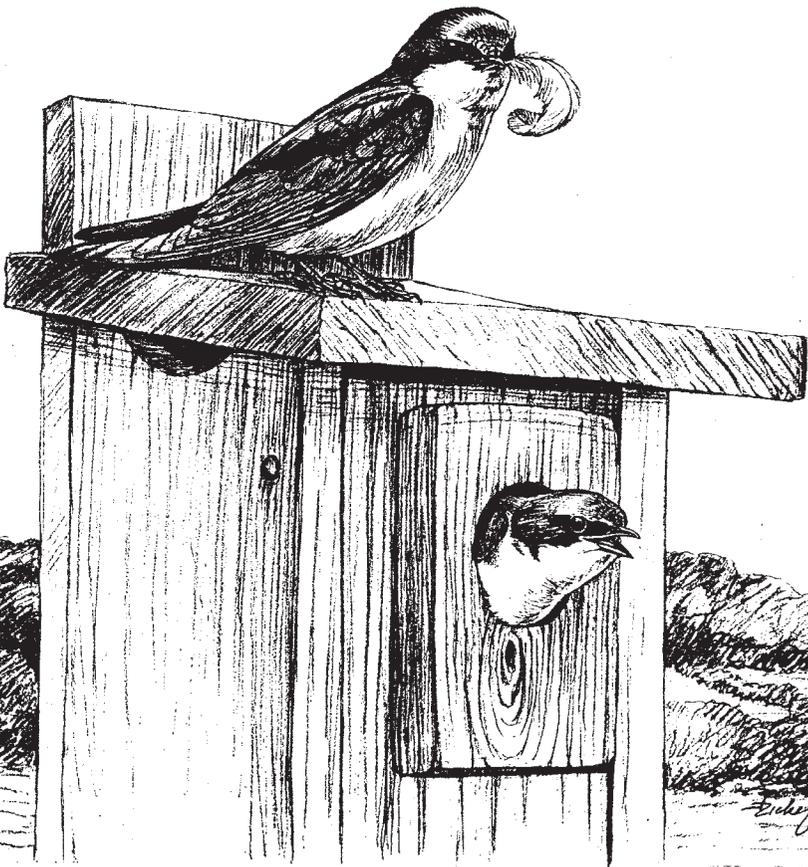


Bird Observer

VOLUME 32, NUMBER 2

APRIL 2004

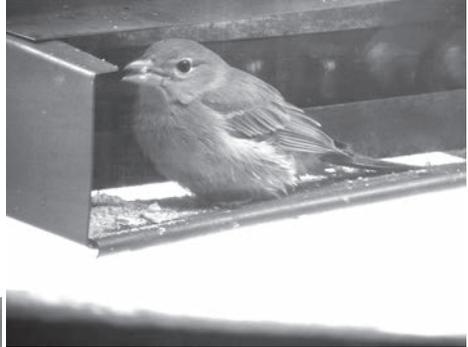


HOT BIRDS



Quick, which tanager is the most likely in New England in winter? This **Western Tanager** (left) was visiting a feeding station in Brewster when Phil Brown took this portrait on January 19, 2004.

Okay, what is the second most likely tanager? This **Summer Tanager** (right) was well and truly lost in Stow in January. On January 12, the bird's congenial host, Bob Stewart, took this photograph through his window.



Another, more persistent winter visitor has been this **Varied Thrush** (left) in Belchertown. It has been delighting hundreds while hanging around in a parking lot at Quabbin Park. Phil Brown took this stunning photo on January 25, but the bird stayed throughout the winter.

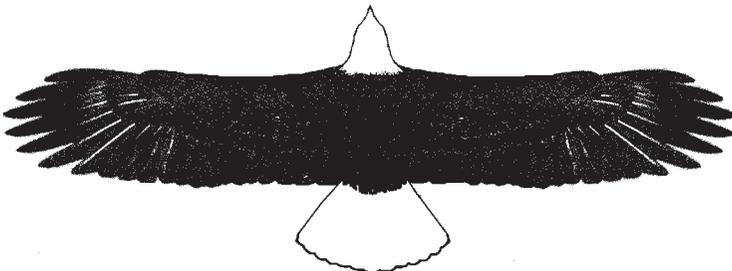
And yet another adult male **Varied Thrush** (right) showed up, this time at a feeding station on Nantucket. This photograph by Edie Ray was taken on January 30.



Aside from thrushes and tanagers, this was the winter of the **Bohemian Waxwings!** Flocks of these handsome birds ravaged New England fruit crops throughout the region. The bird at the left was one of a flock of merely 62. Many birders found flocks in the hundreds. Photograph by Blair Nikula, taken in Truro on January 25.

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BALD EAGLE BY GEORGE C. WEST



Bird Observer

A bimonthly journal — to enhance understanding, observation, and enjoyment of birds
VOL. 32, NO. 2 APRIL 2004

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CHANGES OF ADDRESS and subscription inquiries should be sent to: Bird Observer Subscriptions, P.O. Box 236, Arlington, MA 02476-0003, or e-mail to John Marsh at <anmarsh@jocama.com>.

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

MATERIAL FOR PUBLICATION: BIRD OBSERVER welcomes submissions of original articles, photographs, art work, field notes, and field studies. Please send submissions to the Managing Editor: Carolyn Marsh, 16 Denton Rd., Wellesley, MA, 02482-6405; E-mail: <anmarsh@jocama.com>. If possible, please include a computer disk (Microsoft Word, txt, or rtf formats), or e-mail to the Editor as an attached file. Please do not embed graphics in word processing documents. Include author's or artist's name, address, and telephone number and information from which a brief biography can be prepared.

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BIRD OBSERVER (USPS 369-850) is published bimonthly, COPYRIGHT © 2004 by Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts, Inc., 462 Trapelo Road, Belmont, MA 02478, a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation under section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Gifts to Bird Observer will be greatly appreciated and are tax deductible. ISSN: 0893-463

Birding the Erwin S. Wilder Wildlife Management Area, Taunton

Jim Sweeney



The Erwin S. Wilder Wildlife Management Area is a 465-acre tract of land with a variety of interesting habitats. Oak, maple, and white pine trees are common in the upland areas. There is also a red maple swamp, surrounded by many fields, situated at the edge of an outwash plain. The area is located primarily in the northern section of the city of Taunton, but is also partly in the town of Norton. The Wilder WMA abuts the much larger Hockomock WMA to the east, is bounded by the Snake River to the south, and lies only a short distance from Winnecunnet Pond (in Norton) to the west.

The best time of year to bird Wilder is spring and early summer, though birding at any time of the year can be productive. The mosquitoes can be an issue in summer, so a generous application of insect repellent is strongly advised. Birding between mid-October and late December is not recommended since the hunting pressure in this area can be extreme. Be advised that the Wilder WMA is open to hunting year-round (depending on what is in season) with the exception of Sundays.

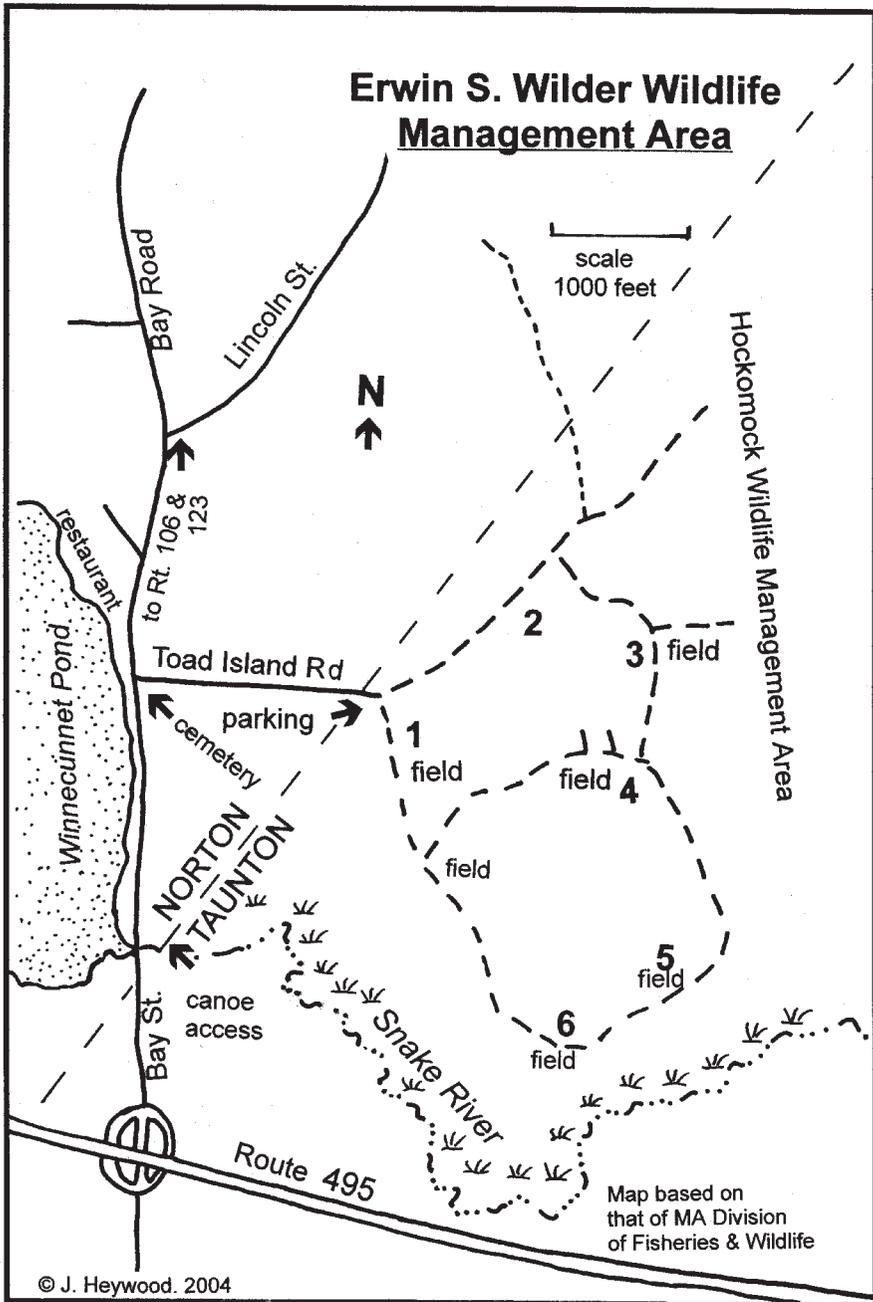
Birders should plan to spend at least several hours at this location. A casual stroll along the main trail can yield many sightings and could easily occupy half a day of birding. In addition to birds, the site has produced an impressive list of odonate sightings, and in mid-summer it is not unusual to record over fifteen species of butterflies. Snapping turtles and black racers are frequently sighted in late spring, and deer and coyotes are occasionally observed.

Directions

From Route I-495 in Taunton, take Exit 9 (Bay Street/Taunton). Travel north on Bay Street to the Taunton/Norton border. Bay Street becomes Bay Road in Norton. Continue about 0.75 of a mile up Bay Road, and look for Toad Island Road on the right. There is a small cemetery just before Toad Island Road. Winnecunnet Pond is on the left. Follow Toad Island Road to the end, and look for the gate and signage for Erwin S. Wilder WMA. If the gate is open, continue on the dirt road a short distance to the main parking lot. The parking area falls just outside the Norton town boundary and is located in Taunton. If the gate is closed, park on the right side of the road, and walk in. Be sure to leave enough room for the gate to be opened and closed.

A Loop Route on the Trails

The best place to start birding is from the parking area. About ninety acres of open fields are under cooperative agreement with a local farmer who grows corn and hay. In years when corn is planted in the field opposite the parking area, there can be large concentrations of Red-winged Blackbirds and, occasionally, Rusty Blackbirds. In January 2002, 167 Rusty Blackbirds were observed in the vicinity of the parking lot. This is also a great place to see the courtship displays of American Woodcock in



mid-March. Woodcock can be found in all the fields throughout the area, but it is not unusual to hear, and sometimes see, up to six birds in this main field (#1 on map).

From the parking lot, walk the left-hand trail that runs northeast. The wooded margin to the left of the trail is a good place to find Indigo Buntings, Carolina Wrens, and Eastern Towhees in summer, and Dark-eyed Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, and Golden-crowned Kinglets in winter. Looking south from the trail, there is a good chance of observing a Northern Harrier (fall) or a Red-shouldered Hawk. American Kestrels are frequently observed in early spring. Moreover, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks can be seen around this field during migration.

At the northeast corner of the main field, the trail enters a red maple swamp. The trail's edge is thick with sweet pepperbush and several species of ferns. Follow the trail to the next field (#2), and listen for Scarlet Tanager, Wood Thrush, Baltimore Oriole, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. In addition, House Wrens, Red-eyed Vireos, and Yellow Warblers are reliable at this location. In the fall the fields in the immediate area are a good place to look for Palm Warbler, Swamp Sparrow, Field Sparrow, and Purple Finch. In spring a variety of warblers can be found in the black locust trees nearby. In June 1998 a singing Cerulean Warbler was observed in the area during a South Shore Bird Club breeding-bird survey.

Following the next trail to the right (southeast) will lead to another field (#3). Indigo Buntings, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Great Crested Flycatchers, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Blue-winged Warblers, and Chipping Sparrows are regular here. Moreover, the edges of this field are a good place to search for migrant sparrows. In winter check the thickets for Winter Wrens. Brown Creepers can be found in the wooded edges as well. A short distance south of the field, the trail enters pine-oak forest. Pine Warblers, Ovenbirds, and Veeries can be heard, and usually seen, on the hottest days of summer. To the right of the trail are many tangles that may produce a variety of warblers, thrushes, and vireos during the spring and fall migrations. Check the leaf litter in this area for scraping towhees. A closer look in early spring might yield a Fox Sparrow.

Follow the trail a short distance to yet another field (#4). Taking a right at this location will lead west to another part of the red maple swamp, and also offers a shorter loop back to the entrance if your time is short. Red-shouldered Hawks probably breed in the immediate area. Joe-pye weed and jewelweed mark the entrance to the cool and shady swamp. Stop here to look for Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. By bearing left and continuing south, you will see the habitat change to pine-oak woodland again. However, it is not long before the trail enters another series of fields (#5). These fields are particularly good for observing butterflies and odonates. By carefully birding the edges, you have a good chance of seeing Red-eyed Vireos, Scarlet Tanagers, American Redstarts, Wood Thrushes, and Eastern Phoebes. American Redstarts are most likely breeding at this location, as are many of the species mentioned in this article. Also in this area are several smaller hunting trails that lead to a cattail marsh near the Snake River. The trails are rather primitive, but a walk to the cattails may produce a sighting of a rail, a Marsh Wren, or a Great Blue Heron.

If you follow the main trail to the southwest, the habitat changes quickly from pine-oak woods back to a much smaller field (#6). Stop here and listen for Eastern Wood-Pewee. Patient searching may be rewarded with a view of this diminutive flycatcher. Yellow-throated Vireos have been observed in this area and at the edges of the south end of the main field (#1, which you will soon reach). According to Veit and Petersen (1993), the Yellow-throated Vireo is local in its distribution, being most numerous in the Connecticut River Valley and western Berkshire County. However, there are scattered pairs breeding in eastern Massachusetts. The Yellow-throated Vireo was formerly a common summer resident at lower altitudes south to the edge of the coastal plain at Taunton and Rehoboth. After 1910, this species decreased rapidly eastward, becoming rare and local (Griscom and Snyder 1955). The presence of two Yellow-throated Vireos in June 2003 suggests possible breeding at Wilder WMA.

At the western edge of this small field, look for Cedar Waxwings, Hairy Woodpeckers, Gray Catbirds, and Common Yellowthroats. The southern end of the red maple swamp abuts the western edge of this field. Listen for the “spray bottle” call of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at the entrance to the swamp. It is likely that Blue-gray Gnatcatchers have been breeding in this area for the past few years. Often, in early spring and after heavy rains, the trail in this area is flooded. Waterproof boots are highly recommended when birding at this time of year.

On the other side of the swamp, the trail enters the south end of the main field (#1). In the fall the edges of the field produce many Savannah and Song sparrows. Large numbers of Tree Swallows congregate here in late summer. Be sure to check this area for Killdeer in early spring. It is not uncommon to observe several birds flying around the south end of the field in April. In fall and winter it is best to bird the edge of the field closest to the Snake River. Slowly bird the edge as you continue north. Look for American Tree (winter), Savannah, White-throated, Field, and Lincoln’s sparrows in the weedy patches at the edge of the field. Swamp Sparrows are particularly numerous in the lower part of the main field closest to the Snake River. In addition, migrant warblers are frequently encountered in this area. Blackpoll, Black-throated Blue, Palm, and Yellow-rumped warblers can be observed here on a crisp October morning following the passage of a cold front.

Following the field edge north, look for a cluster of trees on a gentle rise. This location often yields Eastern Bluebirds in winter. Frequently, up to fifteen birds can be observed perched in these isolated trees. Other birds to expect here include Northern Flicker, Warbling Vireo, Swamp Sparrow (fall), and Eastern Kingbird. From the top of the rise, the parking lot is visible. Whether you walk the trail or the field’s edges, the trip back to the lot is likely to produce sightings of Barn Swallows, Chimney Swifts, Red-tailed Hawks, and Northern Mockingbirds. Savannah Sparrows can be easily flushed by walking through the field. An Eastern Screech-Owl can sometimes be heard calling after dark from the vicinity of the swamp just before the entrance to Wilder WMA. Listen for it from the parking lot.

The main trail around Erwin S. Wilder WMA is a leisurely walk through fields, swamp, and pine-oak habitats. However, it should be noted that the entire area is

replete with subsidiary hunting trails. Many of these trails are not well maintained, but provide access to the vast Hockomock WMA. Hockomock contains numerous fragmented parcels and covers 4389 acres. The wetland vegetation is extremely variable, with marsh grasses and cattails dominating some areas. In other areas are red maple, Atlantic white cedar, and shrub-swamp habitats. Most of the acreage in Hockomock is vegetated wetland, but there are some areas of dry ground throughout the site. There are several locations that provide easy access to the Hockomock WMA. These areas will be the subject of a future where-to-go article in *Bird Observer*.

The Snake River

A canoe trip along the Snake River in fall can be a very productive birding experience. The foliage at this time of year can be spectacular. There is one caveat, however. The first mile of the Snake River is, at times, seemingly impenetrable. The river is very narrow and shallow in some areas, but is surrounded by extensive marshland. Furthermore, the edges of the river are crowded with dense tangles and growth. This can make for a rather strenuous canoe trip. However, the birding can be very rewarding. Presumably, the trip would be easier in spring when the water level is higher and singing birds are conspicuous. However, the author's canoeing experience on the Snake River is limited to the fall season, so an account of the birds found at other times of the year will require further investigation. There is little question that riparian species like Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Eastern Kingbirds, and Baltimore Orioles would be found along this corridor in the spring.

There is canoe access on Bay Road just over the Taunton/Norton border. Look for a small lot on the right side of the road just past the bridge. There are several places to take the canoe out of the water in the first two miles. The Snake River eventually flows into Lake Sabbatia in Taunton. Lake Sabbatia can be productive for migrant waterfowl in fall. Look for Ring-necked Ducks, Greater Scaup, Hooded Mergansers, and Common Mergansers. Birds to expect on the Snake River in October include Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher, Wood Duck, Swamp Sparrow, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. At several locations, there are usually some mud flats containing shorebirds. Look for Greater Yellowlegs, and Pectoral and Solitary sandpipers in these areas. 

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Jim Sweeney, an avid birder since 1980, has birded extensively in New England, the mid-Atlantic states, and Arizona. He lives in Providence, Rhode Island; this is his second article for Bird Observer.

Hoary Redpolls in New Hampshire in December 2003 and January 2004

James P. Smith, Petro Pynnönen, and Susannah B. Lerman

Background

The late fall of 2003 produced a memorable invasion of Common Redpolls (*Carduelis flammea*) throughout the New England states. Common Redpolls first appeared in the area of Keene, New Hampshire, on December 7 (seven individuals) and quickly built up to fifty-five birds by December 10. Variable numbers were present daily throughout to late December and well into January 2004. Several Hoary Redpolls (*Carduelis hornemanni*) were detected among these birds during the Keene Christmas bird count on December 14. The following week produced further single Hoary Redpolls in scattered locations around Keene. Additionally, a site very close to Keene town center held as many as four birds on December 19 and 20, with at least six individuals present on December 23. Two to five were then reported regularly until at least January 19, 2004. These birds gave excellent and prolonged views and allowed many visiting birders the chance to catch up with this beautiful arctic finch for the first time. This site provided a perfect opportunity to study the identification of Hoary Redpolls at length in direct comparison with larger numbers of Common Redpolls.

Taxonomy

Redpolls are small, delightful northern finches with nomadic tendencies. During periodic winter invasions, they can be found at more southerly latitudes. The presence of Hoary Redpolls is of major interest to many birders during these invasions, but shouldn't be totally unexpected (Kaufman 1996). The two species are very closely related and have been the subject of much taxonomic research and discussion, past and present. Some authors have disputed the claim that the two taxa represent distinct species, preferring to recognize them as distinct forms within one species (Troy 1985).

However, the current and widely held taxonomic view recognizes two distinct species: Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*), which occurs in four forms, and Hoary or Arctic Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*), which occurs in two forms.

The four forms of Common Redpoll and geographical occurrences are as follows:

1. *Carduelis flammea flammea*, North America, Northern Europe, and Northern Asia.
2. *Carduelis flammea rostrata*, Eastern Baffin Island, Greenland.
3. *Carduelis flammea islandica*, Iceland.
4. *Carduelis flammea cabaret*, Northwest Europe, and the Swiss Alps.

The two forms of Hoary or Arctic Redpoll and geographical occurrences are as follows:

1. *Carduelis hornemanni hornemanni*. Canadian High Arctic and Northern Greenland.
2. *Carduelis hornemanni exilipes*. Distributed broadly across the tundra of North America, Asia, and Northern Europe.

The Keene Redpolls

The redpolls in the Keene area in December 2003 appeared to be entirely composed of *C.f. flammea* and *C.h. exilipes*, as might have been expected in southwest New Hampshire. Two other potential forms do occur in North America, though *C.h. hornemanni* and *C.f. rostrata* are usually shorter distance migrants and considered to be very rare in the eastern United States.

The variability within Common Redpoll plumages (all forms, including *flammea*) is well known, while a better understanding of the plumages of the southern form of Hoary Redpoll (*C.h. exilipes*) has led to a significant increase in records from a number of European countries, especially the United Kingdom, with almost 800 records to date (Rogers 2000). These included major influxes in the winters of 1984/85 and 1995/96, which renewed interest in (and advanced) the standard field identification criteria of *exilipes* and *flammea* (Millington 1996).

Identification tips

It must be stressed that field identification between *flammea* and *exilipes* is far from easy. Moreover, many published texts refer to classic examples of both forms and allude to the variability within *exilipes*, which can actually be quite heavily streaked and very close to *flammea*. Some examples are much more obvious than others in both species, and therefore prolonged views with a telescope are usually required to establish identification in the field. However, in many cases identification is quite possible using a combination of criteria rather than relying on one specific field character. Indeed, during an examination of skins from northern Fenno-Scandia, Lars Svensson (1992) found that only two percent were especially difficult to assign to either form.

1) Ageing

Determining the age of redpolls in the field can be extremely difficult. Only the males of both taxa, upon completing the first molt, become somewhat obvious. Both acquire variable amounts of pink (Hoary) or red (Common) wash on the breast, upper flanks, and lower rump. These features can be partly concealed by pale feather tips when fresh but become brighter with wear. The overall appearance of both species becomes darker and more streaked in spring and summer. Therefore, the two taxa are most easily separated in fall and winter.

Adult males of both taxa usually have lighter flank streaking and less streaking on the rump and undertail coverts than females or first-year birds. Variability within the age and sex classes would render accurate ageing of adult females and first-years problematic in the field and should only be attempted with extreme caution. Accurate ageing also requires extra care even when the bird is in the hand.

2) Structure

Exilipes is usually slightly larger than *flammea*, and often looks “bullnecked,” especially when feeding on the ground with *flammea*. The nape is broad with little definition between head and mantle, giving a neckless appearance, whereas *flammea* often looks more elegant with a narrower nape. This, combined with the overall

fluffier impression, can contribute to the often squat and chunky impression of *exilipes*.

The bill of *exilipes* is usually shorter and actually a different shape from that of *flammea*, being more conical with a straight culmen. *Flammea* often looks longer-billed with a more obviously curved culmen. While there may be overlap in actual bill length, the differences in shape are consistent, and more often than not, *exilipes* appears to have a tiny bill. This is often emphasized in fresh plumage when longer, denser feathers cloak the bill base and nostrils.

3) Plumage

Exilipes is certainly paler overall than *flammea*, though pale, frosty-looking *flammea* can also occur. These pale *flammea* are probably from the northern extreme of their range, where overlap occurs with *exilipes* and separation can be extremely difficult. However, in *exilipes*, the ground color of the mantle and head is grayish-white or white, rather than brownish-white in *flammea*. Both taxa show a white-grounded stripe or two in the center of the mantle, usually more obvious in *exilipes*.

In addition, the underparts are cleaner white in *exilipes*, especially on the undertail coverts and flanks, while the rump is often crisp white with little or no streaking. Some *flammea* can be white-rumped, though the pure white area is always narrow and not as strikingly white as *exilipes*. Indeed, a freshly plumaged *exilipes* usually shows about two centimeters of broad, white, unstreaked rump, though some first-years may show less.

Only adult male *flammea* will show a largely unstreaked rump similar to *exilipes*, but it is typically reddish, not white. On average, *exilipes* shows broader, whiter tips and fringes to the remiges and retrices than the brownish-white of *flammea*. Furthermore, the bases of the retrices show more white in *exilipes* and, in some adults, the white inner edge can be as extensive as half of the feather's inner edge.

The auricular of *exilipes* is often poorly defined or sometimes absent. Many *exilipes* show a distinctive yellow-ochre wash about the face, sometimes extending onto the upper breast but always contrasting with the clean white ground color of the rest of the underparts. All of these features combined give *exilipes* a distinctive, "hoarfrosted" appearance that will often lift them straight out of a flock of *flammea*, even with the naked eye.

4) Finer points

The undertail covert pattern of both species can be extremely useful in identification, especially when a feeding flock is high above the observer. *Exilipes* usually shows very clean undertail coverts often limited to a fine, hair-like streak on the longest undertail coverts. Sometimes several smaller, finer streaks can be seen with a telescope, though generally speaking, *exilipes* will only show 0-3 fine streaks on the undertail coverts (Pyle 1997). This is also age and sex related, since adults, especially males, usually have one or no streaks on the undertail coverts. Close examination of the Keene birds, both in the field and from images, revealed that all

the *exilipes* present showed at least one fine streak on the undertail coverts, though they sometimes gave the impression of being completely unstreaked.

Flammea, on the other hand, is often boldly streaked on the undertail coverts, the longest covert being the most broadly and heavily marked. While a few adult male *flammea* might show lightly marked undertail coverts, it is highly unlikely that the pattern of *exilipes* would approach the density of streaking shown by most *flammea*. This feature is well illustrated in Pyle (1997) and Svensson et al. (1999).

Experienced observers often talk about the difference in facial “jizz” between the two taxa. This is true to an extent, and *exilipes* does have a distinctive facial pattern created by a number of factors. First of all, the bill is small and conical, and often looks as though it has been “pushed-in” to the face, emphasized by the fluffy nasal feathering at the base of the bill. There is often less black around the bill of *exilipes*, especially above the upper mandible and above the eye, giving way to more white on the forehead and supercilium. The red spot on the forehead often looks smaller, highlighted by the whitish ground color of the crown, which has finer streaking. The auriculars are usually less well-defined than *flammea*. These features will often allow an experienced observer to identify *exilipes* at a glance in the field, or from photos.

Summary

As many as ten individual Hoary Redpolls of the form *C.h.exilipes* were identified and photographed at four different sites in the Keene area of southwest New Hampshire from December 14 to 31, 2003.

Reports of Hoary Redpolls from the Keene area continued well into late January 2004, by which time numerous reports were also received from several locations in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. The images on pages 90 and 91 show just a few of the individuals in comparison with Common Redpolls, which represented the majority of the redpoll influx into the Keene area. An estimated 230 redpolls were present at ten sites during December 2003. 

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Editor's Note: The interested reader can find additional information on this tricky identification issue in the following article: Czaplak, D. 1995. *Identifying Common and Hoary Redpolls in Winter*. *Birding* 27 (6): 447.

Photographs of the Keene Redpolls



Above left. Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemenni exilipes*). A broad band of white is visible across the rump, even on darker individuals. Also note the broad whitish fringes on the uppertail coverts and the thin streaking on the lower flanks. James P. Smith, December 2003.



Above right. Male Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemenni exilipes*). Note the clarity of the white underparts, minimal flank streaking, and virtually unmarked undertail coverts. Why male? The color image shows a light pink wash on the upper breast, ruling out female and first-winter *exilipes*. Compare the flank streaking with the much darker Common Redpoll at the rear. James P. Smith, December 2003.



Above left. Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemenni exilipes*). A classic bird showing off its very best features. Almost spherical at times, such birds give rise to the oft-quoted “flying snowball” appearance. Especially noteworthy are the uppertail coverts (broadly fringed white) and the way that the white of the upper rump extends well into the lower back and deep into the center of the mantle. James P. Smith, December 2003.



Above right. Male Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea flammea*). An exceptionally pale bird for *flammea*, especially on the undertail coverts and about the face, and therefore a pitfall for the unwary. However, only male Common Redpoll can show such an obvious red upper breast in midwinter. The breast of a male Hoary would at best, be very faintly washed pink (not red) in late December, making the identification of this fine male straightforward. James P. Smith, December 2003.



Above left. Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea flammea*). A typical individual with overall brownish cast, heavily streaked flanks, and extensively streaked undertail coverts. Note the dull brownish-white fringes on the remiges. It is also worth noting how narrow and dull the fringes of the uppertail coverts appear when compared with those of Hoary Redpoll. James P. Smith, December 2003.



Above right. Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea flammea*). Notable by its longer-billed appearance, well-defined auriculars, dull brownish-white fringes to remiges and retrices, and rather heavy flank streaking. Interestingly, the pure white undertail coverts of a Hoary Redpoll can just be seen to the rear and right of the Common Redpoll’s head. James P. Smith, December 2003.

An Informal Survey of Raptor Imitations by Blue Jays

Jim Berry

It started when I kept hearing the *kek-kek-kek* calls of a Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) in our yard in Ipswich, Massachusetts. I had seen an adult Cooper's at our feeders once or twice this past fall (2003) and thought the bird might still be in the area, until I began hearing the calls more frequently than I would have expected away from a nest and outside the nesting season. So I began to suspect an impostor — perhaps a Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*), a species well known for imitations of various hawks. But my own experience was limited to hearing them imitate Red-shouldered Hawks (*Buteo lineatus*); I had never heard or read of them imitating accipiters.

On December 16, I was standing in the driveway and heard the call from the Norway spruce that holds our hanging feeders. I walked toward the tree, hoping to flush a Cooper's Hawk or otherwise find out once and for all who was making the sound. A Blue Jay left the tree and flew to a nearby oak. It made no other sound while I watched it, and I could see no other bird in the spruce. A hawk almost certainly would have flushed at my approach.

I reported the incident to the *Massbird* and *NH.Bird* listserves and asked subscribers to relay incidents where they had visually witnessed Blue Jays imitating raptors, adding that I myself have occasionally SEEN them imitate Red-shouldered Hawks. I emphasized that actually seeing the jay voice the imitation was preferable to simply hearing it and suspecting a Blue Jay without visual proof.

Over the next two weeks, forty-four people responded to my informal survey. A few recounted imitations of nonraptor vocalizations as well as various mechanical sounds, and several wrote of watching Steller's Jays (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) or Western Scrub Jays (*Aphelocoma californica*) imitate Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) in the west. Most, however, spoke of their observations of Blue Jays imitating one or more of six hawk species: Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, Broad-winged (*Buteo platypterus*), Cooper's, Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), and, interestingly, Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*). In the vast majority of cases the individual had actually witnessed the jay make the imitation; in the remainder, the person had heard the imitation in circumstances that made it virtually certain that it was a jay giving the call and not a hawk. Where there was doubt, I went back to the respondent to get more details on the event.

The list below gives the numbers of respondents reporting such hawk imitations by Blue Jays, by species of hawk. The few accounts in which the person *thought* the jay gave such an imitation, but was not sure or did not provide enough evidence, have been omitted.

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| Broad-winged Hawk | 16 |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | 16 |
| Red-tailed Hawk | 13 |
| Cooper's Hawk | 9 |
| Osprey | 4 |
| Northern Goshawk | 1 |

Many authors have written of this propensity of Blue Jays to imitate raptors, and in some cases songbirds. (In this summary I focus solely on raptor imitations.) For example, as far back as 1876 H. D. Minot wrote, "They imitate the cries of the Sparrow Hawk (American Kestrel, *Falco sparverius*), and those of the 'Hen Hawks,' with great exactness...." (Minot gave the nickname "Hen Hawk" to both Red-shoulders and Red-tails.) Hoffman (1904) mentions the "*tee-ar, tee-ar* (call), which exactly simulates the scream of the Red-shouldered Hawk," and adds, "Many good observers believe that the Jay imitates the cries of various hawks, such as the Broad-winged and the Sparrow Hawk." Chapman (1939) calls the Blue Jay "both a mimic and a ventriloquist. Besides an inexhaustible stock of whistles and calls of his own, he imitates the notes of other species, notably those of the Red-shouldered, Redtail [sic], and Sparrow Hawks." Chapman had named the same three species in his 1897 book *Bird-Life*.

Frederic Steele, in Foss (1994), cites imitations of Red-shouldered and Broad-winged hawks. Gail McPeck, in Brewer et al. (1991), lists Red-tailed and Red-shouldered, as does Peterson (1947 and subsequent editions). Eight other references I checked mention only the Red-shoulder. Several other authors, including Forbush (1927), simply say that Blue Jays imitate hawks, without specifying which ones. I found no references that mentioned accipiters or the Osprey. On the other hand, none of my respondents included the American Kestrel in their reports.

Why do Blue Jays — and other jays — imitate raptors? Some of my survey respondents offered possible reasons. The most frequently suggested explanation, which I will label **Theory A**, would apply only around bird feeders (which is where much human observation of Blue Jays takes place). It proposes that the jay imitates a hawk to "clear the feeder" so that it can have the food to itself. Several observers described witnessing this behavior. I would counter that the jay doesn't NEED to imitate a hawk to clear the feeder, since it can do this simply by flying in aggressively, which often has the same effect. But if pretending to be a hawk helps, some jays have clearly taken advantage of this tactic; perhaps it works to scare off other jays as well as the smaller birds. George Gladden, in Pearson (1936), liked this idea, though for anthropomorphic reasons: ". . . witness [the Blue Jay's] frequent and almost perfect imitation of the whistled scream of the Red-shouldered Hawk, which many will insist is a deliberate attempt to terrify the other birds, and is perfectly in keeping with the Jay's love of a practical joke."

Several people thought that the hawk call was given simply to indicate the presence of the imitated raptor (**Theory B**), presumably as a warning. They

emphasized that imitations were given of raptors resident in the area; one said that such calls were not given until the hawk (in this case a migratory Broad-wing) returned to the area in spring, while another said the jay imitated a Broad-wing long after the hawk had departed, indicating a good memory. This theory is similar to (A) above, but its application isn't necessarily limited to the vicinity of a feeder. But it leads to another question: what is the advantage to the jay of sounding such a warning? In theory A, that question has a plausible answer. Perhaps in this case it could be warning other family members of a hawk's presence.

Two theories from single respondents pertained to the nesting season. One (C) was that the jays, by giving Cooper's Hawk imitations, might be trying to get territorial Cooper's Hawks, if present, to respond, as a means of ascertaining their own nesting safety; an intriguing idea. The other (D) suggested that, by giving hawk calls from high in the canopy, jays were hoping to elicit a fright response from birds nesting lower down, thus revealing the location of nests to rob of eggs or young. This idea is less likely, since the reaction of most songbirds upon hearing raptor calls is to freeze, not to flee. The latter reaction is resorted to when the raptor is actually attacking.

The other theory offered (E) was that the calls might not be strictly deliberate imitations, but rather sounds within the jays' normal range of vocalizations. This theory was supported by Hoffman (1904), who ended his account of the Blue Jay with this sentence: "The fact remains that even where the Red-shouldered Hawk is uncommon, the Jay frequently uses a note like his scream, so that it may be a part of his original repertoire, and not an imitation." Given the frequency of excellent imitations of a variety of hawk species by Blue Jays, not to mention the astounding mimicking skills of many other corvids, one might conclude that such an idea would not receive much support today, whether or not such calls might be within the jays' normal range of sounds.

However, the most recent, and thorough, reference on Blue Jays, the *Birds of North America* account (Tarvin and Woolfenden 1999), indicates otherwise. These authors devote an entire column to mimicry, and cite, from either the literature or their own or others' personal experience, reports of imitations of all the species mentioned above except the goshawk, and add the Eastern Screech-Owl, the only reference I have found to any owl imitations. Consider their comments on the whole issue:

Hawk Calls [are] usually given when in a highly excited state such as when approaching a feeding station or when human approaches nest. Unclear whether imitations given in response to actual hawk. Most 'imitations,' such as those of Red-tailed and Red-shouldered hawk calls, clearly are modulations of typical Jeer Calls, or combinations of Jeer and Pumphandle calls. Others, such as Cooper's Hawk and Eastern Screech-Owl calls, may be more closely related to Intrapair Contact Calls. [These calls are all defined elsewhere in the text.] Some renditions of Red-shouldered, Red-tailed, and Cooper's hawk calls nearly perfect, but not as loud. However, renditions of Hawk Calls sometime slurred such that they are easily distinguishable from the model, calling into question intention of true mimicry by jays.

Tarvin and Woolfenden go on to cite an article by Hailman (1990) that “offered 4 hypotheses to explain evolution of Hawk Calls by Blue Jays: (1) jays emit Hawk Calls to alert other individuals to near presence of a raptor (‘hawk is here’ hypothesis), (2) jays indicate where a hawk was previously (‘hawk was here’ hypothesis), (3) jays deceive other species into believing a raptor is present (‘deception’ hypothesis), and (4) jays simply incorporate environmental sounds into their repertoires (‘idiot mimic’ hypothesis). A fifth logical, and thus necessary, but rather uninteresting hypothesis is (5) jays emit Hawk Calls because the calls are native to the repertoire of jays (‘convergence’ hypothesis). Although each hypothesis is supported by a modicum of anecdotal evidence, none seems to be substantially more compelling than the others, and systematic study is needed (Hailman 1990).”

It is interesting how some of the theories offered by my survey respondents paralleled those offered by Hailman. **A** and **D** fit into Hailman’s “deception” hypothesis (#3), while **B** is the same as #1 (“hawk is here”) and **E** similar to #5 (“convergence”). **C** had no counterpart, nor did #2 and #4. Personally, I find #2 of little value, since I cannot imagine a reason why a jay would imitate a hawk after it had left the area, when the need for a warning (or whatever) had passed. Be that as it may, it seems clear that we have a long way to go to draw any conclusions about why Blue Jays imitate hawks, how many of them are able to do it, and the degree to which the hawk calls are pure mimicry or simply modifications to their own innate and learned vocalizations aimed at imitation (a subtle difference). My own unscientific inclination, given the known intelligence and outstanding mimicry skills of many corvid species, is that the jays are imitating the hawks with deliberation and adding to their vocabularies accordingly, at least in the case of the Buteo calls, which are widely given and frequently witnessed.

A final thought has to do with how we as humans hear things differently — or, if we hear the same things, how we describe them differently (witness the wide variation in how the various authors describe Blue Jay calls). Some of this is surely related to the widely variable degree to which humans hear and relate to music. There is also the degree to which we as birders are truly familiar with both Blue Jay calls and the various calls of the hawks themselves. Have we all correctly reported the hawk species that we thought was being imitated? Could we have been mistaken in some cases, in that we might have interpreted a jay call as a hawk imitation when in reality it was something else, or an imitation of a different hawk?

This should rarely be a problem with the three Buteo species, which are typically vocal in flight. Most birders with a modicum of experience will correctly identify their calls. It might be more problematic with the Accipiters and Ospreys, which are not generally vocal in flight and make the sounds we think the jays are imitating mainly around their nests, as alarm calls. I should think both birds and birders would be generally less familiar with these calls, and cannot think of a reason why the jays would want to imitate them, especially around feeders, where, in consequence, I suspect they would be less likely to cause alarm. Nevertheless, a week or so after the event I related in the second paragraph, I actually witnessed what I assume was the same jay giving (again) what sounded exactly like a Cooper’s *kek-kek-kek* call directly

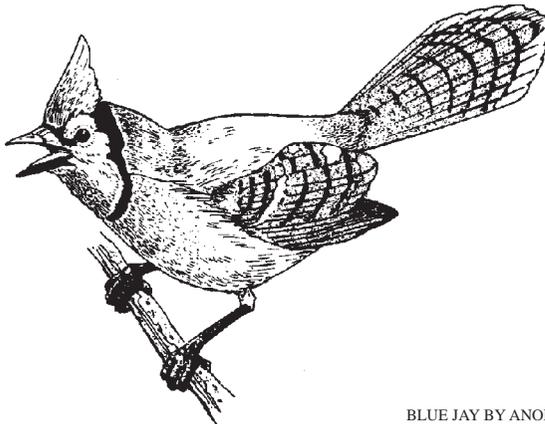
above our feeders. Clearly there is still a lot to learn about Blue Jay behavior, and my speculation is unlikely to reveal anything but more questions.

The question of why Blue Jays imitate raptors is fascinating. I hope readers will look and listen for jay imitations of hawks and report them, along with the circumstances, in a “field note” to *Bird Observer*. The more detailed observations that are published, the better our chances of coming up with some meaningful answers. 

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Jim Berry has been feeding birds and observing their behavior in the yard and in the field for the three decades he has lived in Ipswich. He has found mimicry in birds to be one of their most admirable traits.



BLUE JAY BY ANON.

Age, Sex, and Scissor-tails

Walter G. Ellison and Nancy L. Martin

One great advantage of digital photography and electronic communication is the ability to share wonderful images. We were able to enjoy last autumn's Marconi Beach Scissor-tailed Flycatcher from afar before getting to see it personally during our annual Thanksgiving visit to the Cape. Besides allowing us to appreciate the beauty of the bird, the high quality online images allowed us to determine its age and sex after consultation of Peter Pyle's (1997) in-the-hand identification guide and Jonathan Regosin's (1998) Scissor-tailed Flycatcher species account in the American Ornithologist's Union's *Birds of North America* series. In the past many people assumed that vagrant birds were randomly shifted about by strong weather regardless of age and sex. Partly due to banding results and data from specimens in museums, it is now generally believed that young birds are more likely to get lost during migration; being able to determine the age of a vagrant can lend support to this idea. Learning the sex of lost birds may also help us learn about differences in migratory behavior between males and females.

Adult and young (hatch-year or HY) Scissor-tailed Flycatchers differ in the extent and timing of their prebasic molt. Adults have an incomplete to complete molt in July to September, before they leave the breeding range. Young Scissor-tails have a partial to incomplete molt somewhat later in the season (August to November), often completed after they reach their wintering grounds. Young Scissor-tailed Flycatchers have what is termed an "eccentric" molt pattern, meaning that they replace only some of the central primaries and inner secondaries. Examining the relative ages of feathers in the wing is most easily done with a bird in the hand, but many of the photographs of the Marconi celebrity allow one to see a contrast between the darker freshly molted feathers and the browner, faded older feathers. The tertials (innermost flight feathers) of this bird were new, except for the central one on the left wing, contrasting with the brownish, more ragged-edged innermost secondary feather. It is hard to judge the age of the remaining five secondaries, since they are overlapped in the photos. In the photos showing the outer wings slightly drooped, it appears that only one primary (p7) is new, typical of an HY's eccentric molt pattern. The tail seems to be entirely old feathers, as expected for about 75 percent of HY Scissor-tails, although some uppertail coverts are missing. Another feature of the tail that reveals the bird's age is its relative shortness. The Marconi bird's tail is only slightly longer than its wing chord length, which averages about 120 mm in males and 114 mm in females. A short-tailed adult female Scissor-tail has a 145 mm tail, clearly longer than our subject's tail.

Once the bird's age is known, consultation with the references reveals that HY female Scissor-tailed Flycatchers show little pinkish flank color, in comparison to moderate amounts shown by HY males. The other feature revealing sex in young Scissor-tails is the shape of the tip of the outermost primary feather – in females it is fairly rounded, similar to adjacent feathers, while most young males have a pointed or

narrow-tipped outer primary. In two of the photographs we examined, the outer wing is relaxed enough to reveal the gracefully tapered outer primary tip of a young male.

These days it is often possible to see the kind of feather detail needed for using technical references like Pyle or the *Birds of North America* species accounts. If you take carefully detailed notes or obtain sharp photos of key feathers, it is possible to not only identify a bird but to learn something about who it is – male or female, young or older – as well as what it is. 🐦

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Bill Elrick: <<http://albums.photo.epson.com/j/AlbumIndex?u=4159967&a=30954730&f=0>>

Phil Brown: <<http://mysite.verizon.net/vze2xrsu/id18.html>>

Chris Buelow: <<http://mrines.com/STFL/>>



This photograph of the Marconi Scissor-tailed Flycatcher shows the tapered outer primary on the left wing as well as the tertial-secondary comparison mentioned in the text. Photograph by Phil Brown taken on November 23, 2003.

Twitcher's Temptation

John Nelson

I admit it, I'll chase a bird. Eurasian Kestrel in Chatham? Honey, where are my car keys? Mew Gull in Newburyport? I'll never find it on my own, but surely other birders will be looking. Black Rail in New Hampshire? Too bad I'm retired 'cause I'd blow off work for that bird. Call me a ticker, a lister, a twitcher. Call me obsessive, compulsive, a man comically addicted to avian accounting—ask my wife and she'll tell you what to call me — I plead guilty on all counts. Sometimes I wish I were more like her, a self-proclaimed “Alzheimer's birder.” In truth, she remembers far more than she lets on, but she keeps no lists, targets no birds, and won't cross state lines to see a goose. For her each bird is a new bird, a life bird, a uniquely delightful morsel at nature's feast.

How far will I go to chase a bird? I have no idea. When I began birding in 1998, I'd amuse myself and my civilian friends with tales of the tickers and twitchers I'd meet—one, I remember, complained bitterly about a whale watch on which he'd seen scores of whales—and I was prone to making pompous pronouncements fixing rational limits on the birding excursions I'd be willing to undertake. “I'm not going all the way to the South Shore, and then trudge down some beach, just for some dinky little shorebird.” “I'm not driving clear across the state to see a towhee with dots.” Sad to say, the unchased Red-necked Stint and Spotted Towhee remain unchecked on my state list — what was I thinking? — but I've since roamed the Commonwealth from South Beach (Elegant Tern, no) to the Berkshires (Gray Jay, yes!) in search of vagrants and strays. Now, I need merely start a sentence with “I'm not” — and my spouse collapses in a fit of merciless laughter. How far will I go to chase a bird? Ask me when my ABA list reaches 699.

I'll particularly chase my nemesis bird — that bird, of all the birds I've chased, which remains most defiantly unobserved, most intractably unchecked. Nationally, my nemesis is the Chukar, a bird I've hunted from Colorado to California, from barren rock to barren rock, a creature I've come to regard as not merely elusive but apocryphal, no more real than the single-winged Pinnacle Grouse or the backwards-flying Goofus Bird in Borges' *Book of Imaginary Beings*. Yes, the Chukar is described as “widely introduced” and “locally common” in *A Birder's Guide to Southern California*. Yes, I've met birders who claim to have witnessed Chukars — two, ten, thirty at a time — sunning themselves on rocks or cavorting along the road. Liars, one and all. As a birding peon, I'm reluctant to add Roger Tory Peterson or David Sibley to the list of liars, but . . . Perhaps they've shared a hallucination. Perhaps the detailed depiction of fabricated birds is their idea of a little sick birding fun. Just because Sibley draws it, with all those clever little field marks, doesn't mean that the bird exists.

Statewide, my nemesis has evolved as I've spent more time in the field. For a while the Connecticut Warbler headed my hit list, until that blessed morn at Cumberland Farms when one, two, three showed themselves for split seconds at a

time before skulking back into the bush. Instantaneously, the honor of being my local nemesis passed on to the Northern Goshawk. I've had wonderful looks at goshawks at Yellowstone and Rustler Park in Arizona. One evening, I nearly careened off Route 2 while striving to get a better look at a distant goshawk-like fly-by before it vanished into the woods. But I've yet to fix my bins on a certifiable goshawk within the admittedly artificial boundaries of Massachusetts. It's not for want of trying. I hang out in neighborhoods that goshawks are known to frequent. I meditate with a goshawk mantra, beckon the spirit of Goshawk to welcome me into its realm. Still, no goshawk.

In June 2003 I saw a Massbird report of a goshawk at Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary in Princeton. It was a spot I'd been meaning to visit, and with the prospect of goshawk goading me, I drove out there, from Gloucester, a few days later. When I arrived, I checked the map outside the office to get a feel for the layout of the place. A notice was posted next to the map. Goshawks, it said, were nesting in the sanctuary and, to ensure both the safety of visitors and the breeding success of the birds, the nesting area had been closed to the public. How disappointed I felt. How foolish. Why was I trying to chase down a nesting goshawk?

A bit disoriented, I wandered down a path across a field, toward some wetlands. Tree Swallows zoomed by me. A Red-shouldered Hawk cried out incessantly — *keer! keer! keer!* — and then flew across the field and over my head. A rare butterfly, a sign said, had been spotted in the sanctuary. It was a gorgeous day, sunny, sharp, calm, a beautiful day for birding, for communing with all of nature.

The trail I was on took me into the woods. A nearby Veery sang harmony with itself. Scarlet Tanagers duetted in technicolor. At a junction I turned on to another trail, heading vaguely in the direction of the goshawk area. I heard jackhammer tapping and caught a distant glimpse of a Pileated Woodpecker.

I walked until I saw a sign at the head of another trail. I was at the edge of goshawk territory — it was the same “keep out” sign I'd seen posted at the office. I stood at the trailhead looking around me, listening for signs of human invaders. I was at the far end of the sanctuary, a good ways from the office. I'd seen no one on the trail. I knew that nesting goshawks could be ferociously protective — I'd heard of birders being divebombed and bloodied — but I was willing to sacrifice a few chunks of scalp to see my nemesis. And I felt a presence looming, an overwhelming conviction that if I went down that trail, Goshawk would be there, waiting. I was one lone, quiet intruder — how badly could I disturb these birds? If anyone saw me, I could swear that I'd never seen any sign, that I'd been birding along obliviously. Who could call me a liar? And even if they did, what could they do about it? Take away my birding license?

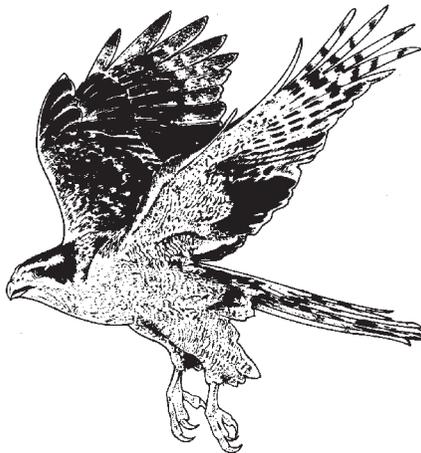
I stood for some time at the trailhead, tempted, glancing about, the gears of rationalization grinding away in my goshawk-mad brain. Why, I asked myself, was I so driven to see this bird, or that bird? What was I doing here? When I was on my deathbed, how much would these numbers matter? Would I care if my state list were one more or one less? Why was I birding in the first place?

I finally turned away from the trailhead. I wasn't afraid of getting caught, or getting hurt. And it wasn't because I'm inherently law-abiding. If I were, I wouldn't have driven seventy miles per hour down Route 2 to see this bird, nor would I have joined my pal Al Gore in conducting certain unscientific "experiments" during my wild and crazy days at college. The reason was simpler: if something was bad for birds, it couldn't be good for me. The birds have enemies enough already: fragmented habitats, pesticides, communication towers. They don't need one more. And if every birder gave in so easily to temptation, I wouldn't be one lone intruder. There would be legions of intruders and no birds to breed, or to see.

I didn't leave the area immediately. For a while I loitered around the fringes of the forbidden zone, hoping, almost expecting that the Bird Gods would reward me for my display of ethical rectitude and send a goshawk soaring my way. But life doesn't work that way, or it shouldn't. A felon doesn't deserve to win the lottery because he has magnanimously decided to refrain from mugging old ladies. I left the sanctuary chastened and goshawkless. It was still a gorgeous day.

How far will I go to chase a bird? I know part of the answer now — not to that point where the chase might harm the bird. I still haven't seen a goshawk in Massachusetts. A week ago one was reported within a mile of my house, and on several occasions I've come home mud-spattered, briar-scarred, and tick-ridden after a fruitless search for it. Perhaps, if life is poetic, the first goshawk I see in the state will be the offspring of the pair at Wachusett Meadow, or the offspring of their offspring, if their breeding is successful. I can wait. That doesn't mean I've stopped twitching. Cave Swallows on the Cape? And a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher? Honey, where are my car keys? 🦅

John Nelson has recently retired after more than three decades as an English professor at North Shore Community college. He now dedicates himself to writing fiction and going birding, not necessarily in that order. He has published a book on teaching, Cultivating Judgment: Teaching Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum, and volunteers as a property monitor for Essex County Greenbelt. He makes his home in Gloucester.



GOSHAWK BY ANON.

Modern Bird Study — Has It Changed?

Robert H. Stymeist

From their earliest accounts, naturalists and birdwatchers have marked the advent of spring with the appearance of certain birds; the journals of these early pioneers contain considerable evidence about the dates of the comings and goings for different species. In the following accounts from William Brewster's journal we find patterns and feelings that we can relate to today. We have pulses of migration followed by unsettled weather and, in early spring, a lag occurs before the next "installment." It is interesting to note that on April 26, Mr. Brewster recorded his last American Tree Sparrow; today we would consider it exceptional to find one of these sparrows on this date.

The breeding status of a number of birds in Massachusetts has certainly changed over the last hundred years, a trend which has continued since the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas was conducted from 1974-1978. (The recently published *Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas*, edited by Wayne Petersen and Roger Meservey, is a must for every birder with an interest in the birds of our state.) In the following account we read of the Northern Harrier breeding in Belmont, in the area that today is still known as Rock Meadow — a spot much reduced in size from 1879. The species is now listed as threatened in Massachusetts. You can feel the excitement in Brewster's writing on discovering the nest of a White-breasted Nuthatch, a species that is listed in the new atlas as being confirmed or probably breeding in nearly fifty percent of the state. And then, some things have not changed. Brewster tells of the great numbers of nesting Black-crowned Night Herons before his time in the Fresh Pond marshes. He reports that when he began a serious study of birds in 1864 these herons no longer nested there, and they still do not today.

Gleanings from the Journal of William Brewster

May 3, 1879 Belmont, Mass

A chilly, disagreeable morning with alternating cloud and sunshine, an occasional gust of hail, and many brief showers. Started off at about 9AM and took quite a long drive over the roads and thro' the lanes and by ways in Belmont. Birds of all kinds were exceedingly scarce and we saw almost none, save the earlier sparrows and a few Robins and blackbirds. If the Redpoll and Yellow rump Warblers have really all migrated, their stay has been brief and their numbers few this year. I, however expect that only the first detachment has passed and I shall look for another installment soon. I saw not a single individual of either species today. In "the Willows" we saw a small hawk, which I took to be *Accipiter fuscus*. (unknown). There was also a *Circus* (Northern Harrier) beating about over the meadows and I think, that another nest may be expected on the ground where I robbed them in 1875 and 1877. The season which was up to the average in development thro' April, is now at a dead lock. There may

however have been more birds about this morning than appeared, for I caught the notes of several species that I did not see. My hip has troubled me very much during the past week and this morning I enjoyed a novel experience, taking the field on crutches, and among other exploits, stumping after, and finally bagging a pair of Field Sparrows, in a rough rocky pasture. I have seen no Tree Sparrows since April 26 when I observed quite a number in “the Willows.” Among the birds heard this morning was a Brown Thrasher, which however was observed by others earlier in the week.

I forgot to note under date of April 24, that I saw a *Sitta carolinensis* (White-breasted Nuthatch) in East Lexington. It must have had a nest some where in the vicinity as the eggs are laid — to judge by the date of the nest I found years ago in Cambridge — much earlier than this. Today, however, I visited the locality without finding it again. The apple orchard in which it was observed offered abundant suitable nesting places, as the trees were old and full of holes, and hollow limbs. I consider this bird exceedingly rare in this part of Mass. during the breeding season. Since finding the nest with eggs in 186-, I recall only three instances of its occurring in our vicinity: the first two of these are positive — a nest with young found in Belmont by F. P. Atkinson, about 1871, and one also with young found in Waltham near the Lyman Place by C.J. Maynard about the same year. The third case is suppositious, resting on my seeing a male in Waverly woods in May 1875.

May 12, 1879 Belmont, Massachusetts

A cloudless but rather hazy and exceedingly warm day with a soft south wind — one of those days when the air is filled with smoky haze and the dust “drives” in clouds along the streets, or waltzes along in miniature columns like water spouts; when the air is filled with the subtle fragrance of early flowers and growing things; when the trees burst almost simultaneously in leaf and one can almost see the progress that Nature makes hour by hour; one of the very rarest of days in short, when life seems almost too delicious to be true.

This morning I started off at 9:30 with Storm (his dog) taking my invariable drive. The country was very very beautiful, all the trees excepting the oaks and a few other kinds being veiled in diaphanous coverings of tenderest green. I did not feel in the mood for shooting and tho birds were very numerous I fired but a few times. There were no new species seen but those already with us were materially increased in number of representative individuals. Upon hobbling into a grove of Yellow pines among the cedars upon the highest point of Prospect St. I was much surprised to start four Night Herons. They were perched in the pines and althou’ rather shy seemed very reluctant to leave the locality as I startled them several times before finally driving them off. Within the last few years they have almost entirely deserted their old haunts among the Fresh Pond Swamps, and have betaken themselves to secluded pine woods or upland and far distant from any water. Their first asylum of this character was Pro. Lowell’s place which they took to some six or eight years ago. Since then they have been found in the autumn of 1876 among the cedars on the Coolidge Farm in Watertown by **A. M. Frazar** and again in the winter of 1879 in the same place by **H.**

M. Spelman; in April 1879 in the pine woods on Waverly hill by the same gentleman. Their wintering with us has become an established habit and they may now be found in small numbers at all times of the year. Those that pass the summer are however barren birds and no case of their nesting in this vicinity has ever come to my notice since I began to study birds (about 1864).

Tradition however assures us that a vast heronry once existed in the almost impenetrable Fresh Pond Swamps and Dr. Brown tells me that he visited it when in college, and found a large number of nests with eggs tho' the birds had then been very much persecuted and their numbers were said to be much reduced. During the autumn the Night Herons are now most numerous with us, as their numbers are swelled by migrants from the north. 🦢

Reprinted with permission from the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University

Bob Stymeist is now beginning his second year of retirement from the corporate world and is enjoying his part-time job, which is preparing a database on endangered and threatened birds in Massachusetts at the Museum of Comparative Zoology.



Fig. 5. Group of Club members, taken near the Brewster Museum in 1889. Listed as present (but their location in the photograph is not indicated) were William Brewster, H. W. Henshaw, C. F. Batchelder, F. Bolles, H. M. Spelman, J. A. Jeffries, W. A. Jeffries, Edward A. Bangs, A. P. Chadbourne, H. A. Purdie, A. M. Frazer, and Outram Bangs.

Courtesy Ruthven Deane Collection, The Library of Congress.

REPRINTED FROM *HISTORY OF THE NUTTALL ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB 1873-1986*, PAGE 20, BY W.E. DAVIS, JR., CAMBRIDGE, MA: NUTTALL ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB. 1987.

Eighth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee

Marjorie Rines, Secretary

This report represents the Eighth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC). Previous annual reports have noted the rather poor participation on the part of the local birding community in submitting written reports of rarities to the committee. This year, however, it is with considerable pleasure that the committee can report a notable improvement in this area. Nonetheless, reports of a number of species currently on the MARC's Review List arrived lacking complete documentation, and the birding public is once again reminded of the importance of submitting full details for any species currently on the MARC Review List.

For the fifth consecutive year the MARC reviewed reports of Pacific Loons and *Selasphorus* hummingbird species. Given the apparent increasing frequency of these species in Massachusetts, some might question why they continue to remain on the MARC's Review List. In response to this, it is important to remember that the reporting criteria for species on the Review List include 1) any species recorded in Massachusetts fewer than 10 times overall or fewer than 5 times in the last 20 years, and 2) any rare and/or difficult to identify species as designated by the Committee. Pacific Loons continue to be difficult to identify and the species always has the potential to be confused with other loon species. Similarly, although most *Selasphorus* hummingbird species that have been captured and measured in Massachusetts have proven to be Rufous Hummingbirds, Allen's Hummingbird has also been recorded in the state. With this in mind, carefully documenting all future *Selasphorus* reports continues to be important in an attempt to positively identify the species involved whenever they appear in the state, and also to accurately document what may be an important range extension for birds in this genus.

And speaking of hummingbirds, a hummingbird visiting a feeder in Eastham was initially reported by the homeowner as a Ruby-throated Hummingbird; however, a group participating in the Cape Cod Christmas Bird Count visited the home and determined that it was instead a Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*), a first Massachusetts record. The addition of this species brings the official state list to 477.

Records Accepted

“Richardson’s” Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis hutchinsii*), #02-46, December 3, 2002, N. Truro (Barnstable), A. Brissette* et al. The observers distinguished this individual from other races of Canada Geese, not only by its small size, but also by its different bill proportions, pale breast, and lack of an obviously broad white neck ring. The features exhibited by the bird effectively eliminated other small races (e.g., *B. c. minima* and *B. c. leucopareia*). Because of its current subspecific status, this form is probably underreported in Massachusetts, so it is difficult to determine how often it may actually occur in the Commonwealth. This small Canada Goose subspecies is

currently being considered for full species status, so it is increasingly important to document sightings of this form for the future.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*), #03-03, March 22, 2003, W. Bridgewater (Plymouth), J. Sweeney*. #03-04, April 13-14, 2003, Whately (Franklin), S. Smolen-Morton*. In the winters of 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, there were multiple reports of Barnacle Goose in Massachusetts. The first was in December 2001 in Gloucester, followed by one seen for several days in February 2002 in Wakefield. In 2003, single birds were reported from West Bridgewater on March 22, Turners Falls on March 25, and Whately on April 13-14. Whether these sightings represent multiple individuals or a single goose meandering about the state is a matter for speculation, although there is good reason to suspect that at least the Turners Falls individual was the same bird reported three weeks later just down the Connecticut River in Whately. While captive origin is always a possibility for reports of this species, these reports seem to fit into a pattern of sightings that suggests that vagrancy was the likely explanation.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*), #02-41, December 22, 2002, North Truro (Barnstable), V. Miller, M. Lynch*. The MARC approved an unambiguous description of a loon of this species, a species now reported annually in Massachusetts.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*), #02-43, December 7, 2002, Plymouth Beach (Plymouth), J. Trimble*. The observer eliminated the similar (but far less likely) Clark's Grebe by carefully noting a facial pattern showing no white in front or below the eye, and dark gray flanks with no white flecks.

Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*), #03-07, May 2, 2003, Muskeget Island (Dukes), I. Nisbet + M. Rosenthal*. Tern researchers on Muskeget Island were startled to see a Red-billed Tropicbird fly into view at 7:30 a.m. and continue to circle the island for 20 minutes, affording spectacular views. As if this was not enough, the bird made another pass at 9:00 a.m. Red-billed Tropicbird has been seen in Massachusetts on only three previous occasions, in all cases off Gay Head on Martha's Vineyard: September-October 1986, August 1987, and June-July 1988. In all three instances the Martha's Vineyard tropicbird lingered for two weeks or more, and it was assumed to be the same individual returning for three years in a row. More than coincidental, perhaps, was the fact that exceptional numbers of Red-billed Tropicbirds were found on pelagic trips off the North Carolina coast in May of 2003 (*North American Birds*, Vol. 57: No. 3)

Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*), #02-40, December 4, 2002, Wayland (Middlesex), A. Weber*. Inland records for Northern Gannet in Massachusetts are extremely rare, but the description of this adult flying over Wayland was unequivocal.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), #03-08, June 28, 2003, Truro (Barnstable), J. Young*. The observer was watching a Turkey Vulture soaring over the Pamet marshes in Truro when he noticed a larger bird above the vulture which, even without binoculars, was obvious as an American White Pelican. It circled overhead for 15 minutes before veering off to the southeast.

Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*), #01-24, June 17, 2001, Essex (Essex), T. Young*. The first Anhinga ever reported in Massachusetts was in 1981. Since then three reports have been accepted by the MARC, one of them in Avon, only two days after this sighting, and possibly representing the same individual (MARC Sixth Annual Report, #01-06). This bird was seen in a flock of Double-crested Cormorants, allowing a direct side-by-side comparison.

Frigatebird species (*Fregata species*), #03-09, September 27, 2003, Marblehead (Essex), D. Noble*. The lucky observer who discovered this bird was rewarded by a quarter-hour view, both through his binoculars and his telescope, from his own backyard. When the bird disappeared from view to the north, he notified other local birders, one of which was lucky enough to relocate it. The report submitted to the MARC was for Magnificent Frigatebird (*F. magnificens*) and, based on vagrancy patterns for this species, quite likely properly refers to *magnificens*. However, the description provided could not rule out Lesser Frigatebird (*F. ariel*), which has previously been recorded in Maine in 1960, or Great Frigatebird, which has been recorded in Oklahoma in 1975 (fide *A.O.U. Checklist*, 1998). Observers need to be aware that out-of-range frigatebirds should not automatically be assumed to be *magnificens*. Consequently, the MARC has adopted a conservative posture on Magnificent Frigatebird reports unless they can specifically eliminate other similar species. This report was therefore accepted as a “frigatebird species.”

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*), #03-11, July 8-15, 2003, Rowley (Essex), R. Heil* et al. An ibis that was discovered among a flock of Glossy Ibises in a salt pan off Route 1A in Rowley was determined to be an adult White-faced Ibis. The observer carefully noted the critical differences between the White-faced Ibis and nearby Glossy Ibises, specifically its larger size, bright red eye, reddish legs, reddish bare skin on the face from eye to chin and, of course, the extensive white feathering around the face. There are less than six records of this species for Massachusetts.

Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*), #03-13, August 24-25, 2003, Barre (Worcester), S. Huntington, C. Buelow*† M. Lynch*. #03-12, April 20, 2003, Lowell (Middlesex), J. Amaro*. Four immature Wood Storks flew into a small farm pond in Barre on August 24, where they were reported to a local birder by the landowner. A follow-up the next day resulted in the discovery of the continued presence of three birds, which was documented by both field notes and photographs. Later in the day the three birds left the pond to forage in an adjacent field, where ultimately the resident cows flushed the storks into a swampy area nearby, from which they eventually disappeared. A ranger for the Lowell National Historic Park spotted a single Wood Stork in Lowell foraging among trash in a local canal. Despite the observer's lack of experience, and the date being two months earlier than any previous record for the state, the details accompanying this report were sufficiently convincing for the Committee to accept it.

Red-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*), #03-14, July 8-9, 2003, Chatham (SB) (Barnstable), B. Nikula. #03-15, August 14-19, 2003, North Monomoy (Barnstable), B. Nikula*, C. Marantz*. The first record of this species in Massachusetts was in 1980, when two separate individuals were reported. The next sighting was not until

1998, from which time on the species has been reported almost annually. The two reports in 2003 were seen and photographed a month apart. The first was in alternate plumage on South Beach in Chatham, while the second was a bird in faded alternate plumage on North Monomoy Island. Shorebirds regularly move between these two nearby locations, so the observer considered the possibility that the sightings could have pertained to the same individual; however, careful examination of photographs showed distinct differences in plumage, proving that different birds were involved.

Mew Gull (*Larus canus*), #03-02, March 8-10, 2003, Newburyport (Essex), J. Berry*, P. Baicich et al. An adult Mew Gull of the European subspecies (i.e., Common Gull) (*L.c. canus*) was discovered among a flock of Ring-billed Gulls at the edge of the Merrimac River. The observers were able to view the bird at a distance of less than 50 feet for nearly an hour and a half. A clear description combined with excellent photographs left no question of the bird's identity. *L.c. canus* is apparently the subspecies most often recorded in Massachusetts, although there are also two known occurrences of the western United States subspecies, *L.c. brachyrychus*.

Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*), #02-39, November 1-December 19, 2002, Eastham (Barnstable), A. Fuller, J. Kricher*, R. Heil*, J. Trimble†, B. Nikula†, et al. This remarkable bird came to light when a group taking part in the Cape Cod Christmas Bird Count followed up a previously reported Ruby-throated Hummingbird visiting a feeder in Eastham. The group spent some time studying the alleged Ruby-throat, noting its small size and primary projection beyond the bird's short tail. These features, along with several colored feathers in the bird's gorget, eliminated both *Selasphorus* and *Archilochus* species. Eventually it was determined that the bird was an immature male Calliope Hummingbird, and subsequent high-quality photographs confirmed this identification. Calliope Hummingbirds have been appearing in the southeastern United States with increasing frequency. There is one record for New Jersey, and as recently as 2001, two were discovered in New York City. This first state record for Massachusetts fits into an increasing pattern of vagrancy for this species.

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*), #03-22, September 18-October 24, 2003, Newbury (Essex), S. Stichter*†. In the fall of 2002, a Newbury backyard hosted two *Selasphorus* hummingbirds. In 2003 another showed up that was netted and identified as a hatch-year male Rufous Hummingbird. This extraordinary series of records at a single location underscores the increasing frequency with which this species is occurring in Massachusetts. In the fall of 2003, no fewer than six *Selasphorus* hummingbirds were reported, three of which were identifiable as Rufous Hummingbirds, either by measurements and banding or by distinct plumage characteristics.

Selasphorus Species, #03-23, October 12,-27, 2003, Lanesboro (Berkshire), P. Dion; S. Stichter*, P. Brown.† A bird visiting a feeder was photographed and described, clearly indicating *Selasphorus*.

Hammond's Flycatcher (*Empidonax hammondi*), #03-25, November 1, 2003, Tuckernuck I. (Nantucket), R.R. Veit*. The observer was first attracted to a *Zonotrichia*-like call note which he ultimately traced to an *Empidonax* flycatcher that

possessed a bold, almond-shaped eye ring. Having had extensive previous experience with Hammond's Flycatcher, he quickly realized the call note was that of a Hammond's Flycatcher. Committee members commented on the difficulty of identifying fall *Empidonax*, but all agreed that the careful description of plumage and call note eliminated all other possibilities. This is only the second record of Hammond's Flycatcher in Massachusetts, the first being an individual that was banded and videotaped in Wellesley in December 1988.

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), #02-42, November 6, 2002, Pittsfield (Berkshire), R. Ferren* et al. #03-18, May 18, 2003, Bedford (Middlesex), D. Ranney, F. Gardner*†, A. Strauss*. Both of the Say's Phoebes here reported were seen for one day only, not unlike other records of this species in Massachusetts. The Pittsfield bird was spotted briefly from an office window, after which the observer rushed outside to confirm his initial impression that it was a Say's Phoebe. Fortunately he was able to alert local birders, who were eventually able to watch it flycatching around the building before it disappeared early in the afternoon. The Bedford bird was only the second spring record for this species when it was discovered flycatching from a fence in a horse pasture. Word quickly spread and it was later seen and photographed by a number of birders.

MacGillivray's Warbler (*Oporornis tolmiei*), #03-27, November 1-3, 2003, Bradford (Essex), S. Carlson* + D. Larson*†. An elusive *Oporornis* warbler discovered in the yard of two lucky birders in Bradford eventually revealed its thick white eye crescents, whitish throat, and short undertail coverts, confirming its identity as a MacGillivray's Warbler. The bird vocalized frequently, producing a distinct note described as similar to that of a Common Yellowthroat, only louder and more emphatic. The bird was eventually photographed and seen by numerous other experienced birders. There have been fewer than ten previous records of this species in Massachusetts, five of which occurred between 1996 and 1999.

Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), #99-25, January 1-February 23, 1999, North Hadley (Hampshire), S. Surner, S. Smolen-Morton*. This report represented the first occurrence of this species since the "Rufous-sided" Towhee was split into Spotted and Eastern Towhee (*P. erythrophthalmus*). Despite its long stay at the same location, its skulking and elusive behavior frustrated many birders who waited many hours in the cold to see it.

Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*), #00-27, April 25-May 4, 2000, North Truro (Barnstable), S. Smolen-Morton*. #00-28, November 21, 2000, Hadley (Hampshire), P. Yeskie†. #02-47, September 2, 2002, Edgartown (Dukes), A. Keith*. Most records of Lark Buntings in Massachusetts have occurred in the fall, but the North Truro male was a rare exception, spending over a week at a feeder. The Hadley bird was a female, also present and photographed at a feeder. The date of the bird in Hadley was more typical for this species; however, since most sightings of Lark Bunting are near the coast, its occurrence in the Connecticut River Valley was noteworthy. The female seen at Edgartown fit nicely into the more usual pattern for Lark Bunting occurrences.

Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*), #03-21, October 5, 2003, Bolton Flats (Worcester), M. Lynch*. This bird was discovered by the leader of a field trip, but before the bird could be shown to the group, it dove into the weeds and eluded rediscovery. The skulking nature of this sparrow makes this kind of experience typical. Henslow's Sparrows are very rare in Massachusetts these days, with only four records in the past ten years. In 1994, a pair was discovered breeding in Lincoln with a successful outcome, the first such attempted nesting in over a decade.

Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*), #98-31, November 11-18, 1998, Plum Island (Essex), P. Drew, S. Smolen-Morton*. A first-winter bird spent a week feeding near the Hellcat Marsh at Parker River Wildlife Sanctuary. Birders reported attempting to observe it at a cautious distance, but the bird was so tame it would approach people, and in several cases, actually walked over their shoes.

"Gambell's" White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*), #02-38, "Late May," 2002, Plum Island (Essex), D. Tambesco, R. Heil*. The *gambelii* subspecies of the White-crowned Sparrow is reported occasionally in the fall, and is probably underreported, since many birders do not examine White-crowns carefully. Evidence of this sighting did not turn up until several months later when the observer showed a photograph to a friend who instantly recognized it as *gambelii*. This is the first spring record of "Gambell's" White-crowned Sparrow in Massachusetts.

Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*), #98-30, March 1-15, 1998, Reading (Middlesex), D. Schromm, S. Smolen-Morton*. An adult male spent two weeks visiting a feeder in Reading, where it was photographed and seen by dozens of birders.

Records Not Accepted

For a report to be accepted by the MARC, it must receive a minimum of eight votes (out of nine Committee members). If, after the first ballot, it gets a majority of "yes" votes but less than the eight minimum, it is recirculated to the Committee with Member comments. After the second ballot if there is still a majority voting "yes" but it fails to get eight votes, it is discussed at the next meeting where a third ballot and final ballot is cast. Therefore, some of the following reports may show a majority of "yes" votes after a third ballot.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*), #02-08B, March 24, 2002, Rockport (Essex). Both date and location are reasonable for Pacific Loon, and although details were consistent with Pacific Loon, they were sufficiently sketchy not to rule out other species. The vote was five in favor and four opposed (third ballot).

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), #03-20, July 18, 2003, Marshfield (Plymouth). The observer watched a dark, falcon-like bird flying at the edge of a storm front, but while he could seemingly eliminate all raptor species with which he was familiar, he could not identify this bird at the time. In his report, it was described as a "probable" Mississippi Kite. The Committee agreed it could easily have been a Mississippi Kite, but the observer's own uncertainty made it seem prudent not to accept the report. The vote was four in favor and five opposed.

Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*), #03-16, April 24, 2003, Gloucester (Essex). A medium-sized gull with a black head was reported, but the description was insufficient to eliminate several other hooded gull species. The vote was one in favor and eight opposed.

Long-billed Murrelet (*Brachyramphus perdix*), #03-01, January 3, 2003, Rockport (A.P.) (Essex). This sighting by an extremely experienced observer was described meticulously, but the bird was only seen in flight at a distance of over 300 yards. Since the description could not eliminate Craveri's Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus craveri*), however unlikely, members felt that for such a rare species, it is necessary to be extremely conservative in the treatment of any murrelet reported in Massachusetts. The timing was right for the increasing history of vagrancy for this species, but its status clearly remains that of a vagrant. There is only one previous record for Massachusetts, a bird found dead in Middleboro in 1982. The vote was three in favor and six opposed (second ballot).

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), #03-17, 7/14/03, Oak Bluffs (Dukes). Two poor-quality photographs were unaccompanied by any written description. The images depicted a pinkish dove, seemingly with a red bill and pale primaries. These characteristics eliminated the possibility of Eurasian Collared-Dove, and more likely represented those of a domestic variant of Ringed Turtle-Dove (*S. risoria*). The vote was zero in favor and nine opposed.

Thick-billed Kingbird (*Tyrannus crassirostris*), #02-36R, December 2, 2002, North Falmouth (Barnstable). This intriguing report was from an experienced observer who was able to watch the bird for 15 minutes while the bird was sketched and heard to vocalize, at times as close as six feet away. After hastily making some phone calls, the observer returned with a camera, but despite the efforts of many observers, the bird was unable to be relocated. Although *Tyrannus* species have a tendency to wander, Thick-billed Kingbird has no history of vagrancy east of the Rockies, so the Committee felt that other similarly unlikely species (e.g., Loggerhead, Giant, and Gray kingbird), needed to be considered. The Committee spent a great deal of time considering this submission, and after seeking additional details, even considered submitting the report for reevaluation. In the end, however, the Committee believed that there was not enough evidence to eliminate Gray Kingbird. This was an especially frustrating report, since whatever the bird was, it undoubtedly represented a most interesting record for Massachusetts. The vote was four in favor and five opposed.

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*), #03-19, October 12, 2003, Nantucket (Nantucket). A description of two blackbirds in a Nantucket cornfield could have equally applied to Rusty Blackbird (*E. carolinus*). The vote was one in favor and eight opposed.

* Details submitted.

† Photographs submitted, or obtained on the internet.

The Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC) was formed to evaluate reports of rare and difficult-to-identify species, as designated on its Review List. For more information about the MARC, or to see copies of previous MARC reports, see <<http://Massbird.org/MARC/>>. MARC members include Steven Arena, James Baird, Davis Finch, Rick Heil, Blair Nikula, Scott Surner, Jeremiah Trimble, Richard Veit, and Wayne Petersen (Chair). Marjorie Rines is the Secretary, and as author of this report extends her thanks to Wayne Petersen and Blair Nikula for their editing assistance. 🐦

From MassWildlife

The Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), part of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, is one of the programs forming the Natural Heritage network <<http://www.natureserve.org/visitLocal/>>. NHESP is responsible for the conservation and protection of hundreds of species that are not hunted, fished, trapped, or commercially harvested in the state. The Program's highest priority is protecting the approximately 190 species of vertebrate and invertebrate animals and 258 species of native plants that are officially listed as Endangered, Threatened or of Special Concern in Massachusetts. Visit our Database and GIS section <<http://www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/nhdatt.htm>> to download a copy of the current list of Massachusetts' protected rare species.

The overall goal of the Program is the protection of the state's wide range of native biological diversity. Progress towards this goal is accomplished through the following:

- Biological Field Surveys,
- Research and Inventory,
- Data Management,
- Environmental Impact Review,
- Rare Species Recovery,
- Ecological Restoration of Key Habitats, and
- Land Protection.

For more details about the Program itself, and for more about our mission, see the Mission and Overview section at <<http://www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/nhmissn.htm>>.

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
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FIELD NOTES

The Junco and the Shrew

J. Thomas Brownrigg

A surprising incident occurred about seven a.m. on January 7, 2004. I was seated at our dining table in a sunroom, which offers a full view of the backyard and bird feeders. There is a simple bird feeder/shelter located near a stone wall about fifteen feet from the sunroom. I had scattered birdseed, mostly sunflower, millet, and cracked corn, under the shelter. There are a few holes under the shelter, the largest of which is about one and a half inches in diameter at the entrance. Mice, voles, and shrews use these holes. The previous week my wife D'Ann had seen a short-tailed shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*) emerge from the largest hole and return with seeds.

As usual, there were many small birds, including Dark-eyed Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, and a male Eastern Towhee foraging for seeds around and under the shelter. One of the juncos was foraging close to the large hole, and began moving closer to the entrance in search of seeds. As I watched the junco, I remembered D'Ann's shrew sighting, and thought, "Maybe this is not a good idea." Meanwhile, the junco had progressed about halfway down the hole, headfirst. As I was watching, the junco suddenly disappeared down the hole!

Although I can't prove it, I suspect the shrew grabbed the junco. According to Godin (1977), the short-tailed shrew is one of the most abundant New England mammals and is the only mammal known to have a venomous bite. The venom acts to paralyze the prey, in the manner of a cobra bite. Godin states: "A small amount of this venom is enough to kill a rabbit. One scientist, bitten on the fingers while holding a short-tailed shrew, suffered shooting pains and swelling which in half an hour reached his elbow. The pain was so great he could not use one of his hands for three days."

The short-tailed shrew feeds mostly on insects, earthworms, and other small invertebrates, but will also take larger prey such as mice and voles, and possibly small birds. It also eats vegetative material such as berries, fruit, nuts, seeds, and roots. The short-tailed shrew is reputed to be the most "fossorial" (burrowing) shrew and will construct its own burrows or use those of other species, especially voles. The shrew's venom allows the immobilized prey to remain alive for several days while being cached within the burrow. Shrews have a very fast metabolic rate, and it is estimated that they can consume three times their body weight in food each day.



SHORT-TAILED SHREW BY PHIL MYERS
<[HTTP://ANIMALDIVERSITY.UMMZ.UMICH.EDU](http://ANIMALDIVERSITY.UMMZ.UMICH.EDU)>

We subsequently saw the shrew a week after this incident, at about four p.m. I had scattered seeds under the shelter the day before. We saw a shrew emerge from a different hole, just far enough grab a seed (probably sunflower), and then return. It moved too quickly and unpredictably for me to get its photograph. Professor Philip Myers of the University of Michigan Department of Zoology has told me that he often live-traps this shrew using black sunflower seed as bait. 

The author thanks Massbirders Phil Brown and Andrew Joslin for directions to the informative URLs cited below, and Professor Philip Myers for his comments.

Editor's Note: *This event was also reported in the Carlisle Mosquito in the Biodiversity Corner.*

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Major Brant Migration Observed at Chickatawbut Hill, Quincy, Massachusetts

Michael F. McWade

On October 16, 2003, I spent from late morning until evening hawk watching with Vin Zollo from the observation tower atop Chickatawbut Hill in the Blue Hills, Quincy, Massachusetts. The night before witnessed extremely high winds of over fifty miles per hour that continued strong and variable from the west and southwest during the period of observation. Visibility was fair with eighty percent cloud cover.

With the exception of an adult Golden Eagle observed in the early afternoon, it was a below-average day for hawk watching. Between 11:00 a.m. to early evening, we observed a Turkey Vulture, 12 Ospreys, 10 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 5 Cooper's Hawks, 22 Red-tailed Hawks, and a Golden Eagle. This was a notably slow day for a semi-coastal hawkwatch site in the aftermath of extended westerly winds.

Despite the low numbers of raptors moving, we nonetheless witnessed an incredible movement of birds, the likes of which I have never witnessed anywhere in southeastern Massachusetts during autumn migration. BRANT! Yes, Brant, hundreds of Brant, moving in large flocks for hours as far as the eye could see to the north and south of the Blue Hills. Flocks of Brant were crossing the Blue Hills on a wide front extending from Boston Harbor to Hull. Most of the flocks contained more than 100 birds, and at least one group containing over 300 individuals passed close to us along

the northwest side of the hill. Many lesser flocks were comprised of 150-200 birds. All of the Brant were moving in exactly the same southwesterly direction.

Since the wind was sufficiently strong on the tower to risk leaving a scope unattended for any amount of time, most of our observations were made only with binoculars. Even so, often it was possible to have over a dozen flocks in sight at one time, and surely if we had more optical power, there were probably Brant flocks to be seen farther out on the horizon. This steady movement of Brant continued from at least late morning into the early evening. We estimated that a minimum of three to four dozen flocks per hour passed during our more than seven-hour period of observation.

This was a truly spectacular and extremely unusual event at our site. I have logged over 2000+ hours observing hawk migration at Chickatawbut Hill over the past nine years. During that period Brant were about as common as Snow Geese during fall migration at that location. On average we observe a few hundred Snow Geese overhead each fall, and usually far fewer Brant. Blue Hills Trailside Museum director, Norman Smith, has put in thousands of hours operating the banding station on Chickatawbut Hill, and his observations of Brant date back to the late 1970s. His observations are parallel: a few hundred Brant a season would be the maximum in any given fall migration at this location.

The numbers of Brant that passed over Chickatawbut Hill on October 16 were simply incredible. Without hesitation, we estimate that a minimum of 25,000 Brant passed the hill, and a conservative approximation might actually be closer to 30,000+. When one does the math (three to four dozen flocks of 100+, some 200+ and larger, per hour times seven hours, not to mention distant flocks we might have seen with the aid of a scope), our estimate is entirely plausible. Indeed, it is possible to think that the flocks averaged 175+ overall. If so, at the rate of four dozen flocks passing per hour, the total could have exceeded 50,000!

The following day I had to travel to North Carolina. On my return trip on October 21 while crossing the Neuse River Bridge in New Bern, North Carolina, I looked down and what did I see? Brant, of course. I wondered if any of these geese passed Chickatawbut Hill only five days earlier? Who knows?

It will be interesting to see whether the magnitude of this flight is reflected by an increase in wintering Brant this year. If it is not, then one might reasonably assume that we merely witnessed an unusually heavy local movement, and certainly one with which we were previously unfamiliar. If this was a normal movement of Brant across southeastern Massachusetts, then we were most fortunate to have witnessed it, since nothing of this magnitude has ever previously been recorded in the Commonwealth. In any event, seeing so many Brant moving in one day in Massachusetts was an experience that we will never forget! 

*The spectacular passage of Brant so well chronicled by Mike McWade, while virtually unprecedented in its magnitude from a Massachusetts perspective, may not be all that unusual. The migration of the eastern race of Brant (*Branta bernicla hrota*) has been well described by various authors (e.g., Lewis, 1937; Bellrose, 1976; Palmer, 1976; Reed et al., 1998). From existing literature, combined with Massachusetts observations, it appears that the autumn migration of Brant headed south to the Atlantic Coast from arctic Canada follows two primary corridors: 1) a major corridor that passes through James Bay in northern Ontario to the Saint Lawrence River estuary, thence south over interior New England to Long Island Sound and coastal New Jersey, and 2) a somewhat lesser coastal corridor that leads through the Bay of Fundy and follows the New Brunswick coastline south toward New England and points beyond.*

In addition to these well-known migration corridors, it is also well known that Brant typically travel at high altitudes during overland crossings, such as the passage from James Bay and the Saint Lawrence River to Long Island and New Jersey. This fact also holds true for scoters, some of which use a similar migration route to reach their Mid-Atlantic wintering grounds. Occasionally, adverse weather conditions force flocks of these waterfowl to the ground, or else cause them to fly low enough to be detected by ground observers. The combination of known Brant flight corridors, and the fact that Brant usually travel very high when making overland crossings, is critical to possibly explaining the great passage of Brant documented by McWade.

Essential to explaining the flight of October 16 is the fact that the observers indicated that "The night before witnessed extremely high winds of over fifty miles per hour that continued strong and variable from the west and southwest during the period of observation." Further checking of continental weather for that period indicates that, "A powerful disturbance raced northeast from the mid-Mississippi Valley to the St. Lawrence Valley on October 14-15. It was preceded by heavy rain and followed by very strong winds. Many cities in the northeast measured wind gusts over 50 miles an hour (22 m/s)." (Fide <<http://www.ems.psu.edu/WeatherWorld/summaries/sum10.03.html>>).

Because the weather conditions described above happened to occur during the primary period of passage for Brant migrating south through New England, the stage was set for a major event. In all likelihood, what McWade and Zolla witnessed was a significant eastward deflection of the typically more westward flight corridor for Brant, caused by the passage of a massive frontal system and accompanied by gale-force westerly winds. Not only do large movements such as this typically occur farther inland in New England, they also ordinarily take place at a higher altitude than the low-level phenomenon observed from the Blue Hills. What made this flight so notable was the fact that the birds were moving low enough to be readily detected, and competent field observers were strategically located to document the event with meticulous observations. Reports of sightings of this type, when carefully made, represent an excellent example of how local field birders can make significant contributions to regional bird life, even in an area as well-studied as Massachusetts.

Wayne R. Petersen

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Bulletin of the Essex County Ornithological Club, 1929

A SHARP-SHINNED HAWK AND ITS KILL

GEORGE E. BENSON

On September 16, 1924, I was duck shooting on a salt marsh on Cape Cod. I was hidden in a patch of tall sedge grass on a point of marsh running down between two shallow, eel grass-filled channels, with my decoys set in the broader channel to leeward of the point. The morning was warm and sunny with a light breeze, and I was lazily watching a Sharp-shinned Hawk cruising low over the sedge in my direction. As he neared the opposite edge of the channel, perhaps seventy yards away, he darted sharply to the right and I saw a small bird rise from the grass just in time to escape his stoop. The small bird flew nearly straight up with the hawk in pursuit. On up they went until the small bird appeared no more than a dark speck, still visible because my eye had not left its course from the start. Then suddenly the speck began to drop, falling like a stone with no wings visible even as it drew nearer. The hawk also dropped, but with wings only partly closed, a few feet behind and to the left of its prey, and keeping the same relative position as it fell. Both birds were falling swiftly and straight, but, just before they reached the surface of the marsh, the hawk made a lightning-like turn, flashed toward the small bird, and struck and held it barely three feet above the grass. As he rose, the hawk swung over the channel below me and I shot him as he passed. In falling he dropped his prey which landed beside him on the water. It proved to be a young Least Flycatcher. The hawk was also a bird of the year.

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ABOUT BOOKS

Run For Your Lifelist

Mark Lynch

Birding On Borrowed Time. Phoebe Snetsinger. 2003. American Birding Association. Colorado Springs, Colorado.

“Death is life’s way of telling us to slow down.” Dick Sharples.

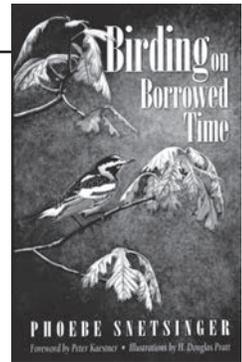
“I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work...I want to achieve it by not dying.” Woody Allen.

In the mid-1960s one of the more popular TV shows was *Run For Your Life*. Paul Bryan, played by Ben Gazzara, finds out he has “chronic myelocytic leukemia.” The producers of the show searched high and low for a noncontagious, incurable disease that would also still allow the lead actor to remain active. The kicker is that Paul has no more than two years to live. What should he do? He decides to cram as much extreme living as is possible into his remaining life and sets out to do all sorts of extraordinary and dangerous things and also help the folks whom he meets along the way, in typical TV melodrama fashion. *Birding On Borrowed Time* chronicles the hardcore lister’s version of this premise minus the helping of the folks met along the way.

Phoebe Snetsinger remains a legend in birding circles. Known as the first person to tick over 8000 of the world’s bird species, Phoebe was also well known as an indefatigable field birder and a meticulous record keeper. She bounded all over the globe with a passion and energy rarely seen in teenagers. This was all the more amazing because Phoebe was suffering from metastatic malignant melanoma, a form of cancer first detected in a mole on her back in 1981. Though she was operated on to remove the malignant growth, the prognosis remained extremely grim, giving her just a few months of seeming healthy life and then a slide into oblivion. Or so the doctors thought.

Despite this gloomy sentence, Phoebe’s brain, bone, and liver scans showed no signs that the cancer had metastasized in other parts of her body. Desperate to just get on with her life, Phoebe decided to throw all her mind and body into doing that one thing she had really enjoyed up until then: birding. Whenever she was out in the field looking at birds, she found that even just for a moment, cancer was not on her mind.

Always, in the heat of the chase and the fun of the find, thoughts of impending illness and death seemed less overwhelming. I was still managing to do some of those things I loved to do; bit by bit the magic grew, and the terror and hopelessness lessened their grip (p. 53).



And this she did with a ferocious single-mindedness rarely seen outside of Russian chess players or computer code writers. She suffered numerous injuries, a near drowning, and a frightening and horrific holdup and gang rape in Papua New Guinea in 1986. Always, her answer to every negative turn of events was to keep on birding, no matter what. Periodically, a lump would reappear under her arms, she would consult doctors and have an operation, but her bone, brain and liver scans always remained as blank as one's year's list on January first. Eventually, in 1999, Phoebe died, not of cancer, but in a freak bus accident in Madagascar, while birding, of course.

Birding On Borrowed Time is Phoebe Snetsinger's account of her frantic quest for the next new species. Peter Kaestner has written an appropriate foreword that fondly remembers Phoebe as his "soulmate." An epilogue by Thomas Snetsinger, one of Phoebe's sons, recaps Phoebe's fateful last trip to Madagascar and adds a needed perspective on her life. The black-and-white illustrations and color plates by H. Douglas Pratt are very good but not extraordinary. There are several photographs of Phoebe in the field, and at home tending her list over the years, which I found very touching.

As a book, *Birding on Borrowed Time* is an exhausting chronological account of Phoebe's birding forays. Phoebe Snetsinger took more trips in a year than most birders I know take in their life. By trying to include at least a mention of everywhere she went, many descriptions of trips that sound potentially fascinating are reduced to just a few paragraphs or less. For example:

Another gap in my world experience was Micronesia, so I had signed up for a late-February trip with Doug Pratt, a highly-respected tour leader and artist. We flew to Guam and went from the Marianas (Saipan, Rota, and Tinian) south to Palau and then east along the Caroline Island chain to Yap, Truk and Pohnpei. These islands hold a high number of endemics, and I was fortunate enough to observe every last one (p. 166).

That's it! On to Japan and the island of Torishima for Short-tailed Albatross. In all fairness, some trips are fleshed out with details, but so many perfunctory descriptions fly by that simply list places and species seen, the reader becomes numb. One is left with very little sense of the many exotic places that were visited.

There is also precious little information given out about a species' habits, history, and behavior, so that many birds become just names on a very long list. For instance, the Short-tailed Albatross, one of the most endangered seabirds in the northern hemisphere, has a long and fascinating history of a severe reduction in population from causes both human and natural, and has an even more interesting history of conservation efforts. Yet in the two separate paragraphs in *Birding On Borrowed Time* devoted to Phoebe's quest to see this species on two different occasions, this is what we learn of the Short-tailed Albatross as a bird:

The Short-tailed Albatrosses were magnificent, and we had wonderful views of all plumages right around the boat as we were anchored off Torishima (p.168).

Most of the two paragraphs are devoted to details about making arrangements for the trip and dealing with Japanese culture. I would refer the reader to Carl Safina's *Eye of the Albatross /Visions of Hope and Survival* (2002. New York: Henry Holt and Company) for details of the history of this amazing tubenose. To be sure, no writer could convey salient details about the thousands of species seen by Phoebe in so short a space, but by trying to include everything, the birds become mere ciphers in her never-ending quest. At times I felt like I was randomly riffling through the pages of a volume of *Birds Of the World*.

The more I read *Birding On Borrowed Time*, the more I began to wonder what it all meant. Is "birding" just stamp collecting with feathers? Is this an extreme example of conspicuous consumption? How much money did she ultimately spend on accruing this huge list anyway? How would that compare to the GNP of one of the many small "developing" nations she often visited? Why do I bird? When does a passion become an obsession?

At one point Phoebe Snetsinger's husband asks for a divorce, and Phoebe reacts as if came out of the blue:

I deeply resented David's unwillingness to accept my point of view: that our lives were out of synchrony in much the same way they had been back when he was pursuing his career and I needed more adult compassion and companionship. Now he was retired, and I was pursuing *my* career, and he was feeling exactly the same lacks I had. We'd both been guilty of a lack of consideration for the other at different times in our many years together — but was it really too late to recognize this failing and to learn from it? There was no third party involved here. I was totally and utterly opposed to the split at this time in our lives. There was *so much* to lose, for both us, and so little to gain. I simply couldn't and wouldn't accept it. I was angry, threatened, confused, and miserably unhappy. And once again I fled — this time to the Ivory Coast (p.175).

This passage is startling within the context of the book because, for once, Phoebe lets the reader in on her passions for something other than for birds. I have to admit I was behind her 100 percent till I got to that last sentence. Your marriage is falling apart, and you're righteously upset, so you take a birding trip? This was where I began to draw the line between "passion" and "obsession." Later, she misses her oldest daughter's wedding because its date was not announced enough in advance, and she has a scheduled birding holiday to Colombia, a "truly excellent trip" (p. 182). I confess I began to wonder about Phoebe's priorities and my own as well.

Even more disturbing is the utter lack of a strong environmental message in this book. Problems like human overpopulation, global warming, forest fragmentation, habitat destruction, and pollution, and their obvious effects on the very birds Phoebe is breathlessly covering the globe to tick, are given barely any mention at all. I kept waiting for Phoebe to make some impassioned statement, some summation of the future of birding and the environment to be given, but none was forthcoming. Interestingly, the single substantive mention of environmental concern is found in one

paragraph in Peter Kaestner's foreword. Perhaps Phoebe had intended to write something more, addressing these issues before she died, or maybe she has written about these topics elsewhere. But as it stands, for a book by THE leading world traveling birder of the last two decades that sums up her life in birding, to not have such a message seems like a singular and important missed opportunity and a bit bizarre. I was left wondering if, in fact, this was the finished manuscript. Was this the book that she wanted to ultimately leave as her ode to the joys of birding? We can never know.

Something I have learned over the decades of interviewing authors for my radio show is that extraordinary people who lead extraordinary lives do not often make extraordinary writers. Why should we expect them to be? Most extraordinary people are far too busy to be able to take the considerable time it takes to turn out a decent book. *Birding On Borrowed Time* is a flawed book that gives only a bare outline of a very rich and complex life. Most of the details are here, but they lack a much-needed depth and perspective. The final appropriate testament to Phoebe Snetsinger is yet to be written. 🐦

Mark Lynch is an environmental monitor, teacher, and trip leader for Broad Meadow Brook sanctuary. He is also a teacher and docent at the Worcester Art Museum and hosts "Inquiry," an interview show of arts and sciences on WICN radio. Mark, of course, attended his son's wedding, which was held outside atop Castle Hill, Ipswich. However, he did wear bins over his tux and managed to tick Northern Gannet as part of his "wedding list."



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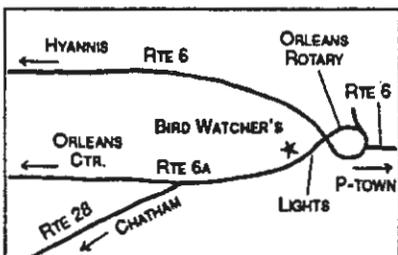
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BIRD SIGHTINGS

November/December 2003

Seth Kellogg, Marjorie Rines, Robert H. Stymeist, and Jeremiah Trimble

November was a very pleasant month — warm, sunny, and dry. In Boston the temperature averaged 45.9°, 1° above normal. Away from the coast the average was closer to 53°. A high of 76° was recorded in Boston on the first day of the month, and the low was 27° on November 9. A dramatic temperature surge on November 28 saw the mercury hit 63° late in the day, and it remained warm all night. Rainfall totaled 2.63 inches in Boston, 1.35 inches less than average, and no snow was recorded. Seth Kellogg noticed that something clearly happened with the migration in early November. A strong front with rain went through on October 27; this was followed by a northeast storm that came up the coast on October 29. Three clear days of warm west and southwest winds followed. Then came another day of clouds followed on November 3 by an even warmer day with noticeable southwest winds. A reverse migration was noted; two more mild days with clouds and drizzle kept the birds grounded.

The weather in December was a mixed bag, with both warm and very cold days, record snowfall, and lots of rain. The month averaged 36.3° in Boston, 1.3° above normal. The first nine days were unseasonably cold, averaging almost 10° below normal, and then the last ten days of the month averaged 12° above normal. The high temperature for Boston during the month was 58° on December 24, and 29; the low was 16° on December 3. Precipitation in the form of rain totaled 5.06 inches, 1.33 inches above normal for December in Boston. The big story this month was the record snowfall: 21.5 inches in Boston, 14.2 inches above normal. The storm on December 5 through 7 brought nearly 17 inches to Boston, a new December record and also a record amount for so early in the season. This storm moved in quickly and caused serious problems on the roads as plows had a difficult time in keeping up with the storm.*R. Stymeist*

WATERFOWL THROUGH ALCIDS

Two reports of **Greater White-fronted Geese** came in during the period, both of the Greenland race (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*). Snow Geese made a somewhat late and not-so-modest movement on November 8, when 700 were counted in Newburyport and 1000 were counted in Essex. Small numbers of Snow Geese continued to be reported at scattered locations throughout the period, with the latest being a group of twelve at Plum Island the day after Christmas.

Some of the largest dabbling duck totals during the period came from South Monomoy. A report from that location in late November included a count of 90 Northern Shovelers, which may be the highest single day count for the state ever. Six Eurasian Wigeon were reported during the period from locations on the North Shore and Cape Cod, where this species has consistently been found. In Massachusetts, Ring-necked Duck numbers peak in early November and it is not uncommon to see over 1000 birds in a day. Still, the 1540 Ring-necked Ducks found in Southborough on November 9 are noteworthy and represent one of the highest counts for the species in Massachusetts.

Impressive numbers of Common Eiders were encountered on Cape Cod, the Islands, and the North Shore. Though no counts reached the astronomical report of 100,000 from South

Monomoy in October, counts of 8020 from Rockport, 10,000 from South Monomoy, and 20,000 from Gay Head are worth noting. Cape Ann has historically been one of the best areas to find King Eiders in Massachusetts. During this period up to three individuals were found there. Additionally, two pairs were reported from Gay Head on Martha's Vineyard and a single female was seen in Eastham. As October turned into November, the Harlequin Ducks started to show up in small numbers along the coast of Massachusetts. These were mostly observed at predictable locations such as Cape Ann, Scituate, the Sandwich end of the Cape Cod Canal, and Nauset Beach in Orleans. Though probably just moving through the area, the four individuals found at Sandy Neck in Barnstable on November 10 were interesting for their unusual choice of habitat. Up to seventy were counted at Andrew's Point in Rockport during the period, a respectable number which represents the Massachusetts increase of this species.

Barrow's Goldeneyes are very rare in Massachusetts before the end of November. Therefore, the report of a female from Randolph on November 1 is noteworthy. No more reports were received until the second half of December, when at least 4 Barrow's Goldeneyes were reported from scattered locations on the North Shore and Cape Cod.

Three **Pacific Loons** were observed during the period, none of the reports of which included documentation. The first was an adult from Rockport on November 4. Although this species has been reported more frequently in recent years, it is still rare in Massachusetts and care should be taken in its identification. While counts of Red-throated Loons well into the hundreds are not uncommon in Massachusetts, Common Loons generally occur in smaller numbers. On November 4, Common Loons outnumbered Red-throated Loons in Rockport, when 654 were meticulously counted moving past Andrew's Point. This total represents the highest single day count for Common Loons in Massachusetts. The Eared Grebe was reported throughout the period in Gloucester.

A few minor storms during the period produced a modest number of Northern Fulmars along the coast of Massachusetts. Fifty-three Northern Fulmars were counted at Andrew's Point on November 21. On December 7, forty-three Northern Fulmars were found at First Encounter Beach in Eastham. More noteworthy was the **storm-petrel species** observed there on the same date. Although Leach's Storm-Petrel is more likely at such a late date (there are no confirmed sightings of Wilson's Storm-Petrel after October), storm-petrels can be very difficult to identify under harsh conditions, especially when one starts considering other more interesting possibilities (e.g. Band-rumped Storm-Petrel). A **Brown Pelican** was observed by several independent observers in Eastham and Wellfleet in the days leading up to the Christmas holiday. Unfortunately, it did not stick around in any one place for more than a few hours and was not seen after December 25. Despite the fact that its normal range extends into New Jersey, there are fewer than twenty records for Brown Pelican in Massachusetts.

A few of the less hardy species of herons lingered into November and December this year. Great Egrets were found along the North Shore into early November, but persisted along the south coast until at least November 27, when seven were found in the Westport/Fairhaven area. Snowy and Cattle Egrets, meanwhile, were not encountered after the first half of November.

Black Vultures continue to maintain their foothold in Massachusetts. November brought reports of 7 individuals from scattered localities, while none were seen in December. Turkey Vultures are now found routinely in Massachusetts in December. A count of forty in the Bourne area on December 1 was on a par with some of the recent winter high counts from southeastern Massachusetts, while the seventy-three observed in Westport on the first of December was certainly above average. The three in Ipswich on the late date of December 27 were noteworthy for the northerly location.

Rough-legged Hawks made a good showing during the period. At least twenty-five different individuals were observed throughout the state, though mostly as singles. Typically the best location in the state to observe this *buteo*, Plum Island, hosted as many as four Rough-legged Hawks at one time. After a good October, Golden Eagles continued to be reported in November and December. The Granville hawkwatch had four individuals fly by during November, and as many as twelve, mostly singles, were encountered at scattered locations. A dark-morph **Gyr Falcon** was an exciting find at Pochet Island in Orleans on November 15, especially considering the observers found at least two Cave Swallows later that same day! Peregrine Falcon was the most numerous falcon reported during November and December. As many as forty individuals were found, a good sign for a raptor that was in serious trouble not so long ago.

Two **Sandhill Cranes** were a big surprise when they showed up at a feeding station in Barnstable and stayed throughout the period! Although there are nearly forty records of American Golden-Plover in November in Massachusetts, it is still a noteworthy sighting. This year four were found during the month, including one on November 15. There are no December records of American Golden-Plover in Massachusetts. An **American Avocet** is a very unusual sighting anytime or anywhere in Massachusetts. However, an American Avocet in November in Sunderland (western Massachusetts) is exceptional. There are only two previous inland records for Massachusetts, one from Natick in October 1880 and one from Longmeadow in August 1974. Additionally, there are only three previous November records and one December record anywhere in Massachusetts.

Lesser Yellowlegs lingered in Newburyport Harbor until at least November 29, when twelve were counted there. Two Lesser Yellowlegs were able to survive through the end of December in Harwich. There are only about ten Lesser Yellowlegs records from December over the last decade, although this species has successfully overwintered in Massachusetts at least twice (Newburyport Harbor 2002 and West Harwich 1999). A Willet of the western subspecies (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus inornatus*) lingered on Martha's Vineyard into the beginning of December. There are only about nine previous December records of Willets in Massachusetts. Western Willets far outnumber eastern Willets during the fall in Massachusetts, and it is likely that all of the winter Willet records refer to *inornatus*.

A very late Hudsonian Godwit was still present on Plum Island on November 23, missing by two days the record late date for Massachusetts set by a lingerer found at the same site in 1999. Marbled Godwits are found somewhat more routinely during the winter in Massachusetts. Still, the Marbled Godwit that was present until at least December 20 in East Falmouth is one of only a dozen or so winter records for the state. A Stilt Sandpiper found on November 1 at Turners Falls provided only the eighth November record for Massachusetts and was particularly noteworthy for that inland locality.

A Red Phalarope was observed in Pittsfield in early November. Although there have been sporadic reports from inland locations, mainly in the fall, it is still rare to find Red Phalaropes, the most pelagic of the phalaropes, away from the coast. In Massachusetts it is a regular sight on pelagic trips, during coastal storms in the spring, and again in the fall and early winter. Still, the 1435 Red Phalaropes counted at First Encounter Beach on December 7 provided an excellent count, and this was among the highest state daily totals.

The same storm on December 7 brought excellent numbers of jaegers within sight of land in Eastham. The count of 228 Pomarine Jaegers is the fourth highest single day total ever in Massachusetts. That same day a Skua (*Catharacta* sp.) was observed as it winged its way up the beach. The skuas in the genus *Catharacta* are notoriously difficult to identify. Historically,

Massachusetts birders have had to work hard to distinguish the subtle characters separating South Polar and Great Skuas. Two recent records of birds identified as Brown Skua in England bring a whole new dimension to this identification challenge. Researchers used DNA samples from feathers taken off these two sick birds when they were brought in for care to make their determination. This story certainly does provide perspective on just how difficult bird identification can sometimes be, although it is not feasible to carry a molecular lab into the field, not yet anyway. On December 14, a light morph Parasitic Jaeger was observed at Andrew's Point in Rockport. Unlike Pomarine Jaegers, Parasitic Jaegers are rare in Massachusetts after October. In fact, this is the latest record of the species and only the fifth December record for Massachusetts.

Adding to the jaeger excitement at First Encounter Beach on December 7 were the large numbers of Dovekies counted there. Observers tallied 1270 Dovekies flying up the beach and sometimes over the parking lot! The following day four Atlantic Puffins were counted at the same location. A few were also seen from Andrew's Point, traditionally the "Puffin Spot" during November. Common Murres have been reported more frequently and in greater numbers in recent years. This is reflected in the count of fifteen from Andrew's Point on November 21. Prior to the mid-1990s there was only one count of over five birds (and that was six) seen in a single day in Massachusetts. In the last five years, there have been seven counts of over ten birds, and even one count of 420 at Andrew's Point in December 2002. J. Trimble

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|----------|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Greenland Greater White-fronted Goose | | | | American Wigeon | | | |
| 11/1-4 | W. Newbury | 1 | A. O'Hare# | 11/2, 27 | S. Monomoy | 70, 40 | B. Nikula# |
| 11/5 | Rochester | 1 | G. Gove | 11/5 | Turners Falls | 12 | M. Taylor |
| Snow Goose | | | | 11/5 | GMNWR | 48 | S. Koch |
| 11/2 | Barre Falls | 95 | B. Kamp | 11/9 | Carver | 66 | G. d'Entremont |
| 11/8 | Essex | 1000 | D. Brown | 11/11 | Lexington | 90 | S. Brown |
| 11/8 | P.I. | 700 migr | S. Sutton | 11/18 | Marston Mills | 137 | P. + F. Vale |
| 11/16 | Granville | 140 | J. Weeks | 11/27 | Ipswich | 53 | P. + F. Vale |
| 11/17 | Richmond | 65 | D. St. James | 11/thr | Pittsfield (Pont.) | 2-6 | v.o. |
| 11/17 | Gay Head | 17 | A. Keith | 12/16 | Orleans | 5 | O. Spalding# |
| 11/25 | Gr. Barrington | 25 | C. Barrett | 12/28 | Newbypt | 4 | CBC (R. Heil) |
| 12/14 | Jamaica Plain | 1 | CBC (d'Entremont) | American Black Duck | | | |
| 12/26 | P.I. | 12 | P. + J. Roberts | 11/2 | S. Monomoy | 450 | B. Nikula# |
| Brant | | | | 11/23 | E. Quabbin | 253 | T. Gagnon# |
| 11/12-14 | Amherst | 1 imm | M. Fairbrother | 11/27 | Westport | 432 | M. Lynch# |
| 11/23 | Wollaston | 1000+ | TASL (A. Joslin#) | 11/30 | P.I. | 560 | E. Nielsen |
| 11/27 | Fairhaven | 360 | M. Lynch# | Blue-winged Teal | | | |
| 12/9 | Nahant | 183 | L. Pivacek | 11/2 | P.I. | 3 | P. + F. Vale |
| Mute Swan | | | | Northern Shoveler | | | |
| 12/12 | Turners Falls | 23 | H. Allen | 11/1 | Arlington Res. | 5 | K. Hartel# |
| 11/9 | Carver | 49 | G. d'Entremont | 11/1-6 | Turners Falls | 1 | M. Taylor |
| 11/27 | Westport | 100 | M. Lynch# | 11/2 | Wakefield | 4 | BBC (D. Williams) |
| 12/12 | Falmouth | 30 | CCBC (Silverstein) | 11/2, 27 | S. Monomoy | 65, 90 | B. Nikula# |
| 12/thr | Framingham | 28 | E. Taylor | 11/9 | Marshfield | 4 | G. d'Entremont |
| Wood Duck | | | | 11/10 | Boston | 2 m | B. Mayer |
| 11/1 | Plymouth | 9 | J. Trimble | 11/16 | Longmeadow | 2 | N. Eaton |
| 11/2 | Truro | 10 | D. Furbish# | 11/26 | GMNWR | 3 | S. Koch |
| 11/8 | Falmouth | 6 | G. Hirsh# | Northern Pintail | | | |
| 12/9 | Medford | 3 | E. McDonald | 11/2, 27 | S. Monomoy | 250, 65 | B. Nikula# |
| 12/14 | Northampton | 1 | D. Schell | 11/5, 27 | GMNWR | 83, 28 | S. Koch |
| Gadwall | | | | 11/8, 30 | P.I. | 140, 14 | E. Nielsen |
| 11/2 | S. Monomoy | 175 | B. Nikula# | 11/9 | Westport | 136 | E. Nielsen |
| 11/8 | Chilmark | 30 | A. Keith | 11/23 | E. Quabbin | 18 | T. Gagnon# |
| 11/9 | Pittsfield (Pont.) | 2 | R. Packard | 12/14 | Northampton | 1 | T. Gagnon |
| 11/9 | Barnstable | 31 | G. d'Entremont | 12/20 | E. Longmeadow | 1 | J. Weeks |
| 11/11, 12/27 | Ipswich | 74, 10 | Heil, Berry | 12/22 | Groton | 1 f | T. Pirro |
| 11/15 | Woburn | 14 | M. Rines# | 12/25-27 | Winchester | 1 m | A. Ankers |
| 11/26 | Longmeadow | 1 | N. Eaton | 12/26 | P.I. | 2 m, 1 f | T. Wetmore |
| 11/27 | S. Monomoy | 70 | B. Nikula | Green-winged Teal | | | |
| 12/14 | Gloucester (E.P.) | 27 | R. Heil | 11/1 | Randolph | 170 | G. d'Entremont |
| Eurasian Wigeon | | | | 11/2, 27 | S. Monomoy | 300, 30 | B. Nikula# |
| 11/1-8 | P.I. | 1 m | T. Wetmore | 11/5, 12/2 | GMNWR | 886, 69 | S. Koch |
| 11/11-22 | Ipswich | 1 f | R. Heil# | 11/8, 30 | P.I. | 750, 78 | E. Nielsen |
| 11/18 | Salisbury | 1 | D. Larson# | 11/16 | Nauset | 30 | M. Lynch# |
| 11/thr | Marston Mills | 1 m | v.o. | 11/23 | E. Quabbin | 131 | T. Gagnon# |
| 12/27 | Osterville | 1 | E. Foster | 12/21 | Winchester | 3 | A. Ankers# |
| 12/thr | Newbypt | 1 m | v.o. | 12/27 | Newbypt | 1 | R. Heil |

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|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Canvasback | | | | 11/18 | Salisbury | 300 | D. Larson# |
| 11/2, 27 | S. Monomoy | 11, 7 | B. Nikula# | 11/27 | Westport | 700 | E. Nielsen |
| 11/9 | Southboro | 2 f | M. Lynch# | 12/9 | Nahant | 310 | L. Pivacek |
| 11/thr | Cambr. (F.P.) | 20 max | v.o. | Black Scoter | | | |
| 12/12 | Falmouth | 12 | CCBC (Silverstein) | 11/2 | Pittsfield (Onota) | 40 | C. Blagdon# |
| 12/25 | Southwick | 1 | S. Kellogg | 11/4 | Rockport (A.P.) | 9055 | R. Heil |
| 12/29 | Cambr. (F.P.) | 2 | S. Simpson | 11/5 | Amherst | 5 | H. Allen |
| Redhead | | | | 11/15 | Westport | 160 | E. Nielsen |
| 11/1-7 | Cambr. (F.P.) | 2 | v.o. | 11/18 | Salisbury | 100 | D. Larson# |
| Ring-necked Duck | | | | 11/25 | Manomet | 80 | D. Furbish |
| 11/2 | Pittsfield (Mud Pd) | 400 | C. Blagdon# | 11/30 | E. Orleans | 900+ | B. Nikula# |
| 11/2 | S. Monomoy | 190 | B. Nikula# | 12/9 | Nahant | 208 | L. Pivacek |
| 11/2 | W. Newbury | 511 | BBC (S. Moore) | Long-tailed Duck | | | |
| 11/9 | Southboro | 1540 | M. Lynch# | 11/4 | Rockport (A.P.) | 2460 | R. Heil |
| 11/22 | Ayer | 70 | E. Stromsted | 11/6 | Southwick | 1 | S. Kellogg |
| 11/24 | Egremont | 105 | K. Ryan | 11/12 | Nantucket | 26,000 | E. Ray |
| 11/29 | Framingham | 130 | E. Taylor | 11/16 | Fairhaven | 115 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| 11/thr | Melrose | 78 max | D. + I. Jewell | 11/16 | Pittsfield (Onota) | 1 | T. Collins |
| 12/1 | Avon | 94 | M. Faherty | 11/18 | Salisbury | 500 | D. Larson# |
| 12/25 | Winchester | 5 | A. Ankers | 11/27 | S. Monomoy | 400+ | B. Nikula |
| Greater Scaup | | | | 12/6 | Rockport (A.P.) | 370 | R. Heil |
| 11/1 | Randolph | 42 | G. d'Entremont | Bufflehead | | | |
| 11/4 | Rockport (A.P.) | 39 | R. Heil | 11/2 | Pittsfield (Onota) | 35 | C. Blagdon# |
| 11/5 | Turners Falls | 10 | M. Taylor | 11/18 | Marblehead | 280 | R. Heil |
| 11/13 | Richmond | 3 | T. Collins | 11/23 | Winthrop | 296 | TASL (P. + F. Vale) |
| 11/16 | Falmouth | 700+ | R. Heil# | 11/27 | Fairhaven | 382 | M. Lynch# |
| 11/27 | Mattapoisett | 341 | M. Lynch# | 11/27 | Cape Ann | 120 | R. Heil |
| 11/27 | Westport | 300 | E. Nielsen | 11/27 | Westport | 270 | E. Nielsen |
| 11/30 | Quincy | 1000 | E. Taylor | 12/12 | Falmouth | 237+CCBC | (Silverstein) |
| 12/14 | Salisbury | 15 | BBC (S. Grinley) | 12/29 | Sunderland | 1 | H. Allen |
| 12/25 | Southwick | 3 | S. Kellogg | Common Goldeneye | | | |
| Lesser Scaup | | | | 11/2 | Boston | 40 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| 11/2 | S. Monomoy | 210 | B. Nikula# | 11/9 | Southboro | 29 | M. Lynch# |
| 11/4, 12/31 | Southwick | 24, 6 | S. Kellogg | 11/16 | Fairhaven | 130 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| 11/23 | DWWS | 8 | G. d'Entremont | 11/23 | E. Quabbin | 16 | T. Gagnon# |
| 11/24 | Cambr. (F.P.) | 7 | O. Spalding | 11/24 | Egremont | 14 | K. Ryan |
| 11/27 | Westport | 140 | E. Nielsen | 11/27 | Westport | 90 | E. Nielsen |
| 11/29 | Marston Mills | 10 | J. Liller# | 11/27 | Richmond | 21 | R. Packard |
| 11/30 | Cheshire | 5 | T. Gagnon | 12/16 | Cotuit | 75+ | M. Keleher |
| 12/2 | GMNWR | 17 | S. Koch | 12/28 | Newbypt | 74 | P. + F. Vale |
| 12/30 | Lynn | 185 | R. Heil | Barrow's Goldeneye | | | |
| King Eider | | | | 11/1 | Randolph | 1 f | G. d'Entremont |
| thr | Cape Ann | 1-3 | v.o. | 12/14-25 | Cotuit | 1 | v.o. |
| 11/11 | Gay Head | 2 m, 2f | A. Keith# | 12/15 | Gloucester | 1 m | J. Berry |
| 12/14 | Eastham | 1 f | CBC (Petersen) | 12/24 | P.I. | 1 m ad | T. Wetmore |
| Common Eider | | | | 12/27 | Ipswich | 1 m | J. Berry |
| 11/4 | Rockport (A.P.) | 8020 | R. Heil | Hooded Merganser | | | |
| 11/22 | Eastham (F.E.) | 2500 | G. d'Entremont | 11/11 | Ipswich | 98 | R. Heil# |
| 11/25 | Manomet | 700+ | D. Furbish | 11/15 | Arlington Res. | 65 | J. Sutherland# |
| 11/27 | Westport | 1400 | E. Nielsen | 11/16 | Pittsfield (Pont.) | 300 | T. Collins |
| 11/27 | S. Monomoy | 10,000 | B. Nikula | 11/17 | Newton | 76 | R. Merrill |
| 11/27 | Fairhaven | 1023 | M. Lynch# | 11/23 | E. Quabbin | 58 | T. Gagnon# |
| 11/30 | Gay Head | 20,000 | A. Keith | 11/30 | Ludlow | 40 | C. Gentes |
| 12/9 | Nahant | 1517 | L. Pivacek | 12/12 | Falmouth | 41 | CCBC (Silverstein) |
| 12/12 | Falmouth | 1000+CCBC | (Silverstein) | 12/19 | Brookfield | 25 | C. Buelow |
| Harlequin Duck | | | | 12/29 | Worcester | 35 | J. Hogan |
| 11/2 | Boston | 1 m | BBC (Stymeist) | 12/31 | P.I. | 40 | T. Wetmore |
| 11/thr | Rockport (A.P.) | 70 | v.o. | Common Merganser | | | |
| 11/7 | N. Scituate | 14 | R. Titus | 11/16 | Pittsfield (Pont.) | 200 | T. Collins |
| 11/10 | Barnstable (S.N.) | 4 | G. Hirth# | 11/27 | Goshen | 47 | R. Packard |
| 11/11 | Sandwich | 4 m | J. Kricher | 11/29 | Wakefield | 133 | P. + F. Vale |
| 11/17 | P'town | 4 | P. + F. Vale | 12/2 | Westboro | 75 | C. Buelow |
| 11/30 | E. Orleans | 3 | P. Flood# | 12/9 | Granville | 111 | J. Weeks |
| 12/1 | Nahant | 2 | J. Berry# | 12/10 | Medford | 205 | M. Rines |
| 12/9 | Orleans | 4 | M. Tuttle | 12/14 | Cambr. (F.P.) | 220 | E. Wyde |
| Surf Scoter | | | | 12/25 | Southwick | 65 | S. Kellogg |
| 11/2 | Cheshire | 2 | T. Gagnon# | 12/31 | Stoneham | 135 | D. + I. Jewell |
| 11/4 | Rockport (A.P.) | 8140 | R. Heil | Red-breasted Merganser | | | |
| 11/5 | Turners Falls | 1 | M. Taylor | 11/2 | Boston | 110 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| 11/15 | Bourne | 850 | BBC (Stymeist) | 11/4 | Rockport (A.P.) | 225 | R. Heil |
| 11/25 | Manomet | 220 | D. Furbish | 11/4 | Southwick | 4 | S. Kellogg |
| 11/27 | Fairhaven | 515 | M. Lynch# | 11/4 | Duxbury Bay | 141 | D. Clapp |
| 12/9 | Nantucket Sound | 658 | S. Perkins# | 11/8 | P.I. | 650 | E. Nielsen |
| 12/9 | Nahant | 475 | L. Pivacek | 11/16 | Falmouth | 280+ | R. Heil# |
| White-winged Scoter | | | | 11/17 | P'town | 485+ | P. + F. Vale |
| 11/2 | Cheshire | 1 | C. Blagdon# | 11/27 | Fairhaven | 1371 | M. Lynch# |
| 11/4 | Rockport (A.P.) | 1310 | R. Heil | 11/27 | Westport | 2700 | E. Nielsen |
| 11/17 | Wellfleet | 500+ | P. + F. Vale | 11/27 | S. Monomoy | 600+ | B. Nikula |

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|-----------------------|---------------------|----------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|--------------------|
| Ruddy Duck | | | | 11/9 | Gloucester (B.R.) | 18 | P + F. Vale |
| 11/1 | Arlington Res. | 30 | K. Hartel# | 11/16 | Sandwich | 6 | G. d'Entremont# |
| 11/2 | W. Newbury | 496 | BBC (S. Moore) | 11/30 | Winthrop | 25 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| 11/2, 27 | S. Monomoy | 90, 213 | B. Nikula# | 12/10 | Dennis (Corp.B.) | 25 | G. Gove |
| 11/2 | Pittsfield (Mud Pd) | 10 | C. Blagdon# | 12/22 | Marblehead | 36 | R. Heil |
| 11/22 | Eastham | 39 | G. d'Entremont | 12/28 | P.I. | 25 | CBC (R. Heil) |
| 11/27 | Westport | 32 | E. Nielsen | Eared Grebe * | | | |
| 11/29 | W. Newbury | 213 | G. d'Entremont# | thr | Gloucester (E.P.) | 1 | v.o. |
| 11/30 | Ludlow | 1 | C. Gentes | Northern Fulmar | | | |
| 11/thr | Melrose | 88 max | D. + I. Jewell | 11/21 | Rockport (A.P.) | 53 | R. Heil |
| 12/thr | Gay Head | 100+ | A. Fischer# | 11/22 | P'town | 14 | P. Flood# |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | | | | 12/5 | Jeffries L. | 4 | C. Tessaglia-Hymes |
| 11/2 | Boston | 4 | BBC (Stymeist) | 12/7 | Eastham (F.E.) | 43 | B. Nikula# |
| 11/15 | Westboro | 2 f | T. Spahr | Greater Shearwater | | | |
| Ruffed Grouse | | | | 11/4 | Rockport (A.P.) | 10 | R. Heil |
| 11/5 | Maynard | 1 (red) | L. Nachtrab | Tubenose species | | | |
| 11/11 | Quincy | 1 | J. Young | 11/21 | Rockport (A.P.) | 20+ | R. Heil |
| 11/16 | Hardwick | 2 | C. Buelow | Storm-Petrel species | | | |
| 11/30 | Ware R. IBA | 1 | M. Lynch# | 12/7 | Eastham (F.E.) | 1 | B. Nikula |
| 12/30 | Quabbin (G40) | 1 | C. Buelow | Northern Gannet | | | |
| Wild Turkey | | | | 11/4, 21 | Rockport (A.P.) | 3330, 630 | R. Heil |
| 11/3 | Lincoln | 24 | D. Peebles | 11/7 | P.I. | 1000+ | T. Wetmore |
| 11/6 | Amherst | 32 | H. Allen | 11/7 | Chatham | 300 | D. Manchester |
| 11/7 | Hingham | 14 | R. Titus | 11/15 | Orleans | 500+ | B. Nikula |
| 11/17 | Ipswich | 20 | J. Berry | 11/16 | Barnstable (S.N.) | 120 | M. Lynch# |
| 11/30 | Brimfield | 47 | I. Lynch | 11/19 | Stellwagen | 2000+ | O. Spalding# |
| 12/29 | Truro | 7 | D. Manchester# | 11/21, 12/8 | Eastham (F.E.) | 2100, 2500 | B. Nikula |
| Northern Bobwhite | | | | 11/22 | P'town | 6000 | B. Nikula# |
| 11/15 | Wellfleet | 2 m, 5 f | P + F. Vale | 12/6 | Dennis (Corp. B.) | 110 | B. Nikula# |
| 11/16 | Nauset | 1 | M. Lynch# | 12/6, 15 | Rockport (A.P.) | 180, 140 | R. Heil |
| Red-throated Loon | | | | 12/6 | P'town | 390 | B. Nikula# |
| 11/1 | Plymouth | 7 | J. Trimble | Brown Pelican (no details) * | | | |
| 11/4, 12/6 | Rockport (A.P.) | 422, 32 | R. Heil | 12/23-25 | Eastham-Wellfleet | 1 imm | fide G. Page |
| 11/8, 30 | P.I. | 182, 33 | E. Nielsen | Double-crested Cormorant | | | |
| 11/16 | Cheshire | 1 | R. Packard | 11/2 | Monomoy | 6000+ | P. Flood# |
| 11/17 | off Edgartown | 250+ | A. Keith | 11/2 | Braintree | 400 | G. d'Entremont |
| 11/17 | Wellfleet | 65+ | P + F. Vale | 11/2 | Boston | 491 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| 11/21 | Eastham (F.E.) | 60 | B. Nikula | 11/2 | Newbypt. | 6100+ | BBC (S. Moore) |
| 11/27 | Westport | 284 | E. Nielsen | 11/17 | P'town | 250+ | P + F. Vale |
| 11/30 | Chatham | 80 | B. Nikula# | Great Cormorant | | | |
| Pacific Loon * | | | | 11/5 | Turners Falls | 1 | M. Taylor |
| 11/4 | Rockport (A.P.) | 1 ad | R. Heil | 11/7 | Salisbury | 30 | T. Wetmore |
| 11/10-25 | Sandwich | 1 | G. Hirth + v.o. | 11/18 | Nahant | 55 | R. Heil |
| 11/22-30 | Wellfleet | 1 | G. d'Entremont + v.o. | 11/23 | P'town H. | 125+ | B. Nikula# |
| Common Loon | | | | 11/27 | Cape Ann | 252 | R. Heil |
| 11/4, 12/15 | Rockport (A.P.) | 654, 16 | R. Heil | 11/27 | Westport | 24 | E. Nielsen |
| 11/8, 30 | P.I. | 15, 18 | E. Nielsen | American Bittern | | | |
| 11/11 | Wachusett Res. | 6 | S. Sutton | 11/8 | Westport | 1 | J. Hoye# |
| 11/16 | Sandwich | 45 | G. d'Entremont# | 11/12 | Newbypt | 1 | MAS (N. Soulette) |
| 11/17 | P'town | 74 | P + F. Vale | 11/22 | Salisbury | 1 | S. Haydock# |
| 11/23 | E. Quabbin | 30 | T. Gagnon# | 11/22 | Ipswich | 1 | S. Hedman |
| 11/26, 12/19 | Ipswich | 24, 27 | J. Berry | 11/22 | WBWS | 1 | G. d'Entremont |
| 11/27 | Westport | 105 | E. Nielsen | 11/25 | Eastham (F.H.) | 3 | C. Dalton |
| 12/9 | Nantucket Sound | 77 | S. Perkins# | 12/28 | P.I. | 1 | S. Moore# |
| 12/10 | Cambr. (F.P.) | 1 | E. Wylde | Great Blue Heron | | | |
| 12/30 | Turners Falls | 1 | W. Lafley | 11/2 | Boston | 9 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| Pied-billed Grebe | | | | 11/5 | Ipswich | 7 | R. Heil |
| 11/1 | Randolph | 5 | G. d'Entremont | 11/16 | Fairhaven | 7 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| 11/2 | S. Monomoy | 11 | B. Nikula# | 11/23 | Orleans | 8 | R. Heil# |
| 11/5, 12/2 | Cambr. (F.P.) | 6, 2 | Miller, Guppy | 11/27 | Westport | 7 | M. Lynch# |
| 11/8 | W. Newbury | 4 | P + F. Vale | Great Egret | | | |
| 11/27 | Longmeadow | 1 | N. Eaton | 11/1, 7 | P.I. | 6, 1 | T. Wetmore |
| 11/29 | Holyoke | 1 | C. Gentes | 11/5 | Ipswich | 1 | R. Heil |
| 12/1 | Avon | 2 | M. Faherty | 11/7 | Westport | 28 | G. Gove# |
| 12/2 | GMNWR | 2 | S. Koch | 11/15 | S. Dartmouth | 3 | J. Sweeney# |
| Horned Grebe | | | | 11/27 | Westport | 5 | M. Lynch# |
| 11/1, 16 | New Salem | 5, 4 | W. Lafley | 11/27 | Fairhaven | 2 | M. Lynch# |
| 11/1 | Plymouth | 17 | J. Trimble | Snowy Egret | | | |
| 11/11 | Wachusett Res. | 9 | S. Sutton | 11/1 | P.I. | 1 | T. Wetmore |
| 11/16 | Falmouth | 83 | R. Farrell | 11/2 | S. Monomoy | 1 | B. Nikula# |
| 11/18 | Salisbury | 20 | D. Larson# | Cattle Egret | | | |
| 11/23 | E. Quabbin | 18 | T. Gagnon# | 11/1-4 | Truro | 1 | v.o. |
| 11/27 | Fairhaven | 206 | M. Lynch# | 11/6-7 | New Salem | 1 | fide D. Small |
| 11/27 | Westport | 121 | E. Nielsen | 11/8 | W. Newbury | 1 | G. Gove# |
| 12/27 | P.I. | 15 | R. Heil | Black-crowned Night-Heron | | | |
| Red-necked Grebe | | | | 11/5, 11 | Ipswich | 3, 1 | R. Heil |
| 11/1 | Plymouth | 8 | J. Trimble | 11/15 | S. Dart. (A. Pd) | 1 juv | J. Sweeney# |
| 11/2 | Pittsfield (Onota) | 1 | C. Blagdon# | 11/30 | Winthrop | 4 | BBC (Stymeist) |

Black-crowned Night-Heron (continued)

12/20 E. Falmouth 1 CBC (D. Comeau)
 12/21 Hyannis 1 ad CBC (E. Nielsen)

Black Vulture

11/15 Bourne 1 S. Perkins
 11/16 Hyannis 1 M. Lynch#
 11/21, 27 Granville 2, 1 Hawkcount (Weeks)
 11/27 Westport 1 M. Lynch#
 11/29 Hingham 1 C. Dalton

Turkey Vulture

11/2 Truro 8 D. Furbish#
 11/2 Sutton 3 M. Lynch#
 11/7 Barre Falls 13 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 12/1 Westport 73 together G. Gove#
 12/1 Bourne 40 J. Kricher
 12/3 Newton 1 E. Taylor
 12/14 Nahant 1 D. Wilkinson
 12/27 Ipswich 3 J. Berry
 12/27 Forestdale 3 D. Manchester

Osprey

11/2, 7 Barre Falls 2, 2 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 11/2 S. Monomoy 1 B. Nikula#
 11/7 W. Newbury 2 J. Hills#
 11/9 Lakeville 1 J. Sweeney
 11/9 Southboro 1 M. Lynch#
 11/12 Lynnfield 1 J. Mullen#
 12/1 Framingham 1 E. Morrier
 12/17 Wayland 1 H. Norwood
 12/29 Truro 1 D. Manchester#

Bald Eagle

11/1-12/13 Granville 52 Hawkcount (Weeks)
 11/9 Lakeville 2 ad J. Sweeney
 11/9 Quabbin (G35) 3 C. Buelow
 11/22-12/31 Medford 1-2 ad v.o.
 11/23 E. Quabbin 12 T. Gagnon#
 11/thr Barre Falls 4 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 12/12, 13 Granville 8, 6 Hawkcount (Weeks)
 12/31 Newbypt 4 S. McGrath

Northern Harrier

11/2 S. Monomoy 5 B. Nikula#
 11/5 Ipswich 2 R. Heil
 11/15 S. Dart. (A. Pd) 3 J. Sweeney#
 11/16 Truro 4 J. Young
 11/16 Nauset 3 M. Lynch#
 11/23 E. Quabbin 3 T. Gagnon#
 11/25 Eastham (F.H.) 3 C. Dalton
 11/27 Mattapoisset 2 M. Lynch#
 11/thr Barre Falls 10 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 12/19 Cumb. Farms 4 J. Sweeney
 thr DWWS 3-5 D. Furbish
 thr P.I. 6-8 v.o.

Sharp-shinned Hawk

11/1 Granville 40 Hawkcount (Weeks)
 11/1-22 Chatham 80 total D. Manchester
 11/7 Barre Falls 26 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 11/9 Westport 6 E. Nielsen
 11/11 Ipswich 4 R. Heil#
 11/16 Fairhaven 6 BBC (Stymeist)
 11/18 Mt.A. 8 R. Stymeist
 11/22 Gay Head 8 V. Laux
 11/23 Orleans 4 R. Heil#
 11/thr Granville 88 Hawkcount (Weeks)
 11/thr Barre Falls 90 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 12/20 Holliston 2 J. Hoye#
 12/27 Marlboro 2 T. Spahr

Cooper's Hawk

11/1-22 Chatham 25 D. Manchester
 11/2 Boston 2 BBC (Stymeist)
 11/4, 23 DWWS 2, 2 D. Furbish
 11/7 Barre Falls 8 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 11/11 Ipswich 2 ad R. Heil#
 11/23 Stoughton 2 G. d'Entremont
 11/27 Cape Ann 4 R. Heil
 11/thr Granville 10 Hawkcount (Weeks)
 11/thr Barre Falls 31 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 12/12 Barre Falls 2 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 12/24 DWWS 2 D. Furbish

Northern Goshawk

11/3-25 Granville 4 Hawkcount (Weeks)
 11/8, 10 Chatham 1, 2 D. Manchester
 11/13 Southwick 1 S. Kellogg
 11/16-12/13 Barre Falls 6 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 11/18 W. Gloucester 1 imm J. MacDougall
 11/23 Orleans 1 imm R. Heil#
 11/25 Northampton 1 T. Gagnon
 11/25 Eastham (F.H.) 1 imm C. Dalton
 11/28 Ashfield 1 S. Sauter
 12/14 Amherst 1 D. McKenna
 12/28 HRWMA 1 ad T. Pirro
 12/29 Truro 1 D. Manchester#

Red-shouldered Hawk

11/1 Randolph 1 G. d'Entremont
 11/7, 8 Barre Falls 19, 19 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 11/15 Gardner 2 T. Pirro
 11/15 Chatham 1 D. Manchester
 11/16 Mt. Watatic 2 T. Pirro
 11/18 DWWS 1 D. Furbish
 11/27 Mattapoisset 1 M. Lynch#
 11/28 W. Barnstable 1 ad R. Stymeist#
 11/thr Granville 30 Hawkcount (Weeks)
 11/thr Barre Falls 81 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 12/12 Taunton 1 J. Sweeney
 12/20 Springfield 1 J. Wojtanowski

Red-tailed Hawk

11/7, 8 Barre Falls 117, 116 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 11/8 Granville 139 Hawkcount (Weeks)
 11/15 Gardner 22 T. Pirro
 11/16 Mt. Watatic 26 T. Pirro
 11/1-12/13 Barre Falls 446 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 11/1-12/13 Granville 544 Hawkcount (Weeks)

Rough-legged Hawk

11/3 Deerfield 1 H. Allen
 11/7-12/13 Granville 6 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 11/15 Northampton 1 A. Magee
 11/23 Barnstable 1 dk ABC (Furbish)
 11/27 S. Monomoy 1 B. Nikula
 11/thr Barre Falls 3 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 12/4 Taunton 1 lt J. Sweeney
 12/12 W. Bridgewater 1 lt E. Giles
 12/14 Underland 1 S. Smolen-Morton
 12/14 Hatfield 1 D. Stemple
 12/19 Essex 1 lt J. Berry
 12/20 Quincy 1 CBC (d'Entremont)
 12/31 Gardner 1 lt T. Pirro
 thr DWWS 1-2 D. Furbish
 thr P.I. 3-4 v.o.

Golden Eagle

11/1 Quabbin (G35) 1 ad M. Lynch#
 11/7-27 Granville 4 Hawkcount (Weeks)
 11/9 Chilmark 1 sub ad A. Keith
 11/9 Barre Falls 1 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 11/15 Richmond 1 D. St James
 11/15 Gardner 2 ad T. Pirro
 11/21 Lenox 1 R. Laubach
 11/22 Northfield 1 M. Taylor
 11/27 Salisbury 1 juv S. Moore#
 11/30 Gloucester (E.P.) 1 subad J. Soucy#
 11/30 Lakeville 1 ad Mi. Sylvia
 12/27 Quabbin 1 v.o.

American Kestrel

thr Reports of indiv. from 15 locations

Merlin

11/2 Boston 2 BBC (Stymeist)
 11/7, 12 Barre Falls 3, 1 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 11/10 Stoneham 2 J. Offermann
 11/16 Chatham 3 D. Manchester
 thr Reports of indiv. from 18 locations

Gyrfalcon*

11/15 E. Orleans 1 dk P. Trimble#

Peregrine Falcon

11/2 S. Monomoy 2 B. Nikula#
 11/2 Boston 3 BBC (Stymeist)
 11/4 P.I. 2 J. Offermann
 11/7 Barre Falls 2 Hawkcount (Kamp)
 11/7 Chatham 2 D. Manchester

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Peregrine Falcon (continued) | | | | 11/27, 12/20 | E. Falmouth1 ph | Gove, CBC (Nikula) |
| 11/9 | Gloucester | 3 | P + F. Vale | Ruddy Turnstone | | |
| 11/16, 12/6 | Boston (Logan) | 2, 2 | N. Smith# | 11/8 | Gloucester | 10 J. Berry# |
| 12/16 | Orleans | 1 | O. Spalding# | 11/9 | Westport | 3 E. Nielsen |
| 12/26 | P.I. | 2 | P. + J. Roberts | 11/16 | Wareham | 13 R. Farrell |
| thr | Reports of indiv. from 21 | locations | | 11/26 | Sandwich | 10 J. Center |
| Virginia Rail | | | | 12/12 | Mattapoisset | 18 D. Furbish# |
| 11/12 | W. Harwich | 1+ | D. Silverstein | 12/27 | Gloucester (B.R.) | 2 P. + F. Vale |
| 11/23 | Orleans | 1 | R. Heil | Red Knot | | |
| American Coot | | | | 11/11 | Ipswich | 1 R. Heil# |
| 11/1 | Randolph | 4 | G. d'Entremont | 11/16 | Chatham (S.B.) | 450 B. Nikula# |
| 11/2, 27 | S. Monomoy | 15, 11 | B. Nikula# | Sanderling | | |
| 11/12-16 | Richmond | 2 | W. Lafley | 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 1100 B. Nikula |
| 11/22 | Cambr. (F.P.) | 4 | J. Crystal# | 11/4 | Duxbury Bay | 118 D. Clapp |
| 11/26, 12/29 | GMNWR | 41, 20 | S. Koch | 11/5 | W. Quabbin | 5 D. Cooper |
| 11/27 | Westport | 17 | E. Nielsen | 11/9 | Northampton | 1 B. Bieda |
| 11/28 | Woburn | 8 | P. Ippolitto# | 11/11 | Ipswich | 80 R. Heil# |
| 11/29 | W. Brookfield | 2 | C. Buelow | 11/15 | Westport | 65 E. Nielsen |
| 12/25 | Brookline | 3 | C. Glassenberg | 11/18 | Nahant | 400+ R. Heil |
| 12/30 | Arlington | 4 | S. Baker | 11/19 | P.I. | 90 R. Heil |
| 12/30 | Lynn | 2 | R. Heil | 12/27 | Truro | 400 B. Nikula |
| Sandhill Crane | | | | Semipalmated Sandpiper | | |
| 12/8-31 | Barnstable | 2 | S. Perkins# | 11/1 | Salisbury | 1 T. Wetmore |
| Black-bellied Plover | | | | 11/2 | Chilmark | 2 A. Keith |
| 11/1 | Quabbin (G35) | 10 | M. Lynch# | 11/2 | Eastham | 4 J. Sweeney |
| 11/2, 12/16 | Eastham | 100, 1 | Sweeney, Spaulding | 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 3 B. Nikula |
| 11/7 | Middleboro | 25 | J. Sweeney | Western Sandpiper | | |
| 11/11, 12/28 | Ipswich | 140 | R. Heil, CBC (Berry) | 11/16 | Chatham (S.B.) | 2 B. Nikula# |
| 11/11 | P.I. | 21 | J. Berry | White-rumped Sandpiper | | |
| 11/16 | Chatham (S.B.) | 900 | B. Nikula# | 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 3 B. Nikula |
| 11/23 | Winthrop | 12 | TASL (P. + F. Vale) | 11/19 | P.I. | 12 R. Heil |
| 12/12 | Mattapoisset | 4 | D. Furbish# | 11/27 | Westport | 1 E. Nielsen |
| American Golden-Plover | | | | Pectoral Sandpiper | | |
| 11/1 | Quabbin (G35) | 2 | M. Lynch# | 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 3 B. Nikula |
| 11/7 | Middleboro | 1 | J. Sweeney | 11/2 | S. Monomoy | 12+ B. Nikula# |
| 11/15 | Eastham | 1 | F. Vale | 11/5 | GMNWR | 1 S. Koch |
| Semipalmated Plover | | | | 11/6 | Greenfield | 4 R. Packard |
| 11/1 | P.I. | 1 | T. Wetmore | 11/7 | Sunderland | 1 H. Allen |
| 11/2 | Chilmark | 2 | A. Keith | 11/12 | Greenfield | 3 R. Packard |
| 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 20 | B. Nikula | Purple Sandpiper | | |
| 11/7 | Marshfield | 2 | R. Titus | 11/7 | N. Scituate | 8 R. Titus |
| 11/23 | Chatham | 1 | B. Nikula | 11/16 | Sandwich | 35 G. d'Entremont# |
| Killdeer | | | | 11/16 | Fairhaven | 45 BBC (Stymest) |
| 11/2 | Lynnfield | 13 | BBC (D. Williams) | 11/27 | Rockport | 400 R. Heil |
| 11/16 | Hadley | 15 | H. Allen | 12/1 | Nahant | 50 J. Berry# |
| American Oystercatcher | | | | 12/12 | Mattapoisset | 40 D. Furbish# |
| 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 11 | B. Nikula | 12/31 | Gloucester | 100 J. Berry |
| 11/27 | Edgartown | 2 | P. Uhlendorf | Dunlin | | |
| 12/27 | Fairhaven | 2 | CBC (M. Rines) | 11/1 | Quabbin (G35) | 21 M. Lynch# |
| American Avocet | | | | 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 950 B. Nikula |
| 11/7 | Sunderland | 1 | D. Minnear# | 11/5 | W. Quabbin | 11 D. Cooper |
| Greater Yellowlegs | | | | 11/6 | Greenfield | 1 R. Packard |
| 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 130 | B. Nikula | 11/7 | Marshfield | 180 R. Titus |
| 11/2 | Newbypt. | 49 | BBC (S. Moore) | 11/9 | Northampton | 2 B. Bieda |
| 11/5 | Ipswich | 33 | R. Heil | 11/11 | Ipswich | 620 R. Heil# |
| 11/6 | Greenfield | 4 | R. Packard | 11/15 | Eastham | 750+ P. + F. Vale |
| 11/7 | Duxbury | 186 | D. Clapp | 11/16 | Chatham (S.B.) | 2500 B. Nikula# |
| 11/18 | Salem | 5 | R. Heil | 11/19 | P.I., Newbypt | 400, 480 R. Heil |
| 11/18 | Marblehead | 5 | R. Heil | 11/19 | Newbypt | 480 R. Heil |
| 12/14 | E. Boston | 1 | R. Scott | 11/23 | Winthrop | 125 J. Young |
| Lesser Yellowlegs | | | | 11/27 | Westport | 524 E. Nielsen |
| 11/1 | Arlington Res. | 2 | K. Hartel# | 12/27 | Truro | 270 B. Nikula |
| 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 5 | B. Nikula | Stilt Sandpiper | | |
| 11/8 | P.I. | 2 | T. Wetmore | 11/1 | Turners Falls | 1 M. Taylor |
| 11/15 | Wellfleet | 2 | P. + F. Vale | Long-billed Dowitcher | | |
| 11/19 | Newbypt H. | 4 | R. Heil | 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 1 B. Nikula |
| 11/29 | Newbury | 12 | G. d'Entremont# | 11/8, 30 | P.I. | 6, 1 Vale, Larson |
| 12/14-31 | W. Harwich | 2 ph | CBC (Nikula) | 11/19 | Newbypt | 2 R. Heil |
| Western Willet | | | | Wilson's Snipe | | |
| 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 7 | B. Nikula | 11/1 | Barre Falls | 2 B. Kamp |
| 11/16 | Chatham (S.B.) | 1 | B. Nikula# | 11/5 | Ipswich | 4 R. Heil |
| 11/1-12/2 | Edgartown | 1 | A. Keith | 11/17 | Hadley | 1 H. Allen |
| Whimbrel | | | | 12/24 | Halifax | 3 F. Bouchard |
| 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 1 | B. Nikula | 12/28 | Lynnfield | 2 D. + I. Jewell |
| Hudsonian Godwit | | | | American Woodcock | | |
| 11/8, 23 | P.I. | 6, 1 | Nielsen, Center | 11/17 | Gay Head | 3 A. Fischer |
| Marbled Godwit | | | | 11/1-12/4 | Reports of indiv. from 8 | locations |
| 11/2 | N. Monomoy | 4 | B. Nikula | | | |

mid-October, and by November it's in full swing. The numbers of these little secretive owls that are banded boggles the mind. In Uxbridge, Strickland Wheelock banded a total of 117 during November, while Norm Smith of the Trailside Museum netted 100 at the Daniel Webster Sanctuary in Marshfield and another sixty-nine in Milton during the same month. Snowy Owls were noted from Logan Airport and from Plum Island, but were less than cooperative in their routines and thus hard to find. Barred Owls were noted from at least fourteen locations as compared with only five locations during the same period last year.

A roost of Chimney Swifts in Hanover, which had as many as 5000 individuals in late September, continued until at least November 1, with as many as forty swifts still coming in to roost. The roost was last checked on November 7 and no birds were found. There are only four other November records of Chimney Swift, the latest being November 11, 1977.

Three of the *Selasphorus* hummingbirds reported from October were still being observed. The immature male **Rufous**, first found on October 14, was last seen on November 3 in East Sandwich. A female Rufous banded in Chicopee was last seen on December 23, staying just short of three months. This bird was still coming to a feeder after the major snowstorms in December. It was counted on the Springfield Area Christmas Bird Count on December 20, surely a first for that count! The *Selasphorus* hummingbird first found in Lanesboro on October 11 was last seen on December 2. Photos confirm this bird as a hatch-year female *Selasphorus*. This is indicated by the fairly clean white gorget with an apparent lack of any red gorget feathers, together with the squared-off black tip to R1 with a green band between it and the rufous base.

As is often the case, November can be full of surprises, and this year the month provided plenty of great birds, including the first state record of **Cave Swallow** (pending MARC approval). In November of 2002 a fallout of Cave Swallows was recorded up the east coast all the way to Connecticut, where over 100 were seen at Lighthouse Point. There were some reports of likely candidates here in Massachusetts, but these swallows evaded conclusive identification. This year on November 15, after two days of northwest gales, the conditions were ideal for vagrants. Jeremiah and Peter Trimble and Blair Nikula decided Pochet Island was the place to look, and Cave Swallow was on the top of their list of possibilities. Over the previous two weeks small numbers had been reported from Connecticut, Rhode Island, and even New Brunswick, and the first state record for Massachusetts was overdue. Their hunch was right, and they were rewarded with sightings (and video) of at least two Cave Swallows. Thanks to cell phones, a few other lucky birders were able to see this new state bird that afternoon, but unfortunately the birds could not be relocated the following day despite a massive search. Another Cave Swallow was found in Chatham on November 27, a great day of Thanksgiving for a lucky birder. In New Hampshire four Cave Swallows were found on November 26 feeding along the wrack line south of Concord Point in Rye. This was a first state record as well; however, not surprising given the recent sightings in the northeastern United States. They all appeared to be of the southwestern or Mexican subspecies.

A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was noted from Tuckernuck Island on November 1. This bird was carefully described and has been accepted by the MARC. This was just the second record for the state; the first confirmed record of this species was from Wellesley in December 1988. Perhaps just as interesting was a well documented report of a **Least Flycatcher** first noted in Marblehead on November 18 and seen at the same location on **December 22**. The previous late date for this species in the state was November 27, 1977, on Tuckernuck. A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** delighted hundreds of birders during its three-week stay at Marconi Beach in Wellfleet. Ironically, the last November report of this species was from Wellfleet on November 8, 1996. It seems almost routine that in late fall and early winter you can count on an **Ash-**

throated Flycatcher appearing somewhere in the state. This year there were two sightings during the period; one was photographed on numerous times at point-blank range in Stoneham, and another was seen at Gay Head.

Continuing on with the period notables, two **MacGillivray's Warblers** were noted, one in Bradford (Haverhill) and another in Westport. There are eleven previous records for this western *Oporornis* in Massachusetts. A **Western Meadowlark** was heard singing on November 26 at Gay Head, a lucky event since its plumage is virtually identical to that of the Eastern Meadowlark. This was the first fall report of this species, but since migrants rarely sing in the fall, it makes one wonder if there may be more going through undetected. Other species of special note included a Red-headed Woodpecker in Medfield, a Yellow-throated Warbler in Nahant, and a Prothonotary Warbler photographed on the late date of November 30; the previous late date was November 14, 1962. A Bullock's Oriole was photographed at a feeder in Walpole and a Blue Grosbeak was noted from Truro on November 2.

The winter finch reports indicate a better-than-average flight year. There were two reports of **Bohemian Waxwings**, a species associated with mountain ash berries in the boreal forest. Because the mountain ash berry crop is poor in some areas, we might expect a small flight of Bohemians into the winter. The white birch seed crop has been reported poor in many northern areas, and as a result an influx of Common Redpolls started to appear in our area by mid-November, with sizeable flocks noted throughout December. Flocks of Common Redpolls always bring the chance of seeing **Hoary Redpolls**, and individuals of this species were described at Plum Island and Belchertown. Pine Grosbeaks, like the Bohemian Waxwings, favor mountain ash berries, and there were two individual birds noted during the period. Purple Finches continued in good numbers, a truly a welcome change from the dismal showing of recent years. A few Red Crossbills were noted from western Massachusetts, with the first December sightings since 1999. Evening Grosbeaks were still scarce, with most appearing at higher elevations in Berkshire, Franklin, and Worcester counties.

Several species were noted later in the season; most notable was a carefully described Swainson's Thrush in Lexington on November 22. Swainson's Thrush is very rare after about mid-November anywhere in the United States, and most winter reports are misidentified Hermit Thrushes. The Lexington bird had almost no tail. If a bird lost its tail during migration it would undoubtedly hamper it on its journey south. A Summer Tanager in Stow and a Scarlet Tanager in Provincetown were both photographed at feeders, each a first December record for the species. There were four reports of White-eyed Vireo and December reports of Black-throated Blue Warbler, two Ovenbirds, and a Northern Waterthrush.

R. H. Stymeist

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------|---------------------|
| Barn Owl | | | | Short-eared Owl | | | |
| 11/16 | Chilmark | 1 | A. Keith | 11/8 | Dorchester | 1 | R. Donovan |
| Eastern Screech-Owl | | | | 11/8 | Westport | 1 | J. Hoye# |
| 11/22 | Gloucester | 2 red | S. Moore# | 11/10, 12/13 | DWWS | 1, 1 | Furbish, Carey |
| 11/22 | Rockport | 2 | D. Chickering | 11/13, 12/26 | P.I. | 1, 2 | Chickering, Wetmore |
| 12/4, 5 | Melrose | 1 red, 1 gray | D. + I. Jewell | 11/16 | Chatham (S.B.) | 2 | P. Flood# |
| Great Horned Owl | | | | 11/18, 12/21 | Salisbury | 1, 3 | Larson, Hills |
| 12/14 | Scituate | 2 | S. Maguire | 12/6 | Boston (Logan) | 3 | N. Smith# |
| 12/14 | Hingham | 2 | C. Nims | 12/16-31 | Chilmark | 1 | R. Johnson# |
| Snowy Owl | | | | 12/31 | Gloucester | 1 | J. Berry |
| 11/16, 12/6 | Boston (Logan) | 1, 2 | N. Smith# | Northern Saw-whet Owl | | | |
| 11/23, 12/27 | P.I. | 1, 1 | Nove, Wetmore | 11/8 | Uxbridge | 19 b | S. Wheelock |
| 12/1 | Newbypt | 1 | S. King | 11/15 | E. Orleans | 1 dead | B. Nikula# |
| Barred Owl | | | | 11/16 | DWWS | 31 b | N. Smith# |
| 11/25 | Saugus | 2 | D. + I. Jewell | 11/18 | Danvers | 1 dead | D. Lacey |
| 12/14 | Berlin | 2 | S. Sutton | 11/30 | Hadley | 2 | A. Magee |
| thr | Reports of indiv. from 12 locations | | | 11/thr | DWWS | 100 b | N. Smith# |
| Long-eared Owl | | | | 11/thr | Uxbridge | 117 b | S. Wheelock |
| 11/13 | Whately | 1 | A. Magee | 11/thr | Milton | 69 b | N. Smith# |
| 11/16 | Salisbury | 1 | R. Merrill# | 12/3 | Hadley | 1 | A. Magee |
| 11/thr | DWWS | 3 | N. Smith# | 12/28 | Newbury | 2 | CBC (R. Heil) |
| 12/13-20 | Lexington | 1 | J. Forbes# | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------|---------|-----------------------|---|--------|--------------------|
| Chimney Swift | 11/1, 7 | Hanover | 40, 0 | W. Petersen | 11/12 Burlington | 1 | M. Rines |
| Rufous Hummingbird | 11/1-3 | E. Sandwich | 1 imm m | R. Ayotte | 11/15 E. Orleans | 1 | B. Nikula# |
| | 11/1-12/23 | Chicopee | 1 f b | D. Glaszcz# | Red-eyed Vireo | | |
| Selasphorus species | 11/1-12/2 | Lanesboro | 1 | P. Dion | 11/2 Boston | 1 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| Red-headed Woodpecker | 12/20-31 | Medfield | 1 imm | D. Allen + v.o. | 11/2 Windsor | 1 | B. Wood |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | 11/12 | Taunton | 4 | J. Sweeney | 11/17 Chilmark | 1 | A. Keith |
| | 11/23 | E. Quabbin | 3 | T. Gagnon# | American Crow | | |
| | 11/23 | Orleans | 3 | R. Heil | 11/15 Framingham | 800+ | E. Taylor |
| | 11/28 | E. Sandwich | 6 | R. Stymeist# | 11/21 Chicopee | 4000 | S. Kellogg |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | 11/2 | Boston | 2 | BBC (Stymeist) | 11/22 Leicester | 885 | M. Lynch# |
| | 11/7 | Westport | 2 | G. Gove# | 12/28 Brookline | 2000 | A. Joslin# |
| | 11/16 | Barnstable | 1 juv | St. Miller# | 12/thr Framingham | 1000 | E. Taylor |
| | 11/16 | Falmouth | 1 | R. Heil# | Fish Crow | | |
| | 11/18 | Mt.A. | 3 | R. Stymeist | 11/2 Boston | 172 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| | 11/18 | Orleans | 2 | R. Heil | 11/2 Pittsfield | 3 | T. Gagnon# |
| | 12/14 | Amherst | 1 | C. Read | 11/22 WBWS | 2 | G. d'Entremont |
| | 12/20 | Quincy | 1 | CBC (J. Young) | 12/20 Holyoke | 2 | T. Gagnon |
| | 12/29 | Winchester | 1 | A. Ankers | 12/20 Chicopee | 3 | T. Swochak |
| Hairy Woodpecker | 11/5 | Ipswich | 3 | R. Heil | 12/28 Brookline | 80 | A. Joslin# |
| | 11/22 | Leicester | 4 | M. Lynch# | Common Raven | | |
| | 11/30 | Ware R. IBA | 3 | M. Lynch# | 11/4 Maynard | 2 | L. Nachtrab |
| | 12/9 | Harwich | 4 | E. Banks | 11/6 Beverly Farms | 1 | J. MacDougall |
| | 12/13 | Bolton Flats | 4 | S. Sutton | 11/8 Topsfield | 2 | J. MacDougall |
| Northern Flicker | 11/2 | Sutton | 19 | M. Lynch# | 11/9 Granville | 8 | J. Weeks |
| | 11/11 | Ipswich | 16 | R. Heil# | 11/27 Westboro | 2 | M. Faherty |
| | 11/16 | Falmouth | 26 | R. Heil | 11/30 Ware R. IBA | 2 | M. Lynch# |
| | 11/23 | Orleans | 26 | R. Heil# | 12/12 Barre Falls | 2 | B. Kamp |
| Pileated Woodpecker | 11/2 | Maynard | 1 m | L. Nachtrab | 12/16 Royalston | 2 | T. Roberts |
| | 11/2 | Lincoln | 1 | E. McDonald | 12/23 Quabbin (G43) | 7 | C. Buelow |
| | 11/2 | Barre Falls | 1 | B. Kamp | Horned Lark | | |
| | 11/16 | Mt. Watatic | 1 | T. Pirro | 11/8, 12/27 P.I. | 75, 25 | Vale, Gurka |
| | 11/19 | Groton | 1 | E. McNierney | 11/9 Newbury | 40 | J. Berry |
| | 11/23 | E. Quabbin | 3 | T. Gagnon# | 11/11 Salisbury | 50 | J. Berry |
| | 12/12 | Concord | 1 | L. Nachtrab | 11/15 Gardner | 63 | T. Pirro |
| Least Flycatcher (details submitted) | 11/18-12/22 | Marblehead | 1 | R. Heil | 11/17 Wellfleet | 75+ | P. + F. Vale |
| Hammond's Flycatcher (details submitted) * | 11/1 | Tuckernuck | 1 | R. Veit | 12/10 Amherst | 200 | H. Allen |
| Eastern Phoebe | 11/1 | Hardwick | 1 | C. Buelow | 12/16 Eastham (F.E.) | 50 | O. Spalding# |
| | 11/2 | Boston | 2 | BBC (Stymeist) | Tree Swallow | | |
| | 11/2 | Burlington | 1 | M. Rines | 11/1, 29 Chatham | 71, 2 | Manchester, Nikula |
| | 11/7 | Stoneham | 1 | D. + I. Jewell | 11/2 Truro | 3 | J. Trimble |
| | 11/15 | Bourne | 1 | BBC (Stymeist) | 11/11 Ipswich | 1 | R. Heil# |
| | 11/22 | Leicester | 1 | M. Lynch# | 11/15 E. Orleans | 1 | J. Trimble# |
| | 11/27-30 | Chilmark | 1 | A. Keith | 11/27 S. Monomoy | 20 | B. Nikula |
| | 12/27 | Canton | 1 | S. McGrath | Northern Rough-winged Swallow | | |
| | 12/thr | M.V.(4 areas) | 4 | v.o. | 11/9 Chatham | 4 | D. Manchester |
| Ash-throated Flycatcher (details submitted)* | 11/7-16 | Stoneham | 1 ph | D. + I. Jewell + v.o. | Cave Swallow (details submitted) * | | |
| Ash-throated Flycatcher (no details) * | 11/18 | Gay Head | 1 | V. Laux | 11/15 E. Orleans | 2 | J. Trimble# |
| Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (details submitted) * | 11/12-12/4 | Wellfleet | 1 ph | B. Elrick + v.o. | 11/27 Chatham | 1 | R. Merrill |
| Northern Shrike | 12/14 | Hadley | 2 | D. Peake-Jones | Swallow species | | |
| | 12/26 | P.I. | 2 | P. + J. Roberts | 11/29 P.I. | 1 | S. Leonard |
| thr | Reports of indiv. from 27 locations | | | | Red-breasted Nuthatch | | |
| White-eyed Vireo | 11/2 | Bourne | 1 | J. Kricher | 11/11 Wachusett Res. | 41 | S. Sutton |
| | 11/3 | Deerfield | 1 | H. Allen | 11/15 Wellfleet | 15 | P. + F. Vale |
| | 11/10 | Chilmark | 1 | A. Keith | 11/16 P.I. | 12 | D. Chickering |
| | 11/16 | Woods Hole | 1 juv | R. Heil# | 11/23 E. Quabbin | 21 | T. Gagnon# |
| Blue-headed Vireo | 11/1 | Windsor | 1 | B. Wood | 11/30 Ware R. IBA | 61 | M. Lynch# |
| | 11/1 | Arlington Res. | 2 | K. Hartel# | 12/9 Quabbin (G29) | 21 | C. Buelow |
| | 11/2 | Sunderland | 1 | C. Gentes | Brown Creeper | | |
| | 11/3 | MNWS | 2 | D. Noble | 11/1 Quabbin (G35) | 9 | M. Lynch# |
| | 11/11 | Wachusett Res. | 1 | S. Sutton | 11/11 Wachusett Res. | 10 | S. Sutton |
| | | | | | 11/30 Ware R. IBA | 19 | M. Lynch# |
| | | | | | Carolina Wren | | |
| | | | | | 11/1 Lexington | 9 | M. Rines# |
| | | | | | 11/2 Pittsfield | 2 | C. Blagdon# |
| | | | | | 11/7 Westfield | 2 | S. Kellogg |
| | | | | | 11/16 Falmouth | 25 | R. Heil# |
| | | | | | 11/16 Fairhaven | 46 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| | | | | | 11/18 Marblehead | 15 | R. Heil |
| | | | | | 11/23 Orleans | 31 | R. Heil |
| | | | | | 11/27 Cape Ann | 18 | R. Heil |
| | | | | | 11/28 W. Barnstable | 24 | R. Stymeist# |
| | | | | | House Wren | | |
| | | | | | 11/11 Ipswich | 1 | R. Heil# |
| | | | | | 11/15 Bourne | 1 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| | | | | | 11/16 Nahant | 1 | G. Tepke |
| | | | | | 11/18 DWWS | 1 | D. Furbish |
| | | | | | 11/26 Chilmark | 1 | A. Keith |
| | | | | | 11/27 Gloucester | 1 | R. Heil |

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|------------------------|------------------|--------|--------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| Winter Wren | | | | 11/23 | Orleans | 4 | R. Heil# |
| 11/5 | Winchester | 2 | M. Rines | 11/27 | Westport | 4 | M. Lynch# |
| 11/16 | Fairhaven | 2 | BBC (Stymeist) | 12/8 | Hingham | 2 | S. Maguire |
| 11/18 | Nahant | 3 | R. Heil | 12/12 | Nahant | 1 | L. Pivacek |
| 11/18 | Marblehead | 6 | R. Heil | 12/14 | Dalton | 1 | B. Wood |
| 11/27 | Cape Ann | 2 | R. Heil | 12/14 | Northampton | 1 | T. Gagnon |
| 12/20 | Agawam | 2 | S. Kellogg | 12/14 | Gloucester (E.P.) | 1 | R. Heil |
| Marsh Wren | | | | 12/23 | Stoneham | 1 | D. + I. Jewell |
| 11/7 | DWWS | 1 | R. Titus | 12/27 | E. Quabbin | 1 | S. Sumner |
| 11/11, 30 | E. Sandwich | 1 | J. Kricher | Brown Thrasher | | | |
| 11/16 | Falmouth | 3 | R. Heil# | 11/15 | S. Dart. (A. Pd) | 1 | E. Nielsen |
| 11/19 | W. Newbury | 1 | S. McGrath | 11/16 | Falmouth | 1 | R. Heil# |
| 11/19 | P.I. | 2 | R. Heil | 11/17 | Truro | 1 | P. + F. Vale |
| 11/23 | Orleans | 1 | R. Heil# | 11/18 | Cambridge | 1 | R. Bradbury |
| 11/30 | E. Boston (B.L.) | 1 | BBC (Stymeist) | 11/23 | Orleans | 2 | R. Heil# |
| 12/28 | Ipswich | 1 | CBC (K. Rosenberg) | European Starling | | | |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | | | | 11/11 | Ipswich | 3000 | R. Heil# |
| 11/1 | Windsor | 30 | B. Wood | 11/15 | Methuen | 25,000 | J. Hogan |
| 11/1 | Quabbin (G35) | 28 | M. Lynch# | American Pipit | | | |
| 11/2 | Sutton | 17 | M. Lynch# | 11/2 | Sutton | 63 | M. Lynch# |
| 11/11 | Wachusett Res. | 20 | S. Sutton | 11/3 | Deerfield | 12 | H. Allen |
| 11/16 | Falmouth | 21 | R. Heil# | 11/7, 12/19 | Cumb. Farms | 100, 34 | J. Sweeney |
| 11/16 | Fairhaven | 20 | BBC (Stymeist) | 11/7 | W. Bridgewater | 51 | J. Sweeney |
| 11/17 | Wellfleet | 17 | P. + F. Vale | 11/7 | Barre Falls | 10 | B. Kamp |
| 11/22 | Leicester | 37 | M. Lynch# | 11/8 | P.I. | 12 | P. + F. Vale |
| 11/28 | E. Sandwich | 16 | R. Stymeist# | 11/11 | Ipswich | 20 | R. Heil# |
| 11/30 | Ware R. IBA | 60 | M. Lynch# | 11/15 | Westport | 40 | E. Nielsen |
| 12/14 | Berlin | 20 | S. Sutton | 12/9-11 | Medford | 1 | E. McDonald |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | | | | Bohemian Waxwing | | | |
| 11/1 | Lexington | 12 | M. Rines# | 12/27 | Windsor | 1 | D. St James |
| 11/1 | Arlington Res. | 12 | K. Hartel# | 12/28 | HRWMA | 2 | T. Pirro |
| 11/2 | Boston | 8 | BBC (Stymeist) | Cedar Waxwing | | | |
| 11/16 | Fairhaven | 9 | BBC (Stymeist) | 11/5 | Ipswich | 80 | R. Heil |
| 12/2 | DWWS | 2 | G. Gove# | 11/9 | Southboro | 44 | M. Lynch# |
| 12/8 | Medford | 1 | R. LaFontaine | 11/15 | Orleans | 120 | B. Nikula# |
| 12/11 | Nahant | 1 | L. Pivacek | 11/16 | Falmouth | 90 | R. Heil# |
| 12/27 | Ware | 1 | B. Bieda | 11/17 | Pepperell | 130 | E. Stromsted |
| 12/27 | Milton | 1 | J. Young | 11/28 | W. Barnstable | 55 | R. Stymeist# |
| 12/27 | Newbury | 1 | R. Heil | 12/22 | Hardwick | 80 | C. Buelow |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | | | | 12/28 | HRWMA | 40 | T. Pirro |
| 11/1 | Mt.A. | 1 | J. Trimble | Orange-crowned Warbler | | | |
| 11/11 | Ipswich | 1 | R. Heil# | 11/2 | Newton | 2 | L. Ferrarrosso |
| Eastern Bluebird | | | | 11/12 | Lexington | 2 | C. Cloyd |
| 11/2 | Sunderland | 29 | C. Gentes | 11/23 | Orleans | 2 | R. Heil# |
| 11/2 | Sutton | 24 | M. Lynch# | 11/30 | Dorchester | 1 | R. Donovan |
| 11/8 | Granville | 24 | J. Weeks | 12/5 | Nahant | 2 | F. Vale# |
| 11/11 | Ipswich | 16 | R. Heil | thr | Reports of indiv. from 14 locations | | |
| 11/12 | Taunton | 10 | J. Sweeney | Nashville Warbler | | | |
| 11/17 | Wellfleet | 35+ | P. + F. Vale | 11/2 | Sunderland | 1 | C. Gentes |
| 12/13 | Lincoln | 10 | W. Harrington | 11/7 | Oak Bluffs | 1 | M. Pelikan |
| 12/22 | Groton | 10 | T. Pirro | 11/9 | Arlington Res. | 1 | A. Gurka# |
| 12/28 | HRWMA | 10 | T. Pirro | 11/16 | Chilmark | 1 | A. Keith |
| Swainson's Thrush | | | | Northern Parula | | | |
| 11/22 | Lexington | 1 | M. Rines | 11/15 | E. Orleans | 1 | B. Nikula# |
| Hermit Thrush | | | | 11/16 | W. Tisbury | 1 | A. Keith |
| 11/2 | Boston | 16 | BBC (Stymeist) | Cape May Warbler | | | |
| 11/15 | Bourne | 16 | BBC (Stymeist) | 11/18 | Marblehead | 1 m | R. Heil |
| 11/16 | Fairhaven | 22 | BBC (Stymeist) | Black-throated Blue Warbler | | | |
| 11/16 | Lexington | 4 | M. Rines | 11/25-12/18 | W. Tisbury | 1 | E. Luce + v.o. |
| 11/16 | Falmouth | 11 | R. Heil | Yellow-rumped Warbler | | | |
| 11/16 | Melrose | 5 | D. + I. Jewell | 11/1 | Arlington Res. | 24 | K. Hartel# |
| 11/18 | Orleans | 12 | R. Heil | 11/1 | W. Newbury | 23 | S. Grinley |
| 11/28 | W. Barnstable | 13 | R. Stymeist# | 11/11 | Chatham | 180 | D. Manchester |
| 12/9 | Nahant | 2 | L. Pivacek | 11/15 | Bourne | 190 | BBC (Stymeist) |
| 12/14 | Northampton | 2 | T. Gagnon | 11/16 | Falmouth | 82 | R. Heil# |
| 12/20 | Agawam | 2 | S. Kellogg | 11/16 | Cambr. (F.P.) | 30 | C. Riehl |
| 12/22 | Marblehead | 3 | R. Heil | 11/17 | Gay Head | 300 | V. Laux |
| American Robin | | | | 12/14 | Northampton | 1 | T. Gagnon |
| 11/1 | Chatham | 325 | D. Manchester | 12/20 | Holyoke | 1 | T. Gagnon |
| 11/5 | Ipswich | 560 | R. Heil | 12/22 | Marblehead | 3 | R. Heil |
| 11/5 | Methuen | 10,000 | J. Hogan | 12/28 | Newbury | 10 | CBC (R. Heil) |
| 11/16 | Chilmark | 750 | A. Keith | Black-throated Green Warbler | | | |
| 11/16 | Falmouth | 230 | R. Heil# | 11/25 | Boston (Fens) | 1 | M. Kaufman |
| 11/18 | Mt.A. | 250+ | R. Stymeist | Yellow-throated Warbler | | | |
| 11/28 | W. Barnstable | 300 | R. Stymeist# | 11/30-12/5 | Nahant | 1 m | L. Pivacek + v.o. |
| Gray Catbird | | | | Pine Warbler | | | |
| 11/16 | Fairhaven | 21 | BBC (Stymeist) | 11/7 | Salisbury | 3 | T. Wetmore |
| 11/16 | Falmouth | 20 | R. Heil# | 11/16 | Wellfleet | 2 | P. + F. Vale |

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|---|--------|------------------------------|------------------|------------|--------------------------------|--------|--|--------------------|
| Pine Warbler (continued) | | | | 11/16 | DWWS | 1 | | D. Furbish |
| 11/27 Gloucester | 1 | | R. Heil | 12/28 | M.V. | 1 | | CBC (M. Pelikan) |
| 12/13 Lakeville | 1 | | J. Sweeney | | Field Sparrow | | | |
| Prairie Warbler | | | | 11/2 | Truro | 13 | | J. Trimble |
| 11/7 Salisbury | 1 | | D. Chickering | 11/2 | Burlington | 3 | | M. Rines |
| 11/7 P.I. | 1 | | H. Galbraith# | 11/9 | P.I. | 2 | | P. + F. Vale |
| 11/23 Orleans | 2 | | R. Heil# | 11/9 | Westport | 5 | | E. Nielsen |
| Palm Warbler | | | | 11/16 | Truro | 3 | | P. + F. Vale |
| 11/1 Windsor | 15 | | B. Wood | 11/26 | Bourne | 3 | | J. Kricher |
| 11/2 Sutton | 9 | | M. Lynch# | 12/22 | Salem | 5 | | R. Heil |
| 11/15 Wellfleet | 20 W | | P. + F. Vale | | Vesper Sparrow | | | |
| 11/23 Orleans | 5 W | | R. Heil# | 11/8 | Chilmark | 1 | | A. Keith |
| 11/25 Hyannis | 2 | | C. Buelow | | Savannah Sparrow | | | |
| 11/27 Manchester | 1 W | | R. Heil | 11/2 | Sutton | 8 | | M. Lynch# |
| Blackpoll Warbler | | | | 11/8 | Woburn | 3 | | M. Rines# |
| 11/2 S. Monomoy | 2 | | B. Nikula# | 11/23 | New Braintree | 5 | | C. Buelow |
| 11/5 Ipswich | 2 | | R. Heil | | Ipswich Sparrow | | | |
| 11/23 W. Barnstable | 1 | | P. Trimble | 11/15 | Westport | 3 | | E. Nielsen |
| Black-and-white Warbler | | | | 11/15 | Fairhaven | 2 | | J. Sweeney# |
| 11/15 Boston | 1 ad | | R. Mayer | 12/8 | P.I. | 2 | | T. Wetmore |
| American Redstart | | | | 12/12 | Mattapoisett | 1 | | D. Furbish# |
| 11/8 Jamaica Plain | 1 | | J. Young | | Grasshopper Sparrow | | | |
| 11/11 E. Sandwich | 1 | | J. Kricher | 11/2 | Newton | 1 | | P. Perry# |
| 11/29 Mt.A. | 1 ph | | J. Harrison | 12/14-20 | Stoneham | 1 ph | | D. + I. Jewell# |
| Prothonotary Warbler | | | | | Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow | | | |
| 11/30 Gloucester | 1 ph | fide | B. Speare | 11/1 | Edgartown | 2 | | A. Keith |
| Ovenbird | | | | 11/25 | Eastham (F.H.) | 3 | | C. Dalton |
| 11/1 Chilmark | 1 | | A. Keith | | Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow | | | |
| 11/2-12/7 Boston | 1 | | R. Stymeist# | 11/1 | Edgartown | 6+ | | A. Keith |
| 11/7 Stoneham | 1 | | D. + I. Jewell | 11/25 | Eastham (F.H.) | 8 | | C. Dalton |
| 12/7 Millis | 1 | | P. Rennert | | Sharp-tailed Sparrow species | | | |
| Northern Waterthrush | | | | 11/25 | Eastham (F.H.) | 10 | | C. Dalton |
| 11/1 Arlington Res. | 1 | | K. Hartel# | | Seaside Sparrow | | | |
| 12/14 E. Falmouth | 1 | | CBC (J. Trimble) | 11/1 | Edgartown | 1 | | A. Keith |
| MacGillivray's Warbler (details submitted) * | | | | | Fox Sparrow | | | |
| 11/1-6 Bradford | 1 | D. Larson, S. Carlson + v.o. | | 11/7 | Southwick | 16 | | S. Kellogg |
| 11/27 Westport | 1 | | E. Nielsen | 11/9 | Berlin | 8 | | S. Sutton |
| Common Yellowthroat | | | | 11/11 | Wachusett Res. | 12 | | S. Sutton |
| 11/16 Fairhaven | 2 | | BBC (Stymeist) | 11/11 | Ipswich | 9 | | R. Heil# |
| Wilson's Warbler | | | | 11/12, 30 | Lexington | 11, 1 | | M. Rines# |
| 11/7 Gay Head | 1 | | A. Keith | 11/23 | E. Quabbin | 7 | | T. Gagnon# |
| Yellow-breasted Chat | | | | 12/3-13 | Watertown | max 5 | | R. Stymeist# |
| 11/16 Falmouth | 4 | | R. Heil# | 12/4 | Melrose | 3 | | D. + I. Jewell |
| 11/18 Gay Head | 2 | | A. Keith | 12/7 | Canton | 3 | | M. Ross |
| 11/23 Orleans | 5 | | R. Heil# | 12/19 | Essex | 3 | | J. Berry |
| thr Reports of indiv. from 12 locations | | | | 12/20 | Ludlow | 2 | | B. Platenik |
| Summer Tanager | | | | | Lincoln's Sparrow | | | |
| 12/6-31 Stow | 1 f ph | | D. Stewart | 11/2 | Windsor | 2 | | B. Wood |
| Scarlet Tanager | | | | 11/6 | Truro | 2 | | G. Gove |
| 11/7 P.I. | 1 m | | G. Wood | 11/9 | Carver | 1 | | G. d'Entremont |
| 12/11-24 P'town | 1 m ph | | P. Post | 11/15 | Westboro | 1 | | T. Spahr |
| Eastern Towhee | | | | 11/18 | Hadley | 1 | | P. Yeskie |
| 11/12 Taunton | 3 | | J. Sweeney | 11/26 | Bourne | 1 | | J. Kricher |
| 11/12 Lexington | 2 | | C. Floyd | 12/14 | Pepperell | 1 | | CBC (E. Stromsted) |
| 11/15 S. Dart. (A. Pd) | 3 | | E. Nielsen | | Swamp Sparrow | | | |
| 11/16 Fairhaven | 9 | | BBC (Stymeist) | 11/2 | Truro | 18 | | J. Trimble |
| 11/28 E. Sandwich | 2 | | R. Stymeist# | 11/5 | Ipswich | 10 | | R. Heil |
| 12/13 Lincoln | 2 | | W. Harrington | 11/16 | Falmouth | 18 | | R. Heil# |
| 12/20 Holyoke | 1 | | B. Bieda | 11/17 | Gay Head | 25 | | V. Laux |
| 12/21 Medford | 1 m | | M. Rines | 11/23 | Orleans | 18 | | R. Heil# |
| 12/26 Dighton | 1 m | | R. Titus | | White-crowned Sparrow | | | |
| 12/27 Southwick | 1 | | J. Weeks | 11/1 | Wakefield | 6 imm | | P. + F. Vale |
| American Tree Sparrow | | | | 11/2 | Burlington | 9 | | M. Rines |
| 11/11 Ipswich | 92 | | R. Heil# | 11/13 | Pittsfield | 4 | | T. Collins |
| 11/15 Westboro | 50+ | | T. Spahr | 11/17 | Gay Head | 35 | | V. Laux |
| 11/18 Bolton | 50 | | F. Howes | 12/13 | Bolton Flats | 1 imm | | S. Sutton |
| 11/30 P.I. | 65 | | E. Nielsen | 12/14 | Hadley | 1 | | D. Peake-Jones |
| 12/9 Groton | 50 | | T. Pirro | 12/28 | Ipswich | 1 | | CBC (J. Berry) |
| 12/13 Bolton Flats | 95+ | | S. Sutton | | Oregon Junco | | | |
| Chipping Sparrow | | | | 12/12 | Nahant | 1 | | L. Pivacek |
| 11/26 Bourne | 5 | | J. Kricher | | Lapland Longspur | | | |
| 12/28 Brimfield | 2 | | I. Lynch | 11/2 | P'town | 4 | | J. Trimble |
| 12/thr Falmouth | 2-8 | | G. Gove# | 11/3 | Deerfield | 2 | | H. Allen |
| Clay-colored Sparrow | | | | 11/5 | Ipswich | 16 | | R. Heil |
| 11/2 Burlington | 1 | | M. Rines | 11/7, 12/9 | P.I. | 15, 35 | | T. Wetmore |
| 11/2 Truro | 4 | | J. Trimble | 11/16 | Northampton | 2 | | T. Gagnon |
| 11/8 S. Boston | 1 | | R. Donovan | 11/17 | Gay Head | 8 | | V. Laux |
| 11/10-11 Gay Head | 1 | | V. Laux# | 11/22 | Eastham (F.E.) | 3 | | G. d'Entremont |

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| Lapland Longspur (continued) | | | | Bullock's Oriole * | | | |
| 11/26 Salisbury | 6 | MAS (B.Gette) | | 12/27-31 Walpole | 1 ph | | W. Barnes |
| 12/18 Sheffield | 4 | D. St. James | | Baltimore Oriole | | | |
| Snow Bunting | | | | 11/5 Ipswich | 1 | | R. Heil |
| 11/8, 12/27 P.I. | 260, 50 | Nielsen, Gurka | | 11/8 Belmont | 1 | | R. Stymeist# |
| 11/9 Westport | 163 | E. Nielsen | | 11/12 Stoneham | 1 | | D. + I. Jewell |
| 11/11 Ipswich | 111 | R. Heil# | | 11/16 Truro | 1 | | J. Young |
| 11/15 Orleans | 100 | BBC (Stymeist) | | 11/23 Gay Head | 1 | | R. Ferren# |
| 11/15 Northampton | 700 | A. Magee | | 12/1-21 Holliston | 1 lyr | | P. Rennert |
| 11/16, 12/4 Granville | 72, 65 | J. Weeks | | 12/13 Lincoln | 1 | | W. Harrington |
| 11/18 Chatham | 95 | D. Manchester | | 12/14-31 Hadley | 1 | | S. Emerson |
| 11/18 Nahant | 150 | R. Heil | | Pine Grosbeak | | | |
| 11/23 DWWS | 75 | G. d'Entremont# | | 11/15 Hinsdale | 1 | | L. Roberson |
| 11/27 S. Monomoy | 150 | B. Nikula | | 12/28 HRWMA | 1 | | T. Pirro |
| 11/30 Barnstable (S.N.) | 80 | J. Kricher | | Purple Finch | | | |
| 12/20 Quabbin Pk | 75 | C. Buelow | | 11/1, 12/20 Lexington | 3, 3 | | M. Rines# |
| Rose-breasted Grosbeak | | | | 11/1 Quabbin (G35) | 10 | | M. Lynch# |
| 11/24-12/31 N. Truro | 1 ph | C. Skowron | | 11/12 Stoneham | 5 | | D. + I. Jewell |
| 12/25 Millis | 1 f ad | P. Rennert | | 11/16 Fairhaven | 3 | | BBC (Stymeist) |
| Blue Grosbeak | | | | 11/16 Falmouth | 4 | | R. Heil# |
| 11/2 Truro | 1 | J. Trimble | | 11/17 Pepperell | 10 | | E. Stromsted |
| Indigo Bunting | | | | 11/18 Marblehead | 9 | | R. Heil |
| 11/1-22 Gay Head | 1 | A. Keith# | | 12/7 S. Lancaster | 3 | | S. Sutton |
| Dickcissel | | | | 12/7 Duxbury | 3 | | T + J. Nickerson |
| 11/2 Sunderland | 1 | C. Gentes | | 12/8 Hardwick | 7 | | C. Buelow |
| 11/3-9 Essex | 1 | v.o. | | 12/21 Ipswich (C.B.) | 65 | | CBC (J. Berry) |
| 11/7 DWWS | 1 f | D. Furbish | | 12/27 Granville | 14 | | M. + K. Conway |
| 11/16-23 Camb. (F.P.) | 1 f | C. Riehl# | | 12/28 Newbury | 8 | | CBC (R. Heif) |
| 11/18-24 Gay Head | 1 | V. Laux# | | Red Crossbill | | | |
| 12/14 Athol | 1 | D. Small | | 12/12 Becket | 1 | | R. Laubach |
| 12/thr Chilmark | 1 | A. Keith | | 12/13 Washington | 8 | | M. + K. Conway |
| Red-winged Blackbird | | | | 12/28 Granville | 2 | | S. Kellogg |
| 11/1 Methuen | 20,000+ | J. Berry, J. Hogan | | Common Redpoll | | | |
| 11/5 Westford | 1000+ | S. Sutton | | 11/16 Salisbury | 1 | | R. Merrill# |
| 11/5 Methuen | thousands | J. Hogan | | 11/17 Gay Head | 2 | | V. Laux |
| 12/19 Cumb. Farms | 120 | J. Sweeney | | 11/18 Salisbury | 4 | | D. + I. Jewell |
| 12/24 DWWS | 70 | D. Furbish | | 11/18 Northfield | 6 | | M. Taylor |
| Eastern Meadowlark | | | | 11/22 P.I. | 60 | | T. Wetmore |
| 11/2 S. Monomoy | 4 | B. Nikula# | | 11/22 Wellfleet | 11 | | G. d'Entremont |
| 11/4, 12/24 DWWS | 24, 6 | D. Furbish | | 11/30 Ware R. IBA | 10 | | M. Lynch# |
| 11/6 Chatham | 3 | D. Manchester | | 12/8 Eastham (F.E.) | 25 | | v.o. |
| 11/8 P.I. | 1 | SSBC (Emmons) | | 12/9 Ipswich (C.B.) | 70 | | J. Berry |
| 11/16 Orleans | 6 | G. d'Entremont# | | 12/13 Pepperell | 25 | | M. Resch |
| 11/16 Barnstable (S.N.) | 13 | M. Lynch# | | 12/13 Barre Falls | 25 | | B. Kamp |
| 11/25 Eastham (F.H.) | 10 | C. Dalton | | 12/13-14 Wakefield | 17 | | P. + F. Vale |
| 12/8 Whately | 1 | R. Packard | | 12/14 Acton | 20+ | | A. Magee |
| 12/16 Rochester | 7 | G. Gove# | | 12/16 Shrewsbury | 12 | | C. Boyle |
| Western Meadowlark (no details) * | | | | 12/16 MNWS | 12 | | D. Noble |
| 11/26 Gay Head | 1 singing | V. Laux | | 12/22 Salisbury | 10 | | P. + F. Arrigo |
| Rusty Blackbird | | | | 12/23 Pepperell | 40+ | | T. Pirro |
| 11/2 Barre Falls | 20 | B. Kamp | | 12/27 Boston | 40 | | J. Young |
| 11/2 Sutton | 50 | M. Lynch# | | 12/27 Newbypt | 40 | | T. Wetmore |
| 11/6 Northampton | 7 | W. Lafley | | 12/27 P'town | 20 | | B. Nikula |
| 11/9 Southboro | 40 | M. Lynch# | | 12/27 Hyde Park | 40 | | J. Young |
| 11/22 Pittsfield | 24 | H. Allen | | 12/28 HRWMA | 17 | | T. Pirro |
| 11/27 Dalton | 3 | R. Packard | | 12/28 Arlington | 14 | | A. Piccolo |
| 12/9 Groton | 5 | T. Pirro | | Hoary Redpoll (details) * | | | |
| 12/14 Sunderland | 1 | S. Smolen-Morton | | 11/22 P.I. | 1 | | Heil, Lockwood, Trimble |
| 12/17 Williamsburg | 1 | R. Packard | | 12/27 Belchertown | 1 | | G. LeBaron |
| 12/19 Cumb. Farms | 16 | J. Sweeney | | Pine Siskin | | | |
| 12/28 Wakefield | 1 | D. + I. Jewell | | 11/1 Gloucester | 12 | | D. Brown |
| Common Grackle | | | | 11/1 Quabbin (G35) | 8 | | M. Lynch# |
| 11/1 Methuen | 150,000+ | J. Berry, J. Hogan | | 11/2 Boston | 9 | | BBC (Stymeist) |
| 11/8 Methuen | millions | J. Hogan | | 11/5 Berlin | 6 | | F. + M. Howes |
| 11/9 Sterling | 5000 | B. Volkle | | 11/5 Essex | 7 | | P. Brown |
| 11/11 Ipswich | 8200 | R. Heil | | 11/5 Woburn | 6 | | J. Brown |
| 11/11 W. Boylston | 200 | S. Sutton | | 11/8 Belmont | 6 | | R. Stymeist# |
| 11/17 Pepperell | 200 | E. Stromsted | | 11/17 Gay Head | 80 | | V. Laux# |
| 11/23 Gay Head | 200 migr. | R. Ferren# | | 11/18 Rockport | 12 | | J. Soucy# |
| 12/11 Lancaster | 300 | S. Sutton | | 11/23 Orleans | 6 | | R. Heil# |
| 12/14 Dedham | 1 | E. Cutler | | 11/27 Medford | 9 | | R. LaFontaine |
| 12/20 Worcester | 1 | M. Lynch# | | 11/30 Ware R. IBA | 34 | | M. Lynch# |
| 12/26 Bradford | 1 | D. Larson | | 12/12 Northboro | 6 | | B. Volkle |
| Brown-headed Cowbird | | | | 12/13 Barre Falls | 6 | | B. Kamp |
| 11/2 Sutton | 48 | M. Lynch# | | 12/26 Princeton | 12 | | S. Moore# |
| 11/16 Fairhaven | 200 | BBC (Stymeist) | | 12/29 Truro | 10 | | D. Manchester# |
| 12/7 Norton | 1 m, 1 f | K. Sejkora | | Evening Grosbeak | | | |
| 12/17 DWWS | 2 | D. Furbish | | 11/15 Hinsdale | 5 | | L. Roberson |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------|----------|-------------------|--------|-------------|----|------------|
| Evening Grosbeak (continued) | | | | 11/30 | Ware R. IBA | 2 | M. Lynch# |
| 11/15 | Gardner | 5 m, 2 f | T. Pirro | 12/5-7 | Newbypt | 1 | S. McGrath |
| 11/16 | Sheffield | 5 | J. Alexander | 12/16 | Royalston | 15 | T. Roberts |
| 11/23 | Carlisle | 8 | T. + D. Brownrigg | | | | |
| 11/23 | E. Quabbin | 2 | T. Gagnon# | | | | |

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taxonomic order is based on AOU checklist, Seventh edition, 44th Supplement, as published in *The Auk* 117: 847-858 (2000); 119:897-906 (2002); 120:923-932 (2003).

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

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO BIRD OBSERVER

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

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

Thirty Years Ago (From Bird Observer Vol. 2, No.2, 1974)

WHAT FUTURE FOR THE OSPREY?

Philip Martin, Antioch College, Ohio

Birders and conservationists have been greatly concerned in recent years over the fate of the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*). The populations of this elegant, crook-winged raptor have declined drastically since the late 1940's. Over the years there has been a high rate of reproductive failure which has been linked to contamination by the insecticide DDT and more recently to compounds known as PCB's (polychlorinated biphenyls), found in such familiar objects as styrofoam coffee cups and plastic bags. Other factors may have contributed to the decline also, a leading contender being depletion of the fish populations on which the Osprey is solely dependent for food.

Both PCB's and DDT are persistent chemicals — they do not break down easily. Insecticides in the same group as DDT remain undecomposed in the environment from two to 20 years. DDT has a great affinity for the fatty tissue in animals. Ospreys, as all species at the top of food chains, are particularly susceptible to a build-up of DDT in their system. The poison is transferred from prey to predator all the way up the line until it finally reaches the Osprey, having "snow-balled" into greater and greater concentrations. DDT has been found to cause reproductive failure in birds, such as the formation of thin-shelled eggs which are too fragile to survive. It is thought that DDT disrupts the balance of enzymes and the hormone estrogen which controls the transfer of calcium from bone to eggshells.

Although DDT is no longer in widespread use, because of a ban by the Environmental Protection Agency, the persistent nature of the substance means that insecticides will continue to be potentially damaging for many years to come. In order to offset this threat, many schemes have been devised for increasing the Osprey's breeding success. Providing poles and structures for nesting sites, to lure the birds into relatively unpolluted areas where the birds enjoy a higher success rate, has been tried in Maryland with good success. (A project of this sort was attempted on a small scale in the late 1960's in the clean environment of Quabbin Reservoir in central Massachusetts, but unfortunately the "osprey-poles" on the Dana meadows lured no occupants.)

Other plans have included removing the first clutch of eggs from a pair living in a relatively clean environment, such as the Chesapeake Bay area, and placing them in an incubator. The eggs would then be brought to the nest of a barren pair of Ospreys to rear, either as pipping eggs or as fledglings. Meanwhile, the original producer of the clutch would lay another set of eggs and care for them, thus doubling the potential reproductive success. If this plan were successful, it could prove valuable in replenishing the ravaged New England Osprey colonies.

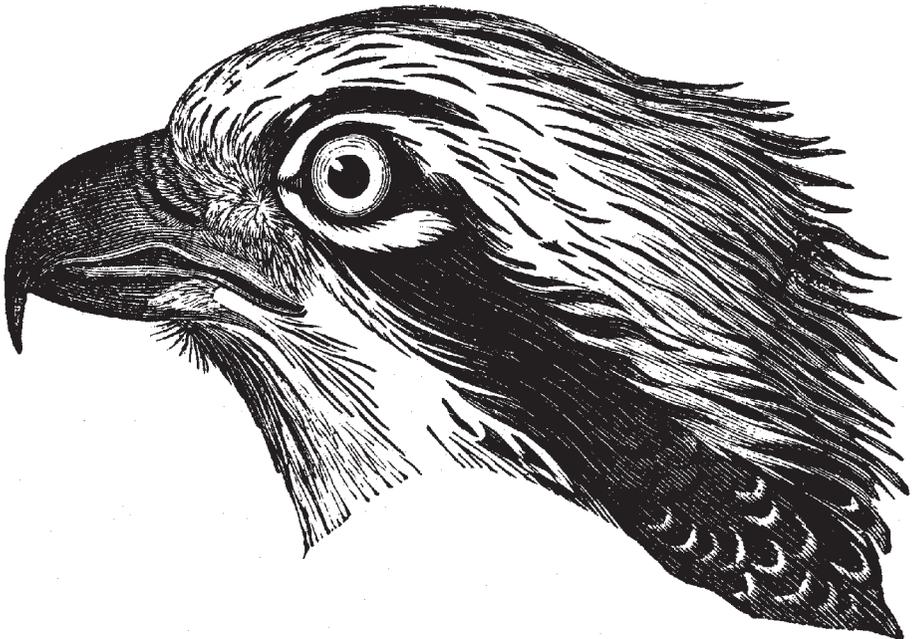
Massachusetts Ospreys declined by about 80 percent during the 60's, paralleling the decline in all the northeastern coastal states, from Maine to New Jersey. Our state has only one significant colony of Ospreys left, on the Westport River near Narragansett Bay. This colony once numbered as many as 120 pairs. By the 1950's it had declined to 60 pairs, and by 1973 to 14 pairs, about a 90 percent decrease. In spite of this low population level (a record low which was also reached in 1963 and 1964), breeding success in 1973 was surprisingly high. The 14 pairs fledged a total of 27 young for an average of 1.9 young per nest. In 1972, the 15 pairs produced only 11 fledglings, an average of only 0.7 young per nest. The 1973 level is well above the 1.2 fledglings per nest which biologists at the U.S. Migratory Bird Population Station have determined is the minimum output required to keep the population stable.¹

Actually, there are Ospreys in our state with an even better track record. On Martha's Vineyard two pairs have produced six, seven and six young in the last three years, respectively, for an average of three or more young per nest.²

This kind of performance is one of the most encouraging signs anywhere in the country that the Osprey may "make it." One year's success does not make a trend, but it gives new hope for this year's breeding season.

Footnotes

1. see: Zimmerman, David R. "Man and Osprey: Strategies for Survival" National Parks and Conservation Magazine. Vol. 47, #1, January, 1973.
2. Massachusetts data courtesy of Massachusetts Audubon Society.



OSPREY BY ANON.

ABOUT THE COVER

Tree Swallow

Few avian spectacles are as impressive as watching tens of thousands of Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) swirling around like a gigantic swarm of bees over the dunes and marshes of Plum Island in the fall. A stocky swallow with broad wings and a shallow forked tail, adult males and older females are shiny green or blue above and white below, giving them their species name, *bicolor*. They are reported to be the only North American passerine in which females do not attain full breeding plumage by one year of age. Juveniles are brown above and white below with the tinge of a dusky collar on their upper breasts, thus giving them a resemblance to the smaller Bank Swallow. The Tree Swallow is a widely distributed monotypic species (no subspecies), with a breeding range that extends across Canada from Alaska to Labrador north to the tree line, south to southern California in the west and the Carolinas in the east, and throughout much of central and northern United States. They winter from southern California south to central Mexico and in the east from coastal South Carolina, through Florida, Cuba, and along the Gulf Coast to Panama.

In Massachusetts, Tree Swallows are a locally common breeder, a very common spring migrant, and an abundant fall migrant. They arrive earlier than other swallows in the spring, a characteristic that is related to their intense competition for nesting hollows and their ability to survive on seeds and berries during cold weather. They also sunbathe and may aggregate in cavities to keep warm. Tree Swallows are a highly social species, often nesting in loose colonies; during migration and the nonbreeding season they may roost in flocks of several hundred thousand birds. They arrive in early April, and many are breeding by the end of the month. They migrate south in August and September, with a high of 300,000 recorded at Plum Island, a favored location with abundant bayberries and late-season insect swarms.

Tree Swallows nest in open areas, usually near water, such as swamps with standing dead trees that provide nest cavities. They are usually monogamous but extra-pair copulations are frequent. In one study up to fifty percent of nests had chicks that were not sired by the resident male. The song and call repertoire of these birds is impressive, with fourteen different calls and song types identified. The “dawn song” and “day song” are given by the male only and consist of a repetition of two or more phrases described by various authors as *chee-tit*, *chip*, *cheet-tit*, *chi-wu* or *tsip-prrup*, *tsip-prrup*, *prrup*, and *chrit*, *pleet*, *euree*, *cheet*, *chrit*, *pleet*. Other authors have described their song as clear, sweet whistles. They have alarm, contact, distress, and anxiety calls, along with assorted chirps, twitterings, and gurgles. Although they often nest in loose colonies, Tree Swallows are highly territorial, defending thirty to forty-five feet of space around the nest cavity. The contest for nest cavities can be fierce: both males and females will attack Tree Swallows or other competitors for nest sites. Their opponents include House Wrens, House Sparrows, bluebirds, and European Starlings, although they often lose fights with these birds. They dive on intruders, uttering *zjht* or *tick-tick* calls and grapple with them inside the nest cavity, in the air,

or on the ground. They peck the intruders on the back of the head in fights that often lead to death. In skirmishes over water the loser is sometimes drowned. If a male dies, the replacement male will often kill the chicks of the previous male before starting his own family. In courtship a male may assume a vertical posture, singing with his bill pointed to the sky, wings drooping, and tail spread. A receptive female pounces on the male's back and is then led to the nest cavity by the singing male.

Nests are in either natural tree cavities, such as old woodpecker holes, or in man-made nest boxes. On one Canadian nest-box trail of 1169 boxes, for example, 549 were occupied by Tree Swallows. Males establish the territory around the cavity, but the female does most of the nest building. The nest is usually a grass cup lined with feathers supplied by the male, mostly from other bird species. The clutch is four to seven white eggs (the usual color for hole-nesting birds) that the female incubates for about two weeks until hatching. The female alone has a brood patch, and she broods the chicks for about three weeks until fledging. The chicks are helpless (altricial), with sparse down and closed eyes, and they are totally dependent upon the adults for food. Parents share about equally in the chick-feeding duties, supplying a diet primarily of insects. Tree Swallows forage by coursing over water, marshes, grassy, or shrubby habitat, sweeping up flying insects as they dart about in flight at speeds of five to twenty miles per hour. They sometimes pick insects off the water's surface and also drink in flight. Foraging occupies most of their day; they are usually below 150 feet in the air. They have been reported to flutter against vegetation, thus startling up swarms of insects. Tree Swallows take a wide variety of prey, including flies, beetles, grasshoppers, dragonflies, and spiders, and will eat berries, particularly bayberries.

Tree Swallows are a well-documented species, partly because they so readily breed in nest boxes, and they have proved to be wonderful study subjects in fields such as evolutionary biology and population ecology. It appears that nest site availability may limit population size, and that the species has probably suffered from forestry practices in which dead snags are removed. An estimated 20,000 pairs use nest boxes in Canada alone, but this is only about two percent of the population. Tree Swallows are plagued by nest predators, including snakes, mammals that range in size from chipmunks to black bears, and blowfly larvae that frequently parasitize nestlings. Avian nest predators include crows, grackles, and jays, and both adults and fledglings are fair game for falcons, accipiters, and owls. Only an estimated twenty percent of young birds survive their first year. Nevertheless, the vast breeding range of Tree Swallows and the remoteness of much of the boreal forests of Canada make the Tree Swallow a secure species that in some areas is expanding its breeding range. 

William E. Davis, Jr



COMMON MERGANSER BY DAVID LARSON

About the Cover Artist

Julie Zickefoose is a widely published natural history writer and artist. Educated at Harvard University in biology and art, she worked for six years as a field biologist for The Nature Conservancy before turning to a freelance art career. Her observations on the natural history and behavior of birds stem from more than three decades of experience in the field. She has presented illustrated lectures for nature organizations and festivals across the country, and exhibited her paintings at universities, museums, galleries, and in juried shows. Illustration credits include *The New Yorker*, *Smithsonian*, *Spider*, *Cricket*, and *Ladybug*. She has written and illustrated articles for *Country Journal*, and *Bird Watcher's Digest* has published more than 30 of Julie's articles and 17 of her cover paintings. With her husband, Bill Thompson III, editor of *Bird Watcher's Digest*, Julie lives on an 80-acre nature sanctuary in the Appalachian foothills of southeast Ohio. A 42-foot-tall birdwatching tower atop their home helps them enjoy and catalogue the wildlife they protect, including 180 bird species and 66 butterfly species to date. 🦉



EASTERN SCREECH OWL ROOSTING UNDER THE EAVES OF A HOUSE IN NEWBURYPORT, BY DAVID LARSON

AT A GLANCE

February 2004



BILL LAWLESS

To kickoff 2004, the At a Glance mystery bird has the reader looking at only a partial bird. In this case, it might seem that a rather critical part of the bird is obscured — the head! This fact should not be too daunting, however, since oftentimes birders fail to obtain complete looks at birds' heads, such as when viewing roosting shorebirds, sleeping waterfowl, diving alcids, or practically any bird flying directly away from the observer. With this in mind, let us try to carefully evaluate what we can see.

First, what does the habitat look like where the image was captured? From the texture of the substrate, the presence of what seems to be a painted line in the foreground, and possibly some ice or snow in the background, a hypothesis might be that the bird is on an asphalt parking lot, probably in the winter. Second, what is the bird doing? By its posture — head down, tail up — it seems reasonable to assume that the bird is either picking at something on the ground (food?) or possibly drinking from a small depression.

With these simple clues as background for an analysis, let us concentrate on the bird itself. It clearly has two white wing bars, separated by a rather wide panel of uniform coloration; streaks on the sides; a notably short tail in relation to the tips of its folded wings; and a prominent, dark, J-shaped (?) marking on the rear portion of the side of its face. This last mark, even though the overall face is obscured, appears

to be pronounced, particularly when it appears to be located below what resembles a broad supercilium, in contrast to an obviously contrasting plain nape.

Given that the bird has streaked sides, combined with two distinct white wing bars, and appears to be feeding from the ground, a sparrow of some type would be a reasonable first guess. Curiously, however, there are not a lot of sparrows that share both of these characteristics, especially considering the bird's obviously short tail in relation to the folded primary tips. An American Tree Sparrow would seem like a possibility, just based upon the strong wing bars and possibly also the dark marking on the side of the face; however, tree sparrows have long tails (like all *Spizella* sparrows) and they definitely do not possess streaked sides and flanks. A White-throated Sparrow in its first winter might give the impression of the kind of side streaking shown by the mystery bird, but like other sparrows with strong wing bars, would also exhibit a much longer tail and would also not have such a conspicuous pale nape. Unfortunately, no other sparrow species are viable candidates.

So what are the other alternatives? How about a redpoll? There were plenty of those around this winter. Indeed, redpolls sometimes feed on the ground in parking lots, possess streaked underparts and display distinct wing bars. Unfortunately, however, a redpoll would not display a strong facial pattern and a broad supercilium the way the mystery bird does. These same characteristics also eliminate a Pine Siskin as a candidate.

At this point in the process, there are few realistic alternatives remaining. So let's go back to thinking about what kinds of small, streaky birds might be likely to feed on the ground in a snow-covered parking lot. Only two or three should immediately come to mind: Horned Lark, Snow Bunting, and Lapland Longspur. Now the choice is easy, since neither Horned Larks nor Snow Buntings have streaked flanks. Lapland Longspurs (*Calcarius lapponicus*), however, are streaked on the sides and flanks, have a broad supercilium and a pale nape, and display, in the words of David Sibley, a "dark frame on the auriculars" (i.e., "ear region"). It is a portion of this frame that gives the J-shaped marking described previously. Once these features are collectively considered, the identification of the mystery bird is actually quite straightforward.

Lapland Longspurs are uncommon late fall migrants and winter visitors in Massachusetts, where they are most often encountered in small flocks on coastal salt marshes and sand dunes, or on extensive barren fields in the interior. Bill Lawless captured this digital image of the Lapland Longspur at Salisbury, Massachusetts. 

Wayne R. Petersen



AT A GLANCE



DAVID LARSON

Can you identify this bird?

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



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VOL. 32, NO. 2, APRIL 2004

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