

NINTH REPORT of the PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE

June 1999

Nick Pulcinella, Secretary

This report covers 55 records of 30 species submitted to the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (hereafter PORC or the Committee). The 38 records accepted, of 18 species, represents an acceptance rate of 67%. Highlights include the first record for Pink-footed Goose, and the third record for Gull-billed Tern. The addition of the one new record brings the state total to 395 species (Pulcinella 1995). PORC requests reports of any species on the Review List as well as any species not previously accepted for Pennsylvania. The committee encourages observers to document their sightings with photographs, videos or sound recordings when possible. The committee would also reiterate however, that the primary point of any documentation of a rare bird, should be the written description. At times, the committee receives photographs that don't adequately depict the field marks needed to clinch the identification, whereas, supporting written documentation may add the missing information. When the written description is the only means of documentation, the observer(s) should include as much detail as possible regarding field marks and plumage, as well as information regarding behavior and habitat. PORC again encourages observers of well-watched multi-observed rarities to submit documentation and not to depend on others to submit a report. It is not unusual to be at the scene of a rarity and notice that there are many photographs being snapped and one or two observers using video cameras to record the event only to find out later that the photos did not show the clinching field marks well or that the video images were too small or too dark to show the bird clearly. Each observer's report builds upon the other forming a large body of evidence for the committee to work with. Reports can be submitted to PORC directly by contacting the committee secretary, Nick Pulcinella, 210 Welcome Avenue, Norwood, PA 19074 or through the various county compilers for

Pennsylvania Birds. A list of county compilers can be found in any issue of the journal. For guidelines on preparing rare bird documentation, readers are encouraged to consult Dittman and Lasley 1992, Kwater 1994 and Hanisek and Lehman 1997.

Membership- Since the last PORC report was issued in June 1997 there have been several changes in the committee membership. During 1998, Ed Kwater, Steven Feldstein and Nick Pulcinella resigned and Paul Hess, Ted Floyd, and Ken Parkes were elected to fill the vacancies. During the annual meeting, held 27 June 1998, bylaws changes were approved formally incorporating the position of Treasurer and establishing the position of nonvoting secretary. During this meeting Roy Ickes was elected chairman, Paul Hess was elected Treasurer, and Nick Pulcinella was appointed nonvoting secretary. Committee members who participated in decisions listed in this report are: Steven Feldstein, Ted Floyd, Frank Haas, Paul Hess, Roy Ickes, Ed Kwater, Jerry McWilliams, Ken Parkes, Nick Pulcinella, and Paul Schwalbe.

Classification of Records

Class I: An accepted record based on an existing identifiable specimen, a diagnostic photograph or a diagnostic recording.

Class II: An accepted sight record documented independently by two or more observers.

Class III: An accepted sight record documented independently by one observer.

- (p) photograph submitted
- (r) sound recording
- (v) videotape
- (s) specimen

Format

The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following the AOU Checklist of North American

Birds (AOU 1983) as recently supplemented. The number in parenthesis after the species name represents the number of accepted records, including this report, since the establishment of PORC in 1989. Within each species, the records are listed chronologically. Each record includes the locality and county and a full date span when known. In most cases, the date span is incorporated from the quarterly reports published in *Pa. Birds*. Enclosed in parenthesis following the date are the initials of those who submitted documentation. There is no attempt to list all observers who saw the bird only those who submitted documentation. Following the list of observers, is the Classification of the record and the PORC record number. All photos, video and sound recordings are currently being held with the Secretary until a permanent location is established.

Abbreviations

Co.= County; FN= *Field Notes*; MCWMA= Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area; NWR= National Wildlife Refuge; PB Pennsylvania Birds; PISP= Presque Isle State Park; Res.= Reservoir; SP= State Park

ACCEPTED RECORDS

Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) (18) One in basic plumage at Moraine SP, Butler, 25-31 March 1997 first confirmed county record (PH, DHe; Class III; 009-02-1997). This species is a regular rare migrant throughout the state, probably seen more frequently than is reported to the committee.

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) (6) An adult was observed in flight at Cook Forest SP, Forest, 26 May 1997 (GN, SN, BR; Class II; 093-01-1997). This is one of the few adult spring records for the state. Most sightings occur from July-October and are of immature birds that wander north from their southern breeding grounds.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) (6)

An adult was observed feeding on the Big Spring Fish and Game Association property near Newville, Cumberland, 6 May 1997 (DHe; Class III; 095-01-1997). This is another regular rare migrant and post-breeding wanderer that occurs throughout the state, again, probably seen more frequently than is reported to the committee.

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) (1) A single individual present in Oley, Berks, 27 March-12 April 1997 (RK, KK, DHe, MM (v), GM, BCo, BU (p); Class I; 108-01-1997). Photograph published in PB11:25. The identity of this species was never in doubt but determining the origin of vagrant waterfowl is problem all records committees dread. Fortunately, this species had several factors weighing in favor of wild origin; the timing of this sighting was consistent with patterns of dispersal and long-distance vagrancy for this species in other parts of the world; the bird's arrival and departure appears to have corresponded with the arrival and departure of the Snow Geese *Chen caerulescens* with which it associated; the bird was wary and showed no signs of having been in captivity; the flight feathers were worn, which could indicate a recent history of long-distance flight. One report submitted mentioned that the wear on the flight feathers was comparable to the wear of the flight feathers of the Snow Geese it associated with; this species is rare in waterfowl collections. The committee appreciates the body of documentation that was submitted for this sighting including copies of personal communications between observers and ornithologists knowledgeable with this species. The acceptance of this species establishes a first state record.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*) (12) One blue-morph was present at MCWMA, Lancaster, 24 February 1997 (KC (ph); Class I; 112-01-1997). Photograph published in PB 11:25. Two birds present at MCWMA, Lancaster/Lebanon 1-30 March 1997 (RM, JM (ph), PL; Class I; 112-02-1997, 112-03-1997, 112-05-1997). The committee feels that these three reports likely pertain to the same individuals. Photograph published in PB V11:24. One at

Shawnee State Park, Bedford, 9-10 March 1997 (JP; Class III; 112-07-1997). One on a small lake near Stoneboro, Mercer, 19 March 1997 (SB (ph), SM, BC; Class III; 112-06-1997). This species is a regular rare migrant in the state with reports increasing yearly. Most reports originate from MCWMA where this species can be found annually accompanying the thousands of Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens*) that stop there on their northward journey.

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) (11) One at Curtin Village, Centre, 3 May-1 June 1997. (BS (ph); Class I; 248-01-1997). This was the first confirmed county record. Photograph published in PB 11:85. One at Menges Mills, York, 8-27 April 1997 (AS (ph); Class I; 248-03-1997). In addition to the nesting pair(s) in the Butler/Mercer/Lawrence Co. area, this species is annual around the state, probably seen more frequently than is reported to PORC.

Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) (6). Three birds seen and heard at PISP, Erie 8 May 1997 (JM; Class III; 261-01-1997). All of the accepted records of this rare shorebird have been from PISP.

Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) (14) One at the Mt Parnell Fish Hatchery, Franklin, 15 May 1997 (CG; Class III; 278-01-1997). One at the CFSR, Lancaster, 30 June 1997 (RM; Class III; 278-02-1997). A flock of 10 at Shenango Res., Mercer, 10 August 1997 (EK; Class III; 278-03-1997). One at Bald Eagle SP, Centre 14 August 1997 (PS, GS, MS; Class III; 278-04-1997). One juvenile at Pymatuning-Millers Pond, Crawford, 16 August 1997 (EK; Class III; 278-05-1997). One along the banks of the Susquehanna River near West Fairview, Dauphin, 16-18 August 1997 (DHe (ph), RKO; Class I; 278-06-1997). Photograph published in FN 52:58 and PB 11:150. Reports are proving that this species is a regular rare migrant especially in the western counties where a majority of the reports originate. The birds that show up in the western counties are also believed to be the "western willet" *C. s. inornatus*. Both the Centre and Dauphin Co. birds were reported to have characteristics favoring *inornatus* such as an overall paleness and lack of

brownness to the upper parts, the lack of contrast on the head as seen in *semipalmatus*, a longer thinner bill and the appearance of longer legs. Readers are referred to Hess (1998) and O'Brien (1997) for further discussion on this interesting identification issue.

Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) (8) One at PISP, Erie, 31 July 1997 (JF, JJ; Class III; 330-02-1997).

Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*) (7) One on the Susquehanna River at West Fairview, Dauphin 16 May 1997 (GR, MM; Class II; 338-01-1997).

Gull-billed Tern (*Sterna nilotica*) (3) Two at Bald Eagle SP, Centre, 25 May 1997 (AF, BS (ph); Class I; 362-01-1997). This is the third Pennsylvania record and a first for Centre Co. Photo published in PB 11:85. With the documentation by photograph, this species is now elevated to a Class I status.

Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*) (7) One seen and heard at Imperial, Allegheny, 10 May 1997 (TF; Class III; 625-01-1997). One at MCWMA, Lancaster, 10 May 1997 (RM; Class III; 625-02-1997). One near Latrobe, Westmoreland, 14 May 1997 (TV (ph); Class I; 625-03-1997). Photograph published in PB 11:86. One at PISP, Erie, 17 May 1997 (JM; Class III; 625-05-1997).

Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*) (4) One at PISP, Erie, 14 May 1997 (BM, MW; Class III; 746-01-1997). There is one other spring record accepted by PORC which also falls on 14 May. Santner (1992), lists an additional spring record on 23 May 1981 in Allegheny Co.

Swainson's Warbler (*Limnithlypis swainsonii*) (2) One at Volant, Lawrence, 21 May 1997 (BD; Class III; 756-01-1997).

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) (9) One at Plowville, Berks 23 May 1997 (KL; Class III; 780-01-1997). One near Ski Rountop, York, 17 June 1997 (JPh; Class III; 780-02-1997). Outside of breeding birds in Greene Co. in the extreme southwestern part of the state, Brauning (1992) this species continues to be a regular rare migrant

especially in southeastern and southcentral counties.

Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) (19) One at Tyler Arboretum, Delaware, 9 October 1996 (AG; Class III; 814-04-1996). One at PISP, Erie, 8-19 May 1997 (JM (ph); Class I; 814-01-1997). Photograph published in PB 11:85. One at Bald Eagle SP, Centre, 11 May 1997 (RM; Class III; 814-03-1997). One at a feeder in Jacobsburg, Northampton 23 May 1997 (RW (ph); Class I; 814-02-1997) the first documented county record. Photograph published in PB 11:87. One at Keystone SP, Armstrong, 30 September 1997 (JF; Class III; 814-05-1997).

Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) (2) One seen and heard in Center, Juniata 21 June - 1 July 1997. (DHe; Class III; 858-01-1997). There was some hesitation on accepting this record with only written documentation to evaluate, but both description of the bird and the song were convincing. Since the decision on this record was completed, further documentation, including a sound recording, has been submitted for evaluation.

Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) (2). A female at Conneaut Lake Park, Crawford, 29 June 1997 (RL, RLe; Class III; 859-01-1997).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification questionable

Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) One at Kahle Lake, Clarion, 27 March 1997, 009-01-1997. The description provided lacked sufficient details to allow for judgment. One at Little Buffalo SP, Perry, 3 April 1997, 009-03-1997. This bird was very likely an Eared Grebe but the description provided was too brief to allow for an adequate assessment.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) One at John Heinz NWR at Tincum, Philadelphia/Delaware, 26 August 1997, 095-02-1997. Probably a Glossy Ibis, but the details were too brief to adequately eliminate the possibility of similar species.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*) One at

Lake Ontalaunee, Berks, 10 February 1997, 112-08-1997. Most likely a Ross's Goose but the description submitted was too brief to allow for adequate assessment.

Canada (Richardson's) Goose (*Branita canadensis hutchinsii*) One at Springton Res., Delaware, 25-26 January 1997, 116a-02-1997. Photograph published in PB 1:241. PORC agrees that this report is of one of the small races of Canada Goose. The committee also agrees with Feldstein (1997), that within the smaller races of Canada Goose there is considerable variation and overlapping characteristics and measurements that prevent most "small canada geese" from being assigned to a specific race.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) One at Grove City, Mercer, 12 July 1997, 171-01-1997. This was very likely a Mississippi Kite, but the description provided lacked sufficient details to allow for judgment.

Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) One at PISP, Erie, 8 February 1997, 200-01-1997. This record circulated the committee twice and the general agreement was that the identification of a Gyrfalcon may be correct, but the description does not entirely rule out a dark Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) of the subspecies *pealei*.

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaria*) One at Martin's Creek, Northampton 7 September 1996, 331-01-1996. Photograph published in PB 11:157. One at Imperial, Allegheny, 7 September 1996, 331-02-1996. Photograph published in PB 11:157. Both of these birds were probably the result of the fallout from Hurricane Fran that passed through the state on this date. Both reports were circulated through the committee twice and caused quite a bit of debate and confusion. It is very likely that both of these birds were Red Phalaropes but the photographs submitted did not rule out the possibility of Red-necked Phalaropes (*Phalaropus lobatus*). Written descriptions in both cases might have aided in establishing the identification.

Mew Gull (*Larus canus*) One at Moraine SP, Butler, 8 September 1996, 344-02-1996. This report was

circulated through the committee twice and the description though highly suggestive of this species, does not completely rule the possibility of a Ring-billed Gull.

Sooty Tern (*Sterna Fuscata*) Two, one adult and an immature, near Reading, Berks, 7 September 1996, 375-01-1996. One immature near the Philadelphia Airport Area, Delaware, 7 September 1996, 375-03-1996. These three birds were part of the fallout from Hurricane Fran that passed through Pennsylvania on this date. Both of these reports circulated through the committee twice. All three birds were probably Sooty Terns but the descriptions submitted were too brief to allow for an adequate assessment or did not completely rule out the possibility of similar species such as Bridled Tern (*Sterna anaethetus*).

Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*) One at Marysville, Cumberland, 10 May 1997, 571-01-1997. The description submitted was based on a brief look at a flying individual and only the "rump" pattern was described. The committee felt the description was too brief to allow satisfactory judgment on such a rarity.

Painted Redstart (*Myioborus pictus*) Four near Medix Run, Elk, 16 May 1997, 770-01-1997. The description submitted lacked several details needed to support the identification.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*) One at Crossingville, Crawford, 9 October 1996, 830a-01-1996. One at Minsi Lake, Northampton, 12 November 1996, 830a-02-1996. Photograph published in PB V10:218. Both of these reports circulated through the committee twice. Though both reports were highly suggestive of this species, the similar Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*A. caudacutus*), which has occurred inland (Parkes 1992), was not completely ruled out. Readers are referred to Sibley (1996) as a guide in separating the two species.

Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*) One at Robesonia, Berks, 15 February 1997, 845-01-1997. The description was too brief and lacked sufficient detail to support the

identification.

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) Four near Erie Rd., Bucks, 22 December 1996, 861-02-1996. This report circulated through the committee twice. Probably Brewer's, but the description is too brief to allow for adequate judgment and elimination of similar species. Sixteen at St. Mary's, Elk, 21 September 1997, 861-01-1997. Though highly likely that these birds were Brewer's Blackbirds, the description was sketchy and too brief to allow for adequate assessment.

Boat-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus major*) One at Crosslands-Near Longwood, Chester, 18 March 1995, 863-01-1995. The description provided was too sketchy and did not completely rule out the possibility of Great-tailed Grackle (*Q. mexicanus*).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, represents an escapee or an introduced bird not yet established in Pennsylvania. Identification accepted.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*) One at MCWMA, Lancaster, 15 March 1997 (MM (ph); 115-01-1997). As with previous records submitted for this species, the date of the sighting falls into a nice migration pattern similar to that of our native goose species. This species is widely held in captivity and determining for certain the wildness of each individual is difficult. With this in mind, the committee continues to take a conservative approach toward acceptance.

Contributors

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PORC Review List

The PORC requests details, including descriptions and photos or sound recordings if possible, of all records of the following species. Please note county exemptions.

Review List A - rarities

Pacific Loon, Eared Grebe, Northern Fulmar, Black-capped Petrel, Cory's Shearwater, Leach's Storm-Petrel, Northern Gannet, American White Pelican, Brown Pelican, Great Cormorant (exempt in Bucks, Delaware, Philadelphia), Anhinga, Magnificent Frigatebird, Tricolored Heron, White Ibis, Glossy Ibis,

Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Pink-footed Goose, Ross' Goose, Cinnamon Teal, Eurasian Wigeon (male only exempt in Erie and Lancaster), Tufted Duck, King Eider, Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Masked Duck, Swallow-tailed Kite, Mississippi Kite, Swainson's Hawk, Gyrfalcon, Yellow Rail, Black Rail, Clapper Rail, King Rail, Spotted Rail, Purple Gallinule, Sandhill Crane, Snowy Plover, Wilson's Plover, Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet (Erie exempt), Willet (Erie exempt), Whimbrel (Erie exempt), Black-tailed Godwit, Hudsonian Godwit, Marbled Godwit, Surf-bird, Red Knot, Purple Sandpiper (Erie exempt), Ruff, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-necked Phalarope, Red Phalarope, Parasitic Jaeger, Pomarine Jaeger, Laughing Gull (exempt in Erie and the lower Delaware and Susquehanna rivers), Franklin's Gull (Erie exempt), Little Gull (Erie exempt), Black-headed Gull, Mew Gull, Thayer's Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Ross' Gull, Sabine's Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Royal Tern, Roseate Tern, Arctic Tern, Least Tern, Sooty Tern, Black Skimmer, Dovekie, Thick-billed Murre, Ancient Murrelet, Band-tailed Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, White-winged Dove, Common Ground-Dove, Northern Hawk Owl, Great Gray Owl, Boreal Owl, Chuck-will's-widow, Rufous Hummingbird, Black-backed Woodpecker, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Say's Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Violet-green Swallow, Boreal Chickadee, Bewick's Wren, Sedge Wren, Northern Wheatear, Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Bicknell's Thrush, Varied Thrush, Bohemian Waxwing, Loggerhead Shrike, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Kirtland's Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, Summer Tanager (exempt in Greene), Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Blue Grosbeak (exempt in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Philadelphia and York), Lazuli Bunting, Painted Bunting, Dickcissel, Green-tailed Towhee, Spotted Towhee, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Lark Bunting, LeConte's Sparrow, Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Harris' Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Bullock's Oriole, Brambling, Pine Grosbeak, Hoary Redpoll.

Review List B - Extirpated Species

Greater Prairie-Chicken, Eskimo Curlew, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Bachman's Sparrow.