

TOM RENICK COUNTY PARK BIRD COUNTS – DECEMBER, 2017

The fall of 2017 has been a crazy time and December was no different - there were five additions to the list. To deal with the data first so that we can get to the interesting stuff the birds. There were 31 surveys during the month and 105 species were located (last year only 84 found). On the 23rd I found 61 species and this is the highest count for the park. There were also 23,926 birds on the 26th. For the year 224 species found as against 188 for 2016. The list now stands at 236 species can it make 250 in 2018? I think that is unlikely although there were 49 additions in 2017. In all for the two years there have been 519 surveys involving 2,693 hours of fieldwork .Now to the birds.

There were a number of Red-throated Loons one on the 3rd, five on the 13th, one on the 26th, two on the 27th and one on the 28th all were flying to the south. There were 27 Common Loons on the 17th this is a new high count. For Horned Grebes there was one on the 4th, two on the 14th, two on the 22nd and one on the 24th. Now we come to the first of the new species a first-winter Masked Booby which flew to the south on the 24th. There were single Brown Boobies on the 3rd and 11th. Northern Gannets peaked at 2,375 on the 24th with seven American White Pelicans on the 6th. The second new bird was a juvenile Great Cormorant that flew to the south on the 3rd. Finally for this group Magnificent Frigatebirds were seen as follows: there was one on the 23rd, two on the 24th (a high count), one on the 25th and one on the 26th.

The wildfowl were also well represented. A flock of 36 Canvasbacks flew to the south on the 13th a new high count. There were two major flights of Redheads with 425 on the 13th and 735 on the 23rd the latter is a new high count. There was a major count of Greater Scaup on the 23rd when 1,550 seen. Having seen a female Common Eider in November single immature males flew to the south on the 24th and 26th. There were five Surf Scoters on the 13th with two on the 22nd. There was also a White-winged Scoter on the 13th. Black Scoters were very scarce this month. On the last day of the month two Long-tailed Ducks flew to the south near the shore just the third record for the park. Buffleheads peaked at 22 on the 9th a new high count. There was a Common Goldeneye on the 20th with six Hooded Mergansers on the 13th.

There was a Sandhill Crane on the 11th. A single Purple Sandpiper flew to the north along the shore on the 14th. That was the only interesting shorebird record. The next new species was a light morph South Polar Skua that flew to the south near to the shore on the 21st. The highest daily count of Pomarine Jaegers was that of 102 on the 6th, only low numbers of Parasitic Jaegers were seen during the month. There were single juvenile Long-tailed Jaegers on the 17th and 26th the latter was one of the

rarer white-headed individuals. There was a Franklin’s Gull on the 10th. Now we come to the fourth addition to the list an adult Black-headed Gull this flew to the south on the 15th. There were new high counts of 4,140 Herring Gulls on the 26th and 15 Lesser Black-backed Gulls on the same date. There were single Glaucous Gulls on the 3rd and 17th with three on the 26th. An adult Black-legged Kittiwake flew to the north on the 29th. To round out this section a first-winter Common Tern flew to the north on the 11th.

With such a busy month for seabirds I paid less attention to the west still I did find one new species. There were single White-winged Doves on the 17th and 23rd with a Nanday Parakeet on the 19th. The new bird was an Eastern Whip-poor-will that paid a visit to the park on the 15th. There was a single American Crow on the 10th. Most unexpected was a Northern Waterthrush on the 15th. On the 18th I located an immature male Baltimore Oriole. Finally on the 22nd there was a flock of 22 American Goldfinches - a new high count.

Because this fall has been so exceptional I have prepared a table showing the more interesting seabirds month by month. I have also included a summary of the 2016 sightings. This table is attached below.

TOM RENICK COUNTY PARK SEPTEMBER/DECEMBER SELECTED COUNTS

Sea watching has proved very interesting through the fall and the following table shows some of the more interesting species seen from September to December, 2017. I am now including a summary of the September to December records for 2016 to show just how good this year has been. Having two such very different years makes it impossible to know what is normal. Whilst it may be unlikely the passage in 2017 may actually be the norm.

SPECIES	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	TOTALS	2016
Red-throated Loon			1	11	12	3
Pied-billed Grebe		1	1		2	2

Horned Grebe			15	6	21	48
NORTHERN FULMAR		7	1		8	
Cory's Shearwater		129	13		142	
Inc. Scolopi's S.		21	1		22	
Greater Shearwater	4	35			39	
Sooty Shearwater		17	1		18	
MANX SHEARWATER	1	5			6	
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	2				2	
LEACH'S STORM-PETREL		2	3		5	
Band-rumped Storm-Petrel		1			1	
MASKED BOOBY				1	1	
Brown Booby	3	2	9	2	16	1
GREAT CORMORANT				1	1	
Magnificent Frigatebird		3	3	5	11	3
BRANT						1
Wood Duck			1		1	1
Canvasback			8	36	44	38
Redhead			110	1,240	1,350	73
COMMON EIDER			1	2	3	
Surf Scoter			5	7	12	58
White-winged Scoter		2		1	3	4
Long-tailed Duck				2	2	1
Bufflehead			23	55	78	51
Common Goldeneye			2	1	3	2
Hooded Merganser			4	6	10	15
COMMON MERGANSER			1		1	
RUDDY DUCK			3		3	
Merlin	4	10	1		15	23

Peregrine Falcon	15	807	2		824	97
AMERICAN COOT			3		3	
Piping Plover			2		2	
American Avocet	7				7	
American Oystercatcher	1	4		1	6	7
Whimbrel	1				1	2
Marbled Godwit	5				5	2
Purple Sandpiper				1	1	
Red-necked Phalarope	2	1			3	
RED PHALAROPE	1	2	1		4	
SOUTH POLAR SKUA				1	1	
Pomarine Jaeger	1	14	240	366	621	146
Parasitic Jaeger	25	211	60	47	343	28
LONG-TAILED JAEGER	3	1		2	6	
Franklin's Gull			1	1	2	3
BLACK-HEADED GULL				1	1	
Iceland Gull						1
Glaucous Gull				5	5	
SABINE'S GULL	1	4			5	
Black-legged Kittiwake			3	1	4	
Gull-billed Tern	1				1	4
Roseate Tern	3				3	1
Arctic Tern	2	5			7	3
BRIDLED TERN	9	11			20	
SOOTY TERN	58	4			62	
BROWN NODDY	5	12			17	
RAZORBILL		1			1	

Some Data:						
Number of surveys	30	31	30	31	122	77
Hours of sea watching	142	175	160	178	655	410

It should be noted that it took 655 hours to find all the birds listed in the table above.