

# Bird Observer

VOLUME 31, NUMBER 2

APRIL 2003

Large, Round  
Gorget  
feathers  
barely  
visible here  
(v. obvious from  
front)

Crown + Back  
Green - not as  
bright or olivey  
as Ruby-throat -  
duller toward wing

Bill  
slightly  
curved

Sitting in top  
bare branches of  
Eucalyptus Bush

Med. Metallic Green  
white  
rufous  
bright rufous  
white

← wings appear dark  
here in dull light  
(often appear paler)

Pale Olive Back  
+ Rump

Bright white  
spots on tail  
feather tips  
bordered in  
black

Rufous at base  
of tail barely  
visible here,  
but obvious  
when bird shows  
tail at the  
feeder

Under tail coverts  
pale buffy  
orange

Strong white  
bar extends  
backward +  
downward  
from eye,  
bordered below  
by dark  
(auricular)

pattern very  
strong and  
obvious at  
times, other  
times very  
faint

Oct 7, 2002  
9:30 AM

Rarities

# HOT BIRDS

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This **Clay-colored Sparrow** beat the odds and survived a very nasty winter by partaking of the largess of Steve Grinley at his Bird Watcher's Supply & Gift at the Route 1 rotary in Newburyport. Phil Brown took this great photo at the store in January.

Jim Berry and Paul Baicich (Director of Conservation and Public Policy for the American Birding Association) located this adult **Mew (Common) Gull** at the seawall in Newburyport Harbor on March 9, 2003. Phil Brown was there with his trusty digiscoping outfit for another great photo.



One of the many *Selasphorus* hummingbirds that visited Massachusetts last fall, this female after-hatch-year **Rufous Hummingbird** was banded in Amherst in October. Phil Brown was there and snapped this stunning image. For more on the *Selasphorus* incursion, see the article on page 129.

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IPSWICH BARNACLE GOOSE BY DAVID LARSON. SEE PAGE 96.

# Bird Observer

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A bimonthly journal — to enhance understanding, observation, and enjoyment of birds  
**VOL. 31, NO. 2 APRIL 2003**

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Cover Art William E. Davis, Jr.  
Where to Go Birding Jim Berry  
Book Reviews Mark Lynch  
At a Glance Wayne R. Petersen  
Bird Sightings Robert H. Stymeist  
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**CHANGES OF ADDRESS** and subscription inquiries should be sent to: Bird Observer Subscriptions, P.O. Box 236, Arlington, MA 02476-0003, or e-mail to Carolyn Marsh at <[cmarsh@jocama.com](mailto:cmarsh@jocama.com)>.

**ADVERTISING:** full page, \$100; half page, \$55; quarter page, \$35. Send camera-ready copy to Bird Observer Advertising, P.O. Box 236, Arlington, MA 02476-0003.

**MATERIAL FOR PUBLICATION:** BIRD OBSERVER welcomes submissions of original articles, photographs, art work, field notes, and field studies. Please send submissions to the Editor: Terry Leverich, 51 Welles Avenue, Dorchester, MA 02124; E-mail: <[terryleverich@sprintmail.com](mailto:terryleverich@sprintmail.com)>. If possible, please include a computer disk (Microsoft Word, txt, or rtf formats), or e-mail to the Editor as an attached file. Include author's or artist's name, address, and telephone number and information from which a brief biography can be prepared.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to BIRD OBSERVER, P.O. Box 236, Arlington, MA 02476-0003. **PERIODICALS CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT BOSTON, MA.**

BIRD OBSERVER (USPS 369-850) is published bimonthly, COPYRIGHT © 2003 by Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts, Inc., 462 Trapelo Road, Belmont, MA 02478, a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation under section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Gifts to Bird Observer will be greatly appreciated and are tax deductible. ISSN: 0893-463

## Guest Editorial

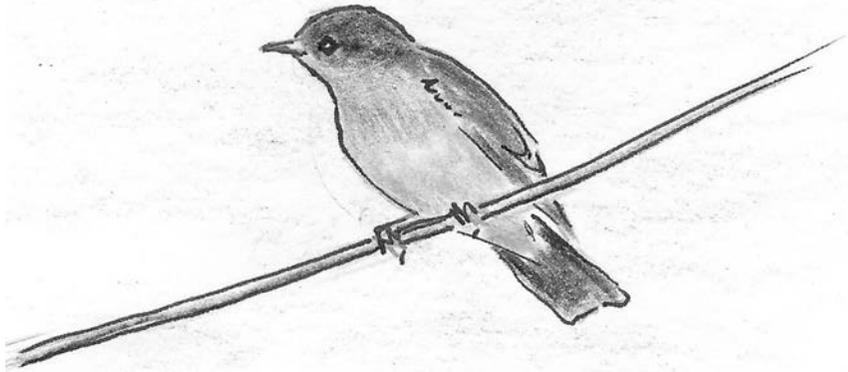
In the fall of 2002, an “invasion” of *Selasphorus* hummingbirds showed up in the northeast, including one at the feeder of artist Barry Van Dusen. To document this sighting, he submitted copies of his sketches and notes to the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC). To lead off this special issue on rarities and the MARC, we feature one of these field sketches on the cover.

When you read the MARC Annual Report, you will see it was an exceptional year for rarities in Massachusetts. Six new species were added to the official state list, more than the previous three years combined. Rick Heil’s article on the discovery of three first state records on Plum Island is a textbook example of how to write a rare bird report. Leslie Bostrom’s article on the Eurasian Kestrel (only the second state record for this species) shows a very different but entirely acceptable approach. A report of an Eskimo Curlew, although not accepted by the MARC, is intriguing reading – was it, or wasn’t it? Should you need additional suggestions on how to write a report, read Mark Lynch’s article on documenting rarities.

But what is the MARC, and how do they decide whether or not to accept a record? The Committee is comprised of 9 voting members and a nonvoting secretary. Voting members may only serve for two 3-year terms and then must rotate off the Committee for at least one year. This is of value, keeping new blood constantly coming into the MARC.

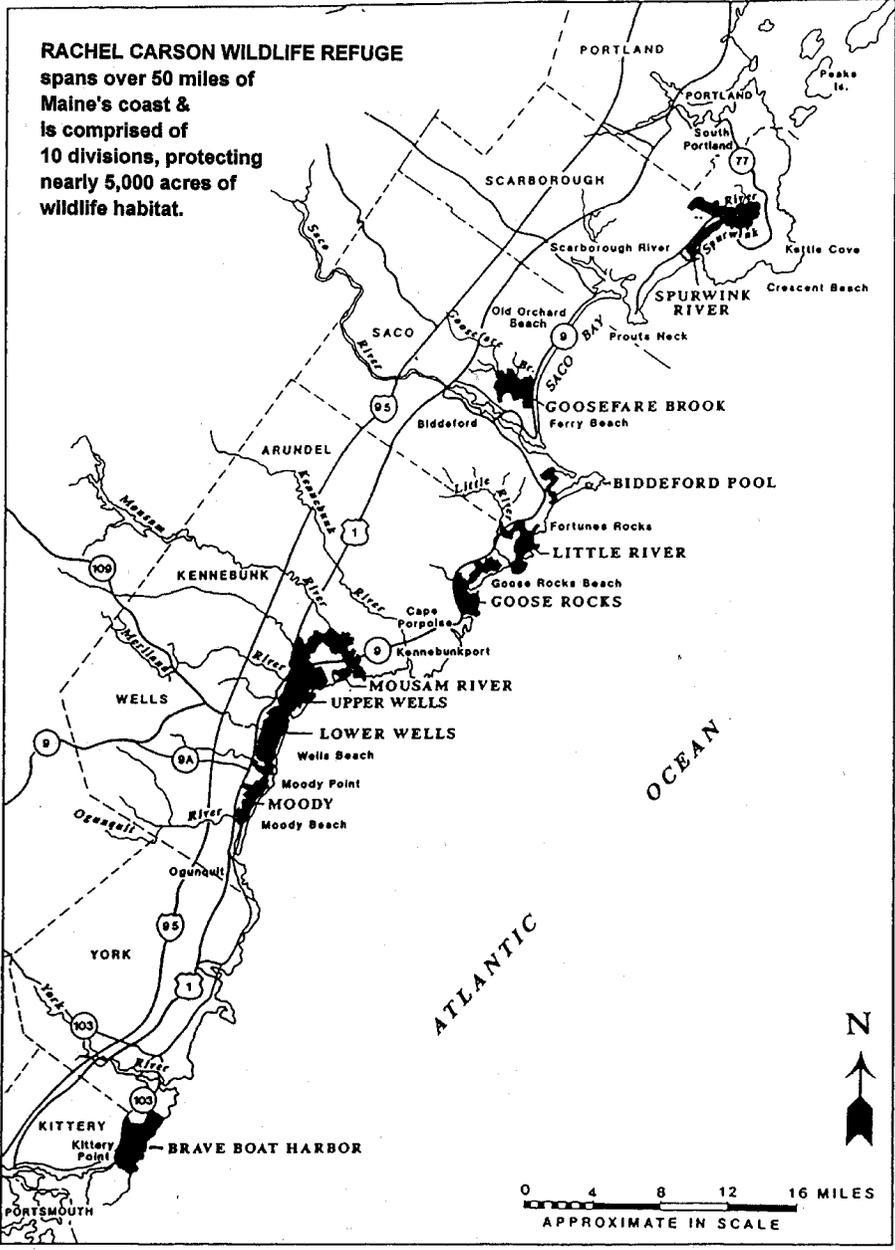
Species listed on the MARC’s Review List should be written up and submitted to the MARC. In order for a report to be accepted, it must receive at least eight “accept” votes, but if a majority of members accept without reaching that threshold, the report circulates through three reviews and is ultimately discussed at a meeting, giving members the chance to discuss it face to face.

For more information on the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, visit the web site at: <Massbird.Org/MARC/>. Marjorie Rines



SAY'S PHOEBE BY JIM BAIRD

**RACHEL CARSON WILDLIFE REFUGE**  
 spans over 50 miles of  
 Maine's coast &  
 is comprised of  
 10 divisions, protecting  
 nearly 5,000 acres of  
 wildlife habitat.



# Springtime Birding at the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge

*Susan A. Bloomfield*

It's difficult to determine exactly when spring begins in southern Maine. It's a short season to be sure, heralded by as many cues as there are naturalists to notice. For some, it's the first hint of crimson on the tops of red maples, the sight of an actual flying insect, or the thought that ice-skating on a pond may not be such a good idea anymore. Here, at the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, it may be determined by the first Pine Warbler singing above the headquarters building in Wells, the faint blush of a trailing arbutus flower, or the first Piping Plover spotted on a frigid, windswept beach.

All are surprises. "What's *that?*" is my usual response to the insect-like trill of a Pine Warbler after the still of the winter. It seems incredible that there would be any insects around to sustain it. These trail-blazing birds have been snowed on more than enough times after their arrival here. Certainly, they must find enough white pine seeds to tide them over until life warms up a bit. Some years, expected blooming dates of early wildflowers are hampered by impressive inches of ice. But they manage, as ice yields to warmed leaves and eventual flowers. There is a refuge staff joke about Piping Plovers *always* showing up on March 21. Actually, they often have; pioneers must brave the brutal, early-spring storms that will redesign the beaches once more.

Southern Maine's Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1966 for the express purpose of protecting wildlife habitat and critical waterfowl migration routes associated with southern Maine's coastal estuaries. It is one of almost 540 National Wildlife Refuges in the country managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The refuge currently consists of ten separate divisions that center on tidal rivers and their associated estuaries, stretching approximately 50 miles between Kittery and Cape Elizabeth. The refuge headquarters, centrally located in Wells, is a one-and-a-half-hour drive from Boston.

The namesake of the refuge was, of course, the world-renowned marine biologist, author, and environmentalist. Through investigation for her greatest work, *Silent Spring* (1962), Rachel Carson eloquently linked unrestrained use of chemical pesticides with fearsome biological consequences. As fitting recognition of her scientific and literary contributions as well as her love of the Maine seashore, this refuge, first known as the Coastal Maine National Wildlife Refuge, was renamed in her honor in 1970.

The refuge's habitat is varied and unique because it lies within the transition zone of the northern boreal forest and eastern deciduous forest. Therefore, some species of plants and wildlife are at the limits of their ranges. This is also the only region in Maine to feature a mix of barrier beaches, rocky shores, and pine barrens. The miles

of sandy beaches are home to Maine's largest concentrations of state and/or federally listed Piping Plovers and Least Terns.

Each of the refuge's ten divisions includes a tidal river, the surrounding coastal wetland complex, and varying amounts of critical edge. Most refuge estuaries contain salt pans. These are natural, shallow depressions that serve as tidal and rainwater-holding basins. They attract waders and shorebirds seeking small fish and invertebrates and are surrounded by highly salt-tolerant plants.

Refuge marshes, fields, and forests are home or resting place to more than 250 species of birds, notably waterfowl, shorebirds, and songbirds. Twenty-six species of waterfowl have been recorded. American Black Ducks are regular nesters on tidal marshes throughout the refuge. During spring migration, eleven species of bitterns, herons, and ibis have used the refuge's estuaries. Southern coastal Maine is also an important staging area for shorebirds; thirty-six species have been seen on or from the refuge, primarily on tidal mudflats and at salt pans. The refuge's diverse habitat sustains numerous passerines: year-round residents, short-distance migrants, and neotropical migrants alike find nesting, feeding, and roosting habitat in the swamps, woodlands, and forests adjacent to refuge estuaries. A dozen species of migrating raptors use the marshes and forests for hunting, and a few stay to nest.

Other wildlife species found on or from the refuge include white-tailed deer, river otter, beaver, red fox, coyote, moose, opossum, northern flying squirrel, snowshoe hare, porcupine, black bear, long-tailed weasel, fisher, and harbor seal. The refuge also supports northern leopard frog, green frog, pickerel frog, Fowler's toad, blue-spotted salamander, dusky salamander, four-toed salamander, Blanding's turtle, wood turtle, eastern box turtle, eastern ribbon snake, northern black racer, northern brown snake, and redbelly snake. Bird checklists and mammal and reptile/amphibian brochures are available at the refuge headquarters.

The south coastal region holds considerable historical interest as well. Sokaki and Saco Indians had established thriving cultures in the area when Samuel de Champlain arrived in 1600. Periods of lumbering, clipper ships, and salt-marsh-hay harvesting have come and gone, each leaving artifacts and memories. Seacoast towns have active historical societies and occasionally hold historic home tours.

### **Visitor Guidelines**

To protect wildlife and the habitat on which it depends, all refuge lands are closed to the public unless otherwise designated, such as the specific trails mentioned below. "Blue Goose" boundary signs clearly indicate refuge properties and must be respected. Observe Piping Plovers and Least Terns from a distance; they are the subject of on-going federal and state monitoring studies and management. Their nesting areas are clearly marked with stakes and twine. As always, respect private property rights of refuge neighbors. Many of the viewing areas identified below are from vantage points along shoulders of public roads. Be careful to consider the seasonally heavy traffic. As always, check for ticks when walking in tall grass: Lyme disease is prevalent in the area. Keep your distance from wildlife.

## Birding Opportunities

Working from south (Ogunquit) to north (Cape Elizabeth) along the coast, the following are recommended refuge sites for birding:

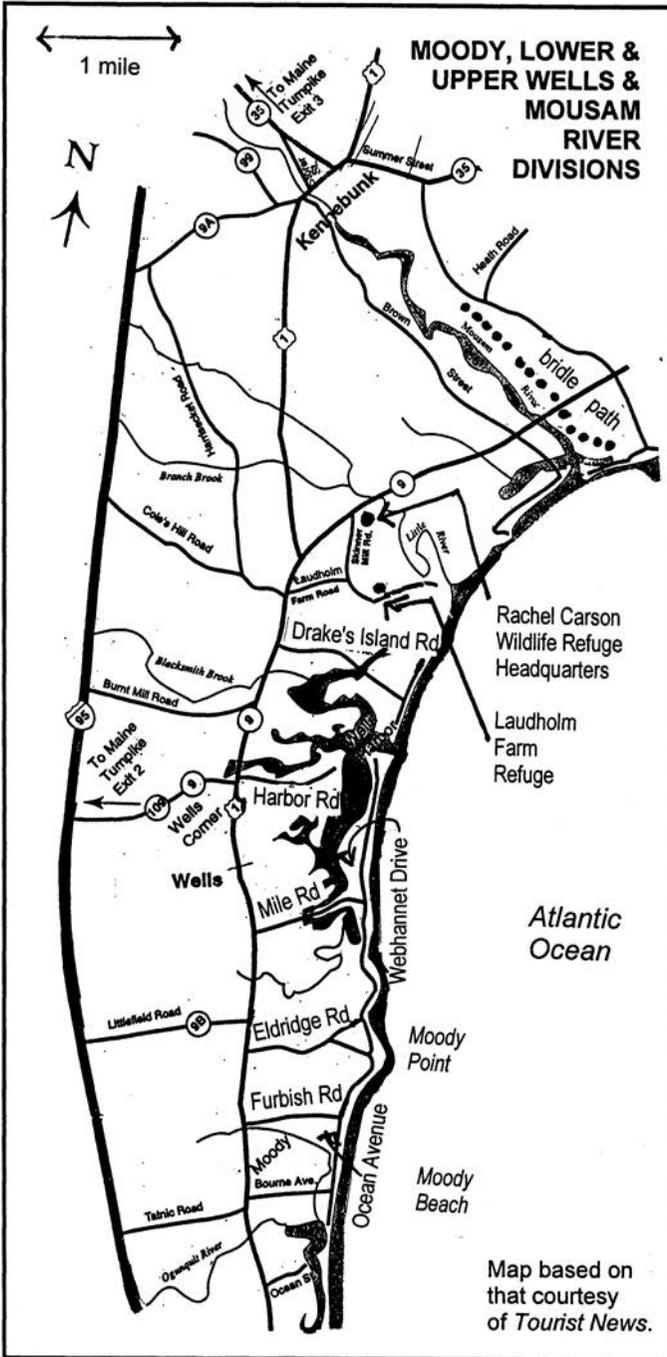
**Moody Division:** Refuge marshes may be best viewed from parking lots at the east end of Ocean Street in Ogunquit and the south end of Ocean Avenue in Wells, and along the roadside of Bourne and Furbish Roads. Ocean Avenue and Webhannet Drive, which run parallel to the sea, have viewing areas facing the marsh and ocean. Look for Green-winged Teal, American Wigeons, Northern Pintails, Common Mergansers, and American Black Ducks in the river; in flight years, look for lingering Common Redpolls and White-winged Crossbills in the upland pines.

**Lower Wells Division:** In Wells there are three roads leading east across refuge salt marshes from Route 1. They are Mile Road, approximately 1.25 miles south of Route 109; Harbor Road (aka Lower Landing Road), just north of Route 109 and the Wells Fire Station; and Drakes Island Road, approximately 1 mile north of the Wells Fire Station. Pull safely off these roads to scan the refuge and Webhannet River tributaries for migrating shorebirds, herons, and waterfowl. Check a local tide table: the best times to visit are two hours before and after a high tide. Glossy Ibises often arrive in late March and feed on invertebrates in the *Spartina* and salt pans. Other species of note are Semipalmated and Black-bellied plovers; Semipalmated, Spotted, Least, Pectoral, and Solitary sandpipers; Greater and Lesser yellowlegs; Willets; Short-billed Dowitchers; Little Blue and Tricolored herons; Black-crowned Night-Herons; and Snowy and Great egrets.

Waterfowl frequenting the river and tidal streams include Snow Geese, American Black Ducks, Northern Pintails, American Wigeons, Ring-necked Ducks, Green- and Blue-winged teal, and Hooded Mergansers.



NORTHERN PINTAILS, USFWS PHOTO



Early Piping Plovers may be found at Wells Beach, though they often move farther north. The northern end of Drakes Island, accessible by walking on the beach from a small parking lot at the end of Drakes Island Road, is another spot favored by Piping Plovers. Find Dunlins and Sanderlings on the beaches by mid-March.

In both spring and early summer, listen carefully for Nelson's and Saltmarsh sharp-tailed sparrows. They both may be found in the marshes alongside Bourne Avenue, Eldridge Road, and Drakes Island Road. There is less traffic noise early in the morning.

**Upper Wells Division (Headquarters):** The Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge headquarters and the adjacent Carson Trail are located off Route 9, heading toward Kennebunkport, 0.7 mile east of Route 1. The trail, a one-mile, wheelchair-accessible, self-guided, interpretive path, follows the edge between a mature upland woodland and a tidal marsh. The Merrilland River attracts Belted Kingfishers, Double-crested Cormorants, and Red-winged Blackbirds. Look for Pine Warblers by the third week of March: they'll eventually nest there. Early April brings Tree Swallows, attracted by salt-marsh mosquitoes; they eventually nest in the boxes visible in the marsh. Cooper's Hawks hunt in the trailhead woods, and Great Horned Owls have bred and fledged young along the Branch Brook. In the salt marsh and rivers, American Black Ducks, Common Goldeneyes, and Common and Hooded mergansers are reliable.

Warblers and vireos do not appear in great variety until mid-May. Along the Carson Trail, Chestnut-sided, Pine, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Palm, Blackpoll, and Black-and-white warblers, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, and Blue-headed and Red-eyed vireos are fairly easily found along with Scarlet Tanagers, Veeries, and Hermit Thrushes.

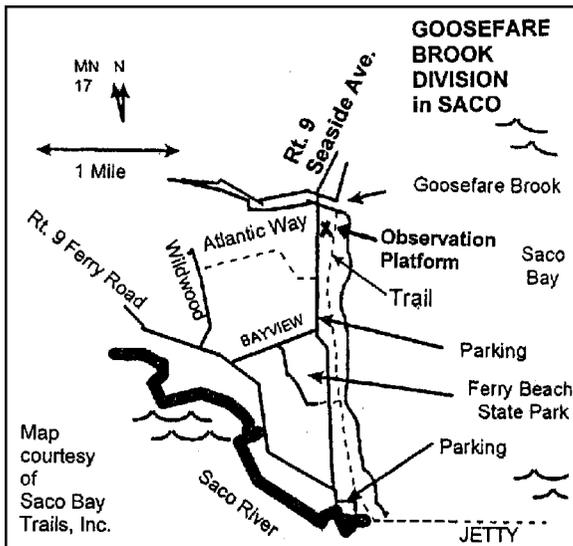
**Mousam River Division:** The salt marshes of this division can best be viewed from Route 9 in the town of Kennebunk. Hike the bridle path, an abandoned railroad bed that parallels the river both north and south of Route 9. Park along Route 9, just east of the Mousam, near a small blue water-pumping station. In the marsh along the river, look for Common Goldeneyes, Common Mergansers, American Black Ducks, and Snow Geese. The woods on the northern end of the trail are fairly rewarding for early-morning warblers.

**Little River Division:** Granite Point Road, off Route 9 slightly east of the Biddeford line, affords good views of more salt-marsh habitat. The rocky coves located along the ocean east of the Little River provide good habitat for Common Eiders and other surf-loving birds.

**Biddeford Pool Division:** This area affords some of the best bird habitat protected by the refuge and is renowned for its concentrations of shorebirds in spring and fall. The tidal "Pool" is a mile wide, nearly surrounded by a sand spit and a peninsula. Though surrounded mostly by private land, it can be viewed from Route 208, east of Route 9, and from Mile Stretch Road. By late March, Eastern

Meadowlarks, Northern Flickers, and Killdeer arrive. While in the area, walk Maine Audubon's East Point Sanctuary trail off Ocean Avenue. You never know what you'll find there. Look for lingering, state-endangered Harlequin Ducks feeding on the rocky shoreline, and scan the ocean for alcids, Northern Gannets, all scoters, Common Eiders, and Common and Red-throated loons. *Always* look for the rare King Eider and the occasional American Oystercatcher. Shorebird migration does not begin in earnest until mid-May, when at the Pool, Spotted, Least, and Semipalmated sandpipers arrive with Ruddy Turnstones, Dunlins, Black-bellied Plovers, Short-billed Dowitchers, Willets, and Greater and Lesser yellowlegs.

**Goosefare Brook Division:** The Atlantic Way trail off Route 9 (Seaside Avenue) in Saco is a former logging road. The trail, maintained by Saco Bay Trails, Inc., winds



through refuge salt marsh, alder thickets, wet and dry woods, and across streams. Look for American Black Ducks, Common Mergansers, Green Herons, Glossy Ibises, and Snowy Egrets. As the trail meanders into the woods, there is excellent habitat for a variety of neotropical migrants. The trail is located just north of Bayview Road, south of where Route 9 crosses Goosefare Brook. There is room for one or two cars to park along the east side of Seaside Avenue.

A new refuge wildlife observation platform is approximately half a mile north on Route 9 from the Atlantic Way trailhead, just past Shore Avenue. There is limited, 20-minute parking. With a spotting scope, scan the Goosefare Brook estuary for waterfowl, herons, Piping Plovers, and, from May on, Common Terns.

**Spurwink River Division:** The northernmost division of the refuge is located in the towns of Scarborough and Cape Elizabeth. The refuge can best be observed from Route 77 (Spurwink Road), Spurwink Avenue, and Wells Road. Waterfowl include Snow Geese, Northern Pintails, Blue- and Green-winged teal, and American Black Ducks. Shorebirds and herons likely to be seen are Pectoral and Solitary Sandpipers, Willets, Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, Glossy Ibises, Little Blue Herons, and Snowy and Great egrets.

### Nearby Natural Areas

While you are visiting the refuge, these local birding sites are well worth a few hours each:

**Scarborough Marsh**, off Route 9/Pine Point Road between Scarborough and Old Orchard Beach, is the largest salt marsh in the state. It comprises more than 3100 acres of mudflats, brackish marsh, and salt meadow. From Route 1 in Scarborough, turn east onto Route 9 West/Pine Point Road. (Don't worry about the posted direction of Route 9: it is often at odds with the actual direction.) A parking area at the nature center is located at 0.8 mile on the left. Over 200 species of birds have been recorded at the marsh, which is managed primarily for waterfowl. Contact the Maine Audubon Society: 207-883-5100; <<http://www.maineaudubon.org>>.



CARSON TRAIL, USFWS PHOTO

**Kennebunk Plains**, located off Route 99, supports habitat and birds found nowhere else in the state. From Route 1 in Kennebunk, travel west on Route 9A (High Street) for approximately 0.3 mile. Turn right on Route 99. The plains are visible from the road in about 4 miles. There is a small parking area on the right. To visit the southern part of the plains, continue westbound on Route 99 to a sharp left, McGuire Road. There is a small parking lot on the right side of the road about half a mile from that intersection. Unique for its size in southern Maine, the plains are a 1600-acre barrens and woodland formed from a glacial marine delta. More than 87 nesting species have been recorded at the barrens; fifty additional species are listed as migrants. Look there for state-endangered Grasshopper Sparrows and Upland Sandpipers, as well as Vesper Sparrows and Eastern Meadowlarks. There are no facilities. Contact the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife: 207-287-8000, or the Maine chapter of The Nature Conservancy: 207-729-5181.

**Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve**, between the Lower and Upper Wells Divisions of the refuge, is accessible from Route 1. Take Laudholm Farm Road at a flashing yellow traffic light (between the Lighthouse Depot and the Maine Diner).

Follow signs to the Reserve. Seven miles of trails meander through 1600 acres of upland fields, woods, salt marsh, dunes, and beaches on the former Laudholm Farm. The varied habitat provides for over 200 species of birds; there are also historic buildings, the Coastal Ecology Center, and a visitor center with special lectures and programs. 207-646-1555; <<http://www.wellsreserve.org>>.

**Mount Agamenticus** woodlands provide habitat for nearly 40 species of breeding birds. It is Maine's southernmost breeding area for Dark-eyed Junco and Common Raven. "Mount A" is the site of the best hawk-watching opportunities in southern Maine, with an average of almost 4000 hawks recorded each fall. From the York Chamber of Commerce on Route 1, travel north approximately 3.9 miles, and take a left on Mountain Road (Flo's Hot Dogs will be on your right). Travel 1.5 miles to a stop sign. Turn right and travel 2.7 miles to Summit Road on your right. The road will take you to the top, but needless to say, walking the trails is most rewarding. Contact York Parks and Recreation: 207-351-1204, or the Maine chapter of The Nature Conservancy: 207-729-5181.

### **Accommodations**

The beautiful southern coast of Maine offers countless lodging opportunities. Advanced reservations are recommended for summer weekends, especially between Independence Day and Labor Day. Contact the following Chambers of Commerce: Kittery/The Yorks: 207-363-4422; Ogunquit: 207-646-2939; Wells: 207-646-2451; Kennebunk/Kennebunkport: 207-967-0857; Biddeford/Saco: 207-282-1567; Old Orchard Beach: 207-934-2500; Portland: 207-772-2811.

### **Refuge Visitor Information**

The headquarters office/visitor information center is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. During summer weekends and holidays, the office is also open 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Summer weekend interpretive programs are normally offered; please call for more information. Portable toilets are provided near the picnic area at the headquarters. There is no refuge admission fee, but donations are accepted. Trails are open year-round from sunrise to sunset. Pets are permitted on the Carson Trail and must be leashed.

Throughout the year, refuge staff conduct a variety of wildlife and habitat studies, including Piping Plover and Least Tern monitoring, biological control of purple loosestrife, salt-marsh restoration, rare-plant monitoring, shorebird and waterfowl surveys, deer-browse impact studies, invasive-plant monitoring, and bluebird nest-box surveys. Volunteers, particularly those with excellent birding skills, are welcomed.

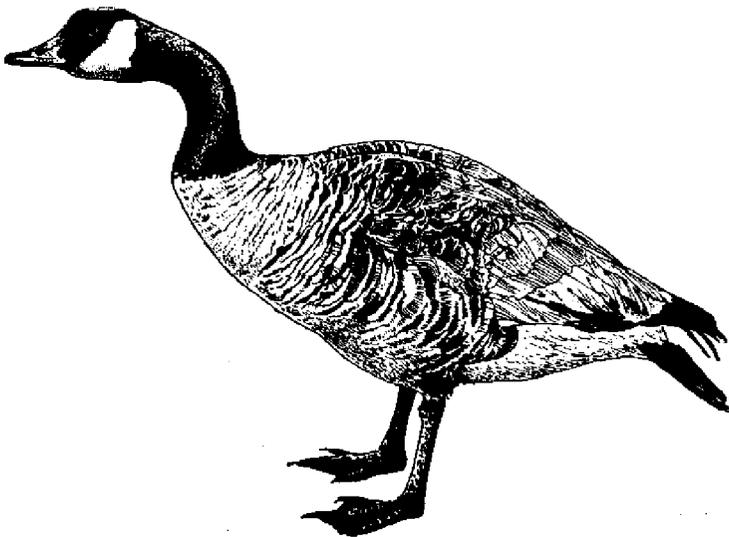
Directions to the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge headquarters in Wells, Maine: From Maine Turnpike Exit 2 (Wells exit), travel east on Route 109/9 to Wells. Turn left (north) onto Route 1. Proceed approximately 1.5 miles and turn right (east) onto Route 9. Travel 0.7 mile; the Refuge will be on your right. Look for the large wooden sign at our entrance.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is celebrating its centennial this year. It is the only system of federal lands dedicated primarily to wildlife. Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's refuge system has almost 540 units and encompasses more than 93 million acres, an area the size of Montana. At least one national wildlife refuge can be found in every state and U.S. territory. Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge will join with refuges throughout the country in marking this anniversary. It's a great year for a visit.

For further information, contact: Refuge Manager, Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, 321 Port Road, Wells, ME 04090, 207-646-9226. <<http://rachelcarson.fws.gov>>. Hearing-impaired visitors may contact the Maine Relay Center at 1-800-437-1220. 

*Susan A. Bloomfield is the refuge's planner/outreach specialist. She has worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and, formerly, the National Park Service for more than seventeen years. She is a member of the York County (Maine) Audubon Society and attributes her ornithological leanings to her mother and grandmother. She shares her love of nature with her husband Kenny DeCoster.*

**Editor's Note:** For more information on places mentioned in this article see: *Bird Observer* October 1995 (23: 256-62): Birding Biddeford Pool by Nancy McReel *Bird Observer* October 2002 (30: 306-15): Birding Mount Agamenticus by Scott Cronenweth.



CANADA GOOSE BY ANON.

# Three New Species for Massachusetts from Plum Island in 2001-2002

*Richard S. Heil*

In the northeast corner of the Commonwealth, in Essex County, lies a barrier beach and great salt marsh complex that includes the well-known Plum Island, most of which is incorporated within the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge near Newburyport, arguably the single best birding location in Massachusetts. The refuge comprises a six-and-a-half-mile-long sandy beach with a backbone of tall dunes interspersed with dense thickets of coastal scrub and patches of maritime forest, behind which lie thousands of acres of salt marsh and tidal estuaries. There are numerous salt pans, several grassy uplands, and three large man-made fresh impoundments created in the late 1940s for the purpose of encouraging the breeding of American Black Ducks (*Anas rubripes*).

Certainly the single most popular birding location in the state year-round, the refuge is an important migratory site for waterfowl, shorebirds, and passerines both in spring and fall. Given the proper weather conditions (usually inclement), tremendous fallouts of shorebirds and passerines, including flycatchers, swallows, thrushes, warblers, and sparrows often ensue. In recognition of this fact, the area was one of the first sites nominated for the Massachusetts Important Bird Area Program, just underway. The island, connected to the mainland by a short causeway and bridge across the marsh, has also hosted a long and impressive list of first state records over the years, including Little Egret, White-faced Ibis, Garganey, Spotted Redshank, Terek Sandpiper, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Sage Thrasher. This article documents the discovery of three species new to the Massachusetts list, all from Plum Island during a 12-month period: Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*), Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*), and Couch's Kingbird (*Tyrannus couchii*).

## **Couch's Kingbird (*Tyrannus couchii*): September 7, 2001**

Adrenalin still flowing from having observed a Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) elsewhere on the refuge earlier in the morning on September 7, 2001, I energetically headed out to Hellcat intending to survey shorebirds at the Bill Forward Pool. While traversing the dike toward the Hellcat tower and the pool, I turned, and using my binoculars (B&L Elite 10 x 42), noticed a roughly robin-sized, yellowish bird perched in one among a group of dead trees, just in from the proximate east edge of the pool, about 500 feet distant. Fumbling to set my scope up quickly and get it on the bird, my initial presumption was that it was a *Myiarchus* flycatcher. Having taken only a brief side profile of the bird with my binoculars, I had observed a yellow belly and very warm brown, almost rufous-appearing, tail. As soon as I had a view in the scope, however, I knew that this was no *Myiarchus*, but rather was clearly a yellow-bellied *Tyrannus* kingbird. But which? The kingbird sallied out on frequent aerial forays after flying ants, which were abundant, but nearly always returned to the same

group of dead trees. In fact, the bird remained in plain sight, nearly continuously, for at least six and a half hours!

Once I had sufficient views of the bird, I gradually noted the salient features, including the large bill, medium gray head and nape, dusky mask, greenish back, brown slightly notched tail, and bright yellow underparts extending to the upper chest. Only then did I reasonably convince myself that this was not just a very worn Western Kingbird (*T. verticalis*), obviously the most expected yellow-bellied kingbird in New England, but was rather either a Tropical Kingbird (*T. melancholicus*) or a Couch's Kingbird (*T. couchii*), both extreme rarities. Although there are subtle plumage and structural differences in this species pair, which can aid in identification, there is also much overlap, and neither is considered safely separable from the other, except by voice. The bird was thus far silent.



TROPICAL KINGBIRD BY DENNY ABBOTT

After viewing the bird from this location for nearly an hour, I decided it was time for a closer view. From the Hellcat parking lot I crept through the vegetation to a clearing adjacent to the clump of trees where the bird was perching and flycatching. Here I enjoyed very excellent backlit views through the scope of the still silent kingbird, at perhaps less than 200 feet, and easily noted the rather worn condition of all the flight feathers, indicating that the bird was an adult. After about 20 minutes here I returned to my original position on the Hellcat dike and continued viewing the bird through the scope for another half-hour. At this point I left the refuge to make a few phone calls. When I returned, the kingbird was still in position. Shortly thereafter, a number of other birders began to assemble and study the still silent bird, including Doug Chickering and Lois Cooper.

The defining moment occurred sometime after 3:00 p.m., when a Peregrine Falcon arrived on the scene, streaking in from the north and flushing all the shorebirds at the adjacent pool. Immediately upon the Peregrine's arrival the kingbird began calling from its perch, uttering several sharp, brief, spaced *kip* calls, diagnostic of Couch's Kingbird, four or five in all, clearly and unambiguously heard by all present. Later, a dozen or more additional birders arrived, including Denny Abbott who was able to obtain some useful video footage. The bird continued to flycatch in plain view from the same group of trees until at least 6:45 p.m., when I departed. Unfortunately, it never vocalized again during the course of the afternoon. The kingbird apparently departed thereafter, since it could not be found the next day.

## DESCRIPTION

*Head and Neck:* Crown and nape gray; lores darker, dusky gray to blackish; auriculars dusky gray forming a subtle mask, appearing bold at certain angles and lighting, but nearly nonexistent at others; chin and throat much paler grayish-white,

contrasting with the gray head and yellow underparts; structurally bigger- (heavier-) headed than Western Kingbird, with thicker neck.

*Bill:* Large, heavy, thick-based, black, with a very slight curve to culmen, and a small but noticeable hook at the extreme tip; the bill was considerably longer and heavier than any Western Kingbird's, but was judged shorter and stouter than the bill of most Tropical Kingbirds. By comparison, from recollection and from a review of photographs of each, this bird's bill appeared slightly shorter, but in particular, considerably heavier (broader- and thicker-based) than the Hingham, Massachusetts, Tropical Kingbird of November 2000, the first state record for that species.

*Underparts:* Bright, deep yellow, extending from, and including, undertail coverts up to upper breast/ lower throat, rising just above bend of folded wing; yellow on upper breast/ lower throat subtly suffusing with obscure pale gray below the brighter white of chin and throat proper. At certain angles this imparted an obscure, pale greenish-yellow chest band, particularly on the sides of the upper chest, where it formed an extension of the greenish back.

*Back:* Rather bright green-olive, showing a fairly sharp contrast with gray nape.

*Wings:* Primaries, secondaries, tertials, and coverts were brownish, worn and somewhat ratty-looking (but this was only noticeable at close range), yet all still showing somewhat narrow, diffuse, paler grayish-white fringes, broadest on the wing coverts. The primary tips were not seen well enough to discern or comment upon any possible notching or comparative primary morphology.

*Tail:* Long in appearance with a noticeable, but rather shallow notch, worn and ragged-looking; rather uniformly brown in color, although at times appearing quite rufous, and completely lacking the bold white outer webs of the outermost (r6) rectrix that is characteristic of Western Kingbird. At close range all of the tail feathers actually possessed narrow, diffuse, paler tips and edges, which were nevertheless frayed.

*Vocalizations:* Four or five sharp, brief, spaced, *kip* or *pik* call notes given from a perch in an alarm response to a passing Peregrine. The kingbird was watched while giving these calls, and the observation included seeing the bill opening and closing during the vocalizations. These calls were clearly and unambiguously heard by each of the half-dozen or so observers present at the time, including local birders Doug Chickering and Lois Cooper. These single note *kip* calls are absolutely diagnostic for Couch's Kingbird and are quite distinct from the rolling, metallic, twittering call characteristic of Tropical Kingbird. Single-note calls such as these are apparently unknown for Tropical Kingbird.

*Summary:* Several structural and plumage features of this obvious Tropical/Couch's Kingbird suggested Couch's Kingbird (*Tyrannus couchii*) from the get-go, including, a brighter green back, brighter yellow underparts, a slighter tail notch, and especially the bill shape, being thicker-based, heavier, and stouter than most Tropicals. This suspicion was confirmed when diagnostic calls were eventually heard after watching the bird for some three hours.

*Prior records of Couch's in the Northeast:* None previously for New England. There is one plausible record for Nova Scotia, at Cape Sable Island, October 16, 1997, which apparently was reasonably described, and the calls were said to match Couch's. The record was written up in *Birder's Journal* (9: 196-199), although I have not read it. Extralimital records of Couch's in the east include Florida (four+), Arkansas (one), Louisiana (three), and Alabama (one). In addition, Northeastern records of indeterminate Tropical/Couch's come from Nova Scotia (different from the above-mentioned) and one also from Maine. The Plum Island Couch's was accepted as the first state record (#01-10) by the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, reported in the Sixth Annual Report (April 2002).

### **Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*): April 21 to May 5, 2002**

Early on the morning of April 21, 2002, the author (along with Jan Smith) discovered a golden-plover in transitional plumage in salt marsh adjacent to several salt pans on the west side of the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge main road, approximately 1.9 miles south of the entrance on Plum Island, Newbury, Essex County, Massachusetts. Almost immediately upon viewing the bird, I believed it to be a Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) nearly in alternate plumage. Over the next four hours we observed the bird roosting, preening, and occasionally walking around adjacent to several small pans about 150 meters from the road. During the course of the next two weeks, the plover remained remarkably faithful to this site, and it was subsequently viewed by perhaps several hundred additional birders. In addition, numerous digital images of the plover were obtained by Tom Carrolan, Phil Brown, Steve Mirick, and others.

#### DESCRIPTION

Since the plover was present for 15 days, and for the most part dependably so at the described site, I was able to observe it in detail on numerous occasions and for extensive periods. The numerous photographs taken clearly document the bird's identity better than any written description. Nevertheless, the following description is a compendium of the features observed over the course of its stay.

*General:* The bird was clearly a *Pluvialis* golden-plover in transitional plumage, but nearly in alternate plumage. By the end of its stay the plover had molted essentially into alternate plumage. The immediate impression was of a long-billed, long-legged golden-plover with very bright golden upperparts and an extensive black belly, these being separated by a white stripe ringing the bird from the supercilium, down the neck, breast, and flanks to under the tail.

*Upperparts:* Crown, rear of nape, mantle, back, and scapulars brightly



PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER BY STEVE MIRICK

patterned black and gold, finely marked on the crown and nape, but very coarsely marked on the mantle and scapulars, with comparatively large golden spotting on the feathers in these areas, along with some smaller white spotting. The overall resultant appearance was of very bright golden, intricately patterned upperparts.

*Underparts:* Black face, throat, breast, and belly, extending to the crissum, where it ended with some black mottling and intrusions of white. When the plover was first discovered, the dark area on the face was not yet truly black but was more of a lightly mottled, dusky grayish-black, but this area became essentially black during its stay. There was a white stripe running from the supercilium down the sides of the neck and breast, along the flanks, and wrapping around under the tail to join the other side. This white stripe was somewhat broader at the upper breast, although this varied with the bird's posture. Along the flanks and on the sides of the lower breast, somewhat dense gold and black barring intruded into the white areas there.

*Head and face pattern:* The immediate forehead above the bill was rather extensively white, such that the white supercilium wrapped across to the other side. A tiny section of the chin just below the bill was also white, and in fact there appeared to be a narrow ring of white feathering completely encircling the base of the bill, such that the black of the face did not quite touch the bill, or did so only very narrowly near the gape. The white supercilium was narrowest anterior to the eye and flared out evenly to become broadest at the extreme rear. Posterior to the black auriculars, the white stripe became broader still as it dipped down along the neck to the upper breast.

*Primaries and tertials, and their relationship to each other and the tail:* The plover possessed a comparatively short primary projection beyond the tip of the longest tertial. On those occasions (several times) when the slightly paler primary edges could be discerned, it appeared that only two primaries extended beyond the tip of the longest tertial, although it is quite possible that it may have been three. The tip of the folded primaries extended only a comparatively short distance beyond the tip of the tail, and at times even appeared to be nearly equal in length. Similarly, the long tertials fell only slightly short of the tip of the tail and at times appeared to nearly reach them. The long, blackish tertials were very coarsely marked with fringing, large and broad, straw-yellow triangles. On windy days these wispy feathers were often seen raised, blowing in the gusts.

*Underwings:* On at least five occasions I had opportunities, with others, to observe all or part of the underwings, either when the plover was raising its wings preening or when it took flight. The underwings were generally gray, but not uniformly so. Approximately the distal fourth of the underside of all the flight feathers were darker than the rest of the underwing, while nearer the base of the primaries appeared the palest gray. The rest of the underwing, including the underwing-coverts and axillaries, appeared a medium gray. The underside of the distal portion of the outermost primary showed a very high contrast between the dark gray or even blackish feather, and a long, bright white shaft streak (see Plate 37 in *Tundra Plovers* by Byrkjedal and Thompson 1998).

*Bill:* The blackish bill was very long, and slender, broader nearer the base, and apparently evenly tapered. By both observations in the field, and especially by measurements of various photos, the bill, if reversed, would extend well beyond the rear of the eye.

*Legs:* The legs appeared grayish, or even a dull blue-gray, and were very long, and delicate looking, at times appearing almost “stilt-like.” Several of the photos by Steve Mirick illustrate both the very long tarsus and tibia (as well as the long bill) of this plover.

*Vocalizations:* The plover was mostly silent, but brief flight calls were heard on two occasions, once by the author, though not well. As best I can describe, the plover called several times as it took flight, issuing a clearly two-syllabled *chu-eee*, somewhat recalling a Semipalmated Plover, and different from the familiar calls of the American Golden-Plover.

## DISCUSSION

Immediately upon scrutinizing this bird on April 21, I believed that it was a Pacific Golden-Plover and posted it as such to the Massbird listserve. Having observed many Eurasian Golden-Plovers (*P. apricaria*) in Europe and perhaps thousands of *fulva* (although never in alternate plumage) on trips to Asia and Australia, I was familiar with the structure and tertial/primary/tail relationships of each. However, given that the date was precisely when numbers of *apricaria* often appear in Newfoundland, and also given the subtleties of golden-plover identification, I initially embraced a somewhat conservative approach to the bird’s identification. However, repeated observations only served to strengthen and confirm my initial identification of the plover as *fulva*.

Structurally, the very long “knitting-needle” legs appeared much too long for any Eurasian Golden-Plover, and probably for most American Golden-Plovers (*Pluvialis dominica*). They imparted a particularly delicate look to the plover when it walked about foraging (of the three, male *fulva* has the longest average tarsus, 43.9 mm, while female *apricaria* has the shortest at 39.3 mm; measurements from *Tundra Plovers*, 1998). Similarly, the very long bill also strongly indicated *fulva* (male *fulva* also has the longest average bill length, 23.1 mm, and *apricaria* has the shortest, 21.5 mm for both sexes).

The very bright upperparts, with large golden spots, were much too bright for *dominica*, and too coarsely patterned for *apricaria*, which shows smaller spots on the upperparts and has more finely notched tertials. The extent of black on the underparts on this bird, extending to the crissum, in conjunction with the comparatively narrow, lateral, white stripe running along the flanks and wrapping around under the tail, also is classic *fulva*. Most *apricaria* show less extensive black on the underparts, usually not reaching the crissum, while *dominica* shows much more black, such that the white running down the neck ends in an expanded blob on the sides of the breast, but does not extend along the flanks in alternate males. The Plum Island plover did not show this expanded area of white on the sides of the breast to the extent typical of

*dominica*. The white area along the flanks was intruded with dense gold and blackish barring, which is typical of *fulva* and not present to this extent in *apricaria*. Finally, the generally gray underwing noted on numerous occasions clearly excluded Eurasian Golden-Plover as a contender.

The relationship of the primaries, tertials, and tip of the tail, in the folded wing, was distinctively characteristic of *fulva*. The comparatively short primary projection on the Plum Island bird, showing only two visible primaries extending beyond the longest tertial eliminated both *apricaria* (shows 4 primaries), and *dominica* (4-5). It is quite possible that the bird actually had three primaries extending beyond, since in *fulva* P9 and P10 are often very close together, and this distinction may have been missed in the field. Furthermore, the long tertials on the plover fell only a little short of the tip of the tail, very different from either *apricaria* or *dominica*, in which the shorter tertials in these species fall far short of the tail (see Fig. 4.2 in Byrkjedal and Thompson for an illustration depicting all of these relationships).

### MOLT TIMING

The Plum Island golden-plover was nearly in alternate plumage by the time of its arrival on April 21, which in and of itself made the bird stand out and demand a “closer look.” All previous American Golden-Plovers that I have personally seen in Massachusetts in March or April (perhaps 5-10) have been in full basic plumage. Observers in Texas and Kansas, where large flocks of American Golden-Plovers are seen in spring migration, independently reported to me that *all* birds seen there in mid-April are in full basic plumage. Even migrant *dominica* in May seen locally in New England are often still in transitional plumage. In fact, it is interesting to note that the timing of the prealternate molt among the three species of golden-plovers does indeed differ considerably. The American Golden-Plover begins this molt on average up to a month later than the other two species (initiating migration north in the spring while still in basic plumage), whereas Pacifics and Europeans begin their prealternate molt earlier, on the wintering grounds. Therefore, any golden-plover in North America in or near alternate (“breeding”) plumage during April is unlikely to be *dominica*.

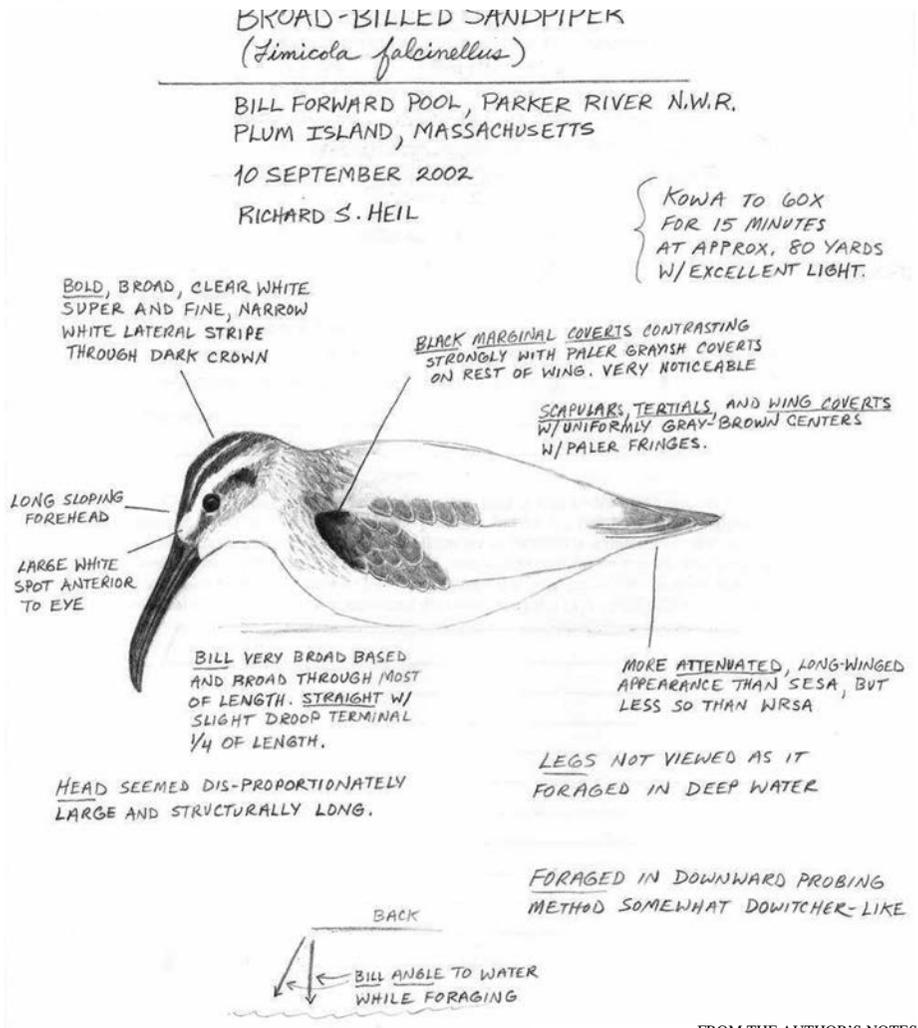
### SUMMARY

In sum, there was absolutely nothing about this well-documented bird that was atypical of an alternate plumaged male Pacific Golden-Plover, despite repeated careful scrutiny for anomalies. The record (#02-10) was accepted by the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee and reported in their Seventh Annual Report (this issue).

There were no prior accepted records for Massachusetts, only one previous record for New England, and none for the Canadian Maritimes. Prior documented records of *fulva* in the East include an adult in prebasic molt just this past September in New Jersey, accepted by the New Jersey Records Committee, March 23, 2002, and an adult female shot at Scarborough, Maine September 11, 1911.

**Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*): September 10, 2002**

All summer 2002, almost every weekday afternoon when there was a late day high tide, I had been doing a survey of the salt pans, the Bill Forward Pool, and Stage Island Pool, three prime areas on the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge on Plum Island, Massachusetts, for staging shorebirds. On the afternoon of September 10, 2002, while counting shorebirds during high tide at the Bill Forward Pool, I was, to say the least, shocked to set my gaze upon a bird showing all the characters of a Broad-billed Sandpiper, a species found only once previously in the "lower forty-eight." In short order I had sufficient views through my Kowa TSN-824 scope with a 20-60x zoom, noting the distinguishing characteristics, and I immediately recognized the species. I became progressively more confident over the course of the next fifteen minutes, with even closer views, that I was indeed looking at a Broad-billed Sandpiper.



FROM THE AUTHOR'S NOTES

The bird, probably a worn juvenile, was feeding in shallow water just behind the close island flat that cormorants, gulls, and shorebirds often roost on. The sandpiper was loosely associated with several each of juvenile Semipalmated and adult White-rumped sandpipers, and one or two juvenile Short-billed Dowitchers. Several Dunlins were in the vicinity, although not in the same field of view, as the others often were. Looking around, there were no other birders anywhere in view; in fact there were no other visitors at all to the area for the next 45 minutes. After just a few minutes, I walked down the dike (into the closed area) to obtain a closer view and was able to approach the sandpiper to a distance of about 80 yards. At this distance I had a relatively close study of the bird through my scope at 60X for approximately 15 minutes. I was looking east at the bird, and the sun was behind me. Although it had been a very warm, somewhat humid day, by 4:30 p.m. it had become one of those clear late afternoons when optimal light results in crisp images.

I was close enough to the sandpiper that I was not just observing “gross” structural and plumage features, or just relying on the bird’s “jizz,” however distinctive, but was rather able to actually examine and study specific feather details. Observations abruptly ended when a juvenile Peregrine, the nemesis of all shorebird watchers (and shorebirds!), dashed through and put up all the birds. Most departed the area and did not return over the course of the next two hours. I had not relocated the bird by 6:30 p.m., by which time the tide had started to drop, and most all of the shorebirds had vacated the impoundment for distant salt flats.

#### DESCRIPTION

*Size and shape:* Direct side-by-side comparisons were made with both Semipalmated and White-rumped sandpipers. The Broad-billed appeared slightly larger-bodied, but noticeably more attenuated (longer-winged) than the surrounding juvenile SESA. Compared with WRSA, it was slightly smaller and less attenuated, therefore roughly intermediate in size and length between these two species, but perhaps closer to WRSA. The sandpiper was considerably smaller-bodied than several nearby Dunlins, although I had no side-by-side comparison with them.

*Bill:* Unique and distinctive; long, thick (especially at the base), and mostly straight, with a slight, downward droop at the very tip. At various angles from different, mostly side profiles, the bill appeared very thick at the base and remained comparatively (to other *Calidridrines*) thick for most of its length, finally tapering near the tip. I never obtained a good study of the bill entirely straight on, but a couple of quick glances as the bird rotated its position while foraging imparted a considerably broad appearance, as did several partial front angle views. This all blackish bill was long, much longer than adjacent WRSA, appearing longer than even the most extreme Western Sandpiper, and clearly longer than the bird’s head length. It was notable for being nearly straight for at least 3/4 of the length, after which there was a slight downward droop, unlike the more uniformly tapered and drooped bill of a long-billed Western Sandpiper. The overall impression was that this was a considerable and unique “heavy” structure relative to the sandpiper’s size that, combined with foraging behavior, imparted a distinctive appearance to the bird. (This may sound odd since I am discussing a *Calidrid*-like sandpiper, but the general “look”

of the face, combining a heavy-based bill structure and white super/dusky eye stripe, was reminiscent to me of Antarctic Prion.)

*Head:* Structurally a bit heavy-appearing, with a long, sloping forehead. The sandpiper possessed a very distinctive head pattern. Most obvious was a bold, broad, clean white supercilium, especially expanded to form a large white supraloral spot anterior to the eye, but remaining broad well to the rear of the head. The supercilium was apparently “split,” because above it there was a second, very fine, white stripe that ran parallel and above the main supercilium, through the otherwise dark brownish crown (the crown was notably darker brown than the crowns of the surrounding SESA and WRSA). With effort, this pattern was noted on both sides of the head. I could not discern where this apparent split occurred, but it was certainly somewhere anterior to the eye. The other possibility was that it was not actually “split” but rather that the upper supercilium didn’t quite meet the main one and was separated by a bit of dark feathering (as illustrated in the sketch of the sandpiper). There was a dusky eye stripe, including the lores, though not so dark as the crown. There was a contrastingly darker, expanded patch or postocular spot at the rear of the eye stripe. The rest of the face was generally quite pale with just some light streaking over the ear coverts to form a vague dusky patch. The chin, throat, and lower face were apparently unmarked white. On this generally pale-faced appearance, the dark eye appeared disproportionately large. The dusky lores, eye stripe, and big “bug eye” only served to increase the long, thick-billed appearance of the sandpiper. The sides of the neck and nape were much paler than the crown, with dull but fairly dense streaks over a very slight buff tone.

*Underparts:* White; sides of breast had some soft, fairly dense, grayish-brown streaks over a slight warm buffy tone. I could not determine how far these streaks extended across the breast, although they clearly diminished farther out toward the center. No marks were noticed on the flanks which appeared unmarked white.

*Upperparts and closed wing:* Mantle, scapulars, coverts, and tertials possessed no strong patterns (with one exception described below), having uniformly grayish-brown centers and narrow grayish-white fringes. These edges were not strongly contrasting and so created only a slightly scaly appearance to the upperparts. The edges and perhaps the bases to some of the mantle feathers and scapulars showed a very slight hint of rufous, and there was only a suggestion of any white “lines” on the back. The one exception to these rather uniformly patterned upperparts was that the carpal area and marginal coverts at the bend of the closed wing were blackish, and they strongly contrasted with the paler gray coverts on the rest of the wing. This darker patch was very noticeable and stood in stark contrast to the uniformly colored wings of the adjacent juvenile SESA. The tertials were rather long and appeared to fall only a little distance short of the end of the primaries, although I can’t say how many primaries extended beyond them. I did not determine the relationship of the tertials/primaries to the end of the tail.

*Legs:* Not seen. The sandpiper was foraging in water nearly to its belly during the entire observation, as were all the other surrounding shorebirds.

*Calls:* None heard.

*Foraging behavior/posture:* While feeding, the bird generally held its bill nearly straight downward, nearly at a right angle to its back, thus often in the water. It probed in a straight up-and-down (vertical) motion, similar to a Stilt Sandpiper or a dowitcher (though not as rapid as the latter). Several times the Broad-billed paused and briefly assumed an apparently alert posture and held its bill in a more upright position.

*Flight:* The flocks flushed rapidly upon the arrival of the Peregrine, and I was unable to pick out and follow the Broad-billed as the flock quickly and erratically departed the impoundment.

## DISCUSSION

Broad-billed Sandpiper is a globally uncommon species and in most areas, even within its range, is considered a somewhat scarce migrant. It is common at some passage and winter sites, however. Six thousand have been observed at one site in Australia, and 1000-1500 regularly occur at each of a few sites from the Arabian Peninsula to Southeast Asia. It is also a very distinctive species. The combination of a unique bill, and a distinctive snipe-like head pattern (minus the median crown stripe), leaves little with which to confuse it. The contrasting dark (blackish) marginal coverts (as on a Sanderling) were also very obvious during the observation. This is a key plumage feature, and one which I did not immediately recall as characteristic of Broad-billed Sandpiper, but it was clearly noted during the observation.

I had prior experience with Broad-billed Sandpiper from Australia, where I gained familiarity with the species from repeated observations of several individuals daily for a week along the Cairns waterfront during November 1995. While it is unfortunate that this record was not photographed, or subsequently seen by other capable observers, I never had any doubts as to this bird's identity. This record (#02-30) was accepted by the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee and reported in their Seventh Annual Report (this issue).

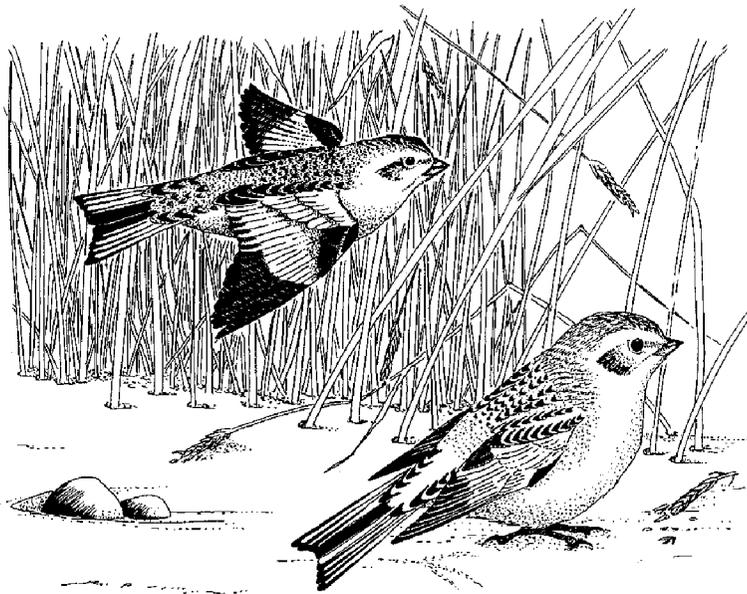
It is interesting and perhaps relevant to note that during August 2002 there was an influx of Broad-billed Sandpipers in Europe (*Birding World* 15 [8]) west of their normal migration route. Two juveniles together in England were termed "unprecedented," while others were in France (1), the Netherlands (8), and Austria (8), the latter two counts about double the normal totals there. A peak of sixty in Hungary was called "exceptional" and was about six times the usual highs there (Steve Gantlett, pers. comm.). Clearly something was going on with Broad-billed Sandpiper in Europe this summer, and this is the most proximal area for the source of a vagrant in the northeastern U.S. In addition, there are five records of Broad-billed Sandpiper from Iceland. However, since most North American records come from the outer Aleutian Islands of Alaska (four records, 8+ individuals), and given that the prevailing winds are from the west, an Asian origin involving the subspecies *sibirica* should not by any means be ruled out, particularly for a fall vagrant. The only photographically documented record outside of Alaska is of a bird at the Jamaica Bay

N.W.R. on Long Island, New York, in late August 1998 (*Field Notes* 52: 513-516). There is however, a very convincing sight record of a Broad-billed Sandpiper from Hartlen Point, Nova Scotia, on September 9, 1990 (McLaren and Maybank), that was fully described in detail in an article by the observers in *American Birds* (46: 48-50). 🐦

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*Richard S. Heil lives in Peabody, Massachusetts, and has accrued a Plum Island list of 331 species in more than three thousand birding excursions there since the early 1970s. Rick is a member of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee and writes bimonthly summaries of bird sightings for Bird Observer.*



SNOW BUNTINGS BY GEORGE C. WEST

# Doing the “Write-up”

*Mark Lynch*

Wherever birders are found, there will be reports of unusual and rare birds. Some of these reports will be worthy enough to enter the avian historical records and become part of the ornithological history of that area. Other reports will turn out to be, well, let’s just say “not as worthy.” It is simply amazing to me how scant are the details of unusual bird sightings that are at times submitted to the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC). Though many people saw the Couch’s Kingbird or the Elegant Tern, the MARC received extremely few written reports.

In this age of digital cameras, many serious birders now think that showing their shots on the internet is enough to constitute a full documentation of a bird’s occurrence. Though photography is obviously invaluable, a written record of an avian event is also very important. First, there may be plumage details, behaviors, or calls that you noticed in the field that are not recorded on any photograph or video. Second, details of weather, time of sighting, the length of time the bird was visible, etc. are important for historically viewing rarity records and possibly noting patterns of occurrences.

It is important to look at bird documentation in the long view. A hundred years from now, the photographs may fade, and the digital photo format may be obsolete, but a written record will still be readable. So, while you are at a rarity event, even if numerous cameras are clicking and videos whirring, please consider submitting a complete written documentation of what you saw.

## **What to include in a write-up**

All pertinent details of the event. This includes date, time, exact location, the length of the sighting, the weather (include wind speed and direction), and the distance you were from the bird. The latter is often extremely difficult to judge in the field, so try to use some fixed objects in the field of view. If the bird is on the ocean, how far out to the horizon line: halfway? three-quarters? If the bird was in a field, how close was it to a certain fixed object like a tree, shrub, or rock?

Optics through which you viewed the bird. This is important. An unaided sight record of a Pechora Pipit in a large field is a very different record to consider than that of the same pipit studied through a scope at 60 power.

All details of plumage, color, proportions, and soft parts of the bird that you saw. If you can age or sex the bird, please include all the observed details that lead you to make this determination. Here I want to make a heartfelt plea for field notes. Write it all down first, check your field guide for critical field marks, and then add what you see or do not see. If you rely on your memory after the bird has disappeared, it is much too easy for your mind to create field marks that were not there. I always carry a notebook with me in the field, both to record numbers of birds seen and in case I

need to do a write-up. By the way, there is nothing more suspicious for a rarities committee to consider than a lengthy report of a rarity that is rich in minute details of a bird, even though the bird was seen only briefly at a tremendous distance. I don't care who you are, we are all subject to the very real physical limitations of human perception, and the eye and brain can only register so much.

A detailed description of the behavior of the bird, even if it was only sleeping. Personally, I find this more difficult to put into words than ticking off plumage details. Many of the words and phrases we use to describe a bird's behavior have such a subjective aspect to them. For instance, read how raptor enthusiasts describe the flight styles and jizz of the different hawks in *Hawks in Flight* for an example of subjective but evocative behavior description. Behavior descriptions can be too subjective. I once had a birder friend describe to me the flight style of a Peregrine Falcon as "looking like a girl running." To this day, I have no idea what he meant. That said, I do find the use of less obscure analogies very useful in trying to capture the look of a bird's behavior, as in "the bird flew like a Common Tern."

Include what your previous experience with this particular species has been. Was this a "life bird"? Have you written the definitive monograph of this species? (OK, this won't happen that much.) I am not going to say that your previous birding experience doesn't matter with a rarities committee. It does, but it is only one factor among many others which are weighed when evaluating your report.

Include your name and full address and the names and addresses of any other people who were with you when you saw the bird.

### **Getting other opinions in the field**

Often, if I am with other people while viewing a rare bird, I will ask those around me to tell me what they are noticing about the bird. This helps me create a list of salient features and creates a more honest documentation as we each try to see some feature another has pointed out. Typically, this leads to further discussion and clarification in the field. "Is that an orange or a red gorget?" "Would you call that bill long?" "What do you think of the gonydeal angle?" The write-up thus becomes a give-and-take collaborative effort.

It is important at these times to avoid simply accepting another birder's judgment, just because she or he is supposed to be a "good" birder. On Plum Island in mid-October 1995 over 40 birders misidentified a Vermilion Flycatcher as a Say's Phoebe, simply because other birders told them that was what it was. Why did this happen? Because no one was looking critically. One way to start to look at birds with a critical eye is to take notes on what you are seeing. Then check your field guide against your notes. Are you really seeing the field marks noted, or are you just trying too hard to make it into the wrong bird?

You may feel a bit like Jimmy Olsen as you jot down details of the sighting from different observers, but the end result is a more complete and more accurate write-up. The weakest of all documentations is a single-person written report with no additional photographic evidence. As I mentioned before, we are all subject to the foibles of

perception, and even the best, most hardcore birders may not see important field marks and misidentify a bird. As David Sibley put it in his *Sibley's Birding Basics*: "In the field, however, identification is rarely 100% certain. One constantly encounters birds that are seen briefly or poorly, and in order to make an identification, one must make some judgment, some subjective interpretation" (p.3). To minimize the problems of a "subjective" view of a bird, the more observers (and the more write-ups) the better.

### Submitting the write-up

After you get all your notes down in some semblance of order and have gotten all the details straight in written form, then mail your documentation to the MARC. I will not go through the whole process by which records get reviewed, but suffice it to say that it takes time, sometimes more than a year if it is a complicated identification. I am always amazed when, only a month or two after a rarity-sighting, people ask if the MARC has made a decision yet. Understand that MARC members have other lives and are not simply waiting with bated breath for the next report to come their way. Some records are even revisited for years after submission if a pattern of a rarity's occurrence becomes evident or if new identification criteria become available.

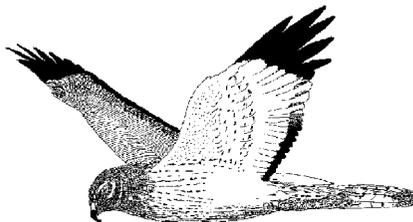
If your record gets accepted, well "congratulations!" – a hearty "well done" and all that. But if your record is rejected, well...it's not the end of the world. It probably means your details did not fit minimal criteria the committee needed to accept the record. This happens. If you submit records, you will get records rejected: it's a fact of field observing. No biggie; don't take it personally. Virtually every member of the MARC has had a record rejected at some time. You are in good company. You still deserve lots of credit for taking the time to document your sighting. That welcome and important effort alone sets you apart from most other birders. 🐦

### Literature cited:

Dunne, P., D. Sibley and C. Sutton. 1988. *Hawks in Flight*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

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*Mark Lynch is an ecological monitor, teacher, and trip leader at Mass Audubon's Broad Meadow Brook. He is a teacher and docent at the Worcester Art Museum. Mark also hosts Inquiry, a talk show of the arts and sciences on WICN. He has done his share of write-ups over the years, and though he cannot honestly say the process is fun, it does get much easier the more experience one has with doing them.*



NORTHERN HARRIER BY GEORGE C. WEST

# Seventh Annual Report of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee

*Marjorie Rines, Secretary*

Changes in technology over the past few years have changed the way that the MARC deals with submitted reports. More and more birders are carrying digital or video cameras, and photographs of rarities are published on the World Wide Web within hours of the initial sighting. Less than a decade ago photographs would have had to be circulated to the nine members, while today an inexpensive CD (compact disc), including all photographs and even field sketches, can be sent to each member. In addition, the internet has provided instant access to expert ornithologists from all over the world through the ID-Frontiers listserv. In the past, a troublesome identification would often involve months, or even years, of correspondence with these experts.

This technology has been a tremendous asset to the MARC in supplementing written reports, but in a few instances at a cost to the written record. Several of the records listed below were accepted based solely on photographic evidence, including the first state record of Lazuli Bunting. Written documentation is part of our ornithological history, but digital photographs are part of a technology that is changing daily. All photos are archived on CD, but the concern remains that the graphic format or the CD itself may become obsolete. The committee is grateful to the many reporters who spent hours preparing written reports and hopes that other observers will follow their example.

This year marked the addition of 6 new species to the MARC's official state list, bringing the total to 476 species. This total includes three composite taxa: Large swift species (*Apus/Cypsiloides* species), Sulphur-bellied/Streaked Flycatcher, and Boat-tailed/Great-tailed Grackle. **Barnacle Goose** had been on the MARC's supplemental list which states that "captive origin cannot be discounted." A historical pattern of occurrence in the northeast plus a rash of sightings along the Atlantic coast in the winter of 2001-2002 convinced the Committee that this was a wild individual. A **Pacific Golden-Plover** was discovered on Plum Island, lingering two weeks to allow many birders to enjoy it, but a **Broad-billed Sandpiper**, also on Plum Island, was not as cooperative and could not be relocated after the initial sighting. A large tern at South Beach in Chatham initially defied identification but was ultimately identified as **Elegant Tern**. The islands south of Cape Cod can often produce good birds, but a **Lazuli Bunting** on Nantucket and a **Shiny Cowbird** on Martha's Vineyard were extraordinary.

## Accepted Reports

**Pacific Loon** (*Gavia pacifica*), #02-03, January 26, 2002, Rockport (Essex), M. Lynch. This species now appears along the Massachusetts coast with greater

frequency, with an average of four individuals reported annually between October and June (since 1997).

**White-faced Storm-Petrel** (*Pelagodroma marina*), #02-28, September 7-8, 2002, Atlantis Canyon, R. Donovan, B. Zuzevich. This species is rarely reported, but it probably occurs regularly over the warm water canyons beyond the range of whale watch boats typically used by birders seeking pelagic species. The observers were on an offshore fishing boat to the Atlantis Canyon, and they were lucky enough to spot this species for the second year in a row.

**Magnificent Frigatebird** (*Fregata magnificens*), #02-27, adult female September 1-4, 2002, outer Cape Cod (Barnstable), M. + T. Gooley, B. Nikula et al. This southern pelagic wanderer makes occasional peregrinations up the Atlantic coast but rarely lingers in one location for four days. Photographs and description eliminated Lesser Frigatebird (*F. ariel*), which has been documented in Maine.

**Barnacle Goose** (*Branta leucopsis*) #02-01, Wakefield (Middlesex) and Lynnfield (Essex), February 17-19, 2002, F. + P. Vale, M. Rines et al. A single adult associating with a flock of Canada Geese was unbanded and exhibited the skittish behavior of a wild bird. A photograph left no question of its identity, only its origin. Barnacle Goose has occurred in Massachusetts on several occasions, but it is often kept in captivity, and until now the Committee has included it on its Supplemental List, which states "captive origin cannot be discounted." In the winter of 2001-2002 there was a small invasion of Barnacle Geese along the North American east coast from Virginia to New Brunswick, with a total of eight to twelve individuals being reported (see *North American Birds*, Vol. 56, No. 2: p. 142). Historical sightings in North America are clustered in the northeast from October through April, the time when these geese could be expected to appear here as true vagrants from Greenland. The Committee agreed that the evidence was compelling that this was a wild individual and accepted it for the official state list.

**Tufted Duck** (*Aythya fuligula*), #02-05, March 17, 2002, Acoaxet (Bristol), M. Lynch, S. Carroll; #01-20, 12/28, 2001, Lakeville (Plymouth), M. Faherty. Only female Tufted Ducks are on the MARC review list. The Acoaxet duck has reappeared each winter since 1998, site fidelity behavior typical of this species. The Lakeville bird appears to be a new arrival.

**Swainson's Hawk** (*Buteo swainsoni*), #98-29, October 3, 1998, Provincetown (Barnstable), J. Young. Two immature Swainson's Hawks were reported with a full description of the first but a sketchier description of the second, which prompted the Committee to accept only the first bird described.

**Eurasian Kestrel** (*Falco tinnunculus*), #02-09A, April 14, 2002, Wellfleet (Barnstable), L. Bostrom; #02-09B, April 18-May 5, 2002, Chatham, R. Clem, B. Nikula. The Wellfleet observer was able to study this male only 20 yards away, noting the gray head, long gray tail with broad black band, and (when it flew off) the wings rusty red to the wrist and black to the tips. Although she reported it to the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, word did not get out to the birding community until four days

later and 15 miles away in Chatham, when another observer rediscovered it, presumably the same individual. In the following two and a half weeks it was seen and photographed by scores of birders. The only other Massachusetts sighting (and the first North American record) of this extraordinary European vagrant was over a century ago, in 1887 in Hull. (*See additional article in this issue - ed.*)

**Gyr Falcon** (*Falco rusticolus*), #01-18, December 17, 2001-April 30, 2002, Boston (Suffolk), R. Donovan et al.; #02-02, January 13, 2002, Salisbury (Essex), T. Raymond. A dark Gyr Falcon discovered on the Boston Christmas Bird Count (#01-18) had a band on its leg which proved it to be the same bird that had overwintered at Logan Airport in early 1998 (*Bird Observer*, Vol. 30, No. 6: p. 399). During its stay it often left to hunt at Logan but returned regularly to its perch where it was seen, enjoyed, and photographed by hundreds. A chocolate brown Gyr Falcon in Salisbury (#02-02) treated the observer to three long looks over the course of fifty minutes as it passed as close as only six feet away.

**Yellow Rail** (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*), #01-25, October 26, 2001, Marshfield (Plymouth), D. Furbish; #02-31, September 18, 2002, Dorchester (Suffolk), R. Donovan. Furbish was mowing the fields at Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary, when the bird flushed only 5 feet away. He was optimistically wearing his binoculars, having flushed a Yellow Rail two years before while doing the same task. Donovan was standing in Neponset Marsh, when the bird flushed from only 20 feet away, flew about 20 yards, and disappeared. In both cases, the view was brief, but the distinctive plumage pattern was observed.

**Pacific Golden-Plover** (*Pluvialis fulva*), #02-10, April 21-May 5, 2002, Plum Island (Essex), R. Heil, J. Smith et al. The first state record of this Eurasian vagrant was an impressive discovery, bringing a parade of admirers. A significant rarity on the west coast of the lower 48 states, it is only the third Atlantic coast record: the first, a female shot in Maine in September of 1911, and the second an adult in prebasic molt in September 2001 in New Jersey. This bird, a probable male, was nearly in alternate plumage upon arrival and effectively in full alternate plumage by the end of its stay. The observer was careful to eliminate other golden-plovers, including European (*P. apricaria*), which occurs with some regularity in the Canadian Maritimes at this time of year. The extensive written documentation was supplemented by a number of photographs. (*See additional article in this issue - ed.*)

**Bar-tailed Godwit**, Siberian race (*Limosa lapponica baueri*), #02-18, May 4, 2002, Edgartown (Dukes), V. Laux, S. Anderson. This breeding plumaged bird stayed only one day, but it was seen by many local birders. Nearly twenty reports of Bar-tailed Godwit have been recorded in Massachusetts, all but four since 1976. The nominate race of this species (*L. l. lapponica*) breeds in northern Europe and comprises the bulk of Massachusetts records, while *L. l. baueri* breeds in eastern Siberia and western Alaska. The only other record of *baueri* in Massachusetts was recorded on Monomoy Island in August 1988.

**Red-necked Stint** (*Calidris ruficollis*) #02-25A and B, August 1-2, 2002, Chatham (Barnstable), R. Heil, J. Trimble. An alternate plumaged stint was discovered in a

flock of shorebirds, but the first observer was only able to study it for a total of several minutes; the second, for even less time, as the flock was continually flushed by a Northern Harrier. After searching for half an hour, a stint was located by the second observer, but astonishingly the plumage was paler, distinctly a second bird. The second bird was photographed the following day, but the first bird was never relocated.

**Red-necked/Little Stint** (*Calidris ruficollis/minuta*), #01-12, August 13, 2001, Chatham (Barnstable), B. Nikula, P. Trull. The brightly-colored calidrid at the edge of a large flock of roosting Semipalmated Sandpipers stood out from the crowd, but after only a few minutes a jaeger flushed the entire flock, and the observers were unable to relocate the bird. The buffy orange on the face to lower breast indicated either *C. ruficollis* or *minuta*, and a band of streaks below the color suggested *C. ruficollis*, but the observers were conservative, given observation at 100 feet under poor light conditions. The first Massachusetts records of both of these species overlapped in June of 1980 on nearby Monomoy Island.

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** (*Limicola falcinellus*) #02-30, September 10, 2002, Plum Island (Essex), R. Heil. While counting shorebirds the observer was shocked to come upon a Broad-billed Sandpiper among a group of calidrids. He was able to study it with a 60x zoom for a total of 15 minutes from as close as 80 yards and in excellent light. At that distance even the specific feather detail was clear, and he was able to age it as a worn juvenile. This Asian vagrant is generally uncommon even within its range, but in August of 2002 there was an influx of Broad-bills in Europe, with greater than normal numbers from England to Hungary. The appearance of this individual is most likely associated with this incursion, although an Asian origin cannot be ruled out. The only photographically documented record in North America (outside Alaska) was in New York in August 1998 (*North American Birds*, Vol. 53, No. 1: p. 36), but there is a convincing sight record from Nova Scotia in September 1990 (*American Birds*, Vol. 45, No. 1: p. 69). Broad-billed Sandpiper is a very distinctive species, with a unique bill and head pattern. Despite the fact that there was only a single observer, the description and accompanying sketch eliminated the possibility of any other species for this first state record. (*See additional article in this issue - ed.*)

**Thayer's Gull** (*Larus thayeri*), #01-16, December 31, 2001, Nantucket (Nantucket), F. Gallo, G. d'Entremont. Low Beach on Nantucket is without doubt one of the best locations in the state for winter gulls, with thousands of individuals, often including dozens of "Kumlien's" Iceland Gulls (*L. glaucoides kumlieni*). The reporter included convincing details of this adult bird, including photographs showing it side by side with a Kumlien's.

**Elegant Tern** (*Sterna elegans*), #02-26, August 4; August 15-28, 2002, Chatham (Barnstable), B. Nikula, G. Wood et al. Wood et al. originally discovered this bird on August 4 and realized it was something different. He described it on the Massbird listserve, tentatively suggesting West African Royal Tern (*S. maxima albidorsalis*) and inviting other birders to check it out. The bird was rediscovered by Nikula on August

15, who photographed it, published photos on the web, and suggested the possibility of first-summer Elegant Tern. In the days that followed, numerous birders saw and photographed this individual, with additional photographs posted on the web, including one comparing plumages of tern skins from Harvard's collection. There was extensive e-mail discussion on the ID-Frontiers listserve, which includes many experts on bird identification. Because the rump of the bird was pale gray, Lesser Crested Tern (*S. bengalensis*) was posited, but it was pointed out that this may not be uncommon in first-year and winter Elegant Terns. The discussion from ID-Frontiers was included as part of the report to the MARC, giving the Committee instant expert input, a luxury not available before the advent of the internet. The acceptance of this southwestern tern represents a first state record and only a third record for the Atlantic coast.

**Bridled Tern** (*Sterna anaethetus*), #02-29, September 7-8, 2002, Atlantis Canyon, R. Donovan, B. Zuzevich. An adult Bridled Tern passed only 20 yards in front of the first observer who called to the second, and both got excellent sunlit views. When it crossed the bow of the boat, it was joined by a second individual. The observer described the extensive white outer tail feathers and brownish plumage that differentiates it from the similar Sooty Tern.

**Monk Parakeet** (*Myiopsitta monachus*). This species was added to the official State List in March of 2000 but was erroneously omitted from previous reports. Monk Parakeet is native to South America, but escaped cage birds thrived even in the harsh winter conditions of northeast North America. They have been breeding for many years in nearby Rhode Island, and the appearance of birds in Massachusetts, especially those in Bristol County, are undoubtedly from this population. While Monk Parakeet has yet to be proven to breed in Massachusetts, its occurrence is clearly from a well-established population, and it joins other introduced species such as House Sparrow and European Starling on the official State List.

**Rufous Hummingbird** (*Selasphorus rufus*), #96-15, September 1996 to October 2002, Agawam (Hampden), L. Fieldstad, T. Gagnon, T. Lloyd-Evans; #02-19, September 17-October 1, 2002, Stow (Middlesex), B. + W. Howell; #2-21, September 24-October 20, 2002, Amherst (Hampshire), T. Priest et al. Fall *Selasphorus* hummingbirds are nearly always immature or female types. The Stow bird was a stunning adult male Rufous, both photographed and described. The Amherst bird was a hatch-year female, but was netted and measured to confirm species. The Agawam bird was still visiting freezing feeders in November 1996, and a permit was obtained from MassWildlife to house the bird in a greenhouse for the winter. Before it was released the following spring, it was measured and banded and identified as a female *rufus*. An intriguing saga evolved when, the following fall, and many more after, the same individual showed up at the same feeder, and spent its winters in the greenhouse. In the fall of 2002, it appeared once again but disappeared the day before it was scheduled to be netted and taken inside. *It is important to note that MassWildlife will no longer issue such permits.*

***Selasphorus* species**, #02-06, November 30, 2001-January 21, 2002, Chatham (Barnstable), B. Nikula et al; #02-22, October 6-20, 2002, Princeton (Worcester), B. Van Dusen et al.; #02-23, October 13-21, 2002, Athol (Worcester), B. Fregeau et al.; #02-24A, September 15-October 19, 2002 and #02-24B, November 8-19, 2002, Newbury (Essex), S. Stichter et al. #02-20, September 22-24, 2002, Essex (Essex), P. Brown et al. An unprecedented “invasion” of *Selasphorus* hummingbirds took place in the fall of 2002, with two birds (#02-24A and B) actually showing up together at the same feeder. All of these birds were photographed, making the MARC decisions easier.

**Say’s Phoebe** (*Sayornis saya*), #02-14, 9/18, 2002, Northampton (Hampshire), C. Gentes et al. The original observer was not familiar with this species when he discovered it perched on a telephone wire in the Mass Audubon Arcadia Sanctuary, but he did all the right things: watched it, took notes, and watched it some more, before he consulted a field guide. He was then able to notify other local birders, so many were able to enjoy seeing this bird. This western vagrant is extremely rare in Massachusetts, with approximately 20 records, the majority seen from early September through mid-October, and, like this bird, they are typically seen only for a single day.

**Ash-throated Flycatcher** (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), #01-17A, November 15, 2001, Gloucester (Essex), J. Paluzzi et al.; #01-17B, 12/16-22, 2001, Gloucester, R. Lockwood et al. The first Massachusetts record of this western species was as recent as 1972, yet since 1997 there have been a total of at least eight individuals reported. The two records above might have represented the same bird, but the two descriptions varied: the first described the belly as “faint yellow,” and the second as “strikingly bright.” A month and a mile separated the sightings, and it is likely that they represent two individuals.

**Cassin’s Kingbird** (*Tyrannus vociferans*), #02-34, November 1-2, 2002, Whately (Franklin), R. Packard et al. The observer was driving when the movement of this flycatcher caught his eye. He stopped to watch as the bird flew and spread its tail, showing no white outer tail feathers as would have been apparent in a Western Kingbird (*T. verticalis*). He noted a thin tan tip of the tail, conspicuous white submoustachial, and thin blackish mask, and, consulting his field guide, he realized he was seeing a Cassin’s Kingbird. The bird was seen by many other birders, and photographs were published on the internet. This is only the third state record of this southwestern flycatcher, the first on October 21, 1962, and the second, October 9, 1965, on Monomoy Island.

**Blue-headed Vireo** (*Vireo solitarius*), #01-21, December 23, 2001, N. Truro (Barnstable), M. Lynch. An individual seen on the Truro Christmas Bird Count was well beyond the normal departure date for this species.

**Gray Jay** (*Perisoreus canadensis*), #01-15, December 2-31, 2001 Windsor (Berkshire), C. Quinlan, C. Marantz. The winter of 2001-2002 was good for northern species, and this individual visiting a feeder in Windsor was seen and photographed by many.

**Townsend's Solitaire** (*Myadestes townsendi*), #02-04, February 4-10, 2002, Essex (Essex), J. Behnke, P. Brown (photo). This western thrush has been recorded in Massachusetts less than a dozen times, typically in early winter. Details were sparse, but photographs posted on the internet were definitive.

**Townsend's Warbler** (*Dendroica townsendi*), #01-19, December 28, 2001-February 3, 2002, Centerville (Barnstable), S. Johnson et al. Less than a dozen occurrences of this western species have been reported in Massachusetts, the first in 1978. This immature male at a feeder was feeding on suet pieces and on insects when available.

**Connecticut Warbler** (*Oporornis agilis*), #01-23, November 25, 2001 (Suffolk), Boston, R. Donovan. Few Connecticut Warblers linger after the first week of October, and *Oporornis* warblers seen this late are more often the very rare MacGillivray's (*O. tolmiei*). The observer got a clear view and documented it carefully.

**Harris's Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia querula*), #01-22, March 29-April 28, 2001, Naushon Island (Dukes), S. Storer; #02-11, March 24-April 7, 2002, Westport (Bristol), S. Bolton, P. Brown (photo). Neither of these reports was accompanied by written documentation, but photographs were definitive. Spring sightings of this western vagrant are very unusual, and it is likely both birds had overwintered.

**Lazuli Bunting** (*Passerina amoena*), #02-12, May 5-10, 2002, Nantucket (Nantucket), M. Aguiar, E. Ray (photo) et al. Lazuli Bunting is a common western songbird closely related to our Indigo Bunting. Although it often wanders east of its territory to the Midwestern states, it has only been recorded once or twice in the northeast. This first state record appeared in the middle of spring migration on Nantucket. It is shocking that a report of this importance was completely undocumented in writing, but the MARC could not ignore definitive photographs of this male that were vouched for by reliable sources and posted on the internet. The Massbird listserve included a report of a purported female, but the message included no description other than "the bird does have more noticeable wingbars than the Indigos near it," so only the male was accepted.

**Brewer's Blackbird** (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*), #02-35, November 9, 2002, Ipswich (Essex), R. Hamburger et al. A bird club group searching a muddy farm field saw a flock of blackbirds fly in, and noticed a grayish-brown bird with a dark eye. It initially suggested Brown-headed Cowbird until closer scrutiny revealed a thin bill, slender structure, and longer tail, and it was identified as a female Brewer's Blackbird. Common in central and western North America, this species has become almost annual in recent years.

**Boat-tailed/Great-tailed Grackle** (*Quiscalus major/mexicanus*), #02-33B, October 27, 2002, Newburyport (Essex), R. Heil, J. Smith. A large male grackle flew out of the salt marsh and continued past the observers, perched on a railing briefly, then flew off and disappeared. Its large size and extremely long, keel-shaped tail made it clear that it was either *Q. major* or *Q. mexicanus*, but the brief view did not allow for detailed observation. Great-tailed Grackle is a western species that is typically found in pastures and second-growth woods and scrub. Boat-tailed is an eastern species

partial to salt marshes, and it has already been recorded as breeding in Connecticut. The observers submitted this report as *Q. major* based on location and habitat, but as they were not able to definitively identify it as such, the Committee accepted it as one of this *Quiscalus* pair.

**Shiny Cowbird** (*Molothrus bonariensis*), #02-32, October 14, 2002, Edgartown (Dukes), V. Laux et al. This South American species is rapidly expanding its range and is already established as a breeder in Florida. There have been sightings all along the lower Atlantic coast, and it was only a matter of time before it was recorded in Massachusetts. The observer glimpsed a purplish blackbird perched on a chimney. Hoping for a Brewer's Blackbird, he raised his binoculars and was astonished to instantly recognize it as a male Shiny Cowbird. Like the Brown-headed Cowbird, Shiny Cowbird is a brood parasite, so this first state record is a dubious distinction.

### **Records Not Accepted:**

**Pacific Loon** (*Gavia pacifica*), #02-08A, March 14, 2002, Rockport (Essex). Both date and location are reasonable for Pacific Loon, but the description could not rule out a small Common Loon.

**Western Grebe** (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*), #02-37, November 15, 2002, Wachusett Reservoir, Boylston (Worcester). Details were suggestive of Western Grebe, but not conclusive. Virtually all Western Grebes seen in Massachusetts have been at the coast.

**Anhinga** (*Anhinga anhinga*), #02-13, June 1, 2002, Lowell (Middlesex). The description of this bird was very good for Anhinga, but the observation was made without binoculars, and the observer did not make the identification until she bought a field guide a month and a half later. This observation may well have been an Anhinga, but the circumstances weighed against it in the voting.

**"Great White Heron"** (*Ardea herodias*), #02-16, September 16, 2002, Groton (Middlesex). This color morph of Great Blue Heron is restricted to the coast of southern Florida, where it is a permanent resident. The only record for Massachusetts is a bird at Nauset Marsh (Eastham) in late summer of 1996, seen by many, but never acted on by the MARC (subspecies and color morphs are acted upon at the MARC's discretion). The description of this individual was too scanty to accept a species so rare in Massachusetts.

**Eskimo Curlew** (*Numenius borealis*), #02-17, September 5, 2002, Edgartown (Dukes). As one Committee member put it, "Eskimo Curlew has been presumed extinct by many ornithologists for decades, probably correctly so. The rarer the bird, the higher the evidence bar that must be hurdled. 'Presumed extinct' is pretty rare." Other members commented that Little Curlew (*N. minutus*) could not be eliminated.

**Mississippi Kite** (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), #01-11, September 29, 2001, Mt. Wachusett (Worcester). An immature reported by two hawk watchers was well described in shape and behavior, but the report lacked details on plumage.

**Three-toed Woodpecker** (*Picoides tridactylus*), #02-15, August 15, 2002, Sheffield (Berkshire). Details were skimpy on this sighting and could not rule out Hairy Woodpecker or Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

**Sprague's Pipit** (*Anthus spragueii*), #02-07, May 26, 2002, Mashpee (Barnstable). A bird loosely associating with a flock of Horned Larks was noticed by a group of birders as being different. Details were scanty and could not rule out juvenile Horned Lark.

**Brewer's Blackbird** (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*), #01-26, October 13, 2001, Plum Island (Essex). The description could not rule out Rusty Blackbird.

The Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC) was formed to evaluate reports of rare and difficult-to-identify species, as designated on its review list <<http://massbird.org/MARC/MARCreviewlist.htm>>. The MARC also evaluates any new state record and records of species that are geographically or temporally rare. Previous MARC reports have appeared in *Bird Observer*, and readers may also find copies of these reports at the MARC web site at <<http://Massbird.org/MARC/>>. MARC members include Steve Arena, Jim Baird, Rick Heil, Chris Leahy, Wayne Petersen, Scott Sumner, Jeremiah Trimble, Richard Veit, and Trevor Lloyd-Evans (Chair). Marjorie Rines is the Secretary.

*Erratum:* In the Sixth report of the MARC, "Black" Brant (*Branta bernicla nigricans*, file #00-26) was reported as having been seen in Mashpee (Barnstable County). It was seen in Plymouth (Plymouth County). 



TOWNSEND'S WARBLER BY JIM BAIRD

## FIELD NOTES

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### Finding a Eurasian Kestrel on Lieutenant's Island, South Wellfleet, MA

*Leslie Bostrom*

Sunday, April 14, 2002. My partner, Pat Maier, and I had an argument about what route we should take back to the house. She wanted to take the road because it was shorter, and I wanted to walk around the island on the beach, hoping I might see some late winter ducks. Pat persuaded me we really did not have much time, and we started back along the sand road that winds along the edge of the salt marsh.

Lieutenant Island is a large, irregularly shaped mound of sand in the middle of an expanse of salt marsh and tidal flats. Pointing roughly westward into Wellfleet Harbor, on the bay side of Cape Cod, it is just north of Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, which owns part of the island. The island is studded with summer cottages but also has an amazing number of mini-habitats: pine woods, a small deciduous swamp, fields with thickets where Prairie Warblers nest, both mudflats and sand tidal flats, and beach, salt marsh, and eel grass environments. I've spotted a number of interesting birds on or around the island, most recently an American Avocet (August 1, 2002).

It was around 3 o'clock on a windless, sunny afternoon; the harbor water was barely wrinkled; the island was empty and silent. The marsh grass was brown, with whorled cowlicks from the winter tides, and the locust and oak trees were still bare. We approached a place where a narrow arm of the marsh cuts across the road, dividing the island into what the residents call the "first" and "second" islands.

Looking north up the marsh, I saw a hawk-like shape in the top branches of a locust tree about fifty yards away. I trained my binoculars on it. The bird was facing me. Although it had a superficial resemblance to an American Kestrel, it was much too big, bigger than a crow. It was being halfheartedly buzzed by a couple of agitated goldfinches. Its breast feathers were a light rust, and it had brilliant yellow feet, a blue-capped head, and a long gray tail with a black band toward the end. As it turned its head back and forth, preening, I saw one thin, black moustache line on each cheek.

I said to Pat, "This is so weird! It sort of looks like a kestrel, but it's too big, and the face is wrong – all kinds of things are wrong – the breast, the tail..." I'm fairly familiar with the falcons and other raptors I'm likely to see on the Cape. I've seen numerous American Kestrels, the occasional Merlin blown in by a storm, never a Peregrine, although I've seen them in other places. In addition, I've seen Red Tails, Bald Eagles (always immature), Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Northern Harriers, and Broad-winged Hawks. Because this bird did not resemble any immature or atypical plumages I could think of, I suspected I had some sort of vagrant.

Along the other side of the marsh is a woods area of pitch pines. Leaving Pat on the road, I walked as quietly as possible through these woods until I was directly across the marsh from the bird, perhaps twenty yards away. At this point I got a really good, long look. It was definitely some kind of falcon, with pointed wings folded behind its back, separate from the tail. I noted the long, gray tail with a wide black band. It had a reddish back, blue head, and yellow around the eye and at the top of the curved beak. I saw the delicate, dark moustache line. The bird's fluffy, buff-colored leg feathers covered the legs almost to its feet. I stepped to get closer, and then it flew, showing the tail with the black band and two-toned wings: deep rusty red up to the wrist and then black to the tips. It gave a couple of strong flaps and glided north to a pine tree.

I rejoined Pat, we ran home (less than five minutes), and I looked the bird up in the National Geographic field guide, third edition. There it was, right next to the American Kestrel, and there seemed to be no mistake about the identification, since it (luckily) looked pretty much exactly like the painting in the book. It was a male Eurasian Kestrel. If the resemblance had been less exact, I would have doubted my identification because the book said these birds have been seen rarely on the East Coast, and only in the fall. So I ran out the door again, thinking I might get another look. As I arrived at the marsh, the bird flew, and I got another brief but clear look at the red and black wings, gray and black tail, and its easy, athletic flying style.

I returned to the house and called the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary to report the bird. I had last seen it heading south, and I really hoped they might pick it up. Because I had no picture or other confirmation, I figured no one would believe me, and indeed, no one did. I was not really worried, however. The Cape has more birders per square mile than any other place I can think of, and someone else was going to notice this bird! Bob Clem spotted the bird on Wednesday morning, April 17, in Chatham, over fifteen miles south of Lieutenant Island, and the rest is history. 🦅



EURASIAN KESTREL BY JIM BAIRD

# Eskimo Curlew Sighting on Martha's Vineyard

*John Nelson*

On Tuesday August 27, 2002, at 3:16 p.m., I was driving North on the Cape Poge road with my son Andrew for an afternoon of field ornithology and bonito fishing. I had pulled off the single lane road to let a southbound vehicle exit the narrow road when I looked west over the Shear Pen Marsh. I saw a curlew flying toward the road from the marsh at an altitude of approximately 50 feet. The bird was approximately 100 yards away from me when I first sighted it. The bird flew in typical curlew fashion with a strong and graceful flight pattern.

At first, I was quite sure it was a Whimbrel. Because it was flying out of the west and from the direction of the sun, my ability to observe coloration and size was not ideal. As the bird got closer and then passed directly over my vehicle at about fifty feet, I was struck by the size and coloration of this bird. It was much smaller than a Whimbrel, between half to two-thirds the typical size. Its overall plumage was a warm brown, not the typical gray coloration of a Whimbrel. The most striking characteristic of this bird was the rich cinnamon color of its wing linings as it passed directly overhead. My son Andrew, who is an avid ornithologist and naturalist, was sitting in the passenger seat next to me. He moved his head outside of the window to observe the bird as it passed directly overhead. He also was struck by the size and plumage of this bird. He looked at me and said, "Dad do you think it could be?" We have observed a great many Whimbrels in the past and were both struck by the fact that this bird was no Whimbrel.

The bird moved to our right and looked as if it was trying to pick out a spot in the beach grass and *Hudsonia* area of the dunes to land. At that moment another vehicle was moving south on the Cape Poge road at a rather fast speed and spooked the bird, which flew across the road in a westerly direction out over the Shear Pen Marsh. The bird did a survey of the eastern part of the marsh and then changed its course to head out to a thin barrier beach that separates the southwest portion of the Shear Pen Marsh from Cape Poge Bay. It circled the barrier beach twice, and then came in for a landing. The wind conditions at the time were NNE at 10-20 mph. The bird approached the beach from the southwest and landed into the wind. It alighted in the high area of that barrier beach amid the beach grass.

I looked at my son and said, "I've got to get close to that bird," and drove my Trooper as close to the marsh as I could and organized my stalk. I wanted to approach this bird with the sun in my back so that I would have the best opportunity to observe its coloration, size, and all other field characteristics in the best possible light conditions. To do this, I would have to cross approximately 250 yards of open salt marsh, while first using a low wooded island to obstruct my view from the resting curlew. The sky conditions were excellent, a perfectly clear day with temperatures in the high 60s. I waded across the outflowing tide of a tidal stream about three feet deep and pulled myself up on the *Spartina patens* marsh to begin my hike across the high

marsh. I moved as close to the northern part of this marsh as I could while moving in almost a due west direction. I crossed approximately 200 yards of open *Spartina patens* marsh. I had to wade across two rather treacherous low spots in the marsh to complete my course to my planned optimum location to begin my observation. One of the low spots was particularly treacherous, since it was a saltmarsh panne composed of black ooze covered by about three feet of water. I got across it, though. I had a bird to observe. I continued my westerly route across the marsh to place me about 75 yards up light of where I had seen the bird land. My heart was pounding with excitement.

I began to move down the barrier beach in the direction of the spot where I knew the bird had landed. I moved in a stalking method taught to me by my superior at Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Sanctuary, the late Wallace Bailey. I was employed by Wallace at Wellfleet Bay as a field naturalist and the Monomoy Island National Wildlife Refuge ornithology tour leader during the mid-1970s. Wallace taught me his method of approaching shore birds by walking five steps and then stopping for a minute or two before moving another five steps ahead. I have used this method successfully countless times in the past, and this method once again proved successful on this approach. I had moved approximately forty yards down the beach when I observed some movement in the beach grass approximately forty yards ahead of me. I immediately froze. The curlew had seen me and moved slightly, which gave its position away to me. I moved slowly to a prone position and began crawling on my abdomen to approach the bird. Between myself and the bird was a small rise in the barrier beach covered with beach grass about three feet in height. I immediately placed that small mound between myself and the curlew to obstruct the bird's view of me as I approached it while crawling on my stomach. I slowly crawled to the small rise and carefully moved my head slightly to my right, keeping my body behind that small hill and out of view from the curlew. The curlew was standing approximately thirty feet away preening its feathers and I raised my binoculars. My first observations were validated at this time. This was not a Whimbrel.

This curlew was slightly less than two-thirds the size of a Whimbrel. Its overall plumage was a warm brown, not the gray plumage tone of a Whimbrel. It had a short, decurved bill that was much thinner and one-third shorter than that of a Whimbrel. The base of the lower mandible was a pink flesh tone where it met the feathers of the lower head. It had a slight eye streak but lacked the profound dorsal crown striping of the Whimbrel. Its legs were a creamy olive color not the blue-gray of the Whimbrel.

As I observed the bird, I was struck by its tame demeanor. It seemed to be observing me as much as I was observing it. It was silent as I observed it. During this time my son Andrew approached me from behind, and he also crawled on his abdomen to a position along side of me. He was thrilled to make the same field observations as I had made. The curlew preened its wing feathers with its bill. On two occasions it stretched its wings over its head, exposing the warm cinnamon-colored wing linings. Also at this time the coloration of the undersides of the wing primary feathers was clear for observation. The primaries were a solid chocolate brown, not the variegated lined primaries of the Whimbrel.

After we had been observing the curlew at this position for approximately fifteen minutes, it began to move down the foreshore to a large mat of eelgrass that had washed ashore as a result of the frequent and unusual east and northeast winds of this August 2002 season. The curlew walked in a deliberate and slow manner. When it reached the eelgrass mat, it dipped its bill into the vegetation three times and started to slowly walk away from us. As it proceeded down the beach, we were both struck with the small size of this bird. It continued down the beach in its deliberate way, occasionally turning its head to observe us as we followed it. As we continued to follow, it became more concerned about our presence and seemed ready to fly. It did eventually flush and once again exposed the cinnamon wing linings and the solid chocolate primary feathers. It flew low down the shoreline and curved to the left, landing on a stretch of shoreline with a group of Greater Yellowlegs and a few Black-bellied Plovers. This made for an excellent size comparison. The curlew was slightly bigger and more robust than the Black-bellied Plovers and about the same body length as the Greater Yellowlegs.

The curlew remained stationary with the flock of other birds and did not interact with them. The Greater Yellowlegs spotted us and gave the alarm to the other resting shorebirds as they flew off with their clear three-note whistle *kew, kew, kew*. The plovers took off with the yellowlegs, but the curlew did not take flight. It waited perhaps fifteen seconds after the other birds flushed to take off. As it took to the air, it flew by us at a distance of about forty feet and produced a melodic twittering call somewhat reminiscent of a Golden-Plover. I had never heard this call before. It was not the distinct seven-note whistle of the Whimbrel, or the musical whistle of an Upland Sandpiper. As it flew by, I once again had a clear view of its cinnamon wing linings, solid chocolate primaries, and its short decurved bill. It flew west for about 100 yards over Cape Poge Bay and then turned due east toward the Shear Pen section of the Cape Poge road. As it approached the dune line past the road, it had gained an altitude of about 200 feet. It then circled back over the shore of Cape Poge Bay and headed due south at a rapid speed in the direction of the Dike Bridge and was lost from sight.

My son and I looked at each other, and I said to Andrew, "Did we really see what we saw?" He replied, "Dad, I am so glad we saw the Eskimo Curlew together. I will never forget today as long as I live." Nor will I.

When I reached my home in West Tisbury, I began a series of hurried phone calls to inform others of our sighting. My first call was to local birding expert Vern Laux, author of the Bird News in the *Vineyard Gazette*. Vern was not home, but had left a number where he could be reached on Prince Edward Island. I called him there and spoke to him at great length about my curlew observation, which he included in his column the following Friday. I called Dr. Robert Cook in Eastham, head wildlife biologist at the National Park Service North Atlantic Research Lab in Truro. Bob was intrigued by my observations and encouraged me to speak to Wayne Petersen at Mass Audubon's office in Lincoln. When I tried to call Wayne, I got a message stating he

would be out of his office for an extended period. I also called other local birders, but any efforts to rediscover the curlew were unsuccessful.

Over a period of the next few days, my phone rang at a rather frequent rate. It became quite apparent that among the birding community news travels fast. 🐦

## A Note on the Report of Eskimo Curlew

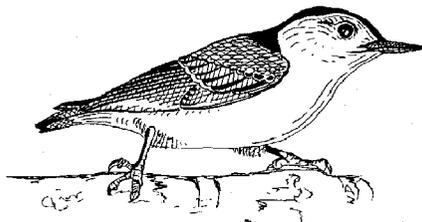
*Marjorie Rines*

The Eskimo Curlew, once abundant in North America, is now considered by most ornithologists to be extinct. In its day, the fall migration of this species took a direct shot from the Canadian Maritimes to South America, starting in late August and ending around the end of September. A combination of strong easterly winds and rain, however, would occasionally displace these oceanic flights toward shore, periodically grounding them in large numbers at favored localities such as Nantucket.

Since 1918 the only well-described observation of an Eskimo Curlew in Massachusetts was that of two individuals reported August 6-7, 1972, at Chilmark, Martha's Vineyard. Several additional unconfirmed sight records from other locations are similarly lacking in specimen or photographic evidence, but keep a faint hope alive that perhaps there is a small breeding population surviving somewhere in the vast, unpopulated areas of the Northwest Territories.

On September 5, 2002, two observers watched a small curlew on Martha's Vineyard for over fifteen minutes from as close as 30 feet. Their conclusion that this was an Eskimo Curlew was supported by a detailed report (see the preceding article), and the report was submitted to the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC). It was not accepted, not surprising given its tenuous status. The significance of an accepted record for Eskimo Curlew would not be local or even North American, but global in its impact. Given this, no record without photographs, specimen, or perhaps a large group of expert observers is ever likely to be accepted for this species.

"Presumed extinct," however pessimistic, still leaves a window of hope that someday a specimen or photograph will appear. It is therefore important to include any report of a well-documented sighting of this species in the ornithological literature. The preceding report includes that documentation, but also tells the story of the joy of discovery and sharing of that discovery. 🐦



WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH BY WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR.

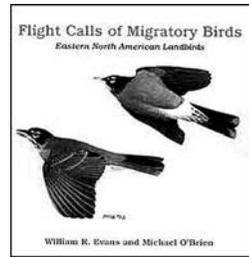
# ABOUT BOOKS

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## Strangers in the Night

Mark Lynch

*Flight Calls of Migratory Birds. Eastern North American Landbirds (CD-ROM).* William R. Evans and Michael O'Brien. 2002. Old Bird Inc. CD-ROM produced by NuVision Media, Lake Oswego, Oregon.



One of the great pleasures of experiencing migration here in New England is to pick some quiet place on a still moonlit night in spring or fall and listen for the calls of the numerous unseen migrants winging their way overhead. It's as though a great invisible river of birds is passing right by you, and the only clue to their presence is their occasional quick and sometimes barely audible calls. We experience this dramatic continent-spanning spectacle only through the very subtlest of clues. Though some species' call notes are certainly recognizable, like those of the thrushes or a Dickcissel, most birds' brief flight calls have remained a frustrating collection of unidentifiable *zeeps* or clipped lisping *tsss*. It has always seemed an impossible task to attribute these fast night flight calls from unseen birds to species – which is why *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds* is such a surprise and revelation.

This CD-ROM is the culmination of more than fifteen years of research by William Evans. Birders first heard of Evans in 1990, when he produced an audiotape of night flight calls of *Catharus* thrushes. His long collaboration with Michael O'Brien began in 1991. Initially, Evans worked with the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the then newly formed Bioacoustics Research Program (BRP). This group of ornitho-technologists developed new digital acoustics analysis software that revolutionized the study of night flight calls. Some of this software allowed for the automatic detection and recording of the short, high-pitched, barely audible sounds typical of warblers and sparrows during night migration. Sophisticated spectrographic analysis programs were then used to separate similar sounding calls. The identification of those *zeeps* and *seeps* in the dark was becoming a hard science. In 1998 Evans founded Old Bird, a nonprofit organization “dedicated to facilitating flight call monitoring” (from “A Short History of Nocturnal Flight Call Monitoring” on the CD-ROM). Old Bird contracted with former BRP programmer Steve Mitchell to develop even more advanced software. This time the recording equipment software could discriminate and identify a *single* species of nocturnal migrant, the Dickcissel. Old Bird then established a network of automatic monitors that could detect migrating Dickcissels by their flight calls at stations at a series of schools in Texas.

Initially wanting to use this technology to produce a new recording of night flight calls of sparrows and warblers, Evans and O'Brien realized that, while they were at it, the old thrush recording needed redoing too. In the end, they produced this CD-ROM that includes flight calls of everything from doves to finches, 211 species in all. As

you can imagine, identifying as to species these night flight calls was no mean feat and involved quite a bit of piecing together of different kinds of evidence. Sometimes recordings and sonograms of night calls were compared with diurnal calls of clearly identified birds. Evans and O'Brien then factored in known migration routes with the dates and locations of the nocturnal recordings. Finally, they then had to compare a specific call in question with other known similar and already identified calls from birds known to be migrating in the same area. Evans and O'Brien's self-described "confidence level" of identification varies from species to species on this CD-ROM. Some calls are clearly listed as "hypothetical" as to species, while for other species, no known flight call is even given. Although *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds* has a wealth of new information for birders, it is still very much a work in progress.

Although the obvious purpose of this CD-ROM is to help folks identify flight calls, diurnal and nocturnal, the CD has also a wealth of information on understanding the dynamics of migration and the behavioral function of calls in birds. For instance, in the section entitled "What is a flight call?" you learn:

Flight calls are given on both diurnal and nocturnal migration during long, sustained flights.

Many species do not give these calls only in flight. Some birds will give these same calls while foraging on the ground or interacting with young.

Some *Catharus* thrushes give the same nocturnal flight calls while perched during the day.

Though you may know that many species of birds, like pipits, sing in flight, you may not know that during nocturnal migration some species may also give a short burst of song.

Another section titled "Glossary" actually attempts to clearly define terms that we have read in field books numerous times before and have often found confounding. These are words that are typically used to describe the auditory quality of call notes. Words like "dry," "burry," "husky," "lazy," "lisping" and even the more exotic: "short rising seep." The list is long and confusing. I don't know about you, but I have often found these terms hopelessly subjective and often not useful. The genius of the *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds* CD-ROM format, is that after the verbal description of each of these terms you can click on a real avian example and hear it then and there. So THAT'S what "husky" sounds like!

Reading the section entitled "A Short History of Nocturnal Flight Monitoring," it is clear that advances in monitoring and understanding flight calls occurred only after a continual evolution of advanced audio recording hardware and software. The first published record of an attempt to count night flight calls occurred in 1896, when Orin Libby spent five hours in the dark sitting on a hill outside of Madison, Wisconsin, counting 3600 calls of night-flying birds. But it would not be until the late 1950s that Richard Graber and Bill Cochran made the first recordings of these same calls. Yet another crucial milestone was the development of a voice-activated flight-call recording system in the late 1980s by Peter Kaetsch.

Finally, do the recordings make this a worthwhile purchase? Clicking on a menu of groups of birds like Cuckoos, Wrens or Wood Warblers, you will find a menu of individual species. Each species has a home page that may include sonograms, notes on behavior, a discussion of vocally distinct subspecies and other vocally similar species. There are also links to short recorded examples of diurnal and nocturnal flight calls. Some species have only one example, others several. The quality of these recordings does vary considerably. Sometimes wind creates a background noise over which you must try to hear the calls. Other birds or animals are sometimes also heard in the background but are typically identified on the species home page. But, overall, the recordings are clear and distinct. However, some species when clicked reveal that there is no known flight call. I question whether these should even have been included.

To further help the listener discriminate between similar sounding species, there are several screens with titles like “Zeep Calls,” “Descending Seeps,” and “Thrush-like Calls,” that offer a grid of sound-alike species and several examples of each call so you can compare and learn. To folks who have difficulty learning even the songs of birds, clicking through these arrays of similar short calls may seem like a cruel joke. After all, to the neophyte, many of these diurnal and nocturnal flight calls sound like minor variations of someone trying to get your attention in a library. But, as Evans and O’Brien note, learning flight calls “demands dedication, concentration and repetition.” They recommend listening for length of call, pattern, and pitch, among other qualities. They also recommend following birds around while they forage to learn diurnal call notes, which are often similar to or the same as the nocturnal flight calls. Evans and O’Brien broadly divide flight calls into two very broad categories: “thrush-like whistles” and high, short, *seep* or *zeep* calls of warblers and sparrows. I would also recommend beginners start with some of the more distinct sounding species like the cuckoos and leave the wood warblers for later.

This is a very easy CD-ROM to use and is well designed and easy to navigate. Simply pop it into your PC, and it runs automatically. You will see a prompt to have Winamp installed, but I found that my disk ran perfectly with my previously installed Musicmatch software that I downloaded for my I-Pod. Minimum system requirements for PC users are Windows 95 or later, Pentium 266 MHz, 64 MB RAM, 800X600 display and a 4X CD-ROM drive.

There is still so much to be learned and studied about avian nocturnal migration. *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds* gives the birder some tools to get at least an auditory glimpse of the vast spectacle that is passing overhead. This CD-ROM also is a wonderful primer on birdcalls, the dynamics of migration, and the evolving collaboration of technology and ornithology. 

*Mark Lynch is an ecological monitor, teacher, and trip leader for Mass Audubon's Broad Meadow Brook, currently working on the birds of the Blackstone National Corridor. He is the host of Inquiry, a talk show of the arts and sciences, on WICN (90.5FM). He is also a teacher and docent at the Worcester Art Museum.*

# BIRD SIGHTINGS

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## November/December 2002

Both November and December were very cold, especially compared with the record warmth we had during the same period last year. The temperature averaged 42.9° in Boston during November, 2.0° below normal and 5.4° colder than last November. The high of 70° on November 10 was 15° degrees above normal and the high of 69° on the 11th tied the record for that date set in 1966. The low was 19° on Thanksgiving Day, 16° degrees below normal for that date. Snowfall in November was 3.6 inches, the first measurable snow in Boston in November since 1997. Most of this snow (3.5 inches) fell on the day before Thanksgiving, a month earlier than normal for such a large amount. Sunshine was only 40% of possible, making November the cloudiest month of the year. A nor'easter on November 16-17 brought gusts of nearly 50 mph. In the western part of the state, the storm dumped 1-5 inches of heavy, wet snow.

December's temperature averaged 32.3° in Boston, 1.6° below normal but 7.6° colder than last December. The high was 61° on the 20th, and the low was 12° on December 9, 17° degrees below normal for that date. Snowfall totaled 11.1 inches, 3.8 inches above normal for Boston. The biggest snowfall measured in Boston was 5.4 inches starting on Christmas Day, but much more fell in central and western Massachusetts. The windiest day was on Christmas, a storm that, coupled with the weight of the heavy snow, caused numerous trees and limbs to break and resulted in many power outages. Heavy fog developed on New Year's Eve, bringing in a soupy New Year.

*R. Stymeist*

### LOONS THROUGH ALCIDS

One of the major events of the period was an unprecedented movement of Red-throated Loons witnessed in mid-November from Cape Ann and Cape Cod, when a northeast storm apparently coincided with the peak of migration. Although flights of hundreds per day were recorded both earlier and later in the month, the bulk of the flight occurred in just a two-day window, November 16-17. It began on the afternoon of the 16th, when 3060 were counted passing by Andrew's Point in Rockport. Ninety percent of that day's passage occurred in just two hours between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m., including several single flocks of 200 to 350 individuals each. The Cape Ann count, as impressive as it was, was easily eclipsed the following day on Cape Cod, as the massive flocks continued on south following the contours of the coast and on into Cape Cod Bay. That day a remarkable **8200+** were tallied at Sandy Neck in Barnstable, and some **10,080** were counted using a clicker at Corporation Beach in Dennis. While these two counts likely represent mostly the same birds (the locations are less than ten miles apart), observers at the Dennis site were only present for four and a half hours until noon, and the flight was still ongoing when they departed, although at a reduced rate. The observers thereby speculated that perhaps as many as 14,000+ Red-throated Loons had been involved in the flight there on that day. Back at Cape Ann, another 840 on the 17th brought the weekend total at Andrew's Point to 3900. The flock of twenty-one Red-throated Loons deposited in Pittsfield in the central Berkshires on the 17th, where they are rarely noted migrants, suggests that many birds may have been arriving at the coast and Cape Cod Bay that weekend directly from overland paths, hence the lower counts at Cape Ann versus Cape Cod.

Two more reports of **Pacific Loons** came in this period, including a bird on the Cape Cod CBC December 15. **Eared Grebes** were noted at Salisbury and Plum Island in November (probably the same individual), as was the perennial Gloucester Harbor favorite. A **Western Grebe** was observed at Plum Island November 8-10, while another was discovered at Plymouth

December 2. Good numbers of Greater Shearwaters lingered in the waters around Cape Ann throughout November, following the mass concentrations there earlier in the fall. Three were still present and observed from Andrew's Point during a storm December 12. Rivaling the loon flight was the remarkable migration and lingering concentrations of Northern Gannets along the bay shore of outer Cape Cod from Provincetown to at least Dennis. Peak estimates included **18,000** at First Encounter Beach in Eastham November 7, and **20,000** at Provincetown November 16. They were observed actively foraging all along the cape shore, often in the immediate surf, perhaps on the same abundant schools of menhaden and herring, migrated south, that had attracted tens of thousands of shearwaters to Ipswich Bay back in September. A single adult Gannet described inland at Wayland December 4 was one of fewer than a dozen such records for the state.

A number of interesting geese appeared during the period. Three separate Greater White-fronted Geese were reported, including a juvenile at Rochester in early November, likely a remaining individual from the family of Greenland birds that included four juveniles reported there in October. Another that was racially identified was an adult at Attleboro November 11, also determined to be of the Greenland race *flavirostris*. A small-race Canada Goose, said to be a Richardson's, was observed at Truro December 23. Continuing the trend of late fall and winter appearances in the Northeast, an adult **Barnacle Goose** was present and well-photographed in Ipswich November 7-11.

December reports of Ospreys included one at Lakeville on the 1st and a very late bird at Quabbin Reservoir on the 28th. It was one of the better incursion years for Rough-legged Hawks, with at least thirty-five individuals noted. Peak counts included six in the Plum Island marshes on several dates and seven at the Daniel Webster Sanctuary in Marshfield in early December. It is likely that many more birds passed through these areas and that such maxima represent only a snapshot and are not representative of the true totals utilizing these areas during the course of the season. The very popular, darkish adult **Gyrfalcon** returned to its South Boston haunts December 13, performing well throughout the rest of the month.

There were no vagrant species of shorebirds found during the period, but as usual for November and December, there was a host of late records of the regular migrants, a few of which were remarkable. Although there are a number of winter records (even mid-winter records), two Piping Plovers at South Beach, Chatham were a surprise November 30. Unlike the previous two winters, which saw overwintering birds, the last Lesser Yellowlegs at Newburyport was noted November 25. Did they foresee something in this winter's approach that we did not? A **Solitary Sandpiper** noted in Westport November 24 constituted the second latest state record, just a few days shy of an 1895 record from Cambridge (Mount Auburn Cemetery) on November 28. There are no known December records. A few Western Sandpipers lingered at South Beach in Chatham until at least December 15, when three were found on the CBC there. White-rumped Sandpipers remained almost common through November at Plum Island, where 21 were still present at the Bill Forward Pool November 21. A single White-rumped hung on at Eastham on Cape Cod until at least December 15. The November 18 storm featured, among other seabirds, 135 Red Phalaropes passing by First Encounter Beach in Eastham.

Two unidentified skuas were reported, one associated with the November 17 storm. Normally one would assume Great Skua at this date, but given the recent proven occurrence of the southern hemisphere Brown Skua in the North Atlantic, such assumptions are no longer safe, if they ever were! A series of nor'easters in November produced excellent numbers of Pomarine Jaegers, including a total of 229 at Andrew's Point in Rockport. Cape Cod sightings were lower but still impressive. Although Pomarines are now known to be regular in early

December, the Andrew's Point count is more than double the previous December high, and the Cape Cod count following the Christmas Day storm smashed all records for this late a date.

A major and totally unprecedented incursion of Common Murres occurred at Cape Ann during December. During the spectacular flight of December 12 many were noted in mixed flocks with Razorbills, but also quite a few solid flocks of 5-25 of this species were observed, mostly after 11:00 a.m. Earlier in the morning, during a heavy movement of alcids, most flocks had to be left as "large alcid species" because of rain and resultant poor visibility. If the composition of these morning flocks could be known, there may have been more than a thousand Common Murres that passed the point that day. Normally considered rare in local coastal waters and nearshore banks, prior to this month there has never previously been a "flight" of this species in Massachusetts, and the previous high, from Provincetown last February, was of twenty-one.

*R. Heil*

Red-throated Loon			12/12	Rockport (A.P.)	33	R. Heil
11/2	S. Quabbin	1	12/28	Quabbin	1	CBC
11/5, 25	P.I.	200, 115		<b>Eared Grebe</b> (no details) *		
11/13	Dennis (Corp. B.)	430	11/3, 10	Gloucester	1	B. Pfeiffer
11/16, 17	P'town (R.P.)	112, 385	11/4	Salisbury	1	D. + T. Brownrigg#
11/16, 17	Rockport (A.P.)	3060, 840	11/8, 25	P.I.	1, 1	G. Leet, R. Heil
11/17	Pittsfield	21		<b>Western Grebe</b> (no details) *		
11/17, 18	Eastham (F.E.)	1790, 1000	11/8, 10	P.I.	1	G. Leet#, S. Moore
11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	8200+	12/7	Plymouth B.	1	J. Trimble
11/17	Dennis (Corp. B.)	10,080		Northern Fulmar		
11/22, 12/12	Rockport (A.P.)	470, 57	11/6, 17	Rockport (A.P.)	160, 22	R. Heil
11/25	Edgartown	1000+	11/7, 14	Eastham (F.E.)	4, 1	B. Nikula
12/12	Dennis (Corp. B.)	320	11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	1	J. Trimble#
12/14	Holyoke	1	11/17	P'town (R.P.)	39	J. Trimble#
			12/26	Dennis	9	CBC (P. Flood)
<b>Pacific Loon</b> (no details) *				Cory's Shearwater		
11/2	N. Scituate	1 br	11/2	Eastham (F.E.)	2	B. Nikula
12/15	Eastham (CGB)	1	11/6	Barnstable (S.N.)	1	K. Ryan
Common Loon			11/9	Sandwich	1	J. Kricher
11/9	Westport	12	11/17, 24	Dennis (Corp. B.)	1, 1	B. Nikula#
11/10	Sandwich	19	11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	1	J. Trimble#
11/16, 17	Rockport (A.P.)	186, 280	11/17	P'town (R.P.)	2	J. Trimble#
11/17	Pittsfield (Onota)	24		<b>Greater Shearwater</b>		
11/17	P'town (R.P.)	55	11/6, 16	P'town (R.P.)	97, 200	Flood, Nikula
11/17	Eastham (F.E.)	85	11/6, 17	Rockport (A.P.)	4030, 435	R. Heil
11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	174	11/7	Eastham (F.E.)	200+	B. Nikula
11/17	Dennis (Corp. B.)	150	11/7	Dennis (Corp. B.)	11	P. Flood
11/24	Quabbin	14	11/14, 18	Eastham (F.E.)	25, 32	Nikula, Heil
11/25, 12/18	P.I.	170, 20	11/17, 27	P'town (R.P.)	395, 7	Trimble, Flood
11/25	Edgartown	500+	11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	5	J. Trimble#
11/28, 12/29	Wachusett Res.	17, 3	11/22, 12/12	Rockport (A.P.)	20, 3	R. Heil
Pied-billed Grebe				<b>Sooty Shearwater</b>		
11/2, 12/8	Cambr. (F.P.)	2, 1	11/6, 17	Rockport (A.P.)	3, 1	R. Heil
11/2	Gloucester (E.P.)	2	11/7	Eastham (F.E.)	1	B. Nikula
11/3	Pittsfield (Pont.)	2		<b>Manx Shearwater</b>		
11/3	Cheshire	8	11/6	Rockport (A.P.)	2	R. Heil
11/10	Falmouth	2		<b>Shearwater species</b>		
11/10	Worcester	4	11/6	P'town (R.P.)	38	P. Flood
11/18	Brockton	3	11/7, 12/26	Dennis	55, 2	P. Flood
12/1, 29	Plymouth	4, 1	11/7	Eastham (F.E.)	600+	B. Nikula
12/4	Eastham	2	11/16, 17	P'town (R.P.)	70, 101	Nikula, Trimble
Horned Grebe				<b>Leach's Storm-Petrel</b>		
11/3	Richmond	3	11/6	P'town (R.P.)	2	P. Flood
11/3	Pittsfield (Pont.)	2	11/6, 17	Rockport (A.P.)	1, 1	R. Heil
11/9	S. Quabbin	6	11/7	Dennis (Corp. B.)	3	P. Flood
11/9	Dennis (Corp. B.)	6	11/18	Eastham (F.E.)	1	P. Flood#
11/25, 12/28	P.I.	90, 26		<b>Northern Gannet</b>		
12/1	Plymouth	10	11/2, 7	Eastham (F.E.)	1600, 18,000	B. Nikula
12/8	W. Quabbin	23	11/6, 16	P'town	2200, 20,000	Flood, Nikula
12/10	Rockport (A.P.)	93	11/6, 16	Rockport (A.P.)	5650, 3200	R. Heil
Red-necked Grebe			11/7, 13	Dennis (Corp. B.)	1200, 4000	Flood, Nikula
11/2	Nahant	6	11/14, 18	Eastham (F.E.)	8000, 10,000	Nikula, Heil
11/3	Gloucester	9	11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	565	J. Trimble#
11/3	Pittsfield	9	12/4	<b>Wayland</b>	1 ad	A. Webber#
11/9	P.I.	12	12/7	Chatham (S.B.)	1000	B. Nikula#
11/16	Rockport (A.P.)	12	12/12	Rockport (A.P.)	440	R. Heil
11/30	N. Scituate	30+	12/12	Dennis (Corp. B.)	450	P. Flood
12/10	Revere/Winthrop	80				

Northern Gannet (continued)				12/21	Southwick	2	R. Packard
12/25	P'town (R.P.)	1650	B. Nikula	Gadwall			
12/25	N. Truro	625	B. Nikula	11/3	Cheshire	7	Hampshire Club
Great Cormorant				11/4	Ipswich	93	R. Heil
11/3	E. Gloucester	80+	J. Berry	11/8	Chilmark	41	A. Keith
11/15	Mblhead-Nahant	275+	R. Heil	11/10	Barnstable	35	G. d'Entremont
12/10	Revere/Winthrop	105	R. Heil	11/11	S. Peabody	44	R. Heil
12/14	Holyoke	1 imm	CBC (B. Bieda)	11/11	Woburn	32	M. Rines
12/28	Quabbin	1	CBC (A. Richards)	11/23	Plymouth	35	ABC (J. Hutchison)
12/28	P'town	295	J. Young#	11/29	Gloucester	69	G. d'Entremont#
Double-crested Cormorant				12/2	Salisbury	32	R. Heil
11/4	Ipswich	40	R. Heil	12/15	Pittsfield	2	CBC (N. Mole)
11/9	Westport	100	J. Hoye#	12/22	Newbypt	67	R. Heil
11/24	Buzzards Bay	50+	R. Heil	12/29	Osterville	30	G. Gove
12/7	Rockport (A.P.)	14	J. Offermann	Eurasian Wigeon			
12/9	Taunton	1	J. Sweeney	11/thr	Edgartown	1 m	v.o.
12/22	Salisbury	1	R. Heil	11/1-12/13	Marstons Mills	1	v.o.
American Bittern				11/4-5	P.I.	1 ad m	O. Spalding#
11/9	P.I.	2	P. + F. Vale	12/5	Nantucket	1 m	M. Aguiar
12/29	P.I.	1	T. Wetmore	12/27	Orleans	1	J. Young#
Great Blue Heron				12/29	Osterville	1 m	G. Gove
11/3	Boston	6	BBC (R. Stymeist)	American Wigeon			
11/4	Sunderland	5	M. Williams	11/3	Cheshire	4	Hampshire Club
11/10	Worcester	10	M. Lynch#	11/3	Northbridge	5	M. Lynch#
11/20	Randolph	9	R. Titus	11/10	Barnstable	57	G. d'Entremont
11/24	Westport	15+	R. Heil	11/11	Marstons Mills	45	M. Keleher
Great Egret				11/19	Arlington Res.	25	P. Savage
11/18	Eastham	1	K. Ryan	12/1	Plymouth	46	M. Faherty#
11/20	Lynn H.	1	O. Spalding#	12/8	Newbypt	14	R. Heil
Turkey Vulture				12/29	Osterville	80	G. Gove
11/15	Granville	2	J. Weeks	12/29	Carver	6	G. d'Entremont
11/24	Westport	12	R. Heil	American Black Duck			
12/17-19	Mashpee	3	M. Keleher	11/25	P.I.	1100	R. Heil
12/21	Southwick	1	J. Hutchison	11/30	Westport	700	E. Nielsen
12/30	Ipswich (C.B.)	2	B. Crowley#	12/1	Plymouth	900+	M. Faherty#
Greater White-fronted Goose				Blue-winged Teal			
11/15	Framingham	1	E. Taylor	11/14	Longmeadow	8	S. Kellogg
Greenland Greater White-fronted Goose				11/18	Chilmark	1	A. Keith
11/3, 10	Rochester	1 juv	v.o.	Northern Shoveler			
11/18	Attleboro	1 ad	G. Valade	11/1-10	Pittsfield (Pont.)	2	v.o.
Snow Goose				11/5	P.I.	9	R. Heil
11/1	Amherst	100	S. Emerson	11/11	Boston	2	O. Spalding#
11/2	P.I.	55+	P. + F. Vale	11/19	Woburn	1	M. Rines
11/6	Somerville	1	D. Oliver	12/1	Plymouth	1	M. Faherty#
11/8	Ipswich	2 ad	J. Berry#	12/22	Arlington	2	M. Rines
11/19	Amherst	13	M. Faherty	Northern Pintail			
11/20	Granville	35	J. Weeks#	11/3	Northbridge	6	M. Lynch#
11/24	P.I.	36	P. Roberts	11/3	GMNWR	10	MAS (J. Liller)
12/14	Holyoke	1 ad	CBC (B. Bieda)	11/5	Greenfield	2	R. Packard
12/15	Pittsfield (Onota)	1	CBC (R. Ferren)	11/5	P.I.	90	R. Heil
Richardson's Canada Goose				11/9	Lanesboro	2	H. Allen
12/23	Truro	1	A. Brissette#	11/10	Worcester	3	M. Lynch#
Brant				11/24	Westport	150	R. Heil
11/3	Boston	110	BBC (R. Stymeist)	12/15	Amherst	2	D. Ziomek
11/6	Harvard	1	T. Pirro	12/29	Turners Falls	1	CBC (A. Richards)
11/10	Quincy	300	E. Taylor	Green-winged Teal			
11/28, 30	Granville	20, 5	J. Weeks	11/3	Boston	14	BBC (R. Stymeist)
12/8	Nahant	125	L. Pivacek	11/3	GMNWR	273	MAS (J. Liller)
12/22	Winthrop	137	P. + F. Vale	11/9	Ipswich	20+	M. Lynch#
<b>Barnacle Goose *</b>				11/11	Randolph	24	R. Titus
11/7-11	Ipswich	1 ph	R. Heil + v.o.	11/14	Longmeadow	40	S. Kellogg
Mute Swan				11/15	New Salem	30	W. Lafley
11/9	Westport	36	J. Hoye#	11/19	DWWS	40	D. Furbish
11/19	Lincoln	29	M. Rines	11/25	P.I.	300	R. Heil
12/14	Agawam	23	J. Hutchison	11/26	Chilmark	36	A. Keith
12/18	S. Hadley	24	W. Lafley	Eurasian Teal			
12/29	Carver	39	G. d'Entremont	11/9-22	P.I.	1	v.o.
12/29	Plymouth	23	G. d'Entremont	Canvasback			
<b>Tundra Swan</b>				11/2, 12/8	Cambr. (F.P.)	90, 38	Tingley, Vale
11/17	Pittsfield (Pont.)	1	E. Neumuth	11/6	Hadley	8	P. Yeskie
11/24	Plymouth (Saquish)	2	E. Neumuth	11/9	S. Quabbin	4	S. Surner
Wood Duck				11/30	Westport	26	E. Nielsen
11/2	Winchester	14	R. LaFontaine#	12/1	Lakeville	7	M. Faherty#
11/3	Northbridge	18	M. Lynch#	12/24	Falmouth	6 m	D. Silverstein#
11/3	Wakefield	11	BBC (D. Williams)	Ring-necked Duck			
11/3	Berkshire Cnty	25	Hoffmann Club	11/2	Cambr. (F.P.)	200	M. Tingley#
11/5	Deerfield	7	M. Williams	11/4	W. Newbury (C.H.)	1050	R. Heil
12/8	Arlington	2	M. Rines	11/9	Framingham	320	E. Taylor

Ring-necked Duck (continued)			11/18	Northampton	1 f	M. Williams
11/9	Pittsfield (Mud Pd)	900	11/19	Huntington	1	M. Williams
11/10	Richmond	700+	11/25	P.I.	550	R. Heil
11/18	Turners Falls	70	12/10	Revere/Winthrop	510+	R. Heil
11/18	Brockton	126	12/25	Gloucester (B.R.)	38	P. + F. Vale
11/23	Middleboro	65+	Black Scoter			
12/18	Plymouth	67	11/2	S. Quabbin	1 f	M. Lynch#
12/29	Carver	58	11/9	Sandwich	72	J. Kricher
Tufted Duck			11/9	P.I.	16	P. + F. Vale
11/28	Sterling	1 m	11/16	Rockport (A.P.)	750	R. Heil
12/1	Plymouth	1	11/17	Richmond	1	E. Neumuth
12/8-29	Wachusett Res.	1	11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	212	J. Trimble#
Greater Scaup			11/17	P'town (R.P.)	120	J. Trimble#
11/2	Lakeville	29	12/5	P.I.	5 f	T. Wetmore
11/3	Berkshire Cnty	9	12/8	Nahant	6	L. Pivacek
11/10	Falmouth	550	Long-tailed Duck			
11/17	Richmond	12	11/1-10	Lincoln	1	M. Rines
11/17	Rockport (A.P.)	175	11/3	Pittsfield (Pont.)	2	Hoffmann Club
11/28	Sterling	26	11/16, 17	Rockport (A.P.)	1780, 3250	R. Heil
11/30	Westport	100	11/16	Barnstable (S.N.)	360	G. Hirth
12/1	Winthrop	280	11/17	P'town (R.P.)	277	J. Trimble#
12/1	Plymouth	40	11/24	S. Quabbin	9	G. Tepke
12/17	Southwick	1	11/24	P.I.	250	P. Roberts
12/22	Winthrop	400+	12/16	Nantucket	72,000	E. Ray
12/25	W. Boylston	47	12/27	Boston	214	C. Dalton
Lesser Scaup			Bufflehead			
11/2	Lynnfield	14	11/2	Lakeville	113	J. Sweeney#
11/2	Nahant	33	11/2	Gloucester (E.P.)	40	J. Nelson
11/3	Pittsfield (Pont.)	14	11/3	Boston	349	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/4, 12/2	W. Newbury (C.H.)	16, 11	11/3	Pittsfield (Pont.)	26	T. Gagnon#
11/9	Southboro	14	11/3	Newbypt H.	60	T. Wetmore
11/30	Westport	80	11/9	Westport	90	J. Hoye#
12/1	Plymouth	35	11/11	Randolph	33	R. Titus
12/6	Hadley	4	11/15	Nahant	580	R. Heil
12/8	Nahant	16	11/17	Winthrop	38	P. + F. Vale
12/10	Winthrop	28	11/18	Huntington	14	M. Williams
King Eider			12/25	Rockport	35	P. + F. Vale
thr	Gloucester	1 m	Common Goldeneye			
11/17	Rockport (A.P.)	2	11/1	Quabbin (G40)	14	T. Gagnon
12/1	Revere	1 m	11/3	Boston	125	BBC (R. Stymeist)
12/27	Scituate	1 f	11/26	Richmond	26	T. Collins
Common Eider			11/28	Wachusett Res.	25	M. Lynch#
11/6	P'town (R.P.)	115	12/1	Lakeville	44	M. Faherty#
11/7	Dennis (Corp. B.)	210	12/7	Newbypt	25	P. + F. Vale
11/14	Eastham (F.E.)	2500	12/8	Nahant	48	L. Pivacek
11/19	Sandwich	233	12/10	Sunderland	25	M. Williams
11/30	Plymouth	350+	12/10	Newbypt H.	70	T. Wetmore
12/5	P.I.	250	12/25	Gloucester	28	P. + F. Vale
12/12	Dennis (Corp. B.)	235	Barrow's Goldeneye			
12/22	Winthrop	400+	11/9	Ipswich	1	BBC (I. Giriunas)
12/27	Boston	1011	12/8	S. Quabbin	1 m	M. Faherty
Harlequin Duck			12/12	Nantucket	2	E. Ray
11/3	S. Boston	1 m	12/14	E. Falmouth	1 m	(CBC) B. Nikula#
11/9	Eastham	1	12/19-21	Scituate	1 m	C. Dalton + v.o.
11/9	P.I.	1 f	12/23	P.I.	1 f	J. Berry
11/21	Marblehead	3	12/29	Cotuit	3 m, 1f	G. Gove
11/30	N. Scituate	17	Hooded Merganser			
12/8	Rockport	63	11/3	Pittsfield (Pont.)	160	T. Gagnon#
12/10	Winthrop	1 m	11/8	Quabbin (G40)	67	C. Buelow
12/21	Marshfield	1 m	11/10	Worcester	302	M. Lynch#
Surf Scoter			11/10	Cheshire	70	S. Surner
11/2	S. Quabbin	1 f	11/10	Falmouth	60	G. d'Entremont
11/2, 12/8	Nahant	38, 11	11/18	Brockton	78	M. Faherty
11/3	Windsor	2	11/25	P.I.	72	R. Heil
11/3	Stockbridge	2	11/26	Lincoln	182	M. Rines
11/3	Pittsfield (Pont.)	7	11/29	Ayer	60	E. Stromsted#
11/16, 17	Rockport (A.P.)	1195, 3800	11/30	Plymouth	75	D. Furbish
11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	318	12/4	Eastham	89	D. Silverstein#
11/17	P'town (R.P.)	312	12/7	Mashpee	96	J. Trimble
12/9	Plymouth	15+	12/8	W. Quabbin	153	T. Gagnon#
12/27	Boston	51	12/29	Wachusett Res.	65	S. Sutton
White-winged Scoter			Red-breasted Merganser			
11/2, 12/8	Nahant	600, 320	11/3	Boston	210	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/3	Stockbridge	2	11/3	E. Gloucester	80+	J. Berry
11/10	Lynnfield	5	11/7	Dennis (Corp. B.)	178	P. Flood
11/16, 17	Rockport (A.P.)	1280, 1050	11/16	P'town	1500	B. Nikula#
11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	410	11/17	Rockport (A.P.)	860	R. Heil
11/17	P'town (R.P.)	275	11/17	Dennis (Corp. B.)	725	B. Nikula#

Red-breasted Merganser (continued)

11/17	Eastham (F.E.)	425	J. Trimble#
11/17	P'town (R.P.)	195	J. Trimble#
11/25	P.I.	525	R. Heil
11/30	Westport	420	E. Nielsen
12/1	Rockport (A.P.)	30	J. Hoye#
12/8	Quabbin	5	T. Gagnon

Common Merganser

11/9	Wakefield	140+	P. + F. Vale
11/10	Pittsfield (Pont.)	60	S. Surner
11/13	Ludlow	90	H. Allen
11/16	Worcester	282	M. Lynch#
11/19	Lincoln	277	M. Rines
11/28	Sterling	134	M. Lynch#
12/8, 29	Arlington	176, 111	M. Rines
12/14	Athol	1506	CBC
12/18	Plymouth	400+	C. Dalton
12/29	Wachusett Res.	60	S. Sutton

Ruddy Duck

11/2	Marlboro	382	B. Volkle
11/3	Pittsfield (Mud Pd)	20	Hoffmann Club
11/3	Boston	53	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/4, 12/2	W. Newbury (C.H.)	380, 68	R. Heil
11/11	Randolph	76	R. Titus
11/13	Ludlow	46	H. Allen
11/20	Cambr. (F.P.)	84	B. Miller
11/20	Randolph	70	R. Titus
11/21	Melrose	142	D. + I. Jewell
11/26	Richmond	21	T. Collins
11/28	Brookline	25	E. Taylor
11/30	Westport	160	E. Nielsen
12/4	Eastham	50	D. Silverstein#
12/8	Nahant	22	L. Pivacek

Osprey

11/2	W. Newbury	1	D. Chickering
11/2	Cambr. (F.P.)	1	M. Tingley#
11/3	Wakefield	1	BBC (D. Williams)
11/3	Stockbridge	1	T. Gagnon#
11/15	Northampton	1	A. Magee
11/24	Falmouth	1	R. Heil
11/28	Sturbridge	1	D. Cabral
12/1	Lakeville	1	M. Faherty#
12/28	Quabbin CBC	1	CBC (Wilson + Emerson)

Bald Eagle

11/1-12/17	Granville	33	J. Weeks
11/2	Clinton	1	B. Volkle
11/2	Chatham (M.I.)	1 imm	D. Manchester#
11/2-26	Barre Falls	5	EMHW (B. Kamp)
11/3	Sunderland	1 ad	M. Williams
11/16	Haverhill	1	B. Landry
11/18	Turners Falls	1 ad	M. Taylor
11/24	Westport	1 2W	R. Heil
11/24	Bourne	1 ad	J. Young
11/24	Gardner	1 juv	T. Pirro
11/25	Mansfield	1 ad	K. Ryan
11/29	W. Boylston	1 imm	R. Stymeist
11/30, 12/31	Northampton	2 ad	Gentes, Taylor
12/8	Wachusett Res.	2 imm	S. Moore#
12/8	W. Quabbin	6	M. Lynch#
12/8-26, 27-31	Arlington	1 ad, 2 ad	A. Ankers#
12/10	Lakeville	3 ad, 1 imm	K. Ryan
12/15	Lenox	1	CBC (T. Collins)
12/15	New Braintree	1 ad	C. Buelow
12/18	Plymouth	1 ad	C. Dalton
12/21	S. Quabbin	9	J. Hoye#
12/31	Salisbury	1 ad	T. Wetmore

Northern Harrier

11/1-12/17	Granville	8	J. Weeks
11/1-15	Chatham (M.I.)	7	D. Manchester#
11/3, 12/5	DWWS	5, 9	D. Furbish
11/5	P.I.	11	R. Heil
11/9	Newbury	4	P. Roberts#
11/11	W. Roxbury	2	A. Joslin
11/23	Cumb. Farms	4	J. Sweeney
12/7	Bridgewater	2 f	C. Buelow
12/8	Duxbury B.	3	D. Furbish#
12/9	W. Bridgewater	2	K. Anderson
12/10	Westport	3	V. Zollo

Sharp-shinned Hawk

11/1-14	Chatham (M.I.)	69 total	D. Manchester#
11/1-12/17	Granville	19	J. Weeks
11/2-26	Barre Falls	31	EMHW (B. Kamp)
11/9	Westport	2	J. Hoye#
11/9	Lexington	2	M. Rines#
12/20	Plymouth	2	R. Titus

Cooper's Hawk

11/1-12/17	Granville	13	J. Weeks
11/2	Lexington	2	M. Rines#
11/2	Medford	2 ad	R. LaFontaine#
11/25	Chatham (M.I.)	2	D. Manchester#
11/25	E. Sandwich	2	D. Manchester
11/26	Barre Falls	4	EMHW (B. Kamp)
11/29	Gloucester	3 imm	G. d'Entremont#
11/30	Northampton	2	C. Gentes
11/30	DWWS	2	G. d'Entremont
12/1	Bridgewater	3	J. Sweeney
12/7	W. Bridgewater	2	C. Buelow#

Northern Goshawk

11/1	Barre Falls	2	EMHW (B. Kamp)
11/3	Richmond	1	T. Gagnon#
11/3	Lenox	1	R. Wheeler
11/5, 8	Granville	1, 1	J. Weeks#
11/10	Windsor	1	T. Gagnon
11/26	Barre Falls	5	EMHW (B. Kamp)
11/28	Cumb. Farms	1	K. Anderson#
12/9	Barre Falls	1 ad	EMHW (B. Kamp)
12/30	Brookline	1	H. Wiggin

Red-shouldered Hawk

11/2-12/17	Barre Falls	28	EMHW (B. Kamp)
11/3	DWWS	1	D. Furbish
11/5-30	Granville	17	J. Weeks
12/6	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg
12/7	Pittsfield	1	T. Gagnon
12/10	Lakeville	3	K. Ryan
12/11	Norton	2	K. Ryan
12/13	Stoughton	2	D. Cabral
12/15	S. Hadley	1	W. Lafley
12/18	Easton	1	D. Cabral

Red-tailed Hawk

11/1-12/17	Granville	341	J. Weeks
11/2-26	Barre Falls	157	EMHW (B. Kamp)
11/3	Pittsfield	17 migr	T. Gagnon#
11/20	DWWS	6	D. Furbish
11/24	Gardner	14 ad	T. Pirro
12/28	W. Newbury	6	P. + F. Vale

Rough-legged Hawk

thr	P.I.	1-6	T. Wetmore
11/2	Barre Falls	1 lt	EMHW (B. Kamp)
11/2	Barnstable	1 dk	J. Young#
11/2	Salisbury	1	K. Goldin
11/3, 12/5	DWWS	2, 7	D. Furbish
11/5	Chatham (M.I.)	1	D. Manchester#
11/10	Newbury	3	B. Volkle
11/15	Grafton	1 dk	D. Freeland
11/20	Middleboro	3	K. Ryan
11/23, 12/3	Granville	1, 1	J. Weeks
11/26	Leominster	1	C. Caron
11/30	Northampton	1 ad lt	C. Gentes
11/30	Boston	1 lt	G. d'Entremont
12/1	S. Quabbin	1	L. Berger
12/5	W. Bridgewater	2	K. Anderson
12/23	E. Sandwich	1 lt	D. Manchester

Golden Eagle

11/2	S. Quabbin	1 imm	M. Lynch#
12/21	S. Quabbin	1	J. Hoye#

American Kestrel

thr Reports of indiv. from 17 locations

Merlin

11/2	P.I.	2	P. + F. Vale
11/1, 2, 19	Chatham (M.I.)	2, 2, 1	D. Manchester#
11/10	Rockport (H.P.)	1	C. Caron#

Peregrine Falcon

11/1	Gay Head	2	V. Laux#
11/3	Boston	5	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/9	P.I.	3	P. Roberts#

Peregrine Falcon (continued)				11/2, 25	P.I.	67, 1	Vale, Heil
11/2, 5, 15 Chatham (M.I.)	1, 1, 1	D. Manchester#		11/3, 24	Edgartown	15, 4	V. Laux#
11/20 Lawrence	2	J. Hogan		11/3	Pittsfield (Pont.)	1	Hoffmann Club
11/23, 12/31 Northampton	2, 1	T. Gagnon		11/7, 19	Waltham	10, 1	M. Rines
11/28, 12/21 Worcester	2, 1	M. Lynch#		11/9	Eastham (F.E.)	6	G. Hirth
12/7 Nahant	2	D. Wilkinson		11/14	Chatham (M.I.)	21	D. Manchester#
12/15 Amherst	3	D. Ziomek		11/17	Winthrop	5	P. + F. Vale
12/22 P.I.	1 imm	R. Heil		11/24	Quabbin	1	Hampshire Club
thr Reports of indiv. from 14 locations							
<b>Gyr Falcon *</b>					Lesser Yellowlegs		
12/13-31 Boston	1 ph	R. Donovan + v.o.		11/2	P.I.	4	P. + F. Vale
				11/25	Newbypt	1	R. Heil
<b>Ruffed Grouse</b>					Solitary Sandpiper		
11/4 Hardwick	1	C. Buelow		11/24	Westport	1	R. Heil
11/7 Sherborn	2	E. Taylor			Spotted Sandpiper		
11/8 Quabbin (G40)	2	C. Buelow		11/3	Cheshire	1	R. Packard
11/15 Granville	1	J. Weeks			Hudsonian Godwit		
12/8 W. Boylston	1	S. Sutton		11/1, 23	P.I.	2	Wetmore, Hoye
<b>Wild Turkey</b>				11/2	Barnstable	2	J. Young
11/thr DWWS	2	D. Furbish		11/3	Essex	1	D. Brown
11/2, 12 Westminster	11, 18	C. Caron		11/11	Ipswich	2	R. Heil
11/4 New Salem	6	C. Buelow		11/19	Fairhaven	1	M. Boucher
11/4-22 P.I.	1	v.o.			Ruddy Turnstone		
11/23 Templeton	133	T. Pirro		11/10	Sandwich	13	J. Kricher
11/24 Quabbin	16	T. Gagnon#		11/24-12/15	P.I.	1	T. Wetmore
11/26 Amherst	40	J. Gawienowski		11/30, 12/7	Chatham (S.B.)	4, 2	B. Nikula
12/1 Easton	9	K. Ryan		12/27	N. Scituate	1	C. Dalton
12/4 Westfield	40	S. Kellogg		12/28	Gloucester	15	S. Leonard
12/11 Rowley	8	J. Berry#			Red Knot		
<b>Northern Bobwhite</b>				11/24	Edgartown	1	V. Laux#
12/19 Eastham (F.H.)	9	R. Heil		11/30, 12/7	Chatham (S.B.)	65, 60	B. Nikula
<b>Virginia Rail</b>				12/19	Scituate	2	C. Dalton
12/5 P.I.	1	T. Wetmore			Sanderling		
12/13 W. Harwich	1	CCBC (M. Dettrey)		11/5	P.I.	400	R. Heil
12/22 Newbypt	1	R. Heil		11/7, 12/12	Dennis (Corp. B.)	300, 60	P. Flood
<b>Common Moorhen</b>				11/9	N. Monomoy	800	B. Nikula
11/1-10 Lenox	1	v.o.		11/15	Lynn/Nahant	575	R. Heil
<b>American Coot</b>				11/24	P.I.	130+	P. Roberts
11/2 Gloucester (E.P.)	1	J. Nelson		11/24	Edgartown	400	V. Laux#
11/11 Woburn	11	M. Rines		11/30, 12/7	Chatham (S.B.)	900, 500	B. Nikula
11/20 Camb. (F.P.)	17	B. Miller		12/1	Winthrop	300+ BBC (R. Stymeist)	R. Heil
12/20 Medford	8	A. Ankers		12/10	Revere	500	R. Heil
12/21 Arlington	6	K. Hartel			Semipalmated Sandpiper		
12/29 Plymouth	7	G. d'Entremont		11/2	Salisbury	2	D. Chickering
<b>Sandhill Crane</b>				11/2	P'town	3	J. Kricher
11/9 Granville	1	J. Weeks		11/5	P.I.	10	R. Heil
<b>Black-bellied Plover</b>					Western Sandpiper		
11/1 Quabbin (G40)	8	T. Gagnon		11/5	P.I.	2	R. Heil
11/2 Salisbury	9	P. + F. Vale		11/30, 12/7	Chatham (S.B.)	3, 2	B. Nikula
11/5, 11/22 P.I.	82, 10	Heil, Wetmore		12/15	Chatham (S.B.)	3	(CBC) P. Flood
11/5 Chatham (M.I.)	30	D. Manchester#			White-rumped Sandpiper		
11/9 N. Monomoy	370	B. Nikula		11/1	Quabbin (G40)	1	T. Gagnon
11/24 Plymouth (Saquish)	6	E. Neumuth#		11/3	Pittsfield (Pont.)	1	T. Gagnon#
11/30, 12/7 Chatham (S.B.)	130, 75	B. Nikula		11/5, 25	P.I.	24, 21	R. Heil
<b>American Golden-Plover</b>				11/9	Ipswich	2	J. Berry#
11/1-22 P.I.	1-2	T. Wetmore		11/13	Lincoln	5	M. Rines
11/9 E. Quabbin	1	A. Magee		11/24	Edgartown	1	V. Laux#
<b>Semipalmated Plover</b>				12/15	Eastham (CGB)	1	(CBC) W. Petersen#
11/5 P.I.	68	R. Heil			Pectoral Sandpiper		
11/5 Sandwich	2	J. Kricher		11/2	P'town	5	J. Kricher
11/9 Hyannis	6	C. Buelow		11/3	Cumb.Farms	20	BBC (E. Giles)
11/9 N. Monomoy	9	B. Nikula		11/4	Newbury	6	R. Heil
11/10 Gloucester	4	C. Caron#		11/5	P.I.	3	R. Heil
11/19 Essex	2	J. Soucy#		11/9	Hyannis	3	C. Buelow
<b>Piping Plover</b>				11/10	Pittsfield (Pont.)	5	S. Surner
11/30 Chatham (S.B.)	2	B. Nikula		11/11	Ipswich	7	R. Heil
<b>Killdeer</b>				11/13	Lincoln	2	M. Rines
11/1 Harvard	3	S. Sutton			Purple Sandpiper		
11/2 Whately	8	M. Lynch#		11/9	Westport	14	J. Hoye#
11/2 Winchester	5	R. LaFontaine#		11/13	Dennis (Corp. B.)	1	B. Nikula
11/9 Northampton	4	S. Surner		11/23	Rockport	100	S. Sutton
11/10 Ipswich	3	C. Caron#		11/24, 12/15	P.I.	3, 3	T. Wetmore
12/8 E. Sandwich	3	D. Manchester		11/24	Plymouth	5	E. Neumuth
12/9 Fairhaven	1	V. Zollo		11/29	Salisbury	15	D. Bates#
12/20 Plymouth	1	R. Titus		11/30	N. Scituate	30+	C. Nims
<b>American Oystercatcher</b>				12/25	Nahant	70	R. Heil
11/3, 17 Edgartown	12, 3	V. Laux#			Dunlin		
<b>Greater Yellowlegs</b>				11/1	Quabbin (G40)	68	T. Gagnon
11/1 Quabbin (G40)	7	T. Gagnon		11/3	Stockbridge	1	H. Allen

<b>Dunlin (continued)</b>				<b>Bonaparte's Gull</b>			
11/9	N. Monomoy	950	B. Nikula	11/3	Waltham	1	M. Rines
11/10	Lincoln	7	M. Rines	11/4	Ipswich	800+	R. Heil
11/24	Plymouth	80+	E. Neumuth#	11/9	N. Monomoy	170	B. Nikula
11/25	P.I.	1350	R. Heil	11/13, 17	Dennis (Corp. B.)	920, 1630	B. Nikula
11/30, 12/7	Chatham (S.B.)	3000, 2500	B. Nikula	11/13, 12/11	Rockport (A.P.)	415, 200	R. Heil
12/10	Revere	130	R. Heil	11/14	Eastham (F.E.)	590	B. Nikula
12/15	Rockport (A.P.)	165	R. Heil	11/15	Lynn/Nahant	1640	R. Heil
12/29	Plymouth	500	G. d'Entremont	11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	1291	J. Trimble#
<b>Dowitcher species</b>				11/25	Edgartown	200+	V. Laux
11/2	Salisbury	1	P. + F. Vale	11/30	Westport	290	E. Nielsen
11/5	P.I.	5	R. Heil	12/1	Wellfleet H.	200	B. Nikula
<b>Wilson's Snipe</b>				12/30	Nantucket	3500+	F. Gallo
11/3	Northbridge	12	M. Lynch#	<b>Iceland Gull</b>			
11/4	Newbury	7	R. Heil	11/11-23	Gardner	1 1W	T. Pirro
11/9, 26	Southwick	3, 2	S. Kellogg	11/16, 22	Rockport (A.P.)	1 1W	R. Heil
11/10	Whately	7	R. Packard	11/20, 12/13	Turners Falls	1	W. Laflay
11/10	Ipswich	4	F. Bouchard	11/27	P.I.	1 1W	B. Stevens
11/17	Pittsfield	1	G. Shampang	12/8	Salisbury	1 1W	G. Tepke#
12/4	Newbypt	8	D. Larson	12/8	Gloucester	1 1W	T. Pirro
12/8	E. Sandwich	2	D. Manchester	12/9, 15	Northampton	1	T. Gagnon
<b>American Woodcock</b>				12/11, 15	Rockport (A.P.)	4, 6	R. Heil
11/2	Methuen	2	R. Stymeist#	12/12	Taunton	1 1W	J. Sweeney
11/6	Hadley	1	H. Allen	12/13	Turners Falls	2	W. Laflay
11/6	Medford	1	M. Rines	12/14	Agawam	1	S. Kellogg
11/23	W. Springfield	1	T. Roberts	12/16	Gill	1 juv	M. Taylor
12/7	Winchester	1	A. Ankers	12/19	Newbypt	1 ad	T. Wetmore
<b>Red Phalarope</b>				12/28	P'town	1	J. Young#
11/18	Eastham (F.E.)	135	R. Heil	12/30	Nantucket	15	F. Gallo
<b>Phalarope species</b>				<b>Lesser Black-backed Gull</b>			
11/7	Eastham (F.E.)	21	B. Nikula	thr	Boston	1	R. Stymeist#
<b>Skua species (no details) *</b>				11/3	Chatham (S.B.)	1	R. Donovan
11/7	Eastham (F.E.)	1	B. Nikula	11/17	P'town (R.P.)	1 ad	J. Trimble#
11/17	Rockport (A.P.)	1	R. Heil	11/19, 12/1	Plymouth	1, 2	Ludlow, Faherty
<b>Pomarine Jaeger</b>				11/21	Chatham	1 ad	J. Kricher
11/6, 16	P'town (R.P.)	2, 2	Flood, Nikula	11/24, 12/30	Nantucket	41, 12	Kennedy, Gallo
11/6, 13	Rockport (A.P.)	77, 12	R. Heil	12/8-22	Newbypt	1 4W	R. Heil
11/7, 14	Eastham (F.E.)	55, 4	B. Nikula	12/14	Longmeadow	2	J. Faucher
11/16, 17	Rockport (A.P.)	29, 107	R. Heil	12/31	Boston	1	S. Moore
11/17, 27	P'town (R.P.)	11, 1	Trimble, Flood	<b>Glaucous Gull</b>			
11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	1	J. Trimble#	12/4	Gloucester	1 1W	N. Soulette#
11/18	Eastham (F.E.)	102	R. Heil	12/11	Rockport (A.P.)	1 1W	R. Heil
12/11, 12	Rockport (A.P.)	10, 24	R. Heil	12/19	P'town (R.P.)	1 ad	C. Tessaglia
12/17, 26	Eastham (F.E.)	8, 6	Nikula, Bonomo	<b>Great Black-backed Gull</b>			
12/26	Dennis	21	(CBC) P. Flood#	11/16	P'town	2000+	B. Nikula#
<b>Parasitic Jaeger</b>				<b>Black-legged Kittiwake</b>			
11/18	Eastham (F.E.)	1	W. Petersen#	11/3	Chatham (S.B.)	75	R. Donovan
<b>Jaeger species</b>				11/6, 16	Rockport (A.P.)	1675, 1320	R. Heil
11/7, 14	Eastham (F.E.)	25, 5	B. Nikula	11/7, 12/12	Dennis (Corp. B.)	996, 260	P. Flood
11/16, 17	P'town (R.P.)	4, 6	Nikula, Trimble	11/7, 14	Eastham (F.E.)	3500, 240	B. Nikula
<b>Laughing Gull</b>				11/16, 12/25	P'town (R.P.)	495, 140	B. Nikula#
11/6	Rockport (A.P.)	3 ads	R. Heil	11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	418	J. Trimble#
11/9	Dennis (Corp. B.)	12	G. Hirth	11/17	Rockport (A.P.)	1600	R. Heil
11/9	Westport	6	J. Hoye#	12/8	E. Orleans	150	B. Nikula#
11/9	Sandwich	87	J. Kricher	12/11, 14	Rockport (A.P.)	700, 1500	R. Heil
11/15	Marblehead	2 ad	R. Heil	12/17	Eastham (F.E.)	130	B. Nikula
11/17	P'town (R.P.)	1 ad	J. Trimble#	12/25	N. Truro	135	B. Nikula
11/24	Nantucket	1	B. Kennedy	<b>Roseate Tern</b>			
11/24	Westport	2	W. Petersen	11/17	Oak Bluffs	1 ad	V. Laux#
11/25	Edgartown	5	V. Laux#	<b>Common Tern</b>			
<b>Little Gull</b>				11/3	Eastham (CGB)	15	B. Nikula
11/3	Chatham (S.B.)	1	R. Donovan	11/3	Chatham (S.B.)	4	R. Donovan
11/5	Vineyard Haven	1	A. Keith	11/6	Rockport (A.P.)	1	R. Heil
11/9	N. Monomoy	1 1W	B. Nikula	11/9	Westport	1	J. Hoye#
11/10	Newbypt	1	D. Chickering	11/9	Sandwich	1	J. Kricher
11/13, 16	Rockport (A.P.)	2, 2	R. Heil	11/14, 18	Eastham (F.E.)	16, 4	B. Nikula
11/14	Eastham (F.E.)	2	B. Nikula	11/23, 12/1	Wellfleet H.	6, 1	B. Nikula#
11/15	Lynn	1 ad.	R. Heil	<b>Forster's Tern</b>			
11/17, 24	Dennis (Corp. B.)	4, 1	B. Nikula#	11/3	Eastham (CGB)	8+	B. Nikula
11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	3	J. Trimble#	11/3	Chatham (S.B.)	12	R. Donovan
11/24, 12/30	Nantucket	12, 13	Kennedy, Gallo	11/7	Dennis (Corp. B.)	3	P. Flood
<b>Black-headed Gull</b>				11/9	N. Monomoy	3	B. Nikula
11/9	Salisbury	2	M. Resch	11/23	Wellfleet H.	2	B. Nikula#
11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	1 ad	J. Trimble#	11/24	Westport	1	R. Heil
12/17	Milford	1	G. Gove	11/25	Edgartown	2	V. Laux
12/29	Osterville	1	G. Gove	12/10	Nantucket	1	B. Kennedy
12/30	Nantucket	1 1W	F. Gallo	<b>Dovekie</b>			
				11/14	Eastham (F.E.)	1	B. Nikula

Dovekie (continued)			Black Guillemot				
11/17, 12/25	P'town (R.P.)	8, 17	Trimble, Nikula	11/6	Rockport (A.P.)	7	R. Heil
11/24, 12/14	Rockport (A.P.)	2	Griffith, Leahy	11/13, 12/12	Rockport (A.P.)	11, 17	R. Heil
12/19	Cape Cod Bay	4	C. Tessaglia	12/7	Gloucester (B.R.)	10	G. Tepke#
12/26	Eastham (F.E.)	20	N. Bonomo	12/19	Hull	32	C. Dalton
Common Murre				12/21	Gloucester (B.R.)	25	P. + F. Vale
11/6, 16	Rockport (A.P.)	1, 2	R. Heil	12/25	P'town (R.P.), N. Truro	2, 2	B. Nikula
12/11, 12	Rockport (A.P.)	27, 420	R. Heil	12/27	Marblehead	2	K. Haley
Thick-billed Murre				12/28	P.I.	11	P. + F. Vale
11/6, 16	Rockport (A.P.)	4, 12	R. Heil	12/29	Marshfield	2	G. d'Entremont
11/17, 12/12	Rockport (A.P.)	11, 14	R. Heil	Atlantic Puffin			
11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	2	J. Trimble#	11/6, 13	Rockport (A.P.)	4, 1	R. Heil
11/23	P'town H.	1	J. Young	11/17	P'town (R.P.)	2	J. Trimble#
12/26	Eastham (F.E.)	2	N. Bonomo	12/11, 12	Rockport (A.P.)	3, 1	R. Heil
Razorbill				12/17	Eastham (F.E.)	1	B. Nikula
11/6, 22	Rockport (A.P.)	243, 511	R. Heil	Large alcid species			
11/7, 12/12	Dennis (Corp. B.)	1, 650	P. Flood	11/14, 12/17	Eastham (F.E.)	135, 130	B. Nikula
11/14, 12/26	Eastham (F.E.)	30	Nikula, Bonomo	11/16, 12/25	P'town (R.P.)	180, 290	B. Nikula#
11/16, 17	P'town (R.P.)	135, 158	Nikula, Trimble	12/8	E. Orleans	500	B. Nikula#
11/25	Edgartown	30+	V. Laux	12/12	Dennis (Corp. B.)	800+	P. Flood
12/12, 15	Rockport (A.P.)	1180, 1410	R. Heil	12/12	Rockport (A.P.)	1800+	R. Heil
12/22	P.I.	210	R. Heil	12/15	P.I.	45	T. Wetmore
12/23, 25	P'town (R.P.)	350, 400	Brissette, Nikula	12/25	Nahant	60	R. Heil
12/25	N. Truro	110	B. Nikula	12/26	Eastham (F.E.)	2250	N. Bonomo
12/25	Nahant	375	R. Heil				

## DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

The bird of the month, a **Calliope Hummingbird**, was first identified on the Cape Cod CBC on Sunday, December 15. This bird had been present since early November, and the homeowner had thought it was a Ruby-throat. It came to the attention of local birders on December 9, who assumed it would be a *Selasphorus* hummingbird, the more likely species at this time of year. The homeowner did not want birders disturbing the bird but agreed to let a group visit during the Christmas Bird Count on December 15, at which time it was identified as a Calliope. Other groups were allowed to visit on December 17 and 19 and photographs were taken. The bird, if accepted by the MARC, will be the first record for Massachusetts. It was just last December that two Calliope Hummingbirds were discovered in New York City, establishing a first record for New York state. This November both Ohio and Pennsylvania confirmed their first Calliope Hummingbirds as well.

The Calliope Hummingbird has some pretty stiff competition for the bird of the month. A **Cassin's Kingbird**, already accepted by the MARC, was discovered in Whately on November 1 but only remained until November 2. It was most cooperative, allowing close views and photographs, and many observers were able to really see the paler wing coverts and hear the distinctive calls. A *Tyrannus* flycatcher was discovered feeding on euonymus berries in North Falmouth on December 2, but it could not be relocated the following day despite a careful search by many birders. It was reported as a Thick-billed Kingbird, but was eventually not accepted by the MARC because the report could not definitively eliminate other similar species such as Gray, Giant, or Loggerhead Kingbird. *Bird Observer* does not normally publish reports which have not been accepted by the MARC. However, this record almost certainly represented one of the four above mentioned *Tyrannus* flycatcher species, and while its actual identity remains a mystery, it nevertheless warrants publication.

Another fine flycatcher, a **Say's Phoebe**, was seen catching insects under the eaves of a Berkshire Community College building in Pittsfield, where it remained for the day, allowing a few local birders to see it; this is just the third western Massachusetts record for this species, the previous one on September 18, 2002, in Northampton.

On Saturday, November 23, there was a major fallout of Cave Swallows along the Connecticut coast with over 100 seen at Lighthouse Point. The next day several unidentified swallows were reported on Plum Island and in Dennis. Details reported by the observers were suggestive of Cave Swallow, but these birds evaded definitive views. In light of all the recent

reports of this species from New Jersey and New York, it is likely to be just a matter of time before we can add this bird to the state list. Unfortunately the observers could not be sure of the identification and, like the Red Sox, we will have to wait until next year.

Two additional *Selasphorus* hummingbirds were found during the period, including a second bird visiting a feeder in Newbury. This brings the total number of vagrant hummingbirds this fall to ten individuals, a veritable invasion. A **Varied Thrush** was banded at Manomet in early November, a bit earlier than most records for this species in the state. Rounding out the more unusual species noted during the period was a female **Brewer's Blackbird** found in Ipswich, just the second record for Essex County, the only other record being in South Peabody on September 27, 1980. A first-year male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** spent a few days in West Bridgewater.

Despite the cold and snow several species lingered beyond their normal migration date. The most unusual was a White-eyed Vireo found in West Gloucester on December 5th, just the third December record for this species in Massachusetts. The other records were of a bird on the Buzzards' Bay CBC on 12/15/79 and another in Chilmark on 12/26/94. Other late birds included Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Magnolia, and Black-and-white warblers, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. In recent years there have been an increasing number of summer residents which linger well beyond their normal migration date. This year these include Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Eastern Phoebes, Tree Swallows, and Chipping Sparrows.

On the down side, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, and especially Purple Finches were recorded in much lower than normal numbers, and there was no indication of any sort of winter finch invasion, with just a scattering of Evening Grosbeaks noted. Many observers remarked on the much lower numbers of the more common birds such as chickadees and nuthatches in their areas, and folks also commented on the scarcity of birds coming to their feeders.

*R. Stymeist*

Mourning Dove			12/15	Nantucket	1	E. Ray	
12/5	W. Bridgewater	550+		12/21	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg
Eastern Screech-Owl			12/23	Lexington	1	M. Rines	
thr	Reports of indiv. from 10 locations		12/29	Petersham	1	W. Lafley	
Great Horned Owl				<b>Calliope Hummingbird</b> (details submitted) *			
thr	Reports of indiv. from 11 locations			thr	Eastham 1 ph	J. Kricher, A. Fuller + v.o.	
12/10	Hardwick	3		<i>Selasphorus</i> species			
12/16	Bradford	2		11/1-7, 8-25	Newbury	1, 2	R. Stichter
Snowy Owl				12/1	E. Bridgewater	1	R. + F. Ellis
11/26	Salisbury	1		Belted Kingfisher			
12/13	P.I.	1		11/10	Falmouth	2	G. d'Entremont
Barred Owl				11/10	Worcester	4	M. Lynch#
11/16	DWWS	1		12/15	New Braintree	2	C. Buelow
11/20	Granville	1		Red-headed Woodpecker			
11/22	Quabbin (G40)	1		11/5	Chatham (M.I.)	1	D. Manchester#
12/6	Ashfield	1		12/29	Greenfield	1	CBC
12/10	Hardwick	3		Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			
Long-eared Owl				11/6	Medford	1	M. Rines
11/thr	DWWS	2		11/30-12/31	Mt.A.	1-2	R. Stymeist#
12/4	P.I.	1		12/4	Boston (A.A.)	2 m	A. Joslin
12/11	Rowley	1		12/14	Longmeadow	1	J. Faucher
12/21	Salisbury	1		12/15	Williamsburg	1	R. Packard
Short-eared Owl				12/17	Westport	1	M. Boucher
11/2	Rockport (A.P.)	1		12/29	Greenfield	1	CBC (T. Gagnon)
11/19	Dartmouth (A.P.)	1		Hairy Woodpecker			
11/26	Salisbury	1		11/21	Townsend	3	R. Stymeist
12/13	P.I.	1		11/21	Ashby	2	R. Stymeist
12/14	Nantucket	2		11/thr	Maynard	4	L. Nachtrab
12/17	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	1		Northern Flicker			
12/27	Eastham (F.H.)	1		11/28	Mt.A.	5	R. Stymeist
12/29	DWWS	1		11/29	WBWS	7	M. Dettrey#
12/30	Nahant	1		12/4	Dennisport	4	D. Silverstein#
Northern Saw-whet Owl				12/13	P.I.	3	T. Wetmore
11/1-15	Williamstown	17 b		12/15	New Braintree	4	C. Buelow
11/23	Brimfield	1		Pileated Woodpecker			
11/28	Monson	1		11/5	Sunderland	1	M. Williams

Pileated Woodpecker (continued)				12/4	W. Northfield	80	M. Taylor
11/14	Gardner	1	T. Pirro	Tree Swallow			
11/19	Granville	1	J. Weeks	11/5	Chappaquiddick	5000	A. Keith#
11/21	Ashby	2	R. Stymeist	11/25	P.I.	3	T. Wetmore
11/21	Brimfield	1	I. Lynch	12/1	Barnstable	1	J. Trimble
11/25	Quabbin (G37)	2	C. Buelow	12/8	Hatchville	22	P. Kyle#
12/8	Hardwick	1	C. Buelow	12/8, 24	Falmouth	130, 5	Trimble, Silverstein
Eastern Phoebe				Northern Rough-winged Swallow			
11/2	Arlington	1	R. LaFontaine#	11/9	Sandwich	1	J. Kricher
11/2	Holyoke	1	J. LaPointe	Tufted Titmouse			
11/3	GMNWR	1	MAS (J. Liller)	11/14	M.V.	1	O. Spalding#
11/3	Lanesboro	1	R. Packard	Red-breasted Nuthatch			
11/5	Wayland	1	A. McCarthy#	12/8	W. Quabbin	5	M. Lynch#
11/20	Barre Falls	1	B. Kamp#	12/8	Wachusett Res.	2	S. Moore#
11/23	E. Middleboro	1	K. Anderson	12/29	W. Boylston	3+	S. Sutton
11/26	DWWS	1	D. Furbish#	12/30	Montague	3	C. Buelow
11/26	Williamsburg	1	G. LeBaron	Brown Creeper			
12/9-31	Wayland	1	G. Long#	11/5	Wakefield	2	F. Vale
12/28	Quabbin	1	CBC	11/21	Townsend	4	R. Stymeist
Say's Phoebe (details submitted) *				11/23	Medford	2	R. LaFontaine
11/6	Pittsfield	1	R. Ferren#	12/8	W. Quabbin	2	M. Lynch#
Cassin's Kingbird (accepted by MARC) *				12/15	Petersham	2	C. Buelow
11/1-2	Whately	1	B. Packard+ v.o.	12/28	Sudbury	4	E. Salmela
Thick-billed Kingbird (Not accepted by MARC) *				Carolina Wren			
12/2	Falmouth	1	I. Nisbet	11/3	Northbridge	5	M. Lynch#
Northern Shrike				11/3	Boston	12	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/1, 26	Barre Falls	1	B. Kamp#	11/9	Westport	12	J. Hoyer#
11/9-12/31	P.I.	1	D. Chickering#	11/9	Lexington	9	M. Rines#
11/9, 12/22	Carlisle	1	D. + T. Brownrigg	11/10	Worcester	7	M. Lynch#
11/15-12/31	Lexington	1 imm	R. LaFontaine#	11/15	Marblehead	22	R. Heil
12/15	Baldwinville	2	T. Pirro	11/21	Unstable	6	R. Stymeist
thr	Reports of indiv. from 20 locations			12/5	Cape Ann	15	R. Heil
White-eyed Vireo				Winter Wren			
12/5	Gloucester	1 1W	R. Heil	11/15	Marblehead	5	R. Heil
Blue-headed Vireo				11/21	Ashby	2	R. Stymeist
11/8	Gay Head	1	A. Keith	11/21	Townsend	2	R. Stymeist
11/19	Plymouth	1	D. Ludlow	12/8	Hardwick	3	C. Buelow
Red-eyed Vireo				12/15	New Braintree	2	C. Buelow
11/1	Gay Head	1	V. Laux#	Marsh Wren			
11/15	Nantucket	1	E. Andrews	11/24	Westport	2	R. Heil
American Crow				11/25	Newbypt	1	R. Heil
11/5	Northampton	500+	M. Williams	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher			
12/26	Worcester	3500+	M. Lynch#	11/1	W. Falmouth	1	R. Vander Pyl
12/thr	Framingham	2000+	E. Taylor	Golden-crowned Kinglet			
Fish Crow				11/2	Cambr. (F.P.)	10	M. Tingley#
11/3	Boston	20	BBC (R. Stymeist)	11/3	Northbridge	6	M. Lynch#
11/14	Eastham (F.E.)	1	B. Nikula	11/4-8	Boston	10	G. Tepke
11/20	Randolph	6	R. Titus	11/9, 12/11	Hyannis	12, 18	C. Buelow
11/30	DWWS	4	D. Furbish	11/10	Worcester	7	M. Lynch#
12/15	Pittsfield	1	CBC (T. Collins)	11/11	Woburn	8	M. Rines
12/15	Northampton	4	T. Gagnon	11/23	Paxton	7	M. Lynch#
12/21	Southwick	1	J. Hutchison	11/25	Quabbin (G37)	10	C. Buelow
12/26	Worcester	2	M. Lynch#	12/8	W. Quabbin	29	M. Lynch#
12/thr	Watertown	60	R. Stymeist#	12/30	Montague	7	C. Buelow
Common Raven				Ruby-crowned Kinglet			
11/2	Whately	1	M. Williams	11/2, 14	Lexington	9, 3	M. Rines#
11/2, 12/9	Barre Falls	12, 3	B. Kamp	11/2	Holyoke	3	M. Lynch#
11/3, 12/7	Granville	5, 3	J. Weeks#	11/3, 16	Boston	13, 3	R. Stymeist
11/15, 29	W. Mansfield	1	K. Ryan	11/6	Medford	6	M. Rines
12/8	New Salem	3	M. Lynch#	11/10	Worcester	4	M. Lynch#
12/8	W. Quabbin	12	M. Lynch#	11/15	Marblehead	3	R. Heil
12/21	S. Quabbin	5	J. Hoyer#	11/20-12/31	Reports of indiv. from 13 locations		
12/23	Canton	1	V. Zollo	Eastern Bluebird			
12/23	Oakham	2	C. Buelow	11/3	DWWS	12	D. Furbish
12/29	Gardner	2	T. Pirro	11/3	Cumb.Farms	25+	BBC (E. Giles)
12/29	Wachusett Res.	2	S. Sutton	11/9	Stow	17	S. Sutton
Horned Lark				11/15	Lincoln	24	M. Rines
11/3	Chatham (S.B.)	80	R. Donovan	11/29	Warren	18	R. Stymeist
11/4	Newbury	165	R. Heil	12/4	Gill	12	M. Taylor
11/4	Katama	45	V. Laux	12/8	Hardwick	14	C. Buelow
11/5	Westminster	35	C. Caron	12/8	Newbury	10+	R. Heil
11/8, 22	Lincoln	6, 35	M. Rines	12/14	Holliston	5	J. Hoyer#
11/9, 12/9	Northampton	300, 600	Turner, Gagnon	12/24	Lexington	5	R. LaFontaine
11/11	Ipswich	350+	R. Heil	Hermit Thrush			
11/14	Granville	40	J. Weeks#	11/3	Boston	7	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/19	Groton	30	T. Pirro	11/6	Medford	8	M. Rines
11/19	Deerfield	75	B. Packard	11/19	Stoneham	5	D. + I. Jewell
11/29, 12/30	P.I.	200, 4	Bates, Wetmore	11/29, 12/29	Woburn	6, 4	M. Rines

Hermit Thrush (continued)				11/10	Falmouth	39	G. d'Entremont
12/1	Barnstable	10	J. Trimble	11/19	Chatham (M.I.)	60	D. Manchester#
12/4	Salem	2	R. Heil	11/30	S. Dart (A.Pd)	35	E. Nielsen
12/5	Gloucester	2	R. Heil	12/2	P.I.	26	D. Schell
12/17	Westport	6	M. Boucher	12/9	Fairhaven	12	V. Zollo
12/21	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg	12/10	Westport	20+	V. Zollo
12/31	Ipswich	2	J. Berry	12/14	Longmeadow	1	J. Hutchison
American Robin				12/21	Southwick	1	J. Hutchison
11/2	Methuen	10,000+	J. Hogan#	Black-throated Green Warbler			
11/9	Lexington	625	M. Rines#	11/11	Sandwich	1	M. Keleher
11/10	P'town	800	B. Nikula	Yellow-throated Warbler			
11/19	Granville	380	J. Weeks	11/8-30	Vineyard Haven	1E. + M. Sibert + v.o.	
12/4	Lakeville	554	R. Titus	Pine Warbler			
12/22	Newbypt	315	R. Heil	11/3	Rockport	1	B. Pfeiffer
12/28	Quabbin	1086	CBC	11/9	Northampton	1	C. Gentes
<b>Varied Thrush</b>				12/22	Harwich	1	M. Dettrey
11/8	Manomet	1 b	fide T. Lloyd-Evans	Palm Warbler			
Gray Catbird				11/2	Holyoke	10	H. Allen
11/9	Lexington	3	M. Rines#	11/3	Northbridge	2	M. Lynch#
11/9	Westport	4	J. Hoye#	11/11	W. Roxbury	4	A. Joslin
11/10	Falmouth	4	G. d'Entremont	11/14	Lexington	1	M. Rines
12/5	Gloucester	2	R. Heil	11/29	Falmouth	4	B. Good
12/15	Amherst	1	K. Meyer	12/7	Hyannis	1	M. Dettrey
12/21	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg	Blackpoll Warbler			
Brown Thrasher				11/1	Gay Head	1	A. Keith
11/10	Rockport	1	C. Caron#	Black-and-white Warbler			
American Pipit				12/1	Lakeville	1	M. Faherty#
11/1	Hyannis	16	C. Buelow	12/15	E. Orleans	1	(CBC) J. Trimble#
11/1	Lincoln	55	M. Rines	12/19-22	Chatham	1	J. Kenneally
11/2	Whatley	100	M. Williams	Common Yellowthroat			
11/3	Deerfield	100+	C. Buelow	11/3	GMNWR	1	MAS (J. Liller)
11/4	Katama	20+	V. Laux	11/14	Lexington	1	M. Rines
11/5	Northampton	70	M. Williams	11/25	Newbypt	1	R. Heil
11/9	Ipswich	50	BBC (I. Girunus)	12/2	Salisbury	1	R. Heil
11/11	Nantucket	50	N. Slavitz	12/27	Amherst	1	D. Minnear
11/11	Groton	50	T. Pirro	Wilson's Warbler			
11/26	Tyringham	1	T. Collins	11/9, 23	Boston	2, 1	M. Verdoes
12/29	P.I.	3	T. Wetmore	11/14	Lexington	1	M. Rines
Cedar Waxwing				Yellow-breasted Chat			
11/1	Deerfield	100	R. Packard	11/2, 12/24	Nahant	1, 1	L. Pivacek
11/1	Whatley	100	R. Packard	11/3	E. Boston	1	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/3	Richmond	150	H. Allen	11/10	Falmouth	1	G. d'Entremont
11/10	Falmouth	75	G. d'Entremont	11/18	Bradford	1	J. Lawrence
11/19	Amherst	44	M. Faherty	11/20	Concord (NAC)	1 f HY b	K. Clayton#
11/29	Warren	46	R. Stymeist	11/20	Squamot	1	P. O'Neill
12/22	Truro/Wellfleet	470	(CBC) B. Nikula#	11/29	Newbypt	1	D. Chickering
12/29	Westminster	90	T. Pirro	12/3	Marshfield	1	D. Furbish
12/30	Ashburnham	750+	T. Pirro	Eastern Towhee			
Orange-crowned Warbler				11/10	Stoneham	1 f	P. + F. Vale
11/1	Gay Head	1	V. Laux#	11/21	Mattapoisett	2	F. Smith
11/1	Brewster	1	D. Silverstein	12/thr	E. Middleboro	1 m	K. Anderson
11/3	Boston	2	BBC (R. Stymeist)	12/10	Westport	2	V. Zollo
11/9	Westport	1	J. Hoye#	12/29	Deerfield	1	T. Gagnon
11/11	Hadley	1	P. Yeskie	12/31	Wakefield	1 m	F. Vale
11/15	Marblehead	1	R. Heil	American Tree Sparrow			
11/23, 12/24	Medford	1	R. LaFontaine	11/19	Amherst	36	M. Faherty
11/24	Falmouth	1	R. Heil	11/20	Middleboro	30+	K. Ryan
12/9	Fairhaven	1	V. Zollo	11/25	P.I.	75	R. Heil
Nashville Warbler				12/1	Lakeville	35	M. Faherty#
11/1	Amherst	1	D. Minnear	12/2	Salisbury	30+	R. Heil
11/4	W. Newbury	1	R. Heil	12/2	Groton	50+	T. Pirro
11/6	Medford	1	M. Rines	12/6	Lincoln	200	M. Rines
11/9	Lexington	2	M. Rines#	12/7	Bolton Flats	380+	S. Sutton
11/10	Whatley	1	B. Packard#	12/19	Hadley	75	M. Williams
11/14	Boston	1	G. Tepke	12/31	Northampton	120	M. Taylor
11/23	Paxton	1	M. Lynch#	Chipping Sparrow			
11/24	Westport	1	R. Heil	11/2	Winchester	2	R. LaFontaine#
12/6	S. Peabody	1	R. Heil	11/17	Athol	1	D. Small
Magnolia Warbler				12/thr	Falmouth	18 max	G. Gove#
11/14	Chilmark	1	A. Keith	12/13	E. Middleboro	3	K. Anderson
Black-throated Blue Warbler				12/27	Stoughton	5	V. Zollo
11/1	Bourne	1 m	J. Kricher	Clay-colored Sparrow			
11/9	Boston	1 f	M. Verdoes	11/10	Truro	1	B. Nikula
11/14	P.I.	1 m	M. Resch	11/10-12	W. Roxbury	1	A. Joslin + v.o.
11/20	Hadley	1	P. Yeskie	12/7-30	Newbypt	1	S. Grinley + v.o.
Yellow-rumped Warbler				Field Sparrow			
11/2	Lexington	37	M. Rines#	11/4	P.I.	2	O. Spalding#
11/2	W. Boylston	12	B. Volkle	12/4	Salem	10	R. Heil

Field Sparrow (continued)				Lapland Longspur			
12/28 Truro	6	J. Young		11/3 Chatham (S.B.)	2		R. Donovan
Vesper Sparrow				11/4 Katama	2+		V. Laux
11/14 P.I.	1	T. Wetmore		11/9 N. Monomoy	9		B. Nikula
11/19 Gay Head	1	A. Keith		11/9, 27 P.I.	4, 1		Roberts, Stevens
12/11 Groton	1	T. Pirro		11/10 Worcester	1		M. Lynch#
Lark Sparrow				11/11 Ipswich	10		R. Heil
11/1 Holyoke	1 ad	B. Bieda		11/15 Northampton	4		A. Magee
Savannah Sparrow				Snow Bunting			
11/8, 12/6 Lincoln	16, 5	M. Rines		11/2, 12/28 P.I.	530, 2		P. + F. Vale
11/9 Lexington	10	M. Rines#		11/2 S. Quabbin	60		M. Lynch#
11/19 Amherst	1	M. Faherty		11/3, 21 Chatham	130, 80		Donovan, Kricher
12/6 Bridgewater	3	C. Buelow		11/4 Barre Falls	13		T. Carrolan
12/7 Salisbury	1	P. + F. Vale		11/8, 12/4 Granville	38, 35		J. Weeks#
12/9 Northampton	7	T. Gagnon		11/9 Northampton	35		S. Surner
12/19 Hadley	2	M. Williams		11/19 Deerfield	103		B. Packard
Ipswich Sparrow				11/19 Williamsburg	103		R. Packard
11/3 Eastham (CGB)	2	B. Nikula		12/14 Orange	75		Athol CBC
11/9 N. Monomoy	2	B. Nikula		12/22 Granville	17		J. Weeks#
11/10 Rockport (A.P.)	2	G. Tepke#		12/31 Salisbury	4		D. Chickering
12/7 P.I.	1	T. Wetmore		Rose-breasted Grosbeak			
12/28 Salisbury	1	F. Vale		11/10, 12/2 Nantucket	1		B. Vigneau
Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow				Indigo Bunting			
11/5 P.I.	1	R. Heil		11/14-15 Gay Head	1		A. Keith
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow				Dickcissel			
12/15 Eastham (F.H.)	1	(CBC) J. Kricher		11/3 E. Boston	1		BBC (R. Stymeist)
Fox Sparrow				11/9 Westport	1		J. Hoye#
11/1 Hadley	4	M. Williams		12/17 S. Dartmouth	1		M. Boucher
11/3 Deerfield	4	C. Buelow		Red-winged Blackbird			
11/5 Northampton	4	M. Williams		11/2 Methuen "thousands"			J. Hogan#
11/14 Lexington	10	M. Rines		11/4 Groton	2250		T. Pirro
11/18 Groton	12	T. Pirro		11/9 Northampton	100		S. Surner
11/18 Southwick	7	S. Kellogg		11/10 Concord	650		M. Rines
11/20 Upton	4	M. Paine		11/11 Ipswich	380		R. Heil
11/21 Townsend	4	R. Stymeist		11/24 Westport	1500		R. Heil
11/21, 12/14 Melrose	3, 2	D. + I. Jewell		11/29 Pepperell	100		E. Stromsted#
11/21 Ashby	3	R. Stymeist		12/6 Bridgewater	1000+		C. Buelow
11/24 Lenox	9	R. Wheeler		Eastern Meadowlark			
11/28 Malden	3	D. + I. Jewell		11/3 Deerfield	1		C. Buelow
12/1 Falmouth	4	B. Good		11/4, 24 Katama	50+, 60		V. Laux
12/8-31 Reports of indiv. from 8 locations				11/9 Chatham (M.I.)	4		D. Manchester#
Lincoln's Sparrow				11/19 Dartmouth (A.P.)	4		N. Bonomo
11/3 Cumb.Farms	1	BBC (E. Giles)		11/24 P.I.	2		P. Roberts
11/7 Lexington	1	M. Rines		11/30, 12/29 DWWS	29, 30		G. d'Entremont
11/9 Northampton	1	S. Surner		12/10 S. Dart. (A.Pd)	15		V. Zollo
11/19 Amherst	1	M. Faherty		12/14 Medway	1		J. Hoye#
11/27 P.I.	1	B. Stevens		12/14 Longmeadow	1		J. Faucher
Swamp Sparrow				12/15 Hatfield	1		M. Locher
11/3 DWWS	6	D. Furbish		12/15 Sunderland	1		A. Richards
11/30 Boston	6	G. d'Entremont		<b>Yellow-headed Blackbird</b>			
12/6 Lincoln	2	M. Rines		12/3-5 W. Bridgewater	1		R. Finch + v.o.
12/13 Hyannis	2	C. Buelow		Rusty Blackbird			
12/21 Southwick	1	S. Kellogg		11/2 Lakeville	26		J. Sweeney#
12/27 Hardwick	1	C. Buelow		11/9 Wakefield	5		P. + F. Vale
White-throated Sparrow				11/10 Chilmark	3		A. Keith
11/3 Boston	160	BBC (R. Stymeist)		11/14 HRWMA	2		T. Pirro
11/15 Marblehead	63	R. Heil		11/15 Wachusett Res.	4		M. Lynch#
White-crowned Sparrow				12/7 Bridgewater	5		C. Buelow
11/3 Boston	3	BBC (R. Stymeist)		12/9 W. Bridgewater	4		K. Anderson
11/3 Stockbridge	2	T. Gagnon#		12/9 Northampton	4		T. Gagnon
11/4 Newbury	3 1W	R. Heil		12/15 N. Adams	3		T. Clark
11/5 Marblehead	2	K. Haley		<b>Brewer's Blackbird</b> (accepted by MARC) *			
11/6 Medford	2	M. Rines		11/9 Ipswich	1 f		R. Hamburger#
11/21 Nantucket	3	B. Vigneau		Common Grackle			
12/21 Southwick	1	R. Packard		11/2 Methuen "millions"			J. Hogan#
12/29 Deerfield	1	T. Gagnon		11/3 Boston	151		BBC (R. Stymeist)
Dark-eyed Junco				11/3 Pepperell	500+		M. Torpey
11/1 Hadley	100	M. Williams		11/4 Westminster	200+		C. Caron
11/3 Sunderland	100+	M. Williams		11/4 Groton	750		T. Pirro
11/13 Boston	100	G. Tepke		11/4 Lancaster	370		S. Sutton
11/22 Petersham	100+	C. Buelow		11/15 Granville	400+		J. Weeks#
11/23 Barre Falls	100+EMHW	(B. Kamp)		12/6 Bridgewater	100+		C. Buelow
11/23 Templeton	200	T. Pirro		Brown-headed Cowbird			
11/24 Pepperell	150	E. Stromsted		11/10 Falmouth	3		G. d'Entremont
11/24 Gardner	100	T. Pirro		12/1 Cumb. Farms	20		J. Sweeney
11/28 Mt.A.	76	R. Stymeist		12/6 Bridgewater	50		C. Buelow
11/16 Westminster	130	C. Caron		12/29 Deerfield	168		T. Gagnon
12/11 Groton	200	T. Pirro					

Baltimore Oriole				11/26	Hardwick	1 f	C. Buelow
11/1, 19	Gay Head	3, 1	V. Laux#, A. Keith	12/15	Hatfield	7	T. Blunt
11/10	Chatham (M.I.)	1	D. Manchester#	12/21	Blandford	5	K. & M. Conway
11/21	Cambr. (F.P.)	1 m	imm B. Stevens		House Finch		
11/24	Nantucket	1	E. Ray	11/10	Falmouth	110	G. d'Entremont
12/8	Falmouth	1	J. Trimble	11/19	Groton	100+	T. Pirro
12/8-31	Bradford	1 m	1W D. + S. Larson	12/2	Groton	100+	T. Pirro
12/9	Manchester	1 f	1W R. Heil		Common Redpoll		
12/15	Nantucket	2	E. Ray	12/14	Ludlow	9	B. Platenik
12/17	Westport	10	B. Gill		Evening Grosbeak		
Purple Finch				11/12	Williamsburg	8	G. LeBaron
11/3	Northbridge	4	M. Lynch#	11/30	Granville	21	J. Weeks#
11/15	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg	12/24	Northfield	12	T. Gagnon
11/24	Lenox	2	R. Wheeler				

## ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

### Locations and Organizations

A.A.	Arnold Arboretum	Mt. A.	Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambr.
ABC	Allen Bird Club	NAC	Nine Acre Corner, Concord
A.P.	Andrews Point, Rockport	NEHW	New England Hawk Watch
A.Pd	Allens Pond, S. Dartmouth	Newbypt	Newburyport
B.	Beach	ONWR	Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge
Barre F.D.	Barre Falls Dam,	P.I.	Plum Island
	Barre, Rutland	Pd	Pond
B.I.	Belle Isle, E. Boston	P'town	Provincetown
B.R.	Bass Rocks, Gloucester	Pont.	Pontoosuc Lake, Lanesboro
BBC	Brookline Bird Club	R.P.	Race Point, Provincetown
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey	Res.	Reservoir
BMB	Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester	S. Dart.	South Dartmouth
C.B.	Crane Beach, Ipswich	S.B.	South Beach, Chatham
C.P.	Crooked Pond, Boxford	S.N.	Sandy Neck, Barnstable
Cambr.	Cambridge	SRV	Sudbury River Valley
CCBC	Cape Cod Bird Club	SSBC	South Shore Bird Club
Corp. B.	Corporation Beach, Dennis	TASL	Take A Second Look
Cumb. Farms	Cumberland Farms,		Boston Harbor Census
	Middleboro	WBWS	Wellfleet Bay WS
DFWS	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary	WMWS	Wachusett Meadow WS
DWMA	Delaney WMA	Worc.	Worcester
	Stow, Bolton, Harvard	WS	Wildlife Sanctuary
DWWS	Daniel Webster WS		
E.P.	Eastern Point, Gloucester	<b>Other Abbreviations</b>	
EMHW	Eastern Mass. Hawk Watch	ad	adult
F.E.	First Encounter Beach, Eastham	alt	alternate
F.H.	Fort Hill, Eastham	b	banded
F.M.	Fowl Meadow	br	breeding
F.P.	Fresh Pond, Cambridge	dk	dark (morph)
F.Pk	Franklin Park, Boston	f	female
G40	Gate 40, Quabbin Res.	fl	fledgling
GMNWR	Great Meadows NWR	imm	immature
H.	Harbor	juv	juvenile
H.P.	Halibut Point, Rockport	lt	light (morph)
HRWMA	High Ridge WMA, Gardner	m	male
I.	Island	max	maximum
IRWS	Ipswich River WS	migr	migrating
L.	Ledge	n	nesting
M.V.	Martha's Vineyard	ph	photographed
MAS	Mass. Audubon Society	pl	plumage
MARC	Mass. Avian Records Committee	pr	pair
MBO	Manomet Center for Conservation Science	S	summer (1S = 1st summer)
		v.o.	various observers
MBWMA	Martin Burns WMA, Newbury	W	winter (2W = second winter)
MNWS	Marblehead Neck WS	yg	young
MSSF	Myles Standish StateForest, Plymouth	#	additional observers

### HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO BIRD OBSERVER

Sightings for any given month must be reported in writing by the eighth of the following month, and may be submitted by postal mail or e-mail. Send written reports to Bird Sightings, Robert H. Stymeist, 94 Grove Street, Watertown, MA 02172. Include name and phone number of observer, common name of species, date of sighting, location, number of birds, other observer(s), and information on age, sex, and morph (where relevant). For instructions on e-mail submission, visit: <<http://massbird.org/birdobserver/sightings/>>.

Species on the Review List of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (indicated by an asterisk [\*] in the Bird Reports), as well as species unusual as to place, time, or known nesting status in Massachusetts, should be reported promptly to the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, c/o Marjorie Rines, Massachusetts Audubon Society, South Great Road, Lincoln, MA 01773, or by e-mail to <[marj@mrines.com](mailto:marj@mrines.com)>.

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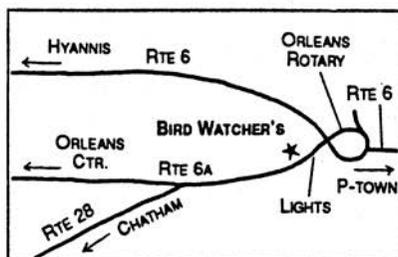
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# BIRDS: CATALYSTS FOR CONSERVATION

## INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY 2003

Birds have long inspired important conservation actions around the world, serving as the stimulus for public campaigns, new legislation, formation of environmental organizations, and individual action. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the federal agency responsible for the management of migratory birds, recognizes birds as “Catalysts for Conservation” in its annual celebrations of International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) taking place around the country throughout the spring (IMBD is internationally recognized on May 10). At hundreds of events such as bird walks, open houses, festivals, lectures and demonstrations, the Service is joining with partners to recognize the ways birds have stimulated people to become involved in conservation and to encourage individuals, corporations, and organizations to be a part of continuing efforts to protect birds.

“Thanks to birds, and the individuals and organizations that worked for their conservation, we have made great progress in conserving wildlife and other natural resources in this country,” said Service Director Steve Williams. “Birds have been the catalysts for many of the most significant conservation actions of the last century, including the formation of the Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System, international conservation treaties and partnerships, and the passage of wildlife protection laws.”

More than 500 IMBD 2003 celebrations will take place at National Wildlife Refuges, fish hatcheries, field offices, and at partnering organizations such as parks, zoos, and schools. The Service’s IMBD website <<http://birds.fws.gov/IMBD>> contains a listing of these events as well as links to additional information on migratory bird conservation, including the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. The IMBD 2003 art and materials portray ten bird species symbolizing conservation laws, programs, and organizations that have benefited birds, the environment and humans alike.

IMBD was created to bring attention to the plight of dozens of birds whose populations have declined at rates exceeding two percent per year (resulting in a net decline of 50 percent or more) over the last 30 years, due to habitat loss, pesticide use, and other factors. IMBD is the hallmark event of Partners in Flight, an international coalition created in 1990 that includes the Service, other federal and state wildlife agencies, conservation groups, academic institutions, corporations, and private citizens dedicated to reversing these declines in migratory bird populations. In addition to celebrations, IMBD involves the development and distribution of unique educational materials, and the promotion of annual themes, such as “Catalysts for Conservation.”

## ABOUT THE COVER

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### Allen's Hummingbird? Rufous Hummingbird?

The bird featured on the cover is either an Allen's (*Selasphorus sasin*) or a Rufous (*S. rufus*) hummingbird. These closely related species are often impossible to separate in the field and can even pose problems of identification in the hand. Females and juvenile males simply cannot be reliably identified in the field, and males of the two species can overlap in plumage characteristics. In addition, the two species apparently hybridize in the narrow range of overlap of breeding grounds in southern Oregon. Both species are small, sturdy, relatively short-winged hummingbirds. They can be separated from the Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*S. platycerus*) by the latter's longer body and much longer tail. Males of both Rufous and Allen's hummingbirds have a coppery red gorget, with rufous-orange on the flanks, face, and tails. Allen's always have a green back but may have an orange rump, while male Rufous Hummingbirds may have green backs, although the usual color is orange. In the hand the species can usually be identified by Allen's having shorter wings and tail and by the shape of tail feathers, although the age and sex of the bird must be established for correct species identification. The Rufous Hummingbird is monotypic (no subspecies), but Allen's has two recognized subspecies: *S. s. sasin*, which has a breeding range along the west coast from north of Los Angeles to southern Oregon, and *S. s. sedentarius*, which, as its name implies, is nonmigratory, local around Los Angeles and the Channel Islands. The migratory *S. s. sasin* winters in a small area of central Mexico. Rufous Hummingbirds have wandered far from their tropical origins, breeding from southern Oregon to Alaska and inland to Montana. They reach 61° N Latitude, the farthest north of any hummingbird species. They winter from southern California through Mexico and Central America and along the Gulf Coast to western Florida. The occasional bird shows up inland and in peninsular Florida. If you measure the distance migrated in body-lengths, the Rufous Hummingbird travels the farthest of any bird species. Rufous Hummingbirds migrate in spring largely up the west coast, and back in fall along the Rocky Mountains. Both species are very early migrants, arriving in the United States from January to March and leaving in the "fall" as early as May for Allen's and July for Rufous. Both species are territorial on stopover sites, and in both species males migrate before females in spring and fall, and in fall females migrate before juveniles.

The occurrence of *Selasphorus* hummingbirds in Massachusetts is intriguing. A hummingbird that was mist-netted on Nantucket in 1988 subsequently died and was identified as an Allen's Hummingbird. In 1978 and 1986 indeterminate *Selasphorus* birds were reported from Newton and Wellfleet, respectively. Since 1992 there has been a dramatic increase in the occurrence of these birds, with unidentified *Selasphorus* seen in at least nine localities by 2001. In addition, three Rufous Hummingbirds were reported. In 2002 a veritable invasion of these birds occurred, with at least eight indeterminate birds, two from the same feeder, and three Rufous Hummingbirds reported. Several birds were captured and identified in the hand, and

one, a female that was banded, returned to the same feeder every fall from 1996-2002, where it spent its winters in a greenhouse. The total number of reported *Selasphorus* hummingbirds thus approaches two dozen, with the bulk of the records in recent years. The locations of the sightings are sprinkled around the state from Cape Cod to Northhampton. The reasons for this spectacular increase are not clear, but the phenomenon may to some degree reflect the increased use of feeders and greater observer awareness.

Both species are polygynous breeders, with territorial males displaying for females, and then, after mating, not aiding in any of the nesting activities or in feeding fledged young. Rufous Hummingbirds nest in more open successional habitats and use mountain meadows as migration stopover sites. Allen's Hummingbirds are coastal and prefer moist, fog-shrouded forests and woodlands. These hummingbirds have no true song, but give a series of *chip* notes and chatter in territorial encounters and mate attraction. Both species produce buzzing sounds with their wings. Territorial males of both species have spectacular flight displays given to interloping males and perspective mates. The Rufous Hummingbird's display has been described as an oval or U-shaped flight pattern as seen by the object of the display. Another display involves a horizontal figure-8 flight, with wings buzzing, directed at the perched object of the male's hostility or desire. Allen's display has several elements: the first is the "Pendulum Display," a back-and-forth flight that precedes a climb to heights of up to 90 feet, from which it descends in powered flight, pulling out in the bottom of a J-shaped path. Another display, the "Shuttle Display," involves the male moving back and forth in looping coils with gorget flared, wings and tail spread, and wings buzzing. The fact that hummingbirds can fly backwards adds a dimension to these flight displays not found in other birds. Males apparently establish feeding territories that they then secondarily use for nuptial displays.

After mating, females build the nest alone, typically on a branch, with an outer layer of bark, moss, lichen, and spider web, lined with fine plant fibers. The clutch is two tiny white eggs. The incubation periods are apparently variable but in the range of 2-3 weeks. Fledging occurs in about three weeks, and the female continues to feed the young for an additional week or so. The female feeds the young small insects and nectar, inserting her bill directly into the open mouth of the chick and depositing food.

Hummingbirds have been much studied for testing "optimal foraging theory," attempting, for example, to determine how hummingbirds choose which flowers to probe for nectar and how many flowering plants to defend in their territories. They have also been studied in regard to the apparent coevolution of hummingbirds and flowering plants, the plants attracting the hummingbirds with colored flowers and nectar, the hummingbirds in turn pollinating the plants. Allen's and Rufous hummingbirds apparently are particularly attracted to flowers that are tubular and red, such as columbine and paintbrushes, which produce high-sucrose nectar. The hummingbirds also hawk and glean small insects such as gnats, midges, and spiders, and use sapsucker wells. The short wings of these two species mean greater energy expenditure while hovering but more maneuverability, and hence they can defend

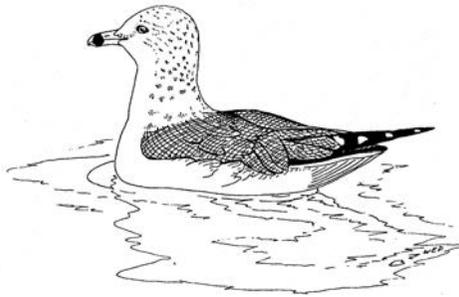
their territories more efficiently. Rufous Hummingbirds have a reputation as a particularly aggressive species.

The tiny size of these hummingbirds poses special physiological challenges. They have high metabolic rates, diminished energy storage capacity, and surface area/volume ratios that favor heat loss; thus they cannot feed at night. Hummingbirds have evolved some intriguing solutions to these problems. Most are capable of becoming torpid at night during cold weather, when their metabolism slows down, and their body temperature may drop to near ambient temperature. Rufous Hummingbirds may increase their body weight as much as 72 percent before migrating. They also have problems with eliminating water, because they take in so much water when drinking nectar. They are constantly naturally diuretic and have been described as “frequent pee-ers.” Census data do not give a consistent picture of the status of Rufous and Allen’s hummingbirds, but it appears that most populations may be about stable. Their interactions with man are interesting. Exotic plants such as eucalyptus have provided new flower resources during critical periods of food shortage for these species, particularly for Allen’s Hummingbirds, and feeders have provided additional food supplements. However, these resources may have benefited Anna’s Hummingbirds to a greater extent in the areas where their breeding range overlaps, thus causing a competitive interaction that may be detrimental to the Allen’s Hummingbirds. The invasion of the northeast by these marvelous little birds in recent years is hopefully an indication that things are going well. 

*William E. Davis, Jr.*

## About the Cover Artist

Barry Van Dusen resides in central Massachusetts. He has contributed illustrations to a variety of natural history books and pocket guides published by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Harper Collins, and Princeton University Press. He was elected a full member of London’s Society of Wildlife Artists in 1994 and exhibits regularly at the Birds in Art Exhibition in Wausau, Wisconsin, as well as in galleries, museums, and nature centers throughout New England and Europe. 



RING-BILLED GULL BY WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR.

# AT A GLANCE

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February 2003



DAVID LARSON

It is possible to say unequivocally that this month's challenge pertains to some species of gull. While it is true that some gulls in certain plumages may bear a resemblance to certain other seabird species (e.g., shearwaters or jaegers), the pictured bird is unambiguous. Remember the old adage that, "If it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck!" In this case, "It's a gull."

Unfortunately, this is where simplicity ends. Most birders would agree that gulls represent one of the most complex and challenging groups to identify of all species that occur in Massachusetts. The identification challenges presented by gulls are the product of a variety of conditions, including 1) a lengthy maturation period (as much as four years in large gull species) that results in a series of highly variable plumages from one year to the next, 2) seasonal plumage and soft part (i.e., leg color) variation from summer to winter, 3) sexual dimorphism (males larger than females), 4) frequent plumage abnormalities (e.g., leucism and albinism), 5) hybridity between one species and another, and 6) complex genetic changes taking place within rapidly expanding gull populations or between closely related species (e.g., Western and Glaucous-winged gulls on the Pacific Coast, or Herring and Yellow-legged gulls in Europe). Having offered this caveat, we can now address the gull in the photograph.

Several things should be immediately apparent about the gull in the picture. First, the fact that it has a strongly bicolored bill and that the back and wings have a finely checkered appearance indicate that the bird is not an adult. The size, shape, and pattern of the bill, along with the absence of a prominent dusky spot behind the eye tell us that the bird is not one of the small, hooded species (e.g., Laughing Gull or Bonaparte's Gull). The bill is obviously quite long and heavy and shows a prominent gonydeal angle near the distal end of the lower mandible. This suggests that this is a really large gull, especially when combined with the flat-headed appearance and overall bulk of the bird. The fact that the bill is neatly tipped with black with an extensive pale area at the base is also an important feature. In the east the only large gulls which regularly show such a distinct dark tip to the bill at certain ages are Herring and Glaucous Gulls.

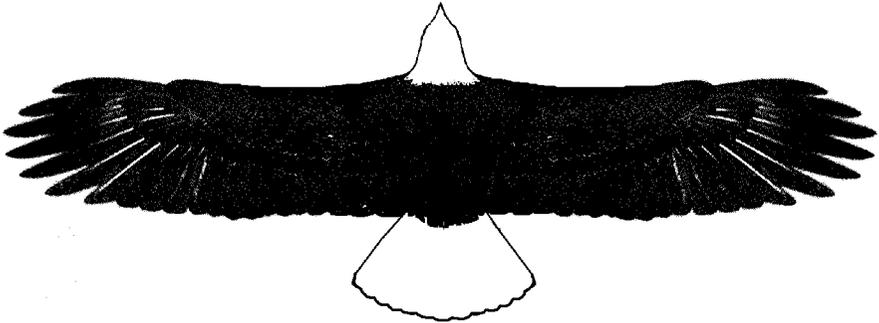
Armed with the knowledge that the mystery gull is probably either a Glaucous Gull or a Herring Gull, other characteristics need to be examined. Since Glaucous Gulls are one of the "white-winged" gulls, one would expect that the primaries and wing tips should be immaculately white, in fact, *whiter or paler* than the rest of the wing and body of the bird. In the image shown, however, the folded primaries are *darker* than any other feathers visible in the picture! Interesting? Indeed, particularly since the back feathering looks extremely pale like a Glaucous Gull, as does the barring on the wing coverts, even though the greater primary coverts appear to be a solid, light brown (?) in color! Ordinarily the primaries and greater primary coverts on a Herring Gull are *black, or blackish*, and certainly not brown, or brownish, the way they appear in the photograph.

Practically all gulls with black wing tips can occasionally exhibit brownish flight feathers, particularly immatures during early summer when their plumage is often badly worn. However, in these cases the rest of such a gull's plumage tends to be similarly worn and frowsy, not crisply patterned as in the pictured gull. With this in mind it is fairly obvious that the bird in the picture was probably not photographed in the summer. In fact, it is in first-winter plumage, as indicated by its crisp plumage and lack of any solid gray feathering coming into the mantle on the back. The large, dark-tipped bill, robust structure, flat-headed appearance, relatively short extension of its folded wing-tips beyond the tail, and overall frosty appearance indicate that the bird most closely resembles a Glaucous Gull. However, the presence of primaries and primary coverts that appear brownish, and clearly *darker* than the rest of the bird, are inconsistent with typical Glaucous Gulls.

Enter the joker! This is one of those wonderful large gulls that tend to give birders fits, and for good reason! The pictured gull is almost certainly a hybrid – a cross between a Herring Gull and a Glaucous Gull – a combination that is often termed "Nelson's Gull," and probably emanating from either Iceland or somewhere along the coast of the Beaufort Sea in Canada's Northwest Territories. While not common in New England, such individuals do appear from time to time, when they may generally be distinguished by their overall pale, Glaucous-like Gull coloration and robust structure, but with coffee-colored primaries and primary coverts. Needless to say, in hybrids of any sort, variation is considerable, but most "Nelson's Gulls"

tend to show these features to one degree or another. For more discussion about the "Nelson's Gull" problem, readers should see *Bird Observer* 28: 61-62. Note, however, that in that reference, in the final paragraph there is a typo indicating that "Nelson's Gull" is a "Glaucous x Iceland hybrid", which should read, "Glaucous x Herring hybrid." The "Nelson's Gull" in the photograph is a digital image taken in Plymouth Harbor by David Larson during the winter of 2001-2002. 🦅

Wayne R. Petersen



BALD EAGLE BY GEORGE C. WEST

## From *Bird Observer* Vol. 1, No. 2 (March-April 1973)

### THE GREAT GRAY OWL

On the afternoon of February 3rd, Bob Stymeist, Dick Veit and I were bound for Gill, Massachusetts. Many birders had flocked there in recent weeks to seek the great gray owl that had been playing hide and seek, appearing and disappearing every few days. Though a few people were successful, most came away without a glimpse of the huge owl. Now it was our turn to try our luck.

We arrived in mid-afternoon and drove along the back roads, scanning the fields and woods. We found very few birds but many birders. By dusk, there were at least 30, including some of the most talented enthusiasts in the northeast, assembled at the farm on West Gill Road where the bird had been last seen. But all was to no avail, for night fell with no sign of the owl.

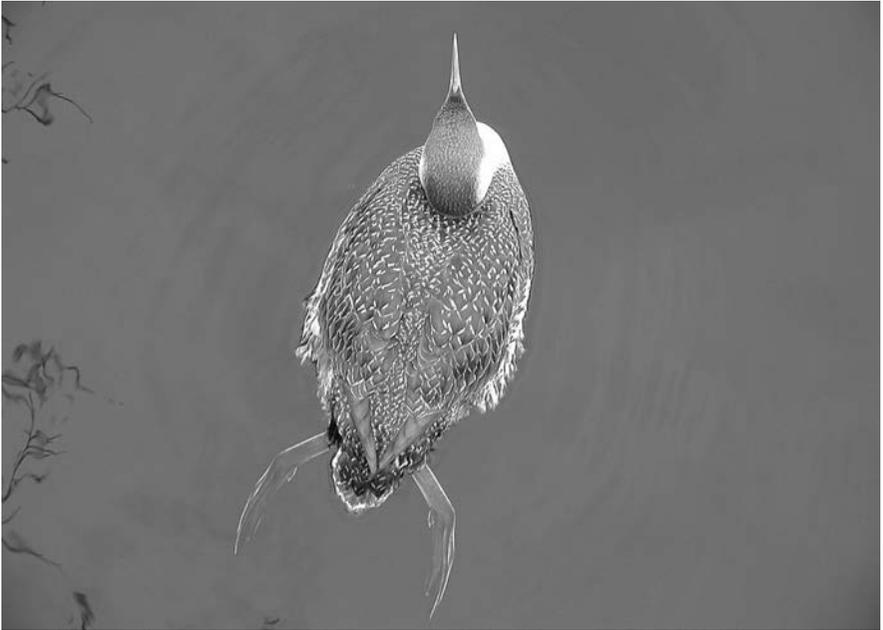
We couldn't give up and decided to stay overnight at a motel. Rising before the sun, we went directly to West Gill Road. Davis Finch (Northeastern Maritime Regional editor for *American Birds*) and Bob Smart were already there and informed us, much to our chagrin and dismay, that they had seen the owl just five minutes before (how often have I heard that story), but that it had flown into the woods. Mr. Smart pointed to the group of pines into which he thought the bird had flown.

Several hours of waiting followed before we obtained permission from the owner to walk on his property. By then at least a score of birders were eagerly waiting on the road. At last we started in, tramping through the snow, jumping a couple of streams, and heading directly for the pine grove. Suddenly, there was the owl, not 25 feet away, looming close to the trunk of a pine. It swiveled its head to stare at us with its small yellow eyes. All I could think of was, "It's so big!" After several minutes, the bird apparently became tired of all the ecstatic people. It ruffled its feathers and launched off on huge but noiseless wings. The great gray owl dipped low, then flopped off and disappeared among the trees.

P.M.

P.M. = PHILIP MARTIN

# AT A GLANCE



MARJORIE RINES

Can you identify this bird?

Identification will be discussed in next issue's AT A GLANCE.

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**VOL. 31, NO. 2, APRIL 2003**

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