

## PA Rare Bird Report

<b>Submission Date</b>	2018-06-03 13:19:04
<b>Observer's Name</b>	Elizabeth Cain
<b>E-mail</b>	lizziecain@yahoo.com
<b>Phone</b>	412-384-8706
<b>Observer's Address</b>	6622 Guffey Rd. Elizabeth PA 15037 United States
<b>Names of additional observers</b>	Day 2 5/6/2018 : John Cain, Rylie Cain, Ryan Cain, Bob Mulvihill, Geoff Malosh, Jim Hausman, Shannon thompson, David Wilton, Day 3, 5/7/2018: Michael David, Jason Horn, Rick Wiltraut, Mark Vass, Dave DeReamus, Malcolm Harter, Chris Lituma, David Yeany II, John Flannigan, Leslie Feree, Tim Salinetto, David Salinetto, Donn Steele, Melissa Easter, Caolyn Mahan, Carl Engstrom, Brad Perouez, Tom and Janet Kiehl, Gail and Mary Carns, Sayre Greenfide, Becky and Steve Szabo, Steve Schmit, Holly Merker, Davich Farbotnik, Brian "BQ" Quindland, Todd Hoor, Peter Robinson, Alyssa Karmann, Fred Kachmarik, Roger and Margaret Higbee, Tony Bruno, Mike and Sarah Weible
<b>Species (Common Name)</b>	Varied Bunting
<b>Species (Scientific Name)</b>	Passerina versicolor
<b>Number of individuals</b>	1
<b>Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)</b>	Adult in Breeding Plumage, Male
<b>Observation Date and Time</b>	05-05-2018 2:20 PM
<b>Did you submit this sighting to eBird?</b>	Yes
<b>Link to eBird checklist</b>	<a href="https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45425972">https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45425972</a>
<b>County</b>	Allegheny
<b>Location (City, Borough, Township)</b>	Forward Township
<b>Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)</b>	6622 Guffey Rd, Elizabeth, PA 15037
<b>GPS coordinates of sighting</b>	Latitude 40.2278817 Longitude -79.8735906 elevation 340 m
<b>Habitat</b>	Backyard with deciduous trees and shrubs, some pines, bird feeder
<b>Distance to bird</b>	3-4 feet outside kitchen window

**Viewing conditions**

overcast day on Saturday 5/5, mostly sunny on Sunday 5/6 and Sunny on Monday 5/7

**Optical equipment used**

Nikon Action 7X35 9.3, Nikon Action EX 8X40 8.2

**Description**

Was a little larger than the house finches that were nearby, smaller than the cardinals. Black mask at eyes, blue above beak and red patch on back of head. Chest was red, back of body was red and blue and grayish, tail had blue on it

**Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)**

Day 1 - sat 5/5 - bird was seen around 2:15pm at the feeder outside window. He flew off to the hawthorn tree that's about 6 feet away when he noticed me, then he flew back into feeder and back and forth to hawthorn tree and feeder before leaving. Day 2 - same pattern of flying in, eating at the platform of the feeder but also around the ground. flew into hawthorn tree when spooked and generally traveled to feeder by flying to the bushes on the sides of the feeder then either up into the feeder or around the ground of feeder.

**Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)**

I knew we only have a small number of birds with blue in PA and I knew it wasn't a blue bird, or an eastern bluebird. I doubted indigo bunting because I have seen those and know they do not have red.

**Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:**

\*\*please note - the link I provided to ebird was not created by me but by one of the birders here. there are a few ebird records created while people were here I just copied one.

Day 1, Saturday, May 5

I first noticed a strange bird around 2:15 pm. I was in the kitchen and looked outside at the feeder that's about 4-5 feet from the window. I caught a glance of blue and red; as I approached for a better look it flitted to the hawthorn tree that's within 10 feet to the left and behind the feeder. I grabbed my binoculars and watched as it flew back to the bush to my left, next to the feeder. It hopped to the ground and ate the black oil sunflower seeds that had fallen under the feeder, in the mulch. A house finch pair, some red winged blackbirds and a blue jay or two were feeding at that same time (variously on ground and at feeder). The strange bird was very spooked anytime it sensed my movement and flew away to the aforementioned hawthorn tree. I managed to get a good look through the binoculars and could see he was blue and red, with dark eyes and dark gray/black on his face.

I wrote a post on PA Birders Facebook site for ID help around 2:30. I described it as looking like a male house finch- except it was blue where it should have been red. I failed to mention there was red splashed about his face and head as well. As I waited for ID suggestions from that site, I referred to my Birds of Pa book and flipped to the "blue section". I didn't expect to find this bird there and expectations were met - nothing of the kind inside. I located the bird again in the hawthorn tree and managed to get two abysmal photos with my point and shoot as he again made his way to the feeder. I added these into the comments and amazingly there were some suggestions. One person said it was probably an escaped exotic and since I couldn't find anything in my book or online via the Merlin Bird ID app, I figured it was a lost pet. Watched a little and didn't see it anymore and regular life took me away from the kitchen window the rest of the day.

Day 2 - Sunday, May 6

I hate to admit I was in the kitchen most of the day but only glanced out now and then as I was making lunch and hanging out with a friend. During these quick looks I saw only the regulars - lots of red wing black birds, house finches, blue jays, chickadee and titmice. Later in the day, around 4:30 - I logged back on to Facebook and looked at all the comments on my PA birders page post-after not being online since the day before. As I was reading, I picked up on the excited buzz that people were thinking that this may be an astounding vagrant. I saw Aleene Jones had mentioned varied bunting and had asked where red was on his body. Max Kirsh was the first to confidently say it looked like a varied bunting and one had once been seen in Ontario, well outside of its range, in the past. These comments made me think oh my it probably wasn't an exotic escapee and I ran to the window with my 8 year old daughter and we sat and watched and waited to see if it would come back. At approx 5pm, he flew to the feeder several times, landing there after hopping around in the bushes next to the feeder, or watching from that same hawthorn tree. He would eat from the ground but also go up to the feeder. He was easily spooked by any movement in the window, a blue jay chased him off once as well. He seemed more comfortable around the house finches, white crown sparrows and even the female cardinal that landed. I managed to get better photographs and posted them to the PA birders post in the comments and that's when everyone said THAT is a varied bunting and it may be the first one ever seen in PA. I contacted Bob Mulvihill who was at my house within thirty minutes or so, in the six o'clock hour, with six birders with cameras and scopes. They all were able to see and photograph the bird, which seemed to come to the feeder and eat for 5-7 minutes then leave for a while and return. My guess is it would be absent maybe 20 minutes, perhaps less. He was not present when everyone left at approx 8pm.

Day 3 May 7

We put a sheet over the kitchen window the night before so as not to disturb/frighten the birds while the family was in the kitchen and the visiting birders were observing from the hill. Dave Wilton was there from 6:15 am to 4:30pm. He said the bird was present at feeder when they arrived. The pattern for the day was generally that the bird would feed for 5-10 minutes then leave and return an hour later. It once stayed around 20 minutes during that time.

My husband and I sat on the observation hill after the 2nd to last group of the day left, around 6:00pm. As we watched, the last two birder visitors of the day arrived just as he left the feeder after 10-15 minutes. It was about a half hour later that it returned (approx 6:45pm). Fed till roughly 7pm. It returned around 7:21pm (and was much more frequent thereafter. Rarely absent. We remained outside until 8:30 pm and it was nearly constantly at the feeder. It may leave when the birds with it were spooked. Or it may take a short break (3-5 minutes) and return. It would generally hide in the two bushes beside the feeder or the same hawthorn mentioned earlier. When we went inside at 8:30, he was still at the feeder.

The next day, May 7 - thirteen Birders arrived at 6:30 am. There was no sightings. That group was entirely departed at 10:30 and two late arrivals stayed until noon. No sightings.

I observed frequently from the house after that and he did not return. Two birders arrived around 2 pm and stayed till 4. They also did not see the bird, nor has anyone since.

**Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)**

Yes. I posted to PA Birders where people first suggested varied bunting; Robert Mulvihill, Ornithologist, also came to my house on Sunday 5/7 and confirmed the ID. Also present were eyewitnesses Geoff Malosh, Jim Hausman, Shannon Thompson and David Wilton. We also had observers on the third and final day of sighting (5/6) who confirmed and took photos:

**During**

What Bird, Cornell Lab Of Ornithology webpage

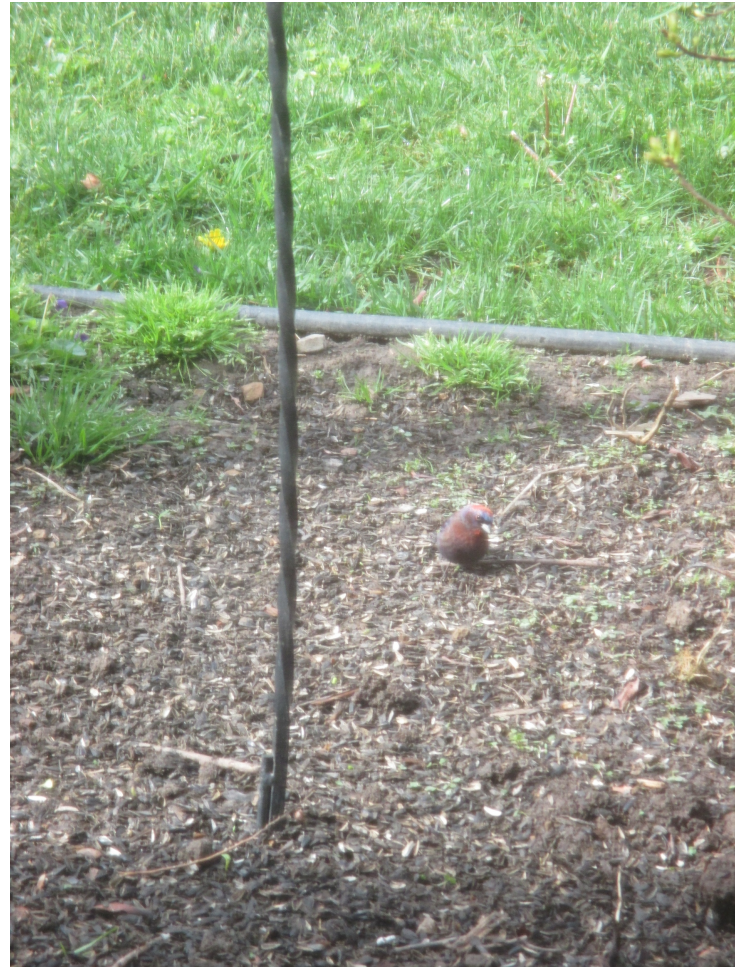
**Supporting evidence (check all that apply)**

Photograph  
Video

**Upload images, audio, video or drawings**



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[IMG\\_3515.JPG](#)





[IMG\\_3516.JPG](#)





[IMG\\_3517.JPG](#)

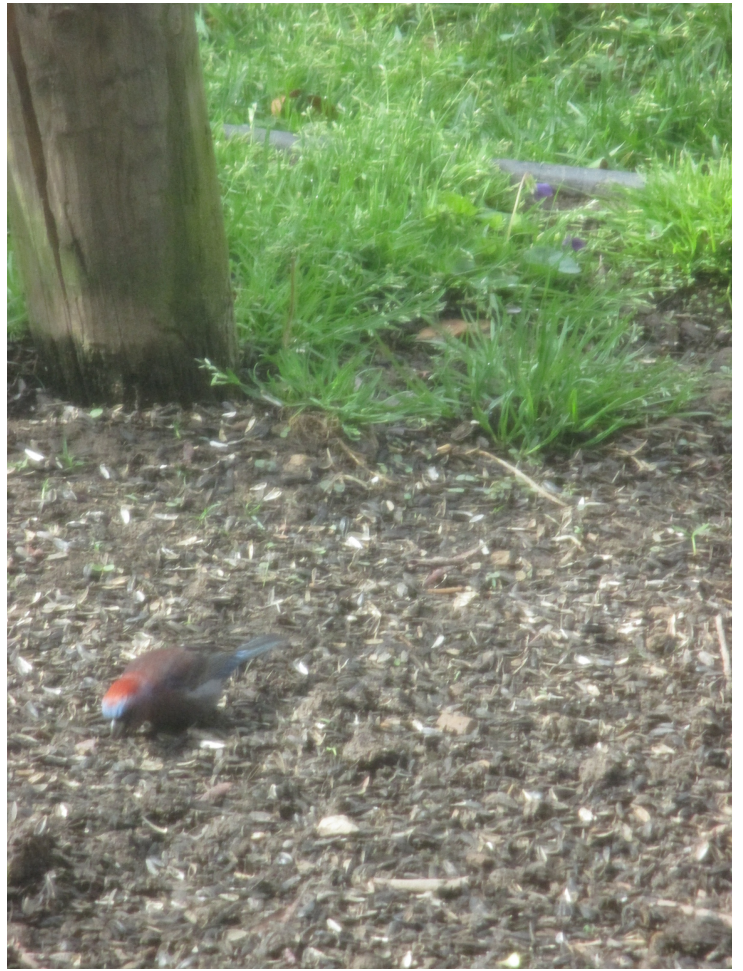


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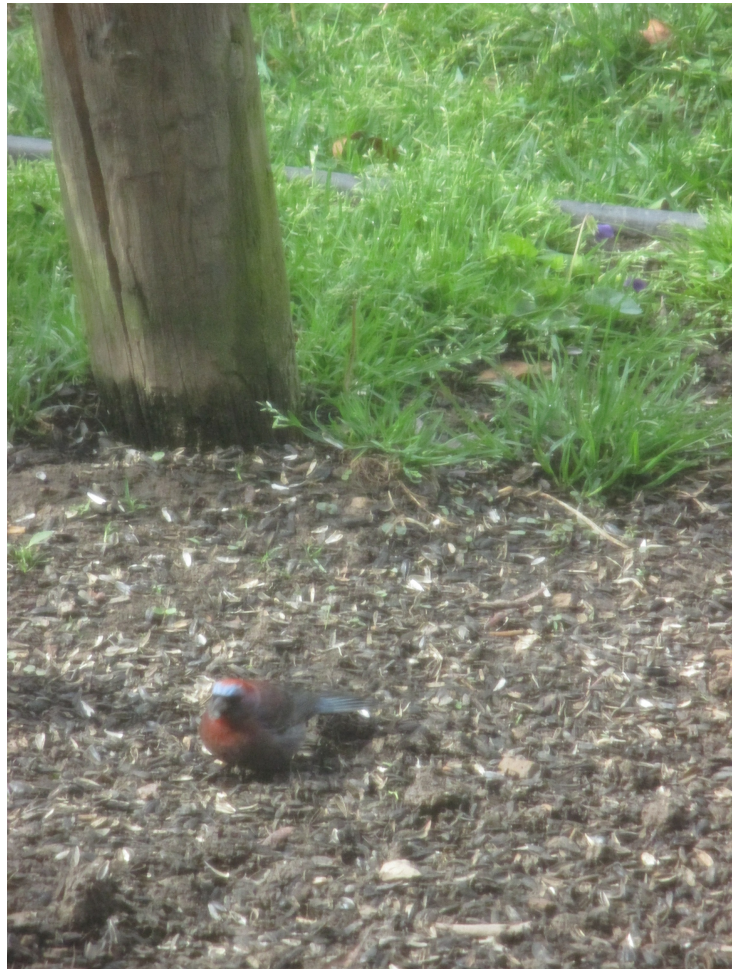


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PORC-webform00500

## PA Rare Bird Report

<b>Submission Date</b>	2018-05-19 22:00:44
<b>Observer's Name</b>	Mark Vass
<b>E-mail</b>	mvas1200@yahoo.com
<b>Observer's Address</b>	United States
<b>Names of additional observers</b>	J. Horn,D. Wilton,R. Wiltraut,D. DeReamus,S. Thompson
<b>Species (Common Name)</b>	Varied Bunting
<b>Species (Scientific Name)</b>	Passerina versicolor
<b>Number of individuals</b>	1
<b>Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)</b>	Adult male
<b>Observation Date and Time</b>	05-07-2018 10:30 PM
<b>Did you submit this sighting to eBird?</b>	Yes
<b>Link to eBird checklist</b>	<a href="https://ebird.org/pa/view/checklist/S45489773">https://ebird.org/pa/view/checklist/S45489773</a>
<b>County</b>	Allegheny
<b>Location (City, Borough, Township)</b>	Elizabeth
<b>Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)</b>	Guffey Rd.
<b>Habitat</b>	Back yard of a home
<b>Distance to bird</b>	25 yards
<b>Viewing conditions</b>	clear day
<b>Description</b>	Red nape...blue head and rump
<b>Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)</b>	foraging at a feeder
<b>Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:</b>	Photographed by others
<b>Click to edit</b>	PORC-webform00491