

Westmoreland County - Sighting of the Season for Fall Migration of 2022 By Compiler Tom Kuehl

A shorebird species observed in a very unusual location, and with so many reports of rarities the selection of the Sighting of the Season was a difficult one for the 2022 Fall Migration Season. My non-scientific selection of the Least Bittern, captured at the Powdermill Nature Reserve banding station, as the Sighting of the Season was made based on the entertainment value of the photo – just adorable. However, still quite the rarity (this is just the fourth record for *Westmoreland* in eBird). This one **Least Bittern** was caught and banded at PNR on 8/26. Of note is that Kevin Pero, in his eBird Checklist for that day, reported the possibility of a second one that was heard and not seen.



Photo Provided by Powdermill Reserve Personnel

As several other sightings are significant, I have the following four Honorable Mentions for this season:

1. This narrative was a post to the PABirds Listserv for a very unusual sighting of 2 Sanderlings at an industrial park in New Stanton on 9/9 by Mike Fialkovich:

I found two Sanderlings at my workplace today just outside of New Stanton. Strangely they were in the mulch under two Blue Spruce trees a few feet from the building. I was walking as usual and from a distance noticed a bird under the trees but in the shade, so all I could see was a shape. As I got near, I saw that there were two birds, and they were Sanderlings of all things! This is right next to a sidewalk and the area with the trees is perhaps 20 feet wide or so. And across the road is a parking lot that is being repaved so there are construction vehicles scraping up asphalt and dumping materials and a lot of activity. I just took a break and quickly ran out to check on them and they were gone. They may have been flushed by someone walking by or a vehicle.



Photo by Mark McConaughy

They were tame when I noticed them, and I was able to take a few photos with my phone. I usually have my camera gear on Friday but not this time, of course.

2. One Long-billed Dowitcher was photographed by Mark McConaughy at the Beaver Run Reservoir Rt. 3 80 Overlook on 11/12. The record is the only eBird Checklist reporting Long-billed Dowitcher and thus, given a report from Greensburg on 10/29/1979, this report may just be only the second report of Long-billed Dowitcher for Westmoreland County.



Photo by Mark McConaughy

3. A photograph by Steve Wagner of one Red-necked Phalarope was included in his 8/31 eBird Checklist for Mammoth Park. <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2743574> This is likely just the fifth report for Red-necked Phalarope in Westmoreland as there is just two other eBird reports of one that are from 2017 at Donegal Lake and a report of three at Powdermill Nature Reserve on 5/18/84 and one at Latrobe Reservoir on 10/18/88.

4. Richard Chirichiello included photos in his eBird Checklist for the morning of 8/9 at Mammoth Park that included his report of seven Little Blue Herons. In his eBird Checklist of 9/2/16 Andy Mack indicated the probability of one Little Blue Heron was of one at Latrobe Reservoir on 9/2/2016. Based on information in the 1997 (then) Westmoreland County Bird Club Checklist and in “The Birds of the Ligonier Valley” Richard’s 8/31 report appears to be only the fourth report of Little Blue Heron in Westmoreland County.



5. Not quite as historical a sighting as the other Honorable Mentions as so many Marsh Wrens have been captured at Powdermill over the years, however for capturing a nice photo of this skulking species in the field, we give Alex Busato the nod for his report of one **Marsh Wren** at Donegal Lake on 10/1.

