

A Bit About the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (“PSO”) and Reporting Bird Observations

By Tom Kuehl

From a recent post on an upcoming PSO-sponsored webinar: “The Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology was founded in 1990 to foster the study of and appreciation of wild birds in Pennsylvania and to promote the conservation of birds and their habitats. We welcome everyone interested in birds to join and participate in our events”. I encourage those who are currently not members of PSO to not be threatened by the heavyweight scientific name, as while there are professional ornithologists as members, most members are just regular birders like most of us, and like many of us, regular and enthusiastic citizen scientists.



Continuous historical documentation of species and accounts of birds in Pennsylvania is one of the primary activities of PSO. To accomplish this PSO publishes the Pennsylvania Birds Journal four times annually to document birds reported for the Winter, Spring Migration, Summer Breeding and Fall Migration seasons.* The publication includes regular submissions (such as a report on the Christmas Bird Counts conducted in Pennsylvania and seasonal Photographic Highlights) and submitted articles and is anchored by the Summary of Season narrative written by the Seasonal Editor and the by-county narratives of bird reports for the season that is written by the County Compiler.

You guessed it, I am the Westmoreland County Compiler. An email request from Tom Moser for me to write a newsletter article on getting submittals of bird reports was quite appropriate and timely as Mike Smith had just given my email address to Regina Gaison so she could send me a report on Snow Buntings at Twin Lakes Park.

What birds should you report? - Obviously rare birds not normally occurring in Westmoreland, such as the recent Little Blue Herons at Mammoth Park, should be reported. Cedar Waxwings are not rare, however if a flock of 200 come in to devour the remaining fruit on your crabapple tree in January, do a report on that as large numbers and/or unusual events are worthy of inclusion in a compiler seasonal narrative. Report what I would call “good birds - for example, Black-billed Cuckoo as not common like Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Rough-legged Hawks and Northern Harriers as not always reliable to see them in the Winter Season, and unfortunately our State Bird the Ruffed Grouse as they are rare as they have declined significantly in Westmoreland County.

How to report? – At the end of each reporting season I review all species accounts in eBird, so if you have submitted an eBird checklist for an observation then no further action by you is needed. If not reporting by eBird then I will need all the information that is included in an eBird checklist – date, location, species, and number of that species reported and the person(s) making the report. If you are not using eBird, that information by email or by snail mail will also work; and note that my contact information is in the mast head of the Syrinx Newsletter. I will also get reports from Steve Manns on the CBC and PMAC so your

reporting to him will get to me. A caution is that this social media Dinosaur continues to live Facebook-Free so I will not see your postings to the Club's Facebook Page.

In his email to me Tom Moser also suggested a bird report for the Newsletter. As the PA Birds narrative I write is much too long for the Newsletter my thought would be to try to do a Sighting of the Season and perhaps some honorable mentions. This could also provide some incentive for reporting to achieve your 15-minutes of fame! The most recently completed season is the Summer Breeding Season, and the first Sighting-of-the-Season goes to Sue Miller for a Virginia Rail (From the submitted narrative: "One **Virginia Rail** was first reported at the MCP wetland on 6/3 (JLK,TK,MM), continued there on 6/6 (PF) and heard and then seen being chased by a mink on 6/7 (Sue-M)." An honorable mention is given to Ken Byerly: "Just one report of **Common Mergansers** during the season, with just one on 7/3 that was being hunted by a **Bald Eagle** on Loyalhanna Creek along the WHT-SS (KB)."

As Tom Moser noted, this is rather dated information so expect that future awards will be reported via an email to club members with a link to website rather being a very late report in the next issue of the newsletter. Seasonal reports are due one month following the close of a season so expect the Fall Migration (which ends on November 30) Sighting-of-the-Season to be awarded by the end of December.

* Consider PSO Membership, which is just \$30 per year for an Individual. Membership includes four annual PA Birds Journals (so my full report on Westmoreland County) and Newsletters, and discounted registration for the Annual Meeting. (<https://pabirds.org>)