

TOM RENICK COUNTY PARK BIRD COUNTS – APRIL, 2020

As you will know the parks were all closed (from the 3rd) but I had already spoken to Bill Bramer of the Ormondy Condominiums and he had spoken to the condo president Rick Verstay and he gave me permission to sea watch from their parking lot that abutted the park. There is no shelter from the sun or the rain so on dry days I limited the sea watching to the first two hours of the day. I am very grateful to both gentlemen for their assistance. At the end of the two hours of from first light if it rained I watched from my apartment as I had a wide view towards the Halifax River. This all meant that with minor variations the survey continued uninterrupted.

I conducted 30 surveys over 150 hours and saw 129 species this is the second highest April count as I had 140 species in April, 2018. At last there were additions to the list two in fact so read on. The total list now stands at 265 with 173 species for 2020. The best day was the 24th when 1,506 birds seen and 64 species were located. This is a very high count as the best day to date was on April 9, 2018 when 65 species seen so very close...

There were single Red-throated Loons on the 6th and 13th and the last Common Loon was also seen on the 13th. There were two immature Brown Boobies on the 28th. Northern Gannets continued to be seen all month if in low numbers. Double-crested Cormorants flew to the north all month with a high count of 555 on the 6th. Two Magnificent Frigatebirds flew to the south along the Halifax River on the 30th. Herons numbers were low with single Reddish Egrets on the 13th and 26th. There was a Green Heron on the 18th with a Black-crowned Night-Heron on the 22nd. Up to two Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were seen all month. A total of 104 Glossy Ibis were seen from the 20th with 30 on the 21st. There were nine Roseate Spoonbills on the 18th with one on the 19th. There were also 12 on the 26th with seven on the 30th.

Only limited numbers of ducks seen this month there were two American Wigeon on the 22nd. Blue-winged Teals were seen to the 24th. There was a Northern Shoveler on the 6th with two Northern Pintail on the 3rd and 4th. There were 65 Green-winged Teal on the 3rd with five on the 4th. There was a flock of 20 Ring-necked Ducks on the 6th. Red-breasted Mergansers were seen to the 16th with a late individual on the 28th.

Swallow-tailed Kites were seen on nine dates from the 6th, 14 birds in all. There was a Mississippi Kite on the 27th. Bald Eagles were seen all month just one to two a day. There were single Northern Harriers on the 14th, 15th and 17th. Sharp-shinned Hawks were seen on the 12th and 13th with three on the 15th. I would have expected these species to be seen at the same time. There were four Red-shouldered Hawks on

the 26th this is a joint high count. A dark morph Short-tailed Hawk was seen on the 21st, 22nd and 28th. There were single Red-tailed Hawks on the 8th, 15th and 21st this is always a rarity. The wintering American Kestrel was seen to the 5th. For the first time there was a visible spring passage there were eight on the 8th, three on the 9th, three on the 10th and two on the 15th. The count of eight is a new high count for the park (no more than two a day seen previously). Merlins moved through all month 33 in all. There were two Peregrine Falcons on the 24th with one on the 30th.

There were single Semipalmated Plovers on the 8th and 27th. There was a Black-necked Stilt on the 8th. On the 26th a flock of 12 Greater Yellowlegs flew to the north. There were two Lesser Yellowlegs on the 3rd with another on the 16th. There were single Solitary Sandpipers on the 21st and 26th. Spotted Sandpipers were more frequent as there were three on the 21st with singles on the 23rd, 25th and 26th. There were also eight on the 27th a new high count for the park. Whimbrel were very scarce this year only singles seen on the 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 10th and 18th. Semipalmated Sandpipers were seen from the 20th when five noted. There were seven on the 22nd with eight on the 23rd and six on the 25th. On the 20th there were also three Western Sandpipers and four Least Sandpipers. A Purple Sandpiper flew to the north on the 16th. Finally for this group there were single Short-billed Dowitchers on the 2nd and 11th.

There was a Bonaparte's Gull on the 6th. The last Ring-billed Gull was seen on the 27th and the last Herring Gull was seen on the 25th. Both species may be seen in early May. A total of eight Lesser Black-backed Gulls were seen through to the 20th. The last Great Black-backed Gull was on the 25th. There were more Gull-billed Terns than normal as one seen on the 2nd with two on the 5th, then singles seen on the 6th, 16th, 23rd and 25th. There were two Roseate Terns on the 17th. Common Terns were seen from the 16th with six on the 17th. Forster's Terns were seen to the 14th with a late individual on the 23rd. Least Terns peaked at 17 on the 15th the main passage had started on March 28.

There were single White-winged Doves on the 15th, 23rd and 24th. Single Belted Kingfishers flew to the north out at sea on the 24th and 26th. Unexpectedly a Red-headed Woodpecker flew to the south on the 3rd (previously there had been one on April 15, 2018). There were five Red-bellied Woodpeckers on the 29th a joint high count, there were also five on March 27, 2020. There was a Downy Woodpecker on the 28th. Pileated Woodpeckers were seen on six dates as were Great Crested Flycatchers. A total of 47 Eastern Kingbirds were seen from the 2nd with 24 on the 20th. A Loggerhead Shrike was present all month. Up to three American Crows were seen to the 26th but not since. Tree Swallows were seen to the 14th. There were single Northern Rough-winged Swallows on the 8th, 9th, 10th, 14th and 26th. Bank Swallows

were seen on nine dates from the 6th with seven on the 8th. Cliff Swallows are always rare there were singles the 8th, 9th, 22nd and 24th.

The House Wren that had wintered was last seen on March 27 so the singles seen on the 4th and 5th represents a migrant. There was a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on the 7th. There were single Gray Catbirds on the 3rd and 20th with two on the 24th; the count of two is a high count for the park. A pair of Brown Thrashers raised one young locally. Cedar Waxwings were seen to the 18th with later six on the 25th. The 24th was warbler day there were single Northern Parula, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Palm Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart and Northern Waterthrush. Although I could not use the telescope from the park I could visit it...The wintering Palm Warbler was seen to the 4th. There was also an American Redstart on the 10th. So we come to the first of the new species (had you forgotten?) there was a Prothonotary Warbler on the 12th. The other new species follows as there was a Swamp Sparrow on the 10th. Back to the 24th there was a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak on this date. There was a Blue Grosbeak on the 8th. There was an Indigo Bunting on the 19th with four on the 24th a new high count. With the Indigo Buntings there was a female plumaged Painted Bunting. Bobolinks were seen regularly with 262 being counted during the month the high count was that of 150 on the 26th - a new high count for the park. Brown-headed Cowbirds were seen to the 8th with a late individual on the 28th. Finally there were two pairs of House Finches in the area.

May is always a lesser month still I will keep looking.

Harry Robinson