

TOM RENICK COUNTY PARK – BIRD COUNTS DECEMBER, 2018

So another year (the third) comes to an end a year in which I had hoped to bring the species list up to 250. There were in fact two additions this month on the 6th and the 19th making the grand total 251! For the year as a whole I only added 15 species. It is unlikely that I will add more than five species in 2019. For the year I saw 218 species over 365 surveys (yes I did not miss a single day) and 1,682 hours of field work. For the month there were 99 species over 31 surveys and 136 hours of field work. The best days were the 16th with 48,888 birds and the 22nd with 49 species the latter being the Christmas Bird Count.

Now to the birds there were single Red-throated Loons on the 5th and 21st with counts of 12 Common Loons on the 19th and 29 on the 21st; the latter is a new high count. The only Horned Grebes were two on the 6th. Very surprisingly there was a Scolopi's Shearwater on the 4th. Northern Gannets were common with 3,118 on the 9th, 3,683 on the 27th and 4,897 on the 14th a new high count. The only American White Pelicans were a flock of 44 on the 12th. The only heron of note was a Reddish Egret on the 7th.

There were eight Gadwall on the 27th with two American Wigeon on the same date. The only Canvasbacks were a flock of 14 on the 4th. Redheads were seen on five dates with 150 on the 6th, 150 on the 8th, 225 on the 9th, 50 on the 16th and 15 on the 13th. There were seven Ring-necked Ducks on the 9th. Greater Scaup were not so common this year with 200 on the 20th as the highest count. Lesser Scaup were also in low numbers with 345 on the 8th. The scoters were a very different story. During the month 70 Surf Scoters were seen with 24 on the 4th and 12 on the 25th. There were single White-winged Scoters on the 2nd, 5th and 24th with two on the 25th, then one seen on the 28th. Black Scoter continued to reign supreme with 17,210 for the month this when added to the 26,750 of November gives a staggering total of 43,960 birds for the two months. The best day was the 4th when 8,490 flew to the south this is by far a new high count. There were 21 Buffleheads with six on the 18th. There were also four Hooded Mergansers on the 2nd. Finally for the ducks Red-breasted Mergansers peaked at 55 on the 4th.

There was a Northern Harrier on the 31st and a Merlin on the 17th these were the only unusual birds of prey. There were three Sandhill Cranes on the 12th with four on the 23rd the latter being a new high count. The only interesting shorebirds were a Western Sandpiper on the 22nd, three Dunlin on the 19th and two Purple Sandpipers on the 1st. Jaegers were seen nearly daily for the month there were 147 Pomarine and 85 Parasitic Jaegers. The best days for the Pomarine were 20 on the 17th and 17 on the

27th. For the Parasitic there were 16 on the 17th and 22nd. On the 16th a total of 47,300 Laughing Gulls flew to the south a new high count the next best day was that of 5,500 on the 17th. Herring Gulls peaked at 1,070 on the 18th. There were 33 Lesser Black-backed Gulls during the month with nine on the 18th. Royal Terns peaked at 151 on the 4th and Sandwich Terns peaked at 146 on the 25th. There was an adult Common Tern on the 14th. Finally for this group there were 33 Black Skimmers on the 14th with 38 on the 22nd.

There was a White-winged Dove on the 1st with another on the 20th and 22nd. There was a Common Ground-Dove on the 31st. The first of the two new species was a Great Horned Owl heard calling at night on the 19th there are some advantages at living "on site". There were two Loggerhead Shrikes on the 22nd. The only American Crow was on the 15th. The second new species was a March Wren on the 6th (this was the 250th species now why could it not be a spectacular rarity?). European Starlings peaked at 440 on the 3rd and Palm Warblers peaked at nine on the 18th a new high count. There was a Savannah Sparrow on the 24th. Brown-headed Cowbirds peaked at 170 on the 17th and 140 on the 29th. House Finches were scarce but there were three on the 13th. Finally there were 15 American Goldfinches on the 9th with eight on the 24th and 16 on the 31st.

WHAT WILL 2019 BRING?

Harry Robinson