

## ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF TINICUM AND NEARBY AREAS

JOHN C. MILLER

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The productive birding areas in and near the Tinicum Wildlife Preserve are today much more compressed than they were in 1949 when I first became interested in birds. The Philadelphia Airport has taken much more land, and a number of industrial concerns have sprung up or expanded in the area. Silt from dredging operations has further reduced the extent of marshlands along the Delaware River. Construction of the new Interstate Route 95 is resulting in the decimation of extensive wild rice marshes south of the Preserve. Most of the woods and fields immediately adjoining the Preserve have been bulldozed over in connection with the Eastwick Redevelopment Project. The sum total of these and other encroachments has now limited most of the good birding areas to the Preserve itself, and this central area has undoubtedly only been saved by the dedicated work of conservationists.

The following notes and observations cover the period from 1958 until late summer, 1970. These are taken largely from my own records, with some additional data supplied by other observers.

Birds new to the list (as published in the 1959 *Cassinia*) are marked with an asterisk.

**GANNET:** There are two additional records. One was present on the Preserve for three days commencing May 3, 1961 (James Carroll, Joseph Devlin). It was subsequently picked up dead. An immature bird was seen in flight over the Preserve on May 4, 1967, by Thomas Dougherty.

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT:** I noted a flock of 53 birds in flight on April 15, 1965, and additional flights of over 300 on April 17, 1968, and of over 100 on April 27, 1969.

**CATTLE EGRET:** This bird is now a regular visitor to the area in spring and fall, with the maximum number being perhaps half a dozen.

**CANADA GOOSE:** Several pairs now nest on the Preserve each year, and a few birds remain until the winter freeze, at which ~~time~~ they undoubtedly fly over to the river.

**BRANT:** I saw single birds on January 14, 1965, and November 2, 1966. On October 30, 1968, I noted a flock of about 250 in flight over the Preserve.

**SNOW GOOSE:** There are a few additional records for the area. Single birds, apparently uninjured, summered in 1964 and 1965.

**GADWALL:** This species has become increasingly common in the spring, fall, and early winter. It will very possibly be the next waterfowl species to be found breeding in the area.

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**PINTAIL:** Although this is still the most common waterfowl species on the Preserve, numbers in the past few years have not been as large as earlier recorded. My own highest count in the last ten years is 15,000. A count more than double that was made in 1952.

Pintails with young were seen on June 7, 1966 (*Cassinia*, Vol. 49, 1965-1966, p. 30), and May 14, 1969.

**COMMON TEAL:** This species is now a regular spring and fall transient and would undoubtedly remain throughout the winter if not frozen out. Four birds were present on March 24, 1961, and three birds on March 4, 1969. The Tinicum Wildlife Preserve is certainly one of the best spots along the eastern seaboard at which to observe this species.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL:** This species continues to become more common, with a high count of 1,500 on March 30, 1969. There are two additional nesting records, in June, 1966, and June, 1967.

**EUROPEAN WIDGEON:** There are two additional area records, a bird present from March 10 to March 24, 1960 (James Carroll, George Lamb) and another bird seen on March 13, 1966.

**SHOVELER:** A much commoner bird in the area in recent years, with a high count of over 500 on April 1, 1969. Thomas Dougherty and I found a nest with 11 eggs on May 15, 1966 (*Cassinia*, Vol. 49, 1965-1966, p. 30). In the last several years I have seen Shovelers with young although no additional nests have been actually found.

**OLDSQUAW:** This bird is now seen quite regularly in limited numbers along the Delaware River near the Philadelphia Airport.

**WHITE-WINGED SCOTER:** This species is seen quite regularly along the river. One summered on the Preserve in 1966.

**RED-TAILED HAWK:** This bird is becoming less common as a winter resident, undoubtedly because of habitat loss.

**RED-SHOULDERED HAWK:** This species also continues to decline in numbers with the lack of suitable habitat.

**BALD EAGLE:** This species has declined drastically from a once reasonably common level. I know of only one record in 1969 and none through mid-year 1970.

**MARSH HAWK:** This bird no longer nests in the area and is becoming increasingly scarce in the winter with the decimation of suitable habitat.

**OSPREY:** This bird continues to be a regular spring and fall migrant. None breed in the area.

**BOBWHITE:** In the late 1960's it was evident that this species was becoming increasingly common at all seasons. With the recent (i.e. 1970) elimination of woods and field cover for the Eastwick Redevelopment Project, it is difficult to see how this trend can continue. Two nests which I found in July, 1966, were the first known in the Tinicum area in a number of years (*Cassinia*, Vol. 50, 1966-1967, p. 25).

**\*SANDHILL CRANE:** One bird was present on the Preserve from July 4, 1969, to July 10, 1969 (James Carroll and others).

**KING RAIL:** This is no longer a regular breeding species in the area, but good numbers can still be seen during migration.

**YELLOW RAIL:** A bird was flushed by William C. Russell in the northeastern corner of the Preserve on March 27, 1963.

**BLACK RAIL:** With the aid of a dog Paul DeAoun flushed a bird in September, 1962. The same observer saw another bird in mid-April, 1970. Both of these records were for the Preserve proper.

**AMERICAN COOT:** A more common bird in recent years, both as a migrant and as a breeder. I found two nests in 1968 and one in 1969. James Carroll found two nests in 1970.

**GOLDEN PLOVER:** This species continues to be seen annually during the fall migration, but numbers have not been high in recent years.

**WHIMBREL:** James Carroll saw one on the Preserve on September 16, 1967.

**DUNLIN:** A few birds wintered in the area in 1967-1968 and the two subsequent winters.

**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER:** This species is still a regular late fall migrant. One bird was seen on December 20, 1958.

**WESTERN SANDPIPER:** Two birds were seen quite regularly during the winter of 1967-1968. This constitutes our first winter record.

**BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER:** There are two additional records for this species, both from the Philadelphia Airport. I saw one on September 19, 1961. On September 20, 1964, Harry Goldstein and James Meritt saw eight. The latter birds stayed for ten days or so and were seen by many people.

**MARbled GODWIT:** There are three additional records, all of single birds: November 4, 1962; September 3, 1964; and September 24, 1967.

**HUDSONIAN GODWIT:** There are three additional records. Single birds were seen on September 29, 1961, and September 19, 1964. Two birds were observed on September 25, 1967.

**RUFF:** This species continues to show up with amazing frequency. Among my observations during the last ten years are the following:

May 14, 1961 (1)  
August 4 to 27, 1962 (1)  
May 4, 1963 (1)  
July 13, 1963 (1)  
July 6, 1964 (1)  
April 6, 1965 (1)  
May 6, 1965 (1)  
May 15, 1966 (1)  
August 10, 1967 (1)  
May 12, 1968 (1)  
July 26, 1970 (2)

**AMERICAN AVOCET:** There are two additional records. A single bird was present on the Preserve from September 10, 1965, to October 3, 1965, and three birds in spring plumage were seen on May 30, 1969.

**BLACK-NECKED STILT:** One bird was seen by Joseph Devlin on July 13, 1961.

**WILSON'S PHALAROPE:** Five were present on September 4, 1964, and one on September 25, 1967.

**NORTHERN PHALAROPE:** There are four additional records: one on September 9, 1961; one from July 19, 1962, through September 7, 1962; one on September 2, 1963; and one on May 18, 1968.

**GLAUCOUS GULL:** This species has become almost a regular winter visitor, with records of at least one bird during each of the last five winters.

**ICELAND GULL:** I have seen at least one of this species during eight of the last ten winters. My high count was three on January 20, 1969.

**BONAPARTE'S GULL:** There are now a few winter records for the Delaware River.

**LEAST TERN:** Although still an uncommon bird in the area, there is one additional nesting record. Mr. Nelson Hoy found a nest with two eggs on June 14, 1961.

**BLACK TERN:** In recent years this species has occasionally turned up in large numbers during migration. I saw about 200 on one date in May, 1967.

**SNOWY OWL:** There are four additional records, all of single birds: December 23, 1962; December 19, 1964; March 14, 1965; and December 21, 1968 (Thomas Dougherty).

**LONG-EARED OWL:** There are four additional records: one on December 5, 1965; two on March 17, 1967; eight on December 24, 1967; and one on November 20, 1969.

**SHORT-EARED OWL:** During the last few years this bird has been reasonably common during the winter. The highway construction currently going on near the airport will undoubtedly have an adverse effect. On May 15, 1966, Thomas Dougherty and I found a nest with four young and two eggs (*Cassinia*, Vol. 49, 1965-1966, p. 30).

**SAW-WHET OWL:** This species has undoubtedly been more common in the area in winter than generally supposed. My high count was four on November 20, 1965. Saw-whets will undoubtedly be more difficult to find in the future because of habitat destruction.

**WESTERN KINGBIRD:** One additional record, a bird seen by James Carroll and J. Piatt on December 3, 1961.

**ACADIAN FLYCATCHER:** This species used to nest in willow woods near the airport. With the leveling of this ground for airport use, the Acadian Flycatcher has disappeared as a breeding bird.

**LONG-BILLED MARSH WREN:** There have been several additional winter records.

**SHORT-BILLED MARSH WREN:** Insofar as I am aware, there have been no local records since 1954.

**NORTHERN SHRIKE:** There is one additional record for the area, a bird which I saw on November 12, 1966.

**WARBLING VIREO:** To my knowledge, this species no longer nests in the area.

**\*PROTHONOTARY WARBLER:** A singing male was seen on the Preserve on May 19 and 20, 1958.

**\*YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD:** One bird was at a feeder in Glenolden on January 14, 1969 (Carl Larup).

**RUSTY BLACKBIRD:** These birds are becoming considerably more common as winter residents.

**BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE:** There are two additional records of single birds, one seen in the spring of 1961 by James Carroll and the other in the spring of 1966 by Thomas Dougherty.

**\*SUMMER TANAGER:** I have three spring records: an adult male on May 1, 1966; an adult male on May 6, 1968; and a female on May 11, 1969.

**BLUE GROSBEAK:** Two pairs were present in the springs of 1967, 1968, and 1969. One pair was seen with young in 1967 and in 1969.

**\*HOUSE FINCH:** A few of this species were seen in 1966, 1967, and 1968.

**\*RED CROSSBILL:** Dr. Keith Richards and I saw two birds on January 17, 1970.

**\*WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL:** I saw a female on December 24, 1963. This is my only record for the area.

**\*GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW:** One bird was seen by Joseph Devlin on November 12, 1961.

**\*LARK SPARROW:** A bird seen by Robert J. Miller in September, 1961, constitutes the only local record.

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW:** This is an increasingly common winter bird, with high counts of about 75 for each of the last four winters.

**LAPLAND LONGSPUR:** This bird turns up quite regularly in winter in suitable areas on or near the airport. I saw six birds on November 20, 1966, two birds in December, 1967, and two in December, 1968.

#### OTHER RECORDS

**BAIKAL TEAL:** A bird of this species was seen on January 30 and 31, 1960, by James Carroll and George Lamb. At best, the origin of this bird is open to suspicion.

**SPOTTED REDSHANK:** A bird of very possibly this species was seen by H.G. Alexander on July 30, 1960. See *Cassinia*, Vol. 45, 1960, pages 10-12.

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