

New Jersey Bird Records Committee

— Annual Report 2025

by Bill Boyle and Milton Collins

The New Jersey Bird Records Committee (hereafter “NJBRC” or “the Committee”) voted by email during 2024 and met in person on 9 March 2025 to complete review of rare bird reports for the year 2024. During the year and at the meeting, one hundred thirty-six reports were considered and voted on. There were four new additions and one deletion to the New Jersey State List in 2024, so the grand total stands at 503 species through 2024.

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 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. 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*, 7th 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.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchos* (28)

- 2025-005. 4 – 15 January 2024. Rockleigh, Bergen Co. B. Kenney*(ph), B. Sheppard, m.ob.
- 2025-009. 9 January – 12 March 2024. Lincroft, Monmouth Co. B. Murray(ph), R. Fischer(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-114a. 1 – 7 December 2024. Etra Lake, Mercer Co. J. Howland(ph), B. Hewitt, D. Magda, m.ob.
- 2025-114b. 27 December 2024. Allentown, Monmouth Co. R Taylor(ph), S. Taylor.

After three years without any sightings, Pink-footed Geese returned to New Jersey with four records in 2024. These records, along with the greater trend of increased sightings throughout the northeast, coincide with the rise in numbers of the species’ Greenland and Iceland populations.

Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* (93)

- 2025-026. 7 – 22 March 2024. Wildwood Crest, Cape May Co. K. Horn*(ph), G. Muller(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-033. 19 – 22 April 2024. Elizabeth, Union Co. D. Bernstein*(ph), E. Ray(ph), m.ob.

- 2025-084. 13 – 14 September 2024. Cranbury, Monmouth Co. T. Brown(ph), M. McCarthy(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-093. 30 September 2024. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. B. Elrick(ph).

Now an annual rarity in the state, 2024 saw four records of Eared Grebe. The Union and Middlesex birds represented first county records of the species.

Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* (33)

- 2025-002. 11 January 2024. Avalon, Cape May Co. J. McDonough*, B. Herschfeld.
- 2025-017. 4 February – 22 April 2024. Amboys, Middlesex Co. J. Denesevich*(ph), D. Asbjorn(ph), K. Leonard(ph), m.ob.

After eight years without any sightings, 2024 saw two records of Western Grebe. The Cape May bird was well described and only seen for a short time. The Middlesex bird was seen by many observers over several months on both the New Jersey and New York sides of the Raritan Bay.



The long-staying Western Grebe at The Amboys, Middlesex Co. Photo: D. Asbjorn.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (37)

- 2025-036. 27 April 2024. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. J. Gant*(ph).

- 2025-037. 28 April – 2 May 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. S. Reynolds*, M. Stubblefield(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-054. 24 – 27 May 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. J. McDonough(ph), A. Reb, m.ob.

This introduced species remains a rarity throughout the northeast, though the last few years have seen an increasing number of records in New Jersey. The majority of sightings occur in Cape May, which was the case for two of this year's records. All three were supported by photographs which helped eliminate the similar African Collared-Dove.

Lesser Nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis* (2)

- 2025-047. 11 May 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. V. Elia, A. Reb(ph), J. McDonough, m.ob.

This nighthawk flew by the Cape May Springwatch at Coral Ave and aroused suspicion based on its shape and flight style. Photographs showing the wing pattern allowed the observers to confirm their impressions of Lesser Nighthawk. This is the third record of this southwestern species in New Jersey and the second for Cape May.

Common Swift *Apus apus* (1)

- 2025-050. 17 May 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. J. Gant*(ph), m.ob.

A first record for New Jersey, this Common Swift spent a day feeding with Chimney Swifts over the South Cape May Meadows. Good photos and detailed notes allowed the finder to eliminate other *Apus* Swift species and quickly get the word out, allowing many fortunate birders to share in the sighting. This species breeds across much of Eurasia and winters in Africa, but despite its wide range and migratory nature there are only three vagrant records for North America.



Only the third eBird record for North America, this Common Swift was enjoyed by more than 100 birders during its one-day visit. Photo: C. Daly.

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus* (56)

- 2025-088. 24 September 2024 – 22 January 2025. Bridgewater, Somerset Co. N. Garay(ph), A. Boyd, K. Cronin(ph), m.ob.

A young male Rufous Hummingbird spent much of the fall and winter attending feeders in a Somerset County yard. Photos of the bird's back and tail feathers were able to eliminate Allen's Hummingbird.

Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus/sasin* (39)

- 2025-115. 30 November – 7 December 2024. Del Haven, Cape May Co. R. Crossley, J. McDonough(ph), H. Tomlinson(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-132. 29 November – 8 December 2024. Middlesex Co. L. Schulz.

These two hummingbirds were accepted as Rufous/Allen's. While Broad-tailed Hummingbird was eliminated, documentation was insufficient to identify fully to species level.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* (77)

- 2025-080. 21 August – 5 September 2024. Cape May Point, Cape May Co. B. Ewald*(ph), P. Bujanowski(ph), m.ob.

This subadult Purple Gallinule spent two weeks in Cape May Point and was enjoyed by many observers. Although known to show up in unusual places, this individual was found in suitable marshy habitat at Cape May Point State Park and around Lily Lake.

Wilson's Plover *Anarhynchus wilsonia* (36)

- 2025-027. 17 March 2024. Long Beach Island, Ocean Co. M. Reitingner*(ph).
- 2025-053. 22 April 2024. Island Beach SP, Ocean Co. J. Heine(ph), S Weiss*, m.ob.
- 2025-074. 26 July 2024. Island Beach SP, Ocean Co. J. Heine*(ph).

All three of this year's Wilson's Plover records came from barrier islands in Ocean County. Sightings of this southern coastal species have been sporadic but increasing over the last decade, with most records occurring during spring.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax* (34)

- 2025-029. 1 March – 30 April 2024. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. B. Elrick*, J. Antus(ph), J. Klizas(ph), J. Heine*, m.ob.
- 2025-034. 20 April – 16 May 2024. DeKorte Park, Bergen Co. M. Collins*(ph), B. Kenney(ph), C. Takacs(ph), C. Gabel(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-051. 23 May 2024. South Amboy, Middlesex Co. P. Belardo(ph), S. Barnes(ph), C. Duncan, m.ob.
- 2025-065. 26 June 2024. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. B. Elrick*(ph), R. Morrison(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-071. 2 – 11 July 2024. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. E. Stone(ph), E. Gibney(ph), D. Brill(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-087. 25 September 2024. Cape May Point, Cape May Co. T. Reed, J. Askildsen*, J. Denice(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-116. 7 August 2024. Cape May Point, Cape May Co. T. Reed*.

Seven records of Ruff in 2024 mark a high count for annual sightings in the state since being added to the review list in 2011. A variety of plumage types were represented this year, from the distinct breeding plumage males to the subdued plumage of female types, and even a juvenile plumage bird.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* (51)

- 2025-041. 6 – 12 May 2024. Heislerville WMA, Cumberland Co. H. Tomlinson*(ph), B. Elrick(ph), J. McElroy(ph), m.ob.

This year's single record of Curlew Sandpiper was found at the traditional stronghold for the species in New Jersey. A drab individual, this bird presented just a faint amount of red through the chest but still stood out among the flocks of expected shorebirds.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (3)

- 2025-133. 18 – 20 December 2024. Corson's Inlet SP, Cape May Co. J. Amesbury*(ph), H. Hepding, E. Price, J. McDonough, M. Heine, C. Naughton(ph), m.ob.



The highlight of the Marmora Christmas Bird Count was this juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Photo: J. Amesbury.

An immature Sharp-tailed Sandpiper found during the Marmora Christmas Bird Count is

only the third state record of this primarily Asian species. The bird was seen with a large flock of wintering Dunlin and stayed for just three days.

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki* (27)

- 2025-078. 14 July 2024. Pelagic off Ocean Co. S. Weiss*(ph).
- 2025-081. 27 July 2024. Pelagic off Atlantic Co. T. Reed, E. McGee(ph), m.ob.

South Polar Skua is a low density but regular pelagic migrant from late spring through the summer. Both of this year's birds were photographed far offshore.

Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus* (15)

- 2025-123. 25 November – 9 December 2024. Barnegat Inlet. A. Tongas, S. Weiss(ph), C. Thomas(ph), B. Leifeste, m.ob.

Pomarine Jaegers are common offshore migrants but are rarely seen from land and seldom offer great views. This confiding juvenile bird defied convention and spent two weeks on the beach at Barnegat Inlet where it was seen by many observers.

Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus* (9)

- 2025-097. 7 October 2024. Cape May Point, Cape May Co. D. Irons*(ph), S. Rodan*, E. McGee, R. Cobbs.

Long-tailed Jaeger is a regular migrant offshore but sightings from land are rare and reviewable. This year's record was a juvenile bird photographed flying out of the Delaware Bay past Cape May Point.

Common Murre *Uria aalge* (34)

- 2025-023. 31 January 2024. Island Beach ST, Ocean Co. Deceased. A. Davis*, D. Leiter, D. Fresco(ph).

A freshly deceased Common Murre was found and photographed on the beach at Island Beach State Park. This species remains on the review list from shore, while it is expected in offshore pelagic waters.

Thick-billed Murre *Uria lomvia* (38)

- 2025-014. 5 February 2024. Manasquan Inlet, Monmouth & Ocean Cos. J. Apgar(ph), G. Prelich.
- 2025-018. 16 February 2024. Island Beach SP, Ocean Co. A. Tongas(ph).
- 2025-019. 10 – 11 February 2024. Raritan Bay, Middlesex Co. S. Greenwood(ph), J. Gunther, Robin M.(ph), J. Denesevich*, S. Barnes*, m.ob.
- 2025-030. 5 – 16 April 2024. Elizabeth, Union Co. D. Bernstein*(ph), A. Bernzweig(ph), J. Deng.

Separation of Thick-billed and Common Murres can be difficult under the weather conditions in which they are frequently found. Fortunately, all of these reports were supported by photographs confirming the identification. This species is found along the coast more often than its congener.

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle* (24)

- 2025-010. 15 January – 24 February 2024. Shark River Inlet, Monmouth Co. D. Larsen*, M. Collins(ph), M. Kotran, m.ob.

The majority of New Jersey's Black Guillemots have been one day wonders, but this bird at Shark River remained for over a month to the delight of dozens of observers.

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini* (25)

- 2025-094. 2 October 2024. Gloucester Park, Camden Co. B. Filreis(ph), D. Ceravolo*.

This juvenile bird was first spotted from the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River, then seen continuing upriver from the New Jersey side. The photos show the diagnostic triangular wing pattern. After a single record between 2009 and 2020, this species has been recorded in four of the past five years.

Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* (53)

- 2025-057. 27 May 2024. Fortescue, Cumberland Co. H. Hepding*.
- 2025-066. 30 June 2024. Round Valley Res., Hunterdon Co. J. Ellerbusch*(ph), F. Sencher*(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-103. 21 – 23 October 2024. Cape May Point, Cape May Co. A. Place*(ph), K. Baidoo*, m.ob.
- 2025-109, 1 November 2024. Barnegat Light, Ocean Co. C. Thomas*(ph).
- 2025-110. 28 July 2024. DeKorte Park, Bergen Co. M. Collins*(ph).

Franklin's Gull has been recorded with increasing frequency in recent years and has not been missed since 2018. The five sightings from 2025 continue the pattern of the species showing up at almost any time of the year,

Vega Gull *Larus Vegae* (1)

- 2025-135. 9 March 2024. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. J. Denesevich*(ph).

Careful study and photographing of a group of gulls at Sandy Hook led the observer to identify this bird as a Vega Gull, an Asian species and recent split from Herring Gull. Distinguishing between the different taxa of *Larus* gulls can be very difficult, but the Committee and outside experts agreed on the identification. This (sub)species has

previously occurred on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River.



Apparent Vega Gull (foreground) at Sandy Hook, 9 March 2024. Photo: J. Denesevich

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* (53)

- 2025-079. 27 July 2024. Pelagic off Atlantic Co. T. Reed*, E. McGee(ph), M. Collins(ph), m.ob.

Always a treat, but usually associated with tropical storms, this adult Sooty Tern was the highlight of the July pelagic trip far off Atlantic County.



Adult Sooty Tern about 70 nm southeast of Atlantic County. Photo: E. McGee

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* (62)

- 2025-068. 7 June 2024. Barnegat Light, Ocean Co. C. Thomas*(ph).
- 2025-069. 4 July 2024. Stone Harbor, Cape May Co. D. Gochfeld*(ph), G. Davis, K. Davis.

Despite an increase in reports of Arctic Tern from land in recent years, many of them storm related, it is still a rarity for observations from shore. The Barnegat bird

was a well-photographed adult, while the Stone Harbor bird was a one-year-old in the so-called “Portlandica” plumage, once considered a separate species.

Pacific Loon *Gavia pacifica* (86)

- 2025-003. 3 – 12 January 2024. Barnegat Light, Ocean Co. C. Strand(ph), M. Collins*(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-011. 16 January 2024. Avalon, Cape May Co. J. McDonough*.
- 2025-013. 29 January 2024. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. B. Elrick*.
- 2025-016. 2 February 2024. Mullica River, Burlington Co. D. Eglinton*.
- 2025-020. 10 February 2024. Shark River Inlet, Monmouth Co. S. Smith*.
- 2025-021. 11 – 12 February 2024. Deal, Monmouth Co. J. Ellerbusch*(ph), B. Dodelson*, m.ob.
- 2025-028. 17 March – 17 April 2024. Manasquan Inlet, Monmouth & Ocean Cos. S. Barnes*(ph), B. Ashin*(ph), V. Schwartz, m.ob.
- 2025-040. 5 May 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. D. Gochfeld*(ph), M. O’Brien*(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-121. 28 October 2024. Cape May Point, Cape May Co. M. O’Brien*, L. Zemaitis.
- 2025-128. 20 November 2024. North Cape May, Cape May Co. V. Elia*.
- 2025-129. 15 November 2024. Higbee Beach, Cape May Co. G. Apte*.

The ten accepted reports of Pacific Loon during the year continue the dramatic increase in well-documented sightings of this species in coastal New Jersey. With more than thirty records in the past four years, the Committee has chosen to remove the species from the Review List, effective January 1, 2025.

Cape Verde/Desertas Petrel *Pterodroma feae/deserta* (1)

- 2025-059. (2). 3 June 2024. Pelagic off Ocean Co. D. Gochfeld*(ph), J. Denesevich*, m.ob.



Cape Verde/Desertas Petrel off Ocean County, 3 June 2024. Photo: D. Gochfeld

New Jersey’s first Fea’s Petrels, a species pair rarely recorded in the western Atlantic Ocean away from North Carolina’s Outer Banks, were seen and well-photographed about two hours apart in deep water off Ocean County. Fea’s Petrel has been recently split into Cape Verde Petrel and Desertas Petrel, which nest on different island groups in the Atlantic off Africa. The two species are apparently indistinguishable at sea away from the breeding grounds.

Scopoli’s Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* (3)

- 2025-075a. 27 July 2024. 4. Pelagic off Cape May Co. M. Laurino, E. McGee(ph), M. Schuler(ph), J. Denesevich(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-076b. 24 August 2024. 15. Pelagic off Atlantic Co. T. Reed*, J. Amesbury(ph), G. Roussey(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-076c. 24 August 2024. 10. Pelagic off Cape May Co. T. Reed, C. Liazos(ph), G. Roussey(ph), m.ob.

Scopoli’s Shearwater is a recent split from Cory’s Shearwater, which is very similar in

appearance. The two species can be separated by the underwing pattern when seen well. The three accepted records represent multiple individuals seen and photographed in the presence of Cory's. Scopoli's Shearwater is added to the New Jersey State List.

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana* (26)

- 2025-086. 23 – 24 September 2024. Cape May Point, Cape May Co. A. Place*(ph), N. Hanson, m.ob.

This sub-adult Wood Stork entertained the crowd at the Cape May Hawkwatch as it soared overhead for 20 minutes before disappearing to the Southwest.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* (88)

- 2025-031. 6 April 2024. Pelagic off Cape May Co. M. Forehand*.
- 2025-032. 15 April 2024. Manasquan Inlet, Monmouth & Ocean Cos. K. Leonard*(ph).
- 2025-039. 4 May 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. C. Miller*, T. Caruthers*.
- 2025-060. 7 – 15 June 2024. Round Valley Res., Hunterdon Co. S. Bonamo*(ph), J. Bonamo, P. Kwiatek(ph), R. Fleming(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-062. 17 June 2024. Gloucester, Gloucester Co. D. Ceravolo*, M. Henry*, B. Bassett(ph).
- 2025-063. 21 – 26 June 2024. Manasquan Res., Monmouth Co. P. Mandala(ph), M. Ragle(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-085. 11 August 2024. Long Key Marina, Ocean Co. Anonymous(ph), S. James.
- 2025-089. 14 August 2024. Delaware River, Gloucester County. M. Dominguez(ph).
- 2025-090. 14 September 2024. Pelagic off Atlantic Co. T. Reed, J. Amesbury(ph), m.ob.

- 2025-091. 30 September 2024. Higbee Beach, Cape May Co. G. Apte*, G. Kinney.
- 2025-092. 13 August 2024. Camden, Camden Co. C. Hinkle*.
- 2025-099. 28 September 2024. Stone Harbor, Cape May Co. J. McDonough*(ph).
- 2025-101. 27 August 2024. Camden, Camden Co. E. Cusick*(ph).
- 2025-117. 27 July 2024. Pelagic off Cape May Co. T. Reed, M. Shuler(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-125. 27 September 2024. Riverwinds, Gloucester Co. J. Stippick(ph).
- 2025-126. 2 October 2024. National Park, Gloucester Co. J. Horn(ph), M. Keefe, m.ob.
- 2025-127. 12 October 2024. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. M. Ragle*(ph).

Items 062, 089, 092, 101, 125, 126 are almost certainly the same adult bird.

Well-documented reports of Brown Booby, 64 in the past six years, have become so commonplace that the Committee has chosen to remove the species from the Review List.

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga* (30)

- 2025-046. 11 May 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. A. Crawford*, C. Hamilton*, m.ob.
- 2025-058. 3 – 4 June 2024. West Cape May, Cape May Co. M. O'Brien*(ph), K. Thompson*, M. Garland, m.ob.
- 2025-136. 22 July 2024, Duke Farms, Somerset Co. J. Patterson*, H. Jeschke(ph).

As with several other Southern species, records of Anhinga have increased significantly in recent years. Confusion with soaring cormorants presents an identification problem, but these three reports were supported by good documentation and, in two cases, good photographs.

Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja* (18)

- 2025-072. 14 July 2024. Spruce Run Res., Hunterdon Co. B. Meriwether(ph), A. Holladay, B. Dodelson, m.ob.
- 2025-082. 9 – 11 September 2024. Heislerville WMA, Cumberland Co. M. Webster(ph, v), K. Stampfer, S. Lewis(ph).
- 2025-083. 12 – 29 September 2024. Henry Hudson Trail, Monmouth Co. A. Ridley(ph), C. Naughton(ph), J. Roemer*, m.ob.



The long-staying Roseate Spoonbill at Henry Hudson Trail. Photo: C. Naughton

Yet another Southern species increasingly finding its way north, the three reports of Roseate Spoonbill were well documented by photographs. The Heislerville WMA bird may have been an adult, but the other two were juveniles. Even more were to arrive the following year.

Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni* (53)

- 2025-098. 8 October 2024. Chimney Rock Hawk Watch, Somerset Co. C. Aquila*, J. Hoffman.
- 2025-104. 24 – 27 October 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. G. Apte*, S. McConnell(ph), A. Place*, B. Fox(ph), m.ob.

Swainson's Hawk is almost annual in New Jersey, having been missed in only five years of the past twenty-five. The majority, more than three-quarters, of the records are from Cape May County, so the Somerset County report is unusual and apparently the second

for that Hawk Watch. Virtually all records involve birds of the year.

Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway* (12)

- 2025-106a. 26 October 2024. Ringwood, Passaic Co. S. Seymour(ph).
- 2025-106b. 1 – 2 December 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. M. O'Brien, H. Hepding(ph), C. Behnke*, m.ob.
- 2025-106c. 28 December 2024. Columbus, Burlington Co. E. Winitz(ph), D. Burgoyne(ph), T. Besancon(ph).

Crested Caracaras have been appearing in the Northeast with increasing frequency in the past two decades although the 2024 sightings were the first in New Jersey in seven years. These three records likely involve the same individual, as do three records for Cape May County and one on Long Beach Island in early 2025. However, the available photographs are not clear enough to compare plumages.

Ash-throated Flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens* (112)

- 2025-119. 17 – 20 November 2024. Manahawkin WMA, Ocean Co. C. Thomas*(ph), R. Ford(ph), J. Kelsey, m.ob.

The only occurrence of the species in the state in 2024, this individual was photographed and enjoyed my many. This lone sighting typifies the feast or famine of the appearance of Ash-throated Flycatcher in New Jersey in recent years. Almost all records are from late fall or early winter – in 2019 there were 10, in 2020 six, in 2021 just 4, in 2022 none, but in 2023 a record 14.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus* (76)

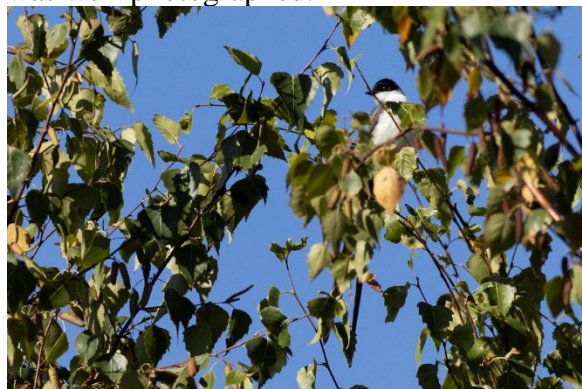
- 2025-052. 23 May 2024. Cook's Beach, Cape May Co. E. Zawatski*(ph).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is almost annual in New Jersey, having been missed just twice in the past 17 years with a maximum of five in 2015. Interestingly, the majority (about 80%) of the records are from May and June, long after breeding adults have arrived on their nesting territories. Some of the birds seen at this season are juveniles with shorter tails, but many of them have the very long tail of a full adult.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus savana* (26)

2025-096. 6 October 2024. Liberty State Park, Hudson Co. M. Stubblefield*(ph), M. Joergensen.

The first Fork-tailed Flycatcher in the state in just over five years, this adult of the nominate race was present for only a few minutes, but was well-photographed.



Adult Fork-tailed Flycatcher at Liberty State Park, 6 October 2024. Photo: M. Stubblefield.

Bell's Vireo *Vireo bellii* (16)

- 2025-107. 31 October 2024. Spruce Run Res., Hunterdon Co. B. Meriwether*(ph), K. Cronin(ph), m.ob.

This very active, but very plain, little vireo caught the attention of a birder at Spruce Run Reservoir on the morning of October 31. After confirming the identification, word of its presence was spread and it was seen by more than two dozen birders during the course of the day. Like this sighting, all but

two of the previous records are from fall or early winter and only one other away from the immediate coast.

Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina* (7)

- 2025-124. 29 November 2024. Spruce Run Reservoir, Hunterdon Co. S. Bonano*(ph), M. Hiotis*, B. Meriwether(ph), m.ob.

Only the seventh record for New Jersey and the first away from the southern coast, this individual was beautifully photographed by the finder and enjoyed by many observers during its one-day visit to Hunterdon County.



A first for Hunterdon County, this Violet-green Swallow was seen by many birders during its one-day visit to Spruce Run. Photo: S. Bonano,

Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla* (22)

- 2025-035. 10 February 2024. Beaver Swamp WMA, Cape May Co. S. McConnell(au).
- 2025-038. 24 – 25 April 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. A. Reb(au), C. Busch*, B. Ewald(ph), m.ob.
- 2025-061. 8 June 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. T. Reed*, K. Thompson*, B. Boyle*, m.ob.
- 2025-064. 8 June 2024. Lakehurst, Ocean Co. C. Thomas(ph), G. Roussey(ph), A. Davis(au), m.ob.

Twenty-twenty four was a big year for Brown-headed Nuthatch in New Jersey, with the four records equalling the previous high

from 2018. Most occurrences have been in Spring or early Summer and all except one pelagic record have been from Cape May County. The Lakehurst record was a big surprise and the first for the county and the Pine Barrens.



Brown-headed Nuthatch at Lakehurst NAES, 8 June 2024. Photo: C. Thomas.

Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus* (6)

- 2025-100. 12 October 2024. Whitesbog, Burlington Co. D. Hockenbury(ph), M. Gage(ph),

Just the sixth record of Sage Thrasher in the state and the first away from the immediate coast, this bird was found in the abandoned cranberry bogs at Whitesbog in the middle of the Pine Barrens. Although it proved to be a one-day wonder, word got out in time for many observers to see it.



Sage Thrasher at Whitesbog, 12 October 2024, a first for Burlington Co. Photo: D. Hockenbury.

Townsend's Solitaire *Myadestes townsendi* (20)

- 2025-112. 9 November 2024. Sunrise Mountain, Sussex Co. K. Cronin(ph).
- 2025-118. 16 November 2024. Cape May Point, Cape May Co. J. McDonough*(ph), A. Golumbeski*(ph), J. Schlickerieder, R. Keefe.

The two records of Townsend's Solitaire came from opposite ends of the state, but both were documented with good photographs. The bird at Sunrise Mountain in Sussex County was the fourth for the site, which also hosted the first state record for a month in late 1980. More surprising was the one that flew by the Coral Avenue dune crossing at Cape May Point, the third record for the county.



Townsend's Solitaire at Sunrise Mountain, 9 November 2024. Photo: K. Cronin

Chestnut-collared Longspur *Calcarius ornatus* (3)

- 2025-134. 28 December 2024. Monmouth County Landfill. T. Boyle*, J. Ellerbusch*(ph), E. Price(ph), T. Brown.

A male in non-breeding plumage, this Chestnut-collared Longspur was discovered during the Long Branch Christmas Bird Count at the Monmouth County Landfill. The third record for New Jersey and the first in 40 years, it was well documented with photographs by the four lucky observers. Unfortunately, because the location was only

available by special permit on the count day, there was no public access to try and relocate it.

Lark Bunting *Calamospiza melanocorys* (9)

- 2025-095. 6 October 2024. Liberty State Park, Hudson Co. C. Ferino, E. Ray*(ph), J. Klizas(ph), m.ob.

The female/immature Lark Bunting at Liberty State Park was just the ninth state record and the first in 8 years. Fortunately, it spent most of the day at the Waterfront Walkway and was seen by many lucky observers.



New Jersey's ninth Lark Bunting and the second for Liberty State Park, 6 October 2024. Photo: E. Ray.

LeConte's Sparrow *Ammospiza leconteii* (58)

- 2025-108. 27 October 2024. Conaskonk Point, Monmouth County. J. Denesevich*(ph), P. Mandala, m.ob.



LeConte's Sparrow at Conaskonk Point, 27 October 2024. Photo: J. Denesevich

LeConte's Sparrow is probably an annual visitor to New Jersey, having been missed in only three of the past 25 years. All but a few records are from late fall or early winter and most are from coastal counties. Because it is so shy and secretive, the species is very elusive and is likely far more common than the number of reports would imply.

Henslow's Sparrow *Centronyx henslowii* (21)

- 2025-111. 8 November 2024. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. T. Brown(ph, b), C. Buchanan.

Once a regular, though uncommon breeding bird in some parts of the state, Henslow's Sparrow is now a very rare migrant or wintering species in New Jersey, with a few apparent nesting attempts in Somerset County in the past 20 years. This individual was captured in a mist net at Sandy Hook and banded.

Western Meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta* (12)

- 2025-015. 27 January 2024. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. J. Denesevich*(ph).
- 2025-067. 17 May 2024. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. S. Ghonge(ph), C. Aquila.

After going unreported for more than twenty years, there have now been four accepted records in the past five years. Separation of Eastern and Western Meadowlarks in the field is difficult unless they are singing. A combination of good photographs and thorough comparison of detailed field marks led to the acceptance of these reports.

Bullock's Oriole *Icterus bullockii* (10)

- 2025-007. 7 January – 23 April 2024. West Cape May, Cape May Co. M. O'Brien*(ph), L. Zemaitis, m.ob.

This immature male Bullock's Oriole spent almost four months of the winter and early spring visiting a couple of feeders in West Cape May. Because it was easily observed from the street without disturbing the homeowners, it was enjoyed by almost two hundred eBirders and others.

Swainson's Warbler *Limnothlypis swainsonii* (32)

- 2025-048. 13 May 2024. Salem County. J. McDonough(au).
- 2025-049. 16 – 19 May 2024. Thompson Park, Monmouth Co. R. Curcio(au), D. DeSarno(ph), K. Leonard(ph), M. Russell, m.ob.

Records of Swainson's Warbler in New Jersey have increased significantly in the past eight years with two or three records in all years but one. The Salem County bird was not seen, but very clearly recorded, while the Monmouth County individual was recorded and seen by many observers during its four-day stay.

Western Tanager *Piranga ludovicianus* (73)

- 2025-001. 19 – 27 January 2024. Piling Lake Bed, Camden. K. Gallagher*(ph), M. Henry(ph), D. Larsen*, m.ob.
- 2025-045. 13 May 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co. M. Lanzone*.
- 2025-131. 29 November 2024 – 8 February 2025. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. C. Walter, D. Benvent(ph), J. Ellerbusch(ph), m.ob.

Reports of Western Tanager have increased markedly in the past decade, with 28 accepted records in ten years. The majority of the occurrences (22 of 28) are from late fall through the winter and the birds often linger at the same location for weeks or even months.



The long-staying male Western Tanager at Sandy Hook. Photo: J. Ellerbusch

Reports not accepted

Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

- 2025-024. 13 March 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co.

This report of a flyby grebe with Horned Grebes by an experienced observer is possibly correct, but the brevity of the sighting and the difficulty of distinguishing these species during spring molt, led several members to vote not accept.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

- 2025-025. 6 March 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co.
- 2025-055. 25 May 2024. Garrett Family Preserve, Cape May Co.

The very brief, vague description of the March 6 bird did not rule out other species. Likewise, the limited details of the flyby dove on May 25 left most members in doubt. If correct, it could be the same bird seen at nearby Cape May Point during that week.

Common Murre *Uria aalge*

- 2025-008. 8 January 2024. Avalon, Cape May Co.

While the Committee was divided on this report a slight majority felt that the details did not rule out Thick-billed Murre.

Thick-billed Murre *Uria lomvia*

- 2025-012. 18 January 2024. Brigantine Island, Atlantic Co.

As with the above sight report, several members of the Committee were not convinced that the two Murres could be distinguished at the considerable distance involved.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

- 2025-070. 28 July 2024. Monmouth Co.

The very brief description provided did not convincingly rule out other species.

Pacific Loon *Gavia pacifica*

- 2025-004. 1 January 2024. Surf City, Ocean Co.
- 2025-130. 20 November 2024. Longport, Atlantic Co.

The description submitted for the January 1 bird was deemed not sufficient to rule out Red-throated Loon. The Committee was divided on the November report, but a majority were not convinced that other species were ruled out.

Scopoli's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* (3)

- 2025-073. 16 June 2024. Pelagic off Ocean Co.
- 2025-076a. 24 August 2024. Pelagic off Atlantic Co.
- 2025-077. 14 September 2024. Pelagic off Atlantic Co.

This recent split (from Cory's Shearwater) was a new addition to the New Jersey state list in 2024; birders are still learning how to separate the two species. The majority of the

Committee voted to accept these three reports, but several members were not convinced.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*.

- 2025-022. 3 March 2024. Liberty State Park, Hudson Co.

The description provided sounded interesting, but the video is too poor to positively identify the bird. It appears to be an alcid.

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga*

- 2025-042. 7 May 2024. Beechwood, Ocean Co.
- 2025-056. 21 May 2024. Big Brook Park, Monmouth Co.

Both of these reports were quite possibly correct, but the details provided did not convincingly rule out cormorant.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

- 2025-105. 27 October 2024. Cape May Ferry, Cape May Co.
- 2025-113. 7 November 2024. Avalon, Cape May Co.

Although the October report was quite possibly correct, given the increasing frequency with which this species is being encountered, nothing in the details rules out Northern Gannet. The November report by an experienced observer was listed as an immature bird and photos taken, but no details or photos were provided.

Ash-throated Flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens*

- 2025-006. 5 January 2024. Villas, Cape May Co.

The Committee was split on this report, but the lack of photo and the limited details led several members to vote not accept.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus savana*

- 2025-122. 23 November 2024. DeKorte Park, Bergen Co.

The details sounded tantalizing, but the majority of the Committee were not convinced that the bird was correctly identified.

Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla*

- 2025-043. 9 May 2024. Cape May, Cape May Co.

No details were provided for this report although a photo was supposedly taken.

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana*

- 2025-044. 8 May 2024. Cedar Bonnet Island, Ocean Co.
- 2025-102. 12 August 2024. Saddle Brook, Bergen Co.

The description submitted for the Cedar Bonnet report does not rule out a first year Scarlet Tanager. Despite the extensive details on the Saddle Brook bird, the unusual date and lack of a photograph left most members unconvinced of the bird's identity.