

Fall Migration of Shorebirds in 2007 at the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum

Frank Winfelder

Another article in this issue of *Cassinia* covers in detail my 2007 Philadelphia Big Year. As part of that commitment, I did a shorebird survey at the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum. As mentioned in that article, there had been a “drawdown” of the water levels in the main impoundment. I knew that this would give me the opportunity to add many species of shorebirds to my list.

The drawdown encompassed the period July through September. I visited Tinicum 67 times during those months. I kept day by day totals for each species, but the accompanying chart takes into account the possibility of double-counting birds.

The numbers are estimates on my part for the entire season. They would vary based upon a number of factors, most importantly how liberal or conservative the estimates are and the competence of the observer. The actual numbers are unimportant, but rather whether a species was common, uncommon, or rare.

Most of the numbers for rarer species are exact. There were, in fact, only three Black-bellied Plovers and one Red-necked Phalarope. I did not see the Black-bellied Plovers, photographed by Bill Moses, or the Baird’s Sandpiper, observed by Todd Fellenbaum, or the American Golden-Plover, called in to Arlene Koch in Easton, who relayed the message to me.

The larger issue is not how many new shorebirds I got out of doing this. Many of us realize the intense pressure these birds are under, due to habitat loss and other factors. This drawdown provided a very important place to feed for these fall migrants.

A by-product of the drawdown was that the sedges and other vegetation that became established provided habitat for migrating Soras and Virginia Rails and thousands of ducks. Hundreds and hundreds of

American Golden-Plover	1
Black-bellied Plover	3
Semipalmated Plover	50
Killdeer	110
Wilson’s Snipe	4
Short-billed Dowitcher	30
Long-billed Dowitcher	3
Greater Yellowlegs	125
Lesser Yellowlegs	1,000
Solitary Sandpiper	15
Spotted Sandpiper	35
Sanderling	1
Semipalmated Sandpiper	6,000-12,000
Western Sandpiper	50
Least Sandpiper	6,000-12,000
White-rumped Sandpiper	6
Baird’s Sandpiper	1
Pectoral Sandpiper	125
Dunlin	1
Stilt Sandpiper	18
Wilson’s Phalarope	1
Red-necked Phalarope	1

herons were present throughout the summer. Tinicum Director Gary Stolz and Staff Biologist Brendalee Phillips deserve a lot of credit for putting into place sound management practices.

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