

Delaware Bird Records Committee Annual Report for 2013

Frank Rohrbacher
on behalf of the Delaware Bird Records Committee

This is the 17th report of the Delaware Bird Records Committee. The Committee members for 2012 – 2013 were Jim White (President), Frank Rohrbacher (Secretary), Chris Bennett, Jean Woods and John Janowski. At the 22 August 2013 annual meeting, Chris Bennett stepped down as a review member and was replaced by Anthony Gonzon. Frank Rohrbacher continued as Secretary and Jim White 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 November 2013 and has distributed these documents to the birding community via the DOS Website, DE-birds and the 2014 *Delmarva Ornithologist*.

This year's summary includes 54 reports forming 26 records involving 24 different species including first state records for Calliope Hummingbird and Crested Caracara. These additions increase the official Delaware Bird State List to 412 species. The Anna's Hummingbird record was accepted by the Committee this year and would have been a first Delaware record but some digital images of the bird were taken after it had completed its molt and just before it migrated. These photographs were published and have raised the possibility that the bird may have been a hybrid. Consequently, the record has been put on hold and a new record with this new data added will be reviewed by the Committee again before a final decision is made. After a lengthy review of the species on the Delaware Review Species List, the Committee has decided to remove three species: Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, Long-tailed Jaeger and Mississippi Kite. All three of these species are present each year, sometimes in large numbers and yet they are not documented often. Mississippi Kite is reported most springs in good numbers and is easy to identify. It is normally seen as quick flybys and are reported on DE-birds but few are documented. The pelagic trips to the Baltimore and Wilmington Canyons in August, particularly over the past few years, have consistently shown that Band-rumped Storm-Petrel and Long-tailed Jaeger are not that rare and are now expected on any trip that can make it to the canyons at that time of year, but they are not documented frequently.

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. Accepted records

use the standard taxonomic order in effect on 1 November 2013. The DBRC emphasizes that a reports deemed "not accepted" does not necessarily mean that the Committee believes the species was misidentified, but rather that the documentation submitted was insufficient to adequately establish the claimed identity.

Accepted Records

Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*)

16 September 2012
DBRC #12/14

Bombay Hook NWR
Notes, Photographs (CL)

21 October 2012
DBRC #12/19

Bombay Hook NWR
Notes (MCM)

Cinnamon Teal is a very rare bird in Delaware, so finding an immature male in eclipse plumage mixed in with hundreds of Blue-winged Teals in eclipse plumage is a spectacular find. Charlie Long not only found such a bird in Bear Swamp at Bombay Hook NWR but was able to get some fantastic photographs showing the distinct red eye and wing pattern that established its identity in mid-September. A month later, from the tower in Bear Swamp, Mike Moore saw and wrote up in great detail a male Cinnamon Teal that had completed about 30% of its molt into alternate plumage. The Committee accepted both reports independently and then decided that they both described the same individual, so the reports were combined into a single record. This became the 6th Delaware Record of this species.

Green-winged "Common" Teal (*Anas crecca crecca*)

18 March 2012
DBRC #12/04

Broadkill Beach Road
Notes (FR)

Since 2004, when the Eurasian Green-winged or Common Teal was put on the Review Species List as a subspecies of the American Green-winged Teal, it has become obvious that this is a rather common bird in Delaware. This is only the 7th state record but it is apparent that if this were a full species as it has been in Europe, Delaware would be a great spot to find one. Thousands of Green-winged Teal mass in the freshwater impoundments from Prime Hook NWR to Bombay Hook NWR each March within easy viewing of dikes and roads and the only thing that is missing is viewers. I am confident that if we searched the flocks of Green-winged Teal with the same enthusiasm that we search the

flocks of American Wigeon, the numbers of Eurasian migrants found would be comparable.

Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

9 February 2013 – 11 March 2013 Indian River Inlet
DBRC #13/03 Notes, Photographs (FR, CPB, CDC)

Eared Grebe is probably not that rare a bird in the winter in Delaware but it is extremely difficult to add to one's Delaware state list because rarely does a sighting last long enough for more than a very few birders to actually participate. So this fantastic bird found, on a DOS/Sussex Bird Club Sea Watch Trip, drifting into Indian River Inlet was a generational bird. If you were to ask a Delaware birder 20 years from now when they added Eared Grebe to their list, they would think of this bird. For an entire month, this bird remained easily found between Burtons Island causeway and the adjacent Bottom Hills Drain area and was viewed and photographed by many local birders. This is the 12th accepted Delaware record.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

23 December 2012 Bay View/Augustine Beach
DBRC #12/25 Notes (GL, FR)
6 January 2013 Beach Plum Island Reserve
DBRC #13/02 Notes (BGP)

On 23 December 2012, an *Aechmophorus* grebe was found during the Middletown CBC at Bay View and then later in the day at Augustine Beach. The written documentation clearly established that the bird was a Western Grebe. On 30 December 2013, a Western Grebe was reported at Beach Plum Island but not documented. On 26 January 2013, a Western Grebe was well seen at Beach Plum Island and well documented. Both records were accepted by the Committee, which voted to combine the reports into one record. The combined record is the 4th accepted Delaware record. In January 2012, a Western Grebe was found at Cape Henlopen Point and spent several weeks at the Cape May Lewes Ferry Terminal. It is possible that this was the same bird.

Band-rumped Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*)

7 August 2012 38 10' N, 73 18' W
DBRC #12/13 Notes, Photographs (MF)

Band-rumped Storm-Petrels are hard to photograph but Mike Fritz

made it look easy in this record of one of four birds that he saw on a fishing trip into Delaware waters. This is only the 4th accepted record, but still the Committee voted to remove this species from the Review Species List. After three straight years of seeing multiple birds in the Wilmington and Baltimore Canyon in Delaware waters during pelagic trips with no documentation, it was time to assume that they are common in August.

Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*)

25 October 2009 Ashland Hawk Watch
DBRC #09/24 Notes (JL, RR)

The bird in this record was reportedly a long way out from the Ashland Nature Center Hawk Watch when two experienced birders scoped it. The written descriptions were well done and though there were some minor inconsistencies in the description the Committee agreed that the bird in question was a Wood Stork. Interestingly, a Wood Stork, undoubtedly the same bird, was seen and photographed an hour and half later at the Militia Hill Hawk Watch in Montgomery County. This is 35 mile northeast of Ashland and in the direction that the bird was reported moving.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

27 May 2013 Talleyville
DBRC # 13/07 Notes (MAS)

This record was well written by a careful observer and fully described a Mississippi Kite. This is the 10th record accepted and with several more records still to be adjudicated, the DBRC decided to remove this under documented but increasingly common bird from the Delaware Review Species List.

Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio martinica*)

2 July 2012 Grier's Pond
DBRC #12/10 Notes, Photographs (SD, FR, JD, JJ, CDC)

3 November 2012 Bethany Beach
DBRC #12/24 Notes, Photographs (LL, LS)

In 1974, and again in 1975, a small group of Purple Gullinules actually nested in Dragon Run but those two records were the only sightings in the state until 2012, when two birds were reported. The first was

found in early July at Greers Pond and Thousand Acre Marsh, just across the C&D Canal from the 1974 – 1975 nesting birds. It stayed there for several days and was well documented with five written records and many spectacular photographs of it in perfect Purple Gallinule habitat (see page 5, this volume). The second Purple Gallinule found that year was in November at the other end of the state, as far from perfect habitat as you could find. It was found in a McDonald's parking lot with a broken leg in Bethany Beach and brought to the Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research Station. It died and now resides at the Delaware Museum of Natural History as the 4th state record and the 1st state specimen (see pages 19-20 this volume).

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*)

28 April 2012

DBRC #12/05

Glasgow

Notes, Photographs (MCM)

Sandhill Crane numbers are increasing and this fact is being reflected in increased sightings over the past several years. For well over a decade, a flock of cranes have wintered at Husted Landing Road, Cumberland County, NJ that includes many Common X Sandhill Crane hybrids left over from an escaped Common Crane. Two winters ago, it was estimated that there were 16 – 19 birds wintering there and about half showed obvious hybrid characteristics. As a result, the DBRC always checks for hybridization but these two well described and photographed dancing birds were obviously pure Sandhill Cranes and are the 6th accepted state record.

Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

29 March 2013

DBRC #13/05

Bombay Hook NWR

Notes, Photograph (APE, DLCM)

The winter of 2013 was the winter of Northern Lapwing as fall conditions were good for depositing this Eurasian species in coastal Canada. As they migrated south we watched as they were reported in New England, then in the mid-Atlantic and then south of us. Many Delawareans in the state went to New Jersey where three birds wintered, to add them to their life list when it looked like Delaware had been missed. However, in late March, Andy Ednie found one at Bear Swamp, contacted the whole world and stopped a car to find a photographer to photograph the distant bird. "Strong work" — this is the 4th state record of this species, all at Bombay Hook NWR.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

20 – 21 July 2012

DBRC #12/12

Prime Hook Beach Road

Notes, Photographs (BGP, MCM, ML, EPS)

Black-tailed Godwit is a really rare bird and difficult to identify when alone in basic plumage. Bruce Peterjohn waited for 40 minutes for the bird to finally raise its wings to reveal gleaming white underwings to confirm its identification. The bird remained in the area for several days and was well photographed several times, but missed by many as it moved around. This is the 2nd state record accepted.

Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*)

20 – 23 May 2012

DBRC #12/08

Mispillion Harbor, Slaughter Beach

Notes, Photographs (JH, FR, BF, MR, MAS)

Sabine's Gull is one of those species that were on very few birders' Delaware State List. Before this record there were only three accepted records; two birders saw one at Cape Henlopen Point in May 1983, eight birders saw one on a Delaware pelagic in August 2006 and three birders saw one at Cape Henlopen SP in October 2006. We know that these gulls migrate yearly through Delaware waters in the spring and fall, but they are usually far offshore and there are no convenient organized pelagic trips that get close enough to see the migration. Now, after three days of strong easterly winds there is this generational bird record. A beautiful alternate plumage bird that was cooperative enough to remain several days with the Red Knots in Mispillion Harbor and nearby Slaughter Beach eating horseshoe crab eggs where it was seen and photographed by hundreds of birders from all over the area for a 4th state record.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

27 August 2004

DBRC #04/19

Pelagic in DE waters

Notes, Photographs (EPS)

This is another species that migrates offshore in large numbers and is seen fairly regularly if pelagic trips make it to the canyons in Delaware waters, but are seen usually as distant flybys. Those that know the bird well use the shape and color to identify it. Trying to document these impressions exact enough to convince a DBRC voting member that one definitely saw an Arctic Tern is tough. The answer, of course, is to get a couple of diagnostic photographs as Ed Sigda did of an Arctic Tern that accidentally stayed close enough to be photographed. This

is the 7th accepted record for this species.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

4 May 2012

DBRC #12/06

Draper Road

Notes, Photograph (SL)

When the population of the colony of Eurasian Collared-Doves in Selbyville reached the high teens in 2004, the DBRC decided to remove the Selbyville colony from the Delaware Review Species List but to keep Eurasian Collared-Dove on the list if seen outside of the town. This well photographed bird is the 5th accepted record for this species. However, in April 2013 the number of birds reported within the city of Selbyville was three and by January 2014 only one bird was found so the colony may possibly fail over the next year or so.

Calliope Hummingbird (*Selasphorus calliope*)

8 – 11 November 2012

DBRC #12/21

Newark

Notes, photographs (HD, AU)

Two strange hummingbirds were reported coming to a feeder in Newark, one an obvious *Selasphorus* that was believed to be a Rufous Hummingbird but that was not confirmed. Hank Davis went over to photograph the birds and took several spectacular photographs of the second smaller hummingbird that was quickly identified as a Calliope Hummingbird. Unfortunately, few got to see the bird as it left shortly thereafter. This species has long been on “Delaware’s most expected new vagrant list”. The Committee had no problems accepting this bird based on the photographs for a new state record and the 411th species recorded in Delaware.

Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*)

8 March 2013

DBRC #13/04

Millville

Notes, Photographs (FR, SL, BF, MR, EB, CDC)

As far as I know, no one had Crested Caracara on their “long overdue Delaware species list” but when three of them were found moving around New Jersey as close as Salem and Cape May counties during the fall and winter 2012 – 2013, there was hope. On 8 March 2013 one was found in Delaware by Chris Gagnione on Iron Road, near Holts Landing in Sussex. Many got to see this bird over the week it was being seen and the photographs were excellent. The locals said that the bird had been around that area for months. Again, the Committee had no prob-

lems accepting this large bizarre bird for a new state record and the 412th species recorded in Delaware.

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*)

11 July 2012

DBRC #12/11

Whitehall Neck Road

Notes, Photographs (HBE)

While leaving Bombay Hook NWR after a day of birding and photography, Howard B. Eskin saw a strange flycatcher on the wires, stopped the car, and the bird flew. He stepped out of the car and managed to snap two quick photographs. Both photographs were spectacular showing clearly all of the body and flight feathers of possibly the scruffiest Western Kingbird ever seen in Delaware. However, this record was good enough for the 6th accepted record of the species in the state.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

8 May 2013

DBRC #13/06

Cape Henlopen SP

Notes, Photographs (CMF)

When a rare bird shows up in Sussex County, the person that is called in to photograph it is Chuck Fullmer. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher showed up at the Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch and Sue Gruver, working the Hawk Watch, does call and the bird was documented with a fantastic series of photographs of the bird catching insects. The Committee had no problem accepting this as the 8th state record.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savanna*)

3 May 2012

DBRC #12/15

Coverdale Preserve

Notes, Sketch (IS)

Fork-tailed Flycatcher is a very rare bird anywhere in the ABA Area and very distinctive. Though only seen by one person without a camera, his sketches and notes made during the viewing and his written documentation convinced the Committee that the observer had seen was in fact a Fork-tailed Flycatcher. Careful observations totally excluded Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. This is the 3rd Delaware record for this species.

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

12 May 2012
DBRC #12/07

Cods Road
Notes, Photograph (RC)

Very few Loggerhead Shrikes nest north of our area anymore and consequently over the years the number of sightings is way down. The bird seen and photographed in the record was a very late migrant. This species has in the five previous Delaware spring records migrated between early February and early April. In any event, it was a great find on the Spring Roundup for the 11th state record.

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)

4 November 2012
DBRC #12/17

Augustine Beach
Notes, Photographs (MCM)

10 November 2012
DBRC #12/23

Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch
Notes (FR)

Cave Swallow is a relatively new species to Delaware. Twenty years ago it began collecting in large numbers at Cape May in the fall. It was first reported in Delaware in 1999, and then one in 2006, two in 2007, four in 2008 and now two in 2012 for a total of 10 accepted state records. If this trend continues, this species will probably be removed from the Delaware Review Species list in the next year or two.

Records Archived Without Review

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)

18 January 2014
DBRC #14/03

Wilmington Peninsula Compost Co
Notes, Photograph (TS)

This record has a photograph and a compelling write up but the Committee does not feel that it is sure enough of the identification criteria to make good decisions on Thayer's Gull records, particularly of immature birds. They have decided to archive them at the Delaware Museum of Natural History until the criteria are improved. They are still available for researchers to make their own decisions until we review them.

Records Not Accepted

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)

28 July 1982

Port Mahon Road

DBRC #04/04

Notes

This is an old record but this is also a very rare bird in Delaware with only one accepted record. The multiple reports that make up this particular record were well written by experienced birders about a bird seen in 1982 at Port Mahon Road taken from the archives. After three votes, the Committee finally decided that the observers very likely saw a Little Stint that day but the short viewing time, long distance and small discrepancies noted in the write ups were sufficient to reject this record. Part of the problem with archival records is the changes that have occurred in the identification criteria needed to accept any species.

Reporters

Chris P. Bennett, Eric Braun, Colin D. Campbell, Richard Clifton, Hank Davis, Jeff Davis, Steve Dupont, Andy P. Ednie, Howard B. Eskin, Bert Filemyr, Mike Fritz, Chuck M. Fullmer, John Hoyt, John Janowski, Jim Lewis, Lorraine Logan, Charlie Long, Glen Lovelace, Mikey Lutmerding, Sharon Lynn, Dawn L. C. Miller, Michael M. Moore, John O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Paul O'Brien, Bruce G. Peterjohn, Frank Rohrbacher, Mike Rosengarten, Robert Rufe, Taj Schottland, Ed P. Sigda, Lisa Smith, Michael A. Smith, Ian Stewart, Andy Urquhart.