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Cover: Greater White-fronted Geese (*Anser albifrons*) invaded western and central Pennsylvania in late winter. The largest reported flock was 68 at Bald Eagle State Park, Centre, part of which was photographed here 8 February. (Wayne Laubscher)

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With this issue, I take on the editorial responsibilities for *Pennsylvania Birds* from Geoff Malosh. Geoff's tenure as chief editor began in 2007 and spanned 34 issues, continuing the level of excellence established by previous editors Nick Pulcinella, Katrina Knight, and, of course, Frank and Barb Haas, the founders of our state journal.

When a new issue of *Pennsylvania Birds* arrives in one's mailbox and is first opened, I wonder how many readers give thought to the process required to assemble the final product. The time and the effort required are substantial, of course, and it happens entirely thanks to volunteers. Most conspicuous are the names on the first pages – the chief editor, the seasonal editors, and the writers of various annual reports and feature articles.

Then there are the county compilers (listed below), as important as anyone, if not more so – from whose effort the most substantial part of the journal derives. Largely unsung, they take the time to gather, digest, and assemble raw and unorganized information from their respective counties, converting it into something much more than a mere list of bird sightings. As innovative as eBird is, the computers at Cornell do not write reports that put the accumulated data into context in the way of veteran birders with local knowledge. In the next issue I will focus more on the county compilers, a group that includes quite a few new to the job.

Finally, of course, is the foundation of the journal - hundreds of birders who take the time to report their sightings to county compilers, post them on PABIRDS, and/or enter them into eBird.

Back to Geoff, I must further point out that not only was he chief editor, but he also did all photo compiling and all layout of the magazine; *and* he contributed three county summaries to each issue, which he will continue; *and* he wrote the fall season state-wide summary, again, which he will continue. (Not to mention being photo editor for the

Second BBA and eBird reviewer for several western counties, all during his time as chief editor of Pennsylvania Birds).

One might have to be delusional to try to follow in those footsteps unless, perhaps, one has lots of help, which I do. My wife Deb Grove is doing the layout work and some copyediting. I will also have a dedicated photo editor – my son Lewis filled that job for this first issue while I searched for someone to take on this task permanently (successfully it now appears – see next issue).

A few obligatory remarks about myself: I grew up in rural southern York County near Felton, in the Red Lion School district. As a teenager, the only bird that particularly attracted my attention was the Ring-necked Pheasant, of which York then had an abundance. In 1971, about the time pheasant numbers crashed in southeastern Pennsylvania, I went to Penn State as a Biology major, graduating in 1975. (Little did I know that one of my fellow Biology majors at Penn State was Doug Gross, now a pre-eminent ornithologist in Pennsylvania and former president of PSO).

From Penn State, I went to grad school at Ohio State. There I met Deb, a fellow grad student, and it was there that semi-serious birding began. I cannot recall what spurred us to do so, but in 1979, we started going out around Columbus with cheap binoculars and a Peterson field guide. After finishing Biochemistry degrees at Ohio State we moved to post-doctoral positions at the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia in the summer of 1980 (just in time to watch the Phils finally win a World Series). We quickly became acquainted with Tincum and Bombay Hook and Brigantine. But with the jobs and a couple children (Laurie and Lewis, born in Cheltenham), birding time was very limited for the next several years.

In 1984, we took research and teaching jobs at Penn State where we have been until retirement this year. Birding activity gradually increased and by the late 1980s, we became acquainted

for the first time with other people who actively looked for birds, the Kyler's in Huntingdon and the active membership of the State College Bird Club.

Eventually came the standard activities – Christmas Counts, BBS routes, hawk watching at Stone Mt. (beginning in 1991). In 2001, I started the Pennsylvania Winter Raptor Survey project, inspired by winter counts from other states. I have been the Huntingdon compiler for Pennsylvania Birds on-and-off since about 1992. I compiled the Winter Season Summary and Birds-of-Note articles for Pennsylvania Birds for eight years, now turned over to Nick Bolgiano. When Geoff decided last year it was time for a break, I vacillated for several months, but finally agreed to take on the task of Editor.

There will be no immediate substantial changes in the journal – indeed, for now, we will be happy to just get it out on time, or nearly so, and with close to the quality readers have come to expect.

There are, obviously, questions and issues for the future, among which:

- Do we (ever) go to on-line publishing, either entirely or at least as an option?
- The evolving role of eBird in the preparation of the county and seasonal summaries.
- The never-ending challenge of finding writers for articles
- Keeping up the stable of county compilers, and maybe someday having a compiler for all 67 counties.

I look forward to serving the PSO community. To help me do so, I invite comments from members on how you view the journal, what you like and dislike, what parts you read (or don't), and thoughts and suggestions related to the issues posed above.

If you have read this far – Thank You!

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An Account of Large Starling and Blackbird Flocks in Pennsylvania and Regionally

Nick Bolgiano

Large numbers often fascinate, especially when the number is a bird count far beyond what one typically experiences or has even imagined. This article relates such counts of starlings and blackbirds in Pennsylvania and regionally, particularly during the peak period of the 1950s to the 1980s. Also related is how a large starling-blackbird roost in York County may have played a role in the regional dynamics of these gatherings. The Pennsylvania history of these starling-blackbird flocks is not well known, possibly because the participant species are very common and are often considered as pests. Nevertheless, these flocks have their own compelling story, as they contributed to some of North America's largest avian concentrations since the Passenger Pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*), at times more pestilence than pest, while their dwindling has reflected how our landscape and balance of avian populations have changed.

Four species, European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*), and Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*), comprised the vast majority of the birds in these flocks and are the subjects of this article.

Starlings and blackbirds often congregate into communal night roosts during July to April, with the largest usually occurring during winter. The largest starling-blackbird roosts are found in the lower Mississippi Valley, particularly where rice is grown (Meanley and Webb 1965; Meanley 1971); high starling-blackbird counts there included 35-109 million birds at Pine Prairie, Louisiana, during 7 of 8 Christmas Bird Counts in 1982-1989, and 33-45 million birds at Little Rock, Arkansas, during 5 of 7 Christmas Bird Counts in 1963-1969 (National Audubon Society 2015). Large roosts in the south are found as far west as Texas, as far north as Missouri and Kentucky, and as far east as Georgia. East of the Appalachians, the largest starling-blackbird roosts have been found in southeastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, the Chesapeake Bay region, the Virginia-Carolina peanut belt, the South Carolina coastal plain, and the southern Georgia peanut belt (Meanley and Webb 1961a,b, 1965; Meanley 1971, 1975).

Migration pathways vary among the four species, affecting the location and species composition of flocks. Band return data indicate that starlings and cowbirds tend to migrate in a northeast-southwest direction, while red-wings and grackles tend to migrate in a north-south direction (Burt and Giltz 1977). Red-

winged Blackbirds are the most selective in choosing a wintering area, usually wintering in a coastal plain. Starlings, grackles, and cowbirds are less selective in choice of wintering area; in the east, starlings, grackles, and cowbirds may winter in the coastal plain, the Piedmont, or the Ridge and Valley (Meanley and Webb 1961a; Dolbeer 1982).

In the 1960s and 1970s, large flocks of starlings and blackbirds increasingly came to be viewed as pests in many locations, because of crop depredation; the noise, smell, and mess of large roosts; and the fear of contracting the respiratory disease histoplasmosis (Meanley and Webb 1965; Meanley 1971, 1975; Graham 1976). Meanley and Webb (1965) thought that, while starling numbers had increased, blackbird populations hadn't changed much compared to previous decades and suggested that the increased prominence of the starling-blackbird roosts arose from increased birder observations, more concern with the birds as agricultural pests, and the sensation of large roosts appearing in new locations. The control of large starling-blackbird roosts became an intense political issue in Kentucky and Tennessee during the 1970s when millions of birds were killed there, many because of the application of Tergitol, a wetting agent that negates the insulating properties of feathers against cold temperatures. Waste corn left in large amounts in fields was blamed for attracting the birds to roost sites in those states (Meanley 1975; Graham 1976, 1978; Dolbeer et al. 1978).

The Hanover roost, which typically congregated near the Hanover reservoir in southern York County, was Pennsylvania's most significant starling-blackbird roost. It was first recorded during the winter of 1954-1955 (Poole, unpubl. ms.) and lasted until the winter of 1980-1981. During the mid-1970s, trees were cut down to prevent the birds from roosting there (Meanley 1975), though the data indicate that starlings and blackbirds continued to gather in the surrounding region. Documenting those starlings and blackbirds was a focus of the volunteers at the York Christmas Bird Count (CBC) site. Before the CBC season of 1975, the York count circle was moved 26 km southwest, from a center five km east of York to one ten km east of the Hanover reservoir.

In this article, I examine band return, CBC, and Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data to address the following questions: 1) What are the predominant migration pathways for each of the four species and how did these pathways

contribute to regional flock dynamics? 2) When and where were large starling-blackbird flocks observed in Pennsylvania and nearby states? 3) What perspective do breeding bird data add to the flock observations?

Method

Band Returns. Band return data from 1920-2015 were obtained from the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center's Bird Banding Laboratory. For each of the four study species, 8-11 clusters of banding sites were identified as the major banding locations east of -95 degrees of longitude (near Missouri's western boundary). Band recoveries away from banding sites (19-38% of all recoveries) were plotted to discern primary migration pathways. The resulting migration pathway summary figure (Figure 1) is similar to those displayed by Burt and Giltz (1977), but adds context by displaying upon a map the migration pathways from major banding centers. Symbols are plotted at the center of each banding station cluster. Recoveries from banding locations are categorized into one of twelve 30-degree angle segments, with segments centered on the four cardinal directions and 30 degrees to each side. For segments where there were 10 or more band recoveries, a line segment was drawn of length equal to the median (middle value when ordered) band-to-recovery distance and bisecting the 30-degree segment, with the line weight proportional to the number of recoveries in that segment.

Christmas Bird Count. CBC data from 1950-2014 were obtained from National Audubon Society (2015). This analysis concentrates on very large counts, with no adjustment for effort. The year referred to is the year in which Christmas occurs for the count period.

Not surprisingly, there appears to be considerable imprecision in the large starling-blackbird CBC counts, as many were round numbers (e.g. one million) or a round number plus a small number, as if the round number was estimated by one observer party and the small number was the sum from all other parties. Accordingly, general trends in Pennsylvania and regional data are graphically displayed.

The eastern region selected for further study was defined as the area within which most starlings and blackbirds originated from the eastern flyway, as determined by locations of band returns.

Density maps of the starling-

blackbird CBC numbers in this region were created for each of four fifteen-year periods, 1955-2014. The value depicted by symbol size is the mean of the top three starling-blackbird totals in a period, a measure chosen to emphasize those sites where large flocks were found over at least several years. Five sub-regions were identified as having different starling-blackbird dynamics within this eastern region, with trends separately displayed.

Breeding Bird Survey. Survey-wide BBS statistics were gathered to measure population changes among the study species over the period 1966-2013. The 2013 population size was estimated by Partners in Flight (PIF, Partners in Flight Science Committee 2013); the 1966 population estimate was calculated using PIF's extrapolation factor; the 1966-2013 percent annual change is from Sauer et al. (2014); and the 1966-2013 percent change was calculated. Annual mean birds per route values were obtained from Sauer et al. (2014) for each of three regions: Pennsylvania, the eastern BBS region, and survey-wide.

cowbirds flew from western New York and Pennsylvania to the Midwest in the fall (Figure 1).

Pennsylvania CBC. During the first 115 years (1900-2014) of the Pennsylvania CBC, a total of 75.1 million starlings, red-wings, grackles, cowbirds, and blackbird sp. were tallied, which is nearly two-thirds (65.6%) of the 114.5 million individual birds tallied of all species. The vast majority of starlings and blackbirds were observed in southeastern Pennsylvania; starling-blackbird totals of one million or more have been recorded 22 times at southeastern CBC sites. Outside of the southeast, the highest Pennsylvania CBC starling-blackbird count was 34,000 birds reported from Butler County in 1999. Most starlings and blackbirds were concentrated at a few sites - the top four were York, Southern Bucks County, Southern Lancaster County, and Bethlehem-Easton, which tallied 79 percent of all starlings and blackbirds reported in the Pennsylvania CBC.

The first indication of substantial starling-blackbird flocks in the

Pennsylvania CBC are 1937-1941 reports from Reading of 33,000-40,000 starlings and as many as 2000 grackles and 3500 cowbirds. Subsequently, 200,000 starlings were reported from Wyncote in 1952; 700,000 starlings were reported from Lititz in 1955 (a North American CBC high count that year); and up to 35,000 starlings and blackbirds were reported from Lititz in 1957 and 1959-1960.

The peak period of starling-blackbird counts in the Pennsylvania CBC began in 1960, when one million starlings and blackbirds were reported from York. A million or more starlings and blackbirds were reported from York 15 times during the 21-year period 1960-1980. During this period, 55.2 million (88.0%) of the 62.8 million individual birds tallied in the Pennsylvania CBC were starlings or blackbirds and 38.1 million (60.7%) of those were counted at York. Nearly half (48.2%) of all birds counted during the 115 years of the CBC were the starlings and blackbirds counted during the 21-year period of 1960-1980, with one-third (33.3%) of these tallied at York during

Results

Band Returns. The migration summary map (Figure 1) shows that European Starlings and Brown-headed Cowbirds tend to migrate along a northeast-to-southwest axis and Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles tend to migrate north-south, as previously found by Burt and Giltz (1977). Exceptions to this trend occurred for the latter two species in southern New England, where migration was predominantly northeast-southwest along the coast. Migration east of the Appalachians was largely independent from migration in the Midwest, except that some red-wings from Ohio and southern Ontario migrated to the Carolinas, with a smaller number migrating to the Chesapeake Bay (the latter appearing on individual band recovery maps not shown here). The other three species tended not to migrate from the Midwest to the East in the fall. However, some starlings, red-wings, and

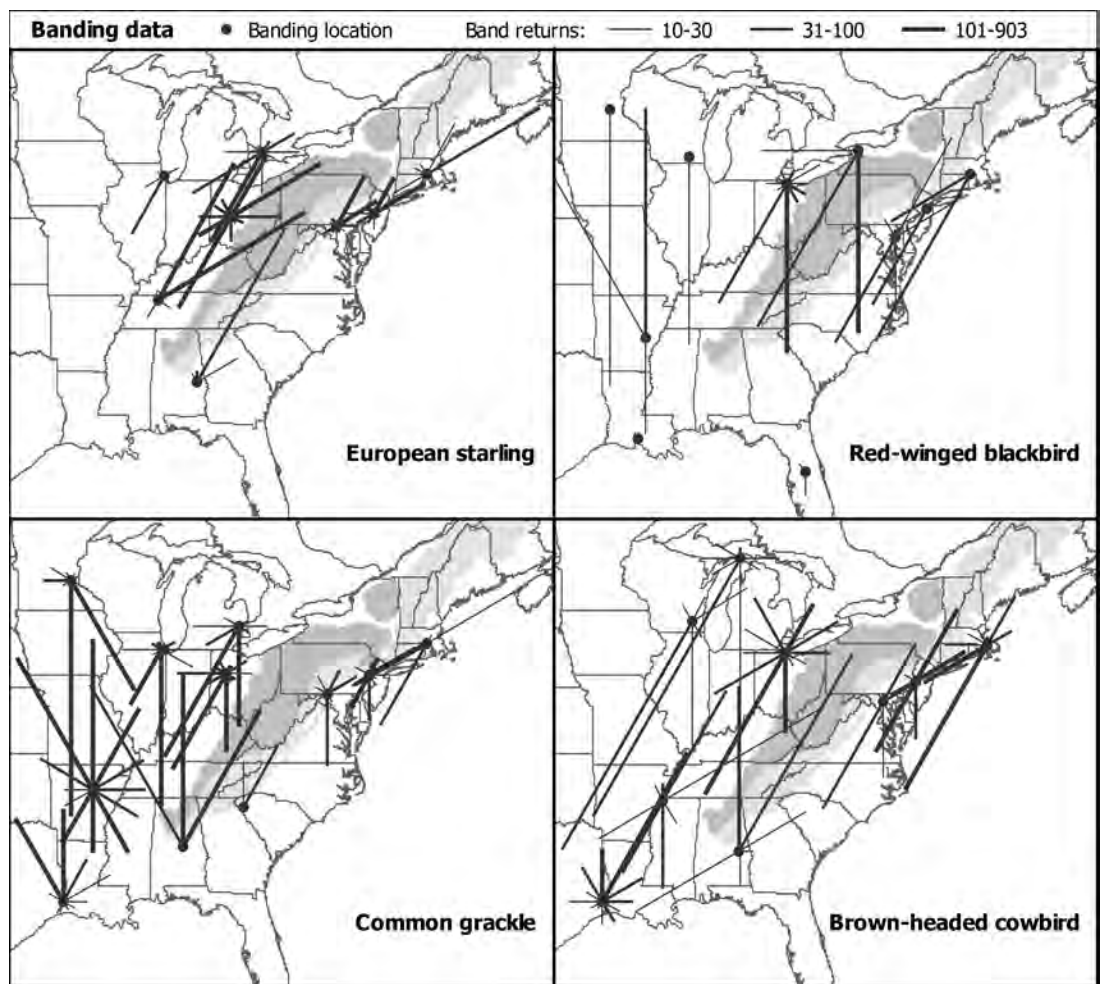


Figure 1. Projections of the median distance of band recoveries from the center of banding location clusters, for each of four species, with recoveries classified into 30 degree spans from their banding locations. Line weights reflect the number of recoveries in each 30 degree span.

that period.

The peak year at York was 1974, when 5 million starlings and blackbirds were reported. More than 3.5 million starlings and blackbirds were estimated there in 1964, 1969, and 1979-1980. The species breakdown at York was 46.3% starlings, 30.9% grackles, and 22.8% cowbirds, but just 0.05% red-wings. More than two million starlings were counted in each of seven years, with the maximum being 2.5 million in 1974. More than a million grackles were also counted in each of seven years, with a maximum of 2.6 million in 1980. Cowbird counts at York were unusually high for an eastern site, exceeding one million in 1964, 1969, and 1974 (Figure 2). York provided the high for all North American CBCs seven times: starlings in 1979; grackles in 1980; and cowbirds in 1963, 1964, 1968, 1974, and 1980.

The second-highest cumulative number of starlings and blackbirds is from Southern Bucks County, with most observed in the in the period 1968-1980. More than one million starlings and blackbirds were tallied in 1971, 1973, and 1974, including more than 2.5 million grackles in 1974. The species composition was 18.7% starlings, 3.9% red-wings, 69.5% grackles, and 14.0% cowbirds (Figure 2). Southern Bucks County provided the high for all North America CBCs twice: grackles in 1971 and cowbirds in 1973.

In recent decades, the Southern Lancaster County CBC has often recorded the highest starling-blackbird tallies in Pennsylvania. It has the third highest cumulative starling-blackbird total among Pennsylvania CBCs, despite its relatively recent origin in 1976. The number of starlings and blackbirds exceeded one million in 1993 and 1999. Fewer starlings and more red-wings have been counted here than at other major Pennsylvania sites; the composition has been 3.9% starlings, 24.2% red-wings, 47.5% grackles, 4.7% cowbirds, and 19.6% blackbirds not identified to species. The cumulative 1.7 million red-wings counted there is the highest total for any Pennsylvania site (Figure 2).

Bethlehem-Easton ranks fourth historically in starling-blackbird counts in the Pennsylvania CBC, but starlings comprised the vast majority, totaling 96.8% of the total. More than 50,000 starlings were counted annually there in the 21-year period 1968-1988, with the high count of 246,000 in 1971. This maximum is much lower than has been observed at the three sites discussed above, but there was a year-to-year consistency in the Bethlehem-Easton counts not seen at the other sites (Figure 2). This pattern of starling domination with relatively low year-to-year variability was also observed at Reading, Harrisburg, Lehigh Valley, Delaware County, Wyncote, Upper Bucks County,

Hamburg, Pittsburgh, and Bernville (ordered by totals).

Large starling-blackbird flocks, similar in composition to the York flocks, were observed at two sites relatively close to York: at Lancaster in 1977-78, 1983, and 1986 and Chambersburg in 1984, with total reported starling-blackbird numbers attaining 1 million at Lancaster in 1977 and at Chambersburg in 1984. At West Chester, Elverson, and Western Chester County, flocks exceeding 100,000 have been periodically reported, with most being grackle-dominated.

Historically, European Starling has been the most numerous species in the Pennsylvania CBC, with 33.3 million birds counted (29.1% of all birds). Starlings first appeared in the Pennsylvania CBC in 1911; the first time an individual site reported more than 10,000 starlings was in 1936; during 1952-1988, a site reported more than 100,000 starlings a total of 43 times. The eleven highest starling counts occurred at York, where the starling count exceeded one million seven times during the period 1963-1980, with a high of 2.5 million in 1974. However, since 1988, no Pennsylvania CBC site has reported as many as 60,000 starlings and the average annual maximum among all sites has been 22,000, despite participant effort generally increasing over time.

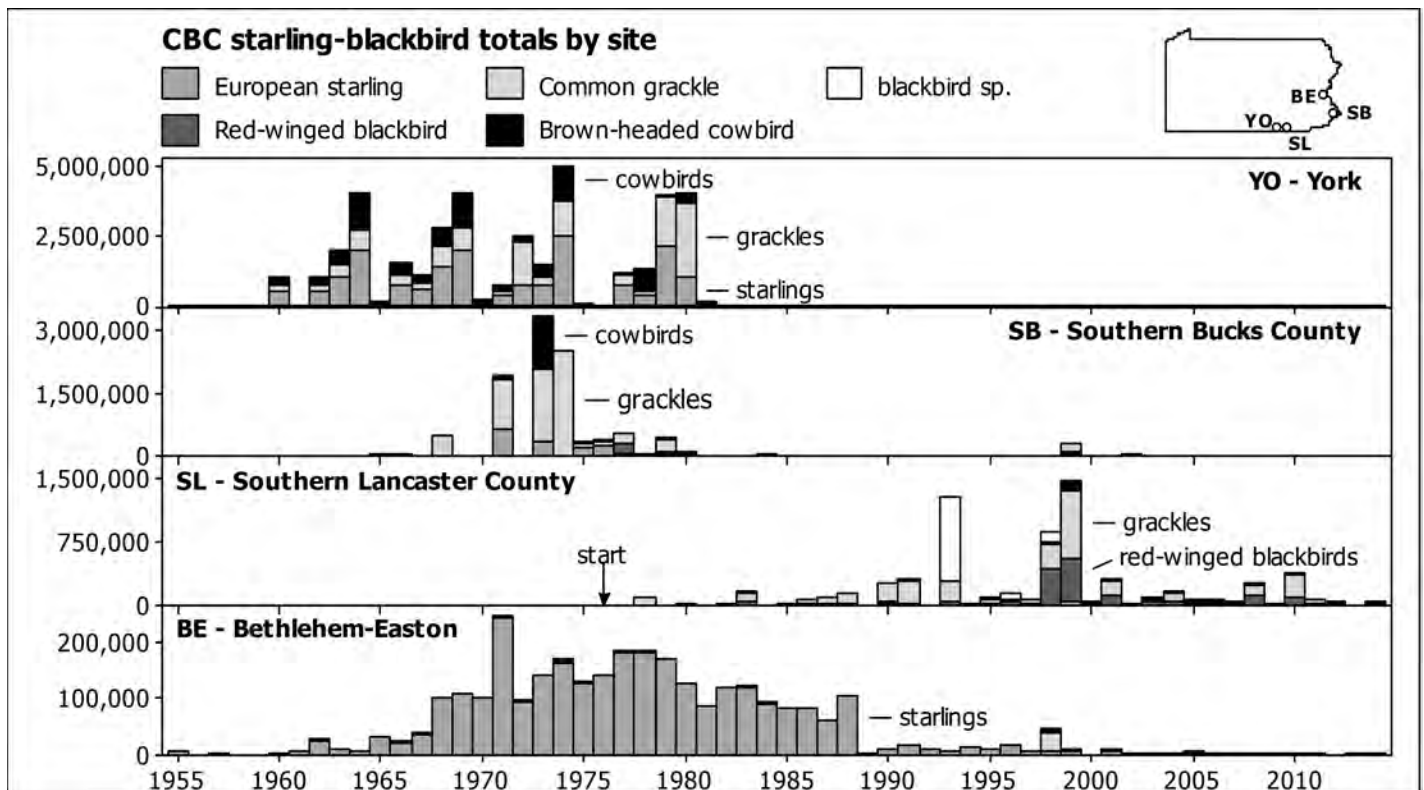


Figure 2. CBC totals of starlings and three blackbird species, 1955-2014, reported from the four Pennsylvania sites with the highest historical totals. The map shows the site locations. Note that the Y scales differs.

Grackle numbers also gradually increased in the Pennsylvania CBC. The first time a count in excess of 1000 occurred was in 1937 and the first grackle count of over 10,000 was in 1957. Single-site reports of more than 100,000 grackles have occurred 45 times, starting in 1960 at York. The grackle count exceeded 1 million four times at York and three times at Southern Bucks County during the period 1971-1980, with a high of 2.6 million at York in 1980. The frequency and magnitude of the very large numbers have diminished in recent decades, but high grackle numbers continue to be reported from Southern

Lancaster County and Western Chester County; nearly one-quarter million grackles were reported from Southern Lancaster County in 2010. (also more than one-half million grackles were reported from Western Chester County in 2015 – Ed). Historically, Common Grackle ranks second numerically in Pennsylvania CBC numbers, with 25.4 million birds (22.2% of all birds).

Large numbers of cowbirds are a particularly noteworthy aspect of the Pennsylvania starling-blackbird flocks, as the highest cowbird breeding abundance is in the central part of the continent (Lowther 1993). Cowbirds were

first reported in a Pennsylvania CBC in 1920 and a site count first exceeded 1,000 cowbirds in 1938. The highest cowbird count for any Pennsylvania site was 5000, prior to the first large York count of 300,000, in 1960. A Pennsylvania site has reported 100,000 or more cowbirds a total of 21 times; more than a million cowbirds were counted at York three times and once at Southern Bucks County, with a high of 1.3 million at York in 1964. The Pennsylvania sites reporting the highest numbers of cowbirds were York, Southern Bucks County, Lancaster, and Chambersburg. Cowbird numbers in the Pennsylvania CBC plummeted after the

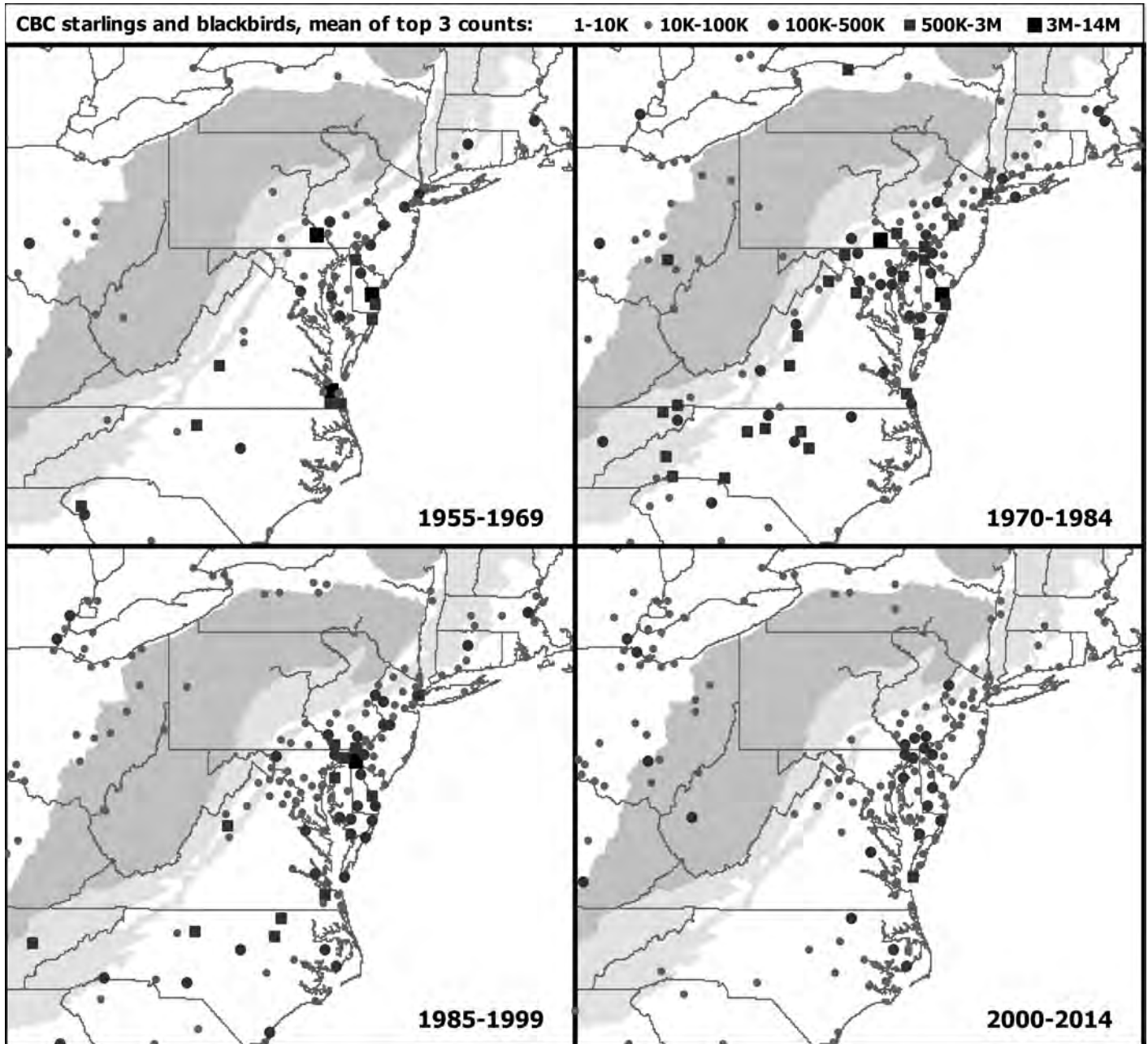


Figure 3. CBC maps of the mean of the top three counts of starling-blackbird totals within each of four 15-year periods, 1955-2014. Shaded areas represent mountainous or upland physiographic provinces.

mid-1980s; since 1986, only once has a cowbird count exceeded 40,000 when 100,000 were reported at Southern Lancaster County in 1999 (also one-quarter million were reported from Western Chester County in 2015 - Ed). Historically, Brown-headed Cowbird ranks third numerically in Pennsylvania CBC numbers, with 12.3 million birds (10.8% of all birds).

Red-winged Blackbird has been the least-reported of the four species in the Pennsylvania CBC. There have been six reports of 100,000 Red-winged Blackbirds at a Pennsylvania CBC site, with the maximum being almost one-half million at Southern Lancaster County in 1999 (since exceeded by the estimated 1.15 million at Western Chester County in 2015 - Ed). In Pennsylvania, the CBC sites with the highest Red-winged Blackbird counts have been along the state's southeastern border: Southern Lancaster County, Southern Bucks County, West Chester, and Western Chester County. Historically, Red-winged Blackbird ranks seventh numerically in Pennsylvania CBC numbers with 2.7 million birds (2.4% of all birds).

Regional CBC. The region studied here includes Pennsylvania, southern New York, and southern New England south to North Carolina. The band return data indicate that most starlings and blackbirds found here are from the eastern flyway, with North Carolina the only state with many migrants from the central flyway, predominantly Red-winged Blackbirds.

The regional distribution of large starling-blackbird counts in each of four 15-year periods is shown in Figure 3. During the first two periods, 1955-1969 and 1970-1984, large counts were observed in southeastern Pennsylvania, western Maryland and Virginia, the Delmarva Peninsula and near the Chesapeake Bay, and North Carolina. During the third period, 1985-1999, the large counts in southern Pennsylvania were east of the Susquehanna River and there were few large counts in western Virginia and in North Carolina. During the most recent period, 2000-2014, there were no large counts in western Virginia or in central and western North Carolina. Large counts were observed from southeastern Pennsylvania south along

the coast, but were much diminished from the earlier periods (Figure 3).

Five sub-regions were identified as having unique starling-blackbird dynamics: 1) a Boston-to-eastern Pennsylvania corridor used primarily by starlings; 2) York and nearby sites in Pennsylvania and Maryland; 3) western Virginia sites in the Ridge and Valley, the Blue Ridge Mountains, and the Shenandoah Valley; 4) central North Carolina sites; and 5) the southern Delaware valley, the Delmarva peninsula, and around the Chesapeake Bay. Trends and species composition in each sub-region are shown in Figure 4.

The corridor from Boston through Connecticut and southeastern New York to eastern Pennsylvania was primarily a corridor for starling migration, as starlings comprised 87% of starling-blackbird numbers. Starling numbers peaked at 1.3 million during the early 1970s to early 1980s, and then gradually declined. Sites with the largest cumulative totals, ordered by totals, were Lower Hudson, in New York and New Jersey; Greater Boston, Massachusetts; Bethlehem-Easton, Pennsylvania;

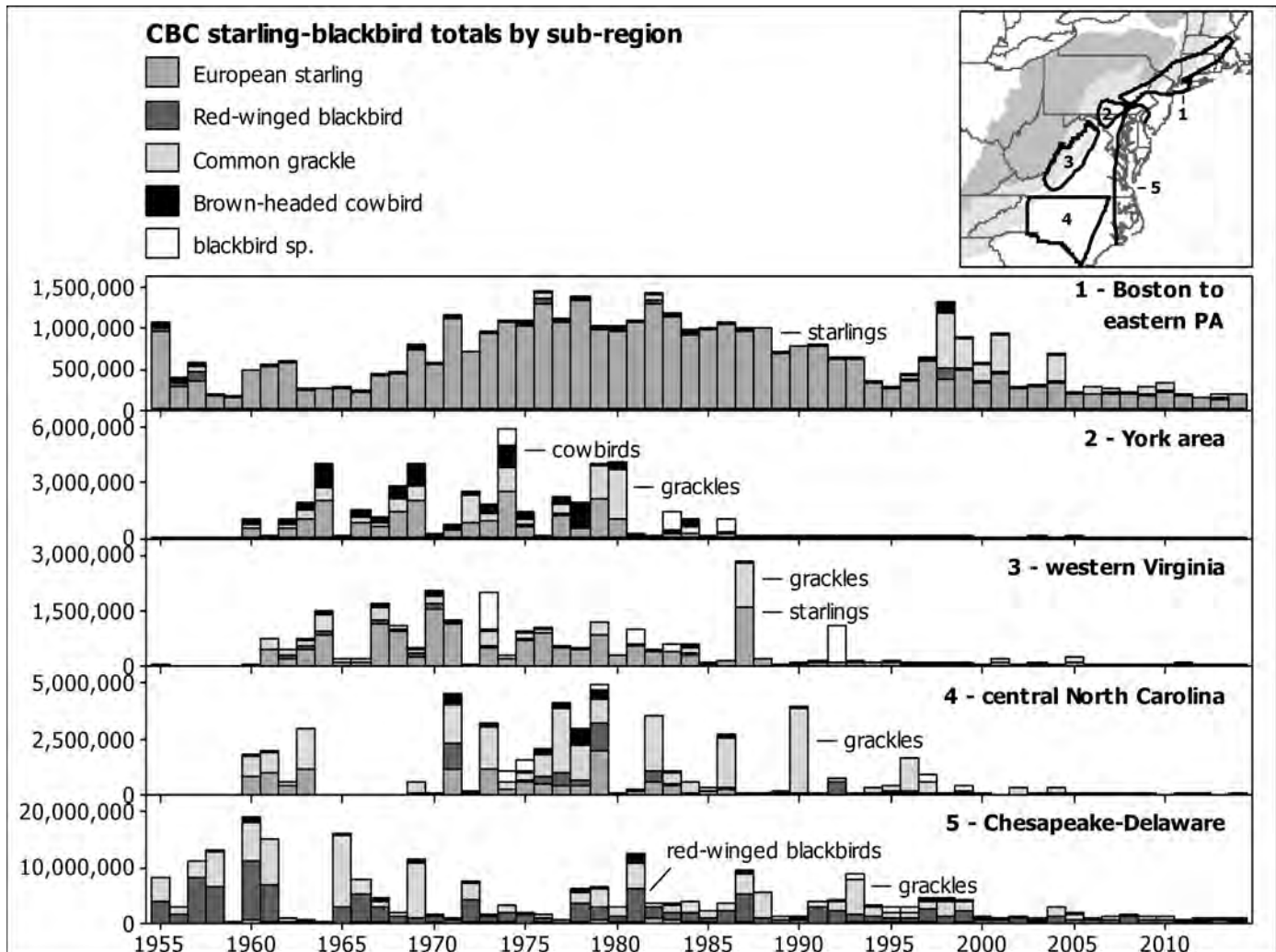


Figure 4. CBC totals of starlings and three blackbird species, 1955-2014, reported from all sites within each of five regions depicted in the map. Note that the Y scales differ.

Hartford, Connecticut; and Walnut Valley, New Jersey (Figure 4). Most of this sub-region's grackles recorded in the late 1990s and early 2000s were at Walnut Valley, New Jersey.

As expected, York area numbers were dominated by counts from the York CBC, but totals exceeded one million starlings and blackbirds six years after the York's last large count in 1980. Other major contributing sites by cumulative totals were Washington County, Maryland, and Lancaster and Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where the species composition of large flocks was similar to the York flocks, but with fewer years of high counts (Figure 4).

Western Virginia flocks consisted primarily of starlings and grackles, with starlings comprising 71% of starling-blackbird totals, and grackles 21% (Figure 4). Sites with the largest cumulative totals were Lynchburg, Northern Shenandoah Valley, Augusta County, and Waynesboro. That flocks in this region were starling-dominated is consistent with the band return data showing the southwestern migration pattern of starlings. In this sub-region, as well as for the central North Carolina and Chesapeake-Delaware sub-regions, sites tended to produce high counts over a span of 4-10 years, though some reported only one high count. The last report of one million starlings and blackbirds in this sub-region was in 1992.

Central North Carolina flocks had comparatively more grackles (57% of starling-blackbird totals), fewer starlings (26%), and more red-wings (11%) than were found in the York and western Virginia sub-regions. The band return data indicate that many of the Red-winged Blackbirds found here were probably from the central flyway. Sites with the largest cumulative totals were Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Roanoke Rapids, Rocky Mount, and Raleigh. High counts extended a few years past those in the York area and Virginia mountain sub-regions, with the last count of one million blackbirds recorded in 1996 (Figure 4).

Chesapeake-Delaware counts differed from observations in the other sub-regions in two ways. One difference is that the flocks were predominantly grackles (47%) and Red-winged Blackbirds (45%), consistent with previous observations (Meanley and Webb 1961 a,b; Meanley 1965). Furthermore, large flocks continue to be found here, with totals of 0.7-1.4 million during the recent nine years (2006-2014), though these numbers are nevertheless much reduced from earlier years.

The highest starling-blackbird counts in both the study region and the Chesapeake-Delaware sub-region were at Norfolk County in southeastern Virginia.

While counts were made at Norfolk County in only 9 years during the period 1954-1965, the highest single count of starlings and blackbirds (15.8 million in 1960) and the highest cumulative total (75 million) were at Norfolk County, despite its short count duration. The birds observed at this site were presumably from the Great Dismal Swamp roost of 15 million birds, the largest known roost in the east (Meanley and Webb (1961a,b). Other sites in this sub-region, in order by cumulative totals are Cape Henlopen-Prime Hook and Middletown, Delaware; Lower Kent County, Maryland; Wilmington and Rehoboth, Delaware; Ocean City and Elkton, Maryland; and Southern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Also noteworthy were the 11 million birds at Cape Henlopen-Prime Hook in 1985 and 5 million birds at Middletown in 1979.

Breeding Bird Survey. BBS data indicate long-term and steady declines for all four species. Survey-wide estimates are displayed in Table 1: 1966 and 2013 population sizes, the annual percent change, and the percent decline over the period 1966-2013. The largest decline occurred in grackles at 57%, followed by starlings at 46%.

Annual BBS mean birds per route

Hanover roost and beyond; 2) the large starling-grackle-cowbird roost at Hanover and its nearby satellite roosts, which likely supplied roosts in Virginia, North Carolina, and elsewhere; and 3) the grackle and red-wing flocks observed in very southeastern Pennsylvania that were the northern margin of the large flocks in the Chesapeake-Delaware region. While the majority of North America's starlings and blackbirds winter in the Mississippi Valley, large numbers of starlings and blackbirds have also wintered in the East, with their Pennsylvania dynamics being integral.

Several aspects of the CBC data suggest a high degree of fluidity in the starling and blackbird congregations at Hanover: the large variation in the York CBC counts; the appearance of satellite roosts; the continued large numbers observed after the mid-1970s site alteration; and that the large numbers still observed in the greater York area after 1980. Here, the term "roost" might best be thought of as a shifting congregation whose center in this case was often near Hanover.

The Hanover roost was noteworthy for its size, longevity, and the high number of cowbirds, a combination likely attributable to the site's location and

Table 1. North American population estimates for starlings and blackbirds.

Species	1966 population estimate (millions)	2013 population estimate (millions)	1966-2013 estimated annual % change	1966-2013 estimated annual % decline
European Starling	105	57	-1.30	46
Red-winged Blackbird	190	120	-0.98	37
Common Grackle	140	61	-1.76	57
Brown-headed Cowbird	156	110	-0.74	29

Source: 1966 population estimate (calculated); 2013 population estimate (Partners in Flight Science Committee 2013); 1966-2013 estimated annual %change (Sauer et al. 2014); 1966-2013 estimated %decline (calculated)

data show long-term declines in all four species in each of three regions: Pennsylvania, the eastern BBS region, and survey-wide. The shape of the trend was roughly similar for each species across the three regions, although there is more variability in the Pennsylvania data. Compared to survey-wide, Pennsylvania observers have reported more starlings, red-wings, and grackles, but fewer cowbirds (Figure 5).

Discussion

Pennsylvania has sometimes hosted immense flocks of European Starlings, Common Grackles, Brown-headed Cowbirds, and Red-winged Blackbirds. Their migration streams here were part of larger-scale movements in the eastern flyway: 1) the starling stream in a Boston-to-eastern-Pennsylvania corridor, which likely supplied many birds to the

historically high food levels in nearby fields. Hanover is at a crossroads (similar reasoning is cited for why an important Civil War battle was fought at nearby Gettysburg). Starling and grackle streams meet in the lower Susquehanna Valley. The starling stream funnels birds southwest into the Great Valley from the large cities of the northeast. Grackles commonly migrate north-south and are commonly found along rivers; their highest Pennsylvania numbers have been found in the state's largest north-south river valleys, the Susquehanna and the Delaware. The high cowbird numbers followed a pattern of cowbirds often concentrating at a particularly large roost; another such case was Pine Prairie, Louisiana, where cowbird numbers were estimated at 10-38 million during the 1982-1987 CBCs.

The Hanover roost may have served as a staging area for the continued

migration of starlings and blackbirds to the south. The banding and CBC data suggest that many starlings continued southwest to Virginia. It is likely that many grackles accompanied the starlings there, as the Virginia mountain flocks had a substantial grackle component. Many of those starlings and grackles could have continued on to central North Carolina. It would also have been natural for grackles to have flown south in the Susquehanna River Valley to the nearby Chesapeake region, where grackles and red-wings were found in approximately equal numbers. Though the inland and coastal roosts varied in their species compositions, grackles were common to most roosts except in the starling corridor.

During the last half century, the CBC has probably recorded much about general starling-blackbird flock dynamics that have occurred in Pennsylvania's early winter period. Before then, coverage was much more limited and it is likely that concentrations of red-wings and grackles in the lower Delaware and Susquehanna valleys went unrecorded by this survey (e.g. the first six years of the Hanover roost). Poole (unpubl. ms) noted Red-winged Blackbird and grackle aggregations in those valleys from as far back as 1894, lending validity to Meanley and Webb's (1965) premise that large roosts of these species have been occurring over a long period. However, the additions of large numbers of starlings and expanded corn production apparently charged the mixed flocks to higher levels.

What caused the starling-blackbird population declines and the large flocks to vanish? Severe winters in the second half of the 1970s have been suggested as affecting their population trends (Robbins et al. 1986), as have the control measures that killed millions of birds (Peer and Bollinger 1997). However, the control measures were applied primarily in the Midwest and band recoveries indicate that the killed birds were predominantly from the upper Midwest (Bystrak and Robbins 1977). Rather than responding to the above-mentioned short-term events, population declines of starlings and red-wings appear to be closely related to changes in the agricultural landscape, specifically the loss of pastures and hayfields, the earlier mowing of hay, and the increase in corn and soybean acreage (Cabe 1993; Blackwell and Dolbeer 2001; Wilson 2012a,b). It is also possible that waste grain availability may have affected winter survival and flock sustenance; modern corn harvesters typically leave much less waste corn than previously. In Tennessee, grackles and red-wings were the two species observed to commonly feed in harvested cornfields (White et al.

1985), and thus would have the most to lose if this resource diminished. Flock cohesion might also have suffered from the large declines in starlings and grackles, as they comprised the majority of birds where the large flocks vanished, and grackles commonly form the nucleus of mixed flocks (Stewart 1975).

These were winners and losers among other avian species with respect to the agricultural changes that apparently affected starlings and blackbirds. The large starling-blackbird flocks included unsustainable numbers of nest usurpers (starlings), predators (grackles), and parasites (cowbirds), to the detriment of many other avian species. Those other avian species suppressed by starlings and blackbirds are the beneficiaries of these dynamics. Conversely, those species that glean waste corn from harvested cornfields were probably negatively affected with the adoption of cleaner harvesting. This includes the Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchichus*), which has declined in Pennsylvania since the 1970s (Bolgiano 1999).

While starlings and the three blackbird species should remain common, the huge flocks seen here in the 1950s to the 1980s appear to be a thing of the past, except at those southeastern Pennsylvania locations where the northernmost flocks from the Chesapeake-Delaware region can still be seen. If the arc of the large flocks reflects the corn wastage that sustained a high level of nest usurpation, predation, and parasitism, then the current state is probably better. Nevertheless, the streams of so many starlings and blackbirds flying over southeastern Pennsylvania and points south were spectacular while they lasted.

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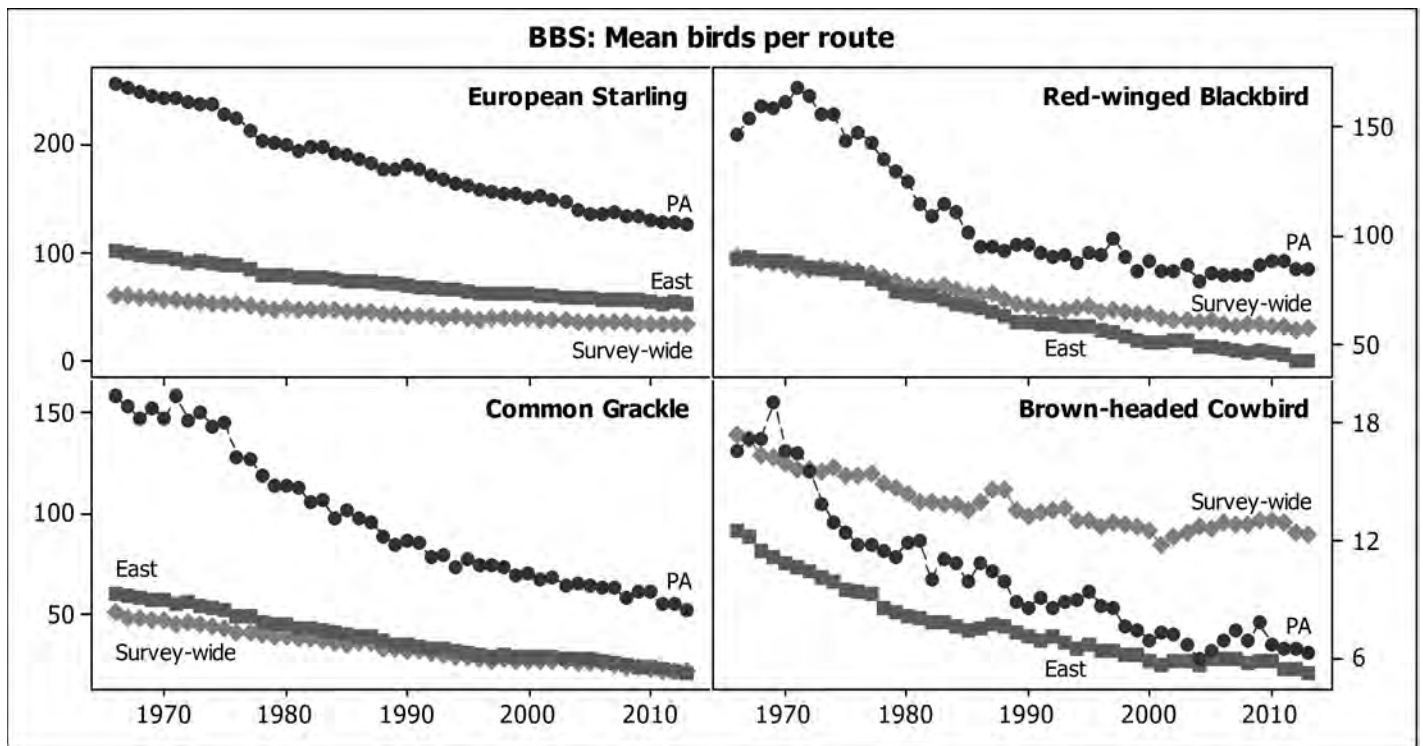


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The 2015-2016 Christmas Bird Count in Pennsylvania

Nick Bolgiano

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held for the 116th time during December 14, 2015 to January 5, 2016. (I refer to a year as the one in which Christmas occurred; the 116th count is referred to as occurring in 2015.)

Seventy-five sites reported, one fewer than the previous year. Statewide effort reached a new high with 6573 party-hours. Imperial was a new site with its center in western Allegheny County and Bob Mulvihill as compiler. Duck Harbor Pond and Philipsburg did not report.

The months before the count were the warmest on record for this period, with December temperatures averaging 13 degrees Fahrenheit above normal. The 168 bird species reported, plus 3 count-week species, was about average. A few more rarities than usual were reported, but nevertheless within the normal range of variation. **Pacific Loon** and **Blue-winged Warbler** were new species for the Pennsylvania CBC, bringing the statewide historical species total to 286. The possibility that the warm weather may have affected bird distributions is suggested by the increased numbers of some half-hardy species (**Wood Duck**, **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, **Brown Thrasher**, **House Wren**, **Fox Sparrow**) and the relative scarcity of some northern species (**Rough-legged Hawk**, **Iceland and Glaucous Gulls**, **Short-eared Owl**, **Northern Shrike**, **Lapland Longspur**, **Snow Bunting**).

Species Numbers

Southern Lancaster County reported the most count-day species, with 103, followed by Harrisburg with 102 and Southern Bucks County with 97. The top ten sites for species number are shown below and Figure 1 shows a map of site locations and species totals.

Top 10 Sites for Species Number

1 Southern Lancaster County	103
2 Harrisburg	102
3 Southern Bucks County	97
4 Upper Bucks County	92
5 Elverson	90
T6 Lancaster	89
T6 Lititz	89
T8 Delaware County	87
T8 York Springs	87
10 Central Bucks County	85

Hits and Misses

A "hit" is an unlikely species found in 2015, while a "miss" is an expected

species not found ("unlikely" means recorded in less than 40% of the previous 30 years, while "expected" means recorded in more than 60% of those years). There were 17 hits and 6 misses.

Hits

Trumpeter Swan
Pacific Loon
Thayer's Gull
Pacific-slope Flycatcher
Tree Swallow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow
Mountain Bluebird
Blue-winged Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Wilson's Warbler
Clay-colored Sparrow
Western Tanager
Dickcissel

Misses

Black Scoter
Northern Bobwhite
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Osprey
Lapland Longspur
Evening Grosbeak

Count Highlights

Greater White-fronted Goose was reported from Audubon, Bethlehem-Easton, Gettysburg, Lehigh Valley, and Southern Bucks County. The 37,000 **Snow Geese** were fewer than the 189,000-239,000 reported during the previous two years, but comparable to numbers tallied during 2008-2012. **Ross's Geese** were at Bethlehem-Easton, Lehigh Valley, and Western Schuylkill County. A total of 33 **Cackling Geese** were reported from 10 southeastern sites. Eleven hundred **Tundra Swans** were at Lititz.

A total of 130 **Wood Ducks** were reported, compared to 43-95 during the previous four years. **Gadwall** numbers have doubled in the last five years (statewide average of 785), compared to levels of the previous two decades (average of 358). In the recent period, they rank between **Ring-necked Duck** and **Bufflehead** as the seventh most abundant duck. The top row of maps in Figure 2 compares average Gadwall numbers/10 party hours in the recent five years (right) to the previous five years (left). Increases were most noteworthy in the northwest, particularly at Erie, Lineville, and Butler County, and in the southeast, particularly at Harrisburg,

York Springs, Lititz, Upper Bucks County, and Southern Bucks County.

The documented decline of **American Black Ducks** that began in the 1960s continues, although the Black Duck usually ranks as Pennsylvania's third most common duck (after **Common Merganser**). **Mallard**, usually the most common duck in Pennsylvania, continued a decline that began in 2000. During the last five years, annual Mallard totals have averaged 21,000, compared to 32,000 during the previous two decades.

Like Gadwall, **Ring-necked Duck** and **Hooded Merganser** have increased in abundance beginning in 1999 and 1998, respectively, ranking sixth and fourth in abundance, respectively, among duck species in the last five years.

Among less common ducks, **Blue-winged Teal** was at Erie. Six **Surf Scoters** were at Newville, 18 **White-winged Scoters** were at Erie, and count-week **Black Scoters** were at Butler County and Erie. A **King Eider** at Erie was also a count-week species (observed 3 previous times on count day).

The total of 75 **Ruffed Grouse** was the second lowest count during the last 40 years, after the 51 in 2013. The middle row of maps in Figure 2 compares the CBC grouse distribution during the first four years of the second breeding bird atlas (2004-2007) on the left, with the most recent four years on the right. Trends observed during the atlas have continued: a withdrawal of grouse from the southwestern corner and along the southeastern edge of the Appalachians (Gregg 2012). Additionally, grouse numbers have declined in the south-central Ridge & Valley province and in the northeast. Their stronghold remains the well-forested north-central region.

Red-throated Loons were at Erie and Lancaster. The **Pacific Loon** at Erie was a first report for the Pennsylvania CBC. Only twice have triple-digit numbers of **Common Loons** been reported from a single site, both at Erie, with 450 in this count and 447 in 2001. **Red-necked Grebes** included two at Erie and one at Indiana.

The 283 **Double-crested Cormorants** set a new statewide high, with 160 at Erie and 80 at Delaware County. A **Great Egret** was at Southern Bucks County. The 2771 **Black Vultures** set a new statewide high, continuing a long-term increasing trend.

The 793 **Bald Eagles** represented a 29% increase over the previous record established last year and included 91 at Southern Lancaster County, 84 at

Southern Bucks County, 47 at Linesville, 29 at Lancaster, and 28 at Southeastern Bradford County. A decade ago, the statewide Bald Eagle CBC total was 201, a record high at that time. Comparable increases during the last two years have been particularly noteworthy.

Two **Northern Goshawks**, one each at Culp and Southern Lancaster County, were the fewest since 1968. The 17 **Rough-legged Hawks** matched last year's low number. Ten **Golden Eagles** represented the second highest statewide total after 11 in 2001.

The 88 **Sandhill Cranes** again set a new statewide high with 85 at Linesville, the usual hotspot and three at Bald Eagle State Park. Two **Virginia Rails** were at Lancaster. **Sanderling** was a count-week species at Erie; there are no count-day records on a PA CBC.

The count of 485 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** was well below the record high of 847 reported last season, but was consistent with the previous eight years. As usual, most came from in or near Bucks County: 155 at Upper Bucks County, 135 at Southern Bucks County, 91 at Central Bucks County, and 87 at Bethlehem-Easton; six other sites contributed an additional 17. The nearly 45,000 **Herring Gulls** at Southern Bucks County provided a continent-wide CBC high, as commonly occurs. White-winged gulls were scarce, with seven **Iceland Gulls** and two **Glaucous Gulls** reported. Of these, all were at Southern Bucks County except for single Iceland Gulls at Bethlehem-Easton and Elverson. The lone **Thayer's Gull** was also at Southern Bucks County.

Five **Barn Owls** included 3 at Penns Creek and one each at Hamburg and Lewistown. Upper Bucks County again led the state's owl totals (see table), including 136 **Eastern Screech-Owls**, the most of this species in the continent-wide CBC. The downward trend in Great Horned Owls that began in the mid-1990s continued-the total 300 was the second lowest total since 1978. Indications are that this decline is associated with West Nile Virus (Bolgiano 2012). The 12 **Long-eared**

Owls and one **Short-eared Owl** were low numbers; the Long-eared Owl number was comparable to totals of recent years, but the Short-eared Owl total was the fewest since 1955.

Rufous Hummingbirds were at Curtin and Gettysburg, the sixth consecutive year and eighth of the last nine with at least one reported from a Pennsylvania CBC site. **Red-headed Woodpecker** numbers held steady with 65 statewide, including 12 at Gettysburg, 10 at York Springs, 7 at Buffalo Creek, and 5 each at Butler County and York. The count of 681 **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** established a new statewide high, but was similar to the totals of 2001 and 2007 when adjusted for effort.

The 644 **American Kestrels** represented a decline from the previous several years, consistent with mortality observed after previous severe winters (Bolgiano et al. 2015). New statewide highs were established for **Merlins** (51), **Peregrine Falcons** (38), and **Common Ravens** (557), continuing the increasing trends of recent decades. **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at Reading was a third report for the PA CBC. For the second consecutive year, only one **Northern Shrike** was found at Huntingdon.

There were 125 **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** at Pennypack Valley, where they have been found during ten of the last eleven years. Single **Tree** and **Barn Swallows**, also observed at Pennypack Valley, provided the sixth and fifth reports, respectively, for those species in the Pennsylvania CBC. The 91 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** was the fewest since 1967 and represents the third consecutive year of low numbers.

The 13 **House Wrens** included 7 at Southern Bucks County, 2 each at Harrisburg and Newville, and one each at Curtin and Wild Creek-Little Gap. A **Marsh Wren** was at Delaware County and single **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were at Elverson and State College.

A **Mountain Bluebird** was in Central Bucks County, just the third occurrence in the Pennsylvania CBC. A total of 72,000 **American Robins** were recorded, a level reached previously only

in 1999 and 2001. The bottom row of maps in Figure 2 compares the Robin distribution during 2010-2012, a period with relatively low Robin counts compared to their 2015 distribution. In both periods, the highest Robin concentrations were in the southwest and the southeast, but higher numbers extended over a wider area in 2015.

Northern Mockingbird numbers were relatively stable across most of Pennsylvania during the mid-1960s to 2008. However, during the last seven years, mockingbird numbers in the CBC have dropped by 50%, with losses primarily in the southeast. Twenty-five **Brown Thrashers** were reported statewide, a new high, although when adjusted for effort, much lower than levels observed in the 1960s-1970s.

For the first time since 1972, no **Lapland Longspurs** were reported, continuing a trend of low numbers in recent years. **Snow Buntings** were uncommon, with a combined total of just 32 from four sites.

Rarely found in the winter north of south Texas and southern Florida, a **Blue-winged Warbler** at Butler County was a new species for the Pennsylvania CBC. A **Black-and-white Warbler** was at Pennypack Valley, found on a Pennsylvania CBC for the third consecutive year. An **American Redstart** at Delaware County provided the seventh report for a Pennsylvania CBC. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was at Pennypack Valley, **Vesper Sparrows** were at Southern Lancaster County (2) and Harrisburg, and a **Lincoln's Sparrow** was at Lititz. The 254 **Fox Sparrows** was a relatively high total, although when adjusted for effort, lower than levels observed in the 1950s-1960s.

A **Western Tanager** at State College provided the fifth reports, respectively, for the Pennsylvania CBC. A **Dickcissel** at Wild Creek-Little Gap was the first Pennsylvania CBC report since 2004. An estimated two million blackbirds, 1.15 million **Red-winged Blackbirds**, 640,000 **Common Grackles**, and 260,000 **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, were at Western Chester County. **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were at Southern Lancaster County and

Western Chester County (2 each), a **Brewer's Blackbird** was at Southern Lancaster County, and a **Baltimore Oriole** at Lancaster.

Pine Siskin was the only winter finch to irrupt, although in very modest numbers. Of the statewide total of 850, over half were reported from just three sites: 293 at Pleasantville, 152 at Northern Lycoming County, and 58 at Penns Creek. Uncommon finches included 3 **Red Crossbills**

Top 10 Sites for Owls

	Barn	EScr	GH	Barr	LE	SE	NSW	Sum
1. Upper Bucks County	0	136	12	0	0	0	2	150
2. S. Lancaster County	0	58	42	7	2	0	5	114
3. Central Bucks County	0	48	3	0	0	0	0	51
4. West Chester	0	42	7	0	0	0	0	49
5. Lewistown	1	34	12	0	0	0	0	47
6. Audubon	0	26	16	0	0	0	0	42
7. Elverson	0	21	13	3	0	0	0	37
8. Western Chester County	0	30	4	0	1	0	0	35
9. Bloomsburg	0	17	13	1	0	0	0	31
10. Hamburg	1	16	9	1	0	0	0	27
State-wide total	5	729	300	50	12	1	27	1124

at Rector and one at Hamburg, a single **White-winged Crossbill** at Emporium, and single **Common Redpoll** at Buffalo Creek, Buffalo Creek Valley, and Wyncote.

CBC results can be found at the PSO website: <http://www.pabirds.org>

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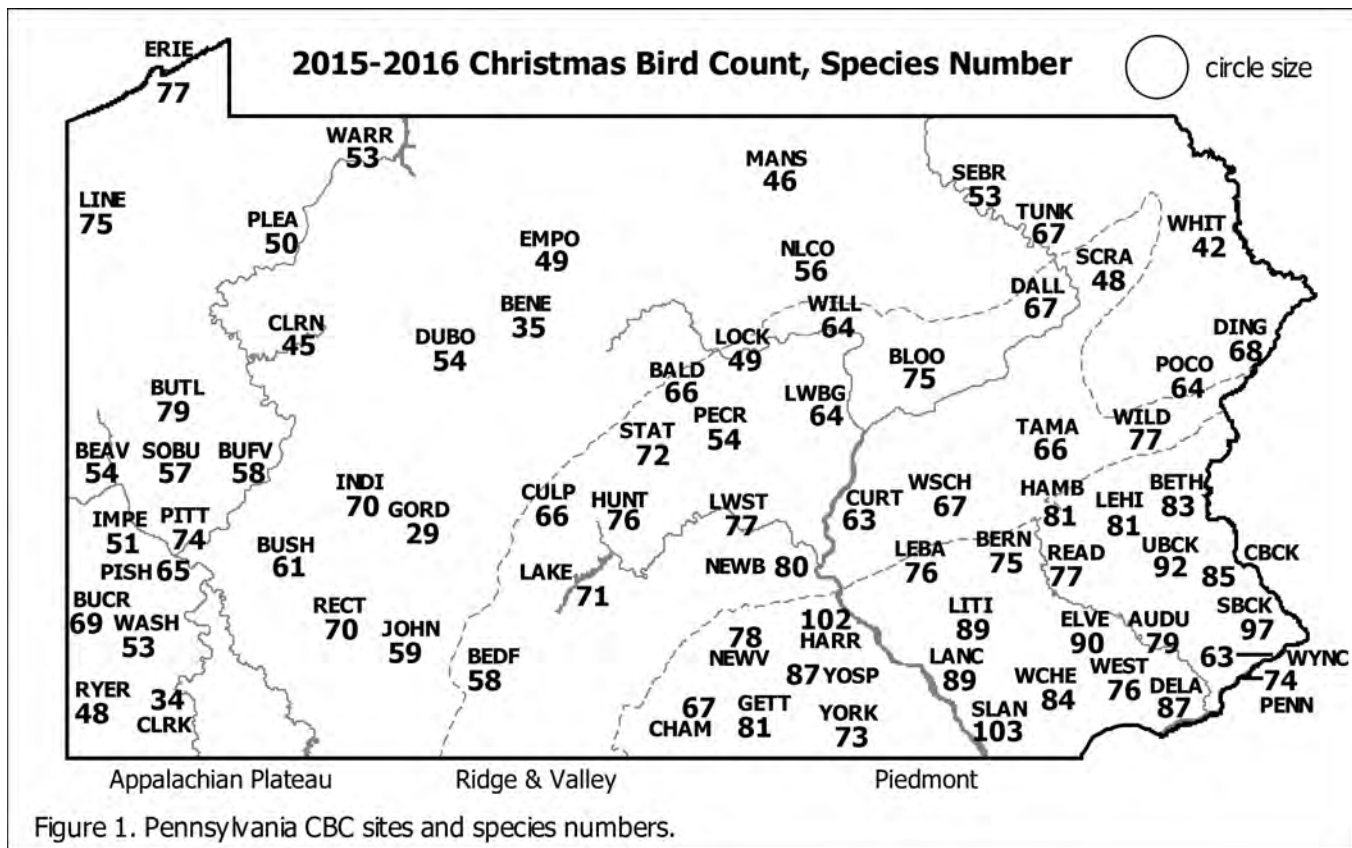
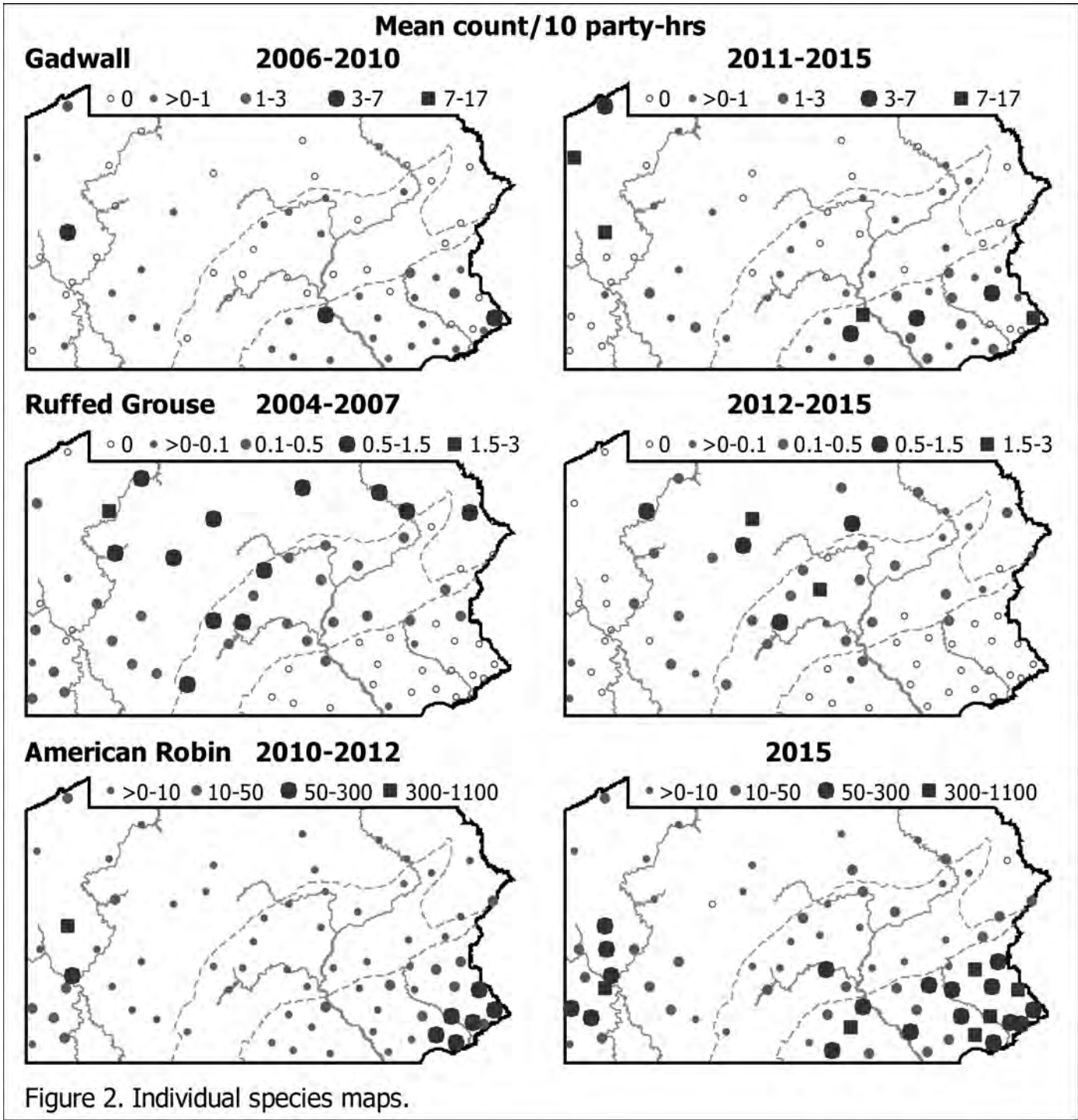


Figure 1. Pennsylvania CBC sites and species numbers.

Site Abbreviations

AUDU	Audubon	DELA	Delaware County	LWBG	Lewisburg	SLAN	Southern Lancaster Co.
BALD	Bald Eagle S.P.	DING	Dingman's Ferry	LWST	Lewistown	SEBR	Se. Bradford Co.
BEAV	Beaver	DUBO	Dubois	LINE	Linesville	SBUT	South Butler
BEDF	Bedford County	DUHP	Duck Harbor Pomd	LITI	Lititz	STAT	State College
BENE	Benezette	ELVE	Elverson	LOCK	Lock Haven-Jersey Shore	TAMA	Tamaqua
BERN	Bernville	EMPO	Emporium	MANS	Mansfield-Wellsboro	THOM	Thompson
BETH	Bethlehem-Easton	ERIE	Erie	NEWB	New Bloomfield	TUNK	Tunkhannock
BLOO	Bloomsburg	GETT	Gettysburg	NEWV	Newville	UBCK	Upper Bucks County
BUCR	Buffalo Creek	GORD	Gordon Glen	NLCO	Northern Lycoming Co.	WARR	Warren
BUFV	Buffalo Creek Valley	HAMB	Hamburg	PENN	Pennypack Valley	WASH	Washington
BUSH	Bushy Run S.P.	HARR	Harrisburg	PISH	Pittsburgh South Hills	WCHE	Western Chester Co.
BUTL	Butler County	HUNT	Huntingdon	PITT	Pittsburgh	WEST	West Chester
CBCK	Central Bucks Co.	IMPE	Imperial	PLEA	Pleasantville	WHIT	White Mills
CHAM	Chambersburg	INDI	Indiana	POCO	Pocono Mountain	WILD	Wild Creek-Little Gap
CLRN	Clarion	JOHN	Johnstown	READ	Reading	WILL	Williamsport
CLRK	Clarksville	LAKE	Lake Raystown	RECT	Rector	WSCH	Western Schuylkill Co.
CULP	Culp	LANC	Lancaster	RYER	Ryerson	WYNC	Wyncote
CURT	Curtin	LEBA	Lebanon County	SCRA	Scranton	YORK	York
DALL	Dallas Area	LEHI	Lehigh Valley	SBCK	Southern Bucks Co.	YOSP	York Springs



PENNSYLVANIA BIRDS

SPECIES	TOTAL	SITES	HIGH	HIGH COUNT
Gr. White-fronted Goose	7	5	3	LEHI
Snow Goose	37033	23	31636	BETH
Ross's Goose	6	3	4	BETH
Cackling Goose	33	10	11	BETH
Canada Goose	130016	74	12000	LEHI
Mute Swan	211	35	41	SBCK
Trumpeter Swan	1	1	1	LAKE
Tundra Swan	1678	17	1106	LITI
Wood Duck	130	32	23	BETH
Gadwall	953	28	207	HARR
American Wigeon	122	16	40	YOSP
American Black Duck	2220	58	310	SLAN
Mallard	20619	74	1796	LINE
Blue-winged Teal	1	1	1	ERIE
Northern Shoveler	294	11	146	LITI
Northern Pintail	84	16	30	DELA
Green-winged Teal	380	25	150	DELA
Canvasback	25	4	22	ERIE
Redhead	203	3	177	ERIE
Ring-necked Duck	946	30	250	SBCK
Greater Scaup	84	3	82	ERIE
Lesser Scaup	1392	10	1306	ERIE
Surf Scoter	6	1	6	NEWB
White-winged Scoter	18	1	18	ERIE
Long-tailed Duck	32	5	20	DELA
Bufflehead	808	44	87	WARR
Common Goldeneye	190	13	38	ERIE
Hooded Merganser	1380	54	216	LINE
Common Merganser	3612	51	1261	LINE
Red-breasted Merganser	1682	7	1649	ERIE
Ruddy Duck	724	23	413	LINE
Ring-necked Pheasant	191	40	17	CURT, LITI
Ruffed Grouse	75	22	12	EMPO
Wild Turkey	3896	69	316	TUNK
Common Loon	471	12	457	ERIE
Pied-billed Grebe	1	1	1	ERIE
Horned Grebe	26	10	12	ERIE
Red-necked Grebe	3	2	2	ERIE
Double-cr. Cormorant	283	14	160	ERIE
Great Cormorant	16	2	9	SBCK
Great Blue Heron	622	60	54	SBCK
Turkey Vulture	4521	45	17	GETT
Bald Eagle	793	70	91	SLAN
Northern Harrier	164	45	17	GETT
Sharp-shinned Hawk	265	62	17	DELA
Cooper's Hawk	419	69	22	AUDU
Northern Goshawk	2	2	1	CULP, SLAN
Red-shouldered Hawk	119	39	8	YOSP
Red-tailed Hawk	3534	75	130	LEHI
Rough-legged Hawk	17	7	4	STAT
Golden Eagle	10	9	2	HUNT
Virginia Rail	2	1	2	LANC
American Coot	757	16	350	BUTL
Sandhill Crane	88	2	85	LINE

SPECIES	TOTAL	SITES	HIGH	HIGH COUNT
Killdeer	382	2	33	WEST
Wilson's Snipe	25	10	7	SLAN
American Woodcock	10	7	3	NEWB
Bonaparte's Gull	13326	7	6837	ERIE
Ring-billed Gull	68829	57	11118	ERIE
Herring Gull	46866	4	44988	SBCK
Thayer's Gull	1	1	1	SBCK
Iceland Gull	7	3	5	SBCK
Lesser Black-backed Gull	485	11	155	SBCK
Glaucous Gull	2	1	2	SBCK
Great Black-backed Gull	2171	15	1826	SBCK
Rock Pigeon	29013	74	1272	LWST
Mourning Dove	23867	75	1517	YOSP
Barn Owl	5	3	3	PECR
Eastern Screech-Owl	729	57	136	UBCK
Great Horned Owl	300	56	42	SLAN
Barred Owl	50	29	7	SLAN
Long-eared Owl	12	8	3	DING
Short-eared Owl	1	1	1	LEBA
Northern Saw-whet Owl	27	17	5	SLAN
Rufous Hummingbird	2	2	1	CURT, GETT
Belted Kingfisher	536	69	32	LITI
Red-headed Woodpecker	65	20	12	GETT
Red-bellied Woodpecker	5924	75	231	AUDU
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	681	55	44	AUDU
Downy Woodpecker	6445	75	245	PITT
Hairy Woodpecker	1553	75	75	PITT
Yellow-shafted Flicker	681	67	142	YOSP
Pileated Woodpecker	957	75	56	LAKE
American Kestrel	644	68	43	YOSP
Merlin	51	30	5	BETH
Peregrine Falcon	38	24	4	LANC
Eastern Phoebe	12	12	1	12 sites with 1
Northern Shrike	1	1	1	HUNT
Blue Jay	12583	75	476	AUDU
American Crow	77089	75	25129	PITT
Fish Crow	2718	29	1238	SBCK
Common Raven	557	62	38	PECR
Horned Lark	6239	43	1226	SLAN
N. Rough-winged Swallow	125	1	125	PENN
Barn Swallow	1	1	1	PENN
Carolina Chickadee	5993	37	516	AUDU
Black-capped Chickadee	8645	58	401	SCRA
Tufted Titmouse	10633	75	474	PITT
Red-breasted Nuthatch	91	32	11	HUNT, WASH
White-breasted Nuthatch	8054	75	254	UBCK
Brown Creeper	500	69	50	LWST
House Wren	13	5	7	SBCK
Winter Wren	265	54	22	SLAN
Carolina Wren	4380	71	266	PITT
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1683	72	126	EMPO
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	186	42	19	UBCK
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	2	2	1	ELVE, STAT
Eastern Bluebird	8565	75	351	LWST
Mountain Bluebird	1	1	1	CBCK

SPECIES	TOTAL	SITES	HIGH	HIGH COUNT
Hemitt Thrush	393	43	40	UBCK
American Robin	72709	73	12142	WEST
Gray Catbird	63	32	6	DELA
Northern Mockingbird	1954	63	95	YOSP
Brown Thrasher	25	8	18	SBCK
European Starling	237137	75	55987	WCHE
American Pipit	1103	16	460	LANC
Cedar Waxwing	6702	67	636	HARR
Snow Bunting	32	4	10	LWST
Blue-winged Warbler	1	1	1	BUTL
Black-and-white Warbler	1	1	1	PENN
Common Yellowthroat	2	2	1	CBCK, HARR
American Redstart	1	1	1	DELA
Palm Warbler	5	2	4	PENN
Pine Warbler	3	3	1	DELA, SLAN, UBCK
Myrtle Warbler	604	44	110	UBCK
Wilson's Warbler	1	1	1	WYNC
Eastern Towhee	388	37	49	DELA
American Tree Sparrow	4575	72	450	LINE
Chipping Sparrow	38	14	8	CBCK
Clay-colored Sparrow	1	1	1	WYNC
Field Sparrow	465	52	40	YOSP
Vesper Sparrow	3	2	2	SLAN
Savannah Sparrow	203	24	59	SLAN
Fox Sparrow	254	38	42	LITI
Song Sparrow	9217	73	647	LITI
Lincoln's Sparrow	1	1	1	LITI
Swamp Sparrow	312	48	46	SLAN
White-throated Sparrow	23256	73	1580	SLAN
White-crowned Sparrow	840	49	83	LEHI
Slate-colored Junco	48152	75	2540	HAMB
Western Tanager	1	1	1	STAT
Northern Cardinal	13345	75	491	SLAN
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1	1	1	WILD
Dickcissel	1	1	1	WCHE
Red-winged Blackbird	1204410	51	1145996	GETT
Eastern Meadowlark	39	5	14	GETT
Yellow-headed Blackbird	4	2	2	SLAN, WCHE
Rusty Blackbird	158	16	35	TUNK
Brewer's Blackbird	1	1	1	SLAN
Common Grackle	730903	35	638731	WCHE
Brown-headed Cowbird	268488	37	255553	WCHE
Baltimore Oriole	1	1	1	LANC
Purple Finch	536	56	93	UBCK
House Finch	11525	74	687	BERN
Red Crossbill	4	2	3	RECT
White-winged Crossbill	1	1	1	EMBO
Common Redpoll	3	3	1	BUCK, BUFV, WYNC
Pine Siskin	850	45	293	PLEA
American Goldfinch	12205	75	499	PITT
House Sparrow	21097	75	1048	CHAM
Number Individuals	3293356		2111332	WCHE
Number Species	167		103	SLAN
Party Hours	6573		596	PITT

The 2016 Winter Raptor Survey in Pennsylvania

Greg Grove

The 16th Pennsylvania Winter Raptor Survey (WRS) was conducted from 14 January through 21 February 2016 with at least one route in all 67 counties.

WRS is a roadside survey with simple but specific guidelines. All raptors and vultures are recorded and data are collected on sex/age/color form. Routes range between 15–110 miles, with most between 35–75. A map showing details of most routes is at the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology website (PSO website). Procedures and cumulative results were summarized previously (Grove 2010, Grove and Bolgiano 2012).

Effort and Weather. Over 225 routes were run, comprising 835 hours and 12456 miles of observation, the highest-ever effort. Lancaster observers logged 36 hours to lead the state (Table 1).

After 2 relatively severe winters, the 2015-16 season returned to near-normal. December was quite warm; January and February saw very nearly average temperatures overall, though with substantial fluctuations. Snowfall was largely lacking, except, of course, the one big storm of the season in late January, an outright blizzard in the southeast. Snow accumulations exceeded 20 inches in much of the southern one-third of the state, and the worst hit areas had in excess of three feet. This storm may have delayed running of some routes, but few, if any, were ultimately not run due to weather.

2016 Results

After 2 years of numbers below average (in terms of hourly rates), several species returned to near-normal levels, comparable to the years preceding the cold winters of 2014 and 2015. Rough-legged Hawks, on the other hand, were scarce. Bald Eagles set a new high for the fifth consecutive year, blowing past last years count by over 50%.

Table 1. Top three counties for effort and selected species.

Rank	1	2	3
Hours	Lancaster (36)	Chester (27.5)	Huntingdon (27)
Bald Eagle	Lancaster (142)	Bucks (31)	Northumberland (28)
N. Harrier	Lycoming (13)	Northumberland (11)	Bradford (9)
Sharp-sh. Hawk	Mifflin (4)	Washington (3)	-
Cooper's Hawk	Chester (6)	Five with (5)	-
Northern Goshawk	None	-	-
Red-sh. Hawk	Adams (10)	York (10)	Crawford (9)
Red-tailed Hawk	Lancaster (171)	Adams (160)	Perry (135)
Rough-lg. Hawk	Crawford (12)	Lycoming (9)	Tioga (9)
Golden Eagle	Potter (2)	Juniata, Lycoming (1)	Pike, Snyder (1)
Am. Kestrel	Lancaster (41)	Indiana (34)	Franklin (32)
Merlin	Montgomery (2)	-	-
Peregrine Falcon	Lancaster (5)	Montgomery (2)	Northampton (2)
Turkey Vulture	Lancaster (894)	Chester (522)	Cumberland (183)
Black Vulture	Chester (273)	Lancaster (236)	Berks (100)

The increase in Northern Harriers occurred largely because of higher numbers in northern counties, perhaps due to a combination of slightly increased coverage and that northern counties escaped the heavy, lingering snow cover of the January storm that buried the southern counties that are normally warmer and less snowy.

Results for individual counties are in the Appendix.

Red-tailed Hawk. The count of 3584 Red-tailed Hawks was the highest ever, topping the record set in 2013. The hourly rate of 4.29 was near the long-term average, but well above the low values of the last two years, perhaps because of the relatively mild conditions (Figure 1). The record high count, despite an average hourly rate, is explained largely by the record high hours of observation.

The distribution of Red-tails was normal, with the highest densities in the Susquehanna and Juniata River valleys and counties west of the high Allegheny Plateau (Figure 1). Lancaster led again this year with 171 Red-tails, followed by Adams with 160 and Perry with 135 (Table 1). Among counties with at least 7 hours of coverage, Adams, Lawrence, Mercer, Perry, and Snyder averaged over 6.5 Red-tails per hour.

Of 2722 Red-tails aged, 218 (8%) were identified as immature, slightly below previous years (range: 9-16%).

American Kestrel. As with Red-tails, American Kestrels rebounded from 2 very low years, with 603 tallied in 2016. The hourly rate was 0.72, also up from the past 2 seasons, but not to levels of earlier years (Figure 1). The increase this year is presumably due to milder conditions. During the WRS era, low kestrel numbers are strongly correlated with cold temperatures and deep snow cover (Bolgiano et al. 2015).

As usual, most Kestrels were in the central and lower Susquehanna and Juniata River valleys (Figure 2). Fairly good numbers were also found in southwestern counties. Lancaster led with 41; Indiana, Franklin, and Huntingdon had at least 30. In counties with at least 7 hours of effort, Adams, Franklin, Indiana, and Union had at least 1.4 kestrels per hour. Kestrel numbers in the far southeast continued to be extremely low (Table 2) as documented in more detail elsewhere (Bolgiano et al. 2015).

Table 2. American Kestrel counts and hourly rates in SE Pennsylvania (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton).

Year	Hrs.	Kestrels	Kestrels/hr.
2001	23	28	1.24
2002	23	30	1.33
2003	44	35	0.80
2004	49	11	0.23
2005	45	18	0.40
2006	63	18	0.29
2007	63	18	0.29
2008	77	22	0.29
2009	74	25	0.34
2010	63	16	0.25
2011	64	12	0.19
2012	88	19	0.22
2013	100	35	0.36
2014	106	18	0.17
2015	103	23	0.22
2016	100	19	0.19

Of 513 Kestrels sexed, 321 (63%) were males, consistent with previous results (range: 59-66%).

Rough-legged Hawk. This year's count of 72 Rough-legged Hawks was the lowest since the 54 recorded in 2010, when hours of observation were less than 75% of 2016 (Figure 1). This is in agreement with low numbers reported from Pennsylvania's CBCs (Bolgiano, per. comm.).

The usual distribution pattern was evident with most of the Rough-legs in northern counties and the central and upper Susquehanna valley (Figure 2). Twelve were found in Crawford, and 9 each in Lycoming and Tioga.

All Rough-legs were identified by color morph - 44 (61%) were light (2001-15 range = 60-78%).

Northern Harrier. A total of 124 Northern Harriers were counted, the third highest number recorded during the 16 WRS years, and nearly double the count and hourly rate from the cold, snowy year of 2014 (Figure 1).

Harriers were widely scattered, perhaps more so than usual. In this relatively mild year with less snow cover, even northern counties recorded a number of harriers, Lycoming led with 13 harriers (Figure 2). Less snow cover and somewhat expanded coverage in the northern tier probably added to a relatively good harrier count in the northern tier: Bradford had 9, Potter 7, and Tioga 5.

Vultures. Turkey Vultures and Black Vultures continued to rebound from low counts in 2014. Both species had their second highest counts ever. The hourly rate for Black Vultures was third highest (Figure 1).

As usual, most vultures were in the southeast. Also as usual, Lancaster and Chester were tops, those 2 counties accounting for 52% of all vultures recorded (Figure 2, Table 1). Six other southeastern counties had at least 150 individuals of the 2 species combined. Turkey Vultures were also recorded in the 4 most southwesterly counties.

Turkey Vultures were found in 29 counties, about average. Black Vultures were found in 25 counties that matches the previous high. A Black Vulture in Clearfield was a WRS first and certainly a very rare winter bird there; but Black Vultures are now well-established, albeit still uncommon, in neighboring Centre. Black Vultures were also found in counties other than the southeast: Westmoreland, Lycoming, and Wayne.

Bald Eagle. Last year I wrote "Seemingly nothing can stop the Bald Eagle explosion, not even one of the coldest Februaries in recorded history". Perhaps thanks to the lack of extreme cold, but maybe due just as much to their remarkable population recovery and growth, the explosion continued and even accelerated as 487 Bald Eagles were recorded this year, over 50% greater than the record of 319 set in 2015 (Figure 1).

Bald Eagles were recorded in 54 of the 67 counties (Figure 2). The highest numbers were in counties in the lower Susquehanna River valley and along the Delaware River, the major exception being 23 in Crawford, a county that gets good coverage. As always, Lancaster led, tallying 142 Bald Eagles with 81 on one route that follows the Susquehanna; in 2015, Lancaster surveyors recorded 82. Bucks was second again with 34 Bald Eagles. In Northumberland, 28 Bald Eagles were found, most of which were congregated at a poultry farm where apparently, carcasses had been discarded rather than destroyed.

Of the 487 Bald Eagles, 45% (221) were listed as immature, the same distribution of adult and immature birds as last year.

Other Raptors Red-shouldered Hawks have been increasing on WRS routes (Grove and Bolgiano, 2014) with most found in the southeast and northwest, as was the case again this year. Their numbers fell off slightly this year but the hourly detection rate was still much higher than during the first 10 years of WRS. All other raptor species were within the range seen in recent years (Tables 1, 3).

Table 3. Pennsylvania WRS Species Counts for 2016 and High Counts.

Species	2016	High Count
Bald Eagle	487	487(2016)
Northern Harrier	124	133 (2008)
Sharp-shied Hawk	43	55 (2009)
Cooper's Hawk	108	123 (2004)
Northern Goshawk	0	5 (2004)
Red-shouldered Hawk	88	101 (2014)
Red-tailed Hawk	3584	3584(2016)
Rough-legged Hawk	72	341 (2004)
Golden Eagle	6	10 (2015)
American Kestrel	603	699 (2013)
Merlin	8	11 (2015)
Peregrine Falcon	16	17 (2014)
Black Vulture	1205	1279 (2013)
Turkey Vulture	2528	2804 (2012)
Northern Shrike	1	10 (2012)
Hours	835	835 (2016)
Miles	12456	12456 (2016)

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And of course thanks go to the well over 100 birders and companions who gathered the data across the state.

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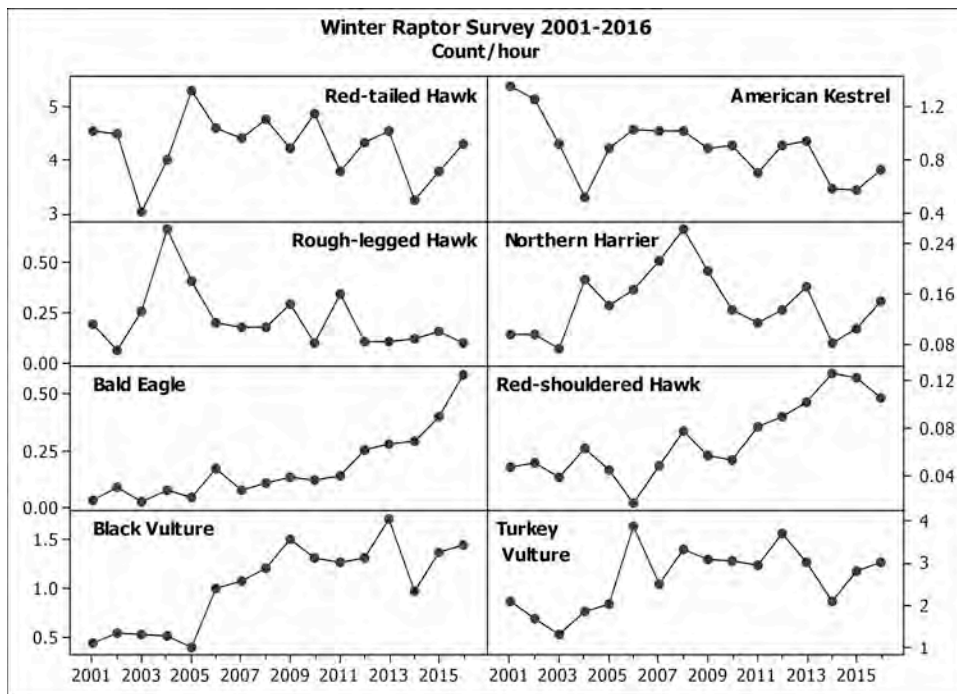


Figure 1. Pennsylvania WRS trends, 2001-2016. Data from all counties was combined and expressed as birds/hour.

Winter Raptor Survey 2016

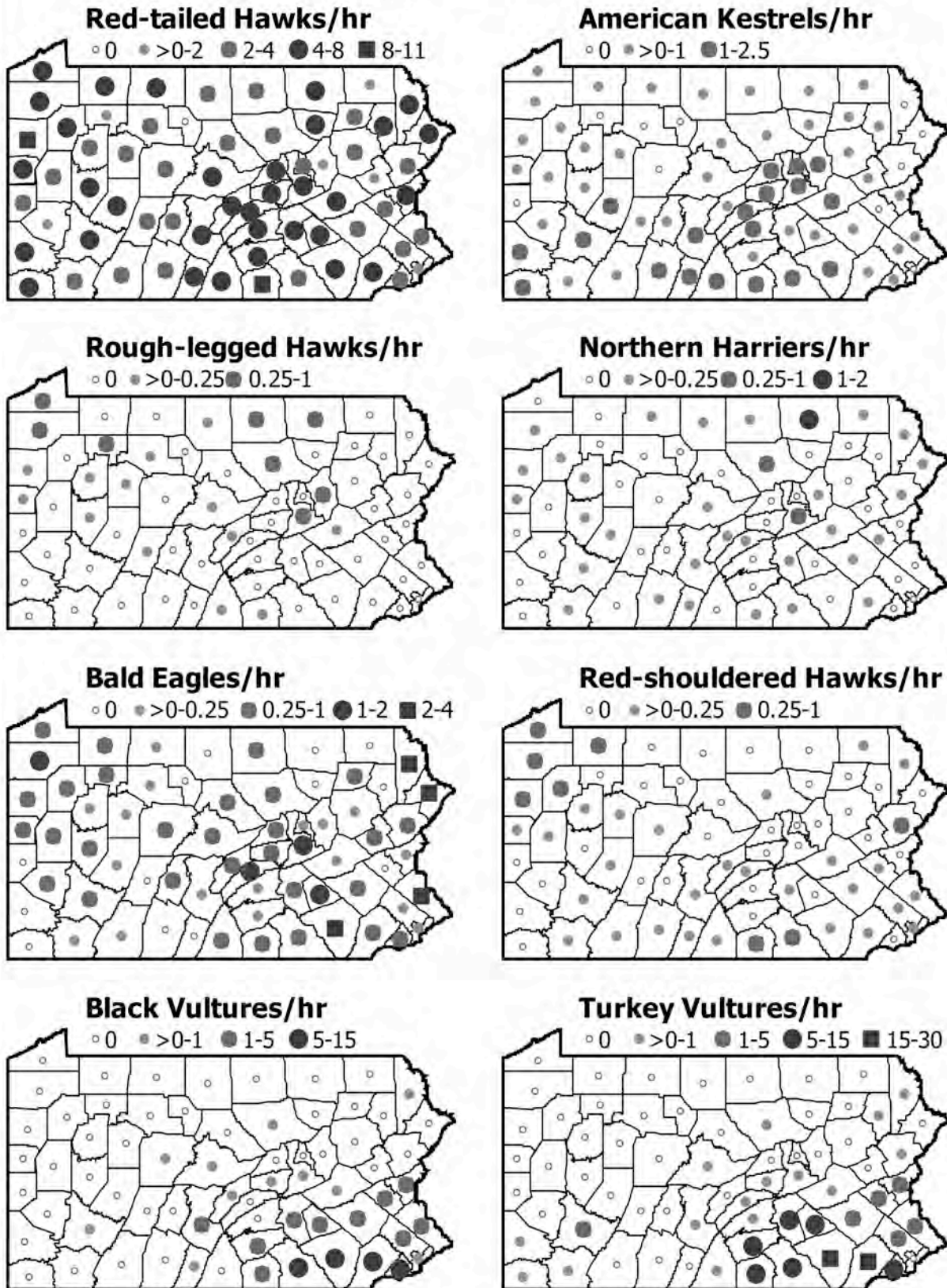


Figure 2. Pennsylvania 2016 WRS results by county. Count and effort data from all routes in a given county were combined and results expressed as birds/hour.

Appendix: 2016 Winter Raptor Survey Results

County	Hours	Miles	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	TV	BV	NShr
Adams	15.75	221	5	6	1			10	160	1		22	1		145	77	
Allegheny	2.5	58	1						4			1					
Armstrong	10.5	164	4	1		1			43	1		5					
Beaver	2	23							4								
Bedford	6.75	147		1		1		1	19			8					
Berks	25.25	378	22	1	1	4		1	80			14	1	1	93	100	
Blair	9.25	141	3			1			20			9					
Bradford	8.25	97		9		1			39	5		5					
Bucks	10.5	94	31		1	1		1	33			6		1	37	13	
Butler	7.5	130	2		1			1	17			5					
Cambria	6.75	131							22	1		1					
Cameron	2	63				1											
Carbon	13.75	170	10			4			27			1					
Centre	23.25	339	7	6		3			115	4		11			14	6	
Chester	27.5	457	17	4	1	6		2	118			8	1		522	273	
Clarion	20.75	305	5	2	2	1		2	65	3		11					
Clearfield	7.25	212	5			1		1	20							1	
Clinton	7.5	130	2			2			25			4					
Columbia	10.5	133	1	4	1	4			20	3		11					1
Crawford	18.25	251	23	3				9	111	12		10					
Cumberland	22.5	337	5			4			92			19		1	183	46	
Dauphin	12.75	183	4	1		1		2	63			11		1	118	61	
Delaware	10.25	165	8		2	2			39			1			139	77	
Elk	4.5	103	1						14	1							
Erie	3.25	71	2					3	14	3		1					
Fayette	17.25	275	1	1		3		3	43			16			1		
Forest	4	66	1						6	1							
Franklin	19	368	5		1	1		2	105	2		32			4		
Fulton	5.5	61		1				1	27			9				1	
Greene	14.75	255				3			62			19			1		
Huntingdon	27	393	6	5	2	5		3	136			30	1		18	67	
Indiana	22.5	306	1	4	1	2		1	133			34					
Jefferson	15.25	209	1		1			1	58	2		3					
Juniata	9.5	148	11	1	1	5		1	52		1	10			2		
Lackawana	2.25	77				1			12			1		1	2		
Lancaster	36	460	142		2	5		1	171			41		5	894	236	
Lawrence	18.25	230	7	8	2	4		4	122	3		18					
Lebanon	9	156	9		1				39			7			58	14	
Lehigh	10.25	146		1				1	38						24	32	
Luzerne	8.5	136	1						17			4					
Lycoming	14	237	4	13		4		1	55	9	1	5			2	9	2
McKean	4.25	61	1	1					22			1					
Mercer	9	150	8	4		1		5	74	1		4					
Mifflin	21.25	222	6	8	4	2		2	87	3		20				1	
Monroe	8.75	126	6	1		1		3	27						2		
Montgomery	22	264	5			5		2	45			2	2	2	59	51	
Montour	5.75	122	1		1				12			8					
Northampton	19.75	231	2		2	3			85			2		2	66	49	
Northumberland	20.75	259	28	11	1	4			126	6		25	1	1	11	2	
Perry	19.5	257	3		1	1			135			20			15		
Philadelphia	5.25	62	1		2	1		1	6							2	
Pike	6.5	24	14	1	2	2			29		1						
Potter	16.5	243		7		1			37	1	2	1					
Schuylkill	15	237	3	3	2	3		1	70	1		19			9	4	
Snyder	14.25	178	5		2	5			96		1	19			2	2	
Somerset	22	283	2		1			1	70			9					
Sullivan	2.5	60							14			1					
Susquehanna	9.25	89		4	1			1	18			7					
Tioga	14.5	224	9	5					49	9		3					
Union	8.25	160	8			2			36			18		1			
Venango	8	136	2	2		1		2	35			1					
Warren	7	113	5			1		3	29			2					
Washington	14.25	277			3	1			65			19			4		
Wayne	8.75	83	20	3	1	1		2	51						2	7	
Westmoreland	12.25	211	5	1		1		3	78			13	1		17	3	
Wyoming	6	100	2						16			1					
York	11.75	258	4	1				10	32			15			84	71	
TOTAL	823.25	12198	483	123	43	108	0	78	3552	72	6	588	8	16	2444	1134	3

The 2015-2016 El Niño event had its greatest effect in Pennsylvania during the winter period. Temperatures were unusually mild, especially in December and February and snowfall was below normal in most places. Historically, it was the warmest December ever, with temperatures averaging 13 degrees Fahrenheit above normal. January temperatures were near normal but warmth returned in February, which averaged 4-8 degrees Fahrenheit above normal (NOAA 2016). A noteworthy storm occurred 1/22-24, depositing over 20 inches of snow in parts of southern and eastern Pennsylvania.

The avian event of the season was the **Greater White-fronted Goose** incursion that began February 1 and continued into the spring. Greater white-fronted Geese are most commonly found in the southeast, and indeed reports from nine southeastern counties plus *Luzerne* fit the typical winter distribution. Far less common was the invasion elsewhere, including nine western counties, six central counties, plus *Berks*, *Somerset*, and *Tioga*. See the devoted article in an upcoming issue for details.

In contrast to the unusually high numbers of **Snow Geese** found in southeastern counties during the previous two winters, the lower Snow Geese numbers of this past winter were more typical. The distribution of **Ross's Geese** in six southeastern counties was typical; less so were records in *Armstrong* and *Crawford* in the west and *Somerset* in the south-central. A vagrant western **Black Brant** was in *Bucks* 1/1-4. A **Barnacle Goose** in *Philadelphia* 2/19 represented a first county record.

Winter reports of **Trumpeter Swans** continue to increase, found this year in six counties: *Berks*, *Blair*, *Chester*, *Forest*, *Huntingdon*, and *Lancaster*. One of the *Forest* swans and the *Huntingdon* swan were wing-tagged in Ontario, the latter bird returning to where it was found a year earlier.

The eastward expansion of **Gadwalls** observed over the previous four winters continued this period, according to the CBC. Gadwalls were most commonly found in northwestern and southeastern counties. **Eurasian Wigeons** were relatively numerous, found in six counties. A **Blue-winged Teal** in *Montgomery* was present, apparently, for several months.

King Eiders were observed at *Erie* 12/6 and 12/20 during waterbird counts, about the fourth winter record in Pennsylvania. **Surf White-winged**, and **Black Scoters** were present in small numbers, primarily in western counties,

which is typical. A female **Barrow's Goldeneye** was on the Delaware River in *Northampton* for the third consecutive winter.

The decline over the last two decades in **Ruffed Grouse** numbers continued. The second breeding bird atlas found grouse to have withdrawn from parts of western and southeastern Pennsylvania. CBC data suggest that declines are now occurring in the south-central and northeastern regions, although they appear to be maintaining their numbers in their core north-central region.

Red-throated Loons were found in 11 counties, roughly the norm. One in *Butler* provided the only report west or north of *Centre*. Two immature **Pacific Loons** were found in *Erie*, in December, with both staying until at least 1/8; one was recorded during the Erie CBC, a first CBC record for Pennsylvania. These are the first winter records for Pennsylvania excepting one in *Erie* 12/2/1992. **Red-necked Grebes** were relatively scarce, presumably because the Great Lakes remained largely ice-free, allowing the grebes to overwinter there, in sharp contrast to the previous two years. Small numbers were noted on Lake Erie and singles were noted in *Bucks*, *Indiana*, and *Philadelphia*. **Great Cormorants** were present on the Delaware River in the usual locations but numbers were low compared to recent years.

Uncommon herons included an **American Bittern** in *Philadelphia* 12/3, single **Great Egrets** in *Beaver* 12/28 and *Bucks* 12/19, and single **Black-crowned Night-Herons** in *Bucks* 1/1 and *Erie* 2/28.

An **Osprey** lingered in *Chester* until at least 1/6. **Bald Eagles** set new highs in the CBC with 793 (a 29% increase over the previous season) and the WRS with 487 (a 53% increase). **Northern Goshawk** numbers were low; the CBC total of 2 was the lowest since 1968. This followed the low fall hawk watch total, which was 64% below the 10-year average (Goodrich 2016). **Rough-legged Hawk** numbers were also relatively low, with 17 in the CBC and 82 in the WRS. Only 70 Rough-legged Hawks were observed during the spring season (2/28-5/31) at the Derby Hill, NY, hawk watch at the southeastern end of Lake Ontario – their lowest number by far in 38 years (10-yr average = 220), also indicative of their scarcity. Hawk watches tallied relatively few south-bound **Golden Eagles** in December; Hawk Mountain reported 10 and Waggoner's Gap reported 8. Away from hawk watches, Golden Eagles were reported in 17 counties, with 10 tallied on nine CBCs,

the second highest historical CBC total. This suggests that Golden Eagles wintered in Pennsylvania in higher than normal numbers. The mild winter was likely the cause of both low Rough-legged Hawk numbers and high Golden Eagles numbers.

Sandhill Cranes were common at known northwestern locations, particularly in *Crawford* and *Laurence*, with a total of 85 tallied on the Linesville CBC. Elsewhere, 3 were in *Centre* 12/7-1/3. **Virginia Rails** were found in *Lancaster* and *Westmoreland*.

A higher than usual number of uncommon sandpipers was observed. A **Spotted Sandpiper** was found along the Delaware River in *Northampton* 1/6; it stayed into the spring period, probably the first fully documented Spotty to successfully winter in Pennsylvania. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was in *Bucks* until 12/17. Three uncommon sandpipers were at Gull Point in *Erie* during December: **Sanderling** 12/4-25, **Dunlin** 12/25, and **Purple Sandpiper** 12/4-12/11, illustrating the value of patient observation at this premier site.

A **Black-headed Gull** returned to Lake Moraine in *Butler* for the fifth consecutive winter. **Laughing Gulls** were observed along the Delaware River in *Bucks*, *Delaware*, and *Philadelphia*, including 7 in *Bucks* 12/9.

Observers of large gulls continue to compile remarkable records. The nearly 45,000 **Herring Gulls** on the Southern Bucks County CBC led all North American CBC counts. **Thayer's Gulls** were found along the Delaware River and Lake Erie, with observations in *Bucks*, *Erie*, *Northampton*, and *Philadelphia*. White-winged gulls were relatively scarce in the CBC, but their January-February distributions were more typical. **Iceland Gulls** were in seven southeastern counties plus *Erie* and *Allegheny*, and **Glaucous Gulls** were recorded in *Allegheny*, *Bucks*, *Erie*, *Lebanon*, *Northampton*, and *Philadelphia*.

The distribution of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** continues to widen. They were reported in 9 southeastern counties, as well as *Allegheny*, *Beaver*, and *Erie* in the west; *Montour* and *Northumberland* in the central Susquehanna Valley; and *Carbon* and *Monroe* in the northeast. It will be interesting to see if their winter distribution changes after the slated 2017 closing of the Tullytown landfill in southern *Bucks*. The number of Lesser Black-backed Gulls began to increase in *Bucks* after this landfill opened in 1988, but the gulls have found other landfills and spread to the north and west. The western Pennsylvania gulls appear to be

part of the Great Lakes population and will probably not be affected. Gull discoveries in both the east and west have been fascinating, for these birds are highly adaptable and the distributions that we see today are apt to change.

A **Forster's Tern** was a very rare winter find in *Philadelphia* 2/25-2/27. Small colonies of **Eurasian Collared Doves** continue in *Berks* and *Franklin*. Are these the initial colonizers that will eventually expand into larger areas? A **White-winged Dove**, an expected vagrant to our region, was noticed thanks to extra scrutiny during the great Backyard Bird Count in *York* 2/13-15.

Barn Owls were observed at multiple locations in both *Berks* and *Centre*. **Snowy Owl** occurrences were similar to last year, with 12 birds in five counties - *Allegheny*, *Armstrong*, and *Erie* (7 birds) in the west, and *Lancaster* and *Lebanon* in the southeast. **Short-eared Owls** were generally scarce; the single bird during the Pennsylvania CBC represented the lowest count since 1955. Otherwise, Short-ears were scattered over 16 counties, with 8 at a *Bradford* location and 9 at a *Lycoming* location being notable. Four **Rufous Hummingbirds** were found, one more than last winter but fewer than the double-digit numbers of the three previous winters.

American Kestrel numbers were consistent with the observed pattern of declines occurring during very cold winters followed by only partial rebounds to previous levels (Bolgiano et al. 2015). CBC numbers were down; WRS detections per hour, although higher than in 2014-2015, were nevertheless lower than all but one year during 2001-2013. **Merlin** and **Peregrine Falcon** numbers continued to increase. A rare **Gyr Falcon** was seen in farmlands of northern *Clarion* 2/20.

Two rare western flycatchers were vagrants to Pennsylvania this period. A bird thought to be **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was found in *Berks* during the Reading CBC 12/20 and stayed until 1/5, providing the fourth winter report for this species. An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was in *Philadelphia* 1/9-10, about the sixth winter report.

A **Blue-headed Vireo** in *Franklin* 12/6 was a late straggler. After a decade of relatively high counts, this was the second consecutive winter for low numbers of **Northern Shrikes**. Shrikes were reported from 15 counties, with only one in the southeast, at *Lancaster*. Many did not stay long and for the second consecutive year, the CBC total was only one. This scarcity was consistent with fall reports (Malosh 2016).

The flock of **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** was again present at the NE Philadelphia Treatment Plant in

Philadelphia, staying (or surviving) until at least 2/1, with a high of 125 on 12/19. They were joined briefly in December by single **Tree** and **Barn Swallows**.

It was a low year for **Red-breasted Nuthatches**. The count of 91 on the CBC was the lowest since 1967 and the third consecutive year of low numbers. **House Wrens** were reported from six counties, mostly on CBCs and more than normal, including 7 on the Southern Bucks County CBC. **Marsh Wrens** were found only in *Philadelphia*. **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were noted in *Centre*, *Chester*, and *Cumberland*, more than in many winters.

Among thrushes were two rare species while another was unusually common. A **Mountain Bluebird** was found on the Central Bucks County CBC and remained until 2/2. A **Wood Thrush** was nicely photographed in *Allegheny* 1/3. This is about the fourth winter report for both species. **American Robins** were especially numerous in the southwest and southeast – see the CBC report.

Lapland Longspurs were not reported on the CBC for the first time since 1972. They were found scattered across Pennsylvania this winter, with most reports after the CBC period. Except for northwestern counties, **Snow Buntings** were also relatively uncommon, with few large flocks.

The 12 warbler species was slightly more than average and considerably more than last winter's low number of only 6. The most unexpected was a **Blue-winged Warbler** in *Butler* 12/19, a first for the Pennsylvania CBC and rare in winter north of the Gulf Coast. It was found in November and relocated during the Butler County CBC. Uncommon in winter were an **American Redstart** in *Delaware* 12/19, a **Cape May Warbler** in *Bucks* 1/4-5, a vagrant **Audubon's Warbler** in *Erie* 1/23, and **Yellow-throated Warbler** in *Montgomery* 1/17 that stayed through the rest of the period. Warblers that are uncommon, but nearly annual, included an **Ovenbird** in *Philadelphia*, **Black-and-white Warblers** in *Cumberland* and *Philadelphia*, and 3 **Wilson's Warblers** in *Philadelphia*. **Pine Warblers** were more widespread than usual, found in eight southeastern counties, plus *Clinton*, *Monroe*, and *Tioga*.

Sparrow observations were generally typical of recent past winters. **Clay-colored Sparrows** were in *Montgomery* and *Northampton*. **Vesper Sparrows** were reported four south-central counties. **Lincoln's Sparrows** were in *Crawford* and *Lancaster*. A **Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow** was at the Koch residence in *Northampton* during early December. **Fox Sparrows** were found in relatively high numbers, presumably lingering on their way south.

A remarkable aspect of the season was the number of tanagers, cardinals, and allied genera; including **Northern Cardinal**, 7 of the 11 species from this group on our state bird list appeared this season. The male **Western Tanager** in *Centre* (Snyder 2016) remained throughout the period and a female was briefly in *Montgomery* 1/1. There have been less than 10 previous winter reports of Western Tanager. A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was in *Luzerne* for one week. A **Black-headed Grosbeak** was along the *Bucks/Northampton* county line for most of February, a third winter report for Pennsylvania. An **Indigo Bunting** was photographed in *Montgomery* 1/18. A **Painted Bunting** found in *Chester* in late December, stayed through the remainder of the period, about the 13th winter report. **Dickcissels** were in *Crawford* 2/14 and *Northampton* 12/20.

One of the largest blackbird flocks to have occurred in Pennsylvania in recent years was the estimated two million blackbirds on the Western Chester County CBC. Uncommon blackbirds sometimes accompany large blackbird flocks and this apparently happened this period. **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were particularly abundant, with 5 birds in four locations in *Chester* and 15 birds in eleven locations in *Lancaster*. A Yellow-headed Blackbird was also found in *Philadelphia*. A **Brewer's Blackbird** was in a large flock in *Lancaster*. **Baltimore Orioles** were concentrated in southeastern Pennsylvania, with up to 13 in *Bucks*, including up to 7 in one yard during the period! Baltimore Orioles were also present in *Lancaster*, *Montgomery*, and *Philadelphia*.

Pine Siskin was the only winter finch found commonly, although this winter's siskin irruption was modest compared to the previous year. A total of 850 siskins were reported on the CBC compared to 1823 last year. **Red Crossbills** were in *Clarion* in the west and *Berks*, *Lehigh*, and *Schuylkill* in the east. A **White-winged Crossbill** was reported on the Emporium CBC. **Common Redpolls** were widely scattered, reported from *Crawford*, *Erie*, *Montgomery*, *Susquehanna*, *Tioga*, *Venango*, and *Washington*. No **Evening Grosbeaks** were reported.

References

- Bolgiano, N., J.-F. Therrien, and G. Grove. 2015. Pennsylvania's Importance to American Kestrels: A Regional Context. *Pennsylvania Birds* 29:76-83.
- Goodrich, L. 2016. 2015 Autumn Raptor Migration Summary. *Pennsylvania Birds* 29:193-198.
- Malosh, G. 2016. Summary of the Season. *Pennsylvania Birds* 29: 199-203.
- NOAA. 2016. www.ncdf.noaa.gov/Snyder, D. 2016. Western Tanager in Centre County. *Pennsylvania Birds* 29:189.

Birds of Note – December 2015 through February 2016

This report summarizes unexpected species reported in Pennsylvania for this period. As a general rule birds must have been recorded in five or fewer counties to qualify for inclusion here, but rare species recorded more frequently, or irregular species exhibiting an unusual seasonal occurrence, are also included. "Listserv" indicates records deemed credible which were gleaned from the PABIRDS listserv for counties with no reporting compiler. "eBird" indicates valid records deemed credible which were entered into the eBird database for counties with no reporting compiler.

An * denotes species on the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee (PORC) Review List. Details or descriptions that are submitted for species on the PORC Review List will be reviewed by the committee. The terms "no doc" and "doc submitted" indicate whether documentation has been submitted on reports of Review List species listed herein; "no doc" indicates that no documentation was known to have been submitted as of the time of writing. The PORC Review List can be found at the PSO web site <<http://www.pabirds.org>>.

Birds in *Italic* typeface are uncommon or rare, but occur during this time period in most years.

Birds in Underlined typeface occur at least 4 to 7 out of 10 years during this time period.

Birds in *Italic and Underlined* typeface occur fewer than 4 to 7 out of 10 years during this time period.

Birds in Normal typeface are noteworthy for rarity, but are recorded annually, usually in more than one county.

Barnacle Goose* – *Philadelphia*: two at Franklin D. Roosevelt Park 2/19 through the end of the period (Jim McConnell, m.ob.).

Black Brant – *Bucks*: one at Peace Valley Park 1/1-4 (Devich Farbotnik, Holly Merker).

Eurasian Wigeon – *Centre*: one at Bald Eagle S.P. 2/29 (AM, m.ob.); *Dauphin*: one on the Susquehanna River at West Fairview 2/28 (m.ob.); *Lancaster*: one on the Conejohela Flats 2/20-27 (m.ob.), one at Middle Creek W.M.A. 2/25-27 (Jim Fiorentino, m.ob.), and one at Riverfront Park 2/28 (Mike Epler); *Luzerne*: one at Beech Mountain Lakes 2/28 (Jonathon DeBalko, John DeBalko); *Philadelphia*: one on a small pond at Franklin D. Roosevelt Park 12/28 (Ann Reeves, Todd Fellenbaum), where one also visited last year.

Blue-winged Teal – *Montgomery*: a male at a pond in Pottsgrove 12/13 (Kenneth Rieker) and assumed to be the same duck first noted there 11/5 (Nikki Flood, Scott Stollery); on 1/15, a male was at a pond about a mile north of the original location, likely the same bird (Rudy Keller).

King Eider* – *Erie*: an imm. male flew past the mouth of Walnut Cr. during the waterbird count 12/6 and another flew past the waterbird count off Sunset Point 12/20 (Jerry McWilliams).

Surf Scoter – *Clarion*: one at Kahle L. 12/1-4 (Gary Edwards, Jerry Stanley, Carole Winslow); *Crawford*: one juv. at Conneaut L. 12/4 (Rob Hodgson, Ken Pinnow); *Perry*: 3 males and 3 females at Little Buffalo S.P. during the New Bloomfield CBC 12/27 (m.ob.).

White-winged Scoter – *Beaver*: one photographed on Beaver R. at Rochester 12/7 (*fide* Tim Johnson). *Crawford*: one at Conneaut L. 2/26 (Ron Leberman); *Monroe*: one at Stillwater L. 12/2 (Bruce Johnson) and another on the Delaware R. at Delaware Water Gap's Smithfield Beach 1/22 (Steve Kloiber); *Somerset*: one at Somerset L. 12/1 (Anthony Marich).

Black Scoter – *Butler*: one at Watts Bay 12/22 (MV); *Clarion*: one at Kahle L. 12/2 (Gary Edwards, Jerry Stanley, Carole Winslow); *Erie*: small numbers on L. Erie 12/7-1/7 (m.ob.). *Indiana*: one at Yellow Creek S.P. 12/08-29 (m.ob.).

Barrow's Goldeneye* – *Northampton*: female on Delaware R. for third consecutive year 1/25-2/19 (Jason Horn, Michael Schall, Matthew Sabatine).

Pacific Loon* – *Erie*: an imm. off the north pier 12/4 and another imm. off Niagara boat launch 12/21, both remaining until at least 1/8 (Jerry McWilliams, m.ob.).

Red-necked Grebe – *Bucks*: one at Nockamixon S.P. 1/6 (Ian Gardner); *Erie*: small numbers on L. Erie 12/5-23, including 2 on the Erie CBC; *Indiana*: one on the Indiana CBC 12/26; *Philadelphia*: one at East Park Reservoir 12/12 (m.ob.).

Great Cormorant – *Bucks*: high count on the Delaware R. was 15 at Bristol 1/1 (Devich Farbotnik), with 9 counted on the Southern Bucks CBC 12/19; *Delaware*: 2 at Governor Printz Park 1/15 (Damon Orsetti); *Philadelphia*: present all season, with 7 on the Pennypack Valley CBC 12/19.

American Bittern – *Philadelphia*: one at Tinicum 12/3 (Scott Reynolds).

Great Egret – *Beaver*: one at the mouth of the Beaver R. 12/28-31 (Gina Rubino, Mark Vass); *Bucks*: one on the Southern Bucks CBC 12/19.

Black-crowned Night Heron – *Bucks*: one at Silver Lake Park 1/1 (Devich Farbotnik); *Erie*: one in Greene Twp. 2/28 (Pam Zelenak, Bob Zelenak).

Osprey – *Chester*: one at Octoraro Res. 1/6 (Patrick Millar).

Virginia Rail – *Lancaster*: one at Wood's Edge Park 1/3-10 (Zach Millen, m.ob.); *Westmoreland*: one at Little Sewickley Creek 12/12 (Jim Pemberton).

Spotted Sandpiper – *Northampton*: one at a boat launch on the Delaware R. near Martins Creek power plant 1/6 (Jason Horn, Michael Schall), stayed into Mar; possibly the first fully documented record of this species surviving through the winter season.

Lesser Yellowlegs – *Bucks*: one at Bradford Dam until 12/17 (Gail Johnson).

Sandling – *Erie*: one at Gull Point 12/4-25 (Roger Donn).

Dunlin – *Erie*: one at Gull Point 12/25 (Roger Donn).

Purple Sandpiper – *Erie*: one or 2 at Gull Point 12/4-11 (Roger Donn, Ruth Swaney).

Black-headed Gull* – *Butler*: one returned to the same location at South Shore where seen for the last several years (Debbie Darney, m.ob.).

Laughing Gull – *Bucks*: 7 at Falls Twp. Community Park 12/9 (Tom Johnson); *Delaware*: one observed along the Delaware R. near the Philadelphia Airport 12/15 (Al Guarente); *Philadelphia*: one observed at Philadelphia Naval Yard 12/10 (George Armistead).

Thayer's Gull – *Bucks*: a second-cycle bird at Falls Twp. Community Park 12/19 (Tom Johnson, Melissa Roach, George Armistead, Michael O'Brien). Adult at Nockamixon S.P. 2/3 was believed to be this species (Devich Farbotnik); *Erie*: one at Lake View Landfill 1/25-2/2 (Jerry McWilliams); *Northampton*: a second-cycle bird at Grand Central Landfill 1/26-30 (Billy Weber, Matt Sabatine, Bill Etter); *Philadelphia*: one at Navy Yard 1/9 (George Armistead, Ann Reeves, Rich Horwitz).

Forster's Tern – *Philadelphia*: adult at Tinicum 2/25-27 (Don Freiday, Ron Furnish, Marie Mullins, m.ob.).

Eurasian Collared Dove – *Berks*: one or 2 at the Shartlesville colony Jan-Feb (Dan Altif, Ken Lebo, Matt Wlasniewski); *Franklin*: several throughout period at

Greencastle and Shady Grove colonies (Dale Gearhart, Stefan Karkuff, Bill Oyler).

White-winged Dove* – *York*: one in a York Twp. yard, 2/13-15 (Ann Pettigrew, m.ob.).

Barn Owl – *Berks*: one on the Hamburg CBC 12/27 and one roosting in a silo in Albany Twp. 2/15 (Bracken Brown); *Centre*: 2 near Millheim during the Penns Creek CBC 12/16 (Sean Herrmann). A continuing female on a farm near Spring Mills 2/20 (Alex Lamoreaux, Elora Grahame).

Snowy Owl – *Allegheny*: a second hand report of one at Pittsburgh Airport 2/12 (Dan Richards); *Armstrong*: one north of Mahoning Dam 1/22 (Frank Pago); *Erie*: approximately 7 individuals across the northern portion of the county 12/23-2/25 (m.ob.); *Lancaster*: one at Groffdale and Scenic Rds. 1/9 (Jim Flowers). *Lebanon*: an imm. male along Prescott, Reistville, and Elco Rds. 12/9-23 (Ruth Witmer, m.ob.), banded by Scott Weidensaul 12/15, found injured and euthanized 12/23. A second bird was found dead southeast of Myerstown 1/4 (*fide* Ted Nichols II, Scott Weidensaul).

Rufous Hummingbird – *Adams*: the prior period's adult female was at the Siefken residence on Mountain Rd. until 1/20 (m.ob.); *Dauphin*: a female, first banded 11/20/2015 on private property in Lykens (Scott Weidensaul, Gary Lockerman, Sandy Lockerman), was reported through 12/13 (m.ob.); *Lancaster*: one from the previous season continued at a Quarryville home 12/3-4 (Randy Kimmet, Ted Nichols II); *Montgomery*: the imm. female banded in Willow Grove 11/30 (Sandy Lockerman) continued visiting the anonymous homeowners' feeder until 12/12.

Gyr Falcon* – *Clarion*: likely an imm. male, found and photographed near Tylersburg in the northern part of the county 2/20 (Philip Smith, doc. submitted).

Pacific-slope Flycatcher* – *Berks*: a "Western" type flycatcher thought to be this species found near Red Bridge at Berks Heritage Center 12/20 (Russ Hoffman) during the Reading CBC, continued to 1/5 (m.ob.).

Ash-throated Flycatcher* – *Philadelphia*: one at Tacony Creek Park and Juniata golf course, 1/9-10 (Robin Irizarry, Martin Selzer, Peter Burns, Tony Croasdale).

Blue-headed Vireo – *Franklin*: one along Falling Spring stream near Chambersburg 12/6 (Dave Cooney).

Tree Swallow – *Dauphin*: three at Front St., Harrisburg 2/29 (Deuane Hoffman); *Lancaster*: 2 at Commons Park along Susquehanna R. 2/26 (Chuck Berthoud); *Philadelphia*: one at the NE Philadelphia Treatment Plant 12/19-1/9, recorded for the Pennypack Valley CBC 12/19 (Todd Fellenbaum).

Northern Rough-winged Swallow – *Philadelphia*: the usual flock was at NE Philadelphia Treatment Plant until 2/1, with a high count of 125 on 12/19 (Todd Fellenbaum), when recorded for the Pennypack Valley CBC. Also, 60 observed at Frankford Cr. and the Delaware R. 1/15 (Robin Irizarry).

Barn Swallow – *Philadelphia*: one at the NE Philadelphia Treatment Plant 12/19-1/9 and recorded for the Pennypack Valley CBC 12/19 (Todd Fellenbaum, m.ob.).

Marsh Wren – *Philadelphia*: at least 2 at Tinicum throughout the period (m.ob.) and one at Franklin D. Roosevelt Park 2/28 (Ann Reeves).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher – *Centre*: one on the State College CBC 12/22 (Julia Plummer, ph.); *Chester*: one at Marsh Creek S.P. during the Elverson CBC, through at least 1/4 (m.ob.); *Cumberland*: one at Huntsdale Hidden Pond 1/8 (Dave Kerr); possibly the same bird reported there 11/27.

Mountain Bluebird* – *Bucks*: one found in Tinicum Twp. during the Central Bucks County CBC 12/27 (Diane Allison), remaining until 2/2 (m.ob.); first county record and about the sixth for the state.

Wood Thrush – *Allegheny*: one beautifully photographed at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve 1/3 (Amy Henrici, Pat McShea).

Ovenbird – *Philadelphia*: one at Kaskey Park pond on the U. of Pennsylvania campus 12/9 (Monica Carlson).

Blue-winged Warbler – *Butler*: one first discovered at Sunken Garden Trail in November was relocated and photographed during Butler County CBC 12/19 (Glenn Koppel, Mary Alice Koeneke).

Black-and-white Warbler – *Cumberland*: one along the Conodoguinet Cr. at the West Fairview Boat Launch 1/17 (Ramsay Koury), the second consecutive winter one was found there; *Philadelphia*: a female at Lardner's Point Park on the Pennypack Valley CBC 12/19 (Todd Fellenbaum), present until 1/9 (Martin Dellwo, Jamie Zigarelli).

Orange-crowned Warbler – *Bucks*: one at Falls Twp. Community Park 12/6 (Devich Farbotnik); *Chester*: one at Okehocking Preserve 12/18 (Andrew Eberly) and another at a suet feeder in Devon 1/17 (Tyler DiAndrea); *Lancaster*: one photographed at Masonic Village 2/12 (Ted Nichols II); *Philadelphia*: 2 at the NE Philadelphia Treatment Plant 1/30 (Jim McConnell) and 2 at Franklin D. Roosevelt Park 1/9 (George Armistead).

Common Yellowthroat – *Bucks*: one at Carversville for the Central Bucks County CBC 12/27 (Devich Farbotnik); *Philadelphia*: singles at Tinicum, Franklin D. Roosevelt Park, and the Cumberland St. fields 12/4-1/9 (m.ob.); *Washington*: one at Greencove Wetlands 12/23 (Mike Ellis).

American Redstart – *Delaware*: one on the Bridle Trail at Ridley Creek S.P. 12/19 (Brian Byrnes, F. Arthur McMorris).

Cape May Warbler – *Bucks*: one in Tinicum Twp. 1/4-5 (Jason Horn, Devich Farbotnik).

Palm Warbler – *Bucks*: one at Quakertown for the Upper Bucks County CBC 12/20 (Tim Bradley); *Philadelphia*: up to 4 at the NE Water Treatment Plant 12/19-1/30 (m.ob.) and 3 along the north shore of the Delaware R. near Pennypack Park 12/19 (Peter Kurtz, D. Podolsky, Denis Mora).

Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler* – *Erie*: one along Gull Point Trail 1/23 (Tim Lenz, m.ob.).

Yellow-throated Warbler – *Montgomery*: one frequented a Skippack suet feeder 1/17 to end of period (Ginger Bruntrager).

Wilson's Warbler – *Philadelphia*: a male at Tinicum 12/3 (Damon Orsetti), a second also at Tinicum 1/16 (Young Birders from Hawk Mt), and a third in a meadow near Carpenter's Woods 12/19 (Judy Stepenaski).

Clay-colored Sparrow – *Montgomery*: one at the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust 12/19-1/1 (Paul Driver), recorded for the Pennypack Valley CBC; *Northampton*: two at a backyard feeder in Pen Argyl 2/5 through remainder of period (Bill Hobbs, Regina Robbs).

Vesper Sparrow – *Adams*: one at Gettysburg National Military Park 2/12 (Andy Wilson); *Dauphin*: one for Harrisburg CBC 12/19; *Lancaster*: one at Octoraro Res. for Southern Lancaster CBC 12/20 (Deuane Hoffman); *Lebanon*: one at Middle Creek W.M.A. 2/29 (Randy Miller); *York*: one at Lewisberry 12/19 (Ed Bernot).

Lincoln's Sparrow – *Crawford*: one at a private residence in Meadville area 1/20 (Ron Leberman); *Lancaster*: one at Middle Creek W.M.A. 12/12-14 (Larry Keller) and one on the Lititz CBC 12/27.

Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow – *Northampton*: one at the Koch property in early Dec (Arlene Koch).

Western Tanager* – *Centre*: the continuing male remained near State College throughout the season, observed during State College CBC 12/20 (m.ob.); *Montgomery*: a female

photographed at Valley Forge National Historical Park 1/3 (Kitty Kono), unfortunately departed shortly afterward.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak – *Luzerne*: a female frequented a feeder in Shavertown from end of Jan until at least 2/7 (Mark Stair, ph.)

Black-headed Grosbeak* – *Bucks/Northampton*: A first winter male visited a feeder south of Hellertown on county line 2/13 through remainder of period (Don Mease, Elaine Mease), first confirmed record in *Bucks* and second for *Northampton*.

Indigo Bunting – *Montgomery*: a male beautifully photographed at Valley Forge National Historical Park 1/18 (Kitty Kono); there are approximately a half dozen previous winter records in the state.

Painted Bunting* – *Chester*: a female or young male appeared in the West Chester area in late Dec (Ann Williams) and remained through the period, providing the second county record.

Dickcissel – *Crawford*: one photographed during the Great Backyard Bird Count in the Woodcock Lake area 2/14 (Bill Dustin); *Northampton*: a female found along Church Rd. in Emanueltown during the Wild Creek-Little Gap CBC 12/20 (Dave DeReamus, Jason Horn, Adam Smith).

Yellow-headed Blackbird – *Chester*: 5 at 4 locations 12/27-2/19 (m.ob.); *Lancaster*: 15 at 11 locations 12/26-2/27 (m.ob.); *Philadelphia*: a female found under the Girard Point Bridge 2/27 (Todd Fellenbaum).

Brewer's Blackbird* – *Lancaster*: one in a large blackbird flock near Octoraro Reservoir 12/20 (Bob Schutsky).

Baltimore Oriole – *Bucks*: up to 7 orioles frequented a yard in Middletown Twp., where present for the fourth winter. Six orioles were at 5 other locations 12/20-2/28 (m.ob.); *Lancaster*: one at Lancaster Community Park during Lancaster CBC 1/3 (John Shenk, Pamela Fisher, Mary Alice High) and one in Elizabethtown 1/22 (Cynthia Edwards); *Montgomery*: one in Upper Hanover Twp. 2/1-2 (Diana Rudloff) and one in Hatfield 2/15-27 (Judith Stimson); *Philadelphia*: one visited a feeder in West Philadelphia 12/31 until at least 1/16 (Navin Sasikumar).

Red Crossbill – *Berks*: one on the Hamburg CBC 12/27 (Kerry Grim); *Clarion*: one continuing from fall at feeder near Strattanville until 12/3 (Shari Hindman); *Lehigh*: 4 at Leaser Lake 12/25 (Frank Dickman); *Schuylkill*: 3 at Hawk Mountain 12/10.

White-winged Crossbill – *Cameron*: one during Emporium CBC 12/27.



Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*). First noted 21 November at State College, *Centre*, this Western Tanager survived the winter, here 6 February, in good shape, staying well into the spring. (Wayne Laubscher)



Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*). Snow Geese both white and blue on 2 February over the Volant Strips *Allegheny*. (Geoff Malosh)

Photographic Highlights



Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*). This bird, carrying wing-tag L95, was found in *Huntingdon* during the Lake Raystown CBC 30 December and stayed until at least late (here 24) February. It was tagged in Ontario 3 November 2012 and had been seen previously in *Huntingdon*, during spring 2015. (Gordon Dimmig)



Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*). This pair of Barnacle Geese, which provided *Philadelphia* with a first record, arrived 12 February and was still present at the end of the period, here 15 February. (Jonathan DeBalko)



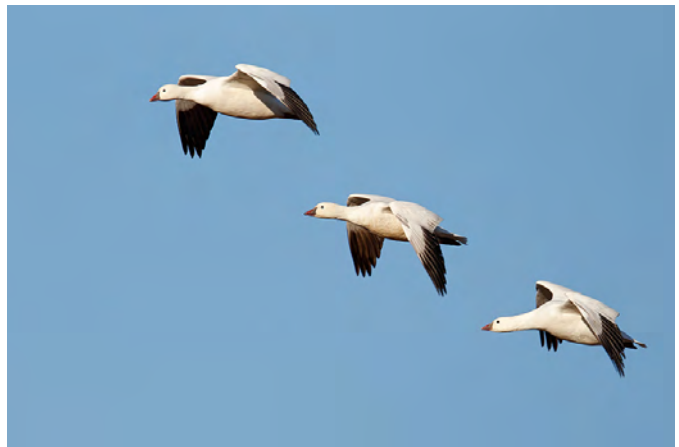
Trumpeter Swan and Mute Swan (*Cygnus buccinator* and *Cygnus olor*). A nice side-by-side view of Trumpeter and Mute Swans at Coatsville Reservoir, *Chester*, 28 December. (Brian Quindlen)



Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*). Another view of one of the two Barnacle Geese in *Philadelphia*, 19 February. (Todd Fellenbaum)



Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*). Among the many flocks from the unprecedented invasion of Greater White-fronted Geese, the largest may have been the flock of 67 at Bald Eagle S.P., *Centre*, photographed 7 February. (Nick Bolgiano)



Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*). Three Ross's Geese, captured beautifully in flight at New Beaver, *Lawrence* 6 February. (Geoff Malosh)



Mallard x Northern Pintail. This distinctive hybrid was photographed at Lake Kay, Adams, 21 January (Andy Wilson)



Eurasian Wigeon (*Ana penelope*). This male Eurasian Wigeon at Bald Eagle S.P., Centre, 29 February, represented the fourth county record (Joe Verica)



Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*). Showing up for the third consecutive winter on the Delaware River at Portland, Northampton, a female Barrow's Goldeneye was present 25 January – 19 (here 14) February. (Michael Schall)



King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*). There were two fly-bys by immature male King Eiders in Erie. One, seen here with Red-breasted Mergansers, occurred 6 December at the mouth of Walnut Creek. A second was at Sunset Point in Presque Isle S.P., 20 December (Jerry McWilliams)



Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*). Surf Scoters are exceedingly rare in Mifflin. This immature male, found and photographed on New Year's Day on the Juniata River at Lewistown, stayed through at least 10 January, apparently the first winter record for the county. (Rob Dickerson)



Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*). Two immature Pacific Loons visited Erie, both seen as late as 8 January. This bird was off the mouth of Walnut Creek 6 December. (Jerry McWilliams)



Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*). This trio of Sandhill Cranes was at Bald Eagle S.P., Centre, 7 December (here 14) – 2 January. (Bill Chambers)



White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*). This White-winged Dove in York was noted during the Great Backyard Bird Count 13 February, arriving perhaps on warm southerly wind of the preceding days. It stayed only two days. (Ann Pettigrew)



Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*). This very out-of-season Spotted Sandpiper was found and photographed 6 January at the Martin's Creek Power Plant on the Delaware River in Northampton; still present into March. (Matt Sabatine)



Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus fufus*). Continuing from the fall, this Rufous Hummingbird stayed on Mountain Road in Adams though at least 20 (here 17) January. (Ted Nichols II)



Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*). Another view of the Northampton Spotted Sandpiper, 9 January. Perhaps not the first Spotty to winter, but the first convincingly documented. (Michael Schall)



Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). The established nesting pair of Peregrine Falcons at McEllhatton, Clinton, here 13 February. (Wayne Laubscher)



Barred Owl (*Strix varia*). Barred Owl is a winter resident at Boyce-Mayview, *Allegheny*, photographed here 24 January. (Geoff Malosh)



Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*). For many years, Bald Eagle S.P., *Centre*, with extensive open, shrubby habitat, usually has hosted at least one Northern Shrike. Given the long-term reliability of at least one shrike, it is reasonable to suggest that the same individual may be returning annually. This year's bird was present 5-29 (here 21) December. (Bill Chambers)



Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*). This Snowy Owl was seen by many birders in the vicinity of the city of Lebanon, during mid-December, here 17 December. Unfortunately, it did not survive – see the *Lebanon* summary for details on this and a second Snowy Owl in *Lebanon* in January. (Ted Nichols II)



Pacific-slope Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*). This western type flycatcher at Red Bridge, *Berks*, was likely a Pacific-slope Flycatcher – if accepted, it will provide the third Pennsylvania record. Found 20 December and last seen 5 (here 2) January. (Geoff Malosh)



Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*). Short-eared Owl caught beautifully in flight 7 February along Mill Hill Road, *Lycoming*. (David Brown)



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliptila caerulea*). Providing a probable first winter record for *Centre*, this Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was found during the State College CBC, 20 December. (Julia Plummer)



Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*). This Barn Swallow was at the Northeast Water Treatment Plant, *Philadelphia*, with the winter flock of Northern Rough-winged Swallows 19 December. (Todd Fellenbaum)



Black-and-White Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*). For the third consecutive winter, at least one Black-and-White Warbler was found in the state. This bird was photographed 19 December at Lardner's Point Park, *Philadelphia*, and last seen with a flock of House Finches 9 January. There are fewer than 10 winter records for the state. (Todd Fellenbaum)



Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*). This Tree Swallow was at the Northeast Water Treatment Plant, *Philadelphia*, with the winter flock of Northern Rough-winged Swallows 19 December. (Todd Fellenbaum)



Pine Warbler (*Setophaga pinus*). Rare in winter in central Pennsylvania, this Pine Warbler frequented a feeder in Woolrich, *Clinton* beginning 21 December and staying until at least 26 February, seen here 22 January. (Skip and Linda Frye)



Orange-crowned Warbler (*Oreothlypis celata*). Orange-crowned Warblers are reported nearly annually in winter, most often in *Philadelphia*. This bird was photographed at Masonic Village, *Lancaster*, 12 February. (Ted Nichols II)



Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora cyanoptera*). This Blue-winged Warbler was found in November, in Morraine S.P., *Butler*, then re-located during the Butler CBC 19 December, providing a first record for a CBC in Pennsylvania. (Glenn Koppel)



Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*). Snow Buntings were not widely reported during this winter of limited snow cover – this bird was at South Avis, *Clinton*, 13 February. (Wayne Laubscher)



Vesper Sparrow (*Poecetes gramineus*). A rare winter find in the state outside of the southeast, this Vesper Sparrow was found at Gettysburg National Military Park, *Adams*, 12 February. (Andy Wilson)



Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*). The long-staying male Western Tanager in *Centre* got most of the press, but a second individual, a female, was found 3 January at Valley Forge, *Montgomery*. Despite searches, it was not seen again (Kitty Kono)



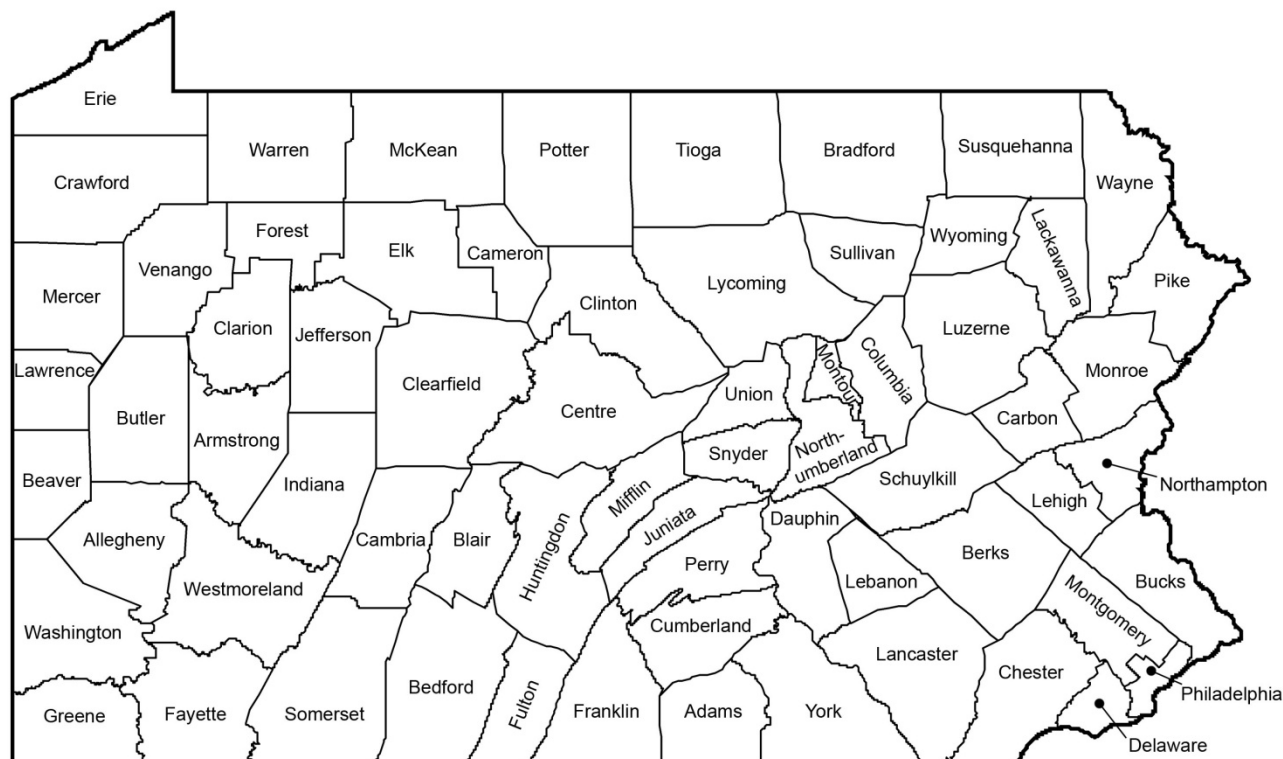
Clay-colored Sparrow (*Scientific*). Two Clay-colored Sparrows touched down in Pen Argyl, *Northampton*, 5 February and stayed through the end of the period. (Michael Schall)



Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*). This female Rose-breasted Grosbeak attended a feeder in Shavertown, *Luzerne*, from late January into the first week of February. (Mark Stair)



Pine Siskin (*Scientific*). Siskin numbers were low through much of the season, but numbers gradually increased late, continuing into March – these birds were in Swissdale, *Clinton*, 19 February. (Wayne Laubscher)



ABBREVIATIONS

B.B.S.	Breeding Bird Survey	max	maximum	R.B.A.	Rare Bird Alert
C.A.	Conservation Area	min	minimum	Res.	Reservoir
C.B.C.	Christmas Bird Count	m. ob.	many observers	Rte.	Route
C.P.	County Park	Mt. (Mts.)	Mount/Mountain/Mountains	S.F.	State Forest
Cr.	Creek	N.A.	Nature Area or Natural Area	SGL	State Game Land
et al.	and others	N.F.	National Forest	S.P.	State Park
Ft.	Fort	N.M.	National Monument	S.T.P.	Sewage Treatment Plant
G.C.	Golf Course	N.P.	National Park	subad(s).	subadult(s)
G.P.	Game Preserve	N.W.R.	National Wildlife Refuge	Twp.	Township
Hwy.	Highway	PAMC	Pennsylvania Migration Count	vr.	voice recording
imm(s).	immature(s)	ph.	Photographed	vt.	videotape
Jct.	Junction	Pt.	Point	W.A.	Wildlife Area
juv(s).	juvenal [plumage]; juvenile(s)	R.	River	W.M.A.	Wildlife Management Area
L.	Lake	R.A.	Recreational Area	WRS	Winter Raptor Survey

eBird Usage: Data for these reports and throughout this journal include observations collected from the eBird database <<http://www.ebird.org>>. Citation: eBird. 2012. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. (Accessed: 31 March 2014)

Adams County

Locations: Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Gettysburg Christmas Bird Count (GCBC), Gettysburg National Military Park (GNMP), Long Pine Run Reservoir (LPRR), Mountain Road (MTN), York Springs Christmas Bird Count (YSCBC).

With the glaring exception of the 1/22-23 record-setting “Jonas” blizzard that dropped approximately 30 inches of snow on the county, this winter was relatively tame. The species count of 107 plus one hybrid was on the high side. The GCBC led by Mike O’Brien found 81 species 12/19 while the YSCBC led by Vern Gauthier recorded 73 species in the Adams portion 12/29. The county’s four Winter Raptor Survey routes produced typical results.

Lake Kay, a spring fed 20-acre impoundment, continues to provide the bulk of winter period waterfowl reports as a result of consistently open water. Nineteen waterfowl species were observed at this location throughout the period. Highlights were a **Greater White-fronted Goose**

on the GCBC, up to five **Cackling Geese** 1/22 (AL, CW), 181 **Mallards** 2/12 (AW), a **Mallard x Northern Pintail** 1/21 (AW), a pair of **Canvasbacks** 2/26 (IC), and 117 **Ring-necked Ducks** 2/27 (JSD). **Snow Geese** found Lake Meade to their liking 1/1-2/29, with a high count of 45 on 2/28 (JV). Thirty **Tundra Swans** made an appearance at LPRR 12/2 (BO). The northeast portion of the county continues to witness the spring migration of Tundras, with a high count of 98 coming from Ridge Rd 2/29 (ED). **American Black Duck** observations came from five locales 12/19-2/15 (m.ob.), but no count exceeded 5 birds. Species with only a single report included a trio of **Red-breasted Mergansers** at LPRR 12/12 (VG, BO), one **Common Loon** at Lake Heritage 12/5 (MB), and three **Horned Grebes** at LPRR 12/2 (BO).

Ring-necked Pheasant reports were limited to a single along Ridge Rd 2/13 (ED) and 3 on the YSCBC. The eight reports of **Wild Turkey** included high counts of 35 at GNMP 12/22 (AK), 36 at Knorr Rd 2/14 (CK), and 20 at MTN 2/28 (RDS). An uncommon winter sighting was provided by a **Double-crested Cormorant** at Lake Mae 12/10 (IC).

Although common year-round residents in the county, 83 **Black Vultures** at Ski Liberty 2/28 (PK) and 125 **Turkey Vultures** at Buchanan Valley Rd 12/18 (CB) represented notably high winter counts. **Northern Harriers** were well reported – the count of 17 on the GCBC was outstanding. **Rough-legged Hawks** were nearly absent this year with only a single bird at Freedom Twp. 1/15-17 (JF, NL, CS, DS).

Four **Herring Gulls** mingled with **Ring-billed Gulls** at Germany Rd. 12/30 (PK). A GCBC highlight was a **Long-eared Owl**, but a glaring miss for the period was Short-eared Owl. Local birders have to cross the Mason-Dixon line on Bullfrog Rd. and go about a mile into Maryland to observe Short-ears. The Siefken residence on MTN held the adult female **Rufous Hummingbird** from the fall season until 1/20 (m.ob.).

Both *Adams* and *York* produced double digit concentrations of **Red-headed Woodpeckers** at specific sites. There were 14 reports for *Adams* with GNMP being the favored site, producing a high count of 10 on 12/22 (AK). Trios of **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** and **Pileated Woodpeckers** were at MTN 12/19 & 12/12, respectively, (RDS).

Twenty reports of **American Kestrels** included 28 on the GCBC and decent numbers from the WRS routes, suggesting the county was a good wintering locale for this species of concern. **Merlin** reports came from Freedom Twp 12/16 (SB) and 1/22 (AL, CW), Lake Kay 12/30 (AW), and Wenskville Rd. 2/8 (BO). Observers were treated to close views of a **Peregrine Falcon** dining on a **Mourning Dove** at Possum Hollow Rd 2/5 (AW, PK).

Fish Crows stayed well into the period with a pair at Lake Kay 2/28 (MS, JW) and a single at Ridge Rd. 2/29 (ED). With nine **Common Raven** reports and 16 sightings on the GCBC, their upward trend continues. High counts of **Horned Larks** were 30 at Freedom Twp. 1/26 (IC) and 40 at Possum Hollow Rd. 2/1 (PK).

The higher elevation (1400 feet) of LPRR held nine **Black-capped Chickadees** 12/23 (AK). **Brown Creepers** were found all period. The five reports each of **Winter Wren** and **Golden-crowned Kinglet** and four reports of **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** were all confined to Dec. The GCBC reported 3 **Hermit Thrushes** and 7 were noted during the YSCBC. They went unreported for Jan but were at GNMP 2/5 (NL) and LPRR 2/11 (DB).

The YSCBC produced the only **Gray Catbird** sighting. Interestingly, **American Pipits** were only reported during the CBCs: 200 on the GCBC and 40 on the YSCBC. Uncommon for the county, **Lapland Longspurs** were at Possum Hollow Rd. 2/1-5 (IC, PK, AW), with a high count of 4 on 2/3 (AW).

Eastern Towhees were present all period, with 11 on the CBCs. Sparrow reporting was favorable. A nice count of 23 **American Tree Sparrows** came from GNMP 12/22 (AK) and a **Chipping Sparrow** was found in the company of the “trees” at GNMP 2/2 (JS). Rarely found in winter, a **Vesper Sparrow** was at GNMP 2/12 (AW). Five locales held **Savannah Sparrows** with a high count of 6 from Cunningham Rd. 1/27 (AW). The 7 reports of **Fox Sparrow** were more than usual as was the 5 reports of **Swamp Sparrow**; both species were found in all months.

Red-winged Blackbirds, **Common Grackles**, and **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were present all period. With the overall mild winter, it was somewhat surprising that **Eastern Meadowlarks** were not frequently found. In fact, GNMP and Freedom Twp. were the only sites where found, reported 12/10-2/15 (AK, PM, AW) with a nominal high count of 4 on 2/15 (PM). A single **Rusty Blackbird** was at McGlaughlin Rd. 1/23 (PM); Turkey Point Rd. held a pair 1/24 and a single 2/14-15 (LM).

Six reports of **Purple Finch** were marked by their randomness, with no count exceeding 2 birds. The only **Pine Siskin** report came from MTN 2/13-28 (RDS), where high counts of 20 high count occurred 2/20 and 2/24.

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Allegheny County

Locations: Findlay Township (FT), Wingfield Pines (WP).

Allegheny took part of the highly unusual **Greater White-fronted Goose** invasion in early Feb. With large numbers in the surrounding area, it was likely this rare species would appear here. Ten were at a small pond at Janoski's Farm in FT 2/6 (MV), representing the fifth county record. They remained the following day and a single bird was still there 2/20 (MV); likely the same bird was at nearby Imperial 2/24 (GM). A white morph **Snow Goose** was found at WP 1/12 (MJ) and remained at least to the middle of Feb (m.ob.). Snow Geese also invaded the western part of the state as well as eastern Ohio.

Waterfowl highlights include 4 **Gadwalls** at WP 1/22 (GM) and 3 **Northern Pintails** there for most of Jan–Feb (m.ob.) as well as one in FT 1/9 (MV). A **Greater Scaup** was at Cheswick 2/14 (TH), 2 **Lesser Scaup** were at Wood's Run 1/24 (TJ), and one was at Cheswick 2/24 (TH). Four **Redheads** were at Creighton 2/14 (TH) and one was at Imperial 2/21 (GM, MV). Three **Canvasbacks** were at Wood's Run on the Ohio R. 1/24 (TJ) and one was on the Allegheny R. at Sharpsburg 1/30 (AH, PM). A **Ruddy Duck** was at Wood's Run 1/24 (TJ). There was only one report of **Red-breasted Merganser**—a single on the Allegheny R. at Blawnox 1/31 (SG, JJ, TSh, JSh).

The **Bald Eagle** nest in Crescent Twp. (the first nest in *Allegheny*) was noted to be missing 12/19 (MV). It's likely the nest or the tree it was in fell during bad weather. Fortunately, a new nest was constructed nearby. A **Northern Harrier** was an unexpected flyover in Schenley Park in Pittsburgh 12/26 (MHo, MF). The park has no harrier habitat and clearly the bird was just passing over. The only report of **Rough-legged Hawk** came from Imperial, where a light morph was noted 12/19 (MV).

Merlins continue to winter in the county with reports from five locations including the traditional Schenley Park G.C. location. The female **Peregrine Falcon** (named Hope) that nested at the Tarentum Bridge in the past was seen at the bridge 2/8 (SK). She actually moved to the Cathedral of Learning in Oakland where she apparently took the place of the female that nested there for many years and is presumed to be deceased. More news in the next report—stay tuned

Killdeer were reported in Dec and Feb from a few locations. Single **American Woodcocks** were at WP 2/23 (JM) and Plum Borough 2/24 (AH, PM).

We had a minor invasion of gulls at The Point in Pittsburgh, but very few rarities concentrated during the coldest days of the season. Rare during the winter, two **Bonaparte's Gulls** were in that area 1/17 (AH, PM). A first cycle **Iceland Gull** was present 12/19 (GM) and a second cycle was there 1/23 (ST, GM, et al.). A first cycle **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was present 12/13 and a second cycle on 12/17 (BC, ST). Single adult, second, and third cycle birds were there 12/19 (GM). None were reported again until 1/21 when two adults were found (BC). One or two adults were at the Imperial Landfill 1/22 (GM), a first record for that location. Single adults continued off and on through 2/13 (m.ob.). Two adults and a third cycle were seen 2/14 (ST, DW). Two adult **Glaucous Gulls** were present 1/21 (BC), a second cycle was seen 1/22 and 1/29 (ST, et al.), and an adult 1/31 (SG). Two **Great Black-backed Gulls** (an adult and a first cycle) were spotted 12/19 (GM). This species was reported regularly 1/21-30 with a high count of 7 of various ages 1/22 (m.ob.). A second cycle was at the Imperial Landfill 1/22 (GM), the second record for that location. Two first winter birds were in Pittsburgh 2/14 (DW, ST), the only report for Feb.

A **Barred Owl** made the Pittsburgh CBC 12/26 in Fox Chapel and one was at Sewickley Heights Park 2/21 (GM). Barred Owls are local residents in the county. There was a second hand report of a **Snowy Owl** at the Pittsburgh Airport 2/12 (Dan Richards, PA Birds Listserv). The adult and immature **Red-headed Woodpeckers** continued from the fall at North Park (m.ob.), the immature becoming increasingly difficult to find as the season wore on.

Common Raven and **Fish Crow** reports continue. A raven was seen for the first time in Braddock, oddly hanging on the side of a building possibly extracting grit from mortar between the bricks. One at North Park 2/20 may be a first for that location (BM). Two **Fish Crows** in Hampton Twp. provided a first record for that location 12/2 (DN).

There were only two reports of **Red-breasted Nuthatch**. Single birds were at Fox Chapel 12/26 (CBC) and in Hampton Twp. 2/26 (DN). A **Winter Wren** was at Harrison Hills Park 12/19 (SG) and birds found during the Pittsburgh CBC 12/26 include two in Indiana Twp. and singles at Frick Park and Fox Chapel. This species probably winters regularly in the county.

Hermit Thrushes probably winter every year in small numbers. Single birds were at Deer Lakes Park 12/12 (TH), Sewickley Heights Park 2/12 (SD, BVN), and North Park 2/27 (DN). Providing an amazing winter record, a **Wood Thrush** was found at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve 1/3 (AH, PM). Beautiful photos were obtained of this rare winter visitor. A total of 3440 **American Robins** were counted leaving a roost near WP 12/19 (ST). A leucistic robin was at Strouss Farm in FT 2/26 (MV).

A few **Gray Catbirds** lingered into the winter. One was in a yard in Gibsonia 12/5 (KP), another yard bird was in Forest Hills 12/26 (TBI), and one visited a feeding station in Bethel Park 1/1 through the end of Jan (JP). A catbird found in riverside brush in Pittsburgh 1/21 (SG) remained until at least 2/14 (PLi, DP). A late **Brown Thrasher** was found during the Pittsburgh CBC in Fox Chapel 12/26 (BSh), surprisingly not a first for this location during the CBC.

Uncommon in winter, a few **Eastern Towhees** were present in Dec and Jan. One visited a feeder in Harmar Twp. 12/12-19 (JV), 3 were at Harrison Hills Park 12/19 (SG, JS, SS, MF), 4 were tallied at various locations during the Pittsburgh CBC, and single birds were at North Park (GM) and FT (MV) 1/22. Three **Chipping Sparrows**, rare in winter, were photographed at a feeder in Sewickley 1/3-2/14 (JT) and two were in Marshall Twp. 2/23 (JHe). **Field Sparrows** uncommon in winter, were reported only twice: two in Indiana Twp. 12/26 (Pittsburgh CBC) and 3 at North Park 2/27 (AB).

Fox Sparrows are also uncommon to rare in winter. One at Deer Lakes Park 12/12 (OL, TH) could have been a late migrant, up to two visited a feeder in Pleasant Hills 12/26 through Feb (MH), two were in FT 1/22 and 3 were there 2/19 (MV), one was in Plum Borough 2/14 (AH, PM), and two were in Sewickley Heights Park 2/21 (GM). A few **Swamp Sparrows** winter in the county every year. Three were at WP 12/19 (ST) and 3 in Fox Chapel 12/26 (Pittsburgh CBC), both reliable wintering sites. **White-crowned Sparrow** is a local winter resident and is most reliable at a farm in FT where 6 were found 1/17 (MV).

Red-winged Blackbirds lingered into Jan. A male visited a feeder in Harmar Twp. 12/18-19 (JV), 3 were at North Park and 4 in Indiana Twp. 12/26 (Pittsburgh CBC), one was in FT 1/17 (MV) and a flock of 25 visited a feeder in Pine Twp. 1/30 (PL, SL). Five in Natrona Heights 2/8 (PH) may have been early migrants but this species does not normally return until late Feb at the earliest. **Common Grackles** may have been following the same pattern. Usually not seen until late Feb or early Mar, one was in Greenfield 2/2 (KSJ), one was at Bethel Park 2/20, and one was in Shaler Twp. 2/28 (STI). A **Brown-headed Cowbird** visited a feeder in Pine Twp. 1/11 (PL, SL). A flock of 30 visited a feeder in Natrona Heights 1/13, three were there 1/18, and 40 stopped by 1/22 (PH). Interestingly, there were reports in several locations in the state around the same time posted on the PA Birds Listserv.

Purple Finch is always reported in just a few locations. Three were tallied in Kilbuck Twp. 12/26 (Pittsburgh CBC), one visited a feeder in Natrona Heights 12/28 (PH), one was at a feeder at North Park 1/22 (GM) and 2 were at the same location 1/27 (JM). There was a minor invasion of **Pine Siskins** this season with most seen at feeders in small numbers. The exceptions were a flock of 21 in Indiana Twp. during the Pittsburgh CBC (SG) and a flock that spent the entire season at a feeding station in Sewickley, with a max of 43 birds 2/27 (JT).

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Armstrong County

Locations: Crooked Creek Park (CC), Lock and Dam (L&D), Rosston

(RT), Worthington (WT).

Four **Greater White-fronted Geese** originally found at CC 1/3 (SG) were still present 1/9 (AK, JK). The top *Armstrong* count was 42 at L&D 7 on 2/14 (TR), but only one remained the following day (TR); these are the third and fourth county records for this species. A **Ross's Goose**, representing the second county record, was photographed on Crooked Creek from Scout Run Rd. 2/15 (TB); possibly the same bird was found 2/20 (AK, JK, TR) at RT. The last 12 south-bound **Tundra Swans** were at CC 1/8 (MVT); this is only the third Jan sighting for *Armstrong*.

A **Wood Duck** was first seen north of L&D 8 on 2/21 (TR), the second earliest date of arrival - the previous being 2/19/2006 (DY). **American Wigeons** arrived at L&D 5 on 2/20 (TR) and 2 were spotted the next day at RT (AB); these are among the earliest arrival dates for wigeons. **Northern Pintail** reports were limited to 3 at RT 2/3 (MH, RH) and one at CC 2/25 (MVT). Single **Green-winged Teal** appeared at MV 2/17 (MH, RH), the earliest arrival date on record, and at L&D 7 on 2/20 (TR), tying the previous early date of 2/20/2011 (MH, RH).

Amazingly, 2 **Ring-necked Ducks** at RT 12/2 (MVT) and one **Lesser Scaup** at L&D 7 on 1/23 (TR) were the only ones reported. Small numbers of **Buffleheads** were noted this winter with the largest flock of 8 at L&D 7 on 1/24 (TR). **Common Goldeneyes** were found on the Allegheny R. again this year with the largest flock of 11 at L&D 7 on 2/14 (TR). Twenty-three **Hooded Mergansers** lingered at KR 12/11 (MH, RH). **Common Mergansers** were widespread throughout the county, wintering on Mahoning Cr. as well as the Allegheny R..

KR harbored the last 4 **Common Loons** 12/3 (MH, RH) and the last 6 **Pied-billed Grebes** 12/11 (MH, RH). The only **Horned Grebes** were the 3 lingering at KR 12/3 (MH, RH) and one early returnee at CC 2/29 (MVT).

Two **Turkey Vultures** on 2/29 were early (MH, RH). The WT area was the hotspot for **Northern Harrier** sightings between 1/22 (MVT) and 2/20 (TR). Two **Rough-legged Hawks** were noted, a dark morph female near Elderton 1/30 (MM) and a light morph near KT 2/14 (MVT).

The only **American Coot** was at RT 2/20 (TR). Eight **Killdeer** remained at CC 12/26 (MVT); the first spring returnee appeared 2/28 (TR). Eight **Bonaparte's Gulls** visited RT 12/2 (MVT), only the third Dec record.

A **Snowy Owl** photographed north of Mahoning Dam provided the third *Armstrong* record 1/22 (FP). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** lingered at CC through 1/3 (SG). A **Merlin** near WT 1/22 (MVT) was unexpected. A pair of **Peregrines** returned to the KT bridge again this year, with the first sighting 2/2 (MVT).

Two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were noted at Ford Cliff 2/12 (LR). CC harbored 2 **Yellow-rumped Warblers** 2/7 (MVT). Single **White-crowned Sparrows** were listed on the northern *Armstrong* WRS 2/10 (MH, RH, GL) and south of KT 2/13 (LV). In this nearly northern finch-less year, 3 **Pine Siskins** at Cochran's Mill 1/26 (MVT) and one at Leechburg 2/15 (MVT) were noteworthy.

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Beaver County

Locations: Little Blue Lake (LBL) New Brighton (NB), Rochester - Beaver River mouth (RCH).

After an excessively mild fall and early winter, the Ohio River finally saw some ice by about mid-Jan, though it was completely open again by late Feb. Infrequently noted in *Beaver*, a **Mute Swan** was at NB 1/22 (MV). It was a good season for **Gadwall** at RCH beginning with the freeze-up in mid-Jan; they were seen rather frequently from then until the end of the season (DY, MV, OM, et al.). **American Wigeons** at RCH included singles 1/22 (KSJ) and 2/14 (MV). It was an "on-again" winter for the enigmatic **American Black Duck**, with many sightings from RCH 12/13-2/15 (m.ob.); others included one at Ambridge Res. 12/13 (MJ) and 17 at LBL 2/6 (MV). Top count of **Mallard** at RCH was 261 on 1/24 (MV). **Northern Pintail** was noted sporadically through the season headed by 8 at LBL 2/6 (MV). A very nice winter count (by *Beaver's* standards) of 20 **Green-winged Teal** was made at Ambridge

Res. 12/13 (MJ). Following the freeze-up, good counts of **Redhead** included 11 at Vanport 1/19 (GR, DR) and 18 at RCH 2/20 (DK, et al.).

A **White-winged Scoter** was photographed by a non-birder at RCH 12/7 (*fide* TJ), notable for its presence during the mild late fall; it was also the only scoter seen in the county this season. A **Common Goldeneye** at RCH 1/24 (GR) was also the only of its kind reported. Probably owing to the rather mild conditions overall, **Hooded Merganser** was exceptionally well reported for most of the season at RCH and nearby (m.ob.). Likewise for **Common Merganser**, which was reported in small handfuls for the first half of the season, but increased dramatically at RCH in Feb, where the top count was 59 on 2/15 (GR). A total of 25 were seen on a survey of the Ohio R. 1/14 (DY). An early **Red-breasted Merganser** was at RCH 2/19 (OM).

A **Common Loon** at RCH 2/7 (DG) was a rare mid-winter find. A few **Double-crested Cormorants** hung around NB and RCH to at least 12/20 (MV, m.ob.). Very rare for Dec anywhere in western Pennsylvania, a **Great Egret** was found at RCH 12/28 (GR) and was relocated a little upstream on the Beaver R. 12/31 (MV).

There were at least 14 reports of **Bald Eagles**, in counts of up to 4 (m.ob.). One was observed taking a Mallard out of mid-air 1/22 (GR). The fields around LBL usually support a wintering **Northern Harrier** or 2 and that was the case again this year; one was noted there 1/1 (GM) and 1/15 (KJ). A **Red-shouldered Hawk** wintered around RCH, with sightings 1/3-2/16 (MV, et al.).

Killdeer lingered to 12/20 at NB (MV). A **Wilson's Snipe** probably wintered again at the Siebel farm in Independence Twp., noted this year 1/7 (MV). Rare in mid-winter was a single **Bonaparte's Gull** on the Beaver R. near Bridgewater 1/1 (GM). Prior to the freeze the top count of **Ring-billed Gull** was 250 at NB 1/3 (TJ), and after the ice appeared it was 400 at RCH 2/13 (MV). Also at RCH 2/13 were 35 **Herring Gulls** and a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (MV).

As is usually the case, an **American Kestrel** wintered around RCH, seen 1/3 (MV) and 1/22 (GR). A wintertime **Merlin** returned again to RCH, where it was seen atop the Grace Lutheran Church 12/5 (MV), but it was not seen after that date. The county's pair of **Peregrine Falcons** was seen carrying nesting material to the top of the P&LE rail bridge 2/21, and squabbling with the pair of **Common Ravens** that also returned to attempt to nest on the nearby Rochester-Beaver rail bridge (GR). Whether the ravens will be tolerated this year remains to be seen.

Reports of passerines were nearly zero. Two **Yellow-rumped Warblers** and 9 **Snow Buntings** were noted on the Beaver CBC (*fide* RM). Interesting birds around LBL included up to 8 **White-crowned Sparrows** 1/1 (GM) and 1/31 (MV), and an **Eastern Meadowlark** 2/6 (TJ). Up to 28 **Pine Siskins** frequented a feeder in Economy through Feb (KD), and smaller numbers were noted on a few dates at the Raccoon Creek S.P. feeders beginning 1/12 (DC).

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Bedford County

No report.

Compiler: **Tom Dick, 123 Hummer Lane, Cairnbrook, PA, 15924, (814) 754-5727, thomasd102.d@gmail.com.**

Berks County

Locations: Blue Marsh L. (BML), E. J. Breneman Quarry (BQ), Hawk Mt. Sanctuary (HMS), L. Ontelaunee (LO), Pheasant Valley Farm, Robesonia (PVF), Christmas Bird Counts: Reading 12/20 (RCBC), Bernville 12/26 (BCBC), Hamburg 12/27 (HCBC).

This El Nino winter, very warm and fairly dry, produced only one major snowfall, the blizzard of 1/23-24, whose effects were short lived. With the combination of mild weather, lakes frozen only briefly, and snow cover sporadic, some species that normally leave by December or January overwintered in small numbers as in previous mild winters. Warm weather at the end of the February triggered strong migration, especially of waterfowl,

A flock of 23 **Greater White-fronted Geese** was seen at BML 2/7 (DH, JH, RK, et al.). Groups of 2-22 Greater White-fronted Geese

reported at BQ and other places near BML (m.ob.) during the next 3 weeks were probably fractions of the original flock. The last reported flock consisted of 21 birds feeding in a field near Mertztown on the other side of the county 2/29 (JH).

Altogether, this was the largest number of Greater White-fronted Geese ever reported in *Berks*. Birds in the flock at BML 2/7 had pink or pinkish orange bills, differently colored than their orange feet, and the barring on the sides of the adults varied from one or two wide bars to several narrower bars on each side. Like the geese reported this winter in western Pennsylvania, these birds seemed more likely to be of the North American frontalis subspecies than of the Greenland flavirostris subspecies to which we have become accustomed seeing in much smaller numbers (usually singly) in *Berks* in most winters since the mid-1990's.

Flocks of a few to a few hundred **Snow Geese** wandered around the county in Dec and Jan. Late Feb brought clamorous waves of migrants, with 27,000 (including 40 Blue Geese) dropping down to rest on LO 2/27 (RK). At least one **Ross's Goose** was a member of that flock 2/27-28 (RK, KL, MSI). There were three reports of **Cackling Geese**: 2 flying with **Canada Geese** over Berks Heritage Center 12/26 (SM, RJ), one at LO 1/16 (DA), and one at BQ 2/5,14 (KL, MSI).

The **Mute Swan** flock at LO, culled from 30 birds two years ago, stood at about 10 this winter (RK). Foraging flocks of **Tundra Swans** from the population wintering at Middle Creek WMA, *Lancaster* were seen during the winter, such as 84 found on the BCBC. Two swans that flew out of BML 1/1 (JS) identified themselves by their bugling calls as **Trumpeter Swans**.

Birders reported 22 duck species this winter, some only a few times, others all season. The distinction between wintering birds and migrants was sometimes blurry, and many ducks probably wintered north of Pennsylvania. By the end of Feb, all of the commonly occurring species except **Blue-winged Teal** (and two uncommon scoters) had begun migrating through *Berks*. A few **Wood Ducks**, usually gone by Dec, stayed later. Two male **Eurasian Wigeons**, one at BML (MSI) and one at LO (KL, MSI), appeared with the first large influx of 330 **American Wigeons** 2/28 (RK). Five male **American Black Duck X Mallard** hybrids were at LO 1/5 (RK) among their parent species, both of which were less common than usual. Counts of 1-7 wintering **Northern Shovelers** were made at BQ 1/4-2/28 (m.ob.), where they have been found in each of several winters.

Early migrating **Northern Pintails** were already here by 2/20, increasing to 207 at LO 2/22 (RK). Of the five *Aythya* species, only **Ring-necked Duck** was fairly common. No more than 2 **Greater Scaup**, 4 **Lesser Scaup**, and 10 **Canvasbacks** (the highest count of only three records of this species) were reported. The now annually wintering flock of **Redheads** at BQ never exceeded 17 birds (m.ob.). Two **White-winged Scoters** were at BML 2/15 (LC) and one 2/19 (EB).

Single **Long-tailed Ducks** were at BML 2/20 (DH, KL) and LO 2/27 (FD). Three **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at BML 2/15 (LC) and one was there 2/19 (EB) along with about 200 **Common Mergansers**. This winter's **Ruddy Duck** flock at BQ numbered up to 32 in Jan and Feb (m.ob.).

The cluster of winter **Ring-necked Pheasant** reports around BML and LO on eBird represents put-and-take birds released for hunting that are unlikely to survive until spring. A late lingering **Common Loon** was at LO 12/5-19 (RK, MSI). Open water at BQ and the lakes allowed up to 8 **Pied-billed Grebes** and 2 **Horned Grebes** to linger into Jan and Feb (m.ob.). **Double-crested Cormorants** are usually gone by early Dec and don't reappear until Mar or Apr, but this year 1-4 were reported in Jan and Feb (KG, et al.).

There were more than a dozen reports of **Northern Harriers** (m.ob.), mostly single birds, accounted for by a lack of persistent snow cover to conceal prey and requests for sightings by the Farmland Raptor Project of HMS. That **Bald Eagles** are now one of the most often reported winter raptors still amazes those who remember their DDT era rarity. Six were standing on the ice at LO 1/21 (KL) and 19 were scavenging at a chicken farm near Shartlesville 2/14 (MW). Two southbound **Golden Eagles** migrated over HMS 12/31 (LG). An immature Golden lingered along the Kittatinny Ridge during Dec, roosting a short way northeast of North Lookout at HMS (LG).

Counts of this year's wintering **American Coot** flock at BQ numbered 5-40 in Jan and Feb (m.ob.). **Killdeer** reappeared at a few places in mid-Feb, increasing to 16 near Shartlesville 2/26 (MW). A flock of 25 **Wilson's Snipe**, a high winter number, seen in Marion Twp. 2/7 (RK) may have been migrating. Newly arrived **American Woodcocks** were reported displaying at several places starting 2/27

(KG, m.ob.).

The only **Iceland Gull** was a first winter bird at BML 2/7 (JH, EH, RK). The count of 10 Lesser **Black-backed Gulls** at BML 2/7 (RK) was slightly higher than the usual peak winter count. One to 8 **Great Black-backed Gulls** at various locations during the period was a normal seasonal number.

One or 2 **Eurasian Collared-Doves** were seen at the Shartlesville colony in Jan and Feb (DA, KL, MW). A **Barn Owl** was found on the HCBC 12/27 and one was seen roosting in a silo in Albany Twp. 2/15 (BB). Wintering **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were seen at Bastian Rd. near Bowers 1/24-25 (KL, PJW) and along Bordner Rd. near Rehrersburg 2/7 (RK), both locations where Red-heads have wintered previously.

Spotty snow cover enabled wintering of more **American Kestrels** than during the previous two years. A **Merlin** was at BML, a traditional wintering site, through Jan (MSI et al.). Other **Merlins** were seen hunting from roadside utility poles in farmland at a few places all winter (m.ob.). There was a bewildering number of **Peregrine Falcon** reports. Reading's Peregrine pair remained in residence. A Peregrine roosted on a church in Hamburg from mid-Jan to mid-Feb (KG, MW). Two were seen and photographed at PVF 1/29-30 (NL). Two, apparently a male and a female judging by size difference, were photographed near Virginville 1/31 (DH). Single birds were seen at other places on other dates. How many of these observations were re-sightings of the same few birds peregrinating around the county is unknown.

A "Western" type flycatcher thought to be a **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was discovered in a wet hedgerow near Red Bridge at Berks Heritage Center during the RCBC 12/20 (RH). It was seen by many birders from many states until 1/5. The bird was observed feeding on midges and other small insects still active during mild days. Many photos, recordings of vocalizations, and written descriptions can be studied on eBird. If accepted, it will be the third in Pennsylvania and the first in *Berks*. Last seen at the beginning of the coldest part of winter, the bird's fate is unknown.

The only reported **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was found on the BCBC 12/26. **Brown Creepers** were well represented on the CBC's and widely reported all winter, but **Winter Wrens**, **Golden-crowned Kinglets** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were no more common than usual. **Eastern Bluebirds** and **American Robins**, highlighted by 5000 eating fruit at BML 1/4 (JS), were ubiquitous, and even skulking **Hermit Thrushes** were reported at least 4 times in Feb.

It is rare for **Gray Catbird** to be tracked through a winter, but that happened with 2 birds along the Schuylkill R., one at Trout Run Sports Complex 1/2-2/20 (RH) and one at Union Meadows Park near Birdsboro 1/15 until Mar (JT). A **Brown Thrasher** was photographed in Albany Twp. 1/30 (DA). **American Pipits** were either scarce or went undetected in brown fields. The highest count among seven reports was of 40 near Blandon 1/13 (PJW). Flocks of **Cedar Waxwings** (100-300 on CBC's) were found with thrushes in fruitful thickets later in winter.

An unusually high count of 18 **Lapland Longspurs** was made at PVF 1/28 (MF), shortly after the 1/23-24 blizzard. Smaller numbers were reported during the next few days. Some of these birds and their **Horned Lark** companions left the bare windswept fields and perched on unharvested sorghum plants to eat the seeds, taking refuge in uncut warm season grasses between feeding forays (RK). Few **Snow Buntings** were reported. The largest flock was of 38 birds near PVF 1/30 (MSI), but no other count exceeded 4 birds. A **Pine Warbler** was at LO 1/2 (PJW); the species has wintered a few times. Typically-small numbers of **Yellow-rumped Warblers** wintered, mostly in the Schuylkill R. valley; the highest count of 11 was in Exeter Twp. 2/6 (PJW).

The only **Chipping Sparrow** was found on the HCBC 12/27. **Fox Sparrows** are usually gone by the end of Nov or early Dec, but this year a few were found on each CBC and there were at least 15 reports of 1-2 birds from different locations in Jan and Feb (m.ob.). At least one (and probably others) wintered at a feeder (PJW). On the other hand, **White-crowned Sparrows** were less common than usual. A flock of 30 **Savannah Sparrows**, a high count in winter, was at PVF 1/28 (RK). Excellent wintering habitat of standing sorghum and uncut warm season grasses accounted for their presence. **Eastern Towhees**, responding to the same benign weather conditions as **Fox Sparrows**, wintered in higher numbers than usual, clustered in southern and eastern *Berks*.

No Eastern Meadowlarks were reported. Only 2 **Rusty Blackbirds** were reported, near BML 2/25 (PM). As in previous years, **Brown-headed Cowbirds** exploited a winter niche in open cattle barns, feeding in the troughs among **European Starlings** and **House Sparrows**, such as a flock of 30 that spent a few weeks in Jan and Feb in a barn near

Robesonia (RK).

Minuscule numbers of **Purple Finches** and **Pine Siskins** were seen at very few feeders in Jan and Feb. An interesting report of a **Red Crossbill** found on the HCBC 12/27 (KG) probably represents the tail end of a small movement of the species detected at hawk watches along the Kittatinny Ridge from Oct to Dec.

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Blair County

Blair joined in the **Greater White-fronted Goose** bonanza with 5 at Martinsburg, reported to eBird 2/14 and 2/20 (Cindy Schaner, Laura Palmer). A **Trumpeter Swan** was standing on the ice at Canoe Creek SP 1/9 (Greg Grove, Deb Grove), providing at the least the second county record; one was at the same location in Aug 2010.

Notable raptor reports include a **Rough-legged Hawk** near the town of Bald Eagle 1/26 (Mark Bonta) and a **Merlin** at Duncansville 1/4 (Alyssia Church).

NEW COMPILER BEGINNING Spring 2016: **Mark Bonta, markabonta@gmail.com** .

Bradford County

Locations: Browning Pond, Wyalusing (BRP), SE Bradford County Christmas Bird Count: the count area is a circle with a 7.5 mile radius from its center, which is Wyalusing (CBC), Echo Beach Rd. on the south side of the Susquehanna River downriver from Wysox (EBR), Edwards Rd, Stevensville (ERS), Graham Rd., Canton (GRR), Mid-Winter Bald Eagle Survey Bradford Co. (MBE), Peck Hill (PEH), Seeley/Seeley Farm Rd. (northeast of Canton) (SEE), Susquehanna River (SUR), Trudy Gerlach farm near New Era (TNE), Taylor Rd. marsh just south of Grover (TRM), Ulster Boat Access (UBA), Wyalusing New Albany Rd. (WNA), Bradford Co. Winter Raptor Survey (WRS).

Winter was extremely warm, with very little snow. Some fall migration dates were later than normal, geese and some ducks for example, and there were late sightings of some species, like **Gray Catbird**, and fewer sightings of certain winter species like **Rough-legged Hawks**. Among winter irruptive species, there were no **Common Redpolls**. The number of **Pine Siskins** was low at the beginning, but they increased throughout the winter.

An example of late fall migration due to the warm winter was the sighting of about 200 **Snow Geese** flying south on WNA east of New Era 12/13 (TG); some were also observed at PEH on the same date (AV, GV). Two **Wood Ducks** were reported on the CBC 12/26. Thirteen **Hooded Mergansers** were also seen on the CBC and 2 were at TRM 2/29 (LF). Two **Buffleheads** and a **Common Goldeneye** were at the UBA 2/14 (DH).

One **Ring-necked Pheasant** was seen at Kelly Rd. west of Ulster 1/16 (AJ), an unusually large number of 7 were seen on the Springfield/Wetona Rd. north of Mt. Pisgah 1/17 (LF), and one was east of Canton 2/20 (NF). A **Common Loon** was found at the Ulster SUR bridge 2/7 (DA). A somewhat late **Green Heron** was at PEH 12/9 (AV, GV).

Ten **Black Vultures** (the largest number I recall in the county) were seen in the same Franklindale vicinity 12/21 (LF), where **Short-eared Owls** and **Northern Harriers** were reported in large numbers (see below). The number of **Bald Eagles** has gradually increased since they were introduced: 2 were observed near Rt. 220 at Ulster 12/13 (IW, AJ), one was also at Tozers Landing, Athens on the same date (IW); one was at Manahan Rd. 12/18 (LF); 16 adults and 12 imms. were seen during the CBC 12/26; one was near Rimmersfield 12/31 (RYa); 24 were observed on the MBE along the SUR and a small portion of the Chemung R. 1/8. Most sightings were near urban areas (RG believes

they are becoming increasingly tolerant of human activity) (JaP*, MD*, TDa*, DB*, RG*, MBr, DA, BM). One was at the James St. bridge, Towanda 1/11 (LF); an imm. flew into the woods on the hill SW of the Wysox SUR bridge 1/14 (TG); a deer carcass on a small island in the SUR across from EBR attracted up to 9, mostly imms, 1/29-2/6 (TDu, DN, KD, TG); an adult was at ERS 1/31 (KR); one carrying a large limb flew toward Tip Top Mt. 2/8 (DN); 2 adults were at Browntown Mt. 2/9 (KR); and 2 were at Knapp's Covered Bridge 2/14 (east of Burlington) (DH).

As has been true in other areas where Short-eared Owls winter (see below), the Franklindale area was shared by **Northern Harriers**, in this case an astoundingly large number, up to 23 (on 2/19, SR) were reported by various observers: 12/16 (9: 3 male, 6 female, LF), 12/18, 12/20, 12/21 (2), 12/25, 1/6, 1/8 (8), 1/12 (14), 1/21, 2/19 (23), 2/20 (7 females, on the S. Central Brad. Co WRS), and 2/28 (6) (LF, NF, AJ, SR, KR, TG). One was at BRP 12/21 (KR). One on 1/27 and 2 on 2/14 were observed at PEH (AV, GV); 2 were counted on the NW Bradford Co. WRS 2/7 (LF, NF).

A leucistic **Red-tailed Hawk** was on SEE 1/22 and 1/31 (LF). There were slightly fewer sightings of **Rough-legged Hawks** this winter: one was at Manahan Rd. 12/25 (AJ); one was at Kelly Rd. west of Ulster 1/16 (AJ); 2 light phase were seen on the Northwest Bradford WRS 2/7 (LF, NF); one adult and 2 imm. dark morphs were seen on the South Central Bradford WRS 2/20 (LF, NF, SR).

Among the unusual sightings on the CBC 12/26 was an **American Coot** skulking in the vegetation near east end of pond at Higley Rd. (south of New Era) (DG, RM, EZ). Having not yet migrated, a pair of **Sandhill Cranes** (that had 2 chicks this year) were in the Crane Swamp vicinity 12/7 and 12/16 (JR, RR, RW). Two **American Woodcocks** were seen on the CBC 12/16.

Very seldom seen, a **Long-eared Owl** was observed in the East Smithfield vicinity 1/10 (RG). The excitement this year was a new location near Franklindale for wintering **Short-eared Owls**, an area of large farm fields higher in elevation than their surroundings (LF). The first report was of 2 on 12/10. They were seen through the end of the period, with a max of 8 on 2/18 (LF, SR, DY, BC, KR, TG). It was great to have aural confirmation of the seldom-seen **Northern Saw-whet Owl**, heard tooting at PEH 1/25, 1/28, 2/21, and 2/23 (AV, GV); and at TNE 2/21 (TG).

A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was observed on the CBC 12/26; one was at ERS 1/5 and 1/14 (KR), and one was recorded on the South Central Bradford WRS 2/20 (LF, NF, SR). Very unusual for winter was a **Merlin** seen during the CBC at Quick's Bend 12/16 (LF, NF, SR). Another was seen on Hollenback Rd. north of Lake Wesauking 1/14 (LF). A marvelous and unusual sighting was of a **Peregrine Falcon** at EBR during the CBC 12/26 (DN, KN). DN had seen one, and occasionally two, regularly for some time when the SUR was low and the sandbar was exposed - one was also seen at times in the same location this winter (TDu).

Most unusual, a **Northern Shrike** was observed on Kelly Rd. west of Ulster 1/16 (AJ). A nice flock of 71 **Horned Larks** was observed 1/2, and even nicer, 200 on 2/19, reduced to 30 on 2/20 (on the S. Central Brad. Co. WRS) at SEE (LF, NF, SR). Infrequently seen, a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was at Wilawana Rd., west of South Waverly (MZ). Four **Winter Wrens** were present during the CBC 12/26. Quite unusual was a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** seen on the CBC 12/26 (LF, NF, SR).

A late **Gray Catbird** was present near East Smithfield until about 1/3 (RG). Rarely seen, an **American Pipit** was found at Seeley Rd, Canton 2/20 (KR). A marvelously unusual sighting was of a **Lapland Longspur** seen at SEE 2/19-20 (LF, NF, SR, KR). Ten **Snow Buntings** were at SEE 2/19 (LF).

Somewhat unusual, but perhaps another example of a species still present due to the warm winter, was a **Common Grackle** the CBC 12/26. Another possible result of the warm winter was he find of 18 **Brown-headed Cowbirds** seen on Hollenback Rd. north of Lake Wesauking 1/14 (LF). Starting with low numbers and increasing with time, the first **Pine Siskin** was reported at ERS 12/7, followed by one 1/20, 7 on 1/16, 15 on 1/21, increasing to over 140 by mid Feb, and 300 by the end of Feb (KR). Two were at GRR 1/1 (LF); some were at Tent City Rd. 1/11 (MM, SM) one to 5 were at PEH 1/28-2/29 (AV, GV); 3 finally appeared at TNE on 2/21 (TG); and there were 67 at GRR 2/21 (LF).

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* Five observers on the Mid-Winter Bald Eagle Survey in Bradford Co. (MBE) are connected with SWN Production, LLC, which also provided support for the MBE.

Bucks County

Locations: Bradford Dam (BRD), Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Central Bucks CBC (C-CBC), Southern Bucks CBC (S-CBC), Upper Bucks-Montgomery CBC (U-CBC), Delaware River (Del. R.), Falls Twp. Community Park (FTP), Maple Knoll Farms-Buckingham Twp. (MKF), Nockamixon State Park (NSP), Peace Valley Park (PVP), The Penn-Warner Tract (PWT), Tincum Twp. (TNT).

All three months had above normal temperatures, with Dec 13.8°F above, Jan 0.3°F above, and Feb 2.3°F above. The warm beginning to the winter likely was a major factor in bird status for the rest of the season. Precipitation total was also above normal for all three months by 2.4 inches, with Feb accounting for 1.6 inches. The only significant snow brought about two feet 1/23, which covered the ground for about two weeks. Lakes and portions of the Del. R. froze for a few weeks in Jan and Feb. The warm Dec and apparently good food supply did produce large numbers of a few species in some areas, but it was a mixed bag for half-hardy species. Compared to the last two winters, the more unusual waterfowl species were very low in number as were almost all waterfowl. The irruptive winter passerine species were very few or missing. In general, diversity and numbers were low on any single outing. The county tally of 132 species was five below the previous five-year average.

The Christmas Bird Counts had lower species and individual counts this year. The 48th U-CBC 12/20 had good mild weather and tallied 24,901 individuals of 92 species. The 50th C-CBC 12/27 had some fog and drizzle but mild temperatures, with 27,908 birds of 85 species. The 69th S-CBC 12/19 had 96 species of 74,667 individuals on a windy but otherwise uneventful weather day. It should be noted that all three CBCs have part of their count circles outside the county. Christmas Bird Count details and summaries were supplied by Mark Gallagher for the S-CBC, Diane Allison for the C-CBC, and Bill Etter for the U-CBC. As usual, historical references are from *Birds of Bucks County* 1998 by Ken Kitson and subsequent updates recorded in this journal. NOAA weather statistics are from nearby Trenton, NJ based on the three-decade climate normal data from 1981 to 2010. A review of eBird entries contributed to this report.

Greater White-fronted Goose was well reported. Two were at PVP 12/9 (AH ph.), one was just east of Newtown 12/19-20 (CV, BK ph., MG ph.), one was at Lake Towhee 12/26 (PT), one was at Churchville Park 1/10 (DFa), 2 were there 1/16 (SF), and another was at MKF 2/4 (RS, VS). No one indicated that any of these were part of the large invasion of western birds. Compared to last year's 8616 **Snow Geese**, a modest 848 were tallied on the CBCs, with none found on the S-CBC. This is still about four times the long term average. In addition, often multiple flocks per day of hundreds of birds from 100 to 700 were reported on 12 other days at multiple sites (m.ob.).

A **Brant** was first reported 1/1 at PVP but not identified as the very rare **Brant (Black)** subspecies until 1/3 (DFa, HM ph.). It was last seen 1/4 (CR ph., JM, AM). One had been reported at PVP 11/10-11/1997 but not accepted by PORC due to inadequate documentation. No other specific reference on this subspecies' occurrence in Pennsylvania could be found, but I was told it was added to the state list as an identifiable subspecies in 2000 (GM). **Cackling Goose** was infrequently reported compared to recent years, found at seven sites, with about 8 birds total (m.ob.). The low number probably was not surprising considering **Canada Goose** numbers were lower than normal much of the season as well. More awareness of cacklingish geese may also be a factor in more conservative reporting.

The CBC **Mute Swan** count was 63 or about 75% of the 10-year average. A nice high count of 37 **Tundra Swans** was tallied at PVP 12/29 (TFa). One was there 12/14 (KS, MRa), with 4 more 2/20 (ARh), and 5 more 2/29 (AM, JMj). One was at Churchville Park 1/2 (m.ob.) and 4 stopped at NSP 1/3, with 6 there 2/20-21 (DFa, PC). The C-CBC, which has had them four years in a row and only 10 times overall, had 10 on 12/27.

The CBC total **Wood Duck** count was 9, double the long term average. Presumed returning birds in late Feb totaled about 35 (m.ob.). The high count was 12 at NSP 2/21 (PC). Compared to last year's high numbers, the CBC **Gadwall** total of 63 was close to average. Post CBC high reports were about 40 at Bristol 1/1 and 51 at PWT 1/17 (both DFa). Returning **American Wigeons** numbered 35 at NSP 2/21 for a modest high period report (PC). The 10 **Northern Shovelers** provided the sixth year in a row for this species on the U-CBC. This appears to be a new trend considering it has been recorded only 14 times in 48 years on this count. Reports of **Northern Pintails** were only in the low single digits, with the only modestly high count being 34 at NSP 2/21 (PC). The more common **American Black Duck, Mallard, and Green-winged Teal** were also in relatively low numbers.

Two **Canvasbacks** at PWT 12/27 (GJ) provided the only report. Only 10 **Redheads** were reported from four sites in Dec and Jan (m.ob.). Feb fared better with still only four sites, but the high counts were 9 at PVP 2/17 (ARh), 15 at PWT 2/6, and 19 there 2/20 (both DFa). Like many duck species, **Ring-necked Ducks** were significantly lower this year. However, the 67 on the U-CBC was a new count high for the second year in a row. **Greater Scaup** was scarce again compared to two winters ago, with only six sites providing mostly one or 2 birds (m.ob.). The highest report was 6 at PVP 1/5 (KS). **Lesser Scaup** counts were even worse with only four sites and a high of 5 at PWT 1/27 (DFa).

Single **White-winged Scoters** were at NSP 12/1 (DFa) and 12/26 (PC), the fewest in three years. There were 10 **Long-tailed Ducks** in Dec at three sites, including 6 on the S-CBC, a new count high (m.ob.), and one at NSP 12/20 providing the first ever for the U-CBC (KS). Fifteen, an unusually high number, at PWT 1/19 provided the only Jan report (DFa). There were 3 at NSP 2/4 (DFa) and another there 2/26 (SG). **Bufflehead** also had low counts for a relatively common species. **Common Goldeneye** was not as common either on the Del. R., with the stand out high count being 84 at Morrisville 1/22 (BK).

The CBC total of 125 **Hooded Mergansers** was above the long term average, led by 70 on the S-CBC. **Common Merganser** was among the most obvious species with low numbers. The 180 total on the CBCs was a small fraction of the long term average and high counts at area lakes were mostly in the mid-hundreds. Last Jan, the high at PVP was about 2500, but this year the high was 950 on 1/20 (JB). Another relatively scarce duck this winter, single **Red-breasted Mergansers** were reported at six sites on nine dates in Jan and Feb (m.ob.), with the exceptions being 3 at Bristol 1/9 (SG) and 2 there 2/17 (CWh). **Ruddy Duck** was scarce most of the period. The S-CBC had 26 but they were missed on the other CBCs. The highest count was 68 at FTP 12/6 (DFa).

A **Northern Bobwhite** in Bedminster Twp. 1/31 was likely one of the released birds that survive long enough to be recorded (DFa, AM). The high counts for **Wild Turkey** were 67 at Bedminster Twp. (ZM), 29 at NSP 12/20 (DA), and 35 at TNT 12/23 (DA). Lingering or wintering **Common Loons** were reported in Dec and Jan. The high counts were 3 at PWT 12/4 (DFa) and 3 at NSP 12/12 (PC). The last reports were one at PWT 1/17 (DFa) and one at NSP 1/14-17 (DFa, PC). **Pied-billed Grebes** were present throughout the season with about 10 sites reporting. The 19 on the S-CBC and 7 on the U-CBC were normal compared to recent averages. Single **Horned Grebes** were at NSP 12/5 (PC) and Morrisville 1/4 (DFa). Two were on the S-CBC 12/19 and 2 were at NSP 2/17 (PC). Compared to the high **Red-necked Grebe** counts of the last two years, one at NSP 1/6 provided the only report (IG).

After one at BRD 12/5 (AH) and one at PVP 12/7 (HD), **Double-crested Cormorant** was reported in mostly low single digit quantities in the lower part of the county where some usually spend at least part of the winter (m.ob.). The high count at the PWT was 10 on 12/19 (JMa, KF). **Great Cormorant** is usually the more regular and common species in winter in that area, but most counts were in the low to middle single digits (m.ob.). The exception was 15 at Bristol 1/1 (DFa). A **Great Egret** lingered at PWT and matched our previous fall late date of 1/3 (DFa), although one remained all winter a few years ago at the same site. An

adult **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Silver Lake Park provided the only report 1/1 (DFa).

The 8 **Northern Harriers** on the C-CBC was a surprise considering the previous five-year average is just over one. There were also 3 on the S-CBC. Otherwise there may have been as few as 6 others reported in eBird through the season (m.ob.). The S-CBC **Bald Eagle** count was 84 on 12/19, a new high by far, but no attempt was made to eliminate duplication, which was likely significant due to multiple parties in the same general area. The roost at PWT that day that hosts many of the birds, had 30 (JMa, KF). At least 20 were at the roost 1/9 (DFa). There was an unusual count of 10 at PVP 1/20-21 (BCo ph., LF ph.). **Red-shouldered Hawks** were reported from at least 24 sites, somewhat down from last year (m.ob.).

American Coot used to be more widespread at area lakes in winter. Now the only main sites are in Falls Twp. The 105 on the S-CBC was a third of the long-term average. The warm weather resulted in a better showing for **Killdeer**, with 38 on the CBCs although it was missed on the S-CBC. Reports in eBird throughout the season came from many sites (m.ob.). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** lingered at BRD until 12/17 for a new fall late date (GJ). One to 5 **Wilson's Snipe** were found at BRD 12/6-25 (GJ). Two were near MKF 12/21 (RS, VS). Two **American Woodcocks** at Warrington Twp. 12/14 were a pleasant surprise for the observer (RF). One was also at Core Creek Park 12/19 (CV) and another was flushed at NSP 1/8 (EB). Presumed returning birds doing displays were at TNT 2/25 (PC) and Falls of the Delaware Park 2/26 (MG).

Bonaparte's Gull is relatively rare in winter. So one at PVP 12/10 (AG), one at PWT 12/19 (KF, JMa), 2 at PVP 1/4 (AM, JMj), 5 at NSP 1/11 (DFa) and 2 there 2/11 (DFa) were on the high side of expectations. The PWT bird was only the eighth occurrence in 69 years for the S-CBC. Seven **Laughing Gulls** at FTP provided the only report 12/9 (TJ ph.). A possible **Herring Gull (Vega)** was at PVP 1/31-2/1, but definitive photos of all required marks could not be obtained (DFa). A second cycle **Thayer's Gull** was well photographed at FTP 12/19 (TJ, MRo, GA, MO). An adult at NSP 2/3 was believed to be this species (DFa). Adult **Iceland Gulls** were at NSP 1/2-3 (SG, PC ph.), with 2 there 2/6 (DFa), one there 2/21 (DFa), and one again 2/27 (KR ph.). One adult was at PVP 2/21 (AM). As usual, they were at multiple sites along the lower Del. R. (m.ob.). What was believed to be a conservative estimate of 500 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** was tallied at NSP 2/6 (DFa) and was far above all other reports. One **Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull (hybrid)** was reported on three dates between 12/9 and 1/17 at FTP (TJ, GA, MD). Five were seen at PWT 12/19 (TJ ph., MRo, GA, MO). Three **Glaucous Gulls** were at PWT 12/1 (DFa). Thereafter until 2/6, mostly singles were reported in that area (m.ob.). A first year **Herring Gull x Glaucous Gull (hybrid)** was at PWT 1/19 (DFa).

CBC Gull Counts

Species	U-CBC	C-CBC	S-CBC	TOTAL
Bonaparte's Gull	0	0	1	1
Ring-billed Gull	1526	969	6375	8870
Herring Gull	35	14	44988	45037
Thayer's Gull	0	0	1	1
Iceland Gull	0	0	5	5
Ls. Bl.-backed Gull	155	91	135	381
HerringxLs.BI-back	0	0	6	6
Glaucous Gull	0	0	2	2
Gr. Bl.-backed Gull	3	4	1826	1833
Gull sp.	0	0	100	100
TOTAL	1719	1078	53339	56136

Rarely reported at PVP, a **Barred Owl** was heard 1/7 (AMc). The only report of **Long-eared Owl** was of one bird on three dates at PVP 1/1-2/29 (DB, AB, DFa, AM). Hopefully there were more seen that weren't reported. One of two **Northern Saw-whet Owls** found on the U-CBC was in Bucks County, and one was detected in Haycock Twp. 1/1 (DFa). The total of 42 **Belted Kingfishers** on the three CBCs was about average.

Woodpeckers numbers were up. Two wintering **Red-headed Woodpeckers** continued from fall at MKF, with a third confirmed there in late Jan through the period (RS, VS). One was at SGL 157, where they are resident, 12/6 (SG, TR), and at least 3 were at private property where also resident in Haycock Twp. (DFa). Although it might be expected that the 782 **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** on the CBCs would

be almost four times the long-term average, it is surprising that it would be more than two times the more recent five-year average. Both the S-CBC and C-CBC had new high counts of 158 and 204, respectively. The 86 **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** on the three CBCs was almost double last year's count and over three times the average. All three CBCs each had double the long-term average for **Hairy Woodpecker**, with a total of 113, the U-CBC had a new high of 58. Both **Downy Woodpecker** and **Northern Flicker** were also well above average on the CBCs but not as much as the above species. **Pileated Woodpecker** has been recorded 6 times in the 69 year history of the S-CBC, all in the last 7 years. The 5 this year tied the high count so far.

American Kestrel increased slightly to 17 on the CBCs. The recent nest box effort has helped increase the likelihood of finding in winter, but their numbers are still historically very low. **Merlin** was reported from 12 sites in eBird (m.ob.). At least some of the 6 on the CBCs were likely additional birds. Most **Peregrine Falcon** reports are from the lower Del. R. area. Six others from other sites reflect recent increases (m.ob.).

Common Raven was reported at 22 sites in eBird, nine of which had 2 birds on at least one date (m.ob.). The high counts were 4 at Buckingham Twp. 12/8 (BK) and 4 at Churchville Park 2/21 (DK). The amazing increase of this species since they began to show up here regularly after 2003 can be seen in eBird, although many more are not listed there. **Horned Lark** was less often reported and in lower numbers than normal, possibly due to the warm weather and only one major snow storm. A large flock moved around east of Newtown, with the high report 84 on 1/9 (MG). MKF had them on and off through the period, with the high count 61 on 1/31 (RS). A Hilltown Twp. farm had a high count of 85 on 1/2 (DFa).

Considering there was near zero movement of **Black-capped Chickadee** into our area this winter, and a recent scientific paper (MM, ARI) places the narrow contact zone with **Carolina Chickadee** north of the county, it is not surprising there was only one possibly credible report, from Doylestown Twp. 12/4 (BG). The few CBC reports were believed by the compilers to be highly suspect. Amazing was the lack of any Red-breasted Nuthatches for the winter. The CBC total for **White-breasted Nuthatch** was almost twice the long-term average and the 210 on the C-CBC was a new record high.

After two years of very high numbers, the CBC counts of 20 **Brown Creepers** and 13 **Winter Wrens** were more in line with average. The 16 **Golden-crowned Kinglets** on the CBCs was less than 25% of the long-term average. The eBird entries were also very low, with only about a dozen more (m.ob.). The 30 **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** tallied on the CBCs was about average.

Although well reported, the total of 462 **Eastern Bluebirds** tallied for the CBCs was less than last year, and like last year, less than the 10-year average. The site in TNT that hosted the Mountain Bluebird (below) also produced consistently high Eastern Bluebird counts until the food source ran out. The high there was 40 on 1/14 (MC). Another standout high count was 45 at SGL157 on 12/6 (SG, TR). The cooperative **Mountain Bluebird** found on the C-CBC 12/27 at TNT (DA) was the standout bird of the season. It was seen through 2/2 (m.ob.). This was a county first and one of only a handful for the state.

The total **Hermit Thrush** CBC count was 41, with all but one on the U-CBC. The last count that high on the U-CBC was 2006. Most years are much lower; the long-term average for that count is about 10. After the low numbers last year of **American Robins**, the CBC total was more than five times as large, totaling 11,213. Some site high counts included a conservative estimate of 5000 in 20 minutes at the TNT bluebird site 1/7 (DH, LG), 1650 in 10 minutes at MKF 1/24 (RS, VS), and a rough estimate of 10,000 near Ottsville 1/13 (DFa). The roost of many of these birds is assumed to be somewhere near NSP.

The warm weather did not result in a large number of **Gray Catbirds**. The CBC total was a little above average, with 3 each on the S-CBC and U-CBC. In addition, there were about 5 others reported (m.ob.). **Brown Thrasher** was another species that one might expect to stay in higher numbers due to the warmer weather but apparently did not. One was on the S-CBC 12/19, plus one each was at PVP 1/6-28 (CR, AM, KS, RR, DL), Hilltown Twp. 1/28 (DFa), and Core Creek Park 2/14 (DDe). The CBC tally of 151 **Northern Mockingbirds** was less than last year continuing the recent downward trend.

The only **American Pipit** report was of up to 12 at MKF 12/3-4 (RS). The **Cedar Waxwing** total for the CBCs was 716, over five times last year's count and almost two times the long-term average. They were reported throughout Dec and Jan in low to modest numbers (m.ob.). In Feb there were only three dates at two sites reported in

eBird, with a total of less than two dozen birds (DA, BK, PH). The highest single site report was an estimated 400 at NSP 1/10 (DFa). There were no reports after 2/6. The Feb scarcity was likely due to the depletion of food. There were no reports of Lapland Longspur or Snow Bunting

A rarely reported **Orange-crowned Warbler** was at FTP 12/6 (DFa). A **Common Yellowthroat** was rare at Carversville 12/27 for the C-CBC (DFa). A rare and apparently elusive winter **Cape May Warbler** was at TNT 1/4 (JH) and 1/5 (DFa). A **Palm Warbler** was in Quakertown 12/20 (TB) for the U-CBC for only the third occurrence. The others were 1974 and 1976. Another was adjacent to MKF 1/21 (RS). A wintering male **Pine Warbler** returned to a homemade suet mix at Lower Makefield Twp. for the ninth year (CF). Another **Pine Warbler** was reported at Haycock Twp. 2/12-13 (NF, SS ph.). The CBC total of 183 **Yellow-rumped Warblers** was just above the long-term average. They were reported at about 22 sites in eBird throughout the period in single to low double digit counts (m.ob.).

American Tree Sparrow is one of those species that has dwindled over the years. The CBC count was only 48, about 18% of the long-term average. Most eBird entries were in the low single digits (m.ob.), with the highest count 8 at FTP 2/17 (BCu). Despite the warm weather, **Chipping Sparrow** was unusually common. However, the C-CBC tallied 8, where the average is less than one, and matched its previous high set in 1998. There were none on the other CBCs. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve has become a regular winter spot for them in recent years, with the high report of 6 on 1/3 (DFa). Seven more from four sites were tallied (JB, KJ, Dfa, DS, KS). **Field Sparrow** counts on the CBCs have been well below average for many years. The total of 31 this year was 28% of the long-term average. It was a better winter for **Fox Sparrow**, the CBC total of 22 is about 70% above the long-term average. They were present throughout the winter, with reports from 16 sites. The highest site report was 9 at NSP 1/29 (PC).

White-crowned Sparrow was reported at only nine sites (m.ob.), which is probably normal for recent years. Its presence in small numbers is very spotty at usually the same sites each winter. PVP was one of those sites for many years but has not had them for some time. The highest report was 12 at PWT 12/19 (DFa). The **Savannah Sparrow** CBC total tally matched last year's 33, which is double the long-term average. There were eight sites with reports, with the highest reports 9 at Pine Run Dam 12/4 (SG) and 20 at MKF 1/31 (RS). The **CBC Swamp Sparrow** total of 22 was about 28% of last year's high count, but just above the long-term average. **Dark-eyed Junco**, **Song Sparrow**, and **White-throated Sparrow** were all near or above long term averages on the U-CBC and C-CBC. They were significantly below average on the S-CBC. The **Eastern Towhee** CBC total of 18 was double last year's count and 30% above average. There were about 30 additional birds reported in eBird from about 22 sites, making it a better than average year (m.ob.).

A first winter male **Black-headed Grosbeak** at the border of Bucks Co. and Northampton Counties was first spotted at the end of the first week of Feb and remained through the period (fide DDr). Photo documentation confirmed the identification. The homeowners did not want visitors. The feeders where the bird was seen most was almost certainly in Northampton. A one time sighting just southwest of the feeder placed the bird very close to the border, but it can't be proven that it was in Bucks at this time. Thus, what would be a first for the county also can't be claimed until proof of location is certain.

It was an extraordinary winter for **Baltimore Oriole**, with likely an unprecedented number of reports in winter for both one site and the county as a whole. This was the fourth year for wintering birds at a Middletown Twp. yard, where Smucker's strawberry jam is the attraction. Incredibly, as many as 7 were there this winter (DP). A female or imm. male was spotted 12/20, adding to the 2 adult males that arrived in Nov. Then another female/imm. was noted 1/3. By mid-Jan 5 were suspected (DP), which was then confirmed 1/16, with 2 adult males, 2 females, and one imm. male (DFa ph.). On 2/9, four at once were female/imms, resulting in the conclusion there were then 6 individuals (DP). On 2/28, what was believed to be a fifth female/imm. was spotted. In addition, one female was in Morrisville 1/2-15 (DG ph.), and an imm. male was in Solebury Twp. 2/2-9 (MRu). About three miles away from the Morrisville site, a female and an imm. male were in Yardley 2/4 through the period enjoying a homemade mix of lard, chunky peanut butter, quick cooking oats, corn meal, and seed (SH ph.). The observer added Smucker's jam when told of the success at Middletown. Grapes and oranges were also provided. On 2/15 another female/imm. was at feeders near Ivyland, but the observer did not

respond to requests for duration of stay details (SV ph.). Another was noted at feeders at Jamison 2/24-26 (HD).

Three **Eastern Meadowlarks** on the C-CBC and one at Tinicum Twp 1/14 (CH) provided the only reports. Up to 2 **Rusty Blackbirds** were at BRD 12/7-13 (GJ), 7 were at Quakertown Swamp 1/16 (DFa), and one each was at New Hope 1/23 (BH), and Silver Lake Park 2/20 (MG ph.) for the only reports.

Considering the apparent small fall movement of **Purple Finches**, the steady reports through the season were somewhat unexpected. Although the C-CBC and S-CBC had only 7 and 6 respectively, the U-CBC count of 93 was a surprise. Most eBird entries were in the low to mid single digits, but in the upper county, there were four sites with low double digit reports in Jan (m.ob.). **Pine Siskin** was barely noticed in fall, but more appeared in winter. The CBC total was 8. It was also reported from 15 sites on 16 other days (m.ob.). The high counts were 25 at Tinicum Park 12/12 (PC), 10 at Doylestown Twp. 12/25 (TFo), 10 at Solebury Twp. 2/15 (CWA ph.), and 20 at New Hope 2/28 (BH).

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Butler County

Locations: Bike Trail (BT), Clay Township (CT), Lake Arthur (LA), Lake Oneida (LO), North Shore (NS), Rte. 528 Upper Boat Launch (BL), South Shore (SS), Squaw Valley Woodlands (SVW), State Game Lands 95 (SGL 95), Stone Church Road (SCR), Whitestown Road (WR), Wildlife Observation Area (WOA), Bike Trail, Hilltop Trail, Lake Arthur, North Shore, Porter's Cove (PC), South Shore, Sunken Garden Trail, and Wildlife Observation Area (WOA) are all located at Moraine State Park.

What a difference a year can make! Comparing this winter season with last year's shows how variable winter can be in Pennsylvania. Like last year, December was mild, so mild in fact, that reliable observers reported Spring Peepers calling. Unlike last winter, the unusually warm pattern continued. Duck sightings revealed an interesting pattern in that reports stopped around 1/17, presumably when the lakes froze over (much later than freeze-over last winter). However, they returned in force the last few days of February. During the 2014-2015 winter season birders reported 17 species of water birds. Reflecting the much less severe conditions, the winter of 2015-2016 featured 30 species and a much higher number of individual sightings. Nice surprises included a **Red-throated Loon** and the returning **Black-headed Gull**. The highlight of the season was a very late **Blue-winged Warbler** in December.

The mild winter had birders and birds confused. Late departures, late arrivals, out of season birds: normal fluctuations or more evidence of climate change? The best we can do is document and hope patterns become clear. These fluctuations might just become the norm. During the Butler CBC, birders recorded 79 species, four more than last year and twelve higher than the 50-year average of 67 species. Despite open water on lakes and streams, waterfowl numbers were lower than average. Of 11 species seen, only Canada Goose (712) and Gadwall (92) were found in higher than average numbers (GK, MAK).

The only **Snow Goose** report was of 8 flying over CT 1/7 (BBa). Unusual for **Butler**, a single **Cackling Goose** was seen along the NS 2/23 (GK, MAK). **Canada Geese** were spotted through the season with high counts of 120 at WR 12/8 (RN) and 145 at WOA 12/12 (JT). Two **Mute Swans** were found during the CBC 12/19 and a singleton was at the SS 2/23, the latter continuing into the spring season (DP, GK, MAK, AH). Thirty-six **Tundra Swans** were tallied as count week birds on the CBC 12/19. A lone Tundra Swan was seen at the Rte. 528 Boat Launch 1/2 (GK, MAK) and 5 were observed at SS 1/16 (ST) and 1/17 (OL).

Gadwall was reported in much higher numbers than usual - 23 times through the season (m.ob.), with high counts of 93 at WOA 12/6 (JT), 83 there the next day (OM), 48 at SS 12/12 (RN) and 92 at WOA 12/19 (BBa). **American Wigeons** appeared in low numbers 10 times through the season (m.ob.), with high counts of 8 at SS 2/28 and 11 at Lake Oneida 2/28 (MJ). Four **American Black Ducks** were at BT 1/9 (TR) and 4 at SS 1/16 (ST). Only one **Northern Shoveler** was reported, from BL 12/6 (BBa). While there were no reports of **Northern Pintail** last winter season; this year they were reported 7 times, mostly from WOA (m.ob.) with the high count of four 12/10 (MVT). The only **Green-winged Teal** reported were 2 at WOA 12/7 (OM).

The only **Canvasback** was a hen at SS 1/15 (MV). Southbound **Redheads** included 2 at WOA 12/6 (BBa) and 5 there 12/9 (Anon). A singleton was at BT 1/9 (TR) and 2, probably heading north, were at PC 2/29 (AH). **Ring-necked Duck** is one of the more commonly seen migrants in **Butler**. High counts at WOA included 115 on 12/5 (EG) and 83 the same day (JM). Sightings of Ring-necks ended in Dec until a nice flock of 20 returned to LA 2/29 (AH). A single **Greater Scaup** was at SS 12/19 (BBa). **Lesser Scaup** were reported more frequently, with 6 sightings between 12/6-1/10, all at LA (m.ob.). Three were seen near Seneca Valley High School 2/28 (MJ).

A **Black Scoter** was observed at Watts Bay 12/22 (MV). Only 2 **Long-tailed Ducks** were reported, both at WOA 12/7 (OM). **Buffleheads** made a nice showing, being seen 16 times at LA 12/22-1/17 (m.ob.). Only 2 sightings of **Common Goldeneye** were reported; 2 were at SS 1/16 (BBa) and one at Barkley Road 2/29 (AH).

Hooded Mergansers, with a high count 16 at WOA 12/6 (JT), were reported 28 times, mostly from LA (m.ob.). **Common Mergansers** were reported 9 times (m.ob.) including a high count of 4 at LA 1/8 (GM), and **Red-breasted Mergansers**, with a high count 15 at SS 1/8 (GM), were reported 7 times, again with sightings ending 1/16, and mostly from LA (m.ob.). **Ruddy Ducks** were seen 15 times at LA until 1/17 with a high count of 26 at the BT 1/9 (TR).

Continuing to be scarce, **Ruffed Grouse** was reported only once, from Lancaster Twp. 1/28 (RN) but **Wild Turkey** was widespread (m.ob.) including a nice count of 21 near Seneca Valley Schools and an amazing tally of 78 birds in 2 flocks at SCR 1/3 (RN).

A **Red-throated Loon** was a nice find at SS 12/22 (DD). The bird was reported 12/23 (GK, MAK, MV) but was not seen after that. **Common Loons** were reported at LA 5 times 12/12-1/16 (m.ob.). **Pied-billed Grebes** and **Horned Grebes** were widely reported in small numbers until 1/15 (m.ob.). **Double-crested Cormorant**, common at LA in the summer and fall, was only reported once, from BL 12/19 (BBa).

Reflecting a regional trend, **Turkey Vultures** remained farther north than usual with 5 reports in Jan and Feb. **Bald Eagles** were seen regularly through the season, most at LA, but also at LO and SGL 95 (m.ob.). The high count was 9 eagles standing on the ice at LA 2/6 (JT). Two **Northern Harriers** were seen, one at SCR 1/28 (RN) and one at State Game Lands 95 on 2/8 (BBa).

American Coots continues to stop at LA in large numbers with nine triple-digit counts including 317 at WOA 12/7 (OM), 367 at WOA 12/12 (JT), and 350 there 12/19 (BBa). Numbers declined after 1/1 and none were reported after 1/17 (m.ob.). One **Sandhill Crane** was at WR 2/14 (WR). Early **Killdeer** showed up at CT 2/21 (BBa) and at SS 2/23 (GK, MAK).

Bonaparte's Gulls were seen regularly in small numbers 12/19-1/17 with a very nice count of 40 at WOA 1/1 (GK, MAK). The **Black-headed Gull** returned to the same spot at SS, where it has been seen for the last several years, providing the sixth **Butler** record. The bird was found 1/8 (DD) and was seen daily through 1/11. (JM, DK, SG, BBa, GM, DP). **Ring-billed Gulls**, a staple at LA often numbering in the hundreds, began showing up in shopping center parking lots in the Cranberry Twp. area 2/15 (anon).

Eastern Screech Owls were seen twice, with 2 at BL 12/19 (GK, MAK) and one at CT 2/7 (BBa). **Great Horned Owls** included 2 calling at Seven Hills Rd. 12/25 and 2 at CT 2/9 (BBa). **Barred Owl** was only reported once with 2 at CT (2/15 (BBa)). One **Northern Saw-whet Owl**

was reported during the CBC 12/19 (BBa). **Red-headed Woodpecker**, uncommon in *Butler*, was reported 4 times with 2 near East Butler 2/12 (JD), one near Connoquenessing 2/12 (TB) and one near Cabot 2/12 (DG). Five were counted during the CBC 12/19.

A **Peregrine Falcon**, not common in *Butler* in any season, was near the Zelenople Airport 2/10 and one was seen flying over CT 2/20 (BBa). A **Northern Shrike** was seen at SGL 95 on 2/22 (BBa) but could not be located after that. **Common Raven** was reported 5 times, one at WOA 12/19, one at SS 1/30, 2 at SGL 95 2/2, and one at Rte. 528 BL 2/20 (BBa). Two Ravens were seen at Venango Twp. 2/21 (PD). Nine **Horned Larks** were spotted during the Butler CBC 12/19 (GK, MAK), 10 appeared at SCR 1/3 (RN), and 2 were at Mt. Union Rd. 2/26 (DP).

Visitors from the north were scarce this winter season. **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was only reported 4 times: one from the CBC 12/19, one at Kiester House Road 1/5 (anon), 2 near Saxonburg 2/13 (DR), and 2 at Shanor-Northview 2/15 (JK). Only one **Winter Wren** was reported, near Lutherlynn 2/15 (WR). Two **American Pipit** reports included one at SS 1/11 (DP) and a flyover at CT 2/7 (BBa). The surprise of the season was a hardy **Blue-winged Warbler** first discovered at Sunken Garden Trail in Nov and re-located during the CBC 12/19 (GK, MAK). Photographs showed the bird foraging in snow.

Usually gone by early Nov, a late **Chipping Sparrow** was at Butler Twp. 12/28 (MB). Usually first arriving in late Mar and leaving by mid-Nov, a **Field Sparrow** was seen at SVW 1/31 (DW). Single **Fox Sparrows** were at Pleasant Valley Trail 12/19 (GK, MAK) and at Chicora 1/3 (DD). **Swamp Sparrows** were seen at SGT 12/6 and 12/19 (BBa), 1/3 (RN), and again on 1/16 (BBa). Two were at Callery 2/12 (JDe). A possible "Oregon" **Dark-eyed Junco** was photographed near Seven Fields 1/24 (DP) and reported to eBird. Definitely atypical for this region, the bird could have been an intergrade.

Continuing the trend of out-of-season birds, **Red-winged Blackbird** was reported 12/12 and 1/6 at CT, and 20 were at Pioneer Drive-in 1/28 (BBa). The Butler CBC reported 279. Red-wings were seen 6 times in Feb (m.ob.). Five **Rusty Blackbirds** were at Slippery Rock Borough 2/8 (GW, JW) and one was spotted near Sarver 2/12 (AA). Two hundred **Common Grackles** were seen in Buffalo Twp. 12/19 during the CBC (DY). **Purple Finches** were seen at many locations through the season in low numbers (m.ob.). **Pine Siskins** were seen at a feeder in CT 12/16, 1/30 and 2/27 (BBa). One was at Leasureville 2/12 (DF).

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Cambria County

Locations: Patton (PA), Prince Gallitzin St. Park (PG).

Because of the very mild winter, waterfowl at PG were affected for only a short time by ice cover on the lake. There were the usual species with higher numbers of **Canvasbacks** and **Redheads**.

The resident pair of **Bald Eagles** at PG rebuilt their nest during mid-Feb but a strong storm toppled the tree and as of late Mar no attempt at re-nesting had been observed. A single **Northern Harrier** was seen at PG throughout the period (DG). A lone **Red-Shouldered Hawk** was at PG 2/28 (DG).

Bonaparte's Gulls first appeared at PG 2/28 (DG). A single **Northern Shrike** was present from Jan through early Mar at PG (TA, DG, JS). Large flocks of **Horned Larks**, up to a thousand, were seen in the fields at PA early in the period, but by mid- Feb only the residents

remained and were beginning to pair up. A lone **Snow Bunting** was among 500 Horned Larks at PA 1/15 (DG). Unusual were a few flocks of **Red-winged Blackbirds** at PG in mid-Dec (DG).

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Cameron County

Locations: Elk SF—Hicks Run (HR), Elk SF—Salt Run (SR), Shippen Twp. (ST), Lumber Twp (LT).

The only waterfowl report was of 2 **Common Mergansers** at LT 2/14 (SS). One **Bald Eagle** was seen flying up and down the Driftwood Branch of the Sinnemahoning Cr. at LT 2/14 (SS). Scarce in the north woods, single **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** were reported from HR 1/17 (CE) and LT 2/14 (SS). Two **Common Ravens** were at HR 1/17 (CE).

The **Tufted Titmouse**, another southern species uncommon in *Cameron*, was reported only from LT, with a count of 10 on 2/14 (SS). Two **Brown Creepers** were seen at SR 12/28 (BB). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were reported from 2 locations, including 2 at SR 12/28 (BB) and 3 at ST 12/31 (BS).

As a consequent of the mild winter, relatively few **American Tree Sparrows** were reported; 4 were at SR 12/28 (BB) and 3 at LT 2/14 (SS). A rare winter bird for *Cameron*, a **Field Sparrow** was at SR 12/28 (BB). As a result of the high percentage of forest cover, **House Finches** are not well established in *Cameron*, with only 4 birds seen, at LT 2/14 (SS). Although not as numerous as last winter, **Pine Siskins** did make a small flight through the region, with 24 individuals seen at LT 2/14.

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Carbon County

No compiler.

Centre County

Locations: Bald Eagle S.P. (BESP), Black Moshannon S.P. (BMSP), Colyer L. (COL), Scotia Barrens and Pond (SCO), Toftrees pond and gamelands (TOF)

Information for this report was obtained primarily from the State College Bird Club listserv and eBird (<http://ebird.org>) with background and status information from *Birds of Central Pennsylvania* by Nick Bolgiano and Greg Grove, 2010, Stone Mountain Publishing, State College, PA (B&G, 2010). Unless otherwise noted, all species discussed in this report are rarely encountered in *Centre* during the winter. Several species were reported in five or more locations and are not discussed further: **Snow Goose, Turkey Vulture, Winter Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Swamp Sparrow, and Red-winged Blackbird.**

Centre had a very mild winter, and as a result many species that normally would have migrated instead tried to stay the entire season. This was certainly true of waterfowl, and an accidental goose species starts this report. Hunters shot 4 **Greater White-fronted Geese** near Bellefonte sometime the last week in Jan or the first week in Feb. A hunter showed photos of the birds to a local birder (DO). This was the first report of this species since a single bird was observed 2/9/2009 at the Duck Pond in State College (B&G, 2010). That was just the beginning; a large flock of 61-68 birds created quite a stir among area birders as it moved between BESP, Howard, and Curtin wetland 2/5-9 (MB, et al.). Another report of a single bird came from the Duck Pond 2/12 (L&JC). A single rare **Cackling Goose** was described at BESP 1/5 (EH). Two large formations of **Tundra Swans** flew over Unionville 12/20 (DO). However, a few were still in the area 1/17, when 30 were observed on Tadpole and Marengo Rds. (JiD), and 24 were spotted at BESP (MB, BiC, AuC). Some early returning migrants were also observed, with up to 157 Tundra Swans seen at BESP 2/28-29 (AM, et al.) and a baker's dozen in Port Matilda 2/29 (PW).

Most ducks are rare in the winter although uncommon to abundant during the migration seasons. This year some ducks remained most or

all of the winter at BESP, the Duck Pond, the Axemann Rd. Pond, and Talleyrand Park. These species included **Wood Duck**, **Gadwall**, **Northern Shoveler**, **Northern Pintail**, **Green-winged Teal**, **Redhead**, **Canvasback**, **Greater Scaup**, **Lesser Scaup**, **Long-tailed Duck**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Common Goldeneye**, and **Ruddy Duck**. In addition, an early migrating adult male **Ring-necked Duck** was spotted at the Duck Pond 2/24-26 (AM, JP, L&JC). Although common during migration, this species is rarely present during winter. Of particular note is the **Eurasian Wigeon** that stopped briefly at BESP 2/29 (AM, et al.). This species is considered to be accidental in the area, and this is only the fourth reported in *Centre*, with the last being in 2010 at SCO (B&G, 2010; previous *Centre* reports).

A miscellany of other winter rarities was also present at area lakes and ponds. A **Red-throated Loon** was spotted 12/6-1/2 at BESP (AS, et al.). Up to 23 **Common Loons** were observed 12/2-1/3 at BESP (JV, et al.), and up to 4 **Horned Grebes** were seen there 12/2-1/17 (JV, et al.). Single birds were recorded at the Duck Pond 2/15 (L&JC, et al.) and the Axemann Rd. pond 2/16 (RS). A **Double-crested Cormorant** was also present at BESP 12/6 (AS) and 3 were noted there 2/7 (L&JC, MN).

An adult **Golden Eagle** was spotted "soaring low over [the] trees" at BMSP 1/23 (RS, AC). Another adult was observed gliding "northeast along Bald Eagle Ridge above Unionville" 2/25 (DO). A trio of **Sandhill Cranes** caused a bit of mystery during their stay at BESP 12/7-1/2 (JV, et al.); every morning they flew off somewhere to feed. That location was unknown until they were found grazing in a field on Marsh Cr. 1/3 during the BESP CBC (DB). Unfortunately, no one observed them after that date.

A few **American Woodcocks** were also present at BESP during the winter. They were possibly late and early migrants, since one cluster observations was 12/13-29 (BiC, AP, AM) and the other was 2/28-29 (CH, et al.). BESP also hosted some **Bonaparte's Gulls**, another rare winter species. One was observed 12/13 (BiC, AuC) and was probably a late migrant. Two were identified 1/16-17 (AM, et al.).

Several Passerines also made rare winter appearances. A big surprise was the report of 2 rare **Barn Owls** near Millheim during the Penns Creek CBC 12/16 (SH). A continuing female Barn Owl was spotted on a farm near Spring Mills 2/20 (AL, EG). This species is rare in *Centre* at any time of the year. Although a rare winter species, **Merlins** were spotted in five widely dispersed locations during the winter, with most sightings occurring in Feb. There was one Dec report 12/13 at BESP (ph. CH).

A couple **Eastern Phoebe**s decided to winter here. One was found "associating with sparrows, cardinals, [and a] Winter Wren" at Fisherman's Paradise 12/30. A second was located 1/29 "hanging out around the fences and concrete structures near the outflow tunnel of the dam" at BESP (both MB). The BESP **Northern Shrike** continued 12/5-12/29 but was not seen afterward (JM, et al.). Although rare and relatively elusive, this species is a reasonably reliable early winter visitor at BESP.

A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was reported on the State College CBC 12/22 (ph. JP). Not only was this the first time this species was spotted during the CBC (BoF), it was also the first winter observation in *Centre* (B&G, 2010; eBird). A few **Gray Catbirds** also stayed in the area. One was counted on the State College CBC 12/20 (JoB), and another was seen 12/25 in TOF (CG). One was spotted in Spring Cr. canyon dining on multiflora rose hips 1/17 (NiB) and a fourth bird was observed on Bald Eagle Ridge in Taylor Twp. 2/14 (L&JC, MN). At least one **Brown Thrasher** was also trying to winter on Sinking Cr., where it was spotted 12/12, 12/31, and 1/11 (LR).

A few rare wintering **Lapland Longspurs** were spotted, including 2 at BESP 1/16 (MB), and 3 were identified in a flock of **Horned Larks** along S. Nixon Rd. (CE, et al.). Eight were noted in Circleville Park 1/30 (L&JC). Three **Snow Buntings** were located 12/13 at BESP (AP).

While **Savannah Sparrow** and **Fox Sparrow** are uncommon during migration, they are rare during the winter. A single Savannah Sparrow was identified in the Tusseyville area 12/20 (AIC) and 2 were "associating loosely with dispersed flock of Song Sparrows" at COL 2/7 (MB). Up to 3 **Fox Sparrows** were found at each of the following locations: BESP 12/6-12 (AS, MB), Whitehall Farms 1/6 (MB), Puddintown Rd. 1/25 (LC), and Port Matilda 2/12 (RB).

The continuing male **Western Tanager** was present in State College throughout the winter reporting season and was reported during the State College CBC 12/20 (KE, CE). This was the other first record for the State College CBC (BoF). **Rusty Blackbirds** are rare during the winter, but up to 20 were present the week of 12/20 at BESP (JC). Two

were spotted with a flock of **Red-winged Blackbirds** at Curtin 2/21 (RS), and 2 others were at TOF 2/28 (AIC).

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Chester County

Locations: Chambers Lake (CL), Coatesville Reservoir (CORES), Marsh Creek State Park (MCSP), Octorara Reservoir (OCTRES).

Following a rather mild fall, which featured many southwesterly fronts, an unseasonably mild start to winter was in store. One of warmest Decembers on record was exemplified by Christmas Day temperatures reaching 70 F. January produced one of the highest snowfalls on record, with up to 30 inches recorded in many areas of the county. The dramatic shifts in weather resulted in a roller-coaster ride of winter conditions.

The county's Christmas Bird Counts yielded no highlights this season, and birders reported that numbers of birds, in general, were down, except American Robins, which were higher than normal.

That said, avian occurrences matched the extreme weather trends, featuring some unusual species, most notably a **Painted Bunting** that appeared at a feeder in late Dec.

Located annually in fall and winter, but still uncommon to rare for the region, a **Greater White-fronted Goose**, seen at the West Vincent WTP, provided a good find among the **Canada Geese** 1/1 (MD). A **Trumpeter Swan**, discovered in late fall, lingered through the beginning of the year, seen 1/1 at CL (MH). This species is still very rare throughout the state, but has been located in *Chester* for the past few years during winter and spring.

Canvasbacks are irregular in winter, so 5 were a nice treat at CL 1/15 (RR, FH). What was likely the same group was relocated at CORES 1/18-21 (m.ob.). **Long-tailed Ducks**, another irregular in winter sea duck, was found on several occasions: one each on a small pond in West Nantmeal 12/12 (FH, BH), at MCSP 12/28-1/2 (m.ob.), and on a small pond at Hershey's Mill 1/16 (JW). A high count of **Common Goldeneye** was 29 at Atwater Quarry 2/25 (MH). This is an uncommon migrant through *Chester*, so a number this high was a treat for the observer.

A **Red-throated Loon**, an irregular visitor to the county, was a welcome visitor at MCSP 12/1-5 (HM, BB). A very late **Osprey** at OCTRES was a surprise 1/6 (PM); it is rare to see this species past mid-Nov. Single Osprey occasionally straggle into Dec in *Chester*, but typically vanish well before the end of the month.

The South Eastern Chester County Refuse Authority is a great spot to sift through large gull congregations, hoping for the unusual.

Efforts paid off when a *Kumlien's Iceland Gull* was photographed there 1/29 (KN). This species is usually located annually among large gull congregations by birders willing to scour the landfill gulls or gulls roosting on one of the lakes. Additional Iceland Gulls also found in this location one 2/20 (AG, BQ, MH), one 2/22 (DR), and 2 there 2/26 (AL, KN).

Once more common in *Chester* during winter, but now scarce, **Short-eared Owl** sightings are especially notable. One was seen hunting at Peacedale Preserve 1/24 (KG) and another was reported from Exton Park 2/26 (MH).

The area around the Chrome Barrens has been known to host **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, but the absence of this species last winter made the discovery of two Red-headed Woodpeckers there again this winter exciting. The pair were seen 1/17 (KS, TR) and again 2/6-7 (m.ob.).

Reports of **Common Ravens** continue to soar, but a new nesting site was an especially exciting find, since there's only one other location historically, where ravens have nested in *Chester*. A pair was spotted constructing a nest at the Cromby Trailhead in Phoenixville 2/20 (SS, NF). The pair continued actively working on the nest until the end of the period.

This was not an irruptive winter for Black-capped Chickadees or Red-breasted Nuthatches with no confirmed reports of either. A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** reported through Dec at MCSP lingered through at least 1/4, when last reported (m.ob.). Logged for the Elverson CBC 12/27, this was a first on a CBC in Chester County (BB, MB).

A couple **Pine Warblers** are typically reported each winter, and this year was no exception. One was at CORES 12/20 (RR), another visited a suet feeder in Wayne 2/15 (BE), and yet another was found in a yard in Chadds Ford 2/27 (HD). Irregularly found in winter, two reports of **Orange-crowned Warblers** in the county are noteworthy. One was spotted in the Okehocking Preserve 12/18 (AE) and another was photographed at a suet feeder in Devon 1/17 (TD).

The stand-out bird of the season was most definitely a **Painted Bunting** that showed up in late Dec in the West Chester area (AW). This individual was green, indicating either a female or young male. It visited the same feeder, even during the few feet of snow and polar temperatures in mid-Feb, and continued there through the reporting period. The only other record for *Chester* is of a bird in West Chester 5/12/1993 (PORC).

Persistent scanning through massive winter blackbird flocks usually pays off with **Yellow-headed Blackbirds**. This year, lucky birders found one of these saffron-headed westerners in Oxford 12/27 (NP) and 2 on 1/1 (CKa, RH), one in Sadsbury 12/31 (BQ, MH), and another in Cochranville 2/19 (MG). The occurrence of **Rusty Blackbirds** in any season is notable because of their sharp population decline. *Chester* typically hosts a few of these uncommon blackbirds, with reports of one to 5 birds from W. Marlborough Twp 12/3 (JS), at Crow's Nest Preserve 1/8 (NF, SS) and 2/27 (JT), and at Great Marsh IBA 1/15 (BB) and 2/7 (MC).

Pine Siskins were not in good numbers this winter compared to last, when a widespread irruption occurred. That said, there were scattered and irregular reports, with a high count of 18 from Landenberg (SC).

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Clarion County

Locations: Curllsville (CV), Kahle Lake (KL), Mt.Zion/Piney Tract/SGL 330 (MZ), New Bethlehem (NB).

Only two species of water birds were worthy of mention, both at KL and both continuing from the fall. A single **Surf Scoter** was present 12/1 and last seen 12/4, as well as a single **Black Scoter** (GE, JS, CW). Both are unusual for this location with only one other recorded in eBird previously for the county.

Northern Harriers were well-above average, likely because of the mild winter and little snow cover. Beginning with 3 seen at MZ 12/7 (CW), they were reported in various areas throughout the county during the entire season, including CV strips site and nearby areas (MM, CW), open pastures around NB (SG, RN, MH, RH, AB), various spots in the MZ area (RM, MH, BB, RN), and in the northern part of the county near Lake Lucy (FM). **Bald Eagles** are no longer uncommon in winter, but as they begin breeding activities, two nesting locations should be noted. Nests were active again along the Clarion R. near Sligo 2/24 (CW) at and a newer site near New Bethlehem on Redbank Cr. 2/23-2/29 (MM, MVT). While **Rough-legged Hawks** numbers were generally low in Pennsylvania this winter, several areas in *Clarion* continue to be reliable for this raptor due to the excellent open habitat found here. A light morph was seen on Dairy Rd. near NB 1/14 (MM, CW). There were 2 light and one dark birds present on Huber Rd near NB 1/22 (AB), and one light morph at MZ (RN). A light bird was seen near Lake Lucy in northern *Clarion* 2/1 (FM). Near NB, further sightings were noted 2/11 with one dark individual (RN, CW), and again 2/12 with 2 dark morphs and one light (AB, MH).

Two **American Woodcocks** were heard, returning to one of their regular breeding areas near CV 2/28, a probable record early date for *Clarion* (CW). Only a few reports of **Short-eared Owls** were received - the first from Mt. Airy of 2 individuals 12/6 (MaH, RM) and 3 at MZ observed at dusk 12/7 (CW). On open pastures near CV, 2 birds were seen hunting at mid-day 1/14 (MM), and at the same location a single bird was seen near mid-day 2/16 perched on a telephone pole next to the road (DD, CW).

Unquestionably the rarest species seen for the season was a **Gyrfalcon**, found near Tylersburg 2/20 in the rural northern part of the county with many open fields and agricultural areas. It was seen briefly perched roadside on a telephone pole with video obtained for documentation (PS). The bird was reported as a likely imm. male, appearing more white than gray in video. The observer was experienced with falcons and reported no jesses or bands on it. Likely due to a strong weather system on that day, it was never relocated. No other report of this species is known for *Clarion*.

Northern Shrikes are not common, but are reported in small numbers yearly, likely due to the large amount of appropriate habitat. This year was no exception, with a single bird seen at CV strips 1/25, one of their most common locations (AB), and another in scrubby habitat along Packing Rd. near NB 2/23 (MVT).

There was only one report of a large flock of **Horned Larks** this year, with 75-100 found not far from CV on Haul Rd. 2/16-18 (DD, AK, JK, MM, CW) along with 45-50 **Snow Buntings** (AK, JK, MM, CW). This location has become a reliable spot to see field birds every winter season due to a large herd of cattle kept on open pasture year round.

A single **Fox Sparrow** attended a feeder near CV 1/17-27, an unusual record as these birds are not typical winter residents (RN, CW). It is worth noting that there was an increased number of winter reports for this species throughout the state, possibly due to very mild weather earlier in the season allowing birds to linger in migration. **Rusty Blackbirds** are always worth mentioning, given their sharp decline. Only a single bird was noted this year, found during a WRS route on 2/11 with a small group of **Red-winged Blackbirds** beside a hilltop corn field cut during the fall (RN, CW).

Another excellent sighting was that of a **Red Crossbill**, continuing near Strattanville from the fall, reported daily at a sunflower feeder 12/1-3 (SH). **Pine Siskin** numbers vary greatly from year to year - this was an off year, with just a few reports from feeders in Rimersburg and north of Clarion, beginning 2/19 and through the end of the season, with a max count of just 21 (PC, MM).

Observers: **Carole Winslow, 159 Moggey Rd, Sligo, PA 16255, (814) 745-3818, cjnal@windstream.net**, Brendyn Baptiste, Anthony Bruno, Paulette Colantonio, Donald DeWolf, Gary Edwards, Steve Gosser, Mal Hayes (MaH), Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Shari Hindman, Avis

Keener, John Keener, Michael Leahy, Florence McGuire, Ron Montgomery, Mark Moore, Richard Nugent, Theo Rickert, Philip Smith, Jerry Stanley, Marge VanTassel.

Clearfield County

Unseasonably mild winter weather may have been the cause of unusual winter sightings of **Turkey Vultures** near Dubois 12/29 and 1/3 (MA), and a **Black Vulture** near Frenchville 1/31 (AC). Five imm. **Bald Eagles** counted during Winter Raptor Surveys included 2 in Karthaus, 1/31; 2 at Curwensville L. 2/6, and one near Atlantic 2/6 (AC). Small numbers of **Pine Siskins** were seen at birdfeeders in Dubois 2/29 (MA), Treasure L. 1/30 (DR), and Parker Dam State Park 2/27.

Observers: **Diane K. Bierly, 143 W. Lytle Ave., State College, PA 16801. (814) 238-8183, dkb246@usa.net**, Marianne Atkinson, Alyssia Church, Dan Richards.

Clinton County

Locations: Lock Haven (LH), Susquehanna River (SR), Woolrich (WR).

Not passed over during the historic statewide appearance of **Greater White-fronted Geese** in Feb, *Clinton* hosted a small gaggle of these geese. A group of 10 rested briefly on the SR at Lock Haven 2/10 (CCH). A group of 13, possibly the same group with 3 additional birds, was later located on the SR near McElhatten 2/13 (JD, m.ob.).

A **Rough-legged Hawk** was seen on River Rd. east of LH 2/28 (CCH). A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was at WR 2/22 (SLF). A **Black Vulture** was observed during the local CBC in the Rauchtown area 12/19 (DR, DK).

From 12/21 through the period, a hardy **Pine Warbler** was observed regularly coming to feeders in WR (CCH, SLF). Typical of the apparent dearth of winter field birds during the period, a lone **Snow Bunting** was found with a few **Horned Larks** at South Avis 2/13 (WL). From 2/15 through the remainder of the period, flocks of **Pine Siskins** visited feeders in Swisssdale (WL).

Observers: **Wayne Laubscher, 749 E. Croak Hollow Road, Lock Haven, PA 17745, 570-748-7511, wnlaubscher@comcast.net**, Jim Dunn, Skip and Linda Frye, Charles and Carol Hildebrand, Dave Krempasky, David Rothrock.

Columbia County

No compiler.

Crawford County

Locations: Conneaut Lake (CL), Erie National Wildlife Refuge-New Road (ENWR_NR), Erie National Wildlife Refuge-Sugar Lake (ENWR_SL), Erie National Wildlife Refuge-Swamp Road (ENWR_SR), Pymatuning-Causeway (P-C), Pymatuning- Fish Hatchery (P-FH), Pymatuning-Hartstown Project (P-HP), Pymatuning-Miller's Ponds (P-MP), Pymatuning-Wilson Road (P-WR).

Crawford was part of the historically unprecedented invasion of Western Pennsylvania by **Greater White-fronted Geese** this winter season. A group of 28 was found at P-HP 2/2 (GK, MAK) and continued there through 2/10 (m.ob.), with the largest count being 31 on 2/6 (KA, NA, JH) and 2/7 (KA, GK, MAK). Six were observed in the Pymatuning area 2/19 (SD, BVN). A presumed second group of 46, an amazing count for *Crawford*, was sighted at P-HP 2/27 (RS) and up to 26 birds were at P-HP 2/29 (m.ob.).

Large groups of **Snow Geese** were also reported. A very good count, for *Crawford*, of 53, a remarkable half of which were blue phase, was made at P-MP 2/2 (GK, MAK). Snow Geese continued to be reported there and at P-HP through 2/9 (m.ob.), with the largest count being 74 on 2/7 (GK, MAK). A single **Ross's Goose**, very rare in the county, was found at P-HP and P-WR 2/5 (KA, SC, RH, TN, KP). Remarkably, 4 individuals were found at P-HP and P-MP the next day 2/6 (KA, NA, SC, DP, KP, JT). Two were observed at P-HP 2/7 (AM) and 2/9 (CN). Six **Cackling Geese**, a notable bird for the county, were

found at P-MP 2/3 (SC). Other observations included 4 at P-HP 2/4 (KA), one at P-MP 2/6 (RN), one at P-HP 2/6 (SC), one in the Pymatuning area 2/27 (RS), and one at P-MP 2/28 (m.ob.).

A nice count of 260 **Gadwall** was recorded at P-MP and P-FH 12/22 (IF, RL). Two **Greater Scaup**, expected but somewhat difficult to find, were observed in the Pymatuning area 2/6 (SC). A single juvenile **Surf Scoter**, uncommon in *Crawford*, was found at CL 12/4 (RH, KP). A single **White-winged Scoter**, also relatively uncommon, was at CL 2/26 (RL). **Long-tailed Duck** was uncharacteristically absent; the only observation was of a single bird at P-C during the Christmas Bird Count 12/20 (IF, RL). Three hundred **Common Goldeneyes**, a good total, were seen at P-C 12/22 (RL). A nice count of 500 **Common Mergansers** was made in the Pymatuning area 12/16 (RE).

Ruffed Grouse are an increasingly difficult bird to find in *Crawford*. Observations included 2 seen at ENWR-SL sporadically from 12/14 through the end of the season (RE) and a single bird at a private residence near Guys Mills 2/27 (SC). A single **Red-throated Loon**, a good bird for the county, was found at P-C 12/26 (RL). A nice total of 16 **Common Loons** was recorded at P-C 12/6 (IF, RL). Eleven **Horned Grebes** were found at CL 12/6 (RH, KP), also a good number for *Crawford*. Sightings of **Double-crested Cormorants** are notable during the winter and largely dependent on the amount of open water. Observations included a single bird at P-FH 12/26 (RL) and one at CL 1/15 (TN).

A single early **Turkey Vulture** was at a private residence in the Meadville area 2/3 (KP). Twenty-five **Bald Eagles** were seen in west *Crawford* 1/31 (IF, RL). **Rough-legged Hawks**, an expected but notable species, were seen this season in good numbers throughout the county, most notably in the Pymatuning area (m.ob.). An early **Golden Eagle**, a very good bird, was found in the Guys Mills area 2/28 (IF, RL).

Merlins are becoming increasingly common throughout *Crawford*, particularly the Meadville area. Observations this season included 2 on the Allegheny College campus 1/29 (TN), another there 2/9 (KP), one in the Meadville area 2/9 (KP), 2 at a private residence in Meadville 2/20 (RH), 2 at a private residence in Meadville 2/23 (TN), and one at CL 2/28 (IF, RL). A single **Peregrine Falcon**, a notable bird in *Crawford*, was seen at P-C 12/6 (RL).

Observations of **Sandhill Cranes** are increasingly common in the Pymatuning and ENWR areas during the winter, but large groups are still notable. High counts this season included 25 at P-FH 12/6 (IF, RL), 50 in the Pymatuning Area 12/20 (BG, DK, CN), and 30 at P-MP 12/27 (CN). The only notable shorebird was a single early **Wilson's Snipe**, observed at a private residence in the Rundelltown area 2/20 (AT).

A good count of 5,532 **Bonaparte's Gulls** was made in the Pymatuning area 12/6 (IF, RL). **Herring Gulls** are usually found in *Crawford* in small numbers, so counts of 30 at Woodcock Lake 12/26 (RL) and 30 in the Pymatuning area 1/9 (RL) were notable.

Great Horned Owl, an expected but infrequently reported bird, was noted twice. A single was observed on Towpath Road 2/6 (RL) and 2 at a private residence near Blooming Valley 2/13 (SW). **Red-headed Woodpecker** is notable during the winter season. Singles were at Pymatuning-Tuttle Beach 2/6 (SC), 2/21 (RH, TN, KP), and 2/28 (m.ob.). Observations of **Northern Shrike**, an expected but scarce bird, included singles at ENWR-NR 12/13 (TN, KP), at ENWR-SR 12/13 (BS), at ENWR-NR 1/1 (TN, KP), at ENWR-SR 1/2 (BS), at N. Richmond Road 1/22 (BS), and at N. Wayland road 2/27 (TN, KP) and 2/28 (RH).

American Robin numbers were higher than expected, almost certainly due to unusually warm temperatures (m.ob.). **Northern Mockingbird** is relatively scarce in *Crawford*, particularly during winter. One was seen in the Rundelltown area for about a month, last seen 1/21 (JF, CN); and one at Yankee Hill Road 1/17 and 1/28 (BS).

A single **Lapland Longspur** was found at P-WR 2/6 (SC), a very good bird for the county. **Snow Buntings** are expected but somewhat difficult to find away from the Pymatuning Causeway. Up to 16 were in the Pymatuning area, particularly the Causeway, throughout the season (m.ob.). Observations at other locations included one at ENWR-SL 12/7 (RE).

Several excellent sparrow observations occurred, likely due to the warmer than usual temperatures. **Fox Sparrows**, a good species for the season, included one at a private residence in the Rundelltown area 1/16 (JH) and one at a private residence in the Guys Mills area 2/27 (SC). A single male **Lincoln's Sparrow**, an excellent observation for the season, was seen at a private residence in the Meadville area 1/20 (RL). One of the best observations of the season was a **Dickcissel** photographed during the Great Backyard Bird Count in the Woodcock

Lake area 2/14 (BDu).

There were several observations of **Red-winged Blackbird** early in the winter season, likely representing birds which did not migrate or were late doing so. A single was seen at a private residence near Springboro 12/12, 12/19, and 12/26 (CN), another single was at Pymatuning-Area J 12/20 during the Christmas Bird Count (RH, KP, TN), 22 were observed at SGL 214 on 12/20 during the Christmas Bird Count (SS), and 5 were found at Hathaway Road, also during the Christmas Bird Count (SS). Observations occurring later in the season, likely representing birds migrating north earlier than normal, included 40 seen at P-MP 1-31 (RL) and 20 at P-HP 2/7 (JH). **Rusty Blackbird** observations are notable during the winter season, and included 15 seen at CL 12/10 (RL) and 30 on private conservancy land in the north eastern part of the county 2/12 (CZ, FZ). **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were present in higher than expected numbers this winter, with a high count of 46 at a private residence near Springboro 12/26 (CN).

Seven **Purple Finches** were at a private residence near Guys Mills 2/27 (SC). **Common Redpolls** were very scarce, so an observation of a single bird at a private residence near Guys Mills 2/26 (TL) was notable. **Pine Siskins**, while becoming more frequent, were down in number - sightings included one at a private residence in the Meadville area 1/31 and 2/1 (KP), one at a private residence on N. Richmond Road 2/13-14 (BS), and 15 at a private residence near Guys Mills 2/27 (SC).

Observers: **Rob Hodgson, 709 Alden Street, Meadville, PA 16335, (515) 708-0603, robhodgson888@gmail.com**, Katie Anderson, Nancy Anderson, Shawn Collins, Sheree Daugherty, Bill Drolsbaugh, Bill Dustin (BDu), Rich Eakin, John Fehr, Donna Foyle, Isaac Field, James Flynn, Barbara Griffith, Benjamin Haywood, James R. Hill III, Deborah Kalbfleisch, Mary Alice Koeneke, Glenn Koppel, Ron Leberman, Terry Lobdell, Andrew M, Geoff Malosh, Jeff McDonald, Jerry McWilliams, Nancy Moeller, Tom Moeller, Shirley Mutz, Claire Nicolls, Tomas Nonnenmacher, Richard Nugent, Tom Osegueda, Kevin Parsons, Ken Pinnow, David Poortinga, GERALYN PUNDZAK, Ramona Sahni, Sarah Sargent, Kathy Saunders, Bob Scribner, Kim Springer, Randy Stringer, Julia Tebbets, Adam Troyer, James Valimont, Bob Van Newkirk, Mark Vass, Scott Wissinger, Cheryl Zalik, Frank Zalik.

Cumberland County

Locations: Boiling Springs Children's Pond (BSCP), Huntsdale Hidden Pond (HHP), Mud Level Road (MLR), State Game Lands 169 (SGL 169).

The winter season in *Cumberland* was mild, especially in comparison to the prior two winters. November and December were very mild with January and February more seasonable but with no prolonged periods of extreme cold. There was one significant storm late in January that dumped up to 30 inches of snow in the county.

Waterfowl for the period were sparse, probably due to the mild winter throughout the entire northeast meaning that waterfowl were not forced south by ice. As usual, BSCP produced a species or 2 that are uncommon in *Cumberland* during the winter with one male **Canvasback** 1/8-9 (DK, BO, VG) and a **Redhead** pair 1/5-2/27 (DK, m.ob.). A new place of interest is an old quarry on Lisburn Rd. in Camp Hill. While difficult to see into (I'm told by one person that they stand on the roof of their car) it can be rewarding if you manage to do so. Being only a few miles from the Susquehanna R., many species of waterfowl can show up there in large numbers as exemplified by the 11 Redheads 1/30 (SK) and the 16 photographed 2/7 (SK), as well as 21 **Common Goldeneyes** 1/30 (SK) and another 39 on 2/13 (SK). There was also one **Ruddy Duck** reported from the quarry 2/7 (SK). Additionally, the only 2 **Horned Grebes** of the season were at the quarry 1/30 (SK).

Raptors of note were low during the season with only one light phase **Rough-legged Hawk** reported during a Winter Raptor Survey, found on SGL 169 (DG). Presumably the same bird had also been seen the week prior at the same location (DG). Always uncommon, one **Merlin** was seen on I-81 near exit 57 on 1/2 (CH) and another was reported from MLR 2/28 (VG). A **Peregrine Falcon** was observed sitting on a tower at Shippensburg University near Burd Run 1/18 (EL).

Repeating the theme once more, there were fewer gulls around in this mild winter compared to more severe seasons. An unusual sighting any winter, 3 **Bonaparte's Gulls** were seen at Opossum Lake 12/2

(DK) and 2 at the Lisburn Road Quarry 2/13 (SK). The only other species of gull found that was not a **Ring-billed** or **Herring Gull** was one **Great Black-backed Gull** at the Cumberland County Landfill in Newburg 1/12 (VG).

Two **Northern Saw-whet Owls** responded to recordings north of Newville at Conifer Rd. during the Newville CBC 1/2 (TN, VG, BO). While these birds are regular winter residents, they are not often encountered away from the banding station at Kings Gap.

In a non-invasion year there were only six reports of **Red-breasted Nuthatch** throughout the period and only one was of more than a single bird. None were found at the usual stronghold of the Pine Plantation at Kings Gap. Two **House Wrens** were reported from separate locations on the Newville CBC 1/2 (DM, JD, AA, ES), only the second time this species has been reported on the Newville Count since it began in 1992. A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was found at HHP 1/8 (DK). This was probably the same bird reported from that location 11/27 (VG) and which was trying to overwinter.

The half hardy **Gray Catbird** was reported in two locations during the period - one at Opossum Lake 1/2 (DK) and another at HHP 12/13 (AM) and 1/8 (DK). There was also one **Brown Thrasher**, seen in a field near a hedgerow just south of the intersection of Rts. 11 and 233 on 1/25 (VG). A **Black-and-white Warbler** was reported from the wooded trail along the Conodoguinet Cr. at the West Fairview Boat Launch 1/17 (RK), the second consecutive winter in which at least one Black-and-White has tried to overwinter there; two were there last year during the course of the winter.

Field birds were in relatively short supply during the period, perhaps because the lack of snow made them difficult to find. It is interesting, however, that they were reported in the time frame immediately following the only major snow storm. Two **Lapland Longspurs** were reported on MLR 1/27 (DH) and another 5 on MLR 1/30 (SK). Two were also reported on nearby Nealy Road 1/28-29 (VG, DK). The only report of **Snow Buntings** was of 12 on MLR 1/27 (DH). There were 5 reports of **American Pipits**, which included 10 at the Big Spring United Lutheran Church (which is located in the middle of a corn field) north of Newville 1/28 (VG) and five at BSCP 1/29 (KK); other reports were of single birds.

There were 3 sightings of the half hardy **Eastern Towhee**. One was reported at SGL 169 Mountain Road Marsh 1/27 (DH), another near the Fish Hatchery Sinclair Rd. in Mechanicsburg near the Trindle Spring Run 1/20 (SK), and one on Creek Lane near SGL 169 2/12-15 (HL, ML). Two **Eastern Meadowlarks** were reported north of Newville near the intersection of Hunters and Chestnut Roads 1/29 (AM, GW, VG). **Rusty Blackbirds** were sparse with only 3 reports: 3 at HHP 12/13 (AM), one on the Big Spring 2/15 (RP, m.ob.), and 22 also on the Big Spring 2/15 (BF, LF). The 22 are still a far cry from the flocks that numbered a 100 or more around the Big Spring as recently as 2013.

In a non-invasion year for finches, there were only 2 reports each of **Purple Finch** and **Pine Siskin**. There were 4 Purple Finches on the Big Spring 1/2 (DM, JD) and 2 more seen in Camp Hill 2/12 (MR). A flock of 22 Pine Siskins was reported from the Big Spring 1/2 (DM, JD) and 2 at a feeding station in the Huntsdale area (AG).

Observers: **Vernon Gauthier, 111 W. Big Spring Ave, Newville, PA 17241, 717-385-9526, pabirder@gmail.com**, Ann Anderson, Jarrod Derr, Bill Franz, Linda Franz, Andy Green, Dave Grove, Deuane Hoffman, Corey Husic, Stefan Karkuff, Dave Kerr, Ramsay Koury, Kathy Kuchwara, Harold Leaman, Margaret Leaman, Annette Mathes, Emilie Luttmann, Dave McNaughton, Ted Nichols II, Bill Oyler, Robert Peda, Mary Rex, Ed Smith, Gene Wagner.

Dauphin County

Locations: Lamoreaux Property/Fishburn Farmland (LAM), Susquehanna River Fort Hunter (SRFH), Susquehanna River West Fairview (SRWF), Wildwood Lake (WL).

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** made appearances at WL 12/1-15 (AL, IG, et al.) and at Italian Lake 12/7-13 (TJ, SK, et al.), and was thought likely to be the same bird going back and forth between the two locations, which are only four miles apart. Two were found further north on the Susquehanna R. at the South Rockville Rocks 2/3 (IG, AL). One **Cackling Goose** was reported at WL 12/19 (TN, AL, AK) and 2/10 (EB), and in Hershey 1/14 and 2/11 (AL).

A **Eurasian Wigeon** was clearly observed for several minutes in good light from SRWF until it floated south and out of sight 2/28 (RK, AM, HW). A second sighting was reported about two hours later (DHo). This was the first WF report in eBird and only the fourth eBird record for *Dauphin*. A **Long-tailed Duck** was observed from the Tri-County Boat Launch 2/4 (AL) and from WL 12/14 (RH). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was reported at SRWF 1/24 (EG) and on SRFH 2/5 (EB).

A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was observed at SGL 210 on 12/5 (TB). A female **Rufous Hummingbird**, first banded on 11/20 on private property in Lykens (SW, GL, SL), was reported through 12/13 (m.ob.).

Two **Merlins** were noted at LAM 12/11 (AL), and a single continued to be seen in the surrounding Hershey area through 2/16 (AL, IG, CW, CWz, MG). Two **Peregrine Falcons** also were reported at LAM 12/11 (AL), and sightings of a single Peregrine Falcon in the Hershey vicinity continued through 2/16 (m.ob.). Singles were reported from Lykens 2/6 (RK, AM), SRWF 2/2 (DHo), and the I-81 bridge 2/25 (AL, EG); and WL observers found 2 on 12/10 (ED) and one 12/15 (MG, CWz).

One **Snow Bunting** was observed at Fort Indiantown Gap 1/15 (JD, IG) and 8 were reported along with 2 **Lapland Longspurs** at Gratz Grasslands 2/2 (DHo). **Rusty Blackbirds** were at WL beginning 12/13, when 14 were reported (IG, CK, RD), and continuing through 1/1 (m.ob.). One was found at the Hershey IBA 12/18 (DH), one at the Highspire Reservoir 1/21 (AL, CW), and 6 at Fort Hunter 2/28 (DHo).

Observers: **Annette Mathes, 661 South 80th Street, Harrisburg PA 17111, (717) 514-4512, amathes19@verizon.net**, Tim Becker, Ed Bernot, Eli DePaulis, Rob Dickerson, Ian Gardner, Marilyn Glace, Elora Grahame, Daniel Hinnebusch, Deuane Hoffman (DHo), Robert Hossler, Tom Johnson, Chad Kauffman, Andy Keister, Steven Kersting, Ramsay Koury, Alex Lamoreaux, Gary Lockerman, Sandy Lockerman, Ted Nichols, Scott Weidensaul, Casey Weissburg, Howard West, Cathleen Wetzel (CWz).

Delaware County

National Wildlife Refuge (JHNWR), Neumann University, Springton Reservoir (SR), Tyler Arboretum, The Willows (WILL).

The mild winter of 2015-2016 in *Delaware* boasted a total of 106 species. An overwintering **Red-headed Woodpecker** in a neighborhood development, a new late record for **American Redstart**, three species of warbler during the 96th Glenholden CBC, and an **Iceland Gull** on the Delaware River mark this year's winter as an unusual season of birding!

Cackling Geese appeared only as individual birds with one seen at CCR 1/3-17 (NS, AG) and another photographed at WILL 2/24 (KG). The only swan species was **Tundra Swan**; a season-high total of 145 was observed on DR by Marcus Hook Municipal Park 1/8 (NS).

For the second year in a row, 16 species of duck were recorded for the winter season. In addition, there were two hybrid ducks. Frequently observed in nearby *Philadelphia*, one Brewer's Duck (Gadwall x Mallard) was observed at JHNWR 1/12 (DO). Also, a high total of two Mallard X American Black Duck hybrids were observed at the same location 1/12-15 (DO).

Twenty **Long-tailed Ducks**, an unusually high number, were observed during the Glenholden CBC at SR 12/19 (AC, WS). One female **Common Goldeneye** was photographed and observed for over two months and into the spring season at CCR 1/9-2/29 (m.ob.) A regular rare visitor to *Delaware*, one **Red-breasted Merganser** was observed in Ridley Twp. Marina 2/12 (AG). The only sighting of **Ruddy Duck** this was of one bird on SR 1/14 (NS).

Wild Turkeys are still seen in winter as single birds with one at JHNWR 1/17 (MW) and another at Hildacy Farm Preserve 12/8 (DB). An irregular rare winter visitor, a **Red-throated Loon** was photographed at GPP, 2/22 (TB). One **Horned Grebe** was observed at SR 12/5 (DO).

Seen annually in winter, 2 **Great Cormorants** were observed in their usual habitat of the DR near Governor Printz Park 1/15 (DO). An extremely late **Laughing Gull** was observed along DR near the Philadelphia Airport 12/15 (AG). An occasional winter visitor to *Delaware*, one **Iceland Gull** was observed in the same location 2/21 (AG).

An overwintering **Red-headed Woodpecker** was photographed and observed throughout the season in the Glenloch Neighborhood Development in Media 12/10-1/29 (m.ob.). It was recorded for the

Glenholden CBC, providing the seventh record for the Glenholden CBC. Another notable CBC observation was of an **Eastern Phoebe**, an irregular and rare winter species, at Neumann University 12/19 (Delco CBC Data).

A bird whose appearance in the county is inconsistent depending on winter movements from north of *Delaware*, single **Black-capped Chickadees** were observed at a feeder in Media 12/13 (AG) and at Tyler Arboretum 2/10 (NK). Irregular and uncommon, three **American Pipits** were observed at JHNWR during count week of the Glenholden CBC 12/16 (SC).

A surprising 3 species of warbler were observed, all three of these species were found during the Glenholden CBC. Expected in winter, **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were seen all over the county. A very notable find was of an **American Redstart** on the Bridle Trail at Ridley Creek State Park 12/19 (BB, FM). This observation represents the latest date for American Redstart in *Delaware*. One **Pine Warbler** was observed at the Merion Golf Club 12/19 (RB). The only **Savannah Sparrow** was in a yard in Wallingford 1/28 (DO).

Observers: **Brian Quindlen, 5 Winding Way, Malvern, PA 19355 (484) 356-8435 brian.quindlen@gmail.com**, Debbie Beer, Rob Bierregard, Tom Bush, Brian Byrnes, Steve Collins, Alan Crawford, Kim Gruener, Al Guarente, F. Arthur McMorris, Damon Orsetti, Win Shafer, Nathaniel Sharp, Marshall Walthew.

Elk County

Locations: Benezette Township (BT), Jay Township (JAT), Jones Township (JOT), Ridgway Township (RT), SGL 311—Porcupine Hollow (PH), SGL 311—Winslow Farm (WF), SGL 31—Winslow Hill (WH), Tambine Ridge (TR), Wapiti Woods Cabins (WWC).

For the most part, this winter was above average in temperatures, which may have lead to the **Eastern Phoebe** that was seen during the Benezette CBC, held for the fifth year 12/27. The weather was uncooperative, with rain and wind keeping most birds hunkered down; nevertheless, 28 participants managed to record 35 species.

Even though this past winter was milder than average, only 2 species of waterfowl were reported. **Canada Geese** were seen near St. Marys 1/17 (PL) and 12 **Tundra Swans** flew over JOT 12/28 (BB).

Uncommon in the county, **Ring-necked Pheasants** were present at 2 locations. One male was seen along PA 948 in RT 12/9 and 2 males at WH during the Benezette CBC 12/27 (BB, MB, PB). **Ruffed Grouse** were found at JOT only, with singles there 12/10 and 12/29 (BB).

Single **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were at RT and TR 2/13 (MH, AM). The only **Bald Eagle** reported was an adult at WH during a Winter Raptor Survey 1/17 (CE). A **Rough-legged Hawk**, uncommon in mostly forested *Elk*, was at RT 2/2 (SS) and a dark morph at JOT 2/25 (BB). A nice surprise was a **Barred Owl** calling on a sunny day at JOT 12/10 (BB).

A unique aspect of *Elk* and surrounding northern tier counties is the lack of Carolinian species, such as Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Mockingbird, and Carolina Wren. While scarce, there are areas that harbor these species. This is especially true in *Elk*. The southern one-third of the county contains a more southerly element, with more oaks and hickories. The northern two-thirds of the county, on the other hand, falls in the northern hardwoods eco-region. These southern species are rare to absent in these areas, especially in heavily forested areas. In other words, most reports of the previously mentioned southern species are from the southern one-third of the counties or from populated areas.

Red-bellied Woodpeckers were seen in good numbers on the Benezette CBC, with 2 at BT (MA, EE, MM, AN) and 4 at JAT 12/27 (JC, LC). Single Red-bellied Woodpeckers were also at WWC 1/17 (CE) and at TR 2/13 (AM). Probably the most notable species of the season was an **Eastern Phoebe**, photographed at WF 12/27 (BB). The bird was seen at the edge of a small pond and was likely feeding on insects. **Common Ravens** were widely reported (m.ob.).

Another southern species still uncommon in *Elk*, the **Tufted Titmouse** was reported from a few locations in the southern third of the county (m.ob.), with a high of 18 in BT (MA, EE, MM, AN). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were at 2 locations, BT and JOT (BB, MJ). The high count was 11 at JOT 12/10 (BB). Most **Brown Creepers** stayed only until late Dec (m.ob.), but one was at TR 2/13 (AM). The least

abundant Carolinian species, the **Carolina Wren**, was only seen at BT, with 5 there 12/27 (MA, EE, MM, AN). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were reported in good numbers from various locations (m.ob.).

Eastern Bluebirds were at PH, WF, and WH in Dec and Jan (BB, CE). The only report of **American Robin** was of 2 at WH during the Benezette CBC 12/27 (BB). Despite the warmer than average weather, **American Tree Sparrows** were reported from various locations during the season (m.ob.). A high count of 39 was reported for the Benezette CBC 12/27 (MA, EE, MM, AN).

Two species of blackbirds were spotted, both rare to uncommon during the winter. A single, early **Red-winged Blackbird** was at JOT 2/25 (BB). One **Common Grackle** was at RT 2/14 and 3 were there 2/15 (MH). **Purple Finches** were fairly common, seen at BT, JOT, WH, and WWC (BB, CE, MJ). The high count was of 20 at BT during the Benezette CBC 12/27 (MJ). The only irruptive winter finch seen this season was **Pine Siskin**, with 4 individuals at JOT 12/10 and 14 there 2/25 (BB).

Observers: **Brendyn Baptiste, 255 Clayton Rd Butler, PA 16001, brendynbaptiste@yahoo.com**, Marianne Atkinson, Mary Burkehouse, Phil Burkehouse, Jen Crowell, Lewis Crowell, Edwena Eger, Carl Engstrom, Mary Hosmer, Mark Johnson, Mandy Marconi, Chamlie Nixon, Don Nixon, Amber Nodler, Scott Stoleson.

Erie County

A rather mild winter kept the water around Presque Isle State Park (PISP) ice-free for much of the season, with a short period of ice-cover on Presque Bay from mid-Jan through mid-Feb. Many **Redheads** were able to winter around the park with upwards of 4,000 birds present for most of the period. **Snowy Owls** returned in number again this winter, but most sightings were of only one day wonders, scattered across the northern part of *Erie*, including PISP. Northern finch observations were few. Only a few **Pine Siskins** and **Common Redpolls** were reported. Rarities included two **Pacific Loons** that were seen by many through Dec and into early Jan, two imm. male flyby **King Eiders** during the waterbird count, and the first winter record of a **Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler** for the county. See details below.

The following birds were recorded from PISP unless noted otherwise.

Two **Snow Geese** were seen flying over Gull Point 2/2 (RN) and two more were seen the following day over Girard (CS). An imm. male **King Eider** flew past the mouth of Walnut Cr. during the waterbird count 12/6 and another flew past the waterbird count off Sunset Point 12/20 (JM).

An imm. **Pacific Loon** was spotted off the north pier 12/4 and another imm. off Niagara boat launch 12/21, with both birds remaining until at least 1/8 (JM et al.). An adult **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was spotted along a stream in Greene Twp. on the early date of 2/28 (PBZ). Two **Red-necked Grebes** were present around Presque Isle Bay from 12/5-23, and a single was off the north pier 1/17 (JM).

A late **Killdeer** was at Gull Point 1/3 (ST). A **Sanderling** at Gull Point 12/4-25 provided the latest *Erie* record by about three weeks (RD). One or two **Purple Sandpipers** were present at Gull Point 12/4-11 (RD, RS). A lingering **Dunlin** was at Gull Point 12/25 (RD).

White-winged Gulls were rather scarce. Only one **Thayer's Gull** was found, at the Lake View Landfill 1/25-2/2 (JM). Up to two **Iceland Gulls** were at the Lake View Landfill 2/9-15 (JM). Up to four **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were present 12/18 through the period at the Lake View Landfill and PISP (JM). A total of seven **Glaucous Gulls** were recorded 12/18 through the period from the Lake View Landfill and PISP (JM).

There was another good showing of **Snowy Owls**, with a total of approximately of 7 individuals reported across the northern portion of the county, including PISP, from 12/23-2/25 (m.ob.). The **Northern Saw-whet Owl** reported during the fall season on B-trail remained to at least 12/6 (RD).

A **Gray Catbird** along Gull Point Trail 1/23 was rather late and not seen after that date (TL). **Red-headed Woodpeckers** are quite rare in winter, so the sightings of individuals through the winter along the northeastern shore of Lake Erie were noteworthy (m.ob.).

A **Lapland Longspur** was spotted at Gull Point 12/30 (RS). A **Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler** was an excellent find on Gull Point Trail where it was beautifully photographed 1/23 (TL et al.), the

first winter record for this subspecies in *Erie*. A **Rusty Blackbird** at a feeding station in Waterford represented a good winter record of this declining species. Small groups of **Common Redpolls** were reported at various times through the winter at PISP, although they were quite sporadic and never seen for more than one day at time.

Observers: **Jerry McWilliams, 3508 Allegheny Rd., Erie, Pa. 16508-2129, jerrymcw@aol.com.**, Roger Donn, Tim Lenz, Richard Nugent, Chris Swan, Ruth Swaney, Shannon Thompson, Pam & Bob Zelenak

Fayette County

The **Greater White-fronted Goose** invasion came to *Fayette*. A flock of 30 was at Bridgeport Reservoir 2/6 (MJ) and 34 were there 2/7 (MJ, JHA). This unprecedented invasion brought probably the largest numbers of this species to this region.

There was a good variety of birds at Greenlick Run Lake 12/2 with the following reported: 71 **Tundra Swans**, 15 **Ring-necked Ducks**, 31 **Buffleheads**, 16 **Ruddy Ducks**, 7 **Common Loons** and a **Horned Grebe** (CH).

Other Greenlick Run Lake duck reports include a **Lesser Scaup** 1/17 (MJ), a **Bufflehead** 1/17 (MJ), 2 **Hooded Mergansers** and a **Common Merganser** 12/31 (MF) and one 1/17 (MJ). Also reported at the lake were a **Common Loon** 12/25 (DAK, DK), and 2 **Pied-billed Grebes** and 3 **Horned Grebes** 12/31 (MF).

Not often reported (and probably under reported), two **Red-shouldered Hawks** were at Virgin Run Lake 2/27 (MJ). A flock of 26 **Ring-billed Gulls** was at Greenlick Run Lake along with a single **Herring Gull** 12/2 (CH) and 23 Ring-bills were there 12/31 (MF). In my experience gulls that are attracted to the lake do not linger. CH noted on 12/2 the gulls were very few in number and on a return trip later in the day the flock was there. I've had the same experience watching the lake as birds come and go. So it shows how transient birds are stopping as they move through and how an observer can easily miss gulls here.

Observers: **Mike Fialkovich, 805 Beulah Road, Pittsburgh, 15235, (412) 731-3581, mpfial@verizon.net**, Jim Hausman (JHA), Clyde Hess, Matthew Juskowich, Dave Kerr (DAK), Don Kerr.

Forest County

Locations: Beaver Meadows (BM), Buzzard Swamp (BS), Tionesta (TI)

This mild winter saw a dearth of irruptive northern species and the presence of some species which usually winter farther south.

Two **Trumpeter Swans** were noted along the Allegheny R. near TI 2/3. One was wing-tagged with the designation N59, reportedly from Ontario. A flock of **Tundra Swans** was heard near TI 1/13 (FM, JM). The Allegheny R. was open most of the winter, and **Common Mergansers** were reported regularly through Jan and Feb, with the high of 23 seen near TI 1/4 (m.ob.).

A **Cooper's Hawk** was noted near Marienville 2/24 (BB). Unusual for *Forest* in the winter, a **Red-shouldered Hawk** was seen at BM 12/17 (DM), and two were noted near Neiltown on the Pleasantville CBC 1/3 (FM, JM). The only **Rough-legged Hawk** reported was in the Red Brush area on the Winter Raptor Survey 2/2 (FM, JM). These had been fairly regular winter visitors, but not reported since January 2013.

Red-breasted Nuthatches were hard to find; the only report was at BS 2/28 (FM). Three **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were noted at BM 12/17 (DM). There were several reports of **Eastern Bluebirds** in TI in Jan and Feb (m.ob.). **American Robin** is another species seldom reported in winter; 3 were seen near TI 1/26 (FM) and 13 were seen at TL 2/27 (KS).

There were only 4 reports of **American Tree Sparrows** - 3 were seen at BM 12/17 (DM) and the other sightings were at feeders near TI in Jan and Feb (FM). Six **Red-winged Blackbirds**, not reported in *Forest* in Jan in the past 16 years, were seen near TI 1/11 (FM, JM).

Pine Siskins were regular from 1/8 through the end of the reporting period at feeders near TI, with a high of 38 on 2/26 (FM, JM). Sightings of **Purple Finches** were scarce; 4 on 1/6 and one on 2/24 at feeders near TI (FM).

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Franklin County

Locations: Caledonia State Park Area (CP), Greencastle Reservoir (GR), Kriner Road Holding Pond (KR), Shady Grove Area (SG), Stillhouse Hollow Road (SH), Warm Spring Road Feeder (WS), Zullinger Feeder (ZF).

Cackling Geese were seen at GR12/12 and KR 1/3-4 (CG, DG), and a **Greater White-Fronted Goose** at GR 12/14-15 (CG, DG). Nineteen **Tundra Swans**, one **Common Loon**, **Lesser and Greater Scaup**, **Red-Breasted Mergansers**, and **Common Goldeneyes** made a brief stop at GR 12/2 (CG, DG), along with more common waterfowl. Three **Gadwalls** were reported on KR 1/4 (CG) and 6 **Green-Winged Teal** at KR 12/19 (CG).

Wild Turkeys seem to be growing in number with over 90 in a group near Greencastle along the Cononcheague Cr. 12/12 (DG) and a large number near Edenville 1/28 (VB).

Sharp-Shinned Hawks were very active at various feeder sites, with more reports of their presence than usual. Definitely a rare find, a **Northern Goshawk** was spotted along Richmond Rd. in Path Valley 12/8 (CB). **Bald Eagles** were reported at various locations, including 2 near KR 12/19 (CG), at the nest site at Pleasant Hall 12/20 (LK), and near Greencastle at various times (DG). A **Peregrine Falcon** was observed 11/8 (DC), in Chambersburg on the Franklin County Courthouse Annex 12/6 (BO), and at a farm near St. Thomas 1/22 (CB).

Wilson Snipe were at KR and GR 1/15 (CG, DG). **Yellow-Bellied Sapsuckers** were reported at various locations: CP 12/11 (VB), SG 1/12 (DG), and ZU 2/15-16 (CG), and at various times after these dates. A **Blue-Headed Vireo** was photographed near Chambersburg along the Falling Spring stream 12/6 (DC).

A **Brown Creeper** was observed at ZF 2/21 (CG). A **Winter Wren** was calling in SH 12/24 (BK). Forty-seven **American Pipits** were at GR 12/10 (CG). Forty-six **Northern Cardinals** enjoyed the feeders at WS 2/12 (JS).

Fifteen **White-Crowned Sparrows**, an unusually high number, were observed along Shatzer Rd. near Chambersburg 2/12 (VB). They were also reported at feeders 2/28-30 (CG) and at Shady Grove (DG) throughout the period. A **Fox Sparrow** was present at ZU 1/30 (CG).

A **Purple Finch** and 2 **Pine Siskins** attended at a feeder in CP 12/6 (VB). An excellent total of 72 siskins were at that feeder 2/25, with many remaining through the period (VB). As many as 30 **American Goldfinches** were observed at different dates in late Jan and in Feb at feeders at SG (DG).

Observers: Dale L. Gearhart, P.O. Box 155, Shady Grove, PA. 17256 (717) 860-5799, dgearhart01@comcast.net, Valerie Barnes, Chris Blazo, Dave Cooney, Carl Garner, Donna Hocker, Linda Kaiser, Bob Keener, Bill Oyler, Joyce Schaff.

Fulton County

Locations: Blairs Hill Rd (BH), Buchanan State Forest – Kerper Tract (BSFK), Cowans Gap S.P. (CG), Belfast Township (BEL), Gem Bridge Rd (GB) Hess Rd (HR), Hustontown Area (HUS), Meadow Grounds Lake (MGL), Thompson Township (THO).

A flock of 140 **Tundra Swans** flew over MGL 12/21 (CH). MGL is an IBA that is currently drained, but in prior years has served as a stopover for many migrating waterfowl. It is hoped that stabilization of the dam will begin in the next year and allow for MGL to be refilled. This is the only observation in what was an abnormally warm Dec.

Hooded Mergansers were displaying courting behavior on Licking Creek by in BEL 2/28 (CH). Two **Common Mergansers** were at BSFK 2/21 (GG). **Wild Turkeys** began strutting and gobbling behaviors as early as 2/9 BEL (CH).

Two **American Kestrels** (HUS), two **Common Ravens** (HUS), and a **Northern Harrier** (GB) were reported 2/21 (GG). In other raptor news, two **Bald Eagles** were observed in THO 2/19 (DW). Seven **Black Vultures** were reported from the same THO site 1/7 (MW).

Three was a good number in Jan. Three **Brown Creepers** were

observed at CG 1/16 (VG). Three **Winter Wrens**, unusual in any number, were observed at BH 1/30 (CF). Reports of typical feeder and woodland birds were common in Jan and Feb (m.ob.). An early or possibly overwintering **Hermit Thrush** was reported 1/31 HR (GG). The season's first **Red-Winged Blackbirds** were noted 2/27 in Belfast Township (CH).

Observers: Amy Evans, 403 Walnut St, Columbia, PA 17512, (865) 804-4399, needmore.pa@gmail.com, Ronda Barnett, Coy Hill, Charles Fullmer, Vern Gauthier, Greg Grove, Bill Oyler, Doug Weidemann, Marion Weidemann.

Greene County

Locations: Claylick (CL), East View (EV), Franklin Twp. (FT), Last Chance Ranch (LCR), Monongahela River (MR), Morgan Twp. (MT), Sycamore (SY).

Snow Geese flew over SY 11/29, as did a flock of **Tundra Swans** at the same location 12/2 (JC). In Wayne Twp., 22 **Mallards** were found huddling together in a small farm pond 2/27 (JC, MH). Three **Buffleheads** were found in the creek at EV 2/24 (MH) and at MR 2/27 (JC, MH). **Hooded Merganser** was found on the Clarksville CBC 12/19 (TD) and **Common Merganser** in Whiteley Twp. 1/9 (KH).

Six **Wild Turkeys** were found at LCR 2/28 (MLP). **Great Blue Heron** was reported in Whiteley Twp. 1/9 (KH). **Turkey Vulture** was seen in Morgan Twp. 1/29 (GB) and not reported again until 2/22 (JW).

An adult **Bald Eagle** perched on branch near a nest 2/27 and has been seen several times since (JC, MH). A **Cooper's Hawk** was observed at SY 1/18 (JC). Repeated sightings were made of a **Northern Goshawk** on Greene County Country Club property during Dec (AH). In Cumberland Twp., a **Red-shouldered Hawk** visited a yard 1/10 (LD). A pair of **Red-tailed Hawks** circled at LCR 12/27 (MLP) and a leucistic individual continued in Center Twp. (CDB).

A **Killdeer** was seen in a driveway in Morgan Twp. 1/24 (KK). **American Woodcock** was first heard in SY 2/20 (JC). Over 40 **Mourning Doves** were at the feeders at CL 1/14 (LA). An **Eastern Screech Owl** was seen sunning itself from a hole in a sycamore tree at EV 12/19 (JH, MH).

At a home in Morris Twp. a **Red-headed Woodpecker** was observed at the suet feeder 1/2 (CA). A pair of **Pileated Woodpecker** was seen working on a half-rotted maple tree, wood chips flying everywhere, at LCR 2/11 (MLP). An **American Kestrel** was seen at SY 1/31 (JC). A **Common Raven** was heard flying over at EV 12/15 (MH).

Red-breasted Nuthatch was found in Cumberland Twp. 2/14 (LD). A **Brown Creeper** spiraled up a tree trunk at LCR 2/3 (MLP). **Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were recorded on the Ryerson CBC 1/2 (MH). A **Northern Mockingbird** was observed at a birdbath at EV 12/5 (MH).

First report of **American Tree Sparrow** was at EV 12/2 (MH). **Fox Sparrow** was sighted at SY 2/12 and remained for several days (AC, JC). Three **White-crowned Sparrows** were found on the Ryerson CBC 1/2. A leucistic female **Northern Cardinal** was seen in the yard at LCR 2/11 (MLP).

Red-winged Blackbirds were observed throughout the period at several locations, including EV 12/20 (MH), at LCR 1/24 (MLP), and at SY, where there were 9 on 2/9 (JC). **Common Grackles** were in FT 1/2 (KH) and then not seen again until 2/22 in MT (KK). **Pine Siskins** were at a feeder in SY 1/31 (RA, LA, MH, LD). Thirty-one **American Goldfinches** were counted at EV 2/29 (MH).

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Huntingdon County

Locations: Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Cornpropst Mills (CM), Huntingdon (HU), Juniata River (JR), Pennsylvania Furnace Rd. (PF), Petersburg (PET), Raystown Lake (RL), Shaver's Creek Environmental Center (SCEC), Smithfield (SF), Tussey Mt. Hawk Watch (TMHW).

The 2015-16 winter season stood in considerable contrast to the two preceding unusually cold winters. December 2015 was very warm, followed by average though greatly fluctuating temperatures in January and February. The great event of the season, as in much of the state, was the giant snowstorm of late January. *Huntingdon* escaped the heaviest snow, but the southern two-thirds of the county nevertheless saw 15-20 inches of snow.

Two CBCs fall mostly within *Huntingdon*. The *Huntingdon* CBC was conducted 12/20, a mild day by Dec standards. Participation was high, with 78 party hours logged. The species count was 76. Unusual finds included **Golden Eagle**, **Long-eared Owl**, **Northern Shrike**, and **Rusty Blackbird**. Several species hit record highs, including **Red-tailed Hawk** (80), **Pileated Woodpecker** (40), **White-breasted Nuthatch** (189), **Eastern Bluebird** (240), and **White-throated Sparrow** (281).

The Lake Raystown CBC was completed 12/30, also under mild conditions, with temperatures topping out at 50F. Seventy-one species were recorded, five above average. Fifty-five party-hours were logged, slightly above average. Presumably at least in part because of the warmth, a dozen species reached record high counts. Woodpeckers were particularly numerous, with 3 species setting records; for the first time, all 7 expected species were found – **Red-headed Woodpecker** being new to the count. A **Trumpeter Swan** provided a second newcomer to the cumulative count list, which stands at 117 after 23 years.

The big avian event of the winter season in Pennsylvania, especially in the west, was the invasion of **Greater White-fronted Geese**. *Huntingdon* shared in the good fortune when a flock of 24 moved into SF for a couple weeks, first noted 2/6 (DGm) and then seen by several other birders, most of whom got to check this species on their *Huntingdon* life list. The geese remained until at least 2/18. **Snow Geese** were seen several times, with a high of 32 near AL 2/3 (Phillip Harchuck).

The afore-mentioned Trumpeter Swan, with wing-tag number L95, was first seen 12/30 (IG, NB, BW) and stayed until at least late Feb. It had been tagged in Ontario 11/3/2012, and has a history in *Huntingdon*, having spent several weeks around RL during the spring of 2015.

As usual, duck reports were scarce. A **Wood Duck** at CM was late 12/20 (DG); early returnees included 2 in SF 2/14 (Dawn Thompson) and 6 on the JR 2/18 (CY). Four **Gadwalls**, uncommon in winter, were at RL 2/20 (JD). A **Northern Shoveler** at RL 1/21 provided an unusual mid-winter record (GD, CY). Conspicuous by its scarcity was **American Black Duck**, normally one of the few relatively common wintering ducks – but only a few pairs were reported. A **Northern Pintail** stayed at SCEC through at least 1/2 (m.ob.); 15 flew over TMHW 2/28 (NB). A **Redhead** was on RL 1/2 (GD, ZA).

Large flocks of **Wild Turkeys** were seen during the late fall and early winter. A flock of 102 was found during the Lake Raystown CBC 12/30 (DM, LM) and 85 were at AA 1/21 (GD). A **Common Loon** on the RL CBC 12/30 (NB, BM, IG) was unusual but not unprecedented.

With relatively mild conditions through most of the season, many **Black Vultures** and **Turkey Vultures** stayed for the winter. A half-day of birding in *Huntingdon* can now be expected routinely to yield **Bald Eagles**, often several. The 16 counted on the RL CBC set a record high for that count. **Golden Eagles**, recorded on both CBCs, are still notable and uncommon, but now less a surprise in mid-winter as we learn more of their wintering range and deep-forest habits, and to be alert for their presence. Always a welcome sight, up to 5 **Northern Harriers** were seen over the un-mowed fields along Claar Rd., near Mooresville, on several occasions (m.ob.).

Ten **Killdeer**, a good count for winter, were on exposed mudflats during a slight drawdown of RL 12/12 (GG). Unusual in mid-Jan were 18 **Bonaparte's Gulls** at RL 1/18 (GD).

Barred Owls are more difficult to find here compared to 20 years ago. Thus it was encouraging to get reports from multiple locations (GD, ZA, IG). One or 2 **Short-eared Owls** were at the Claar Rd. fields from late Dec until at least late Feb (JS, m.ob.). One **Long-eared Owl** was recorded for the *Huntingdon* CBC at the usual location on private land 12/20 (JC). **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were heard at the Juniata College field station at RL 12/9 and 12/30 (GD, IG, ZA).

A Red-headed Woodpecker near McConnellstown provided a good winter record during the RL CBC 12/30 (DM, LM). **Merlins** were sighted in HU 1/27 (ZA) and near Mooresville 2/4 (JB, DW, JK, TW, Kristen Balschunat). A **Northern Shrike** near PET was a good find during the HU CBC 12/20 (Wendy Vreeland, Beth Glasser).

The warm Dec presumably explains multiple findings each of several half-hardy species, including **Hermit Thrush**, **Gray Catbird**, **Fox Sparrow**, and **Eastern Towhee**. The only **Snow Bunting** report was of one at PF 1/18 (JK, BC). Eight **Rusty Blackbirds** were at CM for the *Huntingdon* CBC 12/20 (DG).

Winter finches were scarce. **Purple Finch** reports consisted of only 1-2 birds in a few scattered locations. **Pine Siskins** were more evident with numerous reports of small flocks – highest count was of 30 at SCEC 1/5 (JK), with other reports mostly in the teens or less.

Observers: **Greg Grove, 9524 Stone Creek Ridge Road, Huntingdon, PA 16652, gwg2@psu.edu**, Zachary Adams, Jason Beale, Diane Bierly, Susan Braun, Nick Bolgiano, Nan Butkovich, Bill Chambers, John Clickner, Rob Dickerson, Gordon Dimmig, Jim Dunn, Ian Gardner, Deb Grove, Lewis Grove, Debra Grim (DGM), Jon Kauffman, Betsy Manlove, Dennis McGillicuddy, Laurie McGillicuddy, Crystal McNeal, Jerod Skebo, Doug Wentzel, Torri Withrow, Chuck Yohn.

Indiana County

Locations: Auen Road Pond (ARP), Blue Spruce County Park (BS), Blacklick Valley Natural Area (BVNA), Lewisville (LV), Shelocta (SH), Two Lick Reservoir (TL), Yellow Creek State Park (YC).

By January 5, only a small strip of open water remained at Yellow Creek. Yellow Creek Lake remained mostly frozen through February 23, with just small puddles or strips of open water around the edges; we were told that ice fishermen had still been present the previous day.

With many reports across the state in Feb this year, YC yielded the first 24 **Greater White-fronted Geese** 2/2 (LC, DK), the fifth county record; two days later, 29 showed up at the ARP near Conemaugh Dam (MH, RH, GL, DL); this is the second highest spring count on record and the third highest overall. The high spring count of 31 occurred 2/21/2006 (LC, MH et al.), but a large fall flock of 97 flew over YC 11/6/1999 (SGR, DJ).

A single **Snow Goose**, not seen in *Indiana* every year, appeared at the VFW pond 2/2 (DL), where it remained the following day (LC, DL); another was spotted at the ARP 2/4 (MH, RH, GL, DL) and 2/5 (DC, MC, DG); a third was found standing on the ice at YC 2/9 (LC). A female **Black Scoter** lingered at YC 12/8-29 (LC, YF, TG, MH, RH, GL), only the second Dec sighting on record. A **Merlin** provided a good find on the IUP campus 2/3, 2/13, and 2/17/(JT).

One to 2 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** visited feeders sporadically near SH 12/3-2/7 (MH, RH); one was found at YC 2/14 (PA) and yet another in a yard near Homer City 2/20 (BF). A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** near LV represented a nice find 2/9 (MC).

A **Hermit Thrush** at Conemaugh Dam 12/29 (MVT) and one near Saylor Park 2/22 (MH, RH) were the only ones reported. Lingered **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were uncommon this winter with the only consistent reports near LV, where 1-5 were found 12/1-1/31 (MC).

A **Chipping Sparrow** appeared at a feeder near SH 2/14 where it visited sporadically through 2/28 (MH, RH). A late **Field Sparrow** was photographed along Creekside Rd. 12/26 (TS). **Fox Sparrows** were found at 3 locations, but were consistent only near SH where seen on 13 dates 12/29- 2/26 (MH, RH). One was heard near LV 1/27 (MC) and another was spotted on WRS # 1 on 1/29 (MH, RH, GL, DL). In this year with few northern finches, **Pine Siskins** were noted at only 4 locations, with the best count of 30 near IN 2/9 (SD).

Observers: **Margaret Higbee, 3119 Creekside Road, Indiana, PA 15701-7934, (724-354-3493), bcoriole@windstream.net**, Lee Carnahan, Dan Cunkelman, Marcy Cunkelman, Sue Dickson, Patience Fisher, Barb Fletcher, Tom Glover, Steve Gosser, Steve Graff (SGR), Deb Grove, Roger Higbee, Dory Jacobs, Debbie Kalbfleisch, Gloria Lamer, Dennis Lauffer, Tim Schreckengost, John Taylor, Marge Van Tassel (MVT), Linda Wagner.

Jefferson County

Locations: Brookville (BV), Fairview Road (FR), Fordham Lake (FL), Harvey Run Road (HR), Hillcrest Drive (HD), Mahoning Shadow Trail (MS), Orchard Road (OR), Redbank Valley Trail (RB), Ringgold (RG), State Rt. 536 (Rte. 536).

A count of 64 **Canada Geese** was the high for the period, found on FL 2/7 (AK, JK). Two **American Black Ducks** were also found on FL 2/7 (AK, JK). The high number of 12 **Common Mergansers** was recorded off the RB 2/1 (AK, JK). The only **Ruffed Grouse** was found on the MS 2/7 (AK, JK).

One **Northern Harrier** was found on FR 12/14 (MH, RH). A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was seen around a feeder in RG 1/12 and 1/31 (AK, JK). A **Cooper's Hawk** was viewed on 5 occasions at the same feeder starting 1/17 (AK, JK). After failing the last two years, the resident MS pair of **Bald Eagles** are nesting again this year! Reports of the female on the nest were noted and birds were confirmed on the nest 2/28 (AK, JK). One **Rough-legged Hawk** was seen off Rte. 536 on 1/30 (AK, JK).

A **Great Horned Owl** was calling in RG 2/3 (AK, JK). A **Belted Kingfisher** was noted on the MS 12/6 and 1/30 (AK, JK) and a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was also noted there 12/14 and 2/7 (AK, JK).

American Kestrels were seen in RG 12/4 (AK, JK) and on OR 1/7 (AK, JK). A very good find was of a **Northern Shrike** on HR 2/4 (DR), where one was also found during the winter of 2014. One **Common Raven** was noted on the MS 12/6 (AK, JK), 2 in BV 1/8 (NP), and 1 off HD 1/12 (JS).

The only **Carolina Wrens** for the period were found on the MS 1/30 (AK, JK). A high count of 9 **Golden-crowned Kinglets** was noted on the MS 12/13 (AK, JK). Two **Cedar Waxwings** were reported in RG 1/29 (AK, JK).

The first **American Tree Sparrows** were 3 recorded on the MS 12/6 (AK, JK). A lone **Fox Sparrow** was located on the MS 12/6 (AK, JK) and a high count of 6 **White-throated Sparrows** was recorded there 1/30 (AK, JK). The high for the period, an estimated 50-60 **Dark-eyed Juncos** were counted 12/13 on the MS (AK, JK).

A lone **Brown-headed Cowbird** was at the feeder in RG 1/17 (AK, JK). An interesting find was that of 6 early **Common Grackles** at the same feeder in RG 2/25 (AK, JK). **Pine Siskins** were reported 5 times, all at the feeder in RG, with the high count of 3 on 2/25 (AK, JK).

Observers: **Thomas Glover, 210 Highland Ave., Punxsutawney, PA 15767-2416, tomnglover@comcast.net**, Avis Keener, John Keener, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Nick Pulcinella, Dan Richards, Josh Stapleton.

Juniata County

Seventy-two species were reported on eBird for the winter season. Seventy-seven species were recorded for the Lewistown Christmas Bird Count 12/19. The western **Juniata** WRS tallied 62 birds including 46 **Red-tailed Hawks** and 10 **American Kestrels** 1/30. A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen near the Mifflintown R. Bridge 2/5; a single has been reported there in the last year or so. The eastern WRS found 22 birds 2/13, with the notables being 10 **Bald Eagles** and 1 **Golden Eagle**.

Observers: **Chad Kauffman, 91 Kauffman Lane, Mifflintown, PA 17059, chadkauffman@earthlink.net, cell 717-994-6715, home/work 717-436-8257. Aden Troyer, 610 Oakland Rd, Mifflintown, PA 17059, phone 717-463-3117.** Deb Brackbill, Ian Gardner, Rob Hosler, Alex Lamereaux, Butch McCahren, Mike McCahren.

Lackawanna County

No compiler.

Lancaster County

Locations: Chestnut Grove Natural Area (CGNA), Conewago Recreation Trail and Wetlands (CRTW), Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area (MCWMA), Muddy Run (MR), Octoraro Reservoir (OR), Safe Harbor (SH), Susquehanna River (SR), Susquehanna River, Conejohela Flats (SRCH), Susquehanna River, Peach Bottom (SRPB), Wood's Edge Park (WE).

About 36 **Tundra Swans** flew over Mount Joy 1/2 (EC). Approximately 4000 were at MCWMA 1/20 (RM) and 3,500 were there 2/29 (DK). A **Trumpeter Swan** was heard bugling at MCWMA 1/20 (RM). Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at MCMWA 1/3-5 (EH,

YH, m.ob.), one was at MCWMA 1/11-2/28 (PS, m.ob.), and one was at Millstone Drive 2/10 (HH). A **Cackling Goose** was in Quarryville 2/29 (AL). A **Ross's Goose** was flying with **Snow Geese** at MCWMA 2/5 (EH). A high count of 3 Ross's was there 2/26 (RM) and one 2/27-28 (BC, ZM). Approximately 5000 Snow Geese were at MCWMA 2/9-18 (DK). The count climbed to 100,000 by 2/26 (RM) and by 2/29 had dropped to 65,000 (DK).

A **Eurasian Wigeon** was on the SRCF 2/20-27 (TNII, ME, ML, ZM & LB), one was at MCWMA 2/25-27 (JF, m.ob.), and third one was at Riverfront Park 2/28 (ME). Fifty **American Wigeons** were in Martic Twp. 2/29 (JS). Two **Long-tailed Ducks** were at MCWMA 12/26 (BC, MMc). Two male **Black Scoters** were at MCWMA 1/4 (RM). Several hundred **Common Mergansers** were on the SRCF 2/25 (PBI).

A **Northern Bobwhite** was calling on Farming Field in Willow Street 1/16 (WY), probably the same bird reported 11/21. A **Red-throated Loon** was at MCWMA 12/31-1/3 (JT, m.ob.). Two **Horned Grebes** were on the SR 2/16 (ML). A **Double-crested Cormorant** was at Grubb Lake 12/10 (TRo) and one was on the SRPB 12/20 (BS). A sub-adult was on the SRPB 1/14 (BS). Twenty-six **Sandhill Cranes** were in a field at PA 283 and Snyder Rd. 1/14 (AL).

A record 210 **Turkey Vultures** were counted on the Southwest **Lancaster** WRS 1/15 (BS, NS). A **Golden Eagle** was at MCWMA 12/24 (TJ, KJ) and one was hunting the Ephrata farmlands 1/4 (RM). An imm. Golden Eagle was at MR 1/30 (TA); single adults were at MCWMA 2/7 (ME) 2/27 (PD). Over 100 **Bald Eagles** were at SH 1/31 (TW). During the Conestoga **Lancaster** WRS 1/31, a high count of 81 was made. A **Northern Goshawk** killed a grey squirrel at OR 12/20 (DH). A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was along Brackbill Rd. 1/2 (FH, BHa) and one was in the New Holland area 1/17 (FH, BHa). Two **Cooper's Hawks** were in the New Holland Area 1/17 (FH, BHa). Four **Northern Harriers** were north of Churchtown 1/4 (FH, BHa). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was at Groffdale and Scenic Rds. 1/9 (JFI).

A **Virginia Rail** was found at WE during the Lancaster CBC 1/3 (ZM, m.ob.). A **Killdeer** was tallied on the Southeast **Lancaster** WRS 1/21 (BS, TA). An **American Woodcock** was at a Lancaster home 1/26 (DS). Eleven were at MCWMA 2/28 (ME, MS, VP, TNII).

A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at the Enola Low Grade Trail in Manor Twp. 1/3 (JM, JH), one was on the SR 2/7-12 (ZM, BC), 2 were on the SR 2/16 (ML), and one was on the SRCF 2/21 (LB). A **Bonaparte's Gull** was on the SR 1/11 (ML) and 45 there on 2/27 (ML, ZM). Twelve were at Riverfront Park 2/28 (ME).

A **Snowy Owl** was at Groffdale and Scenic Rds. 1/9/16 (JFI). A **Long-eared Owl** was south of MR 12/20 (BS). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was near the Boy Scout Camp 12/20 (BS). A **Short-eared Owl** was at MCWMA 2/25 (DK). The **Rufous Hummingbird** from the previous season continued at a Quarryville home 12/3-4 (RK, TNII).

A **Merlin** was south of MR 12/20 (BS), one was along Brackbill Rd. 1/2 (FH, BHa), and another was along Rt. 23 near Pool Forge Road 1/5 (ALa). An aberrant plumaged female **American Kestrel** was found and photographed 1/14 on PA 272-Silver Spring Rd./Scotland Rd. (KM, AL). This female had a rich burnt orange color on the cap and front mustachial stripe. The underside streaking was more finely patterned. The marks were darker and more pointed than on a normal female. She was about a mile away from the original spot 1/15 (BS, NS). A record number of 15 were on the Strasburg WRS 1/16 (TR, KS). A **Peregrine Falcon** was south of MR 12/20 (BS). An adult and an immature were recorded on the Strasburg WRS 1/16 (TR, KS), one was on the NW **Lancaster** WRS route 1/31 (FH, BHa), one was on the Conestoga WRS 1/31 (TR, KS), and for the second year in a row, one was on the Northern **Lancaster** WRS 2/6 (BC). A male drove off a pair of Common Ravens at Peach Bottom 2/20 (BS).

A **Red-headed Woodpecker** was at Williams Run and Smyrna Rds. in Gap 12/12-1/16 (TNII, ME, ML). A continuing bird was at Long Lane 12/22-2/13 (AH), an imm. continued at Hickory/Sportsman Road area 12/26-2/26 (BC, m.ob.), and 2 adults were on Long Lane 2/7 (AH). An **Eastern Phoebe** was at OR 12/20 (DH) and one at MCWMA 12/27 (ML). A **Northern Shrike** was on the CRTW 12/11-27 (DHi, GD).

There were more than a dozen reports of **Common Ravens**, including one carrying prey near Rothsville Road and Meadow Valley Road 2/6 (BC). Two **Tree Swallows** were at the SR 2/26 (CB). Two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were at Lloyds H. Roland Memorial Park 1/2-4 (FB, ZM, BC, TNII) and one was at SH 1/3 (LB, BH). A **Brown Creeper** was at a home in Lancaster 1/18 (PBI).

A **Gray Catbird** was at MCWMA 12/5-1/16 (ME, DHo, ZM), another was found at MR 12/13 (TA), and one was at Landis Woods 12/25 (GS). Single **Pine Warblers** were at OR 12/20-23 (DH, JSe) and

at Lloyd H. Roland Memorial Park 1/3 (BC).

A very late **Lincoln's Sparrow** was at MCWMA 12/12-14 (LK). An extremely late **Vesper Sparrow** was hanging out with **Eastern Meadowlarks** at OR (DH). A **Chipping Sparrow** was at CGNA 1/7 (KL). A **Fox Sparrow** was at CGNA 2/14 (VP, TNII, ME, & ML). Seven **Savannah Sparrows** were at CGNA 2/14 (VP, TNII, ME, & ML). A **Snow Bunting** was near Mountville 2/15 (SS).

An adult male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was at OR 12/20 (DH), one was at Georgetown Road 12/26 (AL, DW, & IG), and one was Brick Mill Road as well on that day (RG, MG). One was in the Lincoln Highway area 12/31 (MH, BQ). Five were found 1/1; the first was off of Hoover Road in Gap 1/1 (EH). Three were at Mt. Pleasant Road and 372 and the fifth was along Street Road (EH, YH). One was at Middle Octorara Presbyterian Church 1/2 (GM). Two were along Brackbill Road 1/2 (FH, BHa), Two were on Old Dam Road 1/16 (ME, TNII, ZM), and one was at 5285 White Oak Road (ZM), 1/16.

A **Brewer's Blackbird** was in one of the large flocks near OR, and the **Lancaster/Chester** border 12/20 (BS). A **Baltimore Oriole** was photographed at Lancaster Community Park during the Lancaster CBC 1/3 (JSh, PF, MH). Another was on Foxchase Drive in Elizabethtown 1/22 (CE). Fourteen **Eastern Meadowlarks** were at CGNA 1/6 (GD) and 5 were at Liberty Lane 1/16 (MG). A **Pine Siskin** was at a home in Willow Street 2/20 (WY).

Observers: **Pamela Fisher, 761 Willow Lane, Gap, PA., 17527, (717) 405-9448**, Tom Amico, Fern Bauman, Larry Bernhardt, Chuck Berthoud, Paul Blank, Bruce Carl, Elizabeth Conroy, Paul Dennehy, Gordon Dimmig, Cynthia Edwards, Mike Epler, Jim Fiorentino, Jim Flowers (JFI), Melissa Gallardy, Ross, Gallardy, Ian Gardner, Michael Gardner, Frank Haas, Barb Haas (BHa), Eric Hartshaw, Yvonne Hartshaw, Holly Hartshorne, Michael Hartshorne, Jonathan Heller, Mary Alice High, Daniel Hinnebusch (DHi), Deuane Hoffman, David Hooper (DHo), Barbara Hunsberger, Anne Hurst, Karena Johnson, Tim Johnson, Larry Keller, Dave Kerr, Randy Kimmet, Kathy Kuchwara, Alex Lamoreaux, Amy Langman (Ala), Keith Leidich, Meredith Lombard, Geoff Malosh, Annette Mathes, Joe Maloney, Mark McConaughy (MMc), Zach Millen, Kris Miller, Randy Miller, Ted Nichols II, Vince Pantanella, Bob Schutsky, Nancy Schutsky, Joe Sebastiani (JSe), Glenn Shaffer, John Shenk (JSh), Mike Shull, Jim Smith, Stan Stahl, Kim Steininger, Stollery & Flood (S&F), Derek Stoner, Susan Strassner (SSt), John Traynor, Drew Weber, Terry Webster, William Young.

Lawrence County

Locations: Volant Strip Mines (VSM).

The invasion of rare geese reached *Lawrence* in early Feb. Six **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at VSM 2/5 (DD), and 3 remained the next day (BB). With them on those dates was a flock of about 20 **Snow Geese** (DD, BB), which increased to 29 on 2/7 (GM). As is often the case with spring flocks of Snow Geese in western Pennsylvania, a good portion of the flock (13 of the 29) were blue morph. On the other end of the season, a single Snow Goose was at VSM 12/5 (MV). Simply outstanding was the flock of 5 **Ross's Geese** at the former Three Rivers Gravel Pond near New Beaver 2/6 (ST, ph. GM).

The only report of **Gadwall** was one at the Glacial Sands Gravel Pond near Plain Grove 1/15 (MV). An interesting aggregation of birds on the Beaver R. near West Pittsburgh 2/28 included 4 **American Wigeons**, 9 **Northern Pintails**, 2 **Redheads**, 135 **Ring-billed Gulls**, and 26 **Herring Gulls**. Wigeons (8) and pintails (2) were also noted at Shaner Rd. 2/29 (MH). Rare in *Lawrence* was a **Common Goldeneye** at Edinburg L. 1/2 (MV). Three **Ruddy Ducks** at VSM 1/15 (MV) were likely pushed into the area by the first true winter conditions of the season, which arrived around that date.

Bald Eagles were noted throughout the season (m.ob.). VSM supported hawks of the open country as usual, with plentiful sightings of **Northern Harriers**, headed by 6 on 12/26 (GK, MAK), many **American Kestrels**, and a **Rough-legged Hawk** 2/19 (SD, BVN). The wintering flock of **Sandhill Cranes** in Plain Grove Twp. peaked at 48 on 1/1 (RT), but by mid-Feb double-digit counts were hard to come by. Three **Wilson's Snipe** were found near New Wilmington 1/21 (CH). One or two **Short-eared Owls** were seen around VSM during Jan and Feb (m.ob.). A **Merlin** near New Wilmington 12/29 (ST) provided a nice find.

A **Northern Shrike** was noted at the gravel company property on Shaner Rd. 12/26 (MV) and was noted periodically there for the rest of

the season. Flocks of about 100 **Horned Larks** were noted at VSM 1/16 (SD) and 2/6 (BB), but these were eclipsed by the 330 there 2/12 (ST). Also with these larks 2/12 were 5 **Lapland Longspurs** and 58 **Snow Buntings** (ST). A flock of 75 **Snow Buntings** was also noted at New Wilmington 1/21 (CH). An **American Pipit** was at VSM 2/19-20 (SD, BVN). Unexpected in Feb was a **Savannah Sparrow** also at VSM 2/19 (SD, BVN). **Eastern Meadowlarks** were able to take advantage of the generally mild winter and held on at VSM in good numbers, with up to 6 reported there 1/11-2/28 (m.ob.). A flock 33 **Rusty Blackbirds** was carefully counted at VSM 12/13 (TJ, DG).

Observers: **Geoff Malosh, 450 Amherst Avenue, Moon Township, PA 15108-2654, (412) 735-3128, pomarine@earthlink.net**, Brendyn Baptiste, Debbie Darney, Sheree Daugherty, Doug Gochfeld, Margaret Higbee, Craig Holt, Tom Johnson, Mary Alice Keoneke, Glenn Koppel, David Poortinga, Shannon Thompson, Ryan Tomazin, Bob VanNewkirk, Marie Van Tassel, Mark Vass.

Lebanon County

Locations: Camp Shand Powerline (CSP), Cornwall Area (CA), Fort Indiantown Gap (FIG), Governor Dick Park (GDP), Kreider's Pond (KP), Lion's Lake (LL), Marquette Lake (ML), Memorial Lake State Park (MLSP), Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area (MC), Millardsville Quarry (MVQ), Mt Pleasant Rd (MPR), Myerstown Quarry (MQ), Reistville Prescott Ponds (RPP), Second Mountain Hawkwatch (2Mtn), SGL 145, SGL 156, SGL 211, Shuey Lake (SL).

A highlight of the winter was the 36th *Lebanon* CBC, hosted by the Quittapahilla Audubon Society 12/19. Thirty-five participants recorded 9629 birds of 76 species. Three species provided counts that were the highest in the *Lebanon* CBC history: 2 **Peregrine Falcons**, 10 **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers**, and 118 **American Robins**.

Accidental in Dec were 7 Greenland race **Greater White-fronted Geese** at LL 12/11-13 (RCM, TJ, JH, P&RW). This was likely the continuing family group reported 11/14-25 of the previous quarter (TN, m.ob.). Accidental in Jan was a single Greater White-fronted Goose, perhaps also from this group, which provided a new county early date at LL 1/1 (KB, TB). Presumably the same group of 7 adult and juvenile Greater White-fronted Geese were at the Spangler Rd. Pond 1/10-18 (TN, JF, RCM, CS). A **Ross's Goose** was seen with 1000 **Snow Geese** at MC 1/10 (RCM). A **Cackling Goose** was seen during the Liitz CBC at MC 12/27 (AL, JL, JF). Nine Cackling Geese provided a new county high count at LL 1/7 (RCM). Three were at MLSP 2/29 (TB).

Three **Mute Swans** were reported from the east section of the *Lebanon* CBC 12/19 (DW, m.ob.). Two juv. Mute Swans were at MLSP 2/6 through the quarter (TN, TB, KB, JD, GT, SW, m.ob.). A pair of **Northern Pintails** at MVQ 1/28 (RCM) and female at MQ 2/6 (L&AW) were fairly early. **Redheads** included 4 at MLSP 12/28 (TN), one at ML 1/3 (P&RW), a male at MVQ 1/28-2/15 (RCM, TB, TN, MF, DB), and two males at MVQ 2/23 (TB). The only **Greater Scaup** was a female at MVQ 2/23 (TB). A female **Red-breasted Merganser**, accidental in Dec, was at MLSP 12/7-10 (SW, IG, TN).

A **Ruffed Grouse** was photographed at FIG 1/19 (JD). Eighty-nine **Wild Turkeys** were counted at FIG 12/14 (SW). A new county high count was provided by a flock of 114 **Wild Turkeys** at SL 12/22 (IG).

A **Common Loon** stayed long at MLSP 12/4-14 (SW, TJ, AM, TN, IG, KB, TB). A **Pied-billed Grebe** was at MQ fairly early 2/13-14 (BC, TN, TB, KB). Accidental in Dec, and providing a new county late date, was a **Great Egret** at RPP 12/20 (KB).

A fifth *Lebanon* **Bald Eagle** nest was discovered along Little Swatara Cr. in Bethel Twp. 12/1 (RW, JHI). Incubation was observed beginning 2/4 (RCM, FH, GB, AS). Incubation was observed on the Bald Eagle nest along Pine Rd., north of Palmyra 2/12 (AL, EG). The only **Rough-legged Hawk** report was of a dark phase bird at MVQ 1/28 (RCM). An adult **Golden Eagle** was a nice find at SGL 145 on 1/15 (RP, RCM).

There were 6 scattered reports of single **Merlins**, in open farmlands where field birds are plentiful 12/14-2/8 (P&RW, JH, TN, AL). Two were seen during the *Lebanon* CBC near the intersection of Rt. 443 and Miner Rd. 12/19 (KM, RCM). Another highlight of the *Lebanon* CBC was two **Peregrine Falcons** chasing two **Common Ravens** at the Pennsy Supply Quarry east of Palmyra 12/19 (GBu, RP, BS). Peregrines were also seen at CA 12/19 (BC) and Lenni Lanape Park 1/6 (TK). A juvenile was reported at MC 12/24 (K&TJ) and an adult was

there 1/10 (RCM).

The winter's first **Wilson's Snipe** was seen at KP 1/26 (LK). Up to six **American Woodcock** were at MLSP at dusk 2/28-29 (TB, SW). Two **Bonaparte's Gulls** at MVQ 2/13 provided a first Feb record and new county early date (TN). Large numbers of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were reported by RCM at LL. The highest total was 90, all but one first winter birds, reported 1/7 (RCM). A second winter **Glaucous Gull** provided a ninth county record at LL 1/7 (RCM).

A **Great Horned Owl** was found occupying a former Red-tailed Hawk nest near the junction of Prescott and Reistville Rds. 2/4 (FH, GB, AS). A **Barred Owl** was vocal at SGL 211 on 12/13 (TN). A **Barred Owl** was nicely photographed in daylight at FIG 1/20 (JD). One was found there again 2/5 (IG). A **Long-eared Owl** was heard along Canaan Grove Rd. east of Schaefferstown 1/6 (BSn).

S.A.

A **Snowy Owl** was discovered along Prescott Rd 12/9 (RWi). This bird appeared to be the same individual reported 10/24 of the previous quarter in the city of Lebanon (BS, DB, J&KL, FH, MS). The owl continued in the general area of Prescott Rd. and Reistville Rd. through 12/13 (fide DB, JB, RB). On 12/15 the owl was spotted along Elco Rd by RWi, and banded by SWe. It was found to be a very thin hatch year male. It was observed by many hunting from telephone poles along Rt. 501 on 12/17 (DB, FH, TB, RCM, TN, m.ob.), flying dangerously close to traffic as it hunted the busy roadside. It was sighted on a pole along Reistville Rd. 12/20 (JB). It was found badly injured back on Elco Rd. and euthanized 12/23 (fide SWe). A second Snowy Owl, representing a 17th county record, was found dead southeast of Myerstown 1/4 (fide TN, SWe).

Good numbers of **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were found at FIG, especially along Tomstown Rd., in an area where they were caching acorns in dead snags during the fall, reported there 1/7-2/13 (JD, IG, TB, KB, AL, m.ob.). An incredible 12 Red-headed Woodpeckers provided a new county high count at FIG 1/22 (IG). One was reported at ML 2/4 (IG, AL). Away from FIG, single Red-headed Woodpeckers were seen in the northeast section of the *Lebanon* CBC 12/19 (GB, m.ob.) and at CA 1/27 (JF). Five **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** provided a nice find at SGL 145 on 1/22 (PB, RCM, m.ob.).

Two **Winter Wrens** were at the Palmyra Sportsman's Club for the *Lebanon* CBC 12/19 (CB, DHO). Singles were at CSP 12/26 (JH), at ML 12/28 (TN), at MLSP 2/6 (TN), and at Myerstown 2/17 (TK). Two **American Pipits** were in a marshy area along Quarry Rd. near Myerstown 1/25 (TB, KB), 3 were there 2/13-15 (BC, TB, KB), and one was at KP 1/27-29 (IG, AL, SW). Fifteen **Yellow-rumped Warblers** made a nice find at MC during the Lititz CBC 12/27 (AL, JL, JF).

An **Eastern Towhee** was at SGL 145 on 1/6 (RCM) and 3 were at CSP 1/16 (JH). Thirty-six **American Tree Sparrows** were at MC during the Lititz CBC 12/27 (AL, JL, JF). A **Vesper Sparrow** provided a new county early date at MC 2/29 (RCM). **Savannah Sparrows** were well reported in small numbers on eBird. Nine were found during the Lititz CBC at MC 12/27, tying the county high count, (AL, JL, JF). A flock of 5 was along the roadside at MPR 2/14 (KB, TB).

There were numerous sightings of **Fox Sparrows**, normally accidental in Jan. One of the better counts was of 5 at CSP, with some singing 12/26 (JH); 4 were there 1/16 (JH). One at SGL 145 provided a new county early date on 1/6 (RCM). Four were at SGL 145, with one singing, on 1/22 (PB, RCM, m.ob.) and 2 again there 2/26 (PB).

Lapland Longspurs were found after a snowstorm in the MPR and Louser Rd. areas 1/25-31 (AL, IG, TN, DHi, m.ob.), with the high of 14 on 1/26 (LK). The same snow cover brought 3 longspurs to the side of Hostetter Ln. near Bellegrove 1/28 (TB, IG), with one remaining 2/1 (TB). Seven were along MPR after a snowfall 2/10 (TB, IG, AL). The winter's only **Snow Bunting** was seen along MPR 1/26 (TN).

At least 70 **Purple Finches** provided a new county high count at 2Mtn 12/31 (RCM, SC, DB). Another nice count of Purple Finches, 15 males and 8 females, was tallied at SGL 156 on 1/22 (RCM). Two were at 2Mtn 12/6 (AM, TJ), and one was at GDP 1/18 (TB). Eight Purple Finches were at MC 2/25 (P&RW). **Pine Siskins** were scarce, with scattered reports of small numbers. Up to 3 were at a home in the CA, 1/23 through the period (P&RW). Two were at a Palmyra home 1/16 (SW) and one in Newmanstown 1/29 (JS).

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17028, tjbecker81@aol.com, Kathy Becker, Chuck Berthoud, Don Billett, Rebekah Bollinger, Justin Bollinger, Gerry Boltz, Dick Boshart (DBo), Paul Brubaker, Greg Burgdorf (GBu), Brian Byrnes, Bruce Carl, Mary Coomer, Sue Cooper, Jarrod Derr, Mike Epler, Jim Fiorentino, Matthew Frederick, Ian Gardner, Elora Grahame, Fritz Heilman, Jonathan Heller, Jerry Higley (JHi), Daniel Hinnebusch, David Hopper (DHo), Karena & Tim Johnson (K&TJ), Tom Johnson, Ted Keen, Larry Keller, Alex Lamoreaux, Josh Lefever, Andrew McGann, Kate Miller, Randy Miller (RCM), Ted Nichols, Robert Peda, Rebecca Picone (RPi), Gary Robson, Brian Sauls, Art Schiavo, Connie Schullau, Brandon Snavelly (BSn), Rosemary Spreha, Jerry Stine, George Tallman, Steve Walthus, Scott Weidensaul (SWe), Ray Weik, Lee & Audrey Wells (L&AW), Dennis Wengle, Pat & Richard Williams (P&RW), Ruth Witmer (RWi).

Lehigh County

The total number of species reported from *Lehigh* this season was 116. For the 2015 calendar year, eBird users reported 232 species, plus 24 other taxa, and thirteen observers reported lists greater than 100 species.

This winter was widely touted as the warmest on record for the region and beyond. Locally, the mean temperature for December at Allentown (45.8° F, a full 13.5° F above the 30-year norm) more or less set the pace for the following two months. The only significant snow event of the season was equally staggering - a whopping 30.2 inches fell at Allentown 1/24, turning snowbound birders' full attention to their heavily hit feeders for a few days!

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was found on the Lehigh Valley Christmas Bird Count (LVCBC, compiler RO) 12/19 (SB); the same bird or one similar stayed for the holidays, found 12/25 and 1/1 at Fogelsville Quarry (FD, JH). **Snow Geese** were present in the county in moderate numbers, again centered at Fogelsville Quarry where peak counts of 2000 to 3000 were present. A flyover **Ross's Goose** was also noted on the LVCBC (JH, RO), followed by 2 other records at New Tripoli 12/28 and Coplay 1/1 (FD). **Cackling Goose** records have become too numerous to detail, but 13 of the (at least) 20 records came from Fogelsville Quarry 12/7-2/27. A **Tundra Swan** was at Leaser Lake 1/13 (FD), and a flyover flock was noted at New Smithville by a credible eBird user. A single Tundra was reported almost daily 12/3-20 at Fogelsville Quarry (m.ob.), and yet another was at Quarry Street in Upper Whitehall 1/1 (FD).

Four **Wood Ducks** lingered at least 1/1 at Leaser Lake (FD), then the species disappeared until 2/20 when found on the Lehigh R. at Canal Park (KD). A few **Gadwalls** (max 5) were found daily at Dorney Pond beginning 1/3. So were a pair (usually) of **American Wigeons** beginning 12/6. Wigeons were also present in small numbers at the Fogelsville and Quarry Street Quarries. **Northern Shovelers** are always good to see here, so 3 at Upper Macungie 1/9 (CH, SB) and another at Fogelsville Quarry two days later (FD) provided nice finds. **Northern Pintails** (max 17 on 2/27) was present in the county daily 2/21-27, mostly at Haafsville (DN, m.ob.), with one early winter record (3) at New Tripoli 1/4 (FD). **Green-winged Teal** were present daily at Fogelsville Quarry, 12/5-2/22 (max 20, second week of Dec), and were also noted 1/7-9 (4) at Leaser Lake (FD) and 2/27 (8) at Nestle Way (JH).

The only **Canvasback** was at Coplay Quarry 1/6 (FD). **Redheads** were found regularly 1/20-2/14 (max 6) at Fogelsville Quarry (JH). **Ring-necked Ducks** were at multiple locations through the period, with a max count of 30 at Fogelsville Quarry 1/20. **Greater Scaup** were reported more frequently than Lesser Scaup. The former was noted 6 times and was present at Lynn Twp., Fogelsville Quarry, and Leaser Lake 12/25-1/15 (FD). The latter was at Fogelsville 1/6, and at Leaser 1/11-15 (FD). So Lesser was located less than Greater at Leaser but it was great to see them both, at least.

Buffleheads were found in small numbers 12/12-2/27. Up to four **Common Goldeneyes** were long-staying at Fogelsville Quarry 1/2-2/28, joined by a **Red-breasted Merganser** 2/15-21.

Ruffed Grouse were found at SGL 217 (2) on 12/25 (JH) and again at Leaser Lake (2) on 1/22 (FD). Never common here, a **Red-throated Loon** was at Leaser Lake 12/1 (FD). A pair of **Horned Grebes** was at Coplay Quarry for two days beginning 2/12 (FD). The last **Double-crested Cormorants** (2) of 2015 were at Fogelsville Quarry 12/4 (FD). The last **Osprey** was at Leaser Lake 12/5 (KD). There were 47 separate eBird records of **Bald Eagles** for the period, with several

reports of a conspicuous pair in the Dorneyville area throughout early Feb. A different pair of Bald Eagles actually nesting in Upper Macungie was even more exciting! This would be the first confirmed breeding pair in the county in modern history - details to follow in a future report (JF, m.ob.).

A pair of early spring **Wilson's Snipe** was at Lynn Twp. 2/5-7 (FD). A **Barred Owl** was heard near Leaser Lake 1/3 (FD). The faithful **Red-headed Woodpecker** pair at Stine's Corner was ticked for 2016 on New Year's Day. Merlins were reported to eBird 18 times 12/13-2/21, a good showing for *Lehigh*. A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen near Blue Mountain 1/16 (CHc) and another near Allentown's 8th Street Bridge 1/27 (FD). An **Eastern Phoebe** arrived fairly early at Haafsville 2/5 and was noted often there throughout Feb (DN). There were 9 reports of **Common Ravens** away from the mountain, including 5 reports from Fogelsville Quarry, where presumably we should watch for signs of breeding.

Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported 8 times all in Feb and mainly from the expected west Allentown locations where it is a rare but regular breeder. **American Pipits** were found 1/5-2/9, with a max count of 60 at Trexler Nature Preserve 1/13 (EK). **Cedar Waxwings** were fairly scarce, with a max count of about 60 at Upper Saucon 1/2 (RA).

Lapland Longspurs were noted at Albutris 3 times 1/29-2/11, as were **Snow Buntings**, 9 times 12/10-2/11 (m.ob.). Two **Snow Buntings** were at New Tripoli 1/6 (FD). A **Chipping Sparrow** was at Trexler Nature Preserve 2/20 (CHa) and 2 were at Leaser Lake 2/28 (KD). There were 4 records of **Savannah Sparrow** 1/23-2/11, including 4 birds at Upper Whitehall 1/30 (JH). **Eastern Towhees** were found just 3 times, 12/5-1/2.

Lone **Rusty Blackbirds** were at New Tripoli 1/24 and Leaser Lake 1/25 (FD). **Purple Finches** were reported to eBird in small numbers 23 times 1/2-2/25 with a max of just 2 birds. Over half these reports were from a feeder at New Tripoli (FD, m.ob.). A small flock of 4 well-described **Red Crossbills** was seen briefly Christmas Day at Leaser Lake in the spruce trees at the south boat launch. **Pine Siskins** were at the previously mentioned New Tripoli feeder 12/28-2/28 (max 4), at Leaser Lake 1/2 (3), and at Pool Wildlife Sanctuary 2/28 (FD, BS).

Observers: **Bill Etter (407 S. Cigar Rd, Northampton, PA 18067. billetter01@gmail.com, Robert Andreucci, Scott Burnet, Frank Dickman, Kevin Dougherty, James Funk, Cat Hahn (CHa), Jeff Hopkins, Chris Hugesson, Corey Husic (CHc), Ed Komito, Dave Neimeyer, Rett Oren, Brandon Swayser.**

Luzerne County

Locations: Beech Mountain Lakes (BML), Frances Slocum State Park (FSSP), Harveys Lake (HL), Plymouth Flats (PF), Susquehanna River (SR), Wapwallopen (WAP).

An average northeastern winter often consists of a deep snow pack, frigid Arctic cold blasts, and ice-locked lakes and rivers. While these descriptors may well have characterized the previous two winters, this year the warm winds of El Niño precluded occurrence of typical weather conditions. While the warmer temperatures meant lingering fall migrants and unusual overwintering species in *Luzerne*, the larger effect was a diminished movement of waterfowl and other northern birds that often call the county home during a normal winter. Although some exciting species were observed, far fewer notable birds were recorded than in past winters.

Despite the overall low numbers of waterfowl, some of the more interesting highlights of the winter season were geese and ducks. A **Greater White-fronted Goose** present at BML 1/21-22 represented only the sixth record for this species in the county (JD, JhD). This bird, which was present with a large flock of **Canada Geese** and 2 **Snow Geese**, was found prior to the large push of this species from the western United States and appeared to be the Greenland subspecies. A single **Cackling Goose** was also present at this location 12/25 (JD).

Because their preferred shallow-water habitat is generally frozen by Dec, dabbling ducks are uncommon during winter. An ice-free start to the season furnished the habitat for 8 **Gadwalls** present at Elstons Pond (Shadyside Lake) during the Dallas CBC 12/20 (JD, JhD, SG, JDM). A pair of Gadwalls on the SR at WAP 1/25 was also unexpected (JD). Maybe the most exciting observation of the season was a male **Eurasian Wigeon** at BML 2/28 (JD, JhD). This one-day wonder represented the first eBird record for this species in *Luzerne* and one of

only a few overall records.

Canvasbacks are among the harder-to-find diving ducks here, so 3 birds at HL 12/10 (JD) and 3 on the SR in Wilkes-Barre 2/21 (PZ) were significant. A **Long-tailed Duck** forced down by a torrential downpour at BML 2/24 (JD, JhD) was unusual, but not entirely unexpected as this site continues to be one of the best in the county for this species.

Double-crested Cormorant is a common species in the county from spring to fall. Two observed at HL 12/10 were a bit later than expected (JD). The northward expansion of **Black Vultures** in the state and county has been well documented, and because this species is more likely to be observed during winter in *Luzerne* than **Turkey Vulture**, sightings of Black Vultures are generally no longer included in this report. The following report was so unusual however, that it was documented on several local new stations. Up to 60 **Black Vultures** were observed during Dec and through at least the first half of Jan at the Trailways to Heaven animal shelter in Fairmount Township. The vultures were seen harassing the shelter's animals, stealing food, damaging siding on the buildings, and on one occasion even entering the house through a doggy door. Prior to this year, **American Woodcock** had never been recorded on eBird in *Luzerne* during the winter season. This year, displays began 2/28 in White Haven (KC) and continued 2/29 from several locations.

Ruby-crowned Kinglets are scarce in winter. At least 2 were observed this season - one from Forty Fort 12/19 (RK) and one in Nescopeck Township 1/25 (JD). A **Gray Catbird** originally found at FSSP in Nov persisted through Dec and was last sighted 1/10 (BT, JH). The large flocks of field birds that visited the farmlands of Nescopeck and WAP last winter never materialized this year due to lack of snowfall and mild temperatures. The best sighting came shortly after the largest snowfall of the season, a single **Snow Bunting** seen and heard in a flock of 20 **Horned Larks** on Hobbie Rd. in WAP 1/25 (JD).

Savannah Sparrows are very common migrants along the SR in fall, often resulting in birds lingering into the winter season. Five were observed at PF for the Dallas CBC 12/20 (MB, BC, PC, PM). Another was recorded from Sugarloaf with a small flock of **Horned Larks** 1/27(JD). An **Eastern Towhee** discovered in Duryea 2/21 (TG) was likely an overwintering bird, as spring migrants generally do not arrive until Apr.

A very unusual winter sighting was of a female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** that frequented a feeder in Shavertown from the end of Jan until at least 2/7 (MS). This likely represents the first winter record in the county. Additionally, there are no eBird records of Rose-breasted Grosbeak for the entire state in Jan or Feb. Winter is the only season when **Purple Finches** are not easily found in *Luzerne*, so it was unexpected that up to 5 spent Jan at FSSP (BT). Despite a pessimistic early season winter finch forecast, small flocks of **Pine Siskins** spent the entire winter in the Back Mountain, with flocks of up to 40 occurring near HL and surrounding areas.

Observers: **Jonathan DeBalko, 235 Buck Ridge Drive, Drums, PA 18222, (570) 956-1849, jonathan.debalko@wilkes.edu, Mark Blauer, Peter Carlen, Kelly Cesari, Bill Chupko, John DeBalko (JhD), Joe DeMarco (JDM), Stan Galenty, Trudy Gerlach, Jim Hoyson, Rick Koval, Paul Mengak, Mark Stair, Bruce Troy, Patricia Zaborsky.**

Lycoming County

Locations: Lycoming County Landfill (LCL), Mill Hill Road (MHR), Market Street Bridge (MSB), Mill Street (MS), Pine Creek (PC), South Williamsport (SWPT), Susquehanna River West Branch (SR), Susquehanna River Walk at Williamsport (SRW), White Deer Hawk Watch (WDHW), Williamsport (WPT), Williamsport Water Company (WWC).

One of the biggest surprises during an otherwise fairly uneventful winter was a flock of 13 **Greater White-fronted Geese** seen at several locations along the SR from Susquehanna State Park and above the Arch St. bridge 2/20-24, and from River Rd., Nisbet 2/21-24 (m.ob.), curiously several weeks after a count of over 60 at Bald Eagle S.P., Centre 2/6 (MB, m.ob.).

Waterfowl numbers were significantly reduced from the previous winter when open water was limited and waterfowl concentrated below the SR dam. Most anticipated species were observed this season, although in reduced numbers, but notably not Red-necked Grebe after

two winters of multiple sightings. A male **Green-winged Teal** at the South WPT Boat Club was early 2/21 (CR).

Further evidence of overwintering **Golden Eagles** includes sightings in Anthony Twp. 12/4 (ML), at the WDHV 12/31 (BB, DvB, DeB), 1/3 (AK), and 2/28 (GM, JY). **Turkey Vultures** lingered into the winter more than normally, possibly in response to mild temperatures, with 17 at the LCL during the CBC 12/21, 2 nearby during a WRS 1/30 (JY, ML), and "several" at the LCL 2/5 (MK). Also notable was **Black Vulture**, found at "record highs" on the northern CBC 1/2 (m.ob.).

Careful attention to migrating gulls prove that **Herring Gulls** pass through regularly during the end of Feb with the more common **Ring-billed Gulls**. A **Great Black-backed Gull** was along SRW 2/22 and 2 were there 2/28 (BB), indicating that they are annual here also.

Multiple **Short-eared Owls** were at MHR, a traditional location, during the entire season, with 9 providing a high count 1/7 (JK, m.ob.). On 2/7 there, the Browns noted 7 Short-ears and a pair of **Great Horned Owls**, and heard a calling **Northern Saw-whet Owl**.

A **Northern Shrike** was found along Post Rd. in Cogan House Twp. 2/6 (WE, DF); attempts to re-locate were unsuccessful. A conservative estimate of 130 **Fish Crows** in SWPT 2/28 represents a notable count of a sometimes overlooked species (BB, DvB). Notable numbers of **American Pipits** were detected, including 30 in Cogan House Twp. during the CBC 1/2 (BB, DvB) and a high count of at least 52 at MS 2/14 as they were flushed by 3 **Northern Harriers** (BB).

A late **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was discovered at RVL 11/30 (DvB, EH). A sporadic winter resident, 2 **Hermit Thrushes** were noted at the WTP twice during the first half of Jan (DvB, BB, DeB). A winter without snow cover produced a lone **Snow Bunting** near Cogan House 12/31 (NoF). Ten Snow Buntings along the SRW 2/15 provided a high count for this season (DvB, BB, DbB); 7 were there 2/18 (EH, DvB) providing the only other report.

Although a regular winter resident, the flock of 20+ **Yellow-rumped Warblers** at Muncy Boat Launch 1/9 provided a high count (BB). Single **Eastern Towhees** at Powys lingered at Wetland during the Northern Lycoming CBC 1/2 and at WWC 1/3 (DvB, BB, DeB). A **Field Sparrow** was at the GPP 2/6 (BB).

An unseasonal **Eastern Meadowlark** was seen and heard singing 2/27, a full month earlier than expected, at Buchanan Meadows (LW); another was at MS 2/28 (BB). Several early spring arrivals were noted, including first-of-year **Common Grackles** 2/27, at least a week earlier than in 2015 (BB). While not as widely reported as last year, dozens of **Pine Siskins** were found at scattered locations, including a well-photographed leucistic bird 2/20 just west of WPT 2/20 (DT).

Observers: **Dan Brauning, 1920 Inverness Rd, Montoursville, PA 17754, (570) 567-4511, dan@thebraunings.com** (DBr), Mark Bonta (MB), David Brown (DvB), Bobby Brown, Deb Brown (DbB), Christy Rhoads, Maddi Dunlap, Wes Egli, Dave Ferry, Norwood Frederick (NoF), Eric Hartshaw, Jean Klotz, Mike Kuriga, Meredith Lombard, Gary Metzger, Christy Rhodes, Dennis Toepperwein, Larry Waltz, Joe Yoder.

McKean County

No compiler.

Mercer County

(SWA), Williamson Rd (WR).

The highlight of the season were the finds of 7 **Greater White-fronted Geese** and 5 **Snow Geese** at the SWA 2/3 and 2/4, respectively (SS). The Greater White-fronted Geese were still present in early Mar. The only report of **Tundra Swan** was a small flock in flight at WR 12/5 (NT). No northbound swans had been reported by the end of the period.

A **Northern Pintail** was noted at the SWA 2/20 (SS) and 8 were found there 2/24 (NT), as were 3 **Common Goldeneyes** at the same location 2/2 (SS). A high of 100 **Common Mergansers** were reported at the Golden Run area of SRR 2/7 (SS). Six **Common Loons** were at LW 12/16 (SS). Twelve **Horned Grebes** and 5 **Double-crested Cormorants** were also at LW 12/6 (SS).

Great Blue Heron was present at LL until 1/11 (NT), and after being absent from the county for several weeks, returned to the SWA 2/2 (SS). Strong south-westerly winds pushed the first **Turkey Vultures** into the area 2/28, with one seen at WR (NT) and one reported from

Sharon (SS). The only **Rough-legged Hawk** was at White Chapel Road 1/22 (SS).

A **Killdeer** lingered until 12/28 at Forrester Road (HT), and the first northbound **Killdeer** were noted at White Chapel Road 2/21 (SS) and at WR 2/23 (NT). Three **Wilson's Snipe** at Cannery Road 1/22 were possibly wintering (SS). An **American Woodcock** was heard at WR 2/29 (HT). Twenty-five **Bonaparte's Gulls** were at SRR 12/11 (SS) and 3 there 1/11 (NT).

Great-horned Owls were heard until late Dec at LL, as was a pair of **Barred Owls** at the same location though Jan (NT). A **Belted Kingfisher** was observed at LL until at least 1/1 (NT). A single **Red-headed Woodpecker** was reported at EZR through the period (NT) and one was found along the Trout Island Trail at SRR 1/31 (BD). A **Northern Flicker** was heard at the SWA 1/11 (NT). Unexpected was a **Merlin** chasing **European Starlings** at a farm at EZR 2/21 (NT).

Both **Brown Creepers** and **Golden-Crowned Kinglets** were present though the period at WR (NT). **American Robins** were reported wintering at LL (NT) and Sharon (SS), with a notable increase in their numbers at both locations by mid-Feb. **Cedar Waxwings** were reported feeding on the fruits of a crab-apple tree at WR 1/29. A high of 52 was recorded there 2/27. **Snow Buntings** were well reported, with a large flock seen in flight at EZR 1/3 (ST) and up to 75 were counted at Angel Road 1/21-22 (CH, SS).

Both **White-throated** and **White-crowned Sparrows** were present though the period at a feeder at WR (NT). Small flocks of **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Common Grackles** and **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were present at WR until late Dec. Single **Red-winged Blackbirds** were noted in late Jan, **Common Grackles** returned 2/23, and **Brown-headed Cowbirds** 2/21 (NT). Noteworthy was a small flock of 21 **Rusty Blackbirds** at WR 12/25 (NT).

Observers: **Neil Troyer, 876 Williamson Road, Mercer, PA 16137**, Bill Drolsbough, Craig Holt, Steve Sanford, Harvey Troyer, Samuel Troyer.

Mifflin County

Locations: Bunker Hill Pond (BHP), Coffee Run Road (CRR), Mifflin Airport (MA), Victory Park (VP).

At least 16 species of waterfowl were reported for the winter, most from increasingly popular Victory Park in Lewistown and a small pond on Bunker Hill Road southwest of Belleville. Notable waterfowl from VP included **Redhead** (CK, RD), **Lesser Scaup** (CK, RD), and a **Surf Scoter** 1/1 -1/10 (RD, m.ob.). A very notable **Red-throated Loon** was on the Juniata River at VP 12/27 (RD), an uncommon sighting for *Mifflin* and the only county report according to eBird.

Finding waterfowl in Big Valley can be challenging due to the lack of large bodies of water. Bunker Hill Pond, on Bunker Hill Road, has been reliable for many years for waterfowl and has continued to produce interesting species. Six **Gadwalls** were there 1/31 (RD), an **American Wigeon** 1/31 and 2/28 (RD), a **Northern Shoveler** 2/5 (RH), and a **Northern Pintail** 1/31 and 2/7(RD).

Four WRS routes were conducted, totaling 22 hours of observation: Big Valley 1/16, Milroy 1/21, Newton-Hamilton 1/25, and Ferguson Valley 1/30. Notable numbers included 87 **Red-tailed Hawks**, 20 **American Kestrels**, 6 **Bald Eagles**, 4 **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, 2 **Cooper's Hawks**, and 2 **Red-shouldered Hawks**. Three **Rough-legged Hawks** were observed on the Milroy route. The Ferguson route, which produced 3 Rough-legs in 2014 and 2 in 2015, had none this year (BF, et al.).

Although *Mifflin* is known for **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, none were found this winter. In five of the last 13 years (2003, 2006, 2007, 2011, and 2015), Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported during the winter season.

A **Merlin** was observed in Lewistown 1/1 (RD). A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen on multiple occasions at VP - 1/3 (DG, GG), 2/6 (RD), and 2/27 (RD). A pair was also seen outside of Lewistown 2/27 (RD).

Eight **American Pipits** were observed on CRR 1/7 (CK) and one at MA 1/30 (RD). One **Fox Sparrow** was observed on CRR 1/24 (RD). An **Eastern Towhee** in Reedsville 2/27 may have been an early migrant (RD). Although **Pine Siskins** were widely reported elsewhere in central Pennsylvania, only one individual was noted in *Mifflin*, at a feeding station in Reedsville 1/23 (RD).

Observers: **Jon Kauffman, 3400 Discovery Road, Petersburg, PA**

Monroe County

Weir Lake (WL).

Following two consecutive cold and snowy winters, the period was notable for being the warmest winter on record. The 36th Pocono Mountain Christmas Bird Count (PMCBC) was held 12/20, recording an above-average 64 species and setting all-time high counts for seven species.

Four flocks of **Snow Geese**, totaling about 1000 birds, passed high over Shawnee on the somewhat late date of 12/19 (BH, AF, MF). A single **Cackling Goose** was picked out of a flock of 300 **Canada Geese** at WL 1/21 (SK). Uncommon in the county and always a beautiful sight was the drake **Redhead** at WL 1/21 (SK) that lingered through the period (DS). Uncommon in the county, single **White-winged Scoters** were at Stillwater Lake 12/2 (BJ) and on the Delaware R. at DWGNRA's Smithfield Beach 1/22 (SK). The 42 **Hooded Mergansers** at WL 2/15 provided an especially high count for the winter season (DS).

A **Horned Grebe** found on Trout Lake 12/20 (VP) represents a first-ever PMCBC record. Both vulture species were present the entire period - the 11 **Black Vultures** and 14 **Turkey Vultures** represent all-time high counts for PMCBC. The earliest report of **American Woodcock** was of a displaying male in the Cresco area 2/27 (JR).

All-time high counts were recorded on PMCBC 12/20 for the following species: 50 **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** (previous high was 38 in 2014), 6 **Common Ravens** (previous high was 3 in 2012), 363 **Tufted Titmice** (previous high was 323 in 1989), and 181 **White-breasted Nuthatches** (previous high was 145 in 2014). The only reports of **Red-breasted Nuthatch** were of a single bird in a yard near Shawnee 12/19 (BH, AF, MF) and another on PMCBC 12/20 (BC).

An outstanding find was of a male **Common Yellowthroat**, photographed at Smithfield Beach in DWGNRA 1/17 (RW). The 7 **White-crowned Sparrows** on PMCBC represent a record high count. The 27 **Purple Finches** on PMCBC represent the highest count of this species since 2003. KCEEC's first **Pine Siskins** appeared at feeders 12/15 where they continued through the period; their numbers peaked at 14 on 12/29 (BH).

Observers: **Brian Hardiman, Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center, 8050 Running Valley Rd, Stroudsburg, PA 18360, (570) 629-3061, bhmccd@ptd.net.** Bill Clark, Andy Fedor, Megan Fedor, Bruce Johnson, Steve Kloiber, Vic Paulus, Jenifer Rituper, Darryl Speicher, Rick Wiltraut.

Montgomery County

Locations: Evansburg S.P. (ESP), Fort Washington S.P. (FWSP), Green Lane Park (GLP), Norristown Farm Park (NFP), Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust (PERT), Unami Creek Valley (UCV), Valley Forge National Historical Park (VFNHP).

Winter of 2015-16 was characterized by an abnormally mild first half, including the warmest Dec in recorded history, followed a more typical, colder back end. There was one large snowstorm, a near-blizzard, but snowfall was negligible for the most part. Overall, 118 species were reported in the county.

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) was held 2/12-15. *Montgomery* birders and feeder-watchers logged a record-breaking 826 GBBC/eBird checklists during this time period. This is the highest checklist total of any county in PA, and the third highest count in the entire nation, after only Los Angeles county and Seattle's King county. *Montgomery's* copious GBBC checklist quantity represents a full half of a percent of the worldwide total, and 9.5% of all lists logged in the state. Eighty species of birds were observed during this period, including a couple of surprises, detailed below. While a healthy number, this species count does not top any lists.

Although western PA's large influx of **Greater White-fronted Geese** did not reach *Montgomery*, there were, perhaps, a few more reports than normal. A pair were at GLP 12/5-20 (m.ob.), presumably continuing individuals first noted 11/27 (KC, GF). A single White-fronted Goose was seen on a farm field in the Worcester area during the

Audubon CBC 12/26 (DB). Another showed up at an office park in Dresher 1/15 (EM, ph.). A group of 3 was reported at GLP 2/21 (MC), followed by one 2/29, also at GLP (GF). For those wondering if GLP would experience huge numbers of **Snow Geese** on the reservoir for a second winter in a row, the answer was no. Most Snow Geese reported were flyovers, including an estimated 10,000 migrating over GLP 2/25 (GF). No particularly large groups were noted on the ground/water. There were just two **Cackling Goose** reports, abnormally light compared to recent years: 2 at Loch Alsh Reservoir 12/11 (AA) and 3 at NFP 12/26 (SK, ph.). A presumed **Canada Goose/Snow Goose** hybrid was observed at GLP 12/20 (PD). **Tundra Swan** reports were fairly few, with a high of just 15 on 12/18 (AA, GF).

A few wintering **Wood Ducks** were observed: singles at both PERT (AM) and High School Park in Elkins Park 1/9 (SP), then pairs at both PERT (EM) and the Schuylkill River Trail at Oaks 2/14 (WBH). Decent numbers of **Gadwalls** persisted through the winter at GLP, including counts of 51 on 1/6 (NF, SS) and 47 on 1/14 (LH). The only non-GLP Gadwall reports came from the nearby UCV: 9 were seen there for the Upper Bucks CBC 12/20 (PB, JF), and another during the GBBC 2/12-14 (SB). Forty **American Wigeons** were noted at GLP 2/25 (PH). A drake **Blue-winged Teal** was seen at a pond in Pottsgrove 12/13 (KR) and is assumed to be the same duck first noted there 11/5 (NF, SS). A full month later, 1/15, a drake Blue-winged Teal was located at a pond about a mile north of the original location (RK), likely still the same bird. **Northern Shovelers** remained at GLP in good numbers through Dec, with a few staying into Jan (m.ob.). A high of 46 was tallied 12/13 (GF).

This was an especially dull winter for diving ducks; a disappointment after two unusually "good" diving duck winters. Case in point: where **Greater Scaup** were noted regularly on the Schuylkill during the winter of 2014-15, just one was reported in winter 2015-16, at GLP 12/2 (SGo). There was also only one report of **Red-breasted Merganser**, a female at GLP 1/17 (KR). There were a few sightings of small numbers of **Common Goldeneyes**, nearly all from the Schuylkill R., as is typical (m.ob.). A nice group of 26 displaying **Hooded Mergansers** was at Oaks 2/14 (WBH). Even nicer was a tally of 108 **Ruddy Ducks** at GLP 12/20 (GF). There were zero reports of Redhead, Canvasback, scoters, or any other sea-ducks.

The group that hunts on much of the land in Palm farm country dumped a multitude of unsuspecting **Ring-necked Pheasants** into the wild in late Jan. Birders driving the area counted 28 on 1/26 (SGo, TR) and 1/31 (PB). These counts more than double the previous *Montgomery* eBird high count of 15, set in 1937, when pheasants were probably a "real" breeding species in the county. Most **Wild Turkey** reports came from PERT (m.ob.), as usual, including 17 on 2/17 (MCA).

A single **Horned Grebe** was photographed at GLP 2/26 (LH). One **Double-crested Cormorant**, a species that is curiously scarce in *Montgomery* in winter, was at GLP 12/20 (ML). A **Sandhill Crane** was reported flying around in circles following a flock of geese over Dixon Meadow Preserve 1/19 (KB).

The warm Dec allowed **American Woodcocks** to stay longer than usual. A pair was spotted at PERT 12/22 (AM), one was heard at NFP 12/26 (WBH), and 3 were detected at PERT again 12/30 (MCA).

Two **Bonaparte's Gulls** were at GLP 12/19 (KR). An immature **Iceland Gull** was noted at GLP 2/21 (MC). A new, but not particularly surprising, county high count was set for **Lesser Black-backed Gull** when 114 were tallied at GLP 1/16 (WBH, SK). The previous high count was 74, set on almost the same date in 2013 (GF). Coincidentally, 74 Lesser Black-backs were also observed at GLP 2/21 (WBH). There were 4 **Great Black-backed Gulls** at GLP 2/21 (GF), somewhat unusual for the location. The few other reports of Great Black-backed Gull came from the Schuylkill R. (m.ob.), where they seem to occur with greater frequency.

Barred Owls were noted in Gilbertsville 1/1 (MA), Harleysville 2/9 (SGo), and ESP 2/26 (SF). There was only one of **Long-eared Owl**, in Schwenksville 1/31 (SG). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was heard tooting in the UCV during the Upper Bucks CBC 12/20 (PB). No Short-eared Owls or Rough-legged Hawks were reported. The immature female **Rufous Hummingbird** banded in Willow Grove by SL 11/30 continued visiting the anonymous homeowners' feeder until 12/12 (*vide* SL).

Nineteen **Fish Crows** were observed in Huntingdon Valley 1/14 (CA), a pretty good count of this species in winter. There were at least 17 credible reports of **Common Raven** this season, scattered throughout the county (m.ob.).

Although there were few **Horned Larks** noted overall, 41 were counted in a farm field near Niantic 1/30 (KR). Away from farm country,

singles were located at NFP 12/6 (SG), Dixon Meadow Preserve 12/13 (MS), and NFP again 2/20 (WBH). There were no confirmed reports of Black-capped Chickadee in *Montgomery*; not surprising given that there was no late fall evidence of an impending irruption. **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was almost a shut-out too, but one was located at PERT 1/9 (PD).

Large numbers of **American Robins** were counted during the latter part of Dec in southern *Montgomery*. A rough count of 2720 was tallied flying over Heuser Park in King of Prussia during the Audubon CBC 12/26 (WBH, JSe), all heading to a roost somewhere. Single **Gray Catbirds** were found at FWSP 12/31-1/2 (MR), Longford Park 1/6 (PD), GLP 1/16 (MH), and Gwynedd Wildlife Preserve 1/21-2/7 (PO, KO). **Brown Thrashers** were spied at NFP 12/9 (PB), West Norriton 1/25 (AU), and FWSP 12/14 (PT). Given the mild Dec, it's surprising more of these half-hardy mimid species were not found.

Two notable warblers were reported, one much more notable than the other. A **Pine Warbler** at GLP 1/9 (EF) was certainly a good bird. It couldn't compete, however, with a **Yellow-throated Warbler** visiting a Skippack suet feeder. Although this latter warbler was first reported during the GBBC in mid-Feb, subsequent investigation revealed that it had been frequenting this location since 1/17 (GB, ph.). Yellow-throated Warbler is scarce in *Montgomery* in any season, making an overwintering individual all the more remarkable. This likely represents the first winter record of its species for the county. The warbler continued stopping by for morsels of delicious homemade suet through the end of the period (GB).

Eighty-two **American Tree Sparrows** were counted at PERT 2/7 (PD). Unlike some previous winters, few **Chipping Sparrow** were noted. Counts of 1-3 were recorded at PERT through the period (m.ob.), a spot that has hosted far more than that count in the past. Five were reported at Willow Lake Farm in Ambler 1/3 (PBu) and one visited a Blue Bell feeder 1/23 (KO, ph.). A single **Clay-colored Sparrow** was identified at PERT 12/19-1/1 (PD). Twelve **Fox Sparrows** were counted at ESP 2/15 (EF). An extremely pale, leucistic **Dark-eyed Junco** became a semi-regular visitor to feeders in Collegeville 1/2 through the end of the period (MAC, ph.). **Savannah Sparrows** are not typically found in large numbers in mid-winter in *Montgomery*. Consequently, a group of at least 16 Savannahs at VFNHP 1/9 was something of a surprise (WBH).

One of the highlight birds of the period was also one of the most frustrating. A female **Western Tanager** was photographed at VFNHP 1/3 (KK), the first of this species found in *Montgomery* since 1990. Unfortunately for local birders, it seems likely this bird was just passing through. Efforts by several parties to re-find it in the following days came up empty. This was not this observer's only remarkable find of the period, however. She also photographed a male **Indigo Bunting** at VFNHP 1/18 (KK), which appears to represent a first winter record of the species for the county. Both of these finds illustrate the power of really getting to know a patch and birding it daily, though good luck certainly doesn't hurt either.

Eastern Meadowlarks were noted at Graterford Prison 2/18 (TR) and GLP 2/20 (AK). There were just 5 reports of single **Rusty Blackbirds**, including 2 visiting feeders (m.ob.). A **Baltimore Oriole** was observed in Upper Hanover Twp., adjacent to GLP, 2/1-2 (DR, ph.). Another Baltimore Oriole was found in Hatfield during the GBBC and lingered a couple weeks, 2/15-27 (JSt, ph.). Sadly, the Gilbertsville **Bullock's Oriole** was *not* seen this winter (MA). Five years in a row made a good run, but the party had to end some time.

Ron Pittaway's winter finch forecast proved itself accurate again. **Purple Finches**, the only finch species he said would be pushing south in numbers, while not "common" in *Montgomery*, were noted at least semi-regularly in small numbers (m.ob.). Forty-six Purple Finches, an astonishingly high number, were found at ESP 1/3 (EF, ph.) A single **Common Redpoll** was well-described in the UCV 2/14 (TR), especially remarkable given the dearth of records of this species in southern Pennsylvania this winter. **Pine Siskins** seemed rather scarce as well, also in keeping with the Pittaway forecast, though they were at least regular at a couple of feeders (m.ob.). One residence in Schwenksville had them consistently, and boasted a high of 20 on 2/14 (MC). There were no reports of other irruptive finch species. Very large quantities of **American Goldfinches** were noted at a large feeder setup at the edge of ESP, including counts of 110 on 1/13 and 122 on 1/23 (both EF).

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Montour County

No compiler.

Northampton County

Locations: Nazareth Quarry (NQ).

December brings large numbers of **Snow Geese** migrating through the county. They use the quarries as resting areas and numerous agricultural fields to feed. Birders were successful at finding several uncommon goose species among both Snow and **Canada Geese**. A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was observed at Martins Creek Environmental Preserve 12/26 (MSa) and at Martins Creek Quarry 1/1 (MSa). There were 4 **Ross's Geese** and 10 **Cackling Geese** among 25,000 Snow Geese and 3000 Canada Geese at NQ 1/2 (DD, JH, SK). Another Ross's Goose was found at NQ 1/7 (BE).

A female **Barrow's Goldeneye** was seen on the Delaware R. for the third straight winter. It was found south of Portland 1/25 (JH) and continued with sightings from near the Frost Hollow Overlook north to the Portland pedestrian bridge 1/25-2/19.

A **Spotted Sandpiper** was found at a boat launch on the Delaware R. at the Martins Creek power plant 1/6 (JH). This may be the first documented record of an over-wintering Spotted Sandpiper in Pennsylvania. McWilliams and Brauning's *The Birds of Pennsylvania* mentions only one hypothetical record in Kutztown, *Berks* 2/7/1984. Other winter reports in ebird include one-day records in *Mifflin* on the Juniata R. (12/20/03 & 12/20/08) and at John Heinz NWR in *Philadelphia* 1/8/2012. The mild winter may be the cause of this bird not migrating south. The sandpiper continued at this location, surviving a major winter snowstorm and frigid temperatures in Feb to the warmer days of Mar.

Seven species of gulls were found at Grand Central Landfill. The rarest was a second cycle **Thayer's Gull** 1/26-30 (BW, MSa, BE). An adult **Glaucous Gull** was at the landfill 1/26 & 2/1 (MSa, BE). **Iceland, Lesser Black-backed** and **Great Black-backed Gulls** were regular at the landfill. The high count for Iceland Gull was 4 on 1/26 (MSa). The high counts for Lesser Black-backed Gull (100) and Great Black-backed Gull (35) also occurred 1/26 (MSa). Away from the landfill, 85 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were at NQ 1/2 (DD, JH, SK).

A **Short-eared Owl** was seen along Rt. 329 near the Keystone Cement Plant 1/22 (BS). **Red-headed Woodpecker** is an uncommon winter resident. Two adults showed up at a residence in E. Allen Twp. this past fall and one stayed for the winter (BP).

Lapland Longspurs are a prized find in winter; one was at Arrowhead Rd. in E. Allen Twp. 1/25-26 (DT, BE) and 2 were at the Greggo Farm in Pen Argyl 1/24-31 (RW, m ob.). There were also 400 **Horned Larks**, 2 **American Pipits** and 4 **Snow Buntings** at the Greggo Farm 1/24 (RW).

A female **Dickcissel** was found on Church Rd. in Emanuelsville during a CBC 12/20 (DD, JH, AS). Two unexpected **Clay-colored Sparrows** showed up at a backyard feeder in Pen Argyl 2/5 and remained for the period (B & RH). Also uncommon, a Gambel's **White-crowned Sparrow** was at the Koch Property in early Dec. (AK).

A **Black-headed Grosbeak** visited a feeder at a residence south of Hellertown on the *Northampton/Bucks* County line 2/13 (D & EM), continuing into Mar. This is the second record of Black-headed Grosbeak in the county following one at Williams Twp. 5/13/06. The county border runs through the property with the feeders in *Bucks* and the woodlot where it spent much of its time in *Northampton*. The home owners chose not to make the sighting known to the public.

Rusty Blackbirds are irregular winter visitors, which makes

sightings at Church Rd., Emanueltown 2/25 (BE) and at Knitter's Pond 1/16 (SK) significant. A Rusty Blackbird was also seen bathing in a creek at the Koch Property 12/16 (AK). There were few sightings of winter finches. Lone **Pine Siskins** were at feeders in Freemansburg 2/14-15 (BA) and at NQ 12/3 (MSa).

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Northumberland County

No compiler.

Perry County

Locations: Juniata River Amity Hall Access (JRAMA), Little Buffalo State Park (LBSP), State Game Lands 170 (SGL 170), Waggoner's Gap Hawk Watch (WGHW)

The winter season was very mild especially in comparison to the prior two winters. November and December were particularly mild with January and February being more seasonable in temperature, but with no prolonged periods of extreme cold. There was one huge storm in January that produced up to 30 inches of snow.

Waterfowl were sparse probably due to the mild winter in the whole of the northeast meaning that waterfowl were not forced south by ice. The only species of note was one male **Ruddy Duck** reported at the boat launch along the JRAMA 1/15 (VG) and 6 **Surf Scoters** (3 males and 3 females) discovered on LBSP during the New Bloomfield CBC 12/27 (DH, DM, JD, CK). This was the first eBird record for the species in Perry. I am not aware of any previous records in the county outside of eBird. With the open water, 3 to 6 **Pied-billed Grebes** were reported through the month of Dec (TN, m.ob.) as were one to 2 **Common Loons** 12/27-30 (DH, m.ob.).

Most raptors of note came from the WGHW with 4 **Golden Eagles** seen 12/3 (DG) and one each day 12/4 and 12/18-20 (DG). Also at WGHW, were one **Northern Goshawk** 12/21 (DG) and one **Rough-legged Hawk** 12/3 (DG). These were all unusually low Dec totals at the hawk watch (fide DG). The only raptors of note elsewhere were one **Merlin** on Creek Rd., Sherman's Dale 12/27 (AM, SS, KK) and one **Peregrine Falcon** in Newport 12/27 (KW). There was one additional Peregrine reported at WGHW 12/31 (DG).

Songbirds of interest included the half-hardies: one **Gray Catbird** at the intersection of Cove Hill Rd. and Rt. 850 on 12/27 (VG, BP, BF) and one **Brown Thrasher** at Kinkora Heights 12/27 (VG, BP, BF). Ten **Snow Buntings** were seen in a field near Ickesburg 12/19 (CK). Two **Eastern Towhees** were reported at Lamb's Gap 2/7 (IG). In a non-invasion year, one **Purple Finch** was found in hedgerow in SGL 170 off of Spur Rd. near Duncannon 12/27 (VG, BP, BF), and two more on the same date at an unspecified location during the New Bloomfield CBC (DH).

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Philadelphia County

Locations: Bartram's Garden (BG), Benjamin Rush State Park (BRSP), Carpenter's Woods (CW), Delaware River (DR), Delaware River Trail (DRT), Fairmount Park (FP), Franklin D. Roosevelt Park (FDR), Glenn Foerd Mansion (GF), John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum-Philadelphia (TI), Naval Business Center aka Navy Yard (NBC), Northeast Water Pollution Control Plant (NEWPCP), Pennypack Environmental Center (PEC), Pennypack on the Delaware (POD), Philadelphia Mid-Winter Bird Census 1/9 (Census), Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education (SCEE), Schuylkill River (SR), Wissahickon Creek (WC).

Winter began with low precipitation and mild daytime temperatures until 1/22-23 when a blizzard dropped 22 inches of snow. The effect on birds isn't immediately known, but the effect on birders and their reports was obvious. By the beginning of Feb., temperatures were back in the 50's and 60's, only to drop again into single digits days later, and so began see-sawing high and low temperatures through the end of the season.

The milestone 30th Philadelphia Mid-Winter Census on 1/9, organized by Keith Russell with many volunteers, tallied 107 species including 2 of this season's 3 county first records, an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** and **Thayer's Gull**, plus 3 species of *Hirundinidae*, 5 of the 7 *Parulidae* seen, and a Census first, a **Baltimore Oriole**.

Another first county record, a pair of **Barnacle Geese** at FDR 2/12-29 (JM, m.ob., ph.) attracted many birders until the geese moved to an inaccessible plot of grass at a highway interchange. **Tundra Swans** migrate over the city and are occasionally heard at night, but usually they fly up and down the DR, making the pair lingering on the impoundment at TI 2/25-29 unusual and attractive to a lot of birders (DF, FW, ph.).

A **Eurasian Wigeon** was on the small pond at FDR 12/28, where it visited last year, (AR, TF). The **Gadwall** x **Mallard** (hybrid) known as a Brewer's Duck represented a first record last winter and the same bird may have returned to TI this year. Photos from both years look identical, and arrival and departure dates are remarkably similar. Originally found 12/4/13 (GA), the Brewer's Duck stayed until 1/14/14. Found again in 2015 on 12/4 (AL) it stayed until 1/17/16 (AG).

The annual winter raft of diving ducks in a sheltered cove at NBC included 220 **Canvasbacks** 2/16, some of which drift across the DR into New Jersey coves making the daily count fluctuate even as the population remains constant (GA). Among the Canvasbacks were 123 **Ruddy Ducks** 2/20 (SJ, KJ), up to 6 **Greater Scaup** 1/7 (AR) and 20 **Lesser Scaup** 2/12 (AG). A single drake **Redhead** was seen at FDR only on 1/9 (AR, GA), but 2 drake Redheads joined the raft at NBC 2/13-18 (BH, m.ob., ph). Two **Long-tailed Ducks** were welcome visitors on the DR 1/9 (RH) and from the DRT 2/19 (AR). The Census total of 158 **Buffleheads** was a notable high count.

A late **Laughing Gull** was a good find 12/10 (GA), but an adult **Iceland Gull** (*kumlieni*) and a well-described adult **Thayer's Gull** on the Census were excellent finds at NBC (GA, AR, RH). This proactive Census team returned to NBC at dusk to chum for gulls as they came to the inner harbor for the night. All scopes were trained on distant gulls when a **Bald Eagle** put the flock into flight bringing the Thayer's Gull close enough to note its slender bill, white head with "limited blurry streaking around the sides of the lower neck", the white undersides of the primaries and while in flight "black concentrated more towards the outer webs of the outer primaries, and white on the inner webs".

In the northeast, the annual wintering **Lesser Black-backed Gull** known as "Shrimpy" returned for the 12th year 12/5 (FW). **Glaucous Gulls** were scarce compared to recent much colder winters, but one was seen on the DR 12/27 (TB) and possibly the same bird was at NBC 1/30 (MD). An unexpected visitor at TI was an adult **Forster's Tern** 2/25-27 (DF, RF, MM, m.ob). Not only are late Feb records for this tern rare on the mid-Atlantic coast, they are non-existent in eBird for the upper Delaware Bay and Pennsylvania.

Providing an unusual sight flying over TI were 4 **Horned Larks** 1/16 for the first record there in five years (HM). Efforts to find owls for the Census included an extensive search of the WC area that produced 28 of the 41 **Eastern Screech Owls** found on the Census (DBel). The elusive **Barred Owl** of the lower WC also was sighted on the Census (fide KR). In one of the poorest **Northern Saw-whet Owl** winter irruptions in history and with banding stations recording record low catches, a worker at the Lincoln Financial Field photographed one diminutive owl perched on a railing in the bleachers, the only Saw-whet reported (AC).

Expectations are high that **Common Ravens** will nest in Philly as they have in surrounding counties. As their southward expansion continues, reports of ravens came from several areas of the county, most notably the northeast section along the DR. Two ravens, possibly the pair that attempted to nest at the Tioga Marine Terminal in 2015, were photographed and seen numerous times throughout the season (FW, TF, RI). In the northwest section over Lemon Hill, a pair was sparing or pair bonding 12/17 (LW). Nearby, at SCEE, a pair was seen 1/9 (KJ, SM). Single reports of Common Ravens also came from 45th St. in West Philly 2/19 (TC) and TI 1/10.

Another first record for the county was provided by the **Ash-throated Flycatcher** found at Tacony Creek Park by a Census team,

but seen by only one birder the following rainy day (RI, MS, PB, TC, ph.). At the NEWTP, single **Tree** and **Barn Swallows** were found 12/19 (TF), feeding with the 130 **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** hunting the millions of midges that surround the fresh water aeration tanks (MS, MD, m.ob.).

At least 2 **Marsh Wrens**, often reported at TI, overwintered at two distinct areas (m.ob.), but they were silent and secretive for the Census. A single **Red-breasted Nuthatch** report came from the Pennypack Trail 1/9. The Census produced fewer half-hardy species than expected: only 3 **Hermit Thrushes**, 6 **Gray Catbirds**, 2 **Brown Thrashers** and 12 **Eastern Towhees**.

Low half-hardy numbers were a contrast to the seven *parulidae* seen this winter. An **Ovenbird** at Kaski Park pond on the University of Pennsylvania campus 12/9 represented one of six winter records in the past eight years. The female **Black-and-White Warbler** found at Lardner's Point Park on the Pennypack CBC 12/19 (TF, ph.) was still present 1/9, feeding with an unusually large flock of 80 **House Finches** (MD, JZ, ph). **Orange-crowned Warblers** have been regular winter visitors since 2009. Two were at the NEWPCP 1/30 (JM) and 2 were at FDR 1/9 (GA).

Three locations, TI, FDR and the Cumberland St. fields, held **Common Yellowthroats**, but none were reported after the Jan blizzard. Several **Palm Warblers** were present along the northern DR, with a group of 4 at the NEWPCP 1/30 (JM) and 3 in the fields along Pennypack St. 12/19 (PK, DMo). **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were relatively scarce, but, again, all those midges at the NEWPCP attracted a pair 1/9-30 (MD, JM) and the largest group of Yellow-rumps, totaling 5, were in the Army Corps fields near Ft. Mifflin (WS, AC). Two (or was it three?) **Wilson's Warblers** set a record. The first male Wilson's Warbler was photographed at TI 12/3 (DO). Weeks later, the Young Birders from Hawk Mountain saw a male at the impoundment edge at TI 1/16 (GV, m.ob.). Speculation was that this bird could be a male of the western subspecies *pileolata* (HM) and was it the same or a second individual? In northwest Philly, in the meadow near CW, another Wilson's Warbler was seen 12/19 (JS). It is interesting that just across the DR in New Jersey at Taylor Refuge, another male Wilson's Warbler was present 12/5-27.

Not reported in 30 years, a female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was found under the Girard Point Bridge 2/27 (TF). A flock of 1100 **Red-winged Blackbirds** near Ft. Mifflin led to the high count of 1542 blackbirds on the Census. A **Baltimore Oriole** visited a feeder in West Philly from 12/31 to at least 1/16 before the owner went out of town for three weeks and reports ceased (NS).

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Pike County

No report.

NEW COMPILER BEGINNING SPRING 2014: Michael Schall, 126 N. Chestnut St, Bath, PA 18014, (610) 737-5275, mdtjschall@yahoo.com

Potter County

No compiler.

Schuylkill County

Locations: Air Products Wildlife Sanctuary (APWS), Hawk Mountain Sanctuary – North Lookout (HM), Landingville Dam (LVD), Lebanon Reservoir (LR), Swatara State Park (SSP), Sweet Arrow Lake (SAL), Tamaqua Christmas Bird Count (TCBC), Tamaqua High School Area (THS), West Schuylkill Christmas Bird Count (WSCBC).

PENNSYLVANIA BIRDS

Throughout the season, we enjoyed warmer than normal temperatures with a couple short cold snaps. A major storm on 23 January dropped as much as 27 inches of snow. A cold wave in mid-February froze local lakes for a couple weeks, but open water re-appeared before the end of the month, especially at Landingville.

Some data for this narrative was gleaned from the three CBCs and the two WRSs conducted in the county. The WSCBC took place 12/20, the Hamburg Christmas Bird Count 12/27 (covering a small area on the county near Port Clinton), and the TCBC 12/30. Thanks to Dave Kruel, Laurie Goodrich, and Jonathan DeBalko, respectively, for heading those efforts. Thanks also go to Ian Gardner and Laurie Goodrich for conducting the WRSs. In addition to species sightings provided directly to me and posted to PABIRDS, lots of good data were also found on eBird. Everyone who posted sightings to eBird was included in the Observer list below.

With the exception of **Mallards**, a few **Mute Swans**, and **Canada Geese**, waterfowl species and numbers are always low, so any postings are notable. Most likely due to the mild temperatures that kept lakes open most of the winter, a number of species appeared much earlier than usual. SAL was particularly notable in Dec, attracting several species not typically seen in the winter or that are generally rare.

Snow Geese were not seen in Dec, but were spotted at several locations in the northern part of the county moving north in late Feb (DK, TB, JoD, FD). The first county record that anyone can remember, a **Ross's Goose** was at SAL 12/15-20 (AK, TB, BrJ, JaD, TN, DR, IG, BR, DD).

Wood Ducks arrived early, with 3 sightings around the county: 2/22 and 2/27 at LVD (DR), 2/23-24 at APWS (JoD, JD), and 2/25-27 at SSP (BR). A **Northern Pintail** was another early arrival, showing up at LVD 2/27 (DR). One also stayed around last Dec at SAL to be the first recorded during the WSCBCA count week (JD). A very early **Green-winged Teal** was at LVD 2/22 (DR). Also early were 2 **Ring-necked Ducks** seen in the southeastern part of the county 2/25. A winter rarity, a pair of **Lesser Scaups** were seen at SAL 12/29 (DD).

More common in early Apr, a **Long-tailed Duck** was found at SAL 12/28 (EH, DD). **Buffleheads**, usually absent during the winter months, were both late and early this season. They were seen in late Dec at LR (IG, AL) and SAL (JaD, SG, AK, JoD, BrJ, DR, SK). Four seen 12/20 were the first of their species for the WSCBC. They also appeared at LVD 2/22 (DR), which is earlier than usual. Very rare for the county, a **Common Goldeneye** was seen at SAL 12/19 (AK, DR, DD), making it the first of its species to be recorded during count week of the WSCBC. Other than one found in Dec last year, the previous Dec record for this bird was in 2005.

Hooded Mergansers were present into Dec, seen at SAL 12/28 (EH) and then arriving early at APWS 2/23-25 (JoD, JD). **Common Mergansers**, increasingly common in *Schuylkill*, were seen from mid-Dec through Feb (m.ob.). **Common Loons** were scarce compared to most years. Only one was seen in Dec, at HM 12/15 (KG); another was at LVD 2/22 (DB). Also early was a **Pied-billed Grebe**, found at LVD 2/18-27 (DR).

Turkey and **Black Vultures** usually leave the county for the Great Valley and Piedmont during mid-winter. Black Vultures usually begin leaving in late Dec, although there seems to be a later departure date in the eastern portion of the county. This year, however, both species were seen throughout the winter months (m.ob.). Unusually high numbers of **Northern Harriers** were seen in open fields, even though none were migrating past HM, where more commonly seen. One was near SAL 12/21 (JaD), and 2 were seen in Jan - one near Mabel 1/18 (IG, EG, AL) and one in Lewiston Valley 1/20 (DK). Additional singles were seen near SSP 2/14 (IG, EG, AL, JL), near Mabel 2/19 (DK), which may have been the one seen 1/18; and yet another near THS 2/22 (FD). **Merlins** were more common than normal with one spotted near Weishample on the WSCBC 12/20 (DR, DB). Other reports came from Eldred Twp. 2/12 (IG, EG, AL) and at LVD, where a single bird flew over 2/20 (DR) and a pair were seen 2/22 (DB).

An **American Coot** arrived very early, seen at LVD several times 2/13-22 (DR, DB). **Killdeer**, not usually seen during winter, were recorded in all three months. In Dec, they showed up for the WSCBC (DR, DB, BC) and in Jan one was spotted at LVD (JD) and another along Mountain Rd. (IG, EG, AL). More were seen 2/21-27, at SSP (BR), at LVD (DH, DR, DB, BJ), and at DL (DR).

A **Ring-billed Gull** migrated through late, seen at HMS 12/15 (Hawk Mountain Data). An unusually large number of reports were received in Feb for Ring-bills, which is very early. Several sightings

were made 2/11-25 at THS (FD), others were seen 2/21-22 at LVD (DH, DB), and yet another report came from SSP 2/28 (BR). The same was true for **Herring Gulls**, another uncommon bird not typically seen in the winter. One was reported at DL 12/25 (MC), 3 were near Pine Grove 2/14 (IG, EG, AL, JL), a single was spotted 2/20 and 2/27 at LVD (DR), and yet another single was at THS 2/15 (FD).

A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was reported for the WSCBC at Black Creek 12/20 (DK, TB) and another was found on New Year's Day at TSP (JD, JoD, DK). Usually not seen until mid to late Mar, an **Eastern Phoebe** was found near LVD 2/14 (BJ). Usually gone by mid-Sep, a **Great Crested Flycatcher** was heard at SAL 12/12 (DD).

The southern portion of the county falls in the chickadee hybrid zone. **Black-capped Chickadees** are the dominant species mixed with hybrids; however, during the last couple years, reports of **Carolina Chickadees** have been coming from the extreme southern edge of the county prior to the coldest part of the winter. This year, there were 6 reports of Carolinas (DR, DH, FD, IG). It appears the species is getting a toe-hold along the southern limits of *Schuylkill*. **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** usually arrive in early Apr, but were seen at SSP 1/13, 1/31, and 2/21 (BR) and at LVD 2/21 (DR). A wintering **Gray Catbird** was seen 1/15, 1/19, and 2/1 at SGL 227 (JD, JoD).

Usually not seen until mid-Mar, **Fox Sparrows** were noted all winter. One was found on the WSCBC 12/20 (BC) and another at APWS 12/28 (JoD). They continued into the new year, found on SGL 227 between 1/3-2/12 (TB, JD) and in Wayne Twp. 2/13 and 2/15 (AW). **Swamp Sparrows**, another sparrow normally not seen until early Apr, were also present all winter. They were found for the WSCBC at SSP 12/20 (BR, DM); and at that location also 12/25, 1/17 and 2/21 (BR). They were also seen at 3 locations on the TCBC (JD, VG, TN) 12/20 and at THS 2/15 (FD).

Four **Eastern Meadowlarks**, typically not arriving until mid to late Mar, were found on Mountain Rd. just east of SAL 1/20. Three **Red-billed Crossbills** were seen at HMS 12/10 (Hawk Mountain Data). The county had a number of **Pine Siskins**, beginning with 25 seen over a nine-day span in early Dec at HM (Hawk Mountain Data). A flock of 15 was seen in South Manheim Twp. 2/17 (DR), another flock of 10 near LVD (BJ), and smaller numbers on Coal Mt. 2/13 and 2/21 (LG).

Observers: **Dave Rieger, 401 Stony Mountain Road, Auburn, PA 17922, d.m.rieger@gmail.com**. Barbara Angstadt, Matthew Aungst, Dan Brennan, Jamie Buehl, Thomas Buehl Jr, Bruce Carl, Milton Collins, John DeBalko (JoD), Jonathan DeBalko (JD), Amy Dewald, Frank Dickman, Denise Donmoyer, Jamie Drake (JaD), Lindsey Duval, Jane Fennelly, Mathew Frederick, Marcina Frost, Ian Gardner, Vernon Gauthier, Scott Godshall, Laurie Goodrich, Elora Grahame, Eric Hartshaw, Daniel Hinnebusch, Jeff Hopkins, Bruce Johnson (BrJ), Tonia Jordan, Barb Jucker, Stephan Karduff, Andy Keister, Dave Kruel, Nancy Kruel, Alex Lamoreaux, Mark Leeson, Josh Lefever, Michelle McManus, Dave McNaughton, Ted Nichols III, Carl Oppert, Rich Rehrig, Barb Ritzheimer, Lynn Roman, Beth Roulin, John Slotterback, Harvey Smith, Helene Sparvero, Karen Spencer, Frances Stahl, Jennifer Stauffer, Amy Weidensaul, Scott Weidensaul, Audrey Wells (AuW) Mary Woolford (MaW).

Snyder County

An immature **Golden Eagle** seen along Silver Creek Rd. provided quite a rare find for *Snyder* 2/7 (JK and TW). A **Rough-legged Hawk** found along Rt. 35 west of Mount Pleasant Mills 2/14 (CK) was the only one reported. **Bald Eagles** were commonly seen along the river throughout the winter, especially south of Selinsgrove. An uncommon visitor, or perhaps just under-reported, 2 **Black Vultures**, were seen along Kratzerville Rd. 1/31 (JK and TW). An early **Common Grackle** was seen along Rt. 522 west of Selinsgrove 2/7 (JW).

Observers: **Jason Weller**, Chad Kauffman, Jon Kauffman, Torri Withrow.

Somerset County

Locations: Berlin Area (BA), Payne Property (PP), Somerset Lake (SL), Quemahoning Reservoir (QR).

December and the first two thirds of January were much warmer than normal. The January 23 snowstorm brought about 36 inches to the county, which was fairly quickly cleaned up. Seasonable weather followed, with some snow accumulations and frozen water through February. Waterfowl were plentiful and persisted late with uncommon geese making a showing. Winter invaders were rather sparse with some notable no-shows.

Representing a notable high count, 16 **Greater White-fronted Geese** were in BA 2/1 (JC) and 4 more were found slightly to the north in Stoneycreek Twp. 2/20 (AM). **Snow Geese** were represented by one blue and one white morph near Kingwood 12/23 (AM), one white morph at QR 1/6 (LG), and 11 blue and 7 white in Stoneycreek Twp. 2/7 (AM). A **Ross's Goose** was in Somerset Twp. 2/8 (AM). Three of 10 **Canada Geese** at SL 1/4 were reported as small sub-species—some of these are easily confused with **Cackling Geese** (AM).

A **Mute Swan** near Jennerstown 1/2 (JP) is probably the last one in the county. While large numbers are certainly undesirable, perhaps it is time to remove the unlimited hunting season on them as pests. Especially with **Trumpeter Swans** now showing up, the chance of mistaken identity kills may outweigh Mute Swan control efforts. A nice count of 112 **Tundra Swans** was made at QR 12/2 (LG).

Unusual for the date were 2 **Wood Ducks** on the Stoneycreek R. near Holsopple 1/29 (LG). When most water freezes, the tailwaters at Youghiogheny Dam usually attracts waterfowl, as evidenced by the 404 **Mallards** present 1/21 (AM). Uncommon in winter, 2 **Green-winged Teal** were in Milford Twp. 2/5 (AM).

Good counts of 20 all-female **Canvasbacks** 1/4 and 17 **Redheads** 12/1 were made at SL (AM). **Scoters** are always nice; a young male **Surf Scoter** 12/23 (JP) and a **White-winged Scoter** 12/1 (AM) were at SL. **Common Goldeneyes** are mostly found in winter in the county, so one at QR and one at Stoneycreek Lake 1/16 were not unexpected (CaP, JP).

Double-crested Cormorants at QR 1/16 (CaP, JP) and 1/23 (LG) were unusual for Jan. Four **Black Vultures** near Wellersburg 1/12 (JC) in the extreme southeastern portion of the county were the first found in mid-winter. This is another example of the species spread north and to higher elevations. Winter **Bald Eagle** reports included one at SL 12/26 (SB), 2 adults at QR 1/13 (LG), and one adult and one immature near Confluence 2/11 (AM). Notable by their absence, Rough-legged Hawks were unreported.

A single **American Coot** was at Indian Lake 1/16 (CaP, JP). Six **Bonaparte's Gulls** were at SL 12/26 (AM). A **Short-eared Owl** was at an old strip mine near New Centerville 12/19 (AM) and another was at the wetlands at BC 2/19 (JP). **Belted Kingfisher** was recorded at QR 1/3 (LG) and 1/16 (CaP, JP). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** in Paint Twp. 1/13 (KM) was a good winter find. Woodpeckers may have been less common at feeders this winter due to the Emerald Ash Borer infestations (AM, JP). A good find was provided by a **Northern Shrike** near Boswell 2/7 (SP), which unfortunately could not be relocated the following day.

A **Brown Creeper** 1/3 (LG), 5 **Eastern Bluebirds** 1/7 (PL), and 28 **Cedar Waxwings** 1/3, all near QR demonstrating that it is a good area to search for half-hardy species. A group of 10 **Snow Buntings** near Hooversville 1/24 and a couple more at Flight 93 Memorial 1/31 were found by JK and TK during winter raptor surveys.

Two **Eastern Towhees**, sparse in winter, were in Paint Twp. 1/13 (KM). A **Swamp Sparrow** was at PP feeders 2/9 through the period (JP). **White-throated Sparrow** on 1/17 (LG) and **White-crowned Sparrow** on 1/20 (PL) near QR are also uncommon in winter. **Rusty Blackbirds** were in BA, with 20 counted 1/26 (JC) and 11 on 2/19 (JP). **Pine Siskins** were the only winter finch widely reported, with birds at Laurel Mountain (SC) and QR (LG) 1/1, 15 at Kimberly Run Natural Area (NB), and throughout the period at PP (JP).

Observers: **Jeff Payne 9755 Glades Pike, Berlin PA 15530 (814) 267-5718**, Scott Bastian (SB), Nick Bliss (NB), John Coughenour (JC), Linda Greble (LG), Janet Kuehl (JK), Tom Kuehl (TK), Paul Lehman (PL), Anthony Marich (AM), Kim Matthews (KM), Jim Moses (JM), Meg Moses (MM), Carolyn Payne (CaP), Chris Payne (CP), Sharon Petrocelli (SP).

Sullivan County

Locations: Camp Brule (CB), Cherry Township (CT), Dutch Mtn (DM), Eagles Mere Lake (EML), Hunters Lake (HL), Lincoln Falls (LF), SGL

The winter season featured mostly mild temperatures with little snow accumulation. Open water remained through most of December. The one exception was the polar vortex that descended across the state over President's Day weekend bringing bitter temperatures as low as -8F. As usual, reports were minimal with fewer than 25 total checklists in eBird for the entire season. No rarities were uncovered and no large invasions occurred.

Hooded Mergansers were seen on both EML and HL 12/20 (WE). A lone male **Common Merganser** was on the Loyalsock Cr. near Hillsgrove 2/6. **Ruffed Grouse** appeared on multiple reports during Feb. A **Common Loon** was seen at EML 12/20 (WE). One of the most unusual sightings was a **Double-crested Cormorant** on EML 12/20 (WE).

A **Red-shouldered Hawk** seen 2/6 at DM and a **Rough-legged Hawk** near LF 2/14 (DH) both represented good finds. The 15 **Red-tail Hawks** seen 2/6-7 were indicative of the lack of snow cover. A **Great Horned Owl** called several times on DM 2/7.

Red-bellied Woodpecker is still not common here but has become consistent. There were 3 reports - from CT 2/7, Dushore 2/12 (AN), and LF 2/14 (DH). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was photographed at a feeder near Forksville 2/19 (LG). Lone **American Kestrels** were seen in CT 2/6 and near LF 2/14 (DH). Large flocks of **American Crows** in agricultural fields in CT 2/6-7 were typical.

A large flock of about 30 **Black-capped Chickadees** was observed in a stand of old growth Eastern Hemlock in SGL66 on 2/7 (SNL). The flock was packed tightly together with as many as 17 in binocular view at once and actively feeding. The flock remained mostly on the ground or very low to the ground picking through leaf litter, rotted logs and on downed branches. At least two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** visited my feeding station on DM on multiple dates. **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were present near LF (DH) and DM 2/14. Four **Cedar Waxwings** were reported at CB 2/14 (DH).

American Tree Sparrows appeared on several reports with a high of 12 seen in Dushore 2/14 (AN). A flock of close to 50 **Red-winged Blackbirds** was seen along Hunsinger Rd., CT 2/6. **Pine Siskins** first appeared at a feeding station in Nordmont 1/16 and continued on and off for the remainder of the season (RPP).

Observers: **Rob Megraw**, Anonymous, Wes Egli, Lucy Goshow, Deuane Hoffman, Roy & Penny Peterman (RPP)

Susquehanna County

During the three months of Winter 2015-16, the weather was the least winter-like in recent memory. In this northern tier county, it is not unusual to have no open water and continuous snow cover through the winter months. This year ponds and lakes remained open well into December, and our fifteen miles of the Susquehanna River remained virtually ice-free for the entire period. Besides the reporting of our local cadre of active birders, the season's numbers include one CBC, three WRS's, and good participation in the GBBC. A total of sixty-six species were reported on eBird.

Two **Snow Geese** sightings bracketed the season nicely, with a flyover of an estimated 400 birds on Mill Rd. 12/28 (EM) and 280 reported over Bruce and Nancy's property 2/26 (BMN). Despite open waters, only 7 species of ducks were reported, following a poor fall showing of migrating waterfowl.

Fourteen eBird reports of **Wild Turkeys** suggests their numbers are growing in this rural county. The largest flock reported was 82 birds at Smiley Hollow 1/20 (EB). **Ring-necked Pheasants** benefited from the mild weather and were seen across the county by various reporters in each of the three months. Sixteen **Ruffed Grouse** startled hikers at various *Susquehanna* locations through the winter season. Either their numbers were up, birds were more active in mild weather, or birders were out more. A very late **Great Blue Heron** was seen at Schooley Pond 1/6 (JS).

In contrast to last winter, **Rough-legged Hawks** were more difficult to locate this year. A total of 4 were reported in late Jan and Feb. **Red-shouldered Hawks** are not often seen during winter. This year, one was seen at Williams Pond 1/22 (NW), another near Wrighter Lake 2/15 (PH), and a third on a WRS (RM). The total of 12 reports of **Bald Eagles** was more than usual during typical winters, and likely due to open waters. The nest near Red Rock was found to be occupied by 2

adults 2/27 (DA). It proved more difficult to locate **Short-eared Owls** in the county's only known location, with only 3 sightings by two observers in Jan and Feb (JS, DA).

Open water kept **Belted Kingfishers** present and active with 6 eBird sightings. A **Northern Shrike** was observed repeatedly during the first two weeks of Dec at Potter Hill Farm (DS). **Common Raven** status is clearly changing in our county as they become more and more common. There were 5 reported in Dec, 5 in Jan, and 8 in Feb.

A **Brown Thrasher** was discovered and photographed in a yard just south of New Milford, feeding regularly at a suet feeder 1/31-2/14 (NVC). Another mild weather visitor was a single **Red-winged Blackbird** that spent the winter in a yard near Elk Lake (CD) and a second that visited feeders in New Milford for the first half of Jan, long enough to be named and blogged about (NVC). Two **Common Redpolls** were seen near Wrighter Lake 2/15 (PH). While not as numerous as last year, **Pine Siskins** visited feeders across the county with a total of 22 reports. The single highest count of the species this season was of 40 individuals reported 2/14 (LT).

Observers: **Evan Mann**, 8313 Laurel Lake Road, Montrose, PA 18801, (570) 663-2621, evanm@frontier.com, David Andre, Edmund Burdick, Charles Denkenberger, Patricia Huenemoerder, Bruce McNaught, Ron Milliken, Douglas Sheldon, Jerry Skinner, Linda Truman, Nancy VanCott, Nancy Wottrich.

Tioga County

No compiler.

Union County

No compiler.

Venango County

Locations: Allegheny River (AR), Buttermilk Hill Nature Sanctuary (BHNS), Kahle Lake (KL), Oil Creek State Park, (OCSP), Two Mile Run Park (TMRP), Wyattville Pond (WP).

It was a fairly mild winter, with the small lakes only freezing for a short time. Ice on the Allegheny River was minimal. However, this did not help much as waterfowl numbers were low and other winter birds sparse. There were 73 total species for the season.

With 19 species of waterfowl, variety was decent, but numbers were low. Highlights include: **Snow Goose** 2/3-2/9 at WP, **Gadwall** 2/27, **American Wigeon** 2/28, **American Black Duck** with a high count of 6 on AR 1/25, **Northern Pintail** 2/25-26, **Green-winged Teal** 1/31-2/28, **Redhead** on AR 1/25-2/28, **Surf Scoter** at KL 12/1-3 (GE), and **Black Scoter** at KL 12/1-3 (JS, KG). **Common Goldeneye** numbers were down, with a high count of 30-40 on AR. The high count of **Common Merganser** was 75 on AR 1/25. **Common Loons** were observed 12/1-17, **Pied-billed Grebe** 12/6, and **Horned Grebe** 12/2 and 2/28.

The only noteworthy raptor sightings were of **Northern Harriers** 12/6 and 1/31, and **Red-shouldered Hawks** 1/3 and 2/28. The first **Killdeer** was noted 2/11. **Ring-billed Gulls** were seen sporadically on AR 1/3-2/29 (AR). **Common Ravens** numbers continue to increase.

Our only **Winter Wren** sighting was on the Pleasantville CBC 1/3. **Carolina Wren** numbers were low and **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were scarce. The first **Eastern Bluebird** was seen 1/31 (BHNS). A **Northern Mockingbird**, always hard to find in *Venango*, especially in winter, was seen near Cranberry 12/20 (MW). From the fall, **Cedar Waxwings** were last seen 12/16, then the first of year 2/16.

American Tree Sparrows were present all season, but in low numbers. **Song Sparrows** have become very scarce. **White-throated Sparrows** were in low numbers. **Red-winged Blackbirds** were present to 12/2, then returned 2/26. **Common Grackles** were present until 12/6, returning 2/20. **Brown-headed Cowbirds** remained until 12/2, returning 1/28. Winter finches were in very low numbers. Highlights include **Purple Finch** through 12/5, and from 2/4 on. One **Common Redpoll** briefly visited a feeder at BHNS 2/2 (JS, KG). A few **Pine Siskins** were found 1/30-2/29.

Observers: **Gary Edwards**, 224 Meadow Rd, Apt 9, Seneca, PA 16346, (814) 676-3011, gedwards@csonline.net; **Russ States**, 111 E.

4th St., Oil City, PA 16301, (814) 676-6320, pabirder@verizon.net, Nancy Baker, Herb Butcher, Mary Edwards, Kathie Goodblood, Jeff Hall, Meg Kolodick, Nick Kolodick, Michael Leahy, Jerry Stanley, Mike Weible, Jim Wilson.

Warren County

No compiler.

Washington County

Locations: AMD Pond on Hahn Road (AMD), Canonsburg Lake (CL), Charleroi Locks and Dam (CLD), Cross Creek County Park (CC), New Eagle (NE), Peters Township (PET), Robinson Township (RBT), Washington Reservoir #4 (R4).

By the end of the first week of February it was apparent that an unprecedented statewide invasion of **Greater White-fronted Geese** was underway. *Washington* was on the leading edge of this event, when 17 white-fronts, representing the fifth record for the county, were found at a farm pond on Ciaffoni Rd. outside of Muse 2/4 (BS). Close inspection and photos of these birds (GM) revealed them to be of the interior North America population *frontalis*. Conventional wisdom generally holds that most white-fronts that appear in Pennsylvania are of the Greenland population *flavirostris*, but this, if true at all, probably only holds in the southeast. Yet even in that region the "conventional wisdom" about Pennsylvania's white-fronted geese probably needs to be revisited. These 17 birds remained at Ciaffoni Rd. until at least 2/9. On 2/11 a flock of 17 white-fronts was reported at AMD (MJ), and were confirmed to be the same 17 birds by close photos of a distinctive individual within the flock that were made at both locations (GM). The flock persisted in the area of AMD to 2/18 (PB) and eventually relocated again back to Ciaffoni Rd., where they were last seen 2/27. Another 3 Greater White-fronted Geese, the sixth occurrence for the county, were found at the Chippewa Golf Course in Bentleyville 2/6-7 (ph. JM). **Snow Geese** appeared during this event as well: 3 were at the Chippewa Golf Course 2/5, two white and one blue (ph. GM). These were preceded by one at R4 on 1/14 (RI), an early harbinger of the goose invasion to come. Quite remarkable was a **Ross's Goose**, the second for *Washington*, at Cherry Valley Res. 1/3 (ph. BS). This bird did not become known to the birding community until its photo appeared in the *Washington Observer* about a week later (RI), by which time it had apparently departed.

A **Mute Swan** enjoyed the open water at Cherry Valley Res. 12/6-1/1 (MJ, RI), and another was periodically seen in a pond near CC 12/20-2/27 (ST, et al.). This species (thankfully) is rare in *Washington*. Southbound **Tundra Swans** were still moving in Dec: overhead birds included 2 over Parkview Rd. 12/16 (RI) and 40 over PET 12/28 (GG). Three flew over AMD on the odd date of 1/14 (RI), but definitely northbound was a Leap Day flock over PET 2/29 (GG).

A **Wood Duck** was at Washington Cemetery in the dead of winter 1/24 (MJ). As was the case elsewhere in sw. Pennsylvania, it was a good season for **Gadwall**, with reports from Timber Lake 12/21-1/3 (MV, et al.), R4 on 1/7 (RI), NE 2/3 (RI), and AMD 2/17 (RT). Three reports of **American Wigeon** at AMD 1/12-2/13 (GG, et al.) probably all referred to the same bird, and were the only reports for this species. **American Black Ducks** were sighted in three different locations though 2/7 (m.ob.). Top count of **Mallards** at AMD was 282 on 2/11 (MV). A **Northern Pintail** was at AMD 1/19-27 (MJ) and one was in Cecil Twp. 2/26 (CB). The female Northern Pintail that wintered annually at Washington Cemetery has not been seen since the winter of 2013-14. It was first recorded there in 2003 but unfortunately it seems the bird may be no more. A late **Green-winged Teal** was at Parkview Rd. 12/20 (ST).

A lingering **Canvasback** was seen at the Southpoint Golf Course 12/21 (MV); the only birds reported on the other side of the season were on the Monongahela R. at NE 2/3 and at CLD 2/15 (both RI). The latter was accompanied by the only 2 **Redheads** of the season (RI). Several reports of **Ring-necked Duck** were widely spread across the entire season, mostly at R4 (RI), including 7 there on the unusual date of 1/14 (RI). Two **Greater Scaup**, unusual in *Washington*, were at NE 2/3-15 (RI). Up to 5 **Common Mergansers** were noted frequently at NE 1/15-2/15 (RI). Singles were at CL 2/22 (GG) and at Boone Res. 2/26 (GG). A few mid-winter **Ruddy Ducks** were noted at Peters Lake and at AMD 1/19 (MJ).

A **Common Loon** rested on R4 12/2-6, along with up to 3 **Horned Grebes** on the same dates (RI); both species are somewhat difficult to come by in *Washington*. A **Bald Eagle** was noted at CL beginning 1/2 (m.ob.) and was also reported on the Monongahela R. 12/21 (MJ) and at Bentleyville 2/7 (RI). A **Northern Harrier** was noted by goose chasers at Ciaffoni Rd. 2/6-24 (JM, et al.). Otherwise the only reports were from traditional wintering grounds in RBT (m.ob.). An **American Coot**, presumably not the injured one from two winters ago that spent that season at the same location, settled on Timber Lake 1/8-2/25 (GG).

A flock of 60 **Ring-billed Gulls** over PET 1/12 (GG) made for a nice addition to a yard list. Otherwise gulls were reported only from CLD, where up to 5 **Herring Gulls** were present in early Feb, as was a **Glaucous Gull** 2/3 (RI), which represented the second county record. A few **Short-eared Owls** wintered again at RBT beginning 1/4 (JM). As is the case most years, a **Merlin** wintered at Washington Cemetery (LC, SG). Goose chasers also turned up another Merlin at Ciaffoni Rd. 2/8 (FK, AK). **Common Ravens** were again all over the place, with 10 sightings from seven locations reported to eBird (m.ob.).

A few **Horned Larks** were noted on Parkview Rd. 12/20-2/27 (ST, et al.) but no other field birds were seen there or anywhere else this season. A trip to the Meadowcroft Museum near Avella 12/20 yielded **Winter Wren**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, and **Fox Sparrow** (ST). Wintering Fox Sparrows were noted at three other locations as well. An **Eastern Meadowlark** was alongside the white-fronted geese at Ciaffoni Road 2/24-27 (JM). Ten **Rusty Blackbirds** were at Greencove Wetlands 12/10 (MH, RH) and 3 appeared with the first wave of **Red-winged Blackbirds** at CL 2/23 (MV). Varying numbers of **Purple Finches** were reported at a PET feeder in Jan and Feb (GG).

Observers: **Geoff Malosh, 450 Amherst Avenue, Moon Township, PA 15108-2654, (412) 735-3128, pomarine@earthlink.net**, Cathy Brown, Paul Brown, Lauren Conkle, Gigi Gerben, Sayre Greenfield, Margaret Higbee, Roger Higbee, Pat Hutchinson, Roy Ickes, Matthew Juszkowich, Fred Kachmarik, Alyssa Karmann, Jeff McDonald, Aidan Place, Beth Signorini, Shannon Thompson, Ryan Tomazin, Mark Vass.

Wayne County

Locations: Prompton State Park (PSP), Wayne County Park (WCP).

Seasonal waterfowl lacked variety this quarter. Only one winter migrant duck species was recorded, 12 **Buffleheads** at Lake Lacawac 12/28 (TG). Multiple sightings of year-round **Common Mergansers** continued through the season along the Delaware R. (AC, RK), Lackawaxen R. (CF), and at PSP (RJ). One **Hooded Merganser** was reported near Williams Pond 12/19 (CF).

A WRS produced a significant increase in raptor counts with 9 species and 89 individuals, compared to last year's totals of 2 species and 10 individuals. Notable were 7 **Black Vultures**, 2 **Turkey Vultures**, 3 **Northern Harriers**, 20 **Bald Eagles**, and one **Great Horned Owl** 2/7 (DA, SK). Not seen during the WRS was **Rough-legged Hawk**; however, one was spotted two weeks prior near WCP 1/24 (CF).

Passerine highlights include 2 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** at Lacawac Sanctuary 12/25 (MC) and 2 **Yellow-rumped Warblers** at PSP 2/15 (JD). A great find during the winter, 3 **Snow Buntings** were discovered on a farm near Aldenville 1/14 (CF).

The season's first reported **American Tree Sparrow** was at a private residence north of Honesdale 12/13 (CF). This common winter visitor was found also at multiple other locations, with the largest flock being 7 near WCP 12/19 (CF). Small numbers of **Pine Siskins** were seen primarily at private residences.

Observers: **Josh Jones, unclechu76@gmail.com**, Dan Altif, Anthony Ciancimino, Michelle Cunningham, Jim Dunn, Chris Fischer, Timothy Grover, Ryan Johnson, Rick Keyser, Stephen Kloiber.

Westmoreland County

Locations: Beaver Run Reservoir – Rt. 380 Overlook (BRR-380), Beaver Run Reservoir – Westmoreland Heritage Bike Trail (BRR-WHT), Ethel Springs Reservoir (ESR, also more commonly known as Derry Lake), Kuehl Property – Murrysville (KP), Keystone State Park (KSP), Latrobe Reservoir (LR, also known as Trout Run Reservoir), Mammoth Park Lake (MPL), New Stanton (NS), Powdermill Nature Reserve(PNR),

St. Vincent Lake/Wetland (SVW).

Westmoreland participated in the season's **Greater White-fronted Goose** irruption into Pennsylvania. An abundance of **American Robins** during the season along with several sightings of other migrating species seem to be a result of the warm winter.

One Greater White-fronted Goose was reported at SVW 1/1 (HP). The high count was of 25 at the BRR-380 on 2/2 (MJS) and 9 were there 2/7(PF). Four were reported at SVW 2/6 (CK/SG). The final report of Greater White-fronted Goose was of 3 at MPL 2/28 (DM).

Two **Snow Geese** were at MPL 1/17 (MJ). The high-count of **Canada Geese** was 406, at SVW 1/1 (HP). Thirty **Tundra Swans** were at Sewickley Creek Wetlands (JP) 12/1 and 7 at ESR 12/2 (CK).

While there were puddle duck reports for **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, **American Black Duck**, **Northern Pintail**, and **Northern Shoveler**, only Black Ducks provided any high-count observations - 31 at LR 1/1 (HP), 35 again at LR 1/3 (MJ), and 30 at LD 1/24 (SG). Unusual during the winter season, one **Blue-winged Teal** was photographed on the water at Twin Lakes Park by Melissa Easter 1/24, and observed again 1/30 (MJ), along with one **Green-winged Teal**. Two Green-winged Teal were reported at BRR-380 on 2/21 (SG).

Diving ducks were also sparse. **Ring-necked Duck**, **Greater Scaup** and **Lesser Scaup** were reported in low numbers. A significant count for **Redhead**, 45 were at BRR-380 on 2/21 (SG). A modest raft of waterfall at ESL 12/2 included 2 **Ring-necked Ducks**, 11 **Buffleheads**, 6 **Hooded Mergansers**, and 3 **Ruddy Ducks** (CK).

As usual there were numerous reports for Hooded Merganser at the Beaver Run Reservoir. High counts, though not unprecedented, for **Common Mergansers** included 49 at BRR-380 on 12/27 (DM), 60 on 1/25 LD (KB), and 70 at the Bush Run Recreation Area of the Loyalhanna Dam complex 2/6 (CK). The only report for **Red-breasted Merganser** was of one at BRR-380 12/27 (DM).

Stocked by a local hunt club, **Ring-necked Pheasant** calls were heard from the Kuehl Property 12/13-14 (TK). Quite a large flock, 60 **Wild Turkeys** strolled through the Jackson's yard near New Alexandria 2/24 (KJ).

There was just one **Common Loon** reported, at BRR-380 on 12/27 (DM). There were scattered reports for **Pied-billed Grebe**, but just one of **Horned Grebe**, seen at ESL 1/17 (SG). One **Double-crested Cormorant** was at SVL 12/2 (CK) and there were reports of one at BRR-380 on 1/6 (PF) and 1/17 (SG).

At least one **Black Vulture** was recorded on the Rector CBC 1/3 (AC). Three Black Vultures were tallied on the 1/31 running of the Ligonier Valley WRS route (JK, TK, KB). As with Black Vultures, **Turkey Vultures** are routinely reported in the Ligonier Valley during winter. A high count of 53 was tallied for a roost on the Rector CBC 1/3 (DB) and 23 were noted in the Wilpen area 2/13 (DM).

Just another sign of the expansion of the species, there were many wide-spread sighting of **Bald Eagle** during the season. On 12/20 one adult **Bald Eagle** followed a west-bound flock of 12 **Mallards** on Loyalhanna Cr. near the Kingston Dam (JK, TK). In the early afternoon of 12/27, tallied on the Bushy Run Christmas Count, one adult Bald Eagle flew over the Kuehl Property, which is around 2 miles south of the Beaver Run Reservoir, a long-time nesting site. During a WRS, one Bald Eagle was seen perched in tree at the edge of the lake at KSP 1/17 (JK, TK, KB). The Loyalhanna Dam area provided high counts of Bald Eagles, including 15 reported there 1/3 (MVT). Just a few miles from that area, a kettle of 15 Bald Eagles was observed from the Westmoreland Heritage Trail just south of Saltsburg 2/28 (JK, TK). Like numbers of Bald Eagles were observed from the bridge over Loyalhanna Cr. just below the dam, with 10 there 2/28 (SG).

A **Northern Harrier** was observed in the Blairsville area during a WRS Route 1/17 (JK, TK, KB). A male Northern Harrier was observed by Georgia Shalek for several days through 1/21 near her Scottsdale home.

There were several reports for accipiters during the season; one **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was reported during a stop at ESR 12/2 (CK), and Karen Jackson reported a Sharp-shinned Hawk hawking her feeders in New Alexandria 2/13 and 2/15. A Sharp-shin captured a **Dark-eyed Junco** at a Ligonier-area feeder 2/11(AM). Attracted to feeder birds, a **Cooper's Hawk** was reported at a home in Delmont 2/18 (KB). There were several sighting of Coops scoping the feeders at the Kuehl Property during the season and one cruised through the city of Jeannette 12/31 (TK).

Two **Red-shoulder Hawks** were reported at BRR-WHT 1/31 (KB). Answering any doubt that **Red-tailed Hawks** are plentiful in

Westmoreland in the winter, a record number of 42 was tallied in 5-hour running of the Slickville WRS route 2/6 (JK, TK, KB). Photos from a wildlife webcam at a roadkill deer dump in the Beaver Run area by Bill Powers of PixContoller provided photos of Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle and a **Rough-legged Hawk** 2/15-20. The only other Rough-legged Hawk was at LD 12/29 (MVT).

Representing a late record, a **Virginia Rail** was reported at the Little Sewickley Creek Wetland 12/12 (JP). Routinely found on the always open waters at ESL during winter, 3 **American Coots** were there 12/2 (CK) and the high-count of 5 coots also came from ESL 1/17(SG).

Killdeer were present during the season as 2 were tallied on the Bushy Run CBC 12/27. Four Killdeer were reported at BRR-380 on 1/16 (PF), providing the high-count for the season. One was in New Stanton 1/7 and again 2/23 (MF). Representing an early report, although not unprecedented, the peent call of an **American Woodcock** was heard from the Kuehl Property on the warm evening of 2/23 (TK). No significant reports of gulls were made. Two **Ring-billed Gulls** were at BRR 2/8 (MVT) and 2 at ESL 1/17 (SG).

One **Eastern Screech Owl** was tallied in the Ligonier area for the Rector CBC 1/3 (AC). The only owls recorded for the Bushy Run CBC 12/27 were one **Eastern Screech Owl** at the wetland at the Murrsville Municipal Park and one **Great Horned Owl** at the Walter's Reserve (TK, JK). One **Barred Owl** called during a daylight walk of the Blair Brother's Railroad Grade 2/23 (RN). During Jan and into Feb, calls of Barred Owls were heard almost nightly north of Ligonier (AM). One Barred Owl called at KSP during the morning 1/3 KP (TK). The only **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was found near PNR during the Rector CBC 1/3 by Bob Mulvihill, and later relocated at that same location (MW, DY).

Routinely tallied on the Rector Christmas Bird Count, one **Red-headed Woodpecker** was reported at Rolling Rock in Ligonier 1/3 (AC). Among a number of reports for this species, a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was included among feeder birds at the Jackson's New Alexandria home 2/13 and 2/15 (KJ).

A **Merlin** provided a highlight for the Rector CBC 1/3 (DB). Spotted by KB during a WRS, a Merlin was perched in a road-side tree on the grounds of Torrance State Hospital 1/17 (KB, TK, JK). At the Allegheny R. border with *Allegheny*, a **Peregrine Falcon** was observed at the Tarentum Bridge 2/8 (Scott Kinzey).

Low elevation sightings of **Common Raven** continue, including 3 flying over Rt. 30 near Westmoreland Mall in Greensburg 12/11 and 2 on a cell tower in Jeannette 1/8 (TK). Quite a gathering, 7 ravens were reported in New Stanton 2/2 (MF). Twenty-three **Horned Larks** were reported near Wilpen 2/13 (DM).

A **Winter Wren** was found near Mamont 12/4 (PF) and one was reported on the BRR-WHT 1/27 (KB). Two **Brown Creepers** visited a feeder in New Alexandria 2/15 (KJ). Perhaps another indication of the mild season, a **Hermit Thrush** was photographed at Burrell Lake Park in Lower Burrell by Susan Leipertz 2/16. One **Hermit Thrush** was tallied for the Rector CBC 1/3 (AC).

A few **Eastern Towhees** apparently over-wintered. Among several reports was a feeder-photo of a male at a home in Murrsville 1/20 (MJS). From Ligonier area feeders, there were eBird reports of one **Field Sparrow** photographed 2/11 and 2 more 2/13 (AM). The only report for the season, a **Fox Sparrow** was in the Rector area 1/3 (AC). Often found only in the farmland areas around Crabtree, 16 **White-crowned Sparrows** were reported at a home in Scottsdale 1/16 (GS).

Observations on 12/12, 1/30, and 2/14 suggest that at least one **Rusty Blackbird** over-wintered at the Little Sewickley Creek Wetlands outside of Herminie (JP). Five were reported at SVW 2/6 (SG). Perhaps another sign of a warm winter, a **Common Grackle** was reported in Scottsdale 1/22 (GS), possibly an over-wintering bird. Two grackles at feeders in Delmont 2/21 were likely early migrants (KB). Two **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were reported just east of New Alexandria 1/1 (HP). Another feeder bird, one **Purple Finch** was reported 2/5 (KB). Tallied for the Bushy Run CBC were 4 **Purple Finches** in the Beaver Run Reservoir area 12/27 (DM). Two female Purple Finches were regular feeder visitors during Feb at KSP (JK). Two **Pine Siskin** were reported at PNR 1/3 (MW, DY).

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Observations from a county-wide blitz 1/1 by Margaret and Roger Higbee, and Denny Lauffer are credited to the "Higbee Party" (HP).

Wyoming County

Locations: Gamelands 57 (SGL), Jayne's Bend, Lake Carey (LC), Oxbow Lake (OL), Sordoni's Farm (SF), Riverside Park (RP), Lazybrook Park (LP), Phelps Swamp (PS), Scottsville Road (SR), Vosburgh Neck (VN).

Once again, we experienced warm weather, minimal snow, and open water throughout the winter. And, once again, *Wyoming's* winter bird records were, for the most part, quite similar to those of recent years: small numbers of the usual migrants, some passing through later in the season; late departures of some local breeders; the occasional record of a local breeder that, for some reason, either did not leave or left quite late. Because of the "great" weather, we expected a great day on the Tunkhannock CBC, but got a particularly usual one, with a species count at just about the 20-year average and the count of individuals one of the lowest in the last 20 years.

Five **Tundra Swans** were recorded at LC 12/5 (AT). Records of the Tunkhannock CBC 12/26 include 3 **Gadwalls**, one **American Wigeon**, 7 **Green-winged Teal**, 8 **Lesser Scaup**, 13 **Buffleheads**, and 4 **Ruddy Ducks**. Buffleheads were recorded on 2 other occasions - one at LC 12/20 (MC) and 2 on the river at Tunkhannock 2/15 (DH). None of these species is a confirmed breeder in *Wyoming*, so were just passing through. One other waterfowl species recorded during the period, also not a breeder, and absent from the CBC was **Ring-necked Duck**, with 8 at LC 12/10 (MC).

Two **Common Loons** were present 12/6-7 at LC (JD). A **Pied-billed Grebe** was at PS 12/10 (JD). Four **Ring-billed Gulls** were found for the CBC 12/16, but this winter's highlight for a species usually reported in very small numbers, was the presence of 300 on the grounds of the Stonehedge golf course 12/15 (JD). I recall no previous record of a flock that large.

Bald Eagle is a fairly common sight nowadays, perhaps no longer necessary to report in this narrative. However, it is notable that I have had reports of 6 active nests in the county. The Tunkhannock CBC reported 3 owl species 12/26: 2 **Barred Owls**, uncommon for the count; and one each **Northern Saw-whet Owl** and **Long-eared Owl**, both rare for the count.

Also rare for the CBC, 3 **Gray Catbirds** were found. A very high number of 282 **Cedar Waxwings** was recorded during the CBC 12/26, with flocks at several locations; the largest count was on SR (JD), totaling 172 birds. Interestingly and quite unusual for the winter season, neither Snow Buntings nor Horned Larks were reported during the period. They were reported in adjacent counties, so it's likely we were just not in the right place at the right time.

Three species, usually recorded in small numbers, if at all, during the CBC, were present in unusually large numbers: 58 **Red-winged Blackbirds**, 35 **Rusty Blackbirds**, and 80 **Brown-headed Cowbirds**. Deeper into winter, 40 Red-winged Blackbirds were at JB 1/14 (JD). Perhaps the warmer temperatures, the lack of snow, and the presence of wild food were factors.

Thirty-six **Pine Siskins** were recorded during the Dallas area CBC 12/19, which extends into *Wyoming*. Otherwise, siskins were noted in small numbers at several locations. It will be interesting to see if the species not only hangs around through spring, but also is recorded during breeding safe dates.

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York County

Locations: Codorus State Park (CSP), Gifford Pinchot State Park (GPSP), Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), Hopewell Township Park

(HTP), York Christmas Bird Count (YCBC), York Spring Christmas Bird Count (YSCBC).

This winter's total of 113 species matched the five-year average for the period. The YCBC found 74 species 12/19 and the York portion of the YSCBC had 76 species. The sliver of the county in the Southern Lancaster CBC on 12/20 again experienced dead calm conditions on the Susquehanna R. resulting in little or no waterfowl nor gull activity. The Harrisburg CBC includes a portion of the northeast section of the county, where 52+ species were found 12/19. The clear highlight of the period was the county's second **White-winged Dove** 2/13-15, also establishing a new early date for the state. The 1/22-23 blizzard dumped up to 30+ inches of snow in some areas of the county but much of it was gone by early February.

Waterfowl variety was on the low side with 26 species found. A pair of **Wood Ducks** were found on the YSCBC and a single was at GPSP 1/7 (DK). Decent counts of **American Wigeons** came from CSP 2/21 (RE) with 50 birds and 63 at Long Arm Reservoir 2/22 (PK). Four locales reported **American Black Ducks** 12/19-2/5 (m.ob.) with a quintet being the high count coming from GPSP 1/10 (CH). The YSCBC reported five **Northern Shovelers** and there were 2 sightings at Lake Lea - a pair 1/7 (DN) and a single 2/1 (DH, TN). **Green-winged Teal** sightings included an uncommon Jan report of 3 birds at Lake Lea 1/7 (DN) and there were 4 at Silver Lake 2/28 (LR).

Canvasback was only found once, a single on a pond along Bowman's School Rd. 2/7 (MCr). A **Greater Scaup** was at GPSP 1/16-17 (DN) and 4 were at CSP 2/22-24 (PK). **Lesser Scaup** were found only on the YSCBC with a count of 3. A **Common Goldeneye** was at GPSP 12/7 (DN) and up to 4 were at CSP 2/18-22 (PK, DN). Four **Red-breasted Mergansers** were at GPSP 12/26 (DG) and a single was at Goldsboro 2/29 (DN). **Common Loon** was limited to Dec singles at CSP 12/2 (IG, AL) and GPSP 12/7 (DN).

Four **Ring-necked Pheasants** were found on the YSCBC and singles were along Valley Rd 1/21 (LT) and at Lewisberry 12/19 (EB). The 9 reports of **Wild Turkeys** were paced by nice counts of 49 in the GPSP area 1/1 (*fide* AP) and 37 on the YSCBC. Occasionally a carryover from the Fall period in some years, a **Double-crested Cormorant** was at Silver Lake 12/2 (IG, AL). However, a cormorant in Feb is unusual for the county and one at CSP 2/13-29 (PE, PK, DN) even spent extended periods perched on the edge of the ice. The **Great Blue Heron** rookery at Spring Grove was commandeered by a pair of **Bald Eagles**. The eagles placed a nest in nearly the exact middle of the prior rookery nesting trees. As a result, typical late Feb heron nest-building activity did not take place. As of this writing (late Mar), it appears the herons are attempting to establish nesting in the near (within 200 yards) vicinity of the eagle's nest. **Northern Harriers** were found at HTP all period (m.ob.) with a high count of 3 on 2/2 (KC). Four harriers were recorded for the YSCBC.

A trio of **Wilson Snipe** were found at SGL 243 on the YSCBC and a single was at HTP 1/9 (DF) and 2/22 (RS). The sole **American Woodcock** report came from Lewisberry 12/19 (EB). A pair of **Bonaparte's Gulls** were at Spring Grove 12/1 (PK) and the YCBC turned up 5. There were 5 reports of **Herring Gulls** with no count exceeding 3. Only one of the 4 reports of **Great Black-backed Gulls** was inland, away from the Susquehanna R., a pair at Lake Williams 2/28 (MCr).

Ann Pettigrew credited increased scrutiny due to the GBBC for recognition of a **White-winged Dove** (doc. submitted w/ph) in her York Twp. backyard. The bird was first noticed the morning of 2/13 and was last seen the morning of 2/15 (ME, EG, JH, DHu, AL, KL, TN, AP). It was typically in the company of **Mourning Doves**. One observer noted that multiple days of prevailing southerly winds may offer an explanation for it's appearance in the state. Checking eBird maps, the nearest observations of white-winged dove in the same time frame were over 350 miles to the south, in North Carolina.

Short-eared Owl barely made the report with singles at HTP 2/18 (ALe) and 2/27 (DF). Five locations held **Red-headed Woodpeckers** and GPSP further cemented its status as the favored over-wintering location in the county with Red-heads present all period (m.ob.) and a high count of 13 on 1/15 (DN). All other expected woodpecker species continued to show well. **Merlin** singles were found along the Davidsburg Rd. 12/31 (CB), at GPSP 1/3 (JSD), in York Twp. 2/14 (ME, TN), and along Shaw Rd. 2/21 (DF). The sole **Peregrine Falcon** report came from New Cumberland Army Depot 1/7 (ML).

Eastern Phoebe sightings were limited to Dec; there was one each on the YCBC and YSCBC, and one at Long Level 12/20 (CM).

Fish Crows remained into Dec with a high count of 35 on the YSCBC, but then were absent until 2/22 when a pair were found at HTP (RS). **Common Ravens**, with 14 reports, were found in all parts of the county with the exception of the southeast corner. **Horned Larks** were present all period with higher counts of 158 on the YSCBC, 51 at Leader's Heights 1/30 (CB), and 30 along Davidsburg Rd. 12/31 (CB).

Of the overstated 30 reports of **Black-capped Chickadee**, 16 were during the GBBC in areas with latitudes south of, and elevation lower than where they are expected in York. The only 2 **Red-breasted Nuthatch** reports also came from the GBBC period. The timing of the 7 reports of **Winter Wrens** suggests they may have been more scarce in the middle of winter, with no sightings 1/13-2/16. A pair of **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were at CSP 1/6 (EG) and a single was at Lake Williams 1/12 and 2/18 (both CK).

SGL 243 produced 62 **Eastern Bluebirds** during the YSCBC with the observer noting abundant amounts of natural food on the tract (DH). **Hermit Thrushes** rode out the winter at Lake Williams with a high count of 3 on 1/21 (CK) while the YCBC and YSCBC produced 9 and 13 birds, respectively. As further testimony to the food bounty at SGL 243, an estimated 2700 **American Robins** were there as well during the YSCBC. There was a **Gray Catbird** at Lake Redman 12/10 (CK), 3 were found on the YSCBC, one was at GPSP 1/5 (IG), and one was seen throughout the period, apparently overwintering at Lake Williams, (CK). A **Brown Thrasher** was found on the YSCBC. A quartet of **American Pipits** was found on the YSCBC, 11 were along Beaver Creek Rd. 2/11 (AW), and 30 were along Glatfelter Station Rd. 2/11 (AP). Best counts of **Cedar Waxwings** occurred within a short timeframe, 12/19-30. There were 164 on the YCBC, 60 at GPSP 12/26 (DG), 120 on the YSCBC, and 65 at GPSP 12/30 (JSD).

Eastern Towhees and **American Tree Sparrows** were found all period. **Chipping Sparrow** was found at HTP 12/26 (DF), two were on the YSCBC, and one was at York Twp. 2/13 (EG, AL). A single **Vesper Sparrow** was in a mixed flock at Lewisberry 12/19 (EB). **Savannah**

Sparrow reporting was limited to two sites; at HTP 12/8-26 (DF, DN) with a high count of 7 on 12/26 (DF) and a pair at Lewisberry 12/19 (EB). Twelve reports of **Fox Sparrows** were higher than normal. The 6 reports of **Swamp Sparrows** were about average.

Red-winged Blackbirds, **Common Grackles**, and **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were found in all months. **Eastern Meadowlarks** were at HTP all period (m.ob.) with a high count of 17 birds 1/22 (DF). There was one at Nixon County Park 12/10 (KS), 6 on the YSCBC, and 5 at Long Arm Reservoir 1/8 (PK). **Rusty Blackbird** reports included a single at New Freedom 12/19 (CK), 13 on the YSCBC, and 8 at GPSP 1/5 (IG). Of the 25 **Purple Finch** reports, 19 were during the GBBC, so overstating of their presence is a very strong likelihood. A nicely photographed yellow variant **House Finch** was in a Fairview Twp. backyard 12/7-21 (DN). This non-irruptive year produced 6 reports of **Pine Siskin** with a high count of 6 at Wyndham Dr. 2/3 (RE).

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PUBLICATION SCHEDULE: Materials to be included in the publication are needed by the due dates below.

Issue	Sightings due to Compilers by...	Articles due to Editor by...	Publication Date
Dec-Feb (Vol. 1)	31 March	1 May	July
Mar-May (Vol. 2)	30 June	1 August	October
Jun-Jul (Vol. 3)	31 August	1 October	December
Aug-Nov (Vol. 4)	31 December	1 February	April

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IN FOCUS



Black Brant, Peace Valley Park, see Bucks County report. (Photo by Cameron Rutt)



Wood Thrush, Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve, see Allegheny County report. (Photo by Amy Henrici)



American Kestrel, Silver Spring Road, see Lancaster County report. (Photo by Alex Lamoreaux)



Mountain Bluebird, Tinicum Twp., see Bucks County report. (Photo by Brian Henderson)



Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Berks Heritage Center, see Berks County report. (Photo by Geoff Malosh)



Indigo Bunting, Valley Forge NHP, see Montgomery County report. (Photo by Kitty Kono)