

**Twenty-second Report of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**  
**Covering 2015 Records**  
**January 2018**  
**Mike Fialkovich for the Committee**

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**2015 Records**  
**Mike Fialkovich**

The Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (hereafter "PORC" or "the committee") evaluates and archives documentation it receives of any species or recognizable form that is on the official Review List for Pennsylvania. In addition, the committee reviews documentation for species or subspecies that were previously unrecorded in the Commonwealth. This report covers submissions for 2015 that includes 32 records of 29 species and two subspecies. The 25 accepted records represented a 78% acceptance rate. Reports were received from 20 counties.

Highlights include the first state records of Brown Booby and Kelp Gull bringing the state total to 438. Other highlights include a long staying Anhinga, three records of White Ibis, King Eider, the first Wilson's Plover since 1976, Ruff, Cave Swallow and the seventh record of Mountain Bluebird.

PORC encourages observers to document their sightings with photos, video, or audio whenever possible. Even poor photos can be diagnostic and elevate a report from Class III to Class I. However, written documentation is also extremely important, as there have been instances where a photograph was not diagnostic, but the report was still accepted as a Class III (sight record) based on the supporting information of the observer's written account.

Documentation can be submitted to PORC Secretary Ian Gardner at [gardnie07@gmail.com](mailto:gardnie07@gmail.com) or on the PORC section of the PSO Website at <http://jotform.us/form/22068006649151>.

#### **The Committee**

Committee Membership in 2015 included Andy McGann (Chair), Ian Gardner (non-voting secretary), Dave DeReamus, Devich Farbotnik, Mike Fialkovich, Holly Merker, Billy Weber and Mike Weible. Mike Lanzone left the committee and was replaced by Billy Weber. In 2015, Mike Fialkovich, Andy McGann, Dave DeReamus and Devich Farbotnik were serving their second terms.

#### **Classification of Records**

*Class I:* An accepted record based on an existing identifiable specimen, a diagnostic photograph, or a diagnostic recording. Abbreviations are (P) photograph, (R) sound recording, (V) video clip, (S) specimen.

*Class II:* An accepted sight record written up independently by two or more observers.

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

*Class IV-A:* A record for which there exists a majority of evidence in support of the observer's identification: the record is probably correct, but not beyond reasonable doubts.

*Class IV-B:* A record for which there exists insufficient evidence for evaluation.

*Class IV-C:* A record for which there exists a majority of evidence in favor of an identification other than what was submitted.

*Class V:* The identification is correct, but the bird represents or may represent an escapee from artificial aviculture or an introduced bird not yet established in Pennsylvania.

#### **Format of This Report**

The records in each section are arranged taxonomically following the 2017 American Ornithological Society Check-list of North American Birds. The number in parentheses after the species

name represents the number of accepted records, including those in this report, since the establishment of PORC in 1989. A (+) after the number signifies accepted historical records prior to the formation of PORC. Each accepted record includes the locality and county and date(s) when known. In many cases, dates are taken from the seasonal reports published in Pennsylvania Birds, and from incidental information gleaned from the PABIRDS email listserv, the Pennsylvania Birders Facebook Group, the PARBA GroupMe text message alert service, and its regional sub-groups and the eBird database. Enclosed in parentheses following the date are the name(s) of the observer(s) who submitted documentation. Following the list of observers is the PORC record number, the record's classification and the votes for/against. All photographs, video, and sound recordings are currently being held with the Secretary and archived on the PORC section of the PSO Website.

#### **2015 Accepted Records**

##### **Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) (14)**

One in breeding plumage at Nockamixon State Park, *Bucks*, 24 July 2015 (Carl Engstrom (p); 002a-01-2015; Class I-P). 5/1. This is the second summer record in the state.

One at Presque Isle State Park, *Erie*, 26 December 2015 (Mary Alice Koeneke, Glenn Koppel, Jerry McWilliams (p); 002a-02-2015; Class I-P). 7/0. Photo published in PB V30:N1.

##### **Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) (92+)**

One on the Susquehanna River near the West Fairview Boat Launch in Harrisburg, *Dauphin*, 21 April 2015 (Ian Gardner (V), Ed Bernot; 009-01-2015; Class I-P). 7/0.

##### **Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) (1)**

One at Van Sciver Lake, *Bucks*, 18 November 2015 (Devich Farbotnik (p), Bill Keim, Nick Pulcinella, Chuck Berthoud (p); 063-01-2015; Class I-P). 7/0. An amazing find at a small lake where it remained for a few days, providing the first state record. Photo published on the cover of PB V29:N4.

##### **Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*) (41)**

One at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, *Philadelphia*, on various dates from 23 August – 21 October 2014 (Ann Reeves, Michael David (p), Mike Fialkovich (p) Holly Merker (p), Devich Farbotnik; 074-01-2015; Class I-P). 7/0. This may be the same bird that was originally discovered during the PSO Meeting in May during a field trip to the refuge. It was then reported in August and regularly into October as observers visited the refuge to see it due to its regular appearances. The bird was on a daily schedule where it took flight mid-morning from an apparent roost site outside of the refuge, soaring over the impoundment for a few minutes, then returning to the roost site. It was occasionally reported at other times in the day but was most reliable in the morning. This was the most reliable and long staying Anhinga recorded in the state and one of the few that was not a flyover at a hawkwatch. In addition to Image 1, a photograph of the bird in flight was published in PB V29:N4.



Image 1. Anhinga, John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, Delaware, 29 September 2015. One of the few observations of the bird perched. Photo by Michael David.

**Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*) (41)**

Two at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, Philadelphia, 30 July – 7 August 2015 (Paul Bernhardt, Al Guarente, Deuane Hoffman, Todd Fellenbaum, George Armistead, Damon Orsetti, Brian Henderson, Frank Windfelder, Ann Reeves, Carl Engstrom, Michael David; 087-01-2015; Class I-P). 7/0. Photo published in PB V29:N4.

**Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) (142)**

One at Lake Caroline, Bucks, 1 May 2015 (Jessica Pellien, Dan Graffius; 089-01-2015; Class I-P). 7/0.

**White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) (44)**

An immature at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, Philadelphia, 1 August 2015 (Todd Fellenbaum; 093-01-2015; Class I-P). 7/0.

An adult at Green Lane Park, Montgomery, 17 October 2015 (Kevin Crilly; 093-02-2015; Class I-P). 7/0. Photo published in PB V29:N4. One of the few adults ever recorded; most records are immature birds.

An immature at Wildwood Lake Park in Harrisburg, Dauphin, 8 July 2015 (Ian Gardner (p.v); 093-03-2015; Class I-P). 7/0. There were ebird entries of this individual from 8-26 July. Photo published in PB V29:3.

**King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*) (8)**

An immature male at the mouth of Walnut Creek, Erie, 6 December 2015 (Jerry McWilliams (p); 145-01-2015; Class III). 6/0. Observed in flight with a flock of Red-breasted Mergansers during McWilliams' fall waterfowl survey. Six of the eight state records have been from Erie.

**Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) (31)**

One on the Allegheny River in the city of Warren, Warren, 14 March 2015 (Stephen Dowlan (p); 149-01-2015; Class I-P). 6/0. An immature bird well photographed.

**Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*) (15)**

A female on the Delaware River, Northampton, 20 January 2015 (Matthew Sabatine (p); 155-01-2015; Class I-P). 7/0. The photographs submitted show the stubby yellow bill and more importantly the difference in head shape compared to the female Common Goldeneyes it associated with. This species has been regular at this location in recent years.



Image 2. Barrow's Goldeneye (right), Delaware River, Northampton, 20 January 2015. Fortunately, the bird turned its head to illustrate the steep forehead and elongated rear of the head. Photo by Matthew Sabatine.

**Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) (106)**

One at Eagleville, Montgomery, 21 September 2015 (Kim Gruener, Anthony Uhrich (p); 171-02-2015; Class I-P). 7/0.

One at the Militia Hill Hawkwatch, Fort Washington State Park, Rich Conroy; 171-03-2015; Class III). 6/1.

One at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Berks, 25 September 2015 (Laurie Goodrich; 171-04-2015; Class III). 6/0.

**Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) (6+)**

One at Hawk Mountain, Schuylkill, 4 October 2015 (Pablo Santoja, David Barber; 186-01-2015; Class III). 7/0.

One at Militia Hill Hawkwatch, Fort Washington State Park, Montgomery, 23 October 2015 (Peter Burns, Andy Fayer; 186-02-2015; Class III). 7/0.

While there are many sight records of this species, thorough documentation is important for acceptance. This is a species that is rarely photographed in the state because they are always seen flying over, the majority at hawkwatches.

**Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*) (2+)**

One at Presque Isle State Park, Erie, 26 May 2015 (Mary Birdsong (p), Jerry McWilliams; 258-01-2015; Class I-P). 7/0. Photo published in PB V29:2. This was the second record from Presque Isle; the first was in 1976.

**Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) (14)**

One at Lake Redman, York, 26 March 2015 (Chuck Kling (p), Robin Smith (p), Carolyn Mathur (p), Mike Yerger; 268-01-2015; Class I-P). 7/0. Photo published in PB V29:2.

**Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) (8+)**

One at Greencastle Reservoir, Franklin, 26 September 2015 (Ian Gardner (p), Michael David (p), Mark Vass, 321-01-2015a; Class I-P). 7/0. Photo published in PB V29:N4.



Image 3. Black-necked Stilt, Lake Redman, York, 26 March 2015. Photo by Richard Cleary.

**Kelp Gull** (*Larus dominicanus*) (1)

One at The Point and Duck Hollow in Pittsburgh, Allegheny, 17-18 January 2015 (Ben Coulter (p) (v), Mark VanderVen, Tom Moeller, Dan Weeks, Jeffrey Cohen; 352-01-2015; Class I-P). 7/0. The bird was first observed at The Point 17 January and a provisional identification was made, documented with photographs and video. This was followed up by additional observers the following day. An extraordinary first state record with a thorough description accompanying photographs. Photo published in PB V29:N1.

**Gull-billed Tern** (*Sterna nilotica*) (12)

Five at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, Philadelphia, 8-9 August 2015 (Andy McGann (v); 362-01-2015; Class III). 5/1. First heard calling, then observed flying over the refuge at treetop level 8 August and recorded on video. Despite the video submission, this record is a Class III because identification details cannot be seen in the video, however the written description provided the information leading to acceptance. The following day a single bird was photographed at that location; however, that record was not submitted to PORC. A photo of that individual is published in PB V29:4. Out of all records in the state since 1992, only one was not observed during late summer/early fall. The timing of this record falls perfectly in the window for migrant and vagrant terns.

**Chuck-wills-widow** (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*) (31+)

One at Michaux State Forest, Cumberland, 21 June 2015 (Ted Nichols II (r), Vern Gauthier, Bill Oyler; 463-01-2015; Class I-R). 7/0. Loud and clear audio of the bird calling left no doubt to the identification.

One at Fort Indiantown Gap, Lebanon, 17 June 2015 (Ian Gardner, Paul Dennehy; 463-02-2015; Class III). 7/0. One heard calling in June and July at this location, the same general location a bird has been spending the summer annually since 2005.

**Pacific Slope Flycatcher** (*Empidonax difficilis*) (5)

One at Berks County Heritage Center, Berks, 24 December 2015 (Michael David (p), David Yeany II, Alex Lamoreaux, Sarah Hungerford, Tom Johnson (r); 538-01-2015; Class I-R). 7/0. While the photographs of this bird are excellent, they don't completely eliminate all other possibilities. The bird's distinctive call note was recorded aiding in identification. Photo published in PB V30:N1.

**Western Kingbird** (*Tyrannus verticalis*) (29+)

One at Palmerton, Carbon, 11 October 2015 (Richard Rehrig (p), Barbara Rehrig, Billy Weber, Michael David (p), Rick Wiltraut; 557-01-2015; Class I-P). 7/0. Photo published in PB V29:N4.

**Cave Swallow** (*Petrochelidon fulva*) (11)

One at Bald Eagle State Park, Centre, 15 December 2015 (John Kauffman, Doug Wentzel, Jerod Skebo, Josh Potter, Brian Sedgwick, Jason Beale; 576-01-2015; Class III). 7/0.

**Mountain Bluebird** (*Sialia currucoides*) (7)

A male at Pipersville, Bucks, 27 December 2015 and 7 January 2016 (Diane Allison (p), Ben Vizzachero, Michael David (p), Ann Rhoads, Zack Moyer, Andy McGann; 649-01-2015; Class I-P). 7/0. Photo published in PB V30:N1.

**European Robin** (*Erithacus rubecula*) (1)

One visited a feeder in Yardley, Bucks, 21-22 February 2015 (Pam Newitt (p), August Mirabella, many observers; 658-01-2015, Class I-P). 7/0. This bird was a surprise visitor to a feeder during a snowy day. The committee decided since there is no evidence of this bird arriving to Bucks County by unnatural means along with some evidence of vagrancy or at least unusual dispersal in Europe and Iceland during the same winter, this bird should be accepted as a Class I and first state record for Pennsylvania. There is one piece of evidence that supports natural vagrancy during the winter of 2014-15. The European Robin exhibits a short-distance migration or dispersal every winter from breeding territories throughout Europe and regularly flies as far away as the Azores Islands, Northern Africa, and Iceland, but only in low numbers. In the winter of 2014-15, Iceland experienced a larger influx of birds than normal. In an average winter season 1 to 8 birds are recorded on the island nation from November to March. Between November 2014 and March 2015 at least 31 birds were reported in Iceland, increasing the possibility of vagrancy to the U.S. by means of a storm or favorable winds. Photographs published in PB V29:N1.

**Western Tanager** (*Piranga ludoviciana*) (11+)

A male visiting a feeder in State College, Centre, 21 November 2015 (Dick Snyder (p), Mike Fialkovich (p), David Yeany (p), many observers; 782-01-2015, Class I-P). 7/0. This bird was photographed at a feeder by the homeowner and was observed and photographed by many observers during its prolonged stay into spring. Photos and an article published in PB: V29:N4.

**Hoary Redpoll** (*Carduelis hornemanni*) (30)

One at the Philadelphia Naval Business Center, Philadelphia, 17 January 2015 (George Armistead (p), Anne Reeves, Martin Dellwo; 887-01-2015, Class I-P). 7/0. The excellent photographs show the overall pale plumage, white rump, and small bill.



Image 4. Hoary Redpoll, Philadelphia Naval Business Center, Philadelphia, 17 January 2015. Photo by George Armistead.

**RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification not established.**

(Votes are listed as for/against. A vote of 6/1 or 7/0 is required for acceptance).

**Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)**

One in Glen Mills, *Delaware*, 29 July 2015. (067-01-2015; Class IV-B). 0/7. This bird was observed in flight only while observer was driving. The bird itself was never described and the observer was not 100% certain of the identification. The committee did not have the details necessary to make a determination regarding this record.

**Double-crested Cormorant (white crested subspecies) (*Phalacrocorax auritus* ssp. *cincinatus* or *albociliatus*)**

One at Peace Valley Park, *Bucks*, 14 April 2015; 069a-01-2015; Class I-P). 0/7. The *cincinatus* subspecies breeds in Alaska and the *albociliatus* subspecies breeds along the west coast of North America. The submitter provided excellent details regarding subspecies, the ranges, identification and vagrancy. After the submitter consulted several experts for further opinions, the committee concluded subspecific identification in the field is not reliable based on that supplemental information. This is an excellent example of researching and discussing the identification of a subspecies that potentially may occur in the state. A photo of the bird was published in PB V29:2.

**Willet (Eastern) (*Catoptrophorus semipalmata*, ssp. *semipalmata*)**

One at Peace Valley Park, *Bucks*, 21 April 2015 (278a-01-2015; Class IV-B). 0/7. This record went through two rounds of voting due to the difficulty separating Willet subspecies. The bird may very well have been an eastern subspecies of Willet, but there was not enough evidence to draw that conclusion with confidence. The bill was a little longer than expected for eastern, but not out of range. The extensive barring and stocky build is consistent with eastern. A few other characters that were not available include details of the spread wing and a recording of the call which led the committee not to accept the record as an eastern subspecies. There are instances such as this where despite the observer's best efforts to document a rare bird, some important details just are not attainable because a bird does not do what we want it to do. A photo of this individual was published in PB V29:2. For information regarding Willets in Pennsylvania, see *Status on field identification problems of the Willet subspecies in Pennsylvania*, PB V12:N2.

**Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)**

One at Lyon's Lake Park, *Lebanon*, 31 December 2014 (348-01-2014; Class IV-A). 3/3. This is another difficult identification that requires plumage details that were not visible in the many good photos submitted. This record went through two rounds of voting. Some members of the committee thought the photos showed a Thayer's Gull but others preferred to see details in the spread primaries and tail to completely eliminate Iceland Gull. Due to the lack of those details (because through no fault of the observer the bird was not observed or photographed in flight) the committee was divided on accepting this record.

**Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)**

One at Loyd Roland Memorial Park, *Lancaster*, 25 April 2015 (171-01-2015; Class IV-B). 2/4. Most committee members felt the description was simply not detailed enough to warrant acceptance.

**Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)**

One at Factory, *Lehigh* 18 June 1992 (780-01-2015; Class IV). 1/6. The description looked fine however points that were cause for concern regarding this record include the length of time between the observation and the submission of the report, the bird singing from a rooftop, the loss of the original notes and the confirmation of the

song by another party but no evidence of an actual recording or confirmation.

**Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*) ()**

One visited a feeder in Rush Twp., *Susquehanna*, 26 January 2013 (887-05-2013, Class IV-B). 0/7. There were characteristics of this bird that fit both Common and Hoary Redpoll. Very limited streaking on the undertail coverts and pale feathers on the rump supports Hoary Redpoll, while the facial structure and overall lack of frostiness on the bird was a better fit for Common Redpoll. The facial structure was also similar to other Common Redpolls in the photos submitted.

**The PORC would like to thank all the observers for submitting rare bird documentation to the committee for review.**

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