Bird Observer

VOLUME 29, NUMBER 2 APRIL 2001

Bird Observer

A bimonthly journal — to enhance understanding, observation, and enjoyment of birds
VOL. 29, NO. 2 APRIL 2001

SUBSCRIPTIONS: $21 for 6 issues, $40 for two years for U.S. addresses. Inquire about foreign subscriptions. Single copies $4.00, see <http://massbird.org/birdobserver/subform.htm>.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS and subscription inquiries should be sent to: Bird Observer Subscriptions, P.O. Box 236, Arlington, MA 02476-0003.

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

MATERIAL FOR PUBLICATION: BIRD OBSERVER welcomes submissions of original articles, photographs, art work, field notes, and field studies. Please send submissions to the Editor: Brooke Stevens, 5 Hemlock Road, Cambridge, MA 02138; E-mail: <Brookestev@aol.com>. If possible, please include a computer disk (Microsoft Word, txt, or rtf formats), or e-mail to the editor as an attached file. Include author's or artist's name, address, and telephone number and information from which a brief biography can be prepared.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BIRD OBSERVER, P.O. Box 236, Arlington, MA 02476-0003. PERIODICALS CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT BOSTON, MA.

 ISSN: 0893-463

CONTENTS

Please visit the newly redesigned Bird Observer website at <http://massbird.org/birdobserver/>.

Thanks to all of you who responded to our December Reader Survey. To date we have received more than 100 responses from subscribers who have been birding on average for twenty-eight years. You have been wonderfully supportive and we appreciate your ideas and comments. Quite a few questions were received about the Bird Sightings section — the section that lists birds reported over a two-month period. There will undoubtedly always be a lively interest in these records and the names associated with them (at least this has been true since the journal's inception in 1973). In response to the current survey commentary, however, Marj Rines offers the following:

"The purpose of the Sightings section is twofold. First, we try to provide our readers with an ornithological snapshot of a two-month period. Rarities are always included, but the compilers also try to offer a broader seasonal picture: When did the first migrants show up? When were the big fallout days? When did the last of the migrants move off? How successful was the breeding season? Were any unique breeding species recorded, or was there a decline in any breeding species? Were there any irruptions of winter finches, or other special events among wintering birds?

"The second purpose of the Sightings is to provide an historical perspective. Over the years, various journals have published Massachusetts bird sightings, but when the *Records of New England Birds* (published by the Massachusetts Audubon Society until 1968) was discontinued, a vacuum was created in this ornithological record. While *Bird News of Western Massachusetts* was initiated in 1966, it did not publish eastern Massachusetts reports, and *Bird Observer* was created to fill the void. The publication of bird records is essential to understanding the avifauna of any region. A perusal of Veit and Petersen's *Birds of Massachusetts* provides clear evidence of the importance of maintaining a continuous published record.

"Another question from our survey respondents pertained to how the published records are collected and selected. Many observers e-mail their records directly to *Bird Observer* as text files that can be imported directly into our database. Others send reports by "snail mail." Reports to the Massachusetts Audubon Society, submitted for inclusion on the Voice of Audubon, are also noted. Finally, reports are collected from Massbird.

"We carefully review the compiled data and select those records that best reflect the snapshot discussed above. Regrettably we have to omit many records. The compilers receive thousands of reports every month, and these need to be pared down to a manageable length. With rarities and temporal anomalies, the documentation provided needs to be carefully evaluated before the sighting is published.

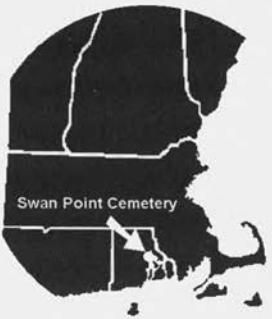
"*Bird Observer* is occasionally criticized for seemingly including a disproportionate number of records from a handful of observers. This is not by design, but neither is it a coincidence. Some birders simply spend more time in the field than others or else they cover certain birding areas more thoroughly than other birders do."

If you have further questions about the reporting process at *Bird Observer*, feel free to contact Marj Rines for more information. We encourage birders to submit their reports directly to *Bird Observer*. Information on how to do this can be found at: <http://massbird.org/birdobserver/sightings/>.

Brooke Stevens
Editor

Birding Swan Point Cemetary, Providence, Rhode Island

Bob Bushnell



Swan Point is a two-hundred-acre garden cemetery that was founded in 1847, and designed by Niles Bierragaard Schubarth. It is located in the northeast corner of Providence, Rhode Island. Swan Point is the final resting place of many of Rhode Island's prominent families of the past one hundred and fifty years. Among those buried there are Civil War General Ambrose Burnside and Elisha Hunt Rhodes, the Civil War soldier made famous by Ken Burns's use of his diary in Burns's "Civil War" series on PBS.

Swan Point can be reached from Boston or other northern locations by taking I-95 south to Pawtucket to Exit 27 (U.S. Route 1). At the end of the ramp turn left, go two blocks on Route 1 (Pawtucket Avenue) to a fork, bear left (south) on East Avenue, go 0.8 miles to Blackstone Boulevard, and turn left. Swan Point is the second left across the divided Boulevard.

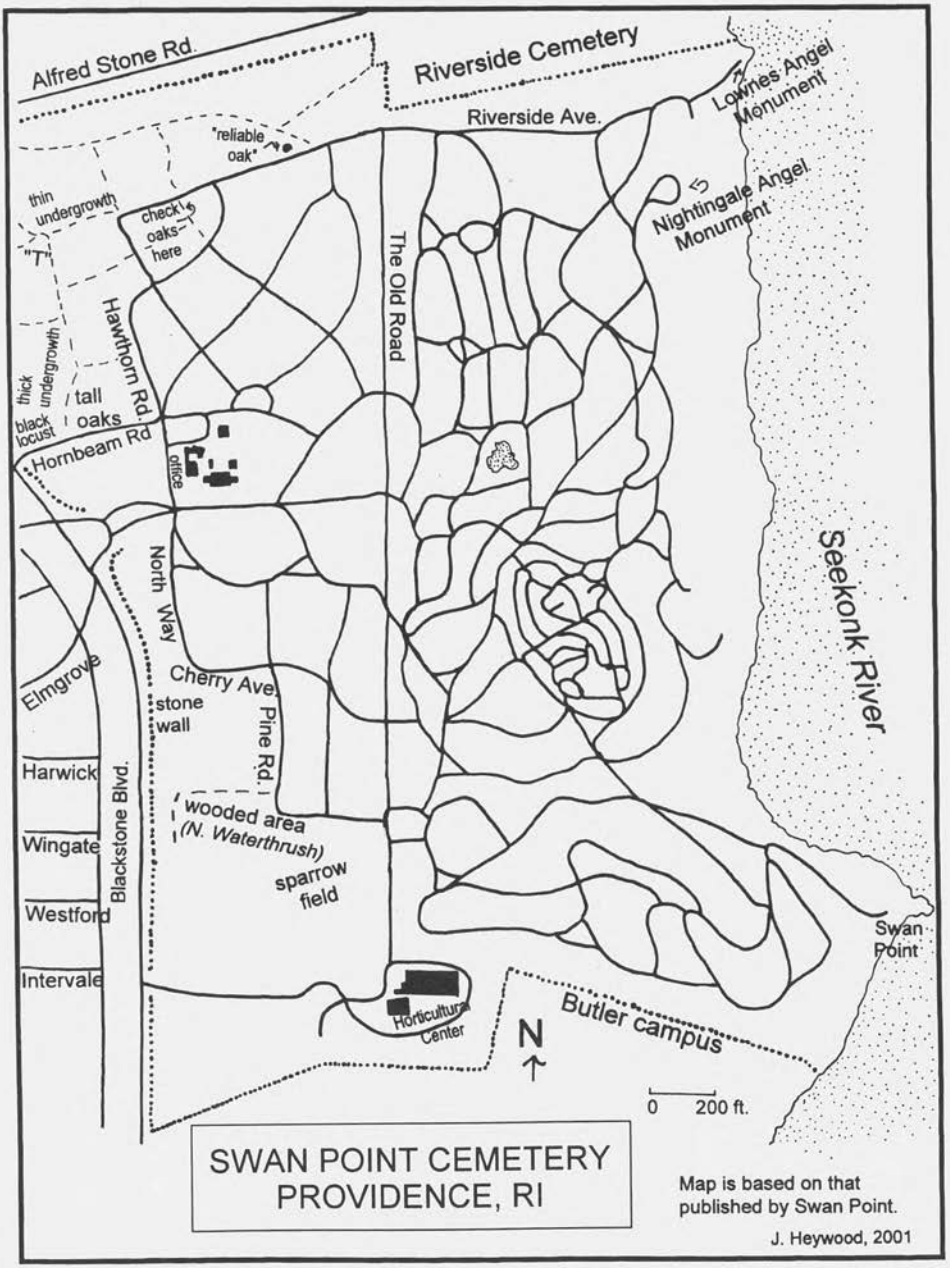
From the east take I-195 to Providence to Exit 3, for Gano Street. At the end of the ramp turn right on Gano Street. Go north to Waterman Street. Turn right. At the second light, turn left onto Butler Avenue. Butler Avenue turns into Blackstone Boulevard. Swan Point Cemetery is 1.7 miles on the right.

From the south or west take I-95 to I-195 East, and take Exit 3 (Gano Street). Follow the directions from the paragraph above.

Swan Point is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the period of Standard Time, and from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. during Daylight Saving. During spring migration the gates are usually opened for birders at 7 a.m., and in May 2000 the security guard opened the gates on most days at 6:30 a.m. If you arrive early, it is best to park your car along Blackstone Boulevard, and climb over the stone wall (an easy climb, but watch for poison ivy). To maintain our excellent relationship with the cemetery, please honor their request not to park in the driveway leading into the cemetery.

Birding at Swan Point can be interesting at almost any season, but for most people the main attraction is spring migration. Swan Point has long been known as a migrant stopover, and there are records that indicate that Swan Point was attracting bird fanciers to watch the spring migration at least as early as the 1930s (R. L. Ferren, pers. comm.).

The geography of Swan Point is probably the most important factor in its popularity with migrants. It is situated on the north side of Providence, and at the northern tip of Narragansett Bay. It is bounded on the east by the Seekonk River, which is a finger of Narragansett Bay. It is the only open wooded area situated


Alfred Stone Rd.
Riverside Cemetery
Riverside Ave.
Lowries Angel Monument
Nightingale Angel Monument
"reliable oak"
thin undergrowth
check oaks here
The Old Road
Hawthorn Rd.
thick undergrowth
black locust
tall oaks
Hornbeam Rd
office
North Way
Elmgrove
Cherry Ave.
stone wall
Pine Rd.
Harwick
Wingate
Westford
Intervale
Blackstone Blvd.
wooded area (N. Waterthrush)
sparrow field
Horticultural Center
Butler campus
Seekonk River
Swan Point
N
0 200 ft.
SWAN POINT CEMETERY
PROVIDENCE, RI
Map is based on that published by Swan Point.
J. Heywood, 2001

directly on the water from Warwick in the south to Pawtucket on the north. As nocturnal migrants fly up Narragansett Bay, Swan Point is the first significant patch of green available at first light.

As at so many other New England spring migrant traps, the wind conditions are a primary factor in the numbers of migrants one is likely to see. Southwest winds produce the best conditions, and fog may also produce significant fallout. Fog also tends to bring the birds that usually feed in the treetops down to eye level.

I usually pay my first spring visit to Swan Point in late March or early April. By that time the resident Black-capped Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatches, and Tufted Titmice are singing, and migrants like Eastern Phoebe, Fox Sparrow, and Winter Wren may be found.

Although Swan Point is primarily wooded, the best place to look for migrants is the naturally wooded area in the north end of the cemetery. The landscaped area of the cemetery consists of mature trees and grass, while the woods have a mix of understory and undergrowth that is better habitat for foraging migrants. The area of woods lies to the north of Hawthorn Road (a cemetery road), and to the south of the city street Alfred Stone Road, which marks the boundary of the cemetery property. To find the woods, go through the main gate and take an immediate left on North Way (unmarked here). You will go past the cemetery office and Chapel (on the right). Then take the next left on Hornbeam Road. As you walk down Hornbeam, the woods will be on your right. In about 200 feet you will see a dirt road on the right. If you are visiting late in May, stop here before you turn right. To the left of the dirt road there are several tall black locust trees. If there is an Olive-sided Flycatcher in Rhode Island, it is likely to be seen on a snag on the tallest of the locusts.

Migrant songbirds can be found anywhere in the wooded area, or in the nearby formal cemetery grounds. Over the years I have noticed that treetop-feeding warblers in particular seem to prefer to feed in the largest of the oak trees. Before you enter the woods, check the large oaks on the right for migrants.

Now take that dirt road on the right, and as you enter the woods, you first pass through thick undergrowth. This area is likely to produce one or two Kentucky Warblers per year, and Mourning Warblers may occasionally be found here during the latter part of May and through the first week of June. You may be lucky enough to hear one of these two species, but getting a good look at either one of them may take some hard work, and it can be frustrating.

After walking approximately 400 feet east on the dirt road, you will come to a path on the left that is worth checking out. Go about one hundred feet to the north, and check the trees on either side of the path. On good days you should find migrant warblers and possibly vireos, thrushes, and other neotropic migrants. With a little luck you may see a Wood Duck fly in and land on an open branch. For the past several years a Red-bellied Woodpecker could be seen here on most mornings.

Return to the main trail, and continue toward the east. The path ends in a T; turn right here. As you pass through this area, watch for activity on the ground and up to

eye level in the thin understory. In late April this area is particularly good for Hermit Thrushes and Palm Warblers. In early May Yellow-rumped Warblers can be seen here in small flocks, which may contain other migrants. In the third week of May this can be the best area to look for Swainson's Thrushes.

As you continue, the path turns to paved road. This is Riverside Avenue, and the cemetery proper is on your right. The trees along the left can be very productive, and one tree in particular (about four hundred feet along the paved road) is always reliable. On April 30, 2000, I stood in the road and watched a stream of 106 Yellow-rumped Warblers cross from a tree on the south side into this old oak. Also, in this area, listen for Fish Crows.

Any of the other dirt paths that you have passed are worth checking for migrants, and listen as well in the nearby cemetery trees.

Regularly appearing migrants in Swan Point include Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Wood Pewee, Yellow-bellied and Least flycatchers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Veery, Swainson's and Hermit thrushes, Red-eyed, Blue-headed, and Yellow-throated vireos, Blue-winged, Tennessee, Nashville, Northern Parula, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Pine, Palm, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, and Black and White warblers, American Redstarts, Ovenbirds, Common Yellowthroats, and Wilson's and Canada warblers. Other neotropic migrants regularly seen include Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, and Baltimore Oriole. Of course, you cannot expect to see all of these migrants in one day. However, during the peak of the migration in mid-May, it is common to see from twelve to sixteen species of warblers in a walk lasting from one to two hours.

Unusual, but seen annually, are Bicknell's/Gray-cheeked thrushes and Cape May, Kentucky (not all years), and Mourning warblers. Typical southern species, which breed in Rhode Island but are rare in Swan Point, are species such as White-eyed Vireo and Worm-eating and Hooded warblers.

Over the years Swan Point has produced a number of rarities such as Cerulean, Prothonotary, and Yellow-throated warblers. In fact, thirty-seven of the thirty-eight accepted species of warblers seen in Rhode Island have occurred at Swan Point, including two records of Black-throated Gray Warbler (R. L. Ferren, pers. comm.).

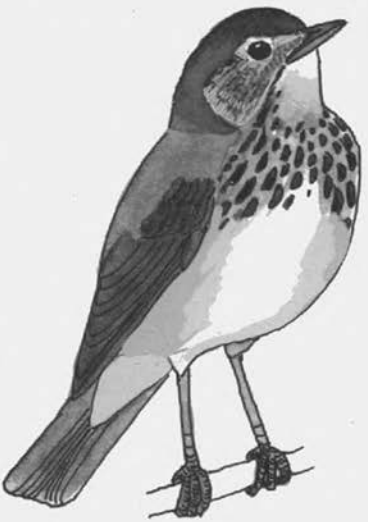
Now continue toward the east on Riverside Road. Watch and listen for migrants as the road descends the hill. In about a quarter-mile you approach the Seekonk River.

The road ends at the river, and a small parking area is on the right. Listen on your right for the resident Eastern Phoebes. You may turn right and go south from here, following the dirt path along the edge of the water. If you have the time, this can be productive.

Now check the river. In spring you may still find a lingering duck or two. Black Ducks, Mallards, and possibly Buffleheads and mergansers can be found even in mid-May. Along the shore watch for Spotted Sandpipers and Greater Yellowlegs. Scope upriver to the left, and you should find Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, possibly a Green Heron, and Great and Snowy egrets, as well as Common Terns and several species of gulls. Watch for a Belted Kingfisher on the opposite shore.

After birding along the river, make your way back to the main gate. You can return by reversing the route, or by going west on Riverside Avenue, then going left (south) on The Old Road, and right (west) on Holly Avenue. Or, since there are no restricted areas in the cemetery, you may follow any road back toward the main gate. A smaller wooded area may be reached by turning right when you enter the cemetery (unmarked North Way again). Go right when the road forks, and then make a ninety-degree turn to the left on Cherry Avenue. Go about two hundred feet, and take a right on Pine Road. Stop where Pine Road turns ninety degrees to the left. Walk down the dirt road on the right. In damp springs this is the most reliable place to find Northern Waterthrushes. The trees on either side of the path can be good for warblers and other migrants, and you should find American Goldfinches and Eastern Kingbirds here. Wilson's Warblers are found here more often than in the other wooded area.

Walk back out to the paved road. Turn right, and directly in front of you may be a weedy field. This can be a good place to look for sparrows, although that will depend on whether the cemetery staff has plowed, mowed, or in some other way disturbed the area.



Fall birding in Swan Point, although not as interesting as the spring, can also be productive. Try the same areas, and be sure to spend time along the river. In late September and October of some years, Forster's Terns can be found, along with the usual ducks, shorebirds, and waders.

In winter check the wooded areas for winter finches. Good places to watch for birds are in the formal cemetery grounds adjacent to the natural woods, where there are spruce or hemlock trees. In particular, check the trees at the corner of Hawthorn and Locust, and at the corner of Riverside Road and The Old Road. These can be good for Pine Siskins, occasionally redpolls, and rarely crossbills.

In the late winter of 2000, up to three Bald Eagles were seen along the Seekonk River either from Swan Point or from other vantage points.

If you are ready for a second breakfast when you leave Swan Point, there are a number of ethnic shops, restaurants, delis, and bakeries nearby. Turn right when you leave the cemetery onto Blackstone Boulevard. When you get to the end of the Boulevard, turn left onto Hope Street. You will see a number of establishments in the next mile. Enjoy your day.

Bob Bushnell *has been a birder for thirty years, and has not missed many May mornings in Swan Point Cemetery since 1974. His primary birding-related interests are habitat conservation and environmental education to promote conservation. He has served the Rhode Island Audubon Society for twenty-five years as volunteer, board member, and president. After thirty years in business, Bob is now a first-year public school teacher. Finally, he would like to thank Dick Ferren for his comments about Swan Point, and in particular for providing him with historical records.*

Wing Island Banding Station

The Wing Island Bird Banding Station in Brewster, MA, opened on September 30, 2000. The banding station is sponsored by the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History and is located in the small octagonal building behind the museum. Wing Island is a small island in Cape Cod Bay separated from the mainland by a tidal salt marsh.

There were 4 to12 mist nets in operation for 13 days during the fall. The nets were opened from dawn to dusk, weather permitting. Most of the fall migrants had passed through before the station was opened, but we still netted 1514 birds, and 967 of those birds were banded. Some of the birds had to be released unbanded because of the government's lack of bands or the incredible numbers of birds netted on two of those days. There was a huge migration of myrtle warblers on October 5 and October 14, and 447 of those birds had to be released.

A total of 34 species of birds were banded, including a Philadelphia Vireo, 2 Blue-headed Vireos, 2 eastern White-crowned Sparrows, 1 Fox Sparrow, 2 Nashville Warblers, 1 Palm Warbler, 1 Orange-crowned Warbler, and 678 myrtle warblers!

Banding on Wing Island will begin again in early spring and continue through the fall. The public is welcome to stop by and observe while the birds are banded.

Susan Finnegan

Birding Wompatuck State Park

Dennis Peacock

Located in northern Plymouth County, in the towns of Hingham, Norwell, Cohasset, and Scituate, Wompatuck State Park is a relatively large tract of semiconserved woodland habitats offering a somewhat diverse mixture of red maple swamps, hemlock and white pine groves, and oak-hickory-beech associations.

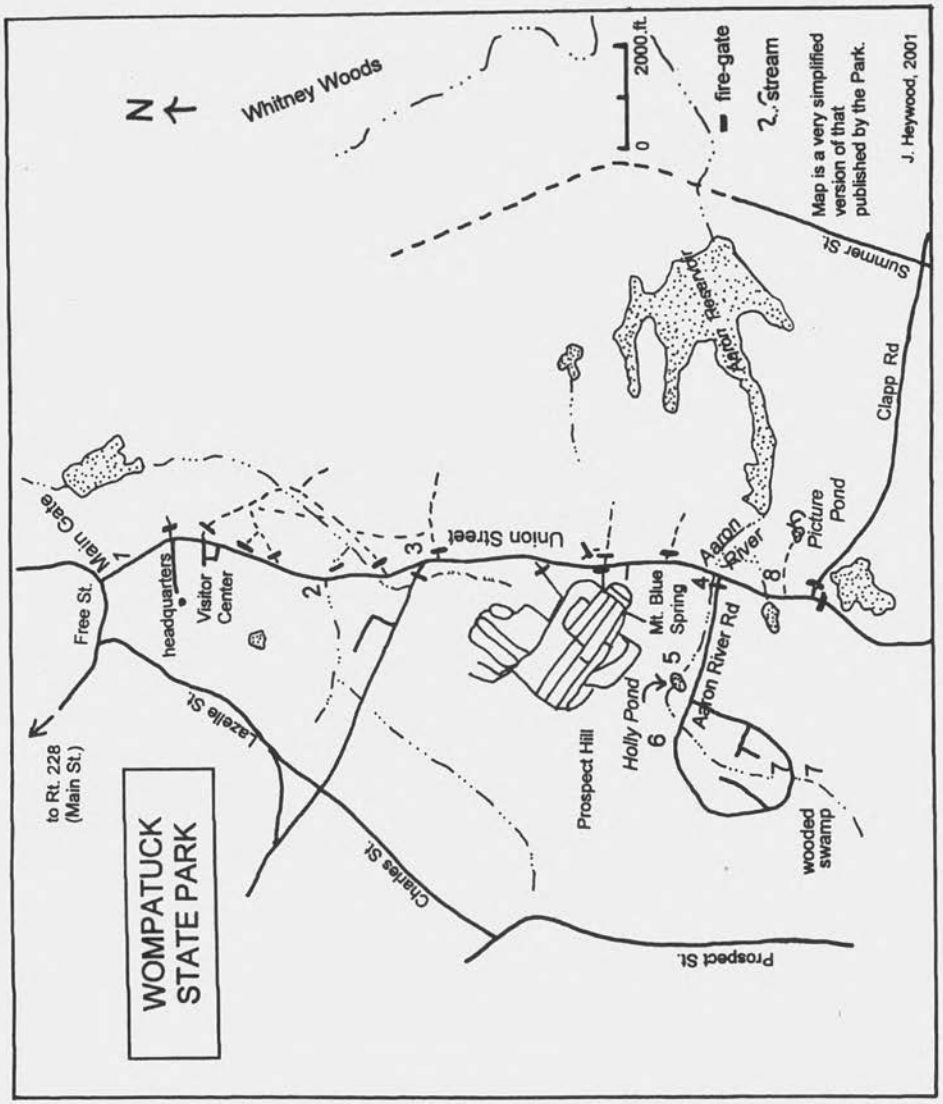
Originally cleared for agricultural uses, the area now occupied by Wompatuck State Park was purchased by the U.S. government as an annex to existing property used as a munitions depot during World War II. Its use was continued throughout the Korean War as a training facility and vehicle repair center. Beginning in 1962, shortly after the annex was declared surplus, the federal government began turning the property over to the state of Massachusetts, which elected to use the property to establish Wompatuck State Park. As of October 2000, the last 125 acres of the former annex were being transferred for use as part of the park, bringing its total acreage to 3002.

Many vestiges of times long past remain: miles of classic New England stone walls lace the forest, evincing the work of bygone farms and farmers; concrete remains of ammunition bunkers and revetments are scattered throughout and evoke images of army-green mobilization during a world war. Many miles of narrow, paved depot roads add to the imagery while creating no shortage of walking paths.

Located in towns comprising the northern-coastal South Shore, Wompatuck lies amid a region in which wildlife habitat has been decimated by suburban sprawl. The resulting scarcity of quality habitat has placed a greater significance on those areas remaining largely undisturbed. In light of this consideration, Wompatuck, with nearly five square miles of woodlands, is important both from the broad perspective of conservation of wildlife habitat and, more specifically, from the perspective of ornithological significance.

The ornithological significance is twofold: as a stopover for migrating songbirds, and as a nesting area for seasonal and resident breeding birds. Its significance as a stopover for migrating birds is especially prominent due to a combination of two salient factors: location and size. Located within one mile of the ocean, Wompatuck is a large, quasicoastal, woodland target in an otherwise less sufficient landscape along the Atlantic Flyway, a heavily used migration route on which optimal avian stopover points are becoming increasingly fewer and of compromised quality.

Its relative vastness and subsequent isolation from residential areas are important for those migrating birds whose tendencies place them near or at ground level, where housecat predation becomes a factor. This insulation from housecat predation is especially vital for ground-nesting breeding birds. Ovenbirds and Eastern Towhees,



both of which appear to breed in good numbers in Wompatuck, have suffered sharp declines in otherwise suitable locations proximate to residential areas and the accompanying population of housecats.

Wompatuck is a worthwhile spot to visit in any season. Miles of paved fire roads and wooded paths make getting around easy. Winter Wrens have been found in every month of the year; Pileated Woodpeckers are irregular winter visitors; Ruffed Grouse are reliable in many sections of the park throughout late winter into early spring and again in late autumn; and, during irruption years, most winter finches appear in respectable numbers. For the inquisitive naturalist, a nice variety of evergreen ferns

and allies can be studied in most months, and throughout much of the year, abundant wildflowers are present.

Starting in mid-April, birding begins to get really interesting. This is when neotropical and continental migrants begin to arrive. During this period, which lasts through the first week of June, the greatest diversity and abundance of bird-life can be seen and heard. Learning what species to expect and how to best go about finding them during spring migration will be the focus of this article. First, we will examine an overview of migrant and breeding birds, and then you will learn where and when to find them.

During spring migration, quite a variety of passerines are typically present. Between 1999 and 2000, thirty-four species of wood warblers were observed, including species with more southern affinities such as Hooded, Kentucky, and Prothonotary warblers. All six of our vireos, all five *Empidonax* flycatchers, and all six brown thrushes have also dropped in. I alone have observed a total of 143 species within the months of April, May, June, and July, during only two years of observation.

Among species present throughout breeding season have been Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Veery, Wood Thrush, Warbling Vireo, Nashville Warbler, and Purple Finch; and, in 2000, at least fourteen pairs of Pine Siskins were present. Both Yellow-billed and Black-billed cuckoos have been relatively abundant breeders, especially during years with heavy gypsy moth infestation. Such a year occurred in 2000: high counts of each were 23 Black-billed on June 12, and 22 Yellow-billed on June 13.

Additionally, some locally and regionally rare breeding birds have likely nested in Wompatuck. Between 1999 and 2000 highs of twenty-one Winter Wrens, three Yellow-throated Vireos, two Canada Warblers, and six Northern Waterthrushes have remained throughout the breeding season, singing in their respectively appropriate nesting habitats. Louisiana Waterthrushes and Acadian Flycatchers both fledged young in 2000, and, as a matter of trivia, appear to be the easternmost breeding pairs of each in the world.

In the following paragraphs, I will suggest an approach to birding the park during spring songbird migration in early May, while addressing a few key areas that I have found to produce the best birding in terms of diversity and abundance. This approach will also include tips on finding some of the park's specialties. Most key areas

addressed will be numbered. These numbers correspond to the numbered locations on the map of the park included in this article.

Directions: To reach Wompatuck State Park from Route 3, take Exit 14 to Route 228 north. Travel north on Route 228 (Main Street) for approximately three miles until you reach Free Street, where you will turn right. Follow Free Street for approximately one mile, at which point there will be a large sign on the right marking the entrance to the park. There is a visitor center two-tenths of a mile in from the main gate where park maps and restrooms are available.

Try to arrive early to start as soon as the park opens at sunrise. This will allow you to maximize your birding time during the dawn chorus. Throughout the following directions, all mileages will be as measured from the main entrance gate at the north end of the park.

Upon entering the park, you will be driving on Union Street. Union Street, which bisects Wompatuck, is 2.3 miles long from the main entrance to the back gate (which is always locked), and is the only road on which you should be driving. If by chance you find an open fire gate, do not drive through it. Driving on the fire roads is not allowed.

Beginning at the main entrance (1), roll down your windows, even if it is chilly, and drive slowly. As you begin, listen for the rolling call of resident Red-bellied Woodpeckers. House and Winter wrens, Ovenbirds, and Eastern Towhees can be heard calling and singing from the brushy thickets, where they stake out and defend their breeding territories with vigor.

Approximately 0.6 mile on the right there will be a steel fire gate (2). (Several gates will be mentioned in this article; if you park near them, be sure not to block them!) Brown Thrashers have been found with some regularity in this area's greenbrier thickets, while an inspection of the adjacent white pine groves may reward the careful observer with a Northern Saw-whet Owl. This reclusive little owl has been stimulated to call at this locality during most seasons and, with no shortage of luck, could possibly be found roosting in these conifers.

The next point of interest is marked by another fire gate (3) at 0.9 mile, on the right. This low, shaded area is flooded seasonally, as evidenced by the presence of broad-leaved cattail, and has been a dependable spot for a seasonal Mourning Warbler, found usually from late May into early June. Listen quietly for Black-billed Cuckoos and Blue-winged

Warblers. Remarkably, this spot produced a state high of *three* Kentucky Warblers on June 10, 1999.

Proceed to 1.8 miles, and look on your right for signage for Mt. Blue Spring, a spring-fed source of fresh drinking water. Pull into the parking area, and listen for a while. This area has hosted at least five Cerulean Warblers in two years and has also been one of the better spots in the park for Tennessee, Blackburnian, Prairie, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, and Worm-eating warblers.

After spending some time here and grabbing a quick drink, continue a short distance on Union Street until you reach the two-mile mark, and park by the next gate on your right (4). Take a short walk downhill on Union Street until you notice a small stream. This is the Aaron River. Listen here for both Waterthrushes. Louisiana will be the more likely of the two to be present, singing on either or both sides of the road. If a Northern Waterthrush is singing, it will be on the upstream side. Listen also for Canada Warblers, both cuckoos, and the buzzy scolding of the obstreperous Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

Return to the gate near which you parked, and walk in. This fire road is an unnamed loop, which we will now name the Aaron River Road. It is approximately two miles roundtrip. Beginning at the gate, walk slowly and be quiet. On the left will be a mixture of mature white pines and oaks gradually interspersed with hemlocks and various hardwoods corresponding to the undulating elevation and attendant soil types. On the right will be a cool, dark bottomland of hemlocks, maples, and birches, marginated by, most notably, sassafras and spicebush. These species thrive in the rich alluvial soil of the Aaron River floodplain, which parallels the road for half a mile.

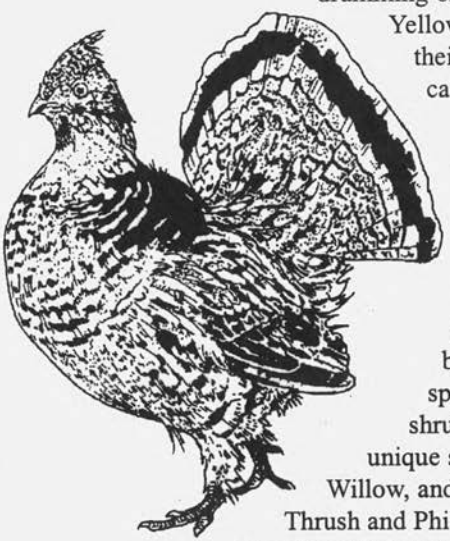
Look and listen carefully for thrushes, often observed in the shadows of the forest floor, busily scratching through the leaf litter. Veerys and Hermit, Wood, and Swainson's thrushes are regular here. The fortunate observer will be rewarded with a Gray-cheeked or Bicknell's thrush, both of which have been present in each of the last two years. These two species can be safely identified in the field by song alone, but proper identification requires careful study, attentiveness, and the humility to let some, if not most, individuals go specifically unidentified.

As you continue on Aaron River Road, listen on the right for Winter Wrens and Louisiana Waterthrushes, two of the eastern forest's finest songsters, frequently heard singing from within the shaded margins of the seasonally swiftly flowing Aaron River. Acadian Flycatchers are frequently found in the dense understory during migration and could be a future breeder at this particular location. A Prothonotary Warbler has also been observed in this area on at least one occasion.

As the fire road begins an incline, you will notice a gated, dirt road ahead on the right. Walk this road about 100 yards to Holly Pond (5), the source of the Aaron River. Scan the dead trees around the pond for Eastern Kingbirds, Cedar Waxwings, and maybe an Olive-sided Flycatcher. Watch for Spotted Sandpipers bobbing along the muddy shoreline, and night-herons hunting frogs and fish on the pond's vegetated perimeter. Above all, listen. Cerulean, Mourning, and Hooded warblers have been observed in the immediate vicinity of this small pond; all were first located by their somewhat distinct songs.

Return to the fire road and proceed. You will pass a white pine grove where resident Red-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, and Purple Finches can be found year-round. Pay attention for the plaintive song of the Blue-headed Vireo, which would be well within expectations to breed in this habitat.

In a couple of hundred yards the road will fork. This is the actual loop. Bear right and proceed counterclockwise. Along this loop, keep an eye and ear open for Black-throated Green Warblers and Scarlet Tanagers. Ruffed Grouse are frequently heard drumming or seen foraging on the forest floor, and Yellow-throated Vireos are often present singing their burly notes from high in the deciduous canopy.



After another few hundred yards there will be a dirt road on the right (6). This short road leads into an area known, by me, as the gravel pit. This area is approximately three acres of relatively open habitat used by park workers as a stump dump and is completely surrounded by mixed woodlands. Substantially wet in the spring, and heavily vegetated by various shrubs and cattails in certain sections, this unique spot has hosted Yellow-bellied, Alder, Willow, and Least flycatchers, as well as Bicknell's Thrush and Philadelphia Vireo, in both 1999 and 2000. Breeding birds include American Woodcock, Brown Thrasher, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, and Orchard Oriole.

About three-quarters of the way around the loop the road bisects a wooded swamp (7). Look for Wood Ducks, and listen for resident Hairy Woodpeckers. Northern Waterthrush and Canada Warbler have both been present throughout the breeding season here in consecutive years. Other birds of interest in this area are Red-shouldered Hawk, a likely breeder noted here nearly year-round, and its nocturnal counterpart, the Barred Owl. Very localized in distribution on the South Shore, Barred Owls can occasionally be found during the day, roosting in the conifers along the edge of this wooded swamp.

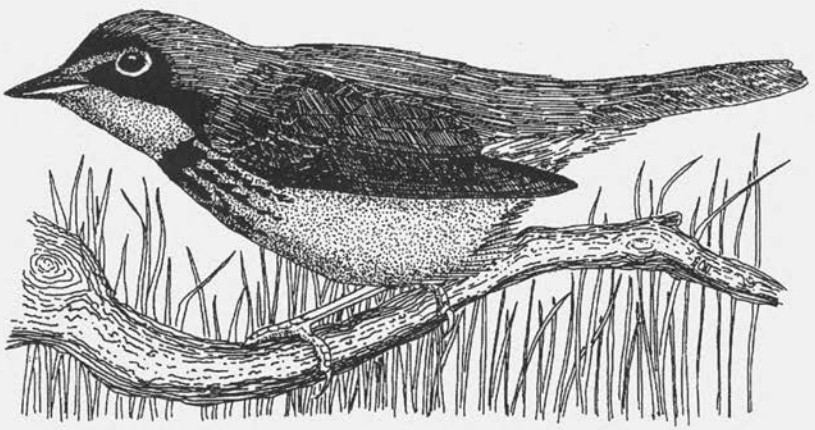
After completing the loop, walk back down Aaron River Road, return to your car, and continue on Union Street until you reach the park's back gate. Park in this vicinity and walk the paved, but very dilapidated, trail on the left (8). This road leads to Picture Pond and has been a reliable area for observing Black-billed and especially Yellow-billed cuckoos as well as Yellow-throated Vireos. As you approach the pond, look and listen for Winter Wrens and waterthrushes. In the immediate vicinity of the pond, be alert for the sharp, abrupt song of the Acadian Flycatcher, which was observed here in 1999 and fledged at least two young in 2000.

Check the pond for Wood Ducks, and search the pond-side thickets for White-eyed Vireo and Mourning Warbler. For the lepidopterist, large stands of milkweed in this area have produced at least eighteen species of butterflies including variegated fritillaries, and a locally rare hickory hairstreak in July of 2000.

When planning a springtime visit to Wompatuck State Park, be sure to consider some form of insect repellent, since the mosquitoes are occasionally, as should be expected, quite nasty. Furthermore, attempt to visit the park during weekdays or early mornings on weekends. The park hosts approximately 130,000 visitors per year and seemingly fifty times that number of unleashed dogs. Optimal birding is best done in the absence of the attendant rowdiness.

I hope you find this information useful and enjoy your time observing the natural history of this fine state park. For further information call the park's headquarters at (781) 749-7160.

Dennis Peacock *is a resident of Hingham and an avid naturalist. When not birding, he can most often be found with his friends and brothers, scouring the countryside in search of ferns, herps, wildflowers, odes, and butterflies. His love of natural history was a gift from his father and uncles who took a young boy hunting and showed him the world.*



An Unprecedented Incursion of Lesser Black-backed Gulls

Blair Nikula

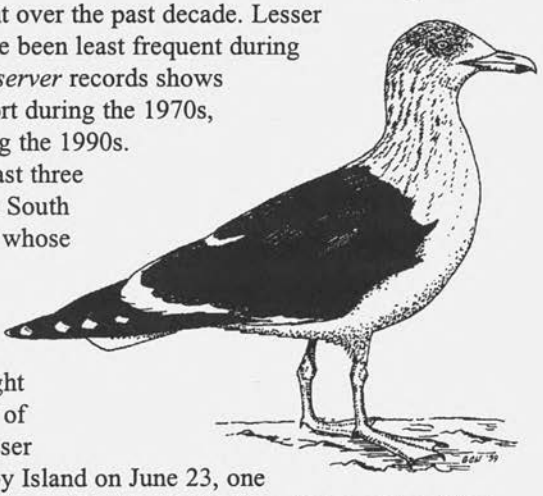
One of the fascinations over a lifetime of birding is witnessing changes in local avian populations. All too often these changes result in the loss of once familiar species. On the other hand, species once uncommon or even unknown can become an anticipated part of a day afield. Equally intriguing and much more dramatic are the sudden appearances of large numbers of a species, due to some confluence of weather, food supply, or other variable(s), that result in unexpected and occasionally unprecedented concentrations. The Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*), an easily overlooked and underappreciated species (it is *only* a gull, after all!), has undergone a population expansion both locally and nationally over the past century, and, attracted by a bountiful food supply, appeared in unprecedented numbers on Cape Cod during the summer of 2000.

The first North American record of Lesser Black-backed Gull (outside of Greenland) came from Beach Haven, New Jersey, in 1934. Following this discovery, the species was detected with increasing frequency on the East Coast, and by the 1970s had proved to be a regular, although still rather rare, transient and winter resident as far south as Florida. The increase of Lesser Black-backed Gulls in North America has continued unabated, with records now spanning the farthest reaches of the continent, from Alaska south along the Pacific Coast to Costa Rica and Panama, and through the Caribbean to the northeast coast of South America (Post and Lewis 1995a). Although still scarce on the West Coast and in interior North America, double-digit counts of Lesser Black-backed Gulls are now routinely reported from a number of favored sites on the Atlantic Coast, particularly in the mid-Atlantic states and Florida. Recently, hundreds have been estimated wintering along the Delaware River on the Pennsylvania–New Jersey border, with as many as 152 counted at one site, the Churchville Reservoir in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, on November 21, 1999 (Paxton et al. 2000).

The species was first found nesting in Iceland during the 1920s, and populations there have continued to increase since, with upwards of 30,000 pairs estimated recently (Reid 2000). In the early 1990s nesting was first confirmed in Greenland, although only a few pairs were involved. To date, this is the closest known breeding site, although the species' increasing frequency here has long led to speculation that nesting was occurring somewhere in northeastern Canada. Yet the origin of the hundreds of Lesser Black-backed Gulls occurring annually in North America remains an unresolved avian mystery.

The first Massachusetts record was not until September 14, 1971, when renowned artist Robert Clem noticed a strange, dark-mantled gull among the Herring Gulls at the area known as the Powder Hole on South Monomoy Island and recognized it as a Lesser Black-backed. Since then, the highest counts in the state have come from

Nantucket, where as many as a dozen were found over the winter of 1980–1981 (Veit and Petersen 1993). Smaller numbers occur routinely on Cape Cod and elsewhere along the southeast coast. The species is also found regularly on the North Shore and among concentrations of gulls inland (particularly in the Connecticut River valley), although rarely are more than single individuals found in these areas. Highest counts typically occur during the fall and early winter when gulls are moving south. A modest influx, presumably involving northbound birds, occurs in the spring, although numbers at this season typically are half or less of fall counts. Wintering birds have become increasingly frequent over the past decade. Lesser Black-backeds, until recently, have been least frequent during the summer. A review of *Bird Observer* records shows only one summer (June/July) report during the 1970s, 12 during the 1980s, and 11 during the 1990s. During the summer of 1999, at least three different individuals were seen on South Beach in Chatham. Most of those whose ages were reported during the summer were immatures.



The first indication that something out of the ordinary might be developing during the summer of 2000 was the presence of two Lesser Black-backeds on North Monomoy Island on June 23, one of which I thought at the time was an adult. About this time, I also noticed that the number of nonbreeding gulls in the area seemed much higher than typical. On July 5, I found three Lesser Black-backeds on North Monomoy (no adults) and on the following day saw three more on South Beach. On July 15, with only limited coverage of South Beach, Jackie Sones and I found at least eight (perhaps as many as a dozen) individuals, all first- through third-summer birds. Later that day, we saw what appeared to be a fully adult bird on the north end of South Monomoy island (although photographs subsequently revealed it to be a third-summer bird). Intrigued by this latest count, Rick Heil traveled to South Beach on July 19 and, joined later in the day by me, made a concerted effort to census the Lesser Black-backed Gulls in the area. Between South Beach and North Monomoy we found a total of 41 birds! On July 23, Rick and Jan Smith, again joined by me later in the day, counted at least 55 birds. The following weekend, Jeremiah and Peter Trimble and I tallied at least 60 Lesser Black-backeds on South Beach and the flats between North and South Monomoy. Finally, on August 5, Rick Heil, Jeremiah Trimble, and I (joined later by Jackie Sones) found 80 or more birds in the same area! These increasing totals through the summer are more likely a reflection of increased efforts to census the birds, rather than a real increase in their numbers. By late August the number of gulls in the area had declined considerably, although Lesser Black-backeds remained easy to find well into the fall.

Previously, the largest reported summer concentration of Lesser Black-backed Gulls in North America was as many as 19 birds at Hart-Miller Island in Maryland during the period July 20-31, 1992 (Armistead 1992). The South Beach aggregation is thus the largest, by far, during the summer, as well as one of the largest reported at any season in North America.

The unprecedented number of Lesser Black-backed Gulls on and around South Beach was part of an exceptional concentration of large gulls present in the area during July and August. Estimates of the total number of Herring and Great Black-backed gulls ranged as high as 15,000 birds, the majority of which were immature (and thus probably not directly associated with the large breeding population on Monomoy). Laughing Gulls were also present in exceptional numbers, although to some extent this may reflect an increasing breeding population on South Monomoy, comprising over 375 pairs in 2000 (S. Fish, pers. comm.). No less than 30 Bonaparte's Gulls summered in the area, also an unusually high number, and Common and Roseate terns numbered in the thousands. Attracting these gulls and terns apparently was an abundance of bait fish (based upon reports from local fishermen), most likely sand launce (*Ammodytes* sp.), close to shore. In addition to gulls, large numbers of shearwaters were also present close to shore at times during this period, and they were occasionally seen feeding in mixed-species flocks with the gulls. These feeding concentrations attracted small numbers of jaegers. On many days, hundreds of Wilson's Storm-petrels were also present close to shore. However, they do not feed on bait fish, so reasons for their presence are unclear, although it seems likely there was at least an indirect relationship.

This impressive concentration of gulls was apparently confined to the Chatham eastern shore, more specifically the South Beach area from Chatham Light south to the southern tip of the beach — about four-and-a-half miles of shoreline, bounded on the north by the Pleasant Bay inlet and on the south by the South Beach/Monomoy inlet. Rick Heil and Jan Smith checked the Nauset area in Eastham on July 23 and found only typical numbers of gulls (and a single Lesser Black-backed Gull). There also was no evidence of unusual concentrations in Provincetown, despite large numbers of seabirds on Stellwagen Bank throughout the summer. Even a boat trip down the east side of South Monomoy Island on August 5 was strikingly devoid of gulls or other seabirds — the masses of gulls ended abruptly at the southern tip of South Beach. However, on August 3 I found three Lesser Black-backeds among a small flock of gulls at the Chatham Airport, a distance of three to four miles inland from South Beach. The Monomoy gulls are known to frequent some of the freshwater ponds near the airport to bathe and drink, and it seems likely that at least some of the Lesser Black-backeds followed their lead.

Virtually all of the Lesser Black-backed Gulls in Chatham were immature birds. Although some were initially identified as adults, based upon their gray mantles, pure white heads, bright yellow legs, and lack of black in the bill, closer examination of most of these individuals revealed characteristics (especially a brownish cast in at least some of the wing coverts, most evident when the wing was spread) that indicated they were in fact third-summer birds. Aging these birds with any certainty proved to

be a challenge, at least in part because many apparently had already begun their fall molt. However, after many hours of studying them and researching the subject in the literature and online, we eventually felt confident in aging most of them. Rick Heil was characteristically diligent in recording ages, and based upon his figures, approximately one-third of the birds were in first summer plumage, with most of the remainder either in second- or third-summer plumages. At least one or two birds appeared to be fully adult.

Lesser Black-backed Gull on South Beach — photograph by the author

Three races of Lesser Black-backed Gull are recognized: *L. f. fuscus*, the darkest mantled of the three, breeds from northern Norway to northwestern Russia and south to southeastern Denmark; *L. f. intermedius* breeds from southern Norway and Sweden to Denmark and the Netherlands; and *L. f. graellsii*, the palest mantled of the three, breeds in the British Isles, the Faeroes, and Iceland (Post and Lewis 1995a). *L. f. graellsii* also has the westernmost wintering range (Iberia south to Senegal on the Atlantic coast of Africa). The vast majority of North American records are of the race *L. f. graellsii*, although there are a few photographically documented reports of apparent *L. f. intermedius* (Post and Lewis 1995b). Although the mantle color of the older Chatham birds appeared quite variable, this was generally attributable to variations in lighting and angle of viewing; we saw no individuals we could confidently ascribe to any subspecies other than the expected *L. f. graellsii*.

The presence of such a large number of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, including a few apparent adults, in the vicinity of one of North America's largest gull colonies during the breeding season, certainly raises suspicions about the possibility of local nesting. While there is yet no evidence of nesting, it seems plausible that at least a handful of these birds might return to Monomoy to breed. Confirmation of a nesting pair in such a large gull colony will require considerable effort and luck, but careful watching in the future seems warranted. A first North American breeding record for Lesser Black-backed Gull would add another chapter to Massachusetts' rich ornithological history!

References:

Armistead, H. T. 1992. Middle Atlantic Coast region. *American Birds* 46: 1129.

Paxton, R. O., J. C. Burgiel, and D. A. Cutler. 2000. Hudson – Delaware Region. *North American Birds* 54 (1): 31-35.

Post, P. W. and R. H. Lewis. 1995a. The Lesser Black-backed Gull in the Americas; Occurrence and Subspecific Identity: Part I: Taxonomy, Distribution, and Migration. *Birding* 27 (4): 282-290.

Post, P. W. and R. H. Lewis. 1995b. The Lesser Black-backed Gull in the Americas; Occurrence and Subspecific Identity: Part II: Field Identification. *Birding* 27 (5): 370-381.

Reid, M. 2000. Martin Reid's Web Site. Internet: <www.martinreid.com/lbbgice.html>.

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

Blair Nikula *has been pursuing birds on his native Cape Cod since childhood. In between birds, he turns his attention to dragonflies and coedits a newsletter,* Ode News, *and has coauthored a beginner's guide (due out this spring) on these fascinating aerial masters. He would like to thank Rick Heil for his assiduous record-keeping and for offering helpful comments on a draft of this article.*

Editor's Note: *Flashback — September/October 1973.* Wayne R. Petersen reported the sighting of a sub-adult Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus graellsii*) at Nauset (Eastham) on August 17, 1973. "I believe this is only the second published record for Massachusetts, despite the recent increase in sightings throughout the Northeast. The other Massachusetts record was for September 14, 1971, when an adult (also of the race *L. f. graellsii*) was seen at Monomoy Point by Robert Clem and Wallace Bailey."

Territorial Behavior of Common Nighthawks in an Urban Habitat

Aaron J. Roth and Gwilym S. Jones

Abstract

Common Nighthawks are well known for their use of urban roofs for nesting. Behavioral consequences of this adaptation were examined in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1998 and 1999. Birds were observed from ground level and from roofs to examine territorial and foraging behavior. Various types of chase and calls were observed and described. Unlike previous studies of nighthawks in natural habitats, birds remained within their territories and exhibited territorial behavior and foraged throughout the night. This suggests the possibility of a different territorial system for urban nighthawks compared with nighthawks in natural habitats.

Introduction

The Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*) is a crepuscular insectivore that breeds throughout most of North America (Poulin et al. 1996). In natural habitats this species nests in open areas, such as fields (Gross 1940), burned areas (Fowle 1946) and sandy beaches (Latham 1946). In the mid 1800s, nighthawks were reported nesting on gravel roofs in cities (Gross 1940). There have been few studies of the effect of this behavior on nighthawk ecology.

This study focused on territorial behavior of male Common Nighthawks in Boston, Massachusetts, during 1998 and 1999. Previous studies have primarily focused on behavior of nesting females (Bowles 1921, Brigham 1989, Dexter 1952, 1956, 1961, 1977, Fowle 1946, Gross 1940, Parks 1946, Rust 1947, Sutton and Spencer 1949, Tomkins 1942, Walbeck 1989, Weller 1958). Little is known about male behavior. Male nighthawks are known to be highly territorial (Gross 1940), maintaining large territories throughout the breeding season. Armstrong (1965) observed unmarked individuals from street level in Detroit. He determined average territory size to be 10.4 hectares (range 4.14 to 22.8) for 13 territories. He also concluded that territory size and location are determined by conspecific population pressures and density of suitable roofs (Armstrong 1965). Common Nighthawks will nest communally if population pressures become great enough, but this is uncommon (Gross 1940). Territorial boundaries are usually asserted at dawn and dusk (Caccamise 1974) as males perform a series of *peent* calls and *booming* dives (Gross 1940). Territorial interaction is not reported to occur during noncrepuscular periods (Poulin et al. 1996). The *booming* of the male is one of the most recognizable behavioral characteristics of this species. The sound is the result of the primaries vibrating as the male pulls out of a steep aerial dive. This display is used in territorial interactions as well as antipredator contexts; it is performed over the female during courtship, as well as over fledged young, humans, predators, and both intraspecific and interspecific invaders of a territory (Miller 1925, Dexter 1952, 1961, Sutherland 1963, Weller 1958).

Roth and Jones (2000) discussed flexibility of nighthawk territorial behavior in relation to food abundance. Nighthawks have been reported to forage either communally outside of their territories (Brigham and Fenton 1991, Rust 1947, Sutherland 1963), or exclusively within their territories (Armstrong 1965, Caccamise 1974). Factors that influence which behavior is manifested have not been previously investigated.

Methods

This study was conducted in the Back Bay area of Boston, Massachusetts. The study area was approximately 73 hectares in area and bounded by the MBTA Orange Line, U.S. Route 1 south, Massachusetts Avenue, and the Museum of Fine Arts. It included the Back Bay Fens, Fenway Park, Northeastern University Campus, and surrounding neighborhoods.

Territorial behavior of a nesting pair near Northeastern University (NU) and a pair nesting near the Boston Conservatory of Music (BCONS) was observed. Birds were observed on 107 nights, for a total 200 observation hours during the breeding seasons of 1998 (55 nights) and 1999 (52 nights). Observations were made from ground level and from rooftops. A total of 60 ground-level observations were made (36 in 1998 and 24 in 1999). A total of 47 rooftop observations of the NU pair were made (13 in 1998 and 34 in 1999). Observation periods were during peak activity times (Brigham 1989), beginning 15 to 20 minutes before sunset and generally ending 90 minutes after sunset. Ten all-night observation periods (from just before dusk to just after dawn) were made of the NU pair from roof level in 1999. Roof observations were made with Swarovski SLC 10x50 binoculars. These binoculars amplified the ambient light of the city and facilitated observation of the entire territory.

Territorial boundaries were determined from observations of display and conflict. Number and intensity of conflicts were recorded. Intensity of conflict was determined by the frequency and tempo of calls during chase, and the volume of the *boom* at the end of the dive. These were determined only when interactions occurred near the observation point. Volume was not precisely quantified; however, changes in volume were apparent. Intensity of interspecific conflict was compared with that of intraspecific conflict.

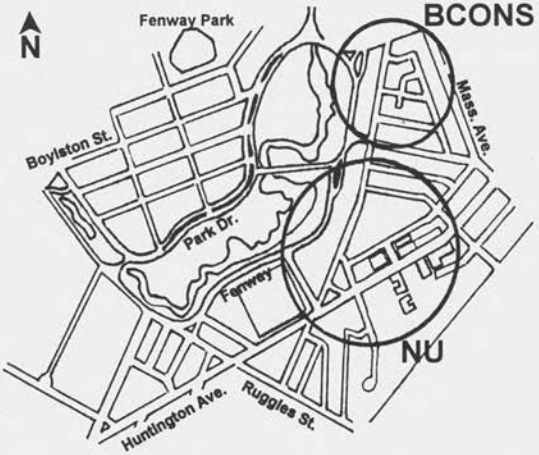
Individuals were identified by behavioral traits while on their territories. Resident males were identified by the act of territorial display. A male exhibiting territorial behavior within a territory was assumed to be its owner according to the methods of Armstrong (1965) and Wedgwood (1973). If a male was observed near the border of a territory or outside a territory, it was observed until it flew to the center of its own territory. Resident females and young were identified by their association with the male territory owner. Sex of individuals was determined by the presence of a white throat patch and white tailband on males. Hatch year birds (HY) were identified by their slightly smaller size and relatively unsteady flight. Foraging was indicated when an individual ceased calling and executed several erratic deviations while in flight (Brigham 1988).

Results

Intraspecific, territorial behavior was exhibited only by males. Birds established territories quickly upon arrival on the breeding grounds. In 1998, the NU male performed displays at his territorial boundaries on May 28, two days after the first observations of Common Nighthawks in Boston for the year. In 1999 the NU male held territorial boundaries on May 27, the day of first observation.

The two territories were estimated to be roughly circular and differed in size (Figure). Diameter of the NU territory was 500 meters, with an area of 196,350 m^2 (19.6 hectares) in both years. Diameter of the BCONS territory was 300 meters, with an area of 70,686 m^2 (7.1 hectares) in 1999, and not measured in 1998. Both territories bordered the Back Bay Fens/Victory Gardens and contained mostly flat-roofed buildings from five to seven stories high.

The males did not hold territories for the same amount of time. The NU male maintained territory until fall migration during both years. At the end of the 1998 breeding season, the NU male was observed defending his territory against a migrating flock of conspecifics (Roth and Jones 2000). This pair was seen with young at the end of both seasons. The BCONS male abandoned his territory by July 21, 1999, and the pair was never seen with young.



Activity generally followed a similar nightly pattern for both males. There was a strong correlation between sunset and the time of first observed activity (correlation coefficient = 0.83, n = 37 nights). Display activity began an average of nine minutes after sunset (standard deviation = 9.2, n = 37 nights) near the male's diurnal roosts in the trees of the Back Bay Fens/Victory Gardens. Both the NU and BCONS males began displaying and foraging high above the edge of the park, calling every two to three seconds and periodically diving. During this period, foraging attacks were observed between dives. After a period of time, ranging from several seconds to several minutes, the birds moved farther into the interior of their respective territories. Territorial behavior continued, periodically, throughout the night. Foraging also continued throughout the night (Roth 2000), but was not associated with display dives. During nocturnal periods foraging was only observed as directed fly-catching runs over artificial light sources (Roth 2000). During the ten mornings on which dawn behavior was observed, activity included roosting, foraging, aggressive territorial display, and chases. Activity ended before sunrise. At this time the male would execute a low, roof-level pass around several buildings, then fly to the Fens. There was strong correlation (correlation coefficient = 0.973) between the time of last activity and sunrise.

No communal feeding areas were found. Foraging was observed nearly exclusively within territorial boundaries. During the 107 nights of observation, nighthawks were observed foraging off territory on only six nights. On these nights, they foraged over the Back Bay Fens, about 100 to 200 meters from their territorial boundary. This occurred at dusk. The birds eventually returned to the NU territory. It is unlikely that the male left his territory undetected since males rarely flew without calling.

Territorial behavior was manifested in three ways - display dives, calls, and chases. Display dives were similar to those described by other researchers, with one exception. Males were observed to give the *peent* call at the same moment in the dive that the *booming* was generated by the primaries. This has not been reported by previous observers. Two types of territorial calls were observed. The most common was the *peent* call, given by both males and females. Males emitted this call approximately every two to three seconds while exhibiting territorial display and between foraging attacks. During agonistic interaction, the tempo of *peent* calls became more rapid, more than one call per second. The other call was a rapid *clucking* emitted by the NU male during some intraspecific chases. Chases varied in intensity and apparent purpose.

Chases were observed in four different contexts. Each type was observed on several occasions, with the exception of the interspecific chase. Chases were observed throughout the night, but were most common at dusk and dawn. The contexts were as follows:

Expulsion of nonresident male from a territory by resident male: All territorial conflicts observed were in the form of rapid tail-chasing. The resident male would chase the intruder from the territory in a fast, zigzag fashion while uttering rapid calls. Once they reached the border of the territory, the chase ended. These chases were always followed by vigorous display dives over the area where the conflict originated. The *booming* generated by these dives was noticeably louder than that produced during other such dives.

Resident male chases of resident female: Two types of male/female chases were observed. One type was a slow circular chase in which the male followed the female within two to three meters as they flew in a tight circular fashion. The male did not call during this type of chase. The second type was a short zigzag chase, similar to the male/male chase, but not as aggressive or as directed. The male did call during this chase; however, unlike the male/male chase, the tempo of the call was not faster than during nonchase periods. These chases usually ended near the center of the territory, not at the edge as in male/male chases.

Resident male chases of resident young: These chases were similar to the second type of male/female chase.

Interspecific chase: Only one observation of this type was made (Roth 1999). It occurred when the NU pair chased a Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*). This was the only response to an avian predator observed during this study. Other possible

avian predators (e.g., gulls, crows, herons) were ignored during this study. There was no observed interaction with other aerial insectivores (e.g., swifts, bats).

Discussion

Territory sizes determined in this study are within the range found by Armstrong (1965). He found urban territories to be an average 10.5 hectares (range = 4.14 to 22.80).

Territorial vocalizations reported here are the same as previously reported (Gross 1940). Previous papers have disagreed about whether or not the female of the species uttered the *peent* call (Gross 1940, Poulin et al. 1996). During this study *peenting* females were observed on more than one occasion. Lack of observation of this behavior in other studies is most likely due to the more secretive nature of the female and the difficulty of sexing birds in flight from ground level. The fact that both sexes give this call and that it was given during flights in which no territorial activity was observed brings into question the purpose of the call. Armstrong (1965), Wedgwood (1973), and Caccamise (1974) stated that this call is territorial in nature. Observations in this study, as well as those of Gross (1940) suggest that the tempo of the call may be very important to territoriality. Tempo of calls increased during male/male conflicts. Tempo did not increase during male/female chases or male/HY chases. *Peenting* during the territorial *boom* may also be territorial. The volume of the call was markedly louder after territorial conflict than during normal display times. The *clucking* call given by the male during some territorial conflict in this study was reported by Gross (1940) as *dick-a-dick-a-dick*. This call is apparently exclusive to territorial behavior. It was heard only during male/male chases.

Variation in chases was apparently associated with the object of the chase. The purpose of the male/male chase was clearly territorial defense. These chases were faster and apparently more intense and more directed than the others. The purpose of male/HY chase is unknown, but may be instructive. Adult males may simply be teaching the young males to chase. Unfortunately, it is unknown whether males chase HY males more than HY females. The purpose of the male/female chase and the reasons behind the two different types of male/female chases are also not known. The only interspecific chase observed in the present study was also the only observed instance of a female and male chasing together. The purpose of this chase was apparently defense of the nest from an aerial predator (Roth 1999).

What caused the BCONS male to abandon his territory is unknown. Wedgwood (1973) reported similar abandonment of territory in an urban area, but causal factors were not determined. However, it is apparent that this pair did not successfully breed.

As previously mentioned, Common Nighthawks exhibit flexibility in territorial behavior. Nice (1941) divided territoriality into six categories: A) use of territory for mating, nesting and feeding, B) mating, nesting, but not feeding, C) mating only, D) restricted to immediate nesting area, both colonial and solitary, E) winter territory, F) roosting territory. Males in this study exhibited type A, although both types A and B have been reported for Common Nighthawks.

The distinguishing factor between types A and B territoriality is whether foraging occurs on or off the territory. Therefore, variation of this characteristic within a species is apparently influenced by either food availability or the animal's ability to utilize food resources located within its territory. In the absence of artificial light, nighthawks may only forage at dawn and dusk due to the specialized chordeilid eye (Brigham 1988). Because of the narrow time period during which nighthawks are able to forage under natural conditions, a predictable source of abundant food is imperative (Brigham 1988). Thus, when sufficient food is not available on territory, nighthawks will leave their territories to use communal feeding areas (Poulin et al. 1996), resulting in the type B territoriality.

Reports of type A territoriality are exclusive to urban studies (Armstrong 1965, Gross 1940, Roth and Jones 2000, Wedgwood 1973), with the exception of Caccamise (1974) who reported type A territoriality in a natural habitat. In previous studies of this species in natural habitats (Brigham and Fenton 1991, Rust 1947, Sutherland 1963), males began each night with a period of exclusive territorial display before commuting to communal feeding areas where no agonistic behavior occurs. Urban studies (including this study) report no communal feeding, with males remaining within individual territories throughout the night. Caccamise (1974) reported that this species foraged on or near its territory in a natural habitat and made no mention of communal feeding areas.

It can be assumed that successful type A territories contain ample, exploitable food resources. In this study, the ability to exploit food resources was aided by the presence of artificial light (Roth 2000). Artificial light may have an effect on territorial behavior of Common Nighthawks. Males were observed asserting territorial boundaries at dawn and dusk in a manner similar to previous studies (Caccamise 1974, Gross 1940, Rust 1947). However, unlike those studies, foraging and territorial display occurred simultaneously, and both foraging and display continued throughout the night. This observation contradicts current literature which states that this species neither forages at night nor engages in nocturnal territorial behavior (Poulin et al. 1996). Artificial light may ensure a predictable food source that can be exploited throughout the night, thus removing temporal and energetic constraints on this species. The time available for territorial behavior and foraging is extended, and individuals do not have to leave their territories to fulfill nightly energy. This enables males to guard their territories continuously throughout the night, potentially resulting in a different territorial system for nighthawks in urban habitats.

References

Armstrong, J.T. 1965. Breeding range in the nighthawk and other birds; its evolutionary and ecological significance. *Ecology* 46: 619-629.

Bowles, J.H. 1921. Nesting habits of the nighthawk at Tacoma, Washington. *Auk* 38: 203-217.

Brigham, R.M. 1988. The influence of wing morphology, prey detection system and availability of prey on the foraging strategies of aerial insectivores. Ph.D. Dissertation, North York, Ontario: York University.

Brigham, R.M. 1989. Roost and nest sites of Common Nighthawks: are gravel roofs important? *Condor* 91: 722-724.

Brigham, R.M. and M.B. Fenton. 1991. Convergence in foraging strategies by two morphologically and phylogenetically distinct aerial insectivores. *Journal of Zoology*, London 223: 475-489.

Caccamise, D.F. 1974. Competitive relationships of the Common and Lesser nighthawks. *Condor* 76: 1-20.

Dexter, R.W. 1952. Banding and nesting studies of the Eastern Nighthawk. *Bird-Banding* 23: 109-114.

Dexter, R.W. 1956. Further banding and nesting studies of the Eastern Nighthawk. *Bird-Banding* 27: 9-16.

Dexter, R.W. 1961. Further studies on nesting of the Common Nighthawk. *Bird-Banding* 32: 79-85.

Dexter, R.W. 1977. Further notes on banding and nesting studies of the Common Nighthawk in northeastern Ohio. *Inland Bird Banding News* 49: 43-49.

Fowle, C.D. 1946. Notes on the development of the nighthawk. *Auk* 63: 159-162.

Gross, A.O. 1940. Eastern Nighthawk. In *Life histories of North American cuckoos, goatsuckers, hummingbirds, and their allies* (A.C. Bent, Ed.). *U.S. National Museum Bulletin 176*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.

Latham, R. 1946. Eastern Long Island records of the nighthawk. *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New York* No. 54-57: 50-51.

Miller, A.H. 1925. The boom-flight of the Pacific Nighthawk. *Condor* 27: 141-143.

Nice, M.M. 1941. The role of territory in bird life. *American Midland Naturalist* 26: 441-487.

Parks, G.H. 1946. Notes on the behavior of a nesting nighthawk. *Bird-Banding* 17: 55-60.

Poulin, R.G., S.D. Grindal and R.M. Brigham. 1996. Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*). *In The Birds of North America*, No. 213 (A. Poole and F. Gill, Eds.). Washington, D.C. The Academy of Natural Sciences and the American Ornithologists' Union.

Roth, A. 1999. Red-tailed Hawk chased off by Common Nighthawks. *Bird Observer* 27: 264-265.

Roth, A. 2000. Nocturnal Foraging by Common Nighthawks. *Bird Observer* 28: 324-325.

Roth, A. and G.S. Jones. 2000. Dynamics of territorial behavior by common nighthawks. *Northeastern Naturalist* 7: 178-180.

Rust, H. J. 1947. Migration and nesting of nighthawks in northern Idaho. *Condor* 49: 177-188.

Sutherland, C.A. 1963. Notes on the behavior of Common Nighthawks in Florida. *Living Bird* 2: 31-39.

Sutton, G. M. and H. H. Spencer. 1949. Observations at a nighthawk's nest. *Bird-Banding* 20: 141-149.

Tomkins, I.R. 1942. The "injury-feigning" behavior of the Florida Nighthawk. *Wilson Bulletin* 54: 43-49.

Walbeck, D. E. 1989. Observations of roof-nesting Killdeer and Common Nighthawks in Frostburg, Maryland. *Maryland Birdlife* 45: 3-9.

Wedgwood, J. A. 1973. Nighthawks in the city. *Blue Jay* 31: 65-128.

Weller, M. W. 1958. Observations of the incubation behavior of a Common Nighthawk. *Auk* 75: 48-59.

Aaron Roth *received his M.Sci. in Biology from Northeastern University in 2000. He is a Curatorial Assistant for the Bird and Mammal departments at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University. He is currently studying Whip-poor-wills on Cape Cod.* ***Gwilym (Gwil) Jones*** *is a Professor of Biology and the Director of the Center for Vertebrate Studies at Northeastern University, Boston. He received his M. Sci. in Vertebrate Ecology from Purdue University and Ph.D. in Vertebrate Ecology and Systematics from Indiana State University. He served as a mammalogist with the U.S. Navy in Taiwan, Vietnam, and Indonesia, and worked in the Division of Mammals at the Smithsonian Institution. More recently, he spent sixteen years as chair of the Massachusetts Nongame Advisory Committee and fourteen years as the nongame biologist on the Massachusetts Fisheries and Wildlife Board.* *The authors thank Thomas French, Ernest Ruber, and Mark Brigham for their help in developing this project. They also thank George Argyros, John Kelly, and Stephen Schneider for their assistance in the field. This work was funded with a grant from the Charles Blake Fund of the Nuttall Ornithological Club.*

News from MassWildlife

Sandy Point Watchable Wildlife — The Department of Environmental Management (DEM) has added a boardwalk and two wildlife viewing platforms at Sandy Point State Reservation, at the southern tip of Plum Island in the town of Ipswich. Sandy Point and the adjoining Parker River National Wildlife Refuge are among the 67 prime wildlife viewing sites identified in the Massachusetts Wildlife Viewing Guide, available at MassWildlife offices and major bookstores across the state. Both DEM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, managers of the Parker River Refuge, are partners in Massachusetts' Watchable Wildlife Program. The boardwalk and platforms afford visitors access to the Bar Head drumlin and the high-water edge of the tidal zone for wildlife watching with minimal impact to the habitat. A recent trip by DEM's Jack Lash revealed 44 species of birds including northern shrike, sharp-shinned hawk, dunlin, sanderling and a variety of sea ducks present on the Reservation along with a host of bellowing harbor seals. The lower platform and boardwalk are universally accessible. Sandy Point also features interpretive programs from Mother's Day through Labor Day, composting toilet facilities, and collaborative projects with the Parker River staff.

An Educational Tribute to a Local Son — A. C. Bent

David M. Larson

All photographs by the author

On the grounds of the Bristol County Agricultural High School in Dighton, Massachusetts, there is a nondescript wood frame building with a very large wooden door at one end, suggesting a barn. The two handicap ramps might suggest otherwise. Open the front door, and the interior of the building is anything but nondescript. This nineteenth century barn is, in fact, the Bristol County Natural History Center (BCNHC), and it has a peculiar and significant place in ornithological history.

Much of the display space on the ground floor of the BCNHC is given over to dioramas with bird and mammal mounts, and many of the bird specimens were provided from the collection of Arthur Cleveland Bent, a name of considerable luster in North American ornithology.

Arthur Cleveland Bent (1866-1954) was born in Taunton, Massachusetts, and lived there all of his life. He attended Harvard College and, while involved with natural history and birds from an early age, spent a first career working in the cotton mill business and in public utilities. Later in life he became more active in ornithology. According to W. Taber (1955. In Memorium: Arthur Cleveland Bent. *The Auk* 72: 332-339), Bent wrote:

> "In considering the amount of ornithological work I have done, allowance must be made for the fact that I was deeply engaged in various business enterprises until I was 48 years old, and only partially retired then. I did not wholly retire from business until I was over 60. Most of my ornithological exploration was done between the ages of 35 and 60. I have not travelled far from home since I was 65."

In 1910 Bent started work on his most lasting ornithological contribution, the monumental book series, *Life Histories of North American Birds*. This Smithsonian Institution series was actually begun by C. E. Bendire, who compiled volumes 1 and 2 (published 1892 and 1895). Work on the series was to carry Bent through the rest of his life, put him in contact with many of the luminaries of North American ornithology, and bring him abundant recognition from his peers. He was president of the American Ornithologists' Union (1935-1937), and a member of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, the Wilson Ornithological Club, the Cooper Ornithological Club, and many other organizations. He was honored with the William Brewster Award from the AOU and the Daniel Giraud Elliot Medal from the National Academy of Science.

Each of the *Life Histories* follows the same format: descriptions of plumage, behavior, voice, food, range, eggs, nest, young, and migration. Photographs accompany many of the accounts. Part of the charm of these histories lies in the inclusion of anecdotes and observations from many correspondents throughout North America.

During his many years of active ornithological study and travels throughout North America, Bent amassed large collections of bird skins (now at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard), eggs (30,000, now at the Smithsonian), and mounts. Some of Bent's mounted birds are displayed at the BCNHC.

How did a high school become the beneficiary of this collection? Apparently, the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard was not interested in the mounts, so Bent donated the material to the school. After an unfortunate fire that destroyed part of the collection, the school formed the BCNHC, and renovations and proper care ensued. Under the tutelage of William Lapoint (Curator of the BCNHC, Head of the Landscape Department, and a Teacher of Natural Resources) and Brian Bastarache (Assistant Curator of the BCNHC and a Teacher of Natural Resources), students in the Natural Resources program at the Bristol County Agricultural High School have undertaken much of the restoration and curatorial work; these students work and study in the Natural History Center. The current state of the collection, and of the BCNHC, is a tribute to all involved.

In a paean to Bent, one room houses a recreation of part of his library, with a desk, cabinets of mounted birds, and his typewriter, on which he typed over five million words while writing the *Life Histories*.

As noted, the ground floor is given over largely to mounted specimens. The basement consists of various aquaria (with fresh and salt water exhibits) and displays containing mounts of fish and other aquatic species. In addition, there

is a display of a coastal shack/decoy carver's workshop, and a small lecture space. An extensive egg collection from Walter B. Savary of Wareham is also housed on campus, although it is currently inaccessible to the public since eggs fade with exposure to light.

The BCNHC has a part time Naturalist/Interpreter, Nancy Durfee, who staffs the center and runs educational programs. Currently, the center is open to the public on Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. or by appointment; call 508-669-6744. There is no admission fee. Remember that this museum is on the grounds of a high school and smoking and alcohol are prohibited on the property.

When you visit, be sure to bird the area. The Taunton River (still tidal at this point) abuts the campus of the Bristol County Agricultural High School and in the winter often supports a good variety of ducks. Bald Eagles can be found there, along with various wintering passerines. Please note that you must make prior arrangements to bird the school grounds (call Nancy Durfee at the BCNHC, Monday through Wednesday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.). According to the count compiler, Russ Titus, the Taunton/Middleboro Christmas Bird Count has tallied "White-eyed Vireo, Greater White-fronted Goose, Lark Sparrow, Snow Goose, Marsh Wren, all three accipters on one CBC morning, Wood Duck, Common Snipe, Greater Yellowlegs, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Snow Bunting on the high school campus. At dusk Rusty Blackbirds usually come in by the bridge. The field edges are good for Savannah Sparrow in winter." While the author has little information on bird populations in this area in other seasons (although Bent probably would have known), the habitat is intriguing and a little more coverage could turn up some surprises.

David M. Larson *is the Production Editor of* Bird Observer, *the Wired Birder (which will return in the next issue), and a frustrated bird counter whose Taunton/Middleboro CBC area is across the Taunton River from the Bristol County Agricultural High School.*

As the Wired Birder, he would like to point out that the text of A.C. Bent's Life Histories of North American Birds *is available online at <http://www.birdzilla.com/>; follow the links to the Wild Bird Omnibus. The pages were processed using optical character recognition software but not copy-edited, so there are some unintelligible words.*

Report Of A Large Movement Of Alcids During The Truro Christmas Count, December 28, 2000

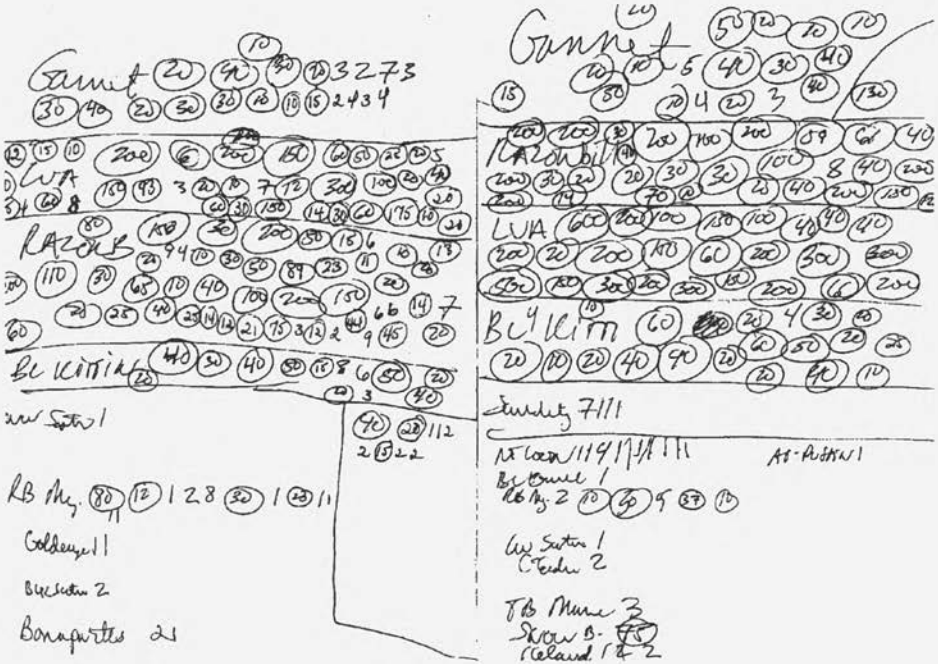
Mark Lynch

On the morning of Thursday, December 28, while counting birds in the North Truro, oceanside sector of the Truro Christmas Count, Sheila Carroll and I arrived at Head of the Meadow Beach upper parking area just before 7 a.m. The weather was clear, sunny, and very cold and windy. We were both sick as dogs with newly blossoming colds, and were not, on the morning of Thursday, December 28, while counting birds in the North, exactly looking forward to spending a long time outside in the bitter cold. Immediately we witnessed small groups of alcids flying close to shore (you could see they were alcids with the unaided eye). On closer inspection, most of these proved to be Razorbills (*Alca torda*), a few Dovekies (*Alle alle*), and a very small number of murres. But the greatest number were simply ticked as LUAs (Large Unidentified Alcids), flying more than halfway out to the horizon. The Razorbills were easily picked out because of head pattern and jizz of body and head. The wind, although light to moderate, was from the north. The direction of flight was consistent, always right to left, or southeast to northwest, along the shore. Tides that day for Nauset Harbor were: High: 1:14 a.m.; Low: 7:30 a.m.; High: 1:19 p.m.

After ticking and carefully counting a few hundred alcids and also a good number of Northern Gannets (*Morus bassanus*) and Black-legged Kittiwakes (*Rissa tridactyla*) which were also on the same course, we had to continue counting birds in our sector elsewhere. At the time, there seemed to be a lull in the activity, and there was not much happening, so after counting birds at Head of the Meadow for about forty minutes, we left. This is one of the disadvantages of covering a large area for a Christmas Count: you are always under the gun to move on and count in the remaining places in your sector. However, in the back of both our minds was the plan to go back and check the area again, just to be sure no other alcids were passing by.

We returned to Head of the Meadow to check on the action close to 9:00 a.m., and as we were driving across the parking area to the ocean overlook we could see large skeins of alcids whipping by. Quickly we pulled up, got scopes out, and started to count. There was quite a bit of confusion because so much was going on, but finally we settled into a system. First, I was going to count, while Sheila sat in the car and wrote down the numbers I called out. Of course, Sheila wanted to see some of this spectacle too, so it was soon agreed that she would spot incoming flocks, look for alcids that were not Razorbills, and I would concentrate on counting close Razorbill flocks and distant LUA flocks. The car door was kept open, and the notebook laid open inside. I would turn and write down numbers every minute or so. On the one hand, this was a spectacular event to witness; on the other, I was in total panic trying to count these birds as they whipped past us.

Flocks of birds were flying from right to left, ranging from relatively close to shore where they were easy to identify, to all the way out to where the horizon



Pages from the author's notebook

shimmer prevented absolutely perfect views. These distant birds were automatically counted as LUAs, even if I had good enough views that under normal circumstances I would have called them Razorbills. Most attention was paid to the closer flocks as we poured over them to look for species other than Razorbills. But besides an Atlantic Puffin, three Common Murres, a small number of Thick-billed Murres, and some guillemots, they were *all* Razorbills. In fact, I am convinced that most of the alcids passing were Razorbills, but would much rather be cautious. Birds were generally in small groups of 10-20 on up to 30-50. Sometimes singles would be seen. The action was not consistent. At times, a spate of flocks would pass overlapping in our view to the horizon, and then there would be a small pause until the next group of flocks passed. A few flocks landed right in front of us and could be seen feeding. Several flocks landed among feeding Red-breasted Mergansers, but these soon continued on their way.

Believe it or not, the large numbers of Razorbills we recorded have to represent a low count. To begin with, birds were already moving when we arrived, so we missed many birds while we were elsewhere. Second, often we would miss groups in the confusion of trading places and getting warm in the car (it was *very* cold out). In addition, we concentrated on the close groups, and the numbers of LUAs farther out represented a percentage of the actual birds passing. Sometimes too, we would be distracted by other birds like passing waterfowl, or by counting the large number of kittiwakes and gannets, or by identifying white-winged gulls that were in front of us.

At one point a possible Thayer's Gull put a real crimp in counting as I turned my scope on it. (It turned out that it was most likely just an Iceland Gull.) All the while, groups of alcids were whipping by. I did not try to estimate overall what we were missing, but counted (by tens) only birds as we saw them passing, usually pausing to write down when I got to some multiple of 100. In the end, we concentrated on counting birds in the narrow space between eleven and one o'clock on the horizon when movements were particularly heavy.

By 10:30 a.m., action was slowing down. Although small groups still passed, the pauses in between the action lengthened. The number of kittiwakes and gannets also decreased. We were relieved for a short time by Lisa and Simon Hennin while we went to Highland Light to see how the flocks looked passing there. This slightly higher overlook is just south of Head of the Meadow. Here flocks passed close by too, but seemed to be coming in more from the east, i.e., out at sea and to our right.

By 11:30 a.m. the show for all the species was essentially over. From 1:45-2:45 in the afternoon, we all reconvened on the spot and saw no alcids at all and only a handful of kittiwakes and gannets, all of which were now flying from left to right.

Obviously I had some questions:

What were these birds doing? Flying to or from a feeding area? Georges Bank, a feeding area for Razorbills, is far out from this area, but in the general direction from which these birds were feeding. Another point to consider was that a major nor'easter was due in two days and a storm system was forming far to our south off the Carolinas. Were these birds' movements anticipating the oncoming storm?

Where were these birds going? Cape Cod Bay? Stellwagen Bank? Is there some unknown spot that holds unnoticed dense flocks of Razorbills?

How many Razorbills actually do winter off our shore?

Last, and more to the point, what percentage did our count represent of the actual number of Razorbills wintering in the western North Atlantic? I tried to determine this when we got home. In *Birds of Massachusetts*, Petersen and Veit describe the status of Razorbills in our waters as "Variously uncommon to abundant migrant and winter resident offshore. Occasionally abundant within sight of land after storms" (p. 250). Maximum numbers sighted included "4,700+ Provincetown, 22 January 1984 (Nikula); 4,363 Cape Cod CBC, 20 December 1979 (Pease)," and other records are in the high hundreds. What percentage of the total world's population are these high Massachusetts counts?

In *Auks: An Ornithologist's Guide*, Ron Freethy writes: "Like all the auks, Razorbills are difficult to census, but it is not a common species and the world population will probably not exceed 200,000 and about 75% of these are concentrated around Great Britain and Ireland" (p. 61). According to these statistics, somewhat in the vicinity of 50,000 Razorbills would then winter in the western North Atlantic. Anthony Gaston and Ian Jones in *The Auks* currently estimate the world population of Razorbills at "500,000-700,000 pairs (of which half could breed at Latrabjarg)"

(p. 129). (Latrabjarg is a noted breeding colony in northwest Iceland.) Indeed, "the majority of the world's population breeds in Iceland" (p. 127). Jones and Gaston (1998) indicate that those Razorbills that breed in Labrador and the Gulf of Saint Lawrence winter from Nova Scotia south to New England. These are the birds that we see in our waters.

In the *Handbook of the Birds of the World, Volume 3,* del Hoyo et al. (1996) estimated that there are 700,000 pairs of Razorbills worldwide, with a low estimate of 300,000 pairs and a high estimate of 1,200,000 pairs, with roughly 70 percent in Iceland, and 3 percent in the western Atlantic (p. 711). Gaston and Jones (1998) cite the research of Nettleship in estimating that 70 percent of the world's population of Razorbills breed in Iceland, 20 percent in the British Isles mainly in Scotland and Ireland, 4 percent in Norway and Finland, and 2 percent in eastern Canada (p. 129). They are most common as breeders in Atlantic Canada between 54 degrees and 58 degrees north, but do breed south to Matinicus Rock in Maine (Powers 1983). It is these Canadian birds that we would most likely see in our waters. Taking 3 percent of the worldwide population estimate of 1,400,000 individuals, we can attempt to estimate the western Atlantic population. This gives a *very* ballpark figure of about 42,000 Razorbills that perhaps could inhabit the western North Atlantic and be found in Massachusetts waters. Of course, it must be taken into account that some of that total has to inhabit Canadian waters and waters off the coast of Maine as well.

Another estimate by Powers (1983) gives a slightly different figure. Based on offshore studies, he estimates 26,000 Razorbills in winter in New England waters with another 16,000 unidentified alcids counted during his studies. "Thus, the total population of Razorbills in Atlantic Canada may be in the order 60,000 to 65,000, and my estimate for shelf waters off the New England coast accounts for only 40 to 45 percent of this" (p. 137). He does ask the question as to where the rest of the Razorbills winter, noting that perhaps numbers winter in the Bay of Fundy or the Grand Banks. However, a study cited by Powers found no evidence of any Razorbills on the Grand Banks.

Our counted totals for Razorbills for that day were 6330, and undoubtedly I missed more by leaving the site prematurely. If you count only *half* of the LUAs that were tallied as Razorbills, then you come up with a total of 10,578 Razorbills seen that morning as a low number. I firmly believe the vast majority of the LUAs were in fact Razorbills. We probably saw somewhere in the vicinity of about 25 percent of the estimated North Atlantic population of Razorbills that morning! If you calculate that most of the LUAs were Razorbills, then that percentage increases to close to 34 percent. If you use Powers' estimated numbers of Razorbills quoted above, then we witnessed from 25-40 percent of the estimated population of wintering Razorbills thought to be found in New England waters (again, only counting half of our LUAs as Razorbills).

That number seems pretty extraordinary to me, and some caveats need to be applied. Every source cited emphasized the difficulty in estimating Razorbill population size. So at best, numbers quoted were very rough approximations. Also, at

the time of the year we saw these birds, populations were augmented greatly by young born that year, although Powers (1983) estimates that 60 percent of the wintering population are breeders (p. 137). Still, we witnessed a significant percentage of the estimated western Atlantic population that morning, and it may be best to leave it at that. Is that great a percentage of the western Atlantic population wintering just in Massachusetts waters? Are the wintering populations of Razorbills in our waters perhaps augmented by Razorbills from populations farther northeast, like Iceland? These questions can only be answered by further extensive and difficult studies, although most authors indicate that Massachusetts Razorbills are predominately from the eastern Canadian populations. Studies done by Rolwett (1980) indicate that extremely few Razorbills get as far south as Chesapeake Bay. In the *Revised Atlas of Eastern Canadian Seabirds*, Brown's shipboard studies indicate that most of the Canadian population of Razorbills winters just south of Canada probably "in the Gulf of Maine and on Georges Bank" (p. 94). So, perhaps the bulk of the western Atlantic Canadian population of Razorbills do winter in Massachusetts waters.

My next question was "what were they doing?"

Veit and Petersen (1993) state that Razorbills feed in shallower water than other large alcids and are abundant on Nantucket Shoals and Georges Bank (p. 200). Their food is indicated to be Atlantic cod, sand eels, capelin with small amounts of crustaceans, and polychaetes (del Hoyo et al. 1996). Gaston and Jones (1998) write that the Razorbill's prey "consists mainly of mid-water schooling fishes: capelin, sandlance (*Ammodytes* spp.), herrings (*Clupea haregus*), sprats (*Sprattus sprattus*), juvenile cod" (p. 130). Furthermore, "concentrations of alcids are almost always found in association with major areas of upwelling" (del Hoyo et al. 1996, p. 686). Gaston and Jones (1998) concur when they indicate that Razorbills feed closer to shore than murres and that they also make use of tidally induced upwellings in "coastal areas" (p.129). It therefore seems likely that one explanation for this particular movement of Razorbills is that it was related to prey and in some way perhaps connected to a tidal situation that was concentrating the prey. Either they were flying from some favored feeding area like Georges Bank or flying to some choice feeding spot near Stellwagen Bank or Cape Cod Bay. Knowledge about the location and concentration of Razorbill food items off our coast at that time, particularly sandlance, would probably do a lot to explain why such unusual numbers were seen in such a short amount of time in this particular place. Gaston and Jones also note that Razorbills have been seen feeding in association with several other bird species including Black-legged Kittiwakes (p. 129), and we had an extraordinary number of Kittiwakes at the same time (see totals below). Like Common Eiders, the concentration of such a significant percentage of the population of Razorbills in a relatively small area, if even only temporarily, makes them vulnerable to environmental disasters like severe storms and oil spills.

Analysis aside, this was an amazing spectacle to witness, beautiful and mysterious. Avian events like this one bring home how little we understand of many species of bird populations and movements, even when they are considered locally common, and how much research needs to be done.

References

Brown, R.G.B. 1986. *Revised Atlas of Eastern Canadian Seabirds*. Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Wildlife Service.

del Hoyo, J., A. Elliott, and J. Sargatal, eds. 1996. *Handbook of the Birds of the World, Vol. 3* (Hoatzin to Auks). Barcelona, Spain: Lynx Edicions.

Freethy, R. 1987. *Auks: An Ornithologist's Guide*. New York: Facts on File.

Gaston, A.J. and I.L. Jones. 1998. *The Auks*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Powers, K.D. 1983. *Pelagic Distributions of Marine Birds Off Northeastern United States*. 1983. NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-F/NEC-27. Woods Hole, MA: NOAA.

Rowlett, R.A. 1980. *Observations of Marine Birds and Mammals in the Northern Chesapeake Bight*. Washington, DC: National Fish and Wildlife Laboratory, National Museum of Natural History.

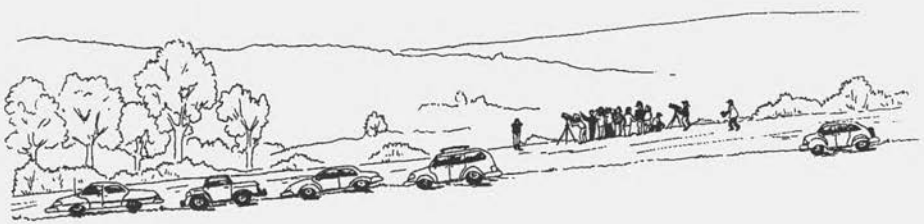
Veit, R.R. and W.R. Petersen. 1993. *Birds of Massachusetts*. Lincoln, MA: Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Totals

Northern Gannet (only a few first winter birds)	981
Unidentified jaeger species	1
Black-legged Kittiwake	1577
Black Guillemot	3
Dovekie	24
Thick-Billed Murre	9
Common Murre	3
Razorbill	6330
Large unidentified alcid species	8496
Atlantic Puffin	1

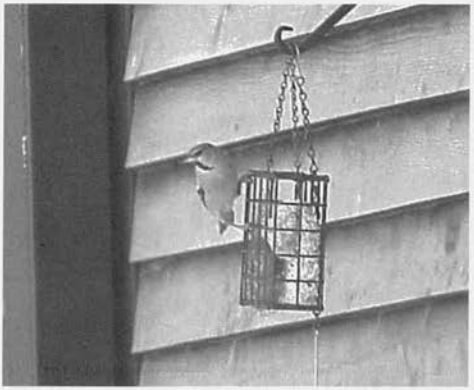
Mark Lynch *is an instructor, trip leader, and ecological monitor for the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Broad Meadow Brook Sanctuary. He is also a teacher and docent at the Worcester Art Museum, hosts* Inquiry *on WICN radio, and is Book Review Editor for* Bird Observer.

He wishes to thank Wayne Petersen for reading this paper and suggesting further readings.



HOT BIRDS

Although Brant (*Branta bernicla*) are a common sight along the coast of Massachusetts in the winter, nearly all are of the pale-bellied population (right center). This **Black Brant** (second from the left), which normally winters on the Pacific coast, was found and photographed by Jeremiah Trimble on November 4, 2000, at the Nelson's Street Landing in Plymouth, MA.



An immature male **Bullock's Oriole** was photographed at this feeder in South Dartmouth, MA, on January 23, 2001, by David Larson.

In the winter of 1999/2000, three Sandhill Cranes were resident in southeastern Massachusetts. In the winter of 2000/2001, there was a single adult **Sandhill Crane**, captured here by David Larson as a digital image through his spotting scope. This photograph was taken on February 18, 2001, from the end of Edgewater Rd. in Fairhaven, MA.

Editor's note: *Please consider submitting your photographs of rare birds, unseasonable birds, or just interesting birds for publication in HOT BIRDS. We encourage you to get in touch with David Larson (<davlars@bu.edu> or 1921 Central Street, Stoughton, MA 02072) if you have a photograph for us to consider. We would be delighted to have more diversity in photocredits for this feature.*

FIELD NOTES

Merlins and Bats

Richard W. Hildreth

In Autumn, Merlins are familiar southward migrating avian predators, harrying and preying on the small shorebirds, creating terror among the migrating Tree Swallows, and plucking monarch butterflies and big darners from the air. My most memorable adventures with Merlins have been witnessing their attacks on large bats.

The first of these observations was on Saturday, September 12, 1992, in New Jersey. My natural history journal for that day tells the story:

> 0800-1236, I explore the Tuckertown Marsh area. The two bridges over the tidal creeks farthest out have been totally rebuilt, but are not yet open to vehicular traffic. I have to hike the 1.8 miles to the end of the road. To have the road closed is a great benefit for wildlife viewing. The road was built across a vast stretch of salt marsh to service a Coast Guard Station (now the Rutgers University Field Station). Along the roadside is a narrow strip of shrubs and a few small trees (groundsel bush, *Baccharis halimifolia*, poison ivy, cherry sp., bayberry, etc.). During Fall migration, with the right weather conditions, many small land birds can be found sheltering in these roadside thickets. On this day I find the following birds in the thickets: 5 Red-eyed Vireos, 20 American Redstarts, 2 Palm Warblers, 2 Common Yellowthroats, 2 Black-and-white Warblers, 1 Yellow Warbler, 1 Black-throated Blue Warbler, 1 Magnolia Warbler, 4 Northern Orioles, 5 Northern Flickers, 1 Ruby-throated Hummingbird (hovering over a bright red poison ivy leaf on the road), 7 Cedar Waxwings, 14 Song Sparrows, 1 Carolina Wren, 1 Gray Catbird, and 1 Mourning Dove. Overhead are about 1245 Tree Swallows and 2 Merlins hunting them.
>
> Hanging on a low roadside shrub I find a red bat, *Lasiurus borealis*. I take two photographs, but before I can get any more, my efforts disturb the bat, and it flies off across the marsh toward the southwest. Soon I spot another red bat high up, flapping along in a leisurely manner, also flying toward the southwest. A Merlin spots the slow-moving bat and dives on it from above. I expect to see the bat struck by the Merlin. Just before impact, the bat makes a quick diversionary side movement, and the Merlin streaks by with a clean miss (see Figure). The Merlin comes back for another try with the same result. After the second miss, the Merlin gives up and the bat continues flapping steadily toward the southwest. Later in the day I find another red bat (dead on the highway). It appears that a red bat migration is underway.

My second adventure involving a Merlin attacking a large bat occurred in Maine, in 1999. Once again, I turn to my natural history journal for an account of the incident:

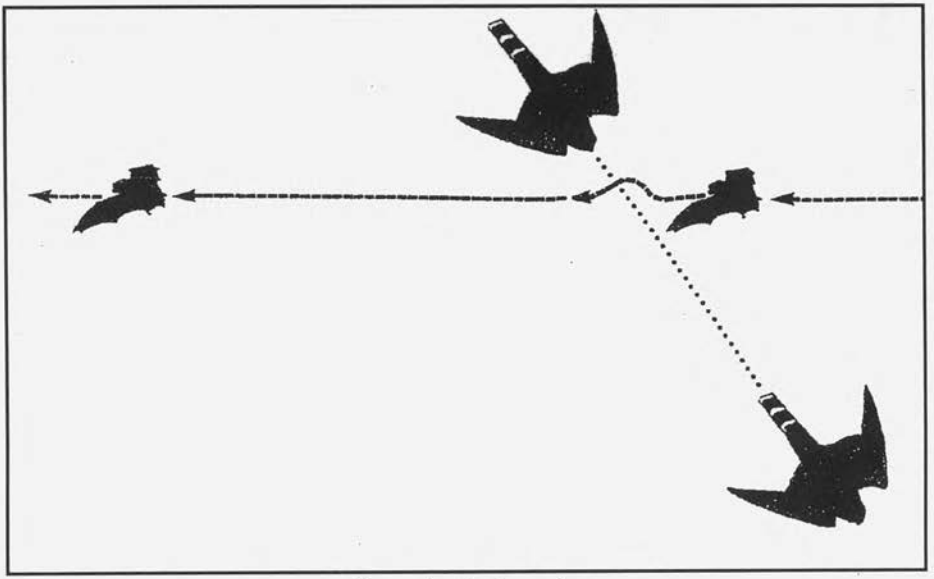


Illustration by the author

In the late afternoon (around 1630 hours) on Friday, August 20 1999, I am walking/wading along the perimeter of a small boggy pond just north of Route 1 in Steuben, Maine, returning with my classmates from a dragonfly hunting foray. We are attending a seminar on "Identification of Adult Dragonflies" at the nearby Humboldt Field Research Institute; we have been out observing dragonflies and busy collecting specimens for later study.

I see a large bat flying about 1-2 feet above the water surface, busy hunting small flying insects. The flight is slow and laborious-looking. The bat slowly circles around the pond. It is only about 100-200 feet away, and the light is excellent for viewing. I am carrying my Swift 10X binoculars, which I use to view insects close up. These binoculars have a very narrow field of view and are less useful for distant objects; it is hard to quickly locate things with the narrow field. I frantically try to get the flying bat in the field of view of the binoculars. I finally get on it; it is a large, more or less uniformly light brown bat with distinctly black ears. I now have the flying bat in clear focus and am tracking it as it flies along. Suddenly, I have a Merlin in my field of view and see it seize the bat (from above). I track the Merlin as it carries the bat away through the trees. The big bat is a sizable load for the Merlin.

There are only four species of medium-sized to large bats in New England: silver-haired bat, big brown bat, red bat, and hoary bat. The unfortunate bat involved in this brief, dramatic incident, is clearly not a red bat or a hoary bat: these two species are very colorful and distinctly marked. I am familiar with the silver-haired bat; the Merlin's prey didn't seem to be that species. The large size, more or less uniform brown color, and the conspicuous black ears suggest to me that it is the big brown bat, *Eptesicus fuscus*."

It is interesting to speculate about these two Merlin–bat encounters. The red bat, which looked like such an easy target, effortlessly and repeatedly eluded capture, while the big brown bat was so quickly and easily captured. The red bat is a highly migratory species, moving southward in the fall, often flying in daylight (I have also seen them flying in daylight in the spring, presumably during the northward migration in May). Since Merlins and red bats migrate south at about the same time, the red bat has to deal with the threat of predation by Merlins on a regular seasonal basis. The big brown bat is a more sedentary species which locally hibernates in winter. Normally, it is only flying at night and thus encounters Merlins on an infrequent basis. The Merlin, which had been harrying small shorebirds all afternoon around the pond, flew from ambush in the trees on the unsuspecting big brown bat.

Brighton Crow Roost

Andrew Joslin

During the fall and winter months crows throughout North America form communal evening roosts. In eastern Massachusetts there are well-known roosts in Framingham, Woburn, and Lawrence. In the immediate Boston area there is also a substantial crow roost. This winter I decided to see if I could locate it. For many years I've been aware of winter crow movements in my Jamaica Plain neighborhood. Before dawn loose flocks of crows move quickly over the rooftops. They arrive from the northwest and pass through to the south and east. By the time the sun is up the morning migration is over and only a dozen or so crows spend the day in the general vicinity. Around 3:00 p.m. small groups of crows reappear flying in the opposite direction. As the sun drops to the horizon a steady stream of crows flows to the northwest, heading to their evening roost.

In late December, Brooke Stevens and Marj Rines posted accounts to Massbird describing large numbers of crows flying at sunset toward Watertown from Cambridge and Arlington. I was intrigued, if "my" crows were headed northwest and theirs southwest perhaps they were going to the same place. On December 24, I finished up some holiday shopping at the Watertown Arsenal Mall at 3:30 p.m. As I walked out of the mall, hundreds of crows were moving overhead in a southwesterly direction. I hopped in my car and set off in pursuit. Twenty minutes and a few zigzags later I was parked on Woodchester Drive in Newton near the Brighton line. In an ordinarily quiet suburban neighborhood 1500 crows perched in trees, on the ground, and milled noisily overhead. In the adjacent Newton Commonwealth Golf Course, sixty or so crows drank from a small brook and another twenty-five stripped fruit from a crab apple tree. The majority of birds were *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, the familiar American Crow. Among them could be heard the descending *eh-uh* call of the Fish Crow, *Corvus ossifragus*. I interviewed a passing dog walker on the spot, "Do the crows come here every night?" "No," he replied, "I haven't seen this many before, it's kind of weird isn't it?" It was strange but not because the neighborhood looked like a Hitchcock movie set. I thought I'd found THE roost location for Boston area crows, but the dog walker's comments indicated that either he was oblivious to

thousands of large black birds on a nightly basis or, more likely, the roost location was constantly changing.

Photographs by the author

In the following weeks I returned to the area several times and found that the roost was indeed on the move. The concentrated center of the roost could be found anywhere within a four-square-mile area. To make things interesting, on some nights the entire roost of roughly 5000 crows could be found in a six-block area. On another night, the roost was split in two with roughly 2000 crows occupying the grounds of the Discalced Monks residence on Foster Street in Brighton. The other 3000 darkened the trees of Fisher Hill in Brookline. On another evening I was surprised to find the roost more fragmented with a large contingent in the woods north of Chestnut Hill Mall. A second group was invading a residential neighborhood around Hobart Road in Newton and a third smaller contingent was gathering at St. John's Seminary in Brighton.

The fluctuations of location and the regular splitting and reuniting of the roosts raised some interesting questions. How is the roost location determined, or is it just an accident of restless crows finally settling down as dark closes in? Do the split roosts represent tribal factions? On several occasions, I observed incoming crows overfly the nearest roost and continue on to a farther group. Could it be that West Roxbury corvids prefer the company of their Cambridge cousins while Watertown crows enjoy an evening with their Mattapan relatives? In one roost, judging by vocalization, there seemed to be a concentration of juveniles. Were juvenile crows roosting together or were adults mimicking juveniles to lower hostility in a crowded situation? Each evening's observations raised more questions than were answered.

In January, I organized a chase with some interested crow aficionados. In preparation, my wife Meg and I did some scouting a few days before the chase date to get a sense of where the crows had been roosting lately. We started in Evergreen Cemetery which is located on a rise behind Chestnut Hill Reservoir in Brighton. Some afternoons as many as 1500 crows have gathered there. We were not disappointed; crows filled the oak trees and carpeted the snowy ground. A pair of Red-tailed Hawks perched in a large white pine in the back of the cemetery. As one flew overhead, the entire roost lifted off and mobbed the hawk before settling back down. Twenty minutes later we heard the yip-yapping of a lap dog. The crows started up a din of *cawing* but didn't fly. The barking continued accompanied by *cawing*, and a male red fox trotted lightly over a rise. The fox methodically zotted a gravestone, barked a few more times, and continued on his way.

On January 7, Meg and I rendezvoused with our chase team and proceeded to Evergreen Cemetery. We arrived at 3:00 p.m.; the air was a little crispy with a blue sky overhead, not a crow in sight. We did some light birding to get warmed up and examined fox tracks in fresh snow. Fifteen minutes later, two or three crows passed

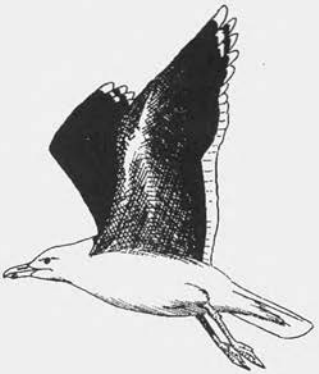
overhead going toward Brookline. Within half an hour a steady movement of crows was pointing the way to the roost. We drove down across Cleveland Circle and headed to Fisher Hill, Brookline. At the top of the hill is a small rectangular reservoir; from there we had a clear view to the southwest. There were already a thousand or so crows in trees and on the ground. Immediately small groups of 25-30 crows began arriving from the southwest. Each time a group arrived there would be a round of *cawing* as they mixed into the roost. We counted 1500 and headed east into a valley and then up to a ridge along Tappan Street.

Away from Fisher Hill crows were scattered throughout the neighborhood. Going up Tappan Street we encountered another concentration. At the end of the ridge there was a view to the south. In one rare moment we viewed three layers of late afternoon migration. A close vertical flock of fifty robins headed east at eye level, perhaps to a Fenway roost. High above, gulls moved sedately in flat V's towards the harbor, and below us crows crept up the hill from the south. The ridge provided other delights. We studied the size differences between American and Fish crows and listened as a crow emitted a nasal toy bugle reveille. The bugle call was repeated several times, maybe a signal to move on. Adding another 1200 to our count, we proceeded north to Beacon Street then headed west back to Cleveland Circle. Overhead the sky was filled for three blocks with crows coming in from the north. After a quick diversion to Brighton to locate possible satellite roosts, we returned to Fisher Hill. The sun had set; as we drove slowly up Fisher Road we could see the numbers had increased tremendously over the last hour and a half. The entire roost lifted off in an impressive flight display. At least 2000 crows filled the sky at treetop level; they turned to the west and we followed under them for a block. The flock abruptly wheeled back and reperched, apparently a minor roost adjustment. The day was done; we tallied our numbers and came up with an estimated 4000 crows.

Winter can be slow for land birds. If you find yourself with time on your hands in the afternoon, take note of which way the crows are flying. If you decide to follow them don't worry if you lose them. Stop and wait a few minutes; others will come along shortly and point the way to the roost. One technique is to set a course by general flight direction and find the best route without focusing on individual birds. If you see strong numbers of crows going at right angles to your path, you know that you are passing the roost. If you do this by car it is safer to have someone ride shotgun and keep track of the birds while you watch the road. It can be tricky; crows have no compunction about flying up one-way streets. Lately I've become convinced that special teams of decoy crows are sent out from the main roost to befuddle crow chasers. Finding a roost is well worth the effort. At the very least you'll learn a lot about local geography; at best you'll witness an amazing spectacle.

Gull Predation of an Adult Red-breasted Merganser

Richard Graefe



On January 14, 2001, I glanced out my kitchen window overlooking Narragansett Bay, and saw a Great Black-backed Gull close to shore, holding a struggling Red-breasted Merganser by its back. I immediately grabbed my binoculars and set out for the beach to watch this predatory drama. As I approached, the gull released the merganser and flew farther from the shore, but to my surprise the merganser did not fly. Instead it swam briskly away from me. At a more comfortable distance, the gull then flew back to resume the attack. I do not understand the reasons for the merganser's ineffective defensive behavior. At no point did it try to escape by taking to the air. Six or seven times, it was able to break free. Each time, it immediately dove below the surface. Sometimes the gull tracked its underwater path and was waiting right where it resurfaced. At other times, however, the merganser evaded the gull and surfaced quite a distance away, yet still made no attempt to fly. Within fifteen minutes, the gull had killed the merganser.

The merganser seemed healthy and uninjured at the start of my observation. It was, in fact, quite feisty. Several times it successfully held the gull at bay with jabs of its own pointed beak, causing the gull to hesitate and briefly back off.

Why did the merganser not attempt to fly away? Did it have a preexisting injury that rendered it flightless? Or would the gull have been able to outmaneuver it in flight even more effectively than in the water? In any species, the least successful escape strategies tend to be extinguished by evolutionary selection. Yet the relative ease and quickness of the gull's success makes me wonder whether this attack was atypical. If healthy adult Red-breasted Mergansers are such easy prey, I would expect their population to be decimated by the many Great Black-backed Gulls on their wintering grounds.

I continue to scan Narragansett Bay daily to try to spot another encounter between these two species. Unless additional observations convince me otherwise, I must conclude that this attack was indeed not typical and that the merganser, although apparently healthy, had some impairment that made it particularly vulnerable.

Sunbathing By a King Rail (*Rallus elegans*)

William E. Davis, Jr.

While sunbathing, or sunning, birds assume distinctive postures. In rails this posture has been described as "spread-wing," in which the standing rail stretches its fanned wings back and arches them over its back (Nice 1962). Typically the rail fluffs out its contour feathers. This sunning behavior has been reported in wild Sora and Virginia rails, but not for Clapper Rails (Eddleman and Conway 1998). The only reference I could find to sunning in King Rails was by Nice (1962) of captive, ten-week old hand-raised birds. Sunning by King Rails is not mentioned in the definitive species account (Meanley 1992). Thus, my observations on sunning behavior in a King Rail may be of some interest.

On June 18, 1999, I drove east along the Tamiami Trail (Route 41) through the Everglades of Florida, and turned north on Route 29 to Copeland, and then left again on the dirt Jane's Scenic Road through the Fakahatchee State Preserve. Along the road I stopped to watch five King Rails foraging. The farthest bird was in the middle of the road sunning about 100 feet from my car, and I watched it sunbathe for about ten minutes. Its left wing was open and fanned, swept back, but not elevated above its back — my journal entry described the wing as drooping. I couldn't see the right wing, but it may have been fanned as well. The left wing surface was extended perpendicular to the 11 a.m. sun, and hence presented maximum surface area to the sun's rays. It preened under and over the wing, its breast feathers, and down the back to the rump where the oil gland is located. It preened only the side facing the sun. It fluffed occasionally and thus had its contour feathers extended, typical of sunbathing rails. The bird never fully extended its wings and did not dust or squat in the whitish limestone sand of the road.

The functions of sunbathing are many and often problematic (Davis and Jackson 2000). Birds sometimes sunbathe early in the day when it is likely that the sunbathing functions primarily to warm the bird. In other cases birds combine panting or gular flutter with fluffing and wing exposure. This usually occurs at times of elevated temperatures and probably functions primarily to help cool the bird. In yet other cases, birds combine the fluffing and wing-spreading with preening, head-scratching, and other maintenance or comfort behaviors. It is suggested that solar radiation, particularly in the ultraviolet range, may enhance skin and feather care by reacting with skin and feather lipids or preen oil to, for example, aid in Vitamin D synthesis. Ectoparasites may become more active and hence more vulnerable to a preening and scratching bird (Simmons 1986).

The late morning hour suggests that the primary motivation for the King Rail's sunning behavior was not warming, and its lack of panting or other heat-releasing behavior suggests that the motivation was not cooling. Since the King Rail was actively preening, it seems likely that it was sunning to enhance maintenance behaviors.

References

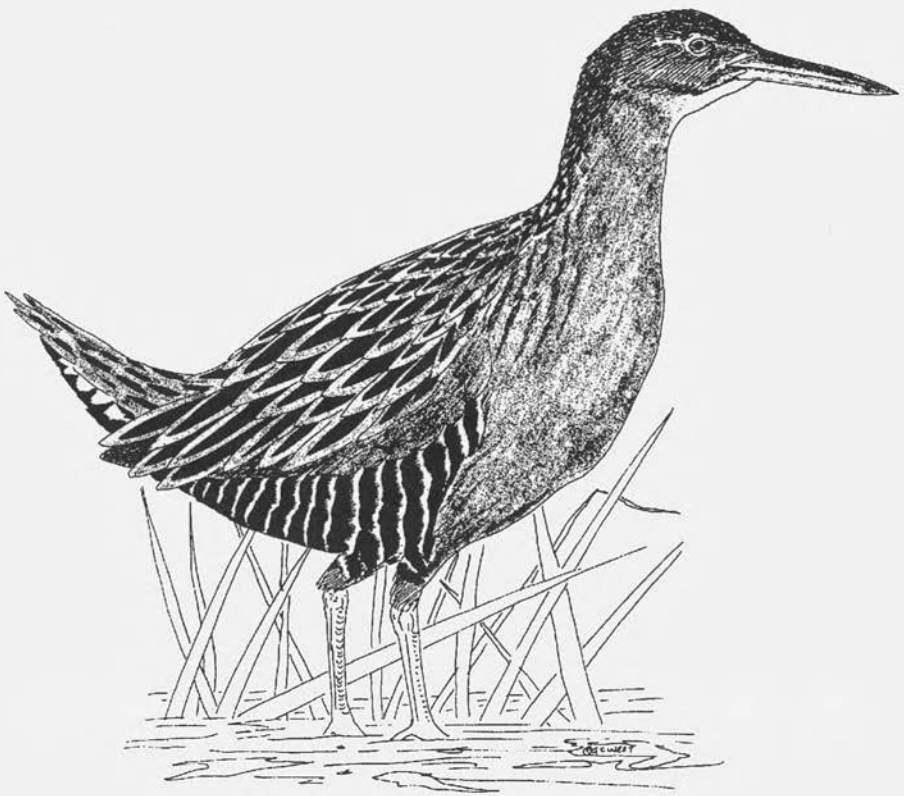
Davis, W.E. and J.A. Jackson. 2000. Sunbathing by Black and Turkey Vultures and a Great White Heron. *Bird Observer* 28 (4): 231-236.

Eddleman, W.R. and C.J. Conway. 1998. Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris*). *The Birds of North America*, No. 340 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). Washington, D.C. The Academy of Natural Sciences and the American Ornithologists' Union.

Meanley, B. 1992. King Rail (*Rallus elegans*). *The Birds of North America*, No. 3 (A. Poole, P. Stettenheim, and F. Gill, eds.). Washington, D.C. The Academy of Natural Sciences and the American Ornithologists' Union.

Nice, M. M. 1962. Development of behavior in precocial birds. *Transactions of the Linnaean Society of New York* 8:1-211.

Simmons, K.E.L. 1986. *The Sunning Behaviour of Birds*. Bristol, U.K.: Bristol Ornithological Club.



Fifth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee

Marjorie Rines, Secretary

The Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC) was formed to evaluate reports of rare and difficult-to-identify species, as designated on its review list <http://massbird.org/MARC/MARCreviewlist.htm>. The MARC also evaluates any new state record, and records of species that are geographically or temporally rare. Previous MARC reports appeared in the October 1995, August 1997, December 1998, and February 2000 issues of *Bird Observer*. In addition to these references, readers may find copies of these reports at the MARC web site at <http://Massbird.org/MARC/>.

One challenge for the MARC is the number of review list species that are reported verbally or by e-mail, for which no written documentation is ever sent to the Committee. Many of these reports refer to birds that are seen by multiple observers, and occasionally photographs are even posted on the World Wide Web. This year, the MARC agreed that these photographs, publicly published and available to anyone who wishes to view them, should be treated as MARC submissions, whether or not accompanied by written documentation. Advances in technology need to be embraced, especially when they can substantiate records that would otherwise be simply anecdotal to future ornithologists.

Clearly this is less satisfying than receiving an official (and written) submission from observers. Currently the Committee archives printed copies as well as floppy disks containing images of unusual birds. However, technology is moving at such a rapid rate that the format of these images could someday become obsolete and unusable by newer technologies.

Massachusetts has a long and important ornithological tradition. To maintain this tradition, readers are encouraged to submit written details as well as photographic evidence to the MARC whenever they observe an unusual bird in Massachusetts. The Committee would like to thank everyone who submitted records for this report.

MARC members include Steve Arena, Jim Baird, Rick Heil, Chris Leahy, Jan Ortiz, Wayne Petersen, Jackie Sones, Richard Veit, and Trevor Lloyd-Evans (Chair). Since the last report of the MARC, Blair Nikula retired after serving the maximum of two consecutive three-year terms, and was replaced by Wayne Petersen. Marjorie Rines is the Secretary.

The MARC **accepted** the following reports. County names follow town or community names in parentheses.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) #99-22, Gloucester (Essex), 14 May, 1999, R. Heil. An individual molting from basic to alternate plumage was carefully described and sketched by an experienced observer. A good description was provided for this bird, a species which is becoming almost annual in Massachusetts.

Arctic/Pacific Loon (*Gavia arctica/pacifica*), #98-2, Hull (Plymouth), 11 January, 1998, D. Oliver; #98-6, Plum Island (Essex), 16 May, 1998, J. Baird, M. Rines, et al. #98-6 was a basic-plumaged loon seen and independently identified by two groups of observers as an Arctic Loon. Both groups viewed this bird at a relatively long distance, and since this would have been a first east coast record for North America, the Committee ruled not to accept it as *G. arctica*; instead it was accepted as a loon belonging to the species pair "Arctic/Pacific Loon."

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*), #99-21, Magnolia (Essex), 12-14 May, 1999, R. Heil. The description of this winter-plumaged grebe carefully noted the dark loral area, eliminating the similar Clark's Grebe (never recorded in Massachusetts). It was also photographed, but not at close range.

Red-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*), #99-12, Chatham (Barnstable), 4-13 September, 1999, R. Lockwood et al., B. Nikula, J. Sones; #99-13, Plum Island (Essex) 26-27 July, 1999, D. Sandee, J. Hoye, A. McCarthy; #00-10, North Monomoy Is. (Barnstable) 4 June, 2000, B. Nikula. Prior to 1998, there were only two records of this species in Massachusetts, both in 1980. In addition to an individual observed in Plymouth in August and September of 1998 (#98-15, see the fourth MARC published in *Bird Observer*, February 2000), these three records bring the total to an astonishing four records in a two-year period.

Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), #99-18, Arlington (Middlesex), 30 October, 1999, M. Rines. Eleven immature kittiwakes were discovered (and photographed) on a small inland reservoir following a heavy overnight fog. There are only three previous inland sightings of this species in Massachusetts, all pertaining to single birds.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*), #99-14, South Hadley (Hampshire), 17 June to 18 July, 1999, H. Allen, S. Smolen-Morton et al. This tern in first-summer plumage presented identification difficulties to a number of observers, but the bird's extended stay made possible careful scrutiny, and the detailed report convinced the committee that it was indeed an Arctic Tern. There are only two previous confirmed inland Massachusetts records for this species.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*), #99-17, Marshfield (Plymouth), 16 July, 1999, D. Furbish et al. This bird was observed with a flock of Mourning Doves for good comparison, and the timing of the report matches the typical pattern of vagrancy in the region.

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*), #98-27, Pepperell (Middlesex), 26-29 September, 1998, C. Pearson. An adult male was photographed coming to a feeder.

MacGillivray's Warbler (*Oporornis tolmiei*), #99-19, Boston (Suffolk), 28 November to 19 December, 1999, R. Stymeist, photos by D. Crockett. No written report was submitted for this sighting, but photographs published on the internet were convincing to the Committee.

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*), #00-03, Orleans (Barnstable), 5-13 February, 2000, A. MacPhail, photos by D. Crockett. A winter-plumaged male bird was reviewed via photographs on the internet. A Western Tanager, most probably the same individual, was reported nearby over a period of several weeks the previous winter.

Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*), #99-20, Weymouth (Norfolk), 5 September to 6 October, 1999, fide K. Vezpazziani, photos by M. Rines and E. Neilsen. Photographs published on the internet. This rare visitor to Massachusetts fits the typical pattern of fall occurrence along the coast.

Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*), #00-04, Amherst (Hampshire), 13 to 14 May, 2000, W. Lafleche (details submitted by M. Lynch). A bird originally discovered by a Massachusetts Audubon Bird-a-thon team was later refound and photographed.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*), #00-07, Montague (Franklin), 8 April, 2000, M. Fairbrother, G. Witman. While this bird was only briefly seen by observers previously unfamiliar with the species, they immediately recognized that it was something "different," and carefully studied and unequivocally documented the important field marks. There are at least four previous records of Brambling in Massachusetts, as well as an individual in Connecticut during the winter of 2000.

Not Accepted:

Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche chlororhynchus*), #00-06, Nantucket (Dukes), 5 June, 2000. In early summer of 2000 there were a number of credible reports of this species along the northeastern Atlantic coast, and while it is very likely that this was, indeed, a Yellow-nosed Albatross, unfortunately the details of the written report were unconvincing.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*), #99-16, Plum Island (Essex), 4 August, 1999. The identification of this bird was not in question, but the Committee could not find a convincing pattern of wild occurrence in this species to eliminate the possibility of captive origin.

Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*), #96-27, Agawam (Hamden), 21 December, 1996. The description of a large hawk seen on a Christmas Bird Count did not definitively eliminate Northern Goshawk, in particular a reference to yellow eyes, which is not consistent with Gyrfalcon in any plumage, and description of white spots on the back, which is more typical of young accipiters.

Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*), #98-18, Chatham (Barnstable), 16 August, 1998. Details on this sighting were consistent with Spotted Redshank, but minor details were missing. Since this would have represented only the third state record for this species, the Committee did not accept this report.

California Gull (*Larus californicus*), #00-02, Eastham (Barnstable), 26 February, 2000. As with a California Gull not accepted in the Fourth Annual Report of the MARC (February 2000 *Bird Observer*), the Committee set a very high standard for this difficult-to-identify species, and believed the written description did not

sufficiently eliminate other species. Even through this individual was photographed, the images were not sufficiently clear for positive identification.

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*), #00-01, Provincetown (Barnstable), 14 March, 2000. Gulls are always problematic, and Thayer's Gull is one of the most difficult, even being considered conspecific with the very similar (and variable) Iceland Gull by some authorities. The description could not eliminate a dark Kumlien's Iceland Gull.

Ross's Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*), #98-5, Barnstable (Barnstable), 13 May, 1998. The description of a small gull with a pinkish breast was compelling, but the size difference between this individual and the nearby Bonaparte's Gulls should have been more obvious, and there was no description of the wing and tail pattern, or tail shape.

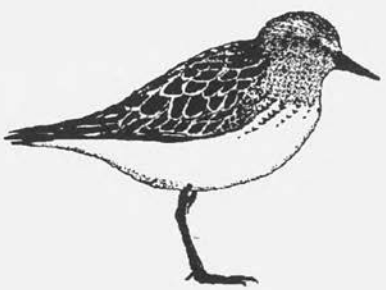
Gull-billed Tern (*Sterna nilotica*), #99-23, Plum Island (Essex), 31 July, 1999. Although this report was at the right season for this species to appear in Massachusetts, it lacked a description of mantle color and distinctive flight pattern, and the description of a "strong, black bill" did not convey the short, stubby appearance of the bill in this species.

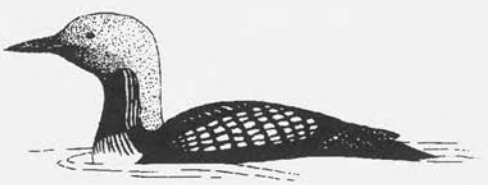
Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*), #00-08, Ashby (Middlesex), 17 March, 2000. A songbird was discovered trapped in a cage, and the observer was able to view it for a minute before the bird escaped. With the help of field guides, it was identified as a Redwing. Unfortunately, the details were sparse, and could not rule out other species.

Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*), #99-15, Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, Concord (Middlesex), 31 December, 1999. As with any rare and difficult-to-identify species, and Committee was extremely conservative in treating this report. The lack of mention of a few key field marks, such as eye ring, post-ocular stripe, and crown stripe weighed against this report.

Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), #00-05, South Quabbin (Hampshire), 15 May, 2000. A bird reported as an immature male Black-headed Grosbeak included the description of white wing "bars" in flight, instead of the very conspicuous white wing patch of this species. Other details were sketchy, and spring is an unlikely time for this rare vagrant.

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*), #98-12, Bolton (Worcester), 12 October, 1998. #98-28, Greenfield (Franklin), 27 December, 1998. The details of both reports did not adequately eliminate other species.





ABOUT BOOKS

Opposite Sides of the Same Coin

Mark Lynch

Threatened Birds of the World. 2000. Alison J. Stattersfield and David R. Capper, project managers and senior editors. London, England: Bird Life International, and Barcelona, Spain: Lynx Edicions. 852 pages. $115.00.

Bill Oddie's Gripping Yarns: Tales of Birds and Birding. 2000. Bill Oddie. London, England: Christopher Helm. 224 pages. $14.95, paperback.

These two books could not be more different in tone, intent, execution, scope, and even size and weight. They represent the two seemingly polar opposite aspects of birding: one concerned with the environment, preservation of habitat, and the fate of the natural world; the other wrapped up in a single-minded pursuit of what could be seen as stamp collecting with feathers. It's the old ornithology versus birding problem. Hopefully, it is apparent to all that the fun and craziness of birding is totally dependent on the health of our environment.

Threatened Birds of the World is Bird Life International's hard copy of the massive World Bird Database (WBDB), extensive data files on all the species of endangered birds. The WBDB was started in 1994 and contains much more information than could possibly be put even into this hefty book. Nearly 1000 people contributed to this important volume, which is now considered the official source for birds on the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red List. The publishing of this book is equivalent to issuing an up-to-the-minute state-of-the-world summary of avian life on the planet.

The news is not good: "A shocking one in eight (or c.12 percent) of all bird species have a real risk of becoming extinct in the next 100 years. This is a total of 1,186 bird species. Most worrying, 182 are Critical, meaning that they have an estimated 50 percent chance of surviving over the next 10 years, or three generations" (p. 2).

Of course it is not just birds: "24 percent of mammals, and of those assessed, 27 percent reptiles, 20 percent amphibians and 30 percent of fish are threatened with extinction" (p. 2).

"We are the problem" and "we are the solution" are the first two page headings. This clearly points out the still hopeful theme of this book.

"People drive this extinction crisis. Of the 1,186 globally threatened species, 1,175 (99 percent) are at risk from human activities such as agriculture, logging,

hunting and trapping. Therefore species extinctions are no longer isolated natural events, but the result of major changes in the world's ecosystem" (p. 2).

The three issues that critically need addressing are habitat loss, direct exploitation (as in food and cage birds), and invasives (especially invasive predators). Agriculture and selective logging and cutting are the leading causes of habitat loss. Ninety-three percent of the threatened birds that use forests are found in moist, tropical forests which are being felled at an alarming rate. Other habitats in dire need of protection from human overuse include grasslands, savannas, and wetlands. A two-page map highlights where conservation is critically needed. The island nations of Southeast Asia such as Indonesia, Borneo, and the Philippines have the greatest need, as well as areas of mainland Asia, parts of South America, and Madagascar.

Solutions are complex and not easily instigated. The authors feel that more needs to be done to further identify priority sites and habitats for conservation. Hard science and monitoring have to be the foundation of every declaration of a species status. It is hoped that this book will provide that baseline for such monitoring. Once the data are in, then the really arduous work of shaping public policy and instigating legislation begins, as well as strengthening coalitions of people at the local, national, and international levels.

Every aspect of this book is well done. This comes as little surprise because Lynx Edicions are the folks that publish *Handbook of the Birds of the World*. The bulk of the volume consists of species accounts, two per page. Each account includes a small, good, color illustration, an excellent range map, and complete details of population, ecology, threats, conservation, and targets. The latter point out what needs to be done next to ensure the species' future. Species accounts were sponsored by individuals, charitable institutions, or companies, an interesting scheme to defray costs. Their names appear modestly in the lower corner of each page. Sections of the book are headed by very good, almost full-page color illustrations of critically endangered birds.

Reading the species accounts, one is struck by how many species are poorly known. For many birds there are little hard data on population densities, while at the same time their habitat is being radically altered. For many of these species, it is a race against time. For instance, in the account of the Snoring Rail (*Aramidopsis plateni*) of Sulawesi we read:

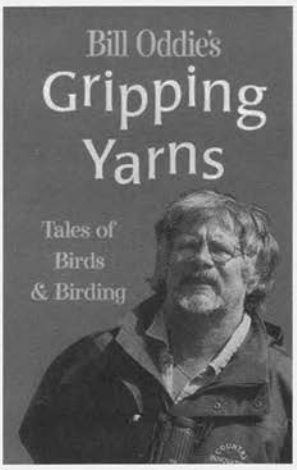
> "This poorly known rail qualifies as Vulnerable because it is thought to have a small population, which is inferred to be undergoing a continuing decline and increasing fragmentation due to habitat loss" (p. 599).

The sad truth is that there are hundreds of poorly known species in far-flung parts of the globe and not enough funding or ornithologists to actually research them. You can't preserve a tract of land simply because you think it might have a population of an endangered bird. I imagine we will lose many unique and wonderful birds simply because there is not enough time and money to get someone there to conduct a study before the land is bulldozed or logged.

Whenever I confront the effort that is needed to begin correcting this global crisis, I start to get depressed. I then have to recall the many conversations I had with my brother Dr. James Lynch about this problem before he died. He was a researcher and ornithologist at the Smithsonian, a person on the front lines, so to speak. His research had taken him all over the world, but most particularly to the Yucatan, Kenya, and Australia. He admitted that the situation globally was very grim when we looked at the problems of habitat loss and human exploitation of the environment. But he always cautioned against getting paralyzed with the enormity and severity of it all. Granted we can do little on the international scale except support (as in money) organizations, like Bird Life International or the IUCN, which are geared for dealing with issues on a global scale. But we *can* concentrate on local initiatives where our efforts can have a direct effect. For instance: we can work to save that local woodlot or marsh; or monitor a local patch, keep consistent records, and send them in to regional schemes like the Important Bird Areas program. We can also cast our votes intelligently.

Threatened Birds of the World is a call to arms or, if need be, a swift kick in the glutes to get you out and into the fight. Or, if you run across those who take the revisionist stance that there is no pressing global environmental crisis, this weighty tome is great for dropping on toes or whacking heads.

After reading *Threatened Birds of the World*, you may need to turn to *Bill Oddie's Gripping Yarns* for comic relief. Bill Oddie is best known to Americans as the author of the classic *Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book*, which in Oddie's inimitable way, told "the truth about bird watching." The truth of course is that birding is more than a bit strange, filled with odd characters, and is totally fun. It was in that book that Americans were first exposed to such delightful British birding lingo as "twitching" and "being gripped off" ("a nasty experience. It means that you have dipped out, but somebody else hasn't" [p. 46]).



There is something about the Brits and birding that is a match made in heaven. First of all, they invented birding, or at least think they did. Second, they are much better at it than anyone else in the world, or at least that's what they would like us to believe. Let's face it, there is something very Monty Pythonesque about this nit-picking, jargon-laden, plain odd avocation. The next time you find yourself standing around sewer beds in the bitter cold waiting for some feathered bit of fluff to appear, see how easy it is to imagine any one of a number of characters made famous by John Cleese or Michael Palin also waiting for the "tick." I confess that I learned my first lessons about how to act like a birder from reading the very British author Stephen Potter's classics on Gamesmanship and One Upmanship. Potter, after all, introduced me to the ploy of Bearded Titmanship and how to perfect the withering "plonking" tone of voice when questioning someone's call in the field.

Bill Oddie's skill is to capture those moments that all birders experience while at the same time poking fun at the more pompous aspects of it all. The "60-odd pieces" that are found in *Gripping Yarns* were originally printed in the magazine *Birdwatch*, although some of these short essays have been rewritten and expanded. Oddie writes about the joys of birding his local patch, whether it is cricket to tick dead birds, the frustration of missing a rarity, and even the sensuous delights of eating Mars Bars while waiting for something decent to show up. His writing style is enthusiastic, boisterous, and irreverent. For Yanks, there is an ever-expanding lexicon of colloquial British to enjoy, including such liberally used words as "narked" and "sprogs." The latter refers to "relatively common birds you still need on your list" (p. 53). Sprinkled throughout are some of Bill's dotty illustrations, which can perhaps best be described as Thomas Bewick by way of Charles Schultz. They do perfectly enhance the tone of these pieces.

Some of the essays are about places farther afield from Britannia, prime birding locations like Trinidad, Cyprus, Portugal, and Morocco. Bill's beloved Fair Isle is mentioned several times. Of particular interest are the several essays on trips to America to bird Arizona, Louisiana, New York City, and Cape May. In "A Tale Of Two Godwits," Oddie tells of traveling to Martha's Vineyard and hooking up with someone he calls "Big Verne" whom he describes as: "physically . . . sort of a Meatloaf x ZZ Top hybrid" (p. 139). After some interesting partying, the whole gang zips off to Monomoy to try to find the Bar-tailed Godwit. I would love to hear from Big Verne about this particular excursion. There is no doubt that Oddie has conflicted feelings about America. He absolutely loves the birds here, but you get the feeling that for him the jury is still out on Yank birders.

Bill Oddie's Gripping Yarns is pure entertainment, chock-a-block with light pieces but always right on target. In the chapter "Some You Win" (p.108), Oddie perfectly unites the diverse themes of this review. In a response to a letter that asks "where has the old enthusiasm gone?" Oddie responds:

"In recent times, I've put every bit of my enthusiasm into conservation as I ever did into trashing twitchers in the *Little Black Bird Book*. Energy rather better spent, I'd suggest actually. The trouble is, though, it is not always a jolly experience. Habitat loss, pollution, poisoning, and politics aren't exactly frivolous topics. 'We all know it's not a perfect world out there without being reminded of it' writes my pen pal Clayton. Well, if you are involved in conservation, you are reminded of it every flipping day. What's more, it's part of the job to remind everyone else about it too. I know I'm using a cheerily meant ribbing to bring up a serious point, but that's how I feel today. Sometimes conservation seems like a series of losing battles. And it can get you down. But when you win one, it feels terrific."

To which I say "Here! Here!" as I don my wellies and anorak to go out to twitch on my local patch.

References

Oddie, Bill. 1980. *Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book*. London, England: Eyre Methuen.

Potter, Stephen. 1970. *The Complete Upmanship*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Important Bird Areas (IBA). For more information, contact: Andrea Jones <ajones@massaudubon.org >, Wayne Petersen <wpetersen@massaudubon.org >, or Scott Hecker <coastalbirds@massadubon.org>.

***Mark Lynch** is the Book Review Editor of* Bird Observer. *He is currently working on doing a Big Year in the Blackstone River Corridor that runs between Worcester and Providence and co-editing and co-writing a massive upcoming book on where to find birds in Western Massachusetts.*

Executive Order on Migratory Birds

President Clinton today [January 11, 2001] issued a landmark Executive Order that requires Federal agencies to avoid or minimize the negative impact of their actions on migratory birds, and to take active steps to protect birds and their habitat.

The Executive Order directs each Federal agency taking actions having or likely to have a negative impact on migratory bird populations to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop an agreement to conserve those birds. The protocols developed by this consultation are intended to guide future agency regulatory actions and policy decisions; renewal of permits, contracts or other agreements; and the creation of or revisions to land management plans. In addition to avoiding or minimizing impacts to migratory bird populations, agencies will be expected to take reasonable steps that include restoring and enhancing habitat, preventing or abating pollution affecting birds, and incorporating migratory bird conservation into agency planning processes whenever possible.

Most bird species in the United States are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, the domestic law that implements the United States' commitment to four international conventions for the protection of shared migratory bird resources. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) protects species or families of birds that live, reproduce or migrate within or across international borders at some point during their annual life cycle. Federal courts have affirmed that Federal agencies are subject to the MBTA's prohibitions on "take" of migratory birds.

The Executive Order is designed to assist Federal Agencies in their efforts to comply with the MBTA, and does not constitute any legal authorization to take migratory birds or otherwise supercede the MBTA's requirements. The MBTA requires Federal agencies to have regulatory authorization from the Service before taking migratory birds.

For further information contact: USFWS Office of Public Affairs, Chris Tollefson, 202-208-5634.

The complete text of this Executive Order is posted on <Massbird.Org>.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2000

Richard S. Heil, Seth Kellogg, Marjorie Rines, Robert H. Stymeist

Both November and December were cold; they were, in fact, the 8th and 9th months in a row with below normal temperatures. December, for example was 8.1 degrees below December of 1999 for Boston. An astonishing variety of warblers and other songbirds lingered well into December last year; not the case this year. The average temperature was 43.8 degrees in Boston for November, 1.5 degrees below the average, and in December the average in Boston was 29.2 degrees or 4.4 degrees below normal. The high reached 66 degrees for Boston on November 4 and the low was 17 degrees on the 24th. Rainfall was 4.50 inches in November, just a little higher than the average. There was only a trace of snowfall in Boston, although many western Massachusetts areas received more at month's end. In December the high was 64 degrees on the 17th, which was very misleading: the wind reached a peak gust of 55 mph complete with unseasonable thunderstorms and rain that came at a slant! Many Christmas Bird Counters will not soon forget the weather that Sunday. Rainfall totaled 4.75 inches in Boston with nearly 3 inches on the 17th; snowfall totaled 3.6 inches in Boston, 3.9 inches under the average. A storm on December 30-31 brought mostly rain along the coast but a great deal of snow to most of the state. This was the coldest December since 1989, and most weekends and days of scheduled Christmas Bird Counts had below ideal weather conditions. R.H.S.

LOONS THROUGH ALCIDS

November, as usual, ushered in large numbers of migrating Red-throated Loons along the coast. The only **Pacific Loon** was a well-described juvenile present at Scusset Beach in Plymouth on November 22. Now with five records accepted by the MARC in just the last four years, plus an additional thirteen unreviewed sight records during the same period, this species has amply demonstrated its status as a rare but quite regular migrant and winterer in our region. Given that this was the coldest December in more than a decade, particularly the first half of the month, a Pied-billed Grebe in the southern Connecticut River Valley, at Agawam, December 16, was indeed tardy. It was perhaps not surprising then that Pied-bills totaled just 41 birds on the Cape Cod Lake and Pond Waterfowl Survey, the lowest in the survey's eighteen years, but only one less than the previous low in, you guessed it, 1989. The continued importance of Buzzard's Bay to Horned Grebes was exemplified by the count of more than 1000 from Bourne on November 9. The **Eared Grebe**, now in its sixth consecutive season, continued at East Gloucester from October.

Small numbers of Greater Shearwaters persisted well into December, as they did last year, including 25 far offshore at Georges Bank on the 2nd, and nine from shore at Andrew's Point in Rockport during a period of strong SSW winds on the 12th. Other tubenoses were unremarkable with just singles of Cory's and Manx shearwaters reported from Cape Cod in mid-November. The peak of the Northern Gannet migration along the Massachusetts coast typically occurs during November. This season's high count was an impressive 5000-plus in the Chatham area on November 12.

Separate reports of Black Vulture from Bourne and Pocasset in late November probably represented a single bird, while the number of Turkey Vultures in the Westport-Dartmouth area in late November, with a maximum of 75 on November 19, was comparable to that of recent years.

Single **Greater White-fronted Geese** of undetermined or undescribed race were noted from Fairhaven, November 4, and North Brookfield, November 5. A hardy and intrepid flock of Snow Geese, including one first-winter blue morph, settled in for the long winter at Newburyport Harbor where 114 on December 5 dwindled to 68 by the 26th. It is very unusual, perhaps unprecedented for a flock of this size to be present in December and to attempt to winter in Massachusetts. An adult **"Black" Brant,** *B. b. nigricans*, treated by some as a full species, was well photographed (see p. 124) and an exceptional find at Plymouth, November 4, but apparently did not linger. Veit and Petersen, in the *Birds of Massachusetts*, cite only nine records for the state up to 1993. American Wigeon were still much in evidence, at least into early December on Cape Cod where the waterfowl survey located 184 birds, nearly double the previous seventeen-year average. A total of eleven Eurasian Wigeon for the period was more than usual and included four at Chatham and a single drake, notable in Worcester County, at Southboro.

Two excellent November counts of staging migrant Ring-necked Ducks included 1180 at Southboro on the 4th, and 1000 in the Berkshires at Pittsfield on the 5th. The returning male **Tufted Duck**, first reported in October, continued at the usual Sterling locations throughout November and later made a brief appearance at Wachusett Reservoir on December 16. Following the remarkable concentration of some 50,000 Surf Scoters in the waters off Martha's Vineyard in late October, no extraordinary counts of scoters were made during the current period. Inland, fourteen Surfs appeared at four sites from Waltham to Turners Falls, and 62 Blacks were located at six sites from Worcester County to the Berkshires. The twice-daily flight of Long-tailed Ducks past the west end of Nantucket was estimated to comprise 185,000 birds on November 23. Although the precise numbers involved in this flight vary from year to year, and even from day to day, this parade to and from foraging areas on Nantucket Shoals remains one of Massachusetts's most enduring and reliable avian spectacles.

Hooded Merganser numbers remain strong following their pronounced increase in the state over the past two decades. On the Cape Cod waterfowl survey the 993 tallied was only slightly below last year's record count. MassWildlife waterfowl biologist H. W. Heusmann reports in a recent issue of *Massachusetts Wildlife* (No. 4, 2000) that, based on annual Massachusetts CBC data, Hooded Merganser numbers have grown by more than 200 percent since 1978. This growth, no doubt part of a larger increase throughout the Northeast, was attributed to the use of more artificial nest boxes (185 boxes utilized in Massachusetts in 1998), primarily in the north central and western part of the state, the maturing of forests resulting in more natural cavities, and the increase in the beaver population which has created many new high-quality wetlands. Ruddy Ducks were common and widespread for the second consecutive year. Seasonal high counts of Ruddies from favored sites more than doubled during the mid-1990s, and numbers have remained strong since.

Late Ospreys in December were noted at Falmouth on the 2nd and at Lynnfield on the 16th. Late fall migrant raptors in the interior included 52 Red-tails plus 9 Red-shoulders at Mt. Wachusett November 12, while three weeks later in December 28 Red-tails and 4 Red-shoulders were still on the move there on the 2nd. These late raptor movements, however, were somewhat below those observed over the last couple of years. Following two reports from the North Shore in late October, it became clear that Rough-legged Hawks were on the move across a broader front as individuals began to filter in throughout the state during November and December. One of the highlights of the period was the appearance of a **Gyrfalcon** at the Plum Island salt marshes. The relatively sedentary behavior of this individual, which was often found in the same patch of marsh during its nearly three-week stay, was unusual for this normally far-ranging falcon. A sub-adult with a blue-gray cere, this spectacular bird was variously described as a "gray morph" and as a "dark morph," although it seem likely that only

one individual was involved. The subtleties of plumage details and color tones vary widely according to distance and light and may have been responsible for the anomalous reports. The distinction between the darker Gyrfalcon color morphs may not be especially valid anyway, since many birds, perhaps including this one, are apparent intermediates. Four Golden Eagles were reported including one noted along the coast at Marshfield November 20.

Yet another **Yellow Rail** was flushed from the renowned Quaise, Nantucket marsh November 28, this being the same site where up to three were present last January. American Coot numbers were very low statewide. It was said to be perhaps the poorest flight ever in western Massachusetts, and the mere 44 counted on the Cape Cod waterfowl survey was the lowest since 1993 and 71 percent below the 18 year average. The only sizeable flock was at Spy Pond in Arlington, where a maximum of 150 were present December 10.

Impressive numbers and variety of shorebirds were still present in the Chatham area in late November. A count of 900 Black-bellied Plovers at South Beach November 25 may be one of the highest November tallies ever recorded. The plovers were accompanied on that late date by more than 200 Red Knots, over 1200 Sanderlings, 2 Western Sandpipers, 1 Least Sandpiper, 3 or more White-rumped Sandpipers, and 2000 Dunlin. In contrast, American Golden-Plovers departed early, with only a single report, from Great Meadows, in mid-November (compare November totals for the last four years, 1996-99: 8, 9, 36, 23; *Bird Observer* records). A very late, although certainly not unprecedented (more than 10 previous December records) **Semipalmated Plover** was seen and heard at Winthrop December 23. All such individuals should be critically scrutinized for potential vagrant Ringed Plovers, *Charadrius hiaticula*, for which there is a single state record. A flock of three juvenile **Lesser Yellowlegs** were surprising lingerers at Newburyport December 5, but one still present, and first seen swimming with Mallards amidst ice flows in the harbor December 25-26, was shocking. Two "Western" Willets and a Marbled Godwit remained at Chatham until at least December 17, five of the latter being present there earlier during November. Hudsonian Godwits were absent in November. Traditionally a few will linger into the month at Newburyport where the species has declined as a fall migrant in recent years. Eleven Red Phalaropes were noted during a seawatch at Andrew's Point, Rockport November 30.

Good numbers of jaegers remained in the waters around both Cape Cod and Cape Ann into early December for the second consecutive year. These late jaegers are overwhelmingly Pomarine, although many were conservatively reported as jaeger species at Cape Cod. Forty-four Pomarines were counted passing Andrew's Point during a rather low intensity storm November 27, while a total of six additional Pomarines was seen on three seawatches there between December 12-17. A single Parasitic Jaeger, considered scarce locally beyond early November, was reported from Nantucket December 2. Four Little Gulls at Katama, Martha's Vineyard were notable for that location. More than 25 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were at South Monomoy November 4, while at least 17 others were found elsewhere, although none were located along the coast north of Cape Cod. Three were found together inland along the Connecticut River at Hadley November 19. A bird labeled a probable Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull hybrid was reported, but not described, from Katama, Martha's Vineyard November 17. Only very modest numbers of Black-legged Kittiwakes were observed due to a lack of storms. Clearly, terns pulled out early with only four single Commons reported. It was the first time in at least the last ten years that Forster's Tern went unrecorded in the state during November. The average total for November Forster's since 1990 has been about 22 birds.

Dovekies staged a minor incursion into coastal waters beginning in mid-November that continued throughout December with a high count of 110 from First Encounter Beach in Eastham on November 12. Four separate Common Murres were identified, and it appeared that

another good winter for Thick-billed Murres was shaping up by the end of December. Comparatively uncommon in Massachusetts waters, Thick-billed Murres, even during good flight years, typically arrive much later than Razorbills, the vanguard of which usually appear in late October. Only moderate numbers of Razorbills occurred, prior to the CBC period anyway, at least by recent standards. A total of seven Atlantic Puffins included a count of four at Race Point in Provincetown November 12. R.S.H.

Red-throated Loon
- 11/8 Ipswich 100+ D. + I. Jewell
- 11/11 Eastham (F.E.) 380 B. Nikula
- 11/11 Barnstable (S.N.) 115 D. Comeau#
- 11/12 Boston H. 123 TASL (M. Hall)
- 11/12 Marshfield 29 G. d'Entremont
- 11/15, 27 Ware 1 W. Lafley
- 11/15 S. Quabbin 4 H. Allen
- 11/16 Salisbury 150 J. Berry
- 11/19 P.I. 100 P. Roberts
- 11/28 Chilmark 800 V. Laux
- 11/30, 12/17 Rockport (A.P.) 134, 21 R. Heil

Pacific Loon (details submitted) *
- 11/22 Scusset B. 1 juv S. Dinsmore

Common Loon
- 11/4 Wachusett Res. 30 M. Lynch#
- 11/4 Falmouth 19 R. Farrell
- 11/8 P.I. 15 G. Leet#
- 11/8 Ipswich 50+ D. + I. Jewell
- 11/11 Barnstable (S.N.) 13 K. Hamilton#
- 11/12 P'town (R.P) 6 K. Hamilton#
- 11/12 Boston H. 43 TASL (M. Hall)
- 11/18 S. Quabbin 8 M. Lynch#
- 11/25 Westport 27 M. Lynch#
- 11/28 Chilmark 350 V. Laux
- 11/30 Rockport (A.P.) 29 R. Heil
- 12/2 Sandwich 19 M. Lynch#

Pied-billed Grebe
- 11/1 Camb. (F.P.) 2 J. Barton
- 11/5 Brookfield 3 M. Lynch#
- 11/12 Randolph 2 G. d'Entremont
- 11/13 Newton 3 E. Nelson-Melby
- 11/15 Bourne-N.Falm 7 BBC (R. Stymeist)
- 12/2-3 Cape Cod 41 CCBC (B. Nikula)
- 12/5 Arlington 5 M. Rines#
- 12/16 Agawam 1 R. Stone

Horned Grebe
- 11/4, 12/3 Wachusett Res. 29 M. Lynch#
- 11/4 Falmouth 117 R. Farrell
- 11/9 Bourne 1000+ M. LaBossiere
- 11/12 Boston H. 324 TASL (M. Hall)
- 11/12 Hingham 19 G. d'Entremont
- 11/16 New Salem 8 W. Lafley
- 11/16 Quabbin (G22) 8 B. Lafley
- 11/19 P.I. 24 P. Roberts
- 11/25 Westport 34 M. Lynch#
- 12/3 Quincy Bay 46 G. d'Entremont

Red-necked Grebe
- 11/1 Waltham 1 M. Rines
- 11/4 Falmouth 8 R. Farrell
- 11/12 Boston H. 31 TASL (M. Hall)
- 11/15 Quabbin (G5) 3 B. Kane
- 11/19 Duxbury 11 SSBC(D. Clapp)
- 11/20 E. Gloucester 8 J. Berry
- 11/20 Stockbridge 1 R. Laubach
- 11/28 Chilmark 40 V. Laux
- 11/30, 12/16 Rockport (A.P.) 11, 20 R. Heil
- 12/23 Winthrop 28 P. + F. Vale

Eared Grebe *
- 11/9-29 E. Gloucester 1 J. Soucy + v.o.

Northern Fulmar
- 12/2 Georges Bank 2 lt, 1 dk K. Hartel

Cory's Shearwater
- 11/12 P'town (R.P) 1 K. Hamilton#

Greater Shearwater
- 11/4 Chatham 110 B. Nikula#
- 11/11 Eastham (F.E.) 1 K. Hamilton#
- 11/24 P'town 100 W. Ellison
- 11/27 Rockport 75 J. Berry
- 12/2 Georges Bank 25 K. Hartel
- 12/12 Rockport (A.P.) 9 R. Heil

Manx Shearwater
- 11/11 Eastham (F.E.) 1 K. Hamilton#

Leach's Storm-Petrel
- 11/2 Barnstable (S.N.) 2 E. Winslow

Northern Gannet
- 11/1, 12 Eastham (F.E.) 900, 1500 B. Nikula
- 11/11 Barnstable (S.N.) 600 K. Hamilton#
- 11/12 Marshfield 44 G. d'Entremont
- 11/12 Chatham 5000+ B. Nikula
- 11/12 Boston H. 6 TASL (M. Hall)
- 11/12 P'town (R.P) 1800 K. Hamilton#
- 11/19 P.I. 500 P. Roberts
- 11/30, 12/17 Rockport (A.P.) 550, 290 R. Heil

Great Cormorant
- 11/9 Nantucket Sound 12 K. Blackshaw
- 11/9 Rockport 51 J. Berry
- 11/12 Boston H. 34 TASL (M. Hall)
- 11/20 E. Gloucester 50 J. Berry
- 12/3 P.I. 35 BBC (S. Grinley)
- 12/12 Rockport 160+ J. Berry

Double-crested Cormorant
- 11/4 S. Monomoy 800 B. Nikula#
- 11/12 Boston H. 1606 TASL (M. Hall)
- 11/25 P'town 2 R. Lockwood#
- 11/25 Acoaxet 28 M. Lynch#

American Bittern
- 11/11 P.I. 1 P. + F. Vale
- 11/12 Eastham (F.H.) 1 K. Hamilton#
- 11/18 Dorchester 1 R. Donovan#
- 11/19 S. Dartmouth 2 K. Anderson#

Great Blue Heron
- 11/12 Boston H. 16 TASL (M. Hall)
- 11/15 Bourne-N.Falm 7 BBC (R. Stymeist)
- 11/25 Plymouth 16 D. Furbish
- 11/25 Acoaxet 5 M. Lynch#
- 12/2 Falmouth 12 M. Lynch#
- 12/23 Southwick 1 R. Packard

Great Egret
- 11/11-17 Orleans 1 S.+ C. Thompson

Snowy Egret
- 11/12 Boston H. 1 TASL (M. Hall)

Black-crowned Night-Heron
- 11/3 Nantucket 14 fide E. Ray
- 11/13 Yarmouthport 1 K. Hamilton#
- 11/25 P'town 2 R. Lockwood#
- 12/17 Boston 3 G. d'Entremont#

Black Vulture
- 11/19 Bourne 1 H. Willoughby#
- 11/23 Pocasset 1 J. Kricher

Turkey Vulture
- 11/12 Mt. Wachusett 2 T. Carrolan
- 11/15 Bourne 7 BBC (R. Stymeist)
- 11/18 Lincoln 1 M. Rines
- 11/19 Wellfleet 1 B. Nikula
- 11/19 Westport 75 P. Donahue#
- 12/2 Harvard 2 T. Carrolan

Greater White-fronted Goose
- 11/4 Fairhaven 1 M. LaBossiere
- 11/5 N. Brookfield 1 M. Lynch#

Snow Goose
- 11/4 Southboro 1 M. Lynch#
- 11/4 Carlisle 1 imm T. + D. Brownrigg
- 11/4 S. Monomoy 1 B. Nikula#

Snow Goose (continued)

11/5	GMNWR	1	SSBC (T. O'Neil)
11/8-16	Chilmark	24	A. Keith
11/10	Ipswich	300	M. Gardler#
11/12	Marlboro	2	M. Lynch#
11/25	Falmouth	3 imm	R. Lockwood#
12/5, 26	Newbypt.	114, 68 (inc 1 blue imm)	R. Heil
12/7	Chilmark	3 blue	A. Keith
12/10	Northampton	1	P. Yeskie
12/11	Winchester	1	M. Rines
12/11, 16	Littleton	3	M. Resch
12/16	E. Longmeadow	1	G. Kingston
12/26	Hadley	2	P. Yeskie

Brant

11/2	Plymouth	700	J. Trimble
11/11	Eastham (F.E.)	325	M. Gardler#
11/12	Boston H.	1219	TASL (M. Hall)
11/18	Quincy	400	E. Taylor
12/15	Boston	50	E. Nelson-Melby

"Black" Brant (details submitted)

11/4	Plymouth	1 ad ph	J. Trimble

Mute Swan

11/4	Ipswich	33	J. Berry#
11/12	Boston H.	8	TASL (M. Hall)
11/25	Acoaxet	64	M. Lynch#
12/2	Northampton	5	T. Gagnon
12/2-3	Cape Cod	156	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/23	Marlboro	23	E. Taylor

Tundra Swan

11/18-12/3	Acoaxet	1-4	P. O'Neill + v.o.

Whooper Swan

11/4	Ipswich	3 ad	J. Berry#
12/5	P.I. Sound	1ad.	R. Heil

Wood Duck

11/1	Hadley	40	H. Allen
11/4	Quabbin	6	B. Kane
11/6	Medford	7	D. + I. Jewell
12/2-3	Cape Cod	6	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/16	Holyoke	2	T. Gagnon
12/23	Granville	1	P. + J. McMahon

Gadwall

11/4	S. Monomoy	8	B. Nikula#
11/4	Ipswich	96	J. Berry#
11/22	P.I.	27	J. Berry
11/22	Sharon	3	R. Titus
12/2-3	Cape Cod	128	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/5, 26	Newbypt.	72, 12	R. Heil
12/10	Arlington	6	M. Rines
12/16	Agawam	1	S. Kellogg#

Eurasian Wigeon

11/4	Southboro	1m.	M. Lynch#
11/12-26	Marstons Mills	2 m	J. Liller# + v.o.
11/21	Carver	2	D. Larson
12/2-3	Cape Cod	6	CCBC (B. Nikula)

American Wigeon

11/1	Camb. (F.P.)	49	J. Barton
11/4	S. Monomoy	15	B. Nikula#
11/4	Ipswich	78	J. Berry#
11/4	Southboro	124	M. Lynch#
11/21	Carver	76	D. Larson
11/24	Marlboro	46	K. Hamilton
12/2-3	Cape Cod	184	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/5	Newbypt.	8	R. Heil
12/10	Arlington	30	M. Rines

American Black Duck

11/12	Boston H.	462	TASL (M. Hall)
11/25	Westport	341	M. Lynch#
12/2-3	Cape Cod	1128	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/5	Newbypt./P.I.	4700+	R. Heil
12/24	Rowley	720	J. Berry

Blue-winged Teal

11/26	Marston Mills	1	S. Miller#

Northern Shoveler

11/4	P.I.	1	R. Lockwood#
11/4-12	Arlington Res.	1	M. Rines
11/4	S. Monomoy	30	B. Nikula#
11/26	Boston	6	R. Stymeist
11/29	GMNWR	1 f	S. Perkins#
12/2	P'town	2	B. Nikula
12/2-3	Cape Cod	2	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/3	Pembroke	3	W. Petersen

Northern Pintail

11/4	S. Monomoy	30	B. Nikula#
11/21	Longmeadow	3	H. Allen
11/24	Marlboro	38	K. Hamilton
11/25	Acoaxet	47	M. Lynch#
11/29	GMNWR	9	S. Perkins#
12/2	P.I.	60	P. Roberts
12/2-3	Cape Cod	14	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/24	Rowley	3	J. Berry
12/26	Hadley	1	P. Yeskie

Green-winged Teal

11/4	P.I.	200	R. Lockwood#
11/4	S. Monomoy	20	B. Nikula#
11/11	Braintree	100+	S. Carey
11/18	Salisbury	27	J. Berry#
11/23	Wayland	88	K. Hamilton
11/29	GMNWR	20	S. Perkins#
12/2-3	Cape Cod	95	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/5	Newbypt.	7	R. Heil
12/10	Pittsfield (Onota)	1	T. Gagnon
12/10	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg

Canvasback

11/4	Southboro	4	M. Lynch#
11/4	S. Monomoy	4	B. Nikula#
11/9	Marlboro	2	M. Harvey
11/18	Camb. (F.P.)	92	BBC (R. Petersen)
11/25	Falmouth	12	R. Lockwood#
12/2-3	Cape Cod	61	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/3	Braintree	10	S. Carey
12/5	Newbypt.	3	R. Heil
12/10-21	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg

Redhead

12/2	Falmouth	1 m	M. Lynch#
12/21-25	W. Newbury	2 m	v.o.
12/23	Plymouth	1	W. Petersen#

Ring-necked Duck

11/1	Camb. (F.P.)	277	J. Barton
11/4	Arlington Res.	242	M. Rines
11/4	Southboro	1180	M. Lynch#
11/5	Pittsfield (Mud Pd)	1000	T. Gagnon
11/13	Framingham	86	K. Hamilton#
11/15	Bourne-N.Falm	30	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/23	Stoughton	76	R. Titus
12/2-3	Cape Cod	203	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/10, 25	Southwick	15, 3	S. Kellogg
12/10	Arlington	23	M. Rines
12/31	W. Boylston	25	S. Moore

Tufted Duck

11/1-25	Sterling	1 m	v.o.
12/16	Wachusett Res.	1 m	S. Moore

Greater Scaup

11/1	Camb. (F.P.)	5	J. Barton
11/5	Brookfield	4	M. Lynch#
11/7	New Salem	1	W. Lafley
11/11	Rockport	30	J. Berry#
11/12	Boston H.	307	TASL (M. Hall)
11/12	Randolph	30+	G. d'Entremont
11/23	Nahant	65	L. Pivacek
12/2-3	Cape Cod	743	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/3	Squantum	525	G. d'Entremont
12/9	S. Quabbin	2	C. Buelow
12/10	Northampton	1	P. Yeskie
12/23	Winthrop	30	P. + F. Vale

Lesser Scaup

11/1	Camb. (F.P.)	2	J. Barton
11/1	W. Newbury	12	J. Berry
11/4	Southboro	3	M. Lynch#
11/4	S. Monomoy	55	B. Nikula#
11/7	Turner's Falls	2	H. Allen
11/23	Nahant	145	L. Pivacek
11/25	Acoaxet	84	M. Lynch#
12/2	Sharon	36	R. Titus
12/2-3	Cape Cod	32	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/21	Southwick	2	S. Kellogg

Scaup species
12/2-3 Cape Cod 1891 CCBC (B. Nikula)
King Eider
11/1-12/17 Rockport (A.P.) 1 m imm R. Heil + v.o.
11/12-12/13 Gloucester 1 m ad J. Soucy + v.o.
11/13 Nantucket 1 f fide E. Ray
12/23 Duxbury B. 1 m W. Petersen#
Common Eider
11/7 Rockport 2000 J. Berry#
11/12 Marshfield 150 G. d'Entremont
11/12 Boston H. 13280 TASL (M. Hall)
11/16 Salisbury 500 J. Berry
11/25 Westport 900+ M. Lynch#
11/25 N. Scituate 1000+ J. Hutchinson
12/2 Sandwich 620 M. Lynch#
12/3 Quincy Bay 600 G. d'Entremont
Harlequin Duck
thr Rockport (A.P.) 54 max v.o.
11/12 Squantum 1 m TASL (D. Larson)
11/12 Marshfield 2 G. d'Entremont
11/21 S. Boston 1 m R. Donovan#
11/22 Nantucket 35 fide E. Ray
11/24 Duxbury B. 2 W. + E. Lackey
11/25 N. Scituate 12 J. Hutchinson
12/2 Sandwich 2 M. Lynch#
Surf Scoter
11/1 Royalston 1 J. Morris-Siegel
11/1 Waltham 3 m M. Rines
11/1 Turners Falls 9 M. Taylor
11/1 Petersham 1 J. Morris-Siegel
11/4 Rockport (H.P.) 460 BBC (J. Nove)
11/9 Nantucket Sound 150 K. Blackshaw
11/12 Boston H. 390 TASL (M. Hall)
White-winged Scoter
11/4 Falmouth 250 R. Farrell
11/11 Rockport (A.P.) 400 K. Hartel
11/12 Boston H. 1616 TASL (M. Hall)
11/15 S. Quabbin 1 B. Kane
11/19 P'town 300 M. Halloran#
11/22 P.I. 200 J. Berry
11/22 Southwick 3 S. Kellogg
11/25 N. Scituate 350 J. Hutchinson
12/3 Quincy Bay 105 G. d'Entremont
Black Scoter
11/1 Petersham 15 J. Morris-Siegel
11/1 Camb. (F.P.) 1 m J. Barton
11/1 Turners Falls 21 M. Taylor
11/1 Gardner 7 T. Pirro
11/1 Royalston 15 J. Morris-Siegel
11/5 Dalton 1 T. Gagnon#
11/11 Rockport (A.P.) 78 K. Hartel
11/12 Marshfield 21 G. d'Entremont
11/22 P.I. 40+ J. Berry
11/23-12/2 Sharon 1 f R. Titus
12/7 Northampton 3 I. Dukovski
Long-tailed Duck
11/1 Turners Falls 1 m ad M. Taylor
11/11 Rockport (A.P.) 225 K. Hartel
11/12 Marshfield 76 G. d'Entremont
11/12 Barnstable (S.N.) 200 J. Liller#
11/12 Boston H. 87 TASL (M. Hall)
11/15 S. Quabbin 6 B. Kane
11/19 Sterling 1 f M. Lynch#
11/23 Nantucket 185,000 A. Charder
12/9 Boylston 1 J. Zumpfe#
12/23 Duxbury B. 180 W. Petersen#
Bufflehead
11/5 Pittsfield 38 Hoffmann Club
11/12 Boston H. 2177 TASL (M. Hall)
11/19 Duxbury 70 SSBC(D. Clapp)
11/20 E. Gloucester 52 J. Berry
11/23 Nahant 180 L. Pivacek
11/25 Acoaxet 409 M. Lynch#
12/2-3 Cape Cod 1970 CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/3 Braintree 30 S. Carey
12/3 Merrimac R. 280 M. Lynch#
Common Goldeneye
11/4 Southboro 32 M. Lynch#
11/12 Boston H. 53 TASL (M. Hall)
11/18 E. Quabbin 60 H. Allen
12/2-3 Cape Cod 121 CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/3 Wachusett Res. 75 M. Lynch#
12/3 Squantum 71 G. d'Entremont
12/3 Braintree 40+ S. Carey
12/9 Boylston 40 J. Zumpfe#
12/10 Nantucket 200 K. Blackshaw#
12/16 Agawam 43 S. Kellogg#
12/17 S. Hadley 38 W. Lafley
12/24 Gloucester (B.R.) 30+ P. + F. Vale
Barrow's Goldeneye
11/25-12/22 Falmouth 2 R. Lockwood#
12/3 Osterville 1 G. + A. Hirth
12/10 Nantucket 1 m K. Blackshaw#
12/16-31 Holyoke 1 B. Bieda + v.o.
12/23 Winthrop B. 2 m P. + F. Vale
12/27 Plymouth 1 J. Forbes
12/30 Gloucester (E.P.) 2 m J. Barber
Hooded Merganser
11/12 Marlboro 33 M. Lynch#
11/18 W. Brookfield 71 M. Lynch#
11/18 E. Quabbin 55 T. Gagnon
11/18 Winchester 40 R. LaFontaine
11/19 Worcester 113 M. Lynch#
12/2-3 Cape Cod 993 CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/3 Sharon 62 R. Titus
12/3 Pembroke 170 W. Petersen
12/5 Belmont 74 J. Miller
12/9 Boylston 80 J. Zumpfe#
12/23 S. Carver 16 K. Anderson
Red-breasted Merganser
11/5 Pittsfield (Onota) 3 T. Gagnon
11/12 Marshfield 57 G. d'Entremont
11/12 Boston H. 2285 TASL (M. Hall)
11/18 P.I. 200 J. Berry#
11/18 E. Quabbin 1 T. Gagnon
11/19 Duxbury 120 SSBC(D. Clapp)
11/23 P'town 1220 W. Ellison
11/25 Westport 595 M. Lynch#
12/2-3 Cape Cod 394 CCBC (B. Nikula)
Common Merganser
11/11 Wakefield 40+ P. + F. Vale
11/14 Waltham 160 M. Rines
11/17 Worcester 229 M. Lynch#
11/19, 12/3 Wachusett Res. 92, 43 M. Lynch#
12/2-3 Cape Cod 185 CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/9 Boylston 380 J. Zumpfe#
12/11 Quabbin (G40) 180 C. Buelow
12/29 Arlington 71 R. LaFontaine
12/30 Bridgewater 59 B. Nikula
Ruddy Duck
11/1 W. Newbury 235 J. Berry
11/1 Camb. (F.P.) 549 J. Barton
11/4 S. Monomoy 175 B. Nikula#
11/12 Boston H. 186 TASL (M. Hall)
11/12 Marlboro 959 M. Lynch#
11/18 W. Newbury 190 J. Berry
12/2-3 Cape Cod 293 CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/3 Pembroke 180 W. Petersen
12/7 Lynn 112 R. Heil
Osprey
11/4 Marlboro 1 E. Taylor
11/5 Marston Mills 1 S. Miller#
11/11 Braintree 1 S. Carey
11/19 Worcester 1 M. Lynch#
11/23 Wayland 1 K. Hamilton
11/28 Natick 1 B. Dockwoski
12/2 Falmouth 1 P. Kyle
12/16 Lynnfield 1 P. + F. Vale
Bald Eagle
11/3 Mt. Watatic 2 imm T. Pirro#
11/16 Quabbin (G22) 1 ad B. Lafley
11/17 Sunderland 1 ad V. Yurkunas
11/29 New Bedford H. 1 imm M. Sylvia
12/3 Wachusett Res. 1 1st yr M. Lynch#
12/10 Newbypt. 1 ad A. Burns
12/10 Lakeville 2 W. Petersen

Bald Eagle (continued)

12/11	Quabbin (G40)	2 ad	C. Buelow
12/25	Amesbury	1 3yr	P. + F. Vale
12/31	Turners Falls	1 ad	V. Yurkunas

Northern Harrier

11/1	Groton	2	T. Pirro
11/5	GMNWR	2	SSBC (T. O'Neil)
11/11	Salisbury	2	P. + F. Vale
11/12, 12/24	Rowley	3, 3	J. Berry
11/19	Wellfleet H.	15	B. Nikula
11/24, 12/23	P.I.	4, 5	P. Roberts
11/24,12/15	DWWS	3, 5	D. Furbish
11/25	Westport	2	M. Lynch#
12/16	Agawam	1	S. Kellogg#
12/24	W. Bridgewater	3	M. Faherty
12/28	Newbury	5	D. Williams
12/30	Bridgewater MCI	4	K. Anderson#

Sharp-shinned Hawk

11/3	Mt. Watatic	13	T. Pirro#
11/15	Bourne	2	BBC (R. Stymeist)
12/3	Salisbury	2	P. + F. Vale
thr	Reports of indiv. from 13 locations		

Cooper's Hawk

11/7	Groton	2	T. Pirro
12/2	Mt. Wachusett	3 ad	T. Carrolan
12/10	New Braintree	2	C. Buelow
thr	Reports of indiv. from 18 locations		

Northern Goshawk

11/1	Gardner	1	T. Pirro
11/1	Granville	1	T. Swochak#
11/5	Northampton	1	T. Gagnon
11/16	Groton	2 ad	T. Pirro
11/22	P.I.	1	MAS (N. Soulette#)
12/2	Mt. Wachusett	1 ad	T. Carrolan
12/5	Harvard	1	S. Hardy
12/29	Pepperell	1	E. Stromsted
12/thr	Oak Bluffs	1	S. Yurkus + v.o.

Red-shouldered Hawk

11/1, 8	Groton	3, 2	T. Pirro
11/3	Mt. Watatic	7	T. Pirro#
11/6	Granville	10	T. Swochak#
11/7	E. Middleboro	1	K. Anderson
11/12	Westford	1	L. Clark#
11/12, 12/2	Mt. Wachusett	9, 4	T. Carrolan
11/18	Gardner	2	T. Pirro
11/24	Stoughton	1 imm	G. d'Entremont
11/25	Bourne	1	R. Lockwood#
12/5	Northfield	1 ad	M. Taylor
12/5	Hanover	1	W. Petersen
12/9	Rowley	1 ad	R. Stymeist
12/thr	DWWS	1 ad	D. Furbish

Red-tailed Hawk

11/1, 6	Granville	22, 41	T. Swochak#
11/3	Mt. Watatic	50	T. Pirro#
11/12	Mt. Watatic	33	P. Staub
11/12, 12/2	Mt. Wachusett	52, 28	T. Carrolan
11/18	Gardner	21	T. Pirro
12/10	Ipswich	10	R. Heil

Rough-legged Hawk

11/8	Rowley	1 lt	J. Berry
11/12	Salisbury	1	ABNC (M. Taylor#)
11/24, 12/16	P.I.	1 lt	P. Roberts
11/29	DWWS	1 dk	D. Furbish
12/2, 24	Northampton	1, 4	T. Gagnon
12/2	Saugus	1	P. + F. Vale
12/2	Mt. Wachusett	1 imm lt	T. Carrolan
12/23	Lexington	1 dk	J. Andrews
12/25	Northfield	1	M. Taylor
12/27	Lee	1	D. St. James
12/28	Newbury	1	D. Williams
12/29	Pittsfield	1	G. Shampang
12/31	Concord	1 lt	D. Furbish#

Golden Eagle

11/18	Gardner	1 imm	T. Pirro
11/20	Marshfield	1	D. Ludlow
11/20	Mt Tom	1	R. Bieda
12/3	Pelham	1	R. Bieda

American Kestrel

11/15	Salisbury	1	MAS (N. Soulette#)
11/24	Westwood	1	S. Donovan
11/25	Hingham	1	J. Hutchison#
11/26	S. Boston	1	R. Donovan#
12/11	Wakefield	1	F. Vale
12/24	Canton	1	D. Furbish

Merlin

11/4	P.I.	2	R. Lockwood#
11/5	Edgartown	3	V. Laux#
11/12	P'town (R.P)	3	K. Hamilton#
11/25	Chatham (S.B.)	2	R. Donovan
thr	Reports of indiv. from 18 locations		

Peregrine Falcon

11/2	Concord	1	B. Stevens
11/4	S. Monomoy	1 ad	B. Nikula#
11/6, 12/5	Amherst	2, 1	I. Dukovski
11/8	Rowley	1 ad	J. Berry
11/11	Braintree	1	S. Carey
11/11	Katama	1	A. Keith
11/12	P'town (R.P)	1	K. Hamilton#
11/17-30	Chatham (S.B.)	1 imm	B. Nikula#
11/19, 12/23	P.I.	1, 2	P. Roberts
11/29	Uxbridge	1	J. Barthel
12/17	Sunderland	1	A . Richards
12/24	Worcester	1	M. Lynch#
12/26	Newbury	1 imm.	R. Heil
12/29	Nantucket	1	K. Blackshaw

Gyrfalcon (details submitted) *

11/18-12/5	P.I.	1 sub ad	R. Harlow + v.o.

Ring-necked Pheasant

11/4	Ipswich	1 m	J. Berry#
12/3	Squantum	1	G. d'Entremont
12/5	W. Townsend	1	T. Pirro

Ruffed Grouse

11/6	W. Bridgewater	1	G. d'Entremont
11/7	Stow	1	R. Lockwood
12/3	Wachusett Res.	1	M. Lynch#
12/11	Quabbin (G40)	10	C. Buelow

Wild Turkey

11/6	Stoughton	1	R. Titus
11/16	Quabbin (G22)	5	B. Lafley
11/17	Winchester	6	M. Rines
11/22	Lexington	15	J. Forbes
11/29	DWWS	4	D. Furbish
12/11	Concord	1	D. Diggins
12/14-26	Ipswich	9	J. Berry

Northern Bobwhite

11/5	Marston Mills	15	S. Miller#
11/14	Bolton	2	F. + M. Howes
11/25	WBWS	7	D. + S. Larson

Yellow Rail (no details) *

11/28	Nantucket	1	E. Ray#

Clapper Rail

12/16	Bourne	1	W. Petersen#

Virginia Rail

11/13	Dorchester	1	R. Donovan#
11/24	P'town	2	W. Ellison
11/28	Nantucket	3	K. Blackshaw#
12/17	Northampton	1	T. Gagnon
12/19	S. Peabody	1	R. Heil

Sora

11/2	Chilmark	1	A. Keith

Common Moorhen

11/5	Nantucket	1 imm	fide E. Ray

American Coot

11/4	Cheshire	2	S. Kellogg
11/4, 12/10	Arlington	137, 150	M. Rines
11/7	Gill	2	H. Allen
11/12	Marlboro	5	M. Lynch#
11/12	Randolph	11	G. d'Entremont
11/24	P.I.	8	P. Roberts
12/2	Wakefield	3	P. + F. Vale
12/2-3	Cape Cod	44	CCBC (B. Nikula)
12/7	Lynn	9	R. Heil
12/10-29	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg
12/27	Plymouth	2	J. Forbes

Sandhill Crane
11/2 Gill 1 R. Coyle
Black-bellied Plover
11/4 Ipswich 67 J. Berry#
11/11 Newbury 12 P. + F. Vale
11/12 Boston H. 52 TASL (M. Hall)
11/12 Rowley 26 J. Berry
11/17 Edgartown 350 A. Keith#
11/19 Duxbury 6 SSBC(D. Clapp)
11/20 P'town 60 C. Buelow
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 900 R. Donovan
11/28 Dennis 15 K. Hamilton
American Golden-Plover
11/19 GMNWR 1 S. Perkins#
Semipalmated Plover
11/4 P.I. 8 R. Lockwood#
12/23 Winthrop 1 P. + F. Vale
Killdeer
11/5 Clinton 7 R. Lockwood
11/9 Marlboro 6 M. Harvey
11/11 Worcester 1 M. Lynch#
11/24 Concord 1 M. Rines
11/26 Boston 1 R. Stymeist
12/10 Ipswich 1 R. Heil
12/17 S. Hadley 1 W. Lafley
American Oystercatcher
11/1-20 Chatham 16 max B. Nikula#
11/17 Edgartown 9 A. Keith
11/22 Nantucket 1 fide E. Ray
Greater Yellowlegs
11/4 Ipswich 4 J. Berry#
11/9 Marlboro 1 M. Harvey
11/11 Newbury 12 P. + F. Vale
11/12 Rowley 15 J. Berry
11/12 Boston H. 73 TASL (M. Hall)
11/16 Edgartown 7 G. Daniels
11/18 E. Quabbin 1 T. Gagnon#
11/19 N. Scituate 1 D. Clapp
11/19 Duxbury 1 SSBC (D. Clapp)
12/3 P.I. 2 BBC (S. Grinley)
Lesser Yellowlegs
12/5, 26 P.I./Newbypt 3, 1 R. Heil
Willet
11/1-30 Chatham 2 v.o.
12/17 Chatham 2 V. Laux#
Marbled Godwit
11/1-30 Chatham 5 max fide B. Nikula
12/1-12/17 Chatham 1 fide B. Nikula
Ruddy Turnstone
11/4 Nantucket 50 fide E. Ray
11/5, 25 Chatham 3, 2 B. Nikula
11/12 Boston H. 42 TASL (M. Hall)
11/20 E. Gloucester 1 J. Berry
11/25 P'town 1 D. + S. Larson
12/19 Sandwich 10 P.Kyle
Red Knot
11/3-30 Edgartown 2 G. Daniels#
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 200+ B. Nikula
Sanderling
11/4 Ipswich 525 J. Berry#
11/11 P.I. 120 P. + F. Vale
11/12 Boston H. 366 TASL (M. Hall)
11/20 P'town 600 C. Buelow
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 1200+ B. Nikula
11/28 Dennis 450 K. Hamilton
12/29 Nantucket 200 K. Blackshaw
Semipalmated Sandpiper
11/11 P.I. 8 P. + F. Vale
Western Sandpiper
11/12 Boston H. 1 TASL (M. Hall)
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 2 R. Donovan
Least Sandpiper
11/11 Newbury 5 P. + F. Vale
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 1 R. Donovan#
White-rumped Sandpiper
11/4 P.I. 13 R. Lockwood#
11/4 S. Monomoy 3 B. Nikula#
11/5 Nantucket 3 fide E. Ray
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 3+ B. Nikula
Pectoral Sandpiper
11/2 GMNWR 23 M. Rines
11/4 P.I. 2 R. Lockwood#
11/11 Katama 2 A. Keith
11/17 Edgartown 1 A. Keith#
Purple Sandpiper
11/12 Boston H. 6 TASL (M. Hall)
11/16 Chilmark 4 T. Rivers
11/17 Oak Bluffs 4 A. Keith
11/19 Westport 3 P. Donahue#
11/20 E. Gloucester 5 J. Berry
11/25 N. Scituate 50 J. Hutchinson
11/27 Dennis 1 S. Miller#
12/3 Acoaxet 15 R. Farrell#
12/10 Nantucket 7 K. Blackshaw#
12/16 Rockport 20 J. Berry#
Dunlin
11/4 P.I. 122 R. Lockwood#
11/4 Ipswich 200 J. Berry#
11/12 Rowley 263 J. Berry
11/12 Boston H. 13 TASL (M. Hall)
11/18 Newbypt 300+ J. Berry#
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 2000+ R. Donovan#
11/25 Acoaxet 94 M. Lynch#
11/28 Dennis 175 K. Hamilton
12/16 Rockport 40 J. Berry#
dowitcher species
11/4 P.I. 3 R. Lockwood#
11/12 Eastham (F.E.) 3 B. Nikula#
Common Snipe
11/12 Hardwick 1 C. Buelow
11/15 Bourne 1 BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/22 Worc. (BMB) 1 J. Liller
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 1 R. Donovan#
11/25 Marstons Mills 3 J. Liller#
12/5 Newbypt. 7 R. Heil
American Woodcock
11/5 New Braintree 1 C. Buelow
11/14 Sterling 1 M. Gardler#
11/22 Lexington 1 M. Rines
12/3 Danvers 1 R. Stymeist
12/3 Sharon 1 R. Titus
12/23 DWWS 1 D. Furbish
Red-necked Phalarope
11/12 Rockport (H.P.) 4 I. Dukovski
Red Phalarope
11/30 Rockport (A.P.) 11 R. Heil
Pomarine Jaeger
11/11 Barnstable (S.N.) 1 K. Hamilton#
11/12 Eastham (F.E.) 12 B. Nikula#
11/12 P'town (R.P) 3 K. Hamilton#
11/30 Rockport (A.P.) 44 R. Heil
12/1 Monomoy 12 K. Hartel
12/2 Nantucket 1 2W G. Wood#
12/12, 16, 17 Rockport (A.P.) 4, 1, 1 R. Heil
Parasitic Jaeger
11/4 S. Monomoy 1 B. Nikula#
11/12 P'town (R.P) 2 K. Hamilton#
11/12 Eastham (F.E.) 1 B. Nikula#
12/2 Nantucket 1 G. Wood#
jaeger species
11/4 S. Monomoy 2 B. Nikula#
11/4 Chatham 5 B. Nikula#
11/11, 12 Eastham (F.E.) 3, 17 B. Nikula
11/27, 12/16 Rockport 1, 1 J. Berry
12/10 P'town 1+ B. Nikula
Laughing Gull
11/4, 11/19 Chatham 200, 15 B. Nikula#
11/9 Hyannis H. 12 K. Blackshaw
11/10 Chappaquiddick 150 V. Laux#
11/11 Rockport (A.P.) 1 K. Hartel
11/11 Eastham (F.E.) 2 K. Hamilton#
11/13 Nantucket 40 fide E. Ray
12/2 Sandwich 1 1W M. Lynch#
12/10 P'town 2 ad B. Nikula
Little Gull
11/7 Oak Bluffs 1 ad V. Laux

Little Gull (continued)
11/10 Katama 4 ad V. Laux
11/11-12 Eastham (F.E.) 1 ad K. Hamilton#
11/19-25 Chatham 1 ad B. Nikula#
Black-headed Gull
11/8 P.I. 1 2W G. Leet#
11/11 Eastham (F.E.) 1 imm K. Hamilton#
11/12 Wellfleet H. 1 1W B. Nikula#
11/12 Winthrop 1 TASL (P. + F. Vale)
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 1 ad R. Donovan#
11/29 Lynn 1 ad J. Quigley
12/16-30 Rockport (A.P.) 1 1W R. Heil
12/23 Centerville 1 ad G. Hirth
12/26 Sandwich 1 1W J. Glydon
12/30 Gloucester (E.P.) 1 J. Barber
Bonaparte's Gull
11/1 Gill 8 M. Taylor
11/4 S. Monomoy 150+ B. Nikula#
11/4 Ipswich 165 J. Berry#
11/7 Lynn 300+ J. Quigley
11/12 Boston H. 208 TASL (M. Hall)
11/16 Salisbury 145 J. Berry
11/19, 12/10 Chatham 350, 500 B. Nikula
11/22 P.I. 160 J. Berry
11/25 Westport 100+ M. Lynch#
11/25 N. Monomoy 1200+ B. Nikula
11/25 Acoaxet 80 M. Lynch#
11/28 Dennis 450 K. Hamilton
11/30, 12/17 Rockport (A.P.) 102, 74 R. Heil
12/2 Sandwich 130 M. Lynch#
Iceland Gull
11/7 Edgartown 1 ad V. Laux
11/7 Rockport 1 imm J. Berry#
11/13 Lynn 1 1W J. Quigley
11/19 Hadley 1 1W S. Surner
11/22 Nantucket 3 fide E. Ray
11/24 P'town 6 W. Ellison
11/27-12/31 Oak Bluffs 1 M. Pelikan
12/5 Newbypt. 2 ad R. Heil
12/16 Gloucester (E.P.) 1 E. Nelson-Melby#
Lesser Black-backed Gull
11/1 Edgartown 2 V. Laux#
11/4 S. Monomoy 25+ B. Nikula#
11/19 Hadley 3 S. Surner
11/19 N. Truro 2 1W B. Nikula
11/22 Sharon 1 ad R. Titus
11/22 Nantucket 3 fide E. Ray
11/24 P'town 2 W. Ellison
11/24 Barnstable (S.N.) 1 J. Liller#
11/25 N. Monomoy 3 B. Nikula
12/2 Sandwich 1 1W M. Lynch#
12/10 Chatham 1 2W B. Nikula
12/20 Acton 1 ad M. Resch
12/30 Raynham 2 R. Titus
Herring Gull x Lesser Black-backed Gull
11/17 Katama 1 M. Pelikan
Glaucous Gull
11/10 Rockport (A.P.) 1 ad K. Hamilton#
11/18 P'town (R.P.) 1 S. Moore#
11/20 E. Gloucester 1 im J. Berry
12/17 Hadley 1 T. Clark
12/20 Acton 1 1W M. Resch
12/30 Raynham 1 R. Titus
12/31 Arlington 1 imm K. Hartel#
Black-legged Kittiwake
11/4 S. Monomoy 350+ B. Nikula#
11/4 Chatham 300+ B. Nikula#
11/11 Wellfleet H. 20 S. Miller#
11/11 Salisbury 3 P. + F. Vale
11/11 Barnstable (S.N.) 45 K. Hamilton#
11/11, 12 Eastham (F.E.) 320, 520 B. Nikula
11/12 Marshfield 3 G. d'Entremont
11/12 P'town (R.P) 650 K. Hamilton#
11/30, 12/12 Rockport (A.P.) 380, 330 R. Heil
Common Tern
11/1 Edgartown 1 A. Keith
11/12 Barnstable H. 1 J. Liller#
11/25 N. Monomoy 1 B. Nikula
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 1 imm R. Donovan#
Dovekie
11/5 Oak Bluffs 1 fide V. Laux
11/11 Barnstable (S.N.) 12 D. Comeau#
11/11 Rockport (A.P.) 16 K. Hartel
11/11 Wellfleet H. 35 S. Miller#
11/12 Marshfield 3 G. d'Entremont
11/12 Eastham (F.E.) 110 B. Nikula#
11/12 Boston H. 2 TASL (M. Hall)
11/13 Nantucket 2 fide E. Ray
11/18 P'town 5 S. Moore#
12/16 Gloucester (E.P.) 6 E. Nelson-Melby#
12/17, 20 Rockport (A.P.) 62, 26 R. Heil
Common Murre
11/3 Rockport (A.P.) 1 J. Soucy#
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 1 R. Donovan#
12/10 Nantucket 1 K. Blackshaw#
12/30 Rockport (A.P) 1 R. Heil
Thick-billed Murre
11/3 Rockport (A.P.) 2 J. Soucy#
11/18 Salisbury 3 J. Barton#
11/18 P'town 3 S. Moore#
11/19 N. Scituate 1 D. Clapp#
12/16, 30 Rockport (A.P.) 8, 2 R. Heil
Razorbill
11/11, 12 Eastham (F.E.) 40, 400 B. Nikula#
11/11 Wellfleet H. 45 S. Miller#
11/11 Barnstable (S.N.) 86 K. Hamilton#
11/12 P'town (R.P) 680 K. Hamilton#
11/12 Marshfield 10 G. d'Entremont
11/12 Boston H. 9 TASL (M. Hall)
11/18 Salisbury 4 J. Berry#
11/19 N. Scituate 3 D. Clapp#
11/30, 12/12 Rockport (A.P.) 132, 445 R. Heil
12/1 Monomoy 12 K. Hartel
12/4 P.I. 20 D. Sibley
12/10 P'town 30 B. Nikula
12/17, 30 Rockport (A.P.) 460, 215 R. Heil
Black Guillemot
11/10 Cape Ann 8 K. Hamilton#
11/11 Barnstable (S.N.) 3 K. Hamilton#
11/12 Gloucester 4 I. Dukovski
11/12 Marshfield 2 G. d'Entremont#
11/12 Boston H. 1 TASL (M. Hall)
11/19 N. Scituate 2 D. Clapp#
12/16, 30 Rockport (A.P.) 17, 11 R. Heil
12/23 Duxbury B. 4 W. Petersen#
12/24 Gloucester (B.R.) 25 P. + F. Vale
Atlantic Puffin
11/11 Barnstable (S.N.) 1 D. Comeau#
11/12 P'town (R.P) 4 K. Hamilton#
12/2 Barnstable (S.N.) 1 M. Lynch#
12/2 Georges Bank 1 K. Hartel
large alcid species
11/11, 12 Eastham (F.E.) 65, 230 B. Nikula#
11/19, 12/10 P'town 70, 300 B. Nikula
12/17, 30 Rockport (A.P.) 75, 85 R. Heil

Dovekies by David A. Sibley

OWLS THROUGH GROSBEAKS

A Barn Owl flushed from the dunes along South Beach in Chatham this November was unexpected: this species is rare outside of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. On the islands these birds have been successful using manmade nesting boxes. Indications were good for a decent flight of Snowy Owls with up to 14 birds noted during the period, including one bird in Pittsfield, the seventh Berkshire County record since 1972 and the first in the county since 1992. Interesting were the reports of two dead Northern Saw-whet Owls, both picked up on the same day on Cape Cod. A total of 60 Saw-whet Owls was tabulated on the Christmas Bird Count.

The **Rufous Hummingbird** that returned to the Agawam feeder on October 5 continued until late November when it was captured and brought to the same greenhouse in Northampton where it has spent the last five years as a winter resident! A second ***selasphorus*** hummingbird, first found on October 7, continued at a Worcester feeder through November 19. For the third year in a row sapsuckers continue to be more in evidence during the early winter months than in the not-too-distant past when they were considered rare after October.

The highlight of the season, make that the year, was the discovery of a **Tropical Kingbird** at World's End in Hingham on November 8 where it remained until November 30. This represents the first state report of this species, and has already been accepted by the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee. The original observers of this bird must be commended for their careful observations, realizing that this was not a typical Western Kingbird. All indications are that this was a hatch-year bird, presumably of northern hemisphere origin (a bird of South America would be at least nine months old and its plumage quite worn). Several photographs, videos, and sound recordings were obtained during its nearly month-long stay. The differences between Tropical and Couch's kingbirds are so subtle and overlapping, especially for a juvenile bird, that it was essential that good voice recordings were obtained. Interesting was a report of another Tropical Kingbird on November 10 at Kiptopeke State Park on the Delmarva Peninsula. There were five reports of Western Kingbirds compared with just one reported last year during the same period. A Great-crested Flycatcher reported on November 18 was nearly six weeks beyond the normal departure date for that species.

It was another poor fall for Red-breasted Nuthatch, the fourth year in a row. Northern Shrikes were noted in many locations, although not as many as during a good flight year. In western Massachusetts it was the poorest fall ever for Brown Creepers, while Carolina Wrens continued to expand their range throughout the state, especially out west with 26 noted on the Springfield CBC. Eastern Bluebird numbers were very encouraging with good size flocks noted from many locations. The **Mountain Bluebird** first found on October 27 remained until November 2 at the Concord sewer beds. This was just the fifth occurrence of this species in Massachusetts.

The weather was unusually cold during the period, unlike last year's record warmth; nevertheless several species lingered past their normal departure dates: a Warbling Vireo in South Boston, a Northern Parula in Vineyard Haven, a Magnolia Warbler in Boston, an American Redstart in Melrose and a Bobolink in Sudbury. Among the more unusual reports were **Western Tanagers** from Gloucester and East Falmouth, a **Henslow's Sparrow** from Dorchester, and a **Sedge Wren** from Nantucket. The winter finch flight was sparse with only one significant Pine Siskin flock, only one report of Red Crossbill, and one flock of Common Redpolls. R.H.S.

Corrigendum

In the summary to the September/October sightings, the following was misleading: Rick Heil commented that this race is a regular migrant to our area and may comprise up to 10% of migrant White-crowns.

It should have read: Rick Heil commented that he is beginning to think that this race is a regular migrant to our area and may comprise from one to perhaps ten percent of migrant White-crowns.

Barn Owl
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 1 R. Donovan#
Eastern Screech-Owl
11/4 Ipswich 2 J. Berry
11/4 Northampton 2 J. Schofer#
11/25 Mt.A. 2 R. Stymeist
12/15 Stoneham 2 D. + I. Jewell
12/16 Randolph 4 G. d'Entremont
12/17 Rockport 3 P. Akers
Great Horned Owl
11/4 Concord 2 L. Clark
11/25 Marstons Mills 1 pr J. Liller
11/26 Ipswich 3 J. Berry
12/4 Wayland 2 G. Long
12/4 DWWS 3 D. Furbish
12/7 Ipswich 2 J. Berry
thr Reports of indiv. from 14 locations.
Snowy Owl
11/4 Milton 1 N. Smith
11/16-24 Duxbury B. 1-2 K. Sejkora
11/17-30 Chatham (S.B.) 2 max v.o.
11/18-12/1 P.I. 1 v.o.
12/3 Acoaxet 1 R. Farrell#
12/3 Boston (Logan) 4 N. Smith
12/3-20 Rockport 1 v.o.
12/3 Westport 1 E. Salmela
12/12 Pittsfield 1 R. Laubach
Barred Owl
11/4-28 Boston 1 M. Rubino
11/13-12/15 Stoneham 1 D. + I. Jewell
11/28 Wayland 1 G. Long
12/10 Barre F.D./Rutland S.P. 1 M. Lynch#
Long-eared Owl
thr DWWS 2 D. Furbish
Short-eared Owl
11/5 Gloucester 1 P. + F. Vale
11/19 P.I. 1 G. Tepke
11/19 Cumb. Farms 1 W. Petersen
11/19 S. Dart. (A.Pd) 1 P. Donahue#
12/3 Boston (Logan) 1 N. Smith
12/thr DWWS 2 D. Furbish
Northern Saw-whet Owl
11/2 Pelham 1 P. Yeskie
11/12 Edgartown 1 A. Keith
12/3 Marstons Mills 1 dead S. Clifton
12/3 Centerville 1 dead G. Hirth
12/23 Westfield 1 D. McLain
12/29 Granville 1 S. Kellogg#
Rufous Hummingbird *
11/1-28 Agawam 1 fide S. Kellogg
Selasphorus species (details submitted) *
11/1-19 Worcester 1 A. Pax
Belted Kingfisher
11/4 Wachusett Res. 2 M. Lynch#
11/15 Bourne-N.Falm 5 BBC (R. Stymeist)
Red-bellied Woodpecker
12/23 Pepperell 4 E. Stromsted
12/23 N. Marshfield 4 G. d'Entremont#
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
11/9 Chilmark 1 A. Keith
11/12 Mattapoisett 1 J. Young
11/12, 25 Acushnet, Truro 1, 1 J. Young
11/13 Wayland 1 m G. Long
11/20 Boston 1 J. Dekker
12/2 Mt.A. 2 R. Stymeist
12/4-12/31 Gloucester 1 ad f D. Sandee
12/8 Brookline 1 H. Wiggin
12/15-31 Tisbury 1 P. Uhlendorf
12/24 Truro 1 J. Young
Hairy Woodpecker
11/4 Southboro 3 M. Lynch#
11/19 Royalston 3 M. Lynch#
11/28 Concord 3 R. Lockwood
12/10 Barre F.D./Rutland S.P. 1 M. Lynch#
12/23 Pepperell 6 E. Stromsted
12/30 Sturbridge 3 R. Stymeist#
Northern Flicker
11/12 Hingham 8 M. Lynch#
11/25 Mt.A. 4 R. Stymeist
12/3 P.I. 4 M. Lynch#
12/10 New Braintree 5 C. Buelow
12/16 Rockport 4 S. Hedman#
Pileated Woodpecker
11/3 Mt. Watatic 1 T. Pirro#
11/4 Wachusett Res. 1 M. Lynch#
12/4 Wayland 1 m G. Long
12/11 Quabbin (G40) 2 C. Buelow
12/13 Manchester 1 S. Hedman
12/27 Pepperell 1 M. Resch
12/28 Tyngsboro 1 M. Amrich
12/28 Westford 1 S. Selesky
Eastern Phoebe
11/4 Southboro 1 M. Lynch#
11/18 Dedham 1 A. Joslin
11/25 Westport 1 M. Lynch#
12/10 Ipswich 1 R. Heil
12/16 Wareham 1 W. Petersen#
12/23 Granville 1 P. + J. McMahon
12/23 Groton 1 E. Stromsted
Great crested Flycatcher (details submitted)
11/18 Hingham 1 R. Ferren#
Tropical Kingbird (details submitted) *
11/8-30 Hingham 1 ph, v S. Avery + v.o.
Western Kingbird
11/11 Halifax 1 E. Morrier
11/22 Wellfleet 1 R. Prescott
11/22-24 Concord 1 M. Rines#
11/25 Truro 1 J. Young
12/3 W. Tisbury 1 V. Laux#
Northern Shrike
11/5 Windsor 2 T. Gagnon#
11/18 S. Quabbin 2 imm M. Lynch#
11/25 P.I. 3 V. Yurkunas
12/10 Barre F.D./Rutland S.P. 2 M. Lynch#
12/11 Quabbin (G40) 2 imm C. Buelow
thr Reports of indiv. from 20 locations
Warbling Vireo
11/7 S. Boston 1 R. Donovan#
American Crow
11/5 Framingham 5000+ E. Taylor
11/12 Framingham 6000+ E. Taylor
12/24 Newton 1500+ A. Joslin
12/24 Brighton 3500+ A. Joslin
12/thr Framingham 11,000+ E. Taylor
Fish Crow
11/4 Mattapan 10 G. d'Entremont#
11/15 Bourne 7 BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/19 Hadley 1 S. Surner

Fish Crow (continued)

11/29	Hingham	2	R. Heil
12/1-31	Seekonk	1-2	R. Farrell
12/10	Braintree	2	G. d'Entremont
12/16	Longmeadow	1	J. Hutchison
12/24	Newton	50+	A. Joslin
12/thr	Watertown	65 max	R. Stymeist

Common Raven

11/1	Webster	1	J. Meyers
11/6	Maynard	2	L. Nachtrab
11/12	Mt. Watatic	12	P. Staub
11/15	Boxford	1	J. MacDougall
11/18	Gardner	1	T. Pirro
11/20	Dedham	1	B. Allen
12/1	Wakefield	1	F. Vale
12/2	Peabody	1	P. Roberts
12/2	Pepperell	1	M. Resch
12/10	Barre F.D./Rutland S.P.	3	M. Lynch#
12/12	Quabbin (G43)	1	C. Buelow
12/31	Northboro	1	S. Moore

Horned Lark

11/3	Mt. Watatic	20	T. Pirro#
11/11	Eastham (F.E.)	18	K. Hamilton#
11/11, 18	Salisbury	4, 20	P. + F. Vale
11/12	P'town (R.P)	16	K. Hamilton#
11/14	Bolton Flats	26	K. Hamilton#
11/21	Lincoln	61	M. Rines
11/23	Scusset	10	J. Kricher
11/24	Concord	55	M. Rines
11/25	Westport	13	M. Lynch#
12/10	Cumb. Farms	100	W. Petersen
12/16	P.I.	30	M. Resch

Tree Swallow

11/5	Nantucket	2	fide E. Ray
11/14	Bolton Flats	8	K. Hamilton#
11/25	Framingham	2	K. Hamilton#
11/25	Wayland	3	K. Hamilton

Red-breasted Nuthatch

11/1	Melrose	2	BBC (D. + I. Jewell)
11/12	Stow	5	R. Lockwood
11/15	Bourne	2	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/19	Royalston	2	M. Lynch#
12/3	Stoneham	2	R. Stymeist
12/10	Barre F.D./Rutland S.P.	31	M. Lynch#
12/11	Quabbin (G40)	2	C. Buelow

Brown Creeper

11/4	Southboro	3	M. Lynch#
11/19	Royalston	4	M. Lynch#
11/28	Concord	2	D. Diggins
11/28	Wayland	6	G. Long
12/3	Stoneham	2	R. Stymeist
12/10	Barre F.D./Rutland S.P.	7	M. Lynch#
12/11	Quabbin (G40)	8	C. Buelow
12/23	Pepperell	2	E. Stromsted

Carolina Wren

11/4	Southboro	4	M. Lynch#
11/4	Lexington	7	M. Rines
11/7	Rockport	4	J. Berry#
11/8-24	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg
11/12	Erving	1	V. Yurkunas
11/15	Bourne-N.Falm	26	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/25	Mt.A.	4	R. Stymeist
11/29	Hingham	7	R. Heil
12/2	Randolph	4	G. d'Entremont
12/3	Westport	12	E. Salmela
12/10	Braintree	4	G. d'Entremont
12/23	N. Marshfield	18	G. d'Entremont#
12/30	Bridgewater	11	K. Anderson#
12/30	Charlton	2	R. Stymeist#

House Wren

11/12	Waltham	1	P. + F. Vale
12/16	Braintree	1	G. d'Entremont#

Winter Wren

11/19	Lexington	2	M. Rines#
11/28	E. Middleboro	4	K. Anderson
11/29	Hingham	2	R. Heil
12/3	Westport	2	E. Salmela
12/3	Stoneham	2	R. Stymeist
12/10	New Braintree	5	C. Buelow
12/11	Marblehead	6	R. Heil
12/19	S. Peabody	3	R. Heil
thr	Reports of indiv. from 18 locations		

Sedge Wren

11/28	Nantucket	1	E. Ray#

Marsh Wren

11/2	DWWS	1	R. Titus
11/13	Katama	1	A. Keith
11/28	Nantucket	1	K. Blackshaw#

Golden-crowned Kinglet

11/4	Southboro	33	M. Lynch#
11/15	Bourne-N.Falm	14	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/18	S. Quabbin	16	M. Lynch#
11/20	Boston	10	J. Dekker
12/10	Barre F.D./Rutland S.P.	43	M. Lynch#
12/11	Quabbin (G40)	30	C. Buelow
12/23	N. Marshfield	23	G. d'Entremont#

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

11/2	Marshfield	2	R. Titus
11/4	Southboro	9	M. Lynch#
11/7	Stow	2	R. Lockwood
11/15	Bourne-N.Falm	2	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/20	Boston	10	J. Dekker
12/9	Melrose	2	D. + I. Jewell
12/9	Rowley	1	R. Stymeist
12/11	Marblehead	3	R. Heil
12/16	Baldwinville	1	T. Pirro
12/16	Southwick	1	R. Packard

Eastern Bluebird

11/4	Wachusett Res.	13	M. Lynch#
11/5	Marston Mills	30	S. Miller#
11/12	Hardwick	22	C. Buelow
11/18	S. Quabbin	14	M. Lynch#
11/19	New Braintree	25	C. Buelow
11/21	Carver	36	D. Larson
11/24	Concord	12	M. Rines
11/29	Hingham	15	R. Heil
11/23	E. Dennis	20	J. O'Neil
11/25-30	Chilmark	70	fide V. Laux
12/10	New Braintree	10	C. Buelow
12/23	Pepperell	10	E. Stromsted

Mountain Bluebird (details submitted) *

11/1-2	Concord	1 ph	M. Rines + v.o.

Hermit Thrush

11/4	Stoneham	7	R. Stymeist#
11/6	Boston	7	J. Miller
11/6	Charlestown	7	B. Miller
11/15	Bourne-N.Falm	7	BBC (R. Stymeist)
11/27	Medford	8	M. Rines
12/3	Westport	10	E. Salmela
12/9-31	Athol	1	R. Coyle
12/10	Barre F.D./Rutland S.P.	4	M. Lynch#
12/10	Ipswich	3	R. Heil
12/11	Marblehead	2	R. Heil
12/23	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg#
12/23	N. Marshfield	6	G. d'Entremont#
12/23	Westfield	1	D. McLain

American Robin

11/15	Boston (Fens)	500	K. Hudson
12/3	Boston	1900	K. Hudson
12/10	New Braintree	150	C. Buelow
12/19	S. Peabody	200+	R. Heil
12/27	Pepperell	481+	M. Resch

Gray Catbird

11/25	Falmouth	2	R. Lockwood#
12/3	Westport	4	E. Salmela
12/11	Marblehead	1	R. Heil
12/11	Stoneham	2	D. + I. Jewell
12/16	Holyoke	1	T. Gagnon
12/19	S. Peabody	1	R. Heil
12/21	Lexington	1	J. Forbes
12/26	Newbury	2	R. Heil
12/30	Easthampton	1	K. Allie
12/30	Boylston	1	P. Metras#

Brown Thrasher

11/25	Lexington	1	M. Rines

American Pipit
11/2 Gill 2 M. Fairbrother
11/2 GMNWR 120 M. Rines
11/4 Quabbin 40 B. Kane
11/5 New Braintree 100 C. Buelow
11/6 Cumb. Farms 15 K. Anderson
11/8 P.I. 6 G. Leet#
11/18 Lincoln 15 M. Rines
12/10 Cumb. Farms 25 W. Petersen
12/16 Gloucester 9 R. Heil
12/26 Hyannis 3 B. Nikula#

Cedar Waxwing
11/5 Brookfield 50 M. Lynch#
11/8 Newbury 50 D. + I. Jewell
11/29 Hingham 100 R. Heil
12/10 Ipswich 240 R. Heil
12/19 Adams 300 R. Rancatti
12/25 W. Newbury 75 P. + F. Vale
12/29 Pepperell 135 E. Stromsted

Orange-crowned Warbler
11/4 Melrose 1 P. + F. Vale
11/12, 22 Medford 1 R. LaFontaine
11/20 Belmont 1 M. Rines
11/22 Boston (Pub. G.) 1 K. Hudson
11/25 Falmouth 1 R. Lockwood#
12/3 Stoneham 1 R. Stymeist
12/10 Oak Bluffs 1 M. Pelikan
12/11 Marblehead 1 K. Haley

Nashville Warbler
11/9, 29 Melrose 1, 1 D. + I. Jewell
11/20 Chatham 1 R. Clem

Northern Parula
12/1, 2 Vineyard Haven 1 E. Sibert + v.o.

Magnolia Warbler
11/19 Boston (Pub. G.) 1 K. Hudson

Black-throated Blue Warbler
12/3-31 Brewster 1 f J. Robb
12/9 Essex 1 m P. Brown

Yellow-rumped Warbler
11/4 Southboro 13 M. Lynch#
11/19 Scusset B. 80+ W. Petersen
11/24 Westport 67 D. Larson
11/25 Hingham 12 J. Hutchison#
12/2 P.I. 65 P. Roberts
12/2 Falmouth 13 M. Lynch#
12/3 Squantum 44 G. d'Entremont
12/17 Hadley 5 D. Peake-Jones

Pine Warbler
12/11 Marblehead 1 R. Heil
12/16 Holyoke 1 T. Gagnon
12/23 N. Marshfield 1 G. d'Entremont#

Prairie Warbler
11/23 Watertown 1 C. Cook
11/28 Nantucket 2 E. Andrews#

Palm Warbler
11/1 Lexington 1 M. Rines
11/9 Melrose 2 D. + I. Jewell
11/10-12 Chilmark 8 A. Goldman
11/22 P.I. 1 J. Berry
11/25 Bourne 1 R. Lockwood#
11/25 Mt.A. 1 R. Stymeist
11/29 Hingham 4 R. Heil
12/2 Braintree 1 G. d'Entremont
12/3 Westport 1 R. Farrell#

American Redstart
11/4 Melrose 1 P. + F. Vale

Common Yellowthroat
11/5 GMNWR 1 SSBC (T. O'Neil)
11/7 Burlington 1 M. Rines
12/3 Westport 1 E. Salmela
12/3 Acoaxet 1 R. Farrell#
12/10 Ipswich 1 R. Heil

Wilson's Warbler
11/1-26 Boston (Pub. G.) 1 K. Hudson
11/5-18 S. Boston 1 R. Donovan#
11/17, 12/20 Chatham 1 R. Clem
11/28 Concord (NAC) 1 m D. Diggins

Yellow-breasted Chat
11/1 Concord 1 R. Min
11/4 Chilmark 1 A. Keith
11/11 Waltham 1 M. Rines
11/18 Squantum 1 P. O'Neill
11/19 Falmouth 1 St. Miller
11/25-30 Tisbury 1 D. Stanwood
11/thr Melrose 1 D. + I. Jewell
12/1-10 W. Tisbury 1 D. Stanwood
12/2 Falmouth 1 M. Lynch#
12/3 Westport 1 E. Salmela
12/3 Acoaxet 1 R. Farrell#
12/21-27 Lexington 1 J. Forbes#
12/23 Marshfield 1 S. Wheelock#
12/23 Hatchville 1 B. Good#
12/25-31 Amesbury 1 P. + F. Vale
12/thr Melrose 1 D. + I. Jewell

Western Tanager (no details) *
12/2 Gloucester 1 C. Leahy
12/16 E. Falmouth 1 S. Clifton#

Eastern Towhee
11/8 P.I. 1 MAS (B. Stevens#)
11/25 Falmouth 2 R. Lockwood#
12/2 Wayland 1 D. Peebles
12/10-23 Erving 1 V. Yurkunas
12/16 Agawam 1 S. Kellogg#
12/16 Hadley 1 M. Jakuc
12/16 Hancock 1 B. Williams
12/17 Sterling 1 E. Harlow
12/29 Mattapoisett 6 F. Smith
12/30 Bridgewater 3 K. Anderson#

American Tree Sparrow
11/5 New Braintree 15 C. Buelow
11/5 Brookfield 30 M. Lynch#
11/19 Marshfield 15 G. d'Entremont
11/28 Concord 22 R. Lockwood
12/4 Baldwinville 50+ T. Pirro
12/10 Salisbury 36+ S. Spangenberg#
12/10 Braintree 19 G. d'Entremont
12/25 P.I. 23 P. + F. Vale

Chipping Sparrow
11/17 Maynard 1 L. Nachtrab
12/20 Erving 1 V. Yurkunas
12/28 Edgartown 4 V. Laux
12/28 Easthampton 1 R. Bieda

Clay-colored Sparrow
11/25-12/17 Lexington 2 M. Rines

Field Sparrow
11/4, 12/19 Melrose 3, 2 D. + I. Jewell
11/7 Stow 2 R. Lockwood
11/16-12/12 Lexington 2 M. Rines
11/30 Billerica 2 M. Rines
12/1 Medfield 7 E. Morrier
12/3 Westport 4 R. Farrell#

Vesper Sparrow
11/2 Cummaquid 2 S. Miller#
11/25 Gay Head 1 A. Keith

Savannah Sparrow
11/1 Lexington 25 M. Rines
11/25 Bourne 8 R. Lockwood#
12/3 Westport 13 R. Farrell#
12/10 Rowley 6 J. Berry
12/10 Cumb. Farms 70 W. Petersen
12/29 Northampton 15 A. + L. Richardson
12/30 Bridgewater 23 R. Farrell#

"Ipswich" Sparrow
11/18 Dorchester 1 R. Donovan#
11/19 Duxbury 1 SSBC(D. Clapp)
11/19 N. Scituate 1 D. Clapp
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 15 R. Donovan#
12/10 Salisbury 1 S. Spangenberg#
12/13 P.I. 1 MAS (N. Soulette#)

Grasshopper Sparrow
12/30 Bridgewater (CBC) 1 B. Nikula

Henslow's Sparrow (details submitted) *
11/11-12 Dorchester 1 R. Donovan#

Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow
12/17 Eastham 2 W. Petersen#

Fox Sparrow
11/16 Lynnfield 4 D. + I. Jewell
11/19 Quabbin 3 B. Kane
11/25 Mt.A. 3 R. Stymeist
12/1 Medfield 4 E. Morrier
12/15-27 Tisbury 3 P. Uhlendorf
12/17 Hadley 4 M. Jakuc
12/23 Pepperell 11 E. Stromsted
12/23 Plymouth 4 W. Petersen#
Lincoln's Sparrow
11/25 Lexington 1 M. Rines
Swamp Sparrow
11/1 Lexington 5 M. Rines
11/19 Wakefield 4 P. + F. Vale
11/19 GMNWR 5 M. Rines
11/25 Sandwich 4 D. + S. Larson
12/3 Squantum 3 G. d'Entremont
12/3 Acoaxet 4 R. Farrell#
12/10 Ipswich 11 R. Heil
12/24 W. Bridgewater 10+ M. Faherty
White-throated Sparrow
11/25 Mt.A. 73 R. Stymeist
11/26 Boston 60 R. Stymeist
12/2 Falmouth 30 M. Lynch#
12/3 Westport 50 R. Farrell#
White-crowned Sparrow
11/18 Dorchester 1 R. Donovan#
11/25 Gay Head 1 ad A. Keith
11/25 Lexington 1 ad M. Rines
11/27 Groton 1 imm T. Pirro
12/3 Westport 1 ad R. Farrell#
12/17 S. Hadley 1 W. Lafley
12/23 N. Marshfield 1 imm G. d'Entremont#
Dark-eyed Junco
11/19 Royalston 155 M. Lynch#
11/25 Mt.A. 116 R. Stymeist
12/10 Barre F.D./Rutland S.P. 393 M. Lynch#
12/15 Quabbin (G40) 250 C. Buelow
12/23 Pepperell 260 E. Stromsted
Lapland Longspur
11/3, 16 Edgartown 20 A. Keith#
11/4 P.I. 11 R. Lockwood#
11/11 Eastham (F.E.) 3 K. Hamilton#
11/16 Salisbury 6 J. Berry
11/18 N. Monomoy 15 B. Nikula
11/24 Lincoln 1 M. Rines
11/25 Westport 8 M. Lynch#
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 40 R. Donovan#
12/10 Cumb. Farms 60 W. Petersen
12/17 Hadley 1 A. Richards
12/25 Newbury 25 R. Heil
Snow Bunting
11/2 GMNWR 25 M. Rines
11/2 Dorchester 30 R. Donovan#
11/3 Mt. Watatic 6 T. Pirro#
11/3 Edgartown 250 A. Keith#
11/4 P.I. 210 R. Lockwood#
11/4 Ipswich 30 J. Berry#
11/6 Quabbin (G43) 100 D. Small
11/11 Salisbury 100 P. + F. Vale
11/12 P'town (R.P) 26 K. Hamilton#
11/12 Marion 50 J. Young
11/12 Boston H. 27 TASL (M. Hall)
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 150 R. Donovan#
11/25 Westport 80+ M. Lynch#
11/25 Gay Head 50 A. Keith
12/10 Cumb. Farms 200 W. Petersen
12/12 Rockport 15 J. Berry
12/24 Northampton 80 T. Gagnon
Indigo Bunting
11/2 Cummaquid 1 S. Miller#
Dickcissel
11/8 Bridgewater 1 f D. Larson
11/13 Newton 1 f E. Nelson-Melby
11/13-12/7 Chilmark 1 A. Keith
11/18-22 Medford 1 R. LaFontaine
12/10 Centerville 1 H. Ferguson
12/10 N. Truro 1 G. Ellison
12/26 E. Longmeadow 1 G. Kingston
Bobolink
11/15 Sudbury 1 K. Hamilton
Red-winged Blackbird
11/5 Brookfield 330 M. Lynch#
11/14 Bolton Flats 1800 K. Hamilton#
11/22 Worc. (BMB) 81 J. Liller
11/24 Concord 45 M. Rines
12/4 Wakefield 45 F. Vale
12/10 Melrose 120 D. + I. Jewell
12/10 New Braintree 65 C. Buelow
12/13 Groton 50 T. Pirro
12/15 DWWS 100 D. Furbish
12/24 W. Bridgewater 1000 M. Faherty
12/24 Mattapoisett 14 F. Smith
Eastern Meadowlark
11/11 Eastham (F.E.) 3 K. Hamilton#
11/12 Rowley 1 J. Berry
11/25 Chatham (S.B.) 1 R. Donovan#
12/5 DWWS 25 D. Furbish
12/10 Washington 1 E. Neumuth
12/10 Cumb. Farms 25 W. Petersen
12/13 P.I. 1 MAS (N. Soulette#)
12/23 Southwick 4 R. Packard
12/27 HRWMA 1 T. Pirro
12/30 Bridgewater 23 B. Nikula#
Rusty Blackbird
11/1 Hadley 12 H. Allen
11/4 Wachusett Res. 21 M. Lynch#
11/4 Gay Head 8 A. Keith
11/5 W. Brookfield 70 M. Lynch#
11/9 Quabbin (G33) 2 B. Lafley
11/13, 12/4 Wayland 15, 1 G. Long
11/14 Bolton Flats 75 K. Hamilton#
11/24 DWWS 12 D. Furbish
11/29 Athol 1 R. Coyle
11/29 GMNWR 1 S. Perkins#
12/3 New Braintree 1 C. Buelow
12/16 Lynnfield 1 P. + F. Vale
12/28 Chappaquiddick 6+ R. Culbert
Common Grackle
11/18 HRWMA 15000+ T. Pirro
11/22 Concord 2 M. Rines
12/15 Quincy 3 G. d'Entremont
12/16 Rockport 1 S. Hedman
12/25 Lincoln 1 S. Perkins
Brown-headed Cowbird
11/4 Concord 100 G. d'Entremont
11/8 Bridgewater 700 D. Larson
Baltimore Oriole
11/5 Medford 1 R. LaFontaine
11/10 Cummaquid 1 S. Miller#
11/12 DWWS 1 G. d'Entremont
11/18 Lincoln 1 S. Harlow
11/25 Gay Head 1 K. Taylor
11/25 Lexington 1 M. Rines
12/14 Cohasset 1 N. Swirka
12/15-20 Chilmark 2 v.o.
12/31 Watertown 1 R. Stymeist
Purple Finch
11/3 Mt. Watatic 10 T. Pirro#
11/4 Lexington 4 M. Rines
11/4 Southboro 4 M. Lynch#
11/4 Wachusett Res. 3 M. Lynch#
11/12 Hingham 60 G. d'Entremont
11/18 S. Quabbin 2 M. Lynch#
11/19 Royalston 14 M. Lynch#
12/10 Windsor 52 T. Gagnon
12/10 Ipswich 3 R. Heil
Red Crossbill
11/12 Yarmouthport 3 K. Hamilton#
White-winged Crossbill
11/3 Mt. Watatic 15 T. Pirro#
11/4 Gill 1 W. Lafley
11/19 Royalston 5 M. Lynch
12/10 Windsor 6 T. Gagnon
12/17 S. Hadley 1 W. Lafley
12/27 Gardner 3 T. Pirro

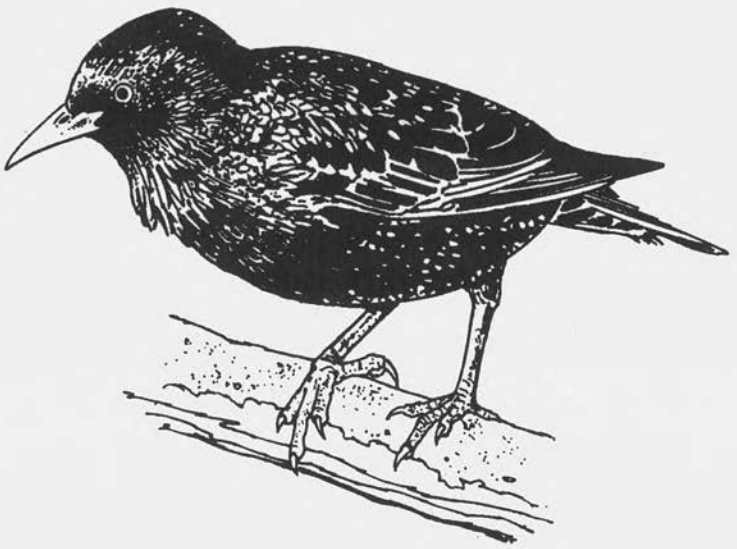
White-winged Crossbill (continued)			
12/29	Colrain	1	R. Bieda
12/29	Savoy	5	T. Gagnon
Common Redpoll			
11/25	New Braintree	100	J. Baird
Pine Siskin			
11/4	Wachusett Res.	1	M. Lynch#
11/7	New Salem	2	W. Lafley
11/9	Quabbin (G33)	2	B. Lafley
11/19	Royalston	9	M. Lynch
12/3	P.I.	1	M. Lynch#
12/10, 29	Windsor	3	T. Gagnon
12/13	Manchester	15	S. Hedman
12/25	Northfield	5	M. Taylor
12/27	Gardner	5	T. Pirro
12/27	HRWMA	5	T. Pirro
12/29	Savoy	150	T. Gagnon
12/29	Colrain	1	R. Bieda
Evening Grosbeak			
11/18	E. Quabbin	1	T. Gagnon#
11/19	Royalston	6	M. Lynch
12/29	Savoy	6	T. Gagnon

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO BIRD OBSERVER

Bird Observer prints compilations of birds reported in Massachusetts and offshore waters. Our compilers select and summarize for publication reports that provide a snapshot of bird life during the reporting period.

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

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



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ad	adult
alt	alternate
b	banded
br	breeding
dk	dark (phase)
f	female
fl	fledged
imm	immature
ind	individuals
juv	juvenile
loc	location
lt	light (phase)
m	male
max	maximum
migr	migrating
n	nesting
ph	photographed
pl	plumage
pr	pair
S	summer (1S = first summer)
thr	throughout
vid	videotaped
v.o.	various observers
W	winter (2W = second winter)
w/	with
yg	young
#	additional observers
A.A.	Arnold Arboretum, Boston
A.P.	Andrews Point, Rockport
A.Pd	Allens Pond, S. Dartmouth
Arl.	Arlington
B.	Beach
B.I.	Belle Isle, E. Boston
B.R.	Bass Rocks, Gloucester
Cambr.	Cambridge
C.B.	Crane Beach, Ipswich
Corp. B.	Corporation Beach, Dennis
C.P.	Crooked Pond, Boxford
Cumb. Farms	Cumberland Farms, Middleboro-Halifax
E.P.	Eastern Point, Gloucester
F.E.	First Encounter Beach, Eastham
F.H.	Fort Hill, Eastham
F.M.	Fowl Meadow, Milton
F.P.	Fresh Pond, Cambridge
F.Pk	Franklin Park, Boston
G40	Gate 40, Quabbin
G45	Gate 45, Quabbin
H.P.	Halibut Point, Rockport
H.	Harbor
I.	Island
L.	Ledge
M.V.	Martha's Vineyard
Mt.A.	Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge
Nant.	Nantucket
Newbypt	Newburyport
P.I.	Plum Island
Pd	Pond
Pont.	Pontoosuc Lake, Lanesboro
P'town	Provincetown
Quab.	Quabbin Reservoir
Res.	Reservoir
R.P.	Race Point, Provincetown
S.B.	South Beach, Chatham
S. Dart.	South Dartmouth
S.N.	Sandy Neck, Barnstable
Stellw.	Stellwagen Bank
Worc.	Worcester
Barre F.D.	Barre Falls Dam, Barre, Rutland, Oakham
ABC	Allen Bird Club
BBC	Brookline Bird Club
BMB	Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester
CCBC	Cape Cod Bird Club
DFWS	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary
DWMA	Delaney Wildlife Management Area Stowe, Bolton, Harvard
DWWS	Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary
EMHW	Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch
GMNWR	Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge
HRWMA	High Ridge Wildlife Management Area, Gardner-Westminster
IRWS	Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary
LBS	Local Bird Survey
LCES	Lloyd Center for Environmental Studies
MARC	Massachusetts Avian Records Committee
MAS	Massachusetts Audubon Society
MBO	Manomet Observatory
MBWMA	Martin Burns Wildlife Management Area, Newbury
MDFW	MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
MNWS	Marblehead Neck Wildlife Sanctuary
MSSF	Myles Standish State Forest
NAC	Nine Acre Corner, Concord
NBC	Needham Bird Club
NEHW	New England Hawk Watch
ONWR	Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge
SRV	Sudbury River Valley
SSBC	South Shore Bird Club
TASL	Take A Second Look Harbor Census
USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
WBWS	Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary
WMWS	Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary

*Indicates a species on the review list of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC). Comment in parentheses (details submitted or no details) indicates whether written details have been submitted to the MARC, regardless of whether photographs or other documentation are available elsewhere. Because these sightings are generally published before the MARC votes, they normally have not been acted upon by the MARC.

The 101st Christmas Bird Count, 12/14/00–1/5/01

Robert H. Stymeist

A total of 190 species plus three subspecies, Red-shafted Flicker, Ipswich Sparrow, and Oregon Junco, were recorded on the thirty-three Massachusetts Christmas Bird Counts. One additional species, Gyrfalcon, was found during count period, although not on a count day. The total is eighteen species fewer than last year, which many of you will remember as having perfect CBC weather. This year the weather was *awful* for most of the counts. December was cold: 25 days of the month had below-normal temperatures. On Sunday, December 17, when five counts were scheduled, wind gusts exceeded 55 mph and the temperature ranged from 33 to 64 degrees. Heavy rain, thunder and lightning, as well as heavy fog are not good ingredients for a successful birding day, especially for the three coastal counts. Several compilers rescheduled count days, only to find yet another not-so-perfect day. On Saturday, December 30, the region was hit with another storm that lasted into the early hours of New Year's Eve. The best weekend was December 23-24, which had only three counts scheduled. Not many folks want to do a count on Christmas Eve.

A new count this year, the Oxbow NWR–Groton count, fielded thirty-seven observers and tallied a respectable 63 species for opening day. The gold medal went to the Cape Cod CBC, which despite the weather conditions recorded 125 species and record high numbers of four species: Gadwall, Mallard, Willet, and Lesser Black-backed Gull. On the flip side, observers there recorded the lowest number of Northern Bobwhite since 1949 — a total of one! The Mid-Cape CBC came in second on a very windy and cold day. The wind was a steady 20–40 mph out of the northwest, but the 25 birders worked hard and managed to find 122 species, including an Eared Grebe, the only Black-headed Gull of any of the CBCs, and the astonishing count of 20,290 American Robins. The bronze medal went to Martha's Vineyard with 121 species.

The stormy weather this season contributed to higher than normal numbers of seabirds in flight, but lower than normal numbers of birds on the water. Northern Gannets numbered 526 on Cape Ann, 642 on Cape Cod, 540 at Marshfield, and 1074 in Truro. Exceptional alcid numbers included 72 Dovekies on Cape Ann and 6339 Razorbills on the Truro count (see Mark Lynch's article on page 118). The rolling seas made it difficult to see seabirds sitting on the water and resulted in lower than normal numbers for many coastal counts.

It is interesting to note that just eleven species were seen on all thirty-three counts: American Black Duck, Mallard, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and American Goldfinch. It's hard to imagine missing a Rock Dove or a House Sparrow, but Tuckernuck Island can even be hard on humans

in winter! It is also noteworthy to see how many of the 190 species tallied are represented by a single individual; this year there were nineteen: Great Egret, Black Vulture, Blue-winged Teal, Clapper Rail, Lesser Yellowlegs, Marbled Godwit, Red Knot, an unspecified dowitcher, Black-headed Gull (what's going on here?), Yellow-legged Gull (the jury is still out on this one), Thayer's Gull, Atlantic Puffin, House Wren, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler, Western Tanager, Dickcissel, and Evening Grosbeak, plus two subspecies, Red-shafted Flicker, and Oregon Junco.

An interesting phenomenon in this year's CBC was the exceptional number of certain sparrow species, despite the poor weather. The highest numbers were recorded in the western half of the state, and it is likely that locally abundant food resources accounted for this increase. Compare this year's CBC data to that of last year:

Species	1999 (33 counts)	2000 (33 counts)
Fox Sparrow	59	145
White-throated Sparrow	4,559	8,861
Dark-eyed Junco	13,824	38,171

New England winter bird populations have certainly changed during the last decade, and we have seen a dramatic increase in many species and a decline in just a few species. In the accompanying table, you can see what a difference ten years has made (and think of what the 2000 numbers could have been with better weather).

Species	1990 (28 counts)	2000 (33 counts)
Canada Goose	29,879	42,148
Cooper's Hawk	20	116
Ring-necked Pheasant	182	84
Wild Turkey	311	630
Lesser Black-backed Gull	2	35
Red-bellied Woodpecker	29	376
Carolina Wren	557	1,185
Eastern Bluebird	156	1,177
Hermit Thrush	44	221
American Robin	2,444	53,461
Northern Cardinal	3,762	5,357

Complete results of all thirty-three Massachusetts Christmas Bird Counts can be viewed on *Bird Observer*'s web site at <http://massbird.org/birdobserver/CBC>. If you want a printed copy, please send a self-addressed envelope with 55-cent postage to Robert H. Stymeist, 94 Grove Street, Watertown, MA 02472-2829. Results of all the counts in North America are available on the Birdsource website (sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology). You can view the data going back to 1990 by visiting <http://www.birdsource.org/> and selecting Christmas Bird Count.

News from MassWildlife

Webpage Update — Check out <www.MassWildlife.org> for some recent additions. Wildlife Management Area maps are now posted as are write-ups to accompany the popular Pond Map series. Click on the Endangered Species icon and enjoy new materials and a new look for MassWildlife's Natural Heritage Program. Outdoor enthusiasts are logging on in record numbers, so plan your next wildlife outing or learn a little about what's in your own backyard and beyond by browsing through <www.MassWildlife.org>.

Wintering Falcons — It's the time of year when wintering peregrine falcons often appear in some Massachusetts cities. At least one peregrine is currently wintering in downtown Worcester, while birders are scanning the rooftops, spires and parapets of Lowell, Lawrence, Haverhill, Fitchburg, and other urban areas hoping to catch a glimpse of this ultimate predator. Should any of these birds linger into April, or be observed interacting with another peregrine, MassWildlife would like to hear about it. Pairs of peregrines can indicate a new territory being established. Contact Tom French, 508-792-7270 x163.

Winter Waterfowl Inventory — MassWildlife Waterfowl Project Leader H. Heusmann reports a total of 99,352 waterfowl counted along the Massachusetts coastline during the January 2001 winter aerial survey, down from 108,578 birds counted one year ago. Eider topped the species list with 47,457 individuals recorded. Black ducks accounted for 15,789 sightings, while 9,909 Canada geese were noted. Rounding out the census were bufflehead (5419), scoters (4418), goldeneye (4146), scaup (3161), mergansers (2750), mallard (2433), brant (1280), mute swans (679), and oldsquaw (384). There were an additional 611 waterfowl that could not be identified. The entire Massachusetts coastline, including Cape Cod and the offshore islands, was covered from the air with the exception of the greater Boston Harbor area, where ground crews from the TASL bird observer group censused the wintering waterfowl. The overall wintering population status for the 17-state Atlantic Flyway will be assessed when all data are compiled in February.

"For the first time in more than 30 years we sent a new crew of observers into the air," remarks Heusmann . . . . While the crew may have been new to the region, their techniques were state of the art. Voice-activated headsets recorded the spoken observations and numbers while a GPS unit simultaneously plotted the position of the plane. All species and group counts were substantially below the 10-year average, suggesting the crew's lack of knowledge of Massachusetts' coastal habitats may have resulted in fewer birds located. In contrast, the experienced TASL group, familiar with the haunts and habits of Boston Harbor's wintering waterfowl, recorded birds in numbers close to the 10-year average for that area. For more information, contact H. Heusmann, 508-792-7270 x122.

ABOUT THE COVER

Virginia Rail

A cryptic bird of vegetation-choked marshes, the Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*) is more often heard than seen. Its species name means "mud-dweller," and several of its folk names, e.g., "freshwater marsh hen" and "small mud hen" give further indications of its marsh-dwelling nature. Because of its cryptic behavior it is understudied, and information is lacking on much of its natural history.

A small, plump, reddish bird with rufous wings and gray cheeks, black-and-white striped flanks, and short, upturned tail, the Virginia Rail is readily separated from the Sora Rail with whom it shares marshes by the Virginia's long, slightly down-turned bill. Virginia Rails superficially resemble King and Clapper rails, but are readily identified by their much smaller size. Juvenile birds lack the gray cheeks and much of the ruddy coloration, and have spotted gray breasts. Virginia Rails are superbly adapted for life in thick vegetation. They have laterally compressed bodies, strong muscular legs, and even possess a claw on their wings that can aid in climbing through vegetation. They rarely fly except during their nocturnal migrations. They can swim and dive, propelling themselves underwater with their wings. Taxonomically, they are monotypic, with very little geographic variation.

Virginia Rails breed in local suitable habitat across much of southern Canada to Nova Scotia in the east, and roughly north of a diagonal line from Massachusetts to northern Baja California. They also breed along the East Coast south to North Carolina. They have a patchy distribution in Mexico and Central America. They are year-round residents along the entire Pacific Coast, and winter from the far Southwest through Mexico and along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts as far north as Massachusetts.

Migratory Virginia Rails arrive in Massachusetts in April, and depart in September and October. By then they have molted their flight feathers, and have survived a flightless period while they replaced their feathers. Small numbers winter on Cape Cod and the Islands, and appear from time to time on Christmas counts.

Virginia Rails are monogamous and produce one or two broods. For nesting they prefer freshwater marshes with heavy emergent vegetation, such as cattails, interspersed with areas of open water and mud. In winter they inhabit both fresh and saltwater marshes. Both males and females are highly territorial, and will respond to tape-recording of their calls, sometimes coming up and pecking at a tape recorder placed on the ground. Males have a *tick-it* advertising call in spring, a *kiu* alarm call, and a *kicker* call that may be a female call, advertising for males. Pairs often communicate with duetting *grunt*s. Chicks utter strong calls when separated from parent birds. In courtship males circle females with wings raised, with tail-flicking and bowing. Courtship feeding and mutual preening are common. In territorial disputes, Virginia Rails will leap into the air and rake opponents with their claws. They may also attack from behind, and bill-stabbing is common.

The nest site is probably selected by the female, and is in thick emergent vegetation, at or near the water surface. Both parents build the nest that is a loosely woven basket of adjacent vegetation, often with a canopy of bent-down reeds. A ramp to the water is a common nest feature that aids the chicks in going back and forth to the nest. Several dummy nests are usually constructed and used for resting or brooding after the young have left the original nest. The clutch is 7-12 cream or buff eggs, spotted brown or gray. Both parents incubate although the female does the majority of the work during the about three-week incubation period. The young are precocial and may use their wing claws to pull themselves through the vegetation. They can swim and use the ramp by age one day, remain at the nest for 3-4 days, and are fed by the adults for the first few days. Adults fiercely defend their young, attacking intruders with rasping grunts, head and neck low and forward. They will give wing-drooping distraction displays as well. The brood remains in the territory for 3-4 weeks, and the young can fly in about a month.

Virginia Rails forage both tactilely and visually, probing mud flats or gleaning insects from vegetation. Their long toes allow them to forage on floating vegetation in deeper water. They feed on a variety of animal prey including beetles, snails, insect larvae, crayfish, earthworms, and even small snakes or frogs. Unlike most birds, they have a good sense of smell which doubtless aids in locating prey.

Virginia Rail populations declined during the twentieth century, largely as the result of wetlands destruction, but most populations are now considered stable. The Virginia Rail is still considered a game species in most states, although hunting pressures are considered low. They are, however, still hunted on coastal wintering grounds with bag limits of twenty-five birds in many states! They are subject to predation by muskrats, snakes, weasels, raccoons, raptors, blackbirds, wrens, and herons. They lose chicks to predatory fish and the voracious snapping turtle; they experience high chick mortality. Nonetheless, they continue to persist in remaining wetlands.

William E. Davis, Jr.

About the Cover Artist

David Sibley has written and illustrated articles on bird identification for *Birding* and *North American Birds* as well as regional publications and books including *Hawks in Flight* and *The Birds of Cape May*. Since 1980 David has traveled the continent watching birds on his own and as a tour leader for WINGS, Inc. He has spent most of the last six years at a drawing table writing and illustrating the new *Sibley Guide to Birds*, a comprehensive guide to North American birds. This book was published in October 2000 and is now in the fourth printing. He has spent alot of time since October attending book signings. You can see more of David's artwork at his website <www.sibleyart.com>. He lives in Concord, Massachusetts, with his wife and two sons.

AT A GLANCE

February 2001

Photograph by Wayne R. Petersen

The first mystery photograph of 2001 quite obviously depicts a sparrow, based upon the bird's conical, seed-cracking bill, prominent wing bars, and plain breast. Although several species besides sparrows display some of these features, none exhibit all three. For instance, a female Indigo Bunting would appear more uniform in appearance and would generally not have such bold wing bars. Likewise, a female or winter-plumaged American Goldfinch would have a shorter tail and display a more complex wing pattern on blackish wings that would strongly contrast with a lighter-colored body. A Pine Siskin and the females of both House and Purple finches would be heavily streaked on the underparts even though they have seed-cracking bills.

Using a traditional approach to determine which species of sparrow is featured in the picture, a quick analysis reveals that the breast is unstreaked. Because many sparrows have streaked underparts, either as adults or sometimes only in juvenal plumage, all such species and age classes can at once be eliminated as identification possibilities. This is a major first step in determining the identity of the mystery sparrow.

Other specific characters to note on the sparrow in the photograph are its uniform, pale-colored bill, neat white eye ring, and uniformly darkish crown. On the

basis of the completely pale bill alone, the American Tree Sparrow can be eliminated, since this species has a distinct dark upper mandible, as well as an obvious dark spot in the center of its breast. Two other similar species are Chipping Sparrow and Clay-colored Sparrow. Both of these species are shaped somewhat like a Field Sparrow (they are in the same genus, *Spizella*); however, neither species has a prominent eye ring and both tend to exhibit a median crown stripe of varying intensity. The Clay-colored Sparrow, especially, also possesses a distinct mustache streak, a feature totally lacking on the pictured sparrow.

The last remaining candidate, based on the pale bill color, is White-crowned Sparrow in immature plumage. Since immature White-crowned Sparrows characteristically have a more erect posture than Field Sparrows, lack an eye ring, and have lighter-colored faces in contrast with broad, buffy eyebrow stripes, the sparrow does not appear to be a White-crowned Sparrow. Thus, the final identification is reduced to Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*).

Field Sparrows are uncommon to locally common summer residents in Massachusetts in old fields, overgrown pastures, along power line rights-of-way, and in regenerating burned woodlands. They are also common migrants and uncommon winter visitors, primarily on the coastal plain. The Field Sparrow in the picture was photographed in winter at the author's feeder.

Wayne R. Petersen

News from MassWildlife

Preliminary Eagle Survey Tally — State Ornithologist Brad Blodget has finalized numbers from the 2001 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey and reports a total of 61 bald eagles (44 adults, 17 immatures) wintering at nine locations in Massachusetts on January 12. Eagles were reported from the Quabbin Reservoir (23), Connecticut River (18), Merrimack River (7), Assawompsett Pond (2), Silver Lake (4), Housatonic River (2), Wachusett Reservoir (1), Taunton River (1) and Westport Rivers (3). Sixty eagles were reported in 2000 and a record 76 eagles tallied during the 1998 survey. Blodget speculates that eagles moved to open water areas of major rivers as lakes and reservoirs froze solid making fish and waterfowl inaccessible. The 18 eagles noted on the Connecticut River was the highest total recorded in that location since the survey began in 1979. Blodget extends his thanks to all cooperators who submitted reporting forms and recognizes National Grid USA/Mass Electric Company for their long-standing commitment and sponsorship of eagle conservation in the Commonwealth. Contact Brad Blodget, 508-792-7270 x152.

AT A GLANCE

Photograph by Wayne R. Petersen

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

Shearwater

Peter Trull — WILD CAPE COD

Too many birds for one to see
August on the open sea
As billow builds to boundless trough
My pinions stiffly streak and laugh
Under gales - such force implores
To drive me on to ancient shores
Effortless I glide and sway
With miles to go, no dark or day
Wind and whales, food forever
Ravenous, gluttonous birds endeavor
To cross the equator spring and fall
Penguins, puffins, I stir them all
Cetaceans in reverence and in slaughter
Been there and back
Seen it all
Shearwater

Photograph by Steve Mirick

BIRD OBSERVER (USPS 369-850)
P.O. BOX 236
ARLINGTON, MA 02476-0003

SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT BOSTON, MA

Dec 01

VOL. 29, NO. 2, APRIL 2001

CONTENTS