

Bird Observer

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HOT BIRDS



Linda Pivacek found this **Sandhill Crane** (left) in Nahant on April 23, and Robb Kipp took this great photograph of the bird vocalizing.



John Quigley found this adult **California Gull** (right) on Nahant Beach on April 29. Tom Murray took this classic portrait on May 2 on nearby Lynn Beach.



One **White-faced Ibis** or two? Check out the images by Charlie Lipson (left) taken on the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in late April and by Phil Brown (right) taken in Rowley in May.



Bob Stymeist found this **White-winged Dove** (left) in Mount Auburn Cemetery on April 22, and Marj Rines captured this image on the same day.

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CASPIAN TERN FOUND AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY BROOKE STEVENS ON
MAY 27 NOT FAR FROM WATERTOWN SQUARE



Bird Observer

A bimonthly journal — to enhance understanding, observation, and enjoyment of birds
VOL. 33, NO. 3 JUNE 2005

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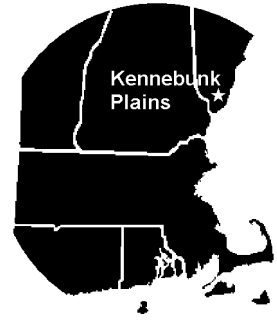
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Birding the Kennebunk Plains Wildlife Management Area

Scott Cronenweth

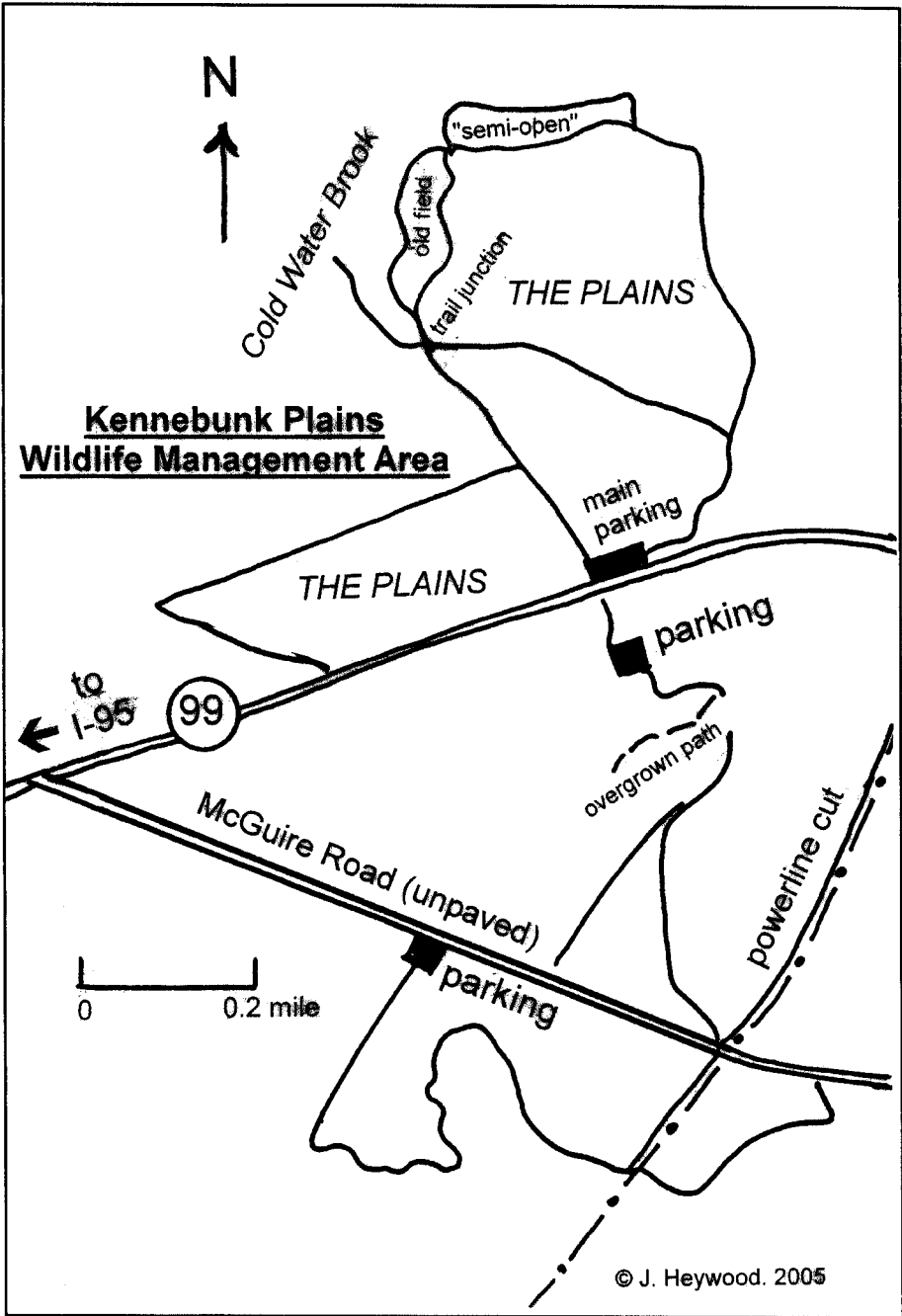


One late spring morning, on the still and silent edge of sunrise, you find yourself in a landscape apart from time. An island of grass, flat and nearly treeless, it floats like a sole survivor in a sea of houses, roads, and woodlots. This place does not rush out to greet you with extravagant vistas or interpretive signage. It holds back, hunkers down. Cloaked in hushed purples and browns, the terrain itself seems to drift like mist in the soft dawn light. You feel conspicuous, like you ought to crouch. You begin walking; expectant, attuned to subtleties. Insects buzz faintly. Distant crows *caw*. Was that a chip note? Is that a bird or a milkweed pod? Why is everything around here so...low-profile? Then all at once the calls of Upland Sandpipers roll out over the land, mournful yet exultant — *wii-ee-LEE-ooooooooo!* Some ancient magic has been worked, and the scene is transformed. Now song, color, and movement well up all around you. Sparrows perch on every snag. Bobolinks babble overhead. Meadowlarks chortle almost at your feet. Suddenly you can't decide where to look next. Welcome to the Kennebunk Plains.

There is literally no place left like the Kennebunk Plains. With the retreat of the most recent glacial ice some 12-14,000 years ago, meltwater streams formed an outwash plain here, depositing the sand and gravel that give the area its distinctive "barrens" character. The soil holds water poorly, creating a landscape adapted to recurrent fire and resistant to drought. The 600+ acres of sand plain grassland at this 1200-acre site represent the largest remaining fragment of this exceedingly rare and threatened habitat in all of New England. Many of the species found here have their backs against the wall, making the Kennebunk Plains ecosystem one of Maine's top conservation priorities.

The management focus of the area is to sustain maximum habitat for three state-endangered species: the Grasshopper Sparrow, the northern black racer, and the northern blazing-star. Many other rare species, like the Upland Sandpiper and the diminutive upright bindweed, also benefit. Along with the adjacent Wells Barrens, the Kennebunk Plains complex supports populations of fourteen rare animals and plants. Mammals found here include fisher, mink, snowshoe hare, New England cottontail, coyote, red fox, raccoon, and wandering moose and black bear. Notable flowering plants include blue boadflax, flowering dogbane, frostweed, and wood lily. Among the principal grasses are little bluestem, poverty grass, and woodland sedge.

Adjoining the open grassland that forms the core of the Kennebunk Plains are a variety of other natural communities including heath barrens; pitch pine/scrub oak woodlands around the margin of the grassland; and outwash seepage hardwood forest with red maple, poplar, gray birch, white birch, and white oak on the steep, sandy slopes of the alluvial swamp where groundwater lies close to the surface. The area



also includes the drainage of Cold Water Brook, a tributary of the Mousam River that still harbors native brook trout. The terrain here is flat to very gently rolling, except where moving water has carved deeply into the soft substrate.

The Plains are not exactly pristine but have been kept at an early successional stage due to natural wildfires and later logging, blueberry farming (lowbush blueberries are still abundant here), and other forms of agriculture. More recently, The Nature Conservancy has maintained the Plains by controlled burns and mowing efforts, without which the area would eventually succeed to pitch pine and early successional hardwoods.

Driving Directions

From the south or north, take Interstate 95 to Maine Exit 25 (formerly Exit 3), for Kennebunk and Kennebunkport. At the end of your exit ramp, follow the signs for Route 99 West and Sanford. You'll find yourself on Alfred Road. Continue to follow the signs for Route 99. You'll turn left at the first stop sign onto Mill Street. After 0.6 mile, turn right onto Route 99, also called Webber Hill Road, heading toward Sanford. Stay on Route 99 for approximately 1.8 miles, at which point the terrain opens up and you'll see grassland on both sides of the road. The parking area on Route 99 is easy to spot on your right.

To explore the southern part of the area, continue on Route 99 for about 0.9 mile, and turn sharply left onto McGuire Road, which is mostly unpaved but well-maintained. Look for a small dirt pull-off about 0.5 mile down the road on your right. From there it's about 0.5 mile to the power line cut that delimits the eastern side of the grassland.

When and How to Bird Here

The Kennebunk Plains is one of the premier birding spots in Maine during the nesting season (late May to mid-July). Grasshopper Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and Upland Sandpiper are the reliable specialties most of us seek. But the Plains can be an interesting and worthwhile destination in any season. In late August and early September the aptly named and globally endangered northern blazing-star is in bloom, blanketing much of the area in a haze of fiery magenta. Even if birds are few, you never know what you'll find here, especially if you're prepared to walk a bit. This write-up presents bird-finding tips for all seasons, with an emphasis on the breeding birds. General information about nonavian species, conservation initiatives, access restrictions, and so forth follows at the end.

The most productive way to bird the area — and the only way during the breeding season, when vehicles are entirely prohibited — is to walk the dirt roads. A tangle of roads and footpaths crisscross the Plains; the accompanying map shows the key ones for birders. You can stroll these trails at will with little fear of getting lost. I'll suggest a couple of favored routes. Bushwhacking, needless to say, is out of the question in a habitat that shelters so many endangered plants and ground-nesting birds.

A gentle reminder: The Kennebunk Plains is a large, exposed area that offers no shelter from sun, wind, and precipitation. Mosquitoes, black flies, and ticks, including those that carry Lyme disease, abound here during the warmer months. Dress and plan accordingly as regards to precautions like water and sunscreen, and wear footgear that is conducive to walking over mud, grit, and rocks.

Getting Oriented

Route 99 bisects the Kennebunk Plains. There are two primary parking areas: a sizable square of dirt/mud bounded by a wooden fence on the north side of Route 99, and a smaller dirt pullout on the south side of McGuire Road. There are lots of spots where you can safely pull off along McGuire Road, but don't even contemplate it on Route 99.

One walking route that I often take on spring and summer visits starts at the parking area on Route 99. On the dirt road on the left (west) side of the parking area, walk north to the corner of the pine/oak woodland. From here you can follow a side trail down to Cold Water Brook, and then head east and back to the parking area with varying degrees of directness. This is the "North Loop" described below. Or you can go north and then straight west through the grassland and return to the parking area via Route 99.

An alternative is to park at the McGuire Road turnoff and walk a loop trail on the south side of the road. You can retrace your steps or go straight back to the parking area along the road itself, scanning both sides. This is pure Grasshopper Sparrow habitat all the way.

Another popular walk for birders includes the trail through the scrub under the power lines that run north-south across McGuire Road about half a mile east of the parking area. This area, particularly the path that swings east from the power line cut just south of McGuire Road, is a "traditional" spot for breeding Blue-Winged Warbler, an uncommon nester nearing the northern limit of its range here.

Between Route 99 and McGuire Road there is a large swath of grassland bisected by a brook drainage with its attendant red maples and pitch pines. South of the drainage there are a couple of trails worth wandering, especially during the breeding season or if you wish to bird along the brook itself. North of the drainage and south of Route 99, trails are very few and increasingly overgrown.

Finding Grasshopper Sparrows

Many birders come to Kennebunk Plains in search of Grasshopper Sparrows. The Grasshopper Sparrow is a state-endangered species in Maine, where it is at the northeastern edge of its range. It has nested in only four locations in the state over the past twenty years, none farther north than Brunswick. Kennebunk Plains annually supports about half the statewide breeding population. The birds generally arrive and begin vocalizing around the third week in May and continue singing through mid-July. A few pairs may attempt a second nesting, in which case singers might be heard into August.

I have been privileged to survey breeding populations of Grasshopper Sparrows here on a number of occasions with both the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We've done both point counts and walking transects, listening for singing males. Based on survey results, anecdotal information, and personal correspondence, it seems reasonable to conclude that the number of breeding pairs is generally between twenty and forty area-wide, in any given recent year. For example, the 2003 census conducted by The Nature Conservancy found thirty-nine singing males, while the 2004 census located twenty-nine.

So the birds are spread out pretty thinly, but there are a fair number around. It is far easier to find them if you can learn — and hear — their buzzy, often faint, songs. However, many people cannot perceive the high-pitched *zeeeeeee* component of the song, especially if the bird is facing away from the listener, or if there is any appreciable wind. In this case more persistence may be required. Scan first and foremost the low grassy stems and sticks favored as singing perches. Grasshopper Sparrows don't generally sing incessantly, but they may perch up for brief periods even when quiet.

Due to the need to burn its various management units in rotation, different areas of the Plains are at different successional stages at a given time, and therefore may host more or fewer sparrows year by year. Dry grassy areas interspersed with a few weeds for perches are ostensibly favored. However, the site fidelity of this species seems to be extraordinarily fine-tuned, so perhaps pairs retain suboptimal territories on that basis. Singing males probably stay in or very close to their territories. But the need to bring food to nestlings no doubt causes individual birds to move around. My point, as you've no doubt gathered, is that "the birds are where you find them." There are no sure-fire spots. Be resolute and watchful, and you should find a teed-up singing male or an individual carrying food somewhere in the grassland habitat. Some local birders have a bias toward the McGuire Road side of the area, but in my experience it's a toss-up. Go with your instincts, and don't give up too easily.

One Birding Option: The North Loop

One tramp of moderate length (roughly 2.5 miles) that I often take at the Kennebunk Plains starts and ends at the parking area on Route 99. The bulk of the route moves through or along the edge of a large swath of grassland. In between it takes in the Cold Water Brook drainage with its associated red maple swamp, a bit of old field with birches and sumac, and a fair bit of pitch pine/scrub oak woodland. Walking this route is an excellent way to enjoy a good cross section of birds in whatever season you find yourself here.

Begin by scanning from the parking area itself. Early on a June morning you can frequently find Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolink, Upland Sandpiper, and sometimes Grasshopper Sparrow before you even start walking. Uppies, in particular, seem to favor this general area, and often circle overhead while vocalizing. They fly around a lot, so look above and well ahead of you once in awhile. Keep in mind that they can appear a bit like American Kestrels

from a distance. Recent census data suggest an average of around eight to twelve singing Upland Sandpipers in a given year.

Once you've scanned your starting point, begin walking along the dirt road that proceeds north from the west/left corner of the parking area. Savannah, Song, and Vesper sparrows are usually abundant here in season. Vagrants like Lark Sparrow and Clay-colored Sparrow are not out of the question, especially in fall. The first nesting record for Clay-colored Sparrow in Maine was recently documented in nearby Arundel, and birds have been recorded in summer at the Kennebunk Plains (Brinker and Vickery 1997), so who knows when they might be shown to nest here?

In late fall and winter, keep a wide eye out for flocks of Snow Buntings interspersed with Horned Larks and the occasional Lapland Longspur. American Pipits also turn up here in spring and fall. Along the lines of "can you top this?" on October 27, 2000, Lysle Brinker had point-blank looks at a Northern Fulmar in this vicinity. There was storm activity well offshore at the time, but local conditions were clear and calm.

There are often a few Grasshopper Sparrow territories in these environs also. Scan the low snags on both sides of the road, and be alert for that thin *chup-chup-ZEEeeeeee!* song. If you haven't spent much time in New England grasslands, it can be maddening to separate one song from another — so many of them have common elements, like a buzz or a burble. Keep walking and listening, and the cacophony may begin to sort itself out. Another impetus to keep walking will be the swirling mayhem of Bobolinks, meadowlarks, and sparrows. Bank, Tree, and Barn swallows are also quite likely. If nearby areas have been recently burned, stay tuned also for the tinkling flight song and hover-flight of Horned Larks. A few (two to four) pairs are presumed to breed annually in the Kennebunk Plains, and burned-over spots are the best areas to find them. Nesting Horned Larks usually return in mid-April.

To walk the loop described here, follow the road back (north) 0.4 mile to the scrubby edge of the tree line. If you prefer, you can veer off to the left about halfway to the tree line and head straight west along that road for about 0.8 mile. Eventually you'll come to another road heading south, back to Route 99. If you're really flogging the Grasshopper Sparrow habitat, this option may appeal.

But for those who are sticking with me, let's continue north. At the end of the road is an eroded track heading steeply downhill through brush and red maples. This leads to Cold Water Brook and a sizable pool above a breached earthen dam. This general vicinity is great for birds like Rufous-sided Towhee, Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Kingbird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Baltimore Oriole, Brown Thrasher, Least and Great Crested flycatchers, and possibly Willow or even Alder flycatcher as well. Eastern Phoebe is likely, as are American Goldfinch, Song and Chipping sparrows, American Robin, Gray Catbird, and Common Yellowthroat. You can also luck into Yellow- and/or Black-billed cuckoos here. While far from a sure thing, cuckoos, especially Yellow-billed, seem to pop up fairly often at the Kennebunk Plains.

When you've finished birding the trail junction, take the track down the hill to the pool. This is a fine place for Belted Kingfisher, Great Blue Heron, and perhaps Green Heron in spring, summer, and fall. Canada Goose and puddle ducks other than Mallard are possible. Don't forget to check for beaver, muskrat, and the tracks of raccoon, fisher, mink, and even moose. Linda Cook found skeletal moose remains near here on a recent visit.

After enjoying the Cold Water Brook drainage, retrace your steps back up the hill and buttonhook left (east) at the top of the rise into some "old field" habitat bracketed by pitch pines to the north. This stretch of trail is a gem for breeding Field Sparrow, a tough bird to find in Maine. Other likely breeders hereabouts include Prairie Warbler, Yellow Warbler, American Redstart, and Nashville Warbler. Cedar Waxwings are often present.

Very shortly you'll notice a narrow trail heading northeast through the pitch pines. I heartily recommend this little detour, which leads through a semi-open area punctuated by gray birches. It's among my favorites for warblers and assorted passerines in both spring and fall. Palm, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Blackburnian, Wilson's, Magnolia, and Yellow-rumped warblers, Ovenbird, and Northern Waterthrush, both kinglets, and Blue-headed, Warbling, Philadelphia, and Red-eyed vireos are among the migrants I've enjoyed along here. Yellow-throated Vireo has also been spotted in this locale. Common Redpolls, being lovers of birch catkins, might show up in winter.

Continue moving east along this trail, and soon it curves to the south, back into the open and toward our starting point. To your right is grassland, to your left pine/oak woodland. This grassy zone may hold a few Grasshopper Sparrows and possibly a Field Sparrow or two. Wild Turkeys seem to like this area. Once or twice in recent years a Sandhill Crane has been seen here. Along the woody edge you might find Black-and-White Warbler or Black-throated Green Warbler. Listen for Wood Thrush and Hermit Thrush. Looking south across Route 99 you may see a Common Raven in flight, as I have on several occasions.

Keep going on the dirt road as it winds south, and eventually you'll see a road intersecting from your right. Now you're at a choice point. If you turn right (northwest) here, you'll cruise through more Grasshopper Sparrow habitat and end up back at the north end of the trail you first walked in on. Or continue straight south, and shortly you'll hit a trail that parallels Route 99; turn right (west) to return to the parking area. If dusk is falling as you return to your vehicle, you may wish to stick around and listen for Whip-poor-wills from late May through July.

If you've missed Grasshopper Sparrow so far, you might do well to get back in your car and head west on Route 99 for about 0.9 mile, and then turn sharply left on McGuire Road. After half a mile, park in the first dirt pull-off you come to. The trail that runs south and east from the pullout can be productive for Grasshopper Sparrows. Or, as previously suggested, you can try simply birding the road. There is appropriate habitat on both sides as far as the power line.

Raptors at Kennebunk Plains

Kennebunk Plains can be a fine place to encounter raptors. In the breeding season watch for Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, and possibly Cooper's Hawk. Red-tails and their nocturnal counterparts, Great Horned Owls, use this territory year-round. During spring and fall migration just about anything might show up here, from Sharp-Shinned Hawks along the piney edges to American Kestrels perch-hunting on the power lines to Merlins and Northern Harriers hunting the open country. Spotting ten or more raptors of several species on an October afternoon would not be exceptional. Bald Eagles and even Ospreys are seen occasionally, mostly in fall. Turkey Vultures are commonly sighted in season. A Short-eared Owl shows up from time to time. Stands of small pines that look promising for Northern Saw-whet Owl occur in several places, though I personally have never seen or heard the species here.

More Rare Plants and Animals

The Kennebunk Plains supports one of the highest concentrations of rare species in Maine. I've already mentioned three state-endangered species found here: the Grasshopper Sparrow, the black racer, and the northern blazing-star. A fourth is the toothed white-topped aster, for which the Plains is the only known location in the state.

The northern blazing-star is endangered not just in Maine but throughout its limited range. There are only four places on earth where more than 1000 stems of this lovely New England endemic are known to exist. Kennebunk Plains supports the largest single population by far. The more than one million stems found here represent perhaps 90 percent of the northern blazing-star's total population.

State-threatened species found at Kennebunk Plains include Upland Sandpiper and upright bindweed. State species of special concern observed here include the Vesper Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolink, ribbon snake, and wood turtle, as well as two moth species, the broad sallow and trembling sallow. No doubt other rare insects occur here, but sampling has been extremely limited. Plants with state special-concern status include small reed-grass, Wiegand's sedge, and pale green orchis.

In addition to rare plants and animals, the Kennebunk Plains also has archaeological significance. A preliminary survey made in 1990 by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission found a Native American campsite some 10,000 years old. Known as the Hedden Site, it has been partially excavated and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Conservation Initiatives

If not for a temporary drop in the housing market, the Kennebunk Plains would likely have been lost to development pressure in the 1980s. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) first proposed acquisition of the site to the Land for Maine's Future program in 1988. The land was acquired in 1990 as part of a joint initiative between TNC, the Land for Maine's Future Fund, the Maine Division of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW), the Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, Wells Water District, the Kennebunk

Conservation Commission, and local land trusts. Kennebunk Plains is now a Wildlife Management Area, jointly owned and managed by TNC and MDIFW.

Considerable land under private, nonconservation ownership remains in the Kennebunk Plains/Wells Barrens area, particularly to the southwest of the existing Wildlife Management Area. In 2001, a grant from the Land for Maine's Future program enabled a broad-based partnership to permanently protect an additional 673 acres, including nearly four miles of Mousam River shoreline, abutting conservation land near and in the Kennebunk Plains. This ecologically significant acreage is now owned by MDIFW and managed by TNC. Acquisition of this parcel expands the contiguous area under conservation to approximately 2600 acres.

But threats to the viability of this critically important ecosystem remain. For example, a likely site for a proposed gambling casino in Maine was within a stone's throw of the Kennebunk Plains. Escalating development pressure in the form of more roads and buildings would be just the tip of the conservation problem if a casino were to be built. While Maine voters overwhelmingly rejected casino gambling in a public referendum in 2003, its proponents are not expected to give up that easily. Even without a casino, rampant growth and sprawl in the area present significant threats, among them increased high-impact use of the Kennebunk Plains. Illegal ATV operation and trash dumping are particular and intractable concerns.


Access and Activities

The Kennebunk Plains WMA is open year-round, free of charge, from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. There are no facilities. Vehicle access is restricted as posted. Logs block many roads year-round. There is *no vehicle access* during the nesting season, currently May 1 to September 30. All vehicles, including ATVs and snowmobiles, must remain on roads at all times whatever the season. The scars left by violators are everywhere in evidence.

Low-impact recreational activities are permitted, including fishing, hunting, trapping, hiking, and cross-country skiing. Dogs must be leashed and kept on roads during the nesting season (May 1 – September 30). Blueberry picking is restricted as posted; harvesting for personal consumption begins on August 1 to reduce disturbance to nesting birds. Various special rules may apply during the nesting season; in particular, birders and other walkers must stay on trails.

For more information, please contact:

Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife: 207-287-8000

The Nature Conservancy, Maine Chapter: 207-646-1788 

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UPLAND SANDPIPER BY DAVID LARSON

The Importance of Naturalists in Identifying Global Warming in Our Backyards

Abraham J. Miller-Rushing and Richard B. Primack

Global warming is a major topic of scientific discussion. However, at a glance, it may appear that the world is not warming: in January of 2005 Boston received more snow than it had in any month since the city began recording snowfall, and January of 2004 was the coldest month in Boston since 1934. Are these signs of global warming? Or if the world is warming, which the numbers tell us it is, one might wonder if the warming corresponds to anything we see in any given year.

Individuals who have been carefully watching their gardens and birdfeeders over the past several decades may know better. Plants in gardens and wild habitats have been blooming earlier in the spring and dropping their leaves later in the fall. Migratory birds have been arriving earlier in the spring. Some have even stopped leaving altogether, instead opting to overwinter farther north than ever previously recorded. These naturalist observations have told a story that many thermometer-watchers may have missed. Annual temperatures in Massachusetts have risen by 0.6°C over the past 100 years, matching the global average, and temperatures in urban areas like Boston have risen even more due to the conversion of forests to buildings, roads, and other paved surfaces (New England Regional Assessment Group 2001). However, the daytime temperatures that many of us follow have risen by only about half as much as the nighttime temperatures (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2001). While we sleep through the bulk of global warming, nature is paying very close attention to the temperature changes. It turns out that organisms like plants and birds are in many ways more responsive to these increasing nighttime temperatures than they are to warm daytime temperatures. Thus, by watching the plants and birds in our backyards, we can draw better conclusions about the changing climate than if we watch only our thermometers.

The Early Bird Arrives Even Earlier

Although spring officially arrives on the same day on the calendar each year, typical spring events like the flowering of plants and the arrival of migratory birds have been occurring anywhere from one to ten days earlier each decade. A growing number of studies provide evidence to support this observation of earlier spring events (e.g., Oglesby and Smith 1995; Sparks and Carey 1995; Bradley et al. 1999; Butler 2003; Ledneva et al. 2004; Primack et al. 2004). The reason that these events are happening earlier is fairly straightforward: many species of plants, birds, amphibians, insects, and other organisms in temperate regions rely on temperature as their primary cue to begin their spring activities. As temperatures have warmed, these species have become active earlier and earlier.

Some species are active or arriving extraordinarily earlier now than they have in the past. For example, Brown Thrashers (*Toxostoma rufum*), Field Sparrows (*Spizella*

pusilla), and White-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) are now arriving in Worcester County, Massachusetts, over two months earlier than they were in the 1930s (Butler 2003). Research based on the observations of the famous American naturalist, Aldo Leopold, indicates that the first Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) are arriving in Wisconsin about one month earlier than they did sixty-one years ago. In England, some plant species, such as Robert geranium (*Geranium robertianum*), have flowered as much as five weeks earlier for each 1°C increase in temperature (Bradley et al. 1999).

Although it is impossible to point to global warming as the force responsible for changes in most individual spring events, many believe that the overwhelming correlation between warming temperatures and advancing spring events provides exceptional evidence that global warming is causing many spring events to occur earlier. The validity of this logic has been vigorously debated. In 2003, two articles published in *Nature* largely settled the argument (Parmesan and Yohe 2003; Root et al. 2003). These papers used a variety of statistical techniques to analyze over 100 studies of changes in springtime events. They demonstrate two key points. First, it is exceedingly unlikely that so many biological events would occur earlier over time by chance alone. All things being equal, we would expect about half of spring events to occur earlier over time and half to occur later. To find that an overwhelming number of species worldwide are active earlier in the spring now than they were in the past suggests that *something* is causing them to be active earlier. Second, we are given a high level of confidence that global warming is responsible for the majority (67-95 percent) of earlier spring activities. This finding arises from patterns present in changes in the timing of spring events. Given what we know about global warming and the effects of temperature on spring activity, we can predict broad patterns that should exist if global warming were causing the earlier spring activity. For example, we know that areas near the poles have warmed more than areas near the equator. Thus, we would expect that spring activity would be advancing more quickly near the poles than near the equator. The data bear out this and several other predicted patterns. While individual species may be active earlier in spring for reasons other than global warming, the majority of species are in fact responding to the rise in global temperatures.

For some taxa, the nature of the relationship between spring activity and temperature is obvious. Many species of frogs begin their reproductive season immediately following ice-out on small ponds. Several species of plants, such as marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), flower immediately after the ground has thawed. For other taxa, such as migratory birds and several species of plants, the relationship between springtime activity and temperature is less clear. Temperature probably plays an important role in regulating spring activity, but other factors, such as day length, precipitation, and wind direction, probably play important roles too.

Examining the connection between seasonal biological phenomena and these types of environmental factors forms the core of the study of phenology. In light of the recognition of global warming as an important change for biological systems, a

growing number of biologists are addressing phenological questions such as, “Just how important is temperature in determining when birds migrate?” Recent studies have demonstrated that temperature is the most important indication of spring for many bird and plant species, but several species seem to rely much more heavily on other cues. Exactly how the phenologies of these somewhat temperature-independent species will change as the world warms is largely uncertain.

Movin’ On Up

In addition to advancing spring events, global warming has induced many species in the Northern Hemisphere to shift their ranges northward, or up mountainsides. Species are following the warming climate. Species ranges will probably shift faster than one might have initially expected based on changes in average temperatures.

Recall that nighttime temperatures are warming much faster than are daytime temperatures; studies show that the minimum temperature that a species can withstand largely determines its distribution (Root 1988; Woodward 1992). Thus, from the perspective of species range shifts, a 0.6°C increase in average temperature does not matter all that much. What matters is how much the minimum temperature has increased. Consider the example of Manomet, Massachusetts, on the coast just north of Cape Cod. Manomet’s average temperature has risen by 1.6°C since 1969 (Fig. 1). Over the same time period, though, the minimum temperature has risen by 4.3°C (Fig. 1); this increase in minimum temperatures is the change that will most affect the ability of many species to shift their ranges.

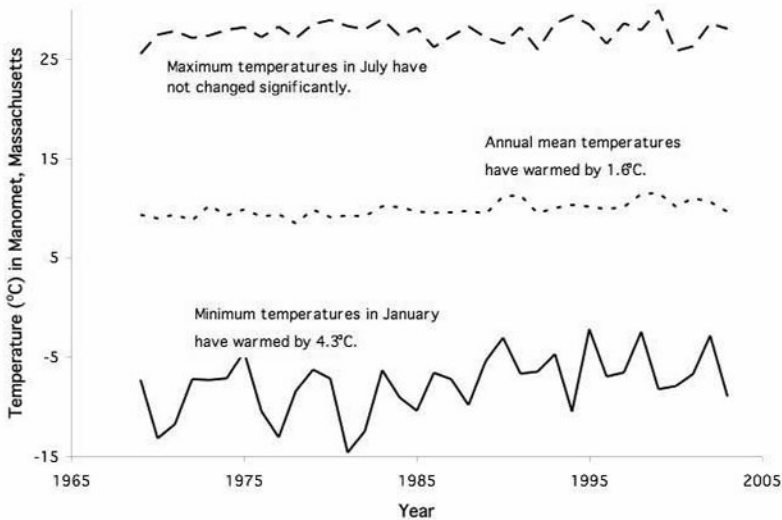


Figure 1: Mean annual (finely dashed line), maximum July (coarsely dashed line), and minimum January (solid line) temperatures in Manomet, Massachusetts, USA from 1969 to 2003. Temperatures were averaged from five weather stations within twenty-five kilometers of Manomet in order to minimize any local anomalies that might be present at a single station. Data was taken from the National Climatic Data Center.

Evidence for current shifts in species ranges is relatively limited, but new studies are appearing all the time. Studies of butterflies provide the best examples of warming-dependent range shifts. In both the western United States and in Europe, butterfly population extinctions are increasing in southern areas as conditions become too warm for species to persist, while new populations are forming in northern areas as conditions there become more favorable. It appears that the extinctions and expansions are related to physiological limitations of the species. Changes in land use do not appear to be causing the range shifts, since land use is changing equally in the northern and southern range limits.

Several studies have reported that bird range limits are also changing (e.g., Thomas and Lennon 1999; Valiela and Bowen 2003; Austin and Rehfisch 2005). It is difficult to say what is causing the range shifts in each particular case, whether it is land use change, invasive plant species, or warming. However, the large number of birds that are breeding and overwintering north of their normal ranges suggests that global warming is probably a major cause of shifts in bird breeding and overwintering ranges.

Do These Changes Matter?

Many people may be inclined to ask, "What does it matter that spring is getting earlier, and that species are shifting their ranges?" Both earlier spring activity and shifts in geographic ranges will, in all likelihood, have major impacts on ecosystems. Each species responds to warming differently. Some species now appear much earlier in the spring than they did 100 years ago. Other species appear at the same time now as they did 100 years ago. Similarly, species are changing their ranges (or will change their ranges) at different rates. Thus, biological communities will be shaken up, and we are only beginning to understand how the shake-up will play out.

Many species have evolved time-sensitive relationships. For example, specialist pollinators have evolved to emerge in the spring at the same time that their preferred plant species flower. If the plant and the pollinator respond differently to warming, the two may lose their synchrony, potentially to the detriment of each. In Europe male bees of certain species emerge just as orchid species are flowering. The bees attempt to mate with the bee-like flowers, and in the process, the plants are pollinated. A few days later, the female bees emerge and mate with the male bees. If a warming climate caused the male and female bees to emerge several days earlier, perhaps the male bees would not be interested in the flowers, and the orchids would remain unpollinated.

Other examples of time-sensitive relationships may include the current situations with Great Tits (*Parus major*) in the Netherlands and American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) in the Rocky Mountains. In the Netherlands, Great Tits are not changing their breeding time in response to warming. However, caterpillars, their primary food source, have been appearing earlier each spring (Visser et al. 1998). Thus, Great Tit reproduction is mistimed with its food source, probably causing populations to decline or at least change food sources. In the Rocky Mountains, American Robins are arriving earlier each spring in response to warming, but the snow on the mountains is not melting any earlier (Inouye et al. 2000). Robins therefore are arriving before their

food is available. Of course, robins can easily fly to an area where food is available, but the point is that as the climate warms, time-sensitive relationships will change. Other ecological relationships will change as a result, probably in ways we will be unable to predict.

At the same time that these time-sensitive relationships are changing, other species are also shifting their ranges, each at its own rate. Species will coexist where they have not previously. Resident species will face new pressures from competition with newly arriving species. Some species will thrive in new areas, while others will become increasingly rare. The implications of changing communities for individual species are difficult to predict; however, some broad trends are already apparent. For example, as the climate has warmed, pests and pathogens have already migrated northwards and upwards and have encountered new host species. A particularly well documented example is the expansion of mosquito-borne diseases to higher elevations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Epstein et al. 1998). In the Pacific Northwest, the mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*) has expanded its range northward in response to warming, and it has caused abnormally high mortality among most pine species in the area (Logan and Powell 2001). The negative impact that new pests and pathogens will have on plant species, like the pines in the Pacific Northwest, will be exacerbated because many plants will be growing under conditions of heat-related stress. Evidence also suggests that warming benefits many invasive species and may even allow some horticultural plant species to become invasive (Dukes and Mooney 1999; Walther 2000). Other plant species will probably be endangered because they cannot migrate fast enough to keep up with climate change; they will either adapt or face extinction (Miller-Rushing and Primack 2004). Among bird species, the ecological implications of shifting species ranges are difficult to predict, but it is clear that their ecological relationships will change. Undoubtedly, many rare and declining bird species will be further threatened with extinction by these ecological changes.

The Importance of Naturalists

Observations of earlier spring events and changes in species ranges have provided key pieces of evidence that global warming is indeed occurring and that nature is already responding to it. Most of the first studies examining the historical response of organisms to warming conditions turned to the long-term records of botanical gardens, scientists, and professional naturalists. For example, several botanical gardens in Europe kept close track of when plants were flowering on their grounds. In the United States, a network of botanists monitored when lilac and honeysuckle cultivars flowered in various locations. In addition, several individuals, such as Robert Marsham in the United Kingdom and Aldo Leopold in the United States, kept records of when plants were flowering and when birds were arriving on their properties or study plots.

Most of our understanding of how species respond to global warming still comes from these professionally collected data sets. Because high quality, long-term records of this sort are rare, we know how only a few species have responded to warming, and that in just a select number of locations. Now many scientists, we among them,

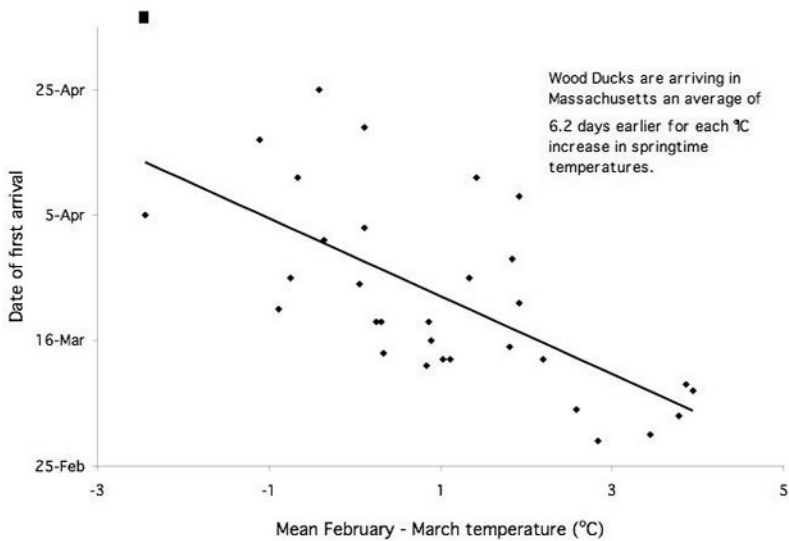


Figure 2: Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) arrival dates in Middleborough, Massachusetts, USA for the period 1970–2002 in relation to mean springtime (February–March) temperatures. Line represents best-fit using regression analysis. Figure taken from Ledneva et al. (2004).

are working to uncover untapped sources of data; we are finding that naturalists, both trained and amateur, are one of the most important. Many individuals — birders, gardeners, hunters, and fishermen among them—notice biological phenomena when they happen, and a large number keep very good records of what they see.

The northeastern United States provides a great case study for how naturalists have provided descriptions of biological responses to global warming that would not have been available otherwise. For example, for the past fifty-four years Kathleen Anderson, a well-known naturalist in Massachusetts, has been keeping records of the birds, flowering plants, butterflies, and amphibian choruses that she hears or sees on her farm in Middleborough. Her records provide an outstanding record of changes in the timing of spring activity on her farm. Many bird species are arriving at her farm earlier now than they did in the past, largely due to a warming climate (Ledneva et al. 2004). Wood Ducks in particular are now appearing on her pond thirty days earlier than they did thirty years ago (Fig. 2). They arrive earlier in eastern Massachusetts, but only arrive at her pond once the ice melts. The earlier appearance of the Wood Ducks is then related to the earlier melting of the ice.

Similarly, the Worcester County Ornithological Society has published records of migratory bird sightings since 1932, and the Cayuga Bird Club in Ithaca, New York, has recorded the first spring sightings of migratory birds since 1903. Analyses of these records have yielded important information regarding how migratory birds have responded to global warming (Oglesby and Smith 1995; Butler 2003). In addition to

finding that birds are migrating earlier now than in the past, these analyses revealed that the migration times of short-distance migrants, such as Brown Thrashers (*Toxostoma rufum*) and Field Sparrows (*Spizella pusilla*), are much more sensitive to global warming than are those of long-distance migrants, such as Least Flycatchers (*Empidonax minimus*) and Blackpoll Warblers (*Dendroica striata*) (Fig. 3). Short-distance migrants seem to depend primarily on temperature cues to set their migration times, while long-distance migrants seem to rely on other cues, such as day length. Currently, researchers are analyzing several more collections of naturalists' observations of gardens, forest plants, and migratory birds in the northeastern U.S.

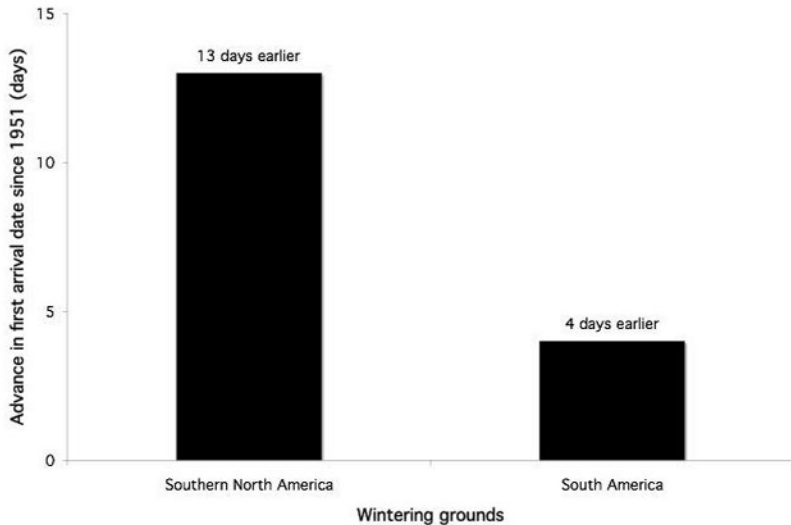


Figure 3: Difference in change in migration time between migratory bird species that over-winter in southern North America and those that over-winter in South America. Data was taken from Butler (2003).

Of course, data on bird sightings come with caveats. The main concern arises from variability in sampling effort. If sampling effort varies significantly over time, it can affect trends in the data. For example, it is easy to imagine that twenty people looking for the first Blue Jay to arrive would probably find it before one person would alone. Thus, if more and more people began looking for the first Blue Jay over successive years, we would expect the first Blue Jay to be sighted earlier and earlier, even if the first Blue Jay is actually arriving at the same time each year.

A similar phenomenon could occur if observers spend more time looking for the first Blue Jay. A person who spends twenty hours per week looking for the first Blue Jay would probably see a Blue Jay before a person who spends two hours per week. If someone spent more and more time looking for the first Blue Jay each year, we would again expect the first Blue Jay to be seen earlier over time, even if it is arriving at the same time each year. Even if sampling effort has not remained constant, if the types of fluctuations are known, researchers may be able to correct the data for sampling

effort. Using such corrections, they should be able find out how much earlier or later the Blue Jay really is arriving over time. If sampling effort fluctuated a lot in ways that are not known, then the record may still provide some information, but it will be limited. Because of the impact that sampling effort has on trends present in long-term collections of observations, the best information comes from records for which the sampling effort has remained relatively constant over time. Such has been the case at Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, where researchers have been using the same methods and sampling effort since 1970. We are currently analyzing these records to quantify the effect of changes of population sizes and sampling effort on observations.

Despite any caveats, naturalist records are gaining attention as a critical source of information on how species respond to climate change. We believe that this attention is well deserved. As scientists examine more naturalist records, we will expand the range of locations where we understand how global warming is altering biological phenomena. Probably more importantly, naturalists can help educate others about how species in their hometowns are changing as a result of global warming, with the result that more people will recognize that global warming is already having an impact on local flora and fauna. Naturalists, thus, serve a double purpose in the study of biological responses to global warming—as researchers and educators. In this dual role, we expect that naturalists will continue to contribute to our understanding of how global warming is affecting biological systems in backyards around the world. 🐦

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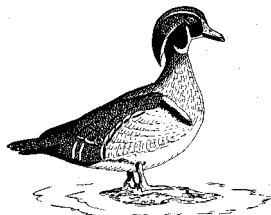
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Editor's Note: *The subject of global warming has generated a number of recent sources for further reading, including the Spring 2005 issue of Sanctuary, the Journal of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, and a report from The Wildlife Society (Technical Review 04-2) entitled Global Climate Change and Wildlife in North America. This report can be obtained at:*

<http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/20784/climate_change_technical_review.pdf>.

Abraham J. Miller-Rushing and Richard B. Primack work in Massachusetts at Boston University. They are examining the impacts of climate change on bird migration and plant flowering times. If you have long-term records of biological phenomena that you would like to contribute, please feel free to contact Dr. Primack at primack@bu.edu.



WOOD DUCK BY WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR.

Spring Migration in Eastern Massachusetts: Then (1886) and Now

Editor's Note: The article on Birds and Birders in Westport, Massachusetts, also in this issue, includes an introduction to Smith Owen Dexter, who was a close friend of William Brewster. After his death, Dexter collected and edited selections from Brewster's diaries which were printed in two volumes by the Harvard University Press: October Farm (1936) and Concord River (1937).

Robert H. Stymeist

In the following excerpts from William Brewster's journal we find some of his frustrations that birders today continue to share— nearly 120 years later. One of his ongoing comments still rings clear, “Apparently the late migrants have not yet come.” We fret that the weather is keeping the birds to our south; we see the first Tree Swallow and then wait weeks for the first Barn Swallow. Pine Warblers have arrived and the buzz is, “Where are the Palms?” Birders just can not get enough of spring migration.

Brewster complained in the following account that he had to take care of business in the city and was not able to see any birds except some Rusty Blackbirds while waiting for the train. In my working days, a core of spring migration watchers at Mount Auburn would have to leave for work just as the day was warming up and the birds burst into more song. The foliage: Brewster in this account states: “The country looks as if it were the last instead of the first week of May. I have never seen as early a spring before.” That trees ALWAYS seem to advance before the birds come is a familiar lament for birders today.

Finally, after a good day of birding, and especially after seeing an unusual bird, we often will celebrate our find over dinner or just by posting it on the internet to alert others. On May 7, 1886, Brewster and his friend Daniel Chester French celebrated the first specimen of Prothonotary Warbler taken in Massachusetts with a good cup of tea. At least today birders have a better chance that their discovery might still be around the following day!

Gleanings from the Journal of William Brewster

April 27, 1886 Concord, Middlesex County Massachusetts

We moved to Concord this morning having taken the Old Manse for the summer. I was obliged to return to Cambridge in the afternoon, however, and to spend the remainder of the week there.

During the short time I was able to spend along the river bank and in the orchard this morning I saw several *Dendroica coronata* (Yellow-rumped Warblers) and a little company of Goldfinches. In the old elms near the bridge a Nuthatch (*Sitta*

carolinensis) was cork-screwing about and hanking loudly. A pair of Downy Woodpeckers were also hammering on the dead limbs. In the boathouse a pair of Pewees (Eastern Phoebe) had a finished but empty nest. A muskrat was swimming from place to place uttering his peculiar whinny cry. Redwings were singing over the green meadows and Bluebirds warbling.

May 2, 1886 a Sunday, Concord

I came to Concord last night to spend Sunday only with business in Cambridge and Boston still uncompleted.

Early this morning there was a grand chorus of bird voices such as we used to hear in Cambridge before the wretched Sparrows came. Robins, Song Sparrows, Bluebirds, Purple Finches, Grass Finches etc made the air ring. About a martin box which was just put up only yesterday several pairs of *Hirundo bicolor* (Tree Swallow) and one pair of *Progne purpuria* (Purple Martin) held high carnival.

Early in the forenoon I went down to the boathouse and spent an hour sitting on its sunny western wall. Redwings singing in all directions, a Meadow Lark whistling out by the railroad station, the Pewees occasionally coming to see that their nest on a rafter inside the boat house still held its two rosy eggs. In the water beneath several species of fishes were feeding or playing. I compared them to boats; the red perch — long and narrow; swift of movement resembled a steam launch; the bream, deep, broad, and yet graceful — a schooner, while a great clumsy horned pout rooting along the bottom recalled a mud scow. The monitors of course were the turtles of which there were dozens in sight—all of the red banded (“soldier turtle”) species. One came past me feeding, it would raise its head above the water, look warily about for a moment, then sink and walk along the bottom exploring it inch by inch and feeding like a hen, pecking about on every side with a quick motion of the head and neck. I timed it repeatedly and found that it remained under water from 30 to 80 seconds, the latter period being the longest noted.

In the morning I walked to the top of Ripley’s Hill. The shad bush was in full bloom and the birches and maples dense with young foliage. Robins, Chipping Sparrows and Song Sparrows singing among the pines, Redwings in the Great Meadows, nothing else noted. Apparently the late migrants have not yet come.

May 3, 1886

Clear and cool. In Boston all day; hence no observations except I saw and heard two Rusty Blackbirds by the railroad station.

May 4, 1886 In Cambridge and Boston all day; no observations

May 5, 1886 Concord, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

Cloudy and warm with a south wind; thunder shower in the PM.

There was a heavy rush of migrants to-day; in fact the county was fairly alive with birds. I heard several new comers singing at daybreak and saw a Wood Thrush hopping about on the ground under the lilacs after breakfast.

My day was doomed to be a broken one as I had an appointment in Boston at three o'clock so I did not attempt any collecting but merely took a drive in the forenoon going up around the "Parker Lot." Least Flycatchers were singing in the orchards, Brown Thrashers and Towhees in the pasture, Creepers (Minotitta), Nashville Warblers and Chestnut-sided Warblers in the woods. I also heard a Grosbeak and a Yellow Warbler. Doubtless there were many more new comers but I had little chance to detect them. Chimney Swifts flying about over the town in the evening.

The vegetation is remarkably advanced for the season. Cherry trees have been in blossom more than a week (they opened in Cambridge April 23 and by April 25 were in full bloom), pear trees are also out and the apple tree in the orchard here showed a few expanded blossoms this evening. In the woods the shad bush is still in full flower (I saw the first blossoms April 27), the poplars are dense with foliage, the birches cast a slight shade and even the oaks have already expanded a few leaves while their swollen buds give the trees a delicate pink tinge. The country looks as if it were the last instead of the first week of May. I have never seen as early a spring before.

May 6, 1886 Concord, Massachusetts, Middlesex County

A fair day, pretty sunny, with frequent intervals of cloudiness. Cool with rather high north wind.

Starting at 9AM, I rowed down river. A little below the stone bridge two snipe hunters asked to be ferried across. They had startled eight snipe and killed two. After I left them they fired two more shots but I was too far away to see at what or with what results.

I had only my 32 cal. Pistol and on the way to Ball's Hill shot only two redwings of which there were great numbers everywhere, more it seemed to me than I ever saw before.

Landing at Ball's Hill I found a small mixed flock in the oaks along the south slope. There were five Creepers, as many Yellow-rumps, three Palm Warblers, one Pine Warbler, and a single Canada Flycatcher. I made a good bag here in a short time and started to return.

On the way home I shot two Redwings, a Bluebird, a pair of Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) [Tree Swallow] and a Solitary Sandpiper. The latter I startled from the river bank on my way down in the morning. It was back again in the same place when I returned but was very shy. Finally it alighted on the topmost twig of a brush heap where I shot it.

The meadows were very beautiful, the grass already a foot high in favored places. Along the river the maples and alders are dense with foliage. The marsh marigold is still in full bloom.

Orioles arrived this morning. I heard one at daybreak, and two others later. The apple orchard was in nearly full bloom this afternoon.


May 7, 1886 Concord Massachusetts

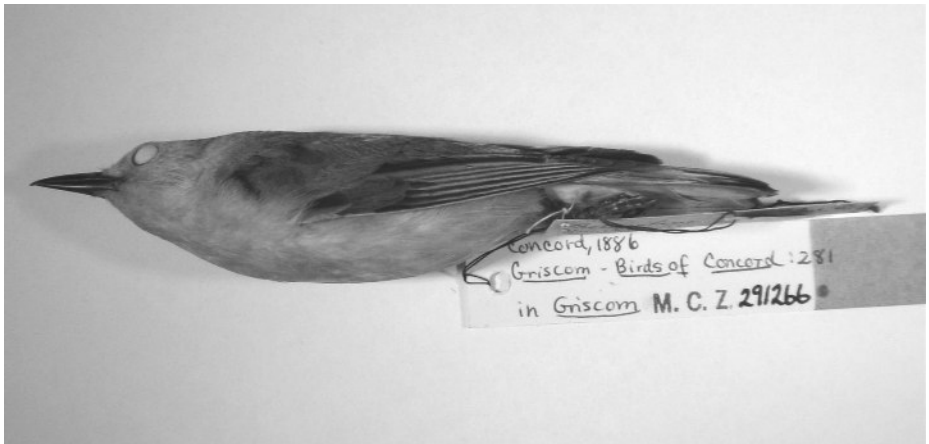
Clear and cool with high N.W. wind. A glorious day as bracing as October yet with the country wreathed in flowers.

In the forenoon I drove C [Caroline, his wife] to Sudbury. The roads are lonely and little used often passing through woodland, occasionally skirting broad meadows. The apple orchards were at their highest perfection and the shad bushes still in bloom boarded all the swampy thickets with patches of white. Birds were numerous but I saw nothing of any particular interest. Meadow Larks were common with one or more being seen or heard in every meadow. Bluebirds were frequently seen along the roadside and Orioles occurred about the orchard and elm shaded farm houses in apparently undiminished numbers. I neither saw nor heard any Bobolinks although we passed many places suited to their habits.

In the afternoon I rode up the Assabet with D.C. French. While midway of the straight reach above the hemlocks my companion asked "is that a Yellow Warbler" pointing out a small bird hopping about in some driftwood caught in the lower branches of the black willows lining the west bank. After looking at it intently for a moment I was amazed to recognize my old Mt. Carmel friend the Prothonotary Warbler. We had no gun but it did not take long to whirl the boat around and start back for one. Returning in about three quarters of an hour we found our little stranger gone but frequently I heard him chirp and then sing in an undertone near at hand. At length he emerged from beneath a mat of drift and I shot him, dropping him the water.

We afterwards rowed up as far as "the Arch" bridge and returned in time for tea.

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MCZ 211462 Protonotaria citrea adult male, rather fat; the stomach well filled with insects chiefly beetles. Shot about 5 PM on the banks of the Assabet River about 150 yards above the hemlocks. This is the first specimen ever taken in Massachusetts.

[Photograph by Miyako Fujiwara, Ornithology, Museum of Comparative Zoology]

Birds and Birders in Westport, Massachusetts, Then and Now

Betty F. Slade and David C. Cole

There are at least four wonderful things about birding: (1) the beauty of the birds themselves, especially when seen up close through binoculars or a spotting scope; (2) the knowledge gained about the life of birds through observation; (3) the beauty of the places to which birders travel to see birds; and finally (4), the people one meets through birding.

This article focuses particularly on people from Westport, Massachusetts, with whom we have recently come in contact because of our interest in birding. Some folks are contemporaries, but the most intriguing are birders we have “come to know” who lived a century ago. A few of these birders left a remarkable legacy of historical records that gives us insight into their lives as well as the lives of their feathered friends. From these records we are able to confirm that most of the generally recognized changes in bird populations in New England over the past century have also taken place in the Westport area.

Our work with the Westport History Work Group, which was organizing historical materials at the town library, started us on this adventure that gave us a look into the ornithological history of the past. Hidden among the library materials were two notebooks containing the title “The Birds of Westport” by Smith Owen Dexter, dated 1918. One set of these notebooks had been given to the Westport Point Library, and the other set was presented to the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University. The notebooks provided an introduction to their compiler that showed him to be a careful, thorough student and lover of nature. They also kindled our own strong desire to learn more about him. Fortunately, our friend and neighbor, Reverend Richard Loring, was the grandson of Smith Owen Dexter, and he possessed a collection of genealogical materials, testimonials, and eulogies that filled in some of the gaps in the notebooks, along with helping us gain a greater appreciation of this remarkable man.

Smith Owen Dexter — the Man and the Birder

On the first anniversary of his death, May 2, 1937, Reverend Smith Owen Dexter was eulogized by one of his parishioners and closest friends, the preeminent Harvard historian, Samuel Eliot Morrison. This eulogy alone was enough to indicate that Dexter was a very special person.

Smith Owen Dexter was born in 1872 in Nayatt, Rhode Island, the son of a manufacturer who expected him to enter the family business. However, from childhood Dexter wanted to be a naturalist — he loved birds, flowers, and all outdoors. But when his father’s business failed and his mother died, he was forced to work in a factory. At this point his thoughts turned to the ministry, and fortunately he was able to attend Harvard College and the Harvard Episcopal Theological School.

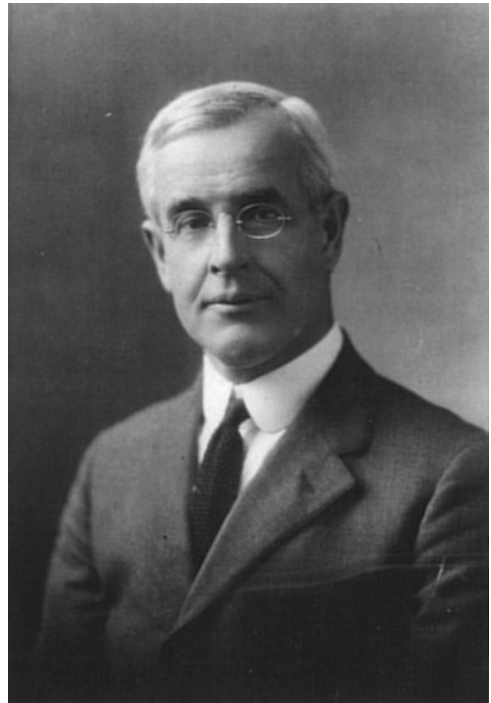
Following his graduation from Harvard, he took a position at a church in New Bedford where he met Helen Denison, whom he eventually married. His early ministerial positions took him to several places in the West, but he ultimately returned to the Trinity Episcopal Church in Concord, Massachusetts, where he remained for twenty-five years. During this period he also established a summer home in Westport.

Dexter's son, Lewis Dexter, who was an eminent heart specialist and owned a house at Westport Point from the early 1940s, wrote the following in 1984:

Dad was an authority on birds, could identify them by sight or song, kept a yearly list of each species he identified. I recall walks with him through the woods such as to Fairyland Pond or through the woods at Mr. [William] Brewster's. He took up many controversial causes but he couldn't do otherwise. Opposing him was like running into a stone wall. It's pretty hard to oppose a saint... On Dad's birthday in July, a fisherman, John Kenny, whom dad had once helped out in some way, would walk up the street in Westport with a gunny sack over his shoulder, go into the kitchen and deposit the sack in the sink and leave without a word. The sack was full of lobsters which were illegally short. I can still see dad, year after year, with a one-foot ruler, grasping the lobsters by claws and tail and pulling (probably dislocating every joint) until it measured twelve inches. I guess no one can be a 100% Christian but dad came very close.

His daughter, Helen Dexter Loring, said that her dad's special interests were music, nature study, and social gospel. His outstanding characteristics were that he was easily depressed, mystical, practical in mechanical details, and un-administrative. She often told of family trips from Concord to Westport via a Model T Ford and Route 138. Smith, over the clatter of the car, could apparently hear a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Raynham Swamp, and they had to stop while he went into the swamp to find the bird.

Janet Gillespie, in her rhapsodic book about Westport, *A Joyful Noise* (1992, pp.107-8) recalls:



Reverend Smith Owen Dexter (1872-1936)

Pop (Robert Russell Wicks) called in Uncle Smith Dexter, his favorite bird friend at the Point and one of our favorite people.... We loved the way he looked — brown as an Indian with a cap of snow-white hair. Uncle Smith kept his eye on the bird. He was making a census of the birds of Westport, so when he was out on a field trip he didn't allow life to get in the way of ornithology. You had to be really good on birds to go out with Uncle Smith, and one of my dreams was to see my name in his notebooks where the Westport bird records were kept. These notebooks were filled with local names, as many sightings had been reported by gunners, fishermen and year-round residents. One of the lobster men, well known to us, brought in reports of oceanic birds — gannets off remote ledges, kittiwakes, eiders and other sea birds not visible from the shore. Uncle Basil (Hall) and Pop were both mentioned in the notebooks and so was our hill, under its real and full name of Eldridge Heights.

Uncle Smith very kindly consented to take me along on a projected trip to see some egrets... he allowed me to look through binoculars; I could hardly believe my eyes and drew back alarmed when the egret turned its dagger beak in my direction. After this revelation I let it be known that the only thing I wanted for Christmas was a pair of good binoculars.

Janet got the binoculars for Christmas, and the first thing she saw with them was a [Northern] Saw-whet Owl. Uncle Smith said that her sighting was the only sighting of this little owl in Westport, and he would put her in his book, which he did in an entry on December 28, 1926. "I had made it," Janet declared. Uncle Smith said that to celebrate this milestone in her life she could accompany him and Pop to Gooseberry Neck to see the Purple Sandpiper.

He spoke of this bird as though it were a personal friend with whom he had an appointment. I had noticed that real bird watchers talked this way... I don't know what I expected to see but I naturally thought it would be a purple bird. The purple sandpipers were stout drab birds, slate gray in color, with yellow legs... I was unimpressed. Uncle Smith explained that its fame rested on the fact that it is the only sandpiper that winters in New England.

Famous Birding Colleagues of Smith Owen Dexter

Smith Owen Dexter had many well-known and respected birding colleagues accompanying him on his rambles around Westport, but two of them stand out especially for their exceptional contributions to the birding world: Arthur Cleveland Bent and William Brewster.

Arthur Cleveland Bent

There are frequent references to the bird sightings of A. C. Bent of Taunton in Smith Dexter's notebooks. At first we passed over these simply as references to a local friend; however, a computer search revealed that A. C. Bent was no ordinary acquaintance. From the Internet we discovered that: "Arthur Cleveland Bent (1866-1954) was a successful businessman who became interested in birds during his

childhood in Massachusetts. A dedicated amateur ornithologist, he traveled extensively throughout North America and acquired a thorough knowledge of the avifauna. In 1910, at the request of the Smithsonian Institution, Bent commenced work on the monumental series of *Life Histories of North American Birds*. He devoted the remaining forty-four years of his life to the project.” Interestingly, A. C. Bent frequently went birding with Smith Dexter in Westport during this period.

A. C. Bent’s extraordinary *Life Histories of North American Birds*, published in a twenty-one volume series (1919-1938), provided a durable foundation for virtually every subsequent compilation of North American bird biology (including the contemporary *Birds of North America*, coedited by another Westport neighbor, Alan Poole).

William Brewster

Smith Dexter edited two books published by Harvard University Press that contained excerpts from the journals of his close friend and Concord neighbor, William Brewster. The first book, *October Farm*, contains no mention of Smith Dexter on the title page, and one only learns from the Forward written by Thomas Barbour that “The Reverend Smith Owen Dexter, for many years Rector of Trinity Church at Concord, was a friend of William Brewster and a frequent guest at October Farm.” Also, that Smith Dexter “suggested extracting certain parts of (Brewster’s diaries) which dealt particularly with observations at Concord and collecting them for publication.” Smith Dexter selected and edited these extracts, which were published after his death, as *October Farm* (1936) and *Concord River* (1937). Unlike *October Farm*, the latter book notes on the title page: “Edited by Smith O. Dexter.”

William Brewster was born in South Reading, Massachusetts in 1851. He graduated from Cambridge High School in 1869, but he was unable to move on to Harvard because of difficulty with his eyes. Subsequently, he devoted his attention exclusively to the study of ornithology. In 1885 he was appointed curator of ornithology at the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology. He had a large estate in Cambridge, where he maintained a bird sanctuary and museum, and a 400 acre farm in Concord along the Concord River. Brewster founded the Nuttall Ornithological Club of Cambridge and was a frequent contributor to the Bulletin of that club as well as other ornithological journals of the day. He was a cofounder of the American Ornithologists’ Union and the first President of the Massachusetts Audubon Society. One of Brewster’s best-known titles was a book called *Birds of the Cambridge Region of Massachusetts* (1906). His writings have been compared with those of Henry David Thoreau. Smith Dexter was responsible for bringing William Brewster’s writings to an audience wider than just the readers of ornithological journals.

Description of Bird Sighting Records

As noted by Smith Owen Dexter in his introduction to “The Birds of Westport” (1918): “Few places in New England are more suited to the study of wild birds than the township of Westport.” Dexter’s notebooks tell us a lot of what bird life in the Westport area was like in the last century, and to this end, provide a valuable resource

for comparing modern conditions with those of an era gone-by. Smith Dexter kept notebooks in which he recorded information about the birds that he had seen personally, or that had been reported to him by others as seen in and around Westport. His notebooks contained one page for each species along with a picture and description of the bird that he had cut out of the book, *Bird Guide* by Chester A. Reed (1909). He often added quotations from Ralph Hoffmann's *Guide to the Birds of New England and Eastern New York* (1904), which he typed onto the page below the pasted cutout from Chester Reed's *Bird Guide*. Finally, he typed in his own notes about the bird, indicating the common, or sometimes colloquial, name for the bird, along with notes as to whether it was common, uncommon, or rare; where it had been seen or was most likely to be seen; who had been with him when he saw the bird (especially for rare species); and who had reported to him their sightings of the species. In some cases his notes are quite extended, in others quite brief. They always end with a capital "D" indicating they were Smith Dexter's notes. On a few pages additional notes have been added by others.

We have two major sources for contemporary sighting records in Westport. The first is The Westport River Bird Surveys which have been conducted since 2002 on four private properties along the eastern shore of the West Branch of the Westport River, as well as at four sites overlooking the Westport River. These surveys combine observations from fixed points and open trail walks. The fixed-point observations are of two types. One set of observations is comprised of those made from points along the shoreline that give unobstructed, but not overlapping, views of birds in the river, on marshes, and along the shorelines. The other observations are stops made at selected points along trails where skilled birders with good auditory skills record all birds seen or heard within a fixed time period. The open trail observations record all birds seen or heard while walking on specified trails through the properties, including both woods and pasture. The open trail and point count surveys are done in the early morning.

The surveys are conducted by small teams of two to five persons and led by experienced birders. Each survey team includes a recorder who is familiar with the requirements of the reporting forms. In 2002-2003 the surveys were conducted monthly in the spring, summer, and fall, and bimonthly in the winter. The data collected are entered into an Avisys computer program that records where, when, and how the birds were identified and what they were doing at the time of observation. This information is then analyzed statistically to test for consistency and to identify significant patterns in the seasonality and prevalence of the species recorded. In 2002-2003, 151 species were identified.

The second important contemporary source of data is the sighting records of local birder Michael Boucher. These records are based upon Boucher's birding activities around Westport over the past twenty years. He leads frequent bird walks for the Paskamansett Bird Club and does bird counts for the Lloyd Center of Environmental Studies and Mass Audubon's Allen's Pond Wildlife Sanctuary. His information indicates the abundance, the seasonal patterns, and the local breeding activity of the 256 species that he has identified in the Westport area.

Apparent Changes in Westport's Bird Population

It is difficult to make any definitive statements about changes in the local bird populations over the past century; however, careful comparison of Smith Dexter's notebooks with subsequently gathered information about bird distribution and abundance does provide some insight. Smith Dexter's records are anecdotal, mentioning sightings of individual species but seldom indicating quantities or frequency of sightings. Dexter provides rough, qualitative measures of numbers such as very rare, rare, uncommon, common, and abundant, but he fails to provide any precise definitions for these terms. He also suggests that some species appear to be declining and others increasing, but again these are qualitative statements without any quantitative specificity.

The more recent sighting records of the Westport River Bird Surveys do provide firm numbers for sightings and frequency of species detection on each survey. Unfortunately, however, these recent surveys cover only three years of observation, and only within a limited area along the West Branch of the Westport River. Most importantly, they do not cover the adjacent ocean areas, which are included in Dexter's records through reports from fishermen and gunners who frequented the local ocean area. Michael Boucher's records also give qualitative indicators of frequency of sightings, and his only seabird observations were made from the shore or from Gooseberry Point.

Despite these variations, by comparing the bird sightings recorded in Smith Owen Dexter's notebooks with those of the Westport River Bird Survey and Mike Boucher, we can still gain some insight into the changes in Westport's bird population over the past century. The most clear-cut evidence of change pertains to birds that were not recorded by Smith Dexter, but which are relatively common in the recent records. Species in this category include the following:

Snowy Egret	Great Crested Flycatcher
Glossy Ibis	Marsh Wren
Mute Swan	Tufted Titmouse
Turkey Vulture	European Starling
Wild Turkey	Northern Mockingbird
American Oystercatcher	Blue-winged Warbler
Forster's Tern	Northern Cardinal
Black Skimmer	House Finch
Red-bellied Woodpecker	

Veit and Petersen, *Birds of Massachusetts* (p. 26), tend to confirm that all of these species were either absent or extremely rare in the early part of the twentieth century in Massachusetts.

The following seventeen species appear to have increased significantly in recent times compared with a century ago. Some of these species may still be recovering from previous temporary declines, while others could possibly be responding to global changing climate. They are:

Great Egret
Canvasback
Bufflehead
Piping Plover
Short-billed Dowitcher
Dunlin
Ring-billed Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Mourning Dove

Eastern Phoebe
Carolina Wren
House Wren
Northern Mockingbird
White-breasted Nuthatch
White-eyed Vireo
Baltimore Oriole
Canada Goose

Thirty-two species appear to have declined significantly since Smith Owen Dexter was observing birds in Westport. These include:

Green Heron
Black-crowned Night Heron
Long-tailed Duck
White-winged Scoter
Common Goldeneye
Red-shouldered Hawk*
Northern Bobwhite
Spotted Sandpiper
White-rumped Sandpiper
Purple Sandpiper
Roseate Tern*
Snowy Owl
Chimney Swift
Least Flycatcher
Bank Swallow
American Pipit
Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Veery
Northern Parula*
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Golden-winged Warbler
Pine Warbler
Palm Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Northern Waterthrush
American Tree Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow*
Savannah Sparrow
Bobolink*
Purple Finch

Note: species marked with * are also listed in Veit and Petersen, p. 28, as declining in Massachusetts.

The endangered species, as reported by American Bird Conservancy (2004), that are currently important in the Westport area include:

Endangered: Piping Plover, Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow.

Declining: Horned Grebe, Brant, American Black Duck, Whimbrel, Sanderling, Semipalmated Plover, Dunlin, Least Tern, and Wood Thrush.

Of special concern in the Northeast: Red Knot, Red-bellied Woodpecker, White-eyed Vireo, Brown Thrasher, Blue-winged Warbler, Pine Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Seaside Sparrow.

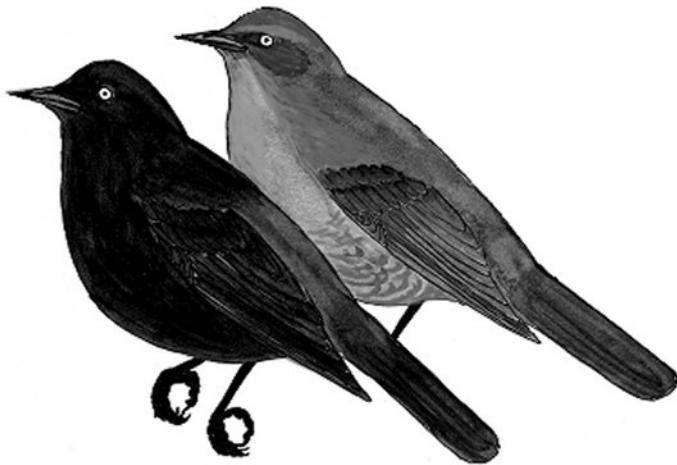
Now that Allens Pond and the Westport River Watershed have been designated as an Important Birding Area by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, hopefully new attention will be directed at the bird populations of the area and, hopefully, there will be renewed efforts to carefully monitor local bird populations. It is this type of

comparative exploration of birding records over long spans of time that makes possible the charting of bird conservation efforts in the future. 🐦

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Betty Slade and David Cole have been birding for ten years after their retirement from Harvard University. They both had been divers, doing underwater photography, but had become interested in birds after a short course at a local environmental center. Betty is interested in genealogy and local history, while David monitors the Ospreys on the Westport River. The article resulted from the combination of interests in local history and birds.



RUSTY BLACKBIRDS BY GEORGE C. WEST

FIELD NOTES

Spotless Robin

Jeffrey Boone Miller

After a multi-year, off-and-on quest, I finally observed an American Robin in New England that had no white at all on its tail feathers. The sighting occurred on March 21, 2005, in Mount Auburn Cemetery, Watertown, MA.

I began looking for “spotless” robins in the East because I grew up in the state of Washington where essentially none of the robins have white spots on their tails. (I also needed something to do when no other birds were around.)

I estimate that I have carefully looked at well over 1000 (though less than 10,000) robins during the past few years without previously finding a “spotless” one.

Tail spotting is quite variable, ranging from only a narrow crescent on the outermost feathers to larger areas of white on the ends of the three outermost feathers on each side. Often, the spots are visible only in flight. Robins with missing feathers or juveniles occasionally presented problems, but the bird I observed at Mount Auburn was a bright adult male with a full complement of tail feathers.

In the only paper I know of that addresses the frequency of “spotless” robins in the East, an observer found only one out of 162 American Robins trapped in Pennsylvania to be without white on the tail feathers. (Wood, H.B. 1945. The Robin does not Change its Tail Spots, *Auk* 62: 141-42.) This paper also showed that the spotting pattern on each individual is stable through successive molts.

Given the normal variability in tail spotting, one should probably suspect that the spotless American Robin I observed was a native eastern bird with an outlier phenotype. One could, however, also consider the possibility that it was a vagrant from the west coast. Varied Thrushes quite often make appearances in New England, so why not a western American Robin?

If anyone knows of or has made additional observations in this area, please contact the author at miller@bbri.org. 🐦

“Owl, Duck!”

Glenn Williams

On a late-October afternoon in 1999, I made the long trek down the beach and out to the tip of Griswold Point in Old Lyme, Connecticut, in hopes of seeing my then life Gyrfalcon – a white morph, no less. Already on the point was Dave Provencher, who found this bird of birds a day or two earlier. Though the day was bright, the fading sun and cold front found me underdressed. Dave remarked that the mouth of

the Connecticut River is the coldest place in Connecticut when the north winds blow down the river valley.

The Gyrfalcon never appeared, but several interesting species were noted — Forster’s Terns, a Snow Bunting, a Snow Goose, a few migrating hawks, etc. — summer birds leaving with the winter birds at their tails. Two American Bitterns appeared over the river at high altitude, migrating southwest. Dave and I were surprised to see an occasional bat winging it west down the beach, over the marsh, and across the river mouth in what would still be considered daylight. Though they appeared to be of the larger variety, we had no idea what species they were. (I still await “Bats in Flight.”) I enjoyed the incongruity of bats and the brisk northwest winds that had me shivering in my thin coat. As dusk approached and the sky turned salmon, a Short-eared Owl rose, bounded over Great Island marsh, and dropped back down out of view. Shortly thereafter, it or another appeared again, this time rising high and heading southwest in apparent migratory flight. A bat approached from the rear and overtook the owl. The much smaller mammal made several quick and aggressive swoops, appearing to make contact with the hapless Short-eared, before flitting past it.

I have been unable to find any information on “bat mobbing” or observe this phenomenon again. Though a number of bats end up as pellets, I did not realize that they expressed their rivalry in a manner similar to their passerine comrades. I finally did get to see my first Gyrfalcon a year later. It was being harassed by a Peregrine. No bats in sight. 🦅

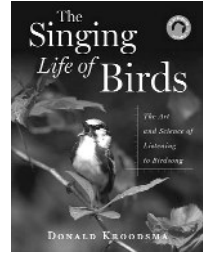


GYRFALCON BY GEORGE C. WEST

ABOUT BOOKS

The Hills are Alive with the Sound of Thrashers, Titmice, and Robins (i.e., Music)

Mark Lynch



The Singing Life of Birds: The Art and Science of Listening to Birdsong. Donald Kroodsma. 2005. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

“Hear the birds? Sometimes I like to pretend that I’m deaf and I try to imagine what it’s like not to be able to hear them. ...It’s not that bad.” Larry David on an episode of the HBO TV series *Curb Your Enthusiasm*.

I, on the other hand, like to imagine Donald Kroodsma watching that episode of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and reacting with total unbelieving shock, shaking his head with the look of someone watching the desecration of the Pieta by Lazlo Thoth. For Dr. Kroodsma is unapologetically passionate about birdsong. I have only seen his kind of uncurbed enthusiasm expressed by connoisseurs of Mozart symphonies and expensive fine wines. I have watched Don listen to a recording of a birdsong — his own recording at that. He breaks into a smile of sheer pleasure and wonder. It is the very picture of someone continually thinking: “Wow!” And then the torrent of questions starts: “Wasn’t that an odd sound?” “Why did the bird do that at that point?” “What is this bird’s neighbor singing?” In *The Singing Life of Birds*, Kroodsma allows the reader to intimately experience the mindset of a scientist who genuinely loves his work.

Birdsong is one of the most prevalent, complex, and acoustically rich natural phenomena we experience. It is therefore interesting and a bit shocking how little birders think about birdsong beyond considering the vocalizations as just another field mark to aid in identification. We all have these records, tapes, and CDs of short snippets of song that we use to help us learn what species is singing what song. On recordings like the *Peterson Field Guide* series or the *Stokes* series, a bird’s name is read in monotone and then typically one quick example of a call or chip note is given. The *Birding by Ear* series by Dick Walton is a vast improvement over these spare snippets found on previous recordings because his sound tracks compare similar calls and teach the listener how to discriminate between them. But still, the focus is on species identification only. New birders are left with the feeling that each species sings only one song and that is all you have to “worry” about. Only a few recordings, such as Donald Borror’s classic *Warblers*, have shown that song within a species is much more complex and variable. But why are they singing? What do all these tweets, whistles, and chirps mean?

Outside of the technical ornithological literature, it has been tough to find information about the reasons birds sing. If you were to ask most birders just a few years ago, they would reply that birds “sing” to attract a mate and advertise their territory. This is like reducing all of human speech to pickup lines given in bars and yelling, “Hey, here I am!” in a crowd. The 1980s and 1990s saw the publishing of a few popular books on ethology, and through these some of the scientific findings on bird behavior became available to a wider audience. Popular books like Bernd Heinrich’s *Ravens in Winter* and Eugene Morton’s *Animal Talk* showed that the vocal behavior of certain species was far more complicated than most people realized, and these authors began to analyze some of these natural “languages” and theorize about their evolution.

In *The Singing Life of Birds*, Kroodsma gives example after example of how unique and complex each INDIVIDUAL bird’s song is. Reading this book is nothing less than revelatory and even mind-blowing. Shortly after starting this book, readers will feel that they have never actually listened to a birdsong before. It will seem that a garrulous and fascinating conversation has been going on all around us, and we have just never bothered to listen it with a sufficiently critical ear. Listening to a bird’s song before and after reading Kroodsma’s book is like the difference between listening to Mingus or Coltrane when you were six years old and then, later, when you are forty.

Kroodsma is adamant that to understand a birdsong in all its variation, you have to be able to SEE that song. Our ears are just not equipped to hear all that is happening in any one song. The best way to do this is with sonograms. Birders whose only experience with sonograms has been the miniscule sonograms included in species accounts in the *Golden Field Guide to Birds of North America* (Robbins, et al. 1966) are likely wincing at this point. Kroodsma understands this reaction. The best way to learn to “love the sonogram” is to be reading them *while* simultaneously listening to the songs. *The Singing Life of Birds* is chock full of nice big, clear sonograms illustrating all the points that Kroodsma is discussing in the text. Most importantly, a CD is also included with the book, so the reader can listen while looking at all Kroodsma’s examples. After several repeat experiences of using the text and the CD, the layperson will begin to use sonograms as a crucial tool to understand avian vocalizations.

You will need every tool you can get because *The Singing Life of Birds* is a celebration of the unexpectedly daunting complexity of birdsong. Each individual robin on your lawn sings his own complex song made up of unique sequences of notes and sounds. On just Point Reyes Peninsula in California, different areas feature populations of White-crowned Sparrows, each with different songs—like regional variations within the Chinese language. How are these songs learned? The Marsh Wren is shown to be likely two species, a western and an eastern, each with its very different song. Kroodsma cannot contain his excitement when he tracks down the marshes where the two different songs can be heard side by side, but the two populations of wrens remain within their song group. Unlike Marsh Wrens, the Sedge Wren’s song seems infinitely malleable, always changing. Why? The Black-capped Chickadee’s *hey-sweetie* call is remarkably consistent across much of North America,

yet on tiny Martha's Vineyard, three different populations of chickadees have three very different variations on *hey-sweetie*. Why only on the Vineyard? Three-wattled Bellbirds not only have dialects, but an individual's song changes from year to year. This is especially interesting because the bellbirds are suboscines, a group of birds including the flycatchers whose songs are supposedly "hardwired" into their DNA. In other words, they supposedly do not learn their songs. What is going on with bellbirds? Each discovery leads to ten more questions.

The Singing Life of Birds could easily have been a dry recitation of the research and discoveries about birdsong much like the volume of collected scientific papers that Kroodsma edited titled *Ecology and Evolution of Acoustic Communication in Birds*. This was an important and very interesting book, but not in any way geared for public consumption. *The Singing Life of Birds* is all about the passion of research as well as the findings. Much of the book is told in a diary format, and the reader is brought step by step through Kroodsma's thoughts as he ponders what these noisy birds are doing traveling from marsh to forest to sagebrush plain. At the same time, Kroodsma is from Massachusetts' Connecticut River Valley and there are many passages in this book that are about our neck of the woods, particularly the Valley and the Berkshires and the birds we commonly hear in those areas.

Kroodsma's writing is wonderfully evocative of the many places his quest for birdsong brings him. Seeking to record a Winter Wren, Donald finds himself in their archetypical habitat:


Smothering the boulders and rotting logs and uprooted tree stumps all around me is a luxuriant growth of soft green mosses. The brook bubbles lazily nearby, the boggy forest floor extending in all directions, the air heavy with moisture. Though it is midmorning, the sunshine barely penetrates the hemlock and spruce towering overhead. Here in the cool of my dark New England forests, here is his home (p. 214).

He is not shy about expressing his real sense of pleasure at hearing birds sing. On listening to Bachman's Sparrows sing among the pines and palmettos:

As for the beauty in the songs, yes I confirmed that too, but not in any rigorous fashion, nor could I have. I took them in, one at a time, marveling at the purity of the whistles, the pleasant buzzes, the contrast among them all. I need no one to confirm my reaction, though I will seek out the opinions of those who know music, those who might hear and be able to describe better what it is about these songs that make them so satisfying to some, perhaps all human ears (p. 233).

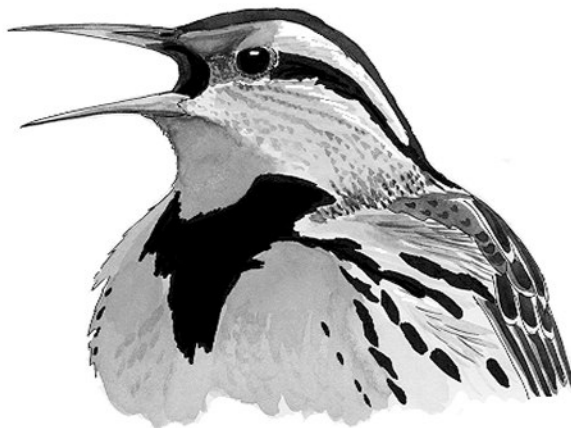
Woven among all this poetic writing is the story of how the very hard and often tedious real work of science gets done. Kroodsma becomes interested in the mimicry of a Sage Thrasher and sets out with his equipment to record a daunting straight eight hours and ten minutes of this one bird singing. But that is not enough for Kroodsma's endlessly curious mind, and he is back the next day to record the same bird again for the full day. These recordings are then converted to sonograms, patterns are plotted

out, the species that were mimicked are carefully noted. His dedication to his research is never ending. He may wake up before dawn, hear a titmouse, note something curious about its song, and begin a full day's recording session with that bird. It is this seamless mix of passion and scientific dedication that makes *The Singing Life of Birds* one of the best books I have read to explain how real science gets done.

At the heart of all of Kroodsma's writing are, of course, the amazing songs of the birds. These are revealed to be endlessly complex, so very different in quality, quantity, tenor, tone, and purpose from species to species and sometimes from individual to individual, that there is virtually no single statement we can make about birdsong. It is like discovering a vast lost library of millions upon millions of volumes all written in a language we are only just beginning to decipher. *The Singing Life of Birds* is a groundbreaking book, a classic that will forever alter your experience of the natural world. 

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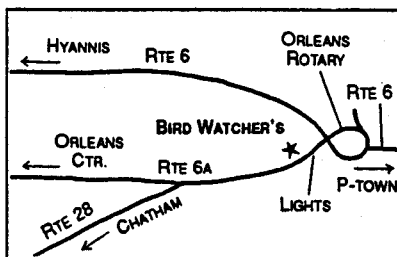
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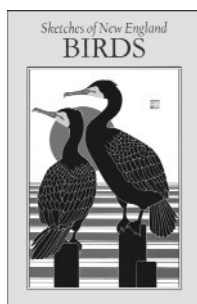
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BIRD SIGHTINGS

January/February 2005

Seth Kellogg, Marjorie Rines, and Robert H. Stymeist

The first day of the New Year was mild and sunny, 12° above the norm for the date — a perfect way to start a brand new year of birding. The abnormal warmth continued, with the first half of the month averaging 7° above normal. The high mark for Boston was 63° on January 14. A cold spell began on January 16, and the temperature did not rise above 32° until January 29. The last half of the month averaged 11° below normal, and the coldest temperature recorded in Boston was two below zero on January 22. Measurable rain fell on sixteen days, five above average, and totaled 4.45 inches in total, just about an inch over normal. Boston recorded an amazing total of 43.3 inches of snow during January, 30.9 inches above normal. The biggest storm was the blizzard on January 22-23 with 22.5 inches of snow. Cape Cod and the Islands were hit especially hard, with the blizzard knocking out power for over 25,000 residents. Windchill was a factor along with the cold temperatures; a peak gust of 55 mph from the northwest was noted on January 23. Of the five weekends, two Saturdays had rain or snow, and three Sundays had both rain and snow.

February started on a cold and sunny day, followed by a warming trend February 4 through 17. The temperatures during this period averaged 4.5° above normal. The high for Boston was 54° on February 16; the low was 13° on February 19. Rainfall totaled 2.70 inches, nearly an inch below average. Snow totaled 17.7 inches, 6.4 inches above average in Boston. Too much snow — birders were getting restless for spring! *R. Stymeist*

WATERFOWL THROUGH ALCIDS

A **Tundra Swan** that spent a month in Egremont was an unusual January visitor. Inland ducks made a lackluster showing due to the cold weather closing in fresh water ponds and lakes. A curious exception was the appearance of less common species in western Massachusetts, where singles of Northern Shoveler, Canvasback, and Barrow's Goldeneye were noteworthy. "Only" one **Pacific Loon** was reported during the period; in recent years there typically have been two or more individuals reported. Two inland reports of Red-necked Grebe in Arlington and at Quabbin Reservoir were unusual for New Year's Day — or for any time in this period. The Gloucester **Eared Grebe** was back for an astonishing eleventh season.

On February 23 a Least Bittern was discovered wandering down Commonwealth Avenue in Boston and was taken to a wildlife rehabilitator. This is only the second record of this species in winter, the first being an individual also discovered in distress in February of 1939. A Little Blue Heron in Orleans on January 14 was similarly only the second record for midwinter, the first being an individual seen in nearby Eastham in February 1975.

Bald Eagles were reported in excellent numbers. There was only a moderate showing of Rough-legged Hawks. For the third year in a row at least three Merlins were seen at the Mystic Lakes dam in Medford. Merlins are not known to be a sociable species, so this behavior seems a strange anomaly.

A Pomarine Jaeger seen on January 12 at Andrews Point in Rockport was a rare winter sighting for this species. A **Mew Gull** carefully observed in Haverhill was determined to be the European "Common Gull," *Larus canus canus*, rather than *L. c. brachyrhynchus*, the subspecies

from western North America that is more typical of Massachusetts sightings. Unfortunately, few people give details on subspecies, so that the actual occurrence of these individuals is not entirely clear. The larid of the season was a first-year **California Gull** discovered on Nantucket on January 3, which remained throughout the reporting period. It was seen and photographed by many, but no details were ever submitted to the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC). Rick Heil's seawatches at Andrew's Point on January 12 and February 10 included well over 1000 Black-legged Kittiwakes, eclipsing all of Rick's previous counts for this location. A Forster's Tern in Freetown on January 2 was one of only a handful of winter records for this species.

Remarkable numbers of dead alcids were discovered on Cape Cod beaches by one reporter on February 19, with Thick-billed Murres being particularly hard hit. Reports of this species were unusually high this reporting period, and Rick Heil speculated: "I think it is likely that the influx of inshore Thick-billed Murres recently is due to prey shortages in deep waters and on the offshore banks, and that the numerous reports of murres in the surf, in bays and river mouths and harbors are of near starved, weakened individuals. . . The earlier strong nor'easter of late January doubtless helped to weaken and push birds to the coast but I don't think it was the primary factor in their appearance." The January nor'easter was, however, undoubtedly responsible for the discovery of one on a pond in Plympton four days after the storm. It was taken to a rehabilitator and fed and released the next day in apparently good condition

M. Rines

Snow Goose				1/12	Scituate	1 f	D. Furbish
1/1-15	P.I.	6	v.o.	1/15	P.I.	1	D. Chickering
1/17, 2/18	Newbury	4	Lynch, Offerman	1/18	Clinton	1 f	M. Lynch#
1/20	Chatham	8	R. Clem	Northern Pintail			
1/30, 2/18	Eastham	8, 10	Furbish, Thompson	1/1-2/2	Turners Falls	1-2	v.o.
Brant				1/4	P.I.	9	F. Vale#
1/9, 2/6	Boston H.	335, 261	TASL (M. Hall)	1/7	Westport	40	G. Gove#
1/11	Wareham	278	R. Farrell	1/29	Marlboro	2	E. Taylor
2/6	Swansea	987	M. Lynch#	2/12	Acoaxet	12	M. Lynch#
2/14	Nantucket	244	E. Ray	2/13	Marshfield	3	SSBC (Gd'E)
2/27	Plymouth	196	M. Lynch#	2/15	Bolton Flats	2 m	S. Sutton
2/28	N. Scituate	14	D. Furbish	2/19	Falmouth	2	M. Keleher
Tundra Swan				Green-winged Teal			
1/1-2/4	Egremont	1	D. St James	1/1, 2/7	Winchester	8, 6	M. Rines#
Wood Duck				1/15	Scituate	5	R. Bowes
thr	Reports of indiv. from 10 locations			2/6	Barnstable	5	BBC (S. Moore)
1/1, 24	Hadley	3, 2	C. Gentes	2/13	Marshfield	1 f	SSBC (Gd'E)
2/26	Bolton Flats	4	S. Sutton	2/15-17	Pittsfield (Onota)	3	D. St. James
Gadwall				2/19	Falmouth	3	M. Keleher
thr	Plymouth	15	v.o.	Canvasback			
1/2	Nantucket	17	G. d'Entremont#	1/1, 2/19	Falmouth	12	Gove, Keleher
1/7	Pittsfield	1	N. Mole	1/2, 2/10	Nantucket	71	G. d'E, Andrews
1/9, 17	Gloucester	34, 20	R. Heil	1/14	Egremont	1	B. Faggioni
1/9	Swansea	51	R. Farrell	1/19-2/21	Turners Falls	1 m	H. Streeter
2/7	Newbypt./P.I.	12	R. Heil	2/12	Acoaxet	32	M. Lynch#
2/12	Salisbury	8	D. Tripp#	Redhead			
Eurasian Wigeon				1/1	Chilmark	1 m	A. Keith
thr	Mashpee	1 m	M. Keleher#	1/1-9	Nantucket	4	G. d'Entremont#
1/9, 2/6	Swansea	1, 2	Farrell, Lynch	1/18	Clinton	1 m	M. Lynch#
1/15	Newbypt. H.	1 f	R. Heil	Ring-necked Duck			
1/15	Barnstable	1	CCBC (Keleher)	thr	Turners Falls	3-4	D. Ziomek
1/15	Scituate	1	R. Bowes	1/3, 2/22	Arlington	8, 7	M. Rines
1/20	Nantucket	2	E. Ray	1/16	Springfield	5	C. Gentes
2/12	Somerset	3 m	G. d'Entremont	1/20, 2/19	Falmouth	74, 118	M. Keleher
American Wigeon				1/29, 2/19	Waltham	5, 9	J. Forbes
1/5	Newbypt	6	MAS (B. Gette)	1/29	Uxbridge	3	M. Lynch#
1/9, 2/6	Swansea	158, 358	Farrell, Lynch	2/6	Swansea	18	M. Lynch#
1/15	Barnstable	21	CCBC (Keleher)	2/12	Framingham	8	E. Taylor
1/20	Nantucket	40	E. Ray	2/27	Plymouth	8	M. Lynch#
2/3	Turners Falls	2	H. Allen	Greater Scaup			
American Black Duck				1/2	Nantucket	100	G. d'Entremont#
1/9, 2/6	Boston H.	920, 889	TASL (M. Hall)	1/9, 2/6	Boston H.	1038, 1083	TASL (M. Hall)
Northern Shoveler				1/9	Fairhaven	598	M. Lynch#
1/2	Nantucket	2	G. d'Entremont#	1/9	Gloucester	14	R. Heil
1/3	Grafton	3	M. Lynch#	1/15	Barnstable	45	CCBC (Keleher)
1/7	Pittsfield	1	N. Mole	1/30	Orleans	60	D. Furbish#

Greater Scaup (continued)				1/9, 2/6	Boston H.	774, 909	TASL (M. Hall)
2/6	Swansea	940	M. Lynch#	1/15	Barnstable	150	CCBC (Keleher)
Lesser Scaup				1/29	Lawrence	44	R. Heil
1/1	Lynn	5	R. Heil	1/30	Turners Falls	40	G. Martel
1/9	Nantucket	16	G. d'Entremont#	2/5	S. Hadley	30	H. Allen
1/30	P'town H.	8+	B. Nikula#	2/6	Swansea	315	M. Lynch#
2/6	Swansea	17	M. Lynch#	2/12	Newbypt H.	550	S. Mirick#
2/11	Gloucester	12	M. Chase	2/19	Falmouth	131	M. Keleher
2/13-27	Turners Falls	3	T. Gagnon	2/27	Plymouth	131	M. Lynch#
King Eider				2/27	Sunderland	21	C. Gentes
1/1-2/17	Rockport	1-2	v.o.	Barrow's Goldeneye			
1/5	M.V.	1 m ad	T. Day	thr	Cotuit	1	v.o.
1/15	Orleans	1 ad m	SSBC (Gd'E)	thr	Gloucester (E.P.)	1 m	v.o.
1/16-2/13	Gloucester	1	v.o.	thr	Nantucket	1-4	E. Ray
Common Eider				1/1	Plymouth	1 m	D. Furbish#
1/7	Chatham	3000+	D. Manchester	1/4-22	Turners Falls	1	M. Taylor
1/9	Gloucester	440	R. Heil	1/5	Dorchester	1 m	R. Donovan
1/9	Fairhaven	1442	M. Lynch#	1/9, 2/6	Boston H.	2, 1	TASL (M. Hall)
1/9, 2/6	Boston H.	5702, 5516	TASL (M. Hall)	1/9	Fairhaven	3 m	M. Lynch#
1/11	Wareham	224	R. Farrell	1/11, 2/18	Falmouth	1 m, 4	G. Gove#
2/7	Newbypt./P.I.	400	R. Heil	1/15	Barnstable	1	CCBC (Keleher)
2/13	Chatham (S.B.)	2000	P. Flood	2/6	Swansea	1 m	M. Lynch#
2/27	Plymouth	1789	M. Lynch#	2/7-20	Newbypt	1-2	v.o.
Harlequin Duck				2/12	E. Sandwich	1 m	D. Furbish
thr	Dorchester	1-2	R. Donovan	Hooded Merganser			
thr	Rockport	60	v.o.	1/2	Nantucket	20	G. d'Entremont#
thr	N. Scituate	12	v.o.	1/8	Worcester	14	M. Lynch#
1/2	Nantucket	11	G. d'Entremont#	1/11	Eastham (F.E.)	50	S. Jaffe#
1/5	M.V.	11	T. Day	1/15	Woburn	11	M. Rines
1/7	Westport	2	G. Gove#	1/19	Wareham	64	G. Gove#
1/31	Gloucester	2	R. Heil	1/20	Falmouth	126	M. Keleher
2/6	Boston H.	2	TASL (M. Hall)	1/22	P.I.	15	MAS (Roberts)
2/6	Sandwich	4	J. Young	1/22	Newbury	13	P. + F. Vale
2/7	Newbypt. H.	1 f	R. Heil	2/6	Swansea	88	M. Lynch#
2/7	P.I.	1 f	T. Wetmore	2/20	Grafton	11	M. Lynch#
2/27	Orleans	4	D. Furbish#	Common Merganser			
Surf Scoter				1/7, 2/27	Lakeville	63, 7	K. Anderson
1/9, 2/6	Boston H.	347, 241	TASL (M. Hall)	1/10	Newbypt	13	J. Nelson
1/9	Fairhaven	310	M. Lynch#	1/15	Barnstable	35	CCBC (Keleher)
1/9	Nant. Sound	2000	G. d'Entremont#	1/15	Hadley	16	H. Allen
1/15	Barnstable	45	CCBC (Keleher)	1/17	Amesbury	24	J. Berry
2/5	Gloucester	39	M. Lynch#	1/29, 2/19	Waltham	25, 3	J. Forbes#
2/27	Plymouth	101	M. Lynch#	1/29	Lawrence	19	R. Heil
White-winged				2/5	W. Springfield	13	H. Allen
1/9, 2/6	Boston H.	1196, 1033	TASL (M. Hall)	2/6	Swansea	88	M. Lynch#
1/9	Fairhaven	112	M. Lynch#	2/19	Falmouth	48	M. Keleher
1/9	Nant. Sound	100	G. d'Entremont#	Red-breasted Merganser			
2/5	Gloucester	297	M. Lynch#	1/7	Chatham	165	D. Manchester
2/7	Newbypt./P.I.	126	R. Heil	1/9, 2/6	Boston H.	541, 471	TASL (M. Hall)
2/27	Plymouth	48	M. Lynch#	2/2	Gloucester	230+	P. + F. Vale
Black Scoter				2/7	Newbypt./P.I.	115	R. Heil
1/4	Orleans	400	G. Gove#	2/12	Westport	61	M. Lynch#
1/9	Nant. Sound	300	G. d'Entremont#	2/19	Falmouth	133	M. Keleher
1/15	Barnstable	12	CCBC (Keleher)	2/27	Manomet	119	M. Lynch#
2/10	Rockport (A.P.)	12	R. Heil	2/28	N. Scituate	65	D. Furbish
2/12	Westport	12	M. Lynch#	Ruddy Duck			
Scoter Species				1/2-29	Gloucester (E.P.)	1	J. Nelson
1/30	Westport	5000	G. d'Entremont	1/22	Jamaica Plain	2	A. Joslin
Long-tailed Duck				2/13	Brookline	2	E. Taylor
1/4	Newbypt	130+	F. Vale#	Ruffed Grouse			
1/8	Worcester	1 f	M. Lynch#	1/1	DWWS	1	D. Furbish#
2/6	Boston H.	96	TASL (M. Hall)	1/2	W. Barnstable	2	G. Gove#
2/7	Newbypt./P.I.	180	R. Heil	1/2	W. Boylston	1	S. Sutton
2/7	E. Gloucester	25	J. Berry	1/20	E. Sandwich	2	D. Manchester
2/20	Woods Hole	600	D. Furbish	Wild Turkey			
Bufflehead				1/8	Bedford	15	J. Offermann#
1/1	Hingham	100	E. Taylor	1/14	Beverly	18	J. Berry
1/2	Nantucket	230	G. d'Entremont#	1/15	Winchester	16	M. Rines
1/9, 2/6	Boston H.	1133, 1499	TASL (M. Hall)	1/16	Tyringham	49	R. Stymeist#
1/9	Fairhaven	346	M. Lynch#	1/19	Montague	27	D. Minnear
1/15	Barnstable	200	CCBC (Keleher)	1/30	Templeton	98	T. Pirro
2/5	Gloucester	103	M. Lynch#	1/30	Cheshire	38	M. Lynch#
2/6	Swansea	113	M. Lynch#	2/12	Salisbury	12	D. Tripp#
2/7	Newbypt./P.I.	150	R. Heil	Red-throated Loon			
2/12	Westport	156	M. Lynch#	1/2	Nantucket	15	G. d'Entremont#
2/27	Plymouth	177	M. Lynch#	1/8	Medford	1	A. Ankers#
Common Goldeneye				1/9, 2/6	Boston H.	34, 10	TASL (M. Hall)
1/9	Fairhaven	978	M. Lynch#	2/12	P.I.	15	D. Tripp#

Red-throated Loon (continued)				Black Vulture			
2/19 P'town (R.P.)	10	J. Hoye#		2/2 Gr Barrington	2	C. Barrett	
2/27 Eastham	15	D. Furbish#		2/19 Sheffield	10	M. Lynch#	
Pacific Loon *				2/24 Westfield	2	J. Zepko	
1/15, 2/19 P'town (R.P.)	1 ad	Gd'E#, Hoye#		Turkey Vulture			
Common Loon				1/1 P.I.	5	BBC (L.de la Flor)	
1/1-7 Southwick	1	S. Ricker		1/9, 2/7 Newbury	2, 5	Hills, Heil	
1/4, 2/5 Gloucester	20, 24	Vale#, Lynch#		1/17 Ipswich	4	P. + F. Vale	
1/8 Worcester	1	M. Lynch#		1/22 Westport	38	R. Hodson	
1/9 Nant. Sound	42	G. d'Entremont#		2/9 Nantucket	7	E. Ray	
1/9, 2/6 Boston H.	47, 26	TASL (M. Hall)		2/20 Palmer	4	J. Hoye#	
1/15 P'town (R.P.)	21	SSBC (Gd'E)		Bald Eagle			
1/19, 2/14 Salisbury	16, 33	R. Hodson		1/4 W. Newbury	2	P. Brown	
2/6 Ipswich	50	D. Chickering		1/7-2/18 Lakeville	4 ad, 3 imm max	v.o.	
2/12 Westport	11	M. Lynch#		1/7 Granville	5	J. Weeks	
Pied-billed Grebe				1/7-2/9 Arlington	3 ad + 2 imm max	v.o.	
1/15 Barnstable	2	CCBC (Keleher)		1/15, 2/19 Quabbin Pk	4, 3	M. Lynch#	
1/20 Nantucket	3	E. Ray		1/15 Bourne	2 ad	G. d'Entremont	
Horned Grebe				1/15 Barnstable	2	CCBC (Keleher)	
1/1 Quabbin	3	T. Gagnon		1/22 Newbypt	8 ad, 2 imm	MAS (Roberts)	
1/8, 2/26 P.I.	20, 10	T. Wetmore		1/29 P.I.	3	T. Wetmore	
1/9 Fairhaven	270	M. Lynch#		1/29 Lawrence	4	R. Heil	
1/9, 2/6 Boston H.	197, 64	TASL (M. Hall)		2/4 Sheffield	2	D. St James	
1/11 Wareham	20	R. Farrell		2/17 Springfield	2	R. Baumhauer	
1/14 Hadley	1	P. Yeskie		Northern Harrier			
1/31 Gloucester	21	R. Heil		1/1 Cumb. Farms	1 m	K. Anderson	
2/6 Swansea	89	M. Lynch#		1/1 Amherst	1	D. Minnear	
2/12 Somerset	10	G. d'Entremont		1/3-4 Egremont	1	T. Collins	
2/14 Nantucket	7	E. Ray		1/9 Fairhaven	5	M. Lynch#	
Red-necked Grebe				1/15 Barnstable	2	CCBC (Keleher)	
thr P'town	3-4	B. Nikula		1/16, 2/26 P.I.	4, 3	T. Wetmore	
1/1 Arlington	2	C. Floyd		2/7 DWWS	2	D. Furbish	
1/1 Quabbin	1	T. Gagnon		2/13 Chatham (S.B.)	1 m	P. Flood	
1/4 Dennis	12	G. Gove#		2/19 Hadley	1	C. Gentes	
1/5 M.V.	27	T. Day		2/27 Eastham	2 f ad	D. Furbish#	
1/31 Gloucester	7	R. Heil		Sharp-shinned Hawk			
2/4 Rockport (A.P.)	7	R. Heil		1/9 Gloucester	3	R. Heil	
2/7 Newbypt./P.I.	7	R. Heil		1/30 Westport	2	G. d'Entremont	
Eared Grebe *				2/12 Westport	2	M. Lynch#	
thr Gloucester	1	v.o.		Cooper's Hawk			
Northern Gannet				1/21 Watertown	2	R. Stymeist	
1/4 Orleans	50	G. Gove#		2/5 P.I.	2	T. Wetmore	
1/12, 2/10 Rockport (A.P.)	430, 25	R. Heil		2/18 Newbypt	2	F. Vale#	
1/15 P'town (R.P.)	33	SSBC (Gd'E)		2/18 Groveland	2	D. Chickering	
2/27 Eastham	3 ad	D. Furbish#		Northern Goshawk			
Double-crested Cormorant				1/4 DWWS	1	D. Manchester#	
1/3 Falmouth	1	G. Gove#		1/5 Alford	1	D. St James	
1/9 P'town H.	3	B. Nikula		1/9 E. Middleboro	1	K. Anderson	
1/10 Arlington	1	M. Rines		1/19 W. Bridgewater	1	K. Anderson	
1/15 Plymouth	1 imm	R. Bowes		1/22 Northfield	1	M. Taylor	
2/8 Cambridge	1	K. Barnes		1/28 Maynard	1 imm	L. Nachtrab	
Great Cormorant				2/13 Newbypt	1 imm	J. Hoye#	
thr Turners Falls	1	T. Schottland		2/19 Royalston	1 ad	G. d'Entremont	
1/8 Arlington	2	M. Rines		2/21 Harvard	1	S. Hardy#	
1/9 Gloucester	89	R. Heil		2/25 Scituate	1	S. Maguire	
1/15 P'town (R.P.)	200	SSBC (Gd'E)		Red-shouldered Hawk			
1/15 N. Scituate	20+	C. Nims#		thr Groveland	1	v.o.	
1/17 Amesbury	25	J. Berry		1/7 Westport	1	G. Gove#	
1/29 Waltham	2	J. Forbes#		1/9 Lakeville	1	C. Longworth	
2/12 Acoaxet	23	M. Lynch#		1/24 Stow	1	T. Carrolan	
American Bittern				1/28 Hingham	2	C. Nims	
1/2 Nantucket	1	E. Ray#		2/7 Northfield	1	M. Taylor	
Least Bittern				2/8 Duxbury	1	R. Bowes	
2/25 Boston	1 m ph	D. Swenson		2/11 N. Falmouth	1	G. Gove#	
Great Blue Heron				2/11 Freetown	1	L. Gerrior	
1/1 Nantucket	3	G. d'Entremont#		2/13 Marshfield	1 imm	SSBC (Gd'E)	
1/2 Medford	4	P. + F. Vale		2/19 Leverett	1	H. Allen	
1/9 Fairhaven	4	M. Lynch#		2/24 Southwick	1	S. Kellogg	
1/22 Jamaica Plain	2	A. Joslin		2/27 Plymouth	pr	M. Lynch#	
2/20 Millbury	2	M. Lynch#		Rough-legged Hawk			
Great Egret				thr Cumb. Farms	3 max	K. Anderson	
1/19 Nantucket	1	M. Aquier		1/1, 2/5 P.I.	1, 3	de la Flor, Taylor	
Little Blue Heron				2/5 Arlington	1 ad	P. Roberts#	
1/14 Orleans	1 imm	J. Kenneally		2/12 Amherst	1	D. Spector	
Black-crowned Night-Heron				2/23 Hadley	1	P. Yeskie	
2/23-28 Falmouth	1	G. Gove#		2/26 DWWS	1 ft, 1 dk	MAS (Lowe)	
				Golden Eagle			
				1/1 Quabbin	1	fide S. Kellogg	

American Kestrel				Black-headed Gull			
1/2	Everett	1 f	P. + F. Vale	thr	Nantucket	2	fide E. Ray
1/4, 2/2	Newbury	1	P. + F. Vale	1/4-2/20	Milford	1	B. Milke + v.o.
1/4	Salisbury	1	P. Brown	2/10	Plymouth H.	1	W. Petersen
1/12-2/22	Hadley	1-2	C. Gentes	2/11	Dartmouth	1 ad	St. Miller#
1/16	Worcester	1 m	M. Lynch#	2/13	Plymouth B.	1 ad	SSBC (Gd'E)
1/16	W. Roxbury	1	M. Kaufman	Bonaparte's Gull			
2/13	Saugus	1 m	P. + F. Vale	1/2	Nantucket	300	G. d'Entremont#
2/16	Lynn	pr	P. B. Faherty	1/12	Rockport (A.P.)	167	R. Heil
2/26	Woburn (H.P.)	1	P. Ippolito#	2/20	Nantucket	105	E. Ray
Merlin				Mew Gull *			
1/3	Boston	2	J. Peterson	1/29	Haverhill	1	R. Heil
2/5-15	Medford	2-3	P. Roberts#	California Gull (no details) *			
thr	Reports of indiv. from 16 locations			1/3-2/28	Nantucket	1 W ph	P. Dugan, F. Gallo + v.o.
Peregrine Falcon				Iceland Gull			
1/4	Worcester	2	M. Lynch#	thr	Turners Falls	1-4	v.o.
1/7	Amherst	2	R. Packard	1/1	Woburn	1 imm	M. Rines#
1/8, 2/13	Boston (Logan)	3, 3	N. Smith	1/9, 31	Gloucester	15, 43	R. Heil
2/8	Agawam	3	H. Allen	1/16	Truro	2	S. + C. Thompson
thr	Reports of indiv. from 15 locations			2/6, 20	Nantucket	26, 161	E. Ray
Virginia Rail				2/7	P.I.	14	R. Heil
1/1	Nantucket	1	G. d'Entremont#	2/19	P'town (R.P.)	16	J. Hoye#
American Coot				Lesser Black-backed Gull			
1/1	Woburn	4	M. Rines	thr	Plymouth	1 ad	v.o.
1/1	Lynn	4	R. Heil	1/thr	Boston	1	v.o.
1/8, 2/20	Worcester	2	M. Lynch#	1/3	S. Dartmouth	1	A. + D. Morgan
1/9	Nantucket	13	G. d'Entremont#	1/9, 2/20	Nantucket	11, 26	G. d'E, E. Ray
1/15, 2/12	Plymouth	1	R. Bowes	1/9	Gloucester	1 2W	M. Taylor
2/6	Swansea	5	M. Lynch#	2/5-17	Newbypt	1 ad	T. Wetmore
2/14	Uxbridge	1	P. + B. Milke	2/23	Brewster	1 ad	G. Gove#
2/19	Waltham	1	J. Forbes#	Glaucous Gull			
Black-bellied Plover				thr	Gloucester	1-3	v.o.
1/9	Nantucket	4	BBC (J. Paluzzi)	1/9-2/14	Turners Falls	1-2	v.o.
1/11	Wareham	1	R. Farrell	1/16-2/27	S. Hadley	1	v.o.
1/15	Barnstable	1	CCBC (Keleher)	2/1, 20	Nantucket	2	E. Ray
2/13	N. Scituate	2	BBC (Gd'E)	2/4	Rockport (A.P.)	1 1W	R. Heil
Semipalmated Plover				2/9	Springfield	1	E. Rutman
1/3	Chilmark	1	A. Keith# + v.o.	2/10	Plymouth H.	1	Wayne Petersen
Killdeer				2/12	Chatham (S.B.)	1	R. Donovan
1/17	Chilmark	1	A. Keith	2/13	Marshfield	2 2W	D. Furbish
American Oystercatcher				2/19	P'town (R.P.)	1 ad, 1 1W	J. Hoye#
1/9	Fairhaven	2	M. Lynch#	2/27	Eastham	1 1W	D. Furbish#
Greater Yellowlegs				Black-legged Kittiwake			
1/9	Swansea	1	R. Farrell	1/4	Orleans	20	G. Gove#
Ruddy Turnstone				1/9	Nant. Sound	9	G. d'Entremont#
1/2	P'town H.	4	B. Nikula	1/12, 2/10	Rockport (A.P.)	1255, 1227	R. Heil
1/30	N. Scituate	6	S. Maguire#	1/15	P'town (R.P.)	14	SSBC (Gd'E)
2/26	Gloucester	7	G. d'Entremont#	1/29	N. Truro	65	B. Nikula
Red Knot				2/13	Chatham (S.B.)	10	P. Flood
1/9	Edgartown	5	A. Keith	Forster's Tern (details submitted)			
Sanderling				1/2	Freetown	1	J. Berry#
1/30	P'town H.	175	B. Nikula#	Dovekie			
2/12	Westport	29	M. Lynch#	1/7	Chatham	1	D. Manchester
2/20	Nantucket	88	E. Ray	1/9	Wellfleet H.	1	B. Nikula#
Purple Sandpiper				1/9-16	P'town H.	1	B. Nikula#
1/9, 2/6	Boston H.	56, 306	TASL (M. Hall)	1/15-2/7	Rockport	1	v.o.
1/9	P'town H.	12	B. Nikula	1/15	P'town (R.P.)	1	SSBC (Gd'E)
1/9	Fairhaven	23	M. Lynch#	2/1, 2/19	P'town 1, dead, 1 dead		Trull, Hoye
1/29, 2/10	Rockport (A.P.)	87, 30	Vale, Heil	2/7	Gloucester	1	J. Berry#
2/5	P.I.	10	T. Wetmore	Common Murre			
2/7	E. Gloucester	40	J. Berry	1/12, 2/4	Rockport (A.P.)	25, 27	R. Heil
2/9	Salisbury	10	MAS (B. Gette)	1/15, 2/19	P'town (R.P.)	1, 2	Gd'E, Hoye
2/12	Manomet	7	R. Bowes	2/19	Eastham (F.E.)	1 dead	J. Hoye#
2/13	N. Scituate	150	BBC (Gd'E)	Thick-billed Murre			
Dunlin				1/12, 2/4	Rockport (A.P.)	1, 110	R. Heil
1/7	Westport	100	G. Gove#	1/27	Plympton	1 inland	R. Turner
1/9	Fairhaven	26	M. Lynch#	1/29-2/13	P'town H.	9-12	v.o.
1/30	P'town H.	125	B. Nikula#	1/30	Annisquam	1 dead	S. Mirick#
2/6	P'town (R.P.)	210	J. Young	2/6-23	Wellfleet H.	3	v.o.
2/13	N. Scituate	50	BBC (Gd'E)	2/6	Sandwich	2	J. Young
Wilson's Snipe				2/6	Boston H.	6	TASL (M. Hall)
1/5	Buzzards Bay	3	G. Gove#	2/6	Gloucester	4	J. Offermann
2/2	Lynnfield	1	D. + I. Jewell	2/7	Newbypt./P.I.	9	R. Heil
American Woodcock				2/13	Chatham (S.B.)	1 dead	P. Flood
2/17	DWWS	4	D. Furbish	2/19	P'town (R.P.)	4	J. Hoye#
Pomarine Jaeger				2/19	Eastham (F.E.)	8 dead	J. Hoye#
1/12	Rockport (A.P.)	1	R. Heil	2/19	P'town (R.P.)	2 dead	J. Hoye#

Razorbill				2/13	N. Scituate	1	SSBC (Gd'E)
1/4, 2/27	Orleans	40, 200	Gove, Furbish	2/19	P'town (R.P.)	1 dead	J. Hoye#
1/8, 16, 2/6	P.I.	14, 10, 3	T. Wetmore	2/19	Eastham (F.E.)	2 dead	J. Hoye#
1/9	Nant. Sound	16	G. d'Entremont#		Atlantic Puffin		
1/12, 2/4	Rockport (A.P.)	253, 62	R. Heil	2/14	Nantucket	1 ad	E. Ray
1/15, 2/6	P'town (R.P.)	375, 180	Gd'E, Flood	2/19	Eastham (F.E.)	1 imm dead	J. Hoye#
2/27	Eastham	100+	D. Furbish#		Large alcid species		
Black Guillemot				1/2, 29	P'town	177, 37	B. Nikula
1/1, 2/10	Rockport (A.P.)	3, 7	Moore, Heil	1/12, 2/4	Rockport (A.P.)	55, 34	R. Heil
1/1	Nahant	2	R. Heil	1/29, 2/5	N. Truro	260, 1040	B. Nikula
1/2	Nantucket	1	G. d'Entremont#	1/30	Eastham	40+	B. Nikula#
1/9, 31	Gloucester	36, 16	R. Heil	2/6	P'town (R.P.)	300	P. Flood
2/6	P'town (R.P.)	1	P. Flood				

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

A **White-winged Dove** that was first found at a feeder on Nantucket on November 23, 2004, was still present at least through January 17, 2005. There are over twenty records of this southwestern vagrant in Massachusetts. There is now an established population in Florida that continues to expand and move north, with more and more reports on the Atlantic coast north into Canada. For the second winter in a row, heavy snow and cold weather have had a devastating effect on the state's population of Barn Owls, so it is interesting to hear of a Barn Owl at Logan Airport this February. This species has been rare on the mainland in the last several years. At Logan Airport, Norm Smith has banded eight Snowy Owls this winter; two of them were equipped with transmitters to track their movement. One of the owls with the tracking equipment was released on Plum Island on February 19, and was hit and killed by a landing jet at Logan on March 10, 2005.

Red-headed Woodpeckers were noted from Leverett and Tyringham, and reports of Red-bellied Woodpeckers have become so numerous that there hardly seems a location in the state that these birds have yet to appear. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were noted from five locations, with as many as three spending the winter at Mount Auburn Cemetery. Occasionally Eastern Phoebes overwinter in mild seasons, and these reports are most often from Cape Cod and the islands. There were just two reports of Eastern Phoebes in January, the same as last year.

It was a good season for Northern Shrikes for the second year in a row, with reports from over twenty locations. American Crows, on the other hand, continued in much reduced numbers with no significant roost totals noted as in the past. It was a poor year for Red-breasted Nuthatches compared to 2004, which was the only good year for this species in the past six years.

This winter southeastern Massachusetts was hit hard with record snowfall, and the numbers of those semi-hardy birds such as Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Eastern Towhee, and even Carolina Wren, were much-reduced in numbers, although Eastern Bluebirds were reported in typical numbers.

Among the more unusual birds reported this season were four different **Varied Thrush** reports including one "the cat brought in." Seth Kellogg, our editor of birding records for western Massachusetts, was horrified when a neighbor delivered him a dead Varied Thrush which had been killed by a cat. It was only small consolation to learn that it had been caught several miles away, and that he hadn't missed a new "yard" bird. The Varied Thrush at Oak Bluffs was an adult male that was found associating with a flock of about 200 American Robins. The other Varied Thrush reports included one that came from Concord, which was recorded on the Christmas Bird Count, and one from Newburyport where another bird remained for this entire reporting period. Unlike last season, with near record numbers of **Bohemian Waxwings**, only a single Bohemian was noted from Nantucket. Also noted was a **Western Tanager** that was present most of January in Westwood. Among the more unusual finds this

winter included a Black-throated Blue Warbler in Brewster, and a Clay-colored Sparrow in Southwick, which was just the sixth wintering record ever for western Massachusetts.

The winter finch department was uneventful except for a female White-winged Crossbill that took up residence in Nahant for this entire period. Purple Finches, for the most part, were only noted in western Berkshire County and northern Franklin County. There were only three locations in the state that reported Pine Siskin, and two of those reports were of just a single individual!

R. Stymeist

White-winged Dove (details submitted) *		1/22	Pepperell	1	M. Resch		
1/7-19	Nantucket	1	F. Karttunen + v.o.	1/24	W. Tisbury	1	L. McDowell
Barn Owl				Hairy Woodpecker			
1/30	Chilmark	2	A. Keith	1/thr	Maynard	4	L. Nachtrab
2/13	Boston (Logan)	1	N. Smith	1/18	Harwich	5	E. Banks
Eastern Screech-Owl				2/19	Royalston	3	G. d'Entremont
1/1	Winchester	2	M. Rines#	Northern Flicker			
1/2	Amherst	2	H. Allen	1/1-31	Sherborn	2	E. Taylor
1/15	Brewster	3	SSBC (Gd'E)	1/2	Gloucester (E.P.)	2	J. Nelson
2/1	Melrose	2	gray D. + I. Jewell	1/15	Mt.A.	3	J. Crystal#
Great Horned Owl				1/18	Harwich	4	E. Banks
1/thr	Mt.A.	1-2	R. Stymeist + v.o.	1/29	Newbury	2	P. + F. Vale
1/2	Bolton	3	S. + L. Sutton	2/5	Sherborn	2	E. Taylor
1/11	Scituate	4	S. Maguire#	Pileated Woodpecker			
1/15	Brewster	3	SSBC (Gd'E)	1/20	Clinton	1	S. Sutton
1/15	Amherst	6	H. Allen	1/31	Gardner	1	T. Pirro
2/17	DWWS	2	pr D. Furbish	2/14	Uxbridge	1	P. + B. Milke
2/20	Westboro	1	n M. Lynch#	2/16, 24	Groton	1	T. Pirro
2/23	Falmouth	2	G. Gove#	2/26	Groveland	1	J. Hoye#
2/24	Wayland	2	A. McCarthy#	Eastern Phoebe			
Snowy Owl				1/2-7	Melrose	1	D. + I. Jewell
thr	P.I./Newbypt	3	max v.o.	1/9	Chilmark	1	A. Keith
1/1-2/8	Duxbury	1	v.o.	Northern Shrike			
1/8, 2/13	Boston (Logan)	3, 6	N. Smith	1/1-2/2	Amherst	1	D. Minnear
1/11	Falmouth	1	G. Gove#	1/1-2/3	Hadley	1	v.o.
2/9	Squantum	1	C. Myers	1/1	Granville	1	J. Weeks
2/26	Gloucester	1	B. + S. Ross	1/4	Ipswich	1	P. Brown
Barred Owl				1/4, 2.13	DWWS	1	Manchester, Gd'E
1/2	Lexington	1	E. Smith	1/10-2/5	P.I.	1	v.o.
1/5	Cambridge	1	K. Barnes	1/21	Pepperell	1	T. Pirro
1/29	Gill	2	BBC (Drummond)	1/29	Hatfield	1	L. Terrien
2/6	Lincoln	1	dead C. Kwong	1/30	Cheshire	1	ad M. Lynch#
2/8	IRWS	1	J. Berry#	2/12	Northbridge	1	M. Lynch#
2/8	W. Townsend	1	C. Crupi	2/12	Sutton	1	ad M. Lynch#
2/12	Salisbury	1	D. Tripp#	2/13	Royalston	1	S. Moore#
2/18	Cambridge	1	ph B. Stevens#	2/13	Concord (NAC)	1	ad T. Carolan
2/19	E. Bridgewater	1	E. Giles	Fish Crow			
Long-eared Owl				1/3	Westfield	3	S. Kellogg
1/2-8	Hadley	1	C. Gentes	1/3, 2/19	Waltham	55, 4	J. Forbes
Short-eared Owl				1/4	Agawam	2	S. Kellogg
thr	Salisbury	1-3	v.o.	1/4	Lawrence	24	P. Brown
1/1	Duxbury B.	1	D. Furbish#	2/2	Belmont	4	P. Perry
1/2	P.I.	1	F. Vale	2/7	Andover	1	D. Tambasco
1/8, 2/13	Boston (Logan)	4, 2	N. Smith	2/23	Hingham	2	W. Petersen
2/19	Cumb. Farms	1	K. Anderson#	Common Raven			
2/20	Nantucket	1	E. Ray	1/7	Granville	4	J. Weeks
Northern Saw-whet Owl				1/9, 2/27	Manchester	2, 1	Heil, Ferrarasso
1/15	Brewster	3	SSBC (Gd'E)	1/22	Royalston	2	M. Lynch#
1/29	Hamilton	1	J. Berry#	1/30	Cummington	1	M. Lynch#
2/14-26	Lexington	1	M. Rines#	1/30	Ipswich	1	J. Paluzzi
Red-headed Woodpecker				1/30	Windsor	2	M. Lynch#
thr	Tyringham	1	imm v.o.	2/19	Quabbin	6	S. Leonard#
1/2-2/1	Leverett	1	H. Allen	Horned Lark			
Red-bellied Woodpecker				thr	P.I.	47	max v.o.
1/thr	Ipswich	2	pr J. Berry	1/4	Egremont	70	R. Reed
1/thr	Falmouth	1-2	G. Gove#	1/15	Scituate	11	R. Bowes
2/1-28	Sherborn	5	E. Taylor	1/15	P'town	25	SSBC (Gd'E)
2/9	Royalston	2	M. Taylor#	1/15	Northampton	300	H. Allen
2/13	Marshfield	5	SSBC (Gd'E)	1/17	Cumb. Farms	75+	K. Anderson
2/24	Groton	2	T. Pirro	1/30	Westport	50	G. d'Entremont
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker				1/31	Turners Falls	80	H. Allen
1/thr	Mt.A.	1-3	R. Stymeist + v.o.	2/13	Chatham (S.B.)	18	P. Flood
1/10	Newbypt	1	J. Nelson	2/13	Sandwich	16	D. Furbish#
1/17	Gloucester	1	f ad D. Sandee#				

Tree Swallow			1/2	Sheffield	1 m	dead	M. Coon
1/9, 16	Nantucket	2, 10	Ray, Blackshaw	1/19-23	Oak Bluffs	1 m	K. Blake# + v.o.
Red-breasted Nuthatch				Gray Catbird			
1/1	Nahant	2	R. Heil	1/2	Nantucket	3	G. d'Entremont#
1/2	Nantucket	4	G. d'Entremont#	1/8	P.I.	1	S. Sutton#
1/17	Salisbury	4	S. Sutton	1/19	Rockport	1	BBC (B. Volkle)
1/29	P.I.	2	T. Wetmore#	1/30	S. Dartmouth	2	G. d'Entremont
2/13	Royalston	2	S. Moore#	2/12	Westport	1	M. Lynch#
2/13	Lexington	2	M. Rines	2/21	Nahant	1	S. Sutton
2/20	Oakham	8	M. Lynch#	Brown Thrasher			
Brown Creeper				1/10	Rockport (H.P.)	1	J. Adamson#
1/4	Ipswich	2	J. Berry	1/28	Chappaquiddick	1	E. Potter
1/8	Gloucester	2	J. + M. Nelson	1/29	Nahant	1	D. Wilkinson
1/18	Jamaica Plain	2	A. Joslin	1/30	S. Dartmouth	1	G. d'Entremont
1/30	Peru	2	M. Lynch#	American Pipit			
2/5	Malden	2	D. + I. Jewell	1/15	Nantucket	4	K. Blackshaw#
2/19	Sheffield	4	M. Lynch#	Bohemian Waxwing			
2/20	Oakham	7	M. Lynch#	2/6	Nantucket	1	E. Ray
Carolina Wren				Cedar Waxwing			
1/9	Gloucester	5	R. Heil	1/2	Newbypt	175+	P. + F. Vale
1/9	Fairhaven	5	M. Lynch#	1/16	N. Adams	25	R. Stymeist#
1/15-16	Berkshire Cty	7	R. Stymeist#	1/29	Haverhill	120+	R. Heil
2/13	Nahant	3	P. + F. Vale#	2/7	P.I.	35	R. Heil
2/15	Melrose	3	D. + I. Jewell	2/13	Arlington	65+	K. Hartel
Winter Wren				2/27	Turners Falls	200	C. Gentes
1/1	Nahant	1	R. Heil	2/28	Northampton	250	C. Gentes
1/1	Medford	1	M. Rines	Orange-crowned Warbler			
1/24, 2/23	Marion	1	M. Maurer	1/1	Falmouth	1	D. Furbish#
1/27	Granville	1	J. Weeks	Black-throated Blue Warbler			
1/28	Ashfield	1	S. Sauter	1/12	Brewster	1 m	fide M. Lowe
2/5	Melrose	1	D. + I. Jewell	Yellow-rumped Warbler			
2/17	Amherst	1	H. Allen	thr	P.I.	2-9	v.o.
Marsh Wren				1/9	Fairhaven	5	M. Lynch#
1/2	Nantucket	1	G. d'Entremont	1/30	Westport	6	G. d'Entremont
1/14	GMNWR	2	M. Rosenfeld	2/13	Marshfield	1	SSBC (Gd'E)
Golden-crowned Kinglet				Pine Warbler			
1/4	Northampton	8	L. Terrien	1/2	Medford	2	P. + F. Vale
1/7	Bolton Flats	6	T. Murray	1/9	Brookline	1	C. Gladstone#
1/9	Fairhaven	5	M. Lynch#	1/18	Mashpee	1 m	M. Keleher
1/22	Royalston	5	M. Lynch#	1/20	Marion	6	M. Maurer
2/20	Oakham	7	M. Lynch#	2/20	Falmouth	1	G. Hirth#
2/22	Medford	4	R. LaFontaine	Yellow-breasted Chat			
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				1/9	Fairhaven	1	M. Lynch#
thr	Stoughton	1	T. Johnston	Western Tanager (no details) *			
1/1	Melrose	1	D. + I. Jewell	1/1-23	Westwood	1 f ph	B. Saunders
1/1	Falmouth	1	D. Furbish#	Eastern Towhee			
1/17	Lexington	1	M. Rines	thr	P.I.	1 f	T. Wetmore
Eastern Bluebird				1/1	Nahant	1 f	R. Heil
1/thr	Falmouth	2-6	G. Gove#	1/1	Quabbin	1	T. Gagnon
1/15	Hadley	12	H. Allen	1/5	Aquinnah (M.V.)	2	T. Day
1/16	Rowley	7	P. + F. Vale	1/9	Fairhaven	2	M. Lynch#
1/19	Groton	7	T. Pirro	1/15	Barnstable	2	CCBC (Keleher)
1/24	Pembroke	12	D. Furbish	1/19	Rockport	1	BBC (B. Volkle)
2/13	W. Boylston	8	M. Lynch#	2/3	Nantucket	4	E. Andrews
2/26	Cumb. Farms	6+	MAS (Lowe)	2/12	Westport	3	M. Lynch#
Hermit Thrush				2/21	Nantucket	3	E. Andrews
1/2	Hadley	1	C. Gentes	American Tree Sparrow			
1/4	Ipswich	1	J. Berry	1/2	Medford	40+	P. + F. Vale
1/7	Westport	1	G. Gove#	1/4	P.I.	45+	F. Vale#
1/9	Berlin	1	F. Howes	1/7	Bolton Flats	100	T. Murray
1/10	Waltham	1	R. Haaseth	1/9	Fairhaven	38	M. Lynch#
1/29	P.I.	3	T. Wetmore	1/17	Cumb. Farms	100+	K. Anderson
1/30	E. Middleboro	1	K. Anderson	1/19	Groton	75	T. Pirro
1/31	Westfield	1	D. James	Chipping Sparrow			
2/4	Nahant	1	T. Murray#	thr	Falmouth	12 max	G. Gove#
2/12	Salisbury	1	D. Tripp#	1/18	Mashpee	1	M. Keleher
2/20	N. Truro	1	C. Skowron	1/20-26	Chilmark	1	T. Rivers
American Robin				1/22	Edgartown	1	A. Keith
1/9	Maynard	100+	L. Nachtrab	2/19	Groveland	1	D. Chickering
1/15	Gr Barrington	202	M. Lynch#	Clay-colored Sparrow			
1/16	Shrewsbury	100	B. deGraaf	2/2-28	Southwick	1	S. Kellogg
1/28	Falmouth	400	G. Gove#	Field Sparrow			
1/29	N. Truro	125	B. Nikula	thr	Falmouth	3	G. Gove#
1/29	Haverhill	165	R. Heil	1/1, 2/5	Cumb. Farms	1, 1	K. Anderson
2/28	Northampton	400	C. Gentes	1/2	Medford	1	P. + F. Vale
Varied Thrush				1/7	Bolton Flats	5	T. Murray
1/1-4	Concord	1	M. Rubel + v.o.	1/22, 2/13	Rockport (H.P.)	1	Murray, Tripp
1/1-2/25	Newbypt	1	R. Laite + v.o.	1/30	Westport	2	G. d'Entremont

Field Sparrow (continued)			2/19	Easthampton	80	H. Allen	
2/5	Westboro	1	S. Moore	2/20	Wakefield	37	P. + F. Vale
2/9	W. Newbury	1	R. Laité	2/23	Salisbury	15	MAS (B. Gette)
Savannah Sparrow				Eastern Meadowlark			
1/15	Barnstable	2	CCBC (Keleher)	1/4	DWWS	3	D. Manchester#
1/15	Newbypt	1	D. Chickering	1/24-29	Chappaquiddick	1	H. Potter
1/17	Marion	1	M. Maurer	1/25	Scituate	2	S. Maguire#
2/7	P.I.	1	R. Heil	2/27	Eastham	6	D. Furbish#
Ipswich Sparrow				Rusty Blackbird			
1/19	Salisbury	3	MAS (B. Gette)	1/1	Gr Barrington	1	R. Laubach
Seaside Sparrow				1/2	Wakefield	1	D. + I. Jewell
1/15	Newbypt	1-2	R. Heil	1/22	Dedham	1	E. Cutler
Fox Sparrow				1/23	Tyringham	1	R. Wheeler
1/1	Amherst	1	D. Minnear	1/29	Hatfield	1	L. Terrien
1/4	Agawam	2	S. Kellogg	1/31	Turners Falls	2	R. Packard
1/9-17	Jamaica Plain	2	R. Stymeist# + v.o.	2/3	Lynnfield	1	D. + I. Jewell
1/23	Harwich Port	2	B. Nikula#	Common Grackle			
1/23-2/28	E. Middleboro	4	K. Anderson	2/8	IRWS	12	J. Berry
2/3	Nantucket	1	E. Andrews	2/16	Northboro	56	B. Volkle
Swamp Sparrow				2/24	Wakefield	15	F. Vale#
1/4	Agawam	2	S. Kellogg	Brown-headed Cowbird			
1/15	Gr Barrington	1	M. Lynch#	1/8	Williamsburg	2	R. Packard
1/15	Newbypt	1	R. Heil	1/17	Cumb. Farms	200+	K. Anderson
1/21	DWWS	1	D. Furbish	1/22	Westport	50	R. Hodson
1/22	Hatfield	1	T. Gagnon	2/5	Sheffield	7	T. Collins
White-crowned Sparrow				2/16	Groton	2	T. Pirro
1/1-2/12	Salisbury	1	v.o.	2/20	Arlington	2 m	K. Hartel
2/20	Nantucket	1	B. Vigneau	Baltimore Oriole			
Dark-eyed Junco				1/1-28	Edgartown	1	R. Gordon
1/2	Malden	30+	P. + F. Vale	Purple Finch			
1/9	Fairhaven	24	M. Lynch#	1/1	Monterey	16	R. Laubach
1/19	Groton	165	T. Pirro	1/14	Washington	43	E. Neumuth
1/20	Scituate	24	S. Maguire#	1/17	Hinsdale	8	R. Stymeist#
2/19	Sheffield	27	M. Lynch#	1/30	Peru	27	M. Lynch#
Lapland Longspur				1/31, 2/19	Royalston	15, 30	Pirro, Gd'E
1/2	Hadley	1	M. Lynch#	2/6	DWWS	1 m	D. Furbish
1/7-30	Northampton	1	C. Gentes	2/7	Cummington	9	T. Gagnon
1/19, 2/28	Salisbury	1, 1	Gette, Brown	2/12	Lenox	20	D. St James
1/31, 2/27	Turners Falls	1	H. Allen	2/25	Lexington	2	R. Hodson
2/11	P.I.	2	D. Tripp#	White-winged Crossbill			
Snow Bunting				thr	Nahant	1 f	R. Heil + v.o.
1/7	Northampton	10	C. Gentes	Common Redpoll			
1/7, 2/6	Granville	1, 3	Weeks, Paxton	1/25, 29	P.I.	21, 27	Sutton, Vale
1/11	Hadley	4	H. Allen	1/30	Nantucket	5	v.o.
1/19, 2/9	Nantucket	45, 18	Aquie, Ray	2/12	Lexington	4	K. Hartel
1/29, 2/27	P.I.	12, 10	T. Wetmore	2/12	Salisbury	4	D. Tripp#
2/12	Montague	30	D. Minnear	thr	Reports of indiv. from 7 locations		
2/13	Chatham (S.B.)	40+	P. Flood	Pine Siskin			
2/13	S. Quabbin	50	R. Laubach	thr	E. Middleboro	20-35	
2/20	Fairhaven	4	C. Longworth	1/21	Rockport	1+	J. Robinson
Red-winged Blackbird				1/27	Northampton	1	T. Gagnon
1/1	Cumb. Farms	15	K. Anderson	Evening Grosbeak			
1/4	Agawam	2	S. Kellogg	1/29-2/27	Royalston	18 max	v.o.
1/20	N. Andover	12	B. Drummond	1/30	N. Adams	1	M. Lynch#
2/6	Swansea	16	M. Lynch#	1/30	Windsor	1	M. Lynch#
2/7	DWWS	230	D. Furbish	2/5	Athol	1	P. + F. Vale#
2/16	Bolton Flats	20	R. Beaubien				

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO BIRD OBSERVER

Sightings for any given month must be reported in writing by the eighth of the following month, and may be submitted by postal mail or e-mail. Send written reports to Bird Sightings, Robert H. Stymeist, 94 Grove Street, Watertown, MA 02172. Include name and phone number of observer, common name of species, date of sighting, location, number of birds, other observer(s), and information on age, sex, and morph (where relevant). For instructions on e-mail submission, visit: <<http://massbird.org/birdobserver/sightings/>>.

Species on the Review List of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (indicated by an asterisk [*] in the Bird Reports), as well as species unusual as to place, time, or known nesting status in Massachusetts, should be reported promptly to the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, c/o Marjorie Rines, Massachusetts Audubon Society, South Great Road, Lincoln, MA 01773, or by e-mail to <marj@mrines.com>.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taxonomic order is based on AOU checklist, Seventh edition, 44th Supplement, as published in *The Auk* 117: 847-58 (2000); 119: 897-906 (2002); 120: 923-32 (2003).

ABC	Allen Bird Club	ONWR	Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge
A.P.	Andrews Point, Rockport	P.I.	Plum Island
A.Pd	Allens Pond, S. Dartmouth	Pd	Pond
B.	Beach	P'town	Provincetown
Barre FD	Barre Falls Dam,	Pont.	Pontoosuc Lake, Lanesboro
	Barre, Rutland	R.P.	Race Point, Provincetown
B.I.	Belle Isle, E. Boston	Res.	Reservoir
B.R.	Bass Rocks, Gloucester	S. Dart.	South Dartmouth
BBC	Brookline Bird Club	S.B.	South Beach, Chatham
BMB	Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester	S.N.	Sandy Neck, Barnstable
C.B.	Crane Beach, Ipswich	SRV	Sudbury River Valley
CGB	Coast Guard Beach, Eastham	SSBC	South Shore Bird Club
C.P.	Crooked Pond, Boxford	TASL	Take A Second Look
Cambr.	Cambridge		Boston Harbor Census
CCBC	Cape Cod Bird Club	WBWS	Wellfleet Bay WS
Cumb. Farms	Cumberland Farms,	WMWS	Wachusett Meadow WS
	Middleboro	Wompatuck SP	Hingham, Cohasset,
DFWS	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary		Scituate, and Norwell
DWMA	Delaney WMA	Worc.	Worcester
	Stow, Bolton, Harvard		
DWWS	Daniel Webster WS	Other Abbreviations	
E.P.	Eastern Point, Gloucester	ad	adult
EMHW	Eastern Mass. Hawk Watch	alt	alternate
F.E.	First Encounter Beach, Eastham	b	banded
F.P.	Fresh Pond, Cambridge	br	breeding
F.Pk	Franklin Park, Boston	dk	dark (morph)
G40	Gate 40, Quabbin Res.	f	female
GMNWR	Great Meadows NWR	fl	fledgling
H.	Harbor	imm	immature
H.P.	Halibut Point, Rockport	juv	juvenile
HRWMA	High Ridge WMA, Gardner	lt	light (morph)
I.	Island	m	male
IRWS	Ipswich River WS	max	maximum
L.	Ledge	migr	migrating
M.V.	Martha's Vineyard	n	nesting
MAS	Mass. Audubon Society	ph	photographed
MBWMA	Martin Burns WMA, Newbury	pl	plumage
MNWS	Marblehead Neck WS	pr	pair
MSSF	Myles Standish State	S	summer (1S = 1st summer)
	Forest, Plymouth	v.o.	various observers
Mt.A.	Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambr.	W	winter (2W = second winter)
NAC	Nine Acre Corner, Concord	yg	young
Newbypt	Newburyport	#	additional observers



GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER BY GEORGE C. WEST

Bulletin of the Essex County Ornithological Club, 1935

ABOUT THE YELLOW-NOSED ALBATROSS

William A. Marcy

While spending a vacation in Conway during the last of July and early August 1935, we heard an Albatross had been shot in Fryeburg, Maine. We went over to Fryeburg the next day filled with a desire to learn more about this bird. Several inquiries with no results began to make us feel foolish; as a last court of appeal I went to the Post Office and had the good fortune to find a young lady attendant that had seen the bird and directed us to Mrs. Archibald Walker about two miles from the centre, on the Bridgeton Road, where the bird was taken.

Mrs. Walker told us that her grandson George while spending the summer vacation in 1934 with her on the farm went fishing one day in the creek where he saw an unusually large bird standing on the shore, asleep. Curiosity prompted the boy to approach. The vibrations of the ground awakened the bird and it slowly removed its head from under its wing. It looked fearlessly at George and offered no resistance when it was picked up and taken home. The Walkers did not know what bird it was and had a busy time trying to find a diet that would appeal to its appetite. Everywhere George went in his auto the bird went with him and seemed to enjoy it.

For the next ten days it was the riddle of Fryeburg. Some thought it was the "Do-do" bird made famous by Raymond Hitchcock some years ago in the musical comedy "The Prince of Pilsen."

Then, the bird died and was sent to the museum of the Portland Society of Natural History to be mounted. There it was identified as a Yellow-nosed Albatross.

Time did not permit our going to Portland to see the specimen but we had a very pleasant visit with Miss Harriet Abbot of Fryeburg in her sanctuary and heard much about birds which visit that section.

As I wished more information about the albatross I wrote to the Curator of the Portland Society and he referred me to the note in "The Auk", October 1934, pages 507-508. Some day I hope to see the specimen itself.

[Reprinted with the permission of the Essex County Ornithological Club of Massachusetts, Salem.]

ABOUT THE COVER

Golden-winged Warbler

The once regionally common Golden-winged Warbler is now an uncommon or rare sight in New England. A changing landscape and competition with its sister species, the Blue-winged Warbler, are likely involved in this attractive warbler's decline. The male Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) is stunning, with highlights of bright yellow on both wing patches and crown. His black eye and throat patches are set against gray-brown upperparts which become light gray below. Females are similar to males, but the eye and throat patches are gray rather than black. Blue-winged Warblers have a thin black eye stripe and white wing bars, are yellow below, and lack the black face and throat patches of their sister species. The two species hybridize to produce fertile offspring — “Brewster’s” and “Lawrence’s” warblers. The former resembles a Golden-wing except that the black face and throat patches are replaced by the thin black eye stripe of the Blue-wing, and there is typically a wash of yellow across the mid-breast. The latter resembles a Blue-wing except that it has the face and throat patches of a Golden-wing. The Golden-winged Warbler has no recognized subspecies. Because the two members of this superspecies hybridize and produce fertile offspring, there has been debate about whether or not they should be considered the same species. Recent mitochondrial DNA studies, however, suggest that the genetic differences are great enough to consider them different species, even though they are not entirely reproductively isolated.

The breeding range of Golden-winged Warblers is largely confined to the interior eastern and northeastern United States and southern Canada, from northern Georgia through the Great Lakes, and from Wisconsin and Minnesota east to coastal New Jersey, with a spotted distribution to northern New England. They winter in southern Central America and northern South America. In Massachusetts, Golden-winged Warblers are currently considered rare and local breeders, and very uncommon to rare migrants. This species is listed as state-endangered by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Numbers of breeding pairs appear to have peaked in the 1940s and have experienced severe decline since then. They arrive in early May and depart for their wintering grounds from late July to September.

Golden-winged Warblers are habitat specialists that require fields, marshlands, or bogs with shrubs and scattered trees and forested edges. Their territories are typically in early successional growth on abandoned farmland, burned-over areas, powerline cuts, or clear-cut patches. Territories often include woodland edge. Song is reported as being of two types. One, a *zee* followed by up to six *bee* notes, is often given by males high on perches. This serves primarily to attract mates. The second song type is described as a stutter followed by a buzzy note; this functions primarily as territorial advertisement and defense. Hybrids can sing the song of either parental species. Courtship displays by the male include flying from a perch in an arc, singing, and then gliding or flapping to the same or another perch. They sometimes make “moth flights” with exaggerated wing beats. Aggressive displays include raising crown

feathers and spreading tail feathers, along with chasing and supplanting attacks (driving a rival from a perch and then replacing him). Fighting sometimes occurs.

Female Golden-winged Warblers select the nest site and build the nest. This is usually on the ground at the base of vegetation clumps or a tree. The nest consists typically of a base of leaves with a cup of bark and woven threads of plant material; it is most often well-concealed. The average clutch is four to five pink or cream eggs, blotched with darker colors. Incubation is by the female alone and lasts until hatching, ten to eleven days. The young are then brooded by the female; fledging occurs in ten to twelve days. Both parents feed the young and continue to feed the fledglings for up to a month. Golden-winged Warblers forage largely by probing, often prying open curled leaves. They rarely hawk flying insects. They eat mostly spiders, insects, and moth larvae.

The breeding range of Golden-winged Warblers is dynamic and has been continuously changing for more than a century. It is presently expanding in the north and contracting in the south. Because they thrive in early successional habitats, as reforestation occurs Golden-winged Warbler populations decline. In areas where Blue-winged Warblers have expanded into Golden-winged Warbler range, Golden-wings have generally been extirpated within fifty years of contact, although there are a few areas where both species have maintained stable populations for more than a century. Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data from 1966-1990 suggest a general decline for Golden-winged Warblers in the United States but possibly an increase in Canada. The causes for these changes and declines are undoubtedly complex, and suggested factors include habitat change on the breeding grounds, competitive interactions and hybridization with Blue-winged Warblers, cowbird nest parasitism, and habitat destruction on the wintering grounds. We can only hope that this combination of factors does not lead to the extirpation of this beautiful warbler from our region. 🐦

William E. Davis, Jr.

About the Cover Artist

We are pleased to again welcome **Paul Donahue** as our cover artist for this issue. His work will be familiar to our readers since he has contributed many fine covers to *Bird Observer*. Paul divides his time between Maine, California, and South America; he has been painting and drawing birds since he began watching them during his early teens. His first trip to South America was in 1972, and since then he has spent a great deal of time in the neotropics, particularly in the rainforests of the western Amazon Basin, birding, painting, tape-recording, and leading natural history trips. Since 1988, his time in the tropics has been concentrated in the rainforest canopy, where he and his wife, Teresa Wood, have constructed two canopy walkways and dozens of canopy observation platforms, and taught over two thousand people how to safely climb into the forest canopy on ropes. He can be reached via email at aracari@ptc-me.net. 🐦

AT A GLANCE

April 2005



DON REIMER

As was prophetically noted in the last issue, “If something looks like a duck and swims like a duck, it’s probably a duck.” While the essence of this rather tired maxim is undeniably true, it does have its caveats. Such is the case with the April mystery bird.

Since this month’s photograph has several ducks depicted, before focusing attention on the one indicated as the mystery individual, it makes sense to determine what the other ducks in the picture are. After all, there’s another homily which suggests that “birds of a feather flock together.”

Cutting to the chase, it appears that all the waterfowl in the picture belong in the rather distinctive genus *Aythya*. This determination is based on the fact that ducks in this group typically exhibit rather long and somewhat tapered bills that are usually accented by a pale band or ring near the tip. Additionally, many *Aythya* drakes have notably dark (i.e., blackish or reddish) heads, and either gray or black backs in contrast to lighter-colored (i.e., gray or white) sides. Females in this genus regularly have a pale or whitish patch at the base of the bill and/or a prominent eye-ring. Armed with these facts, we are ready to move the identification process forward.


Clearly there are at least two different species in the flock of five ducks in the picture. The two birds in the background showing distinct white rings around the distal end of their bills, black backs, somewhat angular heads, and a white vertical

spur behind the black chest, collectively point to their being male Ring-necked Ducks. Likewise, the female duck at the right of the picture also appears to be a Ring-necked, since she shows a noticeable eye-ring and a somewhat diffuse pale or whitish patch at the base of her bill.

Slightly to the right of center is a different-looking duck — a drake showing a pale gray (not black) back, white sides, no vertical white spur behind the dark chest, a rounder and less angular head than the Ring-necked Ducks, and a bill that is only lightly ringed at the tip. This bird is also visibly larger than the adjacent Ring-necked Ducks. Based on these characters, it is fair to assume that it is a male Greater Scaup.

So we're looking at a mixed flock of *Aythya* ducks, not an uncommon scenario on many ponds and lakes across the country. BUT, we still have the unidentified mystery bird in the lower left portion of the picture. In size this bird appears to be, at best, the size of the Ring-necked Ducks in the background, and clearly smaller than the Greater Scaup beside it. Closer examination reveals that the mystery duck has a decided peak on the rear of its crown, affording an almost crested look to the back of the head. Furthermore, its back coloration looks to be somewhere between that of the Greater Scaup and the Ring-necked Ducks (not light gray and not solid black); also, its sides appear slightly lighter in color than those of the Ring-necked Ducks. And finally, the bird scarcely shows a ghost of a white spur behind the black breast, and its bill is only lightly ringed at the tip. In summary the mystery bird seems to be practically intermediate in all characters between a Ring-necked Duck and a scaup. Voila, a hybrid!

Although many hybrids are difficult to recognize in the field, some are so clearly intermediate in features that their mixed parentage is fairly obvious. Hybridization is quite common in the genus *Aythya*, as reflected by the inclusion of illustrations of such birds in several popular field guides. In this instance the mystery duck is most likely a hybrid between a Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) and a scaup, not a Greater Scaup, but a Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*). This determination is based on the small size of the bird, the conspicuously peaked and angular head shape, light gray (not white) sides, absence of a white spur behind the black chest, and the weakly patterned bill tip. Although it is tempting to suggest that the duck is a Tufted Duck X Ring-necked Duck hybrid, the fact that the dorsal color is obviously lighter than that of either of those species suggests that one parent was a scaup. While one can seldom be certain about the identity such individuals, in this case the evidence is compelling.

Don Reimer photographed the mystery hybrid bird on the Maine coast during the winter of 2004-2005. Although one seldom expects to encounter such hybrids, since both parent species regularly occur during migration and in winter in Massachusetts, local birders should be on the lookout for such individuals. 

Wayne R. Petersen

AT A GLANCE



ERIC SMITH

Can you identify this bird?

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

Western Mass Editor Wanted

Bird Observer is looking for an editor or co-editors to contribute and solicit articles and field notes from the western part of the state on a regular basis.

If you are interested in joining our editorial staff, please contact Carolyn Marsh at cmarsh@jocama.com.



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