

# Twenty-eighth Report of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

## 2021 Records

### August 6, 2024

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The Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (hereafter “PORC” or “the committee”) evaluates and archives documentation received for any species or recognized form included in 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 2021 that include 59 records of 41 species. The 53 accepted records represented a 90% acceptance rate. Reports were received from 22 counties.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** There was one documented first state record in 2021: **Neotropic Cormorant**, reported in *Lycoming* by Allison Matlock. Other highlights included first county records for **Purple Gallinule** (*Centre*), **Pink-footed Goose** (*Northampton*), **King Eider** (*Berks*), **White Ibis** (*Butler*), **White-faced Ibis** (*Lawrence*), **Black-necked Stilt** (*Mercer*), **Willet** (*Montgomery*), **Black-legged Kittiwake** (*Franklin*), **White-winged Dove** (*Franklin*), **Calliope Hummingbird** (*Berks*), **Say’s Phoebe** (*Northampton*), **Varied Thrush** (*Lawrence*), **Swainson’s Warbler** (*Fulton*), **Yellow-headed Blackbird** (*Allegheny*), and **Scott’s Oriole** (*Lancaster*).

**HOW TO SUBMIT DOCUMENTATION:** Documentation can be submitted on the PORC section of the PSO Website at this address: [https://pabirds.org/porc/PORC\\_User\\_Video.php](https://pabirds.org/porc/PORC_User_Video.php). 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. Written documentation is valued by the committee. There have been records for which a photograph was not considered diagnostic, but the report was still accepted as Class III (sight record) based on evidence presented in the observer’s written account. There have also 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.

PORC also reviews reports submitted to eBird for review-level species when those records include a photo or audio file and have previously been accepted by the local eBird reviewer.

**THE PORC COMMITTEE:** Members, Chairs, and Secretaries for 2021–2024.

- David Yeany II (2020–2022): Voting Chair, 1<sup>st</sup> term (2021–2022)
- Tessa Rhinehart: Secretary, non-voting (2020–2022)
- Julia Plummer: 1<sup>st</sup> term (2021–2023), Chair (2023), non-voting Chair (2024)
- Emily Ritter: Secretary, non-voting (2023–present)
- Devich Farbotnik: 4<sup>th</sup> term (2019–2022)
- Mike Fialkovich: 4<sup>th</sup> term (2019–2022)
- Billy Weber: 4<sup>th</sup> term (2019–2022)

- George Armistead: 1<sup>st</sup> term (2020–2023)
- Scott Stoleson: 1<sup>st</sup> term (2021–2023), 2<sup>nd</sup> term (2024–2026)
- Amy Davis (2022–2024)
- Annie Lindsay (2022–2024)
- Corey Husic (2022–2024)
- Carl Engstrom (2023–2025)
- Nick Liadis (2023–2025)
- Eric Zawatski (2024–2026)

Records from 2021 were voted on by members of the committee starting in 2021 and completed in 2024. The committee met virtually, including the PORC annual meeting. We conducted ongoing business through email exchanges throughout the year as necessary.

#### CLASSIFICATION OF RECORDS

**Class I-P/R/V/S:** 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.

**Class I-Pe:** A record accepted through the eBird expedited review process.

**FORMAT OF THIS REPORT:** The records in each section are arranged taxonomically according to the 2023 American Ornithological Society *Checklist of North American Birds* (Chesser et al., 2023). 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. Each accepted record includes the location, county, and date(s), when known. Enclosed in parentheses following the date is the name(s) of the observer(s) who submitted documentation. Records submitted from previous years are indicated in the description. All photographs, video, and sound recordings are archived on the PORC section of the PSO Website.

#### 2021 ACCEPTED RECORDS

**Black-bellied Whistling Duck** (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) (27): One observed in Antrim Township, *Franklin* 17 July 2021 (Bill Oyler; Class I-P). Initially found by Michael Saylor, with many observers reporting eBird checklists for the bird. Photos provided to PORC were taken by Dave Ebbitt. Four additional birds were observed in Eckville, *Berks* 23 August 2021 (Bracken Brown; Class III). The birds were sighted from the North Lookout at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary.

**Pink-footed Goose** (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) (17): One observed in Bath, *Northampton* 21 January 2021 (Todd Watkins; Class I-Pe). First observed by Michael Schall and Jason Horn at Seiple Farm Pond.

**King Eider** (*Somateria spectabilis*) (13): A first-year male was observed at Lake Ontelaunee, *Berks* 02 January 2021 (Barton Smith; Class I-P). The bird was observed for 10 minutes before it flew off.

**Eared Grebe** (*Podiceps nigricollis*) (45): One bird in non-breeding plumage was observed in Doylestown, *Bucks* 25 November 2021 (Andrew Harrington; Class I-P). The bird was initially observed sleeping at Peace Valley Park. The bird was also photographed by Andrew and Linda Hamp and by August Mirabella.

**White-winged Dove** (*Zenaida asiatica*) (14): One observed in Letterkenny Township, *Franklin* 14 July 2021 (Bill Oyler; Class I-P). Bird was observed on a private farm lane. Photos were provided by Gavin Anderson and Dave Ebbitt.

**Calliope Hummingbird** (*Selasphorus calliope*) (5): One in Mohnton, *Berks* 17 November 2021 (Sandy Lockerman; Class I-P). Captured and banded at a feeder. The bird was a hatch-year female in a residential, forested backyard. The bird was first observed on 13 November 2021 and last observed on 21 November 2021. Sandy initially observed a hummingbird two miles north of this location on 10 October 2021, suspected to be a Calliope due to small size and “puff-ball” appearance.

**Purple Gallinule** (*Porphyrio martinicus*) (13): A deceased specimen was found and photographed in Millheim, *Centre* 06 November 2021 (Susan Haney; Class I-S). Susan Haney found a fresh specimen beneath the south-facing front windows of an Auto Part store at 11:30 AM on 6 November. An employee told her that he heard a loud bang around 7 AM that may have been the moment of the strike. Photos were taken in the evening of 6 Nov after the specimen had been frozen for transport to a teaching collection at Penn State (care of Dr. Julian Avery).

**Black-necked Stilt** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) (21): One in Sharpsville, *Mercer* 12 August 2021 (Mark Vass; Class I-P). The bird was photographed at Shenango Wildlife Area. Observed by many between 12 and 14 August 2021.

**Willet** (*Tringa semipalmata*) (16): One of the “Eastern” subspecies in Bethlehem Township, *Northampton* 3 May 2016 (Dave DeReamus; Class I-P). One adult in breeding plumage observed at the St. Luke’s Hospital Anderson Campus retention pond. One in Green Lane borough, *Montgomery* 24 May 2021 (Paul Heveran, Paul Driver; Class I-P). Found by Cliff Hirst. Audio recordings by Paul Driver suggest this is an “Eastern” subspecies.

**Black-legged Kittiwake** (*Rissa tridactyla*) (24): One in Guilford Township, *Franklin* 5 September 2021 (Chris Blazo, Mark Vass, Bill Oyler; Class I-P). The immature bird was found by Chris Blazo at the Kriner Road retention ponds. It was observed by several others between 5 and 6 September 2021 (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1.** Black-legged Kittiwake at the Kriner Road retention ponds, *Franklin* 6 September 2021. Photo by Bill Oyler.

**Black-headed Gull** (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) (37): One in Erie, *Erie* 22 January 2021 (Jerry McWilliams; Class III). One adult in basic plumage was observed at the west pier of Presque Isle State Park.

**California Gull** (*Larus californicus*) (14): One in Erie, *Erie* 20 June 2021 (Jerry McWilliams; Class I-Pe). The possible second summer bird was observed at Gull Point, Presque Isle State Park.

**Least Tern** (*Sternula antillarum*) (17): One in East Greenville, *Montgomery* 2 June 2021 (Scott Godshall; Class III). Bird was in adult plumage, first spotted by Sara Busch, and also observed by Jason Hall, Kenneth Rieker, and Jason Horn at the Green Lane Park-Church Road Bird Sanctuary.

**Royal Tern** (*Thalasseus maximus*) (12): One adult at Presque Isle State Park, *Erie* 19 June 2021 (Mary Birdsong; Class I-Pe). Tern was observed roosting on the southernmost tip of the Gull Point peninsula.

**Brown Booby** (*Sula leucogaster*) (9): One in Philadelphia, *Philadelphia* 3 May 2021 (Liam Hart; Class I-Pe). An adult was observed flying low up the Delaware River at the Philadelphia Naval Yard. An observer on the New Jersey side of the river observed the bird flying back downriver about 40 minutes later.

**Anhinga** (*Anhinga anhinga*) (15): One observed in Green Lane, *Montgomery* 31 August 2021 (Bill Etter; Class III). The bird was observed through a spotting scope at Knight Lake/Deep Creek. It was described as a large, sleek bird with a long, wide tail, very long, thin neck, and straight, dagger-like bill. Rich brown neck and breast with dark eyes apparently indicate a juvenile bird. Bird was initially reported on 29 August by James Funk.

**Neotropic Cormorant** (*Nannopterum brasilianum*) (1): One observed in Williamsport, *Lycoming* 11-13 April 2021 (Allison Matlock, Mike Fialkovich; Class I-P). The immature bird was first found and reported by Matlock, with a group of Double-crested Cormorants, at the Williamsport Dam.

**Great Blue ‘White’ Heron** (*Ardea herodias occidentalis*) (4): One observed in Philadelphia, *Philadelphia* 8 July 2021 (Rebecca Froggatt; Class I-P). The bird was observed along the Manayunk Canal from 8 until at least 26 July. Froggatt initially did not realize how rare the bird was until meeting George Armistead and discussing the find while observing the bird along the path. Froggatt identified the bird as a Great Blue Heron because of the pale legs and large bill.

**Western Cattle-Egret** (*Ardea ibis*) (30): One observed in Muddy Creek, *Butler* 18 November 2021 (Martin Carlin; Class I-Pe). Observed flying from the south shore overlook at Moraine State Park.

**White Ibis** (*Eudocimus albus*) (39): One in Butler Township, *Butler* 4 July 2021 (Melissa Bulfone; Class I-P). The juvenile was observed walking around a grassy field, in an area with nearby ponds and lakes. Also observed by Mark Vass, Glenn Koppel, and Mary Alice Koenke.

**White-faced Ibis** (*Plegadis chihi*) (6): One in Cochranville, *Chester* 17 September 2021 (Barry Blust; Class I-P). The bird, in non-breeding plumage, was found in a shallow farm pond. The red eye, pale pink facial skin, and reddish knees were field marks used to differentiate this from a Glossy Ibis. Bird initially reported by Zach Baer. One in Washington Township, *Lawrence* 24 May 2021 (Mark Vass, Martin Carlin; Class I-Pe). Also observed in a farm pond. Photos show a long-curved bill, dark brown rusty red with green sheen body, white face, and red eyes.

**Swallow-tailed Kite** (*Elanoides forficatus*) (32): One observed at Tyler Arboretum, *Delaware* 30 July 2021 (Jennifer Tuliszewski; Class I-P). Observed soaring around the edge of the meadow and over the woods.

**Mississippi Kite** (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) (53): One observed in Douglass Township, *Montgomery* 11 June 2021 (Paul Heveran; Class I-Pe). Observed early in the morning flying right at treetop level. Its main flight was described as slow but tight circles mixed with smooth, deep flaps.

**Western Kingbird** (*Tyrannus verticalis*) (28): One observed in Philadelphia, *Philadelphia* 19 August 2021 (Benjamin Filreis; Class I-P). The juvenile bird was observed by multiple birders in Bartram’s Garden.

**Say’s Phoebe** (*Sayornis saya*) (10): One in Bethlehem Township, *Northampton* 14 September 2021 (Linda Freedman; Class I-Pe). Photos of the bird observed in Housenick Memorial Park appear similar to an Eastern Phoebe but with pink/orange underparts.

**Varied Thrush** (*Ixoreus naevius*) (30): One in West Middlesex, *Lawrence* 5 March 2021 (Mark Vass; Class I-Pe). The bird was observed eating food left by the homeowner.

**Hoary Redpoll** (*Acanthis hornemanni*): One in Washington Township, *Butler* 02 January 2021 (David Yeane II; Class I-P) and one in North Warren, *Warren* 4 February 2021 (Alejandra Lewandowski; Class I-Pe). Photos from *Warren* show the bird surrounded by Common Redpolls (Fig. 2); comparison highlights the overall frostiness and steely color, compared to the brownish Commons. However, as of July 2024, the American Ornithological Society has lumped Common Redpoll (*Acanthis flammea*), Hoary Redpoll (*Acanthis hornemanni*), and Lesser Redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*) into a single species; this will be the final summary sharing reports of Hoary Redpolls as a separate species.



**Fig. 2.** Hoary Redpoll with Common Redpolls in a weedy, snow-covered field, *Warren* 4 February 2021. Photo by Alejandra Lewandowski.

**Dark-eyed ‘Oregon’ Junco** (*Junco hyemalis [oreganus group]*) (17): One in Indiana Township, *Allegheny* 1 January 2021 (David Yeane II; Class I-Pe). The second-year male was observed at a feeder. Photos show high contrast between dark charcoal gray hood and brown back; this combined with pinkish flanks separate this from nominate *J. h. hyemalis*. High contrast separates from the ‘Cassiar’ group. One in Jones Township, *Elk* 14 March 2021 (Brendyn Baptiste; Class I-Pe). Adult male was observed with a flock of Slate-colored Juncos. The adult male had a dark hood, contrasting with a brown back and tannish undersides.

**Harris’s Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia querula*) (26): One in Salisbury Township, *Lancaster* 22 January 2021 (Cynthia Beyer; Class I-P). The bird was observed feeding with a flock of White-throated Sparrows. It was slightly larger and with a dark patch on the chest.

**Nelson’s Sparrow** (*Ammospiza nelsoni*) (22): Observed in Donegal, *Westmoreland* 29 September 2021 (Mike Fialkovich; Class I-P). The bird was observed in cattails along Donegal Lake. First found by Shannon Thompson and photographed by many other birders.





**Fig. 3.** Nelson's Sparrow at Donegal Lake, *Westmoreland* 29 September 2021. Photo by Mike Fialkovich.

**Yellow-headed Blackbird** (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) (13): One in Elizabeth, *Allegheny* 11 May 2021 (Mark Vass; Class I-Pe). The subadult male was observed at a feeder in a suburban yard.

**Western Meadowlark** (*Sturnella neglecta*) (6): One in Armagh Township, *Mifflin* 2 April 2021 (Rob Dickerson; Class I-Pe). The bird was in grass fields on Back Mountain Road. Extensive yellow in the malar region and the pattern of tail barring identifies this as a Western Meadowlark.

**Scott's Oriole** (*Icterus parisorum*) (2): One in Kirkwood, *Lancaster* 10 April 2021 (Pamela Fisher, Randall Nett, Mark Vass; Class I-Pe). The adult male was observed at a feeder and foraging in nearby trees. Photos show a bird with a yellow body, black hood and back, and white wing bars.

**Swainson's Warbler** (*Limnithlypis swainsonii*) (12): One in Ayre Township, *Fulton* 14 May 2021 (Bill Oyler; Class III). The bird was observed in a mature forest with dense understory. Bird identified by its plain-brown back, creamy underside, rusty cap, and dark eyeline. Also observed by Vern Gauthier.

**Summer Tanager** (*Piranga rubra*) (43): One observed in Warren Township, *Franklin* 30 June-4 July, 2021 (Bill Oyler, Gavin Anderson; Class I-P). The female bird was observed giving *pi-tuk* and *pi-ti-tuk* calls, with loud chattering, showing dark yellow underside and solid darker greenish-yellow back and wings. Also observed by Bob Koontz with photos from Gavin Anderson.

**RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED  
(identification not established)**

**Harlequin Duck** (*Histrionicus histrionicus*): One at Presque Isle State Park, *Erie* 27 November 2021 (Class IV-A). A written description of the bird was submitted. While most committee

members felt the description favored a Harlequin Duck, a few felt that more details were needed to approve a female sea duck seen at a distance.

**Barrow's Goldeneye** (*Bucephala islandica*): One at Lake Nockamixon Tohickon Boat Launch, *Bucks* 16 March 2021 (Class IV-A). The record included several comparisons between Barrow's Goldeneye and Common Goldeneye, which was noted by some committee members. However, other committee members raised concerns that the initial eBird report lacked these comparisons and specific field mark notes. The record went through two rounds of votes.

**Pacific Loon** (*Gavia pacifica*): One at Pocono Summit Lake, *Monroe* 3 May 2021 (Class IV-C). After reviewing the submitted photos, many committee members identified this bird as a Common Loon. Some members noted the lack of a diagnostic chin strap for Pacific Loon, among other features including shape and size.

**Anhinga** (*Anhinga anhinga*): One in Sellersville, *Bucks* 10 July 2021 (Class IV-B). A written description of the bird was submitted. While some committee members felt that some of the written description was consistent with an identification of Anhinga, there were concerns that the field notes were limited. Some members noted concerns that the submission described the bird as 50% larger than a Double-crested Cormorant, which is not an accurate comparison between the species.

**Mississippi Kite** (*Ictinia mississippiensis*): One at Nockamixon State Park, *Bucks* 21 July 2021 (Class IV-A). A written description of the bird was submitted. Many committee members felt that the record was reasonable, as the shape described was distinctive for a Mississippi Kite. But many committee members also wished more details were provided. There were concerns that the bird was only observed briefly and at a distance.

**Savannah 'Ipswich' Sparrow** (*Passerculus sandwichensis*): One at Maple Knoll Farms, *Bucks* 6 November 2021 (Class IV-A). A written description of the bird was submitted. Some committee members were concerned that there were not sufficient details to rule out other subspecies.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:** The PORC would like to thank all the observers for submitting rare-bird documentation to the committee for review. Additionally, acknowledgment is given to Emily Ritter, for her time in editing this essay.

**Reference**

Chesser, R. T., S. M. Billerman, K. J. Burns, C. Cicero, J. L. Dunn, B. E. Hernández-Baños, R. A. Jiménez, A. W. Kratter, N. A. Mason, P. C. Rasmussen, J. V. Remsen, Jr., and K. Winker. 2023. *Check-list of North American Birds*. American Ornithological Society. <https://checklist.americanornithology.org/taxa/>