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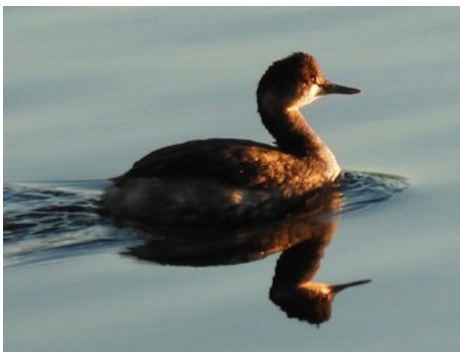
HOT BIRDS

An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** photographed in Orleans on December 20 was in an area closed to the public, so very few were able to see it. Rob Timberlake found a bird of the same species more cooperatively located in the Sagamore Recreation Area by the Cape Cod Canal, on January 10. With a **Black-headed Gull** also being seen there, Sagamore quickly became a very popular birding destination. The flycatcher was last reported January 25. Carol Molander took the photo on the right.



The state hosted one **Tufted Duck** for most of the winter, but jumped up to three before it was over. A brief sighting on the east side of Nantucket in early November presaged the long-staying bird's reappearance in its usual haunts near the island's western tip roughly a month later. In mid-February, a second duck turned up in Eastham, followed by a third in Plymouth in early March. All three were still being seen at press time. Trish Pastuszak took the photo on the left.

In a classic example of the Patagonia Picnic Table Effect, on January 11 Andy Sanford was chasing the previously reported Ash-throated Flycatcher in the Sagamore Recreation Area, when he spotted a **Townsend's Warbler**. Another Townsend's in southern New Hampshire coincidentally was last reported January 11, but that bird had a conspicuous black throat patch, which the MA individual lacks. Andy's warbler was last seen on the same date that the flycatcher was last reported: January 25. Andy Sanford took the photo on the right.



Birders in the general vicinity of Boston enjoyed **Eared Grebe** twice this winter. The first turned up December 5 at Jamaica Pond, continuing there through the 26th. Sixteen days later and 22 miles northeast, Lydia Curtis spotted one from Marblehead Neck, which continued in that vicinity through at least March 10. Mary Ellen McMahon took the photo on the left.

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Bird Observer

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Birding Pembroke, Massachusetts

Brian Vigorito

The town of Pembroke, on the South Shore of southeastern Massachusetts, lies between Boston and Plymouth. It includes several large ponds and a number of small brooks that feed into the North River. Historically, this area was an important herring fishery for Native Americans and early European settlers, as well as the site of a major shipbuilding industry along the North River. In the more recent past, Pembroke was home to many cranberry bogs and a summer resort area called Mayflower Grove. Today, the town is primarily residential.



This article is divided in two sections. The first section—spring birding—covers two lesser-known places, Willow Brook Farm Preserve and Tubbs Meadow. The birding in these areas is typically at its best in the spring, so this section will focus on birding in May or June unless otherwise specified. Both areas have mostly flat, well-maintained trails and can be covered thoroughly in one to two hours each.

The second section—fall birding—covers Pembroke’s ponds, which are the town’s most popular destination for birders. Waterfowl arrive in the fall and linger through the winter, so this section focuses on birding in November or December unless otherwise specified. The shape and size of some of the ponds make it difficult to get a complete view from any one spot, so I have included multiple viewing locations for the larger ponds.

The fall birding trip is a single route covering all of the major vista points. Some of these access points have decent-sized parking areas that will be mostly empty in fall or winter, and others have room for only one or two cars on the side of the road. The north vista point for Little Sandy Bottom Pond and all vista points for Silver Lake require a short hike. You can bird all of the other ponds from or near your vehicle. It takes about four to five hours to cover the entire area in one trip. You can plan a shorter trip by visiting each pond only once—the best spot is listed first in each section—or by skipping the two smaller ponds, Little Sandy Bottom and Stetson ponds.

To plan a longer trip, you can combine several other nearby birding destinations with a visit to Pembroke to make a full day of birding. These include Burrage Pond Wildlife Management Area in Hanson, Mass Audubon’s Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary in Marshfield, Duxbury Beach in Duxbury, and the Cumberland Farms Important Bird Area in Halifax and Middleborough. All four locations provide good year-round birding.

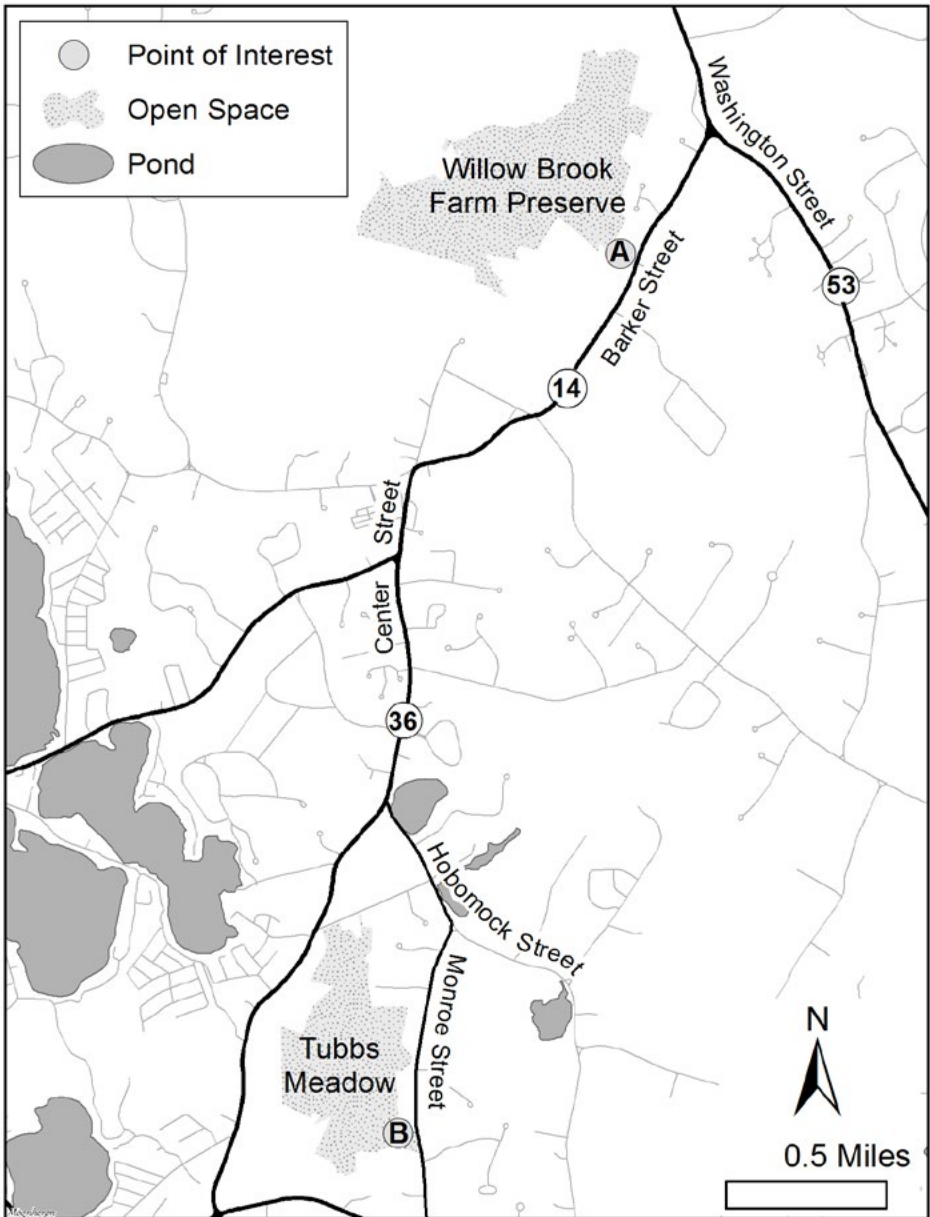


Figure 1. Spring birding map.



Blackpoll Warbler. All photographs by the author unless otherwise indicated.

SPRING BIRDING

Willow Brook Farm Preserve

Willow Brook Farm (Location A on Figure 1. Spring birding map) is made up of two former farms and a few smaller land parcels that are now owned by Wildlands Trust. About three miles of flat, easy trails pass through old farm fields, swamps, and mixed forest. An observation tower overlooks a large freshwater tidal marsh, a rare habitat in Massachusetts. To access Willow Brook Farm from Route 3, take Exit 27—Route 139 (recently renumbered from Exit 12) toward Hanover, follow Route 139 West for 1.1 miles, then turn left onto Water Street. In 1.0 mile, turn left onto Washington Street (Route 53 South). In 0.4 mile, bear right onto Barker Street (Route 14 West). After 0.5 mile, you will come to a small parking lot with a sign for Willow Brook Farm on your right. A trail map is available at <https://wildlandstrust.org/willow-brook-farm>.

From the parking lot, a single trail leads between two old cranberry bogs and then splits when you come out into a brushy field. Listen for the buzzing song of Blue-winged Warbler and look for Blue-gray Gnatcatcher flitting around in the treetops. Most of the fields are surrounded with thickets and mixed forest beyond. Eastern Towhee can be abundant along the edges of the fields, and Scarlet Tanager can be heard singing from the trees. At dawn and dusk in early spring, American Woodcocks display in these fields.



Veery.

At the split, follow the path on the right and walk straight toward the far end of the field. In another clearing farther down the trail, you will see several large piles of loose dirt, some several feet in diameter. I once encountered a hiker here who was concerned about these “shallow graves.” But have no fear; there are no bodies buried here. These piles are giant anthills created by Allegheny mound ants. The ants are not only responsible for building the mounds; they also maintain the grassy clearings around them. These ants have specific habitat preferences, and they kill saplings to prevent trees from overtaking the clearings.

When you reach the end of the field, the trail curves to the left. It passes through a small section of Atlantic white cedar swamp, takes you to the observation tower, then returns to the picnic table at the entrance to the large field to complete the loop. When you walk through the swamp, listen for the soft squeaky-wheel song of the Black-and-white Warbler, the emphatic *teacher teacher teacher* of the Ovenbird, and the nasal, fluting song of the Veery.

On a personal note, a singing Veery in this area was the spark bird that started my interest in birding. A few years ago, I would often go for walks at Willow Brook Farm and had begun keeping track of wildlife that I was seeing along the way. The song of a Veery immediately caught my attention even though I had no idea what it was at the time. Although this song is unique, it is also rather difficult to describe in words. I had to listen to a lot of bird songs to find one that matched so I could identify my mystery

bird. For those unfamiliar with this song, one of my recordings is available at <<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/246001611>>.

The observation tower is a wooden platform about two stories high that overlooks the marsh. This a large open wetland where three small brooks join to form the North River. Although the North River is fresh water and runs for another 10 miles before reaching the ocean between Scituate and Marshfield, it is a tidal river; its water level and the marsh are affected by the tides.

The observation tower's bench is a great place to sit and watch the birds coming and going. Swallows, herons, and the occasional Bald Eagle fly above the river. Cormorants and gulls also fly upriver during the spring when herring are running. The marsh attracts many warblers and other migrants. Because the tower is right in among the trees, sitting here quietly can reward you with a close view of a species normally only seen high overhead, such as Red-eyed Vireo or Blackburnian Warbler.

An interesting phenomenon occurs farther out in the marsh during fall migration. Migrating Soras stop in large numbers to feed on wild rice along the edges of the river. This species is normally seen only in ones or twos in Massachusetts, but a well-timed trip along the North River in late September can potentially turn up dozens. This requires getting out on the river in a canoe or kayak. A public boat launch on Indian Head Drive in Hanover provides access. Note that paddling on a tidal river comes with some practical and safety concerns that are beyond the scope of this article. The North and South Rivers Watershed Association has an excellent guide to such issues at <<https://www.nsrwa.org/listing-category/paddling/>>.

After you complete the loop around the field, you can access the northern half of Willow Brook Farm via the trail that branches off to the right about halfway across the main field. This trail leads across a boardwalk in a red maple swamp, crosses a bridge over Pudding Brook, and then loops around in a brushy meadow. There is also a connector trail here that leads to the Misty Meadows Conservation Area, owned by the town of Pembroke. The meadows have long since returned to forest, but you can still see the misty meadow effect at the horse farm on Route 53 around the corner from Willow Brook Farm. When conditions are right in the morning, fog condenses around Pudding Brook and fills the field.

Tubbs Meadow Conservation Area

The main entrance to Tubbs Meadow (B) is about 3.0 miles from Willow Brook Farm. When you leave Willow Brook Farm, turn right onto Barker Street, which shortly becomes Center Street. In the center of Pembroke, continue straight at the traffic light to stay on Center Street. After 0.8 mile, turn left onto Hobomock Street. In 0.4 mile, turn right onto Monroe Street. In another 0.7 mile, the large gravel parking lot for Tubbs Meadow will be on your right. Trail maps are available at <<http://southshoretails.com/tubbsmeadow/>> and <https://www.pembroke-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3666f/uploads/map_of_trails_in_tubbs_meadow.pdf>.

Tubbs Meadow is made up of former cranberry bogs that are now conservation land owned by the town of Pembroke. Some of the bogs are completely flooded and



Pectoral Sandpiper.

have become small ponds, and others have been almost completely taken over by secondary forest. A couple of miles of broad, dirt trails provide easy access to the entire area.

The main trail from the parking lot leads through a small section of woods and soon comes out into an open area near four small ponds, broken up by old dikes from the cranberry bogs. The dikes are just wide enough for a narrow strip of vegetation to grow on either side of the path, making it easier to spot birds here than in the dense woods. Look for warblers, orioles, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

West of the ponds is a large section of pine forest. The trail here leads off to a side entrance in a neighborhood and does not connect back to the rest of the area. But it can be worth a quick walk down and back to listen for singing Ovenbird and Hermit Thrush.

North of the ponds is a sandy area where the small trees and shrubs have begun to reclaim the bogs. Look for Field Sparrow and Eastern Bluebird here. Along the edge of this area, there is an east-facing slope that runs up to a residential neighborhood. This can be a great place to look for warblers and other migrants when the sun hits the slope early in the morning. Farther north, the trail winds past a small pond, then goes through another section of young forest. The path here connects to a side entrance with a few parking spots on Mill Street.

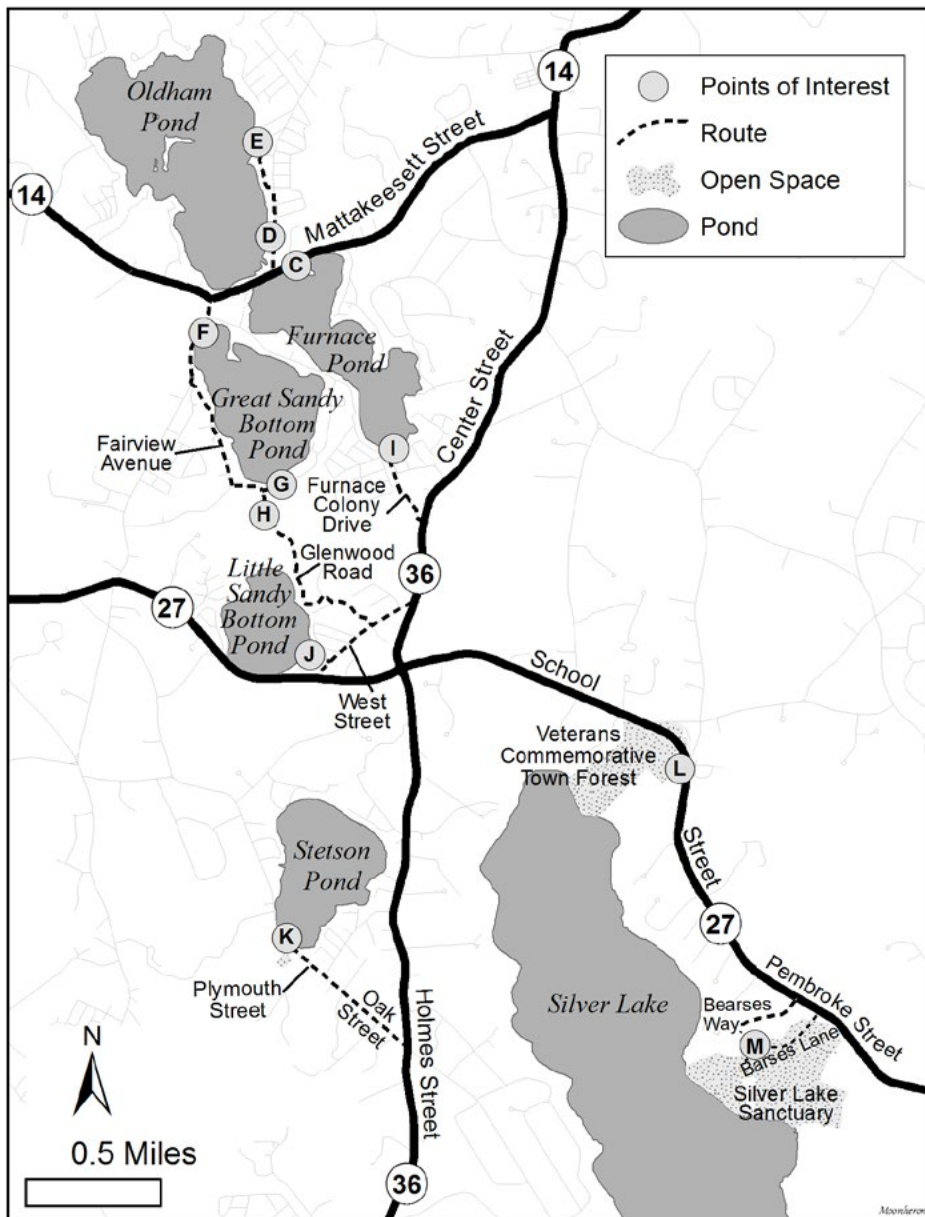


Figure 2. Fall birding map.

Tubbs Meadow tends to be at its best in the spring, but it can also be worth a visit at other times of year. In late summer and early fall, the ponds can dry up, leaving a lot of exposed mudflats that attract Pectoral Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, and other shorebirds. Later in the fall, various sparrows can be found in the sandy area, and dabbling ducks arrive on the ponds.

FALL BIRDING

Pembroke Ponds

To reach the Pembroke ponds (See Figure 2. Fall birding map) from Route 3, take Exit 27—Route 139 toward Hanover and follow Route 139 West for 1.1 miles, then turn left onto Water Street. In 1.0 mile, turn left onto Washington Street (Route 53 South). In 0.4 mile, bear right onto Barker Street (Route 14 West). After passing Willow Brook Farm, Barker Street becomes Center Street. In 1.0 mile, bear right in the center of Pembroke onto Mattakeesett Street (Route 14 West). After another 1.5 miles, the road passes between the first two ponds.

The parking lot of the Lucky Dawg Tavern (C) will be on your left and is a good spot to stop and look at Furnace Pond. The restaurant is located on a small point of land that juts out into the pond, and the parking lots on both sides of the building look onto different sections of the pond. To the left, a shallow cove in the northeast corner of the pond attracts dabbling ducks and American Coot. To the right, a larger, more open section attracts scaup and other diving ducks.

The northwest corner of the pond can be hard to see from the parking lot, but there is another vista point a little farther west on Mattakeesett Street. Walk a bit down the sidewalk to a small trail leading to the water's edge directly opposite Wampatuck Street. The far southern end of Furnace Pond is quite distant from here and partially obscured, but another vista point is included later.

Return to the Lucky Dawg parking lot and take a left on your way out, then immediately take the next right onto Wampatuck Street. The Pembroke Town Landing (D) will be just ahead on your left. This area includes a small beach and a boat ramp with a parking lot. Pull in here for the best view of Oldham Pond.

Set up your scope in the parking lot and scan for Common Goldeneye, scaup, and other diving ducks. In addition to the typical diving ducks, one unique individual has been seen in this pond over the last few years. A drake Common Goldeneye x Hooded Merganser hybrid has returned to Pembroke every fall since 2017. This stunning duck is most often seen on Oldham Pond but could be found on any of the ponds in the area. Besides being a beautiful animal on its own, this individual also demonstrates the tendency of ducks to form unusual hybrid pairings. Its parents are not only from two different species, they are not even in the same genus.

A small plastic dock sticks out into the water next to the boat ramp. Walking out on the dock gives you a view of the close shore. Dabbling ducks and American Coot may be seen feeding among the reeds.



Common Goldeneye x Hooded Merganser. Photograph by Jim Sweeney.

If the rafts of ducks at the north end of the pond are too far out of sight, you can try another access point. Drive north on Wampatuck Street and take a left onto Adams Avenue. On your left across from Beebe Lane there is a small playground and beach (E) with a few parking spots along the side of the road. From here, you can get a closer view of the northern half of Oldham Pond, including the northwest corner, which is hidden behind an island when looking from Town Landing.

Head back on Adams Avenue and Wampatuck Street to return to Mattakesett Street, turn right, and in 0.4 mile take the second exit at the rotary to stay on Mattakesett Street. About 500 feet south of the rotary, there will be a dirt pulloff (F) on your left. Pull in here for the first vista point at Great Sandy Bottom Pond.

Great Sandy Bottom Pond is one of the best places in Plymouth County to see Ruddy Duck. In late fall, as many as four to five hundred can gather here along with other diving ducks. The pulloff from Mattakesett Street typically provides the closest views of the Ruddys, but much of the pond may not be visible from this angle.

A small trail through the woods leads down to the edge of the pond. The water level here can vary quite a bit. If the water is high, you may have to look from the end of the trail, and only the cove in the northwest corner will be visible. Sometimes there is enough exposed shoreline to walk to the right and get a view of the northeast corner, where the largest rafts of ducks tend to congregate.



Ruddy Duck.

To see the southern end of Great Sandy Bottom Pond, continue south on Mattakesett Street and take the first left onto Fairview Avenue. In 0.4 mile, at the end of Fairview Avenue, take a left into the wooded area on Glenwood Road. After about 500 feet, you will arrive at an open area, and there will be an unmarked dirt road on your left. There is no sign here, but the dirt road is Ridge Avenue. Take a left onto Ridge Avenue, and park in the dirt pulloff (G) where the road widens.

On the north side of the dirt road, an overgrown trail leads to the water's edge at the southern end of Great Sandy Bottom Pond. From this vista point, you can see most of the pond. When the water level is high, this may be the best option to see into the northeast corner. This is also a better vista point in the morning, as glare from the rising sun may make it hard to see from the first pulloff.

On the south side of the dirt road, there is a sandy area with brushy habitat and an old cranberry bog. Check the thickets for sparrows, Northern Mockingbird, and the occasional Brown Thrasher. If there is water in the bog, check for Green-winged Teal, other dabbling ducks, and perhaps a lingering shorebird.

This area is also well worth a visit at other times of year. In spring, when warblers and other migrant songbirds are arriving, Ruddy Ducks are leaving our area. Small numbers will often linger on Great Sandy Bottom Pond into mid-May, providing an opportunity to see their vibrant breeding plumage, with adult males sporting light blue bills and reddish brown bodies.

In late summer and early fall, shorebirds and waders use the small bog south of the pond as a stopover site. Several species of sandpipers, including Pectoral, Solitary, and Spotted, often can be found here together, as well as Semipalmated Plovers and Killdeer. These shorebirds will also use the exposed shoreline around the edges of Great Sandy Bottom Pond if the water level is low. Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, and Snowy Egret can pack into this small bog in surprising numbers, with the occasional Little Blue Heron, Glossy Ibis, or night-heron mixed in.

Turn around and head back to Glenwood Road. Take a left onto Glenwood, then immediately pull into the small parking lot on your right, across the street from the Pembroke Water Department. This parking lot also provides another vista point to look down into the bog behind Great Sandy Bottom Pond.

The area west of Glenwood Road is known as Windswept Bogs (H); several trails here crisscross former cranberry bogs, which are slowly giving way to secondary forest. In a good winter for finches, this area is worth a thorough check. The mix of birch trees, crabapples, and pines is perfect for attracting Common Redpoll, Purple Finch, and Pine Siskin. In other years when the finches stay north, you can still find American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and kinglets here.

Little Sandy Bottom Pond is at the south end of Windswept Bogs. The broad, dirt walking trail leading south from the parking lot will take you to a small, public beach on the shore. Bring your scope to check for Bufflehead, Common and Hooded merganser, and Common Goldeneye.

Walk back to your car. When you exit the parking lot, turn right to continue south on Glenwood Road, which becomes Toole Trail. After about 0.5 mile, take a left onto West Street. At the end of the road, take a left onto Center Street (Route 36 North). After another 0.5 mile, take a left onto Furnace Colony Drive. In 0.25 mile, there will be a few parking spaces for Furnace Pond Beach (I) on your right. This is the same pond visible from the first stop at Lucky Dawg Tavern, but this beach provides a view of the southern half, which cannot be easily seen from the earlier stops.

Retrace your route and return to Center Street. Take a right onto Center Street and then another right onto West Street. In 0.5 mile, take a right onto Shepard Avenue. At the end of Shepard Avenue, there are a couple of parking spots at another small beach (J), which gives a different view of Little Sandy Bottom Pond.

Return to West Street and take a right. At the end of the road, take a left onto School Street (Route 27 East). Take a right at the first traffic light onto Center Street (Route 36 South). In 1.5 miles, take a sharp right onto Oak Street, which becomes Plymouth Street in 0.5 mile; continue straight. Shortly, you will come to a parking lot for Stetson Pond Beach (K) on your right.

This is the only publicly accessible vista point at Stetson Pond, but luckily you can see the entire pond from the parking lot here. Across the street in the woods, there is another shallow pond known as Chaffin Reservoir. There is no trail here, but if you are up for a short bushwhack, this pond can be good for Wood Duck and other dabblers.

Retrace your route and follow Routh 36 North back to Route 27. Take a right at the

traffic light onto School Street (Route 27 East). Follow School Street for 1.2 miles. The parking lot for Veterans Commemorative Town Forest (L) will be on your right, just after you pass Lake Street on the left.

This area provides access to Silver Lake, which is located in Pembroke and the neighboring towns of Halifax, Plympton, and Kingston. There are no roads or parking lots along the shore; all of the vista points described here will require a short hike. A trail map for this area is available at <<http://southshoretrails.com/veteranstownforest/>>. From the parking lot at the town forest, follow the main trail for about 0.5 mile to reach the northeast shore of Silver Lake. If the water level is high, the only view here may be from the end of the trail. When the water level is lower, it is possible to walk around on the shoreline.

Of all the ponds in the area, Silver Lake often has the greatest diversity of waterfowl, attracting both diving and dabbling ducks, as well as geese and swans. Large numbers of Common Goldeneye often can be found here, with the occasional Barrow's Goldeneye mixed in. Because it is one of the largest bodies of the water in the area, many waterfowl roost here overnight. It can be worthwhile to visit Silver Lake in the late afternoon and watch ducks flying in from some of the smaller ponds.

When you leave the parking lot, turn right onto School Street. After about 1.5 miles, you will pass Bearses Way on the right. Immediately after Bearses Way, there is a small dirt road into the woods named Barses Lane (M). Turn right onto Barses Lane. After about 0.3 mile, you will come to a loop in the road and an old barn. There is a dirt parking lot just past the barn at the trailhead for Silver Lake Sanctuary. (Note: do not rely on Google maps or GPS devices in this area. Barses Lane does not appear on online maps, and the paved road, Bearses Way, does not connect to this parking lot.) A full trail map is available at <http://kplma.org/maps/SLSS_MapG.pdf>.

From the kiosk at the trailhead, there are two paths to the shoreline. The trail to the right of the kiosk leads to a vista point near the middle of Silver Lake that provides a good view of most of the lake. At the fork near the beginning of this trail, bear left and go straight ahead for about 0.25 mile to reach the shoreline.

To the left, behind the kiosk and the barn, a longer trail leads to a cove at the south end of the lake. Continue straight at the first intersection and walk for about 0.25 mile. When the trail splits, bear right. The trail curves around a swampy area and after 0.25 mile, it comes out onto a small beach, which is the third and final vista point for Silver Lake. 🐾

Reference

McCook, Henry C. 1877. Mound-Making Ants of the Alleghenies, Their Architecture and Habits. *Transactions of the American Entomological Society* 6: 253–96. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25076323>. Accessed 1/11/2021.

Brian Vigorito has lived in Pembroke with his wife Elizabeth since 2010. He first became interested in birds while volunteering for Wildlands Trust in 2016 and has been an avid birder ever since. He is an active member of the South Shore Bird Club and leads trips for the club.

Tracking Local and Long-Distance Movements of Massachusetts Barn Swallows and American Kestrels

Jonathan L. Atwood

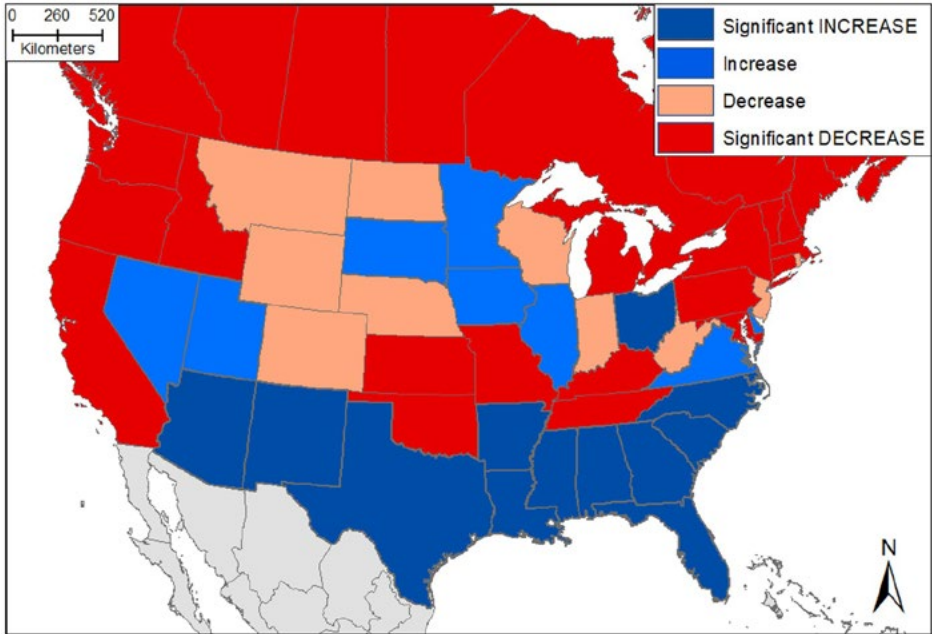


Figure 1. North American population trends of Barn Swallow, by state and province, based on USGS Breeding Bird Survey data, 1966–2017 <<https://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/>>, scale = states; Sauer et al. 2017).

Anticipating field research on important conservation topics may seem far removed from the many challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet Mass Audubon’s conservation science department is planning a couple of specific projects that may be of particular interest to *Bird Observer* readers. These projects—on Barn Swallows and American Kestrels—will begin in April 2021, and we hope to have results that can be reported here sometime in the fall or winter.

Barn Swallows

Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) belong to a suite of aerial insectivores that are undergoing serious population declines in northeastern North America. Although a common, widespread species that occurs throughout most of the world, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Breeding Bird Survey data (Sauer et al. 2017) indicate that, over a 45-year period (1970–2014), the overall population of this species in the United States and Canada has decreased by an estimated 38% (Rosenberg et al. 2016). The Canadian population has declined approximately 80% since 1970, leading the

Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) to assess the Barn Swallow as Threatened (COSEWIC 2011).

Population trends within the Barn Swallow's North American range vary geographically (Figure 1). Numbers are increasing in the southern tier of states from Arizona east to North Carolina. All of the Canadian provinces, California, and northwestern, midwestern, northeastern, and mid-Atlantic states generally show declining populations—with trends that are less pronounced in the Midwest. In Massachusetts, based on 29 Breeding Bird Survey routes, there has been an estimated 1.1% annual decline in abundance of Barn Swallow from 1966–2017 (Sauer et al. 2017). These declines were not reflected by Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas data, which showed a stable or increasing state-wide breeding distribution between the two atlas periods (1974–1979 and 2007–2011), although Walsh and Petersen (2013) nonetheless commented that the species merited “further monitoring and conservation action.”

The causes of Barn Swallow declines are unclear. BirdLife International stated that at a global scale,

The main threat to the species is the intensification of agriculture. Changes in farming practices such as the abandonment of traditional milk and beef production have resulted in a loss of suitable foraging areas. In addition, intensive livestock rearing, improved hygiene, land drainage and the use of herbicides and pesticides all reduce the numbers of insect prey available. Suitable nest sites for Barn Swallows are often scarcer on modern farms. The species is susceptible to changes in climate with bad weather in the wintering areas as well as the breeding grounds affecting breeding success (Tucker and Heath 1994). It is occasionally hunted for sport and nests are sometimes removed as a nuisance. In North America, introduced House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) are serious nest-site competitors, taking over nests and destroying eggs and nestlings (Turner and Christie 2012). (BirdLife International 2016)

In Canada, where the species is listed as Threatened, COSEWIC (2011) concluded that “the main causes [of decline] . . . are thought to be: 1) loss of nesting and foraging habitats due to conversion from conventional to modern farming techniques; 2) large-scale declines (or other perturbations) in insect populations; and 3) direct and indirect mortality due to an increase in climate perturbations on the breeding grounds (cold snaps).” Møller (2001) noted that the number of swallows in Denmark declined when dairy farming was shifted to crop production. Nebel et al. (2010) concluded that “the taxonomic breadth of these downward trends [among 24 species of aerial insectivores, including Barn Swallows] suggests that population declines are linked to changes in populations of flying insects, and these changes might be indicative of underlying ecosystem changes.”

Barn Swallows typically feed at lower heights—often less than one meter above the ground and usually no more than 10 meters high—than most other North American swallows (Brown and Brown 2019). Brown and Brown (2019) suggested that “foraging

low to the ground may enable the Barn Swallow to find more food and thus survive late-spring cold snaps better than species that forage at higher [altitudes] (e.g., Cliff Swallow, Purple Martin, Chimney Swift).” In New England, foraging birds are concentrated over grassy pastures, plowed fields, and around farmyards and domestic animals. Brown and Brown (2019) observed that Barn Swallows “often feed on insects flushed by farm implements, domestic or wild grazing mammals, humans, and flocks of other bird species.” There is no evidence of coordinated group foraging (Snapp 1976), although Hebblethwaite and Shields (1990) found that birds may occasionally cue on the foraging activities of conspecifics.

Little is known about the foraging habitat preferences of nesting Barn Swallows. Within the immediate vicinity of the approximately 40-pair breeding colony of Barn Swallows located on the Fort River Division of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge in Hadley, Massachusetts, are numerous agricultural fields that vary not only in ownership but also in management and landscape characteristics. Mass Audubon conducted preliminary surveys of Barn Swallow nesting sites within 10 kilometers of Hadley during 2020. Of 1,324 grid cells, each 50 hectares in size, that were visited, 145 (11%) contained barns or other structures that appeared potentially suitable for nesting Barn Swallows. Of these potential sites, Barn Swallows were found at 38 (29%).

In the coming study we will place lightweight—approximately 0.32-gram—nanotags on 20 adult Barn Swallows captured at the Fort River Division nesting site. We will use mist-netting capture methods that during 2019 and 2020 allowed us to capture and band 160 individuals. Systematic surveys of agricultural landscapes located within 10 kilometers of the Fort River nest site will then be carried out using a handheld telemetry receiver to detect marked individuals at potential foraging sites. An important part of this study will be to describe the characteristics—crop type, harvest activities, presence of livestock, proximity of water, presence of other aerial insectivores—of fields being used by foraging swallows, as well as descriptions of fields where swallows were not observed or detected.

We also hope to establish insect sampling stations in selected agricultural fields representing the range of management approaches in the landscape surrounding the Fort River breeding colony. This sampling will help us measure insect abundance at the various fields and relate that information to swallow foraging behavior and agricultural management approaches.

Our work on Barn Swallows in the Hadley area will be made possible by financial support from the Blake-Nuttall Fund of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Migratory Birds.

American Kestrels

American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*), a similarly iconic species of New England’s agricultural landscape, will also be a focus of Mass Audubon field research during the 2021 field season. Our work will be conducted as part of the Northeast Motus

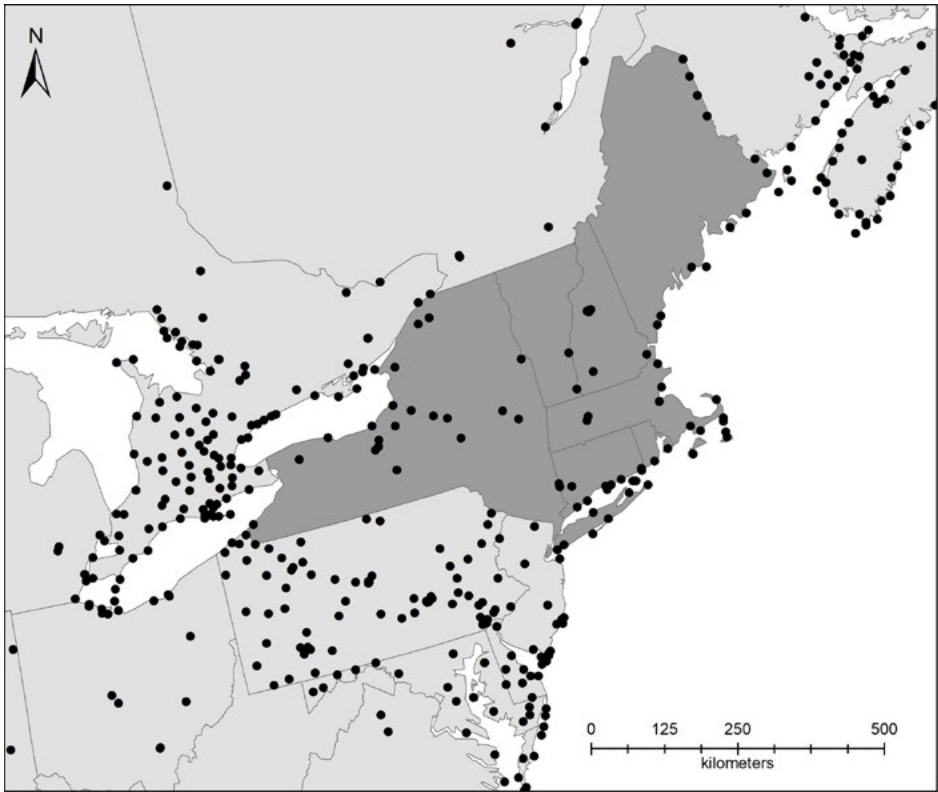


Figure 2. Locations of active Motus receiving stations in northeastern North America as of January 26, 2021, based on data from <https://motus.org/>. Dark-shaded states are participants in the Northeast Motus Collaborative, which will add 50 additional stations in inland areas during 2021–2022.

Collaborative’s <https://www.northeastmotus.com/> first field season. This project, which revolves around a multistate expansion of automated telemetry receiver stations in inland areas of the Northeast (Figure 2), will make use of the Motus Wildlife Tracking Network, spearheaded by Birds Canada <https://motus.org/>. Mass Audubon, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, will capture and mark adult kestrels nesting in Massachusetts and assess movements of these birds as they migrate to and from southern wintering grounds.

The American Kestrel, the smallest and most widely distributed falcon in North America, breeds in a variety of open and semiopen habitats throughout much of the United States. However, despite its broad range and apparent habitat availability, kestrels have undergone a widespread population decline, with some of the steepest declines occurring in the Northeast (Figure 3). As a result, the kestrel is included as a Species of Greatest Conservation Concern in the wildlife action plans of all six New England states. According to the Breeding Bird Survey, kestrels experienced a 5.3% annual decline in the New England and mid-Atlantic Coast region and an alarming

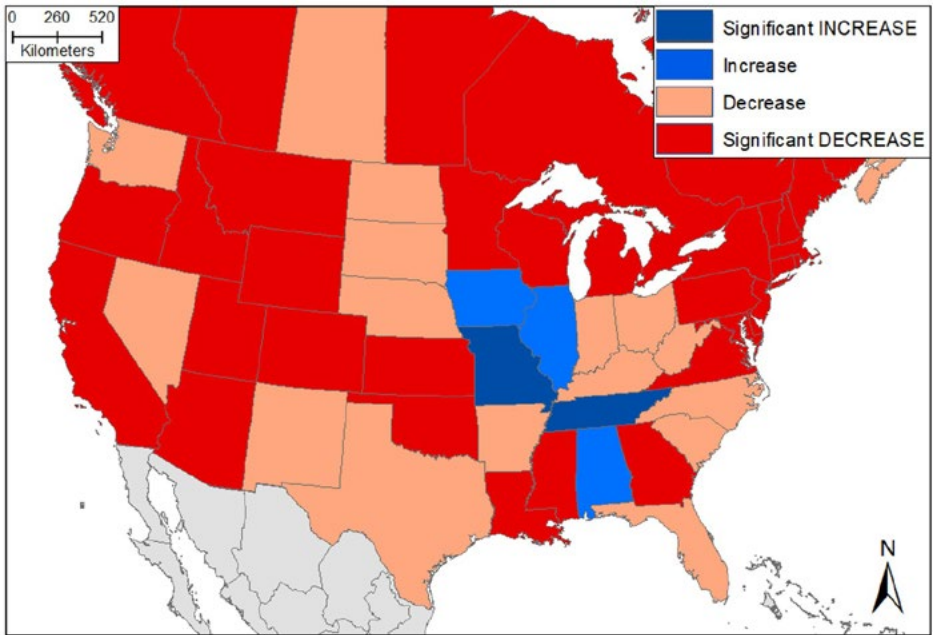


Figure 3. North American population trends of American Kestrel, by state and province, based on USGS Breeding Bird Survey data, 1966–2017 ([https://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/scale = states](https://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/scale=states); Sauer et al. 2017).

7.1% annual decline in Massachusetts during 1966–2015 (Sauer et al. 2017). Further confirmation of this precipitous decline comes from Mass Audubon’s Breeding Bird Atlases. The second Atlas (2007–2011; Walsh and Petersen 2013), documented kestrels in 289 fewer blocks than the first Atlas (1974–1979; Petersen and Meservey 2003). This decline was the second largest of all native breeding birds in Massachusetts.

The specific causes of American Kestrel declines are not well understood. For kestrels in the Northeast, ornithologists generally believe that several factors are likely contributing to declines, with breeding habitat loss and nonbreeding period survival as possible leading factors. Kestrels prefer to nest in open areas over 50 acres in size (Smallwood and Bird 2002), including grasslands and agricultural fields, but such open areas have become increasingly uncommon in Massachusetts and New England. However, there remain numerous locations with seemingly suitable breeding habitat that lack nesting kestrels. This observation suggests that problems apart from the breeding grounds, such as elevated mortality rates during the migratory and over-wintering periods, also may be important factors. In collaboration with the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Mass Audubon hopes that the data collected as kestrels migrate past the Motus telemetry array will help us better understand threats to kestrels across their life cycle, thereby enabling more effective maintenance and protection of suitable habitat.

Our work on American Kestrels in Massachusetts will be funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Competitive State Wildlife Grant CFDA 15.634. 🐦

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Jon Atwood is Director of Bird Conservation for Mass Audubon. After completing his master’s and doctoral degrees in southern California, he moved to the East Coast in 1986. While working at Manomet Bird Observatory (now Manomet, Inc.) during the early 1990s, 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 in New England. From 1998 to 2011, he directed the Conservation Biology Program at Antioch University New England and mentored over 70 graduate students working on various wildlife studies.

Bird Observer supports the right of all people to enjoy birding and nature free from discrimination and harassment, be it sexual, racial, or barriers for people with disabilities, and therefore endorses the following statement on ornithological field safety:

Joint Society Statement on Ornithological Field Safety

The professional ornithological societies of the Americas are committed to maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for everyone in the field of ornithology and for all who participate in birding and other forms of nature appreciation. Among its many gifts, the natural world provides immeasurable solace, connection, comfort, wonder, and peace to those who enjoy it, and this should never come with risk, anxiety, or endangerment. While we represent different societies, we are united as a community around these principles. Individual behaviors that prohibit others from safely engaging in ornithology will not be tolerated by our societies, and we will each do our part in advancing these shared ethical ideals.

Signed by:

**American Ornithological Society
Association of Field Ornithologists
BirdsCaribbean
CIPAMEX
Neotropical Ornithological Society
Raptor Research Foundation
Society of Canadian Ornithologists-Société des ornithologistes du
Canada
The Waterbird Society
Western Field Ornithologists
Wilson Ornithological Society**

Remembering Janet Heywood 1943–2021

Robert Stymeist



Janet Heywood. Photograph by Nancy Heywood.

Janet Heywood, who died in Cincinnati, Ohio, on January 16, 2021, was on the *Bird Observer* staff for 25 years from 1981 to 2006, when she moved back to her native Cincinnati. She initially worked on the production of *Bird Observer* and quickly was promoted to production manager in 1982. She then served as the journal's associate editor from 1987 to 1997. She was especially adept at cartography, something that had interested her since childhood. Her younger sister, Nancy, recalled how she and Janet were fascinated with a pirate map that they played with, exploring where each path led on the map. Nancy felt that their interest in maps related to the lure of the unknown, a desire to seek and follow it, and to find a place often hidden away.

Bird Observer readers will recognize the exquisite and detailed maps prepared by Janet for Where to Go Birding articles from 1991 to 2006 (see Figure 1. Map of

Martha's Vineyard). She also prepared maps for *Birding Cape Cod*, published by the Massachusetts Audubon Society and Cape Cod Bird Club (1990), and *A Birder's Guide to Eastern Massachusetts*, published by the American Birding Association (1994).

Staff also will recall the many *Bird Observer* staff meetings at Janet and Bob Stymeist's house, first on Boylston Street in Watertown and then on Grove Street on the grounds of Mount Auburn Cemetery. Ever present at the meetings were Janet's beloved cats, first Darcy and then Raven.

Janet's artistic talents, attention to detail, organizational skills, and bottomless curiosity left their marks well beyond *Bird Observer*, to the delight of many birders. As vice president of interpretive programs at Mount Auburn Cemetery, she instituted many steps to welcome birders, such as initiating Mount Auburn-sponsored bird walks throughout the year and placing a bird sightings chalkboard at the cemetery's main entrance for birders to consult before starting their own birding. She also edited *Sweet Auburn*, a publication of the Friends of Mount Auburn Cemetery, from 1993–2006. She generously gave of her time to many other endeavors in the Massachusetts birding community, such as helping with the organization of the 1990 Association of Field Ornithologists and Wilson Ornithological Society meeting at Wheaton College, an event renowned ornithologist John Kricher recalls as one of their best meetings ever.

Bird Observer certainly has been fortunate to have had so many talented volunteers produce the journal over its nearly fifty-year history. We are lucky to have counted Janet Heywood among them. 🐦

Tenth Report of the Maine Bird Records Committee

Trevor B. Persons, Louis R. Bevier, and Tom Aversa



This Great White Heron was at Stoneham June 28–August 1, 2017. Photograph July 8, 2017, by Louis Bevier.

The Tenth Report of the Maine Bird Records Committee (hereafter ME-BRC or the committee) summarizes 96 reports involving 58 species, including two distinctive subspecies, that were evaluated and decided during 2020. The committee accepted 77 records for an acceptance rate of 80%. Although many reports were recent, the years of occurrences ranged from 1903 to 2020.

No new species were added to the state list, but the committee accepted first state records of two distinctive subspecies: Greenland Dunlin (*Calidris alpina arctica*) and Great White Heron (*Ardea herodias occidentalis*). Review and rejection of a 1903 report of Whooper Swan that had been placed provisionally on the state list dropped the total number of documented species on Maine's state list to 463. However, historical reports of fifteen additional species that had been placed provisionally on the state list were reviewed and accepted. The official list of bird species recorded in Maine, our review procedures, and the list of members can be found at the committee's website: <http://sites.google.com/site/mainebirdrecordscommittee>.

Records in this report are grouped by species; records accepted and those not accepted are listed within the same species account. Each record provides the location, county (*italicized*), date(s) of occurrence, names of observers or contributors, and committee record number. Documentation was provided by the observers listed or, in

some cases, was obtained from publicly published websites. All reviewed materials and member comments are archived. If known, the names of finders are listed first and separated from other names by a semicolon. Photographic, video, or audio evidence reviewed is denoted by a dagger (†); written notes are denoted by an asterisk (*). As always, the committee strongly encourages written submissions even when there are photographs. Species accounts follow the current taxonomic classification and sequence adopted as of 2020 by the American Ornithological Society (list available at <<http://checklist.americanornithology.org/taxa/>>).

Species Accounts

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*). Maine's eleventh and twelfth accepted records—all since 2009—came from Wiscasset, *Lincoln*, March 22, 2020 (Loretta Leighton; Rhonda Hamlin†, Doug Hitchcox†; 2020-005) and Somesville, Mount Desert, *Hancock*, May 27–30, 2020 (Craig Kesselheim†; 2020-012).

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION AND ORIGIN QUESTIONED: A species that had been provisionally on the state list based on a specimen collected at “Mud lake” (Upper or Lower Mud Lake not specified), Alexander, *Washington*, September 10, 1903 (1903-001) was removed from the list. It was first reported by Swain (1904); a photograph of the mounted specimen appeared as the frontispiece in *The Journal of the Maine Ornithological Society* volume 8, number 1, March 1906, and was reprinted (with the wrong date) in Knight (1908). The specimen's whereabouts is unknown (Palmer 1949). Clark (1905) identified it based on “the yellow covering of the lores and extending over the larger portion of the upper mandible” but this is imprecise as to extent of yellow and impossible to discern, or is not apparent, in the black and white photograph. Reported measurements of wing length, wingspan, and overall length (Swain 1904, Clark 1905) are far shorter than reported ranges for Whooper Swan, including a supposed smaller and extirpated Greenland-breeding population (Cramp and Simmons 1977). Wingspan and overall length fit Tundra Swan (*C. columbianus*), but the reported wing length is short for that species (Palmer 1976). The committee also questioned the bird's wild origin, citing September 10 as early for a fall migrant Whooper Swan at this latitude and noting that waterfowl collections were already present in North America and a potential source (McEneaney 2004). Thus, even if the identification could be confirmed, provenance of the bird is suspect, as is also true of Maine's five more recent records (Sheehan 2020).

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*). This was first reported in Ellison and Martin (2000), and recollections of field marks by one of the original observers—W. Townsend—led the committee to accept an otherwise sparse report of a bird seen by multiple observers at Bar Harbor, *Hancock*, November 14 to December 5, 1999 (W. Townsend, B. Barker, J. Markowsky; 1999-003). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Although distant video of an *Aythya* duck at Hadley Point, Bar Harbor, *Hancock*, October 22, 2020 (2020-043) appeared consistent with Tufted Duck, the poor images left some members concerned that an *Aythya* hybrid could not be eliminated.

Willow Ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*). The species was provisionally on the state list based on at least five credible reports. This year the committee formally reviewed and accepted two birds. One captured in Brooks, *Waldo*, (date not given) died “two weeks later in mid-May” 1990, at a wildlife rehabilitator's facility (Frank Hoffman; 1990-002). This bird was reported by Applegate (1996) as an adult male, but the specimen was identified as female by the preparator, Skip Basso, and is now at the Maine State Museum. Another accepted bird was at Great



New England's second Clark's Grebe was approachable by kayak during its stay on Togus Pond, Augusta, August 8–15, 2020. Photograph August 9, 2020, by Luke Seitz.

Chebeague Island, *Cumberland*, May 16 to June 3, 2000 (Darya and Beverly Johnson†; 2000-001). Both showed some prealternate molt, the one staying until June more extensively so.

Clark's Grebe (*Aechmophorus clarkii*). The second record for Maine and New England visited Togus Pond, Augusta, *Kennebec*, August 8–15, 2020 (Tom Renckens†, Sarah Fagg; Doug Hitchcox†, Logan Parker†, Luke Seitz†; 2020-026). The recorded advertising call was consistent with *A. clarkii* (recording, D. Hitchcox) and delivered as a single, grating *creet*. Sex based on bill shape, often possible, was indeterminate.

Band-tailed Pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*). Two of three older records were reviewed and accepted: Southport Island, *Lincoln*, April 25, 1980 (Peter Vickery†; 1980-002) and Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, September 25, 1994 (Peter Vickery*; 1994-004), originally published in Vickery (1980) and Ellison and Martin (1995), respectively. One additional report from Monhegan in 1990 has yet to be reviewed.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*). Maine's third accepted record was photographed and heard calling at Pemaquid Point, *Lincoln*, May 14, 2020 (Zeke Smith†*; Sean Hatch†; 2020-008). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Photographs of a *Streptopelia* dove in Portland, *Cumberland*, August 15, 2020 showed pale primaries, suggesting an escaped African Collared-Dove (*S. roseogrisea*), and most members thought details were insufficient to identify the bird (2020-036).

Chuck-will's-widow (*Antrostomus carolinensis*). Presumably the same singing bird from 2018 returned to Orland, *Hancock*, June 4 to July 16, 2019 (Tom Bjorkman, Fred Yost, Leda Beth Gray; Kyle Jones†; 2019-026) and again June 27 to July 25, 2020 (Rich MacDonald†; 2020-023). Unlike in 2018, a second bird was not reported in 2019 or 2020, although territorial behavior suggests that a pair may have nested each year. The committee also accepted a previously reported (Finch 1975) sight record from Bar Harbor, *Hancock*, May 24, 1974 (Will Russell*; 1974-001).

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*). An immature male was at Yarmouth, *Cumberland*, October 18 to December 5, 2020 (Randy and Nancy Billmeier†; Louis Bevier†,



Maine's second Common Ringed Plover, a juvenile, was at Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge September 15–19, 2020. Photograph September 15, 2020, by Keenan Yakola.

Josh Fecteau†, Jeanette Lovitch†, Luke Seitz†, Don Thompson†, Marian Zimmerman†; 2020-044).

Clapper Rail (*Rallus crepitans*). One was at Scarborough Marsh, *Cumberland*, September 20 to October 6, 2015 (Logan Smith†; Louis Bevier†; 2015-018).

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*). A pair first documented in 2016 at Webhannet Marsh, *York* (Bevier 2017) returned April 26 to September 28, 2017 (Andrew Aldrich†; Margaret Viens†; 2017-009) and May 7 to September 13, 2018 (Andrew Aldrich†; Bri Benvenuti†, Tracy Rousseau†; 2018-046) with nesting confirmed in 2018. NOT ACCEPTED,

IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Reports of heard-only birds at the same location May 4–17, 2019 (2019-012) were not confirmed and lacked convincing evidence.

Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*). One visited Popham Beach State Park, *Sagadahoc*, June 9, 2020 (Laura Zitske; Noah Gibb†*; 2020-019).

Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*). This species was previously unreviewed; the state's first was an adult male at Lubec, *Washington*, August 26 to September 3, 2003 (Louis Bevier*†, Don Mairs, Ron Joseph; Denny Abbot†, Peter Vickery*; 2003-007). Although it was published as staying through September 5 (Ellison and Martin 2004), the last convincing description accepted is from September 3. Maine's second, a juvenile, was photographed and its voice recorded at Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, *Knox*, September 15–19, 2020 (Keenan Yakola*†; Coco Faber†, Mikayla Ockels; 2020-029).

Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge, *Hancock*, November 21, 1987 (1987-002). Although the original description (*Maine Bird Notes* volume 1, number 3, Autumn 1987) by the lone observer fairly well described a Bar-tailed Godwit of the nominate European subspecies, some members thought that it was not sufficient for first state record acceptance. In addition, the dismissal of the report by Vickery (2020) as a possible misidentification raised questions about the veracity of the report. The species remains provisionally on the state list based on two earlier reports awaiting review and potential location of photographs.

Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*). Well-documented adult males were at Scarborough Marsh, *Cumberland*, July 3, 2011 (Doug Hitchcox†, Mathias Deming; 2011-019), Penjajowac Marsh, Bangor, *Penobscot*, May 13, 2014 (Brian Rolek†; 2014-018), and Weskeag Marsh, South Thomaston, *Knox*, May 19–20, 2016 (Don Reimer; Louis Bevier*†, Richard Garrigus†, Timothy Thompson†; 2016-037).

Dunlin (Greenland Dunlin) (*Calidris alpina arctica*). Popham Beach State Park, *Sagadahoc*, August 8–13, 2015 (Mike Fahay*†, Bruce Pickholtz†, Doug Sutor*; Doug Hitchcox†; 2015-011). Although two birds were reported, examination of photographs submitted by Pickholtz proved only one bird was involved based on matching details of plumage. This is the first report for Maine of this small, short-billed subspecies, and one of only a handful documented in North America. Unlike the expected subspecies *C. a. hudsonia*, adults of which molt into basic plumage prior to southward migration, *C. a. arctica* and affiliated European subspecies molt after arrival on the wintering grounds. An earlier report from Popham Beach



This Greenland Dunlin (*Calidris alpina arctica*) at Popham Beach State Park August 8–13, 2015 is the first of this taxon accepted for Maine. Photograph August 12, 2015, by Doug Hitchcox

on July 21, 2013, not submitted to the committee <<https://ebird.org/checklist/S14700290>>, may also represent *C. a. arctica*; the single photograph shows an alternate-plumaged individual that appears to lack rufous upperparts, but the bill is not visible.

Of the few North American records of *C. a. arctica*, two are from Massachusetts: one collected at Monomoy, August 11, 1900 (Griscom 1937) and one photographed at Chatham, July 29, 2007 (Ilf and Garvey 2010). Griscom and Snyder (1955) listed the 1900 bird as being in the collections of the Boston Museum of Science (BMS 12960). Griscom and Snyder (1955) also noted two additional “small and very short-billed Dunlins” collected at Monomoy, on November 19, 1941 (BMS 18928) and August 4, 1946 (no catalog number given) that they considered to possibly represent *C. a. arctica*. The whereabouts of these specimens is unknown. Many biological specimens in the BMS were apparently transferred to Harvard’s Museum of Comparative Zoology (Johnson 2004), but that collection’s online catalog does not include any of these Dunlins.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*). An adult was photographed off Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, May 29, 2019 (Jennifer Eston†; 2019-050) and a juvenile was inland on Webb Lake, *Weld, Franklin*, September 10, 2020 (Scott and Kyle Isherwood†; 2020-028).

Ivory Gull (*Pagophila eburnea*). Although there are over a dozen specimens or reports dating back to 1880, the first reviewed by the committee was a well-documented immature from Portland, *Cumberland*, January 25 to March 13, 1997 (Lysle Brinker; Bob MacDonnell†, Nick Pulcinetta†; 1997-003). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Description of a bird seen distantly from a moving boat at Monhegan Island, May 14, 1997 (1997-004) was more consistent with Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*). The date was reported incorrectly as May 13 by Perkins (1997), who suggested it may have been the same bird seen in Portland (1997-003, above).

Sooty Tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*). An adult was photographed flying over Matinicus Rock, *Knox*, August 5, 2020 (Jesse Lewis†; 2020-025) following passage of Hurricane Isaias.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*). Most of the committee thought that although reviewed separately, a juvenile photographed at Pine Point, Scarborough, *Cumberland*, March 27, 2019 (Stephen Everett†; 2019-003) and April 10–27, 2019 (Ethan Whitaker†; Glenn Hodgkins†, John Heath*; 2019-005) were likely the same individual. NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Photographs of a bird off Appledore Island, *York*, May 25, 2019 (2019-056) were more consistent with Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*), and descriptions of a loon at Ogunquit, *York*, March 3–5, 2020 (2020-004) were inadequate to rule out other species.

Band-rumped Storm-Petrel (*Hydrobates castro*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Photographs of a well-described bird seen distantly at Long Lake, Sinclair, T17 R4 WELS, *Aroostook*, September 20, 2020 (2020-033) show a white-rumped *Hydrobates* storm-petrel with some features suggesting the more likely Leach's Storm-Petrel (*Hydrobates leucorhoa*), which the committee agreed could not be eliminated.

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Cell phone photographs of a bird seen briefly over Great Moose Lake, Hartland, *Somerset*, September 17, 2020 (2020-031) clearly showed a frigatebird, but species other than Magnificent could not be eliminated.

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Although the description of a bird seen off Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, *Knox*, August 5, 2018 (2018-047) was consistent with an adult Brown Booby, most members thought the report was too sparse to completely eliminate other species.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). This species was removed from the review list in 2014. However, the committee accepted two earlier records: Saint Agatha, Easton, and Fort Fairfield, *Aroostook*, July 10 to September 3, 2013 (David Milligan and Claire Michaud; Louis Bevier†, Doug Hitchcox†, Bill Sheehan†, Rob Speirs†; 2013-025) and St. George, *Knox*, September 8–14, 2013 (Don Reimer; Margaret Viens†, John Wyatt†; 2013-026). Due to an injury on the Aroostook County bird's bill, it was identified as the same individual seen at multiple locations in Massachusetts, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Quebec during the summer of 2013.

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*). One was photographed flying by Biddeford Pool, *York*, June 8, 2020 (Brad Woodward†; 2020-018).

Great Blue Heron (Great White Heron) (*Ardea herodias occidentalis*). One spent over a month at an inland freshwater pond in Stoneham, *Oxford*, June 28 to August 1, 2017 (Jeannette Ross†; Louis Bevier*†; 2017-051). Although a few committee members initially expressed concern over how one would differentiate a supposed white morph Great Blue Heron from a vagrant Great White Heron, the Stoneham bird showed no characters suggesting a pigment abnormality (leucism) and otherwise matched characters of Great White Heron. Evidence for the existence of a white morph among Great Blue Herons is lacking (Mitra and Fritz 2002, McGuire et al. 2019), but leucistic Great Blue Herons do occur and are obviously abnormally pigmented individuals. Genetic studies demonstrate Great White Heron (*A. h. occidentalis*) is a valid taxon that mates assortatively and shows differential habitat use from Great Blue Heron where the breeding ranges meet in Florida Bay (McGuire et al. 2019). The timing and location of the Stoneham bird fit a well-established pattern of vagrancy in Great White Heron in the East (Mitra and Fritz 2002).

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*). After Maine's first records for Little Egret from Scarborough Marsh in 2011–2012, none was reported in 2013–2014, but one or more have been present each year since 2015. The committee accepted reports from Gilsland Farm, Falmouth, *Cumberland*, of single birds June 8 to July 20, 2015 (Doug Hitchcox*†; 2015-017), April 23 to July 30, 2016 (Richard Garrigus†; Ian Carlson†, Laura Keene†; 2016-017), July 11–September 16, 2017 (Bill Bunn†; Timothy Fennell†; 2017-021), and May 31 to August 27, 2018 (Doug Hitchcox†; Alex Lamoreaux†; 2018-034). At the same location on April 27–28, 2019 (Doug Hitchcox*†; 2019-008) one egret might have been the same bird photographed at Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, Newburyport, Massachusetts, on April 25, 2019 (eBird reports); another bird was present May 1–2 and 25, 2019 (Earl Wilcher†; Doug Hitchcox†; 2019-009). Records from Scarborough Marsh, *Cumberland*, May 31 to August 27, 2018 (Richard Garrigus; Timothy Fennell†, Margaret Stewman†; 2018-033) and May 30 to September 16, 2019 (Timothy Fennell†; 2019-023) were likely the same individual(s) observed in Falmouth in 2018 and 2019. Likewise, a bird at Biddeford Pool, *York*, August 2 to September 28, 2016 (Gordon Smith; Dave Cowan†, Rob O'Connell†, Marjorie Watson†; 2016-038) was likely the same individual observed earlier in the year at Falmouth. NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Although one bird was accepted from Falmouth in 2018 (2018-034, above), a second bird photographed with it on June 9, 2018, was suspected of being a hybrid with Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*). Although one or more birds returned in 2020, review has been complicated by the presence of apparent hybrids possibly extending back before 2018. Suspected hybridization between Little and Snowy egrets in Maine will make determination of species identity increasingly difficult. Little Egret is also suspected to have backcrossed with Snowy Egret x Tricolored Heron hybrids in Maine.

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Although the committee agreed that the report of a bird seen in Brunswick, *Cumberland*, May 8, 2020 (2020-021) most likely pertained to this species, the description was too vague for acceptance.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Inconsistencies in the description led the committee to question whether a bird seen at Kennebunk, *York*, October 2, 2019 (2019-044) was irrefutably this species.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*). Although provisionally placed on the state list based on more than a dozen reports over the past century, the species had not been reviewed previously. Two reports were accepted: a road-killed specimen, now at College of the Atlantic (COA #1052), from Belfast, *Waldo*, May 9, 1996 (Ron Joseph†; 1996-003) and one photographed in a barn in Albion, *Kennebec*, August 9, 2004 (Mike Scholz†; 2004-002). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A report based on recollections of a bird seen for two days in a wooded residential yard in Standish, *Cumberland*, midsummer 1981 (1981-002) did not eliminate the possibility of other species.

Eastern Screech-Owl (*Megascops asio*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Description of a call heard at Freedom, *Waldo*, March 17, 2003 (2003-006) was not sufficient to rule out other species. The committee no longer reviews reports from southern Maine (York County), where the species presumably breeds in small numbers.

Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*). Single birds were photographed in Wilton, *Franklin*, February 8, 2017 (Andrea Latimore†; 2017-052) and Union, *Knox*, February 6, 2020 (Timothy Wood†; 2020-003).

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: An intriguing report from Mount Desert Island, *Hancock* (2020-002) may have been correct



Maine's second accepted Gray Kingbird was found October 12, 2020, at Brunswick. Photograph by Gordon Smith.

but the possibility of other species, including hybrid Gyrfalcon x Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) often bred by falconers, could not be eliminated.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). One was at Portland, *Cumberland*, November 3, 2019 (Carly Rogers†; 2019-049) and another at Lubec, *Washington*, November 15, 2019 (Rob Shuman†; 2019-054).

Variegated Flycatcher (*Empidonomus varius*). The species was originally reported by Abbott and Finch (1978), and the committee formally accepted this undisputed first United States record from Biddeford Pool, *York*, November 5–11, 1977 (Susan Bowie and David Whittier; Denny Abbott*, Davis Finch†*, Simon

Perkins†; 1977-001).

Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*). A bird seen briefly was fortuitously photographed at Brunswick, *Cumberland*, October 12, 2020 (Gordon Smith†*; 2020-040), providing Maine's second indisputable record.

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*). Maine's fifth accepted record—in addition to about a dozen unreviewed—was at New Gloucester, *Cumberland*, September 23–24, 2020 (Dave Fensore†; Charles Duncan†, Laura Blutstein†, Weston Barker†; 2020-035).

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*). The committee accepted a sight record from Pine Point, Scarborough, *Cumberland*, November 8, 2005 (Randy Harrison*; 2005-002) observed four days before Maine's previously accepted—and photographed—first state record.

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). Two different birds were found four days apart, one at Freeport, *Cumberland*, October 8–9, 2020 (Stephen Benenson†; Louis Bevier†*, Doug Hitchcox†; 2020-038) and one at Parsons Beach, Kennebunk, *York*, October 12, 2020 (Magill Weber†*; Luke Seitz†; 2020-039). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: One reported on Bald Mountain, *Franklin*, September 18, 2020 (2020-034) was tentatively identified after the fact. Failure to note the distinctive tail pattern and the casual nature of the description failed to gain support. These are the first reports the committee has considered for this species since it was added to the review list for reports from 2014 onward.

Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*). The committee formally accepted Maine's only Sage Thrasher, seen by many at Cape Neddick, *York*, November 17 to December 6, 2001 (Lincoln Maley†; Denny Abbott†, Jason Forbes†, Peter Vickery†; 2001-004) and originally reported in Ellison and Martin (2002).

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (*Leucosticte tephrocotis*). Although it had long been recognized as a valid record, this year the committee formally accepted Maine's only report of the species, an adult that overwintered at a feeding station in Gorham, *Cumberland*, December 15, 1936, to March 10, 1937 (Mr. and Mrs. Verdell Waterman; Alfred Gross†*; 1936-001). The committee further agreed with Gross (1937) that the bird represented the Hepburn's subspecies (*L. t. littoralis*).

Lesser Goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*). After accepting two more recent reports, the committee formally accepted this earlier occurrence at Georgetown, *Sagadahoc*, December 15, 1992, to



An immature male Rufous Hummingbird was at Yarmouth from October 18 to December 5, 2020. Photograph October 27, 2020, by Luke Seitz.

April 13, 1993 (Jean and Lew Frank; Denny Abbott†, Lysle Brinker†; 1992-002), which was at the time a first for New England (Nikula 1993; *Maine Bird Notes* volume 8, number 2, December 1993). All three Maine birds have been black-backed males.

Cassin’s Sparrow (*Peucaea cassinii*).

This is another species already on the state list provisionally, and the committee accepted Maine’s only report, a bird photographed on Mount Desert Rock, *Hancock*, September 16–25, 1986 (Harriet Corbett†; 1986-001) and first reported by James (1990).

Brewer’s Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*).

Maine’s second was photographed at Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge, Steuben, *Washington*, September 4, 2020 (Jada Fitch†; 2020-027).

LeConte’s Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*). Maine’s third accepted record—with five others yet to be reviewed—was an immature at Pemaquid Point, *Lincoln*, October 12, 2020 (Zeke Smith†; 2020-041).

Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*). The species has been provisionally on the state list based on earlier published reports from 1985 to 2000. The committee reviewed and accepted two adults found in 2020: one in Jefferson, *Lincoln*, May 11, 2020 (Thomas and Jean Shippee†; 2020-007) and one in Abbot, *Piscataquis*, October 19–22, 2020 (Ellen Blanchard†; 2020-042).

Harris’s Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*). A basic-plumaged adult frequented a feeding station in Levant, *Penobscot*, December 6, 2019, to March 31, 2020 (Carol Belanger†; 2019-053).

Henslow’s Sparrow (*Centronyx henslowii*). This is another species provisionally on the state list based on about a dozen reports, many published, from 1969 to 2005. Two sight records were accepted from Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*: one on May 20, 1983 (Peter Vickery*, Charles Duncan; 1983-001) and one on October 3, 2003 (Jeremiah Trimble*; 2003-004). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Although no members actually questioned that skilled observers correctly identified a bird on Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, October 3, 1997 (1997-002), the committee could not accept the record without any evidence, either photographic or written. A report of a singing bird in grasslands along Church Road, Sidney, *Kennebec*, August 10, 2005 (2005-010) did not eliminate other species.

Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*). The committee formally accepted one of only two reports for Maine, a bird that overwintered in Southwest Harbor, *Hancock*, November 15, 1988, to April 27, 1989 (M. L. Hughes; Peter Vickery*, unknown photographer†; 1988-002).

Bullock’s Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*). Amazingly, an immature male overwintered in the same neighborhood in Camden, *Knox*, December 31, 2019, to February 26, 2020 (Kristin Kalajian†; Doug Hitchcox†, Margaret Viens†; 2019-055) where another immature male



This Golden-crowned Sparrow was at Abbot October 19–22, 2020. Photograph October 19, 2020, by Doug Hitchcox.

overwintered in 2016–2017.

Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*). The committee formally accepted Maine's only Shiny Cowbird, a singing male on Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, May 25–26, 1991 (Lysle Brinker, Jeff Wells; Scott Sumner*, Carol Mardeusz†; 1991-001) that was originally reported by Sumner (1992).

Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*). A cooperative, phenotypically pure adult male was enjoyed by many at Capisic Pond Park, Portland, *Cumberland*, May 17, 2020 (Casey Cesari, Leah Pillsbury; Becky Marvil†, Brendan Thomas†, Don Thompson†; 2020-011).

Virginia's Warbler (*Leiothlypis virginiae*). Maine's fourth report—and third reviewed—all from Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, was present May 29–30, 2014 (Gabriel Willow†; Luke Seitz†, Jeremiah Trimble†; 2014-007).

MacGillivray's Warbler (*Geothlypis tolmiei*). Maine's fifth—all since 2009—was on Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, September 17, 2020 (Lukas Musher†*; 2020-032).

Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Setophaga nigrescens*). Maine's second and third accepted records were from Mount Desert Rock, *Hancock*, August 31, 1987 (Harriet Corbett*; 1987-001) and Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, May 29–30, 2020 (Don Reimer†; 2020-030). A description of the 1987 bird, which is the earliest report for Maine, was originally published in *Maine Bird Notes* volume 1, number 3, Autumn 1987.

Townsend's Warbler (*Setophaga townsendi*). Maine's first accepted record was an immature male that frequented a feeding station in Winterport, *Waldo*, November 28, 2012, to January 19, 2013 (John Wyatt; Doug Hitchcox†, Margaret Viens†; 2012-026). Two previously published reports, both from 1993, remain to be reviewed.

Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*). Two were found in Maine in 2020: a singing male at Mount Desert, *Hancock*, May 29–30, 2020 (Duane and Ruth Braun, Susan and Tom Hayward; Louis Bevier*†, Doug Hitchcox†, Becky Marvil†; 2020-014) and an immature male in St. George, *Knox*, September 29 to October 1, 2020 (Donald Frederick†; 2020-037). These are the third and fourth reports accepted by the committee. Up to twelve previously published reports remain unreviewed.



An immature male Townsend's Warbler was at Winterport from November 28, 2012 to January 19, 2013. Photograph November 30, 2012, by Doug Hitchcox.

Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*). An immature bird on Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, October 4–6, 1978 (Davis Finch; Tom Martin†; 1978-003) that was originally reported by Vickery (1979) is the second, and earliest, report accepted by the committee; an earlier sight report from 1974 has not been reviewed.

Acknowledgements

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PHOTO ESSAY

Birds of the Tenth MBRC



Two Northern Wheatears were in Maine during fall 2020, and this one was at Parsons Beach, Kennebunk, October 12, 2020. Photograph by Luke Seitz.



A male Black-headed Grosbeak was at Mount Desert Island May 29–30, 2020. Photograph May 30, 2020, by Doug Hitchcox.



A Harris's Sparrow wintered at a Levant feeder from December 6, 2019, to March 31, 2020.
Photograph December 6, 2019, by Carol Belanger.



An immature LeConte's Sparrow was found at Pemaquid Point October 12, 2020.
Photograph by Zeke Smith. 🐦

MUSINGS FROM THE BLIND BIRDER

Birding Solace

Martha Steele

I am anticipating the 2021 spring migration perhaps more than any that preceded it, given how long we have been in the isolation of the pandemic and how desperate I am feeling for some sense of normalcy to return. For the past year, we have had to think carefully before deciding to let anyone come into the bubble of our house in northeastern Vermont and whether we ourselves could venture safely from it. Sometimes we have had to refuse proposed visits from family or friends. I have had frequent Zoom calls with family and friends, and although enjoyable, they were not the same as in-person visits and contact. For walks outside, I continue to check that my mask is secure, and when I heard footsteps approaching, I turn my head away and dig my chin deeper into my chest, trying to minimize any moments of shared air with the passerby. The pandemic has greatly restricted everybody's movements, most notably travel on any public transportation, including aircraft. Now, as I write this in early February, I just want this entire pandemic affair done and over with, even as I acknowledge that we cannot let our guard down and that we are much luckier than many given our financial, housing, and food security.

The commencement of widespread vaccinations gives me hope that the coming spring migration will indeed be more normal or at least experienced with a bright light at the end of the pandemic tunnel. Anticipating spring reminds me once again of how important birds and birding are to my spirits and how they help keep me connected beyond the confines of our walls. The hardships of a pandemic and of a long New England winter will soon give way to the joys and renewals of the spring migration. The return of our birds in all their breeding plumage glory and bursts of song will perhaps be more intensely felt this year than usual as they carry our spirits on their wings into a more hopeful future.

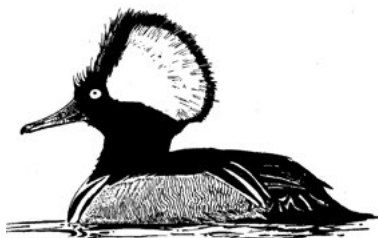
But for me, this spring holds more to look forward to than just coming out of a pandemic and the return of our avian friends. It also will mark more than a year of living with my mother in northeastern Vermont. My husband Bob and I came to visit her on March 3, 2020, intending to stay for a week or two. I have barely left since then. During this long year, I have watched my now 96-year-old mother go from being a fairly independent woman to one deeply affected by her age. A year ago, she was able to take care of her finances; make phone calls from her landline; get her own breakfast and lunch; do her own laundry; walk without any support; be fully alert and engaged in conversations in person, on Zoom, or on the phone; go up and down a flight of stairs; do some limited house cleaning; and walk down the road to the mailbox nearly a half mile away. Today, in just the span of a year, she can no longer do these tasks or activities. She can still walk, but with a walker and very slowly and haltingly. But what is most challenging is that she is prey to periodic episodes of anxiety that seem related to confronting her mortality and worries about her children after she is gone.

What does all this have to do with birding? In truth, not much, but I suspect that many of you have had similar experiences and that many of you, like me, continually find solace in birding. Over and over again, I walk outside the house with Alvin or Bob and already feel better and reenergized, ready to put my own worries on hold and listen to any bird who cares to announce itself. Even in the dead of winter in northern Vermont, when there are precious few birds beyond birdfeeders, I listen attentively for any bird vocalizations. The croak of a Common Raven; the *chick-a-dee-dee* of a Black-capped Chickadee; the nasal sounds of White-breasted and Red-breasted nuthatches; or the soft tapping of a Hairy Woodpecker—all calm me, even in the minutes following a particularly difficult experience with my mother’s state of mind. All keep me grounded in the vitality of the world around me, the here and now, the continuity of life and death, the normal ebb and flow of time and seasons, the very core of life itself.

And so, I will welcome once again the joys of the coming spring even as I grieve the decline of my mother. I will cry tears of joy when I hear my first American Woodcock, White-throated Sparrow, Winter Wren, Veery, or Wood Thrush even as I cry tears of sadness at the pain my mother suffers as a result of her anxieties and infirmities. I will wake early in the morning eager to hear what birds arrived overnight even as I contemplate the march of time for all living creatures on earth. It is a time of so many emotions intertwined, with joy and sorrow countering and balancing against each other. But of one thing I am certain, birds and birding are never far from my thoughts and soul and will always be a source of wonderment, curiosity, connection, and just plain happiness. It is found not just in birds’ beauty or their songs but also in their fascinating behaviors as they go about surviving and passing their genes on to their offspring. No matter what is happening, I will always love to walk outside and embrace the world of birds, who do far more for me than I do for them.

(Ruth Reid Gjessing, 96, died in her Westmore home on March 9, 2021. Among the many causes she supported was environmental conservation, also embraced by her three children, Timothy, Bradley, and Martha Steele. Over the past two decades, Ruth enjoyed the many birders who came to visit with Martha and her husband, Bob Stymeist. For more information about Ruth’s remarkable life, please go to <<https://www.curtis-britch.com/obituary/ruth-gjessing>>.) 🐦

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.



HOODED MERGANSER BY WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR.

FIELD NOTES

Interspecific Conflict Between a Vagrant Varied Thrush and an American Robin

Christine A. Goddard



Figure 1A. First of a sequence of photos taken at five frames per second showing interspecific conflict between a vagrant Varied Thrush and an American Robin. Photographs by the author.

On December 29, 2020, I noticed an unfamiliar bird feeding on the ground under the feeders in my backyard in Sudbury, Massachusetts. Research revealed that it was a Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*), an extremely rare visitor to the East Coast. For more than a month after that first observation, the bird made regular appearances, briefly visiting several times per day to scoop up the scattered seeds and nuts under the feeders. Typically, the thrush would amicably share the feeding area with other birds feeding on the ground such as Dark-eyed Juncos, Northern Cardinals, and Blue Jays.

However, mid-morning on January 29, 2021, an unexpected altercation occurred. The thrush flew to the ground as usual, but a sole American Robin that only recently started visiting the feeder area, was already on the ground in the same space as the thrush. Almost instantaneously, the robin focused on the thrush, taking a threatening stance (Fig. 1A). The thrush appeared to accept the robin's challenge (Fig. 1A) and the birds immediately flew at each other. They physically engaged for no more than one or two seconds (Figs. 1B-1D). As the larger bird, the robin dominated the fight and the thrush retreated into the woods (Figs. 1E and 1F). I was able to spot the thrush a few minutes after the fight, resting on a branch in the woods, seemingly none the worse for wear (Fig. 2). It eventually fed on the ground after the robin departed the area.

This altercation was behaviorally interesting because this was the first time over the course of a month of watching the thrush that I observed it engage with any other bird, even though it regularly encountered different species feeding in the same space. The robin's behavior was also intriguing in that it reacted to the thrush's presence much



Figure 1B.



Figure 1C.



Figure 1D.



Figure 1E.



Figure 1F.

more aggressively than it reacted to the other species it normally encountered in the feeding area. On several occasions since the altercation, I observed both species visiting the feeder area, but never at the same time. When the robin was feeding, the thrush could sometimes be seen in a nearby tree waiting for its turn.

Extreme antagonism of American Robins toward Varied Thrushes has been previously documented in the thrush's native range on the West Coast (Martin 1970). During an unusually snowy winter in Oregon, the interactions between thrushes and other birds were observed at a feeder area. The author reported that unlike other species encountered



Figure 2. Varied Thrush post-altercation, resting in a nearby tree.

by the thrushes, robins were “overtly and persistently aggressive toward the Varied Thrushes....” Not only did robins consistently initiate fights with thrushes, they typically dominated. The reason for the observed aggression between West Coast Varied Thrushes and American Robins was not speculated by the author, but the similar behavior seen at my feeder suggests some sort of innate conflict between the two species that transcends geographic location. 🐦

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House Wrens Nesting in Streetlights

Jeffrey Boone Miller

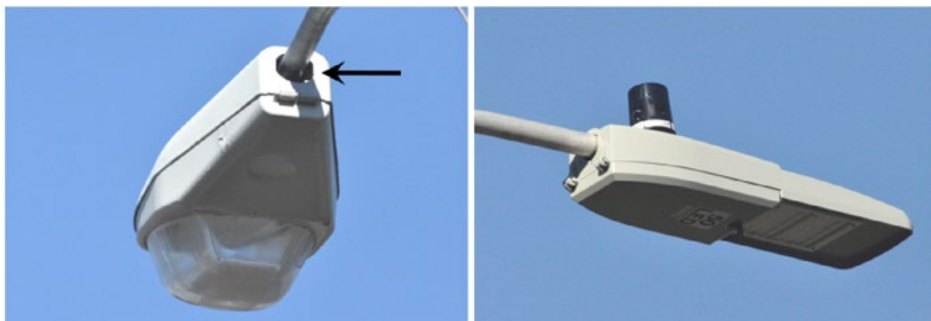


Figure 1. Arrow in left panel points to the opening in an old-style streetlight through which wrens could enter. Right panel shows a new LED streetlight with no opening.

House Wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*)—the Latin binomial roughly translates as “cave-dwelling nightingale”—regularly make use of nesting sites that are inadvertently provided by their human neighbors. In *Birds of America*, for example, Audubon painted House Wrens nesting in an old hat, and Bent (1948) noted that “The House Wren stands out preeminently as one of the most eccentric of our birds in the choice of its nesting site.” Here I tell a tale of how House Wrens in my suburban neighborhood of Belmont, Massachusetts, have used streetlights for nesting sites.

In late spring of 2017, I first observed a pair of House Wrens nesting and raising chicks in a streetlight housing. At that time, all of the streetlights in our neighborhood had openings in the back of the housing that were just big enough for small birds to enter (arrow in Figure 1, left panel). I had seen House Sparrows nesting in this same light in the summer of 2016, which is consistent with the tendency of House Wrens to reuse cavities first occupied by other species (Sedgwick 1997, Johnson 2020). In 2018 and 2019, I found single pairs of House Wrens nesting in nearby streetlights, and in 2020, during my longer, Covid-19-enforced walks, I found four pairs of wrens with active nests in streetlights, including one pair in the light where I had first seen wrens in 2017. Four pairs seemed to constitute a phenomenon, so I started to pay more attention.

In May and June 2020, each of the four nests was consistently attended by at least one noisy wren. As the season progressed, I began to hear the peeping of nestlings. Of the four nests, the closest were separated by about 250 feet—as the wren flies—and the most distant were about 750 feet apart. All four nests fit within a 1,000-foot diameter circle. Though inter-nest distances and territory sizes depend on the number of possible nest sites and food availability, the spacing I noted was consistent with studies showing that House Wrens tend to nest more than 100 feet apart and to defend territories on the order of 100 to 200 feet in diameter (Johnson 2020). Two of the nests faced east, one south, and one west, indicating little directional preference.

What made the streetlights attractive as nest sites? House Wrens are cavity

nesters—hence *Troglodytes*—and the streetlights appeared to be a good substitute for a natural cavity. The housings provided room enough for a nest, protection from wind and rain, a defensible access point, and, I would guess, nighttime warmth when the lights were turned on. Because I observed fledglings, temperatures must not have exceeded the maximum compatible with egg development, which is in the range of 95–105°F (Johnson 2020). The birds also had to tolerate disruption of the natural light cycle.

As I observed these nests, questions came to mind. For example, because males often start to construct multiple nests in their territory before pairing with a female (Johnson 2020), had the males started nests in multiple lights? If given a choice, would females prefer streetlights over other, perhaps more natural, nest sites? Had the birds occupying the four streetlights in 2020 been themselves raised in streetlights? Were these birds genetically related, or did newcomers to the neighborhood also discover the streetlights? Were there other localities with such streetlight nests, or was this phenomenon unique to my neighborhood? Did the birds learn from each other that the lights were suitable nest sites? I began to envision an extensive research project.

On a morning in mid-August of 2020, with these questions still unanswered, I found another streetlight occupied by a pair of House Wrens and—judging by the constant peeping—their youngsters. House Wrens can produce two broods in a season (Johnson 2020), so a nest with chicks in August was not unexpected. I resolved to return the next day with my camera to document this late nest. As I walked home that morning, I noticed a crew from Belmont Municipal Light working on a streetlight. I didn't think much of it at the time, but when I returned the next afternoon, camera in hand, I discovered that the crew's activities had been disastrous for the wrens.

Belmont Light had chosen those days to replace the old-style streetlights—including the one with the active wren's nest—with new LED light fixtures. I found that the old light, the wrens, and their nestlings were gone, replaced by an LED housing that did not have an opening (Figure 1, right panel), thereby eliminating any possibility of future nests. What a difference a day can make.

In coming years, I'll continue to look for House Wrens nesting in odd locations. The utility left behind a few of the old-style lights, mostly on busy streets, so perhaps wrens will find those. Although I wish the changeover to LEDs had been delayed a few days until the nestlings fledged, the new lights use much less energy and are noticeably brighter, so I cannot argue with the decision to install them. It is clear, however, that the proclivity of House Wrens to use human structures for nesting comes with an all-too-familiar drawback—human desires are likely to come first. 🐦

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Unusual Snowy Owl Behavior

Paul M. Roberts



Snowy Owl. Photographs by the author.

My wife Julie and I were at the Parker River NWR on Plum Island, Massachusetts, on January 8, 2021, when we observed a heavily barred Snowy Owl 100 yards out in the marsh from the refuge road. At that distance, the bird appeared safe from human harassment. I was photographing it with a Nikon P1000 megazoom camera and Julie was admiring the bird through the spotting scope at 60X when she asked, “What is the owl doing?” The owl had stretched out apparently flat on its belly with its wings held tightly to its body, looking like a penguin about to slide off a rock into the water. I sagely suggested that perhaps the owl had seen an oblivious vole or mouse approach and was stretching slowly to snatch it, similar in behavior to a heron.

Then I saw movement at the top of my camera’s field of view. A Bald Eagle was rapidly approaching from the south, perhaps 60 feet off the ground, coming out of the sun. The owl obviously had spotted the eagle and had flattened itself into a small “melting pile of snow.” The eagle flew directly overhead and past, seemingly unaware of the feathered white mound below. I took my eyes off the owl to photograph the eagle but, although the eagle was too close and moving too fast to photograph, I was able to see the bright white tail and dark body of an adult. I quickly looked back at the owl, which had craned its neck to follow the eagle, and I saw it stand up with its eyes fixed on the now fast-disappearing threat. The owl then assumed the normal relaxed vertical posture it had been in only seconds earlier.

I have seen similar behavior by squirrels attempting to avoid a hawk, but I have never seen a Snowy react this way before. 🦉

Northern Flicker and Pileated Woodpecker Commensalism

Marsha C. Salett

I was casually watching the chickadees, titmice, and juncos at my backyard feeders on the afternoon of February 12, 2021, when a flash of black and white wings at the edge of the woods caught my attention. I saw a Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) fly into my yard, land about 10 feet up the trunk of an oak, and begin to probe the bark with its bill. It did not chisel into the wood with any speed or force but pried at the bark methodically for two to three minutes. There must have been bark beetle or ant larvae or other insects under the bark.

While the Pileated was feeding, a second woodpecker flew in and landed on the back of the tree a couple of feet below the Pileated. My first thought was that the newly arrived bird must be the Pileated's mate, but it appeared all dark when it flew—no black and white wing pattern—and was not as large. When it moved to the front of the tree directly below the Pileated, I could see it was a Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*). The Pileated worked the bark and the flicker was motionless. The birds paid no attention to each other—or so I thought.

The Pileated hopped a few feet farther up the trunk and began to probe and forage under the bark in a second spot for another few minutes. As soon as the Pileated left the first spot, the flicker moved up the trunk and began to forage there. When it stopped feeding, it remained still until the Pileated moved up the tree again and found a third spot to probe for grubs and insects. Then the flicker moved up to the second spot. This pattern continued four times as the woodpeckers made their way to the top of the tree, with the flicker following the Pileated and keeping the same distance—about two Pileated body lengths—between them. Eventually the flicker flew to the next tree and the Pileated flew back into the woods.

I had not seen this behavior before, so I described it to Wayne Petersen, who agreed that it was unusual behavior but wondered if it simply might be two different species attracted to the same food source. Stephen A. Shunk, in the *Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America* (2016), wrote that different species of woodpeckers may forage together in insect-infested trees and noted, "Extensive excavations often attract other species to forage. In fall and winter [Pileateds were] observed foraging on logs with Northern Flicker and Williamson's Sapsucker."

However, this Northern Flicker and this Pileated Woodpecker never foraged randomly in different parts of the tree. The flicker always followed the Pileated, watching and waiting until the Pileated finished feeding before it took the larger woodpecker's place. It was obvious that the flicker fed only in the wake of the Pileated's foraging, which had exposed food items. Wayne noted, "Perhaps the flicker noticed that the Pileated was successfully collecting some type of beetle or carpenter ant larvae and simply decided to follow the big boy and do the same thing," which, he added, could be an example of commensalism—a relationship between two types

of organisms where one species benefits from the second species, e.g., obtains food or shelter, while neither harming nor benefiting it.

This commensal feeding of the flicker and Pileated is an arboreal example of the beater effect, similar to when egrets follow tractors or cattle in fields and feed on the insects that are stirred up (W. E. Davis, Jr. personal communication). The beater effect is one of the more common commensal feeding interactions, particularly among shorebirds, waterbirds, and marsh birds (Ehrlich et al. 1988). William E. Davis, Jr. has written two Field Notes in *Bird Observer* on this topic: “Tricolored Herons and Great Egrets Use Double-crested Cormorants as Beaters While Foraging” (2000) and “Commensal Foraging of Brown Pelicans and Egrets with Double-crested Cormorants and White Ibises” (2007).

I did a brief search of the literature and could not find any examples of commensalism between Pileated Woodpeckers and Northern Flickers. Nor could I find how common this behavior is among flickers in general. Ehrlich et al. (1988) described commensal feeding in North American woodlands that involved Hairy Woodpeckers foraging on insects exposed after Pileateds stripped sections of outer bark from tree trunks. In the previous issue of *Bird Observer*, Larson and Carlson (2021) described how several passerine species feed on sap from wells drilled by Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, another commensal association mentioned by Ehrlich.

If the Northern Flicker in my backyard learned to exploit a Pileated Woodpecker’s foraging behavior to find an easy food source when the ground it usually forages on is frozen and snow covered, then more power to that flicker. 🐦

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COMMON RAVEN BY WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR.

Manomet Releases Shorebird Management Manual

Danielle Smaha

Manomet is pleased to announce the completion of a new Shorebird Management Manual. This resource provides technical support to those with the ability to influence or implement beneficial habitat management decisions that can help stabilize declining populations of shorebirds in the Americas. Manomet developed this new Shorebird Management Manual (Iglecia and Winn 2021) with guidance from a Steering Committee of shorebird experts, contributing authors, and the cumulative work of hundreds of conservation scientists, ornithologists, and land managers.

“In 1992, Manomet published the first *Shorebird Management Manual*, by Doug Helmers,” said Brad Winn, Director of Shorebird Habitat Management. “Our collective understanding of these amazing birds has evolved considerably since then, and we knew several years ago that it was time to create another resource for today’s conservation practitioners. With Monica Iglecia’s hard work and dedication, combined with significant contributions from many other experts, we have compiled this overview of management approaches and shorebird ecology to help inspire and guide beneficial habitat improvements everywhere these birds go.”

“As we have developed flyway-scale conservation frameworks for shorebirds, a common theme is the continued education and outreach to land managers on the when, how, and where to improve and expand habitats for shorebirds. The revised manual provides a great resource for habitat managers,” adds Steering Committee member Brad Andres, National Coordinator, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Partnership, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

This manual includes thirteen case studies in habitat management from across North, Central, and South America. These real-world scenarios, written by field experts, focus on strategies to improve shorebird productivity and survival within the Americas, south of the Arctic. Each case study includes information on the species benefitted; the threats at the site; the actions taken to protect shorebirds at the site; and outcomes and advice.

The *Shorebird Management Manual* is the core curriculum for Manomet’s Habitats for Shorebirds workshops. It also serves as a stand-alone resource to help guide habitat improvements that benefit shorebirds at the flyway, national, regional, and local planning levels. This manual’s key objective is to help site managers recognize local habitat values, understand the stressors or threats to the birds dependent on those habitats, and identify applicable management approaches to alleviate those challenges to survival.

“The destruction and degradation of wetlands, grasslands, and coastlines throughout the Americas over the last century have been a leading factor in the decline and imperilment of shorebird populations. We wrote this manual to help reverse the negative impacts of these depleted vital conditions,” adds Winn. “Shorebirds need our collective help, at all spatial scales, and working together we can all increase carrying

capacity of important habitat, site by site, throughout the full migration paths of these birds.”

Plans are underway to translate the manual into Spanish and to make the manual available in print. To download the *Shorebird Management Manual*, visit Manomet’s website or click here: <https://www.manomet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Iglecia_and_Winn_2021_AShorebirdManagementManual-012021-web.pdf>. 🦩

About Manomet

Located across the Western Hemisphere with a 40-acre campus in Plymouth, Massachusetts, Manomet is a nonprofit founded in 1969. Since Manomet’s beginnings as a bird banding operation, its science and research have expanded to focus on ecosystem management and resilience, shorebird conservation, and educating tomorrow’s leaders about the importance of the natural world. Diversity, science, and climate change are the fundamental principles driving Manomet’s work today. Visit <www.manomet.org> for more information.

Postscript: Monica Iglecia has migrated away from Manomet to lead the Pacific Birds Joint Venture. We look forward to collaborating with her in her new capacity and wish her all the best as she forges a successful path into her new extensive geography.

Danielle Smaha is Director, Marketing and Communications at Manomet.



LITTLE BLUE HERON BY SANDY SELESKY



Birdability announces nonprofit status to continue much-needed diversity and inclusion work in the birding community and the outdoors

Austin, Texas. January 21, 2021

Travis Audubon is proud to serve as the fiscal sponsor for Birdability, allowing Birdability to continue much-needed work in diversity and inclusion in the birding community and the outdoors for people with disabilities and other health concerns.

- Birdability focuses on removing barriers to access for birders with mobility challenges, blindness or low vision, intellectual or developmental disabilities (including autism), mental illness, being Deaf, deaf, or Hard of Hearing, and other health concerns.
- Birdability addresses physical barriers at birding locations through education, documenting, advocating for, and improving the accessibility of trails, bird blinds and other outdoor spaces.
- To address social, cultural and institutional barriers, Birdability works to educate and advocate around inclusion and diversity in the birding community and the outdoors for people with disabilities and other health concerns.
- Birdability works to ensure that birding really is for everybody and every body, and is excited to inspire and provide resources to bring the many joys of birding to future birders with disabilities.

The resources on the Birdability website (birdability.org) include guidance documents about accessibility of birding locations, steps to implement inclusive and accessible bird outings in your community, and the crowd sourced Birdability Map, with detailed accessibility information for birding locations. Ongoing virtual programs highlight accessible trails and birders who experience accessibility challenges, and engagement via social media continues to demonstrate the need for this work. Use the hashtag #Birdability on your social media platforms to join in on the conversation.

Birdability is a registered nonprofit in the State of Texas. Travis Audubon Society, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization that serves as Birdability's Founding and Fiscal Sponsor, providing fiduciary oversight, financial management, and administrative services to help Birdability grow and build capacity. Birdability is now seeking corporate sponsorships, grants, collaborative opportunities, and donations to continue their work to ensure that birding really is for everybody and every body.

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ABOUT BOOKS

I Know What it *Is* . . . But Why is it Doing *That*?

Mark Lynch

Peterson Reference Guide to Bird Behavior. John Kricher. 2020. Boston, MA, and New York, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

This is a book about bird behavior, how to understand some of the underpinning and meaning to what birds do, how they do it, and why they do it. (p. 1)

I am passionate about reptiles and amphibians, snakes in particular, and have been ever since I was a very young child. An early photograph of me as a toddler taken by my mother has me sitting in our yard covered with brown earth snakes (known at the time as DeKay's Snakes) put there by my older brothers. In that photo I am smiling. Even now, as an older adult, I love snakes and get excited every time I see one. I currently own a geriatric rosy boa, now well over 45 years old, even though I now abhor the reptile trade and would never buy or keep another pet reptile. Early on I realized that you really cannot "watch" snakes unless they are in captivity. You look for snakes instead. You find snakes by turning over logs and rocks, or spot one crossing a road. If you are lucky enough to eventually see a snake, most of the time you can only watch as it quickly slithers away. It is a labor intensive enterprise with little reward.

Here in the northeastern United States, there are only a handful of species to look for, and two of them are state listed as endangered. Sure, snakes have some interesting behaviors, and I have thoroughly enjoyed watching an eastern hognose snake feign death or hearing a black racer vibrate its tail in dry leaves, sounding like a rattler. But the most common snake behavior I observe is being sprayed with foul smelling oily gunk from a water snake's cloaca as I am helping it across a road. Here in New England, snakes are not even around for more than half a year. If you are a person with a passion for watching wildlife, it is a natural choice to start watching birds.

Birds are all around us. Some birds are present every day of the year. Even during our coldest and snowiest days you can see some birds with a little effort. You can attract them to your backyard even if you live in a city. Best of all, birds exhibit complex behaviors that are fascinating to watch. Even common species such as starlings, pigeons, and House Sparrows lead complex lives that make them worthy of our attention. Reptiles, amphibians, fish, and mammals live most of their lives away from human eyes. But birds are decidedly different. They can be watched searching for food, mating, migrating, and bathing all around us. Just go to a pond, a beach, a forest, a grassland, or even walk around your neighborhood, and bird behavior is on display for you to enjoy.

Birds are everywhere, from cities to prairies, over the oceans, in snow during the depths of winter. They are diverse, obvious, and colorful; produce remarkable sounds; and make elegantly structured nests in which to raise

their young. They are out there for us to observe, over 10,000 species worldwide. (p. 1)

We have a wide choice of identification guides today, books that enable us, with some practice, to tell what species of bird we are looking at. But if you read only a field guide, your experience of the bird ends with the naming of that bird. Older, more leisurely, field guides used to include some details of how a species lived. Reading a late nineteenth century field guide like *Birds Through an Opera Glass* by ornithologist Florence A. Merriam, one is struck by how much of the text is dedicated to the bird's behavior and personal details of how Merriam experienced the bird. In "Chimney Swift" Merriam writes: "And what a noise these swifts do make in the chimneys! If you ever had a room beside one of their lodging houses you can testify to their 'nocturnal habits during the nesting season.' Such chattering and jabbering, such rushing in and scrambling out!" (p. 17, *Birds Through an Opera Glass*)

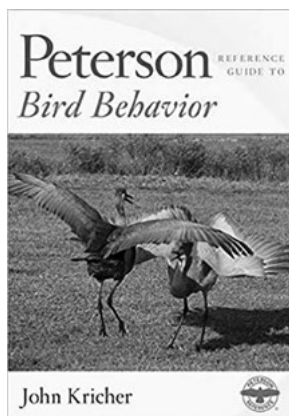
Merriam certainly describes how the bird looks in flight, but there are also details of how swifts fly, feed, nest, and often run afoul of chimney sweeps. Contemporary field guides give us a detailed search image, but these older guides present a living bird.

Beginning in the middle of the twentieth century, several things changed the way field guides were written. Field optics evolved well beyond opera glasses, allowing a person to observe the smallest pattern and color of feathers. Our knowledge of the occurrence of vagrants increased, so more species had to be included in any one regional guide. Small plumage differences that would allow birders to separate similar-looking species in the field meant that field guides increasingly focused on the look of a species and not its life history. Page space in today's modern portable field guides is so crammed with succinct descriptions of plumage that there is no room for information about the lives of the birds.

The nature of enjoying birds has changed since Merriam's time. Birding today is more about identifying a species and moving on, rather than spending an extended period of time with any one bird. Writing about bird behavior is certainly still around, but it is scattered among sources like species monographs or books about specific behaviors like migration.

The more you watch birds, the more they reveal. Watch flocks, watch individuals, and ask repeatedly, why is the bird doing what it is doing? What is it telling you about itself? (p. 9, *Peterson Reference Guide to Bird Behavior*)

John Kricher's *Peterson Reference Guide to Bird Behavior* is a book that gives the birder a more complex appreciation of the bird. A bird becomes so much more than just a set of feather patterns that allow species identification. Kricher is Professor Emeritus of Biology at Wheaton College, where he has taught courses on ecology, ornithology, and vertebrate evolution for 48 years. He has spent many decades studying and enjoying birds. Because he has taught at the college level for so long, he knows how to communicate to a general audience, and this makes *Bird Behavior* a useful and entertaining book to read. This overview of bird behavior is the perfect companion to



any field guide.

From the beginning of the *Peterson Reference Guide to Bird Behavior*, Kricher emphasizes that birds have complex brains and are active, sentient creatures that make choices.

In his book *Mind of the Raven*, author and researcher Bernd Heinrich describes numerous examples from his years of study of the Common Raven. Heinrich documents such complex and emotion-laden behaviors as deception, cooperation, individual recognition, play (see “the mental bird-play behavior,” p. 45), fear, and, of course, memory and intelligence. (p. 37)

Birds know their own species and live high-speed lives where failure is not an option. They choose their habitats and adapt even to humans. Finally, “the birds you watch are watching you.” (p. 15)

Though they have minds, birds also rely on instinct from their genetic heritage, and their behavior reflects this complex interaction. How much of any behavior is inherited and how much is choice varies from species to species. “Birds are quick to develop search images both through their genetic endowments and through learning.” (p. 170) But observers have to resist the temptation of making anthropomorphic moral judgments about what they observe birds doing. “A birder must learn to take avian behavior at face value and not read more into it than is merited. That is a big lesson.” (p. 39)

The Cooper’s Hawk that takes a Mourning Dove in your backyard, mantles it, and leaves behind a bloody mess of gore and feathers is not “evil,” even though you may find yourself viscerally reacting that way. The hawk is doing what hawks do, and doves often end up as prey. “It is exhilarating to study bird behavior, but always keep it in context: they are birds.” (p. 39)

The *Peterson Reference Guide to Bird Behavior* is divided into a number of long chapters with titles like “A Bird’s Brain and Senses” (p. 49), “Understanding Bird Diversity” (p. 65), “Feathers and Flight” (p. 85), “Social Behavior” (p. 147), “and “Real Estate, Mate Attraction, and Pair Bonding,” among others. Each of these chapters is subdivided into labeled sections. For example, “Maintenance Behavior in Birds (p. 107) contains sections on the annual molt cycle (p. 107), ectoparasites (p. 115), preening (p. 117), bathing (p. 120), head scratching (p. 121), sunning (p. 122), anting (p. 122), loafing (p. 124), and sleeping (p. 125). From this example you can see that the book is content rich. Kricher focuses on the general categories of behavior but cites many specific examples. This may make the book sound like a dry and technical read. But it isn’t. Kricher’s skillful writing communicates the scientific details of what is known about bird behavior with plenty of interesting examples and an attitude that encourages the reader to get out in the field and watch birds behaving.

Some years ago, while birding in the Ware River Watershed, we saw a male Scarlet Tanager land on the dirt road right in front of us. We watched for the next 15 minutes as the bird caught something on the road and then carefully ran its bill over its flight feathers. It was an example of “anting” behavior in which a bird catches an ant, keeps it in its bill, and runs the ant over the shafts of its feather. It is assumed, but not proven scientifically, that the formic acid produced by the distressed ant is helping to clean parasites attached to the feather. In Britain, we had seen another example of anting behavior while watching a Green Woodpecker roll in a large anthill. Turning to the

anting section of *Peterson Reference Guide to Bird Behavior*, I learned that: “Birds have been observed rubbing still-hot embers from fires on themselves and sometimes substances as strange as mothballs. The only explanation suggested for this behavior is that it could be repellent to lice or other ectoparasites.” (p. 123)

Another behavior that I often see in central Massachusetts ponds in fall is Ring-billed Gulls gathering around large flocks of Common Mergansers and stealing the fish they catch. This is an example of kleptoparasitism and is well known in a number of species like terns and alcids who are robbed of their prey by gulls. You cannot help but feel it is like the quiet kid in grade school getting his lunch money stolen by the class bully. But that is anthropomorphizing. As Kricher writes: “Being a victim of kleptoparasitism is a fact of life for many species.” (p. 193)

At the end of *Peterson Reference Guide to Bird Behavior* there is a long list of references and books recommended for further reading. Specific studies are also cited in the main body of the book when they provide interesting examples. In the chapter on “Provisioning and Protection” (p. 165), Kricher sites an interesting study that describes how different species of birds can forage in different ways in the same habitat. This classic 1958 study by Robert MacArthur showed that five structurally similar wood-warbler species that nest in boreal (spruce-fir) forests often forage together in the same spruce and fir tree and use different parts of the tree while employing somewhat different foraging behavior. The five species, now known among ornithologists and ecologists as MacArthur’s Warblers, are Cape May, Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, Bay-breasted, and Yellow-rumped (called Myrtle Warbler when MacArthur published his study).

The *Peterson Reference Guide to Bird Behavior* is the latest title in the *Reference Guide* series, which to date has included monographs on subjects like molt, owls, and sparrows, all written by a single author. Like the other books in the series, this is a large format book, with beautiful color photography on most pages. All these volumes belong in the library of any serious birder.

In the *Peterson Reference Guide to Bird Behavior*, John Kricher has done a commendable job of creating a readable overview of most bird behaviors that we see in North America. It is easy to use and fun to read. You can read this book cover to cover or just dip into it whenever you see a bird doing something worthy of putting it into your field notes. There is still so much we don’t understand about what birds are doing.

Having thought about, observed, and studied birds for the vast majority of my life, I know perfectly well what a bird is, anatomically and physiologically, but I still am far from fully understanding what a bird is mentally. I do know this much: these intriguing, indeed beguiling, wonders of nature know more than they are telling. (p. 301) 🐦

NB: I conducted two interviews with John Kricher about the *Peterson Reference Guide to Bird Behavior*. Here is the link to my second interview:

<https://www.wicn.org/podcast/john-kricher-bird-behavior-2/>

Reference

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Bird Observer is Looking for a Digital Editor

Bird Observer, Inc. is a New England-based nonprofit organization that publishes a bimonthly journal and a corresponding website to support and promote the observation, understanding, and conservation of the wild birds of New England.

Overview:

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- A moderate level of familiarity with North American birds including species geography, biology, and natural history.
- Must be able to set and meet deadlines, sometimes at short notice.

The digital editor will:

- Plan, research, and generate copy for posting.
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- Assure accuracy in:
 - the proper spelling of place names.
 - quotes from literature with authors' names and spelling.
 - the spelling of Latin binomials and English common names.
 - following *Bird Observer* style sheet guidelines.
- Submit a proposed item(s) prior to publication to the president for approval of content and to the clerk for review for possible legal issues. The president will forward material to a proofreader for review.
- Report to the president and prepare reports to be shared with the Board.
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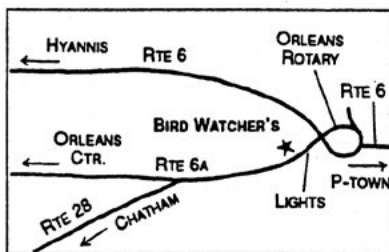
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BIRD SIGHTINGS

November–December 2020

Neil Hayward and Robert H. Stymeist

The temperature for the first 17 days of November was above average. For six days, during a stretch from November 5 to 12, the temperature in Boston was 70 degrees or higher. Worcester tied a record for five consecutive days of 70 degrees or higher. The high temperature in Boston for the month was 76 degrees on November 10. There were 11 rainy days in November, with precipitation in Boston totaling 3.9 inches—the third highest monthly rainfall for 2020. Heavy rain and damaging winds swept through the state on the last day of the month, with wind speeds in eastern Massachusetts exceeding 50 mph and with much stronger gusts in southeastern Massachusetts. The Blue Hill weather observatory in Canton reported a gust of 80 mph.

December began with a temperature of 63 degrees in Boston, the high for the month. Winter arrived on Saturday, December 5; a nor'easter brought strong winds and as much as a foot of wet snow to central Massachusetts and several inches of rain to Cape Cod. Chilmark, on Martha's Vineyard, reported 3.68 inches of rain, while in Boston the rain changed over to snow in late afternoon. Boston recorded its first frost on December 6 when the temperature dipped below 32 degrees. A major snowstorm arrived on December 16–17, just days before the first weekend of Christmas Bird Counts. The storm dumped as much as 10–19 inches of snow on many communities. Boston recorded 13.1 inches of snow, with higher accumulations in western Massachusetts; Ashfield logged 18.5 inches. On Cape Cod and the Islands the snow changed over to rain, leaving just five inches of snow in Harwich and a little over two inches on Vineyard Haven. A late surge of mild temperatures culminated on December 25 with a high of 60 degrees, tying the record for the third warmest Christmas Day in Boston.

R. Stymeist

GEESE THROUGH IBISES

There are eight species of geese on the Massachusetts state list and all eight were reported this period. The first record of **Ross's Goose** for the state was a pair in Sunderland in March 1997. The species has been undergoing a range expansion as well as an increase in population. Twenty-three years later, in December 2020, a bird in Lakeville, Bristol County, completed the county set: this species has now been recorded in each of the state's 14 counties. **Pink-footed Geese** were reported from Outer Cape Cod and Newburyport. This species was first added to the state list in 1999 by a sighting in Dennis and is still unrecorded on Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. **Barnacle Geese** were reported in three counties. A new high count for Snow Geese was set on the afternoon of December 15, when one observer logged 7,215 geese flying south along the Housatonic Valley. Flocks numbered from 40 to 1,200 and included four blue morphs. Another goose high was set at Oak Bluffs on December 12 when 212 Brant eclipsed the previous Dukes County high of 160 birds recorded in January 2019. **Tundra Swans** were well represented with birds in three counties. The flock of 12 in Westport on November 28 is only the fifth record of a double-digit flock this century.

The duck highlight of the period was the spectacular raft of scoters off Revere Beach. A careful count on November 8 recorded 13,500 Black Scoters—which smashed the previous Suffolk County high of 5,000 set in January 2019—as well as 2,400 White-winged Scoters and 1,200 Surf Scoters. A count of 175 Green-winged Teals on Martha's Vineyard on November 22 ties the high count for the county set in 1994. Nantucket hosted record numbers of Canvasbacks

and Redheads; the 185 Canvasbacks on November 6 is the highest period count for the state this century, and a flock of 56 Redheads at the end of the period is the highest count of the species this century, beating the previous high of 44 on Nantucket the previous year.

An **Eared Grebe** at Jamaica Pond, Boston, from December 6 to 26 is the first record for Suffolk County. It is the third record for the state this year, with others in Beverly and Wellfleet, in what has been an exceptional year for the species.

A hatch-year male **Rufous Hummingbird** was banded in Orleans on December 2 after first appearing in mid-November. This species is now recorded annually in the state, typically between October and December.

A new high count for Sandhill Cranes was set when 36 birds flew over an observer at the Delaney Wildlife Management Area on November 3. In contrast to the multiple records in November, there were none in December—the first time the species has been missed in December since 2014.

The only rare shorebird of the period was an **American Avocet** at Barnstable on November 7. Otherwise, shorebird news was highlighted by late departures. The latest record of Semipalmated Plover was a single bird in Fairhaven on New Year's Eve. Though uncommon, this species occasionally tries to overwinter in the state and sometimes even succeeds. Piping Plovers are less hardy; most have departed for the southern Atlantic coast by October. A pair of birds at Provincetown on November 27 is the fourth latest record this century, with the latest being from Nantucket on December 30, 2018. Veit and Petersen (1993), however, note multiple historical records for January and February, suggesting the species may have been more successful in overwintering last century. A Hudsonian Godwit lingered at Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary in Marshfield until November 22, the sixth latest record for the state. A Semipalmated Sandpiper reported from Plum Island on December 12 is the fifth latest record for the state—the latest being December 20 in 1998—and a Solitary Sandpiper at Leicester on November 5 is the second latest record for the state.

December 6 produced a spectacular flight of Dovekies past First Encounter Beach in Eastham. Over a three-hour period 6,420 birds were recorded. The observers noted that, “[Great Back-backed Gulls] were unfortunately feasting on a number (20+); many groups blown up high over parking lot as seen and photographed through moon roof!” This flight beat the previous high count this century of 4,680 at Andrews Point on December 16, 2018. The Dovekie flight at First Encounter Beach also included 980 Razorbills, but this was eclipsed by the huge flight of 10,700 birds at the same location on November 24. This count is the highest for November, and the sixth highest count of Razorbills for the state.

The winner of the most surprising bird photo of the year award must surely go to Peter Flood, who captured a tiny, yellow-billed alcid being “photobombed” by the long-staying **Sabine's Gull** at Race Point Beach on November 9. The alcid was an **Ancient Murrelet** found earlier that day by Amy O'Neill—just the fourth record for Massachusetts. The first state record of this north Pacific alcid was from Halibut Point, Rockport, on November 29, 1992. The second and third were from Race Point, Provincetown, on January 4, 1998, and Andrews Point, Rockport, on February 5, 1999. All have been one-day wonders, including this period's, almost 21 years after the first. Although this sighting was the only North American record away from the Pacific coast in 2020, Ancient Murrelets do exhibit a pattern of extreme vagrancy. There are records throughout the Great Lakes, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Montreal, and multiple occurrences in Maine. There was even a bird present in a colony of Atlantic Puffins on Lundy Island, Devon, England during the summers of 1990–1992, which remains the only record for the Western Palearctic.

A Pacific Loon photographed at Gooseberry Neck, Westport, on November 8 was a long overdue first for Bristol County. This species has now been recorded in seven Massachusetts counties, including a single inland record for Hampshire County at Quabbin Reservoir on November 11, 2015. It is still missing from the coastal counties of Suffolk and Norfolk.

N. Hayward

Snow Goose					American Wigeon				
11/8-11/11	Truro	2	A. Burdo# + v.o.		11/1-11/30	PI	30 max		v.o.
11/13	Melrose	1	J. McCoy		11/12	Waltham (C. Res.)	20		J. Forbes
12/15	Ashley Falls	7215 max	N. Jo#		11/13	Needham	5		R. Everett
12/20	Andover	7	L. O'Brien		11/15	Acoaxet	27		G. d'Entremont#
12/28	E. Boston (BI)	2	A. Valle + v.o.		11/24	Marstons Mills	125		J. Brandin
Ross's Goose					American Black Duck				
12/1-12/16	Lakeville	1	ph J. Sweeney + v.o.		12/1-12/31	PI	880 max		v.o.
12/27	Westport	1	ph M. Nolan, K. Wylie		Northern Pintail				
Greater White-fronted Goose					11/1-11/30	PI	200 max		T. Wetmore + v.o.
11/2-12/4	Paxton area	1	ph B. Robo + v.o.		11/21-12/9	Longmeadow	10		M. Fairbrother + v.o.
11/10-24	Egremont	1	ph B. Lafley		Green-winged Teal				
12/18-19	Lee	1	ph G. Ward + v.o.		11/1-11/21	Easthampton	39 max		J. Harrison
Pink-footed Goose					11/1-11/30	PI	350 max		T. Wetmore + v.o.
11/26-12/27	Wellfleet/Oreans	1	ph P. Sagan#, M. Faherty + v.o.		11/13	P'town (RP)	1500		B. Nikula
12/23-24	Nbpt H.	1	ph M. Stone + v.o.		11/22	W. Tisbury	75		B. Shriber
Brant					Canvasback				
11/1	Northfield	6	Sa. Auer		11/6, 12/31	Nantucket	185,92		T. Pastuszek#
11/28	PI	6	S. Babbitt		Redhead				
11/29-12/3	Mystic River	1	J. Layman + v.o.		11/1	Danvers	3		S. McDonald
12/12	Oak Bluffs	212	B. Shriber		11/3-12/31	Horn Pond area	2		J. Thomas + v.o.
Barnacle Goose					11/4	Sharon	1		L. Waters + v.o.
11/23-12/16	Turners Falls	1	ph S. Lewis		12/19	Falmouth	2		S. Williams#
11/23	Quabbin Pk	1	ph L. Therrien		12/27	Nantucket	56		H. Young#
11/28-12/6	Sterling	1	ph B. Robo + v.o.		Ring-necked Duck				
Cackling Goose					11/1-11/30	Camb. (FP)	125 max		v.o.
11/7-12/16	Turners Falls	2	ph max M+L Waters + v.o.		11/26	Waltham (C. Res.)	364		N. Hayward
11/7	E. Bridgewater	1	ph J. Bourget + v.o.		11/28	Acoaxet	115		BBC (G. d'Entremont)
11/14	Rowley	1	R. Heil		12/10	Douglas	56		M. Lynch#
11/14	Westborough	1	M. Lynch#		12/16-31	Stockbridge	100 max		J. Pierce + v.o.
12/3-12/4	Topsfield	1	ph D. Williams + v.o.		Tufted Duck				
12/3-12/15	Amherst	1	ph L. Therrien + v.o.		11/8-12/31	Nantucket	1		m ph S. Kardell# + v.o.
12/4	Longmeadow	3	ph T. Gilliland		Greater Scaup				
Mute Swan					11/8	Nantucket	450		S. Kardell#
11/14	Westborough	17	M. Lynch#		11/14	Clinton	67		M. Lynch#
11/26	Waltham (C. Res.)	22	N. Hayward		Lesser Scaup				
Tundra Swan					11/21	Lakeville	20		G. d'Entremont#
11/7-12/1	Nantucket	5	ph S. Kardell + v.o.		12/6	Waltham (C. Res.)	8		J. Forbes
11/28	Westport	12	ph J. + M. Eckerson		King Eider				
12/19-21	Waltham	1	ph J. Forbes + v.o.		11/1-11/14	Revere B.	1		m ph S. Zende# + v.o.
Wood Duck					11/11-14	PI	1		imm m ph T. Wetmore + v.o.
11/1	Wachusett Res.	38	M. Lynch#		11/27-30	Rockport (AP)	1		imm m ph S. McDonald + v.o.
12/4	Acton	16	S. Miller		12/11	N. Chatham	1		m M. Plato
Blue-winged Teal					12/12-28	Gloucester (EP)	1		m ph S. Santino# + v.o.
11/20	Randolph	3	P. Peterson		12/13-27	Ipswich (CB)	1		m A. Littauer# + v.o.
12/6	W. Barnstable	3	P. Crosson		Common Eider				
Northern Shoveler					12/1-12/31	PI	725 max		v.o.
11/1	Quincy	8	G. d'Entremont		Harlequin Duck				
11/1-11/13	PI	2	v.o.		11/22	Cohasset	6		V. Zollo
11/8-11/8	Revere B.	2	M. Iliff		12/20	Rockport (AP)	74		R. Heil
12/4-12/15	Pittsfield (Onota)	1	J. Pierce + v.o.		Surf Scoter				
12/9	Melrose	3	J. McCoy#		11/1	Wachusett Res.	2		M. Lynch#
12/22-31	Jamaica Plain	2	H. Ellis + v.o.		11/3	Williamstown	1		T. Kirby + v.o.
Gadwall					11/8	Revere B.	1200		M. Iliff
11/1-11/30	PI	12	max v.o.		11/22	Quabbin Pk	2		max B. Finney + v.o.
11/3	Revere B.	6	J. Layman		12/5-12/30	Mystic River	6		max J. Layman + v.o.
11/15	Acoaxet	12	G. d'Entremont#		White-winged Scoter				
12/3	Nantucket	200	E. Rudden		11/1-11/27	Wachusett Res.	5		max J. Dekker + v.o.
12/6	Waltham (C. Res.)	10	J. Forbes		11/8	Revere B.	2400		M. Iliff
Eurasian Wigeon					12/1-12/31	PI	375		max D. Prima + v.o.
11/7-12/27	Nantucket	1	min T. Pastuszek# + v.o.		12/2	Holland	2		m M. Lynch#
11/24	Marstons Mills	1	m ph J. Brandin		12/6	Williamstown	3		D. Griswold + v.o.

White-winged Scoter (continued)	12/20-30	Mystic River	2 max	v.o.	11/3-12/31	Quabbin Pk	14 max	G. Brown + v.o.	
Black Scoter	11/1-11/30	PI	2500 max	T. Wetmore+v.o.	11/21	Lakeville	10	G. d'Entremont#	
	11/6-11/27	Wachusett Res.	3 max	B. Abbott + v.o.	11/13	Stockbridge	4	J. Pierce	
	11/8	Revere B.	13500	M. Iliff	11/14	Westborough	1	M. Lynch#	
	11/15	Acton	20	S. Dresser	11/30	PI	14	T. Wetmore#	
	11/22	Rockport (AP)	282	R. Heil	12/9	Medford	1	M. Resendes + v.o.	
	11/25	Quabbin Pk	26	L. Therrien	Eared Grebe	12/6-12/26	Boston (JPd)	1 phT. Bradford + v.o.	
	12/13	BHI (Deer I.)	2000	N. Hayward	Rufous Hummingbird	11/15-12/31	S. Orleans	1 imm m ph b S. Finnegan#	
Long-tailed Duck	11/1-11/27	Wachusett Res.	2 max	E. LeBlanc + v.o.	Virginia Rail	11/7	Quaboag IBA	3	M. Lynch#
	11/1-11/30	PI	150 max	v.o.	11/7	GMNWR	1	D. Kelly	
	11/2	Southwick	22	L. + B. Bieda	11/14	Norfolk	1	J. Bock	
	11/21	Lakeville	2 m	G. d'Entremont#	12/11-31	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	M. Iliff	
	11/22	Rockport (AP)	315	R. Heil	12/30	N. Truro	23	N. Tepper#	
	12/11	Pittsfield (Pont.)	1	G. Hurley + v.o.	12/31	Hatfield	1	S. Griesemer#	
	12/20-23	Mystic River	2 max	N. Hayward+v.o.	Sora	11/8	N. Truro	1	N. Tepper#
Bufflehead	11/1	Quincy	295	G. d'Entremont	Common Gallinule	11/7-11/25	Nantucket	2 max ph K. Blackshaw+v.o.	
	11/13	Quabbin Pk	50	J. Oliverio	11/7-11/10	Tidmarsh WS	1 ph	C. Jackson	
	12/26	Mystic River	40	E. Goodrich	11/15	Edgartown	1 imm	L. Johnson	
Common Goldeneye	thr	Turners Falls	50 max	D. Rittall + v.o.	American Coot	11/1-12/6	Turners Falls	5 max A. Green + v.o.	
	11/21	Lakeville	27	G. d'Entremont#	11/10-25	PI	3 max	v.o.	
	12/10	Douglas	27	M. Lynch#	11/12	Waltham (C. Res.)	22	J. Forbes	
	12/24-31	Lowell	62 max	A. + D. McDermott#	11/21	Lakeville	128	G. d'Entremont#	
Barrow's Goldeneye	11/4-12/27	Randolph	1 ad m	J. Sweeney	Sandhill Crane	11/3	Bolton	36	J. Ritterson
	11/18-28	Agawam	1	T. Gilliland	11/8-14	Burrage Pd WMA	4 max	E. Vacchino + v.o.	
	12/19-26	Falmouth	2	A. Burdo#	11/12	Quabbin (G43)	2	B. Robo	
	12/22-23	Tuckernuck I.	1	S. Kardell#	11/15-19	Cumb. Farms	5 max	M. Sheldon#+v.o.	
	12/24-31	Lowell	1	FA. + D. McDermott#	11/18	BFWMA	2	J. Betts	
	12/25	Turners Falls	1	J. Smith	11/19	Quaboag IBA	5	M. Lynch#	
Hooded Merganser	11/1-11/30	PI	50 max	T. Wetmore+v.o.	11/22	Wayland	3	A. Scholten	
	11/19	N. Andover	83	D. Duxbury-Fox#	American Avocet	11/7	Barnstable	1	S. Liffmann
	11/20	Quabbin (G33)	59	B. Laffley	American Oystercatcher	11/6, 12/27	Edgartown	17,2	L. Johnson, M. Curtin
	11/26	Waltham (C. Res.)	104	N. Hayward	11/7	Monomoy NWR	1	B. Harrington#	
	11/27	Quaboag IBA	148	M. Lynch#	12/1	Nantucket	2	Y. Vaillancourt	
	11/28	Acoaxet	40	BBC (G. d'Entremont)	Black-bellied Plover	11/1-11/30	PI	140 max	v.o.
	12/2	Holland	86	M. Lynch#	11/7	Monomoy NWR	661	B. Harrington#	
Common Merganser	11/19	W. Brookfield	646	M. Lynch#	12/30	PI	1 ph	C. Cote#	
	11/25	Easthampton	103	J. Harrison	American Golden-Plover	11/12	PI	1	T. Wetmore
	12/20	Boston (JPd)	151	G. d'Entremont#	Killdeer	12/2-12/5	Concord	5 max	D. Swain + v.o.
Red-breasted Merganser	11/1-11/30	PI	45 max	v.o.	12/26	P'town	1	K. Shen	
	11/4-11/27	Worc.	5 max	E. Kittredge+v.o.	12/31	Fairhaven	1	C. Molander	
	11/21, 12/3	P'town (RP)	2000	B. Nikula	Semipalmated Plover	11/1-11/11	PI	10 max	v.o.
	12/11	Hatfield	1	D. Allard	11/6-11/7	Quabbin (G35)	1	P. Gagarin + v.o.	
	12/20	Mystic River	25	N. Hayward	11/10	Quabbin (G22)	1	J. Smith	
Ruddy Duck	11/1-11/30	Richmond	17 max	M. Kelly + v.o.	12/15, 31	Fairhaven	1	J. Layman, C. Longworth	
	12/14	Boston (CHRes.)	133	N. Hayward	Piping Plover	11/7	Monomoy NWR	7	B. Harrington#
	12/22	Eastham	62	M. Harris	11/21	Nantucket	1	T. Pastuszak#	
Wild Turkey	11/21	Winchendon	39	M. Lynch#	11/27	P'town	2	S. MacDonald	
	12/14	W. Brookfield	33	M. Lynch#	Hudsonian Godwit	11/13-22	DWWS	1	K. Rawdon + v.o.
Ruffed Grouse	11/22	Ware R. IBA	2	M. Lynch#	Marbled Godwit	11/1-12/2	Chatham	3 max	S. Finnegan+v.o.
	12/16	Mount Greylock	4	S. Williams	Red Knot	11/7	Monomoy NWR	257	B. Harrington#
	12/19	Camp Edwards	2	J. McCumber	11/9, 12	PI	1,1	D. Prima, T. Wetmore	
	12/27	Mt Watatic	1	J. Forbes	Sanderling	11/7	Monomoy NWR	2040	B. Harrington#
Pied-billed Grebe	11/1-12/6	Turners Falls	3 max	A. Green + v.o.	11/8	Petersham	1	M. Lynch#	
	11/2-11/13	Arlington Res.	1	J. Forbes + v.o.					
	11/3-11/11	PI	1	v.o.					
	11/14	Westborough	5	M. Lynch#					
	11/15	Acoaxet	6	G. d'Entremont#					
Horned Grebe	11/1	Quincy	33	G. d'Entremont					

Sanderling (continued)
 12/12 PI 200 T. Wetmore

Dunlin
 11/2-11/4 GMNWR 1 G. Dupont + v.o.
 11/7 Monomoy NWR 3170 B. Harrington#
 11/8 Quabbin (G22) 1 J. Smith
 11/11-12 Quabbin (G44) 3 W. Howes + v.o.
 12/16 PI 220 T. Wetmore

Purple Sandpiper
 11/22 Cohasset 1 V. Zollo
 12/7-12/31 Boston 9 max C. Matheson + v.o.
 12/29 PI 4 T. Wetmore#

White-rumped Sandpiper
 11/1-11/13 PI 19 max S. Babbitt + v.o.
 11/7 Monomoy NWR 16 B. Harrington#
 12/6 Westport 1 L. Agosto

Pectoral Sandpiper
 11/1-11/14 Hadley 2 max B. Finney + v.o.
 11/8 Petersham 4 M. Lynch#
 11/8 Nantucket 2 S. Kardell#
 11/12 New Marlborough 2 G. Ward

Semipalmated Sandpiper
 11/1-11/11 PI 5 max D. Chickering + v.o.
 11/6 Nantucket 1 S. Fea#
 12/12 PI 1 N. Landry + v.o.

Western Sandpiper
 11/7 Monomoy NWR 4 B. Harrington#

Long-billed Dowitcher
 11/1-11/12 PI 7 max T. Wetmore + v.o.
 11/21 Rowley 1 S. Sullivan#

American Woodcock
 11/21 Medfield 2 J. Bock

Wilson's Snipe
 11/8 Petersham 1 M. Lynch#
 11/14 PI 1 T. Wetmore
 12/6 Pittsfield (Onota) 1 J. Pierce
 12/29 Cambridge 1 C. Nabel

Spotted Sandpiper
 11/6-11/8 Danvers 1 R. Heil + v.o.
 11/7 Nantucket 1 T. Griswold
 11/8-11/14 Hadley 1 C. Elowe
 11/9 Scituate 1 K. Rawdon
 12/4-12/12 Arlington 1 J. Shelden + v.o.

Solitary Sandpiper
 11/1 Lexington 1 C. Cook
 11/2 P'town 1 S. Finnegan, M. J. Foti
 11/5 Leicester 1 B. Abbott

Lesser Yellowlegs
 11/7 Quaboag IBA 1 M. Lynch#
 11/8 Plymouth B. 1 S. van der Veen

Greater Yellowlegs
 11/1-11/15 PI 35 max T. Wetmore + v.o.
 11/2-11/16 Pittsfield (Pont.) 3 max K. Hanson + v.o.
 11/22 E. Boston (BI) 5 J. Hanson + v.o.
 12/30 Wellfleet 1 M. Iliff#

Pomarine Jaeger
 11/30 Rockport (AP) 2 R. Heil
 12/6 Eastham (FE) 29 J. Trimble#
 12/27 Stellwagen Bank 6 P. Flood#
 12/30 Jeffreys L. 3 L. McKillop#

Parasitic Jaeger
 11/10, 30 P'town (RP) 10, 3 B. Nikula#, D. Errichetti#

Dovekie
 11/22, 12/6 P'town (RP) 1085, 615 B. Nikula#, P. Flood
 11/24, 12/6 Eastham (FE) 4300, 6420 B. Nikula#, J. Trimble#
 11/29 Jeffreys L. 20 S. Mirick#

Common Murre
 11/20-30 Rockport (AP) 46 max R. Heil + v.o.
 12/27 Stellwagen Bank 67 P. Flood#

Thick-billed Murre
 11/22 Rockport (AP) 29 R. Heil
 12/6 Eastham (FE) 4 J. Trimble#

Razorbill
 11/22, 30 Rockport (AP) 233, 141 R. Heil
 11/22 Cohasset 17 V. Zollo
 11/24, 12/6 Eastham (FE) 10700, 980 B. Nikula#, J. Trimble#

Black Guillemot
 11/22 Rockport (AP) 8 R. Heil

Ancient Murrelet
 11/9 P'town (RP) 1 ph A. O'Neill#

Atlantic Puffin
 12/6 P'town (RP) 1 ph P. Flood#
 12/27 Stellwagen Bank 1 ph P. Flood#
 12/30 Jeffreys L. 2 ph L. McKillop#

Black-legged Kittiwake
 11/22, 30 Rockport (AP) 324, 95 R. Heil
 11/29 Jeffreys L. 20 S. Mirick#
 12/6 Eastham (FE) 1650 J. Trimble#
 12/6 P'town (RP) 1650 P. Flood
 12/6 South Hadley 1 M. Locher

Sabine's Gull
 11/1-11/9 P'town (RP) 1 2cy ph B. Nikula#

Bonaparte's Gull
 11/1 Wollaston 60 G. d'Entremont
 11/1 Quabbin Pk 11 M. McKitrick
 11/1 Waltham (C. Res.) 1 C. Cook
 11/25 Pittsfield 1 Z. Adams

Black-headed Gull
 11/1-12/23 Gloucester 1 ad ph L. Bix + v.o.
 11/8 P'town (RP) 1 1W ph B. Nikula#
 11/23 Plymouth 1 ph L. Bix + v.o.
 12/31 W. Dennis 1 ph S. Selkow

Little Gull
 11/8 P'town (RP) 4 2ad, 2 1W ph B. Nikula#
 11/14-15 Nantucket 1 imm ph Y. Vaillancourt
 11/25 Dennis 2 ph A. Burdo

Laughing Gull
 11/4, 12/3 P'town (RP) 170, 6 B. Nikula
 11/23 Richmond 1 G. Ward + v.o.

Iceland Gull
 11/7-12/16 Pittsfield (Pont.) 1 Z. Adams + v.o.
 11/22 Wilmington 1 J. Keely
 11/22-12/9 Arlington (Spy Pd) 1 J. Layman# + v.o.
 11/27-12/24 Turners Falls 2 max N. Kahn# + v.o.
 12/20-21 South Hadley 1 T. Gilliland + v.o.
 12/20 Sharon 1 ad W. Sweet
 12/24-27 Lowell 3 max A.+D. McDermott#
 12/26-29 Mystic River 1 J. Forbes
 12/31 Quabbin Pk 1 L. Therrien

Lesser Black-backed Gull
 11/12 Sharon 1 L. Waters
 11/14 PI 1 S. Sullivan#
 11/29 Jeffreys L. 1 S. Mirick#
 12/8 Medway 1 ad J. Bock
 12/19 Wilmington 1 S. Sullivan#
 12/24 Turners Falls 1 V. Woodring

Glaucous Gull
 11/22 Mystic River 1 J. Forbes
 12/19 Wilmington 1 S. Sullivan#
 12/24 Lowell 1 A. + D. McDermott#
 12/25-28 Westport 1 ad T. Blodgett, M. Iliff
 12/30 Jeffreys L. 1 L. McKillop#

Common Tern
 11/4 P'town (RP) 55 B. Nikula

Black Skimmer
 12/15 Plymouth 2 A. Kneidel

Red-throated Loon
 11/1 Quincy 50 G. d'Entremont
 11/1-11/30 PI 35 max T. Wetmore + v.o.
 11/1-12/11 WWMA 1 I. Grosner + v.o.
 11/3-11/7 Waltham (C. Res.) 1 J. Young + v.o.
 11/5-11/28 Quabbin Pk 5 max L. Therrian + v.o.
 11/10 P'town (RP) 40 N. Hayward
 11/13 Stockbridge 4 J. Pierce

Red-throated Loon (continued)									
11/22,30	Rockport (AP)	18,36		R. Heil	Manx Shearwater	11/30	Rockport (AP)	1	R. Heil
Pacific Loon					Northern Gannet				
11/4-11/6	Marblehead	1 ph	J. Smith + v.o.		11/13	P'town (RP)	4500		B. Nikula
11/8	Westport	1 ph	M. Iliff		11/22,30	Rockport	625,130		R. Heil
11/20-12/28	P'town (RP)	2 max ph	P.Flood+v.o.		12/6	Eastham (FE)	4250		J. Trimble#
Common Loon					Great Cormorant				
11/1	Wachusett Res.	8		M. Lynch#	11/6	PI	24		S. Gravatt-Wimsatt
11/12-12/12	Stockbridge	13 max	J. Pierce + v.o.		11/15	Acoaxet	18		G. d'Entremont#
11/21	Lakeville	8		G. d'Entremont#	11/30	Rockport (AP)	2		R. Heil
12/13	BHI (Deer I.)	12		N. Hayward	Double-crested Cormorant				
Northern Fulmar					11/1-11/30	Everett	180 max		R. Stymest+v.o.
11/29, 12/30	Jeffreys L.	8,2		S. Mirick#, L. McKillop#	11/1	Quincy	96		G. d'Entremont#
Cory's Shearwater					11/26	Arlington (Spy Pd)	30		N. Hayward
11/1	Cohasset	1		V. Zollo	12/27	PI	1		CBC (D. Larson)
11/1, 11/23	P'town (RP)	140,1		B. Nikula#, M. Collins	American Bittern				
Sooty Shearwater					11/13-15	PI	1		T. Wetmore + v.o.
11/21	P'town (RP)	3		B. Nikula	Great Blue Heron				
12/30	Jeffreys L.	1		L. McKillop#	11/4	Quaboag IBA	7		M. Lynch#
Great Shearwater					Great Egret				
11/18,30	Rockport (AP)	31,113		R. Heil	12/1-12/31	PI	4 max		N. Werth + v.o.
11/22, 12/16	P'town (RP)	135,8		B. Nikula, P. Flood	12/28-30	Edgartown	2		W. Looney#
11/29	Jeffreys L.	14		S. Mirick#	Black-crowned Night-Heron				
12/30	Truro	1		B. Nikula#	11/7	PI	1		S. Babbitt

VULTURES THROUGH DICKCISSEL

October and November have historically been the best months to encounter **Golden Eagles** in the state. This year, there were ten reports in October and six reports in November. The majority of observations were from western Massachusetts, although a surprise flyover in Concord was especially welcome for one birder who added it to his state life list. Many birders are accustomed to seeing Red-tailed Hawks on almost all of our outings and may not notice that they are at their peak migration during this period. Blueberry Hill in Granville, for example, logged 58 Red-tailed Hawks during November. Other dedicated hawkwatch stations continued their observations into November, logging Red-tailed Hawks and hoping for those Golden Eagles. The first Snowy Owl of the season was reported at Logan Airport on November 5 and a total of five were seen at Logan during the Greater Boston Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 19.

Birders have come to expect a flurry of rare bird sightings during November and December, and this season was a banner year. The second state record of **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was discovered at Fresh Pond in Cambridge on November 24, and was last seen on December 16. The first record for Massachusetts was discovered just last year in Hadley on October 25. A major snowstorm on the night of December 16 dumped over a foot of snow in the area and the flycatcher was never seen again; it was missing for the Greater Boston CBC held on Sunday, December 20. Other notable flycatchers included a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** at Manomet, an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** photographed in Salisbury, four reports of **Western Kingbirds**, and late records of both Least and Yellow-bellied flycatchers.

A **Loggerhead Shrike** was present in East Bridgewater for ten days in November to the delight of many birders. According to Veit and Petersen (1993), "As recently as the 1960s Loggerhead Shrikes were uncommon but regular migrants." Only three reports have been noted in recent years: Chatham in 2012, Martha's Vineyard last year, and a cooperative bird at the Turner Falls Airport, also last year. Another infrequent vagrant to the state this period included a **Chestnut-collared Longspur** in Eastham. This is only the fifth record for the state, with the most recent at Plum Island on December 15, 2004. A **Brewer's Blackbird** was reported and photographed in Dighton on November 9-10. This sighting is the second report this year, after a one-day wonder on the Amherst-Hadley line on October 11. Before this year, the last record for the state was in Ipswich on November 9, 2002. Finally, two different **Spotted Towhees** were

noted, one from South Dartmouth and another from Rockport. Only three previous state records for this species exist, with the most recent report from Martha's Vineyard in January 2015.

Other “misoriented” birds—species that show up during migration but far off their normal routes—included a **Mountain Bluebird** in Provincetown, a **Varied Thrush** in Sudbury, and a **Sage Thrasher** in Hatfield that was just the fifth state record. Other unusual species that almost always show up during this period include **Summer Tanager**, **Western Tanager**, and **Painted Bunting**. Among the 23 warbler species reported were two **Yellow-throated Warblers** and a **Townsend's Warbler** that was photographed in Fairhaven.

Birders continued to enjoy this year's irruption of winter finches. Red Crossbills, sometimes numbering 50 to 100 individuals, were present throughout the period at Salisbury State Beach Reservation along with good numbers of Common Redpolls and a smaller number of White-winged Crossbills. Similar numbers were noted from Outer Cape Cod, including one flock of 300-plus Red Crossbills in North Truro. The first **Pine Grosbeaks** arrived in our area in mid-November, with most reports from northern Worcester, Franklin, and Berkshire counties. **Hoary Redpolls** were reported from eight locations. One cooperative individual took up residence for four days along the Rose Kennedy Greenway in downtown Boston.

Two other boreal species—**Boreal Chickadee** and **Canada Jay**—were reported this period. Both are rare and irregular migrants that occasionally wander into Massachusetts. Reports of Boreal Chickadees have historically coincided with major flights of Black-capped Chickadees, typically when cone crops are scarce in the northern forests. Boreal Chickadees were noted in five locations during the period this year, the first records for the state since a bird visiting a feeder in Peru for over a month in 2017. A Canada Jay was photographed in Great Barrington, the first report of this species in the state since a bird at Gate 41 at the Quabbin Reservoir from November 4 to 16, 2014. 🐦

R. Stymeist

Reference

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

Black Vulture				11/14	Nantucket	1 imm ph	S. Kardell
11/6	Greenfield	15	H. Lappen	12/8	Granville	1 ad	J. Weeks
11/7	Westport	10	G. d'Entremont	Bald Eagle			
11/7	Millis	4	J. Bock	11/7	Blueberry Hill	7 3ad+4imm	HawkCount (J. Weeks)
12/27-28	Bourne	6	B. Prodouz#	11/15	Quaboag IBA	3	M. Lynch#
12/30	Blackstone	17	M. Alexander	11/24	PI	7	S. Babbitt#
Turkey Vulture				Red-shouldered Hawk			
11/25	Blackstone	108	M. Lynch#	11/3	New Salem	15	J. Smith
12/8	Nantucket	44	H. Young	11/4-11/28	Mt Wachusett	31	HawkCount (R. Chase)
Osprey				Red-tailed Hawk			
12/1-12/2	W. Newbury	1	C. Decker + v.o.	11/1-11/29	Blueberry Hill	58	HawkCount (J. Weeks)
12/9-12/18	N. Reading	1	L. Bruni	11/2	Russell	13	HawkCount (T. Swochak)
12/11	Concord	1	W. Hutcheson	Rough-legged Hawk			
Golden Eagle				11/1	Great Barrington	1	C. Ward#
11/1	Orange	1 imm	G. Watkevich	11/1	Pittsfield (Onota)	1	C. Allen
11/2	Russell	1 imm	HawkCount (T. Swochak)	11/4	Sudbury	1	B. Harris
11/8	Deerfield	1 imm	D. Sibley	11/11, 12/22-31	PI	1, 1 lt, dk	S. Babbitt
11/19	Quabbin (G25)	1 ad	B. Lafley	11/15	South Hadley	1	B. Lafley
11/21	Concord (Kaveski)	1 ph	W. Hutcheson#	11/24	Cohasset	1 dk	S. Avery
12/3	Quabbin Pk	1 ad ph	L. Therrien	12/4-12/27	Rowley	2 max	R. Heil
Northern Harrier				12/22	E. Boston (BI)	1	S. Riley
thr	PI	8 max	v.o.	12/22-29	Salisbury	1	B. Peters# + v.o.
11/21	Concord (Kaveski)	2	W. Hutcheson	Eastern Screech-Owl			
12/22-23	GMNWR	1 ph	C. VanDyke + v.o.	12/27	N. Marshfield	3	G. d'Entremont
Northern Goshawk				Great Horned Owl			
11/3, 12/8	Blueberry Hill	1, 1 imm, ad	HawkCount (J. Weeks)	12/thr	Stoughton	2	G. d'Entremont
11/7	Monomoy NWR	1 imm ph	A. Kniedel	12/14	W. Brookfield	2	M. Lynch#

Snowy Owl				Least Flycatcher			
11/5,6	Boston (Logan)	1,2	N. Smith	11/7	Amherst	1 ph	T. Gilliland
11/7	Chatham	2	A. Kneidel#	Pacific-slope Flycatcher			
11/7	Qabbin (G35)	1 ph	D. Small + v.o.	11/24-12/16	Cambr. (FP)	1 ph au	B. Shamgochian+v.o.
12/9	Nahant	1	L. Pivacek	Eastern Phoebe			
12/11-31	PI	5 max	v.o.	12/26	Plymouth	1	P. Edmundson
12/13-18	P'town (RP)	1	P. Flood#	12/30	Truro	2	M. Faherty#
12/13	Nantucket	1	B. Perkins	12/30	Wayland	1	G. Long
12/19	Boston (Logan)	5	CBC (N. Smith)	Loggerhead Shrike			
12/20-27	Boston (Castle I.)	1	L. Markley + v.o.	11/6-11/15	E. Bridgewater	1 ph B.	Vigorito + v.o.
12/20-30	Ipswich (CB)	1	J. Berry + v.o.	Northern Shrike			
12/27	Barnstable (SN)	1	J. Trimble#	thr	Reported from 16 locations		
12/29-30	Wellfleet	1	C. Stubbs, J. Young	White-eyed Vireo			
12/31	Chatham	1	S. Finnegan	11/6	Muskeget I.	1	S. Kardell
Barred Owl				Blue-headed Vireo			
11/4-11/15	Boston (FPk)	2	L. McCarthy + v.o.	11/22	Medford	1	J. Layman
11/21	Winchendon	2	M. Lynch#	11/24	Hadley	1	C. Elowe
Long-eared Owl				12/19	Falmouth	1	N. Dorian#
12/27	Rowley	1	S. Riley	Philadelphia Vireo			
Short-eared Owl				11/21	Florence	1	B. Finney
thr	Hadley (Honeypot)	3 max	C. Elowe + v.o.	12/4	Hadley	1	C. Elowe
11/7-12/31	Nantucket	1	H. Young + v.o.	Red-eyed Vireo			
11/9-11/12	S. Boston	1	L. Markley	11/1-11/8	Newton (CSPk)	1	C. Dalton + v.o.
11/20	Winthrop	1	T. Carlile	11/7	Rockport (HPt)	1	S. Sullivan#
11/24-12/30	PI	1 min	S. Babbitt#	11/8	N. Truro	1	A. Burdo#
12/7	Wachusett Res.	1	M. Nyquist	Canada Jay			
12/18-26	Orleans	1	v.o.	11/1	Great Barrington	1 ph	C.+B. Barrett + v.o.
12/19	E. Boston (BI)	1	H. Yelle	Fish Crow			
12/20	Boston (Logan)	1	CBC (N. Smith)	thr	Lawrence	500 max	C. Gibson#
Northern Saw-whet Owl				11/25	Blackstone	62	M. Lynch#
11/4	Townsend	2	J. Zaborowski	Common Raven			
11/6-12/28	Pittsfield	1	S. Townsend + v.o.	thr	Nantucket	2	v.o.
11/8	Leverett	2	L. Waters	11/3	Blueberry Hill	10	HawkCount (J. Weeks)
11/8-11/20	Deerfield	2 max	D. Sibley	11/11	Aquinnah	1	B. Shriber
11/21	Assabet R. NWR	2	N. Tepper	Horned Lark			
12/19	Boylston	2	M. Lynch#	11/7-12/31	PI	30 max	T. Wetmore+v.o.
12/28-29	PI	1,1	T. Wetmore	12/12	Acton	60	N. Hayward
12/30	Wellfleet/Truro	20	CBC	12/24	Rutland	53	M. Lynch#
Belted Kingfisher				12/27	N. Marshfield	75	G. d'Entremont#
11/8	Petersham	2	M. Lynch#	Tree Swallow			
11/15	Quaboag IBA	2	M. Lynch#	12/7, 30	N. Truro	8,4	C. Whitebread#
Red-headed Woodpecker				Boreal Chickadee			
11/11	Bridgewater	1 juv	D. Furbish	11/3	New Salem	1 ph	J. Smith
11/27	Princeton	3 2ad+1 juv	ph B. Goodnow	11/8	Shelburne Falls	2	T. Raymo
12/22-31	Florence	1 ph	K. Lombard + v.o.	12/7-12/9	Wellfleet	1 ph C.+A.	Hight + v.o.
12/28	Amherst	1	L. Holder-Webb	12/12	Holland	1	B. Zajda
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker				12/29	Williamstown	1 ph	L. van Handel + v.o.
11/11	Hardwick	3	M. Lynch#	Red-breasted Nuthatch			
12/10-22	Boston (AA)	2	T. Bradford + v.o.	11/1-11/30	PI	10 max	v.o.
12/27	N. Marshfield	2	G. d'Entremont#	11/7	Salisbury	22	S. Zhang
Northern Flicker				11/8	Petersham	77	M. Lynch#
11/28	S. Dart. (APd)	6	BBC (G. d'Entremont)	11/16	Assabet R. NWR	29	J. Mott
12/27	N. Marshfield	11	G. d'Entremont#	11/28	Montague	22	B. Finney
Pileated Woodpecker				Brown Creeper			
11/22	DFWS	3	P. Sowizral	11/21	Winchendon	3	M. Lynch#
Merlin				12/2	Wales	2	M. Lynch#
thr	PI	1 min	v.o.	House Wren			
11/8	P'town	3	P. Trimble#	12/27	Barnstable	1	S. Williams#
Peregrine Falcon				Winter Wren			
11/11	Gay Head (MV)	5	S. Whiting	11/24	Royalston	2	M. Lynch#
11/25	PI	3	W. Tatro	12/27	N. Marshfield	2	G. d'Entremont#
Ash-throated Flycatcher				Marsh Wren			
11/8	Salisbury	1 ph	S. Sullivan#	11/11-12/3	Northampton	2 max	C. Elowe + v.o.
Western Kingbird				11/27	Waltham	2	J. Forbes
11/6	Scituate	1 ph	S. Maguire#	12/13	E. Boston (BI)	1	M. Padulo
11/10	Lakeville	1 ph	E. Dalton	12/17	PI	1	T. Wetmore
11/11-15	Rockport	1 ph	S. Hedman + v.o.	12/20	Neponset	1	S. Williams
11/11-17	Falmouth	1 ph	K. Friel + v.o.	Carolina Wren			
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher				11/27	Quaboag IBA	13	M. Lynch#
11/7	Manomet	1 ph	T. White	11/28	S. Dart. (APd)	17	BBC (G. d'Entremont)
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher				12/19	Braintree	17	G. d'Entremont#
11/2	Falmouth	1	K. Friel#	12/27	N. Marshfield	23	G. d'Entremont#

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher				12/20	P'town	70	C. Whitebread#
11/25 Wellfleet	1	D. Errichetti		12/30	Wellfleet	90	M. Iliff#
Eastern Bluebird							
11/8	E. Bridgewater	10	G. d'Entremont#				
11/20	New Braintree	21	M. Lynch#				
11/28	S. Dart. (APd)	9	BBC (G. d'Entremont)				
12/2	Wales	16	M. Lynch#				
Mountain Bluebird							
11/5	P'town	1 ph	P. Trull				
Swainson's Thrush							
11/1	Gill	1 ph	J. Smith				
Hermit Thrush							
11/28	S. Dart. (APd)	7	BBC (G. d'Entremont)				
12/1-12/31	PI	3 max	v.o.				
Varied Thrush							
12/30	Sudbury	1 ph	C. Goddard				
Gray Catbird							
11/28	S. Dart. (APd)	7	BBC (G. d'Entremont)				
11/28	Cambr. (FP)	2	K. Barlow				
Brown Thrasher							
12/2-12/27	MNWS	1	J. Smith + v.o.				
12/19	Amherst	1	S. Schwenk				
Sage Thrasher							
12/13-thr	Hatfield	1 ph	T. Gessing + v.o.				
Bohemian Waxwing							
11/6	Rockport (HPT)	1 ph	S. Sullivan				
11/7	PI	2 ph	S. Zhang				
11/8	N. Truro	2 ph	N. Tepper#				
11/15	S. Peabody	1	R. Heil				
11/25	Wellfleet	1 ph	D. Errichetti				
12/19	Essex	1 ph	M. Brengle				
12/22	Newbury	1 ph	S. Williams				
Cedar Waxwing							
11/25	Wellfleet	150	D. Errichetti				
12/12	PI	95	S. Babbitt				
12/19	Boylston	41	M. Lynch#				
American Pipit							
11/1-11/25	PI	30 max	S. Miller# + v.o.				
11/1	DFWS	3	P. Sowizral				
11/4	Holden	20	M. Lynch#				
11/21	Rochester	50	G. d'Entremont#				
12/31	Hatfield	5	G. Hodge				
Evening Grosbeak							
11/1-11/27	Rockport (HPT)	50 max	S. Sullivan# + v.o.				
11/1-12/20	Boston (FPk)	12	S. Jones + v.o.				
11/8	P'town (RP)	25	K. Dec#				
11/9	Medfield	21	J. Bock				
11/9	W. Concord	18	D. Swain				
11/14	Wellfleet	54	P. Kyle				
11/20	New Braintree	16	M. Lynch#				
12/2-12/12	Ipswich (WSF)	30 max	I. Pepper				
12/20	Washington	36	M. Watson				
Pine Grosbeak							
thr	Reported from 7 counties						
11/15	N. Truro	1 ph	T. Bradford				
11/25-12/31	Gardner	40 max	T. Pirro + v.o.				
12/19	N. Adams	21	Sa. Auer				
12/7-12/16	Ashby	14 max	D. Williams# + v.o.				
12/19-28	Rutland	34 max	C. Bailey + v.o.				
12/22	Greenfield	20	M. Fairbrother				
Purple Finch							
11/1	DFWS	10	P. Sowizral				
11/8	Petersham	5	M. Lynch#				
Common Redpoll							
11/7-thr	PI	80 max	T. Wetmore + v.o.				
11/7	Lanesboro	50	J. Pierce				
11/8	Deerfield	50	D. Sibley				
11/9	Amherst	84	L. Therrien				
11/18-12/8	Blueberry Hill	100 max	HawkCount (J. Weeks)				
11/21	Weymouth	110	M. Iliff				
11/22	Revere	205	R. Schain				
12/12	Concord (Kaveski)	72	N. Hayward				
12/24	BFWMA	120	S. Williams				
Hoary Redpoll							
11/22-25	Boston (RKG)	1 ph	R. Stymeist# + v.o.				
12/7-12/10	Fitchburg	1 ph	S. Williams				
12/11	Warwick	1 ph	S. Williams				
12/22	Plymouth	1 ph	A. Lamoreaux#				
12/24	BFWMA	1 ph	S. Williams				
12/27	Williamstown	1 ph	J. Pierce				
12/30	Wellfleet	1 ph	M. Iliff#				
12/31	Groton	1 ph	D. Adrien				
Red Crossbill							
thr	Reported from every county. 1508 eBird checklists						
11/7	Orleans	1 Type 4 au	N. Tepper, T. Spahr				
11/8-thr	Montague	60 max	v.o.				
11/11	N. Truro	319	A. Burdo				
11/11	N. Truro 99	Type 10 au	M. Iliff, T. Spahr#				
11/11	P'town (RP)	92	J. Young#				
11/11	N. Truro	5 Type 1 au	M. Iliff, T. Spahr#				
11/11	N. Truro	1 Type 2 au	M. Iliff, T. Spahr#				
11/11	N. Truro	1 Type 4 au	M. Iliff, T. Spahr#				
11/14	Ashby	19	T. Murray				
11/21	Winchendon	14	M. Lynch#				
12/3-12/31	Salisbury	100 max	v.o.				
12/4-12/31	PI	51 max	v.o.				
12/15	Randolph	20	P. Peterson				
12/21	Jamaica Plain	35	T. Bradford + v.o.				
12/27	Nantucket	63	S. Fea#				
White-winged Crossbill							
11/7-11/8	Gloucester	28 max	J. Keyes				
11/7-11/27	Rockport (HPT)	17 max	S. Sullivan# + v.o.				
11/8-11/29	Salisbury	12 max	S. Sullivan# + v.o.				
11/20-12/19	Winchendon	20 max	S. Williams + v.o.				
11/22	Cohasset	8	V. Zollo				
11/29	Boston (FPk)	3	S. Jones				
12/12	PI	12	T. Wetmore				
12/16	MtA	30	R. Stymeist# + v.o.				
12/19	Falmouth	2	P. Crosson#				
12/30	Truro	2	A. Burdo#				
Pine Siskin							
11/1	Orleans	90	N. Tepper				
11/1-11/29	PI	35 max	V. Burdette + v.o.				
11/6	P'town (RP)	200	M. Sabatine#				
11/6	Jamaica Plain	50	J. Miller				
11/7	Nantucket	320	S. Kardell				
11/27	Quaboag IBA	20	M. Lynch#				
12/21	Ipswich	18	N. Hayward				
Lapland Longspur							
11/1	Quincy	1	G. d'Entremont				
11/1-11/2	Boston (FPk)	1	S. Jones + v.o.				
11/3-11/7	PI	2	v.o.				
11/4	Holden	1	M. Lynch#				
11/7	Nantucket	10	S. Fea#				
11/14-27	Acton	1, 1	C. Winstanley#, R. Doherty				
11/22	Revere	1	R. Schain				
11/24	Sandwich	4	P. Trimble				
12/13-19	Hadley (Honeypot)	4 max	A. Hulseys# + v.o.				
12/20-24	Fitchburg	1	S. Miller# + v.o.				
12/23	Salisbury	2	R. Ross				
12/27	Barnstable	2	J. Trimble#				
Chestnut-collared Longspur							
11/4	Eastham (FE)	1	J. Barcus#				
Snow Bunting							
11/1-11/30	PI	60 max	S. Babbitt + v.o.				
11/4	Truro	60	P. Kyle				
11/9	Salisbury	50	J. Hoyer#				
11/14	Concord	200	W. Hutcheson				
12/13	Winthrop	60	N. Hayward				
Grasshopper Sparrow							
11/1	Falmouth	1	G. Hirth				
Lark Sparrow							
11/4	Cambr. (Daney Pk)	1	J. Forbes + v.o.				
11/8	Quincy	1	V. Zollo + v.o.				

Lark Sparrow (continued)								
11/15	Truro	1	L. Waters#	Brown-headed Cowbird				
Chipping Sparrow				thr	DWWS	35 max	v.o.	
11/6-11/22	Lexington (DM)	6 max	J. Forbes# + v.o.	11/29	Harvard	50	M. Lynch#	
11/7-11/9	Concord	4 max	C. Winstanley#	Rusty Blackbird				
12/11-16	MtA	4 max	v.o.	11/8	Petersham	10	M. Lynch#	
12/27	Watertown	2	T. Michel	12/17-21	Wayland	13 max	J. Hoye#	
Clay-colored Sparrow				12/27-28	Middleton	7 max	S. Sullivan#	
11/1	Carlisle	1	K. Dia	Brewer's Blackbird				
11/7	Salisbury	2	S. Zhang	12/9-12/10	Dighton	1 ph	J. Eckerson + v.o.	
11/7	Eastham (FH)	1	W. Klockner	Ovenbird				
11/10	PI	1	D. Adrien	11/5-11/27	Boston (RKG)	2	L. Markley + v.o.	
11/15	Nantucket	1	S. Fea#	11/22	PI	1	J. Hoye#	
Field Sparrow				Worm-eating Warbler				
11/25	Blackstone	1	M. Lynch#	11/6	DWWS	1	A. Wojcikowski#	
12/19	Braintree	1	G. d'Entremont#	Blue-winged Warbler				
Fox Sparrow				11/17	Cambr. (FP)	1	K. Starbuck	
11/8	Deerfield	8	D. Sibley	Black-and-white Warbler				
12/12	Quaboag IBA	2	M. Lynch#	11/3	Gill	1	J. Coleman	
12/19-30	Woburn (HP)	2 max	J. Thomas + v.o.	11/9	Hingham	1	K. Rawdon	
American Tree Sparrow				11/22-12/16	Boston (FPk)	1	G. Gladkov + v.o.	
11/15	Leicester	15	M. Lynch#	12/4	Agawam	1	F. Bowrys	
12/27	PI	29	CBC (D. Larson)	Tennessee Warbler				
White-crowned Sparrow				11/11	Hadley	3	S. Surner	
11/7-11/9	PI	2 max	v.o.	11/20-12/31	Athol	1	S. Johnstone	
11/10-28	Concord (Kaveski)	2 max	G. Dupont + v.o.	12/27	Barnstable	1	M. McCarthy#	
12/11	Hadley	4	L. Therrien	Orange-crowned Warbler				
12/20	Gloucester	2 imm	CBC(K.Bourinot)	11/7	Gloucester (EP)	2	S. Williams#	
Vesper Sparrow				11/21	Eastham (FH)	2	J. Trimble#	
11/8	Sunderland	1	So. Auer, K. Barnes	12/15	Randolph	1	P. Peterson	
11/8	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	L. Eyster + v.o.	Nashville Warbler				
11/20-12/13	Ashley Falls	3 max	G. Ward + v.o.	11/6-12/13	Boston (Fens)	1	J. Cushman + v.o.	
11/29-12/6	Cumb. Farms	1	J. Sweeney	12/13	Waltham	1	C. Hartshorn	
Nelson's Sparrow				Common Yellowthroat				
11/1	Lynn	1	S. McDonald#	11/22-12/12	Boston (RKG)	3	M. Kaufman + v.o.	
11/14	PI	3	B. Shamgochian	12/13	Turners Falls	1	J. Smith	
Saltmarsh Sparrow				12/13	N. Reading	1	J. Keeley	
11/4	PI	4	B. Shamgochian	12/30	N. Truro	1	N. Tepper#	
11/9	Westport (APd)	1	M. Murphy	American Redstart				
Ipswich Sparrow				11/2	Easthampton	1	A. Hulsey	
11/8	Osterville	2	D. Clapp#	11/25	Barnstable	1	K. Miller	
11/14	E. Boston (BI)	1	P. Bain	Cape May Warbler				
12/6	Eastham	2	M. Iliff	11/26	Harwich	1	B. Albrow#	
12/11	Hadley	1	L. Therrien	12/16-25	Yarmouth	1	R. Hamman	
12/16	Yarmouth	4	R. Debenham	Northern Parula				
Lincoln's Sparrow				11/10-11	Acton	1	N. Tepper	
11/21	IRWS	1	S. Mohammadi#	11/11-12	Woburn (HP)	1	A. Flynn#	
12/11-19	Hadley	1	L. Therrien + v.o.	11/14	Ipswich	1	F. Bouchard#	
Swamp Sparrow				Magnolia Warbler				
11/7	Quaboag IBA	4	M. Lynch#	11/9	Amherst	1	L. Therrien	
12/14	W. Brookfield	6	M. Lynch#	Yellow Warbler				
Spotted Towhee				11/22	Brewster	1 b	S. Finnegan#	
11/9-12/15	S. Dart. (APd)	1 ph	au J.+M. Eckerson	12/4	Gloucester	1	S. Sullivan	
12/20	Rockport (AP)	1 ph	R. Heil	Blackpoll Warbler				
Eastern Towhee				11/14	Danvers	2	J. Mahoney	
12/16-17	Granby	1	S. Chapko, G. Regmund	11/14	Medford	2	M. Rines	
Spotted x Eastern Towhee (hybrid)				11/14-15	Medford	1	R. LaFontaine	
11/30	Hamilton	1 ph	A. Sanford	11/16	Newton (CSPk)	1	J. Mott#	
Yellow-breasted Chat				Black-throated Blue Warbler				
thr	Reported from 29 locations			12/6	Cambridge	1 m	K. Dia	
Eastern Meadowlark				12/7	Carlisle	1 f	A. Ankers	
12/13	Ashley Falls	2	A. Rose + v.o.	Palm Warbler				
Bullock's Oriole				11/19	Everett	1	R. Stymeist	
11/2-12/24	Cohasset	1 ad m	phE.Freed+ v.o.	11/27	Sharon	1	J. Glover	
12/4-12/16	Haverhill	1 ph	A. Holden + v.o.	12/7	Jamaica Plain	1	D. Burton	
Baltimore Oriole				Pine Warbler				
12/thr	Reported from 21 locations			12/1-12/3	Sherborn	2	K. Winkler	
12/20	E. Orleans	4	J. Trimble#	12/20	Waltham	1	C. Cook	
12/27	Dennis	2	B. Faherty#	12/20	DFWS	1	P. Sowizral	
Red-winged Blackbird				12/24-31	Gloucester	1	C. Wood	
11/12	Sterling	3000 min	G. + J. Gove	Yellow-rumped Warbler				
11/14	Lancaster	150	M. Lynch#	11/1	Wachusett Res.	10	M. Lynch#	
12/27	N. Marshfield	74	G. d'Entremont#	11/1-11/27	PI	6 max	v.o.	
				12/9-12/23	Lexington (DM)	3 max	C. Gras + v.o.	

Yellow-throated Warbler				12/13	Edgartown	1 ph	B. Biros
12/4	Hingham	1 ph	P. Edmundson	12/21	Orleans	1 ph	N. Tepper
12/10-31	Lancaster	1 ph	J. Paster + v.o.	12/26	S. Yarmouth	1 ph	R. Fisher
Prairie Warbler					Rose-breasted Grosbeak		
11/1-11/8	Newton (CSPk)	1	C. Dalton + v.o.	11/28	Swampscott	1 ph	S. Slik
12/12-16	Harwich	1	C. Whitebread#		Blue Grosbeak		
Townsend's Warbler				11/17	Brookline	1	R. Doherty
12/15-31	Fairhaven	1 ph	B. Tirone#		Indigo Bunting		
Black-throated Green Warbler				11/9	Tidmarsh WS	1	B. Vaccino
11/18	South Hadley	1	F. Bowrys	12/30	Wellfleet	1	D. Clapp#
11/20	Haverhill	2	S. Santino#		Painted Bunting		
Wilson's Warbler				11/13-17	Marshfield	1 m ph	A. Hughes
11/11	Hadley	1	S. Surner	12/13	Eastham	1 imm m/f ph	R. Budnick#
11/21-22	MtA	1	I. Merson + v.o.	12/17-30	Eastham	1 m ph	R. Utt
11/29	Wellfleet	1	D. Burton#		Dickcissel		
Summer Tanager				11/1-12/22	Reported from 11 locations		
11/14-15	Northampton	1 ph	H. Scott + v.o.	11/1	Orleans	2	N. Tepper
11/14	Cohasset	1 ph	S. Zhang				
Western Tanager							
11/28-12/31	Brewster	1 ph	D.Desplaines+v.o.				

Volunteer Staff Opening at Bird Observer Where to Go Birding Editor

Key Responsibilities

- Identify and recruit authors for bimonthly *Where to Go Birding (WTG)* articles about places to bird throughout New England.
- Work with authors and ensure that they meet deadlines.
- Review draft articles for accuracy and content before submitting them to the editor.
- Assist the mapmaker with creation and review of maps.
- Check all directions for accuracy.

This is a position that requires communication and organization skills, as well as great attention to detail. The WTG editor must be able to work independently to recruit authors, maintain schedules, and keep contact with authors prior to deadlines, as well as work collaboratively with the author, editor, and mapmaker from draft article to publication. Knowing birders throughout the New England area is helpful, but not a prerequisite.

To inquire about this position, contact Marsha Salett at msalett@gmail.com.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taxonomic order is based on AOS checklist, Seventh edition, 61st Supplement, as published in *Auk* 137: ukaa030 (2020) (see <<http://checklist.americanornithology.org/>>).

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

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO BIRD OBSERVER

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

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

BYGONE BIRDS

Historical Highlights for November–December

Neil Hayward

5 YEARS AGO

Bird Observer
VOLUME 44, NUMBER 2
APRIL 2015



November–December 2015

Rare geese included a **Ross's Goose** on Plum Island on November 13, a **Pink-footed Goose** at Turners Falls on November 25, and three **Barnacle Geese** at Agawam on December 26. A **Pacific Loon** at Quabbin Reservoir on November 11 was the first inland record of the species for the state. A **Swainson's Hawk** was photographed at Bear Creek in Saugus on December 20, the date of the Greater Boston Christmas Bird Count (CBC). A **Purple Gallinule** was photographed at the Burrage Pond Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Hanson on November 8. A major fallout of **Franklin's Gulls** occurred on the East Coast on November 13, a result of storms across the upper Midwest. At least 22 were seen in Massachusetts. Single **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were reported from Harwich and Dorchester. There were two **Ash-throated Flycatchers** in Rockport and nine individual **Western Kingbirds**. The **Bell's Vireo** continued at Fort Hill, Eastham, through December 12. **Townsend's Solitaires** were reported from Hanson, North Truro, and Rockport. A **Mountain Bluebird** was found at Crane WMA in Falmouth, and a cooperative **MacGillivray's Warbler** was in Lexington.

Best sighting: **Common Ground Dove** in Lexington, November 13. This was only the second state record after one was found on Monomoy Island on October 7, 1973.

10 YEARS AGO

Bird Observer
VOLUME 39, NUMBER 2
APRIL 2011



November–December 2010

A **Pink-footed Goose**, only the third for the state, spent over a month in Sudbury, while a **Ross's Goose** spent the end of December on Nantucket. November 20 was a memorable date, producing two flocks of **Tundra Swans**—29 in Brimfield and 19 at Quabbin Reservoir—and a **Gyrfalcon** at Plum Island. An adult **Purple Gallinule** in distress was rescued from Hull on December 27. Nantucket set a new record for Lesser Black-backed Gulls with 327 on November 26. A **White-winged Dove** appeared at a Watertown feeder on December 4 and remained for the Greater Boston CBC. A **Rufous Hummingbird** was banded in Worcester and a **Black-chinned Hummingbird** visited a feeder on Nantucket. An adult **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** appeared on Nantucket on the last day of November. A **Boreal Chickadee** chose Squantum Point Park in Quincy for a six-day visit in early November. The many visiting birders also found a **LeConte's Sparrow** and a Yellow-breasted Chat. Other passerine highlights included **Sedge Wrens** from Weymouth and Nantucket, a **Townsend's Solitaire** in Gardner, a **Yellow-throated Warbler** in Chatham, three reports of **Harris's Sparrow**, and a **Black-headed Grosbeak** photographed in Easthampton.

Best sighting: **Northern Lapwing**, Plum Island, December 2. The shorebird was observed flying in from the east, whereupon it briefly harassed a Rough-legged Hawk and then continued on its way headed south.

20 YEARS AGO

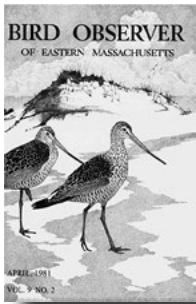


November–December 2000

An adult Black Brant, *Branta bernicla nigricans*, was found at Plymouth on November 4. There were fewer than 10 records of this subspecies in the state. An immature **Gyr Falcon** spent almost three weeks at the Plum Island salt marshes, proving surprisingly reliable for the many birders who chased it. A **Yellow Rail** was flushed from a Nantucket marsh on November 28. A Barn Owl was found in the dunes along South Beach in Chatham in November. The **Mountain Bluebird**, the fifth for the state, remained at the Concord sewer beds until November 2. Other rare passerines included **Western Tanagers** in Gloucester and East Falmouth, a **Henslow's Sparrow** in Dorchester, and a **Sedge Wren** on Nantucket.

Best sighting: **Tropical Kingbird** at World's End in Hingham, November 8–30. This represents the first state report of this species.

40 YEARS AGO



November–December 1980

Four **Tundra Swans** (then known as Whistling Swans) were observed flying between Ipswich and Plum Island in December, and another was seen in Nantucket on the CBC. An impressive 18 **Northern Goshawks** were reported, including three on the Newburyport CBC and four on the Concord CBC. The Newburyport CBC also turned up a Barn Owl on December 27. Nine **Boreal Chickadees** were scattered around the state, including three in Salisbury, and two in Wellesley. A **Sedge Wren** (then known as Short-billed Marsh Wren) was banded in Nantucket in November and lingered long enough to make the CBC. The **Loggerhead Shrike** that appeared in Salisbury on September 13 stayed until November 25. Marlboro hosted a **Varied Thrush** on December 21–22. Three **Brewer's Blackbirds** were found in Marshfield on November 9–12. A male **Black-headed Grosbeak** was reported from a feeder in Walpole, December 2–27. The Concord CBC, held on December 28, recorded 915 Evening Grosbeaks, 33 Pine Grosbeaks, 123 Purple Finches, 95 Common Redpolls, and 74 Pine Siskins.

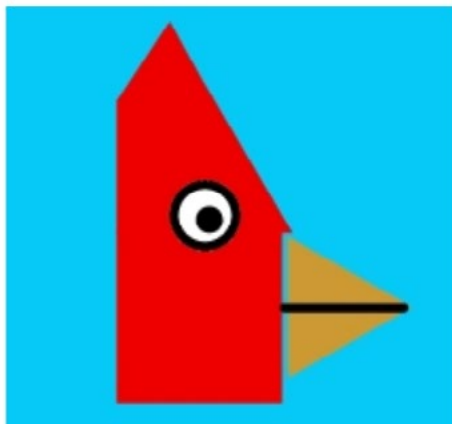
Best sighting: **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, Wellesley, November 11–12. This was the third record for 1980, before which there had been only three records for the state. 🐦



Common Ground Dove. 2015. Photograph by Tom Murray.

Ray Brown's Talkin' Birds

A Weekly Radio Show about Birds, Birding, and Conservation



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ABOUT THE COVER

Orchard Oriole

The Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*) is North America's smallest oriole and one of its most interesting. The adult male has a black head, back, and tail, and a white wing bar and white edges to the flight feathers on its mostly black wings. Its breast, belly, rump, and shoulders are dark russet. It has a short tail and a short bill. The adult female is greenish yellow below, light olive green above, and has two white wing bars. First- and second-year males resemble females but have black throats, and second-year males have some russet body feathers. Adult males are distinctive, but immature males and adult females can be confused with Scott's and Hooded orioles in various plumages, although Orchard Orioles are smaller. However, the Orchard Oriole's range does not overlap with the ranges of either of these species. Orchard Orioles are divided into three subspecies. *I. s. spurius* breeds in the United States and the other two subspecies are restricted to Mexico.

The Orchard Oriole's breeding range covers most of the eastern half of the United States, from the Rocky Mountains to the East and Gulf coasts. Southward, it extends from eastern Montana, southwest Manitoba, and extreme southeast Saskatchewan to eastern New Mexico, Texas, and along the entire Gulf Coast to northern Florida. The range continues south through Central Mexico and along the central parts of the Mexican Gulf Coast. Eastward, the breeding range extends to the Atlantic coast from Massachusetts and southeast New Hampshire through northern Florida. In the north, the range extends into extreme southern Ontario.

Orchard Orioles winter from central Mexico south through Central America to Northern Colombia and northwest Venezuela. They roost gregariously on the wintering grounds, sometimes with as many as a hundred birds in a single tree. Orchard Orioles arrive on the breeding grounds later than other oriole species and depart earlier, a mechanism that may reduce competition with other orioles for food during the nesting period. They arrive in Massachusetts in late April and May and leave in late July or early August. They are one of our earliest fall migrants.

Orchard Orioles are generally monogamous and produce a single brood, although they occasionally produce a second brood. The song—given by males of all age groups and sometimes by females—is a series of loud, high-pitched clear whistles, followed by lower-pitched notes or phrases, terminating in a downward, slurred note. The song primarily functions to attract a mate because Orchard Orioles are not highly territorial after mating. They also give alarm calls. Both adult and immature males are active on the breeding grounds and sometimes may fight or chase one another. During pair formation, males may chase females. Second-year males are capable of breeding but usually do so in marginal habitat. Females may breed at the age of one year.

Orchard Orioles nest in both suburban and rural areas and generally prefer to be near rivers, lakes, marshes, or floodplains. They readily nest in orchards, gardens, and farmlands as long as scattered trees are available. Many nests are near roads. Orchard

Orioles have a high degree of sociality, sometimes nesting semicolonially with as many as 20 nests per tree. They often nest close to kingbirds, whose aggressive behavior may give the orioles some protection against predators and cowbirds. Their sociality is also evident in their tropical wintering areas, where they have been observed, for example, roosting together with seven other species of birds.

The nest cup is usually suspended from terminal twigs or branches. The female builds the nest cup of loosely woven long blades of grass, lined with finer grasses, catkins, and feathers, or bits of human items such as yarn. Orchard Orioles nest and feed lower than Bullock's and Baltimore orioles, with whom they compete for resources. They also nest later than either of their competitors, thus further reducing competition. The usual clutch is five light blue eggs blotched or spotted with dark colors. The female alone develops a brood patch and she alone incubates the eggs for about two weeks until hatching. Males may guard the nest and feed the incubating female. If a weather event causes nest failure, the pair may renest some distance away. In hot weather, the male may attempt to shade the nest. Both parents feed the young. The chicks fledge after two weeks. Fledged broods are divided between their parents and forage together for four to six weeks. After the males have begun migration, the young forage mostly on fruits with after-hatch-year females until ready to migrate south.

Orchard Orioles glean arthropods from leaves and twigs and forage for grasshoppers in open-field vegetation less than two meters in height. Their food during nesting season is mainly insects and spiders, but they also take berries, seeds, and nectar and peck ripe fruit. They will even use hummingbird feeders. During nesting season, foraging males may drive off immature males. In winter, Orchard Orioles forage mainly on fruit, insects, and nectar. Males may exclude immature males and females from nectar-bearing trees on the wintering grounds.

Orchard Orioles are a common host to cowbirds, and that has been blamed for population declines, particularly in parts of the South. Tower kills, particularly in Florida, have had an adverse impact, as has the eating of eggs and chicks by grackles. Habitat degradation is also a problem. In the twentieth century, Orchard Orioles have been subject to fairly regular population fluctuations although they are widespread and common in some areas. Breeding Bird Survey data show the eastern population as stable, but the central population is showing a significant decline. The American Birds Blue List lists the Orchard Oriole as a Species of Special Concern. Nevertheless, most data suggest that this elegant little oriole will be with us into the indefinite future. 🐦

William E. Davis, Jr.

AT A GLANCE

February 2021



DAVID CLAPP

As *Bird Observer* kicks off 2021, readers are undoubtedly hopeful and optimistic that the new year will be better than 2020 in every way possible. How could it be worse, you might ask? With this optimistic forecast in mind, and depending upon your birding experience or birding skill, this issue's At A Glance challenge may cause you to think twice about this as you consider the identification of the February mystery photo. For the benefit of new readers of the magazine, know that At A Glance mystery photos are traditionally poor photos of common species, good photos of uncommon species, or ambiguous photos of any species ever previously recorded in Massachusetts. The purpose of the column is to encourage readers to test their bird identification skills by looking at less than optimum views of birds without the benefit of clues usually provided in the field.

To kick off the new year's challenge, notice by the slim proportions of the mystery bird's legs, and what looks like could be the top of a fencepost, it is clearly a small bird of some type. It is also pale-breasted and devoid of streaks or other markings on its breast. Similarly, while we can't see the side of the bird's head, there is nothing to suggest that it has a prominent eyebrow stripe or distinctive crown markings on its head. Because the reader is looking at the back of the bird's head, it is also obvious that the neck and nape areas of the bird are also uniformly colored. As with all of the mystery photos, readers are encouraged to also view the magazine image in color on the website at <https://www.birdobserver.org/Issues/2021/February-2021/at-a-glance-february-2021>.

A look at the image in color clearly shows that the undertail coverts are distinctly barred with black, and that the tail itself is also horizontally barred with thin dark lines. From the color view provided of the mystery species, these markings offer a

definitive clue to the bird's identity. Virtually no other small brown birds occurring in Massachusetts exhibit such prominently barred undertail coverts, or have the horizontal tail barring shown by the bird in the photograph. One or both of these features are, however, diagnostic of wrens and are not shared by any other North American passerines.

Once the mystery bird has been determined to be a wren, the identification is straightforward. The pale, unmarked breast, absence of flank barring, and no hint of a bold stripe over the eye collectively mark the identification as a House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*).

The House Wren is a common and widespread summer resident in Massachusetts. It typically arrives in mid-April and departs by late October, although occasionally a lingering individual will appear on a Massachusetts Christmas Bird Count. House Wrens commonly occupy suburban birdboxes for nesting, but also readily nest in natural cavities in brushy areas or along woodland edges.

David Clapp captured this cryptic image of a House Wren in the Brewster Community Gardens in Brewster, Barnstable County, September 22, 2020. 🐦

Wayne R. Petersen

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



TOM SULLIVAN

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

MORE HOT BIRDS



Pacific Loons have become a near-regular sight off of Race Point, with multiple reports every month since last August. Three or more individuals were spotted during January. At least one was still present on March 7. The photograph to the left is by Benny Albro.

Cape Cod was hopping with **Western Tanagers** this winter. The first was noticed at a birdfeeder in Brewster on November 28, and continued to visit through January 17. On December 21, Nick Tepper photographed another Western Tanager less than six miles away in Orleans. On January 8 one was photographed at a feeder in Harwich Port, only seven-a-half miles away. If it was the same individual bird, it returned to Brewster, where it was reported just over three hours later. Finally, on January 26 another one was reported from a feeder in South Chatham, just about halfway between Brewster and Harwich Port, but the bird reported this time was described with the bright yellow body and orange face of an adult male; the Brewster bird had been entirely green just nine days earlier. Nick Tepper took the photo on the right.



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