

**Delaware Bird Records Committee Annual
Report for 2019**

Frank Rohrbacher
on behalf of the Delaware Bird Records Committee

This is the 24th report of the Delaware Bird Records Committee. The Committee members for 2019 are president Jim White, secretary Frank Rohrbacher, Anthony Gonzon, Chris Bennett, John Janowski, and Jean Woods.

At the 15 August 2019 DBRC Annual Meeting, Frank Rohrbacher replaced Anthony Gonzon as a review member. Frank Rohrbacher continues as Secretary and Jim White continues 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 2019. It has distributed these documents to the birding community via the DOS website and the 2019 Ornithologist.

Significant changes have been made in the Delaware State Bird and Review Species Lists because of the major changes in the AOS/ABA Taxonomy that have occurred. Common Raven continues to be a Delaware Review Species, but only if it is recorded south of the C&D Canal. Northern Goshawk is a new Delaware Review Species because it is now rare even on the state hawk watches. This year's summary consists of 38 records that involved 28 species, including the first state records for Wilson's Plover, Black-capped Petrel and Pacific Loon. These additions increase the official Delaware Bird State List to 423 species. Dark-eyed Junco '*oreganus* group' was also accepted as first Delaware State Record.

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 as of 11 November 2018 of the AOS and the ABA. The DBRC emphasizes that a report deemed "not accepted" does not necessarily mean that the Committee believes the species was misidentified, but rather that the documentation submitted was insufficient to establish the claimed identity.

Accepted Records

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, *Dendrocygna autumnalis*

7 June 2018 Kenton Road between Dover and Cheswold
DBRC #18/14 Notes, Photographs (TCS, AG)

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are becoming yearly in Delaware but these three birds, unlike all the others that have visited, were not near the ocean or bay but west of Dover.

Trumpeter Swan, *Cygnus buccinator*

2 January 2019 next to Jones Crossing Landfill
DBRC #19/01 Notes, Photographs (BGP, FR)

At the Seaford CBC on 2 January 2019, 3300 Tundra Swans were counted at Sand Pit Pond at the entrance of Jones Crossing Landfill. This was the highest count ever made there. Mixed with all the Tundra Swan chatter were the calls of Trumpeter Swans, sparking a call to fellow birders that 26 Trumpeter Swans were present. Over the next few days, the number of both Tundra Swan and Trumpeter Swan decreased, but many birders saw at least a few Trumpeter Swans the week after the CBC.

Eurasian Collared-Dove, *Streptopelia decaocto*

17 April 2019 Cods Road
DBRC #19/11 Notes, Photographs (RC)

While the Eurasian Collared-Dove colony has been active in Selbyville since 1998, the DRBC decided to leave the bird on the Delaware Review Species if the species were recorded outside of that town beginning in 2002. This is only the seventh such record since then and only the third record since 2009. These last three reports are from April and May and found within a mile or so from this area: one on Prime Hook Beach Road in 2011, one on Draper Road and this one on Cods Road. They are possibly birds from Selbyville that moved out after the winter when they couldn't find a mate.

Yellow Rail, *Coturnicops noveboracensis*

4 April – 5 May 2019 Pickering Beach Road
DBRC #19/12 Notes, Photographs (FR, KO, RCr, MG, RG)

This is the seventh accepted record for this species in Delaware, one that you know is a tough bird to find when three of the records are specimens including one dating back to 1908. It is a fairly common migrant through Delaware during April and May and during September and October, but you have to spend a lot of time searching – if you even have a place to search. Port Mahon marshes, which had been rail

centers in the state, have been replumbed to fight West Nile Fever. Black Rails and Yellow Rails are still at Bombay Hook NWR and probably at Island Farm at Prime Hook NWR, but you can't access the area overnight. The good news is that some new possible areas have been added in Delaware, Port Penn and 1000 Acre Marsh, Pickering Beach Road, and Big Stone Beach Road. The latter two spots are getting Black Rail and with this find on Pickering Beach Road, I think that we will see Yellow Rail, again. This record is the only accepted record since 2006. The fact that it stayed the same spot for two weeks was a treat.

Sandhill Crane, *Antigone canadensis*

22 March 2015

Dragon Run Park

DBRC #15/04

Notes, Sound Recording (TS)

This species is no longer a Delaware Review Species, but we eventually will get around to voting on all of the records we receive. No photographs but a good write up and the voice recording was a great addition by Tim.

Pacific Golden-Plover, *Pluvialis fulva*

28 September – 5 October 2003

Rt. 9 & Whitehall Neck Road

DBRC #03/20

Notes, Photographs (MB, BGP, AG, LG)

When this bird was seen on Whitehall Neck Road and again off Route 9, there was a great deal of interest because these great birders felt sure about their identification. Now the Committee is finally trying to catch up old records and found in this record a lost gem. It was voted on and sailed through without any problems.

Wilson's Plover, *Charadrius wilsonia*

17 May 2019

Bowers Beach

DBRC #19/14

Notes, Photographs (AB)

While working with the Delaware Shorebird Project, Andrew Baksh and two others were south of South Bowers looking for bands and flags on shorebirds when he spotted a medium-sized bird and studied it for 15 minutes. He then took some beautiful pictures of the alternate plumage Wilson's Plover. Though he alerted other birders, the bird was not seen again. This species is long overdue, and this bird is the first Delaware record.

Great Skua, *Stercorarius skua*

6 February 2016

8 28'33.1"N 73 53'33.3W

DBRC #18/18

Notes, Photographs (AG, ML, SW, AL, PAG)

This bird was well seen and photographed on a winter 'See Life Paulagic' out of Cape May. This is only the third accepted Delaware record of Great Skua. The first two in 1943 and 1995, but with today's better boats that can go out further, it was odd that it took so long to find one again. I'm sure all the participants on this pelagic trip were happy with this find.

South Polar Skua, *Stercorarius maccormicki*

13 August 2018

38°34'05.7"N 73°11'49.8"W

DBRC #18/19

Notes, Photographs (AG, TJ, DG, KL)

South Polar was somewhat predictable when the first five birds were seen from 1999 and 2006 because they were found by the fishing trawlers and scallop trawlers that were common then. Today, the fish and scallops are gone along with the boats, so there was little to be seen until this sighting so were the South Polar Skuas. This bird was found on the 'See Life Paulagic' pelagic trip that last August that produced so many great birds.

Common Murre, *Uria aalge*

17 February 2011

Delaware waters, Sussex County

DBRC #11/07

Notes and Photograph (TL)

19 January 2019

Indian River Inlet

DBRC #19/03

Notes, Photographs (AG, CPB, NLH)

The DBRC spent the past year trying to clear some old records which were bypassed for various reasons and this is one of those. This record is one that came in when this species was rare off the coast, although the record itself was straightforward with a great photograph. Since this record was created, Common Murre has become a sure thing on winter pelagic trips, so much that the rules have been changed and this species is now only a Delaware Review Species if seen from shore. This has only happened once, during a January DOS Shore Watch field trip when one drifted in from the ocean, in and through Indian River Inlet. Three written documents supported by some great photographs made this record easy to accept.

Franklin's Gull, *Leucophaeus pipixcan*

13 November 2015

DBRC #15/16

Augustine Beach

Notes (MCM)

28 October 2018

DBRC #18/22

Port Penn Tract

Notes, Photograph (KN)

Franklin Gulls are relatively rare in the state even though these two records set the number of accepted records at 17. There have been big years, such as 2015, that had multiple sightings, but that scenario is not typical. The situation is usually that a bird is found among thousands of Laughing Gulls and documented. Three years after the 2015 invasion, Kelly Nunn was the only person who found and photographed this single bird for a great find.

Pacific Loon, *Gavia pacifica*

22 July – 2 August 2016

DBRC #16/10

Cape Henlopen Point

Notes, Photographs (BGP, TM, CC)

The DBRC has a long history of turning down Pacific Loon records. The Committee met its match when three excellent birders produced written records with fifteen photographs that could not be denied. It was approved as a first Delaware record although it still required two rounds of votes to pass — some old habits are hard to break.

Black-capped Petrel, *Pterodroma hasitata*

18 September 2016

DBRC #18/16

38°28'55.0"N+73°14'57.0"W

Notes, Photographs (PAG, AG, BB, DB, MS, DW)

13 August 2018

DBRC #18/17

Multiple sites in Delaware waters

Notes, Photographs (AG, TJ, DG, KL, PAG)

Black-capped Petrel was an expected species at the Wilmington Canyon as the number of warm water species such as Leach's and Band-rumped storm-petrels have soared over the past five years on early fall pelagic trips. The first accepted record was of a very accommodating single bird on the September 2016 'See Life Paulagic' out of Atlantic County, NJ in Delaware waters lead by Paul A. Guris. Many excellent photographs were taken. The second record was made on an August 2018 'See Life Paulagic' trip, also out of Atlantic County, NJ, where 18 birds were seen in Delaware waters. Again, many photographs were

taken.

Wood Stork, *Mycteria americana*

21 September 2017

DBRC #18/07

Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch

Notes (JO)

Wood Stork is a very rare bird in Delaware, with this being only the fourth Delaware record and the first record being a leg bone found Gordons Pond in 1973 with a band on it. We are waiting for another like the second which was seen in Bombay Hook NWR in 1997 and lingered for many to see. Otherwise, I suggest that if you need it that you sit on either state hawk watch for 30 years and hope.

Reddish Egret, *Egretta rufescens*

13 – 16 October 2018

DBRC #18/05

Gordons Pond

Photographs, Notes, (JO, BGP, CB, AK)

Another rare bird from Florida, this Reddish Egret was found at Gordons Pond and was seen by many for a couple of days. It was an immature and is only the third Delaware record. Great find.

Roseate Spoonbill, *Platalea ajaja*

13,15 June 2018

DBRC #18/12

Ted Harvey WA, Big Stone Beach

Notes, Photographs (LB)

10 – 11 August 2018

DBRC #18/15

Big Stone Beach

Notes, Photographs (AK, FR, CPB)

This is the second year this species has been observed in Delaware and, like the first sighting in 2009, the number of different individuals is unknown. We have decided to take these two sightings as two different records as they are two months apart. DBRC #18/12 is quite a story, with a new Delaware birder on 13 June birding Big Stone Beach. He looked up and saw a young Roseate, grabbed his cell phone and photographed it. On 15 June the same person went to check out Ted Harvey WA, looked up and saw a young Roseate, grabbed his cell phone and photographed it. Clearly, a wonderful addition to our birding community! On 10 –11 August a single bird was found at Big Stone Beach and was seen by many birders.

Tropical Kingbird, *Tyrannus melancholicus*

10 June 2017
DBRC #17/03

Ashton Tract
Photograph, Notes (KN, CC)

This bird certainly appeared to be a Tropical Kingbird but without any vocalization, it was a tough call. Finally, this bird was accepted with a 4-1 vote in the third and final vote to be a Tropical Kingbird and not a Couch's Kingbird. This is the second Delaware record for this species.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher, *Tyrannus savana*

29 June 2018
DBRC #18/11

Ashton Tract
Notes, Photographs (JD, KW, SM)

This South American species is a spectacular find anywhere in the ABA area except Hawaii and appears several times a year somewhere. This is the fourth Delaware record and for a state that, in most states, would be smaller than a county, must be an ABA record. It is all about location and if you start your trip up north in Ontario, New England or New York, Delaware has to be on any flight path that takes you back to the Amazon or Chile. The photographs for this record were spectacular.

Common Raven, *Corvus corax*

15 March 2018 – 18 April 2018

Newark Reservoir, Middle Run
WA, U of D Farms

DBRC #18/10

Notes, Photographs (CD, MK, PC, FR)

21 May 2018
DBRC #18/11

Brandywine Creek SP
Notes, Photographs (APE)

8 January 2019
DBRC #19/04

Harry's Pond, Brandywine Town Center
Notes, Photograph (AO, KO)

17 – 31 March 2019
DBRC #19/09

Wrangle Hill Road
Notes, Photographs (MCM, FR, CR, JD, KS)

Reports of Common Raven have been very common from Yorklyn south to Newark for the past few years. Breeding has not been established and, in fact, the number of birds in Delaware is not known. The highest total seen was four at the Ashland Nature Center Hawk Watch last fall. DBRC #18/10 is a collage of the Newark area birds seen last spring; DBRC #18/11 is the report of a pair at Brandywine Creek SP also from spring 2018; DBRC #19/04 is one of several reports

of a pair that was seen often during this winter; and DBRC #19/09 contains a number of reports and photographs showing birds in Wrangle Hill Road in New Castle. The first accepted record was of a single bird well photographed in fall 2011 by Kim Steinger from the Ashland Nature Center Hawk Watch. It took until late 2015 for the second bird to appear at the same place.

The hub for this species was Yorklyn a few miles away. In 2016, it continued with numerous reports from Yorklyn, Bancroft Mills and the Ashland Nature Center. Then in 2017 and 2018, it began being regularly seen in the Newark area. In 2018 and 2019 Common Raven began moving east. Obviously, recording all of the Common Raven reports as Review Species would be untenable, so the DBRC has decided to only accept records that occur south of the C&D canal.

Cave Swallow, *Petrochelidon fulva*

13 November 2015
DBRC #15/21

Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch
Notes (JO)

Cave Swallows usually appear in waves in certain years, with 2015 one of those years. They collect in Cape May sometimes in the hundreds and fly in over the water. In the fall, Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch is often the place to be when this happens. This bird came ashore, over the hawk watch and fully cooperated with identification efforts, twisting and turning to show all of its marking and colorings. This species is no longer a Delaware Review Species.

Evening Grosbeak, *Coccothraustes vespertinus*

17 March 2019
DBRC #19/10

German Road, Sussex Co.
Notes, Photograph (DL)

After 15 years with virtually no sightings in Delaware and one year after it was added to the Review Species List by the DBRC, Evening Grosbeak was seen and photographed at a feeder. Build it and they will come.

Dark-eyed 'Oregon' Junco, *Junco hyemalis 'oreganus' group*

29 January 2019, 3 March 2019
DBRC #19/05

Hockessin
Notes, Photographs (J-MG)

This is the first accepted record of this 'oreganus group' subspecies of Dark-eyed Junco. This bird was well-documented twice. First when it was seen and photographed at a feeder and the second time when it

reappeared at the same feeder five weeks later.

Black-throated Gray Warbler, *Setophaga nigrescens*

28 September 2018 Parking lot overseeing Cape Henlopen Point
DBRC #18/20 Notes (AG, CPB)

This species is very rare anywhere on the East Coast, so it is always exciting that we have a popular site for them at Cape Henlopen Point. This Black-throated Black Warbler was recorded by two experienced birders who saw the bird well and provided the Committee with extremely well-written documentation that not only described well the species but eliminated all other similar species. This bird is the second accepted record in Delaware.

Painted Bunting, *Passerina ciris*

15 – 20 January 2019 Dixie Line Road, Newark
DBRC #19/02 Notes, Photographs (FR, KO, MK)

20 May 2019 Little Creek WMA
DBRC #19/16 Photographs, Notes (HT)

The Dixie Line Road Painted Bunting returned very early this year in mid-January, but it did return to the same feeder it was seen at previously. In 2017, it was seen in late March and in 2018 in late February. The second bird was a classic ‘green bird’ found in the wilds of Little Creek WMA and photographed beautifully.

Records Not Accepted

Anna’s Hummingbird, *Calypte anna*

13 November 2012 – 1 April 2013 Delaplane Road, Newark
DBRC #12/20, DBRC #14/11 Notes, Photographs

Red-necked Stint, *Calidris ruficollis*

18 September 2016 Bombay Hook NWR
DBRC #16/09 Notes

Yellow-legged Gull, *Larus michahellis*

2-3 June 1998 Port Mahon Road
DBRC #98/42 Notes, Photographs

Roseate Tern, *Sterna dougallii*

27 April 2017 Port Penn Impoundment
DBRC #17/06 Notes

Arctic Tern, *Sterna paradisaea*

6 May 2016 Cape Henlopen SP
DBRC #16/05 Notes, Photographs

Cave Swallow, *Petrochelidon fulva*

13 November 2015 Augustine Beach
DBRC #15/17 Notes

All of these records were rejected after 2 – 3 rounds. The DBRC believed that the documentation just didn’t fully establish the species and in all of these cases the Committee believed that these observers very likely did see these species.

Reporters

Maurice Barnhill, Chris P. Bennett, Lucas Bobay, Bobby Brown, David Brown, Colin Campbell, Patrick Carney, Richard Clifton, Ryan Crane, Curt Davis, James DuHadaway, Andie P. Ednie, Timothy Freiday, Melissa Gallardy, Ross Gallardy, Jean-Marie Gauthier, Doug Gochfeld, Anthony Gonzon, Larry Graff, Steven Graff, Paul A. Guris, Nancy L. Hedgespeth, Tom Johnson, William Kaselow, Megan Kasprzak, Alissa Kegelman, Alex Lamoreaux, Michael Lanzone, Tony Leukering, Dawn Lukitsch, Sean McCandless, Taylor McLean, Keith Leonard, Michael C. Moore, Kelley Nunn, Amy O’Neil, Kathie O’Neil, Jen Ottinger, Bruce G. Peterjohn, Tom Reed, Frank Rohrbacher, Christopher Rowe, Matthew Sabatine, Tim Schreckengost, Thomas C. Shaffer, Kim Steininger, Harry Tiebout, Ken Watt, David Weber, Bill Whan, Scott Whittle.