

Bird Observer

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HOT BIRDS



A **Willow Ptarmigan** that appeared in southern Worcester County in late April was by far the most astonishing bird of the season. Meaghan Keefe posted an eBird record with photos from Charlton on April 30. (Meaghan's photo is on the left.) Photos of presumably the same bird, taken in West Boylston two days before the Charlton sighting, later surfaced on FaceBook. This would be the second record of the species for Massachusetts, following a specimen collected on May 10, 1859.

In a more normal spring, a **Swainson's Warbler** would have been the best bird of the season. It was seen by more birders than the ptarmigan was, even though it was a one-day wonder. Jonah Levy found it early in the morning on May 6; by the end of that day, dozens of birders had gathered to admire the state's seventh record of this species. Justin Lawson took the photo on the right.



Swallow-tailed Kites appeared in Massachusetts in three different months this spring. Hans Holbrook spotted the first one over his yard in Barnstable on March 28. In April, Liam Waters found a kite flying past Pilgrim Heights. Carrie Almeida caught the third on video over Swansea on May 12. Liam Waters took the photo on the left.

Joel and Andy Eckerson were playing disc golf, but of course brought their binoculars along, just in case. They observed 39 bird species during their outing, including two **Mississippi Kites**. Joel Eckerson took the photo on the right.



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April 1 Through October 1, 2022

See Details on Page 184



Bird Observer

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Birds of Acadia National Park and Mount Desert Island, Maine

Part One: Eastern MDI

Michael J. Good

Maine's Down East region, roughly from Rockport to Lubec, offers the most interesting and ecologically diverse birding in the state of Maine, if not nationally. With 348 species recorded in eBird for Hancock County and 464 species documented by the Maine Bird Records Committee, we rank fourth in the state for species diversity. National Audubon Society, the American Bird

Conservancy, and the National Geographic Society have identified several Down East birding spots, including Mount Desert Island (MDI), as Important Bird Areas (IBA) in the United States. This article will help you easily find birding hotspots on MDI, so you can spend your time finding birds in the field.

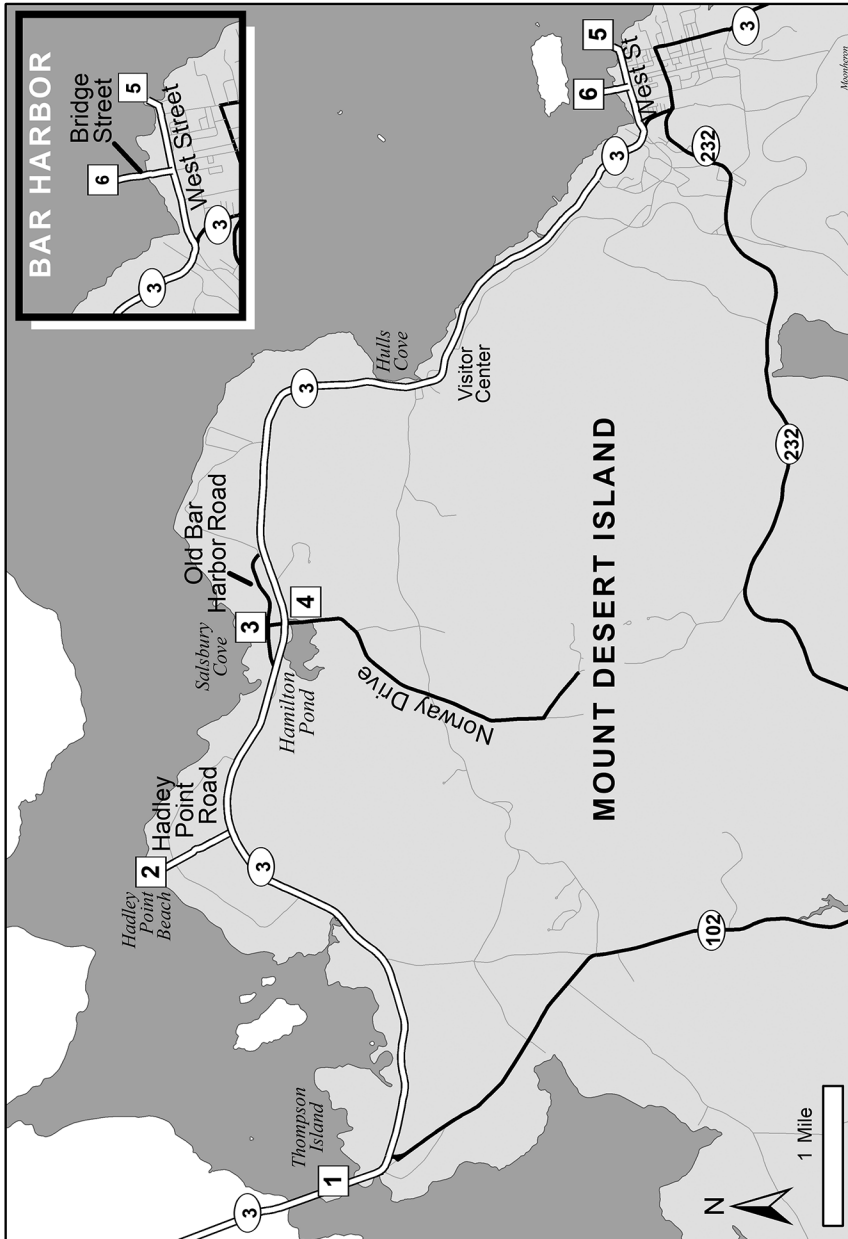
Water and associated wetlands are an abundant resource on MDI, and watersheds define bird habitat, especially for warblers and flycatchers. Somes Sound, the only fjard—a small fiord—on the East Coast, divides the island almost in half, creating eastern and western lobes. Following the seminal watershed work of Steve Perrin (1996), I continue the tradition of dividing Mount Desert Island into three major watershed drainage districts: 1) draining toward Frenchman Bay and east, 2) draining centrally toward Somes Sound, and 3) draining toward Blue Hill Bay and west. Part One of this guide starts at Thompson Island and heads east clockwise along Frenchman Bay, picking up Park Loop Road through Acadia National Park to Jordan Pond. A future Part Two will cover hotspots from Somes Sound continuing clockwise around the Blue Hill Bay side of MDI.

History and Conservation

You can easily drive to MDI over a bridge from the mainland. The island was first linked to the mainland in 1837. With an area of 108 square miles (69,120 acres), MDI is the largest in the Gulf of Maine; it ranks as the 52nd-largest island in the United States, the sixth-largest island in the contiguous United States, and the second-largest island on the Eastern Seaboard. Emerging out of the Atlantic Ocean, Mount Desert Island's Cadillac Mountain, at 1,532 feet above sea level, is the highest summit on the coastline north of Rio de Janeiro. The Mount Desert range has several glacially sheared cliffs that were some of the first nesting locations for Peregrine Falcon after reintroduction in 1991. The ocean cliffs of Otter Point—where Black Guillemots have nested for at least 10,000 years—underscore the unprecedented avian species diversity found on Mount Desert Island.

MDI's prime location accounts for much of its species diversity. Situated in the middle of the Gulf of Maine, the island straddles the boreal forests of the north and





Mount Desert Island Map 1

the temperate deciduous forests of the east, the boreal-temperate forest. Two major drainage systems, the Union and Skilling's rivers, feed into Blue Hill Bay to the west and Frenchman Bay to the east. Nearly ninety percent of the land in Maine is forested, the highest proportion of any state. However, with the exception of a few pockets, there are virtually no primary old growth forest trees remaining along the Down East coast. All the coastal forests were logged during the expansion of precolonial and colonial America. Land development and poor land use practices (Lansky 1992) continue to be the greatest threats to the Northern Forest and Down East Maine ecosystems.

Early Wabanaki people—the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, and Abenaki—traveled to and from Mount Desert Island for over ten thousand years before European explorers arrived. Colonists began to settle here about 400 years ago, occupying the region and exploiting its natural resources, which caused numerous habitat changes. Fishing, granite quarrying, timber harvesting, and grazing are examples. Marshes were cut for hay and islands were heavily grazed. Bird colonies were raided for eggs or feathers, and in the process, a few bird species were extirpated or their populations were greatly diminished. More recently, the forest product industry carried out large land sales for development and natural resource exploitation. Entire islands and the coastline were deforested.

The Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA) of 1988 has been key to restoring and protecting Maine's natural resources. The Act protects a wide variety of critical wildlife habitats, including coastal wetlands and sand dunes, freshwater wetlands, great ponds, rivers, streams, brooks, and fragile mountain areas. In addition, the Penobscot River Restoration Project, an initiative of the Natural Resources Council of Maine, has provided for the removal of dams and the creation of fish passages. It has helped realize the Penobscot Indian Nation's federally recognized sustenance fishery rights and revitalized river-related cultural and spiritual practices. The project has also restored unimpeded flow to the ocean, reestablishing sea-run fish migration up to the base of Mount Katahdin. Healthy fish runs benefit Atlantic Puffin, Razorbill, Northern Gannet, Belted Kingfisher, and wintering ducks, especially mergansers. Healthy fish runs also benefit many mammal species, such as mink and other creatures foraging the stream banks.

Peregrine Falcon is the iconic poster bird for the extremes of the past and the effects of DDT. MDI was one of the initial recovery sites for this species and has one of the most reliable and easily observed Peregrine Falcon aeries in the state on the eastern cliff of Champlain Mountain. A number of the islands surrounding and including MDI are also important to the ongoing recovery and stability of Maine's Bald Eagle population.

MDI is home to Acadia National Park (ANP), the first national park east of the Mississippi River. Established in 1929 by George B. Dorr and community members who wished to preserve the natural beauty of the island, ANP was more assembled than created, weaving its way through and around communities and private properties as parcels were donated and purchased over time. Thus, the towns and villages are as much a part of the Acadia experience as the park itself. John D. Rockefeller built 57 miles of carriage roads in the early twentieth century. Birding the carriage roads by

bike or on foot is a highly recommended way to see many birds and amazing scenery.

Today, Acadia is one of the most heavily visited parks in America, with over four million visitors in 2021. Mount Desert Island residents are struggling to preserve the beauty of the region while expanding their economy, and the two are inextricably linked. A strong economy demands a healthy ecology. Birding and whale watching, in particular, are economic drivers, and a major reason for developing a guide and map to the birds of MDI.

Birding on MDI

The locations I have chosen and the assortment of fresh and saltwater wetlands, shrub communities, and forest habitats will provide a varied sampling of the enormous diversity of birds you will find while visiting the island. Usually you will find birds with a southern affinity on the northeastern side of MDI and those with a more northern affinity on the southwestern side of the island due to the effects of the Great Fire of October 1947. This wind-whipped fire raged uncontrolled for ten days and burned 17,000 acres on the northeastern lobe of MDI, including 13,000 acres of uncut 1800s forest that had been protected by the national park. The fire burned a large swath of emerging old growth forest that would have been home to Boreal Chickadee, Canada Jay, and canopy-nesting species such as Blackburnian, Bay-breasted and Cape May warblers (MacArthur 1958). Boreal species are rarely found on MDI today. Any reported to eBird should be verified with recordings or photos.

The fire, on the other hand, helped create perfect habitat for other warblers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and other southern species that thrive in the deciduous forest and shrub communities that recolonized the disturbed areas. Today, the effects of the fire are evident in the younger hardwood forest communities that emerged in the burned areas, standing in stark contrast to the mature coniferous or mixed coniferous forests that dominate the remainder of the island. The best emerging old-growth forest on MDI is found on the north and south side of Pemetic Mountain, the southern ridges of Cadillac, Sargent, and Beech mountains, the George Dorr “Old Farm” property along the trail to Compass Harbor, and the unique forest habitats of Blagden Nature Preserve in Town Hill.

My experience is that the older the forest, the greater the bird diversity, especially for warblers. Also, the birds you see and hear depend on the time of year you visit. You can find the complete checklist of birds of MDI at <https://www.acadiabirdingfestival.com/>

Spring

Mount Desert Island and Down East watersheds become migratory corridors for millions of birds, providing uninterrupted access into the Northern Forest of Maine, the boreal forest, and tundra of Canada. River and stream arteries provide food for fish-eating birds, as well as insects for tropical migratory species. Flying thousands of miles from South America or the Caribbean along the eastern flyway and across the Atlantic Ocean, neotropical migrants reach our coastal shores in spring hungry and tired. You can feel their energy as they forage along these watery ways, north toward ancestral

breeding grounds. Other significant nesting birds include Common Loon, American Bittern, Sora, Virginia Rail, five species of owl, Marsh Wren, and Nelson's Sparrow.

Summer

Migratory birds settle into their nesting routines. Expect song through late summer for most species.

MDI is prime nesting habitat for American Woodcock. Many raptors nest on MDI, including Bald Eagle, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, American Kestrel, Broad-winged Hawk, and all three accipiters. Less common are boreal species, including Spruce Grouse, Boreal Chickadee, and gregarious Canada Jay. The highly sought-after Black-backed Woodpecker became prevalent shortly after the fire, benefiting from the huge expanses of scorched red spruce and white pine forests, but is rare today. To find these species, go north to Baxter State Park or venture farther Down East; however, their numbers have dwindled recently, most likely due to habitat destruction.

MDI boasts nineteen species of warblers, nine flycatchers, and six thrushes. Birders may also find Wilson's Snipe, Common Nighthawk, Whip-poor-will, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a half dozen woodpeckers, several species of swallows, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned kinglets, Cedar Waxwing, and several species of irruptive finches including White-winged and Red Crossbill. Grassland nesting species also include Bobolink and Lincoln's, Nelson's, Savannah, Song, and White-throated sparrows in migration.

Take an offshore boat trip to see pelagic birds such as Atlantic Puffin, Razorbill, Black Guillemot, Common Murre, Herring, Laughing, and Great Black-backed gulls, and Arctic, Common, and Roseate terns. Other pelagic birds include Northern Gannet, Northern Fulmar, and Greater, Sooty, and Manx shearwaters, as well as Leach's and Wilson's storm-petrels.

Fall

Cooling temperatures and increased frontal activity from the north push neotropical migrants out of the region. A cadre of winter ducks and migratory arctic species retreating from the intense cold moving out of Canada replaces them.

Migratory raptors are spectacular to watch from the Acadia National Park Hawk Watch on Cadillac Mountain during September and October. Sixteen hawk species can be seen in a typical year. A summary of the 2020 fall migration period revealed 1,039 Broad-winged Hawks, 758 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 468 American Kestrels, 159 Turkey Vultures, 123 Ospreys, 99 Bald Eagles, 85 Northern Harriers, 56 Merlins, 38 Red-tailed Hawks, 24 Peregrine Falcons, 19 Cooper's Hawks, 10 Northern Goshawks, and 1 Red-shouldered Hawk.

On the ocean, expect to find Parasitic and Pomarine jaegers, South Polar and Great skuas, and a variety of gulls. Check out the annual fall pelagic trip offered by Maine Audubon. The diurnal tidal range of up to 28 feet exposes vast mudflats for migrating sandpipers and plovers. Typically, only small flocks are seen around MDI, in contrast to the Lubec Flats to the northeast near the Canadian border, where thousands may be



Hooded Warbler, Acadia NP—Schoonerhead Road Ranger Station wetland. May 12 2021. All photographs by the author.

seen twirling about during migration.

Winter

Winter birding is extreme because of the cold, but highly rewarding. Many birds that nest in the boreal forest and tundra retreat south to MDI. These include American Pipit, Bohemian Waxwing, Northern Shrike, Snow Bunting, Horned Lark, and Short-eared, Long-eared, Great Gray, Northern Hawk, and Snowy owls.

Waterfowl include Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Tufted Duck, Wood Duck, Green-winged and Blue-winged teal, Common Eider, Eurasian and American wigeon, Northern Pintail, and all three mergansers. Large flocks of Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, and Common

Goldeneye forage in nutrient-rich coastal hotspots. Other exciting winter birds offshore include lingering Atlantic Puffin, Razorbill, Thick-billed Murre, Black-legged Kittiwake, Purple Sandpiper, and Harlequin Duck.

Unique to MDI are the expanses of semi-alpine habitat along the Mount Desert range that attract northerly migrants such as Snow Bunting, Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur, and Snowy Owl escaping the brutal arctic winters of Canada for Maine. Mountains included in the list of sub-alpine habitat are Champlain, Dorr, Cadillac, Pemetic, and Sargent. These are always worth a hike any time of the year, but your best bet for a Snowy Owl is during the winter months. Make sure you “sit for a Snowy Owl”—give ample distance and do not disturb them. If they fly, you are too close. We want them to return, so please be part of the solution.

Be on the lookout for rarities as well. Some recent rare bird sightings on or near MDI include American Oystercatcher, Hooded Warbler, Varied Thrush, Pink-footed Goose, Black-headed Grosbeak, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, Brewer’s Sparrow, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Franklin’s Gull, and Black Vulture.

Where to go on Frenchman Bay (Map 1: Points 1-6)

1. Acadia NP— Thompson Island Picnic Area

Park in the picnic area across Route 3 from the visitor center. During the winter, park at the visitor center.<GPS 44.4271698, -68.36508179>

From Ellsworth, head southeast on Route 1, and take a right at the fork onto Route 3, which diverges from Route 1 and runs south to Mount Desert Island. The 15-minute drive from Ellsworth to MDI is scenic, revealing iconic views of the entire Mount Desert mountain range. Stop at the Hancock County Airport, especially during the winter months, to check for Snowy and Short-eared owls. Red-tailed Hawks and

American Kestrels are often present during spring and fall migrations.

The section of road approaching MDI is most notable for its lobster pounds, particularly the Trenton Bridge Lobster Pound. It has been run by the same Maine family since 1956 and ships its lobsters worldwide. The quintessential Maine lobster pound, it is located at the causeway entrance to Mount Desert Island. Here, Route 3 crosses from the mainland over a bridge at Mount Desert Narrows. The bridge connects to Thompson Island, positioned between the mainland and Mount Desert Island.

Thompson Island is the first Acadia National Park birding experience. It is a great migrant trap year-round. Look for the Island Chamber of Commerce visitors center on the right and a picnic area entrance on the left. The Thompson Island picnic area provides excellent access to view the channel and extensive mudflats. These mudflats expose Ellsworth schist rock outcroppings at low tide. From the picnic tables, looking east-southeast with a scope you may spot a Bald Eagle nest located in a tall white pine.

The extreme tidal ranges around Thompson and Mount Desert islands, ranging from less than 2 to 14 feet, provide ideal habitat for a variety of ducks, sandpipers, and gulls. Visiting coastal Maine means becoming well acquainted with the tide chart. In the tidal zone, boats tie up with extra-long lines, clambers and worm diggers schedule their days by the tide, and birders have to plan ahead for shoreline exploring.

Use your scope to scan the mudflats for sandpipers in the fall and early spring. Dunlin, Least and Semipalmated sandpipers, and Greater and Lesser yellowlegs may be present. In September 2010, a Marbled Godwit showed up, so always look for rarities during fall migration.

Make sure to walk through the woods to the western side of the small island and check the forest for migratory birds. During the breeding season from April to November, listen in particular for migratory warblers.

As is typical of the Maine coast, there are more interesting waterfowl in winter. The salt marshes and ponds here typically contain Mallard and American Black Duck, but also look for other migratory ducks such as Barrow's and Common goldeneyes, Ring-necked Duck, and all three mergansers, along with Red-necked and Horned grebes. From October to May, Thompson Island hosts mixed flocks of White-winged and Surf scoters, Common and Barrow's goldeneyes, Greater Scaup, Common Loon, Great Cormorant, and Red-breasted Merganser. Look for Laughing Gull in summer and Bonaparte's Gull after July 28.

Just beyond the parking lot, Route 3 runs close to the ocean in a couple of places. Look for Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, Green-winged Teal, and Great Blue Heron in these shallows in the spring and fall. The uncommon Great and Snowy egrets may stop over here as well.

2. Hadley Point Beach

Park at the beach, staying aware of the tides. <GPS 44.44413757, -68.31899261>

Continue south from Thompson Island onto MDI. Where the road splits, bear left on Route 3 toward Bar Harbor. After about 4 miles, take a left on Hadley Point Road.



Thick-billed Murre, Bar Harbor Town Pier, Maine. Feb 16, 2021.

The road dead ends at Hadley Point Beach parking lot.

Hadley Point is a productive stop any time of year. It is one of the top fall hotspots for Least, Semipalmated, and occasional Western sandpipers, and winter hotspots for all three scoter, occasional Red-throated Loon, Horned and Red-necked grebes, Common Golden-eye, Bufflehead, and occasional Ruddy Duck. A variety of gulls may also be found, including Bonaparte's, Iceland, and Lesser Black-backed. During fall migration, raptors such as Merlin often forage here

for the smaller sandpipers, and Peregrine Falcons hunt for wayward migrants over the water. During the spring migration, warblers, flycatchers, and other species amass along the northern coastal edge of the Hadley Point beach area, where they wait to cross to the mainland by night.

3. Salsbury Cove

Park by the cove just north of the post office. <GPS 44.43141174, -68.28422546>

One of the 28 coves around MDI, Salsbury Cove is home to a quaint coastal village. It is the site of Mount Desert Island Marine Biological Laboratory, one of two such research facilities established around the same time as Acadia National Park. Walk Old Bar Harbor Road and listen for Purple Finch, warblers, and sparrows in town. Northern Goshawk has been recorded along the coastal edge. Along the coast in the winter, you will find Common Loon, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, and White-winged and Surf scoters. Mallards and American Black Ducks are here year-round.

4. Hamilton Pond

Park at the public landing near the pond <GPS 44.42910767, -68.28965759>

From Salsbury Cove, it is a short drive on Norway Drive across Route 3 to Hamilton Pond. This large body of fresh water provides all the essentials for more than 100 bird species. Bald Eagle typically roosts on the tallest white pine around the pond. Hamilton Pond is a hotspot for fall ducks, including Ring-necked, Greater and Lesser scaup, Bufflehead, and Wood Duck, along with Pied-billed Grebe. Summer nesting birds in the wetland shrub community on the western side of the pond include Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, Alder Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Rarities have included Violet-green Swallow, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Stilt Sandpiper, Common Redpoll, and many warblers, making Hamilton Pond an important stop. This is a spring migrant trap, so check the public landing on the west side of the pond and the public access along Norway Drive on the east side of the pond.

5. Bar Harbor Town Pier

Park on the pier or anywhere around town. <GPS 44.39194489, -68.20404816>

From Hamilton Pond, continue east on Route 3 for 3.2 miles to the village of Hulls Cove on the left. Here, where Route 3 meets the ocean, is another opportunity for viewing seabirds. At high tide during fall and winter, search for Bufflehead, Long-tailed Duck, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, and Greater Scaup. Common Eider is usually abundant year-round. Horned and Red-necked grebes can be found offshore during winter. I have spotted a fall Willet along the shore eating invasive green crabs, so definitely check this location all year.

After Hulls Cove, the entrance to Acadia National Park and the visitor center is 0.5 mile ahead on the right. In the summer and fall, this is the place to get acquainted officially with the park. In winter, this part of the Park Loop and the visitor center are closed.

From the visitor center, continue on Route 3 to Bar Harbor. Turn left on West Street, which ends at the Town Pier. You are likely to see Common Loon as well as hundreds of Common Eiders here at any time of year. During the winter, Great Cormorant, Black Guillemot, Dovekie, Thick-billed Murre, and Long-tailed Duck have been recorded.

From spring to early fall, sign up for a whalewatching and pelagic bird adventure from one of the storefronts on the pier. Bar Harbor Whale Watch Company (207-288-2386; <<http://www.barharborwhales.com>>) provides the best pelagic birding in the state of Maine. Finback and humpback whales are the main attraction of these tours, though the endangered right whale is a possibility, and the smaller minke whale and white-sided dolphin are regularly encountered. Harbor porpoises are almost a certainty on any trip. Associated with the cetaceans are the pelagic sea birds that are drawn to the same food sources as the whales. Expect to encounter Atlantic Puffin, Razorbill, and Common Murre. Greater, Sooty, Manx, and Cory's shearwaters, Leach's Storm-Petrel, and Great and South Polar skuas all can be found on most trips. While offshore, you likely will be treated to thousands of Greater Shearwaters and Wilson's Storm-Petrels. There is a nesting population of Leach's Storm-Petrel on nearby Great and Little Duck islands. Observe the different flight patterns exhibited by these two storm-petrels. Leach's Storm-Petrels tend to be nocturnal, making sightings during the day an uncommon treat. Northern Fulmar, Northern Gannet, and Parasitic and Pomarine jaegers are always possible, especially later in the season.

6. Bar Harbor Sand Bar

Paid parking on West Street or anywhere in town.<GPS 44.39363098, -68.21051025>

To reach the bar from the pier, return west on West Street. Turn right onto Bridge Street, and proceed to the dead end at the bar. If you walk the land bridge to Bar Island you MUST be aware of the tide. Nearly every year, someone has mistakenly left their car parked on the bar, only to come back and find it fully submerged. Time your visit within a couple of hours before and after low tide. Make sure to return before the

tide comes in so you are not stranded on the island. The extensive tidal change at this location makes it a hotspot worth exploring. The sand bar sometimes shelters thousands of sea ducks in the lee behind Bar Island during high tide, when it is covered by six feet of water. During winter months, Common Eider gathers here, as well as Red-breasted Merganser, Common Goldeneye, American Black Duck, Mallard, and occasional Greater Scaup. Surf and White-winged Scoter, Common Loon, Long-tailed Duck, and Bufflehead may also be observed. Along the shoreline leading to and from the bar, look for migrant passerines during both fall and spring. I often stop here and find surprises such as Gray Catbird, House Finch, and an occasional Yellow Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, or Purple Finch. Look for Peregrine Falcon and Merlin cruising along the shoreline diving for sandpipers and passerines near or over the water. Before leaving, swing a spotting scope onto the islands for Bald Eagle, which for generations has nested on Sheep Porcupine Island, one of a chain of five Porcupine islands to the north and east of Bar Harbor.

Seasonal Access to Park Loop Road (Map 2: Points 7–12)

The Park Loop Road in Acadia National Park is one way in summer and can be accessed from various points, including the Hulls Cove Visitor Center and the Eagle Lake entrance in Bar Harbor. To enter the Park Loop, bear left at the sign pointing to the Sand Beach Fee Station.

7. Acadia NP: Cadillac Mountain

Park at the top. (You must make reservations in advance through the ANP website.) <GPS 44.35348129, -68.2260437>

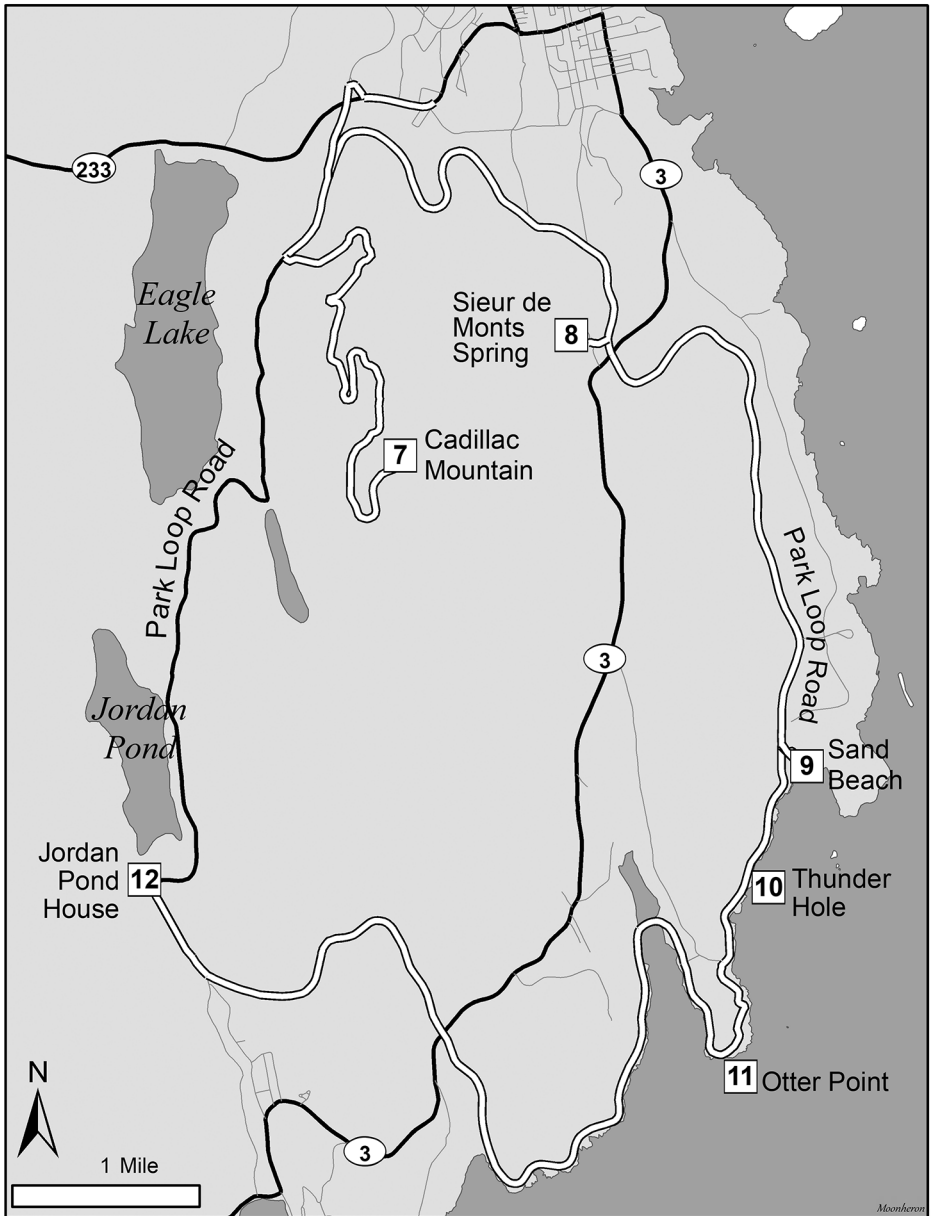
Drive up Cadillac Summit Road if only for the view. It is cool and breezy at the top during all seasons. The birding is ordinary except in September, when it is one of the two best places in the park for hawkwatching. The other is Beech Mountain. During hawk migration in September, naturalists hold a daily hawkwatch and encourage participation. On a good day—typically when northwest breezes follow a cold front—Sharp-shinned, Cooper’s, and Broad-winged hawks, Osprey, Turkey Vulture, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, American Kestrel, and Bald Eagle usually pass close enough to study.

Eastern Towhee nests just below the mountaintop, but is uncommon outside of southern Maine. Brown Thrasher can be found at Blue Hill Overlook, and Dark-eyed Junco, Yellow-rumped, and Black-and-white warbler can be expected around the summit. Listen for Winter Wren.

From here, you can hike a moderately difficult, lightly trafficked six-mile loop comprising the Cadillac South Ridge, Dorr Mountain South Ridge, and Canon Brook trails that offer a variety of habitats, including open mountaintop, forest, and wetlands.

During the winter this is the go-to place for Snowy Owl, Horned Lark, and Snow Bunting. The summit road is closed in the winter. It is at least a half-day walk up that requires winter gear and ice cleats. Be careful.

Most of the Park Loop is closed and unplowed from December 1 to April 14 to benefit snowmobilers and cross-country skiers. However, the most popular two-mile



Mount Desert Island Map 2

section from the Sand Beach Fee Station to Otter Cliffs is open and accessible from a winter entrance off the Schooner Head Road. Heading south from Bar Harbor on Route 3, bear left on Schooner Head Road through birch and aspen groves and frozen marshes impounded by beavers. At the T intersection, a left turn leads to Schooner Head Overlook, which is worth a visit. Turn right at the T to connect with the plowed section



Northern Goshawk. Sweet Lane, Bar Harbor Maine. May 23, 2020.

of the Park Loop Road.

8. Acadia NP: Sieur de Monts Spring

Park in the lot near the Wild Gardens.
<GPS 44.36285782, -68.20759583>

In season—mid-April to December 1—follow the Park Loop Road past Bear Brook Pond for breathtaking vistas overlooking Frenchman Bay. The Precipice Trail is a highlight. Peregrine Falcons have nested at the glacially scoured cliff since their reintroduction in 1986. Today, several pairs nest in the park, and you can see them easily from the Park Loop Road. Rangers and docents are usually stationed below the peak during nesting season with spotting scopes to point out the falcons. Directly across from the Precipice parking area is the Schooner Head Road Marsh, which is worth walking around. American Bittern can

often be heard during the spring. Sandhill Cranes have been recorded here, too. From the Park Loop, follow signs to Sieur de Monts Spring.

In winter, take Route 3 south from Bar Harbor. Look for the entrance sign to Acadia National Park and Sieur de Monts Spring on the right, just past the Jackson Laboratory.

Sieur de Monts Spring is a memorial to George Dorr, the first superintendent of Acadia National Park. Initially designated a national monument, the spring is one of many watersheds that provide some of the best warbler watching on MDI. The mountain spring alone would be enough to attract birds, but it is also home to the Wild Gardens of Acadia, where you can practice your Latin plant names in the extensive wild gardens. The garden is divided into 12 sections, each an example of the different habitats found in Acadia. Mature deciduous trees—mostly hemlock, oak, red maple, and beech—predominate around the spring due to the fire of 1947. Red-eyed Vireos are common. The most frequently occurring warblers are Yellow, Black-throated Green, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, and Ovenbird. Also look for Black-and-white, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided, and Yellow-rumped warblers around the parking lot. Listen for Philadelphia Vireo during spring migration. Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and Alder Flycatcher may be found in the brushy wetlands of Great Meadow that surround the spring. Northern Flicker and Pileated Woodpeckers regularly nest here. During early spring, listen for Virginia Rail, Sora, and American Bittern in Great Meadow.

The most productive walking path exits the parking lot on the north and west side of the Wild Gardens. At the outset, listen for American Redstart, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Swamp Sparrow calling from the small trees. Where the path enters the grove of mature hemlocks, Scarlet Tanager, Great-crested Flycatcher, Hermit Thrush, Wood Thrush, and Ovenbird are typically found. Beyond the grove, the trail enters Great Meadow where Nashville Warbler, American Redstart, Swamp Sparrow, Alder Flycatcher, and Indigo Bunting occasionally nest. See a park map for other enjoyable paths leading southward from the parking lot past the Abbe Museum, where Barred Owls have nested, to a small pond called the Tarn. Check the pond carefully for Common Mergansers or Wood Ducks hidden in the reeds. Sometimes you can hear Black-throated Blue Warblers from the extensive second growth hemlocks on the mountainside beyond the pond.

9. Acadia NP: Sand Beach

Park in the parking lot. <GPS 44.32921982, -68.18222809>

Continue on the Park Loop to Sand Beach, a fun stroll and a great place to go birding any time of year. The “sand” is actually made up of small fragments of ancient seashells deposited by wave action. It is sheltered from prevailing breezes and faces into the sunlight so that sitting on the beach is usually pleasant even in January. American Pipit, Common Eider, Common Loon, Red-breasted Merganser, Bufflehead, and Red-necked and Horned grebes should be present in winter. Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper, and Semipalmated Plover are common in fall. In winter, look for alcids such as Dovekie, Common and Thick-billed murre, and Atlantic Puffin.

The Ocean Trail from Sand Beach to Otter Cliff showcases many warblers, Pileated Woodpecker, and Golden-crowned Kinglet in summer. Common Eider is present year-round, and their numbers increase in winter. A scan of the water during winter usually reveals Black Guillemot, Black Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, and Horned and Red-necked grebes. From late summer well into December, Red-throated Loon, Northern Gannet, and Black-legged Kittiwake often can be seen in the distance. The rocks along this section of the coast are an excellent place for Purple Sandpiper.

10. Acadia NP: Thunder Hole

Park on the right side of the Park Loop Road. <GPS 44.320897, -68.189404>

Farther down the Park Loop is one of Acadia’s top attractions, Thunder Hole. When the surf is high, waves crash into the natural grotto with an explosive boom. Look for Purple Sandpiper at the surf along the rocky edge. Red-throated Loon, Black Scoter, and the occasional alcid are seen during the winter months. It is a great place to scan for sea ducks. Sometimes you will see harbor and gray seals, as well as harbor porpoise and minke whales, especially when forage fish such as alewives and menhaden are numerous. Look for rare King Eider, Pacific Loon, or other rarities in the vicinity of Old Soaker, the small island just offshore from Thunder Hole. Bald Eagles are often seen along the shoreline trees or on Old Soaker, feeding on Herring Gull, Common Eider, or Double-crested Cormorant. Great Cormorant is the dominant species through our long winters.



Sharp-shinned Hawk. Youngs Mountain Road, Bar Harbor, Maine. March 3, 2021.

11. Acadia NP: Otter Point

Park in the small parking lot just before rounding the point.

<GPS 44.30726624, -68.19012451>

Continue down to **Otter Cliff**, named for the river otters prevalent in the area. A short path leads to Otter Point from the parking lot, and it is worth scanning for Purple Sandpipers, especially along the rocks. During the off-season, this panoramic eastern peninsula is an excellent location to spot irruptive Red and White-winged crossbills among the

cone-bearing trees. A bell buoy offshore marks the rocks hit by Samuel de Champlain in 1604 when he explored the island. Common Eider, Common Loon, and Black Scoter forage around the buoy during winter, and Great Cormorant is also a good bet, sometimes roosting on the bell. This is an excellent location to set up a scope and sea watch for fall migrating Northern Gannet, Common and Red-throated loons, all three scoters, and occasionally Harlequin Duck. With 194 species reported for this location, just about any bird species is possible. The woods in this area are full of Golden-crowned Kinglets, Black-capped Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and woodpeckers. During the 1990s, Black-backed Woodpecker was found in the spruce forests covering the point.

Around the bend and downhill from the point is the Fabbri Picnic Area, the site of an early World War I radio communications facility that was, at the time, the most advanced in the world. Scan Otter Cove from this vantage point for water birds. During spring migration this is an excellent spot for a variety of warblers, including Mourning and Blackpoll, as well as Yellow-billed and Black-billed cuckoos, Common Raven, and Brown Thrasher. Fallouts typically occur here, with high numbers of birds during spring and fall. Lapland Longspur has been found here during the winter months.

The Park Loop Road makes a deep hairpin turn over the Otter Cove granite causeway. Greater and Lesser yellowlegs and numerous peeps can be seen feeding here during the diurnal tides that flood the tidal pond. Look on the south side of the road for Bufflehead, Laughing Gull, Red-necked Grebe, and Black Scoter. Continue back up the hill on the far side of the cove where more scenic overlooks provide excellent habitat for Spruce Grouse. Acadia's Blackwoods Campground lies, unmarked, in the forests behind the loop road here. Though there are no services in winter, the campground is accessible and is enjoyed by hearty snowmobilers and cross-country skiers looking for Northern Shrike or wandering owls.

12. Acadia NP--Jordan Pond House

Park in the one of the two parking lots. <GPS 44.32102203, -68.25402069>

Follow the Park Loop Road for 6.0 miles past Otter Cove to the Jordan Pond

House on the left. The trails around the restaurant feature maturing stands of deciduous and conifer trees where warblers and other neotropical migrants concentrate. The Rockefeller carriage roads around Jordan Pond House and Wildwood Stables once belonged to the summering wealthy. Check out the iconic Cobblestone Bridge, the first of 16 built in the park by John D. Rockefeller. Leave the crowds behind by following the Jordan Pond Loop Trail or the carriage road system.

Look for Bay-Breasted, Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, and Black-throated Blue warblers, and Northern Parula along Jordan Stream, which flows toward the ocean. Focus on the northern end of Jordan Pond for Northern Waterthrush. Common Mergansers nest here annually. Merlin and Broad-winged Hawk also frequent this area. Climb Penobscot Mountain for unparalleled panoramic views and the possibility of seeing nesting Peregrine Falcons on nearby Jordan Cliffs. The bridge just below the dam and along Jordan Stream to Seal Harbor is a hotspot for many neotropical birds foraging on insects during spring migration.

Framing the northern end of Jordan Pond, The Bubbles are two scenic knobs carved out by the Wisconsin Glacier and one of the park's favorite hiking places. These peaks are dominated by mixed and open foliage, also making them favorable for warblers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Blue-headed Vireo.

From here, continue along Park Loop Road to the north to return to the Cadillac Mountain Entrance near Bar Harbor. Traveling south will take you to the Stanley Brook Entrance, where you can head toward Northeast Harbor and Somes Sound.

Know Before You Go

Bugs: Mosquitoes are prevalent from May to August, ticks are around well into the fall, and deer flies and black flies are present from early spring through June. Bring repellent and dress accordingly.

Distances: Visitors frequently underestimate travel distances in rural Maine, as well as the availability of gas stations, convenience stores, and toilet facilities. Calculate travel times carefully, and be strategic about refilling gas, restocking supplies, and using restrooms, especially in more remote areas.

Hunting: Hunting is common in rural Maine. Always wear blaze orange in the fall. <www.maine.gov/IFW>

Maps: Although GIS equipment is now common, map lovers will appreciate having *The Maine Atlas and Gazetteer* in the car. <www.delorme.com>

Phone service: Cell phone service is inconsistent on MDI, and public WIFI is not prevalent. A prepaid phone card may be useful.

Tides: Check local tide charts before heading out, especially if you walk to places accessible only at low tide, such as Bar Island in Bar Harbor.

Links

Acadia Birding Festival and MDI Birding Checklist: <www.acadiabirdingfestival.com>

Acadia National Park —park entrance permits, fees, and website for Cadillac Mountain reservations: <<https://www.nps.gov/acad/index.htm>>

Down East Acadia information: <www.downeastacadia.com>

Ferries and regulations for travel between Maine and Canada: <<http://www.quoddyloop.com/info.htm>>

Maine birding information: <<http://downeastnaturetours.com/>>

Maine tourist information: <www.visitmaine.com>

Mount Desert Island, comprehensive information: <<http://mountdesertisland.net/>>



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Please join me in appreciating and conserving this significant resource for generations to come. Enjoy good birding and be responsible!

Michael J. Good, MS, is an ornithologist, biologist, and naturalist; founder of the Acadia Birding Festival; and president of Down East Nature Tours, LLC, a birdwatching and nature tour company started in 1993 out of concern for public ecology-based education. Since 2002, Michael has been a birding diplomat in Cuba, conducting the Cuba Bird Survey with Caribbean Conservation Trust. Michael is currently guiding for Naturalist Journeys based in Portal, Arizona. He has over 35 years' experience studying the birds of North America and brings a wealth of knowledge about Neotropical migrants and the avifauna of the Eastern United States. Michael has traveled extensively in the United States, including Alaska, and in Europe, Australia, South America, and Cuba. In his spare time, he maintains Three Pines Bird Sanctuary in Town Hill, Maine, and studies micro-habitat of Neotropical migratory birds on Mount Desert Island and winter ecology in various Neotropical countries. He and his wife Lori have two children, Graham and Madeleine.

Birding with Autism

Kari Sasportas



Bobolink. Photographed at Heard Farm in Wayland, Massachusetts, on May 1, 2021. All photographs by the author.

Birds are a treasure to me. I am endlessly awed by the variety of birds, their adaptation to specialized habitats, the vastness of their reach across the globe, their ability to survive harsh conditions and long migrations, and their interesting behaviors. As reading books can take us to faraway lands and broaden perspective, birding can deepen our connection to the natural world and allow us to immerse ourselves in experiences unlike our own. I am a person who finds it difficult to sit still and maintain focus, particularly in environments with multiple interruptions and competing priorities. It takes me a long time to get back on track when my concentration is broken. Anxiety and worry, the feeling that I am constantly on the verge of doing or saying something that will disappoint others, is a close companion to autism. Although everyday demands can leave few opportunities for rest, I seek out nature as often as I can to reset. The best way for me to reach a grounded state, to put worry and fear away, is to wander and explore the outdoors.

The way disability is conventionally referred to in society tends to connote that disability is something to be avoided or hidden. Conventional disability etiquette suggests using person-first language, i.e., person with a disability, to avoid attention on the disability and center the person apart from their disability. In contrast, most

autistic people use identity-first language. Our preference to use identity-first language signals to society that our disability is not something to hide or be ashamed of and is inseparable from who we are as people. Throughout this narrative, I will refer to myself and others on the spectrum as autistic rather than as a person with autism.

The term *autism* refers to autism spectrum disorder, a broad condition defined clinically by neurological and developmental characteristics described in *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition* (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association 2013). The term *Asperger's* was introduced as a diagnosis in the DSM-4 in 1994 and was removed in the DSM-5 in 2013. Autism is a dynamic disability. Functioning labels, often referred to in binary “high” or “low” functioning designations, are reductive, and can be harmful and belie our lived experience (ASAN 2021).

I describe the autism spectrum as spherical rather than linear. The nuances in our disability are not captured by a two-dimensional plot or a binary functional reduction. For example, labeling an autistic person “high functioning” because they can speak verbally and “low functioning” if they are nonverbal creates a false dichotomy. Some of us who can communicate verbally may be unable to produce or understand speech in certain situations, and some nonverbal autistic people are exceptional writers or use augmentative and alternative (AAC) technology to communicate. Autistic people have constellations of skills and challenges in certain domains. Our needs can fluctuate based on barriers presented in our environment and our energy levels to tackle such challenges on a given day. Intellectual disabilities and autism may be conflated in conversations about functioning labels and autism (ASAN 2021), which is another reason to disentangle them to make sure that each person has access to the appropriate support they need to face the specific barriers in their daily lives.

Some autistic people have co-occurring conditions, including clinical mental health diagnoses such as anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depression, and neurological conditions such as epilepsy, learning disabilities, and sensory-processing disorders. In my case, I have an auditory processing disorder associated with autism. To describe the range of human neurological complexity, the term *neurodiversity* is used (Silberman 2015), and people who are autistic, dyslexic, or have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or other neurological conditions may also identify as neurodivergent. As an autistic person, I am neurodivergent, but not all neurodivergent people are autistic.

I struggle to converse with people verbally because of my auditory processing disorder. My ability to process and understand speech is slower than average and makes it difficult to keep up with the pace of a conversation or contribute to a conversation with appropriate timing. As a result, I often need to ask people to repeat what they have said and may have to ask multiple times in a single conversation. Because of this, a person I am speaking with may conclude I am not listening, or I am intentionally being disrespectful when I am struggling to understand and worrying about being misjudged. Constantly trying to make out what people are saying, and timing appropriately worded responses, can be exhausting. When there are several speakers, the conversation can become white noise to me, where I cannot discern words that



Eastern Phoebe. Photographed at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on April 10, 2022.

are being spoken. It is like listening to the teacher in the Charlie Brown cartoons from my childhood; the *wah-wah* sounds are unintelligible, and these cartoons very much mirrored my reality. Most people do not realize how much an autistic person's energy is depleted by verbal conversation.

When I am not successful with communication it can feel devastating. I am shy, quiet, and reserved by nature, and some painful and traumatic life experiences have led me to further retreat from social interaction. It can be very isolating to be autistic, both wanting connection and fearing interaction with other people at the same time. There is a myth that autistic people do not feel the full range of human emotion. We do but may not express it in the way that allistic (i.e., non-autistic) people do. Many autistic people experience intense emotions but may not be able to articulate or describe what we feel, and because of this we may be misperceived as lacking empathy.

Written communication is an access need for me and I rely on closed captions for full participation in events. Online birding programs have expanded during the pandemic, and many aspects of virtual programming have the potential for increased accessibility. Most virtual meeting platforms have integrated closed captioning that is a free service generated by artificial intelligence (AI), but it is a feature that needs to be activated manually in the host's account. To signal commitment to inclusion, I recommend that all organizations that offer virtual programming activate the closed captioning feature in their virtual meeting platform account to proactively provide captions to their participants rather than wait for an individual who needs captions to disclose their disability and request them.



Wood Duck. Photographed at Horn Pond in Woburn, Massachusetts, on April 10, 2022.

I strongly advocate for universal design initiatives that intentionally thread broad access and functional needs considerations into the foundation of their design. Designs for new construction—such as in visitor centers or classrooms where birding programming is provided—that optimize natural lighting would be a win-win for some autistic people who cannot tolerate the cycling of fluorescent lights or the blue light from LED bulbs and highlight the benefit of universal design principles.

Furthermore, accessibility should be a key component in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, including DEI efforts in birding and conservation organizations. Intentionally designing programs, community engagement activities, workplaces, recreational spaces, and learning environments that go beyond the minimum physical accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will go a long way toward creating more safety and inclusion for people with invisible disabilities like autism.

Birding is my passion. I can lose myself in birding and everything else that weighs me down in daily life fades away. My focus in the field can be absolute to the point that I miss signals for self-care or safety. For this reason, I typically bird with at least one other trusted individual who knows me well and understands and accepts my access challenges associated with autism. While birding, it helps to be reminded to take rest breaks, eat snacks, avoid situations or locations that could threaten physical or psychological safety, respond to changing weather conditions with appropriate clothing or taking shelter, and hydrate. Having a supportive person along with me is also helpful when I need cover to take time out from a group if I get overwhelmed by noise, bright lights, lively social activity, or other sensory experiences that cause me extreme discomfort.

Autistic people tend to experience both hypo- and hypersensitivity to different kinds of sensory input. No two autistic people are alike and each of our sensory profiles is different. I am hyposensitive to some internal stimuli, such as physical pain or thirst. However, I am hypersensitive to man-made noise and activity, including vehicular traffic, construction noise, babies crying, and social interaction punctuated by loud bursts of laughter or shouting. I am also hypersensitive to stiff or restrictive clothing. I must wear clothes that are familiar and soft, and footwear I have bonded with and broken in. I wear a pair of hiking boots more than a dozen years old with tread worn down flat and leather worked-in like a prized baseball mitt. It is difficult to get traction in them, but I will not purchase new boots. These feel right and changing them out is non-negotiable. Although some of these hyper- or hyposensitivities can seem negative or have negative consequences, the gift of autism for me is that I experience intense joy from the variety of sensory input from nature.

I am a visual thinker and being autistic enables me to notice patterns that other people might not observe. I enjoy cataloging and documenting my encounters with nature and the geography and habitat I cover while birding. When I first graduated college in 1995, I worked with canaries and zebra finches in a neurobiology lab. I studied adult neurogenesis in songbirds (Kern et al. 1999). In the late 1990s, I joined Americorps and worked on watershed restoration efforts and environmental education outreach at several placements in state and national forests and national parks throughout the Great Plains, Southwest, and western United States.



Palm Warbler. Photographed at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on May 1, 2021.

I have always been drawn to animals, but I began a more serious interest in birding after being captivated by birds I came across during my time in the Southwest. The roadrunner in the cartoons of my youth is a real bird, but to my surprise I discovered it is not bright purple. I remember my first trip to Arizona and being transfixed by the silky black sheen, striking red eyes, and animated crest of a male Phainopepla. I was also charmed by the coveys of Gambel's Quail, with their dignified topknots, and enchanted by Verdins with their sprightly bursts of activity, light gray bodies, mustard yellow heads, and touch of russet on the shoulder.

I am drawn to some birds because of their understatement rather than bold colors, flashy behavior, or piercing calls. Gadwalls are among my favorite waterfowl, and though they seem plain, I can observe them closely for hours. Their delicate, intricate patterning and quiet dabbling can be hypnotic.

When I am birding, I instinctively slow down and focus, and I am rewarded by a captivating feast of sound, movement, texture, and color. I think about the first time I heard a Bobolink, and the pleasure of experiencing its robotic, buzzy, yet strangely organic and spirited song. I travel through time when I listen to them. As a child of the 1970s, the first movie I saw in a theater was the original *Star Wars*. Hearing a Bobolink for the first time brought me back to the sound effects of R2-D2 and how exciting it was to experience this on the big screen.

In the last 10–15 years, I have focused more on building my skill set starting with upgrading my binoculars, joining as many field outings as I could, and documenting my observations with paper field cards. The best thing about birding is there is always room to improve and something new to learn. More recently, I have been developing my skills in photography and posting sightings and media to eBird. Bird photography has added a new challenge to birding and is helpful in sorting out tricky identifications after a day in the field.

Field outings are an important part of developing birding skills and there are



Snow Bunting. Photographed at Hampton Beach State Park, New Hampshire, on January 8, 2022.

many ways that leaders and educators can make birding more inclusive and safer for autistic people. First, recognize that autism is a lifelong developmental disability, not a childhood condition. Autistic children grow up to be autistic adults. Engagements should be offered that are age-appropriate and there should be multiple offerings that target autistic people in different life stages. As an example, some birding, land trust, and conservation organizations are offering sensory-friendly programming. These opportunities are wonderful, but they

may unintentionally exclude a large segment of the autistic population. All of the sensory-friendly event descriptions I have encountered so far indicate that the programs are designed for children and their families or caregivers. The bias in this approach is that autistic adults do not have sensory-access needs, yet as I network with other autistic adults, we all are seeking inclusive spaces that would accommodate our needs. Organizations that would like to learn more about autism should consult with autistic adults. The broader disability community has a saying, “nothing about us without us,” but this principle is violated when the direct perspectives and ideas of autistic people are not included in the design of accessible spaces, programs, and activities.

The following are a few practical tips to provide welcoming and inclusive experiences for autistic people, particularly autistic young adults, and autistic adults and seniors. Before an outing, provide detailed written event descriptions and specific directions. Autistic people do best when we know what to expect and can prepare for several possible contingencies. For example, explain the likely trail conditions and necessary gear. Will it be rocky, steep, or wet? If so, provide a packing list that includes waterproof, high-top hiking boots, and clothing that can repel mud and moisture. Will the outing last several hours? In this case, provide a timeline that includes the anticipated timing of breaks, the availability and type of restroom facilities, what to bring for snacks or lunch, and how much water is necessary to keep hydrated.

Providing trail maps and eBird frequency charts ahead of time can help autistic people become oriented with a site and study field guides for likely birds to be sighted. In the field, be sure to point out visual cues and refer to images in field guides to supplement verbal descriptions. Bringing along a phone or tablet with Merlin and other birding apps is helpful for autistic people who prefer to interact with technology. Tactile items, such as raised relief maps, small bird sculptures, or figures to scale are helpful to autistic people who prefer to engage with their sense of touch.

If an autistic person attends an outing with a family member, close friend, or aide, speak directly to the autistic person even if a companion is helping them to understand what is being communicated. Autistic people may struggle with responding to open-ended questions or prompts, either because we cannot put into words what we are

thinking or because we generate so many alternative thoughts and exceptions in our mind that we feel anxious trying to narrow them down. For example, instead of asking, “What is your favorite bird?” ask something with specific parameters, such as, “Which kinds of birds do you prefer, raptors or waterfowl?”

Make sure an outing has ample time for breaks. Scout the location ahead of time to identify quiet areas for autistic people to rest and recharge if they experience sensory overstimulation. Ask autistic participants ahead of time to bring items that help them with sensory overload. Bring along a kit of sensory-friendly items in case a participant forgot theirs. A sensory-friendly kit works for all ages and may include items such as silicone pop bubbles that are often colorful and come in fun shapes, fidget spinners or fidget cubes, items that can be pulled or squished, such as stress balls, moldable putty, or slinkies, and weighted items such as bean bags or weighted blankets.

After a trip, be sure to distribute any photos people have given permission to share, eBird checklists, and a written report summarizing the excursion. Remember that no two people with autism are exactly alike or have the same access needs. The best way for leaders and educators to accommodate autistic participants is to encourage them ahead of time to share their access requirements. For readers of this article who are autistic birders, it is a good idea to prepare a written description of your individual access needs or try role-playing with a person you trust in advance to practice how you will communicate or advocate for your needs.

Birding clubs and birders’ meetings are also opportunities for welcoming and including autistic birders. Like me, some autistic people are wary of in-person social interaction. Online meetings and birding communities offer an alternative for autistic birders who communicate best in writing or need time to process and respond to information. Some birding clubs and organizations have adopted mission statements, codes of conduct, or ethics that call out their commitment to diversity and inclusion. Intentional action to seek out and amplify the perspectives of people who have been traditionally excluded from the birding community is necessary to put this commitment into practice. Autistic people with intersectional identities, including BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and historically marginalized identities, have even less representation in the birding community.

In addition, beginning birders may be intimidated by experienced birders, particularly in outings or meetings that do not take the time to orient new birders to the hobby. Some less experienced birders may think they must have expensive equipment to become a better birder. And some people who have traditionally been excluded from birding communities may be exceptional birders who do not feel safe or comfortable in



Semipalmated Plover. Photographed at Short Beach in Winthrop, Massachusetts, on September 26, 2021.

spaces not designed for them. A better way to spearhead more welcoming and inclusive birding spaces is to value and respect all the different ways that people appreciate birds (McGregor 2021). I volunteer for Birdability, which is a national organization working to ensure the birding community is welcoming, inclusive, and safe for all birders, focusing on birders with disabilities. The Birdability website—www.birdability.org—has an abundance of resources and guidance documents on how to design, promote, and run accessible bird outings and meetings.

In an episode of the recent Birdability Birders interview series with Birdability and the American Bird Conservancy, I have suggested multiple ways to increase accessibility for autistic birders and provided tips for birders who are autistic (Birdability and American Bird Conservancy 2022) <https://www.birdability.org/birdability-birders-interview-series-with-abc>.

Actions matter. Be sure to implement suggestions in your organization from nontraditional birders. For autistic birders, mentorship is valuable. One-on-one interaction, calm and patient instruction, and dedicated attention can help draw out autistic birders who are reserved and want to build their skills in a less socially demanding context. I hope to partner some day with a birding organization to create a structured mentorship program for autistic birders of all ages. Will that organization be yours? 🐦

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The History of Bird Observer

Chapter 2: The Saga Continues

William E. Davis, Jr.

[Editor's Note: All of Bird Observer's content from 1973 to 2015 has been digitized to SORA, the Searchable Ornithological Research Archive, at <<https://sora.unm.edu/>>. This archive is a resource that is open to the public. You can access all articles through SORA as well as through Bird Observer's archives.]

Clearly the *Bird Observer* staff took the December 3, 1977, comments by Philip Martin (Davis 2022) seriously, as evidenced by the January 14, 1978, response to Martin's letter by Paul Roberts and the discussions that followed at the general meeting—and off and on for the next five years. At the February meeting, staff discussed putting the back issues of the *Where to Goes* into book form, and the minutes contain the following comment:

The reorganization of BOEM is a must—we have fallen apart and need very much to begin meeting deadlines. Leif [Robinson] drew up a reorganization plan which is enclosed. Please look at and be prepared to discuss at length and finalize a new reorganization plan

At the March meeting, there was much discussion about changing the cover of *Bird Observer* and changes in the structure of the organization. Leif Robinson stressed that there should be minimal key personnel and no redundancy in staffing responsibility, and that the president should be responsible for success of the business aspects of *Bird Observer* and overall success of the magazine. He further suggested that the editor should be autonomous:

Everything moves from the top. People lower down only worry about one facet. The President has to worry about the whole thing. Normally the president has no role in the production of the magazine, but here since he can do so he should step in and do whatever needs to be done when the usual people are unable to do their jobs.

Bird Observer was trying to deal with the shortcomings inherent in an all-volunteer staff, most of whom had other full-time jobs.

One of the suggestions that arose was the idea of having special issues dealing with, for example, alcid, sparrows, or gulls. There was also a lot of discussion about producing the book comprising past *Where to Go* articles titled *Where to Find Birds in Eastern Massachusetts* and the profits that the sales would bring in.

The problems of getting *Bird Observer* issues out on time continued with the July-August 1979 issue falling three weeks behind. A number of announcements had been eliminated because they were no longer relevant, and staff were irritated at having to type material that was not used. Two subjects that were dear to Soheil Zendehe were broached but tabled until the September meeting:

The need for 'technical' articles four times a year (à la ... Phil Martin, J. T.

Leverich), and the need for a new cover drawing each year. ... Beautiful as our cover is it has become a pain in the azimuth to tell one volume from another, one issue from the next—they all look alike. ... a new cover each year means we'll be giving artists as well as writers a chance to appear in our magazine.

At the October 1979 meeting, Ted Atkinson expressed the forward-looking view: "We should expand the magazine to Rhode Island initially, then Western Mass. Eventually we should be a regional magazine covering New England."

The staff also discussed expansion, using new and unique covers for each issue, and other ideas for change. They debated how much to charge for courses offered by *Bird Observer*. A final major topic focused on the quality of photographic reproduction:

It was pointed out that the most beautiful photo and the greatest expertise was simply wasted on our present printer who is incapable of printing true half-tones. Wayne expressed great dissatisfaction with photos in the magazine, particularly the acid pictures—heartily seconded by Soheil who took the damn things.

Bird Observer still had a way to go to satisfy its own staff members and produce a truly high-quality journal.

The grumbling and controversy continued through 1980, starting with a letter from Bob Stymeist that was highly critical of the magazine:

Bird Observer is in trouble! We are falling apart again! We need to re-organize and make a firm commitment to this new year. We cannot function as a corporation and keep our subscribers happy unless we can work together again. ... Paul Roberts has done one hell of a good job for BOEM, and Julie Roberts continues to help improve the image of the magazine. The two of them cannot do it alone. Please, let's make BOEM work!!

In contrast, the September-October 1978 issue announced the good news that the compendium book of *Where to Goes*, *Where to Find Birds in Eastern Massachusetts*, edited by Leif Robinson and Bob Stymeist, was at last for sale:

Bird Observer announces the forthcoming publication of the first book of its kind for Massachusetts. This 160-page, soft-cover volume contains 34 articles, most of which have previously appeared in *Bird Observer*. All articles have been revised and updated, however, and many are accompanied by new, more-detailed maps.... If you've subscribed to *Bird Observer* since its inception, the book will update your knowledge and, conveniently kept in the glove compartment of your car, will prove a handy reference on birding trips. If you're a recent subscriber to *Bird Observer*, the book will introduce you to a number of birding areas in the eastern half of the state. This volume will also make an excellent gift for anyone interested in birds.... It will retail for \$4.00 but until February 15, 1979, *Bird Observer* subscribers may order as many as they wish for only \$3.00 per copy....

By January 1980, the minutes reported that 1,134 copies of *Where to Find Birds in Eastern Massachusetts* had been sold and nearly \$6,000 was in the bank, a substantial increase over earlier years.

Paul Roberts, in the minutes for March 20, 1980, stated that

It appears that we always have just enough material for each issue, but we need to have more in hand so we can prepare further in advance.... The graphics department is doing OK with contributions forthcoming from Ted [William E.] Davis and Denise Braunhardt.

At the same meeting, the staff considered a list of people they should invite to join *Bird Observer*:

The minutes of the June meeting report the resignation of Terry Leverich and Leif Robinson, two *Bird Observer* stalwarts. On a happier note, they also announced “that Bruce Sorrie has agreed to return to the staff as an Editorial Board member. Also, that Martha Reinstein and Dorothy Arvidson would become Editorial Board members. ...”

At the September meeting, the Take a Second Look (TASL) staff announced that they would formally incorporate into *Bird Observer*. Paul Roberts presented some of the difficulties that plagued *Bird Observer* at that time in the following Editor’s Plaint:

Paul passed around a deadline sheet for 1981. He explained that three years ago every issue of the magazine had been out on or before time, but that in the last two years every issue has been one to five weeks late. He had intended to resign if the second issue this year did not make it out on time, but changed his mind and stayed on, despite feeling keenly the responsibility for the tardiness of the magazine. He feels deadlines are treated as guidelines, with the result that articles, records, etc., come in around the deadline, give or take a few weeks, rather than before the deadline, which is the function of a deadline. ... The need for advanced planning is great and has not been met by meetings where lists of perspective [*sic*] articles are made up and nothing more happens. A year’s worth of issues must be planned ahead.

The November minutes reflected more optimism with the appointment of Martha Reinstein as a new acquisitions editor, Chris Floyd as new editorial board member, and the addition of George Gove to the records staff. The years 1978 through 1980 were difficult for the journal, but in the end, *Bird Observer* was better off.

Despite these various difficulties, *Bird Observer* published some interesting articles from 1978 through 1980. Among these were Paul Robert’s long article, “The Spring Hawk Migration: Toward Understanding an Enigma,” and Phillip Martin’s article on celestial navigation in birds, “To Find a Way Home,” and his “Are New England’s Loons Slipping Away?” These articles were scientific in nature and not restricted to eastern Massachusetts. Volume 6, Number 4, was essentially dedicated to Ruth Emery on her 80th birthday, with the lead four articles about her. Among the Where to Goes were Blair Nikula’s “Birding in Provincetown,” Bill Drummond’s “Newburyport and Vicinity,” and Herman D’Entremont and Soheil Zende’s “The Four Seasons at Plum Island (Part I – Winter-Spring).” As usual, the *Bird Observer* summaries of birds seen constituted a long and important part of the magazine.

The only article in the first issue of 1980 was a Where to Go on the “Waterbirds and Shorebirds of Boston Harbor: Twenty-seven Overlooks” by Soheil Zende and Leif J. Robinson, along with a 25-page summary of the previous fall’s bird sightings.

Subsequent issues included Richard Heil's "An Avian Fallout and the First State Records for Black-chinned Hummingbird and Lucy's Warbler," five articles on terns in an issue dedicated to terns, Ted Atkinson's "Lead Poisoning of Waterfowl," and Tad Lawrence's "Sexual Dimorphism in the Anatidae," another in an ever-expanding list of science-based articles. The *Where to Go*s included Bob Fox's "Block Island" as another example of divergence from eastern Massachusetts.

The first issue of 1981 contained Richard Forster's *Where to Go*, "Birding Newburyport Harbor and the Salisbury Beach State Reservation," Bob Stymeist's "Southern Warblers in Massachusetts," and Henry Wiggin's "The Importance of Counting Birds' Numbers." A *Where to Go* on New Hampshire emphasized *Bird Observer's* increasing expansion of the journal's scope beyond Massachusetts. There was also a paper by John Andrews and Lee Taylor on "The 1980 Spring Warbler Migration Study: An Experiment in Cooperative Data Collection," which had significant scientific implications and in the introduction states:

... If one consults the records published in BOEM or in the Massachusetts Audubon Field Notes, one finds primarily early records, late records, and extreme high counts. Generally, the reports of high counts are difficult to evaluate since they fail to detail the time afield or the area covered in generating the account. Nor do they discuss the unusual weather conditions that might have caused a peak.

The authors have long felt that the field reports of birders can be made much more useful than is currently the case. ... The goal of the study was to observe and record the migration of warblers in a manner that would produce migrant abundance data of long-term usefulness. ..."

The editor announced that, "Field Records have returned to monthly reports rather than the seasonal summaries of the past few years. Records will be more timely with this procedure, and more records can be included." He also announced that articles were being typed in Courier font, which is easier to read, and that brief biographies of authors and illustrators would be included with articles. A *Where to Go* of some interest started Volume 9, Number 4—Peter Dunne's "Birding in Cape May," not exactly eastern Massachusetts, but within driving distance to New Jersey. Articles included Wayne Petersen's "Massachusetts Rallidae—A Summary" and Leif Robinson's "Autumn Broadwing Flights at Wachusett Mountain" in Princeton, Massachusetts. A paper of note in the final two issues of *Bird Observer* for 1981 was John Andrews' "Sparrows and Weeds," which, in the first paragraph, states:

Even the most casual birder soon learns that unmown fields are likely places for finding sparrows. But how many birders can look at fields in July and know which ones will be best for sparrows in October? In order to do this, we must know something about the ecological relationship of bird to habitat. In the case of sparrows, think first about food.

A paper by Don and Lillian Stokes, "Behavior-watching Field Notes," read, "This new feature of *Bird Observer* is designed to encourage reader participation in watching the behavior of birds, and at the same time build up a file of behavioral observations on the birds of our area" The Stokeses explained how people could participate. This paper

was yet another example of how *Bird Observer* had become involved in promoting the serious study of birds.

The first issue of *Bird Observer* in 1982 saw a burst of enthusiasm, with a thought-provoking *Where to Go* by Wayne Petersen, “Marshfield: A Birder’s Perspective,” and a paper by John Andrews about “A Winter Roost of Long-eared Owls,” which included a scientific analysis of their roosting behavior and concluded with a series of unanswered questions:

... We learned much, yet some of the more important questions about the roosting behavior of this owl remain unanswered. How were migrating owls attracted to the roost (were they recruited on the hunting fields)? Why did the size of the roost stabilize suddenly after rising so rapidly (was it habitat limited, or did migratory movements suddenly cease)? Did the owls recognize each other as individuals? Did the same owls sit together night after night? Did the same owls hunt the same out-lying fields? Did the perch groupings represent family relationships? Pair bonds? Social dominance? What is the significance of the various vocalizations (appeasement, aggression, individual recognition)?

In its opening paragraphs, the announcement “Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts Forms Field Studies Committee” states that:

This year BIRD OBSERVER is sponsoring a series of field study projects which will allow active observers to learn more about our Massachusetts birdlife while contributing to worth-while ornithological research efforts. The studies are being coordinated by a BOEM Field Studies Committee (FSC) which was formed as a result of a BIRD OBSERVER-sponsored meeting of active birders last spring. ...

Are amateur birders willing to join together in conducting meaningful collection efforts? BIRD OBSERVER believes that they are. Participation in organized studies such as the Christmas Bird Counts and the New England Hawk Watch has grown steadily over the years. BOEM has sponsored the Take a Second Look (TASL) series which has conducted a number of surveys focusing on coastal birdlife. Several other efforts have been reported in BOEM such as the spring warbler studies (Andrews and Taylor), the autumn sparrow census (Komar), the lake and pond waterfowl census (Andrews) and the winter raptor survey (Petersen). ...

The FSC will focus upon those projects for which BOEM will serve as the primary medium for the publication of results. ...

The first *Bird Observer* issue of 1982 also announced a Screech Owl Survey and a Spring Migration Watch. In “Behavior-watching Field Notes,” Don and Lillian Stokes commented on interesting bird behaviors reported to them since their previous publication in the series. The issue concluded with “Field Records” for October and November 1981. Inside the back cover were announcements of the upcoming Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch and Take a Second Look schedules for 1982 field events. It had been an auspicious start for the last year of *Bird Observer*’s first decade.

The second issue of 1982 had articles by Jeremy Hatch, “The Cormorants of Boston Harbor and Massachusetts Bay,” and Dick Veit and Wayne Petersen, “First and

Second Records of Rufous-necked Sandpiper (*Calidris ruficollis*) for Massachusetts.” John Andrews and Lee Taylor presented a follow-up to their previous warbler study. The year’s third issue of *Bird Observer* was another topical issue, on herons. It opened with a paper by Wayne Petersen, “Massachusetts Waders: Past and Present,” and continued with an article by the *Bird Observer* staff on where to find herons, a research report by Ted (William) Davis and Cathy Parsons, “The Clark’s Island Heronry,” Jeremy Hatch’s “The Heronries of Boston Harbor,” and Leif Robinson’s “Black-crowned Night-Herons: The Rise and Fall of a Daytime Roost.” Don and Lillian Stokes presented a study of reported behavior-watching field notes with their comments and analysis. This was the most lavishly illustrated issue to date, with many line drawings of herons, mostly by Denise Braunhardt and Ted Davis, and several full- or half-page photos of herons by David Twitchell.

There was an announcement that *Bird Observer* would sponsor two pelagic field trips in 1982, a continuance of the organization’s outreach to the birding community. Perhaps the major feature in this issue was what would become a long-standing tradition—an At a Glance section on the inside back cover. There was an introduction to the series—an example of what might be expected—that included a photograph of two swimming shorebirds and an article “At a Glance—Phalaropes” by Wayne Petersen. The first At a Glance photograph was of a heron, the identification of which would be discussed in the following issue. The At a Glance has remained a feature of *Bird Observer* for its first 50 years.

The remaining three issues of 1982 contained more artwork than in the past and lots of ads, some of which were nicely illustrated. Dorothy Arvidson wrote several book reviews. There were two reports of first records of Massachusetts birds, including Blair Nikula’s “First Record of Swainson’s Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) in Massachusetts” and Kathleen Anderson’s “Marbled Murrelet: A First Massachusetts Record.” Other articles included Edith Andrews’s “Bird Banding on Nantucket: Highlights of 1981.” Other papers of note featured Nicholas and Oliver Komar’s “Eastern Massachusetts Sparrow Survey,” John Kricher’s “Meet the Plotopterids” (a long-extinct group of birds), and the usual Where to Go articles.

All things considered, *Bird Observer*’s first decade came to an upbeat conclusion: more ads, more art, stabilized Field Notes reporting, many book reviews, and increasingly excellent papers about birds, most reporting scientifically based conclusions. *Bird Observer* was definitely here to stay. 🐦

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Enter Bird Observer's Fiftieth Anniversary Photo, Video, and Writing Contest April 1 Through October 1, 2022

Contest Details & Rules: *Bird Observer* is celebrating our fiftieth anniversary in 2022 with the publication of Volume 50 of our journal. We invite our subscribers to join the celebration by entering the *Bird Observer* Fiftieth Anniversary Photo, Video, and Writing Contest. We welcome submissions from photographers, videographers, and writers of all skill levels, except for *Bird Observer* staff, board members, and their immediate family members.

The contest is open only to *Bird Observer's* current subscribers. Subscribe now and be eligible to enter.

Contest Dates: The *Bird Observer* Fiftieth Anniversary contest runs from April 1, 2022, to October 1, 2022. Winners will be announced in our December 2022 issue.

Prizes for Entering: There will be one grand prize winner in each of three categories: photo, video, and writing. Each grand prize winner will receive a \$100 gift card to Bird Watcher's General Store, Orleans, MA; a \$100 gift card to Bird Watcher's Supply and Gift, Newburyport, MA; a \$100 gift card to Birds and Beans Coffee; and a two-year extension of his or her subscription to *Bird Observer*, in addition to being featured in the December 2022 issue of *Bird Observer* in print and on our website, www.birdobserver.org.

At least 12 honorable mentions will win a one-year extension of his or her subscription to *Bird Observer*. Additional honorable mentions may be awarded at the discretion of the judges.

In addition to the winners, all contest entries have a chance to appear on our website.

What to Enter: You may submit original, previously unpublished digital photographs, digital videos, or nonfiction, fiction, or poetry that highlight the many facets of wild, native New England birds or birding in New England. Photographs and videos must be taken in New England. If you write about a birding experience, it must occur in New England. Submissions from your backyard or home patch bear equal weight with those from conservation lands, wildlife refuges, or wilderness areas.

We would like to see content that reflects our mission: *to support and promote the observation, understanding, and conservation of the wild birds of New England*. All submissions must align with the right of all people to enjoy birding and nature in a safe and welcoming environment free from discrimination and harassment, be it sexual, racial, or barriers for people with disabilities. You must not infringe upon the rights of any other person to obtain any photo or video. Your photos or videos must not be obtained by capturing, moving, feeding, harassing, or disturbing wildlife, or by altering or damaging the environment in any way.

How To Enter: For the photo and video contests, you may submit a maximum of two entries. They can be entered at the same time or at any time during the contest. For the writing contest, you may enter one submission. You must submit all entries electronically, regardless of original format.

Specifics for Photo and Video Submissions: Your original photos or videos can be digital files, digital prints, slides, transparencies, color prints, black-and-white prints, or any other format that you are able to digitize for submission. You must submit your entries electronically via our online submission tool.

People in your photos or videos: You must obtain written permission (via print or email) from any recognizable people in your photos or videos to 1) submit these images to the contest, 2) publish the images in our print journal and electronically on our website, and 3) allow us to identify them by name. You must get permission from a parent or guardian for children under the age of 16. You must be able to show these consents to *Bird Observer* upon request.

File Types: Video entries must be in MP4 format. Photo entries must be in JPG (aka JPEG) format.

Screen Captures: Please submit original materials only. We will not accept any screen captures of images, including those from social media platforms.

Digital Alterations: You may freely alter or compose photographs or videos to suit your artistic vision. All birds present in an image or video must have been photographed somewhere in New England.

Photo Image Size: The winning image will be featured in *Bird Observer*'s print journal as well as online. Please use the highest setting on your camera. Entries should have a resolution of at least 2272 x 1704 pixels (i.e., 4 megapixels or greater).

Video Size: The winning video will be featured in *Bird Observer*'s online journal, and the print journal will provide a link to our website. The submission form limits file submissions to a maximum of 20MB. For video that is larger than 20MB, we will provide an alternate method for providing the file to us.

Specifics for Writing Submissions: You may submit one short work of nonfiction, fiction, or poetry of any type, so long as it is your original work. Entries may include—but are not limited to—observations, reflections, personal experiences, essays, natural history pieces, stories, and poems. Submissions must be in English and not contain material that is defamatory, obscene, offensive, infringing, indecent or otherwise unlawful or inappropriate as determined by the judges in their sole and absolute opinion.

Space is limited in *Bird Observer*; therefore, we require that your submission be between 500–1500 words, give or take a few, which equals about 1–3 type-written pages. Entries that run over the limit will automatically be disqualified. You must submit your entries electronically via our online submission tool.

File Types: Writing entries must be submitted in PDF format.

Judging: There will be one grand prize winner in each of three categories: photo, video, and writing. Winners will be selected by a panel of *Bird Observer* staff. Entries will be judged based on qualities such as originality, creativity, artistic/literary merit, and technical expertise/writing skill. Judges shall determine eligibility with sole and absolute discretion. All decisions of the judges are final.

ENTER THE CONTEST at <www.birdobserver.org>.

Rights: By entering the contest, you hereby grant to *Bird Observer* (i) a perpetual, irrevocable, royalty-free, fully paid, nonexclusive, worldwide license to use your content in our print journal and electronically on our website, and (ii) the right to use your name, city, state, and country of residence in such publications. All content will be credited with the caption “© Person’s Name.”

Questions: If you have a question, contact contest@birdobserver.org.

Legal Conditions: By submitting content to the contest, participants agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless *Bird Observer*, its respective officers, staff, volunteers, and representatives, from any and all third party liability for any injuries, losses, claims, actions, demands or damages of any kind arising from or in connection with the contest (collectively, “Losses”), including without limitation any third party claim for copyright infringement or a violation of an individual’s right to privacy and/or publicity right. The contest is void where prohibited by law. Each participant in the contest is responsible for ensuring that he or she has the right to submit entries in accordance with these rules.

Bird Observer is not responsible for any incorrect or inaccurate information, whether caused by website users or by any equipment or programming associated with or utilized in the contest, or by any technical or human error that may occur in the processing of submissions to the contest, including but not limited to any misprints or typographical errors. *Bird Observer* assumes no responsibility for any error, omission, interruption, deletion, defect, delay in operation or transmission, communications line failure, theft or destruction or unauthorized access to, or alteration of, entries. *Bird Observer* is not responsible for any problems or technical malfunction of any telephone network or lines, computer equipment, servers, providers, computer on-line systems, software, or failure of email on account of technical problems or traffic congestion on the Internet or at any website, including injury or damage to Participant’s or to any other person’s electronic device related to or resulting from participating or uploading images or information in the photo contest. If, for any reason, the contest is not capable of completion as planned, including, but not limited to, infection by computer virus, bugs, tampering, unauthorized intervention, fraud, technical failures or any other causes beyond the control of *Bird Observer* that corrupt or affect the administration, security, fairness, integrity or proper conduct of the contest, *Bird Observer* reserves the right at its sole discretion to cancel, terminate, modify or suspend the contest.

S. Waldo Bailey Journals (1902–1963) Released

PITTSFIELD, MA—The Hoffmann Bird Club, Berkshire County, Massachusetts, announces the online release of the journals of S. Waldo Bailey. Born in 1885 in West Newbury, Massachusetts, Bailey started his meticulous journals at age 17. He worked throughout Massachusetts in many capacities, including as a supervisor for the Civilian Conservation Corps in Berkshire County, warden at the Lenox Bird and Wildflower Sanctuary (now Mass Audubon's Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary), and his favorite—warden at Bartholomew's Cobble (now owned by The Trustees). Spanning 60 years, his detailed and entertaining writings chronicled the travels of an astute naturalist from his early days in Essex County to his time in the Berkshires. Born 23 years after the death of a more famous writer, Henry David Thoreau, Bailey produced his own detailed observations of plants, animals, and the landscapes of Massachusetts.

The dozen or so 3-ringed binders were rescued from oblivion by Matt Kelly, and the 4000-plus pages of single-spaced, typed pages were individually scanned by student Alexander Olney under the supervision of professor Tom Tynning of Berkshire Community College. Wayne Hammond, of Williams College's Chapin Library arranged for the journals to be placed online so the public may access these most important chronicles. Hammond said these journals represent, "one of the finest collections of rare books and manuscripts to be found among American colleges and universities, in which natural history and the history of science are important components."

Bailey's journals will be of tremendous interest to anyone enchanted by natural history, especially ornithology, historical botany, climate change, and twentieth-century contemporary history, particularly of Berkshire and Essex counties. Bailey noted the dates of the comings and goings of birds, the flowering dates of plants and wildflowers, weather, and much more. "I have seen the journals of Henry David Thoreau, and Bailey's journals will definitely rank alongside them," noted Kelly. "Bailey not only recorded the minute details he saw in nature, but did it with a prosaic flair, which makes it nearly impossible to stop reading."

The website contains an introduction and historical background, then the journals are listed by year, with a few years unaccounted for. Since Bailey typed his journals, they are in searchable PDF format. There is one final file, which combines all the years' files, enabling researchers to search the entire database for keywords. In a prior arrangement with the Bailey estate, Kelly has transferred the copyright of the journals to the Hoffmann Bird Club. The journals will find a permanent home in Williams College's Chapin Library.

The Hoffmann Bird Club was established in 1940 to promote study of birds in Berkshire County; it is open to everyone. The club was named in honor of Ralph Hoffmann, an early twentieth-century naturalist who was born in Berkshire County. [For information on Hoffmann Bird Club's meetings and field trips](https://hoffmannbirdclub.org/), visit [<https://hoffmannbirdclub.org/>](https://hoffmannbirdclub.org/)

To view the journals of S. Waldo Bailey, click here: [<https://hoffmannbirdclub.org/>](https://hoffmannbirdclub.org/).

MUSINGS FROM THE BLIND BIRDER

Getting Hooked on Birds

Martha Steele

I often wonder why one person introduced to birding gets hooked while a second person, introduced at the same time by the same person, finds little to enjoy or learn about birds. Why did I, on a beautiful weekday morning in May 1989 in Mount Auburn Cemetery, get hooked immediately by the spectacle of breeding-plumage birds, while others in my group of work colleagues seemed more interested in blooming flowers or feeling the warm sun on their faces? What was it about the birds or birding that led me straight to F.C. Meichsner's in downtown Boston to buy a \$1,000 pair of 10x40 Zeiss binoculars barely days into my birding avocation?

Perhaps the most interesting question is why it took so long for me to become a birder. I was already an avid nature lover, having done extensive camping and hiking in the wilderness and enjoying many outdoor recreational activities. I even had memorable experiences with birds that, nonetheless, did not set me on the path to birding. Among my wilderness camping experiences were several canoe trips in the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota and Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario. These trips were highlighted by the many Common Loons, often vocalizing, with us frequently their only human witnesses. Whether we sat silently at our campsite or resting our paddles while our canoe quietly drifted to listen to one of the most beautiful wilderness sounds in the world, I was completely mesmerized in the moment by the haunting, piercing calls of the loons. But I did not pay attention to any other birds during those trips and indeed, once back in civilization, I did not pursue learning about birds or consider taking up birding as a hobby.

Similarly, during the two-and-a-half years in the 1970s when I lived in the South American country of Colombia, I did not pay attention to or even recall noticing birds at all. This is the country that has the highest number of bird species of any country in the world. I went on many hikes, traveled throughout Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, and never once recall noticing birds. I visited every imaginable habitat from coastal



Blackburnian Warbler. Photograph by Sandy Selesky.



Black-throated Green Warbler.
Photograph by Sandy Selesky.

areas on the Pacific and Caribbean shores to elevations over 15,000 feet in the Andean mountains. Instead, I was focused on scenery while visiting tourist sites, such as the Puracé volcano in Colombia, Lake Titicaca or the Machu Picchu ruins in Peru, or the Otavalo Indian markets in Ecuador.

Even a two-week voyage in the Galapagos Islands in August 1977 did not turn me into a birder despite stunning experiences with birds in the Galapagos. I walked within feet of the hilarious Blue-footed Boobies guarding nest sites and stood yards from Waved Albatrosses clumsily waddling to the cliff edge to take wing into one of the most graceful flights of any bird in the world. Red-billed Tropicbirds entertained us swooping all around our boat as we motored between islands, and a fleet of Brown Pelicans repeatedly dove into the water, creating dimples of splashes on the ocean's turquoise surface. We laughed at the dozens of Magnificent Frigatebirds perched on

thickets with huge red pouches puffed out from their chests and tucked under their long thin bills, trying to outdo each other for the attention of their female counterparts. And one afternoon, I swam among Galapagos Penguins, their torpedolike bodies dashing gracefully and swiftly in the waters below me.

Still, despite these most memorable of experiences, I never pursued further interest in birds or birding once back from my trips. Perhaps I noticed them less because I was hearing impaired and never heard the vast majority of birds whether in my backyard or in an exotic location. It took a casual decision to join a bird walk before heading in to work to spark a passion that changed my life.

Nothing prepared me for that May morning that I thought was going to be a nice but uneventful stroll through a beautiful garden cemetery. I had never owned a pair of binoculars and had never seen anything, bird or otherwise, through the lenses of binoculars. Although I showed up for the Mount Auburn walk without binoculars, the group leader gave me a pair to use during the walk. With the binoculars, I saw for the first time the magnificent colors of warblers, and there were lots of them: American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Canada, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, Magnolia, Black-and-white, Nashville, Pine, Tennessee, Yellow-rumped, and Yellow warblers. These little ones were just the start of that explosive morning with colorful birds causing such excitement among the dozens of birders peregrinating around the cemetery.

I kept thinking, how could I have possibly missed all this for all the years that I have enjoyed outdoor activities? What was I looking at? Mostly the scenery, I

surmised. But here we were in an urban environment and there were birds everywhere. They were beautiful and seeing them for the first time with such clarity through binoculars made me want to find out more about them.

In those first weeks and months, I went out birding at every opportunity I had. I voraciously learned more about birds, reading early on the then-recently published *The Birder's Handbook: A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds* by Paul Ehrlich. It was full of fascinating facts about birds and their behaviors that fueled my interest even more.

I soon began to plan vacations around birding destinations. As those of you reading this know, birding leads to travel, and travel leads to memorable experiences, and memorable experiences lead to life enrichment. Interest in birds also expands our horizons, brings us closer to the natural world, and stimulates our thirst for learning. I do not know that I realized all this that first May morning but I certainly felt an excitement and passion rising in me that few other experiences have generated in my life.

As I grow older, my passion for birds has hardly lessened and I increasingly appreciate the birds in my own region, annually feeling the rise of expectation and thrill at the first spring sighting of “my” returning birds. I am often fascinated by their behaviors, in awe of their migratory feats, and saddened by the multitude of challenges we humans have placed before them in their quest to survive and thrive. One of my most anticipated spring returnees is the American Woodcock. There is little that stirs me more than hearing that first woodcock repeatedly calling *peent*. Snow often still adorns the forest floor and meadow edges when the woodcock arrives in March near our northeastern Vermont home. But I can stand there in the cold and feel the warmth of our birds, represented by the woodcock, starting to come back, a feeling that still brings great joy in the moment.

Perhaps, in addition to seeing the birds that May morning, I also felt the fervent passion among the birders rushing from one beautiful bird to the next. And now, I have the same passion, the same obsession, some would say, about birds. My husband Bob and I start every morning talking about birds. We look at eBird reports from the previous day and track our progress of how many species we have seen or heard to that point compared to the previous years. Birds are never far from our thoughts or our conversations. Indeed, birds and birding finally captured my heart that May 1989 morning and there was no turning back. 🐦

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.

JOHN'S WORLD OF BIRDS

Happy Feet (Redux)

John Kricher



Herring Gull foot-paddling in Scotland. Source: Video by “Dunnock_D” < <https://flic.kr/p/qZPyTM> >. (CC BY-NC 2.0)

Bird behavior is arguably the most vibrant form of behavior exhibited by any animal group and it is made even more wondrous by the fact that birds are easy to observe. The combination of a rich diversity of more than 10,000 species plus the supercharged physiology of birds has provided them with a complex brain capable of learning and innovation. Birds represent a form of alien intelligence that is not alien; they live among us, here on Earth, and demonstrate their unique and varied behaviors daily. All we have to do is pay attention and watch. And that is what this and future columns will be about. I have watched birds for threescore years and then some. Memories abound, aided by reams of field notes. Which brings us to Oakland, California.

I first visited Oakland in December 1991 and found my way to a place in the heart of the city, a body of water named Lake Merritt. Covering just under one square mile, Lake Merritt is the oldest of California's state game refuges, so designated in 1869. In the September-October 1927 issue of *Bird Lore*, the Audubon Society publication founded and edited by the eminent Frank M. Chapman, appeared an article titled “A Lesson in Civic Ornithology” by Joseph Dixon (Dixon 1927). It is richly illustrated

with black-and-white photos of the lake and its bountiful waterfowl.

Today, in the era of eBird, Lake Merritt is ranked as the eleventh hotspot in Alameda County, with 208 recorded species. I had been told that it was particularly good for waterfowl, indeed an understatement. The lake presented a duck cornucopia, with scaups of both species, Canvasbacks, Barrow's and Common goldeneyes, Buffleheads, Ruddy Ducks, and mergansers. On one of several visits to Lake Merritt during my stay in the Bay Area I reveled in great looks at a drake Tufted Duck. Dabbling duck species such as Mallards, pintails,



Herring Gull foot-paddling in Scotland.
Source: Video by “Dunnock_D” < <https://flic.kr/p/qZPyTM>>. (CC BY-NC 2.0)

wigeons, and shovelers were also numerous. But on this fine December day, as folks strolled the sidewalk that makes a scenic loop around the lake, I was stopped in my tracks by some Ring-billed Gulls gathered on a moist sloping lawn adjacent to the pathway. They appeared to be dancing, their feet vigorously churning on the grass. Never mind the waterfowl, what was with these gulls?

A gull would look downward, head bobbing somewhat, and vigorously churn its legs, pattering its webbed feet on the grass. The behavior was individual, not synchronized among the birds —this was no chorus line. The persistent pitter-patter of gull feet was obvious to the humans passing by, some of whom stopped to muse at the show. The questions such behavior raises are these: What are they doing? And why?

My observations of “gull dancing” subsequently triggered a memory of having read about such behavior in Herring Gulls. In his classic book *The Herring Gull's World*, Nobel Prize laureate and ethologist Niko Tinbergen described what he called “paddling” in European Herring Gulls (Tinbergen 1960). The behavior had first been described in 1949 by A. B. Walker. His description, quoted by Tinbergen, is spot on for what I witnessed among some of the Ring-billed Gulls at Lake Merritt:

The body remained remarkably still, but the feet and tarsi moved up and down quite quickly—at a guess I should say four beats per second. The head was moved rhythmically from side to side as if the bird was watching for something which might appear on the ground. Nothing, however, was picked up while the bird was being watched. (Walker 1949)

And now, the big reveal: I was so taken with my experience watching foot-paddling behavior, now just over three decades ago, that I wrote about it as a field note in *Bird Observer* (Kricher 1992). I quickly learned why the gulls were foot-paddling: earthworms. Unlike A. B. Walker's gulls, the gulls I watched were quite skilled at snatching up earthworms, the unsuspecting annelids presumably inspired to come to the surface by the persistent pattering of gull feet, perhaps mimicking rainfall. I watched for about 25 minutes as six individual gulls each caught and quickly consumed at least

one earthworm, some several earthworms. The gulls showed little aggression toward one another, each devouring its catch within seconds. Ring-billed Gulls are well known to dine on earthworms exposed as fields are plowed. They “know” earthworms as food (Pollet et al. 2020).

Foot-paddling on grassy areas is exhibited by European Herring Gulls but, interestingly, not North American Herring Gulls (Weseloh et al. 2020). Foot-paddling along seashores occurs among Ring-billed (Pollet et al. 2020), Laughing (Burger 2020), and Franklin’s gulls (Burger and Gochfeld 2020) as well as a few other gull species (O’Donnell 2008). Foot-paddling along the shoreline is believed to stir up various marine creatures immersed in the sand, suitable tidbits of gull nutrition. Tinbergen (1960) mentions that both Black-headed and Common gulls foot-paddle along muddy shorelines but not on grass. Some shorebirds, plovers in particular, also exhibit a similar behavior (Message and Taylor 2005).

Ring-billed Gulls foot-paddle on grassy areas and along the shoreline. But now it gets complicated. That is because unlike many other forms of gull behavior, foot-paddling, particularly on grass, is not that uniformly observed. Not all Ring-billed Gulls appear to do it. You may spend many hours watching Ring-billed Gulls from Galveston Beach to Plymouth Beach and not observe them on grass or along shoreline foot-paddling. Yet in some areas, such as the shoreline at Tybee Island near Savannah, Georgia, foot-paddling is commonly seen among Ring-billed Gulls. Why is the behavior common in some areas but not in others? Birds constantly and intently watch other birds. Birds serve as both intra- and interspecific information sources for one another. Is foot-paddling a form of learned behavior that has spread to various degrees among gull species? Is it moving among gulls like a behavioral meme such that some groups are paddlers and others have yet to discover the culinary benefits of paddling?

Tinbergen might disagree. He regarded foot-paddling in Herring Gulls and other bird species as yet another form of innate behavior, a behavior locked and loaded in the birds’ genes. He noted that occasional paddling had been observed in a diverse array of species including some kept in zoos and that the birds, especially inexperienced birds, often paddled in situations that were inappropriate for food capture. Thus, he believed the behavior to be an innate stimulus that was sometimes misapplied, somewhat like a displacement reaction (i.e., such as “frustrated” gulls pulling grass tufts). When Tinbergen wrote, much of bird behavior was regarded as innate, composed of many complex fixed action patterns that required environmental releasers to be exhibited. Bird behavior was viewed as largely a broad repertoire of genetically based actions. One would think, however, that innate-based hard-wired behaviors would be more uniformly observed among bird species with large populations such as various gull species. Consider that foot-paddling on grass was recently reported for Glaucous-winged Gull...but only one Glaucous-winged Gull (O’Donnell 2008).

I have not observed Ring-billed Gulls foot-paddling on grass anywhere since my visits to Lake Merritt. I have seen foot-paddling in several places along the seashores, both in Ring-billed Gulls and less frequently in Semipalmated Plovers, but I do not expect to see it. It is a bonus when I do.

Tinbergen nuanced his assertion that foot-paddling was innate by suggesting that the behavior was continually refined by learning (Tinbergen 1962). Thus, the question remains, how did foot-paddling gulls learn to associate foot-paddling with earthworm emergence? Maybe wet grass felt like wet sand so a gull paddled and it paid off. Paddle on. Fine, but if that was the case, how did gulls on a beach originally learn to associate foot-paddling with capturing food items? Only the gulls know.

Should you want to see gull foot-paddling in action there are numerous videos on YouTube from which to choose.

Acknowledgments: John wants to thank his friend Ted Davis for providing helpful comments. 🐦

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John Kricher taught ecology and ornithology at Wheaton College in Massachusetts for 48 years. His quest to learn ecology and to watch birds has taken him to over 30 countries and to all of the continents. He is a fellow in the American Ornithological Society and past president of the Wilson Ornithological Society, the Association of Field Ornithologists, and the Nuttall Ornithological Club. His books include *The New Neotropical Companion* (2017) and the Peterson Reference Guide to Bird Behavior (2020). He lives with his wife Martha Vaughan in Hingham, Massachusetts.

FIELD NOTES

First Confirmed Breeding of Sandhill Cranes in Worcester County, Massachusetts

Wendy Howes and Alan Rawle



Sandhill Crane parent with two juveniles approximately 10–12 weeks old, July 25, 2021. All photographs are by Alan Rawle.

In the October 2020 *Bird Observer*, Volume 48, Number 5, we reported on the first documented nesting attempt by Sandhill Cranes in Worcester County, in Hardwick. Neither of two observed colts survived beyond the first three to four weeks after hatching. The 2021 season resulted in a better outcome, as what we believe was the same adult pair—Sandhill Cranes exhibit nest-site fidelity—produced two offspring that eventually matured and accompanied their parents throughout at least mid-October.

The first sighting of a single crane in the Hardwick neighborhood where nesting eventually occurred was on April 14, when the bird was seen flying in and landing at the edge of a beaver-pond marsh. This was near the location which a couple of months later would become the regular night roost for the crane pair and their two flightless colts.

After an observation of a single adult crane being dive-bombed by an immature Bald Eagle on April 18, there were no further sightings of any Sandhill Cranes in the immediate area until early June. It was on June 2 that our abutting neighbor saw and photographed two adult cranes with two young. Massachusetts State Ornithologist Andrew Vitz judged that the colts were three to four weeks old, so an early- to mid-



Before the young birds could fly, the family group moved on foot between favorite foraging places, July 28, 2021.

May hatching date seemed likely, given an incubation period of 29 to 32 days <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Sandhill_Crane/lifehistory>.

Having missed the June 2 observation, we began searching for the whereabouts of the crane family in earnest, checking the many wetland marshes and small farm ponds throughout the neighborhood almost daily. Interested neighbors were alerted. The foursome eluded us until the first day of summer, June 21, when we finally found them foraging along the marshy pond edge where the first sighting of the season had occurred, and where the 2020 family was consistently present before those colts were lost. This beaver-pond marsh and adjacent south-facing mowed field were their preferred stomping grounds and where they were most reliably found throughout the summer.

Through the rest of June and until early August, we were able to check on the birds nearly every day as they settled into a predictable routine. Most observations were documented on eBird, and many photographs were taken from a distance.

Before the colts developed some flight capability, the family's daily routine after leaving the overnight resting place, presumably early in the morning (never witnessed), began about one-quarter mile northeast of their favorite field overlooking the marsh. This morning location featured a small, shaded pond surrounded by open, grassy areas as well as a homeowner who discovered that the cranes were attracted to the cracked corn he had been throwing out for Mourning Doves. Around midafternoon the foursome made its way south on foot, using the little-traveled road or cutting through a patch of woods, and arrived back at the favored field. As dusk approached, the birds



Juveniles bathe in farm pond, July 28, 2021.



Adult and two juveniles locating a snake, August 20, 2021.



Sandhill Crane family at rest, August 10, 2021.

gradually wended their way farther into the marsh, foraging and feeding as they went, until reaching the relative safety of the water's edge, where they settled for the night.

Behaviorally and developmentally, the crane family progressed as described in numerous resources. Each parent guided and stayed close to one colt, keeping them apart from one another until the young were well-grown, helping to reduce sibling rivalry and competition for food. One colt, perhaps the first to hatch, appeared to be slightly more developmentally advanced than the other colt. The young birds began stretching and wing-flapping around late June, and on July 17 the colts were making short airborne hops and glides of about 10 to 20 yards. By July 27, the stronger of the colts was observed making two short gliding flights as the other birds walked to the southerly foraging area. Soon afterward all four glided in unison for 75 to 100 yards before landing and continuing on foot. On one hot day in August, in a new twist to their usual routine, the family stopped at a small duck pond they had passed many times, and the two colts took baths while the adults kept watch. On August 2, we heard cranes bugling overhead and saw all four flying together. It was the first day the colts were observed in sustained flight above the height of the largest trees.

The crane family departed the natal site soon after August 27, and subsequent sightings of a matching foursome were at Mandell Hill, Hardwick, on September 12 and 15; Muddy Brook WMA on September 13, flying over at dusk, heading west; and Winimusset WMA, New Braintree, seen by many observers September 28 through October 21.



Sandhill Crane family foraging together, August 1, 2021

Although daytime reports at Winimuset WMA and surrounding areas dried up after October 16 when pheasant-hunting season began, we had the good fortune to see and photograph the family three more times in November. Just after dusk on November 9, 10, and 15, they flew over our observation spot at Muddy Brook WMA, making their way once again to a location to the west. Knowing we would be unable to return to watch for them over the next week or so, we bid farewell to “our” Sandhill Cranes, expecting they would soon migrate to parts unknown. 🦒

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Second Record of Painted Bunting in Berkshire County, Massachusetts

Ken Schopp



Painted Bunting. All photographs by the author.

I write the bird column for the *Sheffield Times* that focuses on the birds of Sheffield, so I get inquiries and questions from local Sheffield residents regarding birds they have observed. A Sheffield couple who are avid gardeners and thoroughly enjoy feeding the birds called me on December 2, 2021, regarding a male Painted Bunting they believed was frequenting their birdfeeders. They live less than two miles from the center of



Painted Bunting.

Sheffield. I rushed right over because they live only five miles from me.

Initially, the Painted Bunting was not there, but within minutes—much to my pleasant surprise—he showed up, first landing in a small crab apple tree and then settling on a feeder containing sunflower hearts. The homeowners had 14 birdfeeders, including suet holders. Their feeders were filled with a variety of seed: niger, shelled sunflower, cracked corn, millet, and peanut pieces. The birds are really given a choice. I observed for a half hour and the Painted Bunting flushed twice but each time returned shortly to the same feeder. He was a bit of a loner; no other birds fed at the same feeder with him.

The last—and only—Painted Bunting observed in Berkshire County was reported on October 11, 1945. The report was of a female Painted Bunting, and this was recorded in David St. James's "Annotated List of the Birds of Berkshire County, Massachusetts." St. James did not indicate who reported this sighting nor were there any photos taken to confirm.

As you can imagine, quite a variety of backyard birds frequent these feeders, but the homeowners are private people and did not want to open their property to outside birders. I had the good fortune to be invited to observe the Painted Bunting several times in December and he was always the lone forager at a feeder filled with sunflower hearts. When the woman discovered that the bird preferred white millet, she set that out for him. The Painted Bunting has been returning to the millet feeder at random times every day through February 20, 2022. 🐦

Carolina Wrens Nesting Observations

Lindi Higgins

I am an amateur birder, and the following account is based on my personal observations. On June 19, 2021, in Brewster, Massachusetts, I noticed a Carolina Wren on one of the three hanging plants on my front porch as I watered the plants. I did not notice the bird again until I started to pour water into one of the hanging pots on June 24, and the Carolina Wren flew out at me. While the bird was away from the nest, I used a stool to observe inside the pot more closely and determined that there were eggs in a hole in the dirt approximately two inches deep by two inches in diameter. The plant and dirt surrounding the hole was raised up forming a dome over the eggs approximately five inches tall.

I began watching the nest multiple times a day. The nest was only about five feet from the screened front door, and I was able to watch without disturbing the birds. I never saw the female leave the nest until the eggs hatched and I did not observe the male bring the female any food. The eggs hatched on July 10, 2021.

After the birds hatched, both parents brought food to the babies. Initially, the food consisted of small caterpillars and tiny bugs. The food brought by the parents varied increasingly in size and type over the following 12 days.

On July 22, 2021, at 9:00 am, the birds fledged one by one, dropping to the ground beneath the nest. By the time the third and last chick fledged, the first chick had already made it around the corner of the house and up into some forsythia bushes. Increasingly, the three chicks were strung out farther apart. The parents appeared extremely stressed, flying back and forth among the three chicks and back into the nest. By 5:00 pm, all three chicks were about 20 yards from the nest in an area filled with trees, brush, and brambles. One was in a tree, one was in the bushes, and the last chick was still on the ground. I was concerned that the chick on the ground might not make it through the night. At 9:00 pm I went to close the front door and observed that all three chicks were back in the nest.

On July 23, 2021, the parents brought food to the babies in the nest until 9:30 am, when all three chicks flew off from the nest into the trees, where their parents continued to bring them food. The birds stayed in the area for the next few weeks.

On August 5, 2021, I heard loud bird calls by the front door and looked out to find both parents and all three chicks flying into the nest and landing among the other potted plants. They continued flying in and out of the nest for approximately ten minutes.

On August 22, 2021, the night that tropical storm Henri hit the Cape, I saw one of the chicks fly into the nest around 8:30 pm. I don't know if the other two chicks were already in the nest. I checked the nest the next morning but did not see any of the wrens. On the evening of September 2, 2021, I observed one of the chicks fly into the nest. It was raining hard with over four inches of rain during the storm.

As of October 11, 2021, I occasionally heard the Carolina Wrens around my house, but not as often. I do hear Carolina Wrens in the neighborhood, but do not know if they are the same family of wrens. I hope that Carolina Wrens will nest in my hanging pots again next summer. 🐦

ABOUT BOOKS

The Wanderers

Mark Lynch

Vagrancy in Birds. Lees, Alexander and James Gilroy. 2021. London: Helm.

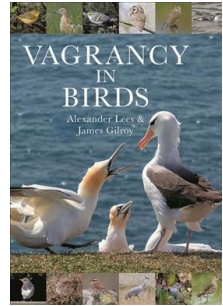
“Birds have wings, and they use them.” [Often quoted in several variations in many bird books, but I have been unable to discover the origin.]

Way back on January 9, 1983, I was leading a BBC trip to South Quabbin, also known as Quabbin Park. There was not much around, which is typical for that time of the year, but we pulled into Enfield Lookout in the hopes of seeing an eagle. Back in those days many birders got their year or even life eagle from that lookout. If we were lucky, we were hoping to see turkeys across the water on the Prescott. Nobody even thought about ravens; they were not that widespread then. Unexpectedly, three geese flew in front of us, a bit of a way out, almost at eye level. They flew left and out of sight, then appeared again this time flying left to right, then away from us along the Prescott Peninsula, and eventually to the right and out of sight. These three geese were strikingly plumaged. Their entire inner forewing was white, they were gray underneath, but their heads had rusty tones. Their light eyes were outlined in black. The entire trip was dumbfounded because none of us had any idea what we had just seen. Did we witness a flock of vagrants? But what species and from where?

About an hour later, the trip took the short hike into Gate 52, and there we found the geese again perched across the water. Using our scopes, I identified them as Egyptian Geese. Do not ask me how I knew what they were; possibly I had seen pictures of them in some global waterfowl guide. Because there had been no previous records in the Quabbin area, and we knew of no accepted records for the state, we eventually assumed the Egyptian Geese were escapees from some exotic waterfowl collection. Therefore, they were not countable on our lists. Still, that momentary thrill of seeing what could have been genuine vagrants, possibly new to the state, remains vivid today. That is because birders crave vagrants. Vagrant species can determine where we go on a day trip. Vagrant species encourage us to wait for hours in bad weather for a bird to show up. Birders absolutely love vagrant species.

‘Vagrants,’ ‘accidentals,’ ‘rarities,’ ‘extralimitals,’ and ‘casuals’ are all synonyms for records of nominally ‘out of range’ individuals of a given bird species. Humans have long coveted records of these ‘lost individuals’, and there is a rich ornithological literature that describes various subcultures associated with their pursuit from 19th-century collectors to 21st-century twitchers (Mearns and Mearns, 1998, Wallace 2004). The obsession surrounding vagrant birds has been historically derided by some ornithologists, who argued that records of vagrants are of little biological relevance, but we share the contention of others (e.g., Grinnell 1922, Rose

& Polis 2000, Newton 2008) that vagrancy is a powerful biological phenomena [*sic*], whose study is fundamental to understanding the diversity of life on earth. (p. 7, *Vagrancy in Birds*)



Vagrancy In Birds is a unique book, a scholarly volume of ornithological research that birders will also find fascinating and enjoyable. Alexander Lees is a senior lecturer in Biodiversity at Manchester Metropolitan University and an associate of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. James Gilroy is a lecturer in ecology at the University of East Anglia who studies the long-distance movements of animals. Together they have written a truly global assessment of how and why birds stray out of their normal ranges. It is a complex story for which there is still a lot to be learned.

Vagrancy does not occur only in birds, and there are records of butterflies, moths, dragonflies, bats, grasshoppers, sea turtles, seals, and cetaceans all straying out of their usual ranges. But in birds, because they can fly, we find the most frequent, widespread, and extreme examples of wandering far beyond where they usually migrate.

The first 70 pages of *Vagrancy in Birds* is a summation of what has been learned about how birds navigate during migration. According to the authors, birds have four basic compasses, ways in which they orient themselves on those long yearly migratory trips. They can use the sun, patterns of polarized light, reading the stars, and the earth's magnetic fields to help find their way. No one species uses all these cues. Some birds also use visual cues of landmarks to develop a mental map of their routes. To aid in the timing of migration, birds also have an internal avian clock.

One possible cue that migrants may use to judge when to cease migration is time itself. Most animals possess an internal clock, and in birds the clock sense is known to be particularly advanced, with the capacity to keep track of time at high precision across daily and annual cycles. (p. 16)

Obviously, any breakdown in the ability of a bird to read these cues could lead to that bird wandering off its usual route. There can be compass errors like reverse migration (for example, going north when the bird should be heading south), or something the authors name as mirror-image misorientation (heading northwest, when they should be heading northeast). Magnetic anomalies in the earth's field may also cause birds to stray. All of these subjects are described in detail in the text.

You would expect juvenile birds to wander off course most often because they have not yet learned the correct route to fly. But there are many records of adult vagrants.

An important question in the context of vagrancy, is if adult birds typically possess such a finely-tuned mental map of their world, why do some of them still end up as vagrants? One possibility is that some birds may reach adulthood without managing to accurately internalize a working map during their developmental years. (p. 19)

Vagrant birds of social species like waterfowl, cranes, or shorebirds may link up with migrating flocks of other species and continue their migration with them. Possible examples of this phenomenon here in New England occur when we see a species such as Pink-footed Goose in a large flock of Canada Geese or a Rufous-necked Stint among hundreds of Semipalmated Sandpipers.

For species that migrate within single species flocks, the social component of navigation may be even more direct. Evidence suggests that some species defer navigation decisions to a subset of experienced (usually older) individuals, with younger birds following behind and perhaps learning a trail of visual beacons along the way (Flack, *et.al.*, 2012). (p. 34)

A common outcome for lost juvenile cranes (or geese) is to join flocks of other species, sometimes entirely different genera, and migrate with them. These flocks can become 'carrier species' that often lead the stray individuals into long range vagrancy. Each year birders across the Holarctic avidly search through wintering flocks of Arctic-breeding geese and cranes in search of stray vagrants that have fallen foul of this mechanism. Some individuals will then continue to migrate back to the Arctic with their adopted species year after year, producing hybrid offspring in some cases (Ottenbughs, *et. al.*, 2016). (p. 34-35)

You may think adverse weather is the greatest cause of vagrancy, but Lees and Gilroy write that this is not the case.

It is understandable that laypeople assume that vagrant birds are usually 'blown off course' by adverse weather, but even the most cursory analysis reveals that a significant proportion of long-range vagrancy events cannot be explained by exogenous factors like winds alone. Vagrancy events are near constant, global, and often entirely uncorrelated with weather patterns, indicating that there are invariably other factors at play. Indeed it is likely that most incidences of long-distance vagrancy are driven by factors that are endogenous to the birds themselves. Failures in the compass system are perhaps the most obvious and pervasive mechanism that would cause birds to stray from their normal ranges. Even humans equipped with satellite GPS can still find navigation difficult and frequently get lost! (p. 21)

Still, weather events such as hurricanes or other powerful atmospheric events do cause vagrancy. You can be fairly sure that a strong southerly storm will be accompanied by a list of sought-after species. Here in Massachusetts, birders closely watch the pathway of incoming hurricanes. Depending on whether the eye passes well inland or closer to the coast determines where birders will venture out, braving destructive winds and falling limbs. Hopes are always high of spotting a Leach's Storm-Petrel at Quabbin or Wachusett reservoirs or a Bermuda Petrel along the shore. Though this does not always work out for the vagrant seeker, some of these atmospheric events have produced historic outfalls of vagrant species.

A particularly notable drift event occurred in the Bering Sea during the peak El Niño year of 1998, when the convergence of two storm systems

in mid-May brought an unusually strong and consistent vector of winds stretching from the Aleutian Islands as far east as the sea of Okhotsk. On 17 May 1998 observers on Attu tallied almost unbelievable totals of vagrant landbirds: some 180 Eyebrowed Thrushes *Turdus obscurus*, 223 Olive-backed Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni*, 193 Rustic Buntings *Emberiza rustica*, and 366 Bramblings *Fringilla montifringilla*, with no fewer than 700 Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola* being found the next day (Hameed et al. 2009). (p. 44–45)

Some species may even wander extensively on purpose as a way to explore potential new feeding or nesting territories.

As noted above, vagrancy among migratory species may often be driven by adverse weather conditions or navigational failings, but a significant proportion of vagrancy events among migrants may also involve ‘deliberate’ exploratory wandering in search of new territories. In many migratory species, juveniles can make apparently random movements away from their natal sites during the first weeks after fledging, prior to commencing their proper directional movement. (p. 55)

This brings us to human-driven vagrancy. This possibility is the *bête noir* of all regional rarities committees. Was that extra-limital bird, that everyone was so excited about adding to their lists, ship assisted? In a recent issue of *British Birds* it was revealed that the October 2019 British record of a Paddyfield Pipit (*Anthus rufulus*) was not added to the British list. Paddyfield Pipits are from Asia and are not migratory, so there was a real possibility that the bird was human assisted, either as a caged bird or brought to the area by accident by a ship or plane. You can imagine the outcries of the hardcore listers who had ticked the bird. Some of the examples cited by the authors of *Vagrancy in Birds* make for fascinating reading. There is also an additional concern that some of the birds that are human assisted may establish themselves in new areas and eventually transition from beloved vagrant to invasive pest.

The accidental transport of birds by boats and other vehicles arguably presents an even greater headache for birders trying to decide what vagrants count as ‘wild’ and therefore ‘tickable’. Shipping, in particular, plays a major role in influencing the movements of birds across oceans and one that is hotly debated amongst birders and ornithologists. Birds, and migratory landbirds in particular, frequently alight on vessels at sea, sometimes in truly spectacular numbers. Whilst ships are slow-moving in avian terms, birds that remain on board for long periods can inevitably find themselves moving inadvertently out of their normal ranges, and there are multitudes of examples of wild birds being carried vast distances aboard ships—for example Snowy Sheathbills *Chionis albus* transported from the Antarctic to the British Isles (Jay 1993) and Taiwan (Lin *et al.* 2018).

The debate usually starts when such a bird makes landfall in a new area—should we count it as ‘wild’ and a ‘natural vagrant’, even though it has not made the journey under its own steam? This is a tricky question—and

one that troubles legislators as well as birders, as ‘wild’ status typically determines whether individuals are protected under regional wildlife laws. Usually, organisms transported outside their native ranges by boats are considered non-native in their destination regions and may thus be targeted for culling to prevent them establishing invasive populations (Gilroy et al. 2017). Some of the most adept ship-born hitchhikers in the avian world are potentially significant pests. (p. 59)

Cases of escapes from collections or ship assists have caused numerous headaches for birders here in Massachusetts. In January 1991 a flock of six Barnacle Geese was seen flying about the Osterville area on Cape Cod. Up until that point all state records of Barnacle Geese were of single birds, and all were considered to be escapes from waterfowl collectors. But six birds couldn’t escape, right? That this was a flock was first considered to add credence that these were genuine and therefore countable birds. Many birders spent many hours trying to track these birds down only to learn later that the flock had indeed escaped en masse from a collection. (See *Birds of Massachusetts* p. 95.)

Some accounts of human-assisted vagrants have unique consequences. In 1982, a Eurasian Jackdaw was found at Tom Nevers Neck, Nantucket. Just previous to its appearance, I had vowed to Sheila C. that if I ticked a lifer in Massachusetts before the end of the year, we would get married. It was December, so I thought, “What were the chances?” To make a long story short, we traveled to Nantucket, I ticked the jackdaw, and we got married. It was later discovered that several jackdaws had appeared in eastern North America, all being clearly ship assisted. I crossed jackdaw off my state list, but we stayed married and are still married to this day.

If you think just because a bird is found aboard ship it is automatically not countable in all cases, the authors of *Vagrancy in Birds* offer this:

When considering whether ship-assisted birds should be classed as ‘wild’, there is a huge grey area between the clear-cut examples of ‘unnatural’ port-to-port transport for largely sedentary species (such as House Crow) and the potentially much shorter (but no less ‘unnatural’) transport of other migratory birds that alight on vessels for a few days during their long overwater flights. At what point do we draw the line between unnatural vagrancy caused by ship assistance and natural transoceanic vagrancy? (p. 59)

Think about the times when you have been aboard an overnight pelagic and a migrant warbler has landed on the deck. This bird may remain on board the ship for some time and may even accept water or food—such as peanut butter—from the passengers. Eventually the bird leaves and takes off across the water. Yes, the bird was ship assisted. It may not have survived but for that pause aboard ship. So, is that bird countable?

The bulk of *Vagrancy in Birds* are the “Family Accounts” (p.71–329) in which the authors describe patterns of vagrancy for every bird family. Many of these accounts are quite short, amounting to a single paragraph. You can imagine how little there is to

write about accounts of vagrancy in Struthionidae (Ostriches) or Tinamidae (Tinamous) (both on p.71). You may think some species are rather sedentary and there is little chance they could wander, but there are surprises. Under Phasianidae (p. 82–83) there is an amazing account of mass vagrancy of ptarmigans.

In North America, where it is known as Willow Ptarmigan, Willow Grouse routinely make significant migrations in flocks numbering up to 2,000 individuals, particularly in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta (Hannon *et al.* 1998), with more than 1,000 observed on intertidal flats at Kotzebue sound, Alaska, in September 1988 (Lehman, 1989). This species is apparently found with some regularity as a migrant offshore, with Zimmerman *et al.* (2005) describing an encounter with a group of more than 100 in August 2003 in Kuskokwim Bay, Alaska, many of which landed on the ship, and were even observed landing—and taking off from—the sea surface! (p. 83)

The much longer accounts of vagrancy in families like Anatidae (waterfowl p.73–81), Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels p.163–68), Trochilidae (hummingbirds p.103–7), Accipitridae (Kites, Hawks, and Eagles p.186–91), and many others have a lot of information that will be of interest to New England birders.

A final important chapter discusses how global climate change may affect patterns of vagrancy in some species.

Vagrancy in Birds is an important contribution to the vast literature on bird movements and migration. It is well illustrated with numerous color photographs from around the world. Vagrancy is a complicated subject, particularly when considered on a global scale, yet the authors present the essential information, references, and examples to make these odd cases of vagrancy something that should be of real interest to both ornithologists and birders. In the birding world, sightings of vagrants will continue to challenge and frustrate us as we try to tease out how any one vagrant got here, always asking: “countable or not?” *Vagrancy in Birds* will be a reference cited by rarity committees in the future. But this is a book that should be enjoyed by all birders. For those of you who thrilled at the Steller’s Sea-Eagle on the South Shore or enjoyed a Rufous Hummingbird at a feeder in December, *Vagrancy in Birds* is a volume that will give you some understanding about how these unexpected birds wandered here.

“Migration is the greatest adventure in the life of a bird, the greatest risk it must take.” Roger Tory Peterson 🐦

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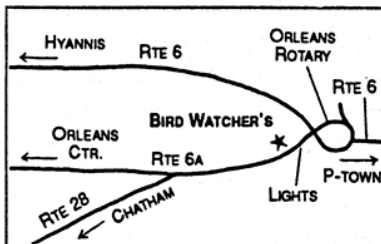
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BIRD SIGHTINGS

January-February 2022

Neil Hayward and Robert H. Stymeist

Weather

On New Year's Day 2022, the temperature reached 54 degrees in Boston, the highest reading for the entire month. The average temperature was 32 degrees, about 2.5 degrees colder than normal for January. The winter's first snowstorm buried parts of the state on Friday January 7. Boston recorded 11.7 inches of snow at Logan Airport and 15.2 inches were measured at the Blue Hills Observatory in Milton. Communities southwest of Boston were the hardest hit, with snow totals between 12 and 14 inches. A powerful nor'easter came roaring into New England during the closing days of January. The Blizzard of 2022—the first in four years—dumped 23.6 inches of snow in Boston, making it the second largest January storm on record and the seventh biggest snowstorm of all time. The record for Boston is 27.6 inches, set in February 2003. Many areas both south and north of Boston received over two feet of snow. The jackpot was Stoughton with 30.9 inches; Quincy recorded 30.0 inches and Danvers measured 24.5 inches.

The average temperature in Boston in February was 36 degrees. But the month was most notable for extreme temperature swings over 24-hour periods. The first swing occurred on February 12, when Boston recorded 60 degrees only to be followed by a drop to 39 degrees the following day. On February 18, Boston recorded 61 degrees and then 39 degrees the next day. Just days later, Boston recorded its highest temperature of the month, a balmy 69 degrees. Many areas in our region reached into the low 70s. Consistent with the month's pattern, the next day saw the temperature plunge to 32 degrees in Boston with nearly 6 inches of snow recorded at Logan Airport. Snow totals north and west of Boston reached 8–12 inches. Cape Cod and the Islands accumulated 2–5 inches of snow. There were 17 days with precipitation during the month. Boston recorded a total rainfall of 4.61 inches, higher than the February normal of 3.21 inches. Snowfall for the month was 15.3 inches versus the normal for February of 10.9 inches. The season total for Boston was 51.9 inches, slightly over the normal of 49.2.

R. Stymeist

GEESE THROUGH HERONS

Pink-footed Geese were reported from Hampshire and Plymouth counties. The two birds at Hadley represent a new high count for the period. With the exception of 2013, Pink-footed Geese have now been reported every year in Massachusetts since 2009. A count of 20 Snow Geese on Nantucket on January 13 and 19 is the highest count for the county since October 1988, when 80 birds were reported flying over Tuckernuck Island. **Cackling Geese** were reported from six counties.

Nantucket Island is 14 miles long and 3.5 miles wide—large enough to host an immature **Trumpeter Swan** and a pair of **Tundra Swans** without the two species ever being seen together. Both continued from the previous period, with the Trumpeter staying until February 15. Trumpeter Swan is a new species for the island and the fourth record for Massachusetts. These birds presumably hail from the Great Lakes, where the species was introduced from the 1960s.

Nantucket was also the duck hotspot for the period. A count of 24 Northern Shovelers at the start of the year was a new high count for the island, beating the previous high of 18 birds set last year. The number of overwintering shovelers has been increasing steadily on the island since 2010. The island also hosted impressive numbers of wintering Canvasbacks and Redheads. A count of 150 Canvasbacks on January 1 is a new Nantucket high count for the month, and the highest eBird January count for Massachusetts since 1999. Forty-seven Redheads on January 1 is the highest eBird count for the month for the state. In addition, the island hosted the Eurasian subspecies of Green-winged Teal for the third consecutive year. Back on the mainland, a Common x Barrow's Goldeneye hybrid in West Newbury on February 3 was only the fifth record of this taxon for Essex County this century. Another bird was reported from Cape Cod in Mashpee, where the taxon is recorded annually.

An **Eared Grebe** continued at Marblehead through February 15. This is presumably the same bird returning to the area from the previous winter.

Single **Rufous Hummingbirds** continued in Hampden County and Brookline through January 3 and January 11, respectively. Both birds were banded this winter.

A count of 24 Virginia Rails on Nantucket on January 2 set a new high count for the island, beating the previous high of 17 in 2010.

The first report of Piping Plover for the year was the early date of February 2, with five birds at Seagull Beach in Yarmouth. The same day, three birds were reported from the south side of Long Island—the only other February record for the species this year north of North Carolina. The Yarmouth record is the highest count for the month after six birds found in Chatham on February 6, 1954 (Veit and Petersen 1993). It is also only the third year this century in which birds have been seen in the state in February—the others were 2019 and 2020. Last year, a single bird was found at Kalmus Park Beach on the exceptionally early date of January 5, 2021, intriguingly only 2.5 miles from this year's February record.

Willetts rarely overwinter in Massachusetts, and when they do it is the *inornata* subspecies known as the Western Willet, which breeds in prairies and grasslands in the west; all of our coastal-breeding *semipalmata* birds depart the country in the early fall to winter mostly in South America. This year, a Western Willet was present throughout the period in West Dennis, only the third period record in eBird for the state. It was also the most northerly bird in the country, almost 300 miles north of the nearest Willet on Brigantine Island, New Jersey. Single Red Knots were on Cape Cod in February. This is the seventh year this century the species has been reported in February. It was also the seventh year this century that Lesser Yellowlegs was reported in January, with a bird in West Harwich on January 10.

This was a good period for seeing Thick-billed Murres. A count of 146 birds at First Encounter Beach in Eastham on January 15 is almost double the previous January high count of 86 set in 2020. Bristol County scored its first Thick-billed Murre record for January, and Nantucket logged its second eBird record for February. Common Murres were also common; a count of 185 birds on Stellwagen Bank on February 11 is an eBird high count for the month.

Bonaparte's Gulls are not uncommon in winter, although they are rare for the small stretch of coastline that lies within Norfolk County. A bird in Quincy on January 7 is the first record for January or February since 1990. Plymouth County scored a second record of the hybrid gull taxon Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull in Plymouth on January 17. Three hybrid birds were also present on Nantucket at the beginning of the month. This taxon has been increasing, with birds found annually on Nantucket since 2018, and likely reflects the expansion of the Lesser Black-backed Gull population in Greenland. Nantucket also hosted an adult **Thayer's Gull**

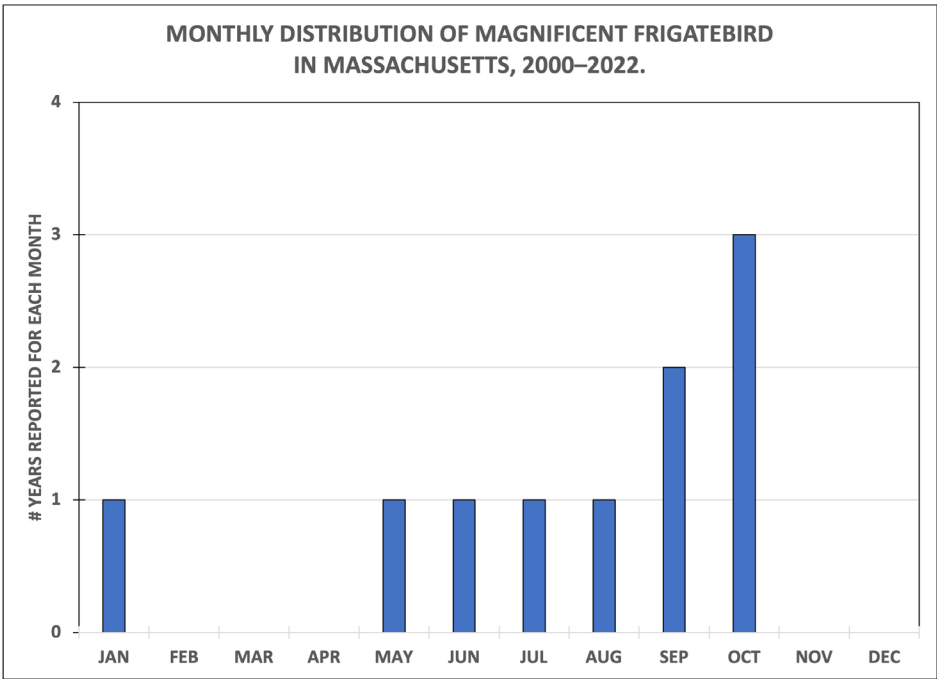


Figure 1. Number of years by month for which Magnificent Frigatebirds have been reported in Massachusetts for the years 2000–2022. The single January sighting is from the Christmas Bird Count on Nantucket, 2022. Data from eBird.org.

(relegated to a subspecies of Iceland Gull in 2017).

The Christmas Bird Count on Nantucket produced a surprise on January 2 when Jeremiah Trimble found a **Magnificent Frigatebird**. The bird was perched on wires on a residential road on the east side of the island. According to Trimble, the “underpart pattern combined with the dark blue eye ring and blue gray bill seemed to indicate adult-type female.” Frigatebirds are rare wanderers in winter; this was the only record north of Florida for the period. Massachusetts has logged 10 records this century, with birds reported from May 17 through October 31. This year’s January record is a true outlier.

A photograph of a **Brown Pelican** in Dartmouth on January 10 that was posted to a local Facebook group would be the first record of this species since June 2020.

Great Egrets were seen in a record four counties in January, including a first January record for Suffolk County, with three birds seen at Winthrop Beach on January 15.

N. Hayward

Snow Goose				2/7	W. Tisbury	6	S. Fea#
1/1	Great Barrington	7 max	D. Curtin + v.o.	2/26	Seekonk	24	L. Miller-Donnelly
1/1-2/20	Bristol Co.	5 max	v.o.	Green-winged Teal			
1/11-2/19	Boston (FPK)	2	S. Jones + v.o.	1/6	Quincy	16	E. Ross
1/13, 1/19	Nantucket	20	M. Thureson, E. Rudden	1/22-2/28	Hatfield	9 max	L. Farlow, S. Winn+v.o.
2/20	Saugus (Bear Ck)	3	G. Wilson#	2/12	Chatham	14	B. Nikula
Greater White-fronted Goose				2/21	Westport	13	M. Iliff
1/1-1/6	Concord	2 max	ph v.o.	Green-winged Teal (Eurasian)			
1/1-1/26	Somerset	2 max	ph J. Eckerson + v.o.	1/1-1/2	Nantucket	1 m	ph L. Waters#
1/5-1/6	Easton	1 ph	K. Ryan + v.o.	Canvasback			
1/10	Longmeadow	1 ph	T. Gilliland	1/1	Nantucket	150	S. Kardell#
1/13-1/22	Taunton	1 ph	K. Ryan	1/1-1/2	Sandwich	1	M. Keleher#
2/18-2/24	Amherst	1 ph	H. Iselin + v.o.	1/11-1/12	Haverhill	1	S. Babbitt + v.o.
2/20	Easthampton	1 ph	B. Bieda#	1/14	Jamaica Plain	1	J. Hanson + v.o.
Pink-footed Goose				Redhead			
1/4, 1/11	Hadley	2,2 ph	M. McKittrick, C. Elowe+v.o.	1/1	Nantucket	47	J. Trimble#
1/12-23, 1/30	Duxbury	1,1 ph	E. Szczypek#, D. O'Brien	1/2-1/9	Falmouth	1	M. Keleher + v.o.
2/21	Plymouth	1 ph	B. Vigorito	1/13	PI	1	R. Heil
Cackling Goose				1/17	Plymouth	1	L. Schibley
1/1	Gill	1 ph	J. Smith	2/24	Boston (CHRes.)	2	C. Conturie
1/1-1/5	Plymouth	1 ph	V. Burdette + v.o.	2/24	Quabbin Pk	1	D. Spector + v.o.
1/1-1/16	Somerset	2 max	ph J. Eckerson + v.o.	Ring-necked Duck			
1/7-1/10	Sheffield	2 ph	J. Pierce + v.o.	thr	Southwick	52 max	D. Holmes
1/10-1/20	Duxbury	1 ph	A. Single + v.o.	thr	Lee	22 20m+2f max	So. Auer+v.o.
2/11-2/17	Amherst	2 max	M. Eckerson + v.o.	1/1	Quabbin Res.	51	M. Lynch#
2/16-2/28	Easthampton	2 max	J. Laflay + v.o.	1/2	Fall River	22	L. Abbey
2/22	Ipswich	1 ph	S. Grinley + v.o.	1/28	Mashpee	146	M. Keleher
Mute Swan				2/19	Wayland	30	J. Forbes
1/19	Westborough	52	C. Martone	2/28	Brockton	35	K. Ryan
2/26	Swansea	78	L. Miller-Donnelly	Tufted Duck			
Trumpeter Swan				1/1-2/16	Nantucket	2 1pr max	ph T. Pastuszak
1/1-2/15	Nantucket	1 imm	ph S. Kardell + v.o.	1/23-2/10	Harwich	1 f	ph S. Finnegan, v.o.
Tundra Swan				2/6	Mashpee	1 f	ph M. Keleher
1/1-1/3	Nantucket	2 ph	v.o.	Greater Scaup			
Wood Duck				1/2	W. Tisbury	865	P. Edmundson
1/5	Barnstable	74	M. J. Foti	1/12	PI	240	T. Wetmore
2/21-2/28	Hatfield	48 max	K. Schroeder + v.o.	1/30	Harwich	730	M. Iliff
Blue-winged Teal				2/10	Fairhaven	275	S. van der Veen
1/5	Barnstable	2	M. J. Foti	Lesser Scaup			
Northern Shoveler				1/27	Fairhaven	45	S.+C. Darmstadt
1/1-1/6	PI	2 max	v.o.	1/30	Harwich	265	M. Iliff
1/1-2/13	New Bedford	4 2pr max	J.+M.Eckerson+v.o.	King Eider			
1/2	Sharon	2	W. Sweet	1/1-2/9	Hull	1 m	ph H. Cross + v.o.
1/5	Nantucket	24	T. Pastuszak	1/9-2/22	Rockport (AP)	2 m	(ad+imm) ph R. Heil
1/5-2/7	Jamaica Plain/Boston	2	L. Sokolow, A. Barker + v.o.	1/15	Nantucket Sound	1 m	ph E. Rudden
1/9	Harwich	2	B. Flanagan	2/9-2/21	Ipswich (CB)	1 f	ph I. Pepper + v.o.
2/12	Hadley (Honeypt)	3	C. Suprenant	Common Eider			
Gadwall				1/2	Fairhaven	250	M. Iliff
1/1-1/3	Wayland	6 max	J. Mott# + v.o.	2/5	Bourne	900	B. Nikula
1/1-1/9	Pittsfield (Onota)	6 max	K. Hanson# + v.o.	2/19	Chatham	2900	L. Waters
1/1-1/13	PI	20 max	T. Wetmore+v.o.	Harlequin Duck			
1/9	Quincy	14	V. Zollo	1/1	Cohasset	6	M. Perrin
2/5	Acoaxet	55	M. Eckerson	1/23	Hull	13	G. d'Entremont#
2/6	Plymouth	70	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)	1/23	Westport (GN)	9	M. Iliff
Eurasian Wigeon				2/1-2/28	Rockport (Hpt)	60 max	v.o.
1/1-2/8	Nantucket	2 1pr max	ph S. Kardell#	Surf Scoter			
1/24-2/20	Fairhaven	1 m	ph C. Longworth + v.o.	1/17	Westport (GN)	85	M.+J. Eckerson
2/8-2/28	Sandwich	1 f	ph P. Kyle + v.o.	White-winged Scoter			
American Wigeon				1/2	Pittsfield (Pont.)	1	So. Auer
1/9-2/27	E. Boston (BI)	4	J. Taylor + v.o.	1/13	PI	320	R. Heil
1/14	Fairhaven	22	A. Rainville	1/17	Westport (GN)	65	M.+J. Eckerson
2/6	Plymouth	40	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)	Black Scoter			
2/18	Hadley	8	J. Oliverio	1/13	PI	150	S. Babbitt#
2/21	Sandwich	80	G. d'Entremont	1/17	Westport (GN)	70	M.+J. Eckerson
2/21	Newbury	9	R. Heil	Long-tailed Duck			
American Black Duck				1/1	S. Deerfield	1	B.+L. Bieda + v.o.
1/23	Westport	250	M. Iliff	1/1-2/3	Mystic River	1	J. Layman + v.o.
2/1-2/28	PI	1000 max	T. Wetmore+v.o.	1/13	PI	145	R. Heil
2/11	Quabog IBA	46	M. Lynch#	1/24-1/24	Wachusett Res.	1	N. Dowling + v.o.
Northern Pintail				2/18	Westport (GN)	80	G. Stuck#
1/1	Egremont	2 m+f	v.o.	Bufflehead			
1/1-1/14	PI	125 max	R. Heil + v.o.	1/4	Sharon	15	K. Ryan
1/3	Cohasset	4	S. Avery	1/23	Westport	125	M. Iliff

Bufflehead (continued)				Clapper Rail			
2/10	Osterville	125	G. d'Entremont	1/4	Fairhaven	1 h	D. Burton
Common Goldeneye				1/6	W. Dennis	1	M. Faherty
thr	Turners Falls	260 max	L. Farlow, S. Winn+v.o.	Virginia Rail			
1/8	Wachusett Res.	94	M. Lynch#	1/1-1/6	W. Roxbury (MP)	2	T. Bradford + v.o.
2/3	W. Newbury	43	R. Heil	1/1-1/13	Ipswich	4 max	N. Dubrow#
2/19	Fairhaven	118	M. Iliif	1/2	Nantucket	24	L. Waters#
Barrow's Goldeneye				1/4-1/28	Peabody	4	R. Heil
1/1-1/4	Sherborn	1	E. Landre, K. Winkler	1/8-1/31	GMNWR	4 max	v.o.
1/4	Sharon	1 f	K. Ryan	2/17-2/21	Newton	5	P. Peterson + v.o.
1/4-1/23	New Bedford	1 m	H. Zimmerlin + v.o.	Sora			
1/8-1/17	E. Boston	1	J. Hanson + v.o.	1/1	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	T. Bradford
1/23-2/3	S. Hadley/Holyoke	1 f	T. Gilliland + v.o.	1/1, 1/9	PI	1,1	G. Ellison, W. Kirby#
2/7	Cotuit	3	D. Clapp#	2/17-2/22	Newton	1	P. Peterson
2/14	Acushnet	1 f	C. Longworth	Common Gallinule			
2/21	Plymouth	3 2m+1f	G. d'Entremont	1/2-1/9	Nantucket	1	ph J. Trimble# + v.o.
2/21	Lowell	1 f	J. Young	American Coot			
Common X Barrow's Goldeneye (hybrid)				1/4	Acoaxet	24	B. King#
1/28	Mashpee	1 ph	M. Keleher	2/15	Wellesley	1	L. Risoli
2/3	W. Newbury	1 ph	R. Heil	Sandhill Crane			
Hooded Merganser				thr	Lancaster	3	v.o.
thr	Turners Falls	56 max	P. Gagarin + v.o.	1/8	BFWMA	3 2ad+1imm	M. Lynch#
1/4	Acoaxet	110	B. King#	1/12-1/13	Rehoboth	2	R. Bradley + v.o.
1/8	Wachusett Res.	46	M. Lynch#	Black-bellied Plover			
Common Merganser				1/2-1/24	E. Boston (BI)	1	L. Woods + v.o.
1/1-1/6	Pittsfield (Onota)	150 max	So. Auer + v.o.	1/16	Edgartown	25	S. Fea#
1/1-1/14	Quabbin (G22)	375 max	B. Lafley + v.o.	2/12	Westport (GN)	6	B. King#
1/2	Boston	50	G. d'Entremont#	Killdeer			
1/13	Westport	150	C. Molander	1/1	Nantucket	5	v.o.
1/30	Harwich	270	M. Iliif	1/27	Fairhaven	8	C. Molander
Red-breasted Merganser				2/12	Ipswich	4	L. Nichols
1/2	Fairhaven	125	M. Iliif	1/2	Eastham (CGB)	1	K. Yakola#
1/3	Quabbin Pk	2	L. Therrien	1/6	Hyannis	1	P. Crosson
1/10	Hadley	1	D. Allard	Piping Plover			
1/14-2/10	Turners Falls	1	G. Ellison + v.o.	2/2-2/7, 2/13	Yarmouth	5,3	N. Villone + v.o.
Ruddy Duck				Ruddy Turnstone			
1/1	Nantucket	50	v.o.	1/23	Fairhaven	24	C. Molander#
1/2	Aquinnah	25	B. Shriber	2/10	Osterville	35	G. d'Entremont
1/10	Harwich	68	M. Tucker	Red Knot			
1/28	Fall River	8	A. Wilson	2/2	Monomoy NWR	1	A. Kniedel
Northern Bobwhite				2/6	Wellfleet	1	N. Dorian
2/12	Eastham (FH)	8	E. Lamb	Sanderling			
Wild Turkey				1/13, 2/1-2/6	PI	234,40	R. Heil
1/28	Montague	52	P. Gagarin	1/30	Westport (GN)	150	G. Stuck#
2/18	Westport	60	R. Tomawski	2/13	Yarmouth	300	B. Nikula
2/22	Rutland	26	M. Lynch#	Dunlin			
Ruffed Grouse				1/1-1/31	Gloucester (BR)	55 max	v.o.
1/1	Quabbin Res.	1	M. Lynch#	2/3	PI	45	S. Babbitt#
1/1-2/24	Pittsfield	1	S. Townsend + v.o.	2/12	Westport (GN)	92	G. Chretien#
1/20	Cheshire	3	D. Griswold	2/19	P'town (RP)	75	B. Nikula
1/25	Shrewsbury	1	M. Lynch#	Purple Sandpiper			
Ring-necked Pheasant				1/1-1/31	Gloucester (EP)	60 max	v.o.
1/1-2/21	Egremont	2 max	So. Auer + v.o.	1/4	Acoaxet	28	B. King#
1/2	Ipswich	1 m	S. McDonald	1/9	Cohasset	2	V. Zollo
1/2-1/3	PI	1	S. McDonald# + v.o.	2/2	Dennis (Corp. B.)	2	N. Villone
1/6-2/24	Hadley (Honeypot)	1	C.+H. Allen + v.o.	2/19	Aquinnah	12	T. Malin
2/16	Attleboro	1	J. Tolbert	American Woodcock			
Pied-billed Grebe				1/2	Chappaquiddick	4	A. Lamoreaux
1/28	Harwich	4	M. Faherty	2/12, 2/20	PI	1,1	L. Waters, S. Grinley#
2/12	Wachusett Res.	1	V. Burdette	2/22	E. Boston (BI)	2	S. Gulls
Horned Grebe				2/23	Dartmouth	2	B. King
thr	Quabbin Pk	2	D. Marchant + v.o.	Wilson's Snipe			
1/1	Hull	21	G. d'Entremont	1/26-1/27	Fairhaven	6 max	C. Longworth + v.o.
1/1-1/2	Stockbridge	1	G. Hurley + v.o.	2/21	Boston (AA)	1	T. Loewenstein + v.o.
1/2	Fairhaven	20	M. Iliif	Lesser Yellowlegs			
Red-necked Grebe				1/10	W. Harwich	1	M. Keleher#
1/6, 1/26	PI	5,1	R. Heil, T. Wetmore	Willet (Western)			
Eared Grebe				thr	W. Dennis	1	v.o.
1/1-2/15	Marblehead	1 ph	A. Damiano# + v.o.	Greater Yellowlegs			
Rufous Hummingbird				1/5-1/6	Fairhaven	4	B. King + v.o.
1/1-1/3	Brookline	1 imm	f bM Garvey+v.o.				
1/1-1/11	Hampden Co.	1 b	A. Hill#				

Pomarine Jaeger				1/17	Plymouth	1 ad ph	L. Schibley
1/15, 1/30	Eastham (FE)	1,1	J. Trimble#, P. Flood#	Glaucous Gull			
Dovekie				1/1-1/2	Lowell	1	S. Miller + v.o.
1/15, 1/30	Eastham (FE)	48,13	J. Trimble#, P. Flood#	1/5	Sandwich	1	M. Tucker
2/11	Stellwagen Bank	5	L. Waters#	1/13-2/9	Fitchburg	1	B. Abbott + v.o.
Common Murre				1/13	Gloucester (EP)	1	J. Nelson
1/14, 1/17	Rockport (AP)	86,6	R. Heil	1/15	Dennis (Corp. B.)	1	J. Pratt#
2/11	Stellwagen Bank	185	L. Waters#	1/18-2/23	Revere B.	1	M. Iliff + v.o.
Thick-billed Murre				1/25	Fairhaven	2	R. Nussbaumer
1/14	Rockport (AP)	37	R. Heil	2/6	Salisbury	1	R. Doherty
1/15	Eastham (FE)	146	J. Trimble#	2/12-2/13	P'town (RP)	1	M. Morales
1/17	Acton	1	A.+A. Sharpe	2/13	Chatham	1	M. Faherty
1/22	Quincy	1	D. O'Brien	2/21	Turners Falls	1	A. Richards
1/23	Westport (GN)	1	M. Iliff	Herring x Glaucous Gull (hybrid)			
2/3	Boston H.	1	A. Jankowich	1/16	Sharon	1 imm ph	L. Waters+W. Sweet
2/6	Nantucket	1	T. Pastuszak	Red-throated Loon			
Razorbill				1/12-2/28	Mystic River	1	J. Mott + v.o.
1/1-1/3	Boston H.	3	M. Bixby + v.o.	1/13	PI	107	R. Heil
1/13	PI	96	R. Heil	1/23	Westport (GN)	9	M. Iliff
1/14	Rockport (AP)	196	R. Heil	1/26-2/23	Wachusett Res.	1	G. Dresser + v.o.
1/15	Eastham (FE)	456	J. Trimble#	Pacific Loon			
1/17	Westport (GN)	14	M.+J. Eckerson	thr	P'town (RP)	2 max ph	v.o.
1/23	Cohasset	4	J. Bock	Common Loon			
2/20	P'town (RP)	1370	V. Zollo	1/1-1/3	Quabbin (G35)	8 max	J. Lafley + v.o.
Black Guillemot				1/13	Fairhaven	10	C. Longworth
1/1-2/28	Gloucester (BR)	4 max	J. Nelson + v.o.	1/28	Harwich	11	M. Faherty
1/16	Rockport (AP)	8	R. Heil	Magnificent Frigatebird			
2/23	PI	1	v.o.	1/2	Nantucket	1 ph	J. Trimble#
Atlantic Puffin				Northern Gannet			
1/1	P'town (RP)	2 ph	K. Yakola#	1/1	Westport (GN)	4	A. Cembalistry
1/14, 1/16	Rockport (AP)	8,2	R. Heil	1/15	Eastham (FE)	165	J. Trimble#
1/15	Eastham (FE)	6 ph	J. Trimble#	Great Cormorant			
2/11	Stellwagen Bank	1	L. Waters#	1/1	N. Scituate	19	G. d'Entremont
Black-legged Kittiwake				1/1-1/31	Gloucester (BR)	30 max	v.o.
1/14, 1/16	Rockport (AP)	85, 840	R. Heil	1/9	Cohasset	5	V. Zollo
1/15	Eastham (FE)	355	J. Trimble#	2/4	Medford	1	J. Kovner
Bonaparte's Gull				2/27	Acoaxet	15	B. King#
1/7	Quincy	1	E. Ross	Double-crested Cormorant			
1/13	PI	1	R. Heil	1/9	Boston	2 1ad+1imm	G. d'Entremont
Black-headed Gull				1/17	Mansfield	10	R. Bedard
1/3	Barnstable	1 1W ph	N. Villone	Brown Pelican			
1/13	PI	1 1W	R. Heil	1/10	Dartmouth	1 ph	M. Gardner
2/1-2/10	Osterville	1 ad ph	P. Crosson + v.o.	American Bittern			
Iceland Gull				1/2-1/28	PI	1	S. Babbitt# + v.o.
1/1-1/17	Wilmington	3 max	S. Sullivan# + v.o.	1/6	Aquinnah	1	M. Born
1/3-1/9	Sharon	3	W. Sweet + v.o.	1/18	Gloucester (EP)	1	P. Vale
1/5	Swampscott	2	S. McDonald	2/2	E. Boston (BI)	1	K. Sayn-Wittgenstein+v.o.
1/8-2/24	Turners Falls	6 1x3cy+5x1cy	D. Sibley+tv.o.	2/9	Salisbury	1	G. Giribet
1/14	Sandwich	8	M. Tucker	2/11	Georgetown	1	B. Gosse
1/25	Fairhaven	2	L. Abbey	Great Blue Heron			
2/12-2/26	P'town (RP)	35 max	P. Flood + v.o.	1/1-1/31	Cambridge	11 max	T. Carlisle + v.o.
2/24	Quabbin Pk	2 imm	L. Therrien + v.o.	1/1-2/22	Sunderland	10 max	S. Griesemer + v.o.
Iceland Gull (Thayer's Gull)				1/24	Westport	6	D. Merski
1/12	Nantucket	1 ad ph	S. Kardell	Great Egret			
Lesser Black-backed Gull				1/1	Mashpee	1	K. Fiske
1/3-1/9	Sharon	2 ad	W. Sweet + v.o.	1/1	P'town	1	E. Dziedzic
1/9	Medway	1	J. Bock + v.o.	1/10-1/12	N. Truro	1	T. Green
1/17	Westport (GN)	2	M.+J. Eckerson	1/13	Vineyard Haven	1	D. Benvent
1/17	Wilmington	1	S. Sullivan#	1/15	Winthrop B.	3	S. Jones
1/18-2/3	Revere B.	6	M. Iliff + v.o.	Black-crowned Night-Heron			
2/3-2/18	Turners Falls	2 1ad+1x1cy	D. Sibley + v.o.	1/1	Vineyard Haven	36	A. Kneidel#
2/19-2/24	Quabbin Pk	1 ad	L. Therrien + v.o.	1/14	Gloucester (EP)	1	A. Sanford
2/21	PI	1	E. Labato	2/2	Medford	1	E. Goodrich
Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull (hybrid)				2/9	Nantucket	2	T. Pastuszak
1/12	Nantucket	3 ph	S. Kardell				


VULTURES THROUGH DICKCISSEL

Few birders are lucky enough to report Golden Eagle sightings in Massachusetts, and when they do, it is usually limited to a brief view of a bird in flight. But from January 16 through February 5, a cooperative juvenile **Golden Eagle** afforded many birders extended looks while it peregrinated along the Merrimack River. It showed a special fondness for the area around Deer Island. The same individual was last reported from Plum Island on February 6. Birders in Berkshire County recorded as many as 50 Black Vultures in Great Barrington, which has been the go-to spot in the state for this species. Blackstone, on the Rhode Island border, is another area favored by both Black and Turkey vultures. During the month of January, as many as 16 Black and more than 50 Turkey vultures were reported. Snowy Owls were reported from 11 locations, including a high count of five individuals on Plum Island. Five Barn Owls were found during the Nantucket Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on January 2, and six Northern Saw-whet Owls were heard on New Year's Day at Quabbin Reservoir.

Highlights among the 133 species recorded on the Nantucket CBC on January 2 included three Blue-headed Vireos, two **Sedge Wrens**, 24 Marsh Wrens, 336 Carolina Wrens, 1518 Yellow-rumped Warblers, and one American Redstart photographed in Madaket. The Concord CBC was held on the same day. Some of the high counts included 11 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, an amazing 46 Pileated Woodpeckers, 59 Winter Wrens, and 426 Carolina Wrens. Carolina Wrens are recovering well from the devastating winter of 2014.

Vagrants continuing in the state from December included the **Bell's Vireo**, first found on October 16 at Fort Hill in Eastham and last seen on January 10. The **Western Meadowlark** from Hadley, first noted on November 11, continued until January 13. Other notable sightings included a **Varied Thrush** that visited a feeder in Falmouth and a **Townsend's Solitaire** that was seen at Lime Kiln Farm, a Massachusetts Audubon Society sanctuary in Sheffield. Several other unusual birds were noted that we have come to expect every year, including **Yellow-headed Blackbird** (Hadley), **Summer Tanager** (Sunderland), **Painted Buntings** (three locations on Cape Cod), and **Western Tanagers** (six locations).

A lot of excitement was generated by the appearance of a brightly colored European Goldfinch that was present throughout January in Lexington. European Goldfinches are commonly kept as cage birds and the assumption is that this individual is most likely an escaped bird and not a natural vagrant.

Winter finch reports were unremarkable, although just after the blizzard at the end of January, there was a major influx of American Goldfinches throughout the state. Josh Rose reported that some Western Massachusetts birders had flocks totaling over 100 coming to their feeders. 

R. Stymeist

Reference

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

Black Vulture				1/16-2/6	Saugus (Bear Ck)	1 min	G. Wilson#
thr	Great Barrington	50 max	C. Ward + v.o.	2/6	Hadley (Honeypot)	1	L. Therrien + v.o.
1/8	Blackstone	16	R. Whetstone	2/6	Saugus (Bear Ck)	1	G. Wilson#
1/8	New Bedford	5	N. Jacob	2/6	Wellfleet	1	N. Dorian
Turkey Vulture				2/6-2/7	Winthrop	2	J. Forbes + v.o.
1/1	Nantucket	48	P. Trimble	Northern Saw-whet Owl			
1/16	Blackstone	51	M. Lynch#	1/1	Quabbin Res.	6	M. Lynch#
2/21	Dartmouth	25	J. Flaherty#	1/1	New Braintree	2	M. Locher
Golden Eagle				1/1-1/25	Boston (RKG)	1	L. Markley + v.o.
1/16-2/5	Nbpt	1 imm ph	G.Overholster+v.o.	2/6	Royalston	2	E. LeBlanc
1/19	Williamstown	1 ph	M. Morales	2/10	N. Brookfield	2	D. Lusignan
2/6	PI	1 imm ph	v.o.	2/16	Mansfield	1	R. Bedard
Northern Harrier				2/25	Norfolk	1 au	E. Alpert
thr	Hadley (Honeypot)	3 max	L. Therrien + v.o.	Belted Kingfisher			
1/1-1/31	PI	6 max	v.o.	1/1	Hardwick	3	S. Sumner
1/25	Freetown	3	G. Chretien	Red-headed Woodpecker			
2/6-2/13	Saugus (Bear Ck)	4	G. Wilson#	1/11-2/28	Dartmouth	1 imm ph	J. Bogart + v.o.
2/26	Barnstable (SN)	4	P. Crosson	1/22-1/25	Worthington	1 ad	E. Vorhees
2/27	Cumb. Farms	12 max	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			
Northern Goshawk				thr	MtA	4 max	v.o.
1/19	Orange Airport	1 imm	B. Lafley	1/1-1/31	PI	3 max	T. Wetmore + v.o.
Bald Eagle				1/2	Concord	11	Concord CBC
1/16	Fall River	8	B. King#	1/30	Dighton	2	J. Eckerson
1/25	Wachusett Res.	6	R. Spedding	2/6	N. Marshfield	2 imm	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
1/28	Harwich	4	M. Faherty	Northern Flicker			
2/3	W. Newbury	5 ad+1 imm	R. Heil	2/27	Cumb. Farms	6	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
2/12	Quabbin Res.	8	5 ad M. Lynch#	Pileated Woodpecker			
Red-shouldered Hawk				1/2	Concord	46	Concord CBC
1/13-2/12	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	M. Iliff + v.o.	2/3	Harvard	3	J. Turner
2/7	Dartmouth	3	S. Walas	2/7	Dighton	2	J.+A.+M. Eckerson
2/11	Medfield	1	K. Ryan	2/21	Hubbardston	3	B. Pelpy
2/17	New Braintree	2	M. Lynch#	American Kestrel			
2/22	Newbury	1	R. Heil	1/1-2/21	Ashley Falls	1	R. Wendell# + v.o.
Rough-legged Hawk				1/2, 1/9	PI	1,1	T. Wetmore#, M. Watson
1/1-1/8	Sudbury	1 dk	v.o.	1/6	Quaboag IBA	1 m	M. Lynch#
1/1-2/8	PI	1	v.o.	1/18-2/24	Hadley	1	M. McKittrick + v.o.
1/13	S. Dart. (APd)	1	M. Eckerson	Merlin			
1/22-1/26	Wachusett Res.	1	M. Lynch#	1/1, 1/6	PI	1,1	T. Wetmore, S. Grinley#
1/30	Hadley (Honeypot)	2 max	M. Akresh# + v.o.	1/1-2/22	Orange Airport	1	D. Small + v.o.
2/1	Great Barrington	1	C.+J. Blake + v.o.	1/3-2/26	Hadley (Honeypot)	2 max	F. Bowrys + v.o.
2/5-2/11	Northampton	2 max	D. Allard + v.o.	1/9	Quincy	1	V. Zollo + v.o.
2/11	Orange Airport	1	B. Lafley + v.o.	1/10-2/13	Longmeadow	1	A. Burrage + v.o.
Barn Owl				1/11	Worc.	1	M. Lynch#
1/2	Nantucket	5	CBC	2/13	Saugus (Bear Ck)	1	G. Wilson#
1/2	Chappaquiddick	2	S. Fea#	2/27	Raynham	1	K. Ryan
Eastern Screech-Owl				Peregrine Falcon			
1/2	Taunton	2	D. Burton	1/9	Franklin	1	J. Bock
2/6	N. Marshfield	2	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)	2/19	Westport	2	G. d'Entremont
Great Horned Owl				2/26	Taunton	1	K. Ryan
1/11	Dartmouth	4	L. Miller-Donnelly	Monk Parakeet?			
Snowy Owl				2/1-2/21	Lawrence	2	R. Hogan
1/1-1/4	W. Dennis	2	P. Kyle + v.o.	Eastern Phoebe			
1/1-1/27	Pittsfield	1	So. Auer + v.o.	thr	Hadley	1	C. Elowe + v.o.
1/1-2/28	PI	5 max	T.Wetmore#+v.o.	1/1-1/14	Lexington (DM)	1	J. Barcus
1/6	Aquinnah	2	M. Born	1/2	Hingham	1	J. Kricher
1/16, 2/13	Saugus (Bear Ck)	1,1	G. Wilson#	1/2	Taunton	1	J.+M. Eckerson
1/17	Somerville	1	N. Given	1/2-1/6	Lincoln	1	K. Dia
1/20	Norfolk	1 inj	Anon.	Northern Shrike			
1/24-1/26	Wachusett Res.	1	P. Vanderhoof + v.o.	thr	Indiv. rep. from 21 locations		
2/12-2/17	Fairhaven	2 max	C. Longworth + v.o.	Bell's Vireo			
2/20	P'town (RP)	2	V. Zollo	1/1-1/10	Eastham (FH)	1 ph	v.o.
2/21	Orleans	2	K. Burke	Blue-headed Vireo			
Barred Owl				1/2	Nantucket	3	CBC (J. Trimble)
1/6	Mt Wachusett	3	B. Sharp	1/2	Aquinnah	3	B. Winn
2/6	Falmouth	2	J. McCumber	Fish Crow			
Long-eared Owl				1/9-2/17	Pittsfield	15 max	K. Hanson + v.o.
1/4, 1/22	PI	1,1	v.o., S. Shapiro	1/10	Blackstone	100	M. Alexander
2/6	Nantucket	1	S. Kefferstan	2/4	Sandwich	353	J. McCumber
2/22	S. Deerfield	1 inj	E. Vorhees	2/19	Dartmouth	110	L. Miller-Donnelly
Short-eared Owl				Common Raven			
1/5	PI	1	T. Graham#	thr	Colrain	11 max	M. Willard
1/12	Eastham	1	K. Burke	1/2	Nantucket	2	J. Trimble#
1/13	Barnstable (SN)	1	P. Crosson	1/16	Oak Bluffs	3	L. Johnson

Common Raven (continued)				1/13	S. Dart. (APd)	3	M. Eckerson
1/22	Dighton	21	M. Eckerson	Cedar Waxwing			
2/19	Southbridge	16	J. Young	1/1	Westminster	130	T. Pirro
2/27	Cumb. Farms	10	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)	2/27	Amherst	265	L. Therrien
Horned Lark				American Pipit			
thr	Northampton	800 max	T. Gessing + v.o.	1/1-1/31	Gloucester (EP)	6 max	J. Keeley# + v.o.
thr	Hadley (Honeypt)	500 max	L. Therrien + v.o.	1/6-1/14	Hadley (Honeypt)	6 max	F. Bowrys + v.o.
1/1-2/17	Sunderland	300 max	S. Surner + v.o.	1/16, 1/22	Saugus (Bear Ck)	4,1	G. Wilson#
1/1-2/21	Egremont	500 max	So. Auer# + v.o.	1/26	Fairhaven	46	C. Longworth
1/8-2/6	Fitchburg	82 max	T. Pirro + v.o.	Evening Grosbeak			
1/16, 1/22	Saugus (Bear Ck)	200	G. Wilson#	1/8	New Marlborough	2	S. Bronson
2/15	Eastham (FE)	75	P. Kyle	1/31	N. Easton	1	N. Block
Tree Swallow				2/10	Williamsburg	1	L. Therrien
1/5	W. Tisbury	40	P. Edmundson	Purple Finch			
1/16	Chilmark	40	D. Benvent	1/2	N. Truro	5	J. Pratt#
Red-breasted Nuthatch				1/3-2/21	Plainfield	10 max	P. Bushway
1/1	Quabbin Res.	6	M. Lynch#	1/14-2/18	Windsor	10 max	G. Hurley + v.o.
2/19	Winchendon	5	B. Clapp	Common Redpoll			
Brown Creeper				1/1	Pittsfield (Onota)	4	G. Hurley
2/12	Northborough	5	B. Robo	1/16	P'town	6	R. Sormani
2/12	Norton	3	C. Darmstadt	2/7-2/14	Nantucket	1	T. Pastuszak
House Wren				2/21	Uxbridge	2	L. Nutter
1/1-1/23	Westport	1	M. Iliff	Red Crossbill			
1/4	Medfield	1	K. Winkler	1/6-1/23	October Mountain	10 max	J. Pierce + v.o.
1/13-1/28	S. Dart. (APd)	1	M. Eckerson + v.o.	1/10	Montague	12	B. Kanash
2/23	Mansfield	1	R. Bedard	1/23	Savoy	2	G. Hurley
Winter Wren				1/24	Quabbin (G33)	5	B. Lafley
1/1-2/20	W. Roxbury (MP)	2	J. Richards + v.o.	2/12	Windsor	3	K. Hanson
1/2	Concord	59	Concord CBC	2/13	Athol	2	V. Burdette
1/2	DWMA	6	N. Tepper	2/17	Heath	3 au Typ3	N. Henkenius
1/2	Taunton	3	J.+M. Eckerson	European Goldfinch?			
1/14	Sharon	2	V. Zollo	1/1-1/26	Lexington	1 ph	J. Forbes + v.o.
Sedge Wren				2/21	Lexington (DM)	1 ph	A.+A. Karighattam
1/1-1/2	Nantucket	2 ph	S. Kardell#	Pine Siskin			
Marsh Wren				1/8-2/15	Savoy	16	J. Pierce, R. Wendell+v.o.
1/1-1/2	Wayland	2 max	J. Hoye# + v.o.	2/3	Quabbin Pk	20	G. Brown
1/1-1/13	PI	2 max	v.o.	2/5-2/19	Williamstown	3 max	L. van Handel+v.o.
1/1-2/14	W. Roxbury (MP)	3	T. Bradford + v.o.	2/21	N. Attleboro	2	M. Rodrigues
1/13	S. Dart. (APd)	2	M. Eckerson	2/24	Phillipston	3	B. Robo
2/1-2/28	GMNWR	2 max	v.o.	Lapland Longspur			
2/20	Wellfleet	1	S. Broker	1/1-1/8	Egremont	2 max	So. Auer# + v.o.
Carolina Wren				1/4-2/20	Northampton	6 max	L. Therrien+v.o.
1/2	Concord	426	Concord CBC	1/16-2/20	Saugus (Bear Ck)	7 max	G. Wilson#
1/2	Nantucket	336	Nantucket CBC	2/12	Westport	12	A. Moberg#
1/13	S. Dart. (APd)	23	M. Eckerson	2/14	E. Boston (BI)	2	S. Jones
Golden-crowned Kinglet				Snow Bunting			
2/7	W. Bridgewater	2	K. Ryan	thr	Northampton	210	T. Gessing + v.o.
2/12	Norton	13	C. Darmstadt	thr	Hadley (Honeypt)	78	L. Therrien + v.o.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				thr	PI	50 max	v.o.
1/1	Hadley	1	L. Therrien + v.o.	1/1-2/21	Egremont	17	P. Banducci + v.o.
1/2	Medfield	1	J. Bock	1/4-1/31	Deerfield	110 max	M. Willard + v.o.
1/13	S. Dart. (APd)	2	M. Eckerson	1/8-2/6	Fitchburg	30 max	T. Pirro + v.o.
Eastern Bluebird				1/16, 1/22	Saugus (Bear Ck)	60, 100	G. Wilson#
1/1	Hardwick	24	S. Surner	1/28	Westport	60	L. Miller-Donnelly
1/27	S. Dart. (APd)	17	D. Guerin	Chipping Sparrow			
2/5	Brewster	20	S. Finnegan	1/1-1/2	Concord	2	J. Barcus + v.o.
Townsend's Solitaire				1/20-2/27	Norton	2 max	P. Galvin
2/27-2/28	Sheffield	1 ph	K. Hanson + v.o.	2/12	Sunderland	4 max	J. Skinner
Hermit Thrush				Clay-colored Sparrow			
1/1-1/31	PI	5 max	R. Heil + v.o.	1/4	Brookline	1	R. Doherty
1/6	Hadley	4	M. McKittrick	1/15-1/17	Duxbury	1	C. Hinkle + v.o.
1/13	S. Dart. (APd)	11	M. Eckerson	1/29-2/28	Easthampton	1	J. Lafley
2/15	Falmouth	6	P. Crosson	2/2	Hadley (Honeypt)	1	L. Therrien + v.o.
Varied Thrush				2/19	Amherst	1	J. Yanko
1/2-2/3	Falmouth	1 ph	J. Hughes	2/22	Hatfield	1	J. Blue
Gray Catbird				Field Sparrow			
1/13	S. Dart. (APd)	34	M. Eckerson	1/13	S. Dart. (APd)	6	M. Eckerson
1/13	Quabbin Pk	1	A. Kallenbach + v.o.	1/19	Groton	2	T. Murray
2/1-2/9	PI	1	H. Miller	1/24	Lancaster	2	R. Surrall
2/19	S. Dartmouth	2	G. d'Entremont	1/24, 1/26	Wachusett Res.	2,2	P. Vanderhoof, R. Spedding
Brown Thrasher				2/11-2/22	Hatfield	3 max	M. McKittrick + v.o.
1/4	Revere	1	R. Stymeist	Fox Sparrow			
1/11	Framingham	1	P. McPartland	1/6-1/26	Lincoln	5 max	K. Dia + v.o.

Fox Sparrow (continued)				1/20	Falmouth	2	J. Carroll
1/6-2/28	Boston (AA)	14	T. Bradford + v.o.	1/23	Sterling	1	K. Bourinot
1/10	Sheffield	5	G. Ward	2/5	Orleans	3	S. Faulkner
2/5	Westport	10	L. Miller-Donnelly	Red-winged Blackbird			
2/15	Falmouth	5	P. Crosson	thr	BFWMA	1500 max	v.o.
American Tree Sparrow				Brown-headed Cowbird			
1/9	BFWMA	25	D. Gibbons	2/17	S. Easton	53	K. Ryan
1/23	Freetown	25	G. Chretien#	2/22	Southborough	36	T. Aronson
Dark-eyed Junco				Rusty Blackbird			
1/3	Medfield	35	K. Ryan	1/13	Amherst	6 max	C. Elowe + v.o.
1/14	New Braintree	131	M. Lynch#	1/17-2/5	W. Brookfield	7 max	D. Mazzaresse + v.o.
White-crowned Sparrow				2/1	Wayland	30 max	J. Hoye#
1/1-1/19	Sheffield	3 max	R. Wendell# + v.o.	2/16	Lexington (DM)	8	C. Gras
1/1-1/30	Sunderland	7 max	S. Griesemer + v.o.	2/17	Great Barrington	83	J. Pierce
1/1-2/28	W. Roxbury (MP)	5	M. Iliff + v.o.	Common Grackle			
1/8	Fairhaven	2	V. Burdette	thr	BFWMA	3500 max	v.o.
1/16, 1/23	Saugus (Bear Ck)	3,7	G. Wilson#	2/5	Dartmouth	510	B. King
Vesper Sparrow				2/5	Barnstable	200	P. Crosson
1/8-1/25	Falmouth	1	M. Tucker + v.o.	Black-and-white Warbler			
1/31-2/28	Hadley	1	A. Hulsey, J. Oliverio + v.o.	1/1	Everett	1	J. Forbes
Savannah Sparrow				Orange-crowned Warbler			
thr	Hadley	11 max	L. Therrien + v.o.	thr	Indiv. rep. from 18 locations		
1/1-1/7	Sheffield	9 max	G. Ward# + v.o.	Common Yellowthroat			
1/20-1/31	Deerfield	10 max	D. Sibley	1/1	IRWS	1	B. Peters
1/24	Fairhaven	13	J. Sweeney	1/6	Waltham	1	J. Forbes
2/6	Saugus (Bear Ck)	12	G. Wilson#	American Redstart			
Savannah Sparrow (Ipswich Sparrow)				1/2	Nantucket	1	CBC (F. Gallo#)
2/6-2/13	Saugus (Bear Ck)	1	G. Wilson#	Pine Warbler			
Lincoln's Sparrow				1/1-1/5	Somerville	1	v.o.
1/10	Longmeadow	1	T. Gilliland	1/6-1/16	Gloucester	3 max	C. Wood
1/21-2/1	Chilmark	1	A. Keith#	1/22	Westport	5	L. Miller-Donnelly
Swamp Sparrow				Yellow-rumped Warbler			
thr	Longmeadow	5 max	M. Moore + v.o.	thr	Orange Airport	2 max	E. LeBlanc + v.o.
1/2	DWMA	5	N. Tepper	1/1-1/31	PI	31 max	R. Heil + v.o.
1/8	BFWMA	5	N. Tepper	1/1-2/9	Sheffield	7 max	R. Wendell# + v.o.
1/13	S. Dart. (APd)	21	M. Eckerson	1/1-2/11	Hadley	2 max	L. Therrien + v.o.
Eastern Towhee				1/2	Nantucket	1518	Nantucket CBC
1/3	Easthampton	1	A. Kallenbach	1/13	S. Dart. (APd)	76	M. Eckerson
1/3	PI	1	D. Adrien	1/14	Uxbridge	3	B. Robo
1/5	Shelburne Falls	1	E. Lavin	Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)			
1/13	S. Dart. (APd)	4	M. Eckerson	1/15	Mattapoisett	1 ph	J. Sweeney
1/26-1/28	Upton	3	Anon.	1/19	Duxbury	1 ph	D. Furbish
Yellow-breasted Chat				Wilson's Warbler			
thr	Indiv. rep. from 18 locations			1/1-2/28	Boston (McW)	1 western	L. Grimes + v.o.
1/13-1/30	S. Dart. (APd)	2 max	M. Eckerson + v.o.	1/2	Lakeville	1	B. Vigorito#
Yellow-headed Blackbird				Summer Tanager			
2/11	Hadley	1	L. Therrien	1/1-2/16	Sunderland	1 ph	A. Samson
Eastern Meadowlark				Western Tanager			
1/13	S. Dart. (APd)	39	M. Eckerson	1/1-1/2	Aquinnah	1 ph	A. Keith, R. Culbert
1/16	Weymouth	3	V. Zollo	1/7-1/28	Edgartown	1 ph	v.o.
2/6-2/7	Newbury	4 max	D. Burton + v.o.	1/13	N. Attleboro	1 ph	Anon.
2/19-2/23	Hadley	6 max	L. Therrien + v.o.	1/13-1/31	Truro	1 ph	C. Skowron, R. Sormani
Western Meadowlark				1/17-1/26	Eastham	1	J. Wick-Pelletier
1/1-1/13	Hadley (Honeypt)	1 au ph	S. Griesemer# + v.o.	1/22-2/8	Yarmouth	1 ph	v.o.
Baltimore Oriole				Indigo Bunting			
1/1-2/23	N. Attleboro	1 m	Anon. + v.o.	1/9-2/28	Harwich	1	M. Faherty
1/1-2/25	S. Orleans	2	M. Freeman	1/17-2/17	Nahant	1	M. Padulo + v.o.
1/2	Nantucket	4	L. Waters#	Painted Bunting			
1/6-1/11	Oak Bluffs	1	L. Maxfield	thr	E. Sandwich	1 m ph	C. Gale
1/12	Wellfleet	1	J. Pratt#	thr	Sandwich	1 m ph	E. Dewar
1/12-2/17	Barnstable	1	E. Hill-Gest	1/25-2/28	Orleans	1 m ph	R. Utt, L. Seletsky
1/15-1/22	Barnstable	1	N. Villone	Dickcissel			
1/16-2/4	Norton	1 imm m	E. Weston	1/1-2/14	Nantucket	1	T. Pastuszak
1/18	Essex	1	R. Tilton				

BYGONE BIRDS

Historical Highlights for January–February

Neil Hayward

5 YEARS AGO

January–February 2017

Ross's Geese were recorded in multiple locations including Plum Island, Saugus, Longmeadow, Northbridge, and Concord. The **Ross's x Snow Goose hybrid** found at Plum Island last period continued at Ipswich, and a **Pink-footed Goose** spent the period in northern Essex County. A **Yellow Rail** was found on the Nantucket Christmas Bird Count and a **Purple Gallinule** was found dead in South Truro. A **Mew Gull** discovered in Nahant on February 25 was banded; the number showed that it was born in Iceland in the summer of 2013. Two **White-winged Doves** continued throughout the period at the Fenway Victory Gardens in Boston. A **Boreal Chickadee**—the first since 2010—spent most of the period in Peru, western Massachusetts. A **Harris's Sparrow** was present for most of January at a feeder in Dalton and a **Sedge Wren** continued at Fort Hill in Eastham.

Best sighting: a **Boreal Owl** found at the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary during the Super Bowl of Birding was the first sighting in the state since a bird in Boston in October 2000.

10 YEARS AGO

January–February 2012

Rare geese lingering from the previous period included a **Barnacle Goose** in West Newbury and a **Cackling Goose** in the Jamaica Plain area. Two different **Slaty-backed Gulls** were reported within a day of each other: in Gloucester on January 21 and in Wellfleet on January 22. Up to seven Short-eared Owls were seen at Boston's Logan Airport, which also hosted a **Gyr Falcon** on February 11. The **Cassin's Kingbird**, found at West Newbury on November 25, continued until January 14, and the **Townsend's Warbler**, visiting Jim and Natalie Berry's feeder in Ipswich, continued through the whole period. A **Spotted Towhee** found in Rockport on January 26 stayed until February 25.

Best sighting: a very cooperative **Lazuli Bunting** at Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary on February 4–28. This was the third record for Massachusetts.

Bird Observer

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Bird Observer

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20 YEARS AGO

January–February 2002

An **Eared Grebe** was in Sandy Neck, Barnstable in mid-January, in addition to the regular wintering bird in Gloucester. A **Gyr Falcon** found on the Boston Christmas Bird Count in December continued throughout the period alternating between Logan Airport and a building in South Boston. Single **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were found in Melrose and Great Esker Park in Weymouth. A **Western Kingbird** was recorded from Woods Hole in January. The **Gray Jay** first found in December in Windsor continued through the first half of January, and **Boreal Chickadees** were reported from five locations. A **Townsend’s Solitaire** was in Essex in February, and a **Varied Thrush** was reported from Belchertown. Unusual warblers included a **Townsend’s Warbler** photographed in Centerville and a **Yellow-throated Warbler** that visited a Scituate feeder for two days in February.



Best sighting: a **Barnacle Goose** was in Lynnfield and Wakefield marshes from February 17–19. This was the first record for the state that was accepted as a wild bird.

40 YEARS AGO

January–February 1982

Five **Greater White-fronted Geese** were in the Newburyport area for much of February. A probable **Western Grebe** (at the time recorded as a “dark-morph Western Grebe”—distinct from the light morph which was later split as Clark’s Grebe) was recorded on the Nantucket Christmas Bird Count on January 2. An injured **Yellow Rail** was found on North Beach, Chatham on January 13. It died in rehabilitation and the specimen was donated to the Massachusetts Audubon Society in Lincoln. An overwintering **Marbled Godwit** was in Scituate for the whole of February. A **Gyr Falcon** (one of three for the period) was found in Squantum during the Take A Second Look (TASL) harbor census. **Varied Thrushes** were reported from Eastham, Dennis, and Framingham, and the **Townsend’s Solitaire** continued on Martha’s Vineyard until February 10.



Best sighting: an immature **Golden-crowned Sparrow** visited feeders in Holyoke. The owners, the Bigelows, generously invited birders into their home to view the bird. 🐦

Friends of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, Inc.

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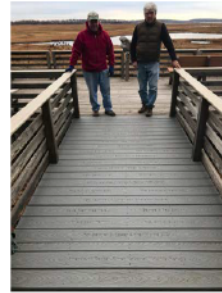
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ABOUT THE COVER

Eastern Wood-Pewee

The Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*) is more often heard than seen, its distinctive *pee-ah-wee* call commonly emanating from the forests of the eastern United States and Canada. It is a medium-sized flycatcher with an olive-tinged gray back, head, wings, and tail. It has a gray breast and flanks, two white wing bars, and is pale below with a whitish undertail. It has an inconspicuous white eye ring; the upper mandible is dark and the lower is yellowish. The sexes are similar in appearance; juveniles are similar but darker with more yellow-tinged underparts. It is best distinguished from the Western Wood-Pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*) by song; the Western's song is a buzzy *dree-yurr*. *Empidonax* flycatchers are smaller than Eastern Wood-Pewees and nearly all have eye rings that are more pronounced. The Eastern Wood-Pewee is distinguished from the Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*) by the latter's larger size, darker head and face, whiter throat and belly (yellowish in juveniles), inconspicuous wing bars, and persistent tail-wagging.

There is little geographic variation in Eastern Wood-Pewees, and no subspecies are recognized. They breed throughout the eastern half of the United States and in southern Canada from eastern Saskatchewan across the Great Lakes to Nova Scotia. In the United States, they breed south to central Texas and northern Florida. They migrate through Florida, Cuba, eastern Mexico and Central America to winter in northern South America from Colombia and Ecuador through Amazonian Brazil. In Massachusetts, Eastern Wood-Pewees are considered a fairly common spring migrant and an uncommon fall migrant. They are considered fairly common to uncommon breeders. They arrive from mid-to-late May and in fall, depart or pass through from late August through early October.

Eastern Wood-Pewees tend to be monogamous, but a small percentage are polygynous, a male breeding with two females and feeding young at both nests. A pair may raise two broods per season. A male Eastern Wood-Pewee on territory may commence singing before dawn, usually from an exposed branch in the canopy or subcanopy and continue uttering its *pee-ah-wee* or variations thereof most of the day. The degree to which females sing is not known but they do vocalize during migration and also on the wintering grounds. Males may defend their territory with chases and fighting; females may also join in the defense, attacking Blue Jays, cowbirds, and other bird intruders. Eastern Wood-Pewees may establish and defend independent territories on the wintering grounds where they tend to be solitary. The male feeds the female during courtship but the details of courtship and mating are not known.

Eastern Wood-Pewees are versatile in their choice of breeding habitats, occupying coniferous and deciduous forest, open or closed canopy, mature or successional forest, or interior or edge in either extensive tracts or forest fragments. They nest in the canopy or subcanopy. The nest is high and inconspicuous, so the nesting details of the Eastern Wood-Pewee are poorly known. The nest is an inconspicuous cup located on a horizontal branch often at a fork. The female builds the nest of grass, bark, twigs,

pine needles, or leaves. It is held together with spider web and covered with lichens. The female alone develops a brood patch, and she alone incubates the usual clutch of three creamy white eggs, speckled on the large end with brown or purple, for about two weeks until hatching. The young are altricial, hatching with eyes closed and naked except for wisps of down. Not much is known about the nestling period, but both parents brood and feed the young birds for roughly two weeks until fledging, and thereafter for the 3–4 weeks until independence.

Eastern Wood-Pewees forage primarily by hawking a broad range of flying insects from perches in the canopy or subcanopy, but may glean foliage or even forage from the ground on rare occasions.

Not much is known about predation in this species, but it is apparently not much afflicted by cowbird nest parasitism. However, Breeding Bird Census data suggest that since 1966, the population has declined by nearly half. The causes for this substantial decline include the widespread use of pesticides to control gypsy moths and other insects and habitat alteration. Despite this population decline, continuing robust population numbers and broad geographic distribution and habitat usage suggest a secure future for this little songster. 🐦

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>>. 🐦

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AT A GLANCE

April 2022



JOHN KRICHER

The photograph of this issue's mystery species poses multiple questions, not the least of which is whether the bird is coming or going. Although perhaps initially perplexing, a close look at the bird's legs offers a subtle clue, especially the angle of the bird's right leg and foot, which indicates that the bird is facing away from the reader. The rest of the image is admittedly less obvious, but once the orientation of the bird is established, the picture becomes easier to puzzle out. As always, viewing the image in color on the *Bird Observer* website (www.birdobserver.org) is highly advisable to see as many details as possible.

With the orientation of the bird in mind, additional features become apparent. First the bird appears small, round-bodied, and compact—facts made more obvious by its seemingly short tail. A close look at this short tail also reveals the presence of white spots on the underside. In the color photograph, the bluish coloration of the back in concert with these white tail spots suggests the possibility of a warbler, possibly a Northern Parula, Cerulean, or Black-throated Blue. However, the roundness of its body and the apparent stubbiness of its tail seem exaggerated enough to make the mystery bird a poor fit for a slim warbler. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, despite the blue on the back, is an even worse fit, because gnatcatchers have extra-long tails and outer tail feathers that are white throughout their length unlike the white tail spots on the mystery bird's tail. Furthermore, none of these species possesses the hint of buff present on the flanks, undertail, or vent area of the mystery species.

Even the legs, toes, and claws of the mystery bird appear too heavy for a warbler or gnatcatcher, which suggests that the bird may use its legs and feet differently from these typical insectivores, an impression reinforced by how the short tail is held

compared to the bird's round body and sturdy little legs. Taken together, the bird's features suggest a nuthatch, though we can eliminate White-breasted Nuthatch because this species would exhibit rusty feathering on the undertail coverts and around the vent.

Concentrating on the bird's bluish dorsal color, touches of buff on the flanks and undertail area, and its short tail with white tail spots, there are no other possibilities. The chubby little mystery species can only be a southerly view of a northbound female Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*).

Red-breasted Nuthatches are fairly common breeding birds in coniferous forests in central and western Massachusetts and locally uncommon in similar habitats in eastern parts of the state. An irruptive species, in some falls and winters they are common throughout the state when they regularly visit birdfeeders to the delight of their hosts. In years following one of their periodic winter irruptions, Red-breasted Nuthatches are often conspicuously more widespread as breeders, even in eastern parts of the state where they are generally less common. John Kricher captured this unique view of a Red-breasted Nuthatch at Magee Marsh, Ottawa County, Ohio, on May 12, 2019. 🐦

Wayne R. Petersen



NORTHERN PARULA BY SANDY SELESKY

All of *Bird Observer's* content from 1973 to 2015 has been digitized to SORA, the Searchable Ornithological Research Archive at <<https://sora.unm.edu/>>. This archive is a free resource that is open to the public.

AT A GLANCE



JOHN KRICHER

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

MORE HOT BIRDS



Normally rare in our state, **White Ibises** put on a show in April and May, with appearances in at least 6 locations. An adult visited Wellfleet on April 12–18. Two birds showed up on April 17, one in Elllisville and a second in Duxbury. Two adults appeared in Eastham on April 20–23. An immature White Ibis showed up along the Charles River in Watertown and Cambridge on April 26–27; it or a different bird appeared in Scituate on May 5 and on May 13. Keegan Burke took the photo on the left.

White-faced Ibises show up annually in coastal Essex County. Sandy Weatherall found the first arrival on April 17 in Ipswich. It or another appeared later in Rowley and Newbury. Marj Watson took the photo on the right.



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