

Bird Observer

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HOT BIRDS



Bristol County, and the adjacent corner of Plymouth County, was the waterfowl capital of Massachusetts this winter. It started with a **Pink-footed Goose** found at Somerset Reservoir in early December by Matthew Eckerson. The bird remained there through the first few days of January. More than a month later, it or another of its species appeared roughly 20 miles to the east in Rochester, where it was still being seen just before press time. Carol Molander took the photo above.



In a classic example of the “Patagonia Picnic Table Effect,” just a day after the Pink-footed Goose appeared, Alan Trautmann discovered a **Tundra Swan** at the same reservoir. It remained in the area for at least three months. Neil Dowling took the photo above.



On January 15, Neil Dowling was chasing reports of Snow and Greater White-fronted geese in cornfields near Rochester, and though he missed those, he came across two **Barnacle geese** instead! The pair spent the next two months wandering between those fields and Acushnet, where they were spotted feeding on a golf course and resting on the river and a lake upstream. Several birders later saw the Snow, Pink-footed, and Barnacle geese all in the same flock. At least one drake Eurasian Wigeon, originally spotted in mid-October in Somerset, also made the rounds through late February in the same locations as the Tundra Swan and various rare geese. Neil took the photo above.

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Bird Observer

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Coastal Birding from Wareham to the Cape Cod Canal

Nate Marchessault

The Wareham area is not well known as a birding hotspot. In fact, most people probably have been to Wareham only to get to Cape Cod or to watch cranberries being harvested. Despite the lack of birding coverage, there are plenty of locations that warrant exploration all year.



Due to its coastal location, Wareham's beginnings were in the shipbuilding industry. Today, cranberries are its major industry. Therefore it is only natural that one of the birding locations in the area is a complex of old cranberry bogs. Wareham, Bourne, and Sandwich are the towns that abut the Cape Cod Canal. The canal slices through Bourne and Sandwich—which are officially part of Cape Cod and Barnstable County—putting a small section of each town on the mainland. Wareham, west of Bourne, is entirely on the mainland and is part of Plymouth County. It was incorporated as a town in 1739 by combining territory from parts of Rochester and Plymouth.

The Cape Cod Canal is an artificial waterway that was built to improve navigational safety. "The Canal" (as locals call it) is an approximately seven-mile-long shortcut from Buzzards Bay to Cape Cod Bay that allows ships to bypass more than 100 miles of treacherous Atlantic Ocean waters along the coastline of Cape Cod. The Boston, Cape Cod, and New York Canal Company began digging the canal and building the bridges over it in 1909, finishing in July 1914. The canal was a privately owned toll waterway until the federal government purchased it in 1927. The United States Army Corps of Engineers widened the canal to 480 feet from the original 100 feet and built the current Bourne and Sagamore bridges and a new railroad bridge in 1935. The canal had a different entrance when it was first built; remnants of the original entrance near Mashnee Island in Bourne can be seen on a satellite map.

Weweantic River

Begin the Wareham area birding route at the Weweantic River bridge (A), which is accessible from a pulloff on Route 6. (See Map 1. Overview.) Named by the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, the Weweantic and its short tributary, the Sippican River, were once important runs for diadromous fish but have been blocked by dams. Recently, the Buzzards Bay Coalition has developed plans to dismantle some of the dams in order to restore the flow between salt and fresh water and recreate the productive spawning routes as well as enhance the overall health of the waterway.

The bridge is a good spot to check for Barrow's Goldeneye in winter, with multiple individuals having been seen in recent years. They accompany the regular assortment of waterfowl: Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers, and Common Goldeneyes. The flow of water under the bridge keeps this part of the river from icing over during the most



Cape Cod Canal Railroad Bridge and Bourne Bridge from Massachusetts Maritime Academy. All photographs by the author.

frigid weather, so check the area even when other nearby waterways are frozen because occasionally you may find large concentrations of birds.

In the warmer months, birding by kayak or canoe is the way to go. Tides generally are not a concern this far up in Buzzards Bay, so timing the tide is not necessary. There is a small trail from the pulloff on Route 6 that you can use to launch a boat, or you can use the boat launch down River Road just south of the bridge. Once on the water, you can follow the main channel of the Weweantic River until the dam at Horseshoe Mill or take the small tributary on the left, the Sippican River. Both are worth exploring. While paddling along the river, listen for songbirds singing in the forest and Marsh Wrens, locally uncommon in Buzzards Bay, in the cattails and phragmites. In early spring and fall, the phragmites and cattails are also productive spots for rails and other migrating marsh birds.

You can find diamondback terrapins by paddling into the small marsh between the marina and the parking area off of Interstate 195 (I-195). The diamondback terrapin is the only North American turtle that is endemic to estuarine areas; it is classified as vulnerable federally and threatened in Massachusetts.

In the fall, lots of baitfish get pushed up into the river, followed by hungry striped bass. It is not unusual to see a few stripers hitting topwater, so for the birder who enjoys a bit of fishing, a rod and reel are worth bringing along for a double-whammy of outdoor fun. Flocks of terns, Double-crested Cormorants, and Greater Yellowlegs accompany the bass upstream.

From the parking area on Route 6, travel north for one mile, then turn right on Cromesett Road. In 0.33 mile turn left onto Terry Lane East. Take the first left onto Christopher Drive, then turn right in 600 feet onto Wright Lane. At the end of Wright Lane, turn left onto Dennis Lane. Take the first right onto Camardo Drive. In 200 feet,



Overgrown bogs at Mark's Cove Conservation Area.

Camardo Drive curves right and becomes Nicholas Drive. Follow this for 0.3 mile to the gate and parking area for Mark's Cove Conservation Area (B).

Mark's Cove Conservation Area

A fine example of how cooperation among conservation organizations can result in large-scale land acquisition, this 118-acre area with two-and-one-half miles of trails is a conglomeration of parcels owned by Buzzards Bay Coalition, Wareham Land Trust, Wildlands Trust, Mass Audubon, and the Town of Wareham. A copy of the trail map can be found here: <www.savebuzzardsbay.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/map_marks-cove-conservation-area.pdf>

The small ponds on either side of the entrance attract Mallards and, occasionally, American Black Ducks or American Wigeons. Beyond the ponds in fall, winter, and spring, the old cranberry bogs—densely overgrown with pines, oaks, and small shrubs—can be teeming with songbirds such as Golden- and Ruby-crowned kinglets and the occasional warbler. The small outflow at the southeastern edge of the bogs is particularly good for semi-hardy lingerers such as Eastern Towhees, Hermit Thrushes, and Gray Catbirds, which are accompanied by the comparatively more common juncos and White-throated Sparrows. In irruption years, the trails into the woods along the bogs can be good for crossbills. The area isn't notably diverse in terms of bird life in the summer, but walking into the forest is almost guaranteed to yield a backdrop of

chattering Brown Creepers, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Pine Warblers, always easy on the ears.

Reverse your route and return to Route 6. Travel north on Route 6 for 0.7 mile, then turn left onto Gibbs Avenue. Turn left onto Main Street, and in 0.9 mile turn left onto Station Street. Follow this to the end to reach Birch Island Conservation Area (C).

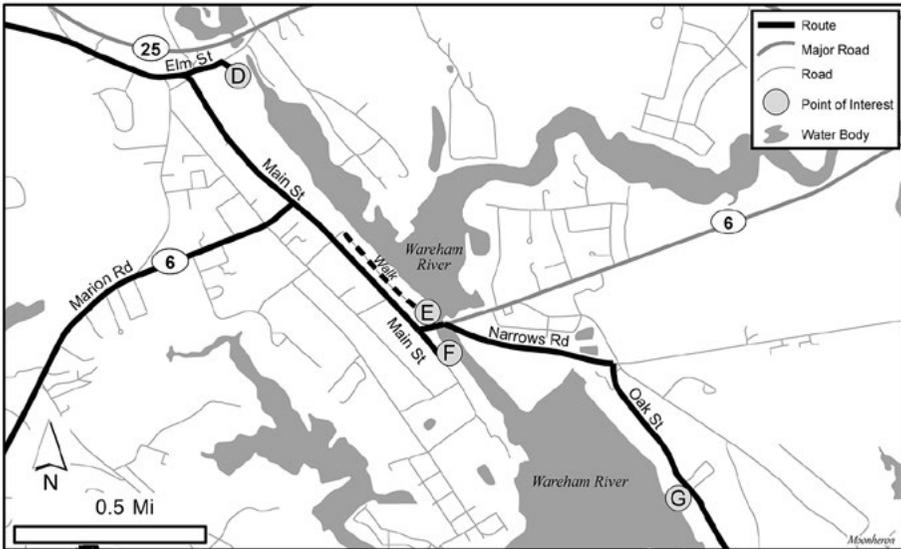
Birch Island Conservation Area

The island at Birch Island Conservation Area isn't an island, and there aren't any birches around either. The "island" is a spit of upland forest along an oxbow of the Weweantic River and is owned by the town of Wareham. The Birch Island Conservation Area abuts the Weweantic River Reserve, owned by the Buzzards Bay Coalition. Trails connect the two conservation areas, and from Birch Island you can walk to Horseshoe Mill, an interesting and historic part of the Weweantic River Reserve that provides access to fresh and brackish sections of the river. In addition, Birch Island and Horseshoe Mill offer a diverse array of habitats with mixed conifer and hardwood forests, maple swamp, salt and freshwater marshes, a small weedy field, and a small patch of white cedar swamp.

A copy of the trail map for Birch Island Conservation Area can be found here: https://www.savebuzzardsbay.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/map_birch-island-conservation-area_horseshoe-mill.pdf

These diverse habitats attract a wide variety of birds, making birding productive here year-round. In spring, this trail system is one of the more productive stopovers for migrants in the Wareham area. The short trail in the center of the Birch Island parking lot leading up a hill seems to be the most reliable place for migrants, but keep an eye out for mixed flocks throughout your walk. Follow the loop trail westward along Birch Island, which pretty much parallels the Weweantic River. In summer, this area hosts an assortment of breeding birds. Wood Ducks and Swamp Sparrows frequent the freshwater marsh along the river, and Great Horned Owls nest in the upland forest. Be sure to peek through the trees to look at the river every now and again. Depending on how much the river has receded over the summer, shorebirds or waders such as the occasional Little Blue Heron can be found. In winter, the Weweantic River rarely freezes over completely, making it another worthwhile stop for waterfowl when all the ponds start to freeze. When the trail comes to a T, continue right to reach the weedy field. In fall, this area can be interesting for sparrows. Continuing past the field takes you over the old Horseshoe Mill. Stop here and check the river for ducks and waders. This is also a good spot in the breeding season to look for Baltimore Oriole and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nests. Belted Kingfishers often can be heard rattling in the brackish marsh to the north. From here you can continue to explore some of the trails into the forest or follow the main trail covered in old slag back to the parking lot.

From Station Street, return to Main Street and take a right. Follow Main Street as it curves slightly to the right, then turn left and make an immediate quick right onto Elm Street. In 500 feet, turn right into the old Tremont Nail Company parking lot (D), and head to the southeast corner to reach your first stop at the Wareham River.



Map 2. Downtown/Wareham River.

Wareham River

The Wareham River once was a reliable location for Canvasbacks in winter; unfortunately—as in many of the old “Can” ponds—their numbers have dwindled to zero. Nonetheless, this is a fantastic area for observing waterfowl, gulls, and terns from fall through spring. Interestingly, concentrations of each species are faithful to certain locations of the river.

The first stop along the Wareham River is where Parker Mills Pond feeds into it. (See Map 2. Downtown/Wareham River.) You can access the water from the parking lot of the old Tremont Nail Company. Waterfowl are typically limited to a group of Mallards—the only reliable spot for them on the river—and a Mute Swan or two, but there are feeders on the opposite side of the river, and the area is lively with songbird activity.

Take a left onto Elm Street, then turn left onto Main Street, which goes straight through downtown Wareham. There are several spots to turn into the downtown parking area, but keep driving through town and turn left into the lot just before the bridge. Park in one of the first spots on the right (E), where you will usually see Common Goldeneyes up close, Hooded Mergansers in the small cove to the east, and groups of Gadwalls and geese in the distance. Depending on the tide, gulls may be out on the mud flat straight ahead or the peninsula that juts out to the left. Be sure to look them over carefully because Iceland and Lesser Black-backed gulls may be in the mix. Keep an eye out for Bald Eagles if all the gulls flush at once, as they are relatively common here and are likely nesting in the area. If you have the time, walk 0.3 mile along the parking area to the train station; there are usually a group or two of American Wigeons and numbers of Mute Swans in the river here.



Forster's Tern.

Return to your car, take a right out of the parking lot, then turn left onto Main Street. Mary Besse Park (F) is approximately 250 feet on the left. You can walk along the river to the bridge, where there are usually several Hooded Mergansers swimming underneath and Red-breasted Mergansers a bit farther out. The birds here will be in close, offering good views. The view of the river at the bridge is practically due north and makes for great lighting conditions for observing the beautiful iridescence of a Bufflehead, goldeneye, or scaup. On several occasions, I have observed a Cooper's Hawk hanging out under the bridge.

Go north on Main Street, turn right onto Route 6, and go over the bridge. Take an immediate slight right at a set of lights onto Narrows Road. In 0.5 mile, take the first right onto Oak Street to a small parking area at a boat launch called Tempest Knob (G). There can be several hundred Buffleheads associating with Greater Scaup here, and Brant frequent this stretch as well. In the fall, large numbers of baitfish attract terns; you can see Common, Roseate, Forster's, and Black terns fishing or loafing on the boats moored in the area.

Drive east on Oak Street for 0.3 mile, and turn right onto Indian Neck Road. In 0.4 mile turn left onto Crooked River Road (which will become Great Neck Road as you continue straight). In 1.75 miles, turn right onto Stockton Short Cut Street. In 0.3 mile, turn right onto Little Harbor Road and follow it until you reach Little Harbor Beach (H). (See Map 1. Overview.)

Little Harbor Beach

Truly a hidden gem, Little Harbor Beach lies tucked away in the sleepy area of



Nelson's Sparrow.

Great Neck in Wareham. The beach limits parking to residents only, so visit in the off-season—when the birding is best. A trail at the end of the parking lot goes through the marsh to the inlet, and from there you can walk the beach back to the parking lot. This area is a magnet for random notable species, and you really never know what you will find. Long-billed Dowitchers, American Bitterns, Pacific Loons, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Black Skimmers, Parasitic Jaegers, and even shearwaters (scarce this far up in Buzzards Bay) have shown up here.

More reliably, the tall *Spartina* grass along the marsh trail is a magnet for Sharp-tailed Sparrows from late September through October, with Nelson's Sparrows being regular. In the early spring, there are usually American Oystercatchers hanging out in the marsh and a Piping Plover or two on the beach. On a day with favorable winds, you can observe a diversity of migrating hawks. In winter, harriers soar above the marsh. You can see the occasional Ipswich Sparrow in the dunes and Horned Larks and Snow Buntings around the edges of the parking lot. Ruddy Turnstones will sometimes mix with Sanderlings and Dunlins along the beach. High tide is best for viewing the decent numbers of waterfowl in the bay because the water is shallow, and on a low tide birds become mere specks on the horizon. Occasionally, large groups of Horned Grebes can be seen in the water along Stony Point Dike to the east, which is a manmade peninsula constructed from the dredgings from the Cape Cod Canal.

From Little Harbor Road, turn left onto Stockton Short Cut Street. Turn left onto Great Neck Road. Follow Great Neck Road for approximately 1.2 miles, bear right at the fork to remain on Great Neck Road, and continue straight for 1.5 miles (Great Neck turns into Depot Road when you cross the railroad tracks). Turn right onto Route 6,

follow it for 1.7 miles, then turn left onto Red Brook Road. In 0.8 mile, you will arrive at the Lyman Reserve (I); there is a parking lot on the left side of the road.

Lyman Reserve and Buttermilk Bay

Buttermilk Bay is the northernmost saltwater body in Buzzards Bay. It is thought that Buttermilk Bay had been a kettle pond that was breached by Buzzards Bay. Red Brook is critical to the migration and spawning of sea-run brook trout. Owned by the Trustees of Reservations, Lyman Reserve features a 1.5-mile loop trail that goes through upland woodlands, pine barrens, and marshland, parallels the stream, and leads to Buttermilk Bay. Another 0.25-mile trail loops along the sandy beach.

A copy of the trail map can be found here: <<http://www.thetrustees.org/assets/documents/places-to-visit/trailmaps/Lyman-Trail-Map.pdf>>

Cross the road and walk the short trail to the overlook and beach for a good view of Buttermilk Bay, which is rich with baitfish. Waders such as Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets hunt along the shoreline. In late July through fall, be sure to scan the marsh at the outflow of Red Brook, which is a favored location of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons. In winter, diving ducks collect fish and shellfish, and dabbling ducks feast on vegetation along the edges of the bay. When you return to the parking lot, take the trail along Red Brook, which features some nice (albeit small) segments of cattail marsh. As you walk, listen for Belted Kingfishers, Marsh Wrens, and Swamp Sparrows, and take a minute to appreciate the crystal-clear waters of the stream. After the first bridge, the trail up the hill on the left leads to a managed pine barrens stand. Here, you may encounter Prairie Warblers, Field Sparrows, goldfinches, and towhees in season; it is a good spot to check for finches in irruptive winters. Follow the trail through the sparse pitch pines to get down toward the river; follow it toward the road and back over the bridge to return to the parking area.

When you leave Lyman Reserve, turn left (east) on Red Brook Road, which in approximately 0.1 mile becomes Head of the Bay Road. In 0.4 mile, you will reach the large dirt parking area for Pine Ridge Road Beach (J). Park here and scan Buttermilk Bay. This is a good alternative to walking the trail to the water at Lyman Reserve in inclement weather, and the marshes in this little cove can be another haunt of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in late summer.

Continue east on Head of the Bay Road for 1.3 miles, and take a sharp right onto Old Head of the Bay Road to access Little Buttermilk Bay. There are a few pulloffs on the right side of the road (K) that provide views of the bay that are not visible from the other two vantage points. Because the water is shallow near the shore, it can be productive for dabbling ducks and geese, but it is deep enough farther out for diving ducks and loons, too.

Follow Old Head of the Bay Road east until it reconnects with Head of the Bay Road, and turn right. Follow Head of the Bay Road for approximately 1.3 miles, and at the traffic circle, take the second right onto Main Street. In 1.0 mile, turn left at the first set of lights onto Academy Drive, and travel 0.7 mile to the Massachusetts Maritime Academy (Mass Maritime) (L).



Common Eiders.

Mass Maritime

Mass Maritime Academy sits at the western terminus of the Cape Cod Canal. On the coldest days of winter, this is a great spot to bird by car. The campus here is generally quiet, and parking is available past the gate and along the canal year-round. Park here and walk along the sidewalk beyond the cul-de-sac at the end of the parking lot to reach a small beach.

In the warmer months, American Oystercatchers hunt for shellfish in the shallow waters along the beach, and terns often chase baitfish that are sucked in and out of the canal. The prime season here, though, is when things begin to cool off in late fall through early spring. The mouth of the canal and surrounding waters are a great spot to find a good diversity of waterfowl. The sheer number of Common Eiders—hundreds, if not thousands—paddling in this part of the canal in winter is a fantastic sight. You can see—or photograph—eiders in many plumages and observe a variety of behaviors at close range. Scan carefully for a King Eider in the mix. Around sunset you can watch as, group by group, eiders fly out of the canal to roost at sea for the night, a fantastic sight to end a day of birding.

Food, Facilities, and Other Birding Resources

Though there is a bit of a tourist presence in Wareham area, there is also a stable year-round population, so most shops and restaurants stay open throughout the year. The Target Plaza off I-195 in Wareham has a few places to eat, and there are bathrooms and a Starbucks inside Target. There are also several dining options in downtown Wareham. The Narrows is a nice spot for lunch and overlooks the Wareham River. Onset also has several places to eat and is a quaint little village. To bird other conservation areas not mentioned in this article, check out Wareham Land Trust at <http://warehamlandtrust.org/properties/> and Buzzards Bay Coalition's website, which has a fantastic compilation of conservation areas in the Buzzards Bay area at <https://www.savebuzzardsbay.org/places-to-go/> > 

Nate Marchessault is an avid birder and wannabe naturalist from Falmouth, Massachusetts. When he's not soliciting people for Where to Go Birding articles for Bird Observer he usually can be found leisurely strolling outdoors enjoying the flora and fauna of Cape Cod and the surrounding area. He is president of South Shore Bird Club and enjoys co-leading walks with other conservation organizations to educate and inspire those interested in birds and nature.

Mealworms—How Scrumptious

David Clapp



Eastern Bluebirds. All photographs by the author.

My wife Fran and I occasionally have had Eastern Bluebirds appear at our feeders. They will drop to the ground to eat suet flakes dislodged by the woodpeckers or feed at the suet cakes that hang like drab flat ornaments throughout the yard. The bluebirds always get me thinking of ways to keep them around the house or at least around the yard, especially ways to secure them for the winter.

For old-time birders and birdfeeding folks, the very idea of bluebirds in the winter is a bit of a shock. They were not commonly found in New England in the winter and the breeding population was modest at best. The Eastern Bluebird has made a leap forward in distribution and population during the recent decade or two, in great part due to people putting up nesting boxes for the bluebirds. There are hundreds of bluebird boxes out there and “bluebird trails” installed, monitored, and maintained by nature groups and bird clubs that offer nesting opportunities galore.

The Mass Audubon Breeding Bird Atlases (Petersen and Meservey 2003) and (Walsh and Petersen 2013) show an increase in Eastern Bluebird breeding presence by topographic block of about 300%; from 174 blocks to 524:

Demonstrating an impressive resiliency and acting as an icon for the conservation movement, the recovery of the Eastern Bluebird represented the product of the hard work of thousands of volunteers across the eastern

United States. Increasing from 254 to 713 occupied blocks from Atlas 1 to Atlas 2, their recovery was impressive. Confirmation rates skyrocketed for the species, from 18% to 50% as nest boxes became commonplace on the landscape making the species even more obvious as it went about its housekeeping duties. Examining only the effort-controlled blocks, one of the remarkable features of this species was its stability – it was only lost from 37 blocks where it was found during Atlas 1. The species was widespread across all regions, and occupied more than 40% of each and every region in the state. (Walsh and Petersen 2013)

It matters little that the great majority of these boxes house nesting Tree Swallows or House Wrens. The Tree Swallows, especially, are a nice addition to any landscape.

When we had boxes up for Eastern Bluebirds at the Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary in Marshfield, Massachusetts in the 1980s and 1990s (and currently), it was never a certainty that bluebirds would use them. The two aforementioned species would use them and some years a pair or two of bluebirds would as well. In most years, there would be bluebirds on the property in January, February, March, and April, but they would often disappear during what seemed to be the best time for nesting. In some years they would reappear in July and nest. It seemed as if it was a second nest in a second location, but there was no way to test that idea. We were just happy to have them back.

Bluebirds get a lot of their food by sallying—sitting on a perch and dropping down to catch their prey and flying back up to the perch. The food item is often a beetle, as evidenced by the droppings that sometimes glisten with shiny beetle wings (elytra). Providing bluebirds with beetles is hard to duplicate in a home birdfeeding operation, but I thought that they must like mealworms—doesn't everyone!

We ordered mealworms, thousands of mealworms. We sent for medium and large and a few giants. They arrived quickly and we dropped them into the container where they would live quite happily until they were offered up to the hungry avian world.

The housing required is modest—any plastic or glass container will do. Mealworms don't climb so the container needs to be only a few inches tall. A kitty litter box is large enough for a huge number of mealworms; start smaller. We use a small plastic storage box designed (probably) to pack away sweaters in the summer, but a similar box for a pair of shoes is fine for hundreds and hundreds of mealworms. A plastic bucket works just fine. Remember, they are small and don't need privacy.

The food and bedding are one and the same. We use nonmedicated chick starter or wheat bran, which is only about \$5.00 for a bag big enough to last most of the winter. Any bran, wheat, or pulverized cereal or dry dog food will work also. Preparing the housing and food is a one-time task; you pour in the feed and add the worms — done. Keep them cool, however, as they will metamorphose if fed and kept warm. Ours live in the garage at about 45–50 degrees. This keeps their metabolism low and prevents pupation, and they will survive for months at this temperature. The pupa will eventually turn into a small black beetle. If you have a smallish number of mealworms in something like a feta cheese or cottage cheese plastic tub, keep them in the



A bowl of mealworms.

refrigerator if your significant other will allow. They won't wander around.

Bring the mealworms into your living space once a week, warm them up, and feed them with carrot, potato, or apple peelings. This gives them a busy day of eating and perhaps molting. We take apple or carrot peelings or a very thin slice of potato every now and then, especially during the warm period, and lay it on the surface of the feed. The worms will wiggle their way in and under the slice where they gain access to a bit of new food and moisture. Don't keep anything too wet in the container because there

is always the chance of mold developing, as with cheese left too long in a refrigerator. But do warm and feed your mealworms every now and then.

If you have some burlap or other coarsely and loosely woven fiber, you can cut it into small pieces and layer them in the worm container. The mealworms will crawl in between the sheets, allowing you to collect them without getting a handful of chicken food at the same time. It is also easy enough to scoop out a dish mixed with chicken starter and put it outside. Birds know how to scratch through stuff to get at the food and they will soon learn that it is well worth digging through your offering.

We (well, Fran doesn't deal with the worms very often actually) put the worms on the deck rail in a small clear dish early each morning. The dish is a bit larger than something you would serve *crème brûlée* in. The mealworms don't climb so the sides of the feeding dish need to be only an inch or so high. A cereal bowl would probably work just fine. If they were on a dinner plate they would eventually crawl off, especially if you feed into warm weather. They are much less active in the cold (aren't we all).

The birds get used to this special food and often arrive immediately after it is placed on the deck. We like to watch the feeding activities so our dish is placed about eight feet from the dining room table in front of a double-door glass slider. The worms will not last all day because the birds seem to eat and eat and eat.

The list of local feeder birds that take the mealworms is probably predictable but their behavior is interesting and not always predictable.

American Robins are not numerous in our yard, but there is usually one big bully robin that tries to dominate the feeders even though it has little interest in most of the seed and suet we offer. The robin does like mealworms, however, and is often the first arrival. Its mere presence intimidates many other species. We counted the worms taken by our robin and the low number for one binge was 15 and the high was 27. We let it eat its fill each time.

The only birds not intimidated by the robin are the pair of Carolina Wrens that boldly land on the dish and take worms from right under the robin. The Carolina Wrens are often in pairs. Their population is recovering from a deadly cold and snowy



Carolina Wren.

winter a few years ago; it is nice to have these busy and inquisitive birds back in the yard.

Tufted Titmice are the busiest of the worm-birds. They take them one at a time and fly off to devour them privately. But they return quickly and frequently. It is hard to count the specific activities of one titmouse because they seem to come in waves one after the other for a spell of time before the group disappears for the day. Black-capped Chickadees and White-breasted Nuthatches feed in the same manner but with less energy and seemingly much less frequency.

The mealworm is a nice addition to a feeding station and nowhere near as creepy as you might first think. Aside from being quiet, aroma-free, and inexpensive, they make for a very entertaining adjunct to your local bird life.

Online, you can find mealworm farms and many dealers who grow and sell mealworms. They can be shipped in various sizes and quantities. We ordered 7000 large mealworms from a company in California (Rainbow Mealworm*) and they arrived on the third day. Pretty good.



Black-capped Chickadee.

It is easy to underestimate what your birds will eat. A handful of worms grabbed from the housing box may total less than 100. Don't be stingy with your offerings. It always surprises me to see how many mealworms remain after I think we have been depleting the stock.

By the way, the Eastern Bluebirds that started our mealworm habit never returned.

**Rainbow Mealworms grows and sells many insect food items in addition to mealworms. They offer butterworms, crickets, Dubia and red runner and Madagascar roaches, flightless fruit flies, giant mealworms, hornworms, isopods, mantis, Mexican jumping beans, phoenix worms, earthworms, rice flour beetles, silkworms, springtails, vinegaroons (whip scorpions—an arachnid), waxworms (wax moth larvae), and more. Many of these creatures are bred for reptile owners to use to feed their frogs, toads, and lizards. 🐦*

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David Clapp has had two overlapping careers, one of 35 years with Mass Audubon as a sanctuary director, mostly on the South Shore, and a second as a tour leader, primarily for the Smithsonian Institution's travel program. He currently works with the famous Tanzanian guide Joseph Ndunguru to operate a small-group safari company operating mostly in Tanzania.



Fay Vale. Photograph by the author.

In Memoriam: Fay Vale

Marj Rines

Fay Vale started birding in the 1970s, an offshoot of another hobby that took her to the outdoors. She and her husband Peter saw a bird, then more, and the addiction struck. She and Peter birded alone for several years, unaware of the birding community until they met Herman Weissberg who introduced them to the Brookline Bird Club. Fay was very active in the club, co-leading trips with Peter and eventually serving on their Board of Directors.

Fay and Peter were early important contributors to the records of bird sightings in *Bird Observer*. In the early 1990s, as the email listserv MassBird became a more and more important source for these records, she was conscripted to compile these MassBird records, which she continued to do for nearly 30 years until she fell ill.

For Fay, it was important to give back to the birding community she loved. In addition to her work for *Bird Observer*, she led trips for the Brookline Bird Club and the Menotomy Bird Club, was a sector leader for the Boston Christmas Bird Count, assisted at the Joppa Flats banding station, and spearheaded several blocks for the Breeding Bird Atlas.

Fay was ruthlessly optimistic. When someone complained about the problems of getting old she would always respond, “Well it’s better than the alternative.” Later in life numerous physical setbacks forced her more and more to scale back her movement until, before her death, she was limited to a walker. This never stopped her birding, and she developed car birding to an art form. She appreciated what she could do instead of complaining about what she could not.

Fay Vale died on February 1, 2020, one day shy of her 74th birthday. 🐦

Ninth Report of the Maine Bird Records Committee

Douglas P. Hitchcox, Tom Aversa, Louis R. Bevier, and Trevor B. Persons



Trumpeter Swan was added to Maine's list after questionable provenance delayed review of one found in Biddeford from April 8–15, 2011. Photograph by Doug Hitchcox.

The Ninth report of the Maine Bird Records Committee (hereafter ME-BRC or the committee) summarizes the assessment of 70 reports involving 36 species or species pairs. Evaluation of and decisions by the committee for these reports occurred during 2019. The committee accepted 50 records for an acceptance rate of 71%. Although the majority of birds in this report were documented in 2018–2019, the years of occurrences ranged from 1973 to 2019.

Highlights in this report include Maine's first record of Zone-tailed Hawk. In addition, the first state record of Trumpeter Swan, previously unreviewed, is accepted here. These bring the total number of documented species on Maine's state list to 464. The official list of bird species recorded in Maine, our review procedures, and list of members can be found at the committee's website: <<http://sites.google.com/site/mainebirdrecordscommittee>>.

Records in this report are grouped by species, with both those accepted and those not accepted listed within the same species account. Each account provides the location, county (*italicized*), dates of occurrence, names of observers or contributors, and committee record number. Documentation was provided by the observers listed or, in some cases, was obtained from public websites. All reviewed materials and member

comments are archived. If known, the names of finders are listed first and separated from other names by a semicolon. Photographic, video, or audio evidence reviewed is denoted by a dagger (†); written notes are denoted by an asterisk (*). As always, the committee strongly encourages written submissions even when there are photographs. Species accounts follow the current taxonomic classification and sequence adopted as of 2019 by the American Ornithological Society (list available at <<http://checklist.aou.org/taxa/>>).

Species Accounts

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*). This species is now nearly annual in Maine. A bird photographed at Lake Josephine, *Aroostook*, October 5, 2018, (Bill Sheehan†; 2018-037) represents the state's eleventh accepted record since the first in 2009.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*). A group of three were at Lake Josephine and Christina Reservoir, *Aroostook*, October 10 and 12, 2017 (Richard Garrigus†, Bill Sheehan†; 2017-040).

Cackling Goose (*minima*) (*Branta hutchinsii minima*). NOT ACCEPTED, ORIGIN UNCERTAIN: A bird showing characters of *B. h. minima*, normally found only along the Pacific Coast, was at Kennebunkport, *York*, August 11, 2017 (2017-034). As suspected by the observer at the time, this bird was likely an escapee, a fact later confirmed when photos of captive birds on a farm in close proximity were discovered by the committee.

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*). Representing the first accepted state record, this swan was found in Biddeford, *York*, April 8–15, 2011, but was not initially reviewed because of questions of origin (Nancy McCreel*; David Doubleday*, Peter Morelli*, Andrew Aldrich†, Christopher Bartlett†, Doug Hitchcox†, Chuck Holmer†, Marie Jordan†, Derek Lovtich†; 2011-016). Likely originating from introduced populations around the Great Lakes, either those actively reintroduced in southern Ontario since 1982 (Carroll and Swift 2000) or progeny of escaped captives in western New York that first started breeding there in 1995 (Sherony and Bolsinger 2007), a pattern of occurrence in the Northeast is now well established. New York, Connecticut, Vermont, and Massachusetts all have accepted the species in recent years. The Biddeford bird had a damaged and withered left eye, which allowed it to be tracked on its wanderings from Maine to Prince Edward Island in May and then to western Quebec in June 2011.

Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*). First found at Scarborough Marsh, *Cumberland*, March 18, 2019, (Brad Woodward†, Tom Foley; Kevin Couture†, Josh Fecteau†; 2019-002) this bird was possibly (but not unanimously agreed upon by the committee) the same as one seen in Arundel from March 25 to April 1, 2019, and later in Lyman, *York*, April 5–6, 2019 (Nate Jones; Nate Hall†, Andrew Aldrich†, Gary Jarvis†; 2019-004).

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*). One bird was photographed off Cape Elizabeth, *Cumberland*, January 20, 2017 (Richard Garrigus†; 2017-002).

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*). Representing a second accepted record for the state, a singing bird lingered at Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, May 27 to June 23, 2019 (Noah Gibb; Jeremiah Trimble†, Kristen Lindquist*; 2019-021). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A report of a bird on power lines in Leeds, *Androscoggin*, lacked sufficient detail to rule out other *Streptopelia* species (2018-017).

Chuck-will's-widow (*Antrostomus carolinensis*). At least one singing bird was present and audio recorded at the Great Pond Mountain Wildlands in Orland, *Hancock*, June 6–30, 2018 (Cheri Domini; Doug Hitchcox†, Trevor Persons†; 2018-015). The latter observer reported two structurally similar, large, long-winged nightjars flying in tandem five feet over his head and thought that the presence of a second bird indicated a territorial pair, and thus likely breeding. Quiet grunting calls, persistent singing, and a bird returning in 2019 to the same location for over a month (presently unreviewed) all support this probability. The same observer also audio recorded another Chuck-will's-widow at Wells, *York*, July 2, 2018 (Trevor Persons†; 2018-018). Only one previous record has been reviewed and accepted by the committee, but reports date back to at least 1974. NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Reports of birds briefly heard at Indian Township, *Washington*, July 13, 2012 (2012-022) and at Cutler, *Washington*, July 16, 2013, (2013-023) did not include detailed descriptions or audio recordings.

Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus/sasin*). An immature male from Deer Isle, *Hancock*, September 16, 2019, (Bonnie Bochan*; Paul Miller†; 2019-040) could not be identified to species and was accepted by the committee under this species pair.

Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*). Two reports of this species were accepted, one from Ram Island, *Cumberland*, May 15, 2018, (Zac Fait†, Heidi Franklin; 2018-009) and another from Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, *Knox*, July 13, 2019 (Keenan Yakola†; 2019-032).

Whimbrel (European) (*Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*). A bird photographed in flight at Frenchboro, *Hancock*, May 21, 2019, showed characters of European Whimbrel, i.e., the widespread nominate subspecies *N. p. phaeopus* plus Iceland-breeding *N. p. islandicus* and the recently-described central Siberian-breeding *N. p. rogachevae* (Allport 2017), and represents a first for Maine (Alex Lamoreaux†; 2019-024). The Frenchboro bird had an all-white, unbarred lower back and rump like all European breeders (i.e., subspecies *alboaxillaris* and *phaeopus/islandicus/rogachevae*), and unlike North American-



Field marks are consistent with European Whimbrel, found in Frenchboro, May 29, 2019. Photograph by Alex Lamoreaux.



A Slaty-backed Gull, Maine's second, was found in Augusta on February 23–24, 2018.
Photograph by Doug Hitchcox.

breeding *N. p. hudsonicus* and *N. p. variegatus*. Also, it showed some barring on the underwings and axillaries, which are pure white in *alboaxillaris* (Allport 2017).

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*). Four reports were accepted: An immature off Bar Harbor, *Hancock*, July 31, 2013 (Gary Leavens†; 2013-024); an adult north of Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, *Knox*, July 11, 2019 (John Drury†; 2019-047); an adult at Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, *Knox*, August 18, 2019 (Zeke Smith, Keenan Yakola†; 2019-036); and two immatures at Mount Desert Rock, *Hancock*, August 9, 2019 (Nathan Dubrow†; 2019-035). Fourteen reports of this species have now been accepted by the committee, all since 2008. NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A report of a light-morph adult from the CAT ferry from Portland to Nova Scotia, September 12, 2016 (2016-035) did not indisputably rule out Parasitic Jaeger and also left doubt as to the exact location of the sighting. A report from Mt. Desert Rock, *Hancock*, August 28, 2018 (2018-032) did not provide diagnostic evidence adequate to rule out other jaegers. The committee discussed halting review for this species but decided to continue due to the difficulty in separating jaeger species.

Mew Gull (*Larus canus*). Apparently returning from 2016, a bird identified as of the western North American *brachyrhynchus* subspecies was present at Owls Head Harbor, *Knox*, January 28 to February 5, 2017 (Keenan Yakola†; 2017-003).

Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*). A third-cycle bird, representing a second state record, was photographed at Hatch Hill Landfill, Augusta, *Kennebec*, February 23–24, 2018 (Doug Hitchcox†; Louis Bevier†; 2018-003). This individual was found earlier at Cambridge (February 16) and Gloucester (February 19), Massachusetts (Williams and Trimble 2018), a reversal of the pattern of Maine's first Slaty-backed Gull (also a third-cycle bird), which was documented in Gloucester eight days after last being seen at the same landfill in Augusta on January 13, 2012 (Persons et al. 2015).

Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*). Two individuals of this uncommon tern arrived in Maine thanks to Hurricane Dorian, the first found at Popham Beach State Park, *Sagadahoc*, September 11, 2019 (Mike Fahay†; 2019-046) and the second at Biddeford, *York*, September 28, 2019 (Gary Jarvis†, Leon Mooney*; 2019-042).

Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*). Maine's celebrity Red-billed Tropicbird returned for its 15th consecutive year in 2019, staying from May 7 through August 16, 2019, at the seabird nesting colonies at Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, *Knox* (Keenan Yakola†; 2019-014).

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*). A well-described alternate-plumaged Pacific Loon flew by Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, October 1, 2018 (Jeremiah Trimble*, Ryan Doherty; 2018-038), and a basic-plumaged one was photographed off Schoodic Point, *Hancock*, November 11, 2018 (Kyle Lima†; 2018-045).

Barolo Shearwater (*Puffinus baroli*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: An intriguing report of a bird seen from a cruise ship ~155 km SSE of Mount Desert Island on October 30, 2019, (2019-051) did not contain enough unambiguous detail for acceptance, especially for a potential first state record. In addition, many members were uncomfortable with the location of the sighting within the Gulf of Maine, far west of the edge of the Continental Shelf where most other documented sightings have occurred (<http://www.ebird.org>. Accessed: January 25, 2020).

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A report of a bird seen at Bar Harbor, *Hancock*, August 5, 2005 (2005-009) contained too few details to eliminate other species, especially other species of frigatebirds. Intriguing, however, was the report of a Magnificent Frigatebird in Chatham, Massachusetts, only two weeks earlier (Rines 2006).

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*). Reports of this species extended farther northward into the Gulf of Maine during 2018 and 2019 than in previous years as Maine mirrored the extraordinary climate-driven change in status seen farther south. Maine's first state records weren't reported until 2011, 2013, and 2017, and the committee more than doubled the number of accepted records by endorsing four additional reports. An immature showed nicely for 160 participants on the Acadia Birding Festival's pelagic trip off Schoodic Island, *Hancock*, June 2, 2018 (Marshall Iliff*, George Armistead; Louis Bevier†, Michael Good†; 2018-012). An adult or near-adult was photographed as it rested on a channel marker off Vinalhaven, *Knox*, June 26, 2019 (Jamus Drury†; 2019-028). A month later a bird in similar plumage rode a fishing boat into Ogunquit, *York*, July 27, 2019 (Mike Parenteau†; 2019-034). It began hitching this ride from Wilkinson Basin ~40 km off Cape Ann, Massachusetts, possibly on the previous day, and may have been the same bird reported at Stellwagen Bank, Massachusetts, on July 27. Another apparent adult stopped at Mt. Desert Rock, *Hancock*, August 12, 2019 (Nathan Dubrow†; 2019-038). Submitted photographs were not adequate to positively determine if these birds were different individuals but they were accepted as three separate records due to the temporal and geographic separation

of the sightings. NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A report of a single bird at the mouth of Frenchman Bay, *Hancock*, July 19, 2019 (2019-033) and two birds at Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, June 1, 2018 (2018-011) lacked sufficient details.

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*). Seen for nearly two weeks, September 7–20, 2019, an apparent adult made regular passes over the Dennys River in Dennysville, *Washington*, (Daniel Marshall*, Norma Smith*; Louis Bevier†; 2019-039). Timing coincided with a northward influx of the species in the region, but the occurrence was also suspiciously timed with the passing of Hurricane Dorian, which might have caused the bird to stop its dispersal.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Written description of a single bird at Belfast, *Waldo*, July 7, 2019 was not sufficient to rule out other species (2019-031).

Zone-tailed Hawk (*Buteo albonotatus*). A first record for Maine, this adult bird was photographed in a yard in Bridgton, *Cumberland*, May 4, 2019 (Jan Jukkola*†; 2019-011). It marked the first record from east of the Mississippi River since multiple reports during 2014–15 from Virginia to Nova Scotia (<http://www.ebird.org>. Accessed: January 25, 2020). Previously there had been only two records in the East, from Florida in 2000 and Nova Scotia in 1977 (Garvey et.al. 2015).

Eastern Screech-Owl (*Megascops asio*). Mobbing corvids alerted the observer to a gray-morph bird in a small row of cedars in downtown Portland, *Cumberland*, November 17, 2018 (John Campbell†; 2018-044). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Description of a calling bird at Seawall Campground, Acadia National Park, *Hancock*, July 5–6, 2019, was not sufficient to rule out other species (2019-030).

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A report from Dyer Point, Cape Elizabeth, *Cumberland*, November 12, 2018, while intriguing, was not sufficient to eliminate other species, particularly Northern Saw-whet Owl, more likely to be moving at the time (2018-043).

Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*). A bird roosting on a woodpile was photographed in Smithfield, *Somerset*, February 12, 2019 (Joshua Sullivan†; 2019-001). At a Saw-whet Owl banding station in Steuben, *Washington*, two Boreal Owls were caught and aged as hatch-year birds, October 26, 2019 (Devin Straley*; Adrienne Leppold*; Tenzen Jampa†, 2019-052).

Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Peregrine Falcon or the possibility of falconry birds (including hybrids) could not be ruled for reports from Lubec, *Washington*, December 27, 2014, (2014-013) and Brunswick, *Cumberland*, January 26, 2019 (2019-006).

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). A bird found at Northport, *Waldo*, November 24, 2011, was captured, taken to a local rehabilitator, and later flown to Texas where it was released in early December (Mark DiGiralomo†, *fide* Don Reimer; 2011-018). The committee also accepted a sight record from Bar Harbor,



A Tropical Kingbird, Maine's second, was found 104 years and one day after the first, in East Machias on October 28, 2019. Photograph by Wendy Sawyer.

Hancock, November 21, 1975, (Will Russell*, Jerry Smith; 1975-001) originally reported in Finch (1976).

Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*). Maine's second record of this species came 104 years and one day after its first, with a bird photographed in East Machias, *Washington*, October 28, 2019 (Wendy Sawyer†; 2019-039).

Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*). A bird stopped at Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, *Knox*, May 25–26, 2019, where it was photographed and its calls were recorded (Keenan Yakola†; 2019-020).

Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A female-type bird reported as “Oregon” Dark-eyed Junco (*oreganus* group) in Etna, *Penobscot*, October 17–19, 2018, (2018-039) was deemed unidentifiable to this group, and was presumably the same bird seen there November 5, 2019 (2018-041).

LeConte's Sparrow (*Ammodramos leconteii*). This skulky sparrow gave lucky birders views in Damariscotta, *Lincoln*, October 10–16, 2019 (Jeff Cherry†; Laura Blutstein†, Don Reimer†; 2019-045).

Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*). A phenotypically pure singing male was located at South Portland, *Cumberland*, May 16, 2018, and was also observed, photographed and audio recorded by many observers the following day (Sean Agrodnia*; Richard Garrigus†, Doug Hitchcox†; 2018-010). An apparent female from Harpswell, *Cumberland*, May 24, 2019 seen by at least three independent observers (Bill Hancock*, Ken Klapper*, Richard Garrigus*; 2019-019) was accepted without photographic evidence because the committee felt that the written details, though brief, provided enough evidence to rule out a hybrid.

Kentucky Warbler (*Geothlypis formosa*). Six reports of this southern warbler were accepted bringing the total number of records endorsed by the committee to eight. A male at Hunter's Beach, Mt. Desert Island, *Hancock*, May 10, 1973 (Will

Russell*; 1973-002) was previously reported by Finch (1973). Another male was at South Portland, *Cumberland*, May 8, 2019 (Noah Gibb†; 2019-013). A female lingered at Evergreen Cemetery in Portland, *Cumberland*, May 13–20, 2019 (Dianne Ballon; Doug Hitchcox *†, Kim Clark†, Chuck Barnes†; 2019-015). Another male was at Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, May 15, 2019 (David Peake-Jones*; 2019-016). A migrant first-fall male spent ten minutes on a rooftop at Mt. Desert Rock, *Hancock*, August 20, 2019 (Nathan Dubrow*†; 2019-037) and, last, another immature male was at Hog Island, *Lincoln*, September 19, 2019 (Scott Weidensaul; Holly Merker*†; 2019-041). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A sight report from Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, May 21, 2019 (2019-018) and a report of a bird heard calling at Wells, *York*, June 25, 2019, (2019-027) lacked sufficient details for acceptance.

Cerulean Warbler (*Setophaga cerulea*). A singing male was at Green Point Wildlife Management Area, *Lincoln*, May 12, 2016 (Mark Manke*; 2016-009). Three reports were accepted from Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*: a male on May 23, 2016 (Pat Moynahan*; Margie Schoelle*; 2016-010); a female found independently the same day and which remained May 23–25, 2016 (Lena Moser*; Gabriel Willow*; 2016-011); and a male seen by several observers on May 21, 2017 (Kristen Lindquist*; Don Reimer*; 2017-012).

Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A sight record from Harpswell, *Cumberland*, May 3, 2019, lacked sufficient detail to eliminate other species (2019-010).

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Bill Sheehan for gathering information related to the Trumpeter Swan record. 🦢

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PHOTO ESSAY

Birds of the Ninth Maine Records Report



A Zone-tailed Hawk, Maine's first, was found in Bridgton on May 4, 2019. Photograph by Jan Jukkola.



A Swallow-tailed Kite lingered in Dennysville from September 7–20, 2019. Photograph by Louis Bevier.



Gull-billed Terns were seen twice in Maine during 2019, both storm-blown from Hurricane Dorian, including this one from Biddeford on September 28, 2019. Photograph by Gary Jarvis.



Banders were surprised when two Boreal Owls were caught in Steuben on October 26, 2019. Photograph by Tenzin Jampa. 🦉

MUSINGS FROM THE BLIND BIRDER

Seeing While Blind

Martha Steele

People often convey their admiration for how I cope with being blind and how I refuse to let my vision loss interfere with my passion for birding. Nonbirders raise their eyebrows when I tell them I am a birder. I can feel their skepticism and confusion, wondering how I can possibly bird when I cannot see the birds. Perhaps some birders wonder the same or even feel a little sorry for me, watching my guide dog, Alvin, and me walk quietly listening for birds.

Yet, I rarely get questions about my blindness, particularly in the context of birding. Most often, the few inquiries come from little kids, curious and uninhibited. “Why do you bird when you can’t see anything?” That might be followed by a parent whispering into the child’s ear, presumably admonishing him for his “impoliteness.” My response is to welcome such inquiries, “That is a great question.” We can then proceed to have a wonderful discussion about how a blind birder can enjoy birding as much as anyone with vision.

Vision dominates our perception of the world around us, and sighted individuals often cannot imagine life without vision. In fact, many surveys have found that most people fear losing their vision more than any other health issue even though blindness is not a fatal diagnosis.

In the face of vision loss, however, it is remarkable how one learns to maximize other senses, most particularly hearing, touch, and smell, to compensate for the loss of sight. When you cannot see, you are much more aware of other clues in your surrounding environment. The sound of your footsteps or the tip of your white cane differs depending on the surface or the proximity of buildings, which create slight echoes as you walk by. Particular smells, such as food from restaurants or flowering bushes, alert you to your exact location on a familiar route. The direction your body faces, whether moving in a car or standing in place, is oriented based on your auditory and tactile information. Is the traffic moving from left to right? Is the strip of grass between a sidewalk and curb parallel or perpendicular to your body under your feet?

To illustrate, I was riding in a car on Route 2 heading west to the exit to go south on Route 128. My friend took the exit but I could feel that the car was not doing a slow, wide right turning loop to go south. Instead, my friend had taken the exit heading north. I said, “I think you took the exit heading north, not south.” My friend was astonished, first that she had taken the wrong exit but more pointedly at my ability to identify her mistake before she could. She was the one with vision, but I was more acutely aware of my environment, always paying attention to what I hear, smell, and feel to give me the information that sighted people take completely for granted.

As all birders know, birding does not rely on sight alone. Fortunately for me, the world of birding is exquisite and marvelously complex by sound. I am constantly

challenged to learn what bird just made that vocalization, an immensely satisfying pursuit. Even in winter, when bird sounds are much reduced or even nonexistent, I can have a memorable experience.

In early January 2020, I took Alvin out at 6:00 am, or well before sunrise, at my mother's northeastern Vermont home to relieve himself. As I walked out into the cold darkness, I heard something that I did not recognize coming from the edge of the woods near our house. I stopped and stood still silencing the crunching sounds of snow under my boots and heard a low, raspy *gonk, gonk*, like a deep two-note knock. What was that? I quickly pulled out my phone and texted Bob back in our bedroom, "Step outside on our bedroom porch and listen." I then recorded the sound on my phone's voice memos app. The bird called several more times before quieting, and then suddenly, from the location of the low knocks, I heard the classic call of a Common Raven, the gurgling, deep, and slightly musical croak. The bird had taken off, its call fading off into the distance as it flew away.

Both Bob and I heard the two-note knocking call many more times over the following weeks, and sometimes, we heard two ravens calling back and forth to each other. It was so cool, literally and figuratively, to listen to this newly recognizable call in absolute winter stillness and darkness in the forest that was otherwise utterly silent.

Bob could not use vision any more than I could for this memorable experience. Vision will not help you identify a bird that vocalizes but refuses to show itself. In addition, your auditory skills are required sometimes to identify birds that you see well but are indistinguishable from others without hearing their songs, e.g., the Empidonax flycatchers.

I am in a unique position in that I started birding while I still had vision but could not hear the birds, and then transitioned into now hearing birds but not seeing them. In all honesty, if I had to choose one or the other, I would probably choose to hear the birds. I hear so many more birds than I ever saw, and I consider their songs often transcendently beautiful, as awe-inspiring as their striking visual beauty. Bird songs can often be piercing, filling the spaces around you, and lingering in your soul long after they stop singing. You most certainly do not need to see birds to enjoy them.

Birders use many tools to sharpen their skills and to find where good birding spots or birds may be. Technology enables me to use the same apps and websites that sighted birders and others use. I regularly open the Sibley Birds app on my iPhone to listen to vocalizations of specific species to try to help me identify what I just heard. I occasionally use eBird to record my sightings and learn about hotspots in our area. I write articles and emails as well as listen to birding books and articles using the VoiceOver app on the iPhone and Job Access With Speech, or JAWS, on my laptop, both of which use artificial voices to read content aloud. I have had extensive training on how to use these programs to navigate apps and computer applications. For example, using an iPhone for a sighted person usually involves simply using your finger to tap or swipe to navigate. For the blind user, however, we may use double, triple, or quadruple two-finger, three-finger, or four-finger taps in various combinations to result in different commands. We may also use one-finger, two-finger, or three-finger

swipes while continually adjusting the VoiceOver rotor (a type of control panel) to swipe by headings, characters, words, lines, paragraphs, message, links, or any number of other features.

Being blind is but a small part of who I am, one of many characteristics that define how I conduct myself and how I interact with others. We are all composites of many physical and mental attributes, and the more that we can get beyond regarding our exterior physical characteristics as defining features, the better we can relate to and share our lives with each other.

In the end, I do not see much to admire about coping with blindness, nor should feeling sorry for someone who is visually impaired necessarily be warranted. Fundamentally, I don't really see much choice in coping with blindness or anything else that is out of your control. Either you move forward and do the best you can with your circumstances, seeking out and learning strategies to confront your challenges, or you retreat into yourself. The degree to which we successfully face our challenges varies widely, of course, and many struggle mightily. On a small, interpersonal scale, however, we can all help each other by at once acknowledging and accepting each other for who we are while also having similar expectations for everyone we know, regardless of any perceived limitation. Thus, as a blind birder, I should be held to the same expectations of acquiring good birding skills and being informed about the birds themselves as sighted birders are. I am like any other birder, trying hard to identify birds, learn more about their behaviors and life histories, and helping in conservation efforts for their futures. 🐦



CANADA WARBLER BY SANDY SELESKY

GLEANINGS

Worse Living Through Chemistry

David Larson



White-crowned Sparrow. Photograph by Bettina Arrigoni (CC BY 2.0)

It is a tough world out there if you are a migratory bird. Loss of habitat for breeding, migration, and wintering can force compromises in vital life events. So can reduced food supplies due to invasive plants, agricultural practices, urbanization, climate change, and other blights. The likelihood of death by feral cats, other human-increased mammals, glass windows, automobiles, and adverse weather, not to mention disease and disability, increases with longer stopover time as well. If you noticed agricultural practices on the above list, let me tell you about an interesting paper I read recently from a research group I have written about before (Larson 2018).

Eng et al., 2019, investigated the effects of neonicotinoid insecticides on spring migrating White-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*). Neonicotinoids (neonics) are a class of neurotoxic insecticides that are widely used in modern agriculture for reducing pest loads on crops. They bind to a type of neurotransmitter receptor, thereby overstimulating the nervous system. This can lead to death for insects—oh wait, that means less food for birds. Neonics are more effective on receptors in insects than those in vertebrates, but they are controversial because they kill beneficial insects as well as pests and they are acutely toxic to birds. Birds can

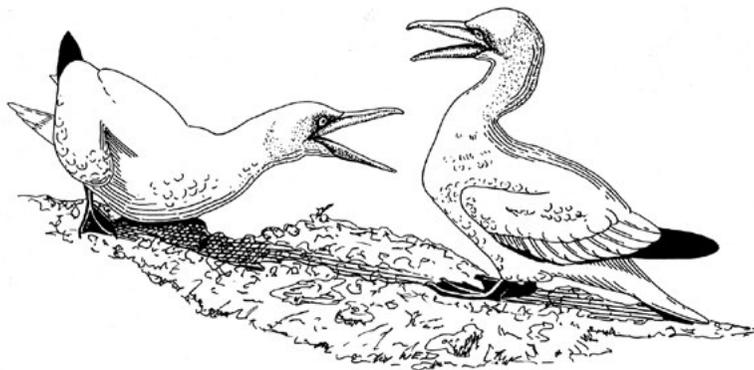
be exposed by sprayed neonics, contaminated soil and water, and by consumption of treated seeds. The actual mechanisms of toxic effects of neonics on birds and the extent of long-term damage are poorly known. In order to elucidate some of the effects, Eng et al., combined controlled dosing of wild-caught birds with telemetry, using nanotags and the Motus Wildlife Tracking System, to follow migration movements in the wild. Sparrows who consumed even very small doses of the neonic imidacloprid showed negative effects on fueling and migration. A single dose of imidacloprid—3-10% of predicted median lethal dose—caused a weight loss within 6 hours; 3% in the lowest dose and 6 % in a higher dose. The loss of weight was due to loss of fat, the critical fuel for migration. Loss of weight or fat was due to appetite suppression, possibly due to acute toxicity, with high-dose sparrows eating 70% less food than controls. Exacerbating changes in nutrient uptake or general toxicity are possible. Once birds had recovered, they resumed a normal migration with no apparent change in directionality or speed of movement.

Imidacloprid exposure significantly increased stopover duration. It seems likely that the birds had to recover from the toxicity of the neonic, and then resume migratory hyperphagia to rebuild fat stores for the next leg of their migratory journey. In previous studies, this research group has shown that sparrows recover body mass and orientation ability within two weeks of a high dose of imidacloprid. Delaying migration, even by a short period, has clear deleterious effects at the individual and population level. Extending stopovers increases the chance of predation, disease, and encountering adverse weather. Delays run counter to selection pressures to minimize migration time in the spring and have been associated with decreased number of offspring in late breeding in poor territories.

Neonics are the most extensively used insecticides in the world, and their abundant availability along bird migration routes presents a worrisome possible barrier to normal migration in this world of too many obstacles to the survival of birds. 🐦

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GANNETS BY WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR

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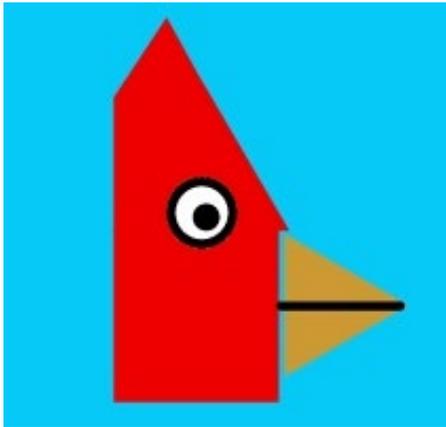
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ABOUT BOOKS

Memoirs of an Ideal Companion

Mark Lynch

Journeys in the Wild: The Secret Life of a Cameraman. Gavin Thurston. 2019. London:Seven Dials.

From such films, viewers were able to see part of what I have known for years—that if you are going to get into difficulties when traveling in some remote and hazardous part of the world, your ideal companion would be a natural history cameraman. (Sir David Attenborough in the Foreword to *Journeys in the Wild*)

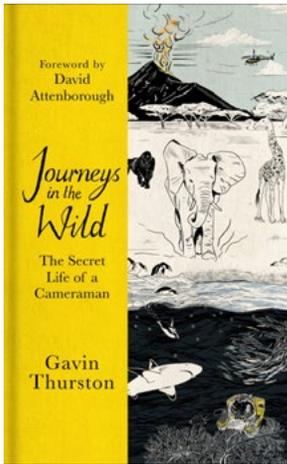
This might sound stupid but forget an Andy Serkis performance—this witch doctor has turned into a tiger. (p. 100)

Unless your parents were hard-core natural historians who believed in bringing their children on their research trips, chances are your first experience with the sights and sounds of the global world of nature was through television. It is through shows like *Nature* on PBS, or any one of the numerous programs on the *Animal Planet* channel, or one of the many BBC series hosted by Sir David Attenborough that we now first learn about the mating habits of dung beetles or the social life of chimpanzees. Our image of the “wild” is deeply affected by these programs. So much so, that as adults, when we finally take a trip to the Rockies or Costa Rica, we want to see nature as it was shown to us via television: close up and doing something interesting.

For those of us raised in the 50s, the offerings were far fewer. I saw Walt Disney’s award-winning nature films in the *True Life Adventures* series only after they were shown on television. Films like *The Vanishing Prairie* (1953) and *Nature’s Half Acre* (1951) featured state of the art cinematography for that era. This was combined with a decidedly anthropomorphic voiceover combined with a music soundtrack that Disney felt would make the films more appealing to a wider audience. So, a pair of scorpions fighting was shown with square dance music added. For Walt Disney, in these films nature always told a clear story that was easy for the public to understand.

Mention must be made of the venerable *Mutual of Omaha’s Wild Kingdom* series, which ran from 1963 until 1988 and was revived in 2002. This series was a spin-off of the earlier *Zoo Parade*. Both were hosted by zoologist Marlin Perkins, a Walter Cronkite with a monkey figure. In later shows, Perkins’s “man in the field” was the indefatigable Jim Fowler, who was always the guy who had to dive into murky water to grab the anaconda or whatever creature that was the focus of that episode. Fowler soon became the face of the series, making numerous appearances on late night talk shows and even an episode of *Seinfeld*.

Today, so-called “nature shows” are everywhere. The best are much more sophisticated than the shows of the 50s and 60s. These contemporary programs try to



convey a more complex and nuanced view of the natural world. Death and blood and guts, and sex—absent from Disney’s vision—are regular parts of the program. The narration and content of these programs is a still mixed bag, but anything hosted by Sir David Attenborough is the gold standard of the genre. We now expect to see truly extraordinary film work that was unthinkable only 20 years ago in every show. Close-up underwater images of penguins catching fish, lyrical aerial shots of hippos swimming down a river, or intimate footage of the daily life of lowland gorillas are all now taken for granted. Usually the camera person, the one responsible for that stunning footage, remains completely unknown to the general public. Often the camera person risks life and limb over long hours, days, and weeks, in sometimes horribly

uncomfortable conditions, just to get that perfect shot that may only last a few seconds in the final edited program. *Journeys in the Wild: The Secret Life of a Cameraman* is the personal journal of one of the best nature cinematographers in the biz. It is a story that is fascinating, funny, sobering, and filled with so many “ripping yarns” as to rival a shelf of Frank Buck books. The reader cannot be blamed for being amazed that Gavin Thurston is still alive after an adventure-filled career of more than 30 years spent shooting on every continent and under the sea.

This book is a meander through those highs and lows, with some plane crashes, wars, coups, near-death experiences, and a kidnap attempt thrown in to boot. (p. 9)

Each short chapter reads like a journal entry. They are dated, given a location, and the longitude and latitude. There are a number of small line drawings to accompany some of the chapters. In addition, there is a small photographic section in the book.

Gavin Thurston’s career began in 1972 at age nine in Cheltenham, United Kingdom, when his beloved auntie lent him a camera so he could take a few shots on his upcoming trip to the zoo. The camera was as basic as they got for the time. “Made by Kodak, it’s affectionately called a Box Brownie, probably the most common camera available. With only 12 photos to a roll and a waist-level viewfinder, who knew what a nine-year-old boy might capture on film—if anything” (p. 3).

When the film was developed, most of his first roll of film did not produce great shots, except for one picture of Cuddles, a male orca. That single photo was enough to get the young Thurston hooked on nature photography. This decidedly unextraordinary shot is reproduced in this book. But his career as a professional cameraman didn’t really take off until years later when he got an entry-level job at Oxford Scientific Films. It was here that he learned the basics of what being a cameraman really means: long hours, on site problem solving, and sometimes dangerous jobs.

Throughout *Journeys in the Wild*, Thurston never comes off as anything more or less than a good-natured, ordinary person who has had the very good fortune to visit

some of the most amazing places on earth. He is up for anything but is also quite self-deprecating about some incredible screw-ups. In 1989, he is filming on Barro Colorado Island, Panama, for the first time. The researchers there warn him about the “jiggers.” He and his companion have no idea what “jiggers” are.

Being macho and not wanting to appear ignorant, we don’t ask where we might see these ‘jiggers’, if they are common or dangerous. I had done some research before coming to Panama and mostly read about jaguars, monkeys, armadillos, anteaters, snakes, sloths and tapirs. Not to mention over 900 species of bird. I don’t recall reading about jiggers though. (p. 73)

They spend their hours while filming on the lookout for these “jiggers,” searching vines and forest floors for some obvious creature, little realizing these jiggers are the minute biting mites, often called chiggers, that are the bane of unsuspecting jungle hikers. They cause a hellish itching as they burrow into your skin. Thurston and his colleagues wonder why the researchers are all wearing long sleeves and long pants in the heat of the tropics. Instead, they choose to hike in shorts and short sleeves. Of course they are smitten later by a plague of horrific itching.

As his career develops, Thurston realizes that it is not only what happens in the field that is a challenge. He spends on the average 220 days per year away from home. He has a family with children that need his attention, and this time away does take a toll. “Divorce can happen to anyone but I think the strains of this career cause a higher than average marriage failure rate” (p. 54).

Early in his career, as he was still earning his reputation, he opens up about the financial worries he faced at that time, adding to the strains on his family: “It’s been an awful few months. Having turned down the trips to Antarctica and the Pitcairn Islands, I haven’t managed to get any other work. Interest rates have been as high as 14.25 percent. Not being able even to make the interest payments on our mortgage and camera loan, my overdraft has shot into five figures. It’s my own stupidity and I have literally been worried sick” (p. 206).

Much of the time, Thurston finds himself in some predicament that would make of most of us run in the opposite direction. In 1990 in the Kyzyl Jar, Badkyz Reserve in Kyrgystan—then part of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)—he is asked to film a nesting Eagle Owl without disturbing it. The only problem is that the owl is nesting high in a cliff in a cave.

Leonid goes ahead of me, shuffling along the foot-wide ledge, and I start to follow. The kit is going to get lowered down from the top of the cliff by rope. Halfway along the ledge, I look down. My head starts to spin. Below me is a 30-foot vertical drop, and then a 250-foot slope to the bottom of the canyon. For the first time in my life I discover what vertigo is. My brain is thinking of it as a 300-foot drop and the wall of rock behind me suddenly feels as if it’s physically pushing me forwards; terrified, I force my head and back against the cliff. Leonid looks at me, “Are you okay?” (p. 41)

He sleeps in the back of the cave all night. The rocky floor is swarming with ticks,

fleas and other biting insects. He suffers through it all and ultimately gets the beautiful shot of the owls in the light of sunrise. This is typical of his job. It requires long hard hours in blinds, platforms in trees, or just sitting soundlessly in a small tent in order to bring you that one sequence that will hopefully make you say “ah!” if only for a few seconds of air time.

Sometimes the situations he finds himself in are both dangerous and humorous. In Tsavo East National Park and Tiva River, Kenya, in 1983, he is assigned to film the life of the dung beetles. “One thing we need for the dung beetle sequence is a backdrop of elephants crapping; that will then lead into the story of how dung beetles can smell the shit, find the shit, make little balls with the shit, and then roll them away, bury them and lay their eggs in them” (p. 64). This means getting very close to the rear end of several large, and potentially very dangerous elephants with all the camera equipment and then waiting for them to defecate. “No gun, no protection, just me and Simon in our sandals heading towards a herd of elephants in an open forest. “ ‘Sure,’ I say” (p. 64).

In *Journeys in the Wild* we learn about how these camera people find all the special sites to capture those perfect images. Obviously the camera people aren’t just wandering around the planet aimlessly hoping to luck into finding the best places to shoot pandas or Kakapos. In some cases the production company—in Thurston’s case this often means the BBC—can develop an interesting mutually beneficial relationship with scientists working in the field.

Keeping scientists out in the field for 365 days a year, in harsh conditions, costs money. Replenishment of grants isn’t easy either. Supporters and companies want to see results, data, findings, to convince them to continue the funding. When the scientists can’t deliver, because they are mid-process and don’t yet have results, additional funding is often denied and money becomes tight. Occasionally, film crews can come to the rescue by paying inflated prices for the huge privilege of filming. (p. 162)

Most of the time this amounts only to scientists giving the camera people access to their research sites or their field knowledge of the area. Sometimes the researchers allow the cameramen to use their blinds and platforms.

Gavin Thurston has worked with Sir David Attenborough many times. It is a relief to learn, that off camera, Sir David is still the enthusiastic, knowledgeable-about-everything naturalist that he presents to the camera. Furthermore, the field people love to work with him because of his generous and friendly attitude to those working around him. “So uplifting to find that Sir David—as well as being a top naturalist and broadcaster, the inspiration to launch my career, a respected figure recognized by the Queen with a knighthood just four years ago—is also a top bloke” (p. 77).

Attenborough’s knowledge of the workings of the natural world is unrivaled. There are times when Thurston is filming Sir David that he experiences that perfect natural history film moment that combines unique imagery with on-site stunning narration. In the Conkouati National Park, in the Republic of Congo in 2001, the crew watches as a tribe of chimpanzees raise their arms and begin to wade across a stream. Sir David Attenborough stands in front of the camera while the chimps continue in the

background.

The hairs stand up on the back of my neck and I am close to tears. To have Sir David Attenborough just in front of me so eloquently explaining a part of evolution and our ancestry, while behind is a vision of the origin of early man. It all makes so much sense to me. The image and the sound of those 25 seconds will stay with me forever. This is another of those days when I appreciate the experience beyond the job. (p. 318)

I have avoided reprinting any of the numerous really crazy stories recounted in *Journeys in the Wild* because those would be spoilers for anyone wanting to read this outstanding book. Suffice it to say, they are many tales of filming gorillas, pandas, tigers, lions, and many other animals and birds and invertebrates. Thurston is punched by a gorilla, chased by rhinos, and stalked by lions. He has traveled a number of times under the sea in a small submersible. He almost kills Sir David Attenborough with a Monty Python song. There is so much more.

Three quarters through the book, Thurston's travels take a dark turn. In 1991, he and his crew are assigned to film the Dinka people of Sudan. This requires them to drive for days through Southern Sudan at the time of their civil war. Seeing so many 12 and 13-year-old boys toting automatic weapons is like nothing he has experienced before. It is the first time in *Journeys in the Wild* that Thurston expresses some doubts about what he is doing.

I find these scenes shocking. This is life for these young men and boys. Most have been conscripted or kidnapped from their home villages and brought here to fight. Driving on, we pass numerous burnt-out and abandoned army vehicles with bullet holes or shrapnel damage. More reminders of the reality of the civil war that has ravaged this country for decades. I'm beginning to wonder whether we should have traveled into Sudan—after all, it's just for a natural history television sequence. (p. 380–81)

Later, in 2005, he flies over Kalimantan, Borneo, and sees the Armageddon-like wasteland that the failed Mega Rice Project has left behind. "The hardwood had been cashed in, the forest destroyed, the water drained. Although not optimum habitat for orangutans, thousands of them, along with a multitude of species, were killed, displaced, and made homeless as a result of this failed project" (p. 408).

"What are we doing to this planet?" (p. 408)

Experiencing scenes like this would be enough for most of us to give up completely on humanity and decide to go live like a hermit on some island. But Gavin Thurston's faith in the human species may have been challenged, but it is not broken. "I believe humans are predominantly a kind and social species—it seems only politics and crazy ideologies split us apart" (p. 132).

I interviewed Gavin Thurston recently for the radio and this is what ultimately impressed me most about him. He is a "top bloke" himself, a down-to-earth person whose faith in the possibilities of the human species, despite everything he has seen, is only rivaled by his deep love of the natural world. 🐦

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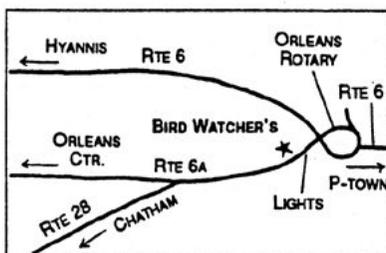
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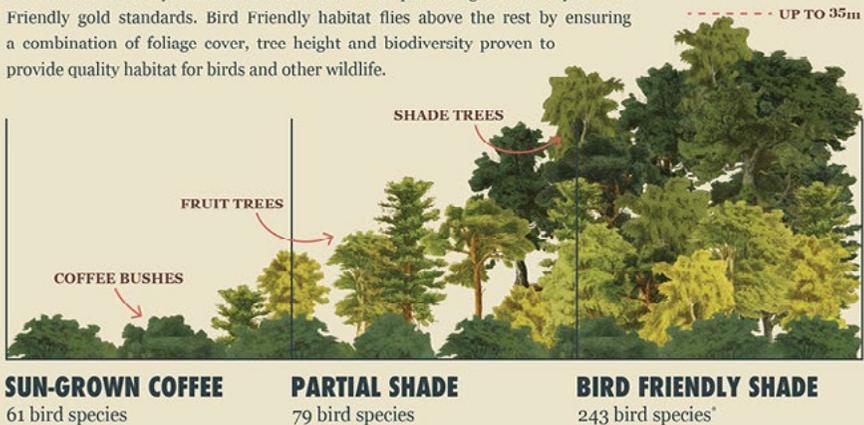
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BIRD SIGHTINGS

November–December 2019

Neil Hayward and Robert H. Stymeist

Editor's Note: For three decades, Fay Vale was the Regional Compiler for Eastern Massachusetts and was a major contributor to the records of bird sightings in *Bird Observer*. Her work for and dedication to *Bird Observer* and the rest of the Massachusetts birding community—along with her passion for birds and birding—will be greatly missed. These *Bird Sightings* reports would not be possible without contributions from local birders and regional compilers. This period we welcome three new regional compilers: Joseph Bourget for Worcester County, Sebastian Jones for Suffolk County, and Lisa Schibley for Plymouth County. They join Joshua Rose (Western Massachusetts) and Mark Faherty (Cape Cod and the Islands). Other regular contributors include Blair Nikula, Bob Stymeist, Glenn d'Entremont, Jason Forbes, Jim Berry, Marj Rines, Mark Lynch, and Trevor Lloyd-Evans (Manomet banding). We thank all these birders for their regular reports. If you are interested in contributing to this column, either through your own sightings or helping to compile the sightings of others, please get in touch with me at <neil.hayward@gmail.com>.

November's high temperature of 72 degrees was recorded on the first day of the month. Thereafter, temperatures went downhill, dropping 19 degrees to a high of 51 on November 2. The only other day of the month that exceeded 60 degrees was November 26 with a high of 63 degrees. The low temperature in Boston was 33 degrees on November 13, a new record low temperature surpassing the previous low of 36 degrees set in 1874. The month in Boston averaged 47 degrees, two degrees above normal. Precipitation in Boston during the month was 3.37 inches, a little over a half-inch less than normal for November. Areas in the Berkshires and the Worcester hills received 1–2 inches of snow during a winter storm on November 13.

Holding true that meteorological winter begins on December 1, the month opened with a two-day wintery blast that brought the region its first significant snowfall. Hardest hit were towns in Franklin County; Rowe and Ashfield recorded 16 and 14 inches of snow, respectively. Up in Essex County, Haverhill reported 11.5 inches, while the Cape and Islands experienced a quick turnover to rain. Boston's Logan Airport reported just 1.2 inches of snow. The high for the month in Boston was 63 degrees on December 10 and the low was 15 degrees on December 19. The month's average temperature was 43 degrees, nearly five degrees above normal for December.

R. Stymeist

GEESE THROUGH IBISES

This period Massachusetts scored an *anserine octofecta*: all eight species of goose on the Massachusetts state list were reported. One of the rarest, a **Barnacle Goose**, was present at Milton from November 21 to December 3. On its last day, it hopped over the county line to visit Franklin Park, adding a new tick to Suffolk County. An amazing three records of **Pink-footed Geese** included a first for Plymouth County. This species was added to the state list in 1999 and, like Barnacle Goose, has been reported annually in the state since 2014. A **Ross's Goose** present at Mashpee from November 11–15 was a first for Barnstable County. This diminutive species, which has been annual in the state since 2008, has now been recorded in 12 of the state's 14 counties. The race is now on between Bristol and Plymouth counties not to be last. **Greater White-fronted Geese** were reported from seven counties, a record high for the period.

Tundra Swans were recorded in five locations. A party of 14 birds (12 adults and 2 young) that visited Plum Island on November 15 were long overdue; it was the first record for Essex County since 1996.

Last winter was a good one for Redheads; the 23 observed on Nantucket was the best period count since 1983. This year was even better with 44 Redheads on the island on the final day of the year. This recent uptick is still far short of the historical counts for Nantucket; the high count in November 1976 was 800 (Veit and Petersen, 1993). Canvasback numbers were similarly healthy with 92 on Nantucket, although down from last year's century-high record of 175. A careful count of 1,880 Ring-necked Ducks at Richmond Pond, Pittsfield, on November 11 represents a new high-count record for the species, beating out the 1,700 recorded in Pittsfield in November 2016. Letting the *Aythya* side down was the single drake **Tufted Duck** on Nantucket in December. It was the only record for the period, which is now below average for this annual rarity.

Hybrids hogged the duck headlines again. Three hybrid species were recorded, all the progeny of the undiscerning Common Goldeneye. A male Bufflehead X Common Goldeneye hybrid returned to Orleans where it first appeared in April 2018, and then wintered there in 2018–2019. This is an uncommon hybrid, with only a handful of records scattered across the continent. The Orleans bird—assuming it's the same returning individual—represents the only eBird record for this taxon in Massachusetts. A Common Goldeneye X Hooded Merganser hybrid was back at Pembroke, which first hosted this duck in 2017, with another bird reported from Lincoln. Common X Barrow's Goldeneye hybrids were reported from Falmouth and Nantucket.

Cuckoos seemed reluctant to leave the state at the end of the year. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo found at Quincy on November 14 was late, although still a week short of the record late date of November 21 shared by 1954 and 2009. A Black-billed Cuckoo appeared at Cuttyhunk Island on November 2 and represents only the second November record this century. The late date for Black-billed Cuckoo in Massachusetts is November 20, 1955. The most surprising lingerer was a **Chuck-will's-widow** photographed on Cuttyhunk Island on November 13. Prior to this year, there had been only one other November record for the state: a bird found dead on a Dartmouth driveway on November 15, 1975. Their scarcity in fall is no doubt a reflection of the extreme difficulty of detecting such a cryptic species when not calling.

Three **Rufous Hummingbirds** are above average for the period. These western vagrants are annual to the state, having been recorded every year since 1994 except for one miss in 2009.

A **Purple Gallinule** was photographed in Harwich on November 4, the third record for the year. Purple Gallinules are prodigious globetrotters. Massachusetts hosts these vagrants every two out of three years on average, with the bulk appearing in October. **Common Gallinules** were found in four counties, including a first December record for Plymouth County.

How many of us look at a muddy winter field and imagine how much better it would look with a **Northern Lapwing** sitting on it? Carolyn Longworth was lucky enough not to have to use her imagination. On November 28, while birding in Fairhaven, Carolyn “heard [an] unfamiliar cry and found [a] large plover with crest.” Sadly, the plover decided to share neither its unfamiliar cry nor its crest with anyone else; it was not relocated despite extensive searching. This is the first record in North America since December 2014, when a bird was found in Canada near Saint John, New Brunswick. The Fairhaven record represents the seventh for Massachusetts and a first for Bristol County.

Other shorebird highlights included single **American Avocets** at Plum Island and Nantucket

in November. Late shorebirds included an American Golden-Plover at Eastham on November 26, one day shy of the latest record for the state, two rare November records of Piping Plovers in Barnstable and Nantucket, and two records of Marbled Godwits, the first December records since 2011.

Alcids put on a good show for the start of the winter. A pelagic trip on December 21 out of Seabrook, New Hampshire, dipped into Essex County waters to log an impressive 360 Dovekies, which is one of the largest December hauls in recent memory. The boat also picked up five **Atlantic Puffins** in the same waters. A pale Black Guillemot, present off Provincetown at the end of December, appears to be of the Arctic-breeding *mandtii* subspecies. This taxon is rare on the East Coast, with the only other records from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Long Island, New York. If confirmed it would be a first record for Massachusetts.

An immature **Franklin's Gull** was in the Milton area on November 22–24 and represents the first record for Norfolk County. The bird was named after the Arctic explorer, Sir John Franklin (1786–1847) on whose expedition in 1827 the first specimen was taken. Franklin died, along with his entire crew of 134 men, on his fourth and final Arctic expedition in 1847. His two boats, Erebus and Terror, became icebound while navigating the Northwest Passage in present-day Nunavut. Though not an ornithologist, the explorer and officer of the Royal Navy was also memorialized by the naming of the Franklin's Spruce Grouse, which has since been relegated to a subspecies.

The other larid highlight of the period was an adult **Mew Gull** found at Somerset on November 22. Not only is this the first record for Bristol County, but—assuming correct identification—would be the third confirmed eBird record of the American-breeding *brachyrhynchus* subspecies. The other two confirmed state records of *brachyrhynchus* appeared in mid-April in 2017 and 2018. A Herring Gull X Glaucous Gull hybrid (known as Nelson's Gull) was photographed on Lake Massapoag on November 19 and appears to be a second record for Norfolk County. Late Black Skimmers on Nantucket and Quincy represented the first November records for Nantucket and Plymouth counties.

One of the biggest surprises this period was the discovery of single **Wood Storks**, in Sutton and Eastham. On the same day that the bird in Sutton was rescued by animal control, a Wood Stork was photographed over Block Island, Rhode Island. Prior to this year, there had been about ten records of the species in the state. More expected these days was a **Brown Booby** on Nantucket on November 15 and a **Brown Pelican** at Wellfleet on December 8.

Cattle Egrets were well-recorded at the end of the year with Berkshire and Suffolk counties picking up their first November records. **White-faced Ibis**, meanwhile, is on a mission to smash all historical records. Last period we reported a sighting in Sterling on October 19–21 that beat the previous late date of July 25 by almost three months. This period a bird was found in Somerset on November 15. Finder Matthew Eckerson commented, "Crazy bird and experience! Also a long hoped for overdue first county record. Just shows what can show up if you bird your patch faithfully." It was the only November record on the East Coast north of Florida.

N. Hayward

Snow Goose				11/11-12/18	Fairhaven	1 m	ph H.Zimmerlin+v.o.
11/12	Northampton	22	B. & L. Bieda	12/1-31	Nantucket	1 m	ph G. Andrews + v.o.
11/17	Newbury	2	J. McCoy	12/22	Rolley	1 ph	S. Riley
12/1	Nantucket	8	G. Andrews#	American Wigeon			
12/4-28	Dighton/Somerset	2	imm max A.Eckerson + v.o.	11/7	Ipswich	21	R. Heil
12/11-27	Orleans	1	imm J. Harris + v.o.	11/9	Duxbury	24	A. Kneidel
12/20-27	Orleans	1	ad J. Harris + v.o.	11/11	Concord	28	D. Swain
Ross's Goose				12/8	Swansea	137	M. Lynch#
11/8-11/15	Mashpee	1	ph M. Keleher	12/31	Yarmouth	172	E. Zawatski
Greater White-fronted Goose				American Black Duck			
11/2-12/1	Amherst	1	ph S. Williams# + v.o.	11/10	Holden	51	M. Lynch#
11/5-11/8	Ipswich	1	ph L. Ferraresso + v.o.	12/8	Swansea	62	M. Lynch#
11/7	New Salem	1	ph B. Lafley	12/10	PI	670	R. Heil
11/8	Quabbin Pk	1	ph L. Therrien#	Northern Pintail			
11/10	Fairhaven	2	ph M. Sylvia	11/2, 12/28	PI	190,11	T. Wetmore
11/11-12/23	Rochester	1	ph G. d'Entremont + v.o.	11/2	Westport	19	N. Tepper#
11/17-24	Concord (NAC)	2	ph F. Morello + v.o.	11/8	Quabbin Pk	21	L. Therrien# + v.o.
11/26	Danvers	1	imm ph R. Heil	12/29	Nantucket	6	J. Trimble#
12/6	Plymouth	1	ph K. Rawdon#	Green-winged Teal			
Pink-footed Goose				11/1-17	Hatfield	24	max K. Barnes + v.o.
11/16-23	Longmeadow	1	ph T. Gilliland + v.o.	11/3, 12/23	PI	375,2	D. Prima
12/1-2	Plymouth	1	ph J. Galluzzo + v.o.	11/3-10	Longmeadow	11	max M. Moore + v.o.
12/6-23	Dighton/Somerset	1	ph M. Eckerson + v.o.	11/7	Hadley	19	C. Elowe
Brant				Canvasback			
11/2	E. Boston (BI)	200	R. Doherty	11/23	Westport	7	M. Eckerson
11/2	PI	50	T. Wetmore	12/31	Nantucket	92	J. Trimble#
11/2	Quabbin Pk	19	J. Forbes	Redhead			
11/6	Quincy	48	M. Iliff	11/14	PI	1	C. Marchant
11/15	WBWS	350	L. Fried#	11/23	Westport	1	M. Eckerson
12/8	Swansea	575	M. Lynch#	12/10-11	Danvers	1 m	R. Heil + v.o.
Barnacle Goose				12/21-24	Haverhill	1	ph K. Wilmarth + v.o.
11/21-12/4	Milton/Boston (FPK)	1	ph P. Dolan + v.o.	12/31	Nantucket	44	J. Trimble#
Cackling Goose				Ring-necked Duck			
11/3-9	Middleton	1	ph A. Steenstrup + v.o.	11/2-12/3	Pittsfield	1880	max T. Carter# + v.o.
11/6-12/6	Ipswich	1	ph G. Power + v.o.	11/4	Sudbury	210	N. Dowling
11/8	W. Newbury	1	ph Grinley#	11/6	Cambr. (FP)	176	J. Trimble
11/9-12/1	Amherst	1	ph T. Gilliland + v.o.	11/15	Randolph	370	P. Peterson
11/14	N. Adams	1	C. Johnson	Tufted Duck			
11/23	Wachusett Res.	1	M. Lynch#	12/1-29	Nantucket	1 m	ph T. Pastuszak#
11/25	Brookline	1	S. Simpson	Greater Scaup			
11/28	Agawam	1	T. Johnson#	11/16	Lakeville	69	G. d'Entremont#
12/29	Danvers	1	S. Grinley#	11/23	Wachusett Res.	86	M. Lynch#
Mute Swan				12/8	Swansea	112	M. Lynch#
11/23	Westport	106	M. Eckerson	12/28	Falmouth	1200	R. Heil
12/8	Swansea	52	M. Lynch#	Lesser Scaup			
Tundra Swan				11/15	Pembroke	54	H. Cross
11/15	PI	14	12ad+2imm ph B. Gette#	12/10	Danvers	21	R. Heil
11/15	Plymouth B.	10	ph C. Jackson	12/28	Falmouth	53	R. Heil
11/16-29	Amesbury	5	max ph K. Wilmarth + v.o.	King Eider			
12/6	PI	1	imm T. Wetmore	11/11-26	PI	1	imm m ph M. McCarthy + v.o.
12/7-27	Dighton/Somerset	1	ph A. Trautmann# + v.o.	11/30-12/4	Duxbury	1	imm m ph R. Bowes
12/24	Halifax	1	ph E. Finizio	12/4-23	Rockport (HPt)	2	imm m ph N. Tepper + v.o.
Wood Duck				12/27	PI	1	ad m ph S. McDonald
11/3	Wachusett Res.	29	M. Lynch#	12/28	Nantucket	1	N. Bonomo#
11/7	Medford	91	R. LaFontaine	Common Eider			
11/27	Jamaica Plain	41	P. Peterson	12/25	Chatham	6000	T. Auer
Blue-winged Teal				12/29	Nantucket	108000	J. Trimble#
11/2	Hanscom	3	C. Winstanley	Common Eider (Northern <i>borealis</i>)			
11/10-17	Rehoboth/Seekonk	2	M. Eckerson	11/23	Westport	1	ph m M. Iliff#
12/20	Orleans	2	P. Crosson#	12/23	Bourne	1	m J. Trimble#
Northern Shoveler				Harlequin Duck			
11/10	PI	33	T. Wetmore	11/17	Rockport	47	P. + F. Vale
11/19	Pittsfield	37	D. Ferren	12/7	Rockport (HPt)	60	R. Lockwood#
12/28	Nantucket	10	H. Young#	12/13	Scituate	31	K. Rawdon#
Gadwall				12/13	Westport	17	M. Eckerson
11/9	Nantucket	76	H. Young#	12/29	Nantucket	21	J. Trimble#
11/13-28	Pittsfield	8	max J. Pierce + v.o.	Surf Scoter			
12/8	Swansea	56	M. Lynch#	11/2-3	Quabbin Pk	1	M. McKitrick + v.o.
12/10	PI	69	R. Heil	11/7	MBO	135	E. Lipton
Eurasian Wigeon				12/29	Nantucket	1405	J. Trimble#
thr	Somerset/Swansea	1	m ph A. Eckerson# + v.o.	White-winged Scoter			
11/1	Ipswich	1	imm m ph N. Dubrow	11/2	Sandwich	6000	N. Marchessault
11/10	Plymouth	1	f D. Furbish	11/2	Fairhaven	48	M. Lynch#

Black-bellied Plover	11/1	Plymouth	5	C. Jackson	12/9	Somerset	2	S. Jones#
	11/2	Winthrop B.	22	J. Young	Spotted Sandpiper	11/3	Sharon	1
	11/2-8	Quabbin (G35)	3	max B. Lafley + v.o.		11/5	Natick	1
	11/6	PI	175	T. Wetmore		11/9	Amherst	1
American Golden-Plover	11/26	Eastham (FE)	1	N. Villone	Lesser Yellowlegs	11/1	Lexington	2
Killdeer	11/1-2	Sheffield	32	J. Pierce		11/6	Nantucket	1
	11/6	Sharon	26	P. Peterson	Willet	11/2	Quincy	1
	12/6	Newbury	2	F. Vale		11/15	Hull	1
Semipalmated Plover	11/10	Duxbury B.	3	A. Kneidel#	Willet (Western)	11/6	Edgartown	1 ph
	11/14	PI	8	S. McDonald		11/25,12/15	Harwich	1 ph
	12/21	Fairhaven	1	V. Burdette	Greater Yellowlegs	11/1	PI	35
Piping Plover	11/9	Nantucket	1	J. Trimble#		11/2	Fairhaven	4
	11/11	Barnstable	1	S. Sullivan#		12/15	Dartmouth	1
Whimbrel	11/3-5	WBWS	1	W. Mumford#	Pomarine Jaeger	11/28	Eastham (FE)	6
Marbled Godwit	11/2	Chatham	6	M. Kaufman		11/29	P'town (RP)	4
	11/25-12/15	Harwich	1	P. Kyle + v.o.		12/2,12/30	Rockport (AP)	6,12
	12/4-12/31	Plymouth	1	L. Schibley + v.o.		12/15	Brewster	3
Ruddy Turnstone	11/7	Quincy	9	K. Rawdon	Parasitic Jaeger	11/10	P'town (RP)	13
	11/11	Lynn	10	D. Padulo	Dovekie	11/29	P'town (RP)	17
	12/21	Dorchester	4	L. Nichols		12/7	Jeffreys L.	120
Red Knot	11/2	Fairhaven	1	M. Lynch#		12/21	Essex Co. waters	360
	11/25	PI	1	T. + J. Foley		12/30	Rockport (AP)	10
	12/16	Duxbury B.	1	H. Wright#	Common Murre	11/29	P'town (RP)	86
Stilt Sandpiper	11/1	E. Boston (BI)	1	S. Jones#		12/21	Essex Co. waters	27
Sanderling	11/7	PI	250	D. Adrien		12/30	Rockport (AP)	1320
	11/10	Duxbury B.	100	A. Kneidel#	Thick-billed Murre	11/24,12/30	Rockport (AP)	9,16
	11/29	P'town (RP)	800	S. Arena		11/26	Rockport (HPt)	3
Dunlin	11/3	PI	250	T. Wetmore		11/29	P'town (RP)	13
	11/9	Duxbury	125	A. Kneidel	Razorbill	11/11	MBO	49
	12/13	Westport	95	M. Eckerson		11/29	P'town (RP)	1222
Purple Sandpiper	11/24	Rockport (AP)	18	J. Bourget		12/13	Westport	16
	12/10	Gloucester (EP)	14	N. Dubrow		12/30	Rockport (AP)	745
	12/13	Cohasset	25	D. Burton	Black Guillemot	11/29	P'town (RP)	6
	12/20	Westport	14	M. Eckerson		12/16-thr	P'town	1 ph
Least Sandpiper	11/2	E. Boston (BI)	1	R. Doherty		12/30	Rockport (AP)	3
	11/5	Northfield	1	P. Gagarin	Atlantic Puffin	11/10,12/30	Rockport (AP)	1,1
White-rumped Sandpiper	11/1	Winthrop B.	1	S. Jones#		12/15	Brewster	1
	11/2, 11/12	PI	3,1	D. Chickering, M. Watson#		12/21	Essex Co. waters	5 ph
	11/10	P'town (RP)	1	B. Nikula#	Black-legged Kittiwake	11/4	Pittsfield	1
Pectoral Sandpiper	11/7	Hadley	1	C. Elowe		11/17	P'town (RP)	600
Semipalmated Sandpiper	11/2	Lynn	8	B. Lee		11/28	Eastham (FE)	300
	11/15	PI	1	R. Heil		12/30	Rockport (AP)	2730
Western Sandpiper	11/14	Eastham (FE)	1 ph	B. Albro	Bonaparte's Gull	11/5	Pittsfield	3
	11/17	Barnstable (SN)	1 ph	J. Glydon		11/10	P'town (RP)	5200
Long-billed Dowitcher	11/2, 11/20	PI	10,1	D. Chickering, D. Adrien		11/11	Plymouth B.	118
	12/29	Nantucket	2	L. Waters#		11/11	PI	66
American Woodcock	11/18-20	Boston	3	S. van der Veen + v.o.		11/24,12/31	Rockport (AP)	15,1
	11/22	Stow	4	J. Ritterston	Black-headed Gull	11/2-15	P'town (RP)	2 max ph
	12/29	Nantucket	5	S. Kardell#		11/8	Falmouth	1 ad ph
Wilson's Snipe	11/3	Halifax	12	J. Carlisle#		11/24	Lynn/Swampscott	1 W ph
	11/6	Quabog IBA	2	M. Lynch#		12/8-12/22	Gloucester (EP)	1 imm ph

in Hadley on October 23. This West Coast *Empidonax* flycatcher continued for 41 days until the state's first major snowstorm on December 2. Vagrancy is often the result of bad weather; strong southerly winds can produce a reverse migration and return southbound birds back north, as well as sending southerly species like Yellow-throated Warbler and Painted Bunting to our region. This fall and early winter saw an unprecedented number of **Painted Buntings**; a total of 11 were reported, eight of which were female or immature birds. An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was discovered on Plum Island on November 12, and perhaps the same bird was found in Salisbury three days later. Ash-throated Flycatchers have been reported 17 times in the last ten years. **Western Kingbirds** were noted in three locations, with birds in Gloucester and Nantucket delighting many birders by staying for over a month. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was found at Halibut Point State Park in Rockport on November 23 and continued into the New Year. Despite the long stay, this bird was elusive and difficult to find. Although it was seen every day, most birders had to try multiple times to find the bird.

Other noteworthy passerine vagrants included **Sedge Wrens** from Nantucket and Cuttyhunk and **Western Tanagers** from Plymouth, Gloucester and Sandwich. The Sandwich tanager frequented a feeder belonging to birders, who welcomed others, allowing many to enjoy the bird at close range. Among the 25 species of warblers seen during the period was a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** that was present for 15 days along the Shining Sea Bikeway in Falmouth and a **Townsend's Warbler** in Watertown.

This year's annual winter finch distribution report by Ron Pittaway of Ontario Field Ornithologists is not encouraging for Massachusetts; an abundant crop of boreal spruce cones and excellent birch and alder seed crops will keep winter finches up north this winter. A handful of Red Crossbills were noted from central and western areas of the state. A single report of 10 Evening Grosbeaks made a one-day stop at a Northfield feeder, and a small number of Pine Siskins, mostly single individuals, were also reported. 🐦

R. Stymeist

References

Veit, R. R., and W. R. Petersen. 1993. *Birds of Massachusetts*. Lincoln, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Black Vulture				Sharp-shinned Hawk			
11/2	Westford	4	M. Sovay	11/1-6	Malden (PR)	5	Hawkcount (C. Jackson)
12/15	Dartmouth/Westport	27	J. Eckerson	11/9	Sudbury Res.	2	M. Lynch#
12/23	Blackstone	8	R. Whetstone	11/23	Sudbury	2	B. Harris
12/28	Egremont	7	J. Drucker, L. Fried	12/15	S. Dart. (APd)	2	J. Eckerson#
12/29	Wrentham	7	W. Sweet	Cooper's Hawk			
Turkey Vulture				11/13	Boston (RKG)	1	R. Stymeist
11/3	PI	18	N. Landry	12/18	W. Brookfield	3	M. Lynch#
12/20	Dartmouth	3	M. Eckerson	Northern Goshawk			
12/31	Northampton	1	T. Carpenter	12/4	Mashpee	1 ph	P. Trimble
Osprey				12/14	Worcester	1 ph	T. Pirro
11/29	Peabody	1	N. St. George	Bald Eagle			
11/30	PI	1	A. Davie	11/1-9	Malden (PR)	9	Hawkcount (C. Jackson)
Golden Eagle				11/15	Quabbin Pk	11	L. Therrien
11/16	Quabbin Pk 2	1 ad+1 juv ph	L. Therrien#	12/9	Somerset	3	S. Jones#
11/17	Ipswich	1	S. Hedman	12/15	Quaboag IBA 3	2 ad+1 imm	M. Lynch#
11/22	Williamstown	2 ph	M. Morales	12/26	PI	3	R. Heil
11/30	Williamstown	1 ad ph	S. Townsend#	12/26	Salisbury	3	K. Millett
12/28	Wayland	1 ph	B. Harris	Red-shouldered Hawk			
Northern Harrier				11/5	Deerfield	4	J. Smith
11/19	PI	6	D. Prima	11/11-19	MBO	2	E. Lipton + v.o.
12/8-15	Saugus	3	S. Zende + v.o.	12/6	Sharon	2	W. Sweet
12/18	E. Boston (BI)	6	DCR (S. Riley)	12/8	Saugus	2 1pr	P. + F. Vale
12/22	Cumb. Farms	7	J. Bourget	Red-tailed Hawk			
12/26-31	PI	6	R. Heil + v.o.	11/1-13	Malden (PR)	24	Hawkcount (C. Jackson)

Red-shouldered X Red-tailed Hawk (hybrid)	12/28	Quabbin Res.	9	M. Lynch#
11/17-12/31 Wachusett Res.	1 ph	T. Pirro + v.o.		
Rough-legged Hawk		American Kestrel		
11/17-21 Cumb. Farms	2	L. Grimes + v.o.	11/2 Somerset	2 P. Lopriori
11/21 Amherst	1	L. Therrien	12/4 Nahant	2 L. Pivacek
11/23 Northfield	1	B. Lafley	12/6 Medford	2 J. Layman
11/30 Dartmouth	1	B. King#		
12/7 PI	3	T. Wetmore	Merlin	thr Indiv. reported from 16 locations
12/19 Seekonk	1	D. Caron	Peregrine Falcon	
12/27-29 Freetown	1	A. Eckerson + v.o.	11/2-29 PI	2 D. Chickering + v.o.
Barn Owl			11/2-9 Woburn	2 J. Kovner
11/2 Nantucket	2	S. Kardell#	11/17 P'town (RP)	2 imm B. Nikula#
11/7 Essex	1 au	P. Brown	12/5 Salisbury	2 C. Floyd
Eastern Screech-Owl			12/7 Jeffreys L.	1 J. Sparrell#
12/4 Ipswich (CB)	5 au	N. Tepper	Ash-throated Flycatcher	
12/22 Ipswich	13	D. Walters	11/12-13 PI	1 ph M. Watson + v.o.
12/29 N. Marshfield	6	G. d'Entremont#	11/15-16 Salisbury	1 ph J. Keeley + v.o.
Great Horned Owl			Western Kingbird	
11/10 Cumb. Farms	3	D. Burton#	11/3-26,12/10 Gloucester (EP)	1,1 ph S. Williams+v.o.,N.Dubrow
12/28 Quabbin Res.	3	M. Lynch#	11/9-12/28 Nantucket	1 ph v.o.
Snowy Owl			11/11-15 PI	1 phM.McCarthy+v.o.
11/9 Mansfield	2	T. Kuras	Eastern Kingbird	
11/27 Ipswich (CB)	1	D. Peterson	11/17 Somerset	1 D. Blanchette
12/1 P'town (RP)	1	B. Nikula#	11/17 Gloucester (EP)	1 M. Sovay
12/5-8 Salisbury	1	C. Leahy + v.o.	Pacific-slope Flycatcher*	
12/10-31 PI	2	E. Granter + v.o.	11/1-12/2 Hadley	1 ph auJ.Oliverio+v.o.
12/15 Boston (Logan)	2	CBC (N.Smith)	Eastern Phoebe	
Barred Owl			11/26-12/26 Hadley	2 ph C. Elowe
11/4 Needham	2	L. Anfenson	12/27 Mattapoisett	1 M. Molander#
11/11 Stow	5 au	N. Tepper	12/28 Lincoln	1 J. Forbes
12/18 W. Brookfield	2	M. Lynch#	Northern Shrike	
12/22 Barnstable	4	J. Trimble#	thr Indiv. reported from 14 locations	
Long-eared Owl			White-eyed Vireo	
thr Suffolk Co.	9 max	anon	11/2 N. Truro	1 A. Kneidel#
11/6-17 PI	1 ph	N. Tepper + v.o.	11/3-5 Montague	1 ph B.Kane, N.Watkins+v.o.
11/9 Medford	1	N. Ardizzoni#	11/14 S. Dartmouth	1 A. Rainville
12/15 Saugus	4	G. Wilson#	12/31 Nantucket	1 P. Trimble#
12/29 Nantucket	1	L. Waters#	Yellow-throated Vireo	
Short-eared Owl			11/2 Nantucket	1 S. Kardell#
11/3 Falmouth	3	N. Marchessault	Blue-headed Vireo	
12/7-31 PI	2	D. Chickering + v.o.	11/2 Cuttyhunk I.	7 L. Waters#
12/15 Cape Cod CBC	3	CBC	11/4 Waltham	2 J. Forbes
12/18 E. Boston (BI)	2	DCR (S. Riley)	11/9 Pembroke	2 J. Young
12/22 Saugus	2	S. Zende#	11/10 Medford	2 W. Freedberg
Northern Saw-whet Owl			11/25-26 Framingham	1 M. Garvey + v.o.
11/2 Sharon	3 b	V. Zollo#	Red-eyed Vireo	
11/6 PI	4 au	N. Tepper	11/1-17 Indiv. reported from 7 locations	
11/10 Marlborough	5 h	T. Spahr	11/4-7 MBO	1 b T. Lloyd-Evans#
11/21 MSSF	21 ph au	N. Tepper#	Fish Crow	
12/4 Ipswich (CB)	4 au	N. Tepper	12/thr Lawrence	700 max C.Gibson + v.o.
12/28 Quabbin Res.	4	M. Lynch#	12/20 Blackstone	150 R. Whetstone
Belted Kingfisher			12/24 Medway	44 M. Pierre-Louis
11/9-17 Westport	2	B. King + v.o.	12/25 MBO	26 I. Davies
11/11 Quaboag IBA	3	M. Lynch#	Common Raven	
12/14 Weymouth	3	J. Bock	thr Nantucket	2 v.o.
Red-headed Woodpecker			11/5 Deerfield	11 S. Surner# + v.o.
11/2-12/31 Ayer	1 imm ph	S.Wilson+v.o.	11/23 Sudbury	5 B. Harris
11/10 Nantucket	1	J. Trimble#	12/19 Plymouth CBC	8 fide T. Lloyd-Evans
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			12/28 Quabbin Res.	7 M. Lynch#
11/2 Westport	2	N. Tepper	Horned Lark	
11/25 Cambridge	2	K. Hartel	12/2 Egremont	150 G. Ward
12/29 DFWS	3	MAS (P. Sowizral)	12/3 Sunderland	335 J. Rose
Hairy Woodpecker			12/3 Hadley (Honeypot)200	S. Hills
12/13 Stow	5	N. Tepper#	12/8 Saugus	120 S. Zende#
12/28 Quabbin Res.	7	M. Lynch#	Tree Swallow	
Northern Flicker			11/2 PI	50 E. Labato
11/2 Fairhaven	10	M. Lynch#	11/21 Westport	34 L. Miller-Donnelly
12/1 Ipswich	15	N. Dowling#	12/29 Chatham	3 F. Atwood
12/21 Plymouth	10	C. Jackson	Red-breasted Nuthatch	
12/27 Freetown	14	A. Eckerson + v.o.	11/27 Quaboag IBA	3 M. Lynch#
Pileated Woodpecker			12/19 Plymouth	2 G. d'Entremont#
12/13 Stow	3	N. Tepper#	12/28 Quabbin Res.	32 M. Lynch#
12/18 W. Brookfield	4	M. Lynch#	Brown Creeper	
			12/28 Quabbin Res.	11 M. Lynch#

House Wren				Purple Finch			
11/30	S. Dart. (APd)	2	M.Eckerson#	11/14	Lincoln	1	H. Yelle
12/22	Nantucket	1	S. Kardell#	11/15	Gloucester (EP)	1	J. Nelson
12/25	Ipswich (CB)	1	N. Dubrow	12/28	Quabbin Res.	2	M. Lynch#
Winter Wren				Common Redpoll			
11/2	Westport	3	N. Tepper	11/16	PI	15	D. Bates
11/7	Brookline	3	P. Peterson	Red Crossbill			
12/21	Marion	3	A. Kneidel#	11/14	Northfield	1	J. Smith
12/22	Ipswich	5	D. Walters	11/18	Turners Falls	1	J. Smith
12/22	Wayland	3	B. Harris	12/13	Shutesbury ³ au Type1		J. Eckerson
12/27	GMNWR	3	J. Forbes	12/15	New Marlborough 2		G. Ward
				12/18	Great Barrington	2	K. Hanson
Sedge Wren				Pine Siskin			
11/2	Cuttyhunk I.	1 ph	M. Sylvia#	11/2-25	Indiv. reported from	14	locations
12/28-29	Nantucket	1 ph	L. Waters#	11/3	Amherst	3	K. Devarajan
Marsh Wren				11/21	Westport	18	L. Miller-Donnelly
11/23	Westport	3	M. Eckerson	Lapland Longspur			
12/4	Mashpee	6	P. Trimble	11/1	Ipswich (CB)	5	S. McDonald
12/22	Ipswich	3	N. Dubrow#	Lapland Longspur			
12/26	Marshfield	3	S. Williams	11/14	Everett	1	C. Kaynor
12/29	Needham	3	P. Peterson	11/17	Saugus	1	S. Zende#
Carolina Wren				11/17	New Braintree	1	B. Robo
11/10	Falmouth	21	G. d'Entremont#	11/23	Westport	1	M. Eckerson
12/14	Braintree	16	G. d'Entremont#	12/4-7	Hadley (Honeypot)	2	max L. Therrien + v.o.
12/22	Hyannis	36	L. Waters#	12/5-12	Salisbury	1	C. Floyd + v.o.
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher				12/22	Newbury	11	A. Sanford
11/8-13	Cuttyhunk I.	1	M. Sylvia	12/26	PI	12	R. Heil
11/9-15	Randolph	1	J. Young + v.o.	Snow Bunting			
11/11	Cambridge	1	J. Forbes	11/9-12/21	Hadley (Honeypot)	88	max M. McKittrick + v.o.
Golden-crowned Kinglet				11/11	Winthrop	110	R. Stymeist
11/30	S. Dart. (APd)	9	M.Eckerson#	11/19	Salisbury	117	S. McDonald
12/18	W. Brookfield	11	M. Lynch#	12/7	Ipswich (CB)	80	C. Lapite#
12/28	Quabbin Res.	49	M. Lynch#	12/11	PI	119	T. Wetmore#
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				12/19	Plymouth B.	60	G. d'Entremont#
11/11	Medford	6	R. LaFontaine	12/21	Hanscom	45	C. Winstanley#
11/23	Westport	14	M. Eckerson	Grasshopper Sparrow			
12/22	Ipswich	6	D. Walters	11/3-12/22	Indiv. reported from	10	locations
Eastern Bluebird				11/15	Rockport	2	S. Williams#
11/2	Westport	15	N. Tepper	Lark Sparrow			
12/19	Plymouth CBC	69	fide T. Lloyd-Evans	11/7-12/26	Indiv. reported from	10	locations
12/28	Quabbin Res.	42	M. Lynch#	Chipping Sparrow			
Townsend's Solitaire				11/13	Freetown	8	M. Eckerson#
11/10	Nantucket	1 ph	J. Trimble#	11/14	Medford	17	R. LaFontaine
11/23-12/31	Rockport (HPt)	1 ph	L. Hale + v.o.	12/1-31	Arlington	5	max R. Stymeist#
Swainson's Thrush				Clay-colored Sparrow			
11/2	Charlestown	2	L. Nichols	11/4-12/19	Indiv. reported from	11	locations
11/3	E. Boston (BI)	1	G. Graham	11/4	Westport	2	A. Morgan
12/25	Ipswich (CB)	1	N. Dubrow	Field Sparrow			
Hermit Thrush				11/17	W. Roxbury (MP)	7	M. Iloff
11/3-30	Boston (RKG)	17	max M.L.Kaufman +v.o.	12/19	Plymouth	20	L. Schibley#
11/3	MNWS	9	J. Smith	12/29	Raynham	12	J. Glover#
11/14	Sandwich	22	P. Crosson	Fox Sparrow			
12/19	Plymouth CBC	40	fide T. Lloyd-Evans	11/10	Winchendon	4	M. Lynch#
12/20	Dartmouth	9	M. Eckerson	11/21	Everett	4	P. Peterson
12/28	Falmouth	10	R. Heil	11/23	Wayland	5	B. Harris
Wood Thrush				11/30	S. Dart. (APd)	6	M.Eckerson#
12/21-22	PI	1 ph	E. Labato + v.o.	12/28	Falmouth	7	R. Heil
Gray Catbird				American Tree Sparrow			
11/11	PI	12	M. McCarthy#	11/10	Groton	10	T. Murray
11/30	S. Dart. (APd)	24	M.Eckerson#	11/27	PI	15	M. Goetschkes
12/28	Falmouth	21	R. Heil	12/6	Lancaster	7	M. Lynch#
Brown Thrasher				Dark-eyed Junco (Cassiar cismontanus)			
11/30	S. Dart. (APd)	6	M.Eckerson#	12/21-26	Andover	1	ph M. McCarthy + v.o.
Cedar Waxwing				White-crowned Sparrow			
11/2	Easthampton	180	L. Therrien	11/2,12/13	Quincy	4	P. Peterson, J. Trimble
12/1	DFWS	88	P. Sowizral	11/6	DFWS	2	P. Sowizral
12/13	Gardner	350	T. Pirro	12/22	Saugus	2	S. Zende#
American Pipit				Vesper Sparrow			
11/27	PI	5	MAS (D. Moon)	11/2-12/22	Indiv. reported from	7	locations
11/28	Fairhaven	25	C. Longworth	11/4-12/27	Falmouth	2	max R. Doherty + v.o.
12/1	Ipswich	6	N. Dowling#	Nelson's Sparrow			
Evening Grosbeak				11/2	E. Boston (BI)	4	R. Doherty
12/6	Northfield	10	M. Taylor				

Nelson's Sparrow (continued)				12/28-31	Nantucket	1	J. Hough#
11/2	Cuttyhunk I.	3	L. Waters#	Black-and-white Warbler			
11/3	Quincy	1	V. Zollo#	11/3	Boston (RKG)	1	L. Nichols
11/4	Westport	1	A. Morgan	11/15	Boston (Fens)	1	T. Ganapathy
11/10	Somerset	2	M. Eckerson	Tennessee Warbler			
Savannah Sparrow				11/10	Medford	1	W. Freedberg
11/3	E. Boston (BI)	16	M. Pongprayoon	11/12	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	M. McMahon
11/10,12/22	Fairhaven	10,4	N. Brown	11/16	Boston (AA)	1	S. Jones#
11/26	PI	12	S. Zhang	11/26	Brookline	1	P. Peterson
12/4	Ipswich (CB)	26	N. Dubrow	Orange-crowned Warbler			
Savannah Sparrow (Ipswich Sparrow)				thr	Indiv. reported from 23 locations		
11/23	Westport	3	M. Iliff	11/11	Melrose	2	J. McCoy
11/26,12/22	PI	3	S. Zhang	11/23	Westport	2	M. Eckerson
12/4	Ipswich (CB)	26	N. Dubrow	Nashville Warbler			
12/22	Salisbury	3	S. Zhang#	thr	Indiv. reported from 16 locations		
Lincoln's Sparrow				12/15	S. Dart. (APd)	2	J. Eckerson#
11/2-12/15	Indiv. reported from 10 locations			Common Yellowthroat			
Swamp Sparrow				thr	Indiv. reported from 18 locations		
11/4	Stow	40	N. Tepper	11/30	S. Dart. (APd)	2	M. Eckerson#
11/23	Westport	22	M. Eckerson	American Redstart			
12/4	E. Boston (BI)	20	DCR (S. Riley)	11/2	Brookline	1	J. Weinberg
12/22	Ipswich	14	D. Walters	Cape May Warbler			
12/29	N. Marshfield	16	G. d'Entremont#	11/2, 11/9	Nantucket	1	S. Sullivan#, J. Trimble#
Eastern Towhee				Northern Parula			
11/27	Gloucester (EP)	4	M. McCarthy	11/1	Boston (AA)	1	C. Hartshorn
12/15	S. Dart. (APd)	7	J. Eckerson#	11/16-27	Medford	1	R. LaFontaine#
12/21	Mattapoisett	6	I. Davies#	Magnolia Warbler			
12/28	Falmouth	7	R. Heil	11/8	Cuttyhunk I.	1	M. Sylvia
Yellow-breasted Chat				Bay-breasted Warbler			
11/11-12/31	Boston (RKG)	2	maxL. Markley+v.o.	11/3	PI	1	J. Hannafee
11/16	Fairhaven	2	J. Eckerson#	Yellow Warbler			
12/28	Falmouth	3	R. Heil	11/9-11	Middleton	1	ph J. Keeley#
12/29	Nantucket	4	J. Trimble#	Blackpoll Warbler			
Bobolink				11/1	Boston (AA)	3	C. Hartshorn
11/23	Hingham	1	S. Williams	11/4-12/1	Medford	1	R. LaFontaine#
Eastern Meadowlark				11/4	MBO	1	b T. Lloyd-Evans#
11/30	S. Dart. (APd)	22	M. Eckerson#	11/12	Boston (RKG)	2	A. Laquidara
12/8	Cumb. Farms	17	L. Grimes	Black-throated Blue Warbler			
12/26	Orleans	6	P. Trull	11/1-7	MBO	1	imm f b T. Lloyd-Evans#
12/29	DWWS	10	K. Rawdon	12/1	Dighton	1	A. Erickson#
Orchard Oriole				12/30	Wellfleet	1	M. Dorrell
11/3	Gloucester	1	R. Heil	Palm Warbler			
Baltimore Oriole				11/4	Middleton	2	W. Tatro
thr	Indiv. reported from 17 locations			11/6	Dartmouth	2	B. King
12/22	Barnstable	2	A. Kneidel#	12/24-31	Plymouth	1	C. Jackson
12/26	Truro	3	J. Young	Palm Warbler (Western)			
Red-winged Blackbird				11/2-29	Middleton	1	P. + F. Vale + v.o.
11/6	Groton	1000	T. Murray	11/2	Weymouth	1	J. Kricher
11/9	Middleton	300	J. Keeley#	11/16	PI	1	J. Keeley#
12/22	Cumb. Farms	225	J. Bourget	12/7	Cumb. Farms	1	J. Meyers
Brown-headed Cowbird				12/16-19	Plymouth	1	D. Furbish + v.o.
11/9	Westport	195	B. King#	12/22	Ipswich	1	D. Walters
12/7	Westwood	10	E. Nielsen	Pine Warbler			
12/22	Cumb. Farms	9	J. Bourget	11/3	Dighton	6	J. Eckerson
Rusty Blackbird				11/23	Westport	6	M. Eckerson
11/4	Stow	15	N. Tepper	12/14	Wilmington	3	J. Keeley#
11/11	Amesbury	45	R. Heil	12/26	Georgetown	3	R. Stevenson
12/22	Mid-Cape CBC	19	CBC	Yellow-rumped Warbler			
Common Grackle				11/2	Fairhaven	56	M. Lynch#
12/13	W. Roxbury (MP)	90	M. Iliff	11/5	Hadley	30	J. Rose
12/16	Plymouth	16	D. Furbish	11/11	Nantucket	950	S. Kardell
12/16	Westwood	12	E. Nielsen	11/11	PI	50	M. McCarthy#
Ovenbird				Yellow-throated Warbler			
11/3	Waltham	1	F. Morello	11/18,12/14	Concord	1	ph T. Walker
11/6	Oak Bluffs	1	Sea Williams	Prairie Warbler			
11/20	Eastham (FH)	1	T. Spahr	11/3	Melrose	1	E. Labato
12/15	Woburn	1	CBC (D. Fruglietti)	11/21-25	Cohasset	1	S. Avery#
12/22	Sandwich	1	S. Williams#	11/23	Westport	1	M. Eckerson
Worm-eating Warbler				11/23	Hingham	1	S. Williams
11/10	Newton	1	ph C. Dalton	11/26	Eastham (FE)	1	N. Villone
Northern Waterthrush				11/26	Orleans	1	K. Yakola#
12/20-21	Tuckernuck I.	1	S. Kardell#				

Black-throated Gray Warbler				11/6	Sharon	1	P. Peterson
11/27-12/11 Falmouth	1 ph	P. Trimble#		11/21	Westport	1	L. Miller-Donnelly
Townsend's Warbler				Painted Bunting			
12/18 Watertown	1 ph	T. Mazerall		11/10-13	Brewster	1 f/imm ph	J. Sweeney+v.o.
Black-throated Green Warbler				11/11	Dartmouth	1 f/imm ph	J. Eckerson#
11/3-12/14	Indiv. reported from 8 locations			11/26-30	P'town	1 f/imm ph	F. Mockler#
Wilson's Warbler				12/7-thr	Eastham	1 m ph	J. Carbone#
11/2 Gloucester (EP)	1	M. McCarthy		12/8	Harwich	1 f/imm ph	R. Debenham
11/2 N. Truro	1	A. Kneidel#		12/15	Brewster	1 f/imm ph	K. Miller#
11/16 Boston (AA)	1	L. Markley + v.o.		12/15-24	Sandwich	1 f/imm ph	R. Curran+v.o.
Scarlet Tanager				12/19-31	Carver	1 f/imm ph	E. Dalton+v.o.
11/4 Framingham	1	J. Forbes		12/22	Harwich	1 m ph b	S. Mackoul
Western Tanager				12/24	Chatham	1 f/imm ph	T. Auer
11/10-15 Gloucester (EP)	1 ph	S. Sullivan#		12/31	Orleans	1 m ph	R. Utt
12/19-11/22 Plymouth	1 ph	I. Davies + v.o.		Dickcissel			
12/22-thr Sandwich	1 ph	S. Williams, S. Boutillier#		11/3	Middleton	1	M. Sovay
Rose-breasted Grosbeak				11/4	Dorchester	1	J. Layman
11/12-19 PI	1	M. Watson#, T. Wetmore		11/17-27	Chatham	1	J. Harris + v.o.
Indigo Bunting							
11/2 Lexington	1	B. Bohnert					



PALM WARBLER BY NATE MARCHESSAULT

BYGONE BIRDS

Historical Highlights for November–December

Neil Hayward

5 YEARS AGO

November–December 2014



A **Ross's Goose** was at Turners Falls, December 20–26, and a **Tundra Swan** spent almost two weeks in the Seekonk and Rehoboth area. **Eared Grebes** were reported from Mashpee and Quaboag Pond, Brookfield (the first inland record for 35 years). There were six reports of **Rufous Hummingbirds** on Cape Cod as well as Arlington and Roslindale. A **Mew Gull** was found on the Nantucket Christmas Bird Count on December 28. **Ash-throated Flycatchers** were reported from three locations and a **Canada Jay** (then known as Gray Jay) was at Gate 41, Quabbin, for almost two weeks. John Kirk Townsend had two eponymous species in the state: **Townsend's Solitaires** at Rockport and Marion, and a **Townsend's Warbler** at Marblehead Neck. Cape Cod hosted a **Yellow-throated Warbler** and a **LeConte's Sparrow** during mid-December.

Best sighting: **Smith's Longspur**, East Point, Nahant was the second record for the state, after a bird at Salisbury State Park on October 12, 1968.

10 YEARS AGO

November–December 2009



Two **Tundra Swans** were at Bartlett's Farm on Nantucket in December. A **Wood Stork** was found in Duxbury on November 3. **Mew Gulls** were reported from Gloucester and Swampscott. A **White-winged Dove** spent the end of the year at the Bird Store and More in Sturbridge. The **Allen's Hummingbird** first found on October 23 in Scituate survived until December 29 when the temperature dropped to the single digits. Two MacGillivray's Warblers were found during the period at the Boston Fenway Victory Gardens and at Wright's Pond in Medford. A **Townsend's Warbler** was in Brewster for three days. Cumberland Farms hosted the continuing **LeConte's Sparrow** until November 9 during which it overlapped with a **Lark Bunting**. A **Henslow's Sparrow** was in South Dartmouth on November 16. A **Common Chaffinch** showed up in Waltham at the feeder of Jason Forbes, where over a hundred birders managed to see it during December. There are only two previous records of this Eurasian species in the state.

Best sighting: **Common Shelduck** at Nahant on December 6–7. At the time, this species was not on the American Birding Association (ABA) checklist. In 2017, the ABA Checklist Committee added the species on the basis of two credible reports from Newfoundland in 2014 and 2009. The latter appeared just three weeks before our bird. Since 2009 there have been records in Nova Scotia and New Hampshire. A growing population in Iceland seems to be responsible. The Massachusetts record has yet to be accepted.

20 YEARS AGO

November–December 1999



There were three reports of **Greater White-fronted Geese** from Turners Falls, Great Barrington and Hamilton. A **Yellow Rail** was flushed by a tractor mowing a wet meadow in the Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary in Marshfield on November 1. A count of 400 Purple Sandpipers in Boston Harbor on December 4 was exceptional. It was a good winter for Barred Owls, including a cooperative bird in the Boston Public Garden. The owl roost at Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary provided birders with seven Long-ears and two Short-ears that could be seen hunting over the fields each night. This was the second biggest year for Northern Shrikes, with at least 73 reported during the period. Rarities included a **Northern Wheatear** in Northampton, a **MacGillivray's Warbler** from the Fenway Gardens, and a **Henslow's Sparrow** at Great Meadows on December 31. A **Boreal Chickadee** continued at a feeder in West Newbury throughout the period.

Best sighting: **Spotted Towhee** in North Hadley from December 29. This was the first record since the species was split from Rufous-sided Towhee in 1995.

40 YEARS AGO

November–December 1979



Plum Island hosted a Western Grebe from November 22, which allowed some observers to approach within 15 feet. A moribund **Fulvous Whistling-Duck**, found on Nantucket on November 28, was the first record for the island. A pair was seen in Uxbridge, December 8–10. An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was in the Cambridge–Belmont area for the first nine days of December. An adult no-tailed **Green-tailed Towhee** continued in South Peabody until November 4 and another one (this one with a tail) was found in East Orleans on December 16. A **Brewer's Blackbird** was found at Corn Hill, Truro on November 4 and one or two were on Martha's Vineyard at the end of December. A female **Western Tanager** was found at Duxbury on November 18.

Best event: an unprecedented warm patch between November 23–28 with temperatures 17 degrees above normal and sustained south to southwest winds produced two state and New England firsts. An immature female **Black-chinned Hummingbird** visited a Cohasset greenhouse from November 25–December 10. Its demise allowed for positive postmortem identification and represented the second record for the northeast after a bird near Antigonish, Nova Scotia, May 30, 1964. A **Lucy's Warbler** was found at Clark's Pond on Great Neck, Ipswich on December 1. At the time, the only record "east" of their southwest breeding range, was in Louisiana, December 30, 1959. 🐦

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taxonomic order is based on AOS checklist, Seventh edition, 60th Supplement, as published in *Auk* 136: ukz042 (2019) (see <<http://checklist.aou.org/>>).

Locations		PI	Plum Island
AA	Arnold Arboretum, Boston	Pk	Park
ABC	Allen Bird Club	Pont.	Pontoosuc Lake, Lanesboro
AP	Andrews Point, Rockport	POP	Point of Pines, Revere
APd	Allens Pond, S. Dartmouth	PR	Pinnacle Rock, Malden
AthBC	Athol Bird Club	P'town	Provincetown
B.	Beach	R.	River
Barre FD	Barre Falls Dam	Res.	Reservoir
BBC	Brookline Bird Club	RKG	Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston
BFWMA	Bolton Flats WMA, Bolton & Lancaster	RP	Race Point, Provincetown
BHI	Boston Harbor Islands	SB	South Beach, Chatham
BI	Belle Isle, E. Boston	SF	State Forest
BMB	Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester	SN	Sandy Neck, Barnstable
BNC	Boston Nature Center, Mattapan	SP	State Park
BR	Bass Rocks, Gloucester	SRV	Sudbury River Valley
BRI Co. seas	Bristol County, offshore	SSBC	South Shore Bird Club
Cambr.	Cambridge	TASL	Take A Second Look, Boston Harbor Census
CB	Crane Beach, Ipswich	WBWS	Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary
CCBC	Cape Cod Bird Club	WE	World's End, Hingham
CGB	Coast Guard Beach, Eastham	WMA	Wildlife Management Area
Co.	County	WMWS	Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary
Corp. B.	Corporation Beach, Dennis	Wompatuck SP	Hingham, Cohasset, Scituate, Norwell
CP	Crooked Pond, Boxford	Worc.	Worcester
Cumb. Farms	Cumberland Farms, Middleboro	WSF	Willowdale State Forest, Ipswich
DWFS	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary	WWMA	Westborough WMA, Westborough
DM	Dunback Meadow	Other Abbreviations	
DWMA	Delaney WMA, Stow, Bolton, Harvard	*	first state record (pending MARC review)
DWWS	Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary	!	subject to MARC review
EP	Eastern Point, Gloucester	ad	adult
FE	First Encounter Beach, Eastham	au	audio recorded
FH	Fort Hill, Eastham	b	banded
FP	Fresh Pond, Cambridge	br	breeding
FPk	Franklin Park, Boston	cy	cycle (3cy = 3rd cycle)
G#	Gate #, Quabbin Res.	d	dead
GMNWR	Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge	dk	dark (morph)
H.	Harbor	f	female
HCB	Herring Cove Beach, Provincetown	fl	fledgling
HP	Horn Pond, Woburn	h	heard
HPt	Halibut Point, Rockport	imm	immature
HRWMA	High Ridge WMA, Gardner	inj	injured
I.	Island	juv	juvenile
IBA	Important Bird Area	lt	light (morph)
IRWS	Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary	m	male
L.	Ledge	MARC	Massachusetts Avian Records Committee
MAS	Mass Audubon	max	maximum
MBO	Bird Observatory, Manomet	migr	migrating
MBWMA	Martin Burns WMA, Newbury	n	nesting
McW	McLaughlin Woods	nfc	nocturnal flight call
MI	Morris Island	ph	photographed
MNWS	Marblehead Neck Wildlife Sanctuary	pl	plumage
MP	Millennium Park, W. Roxbury	pr	pair
MSSF	Myles Standish State Forest, Plymouth	r	rescued
MtA	Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambr.	S.	summer (1S = first summer)
MV	Martha's Vineyard	subad	subadult
NAC	Nine Acre Corner, Concord	v.o.	various observers
Nbpt	Newburyport	W	winter (2W = second winter)
ONWR	Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge	yg	young
Pd	Pond	#	additional observers
PG	Public Garden, Boston		

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO *BIRD OBSERVER*

Sightings for any given month should be reported to *Bird Observer* by the eighth of the following month. Reports should include: name and phone number of observer, name of species, date of sighting, location, number of birds, other observer(s), and information on age, sex, and morph (where relevant). Reports can be emailed to sightings@birdobserver.org or submitted online at <<http://www.birdobserver.org/Contact-Us/Submit-Sightings>>, or sent by mail to Bird Sightings, Robert H. Stymeist, 36 Lewis Avenue, Arlington MA 02474-3206.

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

Snowy Egret

The Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) in its elegant breeding plumage is as bright and spectacular as its early human history is dark and unsettling. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, Snowy Egrets were relentlessly hunted during breeding season for their nuptial plumes to decorate ladies' hats. The Snowy Egret was pushed to the brink of extinction. The passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 ended the slaughter of the plume trade in the United States but it continued in South America for some time. The recovery of the species has been remarkable. In Massachusetts, it was a rare vagrant until the 1950s when Snowy Egrets first nested, and they have gradually increased in numbers since then.

The Snowy Egret is a medium-sized heron with white plumage. Breeding adults have black bills and legs and bright yellow feet and lores. Nonbreeding birds have greenish yellow feet, the color extending up the back of the legs, and have gray in the bill. During breeding season, adults have long, elegant, plumes on their breast, back, and crown that are the basis for the spectacular nuptial displays that characterize the species, and at the height of the breeding season, the yellow of the lores and feet turn orangish to bright red. Immature Little Blue Herons also have white plumage but have gray lores, a gray bill tipped with black, and lack the yellow slippers. Two poorly defined subspecies are generally recognized. *E. t. thula* is found in eastern North America, Central, and South America; *E. t. brewsteri*, with a larger bill, is restricted to western North America. Individual variations in all populations make regional comparisons difficult.

Some Snowy Egret breeding populations are migratory, for example, in the East along the coast from Maine to Maryland. Year-round populations are found along the coast from Maryland south through Florida and the Caribbean Islands, west along the Gulf Coast to Texas, on both coasts of Mexico, and Central America. Migratory breeding populations also occur in scattered small areas across the United States with several located in the Great Lakes region. Other such populations occur in larger areas across East Texas and Oklahoma, east to Georgia, and in the west across Nevada and into several other western states. Several populations of year-round breeders also occur in California. Most wintering birds occur along the coast of California and in patches throughout Mexico and Central America. In late summer after breeding, Snowy Egrets may disperse widely; they have been recorded throughout the United States and southern Canada. In Massachusetts, the Snowy Egret is considered a locally common breeder and a common to occasionally abundant migrant. It can also be a common summer visitor. Snowy Egrets arrive in Massachusetts from late March to May, with numbers peaking in late August and early September. In the fall, they leave by November.

Snowy Egrets are probably seasonally monogamous. Pair formation occurs at the nest site where males perform a variety of nuptial displays that often showcase their remarkable plumes. The most prominent is the stretch display with bill pointed skyward

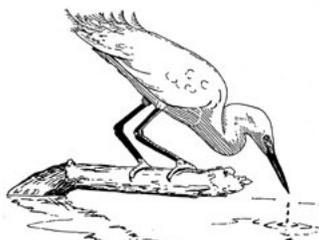
and the body pumped up and down while uttering a *wah-wah-wah* call. Aerial displays include a version of the stretch display, and circle and tumbling flights. One bird may jump over the other. Males also give a gurgling call. Aggressive displays include crest-raising accompanied by rasping calls. Attacks may be made with body held forward and plumes fully erected.

Snowy Egrets breed in mixed species colonies, often on isolated offshore islands near their estuarine tidal foraging areas. They frequently utilize dredge-spoil islands. Away from the coast, they may nest on islands in freshwater lakes, marshes, swamps, and along rivers. Breeding colonies in Massachusetts are largely on offshore islands. Most nests are on large tree branches six feet or more from the ground, but also occur in shrubs and occasionally on the ground. Females do most of the nest building, often with material brought in by the male. The nest is composed mostly of sticks and twigs and is lined with grass and moss, typically with a shallow depression. Both parents incubate the 3–5 greenish blue eggs for the 22–24 days until hatching. At hatching, chicks are covered with down but are helpless. Both parents incubate the chicks for about 10 days until the chicks can leave the nest. Both parents feed the nestlings, initially regurgitating well-digested food onto the floor of the nest and later directly into the chick's bill. The chicks often disperse at about age two weeks and remain in or near the colony for up to two months.

Snowy Egrets often forage in mixed-species flocks in salt marshes and tidal pools, channels, and flats and in the South among mangroves. They are more versatile feeders than any other North American heron with a broad spectrum of foraging behaviors that include disturbing and chasing, standing, walking slowly or quickly, running, hopping, foot-stirring, and in flight, hovering and dipping. They also leapfrog feed, where birds at the rear of the foraging flock fly to the front. Many of their foraging behaviors take advantage of their bright yellow feet, which apparently act as lures to prey. Snowy Egrets feed mostly on small fish and crustaceans but take a wide variety of prey, including earthworms, insects, frogs, snakes, and crabs.

Nesting Snowy Egrets experience nest predation by raccoons, snakes, owls, and crows. Islands have become the favored location for breeding colonies in Massachusetts due to limited access by mammalian predators. Nestlings are also at risk from pesticides and storms, and other heron species may occasionally lay their eggs in Snowy Egret nests. Individual breeding colonies are subject to fluctuations in breeding success, but the dramatic population recovery in the twentieth century and the shift to predominantly island breeding suggests that the Snowy Egret is adaptable and likely secure. 

William E. Davis, Jr.



SNOWY EGRET BY WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR

AT A GLANCE

February 2020



DAVID M. LARSON

The mystery species in this issue is more challenging than some other recent selections, and readers may find it advantageous to view the mystery photograph in color on the *Bird Observer* website. Regardless of how the image is viewed, however, several helpful aspects of the mystery bird are obvious. First, as indicated by its size compared to the oak flowers around it, the mystery species is a small bird, and the presence of these tree flowers indicates that the picture was likely taken in May. The bird appears to be singing, suggesting that it is a male, and it is possibly a warbler given its slim pointed bill and overall proportions, including a relatively short tail.

In the black-and-white image of the bird, its underparts are devoid of streaks, and in the online color version there's a slight blush of yellowish on the throat and upper breast. The color image also shows that the bird has a light gray cap and what appear to be whitish eye-arcs, a similarly colored supercilium, and the suggestion of a dark stripe through the eye. These features, combined with the bird's short tail and white undertail coverts, are most obvious in the color photo.

Although the back and wings are not visible in the picture, the collective impression is of a small, sharp-billed warbler with a plain throat, unstreaked underparts, a short tail, a gray cap contrasting with white eye-arcs, a pale supercilium, and a dark eye line. There are few eastern warblers with the combination of somewhat bland characteristics—especially in spring breeding plumage—shown by the mystery bird. Orange-crowned Warbler might be a possibility, but that species is generally drabber yellow below and typically has at least a hint of blurry olive streaks on the underparts and yellowish undertail coverts. Warbling and Philadelphia vireos are also similar in

appearance to the mystery bird, but both vireos would possess a thicker bill with a tiny hook at the tip. In addition, a Warbling Vireo would have a plainer face without the suggestion of a gray cap, white eye-arcs, or dark eye line, and a Philadelphia Vireo would typically exhibit considerably more yellow on the throat and upper breast, have a less gray crown, show no suggestion of eye-arcs, and would generally show prominent dark lores. Having eliminated other possibilities, there is only one eastern warbler species that shares the features shown by the mystery bird—the Tennessee Warbler (*Leiothlypis peregrina*).

In Massachusetts, the Tennessee Warbler is an uncommon, canopy-loving warbler that, in May, is more often heard than well observed. In fall it is an inconspicuous migrant most frequently detected from mid-September to early October. Not unlike several other Canadian Zone nesting warblers, this species is more common in some years than others depending upon the abundance of spruce bud worms in the boreal forests where it nests. David Larson photographed this Tennessee Warbler in breeding plumage at the Parker River NWR on Plum Island, Massachusetts, on May 18, 2018. 🐦

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. 🐦



BAY-BREASTED WARBLER BY SANDY SELESKY

AT A GLANCE



DAVID CLAPP

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

MORE HOT BIRDS



Massachusetts harbored at least four **Mew Gulls** this winter. A banded bird of the European subspecies and an unbanded one of the Asian subspecies showed up at their usual winter haunts in southeastern Essex County. Jan Smith and Lynn Ferrareso spotted the first one January 18 at Lynn Beach, and Andy Sanford noticed both of them together January 31 at King's Beach. One or the other continued through February 23, including one appearance out in Nahant. In the meantime, Joel and Matthew Eckerson found another European "Common" Gull on January 20 at Gooseberry Neck, and Matthew Sweet picked up a Mew of uncertain subspecies at Lake Massapoag on February 3. Neil Dowling took the photo of the Common Gull above.

**BIRD OBSERVER (USPS 369-850)
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**PERIODICALS
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