

Bird Observer

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HOT BIRDS

A flock of 19 **Tundra Swans**, nearly matching the number of resident exotic Mute Swans, was found on the Turners Falls power canal by Alex Haro on March 12. They remained on the canal the following day, pleasing many local birders, but were gone the day after that. Josh Layfield took the photo on the right.



A **Ross' Goose**, standing on the ice on the Lower Millpond in Easthampton, was photographed on March 14 by Scott Rasmussen (his photo on the left). After a couple of days there, Sean Williams spotted it flying over the East Meadows of Northampton among thousands of other geese including a Cackling, a White-fronted, and nearly 90 Snow; that was the last time anyone saw it in the area.

A Reeve (female **Ruff**) turned up on March 30 with a flock of yellowlegs in the Scotland Road Wet Meadows area of Newbury. Marj Watson was the first to document it (her photo is on the right), originally thinking that it was one of the yellowlegs, but when she posted her photos on Flickr, Nate Dubrow noticed and confirmed the bird's true identity. A horde of birders enjoyed the Reeve's continuing presence the next day, but beyond that it was not relocated.



Black Brant, the Pacific subspecies of Brant, is extremely rare in Massachusetts... but slightly less so in Plymouth Bay. Over the past 20 years, there have been at least 8 reports of Black Brant from Plymouth Bay, including Sean Williams' find on April 19 (his photo is on the left), compared to only one in the entire rest of our state. Francis Morello and Max Chalfin-Jacobs relocated the bird plus an apparent second individual the following day!

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Cover: Olive-sided Flycatcher by John Sill © Massachusetts Audubon Society. Courtesy of the Museum of American Bird Art.

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Bird Observer

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A Guide to Birding Mass Audubon's Tidmarsh Wildlife Sanctuary, Plymouth, Massachusetts

Lisa Schibley

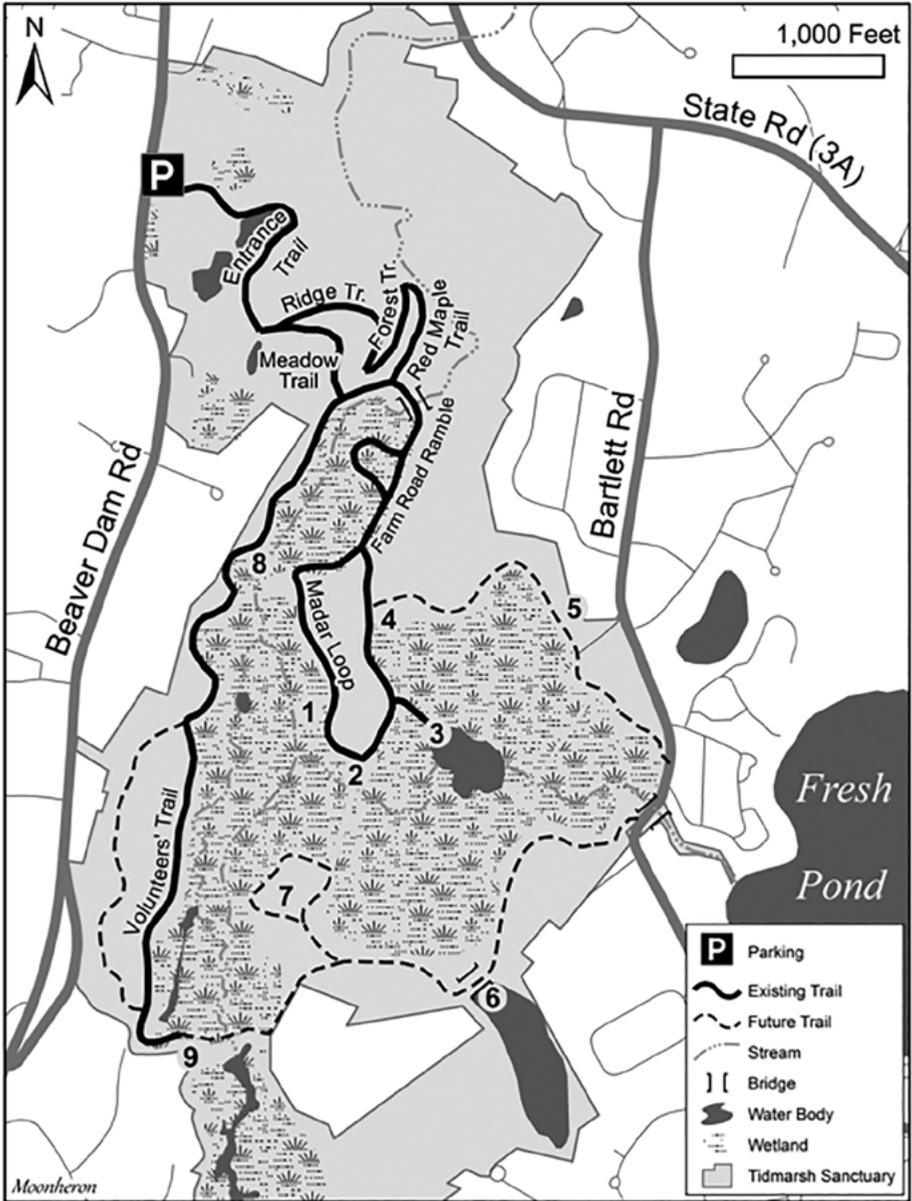


In 2008, Glorianna Davenport and Evan Schulman had a decision to make. Throughout the 80s and 90s, their successful 600-acre Tidmarsh Farms in Plymouth was producing 1% of Ocean Spray's cranberry crop, but when the time came to move on none of the couple's three children had an interest in continuing the work. Once they decided to sell, however, there was plenty of enthusiasm from local developers. One proposal showed an impressive subdivision of more than 400 homes. But Davenport, a cofounder of MIT's Media Lab, and Schulman, a financial entrepreneur, chose another direction.

Instead of selling to the highest bidder, they committed to restoring the Beaver Dam Brook wetlands to their original splendor, launching the Tidmarsh Farms Restoration Project, the largest freshwater wetland restoration project to date in the Northeast. Nine dams were eliminated, over three miles of meandering stream channel were created, and thousands of tons of sediment were removed to reconnect the headwaters of Beaver Dam Brook to the ocean for the first time in a century. In place of the monoculture of cranberry bogs, there emerged a mosaic of ponds, streams, red maple and Atlantic white cedar swamps, grasslands, and pine-oak forests that patchworked the property.

In 2011, Davenport and Schulman founded Living Observatory with a mission "to tell the long-term story of the Tidmarsh Farms Wetland Restoration and to advance scientific knowledge and public understanding of wetland ecology." In 2017, the Mass Audubon Tidmarsh Campaign, through state and federal land conservation grants and individual donations, raised the \$3.6 million needed to acquire the property, and it officially became the Tidmarsh Wildlife Sanctuary.

As of spring 2019, there is no complete loop around Tidmarsh. The sanctuary managers ask that visitors do not cross Beaver Dam Brook—which flows through the entire property—anywhere other than the bridge on the Farm Road Ramble. On many of the trails, you must double back to return to the parking lot. The Volunteers' Trail (which will be covered at the end of the article) is about a mile long, running north to south along the west side of the sanctuary, and does not connect with the rest of the trails except at its northern end; the trail itself is two miles out and back. Or it is just over a three-mile roundtrip from the parking lot. Depending on the amount of time and energy you have, you can choose walks along the rest of the sanctuary trails that vary from a couple of miles to more than six miles roundtrip.



Tidmarsh Sanctuary, Plymouth, Massachusetts.



View from the overlook. All photographs © Cyndi Jackson.

Begin your exploration of Tidmarsh right around the parking lot at 60 Beaver Dam Road, with a possibility of Eastern Bluebirds any time of year in the adjacent open area. The start of the Entrance Trail is a good place for warblers during spring migration. In the first 100 yards, there is an open area on the left side of the trail with a thicket and birch trees. Listen for breeding Prairie Warblers in the summer and Common Redpolls in irruption winters. Eastern Phoebe often arrive here early and linger late.

The next section of the Entrance Trail is mixed pitch pine and oak forest with a number of potential Eastern Screech-Owl roost sites, so it's worth taking your time passing through. As you near the small pond, listen for warbler chips. Spring migration brings Northern Parula, American Redstart, Magnolia, and Black-throated Green warblers here. Although the view is hidden by a row of bushes, approach the pond slowly and carefully because there may be a pair of Wood Ducks just out of sight to the right. Also, spend a few minutes watching for the resident river otter and scanning the bank for pond amphibians. The woods on the left are wet and boggy, particularly good for Black-throated Blue and Black-and-white warblers in spring migration.

As the trail curves around the pond to the right, peer down the drainage outlet to your left. In wet seasons, the waterfall out of the pond can make it tough to hear, but the thickets lining the stream bed can be productive. Historically, this blocked path led to the Red Maple swamp, but access is currently limited while the sanctuary works on a management plan.



Great Blue Heron

The trail continues to curve around the pond, and you are headed toward a different habitat. Tall white and pitch pines surround the trail. Here you can find Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Brown Creepers even in non-irruption years.

The Entrance Trail dramatically opens at 0.4 miles where the dense forest gives way to an open field with numerous boulders deposited by the receding glaciers. The edges just to the left or right of the path are prime spots to find Field Sparrows. Also, look for American Kestrels and Eastern Bluebirds along with Savannah Sparrows and Indigo Buntings in the field, and watch for Hairy Woodpeckers around the edge of the woods. Where the trail forks, the choice is to go low through the Meadow Trail on a short direct path to the wetlands and the intersection of the Volunteers' Trail and Farm Road Ramble, or to climb high up the Ridge Trail toward the overlook—which can be the highlight of any visit and worth the walk.

If you choose the overlook, follow the Ridge Trail up and scan the woods to the left for wintering Hermit Thrushes or for Ovenbirds in the summer. From the top, you can see the full length of Tidmarsh to the south, the Pinehills development to the west, and as far as Bartlett Road to the east. The views are dramatic and worth the effort. Plus it's a great spot to watch for Red-tailed Hawks, Red-shouldered Hawks, Ospreys, and Bald Eagles. Turn left immediately after the platform to take the Forest Trail down, which brings you through a mixed forest that can be good for warblers in spring migration. The trail ends at the Red Maple Path. Looking left, you can see the southern tip of the red maple swamp. In fall and winter, this spot is occasionally good for Winter Wrens, so keep an ear out for their squeaky *klip-klip*.



View of Beaver Dam Brook from the bridge.

Head right down the Red Maple Path to approach the wetlands. You are at the northern tip of the original cranberry bogs, where Beaver Dam Brook exits the property, passes under Route 3A into Bartlett Pond, heads out to Whitehorse Beach, then finally flows into the ocean. At the intersection, you can turn right toward the Volunteers' Trail or left for the Farm Road Ramble and Madar Loop. Either direction is well worth exploring.

For now, turn left and follow the Farm Road Ramble trail with the watercourse on the right. At the bridge over Beaver Dam Brook, check for Eastern Phoebes in summer. You may be lucky to find a pair working on a nest. Also at the bridge, look for monitoring equipment. Scientists continue to monitor and study ecological change across the property as the transformation from bogs to wetlands continues, and they often have equipment here in the stream. This is also the spot where citizen scientists count herring during April and May. Before 2015, water control structures blocked the herring's passage, but since they were removed, herring have been able to travel through Tidmarsh and successfully reach Fresh Pond, the main freshwater spawning pond of this watershed.

You are near the pines again, and this is another good spot for Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Chipping Sparrows, and Brown Creepers. The small loop on the right gives you the first good look at Beaver Dam Brook with an excellent chance for resident Swamp Sparrows. The habitat of the next part of the trail system is uniform. The meandering brook creates open patches of water at irregular intervals, and any one of these can hold ducks; most common, of course, are Mallards and American Black Ducks. In winter, Green-winged Teal, American Wigeons, Gadwalls, Buffleheads, and Hooded Mergansers are also regular. More unlikely are Northern Pintails, Eurasian Wigeons, and Northern Shovelers.



View from the end of the Volunteers' Trail.

Head right at the Madar Loop intersection to keep the excellent duck habitat on your right. Unfortunately, most of the water is hidden from view behind the reeds and grasses, and the ducks are seen in glimpses rather than in long, pleasing views. When the water does open at a couple of vantage points (1 and 2), it is worth standing quietly for a while since ducks will often float by. There are future plans to add additional bridges and boardwalks to Tidmarsh, so as the sanctuary evolves, access to these spaces should be enhanced.

At the southernmost point of the Madar Loop, you have the best view of the rest of the sanctuary from this side of Beaver Dam Brook. This is a great place to scan for Northern Harrier in the winter and American Kestrel in the spring and summer, plus Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, and the occasional Great Egret in summer. It's also a good place to look through the innumerable swallows that call Tidmarsh home in the summer; Barn, Tree, Northern Rough-winged, and Bank are all regular.

Shortly after the loop turns north, there is a spur trail on the right to the Tidmarsh Pond overlook (3). This is the one spot on the property where diving ducks are more common: Red-breasted and Common mergansers, Common Goldeneyes, along with Double-crested Cormorants, and occasionally American Coots and Pied-billed Grebes. The overlook is another great spot to sort through the swallows.

Continuing north, you will come to an unnamed trail (4) to the right that is considered an access road by the Mass Audubon staff. It is not an official trail, but birders are welcome to walk along the road. Mass Audubon is hoping to construct additional trails within the next year that will double Tidmarsh's trail mileage, and



Female Wood Duck with ducklings.

everything listed as “future trail” on the map will be open to visitors. If you don’t have a lot of time, stay on the Madar Loop to return to the parking lot via the Farm Road Ramble, the Meadow Trail, and the Entrance Trail; this route is just under three miles from your car and back. If you are up for a longer exploration, head out along the access road.

At this intersection, there are a number of often-occupied bluebird boxes, and this is the best spot to photograph these charismatic birds. Farther on the left there is a sand borrow pit that was used in the cranberry operation. Along the upper left sandy bank look for Northern Rough-winged Swallow nesting holes. The next part of the access road travels through excellent sparrow habitat (5) from the intersection all the way to Bartlett Road. In winter, you can find Chipping Sparrows, Field Sparrows, American Tree Sparrows, White-throated Sparrows, and Savannah Sparrows. During October, look for White-crowned and Lincoln’s sparrows, and if you are lucky, you might just pull out a Clay-colored Sparrow. In winter, this is a good area to find Eastern Meadowlarks.

The point where the access road meets Bartlett Road is a good place to turn around. But if you are up for a longer walk, there are several other spots worth visiting. Remember, there is no way to reach the Volunteers’ Trail on the southwest corner of Tidmarsh from the access road to complete a closed loop, so you will have about three miles of backtracking to the parking lot after you continue to the end.

After crossing the Bartlett Road bridge (very carefully because the bridge is narrow and the drivers travel too fast and generally are not paying attention), continue



Marsh Wren.

south on the Tidmarsh access road. Off to the right is another good spot for Eastern Meadowlarks in winter. The road passes through forest. When you reach the bridge over “The Arm” (6), look for Green-winged Teal in winter and warblers and vireos in summer. Beyond the bridge as you approach the greenhouses, the large overgrown mound is often good for sparrows. Across from the greenhouses, a small patch of open land is currently being managed for shorebirds. Least, Spotted, and Solitary sandpipers are possible in fall migration, dependent on recent rains. The last spot worth visiting on this side of Tidmarsh is the grassland hill (7). Not only is it good sparrow habitat, but it has views of several of the best spots for ducks that are not visible from other trails. A walk around the small loop is certain to flush several groups of ducks in winter, so proceed slowly. At this point, you are about three miles from the parking lot, with the possibility that the walk back will be just as productive as the walk out.

The final area of Tidmarsh to cover is the Volunteers’ Trail, which begins at the end of the Meadow Trail. Named to recognize Mass Audubon’s valuable volunteers, this trail takes you south along the western edge of the sanctuary. The thickets on the left where the trail starts are good for Nashville and Orange-crowned warblers in fall migration and have yielded the occasional Connecticut Warbler. Listen for Eastern Phoebe and Least Flycatchers in spring.

When the trail opens up, there is an excellent cattail marsh on the left. From here to the end of the trail, listen for the energetic *chit* of the Marsh Wren in fall and winter, as usually several can be heard. The restored marsh has become attractive to Belted Kingfishers and Green Herons, both of which can easily be found. Be ready to jump if you are lucky to flush a snipe, which are found occasionally in the drainage ditches.



Osprey.

When you reach a bench overlooking the wetlands (8), this is an excellent place to sit and quietly listen for rails. Virginia, Sora, and King rails all are possible, although only Virginia is likely. The stretch of trail after the bench is excellent for passerines, early Pine Warblers, late Palm Warblers, warbler and vireo flocks in migration, breeding Baltimore and Orchard orioles, and Great Crested Flycatchers, plus on occasion, unusual species, such as White-eyed Vireo or Black-billed and Yellow-billed cuckoos.

As the trail continues, the diversity of passerines decreases, but the ducks start drawing attention again. For the last 0.25 mile of the Volunteers' Trail, a long stretch of open water is in view, which often has a good variety of ducks. At the

end, the Volunteers' Trail rises up to give a view (9) of what was Beaver Dam Pond and is now a cattail marsh. Again, listen for rails and Marsh Wren here, and keep watch for American Bittern. This is an excellent place to scan for kestrels, egrets, herons, raptors, and swallows. It is one of the best places to get good views of Orchard Orioles. On the mile-long walk back, look and listen for the species that you might have missed earlier.

To reach Tidmarsh Wildlife Sanctuary from the north: Take MA-3 south to Exit 4 for Plimoth Plantation Highway in Plymouth. Follow Plimoth Plantation Highway for 1.7 miles until it turns into MA-3A south. Continue on MA-3A south for 2.5 miles, and turn right onto Beaver Dam Road. 60 Beaver Dam Road will be about 0.6 miles down on the left. From the south: Take Exit 3 from MA-3 north. Turn right onto Clark Road. In 0.7 miles, Clark Road becomes Beaver Dam Road. 60 Beaver Dam Road is 2.5 miles down on the right. 🐦

***Lisa Schibley** is an avid birder from Plymouth, Massachusetts. She works at Manomet Inc. as a Program Associate supporting the International Shorebird Survey and other shorebird projects. She began birding in the early 90s in Tucson and eventually led trips for Tucson Audubon and coordinated the Tucson CBC. After a 13 year hiatus due to the arrival of James and then Edison (who show no interest in birding), she picked it up again in 2015 with passion and enthusiasm for everything birds and birding. She currently is a member of the South Shore Bird Club and loves making connections with birders who want to learn more about Manomet and birding the Plymouth area.*

Feminist Bird Club

Karla Noboa



Participants in the Feminist Bird Club at Castle Island. Photograph by Megan Billman.

The Feminist Bird Club was started in October of 2016 by Molly Adams, when she piqued her friends' interest in what she was doing on the outskirts of NYC during fall migration. When a female jogger was murdered in Queens near a hot spot where Molly would often go birding solo, she felt compelled to create a group in which all birders could support one another in a welcoming and safe environment. The mission of the Feminist Bird Club is to promote diversity in birding and provide a safe opportunity to connect with the natural world in urban environments while fund-raising to protect the rights of women, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and people of color. It quickly attracted others and the Feminist Bird Club was born.

The Feminist Bird Club Boston chapter began in 2017 when I wanted to learn more about birding but found the birding world to be intimidating and overwhelming. I felt out of place and as an education outreach professional, I wanted to do something about my situation that could benefit others as well. I wanted to create a space where anyone felt welcome and excited to explore an interest in birds and the natural sciences.

According to the latest U.S. Fish and Wildlife survey, 93 percent of self-identified

birders are white and only eight percent of self-identified birders are African American. As birding becomes more popular among more diverse groups in the United States, a mindful, inclusive space becomes more necessary. As someone who had very little birding experience, I felt uncomfortable asking questions among the dozen people that seemed to know everything and weren't keen to slow down. As a first-generation American, I felt even more out of place in what seemed like an entirely white community.

Now in its second year, the Boston chapter of Feminist Bird Club has grown in popularity. Our walks have an average of 15 attendees and each walk welcomes around 50 percent new members and 50 percent returning members. We have many members whose first time birding was with the Feminist Bird Club, and now they come back every month. We also have biologists who are expert birders and regularly attend walks to help everyone else see new and exciting things.

The Boston chapter aims to make birding and the natural sciences as accessible as possible; walks are always hosted in areas that are accessible by public transportation and in greater Boston. It is often easy to forget that nature is all around us, even in urban areas, so I hope to bring more awareness to the species that live right in the city. Our favorite locations for urban birding are the common ones: Mount Auburn Cemetery, the Arnold Arboretum, and more. In 2019, we hope to expand beyond only offering walks and partner more with local urban communities to raise awareness for accessibility in the sciences, as well as feminist and human rights causes.

I often am asked what the word "feminist" has to do with birding and this club. Besides discussing feminist issues during walks, the very existence of the Feminist Bird Club is a form of advocacy for the rights of women, the LGBTQ+ community, and people of color by making all of these groups more visible in the birding world. The members of the club participate in fund-raising for feminist and other causes by purchasing an annual bird patch created by the club to support a human rights organization, and have also raised funds for the New York Abortion Access Fund, Black Lives Matter, and this year, Pueblos Sin Fronteras and Native Youth Sexual Health Network.

Birding can be a very intensive, time consuming hobby. For some, the goal is to see as many birds as they possibly can during their lifetime, chasing rarities and attempting big years. For others, birding is casual; it is the time they spend seated by the bird feeders, or a way to get outside and be mindful as they experience nature.

For me, birding is a form of active meditation. As someone with anxiety that fluctuates from minimal to debilitating, birding is how I get my mind to slow down and be present. Three years ago, when I bought my first pair of binoculars, I realized that birding was the most accessible outdoor activity available. It was something I could do anywhere, from mountain trails to the middle of a major city. All I needed to do was slow down and look.

If you would like to be a part of the Feminist Bird Club, please join our mailing list to learn about walks and events. If you can't attend walks in Boston, you can still be involved; anyone anywhere can be a member! Find some interested friends or



Participants in the Feminist Bird Club at Belle Isle Marsh. Photograph by the author.

neighbors, get together as a group of Feminist birders, and have fun! More information can be found online at <molly-adams.com/feminist-bird-club>. Additionally, if you are interested in helping lead walks, organize events or would like to be more involved in the Boston chapter, please reach out! We are looking for extra hands.

Some people are very competitive in their birding. Maybe they'll die happy, having seen a thousand species before they die, but I'll die happy knowing I've spent all that quiet time being present. (Thomson, 2014) 🐦

Reference

Thomson, L. 2014. *Birding with Yeats: A Memoir*. Toronto, Ontario: House of Anansi Press.

Karla Noboa is the coordinator of the Boston chapter of Feminist Bird Club. When not running FBC, she manages volunteers and programs for the Esplanade Association, and volunteers for Mass Audubon and the Arnold Arboretum. With a degree in Natural Resources, Karla aims to diversify and increase access in the field of natural sciences, and create a passion for ecology and conservation in everyone.

A Rare Opportunity: Documenting Red-headed Woodpeckers Nesting in Plymouth, Massachusetts

Susan Abele



Figure 1. Red-headed Woodpecker at my feeder. Photograph by Carol Molander, June 13, 2018.

Immediately upon landing in America, at Newcastle, Delaware, July 14th, 1794, (Wilson) ...shot the first bird that presented itself, a Red-headed Woodpecker, and he thought it the most beautiful bird he had ever beheld. (Burns 1908)

Red-headed Woodpeckers in the Neighborhood

It is not every day that one staggers out of bed at 6:30 am, and peering out the window, lays eyes for the first time on a glorious adult-plumaged Red-headed Woodpecker, *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*! No different from Alexander Wilson and many others enchanted by this bird, I was dazzled and in my excitement whipped off an

email to Trevor Lloyd-Evans at nearby Manomet, known to me from its inception as the Manomet Bird Observatory. Trevor responded, cautious but affirming, and several hours later showed up on my doorstep. An afternoon of generous conversation was rewarded with a late day visit from the bird I learned to call an RHWO.

On that July day in 2017, I could not foresee the remarkable opportunity that would present itself when a Red-headed Woodpecker, possibly the same bird, showed up on May 10, 2018, one day after I returned to my summer home in Plymouth and put out seed and suet feeders. By summer's end, several other observers and I documented this woodpecker and its mate as they successfully raised their young—the first confirmed breeding pair in Massachusetts in decades.

In 1927, Edward Howe Forbush reported a handful Red-headed Woodpeckers—summer and winter—in Plymouth, Bristol, and Barnstable counties, and one nest on the outer arm of Cape Cod. Manomet banded a hatch-year (HY) bird on September 10, 1973. Mass Audubon's first *Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas* (Petersen and Meservey 2003) confirmed one nest in all of Massachusetts. None were confirmed in *Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas 2* (Walsh and Petersen 2011). On October 10, 2011, Wayne Petersen photographed a juvenile Red-headed Woodpecker in Middleboro and reported to *Bird Observer* that the birds are “rare to very uncommon migrants in Massachusetts” and that they are most likely to be encountered in September and October, or else found wintering at birdfeeders almost anywhere in the state (Petersen

2011). Since then, eBird records have cited a small number of immature and adult birds in eastern Massachusetts—again summer and winter—but no confirmed nest sites, thus substantiating the rarity of the bird that first captured our attention in 2017.

Manomet's Lisa Schibley made the first Red-headed Woodpecker report to eBird in 2018, beginning our rewarding mutual endeavor. With deep appreciation for the amazing opportunity and with the help of many dedicated eBirders who photographed the birds' activities, we documented the successful nesting of a pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers, later known to some as Smudge, because of yellow-stained wing feathers, and Pudge because it rhymes with smudge. At that time, even with this distinguishing feature, we were unable to assess by behavior whether the sexually monomorphic bird was male or female.

Field Notes

Careful observations and field notes, supplemented with photographs by eBirders verify the Red-headed Woodpecker's activities, actions that in turn are verified in the literature (see the section below of the History of Red-headed Woodpeckers in Massachusetts). The following excerpts from my field notes, along with additional comments, structure the time line for the Red-headed Woodpecker pair nesting in Plymouth in 2018.

July-August 2017: For about five weeks, beginning on July 17, a Red-headed Woodpecker, calling each time, came to suet feeders at 184 Manomet Avenue in the Manomet section of Plymouth. Red-bellied Woodpeckers were also in the area. I learned to distinguish between the calls of the two birds, and thus was alerted when the RHWO was in the area. Often, the bird seemed skittish, sometimes lighting on the feeder, but taking off again without taking any suet.

May 10, 2018: I set out feeders yesterday upon my arrival for the summer and today the RHWO "returned." I like to think it was the same bird. (See Figure 1.)

May 24: Because the bird usually flew in and out of the yard from the same direction, Lisa Schibley searched south along Manomet Avenue toward Brewster Avenue, where she found the RHWO roosting in a stand of Norway spruce. She posted to eBird: "Seen 3 times over two hours. No pictures but got a recording. Perfect adult. Full red head. Black wings with white secondaries."

June: Throughout the month, I saw the RHWO at my feeder.

June 10: Visits to my feeders seemed to increase.

June 12: Between 6:00 and 7:00 pm, a bird came to the feeders at least seven times, flying in and out from different directions, several times in such quick succession that I began to think that there might be more than one bird. While watching Red-bellied Woodpeckers feeding their young, I had a split-second view of two RHWOs chasing each other in the treetops west of 184 Manomet Avenue.

June 17: The area of observation widened to a wooded area behind my house.



Figure 2 (left). First nestling to fledge. Photograph by Austin Mason, August 29, 2018.

Figure 3 (right). First fledging perches on a branch. Photograph by Austin Mason, August 29, 2018.

David Clapp and Ian Davies reported “**continuing adult; calling and seen flying along Circuit Avenue.”

June 25: Bob Stymeist reported a “continuing male” at the end of Circuit Avenue at Holmes Road. By late June, other eBirders reported sightings on a dead maple tree near the intersection of Circuit Avenue and Holmes Road.

June 26: Family members reported a brief sighting of two birds chasing around the tree near one of the suet feeders in my yard at 184 Manomet Avenue.

June 27: Marshall Iliff posted “**rare; continuing adult on snag among white pine, pitch pine and spruce; calling, drumming, and inspecting cavities. Breeding Code S7 Male present 7 + days (Probable).”

July 12: Marshall Iliff again posted the presence of a male bird, probably breeding. Iliff noted that as soon as he arrived, the bird was easily found perched on the snag at the side of Holmes Road.

July 24-25: The RHWOs abandoned the suet feeders and were not seen again in my yard.

August 1: I walked along Circuit Avenue to Holmes Road and for the first time observed two adult birds on the maple snag.-With permission, I walked onto the property at 9 Holmes Road and saw the nest cavity in the bare upper branches of the snag. For more than an hour, I observed the birds returning again and again to the nest cavity and sent triumphant emails to Trevor.

August 15: Lisa documented the feeding activity and made an audio recording of nestlings responding to the parents’ approach. She also documented nest cleaning.

August 18: Lisa reported, “Two parents visiting nest site with food. Nestlings heard faintly... Breeding Code: ON Occupied Nest (confirmed).”

August 23: Lisa photographed two adult birds at the nest and a woodpecker head in the nest cavity and posted to eBird: “Most likely more than one baby...Lots of noise



Figure 4 (left). Adult bird brings insects to the nestlings. Photograph by Austin Mason, August 29, 2018. **Figure 5** (right). Adult bird also feeds fruit to its young. Photograph by Austin Mason, August 29, 2018.

when the parents approach the nest.” Based on observational data from the feeder site, we figured that the babies would fledge during the week of August 27–31.

August 24: Observed a hummingbird circling about the RHW0 roosting at the top of the tree. This happened more than once. Was that bird attracted to the red head of the woodpecker?

August 29: Austin Mason photographed the first baby to poke its head out; several seconds later, the fledgling perched on the branch. (See Figures 2 and 3). We watch the adults feed insects and fruit to the babies. (See Figures 4 and 5.)

August 29: Lisa reported “one young fledged. Two seen still in the hole.” With the second baby out of the nest, we observed two more babies. One fledged unobserved the same day; also unseen, the third fledged two days later.

August 30: I began watch about 8 am. Linda Fuller and I observed the third baby being fed by two adults, Smudge with the stained feathers, and Pudge, because it rhymed with Smudge. Baby number three sometimes poked its head out, looked around, and then retreated inside the nest. The parents began to re-enter nest cavity, disappearing out of sight as they did when babies were smaller, a change from the most recent behavior. In the late afternoon, I returned to the site with Trevor and saw the last baby, still in the nest cavity.

August 31: I spent a long morning watching and returned briefly to site in the afternoon, but did not see the baby. The adults continued to attend to nest cavity however, but their pattern of behavior was very different. The RHW0 would pause for



Figure 6. “Sexual pose” described by Kilham. Photograph by Linda Fuller September 6, 2018.

an extended time at the outside the nest and occasionally re-entered the cavity. It was tempting to wonder if there was a fourth baby that was failing to thrive. Attendance on the nest cavity diminished over time.

September: The birds remained in the vicinity of the nest tree for most of the month of September. I continued daily visits but of shorter duration.

September 4: From 4:30 to 5:15, I observed the two adult birds fly catching from the nest tree.

September 5: Lisa and I were in the field at mid-day. While I kept an eye on one baby on the nest tree, Lisa spotted the two others together in the canopy of an oak tree. Three babies accounted for.

September 6–9: The birds continued to return to the roost tree. The adult birds would routinely perch at the top of the main trunk, which was also their “anvil” site. The adult birds, whether Smudge or Pudge was not recorded, continued to hang outside the nest cavity for minutes at a time, appearing to look or listen, and occasionally entering the hole and disappearing from sight.

Staining on Smudge’s feathers was probably acquired during brooding inside the nest cavity. The male bird broods at night, but since both birds share incubation, male versus female behavior could not be determined except in Figure 6, showing the “male and female Red-headed Woodpeckers in sexual pose” (Kilham 1977). Smudge, the presumed male with the stained feathers, is on the right. Copulation did not occur, or at the least was not observed, and there was no evidence of a second brood.

September 11: Late afternoon, I saw the two adults fly catching, along with at least two of the three babies. At times, the babies hung out in the tallest Norway spruce tree on Circuit Avenue, and in the oak trees in the yard at 9 Holmes Road.

September 13: Lisa posted to eBird: “Susan and I saw the two adults and three young still hanging in the area around the tree...about 30–40 minutes between visits from the family...all 5 seen at once.”

September 14: The babies began to be more active, investigating the nest cavity. (Figure 7).

September 15: I staked out the snag for the Manomet Bird-a-thon crew. About 11:15, a dark gray CRV came to a quick stop near the tree, the doors burst open and out came members of the South Shore Bird Club team, binoculars at the ready! Lisa’s post to eBird: “One adult one young for Manomet Birdathon (sic) on the Red-headed Woodpecker Tree, Plymouth, Massachusetts.”

September 21: I discovered that the nest cavity had been raided. The lower edge

was ripped away, the wood fibers shredded by what appeared to be a ripping motion. Raccoons? I saw some little footprints at the edge of a nearby mud puddle on the road. Despite destruction of the nest cavity, the RHWOs were still active on the roost tree. [Postscript: The nest cavity branch remains, but several weeks later other branches came down in a wind storm, including the anvil site where the birds roosted most often, and it now lies beside the road in pieces—rotted, bark shredded, and riddled with insect holes.]

September 22: Lisa commented on eBird: “All still traveling in a family group. Watched one adult fly off chased by two young’uns then saw the second adult feeding the third juvie. Were seen just south of the Circuit St. & Holmes Rd. intersection and flew off toward Samoset and not seen again at a 20-minute wait by the original nest tree.”

September 27: The birds were last seen by Lisa, Pete Jacobson, and me. Lisa and Pete saw two juveniles on nearby Samoset Avenue. I saw one juvenile in treetops on Holmes Road. Unlike RBWOs and DOWOs, who brought in their babies, Smudge and Pudge never returned to the feeders at 184 Manomet Avenue.

February 3, 2019: John Galluzo reported a juvenile in Pembroke Woods, only 20 miles from Manomet. (eBird 02-03-19)

Other observations

Territory and Conflicts

As late as 2000, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, like Red-headed, were “rare vagrants in Massachusetts.” Today Red-bellieds are common in “open second-growth woods” and are year-round residents in Manomet (Walsh and Petersen 2013). Jerome A. Jackson confirmed the Red-headed Woodpecker and the Red-bellied Woodpecker as “congeners,” finding many similarities in breeding, incubating, and brooding behaviors. The Red-headed Woodpecker breeds later in the season, however, preferring to nest in open areas, while the Red-bellied Woodpecker breeds earlier and chooses a more wooded site. Jackson suggested that migratory versus nonmigratory habits are likely factors that allow these two species to live in overlapping areas (Jackson 1976). I observed no conflicts between these birds; they both bred successfully in my Manomet neighborhood. Territorial conflicts between Starlings and Red-bellieds are common, but there were no Starlings in the neighborhood. Resident crows occasionally perched on the roost tree, but the woodpeckers did not chase them away. Late in the season, Red-breasted Nuthatches circled the roost tree, but were chased off. An unseen marauder raided the nest three weeks after babies fledged, but until that point, we did not observe any serious interference with the original nest cavity.

Nesting and Foraging

Almost every time I walked to the nest site on Holmes Road during the month of August, one of the woodpeckers was roosting at the top of the main trunk of the maple snag, suggesting the importance of the roost tree. Coues (1883) noted that Red-headed

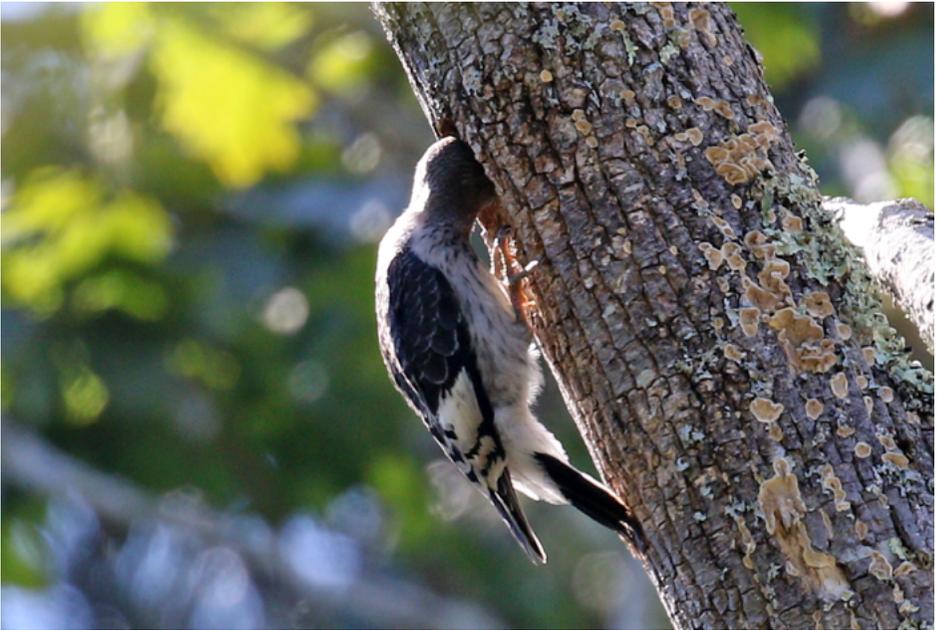


Figure 7. Juvenile inspects the nest cavity. Photograph by Steven Whitbread, September 14, 2018.

Woodpeckers located seemingly on a whim, and that the birds were equally at home in “garden and park as in the depths of the woods....” Seed and suet feeders attracted the birds to my yard, which opened to what might be called a park-like area on the Manomet bluffs. For their nest site, the birds found a snag standing in the midst of a wooded area of oak, pitch pine, and spruce a few hundred feet to the west of my house. The snag sheltered the nest cavity and became a launch site for fly catching. The top of the main trunk of the snag was also the “anvil” site. When the birds brought in large insects, they would perch at the flat top of that trunk and pound on their prey before caching or feeding to nestlings—typical behavior described by Kilham (1988). In addition, the two adults worked up and down the main trunk, which I began to call the larder, gleaning invertebrate material.

An observer in Kansas noted that during the breeding season, Red-headed Woodpeckers foraged extensively by fly catching and stooping (Jackson 1976). I observed stooping—flying to the ground to capture prey—in early July in my yard, but not in the vicinity of the nest site. One study quantified the summer diet for the Red-headed Woodpecker as “34% animal (mainly insects) and 66% plant material” (Frei et al. 2017). Percentages must certainly vary according to availability, but insects and wild fruits were sufficiently plentiful to support this family of Red-headed Woodpeckers in 2018. Curiously, the adults stopped coming to my suet feeder after June 25, which would have been shortly before the babies hatched (working backwards from the August 29 fledging date). Unlike the juvenile Downy and Red-bellied woodpeckers, the young Red-headed Woodpeckers never came to suet feeders.

Fledging

Red-headed Woodpeckers lay an average of four to seven eggs, which they incubate for 12–14 days. They lay their eggs over a period of several days and hatching is asynchronous. The babies remain in the nest from 24 to 31 days (Frei et al. 2017). The Manomet woodpeckers nested late in the season and successfully fledged three young. They stayed together as a family group for about a month before disappearing.

Once out of the nest, the fledglings sheltered in the upper branches of a tall Norway spruce and in the oaks adjacent to the roost tree. We observed them, often stationary on the roost tree, being fed by the parents. As time went on, they began to glean as well as investigate other cavities on the tree. Fly catching by the adults continued and later the young followed suit.

The many hours spent in the field observing the Red-headed Woodpeckers' feeding habits were rewarded with a demonstration by the most persistent fly catcher in the woodpecker family—shown in the word picture below.

At the end of the afternoon on September 11, with the sun lowering in the west, there must have been a hatch or bloom of flying insects, invisible to my eye, but not to Smudge and Pudge, who put on a captivating display—soaring, twisting, snatching—returning to the roost only to become airborne again in pursuit of the winged creatures that I could not see. Stunning flashes of white from their wings, and the glint of red touched by the setting sun was magical. The young birds, handsome in their own right and less than 10 days out of the nest, showed off their skills. Although not as adept as their parents—their flights were shorter—they added to my delight...birds in an airborne dance to a rhythm of their own making.

History of Red-headed Woodpeckers in Massachusetts

Fascinated by these birds and with Alexander Wilson in mind, I began to research the history of the Red-headed Woodpecker in nineteenth-century literature penned by Massachusetts naturalists and ornithologists. The first state report on “Fishes, Reptiles and Birds,” authorized by the Massachusetts Legislature and written by Unitarian minister William Bourne Oliver Peabody, was published in 1839. Enumerating some 240 species, he declared that the “Red-headed Woodpecker, *Picus erythrocephalus*, is a very elegant bird, and perhaps the most common of this familiar race.”

The first objective of the 1839 state report was to “enumerate the birds of Massachusetts.” The second was to gather information respecting their habits, “particularly such as cultivators are interested to know.” With remarkable forethought, Peabody rejected the idea of destroying birds and suggested, “In every instance of our removing a present inconvenience, we are opening a door for the entrance of much greater evils.” Peabody also suggested that killing birds by those who “wish to secure their orchards,” only satisfied a need for revenge. He went on to rail against “wanton boys...permitted to indulge in a cruel amusement, from which every man of sense and feeling should carefully withhold his children.”

Peabody also explained that while the Red-headed Woodpecker “occasionally

regales himself on fruit... his natural and most useful food is insects.” He noted that the birds’ feeding habits could be seen as an important control on the insect population. He did not concede that the collection of skins might also be a concern (Peabody 1839).

Edward Samuels (1870), quoting from Wilson’s *American Ornithology*, described flocks of Red-headed Woodpeckers and damage to fruit crops, which led to bounties being levied and farmers shooting the birds. “No other species of woodpecker in U.S., with possible exception of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker... was the subject of so much adverse criticism during nineteenth century as an agricultural pest” (Frei et al. 2017).

Eliot Coues, a founding member (with William Brewster and others) of the American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU), commented that persecution of this “conspicuous apparition” may affect its survival, “for certainly all persons with gun in hand, on their collecting tours, cannot resist the temptations of a shot at the beautiful creature, and the bird itself is one which never seems to profit by the lesson of danger notoriety teaches” (Coues 1883). William Brewster noted the irregular occurrence of Red-headed Woodpeckers at all seasons, and that the “greatest influx that has taken place within my personal recollection occurred in the autumn of 1881 when, for three of four weeks, Red-headed Woodpeckers literally swarmed about Cambridge and Boston.”

Brewster noted that the earliest breeding record from a Nuttall Ornithological Club Bulletin, “in the immediate neighborhood of Boston appears to be that by Mr. Purdie of a nest containing five eggs which was found by Mr. H. K. Job in June, 1878, in a hole of an apple tree in Brookline” (Purdie, 1882). Nesting records remained sparse, however, and in 1889 observers described a nest in Agawam as the last one known in the state (Howe and Allen 1901). One might question the validity of this statement, but suffice to say that there were no other published records until after the turn of the twentieth century.

Brewster (1906) described a pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers nesting in a grove of large chestnut trees not far from Waverly station in Belmont, which caught my attention because Charles Johnson Maynard (1909) recorded a nesting pair at Waverly in 1909.

Ambitious, independent, and not always in sync with the elite members of the Nuttall Ornithological Club (founded in Cambridge in 1873), Maynard emerged at the turn-of-the-century as a widely respected teacher. After his death, critics would recognize him as an “erratic genius” (Abele 2002). C. J. Maynard, as he styled himself, began as a naturalist and collector, writing his first book *The Naturalist’s Guide* in 1870. Drawing on work by Allen, Coues, and others, he compiled a species list of Massachusetts birds including, “#131. *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*, Swain.— Exceedingly rare... perhaps accidental. I have never seen it living. One seen by Mr. W. Brewster, in summer, at Waltham” (Maynard 1870). In his ambitious *Birds of Eastern North America* (Maynard 1889), self-published with illustrations by his own hand “drawn on stone,” he supplied a concordance updating names according to the new AOC check list: “*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*, Linnaeus.”

Maynard began conducting bird walks in 1893, and from 1908 to 1920 published a serial record of weekly nature classes, listing birds seen on walks in the greater Boston

area, southeastern Massachusetts, Ipswich, and Plum Island. The weekly booklets were sold by subscription and compiled yearly as *Records of Walks and Talk with Nature*. In Volume 2, there were three records for the Red-headed Woodpecker, including the nest site at the Waverley Station in Belmont. At this time, when sight records were not always credited, Maynard asserted that

the information given...has always been fresh and as far as editorial judgement...reliable; nothing which seemed questionable having been allowed a place in its pages. Most of the notes published have at best been only a few days old, and frequently that have appeared in a few hours.
(Maynard 1909)

After compiling the first year's work, Maynard voiced pride in what he had accomplished, suggesting that the work was "unique among publications devote wholly to Nature Study, at least in America" and envisioning that the records would "flow onward like water and finally contribute their portion to that great ocean of scientific research that belts the globe" (Maynard 1908). Maynard was held in high regard by his students and on his 65th birthday, more than 200 individuals, "including his old friend William Brewster," presented him with Zeiss binoculars (Griscom 1955).

Edward Howe Forbush became state ornithologist in 1908, the same year Maynard began to publish *Walks and Talks with Nature*. Forbush began as a shotgun collector, and as a young man studied taxidermy with Maynard. He described the Red-headed Woodpecker in the second volume of his three-volume work, the *Birds of Massachusetts and other New England States*, as a "Rare, Irregular visitor at all seasons...(that) may be seen casually at any season, but apparently not as permanent residents" (Forbush 1927). He also published the first comprehensive range map showing Red-headed Woodpecker nest sites in Massachusetts.

About twenty years later, Griscom (1955) published a checklist of birds found on Plum Island, noting that the total at that time stood at 320 species and subspecies, and suggested that the list was "one of the most remarkable local lists ever made in the Northeastern States." Included on the list, was the Red-headed Woodpecker: "Rare casual. October 17, 18, 1938 (Safford); October 3, 4, 1953 (Emery, Beatties)." This was a fitting entry, because the Red-headed Woodpecker was among the first birds that Griscom learned to identify early in his career (Davis 1994).

Griscom—who noted that Maynard was ahead of his time listing sight records, which "played a major role in the early twentieth century shift from the 'shotgun' to 'binocular' school of ornithology"—according to Davis (1994) was responsible, "more than any other single individual, for the development of the technique of rapid identification of birds." The ever-expanding community of birdwatchers that followed Maynard and Griscom forged a solid link to the citizen scientists of eBird and the documentary images in this article, shot with a camera instead of a gun.

Supporting my fascination for the Red-headed Woodpecker, Trevor pointed me to Kilham's (1983) *Woodpeckers of Eastern North America*, first published by the Nuttall Ornithological Club. In a later book, *On Watching Birds*, Killam (1988) generously

suggested, “that watching birds...can be more than just a scientific exercise and that watching first...making one’s own discoveries opens the mind.” Kilham’s landmark study of woodpeckers began in just such a manner, suggested to him by his first encounters in 1956 with a flock of the charismatic Red-headed Woodpecker near his home in Maryland (Kilham 1988).

The joy of insight is astounding, each source that I read providing *ah-ha* moments and recognized behaviors. Bent’s (1992) *Life Histories of North American Woodpeckers*, also read by Kilham, covers a great range of descriptive literature pertaining to the Red-headed Woodpecker in the Northeast, the Midwest, and the southern coastal states. In southeastern Massachusetts, he said that he had only seen one Red-headed Woodpecker in fifty years of field work, and that he had to chase it “across the line from Rhode Island” in order to shoot it (Bent 1992). Scholarly articles by Kilham and Jackson provide specific scientific descriptions about sexual identification, nesting and breeding behavior, and the particular skills of fly catching and caching of food supplies.

Summary

One nest record in 2018 does not herald a resurgence of the Red-headed Woodpecker population in Plymouth county, but with any luck it is not the end of the story of Smudge and Pudge and their progeny. Red-headed Woodpeckers are known to return to nest sites, possibly to the same tree (Frei et al. 2017). Of course, Smudge would be unrecognizable as he would have molted his stained feathers.

In a changing world, more often than not we count the losses, but opportunity remains. In late February 2019, I was spellbound by the sight and sound of a male Red-bellied Woodpecker in full breeding plumage proclaiming his territory from the treetops on Holmes Road. But in my mind’s eye, the Red-headed Woodpecker inhabits my yard, dimming all others in comparison. Every morning, driven by a vision of the bird that I think should be called a “red hooded” woodpecker, I eagerly scan the yard for the charismatic creature that excited Alexander Wilson and so many others so long ago. 🐦

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- Susan Abele**, a retired archivist lives in Newton—hometown of Charles Johnson Maynard—and in Manomet—2018 hot spot for the Red-headed Woodpecker. Woven into the fabric of her life is a love of art and nature, birds, and her grandchildren. She treasures the many enriching and fulfilling associations with men and women eager to share with her, in historical text and in the present, the joys of birdwatching. She offers special thanks to Trevor Lloyd-Evans, Lisa Schibley, Linda Fuller, and Mark Wilson for keeping watch in 2018.

David Wiley Receives Mass Audubon's 2019 Hemenway + Hall Wildlife Conservation Award

Mass Audubon



David Wiley. Photograph by SBNMS/Anne-Marie Runfola.

Dr. David Wiley, Research Coordinator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary and an expert on seabirds and endangered whales, has been named the 2019 recipient of Mass Audubon's Hemenway + Hall Wildlife Conservation Award.

The award ceremony took place during Mass Audubon's 27th-annual Birders Meeting on Sunday, March 3, at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester. Dr. Wiley was presented with his award by Gary Clayton, President of Mass Audubon, the state's largest nature conservation nonprofit.

This honor recognizes and celebrates individuals or organizations whose research and related ecological successes have achieved significant and lasting wildlife conservation benefits. The award is named for Mass Audubon founders Harriet Hemenway and Minna Hall, who in 1896 organized a national campaign that succeeded in ending the commercial slaughter of bird species for the millinery trade while inspiring broader public support for wildlife conservation in general.



David Wiley with Gary Clayton.
Photograph courtesy of Mass Audubon.

Dr. Wiley's work focuses on Stellwagen Bank, the marine species-rich underwater plateau situated between the tip of Cape Cod and Cape Ann at the mouth of Massachusetts Bay. He studies humpback whales and North Atlantic right whales (the latter the most endangered in the world), shearwaters and other seabirds, as well as sand lances, small fish that sustain both the birds and the large marine mammals.

"Dr. Wiley's conservation work on behalf of Stellwagen Bank and its remarkable biodiversity, from seabirds to endangered whales, honors the legacy of Harriett and Minna," Clayton said. "And thus he is a fitting recipient of the Hemenway + Hall Wildlife Conservation Award."

"Just as our founding mothers understood more than a century ago that all wildlife species warrant protection, Dave is committed to understanding and protecting

our seas and the amazing and diverse life they support," he noted.

Wiley grew up in Latham, NY, near Albany, and earned an undergraduate degree in natural resource management at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He holds a Ph.D. in Environmental Studies and Conservation Biology from Antioch University, New England. 🐦

Mass Audubon protects more than 38,000 acres of land throughout Massachusetts, saving birds and other wildlife, and making nature accessible to all. As Massachusetts' largest nature conservation nonprofit, we welcome more than a half million visitors a year to our wildlife sanctuaries and 20 nature centers. From inspiring hilltop views to breathtaking coastal landscapes, serene woods, and working farms, we believe in protecting our state's natural treasures for wildlife and for all people—a vision shared in 1896 by our founders, two extraordinary Boston women.

Today, Mass Audubon is a nationally recognized environmental education leader, offering thousands of camp, school, and adult programs that get over 225,000 kids and adults outdoors every year. With more than 125,000 members and supporters, we advocate on Beacon Hill and beyond, and conduct conservation research to preserve the natural heritage of our beautiful state for today's and future generations. We welcome you to explore a nearby sanctuary, find inspiration, and get involved. Learn how at massaudubon.org.

Help State-listed Birds

MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program is requesting observations of breeding state-listed birds into the Vernal Pool and Rare Species (VPRS) Information System. Submitting observations to VPRS is one of the most effective ways of protecting and managing rare bird species. To be accepted into VPRS, observations must be in suitable nesting habitat and fall within the specific date range listed below.

Endangered

Pied-billed Grebe (5/10–8/1)

Leach's Storm-petrel (6/1–8/15)*

American Bittern (5/15–8/1)

Least Bittern (5/25–8/1)

Upland Sandpiper (5/20–7/15)

Roseate Tern (6/1–8/5)*

Short-eared Owl (4/15–7/15)

Sedge Wren (6/1–8/1)

Golden-winged Warbler (5/20–8/1)

Threatened

Bald Eagle (4/15–8/15)*

Northern Harrier (5/10–8/20)*

Peregrine Falcon (5/15–8/1)*

King Rail (5/15–8/1)

Piping Plover (5/15–8/15)**

Northern Parula (6/1–8/10)

Vesper Sparrow (5/10–8/5)

Grasshopper Sparrow (5/25–8/10)

Special Concern

Common Loon (6/1–8/15)*

Common Moorhen (5/25–8/25)

Common Tern (6/1–8/5)*

Arctic Tern (6/1–8/5)*

Least Tern (6/1–8/15)*

Barn Owl (4/1–8/1)*

Long-eared Owl (4/1–8/1)

Blackpoll Warbler (6/5–8/10)

Mourning Warbler (6/5–8/10)

Eastern Whip-poor-will (5/25–7/15)

*The presence of an adult at an active nest is required.

**Pair demonstrating breeding behavior is required.

Visit mass.gov/vprs to register an account and to record rare bird breeding observations.

Have questions about VPRS?
Please email VPRSAdmin@state.ma.us.

MASS.GOV/MASSWILDLIFE



Transform Your Yard and Community Into An Oasis for Birds & Insects

Audubon's Plants for Birds shows how individuals can help birds adapt to changing habitats with bird-friendly, native plants.

NEW YORK (May 2, 2019)—“From a changing climate to habitat loss from urban development, birds are constantly facing a myriad of challenges to find natural spaces to rest and fuel up to complete their migration journeys,” said **John Rowden, director of community conservation at the National Audubon Society**. “A clutch of baby chickadees eats up to 9,000 insects between hatching and fledging. As we approach nesting season for many backyard birds, you can help feed baby birds by planting native plants in your yard or on your patios.”

Users simply type in their zip code to search Audubon's Native Plants Database which offers a free online tool to discover the bird-friendly plants, trees, shrubs and grasses that are native to their region and locate a local supplier to start or grow their own backyard bird oasis.

Not only are native plants good for birds and the insects birds feed on, they are good for people, too. Native plants require less maintenance than exotic plants and they help the environment because they need less water and don't require synthetic fertilizer or pesticides.

With support from the Coleman and Susan Burke Center for Native Plants, Audubon works with local chapters to launch Audubon's Plants for Birds in communities across the country.

- **Become a Habitat Hero Anywhere:** Audubon Rockies shows that anyone can create a bird-friendly garden to help reduce one of the biggest threats birds face – habitat loss. Regardless of gardening ability and access to land, the “Habitat Hero” program helps anyone create a garden of native plants that offers food and shelter for birds and makes the community healthier.
- **Transform Urban Concrete to a Green Space for Birds & People:** Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society in Asheville, N.C., exemplifies how native plant gardens provide refuge for birds and people. The Audubon chapter collaborated with a local church and groups to transform an abandoned concrete lot into an urban “Friendship Garden” also known as «Jardin de la Amistad” that has drawn in birds and people, alike.
- **Restoration with a Twist to Encourage New Environmental Stewards:** Seward Park Audubon Center in Seattle, Wash. set out to spice up conservation with a summer series of events called “Restoration with a Twist” that enlisted volunteers to help remove invasive plants that were

harming the native plant communities. With the promise of a foraged-cocktail happy hour, the summer series helped restore Seward's ecosystem while nurturing human connections and new nature lovers.

Already have a thriving bird-friendly garden with frequent feathered visitors or just finished yours? Download the free Audubon Bird Guide App for an interactive bird ID tool to help you easily identify the birds outside your window. The newest "Bird Alert" feature will even provide a real-time notification when a selected bird is spotted nearby, so you won't miss that elusive "life bird" again.

To learn how to make your yard more climate friendly, check out Audubon's five-part series of guides on how to manage your outdoor turf to reduce your carbon footprint, all while creating bird-friendly habitat.

If you're interested in "Plants for Birds" programs happening near you, find your local Audubon chapter to learn what they have coming up at <audubon.org/about/audubon-near-you>.

For more tips on gardening and planting with bird-friendly plants, visit <audubon.org/plantsforbirds>.

About National Audubon Society

The National Audubon Society protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow. Audubon works throughout the Americas using, science, advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation. State programs, nature centers, chapters, and partners give Audubon an unparalleled wingspan that reaches millions of people each year to inform, inspire, and unite diverse communities in conservation action. A nonprofit conservation organization since 1905, Audubon believes in a world in which people and wildlife thrive. Learn more how to help at <www.audubon.org> and follow us on Twitter and Instagram at @audubonsociety.



SANDHILL CRANES BY NEIL DOWLING

PHOTO ESSAY

Birds of Tidmarsh





Top left: Cape May Warbler; Bottom left: Wilson's Warbler; Top right: Green Heron; Bottom right: Black-and-white Warbler. All photographs by Cyndi Jackson.

MUSINGS FROM THE BLIND BIRDER

A Day in the Life

Martha Steele



.Chestnut-sided Warbler. Photograph by Sandy Selesky

It was 5:30 in the morning in mid-June 2018. I was sitting on my deck in our northeastern Vermont home, sipping a hot mug of coffee and enjoying the warm sun on my face. I was beginning to compile my list for the day. The deck overlooks a 5-acre meadow, sprinkled with apple, spruce, and larch trees, as well as patches of thickets. The meadow is bordered by a pine forest on two sides and a hardwood forest on the other sides, part of our 120-acre woodlot that is contiguous with state forest land. A small stream flows near the edge of the field, discharging several hundred yards down a steep slope to Lake Willoughby.

In just 15 minutes on the deck, I heard eight species of warblers, and an additional 18 other birds representing the different microcosms of habitats surrounding our house. An Eastern Phoebe pair was busy beneath me going back and forth feeding their nestlings above our back door. A Blackburnian Warbler was singing along the edge of the pine forest that lay just yards from one corner of our house. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was vigorously tapping on the metal roof of our barn, and a Black-billed Cuckoo surprised me with its staccato series of toots from somewhere along the edge of the field.

I was starting my day as most birders do, especially in the spring: rising early,

grabbing something quick to eat, and heading out the door eager to learn who was out there for us to enjoy. I went downstairs, put the harness on my guide dog, Alvin, and started down our long driveway to begin a seven-mile walk. Because Alvin is so familiar with the area, having done all or parts of this morning's route dozens of times, I could focus on listening for birds while Alvin focused on staying on course.

We birders tend to sample varied habitats to maximize our species total, and this morning's walk was no exception. Our walk, all on rural town roads, would lead us past coniferous and hardwood forest edges; open fields ranging in size from several acres to a hundred acres or more, most of which had not yet been mowed; tiny ponds, small wetlands, and vernal pools; a beaver pond and small boreal bog invisible from the road; and small wet spots with thickets that could yield good birds.

Our quarter-mile driveway runs through a mixed hardwood and coniferous forest. Our first new bird for the day's list was a Winter Wren. A little farther down, a Hermit Thrush chimed in just before a Magnolia Warbler announced its presence with its short, rolling whistle.

We then walked out into a clearing, where a Chestnut-sided Warbler and Song Sparrow were singing, among others we had already heard. I continued down a hill back through mixed forests and added a drumming Pileated Woodpecker followed by the explosive sound of a Ruffed Grouse that we accidentally flushed from the side of the road. At the bottom of the hill and now about a mile into our walk, I could feel the sun's warmth as I left the shade of the forest and entered the open countryside that would be our habitat for the next two miles.

We first passed by an active dairy farm with a bustle of House Sparrows and European Starlings to supplement its odiferous manure smells. Red-winged Blackbirds were plentiful as well. We continued along the road hearing Savannah Sparrows and a voluble Indigo Bunting, with its sharp whistle evoking a what, what, where, where, see it, see it pattern. Soon, I came to a large pasture and heard Bobolinks, some so loud as to seem to be perched on my shoulder.

At about the three-mile mark, we encountered a short stretch of forest on both sides of the road where the Westmore Town Forest is located. This particular stretch of about 200 yards is usually hyperactive with birds in the spring. The mellifluous song of a Veery stopped me in my tracks for as long as I could stand the buzzing black flies around my head. Nashville, Black-and-white, and Canada warblers could be heard as well. Around the corner and now approaching a small wetlands, at least two Northern Waterthrushes sang across the road from each other, joined by Swamp Sparrows with their rich, slow trills. We turned around, retraced our steps about a mile, and then took a turn that continued a rolling, open country loop that would bring us back to our house. From our left came the familiar *che-bek* of a Least Flycatcher. Overhead, a Common Loon, likely flying from its nesting place on May Pond in Barton to Lake Willoughby in Westmore, was voicing its characteristic tremolo call.

Over the next mile, the plaintive, high-pitched whistle of a Broad-winged Hawk startled me, several Alder Flycatchers grabbed my attention, and Eastern Bluebirds let me know they had returned to their nesting boxes on our neighbor's property. We then

approached a small wet area with thickets and short tree growth. We stopped, waited, and then heard the musical song of a Lincoln's Sparrow with its trills, gurgles, and buzzes. This bird is regular but uncommon, and thus I considered this individual the best bird of the morning.

It would be another two miles before we reached home, with a Scarlet Tanager providing the exclamation point to the morning. I daresay that not more than 30 seconds passed where I didn't hear at least one bird of some species or another. Such is the wonder of June birding in the Northeast, diametrically opposed to the utter silence, save for an occasional chickadee, of the exact same walk done in midwinter. We likely missed many other species that were along the walk because they did not vocalize at the time that we pass by. Alvin is not much help as he seems totally uninterested in birds, just in other dogs or the horses and cows that follow us along the fence lines. So I cannot rely on his eyes to tell me something is there, signaling that I should stop and listen.

The morning's tally ended up being 54 species that I heard, not bad for someone who ten years ago could not even hear the vast majority of birds never mind identify them by song. Now hearing birds with artificially created sound produced by cochlear implants, it seems to me that every year the sounds get a bit more natural, a little less tinny, a bit more robust and full. The improved sound quality should help me learn more songs and calls in the coming years. For now, however, on this particular day, Alvin and I would rest before going back outside to work on our vegetable garden. Although I heard nothing new that afternoon, I frequently smiled at the constant checking in of so many birds going about their business just as I was going about mine. I would end the day after dinner standing near the edge of the woods and listening to the beautiful fluting songs of Swainson's Thrushes cascading through the darkening forest before they too called it a night.

This was a typical and unremarkable June day in terms of the birds that I heard. It was also a typical day in my life as a birder, being keenly focused on the presence of birds. At this time of year in particular, my friends and family may ask what I did on such and such a day. "I went birding." What are you doing today? "Going birding." And tomorrow. "Birding, of course." We all have a chuckle even if they cannot understand our passion. But it is so true: we do indeed go out birding day after day. As I went to bed that night, I was just as excited for the next day as I had been that morning. Yes, we will rise early, sip our coffee, listen to who is there, and head out to fill our insatiable desire to go birding. 🐦

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

ABOUT BOOKS

A Sense of Wonder Now and Then

Mark Lynch

Birdscapes: Birds in Our Imagination and Experience. Jeremy Mynott. 2009. Princeton, New Jersey. Princeton University Press.

Birds in the Ancient World: Winged Words. Jeremy Mynott. 2018. New York, New York. Oxford University Press.

Is this why birds inspire such a sense of wonder? (*Birdscapes*, p. 1)

I'm a wreck through lack of sleep here,
What with these owls calling all the time (Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 760-61
quoted in *Birds in the Ancient World* p. 38)

After decades spent birding, chasing rarities, participating in counts, and traveling all over the globe to see new species, most birders will have a sobering moment of reflection. This moment may come while standing out in subzero temperatures waiting for a Boreal Chickadee to come to a feeder or getting soaked to the bone while doing a CBC or experiencing your blood pressure rise while you speed to the Cape in the hopes of seeing some “just found” first for Massachusetts. At some point, you cannot help but start to think to yourself: “What am I doing?” “Why am I spending so much time and money pursuing birds?” “Why chase birds as opposed to say dragonflies or salamanders?” And finally: “Is this obsessive behavior normal?”

Most birding literature is of no use in helping you find answers to these questions. The most popular bird books are utilitarian guides to identification or where to find species. There is no place in these books for psychological, philosophical, or metaphysical questions. There also are the accounts of Big Years and celebrations of the spectacle of migration, of course, but all of these books take it for granted that you want to read about and watch birds. Only a very few books attempt to answer the big questions of why do I care about birds at all and why do I actively seek them out?

In two recently published books, Jeremy Mynott has shown that he is currently one of the most interesting and scholarly writers about the intersecting lives of birds and people. In both *Birdscapes* and *Birds in the Ancient World*, Mynott takes the reader on an unexpected journey to learn what birds can mean to us as individuals and as a culture.

Mynott is uniquely qualified for this task. He is a long time avid world birder. But he is also the former Chief Executive of Cambridge University Press and Emeritus Fellow of Wolfson College, Cambridge. He is a regular reviewer for the TLS (*Times Literary Supplement*) and founding member of “New Networks for Nature.” He has done radio and television and even edited and translated *Thucydides*. When he brings all these considerable talents and interests to the topic of birds, the results are books that belong in every birder’s library.

I keep interrupting myself with all these questions, musings, and asides. But then, why should I move in straight lines any more than swallows do? (p. 4 *Birdscapes*)

By his own admission, he wrote *Birdscapes* quickly, over the course of a year. Each chapter begins with Mynott at some location birding, and the book proceeds through a birding year till it ends up back where it started: watching swallows on Shingle Street in September. It is while watching the careening flight of swallows that Mynott's mind turns inward and he asks some of the basic questions about what he is experiencing. These questions, which become the framework for the rest of the book, are listed on page 5. Here are a few of them:

What are our favorite birds and why? Are there charismatic species (or just special experiences)?

Why are rare birds so important to birdwatchers when rarity is obviously just relative to time or place (gannets in London, Tufted Ducks in Central Park, swallows in December)?

Does our concern with lists and counting indicate something we should worry about in ourselves? Is this acquisition or experience?

Can you enjoy a bird's song just as much if you don't know what it is? (could anyone mistake a Nightingale?)

Why is it so satisfying to see the first swallow or swift of the year?

Is there some realm between sentimentality and science in which we can relate to birds for what they are? (p. 5)

Mynott is a master of digression, and every one of these questions leads to more questions, until he brings his diverse experiences to bear to finally wrestle some answers for himself and the readers. When writing about "charismatic" species, he brings back a delightful word used by British natural historian Gilbert White in the 18th century: "amusive." Today this is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "(1) Deceitful, illusive. (2) Fitted to afford relaxation from graver concerns. Recreative." (p. 28)

I love rails. Others love shorebirds or raptors. Why do we find certain species attractive? Is it their beauty and appearance, their voice, or even their movement? Mynott considers each possibility. In lists culled from the British public of their all-time favorite birds, he looks for clues and finds that the answers are not so obvious. For example, the nightingale always rates as one of the British public's favorite birds, even though, as Mynott reveals, most people who voted for the bird have likely never seen a nightingale because it is a notorious skulker, or even heard their legendary night song because its breeding range in Britain has diminished dramatically. Has a nightingale ever sung in Berkeley Square as the famous song indicates? Mynott writes that it is not likely. When you ask birders for a list of their favorite birds, the results are quite different. These lists reflect not just the physical appearance of the bird, but often personal experiences with those species. How about your lists of favorite species? How

many are birds you have seen, perhaps under unique experiences, or hope to add to your list? So what ultimately makes a bird amusing has more to do with us than some characteristic of the actual bird.

What constitutes a rarity to a birder? This is brought home to Mynott one May morning when he is experiencing a wave of migrants in New York City's Central Park. Even though he resides in Britain, he has birded here several times before. This day he is hoping he will get to see some of the more uncommon yearly migrants, like a Prothonotary Warbler. But his search is interrupted as word spreads among the birders present that a rare duck has been found in one of the ponds. Rushing along with the masses, Mynott arrives to see what all the hoopla is about. It's a Tufted Duck, a species he commonly sees at home, but for most of the other birders present it is a major rarity. His emotional reaction to seeing this bird is very different from the other birders' excitement. The excitement of finding a rarity most often has less to do with the bird species itself than *where* it is being seen. This is true even within our state: a Purple Sandpiper on the coast in December is no big deal, but finding one in the Berkshires at any time would be a record of ornithological importance. It's not that the bird is in itself rare, it is the circumstances and places in which we see the bird.



What authentic pleasure can we take in rare and unusual birds, then? We have to accept straight away that all rarity is relative and is not a primary quality of the birds themselves (like wing-bars and red legs). (p. 106)

There are no exotic birds any more than there are exotic languages, people, or places. There are just exotic experiences. (p. 197)

Mynott creates his own Beaufort Scale of rarities and the human reactions to them. He calls it his Linnaeus Scale and it goes from “0,” a time when no birds are around and there is total peace and calm. This scale ends with an “11” sighting, which is “the rediscovery of an extinct species—great auk, Eskimo curlew,” but this report is immediately “widely disbelieved” and it is considered by the birding community as worthwhile as “searches after Elvis, Bigfoot, Nessie, and the Abominable Snowman.” (p. 99)

Why do we feel such passion for these rarities? This discussion of what we consider rare leads, naturally, to a chapter about listing. Mynott begins this section with a trip to an art museum:

If you visit the Louvre in Paris and make your way to the *Mona Lisa* you will encounter a sight of some ornithological interest. You will see a great crowd clustered excitedly around the exhibit, all facing more or less towards it but many of them looking at it through the view-finders of their cameras and mobile phones, which they are holding up to capture an image. After inspecting the results they usually move on quite quickly to the next highlight on their itineraries. They are clearly all very keen to *have seen* the *Mona Lisa* but they don't actually want to look at it very much. What they want is a souvenir to confirm the occasion and add to their collection.

Some birdwatchers behave in a similar way at a major twitch, to use a technical expression. They may desperately want to *have seen* some celebrated rarity like the Central Park tufted duck, the Scilly semi-p or the Irish Canada warbler and may travel miles to do so at great personal cost, but they may not want to examine it too closely or prolong the experience. (p. 89-90)

Why do we spend so much psychological energy fretting over our lists? Mynott reveals that humans have been keeping lists ever since writing was invented, and this includes lists of birds. It seems listing is practically in our DNA. Perhaps this listing habit is related to an instinct for hunting. For many birders, listing becomes an all-consuming passion, the be-all and end-all of their lives, leading Mynott to consider the possibility that such single-minded pursuits may be related to something else, like Asperger's syndrome (p. 104). In an interesting digression, Mynott looks at other kinds of natural history listers of Britain, like those who pursue native wildflowers and butterflies, and how they have written about their passions. Unlike birds, where new vagrants are always a possibility and a personal list is only completed with the death of the birder, for butterflies and wildflowers the British list is relatively short and finite, so it is possible to actually collect them all and come to the end of your list.

By the end of *Birdscapes*, Mynott concludes that there are many ways to enjoy birds, and the important take-away is for the birder to expand their experiences with birds beyond the quick view and the tick on the list.

There is scope here for many modes and levels of engagement—for study, curiosity, discovery, play, imagination, and affection. Wondering about birds is one way to explore and enjoy things. (p. 302)

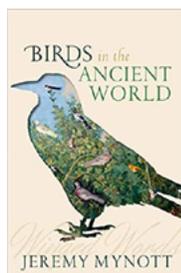
Birdscapes is unique in birding literature in that it is a book as much about birders as the birds they pursue. In posing some of the most fundamental questions about why we birders do what we do, Mynott makes us more aware of our behavior and introduces us to new ways to think about those birds we chase.

Go, go, go said the bird, human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.” (T. S. Eliot quoted on page 302)

In *Birds in the Ancient World: Winged Words*, Mynott focuses on Classical Greek and Roman culture and every way that birds were part of their world:

This book is organized thematically to illustrate the many different roles birds played in the thousand years between about 700 BC and AD 300. As markers of time, weather, and the seasons; as a resource for hunting, farming, eating, and medicine; as pets, entertainment, mimics, and domestic familiars, as scavengers and sentinels; as omens, auguries and intermediaries between the gods and humankind. There are also selections from early scientific writing about taxonomy, biology, and the behavior of birds—the first real works of ornithology in the Western tradition—as well as from more incidental but revealing observations in the works of history, geography, and travel. (p. v)

This is a scholarly and highly entertaining book, and the pleasures it offers are many. There are color illustrations, maps, and timelines. Every page contains quotes from poetry and writing by some of the most famous authors of the ancient Classical world. What becomes abundantly clear is that the Greeks and Romans were passionate about birds, not just as pets and food, but as poetic metaphors and emissaries to the gods.



The first reference to birds in the whole of European literature is Homer's comparison of the Greek forces mustering for the assault on Troy with the sights and sounds of cranes and wildfowl on migration. (p. 7)

Birds as symbols and metaphors are commonly found in the ancient Greek and Roman literature, poetry, and epithets.

There are also plenty of grisly references to corvids feasting on both animals and human carrion and pecking out the eyes of their live victims (usually sheep and cattle). 'Go to the crows' was a common curse, cosigning someone to such a fate, and Aeschylus gives us this terrible image of Clytemnestra after the murder of her husband, Agamemnon:

Perched over his body
Like a hateful raven
She croaks her song of triumph (p. 173)

There are, of course, many differences in the way we look at birds today because our culture is more separated from the natural world. Most people today wouldn't understand a metaphor that cited crane or even crow behavior. But there are also similarities between then and now. Remember how often people in Britain cited the nightingale as their favorite bird, even though very few had seen one? Well, it seems the Classical world was likewise inordinately fond of this small, nondescript skulker.

With the possible exception of the eagle, the nightingale must be more often invoked in ancient literature than any other bird. (p. 49)

I am always interested in recipes in ancient literature, and *Birds of the Ancient World* cites numerous directions on how to cook everything from thrushes to ostriches. Roman satirist Martial's dining recommendations are quoted at length. One example:

Ringdoves obstruct and dull your loins: so if you're thinking of sex, don't eat this bird (p. 100)

Good to know.

People had odd beliefs about the behavior of a number of bird species, or these birds figured in the culture in some other unusual way. Quails were in both categories:

When quails are in their mating season, if one sets up a mirror in their path and then positions a noose in front of the mirror, they will run towards the reflections in the mirror and be caught in the noose. (p. 84)

There was also the bizarre sport of *ortygokopia*, ‘quail tapping’, when one contestant’s quail was placed on a board and the other contestant, the ‘tapper’, would prod it and tap its head; if the quail stood its ground the owner had won its bet. But if it ran away he lost it to the tapper. Aristophanes says the nickname ‘quail’ was given to a man who always looked rather dazed, as though he had been hit on the head too hard by a heavy-handed tapper. (p. 161)

I would love to know if anyone, ancient or contemporary, has ever attempted to catch a quail with a noose and mirror, and I think it’s high time that quail-tapping became an Olympic sport.

Erudite and fascinating, *Birds of the Ancient World* is a unique study of how nature is viewed from all aspects of a culture, in this case an ancient one. The focus of these two books is, of course, birds, but both *Birdscapes* and *Birds in the Ancient World* are more generally concerned with how human cultures, now and then, have looked at nature as a primary source of meaning and pleasure to enrich our lives. In *Birds in the Ancient World*, Aristophanes’ famous play *The Birds* is discussed at length as a fine example of the use of birds as satiric symbols of society. Mynott ends his book with another quote from the play:

Yes, it’s by words that the mind is uplifted
And humankind soars aloft (Aristophanes, *Birds* 1436-49)

Flight was the prerogative of birds and a good part of their fascination for earth-bound mortals. Language, meanwhile, was supposed to be the unique distinguishing feature of humankind. But here, in an artful metaphor, Aristophanes forges a connection between the two faculties and with them the two realms of birds and humanity. The birds have successfully challenged human domination, and through winged words the power of imagination has transcended the limitations of human experience. (p. 361) 🐦

In Memoriam: The birding community was saddened to learn of the death of **Bill Thompson III** on March 25, 2019. Many knew him as an enthusiastic lecturer and global trip leader, but it is important to remember that he was also a prolific writer. He wrote the famous “Bill of the Birds” blog, which many considered his title. He was an avid podcaster as well as the publisher and editor of *Bird Watcher’s Digest*. In addition, he authored quite a list of books, often for the publisher Houghton Mifflin Harcourt here in Boston. These included *The New Birder’s Guide to Birds of North America* (2014) and *Bird Homes and Habitats* (2013). My all-time favorite book written by Bill was *The Young Birder’s Guide to Birds of North America* (2008). This book was written with the help of his (then) young daughter Phoebe and her classmates and is a milestone in natural history writing for young people. I had the genuine pleasure of interviewing Bill and Phoebe about this book and talked with him about a number of his other publications. Bill, in everything he did, was passionate about getting everyone birding, and always geared his writing for the beginning enthusiast as well as the seasoned hard-core birder. He was ever warm and enthusiastic, and I always looked forward to talking with him. He will be sorely missed by many.

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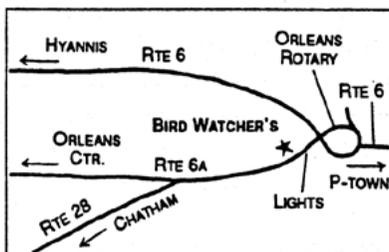
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BIRD SIGHTINGS

January–February 2019

Neil Hayward and Robert H. Stymeist

Both January and February were warmer than normal with near average rainfall. Snowfall was just 13.7 inches in Boston, compared to the 26.1 inches during the same period in 2018. The new year of birding opened by welcoming birders with clear skies and a high of 37 degrees. The temperature for January averaged 31 degrees in Boston, 2 degrees above normal. The high temperature was 59 degrees on January 24, and the low was 5 degrees recorded on January 21 and 31. The first winter storm of the year hit on the night of January 19 and brought sleet, freezing rain, and snow throughout New England. Some areas north of Boston recorded up to 7 inches of snow and Berkshire County saw over 8 inches. Boston escaped with 1.6 inches of snow.

Punxsutawney Phil predicted an early spring this year. However, his counterpart in Massachusetts, Ms. G. who resides at Drumlin Farm, had a different take: she saw her own shadow and declared that we were set for six more weeks of winter. The average temperature for February was 34 degrees in Boston, 2 degrees above normal. Rainfall was 3.45 inches, slightly more than normal. Snowfall totaled 11.6 inches with measurable amounts falling on four days. The heaviest snow fell on February 18, Presidents' Day, coating southern New England with 5–6 inches of snow while Boston accumulated 3.6 inches. The high temperature for the month in Boston was an unseasonal 65 degrees on February 5, and the low was 10 degrees on February 1. Strong winds of 25–35 mph blasted through the state on February 25, knocking over trees and taking down power lines. Gusts up to 76 mph were recorded at Mount Tom in Holyoke.

R. Stymeist

GEESE THROUGH HERONS

Ross's Goose was added to the state checklist 22 years ago, when two birds were found in the Sunderland/Hadley area. It's since been recorded from 11 counties in Massachusetts, missing only from Bristol, Plymouth, and Barnstable counties. The population of this species has increased almost exponentially since the 1990s and, together with a range expansion east, more of them are passing through or wintering in New England. With records this year in Salem (January) and Plum Island (February), Ross's Goose has been counted in the state every year now since 2008. A single **Greater White-fronted Goose** found in Rehoboth on February 16–17 was well below average for the period.

An adult **Trumpeter Swan** was present at Milford from January 28–February 13. This comes less than a year after the state's first accepted record of this species at Charlton, May 26–June 24, 2018. These birds presumably hail from the Great Lakes population, which now numbers around 10,000 swans. This population is entirely derived from birds brought from the Copper River in Alaska in the 1960s as part of a reintroduction program. After several generations the population is now considered wild and "countable." Massachusetts is not quite as far east as these birds have roamed. An immature was photographed in Nova Scotia in 2017, and the banding indicated it to be a wild bird from a nest in Cambridge, Ontario, just west of Toronto. As this population continues to expand we can probably expect our third record before not too long.

Tufted Ducks were reported from three counties. This species is almost annual to the

state and was only missed twice this century (2006, 2008). The northern *borealis* subspecies of Common Eider continues to be widely reported, no doubt due to a greater awareness among birders. The report from Bourne is the farthest south this taxon has been recorded this winter.

Hybrids were again the highlight of the duck news this period. The male Bufflehead x Common Goldeneye continued in Orleans from December until February 21. This hybrid taxon is rare; this year there are only five records across the country in California, New Mexico, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Massachusetts. The Orleans bird was first detected in April 2018 and is the only record for the state. The Common Goldeneye x Hooded Merganser from last period continued in Gloucester until January 26. Single Mallard x Northern Pintail hybrids were reported from Westport and Brookline and represent the first eBird records for Bristol and Suffolk Counties, respectively. The only other eBird records for this hybrid are from the Horn Pond area between 2015–2018.

An immature **Purple Gallinule** was found dead near a cattail marsh on the Cohasset golf course. There was no sign of injury and the finder speculated that the bird may have frozen to death. Purple Gallinules are an irregular visitor to the state, with adults being more common in the spring and immatures in the fall. This species is a renowned globe-trotting vagrant. From breeding populations in Florida, the Caribbean, and Central and South America, far-flung birds have managed to reach Iceland, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and South Africa (more than 20 times). The Cohasset bird is one of only three birds reported north of Florida this year. **Common Gallinules** are rare winter visitors to the state. An immature continuing in Norfolk until January 10 may be the only winter record away from Nantucket and Cape Cod.

A couple of late shorebirds made the birding news this period. A Whimbrel present on Nantucket until January 23 is the first January record since 2000, and a Spotted Sandpiper at Harwich on January 3 is the third January record this century. These lingering shorebirds represent the most northerly records for the East Coast this winter.

The European **Mew Gull** (*Larus canus canus*) that was banded as a chick in Iceland in 2013 continued at Lynn Beach until early February. There are at least four European “Common” Gulls now wintering this side of the Atlantic: the adult Lynn bird (banded on the right leg), a Nova Scotia adult (unbanded), a Newfoundland adult (banded on the left leg), and a Newfoundland immature bird. The Lynn bird was joined by a second, unbanded adult Mew Gull on January 5. That bird looked a better candidate for the *kamtschatschensis* subspecies from the Russian Far East, with the caveat that this taxon is difficult to separate from the *heinei* subspecies of north Asia.

In other gull news, a hybrid adult Herring x Glaucous Gull flew past Gooseberry Neck on January 24 to become the first Bristol County record. This hybrid taxon was first described by Henry Henshaw in 1884. Henshaw was educated in Cambridge High School where he met William Brewster, founder of the Nuttall Ornithological Club and co-founder of the American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU). Henshaw named the gull *Larus nelsoni* after Mr. E. W. Nelson, an ornithologist from Alaska who collected the type specimen. Henshaw considered the gull to be a full species and the Pacific counterpart to Kumlien’s Gull (which he also considered to be a species but is now treated as a subspecies of Iceland Gull). It would take 40 years before the taxonomy was set straight. In 1925, Jonathan Dwight, who’d been a member of the AOU since its founding in 1883 and later became president in 1923, was worried that no breeding colonies of Nelson’s Gull had been discovered and that “no two of them are marked alike.” He suggested that the gull, which showed intermediate characteristics between Glaucous Gull and Herring Gull to be a hybrid between the two. He also questioned whether Kumlien’s was a true species.

Pacific Loons were photographed at Race Point and Falmouth. The latter is a rare inland

sighting, albeit from the brackish Salt Pond. This was the second record for Falmouth, after a report from Woods Hole in January 2003.

While Great Egrets head south for the winter, there has been a growing trend for some individuals to linger. This year there were at least four birds recorded in January, with one on Nantucket present until February 7. But that's about as far north as they come—there are no February records for birds north of Massachusetts.

N. Hayward

Snow Goose				1/1-2/28	Sandwich	1 f	M. Keleher#
1/1-1/19	Amherst	1	L. Therrien + v.o.	1/6	Edgartown	1 m	L. Johnson#
1/6	Chilmark	2	N. Houlihan#	2/2	Plymouth	1 f	B. Vigorito#
1/6	Rochester	1	J. Young	American Wigeon			
1/8-2/10	Middleton	1	P. + F. Vale + v.o.	2/9	Turner's Falls	7	P. Gagarin + v.o.
1/13	Saugus	3	S. Zende#	2/10	Plymouth	150	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
1/21	Acushnet	2	A. Morgan	2/10	Swansea	58	M. Lynch#
1/22-2/3	New Bedford	1	B. King, C. Longworth	2/20-2/24	Pittsfield	1	G. Hurley + v.o.
1/23-2/5	Fairhaven	1	M. Bouchard + v.o.	American Black Duck			
2/8	DWWS	1	J. Norton#	1/1	Eastham	375	P. Trimble
2/18	Chatham	2	J. Trimble#	1/26	Westport	248	M. Lynch#
2/26	Nantucket	3	T. Pastuszak#	Northern Pintail			
Ross's Goose				1/1	PI	15	N. Landry
1/12	Salem	1 ph	C. Lapite#	1/4-2/28	Lee	1	J. Pierce + v.o.
2/10	PI	1 ph	S. Jones#	1/12	Barnstable	6	K. Fiske
Greater White-fronted Goose				1/13-2/25	Easthampton	3	T. Gessing + v.o.
2/16-2/17	Rehoboth	1 ph	D. Zimberlin + v.o.	1/29	Ipswich	14	J. Berry
Brant				2/7	Acton	8	W. Hutcheson
1/17	S. Boston	34	P. Peterson	2/16-2/20	Shrewsbury	2	T. Pirro + v.o.
1/31	PI	7	D. Prima	Mallard x Northern Pintail (hybrid)			
2/3	Fairhaven	772	M. Lynch#	1/15	Westport	1 m ph	R. Heil
2/16	W. Dennis	100	G. d'Entremont#	2/1-2/19	Brookline	1 m ph	M. McMahon + v.o.
2/18	Lowell	1	S. Sullivan	Green-winged Teal			
Cackling Goose				1/1-2/9	Pittsfield	1	G. Hurley
1/1-1/19	Turner's Falls	2 ph	J. Smith + v.o.	1/12	Fall River	3	H. Zimberlin
1/1-1/4	Sheffield/Egremont	2 max ph	G. Ward + v.o.	2/19	Salisbury	4	C. Blake
1/1-1/22	Dighton	1 ph	V. Zollo + v.o.	Canvasback			
1/7-1/17	Amherst	2 ph	Duncan, Zehnder+v.o.	1/6	Eastham	6	D. Bates
1/12-1/23	Brookline	1 ph	D. Bates + v.o.	1/6-1/10	Stockbridge	5	J. Pierce + v.o.
1/15	Rochester	1	N. Marchessault	1/23	W. Tisbury	2	P. Edmundson
1/19, 1/30	Middleton	1	S. Grinley#, R. Heil	1/29-2/16	Springfield	5	C. Roane
1/19	Sharon	1 ph	W. Sweet	Redhead			
1/21	Acushnet	1 ph	C. Longworth	1/1-1/29	Eastham	2	v.o.
1/23-1/30	New Bedford	1 ph	C. Longworth + v.o.	1/13-1/27	Cheshire	3	J. Pierce + v.o.
1/29	Ipswich	1	J. Berry	2/8	Turner's Falls	4	J. Rose + v.o.
2/13	Boston (FPK)	1 ph	S. Jones	Ring-necked Duck			
2/17	Rehoboth	1	A. Eckerson#	1/9	Southwick	4	D. Holmes
Mute Swan				1/14-1/19	Lee	3	J. Pierce + v.o.
2/10	Swansea	34	M. Lynch#	2/10	Plymouth	75	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
Trumpeter Swan				2/12	Mashpee	225	M. Keleher#
1/28-2/13	Milford	1 ad ph	B. Robo + v.o.	2/22	Waltham	20	J. Forbes
Wood Duck				Tufted Duck			
1/1-1/2	Williamstown	4	M. Morales	1/1-2/23	Nantucket	1 m ph	v.o.
1/19	Sandwich	9	G. d'Entremont#	1/11-1/12	Andover	1 f ph	M. McCarthy + v.o.
1/25	Milton	15	P. Peterson	1/17-2/16	Harwich	1 m ph	M. Foti#
2/23	Stow	6	N. Tepper	Greater Scaup			
Blue-winged Teal				1/1-1/12	Clinton	39	J. Bourget, J. Johnson+v.o.
1/1-2/17	Barnstable	2	S. Matheny#	1/2	Haverhill	5	P. + F. Vale
Northern Shoveler				1/8	Falmouth	2000	P. Trimble
1/1	Chatham	2	F. Atwood	2/3	Fairhaven	1121	M. Lynch#
1/14	Fall River	2	A. Morgan	Lesser Scaup			
1/28-1/30	Sandwich	2	P. Kyle#	1/9	Gloucester (EP)	4	MAS (D. Moon)
2/23	Nantucket	9	J. Trimble#	2/8	Turner's Falls	4	J. Rose + v.o.
Gadwall				2/12	Mashpee	100	M. Keleher#
1/4	PI	22	T. Wetmore	2/26-2/27	Sharon	6	W. Sweet
2/3	Plymouth	75	G. d'Entremont#	King Eider			
2/3	Fairhaven	42	M. Lynch#	1/1-2/23	Bourne	1 ad m	M. Keleher#
Eurasian Wigeon				1/1-2/2	Sandwich	1 ad m	J. Johnson#
1/1-1/4	Somerset	1 m	J. Eckerson#	1/1-2/4	Gloucester (EP)	1 imm m	S. Williams + v.o.
1/1-2/3	Fairhaven	1 m	C. Longworth + v.o.	1/1-2/12	PI	1 ad T.	Wetmore + v.o.

King Eider (continued)

1/8-2/21	Hyannis	1 f	S. Matheny
1/15	Rockport (HPt)	1 f	J. Berry#
1/26	Boston H.	1 ad m	M. Mulqueen
2/14	Scituate	1 ad m	D. Peacock
2/19	Ipswich (CB)	3 m lad+2imm	H. Larsson

Common Eider

1/1	Crane B.	650	J. Berry#
1/12	Eastham	5000 SSBC	(W. Petersen)
1/19	Scusset B.	4000	G. d'Entremont#
2/3	Fairhaven	493	M. Lynch#
2/23	Nantucket	2200	J. Trimble#

Common Eider (Borealis)

1/1	Gloucester (EP)	1 f ph	S. Williams
1/1	Rockport (AP)	1 m ph	N. Dowling
2/23	Ipswich	1 m ph	S. Williams

Harlequin Duck

1/10	Nantucket	18	G. Andrews#
1/10	Yarmouth	7	P. Trimble
1/24	Westport	2	M. Iliff
2/10	N. Scituate	11	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
2/14	Rockport	60	P. Peterson

Surf Scoter

1/18	Revere B.	7000	P. + F. Vale
2/3	Fairhaven	59	M. Lynch#

White-winged Scoter

1/26	Westport	41	M. Lynch#
2/23	Crane B.	200	J. Berry#

Black Scoter

1/18	Revere B.	5000	P. + F. Vale
2/23	Crane B.	1000	J. Berry#

Long-tailed Duck

1/3	Stockbridge	1	G. Ward, J. Pierce
1/4	Lee	3	J. Pierce + v.o.
2/3	Fairhaven	102	M. Lynch#
2/8	Ipswich	4	J. Berry

Bufflehead

1/3	Cheshire	1	L. Runaldue
2/3	Fairhaven	815	M. Lynch#
2/16	Falmouth	182	G. d'Entremont#

Common Goldeneye

thr	Turner's Falls	280 max	J. Layfield + v.o.
1/2	Mashpee	103	M. Keleher#
1/2-1/9	Stockbridge	3	J. Pierce
1/14	Wachusett Res.	66	M. Lynch#
2/3	Fairhaven	952	M. Lynch#

Bufflehead X Common Goldeneye (hybrid)

thr-2/21	Orleans	1 m ph	v.o.
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Common Goldeneye X Hooded Merganser (hybrid)

1/6-1/26	Gloucester	1	L. Ireland + v.o.
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Barrow's Goldeneye

1/12	Lowell	1	D. McDermott
1/16-1/29	E. Boston	1 m	J. Layman + v.o.
1/22-2/3	Fairhaven	2 m	M. Sylvia
2/8	Scituate	1	D. Peacock
2/18	W. Newbury	1 f	K. Wilmarth
2/27	Sharon	2	K. Ryan
2/28	Mashpee	2	P. Crosson

Hooded Merganser

1/1	Ipswich	35	J. Berry#
1/5	Arlington Res.	50	J. Guion
1/15	Barnstable	185	D. Furbish
1/16-2/27	Ware	36 max	L. Therrien
1/26	Acoaxet	19	M. Lynch#
2/17	Quabog IBA	57	M. Lynch#
2/23-2/26	Sharon	223	L. Waters + v.o.

Common Merganser

1/2	Stockbridge	228	J. Pierce
1/6	Quabog IBA	196	M. Lynch#
1/9	Southwick	287	D. Holmes
1/14	Medford	343	K. Dia
1/19	Harwich	250	S. Finnegan

Red-breasted Merganser

1/22	Quabbin Pk	1	L. Therrien
1/26	Acoaxet	47	M. Lynch#
2/9	Wachusett Res.	1	S. Williams
2/15	Waltham	1	J. Forbes
2/15-2/16	Sharon	1	W. Sweet

Ruddy Duck

1/1-2/11	Eastham	20 max	v.o.
1/15	Harwich	48	S. Finnegan
2/27	Orange	1	D. Small

Northern Bobwhite

1/2	Truro	1	D. Clapp#
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Ring-necked Pheasant

1/2	Worcester	1	J. Ferrie
1/19	Windsor	2	R. Wendell
2/4	Squantum	1	J. Hoye#

Ruffed Grouse

1/1	Charlemont	3	C. Hyytinen
1/19	Plymouth	1	L. Schibley#

Wild Turkey

1/3	Mattapan (BNC)	34	P. Peterson
1/5	Edgartown	82	J. Trimble#
1/5	Wellfleet	36	M. Faherty
1/26	Westport	80	G. d'Entremont
1/29	Wendell	45	J. Rose
2/22	Templeton	134	T. Pirro
2/23	Hadley	43	L. Therrien

Pied-billed Grebe

1/12	Eastham	1	SSBC (W. Petersen)
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Horned Grebe

1/2	Quabbin Pk	9	D. Marchant
1/13-2/24	Wachusett Res.	2	T. Pirro
2/3	Fairhaven	23	M. Lynch#

Red-necked Grebe

1/3	PI	8	T. Wetmore
1/22	Quabbin Pk	1	L. Therrien
1/23	P'town (RP)	30	A. Kneidel
2/9-2/27	Wachusett Res.	1	S. Williams + v.o.

Eared Grebe

1/1-1/26	P'town	1	phS. Schwenk + v.o.
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Virginia Rail

1/1-1/6	Northbridge	2	R. Jenkins + v.o.
1/1	Peabody	1	R. Heil
1/10	Swampscott	1	R. Heil
2/1	Marshfield	1	D. Peacock

Purple Gallinule

1/7	Cohasset	1	imm ph d S. Avery
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Common Gallinule

1/1-1/10	Norfolk	1	immM. Pierre-Louis
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American Coot

1/11-1/12	Fall River	1	E. Lipton + v.o.
1/13-1/16	Jamaica Plain	4	T. Bradford + v.o.
2/5	Wellesley	4	D. Hursh

Sandhill Crane

1/10	W. Newbury	5	C. Decker
1/14-2/16	E. Bridgewater	3	W. + A. Childs + v.o.

Black-bellied Plover

1/13-2/10	Westport	1	A. Eckerson + v.o.
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Killdeer

1/13	Beverly	1	D. Brewster#
2/15	Acton	1	W. Hutcheson
2/16	Falmouth	1	G. d'Entremont#
2/16	Shrewsbury	1	T. Pirro
2/17	Nantucket	1	R. Ouren
2/20-2/21	N. Dighton	1	J. Eckerson + v.o.

Whimbrel

1/1-1/23	Nantucket	1	v.o.
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Ruddy Turnstone

2/3	Fairhaven	18	C. Longworth
2/3	Quincy	5	S. Williams#

Dunlin

1/1	Eastham (FH)	790	F. Atwood
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Purple Sandpiper				2/13	BHI (Deer I.)	30	P. Peterson
1/6	Nantucket	35	T. Pastuszak#	2/14	Scituate	2	D. Peacock
1/15	Rockport	45	J. Berry#	2/17	Quabbin Pk	2	L. Therrien
1/25	Gloucester (BR)	53	P. + F. Vale	2/19	W. Newbury	5	K. Wilmarth
2/10	N. Scituate	50	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)	2/28	Taunton	2	K. Ryan
American Woodcock							
2/22	N. Dighton	2	A. Eckerson	thr	Turner's Falls	3 max	J. Smith + v.o.
2/23	Cumb. Farms	2	J. Young	2/17	Sharon	3 2ad+1imm	W. Sweet
Spotted Sandpiper							
1/3	Harwich	1	D. Gray				
Pomarine Jaeger							
1/5	Rockport (AP)	1	R. Heil				
Dovekie							
1/1, 2/6	Rockport (AP)	3,3	N. Dowling				
1/26	P'town (RP)	3	D. McQuade#				
2/14-2/22	Rockport (HPt)	1	C. Brown + v.o.				
2/23	Gloucester	1	Athol BC (E. LeBlanc)				
Common Murre							
1/5	Rockport (AP)	10	R. Heil				
1/6, 2/23	P'town (RP)	31,3	P. Flood, B. Nikula#				
2/23	Jeffreys L.	15	S. + J. Mirick				
Thick-billed Murre							
1/5	Rockport (AP)	7	R. Heil				
1/19	Rockport (HPt)	3	I. Pepper				
1/26	P'town (RP)	12	D. McQuade#				
2/20	Gloucester (EP)	4	K. Hochgraf				
Razorbill							
1/5, 1/27	Rockport (AP)	66,24	R. Heil, J. Keeley#				
1/6	PI	12	T. Wetmore				
1/15	Boston	27	N. Dorian#				
1/24	Westport	4	M. Iliif				
2/14	Scituate	18	D. Peacock				
Black Guillemot							
2/4	Rockport (AP)	3	B. Filemyr, C. Hitt				
2/17	P'town	3	L. Waters#				
Atlantic Puffin							
1/5	Rockport (AP)	5	R. Heil				
2/23	Jeffreys L.	1	S. + J. Mirick				
Black-legged Kittiwake							
1/5, 1/27	Rockport (AP)	68,24	R. Heil, J. Keeley#				
1/6	P'town (RP)	170	P. Flood				
Black-headed Gull							
1/24-2/15	Hyannis	2	P. Trimble#				
1/30-2/9	W. Dennis	1 ad ph	N. Villone#				
2/3	Wollaston	1 ad ph	S. Williams#				
Mew Gull (European)							
1/5-2/6	Lynn	1 ad b ph	S. Sullivan+v.o.				
Mew Gull							
1/5-2/4	Lynn	1 ad ph	S. Sullivan+v.o.				
Herring x Glaucous Gull (hybrid)							
1/24	Westport	1 ad ph	M. Iliif				
Iceland Gull							
1/1-1/12	Lunenburg	2	T. Pirro+v.o.				
thr	Turner's Falls	10 max	J. Smith + v.o.				
1/9	Gloucester	3	MAS (D. Moon)				
1/14-1/28	Lowell	2	D. McDermott + v.o.				
2/7	Sharon	3	W. Sweet				
2/10	P'town (RP)	38	B. Nikula#				
Lesser Black-backed Gull							
thr	Turner's Falls	3 max	J. Smith + v.o.				
2/17	Sharon	3 2ad+1imm	W. Sweet				
Glaucous Gull							
1/17	BHI (Deer I.)	2 1W	T. Bradford				
1/22-2/26	Turner's Falls	4 max	J. Smith + v.o.				
1/26	Lawrence	2 imm	R. Heil#				
Red-throated Loon							
1/26	Acoaxet	2	M. Lynch#				
2/9	Wachusett Res.	2	S. Williams				
Pacific Loon							
1/6-2/23	P'town (RP)	1 ph	P. Flood + v.o.				
1/30-1/31	Falmouth	1 ph	E. Dalton#				
Common Loon							
1/14	Wachusett Res.	4	M. Lynch#				
1/26	Westport	22	M. Lynch#				
2/8	Ipswich	17	J. Berry				
Northern Fulmar							
2/23	Jeffreys L.	42	S. + J. Mirick				
Northern Gannet							
1/5	Rockport (AP)	12	R. Heil				
1/6	PI	4	T. Wetmore				
2/16	Salisbury	6	A. Gurka#				
2/23	Jeffreys L.	4	S. + J. Mirick				
Double-crested Cormorant							
1/2	Ipswich	1 imm	J. Berry				
1/2-1/15	Cambridge	1	J. Thomas + v.o.				
1/4-1/11	Randolph	1	M. McMahon + v.o.				
1/8	Wayland	1	J. Forbes + v.o.				
1/9-1/11	Andover	1	M. McCarthy				
Great Cormorant							
1/1	Sandwich	27	R. Hodson				
1/1-1/3	Ware	1	C. Allen# + v.o.				
1/6	Cuttyhunk I.	52	M. Sylvia				
1/15	Rockport	15	J. Berry#				
1/26	Westport	11	M. Lynch#				
2/27-2/28	Medford	2	B. Lee + v.o.				
American Bittern							
1/2	N. Truro	1	P. Flood#				
2/2	Quincy	1	P. Syski#				
2/9	PI	1	N. Duncklee				
Great Blue Heron							
1/6	Worcester	5	P. Dufault				
2/8	Cambridge	8	K. Johnson				
Great Egret							
1/1	Westport	1	D. Hlousek				
1/1-2/7	Nantucket	1	T. Pastuszak#				
1/4-1/30	Barnstable	1	J. Rapp#				
1/6-1/17	Eastham	1	J. Wagner#				
Black-crowned Night-Heron							
1/5	Vineyard Haven	19	R. Bierregaard				
1/15	S. Dart. (APd)	1	J. Eckerson#				

VULTURES THROUGH DICKCISSEL

Raptor highlights during the period included continuing high numbers of Black Vultures, especially in southwestern Berkshire County, where as many as 68 were counted in Sheffield. This was an increase from last year's high count of 35 birds for the same period. Cumberland Farms has always been a traditional destination for winter raptors. High counts this year included 13 Northern Harriers, five Rough-legged Hawks, and three Short-eared Owls. A dead cow carcass in the farm fields of Montague attracted almost equal numbers of carrion feeders and birdwatchers. Up to 19 Bald Eagles were recorded there on February 15 together with 13 competing Common Ravens. An immature **Golden Eagle**, also drawn to the carcass, was present in the area for almost a month.

Perhaps the most notable bird of the period was Barred Owl. Many observers in Massachusetts and New England reported high numbers of the species, including Josh Rose, who encountered 49 birds mostly during the day in areas near his home in central Massachusetts. Tufts Wildlife Clinic in Grafton received over 100 Barred Owls that were brought to their facility for treatment, rehabilitation, and eventual release to the wild. Many appeared emaciated. A lack of sufficient food may have driven many to hunt along the roadways, where many were hit by cars.

A winter roost of crows is an impressive sight. In Lawrence, an estimated 20,000 American Crows roosted in early January. These communal roosts may return to a location for a few years or may shift to another place in response to changing conditions. The crow roost in Lawrence has been studied on many occasions. For further information, see “A History of Winter Crow Roosts and a Visit to a Roost in Lawrence, Massachusetts” by Dana Duxbury-Fox in the February 2018 issue of *Bird Observer* (Duxbury-Fox 2018).

The Truro Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on January 2 reported high counts of some lingering passerines including 29 Hermit Thrushes as well as an unusually high count of **497** Red-breasted Nuthatches. Among the vagrants this period was a **Varied Thrush** from Nantucket and some holdovers from December, including a cooperative **Le Conte’s Sparrow** in Lakeville and a not-so-cooperative **Painted Bunting**, which made brief appearances in a Verizon parking lot in Newtonville. Other noteworthy reports included a **Red-headed Woodpecker** in Pembroke and **Bohemian Waxwings** in Williamstown, Plymouth, and the Truro CBC.

Good numbers of winter finches continued during the period. **Pine Grosbeaks**, Evening Grosbeaks, and Red Crossbills were all reported in higher numbers during this period compared to the previous two months. In contrast, there were no confirmed reports of White-winged Crossbills in the state nor in much of New England.

R. Stymeist

References

- D. Duxbury-Fox. 2018. A History of Winter Crow Roosts and a Visit to a Roost in Lawrence, Massachusetts, *Bird Observer* 46 (1): 22–31.
 H.W. Henshaw. 1884. On a New Gull from Alaska, *The Auk* 1 (3): 250–252.

Black Vulture				Red-tailed Hawk			
1/1-2/9	Sheffield	68 max	T. Schaefer + v.o.	2/16	Montague	10	S. Zhang
1/15	S. Dart. (APd)	24	J. Eckerson#	2/23	Hardwick	13	M. Lynch#
2/18	Westfield	8	D. Scott	Rough-legged Hawk			
2/22	Wrentham	6	C. Caron	1/3-2/12	PI	3	T. Wetmore + v.o.
Turkey Vulture				1/14	Rowley	2 lt	J. Berry
1/15	Dartmouth	37	R. Heil	1/26-1/27	Hadley	2 dk+lt	J. Oliverio + v.o.
1/18	Blackstone	36	E. Kittredge	2/3-2/23	Cumb. Farms	5	E. Nielsen + v.o.
2/17	Westfield	29	D. Holmes	2/23	Salisbury	2	J. Smith
Bald Eagle				Golden Eagle			
1/19	Wachusett Res.	6 max	D. Dow	1/1	Ipswich	1 imm ph	N. Dubrow#
1/22-2/21	Montague	19 max	J. Rose + v.o.	1/6	Williamstown	1 imm ph	C. Jones
1/23	Ipswich	7	J. Berry	1/23-2/17	Montague	1 imm ph	D. Schell + v.o.
Northern Harrier				1/30	PI+Newbury	1 ph	MAS(D.Moon)#
1/4	Cumb. Farms	13	M. Sylvia	Barn Owl			
1/4-1/26	Ashley Falls	2 1m+1f	G. Ward + v.o.	thr	Nantucket	2 max	v.o.
1/30	PI	6	MAS (D. Moon)	1/5	Edgartown	1	J. Trimble#
2/5	Lynnfield	6	R. Heil	Eastern Screech-Owl			
Sharp-shinned Hawk				1/13	Cape Ann	4	B. Harris
thr	Indiv. reported from 25 locations			Great Horned Owl			
Cooper’s Hawk				1/1	PI	2	N. Landry
1/15	Rockport	2 1ad+1imm	J. Berry#	1/18	Boston (AA)	2	R. Mayer
Red-shouldered Hawk				1/25	Milton	2	P. Peterson
thr	Indiv. reported from 29 locations			2/3	Amherst	3	S. Zhang

Snowy Owl				Common Raven			
1/6	Penikese I.	2	M. Sylvia#	1/22-2/19	Montague	16	J. Rose + v.o.
1/30	Winthrop	3	P. Peterson	2/2	Dartmouth	5	A. Eckerson#
2/5	PI	5	T. Graham	2/16	Lexington (DM)	3	E. Nielsen
2/5-2/23	Salisbury	2	T. Graham + v.o.	2/17	Belchertown	8	D. Griffiths
2/18	Westport	2	R. Whittaker	2/17	PI	4	T. Wetmore
2/22	Nantucket	5	B. Balkind	2/17	Quabbin	3	M. Lynch#
Barred Owl				Horned Lark			
thr	1-2 birds reported from 43 locations			1/1-1/10	Sheffield	126	C. Rathbun#
1/2-thr	Deerfield	7	max D. Sibley + v.o.	1/4-1/17	Northampton	150	M. McKittrick + v.o.
1/13-1/29	Montague	11	L. Pelland + v.o.	1/12	Eastham (FH)	30	SSBC (W. Petersen)
2/10	Woburn (HP)	3	D. Littaur#	1/26	PI	38	N. Landry
2/23	Barnstable	2	S. Matheny	1/27	Saugus	111	S. Zende#
Long-eared Owl				1/27	Wachusett Res.	29	J. Shea
1/1-1/27	Saugus	1	S. Zende# + v.o.	2/1	Duxbury B.	29	C. Whitebread#
1/20	E. Boston (BI)	1	J. Coleman#	2/3	Deerfield	305	L. Waters
1/30	Marshfield	2	D. Peacock	2/10	Acton	70	C. Martone
Short-eared Owl				Red-breasted Nuthatch			
1/12	Nantucket	3	J. Wagner#	1/2	Truro	497	CBC (M. Faherty)
2/10	PI	3	F. Morello	1/7	Montague	10	J. Rose + v.o.
2/16-2/23	Cumb. Farms	3	V. Zollo + v.o.	1/8	Boston (AA)	10	P. Peterson
Northern Saw-whet Owl				1/17	Sharon	55	V. Zollo
2/9	Harvard	1	N. Tepper	1/26	MSSF	12	A. Kneidel
2/19	Pittsfield	1	Z. Adams	2/4	Easton	24	J. Sweeney
Belted Kingfisher				Brown Creeper			
1/1	Sheffield	3	T. Schaefer	1/1-1/2	Boston (AA)	3	S. Jones
1/1-2/2	Northampton	2	M. McKittrick + v.o.	1/3	GMNWR	4	Z. Casteel#
1/6	Quabog IBA	2	M. Lynch#	2/16	Granville	5	B. O'Connell
1/12	Plymouth	2	G. d'Entremont#	House Wren			
Red-headed Woodpecker				thr	Indiv. reported from 6 locations		
2/3-2/10	Pembroke	1	immJ. Galluzzo + v.o.	Winter Wren			
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker				thr	1-2 birds reported from 37 locations		
thr	Indiv. reported from 22 locations			1/15	Westport	4	R. Heil
1/18	Ipswich	2	ad 1m+1f J. Berry#	2/22	Reading	3	J. Keeley
1/21	Boston (AA)	2	J. Young	Marsh Wren			
Hairy Woodpecker				thr	Indiv. reported from 6 locations		
1/12, 2/3	PI	4	D. Adrien	1/15	S. Dart. (APd)	3	J. Eckerson#
1/26	Harvard	8	N. Tepper	2/5	Nantucket	2	S. Kardell
Northern Flicker				Carolina Wren			
1/15	Uxbridge	6	D. Gauthier	1/15	Westport	25	R. Heil
2/3	Fairhaven	9	M. Lynch#	1/26	Westport	21	G. d'Entremont
Pileated Woodpecker				1/26	Acoaxet	16	M. Lynch#
1/4	Wayland	3	B. Harris	2/16	Falmouth	10	G. d'Entremont#
2/8	IRWS	3	J. MacDougall	Golden-crowned Kinglet			
American Kestrel				1/26	Westport	4	M. Lynch#
thr	Indiv. reported from 11 locations			1/27	Hadley	6	C. Russell
1/1	Saugus	2	S. Zende#	2/13	Lenox	4	K. Hanson
2/3	Southwick	2	S. Kellogg	Ruby-crowned Kinglet			
Merlin				thr	Indiv. reported from 21 locations		
thr	Indiv. reported from 31 locations			1/1	Uxbridge	2	R. Holden
Peregrine Falcon				2/10	Seekonk	2	J. Knowlton#
1/1	PI	2	N. Landry	Eastern Bluebird			
1/2	Arlington	2	P. Devaney	1/2	Wellfleet	27	K. Yakola#
1/9	W. Roxbury (MP)	2	M. Iliif	1/5	Chappaquiddick	28	A. Kneidel
1/15	Boston	2	N. Dorian#	1/6	Athol	16	G. Watkevich
2/4	Woburn (HP)	2	B. Lee	1/15	Westport	27	R. Heil
2/5	Wenham	2	A. Bailey	1/26	Egremont	15	K. Hanson
Eastern Phoebe				2/12	Amherst	21	S. Zhang
thr	Indiv. reported from 9 locations			Hermit Thrush			
Northern Shrike				1/2	Truro	29	CBC (M. Faherty)
thr	Indiv. reported from 15 locations			1/13	Cape Ann	5	B. Harris
thr-2/2	Windsor	2	S. Sumer + v.o.	1/15	Westport	15	R. Heil
1/18	Middleton	2	A. Bean	2/3	Ellisville	3	G. d'Entremont#
American Crow				Varied Thrush			
1/4	Lawrence	20000	C. Gibson#	2/17-2/28	Nantucket	1 ph	T. Pastuszak#
Fish Crow				Gray Catbird			
1/6	Carver	200	SSBC (P. Jacobson)	thr-2/15	Williamstown	3	C. Jones + v.o.
1/12	Blackstone	27	M. Lynch#	1/11	E. Bridgewater	3	J. Carlisle
1/15	Needham	75	J. Offermann	1/15	S. Dart. (APd)	16	J. Eckerson#
1/26	Lawrence	50	J. Berry#	2/16	Falmouth	3	G. d'Entremont#
2/17	Pittsfield	12	J. Jew + v.o.	Brown Thrasher			
2/28	Fall River	21	L. Abbey	1/2	Truro	1	CBC (P. Flood)

Brown Thrasher (continued)				1/29	Lee	150	J. Pierce
1/3	W. Newbury	1	R. Heil	2/2	P'town (RP)	100	P. Flood
1/15	S. Dart. (APd)	3	J. Eckerson#	2/3	Deerfield	220	L. Waters
2/2	Nantucket	1	S. Kardell	Eastern Towhee			
Bohemian Waxwing				1/15	S. Dart. (APd)	9	J. Eckerson#
1/2	Truro	1	P. Trimble#	2/16	Falmouth	3	G. d'Entremont#
1/12	Williamstown	1 ph	A. Hale	American Tree Sparrow			
1/31-2/3	Plymouth	1 ph	P. Jacobson	1/6	Westboro	65	T. Spahr
Cedar Waxwing				1/18	Longmeadow	58	C. Volker
1/19	Adams	240	K. Hansen	1/26-2/3	Hadley (Honeypt)	100 max	S. Zhang + v.o.
2/8	Hadley	135	J. Rose	Chipping Sparrow			
2/20	W. Boylston	200	B. Abbott	1/6	Waltham	5	J. Forbes
American Pipit				1/19	Medfield	3	J. Bock
1/1	Saugus	1	S. Zende#	1/28	Concord	9	D. Swain
1/3	Lakeville	15	C. Floyd#	Clay-colored Sparrow			
1/6	Penikese I.	2	M. Sylvia#	1/1-1/18	Brookline	1 ph	R. Doherty + v.o.
1/7	Eastham	2	K. Schopp	1/1-1/19	Ashley Falls	1 ph	G. Ward + v.o.
Evening Grosbeak				1/11-1/23	Northborough	1 ph	S. Miller + v.o.
thr	Reported from 31 locations			Field Sparrow			
1/1-2/4	Monterey	34 max	P. Banducci+v.o.	1/12	Bolton	3	N. Tepper
1/1-2/10	Orange	38 max	D. Small + v.o.	1/15	Westport	3	R. Heil
1/5-2/26	Royalston	125 max	E. LeBlanc+v.o.	1/19	Sandwich	10	P. Trimble
1/7	Medway	16	B. Roberts-Lee	1/19-2/5	Hadley	3 max	L. Therrien+v.o.
1/13	Wellfleet	43	P. Flood	1/26	Plymouth	28	L. Schibley#
1/18	Ipswich	63	A. Scholten	Vesper Sparrow			
1/26	Marshfield	15	L. Norton	1/3	Falmouth	1	G. Hirth#
2/20	Lexington (DM)	15	C. Gras	1/6	Lakeville	1	B. Vigorito#
Pine Grosbeak				1/16	Ashley Falls	1	G. Ward
1/1-2/6	Windsor	29 max	C. Johnson+v.o.	2/2	Nantucket	1	S. Kardell
1/7	Medway	2	B. Roberts-Lee	Savannah Sparrow			
1/11-2/19	Williamstown	16 max	M. Morales+v.o.	thr-2/24	Ashley Falls	8	G. Ward#
1/15-2/16	Gardner	8	T. Pirro + v.o.	1/15	S. Dart. (APd)	7	J. Eckerson#
1/31	Scituate	2	J. Frost	1/21-2/23	Hadley (Honeypt)	12 max	M. McKitrick+v.o.
2/7	Lenox	12	M. Caron	2/10	Cumb. Farms	5	J. Sweeney
Purple Finch				2/18	W. Boxford	5	T. Walker
1/4	Ipswich	5	M. Watson#	Savannah Sparrow (Ipswich Sparrow)			
1/5	Lexington (DM)	9	J. Young	1/27-2/4	Hadley (Honeypt)	1 ph	S. Zhang + v.o.
2/4	Boston (AA)	16	S. Jones#	2/14-2/15	Northampton	1 ph	B. Bieda, D. Schell
2/8	Wellfleet	16	P. Trimble	2/20	Northborough	1	S. Miller
2/10	Burrage Pd WMA13	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)		LeConte's Sparrow			
Common Redpoll				1/1-1/6	Lakeville	1 ph	V. Zollo + v.o.
1/2	Truro	25	M. Faherty#	Fox Sparrow			
1/31-2/27	Easthampton	104 max	M. McKitrick+v.o.	thr	Indiv. reported from 19 locations		
2/1	Burrage Pd WMA42		P. LoCicero	1/15	S. Dart. (APd)	2	J. Eckerson#
2/3	Lexington (DM)	42	N. Ulrich#	1/21, 2/20	Boston (AA)	2	J. Young, S. Jones
2/6	Pittsfield	40	Z. Adams + v.o.	Swamp Sparrow			
2/10	Deerfield	65	J. Eckerson	1/4-1/30	Amherst	3 max	M. McKitrick+v.o.
2/17	PI	100	S. Babbitt	1/15	Westport	6	R. Heil
2/27	Harvard	80	J. Flagg	1/18	Ipswich	3	J. Eckerson#
Red Crossbill				1/26	Concord	3	T. Swain#
1/1	Sharon	23 Type 10	W. Sweet	2/3	Plymouth	6	N. Tepper
1/2	Truro	38	CBC (M. Faherty)	White-crowned Sparrow			
2/3	MSSF	24	N. Marchessault	thr	Ashley Falls	18 max	J. Drucker + v.o.
2/4	Easton	8	J. Sweeney	1/3-thr	Northampton	41 max	A. Hulsey
2/6	Chestnut Hill8	Type 10	M. Iliff	2/10	Cumb. Farms	12	J. Sweeney
Pine Siskin				Dark-eyed Junco			
thr	Reported from 26 locations			1/19	Ashley Falls	100	G. Ward
1/1-1/5	Holden	39 max	D. Mahoney	1/19	Ipswich	45	J. Berry
1/1-1/4	Orange	20 max	L. Boudreau	1/27	Hadley (Honeypt)	100 max	S. Zhang + v.o.
1/2	Truro	107	CBC (M. Faherty)	2/23	Hardwick	48	M. Lynch#
1/7-1/25	Granville	100 max	D. Holmes	Yellow-breasted Chat			
2/1	Sharon	42	W. Sweet	thr	Indiv. reported from 14 locations		
2/3	Concord	45	T. Swain	1/15	Westport	2	R. Heil
2/10	Boston (AA)	16	M. Mulqueen	Eastern Meadowlark			
2/11	Middleton	20	L. Wagner	1/15	S. Dart. (APd)	21	J. Eckerson#
Lapland Longspur				2/2	DWWS	16	R. Timberlake
1/7-2/19	Northampton	5	J. Oliverio, A. Hulsey+v.o.	2/3	W. Newbury	9	C. Decker
1/22-2/8	Hadley (Honeypt)	3	M. Locher + v.o.	2/10	Cumb. Farms	5	E. Nielsen
1/25	Williamstown	2	M. Morales	2/23	Falmouth	6	R. Stymeist
2/2	Gill	4	J. Eckerson, L. Waters	Baltimore Oriole			
Snow Bunting				1/1	Orleans	1 ph	K. Yakola#
1/26	PI	87	P. + F. Vale	1/1-1/19	E. Brookfield	1 ph	C. McRae
				1/10	Barnstable	1 ph	P. Trimble

Brown-headed Cowbird thr	Amherst	166 max	S. Surner	1/17	Barnstable (SN)	1	E. Vacchino	
1/16	DWWS	30	J. Smith	1/17	Amherst	1	L. Therrien	
1/25	Wayland	47	B. Harris	1/19	Rockport	1	N. Dubrow#	
2/7	Sheffield	40	R. Wendell	Black-throated Blue Warbler	1/1-1/12	Brookline	1	P. Peterson + v.o.
Rusty Blackbird				1/1-1/18	Reading	1	D. Williams	
1/4	Ashley Falls	4	C. Blake	Palm Warbler				
1/13	Randolph	6	J. Meigs	1/1	Concord	1	S. Perkins	
1/15	New Braintree	2	R. Jenkins	1/2	Nantucket	3	R. Ouren	
1/16-2/10	Barnstable	3	D. Furbish#	1/7	Brewster	1	C. Bates	
1/30	Wayland	28	A. McCarthy#	1/15	Westport	2 western	R. Heil	
2/4	Lynnfield	13	C. Martone	1/25	Wareham	1	N. Marchessault	
Common Grackle				Pine Warbler				
1/3	Boston (FPk)	250	P. Peterson	1/1-1/5	Sherborn	1	K. Winkler	
1/6	Randolph	45	J. Young	1/15	Westport	1	R. Heil	
2/13	Millbury	100	D. Miles	1/21	Cumb. Farms	2	J. Sweeney	
Ovenbird				Yellow-rumped Warbler				
1/6	Barnstable	1	J. Trimble#	1/1	Ipswich	9	F. Hareau	
Northern Waterthrush				1/2	Truro	207	CBC (M. Faherty)	
1/13	Nantucket	1	S. Kardell	1/12	Medfield	8	J. Bock	
Orange-crowned Warbler thr	Indiv. reported from 10 locations			1/18-2/28	Uxbridge	5	N. Demers + v.o.	
Nashville Warbler				1/26	Plymouth	12	L. Schibley#	
1/19	E. Boston (BI)	1	J. Forbes	Painted Bunting				
Common Yellowthroat				1/1-1/4	Newton	1 m ph	J.Hesteman+v.o.	
1/1	Hadley	1	N. Kahn	Dickcissel				
1/1-1/9	Northfield	1	J. Smith	1/1-1/26	Georgetown	1	M. Watson + v.o.	
1/3	Newton	1	J. Forbes	1/2	Brookline	1	P. Peterson	
1/10	MSSF	1	E. Vacchino	1/7	Ipswich	1	F. Bouchard#	
1/15	S. Dart. (APd)	1	J. Eckerson#	1/21-1/27	Acton	1	H. Horton + v.o.	
				1/22-thr	Gloucester	1	P. Hackett	



Masked Booby, by Dave Parrish

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BYGONE BIRDS

Historical Highlights for January–February

Neil Hayward

5 YEARS AGO

January–February 2014



A **Golden Eagle** spent the second half of February at the south end of Quabbin Reservoir. Elsewhere, the story was of lingering birds: a **Mew Gull** on Nantucket stayed until January 1, the **Harris's Sparrow** in Wenham lasted until January 11, and the long-staying **Bullock's Oriole** first discovered visiting feeders in Chelmsford on November 15 was last seen on January 25. A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was reliable throughout the period in the Cumberland Farm fields, and **Western Tanagers** were reported from Gloucester and Truro.

Best sighting: The **Ross's Goose** found in Ipswich on Christmas Day 2013 stayed until New Year's Day, making it onto many birders' 2014 year lists.

10 YEARS AGO

January–February 2009



A **Pink-footed Goose** present at Sider's Pond in Falmouth from January 12–15 was the second record for the state, coming 10 years after the first in Dennis. **Pacific Loons** were one-day wonders at Wellfleet and Race Point. An **Eared Grebe** in Falmouth continued until January 16. A Slaty-backed Gull present at Turners Falls for a week in February was the first inland record for the state. White-winged Crossbills seemed to be everywhere, including more than 150 birds on Plum Island. Feeder birds included a continuing **Summer Tanager** in Orleans, and a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** in Salisbury.

Best sighting: an adult **Ivory Gull** was found on January 17 at Eastern Point, the first record since 1985. Three days later, a second adult was found at Plymouth.

20 YEARS AGO

BIRD OBSERVER



VOL. 27 NO. 3
JUNE 1999

January–February 1999

A **Pink-footed Goose** discovered on a golf course in Dennis in mid-January was retroactively accepted almost 20 years later—making it the state first—after it was clear that these winter occurrences were almost certainly genuine vagrants not escapes. A **Greater White-fronted Goose** in Hadley was the second record for Western Massachusetts. **Tundra Swans** were reported from Westport, Worcester, and Lakeville and a **Tufted Duck** was at Wachusett Reservoir on January 1. Also seen on New Year’s Day was the Logan Airport **Gyr Falcon** originally found at the end of December. A **Crested Caracara** spent a week in Middleboro in early January. At the time the bird was assumed to be an escape. Since then a clear pattern of extralimital wandering has been established and this bird was later accepted as the state first. Seven **Red-headed Woodpeckers** wintered around the state.

Best sighting: an **Ancient Murrelet** at Rockport on February 5 was the third record for the state (the first and second coming in 1992 and 1998). Since then, there have been no further records.

40 YEARS AGO

BIRD OBSERVER OF EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS



JUNE, 1979
VOL. 7 NO. 3

January–February 1979

An adult **Tundra Swan** (or “Whistling Swan” as it was then called) continued in the Plum Island–Ipswich area until January 10. Four–five days after a report of a “purple bird with yellow legs” was received from Chatham, an adult **Purple Gallinule** was captured on Morris Island and later released at Felix Neck, Martha’s Vineyard. Also from Chatham was a Black Vulture found on December 19. An immature male **Black-headed Grosbeak** visited a feeder in Lexington during February.

Best sighting: the biggest **Great Gray Owl** incursion ever witnessed in the northeast (and the only one since the winter of 1890-91) continued with at least 15 individuals present in February. 🦉

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taxonomic order is based on AOS checklist, 7th edition, 58th Supplement, as published in *Auk* 2017, vol. 134(3):751-773 (see <<http://checklist.aou.org/>>).

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

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO BIRD OBSERVER

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

Species on the Review List of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, as well as species unusual as to place, time, or known nesting status in Massachusetts, should be reported promptly to the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, c/o Sean Williams, 18 Parkman Street, Westborough MA 01581, or by email to seanbirder@gmail.com.

ABOUT THE COVER

Olive-sided Flycatcher

The Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*) is the largest of the *Contopus* and *Empidonax* flycatchers with which it might be confused. Its call is a distinctive *quick THREE BEERS*, and among those of us who appreciate a beer now and again, it is a particularly easy mnemonic to remember. Also distinctive of this species is its habit of perching in the open on dead branches on treetops. Olive-sided Flycatchers have a proportionally large, dark head and stout bill. Their upper parts are a dark, brownish olive. Their throat, breast, and belly are white and stand out against dark flanks that are striped with brownish-olive, giving the appearance of an unbuttoned dark vest. White patches along the side of the rump are distinctive and especially visible in flight. The sexes are similar in plumage.

The history of the taxonomy of the Olive-sided Flycatcher is most interesting. First described as *Tyrannus borealis* in 1832, it was subsequently placed in the genus *Nuttallornis* in 1887, and later moved to *Contopus* in 1983 by the American Ornithologists' Union. The specific name was changed to *mesoleucus* in 1931, then back to *borealis* in 1945, and finally to *cooperi* in 1998 after it was determined that this name had been used by Thomas Nuttall three months before the name *borealis* had been published in 1832. The Olive-sided Flycatcher is generally recognized as a monotypic species, although because western birds average slightly larger than eastern birds, as recently as 1997 attempts were made to establish eastern and western subspecies. The general consensus, however, is to retain the species as monotypic with the caveat that the problem needs more study.

Olive-sided Flycatchers breed from western Alaska to Newfoundland in a swath across central Canada extending south through the Great Lakes, northeast New York, and New England, and in a few spots in the Appalachians. They breed along the West Coast from Alaska through much of northern California, in the mountains of southern California, and into Baja California. They also breed throughout much of the Rocky Mountains south to New Mexico and Arizona. They are long-distance migrants, with some wintering in southern Mexico and most in the Andes through Peru to western Bolivia and to a lesser extent east through Amazonian Brazil. In Massachusetts, Olive-sided Flycatchers arrive in late May and migrate through until mid-June. The fall migration is in late August through early September. They are a very uncommon and decreasing local breeder in western Massachusetts, and an uncommon migrant at all seasons.

The Olive-sided Flycatcher is monogamous and raises a single brood. There are some indications that it may be breeding-site faithful. The male's *quick THREE BEERS* apparently functions as territorial advertisement and to attract mates. Males may sing at all times of the day. Females sometimes sing but their song is less distinct. The flycatchers give a *churring* call during aggressive encounters, and twitter when approaching a mate at the nest or on a branch. Male courtship includes display flights

and often chasing the female. Males and females may do swooping flights together. Agonistic displays include crest raising, tail pumping, and bill clicking.

The Olive-sided Flycatcher is primarily a bird of mountains and coniferous forests from sea level to mountain timberline, usually in edge habitat and along natural openings such as canyons, rivers, ponds, or bogs, and also at the edge of forest burns and logging remnants. The female chooses the nest site although the male may help in the selection process. The nest is a bulky open cup of twigs, rootlets, and lichens, most often placed on the upper surface of a branch, normally in a conifer, and usually 5–100 feet above the ground. The nest is constructed mostly by the female. Only the female develops a brood patch and she alone incubates the eggs for the two weeks or more until hatching. The usual clutch is three white or buff-colored eggs blotched and spotted purple-gray near the large end. The male may bring food to the female during incubation. The young are altricial: their eyes are closed, they have sparse down, and they are helpless at hatching. The female broods the young for up to three weeks until fledging. Both parents feed the young for a week or more after fledging. The fledglings typically remain in the territory with the adults for two weeks or more. The family may stay together until the fall migration.

Olive-sided Flycatchers primarily forage for insects by hawking or sallying out from high, exposed perches. Although the bulk of their diet consists of wasps and bees, they also take grasshoppers, moths, dragonflies, flies, and just about any other flying insect.

The Olive-sided Flycatcher suffers nest predation by jays, ravens, and squirrels. Both parents attack intruders, including humans, and they will dive bomb them and sometimes even strike them. The history of the Olive-sided Flycatcher in Massachusetts, as in much of the remainder of its range, is a story of decline. In the mid-nineteenth century, it was a widely-distributed breeder throughout the state. By the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century, it had disappeared from most of Massachusetts, breeding only in the boggy areas of Worcester County and the pine barrens of southeastern Massachusetts and Cape Cod. By the end of the twentieth century, it bred in only a few places in Berkshire and Worcester counties. The Breeding Bird Census results for 1966–1996 indicated a roughly 4% decline in most regions of Canada and the United States. Open-habitat breeders, Olive-sided Flycatchers may have suffered from fire suppression, as well as from dips in prey availability and the effects of severe weather fluctuations associated with climate change. Habitat alteration on the wintering grounds is also considered a factor. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists the Olive-sided Flycatcher as a Species of Concern. We can only hope that the situation brightens for this delightful flycatcher. 

William E. Davis, Jr.

AT A GLANCE

April 2019



WAYNE R. PETERSEN

For the second issue in a row your *At a Glance* editor is offering readers a gift mystery species to identify—at least perhaps it will feel like a gift. Clearly the bird in question is either a gull or a tern. Most of its features lead more in the direction of a tern, such as the bird’s noticeably pointed wings with a sharp crook at the “elbow,” possibly a sharp-pointed tail, a stout black bill, a dark spot behind the eye—the latter two also possible gull features—and an overall white or frosty coloration, although some gull plumages may appear similarly pale. Note also the hint of a dusky tone under the primaries—another feature shared by many gulls and terns.

Given that several of these features are shared or slightly ambiguous, a more thorough examination of the photo is in order. First the pointed wings: generally, even a small gull such as a Bonaparte’s Gull in nonbreeding plumage would be unlikely to present such a pointed wing aspect, and its wings would not appear so narrow, especially at the elbow. Additionally, a Bonaparte’s Gull typically appears grayer above and shows at least some black on the wingtips (which would at least be visible on the bird’s right wing), as well as a narrow wedge of white along the leading edges of the wings. And finally the dark bill of a Bonaparte’s Gull would appear longer, slimmer, and less stout than that of the mystery bird.

Having thus removed gulls as options for the mystery bird, clearly then, the bird is a tern. In breeding plumage all of the regularly-occurring Massachusetts tern species have black caps with the exception of the Black Tern whose entire head is black. Accordingly, the mystery tern has to be either a juvenile/immature tern or an adult in nonbreeding plumage. Given that most terns in nonbreeding plumage have either a

lightly streaked or a clear white forehead and crown, and they exhibit a black “scarf” on the back of the head and nape, the choices are quickly limited to either Gull-billed Tern or Forster’s Tern. Forster’s Terns in nonbreeding plumage characteristically have a dark eye patch, but they also frequently have some dusky streaking on the back of the head, though seldom as black or as extensive as in other similarly sized tern species. A close look at the mystery tern shows that its head is completely white with no dusky on the top, back, or nape. The only prominent black on head of the mystery tern is the dusky patch *behind* the eye, *not through the eye* or extending continuously behind the eye. Combined with the striking whiteness of the mystery bird, these features all point to an adult Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) in nonbreeding plumage.

Most Gull-billed Terns along coastal Massachusetts are rare late spring or early summer visitors, and occasionally post hurricane victims in the fall. The majority of Gull-billed Terns appearing in the Bay State are in adult plumage. The author captured the image of this Gull-billed Tern in nonbreeding plumage at Merritt Island, Florida, in late January 2011.

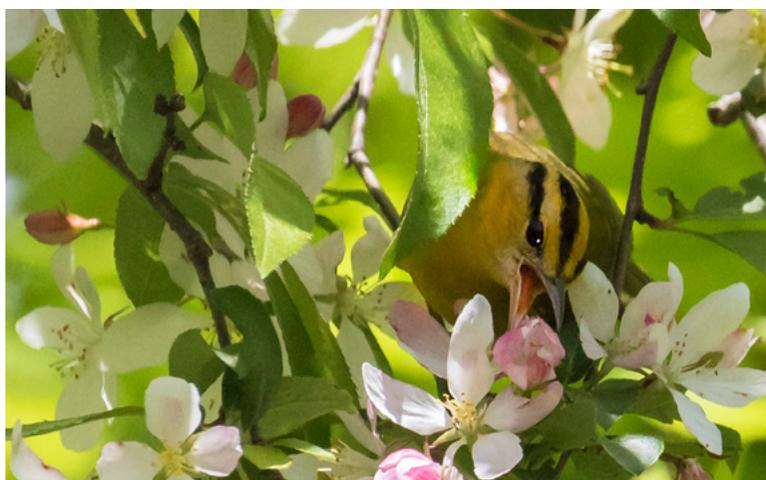


Wayne R. Petersen

ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST

John Sill

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



WORM-EATING WARBLER BY SANDY SELESKY

AT A GLANCE



WAYNE R. PETERSEN

Can you identify the birds in this photograph?

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

MORE HOT BIRDS

A **California Gull** joined the crowd of gulls of other species which regularly gathers at the Turners Falls power canal during the nonbreeding season, just in time for David Sibley to arrive and find it! (His March 14 photograph is on the right). The bird sadly stayed for less than an hour before flying off and was never found again. About a week later, what appeared to be the same bird was photographed in New Jersey! Only the 5th state record in MA (and NJ as well), but the first ever found away from the coast.



Hard to believe that the 5th state record of California Gull would get upstaged as the best bird of the period, but Ken Magnuson photographed a *first* state record **Black-whiskered Vireo** on Martha's Vineyard on April 21. This Caribbean specialty is a breeding resident in Florida, but is virtually never found anywhere further north, with fewer than 10 records for the entire country north of Florida. Good thing that Ken got some photos, as no one else ever saw the bird.

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**PERIODICALS
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