

PA Rare Bird Report

<b>Submission Date</b>	2015-06-21 17:09:23
<b>Observer's Name</b>	August Mirabella
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<b>Phone</b>	2153680594
<b>Observer's Address</b>	Street Address: 1443 Wheaton Lane City: North Wales State / Province: Pennsylvania Postal / Zip Code: 19454 Country: United States
<b>Names of additional observers</b>	Pam Newitt(finder on 2/21), Judy Mirabella(only ones present when we were there)
<b>Species (Common Name)</b>	European Robin
<b>Species (Scientific Name)</b>	Erithacus rubecula
<b>Number of individuals</b>	1
<b>Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)</b>	Adult
<b>Observation Date and Time</b>	02-22-2015 12:30 PM
<b>Did you submit this sighting to eBird?</b>	Yes
<b>Link to eBird checklist</b>	<a href="http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S23624928">http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S23624928</a>
<b>County</b>	Bucks
<b>Location (City, Borough, Township)</b>	Lower Makefield Twp.
<b>Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)</b>	Homestead Dr.
<b>GPS coordinates of sighting</b>	40.2185658,-74.8243665
<b>Habitat</b>	Residential yard
<b>Distance to bird</b>	20 ft.
<b>Viewing conditions</b>	Clear sunny
<b>Optical equipment used</b>	7x42 Bins, 15-60 Power Scope

**Description** Brownish bird with whitish belly and off white flanks. Breast orange extending to lores and around eye. Depending on position and fluffing up of feathers or

not, a gray narrow strip separated the orange from the brown. Dark rather fine bill. The bird displayed no leg bands or feather wear from cage abrasion. Photos taken by Pam Newitt on 2/21 are definitive. I was told she submitted pictures to PORC.

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

Trying to feed on suet cake but starlings didn't let it stay long. Also, just sitting nearby on a fence and in vegetation. Apparently, it was driven to the feeder during the snow storms of 2/21 and 3/5 and following days. It was only seen a few days out of the total duration of 2/21 to 3/7.

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

I don't know what else to confuse it with other than E. Bluebird maybe but brown color eliminates that. I can say when I first saw it I said I could easily dismiss it as a bluebird if seen from a distance. So, how many have been in N. America that were overlooked.

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

Since the ID is certain, I am submitting the following informational since the issue is natural occurrence. I understand that this would be a first but somebody has to be first. There is no reason in my opinion this couldn't be a wild bird based on the influx (INVASION) in Iceland this winter and it being in the expected time frame of a wintering/migrating bird away from its breeding grounds. The timing of a Queens, NY bird (see below) was also during a normal migration/wintering timeframe. I expect to have more details on the magnitude of the invasion sometime soon, but the compiler in Iceland has other commitments at the moment. When I get that info I will send an addendum to this report. The following is a compilation that may be of interest to the PORC team.

1. From Yann Kolbeinsson 4/2

Last autumn saw a massive influx of European Robins in Iceland with very good numbers in the eastern part as well as in the south and into the southwest where they tend to be more infrequent. I don't think it was a record influx, although I haven't gathered the sightings. Highest years were 1982 with 100 birds (autumn influx) and 1994 with 175 birds (spring influx). Then comes 1987 with 45 birds. Average 1979-2009 is just below 26 birds. Total recorded till 2009 was 953 with occasional breeding. So last autumn's influx will at least be in third place.

Given how easily they appear to make it to Iceland I wouldn't be surprised one could reach eastern Canada, whether via Iceland and/or Greenland and then perhaps move on further south. They are tough little birds, at least when it comes to surviving the cold (with a little help from old ladies...).

PS-YANN HAS PROMISED A FINAL STATUS WHICH I WILL SEND TO PORC AS AN ADDENDUM TO THIS SUBMITAL.

2. Here is a link to a blog from Iceland provided by Devich Farbotnik that mentioned the large influx. Scroll down to see all comments.  
<http://ornosk.com/tag/globrystingur/>

3. From Armas Hill regarding an Iceland website, etc.

The website has been primarily the work of a birder named Yann Kolbeinsson. In addition to him, there is a network of some very good birders in Iceland, but not many. Remember that overall there are not many people in Iceland. About 75 per cent or more of them are in the area of the one city of any account, Reykyavik.

<https://notendur.hi.is/yannk/birdnews.html>

4. From Gerry Dewaghe

An analysis of eBird data done 3/29 from Gerry Dewaghe follows below. However, first, based on Armas' comments on human population density and geographic limited area, and my assumption that many birders do not use eBird, I would assume that the eBird entries represent only a small fraction of the birds actually seen and many more that never were seen by humans. Jerry also commented to me that he did not count birds but only entries. I

went in to eBird(2/22) and tried to count birds, taking only the highest counts

went in to eBird(3/30) and tried to count birds taking only the highest counts from each site for the Oct-Dec period. In some cases entries at the same site were a month apart, which may indicate different birds. My counts totaled over 50 birds. If the long time between entries was considered and the likelihood that even close together dates may not represent the same birds since quantities per entry varied, then the actual eBird counts would be much higher.

Per Gerry:

Re: European Robin in eBird

I did some data mining on ebird which proved to be a bit interesting:

I was aware the robin is an occasional visitor in Iceland but could not find any records for May/ June 2014 indicating potential breeding. However there was a huge influx of birds in late fall (Oct-Dec) of 2014 (67 records) far exceeding the previous 5 years. These records cover three general areas on the island; the Southeast coast (19 records), the Southwest coast (27 records) and the North coast (21 records). As a point of reference, there were only 2 records for the entire year of 2013, 6 records for 2012, 34 records for 2011 and 10 records for 2010. The bulk of the records for 2011 were along the north shore in March. The rest of them, were along the south shore.

For 2014, I looked at the report dates and they were very interesting:

On the southeast coast there was a large influx of birds starting October 8 2014.

On the Southwest coast, the influx started October 10 2014

On the North coast the influx started October 15 2014.

For all three areas, the records were concentrated in October and early November with only two records each in December for the Southwest and North coast.

MY curiosity took me East of Iceland to the Faroes Islands, about midpoint between Scotland and Iceland.

For the period on April / May 2014 there are a few (3) records indicating potential breeding on the islands. The rest of the reports (5) are all for the late fall starting on October 7, 2014 !!!

I have a strong suspicion that some weather event created a huge push westward from the European mainland across the North Atlantic. I could not find any weather information covering the North Atlantic for October 2014 (September 2014 is the last info I could find).

The data does not seem to indicate that the birds remained on the island, but kept going. to where ??

I checked the data for other species thru ebird and found that there was also a movement of Song Thrushes and Chaffinches in October and November 2014 along the East coast. There is also a record of a Mistle Thrush in early October. Neither thrush species appears to be breeders in Iceland. An arrival of Fieldfares was also noticeable in November , alas not concurrent with the robin.

5. Regarding trade in this species, I found only one source, whose web site says out of stock. There were three different links. but they all go to the same source birdproducts.com. I believe another link softbillsforsale.com is a subset of the other site. If there are more, I don't know how to find them. Inquiries to those sites produced no replies on sales volume history.

6. From Marshall Iliff regarding eBird entries:

"Other than the three(now four) Bucks Co. records that are now valid (now invalidated by Tom Johnson), the only other US records are either list building or very obvious errors (e.g., 2 or 4 birds)."

7. There was a Queens, NY bird (no photo) believed to be a correct ID that was submitted to the NYSARC for 12/23/2008. It was accepted to ID but as Origins Uncertain or Unnatural. They felt it was widely available for sale, but my attempts to find out how they came to that conclusion got no reply other than the vast ethnic diversity of the city results in potentially almost anything being found there. This is a very interesting and unusual situation.

being found there. They also state it is a short distance migrant but from what I read, the northern population goes to Spain and some to North Africa. They have reached other islands in the Atlantic. This seems to not exclude the distance to the Northeast as a possibility once they get to Iceland. I received comments from a couple of birders who also questioned that conclusion. An example from Bill Porteous of Panama, "I question the statement that the European Robin is a short distance migrant. The species is resident in the west and south of its range, but birds from northern and eastern Europe winter as far southeast as Spain, and it is these birds which turn up in Iceland and potentially in North America."

FROM NYSARC - European Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)

2008-84-A One, Alley Pond Park, Queens, 23 Dec (Jean Loscalzo)

This European Robin was first identified by Eric Miller. Some unnamed observers had seen the bird earlier. Northern populations of European Robin are considered short-distance migrants. However, there are upwards of 900 records from Iceland, indicating a reasonable but unfulfilled potential to reach North America. Surprisingly, this insectivorous species is widely advertised for sale, opening the possibility of an escape.

8. For the record, the observer Pam Newitt lived in a residential narrow street with no shoulders and snow on the edge at the time. Her yard was fenced. She and her husband worked and they have kids and dog. She knew the implications of going public and could not accommodate the invasion both logistically and due to neighbors. She regretted not being able to go public and was apologetic. She initially sent an e-mail to over 420 people in my Yahoo! Group but the subject was Crazy!!! Many probably never even opened it and it probably went to SPAM in many cases. It was dicounted by most. So, only a handful who knew her including me took her seriously. She sent me the photos the night of the observation for my opinion. A handful of folks asked if they could come and they were the only ones to see it. Here is a link to one in China and the results clearly show she made a good decision not going public.

The link below is of the first European robin in China.....this could have been repeated in Lower Makefield.

<https://dearkitty1.wordpress.com/2014/12/06/european-robin-very-rare-in-china/>

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

YES-The picture is clear.

**During**

None

**After**

Before & After -Birds of Europe-Bruun & Slinger & Online photos

**Click to edit**

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