

For the Westmoreland Bird and Nature Club
Westmoreland County – Sighting-of-the-Season for Summer Breeding 2023

By PA Birds Compiler Tom Kuehl

The Summer Breeding Season is officially just June and July, and so it generally does not offer as much an opportunity for rarities that the Winter, and the Spring and Fall Migration Seasons do. For 2023 there were several notable reports, however in most cases without photos to add documentation and excitement to the sighting. So, with little deliberation on my part I was able to make the selection from a most opportune late season (7/27) visit to Donegal Lake by Eric Hall, who was able to get photos of both a **Foster's Tern** and **Great Egret**. Eric provided the following comments on the sighting – “Some of our -



Foster's Tern Photo by Eric Hall



Foster's Tern Photo by Eric Hall



Great Egret Photo by Eric Hall

Westmoreland - lakes can be “good” during bad weather.

On this day, the two terns appeared during a windy rain shower. I like to think they were flying from the Great Lakes to the ocean and Donegal provided “shelter from the storm”. Sort of romantic.” While **Great Egret** are not extreme rarities in *Westmoreland* in migration, they are quite unexpected during the breeding season; and this was the only one reported in *Westmoreland* for the season. Terns, and Gulls for that matter, are

generally rare in all seasons so it is not surprising that the two **Foster's Terns** that were reported in Eric's eBird Checklist were the only tern or gull species reported for the season.

The following are some highlights plucked from my full report for the Season:

- On July 15 Richard Chirichiello reported on one **Ruffed Grouse** at the private SV Ridge location. Sadly, our Pennsylvania State Bird has become a rarity so now a relief when one is reported during a season.
- Annie Lindsay and others making commutes to Powdermill Nature Reserve in darkness are encountering **Eastern Whip-poor-wills** with some regularly on Weaver Mill Road – there were three documented reports this Summer Season.
- While a breeder in the northern tier and in the Appalachian Mountains across the state of Pennsylvania, and in the Laurel Highlands in *Westmoreland*, **Purple Finch** is a good find in any part of *Westmoreland* in the summer breeding season and certainly of note at lower elevations. Lower elevation sightings were made at the Kuehl's feeders in Murrysville by Janet and me on both 6/8 and 6/14, and on 6/29 Cornell's Merling App and I heard one singing at Cloverleaf Golf Course in Delmont. At Spruce Flat's Bog the keen ear of Mike Fialkovich was the first to hear a **Purple Finch** singing on a 6/17 outing of the Three River's Birding Club.
- Now a very hard bird to find, however **Yellow-breasted Chat** has been seen with some regularity at the Morosini Reserve this year. Perhaps a holdover from the sightings made there during the Spring Migration Season, there were several reports at the Morosini Reserve this Summer Season, including the highest count of two reported there by Michele Carlson on July 3.
- The Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas reported **Nashville Warbler** in 213 blocks and included confirmed breeding reports in *Westmoreland*, so not impossible, but still unusual that one would be reported during the Summer Season. Alexander Donley, a researcher who spent some time in the Laurel Highlands this summer reported one in the Donegal area on 6/23.

Again, a plug for PSO, my full report and reports for most all the other Pennsylvania counties along with many excellent color photos, the Summary of the Season along with other regular content and articles is available in the Pennsylvania Birds Journal that is available with your membership.