

BIRDS OF THE TINICUM WILDLIFE REFUGE
AND ADJACENT AREAS
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
1970-1987

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This is the second supplement to my first report in 1959 (*Cassinia* Vol. 44) and the first supplement (*Cassinia* Vol. 52, 1970). This report updates the status of bird life in this area of southeastern Pennsylvania through 1987.

The area around the Tinicum Refuge is being heavily developed. Each year more fine habitat is lost to new homes, new roads and an expanding airport. Fields where hundreds of Short-eared Owls used to be are mostly gone.

I am thankful for the committee set up by the D.V.O.C. in the spring of 1952 whose work saved the Tinicum marshes in Philadelphia and Delaware County. Without this group the Tinicum area would have been lost to the ornithologists' world forever.

In this report I continue to use the name by which local birders know the area. For the record, the area of the old Tinicum Wildlife Preserve was turned over to the Federal Government by an Act of Congress in 1972. From that time it has been officially known as the Tinicum National Environmental Center.

Since 1950, two hundred ninety-five species have been seen in the area by myself and other observers. Species not reported in the two previous papers are denoted by asterisks.

Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*) On the Delaware River (1) 11/26/70, (1) 11/16/74, (1) 11/15/80.

Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) Seen in spring and fall in good numbers migrating over the area.

Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*) Delaware River (1) 2/20/77, T.W.R. (1) 3/19/84, (1) 3/15/85.

***Great Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) First record for the area. Delaware River (1) 12/17/83.

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) This bird now can be seen on the Delaware River all months of the year, and in large numbers in migration. Also common in the Tinicum marshes.

Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) Still a common breeding bird in the Tinicum Wildlife Refuge in Philadelphia and Delaware County.

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) A common bird in the Tinicum Refuge and area. Large numbers in the Refuge in the fall of 1985 and 1986. (175) 9/13/85, (225) 9/18/86.

Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*) A common bird in the Tinicum Refuge and area. Large numbers in the Refuge in the fall of 1985 and 1986 when water was drained. Fifteen pairs nest in the Fort Mifflin area each year.

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*) Seen in the Refuge area each fall. (1) 7/19/79, (2) 7/24/80, (3) 8/31/84, (2) 7/15/86.

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) Seen each spring and fall. Frequent on the Philadelphia Airport in recent years.

Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) A common bird in the area. In the past about 50 pairs nested in the Refuge. When Great-horned Owls nested in the area, the herons moved to the Fort Mifflin area, where 70 to 80 pairs now nest each year. In 1987, I found a small group again nesting in the Refuge. Small numbers winter in the area.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax violaceus*) Seen each year. T.W.R. (1) 6/3/77, (1) 4/21/78, (1) 5/18/83.

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) Seen in the Tinicum Wildlife Refuge. (1) 8/10/77, (1) 7/28/80, (1) 8/14/80.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) Seen each year in the Tinicum Refuge and area. (8) 9/20/70, (6) 5/17/71, (1) 3/24/72, (4) 8/27/73, (4) 8/11/79, (2) 9/4/80, (2) 6/30/85.

Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*) Winters on the Delaware River around Tinicum Island each year. High count, 200+.

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) Only two records: (1) 12/25/70, (3) 7/29/77.

Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) Can be seen each year in small numbers in spring and fall.

Brant (*Branta bernicla*) A rare bird. One record, (1) 11/10/79.

White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) Seen on the Delaware River. (1) 10/10/71, (1) 10/25/72; also one in the T.W.R., 11/4/77.

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) Not common. A few records: (5) 1/5/72, (6) 3/30/79.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) This bird continues to be a regular spring and fall migrant. More common in fall.

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) One or two birds seen each year.

Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) This bird nests on the Philadelphia Airport each year (one to two pairs); also winters in small numbers.

Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) Not seen each year. All records are in the fall. (1) 11/10/76, (1) 11/15/78, (1) 11/28/81, (1) 11/10/82.

Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) Seen in migration each year, but hard to find in the winter now.

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) Still a common bird in the area. This year (1987) we found a nest on the Refuge in Delaware County. This is the first nesting for this bird in the area.

Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) This bird is not seen each year due to loss of habitat.

Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) Only one record; an immature bird seen on Tinicum Island in the Delaware River. (1) 10/3/70.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) This bird is seen in all seasons in the area; one pair has nested on the bridge over the Delaware at Chester, Pa., for a few years now. Also, one pair may be nesting near the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) Not common anymore. Hard to find due to loss of habitat.

Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) One bird calling in the Tinicum Refuge 10/4/77, B. Haas, J.C. Miller.

Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) One bird seen on 4/14/70, T.W.R., Paul De Aoun.

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*) Not a common breeding bird in the area. One to two pairs nesting.
(1) 10/21/75, T.W.R.

Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*) Nests in small numbers each year.

Purple Gallinule (*Porphyryla martinica*) One bird found in the T.W.R. 6/6/82; stayed for a few weeks. Seen by many.

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) One bird seen in the Tinicum Wildlife Refuge on 9/25/70, Jim Carroll; one seen in back of the Philadelphia Airport 10/20/79, Frank and Barbara Haas.

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) One bird seen 5/29/79 behind the Philadelphia Airport; stayed about two weeks. F. and B. Haas, J.C. Miller.

Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) One seen on the Delaware River mud flats on 9/1/71.

Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*) Has nested on the Philadelphia Airport, one pair in 1975 and one pair in 1985. A common migrant on the Airport each fall with high counts in July, August and September, 50+ birds at one time.

***Black-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa limosa*) One bird found in the Refuge tidal marshes on 10/19/79; stayed about two weeks. Seen by many.

Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) Seen each fall recently. (3) 9/11/74, (1) 9/3/76, (3) 10/9/84, (1) 9/13/85, (2) 9/15/85, (4) 9/5/86, (7) 9/25/86.

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*) One record in the period; stayed one week, 8/21/81.

***Red Knot** (*Calidris canutus*) A rare bird in the area. (2) 8/31/86, seen by many.

Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*) Not common. (1) 10/6/78, (1) 9/10/80.

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*) One found on the tidal flats at the T.W.R. by W. Stocku 7/12/81; seen by many.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*) Not common. Two records in the T.W.R.: (1) 8/30/80, (1) 9/26/85, S.L. Sherman.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) A regular bird in small numbers. All found in the T.W.R.: (2) 7/26/70, (1) 7/29/77, (2) 8/26/77, (1) 7/21/78, (1) 10/16/86.

Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*) Seen in the T.W.R. area. (13) 9/3/76, (10) 9/6/77, (5) 9/1/84, (2) 9/15/85, (1) 8/3/86.

Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) Seen in the T.W.R. area. (1) 10/18/70, C.V. Atkinson, and (1) 9/25/86 by many.

Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*) Large numbers on the Delaware River after breeding season; 2,000 to 5,000 birds in September the last few years.

***Little Gull** (*Larus minutus*) One adult bird in breeding plumage seen on a May Run, 5/10/80, in back of Philadelphia Airport.

Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*) Not regular since the closing of the dumps. (1) 12/5/70, (1) 1/31/71, (2) 2/15/77, (1) 4/18/86.

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) No longer a regular bird since area dumps were closed. (1) 3/6/70, (2) 12/5/70, (1) 1/31/71, (1) 1/10/79.

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) A common bird now. Large numbers in the winter months.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) Still a rare bird. One bird seen in the Tinicum Refuge on 9/15/71 and one on 10/12/85, J.C. Miller and F. Windfelder.

Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*) A very common tern in the fall. Can be seen in the hundreds in either T.W.R. or over the Delaware River.

Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) A rare bird. Only two records over the years. (3) 7/12/79, (1) 8/15/85.

***Black Skimmer** (*Rynchops niger*) A rare bird. (1) 8/23/80, (1) 11/15/85, stayed for one week, Jim Carroll.

Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*) A few records in the past few years. (2) 9/12/85.

Eastern Screech-Owl (*Otus asio*) A bird hard to find these days; only a few pairs in the area.

***Great Horned Owl** (*Bubo virginianus*) Has been nesting in the T.W.R. for about five years now.

Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) A few more records for the area. (1) 12/18/71, (2) 12/19/72, (1) 12/4/76, (1) 12/5/80.

Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*) They turn up in small numbers almost every winter in the T.W.R. area. (1) 12/7/70, (2) 12/12/74, (1) 3/11/75, (7) 1/13/77, (4) 2/4/82.

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) One pair has nested on the Philadelphia Airport since 1970. Also winters in small numbers.

Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) Here are a few records, most in the T.W.R., (1) 2/21/70, (1) 12/7/73, (1) 1/7/75, (1) 1/9/76, (1) 12/19/78, (1) 12/16/80, (2) 1/5/82, (1) 1/21/84.

Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) A few birds seen in migration.

Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) Has turned up each year in migration.

Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*) A common breeding bird.

***Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** (*Tyrannus forficatus*) One record in the T.W.R. on 10/26/72.

Fish Crow (*Corvus ossifragus*) A common bird, with a few pairs nesting each year.

Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*) A rare bird in the area now. One record, 9/21/85, T.W.R., F. Windfelder. A small number bred in the early 1950's until the nesting area was destroyed.

Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*) A common nesting bird. A few winter some years.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila caerulea*) A few birds winter in the T.W.R. (1) 12/16/78, (1) 12/19/81, (1) 12/10/87.

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) A rare bird in the area. (1) 12/15/77, (1) 10/16/78, (1) 11/15/84, (1) 11/25/85.

White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*) This bird started nesting in the area in the last seven years.

Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*) One to three pairs nest in the T.W.R. each year.

Philadelphia Vireo (*Vireo philadelphicus*) Seen each fall migrating through the area.

Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*) Can be found each fall and winter.

Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) Has been turning up more often in the spring in the past few years.

Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) Can be seen each fall.

***Black-headed Grosbeak** (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) One record for this bird: 5/10/87.

Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*) Has increased in numbers in the past few years. Six to eight pairs nest each year.

***Clay-colored Sparrow** (*Spizella pallida*) Two birds seen in the spring of 1987 at the T.W.R. parking lot. 6/7/87.

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*) One bird seen on 11/22/82 near the Philadelphia Airport.

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*) One bird seen in the T.W.R. by F. and B. Haas in the fall of 1986.

***Harris' Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia querula*) One bird seen on 5/13/83 in T.W.R. by Harry Todd and Steve Wing.

Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*) Most birds are seen on the Philadelphia Airport. (1) 11/7/70, (2) 11/6/76, (4) 2/15/77, (2) 2/8/79, (1) 1/11/81, (1) 1/22/84.

Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) Another bird that can be seen on the Philadelphia Airport. (200) 12/3/70, (135) 12/6/76, (25) 1/2/77, (200) 12/16/78, (100) 1/10/79, (100) 2/2/82.

Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*) This bird no longer nests in the area. Can be found only in migration.

House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) A very common nesting bird. Can be seen in large flocks in the fall and the spring.

Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) There are only two records for the area: (2) 1/10/70, J.C. Miller and K. Richards; (7) 11/22/73.

Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*) Can be seen in large flocks some winters. (75) 2/4/78, (3) 11/15/80.

Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*) Can be seen some years in small numbers.

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