

# **New Jersey Bird Records Committee**

## **— Annual Report 2024**

### **by Bill Boyle and Milton Collins**

The New Jersey Bird Records Committee (hereafter “NJBRC” or “the Committee”) voted by email during 2023 and met in person on 10 March 2024 to complete review of rare bird reports for the year 2023. During the year and at the meeting, one hundred sixty-eight reports were considered and voted on. There were six new additions to the New Jersey State List in 2023, so the grand total stands at 500 species through 2023.

The current State List and the current NJBRC Review List are available on the Committee web site at <<http://www.njbrc.com>>. (Click on Lists and Annual Reports.) Reports should be sent to [njbrcreport@gmail.com](mailto:njbrcreport@gmail.com) or via snail mail to Bill Boyle, Secretary, NJBRC, 13 Strawberry Lane, Cape May, NJ 08204. More information can be found at the NJBRC website <<http://www.njbrc.com/>>.

Voting NJBRC members during the period covered by this report were Jesse Amesbury, Alex Bernzweig, Milton Collins, Amy Davis, Jason Denesevich, Jeff Ellerbusch, Paul Guris, Kathy Horn, and Bruce McWhorter. The Committee was deeply saddened by the loss of Tom Johnson, who was such a valuable member of the group. Non-voting member Bill Boyle continued as Secretary.

The NJBRC would also like to thank all the observers who submitted documentation during the past year. The Committee would have had an impossible job without the support of these birders. Although digital photography has made the documentation of many rarities easier, field notes still hold an important place as good notes can strengthen the case made by photos of less-than-stellar quality.

Field notes can also make the case for rare birds that are recorded only as brief mentions on the Internet. If you see a Review List bird and post a report to an e-mail list, please take a little extra time and submit a description to the NJBRC as well. Although the identification of rarities with no supporting details is often correct, it cannot be accepted as part of the historical record, which relies on supporting evidence that can be consulted by researchers many years in the future. Even a brief description, or a sketch by an avowed non-artist, can be sufficient to support an observation well enough to add it to the official record.

The format used to present data is standardized. Records are grouped by Committee actions, with Accepted records listed first, followed by reports that the Committee did not accept (identification was not sufficiently supported by the documentation supplied), and then a group for records treated specially. Within each group, records are presented in phylogenetic order (according to the *A.O.U. Check-list*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition and supplements through 2023). For each species, the English and scientific names are given, followed by the current total of accepted state records. The records considered by the Committee are then listed, arranged by date. For each record entry, the internal NJBRC index number is given, followed by date, location, and county. If the report involved more than one individual, the number of birds is given following the location; all records involve a single bird unless otherwise noted. Then, for accepted records, data on finders and documenters are given. The finder’s name, if known, is listed first, followed by a semicolon and the names of other observers who submitted some form

of documentation to the Committee (in alphabetical order), accompanied by symbols: “\*” indicates that written documentation was submitted; “ph” denotes a photo or videotape. Following these data, comments are provided to explain important or interesting aspects of the records.

Other abbreviations used: b = banded; Co. = County; m.ob. = many observers; NJA = New Jersey Audubon; NWR = National Wildlife Refuge; Res. = Reservoir; sk = sketch; SP = State Park; au = audio recording; Twp. = Township; WMA = Wildlife Management Area.

#### **Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* (46)**

- 2024-002. 1 January 2023. Mountain Lake, Sussex Co. A. Boyd(ph), K. Cronin, D. Briede, m.ob.
- 2024-017. 6 March 2023. Franklin Twp, Hunterdon Co. D. Bernstein\*(ph), F. Sencher(ph).
- 2024-152. 4 December 2023. Robbinsville, Mercer Co. C. Brown, E. Stone(ph), m.ob.

Barnacle Geese have occurred in small numbers almost every year since first being added to the state list in 2002. The three sightings noted here were all accompanied by excellent photographs. Unlike most records of this species, all three were seen on only one day.

#### **Trumpeter Swan *Cygnus buccinator* (7)**

- 2024-143. 26 November 2023 – 7 March 2024. Assunpink WMA, Monmouth Co. R. Dodelson, B. Bennett\*(ph), m.ob.

What is presumably the same pair of Trumpeter Swans returned in November to Assunpink WMA, where they have been documented every fall since 2013, except for 2015. In some years they have been accompanied by a young individual.

#### **Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* (89)**

- 2024-006. 10 January – 20 February 2023. North Wildwood, Cape May Co. T. Johnson\*(ph), S. McConnell(ph), M. Webster, D. Webster.
- 2024-009. 21 January 2023. Wildwood Crest, Cape May Co. T. Baxter(ph).
- 2024-010. 23 January 2023. Island Beach SP, Ocean Co. S. Weiss\*(ph).
- 2024-013. 9 – 10 February 2023. Saw Mill Creek WMA, Bergen Co. and Laurel Hill Park, Hudson Co. D. McQuade, M. Turso(ph), D. Bernstein(ph), M. Collins\*, m.ob.
- 2024-028. 1 – 4 May 2023. Round Valley Res., Hunterdon Co. F. Sencher\*(ph), C. Rubinfeld\*, m.ob.
- 2024-074. 3 September – 24 October 2023. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. (2 – 4). A. Ciancimino(ph), B. Elrick(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-100. 8 October 2023 – 14 January 2024. Manasquan Res., Monmouth Co. E. Politz(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-101. 10 – 25 October 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. A. Place\*, T. Hardcastle(ph), G. Eschenbach, m.ob.



*This Eared Grebe spent two weeks at Bunker Pond in Cape May Point. Photo/T. Hardcastle.*

It was a banner year for Eared Grebe, with an unprecedented eight accepted records. Despite the many sightings, the species is retained on the Review List because of the frequent confusion of Eared Grebe with

Horned Grebe, especially during the spring molting period. All of the accepted reports were accompanied by good photographs. The May bird at Round Valley was in the full breeding plumage seldom seen in New Jersey.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (34)**

- 2024-023. 24 April 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. T. Reed, J. Layman\*, R. Horn(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-026. 30 April 2023. South River, Middlesex Co. D. Brill\*(ph), T. Gillen\*(ph), P. Belardo\*.
- 2024-070. 7 August 2023. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co. G. Apte\*.

Despite its abundance over most of North America, this species continues to be a rarity in the Northeast, including New Jersey. The majority of the records are from Cape May, where the 24 April bird was well photographed, but the 30 April report from South River was the first for Middlesex County. Lastly, the August bird was a well-described, close fly-by at the Cape May Morning Count.

**Calliope Hummingbird *Selasphorus calliope* (14)**

- 2024-109. 26 – 27 October 2023. Little Egg Harbor Twp., Ocean Co. D. Roth\*(ph).

There were seven records of this western species from 2013 – 2016, but since then just one in 2021 and the present report from Ocean County. The bird was present for just two days, but was well photographed and the identity confirmed by two experts from the photos.

**Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus* (55)**

- 2024-127. 12 November 2023 – 19 March 2024. Franklinville, Gloucester Co. A. Meritt\*(ph), B. Bassett, J. Stippick(ph), D. La Puma(b), m.ob.
- 2024-134. 16 – 18 November 2023. Wanaque, Passaic Co. D. La Puma(b).
- 2024-150. 27 November – 12 December 2023. Northfield, Atlantic Co. N. Phillips\*, D. La Puma(b).

After failing to appear in 2022, an impressive three Rufous Hummingbirds were recorded in late 2023, one staying for more than four months. All were identified by a combination of photographs and banding measurements.

**Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus/sasin* (37)**

- 2024-097. 28 September 2023. Bloomingdale, Passaic Co. J. Harding\*(ph).

A young male *Selasphorus* hummingbird visited a Bloomingdale feeder one afternoon. Photos were taken and eliminate other members of that genus, but aren't sufficient to distinguish between Rufous and Allen's.

**Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* (77)**

- 2024-055. 16 June – 2 July 2023. Manasquan Res., Monmouth Co. P. Mandala\*(ph), E. Gibney(ph), B. Ashin\*(ph), C. Miller\*.



Purple Gallinule at Manasquan Res. Photo/E. Gibney.

This adult Purple Gallinule spent more than two weeks at the reservoir, but was sometimes difficult to see in the dense vegetation. A species well-known for its vagrancy, it has been found in every corner of the state and in every month but February and March.

**Yellow Rail *Coturnicops noveboracensis* (50)**

- 2024-020. 19 – 21 April 2023. Turkey Point, Cumberland Co. E. Price\*, T. Gabe\*.
- 2024-021. 22 April – 14 May 2023. Bass River SF, Burlington Co. (1 – 2). S. Sobosinski\*, J. Schill\*, M. Jewell(au), T. Bailey.

Both of these reports were from nocturnal birding efforts. The first was from a well-known site where the species has been heard often in the past during April – May. The second report represents the first Burlington County record since the early 1900's. One observer (MJ) obtained a very good recording on May 6 and briefly glimpsed a bird in flight.

**Limpkin *Aramus guarauna* (1)**

- 2024-125. 12 – 16 November 2023. Manasquan, Monmouth Co. E. Higham, M. Heine\*(ph), H. Hepding(ph), D. Ceravolo, C. Ecker, m.ob.



*The Limpkin in Manasquan.* Photo/ H. Hepding.

A first for New Jersey, this Limpkin spent five days poking around people's yards in

Manasquan before being captured and taken to a rehab facility. It was part of a massive irruption of the species across the eastern half of the continent, reaching as far west as Texas and Colorado, as far north as Minnesota and Ontario, and as far east as Nova Scotia. Its normal range in the US is Florida.

**Mountain Plover *Anarhynchus montanus* (1)**

- 2024-071. 9 August 2023. Stone Harbor, Cape May Co. B. Rumer\*(ph).

New Jersey's first Mountain Plover was discovered by a visiting birder on the beach at Stone Harbor. Fortunately, he was able to obtain excellent photographs, but the bird was not seen again. It may have been the same individual that was present on Cape Cod, Massachusetts for five days in late July.



*Mountain Plover at Stone Harbor.* Photo/ B. Rumer

**Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus ssp* (17)**

- 2024-065. 16 July 2023. Jarvis Sound, Cape May Co. A. Griffiths\*.
- 2024-067. 17 July 2023. Taylor Sound, Cape May Co. V. Elia\*.
- 2024-068. 18 July 2023 Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. D. Bernstein\*.

For the second year in a row, there were multiple reports of white-rumped Whimbrels of one of the Eurasian subspecies. Although the nominate *phaeopus* (European) taxon is

the most likely, the others can't be ruled out without good photographs.

**Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus* (9).**

2024-169. 23 August 2023. Stone Harbor, Cape May Co. A. Griffith(ph), C. Griffith, D. Ceravolo(ph), D. Ceravolo, J. Amesbury, M. Pasquarello.

The ninth record for New Jersey and the first in 8 years, this Long-billed Curlew was spotted from the Skimmer Salt Marsh Safari boat near the Wetlands Institute. Several other birders were able to spot it from the dock there, but it was not seen again.

**Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* [lapponica group] (8)**

- 2024-056. 18 June - 4 July 2023. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. M. Collins\*(ph), C. Rubinfeld(ph), C. Thomas(ph), m.ob.

The first record of the species in New Jersey in 6 years and only the eighth overall, this male in patchy breeding plumage spent more than two weeks delighting birders at Forsythe NWR. There was a 25-year gap between the fifth and sixth (2010 – 2015 presumed returning bird) appearances, followed by one at Wildwood in 2017.



New Jersey's 8th Bar-tailed Godwit. Photo/M. Collins

**Ruff *Calidris pugnax* (27)**

- 2024-018. 3 April 2023. Forsythe NWR, Ocean Co. M. Heatherington\*(ph), D. Hockenbury\*(ph), D. Ceravolo\*.

Following the five reports from 2022, which included the first winter (early January) record, there was just one Ruff found in 2023. This bird, an adult male in nearly full breeding plumage, was present for only a single day.



The only Ruff of the year was at Forsythe NWR, Apr. 3. Photo/M. Heatherington.

**Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* (50)**

- 2024-039. 12 – 19 May 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. C. Higgins\*, K. O'Neill\*, N. Minnich(ph), R. Horn(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-042. 15 – 22 May. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. B. Elrick\*(ph), C. Hughes(ph), m.ob.

The first bird, in nearly full breeding plumage, spent a week at the South Cape May Meadows where it was enjoyed and photographed by dozens of observers. The Forsythe bird, on the other hand, showed only a hint of rufous on the upper breast and was probably a female.



*Curlew Sandpiper at Cape May, May 13 2023.*  
Photo/R. Horn

**South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki* (25)**

- 2024-057. 19 June 2023. Pelagic off Cape May Co. J. Denesevich, J. Amesbury(ph), S. Weiss(ph), m.ob.

This well-photographed individual, a first-year bird, made a single pass by the boat filled with birders on a pelagic trip about 50 miles off Cape May County.

**Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus* (14)**

- 2024-085. 24 September 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. (2). G. Apte\*, A. Marden\*(ph), C. Hinkle.

Rare, but almost annual, from land, both birds were spotted by the Cape May Morning Flight counter at Higbee Beach and well described. The first was seen by observers at Sunset Beach minutes later and a mediocre photograph obtained. The second was seen by the Morning Flight counter shortly after the appearance of the Long-tailed Jaeger noted in the next entry.

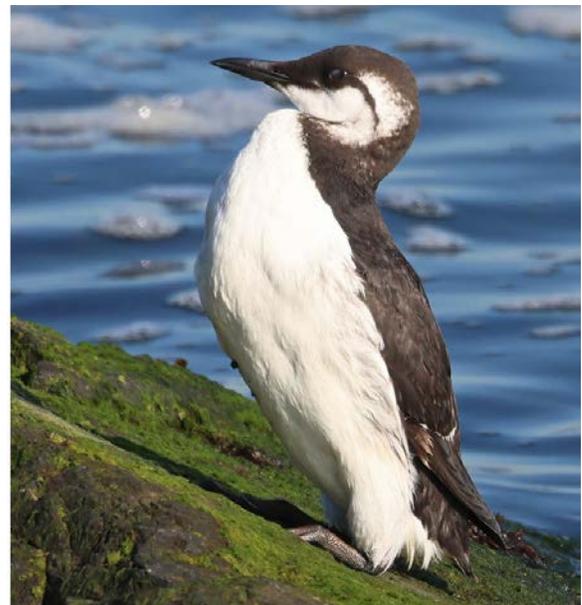
**Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus* (8)**

- 2024-086. 24 September 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. G. Apte\*, C. Hinkle\*, M. Lanzone et al.

This bird, a dark juvenile, was observed at a distance through a spotting scope for several minutes from the dike at Higbee Beach as it harassed a much larger Herring Gull before continuing south out of sight. It was then spotted by multiple observers at Cape May Point as it flew with and briefly chased a Laughing Gull. The species is regular, but uncommon, far offshore in the fall, but very rarely seen from land. This is only the fourth accepted record since it was returned to the Review List for sightings from land in 2013. This report and that of the Pomarine Jaegers the same day may have been related to the landfall of tropical storm Ophelia in North Carolina the preceding day.

**Common Murre *Uria aalge* (33)**

- 2024-012. 8 February 2023. Avalon, Cape May Co. J. McDonough\*(ph).
- 2024-014. 11 – 13 February 2023. G. Prelich\*(ph), J. Apgar\*, J. Antus, B. Elrick.
- 2024-019. 3 – 9 April 2023. Manasquan Inlet, Monmouth and Ocean Cos. B. Bobowski\*(ph), L. Mack(ph), m.ob.



*Common Murre at Manasquan Inlet. Photo/L. Mack*

After going a decade with only a single record, the two reports from 2021 were followed by these three in 2023. All were accompanied by good photographs and the Manasquan Inlet bird was enjoyed by many observers.

#### **Thick-billed Murre *Uria lomvia* (34)**

- 2024-004. 9 January 2023. Avalon, Cape May Co. J. McDonough\*(ph).
- 2024-009. 22 January – 13 February 2023. South Amboy and Perth Amboy, Middlesex Co. J. Denesevich\*(ph), T. Smith(ph), Robin M(ph), F. Pfeiffer, m.ob.

Although still considered a rarity, Thick-billed Murre has been the most frequently observed alcid, after Dovekie, along the coast in the past decade. Almost all of the records are from January and February, with some of the birds staying for extended periods. Both of these reports were supported by photographs.

#### **Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle* (23)**

- 2024-120. 5 November 2023. Barnegat Light, Ocean Co. J. Gant\*(ph), C. Naughton(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-148. 30 November 2023. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. S. Barnes\*(ph), A. Rabbat(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-164. 31 December 2023. Lake Como, Monmouth Co. S. Jarantow(ph).



*Black Guillemot at Barnegat Light. Photo/J. Gant*

Formerly a very rare visitor to the New Jersey coast in winter, Black Guillemot sightings, like those of most of the alcids, have increased significantly in the past few years. The three reports from different locations were unprecedented but supported by excellent photographs.

#### **Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini* (24)**

- 2024-069. 20 July 2023. Off Cape May, Cape May Co. M. Fritz\*(ph).
- 2024-094. 25 September 2023. Penns Grove, Salem Co. D. Weber\*.
- 2024-166. 18 September 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. G. Apte\*, D. Gochfeld(ph), et al.

Sabine's Gull is an arctic breeder that primarily migrates along the west coast, only sparingly along the Atlantic and across the interior of the continent. Records in New Jersey typically occur during fall migration along the immediate coast or on offshore pelagic trips. The September record from Cape May was a juvenile bird remarkably photographed during active nocturnal migration.

#### **Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* (48)**

- 2024-075. 3 September 2023. Cliffwood Beach, Middlesex Co. J. Denesevich\*(ph), S. Barnes\*, D. Stewart(ph), m.ob.

This year's single record of Franklin's Gull was found and photographed along the Raritan Bay where it remained for just a single afternoon. The September occurrence follows the trend of mostly fall sightings, though this species has been recorded in nearly every month of the year.



*Franklin's Gull (right) with Laughing Gull at Cliffwood Beach. Photo/J. Denesevich*

### **Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* (52)**

- 2024-077. 7 September 2023. (2) Pelagic off Ocean Co. E. Price\*(ph), Hillstar Nature, m.ob.
- 2024-087. 24 September 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. G. Apte\*, H. Hepding\*, M. Lanzone\*.

Sooty Tern records are typically associated with strong storms displacing birds from the tropical Atlantic. This year's first sighting broke from that pattern, with an adult and a juvenile bird photographed during a pelagic trip. The Cape May record was more typical with several well-described birds sighted by multiple observers during the aftermath of Tropical Storm Ophelia.

### **Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisea* (60)**

- 2024-045. 19 May 2023. Cape May – Lewis Ferry, Cape May Co. M. Lanzone\*, P. Lanzone.
- 2024-047. 24 May 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. T. Reed\*, D. Ceravolo\*.
- 2024-052. 30 May 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. T. Reed\*, J. Layman\*, m.ob.
- 2024-083. 24 September 2023. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co. G. Apte\*.

Following a recent trend, three of this year's Arctic Tern records occurred onshore in late May during a period of sustained easterly winds. The September record pertains to a juvenile bird seen during the aftermath of Tropical Storm Ophelia. All of these reports

contained detailed descriptions of the key plumage features and impressions of shape and flight style that separate Arctic Tern from similar species.

### **Pacific Loon *Gavia pacifica* (76)**

- 2024-003. 3 – 6 January 2023. Manasquan Inlet, Monmouth and Ocean Cos. J. Denesevich\*(ph), M. Heine\*, C. Miller\*, m.ob.
- 2024-106. 25 October 2023. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co. G. Apte.
- 2024-113. 29 October 2023. Manasquan Inlet, Ocean Co. S. Barnes\*.
- 2024-116. 3 November 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. M. O'Brien\*, L. Zemaitis, A. Humann.
- 2024-122. 8 November 2023. Avalon, Cape May Co. D. Irons\*.
- 2024-131. 16 November 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. M. O'Brien\*, G. Apte\*, et al.
- 2024-137. 21 November 2023. Norbury's Landing, Cape May Co. B. Fogg\*.
- 2024-138. 22 November 2023. Avalon, Cape May Co. D. Irons\*.
- 2024-155. 5 December 2023. Avalon, Cape May Co. T. Reed\*.
- 2024-157. 13 December 2023. Avalon, Cape May Co. D. Irons\*.

Sightings of Pacific Loon in New Jersey have increased significantly over the past decade. The majority of this year's accepted records come from Cape May and occur in the context of migration counts with the birds observed in flight.

### **White-faced Storm-Petrel *Pelagodroma marina* (19)**

- 2024-073. 20 August 2023. Pelagic off Cape May, Cape May Co. T. Reed\*, C. Engstrom(ph), N. Minnich(ph), m.ob.

Late summer pelagic trips offer the best chance at finding this sought-after and

charismatic species in New Jersey. Birders on this pelagic out of Cape May were treated to extended views of a single White-faced Storm-Petrel foraging with its characteristic “kangaroo hopping” style.

**Leach’s Storm-Petrel *Hydrobates leucorhous* (18)**

- 2024-089. 24 September 2023. Liberty St. Park, Hudson Co. M. Collins\*.
- 2024-090. 24 September 2023. South Amboy, Middlesex Co. (2). S. Barnes\*, D. Stewart\*, D. Brill(ph), E. Price.

The aftermath of Tropical Storm Ophelia brought with it a number of displaced seabirds including these Leach’s Storm-Petrels pushed in to Raritan Bay and New York Harbor. Expected off-shore, land-based sightings of this species are rare and all previous records have coincided with the passages of strong storms.

**Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* (16)**

- 2024-001. 19 June 2022. Barnegat Light, Ocean Co. C. Thomas\*(ph), K. Thomas.
- 2024-025. 29 April 2023. Manasquan Inlet, Monmouth and Ocean Co. J. Denesevich\*.
- 2024-060. 27 June 2023, Cape May, Cape May Co, T. Reed\*, D. & D Ceravolo.

Manx Shearwater is an expected species in offshore waters along New Jersey but remains rare from land. The Barnegat Light bird was photographed feeding just off the jetty, while the other two records were more distant fly-bys.

**Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* (73)**

- 2024-059. 25 June 2023. Atlantic City, Atlantic Co. F. Delguercio(ph).
- 2024-064. 9 July 2023. Pelagic off Cape May, Cape May Co. M. Laurino(ph), m.ob.

- 2024-072. 12 August – 27 November 2023. Hoboken, Hudson Co. M. Collins\*(ph), R. Duffy(v), m.ob.
- 2024-084. 24 – 27 September 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. U. Mitra(ph), K. Fung(ph), M. O’Brien(ph), C. Saladin\*, m.ob.
- 2024-088. 24 September 2023. Avalon, Cape May Co. J. McDonough\*(ph).
- 2024-092. 24 September 2023. Pennsville, Salem Co. D. Weber\*(ph).
- 2024-098. 1 October 2023. Avalon, Cape May Co. G. Apte\*.
- 2024-107. 26 October 2023. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co. G. Apte\*.
- 2024-153. 4 December 2023. Pelagic off Ocean Co. S. McConnell\*(ph).

Brown Booby sightings continue to drastically increase in New Jersey and surrounding states; over half of New Jersey’s accepted records have occurred within the last five years. While most records are coastal, this species is liable to turn up on just about any large body of water.



*Brown Booby at Cape May. Photo/U. Mitra*

**Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* (1)**

- 2024-029. 1 May 2023. Tabernacle, Burlington Co. M. Scullion(ph).

New Jersey’s first Red-footed Booby was found in an odd location — 30 miles inland along the side of a dirt road in a cranberry bog. The bird was discovered following

several days of storms from the southeast. This tropical species occurs in a wide range along the central latitudes but has very few vagrant records in our region.



*Red-footed Booby in a cranberry bog 30 miles from the sea. Photo/M. Scullion.*

#### **Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga* (27)**

- 2024-022. 23 April 2023. Highlands, Monmouth Co. B. Diebold\*.
- 2024-024. 26 April 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. (1 – 3). T. Reed\*(ph), H. Hepding, B. Ewald(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-033. 6 – 10 May 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. (1 – 6). E. Dziedzic\*(ph), V. Elia(ph), R. Horn(ph), M. O'Brien(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-037. 10 May 2023. Rockaway, Morris Co. A. Eppedio\*, H. Pryor.
- 2024-051. 30 May 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. B. Roache\*, T. Hardcastle\*(ph), H. Tomlinson(ph), m.ob.

Anhinga has been a sporadic but increasing visitor to New Jersey in recent years. The spring of 2023 brought as many as a dozen individual Anhingas to the state with all of the year's sightings falling in the expected April - June window.



*Two Anhingas over Cape May. Photo/V. Elia*

#### **Little Egret *Egretta gazetta* (2)**

- 2024-062. 10 May 2023. Shellbay Landing, Cape May Co. P Riley(ph).



©Peter Riley

- *Little Egret at Shell Bay Landing, Cape May County. Photo/P. Riley*

This widespread Eurasian species has been recorded numerous times in Delaware and New England, but this Little Egret photographed in Cape May represents only the second record for New Jersey. Care must be taken when identifying a potential Little Egret, as hybrids with Snowy Egret have occurred, but the stellar photos of this bird left no doubt.

### **Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni* (53)**

- 2024-080. 16 September 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. G. Apte\*, D. Ceravolo, C. Hinkle, O. James, M. O'Brien\*(ph).
- 2024-102. 10 October 2023. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. A. Eppedio\*, D. Salas, E. Heiser.
- 2024-104. 22 October 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. A. Place\*(ph), N. Larabee(ph), m.ob.

The majority of Swainson's Hawk sightings in the state come from migration watches in Cape May, as is the case with two of this year's accepted reports. This long-distance migrant is rare but nearly annual during the fall in New Jersey.

### **Ash-throated Flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens* (111)**

- 2024-115. 2 November 2023. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co. G. Apte(ph), C. Hinkle\*.
- 2024-117. 3 November 2023. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. B. Filreis(ph).
- 2024-121. 6 November 2023. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co. G. Apte\*(ph).
- 2024-126. 12 November 2023. Sandy Hook, Monmouth C. Holzapfel\*(ph), C. Naughton\*(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-132. 17 November 2023. Round Valley Res., Hunterdon Co. B. Meriwether(ph).
- 2024-133. 17 November 2023. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. D. Slipp(ph).
- 2024-135. 19 – 25 November 2023. Milltown, Middlesex Co. G. & A. McCormick, J. McCormick\*(ph), D. Puskas(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-136. 20 November 2024. Thompson's Beach, Cumberland Co. C. Sutton, P. Sutton\*(ph).

- 2024-140. 25 November 2024. West Cape May, Cape May Co. M. O'Brien\*(ph), D. Ceravolo, M. Heine.
- 2024-151. 4 - 13 December 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. M. O'Brien\*(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-156. 10 December 2023. Cape May NWR, Woodcock Trail, Cape May Co. T Reed(ph).
- 2024-158. 13 December 2023. Wildwood Crest, Cape May Co. V. Elia(ph).
- 2024-160. 21 December 2023 – 5 January 2024. McGuire AFB, Ocean Co. C. Adams(ph), E. Stone(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-162. 22 December 2023 – 5 January 2024. Palmyra, Burlington Co. J. Carr\*, T. Bailey(ph), m.ob.

After only a single record in 2022, this year brought a total of 14 accepted records of Ash-throated Flycatcher as part of a region-wide irruption. While this species has become a regular late fall rarity, it still requires careful documentation to eliminate other *Myiarchus* flycatchers.

### **Gray Kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis* (27)**

- 2024-027. 30 April – 14 May 2023. Barnegat Light, Ocean Co. S. Darby(ph), A. Stepniewski\*, E. Stepniewski(ph), A. Majewski\*, m.ob.
- 2024-129. 14 November 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. M. O'Brien\*(ph), L. Zemaitis, A. Place, G. Apte\*, A. Marden.
- 2024-141. 25 November 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. A. Bernzweig\*(ph, D), A. M. Morrison.

For the second year in a row New Jersey recorded multiple observations of Gray Kingbird. The Barnegat bird was the first chaseable individual in Ocean County and was seen by multiple observers during its unusually long stay. The Cape May sighting in late November came to a violent end when the bird was attacked by a Sharp-shinned

Hawk; the deceased specimen was taken to the Academy of Natural Sciences.



Gray Kingbird at Barnegat Light, 4 May 2023. Photo/E. Stepniewski

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus* (75)**

- 2024-054. 6 June 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. A. Guarente\*, B. Roache\*, D. Ceravolo\*, D. Ceravolo, L. Hardcastle(ph), V. Elia(ph), B. Boyle\*, K. Barrington.

This late spring Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was cooperative for multiple observers, but, as usual for this distinctive species, it was a one-day wonder.



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at South Cape May Meadows. Photo/V. Elia

**Western Flycatcher *Empidonax difficilis* (7)**

- 2024-105. 23 – 28 October 2023. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. B. Diebold\*(ph),

D. Markowicz(ph), K. Leonard(ph), .m.ob.

- 2024-142. 8 October 2020. Overpeck County Park, Bergen Co. J. Cinquina\*, A. Leurk(ph), J. Fazio-Cohen(ph).

Two new records of the recently lumped Western Flycatcher were accepted this year. The Sandy Hook bird represents a first for the well-birded location, and was seen and photographed by many observers during its stay. The Bergen bird was initially left as an unidentified *Empidonax*, but the finders revisited their photos following the Sandy Hook sighting. Both of these records are supported with documentation photos showing details of the head and wing panel that help separate this species from other very similar flycatchers.

**Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya* (28)**

- 2024-108. 27 – 28 October 2023. Pierce's Point, Cape May Co. J. Carrara(ph), V. Elia\*(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-158. 13 November 2023. Rosenkrans Lane, Sussex Co. G. Surya\*.

Typical for Say's Phoebe in New Jersey, both of these sightings occurred in the fall and were only brief stays. The Cape May bird stuck around just long enough for multiple observers to enjoy it, while the Sussex bird was one-day wonder.



Say's Phoebe at Pierce's Point. Photo/J. Carrara

**Bell's Vireo *Vireo bellii* (14)**

- 2024-058. 19 June 2023. Wharton SF, Burlington Co. T. Bailey\*(au).

This bird was seen and heard. Although there were no details on the visual sighting, the excellent recording of this vireo's distinctive song was convincing.

**Black-whiskered Vireo *Vireo altiloquus* (1)**

- 2024-030. 2 – 4 May 2023. Island Beach SP, Ocean Co. A. Tsongas\*(ph), C. Hockenbury(ph).

The first observer noted the large bill and wide eye stripe on this vireo. On examining his photos, he could see the dark throat stripe of a Black-whiskered Vireo. The second observer was one on many searching for the bird two days later, but was the only one to succeed and obtain multiple photos. The numerous photographs from the two observers provide convincing proof of the identity of the bird, a first state record for New Jersey.



*Black-whiskered Vireo at Island Beach S.P. Photo/A. Tongas*

**Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina* (6)**

- 2024-130. 15 – 24 November 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. A. Place\*(ph), M. Garland\*, m.ob.

The sixth Violet-green Swallow for New Jersey and the first in 12 years was picked out of a flock of Tree Swallows by the keen-eyed hawkwatch counter, although the view was unsatisfactory. Fortunately, the same observer and two others were able to find the bird again at a nearby location and obtain good photos as it made several passes in the company of Tree Swallows. Once the word got out, the bird was seen off-and-on by many observers over the next nine days.

**Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* (22)**

- 2024-123. 8 November 2023. Racoon Ridge, Warren Co. B. White\*(ph).

A lucky birder hiking to the Racoon Ridge hawkwatch came upon a waxwing associating with a pair of Eastern Bluebirds. Noting the gray plumage and reddish around the face, he realized it was probably a Bohemian Waxwing. Fortunately, the bird allowed for closer approach and photographs from several angles confirming its identity. This was just the third individual of the species seen in the state in the past 8 years.



*Bohemian Waxwing, Racoon Ridge, Warren County. Photo/B. White*

**Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla* (18)**

- 2024-035. 6 May 2023. Green Creek, Cape May Co. T. Johnson\*, M. Roach\*.

- 2024-061. 29 June 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. T. Reed\*(ph), V. Elia\*.

The first nuthatch was heard calling twice by very experience observers, but could not be visually located. An unusual record away from Cape May Point. The second report, seen and well-photographed, followed the increasingly familiar pattern of moving through the dunes as Cape May Point.

**Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus* (5)**

- 2024-128. 11 – 15 November 2023. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. L. Riccobene(ph), B. Elrick\*(ph), J. McCormick\*, m.ob.

New Jersey’s fifth Sage Thrasher, the first in 14 years, was photographed on the dikes at Forsythe NWR on 11 November, but apparently not identified until rediscovered on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Once the news of its presence was spread, more than 150 birders were able to see this very cooperative individual over the next few days. The state’s third record from April 2004 was also at Forsythe, but on the entrance road and seen by only two observers.



*Sage Thrasher at Forsythe NWR, 13 November 2023. Photo/B. Elrick*

**Townsend’s Solitaire *Myadestes townsendi* (18)**

- 2024-124. 11 November 2023. Hampton Furnace, Burlington Co. C. Magarelli(ph)

New Jersey’s 18<sup>th</sup> accepted Townsend’s Solitaire, the first in four years, was seen and photographed by a single observer in the heart of the Pine Barrens, but could not be relocated.

**European Robin *Erithacus rubecula* (1)**

- 2024-103. 13 October 2023. Newark, Essex Co. Fide N Tspoura, C. Soucy(ph).



- *European Robin at Rehab Facility. Photo/C. Soucy*

This European Robin collided with a building in Newark during the pre-dawn hours of 13 October, where it was picked up by a volunteer monitoring the site for bird/building collisions. It was taken to a rehabilitator and identified as this species. The bird appeared to be in good condition and was released in the Great Swamp, Morris County. How the bird arrived in North America cannot be readily determined. It

could have been ship-assisted or reached here on its own. Mid-October is a time when many European Robins and other passerines are migrating from Scandinavia and Eastern Europe to the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Middle East. This is the first record for New Jersey and one of very few for North America.

#### **Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (1)**

- 2024-152. 5 December 2023 – 31 March 2024. Whiting, Ocean Co. H. Riker(ph), m.ob.



*A first for eastern North America, this Red-flanked Bluetail spent the winter at a housing development in the Ne Jersey Pine Barrens. Photo/K. Thompson.*

Of all the birds that one might have imagined as the next new species for New Jersey, Red-flanked Bluetail would have been pretty far down the list. This individual, a female or first-winter male, was spotted and photographed in his backyard by a novice birder. Not recognizing the species, he circulated the photos to a web site, where it was soon identified. The bird remained in the same small area for almost four months and was observed by many hundreds of birders from all over the Northeast, although it sometimes stayed out of sight for hours at a time. Red-flanked Bluetail has a large breeding range from Scandinavia to eastern Siberia, but winters primarily in Korea, Japan, and southeast Asia. There about ten

records from the West Coast, plus one each from Idaho and Wyoming, but this is apparently the first for eastern North America.

#### **Harris's Sparrow *Zonotrichia querula* (27)**

- 2024-016. 20 February – 27 March 2023. East Windsor, Mercer Co. B. Hewitt\*, J. Howland\*, M. Heine(ph), C. Adams\*, m.ob.

This sub-adult Harris's Sparrow was found in a road-side field near Assunpink WMA, where it remained for over a month and was seen by dozens of birders.

#### **LeConte's Sparrow *Ammodramus leconteii* (57)**

- 2024-111. 29 October 2023. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co. C. Hinkle(ph), M. Pasquarello(ph), D. Ceravolo, m.ob.
- 2024-118. 4 – 5 November 2023. Chatsworth, Burlington Co. S. Sobosinski\*, J. Schill\*, M. Jewell.
- 2024-119. 4 November 2023. Cranbury, Middlesex Co. E. Price\*(ph).

The first report came from Higbee Beach WMA, where a skulking bird was photographed by two parties, but not seen again. The second was a more unusual spot in the Pine Barrens, where it was well-seen, but not photographed, on consecutive days. The third bird was found on private property; it was well-described and identifiable photos were obtained.

#### **Henslow's Sparrow *Centronyx henslowii* (20).**

- 2024-110. 28 October 2023. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co. J. Chaillet\*, S. Apte, L. Widdop(ph), C. Hinkle(ph), m.ob.

Another skulker, this Henslow's Sparrow stayed hidden most of the time, but was seen by numerous observers. Several good photos were obtained.



*Henslow's Sparrow at Higbee Beach WMA.*  
Photo/L. Widdop

**Green-tailed Towhee *Pipilo chlorurus* (8)**

- 2024-112. 29 October 2023. West Cape May, Cape May Co. B. Ewald\*.

The state's eight Green-tailed Towhee was watched for about a minute feeding with a large flock of White-throated and other sparrows before the group was flushed and the towhee could not be relocated. The detailed description by an observer familiar with the species, rules out other similar species.

**Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus* (7)**

- 2024-124. 1 November 2023. Lord Stirling Park, Somerset Co. D. Morton(ph), J. Ellerbusch\*(ph), m.ob.

New Jersey's seventh Spotted Towhee was found on the morning of 1 November at Lord Stirling Park, where it remained throughout the day and was seen and photographed by several dozen observers. It was not seen after that date.



*Spotted Towhee at Lord Stirling Park, Somerset Co.*  
Photo/J. Ellerbusch

**Bullock's Oriole *Icterus bullockii* (9)**

- 2024-076. 4 September 2023. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co. C. Hinkle\*, G. Apte\*(ph), m.ob.

This adult male Bullock's Oriole was a surprising early season flyby at the New Jersey Audubon Morning Songbird Count in Cape May. Although no photographs were obtained, multiple observers provided convincing details. This represents the fifth record (all adult or immature males) of this species in the past four years. There were only four records in the previous twenty years and three of those were females, which can be very difficult to separate from winter female Baltimore Orioles.

**Swainson's Warbler *Limnethlypis swainsonii* (30)**

- 2024-031. 4 May 2023. West Cape May, Cape May Co. V. Elia\*(ph).
- 2024-032. 4 May 2023. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co. B. Talbott(au).
- 2024-038. 11 May 2023. Allaire SP, Monmouth Co. P. Misseldine\*(au).

The first of these reports was a bird seen and well-described at the Beanery in West Cape May, while the second was recorded, but not seen at the site where a territorial male was present for at least six consecutive seasons. There were no further reports after the May 4

date. The Allaire bird was seen well and good audio recorded, but was not relocated.

**Black-throated Gray Warbler *Setophaga nigrescens* (34)**

- 2024-079. 15 September 2023. Island Beach SP, Ocean Co. A. Tongas\*.

This individual was seen briefly, but well, at close range by an experienced observer, who provided convincing details. The majority of records of this species in New Jersey are from the September to October time frame, although it has occurred in almost every month of the year.

**Townsend's Warbler *Setophaga townsendi* (26)**

- 2024-082. 21 – 24 September 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. J. Parker\*, K. Parker, R. Fanning(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-145. 29 November 2023 – 8 January 2024. Eno's Pond Park, Ocean Co. J. Gant\*(ph), m.ob.
- 2024-146. 29 November 2023. Eno's Pond Park, Ocean Co. C. Costino(ph).
- 2024-161. 22 – 30 December 2023. Trenton Sewage Ponds, Mercer Co. S. Martz(ph), R. Green(ph), m.ob.

The Cape May bird, a female or young male, was an early migrant that visited the Parker's yard for four days and was seen by many. The two birds at Eno's Pond Park, an adult male and an apparent female, were found on the same day by different observers. The male remained for six weeks and was seen and photographed by many birders. The fourth bird, another male, was present for a week at the Trenton Sewage Ponds that have attracted numerous late migrants in recent years.



Townsend's Warbler in Cape May, 22 September 2023. Photo/ R. Fanning

**Western Tanager *Piranga ludovicianus* (70)**

- 2024-006. 10 January – 13 March 2023. West Cape May, Cape May Co. M. O'Brien\*(ph), L. Zemaitis\*, m.ob.
- 2024-011. 1 February 2023. Waretown, Ocean Co. C. Lounsbury, B. Lieter(ph), D. Lieter.
- 2024-147. 30 November 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co. A. Place\*, V. Elia(ph).
- 2024-165. 19 December 2023 – 19 February 2024. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. D. Markowicz, B. Murray\*(ph), m.ob.

The first-winter female Western Tanager that came to a West Cape May feeder was a regular visitor for over two months. The adult male in a Waretown backyard, on the other hand, was a one-day wonder seen and photographed by a small group of people. A female/young male perched in a cedar by the Cape May hawkwatch for less than a minute, but was identifiably photographed. Finally, the female Western Tanager found on the Sandy Hook Christmas Bird County stayed for two months and was seen by many.

## Reports not accepted

### Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis*

- 2024-005. 9 January 2023. Belmar, Monmouth Co.

Without a photo to document the observation, the details provided did not rule out other species, including Red-necked Grebe.

### Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

- 2024-044. 19 May 2023. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co.
- 2024-050. 29 May 2023. West Cape May, Cape May Co.
- 2024-099. 3 October 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co.

The two May reports were of birds heard briefly calling, with no further details. Given the rarity of the species in our area, this was not considered adequate documentation. The Committee was divided on the October report, but several members considered the documentation insufficient to rule out similar species.

### Yellow Rail *Coturnicops noveboracensis*

- 2024-049. 27 May 2023. Cape May NWR, Cape May Co.

The consensus of the Committee was that this was an interesting observation. Possibly correct but not quite adequate to support such a rare sighting.

### Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

- 2024-139. 23 November 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co.

The Committee was divided on this report, given the expertise of the observers, but several felt that the lack of details did not rule out other possibilities.

### Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus*

- 2024-096. 28 September 2023. Avalon, Cape May Co.
- 2024-167. 5 October 2023. Island Beach SP. Ocean Co.

Both of these reports were deemed “difficult to vote on” for this difficult identification, but neither completely ruled out the more likely Parasitic Jaeger.

### Pacific Loon *Gavia pacifica*

- 2024-149. 1 December 2023. Cape May, Cape May Co.

The majority of the Committee voted to accept this report, but three members said that the limited details were not convincing.

### Leach’s Storm-Petrel *Hydrobates leucorhous*

- 2024-091. 24 September 2023. Keansburg Beach, Monmouth Co.

The Committee noted that the identification was plausible given the presence of two Leach’s farther north on the same day, but adequate details were lacking.

### Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*.

- 2024-095. 28 September 2023. Avalon, Cape May Co.

The Committee was divided on this report, but the majority felt that the details were insufficient to confirm the identification.

### Audubon’s Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*

- 2024-093. 24 September 2023. Avalon, Cape May Co.

As with the preceding report, the Committee was divided on voting to accept, but the majority felt that the details for the distant sighting did not rule out other species.

### **Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster***

- 2024-048. 26 May 2023. Island Beach SP, Ocean Co.

The Committee was divided on this report, but several members did not believe that the details ruled out Northern Gannett, many of which were present that day.

### **Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga***

- 2024-034. 6 May 2023. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co.
- 2024-036. 7 May 2023. Ringwood SP, Passaic Co.
- 2024-041. 13 May 2023. Ridgefield Park, Bergen Co.
- 2024-043. 16 May 2023. Highlands, Monmouth Co.
- 2024-053. 31 May 2023. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co.
- 2024-063. 24 May 2024. Mt. Laurel, Burlington Co.
- 2024-081. 21 September 2023. D& R Canal Mercer Co.

While there were multiple sightings of Anhinga during late April and May, mostly from Cape May, the reports listed here lacked convincing details to rule out cormorants.

### **Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni***

- 2024-163. 29 December 2023. Cranbury, Middlesex Co.

This was a tough one – a bird seen well, but briefly, while driving on the New Jersey Turnpike. Given the rarity of this species in the east, especially adults, and the circumstances of the sighting, the majority of the Committee voted not to accept the report.

### **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus***

- 2024-066. 17 July 2023. Assunpink WMA, Monmouth Co.

This report was deemed interesting, but lacking in sufficient detail to rule out other possibilities.

### **Bullock's Oriole *Icterus bullockii***

- 2024-167. 12 September 2023. Cedar Bonnett Island, Ocean Co.

The observer had a very brief sighting of a female/immature male oriole in the company of Baltimore Orioles. Given the well-known difficulty of separating first-winter females of these two species, good photographs are usually necessary to establish identity.

### **Swainson's Warbler *Limnothlypis swainsonii***

- 2024-040. 12 May 2023. Belleplain SF, Cape May Co.
- 2024-046. 21 May 2023. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co.

The 12 May report of a singing, but unseen bird may be correct, but a recording would have been helpful. The bird report on 21 May, could have been one seen there on 4 May, but the details and lack of photo or audio leave room for doubt.

### **Western Tanager *Piranga ludovicianus***

- 2024-015. 15 February 2023. Whiting, Ocean Co.

This bird was reported as a female, but there were no other details.