Bird Observer

VOLUME 48, NUMBER 4 AUGUST 2020

HOT BIRDS

Our state had several **Wilson's Plovers**. A Piping Plover technician working for the Cape Cod National Seashore came across the most-observed individual on May 5 at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham. CCNS volunteer Adele Sullivan relocated it the following two days, allowing birders to see and photograph it as it foraged and chased Sanderlings and Piping Plovers. Allyson Lague, a technician for Mass Audubon's Coastal Waterbird Program, found the next one on the beach at Allens Pond on June 5, apparently being nicer to the Piping Plovers there. Bob Murphy encountered a third at Sandy Point on Plum Island on June 19. Sue Finnegan took the photo on the right.

A few **Golden-winged Warblers**, all one-day wonders, passed through our state this past May. Glenn d'Entremont heard, but did not see, a song of the species at Wompatuck State Park on May 15, but without visual confirmation, he could not rule out it being a Brewster's or Lawrence's. The next day, Maili and Liam Waters spotted an adult male amid a migrant surge past High Head on Cape Cod that included over 2,000 warblers of at least 21 species, and 106 species overall. A couple of weeks later, Mike Sylvia photographed a third in Dukes County. Maili Waters took the photo on the left.

Ted Bradford (his photo on the right) was birding at Race Point on May 25 and discovered a **Sandwich Tern** in a flock of Common Terns on the beach. A few other birders glimpsed it over the next couple of days in the area amid hundreds of Common Terns, dozens of Least Terns, a few Roseates, and at least one Black Tern.

A **White-winged Dove** appeared on Tuckernuck Island, Nantucket, on July 13. It was found twice independently, first by island residents Zoë and William L'Écuyer who saw it at their birdfeeder. It returned to their feeder the following day. The day after that, Skyler Kardell, currently residing at the field station of the Tuckernuck Land Trust, was unaware of the L'Écuyers' discovery when he came across the same bird at a feeder at the field station. Skyler Kardell took the photo on the left.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Follow *Bird Observer* on Facebook at

https://www.facebook.com/birdobserverjournal

and on Twitter at

https://twitter.com/BirdObserver

Bird Observer

A bimonthly journal— to support and promote the observation, understanding, and conservation of the wild birds of New England.

VOL. 48, NO. 4 AUGUST 2020

SUBSCRIPTIONS: $25 for 6 issues, $48 for two years (U.S. addresses). Inquire about foreign subscriptions. Single copies $5.00, see <www.birdobserver.org/Subscribe>. CHANGES OF ADDRESS and subscription inquiries should be sent to: Bird Observer Subscriptions, P.O. Box 236, Arlington MA 02476-0003, or email to Lynette Leka at <lynette.leka@yahoo.com>.

ADVERTISING: full page, $100; half page, $55; quarter page, $35. Contact Bob Stymeist at <ads@birdobserver.org>

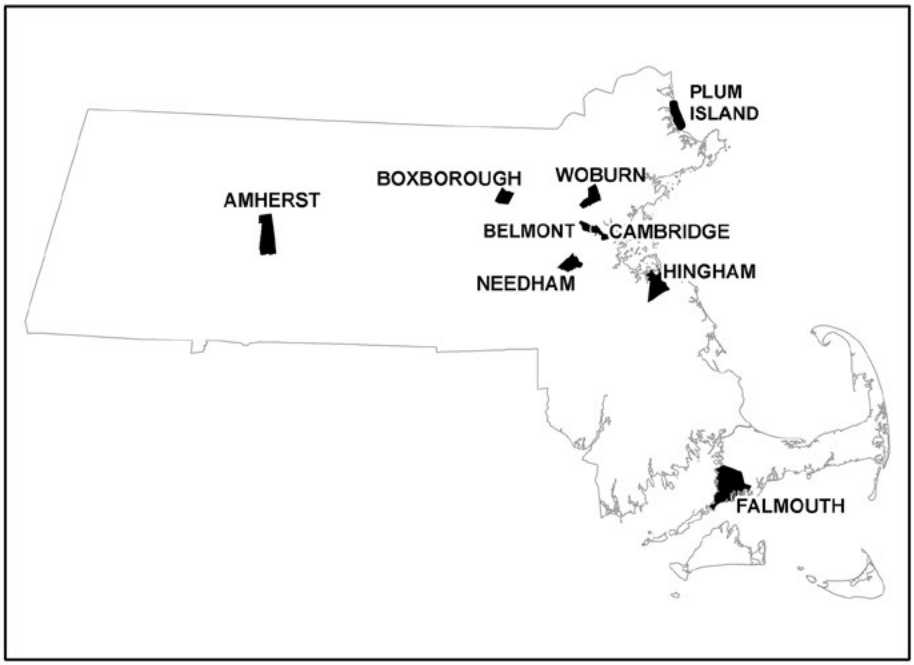
MATERIAL FOR PUBLICATION: BIRD OBSERVER welcomes submissions of original articles, photographs, art work, field notes, and field studies. Scientific articles will be peer-reviewed. Please send submissions by email to the editor, Marsha C. Salett <msalett@gmail.com>. Please DO NOT embed graphics in word processing documents. Include author's or artist's name, address, and telephone number and information from which a brief biography can be prepared.

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

 ISSN: 0893-463

Birding Safely and Sanely During the Pandemic of Spring 2020

Bird Observer *Staff and Board Members*



East Falmouth Covid-19 Birding Surprises and Delights

Nate Marchessault

The last several months of 2020 have resulted in drastic changes for us all, including changes to our birding routines. As someone accustomed to driving relatively long distances to go birding, I found the concept of distance quickly morphed into one that was hyperlocal. Driving more than twenty minutes seemed too far and the ideal distance gave me just enough time to gulp down a cup of coffee in the morning. Being a relatively new resident of East Falmouth, I had an abundance of new locations to explore, and one of the greatest surprises to me was the sheer quantity and the size of some of these areas.

Closest to home and by far the largest is the Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) complex, which comprises nearly 6,000 acres of conservation land. Johns Pond Park, one of my favorite local haunts, is contained within this complex and begins along the shoreline of Johns Pond. A vast network of trails meanders through various types of forest, along a small pond's edge, and through old cranberry bogs that are in various stages of early succession. The combination of habitats and contiguous

conservation land makes for a great birding area with an excellent diversity of bird species. The early spring was my favorite here, where during an early morning walk I would almost always hear hooting Barred and Great Horned owls, singing Hermit Thrushes, and drumming Ruffed Grouse.

Just below the southernmost terminus of Mashpee NWR, South Cape Beach quickly became another favorite place to visit. In addition to walking along the beach, one can explore two trails that are vastly different from each other. The Great Flat Pond Loop begins on a short boardwalk along the salt marsh edge and enters the woods where it eventually reaches Flat Pond, a large salt pond with a northern end dominated by cattails. During several visits here, one of my favorite observations of the spring was a Marsh Wren singing in a small wetland dominated by highbush blueberry. I had hoped the bird would attempt to breed because I found it hard to envision what a Marsh Wren nest would look like in a blueberry bush but alas, the bird eventually came to its senses and moved on. The second trail is Dead Neck Trail, which I first explored during Bird-a-thon. Friday evening, May 15, I began Bird-a-thon looking at a Saltmarsh Sparrow that I had previously staked out, and decided to walk the trail—a sandy hike through the dunes that ends where the ocean meets Waquoit Bay—to see what other estuarine or seabird species I could come up with. I had envisioned the walk being a slog since there was a cold, stiff breeze coming from the west. Much to my surprise, as I started my walk the wind died out, giving way to an utter calmness, the radiant, setting sun gently warming. The sheer tranquility of the moment made it impossible to maintain the rush and anxiety of Bird-a-thon, and along the slow, mile walk out to the end of Dead Neck I watched as Horned Larks sang their sweet and delicate songs on the wing and Green Herons hunted in the small salt ponds.

One of humankind's greatest strengths is its adaptability, and the situation we have been in over the last several months serves as a prime example. From adapting the workplace to socializing digitally to birding, we as a species have come up with ways to do these things safely and responsibly. In the case of birding, I believe we have adapted to *keep us* sane. Luckily, birding is one of the most adaptable hobbies there is; you can travel around the world or not leave home, you can have tons of gear or not use any, you can do it in large groups or do it alone—and for that we are most fortunate.

The Middlesex Canal, Woburn, Massachusetts

Regina Harrison

When the COVID-19 stay-at-home order went into effect, my husband and I found ourselves working from home in North Woburn, where we have lived since 2012. Right away we decided to make a lunchtime walk part of our daily routine and to use those walks to explore parts of the surrounding area where we had never been before. Just up the street from our house, a wide pathway along a narrow waterway leading into some woods beckoned. I had always been curious about those woods but had not previously explored them because I was not certain about the safety of walking there alone. All I knew about the place was that the waterway was part of the Middlesex Canal, according to a sign at the path's far outlet, near the rotary at Exit 35 off Interstate 95/

Route 128. The pathway begins at the fork of School and Merrimack streets and ends in the parking lot of the yellow mansion that houses Sichuan Garden and the Baldwin Bar.

It was late March when we first walked down that pathway. It held the legacy of decades of human activity in the form of trash, old tires, and signs of a homeless encampment. There were many invasive plants present, with bittersweet vines galore festooning the trees, but there were also birches, maples, and oaks, some blueberry bushes, and other signs of native plants. All were bare then, but the woods contained promise in the form of plenty of the local winter birds: Blue Jays, Northern Cardinals, Downy and Hairy woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. As spring rolled along, these birds were joined by Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and American Robins. I noted what looked like some variety of cherry tree getting ready to bloom. Then, finally, on a glorious mid-May afternoon, there they were—spring migrants. Throughout the month of May, the tangled understory lining the path provided wonderful eye-level views of Northern Parulas, Black-and-white Warblers, Palm Warblers, American Redstarts, Blue-headed Vireos, Hermit Thrushes, Baltimore Orioles, Grey Catbirds, and, of course, many Yellow-rumped Warblers gleaning insects from the blooming cherry blossoms. A female Mallard is now raising her brood in the secluded waterway, and a Great Blue Heron regularly visits. All of these riches had been just around the corner from my house for years and I had had no idea. It was a revelation and a gift, a little local patch as consolation for losing the regular spring destinations.

Research on the Middlesex Canal, built in the late 1700s and early 1800s and reaching from Boston to Merrimack, New Hampshire, reveals that many of my regular birding destinations were once along the canal's route, which traveled through Woburn roughly along present-day Route 38 to Horn Pond, down the Aberjona River to the Mystic Lakes, then along the Mystic River to the canal's ultimate end point in Charlestown. Traces of the old canal can be seen all along its route, though much has been filled in and paved over. A dam built in North Billerica to control water flow through the canal flooded hay meadows farther up the watershed, which became permanent wetlands and now form part of the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. As I walk along this little remnant of the once-mighty canal, I am grateful to feel its connection to these other places, making them feel less distant from me, and for showing me that staying at home could be as rewarding as a drive to any of those other places. I look forward already to next spring on the Middlesex Canal.

Covid-19 Birding in Belmont, Massachusetts

Jeffrey Boone Miller

Due to the pandemic, my work closed on March 16, 2020. Soon thereafter, the major birding sites around our suburban home in Belmont, Massachusetts, either closed—Mount Auburn Cemetery—or became too crowded for comfort—Fresh Pond. So, for almost three months, I have birded only in my backyard and on daily walks through local streets and to Clay Pit Pond near our high school. If one is willing to count a neighbor's chickens, as of June 12, my species count for the pandemic era

Fig. 1. Northern Rough-winged Swallow at Clay Pit Pond in Belmont on May 3, 2020. Photograph by Jeffrey Boone Miller.

stands at 67. These birds—all seen within a mile of our house—have brought welcome moments of serenity and contemplation. Some highlights follow.

Through the end of March, "Lefty," a Dark-eyed Junco with a distinctive white wing feather (Miller 2019), visited our feeder for the third consecutive winter. In March and April, a red phase Eastern Screech-Owl appeared consistently in a nearby maple tree and became a neighborhood attraction. On March 18, an aggressive Cooper's Hawk harassed a pair of Red-tailed Hawks that were perched in our backyard apple tree. At Clay Pit Pond, a pair of Eastern Kingbirds carried out a courting flight just over my head on May 6, and my discovery of two Prairie Warblers on May 15 doubled my lifetime total for that species. On the mornings of May 18 and 19, I was enveloped by flocks of Cedar Waxwings with their always endearing susurrations and food-sharing behaviors.

Beginning with their arrival on May 3, I also regularly observed a pair of Northern Rough-winged Swallows that frequented the west end of the pond. Particularly during the first half of May, the two birds were usually calling back and forth, and one sometimes perched nearby (Figure 1). On multiple occasions I saw one either enter or exit a four-inch-diameter pipe built into a rock wall where Wellington Brook enters the pond. I hoped they might be using the pipe as a nest, but I did not see the swallows carry nesting material or food and, as of June 12, no youngsters have appeared.

Nonetheless, if, as Shakespeare wrote in *Richard III*, "True hope is swift, and flies with swallow's wings," then I have lived with hope this spring and I am grateful.

Reference

Miller, J. B. 2019. Heart, Lefty, and Popsicle. A winter with three identifiable Dark-eyed Juncos. *Bird Observer* 47 (1):39–42.

A New Appreciation for Bird-a-thon in Boxborough

Rita Gibes Grossman

Watching the spring rituals of returning migrants—especially the Carolina Wrens now nesting in our propane tank cover—has been calming amid the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic. Being hard-wired for birding has been a source of comfort and discovery, especially for Mass Audubon's Bird-a-thon. Every year in mid-May during the height of spring migration, Mass Audubon sponsors a friendly, fundraising bird count competition. Usually I would head to the northwestern corner of Massachusetts and spend the night in Florida. This year, everything changed. All species counts had to be accomplished at home or at locations within cycling or walking distance to comply with Covid guidelines. Fortunately, I live in Boxborough where everyone is welcome to walk, hike, and birdwatch. I managed to visit seven conservation areas by walking eleven miles and biking fourteen. Not all of the species I anticipated made an appearance during the twenty-four-hour count window, but the ones that did felt notable to me as if I were rediscovering or seeing them as never before.

At Rolling Meadows Conservation Area, an Ovenbird and a Swainson's Thrush gave me a lengthy viewing and both seemed as interested in checking me out as I them. Ovenbirds, despite being common to every patch of hardwood forest and readily heard with their *teacher, teacher, teacher* strident call, can be remarkably difficult to spot. As ground nesters and low canopy and below occupants, these warblers have a voice that seems to project beyond its small source. While walking the main wooded trail, I caught movement in low branches and there was the Ovenbird—constantly moving but giving me a brief penetrating look at its white eye ring, stunning streaked chest, and brown and orange striped crown as it rapidly and quietly foraged for insects. It was a FOY (First of the Year) sighting for me despite having heard many.

With pure luck, as this species tends to be heard and not seen, I found the Swainson's Thrush perched on a sapling branch at eye level on the lower trail near the stream. It seemed as if we both were processing each other's presence. *Catharus ustulatus* was named after the English ornithologist William John Swainson probably in the late 1700s. A shrub nester, the Swainson's Thrush winters in Central and northern South America and breeds in the forests of North America, so the only option for local sightings is during migration. Although these species are common and not threatened, seeing them this year felt different. I had other recent sightings of Swainson's Thrushes in our yard and an Ovenbird continues to define his territory in the woods west of our house, but seeing them as I did felt like a reward for local Bird-a-thon observation.

Additional sighting highlights included Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee, and Prairie Warbler near Beaver Brook Road on the Cisco System's campus, which has accessible conserved parcels; Chestnut-sided Warbler at Patch Hill Conservation Area; Green Heron and Winter Wren on the Hager Land trails; Yellow-rumped Warblers and Northern Parula at Inches Woods; and Bobolink and Northern Waterthrush at Steele Farm. I birded the Boxborough Station Wildlife Management Area (WMA) owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the nesting Great Blue Herons, Osprey, and Eastern Kingbird, among many others. The Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers have been quite visible at the WMA, except neither species cooperated for the count. At the end of the count I had 72 species, which I had hoped would be higher. But still I felt a sense of accomplishment and had counted all without burning fossil fuels.

If you have reason to be near Boxborough, a ten-square-mile, inland, headwater environment with ponds, streams, wooded uplands, and a few meadows, there are excellent birding destinations. The town's website includes the local conservation lands with trails as downloadable PDF maps and a link to OpenStreetMap, an interactive, free app for your smart phone. See https://www.boxborough-ma.gov/conservation-commission/pages/conservation-trail-maps.

Through the migrants and resident species we are watching, birders of all ethnicities, races, and points of view are united in our shared passion for birds and together we will endure this pandemic. We must as there are more birds to be counted.

Neighborhood Nestwatch

Joshua Rose

Covid-19 definitely wreaked havoc on birding during the spring of 2020: places were closed, or open but too crowded for comfort—not only birding hotspots but also bathrooms and food sources; greatly-multiplied household chores took time out of the day; trips, meetings, and activities were cancelled, along with virtually all out-of-town travel. This spring, I rarely left our neighborhood, and many days barely went outside. We live in a nice location, our yard is part of a large wooded area, but you can only get so many species in one habitat.

Birding in our yard does have one added dimension, though, one that I can't really get anywhere else. Several years ago, I volunteered our yard for the Smithsonian Neighborhood Nestwatch program. Every year from 2012 to 2019, Nestwatch sent someone to our yard to mist-net and band certain species, not only with the usual metal bands but also with colored plastic bands, a unique color combination on each individual of a species. In return, I've been keeping my eyes peeled for those color-banded birds and keeping a file of my sightings that I periodically send back to Nestwatch for inclusion in their data. My desk at home where I work just happens to have the best view of most of my birdfeeders, so more time at home has translated to more feeder watching, and lots of sightings of banded birds.

Before the Covid-19 shutdown began, I'd seen only two Nestwatch birds in 2020, a pair of Northern Cardinals. The male is our oldest and longest-surviving bird, banded

Fig. 2. Eastern Phoebe with unique combination of colored bands. Photograph by Joshua Rose.

in 2014. He's been through a few mates in that time; his partner of the past few years is a female banded in 2018. On April 7, about two weeks after most things closed, an Eastern Phoebe showed up, one that was banded last summer (Figure 2). Of four phoebes banded over the years, this was the first time I'd ever re-sighted one after it was banded. In May things got much busier because the catbirds returned. Not only are both of the catbirds that were banded last summer back this year, but three of the four that were banded in 2018 are back, too. Here is one random curveball: a Carolina Wren that was banded last summer appeared fairly regularly throughout the fall, through December 12, then disappeared—until May 27. Carolina Wrens visit my feeder pretty much year-round, and previously banded birds have stuck around through all seasons, so I figured that this one was gone for good. Surprise!

For more information about the Smithsonian's Neighborhood Nestwatch, go to <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/neighborhood-nestwatch>.

The Outfall Pipe

Jay Shetterly

For many years, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority and the City of Cambridge have been working to replace the old combination sewer and stormwater systems that discharge combined sewer overflows into the Charles River. The project is not quite finished and on days when there is a light covering of ice on the river, there is open water near the outfall pipes.

Fig. 3. Plaque on the Anderson Memorial Bridge, Cambridge. Photograph by Jay Shetterly.

There is an outfall pipe at the Weeks Footbridge. Birds seem to know this spot, including Common and Hooded mergansers, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and Great Blue Heron. On June 10, 2020, I saw a Northern Rough-winged Swallow here, a first for me in Cambridge. In the three-meter wide band of scrub lining the water's edge are pair after pair of Song Sparrows, rarely seen in the neighborhoods nearby.

If there is no bird of interest, one need only look upstream to the Anderson Memorial Bridge and imagine Quentin Compson of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, despairing of himself and the South, jumping to his death. Devotees of Faulkner—like me—placed a small plaque there to mark Quentin's passing (Figure 3).

Bird-a-thoning During a Pandemic

Wayne R. Petersen

Mass Audubon's annual Bird-a-thon (BAT) was, for most participants this spring, a unique experience. The Covid-19 pandemic imposed significant changes in the overall BAT protocol this year, primary of which was encouraging birders to confine their birding activities pretty much to their yard or local areas within walking or bicycling distance of home. These constraints were aimed at complying with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's and state-mandated social distancing and health guidelines, and at minimizing the carbon footprint of individual birders.

My own BAT experiences this year were remarkable in several ways. Having downsized to Linden Ponds (LP) in Hingham in February 2019, I am now residing in a retirement community comprising 1200–1300 mostly senior citizens. Accordingly, my living circumstances approached near lockdown conditions since March, a circumstance that also restricted my typical BAT activities. There was a silver lining to this situation, however. By confining my BAT birding only to the Linden Ponds community footprint and one short adjoining street, I was successfully able to locate 66 species between 6 pm on May 15 and 6 pm on May 16. This total exceeded my collective list of species seen since I moved to this retirement community over a year ago.

My solo birding adventures began Friday evening under propitious conditions involving warming 70-degree temperatures and light southwest winds. The forecast also called for rain during the night, with clearing conditions by morning. This combination provided some of the best mid-May birding conditions that one could hope for in Massachusetts. My early evening wildlife highlight was a brief look at a lovely gray fox, along with a resident Red-tailed Hawk, and a selection of some of the common local songbirds including Red-bellied Woodpecker, Great Crested Flycatcher, Fish Crow, Carolina Wren, House Finch, American Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow, Baltimore Oriole, and Northern Cardinal. Not unhappy with some of my local resident species, I optimistically prepared for a more intense search in the morning, hoping the weather would deliver some welcome birding treasures.

At 6 am on Saturday, I was out on the 0.8-mile local nature trail poised for signs of newly arrived migrants, and I was not disappointed. A Veery quietly hopping on the trail in front of me was quickly followed by a Least Flycatcher and the liquid *whit* note of a Swainson's Thrush on the wooded hillside to my right. Three first LP birds for my list. Ecstatic and optimistic as I quietly birded along the trail, I soon added Ovenbird and Rose-breasted Grosbeak to my list. Exiting the gate at the end of the LP nature trail, I began birding the roadside trees and thickets on a short but quiet street running parallel to the LP complex. This is where the fun began. I quickly found another Veery and a couple more Swainson's Thrushes, and then heard singing Black-and-white, Nashville, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided, Yellow-rumped, and Black-throated Green warblers. My dream for a decent migration was coming true.

As I continued to work the roadside trees and an adjacent swampy thicket during my quest for new species, I was practically mesmerized by every new species I recorded. Remember, this was not only more species than I'd ever recorded in my local patch, but it was also the first dedicated birding I'd been able to do in nearly two months. As the morning continued, other additions included a fly-by Solitary Sandpiper, Eastern Kingbird, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Eastern Bluebird nesting in the LP community garden, a most unexpected Lincoln's Sparrow, and additional warblers including Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Black-throated Blue, Pine, and Wilson's. Even such long-distance migrants as Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and Barn Swallow made it on to my BAT roster.

I could not have been more thrilled to see even some of the common species, because each glimpse, and each song, provided renewed promise that even during a global pandemic, birds and bird migration live on to brighten our lives, if only we get outdoors to have a look. For this reason alone, BAT 2020 will forever be memorable in my mind, not just because of the terrific migration, but also because of the positive impact it made on me, given all the other dark events taking place in the world at the same time. Birds and birding rule!

Birding Plum Island in Peak Spring Migration during a Pandemic

Sean Williams

Parker River National Wildlife Refuge closed to motor vehicles on April 17, 2020, and remained closed throughout the duration of spring migration. However, pedestrians and bicyclists were permitted through the gates all the way down to Sandy Point State Reservation. This closure yielded a unique opportunity to bird the refuge road on foot during peak migration without disruption from motorized vehicles. Those who appreciate birding away from crowds on occasion may have reveled in the empty roads and eye-level Blackburnian Warblers along the S-curves. Goodno Woods on the morning of May 15 was eerily devoid of human life, despite the peak date and pleasant conditions (Figure 4). Below I describe some birding highlights at Plum Island in spring 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic when many of normal societal operations were placed on hold.

Between April 26 and May 26, I visited the refuge five times, walked or biked 30 miles over 40 hours, and tallied 170 species. Typically, I arrived pre-dawn and departed around noon. On most days, I saw my first person around 8:00 am. April 26 was remarkably slow and non-speciose. Despite the late-April date and NEXRAD radar showing a pulse of migrants overnight, I tallied only one warbler, a Common Yellowthroat, beyond the expected Palm, Pine, and Yellow-rumped. Warblers were more diverse the following visit on May 3, totaling 11 species. While standing around the pines at The Wardens, I watched a flock of 22 ibises that flew north along the road, totally backlit by the sun. Given that flocks of ibis this size are unusual on the island, I photographed the flock on the off chance that not all of the ibises were Glossys. Indeed, upon returning home and brightening the images on the computer, one White-faced Ibis stuck out with its scarlet face with a thick white border. By May 11, peak warbler diversity hit 23 species, including an Orange-crowned and a "Western" Palm Warbler, both of which are more common in the fall migration than in spring.

On my final visit on May 26, the tail end of migration was characterized by many female or first-spring male warblers. Three Olive-sided Flycatchers were dotted along the S-curves south to the Bill Forward Blind. The main highlight that morning was seeing all six vireo species. Red-eyed Vireo is a given, but on that date even Blue-headed can be scarce. Warblings, which do not breed on Plum Island, are on territory by then. Regardless, both species were at Goodno Woods and Sandy Point. A Yellow-throated was singing at Goodno Woods, as was a White-eyed. Another White-eyed was singing south of the North Pool Overlook. Notably, these were the fourth and

Fig. 4. The Goodno Woods crossing on the morning of May 11, 2020, with no people. Photograph by Sean Williams.

fifth White-eyed Vireos I'd detected on Plum this spring, which typically is a rare and sought-after migrant. Finally, a Philadelphia chided me in a tree across from Stage Island.

Although strenuous, the chance to bike and walk Plum Island without vehicular traffic during the pandemic was, I hope, a once-in-a-life-time occurrence. Fortunately, in early June the refuge reopened fully so that all can enjoy.

Pandemic Pileateds

Marsha C. Salett

It was New Year's Day and a Pileated Woodpecker was in my front yard extricating beetle grubs from the upper trunk of a tall oak—a FOY bird and a first sighting at my house. What an auspicious beginning to the year, I thought (although this is not the adjective I'd choose now to describe 2020). A week later, a Pileated flew over my next-door neighbor's house. When I returned home on February 1 from three weeks in Japan, I heard and saw a Pileated drumming on a tree next to my driveway.

A pair of Pileated Woodpeckers seems to nest annually, albeit in different locations, at Ridge Hill Reservation, Needham, the 352-acre conservation land that abuts my property. Breeding pairs stay on their territory all year and, according to *Birds of the World,* may retain the same territory for several years, averaging a distance

Fig. 5. Pileated Woodpecker excavations are recent here, judging by the fresh wood chips around the base of the tree. Photograph by Marsha C. Salett.

of 0.53 kilometer (0.33 mile) between subsequent nesting sites (Bull and Jackson 2020). Would the Ridge Hill Pileateds nest near me in 2020?

Thanks to the pandemic, I was home to find out. Covid-19 kept me in Needham instead of traveling, and birding Ridge Hill instead of Mount Auburn during spring migration. I birded my patch almost every day and spent a lot of time looking out my windows. From March 1 through June 1, I saw one or both Pileated Woodpeckers 15 times within a half-mile radius of home: seven times around my house and eight times at Ridge Hill. Most years, I'm lucky to see or hear a Pileated two or three times. I also saw many signs of excavations and the telltale rectangular holes that they make (Figure 5).

My delight and fascination with the Pileated Woodpeckers grew with each encounter. On March 1, I looked out my kitchen window to see the male foraging on the ground on a dead tree that had fallen. All afternoon, he returned to the rotting log, staying for 10–20 minutes at a time. I never saw him there again.

I was surprised by how often the Pileateds foraged low, anywhere from the base of a tree to eye level. In the dull gray of the early spring forest, a crimson flash revealed the presence of a bird when it was quietly stripping bark or feeding on carpenter ants. On two occasions, a Pileated spiraled up a tree trunk like a huge—and more colorful—Brown Creeper, then flew away, fading into the dark conifers.

On April 16, I heard the pair duetting in my backyard and went outside to find them just before they flew across the trail in front of a mother and two children who were astonished by these large birds and the eye-popping contrast of their black and white wings. Stopped in their tracks, they asked me, "What are those birds?" As I walked back to the house, I could hear the kids still chattering about the Pileateds.

When the trees started to leaf out in May, Ridge Hill's red maple swamp was a magical place, glistening green in the sunlight of early morning. Eastern Towhees and Common Yellowthroats joined the bird chorus, which was soon punctuated by several Ovenbirds. Even they were no match for the raucous *cuk-cuk-cuk-cuk-cuk-cuk-cuk* duetting of the Pileateds that reverberated through the swamp. I heard them calling back and forth across the swamp a couple of times in May.

My most memorable encounter with a Pileated occurred on April 21, another bleak and raw spring day in New England. I was looking for a Brown Creeper nest under the bark of a dead white pine at the edge of the beaver swamp. The pine has been a favorite nesting tree for the creepers. This year, the first nest had been blown away in a storm a couple of days earlier and I wanted to see if they renested. I saw one of the creepers fly from the dead pine to an oak on the other side of the trail. The next moment, the male Pileated flew out of the forest and landed on a horizontal branch of the dead pine. Oblivious to me, he sat there and called repeatedly—no more than eight feet above my head. With every *cuk*, he opened his long stout bill only slightly and his throat quivered. I could see his face in exquisite detail: the blazing red crest and red cheek stripe, black stripe under the crest, the white stripe across his face and down his neck. What a handsome bird.

The Brown Creeper flew back to the pine and scuttled up the trunk: tiny, cryptic, inconspicuous. The Pileated Woodpecker called from his perch: large, flashy, loud. Two species, so different, each so cool in its own way. My spirits rose, transcending the weather, transcending the pandemic.

Reference

Bull, E. L. and J. A. Jackson. (2020). Pileated Woodpecker (Dryocopus pileatus), version 1.0. In *Birds of the World* (A. F. Poole, Editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.pilwoo.01>

PEREGRINE FALCON BY SANDY SELESKY

Whip-poor-will Dream

John Nelson

"*Who cooks for you*? *Who cooks for YOU all*?" At dusk a Barred Owl calls from the woods behind our home in West Gloucester. Another owl responds, less articulate, a tad hysterical, a mix of bawling toddler and delirious coyote. "*Who cooks aargh garg why whee y'allllll*?" Closer, an Eastern Screech Owl introduces a soft, shivering whinny as a leitmotif. After a while I go back in the house to watch a news report: sickness and death statistics, grief, tear gas, rage, solidarity. Back on the deck I hear no owls, but under a full moon another voice reaches out from inside the darkness, cadenced, relentlessly determined to be heard. For moments there is no pandemic, no nation reckoning with its racial history and future, nothing but a sound beckoning in the wind. *Whip-poor-will whip-poor-will whip-poor-will*.

I love that whip-poor-wills exist. On the cover of my book *Flight Calls*, a beautiful Audubon painting captures their postures, a tail flashing white in flight. The chapter "Whip-poor-will Synchronicity" tells the story of a strange conjunction between a whip-poor-will in our yard, legendary local birders Jerry Soucy and Larry Jodrey, and a haunting whip-poor-will chorus at the end of William Faulkner's story "Barn Burning." The ancient sound transports me back in time, before Europeans came to North America, before the first people on our continent, moving east, reached the Mississippi River, the eons when woodlands resounded with whip-poor-wills with no humans to hear them. Native American tribes named the bird onomatopoetically. In rural novels like Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's *The Yearling* and Elizabeth Madox Roberts's *The Time of Man*, generations pass on the knowledge that the whip-poor-will's first song signals the time for planting. Now, strangers across eastern North American are joined together at night by the same instant thrill of recognition: I hear a whip-poor-will.

The bird sings on. I've been watching a panel of six Black birders on Black Birders Week. Their discussion is delightfully ordinary. They could be any birders anywhere, telling stories and making jokes about warblers, rambunctious Blue Jays, grackles testing the boundaries of dissonance, neighborhood nightjars. It's a vision of a future to work for, a time when it will be mundane to see Black people gathered to chat about birds, a time when anyone can know the freedom to go birding without fear, the freedom to walk alone down a dark country road to get a closer listen to whip-poor-wills.

The bird is still singing when I go to bed. What songs will be part of the soundscape in my patch a century from now? Will the people who come after me know the songs of Eastern Towhees, Eastern Meadowlarks, Eastern Whip-poor-wills? I've been birding alone during this pandemic, missing old friends, never quite unentangled from anxiety, but I'm encouraged by all the people suddenly attuned to the birds around them. They share their excitement on Facebook. A Baltimore Oriole at the hummingbird feeder! My first Rose-breasted Grosbeak! Was that a whip-poor-will I heard? They're paying attention. We don't need to go on field trips to find nature. Nature is wherever we live.

When I wake before first light, the whip-poor-will is there. "Never hope more than you work," says pioneering aviator Beryl Markham in *West with the Night.* Whatever else it may be, the whip-poor-will's song is a work song. This bird is not giving up.

The Birding Community E-Bulletin June 2020

Birding While Black

Just in case you haven't heard the story of Christian Cooper, African American birder, and his experience in Central Park, New York City, last month, here's a short summary... and a lesson.

On 25 May, Chris Cooper, an avid birder, asked a white woman, Amy Cooper (no relation) to control her dog while in the park. Her dog was running unleashed at the Ramble, the most densely vegetated section of Central Park. This is also the most popular section of the park for birding during migration, and there are clearly posted park instructions at the Ramble concerning the leashing of dogs.

"It's posted all over the Ramble: dogs are supposed to be on a leash at all times, but unfortunately, we've had a problem with this for many, many years. A lot of us have been recording these incidents," Chris Cooper said, noting that these recordings could be used as evidence for why the rule must be enforced.

The woman refused to leash her rogue cocker spaniel that was tearing through the plantings. Then the encounter took an ugly turn.

As the birder, Chris, filmed on his phone, the woman, clutched her thrashing dog and called the police, her voice rising in near-hysteria. "I'm going to tell them there's an African American man threatening my life," she said to him while dialing, then repeated to the operator, twice, "African American."

Chris Cooper, in a calm voice, encouraged her to make the call.

The video, posted to Twitter on Memorial Day by Chris Cooper's sister, has been viewed more than 30 million times! This has touched off intense discussions about the history of false accusations made to the police against black people, including putting their lives in danger. This also helps to accentuate the risks that some of our fellow birders experience in the context of "birding while black."

The police said when they arrived at the scene, neither party was there, so it led to no arrests. But, after further investigation, Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York City called the event an example of "racism, plain and simple."

You can access a summary of the event here from *Now This*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODhNRyjJsl8>

and here, from *The View*:

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/christian-cooper-accepts-apology-woman-center-central-park/story?id=70926679>

<https://www.refugeassociation.org/birding-community-e-bulletin>

Revisiting Bird-Window Collisions in Boston: The First Year of the Avian Collision Team (ACT)

William Freedberg

83 of the 119 casualties from the spring 2019 season of ACT. Photograph courtesy of the author.

Migratory bird numbers in Massachusetts are not what they used to be. Rarer, now, are days with 20 warbler species at Mount Auburn Cemetery, thousands-strong shorebird flocks in Chatham, and 200 dead birds gathered at the base of a single building.

Veteran birders talk fondly of the former two cases, but fewer discuss the bygone days of finding dozens or hundreds of window-struck birds in a morning. But this phenomenon did not go entirely undocumented. In 1974, *Bird Observer* published Henry Wiggin's article, "Birding at the Prudential Center," with the focus on unexpected patterns in window-collision observations (Wiggin 1974). At the Prudential Center in Boston (the Pru), which was then his office, Wiggin reported several avian mortality events with over 200 casualties and a personal record-setting day on May 4, 1968, with over 700 deceased migrants.

Sometimes befuddling patterns emerged in Wiggin's data. "If a birder were to bird only the Prudential Center," Wiggin wrote, they "might come to some weird conclusions" regarding the relative abundance and timing of migrants. For example, nearly half of Wiggin's 7,000-plus observations were of White-throated Sparrows. More strikingly, the sparrow and finch family (which was then considered taxonomically valid) outnumbered all other birds by seven to one. Lincoln's Sparrows, Orange-crowned Warblers, and Marsh Wrens were unusually frequent, but there were

almost no records of diurnal migrants, such as swallows or American Robins. Birdsong at the Pru was rare, and almost all migrants were placidly approachable within a few feet.

Surprisingly, very little has been published on window strikes in Boston since Wiggin's article. Even after collision monitoring programs in Chicago, New York, and other major cities entered their second decade, there was no coordinated, multi-observer effort in Massachusetts until last year. Mass Audubon moved to pilot a monitoring program in 2019 after advocacy for bird-safe building practices ran up against local disbelief. In the absence of recent nearby evidence, many nonbirders were skeptical that this global issue existed in their city. Consequently, the Avian Collision Team (ACT) was born.

ACT was invented as a hybrid between the standardized, rigorous studies normally under the purview of a research institution and the more casual volunteer programs common in most cities. For example, one goal is to clarify how common collisions are on an average block rather than just monitoring at the most collision-prone sites. We select several random sites in addition to buildings already predicted to be strike-prone, and we ask volunteers to record negative data (i.e., where casualties were *not* found as much as where they *were*). Volunteers pick a route that they can regularly survey, and we try to ensure that all routes are surveyed during the same early morning period on the same four days of the week.

But data is not the only point of the program. Though we may eventually be able to estimate how many birds die from window collisions annually in Boston, the priority is to raise awareness about the issue, collect stories, and think about solutions at a site-by-site and citywide basis. Volunteer programs have their vulnerabilities and getting clean, noise-free data from a group of mostly casual observers may yet prove to be a pipe dream. Another obstacle, at least for the moment, is the variability between migration seasons, which makes generalizing based on one year of data difficult. Most local birders will remember the fall of 2019 as one of the weakest and strangest fall migrations in memory, which serves to drive home the need for several years of work. Furthermore, Covid-19 made sampling a complete wash for the spring 2020 season and may yet require a total reimagining of the project.

With that said, the initial results from 2019 will be of interest to curious birders. ACT participants recorded 193 strikes across 51 species while monitoring four days a week during spring and fall migration. Just over two-thirds of bird strikes documented so far have been immediately fatal, with the lucky remainder being sent to Tufts Wildlife Clinic for treatment or, sadly, euthanasia.

White-throated Sparrows have been the most prevalent species at nearly 20% of the total so far, with Ovenbirds and Common Yellowthroats being close runners-up. New York's monitoring programs report a similar species composition. ACT volunteers have turned up a few surprises, including six Lincoln's Sparrows, a Virginia Rail, a Belted Kingfisher, and, most notably, a Clay-colored Sparrow and a Nelson's Sparrow found at the same site on the same day. Birds that are weak flyers or that habitually

fly low are especially well-represented, as are tree-climbing birds like sapsuckers, nuthatches, and Brown Creepers.

Surprisingly, nearly 50% of the strikes reported by ACT volunteers came from just two sites—one college campus and one city-block-sized glass-clad building. Many buildings have only caused one or two strikes so far, a few have yet to be observed causing any, and a handful punch above their weight, so to speak. But this should not leave any reader with the impression that window strikes, at a regional scale, are concentrated at a handful of buildings. In fact, a nationwide study showed that 80–90% of strikes occurred at one-to-three-story residences (Loss et al. 2014). Even though only one to three strikes per year occur at the average residence, compared to an average of 22 at low-rise commercial or office buildings and 25 at skyscrapers, the sheer number of residences gives them the lion's share of the total.

All in all, that same study—authored by scientists at the Smithsonian Institution and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—estimated that window collisions kill between 365 and 988 million birds annually.

There is plenty of debate about whether these deaths are additive or compensatory— that is, whether window strikes actually contribute to population declines or whether they remove "extra" individuals that would fail to reproduce because of some other limiting factor such as habitat destruction. Indeed, one paper (Arnold & Zink 2011) showed that the most collision-prone species—such as Wiggin's White-throated Sparrows—were not the species exhibiting the most dramatic continent-wide declines. But this observation could easily be confounded by the intensification or reduction of other stressors at the species level. Even if other factors drive the species' overall trend, window strikes can still have an additive impact.

The estimate of nearly one billion annual fatal collisions from Loss et al. may seem high, but the numbers check out with reports from monitoring programs in most cities, as does preliminary data from ACT. While our current numbers may seem high, looking at historical data like Henry Wiggin's draws attention to how much worse the problem may have been in past decades.

ACT has not recorded any of the avian mass mortality events that Wiggin reported in his 1974 *Bird Observer* article, either at the Prudential Center or elsewhere. In fact, the most active morning for strikes at the Pru in 2019 yielded five birds, and the highest total anywhere else was only eleven birds. At least at the Pru, this may be explained by the significant changes to the building's interior courtyards. The North Garden is completely gone, as are the moats at the bases of the courtyard windows where Wiggin observed hundreds of drowned window-stunned birds. The lighting has changed too, and light pollution in the city has increased, making the Pru less of an isolated beacon for migrants. Indeed, window collisions may have simply become more diffuse throughout the city as more glass façades have gone up. One pattern beginning to emerge in our data—and already backed up by long-term data in other cities—is that more exposed buildings draw more strikes. Glass-clad buildings surrounded by dense development are much less hazardous than similar-looking buildings that stand alone in a grassy field or facing open habitat.

But it is also worth considering a darker possibility—that there are that many fewer migrants in the skies than in the 1970s. Other reports of building strikes, some much older than Wiggin's observations, contain some truly shocking numbers. Colonel Tassin at the Statue of Liberty counted 1,400 birds killed by the Statue's torch one night in 1888; another night, he counted 50 rails (Wilson 1888). To be sure, scientists have thoroughly documented declines of about 30% across all North American birds in the past fifty years (Rosenberg et al. 2019), but declines of that magnitude would still not fully explain some of the more extreme historical reports of window collisions.

Birders interested in mitigating window collisions at their homes or offices have several options. The most popular options are not necessarily the best. Individual stick-on window decals, commonly sold in the shape of a hawk's silhouette, do nothing unless they are affixed in a regular pattern with no gaps greater than two inches by four inches. Birds will aim around a decal to try to access what they see in a window reflection, and the silhouette of an inexplicably stationary hawk will do little to stop them. Decals or window tape that reflect only UV light—clear to us, but opaque to birds—are a great option when placed no more than two inches apart, and there are a number of companies (e.g., CollideEscape) producing them. Anything else that breaks up reflections in a window works well, from installing screens that also shield incoming birds from the hard glass surface to drawing with soap suds or dry-erase markers. There are more expensive options for commercial buildings, including specialty UV-coated glass brands such as OrniLux or AviProtek. Finally, though it may seem counterintuitive, moving existing birdfeeders to *within* 1.5 feet of a window can help protect birds from collisions by preventing incoming birds from picking up the speed required for a strike to result in a fatality.

The ACT welcomes inquiries. If you are interested in volunteering with ACT, want to report window-struck birds, or have general questions, contact Will Freedberg at <williamfreedberg@gmail.com>.

References.

Arnold, T. W. and R. M. Zink. 2011. Collision mortality has no discernible effect on population trends of North American birds. *PLOS ONE* 6(9):e24708. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0024708.

Loss, S. R., T. Will, S. S. Loss, and P.P. Marra. 2014. Bird-building collisions in the United States: estimates of annual mortality and species vulnerability. *The Condor* 116 (1):8–23.

Rosenberg, K. V., A. M. Dokter, P. J. Blancher, J. R. Sauer, A. C. Smith, A. P. Smith, J. C. Stanton, A. Panjabi, L. Helft, M. Parr, and P. Marra. 2019. Decline of the North American Avifauna. *Science* 366:120–124.

Wiggin, H. T. 1974. Birding at the Prudential Center. *Bird Observer* 2 (5):136-140.

Wilson, V. T. 1888. Killed By Liberty's Torch. *The Oologist's Exchange,* 1:1(1).

William Freedberg *writes, conducts field surveys, and coordinates citizen science programs for the Bird Conservation department at Mass Audubon. He coordinates the Avian Collision Team (ACT). He lives near Boston and spends several weeks each year leading tours in the Neotropics.*

Hearing Aids for Birders

Timothy P. Walker

Blackpoll Warblers sing in a narrow range above 7 kHz. Photograph by "WarblerLady." (CC BY-ND 2.0)

In June of 2019, my wife Nancy and I attended the Rangeley Lakes Birding Festival in Maine. One of the highlights was a guided drive up a logging road to search for breeding Blackpoll Warblers. Nancy was the first, and only, member of our group to hear them singing on territory. Our guide, a local wildlife biologist specializing in this bird, was not convinced they were present until Nancy caught them in her scope with their mouths open, singing away. It was a sobering moment as our guide came to grips with the reality of his hearing loss. It was cold comfort knowing I was not the only one of a "certain age" who had lost my high frequency hearing range.

On our drive back to Massachusetts, Nancy and I had a talk about how to solve this widespread problem. Surely, we thought, there had to be a solution for a problem that afflicted so many older birders. Could hearing aids be the solution? It was worth a shot, so I made an appointment with an audiologist. Though Medicare does not cover hearing aids, some supplemental plans do, such as Tufts, and, depending on your plan, Blue Cross/Blue Shield may provide generous coverage. It doesn't hurt to check.

My hearing test produced a frequency response diagram of my ears which compared loudness—from loud to soft sounds—to pitch frequency, which is measured in kilohertz (kHz). Typically, you would like to see a straight, horizontal line across the

graph. Mine, however, showed a dip, indicating hearing loss, at the higher frequencies. A hearing aid can be used to fill these dips by amplifying high frequencies. Some more expensive models will even shift high frequencies down into the range that one can hear.

Many birds have songs that cover a wide range of frequencies, so, even if you may not hear the whole song, at least you can hear a portion. Some birds, however, such as Blackpoll and Magnolia warblers, have songs with a narrow range. If you have lost hearing above 7 kHz, then you will not hear these birds sing. If you can identify songs you have difficulty hearing, you can use those songs to test your hearing aids.

Maybe you are thinking that hearing aids are a bit extreme for your situation. A theoretical solution could be a directional microphone, to filter out noise not in the direction of the song, paired with a headset and a graphic equalizer, to boost high frequencies. I tried this approach with a Rode VideoMic and Apple earbuds paired with an iPhone Xr. The hardware appeared to work, but there was no way to feed it through an app as the earbuds had to connect directly to the microphone. I did not try Bluetooth earbuds or every graphic equalizer app, so a solution to this problem could be out there.

A few fellow birders in similar circumstances shared their solutions. Dennis Skillman uses Walker's Game Ear(s) when birding. He recommended the models with two earpieces for easier location of the bird. He has two HD Elite models. Another birder reported that Bose Hearphones (that's the actual name) work well for hearing birdsong. They go for about $500.

Most people think that hearing aids are expensive and you need an audiologist to buy one. That is not true. Devices called PSAPs (Personal Sound Amplification Products) can be bought by consumers, without the need of an audiologist. I bought a pair for $200 from Olive Union (https://www.olive.store/en/), a start-up in Korea that was funded by Kickstarter. The Olive devices come with an iPhone app that lets you do your own hearing test and then programs the devices using the results of the test. The device also allows you to boost the high frequencies.

I took my new Olives to Crooked Pond in Boxford for a trial run. Unfortunately, I couldn't detect any difference. These devices automatically carry out noise reduction in order to enhance voice recognition. So what do they make of a bird call? They think it is noise. For the Olives I bought, noise reduction could not be turned off, though the manufacturer plans to include that feature in a later release. If you search the web for "PSAP hearing aid" you will find many devices. Birders, however, need one without noise reduction.

Because my hearing test produced that dip at higher frequencies, I was eligible for hearing aid coverage through my health plan. I then set about finding the optimum hearing aid for my situation. There are several manufacturers of high-end hearing aids and most audiologists will carry more than one brand. Their goal is to help you pick one that works best for you. However, because a birder's criteria are different from a normal consumer, it is difficult to find an audiologist with the appropriate experience. My first experience with an audiologist was not successful, as they were not interested in understanding my needs.

I next tried a place in Newburyport, hoping they would have experience with birders. I found a very enthusiastic audiologist, however the brand they sold, Resound, had only three adjustable frequency bands. When the audiologist tried to compensate for my dip, the added gain caused unwanted feedback.

I then went looking for a brand with more frequency bands and I discovered the Signia Styletto. It had 48 channels., which was twice as many as another device by Phonak. The Signia receiver bandwidth also went beyond 10 kHz, whereas the Phonak barely got to 8 kHz. More importantly, I found an audiologist in North Andover who was interested in my problem. She even had me meet the Signia sales representative. The lesson is that most audiologists do not understand birdsong, so one needs to shop around for one who does.

To test my new hearing aids, I bought a sound pressure meter with a bandwidth greater than 10 kHz to calibrate my measurements. I used the Sibley Bird App V2 on my iPhone Xs to generate the songs, choosing the first song for each species. I went outside and set the iPhone song volume at 90 dBa and then measured how far away I could still hear the song.

The following is a table of the distances at which I could hear different songs with and without the hearing aid.

Species	**Song**	**Frequency**	**Distance (ft) with no hearing aid**	**Distance (ft) with Signia hearing aid**
Tufted Titmouse	*Peter-peter-peter*	3 kHz	140	185
Black-throated Green Warbler	*Zee-zee-zoo-zee*	4-5 kHz	5	60
Pine Warbler	Trill	4-5 kHz	25	125
Blackpoll Warbler	*Tsit-tsit-tsit*	8-10 kHz	20	150
Cape May Warbler	*Seet-seet-seet*	8-10 kHz	10	110

I was very happy with my results. I found it was possible to get a five-fold to ten-fold improvement in hearing birdsong. The Signia Styletto is rechargeable and can hold a charge for three days. I keep it in my car plugged into a USB port so it is always ready when I decide to go birding.

Based on my experience, my recommendations to birders looking for similar results are as follows:

1. Check your insurance to see what they will pay and if there are in-network providers.
2. Get a professional hearing test.
3. If insurance won't pay very much, then go to Costco. If insurance will pay a good portion, then consider a local shop carrying one of the major manufacturers.

4. Pick out birdsong that you have a hard time hearing, so you can show the audiologist what you want to hear.
5. When selecting a hearing aid, look for the ability to turn OFF all noise canceling. As far as I'm concerned, this is the number one feature. I wouldn't consider any aid that you cannot turn off noise canceling.
6. To cover the range of most birdsong, be sure that the receiver bandwidth extends to >10 kHz.
7. Determine if the aid can work as a directional microphone. This feature might be useful when trying to listen in a marsh.
8. Determine if the aid can shift high frequencies to a lower band. This feature could be useful if you have significant high-frequency loss.

Also, most of the cost of the hearing aid is dealing with noise reduction for voice. So, if you can hold a conversation, you should be able to use the low-end of most hearing aids.

With all the technology out there, things are constantly changing but this account will give you a good idea of my process. I'm happy to answer further questions at my email address below. Here's hoping you will hear those birds you thought were lost to time.

Further Reading

Cooling, Geoffrey. 2019. *The Little Book of Hearing Aids 2019: The Only Hearing Aid Book You'll Ever Need.* Independently published. (This book is available as an e-book or paperback from Amazon. I found it well worth the money. The author even responded to my questions. There is a new edition for 2020.)

These websites have useful information:

<https://forum.hearingtracker.com/>

<https://www.hearingaidknow.com/>

<https://www.explainthatstuff.com/hearingaids.html>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/hearing_aid>

Timothy P. Walker *is an electrical engineer by training. He has been birding since 1985, when he wanted to know what was coming to his feeders. Since then, he has birded all over the United States and even out of the country. Tim and his wife Nancy live in West Boxford, Massachusetts. His current obsession is birding Essex County with his wife. He can be reached at timothypwalker@gmail.com.*

PHOTO ESSAY

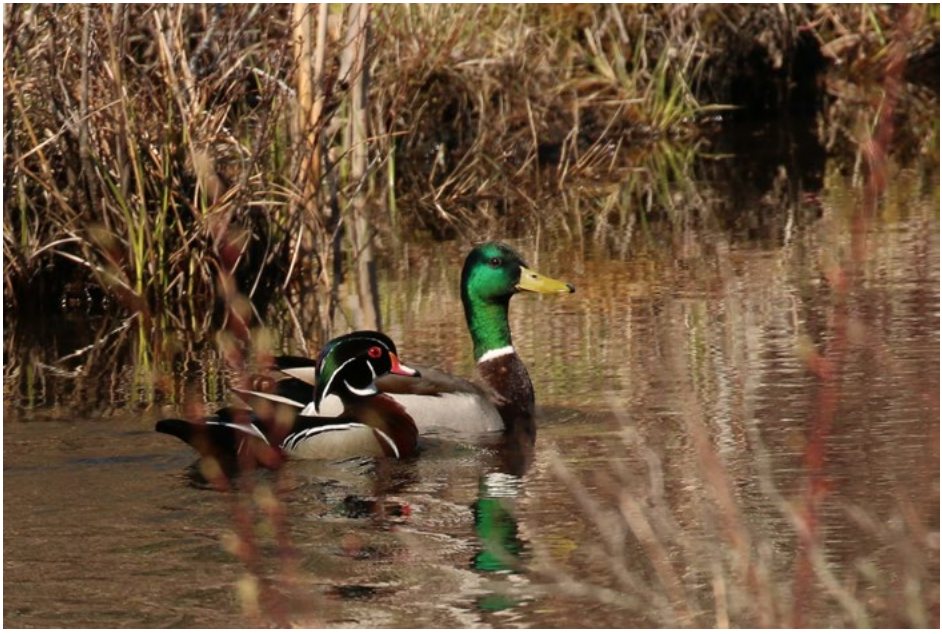
Birds of East Falmouth

Nate Marchessault

White-eyed Vireo. All photographs by Nate Marchessault.

Piping Plover.

Black Vulture.



Wood Duck and Mallard.

MUSINGS FROM THE BLIND BIRDER

The Spring of Covid-19

Martha Steele

Black-capped Chickadee. Photograph by Nate Marchessault

We will remember 2020 as the year of Covid-19. I spent the spring of Covid-19 at my mother's house in northeastern Vermont helping her and keeping her company during the emergency phase of the pandemic. Her house sits on 120 acres of mixed hardwood and coniferous forest, with her nearest neighbor a half-mile away by road.

When I arrived in Vermont on March 3, our fields were covered in nearly 20 inches of snow and some snowbanks piled by plows throughout the winter reached ten feet high. The only birds we heard were the usual winter residents, such as Black-capped Chickadees, Blue Jays, Common Ravens, and Red-breasted Nuthatches. All the lakes and ponds were still frozen.

On March 11 the National Basketball Association shut down and the President announced restrictions on air travel from Europe. From there, the country rapidly entered its lockdown phase. In another week, my husband Bob would return to Boston to take care of our affairs back home while I stayed in Vermont to help my mother. More than two months would pass before Bob and I would see each other again.

I had never spent the entire spring at my mother's house, which gave me the opportunity to take note of new arrivals or commencement of song. Because of the

shelter in place directives, my world from mid-March to mid-May was reduced to what Alvin and I could cover on foot, taking daily walks ranging from just under a half-mile to over seven miles on rural roads where we never encountered another pedestrian and only a few passing vehicles.

The stress of the pandemic was lessened by focusing on the coming migration, walking out the door every day wondering what I would encounter on our walk. Not surprisingly, Red-winged Blackbirds started the procession of spring migrants, singing on March 14. Soon after that, I heard my first Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, which would eventually grace our early mornings throughout the month of May with its characteristic drumming on our garden shed. Although American Robins were arriving in numbers, I did not hear a full song until April 1, two days after hearing my first Song Sparrow. Another early arrival was the Eastern Phoebe, which I first heard on April 8.

On April 9 I walked out with Alvin at 6:15 am to the unmistakable song of a Winter Wren, seemingly perched directly above my head. An Eastern Phoebe, Dark-eyed Junco, and Purple Finch rounded out the chorus. I was so excited knowing that there would be many more days like this in the next few months as more and more birds arrived.

But as can happen in far northern Vermont, winter's grip was not easily loosened. On April 21 wind chills hit seven degrees and the bitter winds continued for three days before a slight warming trend moderated the air over the weekend. On April 27 we awakened to another white landscape, and I put sunflower seeds on our second-floor deck, out of reach of bears but not of birds. That day, in the late afternoon while waiting for Alvin to do his business and clothed in my heavy winter jacket and hat and trudging along in Sorel boots, I was warmed by one of the most beautiful songs in the northern woods, that of the White-throated Sparrow. As I often do, I whispered, "Welcome back."

The first significant song heard was on April 29, a day in the 50s and sunny most of the morning. Newly arrived birds included Savannah Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, and Northern Flicker. American Robins, Song Sparrows, and Winter Wrens were everywhere.

But did I mention that winter was not going away anytime soon? The following week was cold and windy and song was nearly nonexistent. Early May saw chilly temperatures and frequently high winds, and some mornings that first week of May, I heard no birdsong at all, not even Blue Jays or Black-capped Chickadees. The next mini-wave of song occurred on May 6 when I heard a Brown Thrasher and Ruby-crowned Kinglet to add to the list of new arrivals. But, as of May 8, I still had heard only one warbler species. The weekend of May 9 and 10 saw high temperatures in the mid-30s and low temperatures in the mid-20s, definitely not conducive to birdsong or birding for that matter. And then came measurable snow early in the week of May 11 and birdsong was at a standstill yet again. I did finally hear my first Common Yellowthroat on May 13 and my first Ovenbird on May 15, a day where warmer temperatures finally started to take hold. We still had snow piles waiting to melt away and our road was still a bit muddy and soft. It was not until May 17 that birdsong burst

out, and my regular walk to our town forest resulted in a total of eight warbler species and 30 species overall. Bob returned to Vermont on May 20 and we enjoyed spectacular days of birding the latter part of May.

During those initial two months of the shutdown, my mother and I leaned on each other and used Facetime and Zoom to stay connected with Bob and other family and friends. Together, we went through the illnesses and eventual deaths of two beloved and geriatric cats as well as various health issues, consulting with my mother's medical team via telemedicine. Worries about the long-term consequences of the pandemic only added stress that was difficult to address given that so much related to Covid-19 was out of our control.

Once again, birding came to my emotional rescue. Going out to bird offered a safe and enjoyable activity in the midst of confinement and worry. It anchored my feet to the ground even if the rest of me was unsteady with uncertainty. It gave me something to turn to after facing and absorbing the realities of the pandemic and its stunning social and economic impacts.

The novel coronavirus had managed to bring humanity to its knees, from where we will slowly get back up. But the birds pay no heed. They are going about their business, finding food and shelter and reproducing to extend their genetic lines. And I listened to them as I do every spring, absorbing our connection born out of familiarity with their annual comings and goings.

In the face of what seems to be an increasingly troubled country and world, I take refuge in the birds and the natural world. To walk the woods, listening to birds and smelling the moss and the decaying leaves on the forest floor, or hearing the rustle of a nearby animal reminds me of the beauty and complexity of life around me and how I am bearing witness to something much larger than myself. I am constantly reminded of the tenuousness of life and how important it is to be present, to engage with compassion, courage, and thoughtfulness, and to live in the moment. My forays outdoors to listen for birds or just enjoy tranquil solitude repeatedly help me refocus and recommit to my core values. I hope that together we find common ground and our way forward, just as our avian friends and other wildlife find theirs.

***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>.*

In the June 2020 issue, "Musings From the Blind Birder" identifies the American Robin as the state bird of both North Carolina and Virginia; the Northern Cardinal is the state bird of North Carolina and Virginia.

FIELD NOTES

Group Bathing by White Ibises

William E. Davis, Jr.

From an oceanside rental home on Long Beach Drive, Big Pine Key, Florida, I observed White Ibises (*Eudocimus albus*) bathing on seven days during March and April 2020. In all but one instance the bathing involved more than one bird. The first bathing observations were on March 4. I was watching a flock of 14 White Ibises forage in the beach wrack in our backyard. At about 6 pm, a few of the ibises walked into an adjacent tidal pool and began to bathe. The bathing event began with a bird immersing its head (Figure 1), then lowering its body into the water, soaking its wing and body feathers, and shaking its wings and tail feathers (Figure 2), then shaking all of its body feathers (Figure 3). After several minutes of this bathing behavior, the first bird walked out of the pool and began to preen. As birds emerged from the pool, others went into the pool and bathed (Figure 4) until all of the Ibises were out of the water and preening. At about 6:15 pm, all of the ibises took flight together and left.

Fig. 1. Bathing generally started with the bird immersing its head.

Fig. 2. The bird partly submerged and beat its partially open wings.

On March 21 at 12:40 pm, in a group of four ibises, one bird began to bathe and continued to do so for about 10 minutes. It stood in shallow water and ducked its head with its body half submerged. It fluffed its body feathers and vigorously flapped its wings. It stood and fluffed, usually with the wings extended. On four occasions following extensive bathing, the ibis raised its wings and flew a few inches to a foot in the air. This probably aids in drying the bird and settling its

Fig. 3. The bird shook its body feathers.

Fig. 4. After bathing, the ibises walked out of the pool and stood preening.

feathers. Each bout of bathing was followed by extensive preening and sometimes chin-scratching.

On March 23 shortly after 4:30 pm, five ibises flew in and lit in shallow water near a clump of dead mangroves. They stayed together as a group, and 10 minutes later I noticed that they were bathing. They were joined by two more ibises in the bathing activities. Every minute or so, the bathing ibises were joined by one or more ibises until, by 4:55 pm, a total of 14 ibises had bathed. One by one, the original five ibises flew up into the nearby mangrove and preened. Extensive preening often occurred between bouts of bathing. After preening, the ibises flew inland one by one. At 5:10, when I ceased observation, there were still five ibises preening in the mangrove.

On March 24 at 3:25 pm, I noticed two White Ibises bathing in the same pool in which bathing had occurred the previous day. A third ibis came in and bathed. The following afternoon, March 25, at 3:40 pm, three ibises began to bathe near a mangrove inshore from the site used during the previous two days. After a few minutes the three birds, one at a time, flew over to a mangrove. All three preened extensively. Two of the birds opened their wings repeatedly, and in one instance one preened its side feathers under the wing. One bird was observed scratching under its chin. An additional six ibises bathed before I discontinued observations.

At 4:55 pm on March 26, a single White Ibis began bathing in a pool near the mangroves. As is always the case between these cleaning bouts, it preened and, on several occasions, scratched its chin. It also rubbed the upper part of its back with the back of its head. At 5:02 pm, a Willet (*Tringa semipalmata*) approached the bathing ibis and began bathing, too. The power of suggestion in birds to join a bathing bird seems remarkable. A second ibis joined the ibis and Willet. A total of seven ibises, including an immature bird, bathed and all flew to a dead mangrove to preen.

On 14 April, at 6:00 pm, I noticed that two White Ibises were bathing out by the flats, putting their heads under water, bringing them up and then flapping furiously on the water. A third ibis joined the first two, and soon one of the original two flew off to the exposed flats and began to fluff and preen. Preening is apparently an important aspect of bathing. Occasionally they would raise their wings. I watched a total of seven ibises bathe and preen out on the flats. At one point a Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) walked over and preened with the ibises. This is another example of the compelling attraction involved in group bathing and subsequent preening in birds.

The *Birds of the World*'s (formerly *Birds of North America*) White Ibis account (Heath et al. 2020) briefly describes ibis bathing and mentions that "group bathing is common during courtship at the edges of colonies." They provided no additional references to, or comments on, bathing behavior. The bathing ibises were not near any active breeding colony and were not showing any signs of courtship behavior, although they did have the bright red faces associated with breeding season; they appeared to be simply foraging together. I suspect that this group bathing behavior extends beyond breeding season and may occur throughout the year.

The timing of group bathing may be influenced by tide and time of day. The ebbing of the tide influences the depth of water on the somewhat irregular substrate surface, forming shallow pools. Bathing is usually within several hours of low tide. However, on March 4, the time differential was more than six hours. More data will be required to assess the influence of tide on the timing of bathing. All but one of the observations of ibises bathing began late in the day between 3:20 pm and 4:45 pm.

Group bathing by White Ibises appears to be flexible but follows a general pattern. A group bathing event begins with one or a few birds and apparently draws in ibises that can see the bathing event occurring. Group bathing is not unique to White Ibises. Many species of shorebirds also bathe in groups (Davis 2016).

Literature cited

Davis, W. E. Jr. 2016. Shorebird Behavior on their Wintering Grounds. *Bird Observer* 44: (4) 266-69.

Heath, J. A., P. C. Frederick, J. A. Kushlan, and K. L. Bildstein. 2020. White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), version 1.0. In Birds of the World (A. F. Poole, Editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. *https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.whiibi.01*

Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones, and Least Sandpipers Forage on Ephemeral Floating Seaweed Substrate

William E. Davis, Jr.

Fig. 1. The Sanderlings are having trouble with the large waves that lift the seaweed that they are walking upon. Note the breaking wave. The turnstones are mostly foraging in the beach wrack and from a floating board. All photographs by the author.

I had several opportunities during March and April 2020 to watch shorebirds foraging on an ephemeral substrate of floating seaweed. My observations began at 1:15 pm on March 15, a mildly breezy day after several windy days, when I saw 100-plus shorebirds roosting on the dock at our oceanside rental house on Long Beach Drive, Big Pine Key, Florida. At 1:20 pm, many of the shorebirds flew down the beach to the beach wrack two houses down from us. About 50 Ruddy Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*) foraged mainly in the wrack but a few turnstones and 50-plus Sanderlings (*Calidris alba*) walked around on and foraged in a belt of floating seaweed. The belt rose and fell with the incoming waves and the birds moved up and down as well as a foot or so inshore or offshore along with it. At the shore's edge, many birds on the floating seaweed had to raise or flap their wings to maintain their balance when the waves hit shore (Figure 1). At nearby Spanish Harbor on Big Pine Key, high tide was 2:09 pm, so it was nearly high tide. The wind was coming in off the water.

The following day, the high tide was at 3:14 pm. At 1:20 pm, 50-plus turnstones and Sanderlings were foraging on the floating seaweed patch, which had moved much

Fig. 2. The Ruddy Turnstones are bunched together foraging from a floating board.

closer to my house. It was less extensive, occupying an estimated 60 feet of shoreline. At 3:30 pm, I saw 60-plus Sanderlings and a few turnstones foraging on the floating seaweed patch and they were still there at 5pm. By then, the turnstones were concentrated on a floating, seaweed-covered board in the patch (Figure 2). The shorebirds were still foraging at 5:35 pm, when I ended observations for the day. This had been another day of low wind.

High tide on March 17 was at 4:38 pm. At 5:08 pm, approximately 50 Sanderlings foraged on floating seaweed that was in nearly the same location as the previous day. A few Ruddy Turnstones on floating seaweed near shore were moved about whenever a wave shifted the seaweed they were on. The Sanderlings foraged farther away from shore than did the turnstones. The reason is probably related to differences in weight between the species. In winter, Sanderlings average 1.8 ounces. whereas turnstones are much heavier, averaging 4.1 ounces. Thus, Sanderlings could more easily be supported by the floating seaweed.

For the next few days it was windy and the floating seaweed washed up and became beach wrack. I collected samples of the floating seaweed; its three major components were sargassum (*Sargassum* sp.), turtle grass (*Thalassia* sp.), and manatee grass (*Sringodium* sp.). I was unable to determine what organisms the shorebirds were feeding upon. From the concentration of the birds on the floating seaweed and the persistence of foraging during major segments of the tide cycle, the food must have been abundant.

By March 20, all the resident wintering shorebirds had disappeared, probably on their way north to their breeding grounds. On March 28, we had an influx of migrating birds including Least Terns (*Sternula antillarum*), and a large flock of shorebirds that consisted of mostly Turnstones and Sanderlings but included species that had not been part of the resident wintering flock such as Least Sandpipers (*Calidris minutilla*).

High tide was at 11:50 am on March 29. That morning at 11:17 am, several hundred shorebirds alighted on the dock, creating quite a stir among the roosting terns. At 11:25 am, I estimated that there were 200–300 shorebirds foraging, mostly in the wet areas of the wrack. I approached and at 11:35 am, the entire flock flew off but more than a hundred Sanderlings and a few Turnstones soon returned. The birds moved closer to my yard and were not foraging in the large area of floating seaweed they had used earlier. They did, however, use a smaller patch that was somewhat sheltered from wave action by protruding rocks. The wind was strong, causing the waves to move the floating seaweed considerably. At about 12:30 pm, after leaving briefly, the shorebirds returned and 100-plus alighted on the floating seaweed. The wind increased in strength and the birds were moved several feet by incoming waves. By 12:45 pm, the waves forced most of the Sanderlings onto the beach wrack and the high winds seriously reduced the patch. These patches are indeed ephemeral. By 4:00 pm, the patch was essentially converted to beach wrack and all the birds had flownOn April 1, I saw some

Fig. 3. (Left). Least Sandpipers are the only shorebirds foraging on the floating seaweed.
Fig. 4. (Right).About 70 Sanderlings forage on the floating seaweed patch by the dock.

Least Sandpipers foraging on floating seaweed behind my house. The lightest of our shorebird species at two-thirds to slightly over one ounce, Least Sandpipers had no trouble walking about on the floating seaweed. On April 16 at about 6:30 pm, I noticed Least Sandpipers foraging on some floating seaweed in a shallow pool among the rocks. Least Sandpipers tend to forage at the edge of shorebird groups and the floating seaweed is a substrate that heavier shorebirds tend to avoid (Figure 3). On April 19 in the early afternoon when the tide was fairly high, the area of floating seaweed near the dock in my backyard was populated with foraging Sanderlings (Figure 4).

Apparently, wind and tide conditions determine the appearance and disappearance of the ephemeral floating seaweed foraging substrate. Very windy days tend to convert floating seaweed to beach wrack. On less windy days, the patches of floating seaweed form during the high tide portion of the tide cycle. As the tide recedes it leaves the floating seaweed as a coating on the tide-exposed shore. The next tide comes in and floats the seaweed, once again creating the floating patches. All of my observations of shorebirds foraging on these patches occurred within a half hour before or within three hours after high tide. This further suggests that the formation of these patches and their use by foraging birds is heavily influenced by wind velocity and tide cycle.

In *Birds of the World* (formerly *Birds of North America*), I did not find any reference to Sanderlings (Macwhirter et. al. 2020), Ruddy Turnstones (Nettleship 2020), or Least Sandpipers (Nebel and Cooper 2020), foraging on floating vegetation. This floating seaweed foraging substrate may be advantageous for the lighter shorebirds such as Sanderlings and Least Sandpipers because it virtually eliminates competition from larger sandpiper species that cannot, because of their weight, use it.

Literature Cited

Macwhirter, R. B., P. Austin-Smith Jr., and D. E. Kroodsma. 2020. Sanderling (*Calidris alba*), Version 1.0 *in* Birds of the World (S. M. Billerman, Editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.sander.01 Accessed June 7, 2020.

Nebel, S., and J. M. Cooper. 2020. Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*), Version 1.0. *In* Birds of the World (A. F. Poole, editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.leasan.01 Accessed June 7, 2020.

Nettleship, D. N. 2020. Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*). Version 1.0. *In* Birds of the World (S. M. Billerman, Editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.rudtur.01 Accessed June 7, 2020

Wilson's Phalarope: Second Record for Ashley Falls and Fifth Record for Berkshire County, Massachusetts

Ken Schopp

Wilson's Phalaropes, Ashley Falls. Photograph by Ken Schopp.

I participated in Mass Audubon's Bird-a-thon for Berkshire County on May 16, 2020. Special rules were in place this year whereby you had to walk or bicycle to your destinations. I started out early and observed some pretty good birds but did this walking. At 10:00 am, I decided to bicycle and went into the shed to get my bike but it had a flat tire. I called my friend Jim Bennett and asked to borrow his bike.

Jim lives about .75 mile from me. It was a beautiful day, so I grabbed my binoculars and walked down the railroad tracks to pick up his bike, birding on the way. The tracks border Howden Farm and always provide good birding opportunities. Jim and his wife Robin own several hundred acres of beautiful Housatonic River bottomland and Jim lets me fish, bird, and hunt wildfowl on his property. I arrived at 10:15 and decided to check a partially flooded pasture just south of Jim's house, west of the Housatonic River, and adjacent to Route 7A in Ashley Falls. This has become a very popular birding venue because of the easy access and the visibility from Route 7A. On eBird, it is referred to as the Route 7A Hole, Sheffield. I don't particularly care for that moniker, so I always post my observations there as Bennett's Farm.

This flooded area covered roughly one acre in a freshly planted field of about 50 acres. Every year in the spring when it is flooded, it attracts rare birds such as Glossy Ibis, Sandhill Crane, and, a number of years ago, White Ibis. My initial observation

produced about 15 Least Sandpipers and eight Solitary Sandpipers, all foraging in a mud puddle in the flooded pasture. I spotted the two Wilson's Phalaropes wading in the puddle foraging and knew right away they were phalaropes. The phalaropes stayed in the shallow water the entire time, whereas the other shorebirds waded in and out of the large puddle and into the short grass. Both phalaropes were females in breeding plumage.

Fortunately, I had my cell phone with me. My first phone call was to my wife Becky to drive down and bring my camera which she did promptly. Next, I called area birders. Greg Ward, Rene Wendell, Gael Hurley, and Jonathan Pierce dropped what they were doing and drove down from Pittsfield to check out these two phalaropes. They are Berkshire County's all-stars of birding and they got to see the birds. I stayed and observed the two phalaropes for 45 minutes. Most unfortunately, Jim's young son decided to do some rifle-shooting practice behind the barn. This was not malicious, just an unfortunate coincidence and all the birds flushed on the sound of the first shot. Six more birders showed up but the phalaropes did not return. I checked again late in the day and early the next morning, but no phalaropes.

Wilson's Phalarope is accidental in Berkshire County. My May 16 sighting is only the second report of this species in Ashley Falls since May 1977, when three females were spotted in a puddle (St. James 2012). It is the fifth record for all of Berkshire County. The first Wilson's Phalarope in the county was found in Pittsfield on May 16, 1933; there are two more reports from Pittsfield in June 1972 and September 1974 (St. James 2012).

I started keeping written journals of bird observations in 1967 when I was 11. Now I use eBird. The journals comprise observations of birds at our family bird feeder and adjacent woods. The journals themselves were simply sheets of lined paper folded in half and stapled with the time period written on the cover. I still have some of them in my possession and have randomly entered checklists from these written journals into eBird. My oldest eBird checklist dates from 1969 and all my pre-1980 eBird checklists are based on observations where I grew up in Claverack, New York. This hamlet is just east of Hudson, New York, in Columbia County.

Reference

St. James, David P. 2012. An Annotated List of the Birds of Berkshire County, Massachusetts. <https://hoffmannbirdclub.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/130926_berkshire_birds_read_only.pdf> Accessed June 7, 2020.

ABOUT BOOKS

Sparrows: Above and Beyond "LBJs"

Soheil Zendeh, guest reviewer

Peterson Reference Guide to Sparrows of North America. Rick Wright. 2019. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

What is exquisite to me – say, an Ipswich Sparrow – may be just a blur of tans and grays to you. Or you might think the classic elegance of a Greater Yellowlegs or a juvenile Bonaparte's Gull is somehow plainer than the splash of a Blackburnian Warbler. Or maybe you don't often see the variety and plenitude of sparrows, gulls, or shorebirds and have no chance to become familiar with them.

Here is a book that can bridge the gap between aesthetics and human interest. Do not come looking for range maps or wing length data. Rick Wright has spent a lifetime looking at American sparrows in addition to other birds. The "human history [of birds]," he says, "is made up not just of facts and measurements but of stories" – lots of stories. More than seventy separate essays in this book give accounts of the variety of North American sparrows, their discovery by ornithologists, and their naming.

In the first chapter he describes and defines what this grouping of birds is and how it might fit in with other groups and families. First of all, he deals with the term "sparrow." He describes how New World birds got their English names. By and large, English-speaking colonists were not naturalists and had only the vaguest notion of what native birds of Europe looked like. Thus, our large, orange-breasted thrush, closely related to the Eurasian black thrush (simply called Blackbird by the English), came to be named "robin" because the old world Robin had an orange breast also. Never mind that it was about a third of the size, a completely different shape, and only distantly related to the American bird. Similarly, small streaked brown birds came to be called "sparrows" after the House Sparrow of Europe, though they were only distantly related. "The New World birds," explains Wright, "…go by a muddling variety of English names, including 'sparrow,' 'towhee,' 'bunting,' and 'junco.'" These American sparrows, Passerellidae, are restricted to the Western Hemisphere; their closest relatives in the Old World are the Emberizid buntings.

Illustrations in this book are stunningly beautiful and gorgeously reproduced photographs of the subject birds from a variety of photographers in the Americas. Wright gives verbal descriptions and identification tips. Reading this book, you feel you are traveling the continent with a vastly informed and patient guide who tells stories about these birds, the ornithologists who first described them, and the convolutions that their names, both English and scientific, have been through, the species and genus divisions, the confusions and misunderstandings – so many stories.

Species Accounts

Wright deals with more divisions than simply "species." He prefers to deal with "kinds" of birds. For example, there are many kinds of "Savannah" sparrows in the genus *Passerculus*. Several have been known as separate species in the past but are now lumped in as Savannah Sparrows. A bird that winters in southern California, collected in 1852 by Adolphus L. Heerman and delivered to the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, was named Large-billed Sparrow, *Emberiza rostratus*. For sixty years its breeding range was unknown until it was finally discovered to breed *south* of its known winter range, in Mexico at the mouth of the Colorado River. (Later on, the bird was also found to winter west and south of this area, in Baja California.) In time, the genus name of the bird was changed to *Passerculus*. In 1944 *Passerculus rostratus* was merged with three other "species" into Savannah Sparrow, *P. sandwichensis*. Wright's comment about this merger is essentially a motto for the book: "…whether each kind is considered a species or a subspecies group, ignoring those differences, whatever their ultimate scientific significance, flattens nuance and discourages the collection of knowledge."

He expresses similar thoughts on the lumping of Oregon and Dark-eyed juncos. He points out that since Oregon Juncos were demoted to subspecies level, there has been a vast drop-off in the number of Oregon Junco reports. Incidentally, he also points out that Oregon Junco is not a single subspecies but a group of subspecies, some of them with disjoint ranges. The details – oh yes, they're complicated and confusing.

Wright spends just over 40 pages on 10 kinds of juncos. It is clear the juncos fascinate him but also frustrate him as they do most who have tried to separate out and describe them. For example, he goes into great detail regarding *Junco connectens*, "a bird whose identity and affinities remained a subject of debate for more than 40 years after it was originally described – and for a full quarter century after it was proved to not exist."

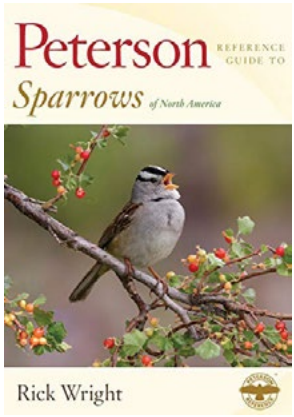
He has 15 pages on four types of Fox Sparrow (*Passerella* species) and 39 pages on the variety of towhees. He also covers several Mexican species, some like the Bridled Sparrow, *Peucaea mystacalis*, whose breeding details (including eggs) were unknown until 2001. He also includes others like the brushfinches (*Arremon*), which we don't ordinarily think of as "sparrows."

The Ornithologists

For reasons both historical and cultural, men are the main ornithological figures in Wright's accounts. Headed by the well-known John James Audubon, Alexander Wilson, and Robert Ridgway, a dozen or so men are the primary actors, but several dozen naturalists crisscrossed North America in the 18th,19th, and 20th centuries to discover the wealth of wildlife that is clearly among the glories of the continent.

Wright loves to trace the naming of our birds. He has a long story about the discovery of "Lincoln Sparrow" (his preferred name instead of Lincoln's Sparrow; there is a dissertation about the use of apostrophed possessives in his opening chapter). Thomas Lincoln was a 21-year-old assistant to John James Audubon when he

collected an unknown "finch" during an 1833 expedition to Labrador. Lincoln was close friends with Audubon's son, John Woodhouse, also on the expedition. The new bird was described and named Lincoln's Finch, *Fringilla lincolnii*. Later, of course, the genus name was changed to *Melospiza*, but the species name remains, honoring the young man so beloved of the Audubons, *père* and *fils*.



The last new bird Audubon described and painted was Baird's Sparrow, among the most obscure of obscure American sparrows. He and his companions heard the songs on a buffalo-hunting expedition on the banks of the upper Missouri River (Montana) in 1843, chased down the birds through tall grass, and collected three. Audubon thereafter named the bird after a 20-year-old rising star of ornithology, the Philadelphian Spencer F. Baird.

Audubon also named Henslow's Sparrow, this time after a Cambridge (England) botany professor whose most illustrious student had been Charles Darwin. Audubon remembered the professor for his kindness while he resided in England.

James William Abert's reputation has survived in the name of several animals from the American west: Abert's Towhee and Abert's squirrel come to mind. But who was he? Says Wright, "The military parties exploring the American West in the mid-nineteenth century included a startlingly disproportionate number of polymath geniuses. James William Abert, watercolorist, engineer, naturalist, soldier, and literature professor was among them…" Beginning in 1845, Abert accompanied other explorers in the southwest and sent back to the aforementioned Baird in Philadelphia a large and varied selection of new mammals and birds. As it turns out, Wright points out, there is no evidence that Abert ever saw the towhee named after him; he may never have even ventured within its range. The mutilated specimen that reached Baird was perhaps slipped into the Abert shipment by another of the explorers in his company.

Wright recounts, in exhaustive details, the squabbles among ornithologists. Sometimes these quarrels are over naming rights, occasionally over discovery bragging rights, but also, surprisingly, often over descriptions of details of plumage based on imperfect specimens. A lot of description and naming of birds was done by museum men who had received specimens from field collectors. The material collected in the field, even if prepared and shipped correctly, was often months in transit. Sometimes a specimen was discovered years later after being ignored. In 1855, for example, a German ornithologist by the name of Gustav Hartlaub accused his colleague Charles Bonaparte of having misidentified a previously unidentified species of towhee in the Leiden museum. Hartlaub said Bonaparte's naming of the specimen, *Pipilo variegatus*, was careless. Bonaparte's immediate response was to accuse Hartlaub of inattention and inability to distinguish Siberian birds from northwestern North American birds. And so it went.

Harriet Williams Myers, a founder of the California Audubon Society, is among the few women who figure in the narrative of discovery, naming, and description of American birds. Beginning toward the end of the 19th century and through the first half of the 20th, she photographed, wrote, and distributed articles and books on western birds. She originated the phrase "plaintive, yet liquid, *dear*, *dear*, *dear*" to describe the calls of the Rufous-crowned Sparrow, a description that is considered standard now. Evidently Myers came up with that description on the afternoon of April 10, 1909, while watching those sparrows build a nest in the foothills of a California mountain range near her home.

Summary

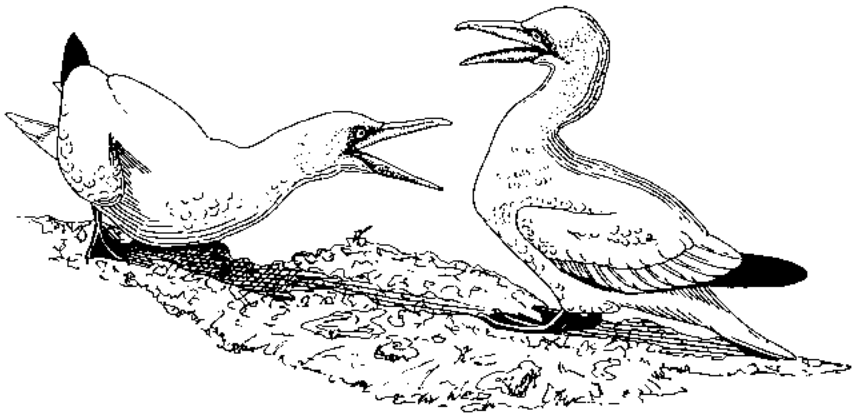
Sparrows, gulls, shorebirds – birders turn the page quickly. As one friend told me a long time ago, "I need to see colors." But never mind the aesthetics. Do pay attention to the history, and let a master historian and story-teller take you through the tales of American sparrows. You don't need to read these accounts in sequence. These are stories that cover many facets of exploration, history, ecology, and biology.

It's a conversation with a knowledgeable and erudite raconteur who uses the kind of language you can expect in dry works of ornithology; but Wright can also tell a tale. This makes his book well worth a read.

Additional Material

Rick Wright has placed much additional information (measurements, summary of taxonomic history, references, full bibliography) in his website <tinyurl.com/wrightsparrows>.

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



NORTHERN GANNETS BY WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR.

BIRD FRIENDLY® COFFEE *at a glance*

- Created by Smithsonian scientists, the Bird Friendly® gold standard does more than other eco-friendly seals to protect habitat that is often destroyed to make way for coffee growing.
- Instead of clearing rainforest, Bird Friendly coffees grow underneath shade trees that provide habitat for birds, including migratory species, whose impressive journeys can take them from the backyards of the US and Canada all the way to coffee farms in Latin America.
- Bird Friendly certified coffees are 100% pure shade-grown and USDA Organic, making them better for you and for the planet.
- Bird Friendly farms fight climate change and its effects—shade trees sequester carbon and protect farmers' crops from increased temperatures and rainfall.
- Coffee experts say shade-grown coffees taste better because the beans mature for longer under shade, creating a more complex, deeper flavor.
- More than 4,600 coffee growers protect over 32,000 acres of Bird Friendly® habitat worldwide, from Mexico to Peru, Ethiopia to Thailand.

BIRD FRIENDLY Smithsonian

IS YOUR COFFEE BIRD FRIENDLY?

Look for the Bird Friendly seal—the gold standard in eco-friendly, organic farming—wherever coffee is sold.

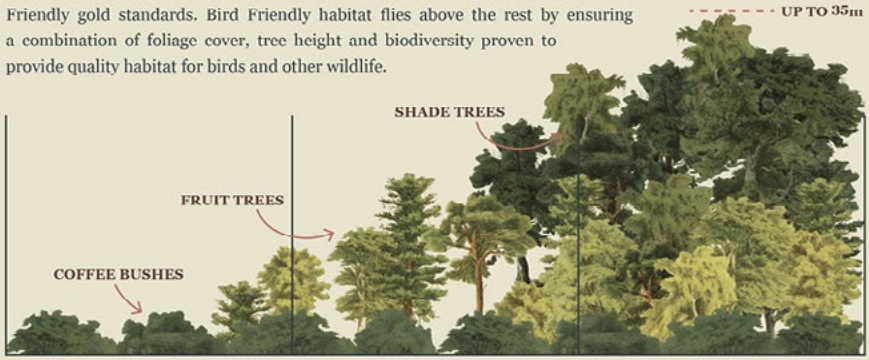
To find a store or café near you, or better yet, have it shipped to your door, visit **DrinkBirdFriendly.com**.

MIGRATE TO THE BEST IN BIODIVERSITY

Becoming Bird Friendly is easy—get in touch at **BirdFriendly@si.edu** or visit **DrinkBirdFriendly.com**.

NOT ALL SHADE GROWN COFFEE IS EQUAL

No other eco-friendly seal or brand comes close to protecting biodiversity to Bird Friendly gold standards. Bird Friendly habitat flies above the rest by ensuring a combination of foliage cover, tree height and biodiversity proven to provide quality habitat for birds and other wildlife.



SUN-GROWN COFFEE
61 bird species

PARTIAL SHADE
79 bird species

BIRD FRIENDLY SHADE
243 bird species*
*SMBC field work, Peru

Birdsandbeans.com

BIRD SIGHTINGS

March–April 2020

Neil Hayward and Robert H. Stymeist

The unusually mild and snow-free conditions of January and February continued into March. The average temperature in March was 42.1 degrees, 4.1 degrees warmer than the average for the month. Boston reached a high of 72 degrees on March 9, the second hottest on record, behind the 77 degrees set in March 2016. Precipitation totaled 3.6 inches, about a half-inch below average. The highest single day rainfall for the month was 1.38 inches on March 23. Only a trace of snow was recorded in Boston compared to the 7.8 inches that fell in March the previous year.

April was unusually cold and damp; it was the nineteenth coldest April since records began in 1872. The high for the month was 62 degrees on April 6–7, while the average temperature for the month was 44.5 degrees, 3.5 degrees below normal. Rainfall totaled 4.33 inches, almost an inch above the average for April. There were 18 consecutive days where at least a trace of rain was recorded in Boston. On April 18, 0.7 inch of snow fell.

R. Stymeist

GEESE THROUGH IBISES

Wild goose chasers were busy this period, with reports of all eight species of goose on the state list. A single **Pink-footed Goose** joined the continuing and long-staying pair of **Barnacle Geese** in the Rochester area. **Cackling Geese** were in short supply, with only single sightings in Essex and Worcester counties, compared to records in eight counties during the same period the previous year. A **Ross's Goose**, the first since November last year, made its 2020 debut in Newbury in mid-March.

Pittsfield, in Western Massachusetts, has had its share of rare waterfowl in the past, including a record of 10 King Eiders on May 5, 1993. This year, the town added two Eurasian ducks—**Eurasian Wigeon** and the Eurasian form of Green-winged Teal—both apparently second records for Berkshire County. Closer to the coast, this winter was good for Ring-necked Ducks, with Fresh Pond in Cambridge and the Chestnut Hill Reservoir scoring a high count for the period of 82 birds on March 3 and April 3, respectively. The big **Tufted Duck** news of the period was not the continuing drake on Nantucket—a regular since 2013—but a hybrid; a rare Tufted Duck x scaup, found in Sharon on April 4, was the first record away from Cape Cod. This taxon is nationally rare with a North American distribution predictably paralleling that of its parent Tufted Duck, i.e., in the Northeast and hugging the West Coast. For only a handful of those records has the scaup parent been identified to species. Also, in hybrid news, the Bufflehead x Common Goldeneye continued at Rock Harbor Marsh, Orleans. First discovered in April 2017, this bird is the only record of this taxon for the state.

In most years, Eastern Whip-poor-wills are the first of the goatsuckers to arrive—usually in the second half of April. This year's single April record from Quabbin Park on April 29 is the latest arrival since 2007 and it was beaten by a Common Nighthawk. A report of the latter in Hadley on April 24 would constitute the earliest arrival date for the state this century. Though most nighthawks arrive toward the end of May and early June, there are historical records from April and even March. Veit and Petersen (1993) report sightings as early as March 14 in 1925 and 1966.

SPECIES	ARRIVAL DATE (AVERAGE)	ARRIVAL DATE (2020)	DAYS EARLY (-) / LATE (+)
American Oystercatcher	3/8	3/15	+7
Piping Plover	3/13	2/23	-19
Lesser Yellowlegs	3/25	3/11	-14
Pectoral Sandpiper	3/25	3/11	-14
Solitary Sandpiper	4/14	4/16	+2
Upland Sandpiper	4/14	4/21	+7
Willet	4/15	4/11	-4
Spotted Sandpiper	4/17	4/18	+1
Least Sandpiper	4/17	4/26	+9
Short-billed Dowitcher	4/20	4/27	+7
Semipalmated Plover	4/27	4/11	-16
Whimbrel	5/1	4/11	-20

Table 1. Shorebird arrival dates in Massachusetts in 2020 compared to historical average (calculated for the period 2000–2019). Data from eBird.org.

Bolton Flats Wildlife Management Area, which straddles Lancaster and Harvard, produced a period record high of 18 Virginia Rails on April 25. Observer Steve Arena, who was positioned there from 4:00 am, noted of the rails that, "about half of them [are] advertising males. No to light wind coupled with the stunted spring vegetation made detection relatively easy." The six Soras that Steve also recorded that day are the highest period count for the state since 1965. A **Common Gallinule** spotted on Nantucket on March 24 represents the only eBird record in Massachusetts for March.

Sandhill Cranes continue their expansion into our state, after the first breeding record in New Marlborough in 2007. The species has been recorded each spring and summer at Burrage Pond WMA since 2014, with breeding confirmed in 2016, 2017, and 2019. At least two birds were present this year from March 13, with a high count of 11 on April 17 setting a new period high count for the state.

Returning shorebirds were across the board in their arrivals this year (see Table 1). Lesser Yellowlegs and Pectoral Sandpiper appeared on March 11, a full two weeks ahead of schedule. A month later, April 11, brought more early birds: Willet (4 days early), Semipalmated Plover (16 days early) and a Whimbrel. The latter, which was found in Falmouth, was almost three weeks early, but still six days short of the earliest state record on Plum Island, April 5, 1974 (Veit and Petersen, 1993). Late arrivals included Upland Sandpiper (April 21), Least Sandpiper (April 26), and Short-billed Dowitcher (April 27)—all at least a week later than average.

The rarest shorebird species of the period was **Ruff**. A probable female was on Nantucket on April 4, the fifth record for the island and third earliest for the state. The earliest record is March 31 of 1999 (Ipswich) and 2019 (Scotland Road, Newbury). A young male Ruff was later found in Barnstable on April 25. Offshore, 30 Red Phalaropes passed First Encounter Beach on April 4, eclipsing the previous April high this century of just three birds, but still some way from the eye-popping 2,000 seen at the Nantucket Lightship on April 30, 1954 (Veit and Petersen, 1993).

The same sea watch that found the Red Phalaropes at First Encounter Beach also produced a **Great Skua**. It is the first sighting for the state since November 2015 and the only April eBird record for North America except for North Carolina (1993 and 2013) and Bermuda (2015).

The pale, arctic breeding *mandtii* subspecies of Black Guillemot, first discovered at MacMillan Wharf in Provincetown on December 16, 2019, continued until March 19. Over two weeks later, possibly a second bird was photographed off Race Point. A National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration survey aboard the R/V Auk on March 3 set a new March record for Common Murres with 102, beating the previous high of 70 set in 2004. The following month, Race Point set a new high for April with 261 Common Murres, which beat the previous high of 57 in 2013.

A **Mew Gull** was photographed on Nantucket on March 28. Since the mid-1990s Mew Gull has been almost annual to the state, with the majority of records coming from Essex County. This year's Nantucket bird is only the fourth record for the island after the first in 2013. It was tentatively identified to the Asian subspecies *kamtschatschensis* based on the primary wing pattern and the dark mantle.

An immature **Yellow-billed Loon** was a one-day wonder at Race Point on April 19. This is the second record for the state, after the long-staying immature seen February 27–April 17, 2016. The only other records in the United States this year have been inland records in Missouri, Oklahoma, and Colorado, as well as the more predictable West Coast records in California and Washington State. **Pacific Loons** were noted from Rockport and Race Point, with a bird at the latter on April 26 having molted into its attractive alternate (breeding) plumage.

The first **Brown Pelican** of the year was captured on video flying back and forth along the beach off Wellfleet. It is the only April record for the state and with the exception of three January records (1998, 2000, and 2015) it is the earliest record for the year.

Herons were mostly early in their arrival dates this year, including Least Bittern (April 23, 12 days earlier than average), Tricolored Heron (April 1, 14 days early), and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (April 20, 13 days early). Little Blue Herons bucked the trend; they were almost two weeks late, with the first being found on April 12. At least two **White-faced Ibises** returned to the Ipswich area in Essex County. The first bird was found on April 11 in West Newbury. The earliest record for the state is April 6, 2015.

N. Hayward

Snow Goose			
3/13-3/14	Newbury	102	S. Grinley# + v.o.
3/14-4/4	Edgartown	6	B. Shriber
3/20	Pittsfield	67	J. Pierce
3/20	Amherst	19	A. Richards
3/23-3/28	Boston (FPk)	1	G. Denton, R. Schain + v.o.
4/15	Hyannisport	10	P. Crosson
Ross's Goose			
3/13-3/17	Newbury	1 ph	S. Grinley# + v.o.
Greater White-fronted Goose			
3/1-4/5	PI	1 ph	v.o.
3/3-3/8	Easthampton	1 ph	A. Baker + v.o.
3/29,4/26,30	Edgartown	1,1,2 ph	B.Shriber# + v.o.
Pink-footed Goose			
3/14-3/20	Rochester	1 ph	B. Vigorito + v.o.
3/27-3/28	Dartmouth	1 ph	Z. Moser + v.o.
Brant			
3/4	GMNWR	3	R. Hodson
4/1-4/20	Nbpt H.	80	R. Heil + v.o.
4/2	Salisbury	100	J. Carroll
4/7	Nahant	167	L. Pivacek
Barnacle Goose			
3/1-3/18	Rochester	2 ph	N.Dowling + v.o.
Cackling Goose			
3/2-3/7	Lancaster	1 ph	E. Kittredge
3/8	Middleton	1 ph	S. Sullivan#
Mute Swan			
3/22-3/29	Westborough	8	M. Lynch#
4/23	Arlington Res.	10	N. Hayward
Wood Duck			
3/14	Wayland	9	G. d'Entremont
3/28	Hinsdale	3	M. Lynch#
4/9	Boston (AA)	2	N. Hayward
4/15	Nashua R. IBA	26	M. Lynch#
4/25	BFWMA	35	S. Arena
Blue-winged Teal			
4/4	Ashley Falls	2	K. Schopp
4/5	E. Boston (BI)	2	D. Oliveria
4/6-4/20	BFWMA	2 1pr	W. Freedberg + v.o.
4/12	Plympton	2 1pr	B. Vacchino
4/14	Waltham	2	J. Forbes
4/20	PI	2 1pr n	R. Heil
4/25-4/27	Hatfield	4 max	T. Gilliland + v.o.
Northern Shoveler			
3/1-4/25	PI	36 max	v.o.
3/10-3/12	Arlington Res.	3	J. Forbes +v.o.

Northern Shoveler (continued)

3/12-4/14	E. Boston (BI)	6 max	S. Riley + v.o.
3/23-4/20	BFWMA	3 2m+1f	V. Burdette + v.o.
3/31	Turners Falls	3	D. Sibley
4/12	Hatfield	3	A. Richards
4/14	Nantucket	10	M. Sayle

Gadwall

3/1-4/20	PI	42 max	D. Prima + v.o.
3/1	Gloucester (EP)	28	v.o.
3/7	Plainville	12	J. Glover
3/28	Somerset	12	G. d'Entremont
4/5-4/6	Pittsfield (Pont.)	5 max	J. Pierce + v.o.

Eurasian Wigeon

3/1-3/4	Gloucester	1 m	G. d'Entremont# + v.o.
3/1-3/22	Nantucket	1 m	B. Balkind + v.o.
3/7	Edgartown	1 m	L. Johnson
3/16	Ipswich	1 f	N. Dubrow
4/5	Pittsfield (Onota)	1 m	J. Pierce + v.o.
4/5	Ipswich	1 m	N. Dubrow
4/26-4/30	W. Newbury	1 m	C. Marchant + v.o.

American Wigeon

3/1-3/10	PI	7	D. Prima + v.o.
3/5-4/4	Concord	8	v.o.
3/28	Somerset	9	G. d'Entremont
4/25	Sudbury	4	B. Harris

American Black Duck

3/1	PI	500	v.o.
3/16	Holden	27	M. Lynch#

Northern Pintail

3/1-4/9	PI	65	R. Heil + v.o.
3/25	BFWMA	8	V. Burdette + v.o.
3/28	Quabbin (G28)	6	B. Lafley

Green-winged Teal

3/1-3/31	PI	300 max	v.o.
4/21	Harwich	30	B. Nikula
4/25	BFWMA	325	S. Arena

Green-winged Teal (Eurasian)

3/18-3/27	Nantucket	1 m ph	S. Kardell
3/22	Pittsfield	1 m ph	J. Pierce + v.o.
4/5-4/25	PI	1 m ph	v.o.

Canvasback

3/20	Danvers	3	D. Walters + v.o.
3/22-4/1	Boston (CHRes.)	4	M. Kaufman + v.o.
3/31-4/7	Cambr. (FP)	3	J. Trimble# + v.o.

Redhead

3/9	Nantucket	39	T. Pastuszak
3/23-4/12	Burrage Pd WMA	1 m	N. Henkenius

Ring-necked Duck

thr	Orange	225 max	B. Lafley + v.o.
thr	Turners Falls	198 max	J. Burk + v.o.
3/1-4/23	Cambr. (FP)	82 max	v.o.
3/4-4/4	Southwick	92 max	D. Holmes
3/4-thr	Boston (CHRes.)	82 max	M. Mulqueen + v.o.
3/15	Ayer	96	J. Forbes
3/22	Westborough	158	M. Lynch#
3/22	Burrage Pd WMA	72	G. d'Entremont

Tufted Duck

3/2-4/9	Nantucket	1 m ph	G. Andrews, v.o.

Greater Scaup

3/10-4/9	Turners Falls	13 max	J. Rose + v.o.
3/18	Wachusett Res.	52	M. Lynch#
3/19-4/14	Boston (CHRes.)	12 max	R. Doherty + v.o.

Lesser Scaup

3/11-4/8	Boston (CHRes.)	11 max	R. Doherty + v.o.
3/20-4/4	Danvers	36	v.o.
4/5	Wachusett Res.	12	J. Driscoll

Tufted Duck x Scaup (hybrid)

4/4	Sharon	1 ph	W. Sweet + v.o.

King Eider

3/1	Rockport (AP)	1 imm m	G. d'Entremont#
3/3-4/4	Gloucester H.	1 m ph	B. Peters# + v.o.
4/28-4/29	Gloucester (BR)	1 m ph	S. Beattie

Common Eider

3/16	Gloucester (EP)	450	J. Keyes
3/18	N. Chatham	5600	L. Waters#

Harlequin Duck

3/1	Rockport (HPt)	100	v.o.
3/21	Cohasset	5	V. Zollo + v.o.
3/31	Manomet Point	41	M. Sheldon#
4/1-4/30	Rockport (AP)	11	v.o.

Surf Scoter

4/5	Revere B.	400	G. d'Entremont
4/7	Nahant	165	L. Pivacek
4/28	Pittsfield (Onota)	2	G. Hurley
4/30	Southwick	3	D. Holmes

White-winged Scoter

3/5	South Hadley	1	L. Bledzki + v.o.
4/7	Nahant	86	L. Pivacek
4/27	Pittsfield (Pont.)	6	J. Pierce

Black Scoter

3/1	Rockport (HPt)	300	v.o.
4/5	Millis	1 ph	D. Sullivan
4/7	Nahant	175	L. Pivacek

Long-tailed Duck

3/16	Gloucester H.	93	J. Keyes
3/20	Turners Falls	2	E. Huston + v.o.
4/18	Easthampton	2	B. Finney + v.o.
4/23	PI	2000	R. Heil
4/28	Dennis (Corp. B.)	1100	P. Flood
4/28	Pittsfield (Onota)	1	G. Hurley

Bufflehead

3/18	Wachusett Res.	22	M. Lynch#
3/28	Squantum	100	G. d'Entremont
4/7	Stockbridge	23	Z. Adams
4/25	N. Scituate	65	G. d'Entremont

Bufflehead X Common Goldeneye (hybrid)

3/21-4/13	Orleans	1 ph	M. Harris, D. Clapp

Common Goldeneye

3/25	Wachusett Res.	27	M. Lynch#

Barrow's Goldeneye

3/11	Nantucket	2 1pr	S. Kardell
3/14-3/24	Sharon	1 m	W. Sweet
3/18	Plymouth	2 1pr	J. Layman

Hooded Merganser

3/9	Quaboag IBA	26	M. Lynch#
3/30	Stockbridge	32	J. Pierce

Common Merganser

3/1-3/24	W. Newbury	150 max	v.o.
3/3-3/4	Easthampton	400 max	C. Stern + v.o.
3/9	Quaboag IBA	789	M. Lynch#
3/18	Pittsfield (Onota)	160	J. Pierce
3/22	Marlborough	62	J. Forbes

Red-breasted Merganser

3/8	Worc.	6	K. Keohane
4/7-4/19	Richmond	2 max	J. Pierce + v.o.
4/13	Cambr. (FP)	3	J. Trimble
4/23	Auburn	3	E. Burch

Ruddy Duck

3/4-3/31	Eastham	36 max	J. Hoye# +v.o.
3/21	W. Newbury	11	G. d'Entremont#
3/27	Waltham	5	J. Forbes
4/28	Boston (CHRes.)	7	N. Hayward

Northern Bobwhite

3/1-3/8	Saugus	1	G. Wilson + v.o.
3/9-4/30	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	M. Iliff + v.o.
4/4	Hadley	1	M. Locher

Ruffed Grouse

4/5-4/25	Quabbin (G40)	12 max	J. Keeley + v.o.
4/25	Mashpee	5	N. Marchessault
4/25	Williamstown	3	M. Gates

Wild Turkey

3/15	New Braintree	24	M. Lynch#

Pied-billed Grebe

3/28	Somerset	2	G. d'Entremont

Pied-billed Grebe (continued)
3/29 Wachusett Res. 2 M. Lynch#
4/17 WWMA 2 N. Jacob
Horned Grebe
3/21-3/29 Cambr. (FP) 1 D. Pettee + v.o.
4/1-4/19 PI 8 v.o.
4/12 Gloucester 4 D. Walters#
4/20 Pittsfield (Onota) 27 J. Pierce
4/24 Wachusett Res. 6 M. Lynch#
Red-necked Grebe
3/11 Gloucester 16 D. Weaver#
3/27 Quabbin Pk 3 L. Therrien
4/20 Pittsfield (Onota) 36 J. Pierce
4/27 WWMA 6 T. Spahr + v.o.
4/27 Waltham 4 J. Forbes + v.o.
Common Nighthawk
4/24-4/27 Hadley 2 M. Cozine, L. Waters
Eastern Whip-poor-will
4/29 Quabbin Pk 1 L. Therrien
Chimney Swift
4/12 Hyannis 1 P. Trimble
4/21 W. Roxbury (MP) 1 R. Schain
4/25 Cambr. (FP) 2 D. Pettee
4/25 Pittsfield 1 S. Townsend
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
4/23 Franklin 1 D. Jantzen
4/30 Montgomery 1 J. Page
4/30 Florence 1 B. Finney
4/30 Concord 1 J. Meyerson
Clapper Rail
3/28-4/27 Fairhaven 1 C. Longworth
4/7-4/25 W. Harwich 1 au S. Finnegan#
King/Clapper Rail
4/8-4/30 Harwich Port 1 B. Nikula
Virginia Rail
3/22 Lynnfield 2 D. Williams
4/16 Barnstable 5 P. Crosson
4/23 GMNWR 9 W. Martens#
4/25 BFWMA 18 S. Arena
4/25-4/30 Hatfield 5 T. Gilliland + v.o.
Sora
4/4-thr Indiv. reported from 11 locations
4/8-4/20 Lenox 2 max J. Pierce + v.o.
4/25 BFWMA 6 S. Arena
Common Gallinule
3/24 Nantucket 1 S. Fee
4/24-4/29 Pittsfield 3 max S.Townsend# + v.o.
American Coot
3/16-3/22 Wellesley 2 J. Ferraro
Sandhill Crane
thr 1-2 indiv. reported from 13 locations
3/3 Mattapan (BNC) 3 C. Hartshorn
3/3–thr Burrage Pd WMA 11 max T. O'Brien + v.o.
3/12-3/28 Worthington 3 max M. McKitrick
3/23 Petersham 7 B. Bourque
3/26 Northborough 7 N. Dowling
3/27 PI 3 R. Heil
4/1 N. Brookfield 3 M. Lynch#
American Oystercatcher
3/28 Squantum 1 G. d'Entremont
4/4 Edgartown 3 Capt. J. Nelson
4/5 Gloucester 1 D. Walters#
4/6-4/20 Marblehead 2 A. Sanford + v.o.
Black-bellied Plover
4/19 Edgartown 37 Capt. J. Nelson
4/19 PI 4 N. Forestell
4/21 Essex 17 S. Grinley#
4/29 Ipswich 6 N. Dubrow
Killdeer
3/18 Wachusett Res. 12 M. Lynch#
3/22 Northampton 16 B. Finney
3/30 Egremont 28 J. Pierce
4/4 Middleton 43 S. McDonald
Semipalmated Plover
3/2-3/9 Hyannis 2 P. Trimble#
4/30 Ipswich 1 N. Dubrow
Piping Plover
3/14 Orleans 1 M. Plato
3/16 Duxbury B. 1 F. Bowes
4/4-4/23 Ipswich (CB) 19 v.o.
Upland Sandpiper
4/21-4/26 Chicopee 6 max L.+A. Richardson+v.o.
4/23 Aquinnah 1 D. Belleny
4/23 Quincy 1 A. Trautmann
4/25 Plymouth Airport 2 G. d'Entremont
Whimbrel
4/11 Falmouth 1 G. Hirth
4/28 Cuttyhunk I. 2 M. Sylvia
Hudsonian Godwit
4/23 PI 1 ph S. Zhang
Ruddy Turnstone
4/23 Rockport 1 C. Marchant
Ruff
4/4 Nantucket 1 ph S. Kardell
4/25 Barnstable 1 ph P. Crosson#
Sanderling
thr PI 240 max v.o.
3/8 Gloucester 10 C. Marchant
4/19 Rockport (HPt) 30 v.o.
Dunlin
3/1-3/31 PI 160 max v.o.
3/30-3/31 Pittsfield (Onota) 1 R. & F. Pierce + v.o.
4/21 Essex 190 S. Grinley#
4/28 Eastham (FE) 150 B. Nikula
Purple Sandpiper
3/1-3/15 Gloucester (BR) 28 v.o.
3/1-3/20 Rockport (HPt) 16 v.o.
3/10 Swampscott 12 P. Martin
4/11 Cohasset 2 V. Zollo
4/23 PI 15 R. Heil
Least Sandpiper
4/26 Middleton 1 M. Sovay
4/29 Lynnfield 1 A. Sanford
Pectoral Sandpiper
3/27-thr Indiv. reported from 9 locations
3/11-4/26 Fairhaven 5 max C. Molander + v.o.
4/17 Middleton 3 S. Sullivan
American Woodcock
3/3 Burlington 11 M. Rines
3/5-3/11 IRWS 8 C. Decker + v.o.
3/9 Quaboag IBA 19 M. Lynch#
3/15 Longmeadow 24 M. Moore
3/17 Lexington (DM) 15 J. Young
Wilson's Snipe
4/1-4/30 Middleton 15 S. Sullivan# + v.o.
4/5 Lexington 16 M. Rines
4/7 BFWMA 43 B. Abbot
4/12 Cumb. Farms 20 P. Jackson
Spotted Sandpiper
4/19-4/30 Arlington Res. 2 v.o.
Lesser Yellowlegs
3/11-thr PI 5 max T.Wetmore+v.o.
3/13-3/17 Topsfield 1 M. Watson
Willet
4/25-4/30 Nbpt H. 5 R. Heil + v.o.
4/26-4/30 Ipswich 11 N. Dubrow + v.o.
4/29 PI 14 S. Mroz + v.o.
Greater Yellowlegs
3/12, 4/20 PI 1,44 S. Santino, R. Heil
3/13-3/14 Topsfield 1 v.o.
3/27-3/30 Rowley 5 R. Heil#
4/12 Longmeadow 2 N. DeGray
Red Phalarope
4/4 Eastham (FE) 30 B. Nikula
4/4 P'town (RP) 4 P. Flood#
4/28 Dennis 1 S. Finnegan

Great Skua
4/4 Eastham (FE) 1 ph B. Nikula
Parasitic Jaeger
4/28 Dennis (Corp. B.) 4 P. Flood
4/28 Eastham (FE) 3 B. Nikula
Dovekie
3/3 Stellwagen Bank 3 P. Flood#
3/6 Rockport (HPt) 1 B. Winger
3/15 P'town (RP) 20 J. Sweeney#
3/27 Cuttyhunk I. 8 M. Sylvia
Common Murre
3/3 Stellwagen Bank 102 P. Flood#
3/19,29,4/24 Rockport (AP) 3,5,15 M. Brengle, R. Heil
3/21 PI 1 G. d'Entremont#
4/11,19,29 P'town (RP) 261,38,4 P. Flood
Thick-billed Murre
3/1-3/15 Gloucester 2 max v.o.
3/1 P'town 1 E. Hill-Gest
3/9 PI 1 J. Keyes#
3/18 P'town (RP) 1 L. Waters#
4/1 Manomet Point 1 D. Furbish
Razorbill
thr Rockport (AP) 50 max M. Brengle + v.o.
3/3 Stellwagen Bank 157 P. Flood#
4/1 Manomet Point 1 D. Furbish
4/5-4/7 PI 5 J. Roth #
4/12 Gloucester 5 D. Walters
4/25 Cohasset 1 V. Zollo
Large alcid sp.
3/25 P'town (RP) 695 B. Nikula
Black Guillemot
3/16 Gloucester H. 1 J. Keyes
4/1-4/30 Rockport (AP) 4 R. Heil + v.o.
4/1 Manomet Point 1 D. Furbish
Black Guillemot (*mandtii*)
3/1-3/19 P'town 1 ph v.o.
4/4 P'town (RP) 1 ph P. Flood#
Black-legged Kittiwake
4/4 Eastham (FE) 255 B. Nikula
Bonaparte's Gull
4/3 Nantucket 540 S. Kardell
4/27 Wachusett Res. 27 ph C. Martone
4/29 P'town (RP) 1200 P. Flood
Black-headed Gull
3/1-3/30 Centerville 1 P. Trimble#
3/1-3/10 Gloucester 1 1W ph G. d'Entremont + v.o.
Little Gull
4/3 Nantucket 8 7ad+1imm ph S. Kardell
4/29 P'town (RP) 3 2ad+1imm ph P. Flood
Mew Gull
3/28 Nantucket 1 ph S. Kardell
Iceland Gull
3/8 Saugus 1 D. Bates
3/30 Tewksbury 1 J. Keeley
4/4 Rockport (AP) 8 N. Dubrow + v.o.
4/4 Cohasset 4 M. Iliff
4/5 Gloucester 2 D. Walters#
4/11 Middleton 1 S. Sullivan#
Lesser Black-backed Gull
3/1 Nantucket 40 S. Kardell
3/1 Turners Falls 1 B. Wilde#
3/17-4/16 Arlington Res. 2 K. Hartel# + v.o.
4/4 Oak Bluffs 1 Capt. J. Nelson
4/6 BFWMA 1 1cy S. Miller#
4/14 Wachusett Res. 1 adS M. Lynch#
Glaucous Gull
3/1-3/8 Saugus 1 G. Wilson + v.o.
3/11 PI 1 R. Heil
3/22 Andover 1 M. McCarthy
4/4 Oak Bluffs 1 Capt. J. Nelson
Caspian Tern
3/27 Pittsfield 1 J. Pierce + v.o.
4/13 Scituate 2 D. Peacock
4/19-4/30 Carver 7 max v. o.
4/26 Gill 1 J. Layfield
4/29 Wachusett Res. 1 H. Siener
4/30 Westford 1 S. Upperman
Common Tern
4/16 Cheshire Res. 1 G. Hurley
4/28 Revere B. 5 B. Burke
4/29 P'town (RP) 7 P. Flood
Arctic Tern
4/27 Rockport (AP) 1 ad R. Heil
Red-throated Loon
3/1-3/17 Medford 1 J. Kovner + v.o.
3/27 Quabbin Pk 1 L. Therrien
4/1-4/30 Rockport (AP) 22 R. Heil + v.o.
4/4 P'town (RP) 450 P. Flood
4/23 PI 48 R. Heil + v.o.
Pacific Loon
3/1-3/8 Rockport (AP) 1 ph R. Heil + v.o.
4/5-4/26 P'town (RP) 1 ph P. Flood#
Common Loon
3/10-4/29 Wachusett Res. 10 max E. Kittredge + v.o.
4/30 Southwick 14 D. Holmes
Yellow-billed Loon
4/19 P'town (RP) 1 imm P. Flood#
Leach's Storm-Petrel
4/28 Dennis (Corp. B.) 2 P. Flood
Sooty Shearwater
4/14 Eastham 1 M. Waters
Manx Shearwater
3/31, 4/25 P'town (RP) 2,4 P. Flood
4/1-4/30 Revere B. 8 v.o.
4/2 Scituate 2 J. Frost
4/4 Cohasset 1 J. Bock
4/28 Dennis (Corp. B.) 1 P. Flood
Northern Gannet
4/4 Cohasset 4 M. Iliff
4/19 Oak Bluffs 100 Capt. J. Nelson
4/26 P'town (RP) 1300 B. Nikula
4/28 Eastham (FE) 1300 B. Nikula
Double-crested Cormorant
3/13 Needham 60 J. Bock
3/21 Cohasset 8 V. Zollo
4/24 Wachusett Res. 14 M. Lynch#
Great Cormorant
3/28 P'town (RP) 13 B. Nikula#
4/1-4/27 Rockport (AP) 28 v.o.
4/12 Gloucester 5 D. Walters
4/25 N. Scituate 5 G. d'Entremont
Brown Pelican
4/10 Wellfleet 1 ph D. Griffin#
American Bittern
thr Indiv. reported from 26 locations
3/26-4/29 Burrage Pd WMA 2 max A. Kneidel + v.o.
4/12-4/29 BFWMA 3 max V. Burdette + v.o.
4/12-4/20 Wayland 2 B. Harris + v.o.
Least Bittern
4/23 Ipswich 1 au N. Dubrow
Great Blue Heron
3/1 Cambr. (Alewife) 11 K. Johnson + v.o.
3/24 Pittsfield 16 J. Pierce
4/1-4/11 Middleton 72 J. Berry#
4/7 Quaboag IBA 13 M. Lynch#
Great Egret
3/20 Hamilton 1 D. Walters
4/10-4/19 Longmeadow 4 max C. Surprenant
4/23 Ipswich 39 N. Dubrow
Snowy Egret
3/28-3/31 Ipswich 2 N. Dubrow + v.o.
Little Blue Heron
4/20 Orleans 1 D. Ortolani
4/20 Nantucket 1 L. Dunn#
4/25 Ipswich 1 L. Sundar
4/25 Hingham 1 G. d'Entremont

Little Blue Heron (continued)			
4/29	Jamaica Plain	1	E. Achtenberg
Tricolored Heron			
4/6-4/19	Eastham	1	S. Finnegan#
Green Heron			
3/12	Tidmarsh WS	1	L. Schibley
4/17	Cambr. (Alewife)	1	R. Evans
4/18	Sheffield	1	J. Pierce
4/20	Longmeadow	1	M. Moore
Black-crowned Night-Heron			
3/9	Essex	2 1ad+1imm	D. Brewster
3/28	Melrose	2	J. McCoy
4/4-4/30	Watertown	20	v.o.
4/4	Gloucester	2	N. Dubrow#
4/7	Quincy	2	D. O'Brien
4/23-4/30	Nbpt	6	v.o.
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron			
4/20	P'town (RP)	1	E. Goodman
4/24	Essex	1	K. Zoll
Glossy Ibis			
4/10	W. Newbury	31	v.o.
4/23	Hamilton	215	D. Walters
4/24	Plymouth	24	D. Furbish
4/24-4/26	Wakefield	12	M. Sovay + v.o.
4/28	W. Harwich	29	B. Albro
4/29	Ipswich	178	J.Berry
White-faced Ibis			
4/11-4/12	W. Newbury	1 ph	M. Sovay + v.o.
4/13	Rowley	1 ph	S. Grinley#
4/16-4/30	Ipswich	2 max ph	N. Dubrow# + v.o.
4/26	Beverly	1 ph	M. Iliff

VULTURES THROUGH DICKCISSEL

A **Swallow-tailed Kite** was photographed in Bridgewater on March 11 and possibly the same individual was seen nearby on March 14. March reports of this species are rare in the state. The most recent March reports are from 2014, with birds recorded in Orleans and Harwich (March 12), Essex (March 15), and Nantucket (March 17). Another Swallow-tailed Kite was noted on April 11 from Truro, an area of the outer Cape that is one of the more reliable locations to see this species from mid-April through early June.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the traditional hawkwatch at Lot 1 on Plum Island was staffed with only a few volunteers; for the month of April, the hawkwatch logged a total of 68 hours compared with 158 hours in 2019. According to Paul Roberts, founder of the Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch, the 2020 season was about average. However, numbers of Sharp-shinned Hawks, American Kestrels, and Merlins were higher than the ten-year rolling average. Broad-winged Hawk migration was well under way by mid-April, with 13 individuals noted in Amherst on April 29. Wintering Rough-legged Hawks continued on Plum Island until March 12, and as many as three Snowy Owls were present on the refuge as late as March 28. The last reported Snowy Owl for the state was from Race Point in Provincetown on April 6.

March and April signal the start of migration. This year's migration was unlike any other that we have witnessed. On March 11, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the spread of Covid-19 a pandemic. By the end of the month many of our favorite birding areas were closed. All the local bird clubs cancelled their scheduled trips and meetings and most Mass Audubon sanctuaries were closed to visitors. On March 30, Mount Auburn Cemetery closed its gates to the public and to birders, with visiting hours restricted to 4–6 pm for those visiting the graves of loved ones. Parker River National Wildlife Refuge closed its gates to vehicles on April 17, but still allowed birders and others to enter on foot or by bicycle. We all learned what it meant to shelter in place and how to keep our social distance. Luckily, social distancing is generally not a problem for birding and staying close to home gave birders a reason to explore new areas. We all discovered that birding can be rewarding wherever you are.

The mild and relatively storm-free weather that we enjoyed at the start of the year continued into March. These mild conditions may help explain some unusual numbers of over-wintering birds that would otherwise have perished. Examples include many Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Gray Catbirds, Chipping Sparrows, Eastern Towhees, and Orange-crowned Warblers. There were also reports of birds that do not typically overwinter in our state, including a Black-throated Blue Warbler found at Mount Auburn in late March, a Northern Parula in Orleans, and a **MacGillivray's Warbler** at Manomet that likely moved on to breed. Tree Swallows and Eastern Phoebes arrived early in March and continued to build up in numbers by the start of April. The woods in late March were alive with the song of Winter Wrens and Brown Creepers. They were

soon joined by Blue-headed Vireos, Pine Warblers, and—in their regular spots—Louisiana Waterthrushes.

With the closure of many of the traditional locations where birders gather to witness and monitor the progression of migration, it was difficult to pinpoint the best days. The first significant movement seems to have occurred on April 19–20. Rick Heil had an excellent fallout of early migrants on Plum Island during the early morning of April 20. Among the 76 species Rick reported, high counts included 44 Northern Flickers, 12 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 40 Hermit Thrushes, 51 Yellow-rumped Warblers, and 67 Savannah Sparrows. Cool weather and significant rain prevailed from April 24 through April 27, which stalled migration.

Among the highlights for the period included the continuing and cooperative **Red-headed Woodpeckers** at Rock Meadow Pond, Ayer, and at Bachelor Brook in South Hadley. The **Townsend's Solitaire**, which was first discovered on November 10, 2019, at Halibut Point in Rockport, was last seen on March 2. Noteworthy sparrow reports during the period were three Grasshopper Sparrows, a Lark Sparrow at Kingston, two reports of Clay-colored Sparrow, and a very obliging Ipswich Sparrow that spent seven days at Millennium Park in West Roxbury. A total of 19 species of warbler were noted during the period. Outstanding reports included the **MacGillivray's Warbler** seen and audio-recorded at Manomet, a Hooded Warbler and a **Prothonotary Warbler** in Provincetown, and another Hooded Warbler in Hingham. The **Western Tanager** first noted from Sandwich on the Buzzards Bay Christmas Bird Count on December 14 was last seen on March 3. Other Western Tanagers were noted from Nantucket and Amherst. Rounding out the rarities were reports of **Summer Tanagers** from Sandwich and Mashpee and two different **Painted Buntings** in Orleans.

R. Stymeist

References

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

Black Vulture
- 3/1-3/12 Wrentham 6 W. Sweet
- 3/10 South Hadley 9 M. Waters
- 3/10 Mendon 5 C. Martone
- 3/24 S. Deerfield 13 B. Finney
- 4/25 Bourne 2 E. Hill-Gest
- 4/25 P'town 2 P. Flood

Turkey Vulture
- 3/27 PI 14 R. Heil
- 4/1 Williamstown 18 M. Morales

Osprey
- 3/8 Longmeadow 1 C. Volker
- 3/18-3/31 Ayer 2 1pr n S. Miller# + v.o.
- 3/22 Harwich 3 J. Hoye#
- 3/22-3/31 Boxborough 2 1pr n E. Zilinek

Swallow-tailed Kite
- 3/11 Bridgewater 1 ph J. Carlisle + v.o.
- 4/11 Truro 1 J. Sweeney

Northern Harrier
- 4/19 Edgartown 2 Capt. J. Nelson
- 4/20 PI 6 3ad m+3f R. Heil

Sharp-shinned Hawk
- 4/thr PI 120 Hawkcount (P. Roberts)
- 4/11 Medfield 2 J. Bock
- 4/12 Pittsfield 3 K. Hanson#
- 4/19 PI 12 J. Trimble

Cooper's Hawk
- 4/1-4/30 MtA 2 1pr n A. Parker + v.o.
- 4/1-4/30 Arlington 2 1pr n D. Bean + v.o.

Northern Goshawk
- 4/5 Pittsfield (Onota) 1 imm J. Pierce, G. Hurley
- 4/6 Millers Falls 1 B. Kanash

Bald Eagle
- 3/1-3/8 Waltham 2 1pr n v.o.
- 3/4 Easthampton 7 D. Allard
- 3/20 Quaboag IBA 3 1pr+1imm M. Lynch#
- 4/14 Wachusett Res. 5 1imm M. Lynch#
- 4/23 Medford 8 4ad+4imm P. Roberts#

Red-shouldered Hawk
- thr Easton 2 1pr n K. Ryan
- 3/12 Quaboag IBA 3 M. Lynch#
- 3/31-4/11 Middleton 2 J. Berry#

Broad-winged Hawk
- 4/11 Sudbury 4 B. Harris
- 4/12 Pittsfield 4 K. Hanson#
- 4/23 Ware R. IBA 3 M. Lynch#
- 4/29 Amherst 13 J. Rose

Rough-legged Hawk
- 3/1-3/12 PI 1 v.o.
- 3/1 Lee 1 J. Pierce + v.o.
- 3/1 Deerfield 1 S. Griesemer
- 3/6 Worthington 1 B. Finney
- 3/25 Northampton 1 H. Faerstein

Barn Owl
- 3/4, 4/8 Nantucket 1 S. Kardell#

Eastern Screech-Owl
- 3/3 MSSF 2 G. d'Entremont

Great Horned Owl
3/1-4/12 Middleton 2 1pr n J. Berry#
4/1-4/6 Lexington 3 yg A. Joslin#
4/7 Boston (AA)3 1ad+2yg N. Hayward
Snowy Owl
3/1-3/28 PI 3 v.o.
3/9 Rowley 1 J. Carroll
4/6 P'town (RP) 1 M. Heintz
Barred Owl
3/9 Quaboag IBA 4 M. Lynch#
3/24 Groveland 3 N. Dubrow
4/25 Wompatuck SP 3 G. d'Entremont
Short-eared Owl
3/3-3/28 PI 4 v.o.
3/7 Edgartown 2 B. Shriber
3/14-4/25 Hanson 1 E. Finizio
3/31 Quincy 1 C. Whitebread
4/4 Hadley (Honeypot)1 M. Locher
Northern Saw-whet Owl
3/5 Marlborough 1 N. Tepper#
3/8 Sheffield 1 K. Hanson, J. Jew
4/23 Williamstown 1 So. Auer
Belted Kingfisher
4/11 Ayer 2 G. d'Entremont
Red-headed Woodpecker
thr Ayer 1 v.o.
3/1-4/23 South Hadley 2 A. Hulsey + v.o.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
3/19-3/27 Ipswich 2 1ad+1imm M. Brengle
4/11 Ashby 4 v.o.
4/21 Sharon 2 V. Zollo
4/23 Hardwick 12 M. Lynch#
Northern Flicker
3/18 Wachusett Res. 5 M. Lynch#
4/20 PI 44 R. Heil
Pileated Woodpecker
thr Ayer 3 v.o.
4/5 Colrain 2 M. Lynch#
American Kestrel
4/thr PI 377 Hawkcount (P. Roberts)
4/8 Hanscom 25 M. Rines
4/11 Bedford 5 D. Swain#
4/19 PI 16 J. Trimble
4/28 Worc. 12 M. Lynch#
Merlin
3/1-3/31 Medford 1 J. Layman + v.o.
3/2 Lexington 1 D. Williams#
4/thr PI 42 Hawkcount (P. Roberts)
4/20 PI 3 R. Heil
4/28 Worc. 1 M. Lynch#
Peregrine Falcon
thr Lawrence 2 1pr n C. Gibson + v.o.
thr Watertown 2 1pr n R. Stymeist# + v.o.
3/28 P'town (RP) 1 B. Nikula
Great Crested Flycatcher
4/25 Easthampton 1 A. Kallenbach
Eastern Kingbird
4/29 Sheffield 1 M. Sand
4/29 Cummington 1 T. Gessing
Least Flycatcher
4/29 Northampton 1 H. Scott
4/30 Pittsfield 1 K. Hanson
Eastern Phoebe
3/1-3/8 Middleton 1 J. Keeley#
4/2 Belchertown 16 D. Marchant
4/5 Colrain 23 M. Lynch#
4/7 Quaboag IBA 26 M. Lynch#
4/12 Ashby 12 S. Miller#
Northern Shrike
thr-4/7 Indiv. reported from 20 locations
White-eyed Vireo
4/18 Barnstable 1 P. Trimble
4/20-4/30 P'town 1 B. Nikula#
4/29 Rockport 1 M. Nelson
4/29 W. Boylston 1 M. VandenBoom#
Yellow-throated Vireo
4/19-4/30 Eastham 1 J. Sweeney#
4/29 Quabbin Pk 1 L. Therrien
Blue-headed Vireo
4/11 Boxford 1 M. Watson
4/13 Newton 1 M. Chalfin-Jacobs#
4/22 Assabet R. NWR 5 S. Beattie
Warbling Vireo
4/14 W. Newbury 1 T. Olsson
4/25 Hadley 1 S. Surner, M. Locher
Fish Crow
3/1 Natick 4 J. Hoye#
3/5-3/12 GMNWR 2 1pr n J. Trimble
3/30 Quaboag IBA 4 M. Lynch#
4/22 Gill 22 J. Layfield
4/25 Concord 13 S. Perkins#
Common Raven
4/4 Carver 14 J. Young
4/12 Pittsfield 9 S. Townsend
4/30 Nantucket 2 1pr n S. Kardell#
Horned Lark
3/1-3/8 Saugus 70 G. Wilson + v.o.
3/21 Hadley 30 J. Oliverio
3/27 Worc. 60 M. Lynch#
3/27 Northfield 50 J. Coleman#
4/4-4/28 Acton 35 D. Swain + v.o.
Bank Swallow
4/12 Wayland 1 B. Harris
4/20 Hadley 2 L. Therrien
Tree Swallow
3/5-3/9 GMNWR 3 W. Martens#
3/10 New Salem 185 E. LeBlanc
3/10 Hatfield 159 M. McKitrick
3/11 Holyoke 190 D. Peake-Jones
3/25 Stockbridge 500 J. Jew
4/24 Wachusett Res. 350 M. Lynch#
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
4/3 Belchertown 1 L. Therrien
4/5 Sheffield 3 J. Pierce
4/8-4/30 Arlington Res. 10 v.o.
Purple Martin
4/8 Barnstable 1 C. Walz
4/13 Millis 4 J. Glover + v.o.
4/15 Brighton 1 R. Schain
4/20 PI 5 R. Heil
Barn Swallow
4/4 Hadley 1 L. Farlow
4/6 PI 4 R. Heil
4/7 Pittsfield 2 S. Townsend
Cliff Swallow
4/11 Sharon 1 W. Sweet
4/16-4/18 GMNWR 1 W. Martens+ v.o.
4/25 Hatfield 1 T. Gilliland
4/28 S. Egremont 1 J. Pierce
Red-breasted Nuthatch
3/1 Ware R. IBA 4 M. Lynch#
4/17 Shutesbury 10 L. Waters
4/25 Wompatuck SP 2 G. d'Entremont
Brown Creeper
3/11 Assabet R. NWR 13 N. Tepper
4/6 Boxford 11 J. Berry#
4/7 Shutesbury 9 L. Waters
4/18 Wompatuck SP 6 G. d'Entremont
4/25 Monterey 10 L. Hertzog
House Wren
3/16 Ipswich (CB) 1 N. Dubrow
4/5 Hingham 1 K. Rawdon
Winter Wren
3/10-3/11 IRWS 4 C. Decker + v.o.
4/1-4/30 Boxford 4 v.o.
4/25 Wompatuck SP 5 G. d'Entremont

Marsh Wren
3/1-3/27 Wayland 2 B. Harris
3/25-4/29 Lenox 2 max K. Hanson + v.o.
4/9 GMNWR 6 W. Martens#
Carolina Wren
4/7 Holland 6 M. Lynch#
4/22 Blackstone 6 M. Lynch#
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
4/8 Easthampton 1 T. Gessing
4/8 Newton 1 W. Wang
4/8 Dedham 1 M. Iliff
4/12 Medford 3 M. Rines
Golden-crowned Kinglet
3/1 Ware R. IBA 5 M. Lynch#
4/5 Wendell 14 D. Narango
4/5 Holyoke 9 D. Peake-Jones
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
3/25 Shutesbury 20 L. Waters
4/20 PI 12 R. Heil
4/23 P'town 14 B. Nikula
Eastern Bluebird
3/1 Ayer 6 T. Murray
3/8 Tyringham 12 M. Lynch#
3/14 IRWS 7 J. Hoye#
Townsend's Solitaire
3/1-3/2 Rockport (HPt) 1 v.o.
Veery
4/30 Amherst 1 S. Schwenk
Hermit Thrush
4/18 Clarksburg 14 So. Auer
4/20 PI 40 R. Heil
4/20 Lexington 27 M. Rins
4/21 Quabbin Pk 22 L. Therrien
Wood Thrush
4/28 Hadley (Fort R.) 1 L. Therrien
4/29 Pittsfield 1 S. Townsend
Gray Catbird
3/10 W. Newbury 1 G. Keller
4/12-4/30 PI 2 v.o.
Brown Thrasher
3/15-3/31 Cambr. (FP) 1 M. Jensen + v.o.
4/1 Cambr. (Danehy Pk) 1 N. Yusuff
4/26 Hanscom 2 M. Rines
Bohemian Waxwing
3/1-3/16 P'town 1 ph J. Wagner#
American Pipit
3/15, 4/26 Nantucket 3, 5 S. Kardell
3/27 Edgartown 18 L. Johnson
3/29-4/4 Ipswich 6 D. Walters#
4/12-4/19 Hadley 22 max T. Gagnon# + v.o.
4/12 Cumb. Farms 18 D. Burton#
Evening Grosbeak
3/21-4/24 Conway 2 1pr S. Baker, S. Dombeck
3/28 Hinsdale 2 M. Lynch#
4/5-4/29 Williamsburg 12 J. Coleman
4/5 New Salem 1 B. Lafley
4/25 Paxton 2 1pr B. Samdahl
Purple Finch
3/28 Hinsdale 8 M. Lynch#
4/20 PI 19 R. Heil
4/20 P'town 1 B. Nikula
4/26 Shutesbury 8 B. Emily
Red Crossbill
3/2 Lenox 1 Z. Adams
3/15, 4/26 Tolland 1,1 D. Holmes
3/25-4/19 Conway/Williamsburg 9 max G. Lebaron + v.o.
3/28 Huntington 1 D. Allard
4/1-4/7 Lenox 1,2 J. Pierce
Pine Siskin
4/23 Belchertown 1 L. Therrien
4/24 Bernardston 2 S. Gross
Lapland Longspur
3/1 Edgartown 1 B. Shriber
3/8 Saugus 1 ph G. Wilson + v.o.
Snow Bunting
3/8 Weymouth 28 M. Iliff
3/9-3/11 Northampton 5 max S. Griesemer + v.o.
3/15 Gloucester 2 J. Nelson, M. Watson
3/27 Rockport 1 H. Wales#
Grasshopper Sparrow
3/1-3/8 Saugus 1 G. Wilson + v.o.
4/8 Deerfield 1 D. Sibley + v.o.
4/20 Weymouth 2 D. O'Brien
Lark Sparrow
4/15 Kingston 1 A. Kneidel
Chipping Sparrow
3/1-3/5 Arlington 6 R. Stymeist#
3/2-3/23 Eastham 13 v.o.
4/25 Wompatuck SP 16 G. d'Entremont
4/29 W. Brookfield 51 M. Lynch#
4/29 Pittsfield 27 S. Townsend
Clay-colored Sparrow
3/2-3/23 Eastham 1 v.o.
4/25 Hingham 1 K. Rawdon
Field Sparrow
3/1-3/6 Groton 3 T. Murray
4/7 Brimfield 4 M. Lynch#
4/21 Southwick 11 J. Meyers
4/25 Spencer 6 M. Lynch#
Fox Sparrow
3/8-3/29 Orange 6 max L. Boudreau
3/15 S. Dartmouth 3 G. d'Entremont#
4/5 Colrain 6 M. Lynch#
4/6 Lenox 9 J. Pierce
American Tree Sparrow
4/20 Rockport 1 C. Marchant
4/20-4/25 Sudbury 1 B. Black#
4/25 Ipswich 2 N. Dubrow
Dark-eyed Junco
4/5 Colrain 210 M. Lynch#
4/5 Rowe 62 M. Lynch#
Dark-eyed Junco x White-throated Sparrow (hybrid)
4/4 Upton 1 ph N. Paulson#
White-crowned Sparrow
3/1-3/8 Saugus 3 G. Wilson + v.o.
4/21 Nantucket 2 T. Pastuszak
White-throated Sparrow
3/16 GMNWR 12 N. Hayward
3/28 Hinsdale 14 M. Lynch#
4/5 Colrain 46 M. Lynch#
Vesper Sparrow
3/17 Rochester 3 B. Burke
4/4-4/8 Hadley (Honeypot) 4 max L. Therrien
4/7-4/28 Williamstown 2 max M. Morales+v.o.
4/8-4/26 Orange Airport 3 max B. Lafley + v.o.
Seaside Sparrow
4/5 Eastham (FH) 1 S. Finnegan#
4/7 PI 1 R. Heil
Saltmarsh Sparrow
4/5 Eastham (FH) 1 S. Finnegan#
Savannah Sparrow
4/18 Hanscom 73 M. Rines
4/18 Ashley Falls 28 J. Pierce
4/20 PI 67 R. Heil
4/21 Deerfield 20 J. Layfield
4/29 Easthampton 50 L. Farlow
Savannah Sparrow (Ipswich Sparrow)
4/15-4/21 W. Roxbury (MP) 1 M. Iliff + v.o.
4/18 Rockport 1 J. Keeley#
Swamp Sparrow
4/20 Lenox 24 L. Waters
4/26 Burrage Pd WMA 17 G. d'Entremont

Spotted x Eastern Towhee (hybrid)!
4/16 Assabet R. NWR 1 ph N. Tepper

Eastern Towhee
3/1-4/6 Newton 2 H. Miller+ v.o.
3/15 S. Dartmouth 3 G. d'Entremont#
3/18 Ayer 2 S. Wilson
Yellow-breasted Chat
3/1-4/18 Hyannis 1 L. Cassidy#
3/8-3/9 Winchester 1 R. LaFontaine + v.o.
3/28 Nantucket 1 S. Kardell
3/31-4/5 Scituate 1 R. Copeland
4/12 Tisbury 1 L. Johnson
Yellow-headed Blackbird
4/16 Kingston 1 ph B. Creamer
4/28 Chatham 1 m ph M. Hardy
Eastern Meadowlark
3/10-4/30 Ipswich 5 N. Dubrow + v.o.
4/5-4/30 Concord 6 v.o.
4/8-4/26 Westover AFB 6 max L.+A. Richardson
Baltimore Oriole
3/1 Nantucket 2 G. Andrews#
3/25-4/29 Kingston 1 D. Furbish
4/23 Belchertown 2 M. Cozine
Rusty Blackbird
3/3, 3/7 Barnstable 1 E. Hill-Gest
3/21 Lexington 22 M. Rines
3/30 Medfield 97 J. Bock
4/1-4/28 Lynnfield 108 M. Sovay + v.o.
4/14 W. Roxbury 27 max R. Schain + v.o.
Ovenbird
4/22 Chesterfield 1 T. Gessing
4/25 Arlington Res. 1 K. Hartel
4/26 Longmeadow 1 L. + A. Richardson
Louisiana Waterthrush
4/6 Turners Falls 1 E. Huston
4/6 Wayland 1 J. Hoye#
4/9 Boxford 3 T. Martin
4/11-4/30 Ashby 5 L. Kramer#
4/25 Spencer 6 M. Lynch#
Northern Waterthrush
4/19-4/21 Assabet R. NWR 2 N. Tepper + v.o.
4/25 Wompatuck SP 2 G. d'Entremont
Black-and-white Warbler
4/21 Pittsfield 1 J. Pierce
4/25-4/30 Concord 3 v.o.
Prothonotary Warbler
4/15 Nantucket 1 ph S. Fee
Orange-crowned Warbler
thr Indiv. reported from 13 locations
MacGillivray's Warbler
4/29 MBO 1 ph au E. Dalton + v.o.
Common Yellowthroat
4/11 W. Roxbury (MP) 1 M. Iliff
4/14 Ipswich 2 P. Low
Hooded Warbler
4/21 Wompatuck SP 1 H. Cross
4/26 P'town 1 K. Miller#
American Redstart
4/23 Hardwick 1 B. Goodwin
4/28 Turners Falls 1 J. Layfield
4/29 Ware 4 R. Menck
Northern Parula
3/1-4/15 S. Orleans 1 D. Gilmore
4/14 Randolph 1 M. Iliff
4/25 Leverett 2 C. Sylvia
4/25 Easthampton 2 A. Kallenbach
Blackburnian Warbler
4/29 Williamsburg 1 A. Kallenbach
Yellow Warbler
4/24 Turners Falls 1 R. Brown
4/25 Easthampton 2 B. Finney
4/25 Cambr. (Alewife) 1 S. Griffin
Black-throated Blue Warbler
3/23-4/23 MtA 1 m R. Stymeist + v.o.
4/25 Clarksburg 1 So. Auer
4/29 New Marlborough 5 K. Schopp
Palm Warbler
4/6 Boxford 14 J. Berry#
4/11 Holyoke 73 D. Peake-Jones#
4/11 Groton 17 S. Wilson
4/15 Belchertown 52 L. Therrien
4/23 Hardwick 12 M. Lynch#
Palm Warbler (Western)
3/4 Falmouth 1 J. Hoye#
3/28 Burrage Pd WMA 2 S. Sullivan
4/20 P'town 1 B. Nikula
4/23 Andover 1 M. McCarthy
4/29 MBO 1 E. Dalton
Pine Warbler
3/1 Lowell 8 v.o.
4/5-4/30 Boxford 19 v.o.
4/19 Wompatuck SP 19 G. d'Entremont
4/25 Spencer 38 M. Lynch#
Yellow-rumped Warbler
4/20 P'town 60 B. Nikula
4/20 PI 51 R. Heil
Prairie Warbler
4/12 Edgartown 1 S. Williams#
Black-throated Green Warbler
4/23 Orange 2 G. Watkevich
4/26 Shutesbury 2 C. Sylvia
Summer Tanager
4/15 Sandwich 1 m ph J. Comeau
4/23 Mashpee 1 imm m ph P. Kyle#
Scarlet Tanager
4/22 Barnstable 1 N. Villone
4/30 Granville 1 M. Lerner
Western Tanager
3/1-3/3 Sandwich 1 S. Boutilier
3/7-4/5 Nantucket 1 ph G. Andrews#
4/18-4/19 Amherst 1 ph J. Mildred + v.o.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
4/14 Yarmouth 1 J. Dwelly
4/15 Nantucket 1 S. Kardell
4/17-4/18 Lynn 1 T. McElligot
Blue Grosbeak
4/16-4/28 Nantucket 1 J. Olney
4/22 Waltham 1 f ph R. Barton
Indigo Bunting
4/14 P'town 1 B. Nikula
4/17 Orleans 2 D. Errichetti
4/20 Watertown 1 D. Bates
Painted Bunting
3/6 Orleans 1 f/imm m ph R. Utt
4/7-4/15 Orleans 1 f/imm m ph R. Davis
Dickcissel
3/1-4/15 Rumney (Revere) 1 S. Whitebread + v.o.
3/29 Georgetown 1 ph M. Watson
3/31-4/5 Williamstown 1 ph v.o.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taxonomic order is based on AOS checklist, Seventh edition, 60th Supplement, as published in *Auk* 136: ukz042 (2019) (see <http://checklist.aou.org/>).

Locations

AA	Arnold Arboretum, Boston
ABC	Allen Bird Club
AFB	Air Force Base
AP	Andrews Point, Rockport
APd	Allens Pond, S. Dartmouth
AthBC	Athol Bird Club
B.	Beach
Barre FD	Barre Falls Dam
BBC	Brookline Bird Club
BFWMA	Bolton Flats WMA, Bolton & Lancaster
BHI	Boston Harbor Islands
BI	Belle Isle, E. Boston
BMB	Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester
BNC	Boston Nature Center, Mattapan
BR	Bass Rocks, Gloucester
BRI Co. seas	Bristol County, offshore
Cambr.	Cambridge
CB	Crane Beach, Ipswich
CCBC	Cape Cod Bird Club
CGB	Coast Guard Beach, Eastham
Co.	County
Corp. B.	Corporation Beach, Dennis
CP	Crooked Pond, Boxford
Cumb. Farms	Cumberland Farms, Middleboro
DFWS	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary
DM	Dunback Meadow
DWMA	Delaney WMA, Stow, Bolton, Harvard
DWWS	Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary
EP	Eastern Point, Gloucester
FE	First Encounter Beach, Eastham
FH	Fort Hill, Eastham
FHC	Forest Hills Cemetery, Boston
FP	Fresh Pond, Cambridge
FPk	Franklin Park, Boston
G#	Gate #, Quabbin Res.
GMNWR	Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge
H.	Harbor
HCB	Herring Cove Beach, Provincetown
HP	Horn Pond, Woburn
HPt	Halibut Point, Rockport
HRWMA	High Ridge WMA, Gardner
I.	Island
IBA	Important Bird Area
IRWS	Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary
L.	Ledge
MAS	Mass Audubon
MBO	Bird Observatory, Manomet
MBWMA	Martin Burns WMA, Newbury
McW	McLaughlin Woods
MI	Morris Island
MNWS	Marblehead Neck Wildlife Sanctuary
MP	Millennium Park, W. Roxbury
MSSF	Myles Standish State Forest, Plymouth
MtA	Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambr.
MV	Martha's Vineyard
NAC	Nine Acre Corner, Concord
Nbpt	Newburyport
ONWR	Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge
Pd	Pond
PG	Public Garden, Boston
PI	Plum Island
Pk	Park
PLY Co. seas	Plymouth County, offshore
Pont.	Pontoosuc Lake, Lanesboro
POP	Point of Pines, Revere
PR	Pinnacle Rock, Malden
P'town	Provincetown
R.	River
Res.	Reservoir
RKG	Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston
RP	Race Point, Provincetown
SB	South Beach, Chatham
SF	State Forest
SN	Sandy Neck, Barnstable
SP	State Park
SRV	Sudbury River Valley
SSBC	South Shore Bird Club
TASL	Take A Second Look, Boston Harbor Census
WBWS	Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary
WE	World's End, Hingham
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
WMWS	Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary
Wompatuck SP	Hingham, Cohasset, Scituate, Norwell
Worc.	Worcester
WS	Wildlife Sanctuary
WSF	Willowdale State Forest, Ipswich
WWMA	Westborough WMA, Westborough

Other Abbreviations

*	first state record (pending MARC review)
!	subject to MARC review
ad	adult
au	audio recorded
b	banded
br	breeding
cy	cycle (3cy = 3rd cycle)
d	dead
dk	dark (morph)
f	female
fl	fledgling
h	heard
imm	immature
inj	injured
juv	juvenile
lt	light (morph)
m	male
MARC	Massachusetts Avian Records Committee
max	maximum
migr	migrating
n	nesting
nfc	nocturnal flight call
ph	photographed
pl	plumage
pr	pair
r	rescued
S	summer (1S = first summer)
subad	subadult
v.o.	various observers
W	winter (2W = second winter)
yg	young
#	additional observers

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO *BIRD OBSERVER*

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

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

BYGONE BIRDS

Historical Highlights for July–August

Neil Hayward

5 YEARS AGO

July–August 2015

A **Fea's Petrel** seen on Stellwagen Bank on July 18 was the second for the state. A rare midsummer **Swallow-tailed Kite** lingered for three days on Nantucket at the start of July. A one-eyed **Crested Caracara** was photographed in the back yard of a Lancaster birder on August 5. After a hiatus of almost 20 years for the state, a **Long-billed Curlew** was spotted near the lighthouse on South Monomoy on July 28. Three days later, there were three! A **Curlew Sandpiper** was at Duxbury Beach on August 26, and a **Reeve** was on Plum Island on July 2. A two-legged **Bridled Tern** was reported from the western end of Nantucket on July 11, and then a one-legged bird was spotted by the same observer at Tuckernuck Island, less than a mile away and over a month later. **Sandwich Terns** were in Eastham and Chatham.

Best event: the BBC pelagic on August 22–23, which logged **Black-capped Petrels** on both days, triple-digit **Audubon's Shearwaters**, 37 **White-faced Storm-Petrels**, 23 **Band-rumped Storm-Petrels**, one **Red-billed Tropicbird**, four **White-tailed Tropicbirds**, and a **Bridled Tern**.

10 YEARS AGO

July–August 2010

A visit to Oceanographer and Hydrographer canyons in mid-August tallied three **White-faced Storm-Petrels** and six **Band-rumped Storm-Petrels**. A week later, a **White-tailed Tropicbird** was photographed at Welker Canyon. The only **King Rail** of the season came from a marsh in Wilmington. A **Bar-tailed Godwit** was reported from North Beach Island in Chatham on August 9 and then from nearby South Beach at the end of the month. A **Red-necked Stint** was at South Beach from June 27–July 4. Two different **Sabine's Gulls** were reported at sea in late August, and a **Gull-billed Tern** was at South Beach, Chatham on August 26. Two Monk Parakeets in East Boston became three in July–albeit another adult. Each was busy working on separate entrances to the giant nest atop a utility pole at Bremen Street Park. A male **Golden-winged Warbler** was at Dunback Meadow on August 27.

Best sighting: **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher**, Sandy Point, Plum Island, July 22–August 21. It was seen by many birders, despite its frustratingly elusive behavior during its monthlong tenure.

20 YEARS AGO

July–August 2000

At least six pairs of Ospreys nested on the North Shore, "more than ever before". A pair of Sharp-shinned Hawks nested in Essex County for the first time since 1896. An adult **King Rail** was found with downy young in Orleans in July. Rare shorebirds were limited to a **Black-necked Stilt** at South Monomoy, and an **American Avocet** and **Ruff** at Plum Island. A **South Polar Skua** was photographed on Stellwagen Bank on July 17. A **California Gull** was found at South Beach in Chatham on July 23, the second accepted record for the state. **Gull-billed Terns** were reported from Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, and a **Bridled Tern** was at Muskeget Island. Breeding firsts were confirmed for Tufted Titmouse and Rose-breasted Grosbeak on Martha's Vineyard. A rare summering **Blue Grosbeak** was in Southwick, June 23–July 14.

Best sighting: male **Garganey**, Plum Island, August 4–11. This bird, in eclipse plumage, was accepted as wild and remains the most recent record for this species in Massachusetts.

40 YEARS AGO

July–August 1980

Two **Audubon's Shearwaters** were spotted 55 miles south of Nantucket on July 27. An adult **Red-necked Stint** was at Scituate (Third Cliff), July 17–22. This was the second record for the state, hot on the heels of the first, found only a month earlier at Monomoy, June 24. Two **American Avocets** were at Plum Island. A **White-winged Dove** at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, July 2–4, was the second record for the sanctuary. A **Sabine's Gull** was spotted at Stellwagen Bank on August 15, and a **Gull-billed Tern** was on Monomoy, August 10. Also on Monomoy was a **Loggerhead Shrike** on August 24. A Barn Owl pair with four young was seen at Newburyport on August 12.

Best sighting: **Burrowing Owl**, Martha's Vineyard, July 12–22. This was presumably the same bird that was first found in Plymouth on May 13 and then again on Monomoy. It is the second record for the state after the first in Newburyport in May 1875.

MassWildlife July 2020

Peregrine Falcon Restoration Reaches New Heights in Massachusetts

As part of routine summer monitoring, MassWildlife biologists criss-crossed the state visiting nest sites to band Peregrine Falcon chicks. Thanks to enthusiastic volunteer observers and other conservation partners, a total of 46 territorial pairs were documented statewide. Most pairs are nesting on man-made sites such as buildings, bridges, and quarry cliffs. A few pairs are raising young on mountainside cliffs in more remote parts of the state. Two new nests were confirmed in Springfield and three historical nests have been reconfirmed in Bourne, Sandisfield, and Worcester.

MassWildlife biologists successfully banded over 40 chicks with small metal leg bands inscribed with a unique identification number. Staff use this information to track individual peregrines through observations reported by the public. This helps biologists learn about these protected birds' movements, life span, and breeding activity. Web cameras are another useful tool to monitor peregrine nests for eggs, hatched chicks, and fledged chicks. A new Peregrine Falcon nest camera was installed by MassDOT this year at the Gillis Bridge in Newburyport. Get an inside look at the nests of the fastest birds on Earth through one of the live peregrine nest cameras before the young ones leave their nests! < https://www.mass.gov/service-details/view-falcon-cameras>

Other highlights from this year's monitoring include identification of a Peregrine Falcon at a nest site in South Hadley. This male was banded 17 years ago as a chick in Fairlee, Vermont on May 29, 2003. Peregrine Falcons from Massachusetts have dispersed far and wide. A female peregrine banded in May of 2013 in Cambridge at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) campus has now established a nest at the University of Montreal. (Hopefully her college credits from MIT transferred!) This female, lovingly referred to as Spirit, can be seen on this live nest cam. < https://sportsmansparadiseonline.com/university-of-montreal-peregrine-falcon-cam/>

Before restoration efforts, the last active Peregrine Falcon nest in the Commonwealth was documented in 1955. Nesting failures were due mostly to the eggshell thinning effects of DDT and similar pesticides. The Peregrine Falcon was listed as endangered in 1969 under the federal Endangered Species Conservation Act and the use of DDT in the United States was banned in 1972. Peregrine Falcon restoration became MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program first restoration project in 1984 and is its longest running project to date. The first successful nesting pair in Massachusetts occurred in 1987 on the Custom House Tower in Boston. The Peregrine Falcon was removed from the federal list of Endangered and Threatened Species in 1999. In Massachusetts, the Peregrine Falcon's status under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) has improved over the decades. In late 2019, due to continued conservation efforts, the bird's MESA status was improved from threatened to special concern.

ABOUT THE COVER

Greater Yellowlegs

The Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*) is one of North America's most widespread and easily identified shorebirds. This middle- to large-sized shorebird has long, lemon-yellow legs, distinguishing it from all other shorebirds except for the Lesser Yellowlegs, which is smaller and weighs about half of what the Greater weighs. Greater Yellowlegs has a long, heavy, and slightly upturned bill; Lesser Yellowlegs has a proportionately smaller bill that is shorter, straighter, and more delicate.

In breeding plumage, adult Greater Yellowlegs are gray to brown with whitish spots above, and the head and neck are gray with white flecks. They have white bellies with black barring on the flanks. The nonbreeding plumage is a paler version of the breeding plumage, with the dark flank markings mostly gone. Juveniles are similar in plumage to the nonbreeding adults, but have pale throats and streaking on the breast. The Greater Yellowlegs is monomorphic with no recognized subspecies. It is closely related to the Old World greenshanks, but further study is needed to sort out the relationships.

The breeding range of Greater Yellowlegs stretches from southern Alaska to central British Columbia and in a swath across central Canada south of Hudson Bay to Newfoundland. They winter along both coasts of the United States, the Caribbean Islands, and from Arizona and Texas south through Mexico, Central America, and locally throughout South America. In Massachusetts, the Greater Yellowlegs is a common coastal migrant on salt marshes and mud flats and is sometimes common inland in suitable habitat. It is a rare but regular visitor during winter, primarily on Cape Cod. Yellowlegs arrive from late April to early May and depart beginning in mid-July; fall migration numbers peak from late August until the end of September. They spend their winters in coastal marshes, mud flats, swampy wetlands, and lagoons. Greater Yellowlegs tend to be a solitary species, although in migration they may be found in small flocks. However, when feeding they tend to stay at least 30 feet apart from conspecifics.

The Greater Yellowlegs' most frequent vocalization is a three-note call, often described as *whew whew whew* or *teu teu teu;* it is strident, loud, and clear and is often given during flight. When alarmed, they give a series of *kek* calls while standing. On the breeding territory (and sometimes in migration), the male gives a yodeling flight song during the courtship display, in which the bird flaps its wings as it rises, coasts to a high point, then falls with closed wings some distance before resuming regular flight. On the ground, the courting male runs around the female and raises quivering wings.

Greater Yellowlegs are boreal breeders, nesting in muskeg and other waterlogged ground covered with lichens, mosses, and sedges, as well as in open woodlands and meadows where there are small ponds and sloughs. They also breed on tundra. Lined with sedges, grasses, or leaves, the nest is a well-hidden, shallow scrape in peat, moss, grass, or other substrate, often close to a short boreal tree.

The nesting biology of Greater Yellowlegs is poorly known. The usual clutch of 3–4 dark-spotted gray or olive eggs is incubated for about three weeks until hatching. Adult birds often sit tight on the nest when approached, or they may leave the nest and give a broken-wing distraction display. While nesting, one adult sits on the eggs or stays with the chicks while the other bird perches on a tree in order to spot predators at considerable distance. Predators are harassed or mobbed. Chicks are precocial, capable of leaving the nest and feeding themselves the day they hatch. Both parents remain with the chicks for about a month until they begin to fly. One or both parents continue to accompany the chicks for an additional two weeks until they become capable of sustained flight.

Greater Yellowlegs usually forage in shallow water or on mud flats. Their prey consists of small marine and terrestrial invertebrates, including shrimp, beetles, insect larvae, and small fish and amphibians. In daytime they are primarily visual foragers, stabbing at prey with the bill, but at night and sometimes during the day they use a sweeping motion, which suggests that they are foraging tactilely. They may chase fish and sometimes pursue small fish with the bill open and the lower mandible below the water surface. Occasionally, a small flock will pursue schools of minnows in unison, moving and turning together.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Greater Yellowlegs populations decreased due to market and game hunting activities. There is little information about subsequent trends, but populations seem to have increased and are currently stable. There is little information about predators of Greater Yellowlegs. The vagaries of weather, especially freezing on the breeding grounds, are known to be detrimental. However, Greater Yellowlegs have a broad breeding range that includes a wide variety of habitats. In migration, they do not depend on just a few staging areas, and in winter they use wetlands dispersed throughout Central and South America—all factors that suggest that the Greater Yellowlegs will continue to be one of our more common and conspicuous shorebirds.

William E. Davis, Jr.

ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST

Barry Van Dusen

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

AT A GLANCE

June 2020

DAVID CLAPP

No doubt some readers are old enough to recall Dr. Doolittle's imaginary hybrid between a gazelle and a unicorn, the pushmi-pullyu. Without going into the details of pushmi-pullyu taxonomy, suffice to say that this issue's mystery bird shares one important characteristic with that mythical creature. Specifically, one of the birds in the photograph is seemingly mired in an identity crisis. That's right, the bird on the left fails to match precisely any duck-like bird regularly occurring in Massachusetts. This observation brings us back to the fictitious pushmi-pullyu by suggesting that we might need to consider interspecies hybridization to identify the mystery bird.

There is little doubt that the birds in the picture are ducks of some kind. A cursory search through a field guide will suggest that the small, white-chested, dark-headed duck with a white patch on the side of its head in the foreground of the picture is either a female or immature male Bufflehead. The other duck, however, fails to match field guide depiction of any other waterfowl species. Clearly, the mystery bird is larger than the Bufflehead in the photograph, and it also has a larger bill, extensive white sides and chest, and a unique head and facial pattern that fails to match any other North American waterfowl. Focusing on the mystery duck's gleaming white sides and chest and its black back significantly narrows the field of possibilities. Only the drakes of Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, and Common Merganser share these color characteristics. Common Merganser can be eliminated by the shape of the bill, which in all merganser species is narrow, tapered, and pointed at the tip.

A drake Common Goldeneye has a large, somewhat angular-shaped head, and a conspicuous white spot on the face between the eye and the bill. A Bufflehead drake is small and compact, with a small blue-gray bill and a prominent round white patch covering the top and back of the head. When these various features are compared to the mystery duck, the head pattern is decidedly aberrant—intermediate?—in appearance. A close examination of the color photograph on the website also hints at a dark green iridescence on the head of the mystery duck which is a characteristic of drake Common Goldeneyes. Given the overall mix of features, including the size and somewhat chunky shape of the mystery species, everything points to the quiz bird as a probable Bufflehead x Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala albeola* x *Bucephala clangula*) hybrid.

Hybrids of these two closely related species, though apparently not common in the wild, have been well documented in the literature. The breeding and wintering ranges of the two species overlap extensively, and both species are cavity nesters that use similar habitats for breeding, so hybridization is not unexpected. Without attempting a lengthy explanation of the genetics and behavioral aspects of waterfowl hybridization, suffice to say that both phenotype (the observable characteristics resulting from gene interactions) and biological probability suggest that the mystery bird is most likely a first-generation hybrid between a Common Goldeneye and a Bufflehead.

In Massachusetts, Common Goldeneyes and Buffleheads are common spring and fall migrants and are winter residents on saltwater and freshwater lakes and ponds. Both species typically arrive in mid-fall and generally depart by mid to late April.

David Clapp photographed this unusual hybrid waterfowl in midwinter of 2019–2020 at Rock Harbor in Orleans, Massachusetts, where it spent much of the winter.

Wayne Petersen

RED-NECKED STINT BY NEIL DOWLING

AT A GLANCE

JOHN MISSING

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

MORE HOT BIRDS

John Flagg photographed a yellow-bellied kingbird (his photo above) below Watertown Dam on July 1, and posted his photos in the FaceBook group "What's This Bird?" It was quickly identified as either a **Couch's** or **Tropical Kingbird**. Several birders arrived before the end of the day and relocated it. One reported hearing the bird give a Tropical-style call, but everyone else who saw it reported that it was silent while they were present. The bird has not been seen since. The location of this encounter is roughly three miles south of Rock Meadow Conservation Area, Belmont, where a confirmed Tropical Kingbird was present last October.

Maryann Fortier photographed an unfamiliar raptor on May 18, and posted it to the FaceBook discussion group Western Mass Bird Photography asking for help identifying it. To the surprise of all, it was a **Mississippi Kite**. It was followed by two more in the first week of June. On June 5, Chris Liazos photographed another perched by Lake Quinsigamond. Marshall Iliff added still another, which was soaring high above Borderland State Park on June 7. Maryann Fortier took the photograph above.

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

PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT BOSTON, MA

VOL. 48, NO 4, AUGUST 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

www.birdobserver.org/Subscribe