

New Jersey Bird Records Committee

— Annual Report 2026

by Bill Boyle and Milton Collins

The New Jersey Bird Records Committee (hereafter “NJBRC” or “the Committee”) voted by email during 2025 and met in person on 15 March 2026 to complete review of rare bird reports for the year 2025. During the year and at the meeting, one hundred forty-three reports were considered and voted on. There were five new additions to the New Jersey State List in 2024 (two by virtue of taxonomic splits), so the grand total stands at 508 species through 2025.

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, Ben Barkley, Alex Bernzweig, Milton Collins, Amy Davis, Jason Denesevich, Jeff Ellerbusch, Kathy Horn, and Jonathan Klizas. 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 2025). 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* (30)

- 2026-001 1 – 18 January 2025. Overpeck Park, Bergen Co. T. Benz, A. Cunningham*(ph), R. Krieg*, A. Krieg, m.ob.
- 2026-136 18 December 2025. Alpha, Warren Co. J. Climpson*(ph), sk.

For the second time in the past five years, a Pink-footed Goose visited Overpeck Park, where it was enjoyed by many during its 18-day stay. The Alpha bird was a one-day wonder, but may have been the same individual that spent a week at nearby Merrill Creek Reservoir later in the winter.



Pink-footed Goose at Overpeck Park. Photo: Avery C.

Brant *Branta bernicla nigricans* (41)

- 2026-008 8 February – 6 April 2025. South Amboy, Middlesex Co. J. Denesevich*(ph), J. Whitehurst(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-014 26 March – 4 April 2025. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. B Elrick*(ph), M. Mandracchia*(ph), M Romanik, m.ob.

These two “Black” Brant are the first reported in five years, but this subspecies is probably more regular in New Jersey than records indicate. It is difficult to detect among the thousands of wintering “Atlantic” Brant. This subspecies of Brant nests in the Arctic of Alaska, northwestern Canada, and eastern Siberia and winters along the Pacific Coasts of Asia and North America.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* (47)

- 2026-139 24 December 2025 – 24 January 2026. Weamaconk Lake, Monmouth Co. (3) A. Mandala(ph), m.ob.

Barnacle Goose is almost annual in New Jersey, but after missing a year of reports, these three individuals lingered with a flock of Canada Geese for a month at a small lake and nearby recreation area in Englishtown. There was some initial concern about captive origin due to the presence of a known breeder a few miles away, but these birds showed wild behavior and were accepted by the Records Committee.

Trumpeter Swan *Cygnus buccinator* (8)

- 2026-138. 20 December 2025 – 9 January 2026. Stafford Forge WMA, Ocean Co. O. Train*(ph), M. Heatherington(ph), m.ob.

Only the eighth state record and the first away from Assunpink WMA, this juvenile Trumpeter Swan was viewed by many during

its three-week stay on the large lake at Stafford Forge, usually accompanied by a few Canada Geese. Thanks to a successful reintroduction program in Ontario and a few northern states, we can expect more individuals of this species wintering in the state in the future.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (38)

- 2026-034 17 May 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. T. Reed*, J. McDonough(ph), A. Reb, m.ob.

Despite this species widespread dispersal across much of North America during the past several decades, it is still very rare in New Jersey, averaging just one or two a year. This individual flew around the Cape May Springwatch platform a few times and was well-photographed.

Common Swift *Apus apus* (2)

- 2026-038 19 May 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. A. Reb*, J. Stippick*(ph), E. Zawatski*, m.ob.

There is no way to know for certain, but this Common Swift was most likely the same individual that spent day at the South Cape May Meadows, May 17, 2024. There is only one other record for eastern North America.

Mexican Violetear *Colibri thalassinus* (2)

- 2026-078 31 August – 1 September 2025. Estell Manor, Atlantic Co. B. Hixon(ph).

New Jersey's second Mexican Violet appeared at an Atlantic County feeder late one afternoon and was seen briefly the next morning. Unfortunately, it quickly departed and was not seen again. Fortunately, the observer was able to obtain identifiable photographs.



Mexican Violetear at Estelle Manor, 31 August 2025.
Photo: B. Hixon

Black-chinned Hummingbird *Archilocus alexandri* (14)

- 2026-107 22 – 27 October 2025. Northfield, Atlantic Co. N. Phillips*(ph), R. MacKenzie(ph), m.ob.

The first Black-chinned Hummingbird in the state in five years, this juvenile male showed a partially developed purple gorget. It was seen and photographed by multiple observers during its six-day visit.

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus* (59)

- 2026-140 11 November 2025. Park Ridge, Bergen Co. D. La Puma(banded).
- 2026-141 7 December 2025. Egg Harbor Twp., Atlantic Co. D. La Puma(banded), M. Lanzone.
- 2026-142 7 December 2025+. Point Pleasant, Ocean Co. D. La Puma(banded), M. Lanzone.

These three immature hummingbirds were banded and identity confirmed by measurements.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* (79)

- 2026-095 15 – 17 October 2025. Hugh Force Canal Park, Morris Co. C. Rubinfeld*(ph), J. Klizas*(ph), A. Eppedio*(ph), m.ob.

Purple Gallinules are well-known vagrants and can show up in state almost any time (even mid-winter) and anywhere (even at sea). This juvenile spent three days foraging and lurking in the reeds at a small park in Wharton, Morris County.



Juvenile Purple Gallinule in Morris County. Photo: J. Klizas

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* (20)

- 2026-019 26 April 2025. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. C. Hinkle*.
- 2026-031 14 May 2025. Shell Bay Landing, Cape May Co. D. Gochfeld*(ph), K. John(ph), T. Loftin.
- 2026-033 16 May 2025. Jarvis Sound, Cape May Co. V. Elia*, J. Tornetta*, m.ob.



Eurasian Whimbrel at Shell Bay Landing, 14 May 2025. Photo: K. John

With the recent taxonomic split of the whimbrels, Eurasian Whimbrel is officially a new species for the New Jersey State List. This species is almost annual in the flocks of Hudsonian Whimbrels that pass through the marshes of Cape May and Atlantic counties, but observers need to watch them in flights to spot the white V up the back that distinguishes this species.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax* (37 since 2011)

- 2026-015 15 – 29 April 2025. DeKorte Park, Bergen Co. M. Collins*(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-030 11 – 13 May 2025. Manahawkin WMA, Ocen Co. D. Asbjorn*, B. Ashin(ph), C. Thomas(ph), m.ob.

One or more Ruffs have occurred almost annually since 2016, missing only 2019, but this year's two records represent a more modest tally compared to last year's seven. The DeKorte Park bird was a male molting into breeding plumage, while the Manahawkin bird was a female.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* (53)

- 2026-035 18 May 2025. Del Haven, Cape May Co. D. Griffiths*(ph), A. Griffiths, C. Griffiths, m.ob.
- 2026-079 14 September – 11 October 2025. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. B. Elrick(ph), N. Larrabee(ph), T. Chesnes(ph), C. Hinkle(ph), m.ob. C. Griffith, m.ob.

Curlew Sandpiper is another species that is almost annual, with one to three having been recorded every year since 1999, except for 2018 and 2022. The Del Haven bird, an adult molting into breeding plumage, was in a large flock of Red Knots, making it difficult to pick out. The Forsythe NWR individual, an immature, was present for nearly a month.



Curlew Sandpiper at Del Haven, 18 May 2025. Photo: D. Griffiths

Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle* (26)

- 2026-004 18 January 2025. Shark River Inlet, Monmouth Co. C. Cohen*, K. Tekel(ph), E. Gibney*, T. Reed.
- 2026-113 3 November 2025. Cape May Point, Cape Co. B. Fogg*(ph).

Once an extreme rarity, Black Guillemots have been found with increasing frequency in the past six years, missing only 2021 and with a peak of three in 2023. The Shark River Inlet bird was well-photographed and enjoyed by numerous observers during its one-day visit. The November report was of a guillemot flying out of Delaware Bay past Cape May Point. Although the views were rather distant, a couple of identifiable photos were obtained.



Black Guillemot at Shark River Inlet, 18 January 2025. Photo: K. Tekel

Thick-billed Murre *Uria lomvia* (39 since 1996)

- 2026-006 20 January 2025. Manasquan Inlet, Monmouth & Ocean Cos. M. Collins*(ph).
- 2026-011 23 February 2025. Pelagic off Cape May Co. T. Reed*, J. Amesbury(ph), m.ob.

Despite breeding farther north than its congener, Thick-billed Murre is the species more frequently seen along the coast in winter in New Jersey. The individual at Manasquan Inlet was seen by a single observer who was able to obtain identifiable photos. Many observers aboard a pelagic trip out of Cape May in late February enjoyed close-up views of one right next to the boat.

Common Murre *Uria aalge* (35)

- 2026-005 19 January 2025. Avalon, Cape May Co. (2) J. McDonough*.

Two Common Murres flying together were in with a massive flight of Razorbills (10,000+) at Avalon, January 19.

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini* (27)

- 2026-040 27 May 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. A. Reb*(ph).
- 2026-050 19 June – 16 August 2025. Villas and Cape May, Cape May Co. R. Crossley, V. Elia*(ph), M. Chelemer(ph), J. Stippick, G. Davis, M. O'Brien, W. Boyle, m.ob.

A sub-adult Sabine's Gull was photographed flying by the Cape May Bird Observatory Springwatch in late May. What was almost certainly the same individual reappeared in mid-June in nearby Villas, in mid-July at Cape May Point and again in mid-August at the Cape May Canal. The only other state record of a lingering Sabine's Gull was a

subadult present in late September and early October 2004.



Sabine's Gull at Villas, 19 June 2025. Photo: v. Elia

Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* (59)

- 2026-045 5 June 2025. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. S. Heinrich*(ph).
- 2026-048 9 – 27++ June 2025. Villas, Cape May Co. J. Dowdell, S. Brown*, m.ob.
- 2026-058 11 July 2025. DeKorte Park, Bergen Co. (2). M. Collins*(ph), C. Takacs(ph).
- 2026-085 23 – 24 September 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. J. Amesbury(ph), D. Gochfeld(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-088 7 – 17 October 2025. Trenton, Mercer Co. (2). B. Hewitt*, M. Heine(ph), J. Gant(ph), A. Boyd(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-106 23 October 2025. Avalon, Cape May Co. D. Irons*(ph).

There has been a dramatic increase in sightings of Franklin's Gull in New Jersey in recent years. With the exception of a single record in 2023, each of the past seven years have produced three to five documented reports. All five of this year's individuals were well-photographed and two were present for extended stays.

Short-billed Gull *Larus brachyrhynchus* (1)

- 2026-137 21 - 23 December 2025. South Amboy, Middlesex Co. J. Denesevich*(ph), m.ob.

New Jersey's first confirmed Short-billed Gull was spotted by a keen-eyed observer at South Amboy, where it was present for three days. Two earlier records of birds identified as Common/Short-billed Gulls were most likely the more expected Common Gull. Separation of these recently split species is challenging.



Short-billed Gull at South Amboy, 21 December 2025. Photo: J. Denesevich

California Gull *Larus californicus* (9)

- 2026-094 14 October 2025. North Wildwood, Cape May Co. D. Irons*(ph).



California Gull in North Wildwood, 14 October 2025. Photo: D. Irons

Just the ninth record for New Jersey, this near-adult plumage California Gull was picked out of a flock of Herring and Great Black-backed gulls as it roosted on a North Wildwood sand spit. It was well-photographed both perched and in flight.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

- 2026-023 4 May 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. A. Reb*.
- 2026-024 6 May 2025. White Lake, Warren Co. D. Briede*(ph), A. Orsi(ph), T. Sudol*, m.ob.
- 2026-041 28 May 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. (2). A. Reb*.
- 2026-052 15 June 2025. Barnegat Light, Ocean Co. C. Thomas*(ph), S. Thomas.
- 2026-054 7 July 2025. Barnegat Light, Ocean Co. A. Cunningham*(ph).

Despite its abundance offshore and the increasing number of reports from land in recent years, Arctic Tern is still a rarity for observations from shore. The occurrence of the well-documented bird at White Lake was probably storm related.

Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* (96)

- 2026-002 3 January 2025. Holgate, Ocean Co. C. Thomas*(ph), T. Noel, K. Hogan*(ph).
- 2026-042 30 May 2025. Merrill Creek Res., Warren Co. K. Mylecraine*(ph), M. Britt*.
- 2026-083 18 September – 20 November 2025. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. B. Elrick(ph), J. Gant(ph), P. Hammer(ph), m.ob.

Although there are now nearly 100 records of Eared Grebe in the state, it has been retained on the review list because of the frequent confusion with the far more common Horned Grebe, especially with molting birds. The Holgate bird was seen by a few birders and photographed, as was the Merrill Creek

individual, one of the few records of Eared Grebe in breeding plumage. Many observers enjoyed the Forsythe NWR bird that was present for more than two months.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas* (1)

- 2026-029 11 May 2025. Cape May Ferry, Cape May Co. C. Hibschi(ph), C. Chojnacki, J. Chojnacki.

Three lucky observers photographed this *Calonectris* shearwater from the Cape May – Lewes Ferry, while still in New Jersey Waters. Although Cory's and Scopoli's are the expected members of that genus, the thin bill and underwing pattern led them to solicit expert opinion. Numerous experts concurred on the identification of the bird as a Streaked Shearwater. This represents not only a first record New Jersey, but a first for the Atlantic Ocean.



Streaked Shearwater from the Cape May – Lewes Ferry, a first for the Atlantic Ocean. Photo: C. Hibschi

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana* (27)

- 2026-047 10 June 2025. Stonetown Road, Passaic Co. R. Wierer(ph).

This sub-adult Wood Stork was photographed wading in a small pond in northern Passaic County. This was a first record for that county and a rare occurrence of the species away from the coast.

Anhinga anhinga anhinga

- 2026-028 10 May 2025. Holmdel Park, Monmouth Co. R. Curcio(ph), S. Hunt, F. Masini, S. Skinner.
- 2026-037 19 – 20 May 2025. Cape May Point, Cape May Co. A. Reb*, J. Stippick(ph), m.ob.

Continuing a recent trend of a few Spring sightings of this species, one Anhinga was photographed as it soared over Holmdel Park to the delight of four observers. Another was seen by many observers as it soared over Cape May Point off-and-on for two days.

Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja* (27)

- 2026-061 17 - 24 July 2025. Columbia WMA, Warren Co. S. McPhail(ph), K. Cronin(ph), A. Boyd(ph), J. Woodmansee, m.ob.
- 2026-064 28 July – 28 August 2025. Lacey Twp., Ocean Co. (3). J. Fazio-Cohen*(ph), T. Tindall*(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-067 25 July 2025. Flood Gate, Gloucester Co. D. Ceravolo(ph), C. Herz, M. Henry(ph).
- 2026-068 1 August – 19 September 2025. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. B. Elrick(ph), T. Speedy, m.ob.
- 2026-072 18 September 2025. Turkey Point, Cumberland Co. J. Austin-Cole*.
- 2026-084 20 September 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. (2). D. Benvent*, T. Hardcastle(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-087 21 September 2025. D. Benvent*, M. O'Brien(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-102 27 September 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. D. Benvent*, A. Sell(ph), P. Bonin(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-121 29 September 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. D. Benvent*, m.ob.

Prior to 2017, there had been only three accepted reports of Roseate Spoonbill in New Jersey. Since that time, there have been more than twenty, with four in 2018, six in 2021,

three in 2024 and six to nine in 2025, depending on how many different birds the four Cape May sightings represent. This trend is part of a continuing movement of southern species north, including Anhinga, Limpkin and especially White Ibis. Whether or not the spoonbills set up housekeeping in the state, as the White Ibis have done, remains to be seen.



These three Roseate Spoonbills spent a month in Lacey Township, Ocean Co. Photo: J. Fazio-Cohen

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens* (4)

- 2026-074 19 August – 28 September 2025. Stone Harbor, Cape May Co. J., M., & W. Lutmerding(ph), D. Wilcove, m.ob.

New Jersey's fourth Reddish Egret chose a very visible spot on Stone Harbor Boulevard to spend its six-week visit to the state. Hundreds of birders were able to observe the bird during its long stay.



Reddish Egret at Stone Harbor. Photo: M. Lutmerding

White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus*

- 2026-022. 4 – 7 May 2025. Branchburg, Somerset Co. and Cedar Mill Grassland Preserve, Hunterdon Co. A. Reichelderfer*(ph), M. Collins*(ph), M. Sharma(ph), m.ob.



The White-tailed Kite at Cedar Mill Grassland Preserve, 7 May 2025. Photo: M. Sharma.

A White-tailed Kite, New Jersey's third, was discovered and photographed by a birder along a road in Branchburg, Somerset County on the morning of May 4. Remarkably, it was relocated that evening at a grassland preserve three miles away in Hunterdon County. Fortunately, it remained at the preserve for three additional days and was enjoyed by dozens of birders.

Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni* (62)

- 2026-096 17 October 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. D. Benvent*, J. O'Neill(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-112 29 October 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. M. O'Brien(ph), L. Zemaitis.
- 2026-122 31 October 2025. Whitesboro, Cape May Co. S. McConnell(ph).
- 2026-123 1 – 29 November 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. J. Magariel(ph), M. Lanzone(ph), J. Stippick(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-131 29 November 2025. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. S. Barnes(ph), J. Denesevich(ph), J. Ellerbusch, m.ob.

It was a banner year for Swainson's Hawk, which has now been recorded every year

since 2019. The vast majority of the sightings come from Cape May, including four of this year's five, but the Sandy Hook bird was a first for Monmouth County.

Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia* (2)

- 2026-077. 31 August 2025. Twin Lakes, Ocean Co. Lynn G.(ph), J. Orpen.



Burrowing Owl at Twin Lake, 31 August 2025. Photo Lynn G.

New Jersey's second Burrowing Owl was observed by a pair of lucky birders as it perched on the roof of the house across the street. Unfortunately, it didn't stay long.

Crested Caracara *Caracara plancus* (16)

- 2026-009 8 February 2025. Eldora, Cape May Co. J. Schlickenrieder*(ph), K. Horn*, R. Horn(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-010 12 – 14 February 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. M. O'Brien*(ph), M. Lanzone*, m.ob.
- 2026-012 13 – 18 March 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. A. Reb*, J. McDonough*(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-017 21 April 2025. Harvey Cedars, Ocean Co. S. McConnell*(ph).

Although the photographs are not detailed enough to be certain of the identity, these four reports of Crested Caracara most likely involve the same individual first detected in Ringwood, Passaic County in October 2024. What was presumably the same bird was subsequently seen in Cape May and Burlington County in December 2024, then

returned to Cape May County early in 2025 before heading up to Ocean County in April.

Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya* (30)

- 2026-089 5 – 7 September 2025. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. M. Collins(ph), S. Barnes, R. Duffy, m.ob.
- 2026-090 10 – 14 October 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. D. Benvent, D. Howell(ph), D. Irons(ph), m.ob.



Say's Phoebe at Sandy Hook, 5 September 2025.
Photo: M. Collins.

All but five of the thirty state records of Say's Phoebe have occurred in the fall, usually in September or October. This season's September bird was a bit on the early side, but was enjoyed by numerous observers on the first and last day of its visit. The Cape May bird set a record as the longest staying member of the species in New Jersey.

Gray Kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis* (27)

- 2026-036 18 – 19 May 2025. Cedar Bonnet Island, Ocean Co. L. Potash*, J. Fazio-Cohen(ph), B. Leifeste, m.ob.
- 2026-039 23 May 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. J. McDonough*(ph), F. Lenik*,
- 2026-124 24 November. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. M. Webster(ph), R. Fry.

The majority of records of Gray Kingbird in the state are from the fall, typically October or November, but there are seven documented sightings from May, including the two listed here. The Cedar Bonnet Island

bird was seen by many observers during its two-day visit, while the Cape May individual was seen by just a few as it flew by the Springwatch site. The Forsythe NWR bird was seen by just two birders, but was well-photographed.



Gray Kingbird at Cedar Bonnett Island, 18 May 2025.
Photo: J. Fazio-Cohen

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus* (77)

- 2026-044 1 – 5 June 2025. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. B. Elrick*(ph), N. Larrabee*(ph), D. Asbjorn*, m.ob.

Curiously, the vast majority of records of Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in New Jersey are from late May and June, long after most of the migrants have arrived on their breeding grounds in the south-central states. Although many individuals are one-day wonders, a few like this year's Forsythe NWR bird have lingered for a few days.



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Forsythe NWR, 4 June 2025. Photo: N. Larrabee

Fork-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus savana* (28)

- 2026-049 12 June 2025. Davidson Mill Pond Park, Middlesex Co. H. Shi(ph).
- 2026-081 12 – 14 September 2026. Higbee Beach WMA, Cape May Co. T. Reed*, J. Davidson(ph), P. Maurice(ph), L. Widdop(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-126 24 November 2025. Seaside Heights, Ocean Co. N. Tartaglia(ph).

Historically, the majority of records of Fork-tailed Flycatcher in the state have occurred in the fall, but five of the nine reports in the past ten years have been in May or June. The year's sighting from Middlesex County was seen by a single observer, but beautifully photographed. The Higbee Beach bird, an adult male, taunted birders as it flew around the Wildlife Management area for three days. However, many were able to catch up with it and some obtained excellent photos. The Seaside Heights individual was photographed by a single observer, but not seen again.



Fork-tailed Flycatcher at Davidson Mill Pond Park, 12 June 2025. Photo: H. Shi

Bell's Vireo *Vireo bellii* (17)

- 2026-129 1 – 5 December 2025. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. S. Barnes*, J. Febre*(ph), C. Wheeler(ph), T. Gabe*, B. Dodelson, m.ob.

The second record for Sandy Hook and Monmouth County, this Bell's Vireo was enjoyed and photographed by numerous observers during its five-day stay. All but six

of the previous documented sightings have come from Cape May.

Western Warbling Vireo *Vireo swainsoni* (1)

- 2026-092 18 – 21 December 2022. Cape May, Cape May Co. R. Horn*, T. Johnson*(ph), D. Gochfeld*, J. Amesbury(ph), K. Horn(ph), m.ob.

The first record of this recently split species was detected on the 2022 Cape May Christmas Bird Count. It lingered for several days and was seen and photographed by numerous observers. This sighting actually preceded the 2025 division of the two Warbling Vireo into separate species.



Western Warbling Vireo at Cape May, 19 December 2022. Photo: K. Horn

Mountain Bluebird *Sialia currucoides* (5)

- 2026-025 7 May 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. T. Reed*.

This report generated a great deal of discussion among members of the Committee due to the circumstances of the report. The bird was spotted flying high over the Cape May Springwatch and several medium quality photos were obtained and submitted with details of the flight characteristics by the single observer. All but two of the members voted to accept the report as Mountain Bluebird, so it stands as accepted.

Townsend's Solitaire *Myadestes townsendi* (21)

- 2026-104 25 October 2025. Cape May Point, Cape May Co. (1, 2?). C. Roberto*(ph), F. Lenik(ph), L. Marsh, P. Marsh.



Townsend's Solitaire at Cape May. Photo: C. Roberto

After going missing for three years, this is now the fourth record of the species in the past three years. There was at least one well-photographed individual and possibly a second.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (28)

- 2026-111 28 October 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. M. Sciortino*(ph), M. O'Brien*(ph), m.ob.



Northern Wheatear at Cape May, 28 October 2025. Photo: M. Sciortino

This juvenile Northern Wheatear, apparently a male, flew into the South Cape May Meadows shortly after noon and spent the afternoon there. It was enjoyed and photographed by many observers.

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garullus* (23)

- 2026-114 10 November 2025. Troy Meadows, Morris Co. R. Johnson*.

This Bohemian Waxwing was with a small flock of Cedar Waxwings, but was distinguished by its larger size, gray belly and rufous undertail coverts. Only the second record in the past five years, it follows the typical pattern of a single bird showing up in a flock of its congeners.

Chestnut-collared Longspur *Calcarius ornatus* (4)

- 2026-101 21 – 23 October 2025. Villas, Cape May Co. J. Dowdell*, J. Amesbury(ph), M. O'Brien*(ph), B. Filemyr(ph), m.ob.

New Jersey's fourth Chestnut-collared Longspur was discovered by a birder taking his regular morning hike along the beach in Villas. Word spread quickly and, fortunately, the bird remained in the area for three days and was enjoyed by dozens of observers from all over the region.



Chestnut-collared Longspur at Villas, 23 October 2025. Photo: B. Filemyr

Lark Bunting *Calamospiza melanocorys* (11)

- 2026-016 17 April 2025. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co. S. Rappaport*(ph), K. Moon(ph), B. Elrick(ph), m.ob.

- 2026-143 13 September 2023. Cattus Island, Ocean Co. R. Curcio(ph).



Lark Bunting at Forsythe NWR, 17 April 2025. Photo: S. Rappaport

The Forsythe NWR bird, apparently a male in partial breeding plumage, was found along the dikes at the refuge. It spent most of the day there and, despite it being mid-week, was seen by a couple of dozen lucky observers. A birder updating his eBird lists from two years earlier realized that he had seen and photographed his first Lark Bunting at a feeder on Cattus Island, having dismissed it as a probable Purple Finch at the time.

LeConte's Sparrow *Ammospiza leconteii* (62)

- 2026-109 25 October – 3 November 2025. Alpha, Warren Co. R. Goldberg*, A. Co(ph), C. Della Penna*(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-110 26 October 2025. Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co. J. Ellerbusch*(ph), T. Boyle(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-119 15 – 21 November 2025. Budd's Bog, Burlington Co. S. Sobocinski*, T. Besançon*.
- 2026-128 3 December 2025. Rio Grande, Cape May Co. J. McDonough*(ph).

Once considered an extreme rarity, LeConte's Sparrow is now known to occur almost annually in New Jersey, having been missed only once since 2005. Whether this represents an actual increase in occurrence or more birders searching in likely places is

uncertain. This year's quartet were all well-photographed, especially the unusually cooperative individual in an unusual location at Alpha.



LeConte's Sparrow at the Alpha Grasslands, 25 October 2025. Photo: Angie Co

Bullock's Oriole *Icterus bullockii* (11)

- 2026-003 27 January 2025. Ocean Twp., Ocean Co. A. Chodan*(ph).

This adult male Bullock's Oriole makes it seven records in five consecutive years for the species after have only four confirmed occurrences prior to 2021. Unfortunately, the homeowner's circumstance did not allow for visitors other than the observer.

Swainson's Warbler *Limnethlypis swainsonii* (32)

- 2026-018 26 – 27 April 2025. Galloway, Atlantic Co. J. Apgar*(ph, au), B. Elrick(ph).
- 2026-021 3 May – 14 July 2025. Old Mine Road, Warren Co. (2). P. Shanahan*(ph), P. Murray*, K. Mylecraine(ph), B. White(ph), J. McGowan(ph), m.ob.
- 2026-027 9 – 10 May 2025. Cox Hall Creek WMA, Cape May Co. M. Currier(au), H. Leonard, R. Nicholson, D. Woolston(ph), F. Lenik*, m.ob.

It was an excellent year for Swainson's Warbler. The Galloway bird, just the second for Atlantic County (the first was in 1968), visited a birder's backyard for two days and was recorded and well-photographed. Most unusual was the occurrence of two singing male birds on Old Mine Road along the Delaware River in far inland Warren County. One or both were seen and heard regularly for more than two months. Remarkably, two males, presumably the same individuals returned to the same area in late April 2026. The Cox Hall Creek WMA bird was present at a new location in Cape May County for just two days. Despite that fact that there have been more than a dozen records of singing male Swainson's Warblers in the past ten years, there has never been any evidence of a mated pair.



Swainson's Warbler on Old Mine Road, 3 May 2025.
Photo: P. Shanahan

MacGillivray's Warbler *Geothlypis tolmiei*

- 2026-115 13 November – 10 December 2025. Spruce Run Res., Hunterdon Co. F. Sencher*, D. Bernstein*, P. Kwiatek*, B. Meriwether(ph), J. Horn(ph), J. Klizas*(ph), J. Woodmansee*, m.ob.

The third record for New Jersey and the first for Hunterdon County, this skulker was present for four weeks at Spruce Run Reservoir, where it was seen and heard by dozens of observers. Although it stayed buried in the bushes most of the time, a few birders were able to obtain excellent photographs.



MacGillivray's Warbler at Spruce Run Res., 21 November 2025. Photo: J. Klizas

Townsend's Warbler *Setophaga townsendi* (28)

- 2026-086 25 – 27 September 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co. D. Gochfeld*, J. Marrazzo*, m.ob.
- 2026-135 17 – 20 December 2025. Pole Farm, Mercer Co. S. Matson*(ph), B. Hewitt(ph), m.ob.

This western species has been seen with increasing frequency in recent years (14 records in the past ten years), but is still a treat for New Jersey birders. The Cape May bird, an immature female, was seen briefly on two different days. The Mercer County individual, also an immature female, was seen and photographed by multiple observers during its four-day visit.



Townsend's Warbler at the Pole Farm, 17 December 2025. Photo: S. Matson

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana* (74)

- 2026-132 13 December 2025. Weitz Park, Monmouth Co. A. Bernzweig*(ph), A. Morrison*(ph), L. Sheldon(ph).

There was just one new record for 2025, but Western Tanager is now an annual visitor to New Jersey, not having been missed since 2010. This individual, apparently a female, was present for just one day at a Monmouth County park.

Reports not accepted

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

- 2026-099. 19 October 2025. Miry Run Natural Area, Mercer Co.

Scanty details were provided. Photos apparently taken, but not provided.

Trumpeter Swan *Cygnus buccinator*

- 2026-134. 15 December 2025. Cape May, Cape May Co.

Under the circumstances, the Committee did not believe that Tundra Swan could be eliminated.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

- 2026-007. 30 January 2025. Toms River, Ocean Co.
- 2026-051. (2). 19 June 2025. Stone Harbor, Cape May Co.

Most members of the Committee were not convinced that the details of the Toms River bird ruled out other species. The Committee was divided on the report of two flying together along the Stone Harbor Causeway, but there were not enough votes to accept.

Black-chinned Hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri*

- 2026-105. 6 – 9 October 2025. Del Haven, Cape May Co.

The photos were not considered conclusive to rule out Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

Wilson's Plover *Anarhynchus wilsonia*

- 2026-082. 11 August 2025. North Cape May, Cape May Co.

Lacking a photograph, the description was not sufficient to rule out other species.

Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

- 2026-073. 24 August 2025. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co.

The bird in the photo appears to be a Wilson's Phalarope.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

- 2026-093. 13 October 2025. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co.

The brief description was lacking in details.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

- 2026-020. 30 April 2025. Heislerville, Cumberland Co. (2).
- 2026-075. 24 August 2025. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co.

The report of two Curlew Sandpipers at Heislerville as being in full and partial breeding plumage contained no other details of the plumage or how other species were eliminated. The poor photo of the bird at Forsythe does not rule out Stilt Sandpiper.

Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan*

- 2026-043. 31 May 2025. Avalon, Cape May Co.

There was not quite enough in the observer's description of this bird to convince the Committee of the identification.

Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

- 2026-013. 15 – 17 March 2025. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co.

The bird in the photos submitted with this report appears to be a molting Horned Grebe.

Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis*

- 2026-116. 15 November 2025. Raritan Bay, Middlesex Co.

This was a tantalizing report, but without a photograph it's difficult to rule out other species, such as Clark's Grebe or the Red-necked Grebe known to be in the area.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*.

- 2026-032. 14 May 2025. Avalon, Cape May Co.
- 2026-048. 14 June 2025. Avalon, Cape May Co.

Although these two reports were probably correct, the Committee felt that the details were insufficient to rule out other species.

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana*

- 2026-091. 10 October 2025. Cape May Point Cape May Co.

The brief description fits the species, but lack of more details and a photograph make the report uncertain. On that date, there are dozens of observers around Cape May Point, many frequenting the site of this observation, but there were no other reports of Wood Stork.

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga*

- 2026-076. 29 August 2025. (2). Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co.

Probably correctly identified, but the details were not sufficient to convince a majority of the Committee.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus savana*

- 2026-080. 10 August 2025. Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co.

Another possibility, but without a photograph the details were not convincing.