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Cover: An ice storm brought down **Red-throated Loons** in central Pennsylvania 17 December. Some were rescued and taken to Centre Wildlife Care, to then be released after recovery. This loon ended up on Penns Creek, Centre where it stayed 10 days, seen here 2 January. (*Debra Rittelmann*)



# The Curious History of Black-headed Gull in Southwestern Pennsylvania

## Geoff Malosh

On 4 Nov 1997, the late Chuck Tague photographed an adult Black-headed Gull at Riverfront Park, a small stretch of grass and benches along the Monongahela River in the city of Pittsburgh's South Side district. The bird provided a first for Allegheny County and the first for anywhere in the southwestern corner of Pennsylvania. (For purpose of this article, "southwestern Pennsylvania" refers to the region often considered Pennsylvania's physiographic Southwest, i.e., the counties south of the Glaciated Northwest and west of the Allegheny Front.)

Black-headed Gull is a Eurasian species that for most of known history was a rare vagrant to North America. Nearly all records through the middle of the 20th Century were from the far northeastern provinces of Canada and states of the U.S. It wasn't until 1977 that they were first found breeding on North American soil, when at least two pairs nested in Newfoundland (Godfrey 1986). In the decades since, they became sporadic breeders in the Maritimes and the northeastern Atlantic states, and are now found rarely but regularly in winter in those same areas, as well as south and west into the mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes. Indeed, the first record for Pennsylvania did not occur until 1979, when one was found at Presque Isle State Park on 28 May of that year (McWilliams and Brauning 2000). The bird in Pittsburgh in 1997 was still only about the tenth record for the state by that time. Today the species is still rare, but has been found annually in Pennsylvania since the mid-2000s, with most records from the southeastern counties, especially along the lower Susquehanna and Delaware rivers.

Yet southwestern Pennsylvania, as of this writing, boasts no fewer than 11 records, beginning with Tague's bird in 1997 up to the most recent in 2017. That fact, while impressive, is not particularly curious. What *is* curious is that a good argument could be made that all 11 records, spanning a full 20 years, represent no more than two individual birds—or perhaps even just one single bird—seen 11 times over two decades.

For as it turns out, all 11 records have been of birds in adult basic plumage, and all of them occurred in just three very specific places: two locations on the rivers of Allegheny County, where the species occurred three times in the late 1990s, and at the South Shore Day Use Area of Moraine State Park in Butler County, where the species has been found an amazing eight times, each time at the exact same location within the park.

Table 1 summarizes the dates and sites of each sighting. The "year" listed is the year in which the fall season occurred, even if the bird did not depart (or did not even first appear) before 31 Dec:

Examining the records above, there really is little doubt that the seven records from Moraine State Park's South Shore from 2008 through 2017 all represent the same bird. Like clockwork (more or less), it appears during or after the second week of November, always associated with a few hundred Ring-billed and Bonaparte's Gulls that also pass through the park around that time, and always seen roosting during the mid-afternoon hours on the South Shore's "beach" (really, a grassy lawn) with the other gulls. It even sits in the same place on the lawn each year, somewhere along about a 100 yard stretch of the grass behinds the bathroom buildings in the middle of the day use area. The only exception to this was the fall of 2015, when the bird was not found until 8 Jan (2016), by which time the lake was mostly frozen and the lawn snow-covered. That year the bird was seen only nearby the South Shore lawn roosting on ice, and not on the lawn itself. But it's quite likely that it was there earlier that fall too, roosting on the lawn from time to time as it's well-known to do, and merely escaped detection until January.

Indeed, each year since 2012, when the gray skies and cold north winds of November finally arrive, it's become an annual ritual for some western Pennsylvania birders to seek out "their" Black-headed Gull at the South Shore, and they have been

successful more years than not. The bird was not seen in 2018, but hope still remains that it may yet turn up again.

Black-headed Gulls typically reach adult plumage in their second winter, meaning birds in adult basic plumage could be as young as a year and half old, having hatched two summers previously. Assuming that it's been the same bird at the South Shore each time since 2008, and because the bird was an adult in 2008, we can deduce that it could have hatched no later than the summer of 2007, making it at least 10.5 years old in 2017—which is still somewhat young, actually, for a gull.

But what of those four records from the late 1990s? Again with those records, although comprising three different places, in all cases the bird was in adult basic plumage, it was not seen in more than one place in the same year, and it appeared in southwestern Pennsylvania more or less always around the same time of year. It's likewise not unreasonable to think that all four of those records were also the same bird each time: an adult wandering its way through southwestern Pennsylvania, coming from who knows where and headed to parts just as much unknown.

What links the two sets of sightings together, besides the consistent arrival dates each year, of course, is the 1998 sighting at the South Shore at Moraine. That year, it first appeared in early December, exactly at that same spot on the South Shore lawn, and stayed for a month. In all, that bird quite effectively foreshadowed a pattern of occurrence that would become regular at the site 10 years later. Could it have been the same individual bird even back then? Was it absent (or perhaps merely undetected) from 2001 to 2007, but otherwise has been a fixture in this corner of the state for two full decades?

Now we'd be looking at a bird hatched no later than summer of 1996, making it at least 21.5 years old in 2017. That most certainly *is* old for a gull, but is still far short of the record for this species.

The oldest known Black-headed Gull was a bird banded as a chick near Zandvoort, the Netherlands, on 25 June 1978. Over thirty years later, the bird, bearing its now three-decades-old ring, was observed at the Benthuiserplas breeding colony near Zoetermeer, the Netherlands throughout the spring and early summer of 2009. It returned to the colony for a shorter interval in early spring 2010, and for a single day on 21 Mar 2011, the last day it was ever seen (van Dijk, et al. 2012). The time between the date of its banding as a chick and its last known sighting was a whopping 32 years, 8 months, and 24 days! There are other records of extremely aged Black-headed Gulls too. van Dijk (2012) lists the 10 longest-lived Black-headed Gulls known and definitively confirmed from banding records, the youngest of which was 29 years, 8 months old when last sighted. Clearly, a Black-headed Gull exceeding the age of 20 years is not at all unheard of.

What any of this means for southwestern Pennsylvania's own bird (or birds) can only be left to speculation, but at least in the opinion of this author, the "single bird hypothesis" is a pretty strong one. It's fun to think about anyway. Whatever the case, here's hoping we haven't yet seen the last of our Eurasian friend in the Pittsburgh area, and that "our" Black-headed Gull will once again appear on the grass at Moraine State Park some cold, gray November day.

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Table 1. Sightings of Black-headed Gull in southwestern Pennsylvania, 1997-present.

Year	Dates	Location	County	Initial Observer
1997	4 Nov	Southside Riverfront Park	Allegheny	Chuck Tague
1998	5 Dec to 6 Jan (1999)	Moraine S.P. South Shore	Butler	Randy Stringer
1999	3 Nov to 24 Nov	McKees Rocks	Allegheny	Scott Kinzey
2000	29 Oct to 30 Oct	McKees Rocks	Allegheny	Scott Kinzey
2008	27 Nov to 10 Dec	Moraine S.P. South Shore	Butler	Debbie & Dave Darney
2011	9 Dec to 1 Jan (2012)	Moraine S.P. South Shore	Butler	Shannon Thompson & Dave Wilton
2012	2 to 3 Dec	Moraine S.P. South Shore	Butler	Mark Vass
2014	23 to 26 Dec	Moraine S.P. South Shore	Butler	Debbie Darney
2015	8 Jan (2016) to 11 Jan (2016)	Moraine S.P. South Shore	Butler	Debbie Darney
2016	27 Nov to 10 Dec	Moraine S.P. South Shore	Butler	Becky Smith et al.
2017	12 Nov to 11 Dec	Moraine S.P. South Shore	Butler	Mark Vass

*Post-script. The initial draft of this article was written in early fall, 2019. As it happened, there were indeed two reports of Black-headed Gull at Moraine State Park later in 2019, the first of which, reported by Glenn Koppel and Mary Alice Koenke on 8 Dec, appeared to be a first-winter bird, and it wasn't at the South Shore Day Use Area, but instead was seen at scope distance at the waterfowl observation area on a different part of the Lake Arthur. Then, on 14 December, Brendyn Baptiste and Martin Carlin described an adult at the South Shore Day Use Area, but unfortunately, they were not able to obtain a photo, nor was it seen again later in the season. Whatever one makes of these two sightings in the overall context of Black-headed Gull records at Lake Arthur, it seems this story of Black-headed Gull in southwestern Pennsylvania is not quite over just yet. Maybe even a new young bird is getting ready to take the place of our old, would-be-now 23 year old friend, in seasons to come...*

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Pittsburgh (Allegheny) 11/14/1997 (Chuck Tague)



Lake Arthur (Butler) 06/01/1999 (Walt Shaffer)



McKees Rocks (*Allegheny*) 11/20/1999 (Walt Shaffer)



McKees Rocks (*Allegheny*) 10/29/2000 (Scott Kinzey)



Lake Arthur (*Butler*) 11/29/2008 (Steve Gosser)



Lake Arthur (*Butler*) 12/11/2011 (Geoff Malosh)



Lake Arthur (*Butler*) 12/03/2013 (Jeff McDonald)



Lake Arthur (*Butler*) 12/24/2014 (Matt Juskowich)



Lake Arthur (*Butler*) 01/11/2016 (David Poortinga)



Lake Arthur (*Butler*) 11/29/2016 (Jeff McDonald)



Lake Arthur (*Butler*) 11/26/2017 (Geoff Malosh)



Lake Arthur (*Butler*) 12/03/2017 (Geoff Malosh)



Lake Arthur (*Butler*) 12/03/2017 (Geoff Malosh)

# Strangers from Afar: Two Un-“twitch”-able Additions to the PAvifauna

## Billy Weber

In 2003, Nick Pulcinella asked a wide cross-section of Pennsylvania birders to predict the next ten additions to the state list. The results, compiled in this very journal, indicated in retrospect that those birders knew what they were talking about. Of the top ten predictions, seven have since been documented here, most of them multiple times. The same survey today would probably generate similarly smart guesses, with the advantage of seventeen years of burgeoning knowledge/interest and the process of elimination. (Oh, and something called eBird.) How have we not stumbled across a definite Neotropic Cormorant? Heard about a Mexican Violetear at someone’s feeder? Detected one of the numerous Bell’s Vireos that have powered through to New Jersey? Who among our state-listers has not wondered why Boat-tailed Grackles, a mere county away in both Jersey and Delaware, have been sheltering in place since long before their respective governors’ COVID-19 orders? In short, we know what to expect (and what not to) in our commonwealth.

Or do we?

### Corn Crake

On New Year’s morning 2016, at about ten o’clock, Cassie Schweighofer opened the door to let in one of her cats. It was only fifteen degrees Fahrenheit at her family farm in Tyler Hill, Wayne County, PA, not far from the New York border. The night had brought a dusting of snow, and the cat had brought a bird. Schweighofer did not recognize the squat, buffy creature—still alive—with its black-centered back feathers, chestnut wing panels, barred flanks, and stout pink bill. Neither did her husband Erik, despite the fact that they both had degrees in the natural sciences from Cornell University, were outdoorsy, and were familiar with the usual avian suspects in the vicinity. “The bird was gorgeous,” remembers Schweighofer. “It was in great condition, not damaged or bloody, but was clearly very weak and cold.” She snapped pictures and sent them to her friend Lauren Flesher, a Cornell senior and bird enthusiast. Flesher communicated with a friend in New York, Benjamin Van Doren, who then reached out on Facebook to recommend a wildlife rehabilitator and to reveal the bird’s identity. See Figures 1 and 2.

PA.area. It was not on any of the thirty-three top ten lists Pulcinella had gathered in 2003. No one had even included it as a wild card. Corn Crakes frequent damp meadows and hayfields, not marshes, and this particular immature male had likely been lurking somewhere in the property’s vast expanses of managed grass hay (although Schweighofer notes that her cats tend to patrol the five acres of barnyard and pasture closest to the house). Van Doren, who judged the bird to be in “pretty bad shape” from the photographs, speculated that it had been in North America for a while, since prevailing winds had not been conducive to westward trans-Atlantic vagrancy since the fall. However long it had survived on our shores, by 2:15 p.m. on the day of its discovery, sadly, it had succumbed to exhaustion, starvation, and/or cold.



Figure 2 **Corn Crake**, still alive, Tyler Hill, Wayne January 2016. (Cassie Schweighofer)



Figure 1 **Corn Crake**, still alive, Tyler Hill, Wayne January 2016. (Cassie Schweighofer).

Schweighofer had not recognized the bird, it turned out, because it was a Corn Crake. *Crex crex*, a furtive Old World rail recovering from a precipitous decline in western Europe, was, to put it mildly, a surprising visitant to the greater Honesdale,

But it was not actually on our shores, which was part of what made the crane’s appearance in Pennsylvania remarkable. All North American records in eBird and in Howell, Lewington, and Russell (2014) are from coastal states and provinces between Maryland and the Maritimes; several (at Cape Race, Newfoundland and Little Harbor, Nova Scotia) are from the first point of land their respective individuals may have seen after ending up on the wrong side of the pond on their way to sub-Saharan wintering grounds. Also idiosyncratic was the date. Nearly all records in the sources just mentioned occurred in October and November, suggesting that two January outliers, in addition to the Pennsylvania one, had been alive on our continent for at least a month, presuming they had arrived during the peak period. This aligns with Van Doren’s hypothesis about



Schweighofer's crane and may explain how it had the time to wander inland.

How it had the motivation and energy, on the other hand, may never be explained, since the Wayne bird is now unavailable for comment. It is not unique in that designation. In the late 1800s, Corn Crakes were apprehended regularly in the Northeast, and quite literally, often through the barrel of a firearm. All but four eBird entries fall between 1856 and 1943, when bird-hunting was a common activity in errant crane habitat. Howell et al. (2014) note, "Corncrake is one of the few Palearctic vagrants whose frequency of occurrence in N America declined during the 20<sup>th</sup> century" (pp. 206-207). In the cases of most rarities, decreases in Eurasian populations were offset by increases in American observers, but because "observers" of Corn Crakes and Eurasian Woodcocks were generally hunters with dogs, those species' detection underwent a double decrease. The eight or so stray crakes that have been found in more recent years, while not shot dead, have not necessarily fared better, which is understandable since their being noticed now depends upon some type of duress: weakness, disorientation (the 1997 Nova Scotia bird was spotted in someone's garden), or, as in our instance, capture by cat. According to Howell et al., all the multiple Bermuda records have been cat or car kills and many of the dozens of crakes discovered in Iceland in modern decades have been either dead or dying. Even the lone "chasable" *Crex* of the eBird age—only the second one on Long Island since the 1880s, enjoyed by legions of birders as it itself enjoyed earthworms on the shoulder of the busy Ocean Parkway near Cedar Beach, New York, for two days in November 2017—was ultimately roadkilled, to the dismay of less punctual legions. (An exception with an ambiguous fate was a crane among Northern Flickers in a yard on Monhegan Island, Maine in October 2014, misidentified as a juvenile Sora until the single uploaded image was examined more closely in November 2016.)

So Pennsylvania's initial Corn Crane made it farther from the ocean, survived potentially much longer, and appeared over a hundred years later than the majority of its wayward kin. Schweighofer was eventually contacted by Jason D. Weckstein, associate curator of ornithology at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, and decided to donate the specimen. The academy's ornithology collections manager Nate Rice took a series of pictures that crossed the desk of Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee member George Armistead, who on February 4, 2019, formally submitted the record (the first PORC CORC!—#bandingcodehumor). Unfortunately, what Schweighofer got in return for her contribution to science was an acrid reprimand for having outdoor cats. "I was honestly hurt by the negative response from the birding community," she confesses, going into pained detail:

*I got actual hate mail!!! Lots of it. It was insulting, rude, and ungracious. It left a very bad taste in my mouth regarding birders in general. Luckily I have some birding friends, so I know they're not all like this.... Here at my farm, we strive to operate in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner. We maintain over 800 acres in no-till agricultural use or open native space.... I love our cats dearly. They are all cared for, indoor/outdoor, and all spayed and neutered. They generally hunt mice and rats around the barns, especially in winter when it's cold.... Nate from the Academy of Natural Sciences said that the bird was clearly malnourished and would likely have died anyway.... We shouldn't have been treated the way we were and I would like that known. Maybe it will prevent someone else from experiencing a situation like ours.*

The politics of outdoor cat ownership aside, the honey-versus-vinegar adage surely applies here. The apparent volume of virulent reactions to the feline involvement in this saga seems disproportionate, considering the cat in question did not even kill the crane and is the only reason we know it was on our turf. This writer hopes that Schweighofer continues to share her findings.

You can learn more about her farm at [twinbrookfarmsandlivestock.com](http://twinbrookfarmsandlivestock.com) or [facebook.com/TwinBrookFarms](https://facebook.com/TwinBrookFarms).

Corn Crane was the 428<sup>th</sup> species to be documented in our state, but due to the delayed submission, the White-winged Tern in Tioga County in 2017 was officially #428, following the controversial European Robin in Bucks in 2015. We proceeded to add Black-backed Oriole, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, Varied Bunting, and Rock Wren before the crane was accepted. This five-year roster of additions, six out of seven of which we did not really see coming, reveals a shift in the relationship between our expectations and reality. In the decade prior, perhaps only Bahama Woodstar (if you winced, know that this writer did too) was more of a head-scratcher than any of the above except the wren and arguably the tern, marginally expected in light of a presence in upstate New York (and soon to drop in another time or two). Now we are on a startling run that has not been mitigated at all by the two species accepted since the crane's submission: last year's Snail Kite(!)...and another Eurasian pioneer, also labeled "Code 4" by the American Birding Association and also with identical genus and species names, significantly more conspicuous than the rail but likewise absent from the average short, or long, list of predictions.

### Common Shelduck

Pennsylvania ornithophiles such as Rick Koval, adjunct biology professor at Keystone College and astonishingly active eBirder, are ready for Old World vagrants. If they can find three in a row (see above), they can keep finding them, and a sand-plover or a stint is overdue. But what if a bird's vagrancy has just recently been interpreted as natural? "My guard was down on this one," Koval admits. On the clear, bright morning of September 16, 2017, as he routinely does, Koval walked out into a seasonal topsoil excavation pit abutting and periodically flooded by the Susquehanna River's east branch, outside Wilkes-Barre in Luzerne County, PA. He knew that any trip to the site, owned by Hanover Nursery but familiar to birders as the Plymouth Flats, could produce something exciting. Still, he muses, "I never expected what I found."

Approaching the center of the flats shortly after 8:30, Koval noticed an odd duck feeding in a shallow pond. "What is this?" he asked himself. "Looks like a merganser, but looks like a shoveler." Whatever it was, it was skittish, relocating with sleek, rapid flight hundreds of yards from one end of the pond to the other. Koval saw a second birder, Rich Pries, coming his way from the opposite side of the complex, and inquired about the duck. "I have no idea what that is either," said Pries. He and Koval were able to get close enough for photographs, and at that point suspected a shelduck in eclipse plumage. It then flushed again and vanished. Unsure if the bird had left the area, Koval sent one of Pries's photos to Devich Farbotnik and Jim Hoyson, who independently confirmed the identity. The photo (Fig.3) adequately depicts a young Common Shelduck, with the upturned, reddish-pink bill and mostly dark head of an adult but lacking the rufous breast band and showing pale-edged, brownish tertials and a thin white trailing edge to the secondaries. Koval, Pries, and others searched for it repeatedly on subsequent days, but it was never seen again.

As late as 2014, the presence of *Tadorna tadorna* in North America was habitually attributed to humans. Shelducks are standard issue in captivity, and even generous/liberal authorities such as Howell et al. (2014) concede that escapes or feral populations may be responsible for a lot of records. There are, however, a lot of records. In 2010, in *North American Birds*, Brinkley (as cited in Pyle et al., 2017) reviewed 40 mostly northeastern occurrences involving almost 60 individuals from 1921 to the time of publication. His hot take was that some, maybe many, of these shelducks were wild. A female in Rimouski, Quebec in November 1996 was apparently accepted as a natural

vagrant, and Howell et al. do regard two 2009 birds as plausible strays: a first-year female on November 17 in St. John's, Newfoundland (not submitted at the time but accepted afterward) and another first-year female December 6-7 in Lynn, Massachusetts (rejected by the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee). Howell et al. theorize that since (a) 50-100 pairs of shelducks were breeding in Iceland by 2010, (b) the Icelandic shelducks depart in late summer or fall for unknown molting grounds (unlike the British population, which relocates to a specific bight in Germany), and (c) most shelducks in our Northeast have appeared between August and November, we could be witnessing a westward distribution shift of *Tadorna*, as opposed to a slew of free-flying exotics mixed with some stragglers from Europe. This would be a pattern of occurrence as sturdy as any, and accords nicely with the taxon's increase in numbers in its normal range. Other Old World waterfowl—Barnacle, Pink-footed, and even Graylag geese—formerly relegated to “origin uncertain” appendices have experienced analogous explosions/expansions and now trigger text alerts in America instead of raised eyebrows. In the case of Common Shelduck, had we been prudish about provenance?

The stage was set for the discovery, on April 2, 2014 (as Howell et al. went to press), of a wary male in Renew's Harbour on Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula. “This is the Common Shelduck that will break the dam,” prophesied venerable local expert Bruce Mactavish, noting—in a listserv message headed “MAJOR MAJOR MAJOR RARITY”—the prolonged east winds on previous days as well as the date, consistent with a shelduck's migration to (instead of from, in this instance) Iceland. Indeed, three years later, the ABA Checklist Committee voted unanimously to add Common Shelduck on the merit of the two Newfoundland birds discussed above (Pyle et al., 2017). Since the ceiling-shattering Renew's bird, shelducks have reached North America six or seven more times, all from August through January. Three separate sightings in Quebec (2014-2016) were followed by three birds together in Saint John, New Brunswick (December 2016-January 2017), then concurrent shelducks on our side of the border (Chazy, New York, August 9-September 6, 2017, and a high-profile juvenile in Rye, New Hampshire, August 13-September 17, 2017). The day before the last credible report in New Hampshire, Koval visited the Plymouth Flats.

The New York bird, present on Lake Champlain for nearly a month but eBirded by only one observer, was described as an adult whose original chestnut breast band molted completely out during its stay. However, this writer has found little if any indication online or in the literature that winter adult shelducks lack this mark entirely (they should also have a black central stripe on the underparts), and the rest of the description (pale eye ring and cheek patch, dull bill, dark tail) clearly pegs this individual as immature. First-year shelducks may show an incomplete breast band (van Duivendijk, 2010); this bird's brown band was initially mottled and faded outward to a shoulder wash. Given the timing of the records, affording the New York duck up to ten days to drop down into Pennsylvania, and the fact that the PA bird in Pries's picture almost has a hint of a breast band and some warm smudging in the shoulder area, this writer acknowledges the possibility that one young shelduck was involved (weakening the case for a natural influx but demanding impressive mobility from a captive-bred local).

Koval's record was not submitted to PORC until March 11, 2019, at which point the committee faced the provenance dilemma. The scenario would have been stickier minus the precedents already mentioned. The bird passed in one round, with the committee voting 6/1 to accept it as a wild vagrant. One member noted the lack of evidence of captivity (bands, clipped halluces, pinioning), another brought up that the species has been reported in Pennsylvania in the past (before natural origin was considered feasible), and a third quoted Marshall Iliff's eBird account of the Massachusetts individual from 2009: “Known or presumed escapee records seem uncommon to rare.” The lone

dissenter included a link to a New Hampshire blog entry challenging the Rye record from the preceding month on the basis of the distance from Iceland to New England (versus the shorter typical migration between Europe and Africa), uncertainties surrounding the Iceland population's movements, and the relatively early date (well within the peak period for North American reports, though). Assuming the ABA Checklist Committee addressed equivalent objections in the deliberations leading to their acceptance of Common Shelduck, this writer is comfortable with PORC's decision to follow suit.

The moral of this story, if there is one, and if this counts as a story, is that the next time someone asks you what our next state addition will be, you might as well set aside your notions about Virginia's and Hermit warblers and dust off your Eurasian field guide instead. Place your finger on a bird. Your guess will be as good as anyone's. Just hope the thing survives and sticks around.

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Figure 3 **Common Shelduck** at Plymouth Flats on Susquehanna River, Wilkes-Barre, *Luzerne* 16 September 2017. (Richard Pries)

# The 2019-2020 Christmas Bird Count in Pennsylvania

Nick Bolgiano

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held for the 120<sup>th</sup> time during December 14, 2019 to January 5, 2020. (When I refer below to a single year, it is the one in which Christmas occurred.)

Eighty sites reported, a new high for the state and two more than last year. Statewide, 5599 party-hours were recorded, about average, plus 971 feeder-watch hours and 358 nocturnal hours. December averaged about four degrees Fahrenheit warmer than average. Heavy rain or snow occurred during nine counts on Dec 14, one count on Dec 15, and five counts on Dec 29.

A statewide total of 163 count-day species were reported, which is average and three more than last year, plus two count-week species. Pauses in the declines of several West Nile Virus (WNV)-affected species were observed. As in the previous year, open-country species were less common than usual. Irruptive birds were especially scarce. Nine species set new statewide high tallies for the Pennsylvania CBC: **Snow Goose**, **Red-shouldered Hawk**, **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, **Pileated Woodpecker**, **Common Raven**, **Carolina Wren**, **Song Sparrow**, **Eastern Towhee**, and **Pine Warbler**.

**Species Numbers.** Southern Bucks County was alone as the top site for species number for the first time, with 98 species. It tied for the top spot in 2002 and 2014 and has often been second. Harrisburg and Upper Bucks County tied for second with 97 species. The below table shows the top 10 list and Figure 1 shows a map of site species totals.

## Top 10 Sites for Species Number

1. Southern Bucks County	98
T2. Harrisburg	97
T2. Upper Bucks County	97
4. Southern Lancaster County	95
5. Lititz	93
6. Delaware County	90
7. Bethlehem-Easton	87
8. Western Chester County	84
T9. Central Bucks County	83
T9. Elverson	83
T9. Lancaster	83

**Hits and Misses.** A “hit” is an unlikely species found in 2019, while a “miss” is an expected species not found (“unlikely” is assessed as being recorded in less than 40% of the previous 25 years, while “expected” is assessed as being recorded in more than

60% of those years). There were fifteen hits and six misses, both average numbers.

### Hits

**Barnacle Goose**  
**Harlequin Duck**  
**Eurasian Collared-Dove**  
**Common Gallinule**  
**Least Sandpiper**  
**dowitcher species**  
**Black-headed Gull**  
**Myiarchus sp**  
**Swainson's Thrush**  
**Green-tailed Towhee**  
**Clay-colored Sparrow**  
**Lark Sparrow**  
**Northern Parula**  
**Wilson's Warbler**

### Misses

**Ross's Goose**  
**Surf Scoter**  
**Black Scoter**  
**Black-crowned Night-Heron**  
**Evening Grosbeak**  
**Common Redpoll**

**WNV Update.** After a sustained period (2011-2018) of high WNV levels in mosquitoes and steep declines of susceptible species, changes were observed in some trends. The 2019 statewide index of WNV level in mosquitoes, as measured by our state's Department of Environmental Protection, was at its lowest level since 2009. For **American Crow**, **Carolina Chickadee**, and **Tufted Titmouse**, which all showed steep WNV-induced declines during the previous two seasons, 2019 counts were similar to 2018 or slightly higher in 2019 than in 2018, suggesting that WNV effects may have leveled off. The previous time that WNV levels in mosquitoes dropped off, during 2004-2009, it took several years for the Pennsylvania populations of these bird species to rebound (Bolgiano 2019).

For **Great Horned Owl**, for which there is strong evidence of a WNV effect, and **Northern Mockingbird**, **Eastern Bluebird**, and **House Finch**, all possibly affected by WNV, slight upticks in numbers were also observed in 2019.

However, apparent declines continued for three other species, including two with strong evidence of a WNV effect. The 33 **Ruffed Grouse** was a modern era low; in comparison, the statewide grouse count 20 years ago was 208 birds. The **Black-capped Chickadee** count was 23% lower in 2019 than in 2018. The 54 **Killdeer** was the lowest statewide tally since 1948; this species is possibly affected by WNV.

**Details for Other Species.** The 253,000 **Snow Geese** set a new statewide

high, 14,000 more than in 2012. The high count of 226,000 was at Bethlehem-Easton and all but a few birds were from the southeast. Despite the abundance of **Snow Geese**, no **Ross's Geese** were detected; there are usually several. **Greater white-fronted Goose** was at Central Bucks County, Gettysburg, and Lebanon County. **Barnacle Goose** was at Southern Bucks County.

**Trumpeter Swan** was at Lewistown and Northern Lycoming County. The 901 **Tundra Swans** was about double the count from the previous year and included 681 at Lititz.

The 18,500 **Mallards** were about 1500 more than the previous year, but several thousand below the 10-year average. The 1500 **American Black Ducks** were particularly few for the second year in a row. **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** was a count-week bird at Delaware County.

**Canvasbacks** and **Redheads** were especially scarce, with statewide totals of two and 29 being much lower than the 10-year averages of 165 and 181, respectively. **Harlequin Duck** at Williamsport was the seventh report during a state CBC. Two **White-winged Scoters** at Erie were the only scoters. The absences of **Surf** and **Black Scoters** were the fifth and sixth times in the last 20 years, respectively.

**Red-necked Grebe** was at Erie. **Eurasian Collared-Dove** at Newville was the fifth report in the Pennsylvania CBC. After not being tallied for two years, **Rufous Hummingbird** was again seen, in Reading. **Anna's Hummingbird** was a count-week species at West Chester.

**Virginia Rail** was at Lancaster. **Common Gallinule** at Delaware County was the first in the Pennsylvania CBC since 2006; it was once much more common, with 19 of the previous 26 reports also being reported from Delaware County. The **American Coot** count of 1108 was in the normal range after an abnormally low count in 2018 and included 917 coots at Southern Bucks County. The 161 **Sandhill Cranes** continued the four-year string of high counts and included 90 at Linesville, 57 at Grove City, and 10 at Butler County. **Least Sandpiper** at Johnstown was the sixth year it has been reported in the last 20 years. **Dowitcher** species at Erie was only the third report in a Pennsylvania CBC. The previous two were single **Long-billed Dowitchers** at Delaware County in 1958 and Linesville in 2011. After being missed last year, **American Woodcock** was at Hamburg, Southern Bucks County, and Upper Bucks County. The 39 **Wilson's Snipe** were an uptick over the 10 birds of the last year, but continued the low numbers of the last five years.

The lower Delaware Valley hosts some of North America's highest wintering **Lesser Black-backed Gull** densities. Such densities were first noted at Southern Bucks County in 1998, and successively later at Central Bucks County, then Upper Bucks County, and then Bethlehem-Easton. Together, 96% of all Lesser Black-backed Gulls reported in the state CBC have been from those four sites. A noteworthy event occurred in 2019, with Upper Bucks County reporting 459 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, the highest tally in a Pennsylvania CBC and the highest continent-wide report (Figure 2). Higher counts have commonly occurred with a late-day focus on roost sites.

Southern Bucks County reported 39,000 **Herring Gulls**, the highest continent-wide report, 1046 of the state's 1227 **Great Black-backed Gulls**, 14 of the 16 Iceland Gulls, and 3 of the 5 **Glaucous Gulls**. Iceland Gull was also at Lebanon County and Upper Bucks County, while Glaucous Gull was also at Beaver and Erie. **Black-headed Gull** at Butler County was the sixth report and the third year in a row for the state CBC.

**Red-throated Loon** was at Erie, Harrisburg, and Upper Bucks County. **Great Cormorant** was at the usual sites, Pennypack Valley and Southern Bucks County. **American Bittern** was a count-week bird at Hamburg. **Great Egret** was at Audubon, Lancaster, and Upper Bucks County. **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was missed for the sixth time in the last eight years.

**Osprey** was at Bloomsburg. The eight **Golden Eagles** matched the 10-year average and included two each at Benezetze, Emporium, and Hamburg, where they are most commonly reported. The count of 153 **Northern Harriers** was near the 10-year average and included 18 at Clarion and 17 at Bloomsburg. The **Sharp-shinned Hawk** decline continued; 168 were tallied in 2019 compared to the peak of 455 in 2002. The 436 **Cooper's Hawks** maintained a consistent level. Just two **Northern Goshawks** were reported, at Bloomsburg and Cowanesque Lake.

The 865 **Bald Eagles** were second in the statewide total to last year's 899 and included 88 at Southern Lancaster County, 81 at Southern Bucks County, and 52 at Linesville. The 214 **Red-shouldered Hawks** set a statewide CBC high and included 18 at Gettysburg, 17 at Central Bucks County, and 16 at Harrisburg. The 3091 **Red-tailed Hawks** was consistent with the previous two years, but lower than the early 2000s peak. A Red-shouldered x Red-tailed Hawk hybrid was reported from Lancaster. The 19 **Rough-legged Hawks** continues its string of low years, but includes five each from Cowanesque Lake and Penns Creek.

Lewistown was the top owling site in 2019, followed by Upper Bucks County and Hamburg. The top 10 list is below, with most of these sites common to the top 10 list.

**Eastern Screech-Owls** appear to be maintaining relatively high numbers, as the tally of 804 birds was consistent with other recent good years. The 86 **Barred Owls** was the second-highest statewide tally. **Barn Owl** was at Lewistown. No **Snowy Owls** were reported. The 10 **Long-eared Owls** at five sites included three each at Huntingdon and Lititz. The 15 **Short-eared Owls** at four sites included six at Clarion and four each at Butler County and Gettysburg.

Woodpeckers appeared in good numbers. After successive years with very high, then very low numbers, the **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** count of 511 was

**Common Ravens** statewide was over 100 more than any previous year.

**Horned Larks** were notably scarce in 2018 (1836 birds), but the 2019 count (2690) was only somewhat higher. Three southeastern sites reported **Northern Rough-winged Swallow**: 80 at Pennypack Valley, 10 at Southern Bucks County, and four at Lancaster. **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were particularly abundant at southeastern sites, with densities not seen since 2007. **Red-breasted Nuthatch** numbers vary each year in approximate two-year cycles, but their statewide total of 82 was the lowest since 1967. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was at Southern Lancaster County.

Seven **House Wrens** were reported from five sites, more than usual, including three at Delaware County. **Carolina Wrens** flourish during periods with warmer winters and the 7281 Carolina Wrens was more than a thousand higher than any previous year.

Top Ten Sites for Owls

	Barn	EScr	GH	Barr	LE	NSW	Sum
1. Lewistown	1	95	25	1	2	0	124
2. Upper Bucks County	0	84	8	2	0	0	94
3. Hamburg	1	67	19	1	1	2	90
4. Central Bucks County	0	58	14	0	0	0	72
5. Southern Lancaster County	0	43	16	3	1	2	65
T6. Lititz	0	39	9	0	3	3	54
T6 West Chester	0	45	5	4	0	0	54
8. Western Chester County	0	29	10	3	0	0	42
9. Elverson	0	28	8	2	0	0	38

back to normal. The 84 **Red-headed Woodpeckers** was the highest statewide tally since 2001, being reported from an above-average 23 sites, including 19 birds at York Springs and nine at Lebanon County. After being about 15% low in 2018, the 6161 **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** and the 1087 **Pileated Woodpeckers** set new statewide highs in 2019, even after adjusting for effort.

**American Kestrel** numbers remained level. **Merlin** numbers continued to be reported in high numbers and from nearly half of all sites, which was a higher percentage than during any previous year. **Peregrine Falcon** numbers were similar to the previous year (30-32 birds), but lower than during the 2016 and 2017 peak (38-45 birds).

A **Myiarchus sp.** flycatcher was at York Springs. There has been one previous report each of **Ash-throated Flycatcher** and **Great Crested Flycatcher** in the state CBC. **Blue-headed Vireo** at Dallas Area was the eleventh report on a state CBC and the second consecutive year. The four **Northern Shrikes** continued the low numbers of the previous five years, being found at Bald Eagle S.P., Clarion, Cowanesque Lake, and Imperial. The 671

**Swainson's Thrush** at Chambersburg was the eleventh report on a Pennsylvania CBC. Typically, hundreds of **American Pipits** are reported, but only 11 were tallied in 2019, fewer than the 36 the previous year, and again the fewest since 1989.

Abundant northern seed crops led to an annual winter finch prediction of few winter finches (Pittaway 2019), which is exactly what happened this season. There were no **Evening Grosbeaks** for the sixth of the last 20 years; no **Common Redpolls** for the first time since 1964; and no **Red Crossbills** or **White-winged Crossbills** for the 11th and 12th of the last 20 years, respectively. Only 82 **Purple Finches** and 32 **Pine Siskins** were reported, vs. 10-year averages of 345 and 514, respectively. While it was once common for a low year to set up a good flight the following winter, this rule of thumb does not hold as well as it once did.

There were two **Lapland Longspurs**, both at Grove City, and 96 **Snow Buntings**, including 80 at Grove City, levels similar to last year. Among uncommon sparrows, **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Pocono Mountain was the eighth report in a Pennsylvania CBC; **Lark Sparrow** at Lititz was the fifth report in a Pennsylvania CBC; **Vesper Sparrow** was at Curtin and

York; **Lincoln's Sparrow** was at Grove City and Upper Bucks County; and **Green-tailed Towhee** at Pennypack Valley was only the third Pennsylvania CBC report.

This year's distribution maps feature the eight most common sparrows (Figure 3). For both **Field Sparrow** and **Song Sparrow**, 2019 densities were relatively high, but still much lower than during the 1950s-1970s. **American Tree Sparrow** has been declining since the 1970s and the 1358 Tree Sparrows were the fewest since 1937, when effort was much lower. **Dark-eyed Junco** numbers were 38% lower than the 10-year average and especially fewer in the west, just as in 2018. Peak reports of **White-crowned Sparrow** occurred during the late 1990s to 2010 and have been slightly lower in recent years; their highest densities were at open-country south-central sites. **White-throated Sparrow** densities have been holding steady.

**Eastern Towhee** numbers were at their highest density in recent decades. As is typical, Song Sparrows and Towhees were found in higher densities in both southern corners, while the highest White-throated Sparrow densities were in the southeast. **Swamp Sparrows** were most common in the southeast and at sites with wetlands (Figure 3).

The 62 **Eastern Meadowlarks** were the most since 2012 and many more than the seven in 2018, but still many fewer than in most 20th-century years. **Baltimore Oriole** was at Warren, where rare in winter. **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, and **Common Grackles** were relatively scarce, totaling only about 50,000 birds.

Among warblers, **Orange-crowned Warbler** was at Bald Eagle State Park and Harrisburg; **Northern Parula** at Lancaster was only the second Pennsylvania CBC

report; the 10 **Pine Warblers**, with two each at Audubon, Dallas Area, and Southern Lancaster County, set a new high for the Pennsylvania CBC; and **Wilson's Warbler** at Wyncote was the 12th Pennsylvania CBC report.

## References

Bolgiano, N. 2019. Evidence for West Nile Virus-Related Avian Declines in Pennsylvania. *Pennsylvania Birds* 33:2-11.

Pittaway, R. 2019. Winter Finch Forecast 2019-2020. <http://www.jeaniron.ca/2019/wff19.htm>

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## Site Abbreviations

AUDU	Audubon	DALL	Dallas Area	LWBG	Lewisburg	SBCK	Southern Bucks Co.
BALD	Bald Eagle S.P.	DELA	Delaware County	LWST	Lewistown	SLAN	Southern Lancaster Co.
BEAV	Beaver	DING	Dingman's Ferry	LINE	Linesville	SEBR	Se. Bradford Co.
BEDF	Bedford County	DUBO	Dubois	LITI	Lititz	STAT	State College
BENE	Benezette	ELVE	Elverson	LOCK	Lock Haven-Jersey Shore	TAMA	Tamaqua
BERN	Bernville	EMPO	Emporium	MANS	Mansfield-Wellsboro	TUNK	Tunkhannock
BETH	Bethlehem-Easton	ERIE	Erie	NEWB	New Bloomfield	UBCK	Upper Bucks County
BLOO	Bloomsburg	GETT	Gettysburg	NEWV	Newville	WARR	Warren
BUCR	Buffalo Creek	GORD	Gordon Glen	NLCO	Northern Lycoming Co.	WASH	Washington
BUFV	Buffalo Creek Valley	GROV	Grove City	PECR	Penns Creek	WCHE	Western Chester Co.
BUSH	Bushy Run S.P.	HAMB	Hamburg	PENN	Pennypack Valley	WEST	West Chester
BUTL	Butler County	HUNT	Huntingdon	PISH	Pittsburgh South Hills	WHIT	White Mills
CBCK	Central Bucks Co.	INDI	Indiana	PITT	Pittsburgh	WILD	Wild Creek-Little Gap
CHAM	Chambersburg	JOHN	Johnstown	PLEA	Pleasantville	WILL	Williamsport
CLRN	Clarion	LAKE	Lake Raystown	POCO	Pocono Mountain	WSCH	Western Schuylkill Co.
CLRK	Clarksville	LANC	Lancaster	READ	Reading	WYNC	Wyncote
CULP	Culp	LEBA	Lebanon County	RECT	Rector	YORK	York
CURT	Curtin	LEHI	Lehigh Valley	RYER	Ryerson	YOSP	York Springs

Figure 1. Pennsylvania CBC sites and species numbers. Background shows elevations (<1000, 1000-2000, >2000 ft) and main rivers and cities.

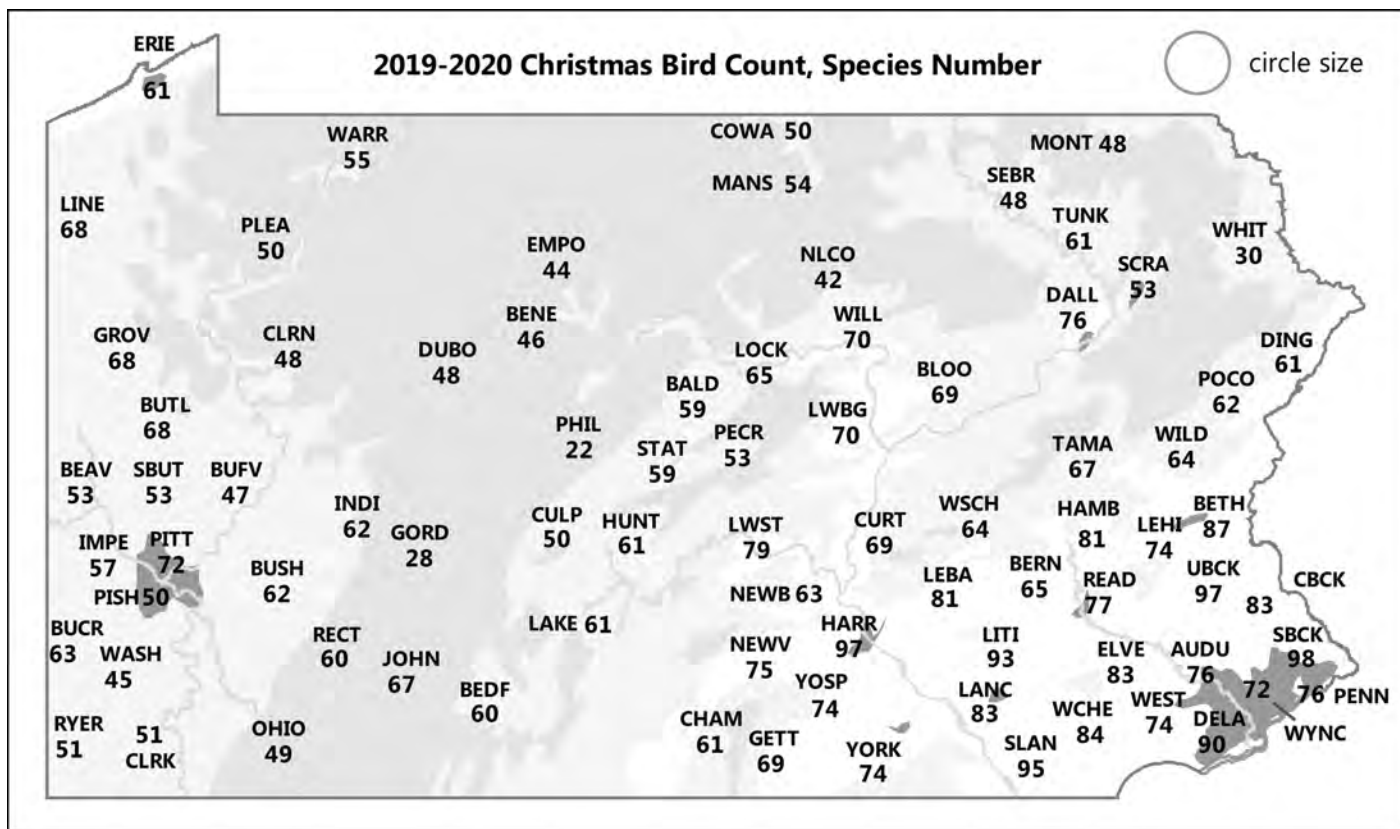


Figure 2. Lesser Black-backed Gull counts at four Pennsylvania CBC sites and totals from 19 other sites. High years are labeled with counts. Note that the y-scale is different for top vs. bottom graph panels.

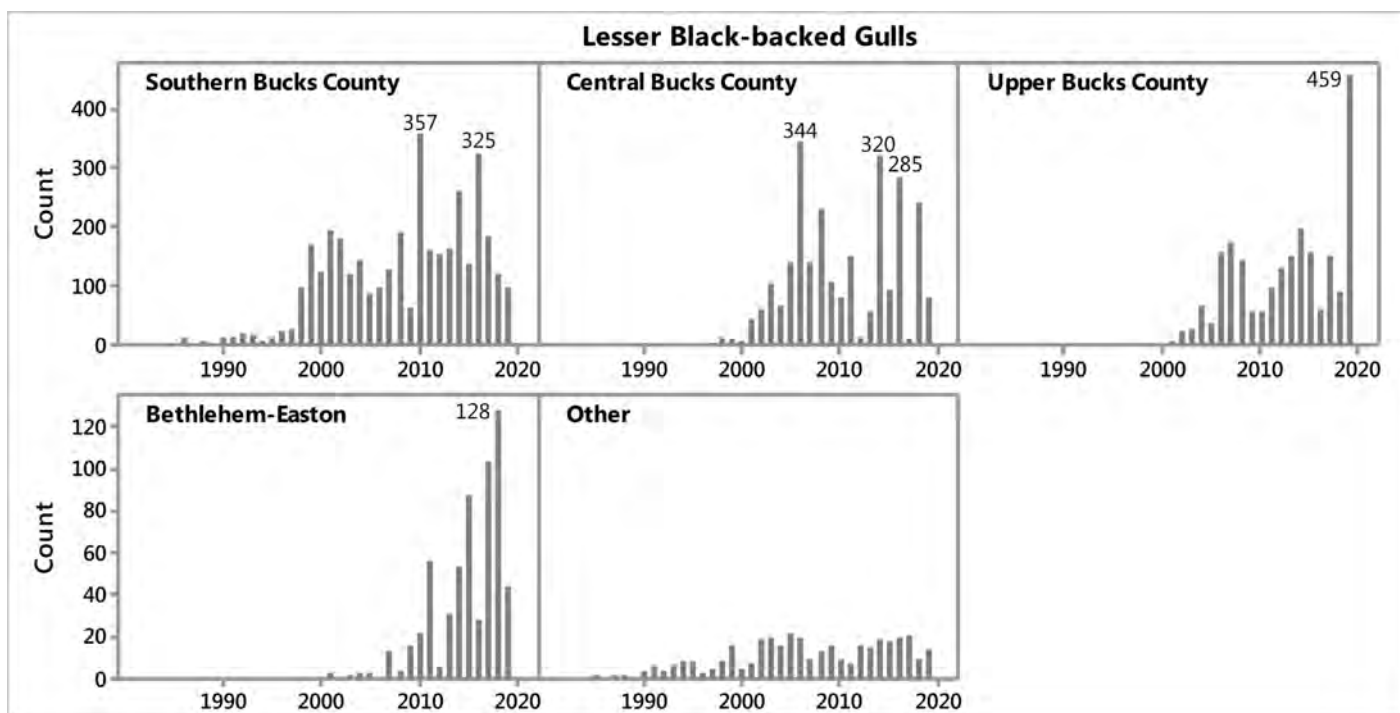
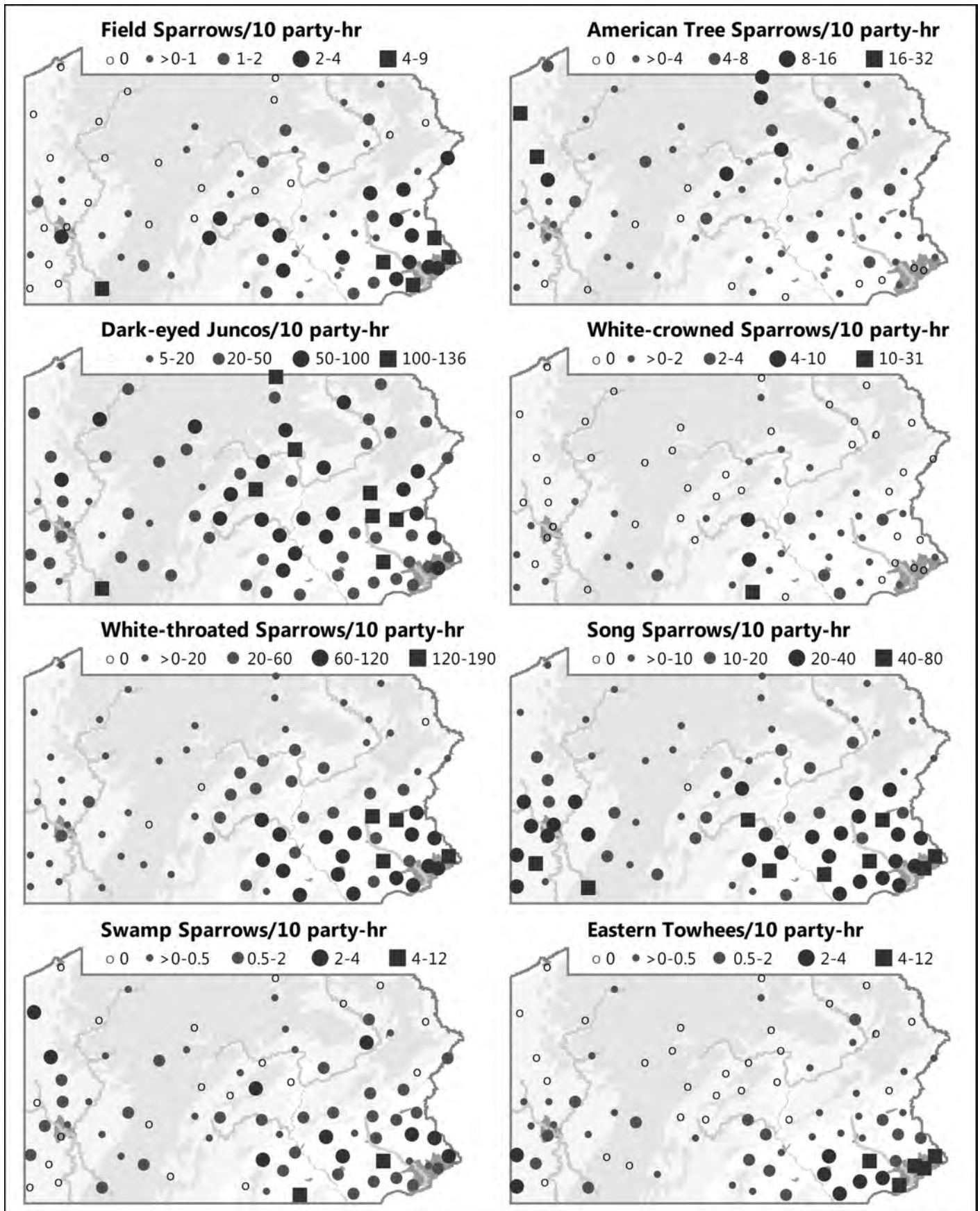


Figure 3. Distribution maps with symbol sizes proportional to the 2019 count/10 party hours.



SPECIES	TOTAL	10-YR AV	SITES	HIGH	HIGH COUNT	SPECIES	TOTAL	10-YR AV	SITES	HIGH	HIGH COUNT	SPECIES	TOTAL	10-YR AV	SITES	HIGH	HIGH COUNT
Snow Goose	253243	96652	21	226252	BETH	Great Egret	3	1	3	1	AUDU,LANC,UBCK	Cedar Waxwing	3994	3811	67	353	UBCK
Greater White-fronted Goose	3	7	3	1	CBCK,GETT,LEBA	Black Vulture	1983	2161	43	290	SLAN	House Sparrow	16051	18184	79	1081	PITT
Barnacle Goose	1	0.2	1	1	SBCK	Turkey Vulture	2979	3500	41	430	SLAN	American Pipit	11	661	7	3	BERN,WCHE
Cackling Goose	23	29	11	6	SBCK	Osprey	1	0.9	1	1	BLOO	House Finch	9378	9328	76	575	PITT
Canada Goose	163668	170090	76	21460	LEHI	Golden Eagle	8	8	5	2	BENE,EMPO,HAMB	Purple Finch	82	345	29	14	EMPO
Mute Swan	167	182	32	34	SBCK	Northern Harrier	153	143	52	18	CLRN	Pine Siskin	32	514	9	11	CURT
Trumpeter Swan	2	2	2	1	LWST,NLCO	Sharp-shinned Hawk	168	256	57	11	BETH	American Goldfinch	7991	9523	80	371	PITT
Tundra Swan	901	1127	22	681	LITI	Cooper's Hawk	436	431	74	27	PITT	Lapland Longspur	2	7	1	2	GROV
Wood Duck	79	82	24	18	BETH	Northern Goshawk	2	5	2	1	BLOO,COWL	Snow Bunting	96	272	4	80	GROV
Northern Shoveler	247	208	10	133	DELA	Bald Eagle	865	578	73	88	SLAN	Chipping Sparrow	111	75	25	22	PENN
Gadwall	551	575	28	91	SBCK	Red-shouldered Hawk	214	145	43	18	GETT	Clay-colored Sparrow	1	0.3	1	1	POCO
American Wigeon	98	115	11	34	YOSP	Red-tailed Hawk	3091	3282	80	98	PITT	Field Sparrow	785	475	58	69	DELA
Mallard	18475	20496	78	930	WILL	Rough-legged Hawk	19	24	8	5	COWL,PECR	Lark Sparrow	1	0.1	1	1	LITI
American Black Duck	1547	2341	55	239	LITI	Barn Owl	1	5	1	1	LWST	American Tree Sparrow	1358	4112	69	151	GROV
Northern Pintail	53	138	14	20	DELA	Eastern Screech-Owl	806	754	60	95	LWST	Fox Sparrow	130	125	28	19	DELA
Green-winged Teal	127	187	20	29	SBCK	Great Horned Owl	292	335	55	25	LWST	Slate-colored Junco	28583	44732	80	1548	HAMB
Canvasback	2	165	2	1	ERIE,LITI	Barred Owl	86	55	47	6	MONT	White-crowned Sparrow	701	1091	39	206	GETT
Redhead	29	181	4	12	ERIE	Long-eared Owl	10	14	5	3	HUNT,LITI	White-throated Sparrow	26961	24785	77	2020	LEHI
Ring-necked Duck	769	776	28	115	SLAN	Short-eared Owl	15	11	4	6	CLRN	Vesper Sparrow	2	1	2	1	CURT,YORK
Greater Scaup	368	143	3	362	ERIE	Northern Saw-whet Owl	25	27	12	4	BENE	Savannah Sparrow	52	152	15	8	BETH,WCHE
Lesser Scaup	282	481	10	229	ERIE	Belted Kingfisher	500	551	74	30	AUDU	Song Sparrow	12740	8935	79	748	LEHI
Harlequin Duck	1	0	1	1	WILL	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	511	457	58	39	AUDU	Lincoln's Sparrow	2	2	2	1	GROV,UBCK
White-winged Scoter	2	22	1	2	ERIE	Red-headed Woodpecker	84	48	23	19	YOSP	Swamp Sparrow	590	409	60	66	YORK
Long-tailed Duck	11	19	5	6	POCO	Red-bellied Woodpecker	6161	4683	79	307	PITT	Green-tailed Towhee	1	0	1	1	PENN
Bufflehead	1023	708	39	141	SBCK	Downy Woodpecker	5626	5506	80	241	PITT	Eastern Towhee	654	306	52	97	SBCK
Common Goldeneye	473	368	24	177	ERIE	Hairy Woodpecker	1516	1321	79	81	PITT	Eastern Meadowlark	62	38	12	15	SBCK
Hooded Merganser	1016	1209	50	101	JOHN	Pileated Woodpecker	1087	759	79	94	UBCK	Baltimore Oriole	1	1	1	1	WARR
Common Merganser	7869	5968	65	1972	LINE	Yellow-shafted Flicker	2280	1872	72	180	YOSP	Red-winged Blackbird	15692	158714	45	7384	SLAN
Red-breasted Merganser	307	3116	7	265	ERIE	American Kestrel	649	699	67	46	LWBG	Brown-headed Cowbird	6776	33978	46	3000	OHIO
Ruddy Duck	405	707	20	104	BETH	Merlin	60	44	38	5	LEHI	Rusty Blackbird	304	194	14	112	NEWV
Ring-necked Pheasant	142	160	36	25	ERIE	Peregrine Falcon	32	34	19	3	DALL,PITT,SBCK	Common Grackle	16055	164648	34	6509	SLAN
Ruffed Grouse	33	82	14	8	EMPO	Eastern Phoebe	28	16	18	5	SLAN	Orange-crowned Warbler	2	1	2	1	BALD,HARR
Wild Turkey	2760	3643	71	172	PITT	Blue-headed Vireo	1	0.2	1	1	DALL	Common Yellowthroat	11	4	9	3	UBCK
Pied-billed Grebe	57	110	17	8	UBCK	Northern Shrike	4	6	4	1	BALD,CLRN,COWL,IMPE	Northern Parula	1	0	1	1	LANC
Horned Grebe	6	38	2	4	ERIE	Blue Jay	16247	13001	80	870	PITT	Palm Warbler	5	4	4	2	PENN
Red-necked Grebe	1	1	1	1	ERIE	American Crow	46372	76250	80	11755	LANC	Pine Warbler	10	4	7	2	AUDU,DALL,SLAN
Rock Pigeon	28148	28567	78	2100	LEHI	Fish Crow	2317	3202	22	1372	SBCK	Myrtle Warbler	329	519	36	41	UBCK
Eurasian Collared-Dove	1	0.5	1	1	NEWV	Common Raven	671	429	69	39	LWBG	Wilson's Warbler	1	0.3	1	1	WYNC
Mourning Dove	28139	26782	80	1600	LEHI	Carolina Chickadee	2909	4859	35	235	LANC	Northern Cardinal	14985	14171	80	790	PITT
Rufous Hummingbird	1	2	1	1	READ	Black-capped Chickadee	6015	8744	56	287	WARR	Individuals	1085534	1381839		249961	BETH
Virginia Rail	1	1	1	1	LANC	Tufted Titmouse	6272	9742	80	560	PITT	Species	163	160		98	SBCK
Common Gallinule	1	0	1	1	DELA	Horned Lark	2690	7290	39	306	LWST	Party Hours	5599	5560		223	PITT
American Coot	1108	1883	12	917	SBCK	Northern Rough-winged Sparrow	94	87	3	80	PENN						
Sandhill Crane	161	120	6	90	LINE	Golden-crowned Kinglet	2227	1620	76	97	LWST						
Killdeer	54	239	18	8	READ	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	363	151	49	25	DELA						
Least Sandpiper	1	0.3	1	1	JOHN	Red-breasted Nuthatch	82	366	32	8	HUNT,MANS						
American Woodcock	3	4	3	1	HAMB,SBCK,UBCK	White-breasted Nuthatch	5712	6349	80	322	PITT						
Wilson's Snipe	39	59	12	16	LWST	Brown Creeper	470	585	71	30	LWST						
Bonaparte's Gull	32	2729	3	26	LINE	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1	0.7	1	1	SLAN						
Black-headed Gull	1	0.3	1	1	BUTL	House Wren	7	3	5	3	DELA						
Ring-billed Gull	42531	65978	54	9940	ERIE	Winter Wren	411	313	62	27	SLAN						
Herring Gull	40977	53664	29	39444	SBCK	Marsh Wren	2	1	1	2	DELA						
Iceland Gull	16	19	3	14	SBCK	Carolina Wren	7281	4485	77	431	PITT						
Lesser Black-backed Gull	689	507	8	459	UBCK	European Starling	146707	165650	80	7337	CHAM						
Glaucous Gull	5	6	3	3	SBCK	Gray Catbird	57	40	23	8	SBCK						
Great Black-backed Gull	1227	2279	12	1046	SBCK	Brown Thrasher	15	12	9	6	SBCK						
Red-throated Loon	3	2	3	1	ERIE,HARR,UBCK	Northern Mockingbird	1666	2140	67	96	PITT						
Common Loon	26	76	10	7	ERIE	Eastern Bluebird	5952	6814	78	300	LWST						
Great Cormorant	14	26	2	9	SBCK	Swainson's Thrush	1	0	1	1	CHAM						
Double-crested Cormorant	133	159	15	50	ERIE	Hermit Thrush	263	261	53	18	NEWB						
Great Blue Heron	752	706	65	43	NEWV	American Robin	19823	24048	75	2702	CBCK						



# The 2020 Winter Raptor Survey in Pennsylvania

## Greg Grove

**Introduction.** The 20th Pennsylvania Winter Raptor Survey (WRS) was conducted 12 January - 17 February 2020 with at least one route in 66 of 67 counties. WRS is a roadside survey with simple but specific guidelines. All raptors and vultures are recorded and data are collected on sex/age/color form. Routes range in length, mostly between 25–90 miles. A map showing details of most routes is at the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology website (PSO website). Procedures and cumulative results were summarized previously (Grove 2010, Grove and Bolgiano 2012).

**Effort and Weather.** Over 225 routes were run, comprising 850 hours and 12,850 miles of observation; the third highest level of hours ever (previous high - 856 hours in 2018). *Clarion* displaced *Lancaster* as the leader in effort, logging 34 hours (Table 2).

Weather was extremely mild through the entire WRS period, and indeed most of the winter. Average temperatures in Jan. and Feb. were around seven degrees (F) above normal. There were no major snow storms, and very little snow at all, except for modest amounts in the northern counties. But even in the north, most routes were run with zero or nearly negligible snow cover. Many counts were done with temperatures in the 40s, 50s, and even the 60s.

## Results

**Summary.** For some species, the 2020 WRS numbers were clearly influenced by the mild conditions. For none was this more evident than the vultures, both species of which set new records for state-wide totals and in the numbers of counties recorded. Northern Harrier and American Kestrel both rebounded after low numbers in 2019, benefitting especially, perhaps, from the lack of snow cover. On the other hand, also perhaps tied to mild weather, Rough-legged Hawks, presumably staying mostly north of the state, saw their second lowest number ever, topping only the 21 in 2002, when survey effort was much lower. The only other record high count was of Red-shouldered Hawks – which may be more a reflection of a long-term trend than of mild weather.

Results for individual counties are in the Appendix.

**Red-tailed Hawk.** The 2020 count of 3242 Red-tailed Hawks nearly equaled last year, down just 3%. The hourly rate of 3.82 was essentially average for the past decade. In the last four years, the hourly rate has varied little, staying between 3.6 – 4.0 (Figure 1). The long-term trend WRS for Red-tails may be slightly downward, possibly mirroring

the negative trend of the last decade in Red-tail counts at fall hawk watches. This may not indicate an actual decrease in the Red-tail population in the northeast but rather is a reflection of changes in seasonal dynamics (Bolgiano and Grove 2018).

As usual, Red-tails were widely distributed in good numbers, except that relatively few winter in the north-central woodlands, as expected of an open country raptor (Figure 2). After several years with the highest Red-tail tally, *Lancaster* was topped this year by *Huntingdon* and *Westmoreland*, with 150 and 148 Red-tails, respectively (Table 2). Among counties with at least seven hours of coverage, *Armstrong*, *Mercer*, *Schuylkill*, *Snyder*, and *Westmoreland* averaged over 6.0 Red-tails/hour.

**American Kestrel.** The mild conditions presumably played a role in the American Kestrel rebound from the low count of 473 in 2019 to 623 in 2020, a 32% jump. The Kestrel was the fourth highest ever (record is 711 in 2017). In 2019, the hourly rate was the second lowest ever at 0.56, but this year the rate was 0.73/hour, about average over the last decade (Figure 1). The factors that dictate winter population levels of kestrels are likely complex, but, presumably, during severe winters kestrels either withdraw further south or suffer higher mortality (Bolgiano et al. 2015).

As usual, most Kestrels were in the central and lower Susquehanna and Juniata River valleys, with good numbers also in the southwest (Figure 2). *Franklin* was way out in front with a total of 50, and a half dozen more counties numbered 26-31 (Table 2). In counties with at least seven hours of effort, five counties had rates of at least 1.5/hour: *Adams*, *Dauphin*, *Franklin*, *Northumberland*, and *Washington*. Numbers in the relatively warm southeast stayed at the same low rate where they have been for many years, well below that of the south-central agricultural counties.

Of 495 Kestrels sexed, 298 (60%) were males, consistent with previous results (range: 59-66%).

**Rough-legged Hawk.** This year's count of 30 Rough-legged Hawks was the second lowest ever. The lowest total was 21 in 2002, when coverage hours were just over one-third of the level in 2020. The 2020 rate of 0.035/hour was the lowest ever (Figure 1). The state-wide total of Rough-legs on CBCs was also low, continuing the trend of recent years (see CBC article elsewhere in this issue).

Rough-legs were found in 17 counties, the southernmost of which was one in *Huntingdon*; however, most were scattered across the northern half of the state (Figure

2). The highest number was in *Centre*, where all five Rough-legs found came from the traditional hotspot route in Penn's Valley in eastern *Centre*. Elsewhere, *Crawford*, *Susquehanna*, and *Tioga* had three Rough-legs each.

Of 27 Rough-legs identified by color morph, 20 (74%) were light (2001-19 range = 60-78%).

**Northern Harrier.** Winter numbers of raptors are determined by an interplay of various factors. For perhaps no other of our winter raptors in Pennsylvania is this truer than for Northern Harrier. Most obvious is the weather, an important component of which is snow cover, perhaps a critical factor for a small mammal specialist like Harrier. The population status of that prey base itself is of course another factor, likely tied to field conditions, whether fields were in row crops or mowed short or left bare for the winter (Wilson et al. 2010). An additional intriguing element is the apparent four-year population cycle of Harriers, as determined from hawk watch data (Schimpf et al. 2020).

In 2019, the WRS total of 59 Harriers was the lowest ever, excepting the first three years (2001-2003), when coverage hours were less than half of that of recent years. The mild conditions and lack of snow cover presumably explains much of the recovery in 2020, albeit only to a level that is average for the last decade. The 2020 count of 104 Harriers was 76% higher than last year. Last year's hourly rate was a record low of 0.067/hour, this year that figure was 0.12 (Figure 1).

Harriers were widely scattered, with some indication of more in the Susquehanna River Valley, as usual, and in west-central counties (Figure 2). With its extensive grasslands free of snow-cover this year, *Clarion* led with a total of 12. *Northumberland* had 8 and *Huntingdon* and *Lawrence* 7 each.

**Vultures.** With the mild conditions, there should be no surprise that many vultures stayed north. The 3634 Turkey Vultures and 1689 Black Vultures were set records, each topping previous highs by over 10%; and in doing so, continued general upward trends for both species (Figure 1).

As always, most vultures were in the southeast, with *Lancaster* and *Chester* tops for both; those two relatively warm, well-covered counties accounted for 43% of all vultures recorded (Figure 2, Table 2). Turkey and Black Vultures were found in 39 and 29 counties, respectively, both the highest ever for the Pennsylvania WRS. Among outliers, where not often found in winter, were Turkey Vultures in *Cambria*,

Clearfield, Indiana, and Mercer; and Black Vultures in Blair and Tioga.

**Bald Eagle.** The Bald Eagle count of 509 fell short of last years' record count of 600. That was largely due to smaller numbers on two key routes, one in Lancaster on the Susquehanna River, and one in Bucks on the Delaware River, where the big birds often congregate during winter's cold. This year's mild conditions may have kept eagles more dispersed, less dependent on the major rivers as a food source. Nevertheless, the count this year was second highest ever (Figure 1).

Bald Eagles were recorded in 56 of 66 reporting counties (Figure 2) with highest counts, as usual, in the Susquehanna and Delaware River drainages, and in the northwest. Top counties were Lancaster, Bucks, and Chester, with 81, 42, and 26 eagles, respectively. Thirteen counties reached double digits.

Of the 509 total eagles, 34% (175) were listed as immature, somewhat lower than values of recent years, which have generally been above 40%.

**Other Raptors** Red-shouldered Hawks continued their recent trend of increase (Grove and Bolgiano, 2014), following record highs in 2018 and 2019 with another record this year, totaling 188 (Figure 1). As usual they were concentrated in the southeast and south-central counties and especially in the northwest (Figure 2). The top county was Adams, where an amazing 31 Red-shoulders were recorded. Butler, Chester, Crawford, Huntingdon, and Mercer all hit double-digits. In fact, three individual routes, one each in Adams, Butler, and Crawford had double-digit counts of Red-shoulders. The Red-shoulder CBC count for the past winter was approximately 50% above the ten-year well average (see Bolgiano report in this issue).

Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Merlins, and Peregrine Falcons were all slightly below levels of recent years (Table 1). Five Golden Eagles were found, about average. A Northern Goshawk was in Franklin. The three Northern Shrikes were about average (Table 1).

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### Acknowledgements

I thank Nick Bolgiano for creation of the figures. Thanks to Frank Haas for generating the map showing WRS routes in each county (PSO website). And of course thanks go to the well over 100 birders and companions who gathered the data across the state.

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Figure 1

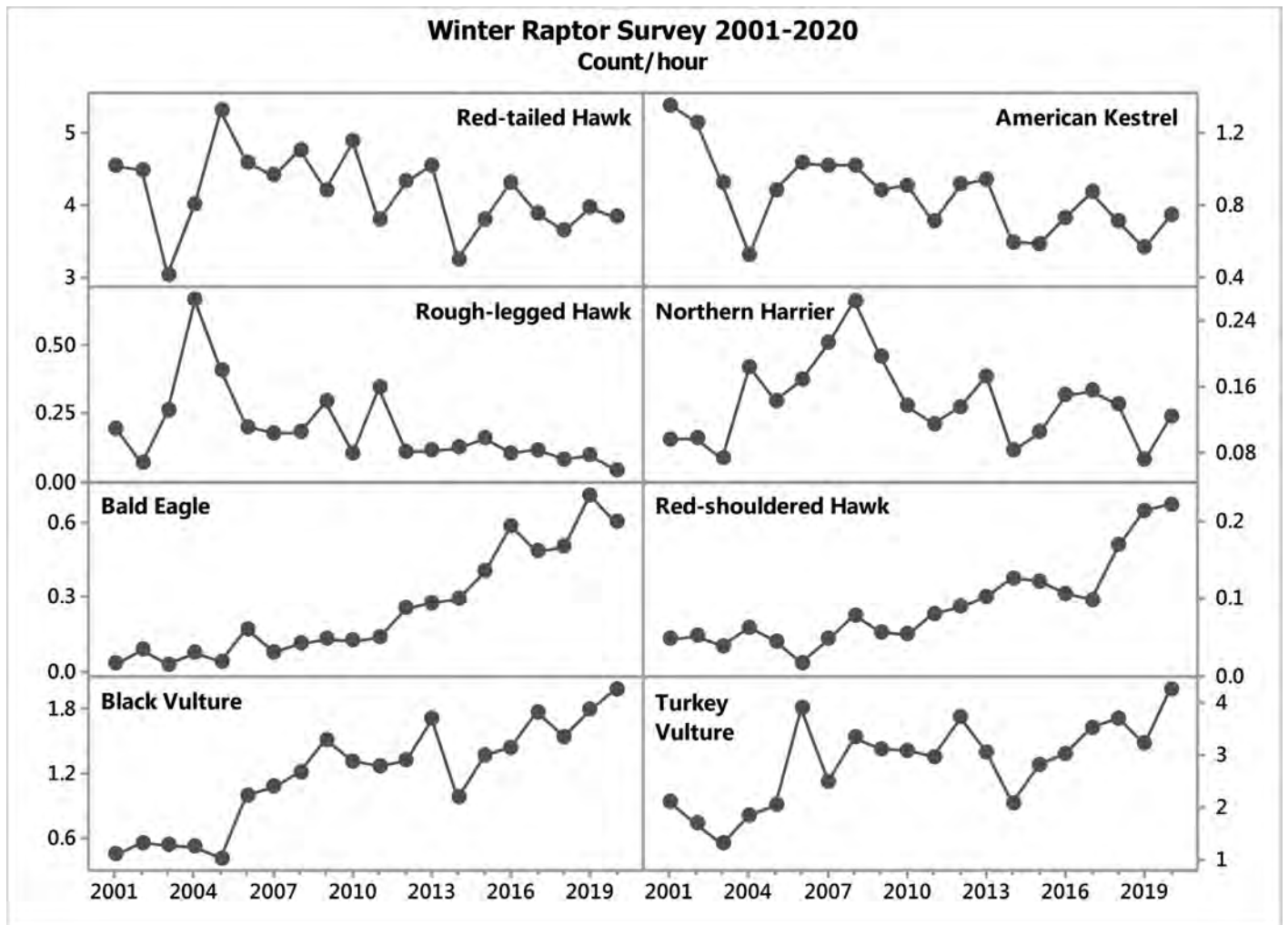
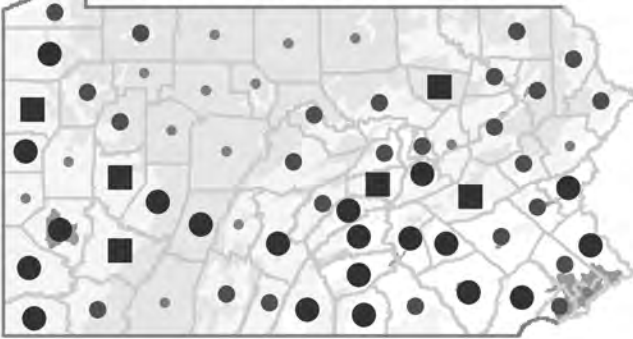


Figure 2

Winter Raptor Survey 2020

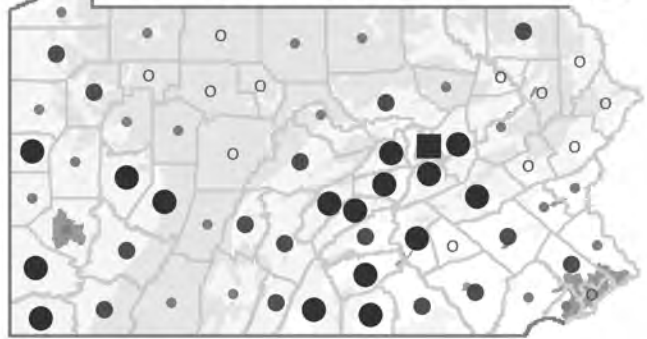
Red-tailed Hawks/hr

○ >0-2 ● 2-4 ● 4-6 ■ 6-9



American Kestrels/hr

○ 0 ● >0-0.5 ● 0.5-1 ● 1-2 ■ 2-3.1



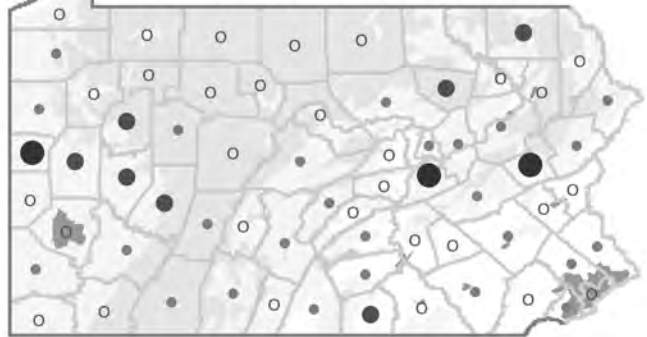
Rough-legged Hawks/hr

○ 0 ● >0-0.25 ● 0.25-0.5



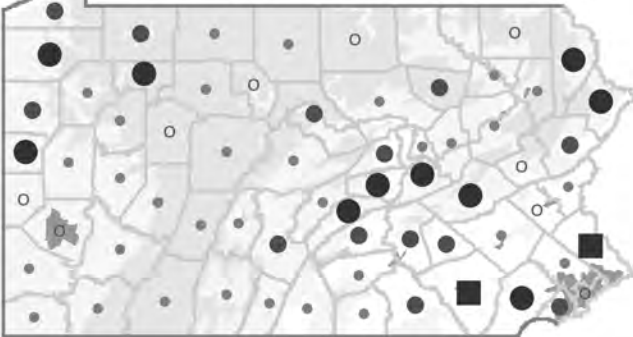
Northern Harriers/hr

○ 0 ● >0-0.25 ● 0.25-0.5 ● 0.5-1



Bald Eagles/hr

○ 0 ● >0-0.5 ● 0.5-1 ● 1-2 ■ 2-4



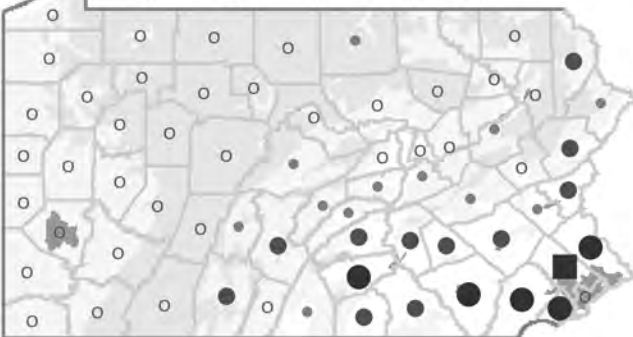
Red-shouldered Hawks/hr

○ 0 ● >0-0.25 ● 0.25-0.5 ● 0.5-1 ■ 1-2



Black Vultures/hr

○ 0 ● >0-1 ● 1-5 ● 5-15



Turkey Vultures/hr

○ 0 ● >0-1 ● 1-5 ● 5-15 ■ 15-36



**Appendix: 2020 Winter Raptor Survey Results**

County	Hours	Miles	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	TV	BV	NShr
Adams	16.75	250	2	6	1	1		31	90			28			211	69	
Allegheny	2.5	58						4	12			1					
Armstrong	11.25	159	3	3	1	1		2	72			12					
Beaver	2	24							3			1					
Bedford	10.75	188	3	1					28			5			1	20	
Berks	24	361	8	1	1	5			94			15	1	1	206	99	
Blair	9	146	2		1	2			14			8			2	3	
Bradford																	
Bucks	12.5	165	42	2		5		2	56			4		2	332	131	
Butler	12	172	3	3	1			18	12	1		6			0		1
Cambria	10.75	180	1	1	3			4	63			5			1		
Cameron	1.75	62							1								
Carbon	5.5	76		4		1		1	15								
Centre	25.75	369	3	4		3			84	5		17			43	7	
Chester	22	372	26		1	7		10	114			4	1		443	237	
Clarion	33.75	469	7	12		2		7	88	1		13					1
Clearfield	8	189	2						12	2					1		
Clinton	8.75	131	7			1			28			3					
Columbia	6.25	125	2	1		1		1	11			12					
Crawford	15	218	22	2		1		14	85	3		11					
Cumberland	21.75	367	5	1	3	6		1	108			26	1	2	249	127	
Dauphin	12.25	235	8			2		2	55			21			43	17	
Delaware	11	163	7	2	2	1		3	36			1			105	76	
Elk	4.75	113	1						3								
Erie	15.75	262	9		1	1		4	33	2		3	4	2			
Fayette	13.5	224	4		1	2		8	43			9					
Forest	7.5	98	8			1		2	10	2							
Franklin	27.5	441	9	1	5	4	1		110			50			68	4	
Fulton	9	117	1					3	34			7			3		
Greene	15.25	250	1			2			68		1	17			1		
Huntingdon	31.5	421	19	7	4	4		10	150	1	1	27			8	33	
Indiana	19.5	264	3	5		7		3	79			22		1	1		
Jefferson	16.75	244		4				2	22			1					
Juniata	13.25	203	24		2	5			61			18		1	11	1	
Lackawana	5	93	1						12								
Lancaster	32.25	468	81	1		5		1	136			18	2	2	1140	465	
Lawrence	12	155	14	7		8		6	71			16					
Lebanon	8.5	160	7			2		4	47						159	14	
Lehigh	10	156			1	1			25			2			47	8	
Luzerne	9.5	138	1	2					19			3			1	9	
Lycoming	18	309	4	3					45	1		10			3		
McKean	7.25	127	2					2	13								
Mercer	16.25	205	14	4		3		13	112			8			1		
Mifflin	21.75	228	6	3	2	4		1	55	1		31		1	5	6	
Monroe	8.5	125	5	1				2	16						7	14	
Montgomery	6	42	2	1					21			4	1		42	126	
Montour	5.25	98	1	1					17			16					
Northampton	18.5	283	8		1	2			76			4			161	91	
Northumberland	15.25	204	21	8	1	1			75	1		28	1		2	4	
Perry	21.25	290	15	1	2	2		4	110			16			117	84	
Philadelphia	6	61							4						14		
Pike	5	22	9	1					14						5	1	
Potter	15.5	238	4			2			21	1	1	2					
Schuylkill	14.5	246	20	3	2	5		4	115		1	15	1		56	9	
Snyder	13.25	183	16			1			85	1	1	22			8	3	
Somerset	10.75	165	2	2		4			21			1					
Sullivan	3.5	60	2	1					21	1		1					
Susquehanna	9.75	89		3					22	3		7					
Tioga	17.25	185				3			34	3		2				2	
Union	8	156	6		1				25			11			6		
Venango	9.25	145	3			1		7	35			8					
Warren	11.75	173	10		1	1		4	31	1		2					1
Washington	14.75	225	3	1	1	1			62			28	3		1		
Wayne	5	75	7						11						2	8	
Westmoreland	16.75	307	4	1		2		3	148			11	1		17		
Wyoming	5.5	100	1					1	11								
York	10.5	223	8					4	38			10			111	21	
TOTAL																	
	850	12850	509	104	39	113	1	188	3242	30	5	623	16	12	3634	1689	3

## BOOK REVIEW

### Gene Wilhelm

**BIRD LOVE: The Family Life of Birds** by Wenfei Tong, contents including foreword by consultant editor Mike Webster, introduction, seven chapters, further readings, index, acknowledgments, picture credits, 220 + color photos, 7 black and white illustrations, 2 maps, 8 x 10 in., published by Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2020, \$29.95 hardback.

Wenfei Tong is a research associate in the Department of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology at Harvard University and a faculty member at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. She received a bachelor's degree in ecology and evolutionary biology from Princeton University and did postdoctoral research at the University of Cambridge focusing on the evolution and genetics of brood parasitic birds. Tong writes popular science articles for nature nonprofit organizations and contributes often to international science journals. She often is a guest lecturer for Lindblad National Geographic Expeditions and runs nature tours from Missoula, Montana, her home town.

Mike Webster is the Robert G. Engel Professor of Ornithology in the Department of Neurobiology and Behavior at Cornell University and Director of the Macaulay Library at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. His research has focused on the effects of ecological factors on bird breeding behavior, the ways that sexual selection shapes courtship signals like plumage color and song, and the effects of those signals on the process of speciation. He has written widely on bird behavior for scientific journals such as *Behavioral Ecology* and *Studies in Avian Biology*.

*Bird Love* examines the extraordinary range of mating systems in the avian world, exploring all the stages from courtship and nest-building to protecting eggs and raising chicks. In short, birds have an amazing array of strategies to ensure that they pass on their genes. For examples, the Atlantic Puffin mates for life, building a cozy, fruitful relationship year after year. A lyre species will perfect a song-and-dance routine beginning as an adolescence to woo his future love. The male Hornbill goes to the extreme by walling his partner into a hollow tree for three months while she incubates their eggs, imprisoned and reliant. Finally, coots pit their chicks against one another so that the weakest invariably dies.

This book explores the wide variety of ways birds insure they find a mate in the first place, including how many male birds employ elaborate tactics to show how irresistible they are. Gathering in leks to display to females, males dance, pose, parade, or use all three actions together, to convince females of their suitability as the

best mate available. Other male birds attract a partner with their construction skills: female bowerbirds rate intelligence above looks, so males construct elaborate bowers with twig avenues and cleared courtyards to impress them. However, let us not get ahead of our story.

The book's Introduction stresses that bird family life can look rosy, from the long-term pair-bonds of parrots and albatrosses to the many species in which both sexes, and sometimes an extended family, share parental care duties. However, nature is amoral and a darker side is equally common. This book examines how and why both the light and darker sides of bird family life have evolved (p. 8). Many of us have asked why so many female birds are a dowdy brown when their mates are covered in iridescent splendor and why single parents in the bird world are usually female? Answer: Investment asymmetries. The female reproductive strategy, with a large investment in eggs, is simply quality over quantity, whereas the male strategy is typically the reverse. The opportunity costs of a bad investment are much higher for a female's future reproduction than for a male's sperms, which are individually cheaper than eggs. Further, in species where one parent is enough to rear offspring, whoever can leave first and safely will escape all the costs of childcare. Male birds can always leave first excepting some species that seem to require at least two adults to successfully raise chicks (p. 11).

Birds are the only dinosaurs still living. Although flight is a relatively recent evolutionary phenomenon, much of avian reproductive behavior, including nesting and parental care, evolved much earlier among dinosaurs. Note arrows in the superb chart on p.13 that indicate lineages still living today. As a reminder that most of the diversity of bird family life can be found in your own backyard, the reader encounters a series of boxed examples running throughout the book. The boxes feature common birds such as the beautiful adult Barn Swallow illustrated on p. 14.

Chapter One: Ecology and Mating Systems raises the question: What determines why some individuals or species make more faithful partners or who "wins" a battle of the sexes? This chapter explores the causes and consequences of bird-mating systems. Mating systems are defined by the number of partners each sex has: monogamy for one female and one male, polyandry for one female mating with multiple males, polygyny one male mating with multiple females, and polygynandry multiple mates for both sexes (p. 18 illustration). It is estimated that 90 per cent of bird species are socially monogamous. Such birds behave rather like human couples even going

through a series of formalized rituals, akin to an exchange of "marriage vows," for humans or they simply establish a property together and share the work of childcare. They constitute a couple to the outside observer. Again, like human couples, infidelity exists yet birds form socially monogamous pair-bonds for decades.

Bald eagles, like most birds of prey, need both parents to successfully rear offspring year after year. Shorebirds provide a spectrum of mating systems that are mostly determined by how much care chicks require, and which sex is more likely to make it to adulthood. As young shorebirds go, oystercatcher chicks are rather helpless, requiring their parents to remain in a monogamous pair-bond long enough to raise the offspring together. In contrast, other species, like the Kentish plover (formerly the same species as the endangered snowy plover in North America), has highly precocial chicks that are able to swim and run for three quarters of a mile (just over 1 km) within hours of hatching. Ravens, like humans, engage in a lot of intricate political maneuvering throughout their lives. Raven couples keep track of the ever-changing relationships between many other individuals across years often using this knowledge to manipulate the behavior and status of competitors. Finally, almost all socially monogamous avian species that establish pair-bonds, even for one breeding season, experience divorce. There is evidence that, at least for one of the parties, divorce improves reproductive success. However, the jury is still out on whether the propensity to divorce is generally influenced among species that are largely monogamous (p. 34). Then too, although sexual reproduction is essentially a cooperate investment in the next generation, like most partnerships in which long-term strategies of both parties differ, there is room for conflict and cheating. Sometimes conflict can escalate into an arms race between the sexes (p.36-37).

Chapter Two discusses how birds attract and choose mates while the remaining chapters elaborate on how they raise families. Chapter Three concentrates on eggs and nests, Chapter Four emphasizes chicks that are independent, behaving entities in their own right that do not always align with those of their parents or siblings. Chapter Five discusses situations where conventional sex roles are reversed, so that females are the larger, more competitive, and ardent sex, often with a male harem which performs all childcare from incubation forward.

Chapter Six examines care extended beyond parents to other individuals including many family members, but also

unrelated adults with genetic shares in the communal make up. Chapter Seven discusses birds that rely solely on others to build nests, incubate eggs, and raise chicks. These brood parasites range from occasional parasites of their own species to highly evolved specialists that can only reproduce by duping a different species to care for their young (p. 12).

Although the bird photos in the book are appealing and named properly, the pair of Kea (*Nestor notabilis*) on the cover are not identified and should be. After all, it's the earth's only "alpine parrot." Keas are endemic and occur only in the high South Island Mountains of New Zealand. Their keen curiosity and mischievous tendencies in demolishing vinyl ski tow seats and wind

screen wipers have incurred the wrath of many folks on the ski slopes. When our American group was visiting South Island's Arthur Pass National Park some years ago, the birds had switched to cutting vehicle radio antennas and window wipers. A park ranger had to constantly chase the birds because the species is protected by law. Perhaps the birds were taking vengeance for the 150,000 kinfolk killed by farmers in a bounty scheme that lasted a century. Juvenile male birds seem to comprise the majority of these loitering groups (like some human gangs?). A key to solving Kea mischievousness is to remove all artificial food sources from their environment and punish people who feed the problem birds. Kea will investigate all likely food sources

and have even been known to gain entrance into huts through chimneys after watching people carry food inside.

This book is a genuine pleasure for exposing behavioral similarity between birds and humans. Even their scientific terminology is similar. Researching birds among primal peoples (Inuit of Alaska to Mountain Folk of Appalachia) has taught me that the bird/human tie has been an integral part of synecology for eons. Do yourself a favor by investing in a copy soon.

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## 25 Years Ago in *Pennsylvania Birds*



### Volume 8, No. 4.

Gene Wilhelm discussed the status of Upland Sandpiper in western Pennsylvania.

Ted Floyd speculated on what the next new breeding species would be in Pennsylvania. Of the ten species he listed, he was right on three of them – Double-crested Cormorant, Mississippi Kite, and Clay-colored Sparrow.

Rare birds reported included Trumpeter Swan, Cinnamon Teal, Western Kingbird, Green-tailed Towhee, Lark Sparrow, and LeConte's Sparrow

This issue can be read at [pabirds.org](http://pabirds.org).

## Summary of the Season: Winter 2019-20

Nick Bolgiano

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The winter of 2019-20 was one of the mildest on record in Pennsylvania, after Nov was colder than average. Compared to long-term averages, the temperature in nine representative Pennsylvania locations averaged 1.7°F warmer in Dec, 6.4°F warmer in Jan, and 4.7°F warmer in Feb. Snowfall was below normal everywhere, but especially in eastern and central regions (NOAA Regional Climatic Center 2020).

The 2019-20 winter season featured healthy goose numbers once again, although relatively low numbers of other waterfowl; comparatively few open-country birds for the second consecutive winter, although the cause this time was a lack of snow and ice, with birds remaining elsewhere; more than the usual number of half-hardy birds and rarities; very few irruptive birds; and a pause in the declines of some species affected by West Nile Virus (WNV), following a spring/summer with sufficient dry spells and a steep drop-off in WNV levels in mosquitoes (see CBC report).

Historically, winter observations of uncommon birds have often concentrated in southeastern Pennsylvania, due to a favorable geography and climate and the many active birders who live there. This was evident in the winter of 2019-20, particularly in *Philadelphia* and neighboring counties (see *Philadelphia* report).

**Greater White-fronted Goose** was in 14 counties (vs. 15 in 2018-19 and 25 in 2017-18), mostly south of the mountains, plus *Cambria*, where a first county record, *Centre*, and *Tioga*.

The northward shift in wintering **Snow Geese** from Delmarva to southeastern Pennsylvania, especially the Lehigh Valley, continued. A new statewide CBC high of 253,000 Snow Geese was set, including 226,000 at Bethlehem-Easton. Snow Goose was in 37 counties, the same number as in 2018-19, and was widely found east of the Susquehanna River and south of the mountains. In February, tens of thousands of Snow Geese moved to the upper Susquehanna Valley, between the river forks at Sunbury and Williamsport. Outside of these locations, however, Snow Goose was infrequently found.

**Ross's Goose** was in eight counties (vs. five in 2018-19 and 23 in 2017-18), including seven southeastern counties plus *Allegheny*. Despite the abundance of Snow Goose, this was the second year in a row with comparatively few Ross's Geese. It was also missed in the CBC.

A rare **Pink-footed Goose** was in *Berks*, *Lancaster*, *Montgomery*, and *Philadelphia*. The same bird was seen in

the latter two counties, but as there were no overlapping dates of sightings, it is conceivable that the same bird was seen in all four counties.

Single **Brant** were in *Erie*, *Lehigh*, and *Luzerne* for short periods. A rare **Barnacle Goose** was present for several weeks in *Bucks* and observed on the Southern Bucks County CBC. **Cackling Goose** was in 22 counties (vs. 26 in 2018-19), mostly south of the mountains and widely scattered elsewhere.

**Trumpeter Swan** was in 11 counties (vs. 10 in 2018-19), mostly along their usual northwest-to-southeast distribution, but also in *Cambria*, where a second county record, *Lycoming*, and *Monroe*. This was the second consecutive year with higher-than-average detections of Trumpeter Swans.

**Blue-winged Teal** in early Jan was unusual for *Allegheny*, but those seen at *Bucks* and *Philadelphia* were more expected. **Eurasian Wigeon** was briefly seen in *Chester*. The steep decline of **American Black Ducks** in the statewide CBC continued. **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** was at John Heinz NWR, *Philadelphia*.

Diving ducks were relatively scarce, likely because there was open water to the north. This seemed especially true for **Canvasback** and **Redhead**, whose statewide CBC totals were just two and 29, respectively.

**Harlequin Duck** was in *Centre* for a second county record and one was in *Lycoming*, presumably continuing from the fall. A female **Barrow's Goldeneye** was on the Delaware R., *Monroe*, for the second consecutive year.

Scoters were relatively scarce. **Surf Scoter** was in *Carbon*, *Erie*, and *Venango*. **White-winged Scoter** was in just six counties: *Carbon*, *Centre*, *Erie*, *Lackawanna*, *Luzerne*, *Philadelphia*, and *Pike*. **Black Scoter** was found only in *Erie* 12/6-11.

**Ruffed Grouse** was in 28 counties (vs. 29 in 2018-19). Grouse flush rate data collected by the Game Commission indicated that the grouse decline paused in 2019 (L. Williams, pers. comm.), similar to declines for several other WNV-affected species.

**Red-necked Grebe** was comparatively scarce, being found only in *Centre* and *Erie* during Dec and without a late winter incursion that sometimes accompany Great Lakes freeze-ups, which didn't happen this winter. **Eared Grebe** was in *Erie* during Dec, where it is most commonly found.

While the previously-known small *Berks* and *Franklin* colonies of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** continued, a grain silo at

a new *Franklin* location produced a high count of 41 (see *Franklin* report). Grain silos often attract Eurasian Collared-Doves in western states.

**Anna's Hummingbird** continued in *Chester* until 12/12. **Rufous Hummingbird** was in *Allegheny*, *Berks*, and *Bucks*.

**Sandhill Crane** concentrated in the northwestern wetlands of *Crawford*, *Lawrence*, and *Mercer*, though not as much in some locations as in past years (see *Lawrence* report). However, they were more widespread than usual, being found in 16 counties (vs. eight in 2018-19). A noteworthy 75 were reported from *Westmoreland*.

**Dunlin**, one of the more-expected winter sandpipers was in *Mercer* 2/22. **Purple Sandpiper** was in *Erie* in Dec and Feb, the one place where it is most likely.

**Least Sandpiper** was in *Somerset* and seen on the Johnstown CBC. **Pectoral Sandpiper**, uncommon in winter, was in *Lebanon* 12/7-8. A **dowitcher sp.** was seen in *Erie* 12/14 and on the *Erie* CBC. Two previous years, a Long-billed Dowitcher was seen on a Pennsylvania CBC and is probably the more expected species in this season.

Dec-Jan reports of **American Woodcock** were limited to *Bucks* (three reports), *Montgomery* (two reports), and *Philadelphia* (two reports). **Spotted Sandpiper** was at Martins Creek Environmental Preserve in *Northampton* 12/29-1/02, where one has been seen four of the last five years.

**Black-headed Gull** was in *Bucks* and *Butler*. The *Bucks* bird was assumed to be continuing from fall, while the *Butler* bird was not seen well enough to discern if it was the bird that has frequently returned there (see *Bucks* and *Butler* reports, and article by Malosh in this issue). No **Laughing Gulls** were reported; typically, a few are reported from the Delaware River.

A rare **Mew Gull** was briefly in *Delaware* and *Philadelphia* for new county records. This western gull is accidental to Pennsylvania, with relatively few previous records.

The 39,000 **Herring Gulls** counted during the Southern Bucks County CBC again led all North American CBC counts. **Iceland Gull** was in seven southeastern counties, plus *Erie* and *Montour*, while **Glaucous Gull** was in six southeastern counties, plus *Beaver* and *Erie*.

The importance of Peace Valley Park and Nockamixon SP, *Bucks*, for roosting of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** was illustrated by high counts of 440 and 442, respectively (see *Bucks* report) and a new



single-day CBC high of 459 Lesser Black-backed Gulls set by the Upper Bucks County CBC (see CBC report). This is consistent with a trend for higher Lesser Black-backed Gull counts in northern *Bucks* and *Northampton*.

A notable fallout of **Red-throated Loons** occurred during Dec 1-17. It was in 15 counties (vs. seven in 2018-19), with nearly all records from that Dec period.

**Great Cormorant** was found in *Bucks*, *Delaware*, and *Philadelphia*, primarily along the Delaware R., where annual.

**American Bittern** was in *Lancaster*. **Great Egret** was concentrated in the southeast: in *Bucks*, *Chester*, *Montgomery*, *Northampton*, and *Philadelphia*. The most unusual wading bird sighting was **Little Blue Heron** in *Adams* 12/26. While annual in winter to the lower Chesapeake region, Little Blue Heron is quite rare for Pennsylvania in winter, this being the second winter eBird record. **Green Heron** was detected at Bald Eagle SP in *Centre*. No **Black-crowned Night-Herons** were reported, continuing their absence of recent winters.

**Osprey** was along the Juniata R. in *Mifflin* 2/26 and one was seen on the Bloomsburg CBC, *Columbia*, 12/15. **Golden Eagle** was detected in roughly the same frequency as during the previous winter, found in 19 counties (vs. 22 in 2018-19). In both CBC and WRS, **Northern Harrier** counts were about average. Both surveys also showed that **Bald Eagle** counts ranked second historically, behind only the previous winter.

**Northern Goshawk** was in nine counties (vs. 11 in 2018-19) and only two were reported in the CBC, consistent with a steady decline. **Red-shouldered Hawk** numbers set new statewide highs in both CBC and WRS, continuing their trend to increasingly winter within the state. **Rough-legged Hawk** was found in 27 counties (vs. 48 in 2018-19), mostly in the northern half of the state, plus *Chester*, *Juniata*, *Huntingdon*, *Lancaster*, *Lehigh*, *Mifflin*, and *Somerset*. The comparative sparseness was consistent with CBC and WRS results.

**Barn Owl** was reported in seven counties, more than usual, mostly in the central valleys, with *Tioga* being an outlier. No **Snowy Owls** were reported in Pennsylvania, although eBird shows some were reported in Ohio, New York, and New Jersey.

**Long-eared Owl** was in 10 counties (vs. 9 in 2018-19). In *Cumberland*, it was thought to be harder to find than previously, while in *Mercer*, a roosting area was closed after harassment by photographers. For many Long-eared Owl roost sites, it would be better for the

owls if observers not disclose their locations, as is being done for Barn Owl.

**Short-eared Owl** was found in modest numbers, reported from 20 counties (vs. 20 in 2018-19 and 34 in 2018-18), though it was thought to be plentiful in *Adams*, where high counts were 10 and 12.

**Red-headed Woodpecker** was fairly widespread, found in 33 counties (vs. 25 in 2018-19). The CBC reported a higher-than-average 84, the highest statewide tally since 2001. A high site count of 19 was observed at York Springs, which has supplied other recent high counts – this site began in 2012 and is located where *Adams*, *Cumberland*, and *York* converge.

After low counts of **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, and **Pileated Woodpecker** during the 2018-19 CBC, the recent CBC resulted in normal sapsucker counts and record highs for the other two woodpeckers.

**American Kestrel** counts in both the CBC and WRS were similar to recent years, though the long-term trend is declining. According to the CBC, the 30-year increase in wintering **Merlins** continued. **Peregrine Falcon** CBC numbers appear to be leveling off. A **Gyrfalcon**, the rarest of our falcons and a dark morph, was in *Northampton* for a third winter.

Two rare flycatchers were observed, with both being identified to genus. **Empidonax sp.** was seen in *Philadelphia* on 12/10, while **Myiarchus sp.** was seen on the York Springs CBC, *Adams*, on 12/30 and suspected to be Ash-throated Flycatcher.

**Blue-headed Vireo** was in *Allegheny*, *Chester*, *Dauphin*, *Luzerne*, and *Philadelphia*, probably an unprecedented winter showing for Pennsylvania. Most of the 11 historical CBC reports have been in the last 23 years, suggesting that Blue-headed Vireo could become more frequent as winters warm.

Typical of recent winters, **Northern Shrike** was found in 16 counties (vs. 15 in 2018-19), mostly in the northern half of the state, plus *Allegheny*, *Blair*, *Dauphin*, *Mifflin*, and *Somerset*. Most reports were of single birds. **Horned Larks** were comparatively scarce for the second consecutive winter, consistent with other open-county birds.

The wintering flock of **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** was present once again at the NE Water Treatment Plant, *Philadelphia*, where first noted in 2005, with a high count of 140. As in recent winters, smaller numbers were reported elsewhere, this time from *Bucks*, *Lancaster*, and *Montgomery*. **Tree Swallow** was present in late Feb in *Philadelphia*. Rare in winter north of Florida and the Gulf Coast, a **Bank**

**Swallow** was observed until 1/14 at the NE Water Treatment Plant, *Philadelphia*.

**Red-breasted Nuthatches** were relatively scarce, consistent with fall reports (Malosh 2020) and the winter finch forecast (Pittaway 2019); the CBC reported the fewest, 82, in over five decades.

**House Wren** was reported more frequently than usual, in *Delaware*, *Lancaster*, *Lebanon*, *Luzerne*, and *Philadelphia*, including at five locations in the latter. **Marsh Wren** was in *Allegheny*, *Cumberland*, and *Philadelphia*, an average showing.

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was in *Erie* for a first winter record, and in *Lancaster*, where more expected.

Two thrush species were more frequent than usual. **Varied Thrush** was in *Bucks*, *Lancaster*, and *Tioga*. **Swainson's Thrush** is rare in winter, but two were in neighboring counties. An injured Swainson's Thrush was in Mechanicsburg, eastern *Cumberland* 12/6-11 and seemingly unable to fly (see *Cumberland* report), while a Swainson's Thrush was seen on the Chambersburg CBC, *Franklin*, 12/14.

Consistent with the winter finch forecast (Pittaway 2019) and fall observations (Malosh 2020), winter finch sightings were at notable lows. No crossbills or **Evening Grosbeaks** were reported. **Common Redpoll** was briefly seen in *Centre*, *Erie*, *Mercer*, and *Wayne*. In the CBC, Purple Finch and Pine Siskin numbers were fractions of their 10-year averages (see CBC report).

**Lapland Longspurs** and **Snow Buntings** were relatively scarce, consistent with other open-county birds. Lapland Longspur was found in 12 counties (vs. 20 in 2018-19), while Snow Bunting was found in 22 counties (vs. 27 in 2018-19). In neighboring regions, Lapland Longspurs were more heavily concentrated in the Ohio Valley, while many Snow Buntings stayed farther north, around the eastern Great Lakes. Low numbers were also observed in the CBC.

Sparrow distributions reflected the mildness of the winter (the summary here is of CBC observations, see also the CBC report's Figure 3). **American Tree Sparrows** were at a historical low level in the CBC and mostly confined to northern counties. **Dark-eyed Juncos** numbers were lower in the west for the second consecutive year. **Field Sparrow**, **Song Sparrow**, **Swamp Sparrow**, and **Eastern Towhee** were reported in higher-than-usual numbers.

Among the uncommon sparrows, **Clay-colored Sparrow** was reported from the Pocono Mt CBC, *Monroe*; **Vesper Sparrow** was in *Dauphin* and *Northampton*; **Lark Sparrow** was in *Lancaster* and *Montgomery*; **Harris's**

**Sparrow** was in Bucks; **Lincoln's Sparrow** was in *Bucks, Mercer,* and *Philadelphia*, a typical showing; while the long-staying **Green-tailed Towhee** in *Montgomery* continued to 12/21, but was assumed to have died (see *Montgomery* report). Lark Sparrow and Harris's Sparrow are casual in winter, but there have been relatively few previous records of Green-tailed Towhee.

Among blackbirds, no large flocks were found during the CBC, while uncommon species were detected in typical numbers. **Eastern Meadowlark** was in 17 counties (vs. 18 in 2018-19), although higher counts than in recent winters were noted. The 62 statewide in the CBC were the most since 2012 and far more than the seven of the previous year. Outside the CBC, high counts of 25 and 10 in *Montgomery* and 13 in *York* were reported. **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was in *Chester*. **Rusty Blackbird** was in 22 counties (vs. 31 in 2018-19), but CBC counts were average. **Baltimore Oriole** was in *Bucks, Chester, Mercer,* and *Montgomery*, about average in frequency.

The 13 warbler species was a notable winter tally for Pennsylvania and featured both rarities and higher than usual numbers of the more common wintering warblers, particularly in *Philadelphia* and nearby counties. **Ovenbird** displayed its occasional habit of winter appearances in large downtown areas, this time in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. It was also found in rural *Tioga*. **Orange-crowned Warbler** was in five southeastern counties, including nine birds at five *Philadelphia* locations, plus *Centre* and *Erie*, the second winter county record for the latter. This continued a recent trend of higher winter frequency.

**Nashville Warbler** was in *Chester, Montgomery,* and *Philadelphia*, continuing a recent wintering trend. **Common Yellowthroat** was in six southeastern counties, plus *Bedford* and *Luzerne*, and was among the warbler species much more common near *Philadelphia*. **Northern Parula** was in *Lancaster*, while **Yellow Warbler**, rare in winter, was in *Philadelphia*.

**Pine Warbler** was in 10 southeastern counties, plus *Butler, Huntingdon, Luzerne,* and *Washington*, with notably higher densities near *Philadelphia*. **Palm Warbler** was in six southeastern counties, plus *Centre*.

**Yellow-throated Warbler** was in *Mercer*, while **Prairie Warbler** was in *Delaware, Philadelphia,* and *Westmoreland*. For the second consecutive year, multiple **Black-throated Gray Warblers**, rarities from the west, visited our state. One continued through the period in *Lebanon*, while one was in *Northampton* 1/9. **Wilson's Warbler** was in *Lancaster* and *Philadelphia*.

Among the Cardinalidae, an exceptional record was **Scarlet Tanager** in *Northumberland*, for the state's first Feb eBird record. Other observations were more typical: **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** in *Bucks*; **Painted Bunting** at *Allegheny* and *Lancaster* feeders; and **Dickcissel** continuing in *Lancaster*. The *Lancaster* Painted Bunting was the third winter of the last four for a male appearing at the same location, presumably the same bird.

## References

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These Cedar Waxwings provided a New Years Day highlight in SGL 35, Great Bend Twp., *Susquehanna*. (Barb Stone)

## Birds of Note – December 2019 through February 2020

This report summarizes unexpected species reported in Pennsylvania for this period. As a general rule birds must have been recorded in five or fewer counties to qualify for inclusion here, but rare species recorded more frequently, or irregular species exhibiting an unusual seasonal occurrence, are also included. "Listserv" indicates records deemed credible which were gleaned from the PABIRDS listserv for counties with no reporting compiler. "eBird" indicates valid records deemed credible which were entered into the eBird database for counties with no reporting compiler.

An \* denotes species on the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (PORC) Review List. Details or descriptions that are submitted for species on the PORC Review List will be reviewed by the committee. The terms "no doc" and "doc submitted" indicate whether documentation has been submitted on reports of Review List species listed herein; "no doc" indicates that no documentation was known to have been submitted as of the time of writing. The PORC Review List can be found at the PSO web site <<http://www.pabirds.org>>.

Birds in *Italic* typeface are uncommon or rare, but occur during this time period in most years.

Birds in Underlined typeface occur at least 4 to 7 out of 10 years during this time period.

Birds in *Italic and Underlined* typeface occur fewer than 4 to 7 out of 10 years during this time period.

Birds in Normal typeface are noteworthy for rarity, but are recorded annually, usually in more than one county.

*Pink-footed Goose*\* – *Berks*: one at Gotwals pond in Oley 1/30 (Peter and Jane Wolfe, m.ob.); *Lancaster*: one at Woods Edge Pond 2/16-19 (Tom Garner, m.ob., *doc submitted*) and one at Middle Creek WMA 2/26-29 (Pam Fisher, m.ob.); *Montgomery/Philadelphia*: one along the county border in Lower Moreland Twp, *Montgomery*, 1/11 and 1/26 (Holger Pflücke, m.ob.) and seen in both counties for first records.

*Barnacle Goose*\* – *Bucks*: one in Lower Makefield Twp 12/12-25 (Dwight Molotsky, m.ob.).

*Blue-winged Teal* – *Allegheny*: one at Wingfield Pines 1/2 (Jeff McDonald); *Bucks*: one at Penn-Warner Tract 1/1-2/23 (Devich Farbotnik, Jim Hartley); *Philadelphia*: up to 4 at John Heinz NWR 12/3-11 (Alan Simon, Rich Ziegler, Jamie Tigges).

*Eurasian Wigeon* – *Chester*: one at Struble Lake 2/7 (Larry Lewis).

*Eurasian Green-winged Teal (Common Teal)* – *Philadelphia*: one at John Heinz NWR 12/12-18 (Todd Fellenbaum, m.ob.).

*Harlequin Duck*\* – *Centre*: one at Bald Eagle SP 1/20-2/10 (John Carter, m.ob.), second county record; *Lycoming*: one at Williamsport Dam 12/7-2/2 (Bobby Brown, Deb Brown, Bob Brown, *doc submitted*), presumably continuing from fall.

*Surf Scoter* – *Carbon*: 1-2 at Beltzville SP and nearby Lehighton 12/10-11 and 2/10-22 (Rich Rehrig, Jeff Hopkins, m.ob.); *Erie*: 1-3 at Presque Isle through 1/26 (m.ob.); *Venango*: one on Kahle Lake 12/4-5 (Jerry Stanley and Kathy Goodblood).

*Black Scoter* – *Erie*: 1-2 at Presque Isle and mouth of Walnut Creek 12/6-11 (Jerry McWilliams).

*Barrow's Goldeneye*\* – *Monroe*: a female on Delaware R. 1/26-2/16 (Rick Wiltraut, m.ob.) for second consecutive year.

*Red-necked Grebe* – *Centre*: 2 at Bald Eagle SP 12/1 (Eric Zawatski, Scott Parkhill); *Erie*: 1-2 at Presque Isle 12/12-16 (Jerry McWilliams, m.ob.).

*Eared Grebe*\* – *Erie*: one at Presque Isle Bay 12/23-24 (Chris Williams, Connor Vara).

*Eurasian Collared-Dove* – *Berks*: several at the Shartlesville colony; *Cumberland*: one on the Newville CBC 1/4 (Bob Koontz, Bill Oyler, Chris Payne, Rebecca Perruci), where seen in small numbers since 2013; *Franklin*: in addition to the usual Shady Grove/Newcastle area, a new location was the Zarger Rd grain silo, with a high count of 41 (see *Franklin* report).

*Anna's Hummingbird*\* – *Chester*: one continuing until 12/12 (Lois Bryman, *doc submitted*).

*Rufous Hummingbird* – *Allegheny*: one at Overlook Park, Monroeville 12/2 (James Hausman III&IV); *Berks*: one continuing in Exeter Twp. until 12/24 (Lois Vedock);

*Bucks*: one continued in Plumstead Twp until 12/18 (Wayne Lattuca).

*Virginia Rail* – *Bucks*: one at a private location 2/22 (August Mirabella); *Chester*: throughout period at ChesLen Preserve with a high count of 3; *Lancaster*: 2 at Woods Edge Park throughout period.

*Sora* – *Philadelphia*: one at John Heinz NWR through period, may have continued from fall (m.ob.)

*Common Gallinule* – *Philadelphia*: one at John Heinz NWR through period

*Dunlin* – *Mercer*: one at Willow Tree 2/22 (Michael Williams).

*Purple Sandpiper* – *Erie*: one at Gull Point 12/1 (Roger Donn) and 12/6 (Justin Berkheimer), and one 2/29 (Brian Berchtold).

*Least Sandpiper* – *Somerset*: one at Somerset Lake 12/14-15 (Daniel Barton) and seen on the Johnstown CBC.

*Pectoral Sandpiper* – *Lebanon*: one at Quittapahilla Educational Wetlands 12/7-8 (Pat and Richard Williams, Jonathon Heller).

*Dowitcher sp.* – *Erie*: one at Gull Point 12/14 (Roger Donn, Sam Stull) and seen on the Erie CBC.

*Spotted Sandpiper* – *Northampton*: one at Martins Creek Environmental Preserve 12/29-1/2 (Corrine Campbell Schall, Michael Schall).

*Black-headed Gull*\* – *Bucks*: one seen twice in Penn-Warner Tract assumed to be continuing from fall; *Butler*: one at Lake Arthur 12/8-14 (Glenn Koppel, Mary Alice Koeneke, Brendyn Baptiste, Martin Carlin).

*Little Gull*\* – *Crawford*: one at Pymatuning SP-Jamestown SP 2/24 (Ron Leberman).

*Mew Gull*\* – *Delaware*: one at Ridley Twp Marina 2/1 (Samuel Neat) for a new county record; *Philadelphia*: one at FDR Park 1/23 (Holger Pflücke) for a new county record.

*American Bittern* – *Lancaster*: one at Woods Edge Park 12/8-15 (Mike and Megan Zettlemoyer, m.ob.).

*Great Egret* – *Bucks*: 1 location; *Chester*: one location; *Montgomery*: 2 locations; *Northampton*: one location; *Philadelphia*: 2 locations.

*Little Blue Heron* – *Adams*: along Mummasburg Rd 12/26 (Mike Bertram).

*Green Heron* – *Centre*: one at Bald Eagle SP 12/12 (Joe Verica).

*Osprey* – *Columbia*: one on Bloomsburg CBC 12/15; *Mifflin*: one along Juniata R. 2/26 (Aden Troyer).

*Gyr Falcon*\* – *Northampton*: one at several locations 1/7 through period (Bill Etter, m.ob.) for third winter.

*Empidonax sp.* – *Philadelphia*: one in Bustleton neighborhood 12/10 (John Eskate).

*Myiarchus sp.* – *Adams*: along the Baltimore Pike during the

York Springs CBC, suspected to be Ash-throated Flycatcher 12/30 (Deb Gingrich, Pat Freed, Ron Freed).

**Blue-headed Vireo** – *Allegheny*: one at Allegheny Cemetery in Lawrenceville 1/1 (Amy Henrici, Pat McShea); *Chester*: one at Goat Hill Serpentine Barrens 12/15 (Mark Johnson); *Dauphin*: one at Fort Hunter 12/04 (Scott and Stephanie Bills); *Luzerne*: one at Plymouth Flats 12/14 (Jonathon DeBalko, John DeBalko, Eric Zawatski); *Philadelphia*: one at Tacony Creek Park 1/11 (Peter Burns, Martin Selzer).

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow** – *Bucks*: 10 at Van Sciver Lake, Tullytown 12/14 and seen on the Southern Bucks CBC; *Lancaster*: 4 continued at water treatment plant in Washington Boro through the period (m.ob.); *Montgomery*: 2 at the Oaks water treatment plant through 1/16 (Steve Grunwald, Bo Hopkins, Michael Rosengarten); *Philadelphia*: up to 140 at the NE water treatment plant.

**Tree Swallow** – *Philadelphia*: one at NE water treatment plant 2/22 (Holger Pflücke), 2 at John Heinz NWR 2/26 (Geoff Veith).

**Bank Swallow** – *Philadelphia*: one at NE water treatment plant until 1/14 (m.ob.).

**House Wren** – *Delaware*: one at John Heinz NWR 12/13 (Jim McConnell); *Lancaster*: one near Manheim on Lititz CBC 12/29 (Bruce Carl, Jim Fiorentino); *Lebanon*: one at Quittapahilla Wetlands Preserve 2/26 (Thomas Buehl, Jr); *Luzerne*: one in West Wyoming 1/17 (Rick Koval); *Philadelphia*: 5 locations.

**Marsh Wren** – *Allegheny*: continuing bird at Wingfield Pines remained into Feb (m.ob.); *Cumberland*: one in a Newville marsh 12/6 (Rodney Martinez); *Philadelphia*: throughout period, especially at John Heinz NWR (m.ob.).

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** – *Erie*: one at Long Pond Trail 12/31 (Jamie Hill) for first county winter record; *Lancaster*: one in Wrightsdale 12/3-15 (Sabrena Boekell).

**Varied Thrush\*** – *Bucks*: one in Makefield Twp 1/1-23 (Rick Mellon, Devich Farbotnik); *Lancaster*: one near Landisville 12/4 (Jack Reese, *doc submitted*); *Tioga*: one at Hill Creek Estates 12/8 (Rich Hanlon, *doc submitted*).

**Swainson's Thrush** – *Cumberland*: injured bird in Mechanicsburg 12/6-11 (Karen Atwood); *Franklin*: one on Chambersburg CBC 12/14.

**Common Redpoll** – *Centre*: one at Rebersberg 12/6 (Martha Ruhe); *Erie*: 1-3 at Erie homes 12/14-15 (Kevin Barron, Thomas Williams); *Mercer*: 3 in Sandy Lake 1/9 (Michael Williams); *Wayne*: one in Williams Valley 2/22.

**Clay-colored Sparrow** – *Monroe*: one on Pocono Mt CBC 12/15.

**Vesper Sparrow** – *Dauphin*: one on Curtin CBC 12/27; *Northampton*: one at Albert Ponds 1/18 (Scott Angus).

**Lark Sparrow\*** – *Lancaster*: one near Manheim on Lititz CBC 12/29 (Bruce Carl, Jim Fiorentino) continuing to end of period; *Montgomery*: one at Twining Valley Park 1/24 to end of period (Tony Geiger, m.ob., *doc submitted*).

**Harris's Sparrow\*** – *Bucks*: one at Bristol Twp feeder through period (Anne Edwards).

**Lincoln's Sparrow** – *Bucks*: one on Upper Bucks CBC 12/15 (Devich Farbotnik); *Mercer*: one at Pennsy Swamp 12/21 (Kim Berry); *Philadelphia*: one at John Heinz NWR 12/28 (Daniel Long).

**Green-tailed Towhee\*** – *Montgomery*: one continuing at Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust until 12/21 (m.ob., *doc submitted*).

**Yellow-headed Blackbird** – *Chester*: one at Cochranville 1/29 (Jason Horn).

**Baltimore Oriole** – *Bucks*: 2 at Churchville Park 12/7 (Mike Lee) and one at Middletown Twp feeder (David Pentland); *Chester*: one in Landenberg 12/21-22 (Clyde Kessinger); *Mercer*: one continued at Grove City until 12/11 (Jack Dowell); *Montgomery*: one at Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust 12/1 (Steve Grunwald).

**Ovenbird** – *Allegheny*: one in downtown Pittsburgh 1/19 (Hannah Jones); *Philadelphia*: one in Center City 1/24 (Jordon Chazin); *Tioga*: one along Marsh Creek near Asaph 2/15 (John Corcoran).

**Nashville Warbler** – *Chester*: one at Avondale 12/8 (Kathy and Charles Shattuck) and one near Thorndale 12/16 (Mike Andersen); *Montgomery*: one at Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust continued until 12/5 (MG); *Philadelphia*: one at FDR Park 12/21 (George Armistead).

**Northern Parula** – *Lancaster*: one on Lancaster CBC 1/4.

**Yellow Warbler** – *Philadelphia*: one at Delaware R. Trail 12/8-28 (m.ob.).

**Yellow-throated Warbler** – *Mercer*: one at Director Rd 12/27 (Eli & Niva Hochsetler).

**Prairie Warbler** – *Delaware*: one at Commodore Barry Bridge 1/3-15 (Al Guarente, m.ob.); *Philadelphia*: one at Pennypack on the Delaware 1/11 (Peter Kurz); *Westmoreland*: 2 at a feeder near Latrobe Reservoir 1/5 (Steven Lautman, Lauren Schneider).

**Black-throated Gray Warbler\*** – *Lebanon*: continuing bird at Clear Springs Rd home throughout period (Emily, Justin, and Nate Felty, *doc submitted*); *Northampton*: one near Easton 1/9 (Arlene Koch, Jason Horn, *doc submitted*).

**Wilson's Warbler** – *Lancaster*: male in Columbia 1/12 (Dennis Weaver); *Philadelphia*: one at Cresheim Woods 12/14 (Keith Russell).

**Scarlet Tanager** – *Northumberland*: one at Riverside 2/24 (Steph Fullmer) for first February eBird record for PA.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak** – *Bucks*: immature male in a New Britain park and nearby feeders 1/26 to end of period (Tom Price).

**Painted Bunting** – *Allegheny*: male in O'Hara Twp 1/20 through period (Brian Shema, m.ob., *doc submitted*); *Lancaster*: male in Bowmansville 12/20 through period, for third winter of last four (*doc submitted*).

**Dickcissel** – *Lancaster*: one continued near Reamstown through period.

## Photographic Highlights



This **Sandhill Crane** stayed most of the winter (here 10 January) at Jersey Shore, *Lycoming*. (Wayne Laubscher)

*Color printing*  
*Sponsored by Tom and Janet Kuehl*  
*of Export, Westmoreland County*



Most **Purple Sandpipers** in Pennsylvania are seen in late fall at Presque Isle SP, *Erie*, so this bird there on 29 February was a surprise. (Brian Berchtold)



**Sharp-shinned Hawk** checking backyard feeders in Fairview Twp., York 9 December. (Dean Newhouse)



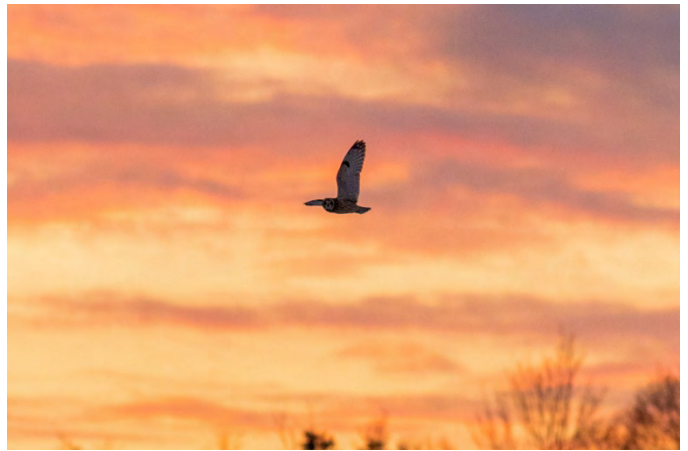
Adult **Cooper's Hawk**, perhaps scanning for an unwary meal-to-be in Venango 20 January. (Meg Kolodick)



Adult **Red-tailed Hawk** in East Great Bend Swamp, *Susquehanna* 31 December. (Barb Stone)



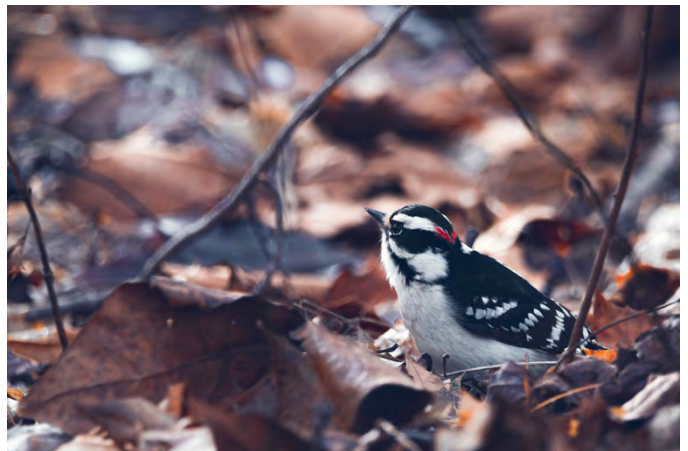
**Rough-legged Hawks** were in very low number this winter; this Rough-leg was at a fairly reliable location on Salem Cross Road, near Milroy, Mifflin 11 February. (*Rob Dickerson*)



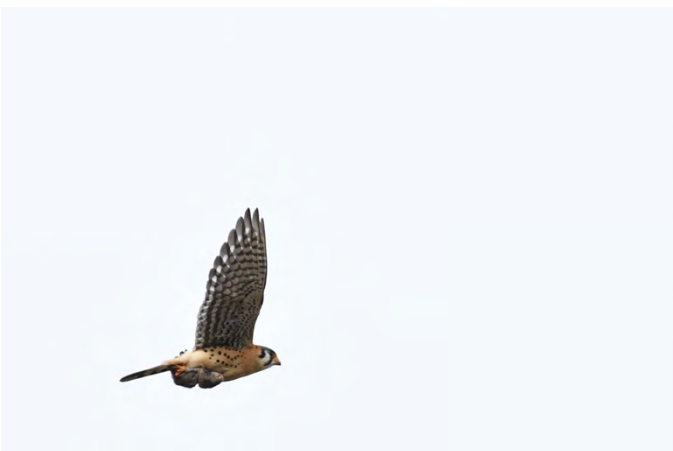
One of three **Short-eared Owls** at Glemboski farm fields 5 (here 19) December-13 January. (*Eric Zawatski*)



This **Red-headed Woodpecker** spent the winter at Gifford Pinchot SP, York, seen here 7 December. (*Dean Newhouse*)



Male **Downy Woodpecker** searching among leaves at North Allegheny, Allegheny 15 February. (*Mike Birge*)



**American Kestrel** carrying, perhaps, a vole, seen at the Lark Sparrow stakeout at Manheim, Lancaster 2 January. (*Barry Blust*)



A late afternoon **Tufted Titmouse** at Canonsburg Lake, Washington 13 January. (*William Berteotti*)



It requires patience and good camera reflex to photograph a **Golden-crowned Kinglet** as nicely as this bird at Marsh Creek SP, *Chester* 31 December. (*Barry Blust*)



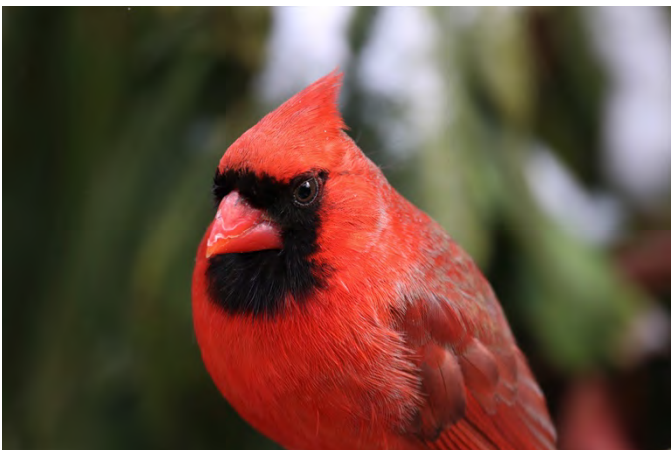
**Eastern Bluebird** at the old site of the Churchill Valley Country Club – Land Preservation Effort, *Allegheny* 17 February. (*Mike Birge*)



**Lapland Longspurs** were relatively scarce this winter; these longspurs were at Rock Springs, *Centre* 20 January. (*Eric Zawatski*)



Fairly annual in winter in *Philadelphia*, this **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Franklin Delano Roosevelt Park 12 December was one of nine reported from five locations. (*Albert Guarente*)

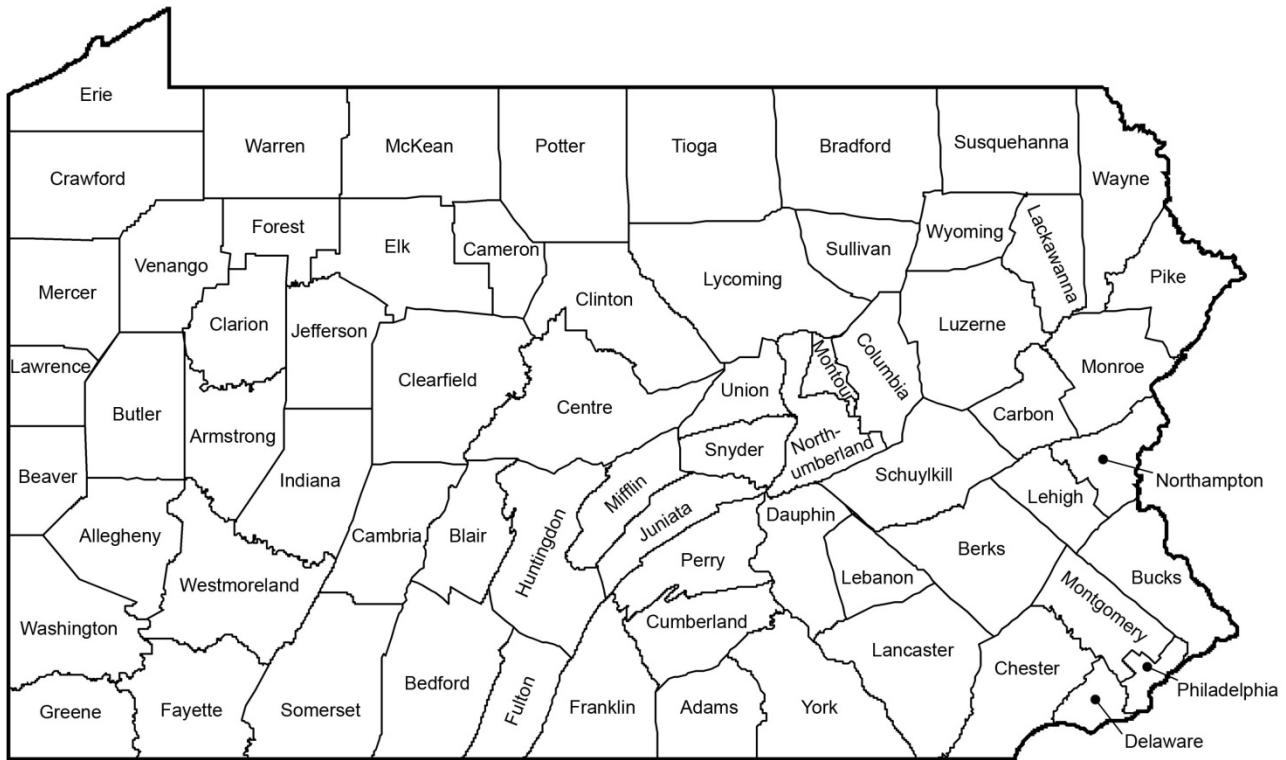


Are **Northern Cardinals** so common that we often don't pause for a well-deserved second look; this handsome male was in Franklin, *Venango* 27 February. (*Jeffrey Hall*)



Presumably the same individual, this **Painted Bunting** has spent 3 of the last 4 winters at the same location, in Mohnton, *Lancaster*; arriving this season 20 December and staying into April (here 19 February). (*Albert Guarente*)

# Local Notes – December 2019 through February 2020



## ABBREVIATION

BBS	Breeding Bird Survey	max	maximum	RBA	Rare Bird Alert
C.A.	Conservation Area	min	minimum	Res.	Reservoir
CBC	Christmas Bird Count	m.ob.	many observers	Rte.	Route
C.P.	County Park	Mt. (Mts.)	Mount/Mountain/Mountains	SF	State Forest
Cr.	Creek	NA	Nature Area or Natural Area	SGL	State Game Land
et al.	and others	NF	National Forest	SP	State Park
Ft.	Fort	NM	National Monument	S.T.P.	Sewage Treatment Plant
G.C.	Golf Course	NP	National Park	subad(s).	subadult(s)
G.P.	Game Preserve	NWR	National Wildlife Refuge	Twp.	Township
Hwy.	Highway	PAMC	Pennsylvania Migration Count	vr.	voice recording
imm(s).	immature(s)	ph.	Photographed	vt.	videotape
Jct.	Junction	Pt.	Point	WA	Wildlife Area
juv(s).	juvénal [plumage]; juvenile(s)	R.	River	WMA	Wildlife Management Area
L.	Lake	RA	Recreational Area	WRS	Winter Raptor Survey

**eBird Usage:** Data for these reports and throughout this journal include observations collected from the eBird database <<http://www.ebird.org>>. Citation: eBird. 2012. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. (Accessed: 31 March 2014 abundance [web application]). eBird, Ithaca, New York. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. (Accessed: 31 March 2014)

*The following counties need a compiler: Bradford, Fulton, Luzerne, McKean. The following counties had no report submitted: Perry, Snyder, Union.*

## Adams County

Locations: Freedom Twp (FREE), Gettysburg Christmas Bird Count (GCBC), Gettysburg National Military Park (GNMP), Long Pine Run Reservoir (LPRR), Mountain Rd (MTN), Ridge Rd – Cumberland Twp (RRCT), Ridge Rd -Huntingdon Twp (RRHT), York Springs Christmas Bird Count (YSCBC).

A very mild winter saw south-central PA temperatures averaging ~ 5F above normal for the three-month period. Total snowfall for the period was a meager 5.2" at Harrisburg with Feb tying its all-time low snowfall amount with "a trace". However, total precipitation was slightly above normal. Birding highlights included rare PA winter reports of **Little Blue Heron** and a suspected **Ash-throated Flycatcher** recorded as a *myiarchus sp* flycatcher. A lowlight for the period was the total species count of 96, quite a bit below recent winter period reporting. The 12/14 GCBC recorded 73 species (within typical range) while the 12/30 YSCBC

recorded 65 species in the *Adams* portion which is on the low side.

One of the main drivers for the period's low species count was low waterfowl variety. Misses were Cackling Goose, Wood Duck, Northern Pintail, Canvasback, Redhead, scaup sp, and the grebes. However, a nice hit for the GCBC was a **Greater White-fronted Goose**. **Snow Goose** pairs were found on the GCBC and Lake Kay 12/23-25 (IC, RG, ML, NL). **Mute Swan** were found at 3 sites with a high count of 9 at the Rt 94 quarry 2/1 (SK). **Tundra Swans** were found at 3 locales as well 12/11–2/28 (CA, PK, PM) with a 73 high count along Possum Hollow Rd 2/28 (PK). A pair of **Northern Shovelers** on the GCBC was the only report. **American Black Duck** continues to show well in the county in this period with 6 sites producing observations 12/8-2/23 (m.ob.). A nice county count of 32 birds came from Rt 94 quarry 12/8 (SK). A pair of **Green-winged Teal** were at Crooked Creek Wetland 2/19 (BP) and a trio at SGL 2/23 (PK). LPRR held 5 **Long-tailed Ducks** 2/5 (DB). A pair of **Red-breasted Mergansers** was at LPRR 12/3 (BO).

Ten locales reporting **Wild Turkey** were led by a 24 count at RRHT 2/12 (TS) and a 23 count along Leedy Rd 2/17 (JB). A flock of 10 at MTN 2/29 (RDS) included 2 birds displaying. Ring-necked Pheasant was not reported. Three **American Coots** at Cross Keys Village 12/14 (LM)



produced the only report. A pair of **American Woodcocks** showed at MTN 2/27-28 (RDS).

The **Little Blue Heron** observation in a wet area along Mummasburg Rd 12/26 (MB), was made by an experienced birder. Noted was its small size and overall dark blue/gray coloration. Pennsylvania e-bird reports show only one other historical winter sighting, a bird at John Heinz NWR, Delaware, 1/1/05. Closest proximity e-Bird entries this winter came from the Chincoteague and Kiptopeake areas in Virginia 12/10–2/28.

*Adams* birders were happy to see a return to high numbers of **Short-eared Owl** this winter with reports coming from 3 sites; GNMP, FREE, and Bigham Rd. The GNMP report was of a single bird 12/14 (PMo). FREE produced reports 12/27–2/21 (m.ob.) with a high of 10 on 2/21 (RF). Bigham Rd was equally impressive with sightings 12/23–2/17 (m.ob.) and a high of 12 on 2/17 (TA). As would be expected, **Northern Harrier** was part of the show but was limited to a high count of four birds.

Twelve sites reporting **Red-headed Woodpecker** suggest that it was a positive year for overwintering in the county. A 12/26 visit to GNMP produced 12 birds (ML). In addition to the Gettysburg area, the YSCBC count of 13 birds in the *Adams* portion of the circle continues to document the northeast corner of the county as another favored overwintering locale. The YSCBC count of 92 **Northern Flicker** in the *Adams* portion and 180 in the full count circle indicated a rather remarkable and unprecedented flicker presence for that count.

As WRS results show statewide, **American Kestrel** numbers were up in this mild winter. Over 30 e-Bird reports were entered and the GCBC and YSCBC (*Adams* portion) had counts of 23 & 20, respectively. A pair of **Merlins** was at GNMP 12/28 (MA) and a **Peregrine Falcon** was at Possum Hollow Rd 12/26 (PK) for the only reports of these species. A 12/30 (PM) observation of an **Eastern Phoebe** at a wooded pond on Bermudian Springs High School campus may have overwintered. A 2/23 observation at a wooded pond on SGL was less than a half mile from the Dec sighting (PK).

The reported *myiarchus* sp came during the YSCBC 12/30 (DG, PF, RF) along the Baltimore Pike. The observers found the bird at the top of a tall tree with profile elements of a large head, heavy bill, and size larger than a smaller *empidonax* sp flycatcher. Under dark skies, coloration appeared overall dark on the back with some yellow on the lower part of a plain breast. While getting a scope positioned the bird flew, not to be relocated. Reviewing the observation, the party felt that **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was the probable id. PORC and e-Bird winter records show at least seven other Pennsylvania winter reports for this species, with winter records spanning 12/1-1/14.

High count among 7 **Horned Lark** reports were 25 along Chapel Hill Rd 1/5 (CM). It's nice to be able to report an uptick in reporting of suspected West Nile Virus sensitive species vs last winter. **Carolina Chickadee**, **Tufted Titmouse**, and **White-breasted Nuthatch** all had higher frequency reporting. Hopefully, this trend will continue. The only reports of **Red-breasted Nuthatch** were a single on the GCBC and pairs at Lake Heritage 2/14 (JD) and Knorr Rd 2/16 (CK). A **Brown Creeper** was found on the GCBC, a single showed up at MTN 2/14-15 (RDS), and a nice 6 count came from Leedy Rd 2/17 (JB). **Winter Wren** was found at 7 sites 12/3–2/3 (m.ob.) and 6 sites held **Hermit Thrush** 12/1–1/19 (m.ob.).

A nice find on the YSCBC was a **Gray Catbird**. A **Brown Thrasher** at RRCT 1/31-2/1 (CM) and a pair on the YSCBC were also noteworthy. A female **Purple Finch** showed up at MTN 12/25 (RDS) for the only northern finch report for the county. Highlights of the sparrow group were up to 2 **Savannah Sparrows** 12/26-1/1 (ML, NL, AW) and up to 6 **Swamp Sparrows** at GNMP 12/14–1/24 (m.ob.). **Eastern Towhee** reports included a single on the GCBC, 3 on the YSCBC, up to 3 at RRCT 1/29–2/29 (CM) and a pair at SGL 2/14 (LT).

**Eastern Meadowlark** reports included 7 on the GCBC, up to 7 at GNMP 12/14-2/12 (m.ob.) and 8 at FREE 1/1–2/21 (m.ob.) As one might expect with the mild winter **Red-winged Blackbird**, **Brown-headed Cowbird**, and **Common Grackle** were found in all months. A single **Rusty Blackbird** was found on the YSCBC and a pair was at GNMP 12/31 (CM).

Observers: **Phil Keener, 198 Jacobs Street, East Berlin, PA 17316, (717) 259-9984; pittche74@yahoo.com**, Christine Alexander, Gavin Anderson, Matt Anthony, Tony Arnold, James Bargass, Val Barnes, Chuck Berthoud, Mike Bertram, Doris Brookens, Peggy-Keating Butler (PKB), Lauren Chronister, Ian Clarke, James Derby, Dave Ebbitt, Patsy Freed, Ron Freed, Robert Garriock, Deb Gingrich, Jim Green, Donna Hocker, Matthew Hodgson, Scott Hodgson, Caroline Jones, Stefan Karkuff, Cathy Knorr, Amy Kolander, Bob Koontz, Michael Locher, Nancy Locher, Henry McLin, Linette Mansberger, Peter Martin, Peter Morgan (PMo), G. Dwight Mueller, Callan Murphy, Ryan Murphy, Dean Newhouse, Bill Oyler, Bonita Portzline, Lynn Rebert, Michael S, Jeremy Scheivert, Tammy Schwab, Beth Shipley, Ralph & Deb Siefken (RDS), Tamzen Sonntag, Leah Talkington, Susan Thomas, Richard & Pat Williams (RPW), Andy Wilson, Scott Wood, Nelson Yoder.

### Allegheny County

It was a mild winter season with a minor snowfall in early February. The rivers did not freeze so there was a lack of rare gulls and waterfowl on the county rivers. The mild weather may be responsible for several out of season birds that were reported.

Four **Ross's Geese** were at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 12/13-19 (MV, m.ob.); the twelfth county record. A flock of late **Tundra Swans** was heard flying over Hampton Twp. 12/18 (DN). A group of 5-6 flew over Natrona Heights 2/5 (PH) that may have been early migrants or wandering birds.

Two **Gadwall** were at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. in Dec (MV) and one was in Harmar Twp. 12/28 (AH, PM). A **Blue-winged Teal** at Wingfield Pines 1/2 was notable for Jan (JM). I can't think offhand of any winter records in recent years. Two **Northern Shovelers** were in Harmar Twp. 12/5 (RB) and one was on the Ohio River at Osborne 2/16 (JO). A male **Northern Pintail** was at Wingfield Pines 1/4-8 (MT, JM, JP). A **Green-winged Teal** was at Imperial 1/2 (MH, RH) and one in Harmar Twp. 12/30-1/28 (AH, TA, et al.).

A **Redhead** was at the ponds on Moody Road in Findlay Twp. 2/23, the lone report. This site has attracted waterfowl for many years but in the past few months it appears a construction project is in progress at the site, so the fate of the ponds remains unknown. Six **Greater Scaup** at Wood's Run on the Ohio River 2/1 (PB) was the only report. A **Lesser Scaup** was at Dashields Dam the same day (MV). A **Long-tailed Duck** was on the Ohio River at Emsworth Dam 2/2 (MV).

A **Rufous Hummingbird** was at Overlook Park, Monroeville 12/2 (JHa). A **Red-throated Loon** was found on the Allegheny River at Verona 12/1 (AH, PM) providing the eleventh county record. It was last seen 12/2 (m.ob.). **Killdeer** lingered in Dec with up to 18 at South Park late in the month (MM, et al.). One was found during the Pittsburgh CBC 12/28. One at Frick Park 2/17 may have been a returning migrant (MK). An **American Woodcock** was found at Boyce-Mayview Park 2/19 (JF, MM). A **Bonaparte's Gull** was photographed at Duck Hollow 2/1 (LK, JHA). Bonaparte's are rare in winter in the county.

**Turkey Vultures** were seen regularly at various locations throughout the season. Up to 92 were counted in Fox Chapel in Feb (BSh, ebird); an impressive number. Five **Black Vultures** were photographed in Bethel Park 1/2 (AN), a rare sight here. A flock of 10-16 **Sandhill Cranes** was reported from various locations in the northern part of the county 12/25-28 (LC, ebird, EL, BD) providing the twelfth county record.

A **Short-eared Owl** was at Imperial 1/9 (DYE) and 2/1 (JP). An immature **Red-headed Woodpecker** was a nice find at Allegheny Cemetery in Lawrenceville 12/13 (AP). It was relocated 1/1 (AP) and reported through the season (m.ob.). **Merlins** were reported from 8 locations (m.ob.). A **Northern Shrike** was found at Imperial 12/7 (GG, MV). It remained at least into early Jan (m.ob.).

A late **Eastern Phoebe** was at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve 12/11 (CK). Another was found during the Pittsburgh CBC at Duck Hollow 12/28 and was there into Feb. A surprising winter record, a **Blue-headed Vireo** was photographed at Allegheny Cemetery in Lawrenceville 1/1 (AH, PM). Two **Common Ravens** were observed in Bridgeville carrying nesting material 2/7 (RT). They have been observed in the area for

months. If successful, this would be a new breeding location in the county. A good size flock of **70 Horned Larks** was at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 12/16 (AP, JC).

The **Marsh Wren** reported at Wingfield Pines in the fall remained at least into Feb (m.ob.). This site has become a regular wintering spot for this species, which is rare in the county. Single **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were at Blawnox 12/2 (RB), South Park 2/8 (JF), Hampton Twp. 2/28 (CBC), and at Wingfield Pines 1/2 (AP, TRh). One was at Wingfield Pines the first half of Jan (AP, TRh, SA, et al.) and one visited a feeder in Gibsonia 1/17 through Feb (*fide* MV). There are several other entries in ebird for the season. Ruby-crowned Kinglets are very rare in western Pennsylvania in winter. Could the mild weather be the cause of so many reports?

Two **Hermit Thrushes** were found during the Pittsburgh CBC at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve and Kilbuck Twp. Out of season mimids include **Gray Catbird** at South Park 1/22 (JF, LF) and in Swissvale during the season (Rbi). A **Brown Thrasher** was found during the Pittsburgh CBC in Fox Chapel 12/28 (BSh) and another was in Gibsonia 1/8 (BMu).

Seven **Eastern Towhees** were tallied during the Pittsburgh CBC 12/28. Two were in Squirrel Hill (MK), one in Indiana Twp., one in Fox Chapel and 3 in Penn Hills. One was in Findlay Twp. 1/1 (AP, TRh, SA) and 6 in South Park 2/28 (JF). **Chipping Sparrows** are uncommon in winter so reports are notable. One visited a feeder in O'hara Twp. 12/23 (BSh), 4 were at Harrison Hills Park 1/11 (DB) and 2 were photographed at a feeder in Verona 2/15 (RD). **Field Sparrows** are also uncommon here in winter. One was in Pine Twp. 12/26 into Jan (PL, SL) and 2 were in Gibsonia 1/4 (BMu). **Swamp Sparrows** wintered in the wetlands at Wingfield Pines (m.ob.). A number of observers noted a lack of **Dark-eyed Juncos** this winter with only small numbers seen.

Blackbirds are rare here in winter. **Red-winged Blackbirds** were present at Wingfield Pines during the season (m.ob.). A late bird was at Imperial 12/21 (MF), one was found during the Pittsburgh CBC, and 40 were at Imperial 1/12 (BQ). Three **Common Grackles** were found at Chatham College in Squirrel Hill 12/28 (MK) and one that visited a feeder in O'hara Twp. 2/21 (BSh) could have been a returning migrant. Six **Brown-headed Cowbirds** stopped by a feeder in Natrona Heights 12/30 (PH). An **Eastern Meadowlark** was at Imperial 2/1 (JP). This could be an early returning migrant or an overwintering individual.

A very surprising ebird entry of an **Ovenbird** in downtown Pittsburgh was accompanied by a photograph 1/19 (HJ). The observer also shared a short video of the bird on the Groupme text alert. It was walking among very small shrubs in a small landscaped area in front of a building. A male **Painted Bunting** appeared at a feeder in O'hara Twp. 1/20 (BSh) providing the third county record. It remained through the season. Many observers were able to see and photograph this beautiful visitor. An amazing number of **Northern Cardinals** were in West Deer Twp. 2/14 (AA). The observer tallied 66 birds in his yard and a photo of about half of the group was in ebird.

Observers: **Mike Fialkovich**, [mpfial@verizon.net](mailto:mpfial@verizon.net), Alvin Anthony, Sameer Apte, Tammy Arnold, Roy Bires (Rbi), Dave Brooke, Paul Brown, Ron Burkert, Jack Chaillet, Linda Croskey, Roger Desy, Barbara Drennen, Leslee Ferree, John Flannigan, Gigi Gerben, Jim Hausman (JHa), Janet Heintz (JHz), Amy Henrici, Paul Hess, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Joyce Hoffmann, Hannah Jones, Michelle Kienholz, Lisa Kaufman, Chris Kubiak, Janel Kuehl, Tom Kuehl, Eileen Luba, Pat Lynch, Sherron Lynch, Jeff McDonald, Pat McShea, Michele Mannella, Oscar Miller, Bob Mulvihill (BMu), Alyssa Nees, Dick Nugent, John Orndorff, Joe Papp, Aidan Place, Brian Quindlen, Tessa Rhinehart (TRh), Kate St. John, Brian Shema (BSh), Claire Staples, Steve Thomas, Ryan Tomazin, Molly Toth, Mark VanderVen (MvV), Mark Vass, John Vassallo (JVa), Andrew Wood.

#### **Armstrong County**

Locations: Armstrong Trail no. of dam 8 (AT), Crooked Creek Lake (CCL), Dayton (DT), Distant (DI), Ford City (FC), Keystone Lake (KL), Kittanning (KT), Leechburg (LB), Logansport (LP), Mahoning Creek Lake (MCL),

Manorville (MV), Murphy's Bottom (MB), Rosston (RT), State Game Lands 105 (SGL 105), Valley Township, KT (VTKT), Worthington (WT).

A lone **Tundra Swan** on the AT north of Dam 8 on 12/5 was only report (TR). Two **Wood Ducks** were observed on the AT 12/16 and also 2 at RT 12/25 (TR). Two **Northern Pintails** were seen at KT L&D 7 on 12/5 (TR) and again 12/23 (SGu). Seven Redheads were observed at KT L&D 7 on 7/10 (SGu). A **Long-tailed Duck** was noted 12/5 at KT L&D 7 (TR) and at RT 2/5 (TR). **Bufflehead**, **Common Goldeneye**, and **Hooded Mergansers** were fairly spread out and in good numbers, and 5 **Red-breasted Mergansers** visited CCL 2/1 (JB).

Approximately 35 **Sandhill Cranes** flew over a farm in Worthington 12/19 (MSW, TSW). A **Ruffed Grouse** was a nice find 12/24 at Farm Rd./Sam's Rd. in DI (BR) and one was also reported from SGL 105 on 2/25 (RB).

There were quite a few reports of **Northern Harriers**, spread throughout the county. Only one **Rough-legged Hawk** was reported, near MCL 1/11 (AD). A high count of 8 **American Kestrels** was found around WT area 1/31 (MVT) and a lone **Merlin** was observed near LB 1/4 (EH). It is hoped the **Peregrine Falcons** are nesting once again at the Graff Bridge as one has been seen several times in MV (AB, SGU) and also on Route 422 E (MH, RH). Two **Short-eared Owls** provided a good sighting around DT 2/23 (AD, KH).

**Horned Larks** were reported several times from WT and in good numbers (AB, DB, SGU). **Cedar Waxwings** showed up at a few areas and a nice count of 26 was reported at PBF 12/19 (MVT). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were fairly widespread. Only one **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was noted, on the AT north of Dam 8 on 1/2 (TR). One **Winter Wren** was observed on the AT north of Dam 8 on 12/23 (TR) and 1/5 (AH), where 6 **American Tree Sparrows** were also noted 1/5 (AH). **White-throated Sparrows** were spread out and in good numbers but the one and only **Swamp Sparrow** was reported on a CBC 12/14 (RD, LL, BP).

Observers: **Marjorie Van Tassel**, 3102 River Road, Vandergrift, PA 15690-6093, 724-845-1050, [marvantassel@gmail.com](mailto:marvantassel@gmail.com), John Boback, Dave Brooke, Alan Buriak, Ron Burkert, Roberta Diller, Anna Donato, Sam Gutherie, Amy Henrici, Elizabeth Hewitt, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Karlee Holmes, Larry Long, Brady Porter, Bill Reddinger, Theo Rickert, Marci Skvaria-Williams, Terry Skvaria-Williams.

#### **Beaver County**

Locations: Independence Marsh (IND), Raccoon Creek State Park (RCSP), Rochester – Beaver River mouth (RCH).

A few **Gadwall** hung around at RCSP from the fall to 12/8 (MV), and the first early migrants (presumably) reappeared at RCH 1/19 (MV) and at a small pond in Independence Twp. 1/26 (JM, DZ). A few days later, an early **American Wigeon** was on the same Independence Twp. pond 1/31 (MV, DZ). Otherwise there wasn't much else happening waterfowl-wise over the winter. A **Ring-necked Duck** was somewhat early at RCH 1/31 (MV), the same day that a **Long-tailed Duck** also appeared at RCH (MV). More timely were up to 4 **Common Goldeneyes** at RCH beginning 1/12 and continuing through at least mid-Feb (m.ob.).

The most notable event of the season among ducks was the surprising collection of up to 43 **Common Mergansers** at RCSP on and around 1/1 (MV, et al.). RCSP is not known as a waterfowl magnet, much less for counts of Common Mergansers like this. Up to 15 persisted there through to the end of Feb (JM, et al.). A count of 11 was made at Ambridge Reservoir 1/15 (DZ), and 2 were somewhat out of place on the pond at Shadow Lakes G.C. near Aliquippa 2/28 (DZ).

First **Wilson's Snipe** appeared more or less on time in the usual spot at Siebel's farm in Independence Twp. 2/23 (MV). The surprise **Glaucous Gull** continued at RCH from Nov and was seen sporadically at RCH and New Brighton to at least 12/21 (MV, et al.); during that same time, the **Ring-billed Gull** count at New Brighton built to at least 300 birds (MV).

The two **Black Vultures** that took up residence in Hanover Twp. in

early spring last year were still there as of 12/21 (JM). **Northern Harrier** was seen several times in Feb in Independence Twp. not too far from Siebel's farm (DZ, et al.), a location where they are not known to be annual. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** attended a yard in Hanover Twp. throughout Dec (JM). Reports of **Merlin** included one seen at RCH a few times in Dec and Jan (MV), one in Beaver Falls (perhaps the RCH bird?) 1/21 (TJ), and one in Ambridge, presumably continuing from the fall, 1/4 and 1/11 (MV). A **Peregrine Falcon** once again was seen sitting on the Ambridge-Aliquippa Bridge all winter (m.ob.) but it is still unknown whether a pair is now nesting there.

**Common Raven** was noted in four different locations (m.ob.). The only **Red-breasted Nuthatches** reported were in the same Hanover Twp. yard that held the sapsucker 1/5-2/7 (JM); for a brief time 2 were there. Unusual for Dec in *Beaver* was an **Eastern Towhee** still at IND 12/23 (DZ). A nice count of 20 **American Tree Sparrows** was made at the fields in Greene Twp. near the former Little Blue Lake site 12/27 (MV), but unfortunately this area, which still holds great potential, though now for field birds rather than shorebirds, remains sadly under-birded. Two **Eastern Meadowlarks** were back near Siebel farm 2/27 (MV), and the only report of overwintering **Yellow-rumped Warblers** was of a flock of 4 at Shadow Lakes G.C. 12/6 (DZ).

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### **Bedford County**

Locations: Allegheny Front Hawk Watch (AFHW), Bedford Christmas Bird Count (Bedford CBC), Bedford Environmental Center (BEC), Bedford Springs (BS), 4312 Business 220 (B220), Casalena Farm (CF), 149 Cessna Drive (CD), Jan and Brent Chippendale property near Centerville (C), Dunning Creek (DC), Faupel Road (FR), Foor Farm (FF), Friends Cove (FC), H and BT Bike Trail (HBT), Hipple's Cave Road (HCR), Jackson Property (Mountain Meadows) near Everett (MM), Lake Gordon/Lake Koon (LG/LK), Milligan's Cove (MC), Piney Creek/5 Forks Rd. area (PC), Shawnee State Park (SSP), Sollenberger Farm (SF), Union Memorial Church (UMC), Whitetail Wetlands (WW), Woodbury Reservoir (WR).

The Bedford CBC, held 12/28, tallied 60 species - 8 more than the previous year. There was also an uptick of individuals for a total of 4431 - 1092 more than the previous count. Mild weather and mostly open water might have been the reasons for the increase. Some highlights of the count included 8 **Gadwalls** at BS (JMP), 12 **Common Mergansers** at SSP (WSP), and 13 **Black Vultures** at BEC (MLJ). One **Northern Harrier** was reported at CF (MJC), while 3 **Bald Eagles**, 3 **Barred Owls**, and 15 **White-crowned Sparrows** were reported at scattered locations. All species of woodpeckers were seen, including one **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** in MC (MR), and 3 **Red-headed Woodpeckers** - one at MC (MEB) and two at FC (JD). Seven **Common Ravens** were tallied during the Bedford CBC. **Red-winged Blackbirds** made the count 2 years in a row at DC (MB), but 100 were counted this year, a 25% increase. Two **Rusty Blackbirds** were reported at MC (MR), a species seldom tallied during the count.

Waterfowl numbers and diversity were low; only 12 species were reported. Just one **Tundra Swan** was seen at LG/LK 12/5 (AD). **American Black Ducks** were consistently seen at WR mid to late Feb, with a high of 18 on 2/25 (EB). A high count of 10 **Bufflehead** was reported at LG/LK 12/5 (AD).

A high count of 14 **Wild Turkeys** was reported at C 2/2 (JBC). Sadly, not a single Ruffed Grouse was located. Historic records show that grouse are on a precipitous decline in *Bedford*, most likely due to mortality from West Nile Virus. Four **Horned Grebes** were spotted at SSP 12/1 (AM). One early **Killdeer** occurred at UMC 2/22 (EB). Six **Common Loons** were reported at SSP 12/1 (AM).

The last **Turkey Vulture** of the fall was at SSP 12/5 (HH). **Turkey Vultures** returned to *Bedford* in early Feb and were consistently seen at

FF, with a high of 30 on 2/29 (EB). One adult **Golden Eagle** was seen at MM 1/30 (MLJ), most likely part of a wintering population in *Bedford*. A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was reported from just one site, making regular backyard visits to MM in Feb (MLJ). Single **Cooper's Hawk** sightings were more scattered - at PC 12/7 and 12/12 (BK), at AFHW (DP) 2/20, and intermittently at MM (MLJ). Last year's nesting pair of **Red-shouldered Hawks** frequented FF during this period, with 2 reported 2/28 (EB) - the only record in *Bedford*. **Red-tailed Hawks**, in singles and pairs, were the most commonly reported raptor. A high count of 4 was reported 1/28 MM (MLJ).

One **Barn Owl** was reported in *Bedford*, exact location undisclosed, 12/28 (LG). While not rare, sightings of one **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** were only reported from MM during this period (MLJ). **American Kestrel** sightings were clustered south of SSP, one was seen frequently at C (JBC), and one at UMC (EB). Only one **Merlin** was sighted, 12/7 at SF (EB).

Although not reported as often as the **American Crow**, **Common Ravens** were seen or heard year-round, with numerous and consistent flyovers at MM during this period (MLJ). Thirty-two **Horned Larks** found just one spot to their liking: HCR 12/16 (SG). One **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was reported at C 2/12 (JBC). The only **Winter Wren** was seen at SSP 12/28 (LG).

The mild winter meant **Eastern Bluebirds** were often seen in *Bedford*; high counts were 6 on 12/26 at UMC (EB), and 5 on 2/17 (JBC) at C. Surprisingly, there were only 2 reports of **Cedar Waxwings**, with a high of 27 at SSP 2/1 (AM). **House Finches** were frequent visitors to MM with a high count of 28 on 1/11 (MLJ), but those numbers paled in comparison to the high count of 63 **American Goldfinch** at MM 1/7 (MLJ). The only report of **Purple Finch** listed 2 at WW 12/28 (LG).

Two sightings of **Field Sparrows** were reported: one at C 2/6 (JBC) and one at HBT 2/17 (LG). A high count of 20 **White-throated Sparrows** was reported 2/21 at MM (MLJ). For the first time in many years, 2 **Song Sparrows** over-wintered at MM with almost daily sightings (MLJ). One early **Eastern Towhee** was reported 2/3 at B220 (KTJ). Eight **Red-winged Blackbirds** made their first of the year appearance in *Bedford* 2/15 at CD (TR). One **Common Yellowthroat** was found 12/28 at WW (LG). A high count of 32 **Northern Cardinals** visited MM 2/12 (MLJ).

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### **Berks County**

Locations: Blue Marsh L. (BML), E. J. Breneman Quarry (BQ), Hawk Mt. Sanctuary (HMS), Kernsville Dam & Recreation Area, Hamburg (KDRC), L. Ontelaunee (LO), State Game Lands (SGL). Christmas Bird Counts: Reading (RCBC), Bernville (BCBC), Hamburg (HCBC).

Winter was exceptionally mild with virtually no snow cover. Lakes and larger waterways mostly stayed open and the ground was never deeply frozen. Spring migration of waterfowl and such passerines as blackbirds and **Fish Crows**, which usually begins late in Feb, was well underway by the beginning of that month.

The enormous wintering population of **Snow Geese** in the Lehigh Valley again spilled over into eastern *Berks*, where flocks of hundreds to 15,000 were often reported. Sightings increased in late Jan and Feb, when multitudes of geese staged at Middle Creek WMA in *Lancaster*. Winter's only **Ross's Goose** was photographed as part of a flyover flock of **Snow Geese** at Green Hills Preserve 12/27 (NW, DW). Two **Greater White-fronted Geese**, a typical winter number, were with **Canada Geese** in the Oley Valley 2/16-20 (RK, m.ob.). A **Pink-footed Goose**, the first in 20 years, was a one-day wonder at Gotwals pond, Oley 1/30 (PJW, m.ob.). Pennsylvania's first Pink-footed Goose was seen at this pond 3/29/97, attracting dozens of birders to see what was then a mega-rarity.

One to 3 **Cackling Geese**, annual in small numbers, were reported at 3 places 1/1-2/22 (m.ob.). A Canada X dark morph Snow Goose was at BQ 12/24 (RK). This hybrid combination has previously been described in *Berks*. A few Dec reports of southbound **Tundra Swans** were followed in Feb by reports of a strong northbound movement, including 250 over the Schuylkill R. 2/9 (EB).

The last **Wood Ducks** had barely left in early Jan before small numbers began returning in mid-Feb, such as 3 at KDRC 2/17 (KG). The seasonal high count of the small, long established wintering population of **Gadwall** around LO was 72 on 2/29 (RK), when migrants were already swelling the numbers. LO is a favored regional spring stopover site for **American Wigeon**. The seasonal high count there was 150 on 2/28 (JSp). **American Black Duck** continued to decline, its winter high count a mere 28 on the RCBC 12/15. One or 2 **American Black Duck X Mallard** were periodically seen at 6 locations, showing how widespread this hybrid is. One or two **Northern Pintails** were at BQ in Jan and 18 were part of the Feb migratory movement at LO 2/15 (PJW). Open ponds favored wintering by **Green-winged Teal**, up to 7 of which were reported from various places during the period.

**Ring-necked Duck**, the *Aythya* that prefers ponds, was well reported, with 18-50 at a farm pond on Zweizig Rd. near Shoemakersville in Jan and Feb (MW) and up to 35 at BQ during the period. **Canvasback**, **Redhead**, **Greater Scaup**, and **Lesser Scaup** were far more scarce, with one to 7 seen at BQ and a few other places on various dates. Single **Long-tailed Ducks** were at BML 12/3-22 (DP, RH) and Hopewell L., French Creek SP 2/26. A few **Buffleheads** (up to 9 at KDRC 12/10 – KG) popped up with **Ring-necked Ducks** at some ponds and lakes during the winter. **Common Goldeneye**, a winter lake duck here, peaked at 10 at BML 1/27 (VS).

Patient scans of lakes and shadowy pond edges revealed elegantly cryptic **Hooded Mergansers** at many places, with the winter high of 20 made on the RCBC 12/15. Some **Common Mergansers** wintered, but 1000 at LO 2/18 (RK) were part of a migratory surge. Four **Red-breasted Mergansers** seen on the RCBC 12/15 were the first on the count since 2008. Two others were at BQ 12/31 (KG) and one was at LO 1/31 (RK). Many counts were made of the annually wintering flock of **Ruddy Ducks** at BQ, tallying a range of one to 38 birds from 12/4-2/23 (m.ob.).

Four **Ruffed Grouse** were counted on the HCBC 12/29 and one was at SGL 110, Northkill Gap 2/9 (PJW), all on the Kittatinny Ridge, which harbors the last of the county's grouse. A first year female **Rufous Hummingbird** first identified in Exeter Twp. 10/14 and banded by Sandy Lockerman 10/21 was last seen 12/24 (LV). One or 2 **Pied-billed Grebes** wintered at BQ and at a pond in Morgantown. One to 3 **Horned Grebes** at BML 12/2-6 (DP) were late migrants. Birders starting annual lists found 2 or 3 **Eurasian Collared-Doves** at the Shartlesville colony during the period. This colony apparently renews itself, but does not grow. Along with Canada Geese, gangs of corn demanding suburban Mallards and a few **Ruddy Ducks**, **American Coots** have become winter fixtures at BQ. Coot counts this season usually numbered in single digits, but there was a surge to 30 on 2/1 (CH).

**Killdeer** were not reported during most of Jan, but birds slowly returned in Feb, with a seasonal high of 12 at Kutztown 2/29 (TU). **Wilson's Snipe** were regularly seen only at Rodale Experimental Farm in Maxatawny Twp., where one to 8 were reported on various dates 1/6-23 (m.ob.). Three **American Woodcock** were displaying at Union Meadows Park near Birdsboro 2/22 (S&F).

Shrieking masses of gulls sated with landfill delicacies enliven the dark months when they gather on the beach at BML in late afternoon. Birders seeking white-winged gulls among them were well rewarded this season. Two first-winter **Iceland Gulls** were there 12/3 (JS), when few birders were paying attention. The next Iceland Gull, a light first winter bird, was not seen till 1/21 (RW), but stayed till 2/8 (RK). This light bird and a dark Thayer's type bird were seen together 1/29-2/8 (m.ob.), leading to the conclusion that at least 2 but probably 4 different **Iceland Gulls** were present this season. Sorting out the number of **Glaucous Gulls** was equally interesting. A first winter bird was at BML 1/4-2/28 (RK, m.ob.). Another bird, possibly second-winter, was at BML 1/17 (RK), and 2, likely the ones above, according to photos, were there 1/28 (JH). An older, probably subadult bird was photographed at BML 1/5-9 (SG, DP,

PJW, RPW), when neither of the younger birds was apparently present. Thus, 3 Glaucous Gulls visited BML this winter. Counts of one to 9 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** and one to 10 **Great Black-backed Gulls** were within expected numerical ranges.

There were reports of single **Red-throated Loons** at BML 12/2-13 (DP, JSp). **Double-crested Cormorants** did the expected thing by disappearing after 12/15.

An adult **Northern Goshawk**, now rare in all seasons, was clearly seen perched at close range in Bern Twp. near BML 1/24 (JS). This species has been seen around BML in a few recent winters, perhaps attracted in part by sacrificial pheasants released for the hunting season. Credible winter reports of **Golden Eagles** off the Kittatinny Ridge have increased in recent years, but definitive details should always be provided to distinguish them from the many immature **Bald Eagles** on the scene. The BCBC recorded its first Golden Eagle 12/28. Two birds were seen from North Lookout, HMS during the HCBC 12/29. A probable adult was seen at BML 1/9 (ZM), one was soaring over SGL 106, Pine Swamp Rd. 1/29 (KG), and one was seen near LO 2/9 (JV). Single **Northern Harriers** were reported from 7 locations, mostly in Dec. These birds are forced to move on because modern intensive agriculture does not provide vole habitat.

The only reported **Long-eared Owl** was found on the HCBC 12/29. Two **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were heard on the HCBC 12/29. Single birds were attracted by playback at Port Clinton Firetower 12/29 (DKr) and at HMS 1/11 and 2/8 (DKr, MW). Mild weather may have induced some **Red-headed Woodpeckers** to stay on territory rather than migrate. Birds were recorded on all three CBC's, which is not the norm, and at some known breeding locations later in winter. The largest colony currently known is in the vicinity of Allendale Rd., Shoemakersville, where 3 pairs were found as late as 12/27 (SM). **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, apparently still expanding, was abundant, with a record 202 tallied on the HCBC 12/29.

Lack of snow cover probably helped **American Kestrels** winter in the low numbers that have become the norm in recent years. **Merlins** were recorded on all three CBC's, including a record 4 on the BCBC 12/28. Singles were reported periodically for the rest of the winter in habitats from rural to urban. Reading's resident **Peregrine Falcons** were seen in Jan. Singletons were seen at Hereford 12/27 (JH) and along Bastian Rd. near Bowers 1/26 (DB).

**Eastern Phoebe**s were surviving in Wyomissing 1/9 (LC), at KDRC 1/12 and 2/4 (KG), and at Gring's Mill 1/31 (PJW). Following their decimation, likely by West Nile Virus, numbers of **Tufted Titmice** on CBC's were slightly higher than the lows of last year, but still far below ten-year averages. In this non-irruption year, single **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were reported in Wyomissing Park 12/26 (LC) and at Gring's Mill 2/16. Thanks to a run of non-lethal winters, **Carolina Wrens** will enter the 2020 breeding season with a booming population. High numbers were tallied on the CBC's, including a record 224 on the HCBC 12/29, and theirs were among the most frequently heard voices on winter bird-walks.

Single **Gray Catbirds** were found in Shillington Park 12/2 (NW), at KDRC 12/5 till 1/15 (KG), and on two CBC's. A **Brown Thrasher**, still exceptional in winter, was at KDRC 12/6 till 1/23 (KG). In early Dec, a small regional movement of **Pine Siskins**, also not irruptive this year, was detected in *Berks*, with 15 counted at HMS 12/4 and 7 at LO 12/12 (AZ). Two **Purple Finches** visited a Bern Twp. feeder 12/31 and one on 2/14 (JS).

Birds associated with cold, snowy winters were scarce. No reported flock of **Horned Larks** exceeded 250 birds. Most often encountered were resident birds of the prairie subspecies in pairs or small flocks in fields where they breed. The sole report of **American Pipit** was of 3 on the BCBC 12/28. A **Lapland Longspur** was near Fleetwood 1/18-19 (JH, MW). A **Snow Bunting** was found on the HCBC 12/29 and one was near Fleetwood 1/19 (MW).

**Chipping Sparrows**, **Fox Sparrows**, and **Eastern Towhees** seem to be continuing a trend of staying later in fall and perhaps overwintering more regularly. Green Hills Preserve, a farm converted to warm season grassland and edge, held 3 **Fox Sparrows** 12/27 and 5 **Eastern Towhees** 2/18 (NW). **Red-winged Blackbirds** and **Common Grackles**,

normally about 30 miles southwest of *Berks* in winter, stayed later and returned early (e.g., 2000 **Red-winged Blackbirds** near Bowers 1/26 (DB) and 1000 **Common Grackles** near Morgantown 2/3 (RK, AZ)).

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** was photographed on the Exeter Scenic River Trail 12/22 (RH). Eight were recorded in Dec and Jan during the 20th century, most recently in 1995. This is the first since then. A **Pine Warbler** was photographed in its eponymous habitat at Daniel Boone Homestead 12/3, 5 (SF). There have been several winter records, from single sightings to overwintering birds, of this species since 2000. There was just one, in 1957, in the 20th century. **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were reported in their usual small winter numbers, mostly in the Schuylkill R. valley.

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### **Blair County**

Locations: Albemarle Nature Trail (ANT), Bells Gap Trail (BGT), Canoe Creek S.P. (CC), Henry's Pond (HP), Lake Raystown CBC Area 1 only (LR-CBC), Plummers Hollow (PH), Reese Pond (RP), State Game Lands #278 North (SGLN), Watts Pond (WP), Yellow Springs Pond (YSP).

Information for this report was obtained primarily from eBird data. Additional information was pulled from the 51st Culp CBC that was held on 12/14. A dip in species reported from last winter season as 73 species were observed compared to 93.

The winter weather was very mild with minimal snow accumulation and average temperatures causing much of the big water to remain unfrozen. Several waterfowl were discovered during the Culp CBC including 227 **Canada Geese**, 137 **Mallards**, 2 **Tundra Swans**, 22 **Hooded Mergansers**, 17 **Buffleheads**, one **Wood Duck**, one **Gadwall**, 2 **American Black Ducks**, 5 **Green-winged Teal**, 2 **Ring-necked Ducks**, and one **Ruddy Duck**. Other notable sightings during the CBC included 5 **Great-Blue Herons**, 3 **Belted Kingfishers**, and one **Swamp Sparrow** seen around open water.

Other waterfowl sightings included 17 **Green-winged Teal** at the Army National Guard Readiness Center Pond 1/14 (PI) and a pair of **Common Goldeneyes** observed at CC (JC). Part of the Lake Raystown CBC dips into the county, and several owls were documented including a single **Northern Saw-whet Owl**, a **Barred Owl**, 3 **Great Horned Owls**, and 4 **Eastern Screech Owls** 12/29 (DB, DG).

The most notable rare sighting was a lone **Northern Shrike** seen in the open field on PH property 1/25 (MaB, MB). An **American Woodcock** returned early at PH when it called from a field and flew over the owners' house at late dusk 2/10 (MB).

Raptors include single **Northern Harriers** on Arch Springs Rd 1/12 (JC, LC) and cruising near the Roaring Spring Exit 1/31 (AM). There were 4 separate reports of lone **Sharp-shinned Hawks** and 3 of single **Cooper's Hawks** across the county. **Bald Eagles** continued to be reported widely, with a high count of 3 along the Juniata Valley Rd 1/11 (PI). A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was perched near RP 1/9 (MN). **Red-tailed Hawks** continued to be reported consistently across the county, especially along the I-99 corridor.

A winter highlight was 2 separate reports of single **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, found 2/14 near Dylan Drive (AG) and 2/15 near E Logan Ave. The lone **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was noted calling in a pine tree thicket at CC 1/11 (JC). Two **Rusty Blackbirds** were spotted at CC 1/4 (CE, KE).

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**Bradford County** – no compiler

### **Bucks County**

Locations: Bradford Dam (BRD), Maple Knoll Farms in Buckingham Twp. (MKF), Nockamixon State Park (NSP), Peace Valley Park (PVP), Penn-Warner Tract (PWT).

During December, temperature (+3.6°F) was higher but precipitation (-0.16") was fairly normal compared to the average. January was much warmer than usual (+8.0°F), but a little bit drier (-0.50"). February was also unusually warm (+7.9°F), but not much wetter than normal (+0.27"). In total, 135 bird species were reported, falling right near the five-year average of 136. This warm winter resulted in many low numbers of ducks and waterfowl, with scattered exceptions. Irruptive passerines were near zero in this non-flight year. Several species that we know as "half-hardy" were more common than usual with the mild conditions. A few scarce and rare birds spiced things up but were not often logistically viewable by the masses. These included **Barnacle Goose**, **Trumpeter Swan**, **Rufous Hummingbird**, **Sandhill Crane**, **Black-headed Gull**, **Varied Thrush**, and **Harris's Sparrow**. Exceptional reports of birds that are recorded in other seasons included a high count of **Golden Eagles**, a clan of **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** on the CBC, and an extremely rare winter **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**.

The 52nd U-CBC was run 12/15 and had fairly mild temperatures (40-46°F), although the nighttime owling and afternoon birding were somewhat affected by wind. The result was a strong 40,112 individuals of 97 species. Only 2 other years have had higher species totals. Although 7 species had new high counts, a few surprising ones were missed, and others had extremely low numbers. The 54th C-CBC 12/29 had similar conditions, as well as late-day rain, but the count still resulted in near-average species (83) and numbers (27,527). Six species set new high counts, while 5 species were highlighted as being unusually low and 3 were listed as rare misses. The 73rd S-CBC 12/14 had a near-average 98 species on a day that wasn't windy but had light rain and drizzle along with fog over the water. The total number of 72,202 individuals was a bit below most recent counts. All 3 areas had above-average numbers of lingerers that took advantage of the warm temperatures. Note that every area has at least some space in a different county. Thanks to Mark Gallagher for the S-CBC, Diane Allison for the C-CBC, and Bill Etter for the U-CBC for providing summaries and/or spreadsheets, as well as August Mirabella for compiling some general notes and observations. Ken Kitson's 1998 *Birds of Bucks County* was referenced for some historical information.

Over the course of the winter, multiple goose species were encountered. At times in Dec and Feb, **Snow Goose** flocks were abundant but not very large. Higher counts included an estimated 1500 in a Riegelsville field 2/22 and about 850 flyovers at NSP 12/5 (BG, EB). **Greater White-fronted Geese** were present in good numbers this winter, with at least 5 scattered across the county. One spent 12/6-1/25 at Pine Run Dam and PVP (m.ob. ph.), with possibly the same bird in Hilltown Twp. 2/2 (AM). Singles were at Churchville Park 1/31 and Delaware Canal S.P. 1/6 (KL, MG, ph.). L. Towhee C.P. had one 12/6, 2 on 12/11, and one 2/26 (PT). The 12th *Bucks* record of **Barnacle Goose** spent 12/12-25 in a Lower Makefield Twp. pond and fields (DM, m.ob. ph.). It made the S-CBC as that count circle's first record. A probable **Barnacle X Canada Goose** was seen and well-documented in Upper Makefield Twp. 1/2-15 (SA, ph.). Its leg band was partially readable, and the finder got a response from the Bird Banding Lab, as discussed in the stand-

alone box below.

**Cackling Geese** were found at upwards of 14 sites through the period, often in singles but with a high of 11 at PVP 12/28 (AM, m.ob.). One **Canada Goose** at PVP 1/22 had a readable neck collar, "NR35". The results came back that the goose was banded 07/07/2016 on a beach near Queens County, New York, and that it was at least 4 years old at the time of observation (WC). The usual **Mute Swan** haunts held their charges, with a high of 16 at PWT 1/26 (RS). A pair of rare **Trumpeter Swans** was seen at PWT and surrounding lakes 1/25-2/29 (DF, m.ob. ph.). Surprisingly, only one report of **Tundra Swans** was received, a flock of 12 at NSP 2/12 (AM).

During the first half or so of Jan, a metal federal leg band was discovered on a small goose that appeared to be a **Barnacle X Canada Goose** (SA). After sending images of both the bird and the band to the Bird Banding Lab, a staff member responded with the following message: "Our federal bands are 9 digits in the following format: 1234-56789. I feel very confident that the first 6 numbers are 1158-10xxx, and I'll also add that this looks like one of our federal bands (so it was put on a wild bird). If the partial number is 1158-10xxx, that leaves 1000 possibilities... They were all banded under the same permit, within 5 days of each other, and generally in the same place. So that being said, if 1158-10xxx is correct, this was a bird banded sometime between 8/5/2016 and 8/9/2016 in the general vicinity of Aupaluk and Kangirsuk, QC, Canada. On these big goose-banding operations, the researchers usually corral a large group of flightless birds and work through them. So my best guess is that this was a young goose still in its juvenile plumage and the banders just assumed it was a Canada Goose." (MR)

Twenty-one duck species were observed, many in now-expected low numbers. The fairly mild winter did not help the duck situation, either. A **Blue-winged Teal** was a winter lingerer at PWT 1/1-2/23 (DF, JHa). Nearly all other dabblers numbers were very low. **Canvasbacks** were again present at Neshaminy S.P. in Feb, with a high of 77 on 2/1 (KL ph.). Elsewhere, one female stayed at NSP 1/26-2/19 (m.ob. ph.). A notable February push of **Redheads** plus 2 in Dec resulted in 5 locations reporting them (m.ob. ph.). The high count was 37 at PWT 2/9, higher than eBird's county high of 34 (also this Feb) but probably not an all-time high (DF). Both **Greater** and **Lesser Scaup** were reported in modest numbers at various sites, with PWT having 13 of the former and about 40 of the latter 1/19 (DF).

Zero scoters were reported, although they are more common into Nov and beginning in Mar. Just 5 **Long-tailed Ducks** were observed, one at PVP 1/1, 2 at NSP 12/13-16, and a photogenic female there 2/11 through the end of the month (AH, EB, m.ob. ph.). Numbers of **Common Goldeneye** were not exceptional, with counts not greater than 32 at either NSP or the Del. R. (AH, m.ob. ph.). The PVP **Common Merganser** show was lower than in recent years, with a reported high of only 1850 there 1/2 (SA). Counts of **Red-breasted Merganser** numbers were usually one or 2 at 5 locations, with a high of 9 at PWT 2/9 (m.ob. ph., DF).

Consistent with a recent trend, only 6 **Wild Turkeys** made it on the C-CBC, with none in the other 2 count circles. Other high counts during the period never reached more than 20 birds (m.ob.). The only location that held **Horned Grebe** was PVP, where there were 2 on 12/10 (KR). One of these was superbly photographed until 12/15, and then one was seen 1/5 (m.ob., MC, KF ph.).

The **Rufous Hummingbird** that was seen by many in the fall at Plumstead Twp. was last seen 12/18 by the homeowner (WL). Not too surprisingly, with this mild winter, a **Virginia Rail** was detected 2/22 at a private location, certainly a wintering individual (AB). Outside of PWT, wintering **American Coots** were sparse. Singles at NSP 12/4 and Core Creek Park 12/25 were the only reports (PH, DD ph.). However, numbers at PWT were strong throughout the winter with a peak estimate of 1000 on 1/19 (DF). The S-CBC total of 917 (PWT birds) was the second highest total since 1976. The annual wintering **Sandhill Cranes** at Pine Run Dam were seen through almost the whole period, 12/6-2/29 and into March (LG ph.).

**Killdeer** were present through much of Feb in 9 locations, with one location in Dec and none on the CBCs. Midwinter reports of **American Woodcock** were singles at BRD 1/19, Hidden Lake (Newtown) 12/14, and NSP 12/15 for the 7th U-CBC record (GJ ph., MG, BE). Normal Feb reports were at NSP 2/24 and 2 at Tincicum Twp. 2/25 (AH ph., PC). The mild weather allowed **Wilson's Snipe** to overwinter, too. One lingered at PVP until 12/5 and anywhere from one to 4 could be found at their favored BRD through the winter (AM ph., m.ob. ph.).

Reports of **Bonaparte's Gulls** were light. One was at PVP 12/16, with NSP hosting one 12/4, 12/15, and 2 on 12/16 (AH ph., PH, BE, DF). The NSP bird was just the 3rd record for the U-CBC. The **Black-headed Gull** seen twice at PWT was a first-winter bird, and assumed to be a continuing visitor from the 2019 fall season. At least 3 **Iceland Gulls** spent Dec and Feb at NSP (m.ob. ph.). Two were at PVP until 12/13, then one until 1/27 (m.ob. ph.). **Glaucous Gull** is fairly rare away from the lower Del. R., but a first-winter was seen at NSP 2/11 (PH ph.). Since 2015, 3 or 4 other Glaucous have been reported at NSP, making it not quite annual. Site high counts of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were 440 at PVP 12/3 and 442 at NSP 2/2 (AH, AM). See the table below for CBC gull totals. Many of these were below average this year with the exception of U-CBC **Ring-billed Gulls** and the U-CBC's 4th occurrence of **Iceland Gull**.

CBC GULL COUNTS

SPECIES	U-CBC	C-CBC	S-CBC	TOTAL
Bonaparte's Gull	1			1
Ring-billed Gull	3384	169	1562	5115
Herring Gull	48	38	24,444	24,530
Iceland Gull	1		14	15
Lesser Bl.-backed Gull	459	78	94	631
Herring x Lesser Bl. Bk.			4	4
Glaucous Gull			3	3
Herring x Glaucous Gull			3	3
Great Black-backed Gull	2	26	1046	1074
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3895</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>27,170</b>	<b>31,376</b>

A storm brought **Red-throated Loons** to the general area 12/17. Seven were found at PVP on that day (KR ph.). Before that, one and possibly 2 were seen 12/4 and 12/15 at NSP, staying long enough to be just the 2nd U-CBC record (BE, PH). One more was at PWT 1/19 (DF). Numbers of **Common Loons** were modest, with about 7 in the PWT area and one each at PVP 12/17 and NSP in Dec and Jan (m.ob.). High counts of **Great Cormorants** from their 5 locations totaled 15 birds. This is low, considering that just one site used to yield about this number. A flyover **Great Egret** was unusual for the date at Core Creek Park 12/13 (SA, MN). Away from occasional PWT sightings, there are only 6 other winter records in eBird.

Not one, not 2, but 3 **Golden Eagles** were discovered in the county this winter! An adult surprised the observer on Christmas Day in Riegelsville 12/25 (EB). One adult was seen over Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve 1/26 (CL). Another probable adult was described at PVP 2/17 (DB). Although they are observed in fall migration in **Bucks**, winter records are scarce; only 2 others exist in eBird.

Extensive coverage of winter fields yielded an encouragingly high number of 26 **Northern Harriers** at 24 eBird locations, although no site held more than 2 birds (m.ob.). The number of sites reporting has recently been near 20 or fewer, with a couple exceptions. **Bald Eagle** numbers were strong at PVP, with 3 counts of over 10 (m.ob.). The high was at least 16 there 1/10, good for the park's second highest count (AM). Not surprisingly, CBC numbers were also high. A new high count of 17 was set for the U-CBC, while the C-CBC had a second-best 19. Notably, both the C-CBC (17) and U-CBC (12) had record numbers of **Red-shouldered Hawks**.

Although the 84 **Eastern Screech-Owls** on the U-CBC was low,

weather probably affected this and the above-average 58 on the C-CBC (the highest tally there since 2007) helped boost overall numbers. **Barred Owl** reports came from 3 sites in central and upper *Bucks* during Dec and Feb (BM, PT, BF). PVP held its remnant **Long-eared Owl** winterers, with 2 on 1/10 and 2/17, and one on 2/24 (DB, AM). Four were also in West Rockhill Twp. 2/19, with at least one still there 2/23 (AH, BH). One **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was detected in Solebury Twp. 1/1 (DF).

Overall, CBC numbers remained high for **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** and at a fairly high plateau for most other woodpecker species. It was a fairly normal winter for **Red-headed Woodpecker** sightings. One or 2 were seen numerous times in their known Buckingham Twp. woods (DS). One was well-photographed through the entire period at Delaware Canal S.P. (Washington Crossing) (SA ph., m.ob. ph.). An adult was seen at PVP 12/23-2/23, with a small possibility of 2 at one point (m.ob. ph.).

**American Kestrels** were reported in singles from 37 locations, with 2 at one location. A survey of 175 kestrel boxes done 2/16 yielded 14 kestrels, likely some of what is mentioned above (DF). However, the CBC total of 10 was even a bit lower than the last 2 years' incredibly low counts. Eighteen **Merlins** were reported from 17 locations (m.ob. ph.), with 5 making it on the CBCs. Often found along Delaware R. bridges, 14 **Peregrine Falcons** were reported at 13 locations, including some well inland (m.ob.).

Due to the mild winter, **Eastern Phoebes** turned up in 6 locations (m.ob.). Singles made it on the C-CBC and U-CBC, both of which had phoebes 5 or fewer times in the last 15 years. **Common Ravens** are now distributed all over the county, though a little heavier in the central and northern parts. During the winter season, at least 2 sites had high counts of 4 birds (m.ob.). C-CBC (11) and U-CBC (12) numbers reflected that, both recording new high counts for the species. The drastic decline of chickadees and titmice over the past couple of years has been documented but remains a concern. The CBC total of 291 **Carolina Chickadees** was a notch lower than last year's modern low of 353. In a non-irruption year, Black-capped Chickadee was completely missed; usually a few turn up in such years. **Tufted Titmice** fared little better than their chickadee cousins; their 242 were exactly the same as last year.

Counts of 50+ **Horned Larks** were at MKF and vicinity, as well as the preserved Patterson Farm (RS, m.ob. ph.). A flock of 10 **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** on the S-CBC provided a new species for any of the 3 count circles. Only one prior *Bucks* record is known from this period, despite the fact that multiple birds attempt to overwinter at neighboring wastewater treatment plants. The 94 total **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were well above the long-term CBC average, while the 52 **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were over twice the long-term average.

One **Red-breasted Nuthatch** on the C-CBC provided the only report anywhere. **White-breasted Nuthatch** numbers were mostly at or somewhat below average. Two **House Wrens** were found, one at PWT 1/26 and one for the 2nd time in 15 years on the U-CBC (DF). The **Winter Wren** CBC total of 43 remains quite high, though a shade below the previous 2 years. All three CBCs had over 200 **Carolina Wrens** for a new cumulative record, with the C-CBC's 203 representing a new high count.

The U-CBC's 2021 **European Starlings** were a new modern low, with both other count circles reporting low numbers as well. **Gray Catbird** is a half-hardy species that will stay around in mild winters; 20 were reported to eBird at 15 locations throughout the county (m.ob. ph.). CBC numbers reflected similarly, with a total of 12 birds. **Brown Thrasher** was detected in lower numbers, just 4 at 4 locations, but still more than usual (m.ob.). CBC numbers were high though, with the S-CBC alone recording 6 (new high count) and the U-CBC having one. Their **Northern Mockingbird** relatives did not do well, with a total of 91, still less than 30% of the long-term average.

One of the rarest birds of the period was a **Varied Thrush** that spent 1/1-23 at a private yard in Lower Makefield Twp. (RM, DF ph.). Although very few people saw this bird, it comes in as just the 4th county record of this northwestern wanderer. On eBird, **Hermit Thrush** was reported from 21 sites, not bad compared to recent years. The CBC number of 16 was on the low end, however. Numbers of **Cedar Waxwings** are always fluctuating. This year's CBC total of 377 was not extreme either way. Large flocks at NSP held a possible Bohemian Waxwing 12/15 (would be

first CBC record), but additional efforts to relocate it were unsuccessful and a Cedar Waxwing was seen later with white in the wings. **House Sparrows** were generally far below average, with a very low count of 75 on the U-CBC possibly due to lack of coverage at a traditional location. **American Pipits** were seen at just 2 sites, with highs of 3 at BRD 1/26-2/23 and 4 at the preserved Patterson Farm 12/14 (m.ob. ph.).

This winter was a total non-irruption year for finches and other species. It showed clearly on eBird, with just one reported **Purple Finch** from 1/13-2/8 at a Lower Makefield Twp. feeder (CF ph.). The cumulative CBC total was also just 2. NSP often hosts a few **Snow Buntings**, with sporadic Dec and Jan counts this winter. The high report was 4 at the fishing pier 12/4 (EB).

**Chipping Sparrows** lingered in unusually high numbers, especially in Dec. The sum of the high counts from 22 eBird locations was a remarkable 92 birds! Therefore, the CBC total of 6 is surprising. On the contrary, **American Tree Sparrows** continue to disappoint as a winter resident. No more than 21 birds were reported from 10 sites on eBird, and the CBC total was a dismal 24 (m.ob. ph.). Another species with low CBC numbers was **Dark-eyed Junco**. The S-CBC (248) and U-CBC (699) set modern lows, although the C-CBC (876) had a good showing right near the long-term average. **White-crowned Sparrow** was reported sporadically, with a high of 3 in Bedminster Twp. 2/4, plus an immature at a Buckingham Twp. feeder 1/5-18 (AH, WK ph.). The S-CBC had a decent count of 16, while it was a rare miss in the other 2 circles.

The county's third known **Harris's Sparrow** stayed at a Bristol Twp. feeder through the winter period (AE). Due to the homeowner's wishes, only a very few people saw the bird. One **Lincoln's Sparrow** made it on the U-CBC as a new species for that circle and just the 6th record in any *Bucks* CBC circle (DF). **Eastern Towhee** CBC numbers were astronomically high. The total of 128 was over 7 times the long-term average of 18! These included new records of 25 and 97 on the C-CBC and S-CBC, respectively.

The CBC total of 16 **Eastern Meadowlarks** was buoyed by a flock of 15 on the S-CBC. Meadowlarks had been missed by all circles for the past three years. The number of **Baltimore Orioles** wintering at a Middletown Twp. feeder decreased to just one this winter (DP). Two others were photographed at Churchville Park 12/7 (ML ph.). **Rusty Blackbird** is unpredictable anymore on CBCs, but this year's total of 25 included a new high of 23 for the C-CBC.

**Common Yellowthroats** set a new total high count of 4, including one on the S-CBC and a record 3 on the U-CBC, which only had 4 prior occurrences. The mild winter was almost certainly a large factor for these and **Pine Warblers**. Although just 2 Pines were found on the CBCs, eBird and additional reports told a different story. At least 17 individuals were confirmed present, many in the lower county (m.ob. ph.). One of these was an adult male at a Lower Makefield Twp. feeder, which has had a male for 13 winters in a row. If it is the same bird, that would be a tremendous feat for such a small passerine. **Yellow-rumped Warblers** totaled 87 birds on the CBC, about half the long-term average. At NSP, 21 were carefully counted 1/3 (DF). After a down year last year, **Northern Cardinal** set a new modern low for the U-CBC at 189 birds, although the C-CBC and S-CBC had normal or good numbers. A single immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was discovered at a New Britain Twp. park 1/26, then stayed at nearby feeders through the end of the period. This represents the first winter record of the species in *Bucks*, and one of only 6 accepted eBird winter records in the entire state.

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## Butler County

Locations: Lake Arthur (LA), Lake Oneida (LO), Moraine State Park (MSP)

The big lakes froze over early this season, limiting waterfowl observations especially the Butler Christmas Bird Count, but warmer weather at the end of December caused some open water to appear. As a result, no spectacular flights or flocks were reported. Increased numbers of "half-hardy" birds were seen, no big surprise because of the mild winter here; details below. A few surprises included appearance of a **Black-headed Gull** at Lake Arthur, and 5 owl species thrilled observers and haunted small mammals and birds including **Short-eared Owl** returning to an area near Portersville.

Usually not mentioned here because the resident population continues to thrive, flocks of over 300 **Canada Goose** were counted in 2 locations on the same day: 345 at Lake Oneida (KB) and a low estimate of 300 at South Shore 12/25 (KB). One **Mute Swan** was seen at Ben Venue Road 1/17 (MV). After a steady movement in Nov, **Tundra Swan** continued to be seen in small numbers through Dec until the last report of 24 at Squaw Valley Woodlands 1/5 (DW). Single digit flocks of north-bound birds were seen starting 2/21, most at Lake Arthur (m.ob.).

Eighteen species of duck were reported, all expected. No teal or scoter was reported. The most frequently reported ducks included **Mallard**, **Hooded Merganser**, and **Common Merganser**. High counts for ducks reveal an average and unspectacular season: **Wood Duck** (5), **Gadwall** (23), **American Wigeon** (2), **Mallard** (125), **American Black Duck** (8), **Northern Pintail** (1), **Canvasback** (7), **Redhead** (38), **Ring-necked Duck** (20), **Greater Scaup** (2) **Lesser Scaup** (12), **Long-tailed Duck** (1), **Bufflehead** (13), **Common Goldeneye** (2), **Hooded Merganser** (42), **Common Merganser** (51), **Red-breasted Merganser** (7), **Ruddy Duck** (102).

Sadly, **Ring-necked Pheasant** reports (m.ob.) outnumbered reports of **Ruffed Grouse** four to one with a lone grouse at SGL 95 Hilliards 1/6 (BB). **Wild Turkey** continue to be abundant locally including flocks of 68 at Reichert Road 12/13 (MC) and a careful count of 193 not far from Butler 1/7 (KB). Grebes were scarce with only 2 reports of **Pied-billed Grebe** and 9 of **Horned Grebe**, all in Dec and all at LA (m.ob.).

**Killdeer** arrived early with 2 photographed at Brewer Road 2/15 (LC). **Bonaparte's Gull** was seen 4 times before the lakes froze with a high of 7 at Nealey's Point 12/7 (MC). One highlight for the season was a **Black-headed Gull** observed at LA 12/8 (GK, MAK). One (presumably the same bird) was seen a week later during the Butler CBC (BB, MC). Unfortunately, distance and rain prevented observers from seeing details that would indicate that this was the storied bird that has returned to Moraine SP repeatedly. Rounding out the gull reports were the expected **Ring-billed Gull** (high count 558 at SS 12/8 (GK, MAK) and less common **Herring Gull** with a rare high count of 95 there 1/2 (GK, MAK). Not often seen **Red-throated Loon** was observed once at South Shore 12/7 (MC) and **Common Loon** was reported from LA between 12/2 and 12/15 (m.ob.).

Even though **Turkey Vulture** has been noted wintering in nearby counties in recent years it was still a bit of a surprise when one was seen in southern *Butler* 1/5 (RN) and another was in Butler Twp. 2/3 (GK, MAK). **Bald Eagle** was seen regularly through the season with a high of 5 at LA 1/15 (GK, MAK) and **Northern Harrier** was reliable at several locations all season (m.ob.). For much of the season, several (up to 6) harriers would go to roost in the same field on Johnson Road as up to 5 **Short-eared Owls** would rise to hunt at dusk. What a show! (MC et. al.).

Two **Sandhill Cranes** returned to West Liberty Road 2/21 (MC) and 2 arrived at Swope Road 2/23 (GK, MAK). During the Butler CBC, 4 owl species were found at/near Moraine SP 12/14 including **Eastern Screech Owl**, **Great Horned Owl**, **Barred Owl**, and **Northern Saw-whet Owl**. Single **Merlins** were at Johnson Road 1/1 (GK, MAK) and near Portersville 1/21 (MC). Single **Northern Shrike** were spotted at Barkeyville Flats 1/7 (RS) and Porter Road 1/23 (GK, MAK). **Common Raven** was spotted at widespread locations, all lone birds (m.ob.). There were scattered reports of **Horned Lark** including several nice flocks of 30

at Kildoo Road 1/2 followed by 63 there 2/15 (KB).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch** was scarce with only 3 reports of single birds in widespread locations. **Winter Wren** was seen sporadically in several locations and single **Hermit Thrush** was reported in Moraine SP 4 times. Suspected of being from more northern latitudes because of no pairing behavior and orange plumage far less bright, 250 **American Robins** descended on a yard in Slippery Rock 2/21 (GW, JW). The only **Purple Finch** reported was one at Zelenople 12/4 (DK) and only one **Pine Siskin** was reported, from the Bird Watcher's Store 1/29 (DKw).

Delightful **Snow Bunting** was also scarce with just 2 reports: one at McDanel Boat Launch 12/6 (EL) and one photographed at North Shore 12/6 (LC). A number of "half-hardy" birds spent parts of winter in *Butler*, starting with **Eastern Towhee** in Jan at SS 1/22 (KB) and also seen in Feb (m.ob.). **Chipping Sparrow** and **Field Sparrow** were also reported in Jan and Feb.

Surprising was a flock of 200 **Red-winged Blackbird** at Swamp Run Road 12/14 (GK, MAK) and small numbers appeared in scattered locations through Jan. Other hardy wanderers included **Common Grackle** and **Brown-headed Cowbird**, both seen more frequently than in an average *Butler* winter. A **Pine Warbler** appeared at a feeder near Chicora 12/21 (DD fide MV) and **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was spotted 4 times in Jan and Feb at MSP (KB).

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## Cambria County

Locations: Chest Springs (CP), Patton (PA), Prince Gallitzin St. Park (PG).

Waterfowl at PG put in an excellent showing throughout the period. Due to the lake not totally freezing over there were always birds present. Three **Greater White-fronted Geese** present for a few days in early Dec (TD, et al) represent s our first county record. Three **Trumpeter Swans** at PG 2/24 provided a second county record (TD). Some of the better sightings were **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, **American Black Duck**, **Northern Pintail**, **Canvasback**, **Redhead**, **Greater** and **Lesser Scaup**, and **Common Goldeneye**.

Probably for the first time, **Killdeer** sightings included all three winter months. Eighteen **Red-throated Loons** were a nice find 12/17 at PG (TD). **Turkey Vultures** were seen throughout the period, with only our second Jan sighting. It was a good winter for **Northern Harriers** with way above average numbers present. Three **Short-eared Owls** were present at CP from mid-Jan into Feb and were seen by many birders.

**Horned Larks** were more numerous this year with a few flocks numbering over 100. A **Winter Wren** was at PG 1/31 (TD). A **Lapland Longspur** and small groups of **Snow Buntings** were seen at PA in late Jan. These birds were mixed in with a large group of Horned Larks and were observed by many birders. A single **Rusty Blackbird** was at PG 2/18 (TD). One of few Jan records, a **Common Grackle** was seen in the PG area 1/14 (DG).

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## Cameron County

Locations: Emporium Christmas Bird Count 12/18 (ECBC), Driftwood (DR), Emporium (EMP), Hicks Run (HR), Quehanna Wild Area (QWA), Sinnemahoning State Park (SSP), Sterling Run (SR), Sterling Run Mines (SRM), West Creek (WC).

Information for this report was gathered mostly from Ebird and the Emporium CBC, held 12/22, with 20 participants, compiling 44 species.



Twenty-four **Snow Geese** were found at EMP 2/13 (SZ). Ducks at SSP included 2 **American Black Ducks** 2/21 (MJ), 35 **Redheads** and a single **Long-tailed Duck** 2/13 (MJ), 2 **Hooded Mergansers** 2/21 (MJ), and 51 **Common Mergansers** 2/13 (MJ).

Eight **Ruffed Grouse** were found on ECBC 12/22 (m.ob.). A **Turkey Vulture** was at SRM 12/6 (MJ). Two **Golden Eagles** and 2 **Red-shouldered Hawks** were recorded on ECBC 12/22 (MJ et al.). A **Great-horned Owl** was heard at SR 1/4 (BH). Four **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were found on ECBC 12/22 (BH et al.). An **American Kestrel** was at DR 1/3 (BH).

Two hundred twenty-seven **American Crows** were gathered at SR 1/5 (BH). Thirty-five **Common Ravens** and 15 **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were found for ECBC 12/22 (m.ob.). A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was found at DR 2/18(DB). Ninety-five **American Goldfinches** were at SR 2/6 (MJ). Five **Field Sparrows**, 18 **American Tree Sparrows**, a **Fox Sparrow**, and 26 **Song Sparrows** were tallied for ECBC 12/22 (m.ob.). A single **Red-winged Blackbird** was found at EMP 2/12 (BR). One **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was at SSP 12/18 (MJ).

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### Carbon County

Locations: Beltzville S.P. (BSP), Penn Forest Res. (PFR), Wild Cr. Res. (WCR).

With the exceptions noted below, all sightings this period came from BSP. It was a relatively good quarter for scoters—probably the biggest news of a season with seemingly reduced *Carbon* coverage or at least reports. A young **Surf Scoter** 12/10-11 (RR, JHop) and 4 **White-winged Scoters** 12/11 (RR, BR, JHop) were followed by a trio of unidentified scoters 12/12 (RR) and, much later, an accommodating pair of **Surf Scoters** 2/10-22 (RR, m.ob.). Other notable waterfowl included 2 **Tundra Swans** 2/24 (RR, EK), **Redhead** virtually throughout the period with a high of 14 on 2/22 (RR), 5 **Long-tailed Ducks** 12/11 (RR, BR), and another **Long-tailed** 12/17 (RR).

**Killdeer** returned 2/24 (EK), more-or-less on schedule despite the mild “winter.” **Northern Goshawk**, always an exciting find outside the peak of fall migration, is included here on the basis of an immature perched atop a fallen tree at the back of the cove between the spillway and the point 12/27 (RR).

The only **Purple Finch** report was of 10 on 2/10 (AM). **Eastern Towhee** apparently overwintered for the second consecutive year, with one detected 1/2 (RR, BR). Away from BSP, **Red-breasted Nuthatch** appeared at WCR 1/11 (RR, BR) and 1/20 (JHor), and a **Snow Bunting** passed by the PFR overlook 12/12 (RR). Here’s hoping the spring brings more exhilarating, or just more, news (although the COVID-19 lockdown continues at the time of this writing).

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### Centre County

**Locations:** Bald Eagle S.P. (BESP), Black Moshannon S.P. (BMSP), Colyer L. (COL), Scotia Barrens and Pond (SCO), Tofrees pond and gamelands (TOF).

The winter was very mild, so many species either attempted to linger in the area or returned early. The following species were reported in five or more locations and will not be discussed further in this report: **Tundra Swan**, **Gadwall**, **Northern Pintail**, **Hooded Merganser**, **Turkey**

**Vulture**, **Golden Eagle**, **Northern Harrier**, **Merlin**, **Peregrine Falcon**, **Hermit Thrush**, **Gray Catbird**, **White-crowned Sparrow**, and **Swamp Sparrow**. Information for this report were obtained primarily from eBird and the State College Bird Club listserv with background and status now from *Birds of Central Pennsylvania* by Nick Bolgiano and Greg Grove, 2010 (B&G, 2010).

**Snow Geese** were reported twice at BESP; one was observed 12/1 (NSP), and a flock of 26 flew over 2/10 (JC). Additional fly-overs elsewhere included 11 at the Duck Pond 2/4 (PS) and 10 at the Bernel Rd. ponds (JV). Several birders observed 5-6 **Greater White-fronted Geese** at BESP 2/16-22 (KE, et al.). At least one **Cackling Goose** visited the State College area 2/7-11, with sightings 2/7-11 at the Duck Pond (JV, et al.) and TOF 2/9-10 (JG, et al.). These locations are close enough that these may have been the same bird. A **Cackling Goose** was also spotted 2/17-21 at the Johnson Rd. pond (JV, et al.).

Many rare duck species appeared to take advantage of the mild weather and lingered into winter. Others returned throughout Feb. One or 2 **Wood Ducks** were noted 2/1-16 at BESP (AG, et al.), while singles were spotted 2/12 at Whitehall Farms and 2/28 at SCO (both JV). A pair of **Northern Shovelers** were reported 2/16-23 at BESP (KO, et al.). A male **American Wigeon** was present at the Axemann Rd. pond 1/1-6 (MR, JC). Other reports of this rare species came from BESP, where up to 15 were observed 2/5-24 (RS, et al.), as well as 3 at COL 2/18, and 2 at Curtin Wetland 2/18 (AM). Two **Green-winged Teal** were seen 1/16 at BESP (JF) and 2-3 were observed there 2/11-17 (AK, JP, JC).

**Canvasbacks** bookended the season at BESP, with 3 observed 12/2 (SB) and one spotted 2/18 (JV). Up to 5 **Redheads** were spotted from the Howard Causeway 2/1-9 (NSP, et al.), and as many as 94 were present at the adjacent BESP 2/1-24 (AM, et al.). **Ring-necked Ducks** were also present. Eight late fall migrants were at COL 12/3 (DR), one was present 2/15 in Linden Hall (JD), and singles were noted 12/1 (EZ) and 12/26 (BS) at BESP. Spring migrants included up to 5 at COL 2/10-2/23 (RF, AH), as many as 10 at BESP 2/11-24 (NSP, et al.), and 3 at BMSP 2/18 (JF). BESP was the hotspot for scaup, with 5-10 **Greater Scaup** reported 2/10-11 (JV, JC, NSP), and 2 **Lesser Scaup** seen 12/10 (RS). There were also as many as 12 **Lesser Scaup** observed there 2/10-15 (JC, et al.).

The second county record of **Harlequin Duck** was reported 1/20 at BESP. This female continued through 2/10 (JC, et al.). This is an accidental species, and the only previous record is from 2003, when a female was observed in Spring Cr. near Bellefonte (B&G, 2010; eBird).

A **White-winged Scoter** was spotted 2/10 at BESP (BS), while up to 14 **Long-tailed Ducks** were present at that park 12/29-2/16 (RF, et al.). As many as 32 **Common Goldeneyes** were also there 12/1-2/25 (NSP, et al.). A **Common Goldeneye** celebrated New Years Day at COL (JG), and another was seen there 2/20 (KE). One-7 **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at BESP 12/1-4 (EZ, MB), and 2 were there 2/19-23 (LR, JC).

BESP was the place for rare grebes. One or 2 **Horned Grebes** were seen 12/12 (EZ, JC, MN), and one visited 2/9-18 (RS, et al.). Two very rare migrating **Red-necked Grebes** stopped at BESP 12/1 (EZ, NSP). Fifteen **Sandhill Cranes** were spotted 12/16 on Lingle Valley Rd. (GG). **American Woodcocks** started their return, with up to 9 reported 2/12-25 at SCO (JC, et al.), and one at Curtin wetland 2/22 (CE, KE). A rarity in winter, 2 **Bonaparte’s Gulls** were recorded 12/8 at BESP (EZ, CE, RS).

**Red-throated Loons** were reported in 3 locations, including 2 unusual spots. One or 2 were observed 12/1-2 at BESP (NSP, et al.). One that was stuck on the ice at an Innovation Park retention pond was found by an area birder, who notified a wildlife rehabilitator (JC). A third ended up in Penn’s Cr. near the intersection of Penn’s Cr. Rd. and Kline Rd. 12/28-1/6. It was observed moving along a segment of the creek and diving for food in the deeper pools (DR, et al.). Some late migrating **Common Loons** were also spotted, including one lingering at BESP 12/1-14 (EZ, et al.) and another at COL 12/3 (DR). A **Double-Crested Cormorant** stopped at COL 12/12-13 (RF, DR).

A **Short-eared Owl** was seen flying over the Rusnak Hill reclaimed strip-mine 12/15 (JC) and one observed 1/24 on W. Gatesburg Rd. was described as flying “like a giant moth” (NSP). An **Eastern Phoebe** was

spotted in Linden Hall 12/15 (JD); several early migrants were observed, including singles in Toftrees 2/24/29 (PB), Fairbrook Wetlands 2/28 (KE), and SCO 2/29 (NSP). A **Northern Shrike** returned to BESP again this year, seen 12/8-1/5 (EZ, et al.).

A rare winter **Brown Thrasher** was found at the Haugh Family Preserve 2/15 (JCo). Another rarity, a **Lapland Longspur** was noted on Plainfield Rd. 12/2 (EZ) and one or 2 were at Rock Springs 1/19-21 (JV, et al.). Two migrating **Snow Buntings** were observed 12/2 on Plainfield Rd. (EZ).

Three rare sparrow species were recorded. A **Chipping Sparrow** was seen 12/2 (DK) and 1/9 (JH) in Gray's Woods. Another was present 12/28 in the Fasick Memorial Park (CE). A **Fox Sparrow** was reported 2/1-21 at BESP (AG, et al.) and a **Savannah Sparrow** in Bellefonte 1/6 (KO). Single **Eastern Meadowlarks** were spotted in the Rockview Field-South 12/15 and 12/20 in Woodard 12/20 (both JP).

A **Palm Warbler** was spotted "staying low in [the] shrub or compost heap" at the University Park compost area 1/17 (NSP). Up to 6 **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were noted 12/12-27 at BESP (RC, et al.), and as many as 8 were present there 2/6-13 (EZ, NSP, PSU). One was observed 1/20 in Port Matilda (JH).

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#### **Chester County**

Locations: Bucktoe Creek Preserve (BCP), Chambers Lake (CL), Struble Lake (SL), Marsh Creek State Park (MCS)

This marked one of the warmest winters on record. Above average temperatures prevailed through the season. Local lakes and ponds never seized-up by the grip of winter, remaining mostly ice-free. Anyone hoping for significant snowfalls was disappointed, snowfalls were few and far between, only a sparse coating at most. The impacts of the mild conditions were reflected in population boosts of half-hardy wintering birds, and the absence of some water birds that are more likely to appear when water freezes north of here. Highlights of the season were not rarities, but instead lingering and persistent species that prevailed in large numbers.

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was among a group of Canada Geese that flew over BCP 12/14, and later, presumed to be the same individual, was found in a grounded flock nearby in Kennett Square (LL). A group of 4 White-fronted, was picked out of a collection of **Canada Geese** in Cochranville during a WRS (HM, MG). **Tundra Swans** were found throughout the season, with a high of 50 logged during the WCC CBC in Cochranville (PM, HD, JMG).

In some winters, encounters with **Wood Ducks** are scarce. With a milder season, lingering Wood Ducks were found in a variety of locations throughout the county Dec-Jan. Numbers started to climb near the end of Feb. with 10 reported in the Nottingham area 2/20 (DQ). A **Eurasian Wigeon** was at SL 2/7 (LL). In comparison to recent winters, **Canvasbacks** were tougher to find inland, likely a result of climate driven movements, or lack thereof. One was spotted at Westtown Lake 12/1 (RG), 3 at SL 12/5 (LL), and into the new year, one at SL 2/7 (LL). Nice collections of **Redheads** could be found more readily in Feb and good places to look are sewage lagoons, and smaller bodies of water in the region. Numbers often were decent at the Honey Brook WTP, where the high was 35 on 2/28 (LL). The pond in the Wedgewood community also hosted a nice congregation of 24 on 2/19 (RR). **Long-tailed Ducks** are a nice prize here on the piedmont, when scanning waterfowl. A nice end of the year gift was 2 found 12/31 on a small pond in Bulltown (NF, SS).

In a typical winter, when water is prone to icing over, **Pied-billed Grebes** are not found consistently. This winter's mildness allowed for lingering, and these small grebes were found in various bodies of deeper water, especially Atwater Quarry (m.ob.). The first week of Dec featured the last of the season **Horned Grebes**, with a high of 3 at CL 12/4 (RR).

The superstar male **Anna's Hummingbird** visiting a yard in West Chester made his last appearance there 12/12 (LB). After a 6-week stay, it was thought he might linger longer into winter, but nature had other plans. Another bonus of the warmer season was the continued presence of **Virginia Rails** at a large wetland within ChesLen Pres. A high was of 3 detected there 12/22 (JM). **American Coots** are typically scarce in winter, but 3 were found at quarry in Malvern 12/1 (MC) and again 2/16 (BB). Another report came from Longwood Gardens 1/11 (m.ob.).

There were few reports of **American Woodcock**, but all came in the second half of Feb. (m.ob.). Up to 3 **Wilson's Snipe** were found and remained in a retention basin in Coatesville through the second half of Feb. Often this cryptic shorebird species is not detected, or present, in winter.

A well-described subadult **Golden Eagle** was a nice northbound migrant passing over Kennett Square 2/23 (JA). This species is a regular migrant through Pennsylvania in late winter and early spring, but less common east of the Susquehanna R. There was a lone report of a dark **Rough-legged Hawk** from Embreeville, 12/22 (JF). This irruptive buteo was not in good supply in other areas of the region this year, perhaps consistent with climate, and resulting adequate food supply elsewhere.

A great surprise was a **Long-eared Owl** at Valley Creek Park, 12/1 (MC). Another was spotted in flight at Octorara Res. 12/15 (AM). A calling **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was heard 2/22 in Kennett Square (JA). This was the only report of this tiny owl, the scarcity of reports reflecting a noticeably low-flight year in fall migration.

Birders with persistence could reliably find **Red-headed Woodpeckers** in 2 established locations: near Kennett Square and Honey Brook. Lucky finds were one at Black Rock Sanctuary 1/24 and 2 at SL mid-Feb (NF, SS). A pair of **Peregrine Falcons** have taken up residence for another year at a power plant along the Schuylkill R. in Phoenixville, making this the only reliable spot in the county to find this charismatic raptor. Nesting is presumed to be underway.

There was a noticeable uptick of **Eastern Phoebe**s spending winter in the area (m.ob.). This half-hardy flycatcher is usually found a handful of times in winter, but this was a season of many reports, clearly in response to warmer temperatures sustaining insect availability. There seemed to be a stronger showing of both kinglet species this winter, undoubtedly a result of food availability facilitated by warmer temperatures.

**Brown Thrasher** was reported only in the latter half of Dec - one from Warwick CP 12/21 (PW, JW, DK, JK), and one near Valley Forge 12/28 (MEH). Thrashers are not regularly found in winter, but occasionally hold-on, or pass-through. **American Pipits** were low-supply. One flew above the Great Marsh 12/27 (NF, SS), 3 were found in Cochranville 12/29 (HD, PM, JMG), and one was at Valley Forge NHP 2/23 (KF).

The first half of Dec provided for scattered reports of **Purple Finch** (JM, LB, KF). This species did not make a broad movement this fall, resulting in a noted absence from the region, in general. After last year's irruption, Pine Siskins did not appear, or take up residence anywhere in the county. The expected lack of winter finches was due to an ample food supply in the far northern latitudes. A single **Lapland Longspur** was carefully combed out of a flock of **Horned Larks** in Honey Brook 12/19 (NF, SS), presumably the same individual found there through 1/17 (SS, NF, LL).

A vibrant male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** stood out among a mixed flock of blackbirds in Cochranville 1/29 (JH). This southwest region of the county is always a good place to start your search if hoping to increase your chances of picking out this golden-headed vagrant from the west. **Eastern Meadowlarks** aren't reliably found in winter, so a high count of 27 in the Doe Run area was notable (JS). Two were seen there 1/14 (LL), and 3 seen 1/30 (MN). Another was found in Oxford 1/23 (SB). A flashy orange adult **Baltimore Oriole** visited a yard in Landenberg 12/21-22 (CK). These orioles are not expected in winter, but randomly appear,

eating from suet or berries.

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** showed up at a suet feeder in Landenberg 1/19 (CW) and remained there through at least 2/19. This species will occasionally find a suet feeder, and take up winter residence. There were 2 sightings of **Nashville Warbler**, both in Dec: one 12/8 in Avondale (CS, KS), and another near Thorndale 12/16 (MA). This is a rare visitor to the region in winter, but one of a few warblers known to be found. At least one **Common Yellowthroat** persisted through winter at ChesLen Preserve's large wetland. This species is a relatively short-distance migrant and considered half-hardy, but certainly not always reliable in colder winters.

A "Western" **Palm Warbler** was spotted in a large agricultural field in Cochranville 12/29 (HM). This species is not regularly found in winter, but is always of the drab western ssp., a population that winters in the southeast US. **Pine Warblers** were reported more widely than usual, though still in low numbers (m.ob.). The same was true of the numbers of **Yellow-rumped Warblers** – a clear uptick with many reports from across the region (m.ob.), evidence of bird distribution clearly impacted by food availability as a result of a milder winter.

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### Clarion County

Locations: Armstrong Trail-East Brady (AT), Callensburg (CA), Cook Forest (CF), Curlsville (CV), Mount Airy (MA), New Bethlehem (NB), Rimersburg (RI).

Only three species of waterfowl make the winter report this year, and all at the same location in NB. **Northern Pintail** is the first on the list, with 2 birds seen 2/15-2/16 (J&AK). **Green-winged Teal** are continuing to winter here regularly with up to 3 present 12/7-2/15 (J&AK, MM). **Hooded Mergansers** also remained throughout the season in numbers up to 8 from 12/7-2/20 (J&AK, ES).

Only one **Ruffed Grouse** was noted, seen near Lucinda 12/13 (ES). Shorebirds are not often reported in winter, but with mild weather and little snow cover, it was not quite as surprising to find an overwintering **Wilson's Snipe** at a large seep in a farm pasture near NB 1/30 (DD, CW).

**Turkey Vultures** once again returned during the late winter days with the first group seen over Clarion 2/24 (TS). **Northern Harriers** were widespread over southern Clarion including on Rankin Rd near CV where up to 3 were found 1/4, 1/24, and 2/3 (DD, MD, TS, CW, DW). Three were found near West Freedom 1/9 (DD, CW), 2 at MA 1/12 (DD, CW), and one near RI 1/9 (MM). On a WRS done near NB, singles were found in 3 locations 2/3 (DD, CW), and singles were also found in 4 locations near CV 1/4-2/3 (J&AK, CW). Near Sligo, a long time nest site for **Bald Eagles** was checked 2/19 and one adult was found on the nest (CW) A second nest near CA showed 2 adults at the site 1/30 (PC, GE, ML). **Rough-legged Hawks** were uncommon, with the first being a dark phase bird near CV 12/6 (CW). Singles were seen near Lake Lucy 2/8 (FM), near

Leeper 2/17 (T&JK), and a light bird near Strattanville 2/20 (LT).

**Short-eared Owls** were more frequently reported this year, though it's uncertain if this was from increased presence or increased birder effort. On Rankin Rd near CV, up to 4 were found on 7 different occasions 12/5-2/14 (DD, MD, TS, CW, DW). Three owls were reported near MA 12/22 (MH), 3 near CA 1/4 (MH, RM, LT), and one at a second location near CA 1/17 (MH). Not far away, on other reclaimed strip mine land, 3 were found outside of West Freedom 1/9 (DD, CW) and one was found on open pasture land near CV 1/23 (MD).

Unusual in any season, but particularly in winter, a **Red-headed Woodpecker** was seen near Lake Lucy 2/8 and 2/15 (FM). In what was the worst winter showing in recent memory for **Northern Shrikes**, only one was reported, near Sligo during a WRS 1/12 (DD, CW). **Horned Larks** were also scarce, with just 1-2 birds noted in areas around CV 12/6, 2/14, and 2/17, and one singing in appropriate habitat 2/18 (CW).

**Northern Mockingbirds** are not rare in winter, but still in low enough numbers at this northern end of their range in western Pennsylvania to be worthy of mention. One was near CV 12/26-12/28 and 2/24 (CW), and one near NB 12/28 (CW), 1/14 (J&AK), and 2/3 (CW). Further north, one was also noted near Shippensburg during the CBC 1/4 (FM, JM). It was not a year for finches and northern birds, with **Purple Finches** only reported from RI where up to 4 were seen 1/21-2/14 (MM). Just a single **Pine Siskin** was reported, near CF 12/3 (RS).

A **Chipping Sparrow** showed up at feeders in RI 1/19 and continued there through 2/17 (MM). A lingering **Field Sparrow** was found along the AT 12/21 (MD). **American Tree Sparrows** were reported but numbers have declined over the last 6 years. At feeders near CV where they had been present in regular numbers for many years, they were recorded from 12/7 through the season but with a high number of only 11, and average numbers of just 4-5 (CW). The only other reports were also near CV, with 5 found in 2 locations 1/4 and 1/12 (CW), and 6 found at Beaver Creek 12/21 (MD). At Beaver Creek a **Swamp Sparrow** was also noted on the same date (MD), and another near CV 1/4 (CW), unusual for Jan.

The remarkably mild winter may have also contributed to a couple of reports for **Eastern Meadowlark**, a species not often noted during this season. One was seen near CA on reclaimed strip fields 1/17 (MH), and 2 near CV 2/24 (CW). And the final species of note was likely also present due to mild conditions, a large flock of 65 **Red-winged Blackbirds** seen in CV during the CBC 1/4 (CW).

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### Clearfield County

Locations: Bimini Lake (BL)

Personal communication was supplemented by information from the PABirds listserv and eBird for this report. The weather was unseasonably mild which accounts for both lingering waterfowl and early spring migrants. Despite area lakes being partly frozen, 2 unusual species were recorded during the DuBois Christmas Bird Count 12/14 (MA, JoS): 3 **Greater Scaup** and 1 **Common Loon**.

Twelve **Red-Tailed Hawks**, 4 **Bald Eagles**, and 2 **Rough-Legged Hawks** were tallied during Winter Raptor Surveys in the county (DB, DG, DR). There was a **Cackling Goose** resting on the ice among a large flock of **Canada Geese** on BL 2/20 (DR). A juvenile **Common Loon** was present on BL 1/31 (DR).

One **Black Vulture**, an unusual visitor to the high plateau even during warmer seasons, was seen roosting with 12 **Turkey Vultures** along Larson Road 2/29 (JS). An immature **Golden Eagle** was seen along the Quehanna Highway 2/15 (JF). A **Merlin** was seen flying across the parking area of the DuBois Mall 12/16 (DR).

Although this was not an irruption year, 6 **Pine Siskins** were seen near Ramey 2/16 (SM). An early, or wintering, **Eastern Towhee** was

heard vocalizing in the mountain laurel along Mountain Run Road 2/1 (DR). A harbinger of spring, **Common Grackles** were seen throughout *Clearfield* in Feb with reports from Cherry Tree 2/13 (JB), DuBois 2/28 (MA), and Ramey 2/29 (SK). **Red-Winged Blackbirds** were seen at the Beaver Meadow Walkway as early as 2/19 (BM).

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#### Clinton County

Locations: McElhatten (ME), Mill Hall (MH), Rauchtown (RT).

On 12/21 during the Lock Haven- Jersey Shore CBC, 2 **Mallard x Black Duck** hybrids were found near RT (DK, DR). Also during the CBC, 22 **Black Vultures** and 8 **Turkey Vultures** were seen near RT (DK, DR). A lone **Sandhill Crane** was briefly seen and heard near MH 12/2 (JL, MA). Near MH on the CBC, 3 **Wilson's Snipe** were observed (BSB, MSW, TW).

An **Eastern Phoebe** was discovered near ME 1/13 (BS). Two **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were seen 1/4 at Castanea (BS) and one there 1/24 (BZ). A **Chipping Sparrow** was observed near ME 1/13 (BS). At S. Avis, one **Lapland Longspur** was found 1/8 (CCH).

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#### Columbia County

Locations: Catawissa (CAT), Hollow Road Catawissa (HRC), Jamison City (JC).

The winter season was mild overall and produced few notable bird sightings. **Red-shouldered Hawks** are not regularly reported in *Columbia*; this season's lone report was a single bird observed in CAT 1/4 (JS). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** did not move south in high numbers this year; the lone report was of a single bird along HRC 2/15 (MT). Similar to other northern species, **Purple Finch** was not common at all this winter, with the only report of 3 birds in JC 2/14 (JL).

Observers: **Andy Keister, 110 Hawk Ridge Road, Bloomsburg, 17815, (570) 337-3802, akeister110@gmail.com**, Judith Lynn (JL), John Slotterback (JS), Margaret Thrasher (2/15).

#### Crawford County

Locations: Conneaut Lake (CL), Conneaut Lake- Marina (CLM), Conneaut Marsh- McMichael Road (MCR), Hartstown Marsh Towpath (HMT), Pymatuning S.P.- Dam (PSP-D), Pymatuning S.P.- Miller's Ponds (MP).

The only reports of **Snow Goose** were of one at MP 2/18 (EN, MW) and 5 near MP 2/23 (IF, SR). Observations of **Cackling Goose**, a rare and notable bird for *Crawford*, included 3 birds at Pymatuning S.P.- Causeway 12/23 (TNo) and 4 seen in the Pymatuning area 1/6 (MK). **Mute Swan** is rare in *Crawford*, so observations of 2 in the Townville area 12/30 (AL), 2 at the HMT 1/7 (MW), and 2 in the Townville area 1/31 (TNo) are especially notable. A single **Trumpeter Swan**, rare and notable here, was observed at Custards Marsh 1/14 (CG) and 1/30 (IF).

A below-average, but still notable, count of 40 **American Black Duck** were observed in the Pymatuning area 12/15 during the Linesville CBC (m.ob.) Notable early counts of **Northern Pintail** included 175 at Geneva Marsh 2/16 (CG) and 300 in the Geneva Marsh and MCR areas 2/22 (IF, RL). The only observations of **Canvasback** were of singles at CL 1/10 and 2/4 (RL), and at PSP-D 2/29 (CD). Notable counts of

**Redhead** included 227 at CL- M 2/21 (MV) and up to 600 at CL 2/22 (IF, RH, RL). Observations of **Greater Scaup**, scarce during the winter, included 4 seen at CLM 1/2 (RN), one at PSP-D 1/5 (MW), and one at CLM 1/24 (BW). A notable count of 1972 **Common Mergansers** were observed in the Pymatuning area 12/15 during the Linesville CBC (m.ob.).

**American Coot** was observed in much lower numbers than average throughout the season at CL- M, their expected location (m.ob.). **Sandhill Crane**, expected and notable, was observed in the usual winter numbers throughout the county (m.ob.). A high of 107 were at Pymatuning S.P.- Fish Hatchery 12/8 (CG, TNo, KP).

**Killdeer**, expected but scarce during the winter, were present in their expected numbers and locations (m.ob.). A **Little Gull**, rare and notable for *Crawford*, was observed at Pymatuning S.P.- Jamestown State Park 2/24 (RL). Notable counts of **Ring-billed Gull** included 2400 at PSP-D 218 (CN) and at least 3000 at the same location 2/26 (MW). An incredible count of at least 2000 **Herring Gulls** were observed at PSP-D 2/26 (MW).

A single **Red-throated Loon**, notable for *Crawford*, was observed at Pymatuning S.P.- Causeway 12/3 (MW). Observations of **Double-crested Cormorant**, notable during the winter, included 2 in the Pymatuning area during the Linesville CBC 12/15 (JH, AL, CN) and one at PSP-D 12/19 (MW).

Early observations of **Turkey Vulture** included singles near Conneautville 2/22 (KZ) and at Woodcock Lake 2/23 (BW). A notable 52 **Bald Eagles** were observed during the Linesville CBC 12/15 (m.ob.). A **Northern Goshawk**, an excellent sighting for *Crawford*, was in the Woodcock Lake area 12/7 (IF, SR). **Rough-legged Hawk**, notable but expected, was observed in expected locations throughout the county (m.ob.).

The only report of **Great Horned Owl** was of 2 observed at MP 1/17 (RT). Observations of **Short-eared Owl**, rare and notable, include 2 seen in fields near Springboro 2/20 (CN). **Red-headed Woodpecker**, notable for the county and season, was found in expected locations in the Pymatuning and Conneaut Marsh area (m.ob.). A notable total of 5 birds were observed in the Pymatuning SP area during the Linesville CBC 12/15 (CG, RH, TNo, KP). **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** is rare during the winter, so observations of singles in the Pymatuning S.P.- Area J area 12/8 (TNo, KP), at MP 2/18 (EN, KN) and at Tamarack Lake 2/22 (RL) are especially notable.

**American Kestrels**, expected but notable for *Crawford*, were observed in their expected numbers and locations (m.ob.). The majority of reports of **Merlin** were from the Allegheny College campus in Meadville, including singles seen 1/28, 2/4, and 2/8 (all TNo), 1/25 (JH), and 2/24 (CD). One was also found at Pymatuning S.P.- Goose Management Area 1/10 (RL). Observations of **Peregrine Falcon**, notable for *Crawford*, included singles at Pymatuning S.P.- Fish Hatchery 12/8 (CG) and 1/1 (IF, SR), in downtown Meadville 12/10 (TNo), and near the HMT 1/20 (RH, MW).

An **Eastern Phoebe** was at MCR 2/17 (JM) and 2/23 (CG), very early dates for this species. The only report of **Northern Shrike** was of one near N. Wayland Road in the Meadville area 12/1 (TNo). Observations of **Common Raven**, while becoming increasingly expected, are still notable. There was a higher than normal number of observations this season throughout the county (m.ob.). A good count of 5 were observed during the Crawford County Raptor Survey 1/21 (PC, GE, AL, ML). **Horned Lark** were recorded in their expected numbers and locations (m.ob.), including a notable count of 30 at MP 2/15 (CD, JH, EM, TNo).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch** were observed throughout the county in expected numbers and locations (m.ob.). There were a higher than average number of **Winter Wren** observations, primarily throughout the Pymatuning area as well as Custards Marsh (m.ob.). **Carolina Wren** was observed in expected numbers and locations throughout the county (m.ob.).

**Hermit Thrush** are rare during ] winter, so observations of one near Pymatuning S.P.- Area J 12/8 (TNo, KP) and one at Lincoln Avenue Park in the Meadville area 2/29 (BW) are notable. Good counts of **American Robin** included 107 at the HMT 1/20 (RH, MW) and at least 100 in the

CL area 1/26 (KZ). Sightings of **Gray Catbird**, rare during winter, included singles at Lincoln Avenue Park in Meadville 12/3 (BW), along the Ernst Bike Trail in the Meadville area 1/13 (IF), near CL 2/11 (RL), and at Geneva Marsh 2/25 (CG). There were no reports of Northern Mockingbird. Notable high counts of **Cedar Waxwing** included 179 observed during the Linesville CBC 12/15 (m. ob.) and at least 100 in the CL area 1/26 (KZ).

**Purple Finch** was observed in expected locations throughout the county (m.ob.). Notable counts included 8 at a private location near SGL 146 on 1/19 (RS), 8 seen at a private location in the Townville area 1/28 (AL), and 10 seen at the same location 2/6 (AL). The only observation of **Pine Siskin** was of one at a private location in the Meadville area 12/26 (KP). **Snow Bunting** was observed primarily throughout the Pymatuning area in expected numbers (m.ob.). A high of 16 were observed at Pymatuning S.P.- Causeway 1/25 (TNo).

A single **Eastern Towhee**, notable during winter, was at a private location near Pettis Road in the Meadville area 1/1 and 1/10 (RL). A good count of at least 61 **American Tree Sparrows** were seen at the HMT 1/7 (MW). A **Chipping Sparrow**, rare during winter, was seen coming around feeders at a private location near SGL 146 from 12/15-12/22 (RS). Observations of **Field Sparrow**, another rare sparrow during winter, included one at Custards Marsh 12/28 (GF, AW), 2 at Pymatuning S.P.- South Lake Road 2/16 (SS), and one in the Hartstown Marsh area 2/18 (MW). There were a higher than average number of observations of **Swamp Sparrow** throughout the county, in expected locations (m.ob.).

Reports of **Red-winged Blackbird** in Dec and Jan are relatively rare, so observations of 6 near Hartstown 1/5 (MW), one in the Pymatuning S.P.- Goose Management Area 1/11 (RL), and a count of approximately 50 at Conneaut Marsh- MMR 1/26 (IF, SR) are especially notable. Approximately 30 **Rusty Blackbirds**, notable and rare during winter, were at MCR 1/26 (IF, SR). Observations of **Common Grackle**, rare in Dec and Jan months, included one observed during the Linesville CBC 12/15 (CN, TNI) and one in the Cambridge Spring area 1/17 (KZ).

Observations of **Yellow-rumped Warbler** included a notable count of 9 birds during the Linesville CBC 12/15 (CG, JH, AL), one at HMT 1/7 (MW) and 1/20 (RH, MW), a good count of 10 birds at MCR 1/26 (CG) and one at the same location 2/22 (RH).

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### **Cumberland County**

Locations: Boiling Springs Children's Pond (BSCP), Mud Level Road (MLR), Newville CBC (PANV), Stage Game Land 169 (SGL 169).

The winter period was drier and warmer than normal with hardly any snow. Please note that unless otherwise stated occurrences and the number of prior occurrences of the species listed in this report are according to eBird records and An Annotated List of the Birds of Cumberland, *Pennsylvania Birds* 2016 Volume 30 NO 3 (Gauthier). It should also be noted that there may be current and historical sightings for *Cumberland* listed on eBird from the Susquehanna River that may be possible to list on this report, but without clear documentation otherwise

they are considered *Dauphin* birds as the county line is the west shoreline of the river.

Four to 5 **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at the quarry on Route 533 in Shippensburg 1/25-27 (VG, BK, DB, SB, RP, CP), the first winter record for the species in *Cumberland*. Also of note was the fact that there were 5 individuals - usually this species shows up in the county as a lone bird. There was also one **Cackling Goose** in the same location 1/11 (VG) and another at BSCP 1/9-10 (TJ, m.ob.). This species is reported about half the winters in very small numbers.

A **Long-tailed Duck** was at the Route 533 Quarry 1/30-2/8 (VG), only the third winter record for the species and the first other than in the mouth of the Conodoguinet Creek at the confluence with the Susquehanna River. The final species of waterfowl of note was a **Red-breasted Merganser** on the Conodoguinet Creek at the corner of Burgners Mill and Creekview Roads, West Pennsboro Township 1/23 (VG). This species has become more consistent in the winter with one or 2 reports now almost annually. The other two eBird reports from West Fairview are assumed to *Dauphin* birds in the Susquehanna River.

There was the first ever report of one **Eurasian Collared-Dove** on the PANV 1/4 (BK, BO, CP, RP). This bird was found in the area west of Route 233 and north of Route 997 where this species has been reported in very small numbers since the spring of 2013. A **Long-eared Owl** was photographed in the very odd location of an outbuilding at an industrial park in Mechanicsburg 12/19-24 (JM). Once mostly annual at SGL 169 and nearby Conifer Road, this species has been increasingly difficult to find in *Cumberland*. **Redheaded Woodpecker** is of note because of its increasing penchant over the last few years to overwinter in the Propagation Pond area of SGL 169. While one or 2 individuals are reported each winter in the county, this winter up to 4 were reported at one time, with reports of multiple birds often.

In a very much a non-invasion year of winter finches, there was only one report **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, two on South Ridge Road, Boiling Springs 12/26 (AD). No Purple Finches were reported. A **Marsh Wren** was seen in the marsh at 2015 Pine Road, Newville 12/6 (RM), only the second *Cumberland* winter record for this species. As in most winters there was a couple of reports of **Gray Catbird**. One was reported from Opossum Lake 1/1 (SF) and 1/4 (DK), and one at Huntsdale 2/25 (BK). A great surprise was a **Swainson's Thrush** at the Oasis Ministry in Mechanicsburg 12/6-11 (KA). The bird was injured, having no tail, and seemingly unable to fly. It presumably perished during the winter as it was no longer seen.

In a winter with such little snow, reports of field birds besides **Horned Larks** were sparse. During the only snowfall with any accumulation 2 **Lapland Longspurs** were reported on Ott Road Shippensburg 1/8 (CP, RP) and one on MLR 1/8 (BK). Only one **Snow Bunting** was reported, at MLR 1/9 (VG). The only **American Pipits** a flock of 15 at MLR 1/8 (CP, RP). Maybe the most interesting bird of the season was one **Dark-eyed Junco x White-throated Sparrow** (hybrid) at Pine Grove Furnace SP 1/7 and 1/12 (CP, RP). Pictures of this unusual hybrid were included on the eBird checklists. A large flock of 100 plus **Rusty Blackbirds** was reported at the winter stronghold for the species at Huntsdale 1/1 and 1/4 (RK), the only report of the species for the season.

Warblers showed quite well. A **Common Yellowthroat** was seen on the same location of the Big Spring 12/7 and 1/4 (VG, HW, TW, BF, CC, m.ob.), the ninth appearance of this species in the 29 years of the PANV. There was also a **Palm Warbler** found on the PANV 1/4, at Huntsdale (RK), the third appearance of this species on the PANV. Finally, one **Pine Warbler** was at a suet feeder at Opossum Lake 12/6 (DK). This species is reported on average about every other winter.

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## Dauphin County

Locations: Blue Mountain Parkway (BMP), Cummings Swamp-Millersburg (CS), Fort Hunter (FH), Fort Indiantown Gap west corridor (FIG), Lake Tobias (LT), Milton Hershey Lands (MHL), MYO Park-Millersburg (MYO), Peter's Mountain Road (PMR), State Game Lands 290-Haldeman Island (SGL290HI), Susquehanna River Front Street (SRFS), Susquehanna River West Fairview (SRWF), Wildwood Lake (WL).

The two Christmas Bird Counts that include *Dauphin* resulted in 97 species for the Harrisburg Count (DHo), and 70 for the Curtin Count (S&SB).

**Snow Geese** began arriving in the fields of lower *Dauphin* in early Jan. A large flock of approximately 4000 was found on MHL 1/5 (ST, RE). A pair of **Trumpeter Swans** was found on SGL290HI on 12/29 (S&SB).

With no ice freeze of the Susquehanna River this winter, all the common species of ducks were seen frequently either from SRFS or SRWF (m.ob.). Interestingly, no scoter species were reported. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was found at SRWF 12/22 (RK). Of the loon species, only the **Red-throated Loon** was reported on the river in Dec (m.ob.).

Migrating **Golden Eagles** were spotted in two locations, one on 12/23 at FIG (JoD) and one on the Appalachian Trail on PMR 1/21 (IG). The 23 **Bald Eagles** counted on the Curtin CBC 12/27 broke the record of 13 seen last year (S&SB). During *Dauphin's* January-February Winter Raptor Route surveys, activity was seen at the new Bald Eagle nest along the Swatara Creek (P&DW) but the nest in the Pine Road area fell down (B&SC). **Red-tail Hawk** sightings were lower than average on all five surveys.

All the usual species of woodpeckers were reported in *Dauphin* as well as the **Red-headed Woodpecker** that is now being seen on a regular basis at LT (S&SB). An **Eastern Phoebe** was reported at WL 1/31 (TG) and one was at CS 12/05 (S&SB). In addition, a **Blue Headed Vireo** was spotted at FH on 12/4 (S&SB). On 2/9, a **Northern Shrike** was sighted at FIG (JD).

Of the three mimics, **Northern Mockingbird** is commonly seen in *Dauphin* in the winter. But this year, the other 2 were also present. A **Brown Thrasher** was observed from 12/5 through the end of this period at a home in the Harrisburg area (RS) and a **Gray Catbird** were at WL all winter (m.ob.).

Winter finch numbers were low with only 2 **Purple Finches** reported at BMP on 12/30 (MB) and one at a home in Harrisburg 2/4 (WP). A **Pine Siskin** was seen near Hershey 2/15 (AN) and one at MYO 12/26 (S&SB). An **Orange-crowned Warbler** took up winter residence at a home off of Locust Lane in Harrisburg. First seen 12/29 (A&CO), the bird has been well photographed and observed through the end of the season (m.ob.). Additionally, a **Pine Warbler** settled in at another home in Harrisburg, first observed 12/25 and still being seen through Feb (R&PP).

Observers: **Sandy Lockerman, 3830 Lexington Street, Harrisburg, PA 17109, (717) 329-8040, sandylockerman@yahoo.com**, Scott & Stephanie Bills, Mary Brenner, Bernie & Suzie Crist, Joey Dell (JoD), Jarrod Derr, Richard Evans, Ian Gardner, Thomas Galaskewicz, Deuane Hoffman (DHo), Ramsay Koury, Alex Lamoreaux, Anne Newman, Andy & Cindy Ohrman, Wenda Plowman, Rick & Peggy Price, Rosemary Spreha, Scott Thomas, Pat & Dick Williams.

## Delaware County

Locations: Bethel Springs Elementary School (BSES), Commodore Barry bridge/riverfront (CB), Crum Creek Reservoir (CCR), Crum Woods (CW), Delaware County Community College (DCCC), Delaware River (DR), Earles Lake (EL), Episcopal Academy (EA), Fort Mifflin (FM), Glen Providence Park (GP), Governor Printz Park (GPZ), John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge (JHNWR), Liseter (LIS), Marcus Hook (MH), Ridley Creek State Park (RCSP), Ridley Township Marina (RTM), Springton Reservoir (SR), Strathaven High School (SHHS), Tyler Arboretum (TY).

Just like last winter, precipitation this winter was rain and not snow. Temperatures in the Philadelphia region averaged about five degrees above average during January and February. *Delaware* was in the mid-60's Jan 11-12 and hit 60F or higher again Feb 3-4 and 18.

The 100th Glenolden CBC was held 12/14, under overcast skies with intermittent light rain; 90 species were recorded on count day with 8 more during count week. Among those were a record high of 4503 **Snow Geese** on the Delaware River at the CB and MH. Seven **Common Ravens** represented a new high count, as this species continues to increase since first confirmed breeding in the county in 2013. The CBC also tallied its second highest count of **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**: 25, more than triple the average yearly number. In a year of shortage, 2 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** found at TY were notable. There were 4 warbler species reported: **Yellow-rumped**, **Pine**, **Palm**, and **Common Yellowthroat** (DE).

A **Cackling Goose** was seen at LIS intermittently 1/3 - 2/22 (m.ob.) and nearby EL on 4 dates including 3 on 2/8 (JMc); other singlets were reported 1/29 along Darby Creek in Drexel Hill (JH) and at SR 2/6 (RF). **Tundra Swans** were in their usual DR locations [CB, GPZ, MH] throughout the period with a high of 71 at CB 2/1 (AG).

As usual, JHNWR hosted a variety of ducks on multiple dates (m.ob.) throughout the period, including **Northern Shoveler**, **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, and **Green-winged Teal**. **Greater Scaup** were reported from the DR at FM on 6 dates 2/13-2/28 (m.ob.) and **Lesser Scaup** used the pond at LIS 2/20-2/29 (m.ob.) The latter species was also recorded at GPZ 12/12 (RF) and 12/24 (DO) and at JHNWR 12/13 (JMc) and 12/14 (RM). **Common Goldeneye** was seen thrice this year at CCR: 12/6 (DE), 12/8 (AG), and 12/21 (DO). Two **Red-breasted Mergansers** at JHNWR 12/12 (GB) were the only reports. A **Pied-billed Grebe** spent the entire period at CCR (m.ob.) and was still present as of 2/29 (RF).

Although there was one at GPZ 12/24 (DO) and also 11 at JHNWR that same day (RZ), the first returning **Killdeer** seemed to show up at LIS 1/17 (RF). Displaying **American Woodcock** are hard to come by in *Delaware*. A 4th Ave location in Lester produced 4 on 2/16 (DB) and again 2/22 (AG). If you know where else to find some, please let me know. A **Wilson's Snipe** was spied as it flew across the DR at FM at dusk 12/14 in an extended watch for the CBC (RF). **American Coot** was noted at JHNWR 1/12 (4, TB) and 2/2 (2, JH); one was at SR 1/14 (AG).

A single **Bonaparte's Gull** was noted 12/16 at CB (RF). The rarest gull of the season, a **Mew Gull**, was identified from photographs taken at RTM 2/1 (SN) and represented a new find for *Delaware*. Unfortunately, its identify was not discovered in time to be seen by others although it is presumed to be the same bird (also identified after the fact) as was found the previous week in *Philadelphia*. The DR at FM produced **Iceland Gull** 1/31 (RF) and 2/16 (LH) and **Lesser Black-backed Gull** 2/27 (RF).

**Great Cormorant** was reported from MH 1/24 (DO), on 6 dates from the CB (m.ob.), and at JHNWR 12/24 (DO). **Northern Harrier** reports were many and came from MH 12/6 (RF) and 2/3 (RF), GPZ 12/14 (RF), and RCSP 12/24 (GJ), in addition to the usual locations at JHNWR (nine dates, m.ob.) and DR at FM (12 dates, m.ob.) though never more than a single individual in any of these reports.

**Eastern Screech-Owl** reports were numerous and from about a dozen different locations (m.ob.) and about ten locations reported **Great Horned Owl** (m.ob.). A **Barred Owl** was heard in Cheyney 12/14 (JM), in Haverford 2/17 (SJ), heard and recorded in Glen Mills 2/17 (JM), ditto in Lansdowne 2/18 (JZ), just heard in Bryn Mawr 2/19 (KB), and one photographed at TY 2/19 (JM). Except for the first CBC report, note how all of these reports are from such a narrow window of time. Mark your calendars for listening next year! There were about a half-dozen **American Kestrel** reports during the period. **Merlin** was consistent at GPZ and CW (m.ob.) and observed at about 8 additional locations. **Peregrine Falcon** was most likely along the river at CB (4 dates, m.ob.) or MH (2 dates, RF), but there were also 3 other reports (m.ob.).

An **Eastern Phoebe** was found at JHNWR 12/13 (JMc), 1/10 (JMc), and 1/31 (AG), with another individual at SHHS 1/16-17 (SN) and in the CW 1/18 (SN). Reports of both kinglets were numerous but **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were not, seen only twice at TY 12/14 (SBN) and 1/15 (FB), and at RCSP 2/21 (RZ). A lingering **House Wren** was noted

at JHNWR 12/13 (JMc).

Unusual were **Brown Thrasher** at TY 12/14 (SBN), and RCSP 2/21 (CS) and 2/22 (JMc); and many more reports than usual of **Hermit Thrush**, most from those same 2 locations (m.ob.) as well as GP, CW, and other scattered locales. Sixteen reports of **Gray Catbird**, about half of which came from RCSP, also represented an increase while 7 of **Cedar Waxwings**, with most associated with the CBC, were about usual. Winter finches were non-existent.

One to 4 **Chipping Sparrows** spent Jan in the CW (DE, AG, SN); a lone bird showed up at a Springfield yard feeding station 1/18 (TB), and then Feb seemed to usher them in with 8 at DCCC 2/13 (BB), 4 at BSES 2/18 (BQ), and 5 at TY 2/21 (JMc). **American Tree Sparrow** was only reported from its usual haunt of JHNWR (10 dates, m.ob.). **Fox Sparrows** were reported from a dozen locations and **White-crowned Sparrow** was found on 6 occasions at JHNWR (m.ob.). **Eastern Towhee** reports were too numerous to count, a reflection of a snow-starved winter.

**Rusty Blackbirds** were reported from the FedEx complex in Lester 12/12 (RF) and Nether Providence Twp 2/12 (DO). Multiple individuals were at JHNWR through Dec and Jan, with a large flock estimated at 35 on 1/13 (DE). Winter warbler reports included a **Common Yellowthroat** in the CW 12/10-1/12 (DE, AG), a bird at JHNWR 1/21 (AG), and one along the DR at FM 1/25 (DB). **Palm Warbler** was discovered at CB 12/6 (RF), consistent there through 1/11 (m.ob.), and then noted again 2/2 (JE). A **Prairie Warbler** joined it 1/3 (AG) and remained through 1/15, to be seen by many during those two weeks. **Pine Warblers** were at MH 12/6 (3, RF) and 12/17 (RF), and visited suet feeders in Aston 1/8 (TP) and Glen Mills 2/2 (BB). One **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was found at Cobbs Creek 12/14 (RH), up to 4 at CB 12/6-2/2 (m.ob.), and one to 2 at DCCC 12/5-2/21 (BB). Two Yellow-rumps were in Smedley Park 1/31 (JZ) and one there 2/24 (TB).

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### Elk County

Locations: Benezette Twp. (BT), Eastern Branch Lake (EBL), Elk County Visitors Center (ECVC), Marion Brooks N.A. (MB).

A **Ruffed Grouse** was photographed roosting on a branch in BT 12/22 (BH); one was seen near EBL 12/28 (BB), and a third at ECVC 12/29 (BG). A **Golden Eagle** was "seen perched, then flew" at MB 12/29 (BH). A **Bald Eagle** was part of the Benezette CBC 12/29 (MJ), and one was reported for the *Elk* WRS 1/18 (KE). A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was seen in BT 12/22 (BH).

Three owls were reported to eBird: a **Great-horned Owl** in BT 1/10 (CL), another in Kersey 1/18 (CB), and a **Barred Owl** in Kersey 1/29 (CB). A **Northern Shrike** was observed at the East Branch Dam 2/18 (AS *fide* MJ). A **Belted Kingfisher** was seen at Daguscahonda 2/4 (CB). Woodpeckers included a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** in BT 12/22 (BH) and one in Weedville 1/30 (KH). Others seen wintering throughout *Elk* on multiple occasions were **Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, and Pileated Woodpeckers** with a high of 5 Pileated at EBL (BB). A **Merlin** "flew low overhead" in BT 1/19 (KE).

Four **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were seen at EBL 12/28 (BB), and another for the Benezette CBC 12/29 (MJ). Four **Brown Creepers** were also seen at EBL 12/28 (BB), with 2 in MB 12/29 (BH), and 2 in BT 2/15 (MW). A **Winter Wren** was observed at ECVC 12/29 (BG). Two **Carolina Wrens** were added to the Benezette CBC 12/29 (MJ) and one was in Kersey 2/25 (CB). A **Purple Finch**, a **Pine Siskin**, and a high of 10 **American Tree Sparrows** were seen near Wilcox 2/15 (LD).

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### Erie County

Snow fall fell far short of the norm this season and the temperature was about five degrees Fahrenheit above the mean winter temperature. The warm winter prevented the lake and bay from freezing, dispersing gulls and waterfowl, so there were few concentrations anywhere. Not surprising there were several species of birds that remained well into the winter as well as a couple of species that should not be found here in winter like the dowitcher and **Black Vulture**.

The following birds of note were recorded from Presque Isle State Park (PISP) unless noted otherwise.

A white morph **Snow Goose** in the Thompson Circle area 12/28 remained to 1/1 (BB). An unprecedented 21 white **Snow Geese** were in a field with **Canada Geese** in Fairview Twp. 2/12 (LS), a very high count for the winter season. A **Brant** at the Fairview Business Park remained from the fall season to at least 12/8 (m.ob.). Up to 6 **Cackling Geese** were present at the Fairview Business Park 12/7-1/15 (AM, JF, RS).

The pair of **Green-winged Teal** 2/11 were either wintering birds or very early migrants at Edinboro (RS). The 700 **Long-tailed Ducks** counted during the waterbird count at Sunset Point was an exceptionally high winter season number (JM). Two **Red-necked Grebes** were off Beach 11 on 12/12-14 (JM). An **Eared Grebe** made a two-day appearance in Presque Isle Bay 12/23- 24 (CW, CV).

A second local winter record of a **Black Vulture** was a surprise when one was seen feeding on a deer carcass near vista 1 on 2/10 & 11 (BB). A **Turkey Vulture** on 12/5 circling over Erie was quite early (PZ, BZ). An amazing 34 **Turkey Vultures** were counted passing over the Presque Isle Hawk Watch 2/23 (JM). This is more TVs than have ever been recorded in the county for the entire month of Feb.

A **Purple Sandpiper** was at Gull Point 12/1 (RD) and either the same bird or a different one was there 12/6 (JB). Quite unexpected was a **Purple Sandpiper** on the leap year date of 2/29 (BB). The question is, being a leap year bird, should it be a winter record or a spring record? A dowitcher on the CBC 12/14 at Gull Point was totally unexpected. Unfortunately, the species could not be determined (RD, SS). A **Wilson's Snipe** at Edinboro Lake 2/13 was a rare winter sighting (RS).

**Iceland Gulls** went undetected until the latter part of the season when multiple sightings of both Kumlien's and Thayer's types were recorded from 2/1 to the end of the period (JM, et al.). **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were reported in moderate numbers from 12/28 periodically through the rest of the season (m.ob.). **Glaucous Gulls** were quite rare with singles at the Lake View Landfill and at Presque Isle S.P. (m.ob.). However, multiple birds were seen in Presque Isle Bay during the latter days of Feb (JM). A probable **Herring Gull X Lesser Black-backed Gull** was present on 2/16 & 18 at the Channel and in Misery Bay, respectively (JM).

The only **Long-eared Owl** was in the pines 12/8 and again 12/28 (RD). A **Short-eared Owl** was at Gull Point 12/9 (RD). Three **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were in the pines 12/3 and another, or one of the same birds, 12/13 (RD, RS). Until the last few years **Eastern Phoebes** were unrecorded in winter in *Erie*, but with such a mild winter it wasn't a surprise to have one or 2 birds present on Presque Isle S.P., at both ends of the park 12/13-1/30 (JM, et al.). **Northern Shrikes** were scarce with only one reported in Albion, 12/28 (TN); and one at SGL109 from 1/1-2/16 (RS).

**Common Ravens** have become county regular visitors or residents in recent years with singles or pairs being reported from the Edinboro area (JH, JF) and SGL 109 (JH). A first winter record of **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was documented near Long Pond Trail 12/31 (JH). **Gray Catbirds** have also become regular winter residents in recent years on Presque Isle S.P. with birds recorded from 12/25 to at least 1/17 (CV, et al.). A **Brown Thrasher** near Beach 11 was a rare winter visitor 12/30 as was the **Orange-crowned Warbler** seen on the same day on Pine Tree Trail for a second *Erie* winter record (JH).

Observers: **Jerry McWilliams, 3508 Allegheny Rd., Erie, Pa. 16508-2129, jerrymcw@aol.com**, Brian Berchtold, Justin Berkheimer, Roger Donn, Jennifer Ferrick, Jamie Hill, Andrew Markle, Tomas Nonnenmacher, Robert Scribner, Sam Stull, Linda Susko, Connor Vara, Chris Williams, Pam & Bob Zelena.

### **Fayette County**

Mild weather kept lakes open but few waterfowl were reported during this off-peak season. Numerous Bald Eagle reports are listed in this report; something not unexpected these days but I have not highlighted them in past reports. Perhaps the mild weather kept some uncommon wintering species from moving out of the county.

Waterfowl highlights include 2 **American Wigeons** and 9 **Common Mergansers** at Virgin Run Lake 2/29 (KB), and 4 **Northern Pintails**- 2 at Greenlick Reservoir 2/15 (KB) and 2 at Colonial Reservoir 2/20 (JF). Two **Long-tailed Ducks** were photographed at Greenlick Run Lake 2/25 (KB).

Three **Common Loons** were at Greenlick Run Lake 12/1 (KB). A wintering group of 15 **Killdeer** was at Virgin Run Lake 1/1 and 12 were there 2/2 (KB).

A **Golden Eagle** was photographed at Nemaacolin Woodlands Resort 12/8 (MJ, DB) was likely a migrant. Golden eagles are rarely seen in *Fayette* but are known to winter in the mountains of Pennsylvania. **Bald Eagles** were widely reported this season in ebird. Singles were at Spring Valley 12/18 (DBI), Confluence 12/24 (DB), Ohiopyle SP 1/4 (DBI), Heritage Scout Reservation 1/11 (MD), Nemaacolin Woodlands Resort 1/12 (ER), Yough River Park 1/22 (KB), Mill Run Reservoir 2/9 (KB), and Confluence 2/16 (DB) and 2/18 (MH).

There were **Black Vulture** reports near Farmington in ebird including 9 birds 2/3 (DBI) and 2 on 2/20 (DB). I suspect reports will be increasing over time as this species appears to be expanding in the area. A **Merlin** was at Greenlick Run Lake 1/21 (MF) and again 2/1 (MJ). One was in Connellsville 2/5 (KB).

A late **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was photographed at Greenlick Run Lake 12/1 (KB). An uncommon wintering species, 6 **Field Sparrows** were photographed at Ohiopyle SP 1/4 (ER, KB) and 6 were in Stewart Twp. the same day (MJ, DZ). **White-crowned Sparrows** are uncommon in southwestern Pennsylvania in winter. Singles were reported at Deer Valley 1/31 (ER) and Dunlap Creek Park 1/31 (CL) and 2/2 (KB).

Observers: **Mike Fialkovich, mpfial@verizon.net**, Kerry Bell, Dwight Blough (DBI), David Burleson, Matthew Domer, John Flannigan, Mark Hopey, Matthew Juskowich, Calvin Livengood, Ed Regula, Dante Zuccaro.

### **Forest County**

Locations: Mt. Collins Cemetery (MCC), Pleasantville CBC (PCBC), Tionesta (TIO), Tionesta Lake Dam (TLD), West Hickory (WH).

One **Wood Duck** was seen in TIO 2/1 (KS). Nine **American Black Ducks** were part of the PCBC 12/29 (MH, KS) and 9 were also near TIO 2/1 (KS). A **Bufflehead** was near MCC 12/3 (EN, KN). Two **Hooded Mergansers** were observed in WH 2/1 (KS) and again 2/17 (AC).

A **Ring-necked Pheasant** was seen near WH 12/29 (MH, KS) and 2 were near TIO 2/21 (KN). The first record of a **Red-throated Loon** in *Forest* was photographed at MCC 12/3 (EN, KN). A **Great Blue Heron** was seen near WH 12/29 (MH, KS), and another at TLD 1/11 (FM).

Over a dozen sightings of **Bald Eagles** were reported along the Allegheny River below TIO up to WH, with a high of 4 on 2/9 (FM). A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was seen in TIO 2/9 (FM) and another in WH on the same date (FM). Two **Rough-legged Hawks** "both light morph...on opposite sides of the road" were near TIO 2/9 (FM).

An **Eastern Screech Owl's** call was recorded as part of the PCBC 12/29 (MH, KS) at the same time that a **Great-horned Owl** was observed near WH in its usual area. A **Northern Flicker** was seen in WH 2/1, and the next day an **American Kestrel** was seen in TIO 2/2 (KS). A **Merlin** was photographed feasting on a small bird near TIO 12/29 (MH, KS).

**Golden-crowned Kinglets** were observed along the Allegheny

River several times on 2 different days with a high of 5 as part of the West Forest WRS 2/5 (MH, KS). **Eastern Bluebirds** were seen several times as well, with the earliest at the TLD 1/11 (FM). A high of 32 **Cedar Waxwings** were in TIO 2/9 (FM). **Purple Finches** were seen twice near TIO, 1/5 and 12/17 (FM). Purple Finches were near TIO 12/17 and 1/5 (FM). Three **American Tree Sparrows** were at TIO along with 4 **White-throated Sparrows** 2/1 (KS). Two **Song Sparrows** were seen during the PCBC 12/29 (MH, KS) and one in TIO 2/2 (KS). An **Eastern Towhee** was near TIO 12/9 (FM). Thirteen **Red-winged Blackbirds** arrived near TIO 2/27 (FM).

Observers: **Carol Light, P.O. Box 6, Benazette, PA 15821, (814) 787-6036, lightpc2@gmail.com**, Angela Colwell, MiMi Hoffmaster, Flo McGuire, Elizabeth Nicholson, Ken Nicholson, Cindy Schmidt, Kim Springer.

### **Franklin County**

Locations: Antrim Commons Ponds (ACRP), Keefer Road Farm Pond (KRFP), Kriner Road Retention Ponds (KRRP), Mountain Lake Fannettsburg (MLF), Mountain Brook Road Pond (MBRP), Old Heisey Orchard (OHO).

Dale Gearhart, a long-time birder, and for many years office holder in Conococheague Audubon, has been monitoring the county **Bald Eagle** nests since 2010 when an eagle nest became known of near Greencastle. Dale reports 7 active nesting sites this winter. The known nesting sites are in riparian areas along the Conococheague Creek, Back Creek, Conodoguinet Creek, Buck Run, Middle Spring Creek, and also in the Waynesboro area. With 7 active nest sites known of, I wonder how many others there are in other places like Path Valley, Little Cove, and other less traveled areas in the county? Dale reports that 23 eaglets have hatched at the Greencastle area nest since 2010. No wonder that Bald Eagles are becoming a relatively common sighting in our county!

Waterfowl reports were unlike last winter's reporting period when reports were high in diversity and numbers. The reports this winter also lacked the number of notable birds. A **Snow Goose** was at ACRP 12/31-1/6 (JD, SD, CG, CC, DC, Bktz). Five **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at MBRP 2/15-17 (CG, Bktz, GA, CP, RP, BKrt, TK). **Cackling Goose** was reported at Burnt Mill Road 2/10-14 (Bktz) and 2/15 at KRRP (CG). The high of 18 **Gadwalls** was at Royer Road pond 1/22 (CG), and high count of **Redhead**, 11, was at ACRP 2/14 (CG). High counts of species like these and others were much greater last winter. Two **Common Goldeneyes** were reported at KRRP 12/17 (BO, Bktz).

South-central Franklin County is the go-to place for many state birders who want to see **Eurasian Collared-Dove**, which are reported from the Shady Grove/Greencastle area north to Marion. A new location for numbers of these doves is Zarger Road grain silo, not far from Greencastle Reservoir, where the doves tend to congregate in late summer/early fall. For time of year, an unusual high count of 41 birds was reported from Zarger Road 2/11 (Bktz). **Sandhill Crane** was reported from 2 locations, 3 birds in the East Fayetteville area 1/4 (JS) and 3 at MLF 2/15 (Bktz, CG).

The first report of **American Woodcock** displaying was at OHO 2/25 (BKnr). Winter **Wilson Snipe** reports were 2 on 12/1 along Wenger Road (BO), one 12/17 at KRFP (BO, Bktz), 4 along Findlay Road 1/18 (BO), and one at KRRP 2/16 (GA). **Herring Gull** is not an easy bird in our county - five were reported at a farm along Olde Scotland Road 2/16 (JS).

A **Northern Goshawk** was found near Fannettsburg during a Winter Raptor Survey in Path Valley 2/1 (BO, LN). Single **Barn Owl** reports were along Charlestown Road near Mercersburg 12/6 (JF) and in the Edenville area 1/19-2/27 (BO, Bktz, CP, RP, GA, CG). A **Short-eared Owl** was flushed on a farm along Shimpstown Road 2/9 (SK). There were multiple **Merlin** reports from various locations (BKnr, DC, BO, CP, RP, Bktz, GA, CG). **Peregrine Falcon** reports were from downtown Chambersburg 12/10-2/2 (BO, VB, DG, Bktz, DC), Whitetail Ski Resort 1/28 (AH), and ACRP 2/16 (GA, CG). The falcon that had been regularly wintering in downtown Chambersburg for the past two or three winters seemed to disappear earlier this winter than past ones.

An over-wintering **Eastern Phoebe** was found on a farm east of Fayetteville 2/15 (JS). **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, largely absent this winter, was reported from Antietam Meadow Park 1/1 and 1/26 (GA), and from Bear Valley 2/14 (NS). An over-wintering **Chipping Sparrow** was



found at Izaak Walton Meadows 1/21 (BKtz). Early **Fox Sparrow** reports were at OHO 2/15 (BKnr) and a Greene Knolls yard 2/18 (VB). **Pine Siskins** were absent except for feeder reports near Mont Alto in Dec (EN, VB). A wintering **Pine Warbler** was reported from the Waynesboro area 12/29-1/5 (GA).

Observers: **Bill Oyler, 1216 Wilson Ave, Chambersburg, Pa 17201 (717-360-5191), oylerville@gmail.com**, Gavin Anderson, Val Barnes, Dave Cooney, Collen Corballis, Josh Donaldson, Susan Donaldson, Jim Flowers, Carl Garner, Dale Gearhart, Amiel Hopkins, Stefan Karkuff, Bob Keener, Bob Kochert, Terri Kochert, Bob Koontz, Earl Nollenberger, Chris Payne, Rebecca Perruci, Nick Sabetto, Jefferson Shank.

### **Fulton County**

A **Northern Harrier** was near Warfordsburg 12/28 (Joel Springer). Single **Red-shouldered Hawks** were at Hustontown 1/21, Knobsville 1/29, and Needmore 1/29 (GG, DG). **American Kestrels** were reported from at least 8 locations (GG, DG, PK, Josh Auld). A **Carolina Chickadee** song was heard near Needmore 1/29 (DG); *Fulton* lies primarily within the Black-cap range. Best **Horned Lark** count was 25 on Frick Rd near Waterfall 1/21 (GG, DG).

Observers: **Greg Grove, gwg2@psu.edu**, Deb Grove Phil Keener.

### **Greene County**

Locations: Claylick (CL), East View (EV), Last Chance Ranch (LCR), Sycamore (SY).

**Gadwall** was sighted in Wayne Twp. 2/3 (AD, MH) and **Common Merganser** at several locations throughout the period (m.ob.). **Wild Turkey** (20 in all) was found at CL 1/11 (RA, LA). **Great Blue Heron** was at LCR 1/10 (MLP).

Among diurnal raptors, **Black Vulture** was in Perry Twp. 2/16 (TM), **Turkey Vulture** at CL 1/11 (RA, LA), **Bald Eagle** in several locations (m.ob.), and **Golden Eagle** in Wayne Twp. 1/12 (MH, RA, LA, SB, SC). A pair of **Red-shouldered Hawks** was very vocal at LCR 1/11 (MLP). **Great-horned Owl** was heard at CL 1/24 (RA, LA).

**Belted Kingfisher** was in Center Twp. 1/11 (RA). **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was found in EV 12/27 (MH). **Merlin** was observed in Franklin Twp. 12/21 (RA, LA, MH).

**Eastern Phoebe** was at CL 2/17 (LA), and **Brown Creeper** at EV 12/19 (MH). **Purple Finch** was found in Gilmore Twp. 2/7 (JLN). **American Tree Sparrow** was in SY 2/16 (JC) and **Fox Sparrow** in EV 1/15 (MH). **White-crowned Sparrow** was reported in SY 12/18 and Center Twp. 1/29 (AD). **Eastern Towhee** was observed in SY 12/19 and in EV 2/5 (MH).

**Red-winged Blackbird** and **Common Grackle** were present in several locations throughout the period (m.ob.). **Brown-headed Cowbirds** (75 total) were observed in SY 12/18.

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### **Huntingdon County**

Locations: Aitch Access at Raystown Lake (AA), Baker-Henry Peace Chapel at Juniata College (BH), Brumbaugh's Access at Raystown Lake (BA), Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Entriken Overlook at Raystown Lake (ENT), Huntingdon (HU-town), Juniata College campus (JC), Juniata River (JR), Lake Perez (LP), Marklesburg waterfowl area-SGL 420 (MAR), Murray Run Rd. (MRR), Old Crow wetland (OC), Raystown Lake (RL), Seven Points Rec Area at Raystown Lake (SP), Stone Creek Ridge (SCR), Stone Mt (SM), Stone Mt Hawk Watch (SMHW), Stone Valley

(SV), Trough Creek Valley (TCV), Tussey Mt. (TM).

The winter of 2019-20 featured little winter-like weather. Each month saw temperatures well above average, with Jan and Feb 7 degrees F over normal. Precipitation was close to normal, but nearly all came as rain; snow fall and snow cover were minimal.

The Huntingdon CBC, held 12/15 under windy conditions, produced 61 species (avg 64). Record highs were recorded for **Bald Eagle** (12) and **Common Raven** (38), and tied for **Hooded Merganser** (20). New for the count was a **Peregrine Falcon**. Due perhaps to windy conditions, but also West Nile Virus, Great Horned Owl was missed. The Raystown Lake CBC was held 12/28, with a below-average total of 61 species (avg 66). A record high 134 **Carolina Wrens** were tallied, but on the negative side were record lows for **Black-capped Chickadee**, **American Tree Sparrow**, and **Dark-eyed Junco**.

Given the mildness of the season and lack of ice much of the time, it is not surprising that waterfowl reports were above average, especially in Feb, due no doubt to birds pushing north earlier than usual. **Tundra Swans** began moving through in mid-Feb; high counts were 55-60 at RL 2/16 (KT, DGr) and 80 over MRR 2/1 (GG). Top **Gadwall** number was 24 at BA 2/29 (AG, JH). **American Wigeon** was reported throughout Jan and Feb, with all reports less than 10 birds (m.ob.). **American Black Duck** was a bit easier to find than it has been in recent winters – high count was 10 in TCV 1/15 (GG, DG, TK, DK). As elsewhere in central Pennsylvania, **Redheads** were found in good numbers beginning in mid-Feb., including counts of 40 at SP 2/15 (AK) and about 35 at BA, first found there 2/16 (KT) and continuing thereafter. About 30-40 **Ring-necked Ducks** were at MAR 2/12-20 (KT).

A single **Long-tailed Duck**, rare in mid-winter, was reliable at SP 2/3 through at least 2/19 (LF, KT, m.ob.). **Buffleheads** are a winter regular – 58 noted at SP 2/13 (GG, DG, AG) and 56 there 2/15 (TK, DK) provided the highs. Another winter regular, though much less common, 12 **Common Goldeneyes** was a nice count below the dam on the JR 1/2 (LF). As usual, **Hooded** and **Common Mergansers** were not hard to find, with highs of 65 Hoodies at AA (TK, DK) 2/19 and 209 Common Mergs at ENT during the Lake Raystown CBC 12/28 (NB). Unlike Hooded and Common Mergs, **Red-breasted Mergansers** are rare in winter; early birds this year were singles at AA 2/19 (TK, DK) and LP 2/26 (JK).

**Ruffed Grouse** reports were limited to singles at LP 1/29 (KT) and 2/12 (Alexa Sarussi, Ryan Witham), at BH 1/31 (KT), and at OC 2/24 (DO), the latter a first ever in eBird from 1474 checklists entered for a location that is possibly the most-visited birding spot in the county. Continuing a trend of the last couple years, few **Killdeer** were reported: singles at OC 12/6 (TK, DK) and 2/19 (KT), and at JC 2/11 (AG, JH). The only **Wilson's Snipe** was a presumably early migrant at OC 2/26 (DO).

**Ring-billed Gulls** are common here in winter, but nevertheless remarkable was a count of 600 at SP 2/3 (LF). Far less common is **Herring Gull** - 2 were at RL 12/4 (DK, TK), one at OC 1/1 (LF), and one at SP 2/17 (AP, ph, KT). Lingering **Common Loons** were one at LP 12/18 (Sean McLaughlin) and 2 at ENT 1/1 (TK, DK).

**Golden Eagle** reports away from hawk watches were one in SV 2/3 (JK et al), likely a wintering bird; and 3 in late Feb, presumably migrants: on the Standing Stone Trail on SM 2/22 (NB), at Raystown Field Station at RL 2/25 (CY), and on SCR 2/26 (GG, DG). At least 8 reports of **Northern Harrier** represent an encouraging number, thanks probably in part to the warm season and lack of snow cover. **Red-shouldered Hawk** continues to do well, perhaps increasing, as evidenced by over 30 reports, many in SV, where there is lots of birding activity; but, also, multiple reports came from TCV, which has lots of excellent wet woodland habitat, and from Hartslog Valley. (m.ob.). Single **Rough-legged Hawks** were seen at SMHW 12/3 (GG, ZG) and in TCV 1/15 (TK, DK, GG, DG).

In addition to the 3 usual owl species, one **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was heard at BH 2/23 (AG, JH, PM). For the first time in several years, and across all seasons, there were no reports of Red-headed Woodpecker. **American Kestrel** was entered into eBird several dozen times; as a species of heightened interest observers enter reports even of "Incidental" nature in eBird. A **Merlin** probably wintered in HU, with reports around town 12/6, 12/15, 1/27, 2/16 (GG, PM, DK, TK, DO); one was in Hartslog Valley 1/1 (LF). Quite visible all season was a **Peregrine**

**Falcon** that wintered at HU – will there be nesting?

Mild conditions encouraged **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** to attempt to winter, the four eBird reports being more than usual. One was at Mooresville 12/15 (HU CBC - Matt Marshall), one near Mapleton 12/28 (JK, RL CBC), one in HU 1/27, 2/24-25 (LF), and one at BH 2/24 (DG). A dozen reports of **Red-breasted Nuthatch** were fewer than last year – this was not a major incursion year. **Brown Creeper**, **Winter Wren**, and **Hermit Thrush**, each an uncommon winter regular, were each reported at least ten times in eBird.

Winter finches were few, as had been predicted. A half dozen scattered **Purple Finch** reports included none of more than 4 individuals. Three **Pine Siskins** were at BH 1/30 (DO) and 7 near Alexandria 2/17 (Michelle Shea). Rare in winter, but perhaps becoming a more common winter bird in the future, a **Chipping Sparrow** visited a feeder on SCR 1/8 and 1/18 (GG, DG). A dozen reports of **American Tree Sparrow** included a high of 15 at BA 2/13 (AG, GG, DG). A late **Fox Sparrow** was found at Trough Creek SP during the RL CBC 12/18 (NB). Likely early spring migrants were in SCR 2/21 and 2/26 (DG, GG) and at MRR 2/25 (DG). Another uncommon winterer, **Swamp Sparrows** were found at 8 locations throughout the period. Two **Eastern Towhees** were found during the RL CBC 12/28 - at Trough-Creek SP (NB) and near Mapleton (JK). One was near Donation 1/23 (JK).

The only **Rusty Blackbirds** were 15 over TM hawk watch 2/24 (NB). A presumably early **Pine Warbler** had returned to a yard in HU, seen 2/24-26 (LF). The only **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was near HU 1/2 (DK, TK).

Observers: **Greg Grove**, [gwg2@psu.edu](mailto:gwg2@psu.edu). Diane Bierly, Susan Braun, Nick Bolgiano, Carl Engstrom, Kurt Engstrom, Luke Fultz, Zoey Greenberg, Aidan Griffiths, Debra Grim (DGm), Deb Grove, Jeanette Harijanto, Jon Kauffman, Andy Keister, David Kyler, Trudy Kyler, Dennis McGillicuddy, Mark McLaughlin, Pedro Miranda, Desmond O'Donovan, Alicia Palmer, Joshua Potter (JPo), Ken Tucker, Doug Wentzel, Chuck Yohn,

#### **Indiana County**

**Locations:** Indiana (IN), Lewisville (LV), Two Lick Reservoir (TL), Winter Raptor Survey (WRS) Yellow Creek State Park (YC).

All waterfowl sightings were at YC unless otherwise noted. Five **Wood Ducks** remained in IN 12/26 (TS) for the Indiana CBC; 3 noted at IUP 1/3 (JT) were possibly some of the same ones. There are no eBird Jan Wood Duck records. A **Gadwall** remained on the lake 1/14 (LC, SD, BF, TG, DM), but the next sighting did not occur until 2/4 (MH, RH) when 11 Gadwalls were counted; that same day, 4 **American Wigeons** arrived and remained through the end of the period (MH, RH). The CBC yielded 3 **Northern Pintails** at TL 12/26 (LC, DL); 6 appeared 2/11 (LC, BF, MH, RH, GL, KT) at YC where they remained through 2/15 (JK, TK, MM). Fifteen **Green-winged Teal** 12/1 (MH, RH) were the only ones reported this winter.

Two **Canvasbacks** lingered through 12/17 (MH, RH) with first 2 spring arrivals on 2/17 (MO, HW). Thirteen **Redheads** were first 2/1 (SM), but by 2/11 (LC, BF, MH, RH, GL, KT) 71 were tallied; numbers continued to increase with the maximum count of 94 on 2/17 (MO), the highest Feb tally on record. A single **Ring-necked Duck** swam among the **Canada Geese** 1/18 (SD); by 2/17, 37 was the high count (MO). Two **Greater Scaup** lingered through 12/1 (MH, RH). The first **Lesser Scaup** were 2 on 2/11 (LC, BF *et al*); numbers remained low through the end of the month. Sixteen **Long-tailed Ducks** were nice finds 12/17 (MH, RH); first 4 spring arrivals appeared 2/1 at YC (SM), the first Feb. reports on eBird for YC. Two **Buffleheads** were noted 1/11 (DW), and one remained through 1/18 (SD); next Bufflehead reported was a singleton 2/4 (LC, MH, RH), after which reports were continuous through month's end. A **Common Goldeneye** was observed 1/28 (TR) and 2/25 (MH, RH).

Last **Hooded Mergansers** were 8 at TL 12/26 (CG) and 3 near HC the same day (CW, PW); after 1/7 (LC, PF, BF, TG, MH, RH, DK), 2-11 were mostly present in patches of open water. Peak numbers of **Common Mergansers** included 41 at TL 2/8 (MH, RH), 51 at YC 2/11

(LC, BF *et al*), and 33 in McFeaters Cove at YC 2/18 (SD). Fifteen **Red-breasted Mergansers** arrived at YC 2/1 (SM), only the 8th year with Feb reports since 1983; the earliest previous Feb. arrival date was 2/14/90. **Ruddy Ducks** numbered 39 on 12/1 (MH, RH) but the flock had dwindled to 19 by 12/17 (MH, RH). A Ruddy Duck over at TL a day or two before the CBC (LC) was countable for count week. A singleton, at YC, first spotted 1/7 (TG, DK), continued through 1/14 (LC, SD, BF, TG, DM). Next Ruddy arrival occurred at YC 2/11 (LC, BF *et al*) after which sightings were continuous through the period's end.

Last **Pied-billed Grebes** and last **Horned Grebes**, respectively, remained at TL through 12/26 (CG) and at YC 12/17 (MH, RH); first spring arrivals were a Pied-billed at TL 2/8 (MH, RH) and one Horned at YC 2/11 (LC, BF *et al*). With only six years with Feb returns since 1983 for Pied-billed, this is the second earliest date on record; the previous earliest was 2/7/12. Two to 3 **American Coots** stopped at YC 2/23-27 (MH, RH, SS).

First **Killdeer** were 3 in IN 2/11, 23 (DL) and one at Buttermilk Falls 2/25 (JB). Three **American Woodcocks** were found near Josephine 2/20 (DL). Last **Bonaparte's Gull** was sighted 12/17 (MH, RH) at YC. A flock of 177 migrating **Ring-billed Gulls** flew high over BS 2/23 (MH, RH).

Two **Red-throated Loons** graced YC Lake 12/1 (MH, RH); only one could be relocated 12/3 (MH, RH) when the **Common Loon** count reached 32. First returning Common Loon was listed at YC 2/15 (LC, TG, MH, RH, JK, TK, MM, JaP, JP). A **Turkey Vulture** near Clymer on *Indiana* WRS #1 on 1/21 (ED, MH, RH, GL) was only the second time found on this route; next reported were at Clymer again 2/8 (DB) and at IUP 2/17 (JT).

Only 3 **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were listed: near Homer City 12/29 (LC), near SH 1/3 (MH, RH), and at YC 1/18 (SD). Single **Merlins** were sighted 12/29 (ReH, SM) and 2/17 (JaP, JP, JT). WRS #1 on 1/27 (ED, MH, RH, GL) yielded a **Peregrine Falcon** perched on a wire over a field near Clarksburg. Two **Fish Crows** were heard in IN 2/17 (SD), the season's first report. WRS #3 yielded 55 **Horned Larks** 1/27 (MH, RH, GL, DL) and WRS #2 produced 15 on 1/31 (MH, RH, DK, GL); 30 were at YC 2/27 (SS).

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** popped up 2/5 (MH, RH) at a feeder near SH where it remained through 2/29 (ReH, MH, RH, SM). **Brown Creepers** were in short supply with only 5 reports from YC (m.ob.) between 12/26 (RC, MH, RH) and 2/17 (MO); one from the Blairsville area 1/11 (JKe); and one near Marion Center 2/17 (SN). Three **Winter Wrens** were noted this season: one on the IN CBC 12/26 (CW, PW), one near Homer City 1/12 (BF), and one at YC 2/4 (LC, MH, RH). The only **Hermit Thrushes** listed were 3 on the IN CBC, all at YC, 12/26 (MH, RH).

**Purple Finch** reports included 2 at Nolo 12/12 (GL), one near Lucerne Mines 12/24 (RS), one at YC 12/26 (MH, RH), one to 2 near Homer City 1/5,12 (BF), and one near IN 2/16 (CR). A **Fox Sparrow** wintered at a feeder near SH 12/1 (MH, RH) through 2/29 (RH, MH, RH, SM). A single **White-crowned Sparrow** was found 12/26 (LC, DL) on the IN CBC; 5 were near IN 1/26 (DL) through 2/16 (DL) when 7 were counted.

**Observers:** **Margaret Higbee**, [bcoriole@windstream.net](mailto:bcoriole@windstream.net). Dave Beatty, John Boback, Rich Carlson, Marcy Cunkelman, Sue Dickson, Ed Donley, Lee Carnahan, Sue Dickson, Barb Fletcher, Tom Glover, Carol Guba, Rebecca Hart (ReH), Roger Higbee, Timmi Jones, Debbie Kalbfleisch, James Kellam (JKe), Jan Kuehl, Tom Kuehl, Gloria Lamer, Dennis Lauffer, Steve Manns, Mark McConaughy, Donna Meyer, Sandra Newell, Miriam Ohanjanyan, James Pumford (JaP), Joseph Pumford, Cindy Rogers, Steve Schmit, Richard Staffen, Georgette Syster, John Taylor, Ken Truitt, Ding Wang, Howard West, Chris Williams, Paula Williams.

#### **Jefferson County**

**Locations:** Caldwell Corner Road (CW), Cloe Lake (CL), Fordham Lake (FL), Mahoning Shadow Trail (MS), Mayport (MY), Munderf (MD), Ohi (OH), Punxsutawney (PX), Ringgold (RG), Skyline Road (SK).

Highlights for the period included one **Snow Goose** on FL 12/14 (AK, JK), only the second time this species has been noted in *Jefferson*.

Also notable were 5 **Swamp Sparrows** on the MS 1/23 (MD). This observation proved to be a high for the county and the only time this species has been found here in Jan. Also interesting was an **Eastern Screech-Owl** found in PX 2/21 (TG). The owl was found flopping around an alley, struggling with a kill that turned out to be a **Mourning Dove**.

The high count for the period, 250 **Canada Geese** were in MY 1/23 (MD). Four **Gadwalls** were found on FL 2/4 (AK, JK), 7 **American Black Ducks** in MY 1/23 (MD), and a high count of 18 **Common Mergansers** on CL 2/29 (AK, JK).

The resident pair of **Bald Eagles** at MS were noticed several times in the nest area. The female was observed for the first time on nest 2/17 (EF, PF, TF, JG, TG). The only **Rough-legged Hawk** was found in MD 1/22 (PC). The only **Great Horned Owl** observation was one on the MS 2/3 (AK, JK). A **Northern Flicker** also found on the MS 1/23 (MD) provided the only sighting for the period. Another interesting find was one odd **Eastern Phoebe**, again on the MS 1/23 (MD).

Single **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were noted on the MS 1/23 (MD) and 2/17 (EF, PF, TF, JG, TG). The only one **Northern Mockingbird** was seen in OH 2/13 (PC). Eighteen **Snow Buntings** were observed on SK 1/7 (AK, JK) and 20 on CW 2/15 (PC). Single **Eastern Towhees** were noted in RG 2/27 (AK, JK) and in RG 2/29 (AK, JK).

Observers: **Thomas Glover**, tomnglover@comcast.net, Patricia Conway, Michael David, Elyse Fuller, Phoebe Fuller, Tom Fuller, Jud Glover, Avis Keener, John Keener.

### Juniata County

Locations: Casner's Crossing - Juniata River (CC), CBC (12/21), Juniata River (JR), Licking Creek Valley (LCV), McAlisterville (MA), Metz Rd (MR), Mifflintown (MIF), Oakland Mills (OM), Port Royal (PR), Thompsontown (TT).

The 33rd Lewistown CBC (mostly in *Juniata*, but with a small section in *Perry*) was held 12/21 in good weather conditions. Thirty-nine participants logged 67 party-hours and recorded 76 species, slightly above average. **Trumpeter Swan** was a new species, and 8 species set record highs, as mentioned below.

Uncommon here, 8 **Snow Geese** at MA provided a good count 2/4 (JP). A tagged (T77) **Trumpeter Swan** was found near PR 12/17 (Dave Barnes, CK, m.ob.) and stayed in the area, including at CC, through at least 12/21, before moving down-river into *Perry*; this was probably the second county record. Nine **Mute Swans** represented a new CBC high count.

An early (or wintering) **Wood Duck** was in LCV 2/10 (DB). Unusual winter waterfowl included 2 **American Wigeons** at MA 12/22 (AK), single **Green-winged Teal** at MIF 12/24 (CK) and 2/16 (JP), and at least 7 reports from 4 locations of **Northern Pintail**, some likely involving the same bird(s).

**Killdeer** reports were few, with 2 at MR 12/22 (AK) and 1-2 at MA through the season (JP). **Wilson's Snipe** max was 3, with reports from 4 locations in the vicinity of MA (Betsy Riter, Steven Johnson, CK, TW, JP, AK). **Northern Harriers** were scarce – one was at Stetler Rd for the CBC (GG, DG) and one at MA 1/17 (JP). **Cooper's Hawks** set a CBC record with 14. **Rough-legged Hawks** were seen north of TT 12/22 (AK) and near MA 1/26 (JP).

A nice New Year's Day find was a **Barn Owl** at an unspecified location (CK, RH). A very impressive record-high 95 **Eastern Screech-Owls** were recorded for the CBC. **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were seen frequently at the usual location, the Juniata Saddle Club, with a high of 5 on 12/22 (m.ob.); and one was at MIF 12/26 (Tim Reichard). Woodpeckers had a great day on the CBC, with 3 species setting record highs: **Red-bellied Woodpecker** (216), **Hairy Woodpecker** (53), and **Pileated Woodpecker** (52). Single **Peregrine Falcons** were seen at the Juniata Saddle Club near MA 1/9 (Carrington Stephenson ph) and the JR bridge at MIF 2/1 (RH). A **Peregrine** was also seen occasionally through the season at Lost Creek Show Shop (Troyer family).

The mild season was conducive to **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** that attempted to over-winter – singles were at MIF 1/1 (JP, Tobias

Petersheim) and Richfield 1/25 (CK, TW). Single **Winter Wrens** were at MA 12/28 and 1/12 (JP). Lone **American Pipits** were at MR 12/22 (AK) and MA 1/7 (JP). In a poor season for winter finches, 3 **Pine Siskins** were of note, at MA 1/18 (JP).

There were only 4 reports of **American Tree Sparrow**. The high count was a very modest 4 at MA 2/1 (JP); others reports were of 2 in LCV 1/19 (DB) and one each near MA 12/22 (AK) and at the Lost Creek Show Shop 2/17 at OM (Troyer family). The only **Swamp Sparrow** was at PR 1/11 (CK, TW). Wintering **Eastern Towhees** were at MIF 12/2 (CK) and PR 1/11 (CK, TW). Record high CBC counts were made for **Field Sparrow** (30) and **Northern Cardinal** (763).

Observers: **Greg Grove**, gwg2@psu.edu, **Chad Kauffman**, 91 Kauffman Lane, Mifflintown, PA 17059, chadkauffman@earthlink.net, cell 717-994-6715. Deb Brackbill, Deb Grove, Robert Hosler, Andy Keister, Jason Petersheim, Tiffany Willow.

### Lackawanna County

Locations: Chapman Lake (CL).

This year's winter was likely the most unusual many have ever encountered; temps were above average for almost the entire season and snowfall was nearly non-existent. Together, these factors kept many cold weather species further north, ultimately limiting the amount of bird sightings. Ice coverage was also lacking, but this reality did encourage 3 **Tundra Swans** to stop down for a rest on CL 1/20 (MM). Seven **White-winged Scoters** were also discovered at CL 12/11 (MM).

Two **Rough-legged Hawks** surprised birders this season; one was reported near Pump House Rd. 1/20 (NL) and a second was spotted along I-81 in Scott Twp. 2/15 (IR). A single **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was a great find at CL 1/31 (MM) marking just the fourth county encounter of this species in ebird.

*Lackawanna's* CBC on 12/21 exhibited relatively good passerine numbers, especially considering the impact West Nile Virus is having on many of Pennsylvania's year-round residents. Tallies referred to include 210 **Black-capped Chickadees**, 262 **Dark-eyed Juncos**, and 119 **Northern Cardinals** (MC). Additional noteworthy CBC sightings are listed in the chart below. Significance is based upon either a lower or higher than expected count, or the fact that the species was present at this time of the year when it normally would have been wintering furthering south.

Significant 2019 Scranton CBC Sightings		
Species	Tally	Significance
American Black Duck	16	higher than expected
Ruffed Grouse	1	lower than expected
Northern Harrier	1	Present
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Present
American Kestrel	1	lower than expected
Fish Crow	5	higher than expected
Winter Wren	1	lower than expected
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2	Present
American Tree Sparrow	20	higher than expected, but still a low count overall
Swamp Sparrow	1	lower than expected
Purple Finch	4	higher than expected; but still a low count overall
Pine Siskin	1	lower than expected

Observers: **Ryan Johnson**, 140 Hollisterville Hwy, Moscow, PA 18444, (570) 702-9118, natureguy13@gmail.com, Mark Catalano, Nehemiah Laudermitch, M. Mack, Ignacio Rodriguez.

### Lancaster County

Locations: Alcoa Marsh (AM), Beechdale Rd Farm Pond (BRFP), Brenner Quarry (BQ), Chestnut Grove Natural Area (CGNA), Chickie's Rock County Park (CRCP), Conewago Recreation Trail & Wetlands (CRTW), Greenfield Ponds (GP), Lancaster Airport (LA), Lancaster

County Central Park (LCCP), Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area (MCWMA), Millport Conservancy (MC), Muddy Run Reservoir (MRR), Noel Dorwart Park (NDP), Octoraro Reservoir (OR), Overlook Park (OP), Prescott Rd (PR), Riverfront Park (RFP), Rock Springs Nature Preserve (RSNP), Safe Harbor Dam (SHD), Speedwell Forge County Park (SFCP), Speedwell Forge Lake (SFL), Shenk's Ferry Wildflower Preserve (SFWP), Sporting Valley Turf Farm (SVTF), Susquehanna River Bainbridge Islands (SRBI), Susquehanna River Conejohela Flats (SRCF), Susquehanna River Lake Clarke (SRLC), Susquehanna River Long Level (SRL), Susquehanna River Peach Bottom (SRPB), Susquehanna SP (SSP), SGL 52, SGL 156, SGL 220, Susquehanna W.T.P Washington Boro (SWTPWB), Wood's Edge Park (WEP).

The entire winter was unseasonably warmer than average by 5°F, and only 6" of snow fell compared to the 27" average. Any distribution notes (more abundant, less common, etc.) are compared to that species' 5-year eBird data trend. 133 species were recorded during the period, below the 3-year average of 140.

The highest count of 160,000 **Snow Goose** was recorded 2/24 (JL, m.ob.). At last 4 **Ross's Goose** were mixed with the goose flock at WEP 2/15-24 (m.ob.). A **Greater White-fronted Goose** hung around MCMWA 2/22-29 (ZM, m.ob.). Spectacularly, a **Pink-footed Goose** was discovered at WEP 2/16-19 (TG, m.ob.). Briefly it jumped over to MCWMA 2/26-29 (PF, m.ob.), and would continue in the county post-period. This is the 2nd record for *Lancaster*. A flock of 20 **Long-tailed Ducks** was seen on SRLC 1/1 (ML), and there were several other reports of single birds (m.ob.). All 3 scoters were missed, but 12 **Red-breasted Mergansers** were totaled (m.ob.). Red-necked Grebe was not found.

No hummingbirds showed up this winter. At least 2 **Virginia Rails** once again overwintered at WEP (m.ob.), and the previous **Sandhill Crane** at CGNA continued through the period (m.ob.). The first 2 **American Woodcocks** were found at MCWMA 2/20 (BC), and another at NDP 2/24 (DK, SM).

**Bonaparte's Gulls** began to pop in to SRLC in Feb. A juv **Iceland Gull** was seen on SRCF 12/21 (ML), the only one of the season. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were noted on SRLC 1/1, 2/8 and 2/21 (JHr, ME, LB, respectively) and OR 1/28 (LL). **Glaucous Gull** is typically annual, and a juv was photographed on SRLC 12/7 (JHr). Red-throated Loon was missed, but there was a **Common Loon** at MCWMA 2/6 (PB). A lone **Double-crested Cormorant** was seen at MCWMA 2/9 (DH). A lingering **American Bittern** stuck around at WEP 12/8-15 (MMZ, m.ob.).

An adult **Golden Eagle** was observed at MCWMA 12/3 (JL), and again an adult continued there 2/23-29 (ME, m.ob.). The hybrid juv Red-tailed x Red-shouldered Hawk continued at CGNA throughout the season (m.ob.). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was described at MCWMA 12/23 (anon.), and possibly the same bird was seen again in nearby farmland 1/1 (CK, AT, m.ob.). A **Long-eared Owl** was heard near Lititz 12/28 (EH, JB, YV), and 3 were counted on CBC at MCWMA 12/29 (m.ob.). Four **Short-eared Owls** provided the highest count at MCWMA (JHe, m.ob.), and a single bird crossed a road early morning 2/6 in Manheim farm fields (BC). At least 8 **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were counted across the county throughout the season (m.ob.).

Five **Eastern Phoebe**s spent some portion of the season in the southern end (m.ob.). Northern Shrike was missed. One singing **Black-capped Chickadee** was well seen and described in Willow Street 25 Dec (KH), and several other reports were probably not substantive as it was not an irruptive winter. **Horned Lark** numbers reported to eBird were a bit lower than usual, but this was likely driven by low snow cover and therefore more difficulty counting. Four **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** continued at SWTPWB through the period (m.ob.).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch** also stayed north, but one was listed at a Willow Street home 2/24 (WY). A late **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was photographed at a Wrightsdale home 12/3-15 (SB). A wintering **House Wren** was found on CBC near Manheim 12/29 (BC, JF). Brown Thrasher was not reported. Another fantastic find of the season was a female/immature **Varied Thrush** at a home near Landisville 12/4 (JR). The bird continued to 1/4, providing amazing looks and *Lancaster* its 5th record! A handful of **Purple Finch** reports popped up, but they also did not irrupt and it's difficult to know which sightings were legitimate.

For the 2nd year running **Lapland Longspurs** were almost nonexistent, but one was finally found 2/16 near New Holland (BC). However, Snow Bunting was missed. The 3rd high quality find to highlight was an adult **Lark Sparrow** on CBC near Manheim 12/29 (BC, JF). The bird would continue post-season and is at least *Lancaster's* 7th record. Yellow-headed Blackbird was not found, but decent blackbird flocks existed in the southern end. Two **Rusty Blackbirds** were noted in Willow Street 2/29 (WY).

A very late **Palm Warbler** was seen at MRR 12/29 (TA), and a high count of 15 **Yellow-rumped Warblers** was taken at SWTPWB 1/4 (ML). A male **Wilson's Warbler** was photographed in Columbia Jan 12 (DW), which was perhaps the same bird from just prior to the season at SWTPWB. A young male **Dickcissel** visited a feeder near Reamstown, which arrived just prior to the period on Nov 22 (EZ) and continues into Apr.

Perhaps the brightest star of the season in *Lancaster* was an adult male **Painted Bunting** returning to a Bowmansville home 12/20. Remarkably, this bird overwintered at the same feeder from 2016-17 and 2017-18, skipped a year, then returned for a 3rd season! Even more remarkable has been the consistency of its arrival dates: 12/18/2016, 12/17/2017, and 12/20/2019. It is the 3rd record for *Lancaster*, and the first to attend a feeder. Thus many birders, some long-time residents have been able to check off a new county bird, or even a lifer!

Observers: **Zach Millen, 101 Bridle Path, New Holland, PA 17557, (717) 723-1279, zjmillen@gmail.com**, Tom Amico, Joseph Beiler (JBe), Yvonne Beiler, Larry Bernhardt, Sabrena Boekell, Jerry Book (JBo), Paul Brubaker, Bruce Carl, John Carter, Thomas Donahue, Mike Epler, Lauren Ferreri, Jim Fiorentino, Pam Fisher, Tom Garner, Carlton Groff, Kim Hartquist, Holly Harthshorne, Denice Hardtmann (DH), Eric Hartshaw, Jonathan Heller (JHe), Daniel Hinesbusch (DH), Jason Horn (JHr), Josh Houck (JHu), Chad Kauffman, Dan Keener, Larry Lewis, Meredith Lombard, Ervin Martin, Seth McComsey, Brent Musser, Ted Nichols II, Jack Reese, Bob Schutsky, Derek Stoner, Stan Stahl, Aden Troyer, Dennis Weaver, Eric Witmer, Mike & Megan Zettlemoyer, Eva Zimmerman.

#### **Lawrence County**

Locations: Edinburg Lake (EL), New Wilmington area (NW), Shaner Road marsh (SR), McConahy Road, Plain Grove Twp., Volant Strip Mines (VSM).

As usual most of the birding in *Lawrence* this winter came in the form of checks of the county's many wetlands and gravel ponds for waterfowl, and open fields for field birds. Both groups had lackluster seasons. A **Snow Goose** hung around with the Canadas at MR 12/20-22 (MV), rare in fall here. Four late-Dec **Gadwall** were at MR as well 12/21-26 (MV, BB, MC, GK, MAK). First northbound **American Wigeons** were 8 at EL 2/9 (MV), and they were seen at VSM and NW later in Feb as well. The collection of **Mallards** at MR peaked at 262 on 12/22 (GK, MAK), and **American Black Ducks** were widespread, especially after 1/1, but in small numbers throughout (m.ob.). **Northern Pintails** bookended the season with appearances at MR 12/21 (BB, MC) and at VSM 2/16-22 (MC).

Bay ducks were few prior to the end of Feb, but the first indications of spring migration were in evidence with 38 **Redheads** at Shaner Road 2/22 (MV), the highest of several double-digit counts around the area in Feb. A pair of early **Ring-necked Ducks** was at MR 2/1 (MV). Also notable was the count of 21 **Hooded Mergansers** at EL 12/7 (MV). Lastly, a late **Ruddy Duck** was at MR 12/20 (MV).

The top count of **Sandhill Cranes** at the wintering grounds in Plain Grove Twp. was just 33 on 1/17 (RT), far short of high counts in recent years. Three **Wilson's Snipe** were still at NW on Heather Heights Road 12/19 (LW) and up to 4 were back there for the month of Feb (MV, et al.). Unusual for *Lawrence* was a high count of 380 **Ring-billed Gulls** at a pond near New Galilee 2/9 (MV). This flock also included 4 **Herring Gulls**

(MV).

An early **Turkey Vulture** appeared near New Castle 2/3 (MV). A new **Bald Eagle** nest seemed to be in process at MR 2/29 (MV). There were only a few reports of **Rough-legged Hawk**, all from Lake Road in Washington Twp. 12/23-1/1 (MC, LC). **Barred Owl** is not often reported in *Lawrence*, so reports of one at a residence near New Castle 1/22-2/12 (LW) and one at Black Swamp 2/16 (MC) were notable. **Short-eared Owl** was not reported from VSM, but many observers traveled to see a group of at least 3 that wintered in fields just outside of McConnell's Mill SP on Portersville Road, right on the *Lawrence/Butler* line. The birds (or at least the observers) spent most of the time on the *Butler* side but there were a few reports from *Lawrence* airspace 1/18-2/17 (MC, et al.). A **Merlin** was on Bonnani Road, Plain Grove Twp. 12/21 (BB, MC).

An early (or overwintering) **Eastern Phoebe** was seen on Savannah Road near New Castle 2/1 (MC). A **Common Raven**, still uncommon in *Lawrence* but probably not for long, was at EL 2/3 (MV). Lake Road in Washington Twp. held 200 **Horned Larks** and 50 **Snow Buntings** 12/21 (BB, MC). That same day, 2 **Lapland Longspurs** and another 50 **Snow Buntings** were at VSM (BB, MC), and the longspurs were reported again 12/22. A late **Chipping Sparrow** was at a feeder about a mile northeast of McConnell's Mill 12/14 (MH, RH, LW), found during the Butler CBC. The only report of **Rusty Blackbird** was of 3 at SGL 151 on 12/21 (BB, MC), and a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was at Copper Road 2/23 (MC).

Observers: **Geoff Malosh, 7762 Maumee Western Road, Maumee, OH 43537-9334, (412) 735-3128, pomarine@earthlink.net**, Brendyn Baptiste, Martin Carlin, Linda Croskey, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Deb Kalbfleisch, Mary Alice Koeneke (MAK), Glenn Koppel, Ryan Tomazin, Mark Vass, Linda Wagner.

#### **Lebanon County**

Locations: Balmer Farm Ponds (BFP), Clear Springs Rd (CLSP), Fort Indiantown Gap (FIG), Lion's Lake (LL), Louser Park/Northeast Pond (LPNP), Marquette Lake (ML), Memorial Lake State Park (MLSP), Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area (MC), Mt Gretna (MG), Quittapahilla Educational Wetlands (QEW), SGL 211, Stover's Dam Park (SDP).

The only **Ross's Goose** of the winter was found at MC 2/29 (JH). A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at LL 12/21 (JH). Possibly the same individual was at LPNP 12/31-1/5 (TBU, RH, JM, SS, CK), and at neighboring SDP 1/1-11 (TBU, TW, JH). Five **Cackling Geese** provided a good count at SDP 12/18 (TK). Up to 4 were at LPNP 1/15-16 (TBU, JHn). Single Cackling Geese were at QEW 12/22 (JH, ZM) and 2/1 (JH), at LL 1/5 (RE, ST) and 1/27 (TB), and at SDP 1/16 (TBU). A very interesting **Eurasian x American Green-winged Teal** hybrid was at MC 2/22-29 (JH, JHo, JF, EF, NF, BBr). Twenty-two **Redheads** provided a good count at MC 2/22 (JH). A **Long-tailed Duck** was at MLSP 12/21 (JF). A **Common Goldeneye** was seen at SDP 12/25 (P&RW), and at MLSP 2/5-6 (TK, BBU). Two were at LL 1/4 (TBU, P&RW).

A **Ruffed Grouse** was found at FIG 12/21 (JD), and one at SGL 211 on 2/17 (JH). Five **Sandhill Cranes** were in the Lawn area 2/18 through the period (RB, P&RW, MC, JH, RSt, SL, CW). Accidental in Dec was a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at QEW 12/7-8 (P&RW, JH). A **Thayer's Iceland Gull** was at LL 12/21 (JH).

A **Golden Eagle** was found at MC 12/3 (JL) and 2/15 (JH). A **Barn Owl** was a surprise daylight find along Gingrich Rd, in the area of Upper Lawn 1/22 (P&RW). Five **Barred Owls** and a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** were at SGL 211 on 2/17 (JH). A **Short-eared Owl** provided a first FIG record 12/21 (JD, SW). One was seen at MC 2/22-29 (JH, P&RW, AH).

Up to four **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were found in the ML area of FIG 12/14-2/22 (m.ob.). Single Red-heads were at SDP 12/9-1/6 (TBU), and at MLSP 12/24 (JH) and 2/5 (BBU). Two were at CLSP 1/19 (JF). **Merlins** were found at MLSP 12/8 (MC) and 12/12 (SW), Pine Rd 1/5 (SW), BFP 1/11 (JH), Fox Rd 2/2 (JH), and in Palmyra 2/23 (AM). A **Peregrine** was at MC 2/29 (CK). The only **Purple Finches** reported during this non-invasion winter were nine at MG 12/13 (PB). The only **Lapland Longspur** of this virtually snowless winter was found at Meadow Lane 1/8 (P&RW).

The Felty family hosted many birders during the winter to see the continuing **Black-throated Gray Warbler**. Representing a first *Lebanon* record, this rarity persisted at their CLSP home from 9/26 of the previous fall quarter, through all of this winter quarter (m.ob.).

Observers: **Timothy Becker, 10283 Jonestown Rd, Grantville, Pa 17028, tjbecker81@aol.com**, Kathy Becker, Brandon Brown, Brian Brown(BBr), Paul Brubaker, Regina Brubaker, Thomas Buehl Jr (TBU), Brendan Burke (BBu), Mary Coomer, Mike Defina, Jarrod Derr, Mike Epler, Richard Evans, Emily Felty, Justin Felty, Nate Felty, Jonathan Heller, Amy Henrici, Jason Horn (JHn), Robert Hostler, Josh Houk (JHo), Chad Hutchinson, Chad Kauffman, Ted Keen, Josh Lefever, Sandy Lockerman, Annette Mathes, Jessica McNally, Zach Millen, Ted Nichols, Rick and Peggy Price (R&PP), Brian Quindlen, Scott Singer, Rosemary Spreha, Rita Stima (RSt), Scott Thomas, Steve Walthius, Cathleen Wetzel, Pat and Richard Williams (P&RW), Tiffany Willow.

**Luzerne County** – no compiler

#### **Lycoming County**

Locations: Rose Valley Lake (RVL), Williamsport Dam (WD).

It was a generally tame winter season, with little snow or cold. The main excitement for the season came from three long-staying rarities. In total, 106 species were reported during the winter.

**Snow Geese** were unusually abundant in Feb, with tens of thousands seen regularly in the Muncy/Pennssdale area, along with large flyover flocks in the Montoursville area, usually near dusk. **Trumpeter Swan** V31 was at a small private pond in Gamble Twp. from 12/21 until relocating to RVL near the end of Feb (SP, m.ob.). An imm male **Harlequin Duck**, presumably the same bird seen previously on Lycoming Cr. in Nov, was re-found at WD 12/7 (BB, DeB, BoB), and continued through 2/2 (AK).

A **Sandhill Crane** was in Jersey Shore from 12/8 through early Feb (m.ob.). Three also flew over Montoursville 2/11 (DB, DeB). A **Wilson's Snipe** was found along Rte. 44 on 1/20 (EH) and 4 were in Hughesville 2/9 (BB, DeB, BoB). An early **Bonaparte's Gull** was at WD 2/27 (BB), providing the first Feb eBird record for *Lycoming*.

An imm **Red-headed Woodpecker** was in Ralston 12/16-20 (NF). A **Gray Catbird** was seen at Lime Bluff Recreation Center 1/20-21 (WE) and 1/26 (BB, DeB, BoB). Wintering **Hermit Thrushes** were relatively abundant at the Williamsport Water Authority, including a count of 8 on 12/26 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB). Up to 2 **American Pipits** were seen at WD 1/6 (DB, BB) and 1/10 (DB).

**Purple Finches** and **Pine Siskins** were both scarce. The only siskin report was a group of 4 that stopped by a feeder in Ralston 1/29 (NF). A decent flock of **Snow Buntings** was in Cogan House Twp. during Feb. At least 9 **Chipping Sparrows** were at WD 1/2 (EvH, AK, BB, DeB, BoB). A small flock of **White-crowned Sparrows** wintered at Lime Bluff Recreation Center (m.ob.), and one was seen at RVL 12/28 (BB, DeB) and 2/16 (BB, DeB). The only report of **Eastern Towhee** was at RVL 12/28 (BB, DeB). **Yellow-rumped Warblers** wintered at their normal locations at Mill St. and Canfield Island.

Observers: **Bobby Brown, bobbybrown1011@gmail.com**, Dan Brauning (DanB), Bob Brown (BoB), David Brown, Deb Brown (DeB), Jean Dalton, Maddi Dunlap, Wes Egli, Dave Ferry, Norwood Frederick, Eric Hartshaw, Evan Houston (EvH), Andy Keister, Gary Metzger, Steve Pinkerton.

#### **Mercer County**

Locations: Beaver Pond Road (BPR), Buhl Park (BP), Cannery Road (CA), Director Road (DR), Greenville (GN), Grove City (GC), Jackson Center (JC), Jamestown (JA), Maurice Goodard State Park (MG), Millbrook Road (MB), Mercer (ME), New Wilmington (NW), Penny

Swamp (PS), Pine Swamp (PI), Shenango Reservoir Propagation Area (PR), Rodgers Road (RO), SGL 130 (S130), SGL 151 (S151), Sharon (SH), Sharpsville (SV), Shenango Reservoir (SR), Stonebase Road (SB), Tieline Road (TE), Transfer (TF), Trout Island (TI), Willow Tree (WT).

Overall it was a fairly uneventful winter season. Mild temperatures kept birders active but numbers of most birds were down. It was, however, an exciting year for Bald Eagles and Owls.

One **Trumpeter Swan** was found at PR 1/17 (MW). **Tundra Swans** were scarce with only one group of 16 at BP on 12/16 (BW). Other waterfowl were also scarce and this was noticed in other areas around Mercer also. Some movement started showing in mid-Feb with a mild spell of weather. A small group of 18 **American Wigeons** was at PR 2/16 (MW). **American Black Ducks** had some good numbers with 21 at PR 1/13 and 40 there 2/16 (MW). Six **Northern Pintails** were at PR 2/16 (MW) and one 2/23 (BW). **Redheads** were found in good numbers, also noted in surrounding counties. A nice group of 28 at PR 2/16 was noteworthy (MW). Single **Common Goldeneyes** were at PR 12/3 (MW) and GN 12/4 (MW), and 7 were at PR 2/16 (MW). **Common Mergansers** were the most noted waterfowl, with numbers up to 300 at PR 1/31 (MW). A small group of 26 **Ruddy Ducks** was at PR 1/13 (MW).

Upland game birds were hardly noticed. There were 3 reports of **Ring-necked Pheasant** with the max of 5 at S151 12/21 (AL). **Sandhill Cranes** continue to be reported in small numbers. Ten were at PS 12/21 (KB), and 15 there 2/16 (MHO).

A few shorebirds were noted. A **Dunlin** was at WT 2/22 (MW). **Wilson Snipe** were noted throughout the period at locations around RO (m.ob.). The highest number was 10, on 1/20 (SG); many photographs of these birds were taken by all.

It was another good year for large groups of **Great Blue Herons**. Good numbers were at PR and TI with up to 33 at PR 1/2 (MW) and 25 at TI 1/23 (BW). These large groups have been showing up over the past several years.

Raptors put on a good showing during the winter. An early **Turkey Vulture** was at MB 1/14 during a Winter Raptor Survey (GK, MAK). The stars of the show though were the high numbers of **Bald Eagles** found throughout the county. Up to 35 at a time were reported from PR and MG (m.ob.). The PGC estimated up to 100 around SR! **Northern Harriers** were seen sporadically around NW throughout the period (m.ob.). A few accipiters were noted - a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** at SV 12/10 (BW) and one at GC 12/15 (BW). A single **Cooper's Hawk** was seen at GC 12/16 (BW). Single **Rough-legged Hawks** were found around the NW area 1/20-2/16 (m.ob.).

The real stars of the season were owls. A **Long-eared Owl** was found 2/16 by an undisclosed observer and location (*fide* MC, ph). On 2/17, another was found (possibly the same bird as above) at PR (MW), and later 2 were seen here through the end of the period. This bird was seen and photographed by many people necessitating the Corps of Engineers to declare the area off limits due to harassment by photographers going right up to the tree to photograph the birds. A **Short-eared Owl** was found at PR 12/16 (BW). Up to 3 were in JC starting 1/14 (JAM). These birds were seen through 2/16 and also subjected to undue harassment by birders and photographers. Attempts to limit access by restricting location information were unsuccessful. Near the end of the period, a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was found at GN 2/24-29 (MW, m.ob.).

Single **Merlins** were noted 12/18 at SH (SS), 1/28 at PR (MW) and 2/12 at JC (JMC, MW). **American Kestrels** were reported throughout the period around NW, a traditional area to find these birds. Surprisingly, only a single **Eastern Phoebe** was reported, found 12/24 at JA (MW). Another good winter find was a **Northern Shrike**, at PR 12/21 (BW) This bird was seen by many with a lot of photographs taken. There were not many other reports of shrike around this part of the state this year. Very few reports of **Horned Larks** were received. The highest count was 200 on SB after a fresh manure spread 1/7 (GK, MAK).

A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** is always a good sighting in the winter - one at PR 2/17 is noteworthy (MV). A lingering **Gray Catbird** stayed at DR till 1/6 (HH) An unusual find, as this was not a winter finch year, was 3 **Common Redpolls** at S130 1/9 (MW). As with Horned larks, **Snow**

**Buntings** were also seldom seen. Two were at SB 2/3 (RN). A few unlikely sparrows were reported. Single **Field Sparrows** were at SR 12/26 (MW) and at PR 1/24 (MW). A good find of 5 **Savannah Sparrows** was made at PR 12/21 (BW). One **Lincoln's Sparrow** was at PS 12/21 (KB).

A **Baltimore Oriole** lingered until 12/11 at GC (JD). Blackbirds were not seen often during the period. A nice group of 200 **Red-winged Blackbirds** at PR 1/22 was noted (MV). Interestingly a group of 200 were found on the Butler CBC the week before. **Common Grackles** were noted on 2/3 with 2 at PR (BW) and 7 at PS 2/9 (MW). Warblers were represented by only a single **Yellow-throated Warbler** at DR 12/27 (E&NH). Of note, a leucistic female **Northern Cardinal** was seen at TF 2/6-7 and possibly later (KS).

Observers: **Glenn Koppel**, [macatilly@gmail.com](mailto:macatilly@gmail.com), Kim Berry (KB), Dave Brook (DB), Martin Carlin (MC), Linda Croskey (LC), Jack Dowell (JD), Steve Gosser (SG), Eli and Niva Hochstetler (ENH), Henry Hochstetler (HH), Mimi Hoffmaster (MHO), Alejandra Lewandowski (AL), Mary Alice Koeneke (MAK), Jim McConnor (JMC), Jacqueline McCullough (JAM), Richard Nugent (RN), James Offhaus (JO), Steve Sanford (SS), Kim Springer (KS), Randy Stringer (RS), Mark Vass (MV), Chris Williams (CS), Michael Williams (MW), Bill Winkler (BW).

### Mifflin County

Locations: Back Mountain Road Milroy (BMRM), Stone Mountain Hawk Watch (SMHW)

The winter season concluded with 76 species reported, ten less than the 2018-2019 season. Twelve species of waterfowl were observed, 8 less than the 2018-2019 season. Most notable was one **Snow Goose** at Strodes Run Lake 1/6 (CK). Shorebirds were once again scarce this winter. Two **Killdeer** were in Belleville 2/21 (JZ) and one outside Milroy 2/25 (RD). Five **Wilson Snipe** were on BMRM 12/27 (RH) and one on BMRM 1/31 (RD).

Four Winter Raptor Surveys were conducted totaling 21 hours of observation - Milroy 1/24, Newton-Hamilton 1/31, Kishacoquillas (Big) Valley 2/1, and Ferguson Valley 2/3. Notable numbers included 55 **Red-tailed Hawks**, one **Red-shouldered Hawk**, one **Rough-legged Hawk**, 31 **American Kestrels**, 6 **Bald Eagles**, one **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, 4 **Cooper's Hawks**, 3 **Northern Harriers**, and one **Peregrine Falcon** (BF, et al.). Once again, non-Winter Raptor Survey **Northern Harrier** sightings were down with only 4 locations reporting individuals. **Rough-legged Hawk** reports came from BMRM throughout the season and one at SMHW 12/3 (GG, ZG). An early **Osprey** was along the Juniata R. 2/26 (Aden Troyer).

**Barn Owls** were reported at two undisclosed locations - 2 at one location 2/19 (JK) and 3 at a second location 12/20 (JK). Short-eared Owl was not reported. For a fifth consecutive year, a winter season **Peregrine Falcon** was at Lewistown, found 12/14 (CK) and 12/15 (RD). One was at SMHW 12/11 (ZG, DK, TK). A **Northern Shrike** was reported on BMRM 2/9 (JK). No Snow Buntings or Lapland Longspurs were reported for the second straight winter. Two **Pine Siskins** were reported on Front Mountain Road 1/19 (JDB).

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### Monroe County

Locations: Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge (CVNWR), Shawnee (SH).

The Winter season in the Poconos for birding was rather dull and calm, not to be unexpected here in the cold, higher elevations. Severe winter weather was nonexistent, with only a few nights and days in the single digits, and snowfall amounts totaling only 15 inches for the period.

Many larger bodies of water still had freeze-ups, with more thawing in between than usual. Winter finch irruptions never materialized, as Canada had an excellent bumper crop of seeds to keep the birds up north.

Highlights include 6 **Long-tailed Ducks** found at Mt. Airy Lake 12/15, and a nice late find was a **Gray Catbird** at CVNWR 12/31 (JM).

A parade of good birds continued intermittently through Jan and Feb, beginning on the first day of the New Year with a couple **Gadwalls** and **American Wigeons** in Lower Swiftwater on a small private pond (NF), followed by a female **Northern Shoveler** 1/6 (BJ) and a **Green-winged Teal** 1/17 (SA, RJ), all at CVNWR. A **Peregrine Falcon** was a noted pass-through 1/20 at the CVNWR (BS).

Jan finished with an **Eastern Towhee** at a private feeder in Barret Twp. 1/25 (TG), a **Merlin** in the outskirts of Stroudsburg 1/28 (PRW), and for all who missed the female **Barrow's Goldeneye** last year, there was another crack at it this year where it showed up once again on the Delaware River at Shawnee (RW, m.ob.) for a second year in a row, one (if not the) only reliable location for goldeneyes in *Monroe*.

Good birds and rarities were staggered through Feb as well, with 8 **Snow Buntings** at the Mt. Pocono Airport 2/2 (BJ), a second **Eastern Towhee** at SH 2/3 (MJ), and a **Cackling Goose** on 2/5 (TM) at CVNWR. Among high counts for the season were 42 **Black Vultures** (BJ) being fed at a private residence in CV (2/3), literally covering her whole house. An estimated 5000 **Snow Geese** flew over the West End 2/8 (PN). A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was lingering on the Broadhead Creek 2/11 (JS), a **Redhead** was notched on the Weir Lake 2/12 (PN), a very early **Killdeer** showed 2/14 on the Mt. Airy Lake (TG), a **Tundra Swan** and **Merlin** at SH 2/15 (SK), the returning **Trumpeter Swan** to Lynchwood Lake 2/19 (BJ), and 8 **Horned Larks** making their way north in Reeders 2/26 (BJ).

The most memorable sighting by this observer for its significance and its utter beauty, was that of 3 **Sandhill Cranes**, followed as they migrated in formation west along I-80 in front of Big Pocono through the passing twilight (2/29). This is the second year in a row I observed Sandhill Cranes migrating west along the I-80 corridor. Could it be this interstate highway system goes right through Nebraska and very near the Platte River valley?

Observers: **Bruce Johnson**, Mt. Pocono, PA 18344, (570)534-2852, [brucejohnson207@yahoo.com](mailto:brucejohnson207@yahoo.com), Scott Angus, Nate Fronk, Timothy Grover, Ryan Johnson, Marion Jordan, Stephen Kloiber, Terry Master, Jon Malarcik, Paul Nalle, June Smith, Brandon Swayser, Patricia and Richard Williams, Rick Wiltraut.

### Montgomery County

Locations: Green Lane Park (GLP), Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust (PERT), Twining Valley Park (TWP), Valley Forge National Historical Park (VFNHP).

This winter season was notably mild, with practically no accumulating snowfall. Hard freezes of our water bodies did occur, but the larger lakes were never fully iced over, and these events were fairly short-lived. The unusual weather led to an apparent reduction in waterfowl diversity and numbers, particularly diving ducks, but may have also enabled additional half-hearted species to persist. A total of 119 species were reported for the period. While slightly below an 8-year average of 121, 119 seems an admirable result given the paucity of waterfowl and lack of serious irruption from any of the northern species prone to semi-annual southerly wanderings.

For the second period in a row, two new species were added to the *Montgomery* list: **Pink-footed Goose** and **Lark Sparrow**. A member of a third review list species, the previous period's **Green-tailed Towhee**, held on through the first weeks of winter. Some new county high counts were also recorded.

One of those high counts was set in late Feb, when an extremely large **Snow Goose** flock took up temporary residence at GLP. This group was carefully estimated at 36,000 on 2/26 (PH), and 30-33,000 on 2/23 (m.ob.), during the zenith of the GLP goose spectacle. While the reservoir

does occasionally get thousands of Snow Geese, their presence is usually shorter-lived and numbers are lower. The previous county record was 20,000, established back in 2015 (GF). In most other recent years, Snow Goose peak numbers have not even hit half of that 2015 estimate.

A **Ross's Goose** was at GLP 12/7-14 (PH, m.ob., ph.), and another was picked out of the Snow Goose horde at GLP 2/23 (PH, AM, ph.). So too was a Snow x Ross's Goose hybrid in the Snow party at GLP 2/22 (PH, ph.). A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was a surprising find at PERT 12/7-8 (m.ob., ph.), and represented a park first. The only other report of this species came from GLP 1/5 (AD, ph.). A **Pink-footed Goose** was found grazing in a construction site on the border between Lower Moreland Twp. and *Philadelphia* 1/11 (HP, ph.). This sighting represented a new species for the *Montgomery* county list, one that was probably overdue given the uptick in sightings of Pink-footed Geese in the northeast. The goose returned to the same location 1/26 (*fide* GA). Alas, due to concerns about the location limiting widespread publicity and no clear behavioral pattern being established of when and where this goose was showing up, few people actually saw it. **Cackling Geese** were present at GLP from 12/7 through the rest of the period (m.ob.). Though most sightings were in the low single digit range, some larger groups were reported, including 12 on 1/11 (JH, KR, ph.).

A pair of **Trumpeter Swans** was found at GLP 1/29 (AM, ph.), *Montgomery's* first since 2013. They did not linger, and no other birders were able to see them, unfortunately. **Tundra Swans** are not typically seen in Dec/Jan, but 5 were present at GLP 12/11 (KI, VM), and another was at GLP 12/26-1/12 (ML, m.ob., ph.). Representing another park waterfowl first, a pair of Tundra Swans turned up on the pond of the farm adjacent to PERT 2/2 (MG, AnM, KR, ph.).

GLP **Northern Shoveler** numbers peaked at 28 on 12/8 (KR). The species was present at GLP in smaller numbers through the entire period, however (m.ob.). GLP's **Gadwall** numbers were still relatively high, including 53 on 1/13 (KC), and with several other reports in the 30-50 range (m.ob.). High counts from the previous three winters were higher. The only other notable dabbler sighting was 170 **Mallards** at GLP 12/8 (AM), more than are typically encountered here.

Diving ducks seemed to be among the worst local "casualties" to the warm winter. There was a single sighting of **Redhead**, a male, at GLP 12/27 (JH, ph.). A pair of **Long-tailed Ducks** were reported at GLP 2/17 (DMu), during the Great Backyard Bird Count. Small groups of **Common Goldeneye** were present with reasonable consistency at assorted sites on the Schuylkill 12/19 onward (m.ob.). Though Norristown Dam saw the most reports, the biggest goldeneye numbers came from the Longford Park area to the west, including a group of 18 on 1/31 (KCa, ph.). Two female goldeneyes made appearances at GLP on three instances 1/11-2/12 (m.ob.), and a single female was found on the quarry pond at Springfield Twp.'s Sandy Run Park 12/28 (JHe, ph.). Single drake **Red-breasted Mergansers** were seen a few times at GLP 1/2-20 (JG, m.ob., ph.). **Ruddy Duck** was mostly absent, with only a handful of single digit reports at GLP through 12/19 (m.ob.) and a sighting of a pair at Wissahickon Waterfowl Preserve 1/1 (AF).

Two **American Coot** were at GLP 12/12 (RK); aside from that, there were no other coot reports. Solo lingering (or, in one case, potentially early-returning) **American Woodcocks** were spotted at PERT 12/4 (PD), Valley Center Park in Lower Moreland Twp. 1/1 (CA, SA), and PERT 2/12 (MG).

Though duck numbers at GLP seemed down this winter, gull numbers seemed up. Fifty **Herring Gulls** were counted at GLP 1/12 (PH), a higher than typical quantity for the park. More impressive was the quantity of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** that chose to rest at GLP this season. Prior to Dec 2019, there was only a single 2016 report from GLP of more than 100 Lesser Black-backs. Few groups exceeding even 50 were noted in previous seasons. This period, however, the explosion of Lesser Black-backed Gulls experienced over the past several years in *Bucks* finally came to *Montgomery*. Our new high count of this species, 307, counted on 1/15 (RK), nearly triples the old record. Counts of 200+ Lesser Black-backed Gulls were made at GLP on 6 dates 12/27-1/31 (m.ob.), and 100+ counts were tallied on 17 dates 12/7-2/23 (m.ob.). A young **Iceland Gull** was seen at GLP 12/27-1/1 (JH, m.ob., ph.). A **Glaucous Gull**, probably in its third winter, visited GLP 1/10-12 (KR,

m.ob., ph.). While only the fourth Glaucous on record for the county, this was our second in two years. A second winter **Great Black-backed Gull** was noted at GLP 1/7-11 (JH, m.ob., ph.).

Although no Common Loons were found, a **Red-throated Loon** was found at GLP 12/17 (PD). **Double-crested Cormorants**, usually absent in winter, were seen as singles at GLP 12/28 (CH) and 1/24 (CB), and in flyover flocks of 4 (CA) and 9 (MG) from Huntingdon Valley 12/29. A **Great Egret** was present at GLP 12/8-15 (DM, KR, m.ob., ph.). Another was spotted in King of Prussia 12/22-28 (SSt, PW, m.ob., ph.).

Several large accumulations of **Black Vultures** were reported from generally the same area of the county, including 98 at a rendering plant in Souderton 1/28 (AH, AM), 60 over a Harleysville McDonald's 12/27 (WBH, KH), and another 60 at Enos B. Godshall Park in Souderton 2/17 (JK). Eight **Northern Harriers** were counted simultaneously at VFNHP 1/19 (SGr), the sole instance of an observation of more than 3 harriers this period. There were no sightings of Rough-legged Hawk.

Nine or more **Long-eared Owls** were split between two undisclosed locations in the GLP area 2/9 to the end of the period (LH, m.ob., ph.). There were sporadic sightings of single **Short-eared Owls** at GLP 12/7-2/19 (JH, m.ob., ph.), and another was flushed at PERT 12/21 (PD). A **Red-headed Woodpecker** didn't let a deformed bill stop it from surviving the winter at Upper Schuylkill Valley Park, where it was seen by many 12/7 through the end of the period (KCa, m.ob., ph.). Another was found by complete accident in Salford Twp. 12/25 (WBH, KH, ph.), thanks to a teetering plate of deviled eggs that required an emergency stop. A third Red-headed Woodpecker was seen in Horsham Twp. 1/21-2/14 (RW, ph.).

At least 8 different **Eastern Phoebes** were spotted this warm winter (m.ob.), with the most regularly encountered of these at TWP 12/14-2/15 (TG, m.ob., ph.). **Common Raven**, continuing to integrate itself into the local avifauna, was reported from a minimum of 30 locations (m.ob.). Though most other irruptive species were not seen at all this season, a few **Black-capped Chickadees** that had slipped south were detected. Singles Black-caps were observed at a Green Lane feeder 12/21 (PG, ph.), in Collegeville 1/26-21 (JD) and Perkiomenville 2/6 (WBH, ph.). There was no widespread irruption of Black-capped Chickadee through the region this winter.

A pair of **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** were reported from a water treatment plant in Oaks, where they were also observed the previous winter, from the beginning of the period through 1/16 (SGr, BH, MR). Despite warmer weather this winter, Oaks swallow numbers from winter 2018-19 were actually higher. **Gray Catbirds** were found at SGL 234 on 12/18 (KR), Bryn Mawr 12/22-1/18 (BL) and TWP 1/27 to the end of the period (SP, m.ob., ph.). A **Brown Thrasher** was also noted at TWP throughout the entire period; however, it was seen by Lark Sparrow-hunters far less than the catbird, only 3 times during this time frame (TG, m.ob.). A second Brown Thrasher visited Hatboro feeders 12/7-1/1 (KE, ph.).

**House Finch** is not normally included in these summaries, but a couple of high counts seemed worthy of recognition. A House Finch flock estimated at 175 was reported at Norristown Farm Park 12/28 (PB). This amount represents a new high count for *Montgomery*. Another extra large group of roughly 120 was seen at the Linfield section of SGL 234 1/9 (SS). The game commission planted sunflower in the gamelands in 2019, which may explain the abundance of finches and **Northern Cardinals** there this winter. There were zero credible reports of Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, or other winter finches.

**Chipping Sparrows** were found at 14 locations (m.ob.). High Chipping counts included 33 at the defunct Ashbourne Country Club in Cheltenham Twp. 2/1 (PD), 24 at PERT 12/28 (AnM) (the highest of 10 double-digit counts at PERT (m.ob.)), 15 at VFNHP 1/15 (SG, RS), and 10 at Gwynedd Wildlife Preserve 1/23 (AA). Several abnormally large **Field Sparrow** counts were reported from PERT, such as 53 on 12/21 (PD). Similarly, **Fox Sparrows** were also plentiful at PERT, including 8 there 12/2 (MG), as were **Savannah Sparrows**, seen in numbers as high as 13 on 1/18 (PD). Running contrary to that trend, the sole report of **American Tree Sparrow** to exceed 5 was 9 at GLP 12/30 (WBH, ph.). Tree Sparrows were fairly scarce this season overall. **White-crowned Sparrows** were also few and far between, with all reliable reports coming

from SGL 234 Linfield, and none of them surpassing a quantity of 4 (m.ob.).

The standout sparrow for the period was a **Lark Sparrow** found at TVP, a new Upper Dublin Twp. park which had been a golf course until recently. Initially detected 1/24, the sharp-looking sparrow remained at the park through the end of the period (TG, m.ob., ph.). This individual was probably the first of its kind to have been witnessed by human eyes in *Montgomery*. Honorable mention for Best Sparrow goes to the continuing **Green-tailed Towhee** at PERT. Found on 11/11 (BR), the towhee hung on until at least 12/21 (MG). It was assumed to have died not long after this final report. Photos taken in Dec showed that the (presumed) ill-fated vagrant had a badly swollen foot, caused, perhaps, by frostbite. **Eastern Towhee** was plentiful, noted even in the northern parts of the county, where they are quite uncommon some winters (m.ob.). Twenty Eastern Towhees were reported at Lorimer Park 1/28 (MG).

A notably large collection of 25 **Eastern Meadowlarks** was located along a farm road near Gilbertsville 12/31 (DM, ph.). Ten meadowlarks were at VFNHP 2/26 (BM, KJ). A briefly-seen **Baltimore Oriole** was reported at PERT 12/1 (SGr). Nine **Rusty Blackbirds** were at Bethayres Swamp in Lower Moreland Twp. (PD, vr.). There were another 3 reports of 1-3 individuals from Bethayres and elsewhere this period (m.ob., ph.). Representing a new Jan high count in eBird (*Montgomery* does not typically host the huge blackbird congregations of other neighboring counties), 3000 **Common Grackles** were viewed in the farmland around Palm/Hosensack 1/3 (GF).

The **Nashville Warbler** that had been present at PERT since mid-Nov was last seen 12/5 (MG). **Pine Warblers** were unusually common, with 12 or more individuals spotted between 8 locations, all in the southern or central portions of the county (m.ob.).

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#### **Montour County**

Locations: Fry Wetlands on Rte 54 near Arrowhead Rd (FW), Montour Preserve (MP), Stamm Rd. (SR).

This winter was extremely mild, and there were many reports of "half-hardy" species persisting through the season statewide; while northerly species generally had a poor showing.

**Snow Geese** began moving north through the county the last week of Jan, and two **Ross's Geese** were seen among them at the MP 2/11 (AK) and one at nearby Arrowhead Rd. 2/1 (AK). Single **Cackling Geese** were seen on SR 1/8 (AK) and at the FW 1/13 (ErH). A very rare-for-the-county **Iceland Gull** was seen at the MP 12/9 (KP).

As mentioned above, northerly species made a poor appearance this season, and there were just 2 reports of **Rough-legged Hawk**, one at SR 12/19 (WE) and another at Fairview Rd. 2/9 (AK). A **Northern Goshawk** was reported at the MP 12/15 (JB). A **Northern Shrike** was seen for a single day along SR 12/17 (AK), the same location where a shrike overwintered the previous two winters. Perhaps this was the same bird that did not find the location to its liking this year.

There were no reports of winter finches such as Purple Finch or Pine Siskin, and Red-breasted Nuthatches were also absent. As mentioned above, reports of "half-hardy" species were common across



Pennsylvania. In *Montour*, **Eastern Towhee** is often not reported in a given winter season; however, this winter, up to 3 were regularly reported at the MP and apparently overwintered (m.ob.).

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#### **Northampton County**

Locations: Grand Central Landfill (GCL), Martins Creek Environmental Preserve (MCEP).

A **Ross's Goose** was seen sporadically at Seiple's farm pond 12/26-2/16. A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was found at Echo Lake 1/26 (BW) and continued till 2/9. Another Greater White-fronted Goose was at Albert Road Ponds 2/11-12 (SA).

A **Spotted Sandpiper** was seen at the boat launch at MCEP 12/29 during a CBC (CCS, MS) and seen again 1/2. This species has wintered at MCEP 4 of the last 5 years. **Iceland Gull** was reported at the Forks of the Delaware 2/26 (KZ), Albert Road Ponds 12/22 and 2/15 (SA), and GCL 1/26-2/23. There was a rare winter report of a **Great Egret**, a flyby over US22 in Bethlehem 2/9 (GN, SS, GA).

Up to 3 **Long-eared Owls** found 12/29 at MCEP remained for the period (CCS, MS). A dark morph **Gyr Falcon** returned for its third winter. It was first reported on a smokestack at the Keystone Cement Quarry 1/7 (BE), and then turned up at GCL 1/25 (SA). This location became a somewhat reliable location as many people saw the falcon for the first time. It was last seen 3/22 flying over Pen Argyl (DZ).

**Eastern Phoebe** was reported from MCEP 12/29 (CCS, MS) and at Housenick Memorial Park 1/31 (LF). There was one sighting of a **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, found at Housenick Memorial Park 2/20 (LF). This is significant as there were few reports of this species moving south this winter. The same park also had a **Gray Catbird** 2/12 (LF, JZ). Two **Lapland Longspurs** were at Graver's Hill 1/19 (MS), coinciding with the only accumulating snow fall of the season. A high count of 31 **Snow Buntings** occurred at the Greggo Farm near Pen Argyl 1/21 (AM).

An **Eastern Towhee** was at Woodland Hills Preserve 12/28 (AS) and towhees were also reported at Riverview Country Club 12/29 (MSa, CH) and on private property near Minsi Lake 12/31 (SA). **Rusty Blackbird** reports seemed above average compared to recent winters with observations at Nazareth Quarry 12/28 (JH), Benders Church Rd. 1/18 (JH), and on Ridge Rd. in Bangor 1/28 (SA). A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was near Easton 1/9 (JH, Arlene Koch).

Observers: **Michael Schall**, 610-737-5275, [mdtjschall@yahoo.com](mailto:mdtjschall@yahoo.com), Scott Angus, Gautam Apte, Bill Etter, Linda Freedman, Jason Horn, Chris Hugosson, Adam Miller, Gavin Nupp, Matt Sabatine (MSa), Corinne Campbell Schall, Stephanie Secic, Adam Smith, Billy Weber, Joe Zajacek, Kurt Zimmerman, Dan Zmoda.

#### **Northumberland County**

Locations: Paradise Road – Turbotville (PRT), Plotts Road (PR), Riverside (RIV), Snyder Road – Turbotville (SRT).

A relatively mild and storm-free winter produced few notable sightings this season. **Short-eared Owls** are typically regular in the county each winter, but this season the only report was of 3 seen along SRT 2/23 (MB). **Wilson's Snipe** are annually reported from a few reliable locations across the county. This season up to 3 were reported feeding along the limestone springs near PR 12/8–2/25 (AK, BS, LS).

The only report of **Snow Bunting** was of 2 seen along PRT 1/21 (KP). The highlight of the season was the unusual sighting of a **Scarlet Tanager** in RIV 2/24 (SF). This represents the only Feb eBird report of this species in the state. There are other winter records in Pennsylvania so it's not unprecedented.

Observers: **Andy Keister**, 110 Hawk Ridge Road, Bloomsburg, 17815, (570) 337-3802, [akeister110@gmail.com](mailto:akeister110@gmail.com), Mary Bogert, Steph Fullmer,

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**Perry County** – no report

#### **Philadelphia County**

Locations: Andorra Meadow (AM), Delaware River (DR), Delaware River Trail - Reed Street (DRTR), Discovery Center - East Park Reservoir (DCEPR), Franklin Delano Roosevelt Park (FDR), Glen Foerd (GF), Independence National Historic Park (INHP), Island Green Country Club and Golf Course-abandoned (IGCC), John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge (JHNWR), Navy Yard (NY), Northeast Water Treatment Plant (NEWTP), Pennypack on the Delaware (POD), Pennypack Park (PP), Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education (SCEE), Tacony Creek Park (TCP), Wissahickon Valley Park (WVP).

Favorable weather on 1/11 and the largest number of participants (98) were the likely reasons for the second best Philadelphia Mid-Winter Bird Census in its 34-year history. Lacking its own Christmas Bird Count circle, observers recorded 109 species in the city which was more than any other circle in Pennsylvania or any of the surrounding circles in New Jersey, emphasizing again the weird attractiveness of the second-smallest and most urban county in the state for wintering birds. And the awesome and vibrant birding community we have that comes out to count birds in the dead of winter. Let's keep that enthusiasm up for the breeding bird census later this year! Four new species were observed during the census: **Pink-footed Goose**, **Blue-headed Vireo**, **Bank Swallow** and **Marsh Wren**.

After a possible sighting in November last year, the first county record of a **Pink-footed Goose** was established at IGCC 1/11 (HP). The bird was feeding with a flock of **Canada Geese** on a barren field just across the county line in *Montgomery* before taking flight and heading into *Philadelphia* airspace heading NE. The bird was re-found at the same location 1/26 (GA, LH, PM, FW). An unusually high number of up to 35 **Woods Ducks** was present at DCEPR throughout winter (RI, KR). A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** stayed late at JHNWR, until 12/10 (AS, RZ). After observations in 2006 and 2011, a male **Green-winged Teal** of the Eurasian subspecies was at JHNWR 12/12-18 (TF, et al.).

Numbers of **Canvasbacks** peaked (329) at their usual spot at NY 1/11 (m.ob.), but dwindled to less than half by end of Feb. Up to 100 birds were seen at DCEPR (m.ob.). **Redheads** were more numerous than usual in recent years with up to 12 at DCEPR, 8 at JHNWR, and 5 at NY (m.ob.). A **White-winged Scoter** was discovered at the NY 2/5 (DE). Up to 2 **Long-tailed Ducks** were straddling the border to *Bucks* at GF 2/15-22 (LH et al.). **Ruddy Duck** counts at the NY reached a new high since flocks started congregating with **Canvasbacks** at 13th Street and the DR in 2014 with up to 230 birds counted in early Jan (m.ob.).

A **Sora** was intermittently seen at JHNWR throughout the observation period and might well be the bird that was there last fall (m.ob.). This appears to be the first winter record for *Philadelphia*. **Common Gallinules** have stayed well into Dec and a couple of records exist for Jan as well, but one immature hung out at JHNWR the entire season and will get first dibs on prime real estate there. Three flyover **Sandhill Cranes** were a surprise at FDR 12/21 (GA).

The first **Mew Gull** for *Philadelphia* was spotted in the company of other gulls on icy Edgewood Lake at FDR 1/23 (HP). With its proximity to the NY, FDR can be a good place to spot gulls when the lakes are frozen. The bird was the fourth record for the state and the first of the subspecies *kamtschatschensis*. Likely the same bird was seen again in *Delaware* a week later. Three different **Iceland Gulls** were seen at the NY 1/19-2/9 (m.ob.), one was at POD 1/25 (FW et al.) and another at GF 2/16-28 (GA, DE, PK). **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were frequently observed along the DR with most observations at GF which offers the most extensive mudflats stretching into *Bucks* at low tide. An immature **Glaucous Gull** slowly floated downriver there 2/16 (BH).

The **Bald Eagles** at JHNWR were on nest starting 2/17 (m.ob.) with the pair at POD only three days behind (BM, HP). A **Great Horned Owl** was utilizing an old Cooper's Hawk's nest at JHNWR since 2/17 (m.ob.). Observations of **Barred Owls** have been few and far between over the

years and were made at WVP. Oddly enough, a bird vocalized in a small city park in the Germantown neighborhood 2/9 sitting in a 300-year-old chestnut oak (SP). Two **Long-eared Owls** were flushed from a pine tree at IGCC 1/11 (HP). The birds were still present the following day (GA, TF, LH, AR). No Northern Saw-whet Owls were discovered. A **Red-headed Woodpecker** was working hard on the root ball of a fallen tree at WVP 2/8 (BP).

An **Empidonax sp.** with "yellow-ish belly and wing bars" remained unidentified in the Bustleton neighborhood 12/10 (JE). The first Jan record of a **Blue-headed Vireo** was made at TCP 1/11 (PB, MS). The "Badass Award" this winter goes to a **Bank Swallow**. The bird was originally discovered at NEWTP in Nov, but was still around on 1/11-14 (m.ob.). Based on ebird records, this appears to be the first time this species has been observed in the Northeast during winter. Primarily overwintering in South America, the species is regularly seen in Southern California and Texas as well as Florida. This is now the fifth swallow species that has been recorded at NEWTP during the colder months. The usual **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** flock numbered up to 140 individuals with a **Tree Swallow** in the mix 2/22 (m.ob.).

**House Wrens** overwinter infrequently and the warmer weather this season certainly supported several observations from all corners of the city. The same holds true for **Gray Catbirds** and **Brown Thrashers**, which were seen more frequently than usual. A flyover flock of 30 **Cedar Waxwings** was unusual at SCEE 1/11 (m.ob.).

Numbers of **Field Sparrows** appeared higher than in colder winters with, for example, 17 birds counted at IGCC 1/11 (HP) and 14 at AM 2/9 (LH). Seventeen **Fox Sparrows** at JHNWR 1/11 were remarkable (KJ, SJ, HM, RM) and so were 16 **Swamp Sparrows** there on the same day (DM); these are numbers one only gets during a careful census of the area. A **Lincoln's Sparrow** was photographed at JHNWR 12/28 and is only the third winter record in ebird (DL). The other two are from Jan 2009. Up to 80 **Rusty Blackbirds** were at JHNWR throughout the winter (m.ob.).

Ten - yes, 10 - warbler species were found. The regulars were: **Orange-crowned Warbler** (up to 9 at 5 locations), **Common Yellowthroat** (up to 12 birds at 8 locations), **Palm Warbler** (up to 12 at 4 locations), and **Yellow-rumped Warbler** (up to 27 at 10 locations). An **Ovenbird** was in Center City 1/24 and most certainly stuck around all winter (JC). Fleeting impressions of a **Nashville Warbler** were made at FDR 12/21 (GA). A **Yellow Warbler** was at DRTR 12/8-28 (m.ob.). Apart from single migrants at JHNWR in early Dec and INHP in late Feb, up to 2 **Pine Warblers** were at Verree Meadow in PP throughout the winter (PK). This site appears to become a regular winter spot for this species and should be checked more frequently during breeding season. A **Prairie Warbler** was discovered on the north shore of POD 1/11 (PK), perhaps only be the second winter record for the county after one bird in 2000. Migrating super late might have been a **Wilson's Warbler** at the edge of Cresheim Woods 12/14 (KR).

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### **Pike County**

There were few exciting or uncommon sightings in *Pike* during the winter. A **White-winged Scoter** was at Porter's Lake 12/11 (BW). There was a mini fallout at Lake Wallenpaupack 12/11 that included 3 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, 22 **Common Goldeneyes**, and a **Greater Scaup** (RK). A rare find in the county was an adult **Northern Shrike** seen at Pecks Pond 12/10 (CCS, MS).

Observers: **Michael Schall, mdtjschall@yahoo.com, 610-737-5275**, Rick Koval, Corinne Campbell Schall, Bradley White.

### **Potter County**

Locations: Coudersport (CO), Genesee Mills Road (GMRd), Gold (GO), Green Forest Road (GFRd), Joerg Road (JRd), Ole Bull State Park (OBSP), Oleana (OL), Rock Ridge Road (RRRd), Rose Lake Road (RLRd) and Wharton (WHA).

Bird sightings reported to eBird for the winter season were low in individual numbers, with very few observations posted, even though the winter was a mild one for Pennsylvania. A total of 40 species were reported to eBird. Notable species sightings from ten locations submitted by eight observers follow.

Five **Canada Geese** and 80 **Mallards** were observed along Rte. 449 north of GO 12/2 (SaG). Thirty-eight **Wild Turkeys** were seen east of PA Rd T350, on RLRd 1/26 (BG). One hundred and thirty **Mourning Doves** were seen on Rte. 449, north of GO, 12/2 (SaG). One **Cooper's Hawk** and one **Bald Eagle** were reported east of PA Road T350, on RLRd 1/26 (BG). **Red-tailed Hawks** were reported from two locations, one from Rte. 449 north of GO, 12/2 (SaG) and 2 east of Road T350 on RLRd, 1/26 (BG).

A single **Barred Owl** was reported from a location southwest of Rt 44 on RRRd 2/6 (MDR). One **Belted Kingfisher** was reported north of GO on Rte. 449, on 12/2 (SaG) and a second was reported at Beaver Swamp in OBSP 2/17 (BG). One **American Kestrel** was seen at 633-689 GMRd 1/26 (BG). Two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** and one **Brown Creeper** were observed at OBSP 2/17 (MH). Two **Eastern Bluebirds** were seen in OL 2/17 (MH). Two **Purple Finches** were seen near Rte. 287 south of WHA 12/2 (RB).

Thirty-two **American Goldfinches** were observed at feeders at a residence south of Sweden Hill Rd off GFRd, 2/18 (RS). Two **American Tree Sparrows** were seen at OL, 2/17 (MH). **White-throated Sparrows** were reported from two locations: one from South Hollow near CO 2/15, and 2 from a residence southeast of Rte. 144 on JRd, 2/29 (SL). Two **Red-winged Blackbirds** were seen in OL 2/17 (MH).

Observers: **Robert Snyder, P.O. Box 603, Howard, PA 16841, (814) 753-2629, birdphotoginpa@gmail.com**, Ryan Beatty (RB), Sam G. (SaG), Barbara Gee (BG), Kay Heffner (KH), Mary Hirst (MH), Sarah Lindgren (SLi), Michael Dello Russo (MDR), Ronnie Schenkein (RS).

### **Schuylkill County**

Locations: Air Products Wildlife Sanctuary (APWS), Deer Lake (DL), Hawk Mountain Sanctuary – North Lookout (HM), Landingville Marsh and Dam (LVD), Lebanon Reservoir (LR), Locust Lake State Park (LLSP), Swatara State Park (SSP), Sweet Arrow Lake (SAL), Tamaqua Christmas Bird Count (TCBC), Tuscarora State Park (TSP), West Schuylkill Christmas Bird Count (WSCBC).

Some data for this narrative was gleaned from two Christmas Bird Count's (CBC) that took place in the county. The WSCBC took place 12/15 and the TCBC 12/28. Thanks to Dave Krueel and Jonathan DeBalko, respectively, for heading those efforts. In addition to species sightings provided directly to me and posted to PABIRDS, a lot of good data were also found on eBird. Many who posted their sightings to eBird were included in the Observer list at the end of this narrative.

With the exception of **Mallards**, **Mute Swans**, **Canada Geese**, and **Common Mergansers** (in recent years), waterfowl species diversity and numbers are always low for the county so any postings are considered notable. Overall, this season's temperatures trended above average so open water was available for most of the winter. As typical in most years, sightings tend to be in Dec for ducks moving south and in Feb for birds moving north as soon as open water is available. Two single **Cackling Geese** were reported at SAL; one 1/19 (TB) and another 2/3 (IG, JL). A small flock of **Tundra Swans** was heard flying over on the Burma Road 2/9 (TB).

Pairs of **Wood Duck** were found at LVD 12/14 (DK), 2/16 (TB), and 2/23 (TB); another pair was reported at SSP 2/19 (RS). A **Gadwall** was spotted at DL 2/20 (TJ). The most dependable spot in the county to find **American Black Ducks** is APWS, which was true again this winter. These ducks were found here throughout the winter (JoD, DR) with a high count of 19 on 2/23

(JoD). They were also observed at SAL 12/11 (NF), SCR 12/17-12/30 and 2/26 (JoD, JD), and Lake Hauto 12/27 (JoD, JD). A **Northern Pintail**, a rare winter visitor to the county, was found on the Sterman Masser Pond in Sacramento 1/24 (IG, JL). A **Green-winged Teal** was found on the same pond 1/24 (IG, JL) and 2 others at LVD 2/16 (TB).

A single **Ring-necked Duck**, also rare here in winter, was reported at SCR 12/17 (JD). Another winter rarity in *Schuylkill*, one **Long-tailed Duck** was at LLSP 12/7 (TB) and 3 at SCR 12/17 (JD). The next three waterfowl species are considered uncommon in *Schuylkill* in winter. First, one **Bufflehead** appeared at SAL 12/27 (NF), 3 more at SCR 12/17 (JD), and another single at LLSP 1/18 (TB). The second uncommon bird was **Common Goldeneye** with singles at TSP 12/8 (JoD) and LVD 2/23 (DH), and 2 at SCR 12/17 (JD). The last of the triad, numerous **Hooded Mergansers** were reported throughout the county in Dec and Feb (m.ob.). Finally, another rarity, a **Red-breasted Merganser** was reported at SAL 12/11 (DK) and 4 others were seen 12/17 at SCR (JD).

One **Pied-billed Grebe**, rare in winter for the county, was heard at LVD 2/16 (TB). **Ring-billed Gulls** are considered occasional during the winter in *Schuylkill*, but similar to the last three years, they were found in all three months. Except for one at LLSP 2/9 (TB), these gulls were found at seven other locations along the southern county border in flocks up to 60 (m.ob.). **Herring Gulls** are generally considered more common in the winter but they were only reported in small numbers at three locations: one at HM 12/5 (HMD), 3 at SAL 12/27 (NF), and singles at LLSP 1/5 and 2/23 (TB). Notably, a **Red-throated Loon**, a rare winter visitor, was at LVD 12/14 (DK). A very late record for **Double-crested Cormorant** was the one seen 12/12 at SAL (BR).

Eighteen **Golden Eagles** glided past HM between 12/3 and 12/12 (HMD). In addition, one was spotted near Klingertown 1/24 (IG, JL). We can reasonably expect **Northern Harriers** to pass by HMS every year but sightings around the rest of the county are usually fairly limited. This season, however, was exceptional. Harriers were spotted at thirteen separate locations including several pairs (m.ob.) during all three months. Six **Northern Goshawks** flew by HM between 12/5 and 12/7 (HMD).

**Northern Saw-whet Owl** reports posted to eBird over the last two winters show an interesting geographic spread along a single ridge running from LR in the west to TSP to the east. With additional surveys this winter season, the birds were also located within the bordering ridge to the south. Credit goes to Dave Krueel for spearheading this effort to locate NSWO territories in the county. **Merlins** appeared in the county for the fifth straight winter, seen at four locations: at SSP between 12/8-1/19 (BR), in northern Frackville between 1/22-2/19 (TB, TJ), APWS 12/27 (JoD, JD), and along 1-81 between the Pine Grove and Ravine exits 1/24 (IG).

The following three species are notable because they are out of season or hard to predict from year to year. An **Eastern Phoebe** was at SSP 12/8-1/19 (BR). A **Lapland Longspur** was spotted along Flat Hill Road 1/19 (TB). A **Snow Bunting** was reported near Pitman 12/24 (TB) and another at HM 12/2 (HMD). Based on CBC comparative data and eBird postings from over the last eight to ten years, **Field Sparrows** appear to be establishing a greater winter presence in the county (JD). This year they were seen throughout the county in all three months (m.ob.). **Rusty Blackbirds** hung around into Dec where they were found 12/27 at TSP (RK, JH). They arrived back 2/15 at the Schwartz farm (DS) and at SSP 2/25 (BR).

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**Snyder County**— no report

#### **Somerset County**

Locations: Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society CBC 12/15/18 ( APAS CBC); Berlin Area (BA); Bluebird Hill Farm (BHF); Confluence Area (CA); Cranberry

Glade Lake (CGL); Flight 93 National Memorial (Flt 93); Indian Lake (IL); High Point Lake (HPL); Laurel Ridge State Park (LRSP); Ohiopyle CBC 1/4/19 – (OP-CBC); Payne Property (PP); Somerset Lake (SL); Stoney Creek Lake (SCL); Quemahoning Reservoir (QR)

The season could best be described as the winter that was not. Usually snowy *Somerset* received only about 30" of snow and there were no protracted cold spells. Lakes froze up only briefly so a few waterfowl stayed around. There was no finch movement and even normally abundant winterers like **American Tree Sparrows** were in short supply.

There were 21 waterfowl species reported. A few more notable records include: 617 **Canada Geese** at IL 12/15 (CP, JP, JM, MM); 51 **Tundra Swans** at QR 2/21 (LG); a **Northern Shoveler** and 6 **Gadwalls** at Stoughton Lake 12/25 (LG); 8 **American Wigeons** at QR 2/13 (LG); 7 **American Black Ducks** at Cranberry L. 1/4 (JP, JM, MM); a **Northern Pintail** in BA 2/27 (JP) and one in Friedens 1/1 (SB); 2 **Canvasbacks** at QR 12/28 (CP, JP, RP); 41 **Redheads** at QR 2/16 (LG) with same number at SCL 2/28 (JP); high of 25 **Ring-necked Ducks** at QR 2/21 (LG); a long staying male **Greater Scaup** at QR 1/16-2/12 (LG, JP); 14 **Lesser Scaup** at SCL 2/28 (JP); one **Long-tailed Duck** at QR 12/8 (LG); many records of **Buffleheads** including 13 on 12/11 at QR (LG); up to 7 **Common Goldeneyes** in CA 1/4 (JP, JM, MM); 58 was highest of many reports for **Hooded Mergansers** at QR 12/13 (LG); of over 50 reports for **Common Mergansers** the high was 29 on 2/6 at QR (LG); **Red-breasted Merganser** maximum was 11 on 12/9 at QR (LG); and the widely reported **Ruddy Ducks** topped out at 16 on 12/15 at QR (LG).

There were no eBird reports for **Ruffed Grouse** but one dog trainer reported 3 at IL (JW). The highest eBird flock of **Wild Turkeys** was of 12 in BA 2/22 (TM). There were 20 reports of **Pied-billed Grebes** with LG's 6 on 12/7 at QR being most, **Horned Grebes** also maxed at 6 at QR 12/5-22 (LG). Notably no **American Coots** were reported.

**Killdeer** persisted at SL until at least 12/14 (JP) and 3 in CA 2/14 (BO) were earliest returns. Possibly the most notable bird of the season was a very tardy **Least Sandpiper** found at SL 12/14 with the **Killdeer**, it persisted until 12/15 for the APAS CBC (DB). **Ring-billed Gulls** were reported 6 times with 26 on 2/4 at QR being the highest (LG). An impressive flock of 42 **Common Loons** was at QR 12/3 with a single up to 12/13 (LG). **Double-crested Cormorants** were last seen 12/5 with 2 at QR (LG). **Great Blue Heron** records were sparse but records came from all months.

No **Turkey Vultures** were seen in Dec or Jan, with the first return being 2/13 in BA (JP). **Northern Harriers** were somewhat more numerous than normal with 14 reports throughout season. **Cooper's Hawks** had 10 reports and **Sharp-shinned Hawks** had 3. **Bald Eagles** were reported 20 times with most in CA and a couple at IL and QR. A **Red-shouldered Hawk** wintered in Markleton 1/18-2/11 (GS). There were 5 reports for **Rough-legged Hawks** including both morphs in BA 12/13 (JP), 2 near Shanksville 12/15 (CP, JP, JM, MM) plus one at FLT 93 1/26 (DY, MY). An **Eastern Screech Owl** was at BHF 12/30 (PHL); **Great Horned Owls** at Shanksville 12/15 (CP, JP); and at GM 1/17 (LG) and **Barred Owls** at PP (CaP), Shanksville 12/15 (CP, JP), Flt 93 12/23 (WP), and at CA 1/9 (BO).

**Belted Kingfisher** was widely reported, especially in CA. Late **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** included one at LRSP 12/26 (LG) and one in CA 1/4 (JP, JM, MM). A few **Northern Flickers** wintered in CA and QR. **American Kestrels** had 17 reports.

A single report and photograph of **Northern Shrike** 2/1 came from Flt 93 on 2/1 (AM), but could not be relocated. There were 3 reports for **Red-breasted Nuthatches** including at Markleton 1/26 (GS), HPL 2/2 (DB), and 3 at Fairhope 2/16 (CL). A New Year's Day **Brown Creeper** was at PP (CP, JP, RP) and one was also at Shaffer Run Rd. (KB, MJ, ER).

**Golden-crowned Kinglets** had multiple reports as did **Eastern Bluebirds** and **American Robins**. **Northern Mockingbirds** were at CA, Flt 93, and QR. The only **Cedar Waxwing** report was at Flt 93 on 12/15 (CP, JP, JM, MM). **Purple Finch** was mentioned in Jan at Markleton (GS) and Feb in BA (SC). The only lonely **Pine Siskin** was at feeders at GM 12/8 (LG).

**American Tree Sparrow** had 14 reports with all except a flock of 15 in BA 2/27 (JP) consisting of 4 or less birds. A late **Fox Sparrow** at PP 12/16 may have had an injured wing (JP). **White-throated Sparrows** had 10 mentions with 14 in CA 1/4 being highest (JP, JM, MM). **Swamp Sparrows** were only found 3 times: at FLT 93 and Shanksville 12/5 (CP, JP), and CA 1/4 (JP, JM, MM). An **Eastern Towhee** in CA 1/4 was a nice winter find (JP,

JM, MM). **Red-winged Blackbirds** had 10 reports with 50 in CA being highest (BO). **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were only found twice, 12/15 in Shanksville (CP, JP, JM, MM) and 1/7 at BHF (PL). The last **Common Grackle** was at CA 12/7 (TO).

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### **Sullivan County**

Locations: Dutch Mtn (DM), Kinsley's Corner (KC), RGSP – Hayfields (RGH)

The winter season was relatively mild and included no major storm events. Snowfall amounts were not heavy. No rarities were uncovered and no large invasions occurred. All observations are by the compiler except where noted. There are fewer than ten eBird checklists for the winter. This observer made only two trips to the county for the entire period. The lack of birds mentioned in this report is not necessarily indicative of a lack of birds. There was no one watching.

One of the best represented groups was the raptors. Two raptor survey routes were run 2/1. The routes netted a **Bald Eagle** pair, one **Northern Harrier**, 21 **Red-tailed Hawks**, one female light phased **Rough-legged Hawk**, and one **American Kestrel**. The Red-tailed Hawk count was a high for these surveys since first being run. A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was observed at RGH 1/1 (JH). A dark phased Rough-legged Hawk was at KC 2/15.

Corvids were also well represented on two separate Feb trips with a high of about 100 **American Crows** counted during the raptor surveys, as many as 20 **Blue Jays** on each trip, and about 5 **Common Ravens** each trip. A small flock of birds on DM 2/1 included several **Black-capped Chickadees**, 2 **Brown Creepers**, and a **Golden-crowned Kinglet**. A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was on DM 2/15. Two **American Tree Sparrows** were observed near Dushore 2/1. A mixed flock of roughly 25 **Red-winged Blackbirds** and 10 **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were feeding in a cut agricultural field near KC 2/1.

Observers: **Rob Megraw, robert.r.megraw@gmail.com**, Jim Hoyson

### **Susquehanna County**

The winter season was marked by a late start, mild temperatures, and no major snow events. Lingering warmth resulted in open water for waterbirds and accessible mast for land foragers. Nonetheless, bird variety and numbers seemed below average once migrants had vacated the county. The absence of irruptive winter finches was also obvious at backyard feeders. Three Winter Raptor Surveys were conducted in the county and seventeen members of the birding community joined our second annual Montrose Area Christmas Bird Count. After the holiday season a number of the more active county birders disappeared to the south and birds were lightly reported for much of Jan and Feb.

A few examples of the paucity of waterbirds follow. A lone **American Black Duck** spent a week on Quaker Lake 12/3-8 (EM). The season's only **Northern Pintail** posed for pictures on the Susquehanna River 12/5 (BS, NVC). A flock of 14 **Ring-necked Ducks** briefly visited Quaker Lake 12/9-10 (EM). The only **Buffleheads** were 8 on Quaker Lake 12/3 (EM). The single **Common Goldeneye** that first appeared 11/15 continued until joined by a second in Dec. Both were present on Quaker Lake 12/15-16 (DH, EM). On the other hand, mergansers can always be counted on to be present on unfrozen winter waters. **Hooded Mergansers** were seen in good numbers throughout Dec with a high count of 42 on Quaker Lake 12/9 (EM) and 8 were on the Susquehanna River for the CBC 12/16 (JS, DA). There were fifteen reports of **Common Mergansers** across the county with a flock of 23 on the river viewed from Harmony Road 12/26 (JS, DA).

Three game bird species (Phasianidae) continue to thrive in our rural region. A total of 5 **Ring-necked Pheasants** were spotted by CBC teams 12/16 (m.ob.) and 6 **Ruffed Grouse** were present on the same survey 12/16 (m.ob.). Among the many reports of **Wild Turkey** several were of large flocks: 22 on 12/26 (WS), 20 on 12/26 (DB, DS, BS, GS), 16 on 12/10 (NVC), and 17 on 12/26 (EB).

**Ring-billed Gulls** are a hit and miss find in *Susquehanna*, only located during the seasonal transitions of spring and fall. Ten were on Elk Lake 1/12 (JS), 2 on the river found on the CBC 12/16 (DA, JS), and one on the Hallstead "Flats" 1/1 (EM, BS). Our only **Common Loon** was present during the first week of Dec on Stearns Lake 12/1-7 (EB). Moderate temperatures and slow freeze-over of local waters allowed **Great Blue Herons** to linger later than expected. Reports included single birds at various locations 12/4 (KJ), 12/6 (EM), 12/7 (BS), 12/12 (BS), 12/13 (NVC), 12/23 (EM, BS), 1/3 (DS), and 2/4 (MF).

The annual search for wintering raptors resulted in a modest showing of the expected species. **Northern Harriers** were present on two WRS routes, 2 birds 1/12 (EM, RM) and one 1/22 (BM, JS, NW), all in typical open agricultural fields of the southern part of the county. The only **Sharp-shinned Hawk** of the season was found in New Milford Twp. 12/16 (SF, LN, NVC). A **Cooper's Hawk** was present along the river on CBC morning 12/16 (DS, BS, GS), another was at a feeder in Montrose 12/21 (TN), and one was spotted with prey on a Hallstead lawn 1/17 (EM). **Rough-legged Hawks** were seen on two WRS routes, one on 1/12 (EM) and 2 on 1/22 (BM, JS, NW).

A nice flock of 20 **Horned Larks** was foraging in manured corn stubble on a farm southeast of Montrose 12/16 (DA, JS). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** spent the winter with us in good numbers. One was present in SGL35 on 12/13 (BS), 2 in the same location 12/14 (DS), 6 were spotted in Silver Lake Twp. 12/16 (DH, EM), and 3 near Springville, 1/18 (NB). A very late **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was seen feeding on a deer carcass near Camp Susquehannock 12/16 (DH, EM). The season's only **Winter Wren** was seen on two successive days near Springville 1/18-19 (NB). A wintering **Northern Mockingbird** was located in Great Bend Twp. while scouting for our CBC 12/13 (BS) and then successfully relocated on count day 12/16 (DB, DS, BS, GS).

There were but 2 reports of **Purple Finch**, 2 in New Milford Twp. 12/16 (BM) and 5 near Willis Lake 2/27 (SS). A pair of **Snow Buntings** was in New Milford Twp. 2/18 (BM). A late **Field Sparrow** was at Camp Susquehannock 12/16 (DH, EM) and 2 were photographed in SGL35 on 12/26 (BS). A **Swamp Sparrow** was at the New Milford Wetland 12/23 (BS).

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**Union County** – no report

### **Tioga County**

Locations: Locations: Asaph (AS), Canyon Airport (CAA), Hills Creek Estates (HCE), Hills Creek Lake Road (HCLR), Jobs Corner (JC), Lambs Creek Road (LCRd), Leonard Harrison SP (LHSP), Little Marsh (LIM), Mansfield (MAN), Marsh Creek Road (MCRd), Pine Creek Trail (PCT), Snyder Point Road (SPRd), SR 660-Middle Ridge Swamp (MRS), Tioga-Hammond Lakes–Ives Run Rec. Area (THL), Tioga (TIO), Wellsboro (WEL), Webster Road Trail (WRT) and Wellsboro-Johnson Airport (WJA).

Data for this report were obtained from eBird and were reported by nine observers from eighteen locations. Eighty-two species were reported during the winter season. Waterfowl included 2 reports of **Snow Geese**; 3 V's totaling 200 birds that flew over the AS 2/13 (JC), and 3 more seen with 2 **Greater White-fronted Geese** at a farm on Rte. 549 southeast of JC 2/17 (LBSr). Thirty-one **American Black Ducks** were seen in some large wet depressions, along the WRT 1/3 (LD). Four **Hooded Mergansers** and 32 **Common Mergansers** were at the channel overlook at THL 12/31(LD); an additional 3 were seen along the Pine Creek Trail north of LHSP 1/24 (RH).

Two **Ruffed Grouse** were reported along the Firetower Rd., near TIO 2/23 (PH). Forty-five **Wild Turkeys** were seen on a farm on Rte. 549 southeast of JC, 2/17 (LBSr).

Two **Black Vultures** were observed at the intersection of Rt 660 and SPRd 1/22 (LD). A **Cooper's Hawk** was seen on a farm on Rte. 549 southeast of JC, 2/17 (LBSr). **Bald Eagles** were reported from 5 locations: 3 were at the channel overlook at THL 12/31 (LD), 2 were found along a 4.0-mile driving route between Webster Rd and Rte. 287 via MCRd 1/1 (JC), and a one was at Darling Run along the PCT 1/7 (LD). Additional Bald Eagle reports of one bird each were from a farm on Rte. 549 southeast of JC 2/17 (LBSr), and along old Rte. 287 near HCRd 2/26 (LD). **Red-tailed Hawks** were reported from 6 locations: 4 were seen on a 4.0-mile driving route between Webster Rd. and Rte. 287 via MCRd 1/1 (JC), one from Rte. 15, south of MAN 2/13 (LD), 2 from JC 2/17 (LBSr), one at 1582 Bryant Rd, MAN 2/25 (DY), 2 found along the old Rte. 287 north of HCRd 2/26 (LD), and one at 561 Kendrick Rd, WEL 2/27 (SM). One **Rough-legged Hawk** was reported from Perry Road 2 miles south of WJA 2/21 (LD).

A **Barn Owl** was reported from the Heckville pipeline swath at LIM 12/3 (PH). Two **Eastern Screech Owls** and one **Great Horned Owl** were reported from a farm on Rte. 549 southeast of JC 2/17 (LBSr). A **Barred Owl** was reported from LCRd 2/23 (LD). One **American Kestrel** was seen on a farm on Rte. 549 southeast of JC, 2/17 (LBSr). A **Northern Shrike** was at MRS 2/28 (SM).

Two **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and 9 **Winter Wrens** were found along a 4.0-mile driving route between Webster Rd and Rte. 287 via MCRd 1/1 (JC). Another Winter Wren was reported from the Pine Creek Trail north of LHSP 1/24 (RH). One very late **Brown Thrasher** was seen approximately 0.25 miles northeast of the intersection with Webster Rd on MCRd 12/20 (RH). One continuing **Varied Thrush** (ph.) was reported from HCE 12/8 (RH). A large flock of 250 **American Goldfinches** was seen at AS 2/13 (FW).

Twenty-five **Snow Buntings** were in fields across the road from the CAA 2/21 (LD). Fifty-nine **American Tree Sparrows** were reported from a 4.0-mile driving route between Webster Rd and Rte. 287 via MCRd 1/1 (JC). One **White-crowned Sparrow** was seen on a farm near JC 2/17 (LBSr) and 3 **Swamp Sparrows** at WRT 1/3 (LD). Eighty **Red-winged Blackbirds** and 75 **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were tallied at AS 2/13 (FW). Eighty uncommon **Rusty Blackbirds** were reported along a 4.0-mile driving route between Webster Rd and Rte. 287 via MCRd 1/1 (JC), and another was reported from the WRT 1/3 (LD). One very early (or wintering) **Ovenbird** was reported from a residence along Marsh Creek, northeast of AS 2/15 (JC).

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### **Venango County**

Locations: Buttermilk Hill Nature Sanctuary (BHNS), Justus Lake (JL), Kahle Lake (KL), Kolodick's back yard, (KO), Oil City Marina (OCM), Rhoades Farm near KL (RF).

The species count for the season was 152, down from 165 last year. The decrease was slightly offset by one out of the ordinary sighting, but overall it was a below average reporting period.

For the fourth consecutive year, the scarcity of cold fronts during Oct and Nov apparently contributed to the low numbers and variety of waterfowl showing up on JL and KL. The only **Tundra Swan** flights were reported at KL 10/19 (DS) and at BHNS 11/3 and 11/7 (KG, JS). The following waterfowl reports were from KL unless otherwise noted. The only **Gadwall** sighting was 11/19 (GE) but **American Wigeon** was reported from 10/13 (JS) to 11/10 (GE). One **Canvasback** was present 11/5 (JS) and 2 **Redhead** were noted 10/19 (DS). **Ring-necked Duck** was present 11/8-17 (JS, GE). **Lesser Scaup** was reported after 11/10 (GE) and **Greater Scaup** was present 11/20 (JS). **Bufflehead** migration began 9/10 (RS) and continued through Nov. **Common Goldeneye** returned 11/7 (JS). **Ruddy Duck** was present beginning 9/16 (GE, JS, RS). **Pied-billed Grebe** began moving through 9/17 (RS).

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo** remained through 8/17 (KG, JS) and **Black-billed Cuckoo** was last seen 8/18 (NB). It was another good year at the 15th annual **Common Nighthawk** migration count at the OCM 8/15-9/13 (m.ob.). The final tally was 997. No rails were seen during the season. **Chimney Swift** remained thru 9/26 (RS). The last **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was reported at BHNS 9/23 (KG, JS).

The first **American Golden-Plover** in eight years was found at RF 10/27 (JS). **Solitary Sandpiper** moved through 8/3-11 (RS, GE). **Greater Yellowlegs** was at KL 9/1 (MK, NK).

**Common Loon** returned to KL 11/2 (JS). **Double-crested Cormorant** was last seen 10/31 (GE). The first **Great Egret** for the year was reported near Belmar 9/6 (JH) and **Green Heron** remained at JL through 9/27 (MK, NK).

The last **Turkey Vulture** was reported 11/7 (GE). **Osprey** moved through 8/2-9/4 (JH, GE). **Northern Harrier** was seen 10/11-11/17 (GE). The last **Broad-winged Hawk** sighting was 9/17 (RS).

**Northern Saw-whet Owl** was reported 9/20-27 and 11/16 at BHNS (KG, JS) and 11/20 at OCSP (GE, JW). The last **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was seen at KO 10/12 (MK, NK). The only **Merlin** was at OCM 9/29 (GE, MK, NK, RS).

**Olive-sided Flycatcher** was at BHNS 9/12 (KG, JS), and **Eastern Wood-Pewee** remained until 9/23 (MK, NK, RS). **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** moved through 8/29-10/1 (KG, JS). **Least Flycatcher** was last seen 9/16 (GE) and **Eastern Kingbird** on 9/15 (KG, JS). Last vireos were: **White eyed Vireo** 9/25 (JS), **Yellow-throated Vireo** 9/26 (MK, NK), **Blue-headed Vireo** 10/30 (NB), **Philadelphia Vireo** 9/28 (JS), **Warbling Vireo** 9/14 (RS), and **Red-eyed Vireo** 10/8 (NB).

**Cliif Swallow** nests continue to decline. Just 16 nests were counted during an annual survey (RS). The last **House Wren** was reported 9/28 (GE). The only **Winter Wren** was at BHNS 9/27 (JS). **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** remained through 8/29 (MK, NK). **Golden-crowned Kinglet** returned 10/6 (NB) and **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** moved through from 9/24 (NB) to 11/2 (MK, NK). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were at KO 8/15 and 8/26 (MK, NK). **Swainson's Thrushes** moved through from 9/1 (NB) to 11/2 (MK, NK). Other thrush/mimic late dates were **Hermit Thrush** 11/6 (KG, JS), **Gray Catbird** 10/13 (MK, NK), **Brown Thrasher** 10/8 (MK, NK), and **Northern Mockingbird** 11/17 (GE). Gray-cheeked Thrush was not reported.

The only **Snow Bunting** reported was at RF 11/1 (JS). A late **Eastern Towhee** was seen at a residence 11/16 (JR). The first **American Tree Sparrow** appeared at BHNS 11/12 (KG, JS). **Lincoln's Sparrow** moved through 9/27 (JS) to 10/13 (RS). **White-throated Sparrow** returned 10/6 (MK), and **White-crowned Sparrow** moved through 10/5 (RS) to 11/11 (NB). The last **Baltimore Oriole** was seen 9/25 (MK, NK).

Warbler migration was unspectacular with 24 species recorded. Warblers that historically have been recorded in fall but this season but were absent follow, along with the year each species was last found: Worm-eating Warbler 2015; Louisiana Waterthrush 2005; Northern Waterthrush 2004, Golden-winged Warbler 2018, Mourning Warbler 2015, Kentucky Warbler 2015, and Prairie Warbler 2006. The only **Orange-crowned Warbler** of the season was at TMCP 9/28 (RS).

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### **Warren County**

Locations: Chandler's Valley (CV), Chapman Dam State Park (CD), City of Warren (CW), Clarendon (CL), Gorman Road (GR), Hatch Patch fields (HP), Hatch Run Conservation Area (HR), Lander (LA), Oil Creek Road (OC), River Road in Starbrick (RR), Russell (RU); Simmons Road (SR), State line at Sanders Road (SL), Swede Road (SW), Tidioute (TI), Tidioute Trail (TT), Wenzel Road (WR).

The weather rollercoaster ride this winter made for some strange birding, with some typical winter birds not showing up at all. A flock of nine **Snow Geese** passed over CL 12/15 (TS). The sole **Tundra Swan** reported

was from TT 2/22 (CW).

Single **Wood Ducks** was at CD 12/11 (AL) and TT 1/04 (SI). Three **Northern Shovelers** were spotted 2/22 at RR (SB). **American Black Ducks** were seen in multiple locations, with a high of 18 at TT 1/1 (EN, KN). Pairs of both **Northern Pintails** and **Canvasback** were seen on RR 1/29 (JF). Small groups of **Bufflehead** were common across *Warren*; a high count of 20 were spotted in CL 12/14 (SG). A maximum of 8 **Hooded Mergansers** were spotted in the Allegheny River at TT 1/4 (SI).

Although always abundant in *Warren*, **Mourning Doves** seemed especially so this winter, with high counts of 24 in CL 2/8 (TS) and 22 in CW 2/2 (BC, TS). Unusual for winter (or just very early) was a single **Wilson's Snipe** seen foraging in fields at HP 2/15 (BC, TS). Unfrozen stretches of the Allegheny River often attract gulls and other birds, but a high count of 29 **Ring-billed Gulls** at TI was unusual for *Warren* (JN).

Unseasonably warm temperatures probably explain the extremely early **Turkey Vulture** spotted 2/5 over CW (BC, TS). Much of *Warren* is too forested for **Northern Harriers**, so sightings of single birds at HR 12/12 (AL), at WR 2/16 (TS), and along KR 2/15 (SG) are noteworthy. A single **Golden Eagle** was seen soaring over CW 12/4 (TS); game cameras have revealed this species to be a regular and somewhat numerous winter visitor here, but most remain within dense forests. A great sighting was an adult **Northern Goshawk** perched along Rte 6 just south of CW being mobbed by crows 12/23 (TS). Goshawks have declined precipitously in PA over the past decade, due at least partially to their high susceptibility to West Nile Virus.

Breeding **Bald Eagles** continue to increase and expand outward from the Allegheny River, including a pair seen incubating by a pond in CV 2/12 (DW, SS). **Rough-legged Hawks** have been absent the past few winters, so individuals seen east of LA 12/5 (BC, TS), on SR 1/2 (SS), and 2 on WR 2/8 (BC, TS) were encouraging. Two **Great Horned Owls** were noted counter-calling in RU 1/7 (MM). An exciting find was an adult **Peregrine Falcon** hunting along the Allegheny River in CW, seen from 12/19 (EN, KN) through 12/23 (BC, TS). In TI, a brown **Merlin** chased a **Mourning Dove** into a door 2/28 (EN, KN); it appears that as Merlins increase as local breeders, they have become less migratory with occasional individuals remaining throughout the winter, as has been reported elsewhere.

Several **Northern Shrikes** visited *Warren* this winter, including single birds on OC 1/31 (SS, DLW, AL), at WR 2/8 (BC, TS), and one that stayed for over a week at GR (EN, JN, KN). An astonishing yet conservative estimate of 115 **Horned Larks** were spotted in fields at HP 2/15, accompanying other field birds (see below: BC, TS).

Four **Brown Creepers** were seen in a loose flock at CD 12/11 (AL). Despite their name, most **Winter Wrens** leave *Warren* for the winter (even they have their limits, apparently), so 2 seen at HR 12/12 was an exciting find – unfortunately they were not re-sighted during the CBC two days later. Most **Cedar Waxwings** leave *Warren* for the worst part of the winter, so sightings of 29 at SW 1/13 (EN) and 21 in CL 1/15 (BC, TS) are noteworthy. Accompanying the huge flock of Horned Larks mentioned above were at least 28 **Snow Buntings** at HP 2/15 (BC, TS).

**American Tree Sparrows** appear to be decreasing as winter birds locally, so a report of 16 at SL 1/7 is encouraging (BC, TS). Two **Fox Sparrows** hung around long enough to be counted on the *Warren* CBC 12/14 at CW (BG). Also of note for the CBC were 2 **Swamp Sparrows** flushed from a swamp in RU 12/14 (AL). New Year's Day came in with 2 **Common Grackles** in CW (BC, TS). The first genuine migrants for the spring were a pair of **Red-winged Blackbirds** at SW 2/17 (KN); by 2/23 whole flocks began showing up such as the 23 seen at HR (BC, TS).

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#### **Washington County**

Locations: Bentleyville (BENT), Canonsburg Lake (CL), Cross Creek County Park (CC), Ginger Hill Ponds (GHP), Peters Lake (PL), City of Washington (WASH), Washington Cemetery (WCCEM).

The roosting flock of **Canada Geese** at PL reached 400 birds the evening of 12/2 (GG). A flock of 10 straggling **Tundra Swans** was over Peters Twp. 12/26 (GG). Conversely, somewhat early were 2 **Wood Ducks** at BENT 2/23 (JF). The few dabblers reported included **Gadwall** at About Road 2/12 (JF), **American Wigeon** at GHP 2/20 (JF), and 10 **American Black Ducks** at CC 1/23 (RI). Surprisingly there were some reports of mid-winter **Green-winged Teal**, unusual in this corner of the state. Singles were at CL 12/31 (MV) and at the AMD pond on Hahn Road 1/22 (MV). One at CL 2/20 (MV) was probably an early migrant.

GHP held the best counts of bay ducks: 2 **Canvasbacks** and 35 **Ring-necked Ducks** 2/20, and 13 **Redheads** 2/21 (all JF). Five **Buffleheads** were at CC 12/3 (RI). Like in nearby *Beaver*, there were some unusual counts of **Common Mergansers** in the county; these included 17 at CL 1/26 (GG) and 25 at Boone Res. 2/26 (GG). Two **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at CC 12/2 (RI) and a mid-winter **Ruddy Duck** at CC 1/2 (ph. FK) was unusual.

Also unusual for Dec were 3 **Horned Grebes** at CC 12/3 (RI); this species is more common in *Washington* earlier in fall and in the spring. First **Killdeer** was back at Houston 2/19 (FK), and an early **Turkey Vulture** was noted at West Alexander Cemetery 1/26 (RT). Bird of the season honors go to the **Northern Goshawk** seen in a WASH yard 1/11 (RI), the first for the county since Oct 2005, and, indeed, perhaps just the second record for the county ever. **Merlins** included one seen periodically in WASH 12/21-2/23 (LC), one in Houston 1/4 (FK), and 2 at WCCEM 1/26 (RT).

**Common Raven** was seen in four locations, which these days represents a below-average season. A good count of 27 **Horned Larks** was noted at Parkview Road near CC 1/26 (RT). The only **Red-breasted Nuthatches** reported were the small numbers that annually winter at WCCEM, this year variously reported 12/14-1/31 (PB, RR). A late **Gray Catbird** was at PL 12/14 (RT), and a rare mid-Jan **Eastern Towhee** was in the same WASH yard as the goshawk 1/19 (RI). Lastly, another rare wintering bird was a **Pine Warbler** that attended a suet feeder in WASH 1/4-6 (ph. LC).

Observers: **Geoff Malosh, 7762 Maumee Western Road, Maumee, OH 43537-9334, (412) 735-3128, pomarine@earthlink.net**, Paul Brown, Lauren Conkle, John Flannigan, Gigi Gerben, Roy Ickes, Fred Kachmarik, Russ Ruffing, Ryan Tomazin, Mark Vass.

#### **Wayne County**

Waterfowl highlights include 3 **Northern Pintails** at Lake Ariel 12/4-7 (RJ) and one **Greater Scaup** at Lake Wallenpaupack 12/11 (RK). **Rough-legged Hawks** were seen at two separate locations in the Equinunk area 1/28 (CF, JH).

A single male **Common Redpoll** was reported at an anonymous residence near Honesdale 2/22. A flock of 35 **Snow Buntings** was photographed near Beach Lake 2/8 (MS) and a flock of 20-30 was seen on a residential gravel driveway in Milanville 2/10 (JN).

Observers: **Josh Jones, unclchu76@gmail.com**, Chris Fischer, John Harvey, Ryan Johnson, Rick Koval, Jessica Newbern, Michael Schall.

#### **Westmoreland County**

Locations: Beaver Run Reservoir Rt. 380 Overlook (BRR-380), Ethel Springs Reservoir (ESR, also more commonly known as Derry Lake), Helen Road – Crabtree area (HR), Hamilton Road Ponds (HRP), Keystone State Park (KSP), Kuehl Property – Murrysville (KP), Latrobe Reservoir (LR, also known as Trout Run Reservoir), Love Hollow – Andy Mack Ligonier location (LH), Loyalhanna Dam (LD), New Stanton (NS), Northmoreland Park (NMP), Powdermill Nature Reserve (PNR), Tubmill Reservoir (TMR), Turner's Pond, Twin Lakes County Park (TLP), Westmoreland Heritage Trail through the MAWC property (WHT-BR) and from the Sarah Steel trailhead to Saltsburg (WHT-SS), Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve (WPNR).

Two Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) were conducted during the season; the 46th Bushy Run count (12/29) and the Rector count (12/23). Thanks to Dick Byers and Annie Lindsay for their compilation work. Five Winter Raptor Survey Routes were run in *Westmoreland*, with Tom and Janet Kuehl participating in all of those routes. Quite a bit of reporting to do for the season

due to significant effort by observers and due to the appearance of several species not normally expected to be observed in winter.

Two **Cackling Geese** found in a flock of **Canada Geese** at BRR-380 on 12/23 (MM) continued only to 12/23. Again, 2 Cackling Geese, this time at ESL, were found 2/1 (RH/SM), and reported again 2/1 (AL). The high of several reports, an estimated 50 **Tundra Swans** flew east over the KP 12/5 (JLK/TK).

Excepting **Mallard** (such as the 150 on the pond at Delmont's Twin Valley Cemetery 12/27 (KB)), there were just small-to-modest counts of puddle ducks. Missed on both CBC's, there were just a few reports for **Wood Duck**, and none of more than the 3 seen on ponds south of Five Points on Rt. 22 near the intersection of Rt. 819 and Kennan Drive (RB). Seven **Gadwall** were at WHT-BR 12/11 (KB) and 8 at NMP 1/20 (MVT). The high count for the season was of just 2 **American Wigeons** BRR-380 on 2/17 (MM). More widely reported was **American Black Duck**, with the high-count of 11 at LR 2/8 (AM). **Northern Pintails** were found at LR (7 on 12/16 (AM) and 4 on 2/15 (AL), at ESR with only one 1/1 (MH/RH) and one again 1/2 (AL), and just 2 at WHT-BR 1/16 (KB). Northern Shoveler was not reported. Not unusual was that Blue-winged Teal also went unreported. Just one **Green-winged Teal** was tallied for both the 12/15 Rector CBC and the 12/29 Bushy Run CBC's.

Reports for diving ducks were also limited. The only reports of **Canvasback** were at Turner's Pond 2/28 with reports of 2 (MVT) and one (KB); the same location also providing the season high count of 23 **Redheads** (KB). All modest counts on the well-scattered reports for **Ring-necked Duck**, with the pond at Mannitto Golf Course providing the highest counts for the season including 9 on both 12/31 and 1/1 (MH, RH) and 10 on 1/3 (RH, SM). Single **Long-tailed Ducks** were at ESL 1/1 (MH, RH) and again at ESL 1/2 (JK, AL). A bit better reporting of **Bufflehead**, with 4 at BRR-380 on 12/21 (JK, TK, MM) and 4 at HRP 2/28 (PF). However, there were limited reports for other divers: one **Common Goldeneye** at Tubmill Reservoir 2/2 (AM) and only of 2 **Lesser Scaup**, at TP 2/28 (KB). All three merganser species were reported, including many scattered reports for **Hooded Merganser**. The Beaver Run Reservoir continues to attract significant numbers of **Common Mergansers**; 90 at BRR-380 on 12/6 (KB) and an estimated 150 at the Rt. 286 Causeway 2/3 and 2/14 (MM). The only report of **Red-breasted Merganser** was one at ESL 2/1 (KB). Single **Ruddy Ducks** were reported 12/16 at BRR-380 (MM) and LR (AM).

For the struggling **Ruffed Grouse**, the only record was of one tallied on the 12/29 Bushy Run CBC at KSP (KJ, GS et al). **Wild Turkey**, however, are thriving, so not all that unusual was the report for a large flock of 65 that worked a late-harvested soybean field along the WHT-SS 1/12 (KB). No Common Loons were reported. The only grebe reported was **Pied-billed Grebe**, found throughout the season; however, only at Beaver Run Reservoir locations and never more than the 6 reported 1/20 at BRR-380 (MM).

Unusual, but perhaps associated with the mild winter conditions is that **Mourning Dove** counts surged to 50 at the KP feeders on a 11/28-29 Project FeederWatch Count, and then peaked at 51 for the 12/5-6 count; however, Jan and Feb counts dropped to roughly just one dozen birds. **American Coot** was first reported at ESR, with one 1/1 (MH/RH), and continued to be reported periodically through 2/29; however, unusual that there were never more than the 4 on 2/22 (MM), and even more unusual that they were not reported at any other location. There was high drama 1/18 as several flocks with a total of roughly 75 **Sandhill Cranes** honked their way over the observer's home in Delmont (KB).

Perhaps **Killdeer** remained in *Westmoreland* throughout the season, as 2 were tallied on the 12/15 Rector CBC, 2 were at LR 1/1 (MH, RH), and 4 were found on Ankney Road north of New Derry 1/26; however, it is likely Feb reports of 3 at HL 2/15 (JK) and 2 there on 2/22(MM), and the one in NS 2/20 (MF) could well have been the first wave of early returning migrants. Dipped on by this observer on several occasions; however, HR near Crabtree, a long time reliable winter location, was productive for **Wilson Snipe**, with a first report of one 1/1 (MH/RH) and then higher counts later in Feb – 7 on 2/20 (PF), the season-high count of 12 on 2/21 (RH/SM), and 3 on 2/22 (MM). Unusual at any other location, one **Wilson Snipe** was found 12/31 at Mannitto Lake (MH, RH), and then again 1/1 (MH/RH); and one was at PNR 2/24 (AL). Among the few, but well scattered reports for **Ring-billed Gull** was an eBird Checklist of 7 at TMR 2/10 (AL).

Both **Black Vultures** and **Turkey Vultures** continue to be found in the

Ligonier Valley during the winter season. Both species were tallied on the Rector 12/15 CBC and neither on the Bushy Run 12/29 CBC. Eight Black Vultures were found at the "Bob-o-link Field" on Rt. 380 near PNR 1/17 (AL). While there were scattered reports in *Westmoreland* for Turkey Vultures, of note were 16 tallied on a WRS conducted in the Ligonier Valley 2/3, while there was a grand total of just one for the four other WRS routes run during the season. Two **Northern Harriers** were in the West Stahlstown Sector 12/15, so tallied for the 12/15 Rector CBC (RH et al.), and the high of several scattered reports was an eBird Checklist of 3 on Ankney Road north of New Derry 1/26 (AM). As expected, both **Sharp-shinned Hawk** and **Cooper's Hawk** were reported. While never more than 7, multiple observers provided reports for **Bald Eagles** at LD 12/10-2/24.

Although not fully convinced it could not be a mimicking Blue Jay, in hindsight a **Red-shoulder Hawk** was first heard at the KP 12/5, then heard periodically during the season both before and after the identification was confirmed by sight of one and the calls of 2 on 2/12. The Murrysville/Mamont area is productive for Red-shouldered Hawk, the area providing for 6 of the new record of 7 (SG, JLK, TK) tallied for the 12/29 Bushy Run CBC. The mild winter apparently was productive for **Red-tailed Hawks**, which were widely reported and occurred at a high rate of 0.47 per mile on the five WRS routes run during the season. Of note is what seemed be as an outsized number of observations of 3 soaring Red-tailed Hawks – reason unknown, but speculation would be competition for territory or mates (JK, TK). The reverse side to the mild winter was the absence of any reports for Rough-legged Hawk.

One **Eastern Screech Owl** responded to playback during Owl Prowl walks held at WPNR on both 1/31 and 2/15. One Eastern Screech Owl peeked out from a tree cavity during day-time hikes of the WHT-SS on both 12/8 and 2/2 (KB). During owling effort for the 12/29 Bushy Run CBC 2 **Great Horned Owls** were heard at the Murrysville Community Park (JLK, TK). One Great Horned Owl was seen being chased by **American Crows** at WHT-D 1/8 (KB). Two **Barred Owls** were reported at LH 12/8 (AM) and at NMP 1/20 (MVT). Barred Owls called at the KP in the early morning 2/20 and 2/23 (JK).

Reliable in the private Rolling Rock Club in Laughlinton, 2 **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were tallied for the 12/15 Rector CBC (AL). Among the reports for **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** for the 12/29 Bushy Run CBC was one found near Delmont in Sector 5 (AL) and one at TLP (R-C). Unusual were 4 **Pileated Woodpeckers** seen at the Byer's home in Stahlstown 2/28 (DB). Unusual is quite a few reports for **Merlin** for this season: one at LR 12/15 (AL), at ESL one on both 1/1 (MH, RH) and 1/2 (AL), and one found near Forbes Road during the running of a WRS 1/29 (JLK, TK, MM). A **Peregrine Falcon** was at LHD 12/23 (MM).

More than a dozen low-elevation reports for **Common Raven** included 2 tallied for the 12/29 Bushy Run CBC on the WPT-SS (RH, SM) and one calling at the KP 1/16 (TK). Missed this mild winter on both CBC's, the only report for the season was of 50 **Horned Larks** found in the Crabtree area 2/8 (JLK, TK, MM). A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** in the Laughlinton area was tallied for the 12/15 Rector CBC (AL). Not an irruption year, so not surprising that there was only one report for **Red-breasted Nuthatch** - one at Ridgeview Golf Course in Ligonier 12/15 (AM). **Brown Creeper** was widely reported and tallied on both CBC's. A rare find was a **Winter Wren** at LH 2/4 (AM).

One **Northern Mockingbird**, a new yard bird at the KP 12/26, joined a feeding flock of **American Robins** to feast on Choke Cherry and Winterberry Holly berries in the back yard, which provided yet another new yard bird 1/20, a **Hermit Thrush**. The mild winter seemingly provided for reports of significant of thrush and mimic species: For American Robin, high counts were a total tally of 255 for the 12/29 Bushy Run CBC (included 120 at TLP (R-C)), and on 2/17 around 55-60 in Stahlstown (DB). Of note for **Hermit Thrush** was the 4 tallied by the Kuehl Party (SG, JLK, TK) for the 12/29 Bushy Run CBC in their Murrysville/Mamont territory; and one rare winter **Brown Thrasher** was tallied on the 12/29 Bushy Run CBC by the Dale Matuza party on the east side of Beaver Run Reservoir (Sector 11). The berries on a neighborhood holly tree provided for high counts of **Cedar Waxwings** seen at a home in Delmont with 47 on 12/12 and = 52 on 2/29 (KB). More often not reported in winter in *Westmoreland*, 6 **American Pipits** were found in the HR "Wilson Snipe" field 2/21 (RH, SM).

Three **Purple Finches** (2 males and one female) were reported in Greensburg 12/17 (PC), one male 1/20 and 1/24, then 2 males spotted at the KP feeders 1/25 and again just one male was last seen 2/6 (JLK, TK). No

Pine Siskins were reported in this non-irruption winter. An early-season report was of 5 **Field Sparrows** WHT-SS 12/1 (KB), and they were tallied on both CBC counts; 4 were captured at PNR 1/7. A later-season report of Field Sparrow was for 2 at the Latrobe Airport 1/26 (AM). **White-crowned Sparrows** were found in reliable winter locations; 7 at WPNR feeders 12/19 (RC) and 11 tallied in the Crabtree area 2/21 (RH/SM). No reports of Fox Sparrow for the season; however, there were scattered reports for **Swamp Sparrow**, with several reports of one at HRP, first on 1/3 and continuing to 2/3 (MM); an **Eastern Towhee** was at the same location 12/10 (MM).

While conducting the Ligonier Valley WRS on the warm and sunny day of 2/3, an **Eastern Meadowlark** was heard singing at the intersection of Rt. 381 and Allen Road in farm habitat near PNR (JLK, TK). Later in the season, one **Eastern Meadowlark** was seen in the Crabtree area 2/20 (PF). **Red-winged Blackbirds** lingered at the KP Feeders to 11/3, returned 2/16, and a sizeable flock of 24 was joined by one **Common Grackle** 2/28 (JLK, TK). In similar fashion, first seen 12/4, one male **Brown-headed Cowbird** continued at the KP feeders 12/5, and then one was with **Red-winged Blackbirds** 2/27 (JLK, TK). The farm habitat in the Crabtree area and the dairy farm on HR provided for high counts of Brown-headed Cowbird: 28 were counted on HR 1/1 (MH, RH) and described as a conservative count in an eBird checklist; 300 were reported for the Crabtree area 2/21 (RH, SM). The only report of the season, 6 **Rusty Blackbirds** were near the Latrobe Airport 2/8 (AM).

Just several reports, but significant counts on two of this season's reports for **Yellow-rumped Warbler** - 7 in the Crabtree Area tallied for the 12/29 Bushy Run CBC (AL) and 12 at Cedar Creek County Park 2/3 (GS, MS). Comments for this very surprising eBird checklist report for **Prairie Warbler** were provided by Lauren Schneider for her home along Rt. 259 just north of LR 1/5: "Came to window near feeders. Reported to me by my son-in-law Steven Lautman. ID verified by Bob Mulvihill, ornithologist at the National Aviary, who viewed video. Two individuals came at 3 PM, then returned at 345 PM." One leucistic **Northern Cardinal** was first reported (with supporting photos) 2/5 at the WPNR feeders by Environmental Education Coordinator Allison Petris, and the bird was seen again (photo included in an eBird checklist) 2/22 (MM).

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### Wyoming County

Locations: Beaumont (BM), Brown's Farm (BF), Davis Crossing (DC), Vosburg Neck, including the Endless Mountains Nature Center, (VN); Iroquois Trail, Tunkhannock (IT); Jennings Pond (JP); Lake Carey (LC); Lake Winola (LW), Lazybrook Park (LP), Little Rocky Glen (LRG), Mulligan's Pond (MP), Nesbitt Road (NR), Oxbow Lake (OL), North Eaton Road (NER), Perrin's Marsh (PM), Phelps Swamp (PS); Riverside Park (RP); Russell Hill (RH); Scavazzo's Pond (SP); Scottsville Road (SR); Sharpe's Lake (SL); State Gamelands 57 (SGL).

The Tunkhannock CBC produced 61 species this year, which is 5 better than last year, but still 6 less than the average of the previous five years and 11 less than the lifetime average of the count. The species count was the third lowest ever for the count. Two of the three lowest species counts have occurred in the last three years. The individual count was also higher than last year, but 2117 below the previous five-year average and 4195 below the lifetime average. It is the third lowest individual total in the life of the count.

Herein, I've summarized the highlights of the total winter season, including through-migrating and winter transient species, as well as local breeders which were recorded outside their usual departure dates.

Among through-migrators, **Northern Pintail** was recorded on 3 separate occasions at LC: single birds 12/15 (RK) and 12/19 (EZ), and three 2/21 (JS). Birders reported 12 **Ring-necked Ducks** 12/20 at OL (JD) and 7 also at OL (MC). **Bufflehead**, like Ring-necked Duck, a regular during migration, made an appearance with 3 at OL 12/14 (MC). Far less common

is **Common Goldeneye** - singles were recorded 12/12 at OL (RK), and 12/19 at LC (EZ).

Among wintering raptors, **Short-eared Owl**, a rarity for *Wyoming*, was reported 12/19 at West Nicholson (EZ). Best I can tell; this is the first Short-ear in the county since 2013. It's not unusual to find a few flocks of winter-visiting **Horned Larks** here. This season, we had 2 reports: 40 birds 12/19 (EZ) and 35 birds 2/27 (JD), both records from BF, where we usually find them, if they're around. An uncommon winter visitor, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, was also recorded twice, when singles were found 12/31 and 1/26 at VN (JD).

**American Tree Sparrow** is a regular winter visitor to *Wyoming*, and birds were reported from 3 locations: 2 at VN 1/9 (JD), 6 to 8 from 2/14-2/17 at Falls (LJ), and 5 along Erhardt Road near DC 2/18 (JD). **Field Sparrow**, on the other hand, is a local breeder that usually winters south of *Wyoming*. However, 4 were recorded 12/15 during the CBC at VN (JG, MC). And, **Swamp Sparrow**, another local breeder that usually winters further south, was recorded 3 times: singles 12/12 at PM, 12/12 at LW, and 2 on 12/15 during the CBC at LC, (all RK).

Finally, three other local breeders that are usually absent during the winter were recorded during the CBC 12/15: **Eastern Towhee**, 2 along NER (RK); **Red-winged Blackbird**, 21 along SR (JD, MC); and **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, 3 at LC (RK).

Observers: **Joe DeMarco, 15 West Tioga Street, Tunkhannock, PA, 18657, (570) 836-1468, (JD)**, Stanley Bochak (SB), Tom Boyle (TB), Mark Catalano (MC), Joe DeMarco (JD), Laura Dickson (LD), Sandy Goodwin (SG), Lynne Jamison (LJ), Jim Hoyson (JH), Rick Koval (RK), Jonathan DeBalko (JDB), Rick Koval (RK), Rebecca Lesko (RL), Peter Petokas (PP), Susan Petty (SP), Penny Reid (PR), Sandra Rospigliosi (SR), Jerry Skinner (JSK), Cheryle Stone (CS), Kimberly Tavernia (KT), Sharon Templin (ST), Jon Thomas (JT), David Trently (DT), Ronald Vendetti (RV), Ellen Whipple (EW), Melissa Wright (MW), Alan and Bonnie Yuscavage (ABY), and Eric Zawatski (EZ).

### York County

Locations: Codorus State Park (CSP), Gifford Pinchot State Park (GPSP), Hopewell Twp Park (HTP), Lake Redman (LR), Long Arm Reservoir (LAR), York Christmas Bird Count (YCBC), York Springs Christmas Bird Count (YSCBC)

The period's total of 109 species is a bit on the low side vs recent trends. The CBCs in the county also reflected lower than normal species diversity. The 12/21 CBC found 74 species while the 12/30 YSCBC produced 58 species in the *York* portion. The small sliver of *York* in the Southern Lancaster County CBC continued to experience low species variety as well. The mildness of the winter was reflected in **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** and **Eastern Phoebe** being found in all months, frequent reporting of **Hermit Thrush** and **Eastern Towhee**, a **Common Yellowthroat** on the YCBC, and the near absence of northern irruptive species.

The typical pattern for minimal migration drift of **Snow Goose** and **Tundra Swan** west of the Susquehanna R. was apparent once again this winter. Five reports (m.ob.) each of Snows and Tundras were limited to 6 bird and 20 bird maxes, respectively. A **Cackling Goose** was spotted at LR 12/31 (QP). Up to 8 **Mute Swans** were at Spring Grove throughout the period (CB, BR). The species highlight for the period was a pair of **Trumpeter Swans** at LR 2/4-5 (AM, RS, et al). Interestingly, the county's first ever sighting was two years ago in the same general timeframe, 1/21-2/3. That observation on Codorus Creek is approximately 6 miles from this year's sighting. Is it possible the same pair made a return visit?

A pair of **Wood Ducks** was detected at GPSP 2/17 (KE). Three reports of **Northern Shoveler** were unusual in that all were of single birds. Better **Gadwall** counts included up to 36 at Spring Grove 12/4-2/28 (m.ob.) and 40 at Lake Lea 12/30 (VG, HW). Lake Lea also produced the high count of 5 reports of **American Wigeon** with 20 birds 12/30 (VG, HW). Some nice **Mallard** counts for *York* included 342 at LR 12/17 (RS) and 250 at the same site 1/30 (CB). A **Mallard x American Black Duck** was identified at LR 1/5-30 (BR). Five reports of **American Black Duck** spanned the period (m.ob.) with a high of up to 16 at LR. A **Green-winged Teal** was found along River Rd 12/24 (CE) and LR held at least one all period with a high of 5 birds 12/4



(AW).

The sole **Canvasback** report was of 6 birds at LR 2/24 (JF). Four **Redhead** reports 1/9–2/20 (CB, GG, SL, HM, DN) were paced by an 8 count at Hanover 2/19 (GG). The sole **Greater Scaup** report was of a trio at LAR 12/20 (CB). Single **Lesser Scaup** were seen at CSP 12/8 (RS) and LAR 12/20 (CB). Positive reporting of **Common Goldeneye** was evident again this winter with 4 reports 12/11–2/27 (m.ob.); high count was up to 9 birds at CSP. Singles of **Red-breasted Merganser** were found at Lake Williams 12/20 (AL, AV) and LAR 12/26 (MH, SH). **Ruddy Ducks** were sparse, singles were at Lake Williams 12/4 (BR) and LAR 1/24 (CB).

CSP held up to 7 **Pied-billed Grebes** 12/14–2/14 (CB, MJ, PM, RS) and one was at GPSP 12/15 (DN). A **Common Loon** was at GPSP 12/5-17 (DNN, DW) and up to 2 at CSP 12/21–2/15 (m.ob.). Eleven locales produced **Wild Turkey** reports with a 49 count on the YCBC and 44 at Ridge Rd 12/13 (KA) pacing the reporting.

A **Wilson's Snipe** was found in the Lewisberry area 12/14 (EB) and up to 3 were at HTP 2/18-26 (DF, JWH, BR). Five reports of **Herring Gull** were more than normal with a high of 7 at Riddle Rd landfill 12/4 (DN). A **Glaucous Gull** graced *York* airspace at Long Level 12/7 (JH). Two of the 4 **Great Black-backed Gull** reports were off-river sightings. The Riddle Rd landfill held at least 25 birds 12/4 (DN) and 5 were at LR 12/29 (BR). **Double-crested Cormorants** were sighted (m.ob.) in Dec and Feb.

The Stoverstown **Black Vulture** winter roost held 90 birds 12/4 (CB). All other diurnal raptor reporting was at normal levels. Not always found this period, **Northern Saw-whet Owl** singles were at Seven Valleys 1/16 (MS) and Lentz Rd 1/30 (JWH). A surprise was no reporting of Short-eared Owl at the traditionally reliable HTP. **Northern Harriers** were there throughout the period so the owls would have been expected. **Red-headed Woodpecker** reporting was so-so with at least six sites holding birds but 2 was the max at any location. A **Merlin** was spotted on the YCBC and one was at CSP 2/16 (PL). The only **Peregrine Falcon** was a single at GPSP 12/21 (DN).

As noted in the intro, **Eastern Phoebe** was found all months with reporting from four areas. A nice count of 120 **Fish Crows** came from Heck Hill Rd 2/20 (NZ). Rather wide reporting (12 reports) of **Horned Larks** spanned the period (m.ob.). High count was 30 along Eagle Scout Rd 1/9 (CB).

There were four plausible reports of **Black-capped Chickadee**, one of **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, and 3 for **Purple Finch** outside the data reliability challenged Great Backyard Bird Count timeframe of 2/14-17. **Brown Creeper**, **Winter Wren**, **Carolina Wren**, **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, and **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** were all well reported. A **Brown Thrasher** was at Riddle Rd landfill 12/7 (BR).

Four reports (DF, EK, SL, RS) of **Chipping Sparrow** and 6 on the YCBC was a strong showing. Additionally, a photographed bird at Manchester 12/23 (SL) showed a remarkably strong eye-ring in one profile shot. A trio of **American Tree Sparrows** at CSP 12/29 (NH) provided the only report. **Fox Sparrow** was reported (CB, EB, PM, DT) in Dec and Feb. Six reports (m.ob.) of **Savannah Sparrow** spanned the period with a high of 4 birds at HTP 1/29 (DF). **Swamp Sparrow** showed well with reports (m.ob.) throughout the period coming from 8 sites. High count was limited to 5 at 2 locations.

Seen all period at HTP, the high count for **Eastern Meadowlark** was 13 birds 12/2 (AW). The Wellsville area produced the only other meadowlark report, a single 2/11 (JC). As with *Adams*, **Red-winged Blackbird**, **Brown-headed Cowbird**, and **Common Grackle** were found in all months. The only **Rusty Blackbird** report was of 6 at CSP 12/20 (CB). A **Common**

**Yellowthroat** was found at LR 12/12 (BR) and relocated during the YCBC.

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This female **Harlequin Duck** at Bald Eagle SP, Centre 20 January (here 20)–10 February represented the second county record. (Eric Zawatski)

Perhaps a result of the warm conditions, remarkably three **Prairie Warblers** were recorded during the winter: in Philadelphia, Westmoreland, and this bird at the Commodore Barry Bridge, Delaware 3-15 (here 3) January. (Albert Guarente)

**PUBLICATION SCHEDULE:** Materials to be included in the publication are needed by the due dates below.

Issue	Sightings due to Compilers by...	Articles due to Editor by...	Publication Date
Dec-Feb (Vol. 1)	31 March	1 May	July
Mar-May (Vol. 2)	30 June	1 August	October
Jun-Jul (Vol. 3)	31 August	1 October	December
Aug-Nov (Vol. 4)	31 December	1 February	April

**SUBMISSION OF MATERIALS FOR PUBLICATION:** We welcome submission of feature articles, artwork, or photographs focusing on any aspect of Pennsylvania birds or birding. We strongly encourage that submissions be sent in electronic format by email but will accept handwritten or typewritten material if necessary.

For articles, the Microsoft Office suite (any version) is preferred; however we will accept any popularly used format, or plain text. Please email written materials in an attached document in its original source format (i.e., no PDF files, please).

Solicitations window for photos for each issue of Pennsylvania Birds are posted to statewide e-mail lists and Facebook groups by the Photo Editor when submissions are preferred to be received. Digital photos or scanned image files sent for consideration must be sent to radickerson@gmail.com in JPG format and submitted as attachments and not embedded in the e-mail. Horizontal images (preferred) MUST be able to be cropped to 1050px x 700px with a resolution of 300 px/in and vertical images MUST be able to be cropped to 1050px x 1313px at 300 px/in. Images will not be enlarged/upscaled. High-resolution images are requested during initial submission. Submissions must also include pertinent information for captioning to include species, location photographed, county photographed, date of photo and any other information of significance regarding the sighting. Submitted photos may be cropped or adjusted for color, brightness, or contrast as the editor sees fit without notice to the photographer. Photos with copyright or signature text visible in the image will not be accepted. Photographers will be acknowledged in the photo caption.

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## IN FOCUS – Winter Waterfowl



More often found in eastern Pennsylvania, 4 **Ross's Geese** (in center) were at Janoski's Farm, Findlay Twp., *Allegheny* 13–19 (here 13) December, providing the 12th county record. (*Mark Vaas*)



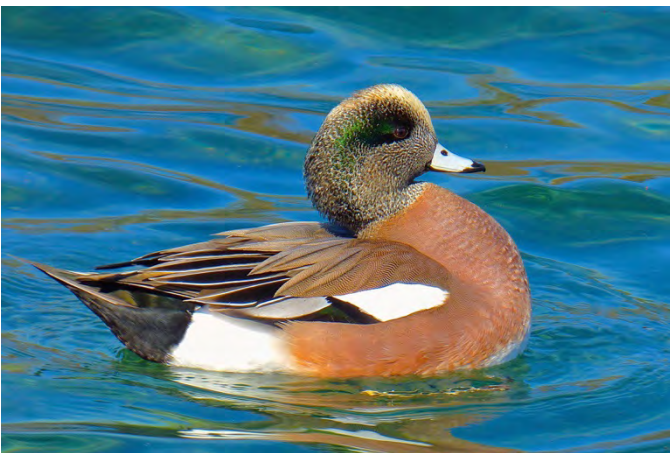
Present 16 February (here 17) into March, this **Pink-footed Goose** seen mostly at Woods Edge Park, *Lancaster*, occasionally commuted north to Middle Creek WMA; second record for the county. (*Meredith Lombard*)



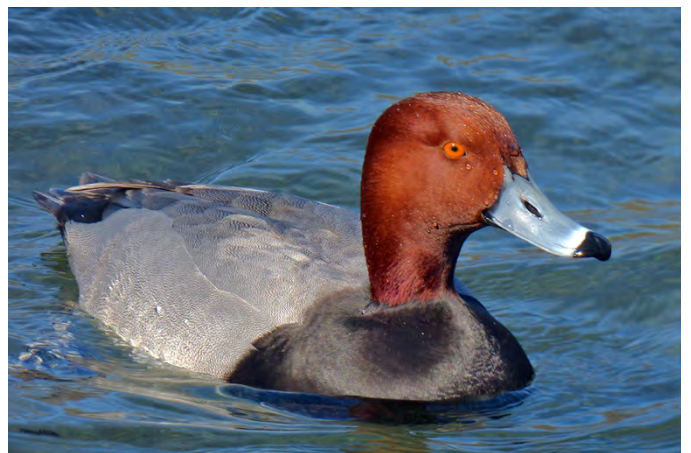
This **Cackling Goose** frequented Woods Edge Park, *Lancaster* from December into March (here 22 February). (*Steve Dale*)



One of ten **Tundra Swans** at Peck's Pond in Delaware SF, *Pike* 24 February. (*Ryan Johnson*)



**American Wigeon** is a winter resident on Children's Lake at Boiling Springs, *Cumberland*; this handsome drake was photographed 22 February. (*Dale Bicksler*)



**Redhead** at Children's Lake, *Cumberland* 22 February. (*Dale Bicksler*)