

Third Report of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee April 1992

by Ed Kwater, Chairman

This report covers all decisions on the occurrence of rarities in Pennsylvania made by the Pa. Ornithological Records Committee (PORC) from May 1991 to April 1992. Reviewing records of rarities will remain a major function of the PORC. During the above period 95 records were reviewed. This is a substantial increase from the 14 records covered by the second PORC report in May 1991 (*Pa. Birds* 5:1) and thirty records covered by the first report in May 1990 (*Pa. Birds* 4:1). This reflects a far greater awareness on the part of birders of the need to document the occurrence of rare birds in Pa., either by photographs, tape recordings, video tapes, or written descriptions. The PORC wishes to express its appreciation to all those who submitted documentation of rarities.

Of the 95 records reviewed, 67 (71%) were accepted. This compares favorably with an acceptance rate of 75% for records covered by the second report and only 43% for records covered by the first report. The standard of documentation has improved substantially since the PORC first began receiving records for review in 1989. Not only have written descriptions become more detailed and thorough, but an increasing number of records qualify for consideration for Class I status (those supported by either a specimen, photograph, or recording—see *Pa. Birds* 3:1). Of the 67 accepted records, no fewer than 32 (48%) qualified for Class I status, compared to five (28% of all accepted records) in 1991 and only one (8% of all accepted records) in 1990. The increasing proportion of Class I records is largely due to the number of photographs now being submitted to PORC. Photographs, even relatively poor ones, are an excellent way of documenting the occurrence of a rarity and the need for them cannot be overemphasized. However, a photograph should not be used as a substitute for a written description, but as a supplement to the description. Photographs cannot show a bird from every angle and frequently do not illustrate hidden areas such as the wing coverts or rump. There are a few species for which photographs can never be absolutely diagnostic. A classic example of this is the Pacific Slope

Flycatcher record from *Lancaster Co.* in 1990. This species belongs to the Western Flycatcher complex and was recently split from Cordilleran Flycatcher. These two species are only safely separable in the field by voice. The occurrence of this individual was well documented by photographs, written details, and tape recordings to clinch its acceptance as the first Pennsylvania record of Pacific Slope Flycatcher.

This report adds several new species to the Official List of the Birds of Pennsylvania (*Pa. Birds* 1990 4:2, 4:3). Apart from the Pacific Slope Flycatcher, there were first state records of Ross' Goose (quickly followed by a second record) in *Lancaster Co.* in 1991; Vermillion Flycatcher in *Tioga Co.* in 1991; Black-legged Kittiwake in *Chester Co.* in 1983, followed by a more recent record in *Berks Co.* in 1991; Black-tailed Godwit in *Philadelphia Co.* in 1979; and Lark Bunting in *Westmoreland Co.* in 1980. The godwit and kittiwake are prime examples of how first state records can be accepted based on two written descriptions (Class II) or one written description (Class III) respectively. The written documentation must be extremely detailed in cases such as this however, and the PORC always welcomes photographic evidence of species which appear in Class II or III of the Official State List.

It should be noted that accepted records are only credited to the people who submit adequate documentation. In many cases these people are not the ones who originally found and/or identified a rarity. For this reason, finders are strongly encouraged to submit their own descriptions, photographs, or recordings so that they can be credited with their find.

The PORC not only reviews records of rare species in the state, but also records of rare subspecies such as Oregon Junco, Bullock's Oriole, and Spotted Towhee, and rare hybrids such as Lawrence's Warbler. Unseasonal records of otherwise common species are also reviewed. Examples of such species included in this report are the Great Crested Flycatcher in *Butler Co.*, Ruddy Turnstone and Forster's Tern in *Erie Co.*, and Nashville Warbler in *Lancaster Co.* All of these species were recorded in Pennsylvania in

late fall or winter and at least the first three established record late dates.

Of the records which were not accepted, most did not have adequate documentation in the collective opinion of the PORC. The committee comprises seven members and six positive votes are needed in order for a record to be accepted. Pacific Loon, Western/Clark's Grebe, Barnacle Goose, Long-tailed Jaeger (*the PORC Chairman is not immune from having records rejected!*), Three-toed Woodpecker, and Boat-tailed Grackle would have been first state records if they had been accepted. Two records of Barnacle Goose were not accepted. One of these records was accompanied by photographs which were obviously of a Barnacle Goose. However, it is not clear at this stage whether or not the record involves an escaped bird. The PORC will continue to discuss this and all future records of Barnacle Goose in the state. All observers who have records in the "not accepted" column are urged not to be discouraged, but to document the occurrence of rare species as thoroughly as they can with particular reference to plumage topography and with photographs and/or recordings whenever possible.

There are still a relatively large number of rarities for which documentation has not been submitted to PORC by the observer(s). This is especially important since 1989 when PORC was founded, but also applies to records before then, some of which would be first state records if accepted. These species are covered in *PENNSYLVANIA BIRDS* 1990, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 53. Documentation for a few of these species (e.g., Barrow's Goldeneye, Band-tailed Pigeon, Le Conte's Sparrow) has now been submitted to PORC. All observers with records which have not yet been reviewed are urged to submit documentation.

The Ornithological Technical Committee (OTC) of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey (PBS) has recently voted two new members onto the PORC. The seven member committee now consists of the following members:

Barbara Haas - Secretary
Franklin Haas
Roy Ickes (new)

Ed Kwater - Chairman
Jerry McWilliams
Steve Santner
Jerry Skinner (new)

Bob Leberman and Paul Schwalbe have recently completed a three-year period of service. The PORC wishes to thank them for their hard work. Special thanks go to Paul Schwalbe for acting as Treasurer. A new Treasurer will be appointed at the next PORC meeting in June 1992.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF ACCEPTED RECORDS, BY CLASS (AOU ORDER).

CLASS I

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*). **Lycoming Co.** A bird in alternate definitive plumage, Rose Valley Lake 29 April 1988 (S. Stahl).

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*). **Indiana Co.** A bird at Yellow Creek SP 25 April 1991 (G. Lamer).

ROSS' GOOSE (*Chen rossii*). **Lancaster Co.** At least one bird at Middle Creek WMA from 3-16 March 1991 (T. Garner). This is the second accepted record for Pa. (see below)

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Anas penelope*). **Crawford Co.** Adult male at Custards, Geneva Marshes 7 April 1991 (J. McWilliams).

KING EIDER (*Somateria spectabilis*). **Erie Co.** A male in basic I plumage at Presque Isle SP 1-27 January and 3-16 March 1991. Seen by many observers and photographed (T. Floyd, F.C. Haas, J. McWilliams).

HARLEQUIN DUCK (*Histrionicus histrionicus*). **Erie Co.** A female at Presque Isle SP 17 February 1991 (J. McWilliams, D. Darney).

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*). **Northampton Co.** A western dark morph bird in Forks Township 19 January 1990 and 13 January to 30 March 1991 (R. Wiltraut).

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*). **York Co.** Two birds at Spring Grove 11 May 1991 (R. Ryan).

AMERICAN AVOCKET (*Recurvirostra americana*). **Erie Co.** One at Presque Isle SP 20 July 1991 (S. Santner, F.C. Haas).

WILLET (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*). **Indiana Co.** A flock of 12 at Yellow Creek SP 30 April 1991 (photo G. Lamer).

HUDSONIAN GODWIT (*Limosa haemastica*). **Cumberland Co.** One at Kuhn L. on 9 November 1988 (D. Henise).

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*). **Montgomery Co.** A bird in alternate definitive plumage at Green Lane Reservoir 25 August 1988 (R. Wiltraut).

Crawford Co. A bird in basic definitive plumage at Pymatuning 22 September 1991 and 6 there 6 October 1991 (E. Kwater).

RED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus fulicaria*). **York Co.** A bird at Codorus SP 2-4 December 1988 (R. Ryan, D. Henise).

THAYER'S GULL (*Larus thayeri*). **Erie Co.** The remains of a bird in definitive plumage at Presque Isle SP 22 April 1991 (J. McWilliams).

NORTHERN HAWK OWL (*Surnia ulula*). **Wayne Co.** A well watched individual near Lookout probably present from late October 1990 and last seen on 17 March 1991 (F. Haas). The first fully documented (photographed) twentieth century record for Pa.

CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*). **Cumberland Co.** One at New Cumberland 24 May 1991 (A. Burnett). First county record. Recording submitted.

Fulton Co. A bird was present in late May and June at Breezewood and was photographed and recorded on 9 June 1991 (D. Colyer, R. Miller).

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus rufus*). **Westmoreland Co.** An immature male came to a feeder at Ligonier from 17 October to 21 November 1990. It was trapped and positively identified on 15 November (R.S. Mulvihill, R.C. Leberman).

PACIFIC SLOPE FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax difficilis*). **Lancaster Co.** A bird was present in East Drumore Township from 16-26 December 1990 having been found on a Christmas Count. The bird was photographed and recorded. This extraordinary extralimital record is the first for Pennsylvania (F.C. Haas).

VERMILLION FLYCATCHER (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*). **Tioga Co.** A male in basic 1 plumage

at Jobs Corners 25 and 25 October 1991 (A. Brown, photographed by F.C. Haas). First record for Pa.

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus crinitus*). **Butler Co.** An extremely late bird near Slippery Rock 18-20 November 1990 (P. Hess, F.C. Haas, B.M. Haas). Originally thought to be an Ash-throated Flycatcher (*M. cinerascens*) the identification of this bird was clinched by excellent field notes and photographs.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia currucoides*). **York Co.** A female at Long Arm Dam 23 December 1988 to 29 January 1989 (D. Heathcote, R. Ryan).

LAWRENCE'S WARBLER (*Vermivora chrysoptera X pinus*). **Northampton Co.** A male at Portland 5 May 1991 (R. Wiltraut).

WESTERN Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*). **Montgomery Co.** A male in either basic 1 or basic 2 plumage in Whitpain Township from 30 December 1989 to 21 January 1990 (E. Fingerhood, J. Pasquarella, F.C. Haas).

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (*Spizella pallida*). **Lycoming Co.** A bird at Rose Valley Lake 2 May 1989. Recording submitted (S. Stahl).

Lehigh Co. One is Salisbury Township 30 April to 1 May 1991 (S. Smith).

Tioga Co. One at Jobs Corners 16-18 May 1989 (L. Brown, A. Brown).

Mercer Co. One at Limber Road, Worth Township 14-19 July 1991 (M. Fialkovich, J. Panza).

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*). **Lancaster Co.** One at Ronks 9 January 1982 (R. Schutsky).

LARK BUNTING (*Calamospiza melanocorys*). **Westmoreland Co.** A male at Export 25 May 1980. First fully documented Pennsylvania record (M. Fowles, E. Fowles).

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*). **Erie Co.** One 29 June to 19 July 1978. Recording submitted (J. Baxter).

CLASS II

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*). **Dauphin Co.** A bird at Hershey 14 May 1990 (S. Santner, S. Rannels).

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa limosa*). **Philadelphia Co.** One in basic plumage at Philadelphia Sewage Ponds 16–26 October 1979. First Pennsylvania record (J. Ginaven, F.C. Haas).

SABINE'S GULL (*Larus sabini*). **Erie Co.** An immature bird at Presque Isle SP 23 September 1989. Fifth Pennsylvania record (E. Kwater, J. McWilliams).

CLASS III

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*). **Lancaster Co.** A juvenile on the Susquehanna River at Marietta 14 August to 15 September 1991 (J. Heller).

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (*Anser albifrons*). **Northampton Co.** One at Green Pond 29–30 December 1990 (D. DeReamus, B. Webster).

ROSS' GOOSE (*Chen rossii*). **Lancaster Co.** A bird in Drumore Twp near Muddy Run 27 February 1991 (F.C. Haas). First Pennsylvania record.

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Anas penelope*). **Lancaster Co.** An alternate definitive male on Chickies Creek 8 February 1991 (J. Heller).

AMERICAN SWALLOW-TAILED KITE (*Elanoides forficatus*). **Monroe Co.** A bird near Jonas 24 May 1991 (R. ZainEldeen).

MISSISSIPPI KITE (*Ictinia mississippiensis*). **Erie Co.** One seen during a hawk flight, State Line Road, Springfield Twp 27 March 1991 (J.H. Stull, J.G. Stull).

MARBLED GODWIT (*Limosa fedoa*). **Lancaster Co.** Two at Marietta 3 August 1991 (J. Heller).

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*). **Erie Co.** A totally unseasonal bird at Presque Isle SP 26 January 1991 (J. McWilliams).

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER (*Tryngites subruficollis*). **Mercer Co.** A juvenile at

Shenango Reservoir 31 August 1991 (T. Floyd).

Lancaster Co. Up to 3 at a sod farm near Landisville 6–19 September 1991 (J. Heller).

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus lobatus*). **Lancaster Co.** A female at Holtwood Flyash Pond 23 May 1991 (R. Schutsky).

RED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus fulicaria*). **Greene Co.** One at Dry Tavern 15–22 September 1991 (R. Bell, G. Hall).

PARASITIC JAEGER (*Stercorarius parasiticus*). **Erie Co.** A juvenile at Presque Isle SP 5 October 1991, the first of several records that fall season (E. Kwater).

FRANKLIN'S GULL (*Larus pipixcan*). **Cumberland Co.** A bird aged as an adult at West Fairview Boat Launch on 27 and 29 August and 17 September 1988 (R. Koury).

THAYER'S GULL (*Larus thayeri*). **Erie Co.** One in basic 1 plumage at Presque Isle SP 13 January 1990. One in basic definitive plumage at the same location 17 February 1991 (J. McWilliams). Two in alternate definitive plumage at Presque Isle 5 March 1991 (T. Floyd).

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*). **Chester Co.** Three in definitive basic plumage at Marsh Creek SP 24 December 1983 (P.B. Street). First accepted Pennsylvania record.

Berks Co. Two in definitive alternate plumage Lake Ontelaunee 31 March 1991 (R. Keller, M. Spence). Second Pennsylvania record.

FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*). **Erie Co.** One at Erie Public Dock 13–19 January 1991 (J. McWilliams). First county record in winter and probably the first winter record for Pennsylvania.

WESTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus verticalis*). **Northampton Co.** One at Seemsville 14 September 1990 (R. Wiltraut).

VARIED THRUSH (*Ixoreus naevius*). **Delaware Co.** A bird at Media 11 January 1991 (B. Mainwaring).

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*). **Erie Co.** One at Presque Isle SP 31 March 1991 (J. McWilliams).

LAWRENCE'S WARBLER (*Vermivora chrysoptera X pinus*). **Lebanon Co.** A female at Duffy's Pond (SGL 145) 17 May 1990 (S. Santner).

NASHVILLE WARBLER

(*Vermivora ruficapilla*). **Lancaster Co.** One at Landisville 17 February 1991 was an extremely unseasonal bird, probably a wintering individual (S. Santner).

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*). **Montgomery Co.** A male near Sumneytown 4 June 1983 (E. Fingerhood).

BLUE GROSBEAK (*Guiraca caerulea*). **Northampton Co.** A male at Little Gap Bird Observatory 30 July 1991 (R. Wiltraut).

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (*Spizella pallida*). **Erie Co.** One at Presque Isle SP 6 May 1991 (J. McWilliams).

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*). **Northampton Co.** One at Easton 14 November 1990 (A. Koch).

Huntingdon Co. One near McAlevy's Fort 12 January 1991 (G. Grove).

Erie Co. One at Presque Isle SP 23 November 1990 (T. Floyd).

List of Records Not Accepted

Pacific Loon—13 May 1990, Penn Forest Reservoir, Carbon Co. Details submitted did not rule out Arctic Loon.

Eared Grebe—30 March 1991, Conneaut Lake, Crawford Co. Description did not rule out Horned Grebe. Details of head and bill shape were not given.

Western/Clark's Grebe—1–3 November 1987, Somerset Lake, Somerset Co. Conflicting documentation submitted. It was not certain which of the two spp. was involved or even if the bird was definitely an *Aechmophones* sp.

Barnacle Goose—4 February 1989, Peace Valley Park, Bucks Co. The submitted account does not include a description of the bird.

Barnacle Goose—28 January 1989, Pymatuning, Crawford Co. Photograph of a definite Barnacle Goose submitted but the status of the bird as an escapee is uncertain.

(Common) Green-winged Teal—27 December 1989 to 13 January 1990, Peace Valley Park, Bucks Co. The submitted account does not include a description of the bird.

- Barrow's Goldeneye—4 March 1991, Presque Isle SP, Erie Co. Description does not conclusively rule out Common Goldeneye.
- Mississippi Kite—31 March 1991, Tuscarora Summit, Franklin/Fulton Co. line. Description does not rule out several spp. of falcon, notably American Kestrel.
- Mississippi Kite—7 April 1991, Mt. Gretna, Lebanon Co. Details very brief and did not rule out other species of raptor.
- Swainson's Hawk—6 October 1990, I-176 near Green Hills, Berks Co. No details submitted by original observer.
- Long-tailed Jaeger—2 September 1990, Presque Isle SP, Erie Co. Description did not conclusively rule out Parasitic Jaeger.
- Franklin's Gull—14 April 1991, Memorial Lake, Lebanon Co. Description does not eliminate Common Black-headed and Bonaparte's gulls.
- Royal Tern—14 April 1991, Memorial Lake, Lebanon Co. Description does not conclusively eliminate Caspian Tern.
- Least Tern—29 May 1990, Presque Isle SP, Erie Co. Details submitted were extremely brief.
- Black Skimmer—22 October 1989, Pipersville, Bucks Co. Details submitted do not include a description of the bird.
- Three-toed Woodpecker—15 December 1984, Presque Isle SP, Erie Co. The possibility of confusion with a Hairy Woodpecker (maybe an aberrant individual) was not ruled out.
- Bewick's Wren—6–8 May 1988, Mount Holly Springs, Cumberland Co. Insufficient detail. Description did not rule out Carolina Wren.
- Townsend's Solitaire—12 May 1984, Presque Isle SP, Erie Co. A close vote. Not accepted because at the time it would have been a first state record and the observation period was extremely brief.
- Varied Thrush—10 January 1985, North East, Erie Co. Details submitted were very brief and did not conclusively rule out American Robin.
- Blue Grosbeak—22 May 1988, Bell's Farm, Greene Co. No written description of the bird itself was actually submitted.
- Painted Bunting—15 May 1986, Lititz, Lancaster Co. Details submitted were very brief.
- Lark Bunting—29 December 1990, Maple Grove Dairy, Bethlehem, Northampton Co. Description did not match any known plumage of the species at that season.
- Grasshopper Sparrow—30 December 1989, U.S. Rt. 6 and Standing Road, Bradford Co. Brief description did not rule out LeConte's Sparrow. An unseasonal report.
- Harris' Sparrow—2 May 1987, SGL 46 near Hopeland, Lancaster Co. Description brief and written several years after the sighting.
- (Oregon) Dark-eyed Junco—15 December 1990, Tioga Co. Description does not rule out female Dark-eyed Junco.
- Brewer's Blackbird—16 December 1989, Menges Mills, York Co. Description does not rule out Rusty Blackbird.
- Boat-tailed Grackle—17 December 1977, Bucks Co. Description very brief and does not rule out Great-tailed or Common grackles.
- Bullock's Oriole—13–29 December 1990, Knox, Clarion Co. The committee vote was deeply split on this one, with some members holding the view that a female Western Tanager was not eliminated.

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HAWK WATCH REPORT (Fall 1991)
Cornwall Fire Tower (Lancaster)
Jay George, Compiler

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Totals
<i>Coverage - days</i>	21	22	19	62
<i>Coverage - hours</i>	107	109	78	294
Osprey	40	25	0	65
Bald Eagle	6	0	0	6
N. Harrier	17	49	7	73
Sharp-shinned Hawk	231	702	19	952
Cooper's Hawk	13	75	6	94
N. Goshawk	0	4	2	6
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	37	3	41
Broad-winged Hawk	2298	5	0	2303
Red-tailed Hawk	16	307	110	433
Golden Eagle	1	1	2	4
Am. Kestrel	30	33	0	63
Merlin	3	3	0	6
Peregrine Falcon	0	1	0	1
Unidentified	12	68	4	84
<i>Totals</i>	2668	1310	153	4131

Somehow this report was omitted from the last issue. —eds.

Feeding Hummingbirds

Apparently the jury is out as to whether or not the red dye used in commercial hummingbird mixtures is good/bad/neutral for hummingbirds. A safe alternative is to use the following formula:

2 cups sugar
8 cups water

Boil the above together for about 4–5 minutes. Allow to cool. Then pour into a glass container and refrigerate. Use as needed. Make more solution when the last is used to fill the feeder(s). The dilution can go to 5:1 at the height of summer flowers and humidity, but the 4:1 ratio should be maintained at the beginning and at the end of the season.☺