

# Bird Observer

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VOLUME 37, NUMBER 4

AUGUST 2009



# HOT BIRDS

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On June 24, Vern Laux captured some photos of an adult **Purple Gallinule** (left) on the west side of Miacomet Pond on Nantucket.

On June 27, Mark Fairbrother discovered a singing **Henslow's Sparrow** (right) in Montague. Nick Bonomo took this digiscoped image of the bird on July 3.



Each summer the Brookline Bird Club sponsors “Extreme Pelagic” trips, and they rarely disappoint. The star of the show on the July 18 trip was a **Black-capped Petrel** (left), originally spotted by James P. Smith. Jeremiah Trimble took this photograph.

On August 9, a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** (right) was discovered at Great Meadows NWR in Concord. This very cooperative bird was photographed by Joan Chasan.



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COMMON EIDER AND CHICKS BY DAVID LARSON

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# Bird Observer

A bimonthly journal — to enhance understanding, observation, and enjoyment of birds  
**VOL. 37, NO. 4 AUGUST 2009**

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# Millennium Park, Boston

*Marshall Iliff*

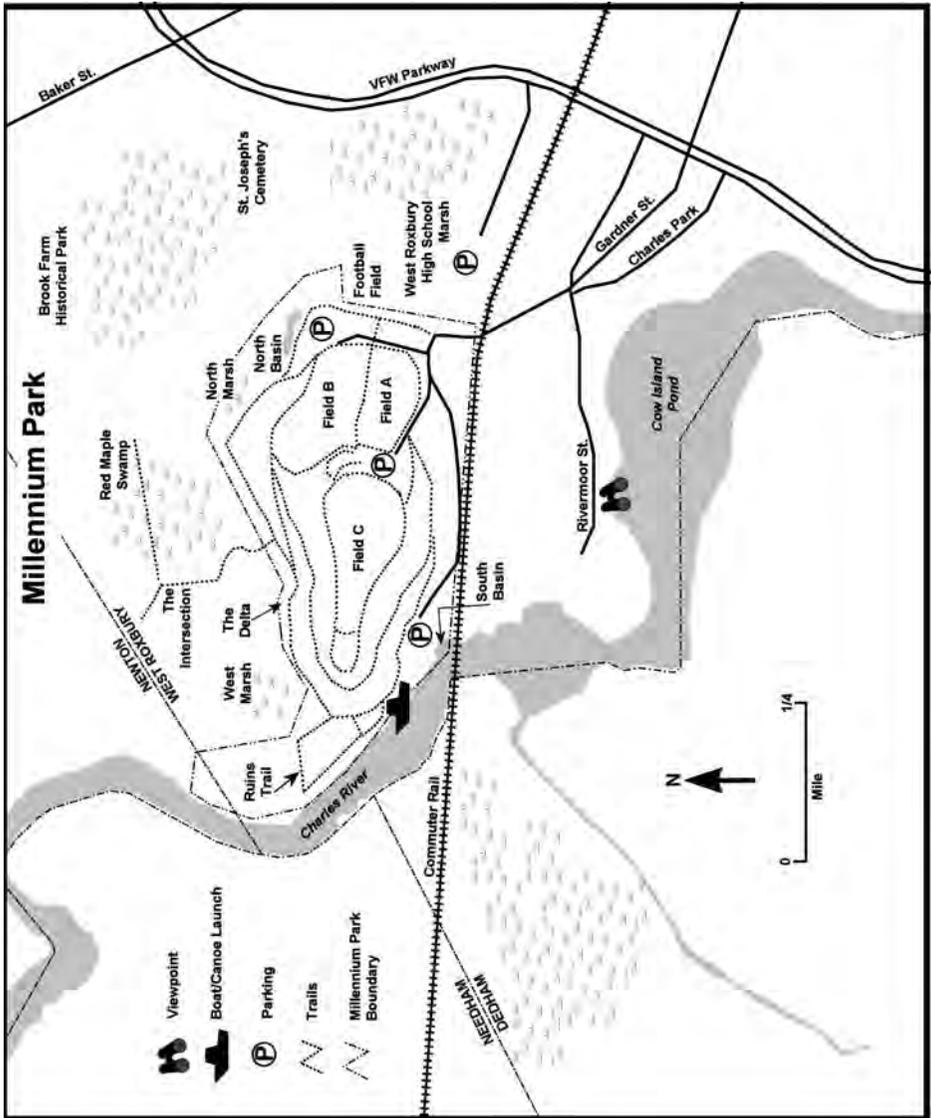
Located at the southwestern extreme of the City of Boston (and therefore Suffolk County), Millennium Park offers extensive open habitats, forest and wood edge, freshwater marsh, some open water, and occasional mudflats along the Charles River. It boasts a commanding view over the southern suburbs of Boston that reveals Great Blue Hill to the east and the punctuation of the Prudential Center within the urban skyline to the north. Its hilltop position is nothing natural — Millennium Park is a reclaimed landfill. Active from 1954 to 1980, the former Gardner Street Landfill was purchased by the City of Boston, filled with dirt excavated by the Big Dig, capped, and developed as a public park. It opened to the public in December 2000. For pictures of the conversion from landfill to parkland, see <http://www.masspike.com/bigdig/background/gardnerst.html>.



Millennium Park is now an oasis of open space among an increasingly suburbanized landscape — but this is not to say that Millennium Park is anything approaching wilderness. While birders once relished the gulls, Fish Crows, and sparrows of the landfill and its weedy hillsides, Millennium has now been converted to a recreationist's paradise. Of the park's 100 acres, 25 are given to athletic fields, and the park is crisscrossed by a network of almost six miles of paved paths enjoyed by joggers and walkers, as well as the occasional rogue rollerblader or cyclist (both activities are officially prohibited in the park). Kite-flyers too converge on Millennium from miles around, since its elevated position captures the best of Boston's crosswinds. One caveat is important to state at the outset: Millennium Park is canine country. If you do not like dogs, or do not approve of them being walked off-leash, you may want to stay away. For birders who own dogs and try to plan their dog walks at locations that are both dog-friendly and birdy, Millennium offers the perfect mixture.

## **How to get to Millennium Park**

Millennium Park is located conveniently off VFW Parkway in West Roxbury. From the north, pick up VFW Parkway from the Arborway, Route 203 (Morton Street), Dedham Street, LaGrange Street, or the West Roxbury Parkway. Proceed 0.5 mile from the stoplight at Baker Street, passing St. Joseph's Cemetery, the West Roxbury High School, and Home Depot, and then turn right at the stoplight onto Charles Park Road. Within a few hundred yards you will reach a stop sign (where Charles Park Road becomes Gardner Street), cross the commuter rail tracks, and enter Millennium Park. From I 95-Route 128 to the south, head north 3.4 miles on Route 1 (Providence Highway) to the well-signed entrance to Millennium Park. Watch for the entrance 0.4 mile north of the stoplight at Bridge Street (which is where Providence Highway gives way to the tree-lined, divided thoroughfare of the VFW Parkway).



DOROTHY GRAASKAMP

Several other areas of parkland are nearby — Nahanton Park, Stony Brook Reservation, Arnold Arboretum, Forest Hills Cemetery, Jamaica Pond, and others — and can be easily combined into an excellent morning of birding in southwest Boston.

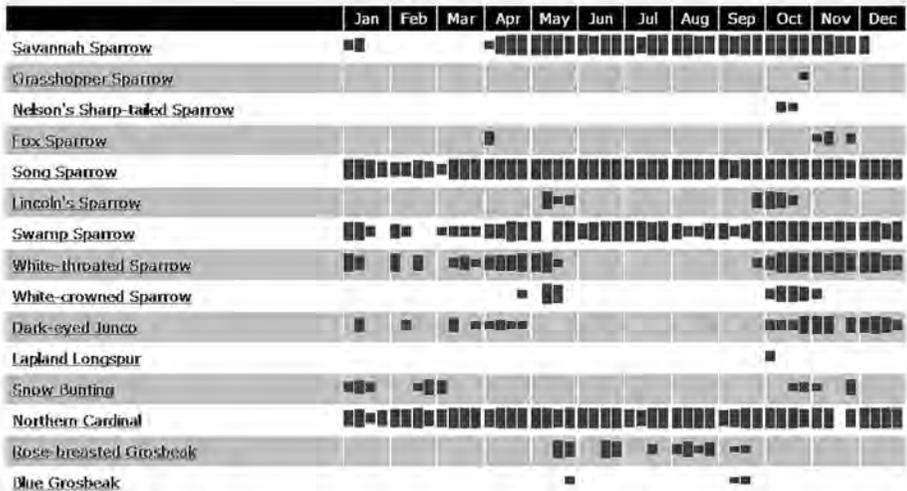
### eBirding Millennium Park

eBird <<http://www.ebird.org>> is an online bird record-keeping system administered by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The records of all participants are pooled and can be downloaded directly or explored

using maps, graphs, and seasonal histograms (bar charts). The official park list, as well as the results of every birding visit I have made there, is recorded in eBird. The visits of other birders are recorded there as well, so I have drawn upon their data as well as my own in the writing of this article. The data-analysis tools within eBird were invaluable for writing this article and for presenting easy-to-interpret summaries of bird occurrence. I hope that the eBird coverage for Millennium Park will serve as an example of how birders can use data from their personal birding expeditions to record and document bird occurrence at their favorite local birding patch. I encourage all birders to convert their record-keeping to eBird. Imagine what we'd have at our fingertips if every observation by every birder at every location was summarized in a single repository available to all! Millennium Park is listed as an eBird hotspot, so to get the most current information on bird occurrence there (including records submitted after this article went to press!), simply visit <<http://www.ebird.org>>, select "View and Explore Data," and make a bar chart for the Millennium Park hotspot. Click on the species names to get a Google Map of the report with a stickpin for the Millennium Park hotspot. When you click on the red or yellow stickpin marking submissions for Millennium Park, you will see a list of all records from the park with the date and observer. The red stickpin becomes yellow if there is a report within the last thirty days.

### Birding Millennium Park

Millennium Park is not that big, but is crisscrossed with trails. As you enter the gate by car your first right takes you up to the North Lot, your first left takes you down and around to the Boat Ramp Lot, and staying straight takes you to the Upper



Section of a bar chart for Millennium Park from eBird. 2009. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. Version 2. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. (Accessed: September 7, 2009).

Lot. Let's begin with a clockwise tour of Millennium by turning left and going downhill to the Boat Ramp Lot. As you go, watch the rocky stream on your right for Killdeer or sparrows coming for water; in late fall the tall weeds can harbor interesting sparrows as can the bare, short grass areas on the left shoulder before you arrive at the parking lot.

Some of the most interesting birding opportunities are to be had near this southernmost parking lot, which is bounded to the south by a depression that I call the South Basin. It collects storm runoff and protects the Charles River from potentially polluted water due to the site's sullied past as an active landfill. The result is a weedy, shrubby area with nesting Willow Flycatchers, Baltimore Orioles, and sometimes Orchard Orioles. It can be interesting in migration as well — both sightings for Connecticut Warbler in the park have come from here.

The path around the basin is usually mowed, and I'd recommend a walk around it and a good *pish* during spring or fall. The grassy slope above (and all around on the landfill slopes) is good for Savannah Sparrows almost throughout the year. They are abundant in migration, and several pairs nest here, but wintering birds have not been seen past mid-January, although the habitat is sometimes appropriate (depending on the mowing schedule).

The paved trail departing from the end of the parking lot quickly reaches a canoe launch (boat ramp), which is also a frequent place for Bostonians to let their dogs swim. A canoe trip from here would be a great way to explore the Charles River. This is also the best area to scan the river for ducks, Mute Swans, herons, including Great Blue, Green and, occasionally, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and other waterbirds.

In dry spells, the river can get quite low and expose surprisingly impressive mudflats here. In both 2007 and 2008, late August and September mudflats attracted migrant shorebirds. The dry year of 2007 was the best and was punctuated by one or two Baird's Sandpipers, a Western Sandpiper, and a surprise Buff-breasted Sandpiper; other shorebirds here have included Least Sandpiper (maximum count of 84), Semipalmated Sandpiper (maximum count 110), both yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper (up to four), Semipalmated Plover, and of course Killdeer, Solitary and Spotted sandpipers (the latter has nested at least once), and Wilson's Snipe. We have yet to record Short-billed Dowitcher or White-rumped Sandpiper here, but either seems possible. Fall 2008 mudflat highlights included the first Great and Snowy egrets for the park.

The boat ramp is good for other birds as well. Watch for Rusty Blackbirds gathering to roost in March and April, but beware the large flocks of roosting grackles that are also in the area. Returning Warbling Vireos and Yellow Warblers often arrive here between April 20 and 25, representing the vanguard of Massachusetts arrivals for those species and occasionally scoring the state's early date for a given year. These two species, along with Baltimore Orioles, which arrive a little later, are always common throughout the park by about May 5.

Another good way to check the Charles River is to hike straight uphill (if you are nimble), or take meandering trails to the crest, and scope the wide basin of the

Charles River above the railroad bridge. The open water is worth checking for ducks, Pied-billed Grebes, or herons along the edges. A small grassy island in the area can have mudflats around its edges, which the Buff-breasted Sandpiper used at one point. This is the best area in the park for Green-winged Teal, especially during March and April. Duck-watching is best when the Charles begins to freeze, since there is often an open water patch where a narrow canal meets the river. This is a good area for lingering ducks, Common and Hooded mergansers, or a tardy Great Blue Heron or Belted Kingfisher. The only regular ducks at Millennium are Mallard, American Black, Wood, Green-winged Teal, Common Merganser, and Hooded Merganser. Anything else is a special sighting for the park, although eight other species have occurred.

If you choose not to hoof it uphill, continuing on the paved trail past the boat ramp quickly presents you with the option of turning left on a gravel path. This is what the park calls the Nature Trail, but several of us affectionately call the Ruins Trail, named for the chunks of stone with bas relief sculptures that dot the Charles River shoreline along this path. This quarter-mile loop runs through the only closed canopy inside the park boundaries. Listen for breeding Orchard Orioles and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers here, along with woodpeckers such as Red-bellied and Hairy. A small clearing here is a magnet for Fox Sparrows in April and November, and a good patch to check for Wilson's Warblers, Lincoln's Sparrows, Mourning Warblers, and other shrub-loving passerines. This loop is one of the better areas to find a cuckoo in the park, although most records thus far come from late May and June and probably represent late migrants.

At the first sharp bend to the right it is possible to drop down to the Charles River for another nice view; listen carefully here in May and June since a Blue-winged Warbler often sings from the opposite shore (along with Willow Flycatchers). Saw Mill Brook lets out here, so it is another area of open water when much of the rest of the river is frozen. The only American Coot that I've had within park boundaries was here in December 2008.

After checking the river, continue on the main path along Saw Mill Brook. This section can be good for early migrants, especially in April when it may provide an insect-rich microclimate attractive to warblers. In April 2008 this was wonderful for Palm Warblers (including one videotaped Western Palm Warbler — rare in spring), but the phenomenon was not repeated in 2009.

At the next bend, one can walk out and scan upstream and down, which can be a good way to spot Wood Ducks and occasionally Black-crowned Night-Herons in August and September. Intrepid birders may take the unkempt trail out beyond the Saw Mill Brook viewpoint, which is a good way to check the cattail marsh and count singing Willow Flycatchers. It also may be worthwhile for lingering landbirds in November and early December, since some of the best park thickets are here. Most birders will complete the loop and turn left at the paved trail again.

It should be noted that the mowed margins of the Millennium trail system can be a magnet for sparrows, largely because the hillsides are weedy and wild in fall and

thus provide both food and cover for seed-eating birds. The dog and human traffic may flush the sparrows, but if you get out early or on a day with inclement weather you may have the park to yourself.

Walk slowly and pay attention to any birds feeding along the mowed shoulders. Song, Savannah, Swamp, American Tree, White-throated, White-crowned, and even Fox, Field, and rare Clay-colored sparrows sometimes feed along the margins. The park's only records of Lark, Vesper, and Gambel's White-crowned sparrows were all discovered by paying close attention to these trailside sparrows.

As you continue encircling the landfill in a clockwise direction, Saw Mill Brook will always be on your left. A large cattail marsh can be seen from several viewpoints (best seen by looking from the hill above) but rarely has much of interest, probably because there are not enough pools and ditches in the marsh. I have yet to record any interesting marsh birds here, but it is the site of some large roosts (see that section below).

About 100 yards after you rejoin the paved path, Saw Mill Brook widens into an area with a patch of reeds, cattails, and a small dead tree. Two streams come together here, with one tributary flowing out of a red maple swamp and the other flowing alongside the paved path. I refer to this area as The Delta, and it is one of my favorite places to watch closely and *pish* at landbirds. Millennium does not offer much for warbler spots, and this is one of the better ones, with Northern Waterthrushes particularly likely. I have seen Soras feeding on the marsh edge here on a couple occasions, seemingly unaware of me watching from the opposite bank. In December 2008, a tardy Marsh Wren remained here. Shorebirds may drop onto the mudflats, and Green Herons are often present, especially from late July to September.

This general area may also have the park's most reliable Screech-owl. The wood edge is a good place to watch for warblers, vireos, and flycatchers, and the slopes above are probably the best area for Bobolinks. Bobolinks are one of the star attractions at Millennium; high-plumaged males display here in May and appeared to be attempting to nest as of this writing in June 2009. In fall, breeding-plumaged birds show up sometimes as early as July, and always by August, and remain to molt into their more subtle but still lovely fall plumage. When they are not singing, Bobolinks are best detected by walking through the tall grass (usually devoid of ticks, thankfully!) or by listening for their flight calls in the morning.

If you do not take the paved trail that angles uphill, you will quickly come to a small wooden bridge that crosses Saw Mill Brook. This is the start of the Blue Heron Trail (a.k.a. the Oak Hills Trails of Brook Farm). A map at the beginning of the trail shows how one can hike an eight-mile loop through Nahanton Park, up to Kendrick Street and the shore of Cutler Lake, and back down through Cutler Park on the west bank of the Charles to complete the loop. If you have half a day to kill, a pack lunch, and plenty of water, this is a very enjoyable hike. My efforts are usually more modest. I typically bird for migrants in the first 100 yards, especially in early May when oaks are budding. I then bird the causeway just beyond, with cattail marsh to the left and swampy woods to the right.

This area is great in summer for Great Crested and Willow flycatchers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Red-bellied and Hairy woodpeckers, Swamp Sparrows, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and is often the only place I find White-breasted Nuthatches. Virginia Rails are consistent here in late April and May, but not beyond. Perhaps these are migrant rails that do not stay to nest. In early May 2009, territorial Brown Creepers were in this area, and for one day in late May a Yellow-breasted Chat was singing here! I rarely bird much beyond the trail intersection just ahead, but can sometimes hear a Wood Thrush or an Eastern Wood-Pewee here, although they may not hold territories here every year. Exploring these trails farther along can be rewarding in spring or summer, especially for migrant warblers.



Common Redpoll at Millennium Park. All photographs by the author.

After going back across the footbridge, turn left again to continue the clockwise circuit. The corner ahead is a favorite area of mine for landbirds, especially Brown Creepers. During late winter and early spring (late February and March) the frozen woodlands here start to thaw and ducks pile in. They are hard to see when buried in the woods, but a dusk visit can catch them leaving for roosting areas. I have counted up to 175 Mallards and 18 American Blacks; Wood Ducks may be present in almost all but the winter months.

Another hundred yards ahead is an area of cattail marsh that I call the North Marsh. Willow Flycatchers, Orchard Orioles, and occasionally a Virginia Rail may be found here in spring and summer. Swamp Sparrows are present virtually year-round, Marsh Wrens have occurred multiple times from August to October, and Soras and American Bitterns have also occurred in migration. The marshes of Millennium are generally disappointing, but this small patch may be the best. Tree Swallows nest in boxes scattered throughout the park but are especially dense here; Eastern Bluebirds have prospected here in spring and may have nested, although they are more regular as October and November migrants.

The slopes of the landfill throughout the park can be excellent for sparrows and other seed-eating birds, especially from mid-September to late October. In summer 2008, some construction and digging in this area above North Marsh made for a particularly diverse bank of weeds and grasses in fall 2008 that harbored specialties like Clay-colored, Grasshopper, and two Nelson's Sharp-tailed sparrows. Close attention to weedy and seedy areas is the best late September and October strategy at Millennium, and walking through the grass to flush the sparrows is often necessary. In late October 2008, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo flushed from almost underfoot and then

perched quietly in a nearby shrub—clearly a sickly bird. Eastern Meadowlarks, Bobolinks, and the occasional Dickcissel are other field-bird specialties to watch for here.

If you avoid the path up to the North Parking lot and continue around the lower paved trail, you will skirt the retention basin that I call North Basin. Like the South Basin, this is a good area for migrants, and the grassy patches here are the best Field Sparrow country in the park. Up to five have remained into early January, but not beyond. An Orchard Oriole, seen on September 30, 2008, represented one of Massachusetts' latest records for the species, and I have found Clay-colored Sparrows here a couple times. This is one of my favorite birding areas in the park, and the weedy areas along the fence at the football field can be excellent as well. Walk (carefully) along the football field fence to the corner with the tall poplar trees. This is another excellent area for migrant landbirds and a place I hit routinely on fall visits.

Take one of the paths leading to the Upper Lot (and its playground). Nearly all uphill paths lead here, and you can cut across the athletic fields if you wish. Do not ignore these close-cropped ball fields as birding opportunities either. Sparrows may feed on the edges, Killdeer are a regular feature from March to November, and Pectoral Sandpipers and American Pipits may occur in September and October, and pipits into November. Ring-billed and Herring gulls often feed here on rainy days. I have hoped for rarer gulls, but without success (yet).

One of the park's greatest assets is its propensity for attracting Snow Buntings from late October to March. They are most consistent in November and early December when they are rarely missed, but they may be found throughout the winter with peak counts up to thirty-six. Horned Larks are regular from November to January and may also occur in March and April. Both species may be found walking on the ball fields, whether snow-covered or not, or on the upper margins of the hillsides or mowed edges of the paths. I have seen Lapland Longspur only once (Oct. 7, 2008), but it is to be expected again.

The uppermost field, Field C on maps, is a favorite of mine. The view from this summit is commanding, and this is a great place to hawkwatch, scan the surrounding trees, or watch migrating passerines. For that particular class of birder, who is more fascinated by migration than anything else, this is one of the best areas in Boston. The 360-degree view is unmatched by any other Boston locale, and the distance at which you can see soaring raptors is only limited by heat shimmer.

I prefer a west-facing view, with looks out over trees rather than houses, and my impression is that birds prefer this side as well (perhaps due to better updrafts on west winds, or more interesting habitat, or both). Turkey Vultures (to the south) and Red-tailed Hawks are the usual fare, but most other raptors can be seen on occasion. The south end of the field looks over the marshes along the Charles River, across to Cutler Park, and out to the hills beyond Interstate 95.

The morning of November 11, 2008, was memorable here for sightings of 220 American Goldfinches, 37 Pine Siskins, 14 White-winged Crossbills (one flock and

the only park record), and a single Cave Swallow (seen by Matt Garvey). All flew in from the north and passed fairly low, sometimes at eye level or below, along the top of the landfill. Freshly arrived migrants sometimes seem to pitch down in the trees along the landfill edges as well. I have seen Blue Grosbeak, Dickcissel, and several other species of migrants drop almost from overhead into trees on the edge of the landfill. Remember, it is important to get out early in the morning to witness migration here.

A few other species are worth keeping in mind on any visit, especially as you gaze from the hilltop. American Kestrels occur in migration and could nest here, if boxes were erected to provide nesting habitat. Northern Shrikes have been seen here several times, and it is classic habitat for them. Northern Harriers occasionally hunt along the landfill edges in spring and fall and have even been seen into December. A Christmas Day 2008 highlight was a lone Short-eared Owl at dusk, which continued to hunt here at dusk over the next couple weeks. Two Red-shouldered Hawks, very rare in Suffolk County, first appeared here in August 2008, and one took up residence for most of the fall, with, presumably, the same bird being seen through January. Bald Eagle has only occurred once (January 25, 2009) but is to be expected again since the view covers so much airspace.

As you drop back down to your car at the boat ramp, it might be worth another look at the Charles River. Adapt your birding to suit whatever style you find most interesting for the season. On good migration mornings, I always start at the Upper Parking Lot checking for fly-bys. On good days for sparrows, I often start at the North Lot, and when shorebirds or ducks are my focus I always go to the boat ramp first and check it again as I return. Note that Millennium usually closes promptly at dusk, and park officials cruise around with lights flashing to make sure everyone exits on time. However, it is permissible to park at the rotunda outside the gate and walk into the park at any hour.

### **Two spots just outside the park**

My trips to Millennium typically involve checks of at least two other areas. **Cow Island Pond** shows up prominently on Google Maps as a wide, slow-moving section of the Charles River just south of Millennium Park. To reach the best viewpoints, exit the park and go right at the stop sign on Rivermoor Street. Within a quarter-mile, a bare area with a picnic table will be apparent on your left, and from here you can walk down to the water's edge and scan for ducks and other waterbirds.

Common Mergansers are present in winter whenever there is open water, and fourteen species of ducks, plus Pied-billed Grebe and American Coot, have occurred here. In winter, gulls congregate here to rest on the ice and bathe when there is open water. Migrant landbirds often occur along the shores, and this is a great place to watch swallows and flights of Wood Ducks (see the sections on Northern Rough-winged Swallows and Wood Ducks below).

The other area you may want to visit is the adjacent West Roxbury **High School Marsh**. This is best accessed by walking across the school's athletic fields to the large

brick building (or by turning off VFW Parkway during non-school hours). A large, shrubby, marshy pond here attracts Wood Ducks from March to November; occasionally other ducks, and it is an excellent area for Green Herons. I always hope to find a Common Moorhen here but have yet to succeed. **Brook Farm Historical Park** and **St. Joseph's Cemetery** are two other birding spots that are adjacent to Millennium and worth attention, especially during May when Millennium itself can be surprisingly dull.

### **Birds of Millennium Park**

Over two-and-a-half years (fall 2006 through spring 2009) I have recorded 180 species at the park, and eBird has records of at least six more (American Bittern, Rough-legged Hawk, Common Moorhen, Monk Parakeet, Cave Swallow, and Grasshopper Sparrow) found by others, bringing the total park list to 186. The Cave Swallow was especially frustrating since it literally flew over my head while Matt Garvey was dialing my cell phone to alert me about it!

One surprise has been how difficult warblers are to find in the park, and the park list still does not include such common landbird migrants as Tennessee, Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian, and Bay-breasted warblers, Philadelphia Vireo, Yellow-bellied and Alder flycatchers, and several others. Additional coverage in May and September would surely push the park list over 200 species. Northern Goshawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Bonaparte's Gull, Barred Owl, and Pileated Woodpecker are other expected species which have yet to occur. If you have seen any of these species, or any others that would be new for the park, please submit them to eBird!

Since 2007, Millennium produced some welcome surprises. Rarities such as Western Sandpiper (September 9–10, 2007), Baird's Sandpiper (September 8–12, 2007), Buff-breasted Sandpiper (September 11–12, 2007), Cave Swallow (November 11, 2008), Short-eared Owl (December 25, 2008–January 13, 2009), Connecticut Warbler (September 16 and October 6, 2008), Yellow-breasted Chat (May 30, 2009, just outside park), Clay-colored Sparrow (September 19 and 25, 2007, and October 26, 2008), Lark Sparrow (September 7, 2008), Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (October 8 and 20, 2008), Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow (May 17, 2008), Blue Grosbeak (September 14–15, 2007 and May 23, 2008), and White-winged Crossbill (November 11, 2008) show that the park has some potential to attract oddities.

Given the extensive open habitat, Western Kingbird seems downright overdue, and apparently it had occurred in the area's former life as a landfill. Other species generally difficult to find in Suffolk County, such as Mourning Warbler, Red-shouldered Hawk, Black- and Yellow-billed cuckoos, Cliff Swallow (four records), Vesper Sparrow, and Lapland Longspur have occurred as well. Some birds that are regular at Millennium, but otherwise quite localized within Boston, include Turkey Vulture, Virginia Rail, Hairy and Red-bellied woodpeckers, Great Crested and Willow flycatchers, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Eastern Meadowlark.

Along with the Boston Nature Center, Millennium Park is one of the great places in urban Boston to witness the spring displays of American Woodcock. Starting in

mid-March (March 10 is the early date so far), two main display grounds become active. One is in the vicinity of the boat ramp (one or two males), and the other is around North Basin and North Marsh (two to four males).

Displays continue through early June at least, and dusk visits through

November often produce a woodcock flying around. Since the park closes at dusk, the best way to see the display is to park outside the gate and walk in.

Listen carefully as dusk falls, and you should be able to locate the *peenting*

birds. With patient watching, you will see the birds spiral skyward with whistling wings, circle for a minute or two, begin descending with an accelerating series of chips and chirps, and finally glide to the ground silently before starting their *peenting* calls again. With luck you'll see a female arrive, see the terrestrial courtship displays, and perhaps even witness a hasty copulation.



Juvenile Lark Sparrow at Millennium Park

With the April 2008 discovery of Boston's first nesting Common Ravens at the West Roxbury Quarry some 1.5 miles distant, it became possible (with significant effort and a telescope) to see Common Ravens from the park. From the upper parking lot, it is possible to see the cliff almost due southeast where the ravens nested. A close flyby of two ravens on November 13, 2008, presumably was the same birds. Thus far, records from the park cluster in April, June, and November. Fish Crow is another species of interest here. None were recorded from October 2006 to May 2008, but singles were seen in May, November, and February over the next year. Then in May 2009, apparent nesting activity at adjacent Pine Island resulted in semiregular records during that month. Both Fish Crows and Common Ravens continue to expand in eastern Massachusetts and will likely consolidate their tenure as nesters over the next decade. Interestingly, the old Gardner Street Landfill was reportedly one of the best winter areas for Fish Crows in the state during the 1970s, with counts of up to 400 birds. However, with the closing of the landfill in 1980 the crows became less prevalent.

### **Roosting phenomena at Millennium Park**

The Charles River Marshes in this vicinity offer perhaps the most significant ornithological phenomena. Although the breeding birds are rather depauperate — Virginia Rail is the only potentially nesting rail, and there are no nesting bitterns, moorhens, or Marsh Wrens — the marshes appear to be responsible for some remarkable concentrations. The headliners are Wood Duck, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Rusty Blackbird, and Common Nighthawk, each of which has been responsible for record-high Suffolk County counts over the past year.

Very detailed bird study of almost any area on the landscape has the potential to reveal some interesting patterns. My visits to Millennium, which have been at all hours of the day, have helped me to realize the importance of evening visits for a full appreciation of the park. Whereby diurnal visits might record a handful of Wood Ducks, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Rusty Blackbirds, or Mallards, an evening visit can produce counts of hundreds! Over the past couple years, it has become clear that Millennium Park is a great place to witness evening roosting congregations for selected species.

By far the most noteworthy discovery has been the Northern Rough-winged Swallow aggregation. On a rainy September 15, 2007, Matt Garvey and I were checking a swallow aggregation over Cow Island Pond and as we worked our way through the flock announced: "OK, we got Tree Swallows"; "I got a Rough-winged"; "there goes a Barn Swallow." But then we came to realize that the flock that we had assumed was mostly Tree Swallows was in fact composed almost purely of Northern Rough-wings. Over the following several weeks up to 370 Northern Rough-winged Swallows would congregate over Cow Island Pond in the evenings before heading out to roost in the cattail marshes of the Charles River. Unable to check on them in early October, I last noted them on September 28, when some 190 were present. In fall 2008 the phenomenon was repeated, with groups of hundreds present from September 10 until October 8, with a peak count of 520 on September 17, and up to 350 still present as late as October 7.

The swallow flock is enigmatic, since morning and midday visits rarely recorded even a single bird (except on a couple of rainy days or odd exceptions when groups of two to ten were seen around the park). But a visit within an hour of dusk typically revealed the swallows arriving en masse from areas to the north, where presumably they had been feeding high over the Charles River or other buggy countryside. Vigils at Cow Island Pond or the Millennium boat ramp would have provided good views of the hundreds of swallows arriving and feeding over the river or hillsides before heading off to roost. I did not find their actual roost site until September 2008, when a large, high-flying ball of swallows spiraled in a vortex down into tall marsh grass south of the railroad tracks right at sunset.

Nowhere else in New England are Northern Rough-winged Swallows known to occur in such concentrations, and other than October concentrations at Great Meadows N.W.R., nowhere else do they occur with such regularity after August. It is unclear whether this phenomenon at Millennium is a recent one or just recently discovered, but Northern Rough-winged Swallows have been expanding in the Northeast over the past century and recently have been lingering later and later.

In September 2008, while watching swallows at Cow Island Pond, I noticed multiple flocks of Wood Ducks heading overhead, and a casual count tallied more than sixty-five birds! I later was able to determine that these birds were coming from the broad swath of marshes and river to the west and that the flight was a nightly phenomenon that concentrated in a tight window from about sunset to dusk. It also became clear that these birds were dropping into the shrubby marsh pond of the West Roxbury High School, and that other species were involved as well.

During September, Wood Ducks clearly dominated the flight, although occasional flocks of Mallards could be discerned as well. Wood Duck numbers peaked on October 8, when I counted 143 — an all-time high for Suffolk County. As October gave way to November, the Wood Duck numbers dropped off precipitously, and the flight gave way to Mallards (occasionally with other species thrown in, like Green-winged Teal and Hooded Merganser), with peak counts of 141 in fall and 175 in spring.

Over the course of the fall I experimented with different viewpoints from which to count the ducks, and there are several other places from which to witness this phenomenon. It is perhaps best watched from the somewhat unaesthetic setting of the Home Depot parking lot. Here the ducks fly directly overhead, and with the setting sun as the backdrop, it is quite easy to get a good count of the arrivals. (Watching from the shores of the High School Marsh is also possible, but the ducks drop in suddenly, and it can be more difficult to see them coming.) The east end of the North Lot at Millennium is a good vantage point but requires a scope and active scanning with binoculars to count the Woodies. I prefer watching from the shores of Cow Island Pond, where the Wood Ducks arrive from the northwest and typically fly right overhead, but some proportion of birds coming in from the north and west are missed.

With swampy woods along the Charles River, Millennium is an excellent spot for Rusty Blackbirds. Fall birds tend to be seen flying overhead in the mornings, but spring birds often form singing flocks in the swampy woods of the Blue Heron Trail. In late March and April 2008, it became apparent that a nearly pure flock of Rusty Blackbirds was roosting in the marsh grasses to the south of the railroad tracks in the same area where the Northern Rough-winged Swallows roost in September. Dusk visits to the boat ramp area allow a birder to scope the Rusty Blackbird flock. Access to the trees along the railroad tracks can be gained from the Millennium Park side (by illegally walking across the railroad bridge — not recommended!), but is better accessed from the Cutler Park side off of Needham Street.

In the 30 minutes before dusk up to 140 Rusty Blackbirds would stage, along with comparable numbers of Red-winged Blackbirds and a lesser number of Brown-headed Cowbirds. In 2009, the first Rusties returned on February 10, at about the same time that other blackbirds returned. The roost was active through at least mid-April. As this species is increasingly identified as a declining species of high conservation concern, it will be interesting to monitor this roost in the coming years.

Evening visits since 2007 have consistently produced Common Nighthawks from late August through September, but it wasn't until 2008 that I started to believe that these were staging birds rather than birds of passage. Concerted watching from the top of the landfill in fall 2008 revealed that the nighthawks were consistently cycling in a clockwise circuit. I presume that whatever concentration of insects attracts the Northern Rough-winged Swallows is good for nighthawks too, and this is a consistent place to get late nighthawks. In 2008, for example, four were still present on October 1, and one was seen on October 8. The peak of 114 on August 27 involved birds seen following the circular path around the park. This is in contrast to migration watches at

Mount Auburn, along the Connecticut River, and elsewhere in Massachusetts where flights of nighthawks appear to be moving consistently southerly and surely involve birds beginning an evening's migration.

One final roosting area of interest is the Ruins Trail and adjacent marsh area. In October and November 2008, I conducted a few counts of thousands of American Robins going to roost with flight lines from the north and southeast converging on the Ruins Trail area. Although I never was able to conduct a count that started early enough to capture the full magnitude, representative counts include 6000 on October 19, 2008, and 4500 on November 11, 2008. Additionally, while comparatively few blackbirds were observed in the area in 2008, flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and European Starlings piled into the West Marsh grasses in October and early November of 2007 and again in March and April 2008. Be careful of this grackle roost since several birders have misidentified these grackles as Rusty Blackbirds!

It may be that other evening roost phenomena are at work in the Millennium Park area. These can be difficult to detect since one must be standing at the perfect vantage at the right time of the evening and the right time of year to detect these major roosting aggregations. Monitoring of these evening roosts has added to my enjoyment and understanding of the Millennium avifauna and has generated a number of notable high counts for Suffolk County.

### **Interesting patterns in common birds**

One of the great rewards of adopting a local "patch" and birding it intensively is that you begin to discover patterns unique to that local area that indicate seasonal patterns in distribution and occurrence. Certain coastal locales (like Plum Island) or offshore islands (like Monhegan or the Isles of Shoals) are ideal places to detect arrival events in the resident species, since the number of breeding landbirds is rather low and an observer can more easily establish the absence of the species. Consider the Millennium Park patterns of occurrence for the below species, all of which are typically considered resident—what migrations they do undertake are poorly known or difficult to observe because resident birds obscure the movements of local birds.

**American Crow:** Crows are not common in mid-winter or mid-summer at the park, but their numbers rise in spring and fall. The first increase in numbers occurs in mid-February, when peak counts swell from ten to forty or more. Counts remain high through early April before starting to drop off again by May. I have not counted more than ten at any time from mid-May to early September, but by the week of September 15, counts surge to twenty-five or more and slowly increased to a high of sixty-five on November 11, 2008, an excellent migration day. Counts fall off again thereafter to twenty or fewer through the end of January.

**Eastern Screech-Owl:** One or two resident pairs have led to scattered records throughout the years, but most nocturnal efforts find one or none. Starting in August 2008, though, up to three birds present at widely scattered locales through at least October gave an indication of a screech-owl *arrival* in the park. This timing likely

corresponds with recently fledged screech-owls pioneering away from their natal grounds and does fit in with a pattern of other out-of-place records in the Boston area (R. Stymeist, pers. comm.). Given this pattern, perhaps August is the best time to seek pioneering screech-owls at the northern limits of their range in central New Hampshire and southern Maine.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** With bottomland Red Maple forest adjacent to a nice area of White Oaks, Millennium would seem a suitable place for wintering Red-bellieds. At least one pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers nests here, some October birds may be migrants, and one is often present into December, but over the last two winters no Red-bellieds have been seen between December 28 and March 4. By mid-March they are again a regular feature of the Millennium avifauna. Could these be feeder patrons from surrounding suburbia that have moved back to the park? Or do Millennium's breeding Red-bellieds winter farther south and make a return migration in early March?

**Downy Woodpecker:** Present year-round, with probably not more than six wintering in the park. Counts of up to fourteen in August and September could be solely due to birds fledging from local nests, but more likely involve some new arrivals dispersing from nearby areas as well.

**Carolina Wren:** This has been a fascinating species to track in the park. It is well-known that Carolina Wren populations in the Northeast follow cycles of expansion and contraction, with long-term range expansion to the north being periodically knocked back by hard winters. Although as many as two Carolina Wrens sang at Millennium from March to May 2008, none were present in June and early July despite concerted efforts to locate them. A single bird on July 21, 2008, was the harbinger of an arrival of four birds by August 8. I am certain that these birds were not products of a nesting from within Millennium, so the question becomes from how far did they come? The Carolina Wren is usually not thought of as a long-distance disperser, although vagrant records hail from Atlantic Canada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado.

My suspicion is that recently fledged juveniles, and some adults, moved into the area in July 2008. From then to November, four or more Carolina Wrens were a constant presence in the park, but by mid-November and December numbers had dropped to three, and by January just one persisted. Were the birds moving back into suburbia in search of bird feeders and fruit-rich hedgerows? I suspect so, although they may have just expired as the colder temperatures arrived.

**Tufted Titmouse:** Midwinter (January to February) counts do not exceed two, but by early April the maximum counts reach six or more. Are these birds from nearby feeders that moved into Millennium's woodlands for breeding?

**Black-capped Chickadee:** With a very limited amount of woodland for nesting, Millennium Park is not a good place to find nesting chickadees. In 2008, I only recorded chickadees when I walked as far as the trail intersection on the Blue Heron Trail, and then my counts topped out at two to four. Consider then how noticeable the

difference was by early August when I found chickadees on edge habitats throughout the park, with my peak counts reaching twenty-four and twenty-seven! Clearly this influx was not merely due to a couple of successful pairs raising their clutch, but involved *dispersal* of birds from elsewhere. See below for thoughts on why they came here, but I can't help but wonder from how far away they came. By October, my chickadee high counts had stabilized at about fourteen, and they stayed that way well into the winter and the following spring. Was the drop-off due to dispersal to other areas, or natural mortality, or migration to the south?

Continuing to watch the patterns of occurrence in Carolina Wren and other nonmigrants remains one of my favorite Millennium pastimes and is made all the easier by my use of eBird to organize my sightings.

### **Final thoughts—staging and molt migration at Millennium?**

Millennium Park appears to offer excellent habitat for late-summer concentrations of birds.

In western North America, there is increasing appreciation of the phenomenon of molt migration. Beginning in July, Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, and other species undertake migrations of hundreds or thousands of miles to vacate their relatively dry breeding grounds in favor of comparatively lush areas in Mexico and the Southwest. The biological equivalent in the East is poorly known. We don't think comparable long-distance migration occurs, but do landbirds undertake elevational movements or small-scale local movements to reach areas with richer resources?

My year-round birding at Millennium provides a suggestion of late-summer movements in several species for which we have little information on where and when they move. It is worth noting that the drought year of 2007 was more impressive for its passerine numbers, perhaps suggesting that this was a more important staging area in that dry year than in the comparatively wet 2008. Examples include August arrivals such as a singing Eastern Wood-Pewee (Aug 8, 2008), a singing Indigo Bunting (August 5–27, 2007), or counts of up to thirty Gray Catbirds (August 5, 2007), all of which involve movements of birds occurring prior to their known migratory seasons.

In addition to the Carolina Wren movements discussed above, consider the pattern for House Wrens. Although their migration period is typically thought of as being in September, House Wrens seem to move into the park much earlier. Maximum counts of just two from late April to mid-July indicate a minor presence of summering birds (I have yet to find evidence of a pair here or a successful nesting attempt), but by August 1, maximum counts surge to six and reach nine by late August.

These birds are spread throughout the park (not concentrated in the territories of the singing birds), and so I believe they are dispersants from nearby areas. It is my belief that the July and August surge in bird abundance (involving catbirds, chickadees, Carolina Wrens, House Wrens, and a few other species) at Millennium is due to birds moving into this area from surrounding nesting habitats. For long-

distance migrants like the catbirds and House Wrens, this may include birds staging for migration by fattening up in a food-rich area. For adult birds, this often also includes a complete molt. If so, is this an eastern example of molt migration?

I hope to gain further insight on all these patterns, especially midsummer movements, over the coming year. The more readers of *Bird Observer* who contribute their records to eBird, the clearer the picture will become.

I often hear other birders who have read my Massbird posts say that Millennium Park “sounds like a great birding area.” My somewhat sarcastic answer is that it only seems that way because I go there four times a week, and anytime one birds an area that frequently, one is bound to find some neat birds. Don’t go too far out of your way to visit Millennium for spring migration (which is terrible), and it frankly is extremely dull in midwinter too, unless you like Snow Buntings (but then again, who doesn’t!).

The great birding at Millennium comes from discovering what hidden treasures one can find by birding the same patch of ground almost daily at all times of the year and all times of the day. If all areas in the state received this kind of intensive coverage, and diligent records were kept, many of the phenomena that I consider interesting here might not be so surprising. That said, the October sparrowing can be excellent, and nowhere else in the state have 500+ Northern Rough-winged Swallows ever been recorded at any time of year! 🐦

*Marshall Iliff* began birding after attending a National Wildlife Federation camp in 1987 and hasn’t stopped since. He grew up in a rather wild area within the city limits of Annapolis, which is still one of his all-time favorite birding areas. During his college years at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, Marshall came on board as Mid-Atlantic Regional Editor for North American Birds (then Audubon Field Notes) and also was a co-author of A Field List of the Birds of Maryland: Third Edition with Robert F. Ringler and James L. Stasz. After college he worked as a field technician on multiple bird-related projects from Kiptopeke, Virginia, to the Nevada deserts, to an oil platform eighty miles south of New Orleans! Marshall lived in California and led birding tours for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours from 2000–2007, moving to Massachusetts in August 2006. His writing has appeared in multiple articles and several books (including the National Geographic Complete Guide to North American Birds), and he has now served as a member of three records committees (Maryland, California, and Massachusetts). Marshall currently works for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s eBird program <<http://www.ebird.org>> — an online bird records-keeping system. When not helping to guide the new developments at eBird, Marshall is either out eBirding or enjoying time with his fiancée, Nahyon, or his dog, Chula.



BOBOLINK BY DAVID LARSON

# Chimney Swift Towers: Tools for Conserving a Species in Decline

*Georgan Z. Kyle and Paul D. Kyle*

Airborne high above treetop level, Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*) are often overlooked. Enthusiastic, twinkling vocalizations betray their presence and positively identify the species without visual confirmation. Chimney Swifts fly continuously during daylight hours scouring the skies of flying insects (mosquitoes, flies, termites, flying ants, etc.) (Fischer 1958; Kyle and Kyle 2005b) and never pausing to perch on wire or limb. They are only capable of roosting vertically on a textured surface and prefer a dark, vertical shaft.

Utilizing their grappling hook-like claws to grasp and using their spine-tipped tails to prop, much like a woodpecker does, they hang on the vertical wall as if attached with Velcro. Each evening, as the sun begins to set, they must abandon the open sky to roost for the night inside a shaft. It is also in these shafts that mated swifts construct a nest of small twigs broken in flight from standing trees. Twigs are glued to each other and the textured wall using saliva produced by the mated swifts. In this stick cradle they raise their brood.

Therein lays a problem for the species. Although the birds roost together in numbers, each mated pair requires its own natal shaft. Historically, the requirement was met with large hollow trees in virgin forests. As forests were systematically destroyed, swifts adapted to masonry chimneys. Old chimneys are now being capped or demolished, and stainless steel-lined chimneys are being utilized in modern construction. The loss of breeding structures directly results in diminished regeneration of the population.

Breeding Bird Survey results (Sauer et al. 2006) indicate that the population of Chimney Swifts in the United States has experienced a 1.6 percent reduction per year since 1966. That translates into a sobering 49 percent decline. Canadian Breeding

Bird Survey results (Downes et al. 2006) reveal a decline of 8.2 percent per year between 1968 and 2004. The Chimney Swift population in Canada has plummeted by 95.4 percent (Gauthier et al. 2007). In 2007, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada designated Chimney Swifts as a threatened species.

That same year, Chimney



Chimney Swifts at a nest, photograph courtesy of the authors

Swifts were listed as endangered under the Nova Scotia Endangered Species Act. As with the decline of most neotropical migrants, Chimney Swifts are affected by the loss of habitat. Unlike most migrants, breeding habitat for Chimney Swifts can be artificially provided by individual conservationists.

Existing masonry chimneys can be maintained for use by homeowners as well as swifts. Cleaning the chimney of creosote build-up before the birds return in spring and insuring that the damper is securely closed from spring until fall will meet the needs of the nesting birds. Older masonry chimneys may require a cap to keep rain from damaging the mortar. Instead of a screened cap that excludes the birds, a cap fashioned to stand at least twelve inches tall above the chimney top and open on two opposite sides will protect the chimney as well as provide access for the swifts. Homeowners and Chimney Swifts can each benefit from time-sharing a residential chimney.

Structures can also be built specifically for swift habitation. Twenty years of research into the requirements of breeding swifts has resulted in designs constructed of wood or concrete that readily attract swifts and consistently allow successful fledging of young (Kyle and Kyle 1989–2004; 1996–2009). Although the research was conducted in Texas, swift “towers” have been constructed throughout the Chimney Swifts’ breeding range. Many of those structures have been occupied by swifts for nesting and roosting. Of the fifty-two towers personally constructed in Texas by the authors, twenty-seven (52 percent) were occupied by swifts in the first breeding season following construction. Sixteen others were occupied within a two-to-five-year span, resulting in an 82 percent occupancy rate. Eight towers remain unoccupied to date.

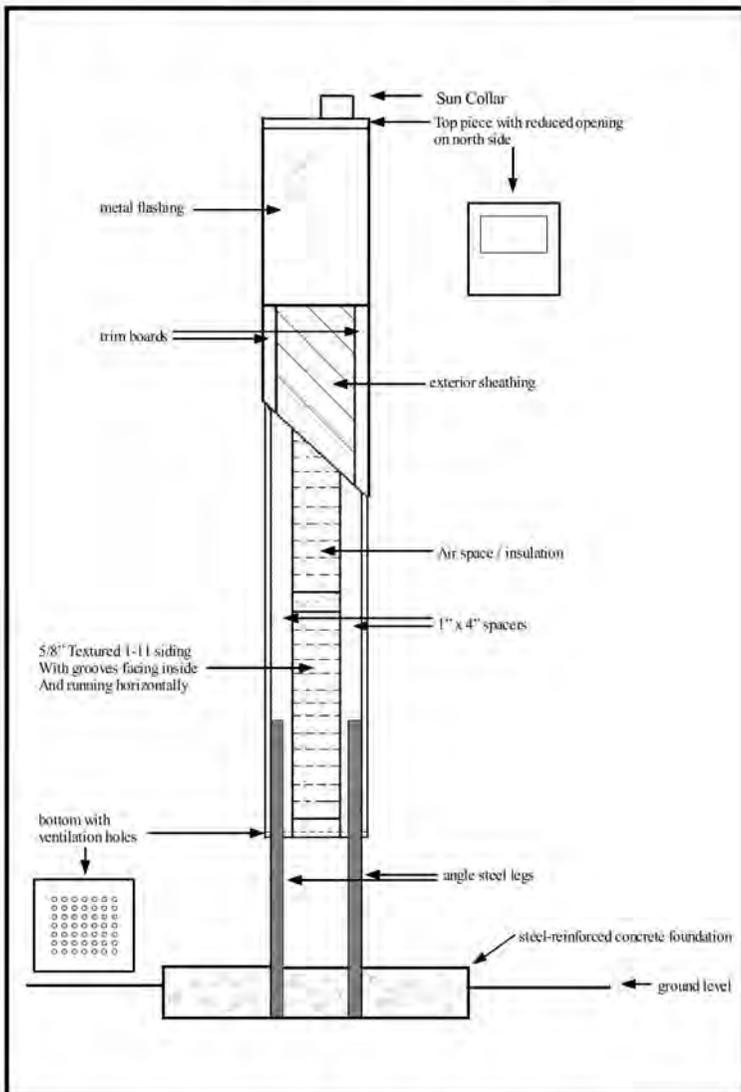
As with any nest box, occupancy is never guaranteed. We found that towers placed closer than ten feet to another swift-occupied structure; towers placed in proximity to resident raptors (i.e. nature center captive raptors or raptors nesting in the immediate area), and towers built without adequate insulation were not used. Communication with builders of other unused towers often revealed deviation from our specific tower construction recommendations.

The illustration details Chimney Swift Tower design basics. Heavy texture on the inside is essential. Five-eighths-inch T1-11 wood siding is readily available and provides the rough texture necessary for swifts to roost and to affix their nesting material. Wooden towers should be double-walled, with a space between the inner nest chamber wall and the outer skin. This space should be filled with insulation. A minimum of three-quarters of an inch of rigid foam insulation is recommended.

The recommended minimum height is eight feet, but twelve feet is preferable. The inside diameter should be no less than fourteen inches.

The bottom of the tower should be made from three-quarter-inch treated plywood and have a grid of three-eighths-inch holes spaced one-and-a-half inches apart for ventilation and drainage of rainfall. It should be installed with wood screws for easy removal for cleaning in winter. Do not substitute wire mesh for the tower bottom. The swifts require a dark shaft and will ignore a tower with light entering from the bottom.

## A Typical Chimney Swift Tower



*Copyright by Driftwood Wildlife Association*

The top should also be made from three-quarter-inch treated plywood and have a reduced opening that is no more than half of the area of the inside of the tower (minimum six inches by twelve inches). The opening must be placed on the north top edge of the tower to exclude as much direct sunlight from the nest chamber as possible. A “sun collar” constructed of treated exterior plywood placed around the opening will provide extra protection from direct sunlight and rain.

The tower may be sided with any product but should be light in color to prevent overheating of the structure. If the siding is not completely smooth, a two-foot band of metal flashing should be installed around the top. This will prevent potential predators from climbing the tower and gaining access to the nest chamber.

A free-standing tower on steel legs is easier to protect from ants, which could kill hatchling swifts. A two-inch band of Tanglefoot (brand) sticky insect trap can be applied around each leg close to the tower bottom. A concrete foundation will provide stability. Towers that are twelve feet tall will require a four-foot by four-foot by ten-inch steel-reinforced concrete slab. Towers that are eight feet tall will require a slab measuring three feet by three feet by six inches. Consult local building codes for advice in areas where frost heaves are a potential problem.

Concrete block towers also provide habitat for swifts. Construction requirements are quite different from woodwork shop projects but can be accomplished by invested tower builders.

Anyone with basic woodworking or masonry skills and an interest in conservation of Chimney Swifts will find useful information in our construction guide, *Chimney Swift Towers: New Habitat for America's Mysterious Birds*. Directions for building wooden and masonry towers include design basics, complete lists of materials required, useful diagrams, and photographs. Detailed instructions are included on site preparation, tower construction, installation, and maintenance.

Chimney Swifts typically return to a successful nest site with the same mate year after year. Conservation of the species requires the protection of existing nesting and roosting structures throughout their breeding range and, wherever possible, the creation of additional nesting locations.

More information on Chimney Swift conservation is available on the Web site: <http://www.chimneyswifts.org>. 

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*The husband and wife team of **Georgan and Paul Kyle** have had a love affair with Chimney Swifts for more than twenty years. They have hand-reared and released more than 1100 babies, cared for injured adults, built dozens of towers for the swifts to nest and roost in, and worked tirelessly to educate the public about these benign, avian insectivores. In 1995, they founded the North American Chimney Swift Nest Site Research Project, a continent-wide conservation initiative, and serve as editors of *Chaetura*, the project's newsletter. In 1999, they received the National Partners in Flight award for their efforts in public awareness. In December 2006, the Kyles donated their home and the surrounding eight acres to the Travis (Texas) Audubon Society to be maintained in perpetuity as the Chaetura Canyon Bird Sanctuary. They continue to live on the property under a Life Estate and as Sanctuary Stewards.*

**Editor's Note:** Swift Towers are not yet common in the northeast; in fact, we were able to identify only one in eastern Massachusetts, located at Mass Audubon's Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary in Marshfield. That tower has hosted nesting swifts for all but one of the past five years since its construction. Despite the success of the project, sanctuary director David Ludlow cautions that a swift tower is a low-yield investment. Swifts may tolerate other, non-nesting swifts in a communal roost even during breeding season, but not another nesting pair. "So what you end up with," Ludlow adds wryly, "is a 200-pound birdbox." Even so, early evidence suggests that as more swift towers are added to the landscape over time, their presence will help to mitigate some of the loss of traditional nesting chimneys.



Swift nest in the Marshfield tower by Shawn Carey

# The Ultimate Bird Feeder: A Review

*William E. Davis, Jr.*

According to one U.S. Fish and Wildlife estimate, millions of people in the United States feed birds at some time of the year. In the northeast, winter is the favored time, and feeding birds (both by plantings and bird feeders) has been implicated in the northward range expansion of a number of species, including the Tufted Titmouse (Kricher 1981), Carolina Wren (Davis 1991), and Northern Mockingbird (Stiles 1982). Bird feeders also concentrate birds and attract accipiters and other raptors, thus becoming the “ultimate bird feeder.” It has even been argued that birdfeeders in the northeast have influenced the northern expansion of wintering accipiter populations (Davis 1992). When did feeder populations begin to have an impact on wintering raptor numbers? Are the numbers increasing? What is the impact of raptors at feeders on the wintering birds that feed the raptors? Does concentrating birds at feeders make them more vulnerable to predation than if they are forced to forage on their own in winter? How do birds cope with predators at feeders? What is the impact of feeders on birds in general? Is it all positive, all negative, or some combination of the two?

For many years I lived in Foxboro, Massachusetts, and had up to a dozen bird feeders in my back yard. My kitchen windows overlooked the feeders and I taped a sheet of paper to the refrigerator and recorded birds of interest that showed up at them. My records run from December 1976 through February 2000. The first record of raptors in my yard was March 17, 1977, when an American Kestrel appeared near the feeders, and on April 4 when a pair were present, probably migrating birds. When looking through my records I was surprised to find that I hadn't seen an accipiter until December 23, 1987 (my impression was that I had seen hawks visiting nearly every year since setting up my feeders), when a Cooper's Hawk attacked the birds in my yard. The next record was January 29, 1989, when an immature female Cooper's Hawk flew in and lit in the lilac bush around which my feeders were organized. A sick Mourning Dove had been staying at the feeders, apparently unable to fly. When the hawk flew in all the birds scattered save the dove. The dove froze and I watched the hawk survey the surroundings, focus on the motionless dove, and then pounce—one less sick dove.

During that winter I saw what was probably the same hawk in the yard seven more times, once sitting in the lilac above the remains of a Rock Pigeon. The next winter, 1989-90, a Sharp-shinned Hawk appeared twice in February, killing a European Starling. From then on, except for 1990-91 when I was absent on sabbatical leave, I recorded both Cooper's Hawks and Sharp-shinned Hawks each year until 1999-2000 when I saw only Cooper's Hawks. During the years I recorded 35 Cooper's Hawk attacks at my feeders, 16 by Sharp-shinned Hawks, and on four occasions, accipiters that I was unable to identify. Usually the hawks would fly in low and then quickly leave if they didn't catch anything, as they were probably trap-lining—moving from feeder to feeder in the neighborhood. Occasionally, however, one stayed around longer. The hawk that killed the starling took five hours to devour

it (Davis 1996). On another occasion, when I was banding birds, an adult Sharp-shinned Hawk attacked Dark-eyed Juncos trapped in my Potter traps and stayed around for nearly four hours (Davis 2004).

My notes have some interesting behavioral descriptions, for example: “Cooper’s Hawk at feeders 7:30 a.m. walking on ground ‘like a chicken’” or “Adult Cooper’s Hawk attacked pigeons & starlings on ground under feeders; 6-8” of snow on ground and still snowing; missed on 1<sup>st</sup> attack, flew up to apple tree, then about 2 min. later dropped down onto the forsythia by feeders, slid down into the center of bush and flushed a hiding junco and starling; no capture.”

The only additional raptor was on December 1, 1994, when an adult Red-tailed Hawk flew about 20 feet above the feeders but did not attack any birds. Successful accipiter attacks involved two Mourning Doves, two House Sparrows, and one each of Rock Pigeon, European Starling, and Downy Woodpecker. I also found the remains of one Blue Jay under the feeders. Since I moved to East Falmouth in 2002, I have recorded either Cooper’s or Sharp-shinned hawks at my feeders every winter (Figure 1). In addition, on one occasion a Merlin caught a House Sparrow at my feeders and perched across the street atop a utility pole to devour it. It appears that accipiters became more common at feeders in my area in the late 1980s and have been present ever since.



Figure 1. Sharp-shinned Hawk sitting on front steps railing near the author’s bird feeders on December 26, 2007, in East Falmouth, Massachusetts. Photograph by the author.

Does feeding birds really make a difference to a species? One study of Black-capped Chickadees concluded that food abundance limited winter survival and that higher survival rates were in food-supplemented plots compared to control plots (Desrochers et al. 1988). Brittingham and Temple (1988) and Egan and Brittingham (1994) found that chickadees with access to supplemental food resources had higher monthly and over-winter survival rates, and in another study found that chickadees got about 21% of their daily energy requirements from bird feeders (Brittingham and Temple 1992). Jansson and others (1981) found that supplemental food led to markedly increased winter survival in tits and a doubling of the breeding population the following spring. Birds do flock to bird feeders and in one study Wilson (1996) found that birds will switch to less desirable habitats if supplemental food is present. It seems clear that, as common sense would suggest, the presence of food can increase the chances of winter survival, particularly in conditions of extreme cold, ice storms, or deep snow when natural food may be unavailable. It logically follows that concentrations of birds at feeders provide a supplemental food source for raptors in winter, particularly when conditions are harsh, and thus improve the probability of their over-winter survival.

What is the down-side of winter bird feeding? Certainly, raptors kill birds at bird feeders. But how bad is the predation, and is it any worse than it would be if the winter birds were on their own in the woods? Dunn reported that for the 1990-91 winter season 946 predation incidents were reported nation-wide by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch volunteers (Dunn 1991). Sharp-shinned hawks were the major predator accounting for 26% of all incidences, followed by Cooper's Hawks at 12%. Because many hawks were recorded as *accipiter* sp., Dunn estimated that the two *accipiters* accounted for about 45% of all predations. Cats accounted for 23%. Cooper's hawks were active throughout the day, but sharp-shins were most active in the middle of the day. Other avian feeder predators were American Kestrels, Merlins, and Red-tailed Hawks. Dunn concluded, however, that because most feeder watchers reported only a few predations per year, hawks use the feeders opportunistically and do not use feeder birds as their main food source.

In contrast to this conclusion, I spent October 2008 house-sitting in Portal, Arizona, and a female Cooper's Hawk made visits to the feeders several times a day and was successful often enough for me to conclude that this was her main source of food — small sample size, but one very successful hawk. In a later report (Dunn and Tessaglia 1994), 1138 predation incidents were chronicled, with roughly the same percentages reported (*accipiters* 51% of all incidences), and they noted some interesting patterns. Hawks were attracted to feeders with particularly high activity levels, and feeder sites reporting predation were more likely to be within 0.8 kilometer of deciduous woodlots. Flocking species were more vulnerable to predation than non-flocking ones, and not surprisingly, the birds that were most common at feeders nation-wide were most commonly preyed upon. Mourning Dove was at the top of the list followed by Dark-eyed Junco, Blue Jay, House Sparrow, and European Starling; Rock Pigeon was number ten. This is interesting because three of those birds are introduced species that are widely considered pests, and many people would be

happy to feed them to hawks. Because there are more birds concentrated at feeders to be vigilant and sound alarms, and because feeders may allow birds to reduce their foraging time and thus reduce the time when they are exposed to predators, the authors conclude that feeders may actually not expose birds to higher risk of predation.

A down-side factor in feeding birds that is not mentioned in these reports, however, is the effect of feeding several species that wreak havoc on breeding birds throughout North America. Bird feeding in winter has been linked to population increases in the Blue Jay (Bock and Lepthien 1976); Blue Jays are a major nest predator and affect the breeding success of many of both resident and migrant species. Starlings compete with other species for nest-site holes and nest boxes, as do House Sparrows. Brown-headed Cowbirds always place high in the list of FeederWatch species and they are nest parasites with a long-documented negative impact on other species. The degree of damage to other bird species by burgeoning populations of these species is difficult to measure, but common sense would suggest that bird feeding in winter that supports high population levels of these species is having a negative effect on a plethora of other species.

How do birds react to predation pressure at bird feeders? Lima (1985) experimentally determined that chickadees will take sunflower seeds to protected sites before eating if the risk of predation is high, thus trading maximum foraging efficiency for protection from predation (flying to cover requires the expenditure of energy). Grubb and Greenwald (1982) found that wintering House Sparrows choose feeders that offer maximum protection from predation, in this case feeders closer to a brushpile. Birds can apparently also determine whether a hawk is hungry or well fed and thus less of an immediate threat, as measured by the mobbing response of small passerines to hungry and well-fed hawks (Hamerstrom 1957). Not surprisingly, it appears that birds have evolved innate responses to predation that include sacrificing foraging efficiency for increased protection from predation.

In summary, accipiters' use of the "ultimate bird feeder" has increased over the past several decades, perhaps because there are simply more accipiters wintering, beginning in my area in the late 1980s. Although accipiters do kill birds at feeders, their impact is lessened by the fact that they take mostly common birds, several of which are pest species. Winter survival in birds is enhanced by bird feeders, and the benefits of supplemental food, in the opinion of most people, out-weigh the costs of predation. Birds may actually be safer at bird feeders than foraging elsewhere due to the advantages of vigilance that many eyes provide and the reduced foraging time during which they are at risk of predation. One factor that so far remains unmeasured is the effect of the increase in populations of nest-predator and nest-parasite species due to enhanced winter survival provided by bird feeders.

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# FIELD NOTES

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## The First Eastern Massachusetts Breeding Record of Cliff-nesting Peregrine Falcons Since Their Reintroduction

*Craig Jackson*

The successful reintroduction of Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) to the Northeast has been well documented. Seeing a Peregrine flying by in migration is no longer a rare event, and many have also been treated to the sight of a Peregrine swooping down from the top of a building to strike its prey. Young Peregrines have been banded at their nests on buildings in cities and have been followed as they chose new nest sites on other buildings. Successful nesting of Peregrines on natural cliffs in western Massachusetts was documented in the town of Irving, in 2002, and two other sites in the western part of the state subsequently had cliff-nesting Peregrines. The following is a brief summary of a cliff-nesting pair of Peregrines that I discovered in an active quarry in eastern Massachusetts. I observed them for more than thirty-seven hours over the past two years.

In 2007, the first year of the second Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas, I volunteered to be the primary atlaser for Boston North-10 (BN-10) and the adjacent block, Boston North-11 (BN-11). On May 27 I went to Mount Hood Memorial Park in BN-11 to look for breeding birds. Having seen Mount Hood Memorial Tower while fall hawkwatching on Pinnacle Rock, I was curious to check out the view from the top. Once there, I could see the higher ledges of a quarry to the east, although they were partially obscured by high trees. I thought that perhaps Turkey Vultures, often seen in both of my blocks, might be nesting on the cliffs and that finding a nesting pair would be quite a coup. I carefully scanned what I could see of the quarry for raptors.

What I found was indeed a coup — not the one I was looking for but something even better! As I scanned the ledges from the tower I saw what looked like a perched adult Peregrine Falcon. Careful focusing confirmed the observation. However, it wasn't until I saw a second bird circle high above the quarry and then fly off that I began to wonder if this was indeed a nesting pair. For the next seventy-five minutes I watched the remaining bird, which did not move from the ledge. I wondered if it was standing next to a nest, but from that distance I could not be sure.

I returned on June 2. Below the tower, I could scan the quarry through a hole in the fence, where, after first hearing a shrieking call, I observed two Peregrines. The larger one (which seemed to have a darker hood) was sitting on a ledge in the cliff face that formed a somewhat circular space about ten feet in diameter. At the back of the ledge there was a tall sapling and a fair amount of other vegetation as well.

Suspecting that these Peregrines were nesting, I e-mailed Tom French, MassWildlife's Assistant Director for Natural Heritage and Endangered Species. Tom informed David and Ursula Goodine about the birds, since they had been keeping tabs on several other Peregrine pairs. David talked to the manager of the quarry on June 24, and we were given permission to enter provided we wore hard hats and safety vests.

In 2007, I spent more than ten hours observing this pair, much of it watching one bird, which was presumably sitting on a nest. When it ultimately left the ledge we surmised that the Peregrines had nested but that the nest had been unsuccessful. The most interesting observation was made by the Goodines, who noted a band on one of the birds and were able to read it. Tom French subsequently informed us that our "male" was indeed a female. He wrote:

"The band sequence A-Z over 3 (black over green) was issued to me except these were designated as female bands; not male. I have a U over 3 band placed on a peregrine female at a site in Baltimore, Maryland in 2005. Her band number is 1687-1680."

I returned in 2008 hoping to confirm the nest, but, due to safety concerns, permission to enter the quarry was denied. All observations had to be made from outside the fence at a much greater distance. From April 16 to June 29, however, the Goodines and I were able to observe and record the first successful breeding attempt on a non-manmade structure by Peregrine Falcons in Eastern Massachusetts since their reintroduction. A few of the highlights that rewarded our efforts were:

**April 27.** First observation of eggs. I heard some *kek, kek, kekking* as both birds left the ledge. There were at least two and possibly three eggs in a shallow nest. The eggs appeared to be light brown and speckled (possibly white with brown speckles). Soon after, one of the birds swooped in, landed on the ledge, and arranged the eggs before settling down on the nest

**May 16.** First observation of chicks. I took Tom French and David and Ursula to my lookout. We found one of the birds on the nest. It shifted around, and we were able to observe two fluffy white chicks. Tom estimated that they were probably about five days old.

**June 11.** First observation of wing exercising. One chick started exercising its wings. The chick did this off and on for about five minutes before heading back under the tree. The second, smaller chick began flexing its wings, but to a lesser extent than its sibling. Its wings appeared to be more feathered with less down on the secondaries.

**June 29.** First extended flight. Ursula found one of the juveniles sitting on a ledge. I quickly spotted the other next to it. To our surprise, they were on a ledge across the quarry from the nest ledge. Both birds began flapping their wings. The adult female flew to the nest side of the quarry and landed in an overhanging tree. One of the juveniles, after significant wing flapping, flew off the west ledge and toward the east side of the quarry, where it went behind some rocks. The adult female

flew with it. Subsequently, the other juvenile also flew back across the quarry. In our excitement to witness these two flights, I did not note the time.

Anyone wishing to read the full account of the discovery and observation of this important breeding record can find it posted at <http://www.massbird.com/birdobserver/>. 



BALD EAGLE BY GEORGE C. WEST

## News from MassWildlife

### The Chicks Are Banded

The Bay State's resident Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons were the focus of a banding effort by MassWildlife biologists during the months of May and June. Dr. Tom French, Assistant Director of MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, reported an estimated 39 Peregrine Falcon chicks at 17 nests. "Peregrine nests are popping up everywhere, with two new nests at MIT in Cambridge and an apartment building in New Bedford," said French. Falcon nest locations include eight Peregrine nesting sites in the Greater Metropolitan Boston area, while Worcester, Fall River, Lawrence, Lowell, Deerfield, Amherst, and Springfield each host one nest.

MassWildlife biologists and technicians visited known or suspected eagle nest sites from Fall River to Sheffield, to the Merrimack River as well as the "core" population on Quabbin Reservoir and the Connecticut River and banded a total of 37 eaglets. Of 22 eagle nesting attempts, 21 were successful, resulting in the fledging of 37 eaglets, an unusually high rate of success. Eagle nesting highlights also included the discovery of three new nest sites among the towns of Hadley, Holyoke, and Lunenburg. MassWildlife has estimated a statewide total of 27 eagle territories.

The banning of DDT in 1972 and subsequent restoration efforts brought the Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle back from the brink of extinction in Massachusetts and across the country. Banding of the young has proven to be an important scientific tool in measuring the success of restoration programs and learning about raptor survival rates, dispersal distances, habitat preferences, and causes of death. The Peregrine Falcon was removed from the federal Endangered Species list in 1999. The Bald Eagle was delisted from the Federal Endangered Species list in 2007, a tribute to the restoration efforts in states like Massachusetts.

## ABOUT BOOKS

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### “Climbing Up and Down on a Round Thing”

Mark Lynch

*Spirits of the Air: Birds and American Indians in the South.* Shepard Krech III. 2009. University of Georgia Press. Athens, Georgia.

Bring me your soul.

I am a black owl of the night.

Your name is Night.

It hunts your heart.

— Part of a Cherokee incantation to encourage an owl to search for the soul of an enemy (p. 163)

Although there have been quite a number of general books published on birds in art and mythology, there have been very few in-depth anthropological studies on the importance of birds within a single region or culture. Exceptions have included Patrick Houlihan’s *The Birds of Ancient Egypt* and Brunsdon Yapp’s *Birds in Medieval Manuscripts*. Surprisingly, there has been no previous sustained analysis of the relationship between Native Americans and birds, which is why *Spirits of the Air* is such a revelation.

Shepard Krech III is Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology at Brown University, as well as a serious birder. In the book’s *Forward*, Paul S. Sutter states:

Shepard Krech’s hook is a simple one: why is it, he asks, that our “most persistent visual image of the indigenous people of the New World is that they were feathered?” (p. xi)

That is a question that seems blatantly obvious only after you have read it, and it is shocking to realize that no one has asked it before. Why is it that most of our images of Native Americans in contemporary paintings and photographs show a person with some kind of feather decoration? Once you pose that question, many more come to mind. Were birds special to Native American cultures? What did Native Americans know about the avifauna of their region? What birds did they eat? Did they domesticate any birds? How else did they utilize birds in their culture? In *Spirits of the Air*, Professor Krech brings together a wealth of research and studies previously unknown—except to the academic anthropologist—to paint a detailed picture of a culture’s intimate relationship with the birds of their environment.

The book *Spirits of the Air* grew out of a symposium lecture Krech was asked to give on “American Indians and Birds in the South” at the University of Mississippi’s Department of History. This is why the focus is only on the cultures of the indigenous

peoples of the southeastern quadrant of America. The South has been home to indigenous people for roughly 11,500 years, and in the last 6000 years, these people have “hunted, gathered, fished, foraged and domesticated the dog.” (p. 5) The first chapter of *Spirits of the Air* describes the societal evolution and complex later history of the Native Americans of the South. When the Europeans landed in the South, they encountered native people with complex cultures “everywhere” from the coastal plains to the Appalachians.

*Spirits of the Air* begins with some of the most basic questions the reader would have about Native Americans and birds. What do we know about bird populations in the South at the time of the European settlements? What species of birds did indigenous people recognize? The following chapters address some of the more utilitarian aspects of American Indians’ relationships with birds: What birds did they hunt? How did they use feathers and other bird parts to decorate their clothing and bodies? What birds were used in the decoration of everything from hair fasteners to clay pots? The last chapters describe the Native Americans’ more abstract and metaphysical images of birds as symbols of power, identity, and spirit.

Our current knowledge of what birds indigenous peoples named is fragmented and spotty. Some lists of Native American bird names gathered by natural historians in the early years of European contact have been lost. This loss is tragic because knowing the species of birds named by Native Americans would provide an insight into indigenous environmental and cultural knowledge. A twentieth century Chickasaw dictionary lists about fifty to sixty names for different kinds of birds, mostly for what settlers called “very good birds,” large species useful for sustenance like turkeys, ducks, and herons. Chief Sam Blue, a twentieth-century Catawba, has provided names for sixty kinds of birds from grebes to shorebirds and raptors. Some of the bird names of his list are onomatopoeic, such as those for Killdeer and Eastern Screech Owl. But many Catawba names were based on a bird’s appearance. So the Catawba title of “big chicken” was used for turkey; “very small bird” for wren, and “bird black with red wings” for Red-winged Blackbird. Other names were inspired by a bird’s behavior. These include “sucking bird” for Ruby-throated Hummingbird and “wild ancient sure enough eats all carrion” for Turkey Vulture.

The data on the Cherokee language is among the richest currently known and includes at least 110 Cherokee names for specific birds. Cherokee bird names were also largely onomatopoeic or descriptive of behavior. “Climbing up and down on a round thing” was the Cherokee name for the White-breasted Nuthatch; “imitator” the name for Brown Thrasher, and “fire on head” the Cherokee name for Golden-crowned Kinglet. “White dirt” is the Cherokee word for Northern Flicker, so called because of its white rump and habit of being on the ground foraging for ants. Some names are insights into mythological and cultural beliefs about those species. The Northern Mockingbird was known as “head eating” because the Cherokee thought that to eat the head of a mockingbird would make one more intelligent. Very few species of what birders call “lbjs” (little brown jobs), like sparrows, had distinct names in most Southern indigenous languages.

Southern Native Americans regularly hunted and ate about seventy-five different species of birds including turkeys, Passenger Pigeons, a variety of ducks, loons, Double-crested Cormorants, coots, Limpkins, and King Rails. The Catawba, Choctaw, Cherokee, Yuchi, and Creek used blowguns to hunt smaller birds. Some of these blowguns were quite impressive, ranging from five to ten feet long. Choctaw darts were eight to ten inches long and consisted of sharpened slivers of pine, oak, or cedar with a plunger made of chicken down, goose feathers, or tufts from a rabbit's tail.

As in many cultures worldwide, there were food taboos among the southern indigenous people, and certain birds were prohibited to eat. It comes as no surprise that the Catawba considered a Turkey Vulture a "most impure fowl" not fit to consume. Other indigenous people shunned eating certain species of birds because of religious or cultural traditions. These commonly included eagles, ravens, crows, swallows, and "every species of owl."

Hard data on whether Native Americans of the south ever domesticated birds before contact with Europeans is scanty and controversial. After contact, we do know that some Native Americans domesticated turkeys and Muscovy Ducks. But some peoples detested chickens and refused to eat them. For instance, the Houma considered the European imported chicken pale-fleshed and excrement-consuming, a veritable fowl of the "dunghill."

Bird feathers, wings, and bones were used extensively for awls, fans, pouches, and all manner of ornamentation. Examples shown in *Spirits of the Air* of bird imagery found in everyday objects showcase both a sophisticated sense of design and a deep understanding of a bird's appearance. A set of silver crested woodpecker pins from Glades, Florida, dating to ca. A.D. 1500-1600 are rather contemporary in appearance. Made from silver, with gold or copper inset eyes, and used as decorations on headbands or turbans, their detailed designs are based on what appears to be the head of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker. A set of small stone owls found in northeast Louisiana that date remarkably to 2000-1000 B.C. are marvels of artistic abstraction and minimalism.

For the indigenous peoples of our South, birds were not just something to eat or wear. Species like eagles were symbols of bloodlines or of achieving power. The well-known ball game, that highly ritualized substitute for hostility and warfare, featured players profusely decked out in feathers from bird species considered the embodiment of power.

On the most basic level, birds belong to the sky and move in the same medium of the cosmos as powerful beings. It takes no stretch of the imagination to extend links with birds — powerful avian beings — to spirits of transcendent importance in the welfare of human beings: the Sun, Thunder, Lightning, and Fire, all of which were essential to life as southern Indians understood it. (p. 134)

*Spirits of the Air* describes many examples of this spiritual interpretation of the birds that surrounded the Native Americans. In some southern societies, when a person died, his bones were ritually "defleshed" in preparation for burial by men and

women known to the Chitimacha as “turkey vulture men.” Owls were considered among the most dreaded and dangerous of all the birds, evil omens or the embodiment of witches. In contrast to this more generally held belief, the Catawba regarded the duetting of Great Horned or Barred owls as a sign of impending good news. Ultimately, there were “bird spirits” and “spirit birds,” primal and ethereal avian forces to be called on with incantations to cure illnesses or curse enemies.

*Spirits of the Air* is sumptuously illustrated. There are numerous color and black-and-white drawings, paintings, and photographs of Native Americans and examples of their physical culture. These are supplemented by classic prints by Catesby and Wilson. The University of Georgia Press should be commended for creating a state-of-the-art volume that is truly a pleasure to look at as well as to read. Professor Krech’s text, though scholarly, is lively and certainly written for a general audience. *Spirits of the Air* is an important introduction to the anthropology of the indigenous peoples of the South as well as one of the finest books written about birds and their importance in culture. As birders, for much of our lives we have learned to see birds only in certain narrow ways framed by avocation, taxonomy, and biology. *Spirits of the Air* invites the reader to see familiar birds through very different eyes. 

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### **News from MassWildlife**

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife has published “The Wild Turkey in Massachusetts,” by James E. Cardoza (Research Bulletin 20, 2009). This authoritative, technical work by the biologist who, since 1969 has conducted much of the successful wild turkey restoration in Massachusetts, provides the first-ever, in-depth history of wild turkey restoration efforts in the Commonwealth. To obtain a copy, contact the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581. Please include a check, payable to the Mass. Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, for \$5.00 for postage and handling, note “Turkey Bulletin,” and provide a mailing address with your order. Copies can also be picked up at no charge at the Division’s Westborough Field Headquarters or at the Fisheries & Wildlife District Offices.

Bird enthusiasts will also welcome a revised, resized, and updated *Birds of Massachusetts Check-list*. Compiled by former state ornithologist Brad Blodget, this check-list is larger in size, includes check boxes, information on the listing criteria, and a legend that indicates the status of the 473 bird species that have been recorded in Massachusetts. Veteran birders will also appreciate the extensive bibliography at the end of the check-list. Check-lists can be picked up at MassWildlife offices. To receive a check-list by mail, send a \$1.22 stamped 6 x 9 inch envelope to Bird Check-list: MassWildlife Field Headquarters, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581.

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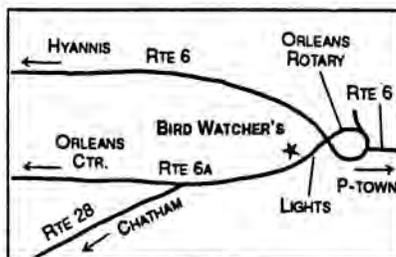
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# BIRD SIGHTINGS

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March/April 2009

*Seth Kellogg, Marjorie W. Rines, and Robert H. Stymeist*

March roared in like a lion with a two-day nor'easter that brought 8.5 inches of snow to Boston and much larger totals to areas west and north of the city. Many communities, especially in northern Worcester County, experienced high winds that knocked down numerous trees. These created massive power outages that left some areas without power three weeks after the storm. During the first four days of the month the temperature never rose above the freezing mark but hit a spring-like 61° on March 7 and again on March 18. The average temperature for the month in Boston was 37.5°, 1.4° below average. Rainfall totaled 2.51 inches, and snowfall reached 10.7 inches in Boston. Much more snow fell north and west of the city.

April was warm, wet, and sunny. The temperature averaged 2.2° above average, helped by a week of extreme heat at the end of the month, which brought in numerous migrants and exploding foliage. Two temperature records were broken, with 87° on April 26, surpassing 85° in 1872, and the month's high of 93° on April 28 beat the 90° mark set in 1990. Rainfall totaled 4.13 inches in Boston, about a half inch above normal with measurable amounts occurring on twelve days. The strong southwest winds at the end of the month opened the gates for an almost unprecedented flight of passerines; twenty-eight species of warblers were tallied in April along with a host of other songbirds that usually arrive later in May. *R. H. Stymeist*

## WATERFOWL THROUGH ALCIDS

The biggest event of the reporting period was the invasion of **Ross's Geese** in the state. Prior to 2009, only three reports of single birds had been accepted by the MARC: Sunderland on March 25–26, 1997; Chilmark on October 14–22, 2001; and Gill on October 21–23, 2004. It was therefore astonishing to hear news of seven birds in Ipswich on March 15. The following day, eight were discovered in Easthampton; on March 19 there were two in Haverhill; on March 22 there was a single bird on Plum Island. Although Ross's Geese were reported in other areas of the northeast, Massachusetts seemed to have the lion's share. Readers are encouraged to look at Paul Roberts' article about this invasion in the June issue of *Bird Observer*.

**Greater White-fronted Geese** are now annual winter visitors to the Commonwealth, but a flock of seventeen discovered at the Bear Creek Sanctuary in Saugus shattered the previous record of six (a probable family group) in Rochester in the fall of 2002. The only **Cackling Geese** this period were two in Easthampton. This species appears to be becoming regular in western Massachusetts.

Most migrant ducks arrived in typical numbers, although Wood Duck numbers were well above average. Redheads are always unusual, and reports from six locations were noteworthy. **Common Teal** are generally reported annually, but reports from six locations were unusual. A **Tufted Duck** discovered on March 12 in Sudbury confounded birders by moving up and down the Sudbury River.

Sooty Shearwaters are rare before May, and a sighting off Provincetown on March 8 is one of very few March records. In the spring and summer of 2008 a small group of Manx Shearwaters seen consistently off Revere Beach raised speculation of breeding on one of the Boston Harbor Islands. This spring, at least eleven were seen in April, continuing hopes of

discovering breeding birds. The only record of this species breeding in the state was on Penikese Island in 1970.

An **American White Pelican** seen in Westport on April 15 was an exceptional find. A female **Eurasian Kestrel** reported from Plum Island on April 13 was carefully described, and details were submitted to the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee. If accepted, this would represent only the third Massachusetts record, the previous two being a female collected at Nantasket Beach on September 29, 1887, and a male that lingered in Chatham from April 18 to May 5, 2002. Four reports of **Sandhill Cranes** included a pair in New Marlborough, where they had nested in 2007.

American Golden-Plover is an uncommon spring migrant, so reports of individuals at two locations were noteworthy. **Black-necked Stilts**, rare in Massachusetts, show up typically only in May or June, so an individual at Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary on April 25 was exceptional. A Whimbrel in Fairhaven on April 27 was an unusual spring visitor. The southwest winds at the end of April brought in a few early Least Sandpipers and Short-billed Dowitchers.

The only Black-legged Kittiwakes reported for the period were nice numbers from Race Point in Provincetown. Gulls were well reported, with honors going to Gloucester, Provincetown, Nantucket, and the inland location of Turners Falls. Of particular note were reports of **Thayer's Gulls** from three different locations. Three Caspian Terns were nice finds, and in the vanguard of our breeding terns were a Least Tern in Osterville on April 28 and a Common Tern on April 24 in Marion.

*M. Rines*

<b>Greater White-fronted Goose</b>				3/14	Duxbury	26	R. Bowes
3/1-8	Sharon	1	W. Sweet + v.o.	3/19	Hatfield	6	F. Bowrys
3/7-22	Saugus	17	P. Peterson + v.o.	3/19-4/30	P.I.	42 max	R. Heil
3/21-23	Hadley/Amhrst	1	S. Sumner	3/26	N. Plymouth	14	R. Bowes
Snow Goose				4/8	Ipswich	20	S. McGrath
3/4-5	Newbypt	3	MAS (B. Gette)	4/14	Plymouth	57	I. Davies
3/8	S. Quabbin	18	M. Lynch#	4/29	Chatham	4	B. Nikula
3/8	Cumb. Farms	3	SSBC (Zollo)	<b>Eurasian Wigeon</b>			
3/12-4/5	P.I.	23 max	v.o.	3/1-17	Falmouth	1-2 m	M. Malin + v.o.
3/15-30	Ipswich	10	J. Berry#	3/7	Plymouth	1	L. Ferraresso#
3/19	Duxbury B.	35	A. Fenwick	3/27-28	Newbypt	1	Goetschkes + v.o.
3/27	Truro	10	M. Faherty	4/2	Dartmouth	1 m	A. + D. Morgan
4/5	Tyringham	7	M. Lynch#	<b>American Wigeon</b>			
<b>Ross's Goose</b> (details submitted) *				3/6	Falmouth	38	M. Malin
3/15-23	Ipswich/P.I.	7 ph	R. Heil# + v.o.	3/8	Newbury	16	K. Elwell
3/16-18	Easthampton	8	R. Beida + v.o.	3/8	Nantucket	85	V. Laux#
3/19-28	Haverhill/W. Newbury	2 ph	Mirick + v.o.	3/8	Longmeadow	7	S. Kellogg
3/20-22	Hadley	5	A. Mueller + v.o.	3/22	Hatfield	17	F. Bowrys
3/22-31	P.I./Ipswich	1	N. Landry + v.o.	3/27	Newbypt	121	S. Grinley#
Brant				4/4	Sudbury	13	B. Harris
3/8	Nantucket	1200	V. Laux#	<b>American Black Duck</b>			
3/14, 4/9	Duxbury B.	184, 297	R. Bowes	thr	P.I.	415 max	v.o.
3/28	P.I.	215	J. Trimble	3/5	Kingston	500	E. Dalton
4/2	Squantum	350	P. Peterson	3/8	Nantucket	350	V. Laux#
4/13	Revere	476	R. Stymeist	3/14	Newbypt	322	M. Lynch#
4/16	Manomet	110	I. Davies	3/21	Cumb. Farms	550	SSBC (Petersen)
4/22	Ipswich	110	J. Berry	<b>Blue-winged Teal</b>			
4/25	Plymouth B.	200	K. Doyon	3/30, 4/18	Longmeadow	2, 4	Eaton, Orcutt
<b>Cackling Goose</b> (no details) *				3/31-4/30	P.I.	2-4	v.o.
3/17	Easthampton	2	S. Sumner	4/2-19	DWWS	2-5	v.o.
Wood Duck				4/5	Sudbury	3	B. Harris
3/12	Georgetown	60+	K. Elwell	4/11	Easthampton	2	T. Gagnon
3/20-21	Haverhill	300+	J. Fenton	4/14, 24	GMNWR	7, 2	Trimble, Center
3/22	Hadley	141	L. Therrien	4/19	Ipswich	4	J. Hoye#
3/28	Northfield	100	M. Taylor	4/24	Pittsfield	4	C. Blagdon
4/14	GMNWR	87	J. Trimble	4/26	Bolton Flats	2	J. Center
4/19	IRWS	30	W. Tatro	<b>Northern Shoveler</b>			
Gadwall				3/1-4/4	Salisbury	8 max	S. McGrath
3/8	Nantucket	12	V. Laux#	3/11-4/10	Nahant	pr	J. LeBlanc
3/13	Salisbury	16	P. + F. Vale#	3/11-27	DWWS	2	E. Dalton

Northern Shoveler (continued)				4/8	Squantum	60	G. d'Entremont#
3/22	Cheshire	2	N. Purdy	4/11	Westport	45	BBC (R. Stymest)
3/26-4/20	E. Boston (B.I.)	2-4	v.o.	4/19	Dorchester	7	T. Factor
3/31	Concord (NAC)	2 m	S. Perkins#	Lesser Scaup			
4/4-30	P.I.	2-4	v.o.	3/3	Nahant	23	L. Privacek
4/19	Ipswich	2	J. Berry	3/7	Acoaxet	30	MAS (B. Gette)
4/22	IRWS	2	J. Center	3/21	Wakefield	16	P. + F. Vale
Northern Pintail				3/22	Westport	74	E. Nielsen
3/1	Hadley	8	H. Allen	4/4	Mashpee	29	M. Keleher
3/7	W. Harwich	9	B. Nikula	4/8	Plymouth	24	I. Davies#
3/8	Cumb. Farms	30	SSBC (Zollo)	4/22	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg
3/8	Revere	8	R. Stymest#	4/25	Sharon	2	W. Sweet
3/13-4/25	P.I.	64 max	v.o.	King Eider			
3/15-4/1	GMNWR	29 max	v.o.	3/6	Bourne	1 f ph	M. Keleher
3/16	Northampton	19	T. Gagnon	3/8	Gloucester (B.R.)	1 m	J. Trimble
3/18	W. Bridgewater	12	J. Sweeney	3/8	Duxbury B.	1 m	R. Bowes
3/22	Westport	18	E. Nielsen	3/15	Woods Hole	1 ad m	BBC (E. Giles)
4/22	Belmont	1	J. Forbes	4/11	Marblehead	1 m	D. Noble
Green-winged Teal				4/13	Gloucester (E.P.)	1 m	M. Swift
3/7, 4/18	W. Harwich	22, 60	B. Nikula	Common Eider			
3/8-4/25	P.I.	208 max	v.o.	3/1, 4/1	P'town	800, 500	B. Nikula
3/8-4/18	E. Boston (B.I.)	60 max	v.o.	3/10	Nantucket	5000	V. Laux
3/9-4/4	Concord (NAC)	50 max	S. Perkins#	3/15	Falmouth	3500	G. Hirth
3/17-4/22	GMNWR	237 max	v.o.	3/22	Duxbury B.	239	R. Bowes
3/18	W. Bridgewater	124	J. Sweeney	4/1	P.I.	113	D. Chickering
3/20	Bolton Flats	150	K. Bourinot	4/18, 25	Manomet	400, 25	I. Davies#
3/27	Northampton	72	T. Gagnon	Harlequin Duck			
4/5	N. Scituate	75	G. d'Entremont	3/6	Falmouth	1 m	M. Malin
4/18	Cumb. Farms	102	I. Davies#	3/8-4/14	Manomet	1-4	v.o.
Common Teal				3/10	Nantucket	8	V. Laux
3/8	Newbury	1 m	P. + F. Vale	3/15	Scituate	50	P. Peterson
3/13-4/1	Concord (NAC)	1 m ad ph	GdE + v.o.	3/22	Westport	8	E. Nielsen
3/15-4/30	Newton	1 ph	Gurka + v.o.	4/19	Orleans	1 m	M. Malin
3/18	P.I.	1 m	R. Heil	4/21	Rockport (A.P.)	16	R. Heil
3/24-4/18	Harwich	1 m	G. Martin + v.o.	Surf Scoter			
4/19	IRWS	1	W. Tatro	3/8, 4/5	Duxbury B.	193, 631	R. Bowes
Common Teal x Green-winged Teal				3/20	Hyannis	1000	MAS (J. Galluzzo)
3/25	GMNWR	1	J. Trimble	4/5	N. Scituate	350	G. d'Entremont
Canvasback				4/18	Plymouth	755	I. Davies#
3/6-15	Falmouth	10	M. Malin	4/19	N. Truro	1300	B. Nikula
3/7	Newbypt	1 f	S. + J. Mirick	4/19	Orleans	162	M. Malin
3/8, 4/12	Nantucket	142, 6	V. Laux#	4/27	Revere	2	J. Trimble#
3/11-14	Turners Falls	1	M. Taylor	4/28	P.I.	2	R. Heil
3/16-17	Norwood	1 m, 1 f	P. Sullivan	White-winged Scoter			
3/18	Braintree	1 m	P. Peterson	3/7	P'town	800	B. Nikula
Redhead				3/8-4/30	Duxbury B.	148 max	R. Bowes
3/1	Plymouth	2	E. Dalton	3/10	Nantucket	260	V. Laux
3/6-8	Falmouth	1	M. Malin + v.o.	3/15-4/26	P.I.	110 max	v.o.
3/7	Carver	1	R. Conway	3/20	Hyannis	1000+	MAS (J. Galluzzo)
3/7	Bourne	1 f ph	J. Trimble#	4/13	Revere	145	R. Stymest
3/8	Nantucket	2	V. Laux#	4/14, 25	Manomet	350, 40	I. Davies
3/20-4/2	Braintree	3	M. McWade + v.o.	Black Scoter			
Ring-necked Duck				3/20	Hyannis	1000+	MAS (J. Galluzzo)
3/1-4/15	Melrose	62 max	D. + I. Jewell	4/5	Duxbury B.	147	R. Bowes
3/8	Winchester	105	M. Rines#	4/15, 24	P'town	150, 50	B. Nikula
3/9-13	Concord (NAC)	110	S. Perkins#	4/18	Manomet	424	I. Davies#
3/13, 4/27	Falmouth	78, 3	Keleher, Malin	4/19	N. Truro	120	B. Nikula
3/14, 4/21	Turners Falls	95, 1	H. Allen	4/21	Rockport (A.P.)	23	R. Heil
3/15-4/22	GMNWR	368 max	S. Perkins#	Long-tailed Duck			
3/21	W. Bridgewater	167	SSBC (Peterson)	3/10	Nantucket	750	V. Laux
3/26	Sterling	175	K. Bourinot	3/14, 4/9	Duxbury B.	190, 30	R. Bowes
4/2	Burrage Pd	300	G. d'Entremont	3/19, 4/24	P.I.	390, 500	Heil, Spahr
4/11	Westminster	50	T. Pirro	3/20	Hyannis	1000	MAS (J. Galluzzo)
4/26	N. Truro	2	B. Nikula	3/22, 4/25	Manomet	120, 4	Dalton, Davies
Tufted Duck				4/11	Brookfields	1 m	M. Lynch#
3/12-14	Sudbury/Concord	1 m ph	J. Hines + v.o.	4/19	Boston (Deer I.)	50+	M. Garvey
Greater Scaup				4/19	Winthrop	50	M. Garvey
3/7	Fairhaven	80	MAS (B. Gette)	4/29	Newbypt	500+	MAS (B. Gette)
3/8	Nantucket	1400	V. Laux#	Bufflehead			
3/14	Falmouth	871	B. Zajda#	3/10	Nantucket	1200	V. Laux
3/27	Truro	90	MAS (M. Faherty)	3/14	Newbypt	182	M. Lynch#
3/28	Marion	250	I. Nisbet	3/14	Mashpee	224	M. Malin
4/7	Turners Falls	4	H. Allen	3/22	Fairhaven	276	M. Lynch#

Bufflehead (continued)				4/25	Royalston	1	C. Caron
3/25	GMNWR	26	J. Trimble	Wild Turkey			
4/18	Squantum	84	T. Factor	3/8	Amherst	40	H. Allen
4/25	Plymouth	85	I. Davies#	3/15	Belchertown	32	L. Therrien
Common Goldeneye				3/17	Newton	28	G. Long
3/6	Turners Falls	22	H. Allen	3/21	Haverhill	43	J. Fenton
3/8	Nantucket	360	V. Laux#	4/14	Plymouth	35	I. Davies
3/14	Falmouth	42	B. Zajda#	4/20	Newbury	25	P. + F. Vale
3/14	Newbypt	474	M. Lynch#	Northern Bobwhite			
3/22	Fairhaven	101	M. Lynch#	3/20	Cotuit	8	B. Babcock
3/22	GMNWR	32	S. Perkins#	4/24	Brewster	1	S. Finnegan
3/22	Swansea	30	M. Lynch#	4/25	N. Truro	6	D. Manchester
4/23	Manomet	18	I. Davies	Red-throated Loon			
Barrow's Goldeneye				3/7, 4/1	P'town	63, 46	B. Nikula
3/5	Kingston	1 f ph	E. Dalton	3/7-20	Medford	1	R. LaFontaine
3/6-15	Falmouth	1-2	v.o.	3/8, 22	N. Truro	18, 60	B. Nikula
3/7	Fairhaven	1 m	MAS (B. Gette)	3/10	Nantucket	65	V. Laux
3/8	Nantucket	2	V. Laux#	3/19, 6/26	P.I.	49, 4	Heil, Tatro
3/14-28	Newbypt H.	1-5	v.o.	4/5	Winthrop B.	15	A. Birch
3/14	Salisbury	1 f	S. McGrath	4/14	Plymouth	12	I. Davies
4/6	Maynard	2 ph	L. Nachtrab	4/21	Turners Falls	1	S. Sumner
Hooded Merganser				Common Loon			
3/8	Nantucket	40	V. Laux#	3/8, 4/5	Duxbury B.	15, 18	R. Bowes
3/10	Turners Falls	36	H. Allen	3/17	Marblehead	51	R. Heil
3/15-4/15	GMNWR	57 max	v.o.	3/20	Hyannis	50	MAS (J. Galluzzo)
3/21	Brookfield	39	M. Lynch#	3/25	Marshfield	36	G. d'Entremont#
3/27	Hatfield	18	T. Gagnon	3/28	P.I.	47	J. Trimble
4/18	W. Harwich	3	B. Nikula	4/7	N. Falmouth	115	I. Nisbet
4/19	E. Brookfield	7	M. Lynch#	4/14	Manomet	28	I. Davies
Common Merganser				4/14	Plymouth	22	I. Davies
3/1-4/14	Melrose	182 max	D. + I. Jewell	4/19	P'town	18	B. Nikula
3/12	Medford	105	M. Rines	4/28	N. Truro	29	D. Manchester
3/26	Southwick	100	S. Kellogg	4/29	S. Quabbin	4	L. Therrien
3/27	W. Newbury	104	S. Grinley#	Pied-billed Grebe			
3/28	Brookfields	141	M. Lynch#	3/8	Nantucket	2	V. Laux#
3/30	S. Quabbin	229	L. Therrien	3/17	Falmouth	2	S. Wheelock#
3/30	Pittsfield	120	R. Laubach	3/21-4/30	GMNWR	17 max	v.o.
4/11	Ashburnham	124	C. Caron	4/13	Plymouth	2	I. Davies
4/26	Southbridge	4 m	M. Lynch#	4/15	Concord (NAC)	2	P. Peterson
4/26	Pembroke	2	G. d'Entremont#	4/16	P.I.	2	J. Carroll
Red-breasted Merganser				Horned Grebe			
3/8	Nantucket	450	V. Laux#	3/10	Nantucket	35	V. Laux
3/21, 4/15	P'town	1100, 2400	B. Nikula	3/17	Marblehead	80	R. Heil
3/22	Fairhaven	132	M. Lynch#	3/19	P.I.	33	R. Heil
4/8	Plymouth	242	I. Davies#	3/22	Swansea	124	M. Lynch#
4/18	Squantum	250	SSBC (K. Ryan)	3/27	Cheshire	3	T. Begley
4/21	Turners Falls	4	S. Sumner	4/11	Turners Falls	5	S. Sumner
4/26	Manomet	200	I. Davies	4/13	Winthrop	51	R. Stymiest
4/26	N. Truro	500	D. Manchester	4/14	Plymouth	108	I. Davies
Ruddy Duck				4/24	Manomet	86	I. Davies
3/1-4/15	Melrose	14	D. + I. Jewell	Red-necked Grebe			
3/7	S. Boston	8	F. Bouchard#	3/8	Nantucket	45	V. Laux#
3/8	Nantucket	6	V. Laux#	3/17	Marblehead	128	R. Heil
3/25	Pembroke	29	G. d'Entremont#	3/22	Winthrop B.	119	T. Factor
4/1	W. Newbury	5	MAS (B. Gette)	3/22	Duxbury B.	18	R. Bowes
4/4	Seekonk	8	M. Lynch#	3/31	P.I.	39	P. + F. Vale
4/11	Brighton	14	P. Peterson	4/5	Revere B.	58	A. Birch
4/14	Chestnut Hill	24	M. Kaufman	4/5	N. Scituate	39	G. d'Entremont
4/24	P.I.	2	T. Spahr	4/11	Brookfields	24	M. Lynch#
Ring-necked Pheasant				4/21	Turners Falls	11	S. Sumner
3/8	Cumb. Farms	1	SSBC (Zollo)	4/24	Manomet	29	I. Davies
3/15	Belmont	1	J. Forbes	Sooty Shearwater			
3/21	Nantucket	1	MAS (J. Galluzzo)	3/8	P'town	1	B. Nikula
4/5	Saugus (Bear C.)	1	S. Zende#	Manx Shearwater			
4/8	Nahant	4	G. Jones	4/10-30	Revere B.	11 max	v.o.
4/25	Mattapan (BNC)	1	A. Birch	Northern Gannet			
Ruffed Grouse				3/8, 4/28	P'town	210, 1000	B. Nikula
3/22	Canton	1	P. Peterson	3/28, 4/28	P.I.	110, 30	Trimble, Heil
4/5	Royalston	1	S. Sutton	4/7	Marblehead	100	D. Noble
4/19	Mashpee	1	M. Keleher	4/7	Squantum	12	J. Baur
4/24	C. Quabbin	7	L. Therrien	4/18	Duxbury B.	17	R. Bowes
4/25	Winchendon	2	S. Sutton	4/19	Orleans	44	M. Malin
4/25	Windsor	6	M. Lynch#	4/21	Rockport (A.P.)	116	R. Heil

Northern Gannet (continued)									
4/21	Nantucket	355		E. Ray	4/23	Mashpee	2		M. Keleher
<b>American White Pelican</b> (details submitted) *					4/25	Melrose	2		D. + I. Jewell
4/15	Westport	3		D. Eastman	4/26	Brighton	2		M. Kaufman
<b>Double-crested Cormorant</b>					4/26	Amherst	3		D. Minear
3/11	Arlington	1		M. Rines	<b>Black-crowned Night-Heron</b>				
4/1	Mattapoissett	25		G. Gove#	3/8	Nantucket	1		V. Laux#
4/11	Squantum	150		J. Baur	3/12	Boston	1		T. Factor
4/17	Milton	175		G. d'Entremont	3/31	Arlington	12		E. McKay
4/18	W. Harwich	220		B. Nikula	4/1	Brewster	12		E. Foster
4/19	Newbyp H.	360		R. Heil	4/8	Plymouth	12		I. Davies#
4/22	Barre Falls	122		B. Kamp	4/11	Milton	18		B. Larson
4/22	Mt. Tom	202		T. Gagnon	4/13	Harwich	30		E. Banks
4/25	N. Truro	350		B. Nikula	<b>Glossy Ibis</b>				
<b>Great Cormorant</b>					3/31	Salisbury	1		J. Kezer
3/13	Scituata	110		E. Dalton	4/1	N. Truro	1		D. Manchester
3/22	Fairhaven	42		M. Lynch#	4/7	Westover	1		M. Allen
3/25, 4/25	Duxbury B.	39, 27		R. Bowes	4/11	Cumb. Farms	6		R. Stymeist#
3/28	Marion	36		I. Nisbet	4/18-30	Longmeadow	1		J. Wojtanowski
4/4	N. Truro	19		D. Manchester	4/23	Rowley	65		P. + F. Vale#
4/17	Manomet	16		I. Davies	4/26	GMNWR	21		W. Hutcheson
4/23	Magnolia	11		M. Lynch#	4/28	Eastham (F.H.)	1		P. Trull
<b>American Bittern</b>					<b>White-faced Ibis</b> (no details) *				
4/7	Nantucket	1		D. Odelle	4/7-10	Ipswich/Essex	1 ph		R. Heil + v.o.
4/10	Royalston	1		C. Caron	<b>Black Vulture</b>				
4/16-17	HRWMA	1		T. Pirro	3/7	Sheffield	23		J. Drucker
4/18	N. Truro	1		B. Nikula	3/7	Williamstown	1		L. Reed-Evans
4/18	Brookfield	2		M. Lynch#	3/22	Ipswich	1		A. + G. Gurka
4/20	Woburn (HP)	1		K. Lynch#	3/25	Saugus	1		S. McGrath
4/22	Lenox	2		G. Hurley	3/28	Pittsfield	4		R. Laubach
4/23	P.I.	1		P. + F. Vale	4/4	Dartmouth	1		A. + D. Morgan
4/25	Haverhill	1		J. Fenton	4/19	Southwick	3		S. Kellogg
4/27	Athol	1		A Mueller	<b>Turkey Vulture</b>				
4/29	Belchertown	1		L. Therrien	thr	Barre Falls	64		Hawkcount (BK)
<b>Least Bittern</b>					3/22	Nantucket	20		MAS (J. Galluzzo)
4/28	P.I.	1		R. Heil	4/thr	N. Truro	415		Hawkcount (DM)
<b>Great Blue Heron</b>					4/thr	P.I.	43		Hawkcount (CJ)
3/17	Westwood	4 n		G. Long	4/1	Orange	29		B. Lafley
3/25	W. Warren	5 n		B. Zajda	4/5	Sheffield	26		M. Lynch#
3/26	Sterling	4 n		K. Bourinot	4/5	Russell	33		M. Lynch#
4/5	Lynnfield	13 n		P. + F. Vale	4/10	P.I.	15		Hawkcount (CJ)
4/10	Royalston	15 n		C. Caron	4/14	GMNWR	15		J. Trimble
4/12	Sturbridge	5 n		M. Lynch#	4/18, 27	N. Truro	34, 46		Hawkcount (DM)
<b>Great Egret</b>					<b>Osprey</b>				
3/8	Quincy	1		P. Fifield	3/8	Cotuit	3		S. Goodwin
3/21, 4/5	Hingham	1, 15		Spalding, Cross	3/22	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	2		E. Nielsen
3/22	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	2		E. Nielsen	3/22	Nantucket	2		K. Blackshaw
3/25, 4/9	Duxbury	1, 12		R. Bowes	3/30	Mashpee	26		M. Keleher
3/25, 4/8	Manchester	1, 28		S. Hedman	4/thr	Barre Falls	65		Hawkcount (BK)
3/29, 4/21	Essex	3, 17		Hoye, Heil	4/thr	P.I.	35		Hawkcount (CJ)
3/30	Revere	4		P. + F. Vale	4/thr	N. Truro	56		Hawkcount (DM)
4/12	Nantucket	3		K. Blackshaw#	4/22	Mt. Tom	19		T. Gagnon
4/27	Longmeadow	3		H. Allen	<b>Bald Eagle</b>				
4/29	Salisbury	33		S. McGrath#	3/7-4/25	Barre Falls	19		B. Kamp
<b>Snowy Egret</b>					3/8	S. Quabbin	14		M. Lynch#
3/28	Essex	2		J. Trimble	3/9	Wachusett Res.	pr n		B. deGraaf
3/30	Mashpee	2		M. Keleher	3/14	W. Newbury	4 imm		R. Heil#
3/31	Duxbury	1		R. Bowes	3/15	Northbridge	3 ad		J. Liller#
4/4	E. Boston (B.I.)	2		S. Zende#	3/19	Fall River	pr n		K. Rodman
4/5	Hingham (WE)	5		SSBC (H. Cross)	3/21	Brookfield	pr n		M. Lynch#
4/6	Ipswich	37		D. Chickering#	3/26	Petersham	3		J. Baird#
4/11	Westport	8		BBC (R. Stymeist)	3/28	Groveland	2 ad, 2 juv		J. Fenton
<b>Little Blue Heron</b>					4/5	Orange	4 imm		B. Lafley
3/25	Manchester	1		S. Hedman	<b>Northern Harrier</b>				
4/9	Essex	2		J. Hoye#	3/8	Nantucket	4		V. Laux#
4/14	Plymouth	1 ad		I. Davies	3/22	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	3		E. Nielsen
4/14	Brewster	1		S. Finnegan	4/thr	P.I.	117		Hawkcount (CJ)
4/26	Scituata	2		G. d'Entremont#	4/2	Burrage Pd	3		T. Factor
4/27	Mashpee	1		M. Keleher	4/5	E. Boston (B.I.)	4		S. Zende#
<b>Cattle Egret</b>					4/8, 10	P.I.	23, 30		Hawkcount (CJ)
4/10	Plymouth	1 ad		T. Lloyd-Evans	4/8	DDWS	3		I. Davies#
4/10-30	Ipswich	1-3		P. Brown	4/9-24	Barre Falls	11		Hawkcount (BK)
					4/11	Cumb. Farms	3		R. Stymeist#

Northern Harrier (continued)	4/thr	N. Truro	333	Hawkcount (DM)		
4/24	N. Truro	7	D. Manchester	4/4-19	DWWS 10 max v.o.	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4/7			Newbypt	6 S. McGrath	
3/4-26	N. Truro	12	Hawkcount (DM)	4/7	Salisbury 9 S. McGrath	
4/thr	N. Truro	124	Hawkcount (DM)	4/18	Cumb. Farms 8 I. Davies#	
4/thr	Barre Falls	94	Hawkcount (BK)	4/23, 24	P.I. 160, 88 Hawkcount (CJ)	
4thr	P.I.	124	Hawkcount (CJ)	4/25, 27	N. Truro 35, 32 Hawkcount (DM)	
4/17, 19	Barre Falls	11, 24	Hawkcount (BK)	Merlin		
4/23, 24	P.I.	17, 21	Hawkcount (CJ)	thr	Reports of indiv. from many locations	
4/25	Windsor	5	M. Lynch#	3/21	Nantucket 2 MAS (J. Galluzzo)	
4/27, 28	N. Truro	17, 25	Hawkcount (DM)	4/thr	P.I. 63 Hawkcount (CJ)	
Cooper's Hawk	4/thr	P.I.	15	Hawkcount (CJ)	4/thr	N. Truro 21 Hawkcount (DM)
4/thr	N. Truro	37	Hawkcount (DM)	Peregrine Falcon		
3/8	Nantucket	4	V. Laux#	3/8	Saugus 4 J. Trimble#	
4/9, 27	N. Truro	9, 8	Hawkcount (DM)	3/10	Nantucket 2 V. Laux	
4/24	Manomet	9	I. Davies	3/15	W. Roxbury 2 R. Stymeist	
4/28	P.I.	5	Hawkcount (TM)	3/17-31	Springfield 2 v.o.	
Northern Goshawk	4/thr	P.I.	5	Hawkcount (CJ)	4/thr	P.I. 19 Hawkcount (CJ)
3/7	Barre Falls	2	Hawkcount (BK)	4/22	Deerfield 2 L. Therrien	
3/14	Groveland	1	K. Elwell	4/26	N. Truro 2 Hawkcount (DM)	
4/5	P.I.	1	C. Jackson	Virginia Rail		
4/8, 14	N. Truro	1, 1	Hawkcount (DM)	3/22	Nantucket 4 MAS (J. Galluzzo)	
4/22	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg	4/26	Burlington 2 M. Rines	
4/25	Windsor	2	M. Lynch#	4/26	E. Boston (B.I.) 3 R. Stymeist#	
Red-shouldered Hawk	4/28	P.I.	5	Hawkcount (TM)	4/28	P.I. 3 R. Heil
3/8	Middleboro	pr	SSBC (Zollo)	Sora		
3/8	Carlisle	2	A. Ankers	4/9-30	P.I. 1-2 v.o.	
3/12	Stoughton	2	G. d'Entremont	4/18	Southwick 1 S. Kellogg	
3/14	Barre Falls	3	Hawkcount (BK)	4/25-26	Concord 1 S. Perkins#	
3/18	W. Bridgewater	4	D. Cabral	Common Moorhen		
3/21	N. Falmouth	2	I. Nisbet	4/12	Nantucket 1 K. Blackshaw#	
3/28	Cumb. Farms	2	J. Hoye#	4/22	Lenox 1 G. Hurley	
3/28	E. Bridgewater	pr n	E. Giles	4/26	Nantucket 1 J. Trimble	
4/5	Ipswich	pr n	J. Berry	American Coot		
4/9	N. Truro	4	Hawkcount (DM)	3/thr	Woburn (HP) 2 M. Rines	
4/24	Manomet	3	I. Davies	3/1	Waltham 3 J. Forbes#	
Broad-winged Hawk	4/24	Manomet	3	I. Davies	3/8	Plymouth 6 E. Dalton
4/10-29	Barre Falls	592	Hawkcount (BK)	3/8	Nantucket 50 K. Blackshaw	
4/18	Hubbardston	3	C. Caron	3/13	Falmouth 14 M. Keleher	
4/19	Southbridge	3	M. Lynch#	3/22-4/22	GMNWR 9 max v.o.	
4/19, 23	Barre Falls	109, 314	Hawkcount (BK)	Sandhill Crane		
4/22	Mt. Tom	208	T. Gagnon	4/1-5	Burrage Pd 1 J. Sweeney#	
4/22-28	N. Truro	77	Hawkcount (DM)	4/5	New Marlborough 2 J. Hoye#	
4/25	Windsor	20	M. Lynch#	4/8-9	Cumb. Farms 2 H. Levesque#	
4/25	Quabbin Pk.	3	K. Bourinot	4/12-26	Nantucket 1 J. Papale	
4/25	Cheshire	14	M. Lynch#	Black-bellied Plover		
4/25	Cumb. Farms	4	I. Davies#	3/8, 4/25	Plymouth 6, 6 Dalton, Doyon	
4/27, 30	N. Truro	47, 19	Hawkcount (DM)	3/8	Nantucket 10 V. Laux#	
Red-tailed Hawk	4/4			4/4	Chatham (S.B.) 40 J. Style	
3/7-31	Barre Falls	52	Hawkcount (BK)	4/10	Duxbury B. 4 R. Bowes	
3/8	Nantucket	16	V. Laux#	4/17	Winthrop 5 P. + F. Vale#	
4/5-27	Barre Falls	26	Hawkcount (BK)	4/18	Sandwich 1 M. Keleher	
4/7-29	N. Truro	41	Hawkcount (DM)	4/19	Orleans 8 M. Malin	
Rough-legged Hawk	4/26			4/26	Wellfleet 12 J. Hoye#	
thr	Cumb. Farms	7 max	v.o.	American Golden-Plover		
thr	P.I.	1-3	v.o.	4/6	Cumb. Farms 1 ph H. Levesque	
3/7, 4/11	N. Truro	1, 1	B. Nikula	4/26	Chatham (S.B.) 1 B. Harris	
3/8	Northampton	1 dk	B. Zajda	Semipalmated Plover		
3/8	Turners Falls	1	B. Zajda	4/29	Duxbury B. 1 R. Bowes	
3/8	Saugus	1 ad lt	S. Zende#	Piping Plover		
3/18	Bolton Flats	1	K. Bourinot	3/14	P'town (R.P.) 1 J. Hoye#	
3/25	Burrage Pd	1 dk	E. Dalton	3/15	Gay Head 1 Nelson/Beattie	
4/19	DWWS	1 lt	R. Bowes	3/21	Truro 2 R. Stymeist#	
Golden Eagle	4/19	DWWS	1 lt	R. Bowes	3/22	Duxbury B. 2 R. Bowes
3/8	Pelham	1 ad	M. Lynch#	4/14	Plymouth 12 I. Davies	
Eurasian Kestrel (details submitted) *	4/15	P.I.	1 f	P. Roberts	4/15	P.I. 12 D. Chickering
American Kestrel	4/13	P.I.	1 f	P. Roberts	4/19	Orleans 30 M. Malin
3/8	Saugus	2	R. Stymeist#	4/26	Cotuit 10 M. Keleher	
3/31	Falmouth	2	J. Style	Killdeer		
4/thr	Barre Falls	64	Hawkcount (BK)	3/8, 21	Newbury 13, 45 Elwell, Trimble	
4/thr	P.I.	668	Hawkcount (CJ)	3/9	Concord (NAC) 11 S. Perkins#	
				3/13	Amherst 13 H. Allen	
				3/15	Hadley 14 B. Zajda	

Killdeer (continued)			Least Sandpiper				
3/20	Bolton Flats	40	K. Bourinot	4/25	Plymouth	1	I. Davies#
3/21	Newbypt	45	BBC (L. de la Flor)	4/26	Arlington Res.	1	J. Forbes#
3/22	Haverhill	30	S. McGrath	4/26	Chatham (S.B.)	48	B. Harris
4/13	Ipswich	15	P. Peterson	4/28	P.I.	27	R. Heil
American Oystercatcher				4/30	Wompatuck SP	2	C. Nims#
3/7, 22	Fairhaven	2, 7	Gette, Lynch	Pectoral Sandpiper			
3/8, 21	Nantucket	3, 12	Laux, Galluzzo	3/8	Saugus	1	J. Trimble#
3/27	Edgartown	4	J. Hoye#	4/1	Fairhaven	1	G. Gove#
3/28	Marion	2 pr	I. Nisbet	4/7	Newbury	1	D. Chickering#
3/28	Falmouth	5	J. Style	4/18	P.I.	1	J. Hoye#
3/28	Winthrop	6	D. + I. Jewell	4/18	Cumb. Farms	1	I. Davies#
4/27	Boston H.	6	R. Stymeist#	4/23	Nantucket	1	E. Ray
<b>Black-necked Stilt</b>				4/28	Haverhill	1	J. Fenton
4/25	WBWS	2	D. Reynolds#	Purple Sandpiper			
Spotted Sandpiper				3/8, 4/24	Nantucket	18, 35	V. Laux#
4/23	Essex	1	S. Hedman	3/8	Rockport	40	BBC (L. Kramer)
4/25	Royalston	1	S. Sutton	3/25, 4/15	N. Scituate	125, 75	G. d'Entremont#
4/28	Haverhill	6	J. Fenton	4/8, 21	Manomet	18, 2	I. Davies#
4/28	Arlington Res.	6	P. Peterson	4/11	Westport	8	BBC (R. Stymeist)
Solitary Sandpiper				4/17	Winthrop	9	P. Peterson
4/22	Nantucket	1	D. Lang	4/18	Nahant	23	BBC (L. Pivacek)
4/22	Ipswich	1	P. + F. Vale#	Dunlin			
4/26	Amherst	3	L. Therrien	3/3, 4/12	Eastham (F.E.)	260, 200	B. Nikula
4/26	Arlington Res.	3	C. Cook	3/14	P'town (R.P.)	33	J. Hoye#
4/28	GMNWR	2	S. Perkins#	3/22, 4/28	Duxbury B.	1887, 1500	R. Bowes
4/28	Haverhill	3	J. Fenton	4/4	Brewster	860	S. Finnegan
4/30	Wompatuck SP	2	C. Nims#	4/14	Newbypt H.	354	D. Chickering#
Greater Yellowlegs				4/15	P.I.	13	D. Chickering
3/7, 4/17	W. Harwich	3, 18	B. Nikula	Short-billed Dowitcher			
3/18, 4/28	P.I.	1, 46	R. Heil	4/19	Orleans	4	M. Malin
3/22, 4/19	Newbypt	1, 24	Trimble, Heil	4/23	Newbypt	2	M. Lynch#
3/31, 4/25	Duxbury	1, 18	R. Bowes	4/25	Mashpee	1	M. Malin
4/17	E. Boston (B.I.)	10	P. Peterson	4/25	Duxbury B.	1	R. Bowes
4/25	Cumb. Farms	12	I. Davies#	4/25	Plymouth B.	1	K. Doyon
Willet				4/26	Chatham (S.B.)	1	B. Harris
4/23	Nantucket	2	D. Lang	Wilson's Snipe			
4/25	Mashpee	3	CCBC (M. Malin)	3/13, 4/1	Fairhaven	3, 31	Morgan, Gove
4/25	P.I.	2	B. Harris	3/18, 4/20	W. Bridgewater	3, 25	J. Sweeney
4/26	Osterville	4	S. Goodwin	3/20	Bolton Flats	34	K. Bourinot
4/26	Cotuit	12	M. Keleher	4/7	Ipswich	70	R. Heil
4/27	Fairhaven	5	M. LaBossiere	4/7	Lexington	20	M. Rines
Lesser Yellowlegs				4/7	Newbury	157	R. Heil
4/1	Fairhaven	3	G. Gove#	4/18	E. Boston (B.I.)	22	S. Zende#
4/8	DWWS	1	I. Davies#	4/18	Cumb. Farms	37	I. Davies#
4/17	Harwich	4	A. Curtis	4/19	Plympton	30	SSBC (J. Sweeney)
4/23	Newbypt	89	M. Lynch#	4/19	Halifax	20	SSBC (J. Sweeney)
4/28	Haverhill	3	J. Fenton	American Woodcock			
4/29	P.I.	9	MAS (B. Gette)	3/8	Nantucket	12	V. Laux#
4/29	Longmeadow	2	T. Alicea	3/14	Longmeadow	6	A. + L. Richardson
Upland Sandpiper				3/14	P.I.	17	N. Landry
4/21	Ipswich	1 ph	R. Heil	3/15	Southbridge	10	M. Lynch#
4/26	Plymouth	6	G. d'Entremont#	3/19	Belmont	10	R. Stymeist#
Whimbrel				3/19	Danvers	25	D. Brewster
4/27	Fairhaven	1	M. LaBossiere	3/21	E. Brookfield	23	M. Lynch#
Ruddy Turnstone				3/22	Canton	10	P. Peterson
3/8	Nantucket	4	V. Laux#	Black-legged Kittiwake			
3/11	Revere	3	P. Peterson	3/8, 4/5	P'town	160, 120	B. Nikula
3/27	P'town	2	MAS (M. Faherty)	Bonaparte's Gull			
3/28	Woods Hole	5	J. Style	3/20	Hyannis	30	MAS (J. Galluzzo)
4/25	Duxbury B.	1	R. Bowes	3/29	Pittsford (Onota)	3	A. Werner
Red Knot				4/8	Osterville	12	M. Malin
4/26	Chatham (S.B.)	1	B. Harris	4/21	Turners Falls	2	S. Surner
Sanderling				4/24	P'town	4	B. Nikula
3/7	Nahant	17	N. Hayward	Black-headed Gull			
3/8	Nantucket	65	V. Laux#	3/8	Nantucket	2	V. Laux#
3/18	Ipswich (C.B.)	120	B. Flemer	Laughing Gull			
3/22	P.I.	50	N. Landry#	3/21, 4/17	P'town	1, 125	B. Nikula
3/28, 4/29	Duxbury B.	22, 28	R. Bowes	3/26	Wellfleet	1	M. Malin#
4/11	Westport	120	BBC (R. Stymeist)	3/29, 4/25	Plymouth	1, 200	Dalton, Doyon
4/12	P'town (R.P.)	35	M. Iliff	4/9	Brewster	28	D. Clapp#
4/25	Mashpee	30	CCBC (M. Malin)	4/19	Orleans	14	M. Malin
				4/26	Chatham (S.B.)	75	B. Harris

<b>Thayer's Gull</b> (no details) *				3/16	P'town (R.P.)	3 1W	M. Taylor#
3/8	Gloucester (E.P.)	1 1W ph	J. Trimble	3/21	Nantucket	3 MAS	(J. Galluzzo)
3/14-19	P.I.	1 1yr ph	J. Trimble + v.o.	4/6	Middleboro	1	W. Peterson#
4/12	P'town (R.P.)	1 1W	M. Iliff	4/19	N. Truro	1	D. Manchester
<b>Iceland Gull</b>				4/21	Manomet	1 1W/2W	I. Davies#
3/5	Waltham	1	J. Forbes	4/28	P'town	1	B. Nikula
3/5	Springfield	1	E. Rutman	4/29	Duxbury B.	1 2W	R. Bowes
3/6	Turners Falls	3	J. Smith		Nelson's Gull		
3/8	Gloucester (E.P.)	14	J. Trimble	3/22	Newbypt	1 ph	J. Trimble
3/10	Nantucket	80	V. Laux		Least Tern		
3/22, 4/28	P'town	40, 16	B. Nikula	4/28	Osterville	1	A. Curtis
3/26	Wellfleet	7	M. Malin#		Caspian Tern		
3/29	Nantucket	3	K. Blackshaw	4/19	Squantum	1	B. Larson
4/1	Newbypt	2	MAS (B. Gette)	4/21	Turners Falls	1	M. Fairbrother
4/19	Duxbury B.	2	R. Bowes	4/24	Manomet	1 ad	I. Davies
4/22	N. Truro	3	D. Manchester		Common Tern		
<b>Lesser Black-backed Gull</b>				4/24	Marion	1	C. Mostello
thr	Boston	1 ad	R. Stymeist		Common Murre		
3/1	Turners Falls	2	J. Smith	3/7	P'town	2	B. Nikula
3/5	Waltham	1	J. Forbes		Razorbill		
3/7	Salisbury	1	B. Zajda	3/7	P'town	25	B. Nikula
3/10	Nantucket	115	V. Laux	3/10	Nantucket	2	V. Laux
3/21	Brewster	1	B. Nikula	3/15	Falmouth	3	G. Hirth
3/29	Nantucket	3	K. Blackshaw	3/26	Wellfleet	30	M. Malin#
4/5	Cumb. Farms	1 ad	J. Sweeney#		Black Guillemot		
4/5, 25	Brewster	1, 1	B. Nikula	3/8	Marshfield	9	G. d'Entremont
4/12	P'town (R.P.)	19	M. Iliff	3/17	Marblehead	7	R. Heil
4/16	Manomet	1 1W	I. Davies	3/27	Rockport	1	J. Robinson
4/19	Gloucester	1 ad	R. Heil	4/18-19	Duxbury B.	3	R. Bowes
<b>Glaucous Gull</b>				4/21	Rockport (A.P.)	1	R. Heil
3/1-6	Turners Falls	1	J. Smith		Large acid species		
3/7	Salisbury	1 2W	B. Zajda	3/8, 22	N. Truro	1320, 610	B. Nikula
3/8	Gloucester (E.P.)	1 1W	J. Trimble				

## OWLS THROUGH FINCHES

Snowy Owls were well reported into April, with as many as six individuals on Plum Island. Unfortunately, one was found dead on April 19, a victim of starvation. Norm Smith banded a total of forty-one Snowy Owls this winter at Logan Airport, the second-best winter since 1981. Great Horned Owls were noted nesting at six locations, with the first young noted on March 28. Short-eared Owls were reported from eleven locations, and a Long-eared Owl made a one-day appearance on Plum Island. The warm southwest winds at the end of the month undoubtedly were responsible for the number of April Whip-poor-will reports. A flock of about fifty Chimney Swifts was an unusually high number for April; typically only a few are seen in April.

A **Black-backed Woodpecker**, a rare visitor to Massachusetts, was discovered at the Lost Farm Sanctuary on Nantucket. It was feeding and stripping bark in the large Japanese black pine forest that extends for over a mile along the south edge of Hummock Pond.

For birders, signs that spring is truly on the way start with the arrival of the first insect-loving swallows and Eastern Phoebes in March and continue with their numbers increasing threefold in April. A high count of seventy-six Eastern Phoebes was tallied on Plum Island on April 6; they had been brought down by an east wind along with a good rainfall. Purple Martins were noted at five locations, but only a single Cliff Swallow was reported in April.

Fish Crows seem to have shifted away from Boston and points north and have moved in increasing numbers into the South Shore, Cape Cod, and Bristol County. Common Ravens have moved into eastern Massachusetts and were found nesting in Sudbury, Groton, Georgetown, and Quincy. For the second year in a row ravens built a nest in the West Roxbury quarry used by breeding Peregrine Falcons.

The strong southwest winds on April 24–28 brought a deluge of spring migrants. Conditions were perfect; cold and wet weather with fog every day from April 18–23 stalled any

northward movement. Migrants continued to build up in the south until the weather cleared, and the temperature quickly rose almost twenty degrees on April 24. Twenty-eight warbler species plus both Brewster's and Lawrence's hybrids were reported during the period, compared with twenty-two last year. Most interesting was the discovery of a **Townsend's Warbler** at Chestnut Hill Reservoir in the Brighton section of Boston on April 14. This continued to be seen for six days. Readers may recall a Townsend's Warbler that spent three months in Cambridgeport and was last seen April 10, 2008. As the warbler flies, a trip from Cambridge to Brighton is less than a mile. Could this bird have been the same individual that was secretly hiding out along Commonwealth Avenue all winter? Other noteworthy warbler reports included an Orange-crowned in Medford, four different **Yellow-throated Warblers**, a Cerulean, Louisiana Waterthrushes at twelve locations, and Hooded Warblers in four locations.

Some nice birds were found at feeders during the period, with top honors going to a **Golden-crowned Sparrow** in South Natick on April 18-19. This was the first report of this species in the state since November 1995. A **Painted Bunting** arrived at a Whately feeder on the last day of April. A **Varied Thrush** was photographed at a feeder in Palmer. **Summer Tanagers** were reported at feeders in Orleans, Eastham, Edgartown, and Nantucket. The **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at a Salisbury feeder continued from January.

"Winter birds" reported during the period included Northern Shrikes at twenty-one locations, with the latest found on April 8. **Bohemian Waxwings** continued to be seen in good numbers, especially in western Massachusetts and in Truro, where a high count of ninety-three individuals was noted on March 28. There was only one sighting in April, a single bird in Turner's Falls. There were many reports of nesting Pine Siskins throughout the state, and many White-winged Crossbills were also noted, although no nesting was confirmed. *R. H. Stymeist*

Barn Owl				4/22	Wompatuck SP	pr	C. Nims#
4/26	Nantucket	1	J. Trimble	4/29	Carlisle	2	J. Center
Eastern Screech-Owl				4/19	P.I.	1	L. Ferraresso#
3/15	Cumb. Farms	6	SSBC (V. Zollo#)	4/19	P.I.	1	L. Ferraresso#
3/20-31	Medford	pr n	P. Devaney	Short-eared Owl			
4/9	Melrose	2	D. + I. Jewell	3/1-4/14	Duxbury B.	1-2	v.o.
4/14	Framingham	4	J. Hoye#	3/1-4/14	Salisbury	1-2	v.o.
4/19	Truro-Wellfleet	8	J. Young	3/7	Fairhaven	1	MAS (B. Gette)
Great Horned Owl				3/7	Plymouth	1	MAS (B. Gette)
3/21	E. Brookfield	6	M. Lynch#	3/8	Saugus	2	R. Stymeist#
3/28	Danvers	1 ad, 1 juv	J. McCoy#	3/13	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	3	J. Hoye#
4/8	Newbury	pr n	J. Berry#	3/17	Westport	1	L. Kramer#
4/12	Bradford	pr n	D. Larson	3/21	Cumb. Farms	2	SSBC (Petersen)
4/15	Ipswich	pr n	J. Berry#	3/25	Falmouth	1	J. Kricher#
4/19	Truro-Wellfleet	8	J. Young	4/1	Burrage Pd	1	J. Sweeney
4/22	Gloucester	1 ad, 1 juv	S. Hedman	4/10	P.I.	1	P. Cooney
4/25	Plymouth	2 juv	I. Davies#	Northern Saw-whet Owl			
Snowy Owl				3/15	Ipswich (C.B.)	1	J. Berry
thr	Duxbury B.	3 max	v.o.	3/15	Southbridge	1	M. Lynch#
3/1-4/18	P.I.	6 max	v.o.	3/22	Nantucket	1	MAS (J. Galluzzo)
3/1	Rowley	1 imm f	J. Berry	4/14	Ashfield	1	S. Sauter
3/7	Marblehead	1	D. Noble	4/25	Windsor	1	M. Lynch#
3/8	Brewster	1	F. Caruso	4/25	Cheshire	1	M. Lynch#
3/10	Boston (Logan)	8	N. Smith	Whip-poor-will			
3/10-26	Fairhaven	1 ph	B. Wilcox#	4/28	P.I.	1	S. McGrath
3/15	Chatham (S.B.)	1	J. Style	4/28	Berlin	1	E. Wolf
3/18, 4/24	Nantucket	2, 1	Blackshaw, Ray	4/28	Newbury	1	L. Leka
3/21	Ipswich	1	S. McGrath#	4/29	Northampton	1	T. Gagnon
3/29-4/7	Plymouth B.	1	v.o.	4/29	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg
4/19	Orleans	1	M. Malin	Chimney Swift			
Barred Owl				4/25	Winchester	1	M. Rines#
3/14	Sharon	2	V. Zollo	4/26	Southbridge	4	M. Lynch#
3/15	Middleboro	2	SSBC (V. Zollo#)	4/28	P.I.	2	R. Heil
3/17	Ipswich	2	J. Berry	4/29	GMNWR	15	S. Perkins#
3/25	Boxford	2	J. Berry	4/29	Ware	6	C. Caron
4/14	Framingham	2	J. Hoye#	4/29	Longmeadow	50	G. Kington

Ruby-throated Hummingbird			4/28	Topsfield	2	J. Berry	
4/22	Granby	1	L. Rogers	4/28	Wompatuck SP	4	C. Nims
4/25	Brewster	1	D. Clapp	4/30	Medford	5	M. Rines
4/26	P.I.	1	R. Heil		Eastern Kingbird		
4/26	Wellfleet	1	J. Hoye#	4/8	Tuckernuck	1	R. Veit
4/27	Mashpee	1	M. Keleher	4/25	Haverhill	3	J. Fenton
4/28	Athol	1	D. Small	4/26	Lowell	2	M. Baird
4/29	Pittsfield	1	N. Mole	4/27	Jamaica Plain	2	P. Peterson
Belted Kingfisher				4/28	Brookline	2	M. Iliff
3/21	Mashpee	4	M. Keleher	4/28	N. Truro	2	B. Nikula
4/11	Brookfields	3	M. Lynch#	4/28	P.I.	3	R. Heil
4/18	Chatham	4	CCBC (A. Curtis)		Northern Shrike		
4/25	Winchendon	3	S. Sutton	3/1-27	DWWS	1	v.o.
Red-bellied Woodpecker				3/1-4/8	Reports of indiv. from 19 locations		
3/21	Brookfield	5	M. Lynch#	3/19-4/7	P.I.	1-2	v.o.
3/28	Braintree	7	G. d'Entremont		White-eyed Vireo		
4/23	Mashpee	5	M. Keleher	4/17	M.V.	2	P. Gilmore
4/26	W. Gloucester	5	J. Nelson	4/24	Nantucket	1	S. Langer
4/26	Southbridge	11	M. Lynch#	4/25	P'town	1	P. Trimble
4/28	Medford	6	M. Rines	4/26	Nantucket	1	J. Trimble
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker				4/29	Medford	1	M. Rines
3/14	Sharon	3	V. Zollo		Yellow-throated Vireo		
4/7	P.I.	3	W. Tatro	4/27	Northfield	1	M. Taylor
4/7	Fitchburg	3	C. Caron	4/28	P.I.	1	S. Babbit
4/8	Tuckernuck	5	R. Veit	4/29	Worcester	1	M. Lynch#
4/8-30	Boston (P.G.)	1-3	T. Factor	4/30	Jamaica Plain	1	P. Peterson
4/17	HRWMA	3	T. Pirro		Blue-headed Vireo		
4/25	Royalston	4	S. Sutton	4/22	Manomet	2	I. Davies
4/25	Windsor	20	M. Lynch#	4/23, 29	Jamaica Plain	1, 6	Morgan, Iliff
4/30	Westminster	8	C. Caron	4/24, 28	P.I.	1, 13	Trimble, Heil
Hairy Woodpecker				4/25	Medford	10	M. Rines#
3/21	Mashpee	5	M. Keleher	4/25	MNWS	10	I. Giriunas#
4/1	Boxford (C.P.)	3	F. Bouchard#	4/25	Windsor	11	M. Lynch#
4/18	MSSF	6	G. d'Entremont	4/25	Royalston	12	C. Caron
4/20	Assabet R. NWR	3	J. Forbes	4/28	Mt.A.	12	J. Trimble
4/26	ONWR	4	K. Bourinot	4/30	Westminster	11	C. Caron
4/28	Medford	3	M. Rines		Warbling Vireo		
<b>Black-backed Woodpecker</b> (no details) *				4/25	Melrose	1	D. + I. Jewell
4/25-30	Nantucket	1 m ph	L. Snell#	4/25	Mattapan (BNC)	2	A. Birch
Northern Flicker				4/26	Southbridge	2	M. Lynch#
4/7	P.I.	12	W. Tatro	4/28	Jamaica Plain	9	M. Iliff
4/8	N. Truro	16	D. Manchester	4/28	Medford	17	P. + F. Vale
4/18	Gloucester (E.P.)	20	S. Hedman	4/29	Ware	6	C. Caron
4/25	Windsor	15	M. Lynch#		Red-eyed Vireo		
4/26	Southbridge	13	M. Lynch#	4/23	Winchester	1	R. LaFontaine
Pileated Woodpecker				4/25	P.I.	1	P. Vale
3/thr	Wayland	3	B. Harris	4/26	W. Springfield	1	J. Zepko
3/7	Manchester	2	S. Hedman	4/28	Medford	1	P. + F. Vale
3/13	Ware	pr	M. Martin	4/30	Newton	1	B. Cassie
3/14	Sudbury	2	S. Grinley#		Fish Crow		
3/21	Brookfield	3	M. Lynch#	3/5	Stoughton	6	G. d'Entremont
3/30	Amherst	4	H. Allen	3/6	Falmouth	36	M. Keleher
4/5	Concord	pr	S. McMahon#	3/15	Northampton	7	T. Gagnon
4/24	C. Quabbin	5	L. Therrien	3/21	Mashpee	43	M. Keleher
4/25	Carlisle	2	BBC (Brownrigg)	3/25	Burrage Pd	8	E. Dalton
Least Flycatcher				3/26	Braintree	8	P. + F. Vale
4/26	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg	4/4	Seekonk	8	M. Lynch#
4/26	Northfield	1	M. Taylor	4/8	Plymouth	7	I. Davies#
4/30	C. Quabbin	20	L. Therrien	4/15	Cumb. Farms	20	G. d'Entremont#
4/30	Newton	1	B. Cassie	4/18	N. Truro	8	D. Manchester
4/30	Westminster	1	C. Caron		Common Raven		
Eastern Phoebe				3/8	S. Quabbin	pr n	M. Lynch#
3/18, 4/6	P.I.	1, 76	Heil, Ely	3/28	Sudbury	pr n	S. Miller#
3/21, 4/18	Brookfield	2, 11	M. Lynch#	3/30-31	Georgetown	pr n	P. Brown + v.o.
4/4	Rehoboth	16	M. Lynch#	4/5	Groton	pr n	T. Murray#
4/5	Tyringham	11	M. Lynch#	4/28	Quincy	pr + 3yng	G. d'Entremont#
4/8	Brighton	9	M. Garvey		Horned Lark		
4/12	Mt.A.	12	W. Freedberg	3/7	Sheffield	102	J. Drucker
4/25	Royalston	9	S. Sutton	3/7	Sharon	12	J. Trimble#
Great Crested Flycatcher				3/8	Duxbury B.	25	R. Bowes
4/26	W. Springfield	1	J. Zepko	3/10	Saugus	50+	J. Trimble#
4/26	Scituate	1	S. Maguire	3/21	P.I.	12	J. Trimble
4/28	Brookline	2	A. Morgan	3/21	Cumb. Farms	75	SSBC (Petersen)

Horned Lark (continued)				4/26	Southbridge	11	M. Lynch#
4/13 Ipswich	55	P. Peterson		4/27	Mashpee	8	M. Keleher
4/16 Hadley	55	S. Surner			House Wren		
Purple Martin				4/9	Duxbury	1	J. Galluzzo
4/8 DWWS	1	I. Davies#		4/9	Bourne	1	E. Dalton
4/13, 25 Mashpee	3, 8	M. Keleher		4/25	Groton	1	B. Hill
4/17, 29 P.I.	1, 7	Trimble, Gette		4/25	Stow	1	N. Soulette
4/22 Rehoboth	1	R. Marr		4/26	Southwick	2	S. Kellogg
4/25 N. Truro	2	B. Nikula		4/26	Southbridge	2	M. Lynch#
4/26 DWWS	10	G. d'Entremont#		4/26	W. Gloucester	7	J. Nelson
Tree Swallow				4/26	Manomet	4	I. Davies
3/8 W. Warren	2	B. Zajda		4/28	Medford	6	M. Rines
3/12, 4/13 Wayland	6, 100	Hines, Hove			Winter Wren		
3/18, 4/26 P.I.	2, 355	R. Heil		3/14	Woburn (HP)	3	M. Rines#
3/21, 4/14 GMNWR	30, 325	Perkins, Trimble		3/28	Braintree	2	G. d'Entremont
4/2 Burrage Pd	500	G. d'Entremont		4/6	P.I.	2	D. Ely
4/7 Turners Falls	500	H. Allen		4/15	Carlisle	2	A. Ankers
4/9 Lenox	300	A. Werner		4/15	Ashburnham	2	C. Caron
4/11 Holyoke	400	T. Gagnon		4/19	Medford	3	M. Rines#
4/22 Southwick	200	S. Kellogg		4/25	Royalston	2	C. Caron
Northern Rough-winged Swallow				4/25	Windsor	3	M. Lynch#
4/4 Wayland	2	B. Harris		4/27	Andover	2	J. Berry
4/7 Longmeadow	1	N. Eaton		4/27	Wompatuck SP	4	C. Nims
4/8 Plymouth	6	I. Davies#			Marsh Wren		
4/19 Waltham	8	J. Forbes		4/19, 28	P.I.	2, 8	Landry, Heil
4/20 Woburn (HP)	5	M. Rines		4/27	Mashpee	1	M. Keleher
4/25 Haverhill	5	J. Fenton			Golden-crowned Kinglet		
4/26 Southbridge	11	M. Lynch#		4/6	P.I.	43	D. Ely
4/26 P.I.	29	R. Heil		4/11	Woburn (HP)	8	M. Rines#
4/26 Manomet	8	I. Davies		4/11	Brookfields	14	M. Lynch#
Bank Swallow				4/14	Melrose	17+	P. + F. Vale
4/25 Sheffield	1	J. Drucker		4/14	MNWS	9	R. Heil
4/25 Cumb. Farms	1	I. Davies#		4/17	Mt.A.	8	R. Furrow
4/26 P.I.	2	R. Heil		4/18	P'town	16	B. Nikula
4/26 Manomet	5	I. Davies		4/19, 27	Mashpee	14, 3	M. Keleher
4/26 Chatham (S.B.)	1	B. Harris		4/19	E. Gloucester	15	R. Heil
4/29 Mt.A.	1	J. Trimble		4/22	Manomet	7	I. Davies
Cliff Swallow					Ruby-crowned Kinglet		
4/26 P.I.	1	R. Heil		3/28, 4/29	Mt.A.	1, 14	Furrow, Vale
Barn Swallow				4/10, 4/19	P.I.	1, 48	Parslow, Vale
3/30 Nantucket	1	V. Laux		4/20	Waltham	41	F. Bouchard
4/4 WBWS	1	J. Style		4/24	C. Quabbin	22	L. Therrien
4/4 Harwichport	1	B. Nikula		4/25	Windsor	22	M. Lynch#
4/5, 26 P.I.	1, 24	Ely, Heil		4/25	Southwick	12	S. Kellogg
4/18, 25 N. Truro	8, 50	D. Manchester		4/25	MNWS	20+	I. Giriunas#
4/25 Sharon	9	W. Sweet		4/25	Salem	24	BBC (L. de la Flor)
4/26 Southbridge	8	M. Lynch#		4/29	Brookline	12	H. Miller
Red-breasted Nuthatch					Blue-gray Gnatcatcher		
3/6 Duxbury	6	MAS (J. Galluzzo)		4/10	Cumb. Farms	1	R. Buckner
4/14 Plymouth	8	I. Davies		4/17, 26	Manomet	2, 17	I. Davies
4/18 MSSF	13	G. d'Entremont		4/18, 30	P'town	1, 4	B. Nikula
4/25 Royalston	6	S. Sutton		4/18, 28	P.I.	1, 16	Spalding, Heil
4/25 Windsor	18	M. Lynch#		4/26	ONWR	7	K. Bourinot
4/25 Winchendon	7	S. Sutton		4/28	N. Truro	6	B. Nikula
4/26 Nantucket	10	K. Blackshaw#		4/28	Duxbury B.	5	R. Bowes
4/27 Mashpee	10	M. Keleher		4/30	Medford	5	M. Rines
Brown Creeper				4/30	Wompatuck SP	9	C. Nims#
3/21 Melrose	4	P. + F. Vale			Eastern Bluebird		
4/10 Duxbury	6	MAS (J. Galluzzo)		3/15	Southbridge	8	M. Lynch#
4/11 Woburn (HP)	4	M. Rines#		3/22	Nantucket	6	MAS (J. Galluzzo)
4/12 Sturbridge	7	M. Lynch#		4/11	Brookfields	6	M. Lynch#
4/18 MSSF	4	G. d'Entremont		4/14	DWWS	7	I. Davies
4/18 Gloucester (E.P.)	6	S. Hedman		4/23	Essex	8+	P. + F. Vale
4/24 C. Quabbin	6	L. Therrien			Veery		
4/25 Winchendon	8	S. Sutton		4/28	Boston (Fens)	1	F. Bouchard
4/25 Royalston	4	C. Caron		4/29	S. Quabbin	1	L. Therrien
Carolina Wren				4/30	Sharon	2	G. d'Entremont
3/6 Bourne	5	M. Keleher			Hermit Thrush		
3/8 Falmouth	12	G. d'Entremont		4/7, 28	P.I.	15, 5	R. Heil
3/22 Fairhaven	5	M. Lynch#		4/17	Manomet	23	I. Davies
4/5 Hingham (WE)	4	SSBC (H. Cross)		4/18	Boston (P.G.)	17	T. Factor
4/11 Brookfields	6	M. Lynch#		4/18	Gloucester (E.P.)	7	S. Hedman
4/25 Medford	6	M. Rines#		4/25	Royalston	16	C. Caron

Hermit Thrush (continued)			Northern Parula			
4/25	MNWS	10+	I. Giriunas#	4/22	Harwich	1 f A. Curtis
4/25	Windsor	25	M. Lynch#	4/25, 29	Mt.A.	1, 28 Freedberg, Vale
4/25	Winchendon	11	S. Sutton	4/26	W. Springfield	1 J. Zepko
4/26	Ashburnham	5	C. Caron	4/26, 28	P.I.	1, 20 R. Heil
Wood Thrush				4/27, 29	Medford	2, 25 M. Rines
4/25	P.I.	1	J. Waters	4/28, 30	P'town	1, 2 B. Nikula
4/26	P'town	1	B. Nikula	4/28	Wompatuck SP	4 C. Nims
4/27	Southwick	3	S. Kellogg	Yellow Warbler		
4/27	Northampton	1	T. Gagnon	4/24, 26	Woburn (HP)	2, 4 M. Rines
4/28	Mendon	1	T. Morelli	4/25	Cumb. Farms	3 I. Davies#
4/28	Salisbury	1	D. Chickering#	4/25	W. Roxbury (J.P.)	8 M. Kaufman
4/28	Medford	2	M. Rines	4/25	Mattapan (BNC)	9 A. Birch
Varied Thrush				4/26, 28	P.I.	3, 12 R. Heil
4/24	Palmer	1 ph	J. Atherton	4/26	Burlington	6 M. Rines
Gray Catbird				4/27	Longmeadow	3 H. Allen
3/14	W. Newbury	1	R. Heil#	4/28	Medford	24 P. + F. Vale
3/26	Hadley	1	D. Minear	4/28	Mt.A.	10 J. Trimble
4/10	Longmeadow	1	C. Supranant	Chestnut-sided Warbler		
4/26	Southbridge	2	M. Lynch#	4/26	Sheffield	2 J. Drucker
4/26	Nantucket	4	K. Blackshaw#	4/28	Medford	2 M. Rines
4/28	P.I.	5	R. Heil	4/29	Mt.A.	3 BBC (P. + F. Vale)
4/28	Medford	7	P. + F. Vale	4/30	C. Quabbin	26 L. Therrien
4/29	Boston (A.A.)	5	M. Kanaracus	4/30	Boston (Fens)	1 J. Taylor
Brown Thrasher				Magnolia Warbler		
4/6	Sandwich	1	M. Keleher#	4/27	Worc. (BMB)	1 D. Silverstein
4/7	Amherst	1	D. Minear	4/28	Mt.A.	1 T. Spahr
4/14, 25	Medford	1, 4	LaFontaine, Rines	4/29	Boston (P.G.)	1 T. Factor#
4/26	Woburn (HP)	2	M. Rines	4/29	Brighton	1 M. Kaufman
4/26	Manomet	3	I. Davies	4/29	Chestnut Hill	1 R. Doherty
4/26	P.I.	8	R. Heil	4/29	Medford	3 M. Rines
4/26	Newbypt	3	S. McGrath	Black-throated Blue Warbler		
American Pipit				4/28	Mt.A.	1 T. Spahr#
3/7	Cumb. Farms	20	MAS (B. Gette)	4/28	P.I.	3 R. Heil
3/15	Harwich	1	BBC (E. Giles)	4/28, 30	Medford	1, 2 M. Rines
3/21	Rowley	28	BBC (L. de la Flor)	4/28	Jamaica Plain	1 M. Iliff
4/5	Newbury	2	S. Grinley#	4/30	Westminster	7 C. Caron
4/5	Royalston	1	S. Sutton	Yellow-rumped Warbler		
4/26	P.I.	1	R. Heil	3/10	Nantucket	180 V. Laux
Bohemian Waxwing				4/10, 23	Longmeadow	1, 100 Supranant, Mueller
3/1	Middlefield	10	N. Purdy	4/13, 28	Mt.A.	1, 85 J. Trimble
3/2	Becket	49	R. Laubach	4/19, 26	Southbridge	3, 88 M. Lynch#
3/7	Truro	40+	C. Skowron	4/19, 25	Medford	2, 270 M. Rines#
3/7, 30	Windsor	50, 9	Blagdon, Wood	4/28	P.I.	285 R. Heil
3/8, 4/22	Turners Falls	55, 1	Zajda, Surner	Black-throated Green Warbler		
3/9	Pittsfield	12	G. Hurley	4/25, 28	P.I.	1, 7 Harris, Heil
3/15	Williamstown	25	G. Hurley	4/25, 29	Medford	1, 6 M. Rines#
3/28	S. Truro	93	J. Young	4/25	Winchendon	2 S. Sutton
Cedar Waxwing				4/28	Topsfield	2 m J. Berry
3/10	Turners Falls	300	H. Allen	4/29	Jamaica Plain	2 M. Iliff
4/23	Cambridge	65	F. Bouchard	4/30	Westminster	5 C. Caron
Blue-winged Warbler				4/30	Wompatuck SP	3 C. Nims#
4/26	ONWR	1	K. Bourinot	Townsend's Warbler (details submitted) *		
4/26	Sheffield	1	J. Drucker	4/14-19	Chestnut Hill	1 ph D. Roms + v.o.
4/26	Amherst	1	J. Merriam	Blackburnian Warbler		
4/28	P.I.	5	R. Heil	4/25	Williamsburg	1 A Mueller
4/29	Mt.A.	5	BBC (P. + F. Vale)	4/29	Jamaica Plain	1 M. Iliff
4/30	W. Newbury	3	S. Grinley	4/29	Mt.A.	1 P. + F. Vale#
4/30	Medford	3	M. Rines	4/30	Wompatuck SP	1 C. Nims#
Brewster's Warbler				Yellow-throated Warbler		
4/29	Jamaica Plain	1 m ph	M. Iliff	4/4	Nantucket	1 E. Ray
Lawrence's Warbler				4/26-27	Arlington Res.	1 C. Cook# + v.o.
4/29	Wrentham	1 m	G. Valade	4/27	Boston (P.G.)	1 T. Factor#
Orange-crowned Warbler				4/28-30	Mt.A.	1 m L. Hartford#
4/27	Medford	1	M. Rines	Pine Warbler		
Nashville Warbler				3/22	Dover	1 B. Glidden
4/22	Harwich	1	A. Curtis	3/25	Byfield	1 J. Sutherland
4/28	P.I.	2	J. Offermann	4/7	Falmouth	3 J. Style
4/28	Mt.A.	4	J. Trimble	4/11	Woburn (HP)	10 M. Rines#
4/28	Westminster	1	T. Pirro	4/12	P'town	40 L. Kramer#
4/28	Waltham	1	J. Forbes	4/18	MSSF	119 G. d'Entremont
4/28, 30	Medford	4, 9	M. Rines	4/24	C. Quabbin	46 L. Therrien
4/29	Pittsfield	4	N. Mole	4/26	Nantucket	25 K. Blackshaw#

Pine Warbler (continued)									
4/27	Mashpee	31		M. Keleher	4/26	Sheffield	1		J. Drucker
4/28	Wompatuck SP	18		C. Nims	4/26	Wayland	1		N. Soulette
Prairie Warbler					4/27	Boston (Fens)	1		P. Peterson
4/25	Quabbin Pk.	1		K. Bourinot	4/28	Mt.A.	2		T. Spahr
4/26	Manomet	1 m		I. Davies	4/28	P.I.	2		R. Heil
4/27	Andover	1		M. Baird	4/29	Burlington	2		M. Rines
4/28	N. Truro	1		D. Manchester	4/30	Westminster	2		C. Caron
4/29	Chatham	1		B. Nikula	Hooded Warbler				
4/30	Westminster	1		C. Caron	4/9	Tuckernuck	1 m (dead)		R. Veit
4/30	Wompatuck SP	1		C. Nims#	4/26	Wompatuck SP	1 m		R. Finch#
Palm Warbler					4/28-29	Mt.A.	2 m		J. Trimble + v.o.
4/8	S. Quabbin	2		L. Therrien	4/29	Newton	1		P. Gilmore
4/9, 25	P.I.	2, 69		F. Vale	Canada Warbler				
4/10	Nahant	6		L. Pivacek	4/28	P.I.	1 m		R. Heil
4/11, 18	Woburn (HP)	14, 30		M. Rines#	4/29	Mt.A.	1 m		P. + F. Vale
4/15, 25	Medford	1, 110		M. Rines	<b>Summer Tanager</b>				
4/19	IRWS	20		W. Tatro	3/28	Orleans	1 ph		C. Kennedy
4/24	Chestnut Hill	24+		S. Simpson	4/4-8	Eastham	1 ph		J. Hequemour
4/25	Wompatuck SP	19		J. Offermann	4/7	Nantucket	1		R. Mack
4/25	MNWS	15+		I. Giriunas#	4/12-15	Lakeville	1		D. Eddy + v.o.
4/27	P'town	15		B. Nikula	4/17-27	Edgartown	1 m		P. Gilmore + v.o.
Blackpoll Warbler					Scarlet Tanager				
4/29	Concord	1 m		S. Perkins#	4/8	Rochester	1 m ph		M. LaBossiere
Cerulean Warbler					4/28	Topsfield	1 m		J. Berry
4/27	Mt.A.	1 ph		J. Trimble + v.o.	4/28	P.I.	1		S. Babbit
Black-and-white Warbler					4/28	Boston (P.G.)	1 m		T. Factor
4/25, 29	Mt.A.	2, 12		Freedberg, Trimble	4/30	W. Newbury	1 m		S. Grinley
4/25	Quabbin Pk.	3		K. Bourinot	4/30	Wompatuck SP	2		C. Nims#
4/25, 28	P.I.	4, 22		Harris, Heil	4/30	Medford	1		M. Rines
4/25, 29	Medford	3, 9		M. Rines#	Eastern Towhee				
4/30	Wompatuck SP	7		C. Nims#	3/8	Nantucket	2		V. Laux#
4/30	Westminster	8		C. Caron	4/11	Milton	1		B. Larson
American Redstart					4/18	Hubbardston	1		C. Caron
4/26	Marblehead	1		L. Pivacek	4/19, 27	Medford	2, 6		M. Rines#
4/28	Jamaica Plain	1		M. Iliff	4/25	Quabbin Pk.	2		K. Bourinot
4/30	Mt.A.	1		S. Buckman	4/26	W. Gloucester	15		J. Nelson
4/30	Newton	1		B. Cassie	4/26	Manomet	9		I. Davies
Worm-eating Warbler					4/28	Wompatuck SP	14		C. Nims
4/25	Brewster	1 b		S. Finnegan	4/28	P.I.	36		R. Heil
4/25	P'town	1		B. Nikula	4/30	Westminster	8		C. Caron
4/26	Southbridge	1		M. Lynch#	American Tree Sparrow				
4/28	Woods Hole	1		J. Style	3/8	W. Warren	12		B. Zajda
4/29	Jamaica Plain	1 ph		M. Iliff	3/8	Cumb. Farms	20		SSBC (Zollo)
Ovenbird					3/16, 4/11	Lexington	18, 2		M. Rines
4/26	Southwick	1		S. Kellogg	3/19	P.I.	16		R. Heil
4/26	Mt.A.	2		J. Offermann	3/20	IRWS	4		J. Berry
4/27	Mashpee	2		M. Keleher	4/24	Woburn (HP)	1		M. Rines
4/27	Falmouth	3		M. Malin#	Chipping Sparrow				
4/28	Topsfield	4 m		J. Berry	3/1	Stoughton	1 ph		L. Love
4/30	Westminster	10		C. Caron	4/4	Boston (P.G.)	2		T. Factor
4/30	Wompatuck SP	16		C. Nims#	4/10	Danvers	2		P. + F. Vale
Northern Waterthrush					4/11	Westminster	2		T. Pirro
4/24	Nahant	3		L. Pivacek	4/18	Brookfield	26		M. Lynch#
4/25	MNWS	1		I. Giriunas#	4/23	Ipswich	25		P. Peterson
4/25	Royalston	1		S. Sutton	4/25	Quabbin Pk.	36		K. Bourinot
4/25	P.I.	2		B. Harris	4/25	Sharon	29		W. Sweet
4/27, 30	Wompatuck SP	1, 3		C. Nims	4/26	Southbridge	107		M. Lynch#
4/30	Ipswich	3 m		J. Berry	4/29	Jamaica Plain	35		M. Iliff
Louisiana Waterthrush					Field Sparrow				
4/11	Turners Falls	1		S. Surner	3/6	Bourne	2		M. Keleher
4/12-17	Mt.A.	1		N. Hayward + v.o.	3/21	Burrage Pd	2		SSBC (Petersen)
4/15	Medford	1		M. Rines	3/28	Eastham	2		J. Young
4/18	Haverhill	1		D. Chickering#	4/6	Sandwich	2		M. Keleher#
4/19	MNWS	1		D. Noble	4/18	Woburn (HP)	4		M. Rines#
4/24	Nahant	1		L. Pivacek	4/18	Southwick	14		S. Kellogg
4/24	Boxford (C.P.)	5		J. Berry	4/25	Salem	5		BBC (L. de la Flor)
4/25	Groton	1		B. Hill	4/28	Westminster	5		T. Pirro
4/25	Cheshire	3		M. Lynch#	Vesper Sparrow				
4/25	Royalston	3		C. Caron	4/18	Hadley	2		S. Surner
4/26	Charlton	1		M. Lynch#	4/18	Sheffield	1		J. Drucker
4/28	Wompatuck SP	2		C. Nims	4/19	Southbridge	1		M. Lynch#
					4/19-21	Rowley	1 ph		R. Heil

Vesper Sparrow (continued)			Lapland Longspur				
4/23	Northampton	1	A Mueller	3/4	Salisbury	12+	S. Selesky
4/24	Groton	1	T. Pirro	3/22	P.I.	1	J. Trimble
4/27	Medford	1	M. Rines	3/26	Eastham (F.H.)	3	M. Malin#
4/30	Plymouth	2	A. + D. Morgan	4/7	Ipswich	1	R. Heil
Savannah Sparrow			Snow Bunting				
3/7	Acoaxet	2	MAS (B. Gette)	4/22	Chicopee	1	M. Allen
3/8	Nantucket	2	V. Laux#	4/26	Chatham (S.B.)	10	B. Harris
4/2	Burrage Pd	6	G. d'Entremont	3/3	Nahant	15	L. Pivacek
4/17	E. Boston (B.I.)	15	P. Peterson	3/4	W. Roxbury (MP)	36	P. Peterson
4/19	Rowley	12	R. Heil	3/5	S. Quabbin	1	L. Therrien
4/20	W. Bridgewater	28	J. Sweeney	3/9	Saugus	16	P. Peterson
4/25	P.I.	38+	F. Vale	3/11	Acton	30	G. Gove#
4/26	Melrose	20+	P. + F. Vale	3/15	N. Carver	7	R. Conway
4/30	Plymouth	25	A. + D. Morgan	3/17	Duxbury B.	6	S. McMahon
Ipswich Sparrow			Rose-breasted Grosbeak				
3/3	Nahant	2	L. Pivacek	3/18, 4/10	P.I.	5, 1	Heil, Trimble
3/15	Chatham (S.B.)	2	J. Style	4/4	Salem	3	D. Ely
3/18	P.I.	1	R. Heil	4/21	Wayland	1	A. McCarthy#
3/21	Nantucket	2	MAS (J. Galluzzo)	4/22	Brewster	1	J. Galvani
3/22	Duxbury B.	2	R. Bowes	4/23	Jamaica Plain	1 m	D. Jerome
Saltmarsh Sparrow			Indigo Bunting				
3/26	Eastham (F.H.)	3	M. Malin#	4/26	Nantucket	4	K. Blackshaw#
Seaside Sparrow			Blue Grosbeak				
4/26, 28	P.I.	1, 2	R. Heil	4/26	Milton	2	J. Baur
Fox Sparrow			Indigo Bunting				
3/2	Concord	1	S. Perkins#	4/28	Waltham	2	J. Forbes
3/8	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg	4/30	W. Newbury	2 m	S. Grinley
3/14, 4/11	Woburn (HP)	1, 3	M. Rines#	4/30	Medford	5	M. Rines
3/14, 4/11	Wayland	1, 3	B. Harris				
3/19, 4/7	P.I.	2, 10	R. Heil				
3/21	Lexington	14	M. Rines#				
3/25	Florence	6	T. Gagnon				
3/26	Newton	6	P. Gilmore				
3/28	Squamton	6	G. d'Entremont				
4/7	P.I.	10	R. Heil				
4/18	Mt.A.	1	C. Floyd				
Lincoln's Sparrow			Painted Bunting				
4/13	Lenox	1	T. Collins	4/30	Whately	1	H. Allen
4/29	Northampton	1	T. Gagnon	4/30	Medford	1	M. Rines
Swamp Sparrow			Painted Bunting				
4/18	Brookfield	32	M. Lynch#	4/30	Whately	1	B. Benner
4/19	Winchendon	12	C. Caron	Dickcissel			
4/25	Royalston	23	C. Caron	3/1-4/7	Salisbury	1	v.o.
4/25	Windsor	21	M. Lynch#	3/11	Deerfield	2	D. Mako
4/26	Wakefield	15+	P. + F. Vale	3/21	Winchester	1	R. LaFontaine
White-throated Sparrow			Eastern Meadowlark				
3/28	Squamton	29	G. d'Entremont	4/6-17	Milton	1-2	R. Mussey
4/25	P'town	20	B. Nikula	4/14	Groveland	1	D. Chickering#
4/25	Royalston	34	S. Sutton	4/22	Nantucket	1	V. Laux
4/25	Windsor	46	M. Lynch#	4/23	P.I.	1	S. McGrath
4/26	Manomet	36	I. Davies	Bobolink			
4/28	P.I.	54	R. Heil	4/25	Southwick	1	S. Svec
4/29	Mt.A.	55	J. Trimble	4/26	Sheffield	1	J. Drucker
White-crowned Sparrow			Yellow-headed Blackbird				
3/1-11	Concord	1 imm	S. Perkins#	3/1-5	Salisbury	1	P. Cozza
3/8	Cumb. Farms	1 imm	SSBC (Zollo)	3/19	Haverhill	1 f	S. Mirick
3/8	Falmouth	1 imm	G. d'Entremont	Rusty Blackbird			
3/28	Essex	2 imm	J. Trimble	3/8	Northampton	14	B. Zajda
3/31	N. Scituate	1	B. Larson	3/8	Newbury	10	K. Elwell
4/11	Pittsfield	1	T. Collins	3/8	Turners Falls	14	B. Zajda
4/19	Essex	2 imm	R. Heil	3/14	Groveland	12	K. Elwell
4/30	Medford	1	M. Rines	3/26	Wayland	45+	P. + F. Vale
Golden-crowned Sparrow (details submitted) *			Yellow-headed Blackbird				
4/18-19	S. Natick	1 ad ph	P. Loranger	3/1-5	Salisbury	1	P. Cozza
Dark-eyed Junco			Rusty Blackbird				
3/8	Nantucket	90	V. Laux#	3/19	Haverhill	1 f	S. Mirick
3/19	P.I.	43	R. Heil				
3/21	Malden	200+	P. + F. Vale				
3/28	Brookfields	43	M. Lynch#				
4/17	Chestnut Hill	46+	P. + F. Vale				
4/25	Windsor	13	M. Lynch#				
4/28	Mt.A.	3	R. Stymeist				

Brown-headed Cowbird				3/8	P.I.	30	N. Landry
3/11	Concord	200	S. Perkins#	3/10	Nantucket	35	V. Laux
4/4	Salisbury	176	P. + F. Vale	3/13	Salisbury	17	P. + F. Vale#
Orchard Oriole				3/14	Lynnfield	20+	P. Vale
4/25	Jamaica Plain	1 m ad	J. Miller	3/17	Winchester	30	R. LaFontaine
4/25	P'town	1	B. Nikula	4/12	Mt.A.	13	N. Hayward#
4/28	P.I.	2 m	R. Heil	4/18	Plymouth	21	I. Davies#
4/28	Southwick	2	S. Kellogg	4/24	Boston (A.A.)	14	P. Peterson
4/29	Milton	3	B. Larson	Common Redpoll			
4/29	Medford	3	M. Rines	3/6	P.I.	50	S. Haydock#
4/30	Mt.A.	2	N. Hayward	3/7	Woburn	50	L. Kaplan
Baltimore Oriole				3/8	W. Roxbury (MP)	40	M. Iliff
4/25	Melrose	1	D. + I. Jewell	3/15	Granby	25	H. Allen
4/25	Lexington	1	C. + N. Floyd	3/17	Washington	15	M. Wiley
4/26	P'town	1	B. Nikula	3/27	P'town	251	B. Burden
4/26	Longmeadow	1	C. Carpist	4/20	Petersham	3	J. Hoye#
4/28	Medford	12	P. + F. Vale	Pine Siskin			
4/28	Brookline	6	M. Iliff	thr	Numerous reports statewide		
Purple Finch				3/1	Easton	50+	K. Ryan
3/1	W. Gloucester	6	J. Nelson	3/1	Southwick	200	S. Kellogg
3/2	Becket	11	R. Laubach	3/2	Sandwich	50+	F. Caruso
3/14	Groveland	7	K. Elwell	3/3	Sheffield	276	S. Macdonald
4/18	MSSF	6	G. d'Entremont	3/7	Williamstown	50	L. Reed-Evans
4/23	Acton	7	P. Cozza	3/10, 4/21	Winchester	30, 4 pr n	LaFontaine
4/24	C. Quabbin	10	L. Therrien	3/18	Barre Falls	75	B. Kamp
4/25	Windsor	31	M. Lynch#	Evening Grosbeak			
4/26	P'town	6	B. Nikula	3/8	New Salem	4+	M. Lynch#
4/28	P.I.	20	R. Heil	3/28	Washington	2	E. Neumuth
4/29	S. Quabbin	12	L. Therrien	4/15	Ashburnham	1	C. Caron
Red Crossbill				4/20	Petersham	1	J. Hoye#
3/2	Pittsfield	2	J. Morris-Siegel	4/24	C. Quabbin	4	L. Therrien
3/8	Gloucester (E.P.)	3	J. Trimble	4/25	Royalston	1	C. Caron
White-winged Crossbill				4/25	Winchendon	1	S. Sutton
3/1-4/18	Reports of 1-15 indiv. from 21 locations			4/26	Nantucket	1	K. Blackshaw#

## 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, 36 Lewis Avenue, Arlington, MA 02474-3206. 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).



ARTWORK FROM USFWS

## ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taxonomic order is based on AOU checklist, Seventh edition, 42nd through 50th Supplements , as published in *The Auk* 117: 847-58 (2000); 119:897-906 (2002); 120:923-32 (2003); 121:985-95 (2004); 122:1026-31 (2005); 123:926-936 (2006); 124(3):1109–1115, 2007; 125(3):758–768, 2008; 126(3):705-714, 2009 (see <<http://www.aou.org/checklist/north/index.php>>).

Location-#	MAS Breeding Bird Atlas Block	NAC	Nine Acre Corner, Concord
ABC	Allen Bird Club	Newbypt	Newburyport
A.P.	Andrews Point, Rockport	ONWR	Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge
A.Pd	Allens Pond, S. Dartmouth	P.I.	Plum Island
B.	Beach	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
BMB	Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester	Res.	Reservoir
C.B.	Crane Beach, Ipswich	S.B.	South Beach, Chatham
CGB	Coast Guard Beach, Eastham	S.N.	Sandy Neck, Barnstable
C.P.	Crooked Pond, Boxford	SRV	Sudbury River Valley
Cambr.	Cambridge	SSBC	South Shore Bird Club
CCBC	Cape Cod Bird Club	TASL	Take A Second Look
Corp. B.	Corporation Beach, Dennis	WBWS	Boston Harbor Census
Cumb. Farms	Cumberland Farms, Middleboro	WMWS	Wellfleet Bay WS
DFWS	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary	Wompatuck SP	Wachusett Meadow WS
DWMA	Delaney WMA	Worc.	Hingham, Cohasset, Scituate, and Norwell Worcester
DWWS	Stow, Bolton, Harvard Daniel Webster WS	Other Abbreviations	
E.P.	Eastern Point, Gloucester	ad	adult
F.E.	First Encounter Beach, Eastham	b	banded
F.P.	Fresh Pond, Cambridge	br	breeding
F.Pk	Franklin Park, Boston	dk	dark (morph)
G40	Gate 40, Quabbin Res.	f	female
GMNWR	Great Meadows NWR	fl	fledgling
H.	Harbor	imm	immature
H.P.	Halibut Point, Rockport	juv	juvenile
HRWMA	High Ridge WMA, Gardner	lt	light (morph)
I.	Island	m	male
IRWS	Ipswich River WS	max	maximum
L.	Ledge	migr	migrating
MAS	Mass Audubon	n	nesting
M.P.	Millennium Park, W. Roxbury	ph	photographed
M.V.	Martha's Vineyard	pl	plumage
MAS	Mass. Audubon Society	pr	pair
MBWMA	Martin Burns WMA, Newbury	S	summer (1S = 1st summer)
MNWS	Marblehead Neck WS	v.o.	various observers
MSSF	Myles Standish State Forest, Plymouth	W	winter (2W = second winter)
Mt.A.	Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambr.	yg	young
		#	additional observers



LEAST BITTERN BY SANDY SELESKY

# ABOUT THE COVER

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The cover of this issue shows a Laughing Gull pursuing a Forster's Tern in an attempt to pirate the tern's fish.

## Part 1: The Chaser: Laughing Gull

The Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*), is a locally common, conspicuous, coastal gull, and many people consider its appearance and laughing-cadence call welcome harbingers of spring. Laughing Gulls are small, black-hooded gulls with slate-gray mantles and black wing-tips. In winter plumage their hood is reduced to black smudges, and their dark red bills become black. Juveniles are largely brownish, and first-winter birds have gray saddles on their backs and flanks and a wide black band at the end of their tail. The dark back and wings separate this species from the smaller Black-headed and Bonaparte's gulls. Two sub-species are recognized by some taxonomists, one from the West Indies, the other, *L. a. megalopteris*, from North America. The Laughing Gull is closely related to the Franklin's Gull of the interior western United States.

Laughing Gulls breed along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts from Maine to Texas, in the West Indies, and in a few locations in the western part of northern Mexico. They are found year round from North Carolina to Texas and in the West Indies. In Massachusetts they are a very common but local coastal breeder. As transients, they are common in the spring and very common to locally abundant in the fall. Laughing Gulls begin to arrive in Massachusetts from early to mid-April. By late July they leave their more southerly nesting colonies, and many disperse north, where they swell local numbers. They move south from August to November.

Laughing Gulls are monogamous and highly gregarious, breeding in colonies of hundreds or thousands of pairs. Their preferred nesting habitats are coastal islands or salt marshes that are low enough for winter storm flooding to kill mammalian predators, but high enough to prevent flooding during nesting. They are very vocal, with a large repertoire of calls: *Koa* notes when head-tossing, *U-ah, U-ah, U-ah* flight calls, *kek-kek-kek* alarm calls, and *Keeaaaaahhhh, kak, kak, kak*, the so-called long call. In courtship and nest exchange they give a series of mewling calls. Laughing Gulls defend the area around their nest, where males use the long call and head tosses as advertisement. Aggressive maneuvers include swooping on intruders while giving the long call and chasing, and in a colony many individuals will mob an interloper. Most displays on the ground involve the long call, head-tossing, choking calls, and charging with feathers raised. Appeasement displays include turning the head to the side.

Nest sites vary from sand and rocks to saltmarsh grass. The nest is built by both parents. Males bring in material, mostly saltmarsh vegetation, and females arrange it to form the nest. They may continue to add material to the nest throughout the nesting cycle, especially in salt marshes where nests may float at high tides. The usual clutch is three brownish-green eggs splotched brown. Both parents have three brood patches and share the incubation duties for the three to four weeks until hatching. The third

chick, which hatches several days after the first two, is at a competitive disadvantage with its siblings. The chicks hatch with eyes closed and are covered with down; they remain in the nest for eight to ten days and are brooded by both parents. They can fly in five to seven weeks. Both parents feed them until they are about two months old.

Laughing Gulls are opportunistic foragers, taking both aquatic and marine invertebrates such as snails, earthworms, crabs, insects, mollusks, shrimp, and horseshoe crabs' eggs, which they uncover by foot-paddling. On the coast they forage mostly at the water's edge but will plunge-dive for fish. They regularly patrol ploughed fields and meadows for invertebrates and will also take offal, garbage, carrion, and even berries. They pirate food from conspecifics and other species. Laughing Gulls regularly steal fish from terns, a growing point of concern at the two tern colonies in Massachusetts where Laughing Gulls currently nest.

Laughing Gulls prefer to drink fresh water but have salt glands, which allow them to drink salt water.

Nesting colonies suffer predation from Fish Crows, larger gull species, and foxes, and flooding can also be a major problem. There is some cannibalism of chicks by adults, and chicks that wander within a colony tend not to fare well. Colonies in the United States were nearly extirpated in the early twentieth century by plume hunters and eggers. They recovered by the 1940s but then declined because of competition from larger gull species, and some were affected by pesticides during the DDT era. Gull control near airports has been another factor, and the capping of landfills has restricted their food supply in some areas. Despite these problems, Laughing Gulls have adjusted well to humans and routinely follow fishing boats for handouts. They are not threatened, and their populations are increasing in most of their range. It appears that these lovely little gulls are here to stay.

## **Part 2: The Chased: Forster's Tern**

The Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*) is primarily a fall visitor to the New England area but also occurs sparingly in spring. It is very similar in appearance to the Common Tern, but in breeding plumage the Forster's Tern may be distinguished by its silver-white upper wings and pure white underparts. In non-breeding plumage Forster's is the only medium-sized black-capped tern in which the black cap is reduced to black ear patches against a white nape. In breeding plumage its bill is orange with a black tip, while the similar Roseate Tern has a black bill in early summer. Breeding-plumaged Arctic Terns have all-red bills and are grayish below. Juvenile Forster's Terns have dark ear patches and are light brownish above. Individuals from central and western North America average larger and darker than birds from the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, and some taxonomists consider them to be a distinct subspecies.

Breeding occurs in colonies scattered throughout the North American interior from the Great Lakes to the Pacific Coast, from coastal New Jersey to South Carolina, and along the Gulf Coast from Alabama to northern Mexico. The largest numbers of breeding birds occur in northern California, Oregon, and southern Manitoba, and also

along the Gulf Coast. Most populations are migratory and winter along the Atlantic Coast from New Jersey to the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico, and along the Pacific Coast from California to Panama. Inland, they winter in suitable habitat in Arkansas, central Texas, Florida, and much of southern Mexico. In Massachusetts, Forster's Terns are rare nesters, and there is but a single conclusive breeding record. However, after breeding they tend to disperse and are uncommon to locally common fall transients. Counts of more than two hundred are occasionally made in September and October.

Forster's Terns are monogamous and usually nest in colonies of up to one hundred pairs, but colonies of more than twenty-five hundred have been recorded. A "marsh" tern, they inhabit fresh, brackish, and salt marshes, and this versatility may explain their disjunct but widespread distribution. Their call is a *Kerrrr* or *Kyarr*, lower in pitch than that of the Common Tern. They also have a variety of harsh alarm and agonistic calls. During their complex courtship flight the pair ascends with exaggerated wing beats and then glides downward. The male usually carries a fish, which he presents to the female upon landing. In a lower-flying version, the male, carrying a fish, elicits the female to join him by flying low across the breeding area, with exaggerated wing beats and tail spread. On the ground the female is in a hunched posture, and she may even assume a nesting posture. The male, with fish, walks around her.

The Forster's Tern is a ground-nesting species that nests in freshwater situations on washed-up vegetation at the edges of lakes or ponds, in marshes, and sometimes on muskrat lodges. In coastal areas these terns tend to nest on islands with salt marshes. The nest may be a simple scrape in mud or sand but is usually lined with dead vegetation. The usual clutch is three eggs that vary in color but are often olive spotted with brown. Both parents incubate for three to four weeks until hatching. They dive-bomb predators, and colonial mobbing is a frequent occurrence. The chicks are covered with down, and eyes open at hatching. They are semi-precocial but remain in the nest and are fed by the parents. The chicks can leave the nest in four days and can fly in four to five weeks.

Forster's Terns feed mainly or entirely on small fish that they take from marshes, saltwater estuaries, and shallow ponds. They forage by hovering or flying with bill pointed down followed by plunge-diving.

Nest predators include Black-crowned Night-Herons, raccoons, owls, rats, and crows, and egg loss occurs from wave action during storms. Forster's Terns were shot for the millenary trade in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and were affected by pesticides during the DDT years. Draining of marshes has also been a persistent threat. Nevertheless, their population appears to be stable, and the increased number of fall sightings in our area bodes well for this elegant little tern. 🐦

*William E. Davis, Jr.*

## About the Cover Artist: Julie Zickefoose

Julie Zickefoose began as an illustrator of natural history subjects in 1976, when she was a college freshman. A six-year stint as a field biologist with The Nature Conservancy's Connecticut Chapter proved a strong motivator both to learn more about ecosystems and to go back to drawing as a career of sorts. (Drawing was easier, and the pay was better.) Along the way, Julie began to write essays about birds and animals, and writing slowly came to the forefront of her interests. Since 1986, *Bird Watcher's Digest* has been the major print venue for her writing as well as her illustrations, and her husband, Editor Bill Thompson III, maintains that it has nothing to do with favoritism. Julie has also contributed short commentaries, mostly critter stories, to National Public Radio's afternoon news program, "All Things Considered."

Julie's first book of illustrated essays, *Letters from Eden*, was published in 2006. Her current book, a memoir about birds, is due out from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in 2010, but first she has to finish the paintings, so you never know.



Julie Zickefoose and *Letters from Eden*

Julie and her family live in Whipple, Ohio, in a ranch house topped by a forty-two foot birdwatching tower (Bill's idea). To date, 183 species of birds and seventy-eight butterfly species have graced the 80-acre sanctuary, the latest being an errant Virginia Rail and a harvester. 🐦



VIRGINIA RAIL BY DAVID LARSON

# AT A GLANCE

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June 2009



WAYNE R. PETERSEN

In this issue, readers are treated to a relatively straightforward view of the mystery bird. From the sturdiness and length of the pictured bird's legs; uniformly colored back, wings, and tail; presence of a bold eye-ring; and the appearance of dark marking on the flanks, the bird is clearly a thrush. Although an Ovenbird somewhat resembles the bird in the photograph, an Ovenbird would exhibit thinner legs, possess a thin black line above the eye on each side of the crown, more likely hold its tail at a slightly cocked angle, and be more delicate overall, including a having a more finely pointed bill.

Knowing that the bird is a thrush makes the identification relatively simple. There are only three thrush species in New England that possess such prominent eye-rings: American Robin, Wood Thrush, and Swainson's Thrush. American Robin can quickly be eliminated because of the mystery bird's strikingly white underparts and the clear presence of dark markings on the sides and flanks. A robin would also exhibit white spots in the corner of the outer tail feathers — a feature that would likely be visible here because of the way the pictured bird's tail is folded.

While it is true that both Wood Thrushes and Swainson's Thrushes possess conspicuous light eye-rings and a pale line between the front of the eye and the base of the bill ("spectacles"), the ventral spotting on a Swainson's Thrush is confined primarily to the chest and upper breast, with markings paler or absent on the lower flanks. In addition, the spotting on the breast of a Swainson's Thrush is generally less distinct overall than on a Wood Thrush. Wood Thrushes have prominent roundish black spots all over their underparts, and they lack the buffy overtones found on a Swainson's Thrush. These dark markings are also far more extensive on the lower breast and flanks than they would ever be on a Swainson's Thrush. Through this process of elimination, the mystery bird turns out to be a Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*).

Wood Thrushes are relatively common and widespread nesting birds in most intact deciduous forests across Massachusetts, except on the Cape and Islands, where they are decidedly uncommon or absent. Trend data suggests that Wood Thrush populations are declining throughout many parts of their range. As migrants, Wood Thrushes are common in spring but notably uncommon in fall. The author photographed the pictured Wood Thrush at Key West, Florida, in April 2009. 

*Wayne R. Petersen*



GREATER SHEARWATER BY DAVID LARSON

# AT A GLANCE

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WAYNE R. PETERSEN

Can you identify the bird in this photograph?  
Identification will be discussed in next issue's AT A GLANCE.

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