

Delaware Bird Records Committee Annual Report for 2010

Frank Rohrbacher
on behalf of the Delaware Bird Records Committee

This is the fourteenth report of the Delaware Bird Records Committee. The Committee members for 2009-2010 were Jim White (President), Frank Rohrbacher (Secretary), Anthony Gonzon, Chris Bennett and Jean Woods. At the 29 July 2010 Annual Meeting, Jim White stepped down as a review member but continued as President. John Janowski was chosen to replace him as a review member. The Committee updated the Delaware State List of Bird Species, the Delaware Review List and the Index of all records adjudicated as of 1 September 2010 and has distributed these documents to the birding community via the DOS Website, de-birds, the 2009 *Delmarva Ornithologist* and *The Flyer*.

This year's summary includes 68 reports forming 30 records involving 21 different species reported including a first state record for Roseate Spoonbill, Tropical Kingbird and European Golden-Plover. These additions increase the official Delaware Bird State List to 405 species.

In the summary below, date, location, DBRC reference number, and documentation received are listed for all records; photographers and reporters are credited only for accepted records. The summary follows, beginning with accepted records using the standard taxonomic order in effect on 1 September 2010.

Accepted Records

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*)

23 November 2008 – 19 August 2009 Silver Lake, Rehoboth
DBRC #08/35 Notes, Photographs (FR, KS, SL, SC, JG,
CB, CK, HH, CL, BA, GJ, DS)

The first Black-bellied Whistling-Duck reported in Delaware was in 2000, followed by a second in 2005, a third in 2007 and finally fourth, fifth and sixth in 2008. It would appear that as its numbers continue to rise in Florida, it is beginning to wander more frequently north. Those wanderings all occurred from June to August until this bird. Originally

found at Silver Lake on 23 November 2008 by Mark Garland and a Cape May Observatory birding group, it remained for the Rehoboth CBC, for the 2009 Spring Roundup and finally left on 19 August 2009. The Committee, recognizing the lure of free corn supplied by a resident, deemed the bird wild and accepted the record.

Green-winged “Common” Teal (*Anas crecca crecca*)

14-15 February 2009
DBRC #09/01

Broadkill Beach Road
Notes (FR)

Five years ago, when the Committee decided to put identifiable subspecies on the review list, there was a discussion on whether this particular subspecies was actually rare enough, but because the Europeans consider it a full species it was put on the list to answer that question. This is the third Common Teal that has been accepted since then but because so few birders actually search for this subspecies, its ‘rarity’ has not yet been established.

White-faced Storm-Petrel (*Pelagodroma marina*)

15 August 2009
DBRC #09/16

38.32.609 ° N 74.01.897 ° W
Notes, Photograph (ES)

White-faced Storm-Petrel is one of the most bizarre and most sought after pelagic birds on the East Coast. Watching this bird move over the water is a treat. It can jump 10 to 15 feet at a time by raising its feet to its chin, slapping the water and holding its wings straight out to its side fast enough to outrun and out maneuver a boat. In August, out at the canyons, this species is probably not all that rare but adding one to your life list can be a challenge. However, Ed Sigda happened to be in the right place at the right time to catch five tuna and take a beautiful photograph of a White-faced Storm-Petrel jumping off the water. The Committee had little trouble accepting this, the fifth record for this species in Delaware waters.

Great White Heron (*Ardea herodias occidentalis*)

1-7 Jul 2009
DBRC #09/26

Bethany
Notes, Photographs (JH, CB, FR, BP)

Great White Heron is the common name for the white subspecies of

the Great Blue Heron found at the southern tip of Florida. It occasionally disperses in small numbers up the East Coast but finding them hiding among the thousands of Great Egrets can be quite a challenge. This particular bird was hiding in plain sight, standing in a small drainage pond next to a busy road. Luckily, Bruce Peterjohn was driving by, noticed that it was too big to be a Great Egret, and stopped to properly identify this bird. Some great photographs and well written descriptions made the decision to accept this second state record an easy call for the review committee.

Roseate Spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*)

21 June – 19 August 2009

Fenwick Island

DBRC #09/07

First State Record

Notes, Photographs (FR, CC, MB, KF, DS, JO)

6, 8 July 2009

Fowler Beach

DBRC #09/08

Notes, Photographs (EPS)

16-22 July 2009

1000 Acre Marsh

DBRC #09/09

Notes, Photographs (FR, LY, CDC)

20-28 July 2009

Bombay Hook NWR

DBRC #09/10

Notes, Photographs (FR, MO, BS, KB)

On 21 June 2009, a hatch year Roseate Spoonbill was reported in the marshes near the Catch 54 restaurant on the Delaware/Maryland line. This bird stayed until mid-August and was seen, photographed and well documented as the first Delaware record of this species. By July, Roseate Spoonbills were being reported as far west as Tennessee and as far north as New Jersey as a major irruption along the East Coast was recorded. In Delaware, other sightings of hatch year birds were reported: one briefly in early July at Fowler Beach, one for a week in mid-June in 1000 Acre Marsh, and one for a week in late June in Bombay Hook NWR. As separating hatch year birds is not possible, the Committee reviewed the dates and timing of the final three sets of sightings and concluded that the sightings were all most likely of one bird as it moved around the state. They established conclusively that this was not the same bird as the one on the Maryland/Delaware border and concluded that only two birds visited Delaware that summer.

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)

25 April 2009 Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch
 DBRC #09/05 Notes (SG, LS)

4 April 2010 Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch
 DBRC #10/04 Notes, Photographs (K&BH)

10 April 2010 Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch
 DBRC #10/05 Notes (BGP)

Before the Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch was fully established, Swallow-tailed Kite was very rarely reported in Delaware. Now, in less than one year, three migrating birds were recorded in Delaware for the ninth, tenth and eleventh accepted records, all in April and all from the Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch. At this rate, this species will not remain on the Delaware Review Species List much longer.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

3 June 2004 Route 40 nr MD border
 DBRC #04/13 Notes (AG)

Seven years ago, a huge cicada hatch in Elkton, MD resulted in a concentration of ten Mississippi Kites and one Swallow-tailed Kite just a few miles from Delaware in Maryland on Route 40. One or two were reported to have drifted into Delaware, but this was the only well documented sighting submitted to the Committee. At the time, this would have been the fifth accepted record for this species.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

19 September 2009 Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch
 DBRC #09/18 Notes, Sketch (FDR)

Less than a year after a Swainson's Hawk was photographed by Forrest Rowland at the Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch to become the first state record, this bird was seen and well documented at the Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch by Forrest. Both these birds were reported as leaving Cape May before they were seen here. With the Hawk Watch well established now and multiple Swainson's Hawks being reported at the

Cape May Hawk Watch each year, it would appear that this long sought species in Delaware will be more predictable in the future.

Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

7 December 2007

DBRC #07/17

Delaware Seashore SP

Notes (BGP)

Gyrfalcons are spectacular birds and finding one in Delaware was a great moment for Bruce Peterjohn, who spotted this one on a telephone pole as he drove south on Route 1 at the Delaware Seashore SP. After driving by the bird, he turned around and parked on the other side of the street. Within a few seconds, as he recalled ‘the bird flew effortlessly and quickly passed fairly low over Rehoboth Bay on relatively shallow “rowing” wing beats and various waterbirds departed in a panicked flight as the falcon flew over the bay’. An extremely detailed description of the bird, addressing cross-breeding and origin issues made a compelling case for accepting this, the second state record, of Gyrfalcon.

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*)

17 May 2010

DBRC #10/06

Clinton Road

Notes, Photographs (LC)

Sandhill Crane numbers have increased greatly over the past few years and the number of reported sightings in neighboring states has sky rocketed. However, Delaware has been largely unaffected by this trend. This bird, which was well documented and photographed by Larry Curlett, is only the third accepted record in Delaware. Any Sandhill Crane reported in Delaware, particularly in northeast New Castle County, is suspect because there is a small flock of Sandhill x Common Crane hybrids that moves around New Jersey just across the border. In this case, an examination of the photographs convinced the Committee that this was a pure Sandhill Crane, perhaps the first of many to come.

European Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

14-15 September 2009

DBRC #09/15

Wicks Potato Field, Route 9

Notes, Photographs (AG, CPB, AU)

Andy Urquhart found, identified, and managed to get a few local

birders onto a European Golden-Plover on a field near the entrance to Bombay Hook NWR before it flew. Anthony Gonzon and Chris Bennett made it in time to confirm the identification and Anthony took about 30 photographs including several diagnostic shots. This was not only a first state record but also only the second ever record in the lower states. Since 1990, only the 1993 Whiskered Tern, which was a first ABA record and the 2008 Wood Sandpiper, which was the third lower 48 record compared with this as significant rare Delaware birds. This was an enormous accomplishment for Andy who found this rare and difficult to identify species and for him, Anthony and Chris who were able to put together a set of documentation that established beyond any doubt its identity.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

26 August 2005

Wilmington Canyon, DE Waters

DBRC #05/16

Notes, Photographs (ES, FR)

Long-tailed Jaeger is on the Delaware Review List but they probably move through Delaware waters in large numbers each year. Unfortunately, they are almost never seen from shore as they are found well off the coast. In August, the closest they normally are found is ninety miles offshore at the Wilmington Canyon but that is the furthest out that pelagic birding trips are ever run in those years when the weather cooperates. Thus, this beautiful photographed bird is only the second record of this species accepted by the Committee.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

18 December 2008 – 16 February 2009

Smyrna

DBRC #09/03

Notes, Photograph (DS)

After the first pair of Eurasian Collared-Doves was found in 1997 and became a small colony of 15 to 20 birds by 2001 in Selbyville, it was decided that Eurasian Collared-Dove would be removed from the Delaware Review Species List for any birds found in Selbyville but that they would still be a review species in the rest of the state. At that time, we expected that the species would overrun Delaware as it had Europe, the Caribbean and the southern US states and we wanted to document this coming event. Now, nine years later, the invasion has not come; the Selbyville colony has ceased expanding (it appears in fact to have

shrunk though no survey has been run in 6 years) and this record is only the third report of this species in the state since then. The Committee appreciates that Derek Stoner not only photographed and provided a complete written description of this bird but also that he added a log of the sightings during its stay.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*)

15-16 November

Prime Hook NWR

DBRC #09/28

Notes, Photographs (FR, ES, CF, CC, BP)

Ken Bass found this bird at the Prime Hook NWR Headquarters and got the word out quickly. This bird, the second state record, was much more cooperative than the first bird two years earlier. It remained in the area for two more days and was seen, photographed and added to their Delaware bird list by many local birders.

Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)

13 October 2009

Prime Hook Beach

DBRC #09/21

Notes, Photographs (FM, ES, FDR)

Frank Marengi found a strange kingbird at Prime Hook Beach and got the word out to the local birding community at 2:45 p.m. A number of local birders joined him and viewed it until 6:00 p.m. when the bird went to roost and was gone. A consensus was formed that the bird was either a Tropical or Couch's Kingbird. Great photographs by Frank and Ed Sigda and written documentation made a very strong case for Tropical Kingbird. Still, separating Couch's from Tropical Kingbird can be difficult. Fortunately, Frank heard the bird and confirmed that it spoke Tropical Kingbird. This great find was the first state record.

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)

2 November 2009

Cape Henlopen SP

DBRC #09/27

Notes (FDR)

Forrest Rowland made a special trip to bird Cape Henlopen SP before manning the Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch in November 2009 searching for birds on telephone lines, because the number of Western Kingbirds being reported in Cape May was impressive. He spotted such a bird at Fort Miles and it was indeed a Western Kingbird as document-

ed in his detailed written report. The fact that Cape May is a migrant trap is well known. Only recently has it been shown with the establishment of the Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch how many rare species leave Cape May, then depending on the wind direction and speed arrive and rest in the coastal area between Fowler Beach and Gordons Pond SP. This was only the fifth accepted Delaware record but many more are likely in the near future.

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)

18-19 November 2008

DBRC #08/34

Augustine Beach

Notes, Photographs (JJ, CC)

During November 2008, Cave Swallows flowed down the East Coast and across Delaware in record numbers. Cave Swallows, often multiple birds, were reported in flocks of Tree Swallows from Augustine Beach to Cape Henlopen and generated six distinct records over a two week period. This record is the fourth of those adjudicated, documenting this unprecedented phenomenon and the eighth accepted record of this species.

Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*)

20-21 October 2007

DBRC #07/11

Prime Hook NWR

Notes, Photographs (LJ, FR, SC, DM)

24 December 2007

DBRC #07/23

Fowler Beach Road

Notes (BP)

This species is no longer on the Delaware Review Species List and these are the last two historical records to be adjudicated by the Committee. In all sixteen Clay-colored Sparrow records were accepted. Of those, ten were found between fall 2005 and winter 2009, and all of those were found within a few miles of the coast between Fowler Beach and Gordons Pond SP. What had been thought to be a very rare bird by birders in Delaware has been shown by these records to be a fairly common species during the fall migration within the shadow of Cape May.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

12 September 2009

DBRC #09/17

Cape Henlopen SP

Notes, Photographs (JG)

11 October 2009
DBRC #09/20

Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch
Notes, Photograph (SL)

18 October 2009
DBRC #09/22

Dover

Notes (FM)

The Lark Sparrow may be following in the path of the Clay-colored Sparrow listed above because when large numbers accumulate in Cape May in the fall, they seem to become prevalent in coastal Delaware. The first bird was found in Fort Miles at Cape Henlopen SP by Jeff Gordon who was alerted by Forrest Rowland that there was a large number of Western Kingbirds in Cape May and the wind was such that someone should be checking the Fort Miles area for this species. He did and found one almost immediately. All of these records were well documented and they represent the seventh, eighth and ninth accepted records.

Le Conte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*)

19 October 2009
DBRC #09/23

Cape Henlopen SP
Notes, Photographs (CF)

Chuck Fullmer has, of late, been roaming the state's coastal areas and has found a good number of the area's rare birds and photographed them and, thankfully, has passed them on to the committee to enjoy. On one such trip he was wandering Fort Miles when he saw and was able to take some great photographs of one such species, a Le Conte's Sparrow which is well known skulker. This was a great find, the sixth state record for this species.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*)

Jan – 22 April 2008
DBRC #08/10

Georgetown
Notes, Photographs (JMD)

22 August 2009
DBRC #09/11

Prime Hook NWR
Notes, Photograph (LR)

Both the male and female plumages of the Painting Bunting are

spectacular and are a treat to watch especially when they stay for the entire winter at your feeder as Janet Davidson in Georgetown knows because she had both a male and a female at the same time. However, Painted Buntings are not always that pretty. A number of good birders saw a drab brownish finch/bunting at the headquarters and couldn't put a name to it. Ed Sigda finally found it and determined that it was Painted Bunting and Larry Riddle took a great photograph of it. The photograph shows a very drab yellowish brown juvenile Painted Bunting that for a few weeks is indeed an ugly duckling destined to be a swan.

Reporters

Ben Anderson, Maurice V. Barnhill, Chris P. Bennett, Kathy Boyd, Chuck Brandt, Colin Campbell, Steve Colins, Larry Curlett, Janet M. Davidson, Keith & Beth Hamilton, Hank Hox, Kevin Fleming, Chuck M. Fullmer, Anthony Gonzon, Jeff Gordon, Sue Gruver, Jim Hall, John Janowski, Gina Jenson, Lin Just, Chip Krilowicz, Chuck Lane, Sharon Lynn, Frank Marengi, Dennis Murphy, Matt Orsie, Janet Owen, Bruce Peterjohn, Larry Riddle, Frank Rohrbacher, Forrest D. Rowland, Bill Schreitz, Ed Sigda, Lynn Smith, Kim Steininger, Derek Stoner, Andy Urqhart, J. Young