## Checklist of Birds Recorded in Erie County, Pennsylvania, Including Presque Isle State Park

Compiled by Gerald M. McWilliams





## Bird Watching in Erie County, PA: An Historical Perspective

This, the latest edition of the Erie County, PA, bird checklist, is dedicated to Jean Stull Cunningham, who started formal bird record-keeping for Erie County and compiled the county's first-ever checklist. Jean founded the Presaue Isle Nature Club in 1956 (now the Presque Isle Audubon Society). and co-authored

every checklist the *Presque Isle Audu-bon Society* published until her death in July, 2011. All of us who had the good fortune to know Jean, truly miss her en-



thusiasm for, and dedication to, the natural world.

The ornithological history of Erie County takes us back to B. H. Warren who mentions Erie County his "Report on the Birds of Pennsylvania" 1890, when Piping Plovers nested regularly along the lake shore. Few birders existed then, and bird

records came from visiting ornithologists and hunters — gunners, as they were called. W. E. Clyde Todd made periodic visits to Erie County and published his monumental



work, "The Birds of Western Pennsylvania" in 1940. From the 1940s, until the mid-1950s, little bird activity was documented, but then birding, bird listing, and bird record-keeping really took off. Much has changed in what we know about birds since the 1950s. Canada Geese were still exciting to see and Double-crested Cormorants were considered rare well into the 1980s. Now several thousand might be seen in a single day. Bald Eagles nested only on Presque Isle, and only into the 1950s. In 2020, at least a dozen active eagle nests are known in the county. We've lost some breeding birds, like the Black Tern, which nested regularly on Presque Isle, and no active nests have been reported anywhere in Pennsylvania in the last few years. Recent waterfowl surveys along Lake Erie have changed the status of some species like Common and Red-throated Loon and all three scoter species, from rare and often irregular then, to common and regular now. Red-bellied Woodpeckers, once considered rare and irregular, are now permanent, common residents. Evening Grosbeaks, which in the 1970s and 1980s were abundant in winter, now appear only once every few years. As the climate warms, Neotropical migrants arrive earlier and depart later, correlating with the availability of insects. This has been noted dramatically over the last decade. Breeding Passerines, which typically did not arrive until early May, are now arriving in late April, and are heading south later in the Fall.

The digital version of this checklist is updated as frequently as daily to reflect observed changes in species' migration timing and abundance. Contributors to this checklist, both past and present, are to be commended for making it one of the most informative and detailed of local checklists.

Jerry McWilliams

**Front Cover:** Checklist compiler, Jerry McWilliams, at sunrise, looking at birds through his spotting scope while on the beach near Gull Point within Presque Isle State Park. Photo taken by James R. Hill, III, in 1980.

## Checklist of Birds Recorded in Erie County, PA,

Including Presque Isle State Park

Compiled in 2023 by

Gerald M. McWilliams

List Maintenance & Graphic Design by James R. Hill, III & Dr. Patrick M. Kramer

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Kathy Weaver © 2016

## **Key to the Seasonal Abundance and Frequency Charts**

1. Date Slivers: Each month on this checklist is divided into six 5-day date slivers that run from the 1st-5th, 6th-10th, 11th-15th, 16th-20th, 21st-25th, and from the 26th through the end of each month.

JAN FEB MAR APR

2. Abundance: The numerical ranges given below are guides to average seasonal abundance, and mean that the species occurs in such numbers that a competent observer at the appropriate time(s) and place(s) might see or hear approximately the given number of individuals in a single day of birding.

Common to Abundant - 26 or more per day (thick line)
Fairly Common - 6 to 25 per day (medium line)
Uncommon to Rare - Less than 6 per day (thin line)

26+ per day 6-25 per day 1-5 per day

3. Frequency: How often a species is reported in Erie County.

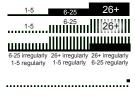
Regular - Recorded nearly every year (solid line)

Irregular - 2 or more years absence between sightings (dashes)

Variable - May vary widely from year to year (solid line with dashes)

Repeated observation of one or more birds indicating a duration of stay that spanned more than a single date sliver/five-day period, plus a departure date (string of lower dashes followed by an upper dash)

Single or repeated observation of one or more birds with a duration of stay confined to a single date sliver/five-day period (*elevated*, *single dash*)



4. Breeding Status: No asterisk after a species' name indicates a non-breeding species. \*A single asterisk after a species' name indicates regular, or nearly regular, breeding. \*\*A double asterisk after a species' name indicates irregular breeding at intervals of 2 or more years. \*\*\*A triple asterisk after a species' name indicates an extant species no longer breeding in the county.

Bufflehead Mallard\* Pied-billed Grebe\*\* Loggerhead Shrike\*\*\*

5. Locations: Birds seen within Erie County, PA, but not within Presque Isle State Park.

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**6. Species' names and groupings** are listed in taxonomic order following Clements, et al., 2022. <u>The eBird/Clements Checklist of Birds of the World:</u> v2022.

Species Name										uenc		
Species Name	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	ОСТ	NOV	DEC
WHISTLING-DUCKS, GEESE, SW	VANS	S, DU	ICKS	3								
☐ Black-bellied Whistling-Duck Ø							:					
☐ Snow Goose		Ц	ШШ	Ц	•					<u>.Ш</u>	Ш	(III
☐ Ross's Goose			•									
☐ Greater White-fronted Goose	ļ	•	.II									
☐ Brant										шШ	Ш.	
☐ Cackling Goose			шш	ш					•	шш	шш	ш
☐ Canada Goose*												
☐ Mute Swan*	<b>_</b>											
☐ Tundra Swan	Ш		Ш								li .	
☐ Wood Duck*	ļ		Ш								_	<u> </u>
☐ Blue-winged Teal**								"	Ш	ш		
☐ Cinnamon Teal			:									
☐ Northern Shoveler					<b></b>					ш		
☐ Gadwall	Ш	ш								l II	Ш	Ш
☐ Eurasian Wigeon												
☐ American Wigeon												
☐ Mallard*												
☐ American Black Duck**	11111	Ш										
□ Northern Pintail	ļ	<u>l</u>								ШШ		Щ
☐ Green-winged Teal**	ļ								ШШ	ШШ		
☐ Canvasback	"											ШПП
□ Redhead	ЧШ											Ш
☐ Ring-necked Duck	ШШ	ШШ		шц								ШПП
☐ Tufted Duck				.:								
☐ Greater Scaup										Ш		
☐ Lesser Scaup												
☐ King Eider					.:							
☐ Harlequin Duck					-							
☐ Surf Scoter	ш		ш	шш	<b>.</b>					ШШ	Ш	шш
☐ White-winged Scoter	шш									Ш	Ш	
□ Black Scoter	ļ									Ш	шш	
☐ Long-tailed Duck	Щ			Ш.							Ш	
☐ Bufflehead												
☐ Common Goldeneye				<u> </u>								
☐ Barrow's Goldeneye					:							
☐ Hooded Merganser*	шш	шш									Ш	Ш
☐ Common Merganser*		ШШ								Ш		

Species Name									uenc		
•							 AUG	SEP	ОСТ	NOV	DEC
WHISTLING-DUCKS, GEESE, SV				3 (co	ntin	ued)					
☐ Red-breasted Merganser		ШШ			_						
☐ Ruddy Duck	шш	шш			ш		 		ШШ		Шш
PHEASANTS, GROUSE, TURKE	YS				,	,		,		,	
☐ Ring-necked Pheasant*											
☐ Ruffed Grouse*											
☐ Wild Turkey*											
GREBES											
☐ Pied-billed Grebe**	<u></u>			шш	<b>L</b>		 		Ш		
☐ Horned Grebe	ш.		"				 				
☐ Red-necked Grebe								<u> </u>			
☐ Eared Grebe	-										
☐ Western Grebe				-		•				-	
PIGEONS, DOVES											
☐ Rock Pigeon*											
☐ Band-tailed Pigeon											-
☐ Eurasian Collared-Dove Ø							 .:			-	
☐ Common Ground Dove									-		
☐ White-winged Dove					:			•	-		
☐ Mourning Dove*											
CUCKOOS, NIGHTJARS											
☐ Yellow-billed Cuckoo*											
☐ Black-billed Cuckoo*											
☐ Common Nighthawk*					ц	ш		L			
☐ Chuck-will's Widow											
☐ Eastern Whip-poor-will*											
SWIFTS	•				•	•		•		•	
☐ Chimney Swift*									<b>L</b>		
HUMMINGBIRDS											
☐ Ruby-throated Hummingbird*											
☐ Rufous Hummingbird Ø											
RAILS, GALLINULES, COOTS, C	RAN	ES									
☐ King Rail					•			-			
☐ Virginia Rail*	-									-	-
□ Sora*										•	
☐ Common Gallinule*											
☐ American Coot**	Ш	ШШ					 				
☐ Purple Gallinule											

	_											
Species Name										uenc		l ·
RAILS, GALLINULES, COOTS, C						JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	ОСТ	NOV	DEC
☐ Sandhill Crane*	Ī	1		IIIIII	_							
AVOCETS	<u> </u>										4	(I
☐ American Avocet								ШШ				
PLOVERS				111								
□ Black-bellied Plover											ı	
☐ American Golden Plover									ш			
☐ Snowy Plover			•				-					
☐ Wilson's Plover						-	-					
☐ Semipalmated Plover					ш			ш				
☐ Piping Plover*												
☐ Killdeer*												
SANDPIPERS, PHALAROPES	,											
☐ Upland Sandpiper**												
☐ Whimbrel												
☐ Long-billed Curlew							-	-				
☐ Hudsonian Godwit												
☐ Marbled Godwit												
☐ Ruddy Turnstone	١.				ш	Ц		ш	1			
☐ Red Knot						Ш	ı.				•	
☐ Surfbird								•				
□ Ruff					-			•				
☐ Stilt Sandpiper									<u></u>			
☐ Sanderling	-				Ш	Ц	"	Ш	Ш			
□ Dunlin					lll'					"	Ш_	<b></b>
☐ Purple Sandpiper	ļ											
☐ Baird's Sandpiper				•								•
☐ Least Sandpiper												
☐ White-rumped Sandpiper					Щ	ш				<u></u>		
☐ Buff-breasted Sandpiper												
☐ Pectoral Sandpiper				ш				ш		<u> </u>		
☐ Semipalmated Sandpiper						<b>_</b>	="	Ш		<u> </u>		
☐ Western Sandpiper												
☐ Short-billed Dowitcher			-		.ш		ш	шш	1			
☐ Long-billed Dowitcher			•					<u></u>	<b></b>			
☐ American Woodcock*	-	•										
☐ Wilson's Snipe**			ц	ш				шш	шш	шш	ш.	
□ Wilson's Phalarope					<b></b> .			<b></b> .	<b></b> .		-	

Species Name										uenc		
•				APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	ОСТ	NOV	DEC
SANDPIPERS, PHALAROPES (c	ontin	ued	)									
☐ Red-necked Phalarope					•							
☐ Red Phalarope	-								<b></b> .			
☐ Spotted Sandpiper*									<u></u>			•
☐ Solitary Sandpiper					<u></u>					<u> </u>		
☐ Greater Yellowlegs				Ш				шш	ш			•
□ Willet				Ш	Щ.		ш	шш				
☐ Lesser Yellowlegs	-			Ш	Ш		<u>.ш</u>	шш	ш	<u></u> .		
JAEGERS, GULLS, TERNS												
☐ Pomarine Jaeger				-					-			
☐ Parasitic Jaeger							-					
☐ Black-legged Kittiwake			-		-				-			
☐ Sabine's Gull											-	
☐ Bonaparte's Gull	Ш		<u> </u>									
☐ Black-headed Gull												
☐ Little Gull							•					
☐ Laughing Gull												
☐ Franklin's Gull												
☐ Ring-billed Gull*												
☐ California Gull				•		•						
☐ Herring Gull*												
☐ Iceland Gull												
☐ Lesser Black-backed Gull	шш	шш	ш								ш	шш
☐ Slaty-backed Gull	١.											
☐ Glaucous Gull												
☐ Great Black-backed Gull												
☐ Least Tern					T.,					•		
☐ Caspian Tern***										<u> </u>		
☐ Black Tern**				Ī.,	Ĺ			ļ	ļ			
☐ Common Tern**								IIII	Ш	Ш		
☐ Arctic Tern					:	-						
☐ Forster's Tern	.:									<u> </u>		
☐ Royal Tern						-						
LOONS, STORKS												
☐ Red-throated Loon	ш					-				ш.,	mIII	шш
☐ Pacific Loon												
☐ Common Loon	ш			Ш					ļ			Ш
☐ Wood Stork								İ				

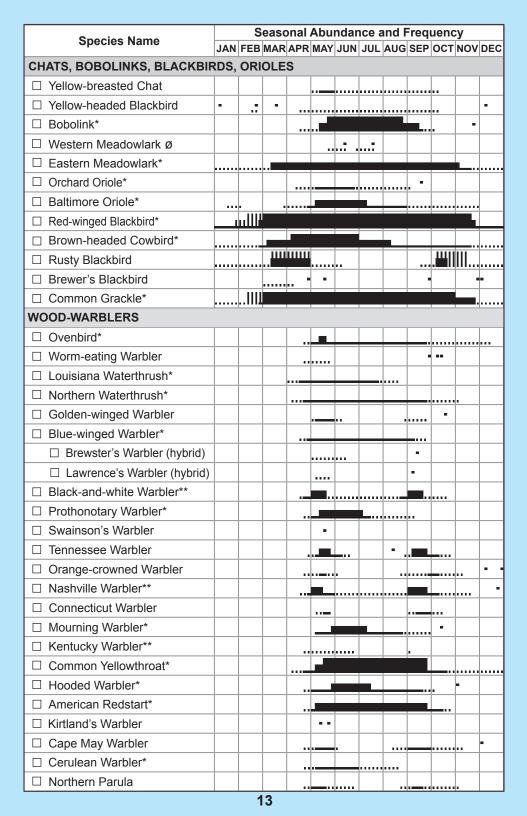
Consider Name		Seasonal Abundance and Frequency JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DE											
Species Name	JAN											DEC	
GANNETS, CORMORANTS, PEL	ICAN	NS											
☐ Northern Gannet													
☐ Great Cormorant										-			
☐ Double-crested Cormorant	Ш	шш										L L	
☐ American White Pelican													
☐ Brown Pelican													
BITTERNS, HERONS, EGRETS, I	NIGH	IT-HE	EROI	NS, I	BISI	ES, S	PO	ONB	ILLS	5			
☐ American Bittern**				ш						ļ			
☐ Least Bittern*									<b>_</b>				
☐ Great Blue Heron*	Ш	Ш	ШШ	ШШ	шш	ш	Ш	ШШ	шш	ш	Ш	ШШ	
☐ Great Egret				шш						<u> </u>			
☐ Snowy Egret							:		:	-			
☐ Little Blue Heron													
☐ Tricolored Heron													
☐ Reddish Egret					-								
☐ Cattle Egret											•		
☐ Green Heron*												-	
☐ Black-crowned Night-Heron		١٠.		ш	L.					<u></u>			
☐ Yellow-crowned Night-Heron							:			•			
☐ White Ibis							-						
☐ Glossy Ibis													
☐ Roseate Spoonbill ø					-								
AMERICAN VULTURES, OSPREY	Y, KI	ΓES,	EAG	ILES	S, H <i>A</i>	WK	S						
☐ Black Vulture												-	
☐ Turkey Vulture*		Щ.,									<u> </u>		
☐ Osprey*											<u></u>		
☐ Swallow-tailed Kite Ø				-	•								
☐ Golden Eagle			_							•	-		
☐ Snail Kite										-			
☐ Mississippi Kite			-										
☐ Northern Harrier**	<u> </u>		ш	ш		ļ							
☐ Sharp-shinned Hawk*													
☐ Cooper's Hawk*													
☐ Northern Goshawk													
□ Bald Eagle*					шш								
☐ Red-shouldered Hawk*			шШ	ш									
☐ Broad-winged Hawk*					<u> </u>								
☐ Swainson's Hawk													

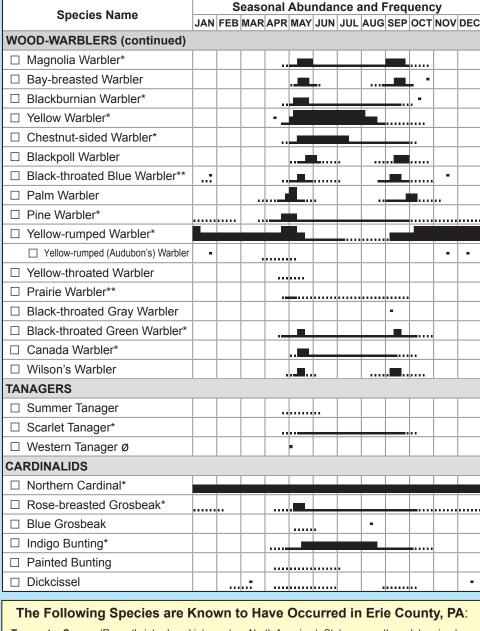
Species Name					Abu							
Species Name	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	ОСТ	NOV	DEC
AMERICAN VULTURES, OSPRE	Y, KI	TES,	EAC	SLES	S, H/	WK	S (co	ontir	ued	)		
☐ Red-tailed Hawk*												
☐ Rough-legged Hawk												
OWLS												
☐ Barn Owl***											-	
☐ Eastern Screech-Owl*												
☐ Great Horned Owl*												
☐ Snowy Owl	ШШ	ШШ	II						:			Ш
☐ Northern Hawk Owl Ø	.:											
☐ Barred Owl*												
☐ Long-eared Owl												
☐ Short-eared Owl						-					ļ <u>.</u>	
☐ Boreal Owl				-								
☐ Northern Saw-whet Owl**							-					
KINGFISHERS												
☐ Belted Kingfisher*												
WOODPECKERS												
☐ Yellow-bellied Sapsucker*										<b>_</b>		
☐ Red-headed Woodpecker*				ш	ш							
☐ Red-bellied Woodpecker*												
☐ American Three-toed Woodpecker												•
☐ Downy Woodpecker*												
☐ Hairy Woodpecker*												
☐ Pileated Woodpecker*												
☐ Northern Flicker*	шш	шш	ш									шш
FALCONS												
☐ American Kestrel*				Ш								
☐ Merlin*												
☐ Gyrfalcon										.:		
☐ Peregrine Falcon*												
FLYCATCHERS												
☐ Olive-sided Flycatcher								ļ <u> </u>	_	-		
☐ Eastern Wood-Pewee*												
☐ Yellow-bellied Flycatcher												
☐ Acadian Flycatcher*												
☐ Alder Flycatcher*												
☐ Willow Flycatcher*												
☐ Least Flycatcher*												

		S	easc	nal	Abu	ndar	nce a	and F	req	uend	CV	
Species Name	JAN	FEB										DEC
FLYCATCHERS (continued)												
☐ Eastern Phoebe*												
☐ Say's Phoebe				.:								
☐ Great Crested Flycatcher*												
☐ Western Kingbird					-							
☐ Eastern Kingbird*									<b>L</b> .			
☐ Scissor-tailed Flycatcher												
VIREOS, SHRIKES												
☐ White-eyed Vireo**											-	
☐ Yellow-throated Vireo*												
☐ Blue-headed Vireo*												
☐ Philadelphia Vireo												
☐ Warbling Vireo*									L		•	
☐ Red-eyed Vireo*				٠.					<u></u>			
☐ Loggerhead Shrike***					-	-	-				-	-
□ Northern Shrike												
JAYS, CROWS, RAVENS												
☐ Blue Jay*												
☐ American Crow*												
☐ Fish Crow				-	-							
☐ Common Raven*												
CHICKADEES, TITMICE												
☐ Black-capped Chickadee*												
☐ Boreal Chickadee												
☐ Tufted Titmouse*												
LARKS												
☐ Horned Lark*	шш	шш								шш	шш	шш
SWALLOWS, MARTINS												
☐ Northern Rough-winged Swallow*												
☐ Purple Martin*									<b>L</b>			
☐ Tree Swallow*									L			•
☐ Bank Swallow*												
☐ Barn Swallow*		-							<b></b>		-	
☐ Cliff Swallow*			•							. •		
☐ Cave Swallow												
KINGLETS												
☐ Golden-crowned Kinglet*												
☐ Ruby-crowned Kinglet			·	🗖	<u>L.,</u>						<u> </u>	

Species Name	JAN		easo								NOV	DEC
NUTHATCHES, CREEPERS	07 111	1		7 41 14	100			7100	<u> </u>		1101	
☐ Red-breasted Nuthatch*	шш	шш	шш						ш	шш	шш	шш
☐ White-breasted Nuthatch*												
☐ Brown Creeper*												
GNATCATCHERS												
☐ Blue-gray Gnatcatcher*									L	-	-	
WRENS	'											
☐ House Wren*												
☐ Winter Wren*												
☐ Sedge Wren**												
☐ Marsh Wren*												
☐ Carolina Wren*												
STARLINGS	'											
☐ European Starling*												
MIMIDS												
☐ Gray Catbird*												
☐ Brown Thrasher*												
☐ Northern Mockingbird*												
THRUSHES												
☐ Eastern Bluebird*	шш	ш									шш	шш
☐ Townsend's Solitare			:									
☐ Varied Thrush Ø		.:	:									
□ Veery*												
☐ Gray-cheeked Thrush					ш	ı				L		
☐ Bicknell's Thrush												
☐ Swainson's Thrush						ш				<u> </u>		
☐ Hermit Thrush*	<u></u> .						<u> </u>					
☐ Wood Thrush*												
☐ American Robin*	Ш											Ш
OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS												
☐ Northern Wheatear									-			
WAXWINGS												
☐ Bohemian Waxwing					-							-
☐ Cedar Waxwing*	Ш	шш	ШШ	ШШ						Ш		Ш
OLD WORLD SPARROWS												
☐ House Sparrow*												
PIPITS												
☐ American Pipit			1	шш	Ш					ШШ		Ш

	Seasonal Abundance and Frequency
Species Name	JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC
FINCHES	
☐ Evening Grosbeak	
☐ Pine Grosbeak	
☐ House Finch*	
☐ Purple Finch*	111111111111111111111111111111111111111
☐ Common Redpoll	<u> </u>
☐ Hoary Redpoll	
☐ Red Crossbill	
☐ White-winged Crossbill	
☐ Pine Siskin**	
☐ American Goldfinch*	
LONGSPURS	
☐ Lapland Longspur	<u> </u>
SNOW BUNTINGS	
☐ Snow Bunting	ШП ПП
AMERICAN SPARROWS	
☐ Grasshopper Sparrow*	<u> </u>
☐ Chipping Sparrow*	
☐ Clay-colored Sparrow	
☐ Field Sparrow*	
☐ Lark Sparrow	
☐ Lark Bunting	-
☐ American Tree Sparrow	
☐ Fox Sparrow	<u> </u>
☐ Dark-eyed Junco*	
☐ White-crowned Sparrow	<u>       </u>
☐ Harris's Sparrow	-
☐ White-throated Sparrow	
☐ Vesper Sparrow*	
☐ LeConte's Sparrow	
☐ Nelson's Sparrow	
☐ Savannah Sparrow*	<u>,</u>
☐ Henslow's Sparrow**	-
☐ Song Sparrow*	
☐ Lincoln's Sparrow	·
☐ Swamp Sparrow*	
☐ Spotted Towhee	
☐ Eastern Towhee*	





Trumpeter Swan (Recently introduced into eastern North America.) Status currently undetermined.

Northern Bobwhite (All sightings are believed to have been of escapees.)

Band-rumped Storm-Petrel (Remains found along shore of Lake Erie on 2/24/1998, origin unknown.)

**Yellow Rail** 1893-1896, 1900-1902, 1905 **Eskimo Curlew** (Probably extinct.) 1889

Long-tailed Jaeger (Remains found along shore of Lake Erie on 9/18/2020, origin unknown.)

Thick-billed Murre 1896, 1899, 1900

Passenger Pigeon (Extinct.) Reported in county up until 1890.

Black-billed Magpie (Sighting is believed to have been of an escapee.) 1955