

TOM RENICK COUNTY PARK BIRD COUNTS – DECEMBER, 2023

Another year is completed (eight in all). This month there were 31 surveys over 188 hours. In all for the month 126 species seen this equals the record set in 2021. There was one addition to the list bringing the list up to 326. For the year 275 species seen this is a record.

Single Red-throated Loons were seen on the 7th, 20th, 21st and 29th. In contrast Common Loons were seen on 17 days with three on the 20th and three on the 21st. There was a Horned Grebe on the 4th. There were two Manx Shearwaters on the 21st with a first winter Masked Booby flying to the south on the 25th. Northern Gannets peaked at 386 on the 14th and 867 on the 25th. American White Pelicans were seen on seven days with ten on the 6th, 14 on the 15th and 44 on the 23rd. Brown Pelicans peaked at 267 on the 13th and 458 on the 25th. Double-crested Cormorants peaked at 162 on the 23rd. There were two Magnificent Frigatebirds on the 17th with one on the 24th (the latter was circling over the river).

There was a Reddish Egret on the 8th. White Ibis peaked at 75 on the 6th. There was a Glossy Ibis on the 6th with six on the 20th. There were six Roseate Spoonbills on the 8th with 15 on the 18th, then three seen on the 19th. Wood Storks peaked at 12 on the 18th and 19 on the 7th. For the vultures the peak counts were: for the Black 102 on the 27th and for the Turkey 403 on the 5th.

There was a Snow Goose on the 10th with two Canada Geese on the 15th. There was a Gadwall on the 11th. There was also a Mallard on the 17th. There were two Mottled Ducks on the 20th. There were six Northern Pintail on the 14th. For the Green-winged Teal there were 20 on the 5th with one on the 7th. There were two Canvasbacks on the 3rd with five on the 10th, seven on the 14th and eight on the 26th. There were 20 Redheads on the 14th with ten on the 21st. There were 25 Ring-necked Ducks on the 5th with four on the 13th. Greater Scaup peaked at 2,520 (over the sea) on the 14th and Lesser Scaup peaked at 1,700 (over the river) on the 23rd. There was a Common Eider on the 14th. Surf Scoters were seen on 16 dates with 18 on the 23rd and 25 on the 15th. For the White-winged Scoter there were five on the 6th, two on the 10th, 23 on the 14th (a new high count), seven on the 15th and seven again on the 21st. Black Scoters peaked at 590 on the 14th. There were seven Buffleheads on the 5th with one on the 9th, two on the 14th with singles on the 18th and 23rd. There were three Hooded Mergansers on the 7th with four on the 13th. Red-breasted Mergansers peaked at 119 on the 15th and 148 on the 14th. There was also a Ruddy Duck on the 21st.

Up to three Bald Eagles seen daily. There were single Northern Harriers on the 3rd, 6th, 13th and 21st. There was a Sharp-shinned Hawk on the 6th. On the 18th there was a spectacular event I was able to watch an adult Bald Eagle chase an adult Golden Eagle all over the sky. An American Kestrel was present all month. There were single Merlin on the 8th, 15th and 30th.

There was an American Coot on the 12th. There was a Killdeer on the 10th. On the 10th there was also an American Oystercatcher. There were 44 Red Knot on the 8th with five on the 9th. They were then seen daily from the 17th with 120 on the 20th.

There were four Pomarine Jaegers on the 6th with three on the 15th. Singles were then seen regularly from the 19th with two on the 21st. There were five Parasitic Jaegers on the 6th with one on the 7th. Up to ten a day seen from the 12th with 29 on the 16th and 37 on the 28th. Laughing Gulls peaked at 2,980 on the 13th and 3,870 on the 28th. There were single Franklin's Gulls on the 13th and the 14th. Ring-billed Gulls peaked at 380 on the 29th. There was an adult California Gull at the river on the 26th. Herring Gulls peaked at 250 on the 31st. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were seen on nine days with seven on the 13th and 13 on the 25th. There were single first-winter Glaucous Gulls on the 25th and the 28th. There were two Black-legged Kittiwakes on the 14th. There were single Caspian Terns on the 1st and the 17th. Royal Terns peaked at 95 on the 23rd. Sandwich Terns peaked at 141 on the 19th and 145 on the 21st. There was a Common Tern on the 23rd. Forster's Terns peaked at 84 on the 19th and 93 on the 23rd. Black Skimmers were seen on 16 days with a peak count of 357 on the 23rd. For the auks there was a Thick-billed Murre on the 20th with single Razorbills on the 25th and the 31st.

There were single Eastern Screech-Owls on the 23rd and 29th with single Great Horned Owls on the 5th and the 26th. There was a Belted Kingfisher on the 3rd. Single Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were seen on the 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 23rd. Up to two Downy Woodpeckers were seen on ten days. Up to two Pileated Woodpeckers were seen on 11 days. There were four Eastern Phoebe on the 1st with five on the 3rd then up to two a day seen to the end of the month. Two Loggerhead Shrikes were present all month with counts of three on the 13th and 20th. There was also a Blue-headed Vireo on the 3rd.

American Crows peaked at 18 on the 13th a new high count. There were eight Tree Swallows on the 2nd with four on the 3rd. There were single House Wrens on the 1st, 2nd and 10th. There were single Blue-gray Gnatcatchers on the 3rd and 23rd. There was a Golden-crowned Kinglet on the 9th a new species for the park. Ruby-crowned Kinglets noted on six dates with three on the 23rd a new high count. American Robins peaked at 1,865 on the 27th and 2,550 on the 29th. There were three Gray Catbirds on the 1st with two from the 3rd to the 9th then one seen on the 23rd. European Starlings peaked at 1,070 on the 20th and 1,160 on the 17th. There were two American Pipits on the 19th.

There was an Orange-crowned Warbler on the 9th. There were two Cape May Warblers on the 3rd with singles on the 8th, 23rd and 26th. There were single Yellow-throated Warblers on the 1st, 5th, 12th, 20th and 23rd. There was also a Prairie Warbler on the 23rd.

Common Grackles peaked at 41 on the 31st. Brown-headed Cowbirds peaked at 210 on the 14th, 260 on the 20th, 360 on the 27th and 520 on the 28th. Up to five House Finches seen daily. There was an American Goldfinch on the 8th with 30 on the 10th, 28 on the 11th and 18 on the 12th.

So, what will 2024 bring? There were a very high 13 additions to the list in 2023, surely there will be only a few new species in 2024.

Harry Robinson