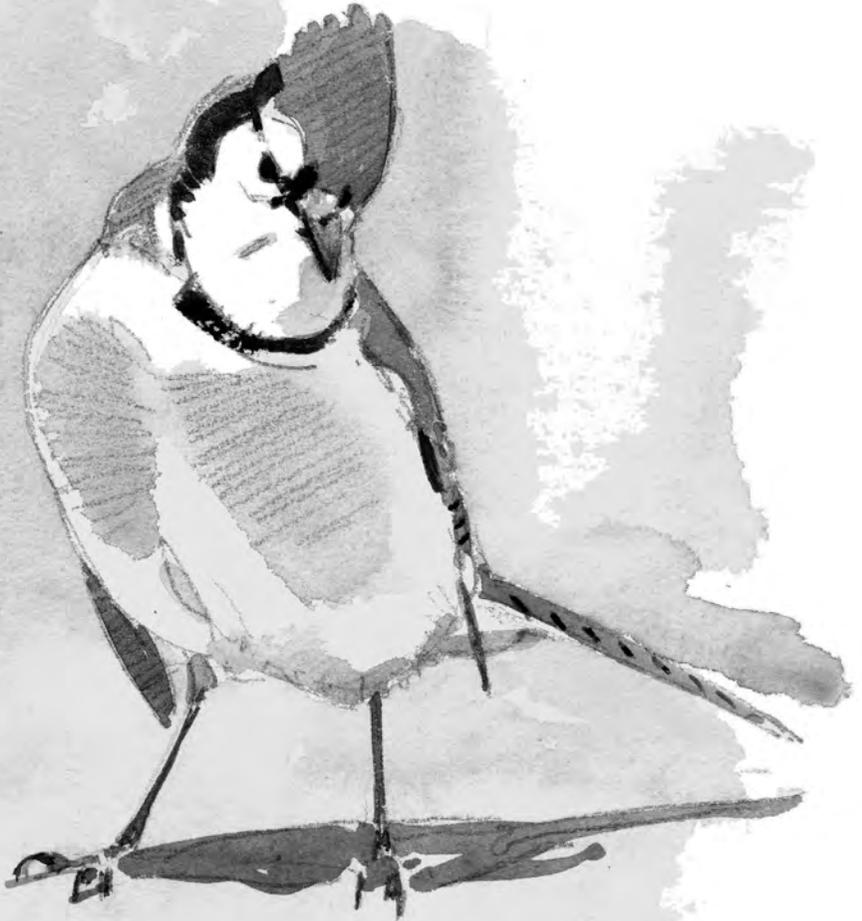


Bird Observer

VOLUME 41, NUMBER 6

DECEMBER 2013



2010

Darryl H. Van Dusen

HOT BIRDS



This handsome **Bullock's Oriole** (left) originally showed up at Steve Spang's feeder in Carlisle on November 15, but disappeared the same day then showed up two days later down the street at Philip and Peg Gladstone's feeder, where Philip took this photo.

The second weekend after Columbus Day marks the Nantucket Birding Festival, and once again it marks the discovery of a spectacular bird. This **Calliope Hummingbird** was discovered on October 19 at the Hummock Pond Road Community Gardens by Simon Perkins, Richard Prum and Vern Laux, who took the photo on the right.



Simon Perkins and Erik Nielsen were checking out a thicket in Rockport on November 16 when Simon called "Get your camera, **Western Tanager**." It was enjoyed for the next couple of days by several, including Phil Brown, who took the photo at left.

November 2013 marked the start of a massive **Snowy Owl** irruption, with sightings on beaches from Salisbury to Westport and airports from Logan to Pittsfield. Phil Brown took the photo at right on December 2.



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Bird Observer

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Birding Newburyport Harbor and the Salisbury Beach State Reservation

Richard Forster

This is a reprint of the late Dick Forster's excellent article from Vol. 9, No. 1 (February 1981) on birding Newburyport Harbor and Salisbury Beach, which most of our readers have never seen. As you read it, keep in mind a few things that have changed. First, the Sportsman's Lodge is now the Joppa Flats Education Center of Mass Audubon. Second, the parking lot of the Chase Shawmut building upriver is no longer available, but there are other places one can stop to look at the river above Cashman Park, such as the marina a short distance upriver from the park and Deer Island off the Chain Bridge, the next bridge upstream from Route 1. Third, two species that Dick mentions can no longer be seen in numbers, if at all: Hudsonian Godwit and Loggerhead Shrike. The latter has not been seen in Essex County in over 20 years. Vesper Sparrows are no longer regular in fall at Salisbury. And, of course, Sharp-tailed Sparrows have been split into Saltmarsh and Nelson's sparrows. Otherwise, the article is still current and can hardly be improved on for birding these two hotspots.

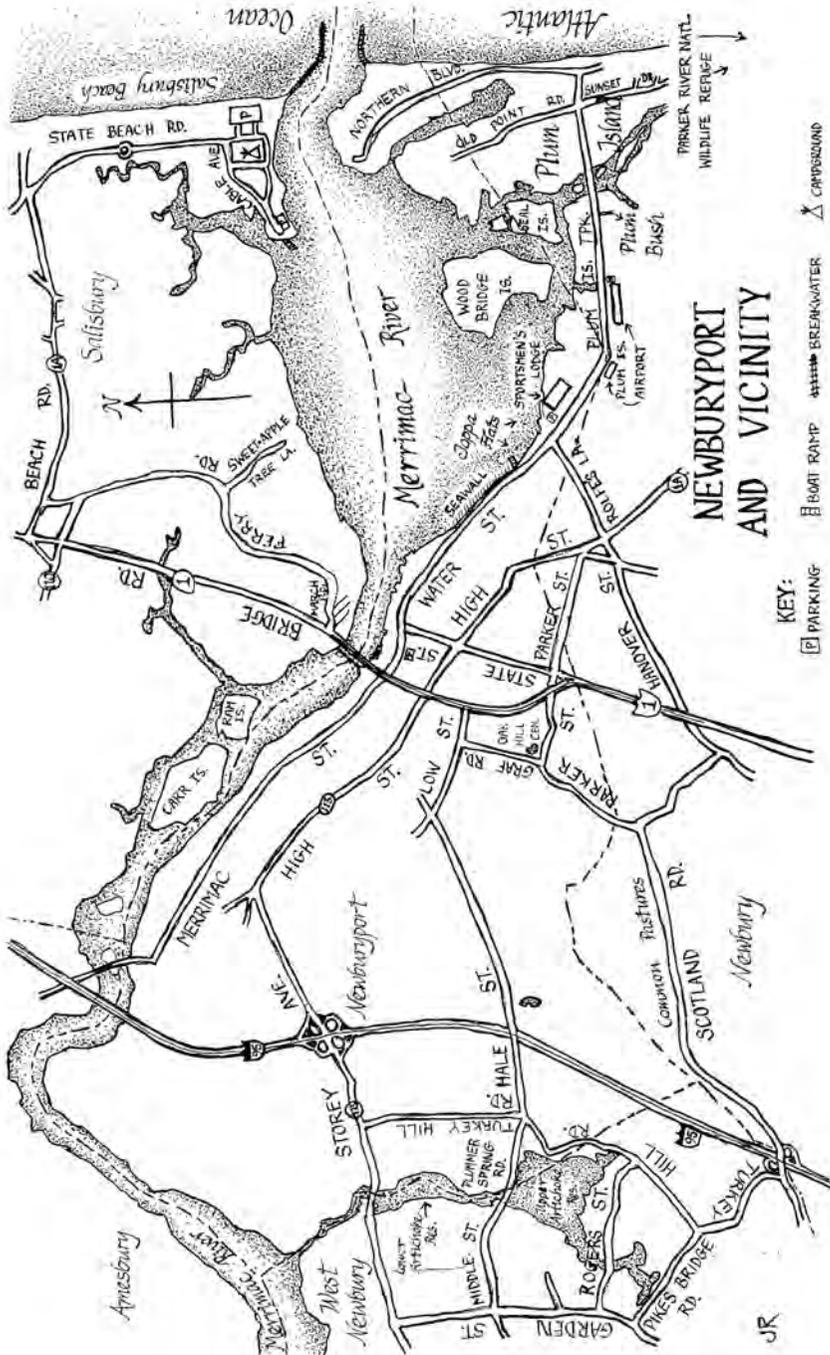


Perhaps no other location in Massachusetts has received as much coverage over the years as the Newburyport area. Its proximity to Boston and a vast birding community contribute to its continued popularity. The drawing card is Newburyport Harbor, a stopover area for thousands of gulls, ducks and shorebirds of great variety. Diligent search through the vast numbers of birds present will often reward the observer with discoveries of rare or unusual species.

Newburyport is located on the coast about 35 miles north of Boston, near the New Hampshire border. It can be reached by going north on Route 95 and taking the Rte. 113 exit (east), which leads into Newburyport. An alternative is to take Rte. 1 north, which also leads to Newburyport Center. This route is more scenic and offers birding stops along the way. Foremost of these stops is the Topsfield Fairgrounds. In spring, the adjacent Ipswich River floods the meadow and attracts migrating shorebirds. Species to look for are Glossy Ibis, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Killdeer and, rarely, Ruff.

Newburyport Harbor

Newburyport Harbor is a tidal estuary located at the mouth of the Merrimack River. The surrounding salt marshes are among the most extensive in the state. The main attraction is the tidal mud flat area known as Joppa Flats. At dead low tide these flats occupy a major portion of the harbor. Viewing birds at low tide can be an extremely frustrating experience because the birds are spread over a vast area and can be viewed only from a great distance. Consequently, the observer should schedule a visit to the harbor at a time when the tide offers optimum viewing conditions. Although the height of the tide varies according to the cycle of the moon, wind speed, and wind



direction, a general rule of thumb is to be at the harbor about 4 to 4 1/2 hours after Boston is high tide. At this time the flats should just be beginning to uncover and the birds should be viewable at close range. If it isn't possible to visit the harbor on a falling tide, then another good option is to reach the harbor on a rising tide about 4 hours before high tide. A rising tide is less satisfactory because the tide rises fairly rapidly and there is less time to watch the birds.

In Newburyport itself, the harbor is best observed from Water Street, which borders the south side of the harbor. There are three principal vantage points along this road. From west to east, these are popularly referred to as the boat ramp/sea wall, the clam shack and the Sportsmen's Lodge. All of these should be visited, since each affords a different perspective of the harbor.

In spring the initial surge of migrants, consisting primarily of ducks, occurs in early March. There is usually a noticeable buildup in the numbers of the wintering species like Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead and Oldsquaw. Generally speaking, the diving ducks are best seen from the sea wall. Puddle ducks, however, are best seen from the Sportmen's Lodge at high tide. Black ducks predominate, but lesser numbers of other species often consort with them. Green-winged Teals, Blue-winged Teals and Pintails are frequently encountered, and American Wigeons and Gadwalls are occasionally found.

Also in mid-March, there is a noticeable increase in the numbers of Ring-billed Gulls. From then until May is a good time to be alert for Mew Gull, a species which has occurred with increasing regularity in recent years.

When April arrives, the activity in the harbor increases. Early April, like March, is dominated by waterfowl, with Brant and Snow Geese frequenting the harbor and surrounding marshes. By mid-April the vanguard of the shorebirds arrive. These include Greater Yellowlegs and Killdeer. In the third week of April, small numbers of Pectoral Sandpipers can often be found. The first Little Gulls may be encountered at this time, often in striking breeding plumage, but they are most reliably found in mid-May.

The Ruff, one of the featured species in the harbor, has usually put in an appearance by the end of April. The male Ruff is unmistakable. Its variety of plumages is amply illustrated in current field guides. The female Ruff (Reeve) is less well marked and may be overlooked in the company of the yellowlegs. Ruffs are usually seen in late April and early May, with stragglers occasionally present until Memorial Day.

The shorebird migration is in full swing by the end of the first week of May. The species that peaks earliest is the Least Sandpiper. The maximum number occurs about May 10th and may be 2000-4000. Shortly thereafter, the other shorebirds become increasingly more common. Species that occur in appreciable numbers are Semipalmated Plover, Black-bellied Plover (peak late May), Greater Yellowlegs, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher and Semipalmated Sandpiper. Species which occur sporadically or in small numbers include Golden Plover (rare), Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, White-rumped Sandpiper and Sanderling. Newburyport is probably the most

reliable location in the state for Curlew Sandpipers. The last week of May is the most likely time to discover them. In recent years three species of Godwit — Marbled, Hudsonian and Bar-tailed — have been seen in spring. Obviously, it would be wise for the observer to be alert for any possibility.

Raptors are often drawn to these shorebird concentrations. A sudden panic of shorebirds often signals the presence of a Peregrine Falcon (most frequently seen in the first half of May). Merlins are occasionally seen darting along the edge of the harbor. Sharp-shinned Hawks and Ospreys are often seen migrating over the harbor.

During June there are just a handful of non-breeding shorebirds present in the harbor, but by early July, shorebirds on their southward trek from the northern breeding grounds begin to appear. The first species to arrive —usually by the end of the first week of July —are Hudsonian Godwit, Lesser Yellowlegs, Short-billed Dowitcher and Least Sandpiper. Of these, the species that peaks earliest is the Short-billed Dowitcher, which reaches maximum numbers by about July 20. Peak numbers of sandpipers



RED-BREASTED MERGANSER PAIR BY SANDY SELESKY

usually occur in early August, while peak numbers of Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers occur in late August.

From late August through early September, there is often a noticeable buildup of shorebirds coinciding with the southward flight of juvenile birds. Species that can reliably be seen during this period are Semipalmated and Black-bellied Plover, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Short-billed Dowitcher, Semipalmated Sandpiper and Hudsonian Godwit. Newburyport Harbor is one of the easily accessible places to see

Hudsonian Godwits. The first individuals arrive by July 4th and are continuously present until mid-September. The peak often reaches 50 or more individuals. Other species that are often present, but which may require a bit of expertise to identify, are Willet, Red Knot, White-rumped Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper and Marbled Godwit. Both Ruff and Curlew Sandpiper are often recorded in late July and early August.

By late August several sections of the salt marsh are mowed to harvest the grass. The area opposite the Plum Island Airport and the area about 100 yards west of the bridge to Plum Island (known locally as Plumbush) are mowed annually. At high tide shorebirds often gather in these mowed areas, particularly where tidal pools are present. Some species which are seldom found in the harbor are often found here. These include Killdeer, Golden Plover, Upland Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper (rare) and Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

In summer and fall the tall grass along the edge of the harbor and along the creeks contains Marsh Wrens, Sharp-tailed Sparrows and Seaside Sparrows. They are best seen at high tide.

Terns are often found in the harbor during the summer. Usually Common and Least Terns, local breeders, can be found feeding along the edge of the harbor. In August, other terns begin to appear on their post-breeding wanderings. Forster's Terns have occurred with regularity in recent years. They often make their appearance by early August, certainly by late August, and they may remain until October. Fortunate observers may find a Roseate Tern in the middle of August.

A small contingent of Bonaparte's Gulls is usually present in summer, and Little Gulls occasionally associate with them. In August, Bonaparte's Gull numbers are augmented by early arriving migrants. Both the terns and the small gulls can often be found resting on moored boats near the sea wall at high tide.

By September, individual numbers of shorebirds have decreased, but species diversity has increased. The shorebirds that breed in Alaska and northwestern Canada are most common at this time. Western Sandpipers and Long-billed Dowitchers can be found if the problems in identifying these species can be overcome. Dunlin make an appearance in early September and reach a peak in late October.

Again in the fall, hawks are frequently encountered in the harbor and over the adjacent marshes. Species seen on a somewhat regular basis include Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Harrier, Osprey, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon. A panic of shorebirds or ducks often indicates the presence of a raptor.

In the latter part of September and during October, the numbers of migrant gulls increase. Little Gulls and Black-headed Gulls are frequently encountered, although the Black-headed Gull has appeared with decreasing frequency in recent years. In late September or early October, the fortunate observer might see a small flock of migrating Caspian Terns. Their passage through the state is direct, usually without stops to rest or feed.

The first wintering ducks (specifically, Greater Scaup) begin to arrive in late September, but it isn't until December that the ducks are present in numbers. Typical wintering species are Oldsquaw, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead and Red-breasted Merganser. Barrow's Goldeneye can often be found feeding around the group of rocks exposed at low tide on the western side of the harbor. Occasionally, species like Canvasback, Redhead and Ruddy Duck can be found, especially during the migration period.

In winter, birds can often be found up the river from the harbor. There are two excellent vantage points in this area. One is Cashman Park, a public park along the shore of the river. The other is the parking lot of the Gould Shawmut (Chase Shawmut) building. Waterfowl and gulls are usually present here, including Iceland, Glaucous and Black-headed Gulls on occasion. This is an excellent area for raptors. Scan the woodland edges along the marsh for perched birds. Likely species are Rough-legged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk and Northern Harrier. Bald Eagle, Goshawk and Red-shouldered Hawk are other possibilities. Common Mergansers often concentrate here when ice forms farther up river, and Belted Kingfishers are often encountered.

In recent years the Bald Eagle has apparently rediscovered the Merrimack River as a wintering area. A reliable place to see wintering eagles is along Main Street on the Amesbury side of the river.

Salisbury Beach State Reservation

The Salisbury Beach State Reservation lies on the north side of Newburyport Harbor at the mouth of the Merrimack River. It can be reached from Newburyport by taking Rte. 1 to Salisbury Center and then taking a right on Rte. 1A to the reservation. A fee is charged from April to October, but early birders may avoid this. Salisbury is best during migration (particularly fall) and in winter. In summer the campground and the beach parking lot are so crowded that a visit then is an experience to be avoided.

Salisbury offers a view of the ocean and of the jetties at the mouth of the river, and a different perspective of the eastern portion of the harbor. The meager thickets often host numerous landbirds, particularly during "waves." The variety of rarities that have been seen in a relatively small area here staggers the imagination.

In late summer and early fall, Loggerhead Shrikes are sometimes found along the access road to the reservation complex. This is one of the more reliable localities for this rare species. When approaching the campground area, take the right that leads to a boat-launch area. Almost immediately on your right is a small copse consisting of sumac, pines, and other shrubby vegetation. This is an excellent spot to look for migrants. Almost any warbler is conceivable and Yellow-breasted Chats are often recorded. These thickets are also attractive to sparrows. Most of the common sparrows are found here and White-crowned Sparrows are a sure bet in October. The weedy patches of the adjacent campground are also worth checking. Savannah Sparrows, Vesper Sparrows and Chipping Sparrows are regular here. Occasionally a Lark Sparrow or Clay-colored Sparrow is discovered.

In late September the first Lapland Longspurs put in an appearance in the campground. They usually remain until at least mid-November. Snow Buntings put in an appearance in late October and reach a peak during the first half of November, when flocks totaling hundreds of birds are often seen.

In fall, shorebirds roost on the parking lot at high tide, particularly when rain has formed puddles there. Whimbrels, Golden Plovers, Western, White-rumped and, rarely, Baird's Sandpipers can sometimes be found with the commoner species.

In winter, Salisbury can be feast or famine. The marshes are attractive to raptors; Red-tailed Hawks, Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Harriers and Snowy Owls are likely to be seen. The thickets at the junction of Rte. 1A and the reservation road are worth checking for roosting Long-eared and Short-eared Owls. Short-eared Owls are often found early in the morning and late in the day hunting over the marshes. Check exposed perches for Northern Shrikes.

The ocean in winter often holds Common Loons, Red-necked and Horned Grebes, Common Eiders and other sea ducks. The jetty usually has Purple Sandpipers (hard to see) and Great Cormorants, while Iceland Gulls are usually present in fair numbers and an occasional Glaucous Gull is found.

Black-legged Kittiwakes sometimes feed between the jetties with the other gulls. On rare occasions, Razorbills or Thick-billed Murres are seen.

From the boat launch area, the bay ducks can be observed to good advantage. Canada Geese, Black Ducks, Goldeneyes, Buffleheads, Greater Scaups, and Red-breasted Mergansers can be seen, and less common species are sometimes found. Also keep in mind that this was the location for a Ross' Gull one winter and an Ivory Gull the following winter.

In spring many of the same species are present, but in greater numbers. The ocean should produce Common and Red-throated Loons, Red-necked and Horned Grebes, and ducks and Gannets offshore. Along the edge of the harbor, on the marsh embankment, Brant congregate until late May. In April, Snow Geese often put down on the marsh in flocks and may sometimes linger for a week or more.

Salisbury is not an impressive looking area, but it certainly draws the birds. Few areas produce such a high proportion of stragglers. Coupled with a visit to Newburyport Harbor, a visit here will seldom disappoint even hard-core birders. 



LONG-EARED OWL BY SANDY SELESKY

The Rise of The Megazoom Camera: A New Era in Birding. Or “Honey, Do We Really Need a Scope?”

Paul M. Roberts

The digital revolution has dramatically altered birding as we once knew it. Digital communications—the Internet, the web, email, blogs, Twitter, Instagram, and more—have changed the way birders learn, communicate, congregate, and, ultimately, bird. Digital data storage has supplanted analog document storage and revolutionized access to information. Digital photography has been a major part of that revolution. One of the most dramatic changes was substituting memory cards for film, eliminating the imposing cost of consumables such as film and processing. Previously, it could cost \$0.50+ per photo for slide or print film and processing, and it could take three to seven days before you could see your photos. Now everything is available instantaneously on your camera and can be distributed in real time, and there is no recurring consumables cost, even though your capital costs might be considerable.

In the 1970s and early 80s, bird photography was relatively limited. For example, there were few bird books with great photographs, which were expensive to procure and print. *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds* (1977) and *The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding* (1983) were revolutionary in using what were then considered high-quality bird photographs for field identification. Look at Clark and Wheeler’s groundbreaking first book, *Hawks of North America* (1987), where the visual focus was on plates by Brian Wheeler while miniscule black and white photos were stuck at the back of the book. Then look at the new *Hawks in Flight* by Peter Dunne, et. al. (2012); the new *Crossley ID Guide: Raptors* (2013); or *The Warbler Guide* by Stephenson and Whittle (2013). We are living in a different, much more photo-conscious, photo-pervasive world.

During the late 90s and early 00s, the elimination of the recurring cost of certain consumables as well as general economic growth, the “boomer bulge,” and new forms of communication, storage, and distribution drove the dynamic growth of Digital Single Lens Reflex cameras (DSLRs) and the dramatic growth of photography—including bird photography—as a hobby.

There were roughly three stages of digital photography development. Some birders began buying inexpensive compact and then minizoom pocket cameras with low magnification. They used these pocket cameras to shoot through their spotting scopes to digiscope. These point-and-shoot cameras meant that almost all functions were automatic, programmed for quick, simple use. By spending \$100–\$200 for a point-and-shoot, birders could leverage their investments in spotting scopes (\$500–\$2000 then) to obtain good quality bird photos at 20X–60X magnification, that is, capturing something close to the equivalent of what a birder saw through the scope. Gradually, some people began using their increasingly powerful smart phones to digiscope as well. Soon, sophisticated adapters were developed to enable digiscoping using high-end DSLRs.

But digital photography exploded beyond the wildest dreams of most people (just ask Eastman Kodak and Fuji shareholders). Although the cost of quality Digital SLRs dropped as the market mushroomed, some birders quickly committed to spending roughly \$2000–\$5000 in order to take quality digital photos in the field and process them with Photoshop on their computers. New rules about documenting all rarity reports with photos were invoked.

The explosive growth of point-and-shoot minizoom and DSLR markets led to the rapid evolution of the “bridge camera,” a slightly larger point-and-shoot that offered increasingly good optical zoom lenses and many of the manual creative capabilities found on SLRs. The rapid evolution of zoom technology gradually yielded megazoom cameras with 26X, 30X, 32X, and 36X optical (as opposed to digital) magnification, and those with 30X and above found an eager audience. In 2012, Nikon introduced its first 42X optical zoom followed by Canon’s 50X somewhat later in the year and a 60X optical zoom by Panasonic Lumix in late 2013. These powerful little cameras have surprisingly good image stabilization, essential when using higher magnifications without a tripod; low-light sensitive Charge-Coupled Devices (more commonly known as CCDs); and remarkably good megazoom lenses for only \$300–\$450. They are also much, much smaller and lighter than the professional DSLR.

I was tracking the evolution of the megazoom while waiting for something that had a sufficiently powerful zoom, was technically advanced, and broadly well reviewed. When Nikon introduced the Coolpix P510 megazoom (16.1 megapixels) with a 42X (roughly 1000 mm) optical lens, I bit the bullet.

I purchased a Nikon P510 as a backup for a trip to the backcountry in Utah, where we hoped to photograph remote ancient Indian rock art and incredible geological



From top to bottom:
Nikon Coolpix P510, Canon SX50, Lumix
DMC-FZ70. Photographs from manufacturers.

formations. The camera arrived the morning after we left, and when my Canon 300m T3i 300mm lens froze at Cedar Breaks National Monument on the first day of the trip, we had the P510 sent overnight to Moab. Its arrival was fortuitous because the megazoom enabled me to photograph exquisite rock art high on the sides of cliffs and alcoves. I was able to zoom in to 42X or more and take excellent photos impossible with my 300mm. Using my new camera, I was able to see some high petroglyphs very well. I could have seen these images equally well only through my Vortex spotting scope, which I did not want to hand carry down the three-mile trail into the canyon. Two months later I was photographing Cooper's Hawks, Bald Eagles, and Red-shouldered Hawks at Lighthouse Point in Connecticut with my P510, getting better hawk photos than ever before.

In November 2012 I gave a raptor field class and had five women enroll together, all of whom had recently purchased 42X or 50X megazooms. They knew a bit about birds, but really wanted to learn how to photograph them with these new toys. I was blown away by what a beginning photographer was able to do snapping snow buntings with a 50X Canon. The digital revolution—and birding—is entering an entirely new era, with more—many billions more—photographs of birds and many people, including me, taking their best bird photographs ever.

I have taken roughly 250,000 digital photos in the past eight years and over 50,000 slides in three decades before that, yet I do not consider myself a photographer. I am a birder who photographs. That is an important difference. I am easily bored talking about camera settings, lenses, and f-stops. Thus I will not provide you with technical analyses of what a specific megazoom can do. You can do the research or check with someone who owns one. I will focus instead on how a good megazoom changed my birding life and might change yours.

In the past eighteen months I have taken more and better raptor photos than I did in the previous eighteen years. I can take sharp, full-frame photos of an accipiter high in a tree at the end of the block; a Peregrine tiercel perched 22 stories above me; Bald Eagles perched on the other side of a lake, or a Long-billed Curlew in a field. Damn, if only I had had this camera two years ago during the Snowy Owl invasion.... I can take decent photos of Red Knots at 100 yards without disturbing them. I've taken many of my favorite photos ever, including (in my mind) incredibly beautiful, ethereal shots of juvenile Semipalmated Sandpipers roosting among the rocks on Bar Head (Plum Island). I can obtain "permanent" images roughly equivalent to what I can see through my 20X-60X scope and have the images to edit and study, all without carrying a heavy, cumbersome tripod and scope.

The camera has changed how I bird. When I am out tracking individual raptors around dawn, I often cannot identify an individual perched Redtail with my binoculars. It is too dark. But I can photograph it with my megazoom, which is much more light sensitive than my eyes, and accurately identify individual Red-tailed Hawks by camera. Driving through chaparral in Texas looking for Ferruginous Hawks, I don't have to climb out of the car, pull my tripod and scope from the trunk, set it up on a busy, often narrow road, and risk life, limb, and car insurance to identify a hawk perched

on the tree line along the horizon. I can now sit in my car and snap two photos using my megazoom, and identify forty Redtails a half mile or more away before I find that Ferruginous and pull out my scope as well. I can photograph the bird at 42X, the equivalent of 1000 mm, and then digitally magnify that image on my camera screen, or LCD (liquid crystal display) by 100X to examine details of the bird. For reasons I still can't explain, the magnified images on my camera LCD are actually better (larger, sharper) than on my 21-inch computer.

I now spend more time than I did previously editing my photos, but now I can study those larger images and learn more from them. I can age and identify individual Bald Eagles; attempt to resolve accipiter IDs; document different roughlegs or redtails in an area; track redtail mates, offspring, and suitors; or track molt in Buzz & Ruby, the widely known Cambridge Redtails.



Ruby & Buzz. Photograph by the author

To my knowledge, there are only three other megazooms in the P510 class. In mid-2012, Canon introduced the SX50 (12.1 megapixel), which offers 50X optical. A friend bought the SX50, which has excellent images at high magnification, and may be a little brighter than the P510 in low light situations. Several other features of the SX50 also appeal to me, so I have considered getting it as my main or backup camera. Having used an SLR for thirty years, I shoot through the viewfinder. The resolution on the P510 viewfinder is disappointing. The resolution on the SX50 viewfinder is noticeably better, as it is on the new Lumix DMC-FZ70 (16.1 megapixel). Second, the LCD screen on the P510 is fixed and exposed at all times, meaning it is inevitable that you will scratch

it as you wear it, just from fabric abrasion over time. That gives a certain lifespan to the camera. The Nikon P520 (18.1 megapixel), introduced in 2013, has a multi-angle LCD, which allows you to flip close and protect the screen. The P520 also provides other benefits, such as instantaneous Wi-Fi connections. I have been unable to test a unit in the field to see if the resolution of the viewfinder is improved. As with many new models, there are tradeoffs with the P520. For example, because the P520 has a larger, brighter LCD screen, the battery life appears to be cut in half. In November 2013, the price of the P520 was cut by about 20%, which suggests the model has a short life and a new model maybe introduced shortly.

In the second half of 2013, Panasonic Lumix came out with a 60X optical zoom (1200 mm equivalent), the DMC-FZ70. Lumix has an envious reputation, but the reviews of this model have been mixed, especially regarding the quality of images at high magnification. This model has not had time to form a reliable user base like the P510 and SX50, so check out the camera and reviews carefully before buying.

Over the past eighteen months, many friends and acquaintances have purchased megazooms. The photographic quality can be superb, and the cameras are small (roughly 1.25 pounds), easy to carry, and relatively inexpensive, cheaper by far than most good scopes. The software on the P510 and SX50 is superior. The cameras are very easy to use. One of the biggest challenges is learning how to track and photograph a moving bird using a 42X or 50X lens. (On-camera software help is provided for that challenge.) The cameras also take high definition video with sound.

If you own a mid-to-high end amateur or semi-professional DSLR, you might not be interested in a megazoom because you do have to make some sacrifices. Megazooms have some shutter lag; slower, lower burst rates; and smaller format sensors. They also have slower focusing speeds at higher magnification. The megazoom lenses are surprisingly good, but not as good, as sharp as a lens that costs four to five times more than the entire bridge camera. But the good megazooms are true bridge cameras, allowing you to do many things manually, just like a DSLR. A friend who has invested well into five figures for her Canon equipment recently purchased the Canon SX50 to be her backup camera on international trips. It is much easier to carry than another DSLR body, and it gives her the best telephoto capability. When I go hiking or hawk watching, the megazoom is the only camera I put in my backpack, which is a lot lighter now.

Some observers question if megazooms effectively can go much higher in optical zoom. I don't know. However, I do know my megazoom is now an essential part of my birding equipment. It is much more convenient to carry around the neck along with binoculars than a DSLR body with a 400 mm lens. It is easier to carry period, especially when hauling a scope and tripod in one hand and wearing a backpack. Increasingly, many people carrying 400 mms or higher no longer trudge around with scopes in hand and sometimes even without binoculars. A growing segment of the larger birding community appears to be focusing on bird photography rather than

identifying birds and observing behavior. Also, as the average age of birders continues to, ahem, mature, it seems likely that ease of movement will drive many of their decisions.

As I travel the country, I see more and more birders carrying megazooms, from Cave Creek and Madera Canyon in southeastern Arizona, to Aransas and Estero Llano Grande in Texas, to South Beach and the Mystic Lakes in Massachusetts.

The megazooms also make it much easier to be a responsible, considerate birder. I still shudder when I recall one birder with a small point-and-shoot chasing the Plymouth Ivory Gull down a breakwater and out of view of many land-based observers, just trying to get a close-up with his minizoom. Everyone, including the gull, would have benefited if that person had had a megazoom camera instead.

If the megazoom sounds of interest, check out professional and user reviews and specs online, and if possible, try out a friend's megazoom before you buy. One friend bought a new model last week but returned it within days and bought the SX50 instead. Recognize that forthcoming models may make significant tradeoffs that you should evaluate. You might find that a good megazoom could enrich your birding life considerably as it has mine, and at a very low cost. 🐦

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Paul M. Roberts of Medford MA is retired after more than thirty years in marketing and corporate communications. Retirement has given him more time to pursue his love of raptors at a more granular level, following as well as possible several individual raptors, some of which have red tails. Paul founded the Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch (EMHW) and is a director of EMHW and the Hawk Migration Association of North America. He is president of the NorthEast Hawk Watch.

Keith Gagnon: Plumage Prodigy

Jenette Kerr and Mark Faherty



Photograph courtesy of the authors.

For seven-year-old Keith Gagnon of Brewster, Massachusetts, it started with a small yellowish feather found two years ago at summer camp. He later took it to school, where his teacher thought it came from a goldfinch. But Keith's mom, Kim, was not convinced.

"That's when we discovered the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary," Keith's dad recalled. "And during the excitement around the rare Lazuli Bunting that appeared there in 2011, Keith met Mark Faherty," the sanctuary's science coordinator. When Keith showed Mark the feather, they figured out it was actually from a Baltimore Oriole, a species on Keith's wish list. "Keith and Mark talked birds and feathers some more. Then Mark showed Keith a Barn Owl feather. Keith was over the moon!" From there, Keith's eyes began to see feathers everywhere, and he regularly asked his parents to take him on walks where he might find more.

Keith's enthusiasm and extraordinary feather acumen also drew the attention of sanctuary director Bob Prescott, who invited Keith to curate an exhibit of his feather collection. During a video interview with the *Cape Cod Times* on the exhibit, Keith can be seen stroking his cheek with his favorite, a flight feather from a Red-tailed Hawk. Later, the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History invited Keith to create a display, and he now has a second exhibit at Wellfleet Bay.

Keith's appreciation of feathers seems to go beyond his ability to identify them, even before he could read. As word got around about Keith's remarkable passion, he was invited to visit the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and later the Smithsonian Institution's division for birds, including a visit with forensic ornithologist Carla Dove. As Keith's dad recalls, "Carla showed Keith some feathers from a bird and plane collision and asked him if he could identify what species they came from." Keith grabbed the first feather, noting its unusual softness. Then he shook it against his ear, noting that it made almost no sound. "By that time, he was already thinking owl," his dad says. "We'd been to Florida recently where we'd seen Burrowing Owls." And that was Keith's conclusion for the Smithsonian feather. "The Smithsonian folks were duly impressed, saying, 'Oh my God, he's right!'"

Keith Gagnon Sr. says his son's uncanny ability to identify birds and their feathers can be mind-boggling. "I came home from work with what I thought was a nice hawk feather. I was just getting out of the car when Keith ran up to me, shouting happily, 'Daddy, you got me a Great Horned Owl feather!' which, of course, it was." And then there was the priceless encounter with a curious and undoubtedly confused person while on the way to Sanibel Island for a vacation week birding adventure. As his mom



Photograph courtesy of the authors.

tells it, "We were at McDonald's and Keith told the server that we were off to Florida. She said, 'Oh, are you going to see Mickey Mouse?' He said, 'No that would be boring and all the noise would scare the birds. We are going in search of the Roseate Spoonbill and Painted Bunting.'" Later on this trip, the pre-literate prodigy would identify a Barred Owl with only an obstructed tail-end view from below, wowing the seasoned birders at the scene.

Is it a gift, this precocious ability in one so very young? Keith's father admits to being somewhat baffled. He credits his wife with encouraging Keith to learn about birds he loves. But there's an appreciation that goes well beyond poring over field guides. As his dad notes, "Keith's entire feather collection is in one box. When he takes that box out and looks at his feathers, it's like he's savoring every single one." 🐦



Photograph courtesy of the authors.

Jenette Kerr has overseen publicity and communications at Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary since 2011. She also works as a part-time announcer and news writer at WBUR, Boston. Before taking over communications functions at Wellfleet Bay, she was a member of the sanctuary's coastal waterbird team, performing fieldwork and public outreach about nesting shorebirds.

Mark Faherty has been the Science Coordinator at Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary since August 2007. Although his current projects involve everything from oysters and horseshoe crabs to bats and butterflies, he has studied primarily bird ecology for the last 17 years. Mark has worked on research projects involving everything from wading birds to vireos in Kenya, Florida, Texas, California, Arizona, Mexico, and the Pacific Northwest. In 2000 he was a counter at the famous Veracruz River of Raptors hawk watch in Mexico. While a grad student at UMass Amherst, he conducted a three-year study of the landbirds of the Cape Cod National Seashore. Mark is past president of the Cape Cod Bird Club and a member of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee. He has been birding in Massachusetts since the age of six.

Bringing up a Birder

Marsha C. Salett



Photograph by the author

One of my favorite birding companions is my eight-year-old grandson Jaden Thompson/Grant. We have been birding together for the past six years. The cosmic familial force that threw together a Mass Audubon teacher-naturalist with a keen-eyed child who has a natural and fervent affinity for birds has enriched our relationship beyond measure. It is a joy to teach my own grandson a favorite subject that I have been teaching children for more than a quarter century. And Jaden has taught me how to hone my teaching methods.

Because I bird and teach environmental education, many people ask me what is the best age to introduce children to birding. My answer: start when they are infants. With a baby in a backpack or stroller, it's quite easy to point out the chickadees and blue jays to one's captive tot while managing to do a bit of birding oneself. The challenge arises when babies become mobile and we have to bird on their terms. Fortunately, young children's curiosity and sense of wonder compensate.

What do parents teach toddlers? Words, colors, shapes, size, sounds—seems like the fundamentals of birding to me. Teaching “What does the crow say?” or “What does the chickadee say?” is as appropriate developmentally as “What does the cow say?” But save the Chuck-will's-widow for older kids. Three- or four-year-olds can enjoy *The Backyard Birdsong Guide* and learn to recognize the sounds of the birds in their neighborhood. Elementary school students love the mnemonics approach when I teach the dawn chorus, especially *konk-la-reee* for the Red-winged Blackbird, *teacher-teacher-teacher* for the Ovenbird, and—the hands-down winner—*potato-chip-potato-chip* for the American Goldfinch.

Jaden is a musical child and has always been fascinated with sounds. His favorite call is that of the Common Loon. For six years, I have kept Disk 2 of *More Birding by Ear Eastern/Central* in my car so he could listen to the loon's call. For four years, that's all I played in the car, over and over and over again. He never tired of it—I had to learn to tune it out to preserve my sanity. The payoff came when Jaden finally became curious about the warblers and sparrows and wanted to listen to the rest of the disk. He's now becoming a good auditory as well as visual birder.

For most children, the first fascination with birds is visual. Birds come in myriad shapes and sizes; some have dazzling colors and patterns; their feathers look soft and inviting; best of all, they fly. Kids like to watch birds at feeders, and some kids become hooked for life. When Jaden discovered Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at my feeder on Cape Cod, he was mesmerized. He was only thirteen months old, but he would sit on my lap for an hour at a time watching the hummers and even waiting patiently for them to come back. Jaden found his passion, his natural inclination—a baby birder was born.

By the time he was two, Jaden knew all of our backyard and local birds by name. My daughter would tell me that when they were driving, she'd hear his voice pipe up from the car seat, "Look! A Red-tailed Hawk!" or "Look! A Great Blue Heron!" And so there was. When he was five and saw Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge for the first time at low tide with the flats filled with herons, egrets, pelicans, White Ibis, Wood Storks, and Roseate Spoonbills, he turned to us and said, "This is one of the best days of my life!"

I've noticed that often there is a transformative *aha* moment for these exceptional young birders. One summer when I was working as a trail naturalist at Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, a nine-year-old girl asked me if we had Piping Plovers. I had been scoping the far shore watching a pair that disappeared over the dune ridge but popped up every now and then. I told her that it might be a while before they appear. "I'll wait," she said. "I did my fourth-grade bird report on Piping Plovers. I'm from New Hampshire and I came to Cape Cod to see a Piping Plover." It took 45 minutes for the birds to come back into view. When she saw the plovers in my scope, it was a moment of pure joy. To his credit, her father had amused his three-year-old son for the entire time so that she could get her bird.

Another summer I met a teenager who knew more about gulls in all of their plumages than I do. His mother told me that he became obsessed with birds in third grade when they studied birds with the Mass Audubon naturalist-in-residence at his school. Also, parent volunteers took the students birding monthly in the bird garden that the school had planted next to the third-grade wing. This sounded familiar. Sure enough, it was the Pine Hill School in Sherborn and I was that naturalist-in-residence. But it was his mother who started birding with him and made it a family hobby with his two younger brothers.

As Jaden's birding mentor, I must admit to stacking the deck with bird books, games, puzzles, flash cards, stuffed animals, t-shirts, and so forth. Many excellent natural history books about birds for preschoolers are available that are well written and beautifully illustrated. One of the most imaginative is *Roger Tory Peterson's Colors: A*

Book for Little Birdwatchers (Hoglund 2002). This little gem juxtaposes a picture of an unnamed bird—a recognizable species—with a block of color, progressing from simple to complex. Check out how Hoglund depicts Red-Bellied Woodpecker and Painted Bunting as squares of color. An excellent avian alphabet book is Jerry Pallotta's *The Bird Alphabet Book* (1987), which was a hit with my children as well as my grandson.

Jaden amassed a large collection of bird books for children, but he liked adult field guides, partly because we didn't find a comprehensive children's version. I gave him my oldest copy of *Peterson's Field Guide to Birds* to preserve the rest of my collection. When it comes to birds he has a photographic memory; show him a bird in the field or a field guide, even as a toddler he remembered its name and what it looked like. Instead of toy-store memory games, I bought him the "Birds of North America 100-piece Memory Card Game" with photographs of fifty pairs of bird species. Jaden and I started playing with 12 pairs of cards when he was three, but now we play with all 50 pairs. I hate to admit it, but Jaden beats me almost all of the time.



Jaden at Captiva, Florida.
Photograph by the author

Within the past two years, several field guides have been published for six- to twelve-year old birders that I've added to Jaden's library: *The Young Birder's Guide to Birds of North America* (*Peterson Field Guides*) (Thompson 2012), *National Geographic Kids Bird Guide to North America* (2013), and—for fun— *National Geographic Angry Birds: 50 True Stories of the Fed Up, Feathered and Furious* (2012). I also bought Jaden a copy of *Bird Log Kids: A Kid's Journal to Record Their Birding Experiences* (Brandt 1998) to get him in the habit of keeping field notes.

Backyard birds are fun to watch, but the real excitement is in the field. Jaden and I get out as often as possible. I work at Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary, which is only four miles from my house. The all-person's trail through the marsh was perfect for short walks with the stroller when Jaden was a baby, the right length for a toddler's attention span, and wonderful habitat for birding. I took him just about every week when he was a toddler and preschooler, and he often goes to Broadmoor on weekends with his family and friends. Broadmoor is his patch. I think it is just as rewarding for a child to have a sense of place as it is for adult birders. Here are some of the lessons Jaden has taught me about birding:

No matter how much your young birder loves birds, turtles always trump birds.

Turning over logs to find red-backed salamanders is de rigueur for a birding trip.

You're going to skip a lot of stones, chase pigeons in the park, and watch too many Mute Swans, Mallards, and Canada Geese. Although we might dismiss these species, children love them because they give us such good, close-up views. Use the time as a teachable moment to hone observation skills: listen to what the beak sounds like when the goose dabbles for plants underwater; look how the water beads up on the duck's feathers; watch how they paddle with their webbed feet; see how the babies swim in a line between their parents. To his credit, my discerning grandson exclaimed, "What is *that!*" the first time he saw a Wood Duck. He knew immediately that it was something special and beautiful; it is his favorite duck.

Bring plenty of snacks and water.

Keep the trip age appropriate and quit while your young sidekick is still enjoying the outing.

I've always been amazed at how focused and calm my physically active grandson gets when we are birding. Nevertheless, some lessons in birding etiquette were in order when Jaden was small: don't point and gesticulate wildly when you see the bird, keep your voice down even when you are excited, and you don't approach other people who are wearing binoculars and say, "Are you a birder? I'm a birder, too."

When he was four, I took Jaden to watch his first woodcock display. We could hear the birds *peent*-ing from the parking lot as we walked to the upper field at Nahanton Park in Newton. As excited as he was, Jaden stood stock-still when we reached the field. Several woodcocks flew up and spiraled down around us and one landed directly in front of Jaden's foot. He didn't move. We've returned every spring since then, but never again has a woodcock come that close.

Jaden's woodcock experience was enhanced when he discovered that he had added a life bird that his mother didn't have. The following year we took her with us. When Jaden's family moved to a new house, he told me that he heard woodcocks behind the backyard. It was private property to which I had no access, but the habitat reminded me of the fields at Ridge Hill Reservation near my house. I decided to check out Ridge Hill and found woodcocks in the meadows, the first time I'd thought to look for them in the town's conservation land in the 40 years I've lived in Needham.

Our woodcock adventure was the beginning of Jaden's serious birding. We have several regular birding spots in addition to Broadmoor where we can bird after school: Waban Pond at Wellesley College, the community gardens at Nahanton Park, Hammond Pond, and the Chestnut Hill Reservoir. We like Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge in Concord when we have more time. Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary is our favorite birding spot on Cape Cod, where Jaden likes to accompany me on my trail-naturalist shifts and is not shy about exhorting adults as well as children to look at the birds he spots.

How I envy Jaden's excellent eyesight and spotting ability! A common refrain on our outings is this: "Grandma, look at the Green Heron!" (Substitute almost any other species.)

Me: "Where?"

Jaden: "There, Grandma, near the lily pads."

Me: "Where near the lily pads?"

Jaden: "It's right there, Grandma, near the stick and the lily pads. Can't you see it yet?"

Invariably, he had no binoculars and I was relying on my Swarovskis. Jaden can identify ducks in the middle of a pond or the opposite shore of the river that I need my binoculars to verify as Mallards, Ring-necked Ducks, or Hooded Mergansers.

In general, I think that children can be keen observers with very little training and prodding. On birding trips to Broadmoor, I discourage elementary school groups from using binoculars because: 1) I don't want anything to get between the children and the outdoor experience, 2) we have many opportunities to see birds fairly close when we are quiet and observant, and 3) with certain age groups, there's a good chance that the kids will be swinging the binoculars at each other, which is a major distraction to say the least.

Even birding with just one or a couple of young children, I like to go binoculars-free with children under five. That's just about the age that they have the eye coordination to see a bird through a spotting scope, too. Toy binoculars for preschoolers don't work, and just discourage or frustrate budding birders. Jaden and I tried several options when he was younger. It was harder for him to find and focus on a bird with compacts than with full-size binoculars. I gave him my old 7 x 42s, but mostly he liked wearing them around his neck for effect, to let the world know that he was a birder. L.L. Bean sells 8 x 25 "Discovery Binoculars" for kids—made by Bushnell—that are inexpensive, sturdy, and fit well in small hands; they work well and were comfortable for Jaden and his younger cousin. I recommend these for the four- to eight-year-old crowd until they are ready for full-size binoculars or you are ready to invest \$100 or more. I bought Jaden his own adult binoculars for his eighth birthday.

As Jaden's knowledge of birds expands, he wants to see new species and new habitats. He enjoys the chase and the exhilaration of finding life birds. And therein lies the challenge of balancing expectations with the joy of spending time birding. When we went to Great Meadows to see the Black-bellied Whistling Duck, we were lucky to find it immediately. The birder next to us told us that it was his sixth time traveling to Great Meadows from Worcester and he finally saw the duck. Jaden was duly impressed with the man's perseverance and good humor. The lesson wasn't lost on him that we don't always find the bird we're looking for the first time, and sometimes we miss it completely.

Another important lesson for Jaden that day was that sometimes we cannot identify a bird with certainty. After the duck disappeared behind the lotus plants, we joined a

few birders who were trying to identify a bird as either a juvenile Snowy Egret or a juvenile Little Blue Heron. They debated back and forth, but reached no consensus. Perhaps it was a strange looking Snowy. Apparently, the discussion had been going on for a couple of days. The birders included Jaden by letting him look in their scopes and pointing out the features of the bird to him. Jaden was impressed that all of these grown-ups couldn't decide what the bird was. And if you are reading this article and remember including us in your discussion, I thank you for treating Jaden as an intelligent young birder.

In May 2013, I took Jaden to Mt. Auburn Cemetery for the first time. We went around 9:00 am, late enough to avoid the crowds because I wasn't sure how much difficulty or patience he'd have looking for warblers, and I didn't want to disturb other birders. I shouldn't have worried—he didn't want to leave the Dell. He recognized the song of a Black-throated Blue Warbler before he saw it. He spotted a Magnolia Warbler: “What's that little bird with the yellow breast and black stripes? There, Grandma, the bird right in the middle of the bush.” It eluded me completely. Jaden has definitely graduated to the big league of birding now.

I asked Jaden what he likes best about birding. He told me, “I like the way birds move. And I'm becoming interested in migration, too. But most of all, I like spending time with my grandma.”

Jaden hasn't officially met Keith Gagnon, the plumage prodigy featured in the article written by Jenette Kerr and Mark Faherty for this issue of *Bird Observer*. However, during the February 2013 school break, they had a chance encounter in Captiva, Florida. Jaden was near the pool watching a Great Blue Heron when another boy joined him. According to my daughter, the conversation went like this:

Keith: “That's a Great Blue Heron.”

Jaden: “I know it's a Great Blue Heron. I'm a birder.”

K: “I'm a birder, too. I bird at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary.”

J: “I bird at Wellfleet Bay, too.”

K: “I am the youngest birder in Massachusetts.”

J: “I'm from Massachusetts, too. How old are you?”

K: “Six.”

J: “Well, I'm seven, so I guess you are the youngest birder in Massachusetts.”

Formalities settled, the two boys went off to bird. I wouldn't be surprised if someday they serve on the MARC together. 🐦

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Marsha Salett is an associate editor of Bird Observer and a teacher/naturalist at Mass Audubon's Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary in South Natick.



WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR.

Seventeenth Report of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee

Matthew P. Garvey and Marshall J. Iliff

The seventeenth report of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (hereafter MARC or the committee) covers the evaluation of 79 records involving 57 species or subspecies. Sixty-nine records were accepted, an acceptance rate of 87%. All accepted records in this report were accepted unanimously on the first round of voting unless noted otherwise.

We present few details in this report. Much more narrative, evidence, and detail are available on the MARC website: www.maavianrecords.com. We ultimately endeavor to have full accounts by species of every record we've treated. Don't hold your breath—we've been working on that for a while! But we are making progress, and shorter annual reports enable us to focus our attention on the website and on dealing with the rich trove of historical records. Our long-term goal is to consistently provide robust and current information on each of Massachusetts's rarity records.

To this end, the committee has taken a small but relatively dramatic step to address a widespread "problem": how can volunteer records committees keep up with the pace of current records, not to mention make headway treating historic ones, when records of rare birds are increasing? MARC considered the increase in records (which we attribute in part to our policy of proactively seeking records to review), the stellar photos that accompany most records, and the recent rise of eBird and its sound structure for expeditious reviewing of records. The committee agreed that certain records will be presumed accepted by MARC once they are accepted in eBird—which means the regional eBird reviewer has accepted them—so long as such records are accompanied by a photograph. The committee will maintain a list of species that are particularly rare or difficult to identify. Records of these species and sight-only submissions will continue to go through the traditional review.

For each record presumed accepted under the new procedure, any member can require full review prior to the publication of the committee's next annual report. Even after publication, a member can request that any record accepted by the eBird procedure be reopened for full committee review as a first circulation by submitting a written statement as to why re-review is needed. Prior to publication of the annual report, the member need only state that full review is desired. The committee amended MARC's bylaws to accommodate the new procedure by adding the following to the "Voting" part of the bylaws: "The committee may have a process for expedited review using a compatible bird record review system (e.g., eBird) for judging certain records such that they are presumed accepted if they have passed that process. However, prior to publication in the annual report any committee member can require a record to go through the full voting procedure..."

With that bit of committee arcana behind us, let's focus on the records reviewed this past year. Two new species have been added to the State List. One was a doozy—a

Gray-tailed Tattler (*Tringa brevipes*) that Jeremiah Trimble and Simon Perkins found on October 18, 2012, just in time for the Nantucket Birding Festival. The discovery was dramatic. The bird was first located by call and then identified as a tattler as it flew away in the evening, with fears it would not reappear. Peter Trimble, Jeremiah's dad, finally documented the bird photographically the next day a good five miles away at Sesachacha Pond. Although a good number of festival participants and quick-on-the-draw chasers were able to catch up with this mind-numbingly unexpected "Sibe" shorebird the following day, it was not refound after the noon high tide on its third day. Hordes of twitchers arriving Sunday went home disappointed. Amazingly, a more obliging Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*) in Rhode Island arrived the previous weekend and stayed through these dates, so was a nice consolation prize for some. With Gray-tailed, Massachusetts now has two tattlers on the State List, which is two more than any other state on the East Coast!

The second species to become a first state record was unfortunately not chaseable, a Black-throated Sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*) that was a two-day wonder at a private yard in Brewster. Fortunately, stellar photographs were obtained to document this first accepted record. Reports from Deerfield on November 4, 1959, and from Amherst on April 12, 1963, may well have been correct but lacked convincing details and were not accepted by MARC (Petersen 1995). The latter individual occurred during an apparent incursion of the species to the eastern United States (Veit and Petersen 1993).

An additional interesting record was the Eurasian Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) that was discussed by Wright (1909). The account of the bird overwintering at the Boston Public Garden convinced the committee that the identification was correct, but the committee concurred with Wright that this was most likely an escapee. Nonetheless, this European thrush is migratory and has reached Quebec and Newfoundland, with the latter bird accepted as being of natural provenance.

Also notable in this report was the acceptance of two records of Sooty Fox Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca* [*unalaschensis* group]), both from Cape Cod. Greg Hirth and Fred Atwood found the first in 2010; John Young found the other in 2012. This subspecies may one day gain full species status and is a taxon heretofore unrecorded in Massachusetts, with only two prior records reported on the East Coast.

A similar "new taxon" was Massachusetts's first Western Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis calurus*), a dark morph found in Hadley by keen-eyed Hampshire College student Jacob Drucker. Additional, twitchable headline-grabbers were the second state record of Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) and third state record of Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*).

This report also includes a deletion from the State List. Jim Berry and Wayne Petersen unearthed Ludlow Griscom's field notes for Massachusetts's two records of White-tailed Eagle: one from the Merrimack River in the winter of 1935 and the other from the Merrimack nine winters later. (See Rines 2009 for MARC's rejection of a third record.) The views were distant and notes were brief, failing to rule out an immature Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), and Griscom himself expressed the

view that more support should be needed for such an incredible record (Griscom and Snyder 1955). The committee agreed not to accept the two records. With the gain of Gray-tailed Tattler and Black-throated Sparrow and the loss of White-tailed Eagle, the State List only moves up a single notch to 499, perching just below an historic milestone. East of the Mississippi River, only Florida has an official state list above 500.

The White-tailed Eagle records did present an important reminder on the importance of keeping and archiving records. Fortunately the Griscom notes allowed evaluation of the original merits of the record decades after the original sightings. The committee strives to provide future researchers and ornithologists—who will need to make their own determinations on what occurred where—with access to the primary evidence used to support each record. MARC's role is not simply to stamp something accepted or not; its more important function is to preserve the evidence so that sound decisions can be made based on evolving knowledge and standards.

The 2012–13 roster of MARC voting members was Marshall J. Iliff (chair), Ian Davies, Trevor Lloyd-Evans, Mark Faherty, Blair Nikula, Wayne R. Petersen, Scott Sumner, Jeremiah R. Trimble, and Richard R. Veit. Veit has since resigned from the committee and has been replaced by Tim Spahr, who has hit the ground running as one of the primary authors of our new species accounts. Matt Garvey continues as secretary and Ryan Doherty continues as webmaster.

In this truncated report, for each record of each species or taxon covered, we present basic statistics: the record number and where, when, and who submitted evidence. We also indicate whether the evidence provided was photographic (ph.), video (v.), audio (au.), or a written submission (†). As always, the committee strongly encourages written submissions even where photographs exist. When known, we try to credit the discoverer with an asterisk (*), especially if he or she has supplied evidence. The statistics in brackets for each species or taxon show the number of MARC-accepted records in this report, followed by the total number of MARC-accepted records for that species, followed by our estimate of total known records, often supplemented with a plus sign (+) where we know there are additional records but are not sure how many. We do not count or use a plus sign for 2011–2013 records that are currently in review. For a subspecies, the statistics refer to the species unless noted otherwise. Species not on the Review List do not receive a count.

Species taxonomy and nomenclature follow the seventh edition of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Check-list of North American Birds (AOU 1998) and supplements (Chesser et al. 2009, Chesser et al. 2010, Chesser et al. 2011, Chesser et al. 2012, Chesser et al. 2013). Subspecies nomenclature follows taxonomy of The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World (Version 6.8), available at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist>.

The list of species reviewed by the MARC (the Review List) is available at www.maavianrecords.com. Since well-documented records of Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*) are so rare (easily fewer than one every two years), the committee voted to add it to the review list. Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) was also added to

the supplemental list, based on the 2009 record (Garvey and Iliff 2011) that narrowly missed full acceptance. Please check out the full Review List and send us any evidence of new or old records you may have. We are particularly interested in records of the three species for which the committee has no physical supporting evidence: Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*), and Painted Redstart (*Myioborus pictus*).

The MARC website has much more information, including the MARC bylaws, past annual reports, and the State List. We are slowly but surely adding species accounts for all species on the Review List. We hope that birders in Massachusetts and beyond will use the list to help them understand the status and occurrence patterns of rarities in Massachusetts, which is what we're all about. Please help us by sending us your evidence of rare birds, whether you saw the bird today or years ago. Photos and notes in an attic or a personal journal are great, but please get a copy to us so we can share it with fellow enthusiasts in an organized, comprehensive, and easy-to-find manner.

ACCEPTED RECORDS (full narratives at www.maavianrecords.com)

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) [3,5,5]

2012-135: 1 at North Pool, PRNWR, Plum Island, *Essex*, 8/4/2012 [ph. Brian Harris*]. Second record for Essex County.

2012-63: 2 at Fenway War Memorials, Boston, *Suffolk*, 7/22/2012 [ph. A. Baker*]. First record for Suffolk County.

2012-64: 1 adult at Great Meadows NWR—Concord Unit, *Middlesex*, 7/3/2012 to 9/1/2012 [ph. R. Doherty*, ph. J. Forbes, ph. R. Schain]. Second record for Middlesex County.

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) [3,7,7]

2011-48: 1 adult at Bear Creek Sanctuary and Barry Park, Saugus, to Hood Playground, Lynn, *Essex*, 12/11/2011 to 12/14/2011 [ph. M. Iliff, ph. J. Offermann, P. Peterson*, ph. R. Schain]. First record for Essex County.

2011-49: 1 adult at Rutland, *Worcester*, 12/17/2011 to 12/18/2011 [ph. †K. Bourinot*, ph. Mark Lynch]. First record for Worcester County.

2012-83: 1 adult at Artichoke Reservoir, West Newbury, *Essex*, 10/20/12 [ph. G. Gove*]. Second record for Essex County.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*) [1,13,13+]

2011-50: 1 adult at Rogers Street to Upper Artichoke Reservoir, West Newbury, *Essex*, 11/6/11 to 1/3/12 [ph. P. Brown*, ph. R. Schain].

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) [1,12,12+; males on Review List only since 2010]

2011-51: 1 adult male at Manchester Reservoir and Lake Hiawatha/Falls Pond, Attleboro and North Attleboro, *Bristol*, 10/22/2011 to 2/29/2012 [ph. S. Glynn, J. Sweeney*, ph. R. Schain, ph. J. Trimble].

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) [2,19,19+]

2012-073: 1 at mouth of Merrimack River, Salisbury, and Newburyport, *Essex*, 3/4/2012 to 3/17/2012 [ph. †E. Labato*, ph. R. Schain]; accepted on second ballot (8-0).

2013-04: 1 at Race Point, Provincetown, *Barnstable*, 1/13/2013 [†E. Nielsen*].

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) [1,9,9+]

2012-113: 1 at Pochet Island, Orleans, *Barnstable*, 11/11/2012 [ph. C. Goodrich*]; accepted on second ballot (8-0).

Black-browed Albatross (*Thalassarche melanophris*) [1,3,3]

2012-84: 1 ad. off Martha's Vineyard (40 52.8092° N, 70 43.0115° W), *Dukes*, 12/2/2012 [ph. B. Gervalis*]. Photos clearly show it to be the expected subspecies: *T. m. melanophris*. First photo-documented record for Massachusetts and first record for Dukes County.

Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*)

2012-132: 1 picked up alive at Springfield, *Hampden*, 12/13/2012 [ph. unknown]. Third inland record (see Veit and Petersen 1993) and new for Hampden County.

Black-capped/Bermuda Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata/cahow*)

2006-63: 1 at Hydrographer Canyon, approximately 80 miles southeast of *Nantucket*, 7/6/2006 [†Tom Auer*]. Rejected as Black-capped on a third-round vote, (2-6), but accepted (7-1) as Black-capped Petrel/Bermuda Petrel.

Black-capped Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata*) [2,5,6]

2012-62: 1 of the 'white-faced' form off *Nantucket*, 39.998322° N, 70.770526° W, *Dukes*, 7/21/2012 [ph. J. P. Smith, ph. J. Trimble].

2012-87: 1 at Andrew's Point, Rockport, *Essex*, 12/21/2012 [† R. Heil*].

Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*) [1,2,3]

2012-107: 1 adult about 60 miles east of *Nantucket*, 6/13/2012, [H. Goyert*, † T. Johnson].

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) [1,3,5]

2012-131: 1 subadult, initially 40.3805° N, 70.7995° W, sallied forth and returned to ship periodically to Martha's Vineyard Sound, *Dukes*, 7/26/2012 to 7/28/2012 [ph. † M. Schrimpf*]. First for Dukes County.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) [1,12,16+]

2011-54: 1 at Morris Island Causeway, Barnstable, 10/28/2011 [M. Faherty*, ph. † R. Schain, ph. P. Trimble].

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) [3,6,20]

2011-55: 1 at Cuttyhunk Harbor, Gosnold, *Dukes*, 8/30/2011 to 9/12/2011 [ph. E. Hierta, † B. Slade, ph. B. Weir].

2012-66: 1 at Lobster Cove, Annisquam, to Gloucester Harbor, Gloucester, *Essex*, 6/5/2012, [ph. † J. Barber*, ph. R. Stymeist].

2012-67: 1 at Black Falcon Pier to Spectacle Island, Boston Harbor, *Suffolk*, 6/9/2012 to 6/30/2012 [ph. B. Mackey, ph. R. Schain].

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) [1,4,21]

2012-102: 1 juvenile at Morris Island Causeway, Chatham, *Barnstable*, 8/29/2012 [ph. D. Manchester*].

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) [1,14,14+]

2012-61: 2 adults at Kettle Island, Manchester, *Essex*, 5/19/2012 to 5/27/2012 [ph. J. Offermann, ph. S. Perkins, ph. † R. Schain*, ph. J. Trimble].

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) [1,10,10+]

2012-74: 1 at *Nantucket*, 5/31/2012 [S. Ainsworth*, K. Griswold, ph. V. Laux].

Red-tailed Hawk (Western) (*Buteo jamaicensis calurus*) [1,1,1]

2012-04: 1 immature dark morph at Hampshire College Farm and South Maple St., Hadley, *Hampshire*, 2/17/2012 to 3/12/2012 [ph. I. Davies, † J. Drucker*, ph. R. Schain, ph. L. Therrien]; accepted on second round (8-0). First state record of subspecies *calurus*.

Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*) [1,10,35+]

2012-75: 1 female at private beach on south side of Martha's Vineyard, *Dukes*, 5/18/2012 to 5/19/2012 [L. Johnson*, ph. L. McDowell].

Gray-tailed Tattler (*Tringa brevipes*) [1,1,1]

2012-116: 1 at Nantucket Harbor Creeks and Quaise Marsh, UMass Field Station, *Nantucket*, 10/18/2012 to 10/20/2012 [ph. au. T. Johnson, † S. Perkins, ph. au. v. † J. Trimble*, ph. P. Trimble]. First record for Massachusetts and first record for Lower 48 states away from immediate Pacific coast.

Bar-tailed Godwit (European) (*Limosa lapponica lapponica*) [2,14,23]

2012-71: 1 first-summer at Tuckernuck Island, *Nantucket*, 6/7/2012 to 6/9/2012 [ph. D. Veit*].

2012-72: 1 first-summer at South Beach, Chatham, *Barnstable*, 6/21/2012 to 9/15/2012 [ph. B. Nikula*, ph. R. Schain].

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) [2,5,9]

2012-81: 1 adult at South Beach, Chatham, *Barnstable*, 7/21/2012 to 7/22/2012 [ph. M. Iliff, ph. † B. Nikula*].

2012-82: 1 adult at South Beach, Chatham, *Barnstable*, 9/2/2012 to 9/8/2012 [ph. D. Anderson, v. M. Garvey, ph. B. Nikula*, ph. J. Trimble].

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*) [1,3,5+; males on Review List only since 2010]

2012-60: 1 adult at Tern Island/South Beach, Chatham, *Barnstable*, 8/24/2012 to 9/3/2012 [ph. D. Anderson, ph. E. Orcutt*, ph. R. Schain].

Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*)

2011-97: 1 at Herring River Conservation Area, Bells Neck Road, West Harwich, *Barnstable*, 12/31/2011 (or earlier) to 3/6/2012 [ph. R. Heil, ph. B. Nikula*]. First overwintering record for Massachusetts.

Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*) [1,5,5]

2012-59: 1 adult at Indian Neck, Wellfleet Harbor, *Barnstable*, 1/22/2012 [ph. M. Iliff, ph. B. Nikula*, ph. J. Trimble]. Second record for Barnstable and first photographed.

Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) [1,5,45+]

2011-96: 1 at Long Point Wildlife Refuge, Martha's Vineyard, *Dukes*, 8/31/2011 [† T. Spahr*]; accepted on second round (7-1).

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) [1,12,29+]

2012-76: 1 at Gooseberry Neck, Westport, *Bristol*, 8/23/2012 [ph. † M. Iliff*].

Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) [1,7,31+]

2012-133: 1 at Marblehead Neck, *Essex*, 11/7/2012 [ph. anonymous].

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) [1,19,19+]

2012-138: 1 adult male at Mt. Pleasant Square, Randolph, *Norfolk*, 7/25/2012 to 7/29/2012 [ph. † L. Buchanan*].

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) [1,7,7+]

2012-123: 1 juvenile at Parker River National Wildlife Refuge maintenance buildings ("The Warden's"), Plum Island, Newbury, *Essex*, 10/4/2012 to 10/5/2012 [† J. Berry, ph. M. Iliff, ph. E. Labato*, ph. R. Schain].

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) [2,14,22+]

2011-77: 1 juvenile at Fort Hill, Eastham, *Barnstable*, 11/11/2011 to 12/30/2011 [ph. J. Trimble*].

2012-92: 1 at Colburn St., Gloucester, *Essex*, 12/16/2012 to 12/22/2012 [ph. † M. Goetschkes, W. Miller*, B. Volkle*].

Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*) [1,5,5]

2012-115: 1 at Gay Head Cliffs, Aquinnah, Martha's Vineyard, *Dukes*, 10/23/2012 [ph. L. McDowell*]. First record for Dukes County.

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) [1,9,9+]

2012-126: 1 at Phillips Andover Academy, Andover, *Essex*, 9/11/2012 [† Bob Muldoon*].

Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*) [2,15,15+]

2011-69: 1 at Morris Island Causeway, Chatham, *Barnstable*, 10/25/2011 to 10/28/2011 [D. Manchester*, ph. R. Schain, ph. P. Trimble].

2012-122: 1 at South Monomoy Lighthouse Banding Station, Chatham, *Barnstable*, 10/5/2012 [N. Ernst*, ph. J. Junda*].

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) [1,2,2]

2013-10: 1 at Greenough Conservation Land, Carlisle, *Middlesex*, 3/17/2013 to 3/23/2013 [A. Ankers*, ph. I. Davies, ph. M. Iliff, ph. J. Lawson, ph. J. Trimble]. Second record for state and for Middlesex County.

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) [1,10,10+]

2013-08: 1 at paved road between Herring Cove and Province Lands Visitor Center, Provincetown, *Barnstable*, 2/18/2013 [ph. J. Taylor*].

Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora cyanoptera*)

2012-104: 1 at Richardi Reservoir, Braintree, *Norfolk*, 12/16/2012 to 12/22/2012 [G. d'Entremont*, ph. M. Iliff, A. O'Neill*, J. Young]. First December record for Massachusetts.

Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*)

2012-136: 1 at Estabrook Road, Carlisle, *Middlesex*, 12/26/2012 to 1/22/2013 [ph. † K. Harte*]. Unusually late.

Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*)

1883-01: 1 at Readville, *Suffolk*, 5/24/1883 [D. Blaney*, ph. J. Trimble (MCZ specimen)]. Only physically documented record for spring (cf. Garvey and Iliff 2012).

Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's) (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) [2,3,3+]

2011-70: 1 female at Rocky Point Road, Bourne, *Barnstable*, 12/17/2011 to

1/8/2012 [† M. Iliff*, ph. J. Trimble].

2012-93: 1 at Salisbury Beach Reservation, Salisbury, *Essex*, 12/7/2012 to 12/15/2012 [ph. T. Factor, ph. J. Offermann, ph. E. Nielsen, ph. † T. Spahr*].

Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Setophaga nigrescens*) [2,5,9+]

2012-121: 1 apparent immature male at South Monomoy Lighthouse Banding Station, Chatham, *Barnstable*, 10/6/2012 [N. Ernst*, ph. J. Junda*].

2013-03: 1 apparent immature male at James H. Luther Drive, Taunton, *Plymouth*, 1/3/2013 to 1/23/2013 [ph. R. Davenport*, ph. † M. Iliff, ph. G. Kessler, ph. J. Trimble].

Townsend's Warbler (*Setophaga townsendi*) [1,13,15]

2011-71: 1 at County Road, Ipswich, *Essex*, 12/24/2011 to 3/27/2012 [ph. † J. Berry*, ph. N. Berry, ph. P. Brown, ph. J. Offermann, ph. R. Schain, ph. B. Zaremba].

Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) [1,3,6]

2012-01: 1 at Eden and Lucia Roads, Loblolly Cove, Rockport, *Essex*, 1/26/2012 to 3/7/2012 [v. M. Garvey, ph. M. Iliff, ph. J. Trimble, † F. Vale*, † P. Vale*].

Black-throated Sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*) [1,1,1]

2012-65: 1 at Brewster, *Barnstable*, 4/20/2012 to 4/21/2012 [ph. J. Trimble]. First accepted record for Massachusetts.

Le Conte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*) [1,12,25]

2013-06: 1 at Shadyside Road, Concord, *Middlesex*, 2/12/2013 to 2/15/2013 [v. Bruce deGraaf, † M. Gilmore*, ph. J. Trimble].

Fox Sparrow (Sooty) (*Passerella iliaca* [unalaschensis Group]) [2,2,2]

2010-84: 1 at Indian Trail Road, Barnstable, *Barnstable*, 12/28/2010 [† F. Atwood*, † G. Hirth*]; accepted on second round (8-0). First record for Massachusetts of Sooty group.

2012-02: 1 at Bound Island Brook Road, Wellfleet, *Barnstable*, 1/15/2012 to 2/5/2012 [ph. M. Iliff, ph. R. Schain, ph. J. Trimble, ph. P. Trimble, † J. Young*]; accepted on second round (8-0). Second record for Massachusetts of Sooty group.

Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*) [1,6,16+]

2013-07: 1 at Periwinkle Lane, Ipswich, *Essex*, 2/2/2012 to 2/4/2012 [† ph. B. Flemer*].

Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon) (*Junco hyemalis* [oreganus Group]) [2,4,4+]

2012-03: 1 hatch-year male at Emer and Littlefield Lanes, Marlboro, *Middlesex*, 1/3/2012 to 1/11/2012 [D. Ely*, ph. M. Iliff, ph. R. Schain, ph. T. Spahr*].

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) [1,7,7+]

2011-72: 1 at Nonquit Road, Falmouth, *Barnstable*, 12/17/2011 to 12/30/2011 [C. Dalton*, ph. R. Schain, ph. J. Trimble].

Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*) [1,3,3]

2012-77: 1 immature male at Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, Wellfleet, *Barnstable*, 2/4/2012 to 3/2/2012 [ph. M. Faherty*, ph. R. Schain].

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) [2,8,8+]

2012-129: 1 female at Administration Building, Thompson Island, *Suffolk*, 12/16/2012 [v. M. Garvey*, ph. M. Iliff, † ph. N. Yusuff*]. First record for Suffolk County.

2012-141: 1 at Eldridge Parkway, Orleans, *Barnstable*, Feb. 2012 [ph. A. Ferrell*].

Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*) [1,6,14+]

2012-90: 1 female at Marblehead, *Essex*, 12/12/2012 to 12/28/2012 [† Jim Berry, ph. B. Graves*, ph. R. Heil].

Common Redpoll (rostrata) (*Acanthis flammea rostrata*) [1,1,1+]

2013-09— “Greater” Common Redpoll (rostrata)—1 at Andrew's Point, Rockport, *Essex*, 2/5/2013 [ph. † Tim Spahr]; accepted on second round (7-1).

Hoary Redpoll (*Acanthis hornemanni*) [1,10,10+]

2013-05: 1 at The Campus, Marlboro, *Middlesex*, 1/8/2013 [ph. † Tim Spahr*]; accepted on second round (7-1).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED (full narratives at www.maavianrecords.com)

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

2012-134: 1 at MacMillan Wharf, Provincetown, *Barnstable*, 12/8/2012. Rejected on third round (0-8).

Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

2011-068: 1 at Harding's Beach, Chatham, *Barnstable*, 3/26/2011. Rejected on third round (3-5).

White-faced Storm-Petrel (*Pelagodroma marina*)

2012-80: 1 at Oceanographer Canyon, 8/26/2012. Rejected on third round (1-7).

White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*)

1935-01: 1 at Newburyport Harbor, *Essex*, 2/10/1935. Rejected on first round (0-8).

1944-01: 1 at Carr's Island, Merrimack River, *Essex*, 1/15/1944 to 1/30/1944. Rejected on first round (0-8).

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)

2011-98: 1 at Niles Pond, E. Gloucester, *Essex*, 12/3/2011. Rejected on a third round (0-8).

Hoary Redpoll (*Acanthis hornemanni*)

2013-01: 1 at Westboro WMA, Westboro, *Worcester*, 1/2/2013. Rejected on third round (3-5).

2013-02: 1 at Westboro WMA, Westboro, *Worcester*, 1/4/2013. Rejected on third round (2-6).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED DUE TO QUESTIONABLE NATURAL ORIGIN

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*)

1998-32: 1 at South Elm Street Fields, West Bridgewater, Plymouth, 4/4/1998. Identification accepted; rejected on provenance issues on third round (6-2).

Eurasian Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)

1908-01: 1 male at Boston Public Garden, Boston, Suffolk, 10/4/1908 to at least 3/25/1909 (See Wright 1909). Identification accepted; rejected on provenance issues on first round (0-8).

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Tips for counting BIG flocks

Ian Worley, Vermont eBird

Have you ever seen a big group of blackbirds in a large tree and estimated, say, 300-400 ... only to have clearly 200 or more fly out of the tree, and it looks like nobody left? And then another couple hundred leave, and it still looks the same? Well, there are ways to get a better count.

Let's face it, no counting technique for a large flock will give exactly the number of birds, but we can get close, and often we can get really close. We'll look at two easily available tools for counting birds one-by-one when there are lots and lots of birds: **hand clicker-counters**, which can be purchased for less than \$10, and **your camera**.

Clicker-counters have many advantages over counting out loud or in your head. You won't lose track of where you are in the count or skip over numbers. Clicker-counting is much faster than oral or mental counting. You pay attention to each bird, which is an excellent way to scan for unexpected rarities. With two clickers, one in each hand, it is super simple to count two species at a time. You can easily pause at any time with no fear of forgetting where you were. You can sometimes carry on a conversation while clicking. But, always be sure to reset a clicker to zero before each count.

Counting from photographs of flocks often is better than trying to count individual birds when they are in flight, moving about, densely packed, or about to disappear. Photographs are most useful when the birds are large enough to clearly see individuals, and this may require multiple images. Overlapping areas can be marked with a pen, or the photos can be physically taped together or electronically stitched for the count.

There are several ways to count from photographs so you don't miss birds or accidentally double count. Again, using a clicker makes the count much faster and less subject to error. On prints, draw lines around groups of 20-30 birds for all the birds in the photo, and then put a check mark in each group once you have counted it. Use a sharp felt tip pen to mark each bird as you make your count. Open the image in editing software and use a drawing tool to put a dot on each bird as you count.

One disadvantage of photographs is that they undercount when birds are hidden behind other birds. In those situations, if the flock is stable enough to count them in real life do so; the movement of individual birds can be used to see and count the hidden birds. One count of a flock of Snow Geese at Dead Creek WMA from multiple enlarged photographs yielded 4907 birds, whereas the count of live birds was 5657. Thus some 750 birds were hidden from view in the still photographs ... birds that were behind other birds and birds that were walking in and out of shallow hollows.

There are several common situations where there are large flocks that can be counted.

Birds in leafless trees (e.g. Grackles, Waxwings, Snow Buntings). These can be upwards of a few thousand and typically are quite underestimated. A February count from multiple, taped-together photographs of a solitary tree in Ferrisburgh yielded 3922 Snow Buntings. Sometimes back-lighting makes for easier counting.

Birds in leafed-out trees (e.g. Red-winged Blackbirds, Robins). Who knows how many are hiding there! Wait until they begin to exit the tree and photograph them as they stream out. If you are far enough away, you'll be able to paste together the photos.

Birds on the ground, barn roofs, utility wires, ice (e.g. Geese, Gulls, Starlings, Swallows, Pipits). Take photos before they unexpectedly take flight. Clicker-count if convenient, or if photos will be hard to interpret, or if the birds are tightly packed and/or milling about. For birds on the ground, get as much height as you can in order to see behind the foreground birds.

Birds on the water (e.g. Geese, Ducks, Gulls, Cormorants). Most folks seem to have a really hard time with estimating numbers on the water. Photos can be useful or not depending on flock activity, wave action, heat distortion, distance, and your height above the water. For some species back-lighting helps, for others direct lighting is best (choose the best time of day, if possible). Clicker-counting is often much better than photographs since you can wait between clicks for birds that had dived, are hidden by waves, are masked by other birds, and so forth.

Birds in the air (e.g. Blackbirds, Bobolinks, Swallows, Starlings, waterfowl, shorebirds). Photographs are by far the better tool when the birds are not lost in background clutter. Get enough distance from the birds so that the entire flock or unit can be captured. When species IDs are important frontal lighting is best. For other species back-lighting or other silhouetting can help the counting.

Full article at <<http://ebird.org/content/vt/news/tips-for-counting-big-flocks/>>

ABOUT BOOKS

Dispatches from the Popular Front

Mark Lynch

Why Do Bluebirds Hate Me? More Answers to Common and Not-So-Common Questions About Birds and Birding by Mike O'Connor. 2013. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press.

Bird Homes and Habitats by Bill Thompson III. 2013. New York, New York: Houghton-Mifflin Harcourt Publishing.

"I don't feed the birds because they need me; I feed the birds because I need them." — Kathi Hutton

Have you noticed that everyone has a bird story? I'm not talking about birders. They are stuffed to their gizzards with nothing but bird stories. Instead I am talking about the non-hardcore person, somebody like your sibling, cousin, coworker, or first date. There are many people with an interest in birds, and most of them are not hardcore fanatics, the kind willing to cancel wedding plans at the last moment to tick a Spoonbill Sandpiper. Most people would just like to know *more* about birds. Not everything you could possibly know about birds and their identification, just a bit more practical information. These are people who are likely to feed birds and put up birdhouses and perhaps go on an occasional birding trip. But they don't want to make a lifestyle choice out of it. They just want to enjoy birds more and know a little more about them.

Most of the books I usually review here do not answer the common questions that most people have about birds. The niche market for bird books today tends to include academic tomes expounding on every possible thing known about identifying shorebirds, warblers, or seabirds. Or they are publications about feather wear or they are large expensive coffee table books on extinct birds. These books are useful and informative in their way, but they can be dry and are often no fun. Is birding all about identification? How many times did you laugh reading the new warbler guide? How much did the new seabird guide tell you about making your yard more bird friendly? What recent identification guide told you everything you wanted to know (but were afraid to ask) about *That Quail Robert?* (That is a book you have likely seen many times but would never deign to read because, well, you know, serious birders just wouldn't read *that kind* of book). The following two books are just as cool and informative as any seabird guide, but they are also aimed at a more general public interested in birds.

I'm happy you saw your first Red-breasted Nuthatches, but I wish you had picked a different bird to ask about. I like Red-breasted Nuthatches as much as the next person but it's the name I hate. Couldn't you have asked me about a Mallard or a Killdeer or some other bird with a shorter name? Why did you have to pick a name with twenty characters in it? That's a lot of extra typing. And don't get me started on the hyphen." (*Why Do Bluebirds Hate Me?* pp.43-44)

Mike O'Connor is an institution. He opened the Birdwatcher's General Store on Cape Cod in 1983, long before other birding stores existed. His store still caters not

WHY DO BLUEBIRDS HATE ME?



More Answers to Common
and Not-So-Common
Questions about Birds and Birding
Mike O'Connor
author of Why Don't Woodpeckers Get Headaches?

only to hardcore birders but also to anyone looking to buy a tee shirt or coffee mug with a bird on it. I swear the “put a bird on it” bit from the IFC comedy series *Portlandia* had the Bird Watcher’s General Store in mind. In those dark early years, few thought that a store solely devoted to things birdy and birding was a wise business model. But what made it work from the beginning was Mike himself. Easy going, fun to talk with, a bit of a wise guy and slacker, but also passionate about birds, Mike is the kind of person you wish was on all your birding trips as the perfect counterpoint to all the dour no-fun listing fanatics. He has the kind of drive and personality that can make a niche market store a success. Some years ago he began penning a birding column for the *Cape Codder*, answering questions sent in to the paper. His earlier book

Why Don't Woodpeckers Get Headaches? was also a compilation of those columns. *Why Do Bluebirds Hate Me?* is a second collection.

The range of questions that Mike answers reveals the diversity of interest there is in birds. Some readers ask basic questions like “Why aren’t chickens pictured in field guides?” (pp. 45–46). Others ask the familiar questions we all have fielded at one time or other: Why are there no birds at my feeder? Where are all the Blue Jays? Are there birds that eat bees? What is a flock of turkeys called? Still other questions focus on unusual observations:

Dear Bird Folks,

This sounds unbelievable, but every morning several Turkey Vultures land on my back deck. They peck at my sliding door, ripping the screen and pulling off the rubber gasket. I’ve called several places, but no one believes me. Do you believe me? Do you have any advice? Besides the damage to my house, these huge vultures are starting to creep me out. Shirley, Franklin, MA. (pp.110-111)

Mike deftly fields questions about bird species that are found all over the world, like the Kookaburra and Pyrrhuloxia. People write in to also ask advice about places to bird like Central Park. There are many questions about feeding birds and housing birds. Mike’s answers are always well researched and helpful, but also couched in lots of humor. His sense of fun combined with his infectious enthusiasm for the subject works well in these short pieces. It is obvious to the reader that he loves birds and birding and is having fun with it. He often pokes fun at his efforts writing the column:

Each week I spend countless hours working on answers to the questions I receive. First, there’s lots of time spent doing research; then more time spent double and triple-checking each fact, or something like that. But all that hard work is nothing compared to the effort I had to put into writing about Nēnēs.

Do you have any idea how long it took me to figure out how to write an *e* with two dots over it? (p.91)

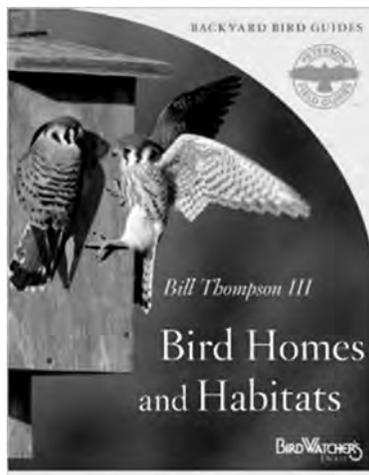
Recently I got to watch Mike speaking at a local bookstore promoting *Why Do Bluebirds Hate Me?* He regaled the audience with stories and answered their questions with humor, understanding, and enthusiasm. Many people had questions about bluebirds. For Mike, there is no such thing as a stupid question. People are interested in birds at their own level, and Mike is there to encourage that interest. The audience had a great time, myself included. Best of all, their interest in birds was encouraged.

Why Do Bluebirds Hate Me? is a funny and informative book. True, it is aimed at a general “interested in birds” audience, but I bet even the most rabid birding fanatic will learn a few things and be entertained along the way. I certainly was. For one thing, I learned all about that damned quail named Robert.

Everyone knows that if you want birds to come to your yard, you put out a bird feeder, or a birdhouse, and the birds will show up. Simple, right? Well, yes and no. First of all, there are a zillion other things you can do to enhance the attractiveness of your landscape to birds and wildlife. Second, what if the birds you attract are not the ones you want? Anyone can put mixed bird seed in a tube feeder and get house sparrows and rock pigeons in droves. But these species are non-native and often drive more desirable, native songbirds away. What then?” (p.xiii, *Bird Homes and Habitats*)

Bill Thompson III is an indefatigable booster for birding. He is the editor of *Bird Watcher's Digest*, one of the great small publications about birding. Bill seems to be always on the move: speaking at some birding conference, leading a trip, or talking up the Midwest Birding Symposium. He has also written a number of books about birds and birding. He authored one of my favorite field guides, *The Young Birder's Guide to Birds of North America*. Thompson managed to write a field guide that perfectly captures the attitudes and language of the pre-teen and young teenage birder thanks to considerable help from his daughter Phoebe and her classmates.

Bird Homes and Habitats is the third in a series of backyard bird guides written by Bill. The other two titles include: *Hummingbirds and Butterflies* and *Identifying and Feeding Birds*. Together these three books comprise an indispensable “how to” library for better enjoyment at home of birds and butterflies. Bill writes on these topics based on considerable experience. The home of Bill Thompson and Julie Zickefoose in Whipple, Ohio, in the Appalachians is a working laboratory dedicated to enjoying and attracting birds. A number of photographs from their beautiful spread can be found throughout this book.



Bird Homes and Habitats covers all the bases. The book begins with instructions on how to make your backyard, no matter how small, a more bird friendly place by looking in detail at “The Four Things That All

Birds Need” (pp.5–12): food, water, shelter, and a place to nest. There are chapters on how to provide natural places for birds to nest as well as the erection, maintenance, and monitoring of nest boxes. Bill describes in detail nest boxes for specific species like Tree Swallows, bluebirds, phoebes, and Wood Ducks. A “Frequently Asked Questions” section (pp.111–119) answers questions like “Can a single parent raise the nestlings?” (p.112) and “Why are there no tenants in my nest boxes?” (p.114). At the back of the book are detailed diagrams on how to build your own nest boxes.

My favorite section of the book is *Chapter 6: The Birdy Backyard All-Stars* (pp.120–164):

In the spirit of drawing inspiration from another’s effort, this chapter profiles several bird gardeners from across North America. I’m calling these folks the Birdy Backyard All-Stars because each one of them has devoted a lot of time and effort to turning their property into bird-friendly habitat. (p.120)

People who have managed to attract a wide variety of species to their backyard are profiled. They explain what they have done to their homes to turn them into bird mini-sanctuaries. There are a few impressive properties, but many of these people own what I would call typical backyards. In each case, the people bought a place and then improved it considerably to attract birds. Each story is accompanied by color photographs, some including fascinating before and after shots. Because these All Stars are from across the country, most climates are covered as well as the plants that will tolerate those regions.

Bill Thompson has an easy-going writing style that is appealing and reassuring even when discussing rats at your feeders or raccoons and rat snakes at your bluebird nest boxes. *Bird Homes and Habitats* answers most of the questions you could have about bird feeding and birds nesting on your property. It is a wonderfully practical book that will inspire many readers to break out the gardening tools and get at it. 🐦

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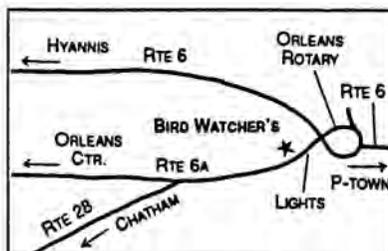
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BIRD SIGHTINGS

July/August 2013

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

July 2013 was hotter than average, with a high of 99° in Boston on July 19. The rainfall total of 3.61 inches was just a bit above average; the most in any one day was 1.76 inches on July 23. The temperature for August was below normal with a high of 89° on August 21. Rainfall in Boston totaled 1.84 inches, 1.51 inches below normal; the most rain in any one day was 1.62 inches on August 9.

R. Stymeist

WATERFOWL THROUGH ALCIDS

The Brookline Bird Club's "Extreme Pelagic" trip on August 3 produced six **Audubon's Shearwaters** and eight **Band-rumped Storm-Petrels** on Hydrographer Canyon and two unidentified **Skua species** on Nantucket Shoals.

On a whale watch out of Boston a **Brown Booby** was photographed on the southwest corner of Stellwagen Bank on July 7. It may have been in distress, as it landed on the third deck of the boat and stayed until the boat returned to Boston Harbor, where it remained overnight. The Environmental Police came to evaluate the situation in the morning, but the bird had flown.

A **Swallow-tailed Kite** was photographed on Chappaquiddick on August 21. Although this species is rare in the state, it is becoming annual with most sightings occurring from mid-April through June. There have been two known September sightings, but this may be the first August sighting.

The three Sandhill Cranes in Worthington through May and June continued during July and August. Although there was no evidence of breeding, they may have been checking out the area for the future. Two Sandhill Cranes were seen also in Cumberland Farms on July 24. Because this species has been reported regularly in Plymouth County over the past few years, birders should be alert for possible breeding here.

A group of birders disappointed, by the cancellation of a pelagic trip out of Plymouth, decided to check out Plymouth Beach. Late in the day they heard an odd call overhead, and as the bird settled onto the flats, they were astonished (and thrilled) to see it was a **Pacific Golden-Plover**. This is only the second record of this species for Massachusetts (the first was on Plum Island in the spring of 2002) and one of only a handful for the East Coast of the United States.

A Ruddy Turnstone made a rare inland visit to Chestnut Hill Reservoir on July 29. A Sanderling in Longmeadow on August 25 was only slightly less unexpected. A **Curlew Sandpiper** is a rare visitor to the Massachusetts coast, so an individual discovered on Plum Island on August 11 was a treat. Sadly, it disappeared the following day.

A **Sabine's Gull** was photographed on Coast Guard Beach in Eastham on August 14, an uncommon sighting on land. Even offshore, Sabine's Gull is so uncommon that photographing three individuals on Stellwagen Bank on August 26 was exciting. A **Black-headed Gull** at Manomet on July 31 was noteworthy, as were Little Gulls from several locations. Two Laughing Gulls in Longmeadow on August 26 were unusual for an inland location.

On July 31, a banded **Sandwich Tern** was photographed on South Beach in Chatham. On August 21, a Roseate Tern researcher from USGS observed the banded individual at Nauset Marsh and was able to read the band. He was stunned to read the words "British Trust," and he eventually discovered that the bird was banded as a chick on Coquet Island in Northumberland,

England, in 2002. In England, the New World subspecies of Sandwich Tern (“Cabot’s Tern”) is considered a distinct species from the Old World “Eurasian” Sandwich Tern. The North American Classification Committee considered a split in Sandwich Tern last year but decided to wait. Eurasian Sandwich Tern had never been confirmed in North America prior to this sighting. Based on plumages shown in photographs, there were at least three individual Sandwich Terns on outer Cape Cod in August.

A **South Polar Skua** was photographed on a pelagic trip out of Chatham on July 5. An adult **Long-tailed Jaeger** was photographed on August 7 flying over Nauset Marsh. This species is rare offshore and almost unheard-of over land.

An **Atlantic Puffin** was spotted from a ship returning to Plymouth from Stellwagen Bank on July 28. A puffin is always unusual in Massachusetts waters, but exceptionally so in July.

M. Rines

Brant				Black Scoter (continued)			
7/11	Eastham	3	S. Motyl	8/24	N. Truro	10	B. Nikula
Wood Duck				8/29	P.I.	50	T. Wetmore
7/15	GMNWR	57	A. Bragg#	Long-tailed Duck			
7/17	Longmeadow	98	M. Moore	7/1-4	P.I.	1	T. Wetmore
8/18	Northfield	49	M. Lynch#	Hooded Merganser			
Gadwall				8/11	S. Egremont	1	M. Lynch#
7/8	Bolton Flats	2	J. Johnson	8/12	GMNWR	1	A. Bragg#
7/9	P.I.	67	R. Heil	8/12	WBWS	1	F. Atwood#
7/21	Rowley	ad + 8 yv	M. Lynch#	8/28	Lenox	1	R. Laubach
American Wigeon				Common Merganser			
7/22	P.I.	1	S. Sullivan	8/10	IRWS	2	K. Rathinasamy
American Black Duck				Red-breasted Merganser			
7/9	P.I.	5 ad, 5 yuv	R. Heil	7/11	Dennis	1	P. Flood
7/19	Acoaxet	7	M. Lynch#	8/6	P.I.	1	T. Spahr#
7/28	Squantum	14	G. d’Entremont	Ruddy Duck			
Blue-winged Teal				7/8	Winthrop	1 m	P. Ruvido
7/2	N. Monomoy	1	E. Orcutt	7/24	Chestnut Hill	1	R. Doherty
7/22	GMNWR	2	C. Winstanley#	Northern Bobwhite			
8/17	S. Monomoy	17	B. Lagasse	7/11	WBWS	1	M. Faherty
8/23	P.I.	4	S. Sullivan	7/12	Norwell	12	W. + A. Childs
8/29	Ipswich	9	M. Brengle	8/3	Chatham	1	G. d’Entremont#
Northern Shoveler				Ring-necked Pheasant			
8/17	S. Monomoy	2	B. Lagasse	8/31	Northfield	1	M. Lynch#
8/23	P.I.	1	T. Wetmore	Ruffed Grouse			
Northern Pintail				7/13	Colrain	1	M. Lynch#
8/17	S. Monomoy	12	B. Lagasse	7/27	New Salem	4	J. Forbes
8/30	P.I.	2	R. Schain	Common Loon			
Green-winged Teal				7/13	P.I.	10	T. Wetmore
7/9	P.I.	10	R. Heil	7/16	N. Truro	15	B. Nikula
8/6	GMNWR	8	C. Winstanley#	7/17	Chatham (S.B.)	10	B. Nikula
8/24	Washington	10	J. Pierce	7/25	Wellfleet	14	S. Perkins
8/26	Ipswich	27	J. Berry	8/27	Wachusett Res.	16	M. Lynch#
Ring-necked Duck				Pied-billed Grebe			
8/13	Cambr. (F.P.)	1	J. Trimble	7/29	Springfield	1	B. Hodgkins
Common Eider				8/6	GMNWR	1	C. Winstanley#
8/20	Gloucester	70	J. Berry#	Horned Grebe			
8/24	N. Truro	110	B. Nikula	8/18	Duxbury B.	1	R. Bowes
8/24	Westport	17	M. Lynch#	8/27	Wachusett Res.	1	M. Lynch#
8/27	P.I.	17	T. Wetmore	8/28	P.I.	1	T. Wetmore
Surf Scoter				Cory’s Shearwater			
7/31	Chatham (S.B.)	6	B. Nikula	7/5, 8/18	E. of Chatham	5, 8	B. Nikula#
8/24	N. Truro	2	B. Nikula	7/25	P’town	24	B. Nikula
White-winged Scoter				7/25	Wellfleet	110	S. Perkins
7/14	Chatham	12	B. Nikula	8/1	N. Truro	15	B. Nikula
8/3	Lynn B.	14	R. Stymeist	8/3	Nantucket Sh.	17	BBC (I. Giriunas)
8/24	P’town	8	B. Nikula	Great Shearwater			
Black Scoter				7/5, 8/30	E. of Chatham	300, 30	B. Nikula#
7/14	Chatham	5	B. Nikula	7/25	P’town	42	B. Nikula
7/27	Wellfleet	20	S. Perkins	7/26	Wellfleet	15	S. Perkins

Great Shearwater (continued)									
7/28	Off Truro	1500		B. Nikula#					
8/3	Nantucket Sh.	609		BBC (I. Giriunas)					
Sooty Shearwater									
7/5, 8/30	E. of Chatham	1 500, 230		B. Nikula#					
7/25	Wellfleet	4210		S. Perkins					
7/25	P'town	213		B. Nikula					
7/25, 8/10	N. Truro	8, 1		B. Nikula					
7/28	Off Truro	500		B. Nikula#					
Manx Shearwater									
7/5, 8/18	E. of Chatham	3, 100		B. Nikula#					
7/11	Revere B.	16		R. Stymeist					
7/25	Wellfleet	31		S. Perkins					
7/28	Off Truro	40		B. Nikula#					
8/1	N. Truro	200		B. Nikula					
8/24	P'town	32		B. Nikula					
Audubon's Shearwater									
8/3	Hydrographer C.	6		BBC (I. Giriunas)					
Wilson's Storm-Petrel									
7/3	Gloucester (E.P.)	20		J. Hoye#					
7/4	Duxbury B.	8		R. Bowes					
7/5, 8/18	E. of Chatham	1200, 750		B. Nikula#					
7/29	Stellwagen	72		MAS (D. Larson)					
8/3	Nantucket Sh.	769		BBC (I. Giriunas)					
Leach's Storm-Petrel									
8/3	Hydrographer C.	43		BBC (I. Giriunas)					
Band-rumped Storm-Petrel									
8/3	Hydrographer C.	8		BBC (I. Giriunas)					
Brown Booby									
7/7-8	Stellwagen-Boston	1 ad		ph NE Aquarium					
Northern Gannet									
thr	Stellwagen	57		max v.o.					
7/16, 8/5	P'town	40, 185		B. Nikula					
7/25	Wellfleet	35		S. Perkins					
8/29	P.I.	25		T. Wetmore					
8/30	E. of Chatham	35		B. Nikula#					
Double-crested Cormorant									
8/3	Marion	188		M. Lynch#					
8/3	Chatham (S.B.)	450		SSBC (GdE)					
8/24	N. Scituate	360		G. d'Entremont					
Great Cormorant									
7/8	Duxbury B.	1		R. Bowes					
7/19	Acoaxet	2		M. Lynch#					
8/24	N. Scituate	2		G. d'Entremont					
American Bittern									
7/4	Konkapot IBA	3		M. Lynch#					
Least Bittern									
7/3	Wellfleet	1		S. Broker					
7/20	GMNWR	3		J. Forbes					
Great Blue Heron									
7/19	P.I.	30		S. McGrath#					
7/22	GMNWR	38		A. Bragg#					
Great Egret									
7/24	Westport	50		P. Champlin					
8/2	Ware	7		L. Therrien					
8/11	Quabbin (G22)	7		B. Lafley					
8/22	P.I.	69		S. Mroz					
8/25	N. Monomoy	12		B. Nikula#					
Snowy Egret									
7/31	Revere	35		P. Peterson					
8/11	Quabbin (G22)	3		B. Lafley					
8/25	N. Monomoy	55		B. Nikula#					
8/31	P.I.	120		S. Arena#					
Little Blue Heron									
8/4	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	2		B. Cassie					
8/17	W. Springfield	1		A.+ L. Richardson					
8/26	Ipswich	4		J. Berry					
8/29	Manchester	10		C. Lapite					
Tricolored Heron									
7/1-18	P.I.	1		v.o.					
7/25	Nantucket	1		V. Laux					
7/31	Manchester	1		C. Lapite					
Cattle Egret									
7/6	Sandwich	1		D. Manchester					
Green Heron									
7/24	W. Newbury	24		S. McGrath#					
7/29	Amherst	12		L. Therrien					
8/11	Mashpee	5		M. Keleher					
8/24	Belchertown	8		L. Therrien					
8/25	Fairhaven	7		G. d'Entremont					
Black-crowned Night-Heron									
8/17	Dorchester	4		P. Peterson					
8/22	Eastham	43		D. Clapp					
8/26	GMNWR	5		A. Bragg#					
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron									
7/7	Hyannis	1		B. Slott					
7/22	P.I.	1		S. Sullivan					
8/5	Westport	1		P. Champlin					
8/27	E. Boston (B.I.)	1		A. Trautmann					
8/28	Eastham	1		B. Lagasse					
Glossy Ibis									
7/7	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	14		J. Guion					
7/15	Cambridge	26		S. Moses					
7/21	Acoaxet	32		S. Arena#					
7/31	Ipswich	12		J. Berry					
8/16	P.I.	16		R. Stymeist					
Black Vulture									
7/4	Russell	1		J. Zepko					
7/4	Great Barrington	1		M. Lynch#					
7/8	Sheffield	2		R. Laubach					
8/7	Westfield	2		J. Zepko					
Turkey Vulture									
8/11	Sheffield	13		M. Lynch#					
8/18	Barre	72		M. Lynch#					
8/28	Westfield	50		S. Kellogg					
Osprey									
7/9	P.I.	13		R. Heil					
7/19	Westport	15		pr n M. Lynch#					
7/19	Acoaxet	12		pr n M. Lynch#					
8/3	Marion	35		M. Lynch#					
8/5	Nantucket	10		V. Laux					
Swallow-tailed Kite									
8/21	Chappaquiddick	1		ph K. Warburton					
Bald Eagle									
7/20	S. Quabbin	2		ad M. Lynch#					
8/31	Easthampton	2		B. Zajda#					
Northern Harrier									
7/17	Chatham (S.B.)	1		B. Nikula					
7/24	Duxbury B.	2		R. Bowes					
7/25	Nantucket	8		V. Laux					
8/30	P.I.	4		J. Berry#					
8/31	M.V.	3		S. Whiting					
Sharp-shinned Hawk									
8/3	Wellfleet	2		SSBC (GdE)					
8/20	Hardwick	3		M. Lynch#					
8/24	Mt. Wachusett	2		Hawkcount (SO)					
Cooper's Hawk									
8/3	Mattapoisett	3		M. Lynch#					
8/7	GMNWR	2		R. Stymeist#					
8/16	P.I.	2		P. + F. Vale					
8/31	DWWS	3		SSBC (GdE)					
Northern Goshawk									
7/14	Upton	1		ad N. Paulson					
7/17	Boxford	1		juv J. Berry#					
Red-shouldered Hawk									
8/31	DWWS	4		SSBC (GdE)					
Broad-winged Hawk									
8/11	Mt. Washington	5		M. Lynch#					
8/15	Peabody	4		S. Riley					
8/26	GMNWR	3		A. Bragg#					
8/27	Mt. Wachusett	4		Hawkcount (RC)					
Clapper Rail									
7/1-21	Mashpee	2		ph M. Keleher#					
8/4	Wellfleet	3		ad + 5 yg S. Broker					

Least Sandpiper				Black-headed Gull			
7/9	P.I.	147	R. Heil	7/31	Manomet	1 IS	B. Harris
7/20, 8/18	Duxbury B.	76, 76	R. Bowes	Little Gull			
7/21	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	100	S. Arena#	7/4	P.I.	1 imm	S. Sullivan
8/18	Chatham (S.B.)	130	M. Faherty	8/10-17	Newbypt H.	1 imm	S. Grinley#
8/26	Longmeadow	155	S. Surner	8/19	Chatham (S.B.)	1	E. Orcutt
White-rumped Sandpiper				8/31	Dennis	1	P. Flood
7/7	Chatham (S.B.)	3	B. Nikula	Laughing Gull			
7/12-8/31	P.I.	60 max	v.o.	7/20	Plymouth B.	400	BBC (GdE)
7/14	Plymouth B.	7	D. Bernstein#	8/1	P'town	475	B. Nikula
7/15	Chatham (S.B.)	50	J. Hoye#	8/20	Westport	200	P. Champlin
8/18	Easthampton	1	L. Therrien	8/26	Longmeadow	2	S. Surner
8/24	Ipswich	11	R. Heil	8/29	P.I.	10	T. Wetmore
Baird's Sandpiper				8/30	E. of Chatham	400	B. Nikula#
8/16-31	P.I.	1	v.o.	Lesser Black-backed Gull			
8/17	W. Springfield	1	T. Gagnon#	7/5	E. of Chatham	1	B. Nikula
8/25	Nantucket	2	V. Laux	7/20	Plymouth B.	2	M. Iliff#
8/25	Longmeadow	1	J. Hutchison	8/17	W. Tisbury	17	S. Perkins
Pectoral Sandpiper				8/18	Duxbury B.	1	R. Bowes
7/12-8/31	P.I.	7 max	v.o.	8/25	N. Monomoy	2	B. Nikula
8/15	GMNWR	5	D. Swain	Least Tern			
8/24	Ipswich	6	R. Heil	thr	P.I.	200 pr	USFWS
8/26	Longmeadow	3	B. Bieda	7/11	Winthrop B.	16	R. Stymeist
Dunlin				7/14	Plymouth B.	100	D. Bernstein#
7/7	Chatham (S.B.)	10	B. Nikula	7/17	Chatham (S.B.)	250	B. Nikula
7/13	Duxbury B.	1	R. Bowes	8/5	Nantucket	350	V. Laux
7/30-8/31	P.I.	1	D. Chickering#	Caspian Tern			
Curlew Sandpiper				7/9	Chatham	3	E. Banks
8/11-12	P.I.	1	D. Anderson + v.o.	8/12	Eastham	1	D. Clapp
Stilt Sandpiper				8/18	Newbypt H.	4	S. Arena
thr	P.I.	9 max	v.o.	8/28	P.I.	2	S. Riley
7/24	S. Monomoy	3	B. Prescott	Black Tern			
8/4	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	3	B. Cassie	7/17, 8/22	Westport	4, 4	P. Champlin
8/9	GMNWR	17	W. Hutcheson	7/21	P.I.	1	J. Keeley#
8/24	Longmeadow	1	B. Bieda#	7/24	S. Monomoy	80	B. Prescott
8/29	Ipswich	3	M. Brengle	8/5	Nantucket	60	V. Laux
Buff-breasted Sandpiper				8/20	Stellwagen	3	T. Robben
8/30	Chappaquiddick	1	P. Gilmore#	Roseate Tern			
Short-billed Dowitcher				thr	P.I.	23 max 7/26	v.o.
7/21, 8/16	Chatham (SB)	1200, 600	B. Nikula	7/20	Plymouth B.	16	M. Iliff#
7/20, 8/18	Duxbury B.	59, 234	R. Bowes	7/27	Nantucket	200	V. Laux
7/20	Plymouth B.	136	M. Iliff#	8/3	Marion	15	M. Lynch#
7/27	Nantucket	200	V. Laux	8/16	Chatham (S.B.)	500	B. Nikula
8/4	GMNWR	2	D. Swain	Common Tern			
Long-billed Dowitcher				7/14	Medford	2	A. Brandt
7/21-8/31	P.I.	1	v.o.	7/20	Plymouth B.	750	BBC (GdE)
Wilson's Snipe				7/25	Nantucket	700	V. Laux
8/6	GMNWR	5	C. Winstanley#	7/26	P.I.	200	R. Heil
8/25	Washington	2	J. Pierce	8/1	N. Truro	1000	B. Nikula
Wilson's Phalarope				8/3	Marion	150	M. Lynch#
7/24	P.I.	1	D. Chickering#	8/16	Chatham (SB)	4000	B. Nikula
8/8	E. Boston (B.I.)	1	R. Stymeist	Arctic Tern			
8/16	Chatham (S.B.)	1	B. Nikula	7/8	Plymouth B.	1 IS	C. Floyd
8/29	Ipswich	1	M. Brengle	7/9	P.I.	1	R. Heil
Red-necked Phalarope				7/21	Chatham (S.B.)	6	B. Nikula
8/3	Nantucket Sh.	6	BBC (I. Giriunas)	8/20	Stellwagen	1 ad	T. Robben
8/11, 18	E. of Chatham	5, 3	B. Nikula#	Forster's Tern			
8/20	Stellwagen	6	J. Berry#	8/3	Duxbury B.	1	R. Bowes
8/24-26	Longmeadow	1	B. Bieda#	8/13	P.I.	2	R. Heil
Red Phalarope				8/20	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	18	P. Champlin
8/3	Nantucket Sh.	5	BBC (I. Giriunas)	Royal Tern			
Sabine's Gull				7/6	Sandwich	1	D. Manchester
8/15	Eastham (CGB)	1 ph	J. Gahagan	7/10	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	1	M. Bornstein#
8/26	Stellwagen	3 ph	J. Mittermeier	8/8	Orleans	1	B. Lagasse
Bonaparte's Gull				8/13	Dennis	1	P. Flood
7/9	GMNWR	1	G. Gove	Sandwich Tern			
7/26	P.I.	14	R. Heil	8/15-26	Nauset	1-3	B. Lagasse#
8/4	Nahant	170	L. Pivacek	8/28	Orleans	1	C. Goodrich
8/6	Wachusett Res.	4	M. Lynch#	Black Skimmer			
8/31	Newbypt H.	250	S. Arena#	7/3	Plymouth B.	6	P. Briggs
				7/24	Chatham (S.B.)	5	D. Clapp

Black Skimmer (continued)				Parasitic Jaeger (continued)			
8/12 Edgartown	4	N. Bonomo		8/11 E. of Chatham	2	B. Nikula#	
South Polar Skua				8/24 P'town	3	B. Nikula	
7/5 E. of Chatham	1 ph	B. Nikula#		Long-tailed Jaeger			
Skua species				8/7 Orleans	1	K. Yakola#	
8/3 Nantucket Sh.	2	BBC (I. Giriunas)		Razorbill			
Pomarine Jaeger				7/13 off P'town	1 sub ad	BBC (GdE)	
7/26 Wellfleet	1	S. Perkins		7/21 Chatham (S.B.)	1	B. Nikula	
7/28 Off Truro	1	P. Flood#		Black Guillemot			
Parasitic Jaeger				7/21 Belchertown	2	S. Sumner	
7/26 Wellfleet	3	S. Perkins		7/29 Rockport	1	MAS (D. Larson)	
8/1 N. Truro	3	B. Nikula		8/28 P.I.	1	T. Wetmore	
8/2 P.I.	1	T. Wetmore		Atlantic Puffin			
				7/28 Plymouth	1	T. Factor	

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

For the first time in many years there was a respectable flight of Common Nighthawks. Recent data has indicated that nighthawk numbers may have dropped by half in Canada since the mid-1960s. This year veteran nighthawk watcher Tom Gagnon recorded more nighthawks over Northampton than from the last two years combined, with a high day count of 1764 on August 25. High counts were also noted from other central and western Massachusetts locations, but counts in the metro Boston area were lower than in recent years. A **Chuck-wills-widow** was last noted in Orleans in early July.

Hummingbird migration begins as early as mid-July with males leaving first. As the month progresses it is hard to tell females and young apart, and getting an accurate count of birds coming to a feeder is nearly impossible as they zip in and out. Banding data suggests that a feeder probably has many more visitors than might be thought. Anthony Hill, a bander from western Massachusetts, caught an amazing 64 hummingbirds in one day from a single location in Whately, and Sue Finnegan banded 46 in Brewster during August. There was a report of a *Selasphorus* hummingbird from Gill in early August.

Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied flycatchers were on the move by mid-August. A **Western Kingbird**, unusual before mid-September, was well documented on the last day of August on Plum Island. Unlike some vagrants from the south and west, the **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** is most likely to appear during this period, and one was documented in Edgartown on July 8 but could not be relocated despite an intensive search by local birders.

The annual swallow spectacular at Plum Island never disappoints, and although getting an accurate count is difficult, counts generally exceed 50,000. The Purple Martins of Plum Island had a bad year; nesting in the gourds at Lot 1 was unsuccessful because a Red-tailed Hawk took up residence nearby, often perched on the racks, and kept the martins away. The good news on Purple Martins comes from Rehoboth, where 43 pairs fledged 178 young at the Crestwood Country Club and an adjacent property. This is now the largest colony of Purple Martins in the state.

Philadelphia Vireos were on the move by mid-August, and 29 species of warblers were noted during the period with a Cerulean Warbler being the most unusual. From a hilltop in Northampton over 2200 Bobolinks were tallied migrating from August 15 through 31. The rarest bird of the period was a **Sedge Wren** that could be heard singing most of August from Mandel Hill in Hardwick. A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was photographed on the unusual date of July 28 in Sandwich.

R. Stymeist

Yellow-billed Cuckoo				Pileated Woodpecker (continued)			
thr	Reports of indiv. from 13 locations			8/16	DFWS	2	P. Sowizral
7/3	Milton	2	R. Mussey	8/18	Northfield	2	M. Lynch#
8/17	W. Tisbury	2	S. Perkins	Olive-sided Flycatcher			
Black-billed Cuckoo				8/12	Belchertown	1	L. Therrien
thr	Reports of indiv. from 10 locations			8/18	Lexington	1	J. Forbes
7/6	Quabbin (G10)	3	SSBC (GdE)	8/22	Woburn	1	M. Rines
7/14	Ware R. IBA	7	M. Lynch#	8/24	Washington	1	J. Pierce
Eastern Screech-Owl				8/28	Lenox	1	R. Laubach
thr	Reports of indiv. from 13 locations			8/29	MNWS	1	D. Noble
8/15	Centerville	3	S. Johnson	8/30	Nahant	1	L. Pivacek
Great Horned Owl				Eastern Wood-Pewee			
thr	Reports of indiv. from 4 locations			7/3	Concord	8	D. Swain
7/1-17	Newbury	1 m	L. Leka	7/14	Wachusett Res.	10	K. Bourinot#
8/7	Stoughton	1 yg	G. d'Entremont	7/30	Harwich	11	F. Atwood
8/22	Wayland	1	G. Dysart	8/5	W. Tisbury	7	O. Burton
8/31	Lexington	1	M. Rines	8/11	Mt. Washington	14	M. Lynch#
Barred Owl				8/17	W. Tisbury	6	S. Perkins
7/14	Wompatuck SP	2 yg	G. d'Entremont	8/20	Ware R. IBA	14	M. Lynch#
8/22	Gloucester	1	J. Nelson	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher			
Common Nighthawk				8/18	Pelham	1	L. Halasz
8/15-31	Northampton	4905	T. Gagnon	8/24	P.I.	1	P. Miliotis
8/17-30	Harvard	309	D. MacFarlane#	8/24	Easthampton	1	B. Zajda#
8/25	Pittsfield	879	G. Hurley	8/24	DWWS	1	G. d'Entremont
8/25, 26	Northampton	1764, 382	T. Gagnon	8/25	Nantucket	1	V. Laux
8/26	Athol	300	D. Small	8/27	Concord	1	C. Winstanley
8/26	Barre Falls	106	D. Grant	8/30	Waltham	1	C. Cook
8/27, 30	Northampton	752, 683	T. Gagnon	Alder Flycatcher			
8/27	Westfield	543	J. Hutchison	7/14	Ware R. IBA	4	M. Lynch#
Chuck-will's-widow				7/27	October Mt.	9	M. Lynch#
7/1-7	Orleans	1	v.o.	8/4	Lee	1	R. Laubach
Eastern Whip-poor-will				8/15	Concord	1	W. Hutcheson
7/27	P.I.	3	J. Miano	Willow Flycatcher			
7/27	W. Gloucester	1	J. Nelson	7/1	P.I.	10	T. Wetmore
8/25	Townsend	1	R. Templeton	7/6	Bolton Flats	3	J. Hoye#
8/28	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg	7/22	GMNWR	3	A. Bragg#
Chimney Swift				8/17	Northampton	2	T. Gagnon
8/5	Melrose	25	P. Vale	Least Flycatcher			
8/11	W. Newbury	250	S. McGrath	7/4	Sheffield	11	M. Lynch#
8/28	Mt.A.	55	R. Stymeist#	7/14	Ware R. IBA	8	M. Lynch#
Ruby-throated Hummingbird				7/27	Lincoln	4	M. Sabourin
8/thr	Brewster	46 b	S. Finnegan	8/24	Lexington	1	J. Forbes
8/10	Whately	64 b	A. Hill	8/27	Mt.A.	1	R. Stymeist#
8/14	Lexington	10	M. Rines#	Eastern Phoebe			
8/20	Westport	12	P. Champlin	8/13	P.I.	10	R. Heil
8/25	Sandwich	13	M. Keleher	8/14	S. Amherst	19	B. Zajda
Selasphorus species				8/15	Ware R. IBA	23	M. Lynch#
8/9	Gill	1	J. Smith	8/24	DWWS	11	G. d'Entremont
American Kestrel				8/25	Quabbin (G35)	10	B. Zajda
7/7	Cambridge	4	P. Roberts	Great Crested Flycatcher			
7/10	Falmouth	4	M. Keleher#	7/14	Wompatuck SP	5	G. d'Entremont
7/25	Ipswich	pr/5yg	J. Berry#	7/19	Acoaxet	4	M. Lynch#
8/20	Hardwick	4	M. Lynch#	7/28	ONWR	4	M. Lynch#
8/20	New Braintree	1	M. Lynch#	8/13	P.I.	3	R. Heil
Merlin				Western Kingbird			
7/7	Cambridge	1	P. Roberts	8/31	P.I.	1 ph	S. Sullivan#
7/22	Nantucket	1 ad, 4 juv	V. Laux	Eastern Kingbird			
7/25	Arlington	1	M. Rines	7/6	Falmouth	16	M. Keleher
8/3	E. Boston (B.I.)	1	R. Stymeist	8/8	Quabog IBA	14	M. Lynch#
8/29	P.I.	2	P. + F. Vale	8/13	P.I.	73	R. Heil
8/30	Northfield	1	J. Smith	8/14	Westboro	35	M. Lynch#
Peregrine Falcon				8/15	Ware R. IBA	76	M. Lynch#
7/2	Mt.A.	2	R. Stymeist	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher			
8/14	P.I.	3	T. Wetmore	7/8	Edgartown	1 ph	W. Elsner#
8/31	Longmeadow	2	S. Kellogg	White-eyed Vireo			
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker				7/19	Acoaxet	3	M. Lynch#
7/5	Orange	5	M. Lynch#	7/19	Westport	1	M. Lynch#
7/6	Quabbin (G10)	5	SSBC (GdE)	Yellow-throated Vireo			
7/13	Colrain	14	M. Lynch#	7/20	S. Quabbin	5	M. Lynch#
Pileated Woodpecker				7/28	ONWR	3	M. Lynch#
7/3	Concord	2	D. Swain	8/17	Sandisfield	3	M. Lynch#
7/13	Colrain	3	M. Lynch#	8/25	Quabbin (G35)	6	B. Zajda

Blue-headed Vireo				House Wren			
7/13	Colrain	5	M. Lynch#	8/15	Ware R. IBA	11	M. Lynch#
7/27	October Mt.	12	M. Lynch#	8/17	Woburn (HP)	10	M. Rines#
8/27	P.I.	1	v.o.	8/21	Burlington	14	M. Rines
Warbling Vireo				Winter Wren			
7/20	S. Quabbin	7	M. Lynch#	7/3	Concord	2	D. Swain
8/1	Cambr. (F.P.)	10	R. Stymeist	7/7	Mt. Watatic	8	T. Pirro
8/14	Lexington	5	M. Rines#	7/8	Greylock	7	R. Laubach
Philadelphia Vireo				7/13	Colrain	12	M. Lynch#
8/16	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg	7/27	October Mt.	6	M. Lynch#
8/25	Belchertown	1	L. Therrien	Sedge Wren			
8/29	S. Amherst	1	B. Zajda	8/4-27	Hardwick	1	C. Buelow + v.o.
8/30	P.I.	1	R. Schain	Marsh Wren			
Red-eyed Vireo				7/14	Holland	1	S. Kellogg
7/6	Quabbin (G10)	64	SSBC (GdE)	7/15	GMNWR	28	A. Bragg#
7/14	Wachusett Res.	21	K. Bourinot#	7/29	Harwich	16	F. Atwood
8/25	Quabbin (G22)	16	B. Zajda	8/13	P.I.	31	R. Heil
8/30	P.I.	16	R. Schain	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher			
Fish Crow				7/12	Melrose	4	D. + I. Jewell
7/20	Ipswich	pr	J. & N. Berry	7/20	S. Quabbin	5	M. Lynch#
8/25	Quabbin (G35)	1	B. Zajda	8/12	GMNWR	7	A. Bragg#
Common Raven				8/14	DFWS	6	P. Sowizral
7/3	Woburn	2	J. Forbes	8/25	Quabbin (G35)	6	B. Zajda
7/6	Florida-Monroe	5	M. Lynch#	Golden-crowned Kinglet			
7/12	Melrose	2	D. + I. Jewell	7/7	Mt. Watatic	2	T. Pirro
7/27	October Mt.	4	M. Lynch#	7/13	Colrain	4	M. Lynch#
7/30	Waltham	6	J. Forbes	7/27	October Mt.	4	M. Lynch#
8/17	Sandisfield	3	M. Lynch#	8/23	Boston (A.A.)	2	P. Peterson
8/18	Barre	3	M. Lynch#	Eastern Bluebird			
Horned Lark				8/14	DFWS	11	P. Sowizral
7/20	Plymouth B.	7	BBC (GdE)	8/24	Easthampton	10	B. Zajda#
8/18	Duxbury B.	7	R. Bowes	Veery			
8/30	Chappaquiddick	2	P. Gilmore#	7/6	Quabbin (G10)	17	SSBC (GdE)
8/31	Hadley	3	S. Surner	7/7	Ware R. IBA	37	M. Lynch#
Purple Martin				7/14	Hopkinton	8	N. Paulson
7/4	Mashpee	156	M. Keleher	7/14	Wompatuck SP	10	G. d'Entremont
8/4	Newbury	3	BBC (P. + F. Vale)	8/29	Westport	4	P. Champlin
8/thr	Rehoboth	43 pr, 178 yg	R. Marr	Swainson's Thrush			
8/12	P.I.	4	P. + F. Vale	7/8	Greylock	3	R. Laubach
Tree Swallow				7/22	Monroe	1	R. Laubach
8/7	Ipswich (C.B.)	4000	D. Williams	8/11	Westwood	1	E. Nielsen
8/13	P.I.	50,000	R. Heil	Hermit Thrush			
8/16	Mashpee	1000	M. Keleher	7/3	Concord	2	D. Swain
8/20	Wakefield	1000	P. + F. Vale	7/7	Mt. Watatic	6	T. Pirro
8/26	Nantucket	4000	V. Laux	7/12	Ipswich (WSF)	2	J. Berry
Northern Rough-winged Swallow				8/4	Ware R. IBA	35	M. Lynch#
7/17	Westport	8	P. Champlin	8/25	Ware R. IBA	11	M. Lynch#
7/29	Brookline (Halls)	4	R. Stymeist	Wood Thrush			
Bank Swallow				7/3	Concord	10	D. Swain
7/13	Ipswich (C.B.)	43	D. Williams	7/3	Paxton	14	M. Lynch#
7/13	Sudbury	75	S. Perkins#	7/8	Waltham	8	J. Forbes
7/19	Duxbury B.	200	R. Bowes	7/14	Wompatuck SP	5	G. d'Entremont
8/6	GMNWR	40	C. Winstanley#	Gray Catbird			
8/26	Longmeadow	200	S. Surner	7/19	Acoaxet	54	M. Lynch#
8/28	Newbury	35	B. Harris#	8/13	P.I.	96	R. Heil
Cliff Swallow				8/25	Fairhaven	36	G. d'Entremont
7/3	Newbury	2	K. Elwell	8/25	Sandwich	42	M. Keleher
8/5	Hardwick	6	M. Lynch#	Brown Thrasher			
8/6	GMNWR	17	C. Winstanley#	7/7	Rockport (H.P.)	4	T. Brownrigg#
8/21	Shutesbury	4	K. Weir	7/13	Ipswich (C.B.)	13	D. Williams
Barn Swallow				7/28	ONWR	3	M. Lynch#
7/21	Westport	250	P. Champlin#	8/13	P.I.	18	R. Heil
7/25	GMNWR	305	C. Winstanley	American Pipit			
8/22	Belchertown	217	B. Zajda	8/22	Duxbury B.	2	J. Bourget#
Red-breasted Nuthatch				8/25	Hadley	2	L. Therrien
7/27	October Mt.	17	M. Lynch#	Cedar Waxwing			
8/15	Ware R. IBA	23	M. Lynch#	8/13	P.I.	97	R. Heil
8/23	Boston (A.A.)	3	P. Peterson	8/15	Ware R. IBA	62	M. Lynch#
Brown Creeper				Ovenbird			
7/5	Orange	4	M. Lynch#	7/3	Concord	14	D. Swain
7/7	Ware R. IBA	4	M. Lynch#	7/6	Quabbin (G10)	31	SSBC (GdE)
7/14	Wachusett Res.	4	K. Bourinot#	7/7	Mt. Watatic	12	T. Pirro

Ovenbird (continued)									
7/7, 8/30	Ware R. IBA	51, 6		M. Lynch#					
Worm-eating Warbler									
7/4	Southwick	4		S. Kellogg					
7/7	Mashpee	2		M. Iliff					
8/11	Mt. Washington	1		M. Lynch#					
Louisiana Waterthrush									
7/13	Colrain	3		M. Lynch#					
7/31	Westport	1		P. Champlin					
8/2	Southwick	1		S. Kellogg					
8/21	Mt. Wachusett	1		T. Pirro					
8/27	Wachusett Res.	2		M. Lynch#					
Northern Waterthrush									
7/3	Concord	2		D. Swain					
8/3	Nahant	2		R. Stymeist					
8/6	Worcester	2		E. Kittredge					
8/24	Westport	4		P. Champlin					
8/31	Wendell	2		M. Lynch#					
Blue-winged Warbler									
Reports of indiv. from 12 locations									
Black-and-white Warbler									
7/6	Quabbin (G10)	6		SSBC (GdE)					
7/6	Florida-Monroe	14		M. Lynch#					
7/14	Wompatuck SP	5		G. d'Entremont					
8/17	Sandisfield	12		M. Lynch#					
8/30	P.I.	15		R. Schain					
Tennessee Warbler									
8/21	Waltham	1		J. Forbes					
8/22	GMNWR	1		R. Merrill					
8/25	Ware R. IBA	1		M. Lynch#					
Nashville Warbler									
7/5	New Salem	1		M. Lynch#					
8/14	N. Andover	1		B. Drummond					
8/15	Ware R. IBA	2		M. Lynch#					
Mourning Warbler									
7/4	Becket	1		R. Laubach					
7/6	Florida-Monroe	1		M. Lynch#					
8/12	MNWS	1		G. Dysart#					
8/24	Northampton	1		B. Zajda#					
8/25	Waltham	1		J. Forbes					
Common Yellowthroat									
7/6	Quabbin (G10)	24		SSBC (GdE)					
7/9	P.I.	35		R. Heil					
7/14	Ware R. IBA	62		M. Lynch#					
8/14	Lexington	23		M. Rines#					
8/25	Sandwich	46		M. Keleher					
Hooded Warbler									
8/5	Westport	1 ad		S. Arena					
American Redstart									
7/4	New Marlboro	11		M. Lynch#					
7/6	Quabbin (G10)	6		SSBC (GdE)					
8/13	P.I.	8		R. Heil					
8/17	Westport	7		P. Champlin					
8/21	Burlington	12		M. Rines					
8/22	Lexington	9		C. Cook					
Cape May Warbler									
8/18	Ashburnham	1		R. Monroe					
8/24	Westport	4		P. Champlin					
8/25	Quabbin (G35)	1		B. Zajda					
8/31	P.I.	2		P. Wilton					
Cerulean Warbler									
8/7	Waltham	1		J. Forbes#					
Northern Parula									
7/31	P.I.	2		R. Schain					
8/6	MNWS	2		R. Heil					
8/25	Quabbin (G35)	4		B. Zajda					
Magnolia Warbler									
7/27	October Mt.	6		M. Lynch#					
8/24	Westport	3		P. Champlin					
8/30	P.I.	9		R. Schain					
Bay-breasted Warbler									
8/30	P.I.	4		R. Schain					
Blackburnian Warbler									
7/6	Quabbin (G10)	4							SSBC (GdE)
7/7	Mt. Wataatic	16							T. Pirro
7/13	Colrain	7							M. Lynch#
8/17	Sandisfield	6							M. Lynch#
8/30	Waltham	1							C. Cook
Yellow Warbler									
7/21	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	25							S. Arena#
7/30	Westport	43							P. Champlin
8/13	P.I.	51							R. Heil
Chestnut-sided Warbler									
7/6	Quabbin (G10)	17							SSBC (GdE)
7/13	Colrain	23							M. Lynch#
8/20	Woburn	3							M. Rines
8/30	Waltham	2							C. Cook
Blackpoll Warbler									
7/8	Greylock	1							R. Laubach
7/13	P.I.	1							R. Heil
Black-throated Blue Warbler									
7/6	Quabbin (G10)	18							SSBC (GdE)
7/13	Colrain	10							M. Lynch#
8/25	Quabbin (G35)	4							B. Zajda
8/30	Ware R. IBA	6							M. Lynch#
Pine Warbler									
7/6	Falmouth	16							M. Keleher
7/6	Quabbin (G10)	12							SSBC (GdE)
7/14	Hopkinton	14							N. Paulson
8/15	Ware R. IBA	54							M. Lynch#
Yellow-rumped Warbler									
7/7	Mt. Wataatic	6							T. Pirro
7/14	Hopkinton	2							N. Paulson
8/17	Sandisfield	13							M. Lynch#
8/30	P.I.	2							R. Schain
Prairie Warbler									
7/6	Falmouth	6							M. Keleher
8/24	Northampton	3							B. Zajda#
8/25	Sandwich	3							M. Keleher
8/30	Westport	6							P. Champlin
Black-throated Green Warbler									
7/6	Quabbin (G10)	16							SSBC (GdE)
7/13	Colrain	27							M. Lynch#
8/30	Ware R. IBA	24							M. Lynch#
Canada Warbler									
7/27	October Mt.	3							M. Lynch#
8/14	Lexington	1							M. Rines#
8/28	Westport	1							P. Champlin
8/29	Waltham	1							J. Forbes
Wilson's Warbler									
8/18	Amherst	1							S. Surner
8/18	Woburn	1							M. Rines
8/30	Nahant	2							L. Pivacek
8/30	MNWS	1							D. Noble
Yellow-breasted Chat									
8/25	DFWS	1							K. Seymour#
Eastern Towhee									
7/6	Quabbin (G10)	23							SSBC (GdE)
7/6	Falmouth	21							M. Keleher
7/30	Harwich	26							F. Atwood
8/5	Nantucket	50							V. Laux
8/13	P.I.	24							R. Heil
8/25	Ware R. IBA	35							M. Lynch#
Clay-colored Sparrow									
7/5	Falmouth	1							J. McCumber
Field Sparrow									
7/6	Falmouth	13							M. Keleher
7/25	Bedford	20							C. Winstanley
7/26	P.I.	3							R. Heil
8/1	Sutton	4							M. Lynch#
Vesper Sparrow									
8/14	S. Amherst	1							B. Zajda
Lark Sparrow									
8/24	Waltham	1							R. Stymeist#

Lark Sparrow (continued)				Dickcissel			
8/31 DWWS	1	SSBC (GdE)	8/15	Ware R. IBA	1		M. Lynch#
Grasshopper Sparrow			8/24	Brewster	1		B. Lagasse
7/3 Southwick	1	S. Kellogg	8/25	Hadley	1		L. Therrien
7/6 Falmouth	10	M. Keleher	8/25	Falmouth	1		G. Hirth
7/13 Turners Falls	3	M. Lynch#	8/26	Nantucket	1		V. Laux
Saltmarsh Sparrow				Bobolink			
7/6 Squantum	3	P. Peterson	7/11	P.I.	75		D. Chickering
7/9 P.I.	22	R. Heil	7/22	Lincoln	21		J. Forbes
7/23 E. Boston (B.I.)	5	P. Peterson	8/26	GMNWR	90		A. Bragg#
7/31 Revere	10	P. Peterson	8/31	DWWS	40		SSBC (GdE)
8/1 Wellfleet	8	S. Broker	8/31	Northampton	290		T. Gagnon
8/18 Chatham (S.B.)	40	M. Faherty		Eastern Meadowlark			
Seaside Sparrow			7/3	Southwick	2		S. Kellogg
thr P.I.	4 max	v.o.	7/10	Falmouth	4		J. McCumber
8/7 Ipswich (C.B.)	3	D. Williams	8/4	Newbypt	2		J. Berry#
White-throated Sparrow			8/27	Wachusett Res.	7		M. Lynch#
7/13 Colrain	14	M. Lynch#		Yellow-headed Blackbird			
7/27 October Mt.	12	M. Lynch#	7/28	Sandwich	1 ph		J. Selby
8/25 Waltham	1	J. Forbes		Orchard Oriole			
Dark-eyed Junco			7/6	Falmouth	16		M. Keleher
7/7 Mt. Watatic	4	T. Pirro	7/30	Hadley	15		J. Jorgensen
7/27 October Mt.	3	M. Lynch#	7/31	Cambr. (F.P.)	5		A. Robinson
8/11 Mt. Washington	11	M. Lynch#	8/7	Amherst	3		B. Emily
8/25 Westport	1	P. Champlin	8/24	Belmont	1		J. Forbes
Scarlet Tanager				Baltimore Oriole			
7/3 Paxton	6	M. Lynch#	7/6	Falmouth	26		M. Keleher
7/6 Quabbin (G10)	10	SSBC (GdE)	8/13	P.I.	22		R. Heil
7/14 Ware R. IBA	15	M. Lynch#	8/18	Northfield	15		M. Lynch#
8/3 Medford	4	M. Rines#	8/23	Boston (A.A.)	10		P. Peterson
8/24 Waltham	2	M. Rines		Purple Finch			
Rose-breasted Grosbeak			7/1	Peru	2		R. Stymeist
7/6 Quabbin (G10)	6	SSBC (GdE)	7/6	Florida-Monroe	7		M. Lynch#
7/14 Ware R. IBA	6	M. Lynch#	7/27	October Mt.	9		M. Lynch#
8/11 Mt. Washington	8	M. Lynch#	7/27	W. Gloucester	4		J. Nelson
8/31 Lexington	9	J. Forbes	7/31	P.I.	7		R. Schain
Indigo Bunting				Red Crossbill			
7/6 Florida-Monroe	16	M. Lynch#	7/7	S. Quabbin	2		L. Therrien
7/13 Sudbury	3	S. Perkins#	7/14	C. Quabbin	3		L. Therrien
7/25 DFWS	3	P. Sowizral		Evening Grosbeak			
8/17 Woburn (HP)	7	M. Rines#	7/13	Colrain	3		M. Lynch#
8/24 Northampton	36	B. Zajda#	7/14	Royalston	2		L. Kramer#



AMERICAN BITTERN IN WINTER BY SANDY SELESKY

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taxonomic order is based on AOU checklist, Seventh edition, up to the 53rd Supplement, as published in *Auk* 129 (3): 573-88 (2012) (see <<http://checklist.aou.org/>>).

Locations		ONWR	Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge
Location-#	MAS Breeding Bird Atlas Block	PG	Public Garden, Boston
A.A.	Arnold Arboretum, Boston	P.I.	Plum Island
ABC	Allen Bird Club	Pd	Pond
A.P.	Andrews Point, Rockport	POP	Point of Pines, Revere
A.Pd	Allens Pond, S. Dartmouth	PR	Pinnacle Rock, Malden
B.	Beach	P'town	Provincetown
Barre F.D.	Barre Falls Dam	Pont.	Pontoosuc Lake, Lanesboro
B.I.	Belle Isle, E. Boston	R.P.	Race Point, Provincetown
B.R.	Bass Rocks, Gloucester	Res.	Reservoir
BBC	Brookline Bird Club	RKG	Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston
BMB	Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester	S.B.	South Beach, Chatham
BNC	Boston Nature Center, Mattapan	S.N.	Sandy Neck, Barnstable
C.B.	Crane Beach, Ipswich	SRV	Sudbury River Valley
CGB	Coast Guard Beach, Eastham	SSBC	South Shore Bird Club
C.P.	Crooked Pond, Boxford	TASL	Take A Second Look, Boston Harbor Census
Cambr.	Cambridge	WBWS	Wellfleet Bay WS
CCBC	Cape Cod Bird Club	WE	World's End, Hingham
Corp. B.	Corporation Beach, Dennis	WMWS	Wachusett Meadow WS
Cumb. Farms	Cumberland Farms, Middleboro	Wompatuck SP	Hingham, Cohasset, Scituate, Norwell
DFWS	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary	Worc.	Worcester
DWMA	Delaney WMA, Stow, Bolton, Harvard		
DWWS	Daniel Webster WS	Other Abbreviations	
E.P.	Eastern Point, Gloucester	ad	adult
F.E.	First Encounter Beach, Eastham	b	banded
F.H.	Fort Hill, Eastham	br	breeding
F.P.	Fresh Pond, Cambridge	dk	dark (morph)
F.Pk	Franklin Park, Boston	f	female
G40	Gate 40, Quabbin Res.	fide	on the authority of
GMNWR	Great Meadows NWR	fl	fledgling
H.	Harbor	imm	immature
H.P.	Halibut Point, Rockport	juv	juvenile
HP	Horn Pond, Woburn	lt	light (morph)
HRWMA	High Ridge WMA, Gardner	m	male
I.	Island	max	maximum
IRWS	Ipswich River WS	migr	migrating
L.	Ledge	n	nesting
MAS	Mass Audubon	ph	photographed
MP	Millennium Park, W. Roxbury	pl	plumage
M.V.	Martha's Vineyard	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.	Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambr.	yg	young
NAC	Nine Acre Corner, Concord	#	additional observers
Newbypt	Newburyport		

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 email. 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 email submission, visit: <<http://massbird.org/birdobserver/sightings/>>.

Species on the Review List of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, 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 Matt Garvey, 137 Beaconsfield Rd. #5, Brookline MA 02445, or by email to <mattgarvey@gmail.com>.

ABOUT THE COVER

Blue Jay

The Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) with its flashy blue plumage, raucous call, aggressive nature, and willingness to frequent suburban areas and use our bird feeders, makes it one of our most widely known, if perhaps not our most beloved, bird species. This small corvid is unmistakable with its blue crown, white face and throat largely outlined in black, purplish back, bright blue wings and tail, white wing bar, and grayish underparts. The sexes are similar in a plumage that remains the same throughout the year. Juveniles are also similar but the blues and blacks are somewhat muted. Although four subspecies are generally recognized, the differences in size and the intensity of blue above and white below are clinal (e.g., varying with latitude) and poorly delineated, so that many taxonomists doubt their validity. The Blue Jays of New England are *C. c. bromia*.

The Blue Jay's breeding range stretches from eastern British Columbia across southern Canada to Newfoundland and south through the eastern two-thirds of the United States. They breed locally in the western states. The most northern populations are largely migratory whereas other populations are irregularly so. In most areas the majority of the jays are resident year-round. All migrants winter within the United States. The irregularities in migration from year to year may be related to failures in local mast crops (e.g., acorns) that are the jay's principal food during the winter. In Massachusetts, Blue Jays are a common and widespread breeder and a common to abundant migrant. They are common to uncommon in winter depending upon whether the local birds migrated or remained. In spring, the migrants appear from April through late May, and they leave from September to November. The migrants from the New England region winter in the Atlantic coast states.

Blue Jays are monogamous breeders, and the pair may remain together through the winter. Their breeding habitat is primarily deciduous, coniferous, and mixed woodlands and forests, especially in edge habitats. They have become common in residential areas perhaps as a result, in part, of winter bird feeders. The vocal array of Blue Jays is remarkable. They can make two sounds at the same time in their syrinx and can mimic a wide range of sounds from their environment. They have a virtually limitless vocabulary of sounds. Attempts to categorize Blue Jay calls has had, at best, limited success. One group of calls, the *jeer* calls, are loud, harsh, and highly variable and may serve as contact calls and calls used in mobbing predators. The so-called "pump handle" calls (they are accompanied with bobbing of the bird's body) are musical whistles. There are also contact calls between mates and rattling calls. Because of the plethora of calls and variations, it is difficult to determine the function of many of them. Blue Jays can mimic a broad spectrum of raptor calls and mimic cats and human words. The function of the mimicry is in most cases unknown. Blue Jays have social displays where three to two dozen birds may bob and call in a pulse-like fashion and may include display flights. These display flocks often include mated pairs so may function for something other than courtship. Courtship involves males bobbing and

calling, courtship feeding of the female, and display flights, although the courtship procedures are not well known. Blue Jays are not territorial in the usual sense but will attack and strike birds or mammals (including humans) that approach their nest.

Little is known about nest site selection. Males collect most of the nest material, and the females do most of the nest construction. The nest consists of an open cup of sticks, lichens, moss, leaves, and grass. It may incorporate string, plastic, paper, or other human refuse, and the birds may reuse old nests. Only the female has a brood patch, and only she incubates the usual clutch of three to six bluish to brownish dark-spotted eggs for the 17–18 days until hatching. The chicks are altricial—helpless and featherless, with eyes closed. During the first eight to twelve days after hatching the female alone broods the chicks while the male brings food for both the chicks and the female. Thereafter the female joins in procuring food. Fledging occurs about 17–21 days after hatching. Parents may continue to feed the young for up to two months. Blue Jays are versatile foragers and are omnivorous, feeding on a broad spectrum of invertebrates, small vertebrates, eggs and chicks of other birds, acorns and other nuts, fruit, and seeds. They glean insects from trees, shrubs, and the ground and may hawk flying invertebrates, for example, dragonflies. They have been reported taking small birds and bats and feeding on carrion. They cache acorns and other nuts in fall. One study suggested that a jay might cache 3,000 to 5,000 acorns in a single autumn. One was reported kleptoparasitizing a grackle by mimicking a hawk call that caused the grackle to drop its food. Blue Jays open acorns and other nuts by holding them against a substrate with one or both feet and hammering them with their bill. They also hold down soft fruits and tear off sections. Blue Jays have been used in laboratory experiments to study foraging strategy (e.g., search image formation and cryptic prey detection).

Blue Jays eject cowbird eggs from their nests and so are infrequently parasitized. Breeding Bird Survey data suggests that they have decreased in numbers in the United States, particularly in the east from 1966 to 1996. But they are behaviorally flexible with a broad scope of habitat, and they have adjusted well to suburban conditions. Blue Jays should continue to adapt to changing conditions and prosper. 🐦

William E. Davis, Jr.



WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR.

About the Cover Artist: Barry Van Dusen

Once again, *Bird Observer* offers a painting by the artist who has created many of our covers, Barry Van Dusen. Barry is well known in the birding world, especially in Massachusetts, where he lives in the central Massachusetts town of Princeton. From May 6 to June 17, 2013, Barry's work was on exhibit at Tower Hill Botanic Gardens in Boylston, Massachusetts, and he is the Artist-in-Residence at Tower Hill for the 2013 season.

Barry has illustrated several nature books and pocket guides, and his articles and paintings have been featured in *Birding*, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and *Yankee Magazine* as well as *Bird Observer*. Barry is currently at work on illustrations for the second volume of *Birds of Brazil* by John Gwynne, Robert Ridgely, Guy Tudor, and Martha Argel, published by Comstock Publishing, a division of the Cornell University Press. For this work he is illustrating the shorebirds and their allies along with the gulls and terns.

Barry's interest in nature subjects began in 1982 with an association with the Massachusetts Audubon Society. He has been influenced by the work of European wildlife artists and has adopted their methodology of direct field sketching. Barry continues to enjoy teaching workshops at various locations in Massachusetts. In 2013, he conducted workshops at Fruitlands Museums, Concord Art Association, and Tower Hill Botanic Gardens. More information on these is posted on Barry's website at <http://www.barryvandusen.com>. 



LONG-TAILED DUCKS BY SANDY SELESKY

AT A GLANCE

October 2013



DAVID M. LARSON

This month, readers are confronted with what can only be described as a challenging photograph. As is often the case when trying to identify these devilish “At a Glance” images, the relative size of the bird, partially hidden body parts, coloration, and habitat are all considerations.

Needless to say, using habitat as a useful clue in this picture is off the table. All that can be said is that the bird is perched in what is arguably a fairly large tree. We know that because of the size of the branches visible in the photograph. A close look at the mystery bird’s feet offers a useful clue. The feet, which appear to be relatively large compared to the size of the branch, have long claws (i.e., talons), especially apparent on the bird’s right foot. The strongly curved shape and length of the most visible claw suggest that the bird is a raptor.

If we make this assumption, other conspicuous features to notice are the prominently dark cap and pure white feathering behind and below the eye, the dark area directly below the eye, the thin pale (whitish?) bands and obvious white terminal tip on a clearly visible tail feather, and the pale tips on the primaries, wing coverts, and scapulars. These pale feather tips indicate that the raptor is a juvenile, not an adult.

Using these clues, we can eliminate a number of candidates. The prominently dark cap contrasting with white below and behind the eye and the relatively short tail compared to the length of the primaries immediately remove any of the accipiters as

possibilities. Additionally, the relatively smooth, uniform appearance on the bird's dorsal feathering (other than the pale feather tips described above) is quite unlike the more textured appearance of juvenile buteos. Once accipiters and buteos are removed from the identification equation, it becomes obvious that the dark area just below the eye is part of the dusky "sideburn" or "mustache" so characteristic of the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), which in fact is the identity of the mystery raptor. A final clue, though not actually a field mark, is the presence of a band on the falcon's right leg—a common feature on Peregrine Falcons these days since many are banded annually by workers monitoring their population.

Peregrine Falcons are increasingly frequent spring and fall migrants and uncommon winter visitors in Massachusetts, where they are seen most often along the outer coast or inland, over extensive fields. They are also an increasingly regular breeding species in the Commonwealth with approximately 16 pairs now nesting on urban structures and in rock quarries across the state. David Larson photographed this juvenile Peregrine Falcon in Bradford, Massachusetts, on July 14, 2013. 

Wayne R. Petersen



SUBADULT BALD EAGLE ON MYSTIC LAKES BY PAUL M. ROBERTS.

AT A GLANCE



DAVID LARSON

Can you identify the bird in this photograph?

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

Your Birding Equipment Checklist:

- ✓ *Binoculars*
- ✓ *Field Guide*
- ✓ *Scope*
- ✓ *Camera*
- ✓ *Cell phone*

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