

GENERAL NOTES

Great Cormorant in Pennsylvania; First Confirmed State Record: In the past couple of years, I have made it a practice to visit the Delaware River in the vicinity of Mud Island in Bucks County. This was a good place to observe species of birds normally associated with the ocean. I had seen both Red-breasted Mergansers (*Mergus serrator*) and White-winged Scoters (*Melanitta fusca*) during the past year.

On November 12, 1983, I saw three Great Cormorants perched on one of the light towers in the middle of the river just south of Mud Island. I was fortunate to observe one individual fishing in the river near its confluence with Poquessing Creek. This creek forms the boundary between Bucks and Philadelphia counties. This cormorant repeatedly submerged, remaining under water for a minute or so. When it surfaced with a catfish in its bill, it was briefly harassed by a pair of Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) until it managed to position the fish correctly for swallowing.

All three Great Cormorants were in sub-adult plumage. Many competent observers saw and confirmed the identity of these birds at this location in subsequent weeks. Two of these cormorants were still at this site on December 3, 1983.

— Frank Winfelder, 9233 Convent Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19114

Editor's Note: Ron Smith of Andalusia, Pennsylvania reports that he correctly identified the Great Cormorants some 24 hours later than Frank Winfelder. Smith's notes (on file) indicate as many as five immature Great Cormorants (November 29, 1983) were in the area. His last sighting was a single sub-adult on January 28, 1984. Frank Winfelder saw a single immature bird as late as February 12, 1984.

Of note, also, is the fact that John C. Miller while on the Glenolden Christmas Bird Count in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, saw a Great Cormorant on the Delaware River on December 17, 1983.

The only previously published record of a Great Cormorant in Pennsylvania was that of October 25, 1942 (*Cassinia* 33, [1943]:31). The "Field Notes" for that season were compiled by C. Chandler Ross who received notice of this bird, at Penn Manor, Pennsylvania, from either Bicknell or James H. Wright. Ross, apparently, did not appreciate the significance of the report because he published a bare bones account that neither described plumage nor other observers, if any. It is perhaps, for this reason that neither Poole (1964:67) nor Wood (1979:7) accepted the report; rather placing the bird on their hypothetical lists. Hence, Frank Winfelder's report is the first acceptable record of Great Cormorants in Pennsylvania.

A careful examination of the appropriate U.S. 7½' Geological Survey Map indicates that the birds were observed perched, diving, swimming, feeding and flying in the following counties; Bucks and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Burlington, New Jersey.

A D.V.O.C. Rare Bird Report is on file.

LITERATURE CITED

- Poole, Earl L. 1964 PENNSYLVANIA BIRDS, Narberth, PA
Wood, Merrill. 1979 BIRDS OF PENNSYLVANIA, University Park, PA

Wood Storks at Cape May Point: On August 15, 1983, an immature Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*) soared over Bayshore Road, near Cape May Point, New Jersey. Later that day it circled over the railroad tracks where it was photographed before soaring off toward Cape May Point. Within minutes it was reported at the Cape May Bird Observatory by Debbie Keller who saw the bird fly past Lily Lake toward Delaware Bay.

After an absence of several days the bird was again seen at several locations; the Meadow south of Sunset Boulevard, the Pig Farm near the railroad, and occasionally at the ponds at Ponds Creek. About ten days after the arrival of the first stork, a second, slightly

smaller immature Wood Stork joined the first one. They become close companions, soaring and feeding together. They became increasingly tame as time went on and allowed a rather close approach.

Both birds appeared to feed on fish; possibly those stocked by the Mosquito Control Commission. They were very active feeders, prancing sideways, dancing with raised wings and stirring the water with their feet. After being absent all day, the pair usually roosted in the Meadow at night. On September 23, 1983, the storks were last seen flying southward over Delaware Bay by observers on the Cape May-Lewes Ferry.

— Catherine O. Brethwaite, 533 Atterbury Road, Villanova, PA 19085

— Alan Brady, P.O. Box 103, Wycombe, PA 18980

I told this story to a friend who was golfing the last week in November, 1983, at Deerfield Plantation, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. She told me that a pair of tame Wood Storks were seen feeding and flying about the golf course during the seven days of her stay. (C.O.B.)



Immature Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*), Cape May Point, August 15, 1983.

Photo by Alan Brady.

Further Comments on Greater White-fronted Geese in Lehigh County: Daily personal observation of Allentown park waterfowl during 1977 (as part of a city research project) indicated that the resident domestic goose population contained no Greater White-fronted Geese (*Anser albifrons*). We were intimately familiar with resident waterfowl at all Allentown area parks at the time of the Greater White-fronted Goose sighting of June 16, 1977 (*Cassisia* 57 [1977-78]:53).

The domestic geese residing within parks were confined largely to Trexler Park and did little if any wandering from pond to pond as Mr. Heintzelman stated in this comment (*Cassinia*, 59 [1982]:80). Recent observations and conversations with the current Parks Director and his predecessor (who was originally responsible for almost all domestic and "exotic" waterfowl introductions to the park system) indicate that neither person can remember having domestic Greater White-fronted Geese within the park system at the time of this observation (Gockenback and Marushak, pers. comm. 1982).

Members of the resident flock of domestic geese appear to be of five varieties, or mixtures thereof, derived from two wild Eurasian species, the Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*) and the Swan Goose (*Anser cygnoides*). The Pilgrim Goose is derived from the Greylag, and older Pilgrim females often have a white patch at the base of their bills. This attribute coupled with their general appearance and relatively small size could cause them to be confused with Greater White-fronted Geese. (Luttman, R. and G. Luttman 1978; *National Geographic* 57, 1930:3) It is certain, however, that the Greater White-fronted Geese observed in 1977 did not belong to the resident domestic goose population of the park system.

All local sources of domestic geese were checked for escapees and none were reported. Based on the facts presented in this and the original article, it was not unreasonable to suggest that these birds might be of feral origin. Overall, the article was noncommittal with the last sentence stating that the birds could have been either feral or domestic. The article implied that if of domestic origin, they were from a source other than the park system or local area.

— Terry L. Master, Biometric Services, Inc., Bethlehem, PA 18017

Purple Gallinule at Tinicum Wildlife Refuge, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: On June 6, 1982 while banding young Tree Swallows in nest boxes in the Tinicum Refuge, I flushed an adult Purple Gallinule (*Parphyryla martinica*) from the weeds in front of me. All colors and field marks were seen well. This was my first record for this bird in Pennsylvania. This bird was seen by many birders in the weeks that followed.

— John C. Miller, 1220 Prospect Avenue, Prospect Park, PA 19076

Editor's Note: John C. Miller's discovery of the Purple Gallinule at the Tinicum National Environmental Education Center is the thirteenth record for Pennsylvania, and the third for Tinicum.

Unusual Display of Ruffs at Pedricktown, New Jersey: It seemed as if the spring of 1982 would be a poor one for Ruffs (*Philomachus pugnax*) at Pedricktown, New Jersey, a traditional site to observe migrating Ruffs in the Delaware Valley. They had been seen on the weekend on April 3-4 only. A snowstorm on April 6 was a major setback for the season. The following week shorebird numbers were very low. I saw no Ruffs on April 10 or 12.

However, the weekend of April 17-18 offered optimal conditions for Ruffs — a rising tide cresting in mid-morning. When I arrived at 6:45 a.m. on April 17, I discovered an abnormally high tide. The entire marsh was flooded. Only two observers were on the causeway, but they had already seen three Ruffs, one pale and two dark birds.

For the next two hours I observed the birds. The pale bird was in full breeding plumage and very active. It displayed frequently and occasionally fought with one of the dark birds. It chased other species of shorebirds also. No Reeves were present.

I gradually became aware that the target of all this display was a beer bottle stuck upright in the mud! When the Ruff turned in the direction of the bottle, its ear-tufts were erected and the ruff was flared. The bird leaned its head against the top of the bottle, rubbed its bill on the bottle's neck and over its opening. It embraced the bottle and strutted around it in full display. At one point, it mounted the bottle. Soon after, one of the dark Ruffs made a quick but nonchalant move, straddled the bottle and dragged its belly across the opening.

During the course of those two hours the pale Ruff also displayed to sticks and tufts of vegetation. One of the dark birds seemed oblivious, while the other, with the exception of the incident described above, displayed infrequently and with lackluster, although, it was in breeding plumage.

— Serge LaFrance, 69 Princeton Drive, Delran, NJ 08075



Ruffs (*Philomachus pugnax*) at Pedricktown Marsh, NJ, April 17, 1982.

Photo by Serge LaFrance.

Recent Sighting of Black-legged Kittiwakes in southeastern Pennsylvania:

Inland sightings of the Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) are rare indeed, and the only modern records I can find for eastern Pennsylvania until 1983 are two sightings of individual birds — one of Lake Ontelaunee, Berks Co., by Earl L. Poole on November 17, 1935 (unpubl. mss.), and one at Harvey's Lake, Luzerne Co., from January 1-3, 1982 (*Am. Birds* 36 [1982]:279), seen by many observers including several from the D.V.O.C. who traveled there to add this Pennsylvania rarity to their state list.

On the afternoon of October 25, 1983, I received a call from Greer Saunders that he had just seen a Kittiwake on Marsh Creek Reservoir in Chester County. It had been discovered earlier in the day by Larry Lewis, who notified Saunders and Robert and Ruth Cook, and they arrived in time to observe the bird until it disappeared to the west. When I arrived late in the afternoon, the bird could not be found.

Then, on December 24, 1983, I found three adult plumaged Kittiwakes feeding in the east arm of the reservoir near the headquarters area. I notified Robert Cook, and he saw them later that afternoon. It was a bitter cold and blustery day with a strong northwest wind. A fast moving low had passed up the coast the previous day and might possibly account for their presence, but, on the other hand, they could have been here for several days. I could not find them during a brief visit on Christmas, but Frank and Barbara Haas did see them that day. I spent most of the following day, the 26th, at the reservoir and could not find them, but another observer reported seeing the three birds there.

— Phillips B. Street, R.D. 1, Chester Springs, PA 19425

Mississippi Kite in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: On May 18, 1982, at approximately 8:30 a.m., I was birding alone in Carpenter's Woods in the Germantown section of Philadelphia when I noticed a crow-sized raptor perched upright in the upper branches of a large, dead oak. The bird was motionless and I had a clear view of its underparts through 10 × 40 binoculars. From that angle the bird appeared uniformly light gray below except for a black tail, a nearly white head, and a black line through the eye. What little I could see of the lower part of the wing appeared dark gray. I tentatively decided that it was an adult plumaged Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*). I was in the process of comparing field marks with a field guide when a group of crows located the raptor and chased it from its perch. I did not see the bird in flight. (Daniel D. Roby)

At approximately 8:50 a.m., as I was birding in Carpenter's Woods, I observed a medium-sized raptor about the size of a small crow flying through the woods just below the tree line. In flight the bird had long, narrow, pointed wings and a long, narrow squared-off tail, giving it falcon-like proportions. However, the wing-span relative to the length of the body appeared to exceed that of a falcon. Its flight was graceful and swallow-like. The body was a medium shade of gray with pale gray unmarked underparts. The underwing was gray with darker wingtips. The tail appeared darker than the body and was faintly barred as seen from below. It was harassed by a crow and quickly swooped down out of sight.

I followed its direction of flight and was rewarded a few minutes later with a clear view of the bird perched atop a dead tree about 20 feet off the ground. The head appeared almost white and the shoulders and upper body were a pearly gray. The breast was a lighter shade of gray. The bird had a dark eye and a dark, hooked bill. A black marking in front of the eye and just above it gave the bird a very fierce look. It flew off toward the periphery of the woods and could not be found again. It was a seasonably warm day, slightly overcast but with light sufficient for good viewing. The bird was observed through a pair of 10 × 50 binoculars. Studying the field guides, I concluded that the raptor was a Mississippi Kite. (Erica Brendel)

The following morning, Erica Brendel, who had seen the bird independently, and I compared notes and agreed that the bird we had seen was definitely a Mississippi Kite. The light barring on the underside of the tail suggested that the bird was a sub-adult. (Daniel D. Roby)

— Dr. Erica Brendel, 7008 Green Street, Philadelphia, PA 19119

— Daniel D. Roby, Dept. of Biology, Univ. of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104

First Gyrfalcon Banded in New Jersey: On November 8, 1982 at 12:18 p.m., a Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) was captured at the Kittatinny Mountains Raptor Banding Station, Sussex County, New Jersey (41°10'N, 74°50'W). The bird was an immature female, wing chord 392 mm, tail chord 220 mm, and was grayish-brown in color; this was the first Gyrfalcon banded in New Jersey.

The underparts of the bird were cream colored with heavy, broad, brown streaking, the upperparts were dark grayish-brown, and each individual feather was edged with buff, giving a definite scaled appearance. The tail was dark grayish-brown with symmetrical buff spots, and had a barred appearance; the two central feathers were darker and less spotted than the rest of the tail. The beak, cere, eyelids and feet were light blue.

Prior to this banding, a total of 180 Gyrfalcons had been banded in the United States. Because of the bird's extreme northern range, only 15 of these were in the contiguous states; the other 165 were in Alaska. There have been six banded in Washington, two each in Montana and Michigan, and one each in Colorado, Wyoming, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. The only other banding in the eastern United States, the Pennsylvania bird, also was captured in the Kittatinny Mountains near Kempton, in 1973.

The Kittatinny Mountains Raptor Banding Station has operated each fall for the past 13 years. In more than 10,000 hours of observation at this location, this was the first Gyrfalcon ever recorded.

I wish to thank K. Klimkiewicz of the Banding Laboratory for supplying the data on all U.S. Gyrfalcon bandings, and a special thanks to Giselle Chazotte for her help at the banding station on that memorable day.

— Leonard J. Soucy, Jr., 1390 White Bridge Road, Millington, NJ 07946



First banded Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) in New Jersey, November 8, 1982.

Photo by Leonard J. Soucy, Jr.

Bell's Vireo in Maryland: On April 30, 1982 while on a birding trip to Elliott Island in Maryland with Sam Orr, Charles E. Price Jr., and Robert J. Miller, we found a Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*) with a small group of warblers along the road to Elliott Island. All of us saw all the field marks of this bird well. This is the first time any of us saw this bird in the east.

— John C. Miller, 1220 Prospect Avenue, Prospect Park, PA 19076

Late Record of Prothonotary Warblers in Berwyn, Chester County, Pennsylvania: According to the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club's A FIELD OF BIRDS OF THE DELAWARE VALLEY REGION, 1972, the Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) is not seen past the end of August. Earl Poole's BIRDS OF PENNSYLVANIA, 1964, cites October 4th as the last day for the entire state. But, on October 13, 1983 I saw

at least one and probably two female Prothonotary Warblers on the edge of woods adjacent to our back yard in Berwyn, Chester County.

The plumage of the exhaustively studied individual was light yellow above the bill shading into yellowish-olive on top of the head. The yellowish-olive then shaded into a very dark gray or grayish-blue in the middle of the back. The wings, lower back and tail (except for tail spots) had the same dark color. There were no wing bars. A yellow stripe above the eye connected with the yellow above the bill and extended behind the eye. The side of the head was yellowish-olive.

Since the individual was almost continually in motion, on only a few occasions was I able to see a narrow, faint yellow eye ring. The throat and breast were pure yellow. The belly and undertail coverts were white. Rectangular white tail spots, estimated to be about 8 mm in length, were located in the outer tail feathers. A few narrow longitudinal blackish lines were evident in the tail spots. The second female was identical except that its eyering appeared to be a fainter yellow.

I visited the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia to study the skins of all species and hybrids with which these birds could be confused. With the assistance of Mark Robbins, it was determined that the only possible identification was that of the autumn female Prothonotary Warbler.

The West Chester (PA) Bird Club's ANNOTATED LIST OF CHESTER COUNTY BIRDS, 1979 states that the Prothonotary Warbler is casual in the county, that is, recorded one or two times in a decade but may be expected to recur. This record, then, represents not only a very late sighting of the bird, but an unusual one for Chester County.

— T. Doman Roberts, 430 Cassatt Road, Berwyn, PA 19312

A D.V.O.C. Rare Bird Report is on file.

Summer Tanager in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania: While birding on June 4, 1983 in a wooded section of Montgomery County, PA approximately 2-3 miles northeast of Sumneytown, we found a male Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*). The bird, in full red plumage, was observed in good but overcast light on at least three occasions that day. The day was somewhat overcast with a threat of rain (it did rain round 5:30 p.m. There were southwest winds, 5-10 mph. A 22x scope, 7x and 10x binoculars were used. The bird's song was recorded also.

The Summer Tanager's characteristic "hiccup call" was repeated from a number of singing perches in the area. From observations made that day, by Ms. Tyrrell the next day, and Fingerhood and others on subsequent days, we were able to establish that the bird had proclaimed for itself a sloping territory approximately 300 yards long by 50 yards wide along and within a power line cut through an oak-hickory-maple woods which bordered the "cut". The open area between the wood edges had low, scrubby growth predominately of multiflora rose and other low, spiny plants.

On the first day, at least, the bird repeatedly gave its call notes. Because the call is diagnostic (pers. comm., Mark Robbins), it is worth describing here.

The bird repeated the call 8-10 times per minute from an open perch around 2:30 p.m. The call sounded like the tanager had a mild case of the hiccups and could quite properly be dubbed the "Hiccup Call" of the Summer Tanager. The call randomly varied between a three and two-part call, as follows: *hic-cup-cup* and *hic-cup*.

The bird was last observed on June 18. At no time was there evidence of a resident female Summer Tanager or breeding behavior other than that already described.

— Edward D. Fingerhood, 2002 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia, PA 19130

— Lucy Tyrrell, 1515 Northwest Boulevard, Apt. B, Columbus, OH 43212

Lark Sparrow in Lancaster County, PA: On January 9, 1982 I observed a Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*) at a feeding station at my home on Peach Lane, Ronks, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. I first observed it at 11:15 a.m. and saw it at various

times throughout the day until 3:15 p.m. It was not seen again. The Lark Sparrow fed on cracked corn which was scattered on the lawn at one of our two feeding stations. It normally fed in conjunction with a mixed flock of ground feeding birds which included approximately 24 White-throated Sparrows (*Zonotrichia albicollis*), 12 Dark-eyed Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*), 5 Northern Cardinals (*Richmondia cardinalis*), 5 Evening Grosbeaks (*Hesperiphona vespertina*) and 1 Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*). It seemed most closely associated with the White-throated Sparrows. The Lark Sparrow was observed by a total of eight people during its brief stay and photographed by Rom Schutsky (my father) and Fred Habegger.

Beck (1924) lists no record of the Lark Sparrow in Lancaster County as far back as the early 1840's. Carl Ernst reported one near Rohrerstown, Lancaster County, May 11, 1958, (Morrin, 1984). Jay George observed one in Manheim, Lancaster County, January 24, 1976 (ibid). Poole (1964) says the Lark Sparrow in Pennsylvania is, "A very rare breeding summer resident and casual transient in the western counties, even more rare in the southeastern section of the State (6 records)." An additional sighting since Poole was made along the Delaware River in the mid-1970's (Keith Richards, pers. comm.). Lark Sparrows have been observed in Pennsylvania from late March through mid-October (Wood, 1979). The two January sightings in Lancaster County appear to be the only winter records in Pennsylvania.

This species formerly bred as far east as State College in central Pennsylvania (Bent, 1968); it now reaches only the western edge of Ohio (Peterson, 1980). Its normal winter range includes central Texas, southern Louisiana, and central Florida south to southern Mexico and El Salvador; it occasionally winters along the Atlantic coast as far north as northern New Jersey (Bent, 1968). Northern coastal records are mainly from Christmas Bird Counts. Very few January or February records exist away from its normal wintering grounds.



Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*),
Ronks, Pa., January 9, 1982

Photo by Fred Habegger

LITERATURE CITED

- Beck, Herbert H. 1924. "A Chapter on the Ornithology of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania with Supplementary Notes on the Mammals." LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA - A HISTORY, New York.
- Bent, Arthur C. 1968. LIFE HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN CARDINALS, GROS-BEAKS, BUNTINGS, TOWHEES, FINCHES, SPARROWS, AND ALLIES, New York, pp. 886-901.
- Morrin, Harold B. 1984. BIRDS OF LANCASTER COUNTY (in preparation).
- Peterson, Roger T. 1980. A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS EAST OF THE ROCKIES, Boston, p. 282.
- Poole, Earl L. 1964. *Pennsylvania Birds - AN ANNOTATED LIST*, Narberth, PA, p. 64.
- Wood, Merrill. 1979. BIRDS OF PENNSYLVANIA, Pennsylvania State University, p. 122.
- Robert M. Schutsky, Muddy Run Ecological Laboratory, P.O. Box 10, Drumore, PA 17518

Lark Sparrow at Tincum, Pennsylvania: While checking for hunters in the area behind the Philadelphia International Airport on October 22, 1982, I flushed an adult Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*) from along the side of a weeded road. All field marks were seen well on this bird.

— John C. Miller, 1220 Prospect Avenue, Prospect Park, PA 19076

Harris' Sparrow at Tincum National Environmental Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: On Friday, May 13, 1983, during the May Roundup, Stephen R. Wing and I were on the old trolley car bed of the Center at approximately 9:00 a.m. It was partly cloudy, cold (38° to 40° F.) and windy (15-20 m.p.h.) Most birds were staying low to the ground. Steve and I were observing White-throated Sparrows (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) when we noticed that one sparrow was about one inch longer and heavier than the other birds. Its bill was pink and the face just above the bill was black. The black gradually changed to brown on the crown. Brown streaks continued down the nape. There was also a small bit of black under the bill, but the throat was white. The ear patch was buffy. There was a prominent black breast patch below the white throat which began to fade to white at the belly and under the tail. The sides were streaked with black. The tail was a nondescript brownish-gray.

The big stranger would sometimes hop into the brush two to three feet above the ground as it slowly worked its way southward along the trolley bed. It fed on the ground, hopped into the brush, back to the ground and so on. We watched this routine for 15 to 20 minutes before continuing our May Run. Michael Logan, who was birding nearby, also saw the bird we identified as an immature Harris' Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*).

— Harry W. Todd, 925 Collenbrook Avenue, Drexel Hill, PA 19026

Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Bake Oven Knob, Pennsylvania: At 8:40 a.m., EST, on September 23, 1982, while on the North Lookout at Bake Oven Knob, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, I observed two female Yellow-headed Blackbirds (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) at close range flying southwestward along the Kittatinny Ridge. The birds were a close match with the illustration in the Fourth Edition of Roger Tory Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* and appeared shortly after a flock of some 400 Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) disappeared from view after passing the lookout.

Earl L. Poole (*Pennsylvania Birds*, 1964: 59) considered the Yellow-headed Blackbird casual at scattered locations in Pennsylvania. Prior to this sighting there is one earlier hypothetical Lehigh County record of this species by Tom Fegeley in March 1977 in Emmaus, Pennsylvania (*A Field List of the Birds of Lehigh County*, 1979: 9).

— Donald S. Heintzelman, 629 Green Street, Allentown, PA 18102