

FIRST REPORT OF THE P.O.R.C.

May 1990

Ed Kwater, Chairman

This is the first annual report of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (P.O.R.C.), hereafter referred to as the Committee. Since its inception in April 1989, the Committee has reviewed a number of records of rare bird sightings in the state. The results of the Committee's deliberations are presented below. For an explanation of the Class I - V system, reference should be made to the Committee's Bylaws (PENNSYLVANIA BIRDS 2:91-94) and P.O.R.C. News (PENNSYLVANIA BIRDS 3:8-9).

Review of rare birds records will remain a major function of the Committee. Observers are strongly urged to submit as many details as possible concerning sightings of rarities. Photographs and recordings are particularly useful and these should be submitted together with written descriptions to Barbara Haas, the Committee Secretary. All documentation will be kept on file for future reference.

The Committee has actively been engaged in the compilation of the Official State List of Pennsylvania Birds over the course of the past year. This has proved to be an enormous task involving a considerable amount of research, including museum visits to photograph skins, and literature searches. Many Pennsylvania birders have contributed photographs, recordings and written descriptions without which the Official State List would be a lot shorter, and our thanks must be expressed to all these people. Readers will be pleased to hear that at long last the Official State List is nearing completion. The last batch of photographs is now in circulation and it is expected that the List will be published in the next issue of PENNSYLVANIA BIRDS. Species classed as rarities (those requiring a specimen, photograph, recording and written documentation for acceptance) will be bold-faced.

A number of species cannot yet be included in the Official State List as sufficient documentation of their occurrence in the state has not been located. These will be included as hypothetical in the Official State List. This does not, of course, mean that they have not occurred in Pennsylvania. A good example of

such a species is the Fulvous Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) seen at Middle Creek WMA on March 16-17, 1975. The bird was seen by numerous observers and at least one photograph existed, alas no longer extant. Unfortunately, no other photograph or documentation has yet been received by the Committee. We urge anyone in possession of good documentation of this bird to submit it to the Committee so that this species can be admitted to the Official State List. The same applies to any other old rarity records.

The enclosed list gives details of all rare bird records which have been accepted by the Committee based on a review of all submitted documentation since April 1989. In these cases observers' names have been included. In the case of rare bird records which have not been accepted observers' names have been withheld, but the reasons for non-acceptance have been given.

Observers are encouraged to re-submit non-accepted records if further details have become available since the original submission. We also encourage second or third observer's descriptions or documentation so that species can be placed in the highest possible category when accepted. And, we are also interested in dissenting opinions on sightings.

Decisions are made as objectively as possible and are based purely upon the documentation presented to the Committee. Non-acceptance of a record is not meant to be taken personally, but we hope it encourages closer observation and more complete documentation. The Committee's decisions are not always unanimous. In such cases records are automatically circulated to Committee members for a second round of voting.

In the past, a small number of second-hand reports have been received. In fairness to the original observer(s) the Committee has decided only to review first-hand documentation. Some descriptions have been received with two observers' names given. Such documentation can only be reviewed for Class III. Class II distinction requires independent written descriptions by each observer.

The Committee is also

interested in reviewing documentation of the occurrence of rare subspecies such as Eurasian Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca crecca*), and Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus galbula bullockii*). Decisions made regarding the occurrence of these subspecies will also be published in subsequent Annual Reports.

Systematic List of Accepted Records, by Class (A.O.U order)

CLASS I

THAYER'S GULL - *Larus thayeri*. **Lancaster Co.** One in first winter (basic I) plumage, Safe Harbor Dam, 7-9 January 1989 (T. Garner, E. Witmer, R. Miller, J. Book). A well-documented bird with good photographs. First state record outside Erie Co.

CLASS II

MISSISSIPPI KITE - *Ictinia mississippiensis*. **Erie Co.** One in first summer (alternate I) plumage, Presque Isle State Park, 15 May 1988 (E. Kwater, J. McWilliams). First Western PA record.

WESTERN KINGBIRD - *Tyrannus verticalis*. **Chester Co.** Two, Beaver Dam Road near Honeybrook, 12 October 1989 (E. Witmer, B. Haas).

SEASIDE SPARROW - *Ammodrammus maritimus*. **Lancaster Co.** One, Conejohela Flats, 14 May 1988 (J. Book, T. Garner).

CLASS III

PIPING PLOVER - *Charadrius melodus*. **Erie Co.** One adult, Presque Isle State Park, July 24, 1988 (J.H. Stull, J.G. Stull, E. Kwater). One description submitted.

AMERICAN AVOCET - *Recurvirostra americana*. **Erie Co.** One, Presque Isle State Park, 7 May 1989 (J. McWilliams, E. Kwater). Second description submitted for Class II consideration.

MARBLED GODWIT - *Limosa fedoa*. Erie Co. One, Presque Isle State Park, 5 September 1989 (J. McWilliams).

SURFBIRD - *Aphriza virgata*. Erie Co. One, Presque Isle State Park, 18 August 1979 (J. McWilliams, S. Stull). First PA record. One description submitted.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER - *Limnodromus scolopaceus*. Crawford Co. One molting adult, Millers' Ponds, Pymatuning, 20 August - 3 September 1989 (R.F. Leberman, R.C. Leberman, E. Kwater, J. Hoffman).

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL - *Larus ridibundus*. Erie Co. A well-studied adult in full breeding (definitive alternate) plumage, Presque Isle State Park, 1-2 April 1989 (J. McWilliams *et al.*). Second description submitted for Class II consideration.

SABINE'S GULL - *Larus sabini*. Erie Co. One juvenile, Presque Isle State Park, 8 October 1987 (J. McWilliams). Fourth PA record.

WESTERN TANAGER - *Piranga ludoviciana*. Indiana Co. One male, Brush Valley Top, 13 May 1989 (P. Andrascik).

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW - *Spizella pallida*. Erie Co. One singing bird, Presque Isle State Park, 18 May 1989 (J. McWilliams).

List of Records Not Accepted

Eared Grebe - 3, Little Buffalo State Park, Perry Co., 28 March 1989 - insufficient detail.

Eared Grebe - Lake Marburg, York Co., 28 March and 4 April 1989 - several crucial identification characters omitted.

King Eider - Presque Isle, Erie Co., 19 November 1989 - insufficient detail.

Harlequin Duck - Presque Isle, Erie Co., 2 April 1989 - insufficient detail.

Mississippi Kite - Saginaw, York Co., 24 May 1989 - field marks noted inconsistent with species.

Swainson's Hawk - Rocky Ridge Park, York Co., 3 May 1989 - insufficient detail.

Swainson's Hawk - Rt. 183 Hawkwatch, 12 October 1987 - insufficient detail.

Krider's Red-tailed Hawk - Rt.

183 Hawkwatch, 12 November 1987 - details presented did not conclusively rule out Eastern Red-tailed Hawk.

Ferruginous Hawk - Hummelstown, Dauphin Co., 10 February 1987 - details presented did not conclusively rule out

Eastern Red-tailed Hawk.

Black Rail - Somerset Township, Somerset Co., 25 September 1987 - second-hand report with very sketchy details.

American Oystercatcher - Susquehanna R., between Middleton & Three Mile Island, 15 August 15, 1989 - details did not rule out Black Skimmer.

Black-necked Stilt - Philadelphia Water Treatment Plant, Philadelphia Co., 2-5 July 1988 - insufficient detail.

Ruff - Presque Isle State Park, Erie Co., 24 September 1989 - insufficient detail.

Three-toed Woodpecker - No locality given, 22-23 November 1987 - apparently a second-hand report.

Bewick's Wren - Amaranth, Fulton Co., 19 June 1989 - insufficient detail.

OUR WORK MUST CONTINUE!

by Raymond Hendrick

In 1949 when my interest in the world of nature was all consuming, I was twelve years old, roaming all over my grandparents' farm in Virginia looking at everything that ran, flew, swam or crawled, and wanted answers to all of my questions.

When a neighbor stopped by the farm one day to show my grandfather a "chicken hawk" he had shot, the answer to the question, "Why kill such a pretty thing?" was "We have to shoot the hawks to protect the rabbits and bobwhite quail, so we can later shoot the rabbits and bobwhites too!"

During the last forty years, efforts by many people in this country have brought about a big change in that kind of thinking by the people who thought that the only "good" hawk was a "dead" hawk. I will not take the time here to recall chapter and verse of our efforts to convince people of the value of raptors. Those of you now reading this already have seen the light. I guess I have become comfortable and thought so had everyone else. You can then imagine my shock when I

received a call one day last fall to check out a report of, not one, but two dead Osprey that had been shot and killed at Nockamixon State Park in upper Bucks County. After several trips and many phone calls, I was able to put together the following. During small game season a fisherman in his boat on Lake Nockamixon, saw a group of hunters shoot an Osprey that was also "fishing" over the lake. The bird dropped onto the water and was recovered. It is now being mounted for use by the state park in its exhibits.

The fisherman got to shore, found a ranger and told him his story. Unfortunately, when they returned to the area the hunters were long gone. Within the week, a second Osprey was reported shot, but not recovered.

As conservation chairman of the Bucks County Audubon Society, I suggested to our Board that we take action over and above the normal "what a shame and a waste" attitude among our membership. We agreed to pay a cash reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the guilty party. We called every newspaper in our area to give them the details of the story and they really went for it. Some went so far as to print editorials calling the guilty persons "morons" and "idiots." Letters from John Q. Public appeared in letters-to-the-editor columns, blasting the "mighty hunters." Sportsmen groups responded not by defending the action, but instead by donating more money to the reward fund. It now stands at \$1500 and is still climbing.

Now, I realize all this will not bring back the dead Ospreys, but I do know it rekindled the fire in my environmental conscience and sent me out to remember that there is still much work that remains to be done. So, let's go out and do it!

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