

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE BIRDS  
OF BUCKS COUNTY, PA.

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(Editor's Note — This is the third supplement to "Birds of Bucks County, Pa.", published in *Cassinia*, Vol. XL, 1953. Other supplements were published in Vol. XLI, 1954, and Vol. XLIV, 1959.)

The great suburban push around Philadelphia, as in all areas along the mid-Atlantic seaboard, is bound to have some effect on bird life. A few thoughts relating to Bucks County ornithology may be of interest since this area lies in the direct path of the mushrooming megalopolis, and what is true of Bucks County is undoubtedly true of suburban Philadelphia and the adjacent Delaware Valley in general.

The original article on the birds of Bucks County noted the growing industrial and population pressures on bird life. In the ten years since, the human population has increased in this county nearly 115 percent, and the density has risen from 234 to 500 persons a square mile. The number of farms has dropped by 22 percent since 1954, with sixty-four square miles withdrawn from farm use. This agricultural withdrawal has amounted to more than 70,000 acres, over 25,000 acres of which have become building lots.

This may sound depressing to the ornithologist who sees his good birding spots turned into streets, rows of houses, and shopping centers. But there are several bright spots. Actually, nearly half of the County is still agricultural, and although the population is expected to double by 1980, little more than ten percent of the area is now developed. We may lose much open land and wooded valleys to the exploiters, but plans are in the making for a number of things pleasing to birders.

A series of up to fifteen dams and lakes are to be built on the Neshaminy watershed. These will be primarily for flood control and water conservation, but the potential benefit to migrating and breeding waterfowl is obvious. With the recent public acceptance of Project 70 for maintenance of open spaces in the Commonwealth, a number of parks and recreational areas now on the planners' books are expected to materialize in the County. Included will be areas in both lower and upper Bucks under the jurisdiction of either the State or the County Park Board. At Churchville, where the land adjacent to the reservoir will become a County park, a nature education center has already been established in a sanctuary of 17 acres. There will be at least seven more County-owned park areas or preserves, six of which now exist in nucleus form. Several of these will have a nature center.

In addition to the County parks and preserves, and the State parks now in existence: Washington Crossing, Ralph Stover, and Roosevelt (Delaware Canal); there will be Logan State Park now under development where the

Neshaminy enters the river, the extensive Tohickon Creek State Park near Haycock Mountain, and the 1600-acre Tyler estate near Richboro, recently acquired by the Department of Forests and Waters.

While "progress" continues to make its inroads on birding territory, we cannot be too disheartened. No significant change in numbers or species of birds has been evident. Many of the birds that once nested in the townships along the river and elsewhere have been forced to move on, of course, and the marsh birds have moved out as their domain has been drained and filled. But birding, where terrain and habitat are concerned, is becoming more concentrated and the yearly records show little change in species or numbers, no more than the normal fluctuations of the bird world. The few reported changes in status are largely, I suspect, because of the more sophisticated observations and the increased number of competent observers. Considering all aspects, I believe that Bucks County will continue to be good bird country for generations to come.

The following addenda to Bucks County birds include new species (\*), significant records and observations, and a few interesting items from the past.

\*CATTLE EGRET, *Bubulcus ibis*. A bird was seen at George School in the summer of 1961 by John Streetz, and a single bird was observed on the Smith Farm near Wycombe on April 26, 1962, by Russell Smith and Lester Thomas.

BRANT, *Branta bernicla*. The first of this species seen at Churchville was on October 21, 1964, by Adolph Herzog and Lester Thomas.

EUROPEAN WIDGEON, *Mareca penelope*. Continues its rather regular appearance at Penn Manor, William Reynolds reporting it again on March 24, 1963.

REDHEAD, *Aythya americana*. Twelve birds at Penn Manor on March 3, 1963, and six on October 28, same year, were noted by several D.V.O.C. observers.

COMMON SCOTER, *Oidemia nigra*. Robert Sehl saw 30 of these unusual ducks at Penn Manor on October 11, 1964. The last preceding record we have is at Beverly, N.J., opposite Croydon where nine birds were seen in December, 1936, by J. F. Street.

EAGLES. There have been no recent reports, but on April 23 and later in May, 1964, the writer saw an immature Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, at Churchville, circling above an Osprey.

No reports of Golden Eagles have come to light recently, but it is interesting to note the following item from the *Delaware Valley Advance* of October 10, 1895: "An eagle killed and ate a Shropshire lamb . . . on Prospect Farm near Langhorne . . . It was scared away . . . and has not reappeared. The lamb was fully half-grown and the eagle said to be of great size."

RUFFED GROUSE, *Bonasa umbellus*. A sidelight on the local history of this game bird, which is still uncommon in the upper end of the County, is quoted by Frank Edminster in his "The Ruffed Grouse" (1947) from the *U. S. Gazette* of November 18, 1832: "We are glad to perceive that the citizens of Bucks County . . . are giving heed to the preservation of game. . . Few of that fine species are to be seen. . . Let us encourage their growth and we shall be repaid by purchasing them a few seasons hence at fifty cents a dozen."

It wasn't until 1897 that Pennsylvania prohibited the sale of grouse.

\*ICELAND GULL, *Larus leucopterus*. Two of these northern gulls were seen at Penn Manor by Robert Sehl and others in February, 1961, and January, 1962; and at Yardley from January 6 to February 23, 1963, as many as twelve birds were seen by as many observers. Alan Brady, in *Cassinia*, XLVI, 1961-1962, p. 24, notes this unusual appearance of white-winged gulls on the middle Delaware.

GLAUCOUS GULL, *Larus hyperboreus*. From 1960 to the present this gull has been observed along the river and at Penn Manor as a fairly regular winter visitor.

\*LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL, *Larus fuscus*. A single individual appeared at Penn Manor, February 7-28, 1960, and was observed closely by Edwin Bloor, Alan Brady, and other competent bird men.

SHORT-EARED OWL, *Asio flammeus*. One or more have been seen each winter recently. A pair spent the winter of 1962-1963 in a brushy field near Richboro; and a small roost at Churchville was reported by Alan Brady in the winter of 1962-1963. One or more were seen in the same spot in December, 1963.

SNOWY OWL, *Nyctea scandiaca*. A bird landed on the pavement on Main Street, Doylestown, in late December, 1954, halting all traffic and attracting many onlookers. It was captured in a basket and later sent to Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago (*Doylestown Intelligencer*, December 31, 1954).

\*BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKER, *Picoides arcticus*. A bird active in a spruce woods on Solebury Mountain in the winter of 1959-1960 (Werner Goodwin, Alan Brady, and others).

LONG-BILLED MARSH WREN, *Telmatodytes palustris*. A bird seen and heard several times during the winter of 1962-1963 in a cattail marsh at Churchville (O. H. Coles, L. Thomas, and others).

EASTERN BLUEBIRD, *Sialia sialis*. John McIlvain reported seven birds roosting nightly in a nesting box at Langhorne from January 11 to February 2, 1961. Scattered reports of migrants and occasional breeders have been received from several localities since 1959.

LAWRENCE'S WARBLER, *Vermivora chrysoptera* × *pinus*. The first report of this hybrid was a bird banded by Dr. Paul Fluck at Washington Crossing on September 9, 1962. Donald Sparks reported a bird near Newtown in late May, 1964.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER, *Dendroica dominica*. Continues to nest on Bull's Island (see *Cassinia*, Vol. XLIV, 1959, p. 26).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD, *Euphagus carolinus*. A bird was seen in the Penn Manor woods by D.V.O.C. field men on October 28, 1963, and again by William Reynolds on December 28 of that year.

\*BREWER'S BLACKBIRD, *Euphagus cyanocephalus*. Three birds reported by William Reynolds at Penn Manor on December 28, 1963.

SUMMER TANAGER, *Piranga rubra*. The third known County record: an individual banded at Washington Crossing by Dr. Paul Fluck on May 12, 1963.

BLUE GROSBEAK, *Guiraca caerulea*. The birds at Churchville (*Cassinia*, Vol. XLII, 1957, p. 23) have been reported each year since 1956, except in 1962. One bird at Langhorne, June 13, 1960, seen by John McIlvain; one at the Coles Nursery in Furlong in the summer of 1962 by O. H. Coles; a bird at New Hope, May 10, 1963, reported by Charlotte Gantz; and scattered reports from other localities not confirmed.

DICKCISSEL, *Spiza americana*. A bird at New Hope on September 25, 1962 (Dorothy Hartmann); two at a feeding station at Richboro, intermittent from December, 1962, to March 2, 1963 (L. Thomas); a single bird at the same station in March, 1964; and one at a feeder in Spring Valley through late winter and early spring, 1964 (Charlotte Achey).

HOUSE FINCH, *Carpodacus mexicanus*. Besides the flock at Morrisville (*Cassinia*, Vol. XLIV, 1959, p. 26), John McIlvain has sight records of three birds at Langhorne on January 16 and February 2, 1961. Several other reports have been received but not confirmed from the lower end of the County. In the late fall and early winter of 1964 the House Finch appeared at a number of feeding stations throughout middle and lower Bucks.

PINE GROSBEAK, *Pinicola enucleator*. At New Hope on January 4, 1962, Dorothy Hartmann recorded four birds; Edwin Bloor saw one at Washington Crossing on January 7, same year; and Bruce Carrick reported three at Churchville on November 30, 1963.

COMMON REDPOLL, *Acanthis flammea*. At Penn Manor, 60 birds through January, 1960, and over a hundred on January 14, 1962 (Robert Sehl and others); at Washington Crossing, March 2, 1963, a small flock was seen by Bruce Garrick.

\*HARRIS'S SPARROW, *Zonotrichia querula*. Center Bridge, December 23 and subsequent, 1960, a bird at a feeder was trapped and banded by Dorothy Hartmann. It was also observed and photographed in hand by Alan Brady, John McIlvain, and L. Thomas.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW, *Zonotrichia leucophrys*. Two immature birds at Churchville, December 25, 1963, and for several days thereafter. Several other reports in 1963 and 1964 were received from this area. The White-crown now seems to be a regular winter visitor and should no longer be considered a "rare transient."

Acknowledgment: Population growth and land statistics were taken from published reports of the Bucks County Planning Commission and the Bucks County Park Board in 1962 and subsequent. Species records are from reports at meetings of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club and the Neshaminy Valley Nature Club, and also from individuals reporting verbally or by correspondence.

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