

FRANKLIN COUNTY: MARCH – MAY 2016 NARRATIVE FOR PSO QUARTERLY

Locations: Bender's Farm (BEFA), Greencastle Reservoir (GRRE), Kriner Road Retention Ponds (KRRP), Letterkenney Reservoir (LERE), Long Lane Pond (LLP), Mountain Brook Road Pond (MBRP)

Many thanks to Dale Gearhart for his many years of compiling for the PSO reports and his leadership for birding information here in Franklin County. This is my first report to PSO.

May 1 became an eventful birding day in the county with highlight birds being White-winged Scoters, Caspian Terns, Forster's Terns, Black Tern, American Avocets, and Black-bellied Plover. Also found in unusual numbers here that day were Common Loons, Red-breasted Mergansers, Double-crested Cormorants, Bonaparte's Gulls, and Lesser Yellowlegs. The numbers and location of these sightings will be in the continuing narrative that follows.

It was a good season for waterfowl for those who regularly paid attention to local spots. Highlights reported for the period include 19 **Redheads** at LLP 3/01 (CG,BO), 12 **Northern Pintails** at LLP 3/2 (CG,BO), **26 Tundra Swans** at MBRP 3/2 (CG,BO), one **Snow Goose** at BEFA 3/6 (BO,VB), one **Cackling Goose** at Keefer Rd Pond 3/15 (CG), one **F Long-tailed Duck** 3/16 at Tallow Hill Rd Pond (LL,BO), 11 **Northern Shovelers** at BEFA 3/17 (BO), 10 **Canvasbacks** 4/9 at BEFA (BO,CG), two **White-winged Scoters** at MBRP 5/1 (BO,CG,VB,JB), five **Red-breasted Mergansers** at MBRP 5/1 (CG), 19 **Ruddy Ducks** at BEFA 5/2 (CG,BO), and 10 Northern Shovelers at KRRP 5/4 (CG). There were also reports of both scaup species and the normal expected assortment of other ducks.

Other notable water/marsh habitat species reported were four **Double-crested Cormorants** at Grant Shook Rd Pond 4/9 (CG) and 50 at LERE 5/1 (BO), 12 **Common Loons** at combined locations BEFA, LERE & Fannettsburg Lake 5/1 (BO), one **Black-crowned Night Heron** at Sand Bag Rd 4/19 (BO), four **American Coots** at KRRP 5/1 (CG), one **Common Gallinule** at BEFA 5/2 (CG,BO), and one **American Bittern** at BEFA 5/6 (BO).

Heisey Road and the old orchard near Stillhouse Hollow continued to be a good spot for early spring **American Woodcock** with up to 4 reported early March (BK,VB,CG). **Wilson's Snipe** frequently were found in numbers at GRRE meadow and KRRP in March and April (CG,DG,DC,BO). Shorebird activity was slow to happen during April despite certain ponds having good amounts of exposed shoreline. However in entering the month of May, notable highlights occurred immediately. 34 **American Avocets** sat down to rest at KRRP on the afternoon of 5/1 (JB,CG,DG,DC,BO, others). Amazingly four days later 50 American Avocets put down at GRRE (CG,DG). During the eventful 5/1 a **Black-bellied Plover** was found at GRRE (CG,DG,BO) and nine Lesser Yellowlegs were reported at KRRP (CG). Other highlights were three **Semipalmated Plovers** at KRRP 5/17 (CG,DG) and one **White-rumped Sandpiper** at a Hamilton Twp. farm pond 5/18 (BO). Also, large numbers of common spring shorebirds **Spotted Sandpipers** and **Solitary Sandpipers** were reported in early May. Finally there was a report from a reliable birder of 22 dowitchers at LLP 5/13. Carl Garner hesitated to have this included because of the unlikeliness of it in the spring let alone anytime, but he is confident there were 16 **Long-billed Dowitchers** and 6 **Short-billed Dowitchers** there. The basis for the LBDO ID was the heavy barring on the sides of the breast of those birds. The reporter is an experienced life-long birder who is careful with his ID's. Other birders informed were not available or arrived there after the birds departed.

Relative speaking, it also was a decent spring for gulls and terns for our county which has no major waterways passing through or bordering it. Two **Herring Gulls** were found in the midst of a good size flock of **Ring-billed Gulls** 3/14 near Fayetteville (BO). On 5/1 at GRRE a **Black Tern** (CG,DG,BO others), two **Caspian Terns** (CG), and three **Forster's Terns** (CG,DG,BO others) were found. **Bonaparte's Gulls** reports were unusually frequent with one at GRRE 3/16 (VB), two at BEFA 4/1 (BO), one at Keefer Rd Pond 4/9 (BO), seven at GRRE 5/1 (CG,DG,BO), 29 at BEFA 5/1 (BO), and 18 at KRRP 5/1 (DH,VB others). A flock of Ring-billed Gulls that numbered as high as 30 birds stayed in the area unusually late into the spring to mid-May being normally seen around the K-Mart parking lot in the south end of Chambersburg (CG,BO).

There were four active **Bald Eagle** nests in the county (DG), at least two reported active **Great-Horned Owl** nests (DC, CG) along with an active **Barn Owl** nest (DG,BO,CG). **Eurasian-collared Doves** continue to be seen frequently in Shady Grove and from there to the GRRE area.

GRRE is a prominent spot to assess the timing of returning swallows. **Tree Swallows** were reported 3/18, **Barn Swallows** 3/26, **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** 3/27, **Purple Martins** 3/31, **Cliff Swallows** 4/27, and **Bank Swallows** 4/30 (CG). Cliff Swallows returned to nest again under the Wenger Rd bridge over Wilson Run in Hamilton Twp. (BO,VB,CG).

Notable field bird findings were 87 **American Pipits** at GRRE 4/2 (CG), one **Blue Grosbeak** 5/20 Ft McCord Rd (CG) and one 5/30 in Little Cove (BO). Two **Bobolinks** were reported 5/8 at Portico Rd (CG), along with numbers in the twenties 5/6 at two places near Pleasant Hall, Iron Bridge Rd (BK,CAS), and Sandy Mt Rd (BK,CAS,BO). Also on 5/6 during the Conococheague Audubon Field Trip to Path Valley a **Clay-colored Sparrow** was found along Creek Rd (BK,CAS).

Highlighting remaining birds of note was a **Summer Tanager** (probably a first year male) found along the Conococheague Creek 5/6 on paths behind Menno Haven at the north end of Chambersburg (BO). The bird was watched feeding and singing for about 25 minutes before moving on. Other birds were **Lincoln's Sparrow** at BEFA 5/7 (BO), One **Kentucky Warbler** in Little Cove 5/30 (BO), and in addition another report of Kentucky Warbler from the 5/14 PAMC at an unstated location (JB). **Black-billed Cuckoos** were reported 4/29 (CG), 5/8 (DL), 5/17 (RG), and 5/28 (BO). Two **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were found 5/25 in Michaux SF along Ridge Rd (BO) and one **Alder Flycatcher** in Horse Valley 5/28 (BO). There were a few reports of **Golden-winged Warblers** (RG,EM,RM,BO,LN). Unfortunately the power line in Lower Horse Valley that had been a reliable place for them (as well as Lawrence's hybrid) the past years was sprayed this spring, and the best habitat destroyed probably for the near future.

Lastly of note are the **Pine Siskins** that continue to come to the feeders at the home of Val Barnes in the greater Caledonia area. There were also late feeders at Caledonia SP; however Val has now had siskins at her feeders daily for two years running. Recently, there was a documentation photo taken of one or two young birds feeding.

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