

**For the Westmoreland Bird and Nature Club  
Westmoreland County – Sighting-of-the-Season for Winter 2022-2023**

By PA Birds Compiler Tom Kuehl

The lack of rarities this mild winter provided for a no-brainer decision of the Winter Sighting-of-the-Season



*Photo by Sue Miller*

– congratulations to Sue Miller for the **Northern Shrike** that she found and photographed at Mammoth County Park on December 10. The bird was a bit uncooperative so



*Photo by Sue Miller*

later seen by just several other Birders in December. Perhaps the same bird has returned in March of 2023, and it has provided for a few others to see and photograph it at the model airplane area in the Park. This is not the first time for **Northern Shrike** at Mammoth County Park – the most memorable one, as a very many Club members probably ticked one as a Life Bird (as I did), was the one seen there on a Club outing on February 27, 2000.

For photographed sightings an honorable mention goes to me, and to Janet and Mark McConaughy (photo



*Photo by Mark McConaughy*

credit to Mark) for a Dark Morph **Rough-legged Hawk** – first spotted and identified by Janet (of course!), that was found at Schramm's



*Photo by Mark McConaughy*

Farm during the running of a Winter Raptor Survey route on January 24.

Another honorable mention goes to Dale Matuza – hey with a photo this good of the Leucistic Cardinal visiting his home feeders you just have to give him a mention!

Honorable mentions without photos go to Mark Bowers, who counted a flyover flock of 7 or 8 **Sandhill Cranes** near West Newton



*Figure 1 Photo by Dale Matuza*

when honking birds alerted him to the need to look up and to Mary Jane Seipler finding an **Eastern Phoebe** along a stream in Manor.

As this was such a mild winter some general comments are also in order for this season. Minus the 400 **Common Mergansers** at Beaver Run Reservoir for the December 31 Bushy Run CBC (seen by several parties and counted by Rebecca Hart and Steve Manns) and 100 **Ring-necked Ducks** at Donegal Lake (reported by Eric Hall) there was very modest reporting and low species counts for waterfowl this season. While it is not all that unusual for no reports of **Scoters** and **Canvasback**, having no reports for **American Coot** is unprecedented in my memory and who can explain MJ finding an **Eastern Phoebe** on January 1? The warm weather provided for more sightings and numbers of **Turkey Vultures** and **American Kestrels**, not just in Westmoreland County but also in the state-wide Winter Raptor Survey results. Without a substantial and sustained freeze, the congregation of **Bald Eagles** at Loyalhanna Dam was a bit underwhelming compared to recent winters – never more than the six that Mark McConaughy counted there on December 8. In addition to warm weather impacts perhaps some evidence that the winter fruits might have been in short supply as Cedar Waxwings, Hermit Thrush, Eastern Towhees and Yellow-rumped Warblers were few and far between this winter. And to close, a reminder that for my full narrative on the season, along with all other Pennsylvania Counties, and other articles and photo highlights from across the Commonwealth are included in the PA Birds Journal which comes with membership in the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology.