

Bird Observer

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HOT BIRDS



On February 27, Steve Arena called attention to an unprecedented loon show off Race Point near Provincetown, including triple-digit numbers of Red-throateds, more than 50 Common, at least 3 Pacific (see below), and the state's first-ever documented record of **Yellow-billed Loon**, which continued to be seen for over a week after Steve originally noticed it. An as-yet unconfirmed Arctic Loon was more recently reported from nearby Truro. James Smith took the photograph on the left.



After an initial fly-by sighting of one bird on February 13, Steve Arena and other observers have repeatedly seen at least 3 **Pacific Loons** off Race Point through early March. The species has been reported (but not photographed) from at least two other locations in the state since January 1, a sighting from Cape Ann and at least two reports from Martha's Vineyard. Steve Arena took the photograph on the left.



A male **Painted Bunting** showed up at a Nantucket homeowner's bird feeder in late January and continued visiting through at least mid-February. Ginger Andrews took the photograph on the left.



Not long after MARC reversed their acceptance of the state's only record of **Yellow-legged Gull**, an even better candidate for the species was found February 1 in Turners Falls by James Smith! The many birders who chased this gull are waiting anxiously to hear MARC's decision about it.... James took the photograph on the left.

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Erratum. In the December 2015 issue, a Purple Gallinule and a Townsend's Solitaire were reported at Burrage Pond WMA in Plymouth. The correct location of Burrage Pond WMA is Hanson and Halifax.

"At a Glance" is on vacation. This gives you two more months to identify the mystery bird from the February 2016 issue.



Bird Observer

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Birding Old Town Hill in Newbury, Massachusetts

David Davis

Old Town Hill is a Trustees of Reservations property on Route 1A in Newbury, Massachusetts, only two miles from the road to Plum Island. Habitats encountered in the property include freshwater and saltwater marsh, oak and pine forests, pasture land, and river, each with its attendant bird species. The property includes more than five miles of hiking trails. The dominant feature is Old Town Hill, a glacial drumlin that reaches 168 feet above sea level and provides views of Plum Island and locations in three states.



A watchtower was constructed at the top of Old Town Hill in the 1600s, and the property has lured sightseers, hikers, and nature lovers ever since. Although the site is a popular hiking destination, local birders on their way to or from Plum Island also know to drive Newman Road, which passes through the reservation, to observe the birdlife on the salt marshes and the tidal Little River.

History

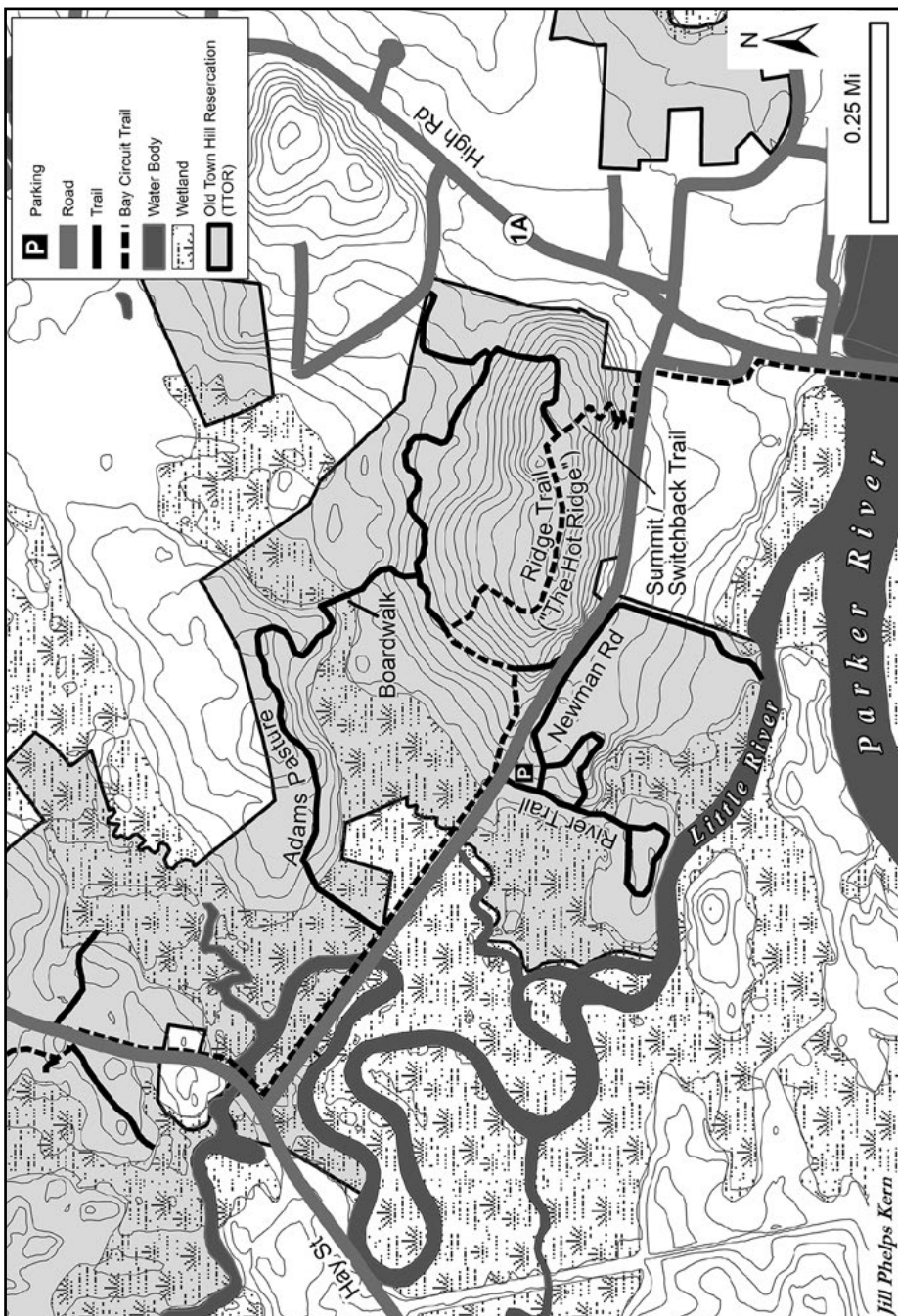
There are Native American sites on the property, and colonists believed that a Native American burial ground was located near the top of Old Town Hill, although it has never been found. The first settlement in Newbury was at the base of the hill, though this original town was later superseded by the current Newbury center and has become referred to as “Old Town.” The Old Town green lies at the base of the hill and gives its name to the hill itself.

Settlers in the 1600s cleared the top of the hill and placed a watchtower there. The site of the tower is currently cleared and provides attractive views of Plum Island, Newburyport, and points in New Hampshire and Maine. The site is also promising for hawkwatching in the fall.

Old Town Hill has been cleared for most of the period from the 1600s to the current time. A preacher in 1634 said in a Sunday sermon that Christians would be born in the Newbury region “...as long as any Sheep shall walk upon Old Town Hills, and shall from thence pleasantly look down upon the River Parker, and the fruitful Marishes [sic] lying beneath...” The pastor’s prediction continues to hold true, although sheep stopped grazing on the property more than a century ago.

Old Town Hill was mostly covered in pines in the late 20th century, but a powerful windstorm felled those on the upper part of the hill in the early 21st century, and much of the summit was then cleared, providing better views than those prior to the storm.

The property has grown from 125 acres since its acquisition by the Trustees of Reservations in 1952 to its current size of 530 acres, and it is likely that it will continue





View of Adams Pasture and salt marsh from Newman Road. Photographs, unless otherwise indicated, by Peter Oehlkers.

to grow. Information on the property can be found at the Trustees of Reservations web site: <http://www.thetrustees.org/places-to-visit/north-shore/old-town-hill.html>

Directions, Parking, and Fees

There are multiple trailheads on the property. Most of them are accessed by parking on Newman Road, which extends from Route 1A in Newbury to Hay Street in Newbury. A large parking area at the bottom of the Old Town Hill area on Newman Road is the main parking area, but there are smaller pulloffs at each of the trailheads that can accommodate one or two cars.

The Trustees website gives these directions to the property: From Interstate 95 Exit 54, take Route 133 East for 4.5 miles. Turn left onto Route 1A North and follow for 4.8 miles. Shortly after passing over the Parker River, turn left onto Newman Road and follow for 0.5 mile to parking (10 cars) on left. Look for trailheads along Newman Road. There is no charge to use the property.

The Trails

This trail map of the Old Town Hill properties is similar to the Trustees of Reservations' map, except that it includes my unofficial names for the trails that I describe. In this map, the shaded areas are the Old Town Hill properties. Trails are



View from the summit of Old Town Hill.

marked with dark lines. The two roads that pass through the property are Newman Road, running east-west, and Hay Street at the left of the map, running north-south.

The trails will be described in order from their intersection with these two roads, beginning at the east on Newman Road and working west.

The Summit Trail and The Hot Ridge. The most popular trail begins at a barrier on Newman Road 100 feet or so west of its intersection with Route 1A. The trail proceeds up Old Town Hill with a few switchbacks and opens out at the summit. Spring birding is good in this area. Indigo Buntings and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are found at the base of the trail, and at the summit Scarlet Tanagers, Pine Warblers, and Indigo Buntings are reliable nesters. Twice I have seen male buntings and tanagers in the single tree on the summit—a memorable sight. Eighteen years ago one could hear Ruffed Grouse booming from the summit in early spring, but not to my knowledge since then. Olive-sided Flycatchers have been observed at the top of the hill, as well as a variety of warblers in May. The summit is the point on the property with the best views.

If the hiker is in a hurry, returning by the switchback trail provides a quick retreat, but continuing west on the Ridge Trail takes the hiker along a ridge between a field on the right and a wooded area on the left. My birding friends and I call this area “The Hot Ridge” because in spring it is the first area to warm up in the morning, and when there are warblers in the area, they will be here. Old Town Hill attracts thrushes in spring,



Scarlet Tanagers are reliable nesters at the summit of Old Town Hill. Photograph by Sandy Selesky.

and this trail is a good place to find them. After turning to the right, the trail proceeds down a hill and turns left, to return to Newman Road.

The Boardwalk and Adams Pasture Trail. There is a trail to the north at the base of the hill below The Hot Ridge. If the hiker takes this trail and bears left in 150 feet or so, the trail proceeds to a boardwalk across a tributary to the marsh. There are good views up and down the marsh from the boardwalk. On the other side of the boardwalk the trail continues through woodlands and meets a more-traveled trail. Bearing left on that trail takes the hiker to Adams Pasture and then along its south edge. Adams Pasture is a field noted for its Bobolinks arriving in spring and nesting in the summer. Near the far side of Adams Pasture the trail veers left to pass through trees and then a section of salt marsh, arriving on Newman Road. This salt-marsh area is reliable during nesting season for Saltmarsh Sparrow and Marsh Wren. In spring, one can often hear Virginia Rails calling in the spartina. This trail is one of my favorites in the area, passing through hilltop views, deciduous and pine forest, pastures, and salt-marsh terrain. Warbler fallouts are possible here in May, and hundreds of robins roost in the wooded area in the winter. Note: I recommend that the hiker walking this trail for the first time proceed in the direction from Old Town Hill to Adams Pasture, as described, since the trail can be difficult to locate when passing in the reverse direction.

The Hill Trail. At the top of the Newman Road hill, there are a pulloff and two trailheads. The trail south of the road passes through a field where Bobolinks nest in the summer and continues to the Little River. The trail north of the road is one terminus of the trail from the top of Old Town Hill to Newman Road, described above.



Boardwalk Trail.

The Lower River Trail. Another trail to the Little River begins at the main parking lot at the base of the hill on Newman Road. It passes through woodlands, follows the bank of the Little River, and returns along the edge of the salt marsh.

The Salt Marsh Trail. At the point where Newman Road crosses the Little River, there is a pulloff and a trail passing north from Newman Road through the salt marsh, through the trees, and along the south side of Adams Pasture. This is the other end of the Adams Pasture trail described above.

The Hay Street Trails. Two short trails, one on each side of the road, lead from a pulloff on Hay Street about one quarter mile north of its intersection with Newman Road. This area is also part of the Old Town Hill property. Each of these

trails begins at a green gate and each leads to freshwater wetlands and marsh. The trail on the west is part of the Bay Circuit Trail, which emerges from the woods at the parking pulloff.

Driving Newman Road

Although the trails provide looks at many birds that cannot be seen from the car, local birders often drive Newman Road on their way to or from Plum Island or other destinations and stop to examine the marsh. A series of pools at the bottom of the Newman Road hill often contains shorebirds and ducks, and this is a favorite spot during summer months for Glossy Ibis. On summer evenings, Whip-poor-wills can be heard from Newman Road. Horned Larks often feed in the frozen marsh in winter. A variety of rarities have been observed in this area. Sandhill Cranes have spent time here. Northern Shrikes have been observed in the trees bordering the marsh, and Rough-legged Hawks are unusual but regular visitors to the area. A bonus for the birder stopping on Newman Road along the marsh is the view of the oxbows in the Little River as it meanders through the salt marsh on its way to join the Parker River.

Nearby Birding Areas

In addition to the areas on the Old Town Hill reservation, there are several spots nearby that are worth checking in season.

Just south of Newman Road on Route 1A is the Parker River Bridge, where the river sometimes freezes down to a single opening in winter. Three merganser species,

as well as a variety of river ducks and loons, can be concentrated near the bridge. In warmer times, the waterfowl are distributed up and down the river but can be observed from the sidewalk on the bridge. The parking lot at the bridge requires a boating permit, but one can park off the highway or in the Old Town green and walk the short distance to the bridge.

Quill Pond (also known as Icehouse Pond) on Hay Street is worth checking, especially now that domestic Mute Swans are no longer allowed to spend their days on the pond, chasing away native waterfowl. If you are proceeding up Hay Street, Orchard Orioles have nested for the last 18 years or so near the intersection of Hay Street and Low Street. Owling can also be good on Hay Street. Last year, Great Horned, Barred, and Screech owls were heard from the road, calling at night.

Precautions

Do remember that mosquitoes breed in the salt marshes in the summer, and greenhead flies can be numerous in July and August, so bring insect repellent if you are walking on the reservation in the summer months. And if you walk through grassy areas in the warmer months, be sure to take precautions and check for ticks afterward.

Conclusion

If you are looking for a scenic and birdy area to visit in the Parker River region of Essex County, Old Town Hill's short trails and longer loops can provide you with interesting birds in any season. The Old Town Hill reservation is a little-known gem that is worth visiting on the way to or from Plum Island or, as local birders know, for its own sake. 🐦

References

- Coffin, Joshua. 1977. *A Sketch of the History of Newbury, Newburyport and West Newbury*. Hampton, New Hampshire: Peter E. Randall, Publisher. See p. 368 for the full, rolling, oratorical sentence in which the sheep look down on the marshes from Old Town Hill.
- The Trustees of Reservations. 2007. *Old Town Hill Management Plan*. Accessed online at: http://www.thetrustees.org/assets/documents/places-to-visit/managementplans/NE_OldTownHill_MP2007-1.pdf. Contains a detailed history of the property and the Trustees' recommendations for preserving and maintaining it.

David Davis is the current Poet In Residence at Mass Audubon's Joppa Flats Education Center in Newburyport. He has lived in Newbury for nineteen years and birds the Old Town Hill area at least weekly, walking to the property from his house along Hay Street and Newman Road. He began birding in Colorado in the 1960s. Davis is an artificial intelligence consultant and high-tech entrepreneur who uses genetic algorithms—evolution simulated on a computer—to solve difficult real-world problems.

The Obscurest of Obscure Birds: Smith's Longspur

Soheil Zende



Smith's Longspur. Photograph by Norman Hyett.

My first post to Massbird on December 22, 2015, noted nothing extraordinary:

Despite the efforts of 18 wind-blown searchers on Monday, Dec 21, no Swainson's Hawk was seen at Bear Creek in Saugus. However, 2 new count week species for the Greater Boston CBC were added: a Rough-legged Hawk and a Lapland Longspur.

This was in the wake of the Saugus Christmas Bird Count crew finding a Swainson's Hawk at the Bear Creek wildlife sanctuary on Sunday, December 20, 2015. I mentioned finding the longspur for CBC count week. I assumed it was a Lapland because—what else could it be? Jan Smith heard a longspur fly over and Tim Factor saw it land and take off several times and saw the conspicuously white outer tail feathers. We all expected to find a Lapland—and there it was. Too bad, we thought, that the bird had not been found on count day.

Also on December 22, this is what Geoff Wilson, our chaperone at Bear Creek, wrote, "The day after the CBC when we were looking for the Swainson's Hawk, Stephen and I were sitting in my truck talking about how bold the [longspur's] outer white tail feathers were." So it went for several more weeks. Geoff or someone else would see a solitary bird, one that did not associate with Horned Larks or other ground-feeding birds. But it was only seen after being flushed, flashing those bright outer tail feathers as it flew away.

Finally, on Monday January 18, 2016, my Massbird post had an entirely different subject: "Smith's Longspur at Bear Creek." Here is the text in its entirety:

On today's otherwise uneventful Bear Creek walk, we spent a lot of time studying a longspur—which may have been 2 different birds. The first one, extremely secretive, was deemed by some to be a Lapland, but frankly I never got a good enough look at it to be sure of anything. The second one (if it was a second one) was extremely tame and allowed close approach by our whole group. Once I got it in the scope I began to doubt seriously that it was a Lapland. There simply was no rufous or ochre anywhere near the face or hindneck—or much of anywhere else....

This is what Marshall Iliff said of the photo [of this bird] taken by Norman Hyett, confirming it as a Smith's Longspur:

Key features shown here are: 1) overall buffy plumage; 2) bright pinkish legs; 3) narrow streaking becoming pencil thin streaks on flanks; 4) lack of a prominent and contrasting rufous wing patch; 5) moderate primary projection; 6) prominent frame to auriculars and large pale spot at lower border; 7) well-defined mantle braces; 8) lack of any rufous on the nape. The one thing that surprises me here is that the eye ring does not appear at all prominent, which is usually the case on Smith's.

At this point I began to look for additional evidence, including all the photos I could collect of the bird. Most showed pretty much what Norman Hyett had captured—all except the bird's legs, which were nearly completely obscured in the one- to three-inch vegetation it favored.

On Wednesday, January 20, 2016, approximately 30 people came to the Bear Creek sanctuary to look for the Smith's Longspur. We found it almost immediately less than 50 feet from where we had seen it last. For the entire time that we were there—nearly two hours—the bird was essentially alone, feeding in three-inch-high vegetation and easy to see. Initially it was in bad light, so we slowly circled to its sun side and the entire group had lovely views of the Smith's in perfect light 20 to 25 feet from us.

We also had the media present. A reporter and a freelance photographer from the Lynn Item came to record this birding event. The management at Wheelabrator, which operates the landfill and wildlife sanctuary at Bear Creek, had been alerted to the onslaught of birders coming to see a once-in-a-lifetime bird and notified the local press. They also alerted the local gourmet sandwich shop, which served us an excellent lunch afterwards, courtesy of Wheelabrator.

The eBird report for January 20 indicated that the combined eyes of all of those birders turned up quite a list. A Lapland Longspur, indeed, was present, feeding with Horned Larks, as is habitually the case for this species. A flock of Snow Buntings put in an appearance. A young Bald Eagle, three Northern Harriers, and a first-year Glaucous Gull rounded out the day's special sightings.

Marshall Iliff's note in eBird about the Bear Creek Smith's Longspur is worth quoting:

...astonishing first winter and third state record for Massachusetts found 17 Jan 2016....This bird [was] seen twice in the same area, and ... a longspur



Gathering at Wheelabrator. Photograph by Ram Subramanian.

sp. was flushed here once or twice previously (first on the day after the Boston CBC). Chestnut-collared Longspur eliminated by moderately long primary projection, prominent frame to the auriculars, and whitish mantle braces. Key field marks distinguishing it from Lapland Longspur are: 1) overall buffy plumage including throat, auriculars, and all of the underparts; 2) pale sandy upperparts with little contrast except whitish mantle braces; 3) narrow breast streaking becoming pencil thin streaks on flank and with no black patches on underparts; 4) secondary panel contrastingly rich buff (or pale rufous) on the edges, but nothing like the chestnut panel of Lapland; 5) prominent frame to auriculars and large pale spot at lower border; 6) brightest rufous color along the rear edge of the auricular frame and very faint, with the nape actually contrastingly grayer (colder) than the buff on the rest of the head and upperparts and very unlike the rich rufous nape of Lapland. 7) very faint, thin white eye ring was almost impossible to see

against the pale buff face but was apparent with very close views (and shows in the photos below) although it looks like some feathers of the eye ring may be missing. Given the lack of obvious white lesser coverts, indistinct eye ring, and generally non-contrasting plumage I assume this is a female and probably a first-winter. Leg color was never seen as this bird stayed back on its haunches the entire time we observed it. I could clearly see that the outermost rectrix was white, but never saw the spread tail and could not see the second white tail feather (although others said they did see this). Towards the end of my (MJI) observation it made one short flight and gave two flight calls, which were a solid, metallic rattle like Lapland but slower and composed of 4–5 distinct notes that could almost be counted.

Eye ring: Chris Floyd, who perused the bird carefully for a long time, assured me that this longspur had much a brighter white eye ring on its right side and also more white on the right side secondary coverts.

Leg color: Norman Hyett's photo clearly shows pinkish legs; they are not exactly the bright pink that Marshall Iliff describes, but are certainly pale. Where visible, the legs in all of my photos of Lapland Longspurs are dark brown or black. Godfrey (1979) states that Smith's young and females have pale brown legs, paler than other longspurs.

Calls: I asked Jan Smith, who originally had heard the bird fly overhead and call on December 20, to listen to recorded calls of Lapland and Smith's Longspurs. He reported, "I just listened to flight calls for both Smith's and Lapland Longspurs and the call that I heard seems most consistent with the recordings for the Smith's."

After the extremely successful attempt on January 20 to relocate the Smith's Longspur, we made two additional trips to the site. On Wednesday, January 27, 52 people came to look for the bird; there was no media contingent this time, but lunch was served again. However, there was no bird to be seen. Four days later, on January 31, nearly 60 people arrived at the site but again we were not successful in finding it. However, some sharp-eyed members of the Tufts Ornithological Club found three Lapland Longspurs.

It is apparent that the Smith's Longspur has left the area or moved. Since it is solitary and does not flock with other ground-feeders, it will be difficult to relocate.

There have been two previous records of Smith's Longspur in Massachusetts:

On October 12, 1968, Chris Leahy identified and described an individual from Salisbury Beach (Veit and Petersen 1993).

On November 9, 2014, Alan Trautmann photographed a longspur at Nahant that was identified as Smith's upon closer perusal (eBird 2014).

I'll share here some of the information I have gleaned about this species. *The Birds of Canada* (Godfrey 1979) shows the breeding range of Smith's Longspur as spanning northern Alaska as well as the far north and northwest of Canada in tundra habitat. The easternmost breeding birds nest along the southern shore of Hudson Bay. They migrate mainly through Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta and winter from Kansas and Iowa

south to Oklahoma, Central Texas, northwestern Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, rarely in Tennessee.

Birds of North America (BNA) covers the breeding biology of Smith's Longspur at length. It has the unusual mating habit of being polygynandrous. Here is how BNA describes this system:

... each female pairs and copulates with two or three males for a single clutch of eggs, at the same time that each male pairs and copulates with two or more females. Males do not defend territories, but instead guard females by following them closely and compete for fertilizations by copulating frequently in order to dilute or displace sperm from other males. Over a period of one week in the early spring, a female longspur will copulate over 350 times on average; this is one of the highest copulation rates of any bird. Males are well-equipped to deliver such large numbers of ejaculates—their testes are about double the mass of those of the monogamous and congeneric Lapland Longspur (*C. lapponicus*).

The birds nest in colonial groups. Males help in feeding the young. Two or more males may assist, and the amount of food each provides seems proportional to the number of young he sired. BNA continues, “Perhaps the advantages females obtain from extra male help in raising offspring may explain why they pair and mate with more than one male.” 🐦

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Soheil Zende, born in Tehran, grew up in Tehran and Tangier, Morocco, arrived in Cambridge in 1961 as a college freshman and later started an auto repair shop first in Cambridge, then in Watertown. He began birding in 1973, never got a good look at the Newburyport Ross's Gull, got sick of driving to the North Shore for birds, and began checking out local Boston spots in 1975. Since 2009 he has been guiding bird tours at Bear Creek Sanctuary in Saugus. Soheil lives in Lexington with his wife Christine.

The author thanks all the people who helped pin down this bird: Geoff Wilson, Tim Factor, Norman Hyett, Marshall Iliff, and Jan Smith. Also, thanks to the researchers whose work was summarized in *Birds of North America*: James V. Briskie and Joseph R. Jehl, Jr.

The Bobolink Project 2016

Jonathan L. Atwood



Bobolink. Photograph © Shawn P. Carey.

In February 2015, Dr. Allan Strong of the University of Vermont introduced to *Bird Observer* readers an innovative approach to conservation of grassland birds on private farms (Strong 2015). In his article “How Much is a Bobolink Worth?” Dr. Strong outlined the basic concept and structure of The Bobolink Project, and he summarized work on the project that he had done in collaboration with Dr. Stephen Swallow of the University of Connecticut. In brief, the project matches conservation-minded donors with conservation-minded farmers to protect nesting Bobolinks and other grassland birds. The Bobolink Project will continue in 2016, and we ask you to help make the project succeed by enrolling as a farmer or becoming a conservation donor.

There are many hay farmers in New England who are willing to delay their harvest schedule for the sake of nesting birds such as Bobolinks, but to do so costs them money. Late season hay is less valuable commercially than early season hay. By providing financial support, The Bobolink Project allows participating farmers to manage their fields for grassland birds by delaying their harvesting schedules. This mechanism buys the time needed for grassland birds to successfully nest on working farms. The Bobolink Project collects conservation donations and provides a way for farmers to submit bids to enroll their farms. Then, through a reverse auction process, the project selects which farms to support so that the amount of land that can be

protected is maximized given the amount of conservation donations that have been received.

The Bobolink Project is a proven and successful model for grassland bird conservation. As summarized by Allan Strong, “In 2013, The Bobolink Project raised about \$32,000, which led to payments to seven landowners for bird-friendly management on 200 acres ... In 2014, we raised about the same amount and ... were able to support bird-friendly management on 340 acres.” Furthermore, in 2015, even more farmers were interested in participating, and approximately \$50,000 of conservation donations allowed protection of 549 acres of suitable grassland bird habitat during June to early August.

However, Strong concluded his article by noting that:

The Bobolink Project has been successful in large part because it is supported by a [federal] grant [that covered administrative and marketing costs] . . . without grant funding, this approach is probably not sustainable in the long term without someone who is head-over-heels in love with Bobolinks For 2015, we’ve got just enough money left in the grant to run the project for one more season (Strong 2015).

That is, The Bobolink Project was expected to close up shop in 2016 because the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s grant to Stephen Swallow had drawn to a close.

As we considered this situation at Mass Audubon, we were convinced that The Bobolink Project was simply too good an idea to allow it to die. With our partners at Vermont Audubon and Connecticut Audubon, we joined forces to become those people Allan Strong asked for—the ones who are head-over-heels in love with Bobolinks. True, some administrative changes would be required to allow the program to become a permanent conservation initiative, without dependence on uncertain grant support from either the federal government or nonprofit foundations. After a series of conversations and meetings with Drs. Swallow and Strong, as well as with representatives of Audubon Vermont and Audubon Connecticut, we developed the new version of The Bobolink Project which is online at <http://www.bobolinkproject.org>.

What has changed? First, administration of The Bobolink Project and its website has shifted from Stephen Swallow and the University of Connecticut to Mass Audubon and our collaborators, Audubon Vermont and Audubon Connecticut. Drs. Swallow and Strong, however, are still fully involved in the program. Second, donations that cannot be passed to participating farms in one year will be set aside and held for use in the following year, and up to 15% of donations will be used to cover administrative and marketing costs connected to the program. Third, the geographic scope of The Bobolink Project will expand beyond its previous focus in the Champlain Valley of Vermont to potentially include farms in the Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts and Connecticut. Farms in Massachusetts outside this region also will be considered.

This effort can only succeed with your support—the more money we raise, the more Bobolinks we will protect. Please tell your friends, farmers, or potential donors about The Bobolink Project, and ask them to tell their friends too. If you are a farmer

interested in being paid for delaying your hay harvest, please go to the website by April 22 and make a confidential bid to enroll your field into The Bobolink Project for 2016 (<http://www.bobolinkproject.com/farmers.php>). If you are a donor, we also need to receive your contribution by that same date (<http://www.bobolinkproject.com/donors.php>).

If protection of nesting Bobolinks were an easy problem, we would have solved it by now. The reality is that conservation on working lands is the key to the success of this work. To ask farmers to delay their harvests, we need to “rent” their working lands to make up for their lost income. Help us continue to make The Bobolink Project a win-win situation, for both birds and farms, by joining as a donor or a farmer. We need you. 🦉

Reference

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Jon Atwood is a Bird Conservation Fellow, concentrating on grassland bird conservation, at Mass Audubon in Lincoln, Massachusetts. He has been a practicing ornithologist and conservation biologist for 30 years, specializing in integrating behavioral studies of rare and endangered bird species with habitat conservation planning. While working at Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences during the early 1990's, he collaborated in the analysis of the first 30 years of Manomet's landbird banding effort, spearheaded federal protection of the California Gnatcatcher under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, led a long-term study of factors affecting Least Tern colony site selection, and contributed to early studies of Bicknell's Thrush. From 1998–2011 he directed the Conservation Biology Program at Antioch University, New England; taught classes in Ornithology, Ecological Research Design, and GIS; and mentored over 70 graduate students working on various wildlife studies. During 2011–2013 he worked as Science Director at Biodiversity Research Institute in southern Maine.



SHORT-EARED OWL BY SANDY SELESKY

A Tribute to E. Vernon Laux:

“Keep your Eyes to the Sky!”

Peter Trimble and Jeremiah Trimble

A Poem by Peter Trimble

When I am birding on a big day or CBC exhausted
from the effort, when I am sharp as a bowling ball,
climbing over an obstacle moving like a cat, I will
listen for the flight call of the Dickcissel, or wait was
that a barking spider? I will think of Vern.

The world lost a true giant on January 21, 2016, with the passing of our friend Vernon Laux. He will be remembered for all the good he did to promote the richness of birding in Massachusetts and beyond, the countless rare birds he discovered, the birders young and old he inspired, and the many friendships he fostered. Many of us will be forever grateful for the people we know and the friendships we have due to his generosity and enthusiasm. Above all, Vern will be remembered for the fun and excitement he introduced into birding and into life in general.

Vern was the most recognizable name and personality in New England birding. He wrote weekly articles for the *Vineyard Gazette*, the *Martha's Vineyard Times*, and the *Cape Cod Times* that exposed many readers to nature through his illustrative prose. Vern regularly appeared on WCAI, Cape Cod's National Public Radio station, for "The Point." The many speaking engagements he was invited to give provided a more personal interaction with the public. Indeed, the number of birders, nature lovers, would-be birders, and would-be nature lovers he reached and influenced is one of his greatest legacies. While traveling the Cape and Islands, it was impossible not to meet people Vern knew or who knew him. Each of those folks had a story about a bird they noticed, or for which they had a special appreciation, all through Vern's influence. In fact, we often joked that if we ever encountered a police officer during late-night owling, a quick mention of Vern's name would clear up any misunderstanding (our get-out-of-jail-free card).

Of course, his work in media couldn't explain the entirety of his legend. Vern had a huge, uplifting personality that inspired people to listen and learn. His infectious enthusiasm for birds and the natural world so excited nonbirders that they tuned in to his radio pieces on a regular basis just to hear his positive words on birding (the same as life). Beginning and experienced birders alike found him equally forthcoming with information, identification help, or a good joke. It didn't hurt that his huge personality came with a giant frame and booming voice. On a one-mile by two-mile island in Maine, we always knew when Vernon had arrived, not by our first sighting of him, but by his far-reaching voice that penetrated every corner of the island.

He also had a competitive side, which showed in his interest in sports. Tom Brady and the Patriots were favorites, as were Larry Bird and the Celtics. Vern enjoyed



Vern Laux. Photograph by Bob Shriber.

Christmas Bird Counts and he particularly relished finding lingering or rare species that he could report at the countdowns—a feat he rarely failed to accomplish! He was an essential asset on any Big Day adventure. He was involved with most of the teams that broke each previous Massachusetts Big Day record. We participated with Vern in the World Series of Birding in New Jersey for a number of years and were fortunate to break the difficult 200-species barrier each time. Typically, these events are extremely well planned with little room for freewheeling, but with Vern there was always time for an impromptu detour of a few hundred miles on a hunch. One year, Vern persuaded us to make a major detour for an American Avocet, which happened to be a mere 150 miles off our route. Needless to say, it paid off; we got the bird and still broke 200 species.

Vern discovered or helped find and identify many exciting birds. The long list includes a Streaked/Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Gray Kingbird, Common Cuckoo, Tufted Duck, Sandhill Crane, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Common Swift, and,



Vern's 60th Birthday Party. Photograph courtesy of the authors.

of course, who could forget the Red-footed Falcon. However, Vern found excitement in every aspect of birding and birds. One of the stories he relished the most was being involved on Martha's Vineyard with the first documented hybrid of Black-capped Chickadee and Tufted Titmouse, a bird he dubbed the Chickmouse.

Whether he was birding locally or in distant lands, he found pleasure in being outdoors and encountering whatever flew by. He visited every continent. He worked on ships in Antarctica, traveled in Africa, and spoke longingly of truly awesome times in Australia, Asia, and Central and South America. Locally, he was crazy about Monomoy Island and South Beach in Chatham for shorebirds, the Gay Head Cliffs in Aquinnah on Martha's Vineyard for fall migration, Low Beach and Madaket on Nantucket for gulls and migrants, and offshore waters where he loved fishing as well as observing seabirds. To be perfectly honest, and we know Vern would be, fishing may have held a spot equal to birding in his heart.

A birding adventure with Vern would not be complete without one of his favorite musicians blaring on the radio. He was particularly fond of epic rock and blues guitar licks from the varied likes of Jonny Lang, Keith Richards and the Rolling Stones, Grace Potter and the Nocturnals, Buddy Guy, John Hiatt, and Stevie Ray Vaughan, to name a few. During the summer of 2015, Vern and Peter Trimble attended a Kenny Wayne Shepherd and Jonny Lang concert which, according to Vern, was the best concert ever!

Vern was a unique person. If he wasn't the inspiration for the most interesting man in the world ad campaign—and he could have been—he certainly could have inspired a most interesting birder in the world ad campaign: “He doesn't always go birding, but when he does, wait—he always does!” And who doesn't recognize his signature slogan: “Keep your eyes to the sky, my friends.” After all, Vern was recognized as a “Person of the Week” on ABC News in 2004! Who would believe that a birder could slide into that spot?

Vern was passionate, intelligent, and outgoing, to put it mildly. One of the traits we found most exciting about Vern was the way he could transform the routine into the extraordinary. Whether you were with him for a first state record, the most routine field sighting, or the millionth time he'd seen a Merlin cruise by—Vern had a special fondness for Merlins, the “magicians”—he turned that experience into the greatest birding moment of your life. More to the point, the next time you saw a Merlin with him, well, now that became your most memorable birding experience. His excitement transformed the way you looked at birds and at life so that you walked away with a new appreciation, no matter if you were a lifelong birder or a first-time participant in Vern's world.

Vern's eyesight was second to none. It often seemed unfair that he walked around with binoculars. I lost count of the number of times he picked out a bird AND identified it with his eyes before anyone else saw it in their binoculars.

Vern had many different jobs during his lifetime, which included being a researcher in Alaska; a Zodiac driver in Antarctica; a fisherman off Cape Cod; a business manager, painter, and realtor on Martha's Vineyard; a naturalist on Nantucket; a writer; and a radio commentator. No matter his career choice of the moment, he was always birding.

His fondness for island living and birding was well known. Monomoy Island, Martha's Vineyard, Monhegan Island, and Nantucket were favorites of his. His last stop was Nantucket and he quickly became an integral part of the island community. He started the wonderful Nantucket Bird Festival, designed for birders and nonbirders, islanders and mainlanders to enjoy an awesome few days of birding and socializing in a unique and special place. The list of rare birds found during this festival in a few short years is amazing: Magnificent Frigatebird, Western Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Townsend's Solitaire, Calliope Hummingbird, and the mega Gray-tailed Tattler. All of these birds speak volumes to Vern's vision.

Wherever Vern called home, he made many friends. Vern introduced birds to many and had time for all. Beginning and experienced birders alike could find a friend in common. Some of our greatest friendships are the direct result of Vern's natural openness. When Jeremiah and I bird and visit Martha's Vineyard or Nantucket we are met with open arms by amazing people. These friendships were a gift from our dear friend Vern and will help his memory live on forever. Wherever we bird, Vern will be at our side. In a story on the Red-footed Falcon for ABC News, Peter Jennings wrote, “The 50 million birders of America have a lot to thank Vernon Laux for.” We couldn't agree more! 🐦

Editor's Note: The following article appeared in the online Nantucket Chronicle (<https://www.nantucketchronicle.com>) on February 4, 2016, and is reprinted here with permission.

Five things I learned from Vern Laux

E. Vernon Laux 1955-2016

Sarah T. Bois

With the recent passing of Vernon Laux, I've been thinking a lot about his absence and what that means to me, the Linda Loring Nature Foundation, the birding world, the Nantucket community, and the children he's inspired and educated. Rather than try to sum up all of these aspects of Vern, some of which I can only scratch the surface of, I've decided to write a more personal remembrance. So, though Vern is known globally for his powers of observation, tenacity, and expertise in the world of birding, I'm going to speak about Vern Laux, my friend and co-worker.

Here are five lessons learned from Vern Laux:

It could always be something special. Never dismiss a group of birds as anything common. Look closely enough and the rare and special may be hidden among the flock. One early summer day, my husband came by our office to have lunch. Vern, Carl, and I sat at the picture window eating sandwiches and chatting about fishing. A slew of mourning doves huddled around the bird feeders. Nothing extraordinary. Then Vern interrupted Carl mid-sentence to exclaim that one of the mourning doves was actually a white-winged dove, a bird usually found in the far southern US and Central America. Leave it to Vern to spot the rarity.

Don't talk down to kids. Despite not having any formal training in education, Vern was an intuitive teacher. His enthusiasm for nature and all things birding was infectious. Children were drawn to him, which I believe was due, in no small part, to the way he spoke to them. He never talked down to children, but spoke to them as peers regardless of their age. He would tell hysterical stories with the heart of a six-year-old all the while discussing breeding habits of Osprey. It is a testament to his genuineness that many island children called Vern their friend.

A true story can be improved upon in the retelling. Working with Vern I got to hear many of his stories; some of which I heard more than once. He was an engaging storyteller leading the listener along right to the end. That's one thing that made him so great to listen to on the radio. However, sometimes the story changed just a bit, was just a bit funnier, or more harrowing. Who knows which versions were true and does it really matter? Aren't we all a little better off for having heard a great tale?

Live life to the fullest. Vern was one to fully enjoy life; never pass up a cookie or a drink when offered. I don't think he ever met a trip he wouldn't take. He knew how to have a good time and not take life too seriously. When I first started at the Linda Loring Nature Foundation he took me out birding with him. After driving around town we stopped in front of a non-descript house with a small front yard and several feeders. "Wait, what's in there?" he said aloud. There was excitement in his voice, so I knew it

was going to be good. As I looked with my binocs, he guided me to the bird atop the feeder, head down. “It’s an Ivory-billed Woodpecker!” he exclaimed with glee. Sure enough, I was looking at a wooden carving of an extinct bird. How many others has he pulled into this trap? I can hear his big laugh even now just thinking about it.

Keep your eyes to the sky. This signature statement ended the WCAI Bird Report each week. Taken literally, Vern loved to remind us that we would only see more and interesting birds the more we looked. Now, with Vern gone, I am reminded to keep my eyes open to observe the world around and all it has to offer. Live big, love big, laugh big. Keep your eyes open to the possibilities.

Vern wouldn’t want you to miss a thing. 🦅



RED-TAILED HAWK (PARTIAL ALBINISM) BY DAVE ADRIEN.

The Essex County Ornithological Club: 1916-2016

John Nelson



Essex County Ornithological Club Canoe trip 2015. Photograph by Dave Brewster.

It started on the water—the Ipswich River in Essex County, Massachusetts. A group of men, perched on the cane seats of canoes owned by Ralph Lawson and Gil Emilio, set out one May morning in 1907 to find birds, by sight or sound, on or along the river and to record the birds they found. The group paddled out again the next year, and the next, and the Ipswich River Trip became an annual tradition, a two-day excursion held on the weekend closest to May 15. Birders commuted by train, trolley, and liveries to Howe’s Station in Middleton and then to the put-in spot at the water hole below Spofford’s Boathouse. Nights they spent in tents, with hay bales for bedding, at a riverside camp in Boxford or at the Pines, now Perkins Island in Mass Audubon’s Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary (IRWS). Before settling in, the more resolute ventured out for night birds.

The camaraderie of these trips was celebrated in impromptu entertainments and songs belted out with toasts around a campfire. The river could be tricky after spring rains, and the group’s comedian, aptly named Albert Fowler, composed mock-heroic ballads about canoeists overturned. “Cum Laude Platypus,” credited to John

R. Ornithorynchus, tells the tale of sunken birders metamorphosed into duck-billed platypuses. They meet their curious fate in the final stanza:

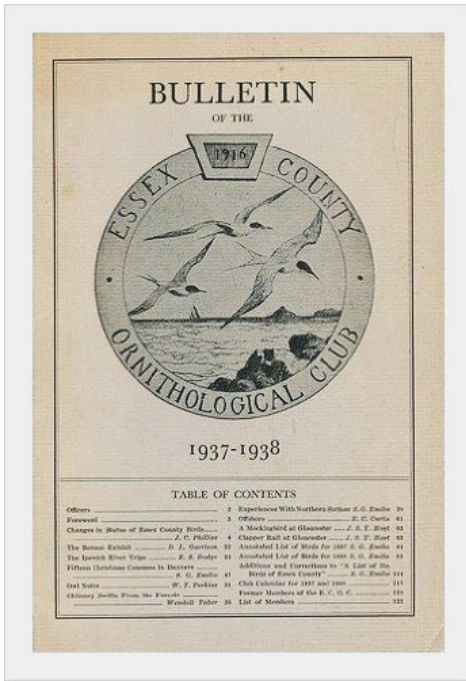
From the Drink, from the Drink,
We emerged through the eel-grass and slime.
We were changed by the Stink
Into Or-ni-tho-ryn-chus Divine.

The moral? Birders on boats should learn to swim. Henceforth, any capsized canoeist would automatically join the Royal Order of Ornithorynchus.

In 1916, the now expanded band of birders formed the Essex County Ornithological Club (ECOC) to study the county's birds systematically in a co-operative spirit. They compiled a list of 40 charter members (mostly from Salem, Lynn, and Danvers) and elected the first officers: Frank Benson, President; Albert Morse, Vice-President; Arthur Osborne, Secretary; and Albert Fowler, Treasurer. The club sponsored field trips and met monthly to compare field notes and hear ornithological papers in the Peabody Museum of Salem (now Peabody Essex Museum), long a center for study of the county's natural history. The ECOC, wrote charter member Edward Morse, carried out nature study in the tradition of Thoreau and John Burroughs. "The meetings are very informal, specimens of birds are exhibited, excursions are made and altogether perfect accord has prevailed." Morse rhapsodized about the fascination of birds and the "agreeable features" of bird study, "wandering as one must over field and forest." He claimed that because of birds' economic importance, "we are of some use in the world in studying and recording observations of intrinsic value" (Morse 1919).

The ECOC bylaws, modeled on those of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, required that existing members nominate new members and that all members agree in writing to conform to the bylaws. Any member could be expelled by a three-quarters majority vote. The club also established an Honorary Membership for "ornithologists of eminence." Annual dues were set at \$2, with a life membership available for \$25.

Among many prominent founders, one man stands out: Dr. Charles Townsend, an all-around naturalist and reigning authority on the county's avian life. In 1905, Townsend published *The Birds of Essex County, Massachusetts*, among the first comprehensive studies of birds within a single county anywhere, to provide an annotated list of all species known from the county. Townsend traced the county's ornithological history from the early 17th century drawing on reports from diverse sources such as seabird-watching lighthouse keepers. His book, wrote Jim MacDougall in a 1993 ECOC history, gives us "a body of knowledge that exclaims we take notice of the trends of the past and demands the necessity of keeping records today" (MacDougall 1993). Jim Berry, Townsend's heir in his exhaustive study of the county's birds, especially admires Townsend's descriptions of bird behavior, observed with scrupulous attention to detail. Townsend, notes Berry, was an intrepid field naturalist who "disdained physical hardship by canoeing around the marshes, hiking and camping in the [Ipswich] dunes, cooking out at all seasons, and taking a dip in freezing water in winter" (Berry).



Bulletin of the Essex County Ornithological Club 1937-38. Cover with logo by Frank Benson.

Townsend's book offers a wealth of knowledge about the county's birds but also tells a disturbing story of lost abundance and diversity. Birds that were once common in Essex County, like the Passenger Pigeon, are now extinct, and a litany of species, including Tundra Swan and Long-billed Curlew, have been extirpated as breeding birds and migrants in the county and often in the whole state. Townsend's 1920 *Supplement to the Birds of Essex County* strikes a more hopeful chord, as he cites recent laws that had shortened the gunning seasons for shorebirds and waterfowl, and notes the crusade to stop the killing of egrets and terns for the millinery trade. We will never know the abundance of birds that astonished the first European settlers in New England, but through dedicated efforts to preserve species and their habitats, we might keep the birds we have.

ECOC meetings featured a regular speakers' program, often covered by the *Salem Evening News*, beginning in 1916 with Winthrop Packard's report on

Mass Audubon's lobbying for legislation to protect birds. State ornithologist Edward Howe Forbush lectured on "How Birds Helped Win the War" in 1918 and "The So-called Suicide of Wounded Water Birds" in 1922. Frank Benson, a renowned artist and club president for 18 years, demonstrated his etching techniques for illustrating birds. Charles Moulton entertained his audience with imitations of bird calls. Many members were knowledgeable naturalists, with interests ranging from botany to entomology to collecting and handling venomous snakes—the subject of Charles Clark's 1927 presentation. Other well-travelled members shared birding adventures around the country and abroad in French Guiana, the Nile Valley, and Japan. Townsend, a delegate to the 1930 International Ornithological Congress in Amsterdam, reported on his around-the-globe birding tours. To add a visual component to lectures, the club purchased a Spencer Delineascope (a reflecting stereopticon or "magic lantern") in 1917 and built a lantern-slide collection of local birds. In 1927, members enjoyed a motion picture starring locally nesting hummingbirds. In 1930, Gil Emilio brought in a freshly collected Say's Phoebe for group inspection.

From 1919 through 1938, the club published annual bulletins that combined detailed field notes with thought-provoking articles on bird behavior, distribution, and conservation. Benson, who later created the second Federal Duck Stamp (a

Canvasback), designed the terns-in-flight logo for the cover and illustrated each issue with woodcuts. The quality of the bulletins can be measured by the widespread interest they generated. ECOC archives in the Peabody Essex Museum contain requests for copies—and offers to exchange ornithological reports—not only from around New England but from individuals and academies nationwide, the Library of Congress, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and scientists at the British Museum, the University of Bologna, McGill University, and zoological societies in Brussels and Paris.

One regular feature was Ralph Lawson's annual report on the Ipswich River canoe trip. Lawson rejoiced over the "rich harvest of species" at such riverside spots as the Proctor estate in Topsfield, a "great wonderland to the lover of trees, shrubs, and rock gardens" (Feathered 1926). Truly, he exclaimed, Essex County in May was a bird lover's paradise. Rodman Nichols explained the diversity of species found on trips as a reflection of the varied habitats along the river: woodlands, uplands, bogs, farmland, salt marshes and sloughs, and the dunes and beaches of Ipswich. The *Salem Evening News* regularly covered trips, with headlines announcing "warblers galore" in 1919 (23 species, including a rare spring Connecticut) and a Wood Duck nest with 17 eggs. In the final bulletin Ernest Dodge summarized the first 32 trips, with a table of all species seen or heard and the years when they were found. To the modern Massachusetts birder, the table is striking for the absent species—Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Carolina Wren—and species once routine but now rare anywhere in the county. Golden-winged Warblers and nesting Vesper Sparrows were seen every year, Sedge Wrens in most years.

Field notes were gathered in "Told Around the Big Table," a reference to the club's meeting place at the museum. Here readers could find reports of rare or interesting species seen by birders from bicycles, cars, trains, rowboats (Little Blue Heron in 1923), and steamers (Harlequin Ducks in 1922), or while trapping mink or searching for flowers or on ECOC field trips. The 1921 issue featured a photo of a preserved Common Shelduck (now in the museum collection) shot by Captain Howard Tobey at the mouth of the Essex River—the first specimen collected in North America, though not accepted as a record because of its questionable provenance. In 1925, George Felt described a county-record American Three-toed Woodpecker he found while hunting in Middleton and persuasively explained why it was not a less rare Black-backed. In 1929, Gil Emilio captured the drama of chasing and trying to document a rare bird, the first Black-headed Gull recorded in North America. On January 26 Emilio spotted the gull offshore in Newburyport and shot at it from 40 yards but missed. The next day, with a boat and a bigger gun, Emilio, Ludlow Griscom, and other club members re-found their bird, but by the time Emilio shot it, they'd lost their boat and captain, and the dead gull remained stubbornly at sea. Griscom frantically tried to organize a swimming party to brave the frigid waters. Emilio prudently declined and waited until his specimen had drifted within wading range.

Griscom, a legendary field birder who joined the club in 1928, quickly became a regular "Table" contributor, reporting on his bird censuses each May. In several reports we find a young Roger Tory Peterson tagging along in the field with Griscom and Lawson. Other field notes illustrated the range encompassed by the term "birding."

Arthur Morley considered the problem of Northern Shrikes hanging out around bird-banding stations. A.W. Taylor in 1936 suggested techniques for capturing birds with a camera.

Each bulletin contained a list of species found that year, and starting in 1921, the club periodically published an updated county checklist, initially based on Townsend's 1920 *Supplement*. Like other record-keeping societies, the ECOC struggled to set standards for accepting "unlikely observations," and Emilio and R.J. Eaton published long bulletin articles on the credibility of sight records. The unreliability or smugness of certain observers was a source of comedy as well as an issue of scientific ground rules. In "Drumming of the Snipe," Albert Fowler reported that, despite gabby group members and a large dog's "uproarious vocalizations," birders managed fleeting glimpses of snipe drumming and fluttering at dusk. "One man," Fowler noted, "went so far as to declare that he saw five Snipe, thereby drawing on himself sundry observations more pointed than scientific" (Fowler 1922). In "It Is Wise to Look Twice," Arthur Stubbs satirized three "bird men"—the Medico, the Engineer, and the Pillman—each "wise in his own conceit" and "a little cocky over his knowledge of local bird-life" (Stubbs 1928). Stubbs nearly overlooked a Bald Eagle while wrangling over shorebird identification.

Field notes also told darker stories of birds and their habitats going or gone. On Martha's Vineyard in late April 1921, ECOC "Heath-henners" thrilled to see 20 Heath Hen pairs engaged in mating dances, but three years later Alfred Gross spoke to the club about the species' rapid decline. In 1921, Stubbs reminisced about Yellow-breasted Chats, regular breeding birds in the county between 1885 and 1895. C. J. Maynard, in 1926, recalled that Esquimaux Curlew once abounded in the Ipswich hills, where he saw some around 1870, but were now gone forever. Members were also dismayed that some of the county's most productive birding grounds, like the Fay Estate—on the shores of Spring Pond, at the meeting point of Lynn, Salem, and Peabody—were now compromised or giving way to development.

More formal bulletin articles ranged from field ornithology to conservation. One recurrent theme was bird identification, from Townsend's illustrated "Identification of Hawks in the Field" in 1919 to Griscom's thorough gull study in 1929. An annual feature was a report on the year's "shooting season"—for years provided by J. C. Phillips, an avid duck hunter and author of the four-volume *Natural History of the Ducks*, and then by game warden Edward Babson. Many members became active banders after the 1922 formation of the New England Bird Banding Association, and Laurence Fletcher presented annual banding results. A 1927 editorial denounced the "Wanton Destruction of Hawks and Owls," and in 1929 state ornithologist John May gathered evidence to show that most birds of prey are economically beneficial.

Beyond its attacks on the slaughter of hawks and heedless shorebird harvesting, the ECOC was dedicated to land acquisition to preserve bird habitat. As a member of the Federation of New England Bird Clubs, established in 1924 with Forbush as president, the ECOC joined the effort to procure land on Plum Island for a state-owned wildlife sanctuary. After Annie Brown of Stoneham bequeathed \$25,000 to acquire and

maintain 300 acres, the Federation and Mass Audubon purchased another 675 acres, and the state hired a warden to patrol the refuge and prevent illegal shooting. The Federation also purchased Egg Rock off Nahant and Milk Island off Rockport. J. C. Phillips, a Federation director, privately donated 2000 acres to establish a reservation in Boxford—the genesis of the current Bald Hill Reservation.

At the close of 1934, with a peak membership of 72, the ECOC seemed to be going strong, but there were signs of incipient decline. One factor was the stress of the Depression, when even a dime for carfare to a bird outing could seem a luxury, but the overriding problem was that the club's leaders were dying. Starting in 1929, each bulletin contained an In Memoriam section, and within the next



Jim McCoy with Ben Peters and Shawn Carey. Photograph courtesy of the author.

decade the club lost many of its founders: longtime recorder Arthur Stubbs in 1932, Charles Townsend in 1934, Arthur Osborne in 1935, Edward Babson and newly elected President Albert Morse in 1936, and J. C. Phillips in 1938. There's a poignancy to the last few bulletins, as members memorialized leaders like Townsend—their “wiser and older brother” and exemplary field ornithologist—and Ernest Dodge bemoaned the fact that local birders seemed “to have fallen into a sad lethargy.” In 1936, despite strong resistance, editors Dodge and Emilio recommended discontinuance of the bulletin. Tired of supplicating and cajoling members to provide a “small amount of very mediocre material,” they could no longer justify the effort spent on “something that amounts to so little” (Dodge and Emilio 1936). The final bulletin, covering 1937 and 1938, did not announce its own termination, but it listed the 28 members who had died since the club's formation 22 years earlier.

The last bulletin marked the end of an era for the club and the beginning of a long stagnation. Many leaders were gone, and others soon left to serve their country in World War II. Birders at home were limited by wartime security and rationing regulations that restricted driving and bird seeking along coastlines. Given the absence of archives from 1940 to 1975, one can only speculate about this period, though the ECOC was hardly unique in struggling to remain a vital, cohesive bird club. Despite its setbacks, the club carried on, maintaining the canoe trip, sharing notes on birds near and far, and remaining committed to conservation. In 1939, members joined a national robin census sponsored by National Audubon, and the Council sent a letter alerting the U.S. Biological Survey to enormous amounts of oil harming birds on Nahant and Swampscott beaches.

A pivotal point in the club's eventual revitalization was the decision, despite some rigid opposition, to accept women as members in the 1970s. “Before the women,” one longtime male member told me, “the club was dying. It was a bunch of guys mostly sitting around and talking about baseball.” Attendance at meetings had dropped to the



Dotty Brown cutting cake 2008. Photograph by George Loring.

single digits, recalls past president Randy Johnson, and as a gentlemen's club the ECOC was facing likely extinction. The club's original by-laws had said nothing about gender, but the revised by-laws of 1936 replaced "persons" with "men" in reference to members, and women were excluded for another 35 years. Whatever the reasons, this exclusion certainly didn't reflect women's lack of interest in birding, for the Brookline Bird Club, founded three years before the ECOC, featured women as leaders from the start, including eight of its first eleven directors.

The first woman to join the ECOC was Dorothy (Dee) Snyder, former Curator of Natural History at the Peabody Museum and, with Griscom, co-author of the comprehensive *The Birds of Massachusetts* in 1955. Another pioneer was Sarah (Sally) Ingalls, Snyder's successor as curator, renowned for her skill in mounting specimens, including a

Great Gray Owl found dead in Newbury and displayed at a 1979 meeting. In a recent interview Ingalls credited founder Ralph Lawson for the push to bring women into the ECOC. "We were curious about the club," she said, "but we didn't know what those boys were doing over there" (Sarah Ingalls, personal communication 2015). Ingalls edited the revised 1975 ECOC checklist and was elected the club's first woman president in 1977. Other women soon took on significant roles, including program coordinator Juliet Kellogg and longtime secretary Pauline Metras. Sarah Robbins, the first Director of Education at the Peabody Museum, instituted the delightful tradition of an annual May outing and potluck supper—with "bird cakes" shaped as eagles, penguins, or "mystery birds"—at her home at bird-rich Eastern Point in Gloucester.

Meanwhile, members kept up the annual canoe trips. Secretary Evelyn Clay described the pleasure of floating like Cleopatra on her barge while others took turns paddling, and the thrill of ducking branches as boats swirled in eddies. Some boaters ducked too late, inducting themselves into the Ornithorynchus Club. They may or may not have been the birders who, according to Johnson, joked about seeing "martini birds" like the Extramarital Lark. In 1993, Jim MacDougall reminisced about his first river trip in 1974, his "introduction to serious birding" by old-timers who knew more birds by sound than he knew by sight. Some charter members were so frail, he noted, that "they had to be transported from bridge to bridge in a big old Buick convertible," yet, while waiting for the canoeists to arrive, they'd find "a roosting nighthawk straddling a branch or a Prothonotary Warbler perched by the river" (MacDougall

1993). The traditional buffet dinners, he recalled, were marked by intellectual sparring, easy laughter, and eyebrows raised skeptically if single-observer rarities were announced. Over the weekend the 1974 group tallied 132 species, carefully recorded by Don Alexander, an ECOC member since 1936. The river trip reports still provide what Jim Berry calls “a useful data base of species found along one of the county’s major rivers” (Berry), illustrating the decline of wetlands and grasslands birds as well as new arrivals. Eastern Meadowlarks were last found in 1986, American Bitterns in 1987. Firsts for the trips included Snowy Egret in 1968, Northern Cardinal in 1969, and Turkey Vulture in 1979.

The club also sponsored regular field trips, including owl prowls and spring woodcock watches led for years by Alexander or MacDougall and recently by IRWS director Carol Decker. One year MacDougall boldly promised woodcock watchers some *peenting* or their membership dues back but later claimed that the fun was in the looking, not the finding. Members explored Misery Island with Joe Paluzzi and joined hawk watches, Essex River boat trips for shorebirds, and a 2001 outing with “bluebird lady” Lillian Files. When Sarah Robbins died in 2003, her good friend and longtime member Dotty Brown graciously took over the birds-and-supper tradition at Eastern Point. Always looking to ally with other groups, the ECOC has co-sponsored trips with the Friends of Salem Woods and the Brookline Bird Club, starting with club president John Nove’s Halibut Point trips in the 1970s and continuing with an annual BBC Crane Beach walk. The ECOC also provided the majority of trip leaders for the annual Cape Ann Winter Birding Weekend, along with presentations on Cape Ann birds and culture by John Nelson, Jim Berry, and conservation scientist Robert Buchsbaum.

At meetings, members have continued to share bird reports, whether it be rarities like a White-tailed Tropicbird found barely alive on a Byfield playing field after Hurricane Gloria in 1985, or an Ancient Murrelet at Halibut Point in 1992, or heartening signs like Bald Eagles on the Merrimac River in 1981 or, in 1995, the first Eastern Bluebirds nesting at the IRWS in twenty years. In 2002, in a thorough effort guided by Jim MacDougall, the ECOC published, via the club’s website, the 7th edition of the ECOC checklist, still the most reliable source for the abundance status and seasonal distribution of the county’s birds. Berry, Nelson, councilor Toddy Glaser, and Fay Vale have also served as contributors and editors for *Bird Observer*.

From the club’s inception, ECOC members have spearheaded efforts to census the county’s birds. Don Alexander, organizer of the first Newburyport Christmas Bird Count in 1938, served as compiler for decades, a role filled by Rick Heil, Jim Berry, and now Tom Young for the past forty years, while Nove and Berry have acted as Cape Ann CBC compilers. Berry, an inveterate seeker of nests, has dedicated himself to studying the county’s breeding birds for over four decades. As Essex County coordinator for the state’s second Breeding Bird Atlas in 2007–2011, he organized comprehensive countywide coverage while taking on many disparate blocks himself. He has also compiled useful data on breeding populations through his longtime counts in Ipswich, surveys of salt marsh birds with MacDougall and Heil, and regular heron nest counts on Kettle and Eagle Islands with Simon Perkins of Mass Audubon.

Beyond their extensive involvement in the two atlases and local CBCs, members also joined in an annual IRWS breeding bird census, shorebird monitoring at Joppa Flats, a discouraging statewide rail and marsh bird survey in 1992, and, guided by Buchsbaum, a waterfowl study in Gloucester Harbor in the late 1990s. The club devoted some meetings to banding reports by Ozzie Norris, Bill Gette from Joppa Flats, and owl expert Norm Smith. Since 2008, through the initiative of Phil Brown, the ECOC has also sponsored an expanding nest box program for American Kestrels, a species dwindling in the Northeast.



Steve Grinley with kestrel box. Photograph by Phil Brown.

Still an advocate for bird conservation, the ECOC has worked in recent decades to protect habitat through its lobbying against proposed legislation in 1993 that would have allowed off-road vehicles on barrier beaches. It also participated in letter-writing campaigns to preserve freshwater marshes at the Parker River NWR and a lobbying effort in 2010 to protest the proposed siting of wind turbines on Nahant Causeway. The ECOC is now supporting the Essex County Greenbelt Association's campaign to acquire and preserve Sagamore Hill in Hamilton. Despite limited financial resources, the club helped support the Tern Nesting Project at Crane Beach in the 1980s and, more recently, Kestrel Educational Adventures, which strives to educate children throughout the North Shore about nature and the need for conservation. The ECOC also donates annually to two organizations that have been special, generous partners throughout its history, the Peabody Essex Museum—

its wonderful home for a century—and the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary, around which canoe trips have been organized since 1907.

Conservation continues to be a major theme of the speakers program, with lectures on habitat loss, the effects of climate change on bird migrations, and Buchsbaum's review of Massachusetts Audubon's 2011 "State of the Birds" report. Through presentations like Chris Leahy's account of the first Mass Audubon trip to Mongolia in 1983 and Jan Smith's 1997 demonstration of global diversity in bird families, members bird vicariously around the world. They've been taken back in time, as with Shepard Krech's lecture on birds and Native Americans in the South, and pointed to the future with talks on the expanding study of night migrations and the frontiers of pelagic birding. Some presentations have drawn crowds of 150 or more, such as Shawn Carey's multi-media account of the 2010 BP Gulf oil spill and Tim Laman's spectacular

video/photo show on birds of paradise in Papua, New Guinea. Thanks largely to the efforts of longtime vice-president Janey Winchell, the programs maintain variety, from local conservation to cutting-edge studies of bird vocalizations, while offering members a world-class line-up of speakers. Renowned figures such as Bernd Heinrich, Irene Pepperberg, David Sibley, and Donald Kroodsma have all made presentations within the past three years.

Live birds have starred in some popular programs, from MacDougall's 1977 talk on birds of prey, featuring an injured Northern Saw-whet Owl, to owl presentations by Norm Smith and by Mark and Marcia Wilson. Other speakers—Janey Winchell in 1992 on bats, Brian Cassie on the 1996 Mass Butterfly Atlas Project, Blair Nikula in 2002 on dragonflies—have gone beyond birds entirely. In the 1990s Jim Brown, Jim Berry, and Tom Young offered a series of identification workshops on seabirds, shorebirds, owls, warblers, nests and eggs that utilized the Peabody Essex Museum's fine collection of bird skins and mounted specimens. In 2013 Winchell, curator of the museum's natural history collections, guided members through the renovated, expanded Art & Nature Center. In 2014, the center was posthumously named in honor of Dotty Brown, a Life Fellow and Honorary Trustee at the museum, and headed by Winchell, whose title, the Sarah Fraser Robbins Director, honors Dotty's friend, the originator of the Eastern Point gatherings.

In 2003, Jim Berry instituted a new club tradition, his book-of-the-month selections, starting with Griscom and Snyder's *The Birds of Massachusetts* and often introducing members to forgotten treasures of regional bird lore. A much older tradition is the annual members' night, when members display their diverse creative talents and share stories of birding adventures. In recent years audiences have been treated to the poems of accomplished poet and novelist (and club secretary) Dawn Paul, bird ballads composed and sung by Caroline Haines, Tom Young's dragonfly photos, John Nelson's comic essay "Geezer Birding," Paul Ippolito's stunning Antarctica photos, Peter Vale's report on bird-banding in El Salvador, a Jim Wallius DVD of birds and mammals in Australasia, and Jay Moore's poem "Blown Away Near Shore," in which a "street-smart coastal bully"—a Great Black-backed Gull—turns its "switchblade bill" on an exhausted Dovekie blown inshore by a storm (Moore 1996).

Over the years, the club has reflected on its history through slide shows by Don Alexander, Stewart Duncan, and Jim MacDougall on the ECOC's formative years and



Jim Berry taking field notes. Photograph by John Lejeune.

canoeing tradition. Members have also periodically re-examined the club's mission and scope. In 1984, a group of members wanted the club to focus more on education and stewardship of all the county's natural resources. Finding the term "ornithological" too restrictive and "club" too reminiscent of the ECOC's original exclusivity, they proposed by-law changes to broaden the club's scope and rename it the Essex County Natural History Society. Members overwhelmingly defeated the proposal, arguing that birding was still the club's primary purpose, but they reached a consensus on the need to recruit new members and expand natural history programs.

Issues of membership and purpose were revisited in 1994 and 2004 through proposed amendments to by-laws. Members agreed to eliminate nomination (and a review of credentials) as a prerequisite for membership, but voted to keep honorary memberships—in part to honor Sally Ingalls, who'd moved to New York—and concluded that the club's horizons now encompassed natural history and biodiversity. These deliberations led to the formation of an ECOC Youth Program, chaired by Sue McGrath, who'd been inspired by MacDougall's 1993 history to join the club and "learn and serve with the finest" (Susan McGrath, personal communication 2015). McGrath organized popular Bald Eagle Family Adventures and family-oriented banding outings. She also became the "landlord" of Purple Martin houses at the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge and in 2002 established Newburyport Birders to teach aspiring birders how to observe and appreciate birds.

Club membership, steadily rising, is now over 100. McGrath credits webmaster Phil Brown for increasing membership by bringing modern technology to the club to improve communications (Susan McGrath, personal communication 2015). The ECOC now has members from all over the county and beyond.

Bird clubs, big or small, thrive only if members step forward to energize the group. The ECOC has been fortunate in its leaders, from Lawson and Emilio in the early years to outgoing president Jim McCoy, who, determined to increase involvement in club activities, instituted "clubhouse gatherings" at the Ipswich River Watershed Association and Ravenswood Park in Gloucester. Rob Moir, former Curator of Natural History at the Peabody Essex Museum, served as president for nine dedicated years, while his predecessors—Randy Johnson, Stewart Duncan, and Jay Moore—continued their service as officers or councilors long after their presidencies. Moir, in turn, was succeeded by a series of steady-handed leaders: Robert Buchsbaum, Tom Young, Jim Berry, and Sue McGrath. It's hard to imagine the modern ECOC without the contributions of Berry—our own version of Charles Townsend—or Jim MacDougall, whom Buchsbaum calls the club's "institutional memory" and "the soul of the organization" (Robert Buchsbaum, personal communication 2015), or Janey Winchell, well-described by Young as "the glue that holds the club together" (Thomas Young, personal communication 2015). And club leaders haven't lost sight of our obligation to the future. As Griscom once guided a young Roger Tory Peterson, and as Duncan, Jim Brown and Berry were teachers of future presidents Johnson, Young, and McGrath, so Berry and McCoy mentor avid young birders like Jeremiah Sullivan, Miles Brengle, Nathan Dubrow, Ben Peters, and others yet to emerge, the new generation of Essex County birding.

In May 2016 the club will sponsor the 110th consecutive Ipswich River canoe trip, among the longest-running bird censuses in the country and invariably remembered by participants for the birds, the dawn chorus on the river, and its lively springtime spirit. Opportunity beckons to join the Ornithorynchus Club. On January 8, 2016, the club met at Salem's Hawthorne Hotel to celebrate its first century and elected a new president, Constance Lapite. The ECOC has a proud history, but there are challenges to face. In 1993 MacDougall asked: "How can we offset further population declines? . . . Do we want to be the record-keepers of the last Golden-winged Warbler?" (MacDougall 1993) The warblers are now virtually gone from the county, but other local breeding birds are at risk, like Saltmarsh Sparrows, threatened by rising sea levels.

The birds await us. They also need us. 🐦

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John Nelson, of Gloucester, contributes regularly to Bird Observer. His recent publications include the essays "I Saw What I Said I Saw: Witnesses to Crimes and Birds" in the Winter 2015 issue of The Missouri Review and "Funny Bird Sex" in the Winter 2016 issue of The Antioch Review. He serves on the Council of the ECOC and chairs the Conservation and Education Committee for the Brookline Bird Club. He would like to give special thanks to Jim MacDougall and Jim Berry for their help in providing sources and reviewing this history.

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PHOTO ESSAY

Essex County Ornithological Club Canoe Trips



Canoe trip group photo 2013. Photograph by John Lejeune.



Phil Brown 2009 canoe trip. Photograph by Laura de la Flor.



Canoe trip putting in 2007. Photograph by Phil Brown.



Canoe trip up the canal 2007. Photograph by Phil Brown.



Binos Up! 2013 canoe trip. Photograph by John Lejeune.



Sue McGrath and Phil Brown on canoe trip 2008. Photograph by Christina MacDougall.

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FIELD NOTES

Swainson's Hawk at Bear Creek Sanctuary, Saugus, MA

Kaija Gahm



Swainson's Hawk. Photograph by Andrew Hrycyna.

On December 20, 2015, during the Greater Boston Christmas Bird Count, I was part of the field party charged with counting birds at Bear Creek Sanctuary in Saugus. Bear Creek is a wildlife sanctuary integrated with an active landfill, managed by Wheelabrator Saugus, Inc. Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, and Northern Harriers are regularly observed there. The day of the CBC, we saw no raptors other than a couple of Red-tails until we rounded a corner of the property and made our way toward the yard waste compost heaps on the other side. There we found a kestrel on one of the wires, and we got spectacular views of an adult male Northern Harrier as he coursed low over the ground. Things were looking up.

One of our party spotted a lump on top of one of the compost piles as we approached. The lighting was less than ideal, but the bird was clearly a Buteo, about the size of a Red-tailed Hawk. Something was off about this bird, though. The wings on the perched raptor extended all the way to the tip of its tail, whereas the wings on a perched Red-tail fall noticeably short of the tail tip. Furthermore, our bird had a pale face, with especially pale cheek patches, and a dark brown body. No red tail was visible, and the

bird had creamy patches on a chocolate brown back, rather than the well-defined white V shape that we would have expected on the back of a Red-tail. Everyone's next guess was Rough-legged Hawk, which certainly would have been an exciting addition to our CBC checklist.

Then, the hawk took off, and we stared. Now we could be certain that our bird was not a Red-tail: we saw no belly band and no patagial bars, and the wings were too narrow. The long-winged, lanky shape of the bird felt right for a Rough-leg, but—

“There are no carpal patches!” I called out. Instead, I saw a clear two-toned underwing pattern. The dark outer flight feathers contrasted strongly with the white belly and underwing coverts. This was no Rough-leg.

It is one of the best feelings in the world when you find yourself face to face with a bird, and you don't know yet what it is, but you know that it's rare, or a lifer, or both. Cameras clicked furiously, and I ran to get a better look from below as the bird circled higher and higher. I stared at the pointy-winged silhouette above me in the sky and had a crazy thought: Swainson's Hawk. Before that day, I had never seen a Swainson's Hawk at any distance less than a mile. As a trainee at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory this fall, I saw maybe two or three Swainson's Hawks mixed in with enormous Broad-wing kettles. I had no idea what a Swainson's looked like up close, but I remembered the other counters helping me pick out the Swainson's silhouettes by the pointy shape of their wings.

It was ridiculous, impossible. Swainson's Hawks are birds of western North America, so to find one as far east as Massachusetts is already notable. But to find one in Massachusetts in late December? The hawks all should have been on their wintering grounds in South America, not up north in freezing Saugus. Mark Resendes, another team member, texted one of his photos to Paul Roberts, a friend who founded the Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch forty years ago, for ID help. Paul wrote back immediately that the bird was a Swainson's Hawk, no doubt. But when Mark told him where and when the bird had been seen, Paul replied, “What????? ... U r bs ing me.” Paul later explained that when he looked at the text message, his first thought was that during one of those typically slow periods in the afternoon of a Christmas count, the team had decided to play a joke on him and text him an image that somebody had looked up online.

But nobody was joking. After the bird flew out of sight, we rejoined the rest of our party, who had been birding the perimeter of the property. Luckily, they had seen the hawk well as it circled overhead, and they had captured some beautiful photos. A look at the field guide left no doubt in our minds that we had found a real rarity.

Interestingly, when we lost sight of our hawk, it was headed north along the coast. Despite a specially scheduled walk at Bear Creek the day after the CBC, no one has succeeded in finding this bird again. A different juvenile Swainson's Hawk was reported in New York City a week before our sighting, and reports of that bird continued through December 30. Overall, a small but steady number of Swainson's Hawks is reported each year on the East Coast, but two in one week seems especially

unusual. The weather patterns created by this year's El Niño, including especially strong winds from the southwest and a relative scarcity of cold fronts from the north, may help account for the presence of these birds. Many other western vagrants, including two Western Kingbirds, a Mountain Bluebird, and several Ash-throated Flycatchers, also have been reported in the area this year.

As for Massachusetts, our Swainson's Hawk is at least the 11th confirmed state record for the species since 1955, but only the third state record for the period from December through February, according to Veit and Petersen's *Birds of Massachusetts* (Veit, R., and Petersen, W.R. 1993. Lincoln, MA: Massachusetts Audubon Society).

On the way to the CBC countdown that evening, we argued over who would be the one to break the news to Soheil Zende, our sector leader; and Bob Stymeist, the Greater Boston CBC compiler. We had the satisfaction of seeing the incredulous looks on the faces of everyone in the room when we announced our find, and we all felt proud of having found the best bird of the day. But the feeling that has stuck with me from that day is not pride or triumph; it is simply happiness at having witnessed the presence of such an amazing bird.

The author thanks Geoff Wilson, Paul Roberts, Janet Kovner, and Nancy Given for their edits and additions to this report, as well as the rest of the Bear Creek CBC team, Mark Resendes, Paul Bain, and Andy Hrycyna. 🐦

Belted Kingfisher Skims the Water

George Gove and Judy Gordon

We saw a Belted Kingfisher behaving unexpectedly at Cedar Meadow Pond in Leicester on Sunday, December 6, 2015. It was flying across the pond a few inches above the surface and would skim the water for several feet like a stone one skips across a pond, actually breaking the surface of the water. The bird continued this behavior first heading in one direction across the pond and then turning and flying in the opposite direction, skimming the whole time. It made a few passes back and forth across the pond. We finally lost sight of it when it flew farther out on the pond because we were looking through shrub and tree branches.

We had never seen this type of behavior by a kingfisher. It reminded us of swallows skimming to drink.

Arthur Cleveland Bent (1940) quoted a Mr. Carey (1909) who noted similar behavior in Belted Kingfishers:

The Kingfisher's flight is remarkable for its beauty. How easily those long wings carry him about, as he skims so close over the water that their tips are sometimes wetted, or, as he hovers, his body appearing absolutely motionless, in that wonderful way which few birds can equal, for indefinite

© Shawn P. Carey



Belted Kingfisher. Photograph © Shawn P. Carey.

periods of time. Sometimes, especially in water half a foot or less in depth, he dives while flying nearly parallel to its surface. Sometimes, in his journeys from perch to perch when fish are plentiful, he dips again and again into the water in this way, reminding one of the Swallow as he gracefully touches the water here and there in his flight over the mill pond. Again, he drops like a falling stone in a nearly perpendicular line upon his fishy prey. 🐦

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WOOD DUCKS BY SANDY SELESKY

MUSINGS FROM THE BLIND BIRDER

The Paradise of Memories

Martha Steele



Eastern Meadowlark. Photograph © Shawn P. Carey.

Bob, Alvin (my new guide dog), and I recently visited our friends Jan and Helen in Arizona. The trip was primarily to catch up with old friends and do some sightseeing in the Phoenix area. We did do some birding, however, including attending a four-day birding festival, Wings Over Willcox, that celebrates the wintering Sandhill Cranes in southeastern Arizona.

Jan and Helen are not hard-core birders, but they are interested in birds and are avid outdoorswomen. Helen in particular knows her local birds, and both clearly enjoyed the casual pace of birding we did with them. We birded areas near their home, including the Desert Botanical Gardens in Phoenix, as well as several locations in the Willcox area. For me, birding with them revealed an interplay between my memory of birds that I can no longer see and Jan or Helen's descriptions of what they were looking at, such that I could attempt to identify the bird in the resulting connections.

This interplay was particularly striking for me during an outing to one of our favorite locations in the Willcox area, the Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area, a wide, open marsh of the high Sonoran Desert in the foothills of the Chiricahua Mountains. Jan, Alvin, and I were walking slowly, separated from the rest of the group, which was spread out among the many small ponds and marshy spots looking at waterfowl

and other birds. Jan saw a perched bird and excitedly noted how yellow it was. She then added that the bird had a black spot and that it was stocky, roughly the size of an American Robin. She asked me what it was, knowing of course that I could not see the bird. Thinking quickly of the habitat and rummaging in my memory, I suggested that it might be a meadowlark, though I could not conjure up the visual difference between the Eastern and Western meadowlarks, both of which occur in this location. Another birder passed by and confirmed that it was an Eastern Meadowlark.

Now, that bird may have been easy to identify by description, but it made me think of how many birds I could identify by someone else's description of what they see. It also made me wonder if I could accurately describe birds from my memory. I think the answer for both questions is not as well as I would like, which suggests that I have a new challenge to work on. I should more often ask Bob to describe what he sees so that I can try to identify the bird by description. For example, he was looking at a photo of what he described as a rare bird that showed up on Nantucket in late January 2016. I asked him to describe the bird, and he said, "Well, it is colorful, has about four colors to it, including a yellow breast, blue, and red..." Before he could complete his description, I suggested a male Painted Bunting, and indeed it was. I was definitely proud of myself, even if this is perhaps an easy bird to describe and identify from words.

I have strong memories of many birding experiences and visual images. It may be a little unusual for a birder to learn birding visually without the ability to hear birds (in my case, due to hearing loss) and then, some twenty years into my birding avocation, switch from visual to auditory identification thanks to cochlear implants. The Arizona trip highlighted my desire to better commit to or strengthen my memory of what birds look like along with what they sound like. I believe that would also help me remember many wonderful circumstances of seeing a bird, as well as aspects of the bird's natural history. At Jan's description of the meadowlark, I immediately thought of our Eastern Meadowlarks returning to New England, with specific images of birds teeing up near our home in Vermont every spring. I thought of its signature song and how thrilled I am at hearing them, a sure sign of our returning migrants. After celebrating the Arizona Sandhill Cranes, Bob and I reminisced about one of the best birding trips we have ever taken, to the Platte River in Nebraska during the truly spectacular spring migration of this species.

I realize now that I have a lot to learn about remembering the field marks of specific birds. When it comes down to it, can I describe from my memory the difference between a Lincoln's Sparrow and a Vesper Sparrow, or between a Black-backed Woodpecker and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker? I confess I will need to work some more! But at least this trip clarified for me the need to do more studying and my desire to have Bob or anyone who is birding with me take a moment and describe what they see so that I can have a chance to participate in identifying what is there. Perhaps that will hone all of our skills in describing a bird and in enhancing our mutual experiences now and in the future.

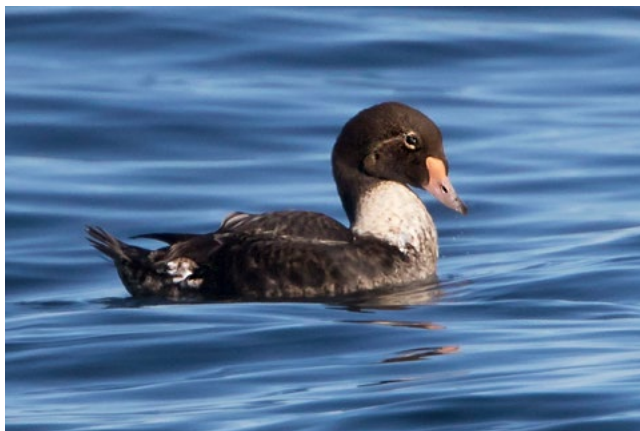
The effort of remembering what birds look like, particularly those that I so enjoyed looking at, reminds me of a quote attributed to an 18th and 19th century German

writer, Jean Paul (pseudonym for Johann Paul Friedrich Richter) (www.wikiquote.org, February 2, 2016): “Memory is the only paradise from which we cannot be driven.” Yes, I am sometimes saddened by the loss of my ability to see my birds, but I retain many memories of seeing them and the circumstances of so many specific experiences with birds and the people I was with. And I certainly remind myself that, despite my vision loss, my birding career is far from over. I have a lot to learn in auditory identification. It is absolutely thrilling to hear a song, a call note, or other vocalization and know what bird I just heard. I had a similar feeling when my friend described the meadowlark and I was able to suggest what bird it likely was.

There are multiple ways to be a birder regardless of your visual, physical, or auditory capabilities, and we will all go through adjustments as we age with concomitant declines in vision, hearing, or other physical attributes.

Remember, birding is not just about seeing a bird. It is everything about the circumstances of the experience that goes well beyond what you actually see. As Jan enjoyed looking at the meadowlark, I enjoyed her excitement, the wide open expanse of Sonoran Desert, the warmth of the sun on our faces, and the distant sounds of Sandhill Cranes in flight. Jan’s eyes were pinned to her binoculars, but mine were closed, soaking in a moment that I will not soon forget and listening intently to anything I could hear. 🐦

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



KING EIDER (FIRST WINTER) BY SANDY SELESKY

GLEANINGS

Wood Thrushes Sleeping Around

David Larson



Wood Thrush. Photograph by Sandy Selesky.

Have you ever thought about what birds do at night? I'm not talking about nocturnal owls and nightjars, but your average diurnal songbird. Well, they sleep. In fact, they sleep soundly. In the tropics on a night prowler with a headlamp, it is possible to walk right up and pluck a sleeping bird off a branch. And what is possible for tourists is possible for nocturnal predators. So, it seems that understanding where birds decide to sleep (roost) is actually an important part of understanding bird ecology, management, and conservation. We do know something about this topic, but mostly from studies on cavity-nesting species like woodpeckers. Turns out that most ornithologists are diurnal, too.

Jirinec and colleagues (2016) recently reported on an extensive study on the day and night activities of Wood Thrushes on their breeding grounds in coastal Virginia. Since Wood Thrushes are declining, the more we know about this species, the better we can craft conservation policies. The authors sought to determine if birds roosted in their daytime breeding territories, if birds selected roost sites of higher vegetation density (more cover), and if roosting locations varied with nesting status.

Using song recordings and mist nets, the authors captured territorial males and fitted them with VHF transmitters. Female mates of some of the males were captured and radio-tagged on territory as well. These transmitters allowed the researchers to follow the movements of the birds during the day, outlining the birds' diurnal home range (DHR). At night, the transmitters helped reveal the nocturnal roosts of the same

birds. Habitat characteristics were determined by light detection and ranging (LiDAR) measurements on breeding territories and roost sites. In order to address the nesting status, nests were checked every three days for evidence of eggs, nestlings, feeding, and other breeding evidence.

Interestingly, although female Wood Thrushes were essentially always found within the DHR (females do all of the incubation and so were on the nests), males often (31%) roosted outside of the DHR (average of 116 meters from the center). Most male roost locations were not consistent from night to night. Males roosted an average 6.8 meters off the ground in holly, beech, maple, and pawpaw trees. Consistently, males selected roost sites with higher vegetation density than randomly selected points in the areas, suggesting that either microclimate characteristics or predator-avoidance helped inform roost selection. Roost characteristics differed with bird age. Younger males roosted twice as far from diurnal activity centers than did the older males, presumably because the older males had better quality DHRs, perhaps including higher quality roost sites. Males might have chosen distant roost sites to avoid attracting predators to the nesting area. However, it is also possible, and perhaps likely, that use of distant roost sites allowed more opportunity for males to engage in extra-pair copulations (EPC) with neighboring females in the early morning or late afternoon hours when females were more receptive (Birkhead et al., 1996).

Roost locations of paired birds varied with nest status. If a pair had an active nest, the females roosted on the nest and males nested at a distance within or outside of the DHR. Pairs without active nests—after the young were independent or if the nest was predated—slept side by side, presumably so that the males could protect against EPC by the females during the time that they were most fertile. Although it is possible that roosting outside of the DHR allows for males to obtain more EPC, this hypothesis is confounded by the fact that most EPC are accorded to older males, but the younger males stray farther from home at night. Perhaps the older males do not need to stray as far due to greater experience.

This comprehensive report clearly demonstrates that male Wood Thrushes do not necessarily roost within their diurnal home range and that nesting status and age of the males are both variable. But it does not settle the question of why the males sleep away from home. More research is needed to resolve this issue. 🐦

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BOOK REVIEW

Desperately Seeking The Robin Snipe

Mark Lynch

The Narrow Edge: A Tiny Bird, An Ancient Crab & An Epic Journey.
Deborah Cramer. 2015. Yale University Press.

Would it really matter if we were to lose one bird species? Imagine a species of shorebird or warbler that you see every year, perhaps now in smaller numbers than years past. Now imagine you will never see it again. Sure, you would miss ticking it on your year list, but ultimately how deeply affected would you be by that one species' absence? What about the extinction of a species of an endemic on some far away island that you will likely never see? Sure, you might briefly note its passing, but would you really care? After all, humans saw the passing of the Heath Hen and Great Auk, and human society marched on. Would that species' loss matter at all to people who are not birders or ornithologists? What is it worth to you to try and keep those birds from disappearing? What would you be willing to pay or do? As frightening as those questions are, there is little doubt that many familiar species are declining, some at an alarming rate, and that extinction is a real possibility in the near future for a number of bird and other animal species worldwide. These questions are at the heart of *The Narrow Edge*.

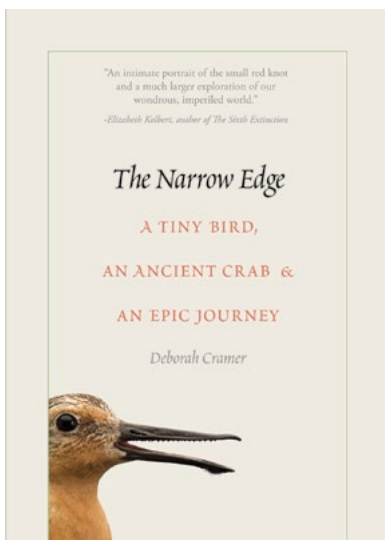
Deborah Cramer is a seasoned writer and journalist and author of several books on natural history. She lives in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Many of us are familiar with the general story of the decline of the Red Knot and that species' dependency on healthy populations of horseshoe crabs. Cramer's book, moreover, is a superb piece of fresh field reporting that expands our understanding of the stories of these two species. She follows the knot from Tierra del Fuego north to Nunavut, with many stops in between: Delaware Bay, coastal Argentina, South Carolina, Texas and, most unexpectedly, a laboratory at Massachusetts General Hospital. She is a passionate and indefatigable traveler, tromping through miles of beach in the blazing sun or miles of wet tundra in cold and brutal wind. *The Narrow Edge* is also the story of the many researchers, scientists, and even birders who are dedicating their lives to monitoring knots and hopefully preserving their populations.

In Massachusetts, we never see large numbers of Red Knots, but we do occasionally encounter small flocks. Small compared to what their numbers once were. There are six "lineages" (subspecies populations) of Red Knots worldwide, with a global population of about one million birds. Every lineage is declining. "There are signs of trouble on almost all the flyways—in Africa and Asia, in Europe and North America." (p. 27)

In North and South America we have the *Calidris canutus rufa* lineage. It breeds in the Canadian Arctic, migrates down the Atlantic coast, and heads south to the very tip of South America. The Red Knot is known as *Playero Ártico* in Argentina and

Chile, where it overwinters. More generically, the Inuit of Nunavut refer to Red Knots as *sijjariaq*, or “birds of the beach,” where they breed. The knot’s migratory journey covers a total of 9700 miles one way, with a few stops in select areas to refuel and rebuild fat reserves for the next leg of the voyage. They are airborne continuously for several days at a time, flying nonstop day and night. Their decline began in the 19th century because Red Knots, like many other shorebirds, were hunted for the table.

New York’s luxurious Astor House, whose guests included Abraham Lincoln, listed on its October 11, 1849, menu roasted wood ducks, dowitchers, plovers, mallards, and broiled robin snipe (Red Knot). An article in the June 11, 1887, issue of *Good Housekeeping* entitled “Table Supplies and Economics: What to Buy, and How to Buy Wisely and Well” praises the offerings in a New York market, which include robin snipe at \$1.75 a dozen, smaller yellowlegs at \$1.50, and greater yellowlegs at \$3.00. Henry Fleckenstein, author of many books on bird decoys, wrote that birds were “hailed from the meadows in wagons heaped full over the boards,” packed in barrels, and shipped by train or boat to city markets. Birds that weren’t as good to eat were used as packing for the others. Not all the shorebirds made it to market. Barrels of knots, turnstones, and plovers shipped to Boston spoiled during passage and were tossed overboard. (p. 69)



The rapid decline in numbers of Red Knots was noted by sportsmen even then, and some speculated on their imminent extinction. The Lacey and Migratory Bird Treaty Acts put an end to the unsustainable market gunning and hunting, but most species of shorebirds never recovered their population levels prior to the 19th century.

Flying there with researchers who monitor knot populations every year, Cramer began her book on the Atlantic side of the Straits of Magellan. For many years, no one knew where knots overwintered. In the early 1980s, Guy Morrison of the Canadian Wildlife Service and Brian Harrington of what was then the Manomet Bird Observatory decided to look for wintering knots by driving south from Buenos Aires along the coast of Argentina, poking into every shore overlook they could find. They did this in a beat-up Citroën. Finally, after thousands of miles and an eventual switch to aerial surveys, they lucked out, and one of the great mysteries of ornithology was solved.

But that was only part of the knots’ story. In order to complete their migratory trip, knots and other shorebirds must stop en route to feed; they lose much weight flying so many miles. In a few days of feeding they have to double their arrival weight. They must find beaches that offer high-energy food like horseshoe crab eggs. One

of the most famous stopover spots is Delaware Bay. In the early 1980s, Pete Dunne, Clay Sutton, Wade Wander, and David Sibley discovered the amazing spectacle of an estimated 150,000 Red Knots in a feeding frenzy along with an estimated 1,500,000 other shorebirds in Delaware Bay. Why wasn't this critical feeding location, so close to well-known birding spots, not discovered until the 1980s? There are records that Delaware Bay had been visited by a number of sportsmen and ornithologists over the past century. Why had no one previously noted the throngs of shorebirds gobbling the horseshoe crab eggs? One suggestion is that no one had gone to Delaware Bay during the narrow window in spring when the knots and other shorebirds are there in peak numbers.

Horseshoe crabs (*Limulus polyphemus*) come ashore to mate in spring and deposit the eggs that are so critical to the Red Knot. The crabs need shallows in areas along barrier beaches. Over the millennia the northward migratory routes of shorebirds have evolved so that they coincide with the laying of the crab eggs. In 1875, the eggs in Delaware Bay shallows were described as so thick that they could be shoveled up and collected by the wagonload. The numbers of horseshoe crabs have dramatically declined since, and nowhere do we see that many eggs along our shores.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, horseshoe crabs were harvested in large numbers for a variety of uses. Early on, they were collected to feed pigs. Later, they were taken in much larger numbers and used as a commercial fertilizer, Cancerine. Today they are still being "harvested" in large numbers locally as bait for eels and whelk, most of which are exported. To give you an idea of how many horseshoe crabs are taken, in 1999, one Virginia fisherman took 1.4 **million** horseshoe crabs. Combine these harvests with a loss of shore habitat to human development and the effects of pollution, and little wonder that since the 1960s and 1970s horseshoe crab populations, like the knot, have declined dramatically. Some states have now banned the taking of horseshoe crabs, and in those areas populations appear to have stabilized for the moment. In other states, the unsustainable harvest continues.

Perhaps the most unusual use humans have found for horseshoe crabs is the relatively recent discovery that their blood is the source for LAL, limulus amebocyte lysate. A hidden danger with any medical injection is that the substance to be injected can be tainted with potentially lethal bacteria, leading to what was historically called "injection fever." It was discovered that the blue blood of the horseshoe crab clots in the presence of gram-negative bacteria and is therefore a fine indicator of these endotoxin contaminants. Consequently huge numbers of horseshoe crabs are now harvested alive by biomedical companies and shipped to various labs where some of their blood is taken. These horseshoe crabs are then shipped back and released into the wild. This practice appears to be a better way to use these ancient invertebrates because we are only borrowing them for some bloodletting. But it has been discovered that horseshoe crabs that have been bled and released are lethargic and do not behave normally for up to six months, a condition that may lead to weakened stocks.

Cramer's last stop on her grand tour in search of knots was Southampton Island in the Canadian Arctic in the province of Nunavut, a very isolated spot. Before she



Red Knot in flight. Photograph by Gregory Breese/USFWS (CC BY 2.0).

could go, she had to be trained to use a 12-gauge shotgun. Polar bears were very much present, and she had to be able to defend herself and others. Cramer joined a small band of researchers and Inuit who were studying a variety of wildlife that inhabited the Arctic tundra. It was very windy, cold, and wet most of the time, and walking across the tundra was physically tough. It was very easy to get lost even a short distance from camp. Knot nests were extremely hard to find, particularly since that bird's populations had declined. In most seasons researchers found no nests. Still, they kept returning year after year or at least until the polar bears got to be too much of a threat. Global climate change was on everyone's mind because they could see the first effects of the ice starting to dwindle. It was a wild and sobering end for Cramer's quest.

There is a chapter in *The Narrow Edge* in which Cramer attempts to answer the questions I posed at the beginning of this review: "Does Losing One More Bird Matter?" (p. 158). For the rest of *The Narrow Edge*, Cramer is the clear-headed journalist, professionally reporting from her various destinations, but in this one chapter, she writes with a deep passion. It is the intellectual heart of the book and is a stand-alone essay that encourages every reader to find his or her own answers to grim questions no one really wants to think about.

What is the financial value of that which nurtures the human spirit? And what kind of uneasy moral terrain do we inhabit when, on the basis of financial expediency, we choose which species will live and which will die? (p. 174)

The Narrow Edge is an important book, but is also a fine and fascinating armchair travelogue. Cramer spends time with some very dedicated scientists working long hours to learn more about and hopefully save the remaining populations of knots and other shorebirds. Some of these same scientists have gone beyond their academic pursuits to help local governments preserve pieces of habitat or stop local sources of pollution. I think it is not a stretch to call these scientists heroes. *The Narrow Edge* is an inspiring and sobering account of how our coastal ecology works, what is wrong with it, and what can be done about it. The lives of the Red Knot and the horseshoe crab, intimately intertwined, are both declining worldwide and continue to face challenges from habitat loss, red tide, pollution, overuse, and ultimately, global warming. Horseshoe crabs are still being harvested in many locations, and Red Knots continue to be trapped and shot along their migratory route in South America. We know what can be done to save both species, and by doing so, to save other species and maybe ourselves. But do we have the will to do so?

Recently I interviewed Deborah Cramer, and I bluntly asked her if she were still upbeat about the future of both species despite the human-caused problems. She was quick to respond that she strives to be an objective reporter and is careful in expressing personal opinions. But in meeting so many dedicated people working on the challenges confronting the knots and crabs, she found hard-won inspiration and hope. And despite the problems mentioned above, both the knot and the horseshoe crab have hung on. She expressed a guarded optimism that future generations will still be able to witness flocks of knots massing in a feeding frenzy to devour horseshoe crab eggs.

The story of the red knot is a story of loss that turns toward restoration and renewal. It is a story of the tenacity and resilience of birds under terrible pressure making long journeys year after year, even as their homes are diminished and their food grows scarce. As we lose our own bearings, their long flights offer a compass. (p. 223) 🦆



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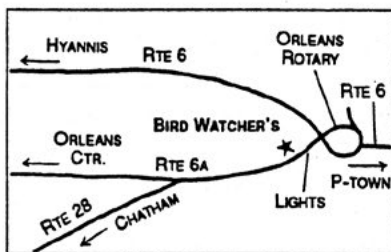
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BIRD SIGHTINGS

November-December 2015

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

November and December were much warmer than normal with little precipitation. The high for Boston in November was 76° on November 5, and the low was 34°. Rainfall for the month measured 2.07 inches, nearly two inches below average. December 1 marks the start of meteorological winter, which was hard to believe this year. The high for Boston was a balmy 69° degrees on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day was sunny and 62°. The average temperature for December was 45°, ten degrees above normal. There was no killing frost in Boston until December 28. Rainfall totaled 4.28 inches, just a half-inch above normal; the most came with the storm on December 23–24, which also brought the record warmth.

R. Stymeist

WATERFOWL THROUGH ALCIDS

It was a banner period for geese, with seven different species reported. On November 13 a Snow Goose was reported on Plum Island, but the next day it was more carefully examined and identified as a **Ross's Goose**. Unfortunately it flew off in mid-morning and was not seen again. On November 25 a **Pink-footed Goose** was photographed at Turners Falls, but was not seen again in Massachusetts. On November 20 a Pink-footed Goose was found in Connecticut and lingered through the end of December; the number of sightings of this bird before and after the Turners Falls sighting indicate that it was probably not the same bird. On December 26 three **Barnacle Geese** were seen in Agawam, and like the others they spent little time in Massachusetts; however on January 3 a group of three was discovered in Windsor, Connecticut, which were likely the same birds. Multiple **Greater White-fronted Geese** and **Cackling Geese** might have been noteworthy in any other reporting period but paled by comparison to their rarer cousins.

A **Tufted Duck** spent three weeks on Johnson's Pond in Groveland, and presumably the same individual showed up ten days later on Lake Cochichewick in North Andover, only a couple of miles away. Barrow's Goldeneye were reported from three Connecticut River Valley locations, along with two other inland locations. **Pacific Loon** is seen almost annually at this time of year, but the November 11 sighting of one at Quabbin Reservoir was particularly exciting as it appears to be the only inland record for this species.

A **Brown Booby** sighted sporadically off Cape Cod since June 30 was seen several times during this reporting period as well. There was an intriguing flurry of reports of **American White Pelican** at this time. On November 15 one was photographed off Pochet Island in Orleans; it was last seen flying south and out of sight. The following day one was photographed at Niles Pond in Gloucester at dawn, and there was another sighting at Plum Island at 9:30 am. While these two Essex County birds could easily be the same bird, it is unlikely the same as the Orleans bird given the distance and the direction it was flying when last seen. On November 4 two birds were seen at Fort Hill in Eastham. On December 22 three were reported from Centerville. Although these birds were not photographed, a second report the same day of three birds flying over Eastham gives credence to the first report.

For a number of years Soheil Zendeh has been leading birding trips to the Wheelabrator property at Bear Creek in Saugus, and on December 20 (happily the day of the Greater Boston

Christmas Bird Count) his team photographed a **Swainson's Hawk** on the property. On November 8 a **Purple Gallinule** was photographed at the Burrage Wildlife Management Area in Hanson.

On November 29 a flock of 23 **Sandhill Cranes** was photographed flying over Kenoza Lake in Haverhill. There is an interesting history of what is presumed to be this flock. In November 2014 up to 30 Sandhills were reported near Skowhegan, Maine, and a number of these were spotted flying south over Newburyport. Once again in 2015 a flock of up to 28 Sandhills tarried near Skowhegan at least until November 21, so the Haverhill sighting was surely the same flock.

In mid-November there was a major fallout of **Franklin's Gull** on the East Coast of the United States. On November 13 Marshall Iliff posted on the Massbird Listserv: "... today is a repeat of a *massive* displacement of Franklin's Gulls eastward from the upper Midwest that happened in Nov 1998. That year many dozens were seen flying south past Cape May – today they had 105+ as of 10am." Later, the eBird web site posted a likely explanation: "A strong storm swept across the upper Midwest and Great Lakes on Wednesday, bringing with it lots of unsettled weather, raging winds at 50 mph or more in many places, and even a few tornadoes."

M. Rines

Pink-footed Goose				Blue-winged Teal			
11/25	Turners Falls	1	J.P. Smith#	11/1	Marstons Mills	1	P. Crosson
Greater White-fronted Goose				11/24	Longmeadow	4	M. Moore
11/20-12/20	Turners Falls	1	E. Huston	12/1	P.I.	1	R. Heil
12/1-20	Holden	1	P. Morlock	12/5	Mashpee	1	T. Green#
12/14-19	Hampden	2	A. Downey	Northern Shoveler			
12/24	Ipswich	2	J. Berry#	11/8	Westwood	3	E. Nielsen
12/27	Agawam	1	S. Motyl	11/15-12/31	Arlington Res.	4	v.o.
Snow Goose				11/26-12/31	GMNWR	4	v.o.
11/23	Granville	25	J. Weeks	11/26	P.I.	8	T. Wetmore
12/14	P.I.	36	S. Babbitt#	Northern Pintail			
12/14	Falmouth	40	R. Debenham#	thr	P.I.	180 max	v.o.
12/14	Pittsfield (Pont.)	340	J. Pierce	thr	GMNWR	12 max	v.o.
12/21	Seekonk	16	R. Bradley	11/25	W. Brookfield	4	M. Lynch#
12/25	Nantucket	3	G. Andrews	12/6	Acoaxet	170	M. Lynch#
Ross's Goose				12/26	Osterville	5	H. Yelle
11/13-14	P.I.	1 ph	N. Landry + v.o.	Green-winged Teal			
Brant				11/5	Pittsfield (Pont.)	49	J. Pierce
11/8	Quabbin Pk	1	J. Drucker#	11/12	Longmeadow	38	M. Moore
11/19	E. Boston (B.I.)	70	P. + F. Vale	11/14	Pembroke	77	G. d'Entremont#
12/8	Nahant	180	L. Pivacek	12/1	P.I.	750	R. Heil
12/30	Fairhaven	167	G. d'Entremont	12/17	GMNWR	8	A. Bragg#
Barnacle Goose				Eurasian Green-winged Teal			
12/26	Agawam	3	S. Motyl	12/1	P.I.	1	R. Heil
Cackling Goose				12/18	Seekonk	1	M. Iliff
thr	Reports of indiv. from 11 locations			Canvasback			
11/1	Acton	3	C. Cook	11/4	Cambr. (F.Pd)	1	B. Miller
11/2-6	Northampton	2	T. Pirro	11/20	Turners Falls	1	E. Huston
11/24-12/21	Concord (NAC)	3	J. Forbes	11/25	Brewster	1	B. Lagasse#
Wood Duck				12/10	Stoneham	3	D. + I. Jewell
12/10	GMNWR	56	A. Bragg#	12/27	Nantucket	28	CBC (N. Bonomo)
12/23	Brookline	30	A. + D. Morgan	12/31	P.I.	1	T. Wetmore
Gadwall				Redhead			
11/6	Royalston	7	M. Lynch#	11/1-14	Gloucester (E.P.)	1	v.o.
11/15	Lexington	11	J. Forbes#	11/6	Turners Falls	2	F. Bowrys
12/1	P.I.	109	R. Heil	11/8-12/12	Haverhill	2	S. + J. Mirick
12/13	Waltham	6	J. Forbes	11/11-12/31	Everett	3	J. Layman#
Eurasian Wigeon				12/27	Waltham	4	J. Forbes
thr	P.I.	1-3	v.o.	Ring-necked Duck			
11/14	Carver	1 m	L. Waters#	11/1	Pittsfield	900	G. Hurley
11/16	Swansea	1	S. Davis	11/9	Southboro	500	S. Miller
American Wigeon				11/21	Waltham	345	J. Forbes
11/14	P.I.	80	J. Berry	11/22	Groveland	400	J. Berry#
11/27	Acoaxet	12	M. Lynch#	12/13	Braintree	350	G. d'Entremont
12/13	Waltham	40	J. Forbes				

Tufted Duck				12/20	Hadley	1	S. Surner
11/15-12/8	Groveland	1 m	T. Walker + v.o.	12/27	Berkley	1	J. Sweeney
12/18-28	N. Andover	1	J. Parrot-Willis#	12/28	Falmouth	1	L. Schibley
Greater Scaup				12/30	Everett	1 m	J. Layman
11/1	Richmond	4	G. Hurley	Hooded Merganser			
11/21	Fairhaven	256	M. Lynch#	11/10	Ipswich	60	R. Heil
11/29	Waltham	25	J. Forbes	11/19	Quabog IBA	118	M. Lynch#
12/26	Lynnfield	30	P. + F. Vale	11/28	Lynnfield	50	P. + F. Vale
Lesser Scaup				12/6	Turners Falls	78	E. Huston
11/8	S. Quabbin	14	L. Therrien	12/12	W. Newbury	100	J. Berry#
11/9	Pembroke	42	J. Sweeney	12/12	Waltham	90	J. Forbes
11/15	Arlington Res.	11	J. Forbes#	Common Merganser			
12/27	Waltham	6	J. Forbes	11/19	Quabog IBA	661	M. Lynch#
12/30	Stockbridge	5	J. Pierce	11/19	Worcester	150	L. Hennin
King Eider				11/28	Lynnfield	200	P. + F. Vale
11/8	Eastham	1	G. Gove	11/29	Pittsfield (Pont.)	355	S. Surner
11/21	Gloucester (B.R.)	1	D. Hursh	Red-breasted Merganser			
12/5	Sandwich	1	L. Meeks	11/10	Winthrop B.	200	S. Zende#
12/7	Barnstable (S.N.)	1	S. Arena	11/12	Southwick	2	S. Kellogg
12/25	P'town (R.P.)	1	S. Arena#	11/21	Mattapoisett	686	M. Lynch#
12/30	Yarmouth	1 f	M. Iliff#	11/28	P'town (R.P.)	500	SSBC (GdE)
Common Eider				Ruddy Duck			
11/21	Rockport (A.P.)	1500	G. d'Entremont#	11/1	Waltham	37	J. Forbes
12/6	N.Truro	6000	B. Nikula	11/6	W. Newbury	100	MAS (D. Weaver)
12/25	P'town (R.P.)	15000	S. Arena#	11/14	Pembroke	551	G. d'Entremont#
Harlequin Duck				11/17	Quabog IBA	85	M. Lynch#
11/1	Chilmark	14	J. Nelson	11/22	Groveland	117	J. Berry#
11/2	Westport	4	M. Lynch#	11/29	Holland	66	M. Lynch#
11/16	Jeffreys L.	1	S. Mirick#	Ring-necked Pheasant			
12/4	Manomet	11	G. Gove#	11/24	Freetown	1	L. Abbey
12/9	Rockport	120	T. Wetmore#	12/13	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	1	E. Nielsen
Surf Scoter				Ruffed Grouse			
11/2	Westport	12	M. Lynch#	11/15	Quabbin Pk	3	B. Zajda#
11/23	Pittsfield (Onota)	1	J. Pierce	11/25	Sandwich	2	P. Trimble
12/5	Rockport	32	J. Berry#	12/20	Rutland	1	M. Lynch#
12/7	Barnstable (S.N.)	14000	S. Arena	Wild Turkey			
White-winged Scoter				11/10	Mt.A.	17	R. Stymeist
11/2	Westport	148	M. Lynch#	12/21	Quabog IBA	28	M. Lynch#
11/15	Rockport (H.P.)	60	J. Berry#	12/27	Ipswich	44	J. Berry#
12/7	Barnstable (S.N.)	6000	S. Arena	Red-throated Loon			
12/30	Quabbin Pk	10	L. Therrien	11/4	P.I.	474	D. Chickering
Black Scoter				11/11	Dennis (C.B.)	115	B. Nikula
11/14	P.I.	130	A. Gurka#	11/28	Rockport (A.P.)	254	R. Heil
11/21	Rockport (H. P.)	350	G. d'Entremont#	Pacific Loon			
11/23	Pittsfield (Onota)	74	J. Pierce	11/11	S. Quabbin	1	L. Therrien
12/6	N.Truro	1500	B. Nikula	11/30	P'town (R.P.)	1	K. Mueller
12/7	Barnstable (S.N.)	4000	S. Arena	12/25	Aquinnah	1	S. Whiting
Scoter Species				Common Loon			
11/3	E. of Chatham	30000	B. Nikula	11/11	Rockport (A.P.)	285	R. Stymeist
Long-tailed Duck				11/14	P.I.	121	A. Gurka#
11/1	Wachusett Res.	11	J. Lawson	11/18	E. of Chatham	110	B. Nikula#
11/8	Eastham (F.E.)	850	B. Nikula	11/22	Wachusett Res.	19	M. Lynch#
11/11	Rockport (A.P.)	160	R. Stymeist	11/22	Quabbin (G35)	19	B. Zajda#
11/15	Quabbin Pk	7	B. Zajda#	Pied-billed Grebe			
12/27	Nantucket	6382	CBC (K. Yakola)	11/2	Acoaxet	7	M. Lynch#
Bufflehead				11/9	Burrage WMA	6	J. Sweeney
11/8	P.I.	24	T. Wetmore	11/10	P.I.	3	T. Wetmore
11/8	Haverhill	22	S. + J. Mirick	11/15	Westboro	4	M. Lynch#
11/15	Ipswich	45	J. Berry#	Horned Grebe			
12/6	Acoaxet	270	M. Lynch#	11/9	Squantum	8	P. Peterson
12/26	Wakefield	19	P. + F. Vale	11/21	Mattapoisett	12	M. Lynch#
Common Goldeneye				11/22	Quabbin (G35)	8	B. Zajda#
11/15	Southboro	53	M. Lynch#	12/6	Westport	34	M. Lynch#
12/19	Agawam	85	S. Kellogg	Red-necked Grebe			
Barrow's Goldeneye				11/8	S. Quabbin	3	L. Therrien
11/1-25	Southboro	1 m	J. Lawson	12/1	P'town	20	B. Nikula
11/17-30	S. Boston	1 m	D. Scott#	12/22	P.I.	15	T. Wetmore
11/26	Dighton	1	D. Lima	Northern Fulmar			
11/29	New Bedford	1 m	G. Gove#	11/3	E. of Chatham	25	B. Nikula#
12/14-19	Agawam	1	L. Richardson	11/16	Jeffreys L.	11	S. Mirick#
12/17-30	Fairhaven	2	C. Longworth	11/18	E. of Chatham	10	B. Nikula#
12/20	Brewster	1	S. Finnegan#	12/26	Stellwagen	76	CBC

Cory's Shearwater								
11/2	Marshfield	6	M. Garvey	11/2-21	Barre Falls	7	Hawkcount (DS)	
11/7	P'town	1200	B. Nikula	11/8	Mt. Wachusett	6	Hawkcount (SO)	
11/8	Eastham (F.E.)	480	B. Nikula	11/15	Quabbin Pk	3 ad	B. Zajda#	
Great Shearwater								
thr	P'town (R.P.)	6000 max	B. Nikula	11/21	Sudbury	3 ad	B. Black	
11/3	E. of Chatham	1000	B. Nikula#	12/10	P.I.	3 ad	T. Wetmore	
11/28	Rockport (A.P.)	29	R. Heil	12/26	S. Quabbin	4	M. Lynch#	
11/28	Orleans	34	B. Nikula	12/31	GMNWR	4	A. Bragg#	
12/26	Stellwagen	56	CBC	Northern Harrier				
Sooty Shearwater								
thr	P'town	13 max	B. Nikula	thr	P.I.	8 max	v.o.	
11/18	E. of Chatham	2	B. Nikula#	11/1	Saugus	2	S. Zende#	
12/15	Nantucket	1	R. Veit#	11/2	Concord	2	M. Rines	
Manx Shearwater								
thr	P'town	60 max	B. Nikula	11/19	E. Boston (B.I)	2	P. Peterson	
11/1	Chatham (MI)	70	B. Nikula	12/5	Cumb. Farms	4	J. Hoye#	
11/3	E. of Chatham	50	B. Nikula#	12/5	Northampton	3	M. Moore	
11/28	Orleans	16	B. Nikula	12/30	Barnstable	9	J. Trimble#	
Brown Booby								
11/8	Eastham (F.E.)	1 ad	B. Nikula	Sharp-shinned Hawk				
11/11	Dennis (C.B.)	1 ad	B. Nikula	11/1	Quabog IBA	2	M. Lynch#	
11/15	Wellfleet	1	M. Moniz#	11/2-21	Barre Falls	13	Hawkcount (DS)	
Northern Gannet								
thr	P'town	1600 max	B. Nikula	11/18	Mt. Watatic	16	Hawkcount (TP)	
11/3	E. of Chatham	500	B. Nikula#	Cooper's Hawk				
11/8	Eastham (F.E.)	650	B. Nikula	11/1	Quabog IBA	2	M. Lynch#	
11/11	Rockport (A.P.)	450	R. Stymeist	11/2-04	Barre Falls	5	Hawkcount (DS)	
11/11	Dennis (C.B.)	1125	B. Nikula	12/3	Belmont	2	R. Stymeist	
12/15	Nantucket	100	R. Veit#	Northern Goshawk				
Double-crested Cormorant								
11/2	Westport	570	M. Lynch#	11/4	Barre Falls	1	Hawkcount (DS)	
11/3	S. Monomoy	2000	B. Nikula#	11/9	Barre Falls	1	Hawkcount (DS)	
11/29	Chatham	400	B. Nikula	11/22	Windsor	1	J. Pierce	
Great Cormorant								
11/27	Acoaxet	10	M. Lynch#	11/27	P'town (R.P.)	1	J. Trimble#	
12/5	Rockport	27	J. Berry#	12/20	Hadley	1	S. Schwenk	
American White Pelican								
11/15	Orleans	1 ph	B. Lagasse#	Red-shouldered Hawk				
11/16	P.I.	1 ph	T. Wetmore#	11/14	Pembroke	2	G. d'Entremont#	
11/16	Gloucester (E.P.)	1 ph	K. Smith	11/18	Mt. Watatic	2	Hawkcount (TP)	
12/4	Eastham (F.H.)	2 ph	S. Barnes#	12/13	Braintree	2	G. d'Entremont	
12/22	Centerville	3	R. Marcantonio	12/20	Cobble CBC	5	Allen Club	
American Bittern								
12/16	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	B. Cassie	Swainson's Hawk				
12/26	P.I.	1	R. Heil	12/20	Saugus	1 ph	CBC (Kovner#)	
Great Egret								
11/2	P.I.	9	T. Wetmore	Rough-legged Hawk				
11/2	Westport	10	M. Lynch#	11/13	P.I.	2 lt	T. Wetmore	
11/25	Squantum	1	E. Lipton	11/15	P.I.	1 lt ph	BBC (J.Center)	
12/28	Quincy	1	V. Zollo	12/1	P.I.	2 lt	R. Heil	
Little Blue Heron								
thr	E. Boston (B.I.)	1	P. Peterson#	Golden Eagle				
Black-crowned Night-Heron								
11/4	P.I.	1	S. Miller	11/2, 7, 20	Granville	1, 1, 1	J. Weeks	
11/19	Cambridge	1	C. Husic	11/2	Pittsfield (Pont.)	1	C. Johnson	
Black Vulture								
11/4	Dartmouth	5	G. Gove#	11/3	N Adams	1	C. Johnson	
11/11	Blackstone	3	D. Berard	11/7	Russell	1	T. Swochak	
11/12	Millbury	2	S. Miller	11/8	Mt. Wachusett	2	Hawkcount (SO)	
11/16	Monson	6	J. Athearn	11/14	Malden (P.R.)	1	Hawkcount (CJ)	
11/29	Franklin	1	D. Allard	11/14	Shirley	1	D. Williams	
12/28	Sheffield	7	J. Pierce	11/15	Barre Falls	1	Hawkcount (DS)	
Turkey Vulture								
11/4	Dartmouth	53	G. Gove#	12/15	Pittsfield	1	T. Collins	
11/4-09	Barre Falls	10	Hawkcount (DS)	12/19	Royalston	1 ad	CBC (J. Siegel)	
11/6	Ipswich (C.B.)	6	J. Berry#	Clapper Rail				
Osprey								
12/6	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	M. Iliiff	12/30	Barnstable	1	J. Trimble#	
12/19	Athol	1	CBC (B. Fregeau)	Virginia Rail				
12/28	Northampton	1	Froehlich	11/5	Wayland	1	B. Harris	
				11/10	Ipswich	1	R. Heil	
				11/12	Reading	1	D. Williams	
				12/30	Barnstable	7	J. Trimble#	
				Sora				
				12/30	Barnstable	1	J. Trimble#	
				Purple Gallinule				
				11/8	Burrage WMA	1	E. Vacchino	
				American Coot				
				thr	Woburn (HP)	33 max	M. Rines	
				11/21	Groveland	155	G. d'Entremont#	
				12/31	GMNWR	37	A. Bragg#	
				Sandhill Crane				
				11/3	Concord	4	S. Clark	
				11/29	Haverhill	23 ph	J. Pettipas	
				12/1	Middleboro	1	E. Lipton	

Sandhill Crane (continued)				12/27	Nantucket	31	CBC (S. Mirick)
12/18-31	E. Bridgewater	1	E. Giles#	Dunlin			
12/30	Jamaica Plain	1	T. Bradford#	11/1	Pittsfield (Pont.)	1	G. Hurley
Black-bellied Plover				11/4	Eastham (F.E.)	450	R. Stymeist
thr	P.I.	56 max	v.o.	11/15	Ipswich	350	J. Berry#
11/4	Eastham (F.E.)	26	R. Stymeist	11/15	P.I.	330	T. Wetmore
11/19	N. Quabbin	6	D. Monette	11/29	S. Boston	130	G. d'Entremont
Semipalmated Plover				12/6	Acoaxet	238	M. Lynch#
11/1	P.I.	26	E. Labato	12/31	P'town (R.P.)	1200	S. Arena
11/6	Ipswich (C.B.)	22	J. Berry#	Long-billed Dowitcher			
12/20	N. Chatham	2	B. Nikula#	11/3	Plymouth	1	B. Zuzevich
12/25	Plymouth	2	I. Davies	11/27	Eastham (F.H.)	1	J. Trimble#
Killdeer				12/19	P.I.	3	D. + S. Larson
11/7	E. Brookfield	12	R. Jenkins	Wilson's Snipe			
11/8	Taunton	9	J. Sweeney	11/1, 12/27	Saugus	3, 1	S. Zende#
Killdeer (continued)				11/8	Taunton	2	J. Sweeney
11/15	Arlington Res.	7	J. Forbes#	12/27	Nantucket	6	CBC (S. Mirick)
Sooty Shearwater (continued)				American Woodcock			
12/27	Acton	3	D. Swain	11/12	Boston (Fens)	3	P. Peterson
American Oystercatcher				12/10	Longmeadow	1	B. Kulvete
11/21	P.I.	2	E. Labato	12/30	Barnstable	2	J. Trimble#
12/5	Edgartown	1	L. Johnson	Red Phalarope			
12/thr	Wollaston B.	2	V. Zollo#	11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	10	P. Crosson
American Avocet				11/21	Dennis (Corp. B.)	2	J. Trimble#
11/16	Salisbury	1	P. Brown	Black-legged Kittiwake			
Spotted Sandpiper				thr	P'town (R.P.)	1200 max	v.o.
11/4	Wachusett Res.	2	J. Lawson	11/1	Nantucket	3200	V. Laux#
11/4	Sheffield	1	J. Pierce	11/3	E. of Chatham	150	B. Nikula#
11/5	Aquinnah	1	S. Williams	11/15	N. Truro	800	B. Nikula
12/5	Mashpee	1	M. Keleher	11/28	Rockport (A.P.)	110	R. Heil
Greater Yellowlegs				Bonaparte's Gull			
11/1	Salisbury	33	F. Vale#	11/8	Eastham (F.E.)	190	B. Nikula
11/10	Ipswich	85	R. Heil	11/8	Turners Falls	1	E. Huston
11/14	Westport	26	M. Lynch#	11/10	Ipswich	220	R. Heil
11/21	Eastham (F.H.)	145	M. Keleher	11/22	P'town	600	B. Nikula
12/20	Cape Cod CBC	21	B. Nikula	12/15	Nantucket	1000	R. Veit#
Western Willet				12/19	Orleans	350	B. Nikula
11/24	Chatham	1	R. Debenham	Black-headed Gull			
Lesser Yellowlegs				11/5	Manomet	1	T. Lloyd-Evans
11/1	Wakefield	1	D. Williams	11/15	Nantucket	1	K. Blackshaw#
12/25	E. Boston (B.I.)	1	M. Kaufman	11/26	P'town	1	B. Nikula
Ruddy Turnstone				11/26	N. Truro	1	B. Nikula
11/27	Scituate	4	K. Rawdon	12/28	Nantucket	1	J. Trimble#
11/28	Quincy	2	J. Forbes	Little Gull			
11/29	S. Boston	3	G. d'Entremont	thr	P'town	3 max	v.o.
12/13	Manomet	2	X. Wei	11/8	Eastham (F.E.)	1 1W	B. Nikula
12/15	S. Boston	3	P. Peterson	11/15	Westport	1	P. Champlin
12/23	Manomet	2	I. Davies	11/20	Plymouth	1	K. Rawdon
12/27	Nantucket	22	CBC (S. Mirick)	11/22	P.I.	1	T. Wetmore
Red Knot				12/15	Nantucket	1	R. Veit#
11/12	P.I.	1	D. Adrien	12/26	N. Truro	1 ad	B. Nikula
11/21	Rockport (H.P.)	2	S. Wrisley	Laughing Gull			
Sanderling				11/4	Westport	27	G. Gove#
11/1	P.I.	40	E. Labato	11/26	Wellfleet	45	B. Nikula
11/2	Acoaxet	19	M. Lynch#	12/13	N. Truro	60	B. Nikula
11/4	Eastham (F.E.)	55	R. Stymeist	12/26	P'town (R.P.)	25	B. Nikula
11/27	Westport	46	M. Lynch#	Franklin's Gull			
12/27	P.I.	20	S. Miller#	11/13-15	Quabbin Pk	1-2	L. Therrien
Semipalmated Sandpiper				11/13	Richmond	4	G. Hurley
11/1	Nantucket	1	V. Laux#	11/13	GMNWR	1	W. Martens
11/1	Salisbury	1	F. Vale#	11/13	Plymouth	3	M. Liff
White-rumped Sandpiper				11/13	Gloucester (E.P.)	1	R. Heil
11/1, 19	P.I.	2, 1	T. Wetmore	11/14, 15	Westport	9, 4	P. Champlin
Pectoral Sandpiper				11/14	Lynn	1	J. Keeley
11/8	Taunton	3	J. Sweeney	11/15	Agawam	1	A. Roblee
11/14	GMNWR	1	J. Forbes	Iceland Gull			
11/19	Wakefield	1	D. Williams	12/26	P'town (R.P.)	25	B. Nikula
Purple Sandpiper				12/28	Nantucket	45	J. Trimble#
11/17	S. Boston	6	D. Scott	Lesser Black-backed Gull			
12/21	Rockport (A.P.)	26	F. Bouchard	11/1-22	Pittsfield (Pont.)	1	G. Hurley#
12/26	Gloucester (E.P.)	45	L. Waters	11/1	Chatham (MI)	9	B. Nikula

Lesser Black-backed Gull (continued)				Dovekie			
11/3	E. of Chatham	7	B. Nikula#	11/8, 23	Eastham (F.E.)	1, 12	B. Nikula
11/7-15	Charlton	1	R. Jenkins#	11/11	Rockport (A.P.)	2	R. Stymeist
11/15	N. Truro	6	B. Nikula	11/16	Jeffreys L.	12	S. Mirick#
11/20	Richmond	1	R. Packard	11/18	E. of Chatham	1	B. Nikula#
11/24-12/31	Turners Falls	1	J. Smith	11/21, 25	P'town	37, 8	B. Nikula
12/28	Nantucket	83	J. Trimble#	Common Murre			
Glaucous Gull				11/21	P.I.	1	D. Chickering
12/21	Rockport (A.P.)	1	F. Bouchard	11/28	Rockport (A.P.)	6	R. Heil
12/31	P'town (R.P.)	1	S. Arena	12/12	P'town (R.P.)	18	S. Arena#
Common Tern				12/26	Stellwagen	38	CBC
11/15-26	N. Truro	20 max	B. Nikula	Thick-billed Murre			
11/15	P'town (R.P.)	300	S. Arena#	11/22	N. Truro	1	B. Nikula
Forster's Tern				12/12	Gloucester	1	M. Lynch#
11/11	Dennis (C.B.)	2	B. Nikula	12/27	P.I.	1 dead	T. Wetmore
11/22	N. Weymouth	1	S. Whitebread	Razorbill			
Great Skua				11/21, 12/26	P'town	200, 2000	B. Nikula
11/21	Dennis (Corp. B.)	1	J. Trimble#	11/22	Scusset B.	340	SSBC (P. O'Neill)
Pomarine Jaeger				11/22	Ellisville H.	250	SSBC (P. O'Neill)
11/16	Jeffreys L.	5	S. Mirick#	11/28	Rockport (A.P.)	136	R. Heil
11/21	P'town	5	B. Nikula	12/5, 27	N. Truro	300, 1400	B. Nikula
11/28	Rockport (A.P.)	6	R. Heil	12/12	P.I.	96	T. Wetmore
12/19	Orleans	2	B. Nikula	12/15	Nantucket	3600	R. Veit#
12/26	Stellwagen	3	CBC	Black Guillemot			
Parasitic Jaeger				11/10	Gloucester (B.R.)	6	J. Nelson
thr	P'town	10 max	B. Nikula	11/28	Rockport (A.P.)	6	R. Heil
11/18	E. of Chatham	2	B. Nikula#	12/26	Gloucester (E.P.)	2	L. Waters
11/22	N. Truro	4	B. Nikula	Atlantic Puffin			
11/28	Rockport (A.P.)	1	R. Heil	12/26	Stellwagen	1	CBC (S. Perkins)
12/15	Nantucket	1	R. Veit#				

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

The most exciting bird of the period was the discovery of a **Common Ground-Dove** in Lexington on November 13, only the second state record. The first record was 42 years ago on October 7, 1973, on Monomoy Island off Chatham. The appearance of that bird occurred during the American Ornithologists Union 100th annual meeting and caused speculation that the bird had been set free to excite the participants on a field trip. The current report is not completely unprecedented since this season has had sightings from three locations in Michigan and two from Wisconsin and also from Minnesota and Illinois.

There was no repeat of the amazing 2013 Snowy Owl invasion; however the flight this season has been better than average. There were reports from over 20 locations, Norm Smith had 10 Snowys at Logan Airport on the day of the Greater Boston CBC, and three were tallied on the Nantucket CBC. The banding stations in Northbridge and Lincoln noted that the Northern Saw-whet Owl migration was much improved from last season. This was the twelfth season for these two sites, the Drumlin Farm site banded 64 birds in November, and Lookout Farm in Northbridge banded 22.

There were two reports of **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** this period, one of which, from Harwich, was banded; the coloration of the head and back, and the length of the bill and wings ruled out female Ruby-throated Hummingbird. The other report was from Dorchester, where a hummingbird was visiting flowering pineapple sage. The homeowner became concerned about the bird because of an impending storm and contacted Mass Audubon. Some photographs taken positively identified it as a hatch year female because of its clean white throat. Both birds were on private property and further access was not allowed. There were no reports of Rufous Hummingbirds, unlike last year when six different individuals were noted.

This period is always exciting for finding something special; there were an amazing five reports of **Ash-throated Flycatchers** including two from the same location in Rockport. The **Bell's Vireo** first noted from Fort Hill in Eastham on October 30 continued at that location

through at least December 12. There were nine individual **Western Kingbirds** noted during the period compared with none during the same period last year. The strong northwest winds that brought the epic flight of **Franklin's Gulls** to the east coast also brought a scattering of **Cave Swallows** to at least eight locations in Massachusetts as well as southern New Hampshire.

Reports of **Townsend's Solitaire** were posted in Hanson, North Truro, and Halibut Point in Rockport. A **Mountain Bluebird** was found at the Crane Wildlife Area in Falmouth in early December and was recorded on the Buzzard's Bay CBC; there are over ten records of this species in Massachusetts. Single **Bohemian Waxwings** were noted from Martha's Vineyard and Gill, and two were found in Provincetown, perhaps the vanguard of the larger flocks noted from northern New England. Among the 23 species of warblers seen during this period were a very cooperative **MacGillivray's Warbler** in Lexington, a **Yellow-throated Warbler** in Hingham, and an Audubon's Warbler in Gloucester. Unusually late reports included Bay-breasted and Prairie on the Nantucket CBC on December 27, and a Chestnut-sided in Acton as late as December 28. Rounding out the rarities this period was a **Western Tanager** in Sandwich.

R. Stymeist

Common Ground-Dove				thr	Longmeadow	2-4		v.o.
11/13-12/3	Lexington	1 ph	Rodriguez + v.o.	11/10	Eastham (F.H)	1		P. Trimble
Yellow-billed Cuckoo				11/25-12/21	Ipswich	1 imm		Dubrow + v.o.
11/20	Eastham (F.H.)	1	L. Wightman	12/13-31	Worc. (BMB)	1		J. Shea + v.o.
Barn Owl					Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			
12/16	Nantucket	3	G. Andrews#	thr	Reports of indiv. from 12 locations			
Eastern Screech-Owl					Northern Flicker			
12/19	Randolph	4	G. d'Entremont#	12/5	Chatham	17		R. Schain
12/20	Cambr. (F.Pd)	3	CBC (R.Stymeist)	12/20	Essex (Choate I.)	9		D. Peterson
12/20	Belmont	3	CBC (R.Stymeist)		Pileated Woodpecker			
Great Horned Owl				11/6	Royalston	2		M. Lynch#
11/12	Woburn (HP)	2	M. Rines	12/18	Melrose	2		D. + I. Jewell
11/25	Belmont	2	F. Bouchard	12/26	S. Quabbin	2		M. Lynch#
12/12	Wayland	2	D. Peebles		Eastern Phoebe			
12/26	Salem	2	J. Paluzzi	12/15	Rockport	1		S. Miller#
Snowy Owl				12/26	Eastham (F.H.)	1		J. Sweeney#
thr	P.I.	1-3	v.o.	12/30	Falmouth	1		C. Whitebread#
11/15-12/31	Reports of indiv. from 16 locations				Ash-throated Flycatcher			
11/17	Barnstable (S.N.)	2	P. Crosson	11/25-28	Nantucket	1 ph		G. Andrews, v.o.
12/19	Sandwich	2	G. Hirth	12/4-26	Rockport	2 ph		S. Williams, v.o.
12/20	Logan	10	CBC (N. Smith)	12/10-31	Manomet	1 ph		B. Harrington#
12/27	Nantucket	3	CBC (K. Yakola)	12/28-31	Cambr. (Danehy)	1		S. Miller + v.o.
Long-eared Owl					Great Crested Flycatcher			
12/19	Warwick	1	CBC (J. Rasku)	11/1	Rockport	1		B. Harris
12/20	Essex (Choate I.)	1	CBC (D. Peterson)		Western Kingbird			
Short-eared Owl				11/1-7	DWWS	2		v.o.
11/14	Sandwich	1	M. Keleher#	11/3-4	Barnstable	1		P. Crosson#
11/18	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	1	L. Miller-Donnelly	11/9	P.I.	1		R. Murphy#
11/9-12/30	Northampton	1	J. Drucker+ v.o.	11/24-30	Eastham	2		S. Williams#
12/thr	P.I.	2	v.o.	11/27-28	Nantucket	1 ph		G. Andrews, v.o.
12/5	Cumb. Farms	1	J. Hoye#	12/22-30	N. Truro	2		M. Malin
12/20	E. Orleans	1	J. Trimble#		Northern Shrike			
12/31	Barnstable	1	M. Malin	11/1-12/30	Windsor	1		J. Morris-Siegel
Northern Saw-whet Owl				11/15	Williamstown	1		C. Jones
11/1-16	Northbridge	22 b	fide B. Milke	11/17	Quabbin (G33)	1		D. Monette
11/thr	DFWS	64 b	fide K. Seymour	12/3	Northfield	1		J. Pierce
12/26	Lincoln	3	N. Levy		White-eyed Vireo			
Black-chinned Hummingbird				12/19	Randolph	1		CBC (V. Zollo)
11/1-26	Dorchester	1 ph	C. Gathman#		Bell's Vireo			
11/30-12/1	Harwich	1 b	S. Finnegan	11/1-6, 12/12	Eastham (F.H)	1,1		J. Drucker + v.o.
American Kestrel					Blue-headed Vireo			
thr	Reports of indiv. from 6 locations			11/17	Mt.A.	1		L. Nichols
Merlin				11/19	Medford	1		R. LaFontaine
thr	Reports of indiv. from 18 locations			12/27	Nantucket	1		CBC (J. Trimble)
Peregrine Falcon					Red-eyed Vireo			
thr	Reports of indiv. from 18 locations			11/4	Manomet	1 b		T. Lloyd-Evans
Red-headed Woodpecker				11/4	P.I.	1		D. Adrien
thr	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	v.o.					

Fish Crow				Ruby-crowned Kinglet			
11/25	Sandwich	125	P. Trimble	11/10	Manomet	2 b	T. Lloyd-Evans
12/17	Northampton	1	T. Gagnon	11/14	Lexington (DM)	3	M. Rines
12/18	Worcester	3	B. Kamp	11/15	Saugus	2	S. Zende#
12/30	W. Roxbury(MP)	400	P. Peterson	11/15	Rockport (H.P.)	3	J. Berry#
Common Raven				12/10	DFWS	2	P. Sowizral
11/6	Royalston	2	M. Lynch#	Eastern Bluebird			
11/18	Mt. Watatic	12	T. Piro	11/9	DFWS	16	P. Sowizral
11/27	Hingham	2	G. d'Entremont	11/28	Nantucket	6	T. Pastuszak
11/30	Jamaica Plain	2	P. Peterson	12/7	W. Newbury	6	R. Heil
12/12	W. Newbury	2	J. Berry#	12/31	GMNWR	11	A. Bragg#
12/20	Waltham	2	J. Forbes	Mountain Bluebird			
12/26	W. Roxbury (MP)	3	M. McMahon	12/4-31	Falmouth	1 ph	G. Hirth
Horned Lark				Townsend's Solitaire			
11/15	Hadley	200	D. Griffiths	11/12-22	Rockport (H.P.)	1 ph	T. Bradford + v.o.
11/18	P.I.	50	T. Wetmore	11/16-17	Burrage WMA	1 ph	L. Wightman
11/19	Quabog IBA	22	M. Lynch#	12/22-30	N. Truro	1 ph	M. Malin + v.o.
12/6	Newbury	36	P. + F. Vale#	Swainson's Thrush			
12/27	Ipswich	60	J. Berry#	11/4	Manomet	1 b	T. Lloyd-Evans
12/27	Saugus	50	S. Zende#	Hermit Thrush			
Tree Swallow				11/8	Boston (RKG)	13	R. Stymeist
11/14	Nantucket	100	K. Blackshaw#	11/9	Medford	9	R. LaFontaine
11/15	Westport	2	E. Nielsen	11/9	Squantum	11	P. Peterson
Cave Swallow				11/12	Boston (Fens)	10	P. Peterson
11/14	Hampden	1	D. Marchant	12/22	P.I.	3	T. Wetmore
11/14	Lynn	5	J. Forbes#	American Robin			
11/14	Westport	3	P. Champlin	12/7	W. Newbury	3900	R. Heil
11/15	Chatham	4	B. Nikula#	Gray Catbird			
11/15	Wellfleet	2	M. Moniz#	11/28	Westport	22	S. Williams#
11/15	Westport	2	E. Nielsen	12/6	Acoaxet	4	M. Lynch#
12/3	Lynn	1	L. Pivacek	12/13	P.I.	2	T. Wetmore
12/13	Salisbury	1	D. Sibley	12/15	Cohasset	2	S. Williams
Barn Swallow				12/26	Fairhaven	2	G. d'Entremont
11/1	P'town (R.P.)	2	P. Flood#	Brown Thrasher			
Swallow species				11/10	P.I.	1	M. Halsey
11/18	Salisbury	1	P. + F. Vale	11/15	Westboro	1	R. McDaniel
12/3	Lynn	2	L. Pivacek	12/12	Ipswich (C.B.)	1	N. Dubrow
Red-breasted Nuthatch				12/30	Amherst	1	J. Rose
11/9	Quabbin (G35)	6	M. Lynch#	American Pipit			
12/13	Ware R. IBA	12	M. Lynch#	11/1	Acton	80	C. Cook
Brown Creeper				11/1	Wachusett Res.	21	J. Lawson
11/6	Royalston	2	M. Lynch#	11/6	Northampton	18	L. Therrien
12/20	Essex (Choate I.)	2	D. Peterson	11/15	Longmeadow	20	L. Richardson
12/31	GMNWR	3	A. Bragg#	11/17	Quabog IBA	8	M. Lynch#
Carolina Wren				11/26	GMNWR	8	D. Swain#
11/5	Quabog IBA	5	M. Lynch#	12/13	Saugus	2	S. Zende#
11/28	Eastham (F.H.)	5	SSBC (GdE)	Bohemian Waxwing			
12/11	Acoaxet	5	G. d'Entremont	11/5	Aquinnah	1	S. Williams
House Wren				11/26-27	Gill	1	J. Smith
11/5	Gay Head	1	S. Williams	11/29	P'town	2	J. Bourget#
11/9	Burrage WMA	1	J. Sweeney	Cedar Waxwing			
12/11	W. Yarmouth	2	P. Crosson	11/12	P.I.	50	T. Wetmore
12/26	Fairhaven	1	G. d'Entremont	11/12	Woburn (HP)	75	M. Rines
Winter Wren				11/27	Waltham	41	J. Berry#
thr	Reports of indiv. from 12 locations			12/3	Scusset B.	24	J. Hoye#
Marsh Wren				Lapland Longspur			
11/26	GMNWR	7	D. Swain#	11/13	Quabbin Pk	1	L. Therrien
11/29	Wayland	5	B. Harris	12/7	Newbury	1	R. Heil
12/20	E. Orleans	9	J. Trimble#	12/8	Northampton	1	J. Smith
12/27	Marshfield	2	D. Furbish	12/16	P.I.	7	MAS (B. Gette)
12/30	Barnstable	6	J. Trimble#	12/27	Saugus	1	S. Zende#
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher				Snow Bunting			
12/4	Gloucester	1	B. Harris	11/6	Ipswich (C.B.)	80	J. Berry#
12/20	S. Chatham	1	P. Trimble	11/7	Deerfield	300	D. Holmes
Golden-crowned Kinglet				11/10	Winthrop B.	95	S. Zende#
11/6	Royalston	4	M. Lynch#	11/14	Acoaxet	96	M. Lynch#
11/12	Woburn (HP)	6	M. Rines	11/18	P.I.	300	C. Johnson
11/25	S. Quabbin	4	M. Lynch#	12/9	Gloucester (E.P.)	30	T. Wetmore#
12/11	Acoaxet	10	G. d'Entremont	Ovenbird			
12/13	Ware R. IBA	8	M. Lynch#	11/2	Boston	2	J. Taylor
12/20	Essex (Choate I.)	3	D. Peterson	11/28	Westport	1	S. Williams#
12/31	GMNWR	4	A. Bragg#				

Northern Waterthrush				Yellow-breasted Chat			
11/6	Nantucket	1	S. Kardell	thr	Reports of indiv. from 9 locations		
Tennessee Warbler				Eastern Towhee			
11/5	Gay Head	1	S. Williams	11/1	P.I.	2	F. Vale#
Orange-crowned Warbler				11/4	W. Roxbury (MP)	2	J. Young
thr	Reports of indiv. from 11 locations			12/20	Randolph	2	C. Whitebread
11/21	Eastham (F.H.)	3	M. Keleher	12/20	Rockport	2	B. Harris
12/1-10	Boston (Fens)	2	P. Peterson	12/20	Newton	2	H. Miller
12/20	N. Chatham	3	B. Nikula#	American Tree Sparrow			
Nashville Warbler				11/9	Burrage WMA	17	J. Sweeney
11/15	Saugus	2	S. Zende#	11/9	Concord	12	M. Rines
12/5	Boston (Fens)	2	P. Peterson	11/17	Quabog IBA	16	M. Lynch#
12/11	W. Yarmouth	1	P. Crosson	12/22	Salisbury	35	P. + F. Vale#
12/20	E. Orleans	1	J. Trimble#	Chipping Sparrow			
12/26	Nantucket	1	K. Yakola	11/12	Millbury	3	S. Miller
MacGillivray's Warbler				11/12	Wachusett Res.	3	M. Lynch#
11/5-23	Lexington	1	C. Floyd#	11/14	Worcester	2	B. Robo
Common Yellowthroat				12/19	Wilmington	1	S. Sullivan
11/18	Boston (RKG)	2	L. Nichols	12/31	Wayland	1	A. McCarthy#
12/10	Wayland	2	B. Harris	Clay-colored Sparrow			
12/25	Ipswich	1	N. Dubrow	11/1	Falmouth	1	M. Schanbacher
12/25	Lincoln	1	N. Levey	11/7-21	Barnstable	1	J. Trimble#
American Redstart				12/11	Manomet	1	T. Lloyd-Evans#
11/1	Boston (BNC)	1	R. Stymeist#	12/13-27	Arlington Res.	1	J. Forbes
11/1	Eastham (F.H.)	1	E. Nielsen	12/29	Haverhill	1	C. Norris
12/16	Nahant	1	S. Williams	Field Sparrow			
Northern Parula				11/28	WBWS	2	SSBC (GdE)
11/1-21	Winchester	1	R. LaFontaine#	12/6	Acoaxet	4	M. Lynch#
Bay-breasted Warbler				12/10-27	Westboro	2	T. Spahr
12/27	Nantucket	1	CBC (J. Trimble)	Vesper Sparrow			
Yellow Warbler				11/1	Lexington	1	J. Forbes
11/3	Mt.A.	1	M. Sabourin	11/2	Wayland	1	B. Harris
11/22	S. Peabody	1	R. Heil	Lark Sparrow			
Chestnut-sided Warbler				11/4-08	Winchester	1	J. Kovner#
12/24-28	Acton	1 ph	A. Pavao#	11/21-12/22	Eastham (F.H.)	1	M. Keleher
Blackpoll Warbler				12/13-17	Weymouth	1	V. Zollo#
11/4	Winchester	4	R. LaFontaine	Savannah Sparrow			
11/7	Manomet	3 b	T. Lloyd-Evans	11/6	W. Gloucester	1	J. Nelson
11/7	Winchester	2	R. Subramanian	11/9	Concord	12	M. Rines
11/19	N. Brookfield	1	R. Jenkins	11/14	P.I.	1	J. Berry
Black-throated Blue Warbler				11/17	Quabog IBA	2	M. Lynch#
12/13	Newbury	1	G. Dearmond	11/29	Saugus	7	S. Zende#
Palm Warbler				11/30	P.I.	1	D. Chickering
11/1	Paxton	3	R. Jenkins	12/5	Cumb. Farms	1	J. Hoye#
11/2	Westport	2	M. Lynch#	12/13	Saugus	3	S. Zende#
11/7	Paxton	2	R. Jenkins	12/18	P.I.	4	T. Wetmore
11/12	Woburn (HP)	1	M. Rines	12/27	Saugus	1	S. Zende#
12/23	Arlington Res.	1	J. Forbes	Ipswich Sparrow			
Pine Warbler				11/12	P.I.	2	D. Adrien
12/21	Lynn	2	M. Iliff	12/5	Chatham	11	R. Schain
12/27	Boston	1	J. Forbes#	Nelson's Sparrow			
12/27	E. Boston (B.I.)	1	K. Hartel#	11/8	Salisbury	2	J. Hoye#
12/29	Webster	1	H. Beaumont	12/30	Barnstable	1	J. Trimble#
Yellow-rumped Warbler				Fox Sparrow			
11/7	Salisbury	12	F. Vale#	11/12	Boston (Fens)	4	P. Peterson
11/12	P.I.	12	T. Wetmore	11/13	Lincoln	12	M. Rines
11/27	Westport	37	M. Lynch#	11/15	Lexington (DM)	15	M. Rines#
12/5	Chatham	86	R. Schain	12/26	Fairhaven	5	G. d'Entremont
Audubon's Warbler				12/30	Yarmouth	8	M. Iliff#
12/4	Gloucester	1	B. Harris	12/31	GMNWR	4	A. Bragg#
Yellow-throated Warbler				Lincoln's Sparrow			
11/10-12/31	Hingham	1 ph	S. Williams + v.o.	11/2	Wayland	1	B. Harris
Prairie Warbler				11/2	Concord	1	C. Gras
11/15	Gloucester (E.P.)	1 ph	P. Brown	11/3	Barnstable	1	P. Crosson
12/27	Nantucket	1	CBC (J. Trimble)	11/9	Lexington	1	E. Lipton
Black-throated Green Warbler				11/11	Everett	1	J. Layman
11/5	Winchester	1	R. LaFontaine	12/27	Nantucket	1	CBC (N. Bonomo)
Wilson's Warbler				Swamp Sparrow			
11/27	Brewster	2	M. Malin#	11/1	Boston (RKG)	7	R. Stymeist#
12/26	Boston (Fens)	1	P. Peterson#	11/26	GMNWR	15	D. Swain#
12/20	E. Orleans	1	J. Trimble#	12/20	Brookline	4	CBC (P. Peterson)

Swamp Sparrow (continued)				11/8	W. Roxbury	750	G. d'Entremont
12/30	W. Roxbury (MP)	4	P. Peterson	Brown-headed	Cowbird		
White-crowned Sparrow				11/21	Fairhaven	75	M. Lynch#
thr	Reports of indiv. from 11 locations			12/11	Acoaxet	50	G. d'Entremont
Scarlet Tanager				Orchard Oriole			
11/1	P.I.	1	E. Labato	11/1-12/12	Mattapan (BNC)	1	P. Peterson.
Western Tanager				11/2	Westport	1	M. Lynch#
11/29	Sandwich	1	M. Keleher	12/4-31	Manomet	1	R. Clay#
Northern Cardinal				12/31	Wayland	1	A. McCarthy#
12/6	Acoaxet	34	M. Lynch#	Baltimore Oriole			
Indigo Bunting				11/7	Truro	7	B. Harris
11/3	Concord	1 f	D. Sibley	11/28	Westport	3	S. Williams#
Dickcissel				12/4	Manomet	2	R. Clay
11/2	Nahant	2	L. Pivacek	12/20	E. Orleans	11	J. Trimble#
12/6	Rockport	2	B.Harris#	12/30	Dennis	4	M. Iliff#
Bobolink				Purple Finch			
11/7	Barnstable	1	J. Trimble#	11/7	N.Truro	6	B. Nikula
Red-winged Blackbird				11/14	Shutesbury	15	B. Emily
11/1	Lexington	120	J. Forbes	12/6	P.I.	12	P. + F. Vale#
12/5	Cumb. Farms	1000	J. Hoye#	12/27	Marshfield	3	G. d'Entremont#
Eastern Meadowlark				Common Redpoll			
11/22	Edgartown	18	J. Nelson	12/12	Ipswich (C.B.)	1	N. Dubrow
11/27	Westport	6	M. Lynch#	12/19	Warwick	3	CBC (J. Rasku)
11/28	Eastham (F.H.)	6	SSBC (GdE)	Pine Siskin			
12/5	Falmouth	6	G. d'Entremont#	11/1	S. Athol	15	B. Lafley
12/30	Barnstable	7	J. Trimble#	11/4	P.I.	15	S. Miller
Rusty Blackbird				11/15	Quabbin Pk	30	B. Zajda#
11/4	Wayland	9	G. Dysart	12/11	Lenox	20	J. Pierce
11/5	Pittsfield (Pont.)	16	J. Pierce	12/20	Norwell	50	C. Patterson
11/22	Wakefield	3	D. + I. Jewell	12/27	Marshfield	26	G. d'Entremont#
11/29	Sudbury	34	B. Harris	Evening Grosbeak			
12/19	Athol	5	CBC (M. Polana#)	11/9	Dalton	17	J. Morris-Siegel
Common Grackle							
11/1	Boston (BNC)	800	R. Stymeist#				



KING EIDER (JUVENILES) BY SANDY SELESKY

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taxonomic order is based on AOU checklist, Seventh edition, up to the 53rd Supplement, as published in *Auk* 129 (3): 573-88 (2012) (see <<http://checklist.aou.org/>>).

Locations		Newbypt	Newburyport
Location-#	MAS Breeding Bird Atlas Block	ONWR	Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge
A.A.	Arnold Arboretum, Boston	PG	Public Garden, Boston
ABC	Allen Bird Club	P.I.	Plum Island
A.P.	Andrews Point, Rockport	Pd	Pond
A.Pd	Allens Pond, S. Dartmouth	POP	Point of Pines, Revere
B.	Beach	PR	Pinnacle Rock, Malden
Barre F.D.	Barre Falls Dam	P'town	Provincetown
B.I.	Belle Isle, E. Boston	Pont.	Pontoosuc Lake, Lanesboro
B.R.	Bass Rocks, Gloucester	R.P.	Race Point, Provincetown
BBC	Brookline Bird Club	Res.	Reservoir
BMB	Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester	RKG	Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston
BNC	Boston Nature Center, Mattapan	S.B.	South Beach, Chatham
C.B.	Crane Beach, Ipswich	S.N.	Sandy Neck, Barnstable
CGB	Coast Guard Beach, Eastham	SRV	Sudbury River Valley
C.P.	Crooked Pond, Boxford	SSBC	South Shore Bird Club
Cambr.	Cambridge	TASL	Take A Second Look, Boston Harbor Census
CCBC	Cape Cod Bird Club	WBWS	Wellfleet Bay WS
Corp. B.	Corporation Beach, Dennis	WE	World's End, Hingham
Cumb. Farms	Cumberland Farms, Middleboro	WMWS	Wachusett Meadow WS
DFWS	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary	Wompatuck SP	Hingham, Cohasset, Scituate, Norwell
DWMA	Delaney WMA, Stow, Bolton, Harvard	Worc.	Worcester
DWWS	Daniel Webster WS		
E.P.	Eastern Point, Gloucester	Other Abbreviations	
F.E.	First Encounter Beach, Eastham	ad	adult
F.H.	Fort Hill, Eastham	b	banded
F.P.	Fresh Pond, Cambridge	br	breeding
F.Pk	Franklin Park, Boston	dk	dark (morph)
G40	Gate 40, Quabbin Res.	f	female
GMNWR	Great Meadows NWR	fide	on the authority of
H.	Harbor	fl	fledgling
H.P.	Halibut Point, Rockport	imm	immature
HP	Horn Pond, Woburn	juv	juvenile
HRWMA	High Ridge WMA, Gardner	lt	light (morph)
I.	Island	m	male
IRWS	Ipswich River WS	max	maximum
L.	Ledge	migr	migrating
MAS	Mass Audubon	n	nesting
MP	Millennium Park, W. Roxbury	ph	photographed
M.V.	Martha's Vineyard	pl	plumage
MBWMA	Martin Burns WMA, Newbury	pr	pair
MI	Morris Island	S	summer (1S = 1st summer)
MNWS	Marblehead Neck WS	v.o.	various observers
MSSF	Myles Standish State Forest, Plymouth	W	winter (2W = second winter)
Mt.A.	Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambr.	yg	young
NAC	Nine Acre Corner, Concord	#	additional observers

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO *BIRD OBSERVER*

Sightings for any given month must be reported in writing by the eighth of the following month, and may be submitted by postal mail or email. Send written reports to Bird Sightings, Robert H. Stymeist, 36 Lewis Avenue, Arlington MA 02474-3206. Include name and phone number of observer, common name of species, date of sighting, location, number of birds, other observer(s), and information on age, sex, and morph (where relevant). For instructions on email submission, visit: <<http://www.birdobserver.org/Contact-Us/Submit-Sightings>>.

Species on the Review List of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, as well as species unusual as to place, time, or known nesting status in Massachusetts, should be reported promptly to the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, c/o Matt Garvey, 137 Beaconsfield Rd. #5, Brookline MA 02445, or by email to <mattgarvey@gmail.com>.

ABOUT THE COVER

Chipping Sparrow

The Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) is one of our most common and frequently heard songsters. Males, during the breeding season, sing their same-pitch trill incessantly throughout the day. Because they nest in rural and suburban habitats, many people frequently encounter these songsters.

In breeding plumage the Chipping Sparrow's head pattern is distinctive. A white superciliary stripe separates the rusty crown from the black eye stripe that distinguishes it from all other sparrow species. The underparts are light gray and unstreaked, the upperparts are brown with black stripes and have tannish wing bars. Nonbreeding Chipping Sparrows are duller: the crown is streaked dark brown and the wing bars are less distinct. In winter, adult Chipping and Clay-colored sparrows look similar but can be distinguished by their rump colors, gray in the former and buffy in the latter. Juvenile Chippies resemble winter adults but are heavily streaked below. Juvenile Clay-colored Sparrows look similar but have sparsely streaked breasts. Adult American Tree Sparrows have a dark breast spot; adult Chipping Sparrows have plain breasts. Five subspecies of Chipping Sparrows are generally recognized, with two occurring in the United States and Canada; *S. p. passerina* is the subspecies found in the east.

The Chipping Sparrow is a wide-ranging, largely migratory species, breeding from eastern Alaska across Canada to southern Newfoundland and across the United States south to near the Gulf Coast and southern California and Arizona. They are generally absent in the south central part of the United States. Southern states, particularly in the east, host year-round populations of Chipping Sparrow. Year-round populations occur in suitable habitat through Mexico and most of Central America. Migratory birds winter in the southernmost United States and the northern half of Mexico. In Massachusetts the Chipping Sparrow is a common breeder and migrant. It is a rare winter resident but in recent years has been recorded more frequently here. Chipping Sparrows migrate in flocks, often in mixed species flocks. They arrive in Massachusetts in April and early May, and leave in late September and October.

The breeding biology of the Chipping Sparrow is poorly known. They have long been considered monogamous but recent studies in Ontario, Canada, indicate that at least in some populations, males wander and copulate with females in neighboring territories and are sometimes polygynous. Chipping Sparrows often produce two broods per year and sometimes three. Only the male sings. The song is a trill of the same pitch. Both sexes utter a variety of chip notes that give the species its name. Males usually sing from perches in trees or shrubs and their song serves as territorial display and to attract females. In threat displays the head is lowered, the bill is open, the wings are drooping, the feathers are fluffed, and the bird shifts from side to side. Fighting sometimes follows threat displays with chases, bill thrusts, and often head to head flights up to 10 feet in the air, with much fluttering and harsh calls. Courtship involves song, chases, hopping along the ground, and pulling at vegetation that some suggest is symbolic of nest material collection.

Chipping Sparrows prefer grassy open woodland habitats and avoid mature forest. They appear to favor ornamental conifers for nesting. Males arrive on territory about a week before the females. The pair searches for nest sites together but the female makes the final choice. The nest is usually three to ten feet above the ground in a tree or shrub in clusters of leaves or conifer needles, but nests have been constructed in bizarre locations such as mowing machines and hanging baskets. The female constructs the nest, a flimsy cup of grasses and rootlets lined with hair and fine plant material. Only the female develops a brood patch and she alone incubates the usual clutch of four blue eggs spotted with various colors for the 11 days until hatching. The male may bring food to the female at the nest. The young are altricial, helpless, naked, and with eyes closed. The female does most of the brooding for about 11 days to fledging. Both parents feed the young and occasionally helpers have been observed. The parents continue to feed the young for about three weeks after fledging. If the female renests, the male takes over the feeding duties for the fledglings.

Chipping Sparrows forage mostly for seeds on the ground or in low vegetation. On the ground they run or hop, scratching through debris on lawns or fields. They also feed directly on the seeds of grasses and weeds. During breeding season they take insects and may eat fruit. In winter they forage in mixed-species foraging flocks and may forage in rolling flocks where birds at the back of the flock fly to the front to search for seeds until they are at the back of the flock again; they then repeat their flight to the front of the flock.

Chipping Sparrows are subject to the usual nest predators: snakes, crows, jays, and squirrels. Hawks and falcons prey on juveniles and adults. Chipping Sparrows also suffer extensive nest parasitism by cowbirds. They faced intense competition from House Sparrows in the early 20th century due to their use of human-altered habitats, but are probably more common now than in colonial times. Some populations declined in the 20th century, mostly due to reforestation. However, the species has adapted well to humans, their ornamental plants, and agriculture, and this together with their vast nesting range suggests that most populations of Chipping Sparrows are secure. 🐦

William E. Davis, Jr.

About the Cover Artist: Barry Van Dusen

An artist who has created many of our covers, Barry Van Dusen, lives in Princeton, Massachusetts, and is well known in the birding world. Barry has illustrated several nature books and pocket guides, and his articles and paintings have been featured in *Birding*, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and *Yankee Magazine* as well as *Bird Observer*. Barry's interest in nature subjects began in 1982 with an association with the Massachusetts Audubon Society. He has been influenced by the work of European wildlife artists and has adopted their methodology of direct field sketching. Barry teaches workshops at various locations in Massachusetts. For more information, visit Barry's website at <http://www.barryvandusen.com>. 🐦

AT A GLANCE



DAVID M. LARSON

Have you identified the bird in this photograph yet?

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

MORE HOT BIRDS



A visitor to Bird Watcher's Supply & Gift in Newburyport reported that a **Western Tanager** was visiting their bird feeder in Rowley. The homeowner did not allow the sighting to be publicized, but one lucky birder (Margo Goetschkes) was allowed to document the bird with the photo on the left.



The former landfill now known as Bear Creek Sanctuary, on the heels of providing Massachusetts' 10th Swainson's Hawk during the local CBC in December, came up even bigger in January with the state's third-ever record of **Smith's Longspur!** Soheil Zende first spotted it on January 17. Marshall Iliff took the photograph on the left. See the full story on page 84 of this issue.

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