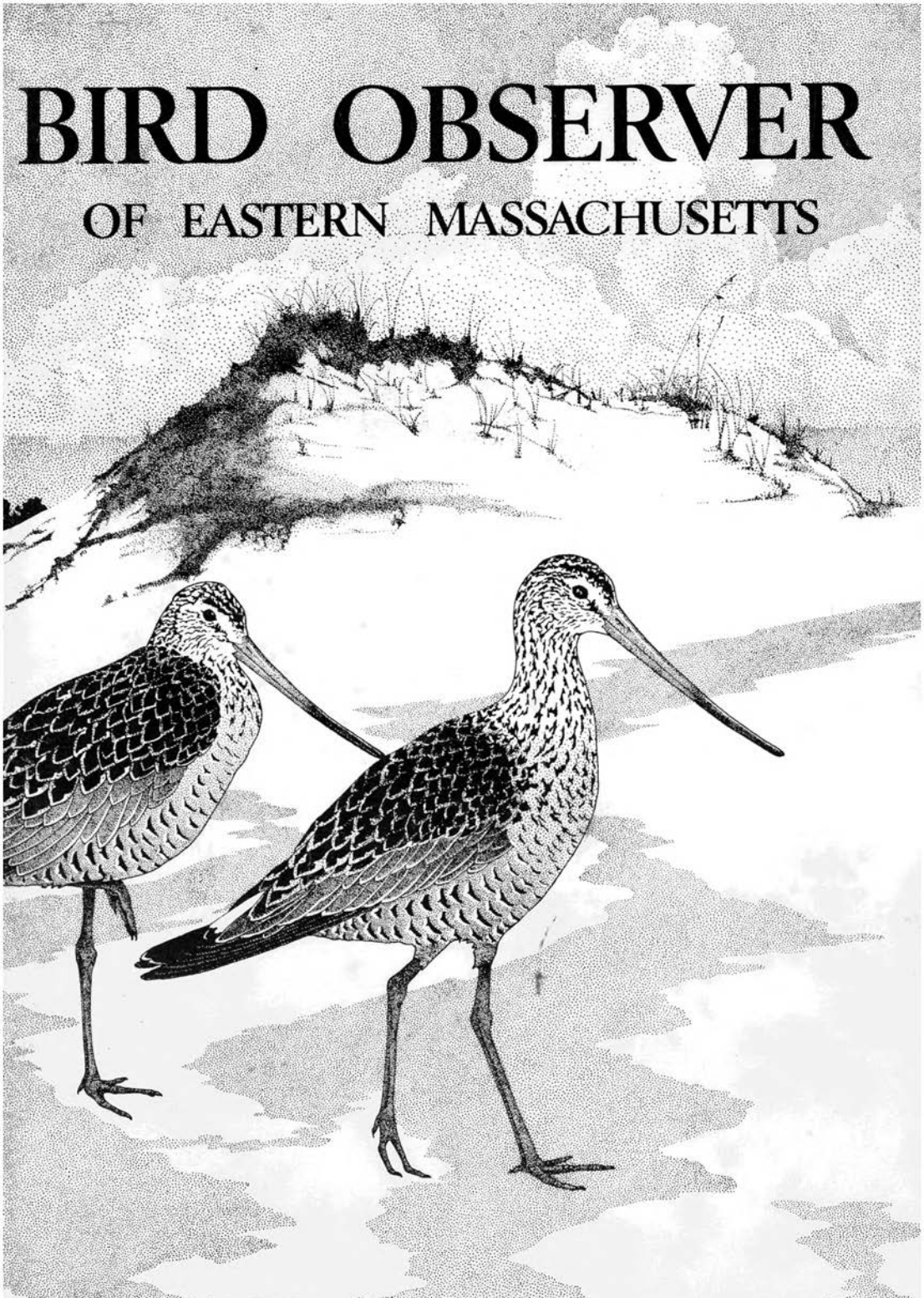
BIRD OBSERVER

OF EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS



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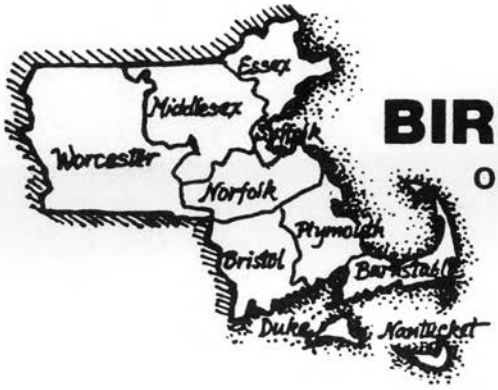

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DECEMBER, 1983
VOL. 11 NO. 6

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Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts has been declared a non-profit tax-exempt organization by the Internal Revenue Service. Any gifts to Bird Observer will be greatly appreciated and will be tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

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TIME TO RENEW

You will find a BIRD OBSERVER 1984 renewal form tucked into the front of this issue. We would very much appreciate it if you would send in renewals as soon as possible. Thank you.

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NEW STATE CHECKLIST AVAILABLE. The 1983 Massachusetts Bird List (third edition), Fauna of Massachusetts Series No. 1, by Brad Blodget has just become available. This is a 24-page booklet listing the birds of Massachusetts, fully annotated with space to check your finds and appendices on Problematicals and Infrequent Vagrants. Bearing the Western Reef Heron on the cover, this up-to-date publication is available for one dollar (postage included) from the

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
Field Headquarters
Westboro, MA 01581.

Send a $1.00 check (not cash) made out to the above state division and mark the envelope: Attention Non-Game Division.

THE NATURE OF WINTER - A NATURAL HISTORY WORKSHOP

Winter is an ideal time to learn about nature. Living things do not die or disappear in winter, as is commonly believed; they just change form. In this workshop, DONALD and LILLIAN STOKES will explore bird behavior and bird nests, mammal signs and tracks, evidence of insects, the ecology of snow, winter weeds, and the lives of trees, shrubs, and vines. Adaptations in the form and behavior of plants and animals and how these function to further the cause of survival and reproduction will be highlighted. The workshop will consist of an evening session with slides and live material, followed by a day-long field trip in the Concord area.

Leaders: Donald and Lillian Stokes are co-authors of A Guide to Bird Behavior, Volume 2, and A Guide to Wildflower Lives (available fall 1984). Don has also written A Guide to Nature in Winter, The Natural History of Wild Shrubs and Vines, and A Guide to Observing Insect Lives.

Evening Session: Wednesday, February 8, 1984, 8-9:30 P.M. at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 404 Concord Avenue, Belmont. Field Trip: Saturday, February 11 (alternate date February 12).

Cost: $25. Send a check made out to Bird Observer to 462 Trapelo Road, Belmont MA 02178. Mark the envelope, "Nature Workshop," and include your return address and phone number. Limited to twenty participants.

MASSACHUSETTS GULLS - A BIRDING WORKSHOP

Bird Observer again invites you to participate in a two-part gull workshop. WAYNE R. PETERSON will conduct an evening seminar on Massachusetts gulls: their biology, evolution, ecology, historical status, and identification. Through the use of slides, study skins, and discussion, participants will be introduced to the subtleness of larid molt and to the many complexities affecting the aging process of gulls. In addition to exposing the group to some of the more important larid literature, a follow-up field trip to Newburyport will provide an opportunity for the group to put to use information gained from the indoor session. And yes, Thayer's Gull will be included.

Evening Seminar: Thursday, March 15, 1984, 8-9:30 P.M. at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 404 Concord Avenue, Belmont. Field Trip: Saturday, March 17, 1984 (alternate date March 18) in Newburyport.

Cost: $25. Send a check to Bird Observer, 462 Trapelo Road, Belmont, MA 02178 and mark the envelope "Gull Workshop." Include your return address and phone number. Limited to twenty participants.

AN INTRODUCTION TO WINTER BIRDING AT QUABBIN

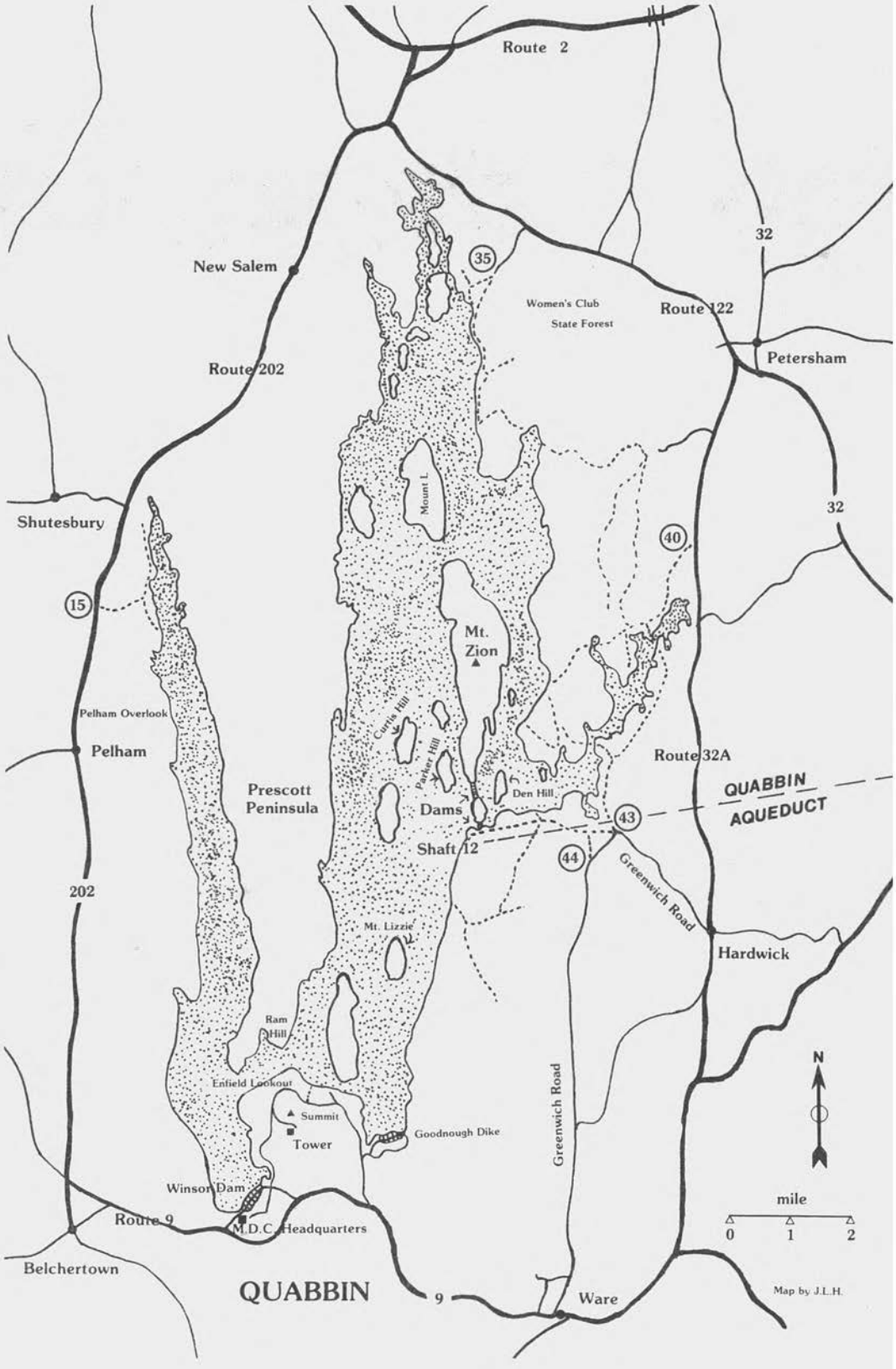
by Mark Lynch, Worcester

Winter birding in Massachusetts can be symbolized in a few distinct images: a Harlequin drake off Bass Rocks on Cape Ann, a Snowy Owl on Plum Island, and a Bald Eagle soaring the icy skies over Quabbin Reservoir. Indeed, for many observers, Quabbin is the premier place to see these majestic raptors. However, Quabbin also offers much exciting birding for the hale and hearty birder as well as for those who prefer to stay close to the reassuring warmth of a well-heated automobile. In this article I will discuss a few of the winter birding possibilities at Quabbin. I emphasize few, because Quabbin and the surrounding area is such a vast wilderness. Keep in mind that compared to areas such as Cape Cod, Quabbin only recently came into being and that its ornithological exploration is still in its infancy. Quabbin awaits its Griscom, Thayer or Forbush.

A Little Background and Some Statistics.

Let us begin by stating the obvious: Quabbin was not always there: originally it was the peaceful and beautiful Swift River Valley: the name comes from the Nipmuck Indian word for "meeting of the waters"- Qaben. Later, white settlers pushed out the Indians and founded the towns of Prescott, Enfield, Dana and Greenwich. By the late 1920s, metropolitan water planners began to consider the feasibility of creating a reservoir in the valley to help alleviate the water needs of Boston. There is a strange and melancholy history surrounding the displacement of 3500 residents. By 1939, the destruction of the above-mentioned towns and the construction of the reservoir was complete, and by 1946, the valley was flooded. Thomas Conuel has written an entertaining and informative book about Quabbin, Quabbin: The Accidental Wilderness, published by the Massachusetts Audubon Society in 1981. Mr. Conuel has included some photos of the original residents and buildings of these lost towns that can only be described as haunting, adding an eerie dimension to any visit to the region.

Quabbin as it exists today is one of the largest wild areas in Massachusetts. It is managed by the Metropolitan District Commission. It is 18 miles long, with the entire watershed being 186 square miles. There are 118 miles of shoreline, and at its maximum, the water is 150 feet deep. This all adds up to the gargantuan total of 412 billion gallons of water. The Quabbin landforms include islands (formerly mountains), evergreen, mixed, and deciduous forests, streams, ponds and swamps. Besides birds, wildlife includes Bobcat, Black Bear, Coyote, Mink, River Otter, Fisher, and Beaver, as well as the more typical Porcupine, Raccoon, and Woodchuck. Most amazing are the persistent, albeit very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1
2
Route 9
M.D.C. Headquarters
Belchertown
QUABBIN
9
Ware
Map by J.L.H.

rare, reports by responsible observers of mountain lion, thought to be absent from the northeast since the late 1880s.

The towns now bordering the reservoir are Ware, Hardwick, Petersham, New Salem, Shutesbury, Pelham, Orange and Belchertown. Quabbin is easily reached via the Massachusetts Turnpike, Routes 9, 122 or 2. A glance at any roadmap will reveal this largest inland body of water in Massachusetts, looking like a sky blue amoeba stretching toward the north and south borders of the central part of the state.

A Word of Caution.

The time period covered by this article is from late fall to early spring with a primary focus on winter. It is recommended that you NOT explore Quabbin during the deer-hunting season, which generally falls somewhere between late November and early December. Some of the gate accesses to southern Quabbin are closed at this season to discourage poachers, and as I was warned by MDC police, it is plain stupid to walk around the woods at this time without bright orange clothing.

Also serious is the very real possibility of frostbite and hypothermia. Quabbin can get frighteningly cold in January and February, and the wind whipping across the vast expanse of frozen water compounds the problem. I have seen birders at the Enfield Lookout standing outside their cars for only a few minutes contract the first symptoms of frostbite. Learn to recognize frostbite and how to treat it. For walking, especially longer hikes, proper clothing is essential. Appropriate thermal covering for head, ears, hands and feet is the rule for any extended winter hike into Quabbin. Winter birding here is often the litmus test of just how good one's long underwear really is! On long hikes, know your limitations, and don't overextend yourself. Food, and especially water, should always be carried. The sense of solitude and peace that one experiences far outweighs the difficulty of proper preparation for a long walk into this wilderness.

South Quabbin.

For many observers, the ornithological exploration of Quabbin starts here. Access is simple and there is no need to wander far from the car. There are three major entrances to Quabbin along the north side of Route 9, a few miles west of the town of Ware. The gates are generally opened from about 7 A.M. until dusk, but access may be delayed if there has been snowfall the night before, and the MDC is plowing the roads. We will start our trip by entering the gate farthest west, turning north at the sign for Winsor Dam and the MDC Police Headquarters. In short order you arrive at the MDC Headquarters on your right and a car pull-off with a nice overlook on the left. Rest rooms, usually deliciously heated, are down the stairs on either side of

the overlook. If it is prior to freeze-up (usually January) carefully scan the water for loons, all three species of grebes, and for diving ducks, and gulls. Ospreys will occasionally fly by, especially in November. Black Ducks usually hug the shore to the left. A peninsula also on the left and somewhat distant contains at times a sitting Bald Eagle, especially after freeze up. (As a rule, in winter, one should carefully check all trees along any visible shore at Quabbin for eagles.) There are several small fruiting trees around the overlook and building that may contain Evening Grosbeaks and waxwings. If there has been a lot of snow, check the bushes on the far side of the wall of the overlook near the entrances to the bathrooms. I have kicked up Ruffed Grouse here on several occasions.

Continue driving past the building and over the Winsor Dam. This earthen dam is 2640 feet long and 170 feet above the riverbed. The road swings right after leaving the dam and you are faced with three choices: straight, which takes you back to Route 9; left through a gate to Quabbin Summit, Enfield Lookout, and Goodnough Dike; or sharp right on a short road that dead ends at a power station. Taking the right, the road rapidly descends in back of the dam and ends in a small parking lot. The pines here often shelter Ruffed Grouse, both nuthatches, kinglets, Brown Creeper, Black-capped Chickadee and, very rarely, a Boreal Chickadee. On your way back up the road you will notice another stand of pines on your right that contains many of the same species.

Continue across the road, through the gate towards Quabbin Summit. It was on the left that I saw my "life" Gyrfalcon attacking two Red-tailed Hawks perched in the trees. You would have to have extraordinary luck to duplicate that experience; however, the Red-tails often perch here and, rarely, a Bald Eagle (especially in the morning). If there is no eagle here, be sure to check the trees on a small peninsula on the far side of the small inlet on the left. Before freeze-up, Buffleheads can usually be seen swimming and diving here. Continue along the road checking for grouse and for chickadees, Tree Sparrows and other passerines. I have even seen several Turkeys along here, but that was the Sunday following the close of the deer season, and traffic had not been permitted in the area for a week. Especially if there has been a fresh snow, watch for turkey tracks on the sides of the road wherever you are at Quabbin. They are about twice the size of the Ruffed Grouse's tracks and sometimes, with luck, you may follow the trail to their source. However, Wild Turkeys are very wary birds, and they will probably hear you coming long before you see them. Turkeys are massive birds and in late fall and early winter can be heard noisily shuffling through the fallen leaves.

At the rotary, turn right up to the tower at Quabbin Summit. In the parking lot, there is often a small flock of Snow

Buntings though their plumage may make them hard to see against the background. Occasionally hawks, mostly Red-tails, will be seen from the hill, but generally, the tower/hill area in winter is too cold to make the stop worthwhile. Retrace your route back to the rotary, continue east along the road, and shortly you will come to a pulloff on the left - the well-known Enfield Lookout. During winter weekends this spot can be crowded with eager eagle watchers, and for good reason. The chances of seeing an eagle here, especially from late December on, are excellent, and you can often scan for them from the warmth and comfort of your car.

The total number of eagles at Quabbin fluctuates due to weather conditions. As few as eight and as many as twenty-two have been counted during the official winter eagle census of the Division of Fish and Wildlife. What one overlooks at the Enfield Lookout is the southern tip of the Prescott Peninsula, a large finger of land (off limits to the public) stretching the length of the Quabbin. Because of its access restrictions, birders' imaginations leap at the possibilities of this vast wild area. It is this pristine aspect that probably attracts the eagles and turkeys, but the thought of opening up the Prescott Peninsula to any form of recreation makes me cringe. Facing out from the Enfield Lookout one sees an obvious hill on the right of this part of the Prescott Peninsula (Ram Hill), and the land flows off to the left and terminates. The peninsula continues north and away from the Enfield observer. Eagles are often seen flying over the Prescott Peninsula on clear windy days, usually around 9:00 A.M. or a little later. They may often perch on any tree there, but careful and persistent scoping is necessary to reveal their presence. Most birds will be immatures, but full adult birds are often present. Very rarely, a Golden Eagle will put in a brief appearance. It is beyond the scope of this article to review points in identification of a species, but birders should use extreme caution in calling a Golden Eagle, as it is a bird often confused with the immature Bald Eagle. By and large, the very few Golden Eagles that appear in Quabbin seem to favor the more northern, remote areas of the reservoir. When Quabbin freezes, the eagles that remain become scavengers. Occasionally a deer will die, and the carcass becomes the focus of intense eagle activity. Sometimes a deer carcass from a road-kill or dog-kill is put out on the ice by the MDC or Massachusetts Fish and Wildlife personnel in a location visible from the Enfield Lookout, at which time the chances of seeing eagles increase dramatically.

There is other birding to do here besides eagle watching. This is a good place to scan for Wild Turkeys, which have been introduced on the Prescott Peninsula. Be sure to scope carefully Ram Hill, the smaller hills, and the edges of the forests on the peninsula. Turkeys are easier to spot when there is snow on the ground, and they appear as slow-moving

large black rocks. A severe winter may make them more obvious at this end of the peninsula, as they are forced to search out acorns and other food. The chances of seeing turkeys here are not the best, but every effort should be made to search for them as they are seen every year.

Before freeze-up, the water between Enfield Lookout and Prescott Peninsula often contains grebes, mergansers, Black and other ducks. Winter finches sometimes pass overhead, and Northern Shrikes occasionally put in an appearance. A birder doing only south Quabbin should plan on spending at least an hour at the Enfield Lookout, unless the weather is inclement.

Tearing yourself away from Enfield Lookout can be difficult, but continuing east along the road about 0.7 mile will bring you to a large open area on the left with picnic tables and an extensive area of low scrubby bushes sometimes called "the blueberry patch." A walk down to the water here (it is longer than it looks) at times offers views of eagles and, before freeze-up, grebes and ducks. The blueberry patch is also home to grouse, chickadees, sparrows, and in the winter of 1982-83, at least one Northern Shrike was often visible, perched on top of the bushes.

One half-mile further along, on the sharp left, is Gate 52. The walk down to the water is not too long and may afford the birder somewhat closer looks at eagles. Prior to freeze-up, this is a good place to check for ducks, especially mergansers, early in the morning (look across to the waters near the island). Grouse and the common winter passeriformes are found in the trees. Watch for Beavers, or at least signs of beaver activity, along the stream and at the water's edge. I have sometimes found a Beaver in the culvert under the Gate 52 road in the winter.

Proceeding on towards the Goodnough Dike, look for Tree Sparrows along the road and, if the water is open, ducks. Two miles from Gate 52, take a left to the dike (continuing straight will bring you out to Route 9). The road soon forks, but it is a loop and you can take either road. The left goes directly to the dike. Just prior to the rotary at the dike, there is a large pulloff on the left. Stop here and carefully scope the opposite shore for a perched Bald Eagle, and scan the skies for flying birds. Drive across the dike, where the road swings right and down behind the dike. You will see a small marshy area on your left, with water that often stays open long into winter. This is an excellent place for sparrows, and the dead trees are attractive to jays and woodpeckers. I have also seen Northern Shrike here. Continue along the road and eventually out to Route 9.

Stopping and searching anywhere in south Quabbin that looks

promising can produce birds like Barred and Saw-whet owls, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Pine and Evening grosbeaks, both nuthatches, creeper, and Black-capped Chickadee.

A Quick Tour Around Quabbin.

Coming out to Route 9 from the Goodnough Dike, take a left (east) on Route 9 toward Ware. About 1.9 miles along, you will see a farm on the left with a large open field. A flock of turkeys has been spotted, off and on, in this field during the past couple of years, primarily in the morning and late afternoon. Only time will tell if this amazing occurrence of seeing Wild Turkeys from your car on Route 9 will be repeated. I have seen Northern Shrike in the trees on the opposite side of the road. If you drive 1.8 miles east from the red barn at the farm, you will see, appropriately enough, Eagle Street on the left. Take Eagle Street to Crescent Street. Turn right and stay on Crescent until you come to Greenwich Road on the left. Greenwich Road runs up the east side of Quabbin to the town of Hardwick. Approximately 7.3 miles north on Greenwich you will come to Gate 44 on the left. Parking is limited here especially after snow.

Gate 44 offers access to one of several favorite hikes into some of the more remote areas of Quabbin. Birders wishing to hike in here should be prepared to hike four to five miles, though mostly on paved or hardpacked surfaces. Winter conditions often make these roads icy, and walking can be tricky for those not surefooted. Once packed up and ready, walk around the gate and down the road until it is intersected by another paved road: Gate 43. Turn left and begin the long hike to Shaft 12 and the baffle dams. Birds along this road can be few and far between, but the diligent and quiet observer may find Ruffed Grouse and Pileated Woodpecker. There are two small marshy areas along this road (one on each side) that are attractive to sparrows and Yellow-rumped Warblers. The dead trees often have Downy and Hairy woodpeckers. After what can seem like a cold eternity, the paved road will dead end at a stone building by some pines and picnic tables. This is Shaft 12. To the left of the building and across the waters lie the Prescott Peninsula and Mount Lizzie and to the right of the building Mt. Zion and the baffle dams. This is an excellent area for eagles, especially if you can time your arrival for early morning. Before freeze-up, look for loons, grebes, and diving ducks, including even scoters. In the pines are apt to be chickadees, both nuthatches, and occasionally lingering Yellow-rumped Warblers. Patience and quiet are required in watching eagles here. Try to stay under the pines and not in the open. From here on carefully check for Golden Eagles, for one or two usually winter. Also watch for ravens, especially if there is a carcass on the ice. The Common Raven, though still a rarity here, is increasing and with recent reports of breeding at Quabbin, may optimistically be looked

for. Again, caution in identification is advised. I have heard crow vocalizations that could be mistaken for those of a raven.

Returning up the Gate 43 road, watch for a dirt road on the left, a few hundred yards from Shaft 12. This is the road to the baffle dams and Mount Zion. After heavy snow, this road can be difficult going. The baffle dams help circulate and clean the water from the Ware River. Before you get to the first baffle dam, look for typical winter birds: grouse, chickadees, nuthatches, as well as lingering Yellow-rumped Warblers, an occasional late Winter Wren, and Pileated Woodpecker. Pileateds, at least in the northern part of their range, are shy and elusive. They may drop off a tree and fly low directly away at the first sound of human presence, thus escaping undetected. However, they also fly from one area to another, sometimes above the trees in sight; so watch the skies. I find these magnificant birds every bit as exciting to watch as eagles. Scan the water on either side of the dam, while still under the cover of trees, for loons, grebes and ducks. Walk across the dam and follow the path north along the east side of a small island. This small island usually seems to hold little other than the typical winter birds. Always keep a sharp lookout for eagles, taking time to scan the skies and trees, and be sure to check for a carcass. This whole area is an especially good place to watch for Coyotes and, rarely, Bobcats. Soon you will come to the second, longer baffle dam that stretches north to Mount Zion and where the trail ends. To the east is Den Hill and Island and the mainland; to the west: Parker Hill Island, Curtis Hill Island, and in the distance, the Prescott Peninsula. This second baffle dam is an excellent place to watch for eagles, but remember to stay out of sight. What I love to do is cross the dam to Zion and wait under the cover of some trees. Even though there may not be a carcass about, patience will usually be rewarded with some exciting views of eagles, and who knows, maybe a Golden Eagle or a raven. The trail continues for a little while on Zion and then ends. The usual birds are found here, but I have also found signs of turkey. Mount Zion is a very long island, and only the hearty should try to walk over it to its northern tip; but by scouting around some distance on either side (especially to the east), you can look into areas not previously visible that may harbor eagles. Although you may be tempted, DO NOT walk on the ice. The Quabbin Reservoir Quadrangle geological survey map is helpful in understanding your exact position. This entire hike is easily a day trip. Returning to your car (easier said than done), proceed north along Greenwich Road about 0.5 mile to the Gate 43 parking area, very obvious on the left. This can be the starting point of yet another great adventure.

Facing Gate 43, you have several choices. Straight will lead to the Gate 44 intersection and eventually Shaft 12.

If you go straight a little and then bear right, you will soon come to a little nook of the Quabbin where eagles have occasionally been seen. (I have found Eastern Bluebirds here in March.) If you take the immediate paved road to right, this leads to the Gate 43 fishing area, a walk of about 1.7 miles that can be rewarding. In the morning, in flight years, listen for winter finches overhead. The typical Quabbin winter birds including the Pileated Woodpecker are found along the road. Great Horned Owls nest along this road, usually in old crow or squirrel nests; and Barred Owls can show up anywhere. Rarities have been found along here such as Gray Jay and Black-backed Woodpecker; but experience has shown that you should be satisfied with a Brown Creeper or kinglet. When you finally reach the water, you will cross a bridge over a spillway from Hardwick into Petersham. Before freeze-up check both sides for loons, grebes, and ducks. When fishing season is in full swing, this area is packed with sportsmen, but in winter it is usually deserted. The road goes by a small wooden shack and curves to the right and into the woods. If one were to follow this path, it would eventually lead to the Gate 40 road. After heavy snows this stretch between the fishing area and Gate 40 can be impassable. This walk should not be attempted except in early winter or in spring. To avoid hiking this stretch both out and back, birders can park one of two cars at Gate 40, ride to Gate 43 to park the second car, hike in at that point, and then ride back. This offers excellent winter birding opportunities with good chances for eagles, hawks, owls, woodpeckers, as well as the more typical woodland birds. Geological survey maps, a compass, a quiet manner, and a good sense of direction are valuable aids.

Back at the fishing area, you can cross the sandy area to the main body of Quabbin and scan in all directions for eagles. By moving north along the shoreline one will come across several inlets and views of areas where eagles can be seen. Give this whole area some time, be patient, and remain inconspicuous whenever possible. The Gate 43 fishing area is perfect for a day's birding. Both paved roads are usually kept plowed during the winter for MDC workers need access to Shaft 12 and to the spillway area.

Back in your car (you may be getting exhausted by now), proceed on Greenwich Road 2.7 miles to the center of Hardwick, a small, pretty New England town. In spring, Turkey Vultures pass by overhead, and usually there are flocks of sparrows and Evening Grosbeaks, and other birds in town. Turn left on to 32A and follow it 6.7 miles to the entrance to Gate 40 on the left. This gate offers birding opportunities similar to Gate 43, but also has historical interest because the Gate 40 road passes through the town common of the former town of North Dana of pre-reservoir days. It is a long hike from this gate to the main body of Quabbin but worthwhile. A marshy area on the left features many ducks and sparrows.

From this spot I have watched good numbers of Turkey Vultures in early spring. Back on Route 32A, continue from Gate 40 3.1 miles to the junction of Route 122 and turn left, heading west, 4 miles to the Federated Women's Club State Forest on the left. This area offers fine spring and summer birding, but I know nothing of winter birding here. There are many evergreens, and the area has possibilities for future exploration; and there is access here to Quabbin. One-half mile beyond this state forest on 122 you will notice an unnamed road on your left. As of this writing there is a sign facing away from you that says "122, Petersham 5 miles/Barre 13." Also there is usually a sign featuring pies for sale. Take this road, and follow it for a mile until it dead ends at Gate 35, which is unmarked.

Of the gates in this area this is my favorite. Park, go through the gate and take the road on the left, which soon takes a swing right and goes straight to the reservoir. This is a much shorter walk to the water than the hike from Gate 40 or 43. The road passes under some power lines where you should check for hawks, shrikes, and sparrows. The reservoir is on the right as you walk south along northeast Quabbin and the Prescott Peninsula is to the west. Before freeze-up this area is excellent for ducks, especially Hooded and Common mergansers as well as for Bald Eagles or even Golden Eagle. Walk south on this trail as far as you can (the road eventually swings inland). There are several small islands here where eagles often perch on the trees. The island to the south is Mount L, and eagles can be seen soaring here and over the peninsula. Late in winter, activity here slows down. This is a perfect place for a day hike, and early mornings are best. Continuing west on 122 for 2.9 miles will bring you to Route 202, which you can take south towards Route 9.

Quickly Along Route 202.

In general, west Quabbin is the least familiar to eastern birders, the author included. I have only begun to explore it. About 2.8 miles south on 202 from the junction with 122, there is a small, almost insignificant pulloff on the left overlooking north Prescott Peninsula. Eagles are sometimes seen here. Nearly eight (7.7) miles farther along (10.5 miles from 122) you will see Gate 15. I have never birded here in the winter, but in the summer of 1983, ravens were reported to have nested here. Walk down the path until you get to a "T." Follow the path right until it ends at the water. Here ravens were seen by several observers during the summer, as well as summering loons. An Acadian Flycatcher was in the hemlocks by the stream in the summer of 1983. This may be a good place to check out in the winter; it is only about a mile hike. South from Gate 15 (1.6 miles) you will reach the scenic Pelham Overlook on the left with an obvious area to pull over. Eagles may be seen soaring over Prescott Peninsula, and ravens and winter finches are often reported from this spot. From the Pelham Overlook it is 8 miles to the junction of Routes 9 and 202.

I have only touched on a small number of winter birding possibilities at Quabbin - including some of my favorites. You may have some of your own. No one has yet fully explored all of Quabbin's exciting birding possibilities, but the best way to start is simply to find a gate and walk in. The birding picture is still developing with the possibility of nesting ravens and with the program of releasing captive immature Bald Eagles. Quabbin is a recent wilderness and may yet be colonized by additional species. What a joy it would be to see Bald Eagles nesting there. A fine article about the eagle release program's first efforts written by William J. Davis appeared in the March-April 1983 issue of Massachusetts Wildlife. However, the future of Quabbin is far from trouble free. Acid rain poses a very real threat to the entire Quabbin ecosystem. There is also mounting pressure from hunters, fishermen, cross-country skiers, snowmobilers, and hikers to open up even more areas to increased recreation. Right now Quabbin combines a delicate balance of the remote and the accessible, and this is what makes it so attractive. There is more than enough area currently open to explore, hike, and bird. It is truly one of the great wild treasures of Massachusetts.

MARK LYNCH teaches a course on birding in the Worcester Adult Education system. An experienced birder in the U.S., he has also studied birds in Mexico, Costa Rica and Panama. Mark is an instructor at the Worcester Art Museum and head of the rock music department at WICN Public Radio Station in Worcester.

THE EAGLE PROJECT

The Audubon Society of New Hampshire (ASNH) is seeking to identify local eagle wintering areas, including perch sites, feeding areas, and night roosts, and to record behavior patterns and food habits of eagles wintering in New Hampshire and vicinity. This data will be used to help minimize the effects of possible winter oil spills in New Hampshire and nearby waters. The findings will also be used in planning energy development projects in the Merrimack Valley and along the coast, so that such projects will have minimal effect on the eagle population of the region.

ASNH asks that you inform them of any eagle sightings in New Hampshire or adjacent areas, providing as much detail as possible on the bird's plumage. Also note the date, time, and exact location of the sighting, and if any colored wing tags or leg bands were seen.

Last year, Bird Observer (December 1982) published a sixteen-page article on eagle identification. The article included two pages of blank eagle silhouettes that are easily photocopied. Plumages can be "sketched in" on the photocopy of the eagle silhouettes, which would make an excellent report form.

Whatever form your eagle sighting reports are in, please send them to: Eagle Project (NHESP), Audubon Society of New Hampshire, P.O. Box 528-B, Concord, NH 03301. The author and illustrator of the eagle identification article, Paul and Julie Roberts, would also appreciate copies of reports on eagle plumages. Please mail these to 254 Arlington Street, Medford, MA 02155.

ESCAPES VERSUS VAGRANTS: A COMMENT

by Richard Veit

As co-author of a forthcoming book on the status and distribution of Massachusetts birds, I have been disturbed by an attitude that seems pervasive in ornithological circles and that influences the handling of records of certain species of vagrant birds. In recent regional notes, as well as in periodicals such as American Birds, a number of authors have been plagued by impossible decisions about whether or not some records involve "escapes." More often than not, these authors have chosen a conservative approach and rejected records of species that are frequently kept in captivity. There is no question birds occasionally do escape from captivity and are subsequently reported by birdwatchers. However, summarily dismissing numerous records of a particular species on the sole evidence that the species is common in collections does a disservice to ornithology. In fact, in many instances I find it highly questionable that a given bird seen in the wild is equally or more likely to be an escape than a bona fide vagrant.

How often do wild birds occur far outside their normal ranges? A examination of American Birds, British Birds, or similar periodical reporting bird records will convince the most skeptical of the regularity with which a wide diversity of bird species stray great distances beyond their normal ranges. No ornithologist to my knowledge has questioned the origins of the Aleutian Tern in Great Britain, Sooty Flycatcher or Fairy Tern in Bermuda, Parakeet Auklet in Sweden, Brown-chested Martin or Lucy's Warbler in Massachusetts, or Dusky Warbler in the Farallon Islands. Why not? Simply because these species are not known to be kept in captivity. Yet ornithologists will sigh in exasperation over reports of American Flamingo, Tufted Duck, Garganey or Brambling in the Northeast, simply because these species are commonly kept in captivity. That these highly migratory species routinely appear far beyond their normal limits is apparently discounted, and thus they are regarded as "more likely" to be escapes. This sort of reasoning begs the question of how often captive birds have been known to escape, survive, and subsequently be reported by birders. My argument is that this occurs infrequently, and the burden of proof rests upon those who cry "escape" to show that this in fact represents a viable alternative to vagrancy.

Many arguments for rejecting certain records as "presumed escapes" are obviously circular. For example, it is said that American Flamingos are poor candidates for vagrancy because there are very few confirmed instances in which the species has occurred far outside its normal range. Therefore, records 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc., of flamingos far beyond the normal range

are considered suspect, because American Flamingos are poor candidates for vagrancy, etc. Furthermore, flamingos appearing in the Northeast are usually very pale in coloration. Therefore, the escape proponents proclaim, the birds were probably recently kept in captivity. They neglect the obvious: immature flamingos, the most likely individuals to wander, are much paler than the adults. Indeed, a record of a vivid adult flamingo in the Northeast should be more suspect than that of a "faded" immature.

How does one prove that a given individual is an escaped cage bird? One usually cannot. However, if escaped cage birds now living free are as rampant as some would have us believe, then certainly there should exist numerous records of wild birds showing unambiguous evidence of having been captive, e.g., a band, excessive abrasion of the wing and tail feathers, abnormal bill growth, or calloused feet. My impression is that birds that escape from the Bronx Zoo, from Sea World in San Diego, or from other places of confinement do not travel far but remain close to their "free" food source. I think that a quantitative study comparing the frequency of vagrancy with the frequency of dispersal of escapes might reveal that the former phenomenon occurs more often.

So why belabor this point? Because I think that a cynical attitude towards the origins of probable vagrants has hindered our perceptions of very real biological phenomena. Vagrancy is, despite many published statements to the contrary, of exceptional biological importance in determining distributional patterns of birds throughout the world, albeit over very extended time periods. The biological species concept, as articulated by Ernst Mayr, requires geographical isolation to explain the evolution of reproductive isolating mechanisms. Geographical isolation must have been achieved originally in many instances by "vagrancy." Consider the distribution of species of rails among isolated islands in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The presence of such distinctive species as the Laysan, Inaccessible Island, and Chatham Island rails presupposes at least two (in each instance) remarkable feats of dispersal over thousands of miles of open ocean. Of course, the distinctive avifaunas of the Galapagos and Hawaiian Islands are the end result of similar instances of vagrancy.

Now, it may be impossible to witness an instance of avian speciation within the span of a human lifetime, but the above examples (and there could be as many as 8600), should indicate the value of studying vagrants. The discovery of a Garganey at Plum Island, Massachusetts, in May 1968 stirred little excitement because the bird was dismissed as an escape. An examination of records before and since then, however, reveals that Garganeys have occurred in eastern North America in the spring during a remarkably limited span of dates. Such a pattern would be expected from a sample of wild birds,

but would be close to impossible to explain had all or most of the birds been escapes. (Do zoo keepers suddenly become more lax in restraining their birds during March?) Similarly, the occurrence of several species of Palearctic waterfowl and finches in North America, many of which are kept in captivity, seems to fall into discrete temporal patterns; this, again, suggests that wild birds are involved.

So what is the proper approach for compilers and authors of regional bird atlases? I think it is high time to stop worrying about the provenance of individual birds and publish all records of potential vagrants; the only way to determine the validity of any one is to compare it with future occurrences. We don't know what causes birds to wander far afield. But we may enhance our chances of finding out by maintaining an open eye, ear, and mind with respect to any species that turn up within our geographical area, however bizarre, outlandish or unexpected.

RICHARD VEIT, a peregrinating Massachusetts birder and formerly a compiler of records for BOEM, tossed the above essay on Bird Observer's desk on his way out the door to the west coast where he is currently a doctoral candidate (University of California at Irvine), specializing in studies of seabirds of the southern hemisphere. This summer Dick completed The Birds of Massachusetts (with co-author, Richard Forster) as part of the work for his master's degree at the University of Massachusetts.

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT FIELD GUIDES - OLD AND NEW

Leif J. Robinson, Wellesley

When it rains, it pours! The new Peterson eastern field guide was published only three years ago, a much heralded and long-anticipated event. But the book played mainly to mixed reviews, and some were damning (see, for example, Jon Dunn's in The Auk, 98:641-644, July 1981). After reading Dunn's critique, I thought: "Anyone would have to be nuts to attempt a new field guide; there's too much to cover nowadays."

Yet, within the past couple of months, a truly new guide has appeared from an unusual source, the National Geographic Society (NGS). However, the Society's long tradition of fostering bird study goes back well over a generation to its support of Cornell University's Arthur A. Allen that culminated in the 1951 publication of his epochal Stalking Birds with Color Camera. The Society's Field Guide to Birds of North America is quite revolutionary. It has no single author (rather a stable of writers, researchers, consultants, and designers) and it features no single artist (rather thirteen who prepared the book's 212 color plates). From such a crew, I expected a hodge-podge but upon flipping through the volume's well-manicured pages, I was amazed by the uniform excellence of the illustrations and text. The lifelike drawings are crisply printed, their colors faithful, and plumage details abound. The depictions of scores of subspecies and geographical color variations should capture the attention of even the most jaded lister. Where else in one pocket volume can you find detailed treatments of: two forms of Common Eider, four of Clapper Rail, three of Short-billed Dowitcher, five of Horned Lark, six of Fox Sparrow, two of Hoary Redpoll?

I suspect most birders will soon carry only this guide afield. Shorebird aficionados will appreciate the illustrations of breeding, winter, and juvenile plumages for many species. And the "gullable" cannot help but be impressed by the depicted variety of species and plumages. It would have been nice, however, to see autumn warblers ganged on one spread. The NGS field guide also contains virtually every vagrant likely to be seen in North America - only such bizarre travelers as Western Reef Heron should send us scurrying elsewhere.

The text is as detailed and concise as the plates. Even birders who have memorized all previous guides will find new insights. Sure, I've noticed a few mistakes (mainly omissions), but they are few. Adjacent to the text are synoptic range maps, postage-stamp size and clearly inferior to those in the new Peterson. The lack of migratory date-lines (also like Peterson) could mislead the beginner.

This is a good place to express my one general negative reaction. So numerous are the pictures and so tightly written is the text that the beginning birder may well be turned off by the impossible task of learning it all. The introduction doesn't give enough suggestions as to how to cope with so much information. This guide synthesizes just about everything that has been learned.

NGS offers this paperbound field guide as a part of a package that includes a four-record set of bird songs, a hardbound book on general ornithology, and a map of migration in the Americas. (These items are beyond the scope of this review, but the record set, in particular, deserves critical assessment.) For birders on a budget, the $29.95 pricetag for the lot is dear, but the guide is available separately from several dealers.

The NGS package appeared a few months after the issuance of the "expanded, revised edition" of an old friend, Birds of North America by Chandler Robbins, et al. My 1966 edition, held together by rubber bands, has traveled more than 100,000 miles around North America; it has been my bible. But the bible has been desecrated! In modernizing its plates, while apparently attempting to keep the price low, corners were cut - far too many corners. The film for printing must have been replicated many times to allow species to be introduced (or deleted) according to today's logic. This cut-and-paste operation degraded Arthur Singer's originally excellent illustrations. The portraits in the new edition are often either fuzzy or harsh; some are grotesque (like the Great Black-backed Gull with the withered foot); and many are badly off color. A few plates manage to combine several faults! The text, however, has been nicely rewritten to include new information; clearly, this is the best part of the effort. The range maps have been properly revised - Robbins knows where the birds are. Nevertheless Eastern birders with the new Peterson will find its large-scale maps much more useful.

There is another aspect to bird watching that none of the modern guides addresses well - the lives of the birds themselves. The "big three" do not tell us much about what the birds eat, or describe their habitats, or talk about nesting, or consider their impact on people (and vice versa). In this respect the Audubon series by Richard H. Pough remains a classic. These books deserve a full update, and they would complement the newcomers. The "Audubon Society" walked a similar road with its 1977 photographic bird guides - the detailed text was quite good. Unfortunately, the overall concept was a tutorial disaster.

Are the new field guides better than the old ones? Certainly insofar as species coverage, identification tips, modern nomenclature, and range information are concerned. But this does not mean that the old guides are bad; many critical identifications, including Ross' Gull, have been made in

recent years from Don Eckelberry's forty-year-old drawings in Pough's guides.

This point was driven home to me on October 20. The bird had the gestalt of a Bobolink (late), and it was directly in line with the sun - I could see almost nothing. The only markings visible were some dark, triangular ticks on the shaded undertail coverts. No "modern" guide helped. Then I looked in Pough, and there was Eckelberry's beautiful drawing of a "fall" Bobolink. A couple of weeks later I received the NGS guide, and its picture of a breeding female also hinted at those streaks - the depicted fall and juvenile critters lacked them! Although some contradictions still need to be sorted out, my first plumage clue as to this bird's identity came from Pough's "ancient" guide. You can't have too many!

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Too late for review in this issue: The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding, John Farrand, Jr., ed., 3 volumes, Alfred Knopf, $42 (discounts available), covers 835 species, including 116 accidentals, with names and phylogenetic sequence according to the new A.O.U. system. The text, written by 61 "master" birders, and the color illustrations, primarily photos but also artists' portraits, are on facing pages. At most, three species are covered in two pages and there are as many as six color pictures for some species depicting sexual, seasonal, and age differences. RIGHT HAND PAGES: each color picture has beside it a postage-stamp-sized, black and white reproduction. Superimposed on this small "plate key" are numbered red arrows referring to a numbered list of field marks below it, an inspired, useful, and beautiful format. LEFT HAND PAGES: each species write-up covers habitat, behavior, description, voice, similar species, range, and as many "personal secrets" for bird identification as the "key expert" could fit in. Small but clear range maps are printed in blue, and there are many small sketches to illustrate the species in flight or other details useful to the birdwatcher. There is a general description of each bird family and a list of all members of that family found in North America, with accidental species in light-phase type, a very useful feature. Other pluses are a superbly illustrated introduction that includes seven pages on how to find and identify birds, a very comprehensive index, a glossary, brief biographies of the writers, a section on birding equipment, and appendices on accidentals, reporting rarities, and rare bird alerts (with phone numbers!). This is a "classy" encyclopedic photographic field guide, a prodigious undertaking, meticulously planned, compulsively organized, and beautifully executed, obviously designed to be essential to the serious (and well-equipped) birder's portable library. With such a splendid product, it saddens this writer that Knopf has continued to use the misleading trademark, "The Audubon Society," but I guess that even with books, "Business is . . ."

Dorothy R. Arvidson

THE GREAT BARN OWL CAPER

by David E. Clapp, Marshfield

The telephone call on September 19 seemed a bit preposterous. I am used to calls that misrepresent natural phenomena, but this one was from Jim Baird, head of Natural History Services at Massachusetts Audubon Society. He suggested that a group, family, or other assemblage of Barn Owls (Tyto alba) was trapped within a chicken-wire tube attached to the inside of the pillars supporting the steeple spire of the lovely Christopher Wren Church (First Church of Christ) in Sandwich. After promising Jim that I would take care of the report, I mulled over a variety of responses: I could visit; I could call a birder in the area; I could call the church officials; or I could call the police. I decided to do all of these.

The police recorded the call. They informed me that there was free access for the birds and that there was nothing to worry about. The church officials and the Cape Cod birder were not available, so I grabbed my kids and headed for Sandwich. We arrived at the center of town and saw the first of several birders awaiting the owls' evening performance. It became apparent that birdwatchers knew of the owls and that there had been many people there to see them. We awaited the 7:15 P.M. squawking that announced the beginning of the alleged evening forays. The kids visited the duck pond, and several other birders arrived. By 7:15 P.M., the twenty people gathered heard the first squawks of the owls. It soon became clear that the birds were not flying to and from the steeple but were, in fact, enclosed in a chicken-wire tube. The noise and vertical activity of the owls was a method of attracting attention from the outside rather than an effort to wish each other luck as they departed on hunting trips.

There was one person among us who was not a birder. He was Rick Lawrence, a trustee of the church. I approached him and we discussed the situation. The church steeple had been painted this summer, and the painters had put the chicken wire in place to relieve a perceived pigeon roosting problem. I concluded that the painters had inadvertently fenced in the owls. We decided that the wire must be removed at some point to allow better access for the parents to feed the young or for the large young birds to exit into the world and take up their lives. We felt that a climb into the steeple might be difficult in the dark, for there is no electricity, and it is, at best, an awkward climb. However, we could find no better time to meet again for the rescue. We located a flashlight and decided to forge ahead.

The climb up to the steeple tower started in the choir loft of the church - a simple, almost stark place that offers nothing to detract from the sermon, a place with the simple elegance of Shaker furniture. From the loft, the climb goes

like this: a ladder to another ladder, a scamper across beams to another ladder to a trap door, through the trap door onto an old roof, a crawl along this angled roof under the bell and over the beams supporting it. The next part is a bit redundant: up a ladder to a platform, up another ladder to another platform, up another ladder to a trap door, and then through this onto a small floor. This floor is surrounded by a five-foot-high wall that made me feel as if I were in the gondola of a balloon. On the top of this wall are eight ten-foot columns that hold up the twenty-foot spire of the steeple. It was a nice climb in the night, what with adrenalin flowing and a mission. There was a sense of strength and power in the ladders, beams, and bell. I made the same climb two days later and, in the daylight, noticed that the sense of strength and majesty was missing. It was just plain scary in the light of day!

As we arrived at the last trap door, there was a scurrying and scratching as the birds moved about. When I lifted the door a few inches to get my bearings and to plan my entrance, I was met by three monkey-faced owls lined up about six inches from my nose. Our close relationship lasted only a few seconds. When I pushed through the doorway and hauled out on the unkempt floor of the gondola, three of the birds went straight up in the chicken-wire tube, and a fourth retreated under the scalloped edge of an interior wall and disappeared. Rick (sensibly below floor level) and I decided to tear open a corner of one of the wired sections to allow for access and egress. With adrenalin doing most of the work, I ripped open a section of wire that was about three feet across at the bottom and went to a point about four feet above the edge. As the gondola was five feet deep and the wire covered the spaces between the pillars (ten feet tall and three feet wide), I was able to make nothing more than an isosceles triangle and hope for the best. I took one tour around the gondola and found on its ledge a smorgasbord of mice and starlings (Sturnus vulgaris) on the outside of the wire. It was apparent by the decay and desiccation that one or both parents had been bringing food for weeks and leaving it to be pulled through the wire by the incarcerated owls. The three owls above me were quite active, although one of them eventually dropped down and crawled under the inside wall and sought refuge out of sight. Use of the same tactic to avoid the painters had probably resulted in the owls' captivity.

After arriving back on the ground and describing what had happened, I got promises from people to give me a call the next night to tell me whether there were more, less, or no owls around the steeple. Word came; there were none! My assumption was that the fledged birds had flown through the opening and had immediately begun depleting the vole population of Sandwich. I called the minister the next morning and offered to come down and inspect the site, close up the wire, and discuss the whole affair. He agreed, and I soon again

made the climb to the steeple. The double-walled gondola offered a spectacular view, and with more time to spend, I assessed the owl nest site. The owls were all gone. There was no scratching, fluttering, or squawking as I crawled around looking behind each wall section. It appeared that they had all gotten out the first night they had had the chance. There were hundreds of bones, broken pellets, and sundry fragments scattered about the floor and between the walls. I had the feeling that this site might have been used previously, although no one knew for certain. I took photographs of the cadaverous buffet and some of the pellets and descended again after pulling and tacking the chicken wire in place. The prey items that had remained on the ledge after the heavy rains of the previous night were two starlings and nine meadow voles. From the ground it became apparent that there were many, many more carcasses on the ledges of the steeple. They had washed off or simply fallen over during the time that the birds were inside the steeple.

The most interesting aspect of this story is the speculation about the composition of the jailed family. There could easily have been four barn owl young. Bent reports instances of eleven eggs and cites six as an average figure. It is also known that Barn Owl eggs are incubated as they are laid and that the young are in varying stages of growth within the same nest. The oldest might eat the youngest if he had the chance or needed the food. Thus, the four owls in the steeple could all have been siblings well fed by two parents who had flown off at the arrival of the painting crew. They could also have been one parent and three young who had been trapped inside as the parent incubated or sheltered the young. Let's work back from the dates we know. The owls were first pointed out to the church officials on September 14. They flew off on the night of September 20. The painter had finished his work and was paid on May 13. On May 18, he was reminded to finish the chicken wire, and this was done either on the weekend of May 21 (church secretary) or on Memorial Day weekend (church trustee). Thus, we have the birds wired in for June, July, August, and three weeks in September!

Barn Owls at this latitude probably nest in late April and lay eggs in early May. With a three-week incubation period, these birds could very well have had newly-hatched young when the wire was put in place. I feel that the young would have been mobile and feathered in order to get the food from the ledge five feet above them, or that one of the parents was also wired in. I also feel that the four birds I saw were three siblings and one parent. This means that the buffet on the outside ledge was set by one parent, the food transferred by another parent, and the young raised from beginning to end within the wire cage.

The birds would have been difficult to observe or even to notice in mid-summer. It takes about eight weeks for the birds to grow to a size where fledging is imminent. Our

birds would have been ready to fledge by early to mid-August. As they grew older, stronger, and more vocal, it became more likely they would be noticed by passing humans. However, there is one other factor. With daylight savings time in effect, the light would not have diminished before eight o'clock until late August. It appears that the noise is stimulated by increasing darkness, and the birds were not noisy at a reasonable hour until September. Also by September even the youngest bird was ready to fly, and the noise increased. Thus, they were fed in their cell for more than a month after they would normally have fledged.

There are many members of the church and its trustees who wish to open a small portion of the screen between one set of pillars and allow access to the birds next year. After all, the wire was put up to alleviate a pigeon problem, and the owls do that as well as watch over starlings, rats, and mice.

DAVID E. CLAPP is director of the South Shore Regional Office of the Massachusetts Audubon Society and tour leader for the Natural History Services. He has contributed several articles to BOEM.

FAREWELL TO THE WESTERN REEF HERON

by Martha Vaughan, Newton

Excerpt from a report dated June 11, 1983, from Edith Andrews on Nantucket Island to Richard Forster of Massachusetts Audubon Society (MAS):

> . . . . Another thing of interest is an adult Little Blue Heron with yellow feet! On 26 April we had 2 Ad little blues out front on the salt marsh. One of them had a white throat and I assumed that it hadn't completed the molt from the im. plumage. We saw it off and on but not regularly and I figured it was over in Polpis Harbor. Anyhow, this morning an ad little blue was out front and it still has the white throat, pure white. I was watching it catch and eat fish and then as it lifted its feet and moved along I saw that the feet are a nice, bright yellow and the legs are black, not as dark a black as a Snowy but, black. The bill is the size of a little blue and two-toned but not quite as sharply defined as some, or as the book shows. All in all a very interesting-looking bird. . . .

Thus, in the course of one of the most exciting spring migrations Massachusetts has experienced in many years, the most extraordinary bird of all quietly took up residence in Quaise Marsh on the very doorstep of the University of Massachusetts Field Station. Toward the end of his Nantucket vacation in June, Rob Cardillo, a photographer associated with the VIREO project of The Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, met Edith during a visit to the Maria Mitchell Museum and, at her request, photographed the "interesting-looking" bird in Quaise Marsh [see "A Visitor from Afar," by D. Arvidson, BOEM 11 (3): 124]. In July, Philadelphia ornithologists familiar with African species viewed these pictures and informed Edith Andrews and Massachusetts Audubon that they had a superstar in their backyard.

Two months and 3000 visitors later, the superstar disappeared. At sunset on Tuesday, September 13, Clinton Andrews at the Field Station by Quaise Marsh saw the now famous Western Reef Heron (Egretta gularis) flying high with a flock of 67 Snowy Egrets (E. thula), then alighting restlessly on the marsh.

The flock did not follow its usual procedure of flying off to the regular roost. The reef heron was not seen again. To date, there have been no reports from more southern birders of this West African species which began its Cape Cod visit on April 26, 4000 miles from home.

There is some controversy as to the "legitimacy" of this bird as a vagrant. The Western Reef Heron is not listed as a captive species on the International Species Inventory System (ISIS) according to the people at MAS who thoroughly checked and ruled out the possibility that the heron could have been an escape from a North American zoo or aviculturist. There are, however, apparently several of these birds in European collections. It seems unlikely that the Nantucket bird would be a European escape as opposed to a wild bird of the dark-phase nominate West African race.

There are some who claim the bird must have been a stowaway on a ship. In fact, Cramp says the reef heron is "often trustful of man; recorded perching on masts of moored boats." As long as the bird was not "man-assisted," i.e., fed, captured, or handled by people, a ship-assisted bird would still be considered an acceptable record by all but a few extremists. In either case, surely the considerable publicity given the heron by The New York Times, Boston Globe, and national and local television news coverage might have prompted witnesses to the bird's long boat ride to speak up. So far, not one peep (so to speak).

The third possibility is that the reef heron is a real vagrant, caught up by a tropical storm and blown westward. (Studies on weather patterns during early and mid-April are underway.) In a paper titled "Thoughts on Reef Herons and of Ships" dated August 21, 1983, by Don Roberson of Pacific Grove, California (a copy of which was sent to MAS), the writer states, "With Western Reef Heron, the case for true vagrancy is so weak as to be implausible." (Roberson is the author of Rare Birds of the West Coast, Woodcock Press, 1980.) Although the evidence is slim, the heron appears to be a wanderer, but not a highly migratory bird. Bannerman (1968) says, "It is subject to local migrations on the African mainland and in April is said largely to disappear from the sea-coast to breeding grounds behind the mangrove swamps. It may have been remarked that it was just at that time - the end of March and mid-April [emphasis mine] - when the birds are reported to move from the mangrove belt father afield, that the specimens were secured in the Cape Verde Islands" (p. 234).

Strays have reached not only the Cape Verde Islands, but also the Azores and Spain during spring (March-June) and the Mediterranean coast of France during summer (June-August) - all roughly due east of Cape Cod. As far-fetched as the true vagrant theory might seem to some, it is a fact that long before boats existed, birds were blown across large expanses of open ocean to colonize islands and other new areas. Since it must take more than one or two rare vagrants to establish a healthy breeding population, maybe the trip is not so

miraculous after all. (See also in this issue the article by Richard Veit, "Escapes Versus Vagrants: A Comment.")

California skepticism notwithstanding, thus far the American Birding Association has accepted the record. The final ruling of its Checklist Committee will come in early 1984. The September-October 1983 issue of American Birds has included the record and contains a feature article on the reef heron by the Philadelphia group who originally photographed and identified the bird.

Massachusetts has played host on the islands off Cape Cod to three North American records this year: in addition to the Reef Heron, there was a Brown-chested Martin on Monomoy and a Streaked Flycatcher on Martha's Vineyard - both South American species. Only the Reef Heron was seen by more than a handful of birders, including Benton Basham who is chasing "703 in 1983" (and saw number 711 on New Year's Eve in Florida - a Masked Duck), and Roger Tory Peterson who called it the "bird of the century," even overshadowing the Ross' Gull of 1975. According to Edith Andrews, the heron guest register at the Field Station recorded 1866 signatures before the bird disappeared, and as many as 3000 people may have watched it prance and lunge and parasol as it fed on small fish, crustacea and mollusks at Quaise Marsh.

Call it heron addiction or reefer madness or whatever you will, that tapdancing "show-off" thrilled a lot of birders' hearts last summer and fattened the pockets of many accommocating Nantucket cab drivers and local airlines.

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MARTHA VAUGHAN has worked on the staff of Bird Observer for six years. Recently she and Robert Stymeist spent a day with Benton Basham while a crew from Channel 4's "Evening Magazine" filmed a story on the Ultimate Listing Experience, to be aired sometime in January 1984. Martha's more prosaic hours are spent trying to "comptrol" several small firms of architects and urban planners in Harvard Square. She lives in Newton with ten-year-old Sarah, who thinks her birding mother is weird.

Photo by J. L. Heywood

Viewing Egretta gularis, *July 16, 1983.*
(l to r) A. Forbes-Watson, E. Andrews, P. Alden, R. T. Peterson

Western Reef Heron feeding.
Quaise Marsh, Nantucket
Photos by D. R. Arvidson

WESTERN REEF HERON

Quaise Marsh
Nantucket, 1983

Photo by Townsend Dickinson

Photo by J. L. Heywood

Signing the guest register.
Edith Andrews, Roger T. Peterson

BEHAVIOR-WATCHING FIELD NOTES

by Donald and Lillian Stokes, Carlisle

Bill Harris, of Chelmsford, wrote us about a White-Breasted Nuthatch at his feeder. "It was sitting on a perch above the feeder, and when other birds came to the feeder, it would immediately roll over to a hanging position and open its wings wide. It swung from side to side with mouth open and no doubt was making some sound."

Comment: Some people might dismiss this as just one of the weird things birds do, but this would be a disservice to both nature and evolution. Many people have seen this same posture used by other nuthatches; we saw it once given at a tree hole when House Sparrows were trying to usurp a nuthatch nest. It is clearly an instinctive reaction passed on in the genetic make-up of the bird; it is part of the bird's "language," part of its repertoire of actions and sounds used to communicate with other birds. From the situations in which this display occurs, we can guess that it is aggressive or competitive in meaning.

We were looking for sparrows one day in November, and were interested to hear three different sounds given by Song Sparrows. We heard bits of song, a high-pitched drawn-out call, and a short, lower-pitched call. The song was heard least often; the low-pitched call was heard more frequently and was given by birds that had risen to exposed perches after being disturbed; and the high-pitched call was heard most and produced by small flocks of birds that stayed hidden.

Comment: Simply counting the numbers of different sounds a species gives at a certain time of year is the first step to delineating its communication system. The number of different sounds used can be a key to the bird's social life and social needs. A large repertoire suggests more complexity; a small repertoire suggests a simpler structure. The frequency of each type of call is an important clue to its significance and should be noted. The most frequently used sound is for the most frequent need. A little used sound is probably for a special, infrequent need. The function of each of the Song Sparrow sounds can only be guessed at. Our best guess is that the high, thin note is a "contact" call used by birds in a flock to keep in aural contact when they are visually isolated. The low-pitched call, the one most often given when you spish near Song Sparrows, is a response to danger or disturbance and, keeping in line with new theories, may be a predator communication which says in effect, "I see you, so don't bother to try to catch me." Most wintering Song Sparrows in our area are males, and as far as we know, only males produce song. Some males remain on their summer territories in winter and may resume some singing in fall. The song we heard is probably a continuation of this behavior.

Please send us any information on the number and frequency of calls of any species you are interested in and we will publish the information in this column. Send it to Don and Lillian Stokes, 52 Nowell Farm Road, Carlisle, MA 01741.

Behavior-Watching in the Months Ahead. Tufted Titmice are gregarious and engaging birds that offer the behavior-watcher some interesting opportunities in the months ahead.

Right now, you will find titmice in groups. Banding studies have shown that these winter groups are composed of family members: either parents and their offspring from the previous breeding season, a mated pair, or a group of siblings. The birds maintain contact by giving their short "tseep" call. Occasionally you will see behavior that indicates the order of dominance among members of the group. When one bird displaces another on the perch, it is obviously the dominant bird. Another dominance display is the head-forward display. The bird leans forward with bill slightly open and lunges towards another bird. Titmice give two calls in aggressive encounters; one sounds like "see-jwee," and the other is a rasping "jway" call. Males are generally dominant over females at feeders. Although titmice groups have been studied, there is still much that remains to be discovered about them: how do groups form; what is the relationship between different groups of titmice, i.e., do they tolerate one another or are they antagonistic; and is there a fixed winter range for these groups? There is some evidence to suggest that there is.

On a sunny day starting in late winter you will begin to hear the "peter, peter, peter" song of the male titmouse. This signifies the beginning of the breeding season. Family flocks will gradually disperse, and birds that are not already paired will seek mates. Among mated pairs, the male will feed the female bits of food as part of their courtship behavior. She may follow him around and wing-quiver giving the "see-jwee" call. You may hear in early spring an extremely high-pitched, piercing, extended call that you may not have associated with titmice. Locate the caller, and you may see mating take place. Both male and female give this call, often accompanied by wing-quivering, just before or during copulation. This call is also produced, along with wing-quivering, when two males are in intense conflict. This usually occurs after they have been calling back and forth and have come close together. If you witness any of these or other features of titmouse behavior, send us a card with your observation, and we will share it with others through this column.

DONALD and LILLIAN STOKES regularly contribute this column and have just published the second volume of A Guide to Bird Behavior. This includes an introductory section on the behavior of birds at feeders, a checklist of nests and displays, and the complete life history of twenty-five birds.

Field Records
September 1983

by George W. Gove, Robert H. Stymeist

It was the hottest September in the Greater Boston area in 113 years of record-keeping, and one of the sunniest and driest as well. The average temperature was 70.6°, 6.0° above normal; the previous record for September was 69.4° back in 1930. Several temperature records were broken: 99° on the eleventh not only broke the old high for the date (95°) set in 1931, but also was a new high for so late in the year. The highest September reading is 102° in 1881. Other new high records include 94° on the sixth, 92° on the nineteenth, and 97° on the twentieth. Some nighttime lows were very high; the low of 76° on the sixth was in fact the highest minimum reading of the entire year and also a new record for the date, surpassing 72° set in 1898. The lowest temperature all month was just 51° on the twenty-fifth. The number of days with the thermometer reaching 90° or more was six, a new high; this brings the total number of days over 90° to thirty days, the old record, set in 1955, being twenty-eight days.

Rain, on the other hand, totaled only 1.06 inches, 2.35 inches less than normal. Although only the driest September since 1980, when 0.82 inch fell, this September was still the sixteenth driest September in 113 years! Measurable amounts of rain came only on three days. Sunshine on the other hand, totaled a new record - 86% of possible days. This, in fact, ties with June 1912 for the sunniest month back through 1893 in 91 years of record-keeping.

LOONS THROUGH HERONS

Pied-billed Grebes were recorded from a very wide selection of locations, with good counts on Monomoy and Plymouth. A Red-necked Grebe found off Eastham was in high breeding plumage according to the observers.

Shearwater reports were uneventful again this month with the maximum numbers being perhaps the lowest ever reported for September. Great Cormorants were reported moving during the third week of the month, with many noted among the larger migrations of the southward bound Double-crested.

The Western Reef-Heron, first noted on April 26, was last seen on the thirteenth. It moved out with the Snowy Egrets with which it had spent the evenings in the marshes of Quaise all summer. (See article elsewhere in this issue.)

A night-time roost of herons at Hellcat Marsh, Plum Island, included thirty-nine Great Egrets, 706 Snowy Egrets, two pied Little Blue Herons, all as late as September 26. A roost of Black-crowned Night-Herons at Eastham reached 130 individuals on September 7, with at least six immature Yellow-crowned Night-Herons noted among them. Other high counts included 213 Snowy Egrets at Belle Isle Marsh, East Boston; 130 Snowys at Third Cliff, Scituate, 51 Cattle Egrets in Ipswich, and 19 Green-backed Herons in Eastham.

R.H.S.

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
Common Loon:			
30	Annisquam	3 calling	H.Wiggin
Pied-billed Grebe:			
11,11+18	MV,Lakeville	6, 1 + 5	R.Sargent,W.Petersen
11,13	Braintree,Winchester	3, 1	R.Campbell,G.Gove
20,24	Monomoy,Wellfleet	14, 3	T.Raymond,J.Barton#
24,25	Plymouth,Scituate	12, 4	G.Gove,H.Mallers
	Other reports of single individuals from various locations.		

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
Red-necked Grebe:			
17	Eastham	1	H.Coolidge,H.Wiggin
Northern Fulmar:			
25	Stellwagen,off Monomoy	30, 10	P.Vickery#,BBC
Greater Shearwater:			
25	off Monomoy	10	BBC
Sooty Shearwater:			
25	off Monomoy	2	BBC
Manx Shearwater:			
1,5	Stellwagen	2, 1	R.Forster,P.Roberts
11,25	Stellwagen,off Monomoy	2, 8	BBC
Gannet:			
6	P'town	1 ad, 2 imm	W.Cornwell
Great Cormorant:			
3,18	Monomoy,Newbypt	1 imm, 1	W.Petersen,BBC
24,28	N.Scituate,S.Peabody	22, 2	W.Petersen,R.Heil
Double-crested Cormorant:			
3,24	PI	100, 536	BBC
24-25,25	E.Boston,Ipswich	645, 175+	S.Zendeh,J.Berry
28	Squantum	500 migrants	R.Abrams
American Bittern:			
4,12-30	E.Boston,GMNWR	1, 4 reports	S.Zendeh,v.o.
13,17	MNWS,PI	1, 1	C.Blasczak,BBC
Great Blue Heron:			
thr,2	Saugus,GMNWR	max 13 9/29, 36	J.Berry,M.Baird
3,5;5	PI;Rowley	6, 9; 7	BBC
27	Eastham	70	R.Forster#
Great Egret:			
3,5	Chatham,Rowley	4, 7	W.Petersen#,BBC
18,26	PI	20, 39	W.Petersen#,G+C.Gove
Western Reef-Heron:			
1-13	Nantucket	1 from 4/26	E.Andrews#+v.o.
Snowy Egret:			
thr	E.Boston,Saugus	max 213 9/4, max 60 9/6	S.Zendeh#,J.Berry
3,5	PI,Rowley	80, 50+	BBC
11,12	MV,Scituate(3rd Cliff)	40, 130	R.Sargent,D.Clapp
26,27	PI,Scituate	706, 47	G+C.Gove,H.Mallers
Little Blue Heron:			
3	PI,E.Orleans	1 imm, 1 imm	BBC,D.Williams
12,18	Scituate,Eastham	4 ad, 1 imm	G.d'Entremont,R.Stymeist#
26,27	PI,Scituate	2 pied, 1 imm	G+C.Gove,H.Mallers
Tricolored Heron:			
2	Monomoy	1	B.Nikula#
Cattle Egret:			
1-26	Ipswich	max 51 9/11	J.Berry
Green-backed Heron:			
2	Eastham	19 (night roost)	R.Forster
25,28	E.Boston,Whitman	4, 1	S.Zendeh,W.Petersen
Black-crowned Night-Heron:			
2,7,27	Eastham	73, 130, 14 at roost	v.o.
11,30	MV,Squantum	65, 75	R.Sargent,R.Abrams
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron;			
thr	Eastham	max 6 imm 9/2	R.Forster#+v.o.
1-26,11	Yarmouthport,Marshfield	1 ad, 1	J.Aylward#,D.Clapp
3,18	PI	1, 1	R+D.Hale#,A.Blaisdell#
Glossy Ibis:			
1-24,27	PI,Scituate	max 5, 2	v.o.,H.Mallers

SWAN THROUGH BOBWHITE

A drake Redhead was early and unusual at Great Meadows N.W.R. where it behaved like a dabbling duck feeding on the surface accumulation. A male Tufted Duck was present throughout the month at the south end of Monomoy where it had been seen earlier in the summer and, as noted by one observer, it was very likely the Chatham bird from early spring (BOEM, 11 (3):153) also believed to be the same bird that had been in Acoaxet earlier. An immature male King Eider was noted at Monomoy and was probably the same bird seen in Chatham in August. No Common Eider are listed in the records although there are always some immature and nonbreeding birds present throughout the year.

September is the month of hawk migration, and this September produced the most spectacular southward migration, particularly of Broad-winged Hawks with twenty thousand passing over Mt. Wachusett in the span of a few hours on September 13, the same day that two hundred Osprey and a hundred Harriers were seen in migration there. This observer was not present to see this spectacle and has only heard rapturous accounts by some of the hawk migration observers who were present; an account of that unprecedented and memorable day will appear in BOEM in the future.

A banded, immature Bald Eagle was seen at Monomoy and Chatham on and off during the month, and two eagles were seen during the migration past Wachusett. Several Northern Goshawks were noted during the month including one near a nesting site in Halifax. Falcons are more generally coastal migrants, and a total of eleven Merlins and nine Peregrines was reported from Plum Island with the latter species being reported from eight coastal and island vantage points.

G.W.G.

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
Mute Swan:			
5,11	Ipswich,MV	9 (family), 400	BBC,R.Sargent#
Canada Goose:			
10	Ipswich	270	J.Berry
Wood Duck:			
24	Hingham	110	SSBC
Green-winged Teal:			
24	Scituate	11	W.Petersen
Blue-winged Teal:			
2,11	Eastham,MV	54, 65	R.Forster,R.Sargent#
Northern Shoveler:			
4,18	Monomoy,PI	8, 10	W.Petersen,BBC
24	GMNWR	6	R.Walton
Gadwall:			
3,18	PI	2, 6	BBC
23,24	GMNWR,Scituate	4, 1	R.Walton,SSBC
American Wigeon:			
11,13	MV,Lakeville	20, 6	R.Sargent#,D.Briggs
Redhead:			
24-30	GMNWR	1 m	G.Gove#
Ring-necked Duck:			
4;11,18	Monomoy;Lakeville	1; 19, 125	W.Petersen#
Tufted Duck:			
thr	Monomoy	1 m	W.Petersen#+v.o.
Greater Scaup:			
18	PI	1	BBC
Lesser Scaup:			
4,13	Monomoy,Lakeville	1, 60	W.Petersen,D.Briggs
King Eider:			
11	Monomoy	1 imm m	W.Harrington#
White-winged Scoter:			
3	Monomoy	18	W.Petersen#
Hooded Merganser:			
18	PI	7	BBC
Red-breasted Merganser:			
10	PI	10	BBC
Turkey Vulture:			
6-30	Mt.Wachusett	total 101	EMHW(fide P.Roberts)
5	Ipswich	2	BBC
Osprey:			
thr	Mt.Wachusett	total 332 max 70 (9/13)	EMHW(fide P.Roberts)
11,18	MV,W.Newbury	5, 33	R.Sargent#,P.Roberts
24,29	E.Boston,Woburn	4, 1	S.Zendeh,G.Gove
Bald Eagle:			
thr	Monomoy	1 imm b	v.o.
12,13,16	Mt.Wachusett	1 ad., 1, 1	EMHW(fide P.Roberts)
Northern Harrier:			
3-30	Mt.Wachusett	total 108 max. 50 (9/13)	EMHW(fide P.Roberts)
thr	PI	max 5	v.o.
Sharp-shinned Hawk:			
thr.	Mt.Wachusett	total 739 max.126(9/14)	EMHW(fide P.Roberts)
Cooper's Hawk:			
3,15	Mt.Wachusett	1, 1, 1	EMHW(fide P.Roberts)
13,16,18	Lynn,Lincoln,PI	1 imm, 1, 1	R.Heil,J.Baird,G.d'Entremont

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
Northern Goshawk:			
14-30	Mt.Wachusett	6	EMHW(fide P.Roberts)
14,18	GMNWR,Halifax	1 imm, 1	G.Gove,K.Holmes#
24	Marshfield	1	SSBC
Red-shouldered Hawk:			
10-24	Mt.Wachusett	11	EMHW(fide P.Roberts)
10	E.Middleboro	1	K.Anderson
Broad-winged Hawk:			
1-28	Mt.Wachusett	total 26,898 max. 19,912 (9/13)	EMHW(fide P.Roberts)
14,25	Mt.Wachusett	1516, 325	EMHW(fide P.Roberts)
Red-tailed Hawk:			
thr.	Mt.Wachusett	total 50	EMHW(fide P.Roberts)
American Kestrel:			
thr	Ipswich	max 6 (9/1)	J.Berry
3-29	Mt.Wachusett	total 149 max. 25(9/14)	EMHW(fide P.Roberts)
Merlin:			
15-24	PI	max 4, total 11	v.o.
8,18	GMNWR,SRV	1, 2	R.Walton
18,20	Eastham,Monomoy	1, 1	R.Stymeist#,T.Raymond
24	Outer Cape	6	BBC
Peregrine Falcon:			
3,8,19	Mt.Wachusett	1, 1, 1	EMHW (fide P.Roberts)
15-27	PI	max 6, total 9	v.o.
4;8,25	Nantucket;Monomoy	1 m; 1, 1	J.Grugan#;v.o.
8,17	Orleans,N.Scituate	1 ad, 1 ad	
24	E.Boston,Duxbury,Truro	1, 1, 2	S.Zendeh,SSBC,BBC
Ruffed Grouse:			
18	E.Middleboro	2	K.Anderson
Northern Bobwhite:			
24	Sudbury,Hingham	1 ad + 3 imm, 16	R.Walton,SSBC

RAILS THROUGH PHALAROPES

Two of the Soras reported this month were unlucky birds; one was a road kill in Halifax and the other was found injured on a lawn in Marshfield.

September is the month of the "grasspipers" and this September was no exception with many reports of Lesser Golden-Plover and Baird's, Pectoral, and Buff-breasted sandpipers. A total of nineteen Lesser Golden Plover was reported from Plum Island and eleven from Monomoy. Maximum flock sizes of thirty-four were seen in Bridgewater and forty in West Bridgewater. Baird's Sandpipers were present in average numbers, with one report of this species in Westboro, an inland location. Pectoral Sandpipers were reported in average to good numbers with a flock of eighty on Monomoy. Buff-breasted were actually rather scarce although two were found at inland locations.

A high count for September of twenty-nine Willets was reported from Monomoy; these were probably the western race as that is the race usually present here in late summer and fall. Solitary Sandpiper sightings or reports were rather low. High numbers of Whimbrel were present on Monomoy on three occasions over the month, and one Marbled Godwit spent ten days at Third Cliff in Scituate where good numbers of Red Knot were present. Both Western and White-rumped sandpiper were seen at Orleans in sizable flocks. Purple Sandpipers were noted late in the month indicating that winter is on the way.

G.W.G.

Virginia Rail:			
2,4	PI,Nantucket	1 imm, 2	D.Briggs#,J.Grugan#
27,30	Eastham,GMNWR	1, 1 imm	R.Forster#,C.Floyd#
Sora:			
thr	GMNWR	max 10	v.o.
11,14	Halifax,Marshfield	1, 1	W.Petersen,A.Hall#
24,27	PI,Truro	2, 1	BBC,R.Forster#
Common Moorhen:			
3,20	PI,GMNWR	2, 9	BBC,A.Williams
American Coot:			
18,23	Ipswich,GMNWR	1, 2	W.Petersen,R.Walton
Black-bellied Plover:			
thr	Monomoy	max 1800 (9/18)	v.o.
3,5	PI,Squantum	300, 250	BBC,R.Abrams
11,22	MV,GMNWR	105, 3	R.Sargent#,R.Walton

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
Lesser Golden-Plover:			
10-24,3-20	PI,Monomoy max 6, total 19, max 8, total 11		v.o.
5-12,15	Scituate,Bridgewater	max 5, 34	D.Clapp#
8,9	MV,Dorchester	27, 6	R.Sargent#,J.Carter
11,17	Halifax,W.Bridgewater	5 ad, 40	W.Petersen#
5,12	Ipswich,Marshfield	5 ad, 5	BBC,D.Clapp
thr	1 to 3 birds reported from 7 locations		
Semipalmated Plover:			
3,4	PI,Monomoy	100, 350	BBC
5,22	Squantum,Lynn	15, 30	R.Abrams,C.Blasczak
Piping Plover:			
4,11	Monomoy,MV	20, 2	BBC,R.Sargent#
12,17	Scituate	max 4	v.o.
Killdeer:			
5,24	Newton	24, 29	F.Bouchard,R.Stymeist#
9,24	Harwich,E.Boston	20, 15	H.Stabins,S.Zendeh#
15,24	Bridgewater	55, 54	R.Forster#,W.Petersen
American Oystercatcher:			
1, 1-17	Chatham,Monomoy	17, max 35	R.Walton,v.o.
3-5	Nantucket	19	R.Stymeist
Greater Yellowlegs:			
thr,4	E.Boston,Monomoy	max 200 (9/24) 120	S.Zendeh#,BBC
Lesser Yellowlegs:			
3,5	PI,Rowley	60, 30	BBC
11	Halifax,MV	60, 12	W.Petersen,R.Sargent#
Solitary Sandpiper:			
1,2	Brookline,Newton	1, 1	J.Paputseanos,O.Komar
3,24	PI,Bridgewater	1, 3	BBC,W.Petersen
Willet:			
4	Monomoy,Squantum	29, 1	BBC,J.Paputseanos
12,17	Scituate	1, 1	D.Clapp,W.Petersen
Spotted Sandpiper:			
3,10;11	PI;MV	3, 1; 2	BBC;R.Sargent#
13,24	Lakeville,Bridgewater	1, 1	D.Briggs,W.Petersen
Upland Sandpiper:			
8,11	MV	4, 4	P.Smith#,R.Sargent#
1-15	4 individuals from 4 locations		
Whimbrel:			
2,15,27	Monomoy	60, 50, 30	B.Nikula#
thr	PI	max 4 (9/16)	v.o.
2,5	Eastham,Scituate	16, 16	R.Forster,D.Clapp
18,24	Yarmouth,Duxbury	12, 8	H.Coolidge#,SSBC
Hudsonian Godwit:			
thr	PI	max 12 (9/3)	v.o.
3,4	Monomoy-south, north	3, 5	W.Bailey#,BBC
Marbled Godwit:			
9-18	Scituate	1	D.Clapp+v.o.
Ruddy Turnstone:			
3,4	PI,Monomoy	3, 20	BBC
10,11	PI,MV	1, 2	BBC,R.Sargent#
Red Knot:			
thr	PI	max 14 (9/26)	v.o.
4,24	Monomoy,Scituate	1000, 200	BBC,SSBC
Sanderling:			
4,6	Monomoy,Nahant	200, 185	BBC,F.Bouchard
8,11	Revere,MV	100, 80	C.Jackson,R.Sargent
22	Lynn	260	C.Blasczak
Semipalmated Sandpiper:			
4,5	Monomoy,Rowley	750, 15	BBC
6,10	Lynn,PI	75, 6	F.Bouchard,BBC
Western Sandpiper:			
thr	PI	max 6 (9/26) total 18	v.o.
5;8,10	Monomoy;Orleans	12; 20, 30	W.Petersen;B.Nikula
10,24	Scituate	12, 5	W.Petersen
10,12	Manchester,Marshfield	1, 2	BBC,D.Clapp
Least Sandpiper:			
4,11	Monomoy,MV	400, 15	BBC,R.Sargent#
5,10	Rowley,PI	3, 20	BBC
White-rumped Sandpiper:			
thr	PI	max 4 (9/10) total 12	v.o.

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
White-rumped Sandpiper (continued)			
4;8,10	Monomoy;Orleans	2; 20, 30	BBC;B.Nikula
8	MV	8	R.Sargent#
Baird's Sandpiper:			
4,17	Monomoy	2, 2	B.Nikula#,H.Wiggin#
14,17	Westboro,PI	1, 1	B.Blodget
24,26	PI	3, 1	D.Stemple#,N.Clayton#
Pectoral Sandpiper:			
thr	PI,Lexington ↘ max 30 (9/26), max 11 (9/25)		v.o.,J.Andrews
8,11	MV,Halifax	6, 20	R.Sargent#,W.Petersen
20	Monomoy	80	T.Raymond
Purple Sandpiper:			
24	Hingham	3	SSBC
Dunlin:			
16,26	PI	20, 120	G.Gove
Stilt Sandpiper:			
3,16	PI	1, 8	BBC,H.Parker#
4,18	Monomoy,Ipswich	3, 6	BBC,W.Petersen
Buff-breasted Sandpiper:			
1,1-2	Newton,Marblehead	1, 1	O.Komar#,J.Smith
1-20	Monomoy	max 3 (9/20)	v.o.
1-12;8,11	PI;MV	1; 1	v.o;R.Sargent#
11,17;16	Scituate;Lexington	1, 1; 1	W.Harrington#,W.Petersen#;J.Andrews
Short-billed Dowitcher:			
thr	PI	max 24 (9/3)	BBC
4,11	Monomoy,MV	12, 25	BBC,R.Sargent#
11,30	Lexington	1, 1	J.Andrews
Long-billed Dowitcher:			
thr	PI	max 150 (9/23)	v.o.
20,27	Monomoy,Eastham	4, 7	T.Raymond,R.Forster
Common Snipe:			
11,27	Halifax,GMNWR	4, 8	W.Petersen,G.Gove
American Woodcock:			
24	South Shore	3	SSBC
Wilson's Phalarope:			
1-23	PI	max 2 (9/10)	v.o.
8	MV,Monomoy	1, 2	R.Sargent#,J.Lortie#
21-23	Lexington	1	J.Andrews
Red-necked Phalarope:			
4,5	Monomoy	1, 1	W.Petersen#(different birds)
11,17-18	Stellwagen,Duxbury	3, 1	BBC,M.Sears#

JAEGER THROUGH OWL

Four Parasitic Jaegers were seen on a BBC pelagic trip, and on the trip to Stellwagen Bank, those on board were treated to close views of two adult Sabine's Gulls, one in basic (winter) plumage and the other in alternate (breeding) plumage. Little Gulls were present in Newburyport Harbor and a Common Black-headed Gull was seen at Belle Isle Marsh in East Boston. A Bonaparte's Gull was seen at Great Meadows; inland records of this species in Massachusetts are unusual. An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull was seen for over a week's time on Monomoy, and the first Glaucous Gull of the season appeared there on the fourth. Caspian Terns were noted at Scituate and Plum Island; in the latter case, the observer noted that the juvenile of this species has the darkest cap of any juvenile or first winter Sterna tern - a complete black cap with a few whitish streaks on the forehead. Royal Terns were also noted and an adult Sandwich Tern was seen at Monomoy where fifteen thousand Common Terns were counted going to roost at dusk. Forster's Terns spent the month in the marsh at Fort Hill with a maximum of seventy present there on September 27. A total of seven Black Skimmers was noted at three locations.

A Black-billed Cuckoo was banded at Nantucket, and a total of twelve Yellow-billed Cuckoos was reported. Two Barn Owls raised three young in a church steeple in Sandwich under trying conditions. Read "The Great Barn Owl Caper" elsewhere in this issue for a report of this bizarre incident. G.W.G.

Parasitic Jaeger:			
5,11	Gloucester,Stellwagen	1, 4 imm.	P.Roberts,BBC
Laughing Gull:			
thr	E.Boston	max 80 (9/24)	S.Zendeh#

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
Laughing Gull (continued):			
7,11	P'town,MV	200, 200	W.Cornwell#,R.Sargent#
4,13,24	Monomoy,Lynn,PI	24, 38, 1	BBC,R.Heil,J.Grugan
Little Gull:			
18;20	Newbypt	1 juv, 1 ad; 3 ad	W.Petersen#,G.d'Entremont;R.Forster
Common Black-headed Gull:			
4;17,18	E.Boston	1; 1, 1	S.Zendeh#;C.Jackson
Bonaparte's Gull:			
6,13	Nahant,Lynn	78, 170	F.Bouchard,C.Blasczak
16,17	Newbypt,GMNWR	340, 1 imm	G.Gove,R.Walton
Ring-billed Gull:			
3,4	Newbypt,Monomoy	250, 100	BBC
Lesser Black-backed Gull:			
5,11	Monomoy	1 ad	W.Petersen#,W.Harrington#
Glaucous Gull:			
4	Monomoy	1	R.Prescott#
Black-legged Kittiwake:			
5	Monomoy	1 juv	W.Petersen#
Sabine's Gull:			
11	Stellwagen	2 ad	BBC
Caspian Tern:			
16,24	PI,Scituate	2 (1 ad, 1 juv), 2 (1 ad, 1 imm)	R.Heil,W.Petersen
Royal Tern:			
5,8	Nantucket,MV	4, 1	J.Grugan,R.Sargent#
Sandwich Tern:			
4	Monomoy	1 ad	BBC (W.Drummond)
Roseate Tern:			
4,11	Monomoy,MV	1000, 2	BBC,R.Sargent#
Common Tern:			
3,15	Monomoy	15,000, 8,000	B.Nikula#(roosting at dusk)
17	PI	250	BBC
Forster's Tern:			
thr	Eastham	max 70 (9/27)	v.o.
1-5	Monomoy,PI	max 20, 1	v.o.
17-25	E.Boston	2	C.Jackson#
Least Tern:			
11	MV	2	R.Sargent#
Black Tern:			
3,4	PI,Monomoy	1, 16	BBC
12,18	Scituate,Eastham	1, 1	G.d'Entremont,R.Emery#
Black Skimmer:			
1-18,2	Monomoy,Plymouth	max 4, 1 imm	v.o.,MBO staff
18	Barnstable	2	F.Bouchard
Black-billed Cuckoo:			
11,15	MV,Nantucket	1, 1 b	R.Sargent#,E.Fisk
18,20	Salisbury,MNWS	1, 1	G.d'Entremont,J.Smith
Yellow-billed Cuckoo:			
2-5,14	E.Middleboro,Lincoln	1, 1	K.Anderson,R.Forster
25,30	Newton,PI	2, 1	O.Komar,BBC
1-24	7 individuals		
Barn Owl (see note in this issue):			
17-20	Sandwich	4	R.Pease#,D.Clapp
Eastern Screech Owl:			
8,11	Annisquam,MV	2, 4	H.Wiggin,R.Sargent#
18	E.Middleboro	1	K.Anderson
Great Horned Owl:			
18	Halifax,E.Middleboro	2, 3	K.Holmes,K.Anderson
26	PI	1	G.Gove
Barred Owl:			
18	Halifax	1	W.Petersen
Short-eared Owl:			
4,20	Monomoy	1, 2	BBC,T.Raymond

NIGHTHAWKS THROUGH VIREOS

The Common Nighthawk migration continued during the first week of the month with good numbers reported from the Greater Boston area. Nighthawks are more unusual south of Boston and on the islands, so the reports from Nantucket and Cape Cod are noteworthy.

Red-bellied Woodpeckers totaled seven individuals on their stronghold of Martha's Vineyard, and an immature of this species was found in Newton.

Empidonax flycatchers were moving in good numbers through midmonth as especially noted from the banding results on Nantucket. Only two Western Kingbirds were recorded, both from outer Cape Cod.

Tree Swallows were concentrated on Plum Island later than usual, probably due to the warm weather, and in extraordinary numbers. Last year the maximum count there was 600+ individuals.

Near month's end Gray Catbirds and American Robins were conspicuously migrating in large numbers. There was in addition a good flight, especially offshore, of Red-breasted Nuthatches, with sixty-three banded on Nantucket. At Marblehead Neck at least fourteen Winter Wrens were noted, and fifteen Veeries were also found. Nineteen Gray-cheeked and twenty-six Swainson's thrushes were banded at Nantucket during the month. A Loggerhead Shrike at Plum Island was the only one reported during the month.

On Nantucket, forty Red-eyed, seven Philadelphia, two Warbling, one Yellow-throated, three Solitary, and one White-eyed vireo were banded during the month. Other Philadelphia Vireo reports came from six additional locations with fifteen individuals noted on Martha's Vineyard. R.H.S.

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
Common Raven:			
thr	Mt.Wachusett	1-2	P.Roberts#+v.o.
Red-breasted Nuthatch:			
1-30,15-30	Nantucket(2 locations)	55 b, 8 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
1-21,11	Annisquam,MV	18, 15	H.Wiggin,R.Sargent
24	South Shore,Chatham	12, 12	SSBC,BBC
Brown Creeper:			
14-30,28	Nantucket (2 locations)	15 b, 5 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
Carolina Wren:			
10	Braintree	1	R.Campbell
House Wren:			
13,18	Braintree,Newton	3, 3	R.Campbell,O.Komar
23-24,25	Nantucket,Newton	4 b, 3	E.Andrews,O.Komar
Winter Wren:			
18-28	MNWS	14+	J.Smith+v.o.
24,28;24	Nantucket;Hingham	2 b; 1	E.Andrews;SSBC
25,30	PI	1, 2	J.Grugan,W.Drummond
Marsh Wren:			
24	Hingham,Marshfield	1, 3	SSBC
Ruby-crowned Kinglet:			
8,29	Framingham,Annisquam	2, 10	R.Forster,H.Wiggin
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:			
17,24	Chatham,N.Scituate	1, 1	H.Wiggin#,W.Petersen
Veery:			
2-23,9	Nantucket,MNWS	6 b, 15+	E.Andrews,R.Heil
11,24	MV,Middleboro	8, 5	R.Sargent#,W.Petersen
Gray-cheeked Thrush:			
9-28,27	Nantucket(2 locations)	17 b, 2 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
9,10	MNWS,Braintree	1, 1	C.Blasczak,R.Campbell
10,24	E.Orleans,Quincy	1, 1	R.Moore#,SSBC
Swainson's Thrush:			
9-30,13-25	Nantucket (2 locations)	20 b, 6 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
24	Brookline,PI,South Shore	2, 2, 25	R.Stymeist,BBC,SSBC
Hermit Thrush:			
11	MV	1	R.Sargent
Wood Thrush:			
11,27	MV,Whitman	1, 1	R.Sargent,W.Petersen
American Robin:			
17	Belmont	81 migrants	L.Taylor
Gray Catbird:			
thr	Nantucket (2 locations)	250 b, 12 b	E.Fisk,E.Andrews
11,17	MV,PI	75, 80+	R.Sargent,P.Roberts
18	Eastham	37	D.Clapp
Water Pipit:			
10	Duxbury,PI	6, 2	R.Walton,BBC
29	Lexington	9	J.Andrews
Cedar Waxwing:			
8-10,11	Annisquam,MV	49, 200	H.Wiggin,R.Sargent

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
Cedar Waxwing (continued):			
24	Plymouth,Marshfield	69, 52	SSBC(Fall Roundup)
24	Scituate,Hingham	42, 19	SSBC(Fall Roundup)
Loggerhead Shrike:			
24	PI	1	F.Bouchard
Common Nighthawk:			
1,2,6	Brookline	236, 69, 4	R.Stymeist#
1,2,5	Newton	226, 40, 90	O.Komar#
10,12	Yarmouthport,Nantucket	3, 17	J.Aylward,R.Stymeist#
18	Harwich	1	B.Nikula,D.Reynolds
19,20	Cambridge,Boston	3-4, 3	F.Bouchard,R.Forster
Chimney Swift:			
1,10	Lincoln,PI	100, 1	J.Baird,W.Drummond
24,30	Lakeville,Mt.Wachusett	1, 6	W.Petersen,C.Floyd#
Ruby-throated Hummingbird:			
5	E.Middleboro,Sudbury	1, 4	K.Anderson,G.Abrahamson
8,10,11	Lincoln	1, 1, 1	R.Forster
16,25	Belmont,Newton	1, 1	O.Komar
Red-headed Woodpecker:			
11,28	MV,S.Peabody	3, 1 imm	R.Sargent#,R.Heil
Red-bellied Woodpecker:			
11,28	MV,Newton	7, 1 imm	R.Sargent#,O.Komar
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:			
24	Salem,Duxbury	1, 2	C.Blasczak,SSBC
30	Newton,Squantum	2, 1	O.Komar,R.Abrams
Northern Flicker:			
11,24	MV,PI	60, 28	R.Sargent#,BBC
Olive-sided Flycatcher:			
9	Annisquam,MNWS	1, 1	H.Wiggin,C.Blasczak
Eastern Wood-Pewee:			
9;18,24	Annisquam;PI,outer Cape	6; 1, 1	H.Wiggin;BBC
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:			
8;23,25	Nantucket	1 b; 1 b, 1 b	E.Andrews;E.Fisk
Acadian Flycatcher:			
12	Nantucket	1 b	E.Andrews#
"Traill's" Flycatcher:			
4-16	Nantucket	6 b	E.Andrews
Least Flycatcher:			
2-13	Nantucket	8 b	E.Andrews
Eastern Phoebe:			
22,24	Newton,Middlesex Falls	3, 10	O.Komar,P.Roberts
Great-crested Flycatcher:			
23,24,25	Nantucket,Chatham,Hamilton	1 b, 2, 1	E.Fisk,BBC,J+N.Berry
Western Kingbird:			
18,27	Truro,Eastham	1, 1	R.Stymeist#,R.Forster#
Eastern Kingbird:			
5	Ipswich,Scituate	15+, 15	J.Berry#,H.Mallers
10	PI,Nantucket	6, 16	BBC,R.Stymeist#
18,27	PI,Eastham	2, 2	W.Petersen,R.Forster
Purple Martin:			
2,11,18	Newton,MV,PI	2, 1, 2	O.Komar#,R.Sargent#,G.d'Entremont
Tree Swallow:			
17,26	PI	25,000+, 2500±	G.Gove#+v.o.
16,18	S.Middleboro,Middleboro	2000+, 100+	S.MacDonald,D.Briggs#
Rough-winged Swallow:			
18	W.Harwich	6	B.Nikula,D.Reynolds
Cliff Swallow:			
3	PI	1	BBC(R+D.Hale)
Barn Swallow:			
26	PI	10-30	G.Gove
White-eyed Vireo:			
10+17,11	Scituate,MV	1 + 1, 3	W.Petersen,R.Sargent#
24	Nantucket	1 b	E.Fisk
Solitary Vireo:			
17,23-25	Belmont,Nantucket	1, 3 b	L.Taylor,E.Fisk
24	Newton,Brookline	3, 2	R.Stymeist#
30	Sudbury	3	R.Walton
Yellow-throated Vireo:			
11,15	MV,Nantucket	2, 1 b	R.Sargent#,E.Andrews
18,24	Chatham,Plymouth	1, 1	B.Nikula,SSBC

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
Warbling Vireo:			
18,25	PI,Nantucket	1, 2 b	G.d'Entremont,E.Fisk
Philadelphia Vireo:			
1, 3	Chatham,PI	1, 1	R.Forster,BBC(Hales)
5,10-25	Ipswich,Nantucket	1, 7 b	BBC(Berry),E.Andrews
11	PI,MV	2, 15	B+W.Drummond,R.Sargent#
15,16	Bridgewater,Woburn	1, 1	K.Holmes,N.King
Red-eyed Vireo:			
9-25,15-25	Nantucket(2 locations)	26 b, 14 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
9,11	MNWS,MV	6, 30	C.Blasczak,R.Sargent#
24,25	Outer Cape,Newton	4, 1	J.Barton,O.Komar

WARBLERS

There was a good fall flight of warblers this September at Mothball Pines, Nantucket at Edith Andrews' banding station. A total of twenty-nine species was netted during the month, including a Golden-winged, nearly three hundred Cape May, a Worm-eating, five Connecticut, five Mourning, and twelve Yellow-breasted Chats. The highlight was a hatching year male MacGillivray's Warbler netted and measured on September 4, 1983. Identification and separation of the species of Oporonis warblers is difficult, and very careful measurements by an experienced bander are required to safely identify this species. Full details are on file of all the critical measurements.

In addition to the Nantucket reports, Golden-winged Warblers totaled eight individuals, double the four that were reported in September 1982. A Prothonotary Warbler was found at midmonth in the MIddlesex Fells. Seven Connecticut Warblers were noted at as many localities, and seven Mourning Warblers were counted in addition to the five banded on Nantucket. Ten Yellow-breasted Chats were noted from eight locations, three more than last year excluding the Nantucket reports. R.H.S.

Blue-winged Warbler:			
5,13	PI,Braintree	1, 1	BBC,R.Campbell
20,24	MNWS,Plymouth	1, 1	J.Smith,SSBC
Golden-winged Warbler:			
5,9,13	MNWS	1, 1, 1	J.Smith,R.Heil#,J.Smith
8,12	Nantucket,Lincoln	1 b, 1	E.Andrews,D.Holt#
11,26	MV,Eastham	2, 1 f	R.Sargent#,P.Vickery
Tennessee Warbler:			
8-23	Nantucket	7 b	E.Andrews
8;10	Framingham;Lexington,PI	3; 1, 1	R.Forster;J.Carter,BBC
11	PI,Ipswich,MV	3, 2, 3	B+W.Drummond,J.Berry,R.Sargent
24,25	W.Roxbury,Newton	3, 1	R.Stymeist#,O.Komar
Orange-crowned Warbler:			
24	PI	1	D.Stemple#
Nashville Warbler:			
5,8-27	Nantucket	1, 6 b	J.Grugan,E.Andrews
11	Ipswich,MV,PI	1, 1, 3	J.Berry,R.Sargent,B+W.Drummond
22;28,30	Newton,PI	1; 2, 1	O.Komar;G.Gove,W.Drummond
Northern Parula:			
10	PI,Lexington,Ipswich	1, 2, 5	BBC,J.Carter,J.Berry
13-30	Nantucket	11 b	E.Andrews
Yellow Warbler:			
2-16,11	Nantucket,MV	8 b, 6	E.Andrews,R.Sargent
24,27	PI,Newton	3, 1	BBC, O.Komar
Chestnut-sided Warbler:			
24,30	N.Scituate,PI	1, 1	W.Petersen,W.Drummond
Magnolia Warbler:			
8,8-30	Framingham,Nantucket	2, 19 b	R.Forster,E.Andrews
18,25	Eastham,Newton	1, 1	R.Stymeist,O.Komar
Cape May Warbler:			
2-30,23-30	Nantucket (2 locations)	281 b, 19 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
5,9;11	Annisquam;MV	3, 19; 25	H.Wiggin;R.Sargent#
24,28	PI,Brookline	4, 3	J.Grugan,H.Wiggin
Black-throated Blue Warbler:			
8-30	Nantucket	13 b	E.Andrews
10	Lexington,Braintree	6, 1	J.Carter,R.Campbell
24,30	Brookline,PI	5, 2	R.Stymeist,W.Drummond
Yellow-rumped Warbler:			
9-30,14-30	Nantucket (2 locations)	51 b, 113 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
Black-throated Green Warbler:			
9,11	Annisquam,PI	1, 2	H.Wiggin,B+W.Drummond
Blackburnian Warbler:			
1, 8	Chatham,Framingham	2, 2	R.Forster
14,23	Nantucket	1 b, 2 b	E.Andrews
Pine Warbler:			
15-29,24	Nantucket (2 locations)	4 b, 1 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
Prairie Warbler:			
4-16,23	Nantucket (2 locations)	6 b, 2 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
24,25	Chatham,Newton	1, 1	J.Barton#,O.Komar
Palm Warbler:			
8,8-24	Annisquam,Nantucket	2, 10 b	H.Wiggin,E.Andrews
Bay-breasted Warbler:			
3-30	Nantucket	56 b	E.Andrews
11	PI,MV,Ipswich	3, 8, 5	B+W.Drummond,R.Sargent#,J.Berry
17,23	Eastham,E.Middleboro	1, 1	H.Wiggin#,K.Anderson
Blackpoll Warbler:			
10-30,23-30	Nantucket (2 locations)	180 b, 12 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
10,11,24	Braintree,MV.Brookline	5, 10, 10	R.Campbell,R.Sargent,R.Stymeist#
Black-and-white Warbler:			
6-28	Nantucket	30 b	E.Andrews
24	Salisbury,Brookline	1, 5	J.Grugan,R.Stymeist#
American Redstart:			
2-30,16-25	Nantucket (2 locations)	96 b, 9 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
11	MV,Ipswich	30, 4	R.Sargent#,J.Berry
13,24	MNWS,Outer Cape	7, 6	C.Blasczak,J.Barton#
Prothonotary Warbler:			
15	Middlesex Fells	1	P.Roberts
Worm-eating Warbler:			
3,12,20	Nantucket,Scituate,WBWS	1 b, 1, 1	E.Andrews,G.d'Entremont,D.Reynolds
Ovenbird:			
2-30,23-24	Nantucket (2 locations)	16 b, 4 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
10-24	Scituate,Brookline	3, 1	W.Petersen,R.Stymeist#
Northern Waterthrush:			
1-27,23-28	Nantucket (2 locations)	34 b, 10 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
11,12	MV,WBWS	6, 15	R.Sargent,D.Reynolds
21,24	Salem,Brookline	1, 1	C.Blasczak,R.Stymeist#
Connecticut Warbler:			
1,8	S.Peabody,Annisquam	1, 1	R.Heil,H.Wiggin
10	Scituate,Lexington	1, 1	W.Petersen,J.Carter
12-23,13	Nantucket,Braintree	5 b, 1	E.Andrews,R.Campbell
19	Cambridge,Newton	1, 1	L.Robinson,O.Komar
Mourning Warbler:			
3-23,5	Nantucket	5 b, 1	E.Andrews,J.Grugan#
15,16	MNWS,Salisbury	2, 2	J.Smith,R.Heil
24	Ipswich,Plymouth	1, 1	J.Berry,SSBC
MacGillivray's Warbler (Full details on file.):			
4	Nantucket	1 b (ph)	E.Andrews#
Common Yellowthroat:			
1-30,15-24	Nantucket (2 locations)	107 b, 6 b	E.Andrews,E.Fisk
Hooded Warbler:			
24-26,28	WBWS,Newton	1 m, 1	v.o. fide D.Reynolds,O.Komar
Wilson's Warbler:			
24	PI;Scituate,Plymouth	1; 1, 1	J.Blaisdell;SSBC
Canada Warbler:			
7,8;10	Nantucket;Manchester	2 b; 1	E.Andrews,BBC
Yellow-breasted Chat:			
2,2-28	MNWS,Nantucket	1, 12 b	J.Smith,E.Andrews
6;11	Manomet;Halifax,MV	2 b; 1, 1	MBO,W.Petersen,R.Sargent
24	W.Roxbury,Chatham	1, 2	R.Stymeist,BBC(Barton)
24,26	Plymouth,Woburn	1, 1	SSBC,C.Gove

TANAGERS THROUGH EVENING GROSBEAKS

Summer Tanagers were noted from Chatham and Marshfield, but only two Blue Grosbeaks were reported, seven less than last September. Dickcissels on the other hand were well represented with eleven identified in ten locations. Clay-colored Sparrows were found in three locations, and one Lark Sparrow was found among the Vespers at Marconi station in South Wellfleet. Lincoln Sparrows were moving during the third week of

September when eleven were counted in Framingham and another five in Sudbury on September 24. An adult Harris' Sparrow was found at Corn Hill, Truro at month's end, and a Henslow's Sparrow was photographed in Wayland on September 27. R.H.S.

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
Summer Tanager:			
18,19	Chatham,Marshfield	1, 1	B.Nikula#,SSBC
Scarlet Tanager:			
11,18	MV,PI	10, 2	R.Sargent#,G.d'Entremont
Rose-breasted Grosbeak:			
11,29	MV,Annisquam	2, 2	R.Sargent#,H.Wiggin
Blue Grosbeak:			
9-10,27	Lincoln,Truro	1, 1	R.Veit#,R.Forster#
Indigo Bunting:			
18	Bridgewater,Newton	1, 7	K.Holmes,O.Komar
24,27	Bridgewater,Truro	18, 3	W.Petersen,R.Forster
30	Newton	3	O.Komar
Dickcissel:			
7,11,17	P'town,MV,Harwich	1, 1, 1	W.Cornwell,R.Sargent,B.Nikula
16,25	Salisbury,Truro	1, 1	R.Heil,G.d'Entremont#
23+24,24	Belmont,Newton	1, 2	L.Taylor,O.Komar
24	W.Bridgewater;Hingham,Holbrook	1; 1, 1	W.Petersen;SSBC
Chipping Sparrow:			
9,29	Annisquam	6, 15	H.Wiggin
28	Newton,PI	10, 80	O.Komar,G.Gove
Clay-colored Sparrow:			
12,24	Lincoln,PI	1, 1	J.Baird,D.Stemple#
29	Annisquam	1	H.Wiggin
Field Sparrow:			
11,24	MV,Newton	1, 2	R.Sargent#,O.Komar#
Vesper Sparrow:			
18,25	S.Wellfleet	5, 8	J.Heywood#,R.Stymeist#
10,17	Manchester,PI	1, 1	BBC
Lark Sparrow:			
17	S.Wellfleet	1 imm	J.Barton
Savannah Sparrow:			
thr	E.Boston	max 60 (9/24)	S.Zendeh#
18-30	Newton	max 36 (9/29)	O.Komar
24	Halifax,PI	75, 48	W.Petersen,BBC
Grasshopper Sparrow:			
8,11;16	MV;Naushon I.	1, 5; 1	R.Sargent#;B.Sorrie
Henslow's Sparrow:			
27	Wayland	1 ad (ph)	J.Hines+R.Walton
Sharp-tailed Sparrow:			
4,18,27	Monomoy,Newbypt,Eastham	4, 1, 9	BBC,G.d'Entremont,R.Forster
Seaside Sparrow:			
4,18,27	Monomoy,Newbypt,Eastham	1, 5, 2	BBC,W.Petersen,R.Forster#
Song Sparrow:			
11,26	MV,Newton	50, 50	R.Sargent#,O.Komar
Lincoln's Sparrow:			
24	W.Roxbury,Framingham,Sudbury	2, 11, 5	R.Stymeist#,K.Hamilton,R.Walton
24,28	Belmont,Newton	3, 4	L.Taylor#,O.Komar
13-30	15 individuals from 10 locations		
Swamp Sparrow:			
11,25	Ipswich	5, 5	J.Berry
30	Newton	9	O.Komar
White-throated Sparrow:			
18-28	PI	max 50 (9/28)	v.o.
White-crowned Sparrow:			
9,25	Annisquam,Ipswich	1 imm, 1 imm	H.Wiggin,J.Berry
17,24;28	PI	2, 1 imm; 1 ad + 2 imm	BBC;G.Gove
Harris' Sparrow:			
28-29	Truro	1 ad	R.Comeau,S.Clifton#
Dark-eyed Junco:			
10,29	Annisquam	3, 150	H.Wiggin
28	PI	150	G.Gove
Snow Bunting:			
24	PI	6	J.Grugan

SPECIES/SEPTEMBER	LOCATION	NUMBER	OBSERVERS
Bobolink:			
2,11	Newton, MV	415, 200	O.Komar,R.Sargent#
24	Newton	10	O.Komar
Eastern Meadowlark:			
11,25	MV,Ipswich	2, 5	R.Sargent#,J.Berry
Yellow-headed Blackbird:			
3,7	Monomoy,P'town	1, 1	W.Bailey#,W.Cornwell
18,19	Naushon I.,PI	1 f, 1	B.Sorrie,D.Zabowski
Rusty Blackbird:			
27,29	Truro,Newton	1, 6	R.Forster#,O.Komar
Common Grackle:			
18	Eastham	1000+ (roost)	R.Stymeist#
Brown-headed Cowbird:			
28	Lexington	175	L.Taylor
Northern Oriole:			
10,18	PI	1, 4	BBC
Purple Finch:			
5,9	PI,Annisquam	20, 27	BBC,H.Wiggin
11,24	MV,Truro	30, 12	R.Sargent#,BBC
American Goldfinch:			
11	MV	40	R.Sargent#
Evening Grosbeak			
10	Manchester	3	BBC

CORRIGENDA: July 1983 FIELD RECORDS

King Eider: 2	Boston Harbor	8 imm.	J.Grugan
	should read		
Common Eider: 2	Boston Harbor	8	J.Grugan
Curlew Sandpiper:			
1,2	P.I.	1	R.Emery#, A.Williams
	should read		
1,2	P.I.	1	A.Williams, R.Emery#
Orchard Oriole:			
30	W.Newbury	1 f.	A.Williams
	should be deleted.		

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ad.	adult
alt.	alternate (plumage)
b.	banded
br.	breeding
dk.	dark (phase)
f.	female
fl.	fledge
imm.	immature
ind.	individuals
loc.	locations
lt.	light (phase)
m.	male
max.	maximum
migr.	migrating
ph.	photographed
pl.	plumage
pr.	pair
thr.	throughout
v.o.	various observers
W	winter (2W = second winter)
w/	with
yg.	young
#	additional observers
A.A.	Arnold Arboretum
A.P.	Andrews Point, Rockport
Buzz.	Buzzards (Bay)
C.Cod	Cape Cod
E.P.	Eastern Point, Gloucester
F.E.	First Encounter Beach, Eastham
F.H.	Fort Hill, Eastham
F.M.	Fowl Meadow, Milton
gr.	greater as in Gr.Boston area
I.	Island
M.V.	Martha's Vineyard
Mt.A.	Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge
Nant.	Nantucket
Newbypt	Newburyport
ONWR	Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge
P.I.	Plum Island
P'town	Provincetown
R.P.	Race Point, Provincetown
S.N.	Sandy Neck, Barnstable
Stellw.	Stellwagen (Bank)
ABC	Allen Bird Club
BBC	Brookline Bird Club
BOEM	Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts
CBC	Christmas Bird Count
DFWS	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary
FBC	Forbush Bird Club
GBBBC	Greater Boston Breeding Bird Census
GMNWR	Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge
IRWS	Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary
MAS	Massachusetts Audubon Society
MBO	Manomet Bird Observatory
MNWS	Marblehead Neck Wildlife Sanctuary
NBBC	Newburyport Breeding Bird Census
SSBC	South Shore Bird Club
TASL	Take a Second Look (BOEM project)
WBWS	Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary
WMWS	Wachusett Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary

HEAD-BOBBING BEHAVIOR IN MALE FLICKERS

by Mary Dickinson Bird and James E. Bird, Boston

Agonistic displays among Northern Flickers (Colaptes auratus) are known to occur frequently during territory acquisition and courtship and may involve either or both sexes (Bent 1939; Stokes 1979). Some recrudescence of this behavior has been observed at other periods as well, including the final week of incubation (Lawrence 1967) and the early stages of migration (Bent 1939; Stokes 1979).

An incident of pre-migratory aggression between two adult male flickers was observed on Sunday, 16 October 1983, shortly after one o'clock in the afternoon. The two flickers, whose loud calls had been heard for some minutes before the birds appeared, flew from the west and alighted in a twelve-foot chokeberry tree located on a levee near Musquashicut Pond, North Scituate, Massachusetts. (This levee runs WSW perpendicular to the pond, extending from Hatherly Road into a marsh known historically as the "Guzzle." It is heavily overgrown with bayberry and poison ivy, a food source for flickers and other birds in the area.) Although the tree was still in foliage, the birds, perched in dead branches on the northeast face of the tree, were clearly visible to observers positioned approximately thirty feet to the south.

The flickers faced each other, separated by no more than twelve inches, with one bird stationed 45 degrees higher than the other. Almost immediately upon assuming these positions, the two birds commenced a simultaneous head-bobbing display. As the bird in superior position leaned forward pointing its bill, the individual in inferior position withdrew. The action was thereupon reversed, with the lower bird extending forward and the higher one withdrawing. This paired sequence of head-bobs was repeated in rapid succession four to six times within a few seconds. There followed a quiescent period of approximately twenty seconds in duration, after which the entire process was repeated several times. No tail or wing movements accompanied the display. The high number of head-bobs performed by both birds during each sequence exceeds that reported by Short (1971), who states that head-bobs rarely occur more than twice within a sequence.

During one of the first quiescent phases, the flicker in inferior position called softly, a short throaty note often associated with intensely threatening displays and believed to serve an appeasement function (Short, 1971). The same individual also frequently sat with its bill directed away from the other bird during the motionless periods.

In the final quiescent phase, the bird in superior position pecked once at a dead branch. A short head-bobbing sequence ensued, after which the same bird defecated. Immediately, both birds plummeted down into the lowest foliage of the

tree. Although the flickers were no longer visible, there were continuous fluttering noises for approximately fifteen seconds. One bird then flew rapidly to the southeast, disappearing into woodland approximately three hundred yards distant. The other bird flew up to the top of the tree's dead branches, called loudly four or five times, then flew west and disappeared from view, though its call continued to be heard for some seconds afterward.

The entire interaction occurred over a period of approximately seven minutes.

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At a Glance . . .

October 1983

Assuming we can all learn from mistakes (less painfully if someone else makes the error), I shall recount the story behind the October photo. I photographed these birds in Florida in November, for it was the first time I had seen White-rumped Sandpipers on the Gulf Coast. Showing the slides to my mentors at MAS, I described the field marks that I remembered: the elongated body, flecks along the flanks, a white eyebrow, faint wing stripe, and a whitish rump seen in flight; so I let myself in for the drill. HOW BIG? A large hand-spread, 8-9 inches. BILL? Black and sturdy. DID THE TIP DROOP? How should I know? The birds were feeding and I was filming. LEG COLOR? Well, darkish; I often have a problem with leg color. As I then examined my slides closely, I realized that the birds, bodies and necks stretched out feeding, looked elongated but were really rather dumpy and probably thick-necked. And, final disgrace, the wing-tips did not really extend beyond the tail. I then recalled how readily I had identified the birds, immediately rushing for my camera to record them. Taking notes or making a field sketch rather than letting the camera do the observing would have forced me to examine them more carefully. People walking the beach had asked what I was "shooting," and I had confidently replied: "White-rumped Sandpipers."

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS? NO! THESE ARE KNOT!

So, why are they knot? To explain this, I sought the help of a master shorebirder, Wayne Petersen. The pictured birds are obviously not plovers. Nor are they peep: the legs are too stout, the necks thick, and the bodies dumpy. The bills are strong and straight as far as can be seen in the picture. We cannot judge the full length of the bill or the nature of the tip. Might these birds be Dunlin or dowitchers? The forward stretch of the neck and the angle of the bill are unlike the vertical alignment of the bill in feeding Dunlin and dows, and the barring on the tail (just visible in the middle bird) eliminates Dunlin from consideration.

What can we discern from this unsatisfactory photo? An undistinguished shorebird with short, heavy legs, a dumpy body and thick neck. The body configuration and short strong legs suggest a medium-sized bird, not a peep. The bill is black and heavy and seems to taper very little. The legs are not black (compare them with the bill). There is a prominent white supercilium and a scaled appearance to the back feathers, seen in the bird on the left. One behavioral clue is apparent: the birds are feeding close together, and the student of ethology might deduce something from that. The rule of thumb of an "old hand" will serve to sum up this identification problem. To wit: if you see a shorebird so nondescript that you can only decide what it is not, chances are, it's a knot!

D. R. Arvidson

PRIZE TO BE AWARDED: National Geographic Society Field Guide

AND THE WINNER IS . . . . .

At a Glance . . .

Photo by L. H. Walkinshaw

Courtesy of Massachusetts Audubon Society

Can you identify this bird? Identification will be discussed in next issue's *At a Glance*. *Bird Observer* will award a PRIZE to the reader who submits the most correct answers in 1983. Please send your entry on a postcard to Bird Observer, 462 Trapelo Road, Belmont, MA 02178 before the answer is published in the next issue.

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