

Bird Observer

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HOT BIRDS



The last straggler of a wave of at least four **Pink-footed Geese** that passed through the state in November and December, a bird continues to circulate around the goose flocks of Essex County through early March, appearing at various times in Ipswich, Topsfield, Rowley, and Wenham. Dan Prima took the photo on the left.

The female **Painted Bunting**, originally reported by Skyler Kardell just after Thanksgiving, was seen around Nantucket through mid-January. Then a male started visiting a few yards with feeders near Orleans in early February and continued in that area through early March. Jeff Offerman took the photo on the right.



The state hosted several **Ross' Goose** in early 2017. An individual found by Ed Kittredge near Whitinsville on February 23 and 24 was apparently a first record for Worcester County. Sean Williams took the photo on the left.

The **Tufted Duck** that spent New Year's Day on the Acushnet River near New Bedford continued to be found there through January 25. A few weeks after it stopped appearing there, Jim Sweeney found it or another of its species in Lakeville, where it remained for at least a few days. Justin Lawson took the photo on the right.



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Cover: Rough-winged Swallow by John Sill ©Massachusetts Audubon Society. Courtesy of the Museum of American Bird Art.



Bird Observer

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Birding Essex County, Vermont, Part 2: Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge and Wenlock Wildlife Management Area

Thomas Berriman



The northern section of Essex County, Vermont, includes two of the best boreal and warbler birding locations in the state: Moose Bog in the Wenlock Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge's Nulhegan Basin Division. While there is plenty of wilderness to explore throughout the area, you will have good access for driving to the heart of these two places. You can access this northern section by a paved road along its perimeter. See the map of Northeast Essex County for an overview. Route 114 from the Village of Island Pond connects with Route 102 in the northeastern corner of the state and then returns to Island Pond westerly by Route 105. During the fall months, the ponds that abut Route 114 along the Canadian border provide resting stops for most species of migrating waterfowl.

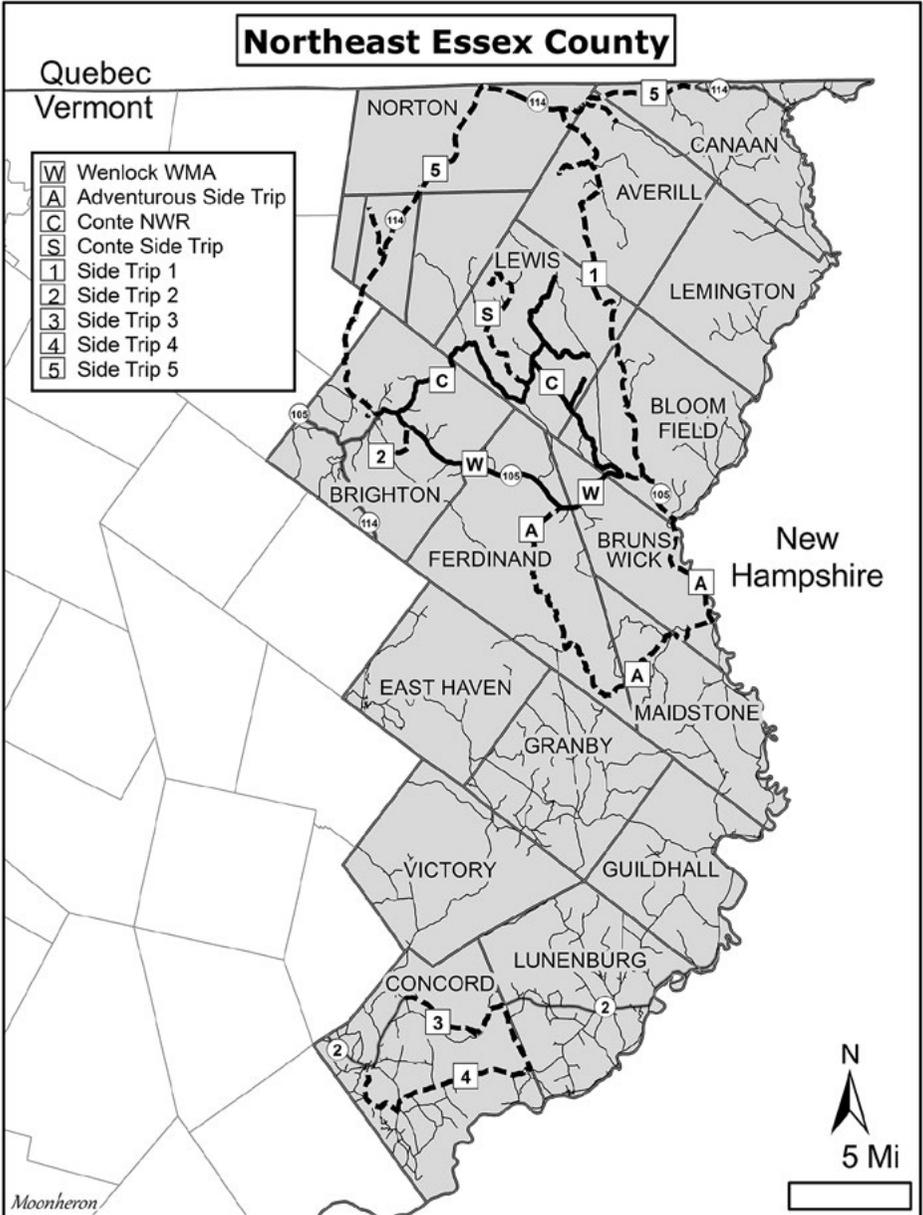
Wenlock Wildlife Management Area

Moose Bog

The Moose Bog Trail in Wenlock WMA is the crown jewel of birding in the Northeast Kingdom. In a short mile and a half walk you can find four boreal species on a regular basis year-round. Black-backed Woodpecker, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, and Spruce Grouse breed near the trail.

From the stop intersection with the blinking red light in Island Pond (point of interest #1 on the Wenlock WMA map), drive east on Route 105. At 8.3 miles, there is a large pull-off on the left about 0.5 mile after you cross railroad tracks. During the winter months this may be the only available place to park if snow depths exceed one foot. It is also not a bad place to stop and bird year-round. Gray Jays frequent this location as well as Black-backed Woodpeckers. Kinglets and nuthatches are plentiful.

From late spring through fall, there are two other places to park closer to the trail. At 8.7 miles—or 0.3 mile from this pull-off—on the right shoulder is one end of the trailhead. There is usually enough room for two or three cars to pull off the roadway here. The preferred place to park is on South America Pond Road, which is 9.3 miles from Island Pond and one mile east of the pull-off. The red gate is open most of the year except during mud season from April to mid-May. Even in winter the gates are open, and with 4-wheel drive you can navigate the 300 yards to an opening wide enough for six cars on the right side of road.

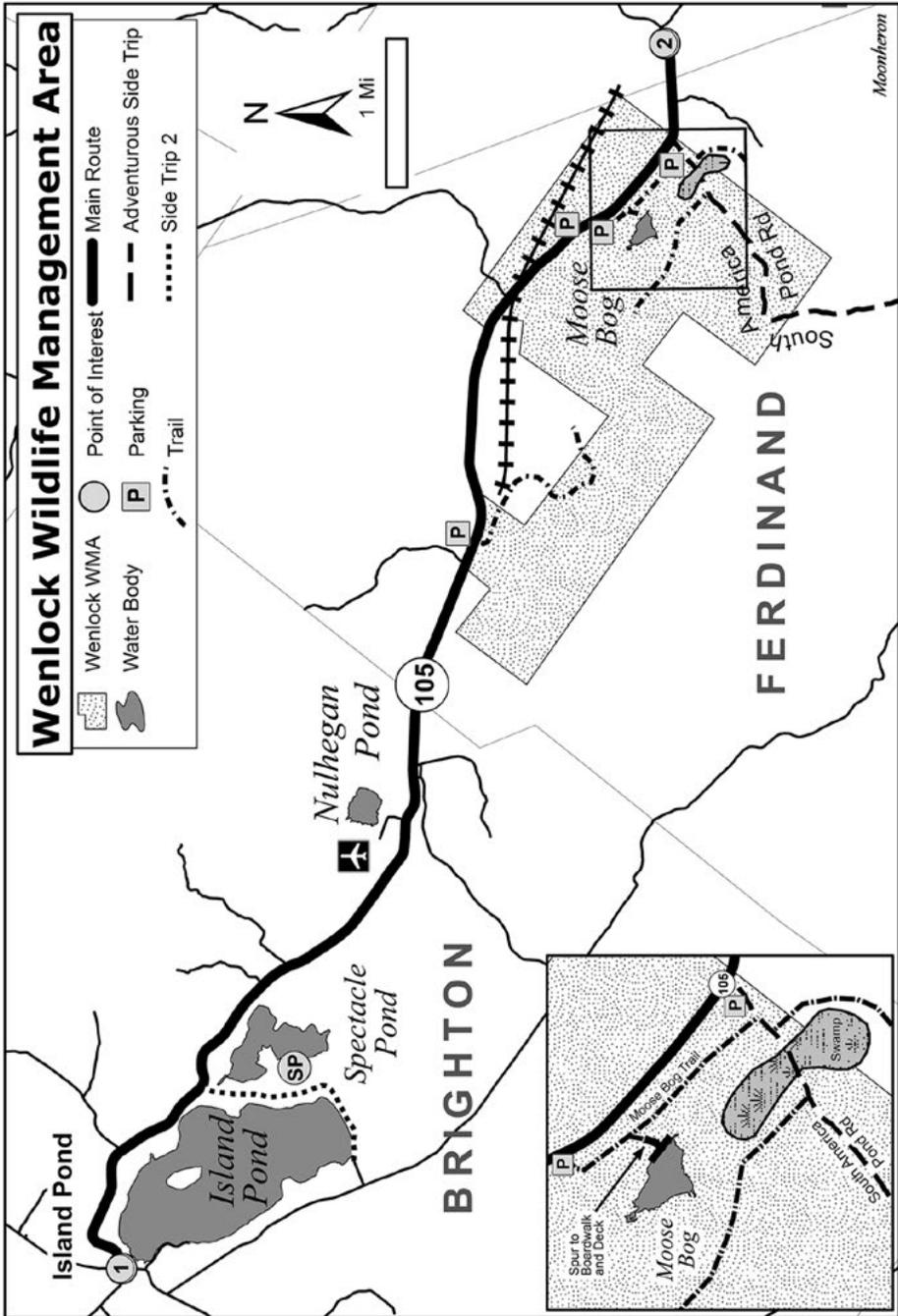




Moose Bog trailhead. All photographs by the author.

On some visits you may not have to leave this parking area to find two or three boreal species. Spend at least 15–25 minutes here listening to what is around before starting the trail. During crossbill years there are frequent fly-overs here. The Moose Bog trailhead is another 200 yards farther along South America Pond Road on the right. There is a sign warning hunters about the difference between Ruffed and Spruce grouse, but no sign to indicate you are at the trailhead. The trail winds through a mix of balsam fir, black spruce, and northern white cedar. From late March through May, listen for the flutter flight of male Spruce Grouse as they fly from leks to branches 10 feet off the ground. The birds are almost tame this time of year and spend large amounts of time on territory displaying for females, who are often close by. Often these grouse may be perched at eye level or foraging along the trail. At any point along this trail, you can find any of the four boreal species. Year-round, you are likely to find Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Blue Jays, Brown Creepers, Ravens, and Hairy, Downy, and Pileated woodpeckers. In spring through summer, expect to find Nashville, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Palm, Canada, and Yellow-rumped warblers. Hermit Thrushes and Swainson's Thrushes are present, as well as at least one Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos are common. In winter months, depending on the year, Pine Siskins, both crossbill species (mainly White-winged Crossbills), Pine Grosbeaks, and Common Redpolls can be found. Northern Saw-Whet Owls have been heard and seen along the trail.

Access to the pond—Moose Bog—is by a spur trail on the left about 0.75 mile along the trail. A new wooden boardwalk and viewing platform were built in the summer of 2016. This is an excellent location to look and listen for Lincoln's Sparrows,





Spruce Grouse habitat along Moose Bog Trail.

Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Black-backed Woodpeckers, and Gray Jays. Palm Warblers and Nashville Warblers breed here. If you continue along the main trail, it will merge back onto Route 105. In spring and late fall there may be a few different species of migrating ducks on the pond, but for the most part, Canada Geese, Black Ducks, and Mallards are the summer residents.

After you've birded the bog pond, return to the main trail. You have two options: If you did not find Spruce Grouse on your way in, trace your route back the way you came—things change every minute, and your luck may improve. Option two is to walk back to the South America Pond Road parking area by way of Route 105. If traffic is light you may be able to hear Boreal Chickadees or a Black-backed Woodpecker as you walk the shoulder. The birding is great along this road, and there are as many boreal species on the north side of Route 105 as on the trail. I often bushwhack into the woods north of Route 105 upon hearing the drumming of Black-backed Woodpeckers. The Nulhegan River is a short distance in and will keep you from wandering too far.

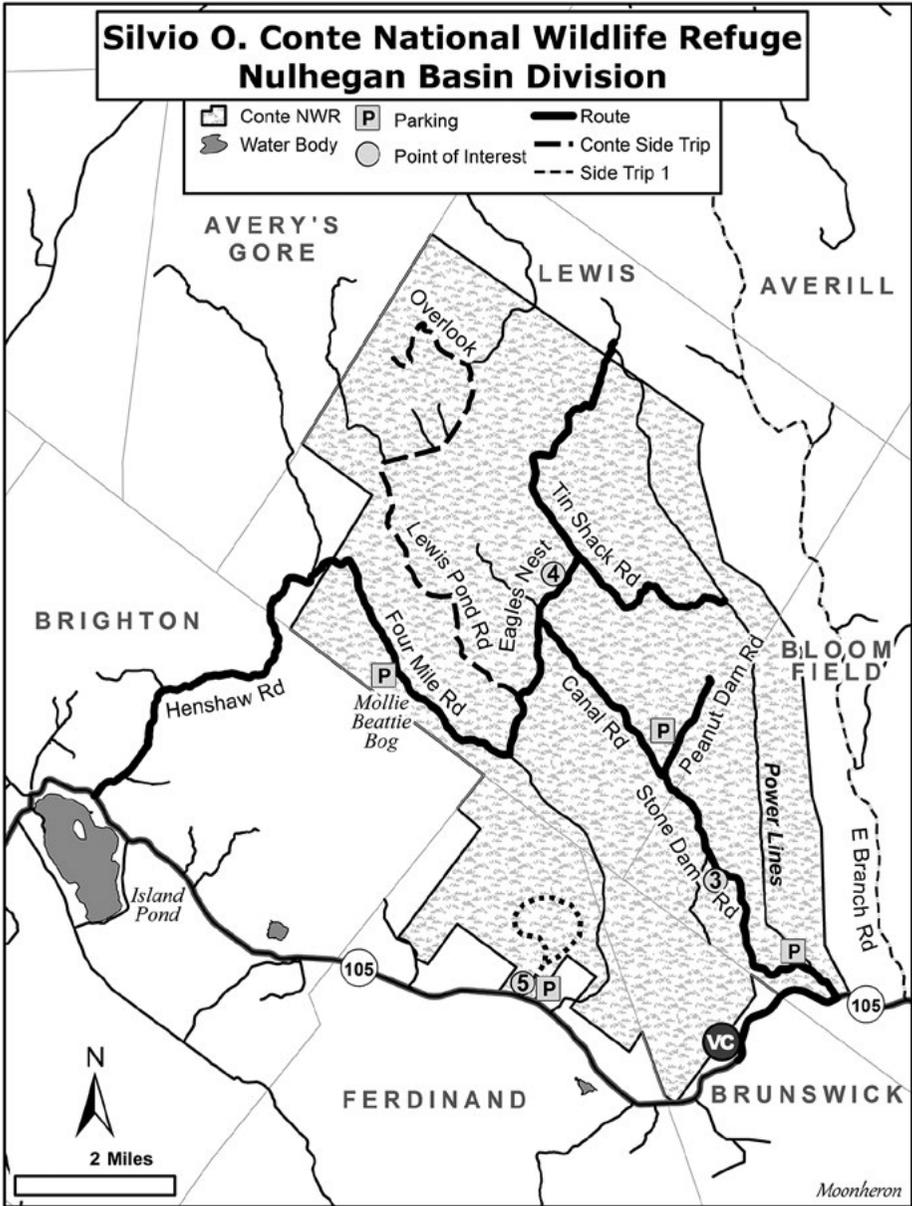
On South America Pond Road, there is a swamp a little farther down the road from the Moose Bog trailhead. The swamp, on both sides of the road, has Northern Waterthrush, Common



Spruce Grouse.

Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge Nulhegan Basin Division

-  Conte NWR
-  Water Body
-  Parking
-  Point of Interest
-  Route
-  Conte Side Trip
-  Side Trip 1



Yellowthroat, and Swamp Sparrow. It is also a great place to see and hear Black-backed Woodpeckers drumming on the dead snags. Rusty Blackbirds have been found on the right side of the swamp. There's a trail on the left just before the swamp, which leads to the back of the swamp and is worth checking out if you haven't found all of your target birds. The trail eventually winds up in private camps, so I usually take it only to access the rear of the swamp. Beyond the swamp on the right is an old logging access trail, which is a good place to check for boreal species, Ruffed Grouse, and Winter Wren.

For an adventurous side trip from mid-May through October only, Wenlock WMA connects with West Mountain WMA. Take South America Pond Road for several miles connecting with Paul Stream Road, and eventually you will pass Maidstone Lake on the right. The road runs into Route 102 bordering the Connecticut River. You can stop anywhere along these hard-packed dirt roads as they weave through a mix of various conifer and hardwood forests and wetlands. Expect to see at least 15 warbler species as well as flycatchers and thrush species. You can drive the roads with your family car during these months.

Two other birding locations worth checking out along Route 105 while you are in the Wenlock WMA area are:

Moose Viewing Platform and Boardwalk

Halfway between South America Pond Road and the refuge headquarters at Conte NWR —0.75 mile east of South America Pond Road —is a moose viewing platform (point of interest #2 on the Wenlock WMA map), built about five years ago by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

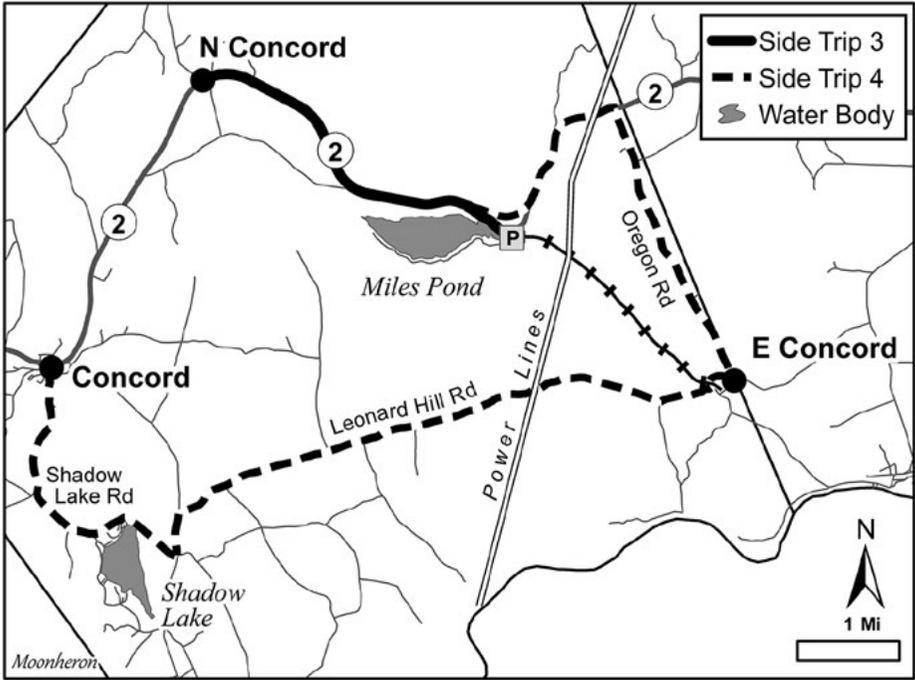
This half-mile stretch of road is known as Moose Alley, and while early morning seems to be the best time to see moose as they browse the muddy wet areas along Route 105, take care while driving along this stretch, as they can be on the roadway any time of day. Pull in on the right at the platform. If you have time, walk or drive down the old logging road. This is one of the entrances to West Mountain WMA. Bearing to the right as you drive or walk the road, you will come to a wide clearing and large power line at 2.4 miles in. I usually try my luck here for Broad-winged Hawks, Indigo Buntings, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Ruffed Grouse, and any number of warblers.



Moose, Wenlock WMA area.

Link for map and description of Wenlock WMA: http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_73079/File/Where%20to%20Hunt/St.%20Johnsbury%20District/Wenlock%20WMA.pdf

The Brighton Airport is on the left side of Route 105 at 3.5 miles from Island Pond. There is a sandy road at the extreme east end of the runway that is drivable and will take you to the edge of Nulhegan Pond. Check for Northern Harriers and any



shorebirds and waterfowl on the pond. Savannah Sparrow is common and on occasion Vesper Sparrow has been reported here.

Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge, Nulhegan Basin Division

The headquarters and visitor center (marked VC on the Conte NWR map) of the Nulhegan Basin Division of the Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge is 1.4 miles east on Route 105 from South America Pond Road, or 10.8 miles from Island Pond. The refuge has some great displays, information, and maps that you will want to have with you as you explore the 44 miles of dirt roads on the refuge. It also has the best bathrooms in Essex County. The refuge is closed to auto traffic from first snowfall through mud season, reopening usually around May 15. Stone Dam Road becomes a snowmobile route, but in early spring if the gates are locked you can park outside—do not block the gate—and walk into the refuge to bird. Link for road conditions: telephone: 877-811-5222. <http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/hunt/find_a_place_to_hunt/find_a_wildlife_management_area/kingdom_heritage_land_road_conditions>

Entrance to the refuge is a left turn onto Stone Dam Road at 1.9 miles east of the headquarters after you cross the bridge and railroad tracks (12.7 miles from Island Pond). There is a small kiosk on the left side at 0.2 mile, with maps and checklists available. You can park on the shoulder of the road here and begin birding. There is a path on the right side of the road opposite the kiosk that leads to a power line clearing. You can find Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Ruffed Grouse, and a good variety of warblers here, along the roadway, and along the Black Branch of the Nulhegan River on the left side of road. During spring migration there may be surprises



Black-backed Woodpecker.

such as Wilson’s Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Mourning Warbler, and once, Yellow-throated Vireo. At 2.4 miles along Stone Dam Road there is a 10-acre clearing—woodcock and grouse management Unit #1—(Point of interest #3 on the Conte NWR map). Check for Field Sparrow, Indigo Bunting, and Great-crested Flycatcher as well as warbler, vireo, and thrush species. Continue on until you reach a wooden bridge that crosses the Black Branch of the Nulhegan River at 2.8 miles. This is a good place for Northern Parulas, Blackburnian and Nashville warblers, American Redstarts and, on occasion, Tennessee Warblers migrating through.

Peanut Dam Road

On the right side of the road at 4.2 miles, you’ll find an old logging trail, Peanut Dam Road. Park in the short pull-off, then walk the one-mile dead-end trail. The habitat is mostly larch, spruce, and fir. Boreal Chickadees have bred here, Gray Jays and Black-backed Woodpeckers can be found, and Spruce Grouse occasionally are seen along the trail. Warblers include Yellow-rumped, Magnolia, Nashville, Black-throated Green, and Northern Parula. Bob Stymeist, leading a field trip here in June, 2015, found a male Cape May Warbler—hinting at possible breeding of the species at this location!

Stone Dam Road becomes Canal Road and then intersects with Eagles Nest Road at 6.8 miles. You have two options. Option one: Turn right, and in another 0.4 mile you will find a marshy area on the left (point of interest #4 on the Conte NWR map). Check for Rusty Blackbird and Common Grackle. Keep in mind that you still can find any of the four boreal species on any of these roads in the refuge. At one mile along Eagles



Mollie Peattie Bog trailhead.

Nest Road, you'll come to a "T" intersection after a wooden bridge. You can bird Upper Tin Shack Road by turning left or Lower Tin Shack Road by turning right. These are old logging roads but are drivable with your car. Lower Tin Road seems to have more coniferous or boreal habitat.

Mollie Beattie Bog

Option two: I tend to turn left at the intersection of Canal and Eagles Nest Roads. Drive for 1.1 miles and you will reach another "T" intersection with Lewis Pond Road (7.9 miles from the entrance). Make the left onto Lewis Pond Road and in 0.7 mile (8.6 from the entrance) you reach a 30-acre clearing, which is another woodcock and grouse management area. You can often see Northern Harriers here along with Mourning Warblers. Turn right onto Four Mile Road. In another 1.4 miles, there will be parking on the left for Mollie Beattie Bog. A boardwalk and viewing platform are on the right. Expect to have Gray Jays and Black-backed Woodpeckers visit as a Palm Warbler or two sing nearby. Magnolia Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Swamp Sparrows, and Lincoln's Sparrows are also around.

For a shortcut back to Island Pond, continue on Four Mile Road and it will run into the Henshaw Road access. This is the back entry into the refuge. It is a 6-mile drive from Mollie Beattie Bog out to Route 105 using this route. Also, birding can be good along this road.

Side trip: At the intersection of Eagles Nest and Lewis Pond Road, turn onto Lewis Pond Road to reach Lewis Pond and the Lewis Pond overlook. While Lewis Pond may

not have any waterfowl, Black-backed Woodpeckers have nested along the shoreline, and the views from the overlook are spectacular, especially in the fall.

North Branch Trail

There is one other trail on the Conte refuge that is worth a visit, especially during fall migration. From the Island Pond stop sign, head east on Route 105 for 7.3 miles. Or from the refuge headquarters, head west on Route 105 for 3.5 miles. A small parking lot for 3 or 4 cars is on the north side of the road. The North Branch Trail (point of interest #5 on the Conte map) is a 3.5-mile loop trail that travels through mixed habitats and runs along the south side of the Nulhegan River for at least half of the distance. In September, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Cape May, and Tennessee warblers, along with Philadelphia Vireos, have been found foraging along this trail. Good numbers of Red-eyed Vireos and a few flycatchers and Ruffed Grouse are also found here.

Link for map of Silvio O. Conte NWR: <http://www.fws.gov/r5soc/library/nulhegan_basin/nulhegan_basin_map.pdf>

Bonus Birding Sites in Northeast Essex County (See map for overview)

Side Trip #1: Plum Creek Timber Lands (Also see Silvio O. Conte NWR map)

Plum Creek Timber Company owns several thousand acres of land in the Northeast Kingdom. The State of Vermont holds easement rights to these lands, and they are open to the public for hiking, birding, hunting, and recreation. The roads are somewhat maintained by the timber company and access to many of these roads can be done in the family car. From the Stone Dam Road entrance of Conte NWR, drive another 0.9 mile east on Route 105 (13.6 miles from Island Pond), then turn left onto East Branch Road. This is just before the bridge that crosses the East Branch of the Nulhegan River. The trip is a 15-mile-long drive through a mix of coniferous and hardwood forests, much of it in successional growth after decades of timber harvest. The good news is that young forests are great for migrating spring and fall warblers. Stop anywhere along the dirt road and see what each particular slice of habitat may offer. At 3.1 miles along the road, cross a wooden bridge and bear left toward Averill/Norton, staying on the main road. You will find a few coniferous areas at 6.5 miles that may be a good place to check, as Spruce Grouse were reported here in summer of 2015. At 9 miles, continue straight—north—toward Averill. At about 15 miles, you merge with Jackson Road. There is a Vermont Fish and Wildlife access for Little Averill Pond if you choose to see what may be on the pond. Otherwise, continue on Jackson Road to Lake Averill and merge onto Route 114, heading west and then south back to Island Pond.

Side Trip #2: Brighton State Park, Spectacle Pond, and Island Pond Access (Also see Wenlock WMA map)

From the stop sign in Island Pond (point of interest #1 on the Wenlock WMA map), drive 1.6 miles east on Route 105. Turn right onto Lakeshore Drive and, after the railroad tracks, make a left onto Fishing Village Road. A Vermont Fish and Wildlife



Gray Jay, Moose Bog.

access is located ahead. Check for Hooded Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks, and Common Loons. You will find Brighton State Park and the town beach 0.8 mile from Route 105 along Lakeshore Drive. Another Vermont Fish and Wildlife access at 1.4 miles is beyond the beach area on the right. In fall months, you will find migrating waterfowl here, including Common Goldeneyes, Red-breasted and Common mergansers, Buffleheads, both scaup species, and all three scoter species. Occasionally, you will see Horned Grebe and Red-necked Grebe. You can often see Bald Eagle in the fall.

Side Trip # 3: Miles Pond and East Concord (Also see Side Trips 3 and 4 map)

Miles Pond is a neglected hotspot for birding. From the North Concord intersection, drive 3.1 miles east on Route 2 to Beach Drive on the right. There is a dirt road, Camper's Lane, on the extreme east end of Miles Pond. Park on the right in front of the town beach and picnic area. The trail for birding is located on the railroad tracks—no longer in use—that head eastward away from the pond. While at the pond area, spend a few minutes to look for Common Loons, Spotted Sandpipers, Baltimore Orioles, Warbling Vireos, and other lakeside passerines.

The old railroad tracks run from Miles Pond to the village of East Concord almost four miles away. If you have two cars, you can leave one at Miles Pond and the other at East Concord where the tracks come out, and walk this trail one way. In summer months, the trail on these tracks can have thorny growth and may be hard to navigate, but persevere and you will be glad you did. You will pass through a mix of habitats including marsh, conifers, hardwoods, and successional growth. In spring, you can find any of the 20 warbler species that migrate through here, including many Canada, Chestnut-sided, and Nashville warblers. Our Audubon chapter often starts our Bird-a-thon here and we can find 60 species. Wood Thrush, Hermit Thrush, and Winter Wren are common, as are Blue-headed and Red-eyed vireos, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Great-crested Flycatcher.

About halfway along the rail trail, you will come to a power line that bisects it. Ospreys have nested atop the poles here, and Marsh Wrens and Olive-sided Flycatchers have been found close by. An ATV/snowmobile trail runs beneath the power lines. Walk in either direction for a few hundred yards, and Mourning Warbler may be your reward. After you cross the trestle past the power lines, the terrain on the right side of trail will be more upland, and on the left side of the trail Miles Stream forms eddies and wetlands below. Openings through the brush reveal waterfowl,ingfishers, and perhaps

Olive-sided Flycatchers as well. The railroad bed gets overgrown with vegetation but is still manageable with proper clothing and boots.

Side Trip # 4: Leonard Hill Road: Whip-poor-wills (Also see Side Trips 3 and 4 map)

If you are in the Kingdom in late May and June, East Concord has one of the best locations for hearing Whip-poor-wills. Wait till the moon has risen above the horizon for at least an hour, preferably closer to a full moon. A short mile or so east on Route 2 from Miles Pond, turn right onto Oregon Road, and follow it for 3.0 miles into the village of East Concord. Bear to the right on Cedar Street and take Leonard Hill Road up the hill over a small concrete bridge. Prime Whip-poor-will habitat runs from 1.5 miles through 3.5 miles along Leonard Hill Road. I've done surveys here for 10 years and always find two to five birds. The best place to stop and listen is where the high voltage power lines cross Leonard Hill Road, at about 2.0 miles. Listen for Northern Saw-whet Owls and Barred Owls, also. I often get each of them as I drive this dirt road. Common Nighthawk is possible in spring and fall as well. If you choose, you can continue on Leonard Hill Road for another eight miles through the village of Concord Corners where you'll make a right turn onto Shadow Lake Road, pass Shadow Lake, and merge into the town of Concord and Route 2.

Side Trip # 5: Northern Essex County Ponds

North of Island Pond, there are five ponds along Route 114 on or a few miles south of the Canadian border that provide waterfowl stops during fall migration. Beginning in mid-September and well into November, any one of these ponds may attract several species of migrating waterfowl. In the spring, these ponds remain frozen until late April so there is less of a chance of finding waterfowl migrating north. In the fall of 2016, I surveyed these ponds regularly and was able to find all three scoter species; all three merganser species; Horned, Red-necked and Pied-billed grebes; both scap species; along with Ring-necked Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Common and Red-throated loons, Common Goldeneyes, Buffleheads, Ruddy Ducks, Green-winged Teal, Black Ducks, and Mallards. I was also able to find Brant, Snow Geese, Canada Geese, and Bonaparte's Gulls. Migrating waterfowl find these ponds inviting enough for a short visit. Short is the key word here, as some birds remain only a few hours before moving on, so timing a trip to these ponds can be hit or miss. One day I had close to 1000 birds among the five ponds and the next day fewer than 50.

Starting at the blinking red light at the intersection in Island Pond (point of interest #1 on the Wenlock WMA map), turn left onto Route 114 and head north. At 0.2 miles, Meadow Street is on the left after you cross a small bridge. This is a good place to stop for a variety of birds year-round. The half-mile dirt road dead-ends at the town's sewage treatment plant. In spring and fall I always check for shorebirds and waterfowl on the two ponds behind the chain link fence. There are a few industrial buildings along the road with several crab apple trees that are worth checking for Pine Grosbeak, Bohemian Waxwing, and Evening Grosbeak during late fall and winter. At least three homes have a few feeders up from November through April. During the winter of

2016, at least 120 Evening Grosbeaks came to the feeders of the house at the corner of Meadow Street and Route 114.

Continue north on Route 114 for 7.5 miles to Hurricane Road on the left. This dirt road leads to a marsh and beaver pond surrounded by a conifer mix of spruce and balsam fir. It is good in the spring for warblers, a few duck species, blackbirds, and the usual woodpecker, kinglet, and nuthatch species. Do not take this road any farther than the pond as it dead-ends at private homes. Return to Route 114.

At 19.5 miles from the Island Pond intersection, turn right onto Jackson Road, the turnoff for Little Averill Pond. This dirt road is open only from late spring to late fall. After five miles of dirt road, you'll arrive at a boat launch and fishing access on the east end of the pond, which is great for kayaking in the fall. To stay on Jackson Road, always bear to the right.

Return to Route 114 and travel north 0.5 mile, turning right onto Lakeview Road, which passes along the northern shoreline of Great Averill Pond. Pull over at any clearings to get scope views of the pond. Another pond that is off the beaten track is Forest Lake. Return to Route 114 north, and in 0.1 mile turn right onto Forest Lake Road. The lake is really a small pond, located 1.6 miles on the right. Check for dabbling ducks in the fall. I have had Boreal Chickadees along the conifer shoreline while scoping Forest Lake.

Four miles up the road from Great Averill Pond is Wallace Pond (24.6 miles from the Island Pond intersection). This 540-acre pond straddles the border with Canada and is the first body of water in the northeastern section of Vermont that migrating waterfowl see as they fly south. There is a Vermont Fish and Wildlife access road on the western end of the pond, but visibility to the pond is not good at that location. I prefer to pull off the road halfway along the pond and scope through the open areas between homes along the shoreline. Many of these homes are summer camps, so during the fall months you won't be interfering with owners' privacy. On the eastern end of the pond, there is a wide opening for scope views of the pond. Wallace Pond is, in my opinion, the best pond for finding waterfowl in Essex County. During the fall, plan to stay at least a few hours at this location. As I stated earlier, the birds seem to come and go, so each time you re-scope there is a good possibility that something new and different has arrived. 🦋

Thomas Berriman moved to the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont in 2002 after living in San Francisco for 25 years. He has spent a good deal of the time since birding that area of Vermont. He is an Audubon chapter president and leads several field trips throughout Vermont each year. Over the last five years, he has honed his skill in digiscoping the birds he finds.



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The Famous Herring Gull of Brenton Reef

John J. Galluzzo



George H. Mackay

Lighthouses have long been places to observe, study, and theorize about birds. Before satellite tagging, before leg banding, simply finding a dead bird in an unexpected place could equal scientific discovery. Unfortunately, thousands of birds struck lighthouse towers every year in the late 1800s. Fortunately, as they gave up their lives, they did so for the furtherance of ornithology, particularly for studies of migration and geographic distribution.

Lightships, too, resting offshore near dangerous underwater obstructions such as rocks and reefs, played their role in the study of birds. One lightship—the Brenton Reef Lightship of Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island—and one

particular Herring Gull at that lightship were written up in the premier ornithological journal of the United States, *The Auk*, in 1892 (Mackay 1892).

George H. Mackay (1843–1937), the author of that piece, holds a special place in the history of the study of our avian friends. The son of Robert C. Mackay, a merchant conducting business in India with his firm Mackay and Coolidge, George had his future career mapped out for him from a young age. As a child, George lived with his parents at 176 Beacon Street in Boston a bustling avenue known as the home of the rich and famous of the city; at 19, he went to sea as supercargo on his father’s behalf during the Civil War. His job was to ensure the safety of the cargo aboard and see to its sale when it reached Calcutta. It was, as the old saying went, an education in the “school of hard knocks”—the “knocks” coming as the ship rolled back and forth and occasionally banged against waves caused by rough seas. Mackay married Maria Mitchell Starbuck, of the great whaling family of Nantucket, on October 13, 1874. In 1880, he still listed his occupation as “East India merchant,” but eventually he would become a stockbroker. About that time, they moved to a new home, at 218 Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, with a summer home at Main Street and Bloom Street on Nantucket. Together they had three children, one of whom, a Noble and Greenough and Harvard alumnus, returned from World War I sporting a wound he gained flying for the Royal Air Force.

In 1865, George Mackay took up the hobby of not only gunning—hunting for sport—but also journaling his experiences on his gunning trips. For about a forty-year period, gunning was both an avocation and a vocation in New England. On the coast of Massachusetts, gunners could make a living producing game birds for the many hotels that dotted the shore. Their prey ranged from pheasants to “coots”—the three species of scoter ducks that migrated in large numbers each fall. Gunners also produced feathers

and even entire birds for display on hats in the women's millinery market. Mackay's father, incidentally, never used a steel pen, instead proudly boasting that he used a quill pen his entire life. It was the public display of this wanton shooting that led to the formation of the Massachusetts Audubon Society in 1896. Eventually, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 outlawed the shooting of most species of birds, but in the late 1800s gunning was a gentlemanly pursuit. Mackay's shooting journal, reflecting fifty-seven years of activity, was privately published in Boston in 1929. In due time he became, particularly through his interests in saving the tern colonies of Nantucket, an important early bird conservationist.

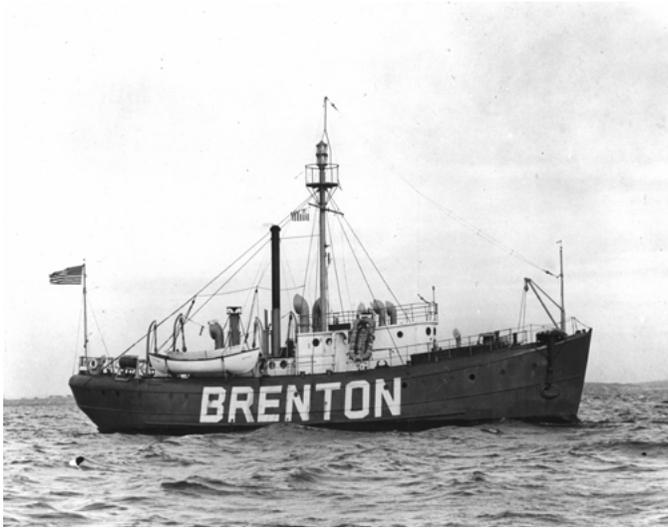
In the days before the routine use of spotting scopes or even binoculars for birdwatching, gunners and egg collectors learned more about birds than most others interested in them. Gunners necessarily watched birds for long periods of time in order to shoot them, and they could hold the birds in their hands and examine them closely.

In addition to his private journals, Mackay took to writing about his experiences, especially around southern New England, for publication in *The Auk*, the journal of the American Ornithologists' Union, in the 1890s. In his 1892 article, one of many he wrote for *The Auk*, Mackay describes many characteristics of the Herring Gull, including its propensity toward kleptoparasitism (stealing food from other birds), how it carried different species of clams into the sky and dropped them to break open on the rocks below, and the wariness of suspicious adult birds that would not fall for tricks gunners used to lure young gulls near enough to be shot. He then dedicates the last three pages of his article to the story of "Gull Dick" and the Brenton Reef Lightship.

That it is customary for some of our water birds to return to their old haunts in New England waters has long been my belief," he writes. "It is therefore with pleasure that I narrate an instance of such return by an American Herring Gull, for the facts concerning which my readers are indebted to the politeness of Captain Edward Fogarty, master of the Brenton Reef Lightship, Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island, who has at my request most kindly furnished me with a description of the Gull and the details of its sojourn in the vicinity of the Lightship for so long a period.

The Brenton Reef Lightship stationed at that time, *LV II*, was built in Baltimore in 1853 and originally served as Nantucket's first lightship, taking up its station on June 15, 1854. After breaking loose from its chains and drifting ashore at Long Island's Montauk Point in February 1855, it was rebuilt in New York and dispatched to Narragansett Bay in 1856, where it would serve until 1897. In 1890, *LV II* ironically—at least in the context of this study—was damaged when it was struck by a British steamer named after a bird, the *Curlew*. The *LV II*'s master, formerly known as its keeper, was Edward Fogarty, who sailed on the ship from 1888 to 1898. When the next lightship, *LV 39*, took over, Fogarty stayed with the station, remaining in charge until his retirement in 1912.

Born in Dublin, Ireland, on July 16, 1850, Fogarty went to sea as a cabin boy at 15, visiting ports from Great Britain to South America. In 1871, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served on ships traveling the world, rounding Cape Horn and visiting Alaska,



For many years in the later 19th century, sailors on the Brenton Reef Lightship off Rhode Island awaited the return of their Herring Gull friend, Gull Dick. Image courtesy of Thomas A. Tag and the United States Lighthouse Society.

Egypt, Italy, and more destinations until settling into the job on the lightship on July 23, 1888. As fellow transoceanic sailors, Mackay and Fogarty spoke the same language.

Mackay asked Fogarty for details about a gull that had been reported to recurrently visit the area around Brenton Reef. This individual bird, it turned out, was well known to the crew. "This particular bird is described as appearing old, and not showing the same activity as other Gulls of the same kind which also frequent the neighborhood of the lightship," writes Mackay. "After it has been absent from the first of April to the middle of October, at which times it usually departs and returns, there are many eyes on the lightship constantly on the lookout to welcome Dick back again."

When Gull Dick arrived on October 5, 1891, the crew noted the event as the twentieth anniversary of his presence in the area. Although the crew had changed with time, old sailors retiring or otherwise leaving the lightship, watching out for and feeding Dick remained an annual tradition. As the years passed, the crew became increasingly concerned about his age and what they perceived as his feebleness. The crew claimed they recognized him by his cry and by "certain marks on its wings," and the fact that he approached the vessel much more closely than any other gulls would, though he never landed on the lightship itself.

"It is fond of and eats boiled pork or fish with voracity, preferring the former, swallowing six or eight pieces the size of a hen's egg when hungry," Mackay reports. "If not hungry and other Gulls are about at the time of its being fed, it will not let them have any if it can prevent it, although not wishing to partake itself, making the greatest possible fuss all the while if one of the other Gulls attempts to secure an occasional piece." In one instance Fogarty shared with Mackay, Dick grabbed another gull "becoming too bold" by the neck and tore out a bill full of feathers, leaving the other

gull “only too glad to escape further punishment by an immediate retreat.”

“Every morning at sunrise, when the lights on the ship are lowered for the day,” states Mackay, “this Gull is perceived coming towards the ship, from the rocks (where it roosts) about two miles away, for its breakfast which it always received from the hands of the crew. Should the bird not be noticed flying around near by, one of the crew will call the bird by name, whistle, or wave his hand, and soon the bird appears.” Once the lights were hoisted for the night, Dick headed ashore, to roost on the rocks near Beavertail Lighthouse on Conanicut Island.

And so it went, each winter, for twenty years. On April 12, 1892, Captain Fogarty noted that he had last seen Dick six days prior. What became of him? Had he flown north once again for the breeding season, expected to return once again in the fall?

Mackay, though, speaking with the heart of a true sailor, says that perhaps that was okay. “Pause my reader and reflect on what this story conveys. Is it not a most interesting portrayal of successful bird life well rounded out? Storms, disease, fatalities, perils of migration, have all been braved and surmounted for twenty years at least, and perhaps for a longer period. Yet still constant, Gull Dick, now a veteran, may nevertheless be seen as of old in his accustomed haunt, - while on board the lightship there is not today a man who was there when this bird first appeared.”

As it happened, Gull Dick continued to return to the lightship for an additional four seasons, which Mackay noted in a series of short annual notes published in *The Auk* (Mackay 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896). In Mackay’s final note about Gull Dick (Mackay 1898), he wrote that the gull had been last observed at the lightship on April 7, 1896, marking its 24th consecutive season at the ship. However, and one can sense Mackay’s sadness, he also wrote,

The failure of this bird to put in an appearance as usual in October, 1896, and his continued absence ever since, leaves but little doubt that he is dead, as are all the captains of the Light-ship except the present incumbent, Captain Fogarty. Having recorded this bird’s movements while alive for several years past in ‘The Auk,’ I now feel called upon to record his probable demise. 🐦

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Sixth Report of the Maine Bird Records Committee

Louis R. Bevier



Maine continues to produce amazing birds. This breeding-plumaged Great Knot stopped on the island on July 23, 2016, providing an extremely rare record for eastern North America. Photograph by Keenan Yakola.

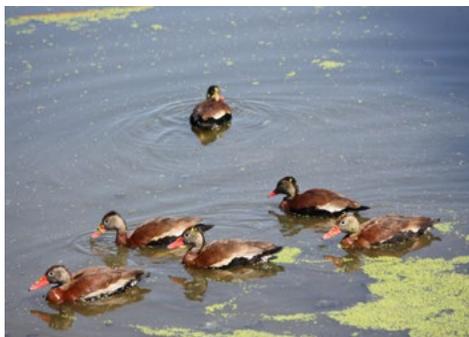
This sixth report of the Maine Bird Records Committee (hereafter ME-BRC or the committee) summarizes assessment of 40 records involving 28 species, including one species pair and one subspecies group. Evaluation of these records occurred during 2015 and 2016. The committee accepted 32 records for an acceptance rate of 80%. Although a majority of birds in this report were documented in 2015–16, the years of occurrences range from 1831–32 to 2016, the earliest of which is review of a specimen illustrated by John James Audubon.

Highlights in this report include eight species accepted as documented for the first time in the state of Maine: Great Knot, Surfbird, Ancient Murrelet, Tufted Puffin, Trindade Petrel, Crested Caracara, Rock Wren, and Brewer's Sparrow. In addition, photographic documentation of a Black-throated Sparrow provided the first solid evidence of that species for the state and the first evidence evaluated by the committee. An older, second-hand, sight record has not yet been formally reviewed but had been accepted on the official list when the committee first formed in 2005. These records bring the total number of accepted species on Maine's state list to 453. The official list of bird species recorded in Maine, our review procedures, and members can be found at the committee's website: <https://sites.google.com/site/mainebirdrecordscommittee/>

Records in this report are grouped by species, including both reports accepted and not accepted in the same species account. Each account provides location, county in

italics, and date(s) of occurrence followed in parentheses by observers names and the committee's record number. Observers listed are those providing documentation to the committee, or in some cases, documentation from public web sites. All reviewed materials and member comments are archived. If known, the finder or finders names are listed first and separated from other names by a semicolon. The type of evidence reviewed is noted as follows: photographic, video, or audio denoted by a dagger (†); written notes are denoted with an asterisk (*). As always, the committee strongly encourages written submissions even where photographs exist. Species accounts follow the current taxonomic classification and sequence adopted as of 2016 by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU, available at <http://checklist.aou.org/taxa/>), now the American Ornithological Society. Family-level sequence arrangements recently underwent a major overhaul by taxonomists using the latest genetic evidence. Consequently, the sequence of species may be unfamiliar to many readers. Please see the AOU link above for references cited in support of these recent taxonomic changes.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS



Black-bellied Whistling Duck. These six were on Mt. Desert Island, Hancock County, Maine May 27–30, 2013. Photograph May 28, 2013 by Trevor Persons.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck

(*Dendrocygna autumnalis*). Up to six were in the towns of Mount Desert and Bar Harbor, *Hancock*, May 27–30, 2013 (Steve Dugay† and Rich MacDonald*; Ed Hawkes, Becky Marvil, William Nichols*, and many others; 2013-003). Dugay photographed the flock in a small wetland at the north end of Long Pond, Mount Desert (44.35526° N, 68.36410° W). MacDonald et al. independently discovered the birds the next day at settling ponds next to Mount Desert Island High School, Bar Harbor (44.37284° N, 68.30321° W), which is about 3.24 miles ENE from the previous location. One bird

died of unknown causes on May 28 and this specimen is at Colby College.

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*). An immature was at Cherryfield, *Washington*, November 5–28, 2012 (Joel Wilcox†; Sandy Wilcox, Chris Bartlett†, Louis Bevier†, Bruce Cole†, Pat Moynahan*, Tal Roberts†, Bill Sheehan*, Margaret Viens†, et al.; 2012-020). One was found at Puddledock Pond, Fort Fairfield, *Aroostook*, October 13–15, 2014 (Bill Sheehan*†; John Wyatt†, Jerry Smith†, Clay Hardy; 2014-009). These sightings are the 3rd and 7th state records of this now annual vagrant.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*). An adult was on the coast at Rockland, *Knox*, January 31–February 4, 2013 (Don Reimer†; Louis Bevier†, Doug Hitchcox†, et al.; 2013-001). Another was at Westbrook, *Cumberland*, November 30–December 28, 2015 (Pat Moynahan*; Doug Hitchcox*, Rob Speirs†; 2015-008).

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*). An adult male was on Sabattus Pond in the town of Greene, *Androscoggin*, March 31, 2016 (Don F. Smith*; Rob Speirs†; 2016-006).



This cooperative Western Grebe was at Owls Head Harbor, Knox County, Maine February 11–19, 2016. Photograph February 11, 2016 by Mike Fahay.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*). An apparent male by bill shape was at Owls Head, *Knox*, February 11–19, 2016 (Mike Fahay†; Nancy Houlihan*; 2016-004). Another, thought to be a female by bill shape, was on Middle Bay, Brunswick, *Cumberland*, April 17–23, 2016 (Derek Lovitch; Louis Bevier*†, Doug Hitchcox*†; 2016-005). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED:

one was seen by a competent observer who described, sketched, photographed, and videotaped a bird in Middle Bay, Brunswick, *Cumberland*, December 26, 2014 (2014-011). Unfortunately, due to the distance involved, the photographs were felt inconclusive. Most members agreed the bird was an *Aechmophorus* Western or Clark's Grebe, but some were uncertain if the bird could be identified even to genus. It is possible that this bird was the same Western Grebe well documented at the same location the following winter (2016-005, above).

Rufous or Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus* or *sasin*). An immature female at Cousin's Island, Yarmouth, *Cumberland*, October 16–17, 2015 was photographed (Lois Randall, Phil Bunch†; 2015-004). The images clearly show a bird that is either Rufous or Allen's hummingbird and not another *Selasphorus* species, e.g. Broad-tailed (*S. platycercus*) or Calliope (*S. calliope*). Feather details that might allow identification to either Rufous or Allen's could not be seen in the photographs, and, even so, photos alone may not be sufficient to identify immature females of this species



This and another King Rail were present at Webhannet Marsh in Wells, York County, Maine from May 1–July 4, 2016. Although clearly territorial, breeding was never documented. Photograph June 9, 2016 by Josh Fecteau.

pair. Minor differences in the breadth of the outer tail feather, the shape at the tip of the next to innermost tail feathers, and, perhaps, how graduated the tail appears are necessary.

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*). Up to two were well documented in the southern part of Webhannet Marsh, part of the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, Wells, *York*, May 10–July 14, 2016 (Bri Benvenuti*†; Louis Bevier*†, Josh Fecteau†, Doug Hitchcox†, and others; 2016-012). Because the two species hybridize in southern New England, Dr. James Maley, an expert on the King and

Clapper rail species complex, evaluated the evidence. Dr. Maley, who is at the Moore Laboratory of Zoology at Occidental College in Los Angeles, California, stated that he saw no reason to suspect mixed ancestry (*in litt.* to L. Bevier). One bird repeatedly gave calls that match male advertising vocalizations of King Rail in pacing and rate of note delivery. Another bird was heard countering or responding at the same time. If nesting occurred was never determined, despite a clearly established territory.

Great Knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*). A stunning first for Maine, a breeding plumage bird stopped on Seal Island, *Knox*, July 23, 2016 (Keenan Yakola†; 2016-018). This species has a limited breeding range in northeastern Russia and winters in Australia. The global population is in decline and designated as Endangered by Birdlife International (2017). It is a rare migrant to western Alaskan islands and the Seward Peninsula, with a few vagrants down the West Coast of North America. Exceptionally, one was found August 13, 2007 in West Virginia (Fazio and Wiltraut 2008).



This Surfbird delighted birders from throughout the region when it lingered at Biddeford Pool, York County, Maine March 21–April 18, 2015. Photograph March 26, 2015 by Louis Bevier.

Surfbird (*Calidris virgata*). One first-year in basic plumage delighted many March 21–April 18, 2015 at Biddeford Pool, *York* (Tin Mountain Bird Society with Chris Lewey, Rick Steber, Sean Ashe, et al.; John Lazzaro†, Sandra Mitchell†, and many others*†; 2015-009). Not surprisingly, this bird was unexpected and not identified in the field. Photos sent by Lewey and, independently, by Mitchell and Lazzaro, were soon identified, making the bird's presence widely known. This record was a first for Maine and only the second for the Atlantic Coast proper. The only previous Atlantic record is from

Florida in 2005—four other Florida records are from the Gulf Coast peninsula and panhandle. There is one fall record for Presque Isle State Park, Erie, Pennsylvania. There are at least 10 accepted records for Texas. Given that the species winters as far south as southern Chile—even wrapping around Tierra del Fuego, it is plausible that some birds cross at the Isthmus of Panama to enter the Atlantic and Caribbean basins.

Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*). A rufous and black adult male was at Scarborough Marsh, Scarborough, *Cumberland*, June 30, 2016 (Timothy Fennell*†; Travis Marceron*†; 2016-015). A female, or Reeve, was at Scarborough Marsh, Scarborough, *Cumberland*, May 9, 2015 (Zeke Smith*†, Collette Lauzau, Rob Lambert; 2015-001).

Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*). One in breeding plumage was first found at Seal Island, *Knox*, May 13, 2016 (John Drury*; Keenan Yakola†; 2016-007). Presumably the same bird appeared at two other locations in the Gulf of Maine during the following weeks: Petit Manan Island, *Washington*, May 22 and June 1 (Jill Tengeres* and Nancy Magnusson† respectively) and Machias Seal Island, *Washington*, May 27 (Tim Dunn†). Machias Seal Island is also claimed by Canada and the province



This Ancient Murrelet, first found at Seal Island, Knox County, Maine on May 13, 2016, visited other alcid colonies in the Gulf of Maine, being seen at Petit Manan Island, Washington County May 22 and June 1, and Machias Seal Island, Washington County May 27. Photograph at Seal Island May 13, 2016 by Keenan Yakola.

of New Brunswick but lies in Maine waters. This species has a long history of vagrancy to eastern North America, but this sighting was the first for Maine.

Tufted Puffin (*Fratercula cirrhata*). An apparent adult was collected by a “fisherman gunner” somewhere near the mouth of the Kennebec River, *Sagadahoc*, during the winter of 1831–1832 (John James Audubon; 1832-001). One was on and around Machias Seal Island (and in Maine waters), *Washington*, June 17–July 23, 2014 (Ralph Eldridge*†; Durlan Ingersoll†, Steve Shreiner†, Amanda Didychuk†, Claus Wolter†, Ben West†, et al.; 2014-015). Audubon states explicitly that his plate is based on a bird procured in Maine (Plate 249 in Audubon 1835a), and the specimen



This Tufted Puffin frequented the alcid colony on Machias Seal Island, Washington County, Maine. The island is claimed by Canada but is within Maine waters. June 17–July 23, 2014. Photograph July 8, 2014 by Durlan Ingersoll.

ascribed to this bird is a mount preserved at the New York State Museum (NYSM zo-9435). Audubon may have seen only the skin, and the mount might have been made up at a later date—John Bell was a New York taxidermist associated with Audubon. Audubon’s plate shows the prostrate and inwardly curved inner toenails that all puffins exhibit, but the mount has the toes unnaturally straightened. If the specimen is the same skin that Audubon saw may be in question, but the committee accepted Audubon’s account (Audubon 1835b). One member noted that the number of furrows on the bill suggested an older bird and might thus be unusual given that most vagrants are immature birds. The

record has long been accepted, and the committee endorses it here. The Machias Seal Island bird fittingly reaffirms the validity of the species in the state and also was a first for New Brunswick. Note the last date for this bird is July 23 (*fide* S. Tingley, *contra* Petersen 2015 and Seeler 2015).

Franklin's Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*). A bird in breeding plumage was on Stratton Island, Saco, York, June 3, 2015 (Kristina McOmber†; 2015-003). An immature at Seabasticook Lake, Newport, Penobscot, October 28–November 14, 2015 presaged a major influx to the Northeast that occurred in mid-November (Bruce Cole*†; L. Bevier†, Steve Mierzykowski†, et al.; 2015-006).

Mew Gull (*Larus canus*). One adult or subadult was at Thomaston, Knox, August 3–26, 2013 (Don Reimer†; Louis Bevier†, Mike Fahay†, Rob Speirs†, et al.; 2013-007). This bird showed characters of the western North American race, Short-billed Gull (*L. c. brachyrhynchus*) based on analysis by L. Bevier (also see Adriaens and Gibbins 2016). One bird identified from photos was briefly seen on Harbor Island, Knox, September 24, 2013 (Peter Vickery†, Geoff LeBaron*; 2013-022) and may have been the Thomaston bird. A first-winter bird, also a Short-billed Gull, was at Owls Head, Knox, January 7–March 13, 2016 (Margaret Viens†, Scott Hall*, and Don Reimer†; many observers; 2016-002).



This first-winter Mew Gull at Owls Head Harbor, Knox County, Maine January 7–March 13, 2016 was easily identified as belonging to the West Coast subspecies, Short-billed Gull (*Larus canus brachyrhynchus*). Photograph January 19, 2016 by Louis Bevier.

Trindade Petrel (*Pterodroma arminjoniana*). Maine's first was a corpse found on Ogunquit Beach, Ogunquit, York, June 10, 2014 (Doug Hitchcox†; 2014-008). Measurements of bill and foot made from the photographs coupled with plumage characters eliminated other similar taxa. Massachusetts recorded its first two occurrences in late July the same year (Garvey et al. 2015).



Maine's first Trindade Petrel washed up on Ogunquit Beach, York County, Maine June 10, 2014. Photograph by Doug Hitchcox.

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*). Sanford Lagoons, Sanford, York, July 1, 2016 (Josh Fecteau*†; 2016-016).

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A bird at Frenchville, Aroostook, April 20, 2012 (2012-018) was documented with poor cell phone photos and was

not identified in the field. It was circulated as this species because the observer thought the bird was a raptor, and Mississippi Kite was suggested by one reviewer. The images are inconclusive, one member suggesting Swallow-tailed Kite was not eliminated and would be more likely in mid-late April. No conclusion was reached on the identity of the bird.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*). A juvenile flew over Cadillac Mountain, Hancock, October 30, 2015 (Jason Bojczyk*†; 2015-005). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: One seen briefly at Laudholm Farm, Wells, York, February 2, 2016 (2016-003*). Details were felt insufficient to verify what would be an extraordinary date for this species in the Northeast.



Maine's first Crested Caracara was originally found August 26–27, 2014 at Unity Township, Kennebec County and relocated at Norridgewock, Somerset County September 2–8, 2014. Photograph August 27, 2014 by David Ladd.

Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*). Providing a first state record, Steve and Debby Muise(*†) found a bird at Unity Township, Kennebec, where seen August 26–27, 2014. The same bird was found subsequently over 22 miles to the west-northwest at Norridgewock, Somerset, September 2–8, 2014 (Derek Willette†, and many others; 2014-014). The bird at both locations was in the same state of molt and had a missing toe nail on the outer toe of the left foot. Comparison of photos of a caracara in New Brunswick during April 2014 were inconclusive as to whether the Maine bird was the same.

Comparison of primary patterns and other features with birds recently seen in Nova Scotia was likewise inconclusive. A strong pattern of vagrancy has developed for this species in recent years, with some individuals ranging hundreds of miles over long periods of time.

Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: The committee reviewed an older, published report (Bent 1942) of two birds at Deer Isle, Stonington, Hancock, September 14, 1938 (Martin Curtler*; 1938-001). The date is within the expected time for a vagrant to New England, but the occurrence of two together was viewed as too unlikely. Some members felt Western Kingbird was not eliminated, but the observer never mentioned yellow underparts, only underwings, which Gray Kingbird indeed shows. Moreover, the observer noted similarity to shrikes in appearance, suggesting the dark mask, also shown by Gray Kingbird. The notes, however, are simply too vague to be sure of the identification.

Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*). One was at Bog Brook Cove, Trescott Twp., Washington, October 29, 2013 (Tom and Pat Cabe*; 2013-017). The observers described salient features of plumage and behavior that were convincing. This first state record is one of the few accepted based only on descriptive evidence. Its occurrence fits a late fall and winter pattern for the species in the Northeast.

Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*). One was at Lincoln, *Penobscot*, November 23, 2014 (Ty Oliver*†; 2014-010). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A bird described at Skowhegan, *Somerset*, May 13–14, 2015 was from a date that is highly unusual for the species in the Northeast (2015-002).

MacGillivray’s Warbler (*Geothlypis tolmiei*). A composite of descriptions and a voice-recording supported one at Kettle Cove, Cape Elizabeth, *Cumberland*, November 27–29, 2015 (Derek Lovitch, Luke Seitz*; Doug Hitchcox†, Becky Marvil*; 2015-007). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: The description of a bird at the Saco River Walk, Saco, *York*, October 28, 2014 lacked enough detail to support the identification (2014-012).

Townsend’s Warbler (*Setophaga townsendi*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A bird photographed incidentally was thought to be an adult male of this species at Sandy Point, Yarmouth, *Cumberland*, September 26, 2011 (2011-014). The single image was thought by most members to show a Townsend’s Warbler but insufficient to definitively support the identification. The date is on the early side for vagrants to the Northeast, most being for late fall, but there are similar early records, even involving adult males.

Brewer’s Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*). One bird that occasionally sang was on Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, May 25–29, 2014 (Lysle Brinker*†, Jeremiah Trimble*†, Doug Hitchcox†, Blair Nikula, and many others; 2014-006). Analysis of the plumage—paler brown with thin black crown streaks—and of the song—exhibiting broad frequency range—suggest the bird was nominate *S. b. breweri* versus *S. b. taverneri*.



Monhegan Island, Lincoln County, Maine always produces surprises. Maine’s first Brewer’s Sparrow was present there May 25–29, 2014. Photograph May 25, 2014 by Doug Hitchcox.

Black-throated Sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*). One found at Winter Harbor, *Hancock*, January 1–March 17, 2016 (Chuck Whitney, Ed and Debbie Hawkes; many others; 2016-001). This bird provided much enjoyment and solid documentation of the species in the state.

Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco (*Junco hyemalis [oreganus group]*). A bird showing characters of the “Oregon” Junco subspecies group was at Reid State Park, Georgetown, *Sagadahoc*, December 7, 2015 (Derek Lovitch†, Kristen Lindquist; 2015-010).

Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A bird incidentally photographed and later thought possibly this species was on Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, May 25, 2010 (2010-019†). The bird shows whitish wing bars and plumage features suggestive of Lazuli Bunting. The notion of a



This handsome Black-throated Sparrow, found on the Schoodic Point CBC, was present in a Winter Harbor, Hancock County, Maine neighborhood January 1–March 17, 2016. Photograph January 8, 2016 by Louis Bevier.

female vagrant in spring and lack of more details meant the record failed to gain support.

Recent noteworthy occurrences in Maine that have not yet been reviewed include a returning Little Egret to Cumberland and York Counties; a Corn Crake on Monhegan Island that, if accepted, would be the second state record (the first in 1889); and two separate Bullock's Orioles.

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From Sanctuary to Sanctuary: Portraying the Diversity of Mass Audubon

Barry Van Dusen



Ruddy Turnstone. All images by the author.

Artist-in-Residence programs have proliferated in recent years, and offer people like me a variety of opportunities for work and travel. In the past decade, I've taken part in four residency programs around New England, and have found them to be productive and fun. From my point of view, the best thing about these programs is the chance to work outdoors on a regular basis.

When Amy Montague, director of Mass Audubon's Museum of American Bird Art, approached me in 2014 with the idea of a Mass Audubon "statewide residency," I was ready to go! I knew it would be my most ambitious residency yet, and I insisted on a two-year working period. I wanted to give each sanctuary the attention it deserved, and didn't want to rush the visits. I agreed to write up my visits in a Mass Audubon blog, where I would also post sketches, paintings and related photographs. The project will culminate in an exhibition at the Museum of American Bird Art in Canton, MA from May 21 to September 17, 2017.

When I started the project, there were 54 public sanctuaries, but two more came online in 2015, and in addition, I decided to include Mass Audubon's Wildwood Camp in Rindge, New Hampshire. This brought the total number of properties to 57—and that was my goal for the two-year working period. I have been a Mass Audubon member for many years, and during that time had visited many of the Society's properties, but I



Black-throated Blue Warbler in Birch, Eagle Lake, Holden.

had certainly not visited all of them. Now I had no excuse!

I typically spend a full day at each location, although some properties are visited more than once. On every visit I carry a 9" x 12" sketchbook for notes and pencil studies, but I also carry several types of watercolor paper and a full watercolor kit. For optics I carry 8x binoculars and a 25x scope, along with a small digital camera.

Initially, I thought I might do all of the watercolor paintings on location, but I quickly realized that this approach was too limiting. Some subjects, like nesting birds, landscapes, and botanical subjects, easily lend themselves to location work, while others prove more challenging. I also realized that some of my best *ideas* for

pictures come to me *after* a visit, when I've had the leisure to mull over my experiences and ponder on the imagery. As it is turning out, about half of the watercolors are produced in the field, and the rest are done in my studio.

In some instances, I've timed my visits to work with very specific subjects, like the yellow lady's slippers at High Ledges or the purple-fringed orchids at West Mountain. For places like Marblehead Neck or Sampson's Island, I made sure to visit at the most productive time of year. Occasionally, I've taken advantage of unexpected weather events, like the spring snowstorm on March 21, 2016, at the end of a mild, open winter.

In general, I did not work towards any predetermined list of species or sanctuary specialties, though many of the subjects I painted would fit that description. My primary aim was to take advantage of artistic opportunities as I encountered them, and at every location a good deal of serendipity was involved. Along the way, I hope I've created a body of work that celebrates the richness and biological diversity of Massachusetts and the Mass Audubon sanctuary system.

I've painted many birds for the project, but also worked with landscapes (some featuring Mass Audubon buildings), flowers and plants, butterflies, dragonflies and other insects, mammals, salamanders, turtles, frogs, and fish. Looking at the entire body of work, I see an obvious bias toward certain subjects, and for this I make no apologies. I tell my students: Draw what you love and it will be reflected in your work!

Here are some of the observations I made in the course of writing my posts for the *Taking Flight* blog:

May 11, 2015, Eagle Lake, Holden—As I hike in along the Appleton Loop trail, it becomes obvious that Black-throated Blue Warblers are the most abundant warbler



Black-billed Cuckoo, Burncoat Pond, Spencer.

at this site. Every quarter mile or so, I encounter another Black-throated Blue singing from the sweet birches that arch above the mountain laurel thickets. Pausing along the trail, a female circles and scolds me—I must be near a nest, so I move on...

May 26, 2015, Ashumet Holly, Falmouth—Drawing birds, as opposed to photographing them or birding, entails observing and studying individual birds for relatively long periods of time. Perhaps because of this, I often find bird nests during my fieldwork. I'll notice that a bird I'm drawing is hanging around one particular spot, or I'll see a bird carrying nest material. Today I found the nests of a Yellow Warbler, a Baltimore Oriole, and an Orchard Oriole!

June 24, 2015, Burncoat Pond, Spencer—While I'm eating lunch under a big sugar maple near the parking area, a bird flies into the branches over my head. Something about the bird looks interesting, but I can't locate it among the maple leaves. Finally, it moves to an oak across the road and I quickly get my scope on it—a Black-billed Cuckoo! Good looks at cuckoos never seem to last very long, and this one is no different, giving me just one good look before it disappears. I rarely try to develop a painting from such a brief look, but the impression was a strong one, so I take out my sketchbook and get down as much as possible of what I remember. I've learned that it's sometimes good to force myself to work from memory; it has a way of distilling and intensifying a field experience.

July 19, 2015, West Mountain, Plainfield—As I'm assembling my gear to hike the trails, I hear a commotion in the woods across the street, and a young bear pokes its head out of the thick roadside vegetation and looks straight at me! I must look



Young Red-tailed Hawk, Habitat Sanctuary.

threatening because the animal makes a hasty retreat back into the woods, only to circle around and do the same thing again. The bear clearly wants to cross the road, but after its second retreat it must have decided to cross elsewhere. The fact that it made so much noise in the woods was reassuring, since it would be unlikely to take me by surprise if I encounter it again.

July 24, 2015, Stony Brook, Norfolk—

Heading back to the visitor center, I hear the distinctive notes of a Purple Martin. Upon my arrival at the sanctuary earlier, I had noticed the martin house in the big field next to the parking area, but had seen only House Sparrows perched there. Now, I focus my scope on the house and find a single martin perched on the top mast. Later, I asked sanctuary director Doug Williams about the birds and was pleased to hear that the martins were in their third year of using the box and that this year

three nests had produced a total of 10 young birds. I saw no more martins this day, but was happy to know that the colony is on the increase.

August 17, 2015, Long Pasture, Barnstable—The tide is low, and there are many birds spread out and feeding on the mudflats in front of me. I greatly enjoy drawing birds at the shore, where my spotting scope really comes into its own. As I work quietly from one spot, the birds soon forget my presence and some of them approach quite closely. After a while, some kids arrive, remove their shoes and socks, and head out on the flats to explore. This puts an end to my drawing as the birds quickly move away, but I've had a good session, and am happy to see the kids getting excited over the crabs, snails, and worms that they find.

October 6, 2015, Lincoln Woods, Leominster—As I'm about to depart, a movement along the opposite shore catches my eye, and I focus my binoculars on two Blackpoll Warblers that have come to bathe in the vernal pool. The bright olive hues of the birds make an unexpected contrast with the somber colors of the shoreline, and their reflections seem to glow on the dark waters. Within minutes the birds have moved on, and the pool is once again quiet and still. I make some quick sketches to fix the scene in my mind.

October 25, 2015, Moose Hill, Sharon—The rocky ridge top of the Bluff Overlook (elevation 491 feet) hosts a plant community quite distinct from that of the surrounding forests. Eastern red cedars are the most conspicuous feature, but there's also a predominance of pignut hickory, and a small shrub-like oak called bear oak. Another prominent feature visible from the overlook is Gillette Stadium. I arrive on the



Blackpoll Warbler bathing in vernal pool.

ridge about an hour before game time, and Gillette is lit up like a spaceship—glowing in the fog and light drizzle (yes, the rain persists!). Rock music from the public address system drifts over the intervening hills.

January 26, 2016, Eastern Point, Gloucester—Gloucester is a popular winter destination for birders, so I am not surprised to meet some today, including Jim Berry, an expert on Essex County birds. He helps me sort out the gulls that are present, and points out a group of about forty Purple Sandpipers hunkered down on the lee side of the Dog Bar Breakwater. Most of the birders are, of course, moving from spot to spot in search of “good birds,” whereas I confine my observations to the sanctuary and the immediate vicinity. If you want to “do art,” you can’t run around a lot, too!

February 29, 2016, Habitat, Belmont—Are there more Red-tailed Hawks around these days, or is it just me? I’m watching a Hairy Woodpecker at Weeks Meadow when a big bird swoops in to land in the lower branches of a nearby tree. It’s a handsome young Red-tail attracted to a noisy mob of House Sparrows in the thicket below. Young birds, being rather clueless, can be excellent models. I’m in full view of the bird, and though I move myself and the scope several times to get better views, it seems totally oblivious to my presence.

March 22, 2016, Arcadia, Easthampton—The eagle nest, by its sheer size, is easy to locate, but to get the best views requires careful positioning of my scope and field stool on the hillside above Ned’s Ditch. I settle down to watch. The nest is placed in a main crotch near the top of a large, live tree (oak?), and is truly MASSIVE in size—so much so that the bird’s head, protruding above the mass of sticks and twigs, looks



White-eyed Vireo in Cherry.

ridiculously *tiny*! I later learned that Bald Eagles make the largest nest of any single pair of birds.

May 4, 2016, North River, Marshfield—In the lower end of the meadow, a big platform has been erected to attract nesting Ospreys, and sure enough, a bird sits on the nest, likely incubating eggs. The platform was erected in 2009, but this is the first year ospreys have used it to establish a nest. Needless to say, David Ludlow and the staff are excited! With my scope, I have superb close-up views of the incubating bird. I get to work with my sketchbook, attempting to capture the angular shapes of the head and that intense, angry look on the bird's face.

May 19, 2016, Marblehead Neck, Marblehead—As with many types of birding, hitting a place like this on just the right day is largely a matter of luck. The day I visited did not coincide with any spectacular fall-outs, but neither did it disappoint. Arriving at the parking area at 10:15 am, I claimed the last parking spot. It had been a busy morning, and some birders were just returning to their cars. They had the usual report: “You should have been here yesterday.” However, I could hear a Blackpoll Warbler, a Magnolia Warbler, and a Black-throated Green Warbler from the parking lot, so how bad could it be?

May 28, 2016, Allens Pond, Dartmouth—I'm surrounded on three sides by coastal scrub: dense thickets of shrubs and low trees that are home to a variety of birds. Catbirds and Yellow Warblers are abundant, but an unfamiliar song captures my attention. It's a loud, persistent song starting and ending with a sharp chip. I jot

it down in my sketchbook thus: “chip-che-wheeyou-chip!” For 45 minutes I stare intently into the thickets, trying to pinpoint just where that song is coming from. Persistence finally pays off when the bird moves to a slightly higher perch in a small cherry tree, and I have a clear view of a White-eyed Vireo. Only later do I read that these birds usually sing from a low, concealed perch!



Osprey on nest

June 30, 2016, Ipswich River, Topsfield—When I pause along the trail, I notice an interesting phenomenon: small birds—mostly titmice and chickadees—approach me closely, coming to within arm’s length. Later, as I work on a watercolor, a White-breasted Nuthatch approaches on a tree trunk and inspects me with a curious expression. This happens at least three times while I’m painting, and I’m beginning to fancy that through some mysterious telepathy, the birds recognize me as a kindred spirit. Back in the parking lot, I relate these “close encounters” to Sandy Selesky (a regular visitor), and she laughs, explaining that Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary is well known to locals as a place where the birds have become habituated to taking hand-outs of food from visitors. So much for my communion with the birds!

July 11, 2016, Sampson’s Island, Cotuit—This is my first sanctuary visit that requires a boat. I meet two coastal waterbird wardens at a rendezvous point in Cotuit, and load my field kit into a small, open runabout. Brad Bower is the Sampson’s Island crew leader, and his associate is Brian Lonabocker. They are students of biology and environmental science, and this is a summer job for them. Today, they load signs into the boat, which they’ll be posting in various spots around the island. During the peak breeding season, boats are not allowed to land on the island, in order to safeguard the birds during this critical period.

July 12, 2016, Daniel Webster, Marshfield—I notice a movement at the base of the cattails, and watch a Virginia Rail emerge into the open water, followed closely by another, darker bird. A moorhen or coot??? No, it’s too small and the bill isn’t right for either of these species. It’s charcoal black, save for a few fuzzy patches of chestnut, and the bill is dark and thin, with a pale nostril and pale tip. It is, of course, a young Virginia Rail! It shadows the adult closely, following every movement of its parent with keen interest. The adult finds what looks like a dead frog or tadpole, and both birds take turns poking, prodding, lifting, and tossing. The show is over all too soon, and the birds melt back into the cattails...

August 19, 2016, Wellfleet Bay, South Wellfleet—Where the Try Island Trail meets the boardwalk to the beach, I meet a group of volunteers who are monitoring diamondback terrapin nests. Each nest is protected by a wire enclosure, and I’ve encountered many of them as I walk the trails. The nest monitors, Theresa Hultin, Steve Monroe, and Nancy Munger, kindly allow me to watch as they assist at a hatching nest. The number of hatchlings and eggshells are carefully counted and recorded in a log,



Virginia Rail and young.

along with location of the nest, time of hatching, and the depth of the nest. Theresa, the team leader, tells me that 85 terrapin nests have been located on the sanctuary this year. Each nest, if it is not disturbed by predators, will produce between 12 and 22 young turtles.

September 2, 2016, Boston Nature Center, Mattapan—On the Snail Trail, I pass through a mature forest of oaks and silver maples, interrupted by sunny glades of lush undergrowth. I watch a flock of young starlings gorging on wild grapes, and make some drawings. Young starlings display this unusual plumage for only a short time in late summer. Their tawny gray heads are set off by black vests densely spangled with bold white spots. A black “bandit mask” on the face gives them an intense, slightly sinister look. The combination of the fruiting grapevines and the smartly dressed birds leaves a powerful impression—and one that I re-create later in my studio.

September 28, 2016, Canoe Meadows, Pittsfield—As I’m packing up to leave, a hawk flies in to land in a big poplar across the pond, which immediately raises a clamor among the neighborhood crows. I put my scope on the bird and see that it’s a Cooper’s Hawk – a young bird (brown upperparts and fine streaking on the breast) with a lean, hungry look. It strikes me as impossibly elongated or stretched out—like a figure painted by El Greco. The bird is driven off by the crows several times, but each time it

returns to perch in the big poplar. It's that LEAN, HUNGRY look that I keep uppermost in mind as I develop its portrait.

September 29, 2016, Pleasant Valley, Lenox—The eastern side of Lenox Mountain falls into afternoon shadow early at this time of year, and I have to watch my footing carefully as I descend the Overbrook Trail. The hemlock gorge is especially dark and gloomy, but the footing becomes easy again as the trail flattens out at the base of the mountain. On the Bluebird Trail, a fleeting brown blur darts under the boardwalk as I approach. I pause and make some quiet squeaks and “pishes”—enough to coax out a Winter Wren into the open. It utters some notes that remind me of a Song Sparrow, and hops around some decaying birch logs on the forest floor. I make some sketches, noting that impossibly short and jauntily cocked tail. What a charming imp!

November 3, 2016, Nantucket—Although the official list of Mass Audubon sanctuaries names only Sesachacha Heathlands, the Society actually owns three properties on Nantucket. My overnight accommodations are at Lost Farm Wildlife Sanctuary—a 90-acre tract that borders Hummock Pond and features an extensive pitch pine forest. Mass Audubon's smallest property on Nantucket is a 30-acre parcel at Smith's Point near Madaket. The Smith's Point property was once owned by Mr. Rogers of television fame. His house, which he named “The Crooked House” and often referred to on his show, is at the edge of the reserve. I chuckled when I noticed that the sign is mounted *crookedly* on the house (Fred Rogers had a good sense of humor!).

I am now nearing my goal of visiting and working at all 57 Mass Audubon public properties. At this writing, I have visited 53. I've filled three sketchbooks, and have produced 150 watercolors. I've taken hundreds of photos, and posted more than seventy accounts on the **Taking Flight** blog. Now that the working period is coming to an end, I'm feeling a reluctance to finish – it's been a wonderful two years!

The Museum of American Bird Art's Taking Flight blog may be found at <<http://blogs.massaudubon.org/takingflight/>>. 🐦

Barry W. Van Dusen is an internationally recognized wildlife artist who lives in central Massachusetts. Barry has illustrated many publications for Mass Audubon, and his bird illustrations have appeared in books published by the American Birding Association, HarperCollins, Princeton University Press, and Cornell University (Comstock). His paintings have been featured in *Bird Watcher's Digest*, *Birder's World*, *Birds Illustrated* (U.K.), *Wildlife Art*, and *Yankee Magazine*, as well as *Bird Observer*.

In 2014, Barry was named Master Artist at the annual *BIRDS IN ART* show (Wausau, Wisconsin) - an award that recognizes artists who have shown “outstanding achievement in using bird imagery in their artwork. At the invitation of the Artists for Nature Foundation, Barry has traveled to Spain, England, Ireland, India, Peru and Israel, working alongside other wildlife artists to raise money for conservation of threatened habitats. See more of Barry's work at www.barryvandusen.com

PHOTO ESSAY

More Paintings from Barry Van Dusen's Residency



Above: Winter Wren at Pleasant Valley.



Left: Diamondback Terrapin Hatchlings.



Above: Surf Scoter.



Right: Cooper's Hawk at Canoe Meadows.

MUSINGS

The Far Side of Birding

Martha Steele

One of my favorite cartoons in the daily newspaper from years ago was Gary Larson's *The Far Side*, in which Larson humorously depicted humans from the animal's point of view. Would we dare take a stab at what birds might think of us birders?

You might put yourself in the feet of a spring migrant arriving at Mount Auburn Cemetery after a long overnight journey, headed to its favorite spot a little farther to the north to await its mate. Perhaps this individual could hear the chirps, calls, and songs of all its cousins with whom he traveled, though he heard only a few of his fellow Cape May Warblers during the flight and, right at that moment, none around him. We also could imagine the bird eagerly dropping into this oasis of greenery, flowers, ponds, and, most importantly, food, in the middle of so many buildings and hard surfaces devoid of anything to nourish it.

It is early May, and we birders know what happens to Mount Auburn Cemetery at that time of year. So let us switch this view from us birders to the one we might imagine from the bird's point of view.

As the sky brightened, I was ready to get going and find some food. I was also ready to sing and let all know of my presence, especially those other competitive males who might encroach upon my space. There were lots of others much like me in this particular tree, but I didn't see nor hear any other Cape May, which was just fine with me. I was happy to enjoy the bounty of food and occasionally stop and sing.

This was at least the sixth season I had landed here in this wonderful spot. So I was prepared when I heard commotion below me.

"Did you hear that? What do you think it is?"

"Huh? I didn't hear anything."

"Listen. There, it sang again."

"[Expletive.] I can't hear that. What is wrong with my hearing?"

"It is somewhere up there. Maybe it's a Baybreast?"

I stopped for a minute and stared at the two older men below me jockeying for position down on the ground. I then saw a young woman running toward where we were, shouting, "Cape May! Cape May!" Before I knew it, people with things hanging around their necks and slung over their shoulders were rushing to see, apparently, me.

But of course, I had seen this before on my previous journeys. I knew the drill, so I continued to feed and sing. Whenever I flitted into the open, there was a collective gasp, tingling excitement, nonstop click-click-click-click of all sorts of devices, some

fitting in the palm of a hand and others appearing about a thousand times bigger than me. Most of the time, I could not see the faces of those below me, hidden as they were by double cylindrical things that reflected the sunlight back to me. I could not laugh too much at all this commotion because they were, after all, extremely complimentary of my gorgeous looks.

I was puzzled by the occasional person who was saying a lot of not-so-nice words as he fumbled with one of his devices. I guess he just couldn't get the thing to work, and I wasn't helping matters by not staying in one spot all the time like a nice cooperative fellow should do.

At one point, I hid a bit behind some foliage, able to see those below me while they could not see me. In addition to the original two older gentlemen whom I first saw trying to identify or even hear me, I saw a couple frantically turning pages in a little book, talking with animation to each other, trying, I must say not too well, to describe how I looked. There were also several people holding something in their hands, tapping their fingers or swiping across the surface, and then appearing to triumphantly put the thing in their pocket as they walked away with a smug air of satisfaction at having checked that one off. Then, there was a gentlemen who seemed to be some sort of authority on me and my cousins. He was describing my beautiful looks very well and could even espouse a bit on all the parts of my, ahem, wimpy song. All those around him seemed to be listening intently, hanging on his every word. He must have been someone very important.

Then, I heard a funny sound, sort of like an owl, which I sure hoped it was not, especially in this tree where I was feeding and hiding at the moment. I was about to get the heck out of there when I noticed yet another person curling his lips and uttering these eerie guttural sounds that I had mistakenly thought might be a real owl. Now, he was not very nice to interrupt my pleasant morning and put a real scare into me, so I decided not to budge and reward his behavior.

But in due time, I resumed my feeding, and the crowd that had almost given up suddenly came to life again. "There it is!" I was enjoying the attention and at the same time disappointed at some who gave me only a quick glance before moving away. Why didn't they spend a little more time enjoying me in all my splendor?

I spent the rest of the day feeding and singing in this and nearby trees. I was never alone, joined by my cousins and constantly interrupted by all those gadget-carrying folks below me. As the skies darkened, I got ready to continue my journey northward, knowing that perhaps the most perilous parts of my journey were over. I hoped to be joined soon in the north by my mate and be left alone to defend my territory and just plain survive. I know I am a beautiful little thing but I am always amazed at the excitement I seem to generate among these people. Of course, not everyone is breathless at the sight of me. A few times, I noticed folks walking nearby without any of those silly gadgets, asking what was going on. Learning that a small, hard-to-see bird was captivating the audience, they smiled weakly, disappointed that it wasn't something really cool, like an owl or a fox, and moved on. But I do appreciate how much in demand I seem to be, and I have to admit, I would miss these crazy

folks if they didn't greet me so warmly and enthusiastically every time I land in this magnificent place. 🐦

Martha Steele, a former editor of Bird Observer, has been progressively losing vision due to retinitis pigmentosa and is legally blind. Thanks to a cochlear implant, she is now learning to identify birds from their songs and calls. Martha lives with her husband, Bob Stymeist, in Arlington. Martha can be reached at <marthajs@verizon.net>.

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Bird Observer is looking for a new staff member to take on the position of Subscription Manager. Primary job responsibilities:

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If you are interested or have questions, please contact John Marsh at jmarsh@jocama.com.

GLEANINGS

Separate Vacations

David M. Larson



Sabine's Gull. Photograph by Gregory Smith (CC BY-SA 2.0)

The northern latitudes of the Earth were, during the recent ice ages, covered with ice and largely depauperate of birds. During the retreat of the ice masses, landmasses became more available to birds as plants and animals re-established suitable habitats. The last places to become free of the year-round ice were in the vast expanses of the high Arctic. Hence, birds that breed in the high Arctic are among the most newly settled species. Few of these birds brave the Arctic winter, so most are migratory, spending the Arctic winter in climes with more abundant food resources. Migratory seabirds nesting in the North American Arctic may have expanded their ranges from the Atlantic, Pacific, or the Old World Arctic.

While some of the migratory Arctic breeders have localized breeding grounds, many are circumpolar, with populations that breed in the New and Old World Arctic. The study of migratory connectivity of breeding with wintering populations seeks to establish both ecological and evolutionary trajectories of species, and the roles of migratory divides in speciation. Certain aspects of these questions have been addressed in prior “Gleanings” articles (Larson, 2014, 2015).

As part of a long-term set of studies on Arctic-nesting birds, Davis, et al. (2016) studied the migratory patterns of Sabine's Gulls (*Xema sabini*). These handsome birds are rarely seen in Massachusetts except offshore during migration. Sabine's Gulls are circumpolar breeders at scattered locations in the Arctic. They are highly pelagic in the nonbreeding seasons, and winter in areas of upwelling currents off the west coast of South America, using the Pacific Humboldt Current off Peru; and off the west coast of Africa, using the Atlantic Benguela Current off Namibia and South Africa. It has been surmised that Sabine's Gulls breeding in Eastern Canada, Greenland, and Svalbard would winter in the south Atlantic and birds breeding in Western North America and Siberia would winter in the south Pacific. The migratory divide in the Old World is thought to be in the Taymyr Peninsula, but the divide in Arctic Canada has not been

elucidated. The authors attached geolocators to adult Sabine's Gulls in breeding colonies in the central Canadian Arctic and recaptured them in following seasons to download the location data from the geolocators. The nesting gulls on Nasaruvaalik Island in Nunavut show high site fidelity, facilitating the recapture of individuals and recovery of geolocators.

Of the 47 geolocators deployed over several years, 38 were recovered and provided full or partial data sets. Analyses of the location data indicate that 93% of birds breeding on Nasaruvaalik Island migrated to the Pacific to overwinter, with only two birds heading to the Atlantic. Perhaps the most intriguing finding was that a mated pair of birds took separate vacations, with the female wintering in the Pacific and the male in the Atlantic, and the birds repeated this pattern in subsequent years.

These data suggest that Sabine's Gulls have a migratory divide near Nasaruvaalik Island at 96°W. Interestingly, distance to the average wintering locations in the fall migration was similar at 14,578 kilometers versus 14,615 kilometers, as was average travel speed and time spent migrating. Migration divides are often considered potential speciation factors, but the situation in the Arctic is complicated by the relatively short time that Arctic landmasses have been available since the last glacial period. This may be particularly true of the isolated colony on Nasaruvaalik Island which is hundreds of kilometers north of the nearest other colonies, suggesting that it may be more newly established. The reproductive success at Nasaruvaalik is also higher than the lower Arctic breeding colonies, suggesting that conditions there are particularly good for breeding, and that the colony may have been established by northernmost Atlantic- and Pacific-wintering individuals.

Pairs of seabirds show strong mate fidelity. The dispersal of a mated pair to separate wintering grounds seems counterintuitive, since it would seem to increase the chances of asynchronous arrival at the nesting colony. Nevertheless, for this one pair of Sabine's Gulls, everything has worked out for at least four consecutive years, implying that the breeding conditions at this one remote site must be superlative. 🐦

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FIELD NOTES

Interspecific Aggression by a Common Loon in Winter

Jeffrey Boone Miller

After work, late on the afternoon of December 12, 2016, I went for a walk at Fresh Pond in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This 155-acre kettle hole pond usually holds good populations of migrating waterfowl from October through December until ice-up (Barton 1995), so my focus was on the waterbirds. When I reached the southernmost cove of the pond, near a region called Weir Meadow, I spotted a loosely associated group of waterfowl about 50 meters from shore that included two male and two female Common Goldeneyes (*Bucephala clangula*), four male and two female Hooded Mergansers (*Lophodytes cucullatus*), and two male Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*). Shortly afterwards, I noted a Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) much farther out, perhaps 250 meters from shore. These different species were about to interact in, what was to me at least, an unexpected manner.

Over the next couple of minutes, while the ducks and mergansers were diving regularly for food, the loon swam directly toward them, soon closing to within a few meters of the four goldeneyes. Now alert to the loon, the goldeneyes stopped diving, extended their necks, assembled into a tight group, and began swimming rapidly away from the loon and toward shore. At this point, the loon extended its neck parallel to the water with its bill pointed at the goldeneyes. The loon looked much like a swimming snake, showing only its bill, eyes, and the top of its head and body. Staying in this posture, the loon accelerated toward the four goldeneyes, all of which took the hint and flew off with their characteristic whistling flight.

The loon then turned its attention to the Hooded Mergansers, which were just a few meters away and now also on high alert. Again the loon approached rapidly with its neck outstretched and with little of its body showing. While two of the mergansers tried diving to escape, the remaining four took flight immediately, as did the diving pair when they resurfaced. The loon then made one aggressive move toward the two Greater Scaup which were about 15 meters to the west of the loon. However, the scaup avoided confrontation by swimming around a nearby point and out of sight of the loon, at which time the loon ended its aggressive behavior and resumed a normal swimming posture.

Throughout this episode, the loon did not vocalize, stand upright, or attack from underwater, even though all of these behaviors are part of a loon's repertoire of aggressive behaviors. The loon's actions did, however, appear to incorporate the "threat" behavior described by Byrkjedal (2011) in which the aggressor swims toward its target after adopting "a low posture, neck and head stretched forward pointing at the opponent."

During the breeding season, Common Loons show interspecific aggression toward other species of waterfowl. Observers have noted loons attacking and killing ducklings and even adults of several species including Common Goldeneyes, Red-breasted

Mergansers (*Mergus serrator*), Long-tailed Ducks (*Clangula hyemalis*), Ring-necked Ducks (*Aythya collaris*), Common Eiders (*Somateria mollissima*), Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Redheads (*Aythya americana*), and Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) (Sperry 1987, Kirkham and Johnson 1988, Morton and Pereyra 2011). In addition to attacking other species, breeding loons frequently show intraspecific aggression toward other loons. Such encounters between breeding loons can result in injury or, particularly when fights are between males, death (Piper et al. 2008).

In contrast to their aggressive behavior during the breeding season, observers have reported that Common Loons are seldom aggressive during migration or on wintering grounds. *The Birds of North America* species account, for example, states that Common Loons “In winter, typically do not show aggression.” (Evers, Paruk, McIntyre, and Barr 2010). Two studies of loons wintering in Rhode Island also noted that the birds did not show aggressive behaviors (Daub 1989, Ford and Gieg 1995). Though examples of intraspecific aggression have been noted among Common Loons wintering in Norway and Virginia (McIntyre 1978, Byrkjedal 2011), I have yet to find another report of interspecific aggression by a Common Loon in the winter. I would welcome information about such sightings from readers.

I have visited Fresh Pond consistently during autumn migration ever since my wife, Kathleen Buckley, first took me there in 1988. In almost every year, I have observed one or two Common Loons on one or more visits. The interspecific aggression I report here, however, was the single instance of this behavior that I have observed. Given the low level of aggression reported for loons in the winter and my previous experience, this behavior was truly unexpected.

Why did this loon carry out an interspecific attack at a migratory stopover on a winter day? There is a lively debate in the scientific literature about the costs and benefits of interspecific aggression by loons. On the breeding grounds, one thought is that such indiscriminate aggression toward other species, including mammals as well as birds, may lessen predation on loon hatchlings, essentially by clearing the nesting territory of all possible predators (Morton and Pereyra 2011). In the winter, however, hatchling predation is not an issue and loons typically become less aggressive, which makes the behavior of the bird at Fresh Pond surprising. Perhaps this bird responded to a specific set of circumstances that were similar to conditions that trigger aggression on the breeding grounds. In particular, Fresh Pond, as a fresh water lake reminiscent of breeding habitat, may provide a stimulus that is lacking at saltwater wintering sites. The loon at Fresh Pond seemed to have gained nothing from its aggression other than a less crowded neighborhood and some practice for the coming breeding season, but perhaps that was sufficient. 🦆

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Townsend's Solitaire

Jonathan Eckerson

The morning of December 6, 2016, had started with me sleeping through an alarm and when I finally did raise myself, it was getting past my preferred time for birding. Hitting the road, I decided to head toward the Taunton River in hopes of turning up some waterfowl. I pulled into Broad Cove rather halfheartedly, still not completely convinced I wanted to bird here. The following turn of events changed my thinking.

I sauntered up the trail and made my way to a grove of cedars and a thicket that was active with a feeding flock of robins and other birds. The thicket looked half decent for a Yellow-breasted Chat and in my experience, chats take quite a bit of time to emerge out of a thicket, so I continued to stay and watch even as the action was dying down. That was when it happened: in flew a delicate bluebird-looking bird, but completely gray. I immediately knew it was something I had never seen before. Townsend's Solitaire was my first thought, although Townsend's Solitaire is a bird of the west, seen annually in Massachusetts, but quite rare. I had been fooled by angled robins with their backs turned, though, and I had to make sure the light wasn't deceiving me. Steadying my binoculars on the bird, I noted the slim shape, uniform gray color, white flecking on the breast, white eye ring, bluebird-like bill, and long tail. The Townsend's Solitaire is a simple and straightforward identification, but I personally had never found an actual mega-rarity, so I had to give it a long look before I convinced myself that it was indeed such a find.

The bird perched in the top of the short oak it had flown into but soon began to move around in the tops of surrounding oaks. With shaking hands and keeping a close eye on the bird, I ripped the lens cap off and flipped on the camera, and snagged some photos. I rattled away and made sure that I had many acceptable images before pausing. The solitaire moved on down the trail towards the road, finally giving me a view of its

back, and I was able to see the distinct buff coloring on the wing. After it moved out of sight, it may have flown off with the flock of robins.

It seemed to me that the solitaire was associating with the flock of robins feeding in the cedars. Or possibly this particular area could become its wintering territory. Doing some research, I found that Townsend's Solitaires usually make their winter territory in patches of junipers and are very defensive of them (Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2015). As of January 2017, however, I have not seen the bird again.

Not only was the Townsend's Solitaire a life bird for me, it was also a first Bristol County record for eBird. What also added to the satisfaction was that I had made up a fairly reasonable list of birds that had been seen in Massachusetts but not Bristol County, and Townsend's Solitaire was on that list. I was quite pleased to remove a species from the list and am looking forward to finding the next.

Finding rare birds can take a lot of luck, but also consistency and repetition. Too often the fallacy is that you have to bird the well-known places such as Plum Island to find rare birds, but the reality is that rare birds can be found anywhere. I've always been a supporter of local birding and I encourage everyone to do likewise. You may be surprised by what birds you turn up or the patch you discover and there could be a mega-rarity just waiting to be found. 🐦

Citation

Cornell Lab of Ornithology. 2015. All About Birds: Townsend's Solitaire. https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Townsend's_Solitaire/lifehistory. Accessed January 10, 2017.

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ABOUT BOOKS

A Continent, a State, and a Home

Mark Lynch

Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America. Stephen A. Shunk. 2016. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Book of Texas Birds. Gary Clark. 2016. College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press.

The Wood for the Trees: One Man's Long View Of Nature. Richard Fortey. 2016. New York: A. Knopf.

Here are three books that look at the natural world in three different scales of geography: an overview of an avian sub-family in a continent, most of the birds that are seen in one state, and an attempt to inventory the entire natural and human history of one's home turf.

Another early naturalist (and pioneer of bird photography), Herbert Job, placed woodpeckers in their very own order, the "International Order of the Knights of the Chisel." (p. xi, *Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers*)

Woodpeckers are a beloved and charismatic subfamily (Picinae) of birds. Here in Massachusetts, they range in size from the diminutive Downy to the impressive Pileated. Though some migrate, many are permanent residents and are among the few species to be found in the silent forests of a New England winter. Woodpeckers have fascinating behaviors too, like the loud drumming they perform to announce territories, excavating their deep nest holes, or sucking up sap. Woodpeckers have even been immortalized in classic animations, though I am the first to admit that I find Walter Lantz's Woody Woodpecker more annoying than endearing. Finally, one species of woodpecker, the Ivory-billed, remains the ultimate mysterious "ghost bird," and recent reports of this species have ornithologists and birders wondering if this magnificent bird could still be alive.

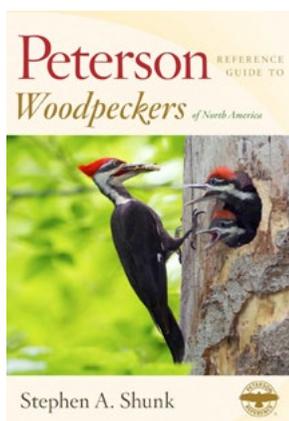
Stephen Shunk is the perfect choice for an author of a book on woodpeckers. He lives on the eastern slope of the Cascade Range in Oregon where there are eleven breeding species of woodpeckers. His considerable expertise and enthusiasm for woodpeckers has created a book that is as informative as it is enjoyable.

Introductory chapters include a fascinating section on woodpecker anatomy and adaptation that details the uniqueness of these species. For example, woodpeckers have very long and unusual tongues, some of which can extend inches beyond the tip of the bill. This allows them to probe for prey deep in the holes they have drilled in bark. The tips of woodpecker tongues are also specialized, some having stiff and hornlike barbs angled backwards to actually hook prey. Woodpeckers also have a larger submaxillary salivary gland than most birds, which coats the tongue with very sticky mucus on its way out of the bill to also aid in firmly gluing prey items to the tongue tip.

There are chapters on woodpecker feeding, communication, social interactions, locomotion, and ecology and conservation. Shunk describes woodpeckers as "keystone

organisms” in the ecosystems of temperate forests and woodlands. This is a species whose behaviors are key to maintaining a healthy ecosystem. Woodpeckers are important because they control insects that are destructive to trees, thereby helping to maintain healthy forests. Woodpeckers also excavate cavities that can help support a community of other cavity nesting species. There are a number of non-avian species, mostly insects but also certain species of hummingbirds, that use the sap wells left by some woodpecker species.

The 23 species accounts make up the bulk of this book. Each account includes a few introductory paragraphs, followed by detailed sections on distribution and range (with detailed maps), habitat preferences, detection and visual identification, behavior, conservation, and a list of references. The entire book is illustrated with 250 photographs, mostly in full color, including many full page shots. All the photography is of the highest quality. The book concludes with appendices, a glossary, a bibliography, and an index.



Shunk’s writing elevates this book beyond simply a dry recitation of the basic facts about woodpecker species.

John James Audubon once described the Red-headed Woodpecker as living its “whole life (as) one of pleasure.” Perhaps the most striking of the continent’s Picinae, the “Red-head” glows like a burning flame atop its favorite snapped-off tree tops. (p. 53)

In every account, the reader will find something new to learn even about familiar species. For instance, it has been suggested that to escape detection by ravens, the American Three-toed Woodpecker uses an unusual defense posture by mimicking fungal conks on the bark of trees (see illustration p. 204).

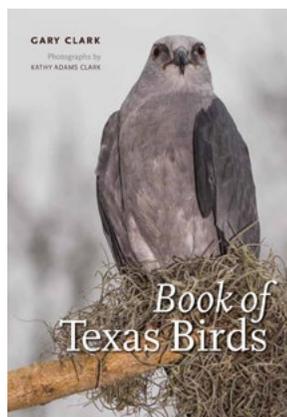
Of course, Shunk includes a complete account of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, detailing population changes and recent search efforts along with its current conservation status and “management” schemes. But as Shunk concludes: “Thousands of cumulative search hours failed to produce irrefutable proof that the species remains.” (p. 250)

The *Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America* is another outstanding volume in this “must own” series and is a book that is enjoyable to read, beautiful to look at, and useful as a home reference guide.

I wrote the majority of this book while sitting in a stone cabin during vacations at Big Bend National Park. The cabin and the sounds of birds provided a haven from the distractions of normal daily life, which then included work as a college dean and later as a college vice president. (ix, *Book of Texas Birds*)

The large format *Book of Texas Birds* is not an exhaustive atlas of the birds that breed in or migrate to Texas. There are no range maps, and pelagic species aren’t even mentioned. There are no lengthy introductory chapters on the history of birding in the

state, no descriptions of habitat types, no illustrations of bird topography. There isn't even a single map of the state that includes all the areas listed casually in the text, which I found frustrating. The *Book of Texas Birds* is instead a highly personal account of the bird species seen inland or right along the coast by one of the foremost birders in the state. Each species account is typically illustrated by a single color photograph taken by Kathy Adams Clark, the author's wife. "It is for the people who wonder about birds that this book is written." (p. 1) This is a book written primarily for Texan birders or out-of-state birders who go there often.



The *Book of Texas Birds* comprises species accounts only; sometimes two species are treated in one account. This includes Mottled and Black ducks and Clapper and King rails. These accounts are chatty. Key identification points are those that Clark thinks have helped him. Sometimes this comes down to some very basic advice: "So play the odds. Salt marsh—probably clapper; freshwater marsh—probably king." (p. 119)

The accounts read as if you are out in the field with Clark as he casually conveys some of his hard-earned wisdom and unique experiences with each species. This excerpt from the account of the Greater Roadrunner is a good example:

We had a great time at a campsite one summer evening simply watching the antics of a greater roadrunner. The bird sauntered cautiously around the periphery of our campsite as we cooked dinner on our camp stove. We moved slowly and quietly so as not to scare the bird away. The bird gradually drew within three feet of us, eating scraps of food we'd dropped on the ground while cooking. We were able to examine up close the interlaced chromatic green, tans, and blues of the bird's feathers.

The roadrunner lowered its head, bellowed its neck, and let forth a low cooing call that sounded like a French horn. Its apparent mate, stationed a hundred yards away, responded with the same call. Our roadrunner erected the feathers on its crown and cocked its head to the side. Was it trying to signal to its mate that the coast was clear? I don't know. I do know that the roadrunner, so common as to be virtually ignored by some bird watchers, gave us uncommon joy that evening. (p. 200-01)

Filled with anecdotes and personal identification tips, the species accounts really express Clark's love of watching birds. At the end each account there are short headings for brief notes on diet, voice, nest, and "where found in Texas." The last category is sometimes general, and this is where I missed detailed range maps being included.

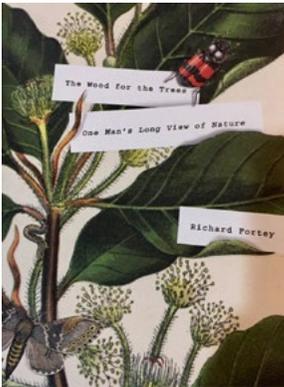
Of course, the reader will be intrigued as to what Clark has to say about the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Most of the two-page account is concerned with the 2004 "discovery" of a possible Ivory-billed by Tim Gallagher and Bobby Ray Harrison in Alabama. Clark refers to those who have doubts about this sighting as "skeptics" and later adds:

Full disclosure: Tim Gallagher and Bobby Ray Harrison are my friends, as are some of the acclaimed birders who doubt the accuracy of the ivory-billed sighting. But I'd put Gallagher's observational acumen at the top of the list of field identifiers of birds. He's among the most cautious, careful bird observers I've ever known. Whereas some birders may reasonably question the ivory-billed sighting, any vilification of Gallagher and Harrison is wholly unjustified. (p. 255)

A few paragraphs later, under "where found in Texas", Clark writes: "Probably extinct, though hope plus research abounds for discovery of a remnant population." (p. 255)

Book of Texas Birds is not a where-to-go book, nor is it a definitive checklist of all the species that have appeared in the state. This isn't even an identification guide containing minute details on plumages and molts. The *Book of Texas Birds* is instead a lively account of most of the species of a large state written by a man who knows those birds better than most.

After a working life spent in a great museum, the time had come for me to escape into the open air. I spent years handling fossils of extinct animals; now, the inner naturalist needed to touch living animals and plants. (p. 3, *The Wood For the Trees*)



There is a long history of British nature writing about one's local patch. *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, written in 1789 by Gilbert White, is one of the earliest examples of a book that tracks the seasonal changes in the fields and woodlots of the author's hometown while also including an account of the town's long human history. A more recent example of this genre is *A Buzz in the Meadow: the Natural History of a French Farm* by Dave Goulson, published in 2016. In these books, the authors observe closely the ecology of his or her hometown or personal property to look at the grand scheme of "nature" and how it changes through a year or more. Some of these books take the form of a journal. One of the great pleasures of reading these local-patch books is discovering the

tremendous variety of species that can occur in such a small space, and this gives the reader a deeper sense of the complexity and diversity of the world's ecosystems. The reader also learns about the changes that occur through the cycle of the seasons, year after year. As William Blake wrote in his poem *Auguries of Innocence* (1803): "To see a World in a Grain of Sand/ And a Heaven in a Wild Flower/ Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand/ And Eternity in an hour."

The Wood for the Trees is certainly a local-patch book, but one with a difference. The author, Richard Fortey, is a gifted natural historian of paleontology. He spent his professional life among the dusty collections rooms of a great museum puzzling over inert fossils. Along the way, he wrote a number of popular and enjoyable books about trilobites, the evolution of life, and the human history of the museum's collections. His life changed dramatically when he retired and he and his wife bought a home and some land in the classic English countryside of the Chiltern Hills northwest of London.

Their home in Grim's Dyke Wood is nestled in a tract of beech woods growing atop hills made of "clay-with-flints," a unique habitat most of us in the States have had no experience with.

Fortey decides to explore every aspect of his new world, keeping a monthly journal of his discoveries. The prospect of finally looking at living nature makes him giddy with anticipation of what he will discover:

Once the project was under way, a curious thing happened. I wanted to make a collection. This may not sound particularly remarkable, but for somebody who had worked for decades with rank after rank of curated collections it was a rejuvenation. Life among the stacks in the Natural History Museum in London had stifled my acquisitiveness, but now something was rekindled. I wanted to collect objects from the wood, not in the systematic way of a scientist, but with something of the random joy of a young boy. Perhaps I wanted to *become* that boy once again. (p. 5)

The Wood for the Trees begins in April and follows Fortey's discoveries throughout a year. He writes about whatever he comes across in his walks in the woods. This includes the birds, mammals, flowers, trees, fungi, beetles, moths, crane flies, spiders, and other life he discovers. The advantage to being connected to a great natural history museum is that he has a huge staff of experts in their own fields to consult and check his identifications. Several times a cherry picker is brought out to Grim's Dyke Wood so entomologists can take an inventory of the invertebrate life found in the tops of the forest.

There is also a long and fascinating human history of the Chiltern Hills. Signs of the human occupation of Grim's Dyke Wood can be found just beneath the leaf litter in a number of locations on Fortey's property. In every chapter, Fortey recounts a piece of this complex story. It begins in the Neolithic period and much later includes the Roman occupation, and on through the Anglo-Saxon years to the establishment of the imposing manor of the Greys, which is still there today. As long as there were human populations in the Chiltern Hills, forest lots like Fortey's were managed so that they would continually produce products for the local population to use. So the reader of *The Wood for the Trees* learns about flint mining, coppicing of trees, and even how to make a liqueur known as "beech leaf noyau." Fortey finds ways to use several of the materials of his woods in his home. This includes the building of a stunning collection cabinet for his discoveries made out of planks from a felled cherry tree. Besides being a fine local natural history, this book is also a concise history of Britain from the local patch point of view.

The Wood for the Trees also features several maps, a number of black-and-white illustrations, and two sections of color photographs. If you are passionate or curious about British natural history and the history of humans in the British countryside, this is a perfect book for you. It may also inspire you to take the long and deep view of your own neck of the woods. 🦋

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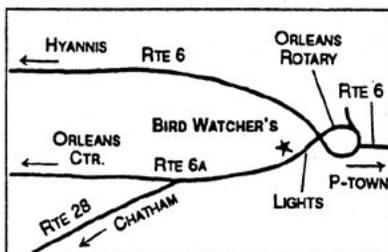
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BIRD SIGHTINGS

November-December 2016

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

Temperature and precipitation were near average in November and December. Total snowfall was 5.9 inches in Boston, most of which fell on December 17, which, unfortunately, was also the date of several Christmas Bird Counts. November averaged 46°, one degree above normal. The high temperature of 70° was on November 2 and an additional six days during the month had readings in the 60s. The first frost in Boston was on November 21 when the high temperature reached only 38°. Rainfall totaled 2.7 inches in Boston, 1.29 inches less than average, most of which fell on just two days.

The average temperature in December was 35°. In Boston, the high was 58° on December 27 and the low was a cold 4° on December 16. Most areas outside of Boston experienced below zero readings that day along with wind that made it unbearable to be out. Total precipitation for the month was 3.25 inches in Boston, just about a half inch below average.

R. Stymeist

WATERFOWL THROUGH ALCIDS

The first **Pink-footed Goose** in Massachusetts occurred less than 20 years ago, an individual that spent several months in Dennis from January 16 to April 11, 1999. Several more have been reported since then, but never as many as were seen during this reporting period. The first was discovered in West Newbury on November 6 and was seen in the same area until December 2. Presumably the same individual was regularly seen in Ipswich through the end of the month. On December 4, one was seen flying over Cape Cod, but was not relocated. Also on December 4, one was discovered at Cambridge Reservoir in Waltham, and presumably the same bird was relocated in Concord on the 7th and seen sporadically through the 15th. Connecticut River Valley birders weren't left out, as a Pink-footed Goose was seen in the Hadley area December 6–19.

These geese were not the only exciting waterfowl. The **Greater White-fronted Goose** reports in Hampden, Southwick, and Agawam surely represented the same individual, and one reported from Amherst, although a significant distance away, appeared in a hiatus in sightings from farther south along the Connecticut River, so it was probably the same bird. On December 28 there was a report of two **Ross's Geese** on Plum Island, but subsequent examination determined that one was a Snow x Ross's Goose hybrid. A flock of 32 Brant flying over Quabbin Park was interesting. **Cackling Geese** were well reported during this period.

There was a time when Fresh Pond in Cambridge was one of the best places in the state to find Canvasbacks, with counts over 100 in the 1990s. Numbers have dwindled since then, with only one seen during this reporting period.

On November 15 there was a remarkable fallout of 38 Red-throated Loons on Pontoosuc Lake in Pittsfield but this number was eclipsed the following morning when 53 were counted. While single Red-throated Loons are regular inland at this time of year, this number is apparently the second largest tally, topped only by 150 at Turners Falls in November 1985.

Sandhill Cranes are becoming more common in Massachusetts, and in this reporting period there were several reports of large flocks.

Sea watchers at outer Cape Cod were treated to some spectacular birding during this period. Several **Black-headed Gulls** were reported, and up to seven **Little Gulls** was a high count for recent years. On December 4 a **Franklin's Gull** was photographed off Truro and as many as 68 Iceland Gulls were reported at Race Point. The most exciting sighting was of an **Elegant Tern** off Wellfleet on November 19. This is only the third record for this species in Massachusetts; the first spent most of August 2002 off Chatham, the second seen for only a single day at Plum Island on July 23, 2011.

M. Rines

Pink-footed Goose				11/12	Newton	5	H. Miller
11/6-12/2	W. Newbury area	1 ph	R. Gervais + v.o.	11/16	Pittsfield (Pont.)	6	J. Pierce
12/3-31	Ipswich	1 ph	v.o.	11/19	Arlington Res.	6	J. Forbes
12/4	Waltham	1 ph	C. Cook#	12/18	Eastham	5	D. Clapp#
12/4	Brewster	1 ph	B. Delaney	Northern Pintail			
12/6-19	Hadley	1 ph	Therrien + v.o.	thr	P.I.	150 max	v.o.
12/7-15	Concord	1 ph	J. Forbes + v.o.	11/11	P'town (R.P.)	30	S. Arena
Greater White-fronted Goose				11/24	GMNWR	5	A. Bragg#
11/1-12/4	Hampden	1	A. Downey	12/11	Duxbury B.	12	R. Bowes
11/8-25	Ipswich	1-2	N. Dubrow + v.o.	12/22	Randolph	2	P. Peterson
12/6	Amherst	1	L. Therrien	Green-winged Teal			
12/21-31	Southwk/Agawam	1	J. Zepko	thr	P.I.	415 max	v.o.
Snow Goose				11/2	W. Roxbury	24	P. Peterson
11/1	Marlboro	6	G. Gove	11/8	Quabog IBA	27	M. Lynch#
12/22	Topsfield	2 imm	B. Hobbie	11/16	Cambr. Res.	31	R. Stymeist
12/24	Danvers	6	J. Keeley	11/21	Wayland	55	J. Forbes
Ross's Goose				12/4	Quabbin (G25)	12	B. Lafley
12/28-31	P.I./Ipswich	1 ph	Wetmore + v.o.	12/31	Shrewsbury	2	P. Morlock
Ross's Goose x Snow Goose				Canvasback			
12/28-31	P.I./Ipswich	1 ph	v.o.	thr	Cambr. (F.P.)	1	B. Miller
Brant				12/11	Turners Falls	1	P. Gagarin
11/4	Quabbin Pk	32	L. Therrien	12/13	Randolph	1	T. O'Brien#
11/17-12/2	Hadley/Amherst	1	L. Therrien	12/20	Nantucket	37	L. Dunn
12/7	E. Boston (B.I.)	15	P. Peterson	Redhead			
12/13	Winthrop B.	20	S. Zende#	11/6-12/18	Somerville	1	A. Gantz + v.o.
Cackling Goose				12/4-31	Waltham	1	C. Cook#
11/20	Northampton	2	K. Yakola	12/30	Egartown	1	S. Whiting#
11/21	Turners Falls	2	J. Coleman	12/31	Nantucket	9	J. Trimble#
11/24	Quabbin Pk	1	L. Therrien	Ring-necked Duck			
12/2	P'town (R.P.)	1	S. Arena	thr	Waltham	250 max	J. Forbes
12/4	Lakeville	1	N. Marchessault#	11/6	Pittsfield	1700	J. Pierce
12/8	Wachusett Res.	1	M. Lynch#	11/8	Cambr. (F.P.)	168	R. Stymeist
12/13	Rehoboth	2	J. Eckerson	12/3	Groveland	175	G. d'Entremont#
12/24	Agawam	1	S. Motyl	12/11	Stockbridge	114	J. Pierce
Wood Duck				12/17	Randolph	300	G. d'Entremont#
11/4	Concord	10	P. Peterson	Tufted Duck			
11/9	Petersham	18	M. Lynch#	11/1-12/4	Groveland	1	v.o.
12/27	Jamaica Plain	33	P. Peterson	12/11-22	Haverhill	1	v.o.
Gadwall				12/31	Nantucket	1	S. Williams#
11/19	Marion	80	G. d'Entremont#	Greater Scaup			
12/3	Waltham	9	J. Forbes	11/12	Holland	13	M. Lynch#
12/5	Quincy	10	P. Peterson	11/16, 12/30	Waltham	8, 5	J. Forbes
12/12	P.I.	41	R. Heil	11/19	Lakeville	167	G. d'Entremont#
Eurasian Wigeon				11/21, 12/26	Wachusett Res.	68, 34	M. Lynch#
11/5-10	P.I.	1	D. Chickering + v.o.	12/20	Falmouth	850	P. Crosson
12/6	Swansea	1	M. Iliff	12/31	Nantucket	215	S. Williams#
American Wigeon				Lesser Scaup			
thr	P.I.	15 max	v.o.	11/10	Pittsfield (Pont.)	28	J. Pierce
thr	Waltham	50 max	J. Forbes	11/17	Clinton	22	M. Lynch#
11/16	Cambr. Res.	57	R. Stymeist	11/19	Lakeville	22	G. d'Entremont#
11/26	Plymouth	75	SSBC (GdE)	11/20	Nantucket	30	S. Kardell#
American Black Duck				12/3	Groveland	50	G. d'Entremont#
thr	P.I.	1525 max	v.o.	12/11	Haverhill	56	S. Mirick
12/13	Barnstable	1200	P. Crosson	12/27	W. Barnstable	385	J. Trimble#
Blue-winged Teal				King Eider			
11/3	GMNWR	1	K. Dia#	11/2-16	Ipswich (C.B.)	1 m ad	N. Dubrow
12/14	Orleans	1	B. Delaney	11/15-24	Bourne	1	P. Crosson#
Northern Shoveler				12/14	P'town (R.P.)	1	C. Hagenlocher
11/3	P.I.	12	S. Babbitt	12/17	Falmouth	1	K. Yakola

King Eider (continued)				12/3	Quabog IBA	570	M. Lynch#
12/20	Rockport	1	B. Harris	Red-breasted	Merganser		
12/31	Salisbury	1 f	J. Berry	11/28	Acoaxet	109	M. Lynch#
Common Eider				11/28	Pittsfield (Pont.)	4	J. Pierce
11/2	E. of Chatham	25000	B. Nikula#	12/1	Tolland	3	D. Holmes
11/6	P.I.	220	S. Sullivan	12/12	P.I.	220	R. Heil
11/18	Boston (Deer I.)	146	R. Stymeist#	12/26	P'town	1500	S. Arena
12/26	Tuckernuck	30246	S. Kardell# (CBC)	Ruddy Duck			
Harlequin Duck				11/7	W. Newbury	320	J. Berry#
thr	Rockport (H.P.)	38 max	v.o.	11/12	Holland	95	M. Lynch#
11/8	P'town (R.P.)	2	B. Nikula	11/24	Lincoln	58	J. Forbes
11/20	Nantucket	6	S. Kardell#	11/26	Eastham	90	S. Finnegan#
11/27	Manomet	10	S. van der Veen	11/26	Pembroke	94	SSBC (GdE)
12/2	P.I.	10	T. Wetmore	11/27	Nantucket	126	K. Blackshaw#
12/11	Duxbury B.	4	R. Bowes	12/7	W. Newbury	150	MAS (D. Moon)
12/14	Cohasset	2	E. Lipton	Ring-necked Pheasant			
Surf Scoter				11/13	Rowley	2	J. Berry#
11/2	Chatham	2000	J. Junda#	12/11	Quabog IBA	3	M. Lynch#
11/5	Wachusett Res.	4	M. Lynch#	Ruffed Grouse			
11/18	Boston (Deer I.)	46	R. Stymeist#	11/14	Windsor	2	M. Lynch#
White-winged Scoter				Red-throated Loon			
11/2	Chatham	1000	J. Junda#	thr	P.I.	111 max	v.o.
11/4	Pittsfield	3	J. Pierce	11/12	Medford	1	J. Layman#
11/6, 26	S. Quabbin	2	L. Therrien	11/15, 16	Pittsfield (Pont.)	38, 53	J. Pierce
11/6	Ludlow	2	S. Motyl	11/28	Westport	38	M. Lynch#
11/19	Ipswich (C.B.)	700	J. Berry#	12/26	P'town (R.P.)	36	S. Arena
11/29	Orleans	3000	S. Sullivan#	Pacific Loon			
Black Scoter				11/5	Salisbury	1	M. Iliif
11/4	S. Quabbin	16	L. Therrien	11/19	P'town (R.P.)	1	S. Arena
11/19	Ipswich (C.B.)	1600	J. Berry#	Common Loon			
11/19	Truro	3000	M. Faherty	thr	P.I.	45 max	v.o.
11/23	Pittsfield (Onata)	74	G. Hurley	11/5, 12/1	Wachusett Res.	25, 16	M. Lynch#
12/31	Wellfleet	4500	S. Arena#	11/26	Manomet	336	SSBC (GdE)
Long-tailed Duck				Pied-billed Grebe			
11/4, 25	Quabbin Pk	26, 4	L. Therrien	11/10	W. Newbury	2	P. Vale#
11/10	Pittsfield (Onota)	7	J. Pierce	11/26	P.I.	2	N. Landry
11/18	Boston (Deer I.)	37	R. Stymeist#	Horned Grebe			
12/1	Wachusett Res.	3	M. Lynch#	11/5, 12/26	Wachusett Res.	4, 1	M. Lynch#
12/12	P.I.	85	R. Heil	11/19	Quabbin (G 37)	7	J. Hoye#
12/26	Tuckernuck	9300	S. Kardell# (CBC)	11/19	Lakeville	20	G. d'Entremont#
Bufflehead				11/27	Dennis (Corp. B.)	11	C. Bates
11/6	Quabbin (G35)	25	B. Lafley	11/28	Westport	17	M. Lynch#
11/28	Westport	254	M. Lynch#	12/13	Winthrop B.	6	S. Zende#
12/12	P.I.	212	R. Heil	Red-necked Grebe			
Common Goldeneye				thr	P.I.	16 max	v.o.
thr	P.I.	25 max	v.o.	11/6	Ludlow	3	S. Motyl
11/19	Lakeville	89	G. d'Entremont#	11/7	Quabbin Pk	3	L. Therrien
12/1	Randolph	28	P. Peterson	12/3	Cambr. (F.P.)	2	J. Young
12/11	Haverhill	26	S. Mirick	12/13	Winthrop B.	31	S. Zende#
12/26	Wachusett Res.	53	M. Lynch#	12/24	Dennis (Corp. B.)	15	P. Flood
Barrow's Goldeneye				Northern Fulmar			
11/7	Dorchester	1 m	J. Benson#	11/2	Stellwagen	1	J. Sender
11/19-25	Marlboro	1	M. Sovay + v.o.	11/11	Orleans	1	N. Dorian
12/2-14	Salisbury	1 m	v.o.	Cory's Shearwater			
12/3, 28	Agawam	1	D. Holmes	11/1, 20	P'town (R.P.)	3000, 1	B. Nikula
12/8	Westport	1	M. Iliif	Great Shearwater			
12/8-17	Somerset	1	E. Lipton + v.o.	11/4	P'town (R.P.)	4900	S. Arena
12/16	Wachusett Res.	1	M. Lynch#	11/11	P'town (R.P.)	1875	S. Arena
12/18	Boston (Deer I.)	1	S. Sullivan#	11/20	P'town (R.P.)	1020	B. Nikula
12/thr	Fairhaven	1	v.o.	11/20	P.I.	1	R. Secatore
Hooded Merganser				12/11	N. Truro	2	B. Nikula
11/6	Brighton	52	R. Stymeist	Sooty Shearwater			
11/16	W. Newbury	90	S. Riley#	11/4	P'town (R.P.)	38	S. Arena
11/19	Lakeville	53	G. d'Entremont#	11/20	P'town (R.P.)	2	B. Nikula
12/10	Woburn (HP)	75	A. Gurka#	11/24	P'town (R.P.)	1	S. Arena#
12/11	Wakefield	72	P. + F. Vale	Manx Shearwater			
12/16	Wachusett Res.	104	M. Lynch#	11/4, 12/11	P'town (R.P.)	82, 2	S. Arena, M. Iliif
Common Merganser				11/4	Chatham	112	B. Harris
11/12	Wakefield	77	P. + F. Vale	Northern Gannet			
11/16	Lincoln	41	J. Forbes	11/4	P'town (R.P.)	9750	S. Arena
11/26	Pembroke	42	SSBC (GdE)	11/5	Ipswich	170	J. Berry#
11/27	Pittsfield (Pont.)	279	J. Pierce	11/7	Eastham	2000	B. Nikula

Northern Gannet (continued)				11/24	Quabog IBA	8	M. Lynch#
11/17	P'town	3000	B. Nikula	Rough-legged Hawk			
Double-crested Cormorant				thr	P.I.	1-3	v.o.
11/6	Winthrop	150	J. Forbes	12/19	Sandwich	1	M. Keleher
11/16	P'town	350	B. Nikula	12/23	Orleans	1	P. Trull
11/28	Westport	26	M. Lynch#	12/28	Cumb. Farms	1	B. Delaney
12/10	Cambridge	6	R. Stymeist	12/28	Lee	2	J. Pierce
Great Cormorant				Golden Eagle			
11/23	Newton	1	J. Forbes	11/5	Eastham	1 imm ph	K. Yakola#
11/28	Westport	16	M. Lynch#	11/6, 20	Quabbin Pk	1	Sovay, Therrien
12/26	Medford	1	J. Forbes	11/6-12	N. Quabbin	1	B. Lafley + v.o.
American Bittern				11/12	Granville	1	J. Wojtanowski
thr	P.I.	1	v.o.	11/19	Sheffield	1	J. Pierce
11/14-12/15	Woburn (HP)	1	R. Jilek + v.o.	12/1	Ipswich	1	J. Berry
11/15	Eastham (F.H.)	3	B. Stymeist	Yellow Rail			
12/thr	Barnstable	1	v.o.	11/1-24	Eastham (F.H.)	1	v.o.
Great Blue Heron				Virginia Rail			
11/27	Saugus	8	S. Zende#	11/24	Quabog IBA	1	M. Lynch#
11/28	Acoaxet	7	M. Lynch#	12/2	Woburn (HP)	1	M. Belyly
12/18	Waltham	3	J. Forbes#	12/18	Salisbury	1	D. Cooper
Great Egret				Sora			
11/19	Falmouth	2	K. Fiske	12/27	Barnstable (S.N.)	1	J. Trimble#
11/26	Edgartown	1	T. Doebel	American Coot			
12/14	Gloucester	1	D. Holmes	11/4	Pittsfield	7	J. Pierce
12/21	Fairhaven	1	E. Lipton	11/25	Woburn (HP)	27	M. Rines
Snowy Egret				11/28	Acoaxet	16	M. Lynch#
11/7	Nantucket	1	R. Ouren	12/3	Groveland	45	G. d'Entremont#
Cattle Egret				12/10	Woburn (HP)	23	A. Gurka#
11/9	Wachusett Res.	1	B. Robo	Sandhill Crane			
11/15	Eastham (F.H.)	1	S. Miller	11/1-12/14	Burrage WMA	3	v.o.
Black Vulture				11/5	P.I.	1	D. Adrien#
12/1	Blackstone	2	B. Robo	11/19	Lincoln	9	N. Levy
12/30	Natick	2	G. Long	11/21	E. Bridgewater	2	B. Lessard
12/31	Blackstone	3	C. Russell	11/22-12/14	Swansea	1	E. Lipton#
Turkey Vulture				11/23	Boxboro	11	D. Kembell
11/10	P.I.	3	R. Heil	11/26	W. Bridgewater	2	J. Macomber
11/28	Westport	2	M. Lynch#	12/4	Lexington	13	D. Scott
12/8	GMNWR	1	A. Bragg#	12/22	Somerville	3	P. Taylor
12/28	Longmeadow	1	C. Volker	12/22	Boston (F.Pk)	3	C. Dalton
Osprey				12/25	Peabody	3	S. Babbitt
12/1	Randolph	1	P. Peterson	Black-bellied Plover			
12/9	Westport	1	S. Williams	11/thr	P.I.	95 max	v.o.
12/9	Braintree	1	J. Sweeney	11/9	Essex	63	D. Brown#
12/12	Mansfield	1	M. Fox	11/12	Quabbin (G35)	2	T. Pirro
12/29	Mashpee	1	M. Keleher	12/18	Ipswich (C.B.)	3	J. Berry#
Bald Eagle				American Golden-Plover			
11/6	S. Quabbin	7	M. Lynch#	11/1-10	Newbury	1	S. McGrath + v.o.
11/6	Quabbin (G35)	4	B. Lafley	Semipalmated Plover			
12/1	GMNWR	4	A. Bragg#	11/2-12/12	P.I.	8 max	v.o.
12/15	Stoneham	5	S. Riley	11/13	Brewster	4	W. Mumford
12/19	Medford	5	G. Campbell	12/10	Plymouth	2	G. Gove#
Northern Harrier				Killdeer			
thr	P.I.	13 max	v.o.	12/2	Hampden	1	A. Downey
11/3	GMNWR	2	K. Dia#	12/12	Sharon	2	L. Waters
12/7	Cumb. Farms	4	H. Levesque#	12/26	Ipswich	3	J. Berry#
12/11	Saugus	2	A. Trautmann#	American Oystercatcher			
12/15	Concord (NAC)	2	C. Winstanley	11/5	Falmouth	2	R. Farrell
12/26	Tuckernuck	6	S. Kardell# (CBC)	11/5	Chatham	22	P. Trimble
Sharp-shinned Hawk				11/24	Nantucket	8	R. Ouren
11/1	Concord	2	J. Forbes	Spotted Sandpiper			
11/1-19	Barre Falls	11	Hawkcount (DS)	11/12	Quabbin Pk	1	L. Therrien
11/28	Acoaxet	2	M. Lynch#	11/12	Concord	1	T. Swain
Northern Goshawk				Greater Yellowlegs			
11/21	P'town (R.P.)	1	P. Flood	11/6	N. Quabbin	3	B. Lafley
12/18	E. Orleans	1	J. Trimble#	11/13	P.I.	22	P. + F. Vale
Red-shouldered Hawk				12/3	S. Dartmouth	2	A. Morgan
11/5	Holden	1	M. Lynch#	12/9	Wakefield	2	L. Ireland
11/7	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	M. Iliff	Willet			
11/10	P.I.	1	P. + F. Vale	11/4	Chatham	1	B. Harris
12/1	Concord	1	M. Rines	12/7	Nantucket	1	G. Andrews
12/15	S. Boston	1	P. Peterson	Lesser Yellowlegs			
Red-tailed Hawk				10/01	Quabbin (G43)	1	B. Robo
11/1-19	Barre Falls	59	Hawkcount (DS)	11/6	P.I.	1	S. Sullivan

Ruddy Turnstone				12/27	Barnstable (S.N.)	1	J. Trimble#
11/26	Manomet	1	SSBC (GdE)	Franklin's Gull			
11/28	Boston	3	S. Zende#	12/4	N. Truro	1 1W ph	B. Nikula#
11/30	P.I.	4	T. Wetmore#	Iceland Gull			
12/4	S. Boston	2	J. Battenfeld	thr	P'town (R.P.)	68 max	v.o.
Red Knot				12/4	Pittsfield	1	J. Pierce
12/18	E. Orleans	1	J. Trimble#	12/9-24	Turners Falls	1-3	v.o.
Sanderling				12/11	Framingham	1	N. Jacob
thr	P.I.	150 max	v.o.	12/27	Nantucket	12	S. Kardell#
12/26	P'town (R.P.)	215	G. d'Entremont	Lesser Black-backed Gull			
Semipalmated Sandpiper				11/18	Boston (Deer I.)	1	R. Stymeist#
11/2	P.I.	1	MAS (D. Moon)	11/20	Nantucket	32	S. Kardell#
Least Sandpiper				11/22	P'town (R.P.)	9	M. Iliff#
11/5	Northfield	1	E. Huston	11/23-12/21	Turners Falls	1	J. Smith
11/18	Arlington Res.	1	M. Beyly	12/7	Sharon	1	L. Waters
White-rumped Sandpiper				12/27	Nantucket	25	S. Kardell#
11/1-19	P.I.	13 max	v.o.	Glaucous Gull			
Pectoral Sandpiper				11/19	N. Truro	1	S. Arena
11/4	Nantucket	2	R. Ouren	12/4	Braintree	2	V. Zollo
11/5	P'town	2	M. Keleher#	12/19	Turners Falls	1	J. Coleman
11/15	P.I.	1	D. Adrien	12/31	P'town (R.P.)	1	S. Arena
Purple Sandpiper				12/31	N. Truro	1	B. Delaney#
11/13	Salisbury	40	P. + F. Vale	Common Tern			
11/28	Boston	5	S. Zende#	11/5, 13	P'town (R.P.)	775, 5	B. Nikula
11/28	Acoaxet	5	M. Lynch#	11/27	Plymouth	1 imm	S. Williams
12/14	Rockport	70	MAS (D. Moon)	Forster's Tern			
Dunlin				11/3	Dennis (Corp. B.)	8	K. Fiske
thr	P.I.	267 max	v.o.	11/3	P'town (R.P.)	30	P. Crosson#
12/13	Winthrop B.	25	S. Zende#	11/4	Dorchester	6	J. Benson
12/26	P'town (R.P.)	170	G. d'Entremont	11/11	P'town (R.P.)	2	S. Arena
Short-billed Dowitcher				11/13	P'town	11	J. Young
11/12	P.I.	1	T. Wetmore	11/19	N. Truro	1	S. Arena
12/3	Eastham (F.H.)	3	D. Peacock	Elegant Tern			
Long-billed Dowitcher				11/19	Wellfleet	1 ph	L. Seitz#
12/5	Nantucket	1	G. Andrews	Pomarine Jaeger			
12/31	Eastham (F.H.)	1	J. Trimble#	11/20, 12/3	P'town (R.P.)	34, 6	B. Nikula
Wilson's Snipe				Parasitic Jaeger			
11/27	Saugus	1	S. Zende#	11/1-12/11	P'town	25 max	B. Nikula
12/4	Chatham	1	B. Harris	11/10, 20	N. Truro	10, 3	B. Nikula
12/13	Salisbury	1	K. Lynch	11/19	Wellfleet	7	L. Seitz#
12/18	Boston	1	S. Williams#	Long-tailed Jaeger			
American Woodcock				11/1, 6	P'town (R.P.)	1, 2	Nikula, Arena
11/3	Wayland	2	B. Harris	11/20	P'town (R.P.)	1 2W	B. Nikula
12/11	Cumb. Farms	1	V. Zollo	Dovekie			
12/11	Hanover	1	M. Iliff	11/19, 12/26	P'town (R.P.)	1, 1	S. Arena#
12/15	Westport	1	R. Couse	12/31	Wellfleet	2	S. Arena#
Black-legged Kittiwake				Common Murre			
11/2	E. of Chatham	200	B. Nikula#	12/4, 26	P'town	70, 199	Nikula, Arena
11/10, 20	P'town (R.P.)	1200, 750	B. Nikula	12/29	Rockport (A.P.)	7	R. Heil
Bonaparte's Gull				Thick-billed Murre			
11/6, 19	Pittsfield (Pont.)	2, 2	Pierce, Ward	11/4, 12/26	P'town (R.P.)	1, 4	S. Arena
11/8	P.I.	170	D. Adrien	Razorbill			
11/13, 20	P'town (R.P.)	2500, 10000	B. Nikula	11/19, 12/30	P'town (R.P.)	447, 5400	S. Arena
11/21	Quabbin Pk	1	L. Therrien	12/14	Cohasset	7	E. Lipton
Black-headed Gull				12/24	P.I.	60	T. Wetmore
11/6-12	N. Truro	1	J. Russo#	Black Guillemot			
11/13, 20	P'town (R.P.)	1 ad, 1 1W	B. Nikula	12/11	Cohasset	1	E. Nielsen
12/4	Chatham	1 1W	B. Harris	12/14	Gloucester	1	MAS (D. Moon)
Little Gull				12/22	P.I.	1	T. Wetmore
11/13-12/20	P'town (R.P.)	7 max	v.o.	12/30	Aquinnah	1	B. Winn
Laughing Gull				Atlantic Puffin			
11/1-12/11	P'town (R.P.)	500 max	B. Nikula	11/10	P'town (R.P.)	1	B. Nikula
11/6	Winthrop	2	J. Forbes	12/20	Stellwagen	4	CBC
12/3	Westport	2	E. Nielsen				

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

White-winged Doves were noted from Nantucket and Edgartown, and two individuals were found in the Fenway Victory Gardens in Boston. These reports follow sightings of two White-winged Doves that visited a feeder on Nantucket this past August. Last year there were good numbers of Snowy Owls found during this period, but this year there were reports from only two locations, one on Nantucket and five at Logan Airport. Short-eared Owls fared better this year compared to last year: a total of 21 individuals were noted including an amazing seven on Tuckernuck Island. The banders at Drumlin Farm had a record season with a total of 371 Saw-whet Owls captured, with 71 banded in the first 19 days of November; another 48 Saw-whets were banded during November at Lookout Farm in Northbridge.

There were two reports of **Rufous Hummingbirds** including one continuing from last month in Westboro and another banded in Falmouth. **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were reported from Northampton, Belchertown, and in the Quabog IBA in central Massachusetts.

A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was discovered in the Middlesex Fells reservation in Medford, only the fifth record for the state and a first record for Middlesex County. Excellent photographs as well as several audio recordings clinched the identification; the previous record was from Fairhaven on New Year's Day 2016. The cooperative **Gray Kingbird** first noted on October 23 continued in Hyannis until November 2. There were two **Ash-throated Flycatchers**, one in Osterville and the other at the Gay Head area of Aquinnah. Late reports of Least Flycatchers came from Cambridge and Westboro. The **Bell's Vireo** first noted on October 12 when it was netted and banded at Manomet was seen by many birders at nearby Holmes Farm until November 25.

A **Sedge Wren** continued at Fort Hill in Eastham and another was located in Sandwich. **Townsend's Solitaires** were discovered in Somerset and Essex. A **Mountain Bluebird**, a first record for Franklin County, was discovered at Turners Falls on November 13. A Swainson's Thrush was photographed and confirmed on the late date of November 6 in Boston. The 21 species of warblers noted during this period included **Yellow-throated Warblers** from Orleans and Marblehead. Some late December reports included a Yellow Warbler in Brewster and a Prairie Warbler in Chatham. Rounding out the rarities was the continuing **Harris's Sparrow** in Westboro, another Harris's at a feeder in Dalton in Berkshire County, **Western Tanagers** in Gloucester and Lexington, and **Painted Buntings** in Melrose and Nantucket.

The winter finch flight was for the most part lukewarm with reports of just single Pine Grosbeaks and only one White-winged Crossbill, but Red Crossbills were seen regularly at Plum Island and Salisbury State Park.

R. Stymeist

White-winged Dove				Long-eared Owl		
11/19	Nantucket	1	S. Kardell	12/27	Barnstable	1 J. Trimble#
11/26	Edgartown	1 ph	M. Gilmore#		Short-eared Owl	
12/11-31	Boston (Fens)	2 ph	J. Trimble + v.o.	11/13-12/11	Barnstable	1 v.o.
Barn Owl				11/19	P.I.	2 J. Kovner
11/6	Orleans	1	K. Yakola#	11/27	DWWS	2 B. Rusnica#
Great Horned Owl				12/thr	Saugus	2-4 A. Trautmann#
12/6	Swampscott	3	J. Paluzzi	12/13	Cumb. Farms	5 S. Williams
12/11	Quabog IBA	4	M. Lynch#	12/26	Tuckernuck	7 CBC (S. Kardell)
12/26	Ipswich	4	J. Berry#	Northern Saw-whet Owl		
12/29	Concord	3	C. Corey	11/1-12	Northbridge	48 b B. Milke
Snowy Owl				11/1-19	DFWS	71 b K. Seymour
12/14	Nantucket	2	H. Young#	11/29	Rutland	4 M. Lynch#
12/18	Boston (Logan)	5	N. Smith	12/4	Sudbury	2 B. Harris
Barred Owl				Rufous Hummingbird		
12/11	Quabog IBA	3	M. Lynch#	11/thr	Falmouth	1 b M. Mann

Rufous Hummingbird (continued)			12/11	Saugus	100	A. Trautmann#	
11/1-13	Westboro	1	S. Williams	12/26	Ipswich	180	J. Berry#
Belted Kingfisher				12/31	Dighton	200	G. d'Entremont
11/17	GMNWR	2	A. Bragg#	Tree Swallow			
12/10	S. Quabbin	3	M. Lynch#	11/3	Mashpee	150	M. Keleher
12/11	Wakefield	2	P. + F. Vale	11/28	Nantucket	23	L. Dunn
American Kestrel				12/27	Barnstable	1	J. Trimble#
11/6	Saugus	2	S. Zende#	12/30	Chilmark	26	B. Stymeist
Merlin				Red-breasted Nuthatch			
11/15	P.I.	2	D. Adrien	11/24	Otis	5	J. Forbes
12/20	P'town (R.P.)	2	S. Arena	11/27	Tolland	30	M. Lynch#
Peregrine Falcon				12/7	Ipswich (C.B.)	4	J. Berry
11/10	P.I.	3	R. Heil	12/8	P.I.	8	T. Wetmore
11/24	P'town (R.P.)	3	S. Arena	12/10	Lincoln	4	P. Peterson
12/18	S. Chatham	3	P. Trimble#	Brown Creeper			
12/30	Medford	3	B. Rusnica	12/1	DFWS	2	P. Sowizral
Red-headed Woodpecker				12/10	Lincoln	2	P. Peterson
thr	Belchertown	1	v.o.	12/15	GMNWR	2	A. Bragg#
11/19-12/31	Northampton	1	D. Allard#	12/22	Randolph	3	P. Peterson
12/28	Quabog IBA	1	M. Lynch#	House Wren			
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker				11/1	Fall River	2	L. Abbey
12/13	DFWS	1	P. Sowizral	11/7-13	Westboro	1	T. Bradford
12/19	Westboro	1	S. Williams	Winter Wren			
12/20	Worcester	1	D. Berard	11/16	Medford	3	R. LaFontaine
Pileated Woodpecker				11/19	S. Brookline	4	P. Peterson
11/5	Holden	2	M. Lynch#	Sedge Wren			
11/19	Quabbin (G 37)	2	J. Hoye#	thr	Eastham (F.H.)	1	v.o.
12/22	GMNWR	2	A. Bragg#	12/17	Sandwich	1	J. Trimble#
12/30	Wayland	2	G. Long	Marsh Wren			
Least Flycatcher				11/3	N. Truro	5	E. Lipton
11/1-16	Cambr. (F.P.)	1	J. Trimble	12/1	Eastham (F.H.)	6	M. Faherty
11/16	Westboro	1	T. Spahr	12/27	Barnstable	7	J. Trimble#
Hammond's Flycatcher				12/29	GMNWR	3	A. Bragg#
11/7-15	Medford	1	LaFontaine + v.o.	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher			
Eastern Phoebe				11/23	Nantucket	1	T. Pastuszak
11/26	Northampton	1	L. Therrien	12/2	Chatham	1	A. Kneidel#
12/26	Barnstable	1	P. Crosson#	Golden-crowned Kinglet			
12/30	Falmouth	1	J. Sherwonit	11/9	W. Newbury	10	P. Peterson
Ash-throated Flycatcher				11/11	P.I.	10	G. Vigna
11/1	Gay Head (MV)	1	A. Keith	12/1	GMNWR	7	A. Bragg#
12/27	Osterville	1	E. Banks#	12/4	Ware R. IBA	11	M. Lynch#
Gray Kingbird				12/10	Lincoln	8	P. Peterson
11/1-2	Hyannis	1	v.o.	Ruby-crowned Kinglet			
Northern Shrike				11/6	Lexington (DM)	6	M. Rines#
11/6	P'town (R.P.)	2	Nikula, Arena	12/11	DFWS	1	P. Sowizral
12/23	Orleans	2	P. Trull	12/17	Braintree	1	G. d'Entremont#
White-eyed Vireo				12/27	Arlington	1	K. Hartel
11/2	Rockport	1	B. Harris	Eastern Bluebird			
11/7	Plymouth	1	D. Furbish	11/9	Hardwick	11	M. Lynch#
Bell's Vireo				11/16	Lexington (DM)	6	M. Rines
11/5-25	Manomet	1	phA. Kneidel + v.o.	12/1	GMNWR	9	A. Bragg#
Blue-headed Vireo				12/1	DFWS	10	P. Sowizral
11/8	Woburn (HP)	1	R. Jilek	12/11	Quabog IBA	8	M. Lynch#
11/12	Rockport	1	B. Harris	Mountain Bluebird			
12/4	Chatham	1	B. Harris	11/13-16	Turners Falls	1	J. Smith
Warbling Vireo				Townsend's Solitaire			
11/4	WBWS	1	J. Junda#	12/6	Somerset	1 ph	J. Eckerson
Red-eyed Vireo				12/18	Essex	1	CBC (D. Peterson)
11/2	Gloucester	2	B. Harris#	Swainson's Thrush			
11/8	P.I.	1	S. Zhang	11/6	Boston (Fens)	1 ph	J. Trimble#
11/10	DWWS	1	H. Levesque	Hermit Thrush			
Fish Crow				11/6	Boston (RKG)	2	R. Stymeist
11/26	Manomet	5	SSBC (GdE)	11/28	Westport	4	M. Lynch#
12/21	Worcester	1	J. Lawson	12/1	Lexington (DM)	4	M. Rines
12/23	Dorchester	1	P. Peterson	12/10	Eastham (F.H.)	2	G. d'Entremont
12/29	Waltham	2	J. Forbes	12/13	Ipswich	2	J. Berry
Common Raven				Gray Catbird			
11/6	Mt. Wachusett	28	R. Chase	thr	Reports of indiv. from 12 locations		
12/15	GMNWR	3	A. Bragg#	Brown Thrasher			
Horned Lark				12/8	Williamstown	1	M. Morales
thr	P.I.	80 max	v.o.	American Pipit			
11/15	Acton	35	J. Forbes	11/1	P.I.	7	D. Williams
12/7	E. Boston (B.I.)	30	P. Peterson	12/13	Concord (NAC)	20	P. Peterson

American Pipit (continued)				11/5	Truro	1	B. Harris
12/18 Ipswich (C.B.)	1	J. Berry#		11/11	Mt.A.	1	J. Barcus
Bohemian Waxwing				Palm Warbler			
12/14 Ipswich	2	A. Steenstrup		11/2	W. Roxbury	2	P. Peterson
Cedar Waxwing				11/19	Marion	2	G. d'Entremont#
11/2 P.I.	150	MAS (D. Moon)		11/28	Acoaxet	1	M. Lynch#
11/30 Waltham	50	J. Forbes		12/17	Westport	1	E. Nielsen
12/11 Quabog IBA	49	M. Lynch#		12/23	Milton	1	P. Peterson
12/30 Wayland	35	G. Long		Pine Warbler			
12/31 Lancaster	34	P. Christoph		12/13	Concord	1	T. Swain
Lapland Longspur				12/13	Nahant	1	R. Heil
11/1 Northampton	2	L. Therrien		12/26	Woburn (HP)	1	M. McCarthy
11/6 Saugus	3	S. Zende#		12/28	Medford	1	J. Layman
11/13 Eastham (F.H.)	6	L. Waters#		12/29	Arlington	2	K. Hartel
11/30 P.I.	4	T. Wetmore		Yellow-rumped Warbler			
12/26 Newbury	6	C. Floyd		11/6	Lexington (DM)	12	M. Rines#
12/31 Salisbury	2	E. Labato		11/13	Worc. (BMB)	3	J. Liller#
Snow Bunting				12/4	Chatham	117	B. Harris
thr P.I.	110 max	v.o.		12/7	Ipswich (C.B.)	3	J. Berry
11/13 Edgartown	63	L. Johnson		12/26	Truro	10	G. d'Entremont
11/16 Ipswich (C.B.)	100	N. Dubrow		Yellow-throated Warbler			
11/17 P'town (R.P.)	150	E. Lipton		11/9	MNWS	1 ph	A. Sandford#
11/28 Acoaxet	110	M. Lynch#		11/27	Orleans	1 ph	J. Sweeney
Ovenbird				Prairie Warbler			
11/1 Medford	1	R. LaFontaine		11/13	Somerville	1	A. Brandt
11/1-16 Boston (RKG)	1	J. Taylor + v.o.		12/4	Chatham	1	B. Harris
11/17 Barnstable	1	P. Crosson		Black-throated Green Warbler			
12/10-31 Woburn (HP)	1	A. Gurka + v.o.		11/2	Gloucester	1	B.Harris#
12/27 Osterville	1	S. Williams#		11/4	Westport	1	C. Blake
Black-and-white Warbler				Wilson's Warbler			
11/4 Medford	1	R. LaFontaine		11/4	Chatham	1	B. Harris
Orange-crowned Warbler				Yellow-breasted Chat			
thr Reports of indiv. from 14 locations				11/1-23	Boston (RKG)	1	J. Taylor
11/4 Chatham	2	B. Harris		11/4, 12/4	Chatham	6, 3	B. Harris
11/6 Lexington (DM)	2	R. LaFontaine#		11/7	Manomet	1 b	T. Lloyd-Evans#
11/6 Boston (Fens)	2	R. Schain#		11/9	Eastham (F.H.)	3	J. Pratt
11/8 Medford	2	N. Dorian		11/12	Rockport	3	B. Harris
Nashville Warbler				11/15-12/31	Nahant	1	v.o.
11/8 Wayland	1	B. Harris		11/16	Medford	1	R. LaFontaine
11/15 Boston (RKG)	1	M. Mulqueen		Eastern Towhee			
11/18 Woburn (HP)	1	M. Rines		12/18	Essex	1	CBC (D. Peterson)
12/4 Waltham	1	J. Forbes		12/18	W. Boylston	1	P. Meleski
12/6 Eastham	1	B. Delaney		12/20	Rockport	2	B. Harris
12/24 Medford	1	J. Forbes		American Tree Sparrow			
Common Yellowthroat				11/3	GMNWR	14	K. Dia#
11/6 Boston (RKG)	2	R. Stymeist		11/27	Brookline	19	J. Forbes
12/4 Wilmington	1	S. Sullivan#		12/11	Quabog IBA	47	M. Lynch#
12/8 P.I.	1	R. Murphy		12/26	P.I.	42	P. + F. Vale
12/20 Rockport	1	B. Harris		12/28	Cumb. Farms	40	B. Delaney
12/26 S. Dart. (A.Pd)	1	G. Perkins		Chipping Sparrow			
Hooded Warbler				11/6	S. Hamilton	4	D. Walters
11/23 Plymouth	1	S. Foster		12/2	Malden	2	R. Shaw
American Redstart				12/31	Framingham	4	N. Paulson
11/6 Northampton	1	D. Allard		Clay-colored Sparrow			
11/7 Plymouth	1	D. Furbish#		11/1	Lexington	1	C. Floyd
Northern Parula				11/2	Medford	1	N. Dorian#
11/25 Nantucket	1	S. Kardell		11/9	Eastham (F.H.)	1	J. Pratt
Bay-breasted Warbler				11/25	Carver	1	P. Jacobson
11/7 Medford	1	N. Dorian		12/3	Falmouth	1	D. Peacock
Blackburnian Warbler				Vesper Sparrow			
11/8 Brewster	1	S. Finnegan#		11/5	Barnstable	3	P. Crosson
Yellow Warbler				11/14	Sandwich	2	P. Trimble
11/1 WBWS	1	J. Junda#		11/15	Salisbury	1 imm	K. Elwell
11/27 Boston (Fens)	1	R. Schain		12/10	Lincoln	1	P. Peterson
12/6 Brewster	1	P. Trimble		12/31	Barnstable	2	N. Villone
Blackpoll Warbler				Lark Sparrow			
11/12 Sharon	1	L. Waters		12/thr	Eastham (F.H.)	1	A. Kneidel + v.o.
11/12 Rockport	1	B. Harris		Savannah Sparrow			
11/13 Brookline	1	P. Peterson		11/9	Raynham	10	J. Sweeney
11/14 Medford	1	G. Richards		11/25	Edgartown	2	P. Gilmore
11/14 Manomet	1 b	T. Lloyd-Evans#		12/11	Saugus	2	A. Trautmann#
Black-throated Blue Warbler				Ipswich Sparrow			
11/4 Chatham	1	B. Harris		11/12	Salisbury	4	M. Brengle

Ipswich Sparrow (continued)				12/30	Eastham (F.H.)	14	J. Trimble#
11/25	Edgartown	6	P. Gilmore		Rusty Blackbird		
11/26	P.I.	2	N. Landry	11/14	Waltham	3	J. Forbes
Grasshopper Sparrow				12/11	Northampton	7	K. Yakola
11/19	Wayland	1	B. Harris	12/18	Wayland	7	A. McCarthy#
12/29	Barnstable	1	J. Trimble#	12/20	IRWS	2	J. Parrot-Willis
Nelson's Sparrow				12/23	Westboro	4	C. Rosenblatt
11/9, 12/11	Fairhaven	6, 3	C. Longworth	12/28	Burlington	9	J. Keeley
12/30	Eastham (F.H.)	3	J. Trimble#	Baltimore Oriole			
Saltmarsh Sparrow				11/1	Medford	1	R. LaFontaine
11/13	Fairhaven	1	C. Longworth	11/5	Hingham	1	BBC (GdE)
11/25	Eastham (F.H.)	4	S. Arena	12/1	Concord	1	J. Keyes
12/13	Barnstable	1	P. Crosson	12/2	Springfield	1	C. Sherrard
Seaside Sparrow				12/26	Gloucester	1	B. Harris#
11/25	Eastham (F.H.)	2	V. Zollo#	Pine Grosbeak			
11/25	Edgartown	2	P. Gilmore	11/6	Stockbridge	1	r. Laubach
Fox Sparrow				11/6	P.I.	1 ph	S. Sullivan#
11/9	W. Newbury	4	P. Peterson	11/6	Orleans	1	K. Yakola#
11/17, 12/7	Lexington (DM)	7, 7	M. Rines	11/8	Quabbin (G52)	1	L. Therrien
11/22	Wakefield	3	L. Ireland	11/16	Eastham (F.H.)	1	G. Gove
Lincoln's Sparrow				11/21	Wachusett Res.	1	M. Lynch#
11/6	Boston (RKG)	1	R. Stymeist	11/24	P'town (R.P.)	1	K. Yakola
11/7	Holliston	1	P. Rennert	Purple Finch			
11/12	Wakefield	1	D. Williams	11/6	Merrimac	1	B. + B. Buxton
Swamp Sparrow				11/9	Petersham	3	M. Lynch#
11/2	W. Roxbury	6	P. Peterson	11/18	Newton	1	P. Gilmore
11/6	Boston (RKG)	4	R. Stymeist	11/22	P.I.	5	T. Wetmore
12/23	Dorchester	5	P. Peterson	11/24	Quabog IBA	1	M. Lynch#
12/29	GMNWR	5	A. Bragg#	Red Crossbill			
Harris's Sparrow				11/25	Nantucket	3	S. Kardell
11/1-07	Westboro	1	v.o.	11/26-12/31	P.I.	20 max	v.o.
11/25-12/31	Dalton	1	G. Hurley + v.o.	12/1	Orleans	14	M. Faherty
White-crowned Sparrow				12/4-31	Salisbury	21 max	v.o.
11/10-23	Concord	2	J. Keyes	12/6	W. Boylston	1	R. Schain
12/1	Wachusett Res.	1	M. Lynch#	12/26	Brewster	1	B. Nikula
Western Tanager				12/26	P'town	1	S. Arena
11/6	Gloucester (E.P.)	1 ph	BBC (S. Hepburn)	White-winged Crossbill			
11/13-12/13	Lexington	1	M. Rines + v.o.	11/6	S. Quabbin	1	M. Lynch#
Rose-breasted Grosbeak				Common Redpoll			
11/19	New Salem	1	S. Cloutier	11/1	Northampton	23	A. Magee
Blue Grosbeak				11/5	Hingham	1	BBC (GdE)
11/3	Sandwich	1	J. Pratt	11/12	Eastham	1	J. Trimble#
Indigo Bunting				11/28	Mt Washington	12	G. Ward
11/4	Chatham	1	B. Harris	12/31	P.I.	3	M. Goetschkes
Painted Bunting				Pine Siskin			
11/27	Melrose	1 f ph	D. Hefferon	thr	Reports of indiv. from 11 locations		
11/27, 12/13	Nantucket	1, 2	S. Kardell	11/6	S. Quabbin	4	M. Lynch#
Dickcissel				11/13	Merrimac	4	B. + B. Buxton
11/1-08	Boston (PG)	1	v.o.	11/27	Medford	2	M. Rines#
11/3	Sandwich	1	J. Pratt	Evening Grosbeak			
11/6	Lexington	1	M. Rines#	11/1	Chatham	1	P. Trimble
11/thr	Eastham (F.H.)	1	v.o.	11/3	Nantucket	1	K. Blackshaw#
12/2	Cambridge	1	M. Sinclair	11/12	Westwood	8	E. Nielsen
12/31	Nantucket	1	P. Trimble#	11/12	Belchertown	3	S. Sumner
Eastern Meadowlark				11/12	Quabbin Pk	2	L. Therrien
11/5	Barre Falls	1	D. Schilling	11/14	Windsor	2	M. Lynch#
11/9	Raynham	1	J. Sweeney	11/19	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	M. McCarthy
12/11	Saugus	3	A. Trautmann	12/24	Hardwick	1	W. Howes

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ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Locations

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

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO *BIRD OBSERVER*

Sightings for any given month must be reported in writing by the eighth of the following month, and may be submitted by postal mail or 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://www.birdobserver.org/Contact-Us/Submit-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 Sean Williams, 18 Parkman Street, Westborough MA 01581, or by email to seanbirder@gmail.com.

ABOUT THE COVER

Northern Rough-winged Swallow

The Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) is something of a mystery bird because the adaptive significance of the rough wings that give the swallow its name remains a puzzle. The genus name combines two Greek words that mean “scraper-wing”, and the species name combines two Latin words that mean “saw-feather.” The stiff barbs of the outer edge of the outer primary feathers, which in the males are curved into hooklets and in females are pointed, are rough to the touch. The Northern Rough-winged Swallow is a small, brownish swallow with creamy white underparts. Its brownish back, flanks, and chest separate it from the adult Tree Swallow, and it lacks the distinct breast band of the smaller Bank Swallow. It feeds over water more consistently than other swallows and it often glides low over the surface and plunges its underside into the water prior to preening.

The taxonomy of the Rough-winged Swallow complex is complicated confusing, and in something of a muddle. In 1983, the Rough-winged Swallow (*S. ruficollis*), ranging from southern Canada to Argentina, was split into Northern (*S. serripennis*) and Southern (*S. ruficollis*) Rough-winged swallow species, the latter being distinguished by, among other characteristics, a lighter rump. The subspecies status of the Northern Rough-winged Swallow is still debated, with some taxonomists considering it monotypic (comprised of only one race) and others dividing it into five or six subspecies, with *S. s. serripennis* breeding in most of the United States and southern Canada except for the Southwest. Variation within populations makes subspecific designation even more problematic. To add to the confusion, some taxonomists consider two of the subspecies in Mexico and Central America to be full species.

The Northern Rough-winged Swallow breeds from southern Canada throughout most of the United States and winters in southern Florida, Mexico, and Central America. Year-round populations occur along the Gulf Coast, and in south Texas, Mexico, and Central America. The Northern Rough-winged Swallow was not reported in Massachusetts before the 1850s, but by 1925 it had a sparsely distributed breeding population. Today it is an uncommon, but widespread, breeder throughout the state. It is a common spring migrant but is rare in fall. It arrives in Massachusetts by mid-April and departs in late July or early August. In an interesting fall migration pattern, Northern Rough-winged Swallows congregate on the Gulf Coast, sometimes staying a month or more to complete their flight-feather molt, before making a trans-Gulf migration.

Northern Rough-winged Swallows are monogamous and produce a single brood per year. The song of the male is a buzzy series of rapid notes, variously described as *brrrt*, *jrrr*, or *jee*. The male sings near the nest, and the song may function to some degree in mate-guarding. Also, a series of high notes may be given during territorial chases and fights, usually by the male. Females give a variety of alarm notes. During courtship and territorial disputes, the rough outer primary feathers produce a whistled

or a whirring sound. In courtship, males may pursue females with the pair periodically alighting together. Courtship in the species is not well documented.

Northern Rough-winged Swallows nest singly or in small colonies ranging from two to 25 pairs, often at the edges of a Bank Swallow colony. They nest in a variety of hollows or burrows, including drainpipes and crevices; under bridges; in gravel pits; and in banks of sand or clay—in short, just about any vertical surface containing cavities or crevices. They frequently nest in the abandoned burrows of other birds, including Bank Swallows, kingfishers, and sometimes in the burrows of mammals. Local distribution is heavily dependent on nest-site availability. During nest construction both sexes are aggressive to intruders. They will swoop at interlopers, which may lead to fights with face-to-face hovering and sparring, which sometimes result in grasping with feet and bills and descent to the ground. When perched near the nest, adults may give a threat display, crouching with head forward and mouth open.

The female collects the nesting material from the ground and she alone builds the nest. The nest material is highly varied: twigs, grass, bark, moss, hair—anything that is available. The new nest may be built on the nest of the previous cavity user. The normal clutch is four to six white eggs, but clutch size is highly variable. Only the female develops a brood patch and she alone incubates the eggs for the 16 days until hatching. The chicks hatch helpless with eyes closed and they are covered in sparse down. The female broods the chicks for up to three weeks until they fledge; after the young fly from the nest, they seldom return. Both parents feed the chicks and continue to feed the young birds for several weeks after fledging. Eventually the young join flocks of adults to forage and roost.

Northern Rough-winged Swallows forage from dawn to dusk. They sweep low over the ground or water, hawking insects, which they sometimes take from the water surface. Their prey are almost exclusively flying insects. Sometimes they land to harvest particularly abundant prey, such as larvae feeding on dead fish. Primary insect prey includes flies, bees, and beetles.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow nests are depredated by snakes and many mammal species, including badgers, ground squirrels, and weasels. As early migrants, the swallows are subject to the vagaries of weather; young may starve if the weather is cold or rainy and flying insect populations are depressed. In some areas, only an estimated 10 % of returning migrants find suitable nest sites, and nest-site availability is doubtless a limiting factor in many populations. Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data show varying periods of increase and decrease. Artificial burrows have proved successful, and the swallows' use of man-made structures or road cuts for nesting is encouraging. The species is not listed as threatened anywhere within its range, and this bodes well for the future of Northern Rough-winged Swallows. 🐦

William E. Davis, Jr.

AT A GLANCE

February 2017



JIM SWEENEY

In this issue readers are once again challenged by a gull—a fact made obvious by the combination of the bird's fairly broad, pointed wings with a strong upperwing pattern set against a medium gray background; an extensive brown back neatly set off from brownish markings on top of the head and behind the eye by a trim white collar; and a rounded white tail showing a narrow, well-defined dark terminal band contrasting with white uppertail coverts. Although in some ways the mystery bird exhibits a vague resemblance to the plumage of certain tern species, its broad wings, the lack of a dark cap or dark scarf around the back of the head, and the lack of a prominently forked tail should at once remove a tern as an identification option.

Other obvious features of this gull include a slim, bicolored bill, a white leading edge—or wedge—on the upper surface of the wings, and black on the underside of the primaries.

One feature that is particularly important to notice about the mystery gull is the slim, pointed, bicolored bill. Large gulls, e.g., Herring or Great Black-backed gulls, have heavy, laterally compressed bills that typically show a conspicuous gonydeal notch (expansion) on the lower bill (mandible) and are never sharply pointed as the bill on the mystery gull.

Other important features are the light brown back (visible in the online image), upper wing bar, and head pattern coloration. This brown coloration and its presence on the dorsal surface of the gull, along with the bicoloration of the bird's slim, pointed bill

indicate that this individual is a juvenile. In a large gull species, these plumage features would be less clearly defined, especially around the head and on the wings, and the tail band would be broader but ill defined. Also, typically the uppertail coverts would be heavily patterned, not pure white as in the gull in the photograph.

With these points in mind, especially the pointed bill, white wedge on the leading edge of the upper wing surface, and the well-defined black band on the slightly rounded tail, this juvenile gull can only be a Bonaparte's Gull or a Black-headed Gull. Since Bonaparte's Gulls always have a sharp-pointed all black bill, white—not black—under their primaries, and seldom show such a clearly defined white collar contrasting with the brownish head pattern on this gull, it is safe to assume that the mystery gull is a juvenile Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)—in a plumage rarely seen in Massachusetts, but nonetheless completely distinctive because of these features.

The Black-headed Gull is an uncommon and somewhat local species in coastal Massachusetts. The gull tends to be most frequent in areas where Bonaparte's Gulls concentrate. Newburyport Harbor, Plymouth, several localities on Cape Cod, and Nantucket seem to be favored spots in recent years, even though the species occasionally shows up elsewhere. Black-headed Gulls are most frequently encountered in spring, fall, and winter, although occasionally nonbreeding immatures linger along the coast in summer. Remarkably, there is also a record of a pair that unsuccessfully attempted to nest at Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge in 1986. Jim Sweeney photographed this Black-headed Gull in Iceland on July 8, 2014. 🐦

Wayne R. Petersen

ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST

John Sill

John Sill is a freelance wildlife artist living in the mountains of North Carolina. He was the illustrator for the Bird Identification Calendar for Mass Audubon for many years. His work has appeared in *Birds In Art* at the Leigh-Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, Wisconsin, and in *Art of the Animal Kingdom* at the Bennington Center for the Arts in Vermont. He continues to illustrate the “About” and “About Habitats” series of natural history books for children written by his wife Cathryn. 🐦

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AT A GLANCE



WAYNE R. PETERSEN

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

MORE HOT BIRDS

A trio of birders from Amherst first reported a **Pacific Loon** at Race Point on January 12. The very next day, another was discovered near Cathedral Ledge, Rockport. Both birds continued at least into late February, and Race Point was eventually confirmed to have two individuals. A more tentative report from North Chatham on January 9 was never re-found. Blair Nikula took the photo on the right.



A **Mew Gull** found at Nahant Beach by John Quigley on February 25 was re-found on subsequent days at Lynn Beach and King's Beach. Zack Weber noticed that the bird was banded, and Dan Prima managed to read enough of the band numbers to confirm that the bird had been banded in Iceland on June 23, 2013! Dan took the photo on the left.

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