

# PENNSYLVANIA BIRDS



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# PENNSYLVANIA BIRDS

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Inside back cover – In Focus

**Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*).** This beautifully photographed first-cycle Black-headed was found at John Heinz NWR, *Philadelphia* on Christmas Day. It stayed into April, seen by many birders, and occasionally crossed into *Delaware*. It regularly came to the same area each day, arriving with Ring-billed Gulls. (*George Armistead*)

■  
**Compiler News**

Three new compilers join the line-up beginning with this issue. **John Carter** takes over in *Blair* for Mark Bonta, whose academic socio-ornithological researches in Australia do not mesh well with writing county reports on the opposite side of the planet. **Bill Oyler** takes over in *Franklin* for long-time reporter Dale Gearhart. And in *Montour*, long without a compiler, **Evan Houston**, transplanted from Washington state, is the new reporter. We welcome John, Bill, and Evan – and thank them for their willingness to donate time to our state journal.

This issue marks the last *Bradford* report from **Trudy Gerlach**, who has been doing reports since 2002. She will be missed but has certainly earned a break. For now, *Bradford* has no compiler – contact me if interested.

In the next issue, a couple of additional compilers will debut, covering *Columbia*, *Northumberland*, and *Union* – all counties that have been lacking coverage for years. The following counties have no compiler: *Carbon*, *Lackawanna*, *Potter*, and *Tioga*. Please contact the editor if interested.

■  
**The 2017 annual PSO meeting will be in Cumberland County, September 15-17.**

For a change of pace, this year's PSO meeting will be in the fall season, in *Cumberland*. By the time you read this, the online registration deadline of August 25 will be rapidly approaching. Registrations by mail must be postmarked August 20. For details on field trips and speakers, please see the most recent issue of *The PSO Pileated* or go to the PSO website [www.pabirds.org](http://www.pabirds.org).

■  
**County compilers:** **Phil Keener** (Adams, York), **Mike Fialkovich** (Allegheny, Fayette), **Marjorie Van Tassel** (Armstrong), **Geoff Malosh** (Beaver, Lawrence, Washington), **Tom Dick** (Bedford), **Rudy Keller** and **Matt Wlasniewski** (Berks), **John Carter** (Blair), **August Mirabella** (Bucks), **Oscar Miller** (Butler), **Dave Gobert** (Cambria), **Brendyn Baptiste** (Cameron, Elk), **Nan Butkovich** (Centre), **Holly Merker** (Chester), **Carole**

**Winslow** (Clarion), **Diane Bierly** (Clearfield), **Wayne Laubscher** (Clinton), **Rob Hodgson** (Crawford), **Vern Gauthier** (Cumberland, Perry), **Annette Mathes** (Dauphin), **Sheryl Johnson** (Delaware), **Jerry McWilliams** (Erie), **Flo McGuire** (Forest), **Bill Oyler** (Franklin), **Amy Evans** (Fulton), **Marjorie Howard** (Greene), **Greg Grove** (Huntingdon), **Margaret Higbee** (Indiana), **Thomas Glover** (Jefferson), **Chad Kauffman**, **Aden Troyer** (Juniata), **Tim Becker** (Lebanon), **Bill Etter** (Lehigh), **Jonathan DeBalko** (Luzerne), **Bobby Brown** (Lycoming), **Gigi Gerben** (McKean), **Neil Troyer** (Mercer), **Jon Kauffman** (Mifflin), **Brian Hardiman** (Monroe), **Brian Henderson** (Montgomery), **Evan Houston** (Montour), **Michael Schall** (Northampton, Pike), **Doris McGovern** (Philadelphia), **Dave Rieger** (Schuylkill), **Jason Weller** (Snyder), **Jeff Payne** (Somerset), **Rob Megrav** (Sullivan), **Evan Mann** (Susquehanna), **Gary Edwards** and **Russ States** (Venango), **Scott Stoleson** (Warren), **Josh Jones** (Wayne), **Tom Kuehl** (Westmoreland), **Joe DeMarco** (Wyoming).



**Black-backed Oriole (*Icterus abeillei*)** The most celebrated bird of the season and possibly most viewed bird ever in Pennsylvania was the sensational Black-backed Oriole first noticed in their back yard by Sue and Dick Hybki of Sinking Spring, *Berks* 26 January. By the time the oriole was last seen in early April (here 3 February), over 1600 visitors had signed the log kept by Tom and Linda Binder, who live across the street from the Hybkis and whose driveway offered the most reliable view of the oriole at the Hybki's feeding station. Black-backed Orioles are endemic to the high plateau of central Mexico and are not known for straying outside their native range. How this bird came to be in Pennsylvania in the winter of 2016-17 is a mystery unlikely to be solved. That uncertainty leads to perhaps the second most asked question (if not the first) – "Is this bird countable"? For more details, see the article by Tom Binder in *The PSO Pileated*, Volume 28, Number 1, which can found on the PSO website.(Frank Haas).

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# THE 2016-2017 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT IN PENNSYLVANIA

Nick Bolgiano

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held for the 117th time during December 14, 2016 to January 5, 2017. (I refer to a year as the one in which Christmas occurred; the 117th count is referred to as occurring in 2016.)

Seventy-five sites reported; Grove City was a new site, with center in Mercer County and Brendyn Baptiste as compiler. South Butler's count is included here, although it occurred outside the count period, on January 7. Imperial and Scranton did not report.

The weather before count period was relatively mild until a cold snap occurred Dec 14-16, followed by snow, ice, and rain on Saturday, Dec 17 (20 counts conducted), and Sunday, Dec 18 (15 counts conducted). Ten counts scheduled for Dec 17-18 were conducted at a later date.

A total of 152 count-day species and four count-week species were found statewide, compared to the average of 164 count-day species. Relatively few rarities were found, with more than the usual number of missed species. This was likely due to the inclement weather on the first weekend.

The 5091 party-hours statewide was a 23% decline from the previous year. A similar happening occurred in 2009: inclement weather on the first weekend, a 19% drop in party-hours, few rarities, and more than the usual misses. Typically, more than half of counts and many of the long-established ones are scheduled for the first weekend. When inclement weather happens on count day, the affected counts are conducted under less than optimal conditions or are often rescheduled without a full complement of participants. That Christmas was on a Sunday may have further complicated scheduling, for only one count was conducted that weekend. Nevertheless, valuable information was collected about ongoing trends.

## Species Numbers

Harrisburg's total of 100 species was the statewide high for count-day species,

### Top 10 Sites for Species Number

1 Harrisburg	100
2 Southern Lancaster County	97
3 Southern Bucks County	95
T4. Bethlehem-Easton	90
T4. Upper Bucks County	90
T6 Elverson	86
T6 Western Chester County	86
T8 Delaware County	85
T8 Lancaster	85
10 Lititz	82

their fourth top count in the last ten years. Southern Lancaster County was second with 97, while Southern Bucks County was third with 95. The table shows the top 10 list and

Figure 1 shows a map of site species totals. Sites reported an average of two fewer species compared to the previous season.

## Hits and Misses

A "hit" is an unlikely species found in 2016, while a "miss" is an expected species not found ("unlikely" means recorded in less than 40% of the previous 30 years, while "expected" means recorded in more than 60% of those years). There were eight hits (low) and seven misses (high).

### Hits

Trumpeter Swan  
Eared Grebe  
Thayer's Gull  
Snowy Owl  
Northern Rough-winged Swallow  
Nashville Warbler  
Yellow-throated Warbler  
Bullock's Oriole

### Misses

Surf Scoter  
Northern Bobwhite  
Black-crowned Night-Heron  
House Wren  
Palm Warbler  
Brewer's Blackbird  
Baltimore Oriole

**Snow Geese** continued a 24-year trend of increased wintering in Pennsylvania, as a total of 90,000 were reported from 20 sites, with 84,000 at Bethlehem-Easton, the usual center of abundance; Figure 2 shows their statewide distribution. The vast majority was in or near the Delaware Valley, but Snow Goose was also detected at four sites west of the Susquehanna River, indicating the possibility of finding this species away from the core wintering area.

Of uncommon geese and swans, **Greater White-fronted Goose** was reported from Gettysburg and Western Chester County (reported 19 of last 20 years). **Ross's Goose** was at Bethlehem-Easton and New Bloomfield (reported 16 of last 20 years). A total of 20 **Cackling Geese** were reported from eight southeastern sites, Emporium, Lewistown, and Wild Creek-Little Gap. **Trumpeter Swan** was at Dallas Area (reported 9 of last 20 years and 8 of last 10).

**Common Merganser**, as usual, was the second most common duck, after **Mallard**; Figure 2 shows the statewide distribution of the 7255 Common Mergansers, aggregating at rivers and large lakes, and well-scattered elsewhere. Top sites were Central Bucks County (with 2433), Southern Bucks County, Southern Lancaster County, Reading, York Springs, Upper Bucks County, Warren, and Bald Eagle State Park. The tendency has been of apparently random fluctuation with

periodic high counts; the last high count was in 2002, with 13,000 Common Mergansers.

Among less common ducks, **Blue-winged Teal** was at Bloomsburg, while Erie observers recorded 9 **White-winged Scoters**, 6 **Black Scoters**, and count-week **Surf Scoter**. (Surf Scoter has been reported on count day in 15 of last 20 years.)

This was the fourth out of the last five years with no **Black-crowned Night-Heron** reported. In contrast, it went unreported only three years during 1948-2011. During 1975-1993, it was reported by an average of three sites per year, but the trend has been toward increasing scarcity. **Great Egret** also went unreported, but it has only been since 1997 that it has been reported with increasing frequency (reported in 16 of last 20 years). **Great Blue Heron** has been reported at historically high levels since 1991, but there has been a slight drop-off during the last four years.

**Ruffed Grouse** continued to be relatively scarce; the 57 grouse was the second lowest count during the modern era, after the 51 in 2013. In contrast, **Wild Turkeys** attained a new high when adjusted for effort; their statewide distribution is shown in Figure 2. Turkey numbers were high in many locations outside the more settled southeast. Lititz reported 50 **Ring-necked Pheasants**, the individual highest site tally in 18 years. Detections of **Northern Bobwhite** have been sporadic since 2000, with this season's miss being the sixth consecutive.

**Red-throated Loon** was at Erie and Pennypack Valley (reported 17 of last 20 years). **Red-necked Grebe** went unreported (reported 10 of last 20 years). **Eared Grebe** was at York, the eleventh report on a Pennsylvania CBC. **Great Cormorant** was at Pennypack Valley, Southern Bucks County, and Delaware County.

**Osprey** was at Lewisburg (reported 14 of last 20 years). The 661 **Bald Eagles** was second to last season's 793 and included 103 at Southern Lancaster County, 73 at Lancaster, and 42 at Southern Bucks County.

The 180 **Northern Harriers** represented an uptick on statewide numbers, though below the 290-301 in 2007-2008, being reported by 75% of sites; their statewide distribution is shown in Figure 2. Harriers were relatively common at many sites, the exceptions being heavily-forested and more settled areas. The 484 **Cooper's Hawks** was a new statewide high and continued their increasing trend. The four **Northern Goshawks** included two at Tunkhannock and one each at Audubon and Lititz.

The total of 186 **Red-shouldered Hawks** represented a new Pennsylvania CBC high (previous was 171 in 2014). Figure 2 shows their distribution, which is generally consistent with previous years. High counts were at Grove City and Butler County in the

west, Benezette in the north-central, Huntingdon in south-central, Harrisburg, York Springs, Gettysburg, Lebanon County, Lancaster, and Southern Lancaster County in the lower Susquehanna Valley, and Pocono Mountain and Dingman's Ferry in the east.

The total of 25 **Rough-legged Hawks** was relatively low, but consistent with recent years. The 11 **Golden Eagles** matched the previous statewide high from 2001 and included two each from Emporium, Hamburg, and Lake Raystown.

**Sandhill Crane** numbers have been rapidly increasing during the last thirteen years; the 246 cranes statewide nearly tripled the previous high and included 127 at Linesville, 83 at Grove City, 32 at Emporium, and 4 at Butler County. The 23 **Wilson's Snipe** represented the lowest statewide total since 1957. The single **American Woodcock** was at Pennypack Valley. **Virginia Rail** went unreported (reported 9 of last 20 years). **Dunlin** at Erie was a count-week species.

The 715 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** was the second-highest statewide total, after the 847 in 2015, and included 325 at Southern Bucks County, 285 at Central Bucks County, 58 at Upper Bucks County, 28 at Bethlehem-Easton, and 17 at Wild Creek-Little Gap. The nearly 44,000 **Herring Gulls** at Southern Bucks County was again a continent-wide CBC high, by a large margin. Fourteen of the 16 **Iceland Gulls**, all 5 **Glaucous Gulls**, and the single **Thayer's Gull** were at Southern Bucks County.

Single **Barn Owls** were at Lewistown and Penns Creek; this is the lowest Barn Owl tally since 1966. **Great Horned Owl** numbers continue to decline, as their counts are roughly half of what they were in the 1990s. A **Snowy Owl** was at Bloomsburg and a count-week bird at Lehigh Valley (reported 7 of last 20 years). The 18 **Long-eared Owls** at five sites included 8 at Huntingdon and 5 at Lititz. The 12 **Shorted-eared Owls** at six sites included 4 at Clarion and 3 at Lititz. After two low years (one in 2015, 5 in 2014), these Short-eared Owl observations were more typical of previous counts in the last decade. Lititz was this season's high site for owl totals, with 75 (see below table). The usual high site, Upper Bucks County, experienced a lower-than-normal count due to weather (Bill Etter, pers. comm.).

**Rufous Hummingbird** was at Lititz and Williamsport, the seventh consecutive year of at least one being reported during the Pennsylvania CBC. It was also a count-week species at Bloomsburg and Southern Lancaster County. The 25 **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were the fewest statewide since 1990, but within what can be considered as a normal year-to-year variation. None were reported from Gettysburg, commonly the top site for this species, but this was likely due to a lack of coverage in frequented areas (Mike Bertram pers. comm.).

The 744 **American Kestrels** was 100 higher than the previous season's total, though this remains far below the levels of the 1970s-

1990s. **Merlins** and **Peregrine Falcons** both set new statewide highs as they continue their upward trends. The 52 Merlins were one more than the previous season's high; their statewide distribution is shown in Figure 2. Merlins were more frequently tallied in the southeast and near rivers. Pittsburgh continued to attract wintering Merlins, with 7 there being the highest historical site tally in the Pennsylvania CBC (previous high was 5). The 45 Peregrine Falcons were 7 more than

County (recorded 11 of last 20 years). The 4 Orange-crowns at Southern Bucks was highest historical site tally in the Pennsylvania CBC (previous high was 2). **Nashville Warbler** at Southern Bucks County represented the eighth report in the Pennsylvania CBC, while **Yellow-throated Warbler** at Bloomsburg was the fifth such report. Other warblers were **Common Yellowthroat**, **Pine Warbler**, and **Yellow-rumped Warbler**. **Palm Warbler** went unreported for the first time since 2002.

#### Top 10 Sites for Owls

	EScr	GH	Barr	LE	SE	NSW	Sum
1. Lititz	44	21	0	5	3	2	75
2. Central Bucks County	47	10	0	1	0	0	58
3. Southern Lancaster County	30	13	2	0	0	6	51
4. Upper Bucks County	40	4	0	0	0	0	44
5. Elverson	28	5	3	0	0	1	37
6. Huntingdon	11	15	1	8	0	0	35
7. Pittsburgh	19	9	2	0	0	0	30
8. Wild Creek-Little Gap	17	7	0	0	0	0	24
9. Lake Raystown	14	3	2	0	0	3	22
10. Hamburg	15	6	0	0	0	0	21

the previous season's high.

Single **Northern Shrikes** were reported from Bald Eagle State Park, Grove City, and White Mills. This was the third consecutive year with few shrikes after a nine-year period (1995-2013) with typically higher numbers (mean=11). The 60 **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** at Pennypack Valley provided the eleventh report there in the last twelve years.

**Red-breasted Nuthatches** irrupted for the first time in four years, with this being among the top 10 nuthatch irruptions since 1970 in the Pennsylvania CBC; their statewide CBC distribution is shown in Figure 2. They were most common at Emporium and Benezette in the north-central, Rector in the southwest, Lake Raystown, Huntingdon, and Lewistown in the south-central, and Tamaqua, Wild Creek-Little Gap, Dingman's Ferry, Lehigh Valley, Bethlehem-Easton, Central Bucks County, Audubon, West Chester, and Southern Lancaster County in the east and southeast. **House Wren** went unreported for the first time since 1981. **Marsh Wren** at Lancaster was a count-week species (reported on count-day 8 of last 20 years).

**Eastern Bluebird** numbers have been at historical highs during most of the last 18 years due to the widespread adoption of nest boxes. Figure 2 shows that high bluebird concentrations occurred throughout the Piedmont outside the Philadelphia region, the Ridge and Valley, along the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, and in the southwest corner. The 20 **Lapland Longspurs** were all at Grove City. The 364 **Snow Buntings** at 11 sites included 148 at Grove City, 105 at Hamburg, and 50 at South Butler.

Warblers were relatively scarce, with six species being found. Five **Orange-crowned Warblers** were reported, including 4 at Southern Bucks County and one at Delaware

Grove City, the first-time site in the northwest, reported 1625 **American Tree Sparrows**, the eighth-highest historical count by any Pennsylvania site. Among less common sparrows, 2 **Vesper Sparrows** were at Chambersburg, while **Lincoln's Sparrow** was at Wyncote (reported 15 of 20 years). **Lark Sparrow** at Western Chester County was a count-week species.

The highest blackbird numbers were the 338,000 at Southern Lancaster County. The 20 **Eastern Meadowlarks** were the fewest since 1947. Neither of the rare blackbirds, **Brewer's Blackbird** (reported 14 of last 20 years) or **Yellow-headed Blackbird** (reported 9 of last 20 years), was reported. **Bullock's Oriole** was at Lititz, the third report in a Pennsylvania CBC. **Baltimore Oriole** went unreported for the first time since 2002.

No widespread winter finch irruptions were detected. There were localized concentrations of **Red Crossbills**, with 20 at Tamaqua and 3 at Lake Raystown. A single **Common Redpoll** was at Lock Haven-Jersey Shore. The count of 92 **Pine Siskins** at 15 sites was typical of a non-irruption winter. **Evening Grosbeak** reports included 3 at Pleasantville and one at Williamsport.

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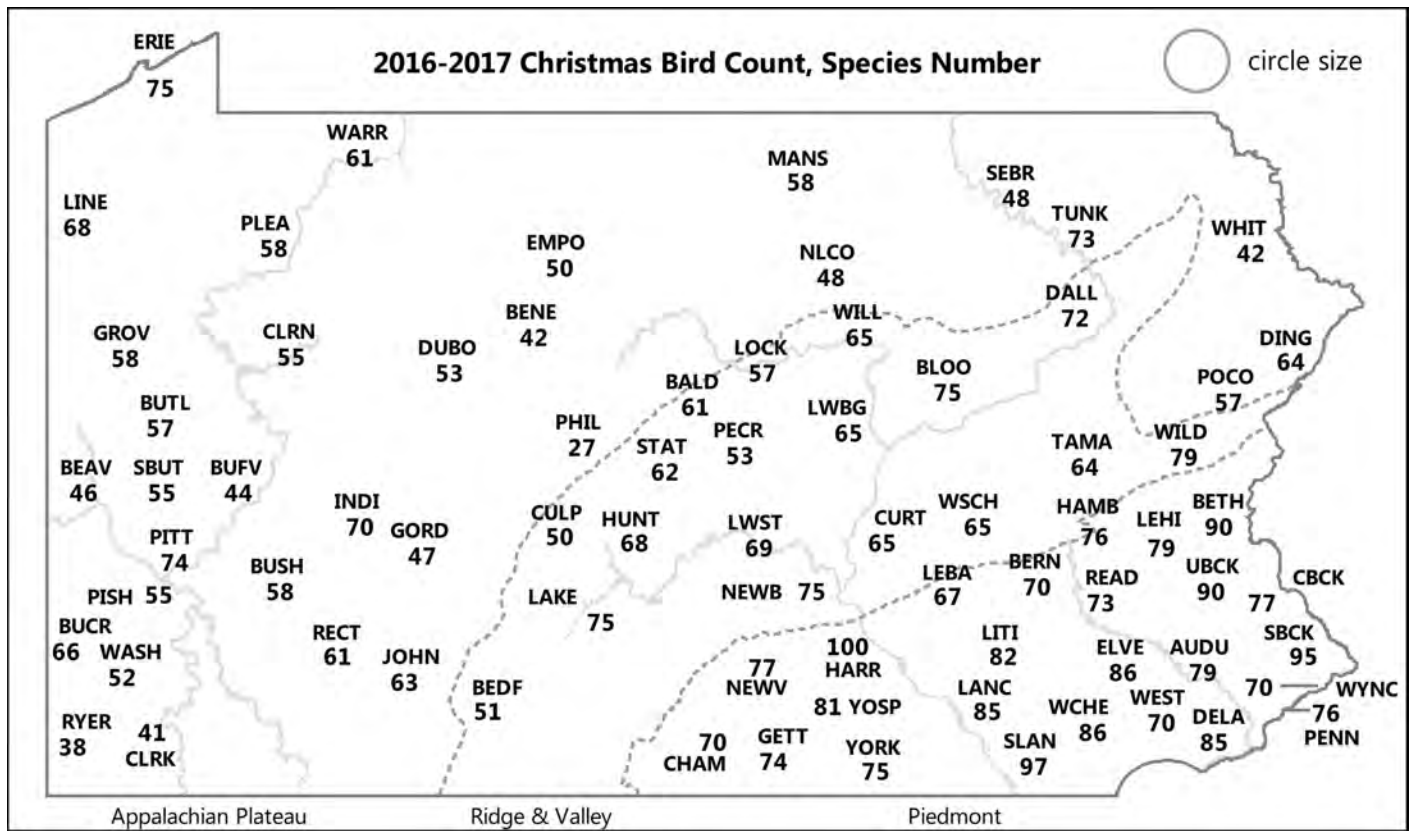
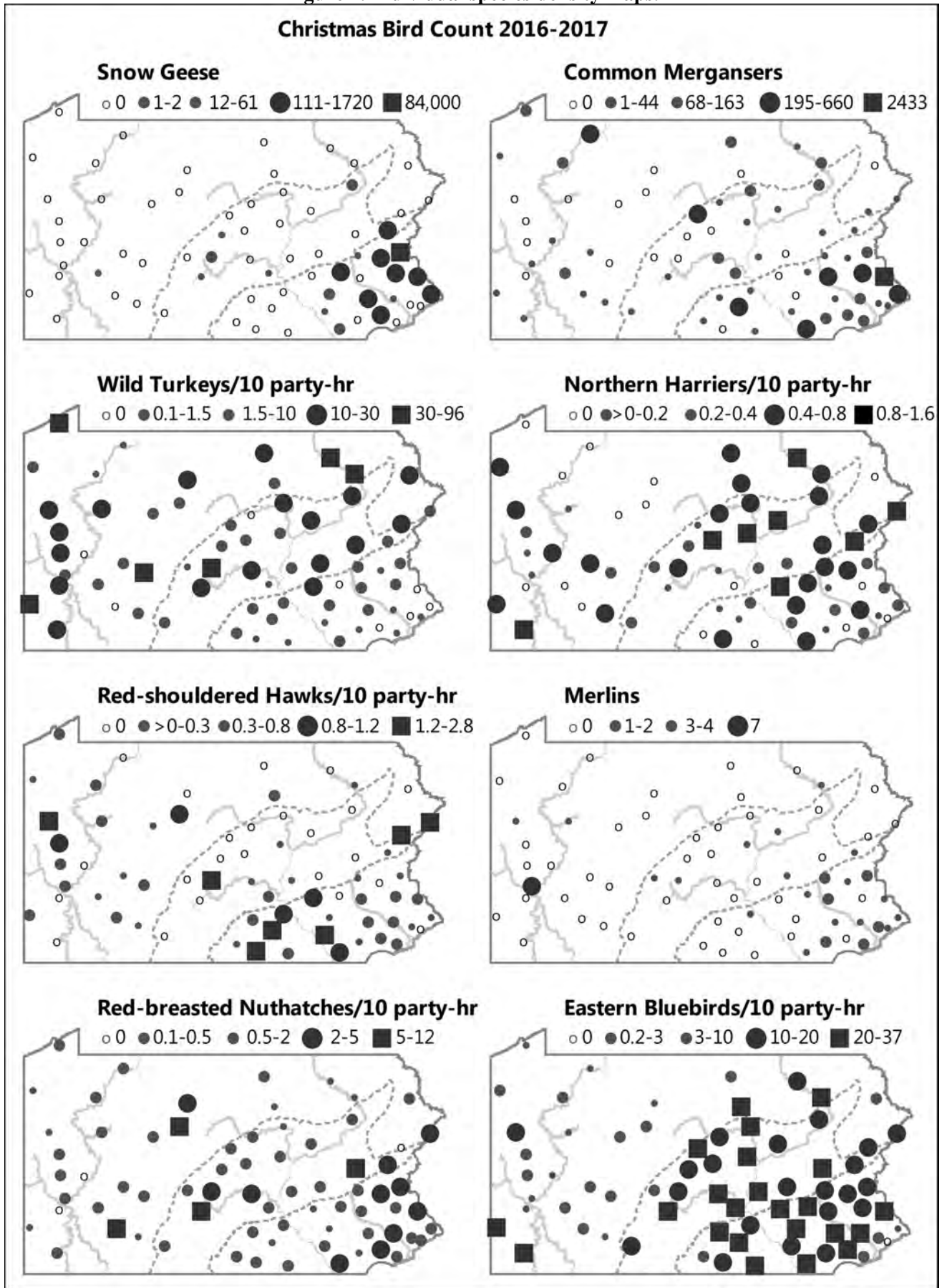


Figure 1. Pennsylvania CBC sites and species numbers.

**SITE ABBREVIATIONS**

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

Figure 2. Individual species density maps.



PENNSYLVANIA BIRDS

SPECIES	TOTAL	SITES	HIGH	HIGH COUNT
Gr. White-fronted Goose	5	2	3	GETT
Snow Goose	89655	20	84035	BETH
Ross's Goose	2	2	1	BETH,NEWB
Cackling Goose	20	11	5	CBCK
Canada Goose	150986	74	18300	LEHI
Mute Swan	145	30	23	GETT
Trumpeter Swan	1	1	1	DALL
Tundra Swan	873	31	200	LITI
Wood Duck	80	20	24	BETH
Gadwall	603	31	175	UBCK
American Wigeon	99	13	31	YOSP
American Black Duck	1915	59	231	LITI
Mallard	19045	74	1063	READ
Blue-winged Teal	1	1	1	BLOO
Northern Shoveler	40	8	17	HARR
Northern Pintail	35	15	9	HARR
Green-winged Teal	66	15	12	HARR
Canvasback	300	5	286	ERIE
Redhead	558	9	343	ERIE
Ring-necked Duck	600	24	111	WEST
Greater Scaup	175	8	161	ERIE
Lesser Scaup	344	11	291	ERIE
White-winged Scoter	9	1	9	ERIE
Black Scoter	6	1	6	ERIE
Long-tailed Duck	19	7	11	ERIE
Bufflehead	665	30	157	AUDU
Common Goldeneye	243	18	60	ERIE
Hooded Merganser	975	37	159	WARR
Common Merganser	7255	52	2433	CBCK
Red-breasted Merganser	610	7	588	ERIE
Ruddy Duck	1015	29	339	SBCK
Ring-necked Pheasant	171	35	50	LITI
Ruffed Grouse	57	24	6	EMPO,LAKE
Wild Turkey	4420	65	445	TUNK
Red-throated Loon	2	2	1	ERIE,PENN
Common Loon	25	8	8	ERIE
Pied-billed Grebe	164	31	20	ERIE
Horned Grebe	100	17	26	ERIE
Eared Grebe	1	1	1	YORK
Double-cr. Cormorant	115	10	45	PITT
Great Cormorant	16	3	10	PENN
Great Blue Heron	568	58	35	NEWV
Black Vulture	2424	40	254	CBCK
Turkey Vulture	3517	39	359	CBCK
Osprey	1	1	1	LWBG
Bald Eagle	661	66	103	SLAN
Northern Harrier	180	56	16	BLOO
Sharp-shinned Hawk	271	63	15	LITI
Cooper's Hawk	484	72	25	PITT
Northern Goshawk	4	3	2	TUNK
Red-shouldered Hawk	197	49	17	GETT
Red-tailed Hawk	3534	75	130	LEHI
Rough-legged Hawk	17	7	4	STAT
Golden Eagle	10	9	2	HUNT

SPECIES	TOTAL	SITES	HIGH	HIGH COUNT
American Coot	1159	24	550	ERIE
Sandhill Crane	246	4	127	LINE
Killdeer	104	32	13	LAKE
Wilson's Snipe	23	9	7	LWST
American Woodcock	1	1	1	PENN
Bonaparte's Gull	61	7	55	ERIE
Ring-billed Gull	70760	52	16442	SLAN
Herring Gull	49158	32	44020	SBCK
Thayer's Gull	1	1	1	SBCK
Iceland Gull	16	3	14	SBCK
Lesser Black-backed Gull	715	7	325	SBCK
Glaucous Gull	6	2	5	SBCK
Great Black-backed Gull	1366	13	873	SBCK
Rock Pigeon	24145	72	898	LWBG
Mourning Dove	29015	75	1912	LEHI
Barn Owl	2	2	1	LWST,PECR
Eastern Screech-Owl	523	56	47	CBCK
Great Horned Owl	300	56	42	SLAN
Snowy Owl	1	1	1	BLOO
Barred Owl	49	34	3	BALD,DALL,ELVE
Long-eared Owl	18	5	8	HUNT
Short-eared Owl	12	6	4	CLRN
Northern Saw-whet Owl	27	15	6	SLAN
Rufous Hummingbird	2	2	1	LITI,WILL
Belted Kingfisher	460	61	33	BETH
Red-headed Woodpecker	25	13	5	LWBG
Red-bellied Woodpecker	4245	74	238	PITT
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	378	62	28	SLAN
Downy Woodpecker	5184	75	243	PITT
Hairy Woodpecker	1316	75	51	AUDU
Yellow-shafted Flicker	1564	65	120	SLAN
Pileated Woodpecker	739	73	48	PITT
American Kestrel	744	69	48	GETT
Merlin	52	25	7	PITT
Peregrine Falcon	45	21	6	SLAN
Eastern Phoebe	11	10	2	SLAN
Northern Shrike	3	3	1	BALD,GROV,WHIT
Blue Jay	15032	75	670	CLRN
American Crow	70305	75	18767	LANC
Fish Crow	1711	25	880	SBCK
Common Raven	439	64	23	NLCO
Horned Lark	7220	42	930	SLAN
N. Rough-winged Swallow	60	1	60	PENN
Carolina Chickadee	5157	33	504	BUCR
Black-capped Chickadee	8735	68	437	TAMA
Chickadee species	2927	30	473	PITT
Tufted Titmouse	10045	75	514	PITT
Red-breasted Nuthatch	751	71	72	TAMA
White-breasted Nuthatch	6265	75	270	PITT
Brown Creeper	482	66	46	SLAN
Winter Wren	250	50	27	SLAN
Carolina Wren	4060	72	301	PITT
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1098	70	84	SLAN
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	116	31	14	SLAN

SPECIES	TOTAL	SITES	HIGH	HIGH COUNT
Eastern Bluebird	7500	74	285	SLAN
Hermit Thrush	198	42	27	SLAN
American Robin	18349	71	2360	BETH
Gray Catbird	20	13	4	SLAN
Northern Mockingbird	1842	62	103	SLAN
Brown Thrasher	6	4	3	PISH
European Starling	155363	75	14033	CHAM
American Pipit	277	12	195	WCHE
Cedar Waxwing	3646	58	410	HAMB
Lapland Longspur	20	1	20	GROV
Snow Bunting	1	1	1	BUTL
Orange-crowned Warbler	5	2	4	SBCK
Nashville Warbler	1	1	1	SBCK
Common Yellowthroat	3	2	2	SLAN
Pine Warbler	4	4	1	JU,BETH,SBCK,WCHE
Myrtle Warbler	213	32	27	ERIE
Yellow-throated Warbler	1	1	1	BLOO
Eastern Towhee	112	33	22	BUCR
American Tree Sparrow	5444	72	1625	GROV
Chipping Sparrow	45	15	7	CBCK,DELA
Field Sparrow	416	48	47	AUDU,DELA
Vesper Sparrow	2	1	2	CHAM
Savannah Sparrow	105	19	22	SBCK
Fox Sparrow	94	29	10	DELA
Song Sparrow	7490	74	455	DELA
Lincoln's Sparrow	1	1	1	WYNC
Swamp Sparrow	244	45	28	DELA
White-throated Sparrow	19180	73	1713	SLAN
White-crowned Sparrow	837	41	89	SLAN
Slate-colored Junco	46728	75	3501	HAMB
Northern Cardinal	14309	75	721	PITT
Red-winged Blackbird	44094	53	38255	WCHE
Eastern Meadowlark	20	7	6	LITI
Rusty Blackbird	198	22	57	UBCK
Common Grackle	66629	40	35142	SLAN
Brown-headed Cowbird	2399	45	715	SLAN
Bullock's Oriole	1	1	1	LITI
Purple Finch	199	48	21	HAMB
House Finch	10502	74	503	BETH
Red Crossbill	23	2	20	TAMA
Common Redpoll	1	1	1	LOCK
Pine Siskin	92	15	22	DUBO
American Goldfinch	10426	75	592	PITT
Evening Grosbeak	4	2	3	PLEA
House Sparrow	17619	75	935	CHAM
Individuals	1362938		378126	SLAN
Species	4945		100	HARR
Party Hours	5091		278	PITT

# The 2017 Winter Raptor Survey in Pennsylvania

## Greg Grove

The 17th Pennsylvania Winter Raptor Survey (WRS) was conducted from 14 January through 20 February 2017 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 between 15–110 miles, with most between 35–75. 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 827 hours and 12,471 miles of observation, the second highest hours ever and highest miles (Table 1). As usual, Lancaster observers led the state, logging 33 hours (Table 2).

After two relatively severe winters, the 2015–16 season returned to near-normal and the winter of 2016–17 took that trend far to the warm side of normal. After an average December 2016, January temperatures were 5F above normal and February even more extreme, at 8F above average. Snow fall, again this winter, was largely lacking; and what snow fell melted soon in the unseasonal warmth. The great majority of routes saw no snow cover; the exceptions were a few northern routes run just after a snow fall, but even most most routes in the cold north reported little white on the ground.

**Table 1. Pennsylvania WRS Species Counts for 2017 and High Counts.**

Species	2017	High Count
Bald Eagle	398	487(2016)
Northern Harrier	127	133 (2008)
Sharp-sh'ed Hawk	62	<b>62 (2017)</b>
Cooper's Hawk	132	<b>132 (2017)</b>
Northern Goshawk	0	5 (2004)
Red-shouldered Hawk	81	101 (2014)
Red-tailed Hawk	3199	3584(2016)
Rough-legged Hawk	91	341 (2004)
Golden Eagle	4	10 (2015)
American Kestrel	711	<b>711 (2017)</b>
Merlin	16	<b>16 (2017)</b>
Peregrine Falcon	19	<b>19 (2017)</b>
Black Vulture	1463	<b>1463 (2017)</b>
Turkey Vulture	2917	<b>2917 (2017)</b>
Northern Shrike	3	10 (2012)
Hours	826.75	835 (2016)
Miles	12471	<b>12471(2017)</b>

**2017 Results.** As might intuitively be expected in a warm year, raptor numbers were mostly above average, the interesting exception being Red-tailed Hawks.

American Kestrels set a record high total count, though not hourly rate. Northern Harriers had a good season. Both vultures set record highs, as did the two larger falcons and the two smaller accipiters. Bald Eagles had another strong showing, though not as good as the record count in 2016. Rough-legged Hawks were on par with recent seasons – no serious invasion from the north. Finally, an Osprey was found in Washington, a species not expected on a WRS route but by no means unprecedented in winter in Pennsylvania. The trends reported below are largely in agreement with those of this season's Christmas Bird Count results, reported elsewhere in this issue.

Results for individual counties are in the Appendix.

**Red-tailed Hawk.** The count of 3199 Red-tailed Hawks was the fourth highest ever, due largely to the high level of coverage; the resulting hourly rate of 3.9 was therefore a bit below the long-term average of 4.3 RTs/hr. (Figure 1).

The distribution of Red-tails was normal, with highest densities in the Susquehanna and Juniata River valleys and counties west of the Allegheny Plateau (Figure 2). Lancaster led again this year with 173 Red-tails, followed by Indiana with 130 and Cumberland with 128 (Table 2). Among counties with at least seven hours of coverage, Adams, Indiana, Juniata, Lebanon, Northumberland, and Union averaged over 6.5 Red-tails per hour.

Of 2536 Red-tails aged, 210 (8%) were identified as immature (range: 8–16%).

**American Kestrel.** Perhaps the best news from the 2017 WRS results was the solid showing by American Kestrels. There seems little doubt the mild season encouraged more kestrels to stay in the state and also, or alternatively, allowed a better survival rate through the winter. During the WRS era, low kestrel numbers are strongly correlated with cold temperatures and deep snow cover (Bolgiano et al. 2015).

The count of 711 kestrels established a new WRS high in Pennsylvania. While increasing hours of effort are a substantial part of the raw total, it is also noteworthy that the hourly rate of 0.86 kestrels/hr. was the best since 2013. The harsh winters of winters of 2014 and 2015 saw kestrel rates drop sharply. With the mild season in 2016, the rate rebounded, and this year, improved further (Figure 1).

As usual, most Kestrels were in the central and lower Susquehanna and Juniata River valleys, with good numbers also from the far southwest (Figure 2). Franklin, Mifflin, and Snyder led with 48, 41, and 37, respectively (Table 2). In counties with at

least seven hours of effort, Adams, Franklin, Juniata, Snyder, and Union averaged over 2.0 kestrels/hr. Numbers in the southeast, despite the mildest winter climate in the state, stayed at the same low rate where they have been for many years, well below that of the south-central agricultural counties (Table 3).

Of 599 Kestrels sexed, 389 (65%) were males, consistent with previous results (range: 59–66%).

**Rough-legged Hawk.** This year's count of 91 Rough-legged Hawks was similar to the previous five years, as was the hourly rate (Figure 1); both far below the peak of the occasional invasion year.

The usual distribution pattern was evident; most Rough-legs were in northern counties, with a scattering found south of I-80 (Figure 2). Rough-legs were found in 19 counties, including a surprise bird in Allegheny. Crawford led the way with an impressive 20 Rough-legs, followed by Clarion at 12 and Lycoming at 11. Centre, Mifflin, and Tioga had eight each. One route in Crawford reported 10 and one route each in Centre and Tioga had 7.

All Rough-legs were identified by color morph - 61 (67%) were light (2001–16 range = 60–78%).

**Table 3. American Kestrel counts and hourly rates in SE Pennsylvania (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton).**

Year	Hrs.	Kestrels	Kestrels/hr.
2001	23	28	1.24
2002	23	30	1.33
2003	44	35	0.80
2004	49	11	0.23
2005	45	18	0.40
2006	63	18	0.29
2007	63	18	0.29
2008	77	22	0.29
2009	74	25	0.34
2010	63	16	0.25
2011	64	12	0.19
2012	88	19	0.22
2013	100	35	0.36
2014	106	18	0.17
2015	103	23	0.22
2016	100	19	0.19
2017	102	23	0.23

**Northern Harrier.** A total of 127 Northern Harriers were counted, the third highest number during the 17 WRS years, following a relatively good year in 2016 (124 counted), also a mild winter. Both 2016 and 2017 saw nearly double the count and hourly rate from the cold, snowy years of 2014 and 2015 (Figure 1).

Harriers were widely scattered as usual, though fewer were found in cold northern counties, especially those largely forested. Mifflin led with 11 harriers,

**Table 2. Top three counties for effort and selected species.**

Rank	1	2	3
Hours	Lancaster (33)	Chester (30)	Huntingdon (27)
Osprey	Washington (1)		
Bald Eagle	Lancaster (59)	Northumberland (36)	Juniata (25)
N. Harrier	Mifflin (11)	Adams (9)	Centre (8)
Sharp-sh. Hawk	Lancaster (6)	Mifflin (6)	Butler, Mont. (4)
Cooper's Hawk	Snyder (8)	Chester, Hunt. (5)	Lanc., Schuyl (7)
Northern Goshawk	None	-	-
Red-sh. Hawk	Butler (14)	Adams (8)	Huntingdon (6)
Red-tailed Hawk	Lancaster (173)	Indiana (130)	Cumberland (128)
Rough-lg. Hawk	Crawford (20)	Clarion (12)	Lycoming (11)
Golden Eagle	Potter (2)	Pike (1)	Schuylkill (1)
Am. Kestrel	Franklin (48)	Mifflin (41)	Snyder (37)
Merlin	Berks (2)	Chester (2)	Lanc., Monroe (2)
Peregrine Falcon	Lancaster (3)	Five with (2)	
Turkey Vulture	Lancaster (880)	Chester (454)	Adams (271)
Black Vulture	Lancaster (496)	Chester (250)	Montgomery (97)
Northern Shrike	Clarion (1)	Dauphin (1)	Tioga (1)

followed by *Adams* at 9, *Centre* at 8, and *Huntingdon* and *Indiana* each at 7 (Table 2).

**Vultures.** Turkey Vultures and Black Vultures continued to rebound from low counts in 2014, with both setting record high counts in this mild winter. The hourly rate for Black Vultures was highest ever and the Turkey Vulture rate was third highest ever (Figure 1).

As always, most vultures were in the southeast and, also as usual, *Lancaster* and *Chester* were tops for both; those two counties accounted for 47% of all vultures recorded (Figure 2, Table 2), thanks in some part to good coverage but also of course their location in the mild southeast.

Turkey Vultures were found in 38 counties and Blacks in 27, both the highest ever (Figure 2). While the great majority of wintering vultures are in the southeast, Turkey Vultures were also recorded in the four most southwesterly counties, also with a relatively mild winter climate. Not surprisingly, given the mild weather, outliers were found where seldom seen in mid-winter - a Black Vulture in *Tioga* and Turkey Vultures in *Sullivan* and *Warren*.

**Bald Eagle.** In 2016, Bald Eagles obliterated the previous record, with 487 tallied, bolstered by 82 on a single count in *Lancaster*. Without that extreme outlier, the total this year fell back to “only” 398, the second highest count ever. Though less than last year, this year’s rate of 0.48 eagles/hr. clearly continues the strong upward trend in wintering Bald Eagles in Pennsylvania (Figure 1).

Bald Eagles were recorded in 51 of the 66 reporting counties (Figure 2) with most in Susquehanna and Delaware drainages and in northwestern counties. As usual, *Lancaster* led, tallying 59 Bald Eagles, which was far less than last year’s 142 that included the aforementioned 82 on one route. *Northumberland* and *Juniata* were next, with 36 and 25, respectively; in both

cases, bolstered by birds congregating at poultry farms. Ten more counties reached double digits.

Of the 398 total Bald Eagles, 38% (153) were listed as immature, a bit below values in the mid-40% range the previous two years.

**Other Raptors.** Red-shouldered Hawks have been increasing on WRS routes (Grove and Bogiano, 2014), They peaked in the especially cold years of 2014 and 2015, falling off slightly the last two (Figure 1); nevertheless, they remain well above hourly rates of the earlier WRS years. Most were in the southeast, southern tier, and northwest (Figure 2). *Butler* led with 14 (7 pairs), all on one route.

Sharp-shinned and Cooper’s Hawks, Merlins, and Peregrine Falcons all set record highs in this mild winter (Table 1, 2). Four Golden Eagles were found, about average. For the second consecutive year, no Northern Goshawks were recorded. Three Northern Shrikes were found, about average.

An Osprey was found by Kathy Kern, Marjorie Howard, and Jan Churney on 2/4 in *Washington*. One or two Ospreys are reported during many winters in Pennsylvania, but most are in December and early January; presumably lingering birds that depart south before mid-winter. There are no February records in Pennsylvania in eBird; there are however many in Maryland, mostly late in the month, presumably birds pushing north. The early February date of the *Washington* record suggests the possibility of a wintering bird, perhaps not so outlandish a suggestion in this extremely mild season.

**Acknowledgements:** I thank Nick Bolgiano for creation of the figures. Thanks to Frank Haas for generating the map showing WRS routes (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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Hawkcount: <http://www.hawkcount.org/>.

PSO: <http://www.pabirds.org/>

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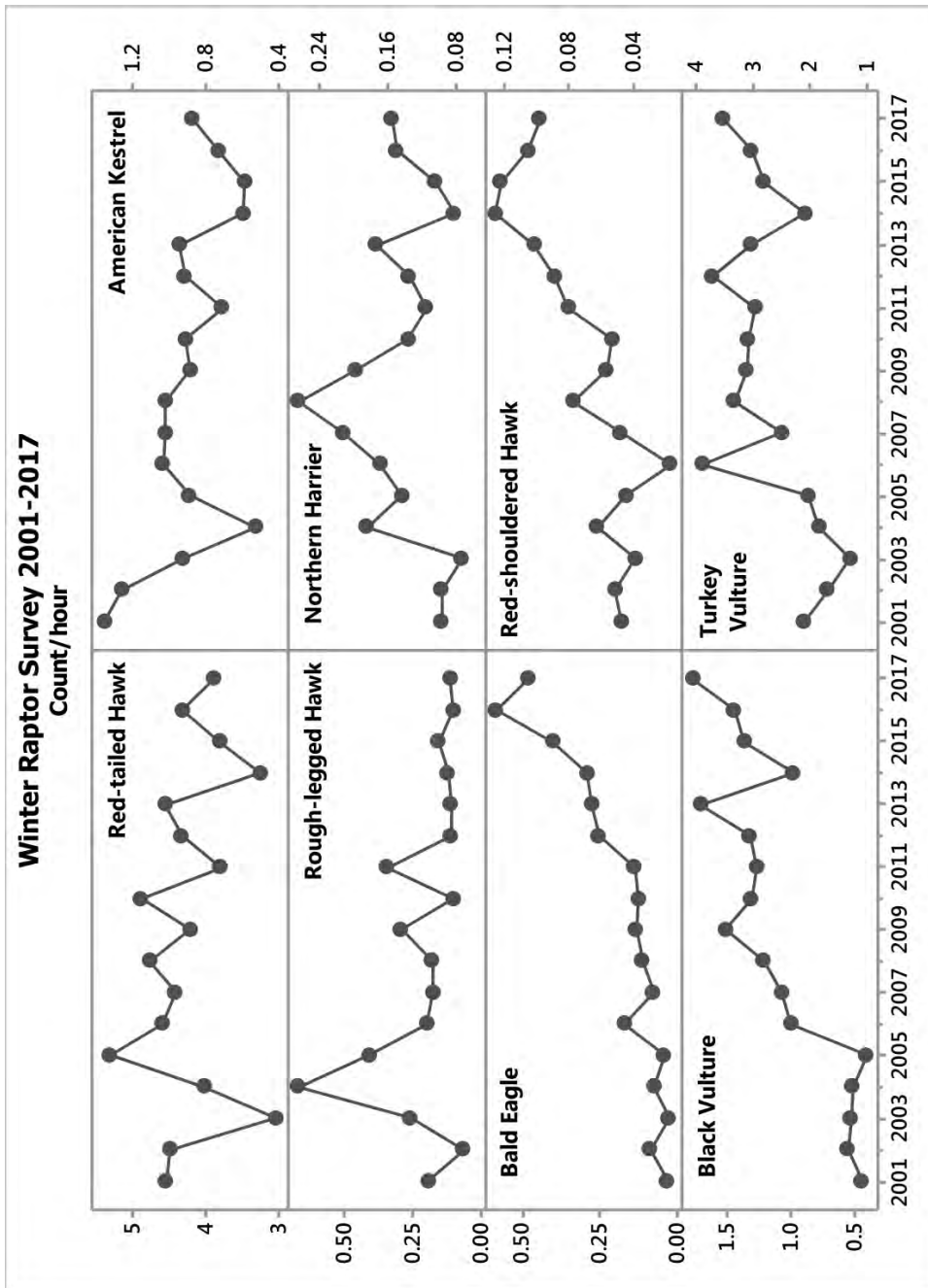
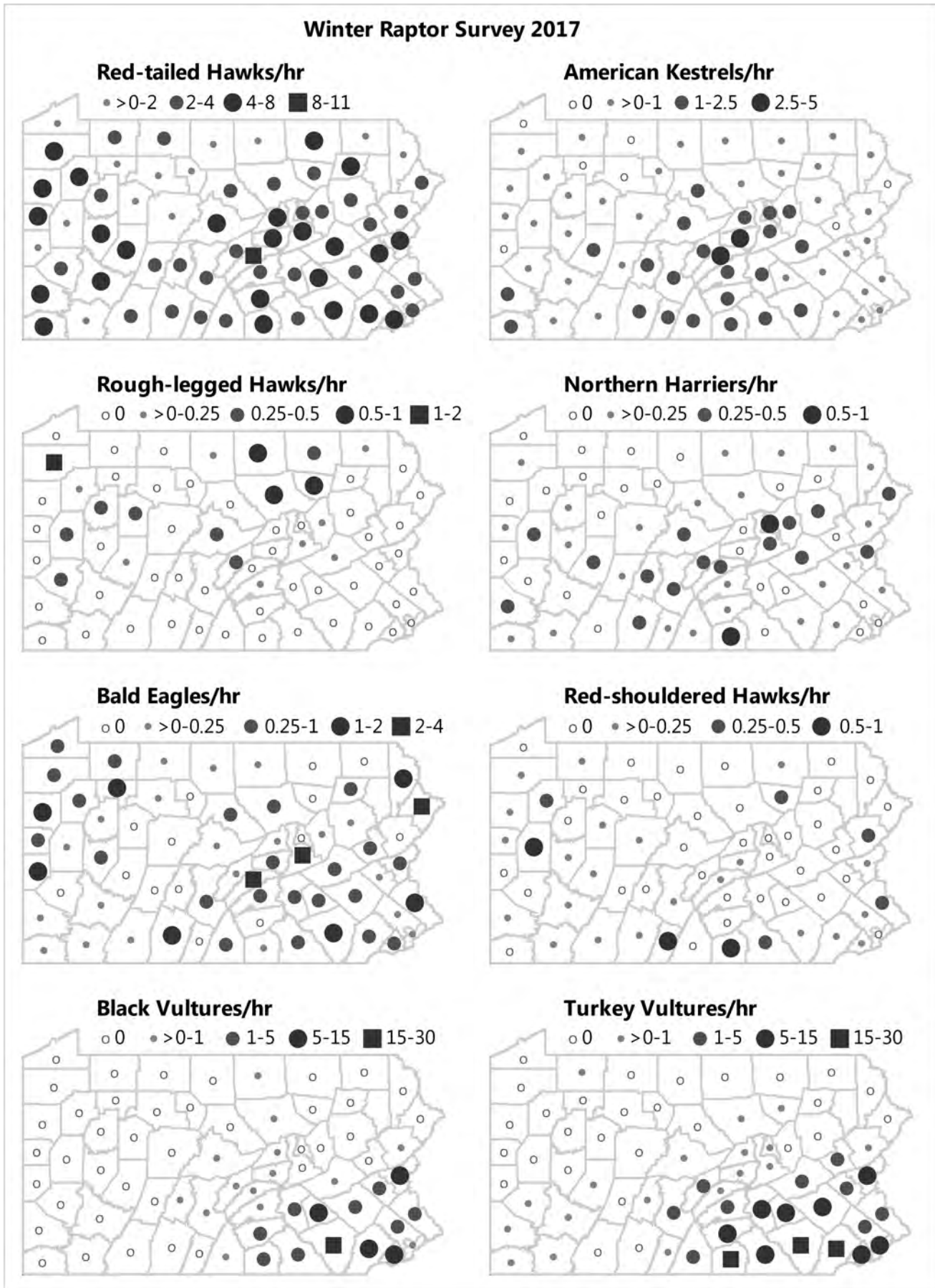


Figure 1. Pennsylvania WRS trends, 2001–2017. Data from all counties was combined and expressed as birds/hour.

Figure 2. Pennsylvania 2016 WRS results by county. Count and effort data from all routes in a given county were combined and results expressed as birds/hour.



**Appendix: 2017 Winter Raptor Survey Results**

County	Hours	Miles	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	TV	BV	NShr
Adams	15.5	223	2	9	4	3		8	114			31			271	52	
Allegheny	3	60				1			8	1		1			1		
Armstrong	10.5	165	3	1				1	44			4					
Beaver	2	25	2						3					2			
Bedford	8.5	153	9	3		1		1	23			13		1			
Berks	25	384	7	1	2	4			86			12	2	2	182	90	
Blair	7.25	134		3		1			26			13			6	2	
Bradford	7.5	96		1	1	1		1	36	2		5					
Bucks	15.25	148	21	3	3	2		4	57			5	1	2	65	26	
Butler	14.5	177	2	4	4	5		14	27	4		11					
Cambria	5	101		1		1			16			1					
Cameron	2	61							3			1					
Carbon	7.5	118	2			1			25			0			8		
Centre	26.5	392	6	8	1	5			120	8		29			10	2	
Chester	23.25	345	17	4		7		2	99			6	2		454	250	
Clarion	29.5	444	6	5		3			89	12		7					1
Clearfield	9.75	195		1		2		1	10			1					
Clinton	7.25	123	2	1		2			28			8	1				
Columbia	8.25	115	2	3		4			23	2		12					
Crawford	17	277	14	1		1		4	90	20		8					
Cumberland	20.75	335		1	2	6			128			33			194	57	
Dauphin	12.5	241	9			2			47			15			84	44	1
Delaware	10	165	6		1	2		1	45			3		1	91	91	
Elk	7.75	170	1			1			3								
Erie	3	71	2						2								
Fayette	19.75	333	1	2				2	28			12			6		
Forest	6	67	7						4								
Franklin	23	416	13	2		2			61			48	1		27	2	
Fulton	5	70		1				3	15			6			2		
Greene	15.25	252	2	1		2			78			17			3		
Huntingdon	27	421	11	7	3	7		6	101			35			36	8	
Indiana	20	263		7		1		1	130	1		21			1		
Jefferson	12.25	130						1	19	4		2					
Juniata	10	144	25	3	1	3		1	100			27			7	1	
Lackawana																	
Lancaster	32.75	461	59	3	6	7		5	173			33	2	3	880	496	
Lawrence	12.5	156	12	3		3		2	66			8	1	1			
Lebanon	8.75	154	4			1			60			8		1	58	49	
Lehigh	10	146	1	1	3	3			50			2		2	38	29	
Luzerne	9.5	167	1	4	3				26			1		2			
Lycoming	15.25	236	6	1		3			46	11		11			3	8	
McKean	7.25	125	1		1	1			16								
Mercer	6.5	76	11			3		1	40			5		1			
Mifflin	23	238	5	11	6	3			72	8		41			34	16	
Monroe	9	136		1		3		4	23			1	2	1	3	3	
Montgomery	27.75	292	4		4	6		2	98			5			108	97	
Montour	6.25	126		4					16			9			4		
Northampton	15.5	256	5	4	1	2		2	69			2	1		115	93	
Northumberland	15.75	198	36	6	1	1			107	2		21			2		
Perry	18.5	257	13	2	3				60	1		35			20	9	
Philadelphia	4.5	63	1		1				11			2			24	3	
Pike	6.25	23	13	2	1	2			22		1						
Potter	16.5	243	4		1				27	1	2	2					
Schuylkill	14.5	231	4	4	2	7			66	2	1	22			20	6	
Snyder	12.5	179	4			8		1	70			37	1		1	2	
Somerset	17.75	251	4					1	41			3					
Sullivan	3.5	65				1		1	11	2		3			1		
Susquehanna	9	92		2	1				15	1		5					
Tioga	12.75	205	3	1					20	8		3				3	1
Union	7	131	1			1			46			17			3	1	
Venango	8.75	145	5			2		3	35	1		4					
Warren	7	123	3					1	16			1			1		
Washington	14.25	229	2	4	3	1		1	82			15	1		12		
Wayne	8.25	83	14	1		2			14			1					
Westmoreland	14.75	260	1		2	1		3	68			10			5		
Wyoming	4.5	100	2						21			2					
York	9.5	210	7		1	1		3	24			15	1		137	23	
TOTAL	826.75	12471	398	127	62	132	0	81	3199	91	4	711	16	19	2917	1463	3

# Summary of Wintering Hummingbirds in Pennsylvania

## Sandy Lockerman

In recent years, efforts have been made to document wintering hummingbird species in Pennsylvania. These efforts begin with sightings by homeowners and birders; and continue with trapping, banding, and identification of the birds by licensed banders.

In the 1980's, Nancy Newfield of Louisiana and Robert and Martha Gail Sargent of Alabama began documenting the diversity and abundance of wintering hummingbirds in the southeastern states. With occurrences there on a regular basis, came the question for Pennsylvania banders of whether our state might have wintering hummingbirds also; and if so, what species?

The first Pennsylvania record archived by the Bird Banding Lab is from 1997. Bob Mulvihill, then working as the bird bander for the Powdermill Avian Research Center in the Laurel Highlands of southwestern Pennsylvania, caught and banded a Rufous Hummingbird near Delmont, Westmoreland County. But digging deeper, research shows that it wasn't the first to be banded in the state. In the March 1991 issue of *Pennsylvania Birds*, an article describes how Mulvihill and Bob Leberman visited a home north of Ligonier, Westmoreland County on November 14, 1990 where they caught, confirmed, and banded a Rufous Hummingbird. Their review of literature at that time showed it to be the first banding record of a non-Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Pennsylvania.

While at Powdermill, Mulvihill went on to band five more Rufous Hummingbirds through 2004, in Westmoreland, Erie, Indiana and Fayette counties.

In 2001, Scott Weidensaul began to investigate and band wintering hummingbirds, followed by Nick Pulcinella in 2003. Both trained by the late Robert Sargent, they began to reach out to homeowners who indicated they had a hummingbird at their feeder, after October 15th. Wayne Laubscher and Sandy Lockerman were trained and licensed as hummingbird banders in 2007 and 2009, respectively.

As of January 1, 2017, a total 163 non-Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have been documented in Pennsylvania by these five banders, which includes six species of hummingbird in 43 of the 67 counties (Figure 1) as of April 2017. The species are: Allen's, Anna's, Black-chinned, Calliope, and Rufous Hummingbirds in addition to the Bahama Woodstar banded in Lancaster County in April 2013 (Figure 2) as of April 2017.

Other interesting tidbits gathered from the Bird Banding Lab and the five Pennsylvania banders are:

1. Six homes have hosted the same rufous hummingbird returning the next year. (Cumberland, Fayette, Lancaster, Montgomery, Northampton and Westmoreland)

2. Four homes have hosted a foreign recovery of a rufous hummingbird. (Maryland, Mississippi and two from Louisiana)

3. One home hosted a foreign recovery of the same rufous hummingbird two years in a row. (Washington)

4. Seven homes have hosted two hummingbirds in different years. (Allegheny, Dauphin, Delaware, Lancaster (3), and Lehigh).

5. Three homes have hosted three different hummingbird species in different years. (Chester, Lancaster and Montgomery)

a. The Chester Co. home: Ruby-throated, Rufous, Calliope.

b. The Lancaster Co. home: Ruby-throated, Rufous Bahama Woodstar.

c. The Montgomery Co. home: Ruby-throated, Rufous, Calliope.

The increased use of social media (email, text, and Facebook) has greatly facilitated the banding of wintering hummingbirds. A decade ago, weeks or months may have passed before notice of a hummingbird reached a bander. Now, contact between a hummingbird host and a bander may occur within hours or even minutes following discovery of the bird.

Caution should be exercised while examining these statistics. Readers should be aware that catching and banding of these hummingbirds is done by volunteer banders working during their free time and at the convenience of the homeowner. Lengthy and sometimes multiple trips are made to these homes in the attempt to document and band a hummingbird. Second, the disproportionate number of records from the heavily populated and birded southeast is not necessarily an indication that there are more hummingbirds in this area; there are, of course, more observers in the southeast and banders have been active there for a longer period of time.

The future is bright in Pennsylvania for documenting hummingbird species other than our own native Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. We encourage homeowners to keep feeders up into the fall and winter (at least until Thanksgiving) and to forward information about hummingbird sightings between October 10 and April 1, whether first-hand and indirectly received, to the closest hummingbird bander.

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Documenting these non-Ruby-throated species will add to the richness and diversity of Pennsylvania birds and help us gain a fuller understanding of bird migration through this state.

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**Figure 2 Non-Ruby-throated Hummingbirds Banded in PA**

Allen's Hummingbird	4
Anna's Hummingbird	1
Bahama Woodstar	1
Black-chinned Hummingbird	2
Calliope Hummingbirds	2
Rufous Hummingbird	153
Total	163

**Figure 1: Counties with Banded Non-Ruby-throated Hummingbirds**

<b>County</b>	<b># Banded</b>	<b>County</b>	<b># Banded</b>
Adams	2	Lackawanna	1
Allegheny	5	Lancaster	16
Armstrong	0	Lawrence	1
Beaver	1	Lebanon	2
Bedford	0	Lehigh	7
Berks	16	Luzerne	2
Blair	0	Lycoming	6
Bradford	0	McKean	1
Bucks	5	Mercer	2
Butler	1	Mifflin	0
Cambria	1	Monroe	1
Cameron	0	Montgomery	11
Carbon	1	Montour	0
Centre	3	Northampton	8
Chester	18	Northumberland	2
Clarion	2	Perry	2
Clearfield	0	Philadelphia	0
Clinton	0	Pike	0
Columbia	1	Potter	0
Crawford	1	Schuylkill	3
Cumberland	2	Snyder	0
Dauphin	8	Somerset	3
Delaware	3	Sullivan	0
Elk	0	Susquehanna	1
Erie	3	Tioga	1
Fayette	1	Union	0
Forest	0	Venango	1
Franklin	5	Warren	0
Fulton	0	Washington	0
Greene	0	Wayne	0
Huntingdon	0	Westmoreland	2
Indiana	1	Wyoming	0
Jefferson	1	York	7
Juniata	2	<b>TOTAL</b>	<hr/> 163

**BETTER BIRDING: Tips, Tools, and Concepts for the Field** by George L. Armistead and Brian L. Sullivan, hundreds of water and land bird color photographs, four color range maps, acknowledgments, group references, index, 7.5 x 9.5 in., 318 pp., published by Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, paper, \$29.95.

This colorful book is a vivid example of what this reviewer stressed recently in *Pennsylvania Birds*, Waterfowl of North America, Europe, and Asia, Vol. 30, No.3 (Jun-Jul 2016), pp.148-149 that “bird guides now concentrate on specific avian groups, families, or tribes” with this book having an intriguing twist. As its authors emphasize in their introduction: “Our primary goal for this book is to help the reader develop a solid foundation for building field skills (p. 10)” by choosing 24 groups in 9 chapters titled Waterbirds, Coastal Birds, Seabirds, Large Shorebirds, Skulkers, Birds of Forest and Edge, Aerial Insectivores, Night Birds, and Open-Country Birds (pp. 29-311). The authors stress that the selection of the treated groups was not arbitrary but admittedly subjective.

Each chapter begins with briefs of information on the approximate age at which the treated species make their first breeding attempts, strategies, and longevity. A brief group essay follows with discussions of natural history, taxonomy, and identification problems. The **Focus** section contains a short list of things to give special attention when learning about the species in a group or noticing them in the field. **Hints and Considerations** provide brief contextual information on potentially confusing species, general range and distribution, useful notes on seasonality, and identification tricks or hints specific for that group. The **Identification** section begins with an overview of plumages associated with the group and its members. This often involves a rudimentary discussion of molt strategy, age, and plumage progression. Species accounts follow this overview which typically begin with a broad outline of the species and then becomes progressively more specific about how to distinguish a particular species. After the accounts, in some cases, are short summaries of rare vagrant species within the group that have appeared in an American Birding Association Area (ABAA). Also evident in most chapters are shaded text boxes containing either a “Taxonomic Note” or a “Natural History Note.” Both of these are meant to add more information about a bird’s or group’s identity, useful in the

context of identification. Chapters end with a list of timely references cited in the text.

The authors are well qualified for publishing this work. George L. Armistead is Events Coordinator at the American Birding Association and a Research Associate in the Ornithology Department at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University. He has led birding tours on seven continents. Brian L. Sullivan is eBird Program Co-director and Photographic Editor for Birds of North America Online at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. He is the author of numerous papers on bird identification and the co-author of *The Crossley ID Guide: Raptors and Offshore Sea Life ID Guide: West Coast*, both published by Princeton University Press.

The many parcels of the Introduction (pp. 11-27) resonate well with me because they have been integral parts of my own field ornithology course – “The Process of Birding” – since 1972. For example, **Wide-Angle Birding: Be the Bird, See the Bird** (p. 11) focuses on seeing a more holistic picture of birds, similar to my own birding by ecology that incorporates six birding keys by eye, ear, behavior, habitat, range, and phenology. In sum, expert birders know not only *what* the bird is (scientific), but *why* the bird is (essence). Humans forget that birds are not just a conglomeration of field marks, instead “they are creatures with lives, still evolving, that possess a constellation of instinctual needs and learned behaviors. Understanding these needs and the associated behaviors brings a birder up to a higher level: the *next* level (p. 11).” Perhaps a holistic ornithological model to examine would be Arthur Cleveland Bent’s twenty-volume series *Life Histories of North American Birds*, published by the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC mostly in the 20th century.

So what is a “good birder” vs. a “good bird-watcher?” The authors suggest suitable definitions. A bird-watcher is someone who enjoys watching birds, period. A birder, on the other hand, is a wild-bird enthusiast, someone who usually pursues an interest in wild birds by studying bird identification and habits, investing much time searching for specific species, and keeping a record of sightings over time. A good birder is well versed in the habits, ranges, seasonal occurrences, and identifications of birds; keen at locating birds; and skilled at recording information about them (p. 12).

**Becoming a “Good Birder:”** starts with understanding the basics of identification. Here I like to stress a few important hints: be quiet, still, and patient;

look at the bird as long as it will let you; remember birds fly but a field guide does not; attach yourself to an expert mentor if you can (still the fastest way of learning); practice seeing details of a bird’s body (size, shape, colors, pattern); then zero in on parts of the body. Remember that color is deceiving. When the bird flies away, anything different about its flight actions? Now is the time to write details in a small note book and make a quick (even if crude) drawing, silhouette (might be the only help you’ll get), or photo on your mobile phone. All of these actions constitute the first key of birding by eye. There are five other keys: birding by ear (bird songs, calls, other sounds), birding by behavior, birding by habitat and range, birding by field marks and patterns (a fine-tuning of identification), and birding by ecology (birds are connected to everything else in nature). Note the bottom line here is that all of these keys combine to help the birder reduce options of what the bird is *not* to what it *is*.

Of course, one of the most exciting aspects of birding is finding a rarity. One thing should be emphasized: good birders find the most rarities because they put in the extra time studying birds at home and in the field, thus increasing their chances of happening across rarities. With ever more field experience, good birders learn how to be in the right place at the right time. In other words, good birders are prepared for the unexpected. Currently one of the most important tools for birders is eBird ([www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)), a free, online global database of bird records gathered and used by millions of birders, scientists, and environmentalists world-wide. Birders can use eBird as an on-line tool to enter observations as they are making them from the field. Most importantly, using eBird places birder observations into the hands of scientists and conservationists who are helping research protect birds and their habitats (p. 17).

The **Using and Birding Bird Sounds** section of the Introduction (pp. 17-18) is particularly well explained. Granted, most birders are first attracted by seeing a bird that grabs one’s attention, but sometimes it is a bird’s voice or even an avian sound that stops one in his/her tracks. A recent field experience may clarify my comment. While slowly driving my car birding with the front passenger side-window down, I suddenly heard an unusual tinny-like sound coming from the field adjoining the road. I stopped, got out of the car with my binocular, quickly scanned the landscape, and focused my optic on an aluminum twenty-foot tall windmill. Surprisingly a male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

woodpecker was drumming its Morse code message on the highest blade of the windmill. Each time the bird drilled the blade, it forced the blade to drop several feet with the bird still clinging to the blade. Immediately, the woodpecker would fly to the next highest blade and repeat the drumming process. Apparently, the bird (dare I say) was enjoying this special sound and only after fifteen minutes did he fly away. I later learned that the sapsucker would only perform when the wind was coming from the northwest direction of the compass allowing the sound to reach the ears of other competitive colonial males a city block away.

The authors stress that there is no substitute for learning bird sounds in the field but a great way to fortify what one learned and prepare for the field is to listen to recordings of bird sounds. And the best way of all to learn such sounds is to make your own recordings because birds have geographical accents. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology or Xeno-Canto avian sounds won't be the same as your own home sounds. Even the authors plead for many more home recorders.

Playback, however, the practice of broadcasting a recording of a bird's song or call note to attract an individual bird, has been a birding issue for years. There is and perhaps always will be pro, con, or neutral birders about the issue. As the authors stress, in the end, a bird will have one of three reactions: it will be attracted, indifferent, or frightened by playback. Generally, birds that are strongly territorial respond most vigorously. Thus before employing playback, a birder must consider the bird, surroundings, and, if the sound is going to be introduced, what that sound should be and to what extent it should be deployed. Some important comments are necessary here: Using playback of an endangered state and/or federal avian species is illegal (Pennsylvania has 12 such bird species). The authors issue five general guidelines for using playback (p. 21): 1) use it strategically, carefully, and sparingly; 2) always obey the laws or regulations for any birding area; 3) do not use it on individual birds that are vulnerable; 4) do not use it in an area where birder use is moderate to heavy; 5) save it for use in group learning situations such as field workshops or courses. I learned decades ago to stay clear of individual birders, groups, or birding businesses that relied on playbacks "to get their birds." Instead, learn your bird sounds from the best option available: birding mentors. All expert birders today have had at least one mentor yesterday. I had two: Wayne Short, President of the Saint Louis Audubon Society, who taught me bird sounds from age eight to fifteen and Roger Tory Peterson, who visited Saint Louis almost annually until I was nineteen years

old. Neither gentleman ever used playback in the field.

**Molt: It's Not So Bad, Really**, next in the Introduction (pp.21-22), is short and challenging because molting birds (all birds undergo some kind of molt each year) are confusing to birders since feathers missing, growing, or the actual shape of a bird's wings, even a whole body, appear differently. Many birds undergo a complete or partial molt after breeding and before fall migration called prebasic molt. Some birds then undergo a prealternate molt to attain a much more colorful plumage before breeding. Juveniles of most species undergo a preformative molt which takes place in late summer through early winter resulting in a change from an identifiable juvenile plumage to an adult-like plumage that is typically indistinguishable from that of adults in the field. Learning when birds undergo these processes is not only fascinating but also helps the birder distinguish similar species that differ in molt timing.

**Taxonomy** is the science of organizing and naming life forms like birds and is "an ugly word" for many birders (p. 23). The authorities are forever changing common and scientific names, family groupings, then splitting species only to lump them together again. The authors state that the species is the "currency" of taxonomy yet the concept itself remains debated. "It is just a human construct. It exists only conceptually at a fixed point in time. It is just a tool, and like any tool it has its limitations, but currently it's our best available device for categorizing life forms. . ." state the authors (p.23) and conclude "What a species is, and how that definition is applied are subjective. Some populations are clear, discrete species, but others are in the midst of differentiating. Several species concepts attempt to address this complexity, sometimes resulting in competing interpretations." Most taxonomists agree that a species is a population of organisms that share a single evolutionary history and can freely interbreed and produce viable offspring. Determining whether two populations are separate species depends on what one of two species concepts is used: *Biological Species Concept* (BSC): a species is a group of interbreeding natural populations that is reproductively isolated from other such groups and *Phylogenetic Species Concept* (PSC): a species is the smallest diagnosable cluster of individual organisms that share a common ancestor and possess a diagnosable character (p. 24). In the first concept by Ernst Mayr, the idea of subspecies is important, rooted in the idea that what distinguishes species is their ability to interbreed. For the PSC, note that no mention is made of the ability to interbreed with sibling populations, thus the subspecies concept is discarded.

Ornithologists have experienced taxonomic trends for decades from splitting to lumping species. Currently we are in the middle of a splitting period. The breakthroughs in genetic research in recent times have been dramatic and revealing, offering another means by which to attack such questions as: "Who is related to whom and how closely related are they?" Yet understanding a bird's DNA is not always so wholly informative in distinguishing species. In fact, genetic studies do not always solve taxonomic problems. Granted it offers clues but scientists still need to make subjective decisions when interpreting results.

Recall that taxonomy is a tool that allows birders to place similar, related birds into groups. And familiarizing oneself with genera and families improves one's ability to narrow choices when identifying a mystery bird.

Finally, the authors wisely suggest thinking holistically when trying to identify a bird. Consider molt, the progression of age-related plumages, breeding and migration strategies, such as isolating mechanisms as weather and climate, geography, elevation, and habitat on breeding and winter grounds, even the timing and location of pair formation. This leads to another obvious consideration of bird distribution: while birds are distributed across space, they are also distributed across time.

The Introduction part of the book ends with the statement **Why Birding Is Cool**. Each birder in the world, and there are millions, can respond positively in his or her own way. For me, it has been a passion, fascination, and awe about birds since the age of eight. Grant that birds are scientifically unique, esthetically beautiful, relatively easily observed, socially appealing, beneficial to the human, and key indicators of quality environment. Further, birds are at the apex of complex food chains and food webs and occupy all seven continents of the world.

For me, birds have been the natural guides and connections to the rest of creation. So why not take the challenge of birding? Warning, however, birding can start anytime, anywhere and quickly lead from pure curiosity, to a part-time hobby, then to an obsession, addiction, and end as a lifetime endeavor. Can you think of a more worthwhile, healthy, rewarding outdoor activity? At least take a little indoor time to devour this charming, rich photographic tome.

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## Summary of the Season: Winter 2016-17

### Nick Bolgiano

December was relatively mild until a cold snap occurred 12/14-16 (the coldest period all winter), followed by snow, ice, and rain that affected many Christmas Bird Counts. January continued mild, with a short cold spell 1/6-9, followed by a warm period 1/17-26, when temperatures averaged about 12 degrees warmer than normal. February was exceedingly mild, particularly during 2/18-25, when temperatures averaged about 20 degrees warmer than normal, reaching 60-75 °F in many locations (Accuweather 2017). There was relatively little snowfall except for lake effect snowfall southeast of Lake Erie; the largest snowfall away from Erie occurred in March. The winter was thus exceptionally mild, the second consecutive warm winter season.

Highlights of winter 2016-2017 included a continuing trend of more wintering **Snow**, **Ross's**, and **Cackling Geese**; prospective second and third state records of **Slaty-backed Gull**; the appearance of **Black-backed Oriole**, a non-migratory Mexican endemic; moderate incursions of **Black-capped Chickadee** and **Red-breasted Nuthatch**; local concentrations of **Red Crossbill** and **Evening Grosbeak**; and birds arriving early during the February warm spell, particularly **Blue-winged Teal**, **Turkey Vulture**, **Golden Eagle**, **Greater Yellowlegs**, **American Woodcock**, **Eastern Phoebe**, and **Tree Swallow**.

One winter ago, the February incursion of **Greater White-fronted Goose** into western and central counties was a season highlight. This winter's observations of Greater White-fronted Goose were more typical and concentrated in the southeast. Higher numbers there included flocks of 14 in *Berks*, thought to possibly be returning birds from the previous winter, and 16 at Green Lane Park, *Montgomery*. In the central Susquehanna Valley, up to 8 were observed in *Montour*. In the south-central, 5 were killed by hunters in *Somerset*. Singles were present in *Crawford* and *Lawrence* in the northwest, where less common.

**Snow Goose** continued to concentrate in the Delaware Valley, continuing their winter expansion north from southern New Jersey and Delaware. Their Pennsylvania stronghold continued to be *Northampton*, where up to 100,000 were seen at Nazareth Quarry. Later, when they stage before migrating north, many shift west to Middle Creek in *Lancaster/Lebanon*. Snow Geese now appear regularly during winter in the Susquehanna Valley and this season showed up with increased frequency to the north and west, in *Allegheny*, *Butler*, *Centre*, *Clearfield*, *Crawford*, *Erie*, *Greene*, *Huntingdon*, *Pike*,

*Sullivan*, *Somerset*, *Susquehanna*, *Westmoreland*, and *Wyoming*.

**Ross's Goose** was also more widely distributed than normal and perhaps more unexpectedly than Snow Goose, given that one or two are typically seen at a time. They were found in 18 counties, including most southeastern counties, *Adams*, *Armstrong*, *Blair*, *Centre* (second county record), *Clinton*, *Crawford*, *Franklin*, *Perry*, *Somerset*, and *Washington*. The largest group was 15 in *Somerset*, where some were killed by hunters.

**Cackling Goose** sightings appear to be increasing, with most sightings in the southeast. They were found in 21 counties, including all southeastern counties from *Franklin* eastward, plus *Blair*, *Butler*, *Cameron* (first county record), *Carbon*, *Centre*, *Columbia*, *Juniata*, and *Somerset*. New county high counts were 14 in *Lebanon* and 11 in *Montgomery*. In *Lebanon*, it was considered regular within large flocks of **Canada Geese**.

The only report of **Brant** was of 9 on the Delaware River, *Bucks* 1/11. **Trumpeter Swan** continued its pattern of being found in widely-scattered locations, in *Adams*, *Bucks*, *Dauphin*, *Luzerne*, and *Tioga*.

A good count of 156 **Gadwalls** was recorded at Pymatuning, *Crawford* 2/23. **Eurasian Wigeon** continued their strong showing of recent years: at *Berks* 2/11 to end of period, at *Lancaster* 2/16-19, at Middle Creek *Lancaster/Lebanon* 2/10-25, another in *Lebanon* 2/14-28, *Philadelphia* 12/18, and in *Somerset* one was reported killed by a hunter 1/14 and another was present 2/20-22 and presumably the same bird again 2/25. **Blue-winged Teal** arrived early during the later February warm spell, at *Adams* 2/17, *Crawford* 2/28, *Cumberland* 2/18, *Indiana* 2/28, *Lebanon* 2/25, *Lycoming* 2/20, and *Mercer* 2/19. **Eurasian Green-winged (Common) Teal** was at *Berks* 12/14 through period and at Middle Creek *Lancaster/Lebanon* 2/14-28.

**King Eider** was at Rose Valley Lake in *Lycoming* 12/4, a first county record and first state record away from Lake Erie since 2002. Scoters were at well-scattered locations, with **Surf Scoter** at *Allegheny*, *Berks*, *Bucks*, *Erie*, *Lancaster*, and *Westmoreland*; **White-winged Scoter** at *Bucks*, *Dauphin*, *Erie*, *Lycoming*, and *Tioga*; and **Black Scoter** at *Erie*, *Indiana* (3rd Dec record), and *Philadelphia*. **Barrow's Goldeneye** was on the Delaware River, *Northampton* 12/26-1/13, thought to possibly be a returning bird.

**Ruffed Grouse** continues to be widespread, reported from 34 counties, but numbers remain low. The CBC count was the second lowest total since 1964. It continued in more marginal parts of its range in the west

and southeast. Ironically, a report in *Erie* was one of only a few Presque Isle sightings.

**Red-throated Loon** was in the northwest at *Butler*, *Crawford*, and *Erie*; and in the southeast at *Bucks*, *Northampton*, *Montgomery*, and *Philadelphia*. **Red-necked Grebe** was found only in *Erie* and missed on the CBC, a result consistent with relatively little ice cover on the Great Lakes. **Eared Grebe** was at *Erie* and *York*, including a first for the York CBC.

**Great Cormorant** winters annually along the lower Delaware River in *Bucks*, *Delaware*, and *Philadelphia*. This season, it was also at Nockamixon SP, *Bucks*. High counts were two groups of 16 in *Bucks* and a group of 13 with 260 **Doubled-crested Cormorants** at the Navy Yard, *Philadelphia*.

The uncommon herons were relatively scarce. **Great Egret** was in *Bucks*, *Lancaster*, and *Philadelphia*, but missed on the CBC. **Green Herons** at *Mercer* 12/1 and *Westmoreland* 1/13 provided the most notable heron sightings. **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was notably absent, with a CBC trend of increased scarcity. Undoubtedly memorable was a group of 131 **Great Blue Herons** flying out of Niagara Pond in *Erie*.

**Black Vulture** observations were indicative of an apparent range expansion in two areas: the southwest, as suggested by Malosh (2017), where reported in *Fayette*, *Green*, *Washington*, and *Westmoreland*; and northern tier, where it was in *Bradford* and *Tioga*. **Turkey Vulture** was present throughout the period in *Centre* and *Schuylkill*, where it once vacated during winter. They started moving north early, returning to *Butler* 1/24, *Cambria* 2/18, *Greene* 2/11, *Indiana* 1/25 (3rd Jan record), *Mercer* 2/24, *Somerset* 2/18, *Sullivan* 2/11, *Susquehanna* 2/22, and *Venango* 2/19.

**Osprey** lingering into Dec were found in *Chester*, *Northumberland* and *Philadelphia*. While early winter Osprey records are expected, if rare of course, much more surprising, if not quite unprecedented, was a mid-winter report of one seen by veteran observers in *Washington* during a WRS survey 2/4. **Northern Harrier** was noted as numerous in *Armstrong*, *Berks*, *Bucks*, *Cambria*, *Clarion*, *Crawford*, *Delaware*, *Huntingdon*, *Jefferson*, *Mifflin*, and *Montgomery*, helped by a lack of snow cover; and absent from the lake effect snow belt southeast of Lake Erie. CBC and WRS numbers showed an uptick, though below the 2007-2009 peak. See the density map in the CBC report for its widespread early-winter distribution.

**Northern Goshawk** was in 11 counties, an average showing, including at unexpected

locations in *Berks, Erie, Lebanon, and Montgomery*.

**Red-shouldered Hawk** was found in 51 counties, being most numerous in *Allegheny, Lawrence, and Mercer* in the west; *Monroe* in the northeast; and most south-central and southeastern counties. In *Elk*, where not normally seen in winter, four were tallied on the Benezette CBC. The 186 Red-shouldered Hawks on the CBC set a new statewide high, continuing its trend of increased wintering. See the density map in the CBC report for its early-winter distribution.

**Rough-legged Hawk** was in 40 counties, although WRS Rough-legged Hawk numbers were low. Clusters of observations in *Centre, Crawford, Clarion, Lawrence, Lycoming, Mifflin, and Tioga* indicated where multiple Rough-legs lingered, primarily in the northwest and north-central.

**Golden Eagle** was in 19 counties, most in or near the migration corridor from their northeastern Canada breeding grounds to their core wintering area in heavily-forested areas of West Virginia and surrounding states (Katzner et al. 2012). The 11 Golden Eagles on the CBC matched the previous statewide high, suggesting that many wintered in the state. Golden Eagles were on the move northward early, as the Allegheny Front hawk watch, *Bedford*, tallied 22 during 2/18-28, including 16 on 2/24.

eBird data shows that many **Sandhill Cranes** winter in a corridor from the western Great Lakes to Florida, with spillover into Pennsylvania. Sandhill Crane observations have been increasing in Pennsylvania; the 246 cranes in the CBC nearly tripled the previous high total. Cranes were observed in 10 counties, with groups of 50 or more in *Crawford and Lawrence*. Unusual was the 32 on the Emporium CBC, *Cameron*.

**Sora** was at *Allegheny* 2/1-2/27, a first county wintering record. **Virginia Rail** was at *Clinton* 2/16 and *Lancaster* 2/22.

Several uncommon sandpipers were seen, a frequency consistent with previous seasons. Presque Isle in *Erie* was the location for late **Dunlin** 12/4 and 12/16 and **Purple Sandpiper** 12/4. **Spotted Sandpiper** was in *Cumberland* 2/23 and at *Northampton* 2/11 through end of period near where one had wintered the previous year. **Greater Yellowlegs** was found during the February warm spell in three western counties: *Allegheny* 2/24, *Crawford* 2/28, and *Mercer* 2/24.

**American Woodcock** arrived early in many locations: *Adams* 2/21, *Allegheny* 2/17, *Berks* 2/18, *Bradford* 2/27, *Bucks* 2/10, *Centre* 2/18, *Clarion* 2/22, *Crawford* 2/23, *Cumberland* on 2/18, *Dauphin* 2/25, *Delaware* 2/23, *Fayette* 2/25, *Franklin* 2/19, *Greene* 2/24, *Huntingdon* 2/21, *Indiana* 2/19 (second earliest), *Jefferson* 2/25, *Lebanon* 2/12, *Lycoming* 2/21, *Montgomery* 2/8, *Northampton* 2/16, *Perry* 2/23, *Philadelphia* 2/19, *Schuylkill* 2/23, *Somerset* 2/18,

*Susquehanna* 2/23, *Venango* 2/24, and *Westmoreland* 2/20.

**Black-headed Gull** was at *Bucks* 12/28; at *Butler* until 12/10, at the same spot for the 6th time in 9 years, suggesting that it is a returning bird; and at John Heinz, in both *Delaware* and *Philadelphia* 12/25-2/28. **Little Gull** was at *Crawford* 2/8. The only **Laughing Gull** was at John Heinz, *Philadelphia* 1/18.

While the rarer gulls may receive more attention, the continuing winter concentration of **Herring Gull** in *Bucks* has been remarkable. The nearly 44,000 **Herring Gulls** at the Southern Bucks County CBC was again a continent-wide CBC high.

Among white-winged gulls, **Thayer's Gull** was at *Bucks, Chester, Erie, and Northampton*. As we recently learned, Thayer's Gull will soon be officially lumped with **Iceland Gull** (Hess 2017). Iceland Gull was at *Bucks, Chester, Erie, Lancaster, Montgomery, Northampton, and Philadelphia*, all expected locations; and *Tioga*, where not expected. **Glaucous Gull** was at *Bucks, Chester, Crawford, Erie, Mercer* (first county record), *Northampton, and Philadelphia*. Glaucous Gull was seen during the period in New York just north of *Bradford and Tioga*.

Southeastern Pennsylvania continued as a core wintering location for **Lesser Black-backed Gull**; the CBC count of 715 was the second-highest statewide CBC total after 847 the previous year. The Tullytown dump in *Bucks* is a main attraction there and the three Bucks county CBCs comprised the vast majority, 668, of the CBC total. The Grand Central Landfill in *Northampton* has been increasingly attracting gulls; the high count there of Lesser Black-backed Gull was 200. This gull was recorded in 17 counties, including all southeastern counties from *Lebanon and Lancaster* eastward, as well as *Allegheny, Carbon, Columbia, Erie, Pike, Tioga, and Warren*. In recent years, it has been regular in *Allegheny and Erie*, and the eBird distribution and *Tioga and Warren* observations suggests that it is spreading south from the eastern Great Lakes and Finger Lakes of New York. The same southward movement is also apparent in eBird's Herring, Iceland, and Glaucous Gull data - thus, Pennsylvania's northern tier may become a new destination for gull-watchers.

Observant gull-watchers recorded **Slaty-backed Gull** for the second and third times in the state. These were first county records for *Erie* 1/27-2/26 and *Northampton* 1/30-31. The only **Great Black-backed Gull** outside its usual range in the southeast and Lake Erie was one in *Mercer* 1/15, a new county record seen during the same outing as the above-noted Glaucous Gull. **Forster's Tern** was at *Erie* 12/7.

The small **Eurasian Collared Dove** colonies in *Berks* and *Franklin* persisted.

**Barn Owl** was at *Centre, Cumberland, Franklin, and Juniata*, consistent with a

retracting population that remains predominantly in the south-central counties. The only **Snowy Owl** concentration was along the Lake Erie shore in *Erie*, with as many as four; it was also recorded in *Bradford, Franklin, and Somerset*. **Long-eared Owl** was at *Adams, Bucks, Centre, Cumberland, Erie, Huntingdon* (group of 7), *Lancaster, Lebanon* (group of 6), and *Northampton*. **Short-eared Owl** was in 19 counties, compared to 16 last winter. After two low years in the CBC, Short-eared Owl numbers returned to more normal levels. However, it was noted in *Huntingdon* and *Schuylkill* that Short-eared Owls no longer frequent CREP/fallow fields that were converted to row crops.

Hummingbirds made a good showing this season. There appears to have been eight known **Rufous Hummingbirds**. Two were at *Allegheny*, one through 12/11 and the other on 12/10; two in *Berks*, one until 12/10, a second until 12/25; *Lancaster* 1/2-2/25; *Lycoming* 10/25-12/27; a probable bird in *Montgomery* 11/28 through end of period; and *York* until 1/8. **Calliope Hummingbird** was a county first in *Berks*, first seen in the fall and present until 12/10.

**Red-headed Woodpecker** was notably uncommon in *Adams and York* and absent from *Franklin*, locations where it tends to be more common, continuing a pattern noted in the fall (Malosh 2017). It was found in 22 counties, compared to 31 in the fall. However, there were 17 Red-headed Woodpeckers at one *Lebanon* location and one in *Venango* was a first winter record. This suggests that a scarcity of food in usual spots may have caused these birds to search elsewhere.

**American Kestrel** was regarded as common in multiple counties and the WRS suggest that kestrels have mostly recovered from the effect of prior cold winters. However, in *Bucks*, where kestrels have declined, they remained scarce despite a nest box effort. **Merlin and Peregrine Falcon** set new highs in the CBC. Merlin was regularly seen in the southeast, but Pittsburgh was the winter's Merlin capitol with seven on the Pittsburgh CBC. Peregrine Falcon was commonly seen in cities where it nests, particularly in the lower Delaware Valley, the Susquehanna Valley, and in and around Pittsburgh.

The 11 **Eastern Phoebes** tallied on the CBC was an average number, indicating that they proceeded south as usual. However, their spring return was earlier than normal, with Feb dates concentrated during the late-month warm spell: *Berks* 2/25, *Bucks* 2/23, *Carbon* 2/25, *Centre* 2/25, *Chester* 2/17, *Cumberland* 2/18, *Delaware* 2/28, *Fayette* 2/25, *Indiana* 2/20 (new early date), *Montour* 2/05, *Lancaster* 2/18, *Northampton* 2/11, *Philadelphia* 2/08, *Washington* 2/17, *York* 2/28.

**Northern Shrike** was in ten counties in the northern half of the state, where expected,

plus *Chester* and *Dauphin*, qualifying as a modest showing of shrikes.

The flock of **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** was again present at the NE Philadelphia Treatment Plant in *Philadelphia*, with a high of 200 during 12/3-11. Through the winter, higher numbers remained than in past years. Several were seen elsewhere along the Delaware River in *Philadelphia* and one was seen several times at a water treatment plant along the Susquehanna River, *Lancaster*.

**Tree Swallow** appeared during the late February warm spell, about a week earlier than normal, at *Carbon* 2/25, *Chester* 2/24, *Delaware* 2/19, *Lancaster* 2/25, *Lebanon* 2/25 (new county early date), and *Philadelphia* 2/19.

**Black-capped Chickadee** irruptions into Pennsylvania have been most noted in the southeast (Bolgiano 2004). This held true this season, with Black-caps observed in modest numbers in *Bucks*, *Chester*, *Montgomery*, and *Philadelphia*.

Pennsylvania birders enjoyed the first **Red-breasted Nuthatch** irruption in four years. Alternate-year irruptions are typical, but three-year gaps have also occurred. This season, Red-breasted Nuthatch was found in modest numbers throughout the state, but abundant in places with plentiful pine or Norway spruce cones. The density map in the CBC report shows their uneven distribution.

The uncommon wrens were particularly uncommon. The only **House Wren** was in *Philadelphia* 12/01, while **Marsh Wren** was at John Heinz in *Delaware* and *Philadelphia*, 1/15-2/17.

**Lapland Longspur** was in 12 counties, with a group of 20 in *Lawrence*. **Snow Bunting** was in 27 counties, with groups of 50 or more in *Cambria*, *Carbon*, *Centre*, *Lawrence*, *Susquehanna*, and *Tioga*.

Among warbler species, **Orange-crowned Warbler** was noteworthy for its abundance in the southeast, particularly the southern Delaware Valley. It was in *Bucks*, including four on the Southern Bucks CBC, *Chester*, *Columbia*, *Delaware*, *Franklin*, *Lancaster*, *Lebanon*, and eight locations in *Philadelphia*. Other uncommon warblers included **Northern Waterthrush** at John Heinz, *Philadelphia* 1/1; **Nashville Warbler** at two locations at *Bucks* 12/17 and 12-25 to end of period, and *Philadelphia* 12/11; and **Yellow-throated Warbler** on the Bloomsburg CBC, *Columbia* 12/18.

Among the more common winter warblers, **Common Yellowthroat** was in *Bucks*, *Butler*, *Cumberland*, *Lancaster*, *Lebanon*, and four locations in *Philadelphia*; **Palm Warbler** was in *Berks*, *Lancaster*, *Lebanon*, and five locations in *Philadelphia*; and **Pine Warbler** was in 11 counties.

A handful of uncommon sparrows made typical appearances. **Vesper Sparrow** was in *Chester* 1/14, two were reported on the Chambersburg CBC, *Franklin* 12/17, and six were in *Cambria* 2/19. **Lark Sparrow** was at

*Chester* 12/31. **Lincoln's Sparrow** was at *Berks* 1/23 and reported on the Wyncote CBC, *Montgomery* 12/31. **Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow** was again at the Koch residence, *Northampton* 2/9-28.

**Western Tanager** was in *Montgomery* 12/22 through the period, while **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at *Erie* 12/18-1/2 and *Washington* 12/25.

The 20 **Eastern Meadowlarks** reported in the CBC were the fewest since 1947. In contrast, during the 1990s, Pennsylvania's yearly CBC average was 177. While seen in small numbers at numerous locations during the period, this bird is in steep decline - the main problem is the early and frequent mowing of hayfields, another case of the economics of farming driving the abundance of farmland birds.

There was a decent showing of **Rusty Blackbird**. The CBC total of 198 was the most in five years, with high counts of 57 at Southern Bucks County and 40 at Delaware County. Outside the CBC, 60 were also tallied in *Bucks* and 45-50 in *Somerset*.

Southeastern Pennsylvania enhanced its reputation as a hotspot for winter orioles. The season's most unusual bird and the one that attracted the most birders was the exotic **Black-backed Oriole** in Reading suburbs, *Berks*, from 1/26 to end of period. **Baltimore Oriole** appeared in typical numbers despite going unreported on the CBC for the first time since 2002. It was at *Bucks*, with five coming to one feeder and several elsewhere, at *Erie* 1/30-2/1 for a second winter report, at *Lycoming* 1/9, at *Montgomery* 12/16, and two were in *Philadelphia* 12/2 and 1/5-7. **Bullock's Oriole** was in *Lancaster* 12/29 to end of period and seen on the Lititz CBC.

There were no widespread irruptions of winter finches, but **Red Crossbill** and **Evening Grosbeak** were found in localized concentrations. The largest and longest-lasting Red Crossbill concentration was at Owl Creek, *Schuylkill* 12/3 to end of period, with a high of 49. At Trough Creek SP, *Huntingdon*, Red Crossbills were present 12/28-1/16, with a high of 25. Smaller numbers of crossbills were observed briefly in *Bucks*, *Centre*, *Chester*, *Fulton*, *Lycoming*, *Monroe*, and *Somerset*.

Evening Grosbeaks concentrated in heavily-forested areas of the northwest. The largest Evening Grosbeak concentration was at Marienville, *Forest* 1/8 to end of period, with a high of 46. In adjacent counties, grosbeaks were present in *Elk* 2/11-26 with a high of 22, and 20 were at a feeder in *Warren*. Smaller numbers of grosbeaks were detected in *Bucks*, *Cameron*, *Clarion*, *Columbia*, *Lehigh*, *Lycoming*, *McKean*, and *Tioga*.

A few **Common Redpolls** were observed - at *Clinton*, *Erie*, *Greene*, *Franklin*, *Monroe*, *Washington*, and *Westmoreland*. After consecutive irruptions, **Pine Siskin** numbers were typical of a non-irruption winter. As usual, they were the most

common winter finch, but this season, one or a few tended to be observed at a time; the highest count was 54 at Stone Mt hawk watch, *Huntingdon*.

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## Birds of Note – December 2016 through February 2017

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.

**Eurasian Wigeon** – *Berks*: One at Lake Ontelaunee 2/11 through period (Rudy Keller, m.ob.). *Lancaster*: One at Chestnut Grove Natural Area 12/16 (Keith Leidich) and nearby Conejohela Flats 12/17-19 (Bruce Carl, Mike Epler). *Lancaster/Lebanon*: One at Middle Creek 2/10-25 (Evan Houston, m.ob.). *Lebanon*: One at Memorial Lake SP 2/14-28. *Philadelphia*: One at FDR Park 12/18 (Ann Reeves). *Somerset*: One at Somerset Lake 1/14 (*vide* Anthony Marich) and 2/25 (*vide* Jeff Payne); one at Berlin Acres 2/20-22 (Chris Payne, m.ob.), presumably the same bird.

**Blue-winged Teal** – *Adams*: One at Crooked Creek Rd wetland 2/17 (Phil Keener). *Crawford*: Two each at Pymatuning SP's Miller's Ponds and Hartstown Project 2/28 (Anthony Bruno, Roger Higbee, Margaret Higbee). *Cumberland*: One at Zion Rd Pond 2/18 (Vernon Gauthier, Scott Brookens, Annette Mathes, Bill Oyler). *Indiana*: Three at Yellow Creek SP 2/28 (Lee Carnahan, Roger Carnahan, Tom Glover, Debbie Kalbfleisch, Gloria Lamer, Dan Perlongo, Susan Wheatley). *Lebanon*: One at Conewago Lake in Mt. Gretna 2/25 (Pat and Richard Williams). *Lycoming*: Two at wetlands adjacent to South Williamsport Park 2/20. (Eric Hartshaw). *Mercer*: Three at Shenango Wildlife Area Propagation Ponds 2/19 (Bill Winkler).

**Eurasian Green-winged Teal (Common Teal)** – *Berks*: One at Eagleview Pond 12/14 through period (m.ob.), one at nearby Upper Uwchlan Twp 1/17-26 (m.ob.). *Lancaster/Lebanon*: One at Middle Creek 2/14-28 (m.ob.).

**King Eider\*** – *Lycoming*: One at Rose Valley Lake 12/4 (Bobby Brown, David Brown, Steve Pinkerton, m.ob., doc. submitted).

**Surf Scoter** – *Allegheny*: One at Highland Park Dam 12/22-28 (Amy Henrici, m.ob.). *Berks*: Two at Hopewell Lake 12/11 (Jaime Thomas). *Bucks*: One at Peace Valley Park 12/1 (Henry D'Alessandro). *Erie*: One off Vista 1 and Beach 11 on 2/19-20 (Russ States, Mike Fialkovich). *Lancaster*: One at Long Level, Susquehanna R. 1/5-9 (Meredith Lombard). *Westmoreland*: One at Tubmill Res 1/5 (Andrew Mack).

**Black Scoter** – *Erie*: One at Sunset Point 1/1 (Jerry McWilliams). *Indiana*: One 12/4-6 (Steve Gosser, m.ob.). *Philadelphia*: One at the Navy Yard 12/26-28 (Anne Bekker, Debbie Beer).

**Barrow's Goldeneye** – *Northampton*: One on Delaware R. north of Easton 12/26-1/13 (Jason Horn, m.ob.).

**Red-throated Loon** – *Bucks*: One at Peace Valley Park 12/6-20 (August Mirabella, Robert McGarry, m.ob.). *Butler*: One at South Shore 12/4 (Brendyne Baptiste). *Crawford*: One at Woodcock Lake 1/5 (Ron Leberman). *Erie*: Waterbird counts of 1-12 at Sunset Point 12/3-1/1 (Jerry McWilliams); one at Leo's Landing and one at North Pier 12/4 (Richard Nugent); one at mouth Walnut Cr 12/7-9 (Jerry McWilliams). *Northampton*: One over Little Gap hawk watch 12/3 (Michael Schall). *Montgomery*: One at Green Lane Park 12/4-6 (Marcia Clouser, m.ob.). *Philadelphia*: One at Pennypack on the Delaware 12/27 and 1/28 (Robin Irizarry, Ann Reeves) and one at Glenn Foerd Mansion 2/26 (Frank Windfelder).

**Red-necked Grebe** – *Erie*: One at the north pier 12/31-1/2 (Shannon Thompson).

**Eared Grebe\*** – *Erie*: One off Gull Point 12/23 (Jim Flynn, Jacob Flynn). *York*: One at Codorus SP 12/31 (Karen Lippy, Barb Fisher, Diane Bortner).

**Great Cormorant** – *Bucks*: High count of 16 at Bristol, on Delaware R. 12/11 (Devich Farbotnik), also at Nockamixon SP 12/3-7 (Devich Farbotnik, August Mirabella, Paul Cooper). *Delaware*: Two at Commodore Barry Bridge 12/17 (Al Guarente, Nick Pulcinella) and one at Marcus Hook (Al Guarente). *Philadelphia*: High count of 13 at Navy Yard 12/26 (Adrian Binns, Debbie Beer).

**Great Egret** – *Bucks*: One at Penn-Warner Tract 2/5 (Devich Farbotnik). *Lancaster*: One at Greenfield Estates Pond 1/17 (Derek Stoner) and one at Conestoga Greenway Trail 2/2 (Brent Musser). *Philadelphia*: Up to 2 at John Heinz NWR 12/3-10 (Jim McConnell, m.ob.).

**Green Heron** – *Mercer*: One on creek along N. Foster Rd 12/1 (Samuel Troyer). *Westmoreland*: One in Murrysville 1/13 (Michael Gagliardi).

**Osprey** – *Chester*: One photographed at West Chester 12/7-8 (Dave Luning). *Northumberland*: One along the Susquehanna R. 12/17 (David Hafer, Than Mitchell). *Philadelphia*: One photographed at John Heinz NWR 12/21 (John Daniel). *Washington*: One at Washington Res. 2/4 (Marjorie Howard, Kathy Kern, Jan Chutney).

**Sora** – *Allegheny*: One at Duck Hollow 2/1-2/27 (Dan Muller, m.ob.).

**Virginia Rail** – *Clinton*: One at Central Mountain High School Wetlands 2/16 (Brian Schmoke, Allie Causey). *Lancaster*: One at Woods Edge Park 2/22 (Zach Millen, Meredith Lombard).

**Dunlin** – *Erie*: Singles at Gull Point 12/4 and 12/16 (Jerry McWilliams).

**Purple Sandpiper** – *Erie*: One at Presque Isle 12/4 (Richard Nugent).

**Spotted Sandpiper** – *Cumberland*: One at Boiling Springs Run and Yellow Breeches Creek 2/23 (Rick Price, Peggy Price). *Northampton*: One at Martin's Creek 2/11-28 (Michael Schall, m.ob.).

**Greater Yellowlegs** – *Allegheny*: One at Imperial 2/24 (Jim Hausman, Todd Hooe, Lauren Nagoda). *Crawford*: One at Pymatuning SP's Miller's Ponds 2/28 (Anthony Bruno, Roger Higbee, Margaret Higbee). *Mercer*: One at Shenango Wildlife Area Propagation Ponds 2/24 (Richard Nugent, Deborah Kalbfleisch).

**Black-headed Gull\*** – *Bucks*: One at Falls Community Park 12/28 (Chris Latuma). *Butler*: One at Lake Arthur until 12/10, likely a returning individual from previous years (Geoff Malosh, m.ob.). *Delaware/Philadelphia*: One at John Heinz 12/25-2/28 (Victoria Sindlinger, m.ob.).

**Little Gull** – *Crawford*: One at Pymatuning SP causeway 2/8 (Ron Leberman).

**Laughing Gull** – *Philadelphia*: One at John Heinz NWR 1/18 (Dan Ceravolo).

**Thayer's Gull\*** – *Bucks*: One at Penn-Warner Tract 12/17 and 2/5 (Devich Farbotnik). *Chester*: One at SE Chester County Refuse Authority 1/21 (m.ob.). *Erie*: One off Niagara boat launch 1/30 (Jerry McWilliams) and

one in Presque Isle Bay 2/10 (Don Snyder). *Northampton*: Up to 2 at Grand Central Landfill 1/20-31 (Jason Horn, Bill Etter, Michael Schall).

**Slaty-backed Gull\*** – *Erie*: One at Lake View Landfill and Presque Isle Bay 1/27-2/26 (Jerry McWilliams, m.ob.). *Northampton*: One at Grand Central Landfill 1/30-31 (Jason Horn, Michael Schall, Corinne Campbell Schall).

**Forster's Tern** – *Erie*: One at mouth Walnut Creek 12/7 (Jerry McWilliams).

**Eurasian Collared-Dove** – *Berks*: Six at Shartlesville colony 2/25 (Matt Wlasniewski). *Franklin*: Several throughout period at Greencastle and Shady Grove colonies (Vern Gauthier, Dale Gearhart, Donna Hocker, Bill Oyler).

**Barn Owl** – *Centre*: One in barn near Millheim 1/2-19 (Carl Engstrom, Kurt Engstrom, John Carter). *Cumberland*: One at SGL 169 barn 2/22-29 (Vernon Gauthier, Scott Brookens, Susan Strassner). *Franklin*: One near Cheesetown 1/29 (Bill Oyler). *Juniata*: One near Thompsonstown 1/29-2/20 (Chad Kauffman, David McNaughton, Robert Hosler).

**Snowy Owl** – *Erie*: As many as 4 along Lake Erie shore 12/4-1/27 (m.ob.). *Bradford*: One near LeRaysville from late Dec until 2/27 (Kevin Raymond, m.ob.). *Franklin*: One near Greencastle 2/28 (Dale Gearhart, m.ob.). *Somerset*: One at Glenmoor 12/15 (Linda Greble).

**Rufous Hummingbird** – *Allegheny*: One at Brookline from fall through 12/11 (Diane Walkowski) and one in Mt Lebanon 12/10 (Shannon Thompson). *Berks*: One outside Adamstown from fall through 12/25 (Mike Slater), one in Bernville from fall through 12/10 (*vide* Scott Weidensaul). *Lancaster*: One in Denver 1/2-2/25 (Zach Millen). *Lycoming*: One near Elimsport from fall through 12/27 (David, Brown, Bobby Brown, Bob Brown, Deb Brown, ph). *Montgomery*: A probable bird in Bryn Mawr through period (*vide* Peter Burns). *York*: One in Dover Twp. from fall until 1/8 (Sandy Lockerman).

**Calliope Hummingbird\*** – *Berks*: One in Robesonia from fall until 12/10 (banded by Scott Weidensaul).

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow** – *Lancaster*: One at a water treatment plant along the Susquehanna R. 1/14-2/5 (Meredith Lombard). *Philadelphia*: The usual flock was at NE Philadelphia Treatment Plant through the period, with a high count of 200 on 12/3 and 12/11 (George Armistead, Ann Reeves). Also observed in vicinity at Frankford Creek, John Heinz NWR, and Pennypack on the Delaware River (m.ob.).

**House Wren** – *Philadelphia*: One at Pennypack on the Delaware 12/1 (Frank Windfelder).

**Marsh Wren** – *Delaware*: One at John Heinz 1/15-21 (Jim McConnell). *Philadelphia*: One at John Heinz 1/16-2/17 (Mike Epler, Ted Nichols II, m.ob.).

**Northern Waterthrush** – *Philadelphia*: One at John Heinz NWR 1/1 (Frank Windfelder, Robin Irizarry).

**Orange-crowned Warbler** – *Bucks*: Two at Penn-Warner Tract 12/11 (Devich Farbotnik, Tom Garner) and 4 there 12/17 (DF), one at Falls Twp Community Park 12/31-1/1 (Dawn Denner), one at a Falls Twp. home 2/11 through period (Karen Bryce), one at Feasterville 2/1-16 (Kris Koch). *Chester*: One in Lionville 12/19 (Michael Hartshorne), one in Landenberg 2/22 (Andrew Leidig). *Columbia*: One at Bloomsburg 12/12 (Andy Keister). *Delaware*: One in Media 12/26 (NS), one at John Heinz NWR 12/17-1/22 (Jim McConnell, Al Guarente, Damon Orsetti). *Franklin*: One at Menno-Haven Nursing Home 1/1 (Dave Cooney). *Lancaster*: One near Elizabethtown 12/9-1/17 (Howard West, Gordon Dimmig, Ted Nichols II). *Lebanon*: One at Union Canal Park (Frederick Heilman, Jim Fiorentino, Rosemary Spreha). *Philadelphia*: At John Heinz NWR 12/10-1/27, FDR Park 12/11-1/19, Delaware River Trail 12/31, Cumberland St 1/7, NE WTP 12/3-2/20, Pennypack on the Delaware 12/1-2/11, Manayunk Canal 12/12, Houston Meadow 12/21 (m.ob.).

**Nashville Warbler** – *Bucks*: One at Penn-Warner Tract 12/17 (Devich Farbotnik) and one at Bristol Twp. 12-25 through period (Gary Dunbar).

**Yellow-throated Warbler** – *Columbia*: One at Bloomsburg 12/18 (Karol Pasquini, John Slotterback).

**Vesper Sparrow** – *Cambria*: Six at Millcreek Hollow 2/19 (Michele Davis). *Chester*: One at Somerset Lake 1/14 (Joe Sebastiani). *Franklin*: Two in Fayetteville 12/17 (Earl Nollenberger and George Baker).

**Lark Sparrow\*** – *Chester*: One at SE Chester County Refuse Authority 12/31 (Kelley Nunn).

**Lincoln's Sparrow** – *Berks*: One at Lake Ontelaunee 1/23 (Matt Wlasniewski). *Montgomery*: One at Cheltenham 12/31 (Rich Conroy, Marlene Morano, Linda McGrath).

**Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow** – *Northampton*: One at Koch property 2/9-28 (Arlene Koch).

**Western Tanager\*** – *Montgomery*: One at Harleysville 12/22 through period (*vide* Robert Megraw).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak** – *Erie*: One at Harborcreek 12/18-1/2 (Don Snyder). *Washington*: One at Daisytown 12/25 (Ryan Tomazin).

**Black-backed Oriole\*** – *Berks*: One in Sinking Spring 1/26 through period (Mike Slater, m.ob.).

**Bullock's Oriole\*** – *Lancaster*: One at Lititz 12/29 through period (Bruce Carl, m.ob.).

**Baltimore Oriole** – *Bucks*: Five attending feeder in Middletown Twp. through period (David Pentland); one in Solebury Twp. remaining from fall until 12/4 and replaced by another until 12/16 (Julie Davies); one at Penn-Warner Tract 12/11 (Devich Farbotnik, Tom Garner). *Erie*: One at feeder in Fairview 1/30-2/1 (Karen Mead). *Lycoming*: One photographed at Haneyville 1/9 (Donna Groves Dawson). *Montgomery*: One photographed at a feeder in West Norritin Twp. 12/16 (Greg Wirtz). *Philadelphia*: One at Pennypack on the Delaware 12/2; one at feeder in East Falls 1/5-7 (Navin Sasikumar).

**Red Crossbill** – *Bucks*: One heard at Nockamixon SP 12/16 (Devich Farbotnik). *Centre*: Nine near Midstate Airport 1/29 (Jim Dunn). *Chester*: Eight at Octoraro Reservoir 12/4 (Joe Sebastiani). *Fulton*: Six at Cowans Gap SP 2/19 (Doug Weidemann). *Huntingdon*: High of 25 at Trough Creek SP 12/28-1/16 (Nick Bolgiano, Betsy Manlove, m.ob., ph), 8 near Martin's Gap 1/1 (Ian Gardner, ph). *Lycoming*: Four at Williamsport Water Authority 2/25 (Dave Ferry). *Monroe*: Eight at Kettle Creek 1/30 (Steve Kloiber), one at Hysie Gap Rd 12/23 (Corey Husic, Diane Husic). *Schuylkill*: High of 49 at Owl Creek, 12/3 through period (Dave Kruel, m.ob.), 3 at Bartram Trail 12/04 (Kerry Grim), one at Hawk Mountain 12/8. *Somerset*: One at Quemahoning Res. 12/20 (Linda Greble).

**Common Redpoll** – *Clinton*: One on Lock Haven-Jersey Shore CBC 12/31. *Erie*: One at Pine Tree Trail 1/29 (Mary Birdsong). *Greene*: Two at Mt Morris 2/19 (Kathie Teagarden). *Franklin*: One at Penn National Estates 2/15 (Earl Nollenberger). *Monroe*: Three at Long Pond 2/16 (Donald DeGroat). *Washington*: One at Brownsville 2/17 (Ralph Lucci). *Westmoreland*: Two at Collinsburg 2/20 (Janet Halle).

**Evening Grosbeak** – *Bucks*: One at Peace Valley Park 12/6 (Paul Lehman). *Cameron*: A count-week species on Emporium CBC. *Clarion*: One in Strattanville late Dec. *Columbia*: One in Catawissa 12/3 (Randy Young). *Elk*: At Jones Twp, 22 2/11-12 and 15 2/16 (Brendyn Baptiste). *Forest*: Highs of 46 at Marienville 1/8 through period, 21 at Neiltown 1/1 through period, and six at Neiltown Fields (m.o.b.). *Lehigh*: One at SGL 205 1/22 (Chris Hugosson). *Lycoming*: North of Slabtown Bridge 12/27 (Gary Metzger, Fred Stiner, Darryl Rebeck). *McKean*: One in Bradford 2/29. *Tioga*: Three at Hammond Lakes 12/26 (Rich Hanlon). *Warren*: 20 at Tiona (Dave Stanko).

## Photographic Highlights



**Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*).** This pair of Trumpeter Swans at Bullfrog Rd., Adams 4-6 February (here 6) is the same pair seen in at least three other Pennsylvania counties and in Virginia the past couple years. (Bonita Portzline)



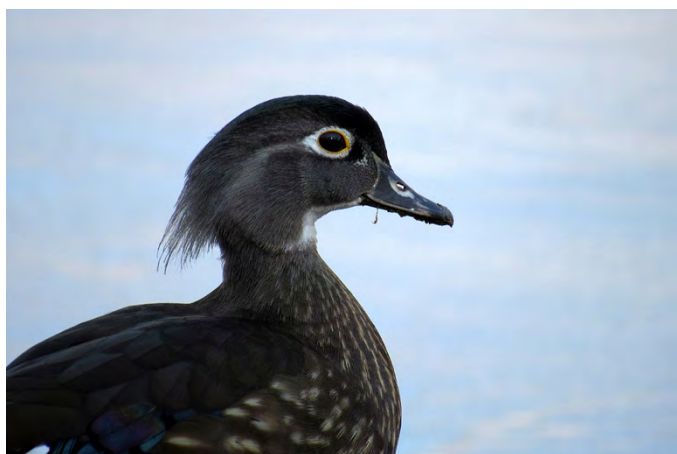
**Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*).** Blue-phase Snow Goose on the Ohio River in Allegheny 2-5 (here 4) February. (Jeff McDonald)



**Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*).** Ross's Goose at Little Buffalo SP, Perry 27-28 (here 28) December, providing a first for the New Bloomfield CBC and also the only eBird record for Perry. (Dave Kerr)



**Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*).** First county record, this Ross's Goose was present at a small pond in Martinsburg, Blair 1-4 (here 1) January. (Laura Palmer)



**Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*).** The mild season allowed ducks to stay north, like this Wood Duck hen photographed 6 February and present all season at Bullfrog Valley Park, Hummelstown, Dauphin. (Eugene Pasquale)



**Eurasian Wigeon (*Ana penelope*).** There were apparently at least two Eurasian Wigeons in Somerset during the winter; one was harvested by a hunter 14 January and another, pictured here, was at both Berlin and at Somerset Lake 20-25 February. (Jim and Meg Moses)



**King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*).** A first for *Lycoming*, this King Eider at Rose Valley Lake was seen only 4 December and is apparently the first in Pennsylvania away from Lake Erie since 2002. (*David Brown*)



**Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*).** Northern Pintail drake at South Park, *Allegheny* 11 January. (*Jeff McDonald*)



**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*).** Late photo from the fall season of probable first county record, this immature Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was at Curwensville Dam, *Clearfield* 3 August 2016, seen only that day. (*Chris Greco*)



**Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).** Resident Bald Eagle pair at Forevergreen Nature Preserve, *Monroe* 24 February. (*Lisa Oser*)



**Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*).** Resident Red-shouldered Hawk pair at Lower Marsh Creek Church, *Adams* 8 January; counties of the south-central region are among the best in the state for wintering Red-shoulders, as shown by WRS and CBC results in this issue. (*Bonita Portzline*)



**Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*).** This dark form Rough-legged Hawk was photographed at Le Raysville, *Bradford* 18 February; the winter saw no significant flight of Rough-legs into the state; most were seen, as expected, in northern counties. (*Kevin Raymond*)



**Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus* and *Falco peregrinus*).** This immature Bald Eagle strayed too deeply into the territory of a Peregrine Falcon at Williamsport Dam, *Lycoming* 19 February. (David Brown)



**Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*).** Proving a second state record, this Slaty-backed Gull found and photographed at Lake View Landfill, *Erie* 27 January continued through 26 February at both that site and at Presque Isle SP. (Jerry McWilliams)



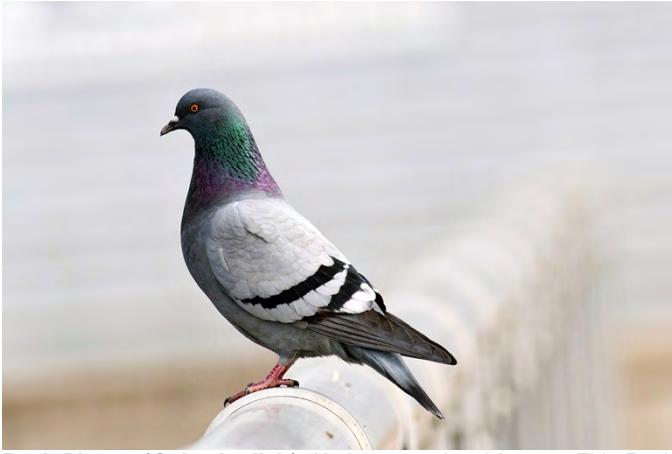
**Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*).** Nearing adult plumage, this Golden Eagle fed on a deer carcass near Emporium, *Cameron* 14 January. (Randy Flament)



**Sora (*Porzana carolina*).** The first Pennsylvania February record of Sora in eBird, this bird in Duck Hollow, *Allegheny* was found 1 February (here 11) and stayed into March. (Jeff McDonald)



**Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*).** Presumably the same Black-headed Gull has returned to Morraine SP, *Butler* at least six of last nine winters, present this season 29 November - 10 (here 4) December. (Glenn Koppel)



**Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*).** Under-appreciated beauty: This Rock Pigeon, photographed 22 February, from the Williamsport, *Lycoming* flock that serves as a prey base for resident Peregrine Falcons. (David Brown)



**Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*).** Few Snowy Owls came to Pennsylvania this season; several were in *Erie*, and singles were in *Somerset*, *Franklin*, and *Bradford*, the later hosting the pictured owl at Le Raysville late Dec through 27 (here 12) February. (Kevin Raymond)



**Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*).** This handsome Great Horned Owl in *Montgomery* was photographed 7 December. (Adrian Melck)



**Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*).** Ever secretive and seldom seen or heard, this wintering Long-eared Owl was at Beaver Creek, *Dauphin* 23 February. (Rick Carlson)



**Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*).** This Rufous Hummingbird was in Elimsport, *Lycoming* 25 October until 27 December when last seen and photographed here, during the Williamsport CBC. (David Brown)



**Merlin (*Falco columbarius*).** An increasing winter presence in Pennsylvania, this Merlin wintered at Schenley Park, *Allegheny*, seen here 23 January; seven were recorded for the Pittsburgh CBC 31 December. (Alan Buriak)



**Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*).** Immature Red-headed Woodpecker present all season (here 21 January) at Crooked Creek Park, *Armstrong*; occasionally seen stashing acorns in tree cavity. (*Alan Buriak*)



**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*).** Immature Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Lake Kay, *Adams* 8 January. (*Bonita Portzline*)



**Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*).** Northern Shrike was in twelve counties, mostly northern, about average; this individual was at Mine Ponds, *Lawrence* 17 December - 18 (here 11) January. (*Alan Buriak*)



**Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*).** Black-capped Chickadees staged a modest irruption south into the range of Carolina Chickadees this winter, as noted by several southeastern county compilers; this particular Black-cap from the overlap zone, *Kelayres, Schuylkill* was photographed 6 January. (*Marcina Trimmell*)



**Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*).** Red-breasted Nuthatches usually irrupt in alternate years, but this winter was the first with good numbers in 4 years; this nuthatch was photographed at a Red Crossbill stake-out at Trough Creek SP, *Huntingdon* 16 January. (*Laura Palmer*)



**American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*).** American Pipits were found mostly in eastern counties; this individual on the snowy bank of the Ohio River at Rochester Riverfront Park, *Beaver* 16 December was a nice surprise. (*Alan Buriak*)



**Townsend's Warbler (*Setophaga townsendi*).** This cooperative Townsend's Warbler was first spotted 3 January in the yard of Katie Yelinek in Bloomsburg, *Columbia*, who allowed many birders the chance to view; it was seen until 12 February (here 15 January). (*Karol Pasquinelli*)



**Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*).** Rusty Blackbird captured beautifully in flight during the Northern Lycoming CBC in Jackson Twp., *Lycoming* 31 December. (*David Brown*)



**Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*).** Male Purple Finch in Seneca, *Venango* 20 December. (*Meg Kolodick*)



**Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*).** Red Crossbills were reported from nine counties, mostly in the east; the most publicized and persistent flock was at Owl Creek Reservoir, *Schuylkill* 3 December through the season, here 25 January, reaching a high of 49 birds. (*Debbie Beer*)

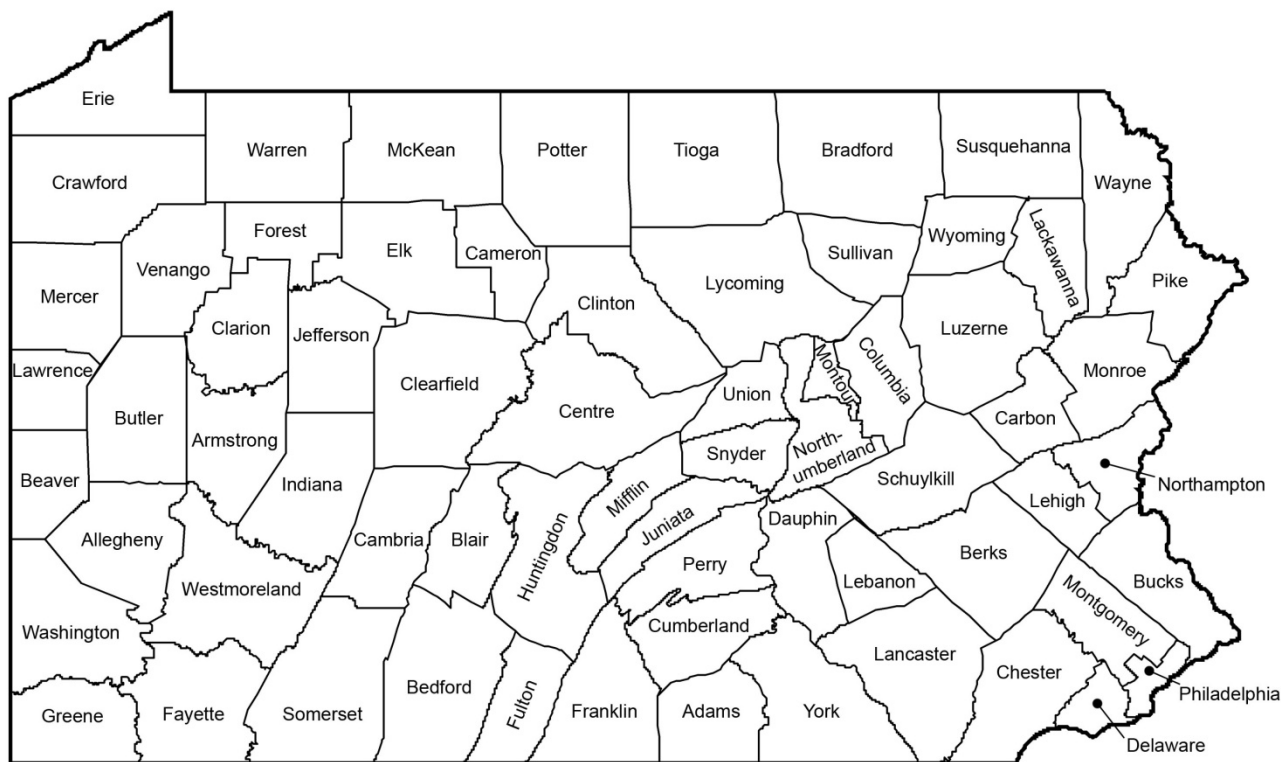


**Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*).** One of the few Common Redpolls of the season, this lone bird was at Presque Isle SP, *Erie* 29 January; there were a few other eBird reports in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New Jersey, clustered in late February. (*Ted Nichols II*)



**Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*).** Evening Grosbeaks were reported from ten counties, mostly northern; a flock at Marienville, *Forest* arrived 8 January and stayed through the end on the season, here 9 January, reaching a high count of 46. (*Anthony Bruno*)

## Local Notes – December 2016 to February 2017



### 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).	juvenile [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)

*Editors Note: Winter reports were received from 53 counties. The following counties have new compilers, with first reports anticipated for the upcoming spring issue: **Columbia, Northumberland, Union.***

*The following counties have no compiler- contact the editor if interested: **Carbon, Lackawanna, Potter, Tioga.***

### Adams County

Locations: Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Gettysburg Christmas Bird Count (GCBC), Gettysburg National Military Park (GNMP), Lake Heritage (LH), Lake Kay (LK), Lake Meade (LM), Long Pine Run Reservoir (LPRR), State Game Lands #249 (SGL), York Springs Christmas Bird Count (YSCBC).

South-central PA saw the warm fall temperatures carry over and remain for the winter. Average daily temperatures at Harrisburg produced Dec, Jan, and Feb temperatures above historical levels by 1.9F, 6.0F, and 8.4F, respectively. In addition, Feb 2017 was the warmest on record

averaging 41.3F. Snowfall at Harrisburg for the period was a remarkably low total of 5.5 inches. Species count of 109 was a new winter reporting high while Winter Raptor Survey routes produced typical results. CBC species counts were mixed. The 12/29 YSCBC, led by Vern Gauthier, produced a strong 70 species for the Adams portion. The GCBC, led by Mike O'Brien 1/4, was on the low side, compared with the historical average of 74 species.

The strong reporting period was paced by 30 species of waterfowl. Up to 3 **Greater White-fronted Goose** were at Gettysburg College 12/31-1/4 (BP, CM, LM, DST, JW) and 2 showed up at LK 1/31-2/6 (EB). A rare (for Adams) **Ross's Goose** was in the company of **Cackling Geese** and **Canada Geese** at LK 1/2-3 (CM, m. ob.). With 5 reports of Cackling Goose 1/3-2/22 (m.ob.), from 5 locations, it is clear that birders were taking the time to sort thru Canada Goose flocks.

The GCBC produced a count of 23 **Mute Swans**, suggesting a growing presence in the Gettysburg area. Banded (Z603 & Z675) **Trumpeter Swans** were at Bullfrog and Gordon RD 2/4-6 (CM, BP, m.ob.). This is the same pair that were documented in *Schuylkill* from 3/22/16 into last summer. As a reminder, their provenance is one of captive birds banded prior to 2002 but from where and when they were released remains unanswered. **Tundra Swan** first appeared 12/10 (CM, JW) at LH and were found sporadically throughout the period. Higher

counts of 50-75 birds came from the traditional favored stopover point of LM and Germany Rd fields spanning 1/26-2/28 (NB, PK, LM, JV).

A female **Wood Duck** had an extended stay at LH 12/11-1/6 (CM, JW). The temperate Feb brought a pair to LK 2/25 (CM) and a trio to a pond along Chapel Rd, same date/observer. **American Black Duck** was reported from 7 locations spanning 12/16-2/17 (m.ob.). High count was 19 at LH 12/16 (CM). Rare for the period, a female **Blue-winged Teal** was at Crooked Creek Rd wetland 2/17 (PK). The bird's behavior and markedly upright posture reminded the observer of a cartoon depiction of a duck finding the water too cold. It was interesting to watch. A nice count for **Adams** of 17 **Northern Shovelers** came from Lake Mae 12/11 (CM). A single **Northern Pintail** was at LK 12/12-13 (JW, AW) and a pair were at SGL 2/19 (PK). **Green-winged Teal** trios were at LK 12/11-20 (CM, BP, DSt, JW) and on the GCBC.

A **Redhead** was at LK 1/7-17 (m.ob.). **Lesser Scaup** showed late; a single at LK 2/25 (CM, JW) and a pair at LH 2/27 (CM, JW). Both uncommon species for the county, a **Long-tailed Duck** was at LK 1/3-5 (EB, m.ob.) and singles of **Common Goldeneye** were found at LPRR 12/15 (BO) and LK 1/3-4 (m.ob.), and 3 goldeneyes were at LM 1/8 (DS). The only **Red-breasted Merganser** report comprised 8 birds at LPRR 12/7 (BO). **Pied-billed Grebe** reporting was limited to a pair on the YSCBC. Up to 7 **Horned Grebes** were at LH 12/25-1/4 (CM, JW).

Of the 12 **Wild Turkey** reports, 5 noted counts of over 20. Like last winter, **Double-crested Cormorants** lingered. One was at LPRR 12/13 (AW) and one put in an extended stay at LH 12/10-1/10 (CM, DSt, JW). Highlights among raptors group was the documentations of a **Bald Eagle** roost with 16 birds reported 2/17. The county is always a stronghold for **Red-shouldered Hawk** and 17 on the GCBC and over 30 reports suggests they were even more abundant in this mild winter.

The only **Wilson's Snipe** was found on the GCBC. **American Woodcock** was first reported at Mountain Rd 2/21 (RDS) and 3 were at Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve 2/24 (CM). **Great Black-backed Gull** is a recent (spring 2014) addition to the county's list so it was nice to have a report of up to 2 birds at LM 12/29-1/8 (DS, JV). Again this year, a **Long-eared Owl** was found on the GCBC. **Short-eared Owl** experienced a second consecutive winter of low reporting. GNMP held up to 2 birds 12/28-1/8 (VB, CM) and Bullfrog Rd held one 1/7 (CM).

As noted in the fall report, **Red-headed Woodpecker** went unreported after 10/1 and was nearly missed this period with only one report of a single bird at GNMP 1/5 (DS). It will be interesting to see what future reporting periods reveal for one of **Adams'** favorites. Hopefully, they will be positive. All other expected woodpecker species saw extensive reporting. Contrasting the uncertainty with Red-headed Woodpeckers, **American Kestrel** was reported over 40 times with 48 found on the GCBC and 26 on the YSCBC. Single **Merlin** were at GNMP 12/5 (EB) and Wenko/Shippenburg Rds 1/30 (BO).

There were 23 reports of **Common Raven** and this species will no longer receive mention for this county unless a downward trend or range retraction is detected. Ten reports of **Horned Lark** were paced by a high count of 32 at Possum Hollow Rd 1/6 (PK). **Black-capped Chickadee** continues to be reported from the higher western regions of the county. **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was the only northern visitor reported with any frequency, entertaining us throughout the period. The mild winter resulted in high reporting of both **Brown Creeper** and **Carolina Wren**. Three reports of **Winter Wren** spanned 12/27-1/18 (ED, VG, TN, DSt) and one was at Lake Mae 2/25 (CM). The 9 reports of **Golden-crowned Kinglet** spanned 12/24-2/19 (m.ob.) and the 3 reports of **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** were confined to 1/4-17 (VG, TN, CM, JW). As expected, the mild winter conditions held **Hermit Thrush**, with 5 reports 12/24-2/26 (m.ob.). A great count of over 300 **American Pipits** came from Bullfrog Rd 11/7 (CM).

A **Pine Warbler** was at LPRR 1/10 (EB). Sparrow reporting was pretty typical. **Savannah Sparrow** was found throughout the period but only at GNMP. Four **Fox Sparrows** were found on the YSCBC but then went unreported until a fairly strong movement was detected starting 2/25 (m.ob.). From then until the end of the period there were 6 reports with nice counts of 6 birds at Michaux SF and 5 birds at Mountain Rd 2/25 (RGTS, RDS). The 9 reports of **Swamp Sparrow** covered the period. **Eastern Towhee** were found on both CBCs but then not again until 2/20 (KD) on Early Avenue.

**Red-winged Blackbird**, **Common Grackle**, and **Brown-headed Cowbird** were found in all months. **Eastern Meadowlark** was only found at GNMP 1/5-2/19 (m.ob.), with a high of 26 on 1/24 (CM). The 2 reports of **Rusty Blackbird** provided nice counts. There were 12 along Zeigler Mill Rd 12/27 (DSt) and 28 along Rake Factory Rd 1/4 (VG, TN). **Purple Finch** was reported 3 times: a single on the YSCBC, up to 3 at B&F Rd

1/8-9 (DSt), and a single in Huntingdon Twp 1/15 (DJG). Pine Siskin went unreported.

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### Allegheny County

Following a mild fall, mid-December weather included brief storms with snow and freezing rain, but for the most part remained calm. The remainder of the winter featured mild weather and little winter precipitation.

The mild conditions resulted in late movement of **Tundra Swans** after none were found during the typical fall migration time of mid-Nov. Despite the late movement, we still saw less than normal: 2 flocks flying over the Greenfield section of Pittsburgh after dark 12/14 (KSJ) and 3 at Duck Hollow 12/20 (JS, SS). A white morph **Snow Goose** was a surprising sight flying low over Schenley Park 1/21 (MVV, MF). A first fall bird was at Wood's Run 2/2-5 (JM, m.ob.).

A **Gadwall** was at Imperial 12/3 (MV), 2 were in Harmar Twp. 1/23 (AB) and 2 were at Imperial 2/11 (MF). **American Wigeon** is a surprisingly uncommon migrant here. Two were at Duck Hollow 2/9 (JF, AB), 6 were at Imperial 2/10 (MV), and up to 14 were at Janoski's Farm in Findlay Twp. 2/19 through the season (MV). Eight **American Black Ducks** were at Findlay Twp. 12/11 (MV), one was at Duck Hollow 12/29 (SS, PH, AP), 2 were at Emsworth 12/31 (PB), and 6 at Brunots Island 12/31 (JG, OM). A **Northern Shoveler** was a nice find at Duck Hollow 12/9 (JF). Single **Northern Pintails** were at Wingfield Pines 12/10 (JF) and South Park 1/10 (JF, MJ). Five were at Imperial 2/16 (MV) and 2 remained 2/18 (MF). **Green-winged Teal** are irregular in winter. Three were in Findlay Twp. 12/11 (MV) and 2 were at Imperial 2/11 (MF).

Two **Redheads** were at the Moody Road Ponds in Findlay Twp. 12/16 and very likely the same birds were at a retention pond at Imperial 12/18 (MV). A **Canvasback** was at Emsworth Dam on the Ohio R. 12/16-31 (PB, et al.). A **Surf Scoter** was a nice find at the Highland Park Dam on the Allegheny R. 12/22 -28 (AH, m.ob.). Six **Red-breasted Mergansers** at Brunots Island on the Ohio R. 12/31 (JG, OM) provided the only report.

A **Common Loon** was at the Highland Park Dam on the Allegheny R. 12/22-23 (AH, m.ob.) and one was around Brunots Island on the Ohio 1/18-29 (AB, et al.). A **Horned Grebe** was at Duck Hollow 12/19-25 (DWe, JS, SS). Horned Grebes seem to just appear for a few days at anytime during the winter. Five were at Duck Hollow 2/25 (AB). Up to 24 **Double-crested Cormorants** were at Emsworth Dam on the Ohio during Jan (PB).

Seven **Merlins** set a new high count for the Pittsburgh CBC. One spent the season at Schenley Park's golf course, a regular location in winter. **Turkey Vultures** were reported all season, likely due to the mild winter. A flock of 54 **Wild Turkeys** was in Upper St. Clair 12/18 (ST).

Seven late **Killdeer** were at Imperial 12/3 (MV) and a **Wilson's Snipe** was there 12/3 (MV). A Killdeer was found on the Pittsburgh CBC 12/31 (MK) and one was in Homewood Cemetery 1/14 (MVV). Six **Wilson's Snipe** were at Imperial 2/23-24 (MV, JHA). A very early **Greater Yellowlegs** was at Imperial 2/24 (JHA, TH, LN). The first **American Woodcocks** were heard 2/17-19 at four locations (GM, JM, GG, DN).

A **Sora** at Duck Hollow 2/1 was unexpected (DM). The bird stayed in thick vegetation on a mudflat at the mouth of Nine Mile Run where it enters the Monongahela R. It remained at least to 2/27 and was seen and photographed by many observers. It endured rising water levels following rain that nearly submerged the entire mudflat. I believe this is the first winter record of this species in the county.

An adult and a first cycle **Lesser Black-backed Gull** were at The Point in Pittsburgh 12/9 (ST). The first cycle bird was seen again 12/11 (SA) and an adult was there 12/19 (GM). **Bonaparte's Gulls** are very uncommon in winter. One was at Duck Hollow (DWe), 2 were at McKees

Rocks 12/19 (JHa) and 2 were at The Point in Pittsburgh 1/6 (GM, ST).

Two **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were banded at Sewickley Heights Park 2/24 (BMu). The **Rufous Hummingbird** banded in late Nov in Brookline was last reported 12/11 (DWa). An **Eastern Phoebe** at Imperial 12/23 (MV) was either very late or a wintering bird. This is the third winter record from the Imperial Area (previous records: 1/16/1999 and 2/11/2013).

The **American Crow** roost in Pittsburgh was located in Oakland this year; birds were roosting at the University of Pittsburgh campus. The CBC total was 14,690, down from previous years however the location made counting difficult with buildings blocking views of incoming birds. Crows staged in nearby Schenley Park prior to going to roost; thousands gathered in the trees bordering the golf course.

A total of 20 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were tallied during the Pittsburgh CBC 12/31 (fide BSh) and reports continued from various locations during the season. A **Hermit Thrush** was at Beechwood Farms for a few days around 1/22 (CK). A late or lingering **Gray Catbird** visited a feeding station in South Park Twp. 12/18 (JF) and one was photographed near downtown Pittsburgh 2/14 (AL).

**Eastern Towhee** reports include birds in Findlay Twp. 1/6 (MV), Brentwood 1/8-9 (JN), and again at Findlay Twp. 2/18 (TH, LN, LK). Towhees are uncommon and irregular here in winter. Uncommon winter sparrows were also found during this milder than normal season. A **Chipping Sparrow** visited a feeder at Frick Park 12/31-1/8 (TF, FI, DWe). Up to 4 **Field Sparrows** were in Pine Twp. in Jan and Feb (PL, SL). **Fox Sparrows** lingered later than usual. One was at Frick Park through Dec (DWe, SS, et al.) and singles were at Findlay Twp. (MV) and Beechwood Farms (BSh) 12/16. **White-crowned Sparrows** wintered at their usual location in Findlay Twp. (m.ob.). A **Cassiar Dark-eyed Junco** (subspecies *Cismontanus*) visited the feeders at Beechwood Farms during the season (BSh).

**Red-winged Blackbirds** are rare after Nov. One visited a feeder in Fawn Twp. 12/11 (PK) and 5 were at Imperial 12/18 (MV). Six visited a feeder in Pine Twp. 12/26 and 3 on 12/27 (PL, SL) where sightings continued well in Feb. One visited a feeder in Crafton 1/16 (LA) and Pine Twp. 1/23 (PL, SL). Thirteen were found in Homewood Cemetery 1/24 (fide MVV). Given the winter reports it was difficult to distinguish birds in Feb as overwintering or returning migrants. An **Eastern Meadowlark** was at Imperial 2/27 (AB). Two **Common Grackles**, rarely found in winter here, were in Squirrel Hill in Dec (JS, SS) and one visited a feeder in Hampton Twp. 1/22 (DN). Four **Brown-headed Cowbirds** (3 males, one female) visited a feeder in Pine Twp. 12/14 (PL, SL), 2 females stopped by a feeder in Natrona Heights 12/15 (PH), 4 females were at the feeder in Pine Twp. again 12/20, and one female and five males on 1/9 (PL, SL). It seems almost every year a few stop by a feeder somewhere in the county and usually just for a brief time. It's uncertain if this species winters nearby or is just on the move when they appear. A **Purple Finch** visited a feeder in Plum 1/3 (AH, PM). A **Pine Siskin** visited a feeder in Natrona Heights 12/12 (PH).

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### Armstrong County

Locations: Locations: Cochran's Mill (CM), Crooked Creek Lake (CCL), Dayton (DT) Keystone Reservoir (KR), Kittanning (KT), Leechburg (LB), Logansport (LT), Mahoning Creek Lake (MCL), Murphy's Bottom (MB), New Bethlehem (NB) Nicholson Run Road (NR), Parks Bend Farm (PBF)

Season highlights include a rare **Ross's Goose** by the Kiskiminetas R. in Parks Twp. 1/8 (KK, photo), observed in the snow in a small field

with **Canada Geese** and later observed in a field with a flock of Canadas off River and Airport Rds. (AH, SG, MBC MVT); last seen 1/15 (JCB). Another nice sighting and first record was provided by 4 **Short-eared Owls** observed near DT in Jan (TB, AD, SG, AK, JK, KK, MVT), remaining through 2/17. Two small flocks (10 each) of **Snow Buntings** were noted on the beach of CCL 12/4 (Ed Manspeaker).

**Tundra Swan** reports included 55 fly-overs at CCL 12/10 (TR), 2 at NB 12/19 (AK, JK), 6 at KR 12/20 (MVT, ph.), 12 low over Freeport L&D (MVT), a short-staying single photographed with geese on the ice by the dam at CCL 1/24 (DF), and 2 at KR 2/26 (MH, RH). The only **Wood Ducks** were 7 at RT 2/20 (TR) and 3 on the AT 2/26 (TR). Ten **Gadwall** were observed at KR 12/14 (TB, MH, RH) and 2 at CCL 2/26 (MVT). A lone **American Wigeon** was spotted on the AT 2/20 (TR). **American Black Ducks** returned 12/2-3 (TR, MVT), 8 were noted at CCL 12/10 (TR), and a high count of 13 occurred 2/25 (JB). Only report of **Northern Shovelers** was of 4 at Logansport 2/25 (JB). Single **Green-winged Teal** were at KR 12/14 (TB, MH, RH), at NB, on the AT (TR), and from the Armstrong Side of the Redbank Creek in NB 2/18 (JB).

Numerous reports of **Ring-Necked Ducks** came from the AT, CCL, and LT. First report of **Lesser Scaup** was at KR 12/14 (TB, MH, RH). **Buffleheads** were first reported from RT 12/24 (MVT), 8 were at KR 12/26 (MVT), one was seen near NB 2/12 (AK, JK), and one on the AT 2/20 (TR). A lone **Common Goldeneye** was noted at RT 1/1 (TR) and also at NB (AK, JK). **Hooded Mergansers** were found in many locations throughout the county and throughout the period (m.ob.). **Common Mergansers** were widespread; highest count was 200 in Dec at CCL (TR). Only **Ruddy Duck** reports were of 16 from KR 12/14 (TB, MH, RH) and 3 there 12/14 (MVT).

The only **Common Loon** was at KR 12/22 (MH, RH). One **Pied-billed Grebe** was spotted at RT 12/10-1/1 (TR) and one at Dam 8 on 2/3 (JB). The only **Horned Grebe** was at KR 2/26 (MH, RH). Numerous reports of **Great Blue Heron** came from PBF, CCL, and KR.

First **Turkey Vultures** to return were one at RT 2/18 (JB), 2 at LB 2/24 (MVT), one at WT 2/26 (TR), and 6 at MCL 2/26 (AD). Reports of **Northern Harriers** were numerous, a very welcome trend. Two **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were seen at CCL 1/9 (AD), one at PBF 1/16 (SA, JC, AP), and one at CCL 2/15 and 2/18 (RN, MD). **Coopers Hawks** were at MB, CCL, PBF, and WT (m.ob.). **Bald Eagles** have made such a great comeback they and their nests have been sighted by many birders on the AT and along the Kiski and Allegheny Rivers, at CCL, MCL, RR, WT. There have also been numerous reports of **Red-shouldered Hawks**, also local nesters, from CCL, DT, ELD, MCL, PBF, and WT. A leucistic **Red-tail Hawk** returned (KK, EP, RM, MVT) and normal Red-tailed Hawks are also numerous. First **Rough-legged Hawk** (light morph) was reported early Jan in WT (JB, ph.), 2 were observed 1/9 and 1/11 (MVT), and one light morph was in Dayton 2/1-11 (AD, DF, MVT, ph.), where a dark morph was also seen 2/5 (AD, DF, ph.).

The only report of **American Coots** was of 3 on 12/14 (TB, MH, RH). A high count of 30 **Killdeer** was made 12/3 (MVT, ph.), and 2 were noted at a farm in KT (MW) and 2 at LT (JB). On a CBC at MB, one **Eastern Screech Owl** was observed (BP); one was on the AT, one at CCL (JB), and one in WT 2/6 (KD, DF, BG, RS). A few **Great Horned Owls** were observed on back roads (TB, MH, RH, TR). **Belted Kingfishers** were noted at the AT, CCL, DT, KR, and MCL.

The **Red-headed Woodpecker** found in Oct were observed and photographed 1/1-2/18 (m.ob.). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** visited a feeder near LB 12/8, one was at WT 1/11, one at CCL 12/10 (MVT), and 2 there later (SG, ph.) Quite a few **Northern Flickers** and **Pileated Woodpeckers** were reported.

Six **American Kestrels** were reported from WT 12/5 and quite a few others were seen there all through winter as well as a few near CCL, DT, and MCL. A **Merlin** with a meal was observed on a pole in DT 1/16 (MVT, ph.) and one was also in WT 2/11 (MH, RH). A nice find near ELD was a **Peregrine Falcon** 1/22 (MH) and 2 were on the AT near Manorville 2/23 (MH, RH). **Common Ravens** were at WT and KR; and at CCL, where they nest, one or 2 were seen 12/2-2/26.

**Horned Larks** included 80 in WT 1/14 (TR) and 55 on 2/11 (JB), and 58 in DT 1/16 (JB); a higher count of 70 was made 2/3 (AD, DF). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were reported at CCL beginning 12/2. A **Winter Wren** was reported from CCL 1/1 (SG) and at MB 1/16 (JB). **Golden-Crowned Kinglets** were noted in a few areas including 2 at WT 1/1 (JB), a high of 6 at CCL 1/2 (SG), and singles at NRR (MVT), KR (MH), and CCL (MD). One **Hermit Thrush** was found near MCL 1/15 (JB). An early **Northern Catbird** was reported from a farm near KT 2/19 (MW, ph.).

Seventeen **Cedar Waxwings** were spotted at CCL 1/7 (SG), 25 were at WT 1/9 (MVT, ph.), and a high count of 68 was reported near ELD 1/28 (TB, MH, RH). The few reports of **Yellow-rumped Warblers** included one at CCL 12/2 (TR), one near CM 1/5 (MVT), and 6 at RT 2/11 (JB). Numerous reports on **American Tree Sparrows** were made through the county. The only 2 **Field Sparrows** were at CCL (PF). Two **Swamp Sparrows** at MB and 4 at LT (JB). The only **Eastern Towhee** was near ELD 1/2 (MH). Five **Eastern Meadowlarks** were near Elders Ridge 12/14 (MH). The only report of **Brown-headed Cowbirds** was of 10 in WT 2/6 (DF, BG, RS).

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### Beaver County

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

The excessively mild winter weather made for a rather forgettable season for birding. Unluckily, one of the worst weather days of the season came in the form of an ice storm on the day of the Beaver CBC 12/17, which depressed birder participation and resulted in a well-below average total of 46 species.

**Tundra Swans** arrived in sw. Pennsylvania somewhat late; reports in *Beaver* after the end of Nov included 19 on the Ohio R. at Vanport 12/4 (GR) and 40 over RCSP 12/7 (DC). **Wood Duck** was back at AR by 2/18 (MV). Two **Gadwalls** at RCH 1/7 (MV) were rare for early Jan, and 2 **American Wigeons** at AR 1/27 (MV) were rare for late Jan. A flock of 16 wigeons appeared at IND 2/22 (JM) and dwindled from that number to the end of Feb. Up to 7 **American Black Ducks** hung around RCH throughout Jan (m.ob.). A late fall **Northern Pintail** was still at RCH 12/1, and first returner was there 1/6 (both MV). A flock of 12 **Green-winged Teal** at AR 12/2 (MV) was notable for Dec.

A few **Greater Scaup** were fixtures at RCH from Jan through 2/8 (m.ob.) but in a reversal of the usual pattern, **Lesser Scaup** was much more infrequently reported. Two **Long-tailed Ducks** were at RCH 12/16-18 (MV) and were noted for the CBC (*fide* RM). A total of 5 **Common Goldeneyes** for the CBC 12/17 (*fide* RM) was a good showing for this species in a year without harsh conditions to the north. One or 2 hung around RCH to at least 2/22 (m.ob.). A nice total of 40 **Common Mergansers** was tallied on the Ohio R. 12/14 (DY). A single **Red-breasted Merganser** was at RCH 12/30-1/10 (MV, et al.).

Quite unusual for Jan was a **Double-crested Cormorant** at AR 1/27 (MV). **Bald Eagles** set up a new nest near Beaver Falls, first noted 2/6 (MV). The Little Blue Lake area in Greene Twp. continues to be reliable for field birds, with a **Northern Harrier** there 1/22 (MV). An early **American Coot** was at New Brighton 2/12 (MV). A **Killdeer** was still at IND 12/24 along with a **Wilson's Snipe** (both MV). Top late winter count of **Ring-billed Gull** was just 165 at New Brighton 2/12 (MV), and 23 **Herring Gulls** were noted on the rivers 2/6 (MV).

A **Red-headed Woodpecker** was reliable at the RCSP campground 2/24 to at least 3/6 (DC). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was found on the CBC 12/17 (*fide* RM). **Merlin** was noted at the Holy Redeemer Cemetery 12/8 (DK) and at RCH 1/22 (GR, DR). A **Peregrine Falcon** was busy defending the P&LE rail bridge after the beginning of Jan (m.ob.).

There were many sightings of **Common Raven** around RCH 12/4-2/25 (m.ob.) but it remained to be seen whether they would think better of attempting to nest so close to a Peregrine Falcon again this spring. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** tapered well off after Nov, but one was noted on the CBC 12/17 (*fide* RM) and one was at the RCSP park office feeders 1/14 (MV). An **American Pipit** at RCH 12/16 (AB) was a very nice find, as was a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** there 1/1 (MV).

A **Fox Sparrow** was at the RCSP feeders 2/26-28 (MV, et al.). **White-crowned Sparrow** was at IND 1/2 (GR, DR) and up to 10 were

around Little Blue Lake, probably the only annual location for them in winter in the county, in the last half of Jan (MV). Up to 12 **Eastern Meadowlarks** were also in the fields around Little Blue Lake in late Jan (MV). Three **Purple Finches** were noted on the CBC 12/17 (*fide* RM) and up to 4 were at the RCSP feeders 1/8-14 (MJ, et al.).

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### Bedford County

(*This CBC summary was prepared by Laura Jackson*). The Bedford County CBC, conducted 12/31, reported 51 species, compared to 58 last year. Ice-covered lakes and ponds meant fewer waterfowl. However, 432 **Canada Geese** were on open water at Fort Bedford. Shawnee SP held 4 **Common Mergansers** and 5 **Tundra Swans**. Shawnee SP and the Raystown Branch of the Juniata R. yielded 3 **Bald Eagles**; elsewhere 2 **Northern Harriers**, 3 **Black Vultures**, and 17 **American Kestrels** were recorded. The only **Red-headed Woodpecker** was at a feeder just north of Bedford. Other high counts were 20 **Carolina Wrens**, 68 **Eastern Bluebirds**, and 188 **American Goldfinches**. Except for a healthy 590 **Dark-eyed Juncos**, sparrow counts were disturbingly low: 3 **American Tree Sparrows**, 16 **White-crowned Sparrows**, 11 **White-throated Sparrows**, and 9 **Song Sparrows**.

Mike and Laura Jackson hosted a **Northern Shrike** at their home near Everett 1/5 and 1/7; on the later date, they watched it eat the head of a **House Sparrow**.

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### Berks County

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

The period was abnormally warm and dry with very little measureable snowfall. Lakes and ponds were only briefly frozen and the ground was seldom more than superficially frozen. Warm fronts in Feb brought an early start to spring migration, especially of waterfowl and some passerines.

The adult male **Black-backed Oriole** that Sue and Dick Hybki first saw at their feeder 1/26 had attracted almost 1500 birders to Sinking Spring by the end of Feb. The question of how this essentially non-migratory Mexican endemic arrived in *Berks* may never be answered, but the mere presence of such a colorfully exotic bird in Pennsylvania during the most colorless time of year seemed reason enough to go and see it. Seeing it was easy thanks to its predictable attendance at the Hybki's smorgasbord of grapes, oranges, nutmeats and suet, and thanks to Tom and Linda Binder, who gave up use of their driveway and sometimes their garage so birders could have a clear view of the oriole's favorite feeder. Mike Slater's logistical planning and the consistently respectful behavior of birders ensured that the community's welcome did not wear out, even after more than two months.

A flock of 14 **Greater White-fronted Geese** was seen at BQ 12/20, 21 (JSp, RK). Counts of one to 14 birds were made in the vicinity till 2/6 (m.ob.), some of them seen commuting over BBOR to cornfields. Part of the flock may have moved briefly to eastern *Berks*, where 8-9 were reported in Mertztown and in Maxatawny Twp. 1/4-25 (DA, RH, JH). Their movements were similar to those of a flock of this species last winter, prompting speculation that these might be returning birds. Extending the similarity, the number of birds and their pinkish bills indicate that they may have been of N. American and not Greenland origin. Again this year, large numbers of **Snow Geese** arrived in Dec, dispersing daily from roosts in *Lehigh's* Fogelsville Quarry and other quarries to feed in

cornfields of the Great Valley farm belt. Since they were not frozen out in Jan, hundreds to thousands were reported all winter (7000 near Fleetwood 1/27 – RK), and numbers increased in Feb (10,000 in Strausstown 2/10 – KG) in conjunction with increases at Middle Creek WMA, Lancaster. Studies of 4-6 **Cackling Geese** at BQ in Feb reaffirmed to this compiler that there is enough variation in size, form and color in this species to cause confusion with smaller interior race **Canada Geese**, which were also present. Double digit counts of Cackling Geese, while possibly correct, arouse skepticism. An impromptu migration count at KDRC 2/24 tallied 23,387 Canada Geese (KG) on a day when thousands of Snow Geese were also headed north on a broad front. The resident **Mute Swan** flock at LO held at 5 most of the winter (RK). **Tundra Swans** were still migrating south in Dec, when 112 were counted at HMS 12/15 (LG). A few were reported in Jan and numbers rose through Feb to 40 at LO 2/25 (HM).

**Wood Ducks** followed a traditional pattern, with a few lingering through Dec, a hiatus in Jan, and a pulse of returning birds in Feb. The count of 29 Woodies at LO 2/25 (HM) was high so early in the season. Counts of wintering **Gadwall** were middling, with a high of just 54 at LO 1/19 (RK). A **Gadwall X Mallard** hybrid drake was observed at LO 2/22 repeatedly attacking and submerging the male of a **Gadwall** pair, eventually driving it off and swimming away with the female (RK). The hybrid was seen again 3/17 accompanying a female Gadwall and making aggressive lunges at a Gadwall drake every time it approached. The mixed pair was still present 3/27. A similar hybrid male was at LO in 2015 (RK). **Eurasian Wigeon** has appeared so regularly in recent years that birders have come to expect one. This year's drake was first seen at LO 2/11 (RK) and was still there over a month later. **American Wigeon** is one of the earliest and most common spring dabblers, and this year 237 were already at LO 2/17 (RK). The similarly occurring **Northern Pintail** also moved early, with 61 (a fairly low count) at LO 2/23 (RK). **American Black Duck** numbers were very low, with a seasonal high count of only 140 at LO 12/21 (RK). Several **American Black Duck X Mallard** hybrids were reported, with a high count of 4 at LO 12/19, when both parent species were most numerous. Counts of 1-10 wintering **Northern Shovelers**, normal numbers in recent years, were made at BQ this season (m.ob.). A flock of 26 **Green-winged Teal** at LO 2/27 (RK) indicated early migration by this duck, which is most common in Mar and Apr.

Winter high counts of seasonally uncommon diving ducks were: 8 **Redheads** at BQ in Feb, 3 **Greater Scaup** at LO 2/13 (SS), 13 **Lesser Scaup** at LO 12/5 (RK), 17 **Buffleheads** at BQ 1/9 (AZ), and 4 **Common Goldeneyes** at Hopewell L. 2/24 (JT). Ducks of singular occurrence were 2 **Surf Scoters** at Hopewell L. 12/11 (JT) and 2 **Long-tailed Ducks** at LO 12/26 (SB, ME). **Ring-necked Ducks**, **Hooded Mergansers** and **Common Mergansers**, which don't leave unless frozen out, all increased notably in mid-Feb, with 52 Hooded Mergansers and 2000 Common Mergansers at LO 2/23 (RK). Six **Red-breasted Mergansers**, seldom numerous, were with their kin at LO 2/12 (MW). Counts of the wintering flock of **Ruddy Ducks** at BQ peaked in the 20-30 range as last year, with a little surge to 68 on 2/14 (mob).

The sole reported **Ruffed Grouse** was at SGL 110, Stony Creek on the Kittatinny Ridge 1/29 (KG). Open lakes and ponds attracted **Pied-billed Grebes** all winter, the counts at BQ ranging from one to 10 during the period (m.ob.). **Horned Grebes** were absent from 12/20 (5 at BML – PJW) to 2/25 (3 at LO – MW). **Double-crested Cormorants** are usually gone from early Dec to Mar, but this year 1 or 2 toughed it out at LO most of Feb (RK, DT).

**Black Vultures** and **Turkey Vultures** were common all period, with two early winter roosts exceeding 100 birds. Diehard hawk watchers on vigil at HMS after the close of the official counting season 12/15 recorded one southbound **Golden Eagle** 12/19 and 2 each 12/30 and 1/4 (LG). An imm. Golden that made a pass at Snow Geese near Windsor Castle 2/10 (RK) provided a rare record off the Kittatinny Ridge. Lack of snow cover made it easier for **Northern Harriers** to find prey, and birds were found on all three CBC's. There were reports from 6 locations in Jan and Feb, most consistently from CREP fields. An imm. **Northern Goshawk** (rare anywhere and anytime except on the Kittatinny in late fall) seen at BML 12/16 (JS) may have been the same bird seen and photographed at BQ 2/8 (TJ, et al.). Post-season southbound **Bald Eagles** recorded at HMS were 5 on 12/28, 2 on 1/4, and 9 on 1/19 (LG). Carrion at a chicken farm attracted 20 on 1/1 (MW). A record high count of 21 was made on the HCBC 12/30. Two vocal adults were on their nest near Lenhartsville 2/5 (RK). About 20 reports of **Red-shouldered Hawk**, an unusually high number, came from scattered locations. **Leucistic Red-tailed Hawks**,

some in residence for years, have been reported several times in the past. This winter a nearly white bird was found along Hottenstein Rd. near Kutztown (CE, SS).

Counts of the wintering **American Coots** at BQ ranged from a few to about 30 birds, about the normal range (m.ob.). A few **Sandhill Cranes** were part of the Feb migratory surge. Three were seen in flight near Sinking Spring 2/7 (GT), one was in a pasture near Windsor Castle 2/10 (*fide* RK), and 3 were in a cornfield with Snow Geese near Boyertown 2/10 (BS). A few early **American Woodcocks** were courting at four locations 2/18-23 (m.ob.). The sole reported **Bonaparte's Gull** was at LO 12/16 (RK). Gull numbers were generally low, with winter high counts of **Ring-billed Gulls** at BML reaching only about 2000. The count of 11 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** at LO 1/1 (KL, et al.) was high for this county, but few were seen later. Only one or 2 **Great Black-backed Gulls** were occasionally reported. Six **Eurasian Collared-Doves**, apparently 3 pairs, were in Shartlesville 2/25 (MW), indicating that the colony remains stable at low numbers. The only reported **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was heard at Glen Morgan L. on the Elverson CBC 12/26 (KL).

A hatch year male **Rufous Hummingbird** banded 11/11 by Sandy Lockerman continued to visit two feeders in southern Berks until it left on the morning of 12/25 (MS). An adult female Rufous Hummingbird, present in Bernville since early fall and banded 12/1 by Scott Weidensaul, left on the morning of 12/10 (*fide* SW). A hatch year male **Calliope Hummingbird**, the first recorded in Berks, was banded in Robesonia 12/6 by Weidensaul. Present since 11/5, it left on the morning of 12/10 (*fide* SW). The property owners did not allow birders to visit. Mid-morning departures by well fed hummers are the norm, says Weidensaul.

Falcons were very well reported. The mild, open winter favored wintering by more **American Kestrels** than in snowy years. Counts of 18 on the HCBC and 21 on the BCBC were good, and birds continued to be seen at certain locations all winter, but numbers were far below those remembered by older birders. **Merlins** were also found on all the CBC's and there were about 14 reports during the rest of the winter, 8 from farmland, one in Reading, and 2 from BML, the longest established wintering location. **Peregrine Falcons** were reported at 9 locations, several in farmland teeming with **European Starlings**, **Rock Pigeons**, and **Mourning Doves**. Given the wandering ways of Peregrines, it is probably impossible to know how many individuals were present.

An **Eastern Phoebe** at KDRC 2/25 (KG) and one in southern Berks 2/28 (AZ) were almost certainly migrants jumping the gun. Very few **Fish Crows** wintered, making the return of 250 at BBOR 2/25 (MS) dramatic. Though the HCBC had a record count of 16 **Common Ravens** 1/1, the novelty of regularly seeing ravens in Berks south of the Kittatinny Ridge has worn off. The **Red-breasted Nuthatch** irruption was moderate at best. Birds seemed most common in early winter, when they were found on all three CBC's. A few were later reported at feeders and in conifer groves. Inconspicuous **Brown Creepers**, **Winter Wrens**, **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and **Hermit Thrushes** were all thinly distributed in low numbers as they usually are. Conspicuous **Eastern Bluebirds** seemed more common than in any other recent winter.

Single **Gray Catbirds** were reported once at each of three locations 12/4, 12/30 and 1/9 (JT, TG). A **Brown Thrasher** wintered at a feeder in Henningsville 12/2 through the end of the period (PS), a rare occurrence. One was seen at Rodale Experimental Farm in Maxatawny Twp. 1/2 (NL) and another was at the HMS visitor center 2/26 (EG). An **American Pipit** was at Henningsville 1/11 (PS) and 30 were in a field near LO 2/24 (DS). Three **Lapland Longspurs** were picked out of **Horned Lark** flocks in various fields 12/17 (DA), 1/6 (NL), and 2/10 (RK). After 105 **Snow Buntings** were found on the HCBC 12/30 and 22 on the BCBC 1/1, only one more was reported the rest of the period.

A western **Palm Warbler** was seen at KDRC 2/1-20 (KG). There are a few other winter records of the species, but it is unusual to have one tracked so long. A **Pine Warbler** wintered near the LO dam, seen in early Dec (PJW), on 2/11 (DW – photo), and 3/5 (m.ob.). The species has wintered a few times. **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was reported in its usual low numbers, mainly in the Schuylkill R. valley.

**Fox Sparrow**, formerly an unusual winter resident, has become more routine in recent years. There were reports from 7 locations of 1-3 birds mostly at feeders in Dec and Jan. Some Feb sightings were probably of early migrants. A **Lincoln's Sparrow**, rare in winter, allowed an unusually long look at LO 1/23 (MW). One to 3 wintering **Eastern Towhees** were reported from each of about 6 locations in Dec and Jan. A **Rusty Blackbird** seen in Spring Twp. 2/20 (PM) was the only one reported. This year's **Purple Finch** flight was concentrated on the

Kittatinny Ridge. Three to 11 birds were consistently recorded on feeder counts at the HMS visitor center 12/6-2/7 (KG), but few were seen elsewhere. **Pine Siskins** dropped in at a few feeders in Dec and Jan, no count exceeding 7 birds, and 3 were seen at LO 2/20 (SS).

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### **Blair County**

Locations: Canoe Creek S.P. (CC), Henry's Pond (HP), Lake Raystown CBC Area 1 only (LR-CBC) Lower Trail-Mount Etna (LT), Plummer's Hollow (PH), Reese Pond (RP), State Game Lands #278 North (SGLN).

The winter weather was reasonably mild; however, most of the big waters were frozen over. Information was obtained primarily from eBird data. Additional information is from the LR-CBC 12/28, and the 48th Culp CBC, held on a cold, rainy day 1/3, after being rescheduled already due to bad weather.

A rare **Ross's Goose** and 2 **Cackling Geese** were photographed at HP along with a **Green-winged Teal**, a **Wood Duck**, 2 **American Black Ducks**, and 250 **Mallards** 1/1 (MD). Other uncommon ducks included a **Greater Scaup** during the Culp CBC on the Little Juniata R. (CE, KE), a pair of **Northern Shovelers** on a wetland at SGLN 2/22 (MN), 9 **Common Mergansers** floating near the LT along the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata R. 2/24 (JC, LC), and a pair of **American Wigeons** spotted at HP 1/3 (CE, KE).

A **Great Blue Heron** was hunkered down, along with a single **Swamp Sparrow** near CC 1/7 (JC, LC). Great Blue Herons were also near Hollidaysburg 2/17 (TL) and 2/19 (CH). A lone female **Ring-necked Pheasant** was spotted crossing a road near the Park Hills G.C. 12/19 (RL) and a single **Ruffed Grouse** was at Overland Pass Rd 2/18 (JB).

On 12/28, several owls were documented in the *Blair* section of the LR-CBC: 3 **Northern Saw-whet Owls**, one **Barred Owl**, 2 **Great Horned Owls**, and 8 **Eastern Screech-Owls** (NB, DB). A Great Horned Owl was also located on Biddle Rd 1/25 (MD) and one found on the LT 1/27 (JC, LC). Another Barred Owl was identified near PH 1/3 (CE, KE).

An uncommon **Rough-legged Hawk** was observed near the Tipton exit of I-99 on 2/2 (MB). A **Northern Harrier** was spotted near Fairview Rd 12/28 (SB, NB) and another at CC 1/7 (JC, LC). An adult **Bald Eagle** was observed near RP 12/27 (MN) and a pair of adults during the LR-CBC (SB, NB). A single **Merlin** was identified near the Convention Center 1/5 (BC).

A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** along the Marsh Trail at CC provided a nice sighting 1/7 (JC, LC). A few **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were found. One was near Hollidaysburg (TL) and one near Blue Knob (KS). Others singles were at PH 1/3 (CE, KE) and SGLN 1/13 (MN); and 7 were at LT 1/27 (JC, LC). Single **Winter Wrens** were located at the Albemarle Trail 12/16 and nestled in at SGLN 1/19 (MN). Sixty-seven **Horned Larks** and 2 **Red-winged Blackbirds** were tallied during the Clover Creek WRS 2/21 (DG, GG). Two more **Red-wings** were spotted at RP 2/24 (MN).

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### **Bradford County**

Locations: SE Bradford County Christmas Bird Count: the count area is a circle with a 7.5 mile radius from its center, which is Wyalusing (CBC), Echo Beach Rd. on the south side of the Susquehanna River downriver from Wysox (EBR), Edwards Rd, Stevensville (ERS), Graham Rd., Canton (GRR), Mt. Pisgah State Park (MPSP), Peck Hill (PEH), State

Game Land (SGL), Susquehanna River (SUR), Trudy Gerlach farm near New Era (TNE), Taylor Rd. marsh just south of Grover (TRM), Bradford Co. Winter Raptor Survey (WRS), Woods Rd (WRD).

As has become usual in the wake of climate change, the weather this winter was unusual. There was very little snow (although there was a record breaking blizzard in March) and cold snaps were interspersed with unseasonable warmth. There were examples of two winter irruptives: Red-breasted Nuthatch and Pine Siskin (in very low numbers). However, we were graced with a Snowy Owl, along with Rough-legged Hawks and Short-eared Owls. Because this is my last report, I'd like to thank all the generous and enthusiastic birders who have shared their sightings with me over the years: being the compiler has allowed me to peer intensely into the avian glories of our county, which are myriad. What a wonderful place!

There was a pair of **Green-winged Teal** at MPSP 2/27 (CG). On the CBC 12 on 12/31, **Common Goldeneyes** were seen near the Red Rock pulloff on Rt. 6 (MBo, JP, MP, DM).

Another, and unusually early, piece of evidence of northward movement in recent years of **Black Vultures** was the 3 on 2/8 at TNE (TG) and one 2/11 in Towanda (BG). A nice number of **Northern Harriers** were observed: a juvenile south of TNE 12/14 (TG); an adult male on the CBC was at Edinger Hill Rd., Tuscarora 12/31 (JD, AT), 2 north of Wyalusing (SG, BW); 2 in the Stevensville area (JL, RL); 3 at East Canton 1/1 (NF); and a female at Davis Rd., LeRaysville 2/22 (KR). The **Bald Eagle** population continues to grow: an adult was seen on Browntown Mt. 12/4 and 12/11, 2 adults 1/31 (AM); 6 were on the SUR at EBR 12/7; 6 were downsteam from the previous location 12/14 and on 12/21; and previous new nest building was occurring on Rockwell Rd. near West Franklindale (DN); on 1/7 1 was at Davis Rd., LeRaysville (BH); on 1/20 an imm. and on 2/28 an adult were at Stevensville (KR); on 2/14 an adult was at the Wappasening Creek in Windham (AV, GV). Quite unusual was a sighting of a juvenile **Northern Goshawk** at PEH 2/22 (AV, GV). A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was present 2/4 on the NW WRS, Rt. 14 N. of Troy (LF). There were numerous **Rough-legged Hawk** sightings: on Glory Barn Rd. 1/2 (LF); dark morph 2/3, 2/5 (2), 2/8, 2/11, 2/13, 2/15, light morph 2/11, 2/15, undetermined 2/16 (3) on Gorham Rd., LeRaysville, undetermined 2/9, 2/16 (3), dark morph 2/17 (2), 2/10, light morph 2/17 (2), 2/20-21 Davis Rd. LeRaysville, dark morph Brown Rd., Herrickville (KR).

**Sandhill Cranes**, which have been breeding in the county for well over a decade, stayed in Dec: 9 were observed 11/2 (they form groups in the late fall prior to migrating) and some were calling 1/19 and 12/20, all at Crane Swamp (JR, RR). First of the year displaying **American Woodcock** were 2 on 2/27 at TNE (TG); and on 2/28 at GRR (LF). Large flights of **Ring-billed Gulls** were reported from adjacent counties in Pennsylvania and New York 2/19, including 500 in wave after wave of 30 to 50 with stragglers in between heading north at PEH (AV, GV); 9 also were seen the same day at Davis Rd (KR).

An **Eastern Screech Owl** was trilling at PEH 2/24 (GVH, AVH). The most exciting find of the winter was a **Snowy Owl** seen from late Dec to 2/27 at the Davis farm on Davis Rd. LeRaysville (KR, m.ob.). The owl was also banded by Scott Weidensaul, and there is an excellent article by Diane David in the March 2017 issue of the PSO newsletter: the [PSO Pileated](#). There were a few **Short-eared Owl** sightings, but not the large numbers seen last winter on Manahan Rd: on 1/1 1 was at Manahan Rd., (SR, LF); on 1/7-8 1 at Patton Hill Rd. near Rt. 706 (JH); and 2 on 2/22 near LeRaysville (KR). A **Merlin** was observed on Taylor Ave., Wyalusing 1/15 (TNI).

Fifty **Horned Larks** were in a freshly manured field off Keene Summit Rd during the CBC 12/31 (MBo, JP, MP, DM); 49 in East Canton 1/1 (NF); and 7-8 on Davis Rd., LeRaysville 1/28 (KR). The irruption of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** was reflected here: one at Lambs Lookout Ln. 1/2(LF); one on the CBC at EBR 12/31 (DN, KN), one at WRD (CM); one at SGL 12 on 1/11 (Barclay Mt. vicinity), and one in Towanda 2/1 (SR). Three **Winter Wrens** were observed on the CBC 12/31: one in the Terrytownship vicinity (DG, RM, EZ), one north of Wyalusing (SG, BW), and one on Jackson Rd. west of Laceyville (JD, AT). A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was observed at TRM 1/22 (LF). Four **Snow Buntings** were seen on Davis Rd., LeRaysville 2/18 (TNo). The few sightings of **Pine Siskins** included 3 on 2/12 and 2/26 at GRR (LF); and 3 on 2/10 at ERS (KR).

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### Bucks County

Locations: Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Central Bucks CBC (C-CBC), Southern Bucks CBC (S-CBC), Upper Bucks-Montgomery CBC (U-CBC), Delaware River (Del. R.), Nockamixon State Park (NSP), Peace Valley Park (PVP), The Penn-Warner Tract (PWT).

All three months had above normal temperatures, with Dec 1.2°F above, Jan 5.3°F above, and Feb 7.3°F above. Precipitation total was below normal by 1.8 inches. Light snow amounted to very little in the lower county to maybe about six inches in the upper, with most on 2/9. Lakes froze only for brief periods and likely there was open water to our north as well. Generally, across almost all groups of species, numbers were low or average. The weather was warm, but apparently food supplies were not good. The irruption of Black-capped Chickadee and Red-breasted Nuthatch might be considered a highlight for lack of something better. There was a very heavy Norway spruce cone crop for the nuthatches. Other irruptive species either were absent or mostly passed through going south. Half-hardy species were very scarce. Looking at eBird entries, diversity and numbers were low on most outings. The county tally of 136 species matched the previous five-year average.

The 49th U-CBC 12/18 had some weather issues resulting in 22,263 individuals of 91 species. The 51st C-CBC 1/1 had calm, warm weather, with 23,073 birds of 77 species, the lowest species count in 21 years. The 70th S-CBC 12/17 had 95 species of 76,838 individuals, and apparently was not hindered too much by a mix of rain and snow in the morning that improved in the afternoon. It should be noted that all three CBCs have part of their count circles outside the county. Christmas Bird Count details and summaries were supplied by Mark Gallagher for the S-CBC, Diane Allison for the C-CBC, and Bill Etter for the U-CBC. As usual, historical references are from *Birds of Bucks County* 1998 by Ken Kitson and subsequent updates recorded in this journal. NOAA weather statistics are from nearby Trenton, NJ based on the three-decade climate normal data from 1981 to 2010. A review of eBird entries contributed to this report.

**Greater White-fronted Goose** was reported regularly at PVP through 1/12 (m.ob.), with the high count 2 on multiple days in Dec (JB, AM). Another was at Bradshaw Reservoir 12/8 (BH, BG). A hybrid goose associating with a Greater White-fronted Goose at PVP 12/19-22 (JB ph., KS ph.) was likely a **Greater White-fronted x Canada Goose (hybrid)**. Large numbers of **Snow Geese** were in the Riegelsville area in early Jan, with the high report about 5000 on 1/4 (DBr, EB). Snow Geese were found in the hundreds on all three CBCs, with a total of 1908. Otherwise the now normal random flocks, sometimes with hundreds of birds, were reported through the period (m.ob.). A bird first reported on the northern edge of Buckingham Twp. 12/23 (AA, CC ph.) and then 12/25-26 at PVP (PP ph., DPa, RS) was determined to be within the accepted variation of **Ross's Goose** (MI). Apparently field guides and other bird identification literature don't provide guidance on this variation. Unusual for the date and quantity, 9 **Brant** were reported on the Del. R. at Bridgeton 1/11 (SA). **Cackling Goose** was reported more frequently and in higher numbers (m.ob.). Photos of some suspicious birds were sent to a goose expert and resulted in suggestions that possibly not all were the expected Richardson's subspecies. A **Canada Goose** in the PVP area in late Dec and Jan with a red collar X8A6 (KS ph., BB ph.) was banded 7/6/2015 as an adult near Pointe-Aux-Trembles, Quebec, Canada. A tally of 52 **Mute Swans** at PWT 1/1 (MG) was the high for a single site by far. The **Trumpeter Swan** that first appeared in the area Dec 2013 returned to Lake Towhee Park 2/21-25 (PC). Eleven **Tundra Swans** at Quakertown 12/18 (DF) provided a first ever appearance for the U-CBC. A nice group of 18 was at PWT 1/29 (DF), and singles were at Del. R.-Tinicum Twp. 1/12 and PWT 2/19 (AM ph.).

Ducks were one of the most obvious groups with low numbers, with a couple exceptions. **Canvasback** is hard to find most years. One was at

PVP 12/13 (AM) and 12/26 (KS), one was at PWT 1/1 (MG ph.), and about 25 were at Mud Island 2/19 (AM) where they sometimes are found in good numbers. **Redhead** was more scarce than normal, with 3 at PVP 12/14 (RM) and 2 at PWT 12/15 (DF). A **Surf Scoter** at PVP 12/1 (HD) and a **White-winged Scoter** at NPS 1/19 (PC, DF) provided the only reports. A modest total of 12 migrant **Long-tailed Ducks** was reported from NSP and PVP (RM, PC, AR), with the last ones at both sites 1/6. Large groups of **Common Goldeneye** are a specialty along the Del. R. in winter, but again this year numbers were low. The highest count was 60 at Morrisville 1/20 (BC).

The CBC total of 147 **Hooded Mergansers** was even more than last year's higher than average tally. **Common Merganser** made an impressive showing, particularly at PVP, starting in Dec and continued through mid-Feb. The result was a record high 2433 for the C-CBC 1/1. Eleven hundred were at PVP 12/19 (JB), and by 1/1 the estimate was 2000 (SG). From there, estimates were generally 2000-2500 (m.ob.), but a tally by an experienced bird counter reached 3990 on 1/4 (CR). There was a big drop when the lake froze for three days in mid-Jan, but the flock was back to as many as 2500 on 1/18 (KI, VM) and continued at high levels, with about 1250 on 2/15 (AM). The extremely warm weather caused a mass exodus after that. Regardless of the accuracy of these estimates, the apparent fish supply in the 1500-acre lake, supporting these numbers plus all the other fish eaters for so long, must be astonishing. Possibly the flow of several million gallons of water a day pumped from the Del. R. for human consumption provides the environment needed. **Red-breasted Merganser** did not join the PVP merganser mob in numbers. They were only reported at three sites, with highs of 3 at NSP 1/21 (PC) and 4 at PVP 2/12 (SR). The **Ruddy Duck** count of 339 on the S-CBC 12/17 was several times the long term average and second only to 506 in 1999.

Assuming the CBC counts are representative, **Wild Turkey** has declined significantly from their peak period as shown in the table below. The S-CBC has only had them on eight of their 70 counts and only in small numbers and therefore is not included in the table below. The first 24 years, through 1989, there were none on the C-CBC. The U-CBC had them only on three counts in the first 19 years through 1986, with only one or two birds each. The surge in numbers starting in 1991 on both counts was apparently due to reintroduction of birds by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. A sharp decline starting in 2006 on both counts was likely due to the end of the reintroduction program in 2003 and possibly hunting pressure.

#### WILD TURKEY CBC HISTORY

CBC	2016	'91-'05 Avg	'06-'16 Avg	High #
U-CBC	40	196	40	344
C-CBC	0	71	31	187
TOTAL	16	267	71	531

Staying unusually long, a **Red-throated Loon** was at PVP 12/6-20 (AM, RM, m.ob.). **Common Loon** was reported at six sites, more frequently than normal, totaling a minimum of 11 birds (m.ob.). The high counts were 3 at NSP 12/6 (EH), and 4 at PWT 1/15 (DF). **Pied-billed Grebe** reports were not unusual except for the 11 at NSP 12/14-21 (PC, CR, AM). The warm weather probably was a factor in a new record high 6 **Horned Grebes** (5 in Bucks) on the U-CBC 12/18 and higher than average 5 on the S-CBC 12/17. The 11 at NSP 12/21 (PC) represented a good Dec tally there. A **Great Cormorant** at NSP 12/3-15 was a good find away from the lower Del. R. (DF ph.). The usual hotspot at Bristol had the high single site tally of 16 on 12/11 (DF). Other site high counts were 14 at PWT-Franklin Cove 12/28 (MG), 5 at Quaker Penn Park 12/28 (MG), and 7 at Mud Island 2/5 (MS). A **Great Egret** at PWT 2/5 (DF) was unexpected. Except for one that wintered at this site a few years ago, this date is a month later than previous late fall dates and a month earlier than our previous spring arrival date.

Record highs were set for **Black Vulture** on both the C-CBC (254) and S-CBC (129). The C-CBC tally of 359 **Turkey Vultures** was the third highest for that count. It was a better season for **Northern Harrier**, with reports from at least 12 sites and possibly as many as 18 total individuals. A **Bald Eagle** at PVP 12/20 with an orange band U/U was banded 5/23/2016 as a juv. in the nest at North Watuppa Pond, Fall River, Bristol County, Massachusetts (LF ph.). A new nest was located at PWT-Franklin Cove in Jan, and 51 were at the PWT roost 1/15 (DF). Multiples were reported at many other sites (m.ob.), with the highest being PVP, with 10 on 1/15 (LF) and 11 on 2/17-18 (TF, *fide* AM). A sick bird found at Core Creek Park 2/18 was determined to be a victim of lead poisoning, with over 15 pieces of lead in its digestive tract. Despite efforts to save it,

it succumbed. A **Rough-legged Hawk** on the S-CBC 12/17 (AA, GA, CC) provided the only report.

**American Coot** was noteworthy for extremely low numbers. The total for the CBCs was 25, when historically hundreds or even a thousand or more were tallied mainly on the S-CBC. High site reports were low as well, with 40 at PWT 2/18 (MG) and 20 at NSP 12/21-1/1 (PC, SG, PT). A **Killdeer** movement arriving back to the area at several sites 2/8 was apparently triggered by the exceptionally warm Feb weather and they were then regular the rest of the month. Only 2 **Wilson's Snipe** were reported despite the warm winter, with one at Buckingham Twp. 1/7 (RS) and one at NSP 2/25 (DG, MR ph.). The warm weather brought an early influx of **American Woodcock**, with the first report at Bedminster Twp. 2/10 (JC), with regular reports thereafter (m.ob.).

A nice high count of 64 **Bonaparte's Gull** occurred at PVP 12/15 (DF). Only 10 other individuals were reported from four sites on six dates (m.ob.). A **Black-headed Gull** at Falls Twp. Community Park 12/28 (CL doc.) will provide only the eighth known county record if accepted by PORC. A first cycle **Thayer's Gull** was at PWT 12/17 for the S-CBC (DF ph.) and again 2/5 (DF). An adult was at NSP 2/26 (DF ph.). The 14 **Iceland Gulls** on the S-CBC matched the average for the previous 10 years. Away from the lower Del. R. where less expected, NSP had one adult 12/3 (AM ph.), 2 adults 2/13 (BK ph.) and 2 adults and a first winter bird 2/26 (AM ph., DF). PVP had at least one adult on multiple dates 12/22-1/4 (JB, AM, SG, RM), with 2 adults there 12/30 (AM). Monthly single site high reports of **Lesser Black-backed Gull** were 230 at PVP 12/10 (AM), 280 at PVP 1/1 (SG), and at least 341 at NSP 2/26 (DF, AM). Three **Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull (hybrid)** were at PWT 12/17 (AA, GA, CC), and one was at NSP 2/26 (AM ph.). Five **Glaucous Gulls** were found on the S-CBC 12/17. Three were still at PWT 1/21 (DF). A first year **Herring Gull x Glaucous Gull (hybrid)** was at PWT 1/17 (AA, GA, CC).

**CBC GULL COUNTS**

SPECIES	U-CBC	C-CBC	S-CBC	TOTAL
Bonaparte's Gull			1	1
Ring-billed Gull	866	830	5074	6770
Herring Gull	28	138	44,020	44,186
Thayer's Gull			1	1
Iceland Gull		1	14	15
Lesser Bl.-backed Gull	58	285	325	668
Herring x Lesser Bl. Bk.			3	3
Glaucous Gull			5	5
Herring X Glaucous Gull			1	1
Great Black-backed Gull		41	873	914
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>952</b>	<b>1295</b>	<b>50,317</b>	<b>52,564</b>

The only **Long-eared Owl** reports were from PVP starting 12/30, with 3 being the high 2/3 (DBe, JH, AM, SS). One **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was at PVP 12/15-22 (FR ph.) and one at NSP 2/22 (PC). Despite the very successful **American Kestrel** nest box effort in recent years, wintering numbers have yet to show a significant related increase. On 1/9, a seven-hour, 175 mile check of all those boxes produced 14 birds (DF), which is consistent with recent CBC totals. The species has historically been seen almost every year on all three CBCs. Surprisingly, a steep crash in numbers started in 2003 for both the U-CBC and C-CBC. The S-CBC area saw a sharp decline beginning in 1987.

**AMERICAN KESTREL CBC HISTORY**

CBC	2016	Pre-'03 Avg	'03-'16 Avg	All Yr. Avg.	High #
U-CBC	9	71	8	53	185
C-CBC	7	29	7	23	49
S-CBC	0	20	2	17	48
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>282</b>

An early **Eastern Phoebe** was at Core Creek Park 2/23 (DD ph.). Still relatively new here, fewer sites reported **Common Raven**, with 15 compared to 22 last year (m.ob.). The only significant **Horned Lark** site

was Maple Knoll Farms through the season, with 130 the high count 1/21 (RS). The irruption of **Black-capped Chickadee** resulted in reports through the period, but only in low single digit counts (m.ob.). The total CBC count was also surprisingly low, with 691 **Carolina Chickadees**, 44 **Black-capped Chickadees**, and 182 **Carolina/Black-capped Chickadees**. Probably many of the latter were **Black-capped Chickadee**. After being absent or near absent for the last two years, **Red-breasted Nuthatch** had a good irruption and was reported through the season (m.ob.). The total CBC tally was 61 compared to an average of 26. For the latter two species, many may have passed through the area after the initial surge, resulting in fewer birds as the season progressed.

The 483 **Eastern Bluebirds** tallied for the CBCs was consistent with the last couple of years (m.ob.). The total **Hermit Thrush** CBC count was 13, a third of last year, and a little lower than the long term average. **American Robins** totaled 1124 on the CBCs, only one-tenth last year's count. **Gray Catbirds** were very scarce with only 3 on the CBCs, one at East Rockhill Twp. 12/4 (BEn), and one each at Solebury Twp. (DF) and Wilma Quinlan Nature Preserve (TP) 1/1. Add **Brown Thrasher** to the half-hardy scarce list, with one each at Falls of the Delaware Park 12/10 (MG) and Kemper Park 12/21 (MD). The CBC tally of 105 **Northern Mockingbirds** was only two-thirds of last year's count and continues the downward trend. The sum of the long-term averages for the three counts is 317.

There was one **American Pipit** on the U-CBC 12/18, 2 at PVP 12/2 (ZM), 4 at Bradford Dam 12/19 (GJ), and one at Ottsville 1/9 (DF). The **Cedar Waxwing** total for the CBCs was 186 less than half the long-term average. They were fairly scarce throughout the period. A **Lapland Longspur** made a stop at Maple Knoll Farms 12/21-22 (RS) thanks to a fresh spread of manure (RS). A good count away from snow or manure, a flock of 16 **Snow Buntings** was seen flying across the lake at NSP 12/3 (DF).

Two **Orange-crowned Warblers** were at PWT 12/11 (DF, TG) and an unprecedented 4 were there 12/17 for the S-CBC (DF ph.). This was only the sixth occurrence on that CBC and all previous counts were of one only. One was at Falls Twp. Community Park 12/31-1/1 (DD ph.). One used feeders at a nearby Falls Twp. home starting 2/11 and continued through the period (KB ph.). Another was at Feasterville feeders 2/1-16 (KKo). Certainly an unprecedented number of reports here for winter for this species or maybe for any other season as well. Keeping one of the **Orange-crowned Warblers** company at PWT was a **Nashville Warbler** 12/17 (DF ph.), a first in the long history of the S-CBC. Both were captured in the same photo. Another wintered at a feeder in Bristol Twp. starting 12/25 and was still present at the end of Feb (GD ph.). These are the fifth and sixth known winter season reports since 2008. One **Common Yellowthroat** was at Falls of the Delaware Park 1/19 (MG). A wintering male **Pine Warbler**, believed to be the same bird returning for the tenth year in a row, was first spotted 12/5 at Lower Makefield Twp. enjoying the homemade suet mix (CF ph.). Another **Pine Warbler** was reported at PVP 1/6 (RZ ph.). The CBC total of 37 **Yellow-rumped Warblers** was just one-quarter the long term average. They were in very low numbers all season.

Sparrows in general were fewer in number, too, with CBC counts almost all below average. With warming winters, **Chipping Sparrow** was anticipated to increase, and the 12 on the CBCs is above the long term average but probably not high enough yet to be significant. An example of a low sparrow count was **Field Sparrow** - the CBC total was 23 compared to long-term average of 109. The 2 on the C-CBC was an all-time low. Another half-hardy species, **Eastern Towhee** was below average, with a CBC total of 6. Other than the CBCs, possibly a total of 6 birds at five sites on nine dates may have included some or all of the same birds (m.ob.).

The recent unusual number of wintering **Baltimore Orioles** at feeders at one site in Middletown Twp. had at least 2 males, 2 females, and an imm. male through the period (DPe). The adult male **Baltimore Oriole** first reported 11/20 last season at Solebury Twp stayed until 12/4, but shortly thereafter a bird believed to be an imm. male appeared and remained until at least 12/16 (JD). One was at PWT 12/11 (DF, TG). There were no **Eastern Meadowlarks** on the CBCs. The warm Feb apparently triggered some movement with one in Solebury Twp. 2/17 (DF), 7 at Tyler State Park 2/17 (EP), and one at Nockamixon Twp. 2/24 (PC). The count of 57 **Rusty Blackbirds** on the U-CBC 12/18 was noteworthy. A good winter high count of 60 was at Silver Lake Park 1/24 (DD ph.), where single digit counts continued through the rest of the season (DD, MG, PJ, DPv). Only 3 other birds were reported at three sites (DF, MG). The fall season movement of **Purple Finch** apparently

kept on moving. There were only 5 on the U-CBC 12/18 and probably only 7 other birds reported in eBird for the season (m.ob.). A **Red Crossbill** was heard at NSP 12/16 (DF) for the only report. Also only a single report, unfortunately, an **Evening Grosbeak** flew over PVP 12/6 (PL).

**EXOTICS:** A Chukar was at East Rockhill Twp 2/21 (eBird ph.). The only known release site is at a private hunting grounds in Bedminster Twp.

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### **Butler County**

Locations: Butler Township (BT), Clay Township (CT), Cranberry Township (CRT), Slippery Rock Borough (SRB), South Shore (SS), State Game Lands 95 (SGL 95), Waterfowl Observation Area (WOA)

The Winter featured a few surprises, some late hangers-on in December, as well as a few early arrivals in February. Tardy birds included **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, **Common Yellowthroat**, and **Fox Sparrow** hanging on into December. Unusually early (or wintering?) birds included **Gray Catbird** 1/29 and **Eastern Towhee** 2/20. The season started on a mild note, but in mid-December, 2 nights near 0 degrees caused water bird sightings to grind to a halt when lakes and ponds froze. The remainder of the season was generally mild with less than average snow. Terrible weather and frozen lakes and ponds caused consternation on the Butler Christmas Bird Count. Despite ice-covered roads and fog, participants managed to find 57 species, 23 fewer than in 2015 and much lower than the 50-year average of 72. Most species were reported in lower than average numbers. Only 3 species of waterfowl were seen: **Canada Goose**, **Tundra Swan** and **Mallard**. A flyover **Golden Eagle** was a surprise count-week bird for the CBC, the first in the history of the Butler CBC. Two **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were tallied. The South Butler CBC, held 1/7 and in its fifth year, reported 55 species and 7301 individuals, down from the high in 2015 of 58 species and 10,487 birds. Highlights included a **Rusty Blackbird**, 80 **Red-tailed Hawks**, a **Northern Harrier** and 6 **Purple Finches**, the latter a first for the count.

A lone **Snow Goose** was seen at South Shore 2/14 (DD fide MV). Subsequent efforts to re-locate were not successful. Rare in **Butler**, 3 **Cackling Geese** were photographed at Lake Oneida 2/18 (KB). Two **Mute Swans** were in Cranberry Twp. 2/18-22 (MR, KB). Hopefully they will move on. Tundra Swans made a decent showing, reported 16 times from 8 different locations. (m.ob.). The high count was a very nice total of 230 birds in 2 flocks over Butler Twp. 2/14 (GK, MAK). Normally seen well into Jan, most ducks disappeared after the early freeze-over in Dec. Seen in early Dec and not again until mid-Feb were **Wood Duck**, **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, **American Black Duck**, **Mallard**, **Northern Pintail**, **Green-winged Teal**, **Canvasback**, **Ring-necked Duck**, **Lesser Scaup**, **Bufflehead**, **Hooded Merganser**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, and **Ruddy Duck** (m.ob.). Ducks seen only in Feb included **Northern Shoveler**, **Redhead** and **Common Goldeneye**. **Common Merganser** was seen in small numbers through the season. Interesting high counts included 103 **Gadwalls** at WOA 12/4 (BB), seventeen **American Wigeons** at Porter's Cove 2/18 (JF), 170 **Mallards** at SS 12/10 (DP, SD), 9 **Northern Pintails** and 139 **Ring-necked Ducks** at SGL 95 2/19 (GK, MAK), 13 **Common Goldeneyes** at SS 2/18 (BB), 130 **Hooded Mergansers** at SS 12/13 (OM), and 180 **Ruddy Ducks** at Watts Bay 12/4 (BB).

No **Ruffed Grouse** were reported but **Wild Turkey** remains relatively abundant including a nice flock of 42 in a cornfield at Kepple Rd 2/19 (TR). More frequently seen in Nov and Dec than in any other month, a **Red-throated Loon** was spotted at SS 12/4 (BB) while singles and pairs of **Common Loon** were seen at Lake Arthur only until 12/9 (m.ob.). **Pied-billed Grebe** was seen at LA 6 times in Dec (m.ob.) with a high count of 26 at SS 12/9 (DK). After 12/13, no Pied-bills were reported until the end of Feb with one at Squaw Valley Woodlands 2/26 (DW) and 2 at SS 2/28 (AB). Likewise, **Horned Grebe** was seen 9 times at LA until 12/13 and then not again until 2 were spotted at SS 2/28 (AB). The high count for Horned Grebe was 11 at SS 12/4 (BB).

A very early **Turkey Vulture** was at Cranberry Twp. 1/24 (RN). **Bald Eagle** has become "almost common" in winter, being seen 33 times, mostly at Lake Arthur, Lake Oneida, and SGL 95. Seven different **Bald Eagles** were seen at LA 12/28 (MVT) and one at LO the same day (KB). Single **Northern Harriers** cruised fields in scattered locations through the season (m.ob.), 2 were at Wolf Creek Narrows 2/11 (RN). **Rough-legged Hawk** was only reported twice: one at Kildoo Rd 12/20 (BB) and one there 1/19 (RN).

**American Coot** sightings displayed the same pattern as ducks - good numbers in early Dec, then disappearing and not seen until the third week of Feb. Seven reports of over 50 coots and 4 counts of over 100 included a nice count of 138 at SS 12/9 (MH, RH). A lone **Sandhill Crane** flew over Clay Twp. 12/18 (BB) and 4 were seen during the Butler CBC 12/17. **Bonaparte's Gull** was spotted 6 times, all in early Dec (m.ob.), with a high of 9 at SS 12/13 (OM). The celebrated **Black-headed Gull** returned to the same spot at LA for the sixth time in the last nine years. First reported 11/29, the bird was seen by many until 1/10. **Ring-billed Gulls**, present at LA year-round, visited in good numbers with a conservative estimate of 600 at SS 12/1 (ST). This number is much higher than the average number reported.

The **Black-headed Gull** at Lake Arthur represents the seventh record for *Butler*, all adults in basic plumage. This bird has a very interesting history at this site; all 7 records for the county are from this exact spot in late fall or early winter, with 6 of those 7 in the past nine years. Records as follows (the year shown is the year in which the fall season and the beginning of the winter season occurred):

1998: 5 to 28 Dec  
2008: 27 Nov to 10 Dec  
2011: 9 Dec to 1 Jan (2012)  
2012: 2 to 3 Dec  
2014: 23 to 26 Dec  
2015: 8 Jan (2016) to 11 Jan (2016)  
2016: 27 Nov (2016) to 10 Dec (2016)

There is little doubt that all sightings since 2008 involved the same individual bird, and the intriguing possibility exists that 1998 record refers to the same bird as well. If that was the case, since it was an adult in 1998, it would be at least 19 years old today. The oldest documented age for **Black-headed Gull** to which I could find reference is 32 years, so it is plausible that all 7 records were of the same bird. (G Malosh).

Two **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were found during the CBC 12/17 - one at Moraine SP (GK, MAK) and one at CT (BB). A **Merlin** visited SS 12/1 (SDa) and stayed until 12/9 (m.ob.). The only **Peregrine Falcon** was in downtown Butler flying around the courthouse 2/8 (BB). A **Northern Shrike** was seen at SGL 95 on 1/14 (BB). **Common Raven** was spotted 9 times in widely scattered locations (m.ob). Consistent with the state wide irruption, **Red-breasted Nuthatch** delighted observers in widely scattered locations. Usually gone by the first week of Nov, a late **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was seen foraging at Kiester Rd 12/3 (OM).

A very hardy **Gray Catbird** was at SS 1/29. Was this bird early, late, or just confused? Another catbird was seen at Three Degree Rd 2/18. (JT). Could it have been the same one? A notable count of 191 **Cedar Waxwings** came from at Slippery Rock Borough 12/17 (GW). For the second straight year the Sunken Garden Trail hosted a warbler in Dec. A **Common Yellowthroat** was found there 12/4 (BB) and seen again 12/10 (SD, DP). Not totally unexpected, 2 **Yellow-rumped Warblers** feasted on poison ivy berries at Slippery Rock Borough 12/15-18 (GW) and one was seen near Callery 12/26 (CT).

A hardy **Eastern Towhee** was in CRT 2/20 (DA). A **Fox Sparrow** was at Upper Boat Launch 12/28 (MVT) and one was at BT 2/16 (GK,

MAK). A flyover **Rusty Blackbird** was at WOA 2/18 (BB) and a very nice total of 50 at SGL 95 on 2/26 (MJ). The only **Pine Siskins** were 5 at feeders in SRB 12/17, with one remaining to 12/20 (GW).

**EXOTICS:** An **African Collared Dove**, most likely an escapee or a released bird, was photographed at Clay Twp. 2/18 (BB).

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### Cambria County

Locations: Nicktown (NT), Patton (PT), Prince Gallitzin St. Park (PG).

A warm winter kept ice cover to a minimum, resulting in a good variety of waterfowl, including **American Black Duck**, **Northern Pintail**, **Canvasback**, **Redhead**, and **Common Goldeneye**, all at PG (TA, DG, JS). First **Turkey Vulture** was at NT 2/18, which was the second earliest sighting in our area. **Northern Harriers** were more numerous than usual with sightings in various areas.

**Killdeer** and **American Woodcock** were first sighted in mid- Feb, at least two weeks earlier than usual. Large flocks of **Horned Larks** were seen in the fields around PA throughout the period (DG). **Red-Breasted Nuthatches** were more common than usual, especially at feeders and conifer stands. A **Hermit Thrush** was seen at PA 1/20 (DG). A flock of at least 150 **Snow Buntings** were seen in mid-Jan at PA (DG, RL).

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### Cameron County

Locations: Emporium CBC 12/18 (ECBC), Lumber Twp. (LT)

The Emporium CBC was held 12/18. Nineteen observers turned-up 50 species, which ties for the second highest number recorded since the count was started in 1989 (highest was 53 species in 2012, and the 2016 count tied with 2007's 50 species). Notable species included a first county record for Cackling Goose, as well as Golden Eagle, Sandhill Crane, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Fox Sparrow, and Evening Grosbeak.

Likely the most exciting find of the season was a **Cackling Goose** on the ECBC, a first county record (m.ob.). Another good find on the ECBC was a flock of 32 **Tundra Swans**. A **Wood Duck** had returned just before the end of the period 2/28 along Sterling Run (GG). A pair of **Common Mergansers** were at Hicks Run, also 2/28 (DG, GG). The ECBC is well known for high numbers of **Ruffed Grouse**, like the 34 seen in 2009. This year though, a total of only 6 were seen on the ECBC (m.ob.), possibly a consequence of a poor breeding year, lack of food, or forest maturity. On the other hand, **Wild Turkeys** were seen in good number on the ECBC with a total of 66 (m.ob.).

A great find for the ECBC was 2 **Golden Eagles**, which tied with the number of **Bald Eagles** seen (m.ob.). Two **Bald Eagles** were also seen at LT 2/18 (SS). **Red-shouldered Hawk** was a count week species on the ECBC (m.ob.). Another awesome find on the ECBC, rarely reported in *Cameron*, is **Sandhill Crane** - 32 were seen on this year's ECBC (m.ob.). The likely owl species were all reported on the ECBC, including singles each of **Eastern Screech-Owl**, **Great Horned Owl**, **Barred Owl**, and **Northern Saw-whet Owl** (m.ob.). A common breeding bird in the summer, but a rarity in the winter, the **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, was seen on the ECBC (m.ob.). Two **American Kestrels** were also on the

ECBC (m.ob.).

Although not unusual here, the 21 **Common Ravens** tallied on the ECBC nevertheless represented a good total (m.ob.). Following the **Red-breasted Nuthatch** irruption last fall, good numbers remained for the ECBC, when 12 were found (m.ob.); 2 were at LT 2/18 as well (SS). The only notable sparrow was a **Fox Sparrow** on the ECBC (m.ob.). Another unusual find on the ECBC, yet becoming more common, is the **Rusty Blackbird**, with 2 found (m.ob.). A few **Purple Finches** were reported, at locations like ECBC, LT, and Shippen Twp. (m.ob.). Very scarce for the past many years, **Evening Grosbeak** was reported as a count week species on the ECBC, but none were reported after that sighting (m.ob.).

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### Centre County

Locations: Locations: Bald Eagle S.P. (BESP), Colyer L. (COL), PennDOT remediation ponds on Rte. 220 west of Julian (JUL), Millbrook Marsh Nature Center (MMNC), Scotia Barrens and Pond (SCO).

This winter was warmer than average. Perhaps because of this, many normally rare wintering birds were present at least part of the winter, and other species left late and returned early. Several species were reported in at least five locations and will not be discussed further, including **Tundra Swan**, **Wood Duck**, **American Wigeon**, **Northern Pintail**, **Turkey Vulture**, **Merlin**, **Winter Wren**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, **Hermit Thrush**, **Snow Bunting**, **Fox Sparrow**, **Swamp Sparrow**, **Red-winged Blackbird**, **Common Grackle**, and **Brown-headed Cowbird**. The county also hosted its second **Ross's Goose**. Information for this report was obtained from eBird and the State College Bird Club listserv, with background and status information from *Birds of Central Pennsylvania* by Nick Bolgiano and Greg Grove, 2010 (B&G, 2010). Weather information was from the Weather Channel (www.weather.com).

The warm weather allowed local lakes and ponds to stay open longer, tempting a wide array of seasonally rare waterfowl to linger over the winter. Most of the **Snow Geese**, however, were flyovers. One bird was spotted "with a flock of about 30 **Canada Geese**" in the Science Park-Gatesburg Rd.-Nixon Rd. area 12/18 (SD). Two flocks of Snow Geese, totaling about 100 birds "were spotted flying south" in SGL 100 on 12/7 (BC). A single Snow Goose accompanying 2 Canada Geese flew over Innovation Park 1/24 (L&JC). Two geese, one a blue phase, were observed on Buffalo Run Rd. 1/24 (JV), and 120 were spotted on a Winter Raptor Survey route that included the University Park Airport, Fisherman's Paradise, and Bellefonte (JL, et al.).

It started with a birder spotting a white goose in a flock of Canada Geese flying over I-99 in State College 1/8. He tracked them to a location along Spring Cr. and identified the white bird as a **Ross's Goose** (SD). According to eBird, this is the second report of this species in *Centre*, the first was in 2011 at COL; Ross's Goose is not listed in *B&G, 2010*. The flock, which sometimes also included up to four Cackling Geese, were spotted in multiple locations, with the last recorded sighting occurring 2/7 at BESP (JW). There is a possibility that this same flock was spotted 1/1 near Martinsburg in *Blair* (MB).

**Cackling Geese** were reported most of the winter. The first sighting was of 4 birds at BESP 12/11 (BC *vide* JP). As with the above-mentioned Ross's Goose, they moved with flocks of Canada Geese around *Centre* and occasionally split into different groups, since only single birds were reported at Rock Rd. 1/8 (JP) and the Duck Pond 1/15-22 (NiB, MR). The last observation, again of 4 Cackling Geese with Canada Geese, was made at the intersection of Filmore Rd. and Rte. 550 on 2/9 (DO).

Many ducks took advantage of the open water. Up to 10  **Gadwall** were present at the Duck Pond all winter (JP, et al.), and as many as 15 were at the Innovation Park Retention Pond 1/23-2/28 (L&JC, et al.). Over

two dozen were seen at BESP throughout Jan and Feb (BS, et al.) and 4 were found at COL 2/21 (JV). **Northern Shoveler** were observed less frequently. Up to 3 were present at the Duck Pond 12/2-2/1 (KE, et al.), and 3 were spotted in the Big Hollow area of Spring Cr. 1/8 (CE, et al.). Up to 4 **Green-winged Teal** lingered at the Duck Pond 12/2-1/23 (KE, et al.), and as many as 7 were noted at Old Gatesburg Rd. 2/23 (JV), Curtin wetland 2/26 (MB), and at BESP 2/24-27 (PSOL, et al.).

A trio of **Canvasbacks** made an appearance at the Duck Pond 12/4 (DG). A **Redhead** was present at the Duck Pond 12/1-2/26 (JP, et al.), and 4 were spotted 12/18 at COL (AM, JV). Another rare winter species, **Ring-necked Duck**, was reported in four locations. Up to 9 were present 12/2-2/26 at BESP (JL, et al.), and up to 4 were recorded 12/2-2/20 at the Duck Pond (KE, et al.). Five-6 were seen 2/12 at Curtin wetland (AM, JP), and one was still present there 2/25 (JP). COL hosted 5-6 between 2/14-24 (RD, SH, JV). "There was one very sleepy **Greater Scaup** in the midst of the **Common Mergansers** [2/12 at BESP] ... Finally, a Common Merganser swam up and poked at it, waking it long enough to be identified before tucking its head back and going to sleep again." Two more Greater Scaup were spotted 2/26 (both JP). A **Lesser Scaup** was present 2/22 at COL (JV, JP), and up to 11 early migrants were at BESP 2/24-26 (RD, et al.).

At BESP, a male **Long-tailed Duck** was present 12/3-1/1 (JV, et al.), and a "female in winter plumage" was seen 2/22 (JL). As many as 14 rare winter **Common Goldeneyes** were seen 12/11-2/26 at BESP (BC, et al.), and one was present at COL 12/14 (JG). BESP was also the place to look for **Red-breasted Mergansers**. One was reported 1/3 (JK), and up to 3 were noted 2/13-21 (JV, et al.). Some late migrating **Ruddy Ducks** were spotted at two locations – as many as 8 were present at COL 12/1-14 (JG, et al.) and up to 24 were at BESP 12/3-17 (AM, et al.). They didn't stay gone long; single birds were observed at BESP 2/5 (BC, AuC) and at the Duck Pond 2/16 (JoW).

Another trio of seasonally rare water species were also present. A single **Common Loon** was observed at COL 12/8 (JV), and there were three sightings of single loons at BESP: 12/3 (MR), 1/5 (L&JC), and 2/26 (MB). Two **Horned Grebes** were reported at BESP 12/3-1/4 and 2/19-27 (both AM, et al.). Up to 8 **Double-crested Cormorants** also attempted to winter there 12/3-1/15 (MR, et al.).

Four crows (sp?) were spotted observing a **Golden Eagle** dining on fish at BESP 2/22 (JL). A juv. **Northern Goshawk** was mobbed by **Blue Jays** at the Rusnak Hill reclaimed strip mine 12/6 (AL); possibly the same goshawk was reported there 12/11 (L&JC). "A small handful [of **American Woodcocks**] ... were "peenting" and doing their display flights" at SCO 2/18, and 24 were observed there 2/28 (both JV). **Bonaparte's Gulls** were present in Dec, with 4 observed 12/3-17 at BESP (AC, BS, BC) and one at COL 12/8 (JV).

A barn near Millheim hosted a roosting **Barn Owl** 1/2 (CE, KE); it was also heard calling 1/19 (L&JC). A single **Long-eared Owl** was heard 2/6-18 at SCO (JV, et al.), while a **Short-eared Owl** was flushed by a birder walking through "a tall grassy field" at Whitehall Farm 12/4 (JG). Most **Peregrine Falcons** were observed as flyovers, with single birds spotted at the Duck Pond 1/12 (BS), at Musser Gap 1/15 and along Rte. 26 near Blue Course Dr. 2/6 (both JP). However, an adult bird was present at Whitehall Farm 12/10-27 and may have been trying to winter there (CE, KE).

A very early **Eastern Phoebe** arrived in Unionville 2/25 (DO) and was also seen 2/27 (JV). The rare but regular wintering **Northern Shrike** at BESP was admired by many 12/3-2/2 (AM, et al.). A local birder's enjoyment of a New Year's Eve **Gray Catbird** at Haugh Family Preserve was enhanced by the sight of "a ... halo around the sun" (JG). The bird, not the halo, was also spotted there 1/2 (CE). One **Brown Thrasher** was observed 1/14 (JG) and 2/11 (SH) on Penns Cr. Rd. between Cooper St. and Kline Rd. A single **Lapland Longspur** was in a large flock of **Horned Larks** 1/31 along Whitehall Rd. east of Tadpole Rd. (CE, et al.).

A few **Yellow-rumped Warblers** attempted to winter. A couple were spotted occasionally at BESP 1/9-2/27 (BC, et al.), and singles were spotted in State College 2/1 (JoW) and at Curtin wetland 2/5 (MB). Five rare **Savannah Sparrows** were spotted "perched in a clump of switchgrass" near Rock Springs 2/10 (JK, NoB). A single bird was present at Whitehall Farm 2/27 (JV).

**Eastern Meadowlarks** started returning in Feb, with 2 heard in Pleasant Gap 2/24 (JL) and one at BESP 2/19-25 (JV, et al.). **Rusty Blackbirds** were also present. Up to 9 were reported intermittently 1/7-2/19 at MMNC (CE, et al.). Area birders also encountered this species at three other locations: 2 at Curtin wetland 1/20 (MB), 2 in Port Matilda 1/22 (L&JC), and one in Unionville 2/27 (JV). A group of 8 males and one

female **Red Crossbills** were spotted eating on the roadside at the Midstate Airport 1/29 (JD).

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### Chester County

Locations: Chambers Lake (CL), Exton Park (EP), Coatesville Reservoir (CORES), Marsh Creek State Park (MCSP), Octorara Reservoir (OCTRES), South Eastern Chester County Refuse Authority (SECCRA), Struble Lake (SL).

The winter season was splattered with temperature surges and drops, but generally very few notable weather events. While not unseasonably warm, this winter consistently saw above average temperatures. There were very few major storms, and measurable snowfall nearly absent. That said, the first Christmas Bird Count weekend was hampered by a snow and ice storm, rendering roads and trails treacherous enough that many birders were unable to participate. Regional lakes did not freeze for extended periods, allowing some species to winter; others were absent because open water north of *Pennsylvania*. Two county "firsts" were well documented: a Thayer's Gull and a Lark Sparrow - remarkably, both at the county landfill!

A Northern Shrike was found in Exton, but remained elusive to birders in following weeks. The season witnessed moderate interruptions of Black-capped Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Winter finches were mostly absent, except for a few Purple Finches attending feeding stations continually.

Early winter provided for some good numbers of geese to scan through. Lucky birders were treated to sightings of **Greater White-fronted Geese** in a few locations, including: Coventry Lakes Estate 12/8-9 (SS, NF, JW, PW), CORES 12/28 (MH), and at a small farm pond in Glenville 1/1 during the Western Chester County CBC where 2 were found (PM, m.ob.). A single **Ross's Goose** was a nice find among **Canada Geese** on CORES 12/8, and was presumably the same individual seen there in Nov. (RR, DS). **Cackling Geese** are tough to find, but with persistent scanning the throngs of Canada Geese, this diminutive white-cheeked goose has high probability of detection and was found in many locations throughout the county, where large goose populations were present (m.ob.).

*Chester* does not always host decent numbers of **Tundra Swans**, but this season produced more than is typical, perhaps attributable to the relatively ice-free water bodies north of our region. A high count of 82 was made at OCTRES 1/25 (MG, PF).

It was a great winter for finding **Canvasbacks**, some years absent from the seasonal report. This year, these salt-water ducks were found on multiple dates and locations, with a high count of 5 at OCTRES 2/19 (AW, TH). Most were seen at MCSP, one the deepest and largest lakes in *Chester*, but a lone drake appeared at a small Wal-mart retention pond in Parkesburg. **Redheads** followed the Canvasback trend, with increased detectability. Up to 8 Redheads were present at a WTP in West Vincent Twp. 2/21 (DH, LG). A single **Long-tailed Duck** was discovered huddled among Canada Geese at CORES 1/1 (MH, CH, MD, m.ob.), representing the only report of the season.

**Horned Grebes** can be scarce in winter, but this season they were found with some regularity at MCSP (m.ob.). Its larger cousin, the Red-necked Grebe, was absent this winter. A late **Osprey** was photographed at West Chester 12/7-8 (Dave Luning).

It was a great winter for interesting gulls in *Chester*! **Bonaparte's Gulls** are uncommon, but a few were spotted early in the season at MCSP 12/15-18, with a high of 3 there, one at CL 12/16 (NF, SS), and

one again at CL 1/8 (RR, CH, MD). Birders who were willing to put in the effort, and tolerate the stench of tons of refuse spilling from garbage trucks at SECCRA, were rewarded by spotting some state rarities, and county "firsts". Most notably, an adult **Thayer's Gull** was picked out of the gull gathering 1/21, allowing careful study by the team of avid birders present (ZM, BQ, ME, TN, SS, NF, BR, MH). This species had not been documented in the county previously, thus marking a new record! Birders had gone to the landfill in hopes of spotting other rare gulls that had been recently seen, including the rare, irregularly-occurring **Iceland Gull**. That individual, a first-cycle bird, was first picked out 1/13 (NP), and was seen through 1/20 (RR, NF, SS, JA). The **Glaucous Gull** is even more rare than the Iceland, so a find of one of these very large gulls was exciting (BQ, MD), a first-cycle bird first discovered 1/16, and continuing through 1/20 (m.ob.).

A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was discovered in Valley Creek Park 12/26 (MC). Other encounters with this tiny owl occurred at night, from within Rushton Farm in Willistown. This property is home to the renowned Rushton Farm Banding Station, making it the best location in *Chester* to see and hear Saw-whets during their fall movements. It's no wonder that with the detectability in fall in this location, that winter would prove a good spot to find them lingering. Two Saw-whets were heard there 1/15 (TA), and another was detected after dark 1/18 (MD, MH, CH). Notably absent this season was Red-headed Woodpecker, an irregular wintering species; however, some recent winters have boasted double-digit numbers, and most years will typically feature a sighting or two.

The half-hardy **Eastern Phoebe** was detected five times, slightly above average and likely a result of the mild conditions. The only Jan phoebe was in Phoenixville 1/9 (RK). Warmer temperatures in Feb likely encouraged early migrants: in Westtown 2/17 (BK), at both Honey Brook WTP (NF, SS) and Welkinweir 2/24 (VL), and again in Coventry 2/28 (NF, SS). A highlight for the season was an immature **Northern Shrike** photographed at EP 2/25 (JD). This species is irregular in *Chester* in fall and winter, and was the first report in the county since 2013. Efforts to relocate were unsuccessful.

The **Common Raven** continues to be widely reported, and from all regions of the county (m.ob.). That said, it is still considered uncommon in most areas, except Downingtown and Phoenixville, which are known to have hosted nesting pairs. Several days of continuous SSW winds during the last week of Feb. brought some early **Tree Swallows**. Two were spotted 2/24 at both MCSP (HM) and CL (RR), and another was at SL (NF, SS). A solo Tree Swallow was spotted over the Schuylkill R. from Black Rock Sanctuary 2/28 (MD).

This winter saw a mild-to-moderate irruption of **Black-capped Chickadees**. Many of these northern birds showed up at feeding stations, while others were detected in the field (m.ob.). The **Red-breasted Nuthatch** also irrupted in moderate numbers (m.ob.); again, most commonly reported attending bird feeders. The best place in the county to increase your likelihood of spotting or hearing one was at Nottingham CP, where 11 was a high count 12/4 (JS). The habitat within that park is excellent for these small nuthatches, with plentiful pine tree species, the cones of which are a preferred food source.

There was just but one report of **Brown Thrasher**, a lone bird seen along Red Clay Greenway 2/2 (GT). Typically, thrashers are not found in good numbers during winter, but nevertheless more than just once. Combing the Amish farmlands in search of field and open country birds is a favorite practice in winter, especially after snow. The Honey Brook region of the county is the best-known location, with its prevalence of Amish farms. Efforts paid off 12/10 when 2 **Lapland Longspurs** were discovered in a feeding flock of **Horned Larks** on Homestead Rd (NP). A single longspur was found there 1/10 (HM).

**Orange-crowned Warblers** are irregular winterers in *Chester*, often using suet feeders as a dependable food resource. After an autumn of regionally higher-than-normal reports, the trend was followed with a few local winter encounters. One was in a yard in Lionville 12/19 (MH). Notably a Landenberg yard hosted a Orange-crown for third-consecutive winter. We may be able to presume these birds exhibit site fidelity, as there was another recent case of an Orange-crown appearing at the same suet feeder for two consecutive winters. A single bird was spotted in the Landenberg yard 2/22 (AL).

**Chipping Sparrows** typically linger in small numbers through Dec, then disperse presumably southward, until early spring. This year, up to 4 were reported in Landenberg in Feb (SC), either wintering birds or early returnees. The passerine "star-of-the-season" was a **Lark Sparrow** discovered at SECCRA 12/31 (KN). This species has no history in *Chester*, so this was an outstanding find. Unfortunately, it was not

relocated after the initial sighting. The only **Vesper Sparrow** was at Somerser Lake 1/14 (JS), a nice find of a species only irregularly reported in winter.

**Rusty Blackbirds** are uncommon winter residents, usually detected only intermittently in a few locations, typically edges of ponds, lakes, or vernal ponds, as they turn the leaf litter seeking out invertebrate prey. EP, a good spot to find them on occasion, had a high count of 4 on 12/3 (JD). **Purple Finches** were scarce. A yard in Glenmoore hosted a nice group that attended feeders throughout the season, with a high of 17 on 2/6 (BB). Pine Siskin went unreported, not too surprising since this species' irruption was not widespread during the preceding autumn.

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#### **Clarion County**

Locations: Curlsville (CV), Mt. Airy (MA), Mt. Zion/Piney Tract/SGL 330 (MZ), Rimersburg (RI)

Two notable waterfowl sightings deserve mention. Two male **Green-winged Teal** were present 12/28-2/28 on Redbank Creek in New Bethlehem (AB, MH, RH, J&AK, MM). At this same location, 2-4 male **Hooded Mergansers** also spent the winter, present 12/31-2/21 (J&AK).

**Northern Harrier** again showed improving numbers, possibly thanks to another mild winter season. A pair was seen at MZ main site 12/1 (SG), and an adult female was there 2/4 (MVT). During a WRS in various areas of western *Clarion*, 5 were seen 1/22 (GE, ML). An imm. harrier was at MA 2/3 (F&JM), and 2 birds were again seen in the area 2/4 (MH, RH, AB). At least one was seen regularly at MA through 2/28 (KD, DF, BG, MM, SS, et al.). **Rough-legged Hawks** had an excellent showing, which was surprising given the mild weather throughout much of the season. The first was a light bird near 12/12 CV (SG), and the last was a light bird at MA 2/17 (DD, CW). Reports throughout the season indicate a possible total of as many as 14 different harriers, although that is an estimate based on location of sightings (m.ob.). The total number reported during the 8 different WRS in the county was 12, not far off the estimate. Locations for this species included MZ, MA, CV, farm fields outside of New Bethlehem, Ninevah, Lake Lucy/Frills Corners area, and RI. Breakdown by color morph was 3 dark and 9 light for the WRS and the overall estimate was 4 dark to 10 light.

**American Woodcocks** made the earliest return yet based on records available to this observer. Four were calling and displaying at dusk 2/22 at a known breeding location near CV (CW), and 8 were found displaying at Beaver Creek Nature Area near Knox 2/28 (ML). There were just three areas with **Short-eared Owls** reports. One was found along Stockdill Rd at MZ 12/1 (SG), and 2 were found along Rankin Rd outside of CV 12/5 (CW). During the *Clarion* CBC 12/18, a single was again found at Rankin Rd (SC, CW) and 3 were at MA (PC, DF, AH, MalH, RM). Among woodpeckers, **Red-headed Woodpecker** is the least commonly reported. The only one noted this year was seen at Riverstone Farm near Foxburg 2/18 (ML). This area has had the only regular, if sporadic, reports, and would seem to have some appropriate habitat, making it worth continued monitoring for the possibility of breeding.

Several sightings of **Merlins** were submitted, another species that seems to be trending upwards across the seasons, although still rare. One was photographed at MA 12/1 (SG), and another was outside of Sligo during the *Clarion* CBC 12/18 (PCon, DF, AH). A third was in Foxburg 2/28 (ML). Once again, **Northern Shrikes** made their winter

home in the overgrown shrubby habitat plentiful south of I-80. This year they were in three locations: the first at CV strips 12/1 (SG), where they are regular; an adult at MA 2/2 (RN, CW) and also seen 2/4 (AB, MH, RH, MW, DY) and 2/28 (MM); and one along Packing and Bug Rd outside of CV 2/25 (MiW).

**Red-breasted Nuthatches** were reported in several spots to start the season, but then numbers seemed to drop by mid-Jan. In Clarion, one was reported 12/2 (TS), and one to 2 birds were at feeders near CV from the start of Dec through 1/5 (CW). Feeders in RI (MM) and near Strattanville (RM) had up to 2 birds present through the season. With the lack of much snow cover this year, there were few reports of field birds. In the northern agricultural areas near Wolf's Corners, a flock of 125 **Horned Larks** was found 1/7 (MD, DY). Eight were on corn fields near CV 2/2 (RN, CW), and along Rankin Rd outside of CV were 12 on 12/12 (SG), and 7 on 1/9 (AB, MH, RH). Only 2 **Snow Buntings** were noted, on Rankin Rd 12/12 (SG).

A lingering female **Eastern Towhee** was found in the western part of the county for the CBC 12/18 (GE). **Purple Finches** continue to frequent feeders in RI where they are now present year-round (MM). Numbers vary daily with up to 12 seen. One was also reported 1/11 near New Bethlehem 1/11 (J&AK). The last species of note is one rarely reported anymore, **Evening Grosbeak** (fide MalH). A female was seen at a feeder near Strattanville for one day only in late Dec, documented with a photo (though not seen by this reporter).

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#### Clearfield County

The DuBois Christmas Bird Count was held 12/17 despite less than ideal weather conditions: overnight snow and freezing rain made roads treacherous, delaying the start of many field counters until mid to late morning. Given these conditions, the count total of 56 species is remarkable, since the record for this count is 59. Three notable species were **Northern Saw-Whet Owl**, **Yellow Bellied Sapsucker**, and **Fox Sparrow**. This count includes parts of *Jefferson* and *Elk*. Elsewhere, an estimated three dozen **Snow Buntings** were seen along Kirk Rd near Luthersburg 1/10 (DR).

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#### Clinton County

One **Ross's Goose** was observed in a flock of **Snow Geese** in Lamar 1/29 (BS), a first record for *Clinton*. A **Virginia Rail** was at the Central Mountain High School wetlands 2/26 (BS). The continuing **Pine Warbler** in a residential area in Woolrich overwintered and was seen throughout the period coming to feeders (C&CH, S&LF). Several **Pine Siskins** attended feeders in Woolrich and Swissdale 1/24 through at least 1/30 (C&CH, WL).

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#### Crawford County

Locations: Conneaut Lake-Marina (CL-M), Erie N.W.R.- Sugar Lake (E N.W.R.- SL), Pymatuning S.P.-Causeway (P S.P.-C), Pymatuning S.P.- Fish Hatchery (P S.P.-FH), Pymatuning S.P.-Hartstown Project (P S.P.-HP), Pymatuning S.P.-Miller's Ponds (P S.P.-MP), Pymatuning S.P.-

Spillway (P S.P.-S), Pymatuning S.P.-Wilson Road (P S.P.-WR), Tamarack Lake (TL), Woodcock Lake (WL).

The exceptionally warm weather of late January and February provides important context for the 2016-2017 Winter report for *Crawford*. Many species arrived considerably earlier than expected, some in fairly large numbers, and several represent the earliest spring arrival dates for *Crawford*, at least per ebird.

A single **Greater White-fronted Goose** was seen at Conneaut Lake Park Beach 1/15 (IF), a notable sighting for *Crawford*. The bird was suspected to be the *Tundra* subspecies. **Snow Goose** is an expected but notable species in *Crawford* in the winter. A flock of 20 were observed flying over the Vernon Twp. area 1/20 (SC). Two **Ross's Geese** were observed, representing great sightings for *Crawford*. A single bird was seen at P S.P.- S 1/21 (MHa) and another single was at TL 2/21 (TN, KP, BVa). Good counts of **Tundra Swan** included approximately 245 flying over the Titusville Area 12/3 (ML) and at least 600 over the E.N.W.R.- SL area 12/7 (RE).

Several species of ducks were seen earlier than expected, in some cases significantly earlier, in notable numbers, or in multiple locations and dates. Early observations of **Wood Duck** included 5 at Erie N.W.R. 1/21 (RL), a single at P S.P.- FH 2/11 (TN, KP), 2 in the Conneaut Lake area 2/19 (HB), 3 in the Pymatuning area 2/26 (JB), one at Custards Marsh 2/27 (AH), 14 at Erie N.W.R.-Seneca District (KA, NA) and 3 at Conneaut Marsh-McMichael Road 2/28 (MHi). A good count, 156 **Gadwalls** were observed at P S.P.- MP 2/23 (RL). Earlier than expected **American Wigeons** included one at CL-M 1/28 (TN), 9 at WL 2/5 (RL), and 2 at TL 2/8 (KP). Good counts of American Wigeon included 31 on 2/20 (RH) and 37 on 2/21 (MAK, GK), both seen at P S.P.-HP, and 49 at the Pymatuning S.P. Goose Management Area 2/23 (RL). A good count of 16 **American Black Ducks** was at P S.P.- FH 2/11 (TN, KP). Two early **Blue-winged Teal** were at P S.P.- MP 2/28 (AB, RHi, MHi) and an additional 2 at P S.P.- HP 2/28 (AB, RHi, MHi). Early observations of **Northern Shoveler** included 4 at TL 2/8 (KP), 8 at P S.P.- FH 2/21 (GK, MAK), 26 at P S.P.- FH 2/23 (RL) and 2 at Conneaut Marsh- McMichael Rd. 2/28 (MHi). Early and providing a good count, 77 **Northern Pintails** were observed at P S.P.- HP 2/20 (RH). Other early observations included 2 at P S.P.- HP 1/22 (JM, CN), 2 at P S.P.- FH 2/11 (TN, KP), one at E.N.W.R.- SL 2/13 (RE), one at WL 2/19 (TN), 9 at SGL 277 2/20 (RS), and one at E.N.W.R.- SL 2/21 (RE). A very early **Green-winged Teal** was observed at Pymatuning S.P.- Goose Management Area 1/15 (RL) and a good count of 16 early birds occurred at P S.P.- HP 2/23 (TN).

**Canvasbacks** were seen at Pymatuning and Conneaut Lakes throughout the season. A high of 22 were observed at Conneaut Lake 1/11 (RL). Good counts of **Redhead** occurred at Conneaut Lake - 200 during the Linesville CBC 12/18 and 100 on 12/27 (CN). A good count of 364 **Ring-necked Duck** occurred at Custards Marsh 2/23 (RL). Eight **Greater Scaup** were at Pymatuning SP 2/26 (JB), a good count for that species in winter. A notable count of 230 **Lesser Scaup** were observed at Conneaut Lake 2/23 (RL).

**Long-tailed Duck** has been seen infrequently the last couple winters so observations of one at WL 1/15 (RL) and one at the P S.P.- C 1/19 (SS) are notable. A nice count of 65 **Common Goldeneyes** were at P S.P.- C 2/5 (MHa). **Hooded Mergansers** were seen throughout the winter (m.ob.). Good counts included 30 at the Conneaut Lake Park Beach 12/18 (RH, TN, KP), and 17 at the CL-M 1/1 (ES). A great count for *Crawford*, 1018 **Common Mergansers** were in the Pymatuning area 2/23 (RL). A good count of 180 **Ruddy Duck** was made at Conneaut Lake 2/27 (RL).

**Ruffed Grouse** are infrequently reported in *Crawford*, so observations of one at Pymatuning S.P.- Fries Road during the Linesville CBC 12/18 (RH, TN, KP), a single at E.N.W.R.-SL 1/5, 1/10, and 2/8 (RE), and one near Guntown Rd. 1/25 (CN) are notable. High counts of **Wild Turkey** included 60 in the Meadville area 2/20 (LB) and 69 near Greene Rd. 2/20 (CN).

A **Red-throated Loon** was seen at WL 1/15 (RL), a rare sighting for *Crawford*. Of exceptional note are 3 observations of **Common Loon** in Jan and Feb - one seen 1/15 and 1/23 at WL (RL), and 3 at P S.P.- S 2/21 (MAK, GK). According to ebird, these are the only *Crawford* observations of Common Loon in Jan or Feb. A very good count of 21 **Pied-billed Grebe** occurred at P S.P.- C 1/2 (RL). A single **Horned Grebe** at CL-M 2/18 (TO) is notable for the early date.

Observations of **Double-crested Cormorant** are notable in the winter in *Crawford*. Sightings included one at P S.P.- FH 12/10 (LC), one at CL during the Linesville CBC 12/18 (CN), one near E.N.W.R.- SL 2/23

(RE), and 3 at P S.P.- S 2/28 (MHi). Surprisingly, given the warm weather and early arrival dates of other species, observations of **Great Blue Heron** were infrequent – singles were at P S.P.- FH 12/10 (LC) and P S.P.- FH 1/11 (RL), and at a private location on N. Richmond Rd. 2/22 (RS); and 2 were at P S.P.- FH 2/23 (RL).

There were numerous early observations of **Turkey Vulture**, beginning with the onset of extremely warm temperatures in mid-Feb (m.ob.). A good count of 7 **Northern Harriers** was noted at P S.P.- HM 2/18 (IF). **Sharp-shinned Hawk** is notable in winter in *Crawford*. Observations included one at E N.W.R.-SL 12/26 (RE), one at a private residence on N. Richmond Rd 1/7 (RS), one in the Pymatuning area 1/15 (RL), one in the Conneaut Lake area 2/19 (HB), and one at a private residence in Meadville 2/25 (TN). **Rough-legged Hawks** are expected but still notable in winter. Sightings of up to 2, including a light morph and a dark morph, came from the P-MP and P S.P.-WR areas throughout the season where they are expected (m.ob.). Good counts included 6 (4 light and 2 dark) observed during the Winter Raptor Survey in northern *Crawford* 2/2 (CN), 4 (3 dark and 1 light) during the Winter Raptor Survey in southeastern *Crawford* 2/6 (ML), and 5 at P S.P.- MP 2/28 (IF).

**American Kestrel** reports included 4 observed during the Winter Raptor Survey in northern *Crawford* 2/2 (CN) and 4 at P S.P.- MP 2/23 (RL). Sightings of **Merlin** are notable and included 2 in the downtown Meadville area 1/15 (IF). Notable observations of **Peregrine Falcon** included a single bird seen repeatedly dive bombing a **Red-tailed Hawk** at P S.P.- FH 1/29 (RH, KP), and one at P S.P.-C 2/18 (IF).

Conneaut Lake often has large numbers of **American Coots** over the winter season. The high count this year was 1000, on 1/2 (RL). **Sandhill Crane** is expected almost year round, especially in the Pymatuning area. Notable high counts included 78 in the north Pymatuning area during the Linesville CBC 12/18 (RH, TN, KP) and 150 flying over a private residence in the Cambridge Spring area 12/18 (BVo).

Early observations of **Killdeer** included a single bird near Erie NWR-SL 2/11 (RE), one-2 near South Shenango Twp. 2/19-20 (VH), a single at P S.P.- HP (MAK, GK), and 8 in the P S.P.- MP area 2/21 (MAK, GK). A **Greater Yellowlegs** at P S.P.- MP 2/28 (AB, MHi, RHi) represents a great early observation for *Crawford*, the only Feb arrival date for in ebird. Two early **American Woodcocks** were reported peenting at a private property in the Meadville area 2/23 (SC) and another early bird was near E N.W.R.- SL 2/24 (RE).

There were multiple great gull observations. A **Little Gull** at P S.P.- C 2/8 was exceptional for *Crawford* (RL). A good count of 1649 **Ring-billed Gulls** was made in the Pymatuning area 2/23 (RL). An observation of 100 **Herring Gulls** in the Pymatuning area 2/26 (JB) was also exceptional. A **Glaucous Gull** at P S.P.- C 1/2 (RL) provided yet another a great observation.

**Great Horned Owl** is expected but infrequently reported. Observations included one at a private location in the Meadville area 1/6 (RH) and 1/25 (RH, KP), and one at TL 2/12 (TN, KP). **Northern Shrike** is expected but notable and scarce bird during in winter. One was seen at Erie N.W.R.- Swamp Rd 1/1 and 2/24 (RS), and 2/27 (KA, NA). Additional observations included one near Meadville 1/15 (RL) and one at P S.P.- FH 2/23 (RL).

Approximately 100 **Horned Larks** provided a good count in the E N.W.R.-SL area 12/1 (RE). The **Red-breasted Nuthatch** irruption that began during the fall continued throughout the county during winter (m.ob.). Up to 2 were seen at private locations in the Meadville area (RH, KP), a single was at a private residence in the Meadville area 12/9 (SC), and up to 3 throughout the season at a private residence on N. Richmond Rd (RS).

**Carolina Wren** is infrequently reported, especially in winter. Notable observations included one at a private residence in the Meadville area 12/9 and 2/10 (SC), one at a private residence in the Meadville area 2/12 (TN), and one near Pymatuning 2/17 (LP). **Winter Wren** is a good bird for *Crawford*; observations included one near Meadville 2/18 (RL) and a great count of 5 near Venango 2/19 (MS).

**American Robins** were abundant, with multiple observations throughout the county (m.ob.). High counts included 15 at Pymatuning S.P.- Black Jack Swamp during the Linesville CBC 12/18 (RH, TN, KP) and another 17 at SGL 214-Hartstown Towpath during the CBC 12/18 (CN), 16 at a private residence on Tower Rd. 12/24 (CN), and 30 at a private residence in Meadville 2/17 (KP)

Notable sightings of **Snow Bunting** included 9 on Church Rd during the Linesville CBC 12/18 (RH, TN, KP), 20 at P S.P.-WR 1/11 (TN), 20 at P S.P.-Causeway 1/15 (IF), 8 at P S.P.- C 1/22 (TN, KP); one at P S.P.- C 2/5 (MHa), up to 2 at at P S.P.- Causeway 2/18 (IF, RL) and one at P

S.P.-FHa 2/18 (RL). **Eastern Towhee** is scarcely reported during the winter, so observations of a single female at feeders at a private residence in the Meadville area 12/9 (SC) and a single male seen at feeders at a private residence on Rogers Ferry Rd 2/18 (PH) are notable. A **Field Sparrow**, very good for *Crawford* in winter, was observed under feeders at a private location on Pettis Rd near Meadville 1/2 (RL). There are no Jan observations of Field Sparrow in *Crawford* in ebird. Several presumably late **Fox Sparrows** were observed in the Titusville area 12/3 (ML).

There were multiple sightings of **Red-winged Blackbird**, usually sporadically observed during winter in *Crawford*. Notable sightings included 2 at a private location on Tower Rd 12/3 (CN), 2 near E N.W.R.-SL 12/7 (RE), one at Woodcock Lake-Dickson Road Trail 12/17 (TN). A good count for the winter of 100 **Red-winged Blackbirds** was noted at Geneva Marsh 2/28 (AB, RHi, MHi). A very early **Eastern Meadowlark** was at P S.P.-WR 1/29 (RH KP), representing the only Jan report for Eastern Meadowlark for *Crawford* in ebird. **Rusty Blackbird** sightings are notable during winter. Observations include one at SGL 277 1/1 (RS), 2 on a private residence on Tower Rd 2/25 (CN), and 3 near P S.P.- WR 2/27 (RL). Notably early 19 **Common Grackles** in the Meadville area 2/19 (BM). A good count for winter, 7 **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were seen at a private residence on Tower Rd 1/21 (CN).

A high count of 4 **Purple Finches** was reported at a private residence at N. Richmond Rd 1/7 (RS). Observations of **Pine Siskin**, while expected, are still notable. Sightings included 4 at a private residence in the Meadville area 12/9 (SC), one at a private residence in the Saegertown area 12/28 (BVa), and 4 at a private residence in the N. Richmond Rd 1/22 (RS).

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## Cumberland County

Locations: Newville Christmas Bird Count (PANV)

The winter season was extremely mild with numerous days in February reaching the 60's and even 70's, which meant very little in the way of frozen water. In fact, it was the warmest February on record with the mean temperature some 8.4F warmer than average.

The only waterfowl of note included one **Blue-winged Teal** at Zion Rd Pond 2/18 (VG, SB, AnM, BO), a very early date for the species, which usually does not begin to migrate through the area until mid-Mar. A **Bufflehead** was reported on the PANV 12/31 (AM, SS, KK), only the third time recorded on the count in 26 years and the first since 2003. A **Red-breasted Merganser** was at Lisburn Rd Quarry 2/19 (SK). This species is reported only half the winter seasons or less in *Cumberland*. The eBird report of this species at West Fairview Boat Launch on 2/11 is most likely of Dauphin County birds in the Susquehanna R.

The only report of **Horned Grebe** was of one individual at the Lisburn Quarry 1/14-22 (SK, SB). An eBird report of a Rough-legged Hawk 2/20 could not be confirmed.

Probably due to the warm weather, **American Woodcocks** were actively displaying in good numbers as early as 2/18 (SB, BO, AnM, VG). The real surprise shorebird of the period was a **Spotted Sandpiper** at the mouth of Boiling Springs Run and the Yellow Breeches 2/23 (RP, PP). This species does not usually arrive until April. Owls of note included a **Barn Owl** at the SGL 169 "Barn" 2/22-29 (VG, SB, SS), a regular breeding spot for this species, which is infrequently reported in the winter. Reports of single **Long-eared Owls** came from Conifer Hills Rd Tree Farm 12/31(JH, SH) and SGL 169 on 2/26 (StS), both locations where this hard to locate species has been noted in the past.

It was a good season for **Merlins**, with a number of individuals reported. One **Peregrine Falcon** was noted in Carlisle 12/3 (TJ) and one as a flyover at West Fairview Boat Launch 12/18 (AM, SS). **American Kestrel** numbers continue to diminish on the PANV with the 16 reported establishing the new low count, exceeding in a negative sense last year's

low count of 22 birds. Having said this, Winter Raptor Survey numbers seem to be holding steady compared to previous years.

After one **Gray Catbird** found for the PANV 12/31, there was a catbird explosion on 1/21 with one at Pine Grove Furnace (VG, BO, AnM, SB) and 2 at SGL 169 (VG, BO, AnM, SB) later that same day; another was at the Zion Rd Pond 2/18 (VG, BO, AnM, SB). One **Common Yellowthroat** was seen on the PANV 12/31 (BF, LF), the sixth time the species has been reported in the count's 26-year history and the first since 2006 (although it had been a count week bird twice since then).

An unusual winter find of 2 **Chipping Sparrows** was documented by photo at Opossum Lake 12/28 (DK). **Rusty Blackbirds** were found at the usual locations of Huntsdale, the Big Spring, and SGL 169, with the largest report being of 50 birds at Huntsdale 12/21 (DB, SB). There were also 8 reported on a less usual location, on the banks of the Conodoguinet Creek at Grahams Woods Rd for the PANV 12/31 (VG, BO). One **Purple Finch** was reported at the Pine Hill Arboretum 12/11 (KM). While they had been commonly reported in the fall they moved on for the winter season.

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### Dauphin County

Locations: Fort Indiantown Gap (FIG), Susquehanna River West Fairview (SRWF), Wildwood Lake (WL).

Temperatures were well above normal during the period, with below average precipitation and barely any snow.

**Snow Geese** made an early appearance in the Hershey area, in numbers quite large for *Dauphin*. The high was a flock conservatively estimated at 30,000, which was observed from the Milton Hershey School 1/29, streaming from the northeast, with most turning and flying north, while a large group landed in the fields (MC ph.). Subsequently, 10,000 birds were reported in the Hershey area each 1/30 (NM), 2/4 (SK), and 2/11 (MC). One **Ross's Goose** was photographed near the Milton Hershey School property 12/26, circling with one Snow Goose and a flock of **Canada Geese** (AL). **Tundra Swans** also were reported in unusually high numbers for *Dauphin*, with 600 observed from SRWF 2/25 (RK) and 1200 reported from Haldeman Island 2/26 (S&SB). Banded **Trumpeter Swans** #675 and #603, found last year and again this year in *Schuylkill*, were at WL 1/25 (DH ph.). These birds, which have been observed copulating, are not in the Bird Banding Lab database and may be from a captive collection (AL).

At least three **American Woodcocks** were observed displaying in Hummelstown the week of 2/25 (R&SZ). One **Bonaparte's Gull** was observed during the Harrisburg CBC at SRWF 12/17 (AM, SS, KK), where one also was seen 2/24 and 2 on 2/25 (RK).

The sole **Rough-legged Hawk** report was of an adult dark morph at FIG 12/19 (JD, RP, DM, IG). A **Long-eared Owl**, revealed by his pellets, was photographed in deep coniferous cover in an undisclosed location 1/13 and is known to have been there for several weeks. Otherwise, owl reports were nonexistent for *Dauphin*, with none other reported—not even a single Eastern-screech Owl—except for **Great-horned Owls** reported in the Hummelstown/Hershey area, with one 12/10 (AM) and one 2/2 (IG), and a pair found perched on the roof of a house and calling for a few minutes, followed by the female chasing the male down off the roof, and the pair then continuing to call from separate locations 12/10 (AL).

**Peregrine Falcons** were observed in several places. One, or sometimes 2 together, were observed from ZooAmerica 1/10-2/21, perched on nearby cocoa bean silos in the Hershey area (TB). Near the Clarks Ferry bridge, both male and female were observed, sometimes together, 12/22-2/18 (S&SB, JL, L&JC). Individuals were spotted several times in the downtown Harrisburg area (m.obs.), where it appears that a male intruder is threatening the 14-year-old resident male, long established on the fifteenth floor of the Rachel Carson Building, and who has uncharacteristically been absent several times this winter for more than a week at a time. The intruder male, who was banded in May 2010 at the McElhattan Bridge in Clinton County, was observed via a falcon

cam engaging in bonding behavior with the resident female in the nest box 1/12. An unbanded female also made a brief appearance on the ledge 1/25 (SH).

One **Red-headed Woodpecker** was spotted at FIG 2/8, where there is a known colony (DM). A fairly tame **Northern Shrike** was observed in Gratz, actively feeding on grubs or beetles in a hedgerow along Yuts Rd on the afternoon of 1/15 (RK); subsequent efforts to locate the bird were not successful.

The only **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at WL 12/2 (IG). A **Gray Catbird** was photographed in mixed honeysuckle and bittersweet shrubbery, calling, at the Swatara Creek portage 12/22 (AL). WL hosted 2 **Rusty Blackbirds** 12/1 (R&PP), 4 on 12/6 (CW, MG), 10 on 12/2 (IG), and one 2/19 (BS); and a single was reported on Haldeman Island 1/15 (S&SB).

Observers: **Annette Mathes, 661 South 80<sup>th</sup> Street, Harrisburg PA 17111, (717) 514-4512, amathes19@verizon.net**, Tim Becker, Scott & Stephanie Bills, Linder & John Carter, Mary Coomer, Jarrod Derr, Ian Gardner, Marilyn Glace, Sue Hannon, Deuane Hoffman, Stefan Karkuff, Ramsay Koury, Kathy Kuchwara, Alex Lamoreaux, Jen Lee, Nate McKelvie, Dave McNaughton, Rebecca Picone, Rick & Peggy Price, Brenda Schultze, Sue Strassner, Cathleen Wetzel, Sally & Rich Zaino.

### Delaware County

Locations: Bethel Springs Elementary School (BSES), Chadds Ford Marsh (CFM), Commodore Barry bridge/riverfront (CB), Crum Creek (CC), Crum Creek Reservoir (CCR), Crum Woods, Darlington Tract (DT), Delaware County Community College (DCCC), Delaware River (DR), Earles Lake (EL), Fort Mifflin, Garnet Valley High School (GVHS), Garrett-Williamson (GW), Glen Providence Park (GP), Greenbank Farm (GF), Haverford College (HC), Haverford Reserve (HR), Hildacy Farm Preserve (HILD), John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge (JHNWR), Marcus Hook (MH), Newlin Grist Mill (NGM), Bridle Trail (BT) at Ridley Creek State Park (RCSP), Ridley Park, Rose Tree Park Hawk Watch (RTPHW), Springton Reservoir (SR), Sts Peter and Paul Cemetery (P&P), Thornbury Township Trail (TTT), Wawa Preserve (WP), The Willows (WILL).

The winter reporting period was characterized by roller-coaster weather that averaged out above normal temperature-wise. Icy precipitation in the AM hours on the day of the CBC, 12/17, reduced participation hours. The first real snow was just a couple of inches on 1/7 followed by three days of lows below 20F. The temperature then bounced back into the 50's and 60's for three days, reaching a high of 67 on 1/12. Feb 6-8 brought another warm spell, reaching 66F on the eighth, followed by about four inches of snow on the ninth. Warmth returned on 2/18-19 with a high of 70F, which was exceeded again on the 2/23-25 with a high of 74F on the 2/24. Total precipitation over the period was approximately six inches, which is a couple of inches below normal.

The "best" bird of the period was the long-staying **Black-headed Gull**, from the impoundment at JHNWR, that drifted across the county line where a few lucky birders were able to record it in *Delaware*, reported 1/16 (BB), 2/19 (AG), 2/24 (AG), and 2/25 (JMc).

The 97th Glenolden CBC was held 12/17 with a total of 63 observers tallying 88 species on count day, slightly lower than the 10-year average of 92 species. Given the mixed precipitation on count day, resulting in reduced party-hours, the overall total was well within normal bounds. Three **Merlins** tied the previous high count; 5 **Northern Harriers** was more than usual. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** at JHNWR was the most unusual CBC find (JMc).

Two **Snow Geese** hung around through part of the period mixed in with **Canada Goose** flocks. There was one individual along CC 1/4-8 (m.ob.) and one in the Garnet Valley schools area Dec through Jan (m.ob.) Migrant flocks were reported as early as 12/28 with 200 over Garnet Valley (BB), but numerous 1/17, with 500 over SR (AG) and another 500 over RCSP (AG) and then 2/24 when 300 were noted over GF (SW), 30 over RCSP (PT) and 121 over BSES (BQ). The next day, 2/25, another 150 were over Swarthmore (DE).

Individual **Cackling Geese** were reported from EL 12/10 (AC) and Memorial Park 1/10 (AG). Up to 3 **Mute Swans** spent the winter hanging out at the pond at the Liseter development off Goshen Rd (m.ob.). **Tundra Swans**, numbering from 12 to 33, could be found mid-Dec through mid-Jan at CB (NP, AG).

In the duck department, an **American Wigeon** at Episcopal 2/5 (WS) was a one-day find. The high count of **Northern Shovelers** was 22 at JHNWR 1/12 (JMc). A **Lesser Scaup** was at JHNWR 12/10 (PT) and 2 females were found at CCR 12/14 (AG). From one to 4 **Common Goldeneyes** were reported from CCR throughout the period on multiple dates (m.ob.). Always a good find in the county, a **Long-tailed Duck** was reported from SR 1/6 (AB, DB). **Red-breasted Mergansers** were noted 1/15-17 at the DR (AB, DB, AG). A half-dozen **Ruddy Ducks** were noted at JHNWR 12/10 (PT) as well as 10 at SR 12/17 (AC) and one at SR 1/12 (WS).

The only **Common Loon** was reported on EL 2/16 (WS). **Pied-billed Grebes** were at SR, CCR and JHNWR occasionally throughout the period (m.ob.). **Horned Grebes** showed up 12/17-22 with 2 at SR (m.ob.) and then at SR 1/7 (JMc). Two **Great Cormorants** from CB 12/17 (AG, NP) and one at MH 2/24 (AG) represented the only reports in the county.

Other than the birds found on the CBC, at least one Northern Harrier was at JHNWR throughout the period (m.ob.). A **Bald Eagle**, photographed sitting in the parking lot at GVHS, surprised a teacher arriving early to work 1/17 (Dan McManus). A new eagle nest for *Delaware* was discovered along the Brandywine Creek by a group conducting a WRS 2/5 (DE, et al.).

**Killdeer** first showed up at JHNWR 2/19 (AG) but 2/24 seemed to be the magic arrival date with 2 reported from BSES (BQ), one from Boeing Ridley Park (JH), and 3 at Villanova Law School (Sarah Polekoff, Holly Garrod). **American Woodcock** were seen and heard displaying 2/23 (JMc) and 2/24 (AG) from the 4th Ave. creek area and also from the Delco section of JHNWR 2/25 (JMc). Other than the Black-headed Gull, the only other Larid of note was a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at MH 1/15 (AG, JMc) and 1/16 (DO).

All 3 expected falcons were reported. **American Kestrel** was at DT 12/7 and 12/17(AE), at Boeing Ridley Park West 12/14 and 1/13(JH), at GW 2/5-6 (TB, DE), in Newtown Sq along Rt 3 on 2/5 (DE, TB), at the Morton Homestead 2/5 (SW), and at GF 2/24 (SW). Merlin reports came from at least eight locations, while **Peregrine Falcons** were found at DT 12/17 (DE), Boeing Ridley Park S 12/13 and 12/20 (JH), SR 2/28 (AG), CB 1/29 for WRS DelcoEast (AG, DE) and JHNWR on multiple dates (m.ob.).

The first 2 **Eastern Phoebes** were at WILL 2/28 (KG). **Common Raven** reports came from a half dozen scattered locations, mostly in the southwest (m.ob.). The only **Horned Larks** were in the Fort Mifflin area 1/3 (JMc) and 1/4 (AG). The first **Tree Swallow** was at JHNWR 2/19 (AG).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch** continued to be widely reported. Somewhat less abundant but still widespread, were many reports of **Brown Creeper**. **Marsh Wren** came only from JHNWR 1/15 and 1/21 (JMc). **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were reported from RCSP, WILL, DCCC, JHNWR, CFM and a couple of individual yard locations within the county.

**Hermit Thrush** favored DCCC 12/13, 12/16, and 1/30 (BB); RCSP from 12/3-1/26 (m.ob.); WILL 1/15 (AG), 1/19 and 2/21 (KG); Sleighton Farm School 2/18 (DB) and yards in Swat (DE), Concordville (BB) and Media (SK). A **Gray Catbird** was at WILL 12/1 (KG) and one at RCSP 1/19 (JMc). Forty-one **Cedar Waxwings** at DT 12/7 (AE) provided a high count, but another good flock of 30 was also found at TTT 12/2 (JM). Otherwise, numbers were low with 9 at DCCC 12/7 (BB), 6 at SR 12/17 (AC), and 2 at JHNWR 1/1 (JMc).

An Orange-crowned Warbler was reported at a private residence in the Media area 12/26 (NS). One also was seen periodically at JHNWR, first on the CBC 12/17(JMc), and periodically thereafter: 1/12, 1/21 (JMc), and 1/22 (AG, DO). A female **Common Yellowthroat** was found at the FedEx complex 1/4 (AG). **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were at RCSP 12/3 (BM); DCCC 12/7, 1/10, 1/18, and 2/6 (BB); Glen Mills 1/22 (JMc); GP 2/11 (TB); and CFM 2/26 (AG)

**American Tree Sparrows** are always relatively few in number except at JHNWR where up to 7 were reported throughout the period (m.ob.). RCSP produced 2 on 12/14 (AE) and 2 on 12/17 (TB). One was found at GW 1/19 (JMc) and 2 were noted in a Havertown yard 12/20 (MM). **Chipping Sparrows** were reported only during the CBC 12/17 - at DT (AE), 3 in the Linvilla area (DO), and 3 at P&P (SJ, SB, LH). **Field Sparrow** numbers reached a high of 32 at DT 12/17 (AE). The only other notable multiple Field Sparrows were 9 at WP 1/5 (AG) and a few other scattered individual reports throughout the period. Three **Fox Sparrows** appeared at DT 12/7 (AE). This species was also reported from a Garnet Valley yard 12/17 (BB); JHNWR 12/10 (PT) and 1/21 (JMc); RCSP 1/5

(JMc), 1/17 (AG), and 1/19 (JMc); BSES, 1/7 (BQ); NGM 1/28 (JS); DT 2/17 (AG); and a Springfield yard 2/26 and 2/28 (DB, AB). The only **Savannah Sparrow** report came from RCSP 12/17 (TB). **Eastern Towhee** reports were from seven locations on nine dates with the maximum count of 4 from the BT 12/17 (AG).

One to 2 **Rusty Blackbirds** frequented WILL from 12/27 (KG) to 1/31 (KG) and were seen by many. A singing **Red-winged Blackbird** at GVHS 1/30 appeared to be an early territory claimer (SJ). **Purple Finch** reports were few and mostly limited to Dec: a single bird in a Garnet Valley yard 12/4 (BB); one 12/11 at WILL (DO); 2 in a Springfield yard 12/12 (DB); and singles at RCSP 12/17 (TB) and 1/17 (AG).

Observers: **Sheryl Johnson, 453 Duck Pond Lane, Haverford, PA 19041, (610) 649-4621, sbjohnso@haverford.edu**, Debbie Beer, Adrian Binns, Sarah Busch, Brian Byrnes, Alan Crawford, Andrew Eberly, David Eberly, Kim Gruener, Al Guarente, Liz Hoffman, Jeff Holmes, Steve Kapski, Becky Marvil, Jim McConnell, Brendan McDermott, John Mercer, Michael Morrell, Damon Orsetti, Nick Pulcinella, Brian Quindlen, Jessica Shahan, Nate Sharp, Kim Steininger, Cindy Steven, Patrick Taylor, Sharon West.

### Elk County

Locations: Benezette CBC 1/1 (BCBC), Jones Twp. (JT),

Even though this winter was warmer than average overall, only 4 species of waterfowl were reported, all of which are those most expected in *Elk* during the winter. The only **Canada Goose** report was of 4 on the BCBC 1/1 (m.ob.), but more surprising was a total of 36 **Tundra Swans** on the BCBC as well (m.ob.). There were also only 2 **Mallards** on the BCBC, which was also the only report (m.ob.). One **Common Merganser** was at Johnsonburg 2/20 (MS). With an apparent decrease in numbers, only one **Ruffed Grouse** was at RT 2/20 (MH), and 4 were seen during the BCBC (m.ob.). One was also at JT 2/26 (BB). Three **Wild Turkeys** were at ECVC 1/28 (CE).

A bird rarely seen in the county and especially on the BCBC is the **Golden Eagle**, which was seen on the BCBC (m.ob.). **Bald Eagles**, on the other hand, were reported from 2 locations, with one seen on the BCBC (m.ob.) and one at Johnsonburg 2/11 (BB). Not normally seen in *Elk* during the winter, 4 **Red-shouldered Hawks** was reported on the BCBC (m.ob.). A nice find was a **Rough-legged Hawk** at BS 2/21 (FM). A dark phase Rough-leg was at JT 2/26 (BB). One **Eastern Screech-Owl** was seen on the BCBC, as were 2 **Barred Owls** (m.ob.). A Barred Owl was also at Johnsonburg 2/20 (MS). Due to the mild weather in Feb, an **American Woodcock** made its way back to JT a bit earlier than usual, with one flushed from the side of a dirt road at JT 2/27 (BB).

As always, **Common Ravens** were reported from various locations across the county with 22 seen on the BCBC (m.ob.). A bird that is hard to come by in mostly forested *Elk*, one **Horned Lark** was reported at RM 1/15, seen and heard flying overhead (BB). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were seen in pretty good numbers, with an awesome total of 31 on the BCBC (m.ob.). Other Red-breasted Nuthatches were at Brockport 12/22-23 (TJ), 2 at St. Marys 2/19 (DW), and at their regular location of JT throughout the season (BB). As a consequence of the irruption of the Red-breasted Nuthatch, BB noted that the numbers of this species this winter dropped to only one pair compared to last winter when up to 12 could be seen in one day. This was likely due to the scarcity of evergreen cones present at this location this winter.

Five **Carolina Wrens**, scarce in *Elk*, were found on the BCBC (m.ob.). One was also at JT 2/26, which is likely the one that nested at that location last year (BB). Rare in winter, a **Hermit Thrush** was found on the Benezette CBC (m.ob.). A bit early and especially for the number seen, were 13 **Fox Sparrows** at JT 2/26; 4 were seen the next day at JT as well (BB). **Purple Finches** were at a couple of locations, including 4 on the BCBC (m.ob.), and 2 were at a residence on Long Level Rd 2/17 and 2/26 (AM). The only **Pine Siskin** was also seen along Long Level Rd 2/12 (BB). The most notable species of the season was **Evening Grosbeak**, at JT in Feb. Twenty-two were first detected 2/11-12, and 15 were at JT 2/26 (BB).

Observers: **Brendyn Baptiste, 255 Claytonia Rd Butler, PA 16001, (724) 496-4856, brendynbaptiste@yahoo.com**, Marianne Atkinson, Kirk Bainey, Don Bickford, Ms. Bond, Lisa Chapman, Jen Crowell, Lewis Crowell, Edwena Eger, Carl Engstrom, John Fedak, Randy Flament,

Nelson Haas, Mary Hosmer, Tom Jiamachello, Mark Johnson, Mandy Marconi, Ann Maiers, Bob Martin, Pam Mohney, Charlie Nixon, Don Nixon, Millie Simbeck, Steve Van Eerden, Don, Weis, Jonathon Williard.

## Erie County

Locations: Presque Isle State Park (PISP), Waterbird count (WC)

A rather mild winter kept the water around Presque Isle State Park ice-free for much of the season, with brief periods of ice-cover on Presque Isle Bay in January and February. Lake Erie remained open through the winter. Only a few siskins and one redpoll were reported. The rarity of the season was an adult **Slaty-backed Gull** first observed and photographed at the Lake View Landfill, then later at the west end of Presque Isle Bay. It was last seen and photographed in flight at the Lake View Landfill in late February. See details below.

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

Four **Snow Geese** were seen at the WC 12/5 (JM) and one was at the Fairview Business Park 1/29 (DM). A single **Surf Scoter** was off Vista 1 and Beach 11 on 2/19-20 (RS, MF). Up to 2 **White-winged Scoters** were observed at the foot of East Ave. in Erie 2/28 (BG, TN). A **Black Scoter** buzzed by Sunset Point at the WC 1/1 (JM). A **Red-necked Grebe** was found at the north pier 12/31 and remained until 1/2 (ST). The only sighting of **Eared Grebe** was one off Gull Point 12/23 (JF).

The increasingly rare **Ruffed Grouse** was spotted on Dead Pond Trail during the CBC 12/17 (EE), providing one of few PISP sightings ever. An unprecedented group of 131 **Great Blue Herons** was seen flying out of Niagara Pond 1/29 (ST). An imm. **Northern Goshawk** was at Thompson Circle 12/3 and another imm. was a window strike in Waterford 12/15 (JH); lit was taken to a rehabilitator where it recovered and later released. A flock of 13 **Sandhill Cranes** flew past the Tom Ridge Environmental Center 2/24 (RD) and 8 were seen flying out of Long Pond the next day (PBZ).

**Iceland Gulls** were observed at PISP and the Lake View Landfill 12/ 31-2/11 (m.ob.). **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were recorded from PISP 12/23-2/17 (m.ob.). A **Thayers Gull** was off Niagara boat launch 1/30 (JM) and another in Presque Isle Bay 2/10 (DSn). The first county and second state record, if accepted by PORC, of an adult **Slaty-backed Gull** was discovered and well photographed at the Lake View Landfill 1/27 and again 2/26 (JM). It was subsequently observed by others at the head of Presque Isle Bay on various days between the Lake View Landfill sightings. However, many of the PISP sightings proved to be Lesser Black-backed Gulls. A total of at least 6 **Glaucous Gulls** were reported from the Lake View Landfill or PISP 1/1-2/19 (m.ob.).

A rather late **Forster's Tern** was at the mouth of Walnut Creek in Fairview Twp. during the WC 12/7 (JM). The only **Purple Sandpiper** was one observed 12/4 (RN). A late **Dunlin** flew past the WC at Sunset Point 12/16 (JM). Perhaps as many as 4 **Snowy Owls** were reported along the Lake Erie shore, including PISP, 12/4-1/27 (m.ob.). A **Long-eared Owl** was in the pines on PISP 12/18 (RD).

A late **Gray Catbird** was on Gull Point Trail 12/23 (JF). **Common Ravens** were reported from the Lake View Landfill 1/28-2/2 (m.ob.). Two **Lapland Longspurs** were at Gull Point 12/23 (JF). A rare winter **Yellow-billed Sapsucker** was photographed in Girard 1/8 (SD). An imm. male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited a feeder in Harborcreek 12/18-1/2 (DS). The **Baltimore Oriole** coming to a feeder in Fairview 1/30 to at least 2/1 was only the second for *Erie* in winter (KM). One **Common Redpoll** was on Pine Tree Trail 1/29, the only report (MB). The only **Pine Siskins** reported attended a feeder in Fairview Twp. (DSn).

Observers: **Jerry McWilliams, 3508 Allegheny Rd., Erie, Pa. 16508-2129, jerrymcwataol.com**, Mary Birdsong, Stephanie DiLuzio, Roger Donn, Emanuel Erb, Mike Fialkovich, Jim Flynn, Bob Grubbs, Jamie Hill, Karen Mead, Drew Mortensen, Ted Nichols, Richard Nugent, Debbie Smith, Don Snyder, Russ States, Shannon Thompson, Pat & Bob Zelenak.

## Fayette County

It was a milder than normal season. Feb brought the first migrant waterfowl through the county but in small numbers. A **Mute Swan**,

probably an "ornament", was at Nemaocolin Woodlands Resort 12/25 (TB). A check of Greenlick Run Lake 2/25 revealed the following waterfowl: 6 **Wood Ducks** (MJ), 8 **Redheads** (MD), one **Ring-necked Duck** (MJ), 3 **Lesser Scaup**, 4 **Buffleheads**, and a **Common Merganser** (MD). Five **Gadwall** were at Filbert Lake 2/25 (MJ). Two **Pied-billed Grebes** were at Point Marion 12/15 (TB), Two **Horned Grebes** were at Greenlick Run Lake 2/25 (MD), and 5 at Dunlap Creek Lake 2/25 (MJ).

Some light was shed upon the possible leucistic **Wild Turkeys** reported last season in Conneville. The flock was seen and photographed again 2/7, this time accompanied by a domestic chicken (JS)! It's likely a Wild Turkey mated with local domestic turkeys resulting in polts that appeared to be leucistic. The observer is unaware of any turkey farms in the vicinity but the birds are obviously more aware of the neighbors. Eleven **Turkey Vultures** were at Jacob's Creek Wetlands 2/25 (MD). Two **Bald Eagles** represented a rare find at Greenlick Run Lake 2/25 (MD).

Two **American Woodcocks** were at Jacob's Creek Wetlands 2/25 (MD). I rarely receive reports of this species that breeds in the county; an early spring report is therefore welcomed. Gulls appear in small numbers here during migration. Ten **Herring Gulls** were at Dunlap Creek Park 2/25 (MJ) and 3 at Greenlick Run Lake 2/25 (MJ). A **Barred Owl** was photographed just outside SGL 51 (CL); although resident in the county, very few are reported. Three **Red-headed Woodpeckers** (2 adults and one imm.) were at Nemaocolin Woodlands Resort 12/25 (TB).

Two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were at Nemaocolin Woodlands Resort 12/25 (TB); there were 8 reports from various locations in eBird. Two **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were at Jacob's Creek Wetlands 12/31 (MD). Rare in winter, an **Eastern Towhee** was at Greenlick Run Lake 2/25 (MD). A flock of 80 **Red-winged Blackbirds** at Jacob's Creek Wetlands 2/25 was a bit early (MD). An **Eastern Meadowlark** was heard singing at Nemaocolin Woodlands Resort 2/19 (TD, eBird).

Observers: **Mike Fialkovich, 805 Beulah Road, Pittsburgh, 15235, (412) 731-3581, mpfial@verizon.net**, Terry Bronson, Michael David, Todd Day, Matthew Juskowich, Calvin Livengood, Jeremy Stansak.

## Forest County

Locations: Buzzard Swamp (BS), Cook Forest (CF), Marienville (MA), Tionesta (TI), Tionesta Outflow (TO).

Although the Allegheny River was open most of the winter, there were few reports of waterfowl. The only report of **Tundra Swans** was of a flock of 30 on 2/27 at BS (LG). **American Black Ducks**, not common in winter, were at TO 1/7 (DY, MD) and near TI 1/25 (FM, JM). The only sightings of **Redhead** and **Ring-necked Duck** were at BS 2/27 (LG). **Buffleheads** were seen 1/11 and 2/20 at TI (FM, JM).

The resident **Ruffed Grouse** are seldom reported in winter. Four sightings from various locations this season are noteworthy: 12/29, 1/1, 1/7, and 1/25 (m.ob.). A **Common Loon**, reported here only one other winter since 2004, was seen at TO 12/24 (FM, JM). **Pied-billed Grebes** are seldom seen in *Forest* in winter, but there were 3 sightings at TI and one at CF (m.ob.).

A light-phase **Rough-legged Hawk**, a semi-regular winter visitor, was noted in the Wolf's Corners area several times (m.ob.). **Horned Lark** is rarely seen during winter, but notably a flock of 25 was found at Red Brush 1/7 (DY, MD).

**Fox Sparrows** were well-reported from both ends of the county, including 2 very early birds: 1/7 at MA (m.ob.) and 1/31 at TI (FM). **White-throated Sparrows** were seen in only two locations, both at lower elevations in the Allegheny R. valley: at West Hickory 1/1-22 (KS) and at TI 1/7 (DY, MD). **Pine Siskins** have been abundant in recent winters but were reported only twice: 2 at CF 2/4 and 4 at MA 2/11 (BB). The nomadic, boreal **Evening Grosbeak**, which has been recorded in *Forest* at least once in seven of the last twenty winters, was well-represented. The hotspot was MA, where they were observed from 1/8 throughout the reporting period, with a high of 46 on 2/14 (m.ob.). They were also seen from 1/1 throughout the period at Neiltown, with a high of 21 on 1/7 (WWD, FM, JM).

Observers: **Flo McGuire, 609 Ponderosa Lane, Tionesta, PA 16353, (814) 755-3672, fmcguire1@verizon.net**, Brendyn Baptiste, Anthony Bruno, Michael David, W. Wayne DelGrande, Linda Greble, Margaret

Higbee, Roger Higbee, Jim McGuire, Mark Moore, Steve Schmit, Kim Springer, Shannon Thompson, Matthew Webb, David Yeany II.

### Franklin County

Although activity was generally slow, there were significant reports, some of which were one and done sightings from reliable sources with sufficient descriptions. The New Year began with a single **Ross's Goose** found at the Rockwell Pond behind Little Dipper Restaurant on Rt 30 near St. Thomas 1/1 (CG, DC, BO). Three Ross's Geese were at same location 1/5 and 1/7 (VB, NM, DG), and presumably the same 3 at nearby Mountainbrook Rd pond 1/6-7 (BO, MO, KO). Other sightings of special note on New Year's Day were **Orange-crowned Warbler** behind Menno-Haven Nursing Home (DC) and **Rough-legged Hawk** along I-81 near Scotland (CG), neither of which could be relocated (LN). Finally, of note, a **Snowy Owl** was found early morning along Long Lane near Shady Grove 2/28 (DG), and was observed through the day by others (CG, VB, DH, BK, JB, DB, MW) until it took flight and departed about 3 PM.

**Cackling Geese** were at Mountainbrook Rd 12/29 (CG), at Kriner Rd Ponds 1/22 (CG), at Greencastle Reservoir (3) 1/22 (CG, DG), and at West Antietam Creek near Waynesboro 2/3 (DG). There were the normal small numbers of typical overwintering ducks, with the only thing of note being a large number of early migrating **Ring-necked Ducks** (46) at Bender's Farm 2/22 (BO). There was a mini-fallout of grebes in the county 1/2 with a **Pied-billed Grebe** and a **Horned Grebe** at Letterkenney Reservoir (BO), 3 Horned Grebes at Greencastle Reservoir (CG), and 3 Horned Grebes at Bender's Farm (BO).

The recent year's trend of increasing **Bald Eagle** nests continued this winter with at least five active nests and a couple other possible ones (DG). Three **Sandhill Cranes** were found on an early morning walk along Windmill Rd near Williamson 2/23 (LN). **American Woodcocks** were at Bender's Farm 2/19 (BO), Bricker Rd Gamelands 2/22 (BO), and at Heisey Rd 2/22 (BK).

**Merlins** were on Boundary Rd 12/10 (BO), along Edenville Rd 1/7(JD, SD), and on Warm Spring Rd 1/29 during a Winter Raptor Survey (BO). **Peregrine Falcon** sightings began with a perched bird along Rt 11 near Greenvillage during the Conococheague Audubon CBC 12/17 (JD, SD), observed by others during the count (VG, BO, LN); and various sightings in downtown and elsewhere around Chambersburg 1/25, 2/2, 2/5, 2/6 (BO, DC).

Reports of **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, which began with many sightings in early fall, continued; otherwise it was a very quiet winter for other species pushing down from the north. A **Lapland Longspur** was at Bender's Farm 1/14 (BO) and up to 14 **Snow Buntings** were at Bender's Farm 12/31-1/14 (BO, MO, KO). Winter hardy birds of note were **Pine Warbler** 1/10-11 at Caledonia SP (EB, VB, DH), as well as several **Fox Sparrows** and **Eastern Towhees**. Fox Sparrows (3) were seen during the CBC near Scotland 12/17 (VG, BO, LN), at Caledonia SP 2/2 (BO), and at a feeder near Zullinger 2/22-28 (CG). Eastern Towhees were reported from Amberson Valley 12/2 (JW), during the CBC at Waltonian Meadows 12/17, and also Throckmorton 12/17 (VG, BO, LN) and 1/29 (BO).

A well described male **Common Redpoll** was observed in a yard at Penn National Estates 2/15 (EN), but was not relocated. The volume of sightings from past winters of **Pine Siskin** dwindled to a report of 3 from Caledonia SP 12/16 (CG) and a single bird coming to a feeder at Green Knolls 1/9-2/28 (VB). The only reports of **Purple Finch** were of single birds at feeders at Guilford Hills 12/18 (JD, SD) and at Shady Grove 2/2 (DG).

Observers: **Bill Oyler, 1216 Wilson Ave, Chambersburg, Pa 17201 (717-360-5191), oylerbillatgmail.com**, Val Barnes, Eric Beck, Joan Bowen, Dustin Brace, Dave Cooney, Josh Donaldson, Susan Donaldson, Carl Garner, Vern Gauthier, Dale Gearhart, Donna Hocker, Bob Keener, Nancy Magnusson, Lori Nichols, Earl Nollenberger, Mik Oyler, Katelyn Oyler, Jerry Walker, Martin Wilson.

### Fulton County

Locations: Dublin Mills Rd (DM) Cowans Gap S.P. (CG), Belfast Township (BEL).

December reports were scarce. A **Common Goldeneye** was present along with 4 **Buffleheads** and a **Common Loon** at CG 12/6 (BO); a Common Loon was at the same location 12/11 (BO). Jan and Feb saw large numbers of expected woodland and feeder birds. Highlights include a first-of-year **Killdeer** spotted in the farm fields of BEL 2/13 (AE). Observations of **American Kestrels** spiked in mid- to late Jan (GG, BO). A **Merlin** was at CG 1/25 (DW). A **Horned Lark** was reported at DM 1/25 (GG). Two **Red-Breasted Nuthatches** were observed at CG 1/25 (DW). **Red-Winged Blackbirds** returned to BEL 2/20 (AE).

Observers: **Amy Evans, 403 Walnut St, Columbia, PA 17512, (865) 804-4399, needmore.pa@gmail.com**, Coy Hill, Greg Grove, Bill Oyler, Doug Weidemann.

### Greene County

Locations: East View (EV), Franklin Twp. (FT), Last Chance Ranch (LCR), and Sycamore (SY).

Over 30 **Snow Geese** flew down the valley in SY 12/18 (JC). Over 40 **Wild Turkeys** were at LCR 1/27 (MLP). **Pied-billed Grebe** was found in Whiteley Twp. 2/25 (KH). **Great Blue Heron** was at LCR 2/6 (MLP).

Among raptors, most notable was an **Osprey** seen flying along the Greene River Trail in Cumberland Twp. 1/19 (JB). During the Ryerson CBC 12/19, a lone **Black Vulture** flew over in Richhill Twp. (LH). The first spring sighting of **Turkey Vulture** was at LCR 2/11 (MLP). A pair of adult **Bald Eagles** flew over a creek in FT 12/26 (JS, MH). A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was at SY 1/7 (JC). In Perry Twp. a **Red-shouldered Hawk** was seen 2/19 (MG). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was sighted during the Ryerson CBC in Center Twp. 12/17 (AD, NG).

**Ring-billed Gulls** were seen flying around the Walmart in FT 1/2 (MiH, MhH, CH). As is often the case, **American Woodcock** was first heard in SY, on 2/24 (JC). A red-phase **Eastern Screech Owl** was seen sunning itself from a hole in a sycamore tree at EV 1/11 (JH). At LCR, a **Belted Kingfisher** was seen flying over the run 1/1 (MLP). **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was in Jackson Twp. 12/17 (MM), then not again until 2/16 in EV (MH). A late **Eastern Phoebe** was seen flying from post to post in Aleppo Twp. 12/17 (MH).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch** visited a feeder in Center Twp. 12/17 (MG). A **Brown Creeper** was reported along the Mon River 1/2 (LG) and again 1/18 at LCR (MLP) and SY (JC). Two **Winter Wrens** were spotted along the creek at SY 2/25 (JC). A **Golden-crowned Kinglet** was found on the Ryerson CBC 12/17 (LH). Only one **Cedar Waxwing** was found, in a yard in Jackson Twp. 12/17 (CH, MiH).

The last sighting of the season of **Eastern Towhee** was in SY 12/6 (JC). **American Tree Sparrow** was reported in Dunkard Twp. 12/17 (CL HK, LJG). **White-crowned Sparrow** was reported 2/17 (KS). **Red-winged Blackbirds** had arrived at LCR by 2/26 (MLP). In Center Twp. a **Rusty Blackbird** was observed 12/17 (AD). **Common Grackle** was at SY 2/19 (JC).

Observers: **Marjorie Howard, 149 Preachers Road, Waynesburg, PA 15370, (724) 852-3155, rkbbirdclub@yahoo.com**, Lyn Argent (LA), Ron Argent (RA), Jake Blaker (JB), Jan Churney (JC), Lucy DeFrank (LD), Al Deynzer (AD), Martha Gach (MG), LeJay Graffious (LJG), Linda Grebe (LG), Natalie Greenlee (NG), Larry Helgerman (LH), Karen Holleran (KH), Chase Howard (CH), Jerry Howard (JH), Michelle Howard (MiH), Mike Howard (MhH), Kathy Kern (KK), Hillar Klandorf (HK), Mary LaPlante (MLP), Chris Lituma (CL), Jean Scott (JS), and Kelly Strobe (KS).

### Huntingdon County

Locations: Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Cornpropst Mills (CM), Ennisville (ENN), Entriken Overlook at Raystown Lake (ENT), Greenwood Furnace SP (GF), Huntingdon (HU), Juniata River (JR), Marklesburg waterfowl area-SGL 420 (MAR), Pennsylvania Furnace Rd (PF), Raystown Lake (RL), Seven Points Rec Area at Raystown Lake (SP), Shaver's Creek Environmental Center (SCEC), Stone Mt (SM), Stone Valley (SV).

Again, this winter, mild conditions prevailed, with little significant snow fall (until March!), and that which did accumulate was soon gone with frequent above-normal temperatures. February was particularly unseasonable, with the thermometer hitting 76 on 2/24. The highlight of

the season was a long-staying and fairly cooperative flock of **Red Crossbills** at Trough Creek SP.

Two CBCs fall mostly within *Huntingdon*. The *Huntingdon* CBC, compiled by Deb Grove, was conducted 12/18. Participation was high, with 33 in the field. The species count was 67, a bit above the average of 64. Unusual finds included **Snow Goose**, **Golden Eagle**, and **Long-eared Owl**. The Lake Raystown CBC was completed 12/28. Seventy-five species were recorded, tying the record set in 1999; the average is 66. A **Snow Goose** at RL was new, the 118th species recorded on this count (NB, BM). Record high counts were established for **Pied-billed Grebe**, **Black Vulture**, **Northern Saw-whet Owl**, **Common Raven**, and **Red-breasted Nuthatch**.

Moving north earlier than usual, 44 **Tundra Swans** were at LP 2/25 (DW, JK, Alexi Sarussi). Also unusually early were 20 **American Wigeons** at RL 2/18 (Alex Bischer). **American Black Duck** continued the trend in recent winters of reduced numbers in comparison with past records; the mid-winter high was 11 on the JR 1/1 (GG, DG), but a good count of 18 possible migrants was made at CM 2/22 (GG). A **Northern Pintail** provided an unusual mid-winter record on Myton Rd. near Cottage 1/4 (JS); another single, presumably an early migrant, was at CM 2/22 (GG). Our most abundant winter duck is usually **Common Merganser**, which winters in large numbers on open waters of RL. High counts often are made at the overlook at ENT (m.ob.) - 219 were there 1/7. Wintering **Hooded Mergansers** seem to increase each year, among many reports was one of 27 at MAR 12/28 (IG). A regular sight in big fields near ENN was a large **Wild Turkey** flock, with as many as 97 counted 1/14 (DW, GG, DG).

**Northern Harriers** were reported over a half dozen times on eBird, more than usual for winter. Numbers may have been helped by the mild season, with little snow cover. However, many fields currently offer little winter habitat, with those sometimes left un-mowed a few years ago now used for corn, soybeans, or hay, leaving little cover for small rodents. This has occurred at two locations each of which harbored Short-eared Owls in recent years, but not now. The only **Rough-legged Hawk** was a migrant counted at SM hawk watch 12/3 (NB). Winter Raptor Survey county-wide totals included 7 Northern Harriers, 101 **Red-tailed Hawks**, 6 **Red-shouldered Hawks**, and 35 **American Kestrels**.

A good count of 25 **American Coots** was made at SP for the CBC 12/28 (DK, TK). A **Wilson's Snipe** lingered to be counted on the *Huntingdon* CBC, found near Mooresville 12/18 (DW). **American Woodcock** had returned to multiple locations by 2/21 - a good count of 10 was made that date at MAR (ZA, m.ob.). We hope they survived the harsh weather of early Mar that followed the warmth in Feb. **Long-eared Owls** returned to their long-established winter location, a large dense stand of red cedar on private land in SV. Seven were counted for the CBC 12/28 (JC, DW). Visitation to this location is restricted so as to minimize disturbance. **Barred Owls** were reported only twice - at HU 12/17 (CM) and at SCEC 2/1 (Jake Smith, Claudia Rosen).

As usual, there were a handful of reports of **Red-headed Woodpecker**. One was noted on 3 different dates in late Dec at McConnellstown (Dawn Thompson) and one or 2 were at CM 1/1 and 1/5 (DK, GG). There were numerous reports of **American Kestrel** in heavily birded SV - encouraging, but probably due in large part to the mild season (m.ob.). There were also at least a half dozen **Merlin** reports, from scattered locations around the more heavily-birded northern half of the county (NB, GG, LG, Linder and John Carter). It seems likely that some now winter here. An apparent early-migrant Merlin flew past the hawk watch at SM 2/26 (GG).

The best of a limited number of reports of **Horned Lark** was 140 at PF 12/14 (JK). As elsewhere, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** arrived in good numbers through the fall; the count of 34 on the Lake Raystown CBC represented a record high. The only **Snow Bunting** report was of 2 at PF 12/14 (JK).

Very unusual in Feb was a **Savannah Sparrow** at OC 2/18 (CM, Dale Plumley). The high count of **American Tree Sparrow** was 104, at MAR 12/28 (IG). A late **Fox Sparrow** was at SCEC 12/13 (DW, JK) and one had returned to LP on 2/28 (Jake Smith). A good count of 15 **White-crowned Sparrows** was made on Myton Rd. 2/1 (JS). Eight **Rusty Blackbirds** were at CM 12/7 (GG) and at the other end of the season, a very good total of 25 was made at MAR 2/28 (ZA).

**Purple Finch** reports were relatively few and limited to one or 2 birds, excepting a nice count of 20 at SCEC 2/27, presumably birds on the move during the Feb warmth (JS). **Red Crossbills** were discovered at Trough Creek SP 12/28, during the LR CBC, when 3 were noted (NB, BM). They frequented a stand of Norway spruce carrying a heavy cone

crop. The flock apparently grew in number, with a high of 25 recorded 1/12. The last reported date was 1/16, when 22 were counted (m.ob.). A second flock, containing at least 8 birds, was photographed in the Martins Gap area of Rothrock SF 1/1 (IG). **Pine Siskins** were in low numbers in this non-invasion winter, though a half dozen reports came from scattered locations, all of less than 10 birds with the exception of a flock of 54 at the SM hawk watch 12/9 (NB).

Observers: **Greg Grove, 9524 Stone Creek Ridge Road, Huntingdon, PA 16652, gwg2atpsu.edu** Jason Beale, Diane Bierly, Susan Braun, Nick Bolgiano, Nan Butkovich, John Clickner, Jim Dunn, Carl Engstrom, Kurt Engstrom, Ian Gardner, Debra Grim (DGm), Deb Grove, Lewis Grove, Jon Kauffman, David Kyler, Trudy Kyler, Betsy Manlove, Crystal McNeal, Jerod Skebo, Ben Steines, Richard & Margaret Sprott, Doug Wentzel, Torri Withrow.

### Indiana County

Locations: Lewisville (LV), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).

The YC **Mute Swan** was last noted 12/6 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK). **Tundra Swans** were reported over a LV yard - unspecified numbers on 12/5 and 14, and 50 on 12/10 (MC). A flock of an estimated 100 were over the Hoodlebug Trail 12/14 (DL) and 6 were listed on the Indiana CBC 12/26 (LC, RC, DL, RS, DW, RW) by three separate parties.

The following reports of ducks are from YC unless otherwise noted. A single **Wood Duck** continued through 12/13 (TG, DK), then Wood Ducks were absent until 1/24 (LC, MH, RH) when a pair reappeared; this is only the second Jan record. The last departing **Gadwalls** peaked at 32 on 12/13 (TG, DK) and 3 resurfaced 2/7 (LC, MH, RH, DK). First 24 **American Wigeons** also arrived 2/7. After almost a full month's absence, 13 **American Black Ducks** appeared 1/25 (PF). Three **Blue-winged Teal** were very early arrivals 2/28 (LC, RC, TG, DK, GL, DP, SW); the previous earliest date was 3/5/1991 (BF, MH, GL). **Northern Shovelers**, too, were early, on 2/21 (LC, RC, DK, KT) when 2 were counted; the previous early date was 2/26/2012 (TR). Eighteen **Northern Pintails** flew over frozen YC Lake 1/17 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK) looking unsuccessfully for a place to land. Open water - approximately 15 percent of the lake - on 2/7 (LC, MH, RH, DK) provided refuge for the next 8 pintails. **Green-winged Teal** were last noted 12/6 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK) but had returned by 2/22 (RL), not the earliest date on record but well ahead of the norm.

Two **Canvasbacks** and 5 **Redheads** still lingered 1/3 (LC, DK); by 2/14 (LC, SD, MH, RH, DK) 14 Redheads had returned. The last large flock of 51 **Ring-necked Ducks** was tallied 12/6 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK), but one remained for the CBC 12/26 (LC, RC, DL) at Two Lick Reservoir, and one continued at YC through 1/1 (MH, RH). Two **Greater Scaup** were spotted 2/26 (JD). Last **Lesser Scaup** were noted 12/13 (LC, TG, DK) while first returnee was 2/14 (LC, SD, MH, RH, DK).

A drake **Black Scoter** was observed 12/4 (SG) and again 12/6 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK); this is the third Dec record. Four **Buffleheads** remained through 12/27 (LC, SD, MH, RH, DK, KT); 10 were next spotted 2/21 (LC, RC, DK, KT). Two Lick hosted 2 **Common Goldeneyes** 12/21 (MH, RH) and 10 **Hooded Mergansers** 12/26 (LC, RC, DL); YC yielded 2 goldeneyes (LC) and 14 Hooded Mergansers (LC, MH, RH) 1/31. **Common Mergansers** were found on 6 dates between 12/26 (LC, RC, DL) and 2/28 (LC, RC, TG, DK, GL, DP, SW). **Red-breasted Mergansers** were noted only 12/4 (SG) and 1/1 (MH, RH), both reports of 2 birds. Huge numbers of **Ruddy Ducks** from Nov decreased to 281 by 12/6 (LC, TG, MH, RH, DK) and only 3 remained 1/3 (LC, DK).

**Ruffed Grouse** continue in low numbers with few reports; only 3 were counted on the CBC (m.ob.). Last date for **Common Loon** (4) was 12/13 (LC, TG, DK) and 1/3 (LC, DK) for both **Pied-billed Grebe** and **Horned Grebe**, all at YC. A Common Loon showed up on a private pond near Shelocta 1/27 (RA), providing only the third Jan record. A WRS yielded the first **Turkey Vulture** 1/25 (TG, MH, RH, GL); also only the third Jan record. By 2/27, 33 were counted near East Pike Elementary (JH). A light morph **Rough-legged Hawk** was found near Homer City 2/3 (MH, RH, DK, GL); another was reported northwest of Alverda 2/12 (WI).

Three **American Woodcocks** were already displaying at YC 2/19 (MW); this is the second earliest Feb record; the other involved 2 birds at Timber Lake 2/5/2004 (AB). A total of 8 **Herring Gulls** noted at YC 2/22 (RL) was a high count but not unprecedented; most records are of one or 2 individuals. A **Merlin** was present on the IUP campus on 5 dates between 1/16 and 2/19 (JT).

A very early **Eastern Phoebe** appeared at Nolo 2/20 (AB); this is the earliest date on record as the previous early date had been 2/22/2001 (MH, RH) near SH. A flock of 150 **Horned Larks** was present near Marion Center 2/2 (MH, RH, GL, LM); this is the largest flock since 1/26/2001 when a flock of similar size was found near Clarksburg (MH, RH). Surprisingly, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were listed at only 3 locations in this invasion year. **Winter Wrens** were reported 4 times, including an individual in the marsh at Waterworks Conservation Area between 12/16 (DL) and 2/8 (SD, DL).

Two **Yellow-rumped Warblers** lingered near LV through 12/9 (MC) but were otherwise completely absent from the county. A **Fox Sparrow** showed up at a feeder near Shelocta 12/11 (MH, RH) and remained through 2/10 (MH); another arrived near LV 2/27 (MC). The only **Rusty Blackbirds** were singletons near LV 12/15-16 (MC), and at YC 12/26 (AB, GL) and 12/27 (LC, SD, MH, RH, DK, KT). A **Pine Siskin** found south of Indiana 12/26 (CW, PW) represented the lone report.

**Observers:** Margaret Higbee, 3119 Creekside Road, Indiana, PA 15701-7934 (724-354-3493; bcoriole@windstream.net) Alice Beatty, Lee Carnahan, Roger Carnahan, Richard Chirichiello, Marcy Cunkelman, Sue Dickson, Ed Donley, Jim Dunn, Betsy Fetterman, Patience Fisher, Tom Glover, Steve Gosser, Jocelynn Higbee, Roger Higbee, Winnie Illig, Debbie Kalbfleisch, Gloria Lamer, Dennis Lauffer, Rich Love, Lisa Meadows, Dan Perlongo, Theo Rickert, Rodger Stormer, John Taylor, Ken Truitt, Matt Webb, Susan Wheatley, Chris Williams, Paula Williams, Daniel Winstead, Ray Winstead.

#### Jefferson County

Locations: Ames Road (AM), Conrad Road (CR), Fordham Lake (FL), Heathville Road (HR), Mahoning Shadow Trail (MS), Punxsutawney (PX), Redbank Trail (RB), Sandy Ridge Road (SR), Section 9 DuBois CBC (S9), Wayne Road (WR).

The highlights for the period include a **Great Horned Owl** found on CR 2/19 (TC) and a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** heard and recorded on an unnamed road off WR 12/17 (LC, JC, AC, SH, BS). The Saw-whet observation represents the only record for the *Jefferson*. A count of 3 **Northern Harriers** made on SR 2/25 (ED, TG, MH, RH, LM) is the highest on record for *Jefferson*. It should be noted that the *Clearfield* section of SR produced 4 more Northern Harriers for a total of 7 for the same outing.

A high count of 113 **Canada Geese** was made on FL 1/23 (TG). Seven **Common Mergansers** were on the MS 1/22 (AK, JK). Two **American Woodcocks** were heard on SR 2/25 (ED, TG, MH, RH, LM). A **Barred Owl** was found in S9 on 12/17 (LC, JC, AC, SH, BS) and 2 on the RB 2/4 (TC). The irruption of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** that was first recorded 9/16 continued through the first two months of the period with numerous observations; the last noted was one at a feeder in PX 2/6 (TG).

*Jefferson* is one of those counties that falls into the under-reported category. This is reflected in a group of reports that represent the only observation made for species considered common in other counties: One **Ruffed Grouse** on HR 1/29 (AK, JK), one **Great Blue Heron** on the RB 2/4 (TS), 2 **Turkey Vultures** on SR 2/25 (ED, TG, MH, RH, LM), one **Red-shouldered Hawk** in S9 12/17 (LC, JC, AC, SH, BS), one **Killdeer** on SR 2/26 (JD), one **Brown Creeper** on the RB 1/11 (AK, JK), and one **Northern Mockingbird** on AR 1/1 (AK, JK).

**Observers:** Thomas Glover, 210 Highland Ave., Punxsutawney, PA 15767-2416, Linder Carter, John Carter, Allie Casey, Tabitha Conrad, Ed Donley, Jim Dunn, Sean Herrmann, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Avis Keener, John Keener, Lisa Meadows, Brian Schmoke, Tabassam Shah.

#### Juniata County

The Lewistown CBC was held under adverse weather conditions 12/17 but, nevertheless, 69 species and 11,067 individuals were tallied, close to the long-term averages. A **Cackling Goose** was a new species for the count. Other unusual species, each found for only the third time, were **Gadwall**, **Pied-billed Grebe**, and **Peregrine Falcon**. Scarce in

recent years, a **Rough-legged Hawk** was also found on count day, then seen just a few times later.

**Observers:** Chad Kauffman, 91 Kauffman Lane, Mifflintown, PA 17059, chadkauffman@earthlink.net, cell 717-994-6715. Aden Troyer, 610 Oakland Rd, Mifflintown, PA 17059, phone 717-463-3117.

#### Lancaster County

No Report

**Compiler:** Pamela D. Fisher 761 Willow Lane, Gap, PA 17527, goldeagle\_60@yahoo.com

#### Lawrence County

Locations: New Wilmington area (NW), Plain Grove Twp. (PGT), Volant Strip Mines (VSM).

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** at VSM and nearby 1/21-2/4 (GK, MAK) brought many birders to the area looking for their year bird. A **Snow Goose** was at Edinburg Lake 12/10, along with a late **Wood Duck** (both MV). Top count of **Gadwall** was 14 at Edinburg Lake 2/24 (MV). There were already 18 **American Wigeons** in the PGT area 2/11 (MH, RH). The former Glacial Sands gravel pond site hosted the season's only **Redhead** 12/9 (MV), **Lesser Scaup** 2/3 (MV), and **Horned Grebe** 2/26 (MJ). **Ring-necked Ducks** returned in force in Feb, topping out with 165 at Black Swamp 2/19 (BB). A **Common Loon** was at PGT 12/9 (MV).

**Bald Eagles** were reported to eBird from at least 10 locations through the season (m.ob.). As usual, *Lawrence* was ground zero for **Northern Harrier** seekers, with many reports across the northern half of the county. **Rough-legged Hawk** was noted at NW and nearby 12/22-1/25 (MV, DI, SS, et al.). Two **American Coots** were still at Edinburg Lake 12/22 (MV). The county's annual wintering aggregation of **Sandhill Cranes** reached a record-setting 124 birds 1/13 (KSJ). At least 101 were still present 2/3 (MV), but many cranes apparently departed shortly thereafter, because the last double-digit count of the season was just 12 on 2/11.

**Killdeer** and **Wilson's Snipe** were both at NW 12/22 (MV) and that same day an **American Woodcock** was kicked up at VSM (BB, GW). A **Bonaparte's Gull** at PGT 12/8 (MV) was a good find, as was the total of 106 **Ring-billed Gulls** at Edinburg Lake 12/22 (MV). **Short-eared Owls** were not reported at VSM after 1/17 (m.ob.). **Merlin** was reported in PGT 1/21 (MH, RH) and 1/22 (BB). The **Northern Shrike** that appeared in Nov at Shaner Rd. was not seen again until 12/31, after which it was noted now and again through 1/18 (m.ob.). Two **Common Ravens** on Poverty Point Rd. near NW 2/11 (GK, MAK) officially put *Lawrence* on the Common Raven expansion list.

Top count of **Horned Lark** was 200 in Washington Twp. 12/31 (DI), which also included a **Lapland Longspur**. Elsewhere on that same day, Grove City CBC counters found 20 longspurs in PGT (BB, GW). Top count of **Snow Bunting** was 140 at NW 12/19 (DK), but in general it was not a good season for buntings or longspurs by *Lawrence* standards. It was a very good season for **American Tree Sparrows**, though, with many flocks reported to eBird all around northern *Lawrence*. A remarkable total of 1625 tree sparrows was submitted for the Grove City CBC 12/31 (BB, GW). **Eastern Meadowlarks** were noted around VSM a few times in Jan, not unexpected in mild winters in that area (m.ob.). Up to 30 **Rusty Blackbirds** were counted at Shaner Rd. 1/21-22 (BB, GL, MAK, et al.).

**Observers:** Geoff Malosh, 450 Amherst Avenue, Moon Township, PA 15108-2654, (412) 735-3128, pomarine@earthlink.net, Brendyn Baptiste, Jack Chaillet, Mike Fialkovich, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Dave Inman, Matthew Juskowich, Deb Kalbfleisch, Mary Alice Koeneke, Glenn Koppel, Aidan Place, Steve Sanford, Kate St. John, Bob Van Newkirk, Mark Vass, Gene Wilhelm.

#### Lebanon County

Locations: Fort Indiantown Gap (FIG), Governor Dick Park (GDP), Greater Lebanon Refuse Authority (GLRA), Lebanon Valley Rail Trail (LVRT), Lions Lake (LL), Marquette Lake (ML), Memorial Lake State Park

(MLSP), Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area (MC), Mt Gretna (MG), Myerstown Quarry (MQ), Quittapahilla Educational Wetlands (QEW), Second Mountain Hawkwatch (2Mtn).

Single **Ross's Geese** were found at MC beginning 1/18 (RCM), with occasional reports through the quarter (RCM, TF, AE, MB). Away from MC, singles were seen feeding with **Snow Geese** along Rt 322 by Colebrook Rd 12/26 (AL), near Colebrook 2/14 (P&RW), and flying over SGL 145 on 2/3 (RCM, m.ob.). Fourteen **Cackling Geese**, with a flock of 3000 **Canada Geese**, provided a new county high count at LL 1/16 (RCM). Cackling Geese have become regular in small numbers, within large flocks of Canada Geese. There were 5 additional reports from 4 locations 12/14-1/13 (AL, RCM, TB, PB, m.ob.). Two **Mute Swans** were seen at MC 1/1 (ZM).

*Lebanon* experienced a Eurasian Invasion this winter. Lisa Black found two **Eurasian Wigeons**. The first was at MLSP 2/14-28 (LB, MC, JD, SW, P&RW, IG, m.ob.). The second was at MC 2/17-25 (LB, DK, TN, RCM, m.ob.). These provided the 8th and 9th county records. It was also the first time that 2 **Eurasian Wigeons** were in the county simultaneously. A **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** provided a third county record at MC 2/14 (SS), and continued through the quarter (P&RW, RCM, ZM, ME, m.ob.).

A **Blue-winged Teal** was at Conewago Lake in MG 2/25 (P&RW). Two male **Redheads** were at MLSP 2/17 (GB, TB, KB) and 12, mostly females, were at MLSP 2/27 through the quarter (IG, P&RW, JD). A female **Greater Scaup** was at MQ 1/14 (TB, KB). A **Long-tailed Duck** provided a first Jan record at MLSP 1/2-3 (TB, KB, JD, P&RW, m.ob.). A female **Common Goldeneye** was at MLSP 1/3-8 (P&RW, TN, JD, SW, TB, KB) and again 1/27 (JD). A **Common Loon** was heard calling as it flew over SGL 211 on 2/25 (SB, SBi). Twenty-eight **Double-crested Cormorants** flew over 2Mtn 12/9 (SC).

A new season record of 269 **Bald Eagles** was established at 2Mtn in 2016, surpassing the former record of 226 in 2011 (DS, m.ob.). A Bald Eagle was seen on the nest at Golf Rd 1/26 (DB). Bald Eagles were observed incubating at Pine Rd 2/15 (TB), GDP 2/23 (L&AW), and ML 2/25 (JD). A juv. **Northern Goshawk** was a great find at MC 1/1 (ZM). A dark phase **Rough-legged Hawk** was seen during a WRS route at FIG 12/19 (IG, JD, m.ob.). A **Golden Eagle** was found at FIG 12/17 (DM), and again during a FIG WRS route 12/19 (IG, JD, m.ob.). A juv. Golden Eagle was seen on occasion at MC 2/10-25 (RCM, FB, ZM, m.ob.). There were 11 sightings of **Merlins** at seven locations 12/9-2/21 (m.ob.). A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen on a WRS route at Royal Oaks Golf Course 1/19 (GB, FH, JF) and one flew over Schaefferstown 2/21 (TB).

Three immature **Sandhill Cranes** passed over 2Mtn 12/3 (GL, DS). **American Woodcock** were active early with the unusually warm winter; 8 were displaying at MLSP 2/12 (TN). A Lesser **Black-backed Gull** was at GLRA 12/14 (AL). Five were at LL 12/15 and 3 were there 1/16 (RCM).

Six **Long-eared Owls** were found at a winter roost in a restricted area of MC 1/28 (SB). A **Short-eared Owl** was seen during the Lititz CBC at MC 12/30 (TN, ME). Seventeen **Red-headed Woodpeckers** provided a new county high count along Tomstown Rd at FIG 12/13 (IG). This is a wintering area that has a good supply of snags and red oaks. Away from FIG, 3 Red-heads were at Cornwall Manor 1/1 (P&RW). An **Eastern Phoebe** was a nice winter find at SGL 145 on 12/10 (BP).

Fourteen **Common Ravens** provided a good count at 2Mtn 12/9 (SC). In southern *Lebanon*, a **Common Raven** was found at MC 2/25 (RCM). Three **Tree Swallows** arrived at MC on a new county early date 2/25 (ZM, FB, RCM). There were 6 reports of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** from MG, FIG, and Cornwall 12/2-1/4 (PB, DM, JF, P&RW, SW, m.ob.). A **Winter Wren** was at SGL 211 on 12/7 (TK) and one at Quitty Park 1/31 (TB). A total of 232 **Eastern Bluebirds** were counted at various *Lebanon* locations 12/23 (SH, RCM, m.ob.). A **Gray Catbird** provided an unusual winter find at SGL 145 on 12/23 (PB, m.ob.).

Four accidental warblers were found during this mild winter, with each providing a new county early date. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** offered unusually good looks at Union Canal Tunnel Park 2/19 (FH, RS, JF). A **Palm Warbler** was photographed along Swatara Creek north of Palmyra 2/20 (BN). Single **Pine Warblers** were singing on 2/24 at both FIG (DM) and SGL 145 (SH, RCM, m.ob.). A **Common Yellowthroat** was in the cattails at QEW 2/22 (TK).

An **Eastern Towhee** was a nice winter find along the LVRT 12/31 (FH, m.ob.). Reports of field birds were scarce due to a lack of snow to bring them to the roadsides. The only snow event of the winter provided

a **Lapland Longspur** in the Mt Pleasant Rd area 2/11 (P&RW), and 2 **Snow Buntings** along Mt Zion Rd 2/9 (TK). Up to 4 **Rusty Blackbirds** were seen at MC 2/3-28 (RCM, KK, PD, P&RW). Single **Pine Siskins** were at MG 12/16 (BP, m.ob.) and SGL 211 on 2/25 (SB, SBi).

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#### **Lehigh County**

No Report

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#### **Luzerne County**

No report

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#### **Lycoming County**

Locations: Cogan House Township (CH), Indian Park-Montoursville (IP), Mill Hill Road (MHR), Mill Street (MS), Montoursville (MTV), Rose Valley Lake (RVL), Williamsport Dam (WD), Williamsport Water Authority (WWA)

The season began with a December that was colder than the previous year, including some snow early in the month. RVL froze by mid-month. The second half of the month saw drier conditions and temperatures that were cold, but close to normal. Temperatures moderated a bit by the second half of January, but cooled off again for early February. The second half of February was unseasonably warm — even spring-like at times — and contributed to early migration for many species.

Two CBC circles fall primarily in *Lycoming*: Williamsport and Northern Lycoming. The Williamsport CBC was held 12/27 after being rescheduled due to poor weather. Twenty-one observers split into 11 groups that tallied 13,161 individual birds from 64 species, including Rufous Hummingbird, Eastern Phoebe, and Evening Grosbeak. The Northern Lycoming CBC was held 12/31. Sixteen observers in six groups counted 3391 individual birds from 48 species, including Rusty Blackbird and Golden Eagle.

There weren't many surprise species during the winter, but a few records stand out, such as *Lycoming's* first eider record. In total, 115 species were reported.

No **Snow Geese** were seen during Dec and most of Jan. A small flock was observed at WD 1/27 (BB), and migratory flocks were observed flying south over MTV 1/28 (BB, DB, DeB) and Picture Rocks (WE). The first sighting of a flock migrating north was at SGL 252 on 2/19 (BB, DB, DeB), and other migratory groups were seen through the end of the month. **Canada Geese** migrated north by the thousands during the second half of Feb, including more than 10,000 migrating past the Rte. 15 Overlook the morning of 2/21 (DB). **Tundra Swans** were recorded 3 times in Dec, including 53 flying over the Lycoming County Landfill 12/9 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB), around 50 over MTV 12/9 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB), and 36 over WD 12/16 (DB). A single bird in a flock of geese at MS 1/2 (BB) provided the only Jan record. As with the geese, swan migration picked up in the second half of Feb, including more than 200 birds that stopped at RVL 2/26 (m.ob.).

**Wood Ducks** were fairly scarce. One was seen in Nisbet 12/18 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB). Spring migrants arrived in late Feb, with several sightings scattered throughout the county. A **Gadwall** was seen at IP 12/16 (BB), and spring migrants began turning up around 2/20. Similarly, an **American Wigeon** was at IP 12/2 (BB, et al.), and first spring migrants were here in mid-Feb. **American Black Duck** was recorded frequently at

IP during the entire winter (m.ob.). Like many other ducks, spring arrival was in the second half of Feb. Hybrid **American Black Duck x Mallards** were seen a few times in Dec and Jan at IP (BB, DB, DeB, BoB) and one was seen at a pond in Montgomery 2/24 (BB, DeB, BoB). Two extremely early **Blue-winged Teal** were reported at the wetlands adjacent to South Williamsport Park 2/20 (EH). The first spring sighting of **Northern Shoveler** was a pair at RVL 2/27 (DB, et al.). Up to 3 **Northern Pintails** were seen at IP throughout the winter (m.ob.), and one bird was recorded as a flyover at Montgomery Boat Launch during the Williamsport CBC (BB, DB, DeB). Spring migrants began arriving in mid-Feb. **Green-winged Teal** was recorded at WD: 12/12 (BB), 12/14 (BB, DB), and 12/18 (SP). Spring migrants began arriving in late Feb.

A single **Redhead** was at WD 12/14 (BB, DB). Four **Ring-necked Ducks** were seen along Pond Rd in Pennsdale 12/9 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB). Spring migrants began arriving in late Feb. A male **Greater Scaup** was recorded for the Williamsport CBC 12/27 at WD (BB, DB, DeB, BoB, MD, JD). Another was observed beginning 2/25 at the same location, and stayed through the end of the month (BB, DB, DeB, BoB, et al.). Several **Lesser Scaup** reports came from RVL, including 12/4 (m.ob.), 12/10 (EvH), 2/25 (SP, BB, DB, DeB, BoB), and 2/28 (EH). Additionally, one was seen on the river in Nisbet 12/18 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB).

The first *Lycoming* record of **King Eider** was found at RVL 12/4 (BB, DB, SP, et al., ph.). That sighting appears to be the first Pennsylvania record away from L. Erie since 2002. King Eider is a review list species, and documentation was sent to PORC. Another good waterfowl find was the **White-winged Scoter** at WD 1/28 (MD, JD, et al., ph.).

As is typical, **Buffleheads** were fairly common along the Susquehanna R., especially at WD. The species was also seen at RVL when it had open water. **Common Goldeneye** sightings were relatively frequent along the Susquehanna, especially at WD and Nisbet, with more than 20 combined sightings at those locations. Other goldeneye locations included Susquehanna S.P. 1/11 (NF) and 1/12 (AK) and MS 2/4 (BB, SP). **Hooded Mergansers** seemed more abundant than normal, with many sightings throughout the winter, especially at WD. A **Red-breasted Merganser** was seen at WD 1/5 (DB) and 2 were reported 2/26 at RVL (EH, NF). **Ruddy Ducks** were scarce during the winter, with sightings at RVL 12/4 (m.ob.), 12/10 (EvH) and 12/11 (BB, DB, SP).

Small numbers of **Pied-billed Grebes** were seen in Dec at RVL and WD, including a sighting during the Williamsport CBC 12/27 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB). **Horned Grebes** were recorded fairly regularly from late Dec through the end of Feb at WD, including 5 during the Williamsport CBC 12/27 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB). A single **Double-crested Cormorant** was seen at RVL 12/10 (EvH) and 12/11 (BB, DB, SP), the only report of that species. **Great Blue Heron** sightings were scattered throughout the season, mostly along the Susquehanna, which remained completely unfrozen most of the winter.

The number of wintering vultures seems to have increased in recent years. **Turkey Vultures** were seen regularly the entire winter, especially in the area around the Lycoming County Landfill. The species became more scattered throughout the county by the end of Feb. Likewise, **Black Vultures** were seen frequently near the landfill, with as many as 39 being observed at a known roost site in that area 1/22 (BB, BoB, DeB). The species was also regularly seen in the MTV and Loyalsock area, and even as far north as RVL 1/29 (BB, DB, DeB).

**Golden Eagles** sightings during the winter were few. There were records from the Rte. 15 Overlook 12/7 (AK), Gap Rd in the southern part of the county 12/16 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB), Trout Run during the Northern Lycoming CBC 12/31 (BB, DeB, BoB), Muncy 1/6 (AK), and RVL 2/26 (SP). **Northern Harriers** were regularly seen in usual areas, especially Nisbet, MHR, and CH. **Red-shouldered Hawks** were uncommon, with a bird in the Haneyville area 1/9 (DGD), a few Feb reports from SGL 252, the Rte. 15 Overlook, and RVL. A small number of the Northern form of **Red-tailed Hawk**, *Abieticola*, were recorded. One particular bird has wintered at the Fairfield exit of I-180 for at least four consecutive years, with its first record this winter 12/17 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB, ph.). The other 2 records were in the Montgomery area 12/16 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB, ph.) and in the Muncy area 12/17 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB, ph.). **Rough-legged Hawk** numbers were strong this winter, particularly in the second half of the season.

**American Coot** sightings, all singles and all at WD, occurred 12/17 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB), 12/23-25 (DB, BB), and 1/6 (DB). Typical for winter, shorebird sightings were scarce. Two **Killdeer** were observed in Nisbet 12/9 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB) and singles were at Lime Bluff R.A. and WD 2/17 (DB). Others recorded soon afterwards were likely spring migrants, that spring arrival date about 10 days earlier than prior years. **American**

**Woodcocks** arrived back early as well, with the first sighting near Williamsport on the morning of 2/21 (DF).

It was a mostly-quiet winter for gulls. The only report of **Bonaparte's Gulls** was of 2 at RVL 12/8 (DB). There were a few Dec reports of **Herring Gulls**, including a bird at the Lycoming County Landfill 12/9 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB), another at WD 12/24 (DB), and 2 recorded for the Williamsport CBC at the landfill 12/27 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB). The species was also observed many times during Feb. The first major spring migration push for gulls was 2/19, with thousands of **Ring-billed Gulls** seen along with several **Herring Gulls** throughout the day.

MHR continued this year as a hotspot for **Short-eared Owls**, seen reliably throughout the entire season, with a high of 6 on 2/12 (SP). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was recorded from the parking lot at SGL 298 on 12/7 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB). Other expected owl species were found in most of their normal locations.

The adult female **Rufous Hummingbird** near Elimsport, first seen 10/25, continued to visit feeders throughout Dec and was recorded for the Williamsport CBC 12/27 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB, ph.), which ended up being the final sighting. The species had been recorded on only one prior Williamsport CBC, in 2003.

Continuing the recent trend, the 3 expected falcon species were seen regularly throughout the winter. **Peregrine Falcon** sightings were mostly contained to the areas near the nest sites at the Market St. Bridge and Muncy Boat Launch. Additionally, an adult bird was observed just across the river from Montgomery in *Northumberland* during the Williamsport CBC 12/27 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB). That bird could possibly be associated with a nest on the *Lycoming* side, which has cliffs. Confirming a nest site has proven difficult the past few years, but there had been evidence of attempted nesting in the past. One other notable sighting of that species was an imm. bird seen 12/17 along Rte. 654 Hwy., a few miles west of the Arch St. Bridge (BB, DB, DeB, BoB). **Merlin** sightings were quite regular in the MTV and Williamsport areas. **American Kestrel** reports were widespread in the southern part of the county, with a few scattered reports farther to the north.

There are typically few flycatcher sightings in *Lycoming* during winter. With no previous Dec eBird records in the county, **Eastern Phoebe** was recorded at 3 locations during Dec. The first was 12/4, a continuing bird at RVL (BB, DB, SP, ph.). Another was observed along Commerce Park Dr. in Williamsport 12/7 (AK) and the third was recorded for the Williamsport CBC 12/27 along the Susquehanna just downstream from the boat launch at MS (DF). **Fish Crow** numbers were much lower than the previous winter. There were no reports at all in Dec, and only scattered reports in Jan and Feb. The flocks in Nisbet and South Williamsport were apparently not present. **Horned Lark** sightings were widely scattered, and as in the past, were found in large numbers in CH.

**Red-breasted Nuthatches** maintained their elevated number of reports from the fall, being seen regularly throughout the winter, especially at feeders. **Winter Wrens** were observed at the Lycoming County Conservation Trail 12/28 (BB, DB) and 1/7 (BB), recorded for the Northern Lycoming CBC at Powys Wetland 12/31 (BB, DeB), and reported at WD 1/14 (SP). Four **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were heard singing at WWA 2/25 (DF), and one was reported at RVL 2/26 (EH). The species is very uncommon during the winter.

A **Hermit Thrush** was at WWA 2/4 (BB), a known wintering site. A **Gray Catbird** was reported during the Williamsport CBC 12/27 (EH). **American Pipits** were seen in a few locations during the winter. Small groups were at MHR 12/4 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB) and 1/1 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB, SP). WD had 3 records during Dec, including a flock of 36 on 12/12 (BB). Pipits were also observed in Nisbet and the Hughesville area during Dec.

**Snow Bunting** numbers were low, with only a handful being seen in CH with the flock of larks. Sightings away from CH included a bird at WD 12/12 (BB), 2 in Nisbet 12/24 (SP) and 3 just south of Liberty 2/4 (SP). A species that has been difficult to locate in recent years, at least 2 **Lapland Longspurs** were seen in CH at the end of Jan and beginning of Feb (m.ob.). The only warbler reports were of 3 **Yellow-rumped Warblers** from the MS area during the Williamsport CBC 12/27 (DF) and 2 in the same area 2/15 (EH).

**American Tree Sparrows** were widely scattered, with the largest groups in Jackson Twp., SGL 252, and MS. **Field Sparrows** wintered in a few spots, and were relatively easy to find at SGL 252, where observed on numerous occasions. **Fox Sparrows** were seen a few times in Dec, including RVL 12/4 (BB, DB, SP) and 12/31 (SP), and at WWA 12/28 (BB, DB). The spring migrants of that species began arriving around 2/24, with many sightings coming immediately afterwards. **White-crowned**

**Sparrows** were reported near SGL 252 on 1/3 (JG), in Nisbet 1/28 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB) and 2/13 (EH), and at Lime Bluff R.A. 2/17 (DB). Two **Savannah Sparrows** were photographed foraging along the side of a road in Nisbet 2/11 (BB, DeB, BoB). **Swamp Sparrows** were fairly difficult to find. Dec sightings were at RVL 12/4 (AK), at SGL 252 on 12/25 (BB, DB), and at a pond in Montgomery 12/9 and 12/26-27 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB). The species was also seen at RVL 1/21 (BB, SP) and at SGL 252 on 2/19 (BB, DB, DeB).

It was a fairly active winter for the blackbird family by *Lycoming* standards. A small group of **Red-winged Blackbirds** was seen in Nisbet 12/17-18 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB). An additional Dec sighting was in Montgomery 12/9 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB). The species was seen twice in MTV during Jan, with a single bird 1/2 (DeB, BoB, BB) and 2 on 1/10 (DeB, BoB). Like many other species, they started showing up in good numbers during mid-Feb, with many observations scattered around the county. **Rusty Blackbirds** were seen in Nisbet 12/16-18 (BB, DB, DeB, BoB) and again 1/2 (SP). The species was also recorded for the Northern Lycoming CBC 12/31 (DB, TN). The spring arrival date was on or near 2/26, when a single bird was seen in Ralston (NF) and a flock observed at SGL 252 (BB, DB, DeB). **Common Grackles** were also seen in elevated numbers during the winter. Three were in MTV 12/24, providing the first Dec eBird record for the species in *Lycoming*. They were also recorded in MTV several times during Jan along with a single just off of Rte. 15 in the southern part of the county 1/2 (BB, DeB, BoB). The spring migrants had arrived by mid-Feb, after which sightings were frequent. There were a few scattered reports of **Brown-headed Cowbirds** during Dec and Jan, and reports increased in frequency during mid-Feb, like many of the other blackbird species. **Eastern Meadowlarks** were reported in CH 1/28 (DF) and in Piatt Twp. 2/1 (NF). Surprisingly, photos of an apparent **Baltimore Oriole** visiting a backyard feeder in the Haneyville area were posted on the Lycoming Audubon Society Facebook group 1/9 (DGD). The observer confirmed that it was a current sighting. The bird was not seen in subsequent days.

There were few notable finch reports during the winter. A male **Evening Grosbeak** was reported on a side road off of Rte. 87 just north of the Slabtown Bridge during the Williamsport CBC 12/27 (GM, FS, DR). Four **Red Crossbills** were found in a remote area of WWA 2/25 (DF), near the location of a sighting of the species in Nov. **Pine Siskins** weren't terribly pervasive, with reports before late Jan coming during snowstorms, but reports became more regular towards the end of the season. Like the previous winter, the feeders at Rider Park were a reliable site for the species. **Purple Finches** were relatively scarce, with just a handful of reports.

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#### McKean County

No Report

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#### Mercer County

Locations: East Zahnizer RD (EZR), Pennsy Swamp (PS), Shenango R. Res (SRR), Williamson Rd (WR).

Most waterfowl species had left the area by early Dec, but with mild temperatures returning by mid-Jan, small numbers started to appear by the end of the month, and the numbers increased steadily through Feb. A flock of **Tundra Swans** seen 12/15 at WR was the last report received of any obviously migrating swans. The first spring migrants were reported 2/22, also at WR (NT). A small flock of **American Wigeons** and a **Northern Shrike** were noted at Rattlesnake Swamp 12/31 (NT). First report of **Northern Pintail** was 5 at SRR 2/20 (NT). Five **Common Goldeneyes** were at the Chestnut Run area of SRR 2/14 (SS). **Hooded** and **Common Merganser** were both at SRR 1/23 (NT) and a **Red-breasted Merganser** was seen at Lake Wilhelm 2/27 (NT). Several

**Ruddy Ducks** and 2 **Horned Grebes** were at Sandy Lake 2/22 (NT).

Five **Great Blue Herons** were at Shanango Propagation area 1/23 (NT). An unexpected find and possibly the first winter record for Mercer was a **Green Heron** at a small creek along North Foster Rd 12/1 (ST). **Turkey Vulture** was first reported at WR 2/14 (ST), and southerly winds pushed above normal numbers into the area for so early in the season during the following week. Several **Rough-legged Hawks** were reported. A light phase adult was at WR 12/12 (NT) and a juv. light phase was at Cowden Rd 2/17 (SS). Unexpected was a **Golden Eagle** at EZR 12/8, during passage of a strong cold front (ST).

Three **Sandhill Crane** were at PS 1/23 (NT). These were possibly part of the group that wintered in the Black Swamp / Volant Strips area. The first report of **Killdeer** was one at WR 2/11. One was heard at Airport Rd (JT) and one was at North Mills Rd (HT). Several noteworthy species of gulls were reported, both found with the large group of **Herring** and **Ring-billed Gulls** staying at SRR. A **Glaucous Gull**, which represented the first record for Mercer, was found at the Golden Run area of SRR 1/15 (TS). A **Great Black-backed Gull** was also found the same day at the same area, which represented the third record for the county (TS). The Great Black-back Gull was last reported 1/13 (NT).

A pair of **Great Horned Owls** put on an excellent show for dedicated observers at Buhl Park through the month of Feb (m.ob). A pair was also heard at WR 1/1 (NT). **Short-eared Owl** was reported from several locations. One was at Airport Rd 12/5-1/24 (JT) and one at EZR 1/1-2/21 (ST, NT). Up to two **Red-headed Woodpeckers** could be found through the period at the Trout Island Trail (m.ob.). A **Peregrine Falcon** was an unexpected find at the White Chapel area 1/25 (SS).

Several **Winter Wrens** were found at PS 1/23 (NT) and one was heard at Lake Wilhelm 2/27 (SS). **Snow Bunting** was first reported 12/8 when a large flock was found along Franklin Rd south of Lake Latonka (NT). A flock of 38 was reported at Ligo Rd 12/31 (GK, MAK, NT, ST) and 12 were at EZR 1/1 (NT). An **Eastern Towhee** wintered in a sheltered area at Skunk Run Rd (NT, ST). Unexpected were 2 **Savannah Sparrows** flushed from a hayfield at EZR 1/15 (NT, ST). Three **Fox Sparrows** were reported at EZR 12/5 (NT). A **Swamp Sparrow** was found in a small wetland along Junction Rd 12/31 (GK, MAK). Scattered sightings of single **Red-winged Blackbirds** and **Common Grackles** were reported through Dec and early Jan at WR. With the return of warmer temperatures, small flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles were reported at WR 1/22 (NT). A flock of 63 **Brown-headed Cowbirds** was at a feeder at WR 2/13 (NT).

Observers: **Neil Troyer, 876 Williamson Road, Mercer, PA 16137**. Mary Alice Koeneke, Glenn Koppel, Steve Sanford, Time Schrenckengost, Kim Springer, Harvey Troyer, Jerry Troyer, Samuel Troyer..

#### Mifflin County

Four Winter Raptor Surveys were conducted, totaling 23 hours of observation: Newton-Hamilton 1/16, Big Valley 1/21, Ferguson Valley 1/28, and Milroy 2/4. Notable numbers included 72 **Red-tailed Hawks**, 41 **American Kestrels**, 5 **Bald Eagles**, 6 **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, 3 **Cooper's Hawks**, and 11 **Northern Harriers**. Six out of 8 **Rough-legged Hawks** were observed on the Milroy route. One Rough-legged Hawk was on the Big Valley route and one on the Ferguson route. The Milroy area continues to provide excellent opportunities to observe winter raptors (BF, et al.).

Other reports included one **Northern Harrier** on Spring Run Rd 12/17 (SW), Back Mountain Rd 12/30 (JK), Cedar Hill 12/3 and 1/8 (RD), Coffee Run Rd 1/1 (CK, RH), Reedsville 12/16 and 2/3 (RD), and 2 individuals on Back Mountain Rd in Milroy 2/4 (JG). Rough-legged Hawk reports were higher than previous years with most sightings being only one individual: Old 3 Cent Ln 1/1 (RH), Coffee Run Rd 1/1 (CK), Milroy 1/8 (SH, BS), and 3 on 2/11 and 2/19 (JG).

One **Wilson's Snipe** was in Milroy 2/18 (JG). Victory Park once again produced winter sightings of a **Peregrine Falcon**, with one each 1/17 and 2/18 (RD). A pair of **Eastern Meadowlarks** were on Yoder Road 2/10 (SW). One **Snow Bunting** was on Middle Rd 12/5 (AP) and 3 on Bunker Hill Rd 1/7 (CK).

Observers: **Jon Kauffman, 3400 Discovery Road, Petersburg, PA 16669, jvk5019@gmail.com**, Nick Bolgiano, Rob Dickerson, Bob Fowles, Joe Gyekis, Sean Herrmann, Robert Hosler, Chad Kauffmann,

### Monroe County

Locations: Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center (KCEEC).

Overall, the winter was a relatively mild, with little snowfall. The month of February was the warmest on record. The 37th Pocono Mountain Christmas Bird Count (PMCBC) was held 12/18, and despite dense fog and rain, a respectable 57 species were recorded, about average.

An uncommon migrant here, 6 **Tundra Swans** on Trout Lake 2/23 and another 16 on Pinecrest Lake 2/27 provided a nice find (BJ). Another uncommon waterfowl species was the **Red-breasted Merganser** found on the Delaware R. at Shawnee 12/17 (BH). The single **Northern Harrier** on PMCBC 12/18 represented only the 4th record for that count since 1994. The **American Kestrel** found on that same count represented only the 4th record since 2000. Kestrels had been recorded every year on PMCBC prior to 2000.

After a big fall movement of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** into the area, at least 2 occupied KCEEC feeders throughout the period (BH). A single **Gray Catbird** on PMCBC 12/18 was an uncommon winter find. The single **American Tree Sparrow** at KCEEC feeders 12/23 was the only one at that location the entire period. A **Fox Sparrow**, uncommon in winter, appeared at KCEEC feeders 1/10 and stayed through the period, with 3 seen 2/21 (BH). Northern finches were practically non-existent after some fall movements of **Purple Finches** and **Evening Grosbeaks**, so the fly-over flock of 8 **Red Crossbills** at KCEEC 1/30 was notable (SK).

Observers: **Brian Hardiman, Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center, 8050 Running Valley Road, Stroudsburg, PA 18360, (570) 629-3061, bhmccd@ptd.net.** Bruce Johnson, Steve Kloiber, Darryl Speicher, Rick Wiltraut.

### Montgomery County

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

An unseasonably mild winter, with minimal snowfall and the warmest Feb on record for the area, spelled doom for winter 2016-17 being a great one for waterfowl in *Montgomery*. It was also not a big winter for irruptive finches, nor were half-hardy birds noted in above-normal numbers. Despite all this, at least 116 species, plus an exotic and some hybrids, were located during the season.

The "best bird" trophy went to a bird that very few humans saw: a male **Western Tanager** was observed regularly at a Harleysville residence from 12/22 through the end of the period (anonymous *vide* MR, ph.). The homeowners requested privacy, and did not permit visitors. Honorable mention was awarded to another western visitor, a probable **Rufous Hummingbird**, visiting a feeder in Bryn Mawr from 11/28 through the end of the period (anonymous *vide* PBU, m.ob.). The homeowners did not want the bird banded. Per SW, photographs taken in Dec were supportive of the Rufous ID, but did not completely rule out Allen's.

*Montgomery*, and neighboring counties, experienced an inundation of **Greater White-fronted Geese** in mid-to-late Jan, including a record-setting count of 16 at GLP 1/18-23 (PB, m.ob.). Twelve white-fronts were also observed at this location 1/28 (LH). Smaller numbers were also noted at GLP on several dates 12/5-2/8 (m.ob.). **Snow Geese** were not present in large quantities on the water at GLP for most of the season, but large groups dropped in on a few days: 10-15,000 were noted 2/6 (LH, GF), 9000 on 2/12 (GF), and 7000 on 2/2 (LH). A long-staying **Ross's Goose** was present at GLP 1/15-2/9 (LH, m.ob., ph.). An astonishing 11 **Cackling Geese** were photographed at GLP 1/29 (ML), representing a record high count of this species for the county. There were several other reports of lower numbers of Cackling Geese at GLP 12/5-1/29 (m.ob.). A single Cackler was noted on a Telford pond 2/3 (ZM, ph.). A Canada Goose x domestic goose hybrid was found at GLP 1/24-25 (MS). Another hybrid, the continuing Snow Goose x Canada Goose mutt noted since 11/13, was seen again 12/6 (EH). The same hybrid,

possibly, was found again at GLP 1/16-19 (SG, AM). **Tundra Swans** were not found in large numbers, with 9 at GLP 2/28 (PH) representing the period high count.

**Gadwall**, on the other hand, were fairly abundant at GLP through much of Dec, including a high of 151 at GLP 12/13 (SG). Forty **Northern Shovelers** were reported at GLP 12/16 (EH), with small numbers persisting there through the entire season (m.ob.). A high of 36 **Northern Pintails** was at GLP 2/8 (WK). Big **Green-winged Teal** numbers were noted at GLP in late Feb, including 140 on 2/26 (PB). An intergrade Eurasian x American Green-winged Teal was photographed at GLP 2/25 (LG). In the same set of photos was a duck that was likely a pure Eurasian/Common Teal, although this bird wasn't officially confirmed until Mar, after the winter season had ended.

Notable diving ducks were few and far between, given the lack of ice to the north pushing them down into *Montgomery*, though there were several good counts of more common species. The only reports of **Redhead** were 4 at GLP 2/8 (GF) and a single at GLP 1/29 (m.ob.). Several nice counts of **Ring-necked Ducks** were tallied, including 175 at GLP 2/26 (GW). Two **Long-tailed Ducks** were at GLP 1/4 (KI, VM), and a single was found at the same location 1/13 (JT). **Bufflehead** numbers were low, on average, but 46 were counted at VFNHP 1/21 (DB). **Common Goldeneyes** were also more scarce than in several previous years: 4 were at Norristown Dam 12/24 (WBH, et al.), and the only other individual was a long-staying female at GLP through essentially the entire period (m.ob.).

A nice count of 36 **Hooded Mergansers** was noted at GLP 12/13 (PB). Higher-than-usual counts of **Common Mergansers** were reported at GLP in late Dec and early-to-mid Jan, including estimates of 300 on 12/23 (LH), 250 on 12/31 (PD), 225 on 1/2 (RM) and 220 on 1/19 (PD). **Red-breasted Mergansers** were observed only a couple of times: 3 males 12/7 (PB) and a female 12/23 (LH), both sightings at GLP. A near-record-setting count of 415 **Ruddy Ducks** was tallied at GLP 12/3 (AC).

An extremely large (for *Montgomery*) group of **Wild Turkeys** was seen in Fagleysville 12/4 (KR). Fourteen **Ring-necked Pheasants**, stocked for hunting purposes, were in Harleysville 1/18 (SG). While there were no sightings of Common Loon, a single **Red-throated Loon** was at GLP 12/4-6 (MC, m.ob.). A **Horned Grebe** noted a few times at GLP 12/13-1/2 may have been the same individual, or multiple (m.ob.). Two **Double-crested Cormorants**, unusual in mid-winter, were reported 1/2 (PD).

VFNHP hosted a seemingly strong wintering population of at least 4-5 **Northern Harriers** 2/18 through the end of the period (m.ob.). An immature **Northern Goshawk**, a species rarely documented well in the area, was skillfully photographed at Evansburg S.P. 12/24 (CF, SF). The near-white leucistic **Red-tailed Hawk** in Hatfield was seen again 2/2 and 2/8 (both SG, ph.).

Thirty-eight **Killdeer** at GLP 12/6 was above average for the period (EH). The only report of **Wilson's Snipe** also came from GLP, 2/26 (PB). An early display of **American Woodcock** was observed in Souderton 2/8 (ZM), no doubt the result of well above average temperatures during Feb. An early high count of 5 of this species was noted at VFNHP 2/23 (HM). An immature **Iceland Gull** was at GLP on 3 dates 1/15-2/26 (KR, LH, m.ob.), possibly the same bird each time. Sixty-three **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were counted at GLP 2/26 (PB). Single adult **Great Black-backed Gulls** were reported from GLP, where they are far less common than Lessers, 1/22 (MS) and 2/9 (PB). Along the Schuylkill R., where they are much more expected, there were at least 8 other reports between Norristown and Bala Cynwyd (m.ob.).

A **Short-eared Owl** was seen on several nights 2/18-24 at VFNHP (AMe, m.ob., ph.). Another was noted at PERT 2/26-27 (MG, AMi). A late-lingering **Eastern Phoebe** was seen on a Wyncote Audubon Society walk at Lorimer Park 12/20 (LA, et al.). Two high Corvid counts were reported: 150 **American Crows** at GLP 12/13 (PB), and, much more impressive, 204 **Fish Crows** were counted at GLP 2/26 (PB). This latter number represents a new winter high count in *Montgomery*. There were a minimum of 16 reports of **Common Ravens** throughout the county (m.ob.). There were 11 reports of small numbers of **Horned Larks** in eBird, including a "high" of 6 at NFP 1/26 (WBH).

The two big irruptive species of 2016-17 were **Black-capped Chickadees** and **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, both of which were noted at feeders (and elsewhere) all over *Montgomery*. A remarkable 12 Red-breasted Nuthatches were counted at PERT 12/4 (PD). The sole **Gray Catbird** was in Flourtown 1/17 (PBU), somewhat counterintuitive given the generally warm temperatures.

The only **American Pipit** observed after mid-Dec was a flyover at

GLP 1/19 (AM). Five pipits were at GLP 12/5 (AG), the only report of higher than 1 of this species. A few **Pine Warblers** were found around the southern edges of the county. One was at NFP 12/7 (AMe), another in Elkins Park 1/28-2/16 (PD), and another in Haverford 2/28 (KJ). A Pine Warbler found at VFNHP 1/28 (AMe) may have been the same bird relocated there 2/17 (WBH).

PERT hosted a large number of **American Tree Sparrows**, with an estimated high of 80 on 1/7 (PD). Other high PERT sparrow counts include 28 **Savannah Sparrows** and 6 **Swamp Sparrows** 1/7 (both PD). A **Chipping Sparrow** was photographed in East Norriton 12/7 (WBH). There were several reports of Chipping Sparrows at PERT as well, including 3 on 2/28 (AMi). Seventeen **Field Sparrows** were found at VFNHP 2/17 (WBH), the high for the period. **White-crowned Sparrow** reports were scarce, with a high of only 3 at Pennsburg 12/20 (GF). **Eastern Towhees** were similarly uncommon: only 7 eBird reports were logged. The high count, by a wide margin, was of 5 at the former Ashbourne Country Club 1/15 (PD).

Three reports of **Eastern Meadowlarks** at VFNHP in late Feb provided the only mentions of this species (m.ob.). Similarly, there was only one solid **Rusty Blackbird** report - 8 at Shortridge Memorial Park in Wynnewood 2/26 (GG, JW). A **Baltimore Oriole** was a one-day wonder in West Norriton 12/16 (GW, ph.). As mentioned earlier, it was not an exceptional year for winter finches. There were less than 10 credible **Purple Finch** reports in eBird, all of just 1-2 individuals (m.ob.). The only **Pine Siskin** was at a feeder in East Norriton 12/5 (WBH, ph.). Of the more exotic finch species, there was no sign.

**EXOTICS:** The perennial drake **Mandarin Duck** at Tookany Creek in Cheltenham was observed 12/18 (RI), 1/16 (BG) and 2/3 (DM).

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### Montour County

Locations: Fairview Rd. (FR), Montour Preserve (MP)

This period saw mostly above average temperatures and lower than average snowfall, though a cold snap in mid-December froze bodies of water, causing most waterbirds to clear out. The headliner bird was an **American White Pelican** circling over the MP 12/8 (LS).

The main waterfowl highlight was 8 **Greater White-fronted Geese**, first reported in the area 11/20 and seen mostly at the MP until 12/11 (m.ob.). Six at FR 1/27 (KP) may have been the same group. A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was at the MP 1/21 (AK). Single **Rough-legged Hawks** graced the area at or near the MP 12/13, 12/18, and 1/7 (EH, PD, SF, MK); at FR 12/19 (JS); and at Stamm Rd. 1/6 (LS).

Shorebirds included 2 **Wilson's Snipe** at Strick Rd. 1/8 (AK). Owl reports included up to 3 **Short-eared Owls** at FR 1/9 (AK) and one at the MP 2/17 (EH). A **Red-headed Woodpecker** was along Rte. 54 on 1/8 (AK). Probable early migrant songbirds taking advantage of unseasonably warm weather included an **Eastern Phoebe** in Danville 2/5 (EH) and a **Tree Swallow** at the MP 2/24 (PM).

The reduced snow-cover through much of the season caused field birds to disperse. The only **Lapland Longspurs** reported were singles at the MP 1/5 (EH) and along County Line Rd. 2/26 (AK). Warblers are hard to find here in winter - the only 2 reports were of **Pine Warblers**, one at the MP 12/12 (EH) and one at the nearby West Branch trail 2/18 (AK).

Reports of uncommon sparrows included a **Fox Sparrow** along FR 1/5 (EH) and an **Eastern Towhee** at the North Branch River Drive trail 1/28 (PD). Single **Savannah Sparrows** were found on the Bloomsburg CBC 12/18 and at Yeagle Rd. 12/14 (LS).

Observers: **Evan Houston, 136 Ridgeview, Danville, PA 17821, evanghouston@gmail.com**, Paul Dennehy, Steph Fullmer, Matthew Karns, Andy Keister, Paul McGuire, Lauri Shaffer, Karol Pasquinelli, John

Slotterback.

### Northampton County

Locations: Nazareth Quarry (NQ).

It has become ritual for local residents to check out the masses of **Snow Geese** that gather in early winter. It is not just the birder that pulls over along the side of the road to watch and listen to Snow Geese that seem to stage especially around the Nazareth area. All types of people stop and take photos of the geese forming a white blanket over NQ. I would hope this will have some positive influence to help curb the recent increase in the number of massive warehouses replacing the corn fields that the geese use. As for numbers, 100,000 Snow Geese were reported 12/18 at NQ (DD, JH) and another 100,000 there 12/31 (BE, RR). Putting an effort into scanning geese can be rewarding as a **Ross's Goose** was located at NQ 12/31 (DD, SK) and a **Greater White-fronted Goose** 2/27 (AM). Another Ross's Goose was seen in flight over Gracedale 2/25 (MS) and a Greater White-fronted Goose was at Albert Rd. Ponds 2/28 (MS).

A likely returning **Barrow's Goldeneye** was seen on the Delaware R. north of Easton 12/26 (JH), continuing through 1/13. At the Little Gap Hawk Watch, a **Red-throated Loon** was among 40 **Common Loons** moving south 12/3 (MS). Late season hawk watching can be rewarding; an immature **Northern Goshawk** was observed at Little Gap 12/4 (MS). A light phase **Rough-legged Hawk** was at the Koch Property 12/17 (AK). A **Golden Eagle** soared over the cliffs at the Arrow Island Overlook 1/30 (JH). An impressive kettle of 61 **Black Vultures** was over the town of Bath 2/20 (MS, CCS). Vultures have been using the large spruce trees in town to roost during the winter months.

Another returning winter rarity was a **Spotted Sandpiper** found 12/11 at the Martins Creek Power Plant (MS) boat launch area. Last winter, a Spotted Sandpiper spent the winter here. The 2017 bird continued into March. An early **American Woodcock** was in Moore Twp. 2/16 (BE).

The 2 county landfills are regularly making the newspaper with numerous public complaints. Local residents have their valid points but the gulls that seek out these spots make places like Grand Central Landfill in Pen Argyl an important bird area in winter. This past season was exceptional with 8 gull species observed. Viewing at Grand Central is best from Evergreen Cemetery. An example of a big day was 2/2, when birders searching for a recent rarity located 9 **Iceland Gulls**, 3500 **Ring-billed Gulls**, 600 **Herring Gulls**, 140 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, and 11 **Great Black-backed Gulls** (SK, CT, RW). An adult and a first-cycle **Thayer's Gull** were reported 1/20 (JH). The first-cycle bird was seen again 1/25 (BE) and 2/6 (JH), and the adult Thayer's was photographed 1/31 (MS). The rarest gull observed at Grand Central was an adult **Slaty-backed Gull** 1/30-31 (JH, MS, CCS). If accepted by PORC, this gull would be a county first. Despite many birders searching, no one could relocate it. A first winter **Glaucous Gull** was also found at the landfill, seen 1/31-2/8 (CB, JF, BS, AW).

Two **Long-eared Owls** were found in a cedar stand in a restricted area of Martins Creek Environmental Preserve during a CBC 1/2 (MS, CCS). **Northern Saw-whet Owl** wintered at Jacobsburg SP (JH) and another was located on a CBC at NQ 12/31, in a restricted area (DD, SK).

Other notable sightings include a **Gray Catbird** perched in someone's yard near NQ 1/15 (BS), a **Pine Warbler** visiting a feeder at the Koch Property 12/27-1/1 (AK), 12 **Snow Buntings** at Arrowhead Rd. in E. Allen Twp. 1/25, and a Gambel's **White-crowned Sparrow** at the Koch Property 2/9-28 (AK). An **Eastern Towhee** was seen on the Martins Creek Nature Trail 12/4 (MSa, CM, JW) and on Fehr Rd. near Jacobsburg 1/8 (JM). Winter finch reports were few but a sighting of 15 **Pine Siskins** in Moore Twp. 12/26 was noteworthy (BE).

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### Perry County

The winter season was extremely mild, with numerous days in February reaching the 60's and even 70's, which meant very little in the

way of frozen water. In fact, it was the warmest February on record with the mean temperature 8.4F warmer than average.

Waterfowl in general were sparse with **Canada Geese**, **Mallards**, and **Common Mergansers** making up by far the majority of reports. There were, however, 3 species of note. There was a **Ross's Goose** at Little Buffalo SP 1/27-28 (CD, DK), the first ever in the 68-year history of the New Bloomfield CBC. It was also the first eBird record for the species in *Perry*. Two **Snow Geese** were reported on the CBC, found in a corn field on Saw Mill Rd in Kinkora Heights 1/27 (BF, RP, VG, JR), providing only the third record on the count. The other species of interest was **Northern Shoveler**, 6 of which were seen at LBSP 2/24 (VG), representing the third-ever eBird record for *Perry* and the first winter eBird record.

In a year with little significant raptor activity other than at Waggoner's Gap Hawk Watch, there was one dark-phase **Rough-legged Hawk**, reported on Route 17, about 5 miles east of Millerstown near Nakoda Rd, 12/26-2/19 (KH, DK, m.ob.); this is the fourth consecutive year that a dark-phase Rough-leg has been reported at this location (KH). The other raptor of interest was a **Merlin**, seen 2/19 at the same location as the Rough-leg (SS), providing only the fourth eBird winter record away from Waggoner's Gap.

Two **American Woodcocks** were heard displaying on Pine Hill Rd, Landisburg 2/23 (VG). This earliest eBird record for the species in *Perry* is most likely due in part to the record warmth in Feb. A **Brown Thrasher** was found on the New Bloomfield CBC 12/27 for the second consecutive year, discovered at the same location (actually the same bush) as the previous year (VG, JR, BF, BP). In this non-invasion year, the only report of **Purple Finch** was of 2 on Sherman's View Rd, Shermansdale (TP)

Observers: **Vernon Gauthier**, 111 W. Big Spring Ave, Newville, PA 17241, 717-385-9526, pabirderatgmail.com, Clayton Delancey, Bill Franz, Kitt Heckscher, Dave Kerr, Bob Peda, Thomas Prescott, Joan Renninger, Steve Schmit.

#### **Philadelphia County**

Locations: Bartram's Garden (BG), Benjamin Rush State Park (BRSP), Carpenter's Woods (CW), Delaware River (DR), Fairmount Park (FP), Franklin D. Roosevelt Park (FDR), Glenn Foerd Mansion (GF), Island Green Country Club and Golf Course--abandoned (IGCC), John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum-Philadelphia (TI), Morris Arboretum (MA), Naval Business Center aka Navy Yard (NBC), Northeast Water Pollution Control Plant (NEWPCP), Pennypack Environmental Center (PEC), Pennypack on the Delaware (POD), Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education (SCEE), Schuylkill River (SR), Wissahickon Creek (WC), Christmas Bird Count (CBC).

Winter was exceptionally mild and dry except during our two major bird counts. On 12/17, just in time for the Glenolden, Pennypack, and Wyncote CBCs, an overnight ice storm severely limited birders' travel and visibility. On 1/7, during the 31st Philadelphia Mid-Winter Census (PMWC), participants endured blinding wet snow and during the course of the day all standing water froze. In that environment 98 species were recorded bringing the census' 31-year species total to 163. Though fewer than recent years, 98 species was admirable given the adverse conditions, and these 98 species exceeded totals for 74 of the CBCs conducted in the Commonwealth with the exception of Harrisburg's 100 species (KR).

The bird of the season, and only the second county record since sightings 1/14/14 and 1/28/14, was a first cycle **Black-headed Gull** identified by an avid young birder 12/25 (VS). This stunning gull was a daily visitor to the same small area of the impoundment at TI. Usually it arrived in the morning with a small group of **Ring-billed Gulls**, actively fed for a few hours using a distinctive fishing style and then disappeared until the next day. It's predictable routine for more than 10 weeks allowed hundreds of birders to observe and study it. Equally popular, but far less rare, were two **Northern Saw-whet Owls**, whose roosts were also viewed by hundreds of birders after they were discovered at TI 12/10 (DBel).

A group of 21 **Tundra Swans** was seen at both POD and Pleasant Hill Park 12/17 (FW) and 11 rested overnight at TI until they headed south in the early morning 1/11 (FW, AB). A **Eurasian Wigeon**, possibly the same bird from last fall, spent 12/18 at FDR (AR). In the sheltered harbor at NBC, the traditional raft of diving ducks included only 70 **Canvasbacks**

at the highest count 1/8, not the 100-200 normally wintering (GD). In that raft, a single **Redhead** was seen briefly 12/30-1/8 (AR, MD), 117 **Ruddy Ducks** 2/11 (AR), and 13 **Greater Scaup** 1/10 (AB). Among these divers, a winter rarity was a female **Black Scoter** 12/26-28 (AB, DBE). A regular, but uncommon visitor was a **Long-tailed Duck** photographed both at POD 12/23 (HP) and at TI 2/24, where to everyone's surprise a drake and two hens were seen 2/24 (FW, TF).

Rafts of waterfowl drift back and forth across the state boundary in the middle of the DR using sheltered areas on both sides of the river. Reports of larger than usual groups of **Common Goldeneyes** came from POD where 23 were seen 1/28 (FW, BH) and farther north at Pleasant Hill Park where 35 were found 2/12. Undoubtedly these were part of a group of approximately 60 Common Goldeneyes opportunistically utilizing both the Pennsylvania and New Jersey sides of the DR in this relatively narrow section. A regular winter visitor, **Red-throated Loon** was seen 12/27 and 1/28 at POD (RI, AR), and 2/26 at GF (FW). A group of 8 **Horned Grebes** was notable at POD 12/17 (DMo, RI, PK) and must have been the same "gang of eight" reported from NBC 1/2 (FW, RI).

A late **Osprey** was photographed at TI 12/21 (John Daniel). A gathering of cormorants is called a "flight" even when they are roosting on a large cement platform in the inner harbor of NBC. Surrounded by enormous decommissioned Navy ships, many species seek protection from the elements in this sheltered environment. There a flight of up to 260 **Double-crested Cormorants** roosted from dusk to dawn 12/26-1/14. Among them was an unusually large flight of at least 13 **Great Cormorants** that could be picked out with a scope 12/26 (AB, DBE). Four **American Woodcocks** danced in the Eastwick field next to Heinz refuge (DBE); and at Houston Meadow, after an unusually warm day, 3 were observed 2/19 (MS).

In addition to the Black-headed Gull mentioned above, a rare but annual **Iceland Gull** came to the NBC gull roost at dusk 1/7 and 2/13 (GA). Possibly the same gull was at Penn's Landing 2/18-20 and seen by many throughout the day. The only adult Iceland Gull reported was also at NBC, again at dusk, 2/16 (JM). A large gathering of 1100 **Herring Gulls** congregated at NBC 1/14 (AB, DBE) and farther north at GF 2500 were found 1/21 (BH). Another large gull flock was 4200 Ring-billed Gulls at NBC 2/3 (GA). Ten **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, one first cycle and 9 older gulls, were at GF 1/6 (AB, DBE) and at NBC, 3 were seen 1/7 (GA) with at least one remaining until 2/25. Of only 2 **Glaucous Gull** sightings, one came from GF 1/10 (FW) and one from the NBC harbor roost 2/13 (GA).

In addition to the those mentioned above, a third Northern Saw-whet Owl also easily seen from the trail was heard and photographed 2/17-18, just before all but one owl departed. As usual for the PMWC, a marathon **Eastern Screech Owl** survey was conducted in the upper WC, producing 26 individuals, a bit below previous years' totals, possibly due to approaching weather front (DBel). The juvenile plumaged **Red-headed Woodpecker** found at POD 11/24 continued until 12/6 (FW). Three **Peregrine Falcons** became involved in a chase when an intruder entered the territory of the breeding pair at the bridge near NBC 2/27 (HM, AR).

**Common Raven** continues to be reported in the area of the NEWPCP and from TI. **Tree Swallows** returned to a variety of locations 2/19. In Dec, up to 200 **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** congregated at the now famous wintering location NEWPCP. That flock dwindled to 90 during the 1/7 census and then dropped to 45 at the end of Feb. There might have been 91 swallows on 1/7, but a **Merlin** was observed flying away feeding on a swallow as it went (FW). These numbers represent more birds at each point in the season than in previous years, undoubtedly due to the mild temperatures and maybe the increasing popularity of the protein rich location.

A late-departing **House Wren** at POD 12/1 provided the only report (FW). A **Marsh Wren** was observed only sporadically this winter, but as usual along the dike road at TI. Among the 7 winter Parulidae, a **Northern Waterthrush** seen only on New Year's day provided a terrific start to a birder's year list (FW, RI). **Orange-crowned Warblers** were present at eight locations, further indicating their increasing presence mentioned in recent fall and winter reports. A very late **Nashville Warbler** was photographed at POD 12/11 (GA). The most dependable place to see several warbler species throughout the season is the NEWPCP, where Orange-crowned was found 1/7-2/20 along with 5 other species including 5 **Palm Warblers** 1/7 (BH, TF), **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, and **Common Yellowthroat**. For the first time, a **Pine Warbler** was found foraging in this insect-rich environment from 1/7 through the end of the season. Other Pine Warblers were at the IGCC 12/3 (GA, ph.) and University of

Pennsylvania Museum 1/4 (DE, ph.). Two Pine Warblers were seen 12/18 at Glenn Foerd, where nesting attempts have occurred.

Though only 27 **Fox Sparrow** were reported in the entire county on 1/7, 22 were found at TI 1/8, showing how many individuals are actually using a location where only a dozen are normally reported (TF). A female-type **Baltimore Oriole** at POD only on 12/2 hastened to go south (JM). For the third winter in a row, a Baltimore Oriole was present for the census. Strangely, an oriole was also visiting a feeder in East Falls 1/5-7 (NS). During the 2016 census, a Baltimore Oriole also visited a feeder stocked by the very same birder - but that was when he lived miles away in West Philadelphia!

The influx of "winter finches" was modest, but far better than last year. Both **Black-capped Chickadee** and **Red-breasted Nuthatch** could be found in small numbers at multiple locations throughout the winter. Less abundant were a handful of scattered **Purple Finches**, and only 4 **Pine Siskins** at Cumberland St. on 1/7 (AR).

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### **Pike County**

No Report

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### **Schuylkill County**

Locations: Air Products Wildlife Sanctuary (APWS), Hawk Mountain Sanctuary – North Lookout (HM), Landingville Dam (LVD), Lebanon Reservoir (LR), Owl Creek (OC), 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 the three CBCs that take place in the county. The WSCBC took place 12/18, the TCBC 12/28, and the Hamburg CBC 12/30 (which covers a small area on the county near Port Clinton). Thanks to Dave Krueel, Jonathan DeBalko, and Laurie Goodrich, respectively, for heading those efforts. Thanks also go to Ian Gardner for conducting a WRS in the southwestern portion of county. In addition to species sightings provided directly to me and posted to PABIRDS, a lot of good data were also found on eBird. Everyone who posted their sightings to eBird was included in the Observer list at the end of this narrative.

With the exception of **Mallards**, a few **Mute Swans**, and **Canada Geese**, waterfowl species and numbers are always low for the county so any postings are considered notable. Mild temperatures kept the county lakes open most of the winter. Single **Cackling Geese** were seen from HM 12/15 (HMD) and SGL 227 on 2/24 (TB). Mute Swan reports consisted of pairs of birds in West Penn Twp. 12/28 (VG), SAL 1/3 (TJ), Bubeck Park in Schuylkill Haven 1/29 (P&RW), and Washington Twp. 2/13 (IG). **Tundra Swans** are considered rare in the county during the winter. A flock of 18-20 was reported at OC 2/25 (DeM, CT) and a large formation of 112 passed HM 12/25 (HMD).

**Wood Ducks** arrived early with reports from two locations: 2/3, 2/25 and 2/28 at APWS (JoD); and a pair at SSP 2/26 (BR). **American Black Ducks** were reported at APWS, Lake Hauto, OC, and in Washington Twp. (m.ob.) **Ring-necked Ducks** are considered rare here in the winter but several were reported in late Feb, with one at SAL 2/8 (BR), 5 in Washington Twp. 2/13 (IG), 3 more at OC 2/25 (DeM), and 18 at APWS 2/28 (JoD). **Buffleheads**, usually absent during winter months, hung on late into Dec. Five were seen at OC 12/23 (RR).

**Hooded Mergansers** were present into Dec with 4 seen at Lake Hauto 12/28 (JoD, JD) and then arriving early at OC 2/25 & 2/28 (DeM). **Common Mergansers** are becoming more common in *Schuylkill* and

were seen from late Dec through Feb (m.ob.). A **Ruddy Duck** seen at SAL was the first for the WSCBC (DD). For the second winter in a row, **Common Loons** were absent from on county lakes; the only reports were birds in migration passing HM: 5 on 12/4 and 3 on 12/15 (HMD).

**Turkey** and **Black Vultures** usually leave the county for the Great Valley and Piedmont during the middle of the winter. Black Vultures usually begin leaving the county in late Dec, which was consistent with the last reports coming 12/15 from HM (HMD). They began returning 2/13 when 2 were spotted on the WRS (IG). Turkey Vultures, on the other hand, were observed every month this winter (m.ob.).

It was a good year for **Golden Eagles**, with one or 2 birds seen on 12 different days at HM 12/1-1/4 (HMD). In addition, an imm. bird was near Heginns 2/15 (IG). Besides HM, where **Northern Harriers** were recorded on four dates 12/1-15 (HMD), individual birds were spotted 12/18 near Valley View (TB), near Orwigsburg 1/2 (TB), near Mabel 1/19 (DK), and near Snyders 12/28 on the TCBC (LR) and again 2/18 (LD).

Very rare in the county, a **Sandhill Crane** was spotted flying past HM 12/13 (HMD). The last **Killdeer** of the winter season was spotted near Minersville 12/27 (CKn). They reappeared at Hawk Mountain Acopian Center 2/19 (DH). **American Woodcock** arrived early with 4 heard 2/23 at SSP (BR) and another 3 at LVD 2/24 (DK). **Ring-billed Gulls** are considered occasional during the winter in *Schuylkill*, but this year they were found in all three months. An impressive flock of 105 was at SAL 2/5 (DR). **Herring Gulls** are considered more common in winter but the only report was of 2 passing HM 12/15 (HMD).

**Barred Owls** were reported twice: near Heginns 12/10 (DB) and in Black Creek Watershed 12/18 (DK, TB). A very good find was a **Short-eared Owl** flying high over a road near Coaldale 1/15 (JD). These birds have become very scarce since the county farmers have discontinued their participation in the state conservation program. A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was reported for the WSCBC at Black Creek 12/18 (DK, TB).

The count of 7 **American Kestrels** was a new low on the WSCBC. Two **Merlins** represented the first time more than one was recorded on the WSCBC (DB, DR, BC). Other reports of Merlin came from HM on 4 dates between 12/3-1/4 while another one was at OC 12/24 (DT). A **Peregrine Falcon** was at OC 2/4 (JG).

A very early **Fish Crow** was heard at OC 2/8 (DR). For the second year in a row, a wintering **Gray Catbird** was found at SGL 227; this year 1/6 and 1/13 (TB).

In the category of hard to find in the winter are a handful of sparrow species. **Field Sparrows** appeared a number of times: near Tremont 1/13 (TK), at TSP 2/19 (RiP), at SGL 106 on 2/19 (DH), and at Deer Lake 2/23 (JSp). Usually not seen until mid-March, **Fox Sparrows** were present all winter (m.ob.). **White-crowned Sparrows** were found on the WSCBC (DB, DR, BC) and again on the TCBC (JD, JoD). **Swamp Sparrow**, another sparrow normally not seen in winter, was present at SSP until at least 1/10 (DM, BR).

The highlight of the season was the **Red-billed Crossbills** at OC. Initially found 12/3 (DK), they were seen throughout the winter by many observers. The highest count was 49 on 12/11 (TB). One additional bird was reported at HM 12/8 (HMD). **Pine Siskins** were found in early Dec at HM (HMD, HM) and then at OC 2/8 (JD, JoD) and again 2/28 (DeM).

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#### Snyder County

No report

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#### Somerset County

Locations: Berlin Area (BA), Hidden Acres Farm (HAF), High Point Lake (HPL), Laurel Hill State Park (LHSP), Payne Property (PP), Somerset Lake (SL), Quemahoning Reservoir (QR).

Winter was a series of starts and stops with some cold periods quickly followed by mild weather. Freeze ups were relatively brief and waterfowl persisted with some nice local rarities. Snow events occurred, concentrating larks and longspurs, and then snow quickly melted. An all too brief glimpse of a **Snowy Owl** and a small group of **Red Crossbills** were highlights.

Waterfowl were well represented and many wintered as freeze up periods were fairly brief. Extended goose season to help reduce the overabundant resident **Canada Geese** also includes the less common geese. The only **Greater White-fronted Geese** reported were 4 killed in the BA by "Team Bahoo" 2/13 (*fide* AM) and one killed in Somerset Twp. 2/20 (DD). **Snow Geese** are off usual migration paths in this county so the 250 on 12/9 at LG's farm was exceptional. Ten others were at SL 12/15 (AM), 2 were at QR 1/14-15 (LG), and a blue morph was seen between Troll's Lake and LHSP (J&MM). A single **Ross's Goose** was at QR 12/20-23 (LG, m.ob.) Unprecedented for this county were 15 Ross's at Troll's Lake starting 12/22. They were hunted several days until a large number of them were shot (*fide* JP, ph). A single was present at LHSP 12/26 (J&MM). **Cackling Geese** were well represented with one 12/23 at QR (MD, BR), one in BA 1/31 with a metal leg band (JP), and 2 on 2/15 at SL (PF). Twenty-five southbound **Tundra Swans** were at QR 12/20 (LG) and 2 headed north were at SL 2/12 (CP, PaF).

**Wood Ducks**, accompanied by 12 **Gadwalls**, were early at SL 2/12 (KG, BH). A **Eurasian Wigeon** was reported harvested at SL 1/14 (*fide* AM); a beautiful male was found in BA 2/20-22 (CP, m.ob.) and probably the same bird was at SL 2/25 (*fide* JP). **American Black Ducks**, **Mallards**, and a few **Green-winged Teal** were present throughout the season. Four **Northern Pintails** and a **Redhead** were at SL 2/12 (KG, BH). **Canvasbacks** put on an impressive showing 1/2 with 26 at QR (LG) and 110 at SL, 95 of which were drakes (JP)! Two were shot 1/3 and the rest presumably departed for the Chesapeake. Twelve **Greater Scaup** were at SL 1/3 and one **Lesser Scaup** was at HPL 1/3 (CB). High counts: 20 **Buffleheads** at SL 12/23 (BO), 12 **Common Goldeneyes** at SL 1/3 (JP), 6 **Common Mergansers** at QR 12/6 (LG), 43 **Hooded Mergansers** at QR 12/12 (LG), and 9 **Red-breasted Mergansers** at QR 12/24 (MN). Small numbers of **Ruddy Ducks** were present throughout the season.

A high of 8 **Ring-necked Pheasants** at HAF 12/10 (SD) accumulated in fields near a SGL. **Ruffed Grouse** singles were at QR 1/22 (LG) and PP 1/13 (JP). A flock of 21 **Wild Turkeys** was at Berlin Community Grove 12/10 (FL). A **Common Loon** was at QR 12/18 (LG) along with 12 **Pied-billed Grebes** (LG) and 20 **Horned Grebes** (JP, CP, J & MM). The first **Turkey Vulture** was in Somerset 2/18 (JP). **Bald Eagles** were widely reported from QR, SL, and Confluence; and a nest with 2 adults was found in Meyersdale 1/15 (J&MM). A dark morph **Rough-legged Hawk** was in BA from 12/23 through early Jan (JP).

Two **American Coots** were at QR 12/14 (AM) and again 2/24 (LG). An early **Killdeer** was in BA 2/16 (JP). **American Woodcock** was also early at PP 2/18 (CP). A good, early flock of 170 **Ring-billed Gulls** was at SL 2/26 (LS). Very intriguing but briefly seen was a **Snowy Owl** flying out of a field at LG's farm 12/15 – unfortunately it could not be relocated. A **Short-eared Owl** was seen in BA 2/20 (LG, MD) while searching for the Eurasian Wigeon. **Belted Kingfishers** were sparsely found throughout the season.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were at QR 12/20 (LG), Markleton 1/6 (AM), and Laurel Mountain 2/19 (TD). **Northern Flickers** were at QR

(LG) and Confluence (BO), both 12/20. The largest flock of **Horned Larks** was 600+ in BA 12/16 (JP). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were sparse with 3 at Laurel Mountain 2/21 (TD) and one in BA 2/22 (JP). **Brown Creepers**, **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, **Eastern Bluebirds**, and **Northern Mockingbirds** were reported in low numbers throughout the period. **Cedar Waxwings** left for a while but 6 were back at SL 2/22 (JF). **Horned Lark** flocks had 5 **Lapland Longspurs** 12/16 and 2 on 2/9, both in BA (JP); and a **Snow Bunting** near Kingwood 1/7 (SB).

**Fox Sparrows** appeared at PP feeders 2/22 (CP), with up to 10 by end of month. **White-throated Sparrows** were thinly represented at Laurel Mountain and at QR 1/20 (JP, CP). A **White-crowned Sparrow** at Bluebird Hill Farm 1/6 (PL) provided a nice winter record. A good number of 45- 50 **Rusty Blackbirds**, with a few **Red-winged Blackbirds**, were at a BA corn feeder 1/31 (JC). An uncommon winter **Common Grackle** was in BA 1/8 (JP). Very nice were 3 female and one male **Red Crossbills** photographed at road edge at QR 12/20 (LG). No Pine Siskins were reported.

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#### Sullivan County

Locations: Cherry Township (CT), Dutch Mtn (DM), Estella (ES), Forksville (FV), Hillsgrove (HG), Splashdam Pond (SDP), World's End State Park (WE).

The winter season saw average temperatures with little snow accumulation. There were no significant storms or extreme cold snaps. As usual, reports were minimal with fewer than 25 total checklists in eBird for the entire season. No rarities were uncovered and no large invasions occurred. The overall counts seemed normal with very few checklists exceeding even ten species. Still, there were some good finds. All observations are by the compiler except where noted.

Some waterfowl migration was still evident early in the season, even though ponds and lakes were frozen, when several large flocks of southbound **Canada Geese** were observed over DM 12/10. A flock of roughly 200 **Snow Geese** was observed in the same area 12/11, also southbound high in the sky. A pair of **Mallards** was at SDP 2/19 (DG). A lone **Common Merganser** was reported near HG 1/28 (L&JC, MN). The only report of **Ruffed Grouse** was made at SDP 1/22 (PD).

Two winter raptor surveys were conducted 2/11. The routes wind through Colley, Cherry and Forks townships covering roughly 75 miles. All but one of the birds observed were seen in Cherry Twp. with the lone exception being a **Turkey Vulture** in the DM area, the only vulture I have found on any WRS I have run in the county. One accipiter was very briefly seen but not identified to species. Eleven **Red-tailed Hawks** were counted, only one of which was not an adult. The only **Red-shouldered Hawk** was an adult. Two light phase **Rough-legged Hawks** were in close proximity along Hunsinger Rd; an adult male and an immature. Three falcons were observed, 2 of which were adult male **American Kestrels**. A third falcon, seen only briefly in poor light flying in the opposite direction of vehicle movement, was not identified to species as Merlin could be considered possible. An adult **Bald Eagle** was reported near MV 12/10 (IG, AL).

Woodpeckers was well represented and scattered across the county. There were multiple reports of **Downy Woodpecker**. A **Hairy Woodpecker** was at SDP 2/19 (DG) as well as 2 along with one **Pileated Woodpecker** in ES 12/5 (TR). One **Red-bellied Woodpecker** was observed in HG 2/19 (AN). Perhaps the best bird of the season was a **Northern Shrike** found along the Dutch Mountain Rd near Kinsley's Corner in CT 12/30.

Three **Fish Crows** were reported from ES 12/5 (TR). This is an uncommon bird in the county at any time of year. **Common Raven** was widespread throughout the season and county with a late report of a pair in suitable breeding habitat at SDP 2/19 (DG). **Tufted Titmouse** is another species that is not all that common here. Most reports seem to be during the winter months when perhaps the birds are concentrated at

feeders. There were several reports of titmouse including 2 at WE 1/28 (L&J, MN). Two **Brown Creepers** in ES 12/5 represented a good find (TR). **Black-capped Chickadee** made every checklist where more than one species was reported.

Among relatively common species were **Eastern Bluebirds**, spotted numerous times including 4 in CT 1/28 (TA). One **American Robin** was at SDP 2/19 (DG) and a few small flocks were observed during raptor surveys. **American Goldfinch** was also populous with as many as 25 reported in HG 2/19 (AN) and a flock of around 20 visiting a feeding station in CT 2/11. **American Tree Sparrow** was found in small groups in numerous locations including 3 in CT 1/28 (TA). As expected, **Dark-eyed Juncos** were numerous.

Observers: **Rob Megraw**, Tom Auer, Linder & John Carter, Paul Dennehy, Ian Gardner, Doug Gross, Alex Lamoreaux, Mark Nale, Tom Roth

### Susquehanna County

Given that two major snow events bracketed the winter season, one in Nov and another in Mar, one might expect that winter visited the northern tier with a vengeance. In fact, the opposite was the case. Moderate snowfall and temperatures were this year's norm. Bird activity was subdued, with few northern irruptives and a relative dearth of unusual sightings. The mild weather did result in species lingering later and returning earlier than normal.

Northbound **Snow Geese** were still overhead on at Hollister's Pond 12/5 (TN). Large numbers of returning birds were seen over the county in mid-Feb (m.ob.). Many skeins of **Canada Geese** were also observed in the same time period. A flock estimated at 1000 individuals was over Stearns Lake 2/24 (EB) and another 2000 flew over Mountain View High School on the same date (DS). Birding hero status this period belongs to David Snyder. In exchange for a photo, he rescued a first year **Tundra Swan** from a puddle alongside a road in Clifford Twp. by coaxing it onto a lawn away from traffic 1/17 (DS).

Wintering **Hooded Mergansers** were harder to come by than is typical in winter, with one at Quaker Lake 12/16 (EM) and 4 on the Susquehanna R. near Hallstead 1/29 (JS). By 12/19, Quaker Lake was only 20% open - sufficient, however, for a lingering **Ruddy Duck** (EM). The ice disappeared with unseasonably mild temperatures in Feb and waterfowl began to appear in small numbers around the county. Early **Wood Ducks** and **Green-winged Teal** were on Hollister's Pond 2/27 (BM).

Work continued by a local landowner/birder to reestablish **Northern Bobwhite** in the county as breeders. Ten birds were present in Dec and nine were seen on 3 occasions in Jan on Potter Hill Farm (DS). **Ring-necked Pheasant** and **Ruffed Grouse** were also present at that location 1/1 (DS). With more open water available, grebes lingered later than normal. A **Pied-billed Grebe** was present on Stearns Lake 12/1 (EB) and 3 **Horned Grebes** were on Quaker Lake 12/19 (EM). The only **Great Blue Heron** was at Hollister's Pond 12/1 (TN).

**Turkey Vultures** returned to the county 2/22-28 (m.ob.) and began their "spring clean-up" duties. The only earlier sighting, of a single bird, dates back to 2013. Five **Northern Harriers** were reported in the period (m.ob.). A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was seen engaging in its own version of the Great Backyard Bird Count in Feb (DS).

Killdeer responded to the warm weather, appearing near Montrose on an unseasonable date of 2/24 (LT). The "Timberdoodle Revue" hit town early with the first report of **American Woodcock** at SGL35 on 2/23 (EM), followed shortly thereafter by encore presentations across the county (m.ob.). **Herring Gulls** are not expected in the winter season in the frozen north. However, one was present at Stearns Lake 12/9 (EB).

**Short-eared Owls** returned to their only known wintering location in the county, in the fields along Glemboski Rd, with up to 3 individuals being seen at one time. The first note of their presence was 12/7 and reports continued through Dec and Jan (m.ob.). A **Merlin** was spotted over Jackson 12/23 (EB), and another was in Auburn 1/15 (ME, TN). A **Peregrine Falcon** was located near the southern boundary of the county 1/30 (JS). Both of these members of the Falconidae family are excellent finds in winter in *Susquehanna*.

A flock of 12 **Horned Larks** was observed in farm fields in Harford 12/14 (NVC). Fifty-five **Snow Buntings** were photographed on Potter Hill Farm 1/7 (DS). **Pine Siskins**, so plentiful last winter, were noticeably absent this season - the only report was of a single individual visiting a

feeder in Feb (JS).

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### Venango County

Locations: Allegheny River (AR), Barkeyville Fields (BF), Buttermilk Hill Nature Sanctuary (BHNS), Kahle Lake (KL), Oil City (OC), Oil Creek State Park (OCSP), Two Mile Run Park (TMRP).

A generally mild winter and a generally uneventful season birdwise. Our county had 80 species for the season. Waterfowl were mostly scarce, even though waters were open most of the winter. The Allegheny River never froze and the lakes only for a few days. It seems that when the Great Lakes remain open, waterfowl have no reason to move into our area. Consequentially, most of our waterfowl records are late February birds moving north, all in low numbers and mostly staying for only a day before moving on. Notable sightings included **Wood Duck** on the AR near President 1/1 (RS, JS) and **Hooded Merganser** through 1/1. **Common Goldeneyes** were in low numbers on AR. **Pied-billed Grebe** was near President 1/1 (RS, JS) and the AR at Franklin 1/5 (GE, ML, RM).

The first **Turkey Vulture** appeared 2/19, not our earliest date, but earlier than average. Mid-winter **Northern Harrier** sightings occurred 1/15 and 1/21. **Rough-legged Hawks** were observed several times 1/1-9 and again 1/29-2/17 at various locations, mostly in the southern part of the county.

**Killdeer** returned 2/22, **American Woodcock** to OCSP 2/24 (GE, JW), and **Wilson's Snipe** to KL 2/26 (MK, NK). **Ring-billed Gulls** were seen sporadically beginning 2/17. **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were at BHNS 1/11 (JS, KG) and OCSP 2/22 (GE, JW, ML). Our first-ever winter **Red-headed Woodpecker** (not common here anytime) occurred 1/1 on the Pleasantville CBC - 2 birds near Hunter Station (RS, JS, m.ob.), photographed by ML. A **Merlin** was sighted near KL 1/19 (GE).

Two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** visited a feeder through the winter at Seneca (GE). Up to 2 **Brown Creepers** came to a feeder through the season in OC (RS). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were present through 1/5. The only **Hermit Thrush** was in the Franklin area 2/24 (NB). **Cedar Waxwings**, generally gone by early Jan, were sighted throughout the season. The only **Snow Bunting** was at KL 12/23 (MK, NK). **Fox Sparrow** returned to OCA 2/24 (MK, NK) and Franklin 2/25 (NB). A late **Brown-headed Cowbird** was at BHNS 12/14 (JS, KG) and 11 were on the CBC 1/1. Winter finches were mostly no shows.

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### Warren County

Locations: Columbus (CO), Hatch Patch (HP), Kinzua Dam (KD), North Warren (NW), Point Park, City of Warren (PP), Tiona (TI).

Bizarre, unseasonal weather patterns, including wild temperature swings, lots of rain, and (relatively) little snow, affected both the birds and local birders this winter. A number of typical winter species seemed to be missing entirely.

Waterfowl were noticeably sparse, perhaps due to nearby Lakes Erie and Chautauqua being unfrozen most of the season and thereby providing open water. Of note were 15 **American Black Ducks** in a flooded cornfield at HP among **Mallards** and gulls 2/8 (JF), a male **American Wigeon** at PP 1/1-12 (SD, TR); also a **Ruddy Duck** and up to 4 **Horned Grebes** at PP 12/24 and 1/1 (SD).

Rough-legged Hawk was not reported, despite two Winter Raptor Surveys through the county's farmlands; both had much lower numbers of all species than normal, perhaps due to spring-like temperatures. **Bald**

**Eagles** continued to expand as breeders across the county, with at least 2 new nests found: one just below KD, the other in "downtown" NW (DW). Multiple **Merlins** were seen throughout the winter (m.ob.), but whether these were wintering local breeders or individuals from further north is unclear.

A lone **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was spotted in a rain-filled hollow at HP among a group of **Ring-billed Gulls**, Mallards, and American Black Ducks, but it stayed only a day (JF). Among the unusually early spring arrivals was the first **Killdeer**, seen at PP 2/16 (m.ob.), at least two weeks before normal. Forty **Horned Larks** were spotted on manured fields outside of CO 1/22 (SHS, DW). Unusual for *Warren* were 20 **Evening Grosbeaks** at a feeder in TI (DS), and 19 **Snow Buntings** at HP 2/1 (JF). **Red-winged Blackbirds** (2/22) and **Common Grackles** (2/23) arrived weeks before their normal arrival date for this cold corner of the state (m.ob.).

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### Washington County

Locations: AMD Pond on Hahn Road (AMD), Buffalo Creek IBA (BC), Canonsburg Lake (CL), Peters Lake (PL), Peters Township (PET), Robinson Township (RBT), Washington Reservoir #4 (R4).

Despite the unfavorably warm weather, birders nonetheless focused much of their winter birding attention on the county's ponds and lakes for wintering waterfowl. Two **Snow Geese** flew over the observer near Burgettstown 1/29 (CB). Two **Ross's Geese** at a farm pond near Canonsburg 2/3 (ph. FK) were an excellent find; they were seen daily to 2/6 (m.ob.). A flock of 80 **Tundra Swans** flew over PET 12/5 (GG, LGK) and 10 more went over there 12/7 (LGK). One was seen at the mouth of Ten Mile Creek 2/12-13 (ph. MJ).

**Wood Duck** hung around PL to 12/24 (GG, et al.). A **Gadwall** at CL 1/5 (JF) was rare for that date. A pond near Bentleyville produced the season's top count of several species 2/19, including 40 **American Wigeons**, 35 **Redheads**, and 75 **Ring-necked Ducks** (RI). Three **American Black Ducks** were at PL 12/14 (JF) and 2 were at Timber Lake 1/10 (JF). A **Northern Shoveler** was at AMD 12/5 (MV) and 4 were at Trax Farm in PET 2/8 (GG). A **Northern Pintail** was at CL 1/4 (JF) and another was at TL 1/19 (GG). Two **Common Mergansers** were at the mouth of Ten Mile Creek 2/12 (MJ), one was at BENT 2/19 (RI), and 3 were at CL 2/28 (GG). A **Red-breasted Merganser** was at New Eagle 12/7 (RI).

A remarkable count of 125 **Wild Turkeys** was made off Red Fox Rd. 1/31 (DC). A **Horned Grebe** was good for mid-winter at R4 on 1/15 (RI). A **Black Vulture** at BC 1/1 (RT) was an excellent find and a continuation of a trend of increased sightings of this species north and west of the Monongahela Valley. **Bald Eagles** returned to attempt to nest again at CL and appeared to be on their way to better success than last year by season's end (LC, et al.). **Northern Harrier** was noted in farm fields around Muse and Canonsburg a few times through the season (CB, GG, m.ob.). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was near Cross Creek County Park 2/2 (RI).

First **American Woodcock** was calling at Peterswood Park 2/23 (LGK). **Herring Gulls** are still rare in *Washington* so singles at New Eagle and the Charleroi Lock and Dam 12/7 were notable (RI). **Short-eared Owl** was reported at the traditional wintering grounds in RBT only 1/14 (DK). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was at Washington Cemetery 12/17 (PB) and **Merlin** was noted there 1/29-2/12 (RT, LC, et al.). **Common Raven** was noted at four locations this season (m.ob.). A flock of 100 **Horned Larks** was noted near Cross Creek County Park 2/14 (RI).

Up to four **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were reported at Washington Cemetery 12/17-1/13 (AK, FK, PB) and one was seen at a feeder in the city of Washington 2/4 (RI). **White-crowned Sparrow**, a regular but low-density wintering species, was noted at six locations overall. The most surprising bird of the season was a male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** photographed at a feeder in Daisytown 12/25 (RT). Apparently, according to the homeowner, the bird had been present there for a few days. **Eastern Meadowlark** was regularly reported in the fields around Muse in Jan and Feb (FK, JM, et al.). A **Rusty Blackbird** was at CL 2/23 (JF). A **Purple Finch** appeared at a feeder in Washington 2/3 (RI), and a **Pine Siskin** at a feeder in PET 1/6 (GG).

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### Wayne County

Locations: Duck Harbor (DH), Wayne County Park (WCP).

Waterfowl observations were typical. Two migrant duck species were reported - 12 **Buffleheads** at Lake Ariel 12/8 (KB) and up to 3 **Ruddy Ducks** at lakes in the Hideout community 1/20 (NF, MR).

The WRS counts produced 5 species and 33 individuals, compared to last year's totals of 9 species and 89 individuals. Recorded this year, on 1/21, were one **Northern Harrier**, 2 **Cooper's Hawks**, 15 **Bald Eagles**, 14 **Red-tailed Hawks**, and one adult male **American Kestrel** (DA, SK). Two **Rough-legged Hawks**, one dark morph 1/2 (CF, JH) and one light morph 2/18 (MS), were spotted along Buckingham Rd. Another dark morph was seen farther north, near DH, 1/7 (DA).

A **Northern Shrike** near DH 1/5 was notable (SK). This species was last recorded here 3/21/2014. Five **Snow Buntings**, including one perched in a tree, were nicely photographed at WCP 2/18 (MS). Winter resident **American Tree Sparrows** were recorded in good numbers countywide (m.ob.). There was a drop in **Pine Siskin** sightings this season with the only report being 2 at a residence near Honesdale 2/19-20 (SP).

Observers: **Josh Jones, unclechu76@gmail.com**, Dan Altif, Kathleen Birmingham, Chris Fischer, Nate Fronk, John Harvey, Stephen Kloiber, Sandra Povse, Michael Rehman, Michael Schall.

### Westmoreland County

Locations: Beaver Run Reservoir at Rt. 380 Overlook (BRR), Ethel Springs Reservoir (ESR, also more commonly known as Derry Lake), Kuehl Property - Murrysville (KP), Keystone State Park (KSP), Love Hollow - Andy Mack property north of Ligonier (LH), Latrobe Reservoir (LR, also known as Trout Run Reservoir), New Stanton (NS), PNR (Powdermill Nature Reserve), St. Vincent Lake/Wetland (SVW), Westmoreland Heritage Trail - through the MAWC Beaver Run property from Trees Mills to Story Road (WHT-BR).

Two Christmas Bird Counts were done in Westmoreland, the 43rd Bushy Run SP Count Circle (compiled by Dick Byers) on 12/28 and the Rector Count Circle on 1/2 (compiled by Matt Webb). The Bushy Run species total was just 58, a far cry from the record 81 - contributing was the absence of diving ducks as only the three mergansers species were tallied for the count. Record highs were of 16 **Pied-billed Grebes** and 12 **Bald Eagles**. The Rector CBC species count was 63, a respectable total given just 9 waterfowl species listed. Overall, it was a warm winter with, most dramatically, a record warm week in late February.

Two hundred **Tundra Swans** were at WHT-BR 12/7 (KB), a flock of 75 flew over PNR 12/9 (BV), 29 were counted at KSP 12/14 (KJ), and 57 were at LR 12/19 (AM). There were no substantial reports for the season, but one **Snow Goose** was at ESL 12/23 (MD) and one at SVW on 1/5 (SG). A blue morph Snow Goose was at BRR 12/28 (DM). **Canada Goose** was widely reported during this mild season, with a season-high count of 490 at LR 12/19 (AM). The highest of many counts of Canada Goose for SVW was 423 on 12/26 (RC).

There were 7 **Gadwalls** at LR 12/19 (AM). There was a substantial build-up of **American Wigeons** at the WHT-BR in Feb; with a first report of 11 on 2/7 and peaking at 41 on 2/28 (KB). The high-count for the season, 150 **Mallards** were at LR 12/19 (AM). There were several reports for **American Black Duck**, with a high of 24 at BRR 1/1 (KB). As with several other water fowl species, some substantial counts were reported for **Green-winged Teal** at WHT-BR late in the season, with 3 on 2/21 and the high-count of 14 on 2/28 (KB). Likewise, for **Northern Pintail**, with 20 on 2/12, and 34 on 2/17 at WHT-BR (KB). **Northern Shoveler** was scarce, with reports of just 2 on 12/14 and one on 12/12, both at BRR

(MD).

Diving ducks were sparsely reported. There were several reports at scattered locations of **Ring-necked Duck**, but with all reports with more than one or 2 being at LR (AM), with a high of 20 on 12/11. No Greater Scaup for the season, and just two reports for **Lesser Scaup**: one at Twin Valley Lake 2/10 and one photographed at Twin Valley Memorial Park in Delmont 2/16 (ME). Few reports for **Bufflehead**: 2 at BRR 1/28 (MVT) and just one at LR, on 12/3 and 12/11 (AM).

The high of several reports for this location, there were 10 **Hooded Mergansers** at BRR 12/10 (MVT), and the highest count for the season was 18 at LR 12/11 (AM). Seen from Harrison Hills Park in *Allegheny*, 19 **Common Mergansers** near the embankment on the east side of the Allegheny R. at the River Forest Country Club 12/25 were credited to *Westmoreland* (AH). A very high count for this species, 120 Common Mergansers were at BRR 12/28 (DMP). The only substantial counts for **Ruddy Duck** were at LR: 22 on 12/3 and 25 on 12/11 (AM).

A too-rare sighting in *Westmoreland*, 3 **Ruffed Grouse** were tallied for the Rector CBC, and one at PNR 1/6 (MR). A substantial flock, 30 **Wild Turkeys** foraged in the farm fields along Borland Farm Rd. 2/24 (TK).

One **Common Loon** was at ESL 12/1 (AM) and one was at PNR 12/9 (BV). **American Coots** are normally quite common, and especially so at ESL - but not this season; the high of just several reports was of 10 at that location 2/12 (KB). A good count at a reliable location in most winter seasons, there were 13 at BRR 12/28 (DM). **Pied-billed Grebe** was reported often throughout the season, but almost exclusively at BRR, with the high-count of 13 coming on the Bushy Run CBC 12/28, reported by the Matuza Party.

After referencing his field guide Michael Gagliardi reported that he observed a **Green Heron** along the creek going through his back yard in Murrysville 1/13. While Green Heron is indeed a major surprise for winter, it is not surprising to have reports of **Great Blue Heron** for a warm winter season; of the several reports - one flew over a home in Delmont 2/17 (KB), one was along Four Mile Run near Darlington 1/22 (TK/JK), and the species was tallied for both CBC's.

**Turkey Vultures** are consistently reported in the Ligonier Valley during the winter season and rare elsewhere in Westmoreland, and such was the case for this season, beginning with the tally of 46 for the Rector CBC 1/2. Five in the Ligonier Valley were tallied on a WRS in that area 2/22 (JK/TK). Near the junction with Borland Farm Rd, one soared over the hay fields along Italy Rd 2/18 (JK/TK). **Black Vulture** was again reported in the Ligonier Valley this winter with 2 on 12/1 and 12/21, and 2 as well on Rector CBC.

**Bald Eagles** again congregated at the Loyalhanna Dam. Seventeen were captured in one photo and 4 others noted for a total of 21 on 1/5 (SG). High numbers continued until at least 2/18 when two pairs, of a group of at least 17 Bald Eagles attempted talon-locking (MVT). Further upstream at the bridge on Mission Bridge Rd in Latrobe there was one Bald Eagle 1/20 (CK). Dec reports for **Northern Harrier** included one on Saul Rd near Delmont 12/21 (KB) and one at Brinker's Farm, also near Delmont 12/23 (KB). After being spotted sitting in a farm field at the bend in Livermore Rd near the West Penn Trail parking area, a juv. harrier lifted off and briefly hunted the field 2/18 (JK, TK).

There were several reports for **Sharp-shinned Hawk**; non-feeder sightings include one 12/4 and one on the Delmont to Trees Mills section of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail 1/29 (both by KB). Likely a routine visitor to the KP feeders, sightings of a **Cooper's Hawk** were made 1/8 (TK) and 1/12 (JK). Two Cooper's Hawks visited the feeders at Ken Byerly's home 2/23. **Red-shouldered Hawks** were tallied on both CBC's, with 3 for the Rector Count, and one for the Bushy Run CBC. Rarely reported, a **Golden Eagle** was seen at the WHT-BR 2/2 (KB).

Another sign of a warm winter, there were 3 reports of **Killdeer** at LR, with 2 on 12/3 and 12/11 and 5 on 1/4 (AM). There were additional scattered reports late in the season, including 3 in NS 2/21 (MF) and 2 at WHT-BR 2/28 (KB). Lured out near the KP by the unseasonably warm weather, the first **American Woodcocks** (at least 2) were heard in the evening 2/20 (TK). Not the only report that day, 3 were on the Latrobe area farm of Skip Shawley. One woodcock was reported at a Love Hollow home 2/22 (AM), and on a record-breaking warm day 2/24 (76 degrees) one was heard at the intersection of Rt. 66 and Silvis Rd (JK) and another across Hilty Rd from the KP (TK).

Just a few gull reports were received, and all of just one species - one **Ring-billed Gull** was at LR 12/11 (AM), one was seen at the Rt. 286 crossing of the Beaver Run Reservoir 1/1 (KB), and 2 were at Acme Dam 2/25 (MJ).

During owling for the Bushy Run CBC 12/28, one **Eastern Screech Owl** responded to call-back near the wetland at the Murrysville Community Park (JK, TK). The first of several **Barred Owl** calls heard during the season at the KP occurred 12/19. One Barred Owl provided an emphatic response to call back at the Walter's Reserve during owling on the Bushy Run CBC (JK, TK) and one Barred Owl was seen in early morning light on Majolie Rd that same day (JK/TK/SG). One Barred Owl was reported at LH 2/26 (AM). A **Great Horned Owl** was reported by Tina Alianiello at LD 1/21. The David-Colleen Yeany and Matt Webb party had one **Saw-whet Owl** respond to playback at the Spruce Flats Bog boardwalk for the Rector CBC 1/2.

As would be expected for a warm winter, **Belted Kingfishers** were tallied on both the Bushy Run and Rector CBC's and were reported at several locations throughout the season. Two **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were in Laughlontown 1/1 (AM). **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were reported on the Rector CBC 1/2 and one was reported on the WHT-Delmont to Trees Mills section 2/27 (KB). Six **American Kestrels** were tallied on the Crabtree WRS route 1/28 (KB, SG, JK, TK).

The first of several observations of **Common Raven** in Jeannette, one was heard, then seen 1/31 (TK). One raven was on the WHT-BR 12/1 and one 2/28 (KB). There were also several reports of ravens in the Laurel Highlands area of *Westmoreland*, and a celebrity Ebird report of one Common Raven was provided by Louise Zemaitis, on a west bound drive-through of the New Stanton area on I-70 on 12/14. Perhaps another reflection of a warm winter season, missed on both CBC's, the only **Horned Lark** was at Ice Pond - Ligonier 12/11 (AM).

Among the many reports in the Laurel Highlands for **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was one of 2 for the Rector CBC Area 7 by the Katie Barnes/Mary Shidel and Mallory Sarver party, which contributed to the whopping grand total of 32 tallied for the CBC, seemingly confirming overwintering of the species following an early irruption across the Commonwealth. **Brown Creeper** was recorded on both CBC's, but in low numbers with just 3 for Bushy Run and 2 for the Rector Count. The early report of several at KP for the season was of one Brown Creeper 12/18 (JK) and the latest, again one, 2/26. Reports included one creeper 12/4, 1/22, and 2/10, all at WHT-BR (KB). One **Winter Wren** was tallied on the Rector CBC, and of several scattered observations of singles was a report for King's Nature Reserve in Murrysville 1/21 (PF). As to be expected, **Golden-crowned Kinglets** overwintered in Westmoreland, recorded on both the Bushy Run and Rector CBCs, and 4 were at Pleasant Valley Park 1/1 (MD).

One of several large flocks of **European Starling** that day during the running of a WRS, one exceeded 1000 near Crabtree 1/28 (KB, SG, JK, TK). Twenty-five **Cedar Waxwings** visited the crab trees at a Stahlstown home 1/15 (DB), and the season-high count was of 132 in Delmont 1/17 (KB). **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was tallied in both CBCs.

One **Eastern Towhee** was tallied for the Rector CBC and 2 were at LH 12/4 (AM). There were 13 **Field Sparrows** tallied on the Rector CBC, and 2 reported at the WHT-BRR 2/21 (KB). The first of many sightings at the KP feeders during the season, one **Fox Sparrow** visited 12/14 (JK), and the high count was of 2 on 12/18 and again 2/26. The Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve location provided 2 **Swamp Sparrows** 1/17 (James Kellam) and the Yeany/Webb party tallied one near the PNR 1/2 for the Rector CBC. The cold days of 1/5-6 for a Cornell Feederwatch count provided a tally of 25 **White-throated Sparrows** and 19 **Northern Cardinals**. Often found in the farm area surrounding the town of Crabtree during winter, a total of 21 **White-crowned Sparrows** were observed during the running of the Crabtree WRS route 1/28 (KB, SG, TK, JK). There were 4 reports for white-crowns at the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve, with the high of 7 coming 2/24 by (James Kellam, MD). White-crowned Sparrows visited the feeders at the Scottdale home of Georgia Shalek from 12/10-13; with a high daily count of 8 on 2/10.

**Red-winged Blackbirds** lingered into the season and returned well before the end of the season. Several visited the feeders at KP 11/5 and 3 on 2/21 (JK). Twenty were tallied in the Beaver Run Reservoir territory 12/28 (DMP). There were 100 **Common Grackles** reported in the Beaver Run Reservoir territory 12/28 (DMP). Three grackles visited the home feeders of Ken Byerly 2/23. There were 8 Brown-headed Cowbirds tallied for the 12/28 Bushy Run CBC.

The first of several reports for the season, a male **Purple Finch** visited the KP feeders 11/4 (JK) and the first of recurring sightings of a female Purple Finch was 12/30 (JK). The Yeany/Webb Party tallied 3 Purple Finches on Linn Run Rd during the Rector CBC 1/2.

And on cold nights throughout the season 2 or more **Carolina Wrens** loudly announced that the day was coming to an end, then

commenced to stuff themselves into a wicker pocket on the side porch of the Kuehl House in Murrysville.

Observers: **Tom Kuehl, 3615 Hilty Road, Export, PA 15632, (724)-325-1918, tjkuehl@comcast.net.** Dick Byers, Ken Byerly, Michael David, Mike Fialkovich, Sharon Gewecke, Steve Gosser, Amy Henrici, Karen Jackson, Matt Juskowich, Chuck Kuchta, Janet Kuehl, Andy Mack, Dale Matuza Party for 12/28 Bushy Run Christmas Bird Count, Margaret Rohde, Marjorie Van Tassel, Ben Viazzachero.

### Wyoming County

Locations: Brown's Farm (BF), Grist Flats (GF), Jayne's Bend (JB), Lake Carey (LC), Lake Winola (LW), Lazybrook Park (LP), Nesbitt Road (NR), Oxbow Lake (OL), Riverside Park (RP), Sordoni's Farm (SF), PA State Gamelands 57 (SGL), Sharpe's Lake (SL), Scottsville Road (SR), Vosburgh Neck/Endless Mountains Nature Center (VN).

Once again, Wyoming's winter records were, for the most part, similar to those of recent years, featuring visits of small numbers of the usual migrant transients and some records of local breeders that made rare or uncommon winter appearances.

Although the Tunkhannock CBC recorded the highest number of species since 2012, both the number of species and the number of individuals were close to the all-time averages. There were a number of rare or uncommon records, however, which I summarize in the paragraphs herein.

**Snow Goose** was reported twice: a single at RP 1/7 (NF) and a small flock over Crow Hill in Beaumont 2/17 (MR and MR2). **Tundra Swan** provided a rare record for the Tunkhannock CBC 12/18, including 4 birds swimming with a huge flock of **Canada Geese** on the Susquehanna R. near JB, and a flock of 30 flying over SR that same day (both JD and RC).

Two **Gadwalls** made an appearance at LC during the CBC 12/18 (RK, SGa, and JT). As is the case in most winters, there were a number of records of **American Wigeon**: 2 were at LC 2/20 (CS), and 5 pairs were at a private pond 2/22 (MR). When the owner appeared near the pond, 4 pairs departed, while one pair stayed, seemingly unfazed. We suspect the remaining pair had been to this pond in the past, as it is a place where we record wigeons every migration season. The boat launch on the Susquehanna near Meshoppen hosted 3 **Northern Pintails** for the CBC 12/18 (RL and JL), a rare record for the count.

A single **Canvasback**, and 4 **Redheads**, both rare for the CBC, were recorded at LW 12/18 (JH, BT). Birders recorded **Ring-necked Duck**, in numbers from 3 to 113 during Jan and Feb, at several locations throughout the winter, including at LC, OL, and at a private pond just east of LC. The largest of these flocks included 113 individuals at the private pond 2/18 (MR). **Buffleheads** appeared in fewer numbers than usual this, with 6 recorded at LC 12/3 (MC) and 3 again at LC 3/16 (JD). Two **Common Goldeneye**, recorded during the 12/18 CBC at LC, represented an all-time high for this count (RK, SGa, and JT). Two goldeneyes were noted at LC throughout the winter, as long as there was open water (MC, JS, and DT). Four **Horned Grebes** were also a high record for the 12/18 CBC, with 2 at LC (RK, SGa, and JT), and 2 at OL (SGo, EH, and DB).

Five species of raptor made what were either uncommon or rare appearances during the 12/18 CBC: 2 **Northern Goshawks**, one at GF and one at Falls (RK, SGa, and JT); **Red-shouldered Hawk** in Lemon Township (SGo, EH, and DB); **Rough-legged Hawk** in North Eaton (RK, SG, and JT); **Merlin** near the Tunkhannock Walmart (RK, SG, and JT); and **Northern Saw-whet Owl** at VN (RK, SGa, and JT). In addition, 2 light morph Rough-legs were observed hunting along Baker-Hirkey Rd, just north of Tunkhannock 1/8 (DiH). A **Golden Eagle** was discovered feeding on a carcass at VN 12/7 (RM). This is a rare on-the-ground record for *Wyoming*. Most Golden Eagle records are migrants seen in flight.

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Husic (CH), Diane Husic (DiH), Robert Hutchings (RH), Mark Kasper (MK), Debra Kidd (DeK), Dave Koval (DK), Rick Koval (RK), Joe Lesko (JL), Rebecca Lesko (RL), Nicholas Lylo (NL), Ray Massacessi (RM), Bryan Montross (BM), Suzanne Owen (SO), Linda Pallis (LP), Buster Posey (BP), David Posner (DP), Penny Reid (PR), Mary Robbins (MaR), Sarah Rospigliosi (SR), Marie Rowland (MR), Mitch Rowland (MR2), Matthew Sim (MS), Jerry Skinner (JS), Jane Packer Stabinsky (JPS), Cheryle Stone (CS), Jeremiah Stone (JS), Joyce Stone (JS), Sharon Templin (ST), Alan Thatcher (AT), Jon Thomas (JT), David Trently (DT), Bruce Troy (BT), Ronald Vendetti (RV).

### York County

Locations: Brunner Island (BI), Codorus State Park (CSP), Gifford Pinchot State Park (GPSP), Hopewell Township Park (HTP), Southern Lancaster County Christmas Bird Count (SoLanCo CBC), Spring Grove (SG), York Christmas Bird Count (YCBC), York Springs Christmas Bird Count (YSCBC).

The species count of 111 was a bit below average for the period. The YCBC on 12/31 found 76 species and produced a count first, **Eared Grebe**. The YSCBC held 12/29 counted 55 species in the *York* portion. The sliver of the county in the SoLanCo CBC on 12/18 was pretty well socked in with river fog and finding birds was a challenge. Compilers were BF, VG, and RP/BS, respectively.

With open water nearly all period, waterfowl reporting activity was high but the species count of 27 was about average. **Snow Goose** was found at 5 locations 12/31-2/21 (CB, DK, DKO, DN, AWG) with a high of 28 at Valley Acre Rd 1/22 (DKo). Single **Cackling Geese** were at SG 1/13 (CB) and GPSP 2/14 (HS). SG continued to hold resident **Mute Swan** and one was at CSP 1/1 (CB). High count for **Tundra Swan** was up to 50 birds at both CSP and Long Arm Reservoir 2/25 (DCI).

Uncommon for Jan, a **Wood Duck** was at BI 1/24 (DN). The mild Feb saw 3 reports of "woodies" starting 2/17 (CB, JD). Four locations produced **American Black Duck**, with a high count of 12 at GPSP 1/4 (DN). Six **Northern Shovelers** at a Brillhart Station Rd pond 2/16 (KG) was the only report. A pair of **Northern Pintails** was at SGL #242 on 2/15 (TCo) and 10 were at CSP 2/22 (DN, NN). A **Green-winged Teal** was at a pond on Bull Rd 2/19 (DS) for the only report. **Canvasback** was only found 2/4 (DKo) at both Fishing Creek Rd and SG. Four **Redheads** were at CSP 2/11 (CB) and up to the same number were at SG 2/6-18 (m.ob.). Counts of up to 150 **Ring-necked Duck** came from both SG 2/9 (CB) and CSP 2/21 (CB). Three **Lesser Scaup** were at GPSP 12/18 (DN) but were not found again until 7 showed up at CSP 2/21-22 (CB, DN, NN).

GPSP produced the only report of **Long-tailed Duck** with a single 12/19 (DN) and one of 3 **Common Goldeneye** reports with 4 birds 12/13-19 (DN). One goldeneye was at Goldsboro 12/16 (DN) and the third report was on the Susquehanna R. during the SoLanCo CBC. The only **Common Loon** was a single at CSP 12/27-31 (PM). Four reports of **Pied-billed Grebe** are normal for the period but a count of 9 at CSP 1/18 (PM) is unusually high. The highlight of the period was the aforementioned **Eared Grebe** on the YCBC at CSP. In addition to being a count first, it appears that it is only the eighth CBC statewide record. Interestingly, CSP held a late Jan Eared Grebe for 6 days in 2015.

**Ring-necked Pheasant** was only found on the YCBC. **Wild Turkey** was well reported - of 10 reports, a high count of 33 birds came from CSP 1/21 (DKo). The balmy Feb weather brought 2 **Double-crested Cormorants** to CSP 2/25 (DC). All expected non-*falco* raptors were well reported. **American Coot** high count was 74 at CSP 2/22 (DN, NN).

**Killdeer** were present all months and even **Wilson's Snipe** were found throughout the period; HTP held 2 snipe 12/24-2/16 (DF, DN), the YCBC reported 2, and one was at SG 1/27 (CB). Birders have been visiting the Riddle Rd County Landfill where visits 1/4-12 produced a **Ring-billed Gull** count of up to 2000 birds and up to 4 **Great Black-backed Gulls (CB, DN)**. High count among the 12 **Herring Gull** reports were 40 at Lake Redman 2/18 (AIP) and, on the same date (CF), 31 at Airville

A pair of **Eastern Screech Owls** were at Hanover Junction 2/10 (RS). Twelve reports of **Great-horned Owl** were on the high side for the period while 4 reports of **Barred Owl** were about normal. **Short-eared Owl** was first detected at HTP 12/9 (RP) and then found thru 2/17 (m.ob.). High count was 3 birds 12/28 (DC) and 2/10 (CB). Alpine skiing and birding aren't often used in the same sentence, at least in PA. However,

a nighttime ride on a Ski Roundtop lift produced a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** sighting 1/17 (ED).

The **Rufous Hummingbird** reported last fall at a Dover Twp. home was last reported 1/8 (*vide* SL). From 9/24 in the prior period until 4 were found on the YSCBC along Big Dam Rd, **Red-headed Woodpecker** went unreported. In addition, the 12/29 sighting was the only one for the period. All other expected woodpecker species were widespread and well reported. **Merlin** reporting was limited to a single at Dillsburg 12/23 (GK) and one at HTP 1/25 (DN). BI and York Haven produced **Peregrine Falcon** sightings (DC, DN). The date range of sightings and these locales being previously documented nesting sites suggest they were in that area all period.

With the mild winter, **Eastern Phoebe** might have been expected, but the only report was a sighting in Fairview Twp. 2/28 (NZ). The Ridge Rd County Landfill was also an attractant for **American Crow**, with approximately 500 found 1/12 (DN). The 6 reports of **Common Raven** spanned the period with all reports from the central to northern part of the county. **Horned Lark** was reported throughout the period with a high count of 110 on the YSCBC.

Great Backyard Bird Count reporting bias muddles any attempt to accurately comment on **Black-capped Chickadee** presence. **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was widely reported throughout the period as was **Brown Creeper** and **Carolina Wren**. **Winter Wren** also enjoyed good reporting with 9 locations holding birds. High counts for **Golden-crowned Kinglet** from the 20 reports (m.ob.) were 28 on the YCBC and 9 at GPSP 1/21 (DSt). The 5 reports of **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** spanned 1/5-2/24 (CB, JF, CK, PM, DN) and all were of single birds.

Fourteen reports of **Hermit Thrush** and 5 of **Eastern Towhee** indicated overwintering. Further attesting to the mild winter, **Gray Catbird** was found at Lake Williams 1/9 (CK) and Saginaw (DW). The sole report of **American Pipit** was of 4 along Good Rd 1/6 (CB). A **Pine Warbler** in Fairview Twp, 2/25 provided the only report (NZ). Uncommon in winter, 5 **Chipping Sparrows** were identified after a good study along Paradise Rd 2/9 (CB). HTP was the only locale with **Savannah Sparrow**, which it held all period. A great high count of 16 was reported 2/11(DF) with the

bird's activity centered in the grape vines of an adjoining vineyard. **Fox Sparrow** was found on the YCBC but then went unreported until 2/19-22 (CB, DN, NN, JS). Seven reports of **Swamp Sparrow** did not include any Jan sightings. A nicely photographed leucistic **Dark-eyed Junco** was in a York backyard 12/23 (BE).

As with neighboring **Adams**, **Red-winged Blackbird**, **Common Grackle**, and **Brown-headed Cowbird** were present all months. **Eastern Meadowlark** was reported all period (m.ob.) at HTP with a high count of 19 on 12/25 (DF). The only other report was a single along Paradise Rd 2/9 (CB). With 70% of the **Purple Finch** reports coming during the Great Backyard Bird Count, it would be unrealistic to say they were that abundant in the county this period. The 5 reports outside that initiative spanned 12/10-2/9 (MC, DK, AO, RS, TS) and all were of single birds with the exception of one pair reported. The single report of a pair of **Pine Siskins** along Range End Rd 1/9 (CH) seems to be an appropriate close to a very mild winter reporting period nearly devoid of winter finches.

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**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

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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).

Digital photos or scanned image files sent for consideration should be in JPG format and resized down to 600-1200 pixels on the longer axis (if the source file is larger than these dimensions), and compressed to no larger than 250kB. Larger files will be requested by the editor if necessary. Submitted photos may be cropped or adjusted for color, brightness, or contrast as the editor sees fit without notice to the photographer. When submitting by email, all files should be sent as attachments—DO NOT embed pictures or documents within the email body. 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



*Rough-legged Hawk, Volant Strip Grasslands, Lawrence County, 1 February (Alan Buriak)*



*American Bittern, Middle Creek WMA, Lancaster County, 21 February (Stan Stahl)*



*Eastern Screech-Owl, Conemaugh, Westmoreland County, 14 December (Anthony Bruno)*



*Short-eared Owl, Dayton, Armstrong County, 13 January (Anthony Bruno)*



*Winter Wren, Wingfield Pines, Allegheny County, 11 January (Jeff McDonald)*



*Purple Finch, Glemoore, Chester County, 1 December (Barry Blust)*