

**Delaware Bird Records Committee Annual
Report for 2020**

Frank Rohrbacher
on behalf of the Delaware Bird Records Committee

This is the 25th report of the Delaware Bird Records Committee. The Committee for 2019 were president Jim White, secretary Frank Rohrbacher, and members Anthony Gonzon, Chris Bennett, John Janowski, and Jean Woods.

At the 27 August 2020 DBRC Annual Meeting, held on Zoom, Anthony Gonzon replaced Chris Bennett as a review member. 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 September 2020. It has distributed these documents to the birding community via the DOS website and the 2020 *Delaware Ornithologist*.

Changes have been made in the Delaware State Bird and Review Species Lists because of the changes that have occurred in the American Ornithological Society (AOS) Checklist. In addition, the DBRC voted to remove Black-bellied Whistling-Duck and Painted Bunting from the Delaware Review Species List.

This year's summary consists of 25 records that involved 21 different species, including the first state record for Neotropical Cormorant. This addition increases the official Delaware Bird State List to 424 species.

For the summary below, date, location, DBRC reference number, and documentation received are listed for all records. Accepted records use the standard taxonomic order as of 1 July 2020 of the AOS.

Accepted Records

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck , <i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i>	
5, 29 June 2019	Bombay Hook NWR
DBRC #19/17	Notes, Photograph (SN, PM)
11 July 2019	Wolfe Neck WTP
DBRC #19/19	Notes, Photograph (DG)
12–15 Jul 2019	Lewes
DBRC #19/20	Notes, Photographs (MS, MK, SL)

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are now yearly in Delaware but in the first record, four birds were recorded three weeks apart at Bombay Hook NWR and are undoubtedly the same group of birds because they were feeding in the same weed mats at Raymond Pool. These two records are from two birders who seem to have been the only ones to observe them, which shows how well the birds blend in with Mallards. They are also nocturnal, and may have been feeding in the same area every night, except for the two days that they had a late night, staying up past dawn allowing the birders to find them. The Wolfe Neck WTP has been the center of activity for 3 to 4 years and is probably their roost for the daylight hours, though they seem to wander at night in a corridor along the coast from Lewes to Rehoboth and a couple of miles inland. With breeding in Delaware now confirmed at the Wolfe Neck WTP with stunning photographs of 2 adults and 5 ducklings, 22 Aug 2019 (NC, eBird record number), the DBRC has decided to remove this species from the Delaware Review Species List.

Pink-footed Goose, *Anser brachyrhynchus*

28 December 2010 – 24 January 2020
DBRC #19/30

Shorts Beach, Cods Rod
Notes, Photographs (JS, AK)

A flock of 60,000 Snow Geese formed by mid-December in the PHNWR area and roosted off the coast from Fowlers Beach to Broadkill Beach in Delaware Bay, which is a little later than normal. Every morning, they rise from the water and spread out over the agricultural land. They return in late afternoon and usually feed in some the fields from Draper Road to Cods Road. On 28 December, a Pink-footed Goose was photographed roosting at Shorts Beach. The search began to re-locate this bird, but it was not until 24 January that it was reported again on Buttonwood Road. From then on until 21 March, it was reported almost daily, usually feeding between Draper Road and Cods Road. Hundreds of birders and photographers enjoyed this bird and the thousands of Snow Geese with it. This is the 3rd Delaware Record for this species, the 1st of which was at Bombay Hook NWR in 1953. The 2nd bird was 2 years ago in flock of Snow Geese that was in the same area, eating in the same corners of the same fields and roosting in the same place, so it is likely that this is the same bird that was here in 2017.

Trumpeter Swan, *Cygnus buccinator*

25 May–15 August 2015
DBRC #15/09

Bombay Hook NWR
Notes, Photographs (BGP, FR, CC)

This bird was hiding in plain sight during the summer of 2015. It was a summering young swan, but was in full molt during July through August, suggesting a Trumpeter Swan with some yellow on the bill in front of its eye. A hybrid is very unlikely because a Trumpeter Swan in Delaware would undoubtedly have come from the Ontario flock and a Tundra Swan from a nest in the far north. Further investigation showed a small percentage of the Ontario flock have yellow on the bill for a year or so after its HY according to Ontario nest records. It took three rounds but it was accepted as a Trumpeter Swan by the Committee.

Eared Grebe, *Podiceps nigricollis*

3 November 2019
DBRC #19/26

Delaware Seashore SP
Notes, Photograph (NH)

This is the 13th record for this species, all of which have been between Roosevelt Inlet and Indian River Inlet. In the past, they were just rare, but this is the 1st record in seven years. It is likely that they are present yearly, but the old practice of spending hours at Rehoboth Bay scoping dozens of Horned Grebes that winter in the inland bays to find a needle in a haystack has lost its charm. A perfect picture of an Eared Grebe is hard to resist.

Thick-billed Murre, *Uria lomvia*

31 January 2020
DBRC #20/06

Bennett's Pier Road
Notes, Photographs (KH)

Though Thick-billed Murres were fairly common this year on Long Island, NY and a few were reported on a fishing/pelagic trip in New Jersey, the last thing that a birder would expect to find at the end of Bennett's Pier Road on the Delaware Bay in Kent County would be this species. The call went out but the bird was not re-located. Fortunately, the photographs lived on for the 5th Delaware State Record, making it the 3rd record (if you don't count the 1896 and 1987 specimens).

White-faced Storm-Petrel, *Pelagodroma marina*

12 August 2019
DBRC #19/23

Multiple stops in Delaware waters
Notes, Photographs (DW, JDe, PS,

The 12 August 2019 See Life Paulagics pelagic out of Cape May, NJ in Delaware waters was one for the record books as an astounding total of 13 White-faced Storm-Petrels were reported on 3 stops in

Delaware waters. This is the 6th Delaware State Record for this rare species. In the past, one to two birds jumping across the water was a good day if you saw it and a great day if you got some photographs.

Magnificent Frigatebird, *Fregata magnificens*

14 August 2019
DBRC #19/24

Fenwick Island Condominium
Notes, Photographs (JV)

Three stunning photographs of an adult female Magnificent Frigate Bird were enough for the DBRC to accept this the 3rd accepted Delaware record. Three other records of *Fregata* sp. with photographs, which were very likely the same species, were not accepted because the committee could not rule out the possibility that they were records of either Great or Lesser Frigatebirds.

Neotropic Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

14 April 2020
DBRC #20/10

Bombay Hook NWR
Notes, Photograph (JM)

This cormorant was sitting on a post next to the road at the end of Shearneck Pool at Bombay Hook NWR. It was photographed and later identified as a long-awaited 1st Delaware State Record of a Neotropic Cormorant. The photograph of this alternative plumage bird was of text book quality.

Reddish Egret, *Egretta rufescens*

11 May 2007
DBRC #18/23

Cape Henlopen SP
Notes, (BGP)

This is an old record that came to light several years ago that establishes that an immature Reddish Egret flew north along the coast from the Great Dune at Cape Henlopen SP on 11 May 2007. The written documentation clearly describes an immature bird and eliminated all possible alternatives to increase the accepted number of records to 4.

Northern Goshawk, *Accipiter gentilis*

5 January 2020
DBRC #20/02

Warren Tract
Notes (JJ, JSk)

Northern Goshawk has become so rarely seen in Delaware, even on the two state hawk watches, that the DBRC decided to put it on the Delaware Review Species List last year to follow the decline of this

species as it stays north as each summer is warmer than the last. On the Middletown CBC, an adult was seen well and the written documentation establish beyond a doubt that it was a Northern Goshawk

Ash-throated Flycatcher, *Myiarchus cinerascens*
15 January 2020 Marian R. Okie Memorial Wildlife Preserve
DBRC #20/04 Notes, Photographs (DP)

This was great find that remained for more than a month allowing dozens of birders to add it to their Delaware lists. This was the 5th Delaware record and the species has been seen every three to four years since it was first found in 2007.

Tropical Kingbird, *Tyrannus melancholicus*
28 November 2019 Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch
DBRC #19/25 Photograph, Notes (JO)

Excellent photographs suggested this bird was either a Tropical Kingbird or a Couch's Kingbird. Fortunately, the bird broke the tie by singing as a Tropical Kingbird, making acceptance a slam dunk. This is the 3rd Delaware State record for this species and like before was a one-day-wonder.

Western Kingbird, *Tyrannus verticalis*
4 January 2020 Scrap Tavern Road
DBRC #20/01 Notes, Photographs (DF, CPB, MK)

This is a nice bird at any time, but was particularly nice for the Milford CBC. The written and photographic evidence made this an easy count for the DBRC. This is the 10th Delaware State Record for this species, but it has been missed lately; it was last sighted in 2014.

Loggerhead Shrike, *Lanius ludovicianus*
14 February 2019 Fowler Beach Road
DBRC #19/07 Notes, Photographs (DP)

The only breeding grounds north of our state for this species are in Ontario, but the area there is shrinking yearly. The only bird that is confirmed as actually having migrated to Ontario was seen Bennett's Pier Road on 5 March 2010 and 6 February 2011. It returned there on 7 November 2011 with an Ontario band. Though this is the 15th record,

the last wintering bird was at Dover Air Force Base in 2013 and before that for two years at Island Farm in 2000–2001. Most of the others are either dispersal or are migrants from Canada.

Common Raven, *Corvus corax*
16 July 2019 Charles E. Price Memorial Park
DBRC #19/21 Notes, Photograph (MR)

As soon as the line drawn in 2019 that Common Raven was a Delaware Review Species if it were found south of the C&D Canal, one was reported there.

Evening Grosbeak, *Coccothraustes vespertinus*
11 November 2019 Adam's Dam Road
DBRC #19/22 Notes, Photograph (BS, KS)

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

Dark-eyed Junco 'Oregon Group', *Junco hyemalis 'Oregon group'*
8 March 2019 near Hazletville, Kent Co.
DBRC #19/08 Notes, Photographs (BM)

This is the 2nd Delaware State Record accepted of this 'Oregon Group' subspecies of Dark-eyed Junco. Ironically, this bird was photographed at a feeder on the same day that the 1st Delaware State Record bird was last seen at its feeder in Hockessin.

White-crowned Sparrow 'Gambel's',
Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii
17 January 2020 Bucks Road, Milford,
DBRC #20/05 Notes, Photograph (NC)

Subspecies of common birds can really be a challenge to collect, because no one looks that hard at each bird once they make the general identification of them. In this case, there were four to five White-crowned Sparrows, and once identified birders logically then look for the Harris's Sparrow that might in with these birds. In this case, not only did this Gambel's quickly get recognized but it was well photographed.

Western Tanager, *Piranga ludoviciana*

24 December 2019

DBRC #19/29

Bombay Hook NWR

Notes, Photographs (RC, CPB, FR)

Two years after this species was accepted as a Delaware State List, a live bird was found by birders. The bird was readily accessible for hundreds of birders, photographers, and ordinary visitors to Bombay Hook headquarters. It was good enough to make itself available to all, feeding on berries against the headquarters wall or sitting in small trees a few feet away. It was even kind enough to stay though the holidays, waiting for crowds to come see it again in the new year, allowing birders to start their lists with a big win.

Painted Bunting, *Passerina ciris*

28 November 2019

DBRC #19/27

Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch

Photographs, Notes (JO)

16 February 2020

DBRC #20/08

South Halsey Road

Notes, Photographs (SW)

22 February 2020

DBRC #20/09

Lewes

Notes, Photographs (ME, RE)

Painted Buntings were very rare in Delaware with only 3 accepted reports by 2000, and an additional 7 in the next 15 years. From 2016, this species has been reported annually with 4 in 2018, 3 in 2019 and 3 in the first half of this year. Though the Committee really enjoys the beautiful bird pictures, it decided to remove it from the Review Species List.

Reporters

Chris P. Bennett, Steve & Josette Bonamo, David Brown, Colin Campbell, Milton Collins, Ryan Crane, Nancy Cunningham, Jason Denesevich (JDe), Ken Enderson, Rob Evens, Marie Evans, David Fees, Anthony Gonzon, David Guarieri, Paul A. Guris, Nancy L. Hedgespeth, Megan Kasprzak, Alissa Kegelman, Sharon Lynn, Brian McCaffrey, Patrick McGill, Julie Memmolo, Michael C. Moore, Sara Nooner, Jen Ottinger, Bruce G. Peterjohn, Dick Plambeck, Frank Rohrbacher, Michael Rosengarten, Jacob Saucier, John Skibicki (JSk), Marilyn Spitz, Kim Steininger, Bill Stewart, Patrick Syiong, John Vassallo, David Weber, Susan West.