

26th Annual
 PHILADELPHIA MID-WINTER BIRD CENSUS
 January 7, 2012

Snow Goose	399	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	13
<i>Snow Goose (blue morph)</i>	6	Downy Woodpecker	213
Canada Goose	4676	Hairy Woodpecker	35
Cackling Goose	2	Northern Flicker	33
Mute Swan	11	Pileated Woodpecker	4
Wood Duck	5	Northern Shrike	1
Gadwall	78	Blue Jay	328
American Wigeon	6	American Crow	131
American Black Duck	135	Fish Crow	13
Mallard	745	Crow <i>sp.</i>	6
Northern Shoveler	302	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	142
Northern Pintail	73	Carolina Chickadee	371
Green-winged Teal	52	Tufted Titmouse	245
Canvasback	159	Red-breasted Nuthatch	4
Ring-necked Duck	8	White-breasted Nuthatch	161
Lesser Scaup	14	Brown Creeper	15
Long-tailed Duck	2	Carolina Wren	155
Bufflehead	81	Winter Wren	20
Common Goldeneye	4	Golden-crowned Kinglet	36
Hooded Merganser	26	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	8
Common Merganser	106	Eastern Bluebird	21
Ruddy Duck	80	Hermit Thrush	1
Wild Turkey	14	American Robin	1389
Common Loon	1	Gray Catbird	2
Pied-billed Grebe	15	Northern Mockingbird	99
Double-crested Cormorant	74	Brown Thrasher	2
Great Cormorant	13	European Starling	5552
Cormorant <i>sp.</i>	2	American Pipit	1
Great Blue Heron	26	Cedar Waxwing	12
Black Vulture	68	Ovenbird	1
Turkey Vulture	90	Orange-crowned Warbler	3
Bald Eagle	6	Common Yellowthroat	5
Northern Harrier	1	Yellow Warbler	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	13	Palm Warbler (<i>western subsp.</i>)	4
Cooper's Hawk	20	Yellow-rumped Warbler	9
Accipiter <i>sp.</i>	1	Eastern Towhee	40
Red-shouldered Hawk	5	American Tree Sparrow	10
Red-tailed Hawk	72	Chipping Sparrow	8
Buteo <i>sp.</i>	1	Field Sparrow	4
American Kestrel	7	Savannah Sparrow	5
Merlin	1	Fox Sparrow	22
Peregrine Falcon	3	Song Sparrow	456
American Coot	230	Swamp Sparrow	36
Killdeer	2	White-throated Sparrow	1489
Wilson's Snipe	1	White-crowned Sparrow	1
Ring-billed Gull	4371	Dark-eyed Junco	492
Herring Gull	337	Northern Cardinal	405
Iceland Gull	1	Red-winged Blackbird	489
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	Rusty Blackbird	77
Great Black-backed Gull	261	Common Grackle	339
Rock Pigeon	1475	Brown-headed Cowbird	2
Mourning Dove	829	House Finch	420
Eastern Screech-Owl	30	American Goldfinch	225
Great Horned Owl	9	House Sparrow	881
Snowy Owl	1		
Belted Kingfisher	12		
Red-headed Woodpecker	1	Total Species	107
Red-bellied Woodpecker	180	Total Individuals	29,125

OBSERVERS**AREAS COVERED**

Matt Sharp	Benjamin Rush State Park
Frank Windfelder, Todd Fellenbaum	Delaware River and shoreline (Poquessing Creek to Pulaski Park), Northeast Water Pollution Control Plant, Pennypack Creek (Verree Rd. to Krewstown Rd., Holme Ave.), west Southampton Rd.
Nick Zahn, Vince DeAntoniis	Delaware River and shoreline (Poquessing Creek to Pulaski Park), Northeast Water Pollution Control Plant
Linda Widdop	Pennypack Creek (Verree Rd. to Pine Rd.)
Peter Kurtz	Pennypack Creek (Sandiford Run, Krewstown Rd. to Verree Rd., Torresdale Ave. to Frankford Ave.), Pleasant Hill Park
Roland Williams	Pennypack Creek (Holme Ave. to Bustleton Ave.)
Audrey Walmsley	Northeast Philadelphia (yard/neighborhood count)
Cindy Ahern, Scott Ahern	Northeast Philadelphia Airport, Burholme Park, Friends Hospital, various shopping centers along Adams Ave. and Roosevelt Blvd.
Keith Russell, Jeanne Schock, Shawn Towey	Delaware River and shoreline (Pulaski Park to Frankford Creek, Packer Marine Terminal to Washington Ave.), Northeast Water Pollution Control Plant, west Southampton Rd., Sunoco ponds along Penrose Ave., TRC Trash Transfer Station, Wissahickon Creek (various locations)
Richard Horwitz, George Armistead, Kate Atkins, Nathaniel Kahn & Susan Behr	Philadelphia Naval Business Center, F. D. Roosevelt Park, TRC Trash Transfer Station, Delaware River (Snyder Ave. to Frankford Creek)
Maria Walker	South Philadelphia (yard/neighborhood count)
Chris Walters, Art McMorris, Edwin Shafer	Fort Mifflin, Army Corps of Engineers compound and vicinity, Southwest Water Pollution Control Plant and vicinity
Doris McGovern, Marty Dellwo, Adrian Binns, Debbie Beer, Tony Croasdale, Clyde Croasdale	John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge (3 field parties)
Tony Croasdale, Clyde Croasdale	Philadelphia International Airport, Delaware River and shoreline (Snyder Ave. to Washington Ave.)
Jan Gordon, Denis Brennan, Gregg Gorton, Judy Stepanaskie	Bartram's Garden, Woodland Cemetery, Cobbs Creek (Whitby Ave., Race St., Morris Park, Karakung Golf Course)
Rob Bierregaard	Cobbs Creek (Morris Park, Karakung and Cobbs Creek Golf Courses)
Erica Brendel, John Goschke	West Park (various locations including Philadelphia Zoo, West River Dr.)
Stephen Kerr	East Park (East Park Reservoir and vicinity, Schuylkill River falls)
Winston and Wendy Moody, Phil Hinline	East Falls and lower Germantown (various locations including Queen Ln. Reservoir, Schuylkill River at the Falls Bridge, lower Wissahickon Creek)
Michael Darcy	Roxborough (Schuylkill River, Peco Power Line corridor, Roxborough Reservoir, Port Royal Ave.)
Judy Stepenaskie	Schuylkill River in Manyunk
Cliff and Nancy Hence	Cresheim Creek (Stenton Ave. to Wissahickon Creek)

OBSERVERS (concluded)**AREAS COVERED (concluded)**

Leigh Ashbrook, Peter & Jack Baumann
 Anne & Jacob Bower, Debbie Carr
 & Doug Wechsler, Paul Croley,
 Gretel Dereuiter, Lynn Ewell, Allison
 & Jack Feldman, Kathleen Geist,
 Rodney Griffith, Sherri Hausser,
 Angela Irwin, Tania Isaac, Dailahn James,
 Ken Januski & Jerene Schroeder
 Rich Lombardo, Donna Long,
 Rob McCellan, Anne Meibohm,
 Elizabeth Porter, Gin & Phil Ranly,
 Judy Seiffert, Peg Shaw,
 Staci Vernick, Cindy Viss,
 Mike Weilbacher, George Wood

Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education (5 field parties)

Al and Nancy Bilheimer

Wissahickon Creek (east bank – Springfield Ave. to Chestnut Hill Ave.)

Ken Januski and Jerene Schroeder

Wissahickon Creek (west bank – Gorgas Ln. at Forbidden Dr.)

Sam and Erin Perloff

Wissahickon Creek (west bank – Valley Green and vicinity, Walnut Ln. Golf Course), I-76 (City Ave. to Vine St.)

David Belford, Jeff Belford,
 Scott McConnell

Wissahickon Creek (west bank – Bell’s Mill Rd. to Cathedral Rd.)

Sarah Besadny, Barbara Thorp

Wissahickon Creek (east bank – Carpenter’s Woods, Livezy Ln., Scotforth Rd.)

Edie Parnum, Joe Hudson,
 Donna Wilhelm

Wissahickon Creek (west bank - Bell’s Mill Rd. to Northwestern Ave.)

Jim and Valene Best, Rich Conroy, Andy
 Fayer, Bob Gutowski, Marlene Morano

Morris Arboretum, Laurel Hill Cemetery

William Reaume

Awbury Arboretum

CONDITIONS

Temperature: low 34°F at 5:31 am, high 62°F at 2:39 pm.

Sky: Sunny becoming partly cloudy during the afternoon and evening.

Precipitation: None.

Ground: No Snow or ice.

Water: Shallow areas of still water completely frozen (e.g. JHNWR impoundment) or mostly frozen with some large patches of open water (e.g., F. D. Roosevelt Park, Southwest Water Pollution Control Plant). Deeper areas of still water (e.g., East Park Reservoir) open with small patches of ice at edges. Rivers and streams completely open.

Wind: Calm throughout the pre-dawn and morning hours noon becoming breezy (10-20 mph) during the afternoon.

2012 CENSUS SUMMARY

The 26th annual Philadelphia Mid-Winter Bird Census was held on Saturday January 7, 2012, a very warm and sunny day that seemed more like spring than winter. This year a record high 95 participants in 34 parties found 107 species and 29,125 individuals. Both of these totals are well above the averages of 92 species and 27,000 individuals, but less than the record high 109 species recorded in 1998 and record high 39,962 individuals recorded in 1991.

This year's census was the second warmest to date (not quite as warm as it was in 2007 when the temperature reached 73°F) and it typified the very mild winter weather that we have experienced this year. The mild winter weather was interrupted however, by a significant drop in temperature on January 3 and 4 that caused all areas of shallow, still water to freeze. Although temperatures quickly rebounded on the 5th and 6th relatively little of the ice that had formed had disappeared by the 7th and this caused many species of waterfowl to be more concentrated and easier to find. The warm temperatures appear however, to have caused many species of land birds to become less concentrated and some expected species that could not be found during the census may have been missed for this reason.

Each winter season brings a somewhat different assortment of bird species to our area, and in different abundances than previous winters. This winter an unusually large assortment of species have been present in the Philadelphia area. This can be explained in part by the mild temperatures that have allowed many half-hardy species that are usually driven away by cold, like Wood Duck and Common Yellowthroat, to remain. In addition, two rare species from the north - the Snowy Owl and Northern Shrike - have staged major irruptions into our region. But other unusual species like Red-headed Woodpecker have also been present this year, and some expected species like Rufous-sided Towhees have been unusually numerous for reasons that are not readily apparent. Missing however have been Black-capped Chickadees, which irrupted into our region in record numbers last winter, and most northern finches.

Heading this year's list of unusual species are two that were new to the census. The rarest of these is the Northern Shrike that was first discovered at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge (JHNWR) on November 24th by Adrian Binns, but which had not been observed frequently since then. On census day it was actually seen and photographed by a birder not participating in the census who kindly showed the photo to some of our census participants. This appears to be the first record of Northern Shrike in Philadelphia since 1966. The second rarest species recorded this year was a Snowy Owl. This bird (an apparent male) was first reported at Northeast Philadelphia Airport on December 14th by an airport employee. Like the shrike it had been difficult to find subsequently but it made a timely re-appearance at the airport on December 6th and it was subsequently observed on the 7th and 8th. Several of us saw the bird on census day and I'd like to thank Frank Windfelder, in particular, for bringing the original sighting of this beautiful bird and its re-discovery to our attention. As has been widely reported in the news the large irruption of Snowy Owls this winter has brought individuals to many areas that rarely see this species. However, here in Philadelphia the Snowy Owl has not been as rare a winter visitor as the shrike. Snowy Owls have been recorded here during at least 12 winters since 1960 and the last previous record occurred in 1998. Together, the shrike and owl raised the cumulative species total for the census to 151.

Thanks to several sharp-eyed observers a number of additional lingering and uncommon species have also been found in Philadelphia this winter and many of these were observed on census day. A Red-headed Woodpecker originally found in the Wissahickon by Ken Januski on October 10th remained to winter and it has even frequented the same tree for months. Ken observed this bird again on census day along with Jerene Schroeder providing the second record of this species for the census. The first record occurred in 1995 when David Belford also observed an individual in the Wissahickon. Among the lingering species recorded this year was an Ovenbird that had been wintering in a garden at the Bell Atlantic building at 1717 Arch Street in Center City. Doug Wechsler reported seeing this bird right before and after the census and although it was not looked for on census day it was included on the list because it is inconceivable that it could not have been present in this isolated garden spot on the 7th. This is the third census record of Ovenbird, which was previously recorded in 2005 and 2009. Another outstanding lingerer found this year was the Yellow Warbler spotted by Erica Brendel and John Goschke in the West Park section of Fairmount Park. Amazingly this is also the third time this species has been recorded. The previous records occurred in 1998 and 2007.

Individual Cackling Geese (3rd record) were also observed at the Army Corps of Engineers area (Walters, McMorris Shafer) and at Roosevelt Park (Binns). Individual Long-tailed Ducks (3rd record) were found on the Delaware at Allegheny Ave. (Horwitz et. al.) and the Packer Marine Terminal (Russell, Towey), and an Iceland Gull (3rd record) was found on the Delaware at the Naval Business Center (Horwitz et. al). Another good find was the American Pipit (4th record) observed at Pennypack on the Delaware or POD (Windfelder, Fellenbaum). Additionally, three Orange-crowned Warblers (4th record) were observed with two at POD (Windfelder, Fellenbaum) and one at the Naval Business Center (Horwitz et. al.). A fourth Orange-crown that had been at JHNWR could not be found. And Cliff and Nancy Hence spotted a large flock of Snow Geese flying over the Cresheim Creek in Chestnut Hill that contained six blue morph individuals. This was the first census record of this morph. As is typical for Philadelphia almost all of the 405 Snow Geese recorded were just seen flying by overhead. The only Snow Goose observed on the ground was a bird that has been wintering at POD (Windfelder, Fellenbaum).

In addition to the above the following species have also been observed in Philadelphia since December, further illustrating the amazing variety of unusual and lingering species that have been present this winter.

Barn Swallow – NW Water Pollution Control Plant, December 17 – Frank Windfelder.

American Bittern – JHNWR, December 30 – Adrian Binns.

Green Heron – JHNWR, January 2 – many observers.

American Woodcock – Center City, January 3 – bird found and taken to the Schuylkill Center rehab clinic.

Eastern Phoebe – NW Water Pollution Control Plant, January 3 – Frank Windfelder, Todd Fellenbaum.

Blackpoll Warbler – NW Water Pollution Control Plant, January 3 – Frank Windfelder, Todd Fellenbaum.

Clay-colored Sparrow – POD, January 4 – Todd Fellenbaum, Adrian Binns, Tony & Clyde Croasdale.

Nashville Warbler – POD, January 5 – Frank Windfelder.

Laughing Gull – JHNWR, January 8 – Ryan Ford, Cory DeStein.

Greater Scaup – Delaware River at Castor Avenue, January 10 – Frank Windfelder, Todd Fellenbaum.

Vesper Sparrow – POD, January 14 – Alex Lamoreaux.

Black-crowned Night-Heron – Schuylkill River at Manyunk, January 24 – Ken Januski.

Common Redpoll – Philadelphia Naval Business Center, January 30 – Todd Fellenbaum.

Common Raven – POD, February 3 – Tom Johnson. (2nd confirmed Philadelphia record)

The now annual flock of wintering Northern Rough-winged Swallows was again found at the Northeast Water Pollution Control (i.e. sewage treatment) Plant for the eighth year in a row. And these swallows, which survive the cold by feeding on midges that emerge throughout the winter from waters being discharged from the plant, were counted in record numbers. As in 2007 when the temperature was also very warm (73°) some of these birds appear to have dispersed from the plant to feed in other locations because seven were also observed at the Naval Business Center and thirteen were also observed at the Army Corps of Engineers area. These areas are located eight and eleven miles respectively, south of the plant. A Barn Swallow and Eastern Phoebe that had also been wintering at the plant may have dispersed to other feeding areas as well because neither bird could be found at the plant on census day.

In addition to the swallows thirteen other species were recorded in record high numbers this year, including Snow Goose, Mute Swan, Wild Turkey, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Coot, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Orange-crowned Warbler and Eastern Towhee. While most of these records can generally be attributed to the combination of mild winter weather, which probably allows more individuals to survive the winter, and a record high number of observers, some can also be attributed to population increases. The Cooper's Hawk for example, was once less numerous than the Sharp-shinned Hawk in our area, but it has increased over the last decade to the point where it may now outnumber the latter species during the winter. And the Black Vulture, which was unknown in southeastern Pennsylvania when the census began has not only expanded its range north into our region since the 1980s but increased markedly in abundance over the last eight years. Similarly, the Turkey Vulture, which often went unrecorded during the early years of the census has not only become a regular winter resident since the 1980s but a more numerous one since 2000. There must be lots of carcasses around to sustain so many vultures.

Conversely, Eastern Screech-Owls were less numerous than expected although a similar effort was made to find them as in previous years. And Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Great Horned Owl, both crows, Cedar Waxwing, House Finch and American Goldfinch continued to be recorded in numbers well below those recorded during the 1980s and 1990s, while most diving ducks continue to be recorded in numbers well below those recorded during the 1980s.

This year's list of species that were only reported by a single party include: Snow Goose - blue morph (Hence, Hence); American Wigeon, White-crowned Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird (Walters, McMorris, Shafer); Canvasback (Kerr); Common Goldeneye, Lesser Black-backed Gull, American Pipit, Hermit Thrush, Savannah Sparrow (Windfelder, Fellenbaum); Common Loon, Iceland Gull (Horwitz, Armistead, Atkins, Behr, Kahn); Northern Harrier (Ahern, Ahern); Merlin, Wilson's Snipe, Northern Shrike (McGovern, Beer, Binns, Croasdale, Croasdale, Dellwo); Red-headed Woodpecker (Januski, Schroeder); Ovenbird (Wechsler); Common Yellowthroat (Russell, Schock, Towey); Yellow Warbler (Brendel, Goschke); and Chipping Sparrow (Belford, Belford, McConnell).

I would like to express my thanks to everyone who participated in this year's census for another job well done. I hope you will be able to join us again next year when the census will tentatively be held on Saturday, January 12, 2013.

Keith Russell - Census Coordinator
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