

# Bird Observer

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VOLUME 49, NUMBER 4

AUGUST 2021



# HOT BIRDS

The first **White-faced Ibis** in the state this year was a Tax Day surprise for Sue Walas, who photographed it near Fairhaven on April 15. Next came the anticipated annual appearances in Essex County: the first in Ipswich near New England BioLabs April 17–24, then a second in Newbury near Scotland Road May 14–20. Shilo McDonald took the photo on the right.



A couple of birders who visited Mount Auburn Cemetery on April 19, before most of the warblers had even started to arrive, were richly rewarded when a **Townsend's Solitaire** showed up. The vast majority of Massachusetts records of this western thrush appear in the fall; only a handful have been found in the spring. Clara Easter took the photo on the left.

Sean Williams picked the right morning to bring his Holy Cross ornithology students to Parker River NWR, where they discovered a Reeve and **Ruff** together in one of the Salt Pannes. The one-day-wonder pair were enjoyed by several birders until they disappeared late that afternoon. Another Ruff made a briefer appearance at Mass Audubon's Allens Pond Sanctuary on June 29, showing up just long enough to be photographed in flight by Joel Eckerson. The photo is on the right.



**Mississippi Kites** appeared in twos in Massachusetts this spring. On May 26, Ted Gilliland photographed one kite in South Hadley and Will Sweet and Nick Tepper found a kite near Truro. Two kites were seen on June 5, one in Falmouth and the other in Plymouth. Two days later, a kite was spotted in Fairhaven and another was seen in Taunton. One June 19, Richard George photographed a single kite over the Arnold Arboretum in Boston. The photo on the left is by Nick Tepper.

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# Bird Observer

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# Birding the Paper City: Holyoke, Massachusetts

*David McLain*

Call me Elizur. What do you think of when someone mentions the City of Holyoke? Paper mills, canals, the massive hydroelectric dam and fish lift, the mall, the old ski area and amusement park, ethnic diversity, and Nick's Nest hot dogs come to mind. Crime, of course. Mount Holyoke College? Nope, that's in South Hadley, but it does have Holyoke Community College. You might be surprised to know Holyoke is the birthplace of volleyball and home of the Volleyball Hall of Fame. It should also be the rightful birthplace of basketball, according to my friend, the late Clara Gabler, whose father, George, introduced a certain James Naismith to a game of throwing a ball into a peach basket at the Holyoke YMCA six years before Naismith honed the sport (Wheeler 1986). Birds? Probably not. Yet on spring migration counts, I can routinely tally over 100 species, sometimes in the 120s if the timing and weather are favorable.



Holyoke has a rich history of planning and development (Connecticut Valley Historical Society 1881, Wikipedia 2021). First explored by Elizur Holyoke in the 1650s, the settlement of “Ireland Parish” would take nearly 200 years to become the township of Holyoke in 1850. The town chose its name from the Mount Holyoke Range, which Elizur had named after himself during his 1660 survey of the northern boundary of Springfield, what is now South Hadley. Rolland Thomas flanked Elizur on the west side of the river—the future Holyoke—naming that range Mount Thomas. Elizur's 1653 survey on the west side resulted in the establishment of Northampton.

The grid pattern of the downtown area and the flats were designed around the construction of a hydroelectric dam at Hadley Falls and the three levels of canals that supplied power to the numerous paper mills. Holyoke once supplied 80% of the country's writing paper. City planning provided residential areas in the highlands and designated the village of Rock Valley (West Holyoke) for light development only. The northern extension of the city, known as Smith's Ferry, was annexed from Northampton in 1909 after flooding at the Oxbow prevented Northampton firefighters from reaching the Canoe Club while it burned to the ground. Three reservoirs supplied ample drinking water, which they fluoridated. My South Hadley dentist could always tell the kids from Holyoke by their lack of cavities.

For an industrial city, the oddly shaped Holyoke landscape has a diverse array of productive habitats. Geographically, the 23-square-mile city is bordered by the mighty Connecticut River along its entire eastern edge. The expansive spillway below the dam has rapids flowing over boulders and ancient sedimentary rock. The current is also swift at the Dinosaur Footprints, while the rest of the river slowly meanders around long bends. Most of Holyoke's stretch has some degree of riparian forest with silver maple and cottonwood, which makes it “snow” in May.

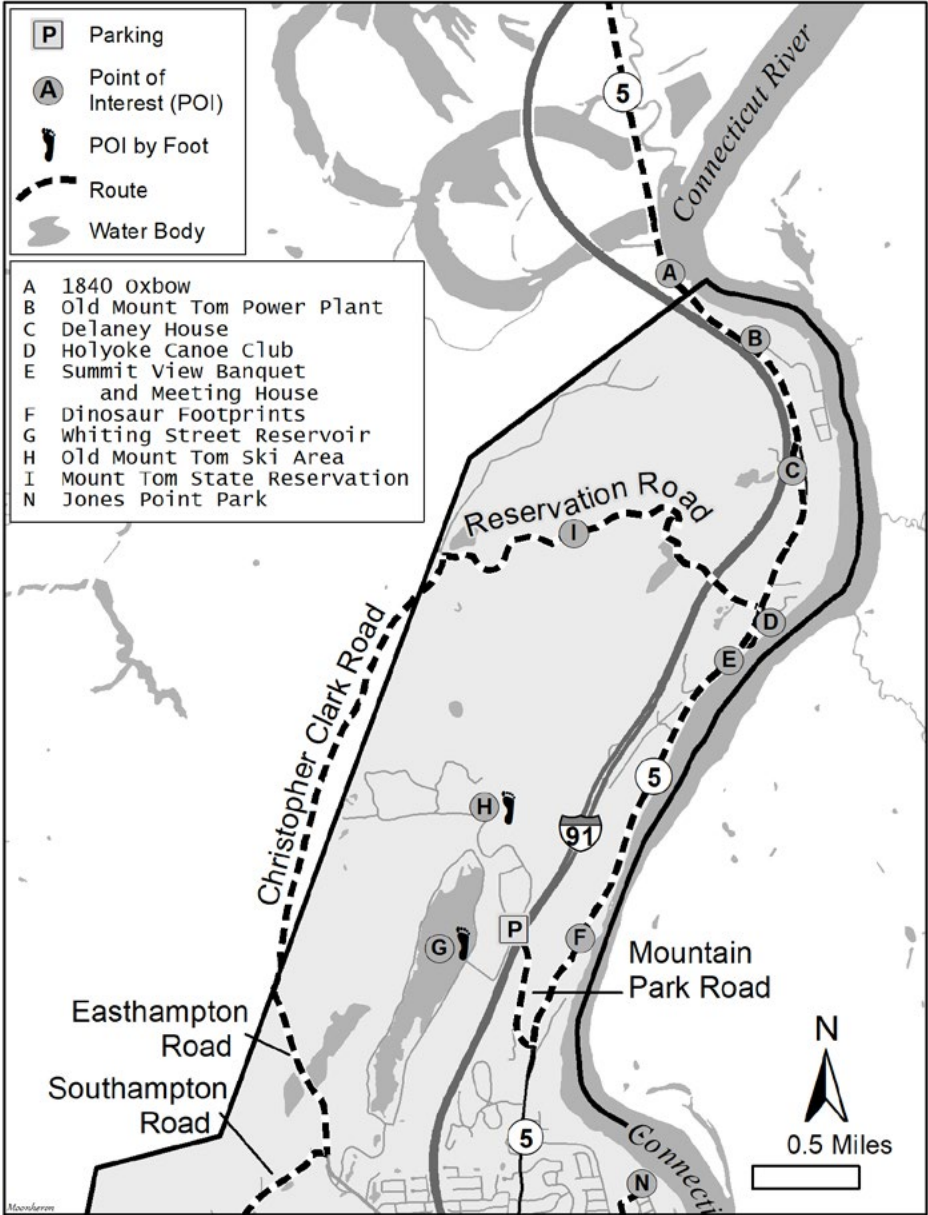


Figure 1. Northern Holyoke Overview Map.



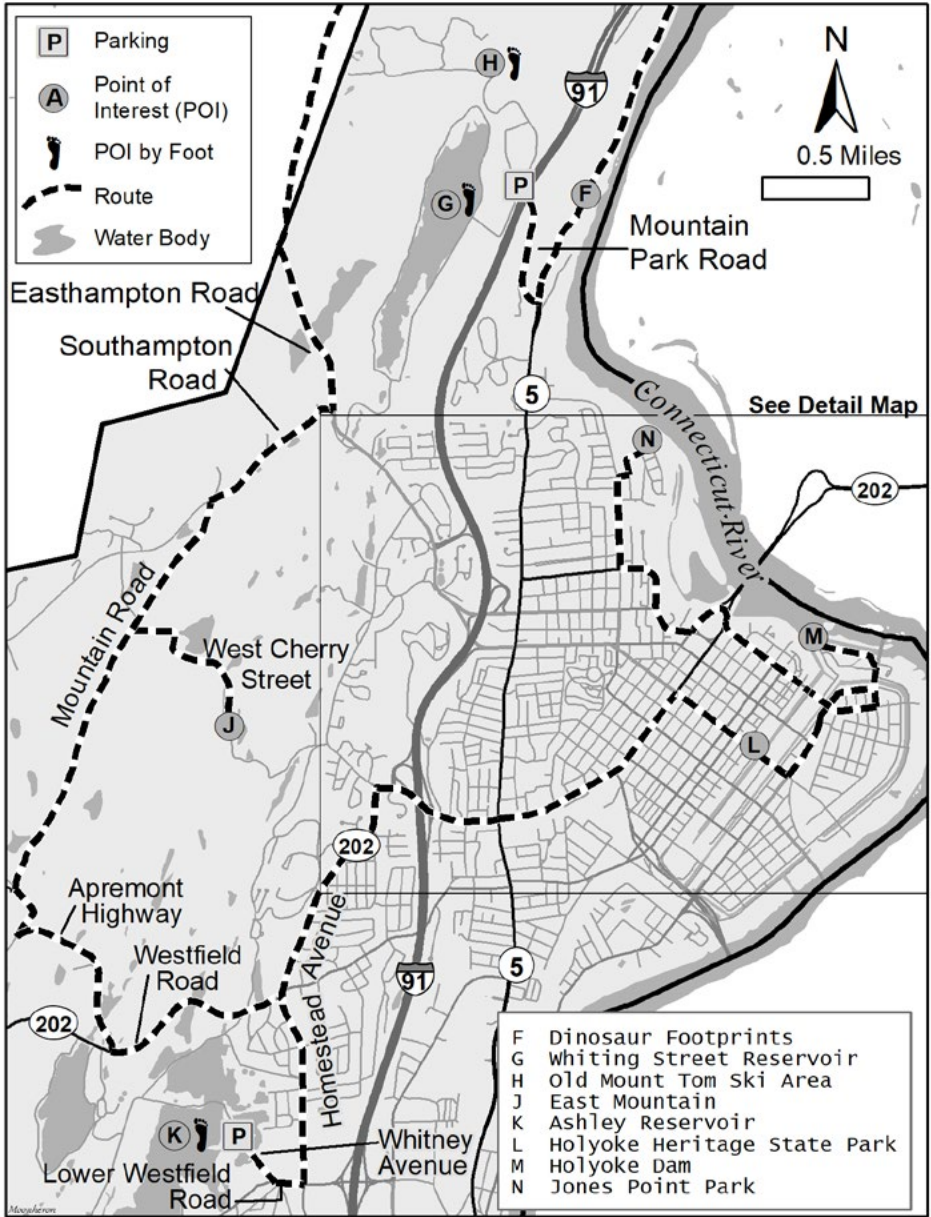


Figure 2. Southern Holyoke Overview Map.



View from the crest of the Mount Tom Quarry with Mount Holyoke peaks in the background. Amphibians breed in the pools below. Photo by David McLain.

The Mount Tom Range and East Mountain along the Metacomet Ridge compose most of the city's western half. At an elevation up to 1200 feet, Mount Tom towers above the surrounding valley, providing exposed basalt cliffs, traprock slopes, and scrub oak-blueberry-huckleberry mesa. Both ranges abut reservoirs and their associated watershed land, forming a sizable, forested greenway from north to south, broken only by a few roads. Large swaths of oak-hickory-birch-ash forest are supplemented with patches of pine and hemlock, red maple swamps, and mixed woods. The two reservoirs provide open lake and pond habitat; Ashley Reservoir also has adjacent marshes. Two golf courses on the range provide open space with small ponds.

Agricultural habitats are scarce in Holyoke. A 25-acre working demonstration farm along the Connecticut River in the Ingleside neighborhood is about all that is left, along with an orchard on Homestead Avenue. A larger farm and productive birding spot in Smith's Ferry was recently converted to a solar farm after one of the dirtiest coal power plants in New England shut down. Today, the city is nearly carbon neutral. The downtown urban area has a plethora of chimneys, flat-topped buildings, canals, and even some trees for urban wildlife.

As a Holyoke native, I have wandered most of the city for half a century—hiking, paddling, sledding, skiing, and fishing. I even have had birdies on both golf courses and eagles at both reservoirs, though now I use glass instead of irons. Since the mid-1980s, I have covered part of Holyoke for the Northampton circle of the Christmas Bird



Count (CBC), and I cover the entire city for the Allen Bird Club (ABC) annual spring migration count, a 24-hour tally of species and their numbers.

Holyoke is underbirded. The city has 16 eBird hotspots: two yellow, three green, eleven blue, with the warmer the color, the more species reported—red and orange being highest—and a tad over 1400 combined checklists submitted, which is a mere fraction of major hotspots elsewhere in the Pioneer Valley. Many birders poach Holyoke birds from the South Hadley side of the dam, and a popular birding spot on Mount Tom is actually in Easthampton. Several veteran birders have spent time in Holyoke prior to eBird's existence, and even my own sightings are lacking in the database, but some of the paucity of records may be from people's perception of the city and unfamiliarity with its natural riches. All that may change as birders discover the bounty that can be found in the Paper City.

Birding Holyoke can be done in various ways, depending on the season and your time and goals. On my ABC count in May, I try to maximize the number of species while counting individuals in representative sections of each area. While much of the city can be covered by car and on foot in a grueling 24-hour period, alternately you can spend an entire day hiking on Mount Tom or at Ashley Reservoir. Or you can head to the dam for a stationary vigil or take several quick peeks along the big river. A birder can drive to various locations for several short stops and compile a decent list in a single morning. However, hitting the 100-species mark in spring usually requires spending quality time at key sites. Keep in mind, you must be everywhere at dawn! Fall and winter are more forgiving with bird activity spread more evenly throughout the day, and not all sites are productive.

Whatever your pace and mode of transportation, this guide will lead you through numerous birding spots as you retrace Elizur's 1653 expedition, albeit over a much-changed landscape. It covers a large geographical area, so tailor your birding trip to your interests and schedule. The suggested route visits the sites progressively from north to south, as shown in the two overview maps, northern Holyoke (Figure 1) and southern Holyoke (Figure 2). Or you can skip ahead to hit productive areas earlier in the morning. A more relaxing strategy on a short time budget would be to visit different sites on successive days. Parts of the river can be birded from your dugout canoe via a few access points:

- Oxbow State Boat Ramp, 978 Mt. Tom Road, Easthampton.
- Brunelle's Marina, 1 Alvord Street, South Hadley.
- South Hadley Canal Park, 99 W Summit Street, South Hadley.
- South Hadley Dam Put-in, 128 Syrek Street, Chicopee.
- Jones Ferry State Ramp, 11 Jones Ferry Road, Holyoke.

See <<https://massachusettspaddler.com/connecticut-river-access>>.

You can reach Holyoke via Interstate 91 (I-91) from the north by taking new Exit 23 and heading south on Route 5, or from the south by taking I-91 to new Exits 10, 11, 12, 14, or 15.

## Connecticut River North

Directions: To begin this birding guide's suggested route, no matter which direction you come from, take I-91 to Exit 23, and drive south along Route 5 into Holyoke, with several river views and short stops along the way.

Target birds: Common Goldeneye (winter) and other waterfowl, eagles, swallows, orioles, migrant warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

Head south from Exit 23 on Route 5 for 2 miles to the first pull-off on the left at the city line (A). With the caveat that crossing the railroad tracks on foot is a no-no, you can view the river near the mouth of the 1840 Oxbow where Bald Eagles may be found. Downstream is Holyoke's reach of the big river.

Next, drive south for 0.6 mile, and take a left into the old power plant grounds (B). The Mount Tom Power Plant tower, an iconic scar on Holyoke's landscape, was toppled recently, and the future of that property is uncertain. Some shrubby habitat at the entrance makes good birding. A solar farm has usurped a productive cropland and brown field on the south end of the property, but shrubs and a small woodlot are birdy.

Return to Route 5, and continue south for 0.6 mile. Turn right onto Smith's Ferry Road. Look for the entrance road to the Holyoke Country Club approximately 700 feet before you get to the Delaney House (C). Country Club Road has a few spots to check, including a swamp near the parking lot. Also, scan the golf course and mountain.

Drive south on Smith's Ferry Road to return to Route 5. In 0.7 mile, turn left onto Old Ferry Road, and head north to the Holyoke Canoe Club (D) for another look at the river. (Brunelle's Marina on the east side of the river in South Hadley has a better view of the Holyoke side, as fellow CBC counters over there tell me what I've missed.)

Drive south on Old Ferry Road to return to Route 5, and in 0.2 mile pull into the Summit View Banquet and Meeting House (E) on the right. Park in the back lot. A walkway leads north to Jericho, a social services organization; the pond often produces a Green Heron. Take several looks in the open wooded area to catch a good mixed warbler flock here when the timing is right.

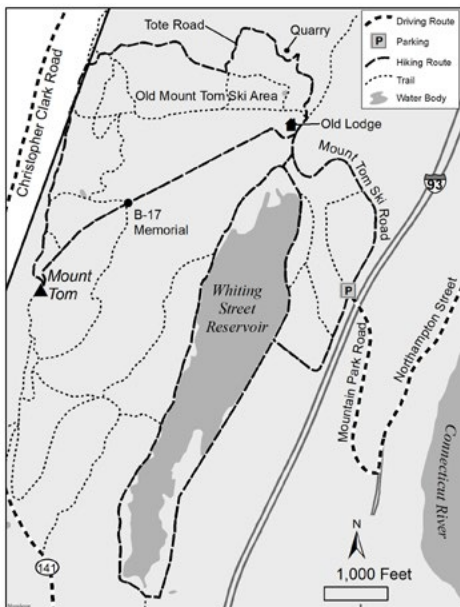
The next stop farther south is the Dinosaur Footprints (F) at a turnout on the left, 1.5 miles past Summit View. The mud from the ancient riverbank hardened to sandstone, revealing the intact trails of the first scientifically described tracks of early dinosaurs (Trustees 2021). You will have to write in the proto-birds you find from 200 million years ago and hope for a sympathetic reviewer. While your inner paleontologist is kicking in, modern dinosaurs, such as Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Redstart, and Baltimore Oriole, will be flying and singing around you in the open riparian forest in season. A stream at the end of the footprints viewing area may harbor a Louisiana Waterthrush. A trail leads down to the river where you will see a spectacular display of varved sandstone layers just beyond the sign telling you not to cross the railroad tracks. Scanning the river, you will find large flocks of migrating swallows in March and April. The flocks move up the section of rapids and then drop back downstream to start over. In winter, the rapids are a reliable place for Common Goldeneye, with an occasional Barrow's Goldeneye. With snow, the parking area is usually closed. I park along the

entrance road to Whiting Street Reservoir and the old Mount Tom Ski Area and then cut through the woods to the ruins of the old entrance road and walk down Route 5 to the Footprints.

### Whiting Street Reservoir and Mount Tom Ski Area

**Directions:** From the Dinosaur Footprints, continue south on Route 5 for 0.6 mile to the next right on Mt. Park Road. Park either after or before the I-91 overpass, and walk west to the gates. The gate on the left leads to the Whiting Street Reservoir (G); the one on the right leads to the old Mount Tom Ski Area (H).

**Target birds:** Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Hooded Merganser, American Coot, Common Raven, Eastern Whip-poor-will, American Woodcock, Wild Turkey, Peregrine Falcon, Eastern Bluebird, Field Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, Indigo Bunting, Prairie Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler.



**Figure 3.** Whiting Street Reservoir and old Mount Tom Ski Area.

Several hiking options are available from here (see Figure 3): a loop around the reservoir, a climb up the old ski slopes, an alternate route to Mount Tom Peak, a visit to the abandoned quarry, a side trip to a red cedar stand, or a connection to the trails at the Mount Tom State Reservation. Except for the road around the reservoir, most of the other routes will give you a good hill workout.

Take the gate to the left to head to the reservoir. The watershed forest along the way is a mix of pine, maple, and oak frequented by Brown Creeper, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Winter Wren. Check the stand of Norway Spruce before the pump house for Golden-crowned Kinglet, winter finches, and boreal warblers. Climb the steep stairway to the pump house to be rewarded with a scenic view of the long north-south reservoir against the backdrop of Mount Tom. Here

you have a choice of taking the three-mile loop around the reservoir or heading north to a trail to the old ski area.

Waterfowl most often congregate toward the north end. The south end is not visible from the pump house and has limited views from the road, but sometimes has mergansers or even a Gadwall or scaup. I usually head north where mixed flocks of ducks and geese are easy to scan. A spotting scope is helpful, but cumbersome if you are planning a long hike beyond the reservoir. My Nikon Coolpix P900 acts as a suitable lightweight scope for identification. In late fall and early spring, Ring-necked

Ducks can number over 100 and are often joined by American Coot, Ruddy Duck, Hooded Merganser, Lesser Scaup, and Greater Scaup. American Wigeon will follow the coots, plotting to steal their food after they surface from a dive.

If you have not killed your time budget just watching the ducks, continue around the north end of the reservoir to the second bend—about a mile from the pump house—to a trail on the right. The trail comes out on Mount Tom Ski Road. Winter Wren often skulks around the rocky slope and cascade here. Immediately to the left, a gated road leads steadily up to the WHYN radio tower at Mount Tom Peak, passing by the Mount Tom B-17 Memorial where a WWII plane carrying 25 servicemen tragically crashed on their way home. Before taking this road up the mountain, keep going a short way to the base of the ski slopes, listening and scanning for birds, then return to the gated access road to the summit. Worm-eating Warblers and an occasional Cerulean Warbler, along with Common Ravens, raptors, Great Crested Flycatchers, breeding Dark-eyed Juncos, tinkling ground crickets, crackling grasshoppers, leeward butterflies, and a spectacular view make the arduous hike worthwhile.

For a geologically interesting loop, continue north from the radio tower along the Metacomet-Monadnock (M-M) Trail for about a half mile to another radio tower and trail to the top of the Upper T slope of the former ski area for a shorter direct route down to the lodge, or continue a short way along the M-M Trail to the next tower and the top of the main spoke of ski slopes. If you find yourself here at dusk, Eastern Whip-poor-wills and American Woodcocks will take your mind off how far from the car you are. I hope you planned the trip with a fully charged phone, a snack, and plenty of water. But it is all downhill from here, almost.

The Upper and Lower T slopes provide an excellent example of old-field habitat. The grassy slopes now have young pines and scattered shrubs that favor Field Sparrow, Prairie Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Indigo Bunting, and Wild Turkey. I have found Northern Shrike multiple times in winter—once on a CBC—making the climb up from the base justify the many times I have left shrike-less.

At the trail by the second tower, two chairlift dismounts were the gateway to the Big Tom, Waterfall, and Vista ski slopes, with the Sidewinder stemming off the Vista. Head north along the top of the slopes to Tote Road. The Tote Road Trail veers off to connect with other Reservation trails or eventually back to the old base lodge. Continue on the actual Tote Road, where rebel skiers from my youth would break the rules and wreck their skis on this rocky, unofficial slope trail. As you descend, listen for the *sweet-sweet, sweat-sweat, choo-choo-choo* of Northern Waterthrush at Mountain Park Reservoir, a water supply for snowmaking machines, or look for a Hermit Thrush surviving on winterberry in winter. Just beyond the pond, you will come to the top of the Boulevard slope before viewing the quarry.

The quarry, abandoned since 2012, has been the center of controversy recently because a Holyoke development company seeks to fill in the huge crater with construction material over a 20-year period (Johnson 2021). The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), however, has stakes in the property from a 2002 purchase of the Mount Tom Ski Area. To some Holyokers, the

quarry is a scar on the landscape, with some homeowners rallying around slogans such as “Mount Tom: I don’t dig it.” To Peregrine Falcons, it is an occasional nesting and roosting site. To hikers, it is a scary, yet geologically interesting spectacle.

Tote Road has two views of the quarry from above for scanning its cliffs. After the second overlook, the trail meets the Boulevard slope with old-field habitat and Blue-winged Warblers amid shrubby areas in spring. A sumac stand may yield bluebirds, robins, and other frugivores in fall and winter, while spruce plantings add a boreal element to the landscape. Bluebirds, hard to find in Holyoke, sometimes nest around the base of the slopes. The old ski lodge and many of the outbuildings have been demolished, and the future of the site, formerly owned by Holyoke Boys & Girls Club, is uncertain.

When you get to the former ski lodge, you have two choices: you can return to your car via the Mount Tom Ski Road, or you can continue hiking. For the red cedar stand and Knox, Bray Valley, and Bray Loop trails, refer to the Trustees’ trail map of Little Tom: <<https://thetrustees.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Little-Tom-Trail-Map.pdf>>. Head north to view the base of the quarry before looking for the Knox Trail to the east. The dotted spur off the Knox Trail on the Trustees’ map leads to a red cedar stand near a Route 91 rest area. Be optimistic for the namesake Cedar Waxwing, along with thrushes and possible Hooded Warbler. A small pond downslope may attract an occasional Belted Kingfisher.

The Knox Trail connects to Bray Loop Trail where you can take a right along a stream to a swamp before looping back from Lake Bray; or go left to the Bray Valley Trail that will bring you back to the quarry and ski lodge. From the lodge, continue down the entrance road past the Mountain Park Theater lawn. The shrubby wet thicket down the hill is productive before you head up the last hill to your car.

### **Mount Tom State Reservation**

Directions: To get to Mount Tom State Reservation from the Whiting Street Reservoir, turn left onto Route 5, then in 2.5 miles turn left onto Reservation Road. From I-91, take Exit 23 to Route 5, go south for 3.4 miles, then turn right onto Reservation Road. Alternatively, from the west, take Route 141 to Christopher Clark Road (see Figure 1).

Target birds: Peregrine Falcon, Common Raven, Worm-eating Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Winter Wren, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Scarlet Tanager.

Managed by the DCR, Mount Tom State Reservation covers 2,000 acres of the Mount Tom Range. The reservation charges a \$5.00 fee between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Twenty-two miles of trails would take days to cover, and some are steep, so shorter loop trails and stops along the road are ideal for birding. Here is the link for the DCR’s reservation map: <<https://www.mass.gov/doc/mt-tom-state-reservation-trail-map/download>>.

From the main entrance on Reservation Road, drive down the hill to the parking lot



for Lake Bray on the left. The Bray Loop Trail is relatively flat and provides looks at the pond as well as a small stream and marshy swamp, a good place to pick up Pileated Woodpecker and Eastern Wood-Pewee, with hopes for Olive-sided Flycatcher. You can also access this loop from the Mount Tom Ski Area (see Figure 3 and the Little Tom map: <<https://thetrustees.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Little-Tom-Trail-Map.pdf>>). With time and energy, add the Lost Boulder Trail to the loop for a traverse through a unique hickory forest. On the east side of the road from Lake Bray, Bray Brook Marsh is an extensive shrub and sedge marsh with abundant birds, including Hooded Merganser, Alder and Willow flycatchers, and Chestnut-sided Warbler.

Continue on Reservation Road where several pulloffs and trailheads provide quick stop-and-listen birding or longer trail excursions. Louisiana Waterthrushes sing their warbled song along Cascade Brook. Blackburnian Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Ovenbird, and Scarlet Tanager are common throughout the extensive forest. Watch for Swainson's Thrush on the road in May.

At the stone house Visitor Center and Pavilion, scan the mowed lawn for field and edge species before taking a relatively flat loop from Keystone Trail to Quarry Trail on the south side with a few small, wooded ponds, or the Monadnock-Metacomet (M-M) Trail on the north side up to the lookout tower at Goat Peak. The tower, which can alternatively be reached on foot from the closed section of Christopher Clark Road, is a great place to watch for hawks and warblers in spring and fall. I have found Red Crossbill on this trek in winter. Tom Gagnon has a long-term tally of Common Nighthawks from his tower vigils. If the tower is crowded, try an opening just downslope, or climb the M-M Trail from the Pavilion to Whiting Peak. With time and energy and plenty of water, continue along the M-M Trail or the closed road to the vista overlook at Mt. Nonotuck. A short trail from there will take you to see the ruins of the Eyrie House, a once-thriving hotel that burned in 1901 (Atlas Obscura 2021). You might see birds too.

Back at the Visitor Center, take Christopher Clark Road to Route 141, stopping at the scenic overlooks along the way and birding along the road. A microburst windstorm swept through on October 8, 2014, toppling and topping a swath of trees. Described by some as a devastating destruction at the time, the storm damage was merely a disturbance that reset the forest to early succession. The area now supports a wide variety of birds not common elsewhere on the Mount Tom Range, including Winter Wren, Eastern Towhee, and Prairie Warbler. The slope between the road and the peak is where birders come to see or hear Worm-eating Warbler. Come back by foot at dusk from the Route 141 entrance to hear the incessant calls of Eastern Whip-poor-wills, another beneficiary of the microburst. Keep in mind that Christopher Clark Road is in Easthampton if your birding is restricted to Holyoke. Birds at the peak, such as Peregrine Falcon and Common Raven, are in Holyoke.

Before Memorial Day, the entrance gates to the reservation are usually not open until 8:00 am and close at 6:00 pm, so plan accordingly. When the gates are open, you can hike to the Mount Tom Peak and Whiting Peak by leaving one car at the Route 141 entrance and another at the Pavilion parking lot. Or take an up-and-back hike to Mount Tom Peak from the trailhead opposite Mt. Joe To Go drive-thru coffee shack on Route

141, or to Whiting Peak from the Pavilion parking lot. Another trail on the west side of Route 141 leads through deciduous forest and near a cattail marsh.

In winter, the best birding in the reservation is around Lake Bray and trails through hemlock forest, such as Kay Bee Trail, T. Bagg Trail, the parking lot at the upper end of the Keystone Trail, and the closed road to Goat Peak. My Christmas Bird Count area usually has the high count of Golden-crowned Kinglets and Brown Creepers. Just as nuthatches associate with chickadees, a creeper or two are sure to be amid a flock of hovering kinglets. Their high-pitched two-note call will help tip you off to their presence, as will a glimpse of a bird flying down from the top of a tree trunk to the base of another where it begins its creeping ascent in search of insects. Avoid areas of extensive hardwoods in winter; I have walked for miles tallying only a single Hairy Woodpecker.

From Route 141, you have the option to head to East Mountain, Ashley Reservoir, or downtown to the dam.

## **East Mountain**

Directions: Exit the park via the western entrance on Christopher Clark Road. Turn Left onto Route 141 for 0.8 miles, then turn right onto Southampton Road. In 0.7 mile, turn left onto Mountain Road, and in another 0.7 mile turn left onto West Cherry Street.

Target Species: Eastern Whip-poor-will, Sora, raptors, woodland warblers.

East Mountain is a continuation of the Mount Tom Range through West Holyoke, and the two are connected by the Metacomet-Monadnock (M-M) Trail. At 778 feet in elevation, its rise above the surrounding terrain is not as dramatic, but the mountain is no less extensive. The habitat is more uniform oak-hickory-ash woodland with scrub oak along the plateau. Basalt cliffs are visible but less dramatic than those of Mount Tom. An impoundment of Broad Brook with marshy bordering wetlands off West Cherry Street had been a prime birding area before development of a few houses cut off access.

MassWildlife, the Holyoke Conservation Commission, the Connecticut River Watershed Council, the cities of Easthampton and West Springfield, and other entities protect much of East Mountain (MassWildlife 2021). Pick up the New England National Scenic Trail, which includes the M-M Trail, at Route 141, where you can choose to hike short, medium, and long loops. Access to the middle section and a quicker route to the cliffs is from West Cherry Street. Access the southern end from Route 202 or Apremont Highway. Also, you can access trails on the west side of Holyoke Community College.

I prefer to start in the middle at the gate on West Cherry Street, but birding is good along the road from the pond to the gate and along the discontinued road beyond the gate. The pond has a marshy edge with Swamp Sparrow and Sora. Eastern Whip-poor-will breeds on the scrub oak cliffs and can be heard from below after dark. Wood warblers, vireos, thrushes, and tanagers are main targets in the forest here.

For a hike to the cliffs and some raptor-watching, look for a trail opposite the

Holyoke Revolver Club before the gate. The trail is steep at first, then winds around for less than a mile to a scenic overlook of West Holyoke. Though not as good for hawks as Goat Peak, the cliffs give a view of the open sky away from the crowds of Mount Tom. Take the trail back the way you came. Or you can plan a longer loop to the south that will come out on the discontinued road.

### Ashley Reservoir

**Directions:** From West Cherry Street, take a left onto Mountain Road. In 1.3 miles, bear left onto Rock Valley Road, and in 0.25 mile turn left on Apremont Highway, which comes to a T at Route 202 (Westfield Road). Take a left onto Route 202, and in 0.9 mile turn right at the first light onto Homestead Avenue. Continue 0.9 mile to the next light, and turn right onto Lower Westfield Road. In 700 feet, turn right onto Whitney Avenue, and park in the lot after the Elks Lodge. You can hike the trails and either walk or bike the reservoir loop.

**Target Species:** Migrant waterfowl, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Common Loon, Spotted and Least sandpipers, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, warblers—Wilson’s, Mourning, Magnolia, Pine—and fluffy, downy goose chicks.

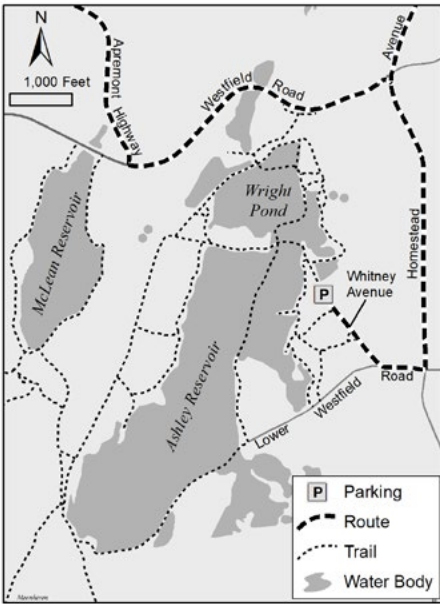


Figure 4. Ashley Reservoir.

Ashley Reservoir is a series of ponds with a perimeter road, crisscrossing causeways, and trails leading to East Mountain and McLean Reservoir. The surrounding forest is a mix of oak stands and pine plantations. The main ponds are clear, with submerged vegetation along shallow edges where you might find yourself fish watching for bass and pickerel more than birdwatching, especially if you have polarized sunglasses. Smaller ponds have floating and emergent vegetation, attracting dabbling ducks and marsh birds.

The road around the reservoir is 3.5 miles, and numerous trails can make the adventure much longer. I find that birding by bike around the road saves time and energy. The trails to East Mountain are rugged hilly ATV trails, so I lock my bike to a tree and hike them on foot.

From the parking lot, cross the gate and walk down the road to the reservoir. Before you reach the main ponds, a shrubby wetland on the left is full of swampy marsh birds. A small pond on the right may produce a Green Heron among dozens of turtles. Take the trail on the right just after the pond for a short walk into the woods for some warblers and a BMX course. Return

and continue on to the main ponds where you will come to a four-way trail intersection. Take the causeway to the left.

The largest pond will be on your right, where diving ducks in spring and fall may include scaup, scoters, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, or even a Long-tailed Duck or Bufflehead. Look for loons and grebes as well, or perhaps a Bonaparte's Gull. Spotted, Solitary, and Least sandpipers may forage along the shore of the causeway, especially at the widened section.

When you reach the trees on the causeway, an open area on the left will help boost your species list with Killdeer, Least Flycatcher, or Savannah Sparrow in the weedy field and sandpit. I have had spring Yellow-bellied Flycatchers in this area and elsewhere at Ashley.

Continuing along the perimeter road, you will come to an intersection with another entrance gate on the left. A footpath across the intersection leads to views of two marshy ponds where you might find dabbling ducks, such as Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, and Wood Duck, along with herons, swallows, and Belted Kingfishers. You will get another look at the larger pond on the left as you continue around the perimeter road.

The southern end of Ashley Reservoir is a destination spot. Check the marshy shoreline in front of the pump house for shorebirds. The left side of the road parallels a railroad track where dense, shrubby habitat is productive for migrant warblers such as Wilson's, Mourning, Canada, or even Connecticut. More thickets are around the bend toward the dam spillway and outlet stream where you can find Louisiana Waterthrush.

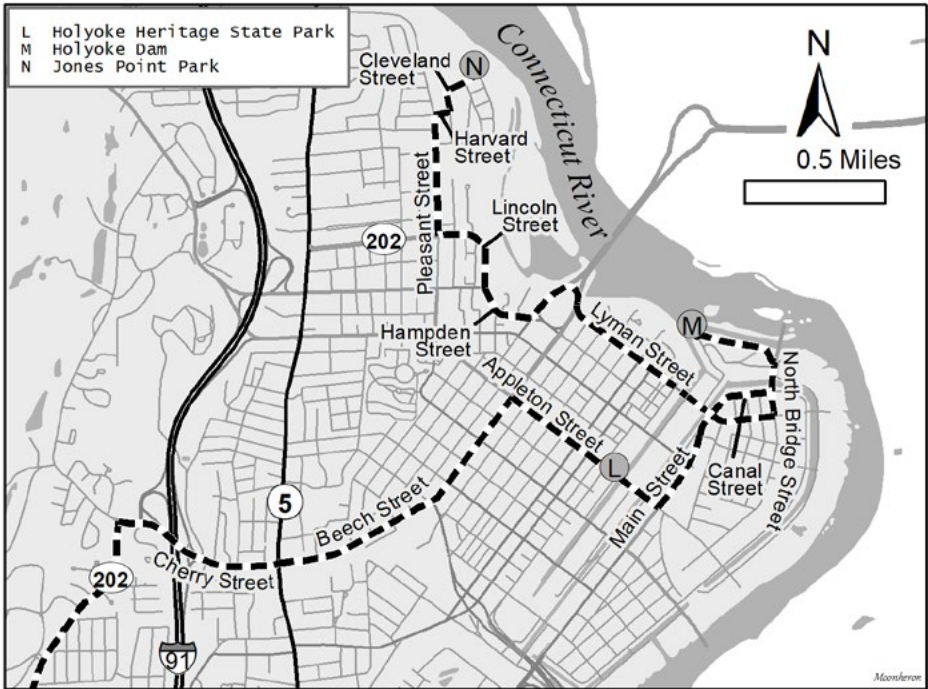
A trail on the left side of the road past the spillway leads to East Mountain and the M-M Trail. Turning right will lead to the north for a brief look at McLean Reservoir. From there, head west to see more of the East Mountain ridge, or loop back to the reservoir and bird your way back to the Elks Lodge.

### **Downtown Holyoke & Heritage State Park**

Directions: To Heritage State Park from Ashley Reservoir and the Elks Lodge, return to Lower Westfield Road. Turn left onto Homestead Avenue, driving for 2.0 miles straight through the lights at Westfield Road and past Holyoke Community College. At the T-intersection, turn right onto Cherry Street. When you cross Route 5 (Northampton Street), Cherry Street becomes Beech Street. In 1.1 miles, turn right onto Appleton Street. Heritage State Park is on the left in 0.4 mile.

Target birds: Peregrine Falcon, Chimney Swift, Pine Grosbeak, city birds.

Downtown Holyoke is an urban habitat with a surprising array of birdlife, and Holyoke Heritage State Park is a green oasis in this urban setting. Although eBird records show only a handful of species, not including the dam area, Greg Saulmon has amassed a list of over 80 species, including hawks, three falcons, herons, waterfowl, winter finches, and several warblers (Saulmon 2021). His blog makes an excellent guide to the downtown area, highlighted by Heritage State Park with its fruiting trees



**Figure 5.** Holyoke Center detail.

for Pine Grosbeaks; buildings for nesting Peregrine Falcon, American Kestrel, and Red-tailed Hawk; and canals for waterfowl, including Common Goldeneye. The power company drains the three-level canals annually for maintenance, which exposes mudflats for a plethora of waders and shorebirds. In 1985, Seth Kellogg reported an impressive list of plovers and sandpipers—listed on the dam’s eBird hotspot—which may have been associated with the draining of the canals. On October 25, 2012, a Barred Owl became a spectacle for passersby on the Holyoke Health Center. It was injured and was taken to rehab, but it is likely that many other owls pass through the city undetected.

### **Holyoke Dam**

Directions: from Heritage State Park, continue southeast on Appleton Street, and turn left in 0.2 mile onto Main Street, which becomes Canal Street at the traffic light. From Canal Street, turn left onto Route 116 in 0.3 mile, and take the second immediate left in about 600 feet at the entrance to the Robert E. Barrett Fishway at the dam.

When the fishway is closed, you can visit the Holyoke Dam from the South Hadley side of the Connecticut River. After the fishway, continue on Route 116 over the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge to South Hadley, taking a déjà vu left onto Main Street, which becomes Canal Street. Park at the South Hadley Public Library lot or continue to the Canal Park.



Target birds: Bald Eagle, Osprey, Common Merganser, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Rough-winged Swallow, Bank Swallow, gulls, shorebirds, and rarities.

The Holyoke Gas & Electric Company operates the Barrett Fishway, an elevator for lifting anadromous fish, such as American shad, blue-backed herring, sea lamprey, and Atlantic salmon over the dam. A glass viewing area lets you watch the fish swim through a channel after getting a lift from the elevator. An outdoor platform lets you watch the elevator in action. It also gives you a great view of the dam and the spillway. However, the facility is open to the public only during the shad run in spring, and it was closed entirely in 2020 and 2021 due to pandemic restrictions. Check online for its status before planning a visit.

When the fishway is closed, proceed to the South Hadley side where you can access a viewing walkway near the library. That site also was closed during the pandemic but reopened in 2021. Farther along Canal Street, you will find a viewing platform at the Canal Park where you can see the river upstream from the dam. A spotting scope is helpful from the platform.

When the mighty Connecticut River is in flood stage, the current is awesome and violent below the dam, but birds are not always there to admire nature's power. The best times are at lower stages when birds can perch on top of the dam or on a shelf below the dam wall, and on exposed rocks that create pools and eddies downstream. A treed island provides shelter for warblers and perches for eagles.

The spillway below the Holyoke Dam attracts a wide variety of birds. If you are hoping to find unusual species in Holyoke, the dam area is probably your best destination. Eventually, something rare will show up. The usual suspects of gulls, cormorants, herons, and mergansers often have rarities among them. Recent sightings include Black-legged Kittiwake, Iceland Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, Great Cormorant, Long-tailed Duck, Brant, American Golden-Plover, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, Little Blue Heron, Glossy Ibis, and Black Vulture, with Red-throated Loon, Greater Scaup, and White-winged Scoter being spotted from the platform at the Canal Park upstream. In May, when Common Merganser is hard to find elsewhere, the dam is a reliable location. In 2019, a harbor seal with a troubled childhood found its way upriver to the dam (Kinney 2019).

### **Jones Point Park**

Directions: From either side of the dam, head back to North Bridge Street in Holyoke, and turn right on Canal Street. At the light, turn right onto Lyman Street. (If construction is still in progress, follow the detour to get back to Lyman Street.) At the end of Lyman Street, turn right onto Route 202, and quickly bear left on the partial roundabout. Turn right at the lights onto Hampden Street, and in 0.3 mile bear right at the top of the hill onto Lincoln Street. Continue around the bend, and in 0.3 mile turn right at the light onto Pleasant Street. In 0.4 mile, turn right onto Harvard Street, then turn left onto Cleveland Street. Park at the bottom of a dangerous skateboarding hill

that left me with a scarred elbow. The parking lot is on the left at the end of Cleveland Road in 0.2 mile.

Jones Point Park comprises a small woodlot, tennis courts, and a Little League baseball field where I once hit three homers in one game and got thrown out at home trying for a fourth. My longest hit ball of the game was actually caught by a fly catcher. The woodlot upslope from the tennis courts has a trail through it that passes a small pond before coming back to the fields. You might pick up a Pileated Woodpecker and Wood Thrush in the woodlot, while scaring up a Green Heron from the pond.

Behind home plate, an opening in the fence leads to railroad tracks. To the left is a view of the Connecticut River at a place called High Rock, where some kids would play hookey. (I never did!) To the right is a series of trails that lead through open floodplain forest and clearings with a variety of birds, including Brown Thrasher, orioles, warblers, vireos, woodpeckers, and Bald Eagle. A large cattail marsh bordering Log Pond Cove may produce waterfowl, rails, and Marsh Wren. It looks like a good spot for Least Bittern. It is illegal to cross the railroad tracks, and this birdy location can be reached by launching a canoe or kayak at the South Hadley Canal Park and paddling across.

You now have taken a whirlwind tour of Holyoke with its rich diversity of birds, habitats, geological features, and historical artifacts. You could hike for days on its trails, so be prepared. In winter, I have found the most productive locales are along the Connecticut River and the Holyoke Dam, the coniferous areas of Mount Tom State Reservation, the reservoirs if there is open water, and the crabapples at Heritage State Park. Do not leave valuables in your car, which can be said for many places beyond Holyoke as well. Be sure to stop for lunch at Schermerhorn's Seafood on Westfield Road for fish & chips—my bird count tradition—or Nick's Nest on Route 5 for a hot dog and baked beans. Happy birding! Elizur. 🐦

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## Volunteer Staff Openings at Bird Observer

### **BIRD SIGHTINGS COMPILER—BRISTOL COUNTY**

### **BIRD SIGHTINGS COMPILER—WORCESTER COUNTY**

*Bird Observer* is looking for Bird Sightings Compilers for Bristol County and Worcester County. Our long-running Bird Sightings column relies on data from compilers around the state. The compilers for Bristol and Worcester counties would be responsible for sending in reports every two months of species seen in those respective counties for the previous two months. Species should be reported in a spreadsheet template and include sightings that are representative of high counts, early / late dates and anything rare or unusual. The compilers should be familiar with the birds (and birders!) of Bristol or Worcester counties, be comfortable with using a spreadsheet and be able to use [eBird.org](http://eBird.org) to query sightings. These are volunteer positions.

Interested candidates should contact Bird Sightings Editor, Neil Hayward, at: [neil.hayward@gmail.com](mailto:neil.hayward@gmail.com).

# Eleven Years of Birding at Halibut Point State Park, Rockport, Massachusetts

*Peter H. Van Demark*



Frozen quarry, April 2015. All photographs by the author.

I started leading bird walks at Rockport's Halibut Point State Park in 2003 with Greg Pronevitz, as a summer complement to the walks led in the winter months by John Nove, the park's visitor services supervisor. The park is centered on a large quarry that was used until the collapse of the Cape Ann granite industry in 1929. The Trustees of Reservations acquired 12 acres in 1929 and created Halibut Point Reservation in 1934. What is now the visitor center was built as a fire control tower for coastal defense against German U-boats during World War II. The state purchased 56 acres in 1981 to create the park. It is a popular park, with recent renovations designed to increase parking, ease visitor access, and provide a modernized visitor center.

A brochure of "Summer 2004 Programs" listed my walks on June 20, July 18, and August 15 from 8:00 am to 10:00 am, starting what eventually became the pattern of park-sponsored walks on the third Sunday of the month. Thanks to Ramona Latham, then with The Trustees, the walks became year-round in 2009, only skipping December because the Christmas Bird Count for Cape Ann is also on the third Sunday. The Brookline Bird Club began listing these walks as Beginner Bird Walks after The Trustees stopped having scheduled events at their properties on Cape Ann.

I began a spreadsheet of sightings during these walks in November 2009, recording species seen or heard, with no counts. This list is not a scientific survey or a comprehensive overview of Halibut Point birds, but simply a snapshot of what one might expect to see or hear during bird walks through the seasons.

The result is eleven full years of sightings—2010 to 2020—for walks eleven months a year, always on the third Sunday from 8:00 to 10:00 am, usually with me as leader. For the months I was away Jim Berry, Barbara Buls, Caroline Haines, and Eric Hutchins acted as leaders. Only three walks were cancelled, due to really bad weather, although there were three walks when I was the only attendee and two more for which I have no record of the sightings.

On the 116 walks for which there are records, a total of 144 species was recorded. The two species most often observed were Herring Gulls, seen on 109 walks, and Blue Jays, on 101. The following list shows the 40 species that were recorded 22 times or more, for an average of at least twice a year. The species in italics were those that were observed at least once in each of the eleven months.

<i>Herring Gull</i>	109	Eastern Towhee	43
<i>Blue Jay</i>	101	Harlequin Duck	42
<i>Black-capped Chickadee</i>	94	Eastern Kingbird	34
<i>American Crow</i>	93	<i>White-breasted Nuthatch</i>	33
<i>Great Black-backed Gull</i>	89	Black Scoter	32
<i>Northern Cardinal</i>	82	Tree Swallow	32
<i>Mallard</i>	81	Common Yellowthroat	31
<i>American Robin</i>	81	Carolina Wren	29
<i>Common Eider</i>	80	Cedar Waxwing	29
Double-crested Cormorant	79	Surf Scoter	27
<i>American Goldfinch</i>	66	Red-breasted Merganser	27
<i>Mourning Dove</i>	57	Ring-billed Gull	27
Gray Catbird	57	Long-tailed Duck	26
<i>House Sparrow</i>	56	Baltimore Oriole	25
Northern Gannet	55	Barn Swallow	24
<i>Tufted Titmouse</i>	55	European Starling	24
<i>Downy Woodpecker</i>	54	Common Grackle	24
Song Sparrow	48	House Finch	24
White-winged Scoter	44	Northern Flicker	22
Common Loon	43	Brown Thrasher	22

At the other end of the spectrum, 33 species, listed below in taxonomic order, were recorded only once on these walks in the eleven years.

Greater Scaup	Iceland Gull	Brown Creeper
Hooded Merganser	Great Shearwater	Veery
Ruddy Duck	Brown Pelican	Swainson's Thrush
Ring-necked Pheasant	Great Egret	Purple Finch
Semipalmated Plover	Northern Harrier	Snow Bunting
Semipalmated Sandpiper	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Savannah Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Ovenbird
American Woodcock	Blue-headed Vireo	Nashville Warbler
Dovekie	Warbling Vireo	Blackburnian Warbler
Thick-billed Murre	Common Raven	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Black-headed Gull	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Hooded Warbler



In the same context, there are spectacular movements of seabirds from late fall to early spring involving many species and tens of thousands of birds. These movements are well described in Rick Heil's excellent summary of his seawatches from Andrew's Point (Heil 2001). The same migrations can be observed at Halibut Point, and large flocks have been seen on our monthly walks. Although my spreadsheet shows species recorded by our groups over the months and does not include counts, those counts are included on my recent eBird lists, as well as on earlier daily field cards that I submitted to the Brookline Bird Club.

To provide some context regarding birds seen at Halibut Point on these walks, Chris Leahy—Mass Audubon's emeritus Bertrand Chair of Field Ornithology—has provided me a list of 271 species that have been recorded by keen observers of birds at Halibut Point. The list includes observations from:

- Robert C. Hooper, an ardent birder and conservationist, who lived on a property abutting the park for more than two decades and recorded a total of 234 species, including 28 listed only by him.
- Leahy himself, who has lived on Cape Ann since the 1970s and birded frequently at Halibut, with a total of 217 species, including 25 listed only by him.
- Martin Ray, Gloucester naturalist, photographer, and blogger, who has focused on the biota of Halibut in recent years, with a total of 166 species, including three listed only by him, all documented with photos.

Among the 144 species seen on the walks, four were not listed by Hooper, Leahy, or Ray—Brown Pelican, Common Raven, Hooded Warbler, and Warbling Vireo. In addition, Leahy lists 41 other species known to occur on Cape Ann but not yet recorded at Halibut Point on these lists; other observers may well have recorded some of these “missing” species.

Table 1 shows, for the eleven years of bird walks, the number of years a species was observed each month, in taxonomic order. Table 2 shows the variation in sightings by month. April, May, and November were the three months with the largest number of species recorded.

In winter, the species at the park include winter diving birds—a primary reason why “Rockport Headlands and Inshore Waters,” including Halibut Point, have been designated a Massachusetts Important Bird Area by Mass Audubon. The Important Bird Site section of the Mass Audubon website also has information about Halibut State Park (Mass Audubon 2021).

For more on winter birding at this site, see “A Guide to Winter Birding on Cape Ann” by Christopher Leahy (2010a, 2010b). [Editor's note: “A Guide to Winter Birding on Cape Ann” has been consolidated into a birding booklet that is available through the Bird Observer store: <<https://www.birdobserver.org/Store>>.]

Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Brant	1		3	4						1	
Canada Goose				1							1
Gadwall									1		1
Mallard	5	4	7	9	10	8	8	8	10	6	6
American Black Duck	4	2	1	1				2		1	1
Greater Scaup			1								
King Eider		1									2
Common Eider	10	6	9	10	4	2	5	7	6	10	11
Harlequin Duck	10	7	9	6							10
Surf Scoter	4	4	3	6	1				1	4	4
White-winged Scoter	8	3	6	1	4				4	9	9
Black Scoter	6	2	6	4	1					4	9
Long-tailed Duck	5	5	7	4							5
Bufflehead	5	1	1	1							1
Common Goldeneye	1										2
Hooded Merganser											1
Red-breasted Merganser	8	4	7	4							4
Ruddy Duck											1
Ring-necked Pheasant										1	
Wild Turkey	2			2	2		2	1	1		
Pied-billed Grebe										1	1
Horned Grebe	2		1	1							1
Red-necked Grebe	1	1									3
Mourning Dove	1	3	5	5	8	9	9	6	5	4	2
Black-billed Cuckoo						1	1				
Chimney Swift					1	3	3	2			
Ruby-throated Hummingbird					7	1	5	2			
Semipalmated Plover								1			
Ruddy Turnstone	1							1	1		
Sanderling				1					2	1	
Purple Sandpiper	2				1		1	1			3
Semipalmated Sandpiper								1			
American Woodcock			1								
Spotted Sandpiper					1						
Dovekie		1									
Common/Thick-billed Murre	1										
Razorbill	1	1									
Black Guillemot	1	1									1
Bonaparte's Gull									2		1
Black-headed Gull				1							
Laughing Gull								1	3		

**Table 1.** The number of years a species was observed each month from 2010 to 2020.

Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Ring-billed Gull	3	1		2			2	4	4	5	6
Herring Gull	10	7	10	10	10	10	11	10	10	10	11
Iceland Gull	1										
Great Black-backed Gull	9	4	5	5	8	9	11	10	8	10	10
Common Tern								2			
Red-throated Loon	3									1	1
Common Loon	7	6	6	5	2				4	3	10
Great Shearwater											1
Northern Gannet	3	1	4	8	3	1		5	8	11	11
Great Cormorant	4	3	4	2					1		4
Double-crested Cormorant	1		1	10	11	10	11	10	8	11	6
Brown Pelican							1				
Great Blue Heron				2	1	1	3	1			
Great Egret			1								
Green Heron					2	4	3				
Black-crowned Night-Heron						2					
Turkey Vulture			1	3	4		1	2		1	1
Northern Harrier											1
Sharp-shinned Hawk				1	2			1	1	2	
Cooper's Hawk			1	2	1					3	1
Bald Eagle								1			1
Red-tailed Hawk		1	3	2	1					1	1
Eastern Screech Owl		1			1		1				
Belted Kingfisher				1	2	1					
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker				1							
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1	1					1			3	2
Downy Woodpecker	3	2	7	5	4	4	6	6	6	5	6
Hairy Woodpecker	1			2					1		
Northern Flicker	1		4	6	4	1			3	1	2
American Kestrel						1	1				
Merlin					2				1		
Peregrine Falcon				1	1						
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher								1			
Eastern Phoebe				4	1	1	2		3	1	
Great Crested Flycatcher					1	1	3	1			
Eastern Kingbird			1		9	9	10	4	1		
Blue-headed Vireo					1						
Warbling Vireo					1						
Red-eyed Vireo									2	1	1
Blue Jay	9	5	8	8	11	10	10	9	10	11	10
American Crow	10	7	9	9	10	9	5	8	8	10	8

**Table 1 (continued).** The number of years a species was observed each month from 2010 to 2020.

Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Common Raven									1		
Black-capped Chickadee	7	6	9	10	10	6	9	8	9	9	11
Tufted Titmouse	4	2	6	9	5	3	5	6	5	6	4
Northern Rough-winged Swallow						1	2	2			
Tree Swallow				3	7	4	7	8	3		
Bank Swallow								2			
Barn Swallow			1		5	5	8	5			
Golden-crowned Kinglet										1	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				3					1	1	
Red-breasted Nuthatch								1	1	2	1
White-breasted Nuthatch	2	2	4	5	2	1	1	4	5	4	3
Brown Creeper										1	
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher					3				1		
House Wren					3	2	1	2	1		
Carolina Wren	3		3	1	3	3	3	3	1	3	6
European Starling	5	2	5	3	1		1	2	1		4
Gray Catbird	1			1	10	10	11	10	10	3	1
Brown Thrasher				1	5	4	7	3	2		
Northern Mockingbird					2	6	6	3	1		
Eastern Bluebird			1								1
Veery					1						
Swainson's Thrush					1						
Hermit Thrush	1			3	1						2
American Robin	9	6	5	9	10	9	10	6	4	7	6
Cedar Waxwing		2	2	1		5	6	7	4	2	
House Sparrow	3	6	7	6	6	7	6	3	5	2	5
House Finch	2	3	3	2		4	3	2	2	2	1
Purple Finch									1		
Pine Siskin			1								1
American Goldfinch	3	2	2	8	8	10	8	10	6	3	6
Snow Bunting											1
Chipping Sparrow	1	1	1	3	6	1	3			1	2
Field Sparrow				1					1		1
American Tree Sparrow											2
Dark-eyed Junco	2	1	5	1						4	3
White-throated Sparrow			1	5	1				1	2	2
White-crowned Sparrow										1	2
Savannah Sparrow									1		
Song Sparrow	1		6	8	4	7	8	2	2	7	3
Eastern Towhee				4	11	10	11	2	5		

**Table 1 (continued).** The number of years a species was observed each month from 2010 to 2020.

Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Baltimore Oriole					9	4	7	5			
Red-winged Blackbird			4	6	4	4	1				
Brown-headed Cowbird				6	4	2	3				
Common Grackle			1	1	8	6	6	2			
Ovenbird										1	
Black-and-white Warbler					4			3			
Nashville Warbler					1						
Common Yellowthroat					10	6	10	2	3		
American Redstart					6				2		
Northern Parula					8						
Magnolia Warbler					7				2		
Blackburnian Warbler					1						
Yellow Warbler				1	6		1		1		
Blackpoll Warbler					1				1		
Black-throated Blue Warbler					4				1		
Palm Warbler				2							
Pine Warbler				2					1	1	
Yellow-rumped Warbler			2	3	1			1	2	4	3
Black-throated Green Warbler					1				2		
Hooded Warbler					1						
Northern Cardinal	6	6	9	9	11	9	9	5	6	7	5
Rose-breasted Grosbeak						1	1				

**Table 1 (continued).** The number of years a species was observed each month from 2010 to 2020.

Month	Total Number of Species Observed	Average Number of Species Observed per Walk	Range in Number of Species Observed per Walk
Jan	51	19.5	12–26
Feb	40	15.5	3–25
Mar	51	21.0	15–31
Apr	67	26.7	13–39
May	75	29.5	19–50
Jun	48	22.8	18–30
Jul	53	24.5	20–31
Aug	56	21.8	16–31
Sep	63	21.0	11–34
Oct	53	18.8	12–28
Nov	67	22.7	12–39

**Table 2.** Monthly variation in sightings 2010-2020.





Halibut Point Beginner Bird Walk, May 2013.

It has been a joy to lead these walks for all these years and to share my local state park, with its wonderful variety of habitat, with so many avid birders, both beginner and expert. I look forward to many more walks! 🐦

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# A First for Nantucket Island, Massachusetts: Breeding Common Ravens

*Skyler Kardell*



One of the adult ravens flies from the water tower to Low Beach to collect a piece of rabbit carcass. All photos by Skyler Kardell.

*Editor's Note: For Bird Observer online, click on the underscored dates to see the eBird reports.*

For a number of years, Common Raven (*Corvus corvax*)—along with Eastern Screech-Owl (*Megascops asio*) and Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*)—was put on a short list of birds that can be found on the mainland but are absent from Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Island. Prior to 2019, there was only one confirmed record of Common Raven for Nantucket County—a bird seen and photographed by several observers at the Milestone Cranberry Bogs on [February 22, 2014](#). Coincidentally, the second documented record for the island was found less than a mile away from the bogs on [August 18, 2019](#). The prospect of ravens breeding on Nantucket was laughable then. Yet that is the reality in 2021.

Ravens had disappeared in Massachusetts by the early twentieth century, having lost much of their former range in New England due to clear-cutting for agriculture among other causes, and did not reappear until the 1940s (Boarman and Heinrich 2020). It would take another 30 years for the species to populate the Northeast again. At the time of publication of *The Birds of Massachusetts* in 1993, the status of Common Raven in the eastern part of the state was rare, although it bred in western Massachusetts (Veit and Peterson 1993). By 2013, the *Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas 2* reported ravens present and breeding statewide—except for Cape Cod and the Islands (Walsh and Petersen 2013). The species' expansion into the coastal plain is still a recent phenomenon. Only within the last decade have ravens returned to Cape Cod

(eBird 2013–2021), where in the early seventeenth century, pilgrim colonizers had reported them as numerous (Veit and Petersen 1993).

Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard added Common Raven to their respective county lists within a period of two months in 2014, but Common Ravens bred first on Martha's Vineyard before they nested on Nantucket. After Adam Burnett found the first Dukes County record on [April 20, 2014](#), in Chappaquiddick, observers around the island started turning up new reports, perhaps of the same bird. On [November 4, 2016](#), a raven was seen for the first time in West Tisbury. Robert Culbert observed one at the Martha's Vineyard State Forest on [September 2, 2017](#). On [December 29, 2018](#), the species was documented at Vineyard Haven for the first time, after five had been seen at a nearby farm. The Vineyard ravens first nested on a mid-island radio tower in 2018 and have subsequently nested there in 2019 and 2020, producing between two and three chicks that have fledged. Unfortunately, they have not been successful in raising any young in 2021.

Common Ravens are rare or infrequent visitors to other small, low-lying islands in our region, such as the Elizabeth Islands. On Cuttyhunk, a group of birders documented the first eBird record for the island on [October 28, 2017](#). Even Monomoy Island, Barnstable County, which is closer to shore than the majority of islands of Dukes County, has just one documented record, from [2019](#).

On May 8, 2019, Nantucket birders were put on high alert for an undocumented report of Common Raven at the Sankaty Golf Club in Siasconset. The bird was being mobbed by American Crows, and presumably calling as well. Over the next several weeks, local birders searched for this rarity in vain and began to dismiss the chances of seeing a Nantucket raven as “nevermore.” That changed on [August 17](#), when Kenneth Blackshaw observed a raven flying beneath the cliff face at Baxter Road. Unable to refind the bird later that day, Blackshaw and several other observers went out to look for the bird on August 18 and photographed it nearly a mile west of the Milestone Cranberry Bogs. For the next three days, the bird again disappeared from the public eye. Tensions eased on [August 22](#) when Lee Dunn had a bird flying east over his mid-island residence at 7:05 pm. The raven was exceptionally vocal, which would make it easy to detect if it continued calling.

September 2019 was characterized by multiple raven sightings across the west half of the island. Two birds were seen at Jackson Point on [September 1](#), riding west on a thermal and being harassed by nearby Ospreys. This record confirmed the existence of two separate birds on Nantucket, rather than just one seen during August. On [September 3](#), a few observers at Sanford Farm noted a single bird flying in circles above the property and vocalizing regularly. Most September records for Nantucket were of single birds, although one observer at North Head of Long Pond had two birds fly east over his house at around 6:30 pm every evening for the latter half of the month. This journey was likely a daily commute for these birds, flying between foraging grounds on the west half of the island and an unknown roost somewhere to the east. An observer in the Mizzenmast area also noted two ravens at approximately 5:40 pm on [September 16](#), indicating that the roost site may have even been farther east than Miacomet Pond.



A precarious balancing act: one of the young birds flaps its wings at the observers below.

For the month of October, the ravens seemingly disappeared—again. The only eBird records for this species in October 2019 come from the Nantucket Wildlife Refuge, where two observers independently observed a raven on the outer beach of Coskata just a half-mile apart on [October 1](#). One observer noted that it was feeding on a gull carcass.

On November 1, two birders watched both ravens calling and foraging over a field just on the outskirts of Siasconset Village. Perhaps this pair was prospecting the suitability of the water tower there as a future potential nesting site. The birds were seen within the immediate vicinity of the water tower through November 10, where they were observed several times calling from on top of the structure. Several sightings from November 9 through the end of the month raised the question: Could there be more than two Common Ravens on Nantucket?

Hopes were high that the 2019 Christmas Bird Count on December 29 would shed some light on the true number of ravens on Nantucket. However, when the day finally came around, with 52 birders putting in 95 hours of search time, only one Common Raven was found throughout the entire island (National Audubon Society 2019). This came as a surprise to many, especially when just a few weeks before, on December 10, Blair Perkins had both birds at Low Beach, where they had been seen often. The Tuckernuck Christmas Bird Count did not reveal anything either. Finally, on [January 12](#), 2020, a group of mainland birders saw one raven flying over Milestone Road. On [January 18](#), both birds were seen again at the water tower and hopping down onto Milestone Road to pick up roadkill scraps. It is likely that the birds spent the majority of February and March 2020 commuting between the water tower and foraging sites in Coskata, as evidenced by several sightings of both or single birds flying north from Siasconset at or before dawn, and then flying south early in the morning along the



For the first few days after fledging, the two juveniles joined the adults in the fields next to the water tower.

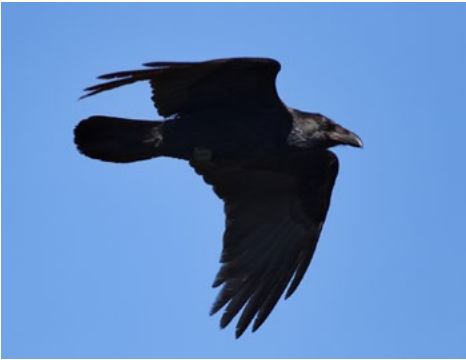
eastern shore. During the winter, large numbers of alcids wash up along this stretch of shore between Great Point and Coskata, especially after strong northeast winds. It is possible that the ravens were being opportunistic with these strandings and feeding on carrion during this time.

In late March, suspicions of nesting ravens on Nantucket were confirmed when Edie Ray spotted a nest on the southeast side of the Siasconset water tower. Situated on a south-facing berm directly below the water tower's cup, the nest was spared from some of the harsh northwest winds that deliver cold, dry air from the mainland at this time of year. On [April 30](#), a young bird was clearly observed in the nest through a scope on Low Beach. Whitewash began to appear on both sides of the nest, indicating that the adults were no longer incubating. At least one parent was frequently flying from the water tower to a select spot in the dunes of Low Beach, carrying a chunk of dead rabbit each time it returned to the nest.

On [May 7](#), it was discovered that one of the young birds had fallen out of the nest and had died on the gravel below. Judging by the state of the specimen, it was likely that this fatality occurred a few days earlier. By [May 11](#), the two remaining chicks fledged and joined the adults in the fields below the water tower. The family group remained in the fields while the juveniles became more independent and bolder in their actions. All four ravens were still there for Mass Audubon's annual Bird-a-Thon on [May 16, 2020](#). With no large mammalian ground predators on Nantucket, the survival of the two juveniles seemed imminent. It would be up to local birders to find out whether or not they would stay on the island into the winter.

After the ravens fledged, local birders and conservation groups started questioning the fate of beach-nesting shorebirds. The addition of Common Ravens to the Nantucket





Two birds, presumably the juveniles, returned to Tuckernuck for the first week in October.

avifauna could potentially spell disaster for the tern colonies at Low Beach or Coskata. In a Californian study, local ravens were the cause of 1.2% of depredations of Least Tern eggs over a 10-year period (Boarman and Heinrich 2020). Fortunately, in 2020 on Nantucket, no such issues materialized. A few weeks after the chicks fledged, the raven family moved to the nearby Milestone Cranberry Bogs to forage.

A major development in the raven saga on Nantucket occurred on [June 8, 2020](#), when an observer in the Milestone Cranberry Bogs saw not four, but six Common Ravens—presumably the

resident family group in addition to an unknown pair. It is possible that the unknown pair arrived sometime in the late summer of 2019, which would have accounted for the large number of raven sightings in September of that year. It is equally possible that this pair arrived on Nantucket during spring 2020 and was not detected until June 8. Either way, the local birding community did not expect this sudden increase in raven numbers. On [June 15](#), presumably the same group of six birds was seen flying west over North Head of Hummock Pond, and the observer picked up the two juvenile call notes from the cacophony of caws and croaks. That was the last reported sighting of six ravens together in 2020.

For much of July, the raven family was foraging at the Madaket Landfill. It is possible that the family group continued to commute between the landfill and the nest site at the Siasconset Water Tower, because several reports during the summer had the birds well east of the landfill, and one sighting on [August 23 has a solo raven](#) at the Milestone Cranberry Bogs.

In September, the ravens apparently discovered the existence of Tuckernuck, an island off the coast of Nantucket. The family group of four was first spotted there on [September 5](#), when they were seen flying across Madaket Harbor from Nantucket around 8:00 am. The birds spent the remainder of the morning on the west side of Tuckernuck. Around noon, they took off for the east, presumably back toward Nantucket. The day before this sighting, [September 4](#), all four ravens were observed at Norwood Farm on Nantucket. The distance between Norwood Farm and the eastern half of Tuckernuck is approximately 12 miles and includes a rough 2.5-mile stretch of water between Madaket on Nantucket and Whale Point on Tuckernuck. Again on [September 27](#), the four ravens arrived on Tuckernuck in the early morning hours, and departed by midafternoon, having foraged around the west end for the majority of the day.

Two of the birds continued foraging on Tuckernuck for the early part of October. On [October 6](#), both ravens were seen flying west in a thermal at a considerable altitude. It is possible that these birds continued out toward Muskeget. They appeared again on

Tuckernuck briefly for part of the day on [October 9](#). Whether the two birds that stayed on Tuckernuck in October were the remaining adults or the two juveniles is unknown. Regardless, no more than two ravens were seen on Nantucket or Tuckernuck islands after that time for the remainder of 2020 until December 27, the date of the Nantucket Christmas Bird Count. With 40 birders putting in over 140 hours of observation time, four individual ravens were confirmed throughout Nantucket Island (National Audubon Society 2020).

Fast forward to spring of 2021: both parents returned to nest in the same location on the water tower as they did in 2020. The reproductive success was better than in 2020. In 2021, a complete clutch of three chicks survived into fledglings. Reactions to the current status of Common Ravens on Nantucket have been mixed. While some birders welcome the presence of these birds, others fear that the long-term effects could be detrimental for the summer population of Piping Plovers, Least Terns, and American Oystercatchers that nest on the island's east end. One priority for studying the Common Ravens nesting on Nantucket should be to track the daily foraging patterns of these birds, because it is unclear where or if these birds explore outside the Milestone Cranberry Bogs or Madaket Landfill during the summer. Some members of the community were convinced that the nesting of the ravens in 2020 would be a one-off event, quite like the Eastern Screech-Owls that nested in Siasconset in the mid-1940s (Griscom and Folger 1948). For now, Common Ravens on the islands seem here to stay. 🦉

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# PHOTO ESSAY

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## Birds of Holyoke



Common Raven and Red-shouldered Hawk dueling over the cliffs of Mt. Tom, an excellent place to view raptor migration. Photo by Kim Jones.



Worm-eating Warbler breeds on the talus slopes of Mount Tom. Photo by Derek Allard.





Peregrine Falcon at the quarry roost. Photo by David McLain.



Common Goldeneye is reliable in winter at the rapids by the Dinosaur Footprints. Photo by David McLain. 🦆

# MUSINGS FROM THE BLIND BIRDER

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## The Return of Birdsong: One Birder's Experience with Hearing Aids

*Martha Steele*



Blackpoll Warbler. Photograph by "WarblerLady." (<https://flickr.com/photos/warblerlady/8482742795/>). (CC BY-ND 2.0)

Alvin and I were walking on a rural road near our Vermont home on a cool, late May morning when I heard a short, weak song from my left. Listening for several minutes, I was not sure which bird was singing it. I pulled out my phone and recorded the song to play later to my husband, Bob Stymeist. Alvin and I continued walking until Bob came by in the car on his way to the town transfer station and picked us up. I told him about the bird and played the recording back to him before we started off. Despite amplification of the song from the recording, Bob could not hear the bird. I asked if he had his hearing aids on, to which he replied no, as he was just planning to go to the transfer station and return home. We chuckled, shook our heads, and reminded ourselves again that if you are a birder, it is best never to leave home without your binoculars or, in this case, your hearing aids.

Back at the house, Bob easily heard the song from the phone's recording after he put his hearing aids on. It was another striking example of how much benefit the hearing aids have been to Bob in the past few years. As we age, many of us start to lose our ability to hear the higher-pitched, or high-frequency, sounds where many bird songs, particularly those of warblers, reside. We may retain for a much longer time excellent hearing in the frequency range of human speech and may not realize that hearing aids could benefit us for specific situations, such as birding, even if most of the time we do not need them. Because birding is so much a function of using what you hear to locate a bird and thus have the opportunity to see it, the loss of the ability to hear birds is a profound one for older birders.

It took Bob time to decide to try hearing aids. He was growing increasingly frustrated during spring migration at not hearing what other birders were calling out. His frustration resulted in a palpable and negative effect on his enjoyment of birding or even on his desire to bird with others. This in turn made it more difficult for me, as his usual birding partner, to enjoy birding with him. The joy of spring migration was turning into discouragement about not hearing the birds and thus not locating them or even knowing they were there. I tried to explain to him that his frustration was affecting me as well and asked him to please make an appointment with an audiologist to see whether hearing aids might help. He certainly had nothing to lose, as most new purchases of hearing aids include the provision of returning them within a specified time for a full refund if you do not feel they are helpful.

For Bob, I was of course a daily reminder of how hearing devices can improve one's quality of life. I was also an example of how one can go from not hearing birds at all to hearing them well, as was my experience after receiving cochlear implants. Bob finally made an appointment with an audiologist to explore whether hearing aids could help him hear his birds.

Bob went prepared to the audiology appointment. Most patients visiting an audiologist need amplification to better understand speech, which is largely at lower frequencies than bird songs. But Bob's hearing in the range of human speech was excellent, so it was important that the audiologist understand what Bob was looking for. He played songs from several species, such as the Cape May Warbler, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Blue-winged Warbler, and Blackpoll Warbler. He told the audiologist, "This is what I want to hear." With Bob's description and recordings, the audiologist was able to program the hearing aids to amplify the higher frequencies. She adjusted the program until Bob could hear those birds with the hearing aids.

Bob is a different birder now with his hearing aids and a far happier one. We can walk down our driveway in Vermont, and he hears the Brown Creeper, the Golden-crowned Kinglet, the Blackburnian Warbler, the Northern Parula, and the Eastern Wood-Pewee deep into the forest. Hearing aids may not help every birder losing the higher pitches, but they are certainly worth exploring, as they can make all the difference in your enjoyment of birding.

Bob does not wear his hearing aids most of the time, only when he birds. At first, I was skeptical that he could get much benefit if he did not wear the aids all the time, as it takes some getting used to the increased amplification of sound with a hearing device. But he easily benefits from the aids while birding, and just as easily can remove them for normal, day-to-day activities and conversation. His hearing devices are now just another thing that he has to check off before he goes birding: does he have his phone, his camera, his binoculars, his scope, and last but certainly not least, his hearing aids? I am just so happy that he can hear his birds again, which is especially critical for songbirds inhabiting thick forest edges and interiors where hearing a bird is far easier than seeing one. Oh, how we relish our return to debating who just sang. 🐦

*Martha Steele, a former editor of Bird Observer, has been progressively losing vision due to retinitis pigmentosa and is legally blind. Thanks to a cochlear implant, she is now learning to identify birds from their songs and calls. Martha lives with her husband Bob Stymeist, in Arlington. Martha can be reached at [marthajs@verizon.net](mailto:marthajs@verizon.net).*

## FIELD NOTE

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### A Hybrid Mourning Warbler x Common Yellowthroat in Leicester, Massachusetts

*Cole Winstanley*



Hybrid Mourning Warbler x Common Yellowthroat. Photograph by the author.

I visited some shrubby woodlands in Leicester near the Worcester Regional Airport on May 16, 2021, looking for migrants and scarce breeders in the successional shrubland habitat. I crossed a streambed with *Spiraea* and tussocks of sedges and noticed a small warbler foraging silently near the ground. Immediately I thought “Mourning” by a combination of structure and the way it was using its tail. However, upon seeing the bird, it first looked like a Common Yellowthroat in plumage, with a clear black mask extending well down into the malar and auricular area, outlined with frosty gray.

Rather than the more striking features visible in the photograph, the first characteristics that I noticed were off were the bright yellow flanks and oddly large tail. Then I noticed that the black splotchy areas on the breast were not bits of mud but rather a plumage feature. These were the partial bib of a Mourning Warbler. At this point, I also noticed that the extent of the gray on the head was abnormal for a Common Yellowthroat. With the combination of the partial bib and the frosty gray on the head, I realized this was probably a Mourning x Yellowthroat and began to take photos. I didn’t get a well-lit look at the bird’s throat and breast until after I realized it was something interesting and switched to my camera.



The photos show a handful of additional marks: a whitish throat with lots of black flecks, especially on the sides, and a splotchy “bib” that might make one think of a Canada Warbler at first glance, but consists of flecks of black, whitish, and yellow. The bird had sturdy, large pink feet, bright yellow extending onto the flanks, undertail coverts, and sides of the tail, and a bright greenish olive back. Most characteristics, apart from the head, point to Mourning.

During this first encounter, I observed the bird for about 10 minutes. After losing it into some mountain laurel behind the small fen it was foraging in, I moved on. However, I passed by the spot again on my way out of the area and relocated the bird, this time getting about 45 minutes of on-and-off viewing and video recording. The bird was silent the entire time, though it did perk up and fly a few feet closer to me when I played a Mourning Warbler song.

Hybrids are somewhat more common in warblers than in other bird families; some hybrid warblers, e.g., Brewster’s Warbler, are prominently featured in many field guides. The Mourning Warbler x Common Yellowthroat hybrid is of taxonomic interest given that the genus *Geothlypis*—the yellowthroats—was recently expanded to include most species formerly in *Oporornis*, including Mourning Warbler (Escalante et al. 2009). Existence of this formerly intergeneric hybrid was an early indicator that these genera might need to be merged.

Mourning Warbler and Common Yellowthroat differ substantially in structure, size, and voice, belying their status as closely related species of the same genus. Hybrids between these two species have been recorded at least seven times, mainly on breeding grounds but with one record in Virginia away from breeding grounds. The earliest confirmed record was reported by Bledsoe (1988): a male collected in 1955 in Connecticut. Plumage features of these hybrids are variable, especially in the black bib and extent of black on the face. However, they always have a white throat, which is surprising given that neither parent species has this feature. In Massachusetts, David Sibley reported a possible sighting of this hybrid in a blog post, but otherwise I could not find any other records for the state. 🐦

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# Group Bathing by Willets

*William E. Davis, Jr.*



**Figure 1.** Two Willets are bathing, one is fluffing its feathers and the other three are between preening bouts. All photographs by the author.

During March and April 2020, my wife and I were in a rental home at 1455 Long Beach Drive, Big Pine Key, Florida, where I was able to record and photograph the bathing habits of Willets (*Tringa semipalmata*) on numerous occasions. The house was on the ocean side and provided an opportunity to watch shorebird behavior in the shallow water and beach wrack. I had reported on a group of five Willets, in a flock of about 150, group bathing at the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, Florida, but did not describe or photograph the behavior in detail (Davis 2016). Our stay on Big Pine Key offered an opportunity to more thoroughly examine and document the bathing practices of Willets. I recorded my observations in a journal and, when possible, photographed these events. What follows are descriptions taken from my journal notes of the bathing events I witnessed.

On March 26, 2020, at 4:00 pm, I was watching White Ibises (*Eudocimus albus*) foraging in the back of our house and at 4:55 p.m. a single White Ibis began bathing in a pool past a small mangrove. Seven minutes later a Willet approached the bathing Ibis and began bathing itself. The power of suggestion in birds to join a bathing bird seems remarkable. On March 29 at 5:06 pm, I watched a bathing Willet duck its head under water, then fluff and flap its partially opened wings, its body partially immersed. It bathed for six minutes and then stood and preened for nine minutes before flying to shore where it preened for an additional five minutes. A second Willet also bathed. The following day at 4:55 pm, a pair of Willets preened, and one scratched its chin. One bird put its head completely under the water and brought it up splashing water onto its back and closed wings; then it bathed, submerging most of its body and fluffing and flapping its partially opened wings. It preened again from 4:59 to 5:06 pm and then walked away. The second Willet also bathed and preened.

On April 11 at 3:30 pm, I noticed a flock of six Willets bathing together (Figure 1).



**Figure 2.** (left) The Willet frequently rubs its bill and head against a partially raised wing.

**Figure 3.** (right) The Willet is off the ground in a preening jump.

They partially submerged their bodies and flapped their wings. Occasionally, one would put its head under water and bring it up with a shake, tossing water onto its back. After multiple bathing bouts the Willets stood, fluffed their body feathers and raised their wings—a rather attractive sight with flashing black and white. They always dipped their bills in the water before each preening event. Chin-scratching was common. One Willet was still bathing when a Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) joined the group and began to bathe. The tendency toward group bathing in shorebirds appears to be profound. Several Willets were still preening at 4:30 pm, when I ceased observation.

On April 13 at 9:55 am I noticed a Willet bathing. With its body mostly out of the water it dipped its head under water, then flipped its head up and to the side, tossing water onto its back with a much-repeated rocking motion. Then it stood and preened with some fluffing and shaking its tail from side to side. It frequently pushed its head and neck against a partially elevated wing (Figure 2). Occasionally, it raised its wings and sometimes jumped or flew up a few inches with wings extended upward (Figure 3). This bathing episode lacked the wing-beating against the water that characterized earlier Willet bathing episodes, although that may have occurred before I noticed the bathing bird. It was the only bathing Willet that I observed in the morning.

On April 15 at 6:20 pm, I noticed a Willet bathing. It splashed with flapping wings, did the dipping routine that I had seen previously, and at one point was almost completely submerged. Eventually, it went into a protracted preening session that lasted until 6:42 pm. On April 19 at 6:05 pm, a Willet dipped its bill and head under the water, rocked from front to back, and fluffed as it bathed. It then raised its wing and semi-flew about five feet to shallower water and stood preening. At 6:10 pm, it flew away.

On April 24 at 3:35 pm, I noticed a Willet bathing in the shallows and photographed the bathing and subsequent preening. The Willet would dip its head and bill under water in a rocking motion, then settle down partially submerged and splash with its wings (Figures 4 and 5). It repeated this behavior a dozen times or more. It then raised its wings and hopped ashore and began to preen, always starting a preening bout by dipping its bill in the water. It preened its back and breast, and under its wings (Figure 6). It periodically shook and fluffed its body feathers and scratched its chin.



**Figure 4.** The bathing Willet splashes furiously with its wings.



**Figure 5.** The Willet is nearly submerged. It has dipped its head and is splashing water onto its back.



**Figure 6.** The Willet preens its back.

On April 18 at 5:03 pm, four Whimbrels flew in and alighted in the shallow water near two Willets. The Willets walked off but one stopped about 10 feet from the Whimbrels. At 5:30 pm, one of the Whimbrels began to bathe. The other Whimbrels preened. The nearby Willet began to bath at 5:37 pm, apparently stimulated by the nearby Whimbrels bathing or preening.

The *Birds of the World's* Willet account (Lowther et al. 2020) reports “no information” on bathing or preening. I searched Google and found a video of Willets bathing, and a number of photographs but no references to it in the scientific literature, and no references to group bathing by Willets. On the six occasions that I observed a single Willet bathing there were no other Willets in sight, and in two of those cases the Willet was bathing with another species. On the three occasions when there was more than one Willet present, all of the Willets bathed. It appears that Willets will bathe when solitary but that if there are birds nearby, they will bathe in a group. All but one of the bathing episodes occurred in the afternoon, usually late afternoon, suggesting that bathing for Willets is generally an end-of-day procedure. The nearby Willet that watched the bathing Whimbrel and then proceeded to bathe offers another example of the apparent power of suggestion, and the resultant tendency toward group bathing. 🐦

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# ABOUT BOOKS

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## We Used to Think....

Mark Lynch

*A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds.* Scott Weidensaul. 2021. New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

“You know what bothers me about scientists?” my mother asked some years ago. “They always say we used to think, but now we know.” (p. 99)

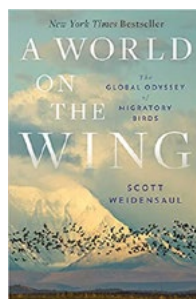
We may finally be looking at migratory birds the way they should be viewed—not as residents of any one place, but of the whole. These are creatures whose entire life cycles must be understood if we are to have a prayer of preserving them against the onslaught they face at every moment, and at every step, of their migration journey. (p. 14)

Avian migration is one of the most spectacular natural wonders that we enjoy every year in New England. Every spring, summer, and fall we can bear witness to mass movements of birds as many thousands of land birds, water birds, and pelagic species pass through our forests, shores, and seas on their way to their breeding or wintering grounds. All you have to do is get yourself to some well-known migration hotspot, of which there are many in New England, and lift up your binoculars. I have seen movements of nighthawks and raptors even from my front walk in the city of Worcester. Though many of us have read details of some of the spectacular migratory flights of species such as Arctic Tern, how many of us have really deeply grasped how incredible migratory journeys are? For many birders, migration means a time to tick uncommon species that do not breed here, but how many of you have been awed by the incredible journey that even the common Red-eyed Vireo makes twice a year?

I have taught classes on migration for decades, but it wasn't until I took a trip in the mid-1990s to Argentina that I got a deeper understanding of just how amazing these migratory journeys are. I was in Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of Argentina in the city of Ushuaia. Many tour ships that visit Antarctica dock here. I took a boat trip far out into the Beagle Channel. Most people take it for the scenery and penguins, but I was there for all the other birds. There were new species—for me—of cormorants and shearwaters, and interesting regional specialties such as prions and diving petrels.

The small boat passed an outcropping of rocks, and there I spotted my lifer Snowy Sheathbill, a specialty of the Antipodes. The charge from that tick was short-lived when I noticed that right next to the sheathbill was a White-rumped Sandpiper. I was dumbstruck. I had just arrived in Tierra del Fuego after a long series of flights, which I found interminable. My rear end and legs were numb. But here was this small sandpiper that breeds in the northwest Arctic, with which I was well familiar from New England in migration. This tiny sandpiper had made the same trip I just had, but under its own steam, often without eating for days at a time, fighting wind and weather all along the way. It wasn't just the extraordinary distance it had traveled; I started to think about how the sandpiper physically accomplished this extreme trip. I had plenty of food and drink and was lifted along with little physical effort on my part, and the distance seemed extreme. This sandpiper accomplished its extreme trip twice a year through

the course of its life. How did it manage to do it? That one sighting changed how I thought about migration forever, and since then I have been in awe of avian migration. But I am a mere neophyte compared to Scott Weidensaul.



This has become a very personal crusade for me, as it has for many of the men and women who study and protect migratory birds; the idea of a world without epic migrations is simply too poor and melancholy to contemplate. As with many of them, migration has captured me all my life—an obsession that began in childhood and crystallized on a windy ridegetop in Pennsylvania, and which has led me from being an eager observer to an increasingly passionate participant; from recreational birder to someone in the trenches of migratory science. (p.15)

Quite a number of books have been written about avian migration, including large-format coffee-table books jammed with colorful pictures. Despite that, *A World on the Wing* is the book about migration you should read this year. Scott Weidensaul is a well-known writer and researcher specializing in birds and bird migration. He started out as an enthusiastic, serious birder and then became enamored of hawk migration. This eventually led him to a deep passion for all the different avian migrations. Today he participates in several migration studies as well as doing field reporting from around the globe where other ornithologists are working on getting a better handle on the parameters of how far birds travel and how they physically manage to travel that far. *A World on the Wing* is his report on what he has learned. This book is simultaneously mind-blowing, depressing, and hopeful. The book follows two parallel tracks. One is Weidensaul's reporting from around the world from key migration spots. The other is summarizing some of the latest scientific research that is rewriting most of what we thought we knew about bird migration.

What has made a crucial difference in ornithological research is the miniaturization of a number of electronic monitoring devices such as geolocators. These allow researchers to attach tracking equipment on birds without interfering with their flight, which means that researchers can closely track individual birds over an entire course of their flight. With ringing (banding), scientists had to hope to retrieve the ringed bird; even if they did, they had little idea about where the bird went in between the ringing and retrieval locations. Now we know, and what has been learned is honestly mindboggling.

Geolocator tracking has revealed that red-necked phalaropes from the Shetland Islands cross the North Atlantic and Central America to winter off the northwestern coast of South America, staging up in the Bay of Fundy along the way. While the wintering area of the eastern Canadian Arctic population remains a mystery, it seems likely that they, too, follow a similar route to the Pacific. (p. 265)

In older books on migration, Arctic Terns are typically cited as the champion long distance migrators, flying yearly trips of 22,000–28,000 miles each year. New research has shown that Arctic Terns can fly 37,000–51,000 miles per year. “Any seabird biologist will admit, especially after a beer or two, that no one really has a clue what the limits of tern migration might be.” (p. 11)

And Arctic Terns aren't the only species to make unbelievably long yearly flights.

In 2006, scientists using geolocators announced they had successfully tracked 19 sooty shearwaters from their breeding colonies in New Zealand. Even a "local" feeding run during the breeding season, when parents forage for squid and fish to bring back to their nest burrows for their chicks, carried these plump, dark gray birds from New Zealand down into the frigid sub-Antarctic waters thousands of miles away, and back. Once the chicks fledged, however, they and the adults all headed north, crossing the equator to reach "winter" feeding grounds in the boreal summer off Japan, Alaska, or California. By following wind and ocean currents in looping curlicues across the Pacific, the birds (in the words of the researchers) enjoyed "an endless summer." It's a helluva road trip, since the routes taken by some shearwaters exceed 46,000 miles a year. (p. 10)

An important concept emphasized in *A World on the Wing* is the importance of stopover sites for migrants. These are areas in between breeding locations and the wintering areas, where birds stop to feed and rest. Here in New England, birding hotspots such as Plum Island, Monomoy, and Nauset Beach are local examples of these stopover sites for shorebirds and terns. Inland, there are many locations where, in spring and fall, large numbers of north or southbound migratory songbirds stop for a day or more before they continue on. Many of these sites are being degraded or lost completely due to habitat loss or pollution. When these stopover spots disappeared, it was always assumed that the birds would simply just go to similar habitat elsewhere. Contemporary research, cited in Weidensaul's book, shows that this might not be true. Long-distance migrants, such as Whimbrels, are faithful to just four or five places where they stop at along the way. For migrants there is "strong connectivity" (p. 122) and fidelity to these sites. Whimbrels may migrate 18,000 miles a year but use only a specific approximate 500 acres of stopover sites en route. Even different populations of the same species may use a different set of stopover sites, and these may not overlap. The Whimbrels have been using their sites for hundreds of years. If these sites are disturbed or are lost to development, the birds that used these locations will likely disappear.

Stopover sites can range in size and quality; somewhat playfully, ornithologists have categorized them as fire escapes, convenience stores, and five-star hotels, though the importance to migrant birds is in dead earnest. Like a crowded truck stop serving as its own best advertisement, the premier stopover locations—those offering the richest bounty of food, abundant at just the right season, with safety from danger and plenty of elbow room—are crowded with migrants that have evolved to depend on these often widely scattered places. (p. 27)

Sometimes in *A World on the Wing* it can feel as if everything we thought we knew about migrants is wrong. We used to think we needed to save the tropical habitats in order to preserve populations of "our" breeding songbirds. Then we learned that we needed to save our temperate forests as well. Our forests were being chopped up into small parcels (forest fragmentation) due to development, and some species needed certain sized forests in order to breed and feed. Now it has been learned that right after fledging, many warblers are leaving the forest habitat to feed in different habitats.

To the scientists' surprise, those supposed deep-woods specialists were moving into the polar opposite habitat—dense thickets and tangled undergrowth in old clear-cuts, field margins, abandoned farms, roadsides, and the like. The juveniles were gorging there on ripe blackberries, in brambles so dense it was hard to imagine even the most agile hawk squeezing itself through; they haunted poison ivy jungles, jumbles of wild grape vines, and sumac so thick one could barely see into them. (p. 104-5)

The reasons for this are not totally clear. Have breeding warblers always done this? Part of the answer may be in the way we are managing our forests. As forest program manager Ron Rohrbaugh tells Weidensaul,

The forest is no longer producing the food and the calories and the energy necessary for migratory birds to get what they need, because there's no understory left—they stop in these forests, and it's all just canopy. They fly down to the midstory and the understory, and there's nothing there. The natural structure of the forest has been lost. (p. 106)

So, in order to “save” certain species of American warblers, we have to make sure tropical wintering habitats are intact, their breeding forest habitats are preserved, AND brushy and brambly understory-like habitats are available for the postbreeding birds to feed in before they migrate south. The complexity of the challenge is sobering. Some species of warblers, such as the Cerulean and Golden-winged, have declined as much as 98% in recent years.

We all know that warblers such as Blackpolls put on lots of subcutaneous brown fat by power feeding before they launch themselves in a wide arc over the Atlantic in fall. It is this fat that powers their long overseas flight, right? Well, yes, but that is not the whole picture. Think about Boston Marathon runners. They may have the muscles to run those 26 miles, but they need to stay well hydrated throughout the course of the run or their bodies will shut down. That is why so many bystanders hand out water to the runners along the length of the course. All vertebrate bodies lose metabolic water just by breathing and excreting, let alone through extreme exertion. Now, think about birds migrating over 1,000 miles or more, sometimes with no stops for food, rest, or water. How do they accomplish this? That brown fat contains very little water. Weidensaul cites the research of Alex Gerson at the University of Massachusetts, who has found that long distance migrants like the Swainson's Thrushes he studies do something quite extraordinary.

He's found that by cannibalizing its muscles and organs in addition to burning fat, a bird can constantly adjust its production of metabolic water to keep up with the loss from breathing and excretion. In the process, a thrush weighing a shade more than an ounce can extend its flight range by almost 30 percent, to more than 2,000 miles, beyond what it could fly on fat alone—a critical cushion for birds that, like the Swainson's thrush, make long overwater crossings. (p. 71)

Actually, referring to the flight as a marathon does the birds a considerable disservice. Theunis has noted that an elite human athlete, performing at a maximum exertion—a male Tour de France cyclist in mid-race is a good example, he says—is operating at about five times his base metabolism. That seems to be the upper limit for sustained exercise by even the fittest, most

highly trained human. A shorebird, on the other hand, is working at a rate *eight or nine* times its base metabolism, and is doing so for days at a stretch without food or water or rest. (p. 40)

I am quoting just a bit of the research described in *A World on the Wing*. But before I move on, I have to mention one finding that made me slack-jawed thinking about its possibility. One of the classic mysteries of migration is how birds find their way. We now know that some species can partially read constellations in the night sky to guide them. Other species may use their ability to perceive polarized light. Pigeons were found to have tiny bits of magnetite in their heads, and it was postulated that by using these minimagets they could somehow follow the earth's magnetic fields to navigate. It was a great idea. Well, it turns out that the pigeon magnetite does no such thing. It is not used to guide them in migration. What *is* being looked at is something so weird, that Einstein had problems dealing with the concept: "It now appears that birds visualize the earth's magnetic field through a form of quantum entanglement, which is just as bizarre as it sounds." (p. 8)

If you don't know about quantum entanglement—what Einstein dubbed "spooky action at a distance"—rest assured that Weidensaul gives a fairly good explanation of it in the book. Be forewarned, quantum theory is tough to understand because it appears to go against everything we have been taught about how the world works. But don't be intimidated if the concepts of quantum theory and quantum physics leave you blank faced. You are not alone. This quote—attributed to the physicist Richard Feynman but probably apocryphal—says it all: "Anyone who claims to understand quantum theory does not understand quantum theory." And birds are using that principle to navigate? Mind: blown.

Now, if all *A World on the Wing* contained was Weidensaul's synopsis of some of the latest research into avian migration, it would be a great book to read. Weidensaul spends time in the field with these scientists, and he knows the material well enough to clearly explain it to the reader. But this material is only half the book. The other half of the book covers Weidensaul's "reports from the field" as he travels around the world to see these critical stopover locations for migration and to talk with the scientists doing critical research there. In each case, there is a real danger that these locations could be lost forever, but in each case Weidensaul manages to find some hope.

The book opens with a chapter that is both hopeful and scary as hell. Weidensaul and a few other hardy banders are in Denali National Park banding thrushes, when a grizzly bear appears. The bear is far, far too close for comfort. This humorous and frightening section is a perfect introduction to the crazy life of researchers who study migration. In the following chapter, we find Weidensaul and a cadre of researchers censusing shorebirds on the vast Yellow Sea flats in Jiangsu Province, China. Every year thousands of shorebirds use this stopover as a critical feeding area as they continue south along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. This includes the extremely rare but charismatic Spoon-billed Sandpiper. This beloved and much sought-after species has declined dramatically in the last decades. In the late '70s, Soviet researchers estimated that 2,000–2,800 pairs of these sandpipers were left breeding in Siberia. Now, hopeful estimates put their numbers at 300–600. In areas where past censuses had found 65 pairs, there are now eight.

Other critically-endangered species also use these Yellow Sea flats:

Nordmann's greenshank, with barely 1,000 individuals left in the world, is only slightly further from extinction, and many of the other shorebirds that use the Yellow Sea—red knots and great knots, black-tailed and bar-tailed godwits, curlew and Terek sandpipers—are declining at up to 24 percent in some years. (p. 33)

Part of the reason for the shorebird's decline has been the rampant reclamation of the flats for development by the Chinese government. Over the past 50 years, it has been estimated that two-thirds of China's coastal wetland has been destroyed this way. And it is not just the flats. At high tide, shorebirds used to fly into pools just a short distance inland to rest and feed even more. Many of these pools have been reclaimed as fish and shrimp farms, and many of them are also now covered with solar farms, making many of these spots unusable by the shorebirds. But all is not *quite* lost. Recently China indicated that the wholesale destruction of this globally important habitat is on hold *for now*. But of course there is a catch: "On the other hand, the ban leaves a loophole for projects in keeping with 'national economy and people's livelihoods,' and no one could say exactly what that might mean." (p. 51)

Weidensaul visits Cyprus, where every year thousands of migrants were taken illegally by netting or, horrifically, using limed branches. The bird slaughter here is considered to be one of the three worst killing sites in the Mediterranean. These songbirds are trapped only to be cooked for a dish called *ambelopoulia*, in which the whole bird, head attached, is cooked in oil and salted. The scope of this slaughter is truly shocking. For instance, up to 300,000 Ortolan Buntings were trapped every year until recently. It is now illegal to trap migrants in Cyprus, but that doesn't mean the killing has stopped. Weidensaul travels out on the back roads of Cyprus with a group of citizens determined to catch these illegal trappers. It is a process that is risky and has the real possibility of deadly violence.

In another chapter, Weidensaul travels to the Naga Hills of northeast India. This is a location where every year at least 50,000 Amur Falcons gather at one time in migration to feed on dragonflies. Until recently, the poor villagers would kill thousands of the falcons to cook and then sell them elsewhere to earn some much-needed cash. Locals were encouraged by Indian conservationists to stop the slaughter with the promise of attracting ecotourism, and the slaughter stopped. The catch is that the Naga Hills is a very difficult place to reach, and you have to travel over some of the worst roads in India. It is also the site of a long guerilla war. The villagers are wonderful folks, now waiting to put up some birders, but so far the conditions on the ground have prevented many birders from coming. What is the solution?

Weidensaul takes a pelagic trip out of Cape Hatteras with Brian Patterson. This leads to a lively discussion about the worldwide travels of pelagic species. Last year a Tahiti Petrel was seen on this particular pelagic. That species is known only from the waters around its namesake island in the mid-Pacific. How did it get to the offshore mid-Atlantic? Did it cross over Panama? Did it wing its way south and cross at the Straits of Magellan? Shearwaters, albatrosses, and petrels seem to rewrite the book on bird movements every year. Pelagic birds as a group seem to look at all of the earth's waters as their home. "In some cases, we're not sure exactly which hemisphere they inhabit; to a surprising degree, we don't even know what species are out there, still unknown." (p. 248)

Hardcore listers and pelagic enthusiasts will enjoy Weidensaul's discussion of the current mess of pelagic taxonomy, a result of recent in-depth genetic studies. For example, the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel nests in the eastern Atlantic Ocean along a 4,500-mile arc of islands. Seabird geneticists have found no evidence of gene flow among any of these colonies, and the birds are utterly faithful to their breeding island. Does this mean each population is a species? Even on one island, it has been found that there can be two distinct populations of the same species. They just nest at different times of the year. Of course, visually separating these populations in the field is another challenge entirely.

In *A World on the Wing*, Weidensaul conveys a global sense of how extraordinary migrating birds are, and how their existence is being threatened at every turn by human activity. But thankfully, it is not all bad news. For example, Weidensaul includes a vivid description of the day when Ian Davies and friends witnessed one of the greatest spectacles of land bird migration in recent history. This took place on May 28, 2018, along the Côte-Nord on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec. Because of particular weather patterns there was a once in a lifetime movement of landbirds. Davies was unprepared for what he witnessed:

The songbirds, almost exclusively warblers, were often flying by at a rate of 20 per second, more than 1,000 a minute. A single binocular view might encompass several hundreds to several thousand songbirds.” (p. 152–3)

At their peak, there were 50 birds passing per second, 72,000 in a half an hour for hours! It was estimated by Davies that totals included 28,900 Blackburnian Warblers, 72,000 Yellow-rumps, and 14,000 Canada Warblers. But don't think all is well because so many birds were seen that one time. Weidensaul cautions that what is astounding today, would have been commonplace just a few decades ago.

*A World on the Wing* is an important book about bird migration. It should be mentioned that there is a generous section of color photographs included. But it is the text that will grab your attention. Weidensaul is an award-winning writer and reporter. He knows how to convey complex ideas to general audiences. He also excels at capturing the sense of place as he ping-pongs around the globe. Finally, he is unabashedly passionate about his subject. That makes this an exciting, thoughtful, sobering, and even thrilling book. After you read *A World on the Wing*, you will never look at the spectacle of spring and fall migration in New England without a feeling of awe.

Reverence for an endurance and tenacity I cannot match nor fully comprehend, but which leaves me breathless when I am confronted with it.” (p. 347)

To listen to my conversation with Scott Weidensaul about this book, use this link:

<https://www.wicn.org/podcast/scott-weidensaul/> 

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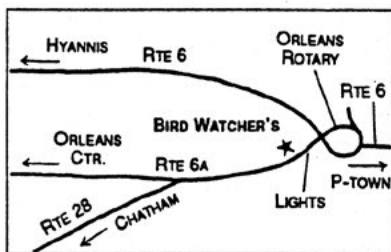
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# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Publishes Birds of Conservation Concern 2021

## Report Identifies 269 Species for Highest Conservation Priorities

In continuing proactive efforts to protect migratory birds, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today released its Birds of Conservation Concern 2021 report. The publication identifies 269 species of birds that represent high conservation priorities for the Service and deserve proactive attention. This science will be used for cooperative research, monitoring and management actions that can directly or indirectly affect migratory birds with the help of international, federal, state, Tribal and private partners.

“This report serves as an early warning indicator for bird species in trouble and will help stimulate the collaborative conservation action needed to bring back declining bird species well before they become threatened or endangered, said Principal Deputy Director Martha Williams. “Almost 3 billion birds have been lost in North America since 1970, and this scientific information will help focus conservation efforts where they are most needed.”

The species that appear in Birds of Conservation Concern 2021 include migratory bird species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that the Service considers to be in greatest need of conservation attention. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act directs the Service “to identify species, subspecies and populations of all migratory nongame birds that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).”

The Service’s goal is to eliminate the need for additional ESA protections for birds by implementing proactive management and conservation actions that sustain populations well above thresholds of endangerment.

The conservation assessment was based on several factors, including population abundance and trends, threats on breeding and nonbreeding grounds and size of breeding and nonbreeding ranges. It encompasses four distinct geographic scales: the Continental U.S., including Alaska; Pacific Ocean islands, including Hawaii; Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Navassa; and continental Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) and Marine Bird Conservation Regions (MBCRs). Of the 269 species identified, 134 are of conservation concern at the Continental scale, 85 at the BCR scale, 30 on Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and 33 on Hawaii and the Pacific Islands. The report was last updated in 2008.

Inclusion in the Birds of Conservation Concern 2021 does not constitute a finding that listing under the ESA is warranted, or that substantial information exists to indicate that listing under the ESA may be warranted.

The report and additional information is available online at <<https://www.fws.gov/birds/management/managed-species/birds-of-conservation-concern.php>>.

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# BIRD SIGHTINGS

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## March–April 2021

*Neil Hayward and Robert H. Stymeist*

March came in like a roaring lion with a blast of arctic air. The low temperature in Boston for the month was 13 degrees on the morning of March 2, a day when the high reached only 28 degrees. The good news was that the bitter cold lasted only about 28 hours and Boston recovered to 50 degrees by Wednesday March 3. The high temperature for the month was 74 degrees on March 11, shattering the previous high temperature of 67 degrees set on this date in 1990. Worcester also experienced a record high—70 degrees—on the same day, breaking the previous record of 66 degrees set in 1977. The average temperature in Boston for March was 42.1 degrees, 4.1 degrees warmer than the historical average for the month. March was also the sunniest March since 2007. Rainfall was only 2.0 inches, 2.5 inches below the historical average, and the only snow all month was just a trace on March 14. A low-pressure system at the end of the month brought some severe thunderstorms, with wind gusts over 50 miles per hour and a high of 70 degrees.

April was warmer and—like March—sunnier than normal. The high temperature for Boston was 78 degrees on April 10 and the low temperature was 33 degrees on April 4. The month averaged out at 47 degrees, 2.1 degrees above normal. Precipitation totaled 4.32 inches, a little more than an inch above the average for April. The weather highlight was a spring nor'easter April 15–17. The storm impacted much of New England. Berkshire and Franklin counties as well as the Worcester County hill towns saw a widespread 6–12 inches of snow, while the Greater Boston area recorded 1–3 inches. The Blue Hill Observatory picked up 3.6 inches, making it the sixth largest April snowfall on record for that location.

*R. Stymeist*

### HIGHLIGHTS

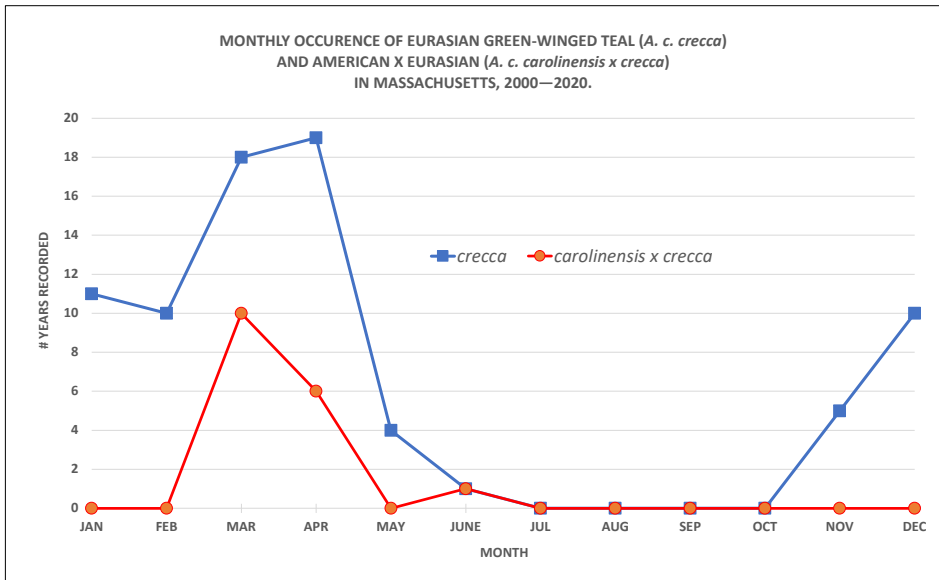
Three state firsts—**European Golden-Plover** and **Great-tailed Grackle**, plus the Caribbean subspecies of Cave Swallow.

### GEESE THROUGH HERONS

**Pink-footed Geese** were reported from Middlesex and Bristol counties. The latter—a bird hanging out in the Dartmouth area—set a new late date of April 25, eclipsing the only other April record from Dennis on April 11, 1999. A **Cackling Goose** at Boston's Franklin Park on April 30 was a day shy of the record late date for this species, set on Plum Island on May 1, 1999.

**Greater White-fronted Geese** were recorded from an above-average seven counties, including the first period record for Berkshire County since 2002.

Duck news was headlined by Green-winged Teal in its various forms. The Eurasian subspecies *Anas crecca crecca* was recorded from four counties, including the first record for Franklin County since 2003. Additionally, there were two reports of the American x Eurasian hybrid from Hampshire and Worcester counties. Historically, March and April are the best months to see the Eurasian and hybrid forms in Massachusetts (see Figure 1). **Tufted Ducks** and **King Eiders** were reported from three and five counties, respectively, which is above average for the period.



**Figure 1.** Monthly status of Eurasian Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca crecca*) and Eurasian x American Green-winged Teal (*A. c. crecca* x *A. c. carolinensis*) hybrids in Massachusetts, 2000–2020. Data from eBird.org.

The **Eared Grebe** first discovered off Marblehead on January 11 continued until April 18, by which time it had molted into its handsome alternate (breeding) plumage. A second bird was discovered at Hull and Cohasset on March 28, where it remained until April 14. Swimming between the two cities the bird provided Norfolk County listers with a county first and Plymouth County with its first bird since 1994.

Black-billed Cuckoos and Chimney Swifts were a few days early this year compared to their average arrival dates. A probable Ruby-throated Hummingbird was reported from Medway on April 10. The earliest confirmed state record for the species on eBird is April 16, with multiple arrivals from April 19. Such early hummingbird records present a problem. Many are assumed to be returning ruby-throats and do not receive the same level of scrutiny as hummingbirds that appear in late fall or early winter. But with an increasing number of western hummingbirds overwintering on the East Coast, the possibility of a vagrant hummingbird in the spring can't be overlooked. Indeed, the "earliest" hummingbird this spring was the continuing immature male **Rufous Hummingbird** in Orleans. This bird was banded on December 2 after first appearing in mid-November and stayed until at least March 30. Such records underline the need for photographic or written documentation for hummingbirds that appear exceptionally early in the spring.

The shorebird highlight of the period—and probably of the year—was a **European Golden-Plover** found by Rick Bowes at Duxbury Beach. Pending acceptance by the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC), it would be the first record for the state. Although the bird was first identified on April 13, it had apparently been present for over a week; photos of what was thought to be a molting Black-bellied Plover taken on April 5 were later shown to be the European species. The bird continued until April 18, to the delight of the many visiting birders. European Golden-Plovers breed from eastern Greenland and Iceland east across northern Europe. The bird is an almost annual spring visitor to Newfoundland, often in flocks; the highest

SPECIES	2021 ARRIVAL	DAYS EARLY (-) / LATE (+) vs. AVERAGE	2000-2020 EARLIEST	2000-2020 AVERAGE	2000-2020 LATEST
American Oystercatcher	3/8	-1	2/23	3/8	3/17
Piping Plover	3/12	-2	2/23	3/13	3/25
Lesser Yellowlegs	3/27	2	3/4	3/25	4/16
Spotted Sandpiper	4/4*	-14	4/8	4/17	4/27
Pectoral Sandpiper	3/27	1	3/7	3/25	4/15
Upland Sandpiper	4/11	-4	4/1	4/14	4/28
Solitary Sandpiper	4/12	-2	4/3	4/14	4/28
Willet	4/16	1	3/19	4/15	4/26
Semipalmated Plover	4/20	-7	4/8	4/27	5/10
Whimbrel	4/21	-11	4/10	5/1	5/29
Least Sandpiper	4/21	4	3/31	4/17	4/29
American Golden-Plover	4/23	6	3/20	4/17	5/16
Short-billed Dowitcher	4/26	5	3/4	4/20	5/14
Semipalmated Sandpiper	4/28*	-9	4/28	5/6	5/14

\* Record early date for the century

**Table 1.** Arrival dates of shorebirds in Massachusetts in 2021. A comparison is made to early, average, and late arrivals calculated for the period 2000–2020. Data from eBird.org.

count was 350 in the spring of 1988 (Howell, 2014). The birds typically appear after strong northeasterly winds. Presumably that’s what happened with the Duxbury bird, although there were no Canadian records this year until a bird in Labrador on May 16. The species is much rarer in the United States, with only four prior East Coast records—interestingly all from the fall: Maine (October 2008), Delaware (September 2009), and New Jersey (July 2014 and August 2016). There are four records from Alaska (June 1980, January 2001, June 2015, and June 2017), and a surprising spring record from New Mexico (September–October 2020).

Shorebirds were all over the place with arrivals this year (Table 1). Early birds included: American Oystercatcher on March 8, Semipalmated Plover on April 20, Piping Plover on March 12, Upland Sandpiper on April 11, Solitary Sandpiper on April 12, and Whimbrel on April 21. A Spotted Sandpiper in Lowell on April 4 was four days earlier than the earliest record this century. The earliest state record is from Andover on March 27, 1973 (Veit and Petersen, 1993). The first Semipalmated Sandpiper of the year was on April 28, tying the record early date this century. Arriving later than average were: Lesser Yellowlegs on March 27, Pectoral Sandpiper on March 27, Willet on April 16, Least Sandpiper on April 21, and Short-billed Dowitcher on April 26. Long-billed Dowitchers are rarely recorded in Massachusetts in the spring, and when they are it’s usually not until May. This year, a bird was photographed at Duxbury Beach on March 20—most likely a bird that had overwintered on the East Coast. Red Phalaropes are also rare in the early spring—a bird photographed at Race Point on March 27 is only the fourth March record this century.

A Dovekie off Westport on April 19 was the first April record for Bristol County. A series of pelagics off Jeffreys Ledge produced an impressive high count of 12 **Atlantic Puffins** on April 9.

The adult Kamchatka subspecies of **Mew Gull** (*Larus canus kamtschatschensis*) that was discovered on Nantucket on February 25 continued until March 3. Another adult Kamchatka Mew Gull—showing a more prominent white “mirror” in primary P9—was found in Connecticut at the beginning of April. These sightings are the only records of this taxon outside of Japan,

South Korea, and China this year. Following a discussion of the increase of Lesser Black-backed Gulls in the state in the previous issue of this journal, the species set a new high count of 220 on Nantucket on March 3, eclipsing the 207 recorded at Monomoy NWR on September 17, 2018. The first report of Least Tern and Black Skimmer for the year came from Martha's Vineyard on April 21. That date set a new early record for Least Tern, beating the previous early date of April 27 recorded in 1979.

A "slingshot" event on March 26 associated with strong south-southwest winds off the mid-Atlantic produced a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at Gooseberry Neck. This sighting is one of only five March records in eBird, all of which were in the last week of the month. The average arrival date for this attractive heron is May 3. **White-faced Ibis** has been annual in Essex County since 2007. This year, a bird was hanging around the Ipswich area from April 17. The species is much less common elsewhere; there are only four records outside Essex County. A bird at Fairhaven on April 15 marks the fifth such record and the second for Bristol County.

*N. Hayward*

Snow Goose				3/10	PI		1 m	ph T. Wetmore + v.o.	
3/13	Rumney (Revere)	2	D. Littauer + v.o.	American Wigeon					
3/13-3/16	Turners Falls	1	J. Skinner + v.o.	3/10-3/11	Medfield	2	1 pr	J. Bock	
4/13-4/23	Amherst	1	K. Krishna + v.o.	3/12	GMNWR	10		J. Forbes	
<b>Greater White-fronted Goose</b>				3/19	Worc.	6		P. Vanderhoof	
3/5-3/9	Hadley	1	ph L. Therrien + v.o.	4/4	Longmeadow	2		C. Volker	
3/10-3/11	Turners Falls	2	ph D. Sibley + v.o.	4/9	Lanesboro	2		R. Wendell	
3/10	Sheffield	1	ph J. Pierce, G. Ward	American Black Duck					
3/18-3/19	New Braintree	1	ph E. Kittredge + v.o.	3/1-3/31	PI	500	max	S. Babbitt + v.o.	
<b>Pink-footed Goose</b>				Northern Pintail					
3/4-3/20	Newton/Watertown	1	ph G. Oines + v.o.	3/1-3/31	PI	23	max	v.o.	
3/7-4/25	Dartmouth	1	ph v.o.	3/4-3/30	Hadley	4	max	S. Winn + v.o.	
Brant				3/17	S. Monomoy	28		P. Trimble#	
3/28	Squantum	75	G. d'Entremont	3/28-3/29	Wachusett Res.	10	max	B. Robo + v.o.	
4/2	Marblehead	106	N. Hayward	Green-winged Teal					
<b>Cackling Goose</b>				3/26	Richmond	28		J. Pierce	
3/5-3/9	Hadley	1	L. Therrien + v.o.	3/28	Rumney (Saugus)	40		G. Wilson#	
3/6	Longmeadow	1	S. Motyl	4/24	Winchendon	21		M. Lynch#	
3/11-3/20	Turners Falls	1	ph J. Smith + v.o.	<b>Green-winged Teal (Eurasian)</b>					
4/26-4/30	Boston (FPK)	1	ph P. Peterson + v.o.	3/22	Woburn (HP)	1	m	ph M. Altieri	
Wood Duck				3/26	Turners Falls	1	m	ph T. Gilliland#	
3/13	PI	2	T. Wetmore	3/28	Pittsfield (Pont.)	1	m	G. Hurley#	
3/14	BFWMA	50	J. Bourget#	4/3	Wayland	1	m	ph E. LeBlanc#	
3/21	Wellesley	8	N. Hayward	Green-winged Teal Eurasian x American (hybrid)					
Blue-winged Teal				3/13-3/17	BFWMA	1	m	ph J. Bourget + v.o.	
3/20-3/30	Longmeadow	2	max T. Peterson	4/8-4/14	Belchertown	1	m	ph L. Therrien + v.o.	
4/4	Concord	5	N. Hayward	Canvasback					
4/4	Nantucket	5	S. Kardell	3/13	PI	1	m	T. Wetmore	
4/15-4/20	Hadley	4	max J. Berman + v.o.	3/28-3/30	Wachusett Res.	1	f	B. Robo + v.o.	
4/18	October Mountain	2	So. Auer	Redhead					
4/22	Centerville	4	P. Trimble	3/1-3/12	Sandwich	11		v.o.	
Northern Shoveler				Ring-necked Duck					
3/11	Belchertown	2	M. McKittrick + v.o.	3/10-4/30	New Salem	300	min	B. Lafley + v.o.	
3/15-3/17	Woburn (HP)	2	v.o.	3/10	Quabog IBA	119		M. Lynch#	
3/17	S. Monomoy	25	P. Trimble, M. Sylvia	3/14	Burrage Pd WMA	75		G. d'Entremont#	
3/26	Nantucket	18	B. Balkind	3/19-4/23	Richmond	93	max	R. Wendell, J. Pierce + v.o.	
3/28	Pittsfield	2	G. Hurley	<b>Tufted Duck</b>					
4/7	Walpole	7	V. Zollo	3/1-3/30	Eastham	1	f	ph L. Waters, v.o.	
4/8	E. Boston (BI)	4	N. Hayward	3/1-3/7	Nantucket	1	m	ph T. Pastuszak, v.o.	
4/8-4/20	Longmeadow	2	max F. Bowrys + v.o.	3/6-3/17	Plymouth	1	m	ph L. Waters + v.o.	
Gadwall				Greater Scaup					
3/15	Plainville	21	J. Glover	3/12-4/28	Turners Falls	14	max	R. Christensen + v.o.	
3/17	S. Monomoy	32	P. Trimble, M. Sylvia	3/26	Wachusett Res.	31		M. Lynch#	
4/1-4/30	PI	14	max v.o.	Lesser Scaup					
<b>Eurasian Wigeon</b>				3/14	Pembroke	52		G. d'Entremont#	
3/5-3/11	Fairhaven	1	m	ph v.o.	3/28-4/8	Stockbridge	5	max	G. Ward + v.o.
3/6	Swansea	1	M. Eckerson	<b>King Eider</b>					
3/6-3/8	Yarmouth	1	N. Oliver, P. Trimble	3/11-3/20	Boston H.	1	ad	m	ph S. Bailey + v.o.
3/7-3/8	Nantucket	1	S. Fee	3/20-3/28	Cohasset/Hull	1	ad	m	ph N. Hayward + v.o.

**King Eider (continued)**

4/2-4/3	Bourne	1 f ph	J. Trimble	4/14	Pittsfield (Pont.)	6 max	J. Pierce + v.o.
Common Eider				4/18	MBO	175	M. Gray
thr	PI	600 max	v.o.	3/1-3/23	PI	3 max	S. Babbitt + v.o.
3/31	Nantucket	6000	S. Kardell	4/16	WWMA	4	T. Spahr
Harlequin Duck				4/28	Pittsfield (Onota)	4	P. Banducci + v.o.
3/11	Turners Falls	1	J. Smith	<b>Eared Grebe</b>			
3/18	Lenox	1 imm m	Z. Adams+v.o.	3/1-4/18	Marblehead	1 ph	L. Curtis + v.o.
3/20	Cohasset	1	N. Hayward	3/28-4/14	Cohasset/Hull	1 ph	V. Zollo + v.o.
Surf Scoter				Black-billed Cuckoo			
3/1-3/27	Mystic River	3 max	v.o.	4/29	Quabbin Pk	1	L. Therrien
3/20	Cohasset	26	N. Hayward	Eastern Whip-poor-will			
White-winged Scoter				4/20	Edgartown	1	S. Fee
3/1-3/18	PI	300 max	T. Wetmore+v.o.	4/24	Florence	1	M. Hartley
4/22	Lynn	77	N. Hayward	4/27	PI	3	T. Walker
Black Scoter				4/27	Montague	2	S. Jaffe
3/1-3/31	PI	250 max	v.o.	Chimney Swift			
3/1-3/5	Mystic River	3 max	v.o.	4/17	Eastham	1	B. Albro
4/11	Pittsfield (Pont.)	2	K. Hanson	4/19	W. Newbury	1	M. Iliiff
4/17	Eastham	2000	J. Garrison	4/21	Franklin	1	M. Perrin
4/22	Lynn	71	N. Hayward	4/24	Palmer	1	J. Young
Long-tailed Duck				Ruby-throated Hummingbird			
3/20	Nantucket	1000	L. Waters#	4/10	Medway	1	J. Pratt
4/6	Quabbin Pk	1	L. Therrien	4/19	Woods Hole	1	D. Remsen
4/14-4/15	Pittsfield (Pont.)	2 max	J. Pierce + v.o.	4/20	Marlborough	1	A. Loveless
4/24-4/22	Deerfield	2 min au	nfc D.Sibley	4/22	Sharon	1	V. Zollo
Bufflehead				<b>Rufous Hummingbird</b>			
3/9	Mystic River (Somerville)	35	N. Hayward	3/1-3/30	S. Orleans	1 imm m ph	b S.Finnegan#
3/29	Wachusett Res.	33	R. Spedding	Hummingbird sp.			
Common Goldeneye				4/10	Medway	1	J. Pratt
3/1-3/21	Turners Falls	51 max	J. Lafley + v.o.	King/Clapper Rail			
3/12	GMNWR	12	J. Forbes	4/1-4/30	Harwich Port	1	B. Nikula
3/26	Wachusett Res.	33	M. Lynch#	Virginia Rail			
4/28	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	M. McMahon + v.o.	3/22	Belchertown	1	L. Therrien
Barrow's Goldeneye				3/23	Harwich Port	1	B. Nikula
3/1-3/14	Turners Falls	1	J. Smith + v.o.	3/27-4/7	Longmeadow	2 max	S. Motyl + v.o.
3/13	Dartmouth	1 m	N.Dowling, N. Tepper	4/6	Waltham	1	J. Forbes
4/1	Cohasset	1	E. Lewis + v.o.	4/8	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	M. Iliiff + v.o.
Common X Barrow's Goldeneye (hybrid)				4/29	Ware R. IBA	2	M. Lynch#
3/3-3/11	Mashpee	1	M. Keleher	Sora			
3/11	Middleboro	4	K. Ryan	4/14-4/27	Lenox	1	N. Henkenius + v.o.
Hooded Merganser				4/14	Amherst	1	L. Therrien
thr	Turners Falls	40 max	J. Blue + v.o.	4/27-4/29	BFWMA	1	N. Dowling + v.o.
3/14	Quaboag IBA	83	M. Lynch#	4/28	Franklin	1	M. Perrin
4/22-4/28	Brighton	2	R. Doherty + v.o.	4/29	Mashpee	1	M. Keleher
Common Merganser				<b>Common Gallinule</b>			
3/14	Mystic Lakes	520	M. Rines	4/27	Richmond	1	K. Hanson
3/14	Quaboag IBA	234	M. Lynch#	American Coot			
3/28	Pittsfield (Pont.)	300 max	G. Hurley	3/17	S. Monomoy	48	P. Trimble, M. Sylvia
Red-breasted Merganser				4/27-4/30	PI	1	D. Chickering + v.o.
3/12	Mystic River (Somerville)	26	N. Hayward	Sandhill Crane			
3/28-4/2	Wachusett Res.	5 max	3m+2f B. Robo + v.o.	3/4	Carver	2	D. Furbish
3/28-4/15	Pittsfield (Pont.)	2 max	Z. Adams + v.o.	3/8-4/30	Burrage Pd WMA	4 max	A. Single + v.o.
Ruddy Duck				3/12, 4/13	Concord	4,1	S. Crosina, D. Swain
3/12	Mystic River (Somerville)	4	N. Hayward	3/12-4/27	BFWMA	3 max	N. Tepper + v.o.
3/14	Pembroke	17	G. d'Entremont#	3/12	Easthampton	1	D. Allard + v.o.
3/31	Pittsfield (Pont.)	4	J. Pierce + v.o.	3/14-4/20	Hardwick	3 max	W.Howes + v.o.
Northern Bobwhite				3/24	Plymouth	2	B. Vacchino
4/11	Eastham (FH)	5	N. Tepper	3/26	Princeton	6	E. Williams
Wild Turkey				3/26	Turners Falls	5	E. Huston
3/11	Mashpee	70	M. Keleher	3/27	PI	3	P. Urich# + v.o.
3/14	Quaboag IBA	32	M. Lynch#	3/27-4/18	Ashfield	2 max	L. Bobay + v.o.
Ruffed Grouse				4/10	Rutland	3	N. Monaco
3/27-4/17	W. Barnstable	1	P. Crosson, v.o.	4/20	Sterling	3 au	B. Robo
3/28, 4/9	Petersham	1,1	M. Lynch#	4/24	N. Truro	2	P. Kyle
Pied-billed Grebe				American Oystercatcher			
3/27, 4/4	PI	1,1	A. Sanford, W. Klockner	3/8	Vineyard Haven	1	J. Peters
3/28	Cheshire	1	G. Hurley	3/12	Orleans	1	J. Harris
3/28	Petersham	1	M. Lynch#	3/13	Edgartown	2	D. Padulo
4/4	Burrage Pd WMA	2	G. d'Entremont	3/29	PI	1	T. Wetmore
Horned Grebe				4/20	Chatham	18	J. Murphy
3/27	Richmond	2	D. Peake-Jones# + v.o.	Black-bellied Plover			
4/4-4/14	Quabbin Pk	2 max	L. Therrien	4/7	Ipswich (CB)	2	I. Pepper

Black-bellied Plover (continued)				3/30	Rowley (RMWS)	4		R. Heil
4/25-4/28	PI	3 max	E.Labato + v.o.	3/30	E. Boston (BI)	2		S. Riley
<b>European Golden-Plover*</b>				4/12	Cheshire	1		G. Hurley
4/5-4/18	Duxbury B.	1 ph	R. Bowes + v.o.	Red Phalarope				
American Golden-Plover				3/27, 4/17	P'town (RP)	1.4		P. Flood
4/23	PI	1	M. Watson	4/16	Rockport (AP)	10		R. Heil
Killdeer				Dovekie				
3/5-3/18	PI	12 max	v.o.	4/19	Westport	1		J. + M. Eckerson
3/13	Concord	27	J. Trimble	Common Murre				
3/14	DFWS	14	P. Sowizral	3/28	Rockport (AP)	61		R. Heil
3/21	BFWMA	9	G. d'Entremont#	4/16	Rockport (AP)	2		R. Heil
Semipalmated Plover				4/17	P'town (RP)	76		P. Flood
4/20	Fairhaven	2	C.+C.+S.Darmstadt	4/25	Jeffreys L.	3		L. McKillop#
Piping Plover				Thick-billed Murre				
3/12	Falmouth	1	K. Fiske	3/1-3/28, 4/18	Rockport (HPt)	1,1		v.o.
3/22-3/31	PI	37 max	D.Adrien + v.o.	3/3-3/21	Gloucester (EP)	1		v.o.
4/17	Quincy	2 1pr	E. Ross + v.o.	3/5-3/21	Nahant	1		M. Padulo
Upland Sandpiper				3/21	P'town (RP)	8		J. Johnson#
4/11	Nantucket	1	S. Demarest	4/3	PI	1		C. Cook#
4/19-4/25	Westover AFB	6 max	B.+J.Lafley+v.o.	Razorbill				
4/19	Orange Airport	1	S. Lachance + v.o.	3/14, 4/14	PI	30.2		T. Wetmore
4/27	Southwick	1	W. Schenck	3/28	Rockport (AP)	365		R. Heil
Whimbrel				4/25	Jeffreys L.	2		L. McKillop#
4/21	Wareham	3	Anon.	Black Guillemot				
4/28	Chappaquiddick	1	A. Schloss	4/18	P'town (RP)	1		P. Flood
Sanderling				<b>Atlantic Puffin</b>				
4/18	PI	250	G. d'Entremont#	3/30,4/9,4/25	Jeffreys L.	1,12,1		Z. Cornell#, L. McKillop#
Dunlin				Bonaparte's Gull				
3/1-3/31	PI	300 max	T.Wetmore+v.o.	3/22	Quabbin Pk	1		L. Therrien
4/1-4/28	PI	50 max	v.o.	3/26-3/27	Turners Falls	7 max		E.Huston + v.o.
Purple Sandpiper				3/28	Rockport (AP)	9		R. Heil
4/15	Marblehead	25	N. Hayward	3/31	Stockbridge	1		G. Ward
4/15	PI	2	T. Wetmore#	<b>Black-headed Gull</b>				
4/22	Lynn	18	N. Hayward	3/3-3/16	Gloucester	1 ad ph		A. Lamoreaux+v.o.
Least Sandpiper				4/23-4/25	Hyannis	1 ph		P. Kyle#
4/21-4/30	Topsfield	3 max	R. Heil + v.o.	<b>Little Gull</b>				
Pectoral Sandpiper				4/16	Rockport (AP)	2 ad ph		R.Heil
3/27-3/28	Newbury	1	S. Grinley# + v.o.	Laughing Gull				
4/10	Amherst	2	L. Therrien	4/10	Plymouth	2		N. Hayward
4/20	Sheffield	1	So. Auer	4/16	Rockport (AP)	2		R. Heil
4/23	Topsfield	3	N. Hayward	4/18	Revere B.	1		V. Burdette
4/28	Rowley (RMWS)	1	R. Heil	<b>Mew Gull (<i>kamtschatschensis/heinei</i>)</b>				
Semipalmated Sandpiper				3/3	Nantucket	1 ad ph		S.Kardell, H. Young
4/28	E. Boston (BI)	12	S. Riley	Iceland Gull				
Short-billed Dowitcher				3/2-3/7	Agawam	2 max		F.Bowrys + v.o.
4/26	Hyannis	1	G. Giribet	3/3	Nantucket	110		S. Kardell
Long-billed Dowitcher				3/3-3/24	Turners Falls	2 max		A.Richards+v.o.
3/20	Duxbury B.	1	M. Moore	3/6	Westminster	1		T. Pirro
American Woodcock				3/14	Wilmington	1		J. Keeley
3/13	Burlington	11	J. Layman#	3/21	Cohasset	1		J. Young
3/17	Medford	11	P. Bain	3/22	Quabbin Pk	1		L. Therrien
3/21	Camp Edwards	17	R. Schain	3/27	Wachusett Res.	1		B. Robo
Wilson's Snipe				4/18	PI	1		E. LeBlanc#
3/12-4/19	Sheffield	5 max	G.Hurley + v.o.	Lesser Black-backed Gull				
4/3	BFWMA	32	S. Dresser	3/3	Nantucket	220		S. Kardell
4/6-4/30	Hadley	5 max	J.Jorgensen#+v.o.	3/3-3/27	Turners Falls	1		A. Richards + v.o.
Spotted Sandpiper				3/11	Medfield	1 3cy		M. Iliff
4/4	Lowell	1	M. Baird	3/12	Waltham	1		W. Klockner
4/18-4/30	Sheffield	3 max	L.Agusto + v.o.	4/17	P'town (RP)	16		P. Flood
Solitary Sandpiper				Glaucous Gull				
4/12	Hadley	1	H. Strauss#	3/2-4/28	Revere B.	2		N. Tepper + v.o.
4/18	Acton	1	F. Morello#	3/2	Westminster	1		K. Locke
Lesser Yellowlegs				3/26	Wachusett Res.	1 imm		M. Lynch#
3/27	W. Tisbury	1	B. Shriber	Least Tern				
3/30	PI	4	S. Babbitt#	4/21	Edgartown	2		B. Shriber
4/14	Quabbin Pk	1	L. Therrien	Caspian Tern				
4/16	Yarmouth	1	F. Clapp	4/28	P'town (RP)	1		B. Nikula
4/20-4/30	PI	20 max	T.Wetmore + v.o.	4/29	Acoaxet	2		C. Molander#
4/21	Rowley (RMWS)	1	R. Heil	4/30	Boston (CHRes.)	1		S. Jones + v.o.
4/25	E. Boston (BI)	3	T. Bradford#	Common Tern				
Greater Yellowlegs				4/30	Turners Falls	1		L. + B. Bieda
3/24	PI	1	W. Tatro + v.o.	Black Skimmer				
				4/21	Edgartown	1		B. Shriber



Red-throated Loon				Great Egret			
3/12-3/21	South Hadley	1	T. Gilliland + v.o.	3/16	Gloucester	1	R. Heil
3/22	Squantum	6	N. Hayward	3/26-3/31	PI	9 max	v.o.
3/27	Wellfleet	1437	T. Green	3/28	Squantum	3	G. d'Entremont
3/31-4/30	Pittsfield (Pont.)	1	J. Pierce	3/28-4/18	BFWMA	1	J. Bourget# + v.o.
4/30	PI	12	T. Wetmore	Snowy Egret			
<b>Pacific Loon</b>				3/31	W. Gloucester	3	A. Sanford
3/7-4/24	P'town	2 max	ph P.Flood, v.o.	3/31	PI	1	R. Joganic
Common Loon				4/1-4/19	PI	9 max	v.o.
3/9	Mystic River (Somerville)	3	N. Hayward	4/17	W. Harwich	33	E. Clemmey
4/17	Wachusett Res.	3	M. Lynch#	Little Blue Heron			
4/19	Gloucester	42	M. Iliif	4/21	Osterville	1	A. Vlasopolos
Leach's Storm-Petrel				4/21	Nantucket	1	J. Olney
4/17	Eastham (FE)	2	C. Cook	4/23-4/27	N. Truro	1	T Bradford + v.o.
Northern Fulmar				4/30	Quincy	3	J. Mackey
4/17	P'town (RP)	2	P. Flood	Tricolored Heron			
Manx Shearwater				4/23-4/26	W. Harwich	1	S. MacDonald#
3/31-4/30	Revere B.	28	N. Yusuff + v.o.	4/28	Westport	1	J. Eckerson
4/17	P'town (RP)	2	P. Flood	<b>Cattle Egret</b>			
Northern Gannet				4/20	PI	1	K. Corliss
3/28	Rockport (AP)	78	R. Heil	4/22	Ipswich	1 ph	D. Oh
4/14	Aquinnah	1450	B. Shriber	Green Heron			
4/17	P'town (RP)	1520	P. Flood	4/11-4/14	Northampton	1	L. Bisailon# + v.o.
Great Cormorant				4/11	Woburn (HP)	1	A. Laquidara
3/1-3/20	Medford	1	v.o.	4/24	W. Newbury	1	E. LeBlanc#
3/20	Cohasset	7	N. Hayward	Black-crowned Night-Heron			
3/31	Quabbin (G35)	2	B. Laffey	3/11-3/21	Salem	2	W. Tatro + v.o.
4/17, 4/28	PI	3,1	S. Babbitt, S. Williams	4/13	Huntington	1	D. McLain
Double-crested Cormorant				4/19	Watertown	2	v.o.
3/11-4/29	Quabbin Pk	51 max	L. Therrien + v.o.	Yellow-crowned Night-Heron			
3/26-3/31	Turners Falls	67 max	E. Huston + v.o.	3/26	Westport	1	M. Iliif
3/31-4/30	Pittsfield (Pont.)	19 max	K. Hanson + v.o.	4/10-4/12	Barnstable	1	G. Ledec
4/28	WWMA	34	S. Miller#	4/17	Nantucket	1	B. Mohr
American Bittern				Glossy Ibis			
3/30-4/1	Nantucket	1	L. Dunn#, T. Pastuszek	4/18	Wayland	12	J. Keeley#
4/5-4/30	Northampton	1	L. Therrien + v.o.	4/22	Ipswich	100 min	D. Oh
4/6-4/30	Lenox	2 max	Z. Adams + v.o.	4/26	W. Harwich	18	M. Heintz
4/9	Eastham (FH)	1	K. Dec#	4/28	Burrage Pd WMA60		B. Vigorito
4/18	New Braintree	1	M. Lynch#	4/30	Longmeadow	27	F. Bowrys
4/29	Ware R. IBA	1	M. Lynch#	<b>White-faced Ibis</b>			
Great Blue Heron				4/15	Fairhaven	1 ph	S. Walas
4/13	Bolton	18	N. Tepper	4/17-4/24	Ipswich	1 ph	A. Steenstrup#

## VULTURES THROUGH DICKCISSEL

Turkey Vultures were on the move before the end of March; the Plum Island hawkcount logged 37 on March 27. During the month of April, the team—stationed at Lot 1—tallied 82 Northern Harriers, 128 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 28 Cooper's Hawks, 288 American Kestrels, and 52 Merlins. The only report of **Golden Eagle** during the period was an adult in Pittsfield on April 13.

One of the two Long-eared Owls first noted from Salisbury State Park on January 24 was last reported on April 2. Another Long-eared Owl was found dead at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge on March 17. Snowy Owls were noted from Chatham and Nantucket and at least one was present on Plum Island throughout the period.

As mentioned in the weather summary, March was unusually mild, with three days in the 70s. Strong southwest winds with light rain and fog characterized some late March days, particularly on Cape Cod and in southeastern Massachusetts. These conditions generally favor fallouts, with migrants traveling beyond their intended destinations. In Harwich, a **Prothonotary Warbler** was found on March 29, and a Louisiana Waterthrush was located at Gooseberry Neck in Westport on March 26.

The first push of newly arriving spring migrants came in mid-April with a welcome stretch

of warm southerly winds. Twenty-two warbler species were noted including exceptionally early dates for Cape May, Canada, and Wilson's warblers. Other early arrivals included Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on April 7, Wood Thrush on April 14, and Northern Parula on April 5.

The exciting news this period was reports of two first records for Massachusetts—pending approval from the MARC. On April 9, Leslie Gomes noticed an unusual grackle at Spooner Pond in North Plymouth. She was able to record a video of the displaying male bird that showed it to be either a Great-tailed or a Boat-tailed grackle. The next day, Sean Williams relocated the bird at Nelson Field—one mile north of Spooner Pond—and obtained audio recordings. The strong consensus from observers familiar with the two species was that the audio included diagnostic phrases for **Great-tailed Grackle**. Unfortunately, the bird was never relocated despite many birders canvassing the area.

The second state first was the Caribbean subspecies of **Cave Swallow** photographed by Andy Sanford on April 18 near Cherry Hill Reservoir in West Newbury. This individual remained in the area for over 10 days, to the delight of many birders. Identification of subspecies is not easy. As explained by Marshall Iliff, “Caribbean birds are very dark on the rump with the rump color contrasting only slightly with the blackish back and tail, whereas western *Petrochelidon fulva pelodoma* has a buffy rump that stands out like a beacon.” It is interesting to note that this sighting coincides with a report of the Caribbean subspecies from Cape May, New Jersey, on April 4.

Some of the vagrant species found in the state last December were still noted during this period. The **Sage Thrasher** first reported on December 13 was present in Hatfield until March 11; the Sudbury **Varied Thrush** was present from December 30 through April 8; the **Yellow-throated Warbler** first found on January 22 in Hingham was still present through March 12; and the **Townsend's Warbler** first noted on December 15 in Fairhaven was last reported on March 17. Other unusual visitors included a **Townsend's Solitaire** photographed at Mount Auburn Cemetery, a **Varied Thrush** in West Brookfield, a **Golden-crowned Sparrow** in Edgartown, a **Spotted Towhee** in South Dartmouth, and a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** in Plymouth.

Birders enjoyed the continuing irruptions of winter finches. Red Crossbills were reported from all over the state, with large flocks reported from the Montague Sandplains throughout the period, numbering over 300 on March 25. Good numbers of Common Redpolls were noted through the end of March, and **Hoary Redpolls** were reported from Plum Island and Newbury. 🐦

R. Stymeist

## References

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Black Vulture				3/20-4/8	Lancaster	2	E. Mueller + v.o.
thr	Sheffield	18 max	J. Pierce + v.o.	Northern Saw-whet Owl			
3/6	Wareham	7	M. Perrin#	4/25-4/30	Foxborough	1 au	V. Zollo + v.o.
3/9	Mashpee	8	M. Keleher	Belted Kingfisher			
3/12	Concord	3	C. Winstanley	3/25	Quaboag IBA	3	M. Lynch#
3/13	Quincy	5	E. Ross	<b>Red-headed Woodpecker</b>			
4/4	Blackstone	9	M. Lynch#	3/4-3/20	Princeton	1 ad ph	v.o.
Turkey Vulture				3/20-4/25	Spencer	2 max	D. Therien + v.o.
3/27	PI	37	R. Secatore	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			
4/3	PI	18	Hawkcount (R. Secatore)	3/4	Winchester	2	M. Rines
4/24	P'town	59	J. Trimble#	4/28	Quabbin (G11)	18	J. Berman
Osprey				4/29	Ware R. IBA	8	M. Lynch#
3/28	Southwick	2	L. + A. Richardson	Northern Flicker			
4/13-4/24	Russell	43	Hawkcount (T. Swochak)	4/4	Blackstone	17	M. Lynch#
4/14	Russell	30	Hawkcount (T. Swochak)	4/18	New Braintree	15	M. Lynch#
<b>Golden Eagle</b>				Pileated Woodpecker			
4/14	Pittsfield	1	T. Collins	3/21	Hardwick	5	M. Lynch#
Northern Harrier				4/24	Winchendon	9	M. Lynch#
3/1-3/18	PI	4 max	v.o.	American Kestrel			
3/30	Rowley (RMWS)	4	R. Heil	3/27	PI	19 migr	R. Secatore
4/1-4/30	PI	82	Hawkcount (R. Secatore)	4/1-4/30	PI	288	Hawkcount (R. Secatore)
4/14	Russell	3	Hawkcount (T. Swochak)	4/13-4/24	Russell	14	Hawkcount (T. Swochak)
4/24	P'town	6	J. Trimble#	4/21	Sandwich	12	P. Trimble
Sharp-shinned Hawk				4/24	P'town	7	J. Trimble#
4/1-4/30	PI	128	Hawkcount (R. Secatore)	Merlin			
4/13-4/24	Russell	32	Hawkcount (T. Swochak)	4/1-4/30	PI	52	Hawkcount (R. Secatore)
4/14	Russell	11	Hawkcount (T. Swochak)	4/4	Nantucket	3	S. Kardell
Cooper's Hawk				Peregrine Falcon			
4/1-4/30	PI	28	Hawkcount (R. Secatore)	4/18-4/30	PI	6	Hawkcount (R. Secatore)
Northern Goshawk				Great Crested Flycatcher			
3/11	Quabbin Pk	1	L. Therrien	4/24	Concord	1	D. Swain
3/14	Wilbraham	1	J. Paterson	4/28	Northfield	1	G. Watkevich
Bald Eagle				4/28	Easthampton	1	L. Therrien
3/14	Norton	2 ad+imm	K. Ryan	Eastern Kingbird			
3/25	Quaboag IBA3	1pr+1ad n	M. Lynch#	4/23	W. Brookfield	1	M. Lynch#
4/1-4/7	PI	6 max	v.o.	4/24	Winchendon	1	M. Lynch#
4/22	Hardwick	5 2ad+3imm	M. Lynch#	Least Flycatcher			
4/23	Russell	4	Hawkcount (T. Swochak)	4/28	Pittsfield	2	N. Henkenius
Red-shouldered Hawk				4/28	Great Barrington	1	G. Ward
3/10	Warren	2 1pr	M. Lynch#	4/28	Quabbin Pk	1	M. McKittrick
3/24	Easton	2 1pr n	K. Ryan	Eastern Phoebe			
4/14	Plymouth	3	N. Hayward	3/11-3/31	MtA	6 max	A. Parker + v.o.
Broad-winged Hawk				3/30	Rowley (RMWS)	11	R. Heil
4/13-4/24	Russell	233	Hawkcount (T. Swochak)	3/31-4/1	Turners Falls	16 min	P. Field + v.o.
4/24	P'town	48	J. Trimble#	4/2	Northampton	30	M. Maity#
Rough-legged Hawk				4/9	Petersham	33	M. Lynch#
3/1-3/22	PI	2 max	T. Wetmore + v.o.	Northern Shrike			
3/1-3/6	Sunderland	1 dk ph	Sa. Auer# + v.o.	3/3-4/18	Indiv. reported from	11	locations
3/3	Aquinnah	1	B. Shriber	White-eyed Vireo			
3/3	Northampton	1 dk	K. Doe	4/21	Southbridge	1	S. Williams
3/3-3/7	Hadley	1 dk	M. Maity# + v.o.	4/24-4/25	PI	1	B. Drummond+ v.o.
3/9	N. Adams	1 ph	M. Morales	4/28-4/30	Medford	1	R. LaFontaine + v.o.
3/31	Nantucket	1	J. Olney	4/29-4/30	Longmeadow	1	M. Moore + v.o.
Great Horned Owl				4/30	MtA	5	v.o.
3/1-3/31	Cambr. (FP)	4 1pr+2yg	v.o.	Blue-headed Vireo			
3/7	Rutland	6	M. Lynch#	4/10	Petersham	2	G. d'Entremont#
3/16	Boston (FHC)	3	N. Hayward	4/24	Winchendon	22	M. Lynch#
Snowy Owl				4/30	MtA	6	v.o.
thr	PI	1 min	v.o.	Warbling Vireo			
3/16	Nantucket	2	S. Fee	4/29	Watertown	6	C. Cook
3/22	Chatham	2	F. Atwood	Fish Crow			
Barred Owl				3/6	Easton	9	K. Ryan
3/1	Boston	2	G. Exley-Smith	3/6	Stoughton	7	G. d'Entremont
3/21	Hardwick	2	M. Lynch#	3/12, 3/31	PI	2,1	W. Tatro, D. Prima
4/18	New Braintree	3	M. Lynch#	3/14	Pembroke	6	G. d'Entremont#
Long-eared Owl				Common Raven			
3/1-4/2	Salisbury	1	v.o.	3/20	New Braintree	8	M. Lynch#
3/17	MtA	1 d ph	A. Parker	3/20	Nantucket	2	S. Kardell#
Short-eared Owl				4/4	Somerville	3	J. Forbes
3/1-3/24	PI	2 max	D. Prima + v.o.	4/17	Tisbury	2	R. Culbert
3/1-4/4	P'town	1	v.o.	4/28	Carver	19	D. Furbish
3/10	E. Boston (BI)	2	E. Trotochaud + v.o.	Horned Lark			
3/11-3/21	Hadley (Honeypot)	2 max	S. + E. Lewis + v.o.	3/3-4/23	Hadley	100 max	L. Therrien + v.o.

Horned Lark (continued)			
3/3-4/30	Hatfield	65	max N. Tepper + v.o.
3/12-3/18	Egremont	100	max R. Wendell, J. Pierce + v.o.
3/14	Chatham	195	P. Kyle
3/28	Rumney (Saugus)	40	G. Wilson#
Bank Swallow			
4/18-4/23	W. Newbury	2	max A. Sanford#
4/18	Medfield	1	J. Bock
4/19	Wayland	1	J. Forbes
Tree Swallow			
3/3-3/6	Georgetown	1	R. Stevensen#
3/7	Assabet R. NWR	2	M. Gooley
3/10	Longmeadow	2	M. Moore
3/11	Rowley (RMWS)	11	R. Heil
4/17	Wachusett Res.	480	M. Lynch#
Northern Rough-winged Swallow			
3/26	GMNWR	1	J. Trimble
3/27	W. Springfield	1	A. Pearsons
4/2	Arlington Res.	5	K. Hartel
4/24	Topsfield	5	G. d'Entremont#
Purple Martin			
4/15-4/30	PI	17	max T. Wetmore + v.o.
4/18	Norfolk	2	N. Crosby
4/21	Stockbridge	1	K. Hanson, J. Jew
4/21	Boston (FPk)	1	S. Jones
Barn Swallow			
3/29	Longmeadow	1	T. Jampa
3/30	Woburn (HP)	1	R. Flynn
4/30	Quaboag IBA	21	M. Lynch#
Cliff Swallow			
4/2	P'town (RP)	1	S. Williams#
4/9	Wendell	1	J. Burkett
4/21-4/29	Rowe	12	max C. Hyttinen
4/30	Great Barrington	60	D. Abrams
<b>Cave Swallow (Caribbean)</b>			
4/18-4/28	W. Newbury	1	ph A. Sanford# + v.o.
Red-breasted Nuthatch			
thr	Montague	30	max J. Smith + v.o.
4/18	Chappaquiddick	25	S. Fee
4/24	Winchendon	42	M. Lynch#
Brown Creeper			
4/9	Ware	12	B. Robo
4/10	Quaboag IBA	9	M. Lynch#
4/11	Wompatuck SP	5	G. d'Entremont
House Wren			
4/30	Quaboag IBA	3	M. Lynch#
Winter Wren			
3/1	Medfield	1	J. Bock
3/6	S. Dart. (APd)	1	G. d'Entremont
3/7	Franklin	1	M. Perrin
3/24	PI	1	T. Wetmore
4/9	Petersham	1	M. Lynch#
Marsh Wren			
3/12	Ipswich	1	A. Steenstrup
3/16	Peabody	1	M. Tillinghast
3/17	PI	1	J. Layman
Carolina Wren			
3/6	S. Dart. (APd)	14	G. d'Entremont
4/4	Blackstone	24	M. Lynch#
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher			
4/7	Boston (FPk)	1	S. Jones
4/12	Waltham	1	F. Morello
4/25	Wompatuck SP	2	BBC (G. d'Entremont)
Ruby-crowned Kinglet			
3/1-3/27	Newton (CSPk)	1	v.o.
3/1-3/31	Cambr. (Alewife)	1	v.o.
3/3-3/26	Medford	1	J. Mott + v.o.
4/18-4/30	MNWS	30	max J. Smith + v.o.
4/24	Winchendon	13	M. Lynch#
Eastern Bluebird			
3/6	S. Dart. (APd)	8	G. d'Entremont
3/14-3/25	DFWS	18	P. Sowizral
3/21	Hardwick	31	M. Lynch#

<b>Townsend's Solitaire</b>			
4/19	MtA	1	ph C. Easter, B. Parker
Veery			
4/30	Longmeadow	1	M. Moore
Swainson's Thrush			
4/29	Boston	1	M. Garvey
Hermit Thrush			
4/29	Ware R. IBA	24	M. Lynch#
4/29	Medford	15	M. Rines
Wood Thrush			
4/14	Cambridge	1	K. Shulgina
<b>Varied Thrush</b>			
3/1-4/8	Sudbury	1	ph C. Goddard + v.o.
4/5-4/6	W. Brookfield	1	ph Anonymous + v.o.
Gray Catbird			
3/1-3/31	PI	2	max v.o.
3/1-3/16	Cambr. (Alewife)	2	max v.o.
3/1-4/1	MtA	1	J. Barcus + v.o.
3/6	S. Dart. (APd)	2	G. d'Entremont
Brown Thrasher			
3/1-4/10	MNWS	1	J. Smith + v.o.
4/8	PI	1	W. Tatro
4/17	Wachusett Res.	1	M. Lynch#
<b>Sage Thrasher</b>			
3/1-3/11	Hatfield	1	ph v.o.
Cedar Waxwing			
3/10	Warren	17	M. Lynch#
American Pipit			
3/21	Nantucket	4	S. Fee
3/28	Chatham	4	P. Kyle
3/31	Wachusett Res.	7	B. Keevan
4/7	Newbury	29	max A. Sanford + v.o.
Evening Grosbeak			
thr	Wellfleet	24	T. Jacobs-Ziobro
3/3-4/2	Wendell	18	max M. Thomas
3/10	Heath	20	J. Coleman
3/11	Royalston	97	M. Lynch#
3/20	New Braintree	6	M. Lynch#
3/31	Ware R. IBA	20	M. Lynch#
4/10-4/29	Washington	8	max M. Watson
4/15	Ipswich	3	M. Watson
4/27	Sharon	2	V. Zollo + v.o.
4/30	Huntington	2	D. McLain
<b>Pine Grosbeak</b>			
3/2-3/22	Williamstown	10	max ph M.+J. Morales + v.o.
3/7	Princeton	2	K. Locke
3/15	Rutland	1	B. Robo
3/20-3/25	Gardner	3	max C. Caron
3/20	Montague	1	J. Smith
3/25	Easthampton	1	L. Therrien
Purple Finch			
3/7	Medfield	19	J. Bock
3/19	Sherborn	8	K. Winkler
4/2	Pittsfield	10	M. Boschetti
4/30	Quaboag IBA	6	M. Lynch#
Common Redpoll			
3/1-3/30	E. Boston (BI)	44	L. Sokolow + v.o.
3/4-3/20	Hatfield	150	max A. Hulse + v.o.
3/4	PI	27	N. Hayward
3/4	Salisbury	13	A. Lamoreaux
3/7	Wellfleet	60	J. Carroll
3/9	Medford	25	M. Rines
3/10-3/15	Sheffield	150	max G. Ward, J. Pierce
3/17-3/22	Windsor	35	G. Hurley + v.o.
3/18	Worthington	30	S. + E. Lewis
3/21	Cohasset	20	J. Young
3/22	Orange	7	L. Boudreau
4/6	P'town	2	D. Clapp#
<b>Hoary Redpoll</b>			
3/2	PI	1	S. Grinley#
3/6	Newbury	1	ph S. Wong#
Red Crossbill			
thr	Montague	340	max J. Smith + v.o.

Red Crossbill (continued)				4/24-4/26	Arlington Res.	2 max	S. Zende + v.o.
3/1-3/30	PI	33 max	S. Miller# + v.o.	4/28	Worc.	1	M. Lynch#
3/1-3/27	Salisbury	30 max	v.o.	4/29	PI	1	T. Graham
3/1-3/31	MtA	14 max	J. Barcus + v.o.	4/30	Sharon	1	V. Zollo + v.o.
3/3-4/7	Williamstown	13 max	So. Auer + v.o.	4/30	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	T. Bradford + v.o.
3/11-4/29	Quabbin Pk	16 max	D. Allard + v.o.	Nelson's Sparrow			
3/16-3/28	Ipswich (CB)	25 max	I. Pepper + v.o.	3/30	Rowley (RMWS)	1	R. Heil
3/16	Somerville	22	M. Haupt	4/19	Gloucester	1	M. Iliff
3/17	Worc.	16	M. Lynch#	Saltmarsh Sparrow			
3/21-3/7	Quincy	15	N. Hayward + v.o.	4/19	Gloucester	2	M. Iliff
3/21-3/26	Charlestown	15	L. Nichols + v.o.	Savannah Sparrow			
4/12-4/25	Gloucester	22 max	J. Keyes	4/24	W. Newbury	28	G. d'Entremont#
4/13-4/19	Chappaquiddick	17	S. Fee	4/24	Arlington Res.	12	N. Hayward
4/15	P'town	39	P. Kyle	4/28	Worc.	13	M. Lynch#
4/18	Falmouth	30	J. Garrison	Ipswich Sparrow			
4/19	Plymouth	20	L. Schibley#	3/9	PI	1	D. Adrien
White-winged Crossbill				4/25	Nahant	1	L. Pivacek
3/1-3/24	MtA	10 max	v.o.	Lincoln's Sparrow			
3/1-3/3	Salisbury	6 max	v.o.	4/20	Shelburne Falls	1	H. Baker
3/6-4/10	Montague	22 max	T. Bombadil + v.o.	4/30	Hatfield	2	A. Hulsey
3/14	Canton	10	D. Sullivan	Swamp Sparrow			
3/20-3/28	Holland	12 max	J. LeBlanc	4/18	New Braintree	18	M. Lynch#
3/21	PI	3	K. Hartel	4/29	E. Boston (BI)	2	N. Hayward
3/26-3/30	W. Brookfield	15	B. Robo + v.o.	4/30	Quaboag IBA	21	M. Lynch#
4/20	W. Gloucester	3	D. McComiskey#	Spotted Towhee			
Pine Siskin				3/6	S. Dart. (APd)	1 au	J. Eckerson
3/3-3/27	Windsor	20 max	G. Hurley + v.o.	Eastern Towhee			
3/8-4/21	Montague	16 max	S. Surner + v.o.	3/6	S. Dart. (APd)	3	G. d'Entremont
3/11-4/28	Deerfield	12 max	D. Sibley	3/6	Quaboag IBA	1 m	M. Lynch#
3/22-4/30	Orange	13 max	L. Boudreau	4/29	Ware R. IBA	34	M. Lynch#
4/4-4/24	Pittsfield	16 max	R. Wendell# + v.o.	Yellow-breasted Chat			
4/12	Easton	6	K. Ryan	3/1-3/17	Sandwich	1	M. West
Lapland Longspur				Yellow-headed Blackbird			
3/9	Amherst	1	L. Therrien	3/31-4/7	Plymouth	1 m ph	M. Howell + v.o.
3/30	Rowley (RMWS)	1	R. Heil	Bobolink			
3/31	Boston (McW)	1	P. Peterson	4/29-4/30	Hadley	3 max	M. McKittrick + v.o.
4/5	Chatham	6	P. Trimble	4/29	Pittsfield	2	K. Hanson
4/6	Pittsfield	1	N. Henkenius	4/30	Northampton	3	T. Gessing
Snow Bunting				4/30	Sheffield	2	J. Pierce
3/5	PI	30	S. Babbitt	Eastern Meadowlark			
3/21	Winthrop	1	J. Forbes	3/12-4/30	Hadley	15 max	C. Elowe + v.o.
3/27	Essex	12	M. Chuffnell	3/12-4/29	Southwick	9 max	T. Jampa + v.o.
3/28	Orange	7	B. Lafley	4/6-4/25	Pittsfield	4 max	N. Henkenius + v.o.
Chipping Sparrow				4/21	Sandwich	12	P. Trimble
3/5	Melrose	1	C. Barnes	Orchard Oriole			
3/24	Mount Washington	1	K. Handel	4/15	Needham	1 au	P. Oehlkers
4/25	Wompatuck SP	25	BBC (G. d'Entremont)	4/25-4/29	Hadley	2 max	L. Therrien + v.o.
4/28	W. Brookfield	57	M. Lynch#	4/27	Florence	1	C. Stern
Field Sparrow				4/29	Merrimac	1	B. + B. Buxton
4/2-4/18	PI	6 max	D. Williams + v.o.	Bullock's Oriole			
4/4	Blackstone	11	M. Lynch#	3/3	Cohasset	1 ad m	S. Magnell
4/9	Petersham	4	M. Lynch#	Baltimore Oriole			
Fox Sparrow				3/1-3/8	Danvers	1	A. Fowlie
3/9	Canton	2	B. Sullivan	3/7	Concord	1	M. Sinclair
3/16-3/22	Easton	2	K. Ryan	3/23	Holliston	1	P. Rennert
3/27	Amherst	3	S. Schwenk	Red-winged Blackbird			
4/3	Warren	3	M. Lynch#	3/14	BFWMA	6500	J. Bourget
American Tree Sparrow				3/14	DFWS	60	P. Sowizral
3/4-4/27	Hatfield	22	A. Hulsey + v.o.	Rusty Blackbird			
3/7	Hadley	15	G. d'Entremont#	3/12-3/17	Lynnfield	70 max	M. Sovay + v.o.
3/21	BFWMA	7	G. d'Entremont#	3/15	Wayland	20	J. Hoyer#
Dark-eyed Junco (cismontanus)				3/20-4/29	Lenox	14 max	Z. Adams
4/2	P'town	1 ph	S. Williams#	3/25	Nantucket	17	S. Kardell
4/17-4/28	Deerfield	1	D. Sibley	3/25	Athol	10	E. LeBlanc
White-crowned Sparrow				Common Grackle			
3/1-4/25	Boxford	2 max	T. + N. Walker	3/20	BFWMA	12515	J. Johnson
3/20-4/6	Nantucket	1	T. Pastuszak	Great-tailed Grackle*			
4/7	PI	1	T. Wetmore	4/9-4/10	Plymouth	1 ph au	L. Gomes, S. Williams
4/29	Boston (FPk)	1	T. O'Brien	Ovenbird			
Golden-crowned Sparrow				4/13	Florence	1	S. Baker
4/28-thr	Edgartown	1 ph	B. Burke, v.o.	4/21	MNWS	1	J. Smith
Vesper Sparrow				4/29	Ware R. IBA	36	M. Lynch#
4/10	Orange	2	G. d'Entremont#				

Louisiana Waterthrush				Chestnut-sided Warbler			
3/26 Westport	1	M. Eckerson, M. Iliff		4/28 Great Barrington	1		G. Ward
4/7 Williamsburg	3	M. McKittrick		4/29 Lenox	1		Z. Adams
4/9 Petersham	3	M. Lynch#		4/30 Hadley (Skinner SP)2			M. Locher
4/10-4/12 Mashpee	1	P. Crosson, v.o.		Black-throated Blue Warbler			
Northern Waterthrush				4/29 Ware R. IBA	1		M. Lynch#
4/18 Gloucester	1	J. Keyes		Palm Warbler			
4/28 Lexington	1	J. Forbes		4/7-4/19 PI	12 max	M. Halsey + v.o.	
4/30 Quaboag IBA	3	M. Lynch#		4/15 Huntington	33	D. McLain, K. Jones	
Blue-winged Warbler				4/23 W. Brookfield	23	M. Lynch#	
4/20 Edgartown	1	R. Culbert		Pine Warbler			
4/25-4/29 Deerfield	2 max	D. Sibley		4/9 Petersham	41		M. Lynch#
Black-and-white Warbler				4/11 Wompatuck SP	21		G. d'Entremont
4/20 PI	1	A. Sanford		4/18 Chappaquiddick	15		S. Fee
4/28 Lexington	1	J. Forbes		Yellow-rumped Warbler			
4/29 Ware R. IBA	9	M. Lynch#		3/3 Hadley	1		L. Therrien
<b>Prothonotary Warbler</b>				3/4 Waltham	1		J. Forbes
3/29-4/19 Harwich	1	T. Gavin		4/28 W. Brookfield	131		M. Lynch#
4/29 Sandwich	1	L. Bedard		4/30 WWMA	130		T. Spahr
Orange-crowned Warbler				4/30 MtA	41		J. Trimble + v.o.
3/1-4/3 Chatham	1	P. Gaines		<b>Yellow-throated Warbler (<i>abilora</i>)</b>			
3/23 Harwich	1	P. Kyle		3/1-3/21 Cambr. (Alewife)	1 ph	P. Cassidy + v.o.	
4/24 PI	1	A. Sanford		<b>Yellow-throated Warbler (<i>dominica/stoddardi</i>)</b>			
4/27-4/28 Nahant	1	M. Padulo + v.o.		3/1-3/12 Hingham	1	P. Edmundson	
Common Yellowthroat				<b>Townsend's Warbler</b>			
4/20 Lexington (DM)	1	A. Gurka#		3/1-3/17 Fairhaven	1 ph		v.o.
4/21 W. Newbury	1	D. Bates		Black-throated Green Warbler			
Hooded Warbler				4/21 MtA	1		J. Barcus
4/20 Franklin	1	M. Noiseux		4/29 PI	1		T. Wetmore
4/29-4/30 MNWS	1	A. Sanford + v.o.		Canada Warbler			
4/30 Hadley	1	M. McKittrick + v.o.		4/20 Edgartown	1		R. Culbert
Cape May Warbler				Wilson's Warbler			
4/30 Great Barrington	1	M. Goldfarb		4/28 Nahant	1		J. Smith
Northern Parula				Scarlet Tanager			
4/5 Lexington	1	N. Yusuff#		4/24 Sheffield	1		D. Abrams
4/24 Northampton	2 max	C. Elowe + v.o.		Rose-breasted Grosbeak			
4/28 W. Brookfield	4	M. Lynch#		4/19-4/28 Nantucket	1		J. Vohs
Magnolia Warbler				4/25 Brimfield	1		W. O'Shaughnessy
4/28 Lexington	1	A. Laquidara		4/25 Easthampton	1		M. Merithew
Blackburnian Warbler				4/30 Quaboag IBA	4		M. Lynch#
4/28-4/29 Quabbin Pk	1	S. Surner + v.o.		<b>Painted Bunting</b>			
4/29 Pittsfield	1	K. Hanson		3/2 Orleans	2 m+f ph	P. Kyle	
Yellow Warbler				3/6-3/27 Westport	1 m ph	C. Molander + v.o.	
4/19 MtA	1	BBC (L. O'Brien)		4/20 Marshfield	1 m ph	B. Morrissey	
4/20 Acton	1	J. Welch					
4/30 Quaboag IBA	2	M. Lynch#					



EASTERN BLUEBIRD BY SANDY SELESKY

## ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

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

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

### HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO BIRD OBSERVER

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

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

# BYGONE BIRDS

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## Historical Highlights for March–April

Neil Hayward

### 5 YEARS AGO



#### *March–April 2016*

Three **White-faced Ibises**—a new high count for the state—were in Ipswich in April. Up to two **Mew Gulls** were present at Race Point in March. Four **Yellow-throated Warblers** were reported, with the earliest found on March 27. The **Mountain Bluebird** in Falmouth continued until March 22. **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were reported from Cumberland Farms and West Harwich.

Best sighting: the first-for-Massachusetts **Yellow-billed Loon** continued at Race Point, Provincetown, from February 27 until April 2 and was accompanied by up to two **Pacific Loons**, allowing some observers to experience a “four loon day.”

### 10 YEARS AGO



#### *March–April 2011*

An **Eared Grebe** was found in Chatham on March 26. A **White-faced Ibis** that was discovered at Plum Island on April 22 ended its visit (and its life) in the talons of a Peregrine Falcon. A **Mississippi Kite** was spotted over Truro on April 23. A **Mew Gull** continued in Lynn until March 8. The three Monk Parakeets were adding nesting material to their East Boston home in April. A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was a one-day wonder on Plum Island on April 29. The **Harris’s Sparrow** continued on Duxbury Beach until April 28. Four **Hoary Redpolls** were identified among the many large redpoll flocks during this period.

Best sighting: five **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks** in Duxbury on April 29 represented the second state record.



## 20 YEARS AGO



### *March–April 2001*

“The” **Eared Grebe** continued at Gloucester through most of March. A strong spring nor’easter produced a Leach’s Storm-Petrel past First Encounter Beach on March 7, the first March record for the state. A **Tundra Swan** spent two weeks in April in West Bridgewater. Nantucket hosted six **Bohemian Waxwings**, while Martha’s Vineyard had a **Yellow-throated Warbler**. Naushon Island had a **Harris’s Sparrow** at the end of March. A long-staying **Bullock’s Oriole** was present in South Dartmouth from March 1 to April 15, and Malden hosted a **Painted Bunting** from March 7 to 25.

## 40 YEARS AGO



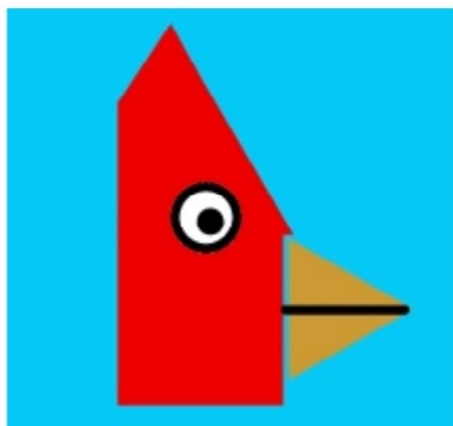
### *March–April 1981*

A **Tundra Swan** was present in Fitchburg, March 26–April 11. The north end of Plum Island hosted up to 120 Iceland Gulls. A basic-plumaged **Bar-tailed Godwit** was found at Point of Pines, Revere, on April 12. A **Black-backed (Three-toed) Woodpecker** was photographed in Baldwinville on March 11. A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher**, missing its left tail streamer, was at Dwyer Farm in Marshfield in the last week of April. A **Boreal Chickadee** was found on Plum Island on April 18–19. Continuing birds included the adult male **Black-headed Grosbeak** in Walpole, and the **Hoary Redpoll** at Plum Island. Manomet Bird Observatory had an “Oregon” Junco for the month of March.

Best sighting: a **Western Meadowlark** was singing in Squantum for three days at the end of April. 🐦

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**Harry Vogel**, Loon Preservation Committee

**Jordan Rutter**, Bird Names for Birds

**Melissa Gonzales**, Latino Conservation Week

**Jeffrey Ward**, co-founder of Black Birder's Week

**Cliff Hawley**, eBird reviewer

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# ABOUT THE COVER

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## Willet

The Willet (*Tringa semipalmata*) is a drab shorebird until it opens its wings to show the magnificent black-and-white wing pattern above and below that instantly transforms it into a spectacular shorebird. The black-and-white wing pattern is distinctive, with a bold white stripe extending through the base of the black primary and secondary feathers. There is also white on much of the leading edge of the wing. The Willet is a large, brownish gray shorebird that, in breeding plumage, has barred and streaked patterns of black and brown on all but its white belly. In winter plumage, it is mostly plain brownish gray. It has a heavy, straight, long, mostly black bill, gray legs, and a white rump.

There are two subspecies, *T. s. semipalmata*, the “Eastern” Willet, and *T. s. inornata*, the “Western” Willet. The two subspecies differ in size, plumage, vocalizations, and location of both breeding and wintering areas. They differ enough that some researchers consider them separate species. Western Willets breed in the western interior of North America, from northeastern California, Nevada, Utah, and Oregon through Idaho, Montana, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Colorado, and north into Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. Also, some are year-round residents in the Bahamas south to Venezuela, where they breed locally. Western Willets winter along the West Coast from Washington State to Mexico, and along the west coast of Mexico and Central America south to Chile. On the East Coast, Western Willets winter along the Atlantic coast from the Carolinas southward, along the Gulf coast, through eastern coastal Mexico and Central America, and along the north coast of South America.

Eastern Willets breed from Nova Scotia south along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts to northern Mexico. Eastern Willets are also resident in the Bahamas and Greater and Lesser Antilles but are migratory elsewhere in the Caribbean. Eastern Willets winter from Virginia south along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, along the Mexican and Central American Gulf Coast, and in South America to southern Brazil. Because of identification problems, among some observers the distribution of the two subspecies in winter is unclear.

In Massachusetts, Willets are fairly common but local coastal breeders, and fairly common to common migrants. Willets are nighttime migrants that arrive in Massachusetts, especially on Cape Cod and the Islands, in late April. They leave during the last two weeks of August, although some occasionally linger into late October.

Willetts are monogamous and usually mate for life. However, males mate-guard females, which suggests that they may occasionally be polygynous. Willets produce a single brood per season. The male’s song is a ringing *pill-will-willet* that often accompanies wing displays featuring the large white wing stripes. Males sing early in the breeding season to advertise territory and to attract females. Males also have *kyah-yak* calls that serve many purposes including appeasement and contact. A *klink* call is

used in agonistic and courtship situations. The male's flight display involves keeping the wings above the body and fluttering. Sometimes the female joins him, with the pair singing duets. The female's call is lower pitched and flatter. Various "scream" calls are given when attacking or fleeing. Aggressive behavior includes crouched and erect postures, neck outstretched, and lunging or flying at an opponent. In fights, one bird may grab its opponent's leg or neck. Willets tend to mob predators and are aggressive with other shorebirds. The pair may defend both breeding and foraging territories, which may be completely separated.

Western Willets breed in wetlands, grassland prairies, and on plains near water. Eastern Willets breed in farmland pastures in Nova Scotia, but mostly in salt marshes or on barrier islands along the East and Gulf coasts of the United States. The pair selects the nest site. The male chooses the site and makes a scrape that the female tries out before accepting or rejecting it. The nest consists of a scrape on compressed live grass stems or grass that is brought in and lined with fine grass, twigs, and leaves. Both parents develop brood patches and both incubate the clutch of four olive buff eggs, blotched with dark colors, for three to four weeks until hatching. The chicks are precocial, covered with buff down, eyes open, and feed themselves from the first day. Chicks are able to fly in about a month. When the chicks first leave the nest, the adults accompany, brood, and defend them. Females abandon the chicks after two weeks but the male stays on duty for an additional two weeks until they are independent.

Willets are versatile foragers. They sometimes dash about with their bill open under water, usually catching prey in the tip of the bill. They also forage while swimming and may raise organic substrate in order to forage beneath it. Most often they forage visually during the day or on moonlit nights. On dark nights, they forage tactically, typically by probing the substrate. During the breeding season they take mainly insects, crustaceans, mollusks, polychaete worms, and sometimes small fish. On the wintering grounds they may temporarily defend mudflat territories, where they forage mostly on fiddler crabs.

Egg theft and market gunning during the late nineteenth century reduced the Eastern Willet population to remnants in Nova Scotia and along the East and Gulf coasts. Recovery started in the 1930s but has been slow. The population in Massachusetts did not recover until the 1970s, and in other New England states until the 1980s. Western Willet population declines were due primarily to the conversion of wetlands to farmlands in the interior west. Willets continue to increase in numbers in Massachusetts and elsewhere where suitable breeding habitat is available, and the Breeding Bird Survey suggests that most populations are stable. Hence the Willet, with its flashes of brilliance, appears to have a secure future. 🐦

*William E. Davis, Jr.*

# AT A GLANCE

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June 2021



WAYNE R. PETERSEN

This issue's mystery species is obviously a tiny bird, a fact suggested by its fine pointed bill, slender legs, and size compared to the twigs and blossoms also visible in the picture. When the picture is viewed online, the bird's bright yellow underparts clearly suggest that the bird is probably a wood warbler of some sort, and few other tiny, pointy-billed birds are as prominently streaked on the breast as the mystery species. Among the alternative possibilities might be such petite species as wrens, kinglets, and gnatcatchers; however, all of these birds are plain breasted and none of them exhibits prominent yellow underparts.

Knowing that the mystery bird is a wood warbler at once narrows the field, and the presence of conspicuous streaks on the bird's sides, but not on its breast, is an important clue. When combined with the distinct dark spot on the side of the bird's lower neck, noticeable stripe over its eye, and obvious wing bars, the identification is readily clinched as a Prairie Warbler (*Setophaga discolor*). Although various other wood warblers are streaked below—e.g., Magnolia, Cape May, Palm—in these species the breast streaks extend across the midbreast and are in some cases less prominent than those exhibited by the mystery bird. Plus, all the other species fail to show the dark spot on the lower neck that is present in the Prairie Warbler and is obvious on the mystery warbler. The light gray face and nape are also frequently characteristic of this species in autumn.

Prairie Warblers are locally common summer residents in early successional habitats throughout Massachusetts, although they are most abundant in the pine barrens of southeastern Massachusetts and Cape Cod. They also frequent powerline corridors where habitat conditions are appropriate. Although locally common as breeders, as spring and fall migrants they tend not to be as widespread as many other wood warbler

species. Rarely Prairie Warblers will linger in Massachusetts until early winter, most often on Cape Cod.

The author photographed this Prairie Warbler during fall migration at Pochet Island in East Orleans, Barnstable County, September 10, 2010. 🐦

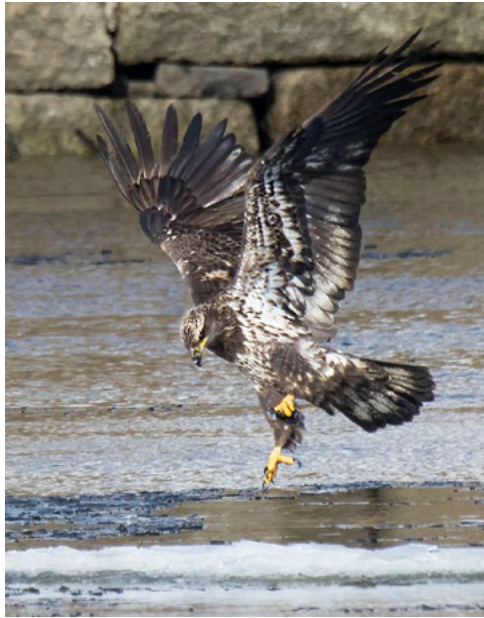
*Wayne R. Petersen*

## **ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST**

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### **John Sill**

John Sill is a freelance wildlife artist living in the mountains of North Carolina. He was the illustrator for the Bird Identification Calendar for Mass Audubon for many years. His work has appeared in *Birds In Art* at the Leigh-Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, Wisconsin, and in *Art of the Animal Kingdom* at the Bennington Center for the Arts in Vermont. He continues to illustrate the “About” and “About Habitats” series of natural history books for children written by his wife Cathryn. 🐦



BALD EAGLE BY SANDY SELESKY

# AT A GLANCE

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WAYNE R. PETERSEN

Can you identify the bird in this photograph?

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

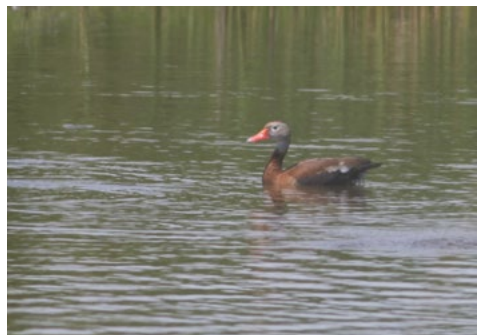
## MORE HOT BIRDS

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Skyler Kardell photographed a **Black-bellied Whistling-duck** on Tuckernuck Island on June 2. Just over three weeks later, Trish Pastuszak found one feeding with Mallards in a yard near the downtown section of Nantucket; the homeowner shared that it had been showing up for a couple of weeks. On July 15th, Amy Roberts photographed another one at the Falmouth salt pond. Ginger Andrews relocated the bird on Tuckernuck on the 15th as well, confirming that at least two individuals are present in the state this summer, if not three or more. The photo on the right is by Skyler Kardell.

A **Heermann's Gull**, presumed to be the same bird that has been present in Florida for the past couple of years, caught a sudden case of wanderlust this spring. It first moved north to Tybee Island, Georgia in February and March. It was next sighted in coastal Virginia on May 12, before arriving on May 27 at Mass Audubon's Allens Pond Sanctuary. It almost immediately moved east, first to Acoaxet, then across the state line into Rhode Island. Then it spent a few days at Cape May before returning to Georgia, where it reappeared at Tybee Island June 18. It and was most recently spotted at St. Simons Island on June 24. Joel Eckerson took the photo on the left.



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