

## Delaware Bird Records Committee Annual Report for 2011

Frank Rohrbacher

on behalf of the Delaware Bird Records Committee

This is the fifteenth report of the Delaware Bird Records Committee. The Committee members for 2010-2011 were Jim White (President), Frank Rohrbacher (Secretary), Anthony Gonzon, Chris Bennett, Jean Woods and John Janowski. At the 10 August 2011 Annual Meeting, Frank Rohrbacher stepped-down as a review member and was replaced by Jim White. Frank continued as Secretary and Jim continued as President. 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 2011 and has distributed these documents to the birding community via the DOS Website, DE-birds, the 2012 *Delmarva Ornithologist* and *The Flyer*.

This year's summary includes 61 reports forming 28 records involving 20 different species reported including a first state record for Brown Booby and Lark Bunting. These additions increase the official Delaware Bird State List to 407 species. After 15 accepted records, most in the past four years, Swallow-tailed Kite has been removed from the Delaware Review Species List. Several projects were undertaken for the next year, including a census of the size of the Eurasian Collared-Dove population in Selbyville and an investigation into the reported Pacific Loon skeleton found in Delaware and stored at the Smithsonian Museum.

For 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 2011. The DBRC emphasizes that reports listed as "not accepted" do not necessarily imply that the Committee believes the reported species were misidentified, but rather that the documentation submitted was insufficient to adequately establish the claimed identity.

### Accepted Records

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

13 August 2010  
DBRC #11/01

Broadkill Beach Road  
Notes (BGP)

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck is a very distinctive bird that is on the move. As the numbers have increased in Florida they are increasingly found well north. The first bird reported in Delaware was in 2000 and the second in 2005. Since then the species has become almost annual and has been seen in every month but September and October. This, an immature bird and the seventh accepted record, was still a great find by Bruce Peterjohn.

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

21 March 2010  
DBRC #10/03

Broadkill Beach Road  
Notes (FR)

Six 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. However, the Europeans list it as full species, so it was put on the list to answer that question. This is the fourth accepted record but it is still too early to decide on its rarity. Three of the records are from the Broadkill Beach impoundments in February and March, which makes sense because thousands of Green-winged Teal congregate in those impoundments each spring and are easily seen from the roads.

**Brown Booby** (*Sula leucogaster*)

19 July 2010  
DBRC #10/07

3 miles east of Broadkill Beach  
Notes, Photographs (SVC, RY, JG)

A hungry Brown Booby flew on to the Thelma Dale IV, a head boat out of Lewes, a few miles east of Broadkill Beach and hitched a ride back to port begging for some bait. Captain Rick Yakimowicz and Mate Steve Cardano took some great photographs. When the Brown Booby would not leave the boat, the bird was captured and sent to Tri-State Bird Rescue. When it arrived there it was underweight and dehydrated. It was rehabbed, flown to Florida and released. All in all, it was a great story that was well told by Jeff Gordon (*Delmarva Ornithologist* 40:5-8, 2011). This was a first Delaware state record and brings the state total to 406.

**Swallow-tailed Kite** (*Elanoides forficatus*)

23-24 April 2011

DBRC #11/12

Middle Run Park

Notes, Photographs (FR, CDC, BF)

Swallow-tailed Kite has become more common in Delaware in the past few years but none have ever been more cooperative than this bird. First reported by Angel Burns and her daughter at 4:00 p.m. to Derek Stoner and Amy White who spread the word by phone and DE-birds throughout the local birding community and the chase was on. It remained at Middle Run Park for two days and was seen by dozens of area birders. This was the twelfth accepted record with a couple more to be adjudicated and the Committee decided in the August Annual Meeting to remove this species from the Delaware Review Species List.

**Swainson's Hawk** (*Buteo swainsoni*)

16-29 October 2010

DBRC #10/16

Cods Road

Notes, Photographs (EPS, CDC, FR, TA,  
AGu BGP, HBE, EN, CR)

On 10 October 2008 and 19 September 2009, Forrest Rowland established that Swainson's Hawks migrate through Cape May and into Delaware annually. The two first records suggested that in order for local birders to actually see one in Delaware they would have to spend months at the Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch. What was needed was a more cooperative bird than a flyover. On 16 September 2010, Bruce Peterjohn found the perfect bird at Cods Road and alerted the birding community. For twelve days this Hatch Year Swainson's Hawk made itself available to hundreds of photographers and birders as it dashed around, even doing somersaults and catching grasshoppers in a soybean field, usually within 100 feet of the road. Nine written reports and 22 outstanding digital photographs were received by the Committee, making accepting this third state record easy.

**Sandhill Crane** (*Grus canadensis*)

14 September – 10 November 2010

DBRC #10/11

Newark

Notes, Photographs (DS, FR)

8-9 November 2010

Broadkill Beach Road

DBRC #10/19

Notes, Photographs (SB, SL)

Sandhill Cranes are definitely becoming more common on the East Coast, so I was surprised to realize that these are only the fourth and fifth state records. The first bird above was most likely the same bird that was frequenting Elkton, Maryland just across the border from late July where it remained until mid-August. It was found by Susan Eggert near Iron Hill in Delaware, and then moved a few blocks away on Dixie Line Road where it probably wintered. The other record was typical of past records, with three birds reported in a corn field during a two day stopover during the fall migration. In both cases, the photographic evidence established beyond a doubt that these were not part of the hybrid flock of Common x Sandhill cranes from Salem County, New Jersey.

**Roseate Tern** (*Sterna dougallii*)

31 May 2002

Cape Henlopen SP

DBRC #02/09

Notes (FR)

7 June 2004

Cape Henlopen SP

DBRC #04/14

Notes, Photographs (AG)

These two Roseate Tern records were orphaned a few years ago when the Committee was a little behind adjudicating records and it was decided to emphasize more recent records. These two records bring the total number of accepted records for this species to eight. Interestingly, after accepting six records between 2002 and 2006, there have been no reported sightings in Delaware. Most of the past sightings were made between late May and early July at the point at Cape Henlopen SP. Perhaps birders are not as keen to fight their way through summer traffic to view the point as they were in the past.

**Common Murre** (*Uria aalge*)

5 February 2011

Pelagic in Delaware waters

DBRC #11/06

Notes, Photograph (TJ)

In the winter of 2011, Common Murres were almost common off the New York, New Jersey and Delaware coasts but getting out there was, as always, a problem. Fortunately, the pelagic out of Lewes on 5 February 2011 did spend enough time in Delaware waters to find one.

Even better, Tom Johnson was able to document the event with a great photograph for only the fourth state record.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove** (*Streptopelia decaoto*)

22 May 2011  
DBRC #11/14

Prime Hook Beach  
Notes, Photograph (EPS)

Eurasian Collared-Dove made its first showing in Delaware in 1997 and became a small colony in Selbyville that continues to the present. When this species first arrived it was thought that it would overwhelm the state as it marched north, as it did in Europe. In order to document this wave, the Committee decided to continue the species on the Delaware Review List for all birds seen outside of Selbyville. The onslaught has yet to occur and outside of Selbyville, where that colony has shrunk to but three birds, the above one day wonder is only the fourth accepted record in the state.

**White-winged Dove** (*Zenaida asiatica*)

2 November 2010  
DBRC #10/18

Cape Henlopen SP  
Notes, Photographs (SL)

20 December 2010  
DBRC #10/22

Lewes  
Notes, Photographs (S&WF, FR)

White-winged Dove is a surprisingly difficult bird to find in Delaware considering the tendency of this species to roam and the numbers seen in surrounding states. These two records are only the fourth and fifth state records, all of which occurred at the shore between Lewes and Rehoboth Beach. This concentration is probably a result of the vagrant trap that is Cape May. This is an easy bird to identify and in both of these records the great photographs made it very easy.

**Hammond's Flycatcher** (*Empidonax hammondi*)

24 December 1986  
DBRC #01/03

Woodland Beach  
Specimen (MBR)

Hammond's Flycatcher is one of the last two species on the Delaware State Bird List (see Bewick's Wren below) that had been included on that list based solely on a specimen in a museum that had not been

reviewed by the Committee. Mark Robins found this bird near Woodland Beach on 24 December 1986 and the specimen has resided at the Delaware Museum of Natural History as DMNH 76370 since then. With skins and photographs supplied by Dr. Jean Woods, Curator of Birds at the Delaware Museum of Natural History, the Committee established that the specimen was a Hammond's Flycatcher.

**Western Kingbird** (*Tyrannus verticalis*)

16-17 August 2009

DBRC #10/09

Whitehall Neck Road

Notes, Photograph (MR, AG)

28 October 2010

DBRC #10/17

Cape Henlopen SP

Notes, Photograph (CB)

This species has become an increasingly common fall vagrant for the East Coast. Like most of the previous Delaware records, they appear from August through December, stay a day or so and move on. In both of these reports a diagnostic photograph as well as well written documentation established the identity of these the sixth and seventh Delaware state record beyond any doubt.

**Loggerhead Shrike** (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

5-6 March 2010

DBRC #10/02

Bennett's Pier Road

Notes (CPB, FR)

6 February 2011

DBRC #11/05

Bennett's Pier Road

Notes, Photographs (CPB)

Loggerhead Shrike sightings have plummeted since the 1970s and 1980s as the nesting population north of Delaware has collapsed. In the past ten years there have only been three sightings and these two above are believed to be of the same bird. Chris Bennett found an early migrant on 5 March 2010 on little birded Bennett's Pier Road in Milford Neck. Almost exactly eleven months later, on 6 February 2011, Chris Bennett again found a Loggerhead Shrike on Bennett's Pier Road standing on exactly the same shrubs as the first bird. The documentation, notes for the first sighting and notes and photographs for the second establish beyond a doubt that it was a Loggerhead Shrike and not a Northern Shrike.

**Bewick's Wren** (*Thryomanes bewickii*)

24 September 1966

DBRC #01/05

Rehoboth Beach

Specimen (JTL)

Bewick's Wren is the last species on the Delaware State Bird List that had been included on that list based solely on a specimen in a museum that had not been reviewed by the Committee. Jack Linehan found this bird Rehoboth Beach on 24 September 1966 and the specimen has resided at the University of Delaware (Department of Entomology and Applied Ecology) as UDEL 115-67 since then. With skins and photographs supplied by Dr. Jean Woods, Curator of Birds at the Delaware Museum of Natural History, the Committee established that the specimen was a Bewick's Wren.

**Northern Wheatear** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

20-27 December 2010

DBRC #10/23

Fox Point SP, Wilmington

Notes, Photographs (CDC, AB, CB,  
BS, TJ, HBE, AGu)

A Northern Wheatear was a spectacular find by Colin Campbell (*Delmarva Ornithologist* 40:9-11) as he rode his bike through the little-birded Fox Point State Park. It stayed long enough and was cooperative enough to bring Christmas cheer to dozens of local birders. Numerous photographs were taken of the bird feeding on the lawn or the fence where it held court. This was only the second state record but it was worth the fifty year wait since the species was last seen in Delaware by Sam Dyke in September 1957.

**Lark Sparrow** (*Chondestes grammacus*)

10 September 2010

DBRC #10/13

Cape Henlopen SP

Notes, Photographs (CMF)

13 October 2010

DBRC #10/15

Prime Hook NWR

Notes, Photograph (CMF)

14-29 January 2011

DBRC #11/03

Lewes

Notes, Photographs (LN)

Lark Sparrow was once considered a very rare bird in Delaware with only five accepted records before 2008 with three of those at Bombay Hook NWR. Since that time with the advent of the Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch, it has become obvious that Lark Sparrows collect in Cape May each fall and jump across the bay in good numbers. Since 2008 seven straight records including these three were found on the coast between Prime Hook NWR and Lewes – all in the migration shadow of Cape May. As more birders search for Lark Sparrows in this well-defined area in the fall, many more will likely be found, so the Lark Sparrow's tenure on the Delaware Review Species List is probably going to end shortly.

**Lark Bunting** (*Calamospiza melanocorys*)

19-20 September 2010

DBRC #10/14

Bombay Hook NWR

Notes, Photographs (CDC, HBE,  
KAB, CPB, FR, MD)

Delaware finally got its first long overdue state record of a Lark Bunting - #407. Karen and Chris Bennett found this bird on the dike at Raymond Pool at Bombay Hook NWR on 19 September 2010. They immediately put out the word, and regional and state birders flocked to the sight. Until it left on 25 September, it remained very cooperative and posed for numerous photographs. The consensus was that it was a Hatch Year male.

**Painted Bunting** (*Passerina ciris*)

9 January – 11 February 2008

DBRC #11/04

Deep Branch Road

Notes, Photographs (BGP, FR, CMF)

This female Painted Bunting wintered at Deep Branch Road. This was the ninth state record and one of those rare sightings of this species that wintered in Delaware without the aid of a well-stocked feeder system. It was seen infrequently but when it was, it was very cooperative. Originally seen and reported by Ed Sigda on 9 January, it was seen a total of four more times. It was last seen on 11 February and fortunately Chuck Fullmer was able to take some great photographs.



### Records Archived

#### **Thayer's Gull** (*Larus thayeri*)

8 February 2008

DBRC #08/07

Port Mahon Road

Notes, Photographs (FDR)

30 December 2010

DBRC #11/02

South Delaware Landfill

Notes (BGP)

Five years ago the Delaware Bird Records Committee decided to stop reviewing Thayer's Gull reports because the species is so ill-defined that the Committee found that it was virtually impossible to make a decision on adults and impossible for immature birds. The only accepted record for this species in Delaware was on 1 March 2003 when a very cooperative letter-perfect alternate plumage adult was observed and photographed by many good local birders at Cherry Island Landfill. This year's Committee continued the practice and archived these reports even though these well written reports and good photographs were submitted by two well-known local birders. The Committee continues to encourage birders to submit such reports for archiving to make these records available for research.

### Records Not Accepted

#### **Le Conte's Sparrow** (*Ammodramus leconteii*)

20 December 2009

DBRC #10/01

Deep Branch Road

Notes

The presence of sparrows scratching on the edge of the road after a snowstorm in winter is a great opportunity to find rare wintering birds. In this case a Le Conte's Sparrow was reported near good wintering habitat. Unfortunately, the written documentation, while very suggestive that the bird was a Le Conte's Sparrow, did not include sufficient detail to fully exclude closely related species.

## **Reporters**

Trina Anderson, Scott Barnes, Chris P. Bennett, Karen A. Bennett, Adrian Binns, Chuck Brandt, Colin D. Campbell, Steve V. Cardano, Mike DeBonis Howard B. Eskin, Sally & William Fintel, Bert Filemyr, Chuck M. Fullmer, Anthony Gonzon, Jeff Gordon, Al Guarente, (AGu), Tom Johnson, Jack T. Linehan, Sharon Lynn, Lee Noles, Ed Norman, Bruce G. Peterjohn, Mark B. Robbins, Frank Rohrbacher, Christopher Rolph, Mike Rosengarten, Forrest D. Rowland, Ed P. Sigda, Derek Stoner, Bob Strahorn, Jean L. Woods, Rick Yakimowicz.