

# Bird Observer

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VOLUME 48, NUMBER 5

OCTOBER 2020



# HOT BIRDS

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The indisputable top bird of the season was the **Gray Heron** found on September 5. The first record in the lower 48 states, it was spotted and photographed by Skyler Kardell on Tuckernuck Island. The following day, Skyler and a group of fellow birders spent most of the day searching Tuckernuck unsuccessfully, until they boated to neighboring Muskeget Island that evening where they rediscovered it. Skyler took the photo on the right.



Max ‘Hummingbird’ Baber photographed a **Crested Caracara** in Gloucester on August 12. Birders saw it from Halibut Point and nearby Locust Grove Cemetery the next day, then it disappeared. After almost three days without a sighting, Bobby Goetschkes rediscovered the caracara at Woodsom Farm in Amesbury, where it made birders happy for two more days. Sam Zhang took the photo on the left.

Tropical Storm Isaias rained **Sooty Terns** across the state from Race Point to Pittsfield. Reports came in from more than 10 locations. A couple of days later, the only tern left was on the Wachusett Reservoir. That last bird lingered for more than a week after the storm’s passage. Manuel Morales took the photo on the right.



Thomas O’Brien encountered an unfamiliar shorebird at Third Cliff in Scituate on August 2, so he photographed it and shared his photos on Facebook. It turned out to be a **Curlew Sandpiper**. It stayed there for a few days to the enjoyment of many other birders. Brian Vigorito took the photo on the left.

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# Bird Observer

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# Birding Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary in the Connecticut River Valley

*David McLain*

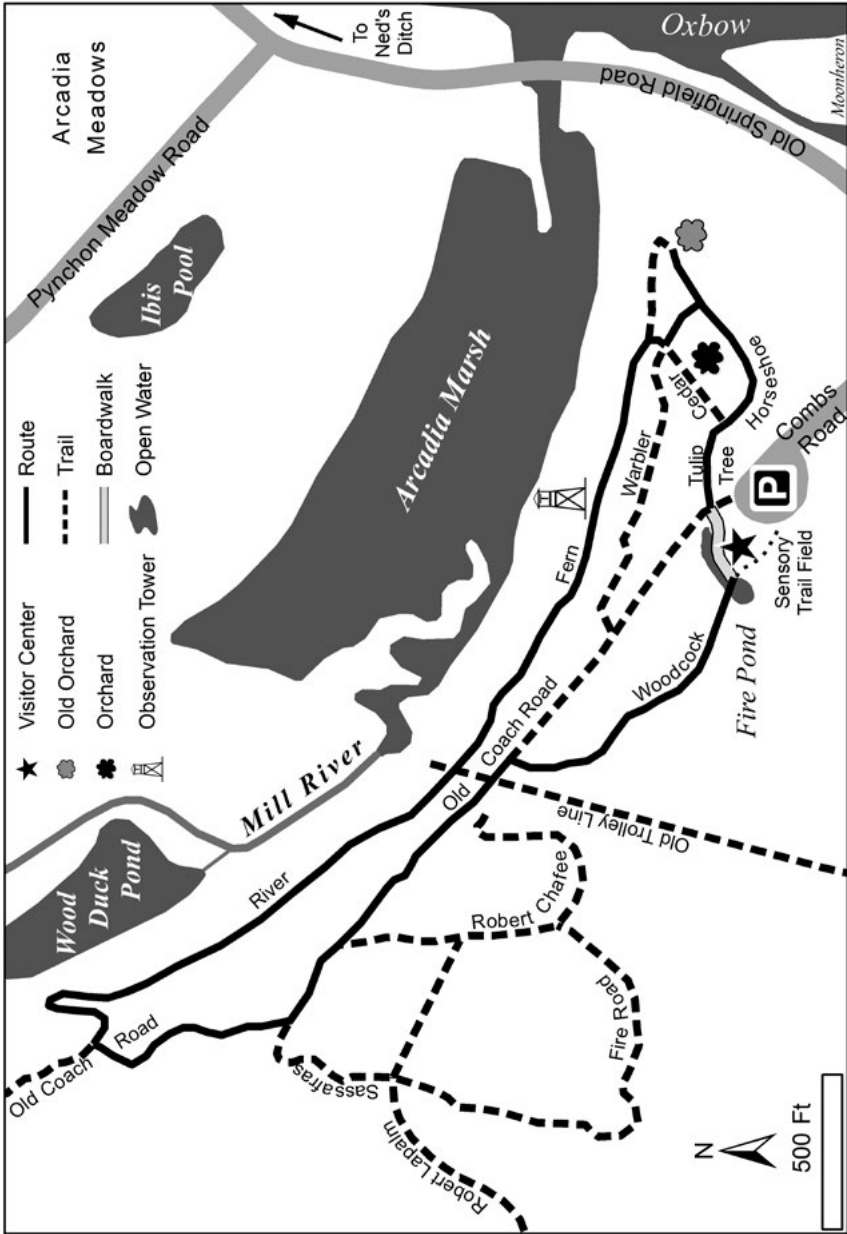
Call it the flooding sanctuary. Bisected by the Mill River as it flows into the 1840 Oxbow of the Connecticut River, much of the land is inundated when April showers bring...April floods. Or March floods. Or May floods, sometimes lingering into June. Or October floods. Nearly everything was under water, and the meadows were navigable by motorboat in the aftermath of Hurricane Irene in late August 2011. The variable floods create variable conditions that favor a variable avifauna from year to year and season to season. Coupled with the wide variety of habitats and strategic location on the landscape, Mass Audubon's Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the best birding destinations in Western Massachusetts, and the best in the state according to *Yankee Magazine* (Yankee Magazine Editors 2015).



Adding to the mystique, the sanctuary is located on a major flyway along the Connecticut River. The Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge conducted a three-year migratory bird stopover habitat survey and found significantly more birds migrating along the big river than farther away (Litwin and Lloyd-Evans 2006). Raptors and other migrants also follow the nearby Mount Holyoke (east-west) and Mount Tom (north-south) ranges. Another productive area nearby is the East Meadows of Northampton, with vast fields of agriculture.

The rich diversity of habitats provides an oasis for birds on the sanctuary, tucked between urban Northampton and Easthampton. The predominant feature of Arcadia, not readily apparent to most visitors, is an older Connecticut River oxbow that was cut off from the main stem some 800 years ago. The basin of the old oxbow is well vegetated with swamp forest, buttonbush marsh, open mats of sparganium and smartweed, and scattered ponds with spatterdock and coontail. A section of this oxbow is known as Ned's Ditch. Another section has been impounded by beavers and is mainly an open buttonbush marsh. The slow and meandering, sandy-bottomed Mill River, with its exemplary floodplain forest of silver maple, pin oak, and green ash canopy above a dense fern ground cover, flows through half of the old oxbow before reaching the 1840 Oxbow. The channel of a historic Mill River diversion and its floodplain forest are adjacent to Ned's Ditch. Within the arc of the old oxbow is Arcadia Meadows, with a suite of early successional habitat and organic agricultural fields, parts of which are owned by the city of Northampton and managed by Arcadia.

The remainder of the sanctuary comprises oak, maple, pine, and hemlock forest; forested wetlands perched on an impervious bed of glacial Lake Hitchcock clay—a rare community in Massachusetts called Black Gum-Pin Oak-Swamp White Oak Perched Swamp—a beaver pond that was formerly a sphagnum bog until, well, beavers; 31 vernal pools; two small woodland streams; and the disturbed habitat around the



Map of Arcadia

buildings and orchard area. The eastern boundary abuts the oxbow of the Connecticut River and a stream-capture remnant known as Danks Pond. One of the woodland streams, Hemlock Brook, has been diverted several times in its history and now flows into the Manhan River, rather than the Mill River, making Arcadia part of two watersheds. One of the relic beds of Hemlock Brook forms the vernal pool and dug-out Fire Pond behind the Visitor Center.

M - migrant nonbreeder	76
N - nonbreeder (winter resident, or summer visitor)	62
B - breeding on the sanctuary	95
V - vagrant, out of range stray, coastal migrant	36
	269

**Table 1.** Status of 269 bird species recorded at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary.

No fewer than 269 bird species have made an appearance at Arcadia, 95 of which have bred there (Table 1). The rest are either migrants passing through to breeding grounds farther north and wintering grounds farther south, such as Snow Goose, Swainson’s Thrush, and Cape May Warbler; fall and winter visitors returning from their northerly breeding grounds, such as Northern Shrike, Snow Bunting, and Golden-crowned Kinglet; postbreeding southern species dispersing northward, such as Great Egret; or to birders’ delight, rare vagrants straying from their normal migration routes (Table 2). Still others are local breeders that use Arcadia’s habitats within their territories but nest elsewhere, including Peregrine Falcon and Belted Kingfisher.

Rarities are what draw birders like bees on honey. Arcadia boasts a list of 36 vagrants (Table 2), mainly strays from coastal flyways, western migrants off course, or southern overshoots. Most have been one-time wonders but Cackling Goose, Clay-colored Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, and Dickcissel have become almost regular

Greater White-fronted Goose	Glaucous Gull	Le Conte’s Sparrow
Ross’s Goose	Common Tern	Nelson’s Sparrow
Cackling Goose	American White Pelican	Harris’s Sparrow
Tundra Swan	Great Cormorant	Yellow-breasted Chat
Ruddy Turnstone	Glossy Ibis	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Sanderling	Say’s Phoebe	Yellow-throated Warbler
Wilson’s Phalarope	Western Kingbird	Prothonotary Warbler
Red-necked Phalarope	White-eyed Vireo	Hooded Warbler
Laughing Gull	Northern Wheatear	Summer Tanager
Black-headed Gull	Bohemian Waxwing	Western Tanager
Iceland Gull	Clay-colored Sparrow	Blue Grosbeak
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Lark Sparrow	Dickcissel

**Table 2.** Vagrant species recorded at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary.

attractions. More species will surely be added in the future. Arcadia Meadows, Arcadia Marsh, Ned’s Ditch, the Orchard, and the Oxbow have been the best spots for rarities. Spring and fall are the best times, but good birding can be had year-round.

The discovery of a rarity often creates the “Patagonian picnic table effect,” when word spreads and many birders, bird photographers, and field ornithologists arrive on scene. Some birds take time to find, giving birders plenty of time to find other birds. A great example was October 1993 when a Harris’s Sparrow was found near the Ibis Pool. It often took two hours to catch a glimpse of it, but in the meantime, Nelson’s Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Dickcissel, Dunlin, and American Golden-Plover were added. Arcadia is frequently cited on the Western Mass Birders Facebook page, which brings in more eyes and lenses after rarity sightings.

Blue-winged Warbler	Black-throated Green Warbler	Worm-eating Warbler
Golden-winged Warbler	Blackburnian Warbler	Ovenbird
Tennessee Warbler	Yellow-throated Warbler	Northern Waterthrush
Orange-crowned Warbler	Pine Warbler	Louisiana Waterthrush
Nashville Warbler	Prairie Warbler	Connecticut Warbler
Northern Parula	Palm Warbler	Mourning Warbler
Yellow Warbler	Bay-breasted Warbler	Common Yellowthroat
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Blackpoll Warbler	Hooded Warbler
Magnolia Warbler	Cerulean Warbler	Wilson’s Warbler
Cape May Warbler	Black-and-white Warbler	Canada Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler	American Redstart	
Black-throated Blue Warbler	Prothonotary Warbler	

**Table 3.** Warblers recorded at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary.

Although relatively few breed there, Arcadia is a hotspot for warblers, especially in spring when trees are flowering and leafing out. To date, 34 species of wood warblers have been recorded on the sanctuary (Table 3), three of which are also in Table 2. Fall migration (i.e. late summer) can be rewarding when Orange-crowned in weedy fields and Connecticut in buttonbush stands in floodplain and hedgerows are more likely to be found.

Waterfowl and wetland-dependent birds are another highlight for Arcadia, whose sanctuary bird is the Wood Duck. Nearly every type of duck and wader has been reported, as well as several shorebirds and gulls, reflecting the mosaic of aquatic habitats.

### **Meadows Management**

A long history of inventory, research, and habitat management on the sanctuary and a growing popularity of birding by digital photographers, as well as having me as a resident naturalist for 28 years, has contributed to an impressive list of birds. Arcadia manages approximately 150 acres of grassland, 30 acres of shrubland, 10





Male Bobolink surveying his grassland domain. All photographs by the author unless otherwise indicated.

acres of old-field habitat, and 10 acres of weedland, and leases approximately 50 acres to agriculture. As a naturalist who also mowed the grasslands, I had my finger on the pulse of the fields and the birds, adapting management practices to suit a suite of target species.

The grasslands are managed with a priority on grassland birds, a group that has been in decline. Bobolinks are the most common nesting species, with lower numbers of Savannah Sparrows and sporadic breeding by Eastern Meadowlark and Grasshopper Sparrow, the latter having nested successfully for the first time in 2019. Several opportunities take advantage of compatible uses by other groups. Unmowed grassy strips become habitat for fall and winter raptors by providing refuge for meadow vole and cottontail prey. Northern Harriers, Rough-legged Hawks, and Short-eared Owls patrol the edges of the strips. I would also mow patches of milkweed in mid-July to have their re-sprouted succulent stems available for monarch caterpillars in August and September.

The sound of the tractor is like Pavlov's bell to Red-tailed Hawks as they wait to pounce on newly exposed meadow voles. From the tractor, I have flushed the likes of Sora, Virginia Rail, and Short-eared Owl from the grasslands. Wild Turkey and American Woodcock will nest in unmowed strips that remain in spring.



Three of twelve fledgling American Kestrels in 2020. Photograph by Kim Jones.

I created old-field habitat for the rapidly declining Field Sparrows by putting some peripheral edges and the isolated Potash Road field on 2–3 year mowing rotations, allowing a scattering of woody vegetation. Field Sparrows are now nesting in four sites on the sanctuary, where previously they were scarce.

Shrubland is an ephemeral stage of plant succession from field to forest and is an important habitat for many declining species. Some edges and former agricultural fields in the Meadows have been managed as shrubland on a 10-year rotation (ideally). Funding, however, drives this management more strongly than biology, but Blue-winged and Chestnut-sided warblers have benefited. Long hedgerows lining Pynchon Meadow Road also provide shrubland habitat for several pairs of Willow Flycatchers, Brown Thrashers, and Yellow Warblers.

Having observed many fall migrants in weedy fields, I instigated a weedland management program to provide attractive habitat for a variety of seed-eating birds in fall. Tilling soil in spring encourages annual weed species that produce an abundance of seeds. In one section, tilled strips are alternated with mowed strips of perennials that contribute to cover, as well as provide a source for pollinators. Agricultural practices in leased fields may also provide an abundance of seed-producing annual weeds. This weedland habitat is particularly productive for birding, with many rarities discovered over the years and good numbers of uncommon species such as Lincoln's Sparrow. Weedy fields may seem unkempt to some, but to birders, they are Eden. I recall a former president of Mass Audubon showing the Meadows to a group of donors and apologizing that the fields don't usually look that messy, but then transforming with enthusiasm when they started seeing birds everywhere!

Numerous bluebird and strategically placed kestrel nest boxes are scattered around the fields. Eastern Bluebirds typically occupy 6–8 boxes, with dozens of Tree Swallows in the rest. American Kestrels have successfully fledged 41 young from 10 nests since 2015, with three pairs raising four young each in 2020. Several duck boxes in the floodplain are used occasionally by Wood Ducks for nesting and also by Eastern Screech-Owls for roosting. My son and I have often found beaks and feathers of Northern Cardinals and Blue Jays in the boxes.



Wood Duck, the sanctuary bird of Arcadia.

### Getting There

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary is nestled between the quaint cities of Northampton and Easthampton, Massachusetts. Coming from far afield, take Interstate I-91 to Exit 18-Route 5-Northampton Center. Head south on Route 5 for 1.4 miles and turn right on East Street in Easthampton. Continue for 1.2 miles and turn right on Fort Hill Road with a Mass Audubon sanctuary sign at the intersection. (See map.) Scan Danks Pond for ducks and herons on your right on the way in from Fort Hill Road. In 0.5 mile, bear right onto Old Springfield Road and take a quick left onto Combs Road to the Visitor Center parking lot. Local folks can come in via Route 10 north from Easthampton or south from Northampton to Lovefield Street where you will follow the signs to Clapp Street, bearing left onto Old Springfield Road and taking a quick left onto Combs Road.

To reach Arcadia Meadows and the Oxbow, continue straight on Old Springfield Road past the Combs Road entrance. A metal bridge spans the mouth of the Mill River, giving views of the Oxbow. The one-lane bridge can be submerged under floodwaters in spring and traditionally closes in winter, though plans for a new bridge have been in the works. After the bridge, the floodplain forest gives way to the open grassland and agricultural meadows. Fields are located down Old Springfield Road and Pynchon Meadow Road. The Ibis Pool is on the south side of Pynchon Meadow Road. The area known as Ned's Ditch is part of the 800-year-old oxbow that bisects the meadows and is opposite the Oxbow Water Ski Show Team boat ramp.



Wild Turkey at Visitor Center kiosk.

## Birding Arcadia

### Visitor Center: Mulberries to Tulip Tree Trail

From the Visitor Center parking lot, some birders and photographers need not go any farther. In June and early July, the mulberry trees and shadbush are teeming with birds. The ripening time coincides with fledgling periods for most songbirds. Family groups with parents feeding offspring are common sights. Baltimore and Orchard orioles, Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Cedar Waxwings, Blue Jays, American Robins, Gray Catbirds, and House Finches flash their brilliant colors among the hordes of dull juvenile European Starlings. But many other species join in that are less often thought of as fruit eaters, including Red-bellied, Pileated, Hairy, and Downy woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Kingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Wood Thrush, Eastern Towhee, Brown Thrasher, Mourning Dove, and Wild Turkey.

A kiosk at the trailhead displays a map of the sanctuary, and trail maps are available at the Visitor Center. Cut across the field with the sensory trail to the boardwalk by Fire Pond and the vernal pool, a good place for Black-and-white Warbler and Northern Waterthrush in spring. Barred Owl has often put on a daytime show. In April a cacophony of wood frogs that deposit masses of jelly-encased eggs can be heard here, and several other frogs and turtles can also be viewed or heard. Continue behind the Visitor Center and head down the Tulip Tree Trail, noting the majestic

twisted-trunk tulip tree on the right. On the left is a wet area and scattered crabapples that usually attract a variety of birds in spring.

### The Orchard

At the junction with the Cedar Trail and Horseshoe Trail, continue on the Horseshoe Trail to bird the hedgerow, either from the trail itself or on the side of the farm field. The hedge is birdy and produced the likes of Yellow-throated Warbler and Western Tanager in November 2017. Some folks get to the hedge from the parking lot by going back down the entrance road and entering near the solar panel array. A grassy trail is maintained that leads past the hedgerow to the Old Orchard, a former apple orchard with a figure-eight trail amid a thicket of shrubs and scattered trees. The Old Orchard Trail connects back to the Horseshoe Trail, which loops around to reconnect with the Cedar Trail.

Inside the Horseshoe Trail-Cedar Trail loop is an orchard, where a variety of crabapples and other fruiting trees have been planted, including three large, prolific Korean mountain ash, one castor aralia, scattered black cherries, and a tangle of wild grapes and invasive fruit-bearing shrubs. This area is a major destination in spring when the trees are in bloom, and again in fall when the berries are ripe. The flowering crabapples in May attract numerous warblers, including Nashville, Wilson's, and Northern Parula, along with Orchard and Baltimore orioles, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Indigo Buntings. American Redstart, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak breed there. Black-billed Cuckoo can also be found in some years. When the fruit is ready, or sometimes sooner, flocks of Cedar Waxwings and American Robins descend on the scene like vultures on carrion. In some winters, you may find Pine Grosbeak, and if you are really lucky, a Bohemian Waxwing.

At the end of the Horseshoe Trail, the Old Orchard area is great in spring for migrant warblers. The mix of open woods, thick shrubs, and tall trees brings in a variety of birds, with chances for good looks. Search the thickets for Nashville, Wilson's, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Canada, and Mourning warblers. Hooded and Worm-eating warblers joined the mix in 2019. At mid-level, you'll find American Redstart, Yellow-rumped, Blue-winged, and Prairie warblers, with Tennessee Warblers gleaning the American elms. When the oaks and hickories are in bloom or just leafing out, you'll get warbler neck by scanning the tops for Cape May and Bay-breasted warblers. Spruce Corner is a good place to find Blackpoll Warbler.

### Mill River Floodplain and Arcadia Marsh

The Fern Trail spurs off of the Horseshoe Trail and leads through exemplary floodplain forest of silver maple, green ash, pin oak, black birch, and shagbark hickory, with glimpses of the Mill River and Arcadia Marsh. Scan the marsh from the trailhead, and then continue down to the observation tower. The spiral staircase has some sway to it, but that is part of the design. Notice the high-water markers on the pole as you ascend. Some mighty big floods occurred in the 1930s. The tower provides a good look at the marsh, which has two channels around a vegetated peninsula with abundant spatterdock, wild rice, and Walter's millet. The Fern Trail is a good place for spring ephemeral wildflowers.



Clay-colored Sparrow.

Ice-out kickstarts the spring waterfowl migration season, sometimes as early as February. Among the large flocks of Canada Geese, look for Cackling, Snow, and Greater White-fronted, or even Ross's. Rafts of Mallards and American Black Ducks stage in the marsh during the day, but most leave in the evenings to roost elsewhere—Nashawanuck and Lower Mill ponds in Easthampton—when the flocks of geese come in to roost in the marsh. Less common dabblers include Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, and Northern Pintail. Scan for Gadwall and Northern Shoveler. Divers are more common in the Oxbow, but Common and Hooded mergansers and Ring-necked Ducks often make their way into the marsh when the water is high. Nearly anything is possible. In 2020, a Greater White-fronted Goose mingled with Canada Geese and buttonbush in Arcadia Marsh for a spell in early March.

When the water level is high, waterfowl congregate to feed or roost. Look for grebes and coots as well. During low water, exposed mudflats often attract shorebirds and waders, including both yellowlegs and Least and Pectoral sandpipers. Keep an eye out for an occasional dowitcher or plover, Glossy Ibis, or Black-crowned Night-Heron, along with other herons and egrets. The marsh is a good place to view broods of waterfowl chicks, including Wood Duck, Mallard, and Common Merganser. In summer, watch for Cedar Waxwings and swallows picking off newly emerged damselflies on their fateful maiden voyages. In September and October, the wild rice and millet provide a feast for hordes of blackbirds, which in turn attract Northern Harriers and Cooper's Hawks. Eagles and Ospreys and Belted Kingfishers also hunt for fish in the marsh, which is a nursery for northern pike. If any of the blackbirds have white wing patches, they may be Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

Near the end of the Fern Trail, try to find another majestic tulip tree—over 120 feet high—towering over its neighbors. The Fern Trail connects to the River Trail, which continues along the Mill River and provides closer views of the river. You might catch sightings of beaver, muskrat, river otter, or mink. Listen for Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-throated and Red-eyed vireos, Scarlet Tanager, Great Crested Flycatcher, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Brown Creeper. The trail leads to Wood Duck Pond, where you will find a smaller version of Arcadia Marsh at closer range. A mudflat at the riverbend can have shorebirds when exposed.



Juvenile Northern Harrier patrolling the grasslands with tall, unmowed strip of switchgrass showing in the background.

### Mixed Lowland Forest

At the intersection of River Trail and Old Coach Road Trail, you have several options, depending on how much time you have and how long a walk you want to take. (See map.) The other trails loop through mixed oak-maple-white-pine-hemlock forest with mountain laurel, witch hazel, and winterberry understory where you will find Eastern Wood-Pewee, Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, and Scarlet Tanager. Stands of white pine are sure to have a pair of Pine Warblers. Acadian Flycatcher was singing in Tupelo Swamp off Sassafras Trail in 2019 and is a bird to watch for in the years ahead. To continue on this route, stay on the Old Coach Road Trail until you find your way to the Woodcock Trail, where you will not likely find American Woodcock but will get views of a perched swamp down the slope. Deer-watching is good there, and a black

bear may wander through the swamp for an early spring salad of skunk cabbage. Birds may be at eye level on the ridge. The Woodcock Trail leads back to the boardwalk and sensory trail and Visitor Center.

### Arcadia Meadows

To get to Arcadia Meadows, walk or drive from the parking lot back to Old Springfield Road and turn left. Soon you will descend to the mouth of the Mill River, where you will risk life and limb crossing a 40-year-old, one-lane, 10-year temporary bridge. Not yours, but the life and limb may belong to anglers on the narrow bridge. The bridge is closed in winter and often floods impassably in spring. Beyond the bridge, the floodplain forest opens up to grassland and agricultural fields called Arcadia Meadows, formerly known as the West Meadows. The Meadows can also be accessed via Fort or Olive streets that lead to Old Springfield Road, or Park Hill Terrace that leads to Pynchon Meadow Road. All three access roads are subject to spring flooding. Pynchon Meadow Road and part of Old Springfield Road are dirt roads that often have hazardous potholes, washboards, moguls, and deep abysses, especially Pynchon Meadow Road.

Once in the Meadows, start scanning the fields from the roadside for Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, and Bobolink, and keep an eye on the sky for Bald Eagle and Red-tailed Hawk. At the right times, most raptors can be seen in the Meadows. The utility lines on Pynchon Meadow Road usually have perching birds, and the hedgerow beneath is a hub of activity. When the road is in bad shape, puddles form and become birdbaths. Wait at a good distance from a puddle long enough and several hard-to-see

birds, such as White-crowned Sparrow, may come out into the open for a good view. Merlins know this and will cruise right down the road, sometimes within inches of observers, to catch unsuspecting prey. An observation blind sits on the raised bed of the old trolley line that crosses the western meadows. Look for Yellow-breasted Chat and Connecticut Warbler in the thickets.

A major highlight and rare bird magnet is the Ibis Pool on the south side of Pynchon Meadow Road. The area is a deep swale that retains floodwater in spring and sometimes autumn. It is bordered by weedy fields. It got its name when a Glossy Ibis showed up in the 1970s. The open pool was historically adjacent to agricultural fields, most recently potatoes in the early 1990s. Farmers would plow as close to the pool as possible. It provided open water for waterfowl and waders, mudflats for shorebirds, and weedy areas for sparrows. When the agricultural fields were acquired in 1993, the land adjacent to the Ibis Pool lay fallow, with acres of annual weeds providing food and cover for droves of seedeaters. Over the years, a wetland marsh community with cattail and smartweed has developed in the pool area, and perennial goldenrods and others have taken hold in the adjacent field; spring tilling encourages weedy annuals. Marsh and Sedge wrens, Blue Grosbeak, Lincoln's, Swamp, and Savannah sparrows, Common Redpoll, and Pine Siskin, as well as many vagrants, keep birders on their toes.

Other areas around the Meadows are grassland, shrubland, and agricultural crops that mesh with bird habitat. While Bobolinks prefer the interior of grasslands, Savannah Sparrows and Grasshopper Sparrows are associated with the grassland-cropland edge or areas with sparse grass. The crops are usually squash alternating with corn along Pynchon Meadow Road, or a variety of vegetables bordered by uncultivated weeds off Old Springfield Road. A cucumber farmer would often wait until July to plant the fast-growing crop, allowing Savannah Sparrows the opportunity to breed in the fallow field before cultivation. Outside the growing season and when freshly plowed, the fields harbor large flocks of Horned Larks, Snow Buntings, and American Pipits, and sometimes shorebirds. Search among them for Lapland Longspur or even a Northern Wheatear. Winter raptors, such as Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk, and Short-eared Owl hunt both the grasslands and agricultural fields.

#### Ned's Ditch and the Old Oxbow

Arcadia Marsh is at the southwest prong of the old oxbow arch, while Ned's Ditch is at the southeast end. Nobody knows who Ned was, but the swamp forest and buttonbush marshes are a botanical gem. The birdlife is also bountiful. The Ditch has low, wet, marshy swales; higher, dryer, forested berms; and open ponds connected during high water through dense buttonbush marsh that provides cover for Wood Ducks and Soras. A Northern Shoveler and Blue-winged Teal lingered with Mallards and American Black Ducks in Ned's Ditch in March and April 2020.

Ned's Ditch has been the scene of much avian drama over the years. In 1995 a pair of Great Blue Herons began nesting and started a rookery that built up to a high of 59 nests in 2009. Most of the nest trees were alive until a prolonged flood in 2009 killed over half of the trees. Supporting limbs gradually began to shed in the following years.





Common Redpoll on evening primrose.

In 2012 a pair of Bald Eagles usurped a heron nest, causing much unrest in the heronry. The eagles preyed on young herons. Two years later a pair of Great Horned Owls moved into another heron nest. Heron numbers plummeted to zero by 2018, though two pairs successfully nested farther away in 2019.

The eagles had troubles of their own, having raised only two young in five years, when tragedy befell the pair in 2017. The female was struck and killed by a car on Route 5 near the Oxbow. Her bands revealed she was 28 years old and born in one of the first two nests at Quabbin Reservoir during the eagle restoration program (French 2017). The male appeared to have a new mate already a few days later. They did not attempt to nest that year but successfully raised three young in both 2018 and 2019. A field-readable photo of the male's leg band by Kim Jones revealed he was born in

Massachusetts in 2010, so it may have been a completely new pair after 2017. In 2020 a male interloper tried to take over the territory shortly after the pair began egg-laying. The resident male vanished for a few days but made a return to help his mate ward off the intruder, lay a new egg, and successfully raise one young.

The 2009 tree-killing flood was a boon to woodpeckers, and other birds have thrived in Ned's Ditch, either during the flood season or in dry years when the bottoms of the ponds are exposed. Northern Flicker and Red-bellied Woodpecker are common. Green Heron and Sora are regular breeders. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher is a relatively recent addition to the breeding avifauna. Flocks of more than 30 Great Egrets have taken advantage of the dry ponds, and Glossy Ibis, Tricolored Heron, and Little Blue Heron have made cameos. The floodplain surrounding the old Mill River channel that enters Ned's Ditch hosted an immature Red-headed Woodpecker in the same location two years in a row.

### The Oxbow

Arcadia abuts the 1840 Oxbow on the eastern side of the Meadows, offering looks into the open-water system. Cut off from the main stem, the slow current provides refuge for waterfowl, especially when the Connecticut River is raging. Shortly after ice-out, flocks of mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks, and cormorants build into the 100s before moving north as Vermont and New Hampshire thaw out. Less commonly, you might encounter Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck, Canvasback, Redhead, or Long-tailed Duck. Either scaup species might hang out with the flocks of Ring-necked Ducks. Several

other divers are possible, including Horned, Red-necked, and Pied-billed grebes. Common and Red-throated loons have been recorded. Rare gulls, particularly Iceland, Glaucous, and Lesser Black-backed, but also Black-headed and Laughing gulls may mix with the common species. Caspian and Common terns sometimes touch down for a day or two on their way to or from their inland breeding grounds. And on two occasions, an American White Pelican filled its beak and belly with Oxbow fish. When the flooding has subsided, or during low-water periods, check the sandbar at the Oxbow Marina harbor for shorebirds, terns, gulls, and herons.

The Oxbow is also a great place for eagle watching, particularly in winter and early spring with some ice and open water. Several immature birds will congregate and mingle with the resident pair. Aerial acrobatics of courtship, combat, or practice are on full display. Peregrine Falcon and Osprey also pursue prey there at times, and the Hadley Gyrfalcon of 2013 undoubtedly checked out the Oxbow, but nobody reported it.

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**David McLain** is a wildlife biologist with degrees in the field from the University of Maine and University of Massachusetts. He has expert level experience with birds, freshwater mollusks, odonates, butterflies, orthopterans, fish, herps, and plants. He has worked in Puerto Rico on the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Project, Scotland and Iceland studying genetics of Atlantic Puffins, Panama on genetic differences between birds on the Pearl Islands versus the mainland, the Bahamas with hummingbirds, and numerous bird population studies in Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. Dave lived and worked at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary for 28 years, studying everything, before headquarters staff changed direction.



PEREGRINE FALCONS BY SANDY SELESKY

## “Birds I Know,” the *Boston Globe*’s Bird Column, 1932–1966

Peter W. Oehlkers



Path along the northern edge of Ada Govan’s Woodland Bird Sanctuary, Lexington, Massachusetts. Photograph by the author.

...In a low shrub near a lane sits a dear little chestnut-sided warbler in her nest of four eggs. They are a dainty bird and not too shy. Then, too, a tiny chebec...is sitting on her downy soft nest in a small apple tree...Who else in this column are interested in birds?...Won’t those who are interested write some of their experiences? Or perhaps describe those they have seen, but do not know. Some of us may be able to answer questions.... (“Troubadour” 1932, 27)

On June 30, 1932, “Troubadour,” a writer from New Hampshire in the *Boston Globe*’s “Confidential Chat,” proposed a new column. The “Chat,” a pseudonymous correspondence feature in the Household section dating back to 1912, already had special columns for letters about gardening and pets. Why not add one for letters about wild birds? On August 22, 1932, “Troubadour” had her wish. The “Chat” published six letters under the header “Birds I Know.” “Meadowford” talked about the chickadees and Blue Jays she had tamed, “Among the Hills” wrote about an albino robin she had

seen, “Rose Marie” talked about the Baltimore Oriole nest she had observed, “G.S.” wrote about the American Redstart she saw trying to teach her young, “Nature Lover” complained about the cats that interfered with nesting in her yard, and “The Mourning Warbler” recounted the best of the 90 birds on her list for the year, including her namesake, a “very rare one for this part of the country.” For the next thirty-plus years “Birds I Know” would be a *Boston Globe* institution, publishing more than 5000 letters from women (and a handful of men) writing to one another about their experiences with wild birds.

“Birds I Know” was never a regular column. Whether it appeared in a given issue of the *Boston Globe* depended on the space available in the Household section and the number of letters that had been received. During winter feeding months it could appear every day; during the late summer and fall it might appear once a month. The typical “bird column” would feature one to five letters, each responding to a previous writer, comparing lists of sightings, asking for advice about feeder arrangements, sharing recipes for bird food, or making identification queries. Perennial themes included excitement about the arrival of Evening Grosbeaks, the mistaken attribution of the “*fee-bee*” song to the Eastern Phoebe instead of the Black-capped Chickadee, and concern about dwindling numbers of birds due to spraying and habitat loss. There was great interest in the still uncommon experience of encountering Northern Mockingbirds, Northern Cardinals, and Tufted Titmice. Some Chat sisters adopted bird species pseudonyms, including “Scarlet Tanager,” “Meadowlark,” “Brown Creeper,” “Wood Thrush,” and “Saddleback” (Great Black-backed Gull). Among the column writers that can be identified are the photographer and prolific bander Elaine Martin Drew, who wrote under the name “Warped Halo,” the author Hattie Blossom Fritze, who wrote as “Woodsie One,” and Myrtle McLellan (“Wren of Wrentham”), who organized face-to-face “Birds I Know” clubs in Massachusetts and New Hampshire during the 1930s and early 1940s. The undisputed star of the column, however, was “Of Thee I Sing”—Ada Clapham Govan, of Lexington, Massachusetts.

Ada Govan had written to the *Globe*’s Household pages since 1911. Her earliest letters recounted her personal tragedy, the loss of two young daughters, and consoled other mothers with similar experiences; she initially used the signature “Redeemed,” but changed her name to “Disillusioned” after her second daughter died. Her frank and engaging style had already made her a favorite among “Chat sisters,” but her stories about the birds at her feeders as “Of Thee I Sing,” would place her among the most celebrated writers at the *Boston Globe* in general, and would supply material for her popular 1940 book *Wings at my Window*.

*Wings at my Window* is framed as a story about overcoming depression and physical disability by caring for birds. In a 1936 letter, “Of Thee I Sing” dramatized the encounter with a chickadee that stimulated her birdfeeding and changed her life, recounting “that December day, almost six years ago,”

when I first saw him clinging to the railing, storm-battered and hungry, but blithely caroling “Things could be heaps worse!” Every motion was agony till I heard that voice, but somehow I threw him some crumbs which he

barely sampled before he was swept away by the blizzard, leaving me in such a mental turmoil as rivaled the storm without.

For I had just resigned myself to an invalid's life—I'd be the happiest invalid that ever could be—but a burden, nevertheless. And then I heard their voices—saw them coming—Chicky! And all the relatives and friends he could scrape together on such short notice. He had only gone to call to the feast others less fortunate that they might share his bit of good fortune. ("Of Thee I Sing" 1936, 21)

She decided to write and sell stories about the birds at her feeder after her husband lost his job.

I took my troubles where I had so often found sweet comfort—to the little feathered friends, now so dear. The sun shone down on a purple finch, one of several on my window sill, and in its radiance, the silky, wine-colored feathers of his crested head, glowed with a jewel-like luster that he wore like a diadem. A pang shot through my heart: my birds! With no money, how could I feed them when they came to me for sanctuary this Winter? ("Of Thee I Sing" 1933, A42)

Govan would end up selling several stories to *Nature Magazine* and writing others for "Birds I Know." Readers loved these stories and asked for more, and she complied, offering real-life tales about the tragic end of "Limpy" the goldfinch, the domestic problems of "Poppa Grosbeak," and the shrike attack-scarred American Tree Sparrow "Henry the Eighth." Many would later testify that these stories, which portrayed birds as "little personalities," had inspired them to study and feed birds, and that their own care for the birds had been therapeutic.

"Confidential Chat" was a print-mediated social support community. "Birds I Know" writers were especially attentive to readers who were confined to their homes or beds. When "Thru the Window Pane" was hospitalized, for example, writers took turns sharing the views from their own windows. "Scarlet Tanager," for example, wrote:

Dear Thru the Window Pane—The outside world is so lovely now at Tanager's Nest, perhaps it would interest you to take a look at it by proxy...I hope you will not mind coming into the kitchen with me...The east window is, of course, most interesting at this time...Over the green field, which is still partly shaded by the hill, the tree swallows are busily getting their breakfast, their light breasts flashing as they dart from the shadows into the golden light... ("Scarlet Tanager" 1936, 26)

The fact that "Birds I Know" was part of a women's social support feature (Oehlkers and Oehlkers 2021) also affected the way writers interacted with each other. Identification corrections were made gently and novices were enthusiastically encouraged. "Of Thee I Sing" was one of the column experts, contributing long species accounts and detailed identification guides, in addition to her lively stories.

Dear Wing Flashes—...Will you join me in a talk-fest about a lovely and little known warbler with a highly romantic background? The Lawrence

warbler has twice been mentioned lately in the bird column, and his is a very different story from that of most wild creatures whose parents “love outside their own class.” For little Lawrence is a mongrel child—a hybrid—whose parentage for years remained more or less wrapped in mystery.... Where hybrids are concerned, Old Mother Nature puts her foot down hard: “Thus far you may go—but no further!” she declares to most mis-mated bird parents, and allows them to produce mongrel offspring to their hearts’ content. But in her determination to keep the stock pure, she brands the hybrid youngsters with sterility. Not so, our little Lawrence, who beat Mother Nature at her own game... (“Of Thee I Sing” 1940, 36)

Although self-educated in the ornithological literature, Ada Govan was a prolific birdbander and a careful observer, and even before the success of her book had deep connections in the larger birding community. In the 1940s and 1950s, she was a contributing editor for the *Bulletin of the Massachusetts Audubon Society*, listed on the masthead alongside such luminaries as Arthur C. Bent, Thornton W. Burgess, and Ludlow Griscom. In her writing for “Birds I Know,” however, she always denied her expert status, choosing to work together with “Chat sisters” to solve identification challenges.

If conflict appeared in the column, it tended to be over the pros and cons of particular bird species:

Dear Woodsie One...Right now the feeders are very busy, with chickadees, nuthatches, downy and hairy woodpeckers, brown creepers, sparrows, juncos, flickers and even a beautiful little golden crowned kinglet. Then of course the miserable and inevitable jays. How I detest these loud-mouthed, thieving birds! I have seen them kill young songbirds in the spring and break eggs. They are arrogant and fiendish and, to me, loathsome. I never feel sorry when I see a hawk demolish one. In fact, I cheer a little, for with me, they rank lowest of all birds we have here. (“Nature Boy” 1953, 14)

During the column’s run, writers, including “Of Thee I Sing,” frequently wrote about the shotgun blasts they used against hawks and shrikes in order to protect birds at their feeders. Though it might be shocking to readers today, this was usually not controversial in the column because it was based on the official “useful bird” framework that regarded songbirds as having higher value than predators. Opinions were much more divided when it came to the Blue Jay, which occasionally produced prolonged disputes. “Of Thee I Sing,” for her part, tried to manage Blue Jays by providing them with a separate feeding area, but showed no mercy when they threatened the birds closer to her house. Opinions were also divided, though less vociferously, about European Starlings and House Sparrows, and even Whip-poor-wills (too noisy) and Evening Grosbeaks (gluttons) were the source of lively disputes. Overall, balance-of-nature perspectives dominated, though “Of Thee I Sing,” among others, maintained that the natural world of birds had been disrupted by humans in a way that only humans could mitigate.

While the column was generally not concerned with larger environmental issues, habitat loss due to development was a common observation. This became personal for Ada Govan in 1937 when developers began cutting the woods behind her house.

People had assured me the woods would be safe for years to come, but last Fall I knew some danger threatened. That day of crashing trees was an unforgettable nightmare! Impossible for me to stay here listening, day after day, while my ideal went down in ruins. For those woods have long been my church, and the trees have taught me peace and understanding. They are the only religion that satisfies my needs. (Of Thee I Sing 1937, 26)

While she chose the pages of *Nature Magazine* (writing as “Of Thee I Sing”) to make her appeal to protect the land, column “sisters” were quick to show their sympathy and support. Eventually anonymous donors emerged with the funding to protect a small parcel of woods as “Woodland Bird Sanctuary” in perpetuity.

By the mid-1950s, the high volume of letters to “Confidential Chat” meant that the publication of letters could be delayed by months. For a topic as seasonal as wild birds, such delays were frustrating. Energy devoted to the column waned. Even though the column endured until 1966, practically speaking, it was on its last legs by 1960. Recognizing Ada Govan’s contributions to the paper, The *Boston Globe* printed a tribute to “Of Thee I Sing” in January 1959 and reprinted some of her classic letters from the 1930s. After Govan retired to Florida in 1960, she continued to send occasional letters to the *Globe*, often with an explicit environmentalist tone, aghast at the unrestrained development and habitat loss there. Her last letter to the *Globe* was a story about the passing of her seventeen-year-old, hand-raised Rose-breasted Grosbeak “Zekie,” published on April 14, 1964, three days after her death.

Except for a recent mention in a history of birdfeeding (Barker, Henderson & Baicich 2015), “Birds I Know” has been largely forgotten. Ada Govan, while cited by Linda Lear (1998) as an important influence on Rachel Carson, has also largely receded from the memory of the birding community. “Woodland Bird Sanctuary”, sometimes labeled “Ada Govan Bird Sanctuary” on area maps—beware Apple’s map, which places it in the wrong neighborhood—persists as a small unmarked forest between Fiske Elementary School and Woodland Road in Lexington. Amid the growing recognition of the therapeutic value of birding during Covid-19, and increased recognition of women’s contributions to the history of nature writing, it is worth returning to the “sisters” of “Birds I Know” to see what else they might have to teach us. This article is intended as an introduction. Readers interested in learning more are encouraged to sample the column and “Of Thee I Sing’s” contributions via online digital archives such as Proquest’s Historical Boston Globe (available at a number of public libraries). As an aid to this research I’ve posted a 220-page log of the column letters I’ve been able to find at <<https://sites.google.com/view/birds-i-know/home>>. 🐦

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## Thank you, Christine King!

*Marsha C. Salett*

An editor is only as good as her staff, which is especially true for *Bird Observer* because this journal has been produced entirely by volunteers since its inception 47 years ago. Every issue is a team effort. Equally important as editorial content, graphic design, and production is quality control—the job of the proofreader.

Christine King, our proofreader extraordinaire, has retired with the August 2020 issue. Christine started in 2012 with the February issue and for nine-and-one-half years has kept *Bird Observer* looking our professional best, which means going over every sentence, word, title, number, name, end-of-article godwit, and more in scrupulous detail. And she has saved us from many embarrassing major errors along the way.

She has revised the style sheet with me at least a couple of times, and the next version of the 2020 style sheet should be available this fall thanks to her giving it one last edit and catching a lot more that we needed to update.

Besides contributing thoughtful ideas and information to staff meetings, Christine is fun to hang out with and I’m going to miss her cheerful presence. A professional baker, she always brought amazingly delicious and beautiful breads or cakes to the staff meetings to complement dinner, for which I have been most appreciative. Christine is a woman of many talents. Thank you from the entire staff and Board of *Bird Observer*.



# Birding the Family Patch: Oak Top, Dighton, Massachusetts

*Andy Eckerson*



Joel scopes the southern horizon on a spring sky watch session. Photograph by the author.

On a sunny afternoon in April 2011, we four Eckerson brothers—Jonathan (then 12), Matt (then 10), Joel (then 9), and I, Andy, (then 11)—began documenting the bird species within our local patch, Oak Top. With four sets of eyes and ears almost always present for several years, we have documented a variety of exceptional records and sightings at Oak Top. The “Oak” is derived from the abundance of oak trees on the property and the “Top” is derived from an elevated vantage point that overlooks the private farm portion of the property. Oak Top is a combination of three parcels in Dighton, Massachusetts: our home, a private cattle farm, and a section of town property. The combination of these three parcels covers over 150 acres of land with several different habitats.

This particular area of southeastern Massachusetts is home to vast hardwood swamps, lush deciduous forests, stands of eastern white pine, and a variety of microhabitats that fill in the rest of the landscape. Oak Top is blanketed by deciduous trees, a small stand of conifers, and a few farm fields. The portion of Oak Top that is



Prothonotary Warbler. Photograph by Jonathan Eckerson.

town land is a third-growth hardwood forest, made up of mainly northern red oak and white oak trees. This portion was burned over in a 1986 brush fire. Our property hosts an eastern white pine stand covering just over 10 acres. It also has a small field that is bordered by a patch of young deciduous trees. The private farm consists of hay fields, a few small ponds, and an overgrown slough area. The private farm also has a manure pile area that has small pools seasonally.

All these habitats are instrumental in making Oak Top a special bird magnet. It may appear that Oak Top does not have any geographical or ecological significance such as a coastal location or large body of water, but we think its physical location cannot be overlooked and is key to the high diversity and numbers of birds that frequent or fly over the property. We consider Oak Top a hidden gem and we call our location the overland passageway. Our assumption for the overland passageway is that northbound and southbound birds during migration do not always fly around the arm of Cape Cod but instead fly straight over Bristol County. This would not only save time but precious energy as well. We base this idea on some of the sightings the property has accrued over the years.

Oak Top has a rich records history during the eight years we brothers have actively birded it. The wooded sections of the property have their fair share of notable records. In November 2012 we had an immature Red-headed Woodpecker visit the feeders twice within a few weeks. In May 2013 a singing Yellow-throated Warbler passed through the property. This is one of two records of this species on the property to date. In May 2015, Joel and I came upon a singing Prothonotary Warbler across the street in



Golden Eagle. Photograph by Matthew Eckerson.

the maple swamp. It not only proceeded to check out an abandoned Northern Flicker cavity but briefly stopped in the birdbath at our feeder setup. Unfortunately, it was a one-day wonder but everyone able to observe it was satisfied with the absurdly close views.

Although most of Oak Top is covered with deciduous trees, there is a unique opportunity to sky watch from the private farm's fields. Sky watching has yielded a great number of otherwise unexpected species for what seems to be a wooded property. Countless hours sky watching during the spring, summer, and fall have paid off with some quality records over the years. Many of the property's most notable records have been flyovers.

On an overcast day in March 2017, Joel alerted us to a flock of 72 Snow Geese flying directly over the property; they nearly landed in the farm fields. We recorded Sora on a low overcast night in May 2017 while monitoring nocturnal flight calls with a homemade bucket microphone. Two weeks after the Sora record, we recorded a Least Bittern nocturnally, which marked the third Bristol County record. That spring we also had a variety of nocturnal first records at Oak Top such as Short-billed Dowitcher, Whimbrel, Semipalmated Plover, and Upland Sandpiper. In fall 2017, we documented the property's first record of Gray-cheeked Thrush by means of the homemade nocturnal bucket microphone.

On a warm October day in 2017, with strong southeast winds blowing, Matt came running inside to alert us that a Golden Eagle was flying overhead. It circled for a few minutes before disappearing to the northwest. This extraordinary sighting marked the fourth record for Bristol County.

In May 2018, we were not terribly surprised to find two Cattle Egrets that spent the day in the neighbor's field feeding within the cattle herd. On a fall day in late October 2018, Matt had a Dunlin drop into a flooded area of the neighbor's corn field where it foraged for most of the morning.



Tundra Swan in corn field with Canada Geese. Photograph by Joel Eckerson.

One April morning in 2019, Joel found a singing Louisiana Waterthrush in the hardwood swamp behind the slough section of the property. Until recently this species was scarce and under-detected in the county. Over the past few years, though, it has become a regular sighting during spring migration. In 2020, we observed a singing male for weeks at the small stream that runs along the back of the property. Although a breeding pair was not confirmed, there is good reason to expect breeding in years to come.

In late May and early June 2019, the Northeast saw an abundance of Mississippi Kites and it was only a matter of time before Oak Top recorded its first. Sure enough, while we were enjoying a calm May evening, one flew low over the property.

One of the most notable—and memorable—property records came in late August 2019 when Matt and Joel observed a flock of 54 migrating Hudsonian Godwits heading southeast. This record marked the highest count of Hudsonian Godwits in Massachusetts over the past ten years and strongly supports the idea of an overland passageway.

Later during that fall migration, Joel had two property firsts: a flyover Eastern Meadowlark and a Philadelphia Vireo in the slough. Although there are hay fields on the property, none is quite suitable for overwintering meadowlarks due to their shape and general configuration.

Things got crazy on the goose front during the winter of 2019–2020. The towns of Dighton, Seekonk, and Somerset had exceptional numbers of Canada Geese with a Pink-footed and Greater White-fronted Goose in the mix. A Tundra Swan was also hanging out with the Pink-footed Goose and Canada Geese. We closely monitored Oak Top’s farm fields for the entire goose season for these unusual geese and, sure enough,

one evening we located the Pink-footed Goose with some Canada Geese. Three days later, Joel spotted the Tundra Swan feeding in the corn field with some Canada Geese. In early January, I found a Greater White-fronted Goose at dusk while scoping a flock of Canada Geese.

The most recent notable record occurred in April 2020 when Matt observed a Swallow-tailed Kite. This occurred the day after Jim Sweeney documented a Swallow-tailed Kite in Truro, Massachusetts. There were favorable strong sustained southwest winds, so Matt set up his scope in the hay field with the hope of spotting this rare southern visitor. He was fortunate enough to pick out the kite flying over the southern portion of the property.

We think the overland passageway is an integral part of Oak Top's attraction to migrating birds. For the past few years, we have observed a large flight of scoters migrating north over the property in late May. The majority of these are presumably White-winged Scoters, although Black Scoters were observed during the 2019 flight. During the 2019 flight we estimated 7000 scoters, of which we identified 737 as White-winged Scoters, 110 as Black Scoters, and the remainder as scoter species. We think that these scoters are traveling north from their wintering grounds off Nantucket and southeastern Massachusetts. Instead of exerting the extra effort to travel around the arm of Cape Cod, they take the direct route over the mainland. Although this phenomenon has not been formally researched, this May scoter flight event supports our idea of an overland passageway.

Sky watching paid off in late March of 2017 when Joel and Matt observed more than 3000 Canada Geese flying north during the evening ahead of a huge storm system. Along with the geese were a couple hundred gulls, mainly Herring, that followed the same flight path. We cannot be sure that this concentration of geese over this particular area of the property is directly connected to an overland passageway, but it helps to support this idea.

On May 18th, 2019, Joel attempted an Oak Top Big Day. In just over 15 hours he documented 100 species on the property. This effort is an important event in the property's birding history and will go down as one of the best days of birding at Oak Top. If you bird an area long enough it is possible to be extremely efficient at covering it during peak migration and pulling out fantastic numbers and species.

Oak Top is a prime example of what relentless coverage of a local hotspot or location can produce. What appeared to be a property with little ecological significance has turned into a wildly different story. Every season on the property brings new birds with new surprises and the everchanging possibilities make birding all the more appealing. Whether it is watching morning flight stream overhead on a crisp October day or listening for nocturnal migrants on a cool May night, Oak Top continues to captivate every month. 🦅

*Andy Eckerson is currently an undergraduate student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst where he studies wildlife ecology with a particular interest in seabird population dynamics. When not engulfed in academia, he enjoys nocturnal flight calls, rock climbing, trail running, and essentially anything involving the outdoors.*

# Group Bathing by Shorebirds, Gulls, and Terns

William E. Davis, Jr.



**Figure 1.** Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones bathing. All photographs by the author.

I spent all of March and most of April 2020 in an oceanfront house on Big Pine Key in Florida, where I had ample opportunity to watch and photograph shorebirds, gulls, and terns on the tidal flats, in the beach wrack, and on our long dock, recording their behavior in my journal. In the past I had witnessed Ruddy Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*) and Sanderlings (*Calidris alba*) bathe synchronously in small groups and in small parts of large groups (Davis 2016) but I have not seen nor read reports of group bathing behavior of the magnitude I witnessed in Florida this year for any shorebirds. Gulls and terns were frequent group bathers as well. The reports that follow are taken from my journal notes.

## **Bathing by Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings, and Short-billed Dowitchers**

On March 3, 2020, I was watching a group of approximately 50 shorebirds, mostly Ruddy Turnstones but also a few Sanderlings that were present on the dock. At about 5:30 pm, a group of 30-plus flew down beside the dock into water three to four inches deep and—with all of the birds standing facing the incoming small waves—began a bathing frenzy (Figure 1). They dipped their heads below the surface, partially submerging their bodies, and flapped their wings wildly in what was clearly a bathing sequence. Bathing was followed by extensive preening. This behavior continued for about five minutes, after which the flock returned to the dock. Perhaps the outgoing tide, which lowered the water three to four inches beside the dock, triggered the bathing



**Figure 2.** This flock of mostly Short-billed Dowitchers bathed and preened.

response in these shorebirds. It was my impression that all of the birds in this flock bathed at some point, although not all the birds bathed together at any point in time.

On March 14 at 4:03 pm, a flock of about 70 Sanderlings stood in or beside shallow water as the flats began to emerge on the outgoing tide. A second group of Sanderlings and a few more scattered among a separate group of about 30 Ruddy Turnstones brought the Sanderling total to more than 100. At least a dozen Sanderlings and a few turnstones were actively bathing. Over approximately 20 minutes, I estimated that nearly all the birds had bathed and were actively preening. The birds were facing into the wind and incoming waves. The following afternoon at 5:05 pm, a flock of about 50 shorebirds, mostly Ruddy Turnstones, but including a few Sanderlings, were bathing near the dock. Almost all the shorebirds had bathed and preened by 5:15 pm. Two days later around 3:45 pm, about 50 turnstones and Sanderlings had come down to bathe and, all neat and clean, flew back up to the dock. The pattern of late afternoon group bathing was repeated at 5:35 pm when about 20 turnstones and Sanderlings bathed together and again at 6:00 pm when a small group of Ruddy Turnstones bathed near the dock.

On March 31 shortly after 5 pm, I noticed about 30 shorebirds in a bathing frenzy just off the right side of the dock. It was a dynamic flock, with new birds joining the bathers every few seconds and others returning to the dock. Most of the bathing birds were Sanderlings or Ruddy Turnstones. A Royal Tern (*Thalasseus maximus*) bathed with the flock of shorebirds and another Royal Tern and a Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) bathed to the right of the flock. At 6:12 pm, a flock of 30-plus shorebirds, mostly Short-billed Dowitchers (*Limnodromus griseus*) were on the water; about a half dozen dowitchers bathed and the remainder preened, suggesting that they had already bathed (Figure 2).

On April 16 at 5:54 pm, a group of about 20 Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones flew down from the dock and bathed for about five minutes. At 6:38 pm, a larger group of 30-plus shorebirds bathed near the dock. The group included Sanderlings, turnstones, and dowitchers and was somewhat dynamic, with birds from the bathing group flying to the dock and switching places with birds that had been on the dock originally (Figure 3). On April 21 at 12:55 pm when the flats were emerging in the falling tide, I watched a Ruddy Turnstone bathing beside three others that were furiously preening and doubtless had bathed. About 10 feet away, a Sanderling bathed for about five minutes



**Figure 3.** Short-billed Dowitchers, Ruddy Turnstones, and Sanderlings group bathe.

and a second bird joined it. At 5:50 pm, a single Sanderling bathed. By 6:00 pm, most of the shorebirds were gone as the incoming tide began to cover the flats. The following day, six Sanderlings were bathing in a pool at 2:19 pm and five Sanderlings bathed at 2:23 pm in a different pool. At 4:10 pm, I noticed seven dowitchers. One was bathing and the others were preening and had probably just finished bathing. At 6:30 pm, 10 dowitchers bathed in one pool and 14 Ruddy Turnstones bathed nearby in two other pools.

The literature on bathing Ruddy Turnstones is sparse. They are “fond of bathing in shallow water, fluttering vigorously” (Nettleship 2020), but no reference was made to group bathing behavior. No reference is made to Sanderlings bathing in the *Birds of the World* (formerly *Birds of North America*) account (Macwhirter et al. 2020), but I had no difficulty finding photos of bathing Sanderlings on Google. The literature on bathing by Short-billed Dowitchers is more extensive, “Bathing most common in evening (18:00—19:00), when feeding in small ponds with other species. After bathing flutters to dry place, bares oil gland, and preens” (Jehl et al. 2020). Again, no reference is made to group bathing. All of my observations of bathing occurred in late afternoon suggesting that bathing may be a usual end-of-day event. The exact timing of the large group bathing episodes was strongly influenced by the tide cycle because there appears to be an optimal water depth on the flats for bathing.



**Figure 4.** One Whimbrel is partly submerged and is bathing. A Willet watches the group.

### **A Whimbrel and a Willet Bathe**

On April 18 at 5:03 pm, four Whimbrels (*Numenius phaeopus*) alit in the shallow water near two Willets. The Willets walked away but one stopped about 10 feet from the Whimbrels. At 5:30 pm, one of the Whimbrels began to bathe, dipping its head and bill under water, dipping its front and rear body in a rocking motion, fluffing, and shaking its tail side to side. A Willet watched (Figure 4). The other Whimbrels preened. The





**Figure 5.** Our dock attracts Royal Terns, Laughing Gulls, and other species.

nearby Willet began to bathe at 5:37 pm, apparently stimulated by the Whimbrel bathing and the others preening. Willets commonly bathe in groups (Davis 2016, Lowther et al. 2020). The Whimbrels preened their lower backs near the oil gland, chin-scratched, shook their heads, and fluffed. They preened until 5:46 pm, when they all flew away. The *Birds of the World* Whimbrel account (Skeel and Mallory 2020) reports only that “Fall migrants occasionally bathe in tidal streams on Cape Cod.” These birds were spring migrants.

### **Small Group Bathing by Royal, Sandwich, and Least Terns, and Laughing Gulls.**

During daylight hours, as many as 30 Royal Terns (*Thalasseus maxima*) and a dozen Laughing Gulls (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) roosted on the dock at our rental house. The dock also hosted a small number of other species, including Sandwich Terns (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) (Figure 5). There were no Least Terns (*Sternula antillarum*) during March but they arrived in April and the dock hosted more than 20. At low tide, substantial rocky, algae-coated substrate is exposed, but is entirely covered by water from mid to high tide. On 16 days from March 12 through April 22, I saw at least one tern or gull bathing near the dock. The bathing was communal for most of the gulls and terns. In most cases, the bathing occurred in two to three inches of water near the end of the dock. In all cases, the birds stood facing into the wind and waves.

Most of the instances of bathing involved multiple birds. The groups would be dynamic, with some birds joining the bathing group as other birds finished bathing and



**Figure 6.** Five Royal Terns and six Laughing Gulls bathe together.

left the water. On March 12 at about 2:30 pm, I noticed several Royal Terns bathing next to the dock as the tide dropped. They partially submerged their bodies, then dipped their heads and bills, with bills held straight out, under water while flapping wings, body feathers extended. A few minutes later two more terns, which had been standing nearby, began bathing. A fifth tern then dropped in for a bath after several of the bathing terns had returned to the dock. Slightly farther up the dock two Laughing Gulls—one an immature—bathed, poking their heads under water, bills pointed down, and fluttered their wings and tails in much the same way the terns did. My notes of these observations say: “Water depth seems to be the key in triggering this bathing response in terns and gulls.”

On March 15 between 4:05 and 4:49 pm, I observed 12 Royal Terns and two Laughing Gulls bathing during a 44-minute period. On March 16 at 6:05 pm, five Royal Terns and six Laughing Gulls bathed together next to the dock (Figure 6). On March 31 at 5 pm, a Royal Tern bathed with a flock of shorebirds and another Royal Tern and a Sandwich Tern bathed at the right side of the flock. Eventually eight Royal Terns joined the bathing group.

Least Terns were not seen in the area until March 28 and not more than a dozen at a time until April 13. There were about 20 Least Terns, three of them bathing, on the flats on April 17 at 3:40 pm when the incoming tide began to submerge the flats. Soon, six Least Terns were bathing at once, dipping into the water, fluffing and wing-flapping with bodies partially submerged (Figure 7). When finished, they walked or flew to the exposed flats and preened with other terns. I estimated from the number of preening terns that at least a dozen terns had bathed. On April 21, a Least Tern was bathing in a pool on the tidal flats when a second tern flew in and joined it. A third bird joined the two bathers. The first bird left the water and stood on the exposed flats and preened; it was soon followed by a second, leaving one tern bathing. Several minutes later, a fourth tern joined the bathing tern. This sequence of one tern leaving the water to preen and another bird joining the remaining bather continued until five Least Terns had bathed.



**Figure 7.** Six Least Terns are bathing and many more are preening.

Bathing in gulls and terns appears to be an afternoon, particularly a late afternoon, phenomenon. On the 16 days during which I recorded gulls or terns, the earliest bathing occurred at 2:30 pm and the latest at 6:05 pm. The tide cycle also may have contributed to the optimal water depth near the dock for bathing. Bathing occurred during both the rising and falling tide, although most instances were during the falling tide.

Bathing in gulls and terns is well known, although perhaps under-reported. The *Birds of the World* account of the Royal Tern states, “Bathes in groups in shallow water” (Buckley and Buckley 2020). The account for Laughing Gull reports, “Individuals bath singly or in small groups in both fresh and salt water...” and continues with a description of the bathing behavior, referencing it to Stone 1937 (Burger 2020). The Sandwich Tern account (Shealer et al. 2020) mentions “group bathing in tidal pools adjacent to colonies” and describes the behavior. The account of the Least Tern (Thompson et al. 2020) states “At colonies, regularly uses salt or fresh water for bathing. Individuals normally bathe alone but may be joined by 2–10 other birds...” and then describes the characteristics of the bathing procedure. I could find no reference to group bathing in mixed-species flocks, as was the case with a Sandwich Tern bathing with a Royal Tern, a Royal Tern bathing with a flock of shorebirds, and Royal Terns bathing with Laughing Gulls as described above. In summary, it appears that bathing by these species is a common occurrence, biased heavily toward the end of the day, and not restricted to the areas adjacent to breeding colonies or to the breeding season.

## Conclusions

I conclude: (1) bathing is common in shorebirds, gulls, and terns; (2) for the species studied here, group bathing, or the tendency toward group bathing is the norm; (3) watching other birds bathe is an incentive to join the bathing group, in many cases leading to interspecific group bathing; (4) bathing for the bird species in this study is primarily an afternoon, end-of-day phenomenon; (5) preening normally follows bathing and can be considered a stage in the bathing procedure; and (6) the timing of bathing is influenced by water depth, and therefore is often influenced by the tide cycle. 🐦

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# PHOTO ESSAY

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## Birds of Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary



Scarlet Tanager feeding on white mulberry. Photo by Kim Jones.



Bay-breasted Warbler gleaning insects from shagbark hickory leaves and flowers. Photo by David McLain.



Blue-winged Warbler singing amid the crabapple blossoms. Photo by Kim Jones.



Young Bald Eagles interacting on the ice and sandbar of the Oxbow. Photo by David McLain. 🦅

# MUSINGS FROM THE BLIND BIRDER

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## Climbing Jay Peak

*Martha Steele*



The author at Jay Peak. Photograph by Bob Stymeist.

Any given day of birding, like any activity, can be exhilarating, frustrating, joyous, slow, boring, intense, disappointing, awe-inspiring, surprising, exhausting, or calming. Many birding forays, although enjoyable, are not particularly memorable. But every once in a while, the stars align where not only the birds but everything about the moment combines to send your spirits soaring. Such was one morning in mid-June in 2020 on Jay Peak, a mountain located in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont just four miles south of the Canadian border.

My husband Bob, my guide dog Alvin, and I set out from an empty parking lot near the base lodge of the Jay Peak ski resort at 5:40 am. The day was clear and cool, perfect for a climb of about 2000 feet to the 3,858-foot Jay Peak summit. On our ascent, we barely stopped to listen to such species as Ovenbird, Hermit Thrush, Black-throated Green Warbler, or Blue-headed Vireo as we were focused on getting to the summit area as quickly as possible for our target bird, the Bicknell's Thrush.



Jay Peak is one of only a few reliable places in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont for seeking Bicknell's Thrush. In recent years, we have taken advantage of summer Friday evening specials at the Jay Peak Resort where a dinner buffet is combined with a tram ride to the summit that runs until dusk, well beyond its normal closing time of 5:00 pm. We could take the tram up after a quick dinner and remain at or just below the summit as dusk approached, thereby getting a chance to hear the beginning of the evening chorus of Bicknell's Thrushes. But in this year of Covid-19, all facilities at the resort are closed. Thus, if we wanted to hear this beautiful bird, we would have to hike up to the summit.

We started out on the rough, grassy and gravelly road designed for the resort's maintenance vehicles in all seasons. The climb is steep in places but the footing is relatively stable and secure, an important consideration for someone who cannot see and who is susceptible to tripping hazards such as rocks and roots. The summit can also be reached via the Long Trail from a parking area on Route 242, a 1.7-mile steep and rigorous hike for those willing to undertake it. On the evening of July 3, 2019, David Hof reported a very careful tally of 17 Bicknell's Thrushes, 22 Swainson's Thrushes, 5 Hermit Thrushes, and 1 Northern Saw-whet Owl on this trail. (Note: The Long Trail is a 272-mile foot path that runs between the southern and northern borders of Vermont.)

After only 1.5 hours of hiking, we heard our first singing Bicknell's Thrush at about 7:15 am. We slowly advanced up the trail and within the next few hundred yards, we heard an additional five Bicknell's Thrushes. Mixed among the Bicknell's were Swainson's Thrushes, Purple Finches, White-throated Sparrows, Winter Wrens, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Nashville and Blackpoll warblers. For good measure, we also heard Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, another species difficult to find in Orleans County where Jay Peak is located.

We were absolutely exhilarated. We were alone, feeling the warm sun against our faces, and listening to a continuous avian symphony that required no conductor. We remained silent and just let the song wash over us. Even Alvin sat quiet and still.

I closed my eyes and tried to remember what I knew to be a spectacular vista from my sighted days skiing or hiking on this mountain. Dense northern forests fall away from Jay Peak's summit. Lake Champlain is visible to the west, and the highest peaks of Vermont and New Hampshire, Mount Mansfield and Mount Washington, respectively, rise in the horizon to the southeast and southwest.

But invariably, as I stood with my eyes closed, my attention returned time and again to the beautiful song all around us. Bob noted that when he looked down on the resort below us, he could see only one car on the entire grounds, and that car was ours. We had the place to ourselves: us, the sky, the earth, and the birds.

I have been asked often why I hike or walk when I cannot see anything. The hike on this late spring morning was a good illustration of why I so love the outdoors even as a blind person. When I could still see, I did many backpacking trips in New England and the Rocky Mountains of the United States and Canada, as well as extended canoe camping trips in the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota and Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario. I loved the exertion and the solitude of the great outdoors. I enjoyed

the views, the encounters with wildlife, the changing weather visible from mountain peaks, broad valleys of meadows filled with wildflowers, and our campsites looking across small and large lakes populated with calling Common Loons. But in those days, I was not a birder nor could I hear most birds with the hearing aids that I used at the time.

Today, I still experience, though in different ways, the joy and solitude of hikes in remote areas. I experience the wild with sounds, smells, and touches, not to mention sharing the moments with someone I love. On the Jay Peak hike, the whiff of the sweet balsam stands we passed stopped me in my tracks. The gentle wind throughout the hike cooled our perspiring bodies. Each step conveyed the grade and texture under my feet. Alvin's harness stabilized me where the footing was tricky. The solitude of the morning intensified our connection with the birds

We stayed up near the summit for another hour and then slowly worked our way back down. We heard several more Blackpoll Warblers, including males clearly defending their territories. We again stopped to absorb the beauty and wonder of the moment, not wanting to leave the mountain. This was one of those birding days that we will not soon forget. How lucky we are that our pursuit of birds has the added benefit of taking us to beautiful places that we might not otherwise enjoy. 🐦

*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)>.*



GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH BY NEIL DOWLING

# GLEANINGS

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## Spring Blackpoll Warblers

*David M. Larson*

In the fall, Blackpoll Warblers (*Setophaga striata*) are celebrated for the exercise in identification and for the appreciation of their long and difficult impending over-water migration. However, in the spring, when local birders find these warblers, a shading of existential dread often colors the experience. “Oh no, migration is almost over!” Maybe that is why relatively little has been published about spring Blackpoll migration.

Because Blackpolls breed across the North American continent in the boreal forests of the United States and Canada and migrate from their South American wintering grounds past a broad array of bird banding stations, they would seem to be a good model for studies on the drivers, modulators, and phenology of migration. They are also a rapidly declining species of concern, meaning that study could illuminate issues of conservation action or further research. Elucidating parameters of spring migration in Blackpolls was the goal of the research reported by Covino et al. 2020. The authors assembled spring records, collected between 1960 and 2017, from 28 birdbanding sites, stretching from Florida and Mississippi up the East Coast, across the upper Midwest, to western Canada and Alaska. Data were retrieved from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Bird Banding Laboratory data base. The researchers also reached out to individual banding stations for additional data, such as wing chord and mass, not usually recorded in the USGS data base.

The hypotheses to be tested were (1) that the number of birds captured in western locations would peak later than those in eastern banding stations; (2) that western populations would have longer wing chords correlating with their longer migration distances; (3) that the energetic condition (mass compared to wing length) of the birds captured in the west and the east would differ; (4) that male Blackpolls would arrive earlier than females; and (5) that the migration phenology of Blackpolls would not show shifts over time considering the late timing of their migration. To test these hypotheses, the researchers examined how migration dates, wing length, and energetic condition varied with sex, location, and estimates of distance from overwintering grounds. Eastern and western banding station designations were separated by the 85° west longitude line, which corresponds to known population migration tracks. In the United States, this longitude line runs from the Florida panhandle through central Michigan.

The researchers statistically analyzed the data from nearly 16,000 new spring captures, although numbers were reduced by a few thousand for analyses of mass and wing length because these data were not available from all stations. The progression of migration varied with route, distance from wintering grounds, and sex, with the midpoint of migration for western birds almost 15 days earlier than that for eastern birds, and male midpoints about 4 days earlier than those for females.

Data on wing length showed two-way interactions, so eastern and western birds were analyzed separately. Males in both populations had longer wings than females. The magnitude of the sex difference was greater in western birds at distant sites than at shorter migration distances, while for the eastern birds, the differences were greater

earlier in the season rather than later. In both eastern and western populations, birds with longer wings arrived earlier. The energetic condition of the birds showed more complex statistical interactions, so eastern and western birds were again analyzed separately. In both groups, longer-winged birds and males had more mass. The effect of migration distance on body mass was nonlinear for eastern birds, depending on sex and the date. Eastern and western birds captured in the south, near the Gulf of Mexico, were underweight (normalized by wing length), and birds in the Midwest were above expected mass. On the East Coast, mass was highest in the middle of the range and about as expected near the breeding grounds, while in the west, peak weights were in the mid-latitudes and were lower in the north.

Overall, 58 years of data from spring banding records indicate that Blackpoll Warblers have migrated earlier in the year by about a half day per decade whether comparing early, median, or late migrants. While unexpected, this result is in concordance with data from other Neotropical migrants. The earlier arrivals of western populations with similar migration distances suggest that both sexes of western birds begin migration earlier. The energetic condition of the birds on capture was similar for eastern and western populations, despite the differences in migration distances, mass being lowest in the south, highest in mid-track, and near optimal near the breeding grounds. The western birds do increase the speed of migration toward the end of the track, suggesting another difference in migration strategy. Eastern birds may be making a more deliberate migration while the western birds may make a big jump and spend more time fattening up in the Midwest.

Males migrate earlier in spring than females, but females apparently speed up for the last part of their migration and arrive in worse condition than the males. Doubtless the females make up any deficiencies upon arrival because they need to be in robust condition to produce a successful clutch of eggs. The differences in migration strategies might prevent intersex competition during migration and lead to more optimal success on the breeding grounds.

This type of study, using data from numerous banding stations, demonstrates the value of a broad view of information impossible with a more restricted data set. Further, the combination of springtime migration data with published information from the same research group on the fall migration patterns of Blackpoll Warblers (Morris et al., 2015) provides a more complete view of the annual life cycle of these birds, their evolved migration strategies, and possible conservation strategies for this rapidly declining Neotropical migrant. 🦅

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# FIELD NOTES

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## A Wild Goose Chase in Rochester, Massachusetts

*Brian Vigorito*



**Figure 1.** Young Greater White-fronted Goose. Photograph by Alan Kneidel.

The fields along Vaughan Hill Road in Rochester, Massachusetts have long been known to attract large numbers of Canada Geese in the winter (Marchessault 2017). These fields, with their large flocks of Canada Geese, can be a great place to check for other species mixed in with their more common relatives. In most years, a careful search might turn up a Cackling Goose or Snow Goose, but the many birders who visited Rochester in the winter of 2019–2020 were rewarded with something unusual. This year proved to be exceptional as this area managed to rack up more species of geese than anywhere else in New England.

Alan Kneidel got the season off to an early start when he visited the Rochester fields on October 19, 2019. Waterfowl migration was just getting underway and new flocks of Canada Geese were passing through the area regularly. Alan said, “I love looking at geese. Few things are more thrilling in the birding world than pulling up alongside a big flock of geese with an opportunity to pick through them.” When he arrived in Rochester that day, most of the geese were concentrated on a small pond. After searching through the flock a couple of times, he picked out a brown goose with orange legs and bill and just a few white feathers behind the bill—a young Greater White-fronted Goose (Figure 1). This species is rare but regular in Rochester, but this year it was only the beginning.



**Figure 2.** Snow Goose. Photograph by Lisa Schibley.

Having seen Alan’s report, Lisa Schibley decided to stop by before going to work the next day. Before relocating the Greater White-fronted Goose, she spotted a new arrival to the fields, a Snow Goose. Most Snow Geese in Massachusetts are of the white morph, with an occasional dark morph or Blue Goose showing up. This particular individual fell somewhere in between with pale gray on most of the body and a white belly (Figure 2).

Both of these birds lingered in the area for the next couple of months and were seen by many birders. The next major development came on January 15, 2020, when Neil Dowling paid a visit to Rochester. He had previously seen the Greater White-fronted Goose and Snow Goose and was hoping to pick out a Cackling Goose from the flock. Instead, he found a pair of Barnacle Geese (Figure 3). This sighting was only the second for this species in Plymouth County, with the first being a single bird found by Jim Sweeney in 2003 (Rines 2004).

The Barnacle Geese stayed at this spot for the next couple of days, and several birders were able to see the Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, and both Barnacle Geese together. For the weeks between January 18 and February 2, these four geese moved to a golf course and pond in neighboring Acushnet, which is in Bristol County. The Barnacle Geese were a first record for Bristol County, and many observers were able to see all four individuals together there as well.



**Figure 3.** Barnacle Geese. Photograph by Neil Dowling.

When I first saw Neil’s report of the Barnacle Geese, I was eager to get down there and see them. But my first chance was the following Saturday, January 18, and they had already left Rochester by then. As a proud Plymouth County birder, looking for the birds three miles down the road in Acushnet just wouldn’t be the same. I wanted to see them in Rochester. The Barnacle Geese returned to the Rochester fields in February, but, unfortunately, I was away on vacation at the time and had to sit back and watch the Rare Bird Alert e-mails come in from eBird each day.

On February 23, I was back home and finally had a chance to look for the Barnacle Geese again. I drove to Rochester first thing in the morning and pulled up alongside the cornfields. Right along the edge of the road was a small group of Canada Geese with one obviously different goose mixed in. But this was not one of the Barnacle Geese I was looking for. This goose was medium-sized with a dark brown head, gray back, and pink legs and feet—a Pink-footed Goose (Figure 4). I took photos and got the word out to friends. I also drove down to the other end of the field to tell other birders who were in the area. Luckily, when I told them about the Pink-footed, they told me what they were looking at—the two Barnacle Geese. The Snow Goose was still hanging around that day, too.

The Pink-footed Goose was the second record for Plymouth County, the first having been found by John Galluzzo along the coast in the town of Plymouth only a few months earlier on December 1, 2019 ([ebird.org/checklist/S61900551](http://ebird.org/checklist/S61900551)). A Pink-footed Goose had also been found in nearby Bristol County on December 6, 2019 by Matthew Eckerson ([ebird.org/checklist/S61900551](http://ebird.org/checklist/S61900551)). These sightings all may have been of the same bird. Initially, this goose was present in Rochester only for the one day.



**Figure 4.** Pink-footed Goose. Photograph by Brian Vigorito.

However, it did return for about a week in mid-March, which gave many more birders an opportunity to see it.

With Canada, Greater White-fronted, Snow, Barnacle, and Pink-footed geese, this year's list for the Rochester fields stands at an impressive five different species. Missing from this year's list is a Cackling Goose. Although this species had been somewhat regular here over the last few years, none was found in the winter of 2019–2020.

If we look at Plymouth County as a whole, Alan Kneidel did find a Cackling Goose this year about 20 miles away at the Monponsett Ponds. Including Brant—common along the coast, but unlikely to be found at an inland field—Plymouth County had seven species of geese this winter. That's every species that has ever been found in this county, and only one short of the overall state list—Plymouth County never has had a Ross's Goose. Now that we know what is possible in a good winter at Rochester, I'm sure we'll have many birders out scanning the flocks for rarities this coming winter of 2020–2021. 🦢

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# First Confirmed Breeding Attempt of Sandhill Crane (*Antigone canadensis*) in Worcester County, Massachusetts, May 2020

Wendy Howes and Alan F. Rawle



Sandhill Cranes in Hardwick May 18, 2020. All Photographs by Alan F. Rawle.

The stately appearance and large size of Sandhill Cranes make them stand out impressively in the landscape or open sky. Accordingly, reports of this species in the state have been intermittent but highly accurate since at least the 1990s. Migrant groups of up to six or more birds have been reported, and individual birds or pairs have stayed around some localities for weeks, promoting speculation as to breeding status. The *Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas 2* comments, “A breeding-season sighting in the Worcester Plateau region also suggested that Sandhill Cranes were also prospecting in other areas in the Commonwealth. Wet meadows with abundant agricultural grain should be closely watched in the coming years, especially those in the western part of the state.”

Breeding has been reported in the western part of the state, although photographic evidence is scant, and pictures tend to show adult birds with juveniles about two feet tall. Reported sightings of Sandhill Cranes have become increasingly common in Worcester County, especially since eBird rolled out its reporting platform. Central Worcester County sightings in the Hardwick area in 2018 that occurred only in April, October, and November (as late as November 15) suggested migrants. In 2019, cranes were observed from South Barre to Hardwick intermittently from April 7 to October 12—dates that encompassed the breeding season. One pair consistently present in



Sandhill Cranes in Hardwick May 18, 2020.

a contiguous series of pastures and hayfields in Hardwick, admired by us and many other observers, lent hope to the possibility that they might nest in one of many nearby wetland marshes. The immediate region seems well-suited for nesting by Sandhill Cranes.

Where we live, on the west side of Hardwick close to the Quabbin Reservation, many prior crane sightings likely have been overlooked due to the vast amount of open land and scarcity of bird observers. The species has occasionally been noted on Quabbin property, and on April 20, 2018, Wendy saw two in flight—within reservation boundaries—about two miles from where this year’s breeding pair ended up. On April 24, 2020, we were treated to an intriguing dusk flyover of a single bird close to home. Then on the morning of May 16, one crane unexpectedly flew low over our backyard.

On May 17, a neighbor described observing a pair of adults with two small chicks at his family property. Behind the property is an 85-plus acre expanse of beaver-influenced wetland and shrubby marsh, an ideal crane nesting site. The next day he saw the foursome foraging in a large field at a different location about one-quarter mile away, as the crane walks. The cranes had found an open expanse of field adjacent to another wetland pond. There we were excited to see two precocial young that seemed to be only a few days old accompanying the adults. Alan obtained initial documentation photos, and the following evening, May 19, he returned to the property and recorded the family group.

On May 20, the owner of the open field and marsh observed all four around mid-morning. Cranes were not present in the evening. Following these initial encounters, we entered into a prolonged period of playing hide-and-seek with this family group.

Given that usually only one young bird survives to fledge and that chicks remain with the parents for nine to ten months, we decided to try documenting the nesting

outcome and survival of one or both young birds. Although we speculated about the 85-acre wetland being the right place to search, access is difficult, time-consuming, and private. It wasn't until June 14 that we were able to get to an observation spot to check that site. Sure enough, both adult cranes were there. The shrubby vegetation was dense; if the young were present, they still would be too small to be visible from the observation point.


On June 15 at 6:00 pm, we again located and observed only the two adults foraging in the same wetland. We had just received the belated, tantalizing second-hand news that all four birds had been foraging in yet another private yard one day around June 5. This encouraged us to spend a long time watching the adult birds. It was frustrating that the pair managed to keep the lower parts of their bodies and young, if any, mostly obscured, but we had several opportunities to see around the legs of the adults and beyond. No young were seen. Speculating that the offspring might be farther away from the parent birds or hidden away waiting for the adults—wishful thinking—we watched the adults closely for nearly an hour as they made their way through the wetland, feeding, preening, and once even breaking into a courtship-type dance for a few seconds. Red-winged Blackbirds were diving at them and even striking their backs. Unfortunately, no young birds were present, and there was no sign that the adults had dependent young nearby.

We observed the crane pair again on June 16 walking and feeding in the same vegetated wetland for more than an hour. The birds occasionally moved into sections that provided good, open views, so there was no longer any doubt about the loss of the chicks.

It is unfortunate that the young birds seem to have been lost within the same general time period when they were both likely less than one month of age. The most probable scenario is that they were predated by any of numerous possible predators that live in the area: Great Horned Owl, eastern coyote, bobcat, or fisher, among others.

Two adults, presumably the same pair, returned on June 26 at 6:30 am to the property where the family was first seen. They remained in the vicinity and were observed intermittently from June 30 through July 6, early mornings and evenings.

Sean Williams (personal communication) and Tom Pirro (personal communication) verified that we have documented the first confirmed breeding attempt of Sandhill Cranes in Worcester County. We thank our caring and enthusiastic neighbors for their help with our efforts.

We hope the future will bring successful nesting attempts in the region as a result of changing landscapes and climate. Their regular presence would expand the biodiversity richness of Massachusetts avifauna and enrich birders' overall field experiences. 

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# ABOUT BOOKS

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## Channeling Your Inner Kinglet

Mark Lynch

*What It's Like to Be a Bird: From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing—What Birds Are Doing, and Why.* David Allen Sibley. 2020. New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

“Birds are making decisions all the time.” (Preface)

Many decades ago I was an underclassman at Clark University. The professor there who had the greatest effect on me was Nicholas Thompson. He taught classes on ethology, primate social behavior, and evolution. He once offered a class during which, once a week, we went to his farm in rural New Braintree and, over four months, described the changes that occurred on his property during spring. He was passionate about birds and wrote, under a pseudonym, a wonderfully Victorian book about the birds found on his farm. How is the book Victorian? Since he may very well still be alive, I will refrain from giving the title of that book.

My first class with him was about instinct, and the very first paper in the textbook we were required to read was by the German scientist Jakob Johann von Uexküll (1864–1944). I can't believe I still recall his name. Uexküll studied muscular physiology, animal behavior, and what was called the cybernetics of life. I have never read another paper by Uexküll, and I certainly can't remember all the details of this one. I do remember an illustration of how the forest looks to an owl versus how it looks to a human. I fully admit that I may be misremembering some details, but the essence of that paper has stayed with me. It was about Umwelt, Uexküll's original concept for which he is best remembered.

Umwelt, the plural of which is “Umwelten,” is a German word for the environment and surroundings. It was Uexküll's theory that all living creatures perceive their environment differently and subjectively. Uexküll believed that if you looked carefully at a creature's unique senses and physiology, you could understand how that creature perceived and behaved in its environment. The owl and the woodsman may be physically in the same space, but to each, their world, or Umwelt, is different. Different animals and invertebrates, whether an owl or a tick, sense a world that is very different from the one humans perceive.

All these long ago academic memories of Uexküll and his Umwelten popped into my mind as I dipped into David Allen Sibley's fine new book, *What It's Like to Be a Bird*.

Consider how a tanager sees the world as it moves through a lattice of slender twigs suspended above ground. The bird gives no thought to hopping from twig to twig eighty feet up in the air, then jumping into the open air to catch a passing insect, or flying across a fifty-foot gap to the next twig. Can birds be afraid of heights? (p. 145, *What It's Like to Be a Bird*)

WHAT IT'S  
LIKE TO BE  
A BIRD  
FROM FLYING  
TO NESTING,  
EATING  
TO SINGING—  
WHAT  
BIRDS ARE  
DOING, AND  
WHY  
DAVID ALLEN  
SIBLEY



*What It's Like to Be a Bird* is a compendium of short pieces on many aspects of ornithological ethology. It is organized by species or groups of species in current taxonomic order. Each species or group is given two facing pages: a large color portrait on the left, and smaller paintings and text on the right. Sometimes, as with shorebirds or wood warblers, several pairs of pages are devoted to those birds. But that isn't all. This large format book is visually stunning, containing large examples of Sibley's artwork. Many of the bird portraits of larger species are almost life size, while some smaller species are shown larger than life size. The birds look like they could hop onto your lap. Most of David Sibley's previous field

guides were painted in gouache. The birds in *What It's Like to Be a Bird* are painted in acrylic, producing more colorful, richer images. These large portraits are augmented by numerous smaller paintings of birds in action. Sometimes this includes additional two-page spreads of annotated illustrations of the breeding cycle of a species. These lively paintings are not the staid diagrammatic illustrations of a field guide, but birds shown going about their lives. In addition, there are also smaller colored illustrations included for every species. A few of these are more like sketches with a minimal use of color. By seeing Sibley's work this large and varied, you can appreciate his more skillful use of looser strokes. Some paintings even veer into an Impressionistic treatment. These include the end papers of crows flocking to trees and "blackbirds flying over a field of bird food" (p. 175). This is the most exciting collection of David Sibley's artwork published to date.

Though it is easy to lose yourself in the wealth of the colorful and lively art, the written part of *What It's Like to Be a Bird* is no less interesting. It is Sibley's goal to show the reader that birds are not just organic automatons.

One of the themes that impressed me throughout my work on this book is that a bird's experience is far richer, more complex and more "thoughtful" than I'd imagined. And if that was news to me after a lifetime of watching birds, it must be surprising to other people as well. (Preface)

Back when I was taking classes with Professor Thompson, animal behavior was seen through the lens of behaviorism. Animals were considered mere organic machines, ruled by instinct that was passed on via the DNA. All animals' repertoire of behaviors were dictated by their instincts and rarely varied from those narrowly defined parameters. The animal had no "choice." One of the first words we learned was "anthropocentric," and we were taught to avoid tainting our field observations with this all too human tendency. Looking at an animal's behavior and attributing humanlike emotions or aspects of consciousness was just bad science and would not be tolerated by the scientific community. But even back then, observations by primatologists like Jane Goodall and Diane Fossey began to push the envelope of how we look at animal behavior. Today there has been a sea change in how we look at the animal mind. Scientists like primatologist Frans de Waal and others have begun to use words like

“empathy” to describe primate behavior. Other scientists have begun describing species other than primates as likely having at least a kind of consciousness. The concept of instinct has evolved to become more complex and subtle.

I think the word “instinct” to most people, implies a kind of blind obedience. We think of instinct as a set of instructions written in DNA, passed down through generations, controlling bird behavior. The most extreme reading of this is that birds are a bunch of zombie-like automatons...Instinct can't be blind obedience. It has to be subtle, to allow flexibility and choices.  
(Preface)

The layout of *What It's Like to Be a Bird* is unique. After an important preface, and a few notes on how to use this book, there is a lengthy introduction (p. ix-xxxii). This is a useful outline of all the topics discussed throughout the book. For instance, under “Bird Senses” (p. xiii), there are various subheadings such as “Sight” (p. xiii), “Hearing” (p. xv), and “Smell” (p. xv). Under each of those subheadings is a list of specific ideas discussed in the main body of the book and their page reference. For example, under “Smell” we find a summary statement: “All birds can smell, in general at least as well as we do, and some species have an extraordinary sense of smell” (p. xv). In this case, there follow three specific references to birds and smell and where that subject matter appears in the main “Portfolio of Birds” (p. 2–176). Here is one example: “It's been known for decades that a few species, like the Turkey Vulture (p. 59 middle) and the American Woodcock (p. 179), hunt largely by smell.” (p. xv)

Some of these topics like “Flight” (p. xvi-xvii), which is found under “Movement” (p. xvi-xviii), can have fourteen or more specific text references. This is more difficult to describe than it is to use. This allows the reader to easily check all the sections of the book that refer to one type of behavior. Want to learn more about birds nesting? Under the main heading of “Social behavior” (p. xxiv) you will find “Nesting” (p. xxv-xxviii), and under “Nesting” you will find subheadings on subjects like “Timing of Nesting” (p. xxv), “Incubation” (p. xxvii), “Brood Parasitism” (p. xxviii), and many others. Each of those subheadings has a list of subjects and their specific page reference. This type of outline makes *What It's Like to Be a Bird* an easy-to-use reference book for the classroom and for any student writing a research paper on bird life. It also encourages all readers to read the book not only species by species, but behavior by behavior.

The colorful “Portfolio of Birds” is the *raison d'être* for *What It's Like to Be a Bird*. If you can tear yourself away from enjoying Sibley's artwork, you will find that each species or group has three meaty paragraphs on the right page. Under “Kinglets” (p. 124–5) the top paragraph ends with:

“A bird as small as a Golden-crowned Kinglet has a resting heart rate of over six-hundred beats per minute (ten per second), about ten times faster than the average human, and during activity the heart rate doubles to over twelve hundred beats per minute.” (p. 125)

The other two paragraphs under “Kinglets” describe the weight loss that occurs in small birds at night, torpidity during winter nights, and the intriguing “What do salmon have to do with kinglets?” (p. 125). This last paragraph describes a unique set of connections between what seems like species that have nothing to do with each other. No matter what level birder you think you are, you will find something new to learn about in *What It’s Like to Be a Bird*. Sometimes, Sibley will contradict what you thought you knew for most of your birding life. For instance, did you know: “Female cowbirds do not simply lay an egg and leave it; they actually monitor the progress of the egg and the young.” (p. 171)

*What It’s Like to Be a Bird* ends with several short sections. “Birds in this book” (p. 177–88) is a review of the species shown in the book, including a small painting of the bird and a paragraph about that species. “What to do if...” (p. 189–90) answers the common questions people have when birds and humans cross paths. It is likely you all have fielded these enquiries. These include “A bird is flying repeatedly against a window” (p. 189), “You find a dead bird” (p. 189), and “You find a baby bird” (p. 190). About that last situation, Sibley cautions fledgling finders, “Only a few situations will benefit from your intervention.” (p. 190)

The last short essay is devoted to “Becoming a Birder” (p. 191). This contains some of the best advice Sibley could pass along to any birder, hardcore or “wannabe”: “You will learn faster if you can be an active observer: draw sketches, take notes, write poetry, take photos, whatever will make you look a little more carefully and a little longer.” (p. 191)

*What It’s Like to Be a Bird* had an interesting evolution.

The creation of this book has followed a meandering path over the last fifteen years. My original idea, in the early 2000s, was to produce a bird guide for kids. Then I started thinking about it as a bird guide for beginners of any age. But having created a comprehensive North American bird guide, the concept of a “simplified” guide never clicked for me. Instead, I wanted to make it a broader introduction to birds. (Preface)

In most field guides we see birds as two-dimensional. In that format birds become a collection of field marks that we can then seek out and tick off. Field guides need to be brief, and they cannot possibly contain much information about how a species lives. With *What It’s Like to Be a Bird*, those field guide birds finally pop off the pages and are shown to be complex creatures with an amazing variety of behaviors as they go about their lives. Once you entertain the notion that birds may have complex lives, and that we can understand some of what they are doing, birding becomes a lot more interesting. Beautiful to look at and fascinating to read, this book belongs in the collections of birders of all levels.

“This book is about what it’s like to be a bird, and that can best be explained in terms of how it compares to being human.” (Preface). 🐦

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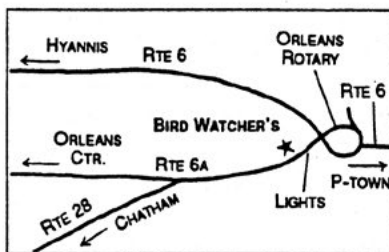
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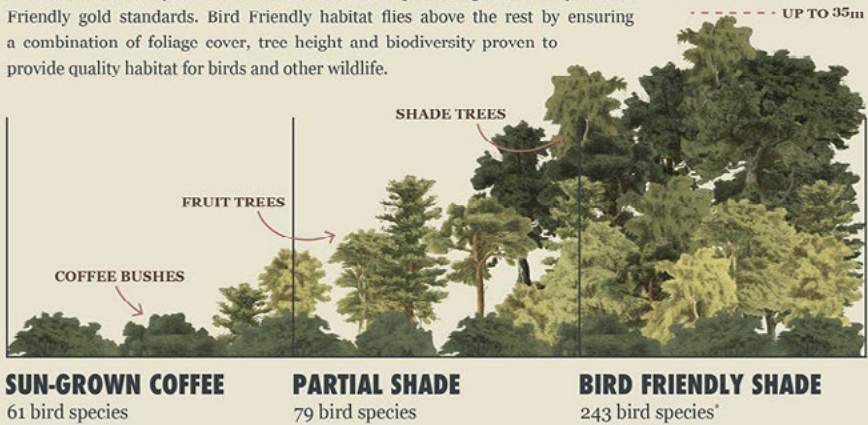
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# BIRD SIGHTINGS

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## May–June 2020

*Neil Hayward and Robert H. Stymeist*

May began as a brief warm spell, with temperatures rising to 78 degrees on May 3. Strong southwest winds brought a surge of new migrants to our area. By May 6, the Boston area experienced unusually cold weather, with parts of western Massachusetts receiving measurable amounts of snow. On May 10 (Mother's Day), Boston tied the record low temperature of 34 degrees set on that date in 1902. The high temperature for the month was 83 degrees on May 27, and the average temperature in Boston was 65 degrees, just one degree below the historical average for May. Precipitation for the month totaled 2.21 inches, 1.28 inches below the normal for Boston.

June was warm, with an average temperature in Boston of 77.6 degrees, 1.6 degrees above normal. For the most part, the month was dry with Boston recording 2.66 inches of rain for the month, more than an inch below the historical average. From June 11–27, only 0.01 inch of rain was recorded. From June 28–30, strong to severe thunderstorms were noted in southeastern Massachusetts, where as much as 5.75 inches of rain was recorded in Norwood and 2.73 inches in Milton. The same storm produced only 1.56 inches of rain in Boston.

*R. Stymeist*

Note: Massachusetts was placed under a stay-at-home advisory on March 24 in an effort to contain the spread of the novel SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19. This was replaced in mid-May with a safer-at-home advisory as part of a planned reopening of certain businesses and communal spaces. The advisory, together with a fear of infection, particularly among older birders, and the closure of some birding locations, such as Mount Auburn Cemetery (closed to all but graveside visitors until June 1) and Plum Island (closed to vehicles until June 4), probably resulted in fewer reports and less coverage than in a “normal” year.

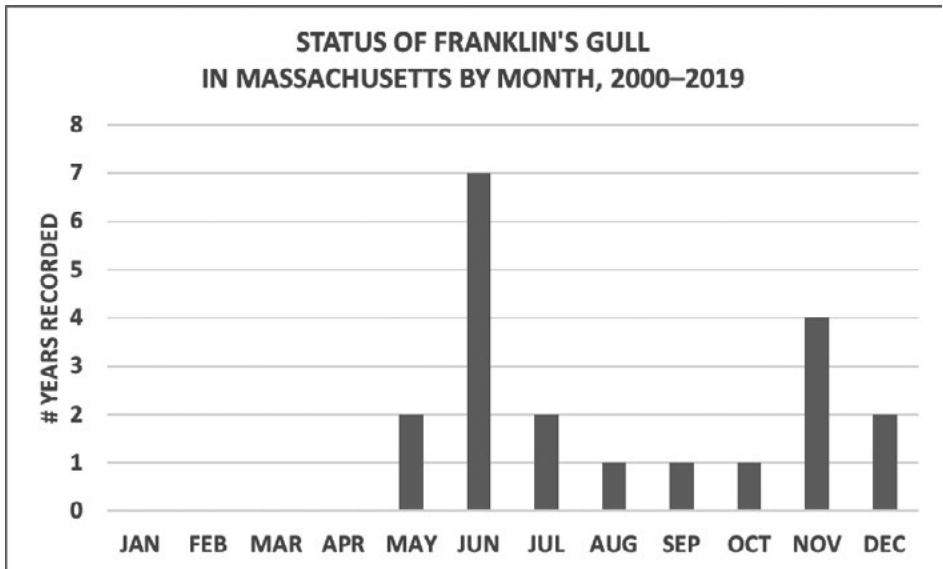
## GEESE THROUGH IBISES

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was socially-distancing on Martha's Vineyard until May 9, before (presumably) flying north to breed. The orange bill suggests that this bird was heading back to Greenland where the *flavirostris* subspecies breed and from where the majority of the state's Greater White-fronts are believed to hail. In contrast, the pink-billed race (*gambelli*), that breeds from central Alaska east to Hudson Bay, is a much rarer visitor to the state.

Tardiness was the theme of duck news this period. A single Ring-necked Duck continued at Chestnut Hill Reservoir in Boston through June, constituting the only June record of this species for Suffolk County. The high of 32 there in May beat the previous Suffolk high count for May of just two birds. The species is rarer on the Outer Cape, where a male present from May 18–21 is only the second May record for Provincetown after a bird in 2009. A male **Eurasian Wigeon** lingered at West Newbury until May 1. It is the first May record for Essex County since 2014.

After a promising increase in numbers in recent years, this year's high count of just 30 Common Nighthawks on May 26 at Bolton Flats was disappointing. **Chuck-will's-widows** were calling from their recent haunts at the east end of Nantucket and in North Falmouth.

Pied-billed Grebe is a very rare breeder in Massachusetts; it is listed as an endangered species by the state's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). Last year, a



**Figure. 1** June is the best month to see Franklin’s Gull in Massachusetts. The chart shows the number of years in which Franklin’s Gull has been recorded in Massachusetts for the period 2000–2019. Data from eBird.org

pair bred near Lenox. This year, breeding was confirmed at Belchertown, with up to five young reported during the period. **Common Gallinule**, also listed by the NHESP (as Special Concern) was reported from six locations, although none indicated any attempt at breeding. Massachusetts hosted two different **Purple Gallinules** in May in Plymouth and in Yarmouth. The species breeds in Florida, is highly migratory and prone to extreme vagrancy. The only other location to host vagrant Purple Gallinules this period was Long Island, New York, while New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in the Canadian Maritimes reported singles in April.

Sandhill Cranes have been recorded in every county in Massachusetts this year except for Bristol County. Breeding was confirmed at two locations: Worthington (for the fifth year in a row) and Burrage Pond (for the fourth year). An injured crane was rescued by Wild Care Cape Cod from South Chatham on May 18. The bird was underweight and had a wound on its neck, which required surgery. After a successful recovery, the crane was released near Barnstable Harbor, from where it was regularly seen through the end of the month.

Rare shorebirds for the period included an **American Avocet** at Plum Island on June 16, and **Wilson’s Plovers** at Eastham on May 6–7 and Plum Island on June 19. The latter are the first spring records for Wilson’s Plover since a bird in May 2014, which was also found at Plum Island. Long-billed Dowitchers are rare spring migrants to the state. An adult bird in breeding plumage, photographed at Quincy on May 1, is only the fifth period record this century. American Golden-Plovers are much less common in the spring than in the fall. Two records this period at Provincetown and Barnstable on May 2 and May 14, respectively, are about normal, though later than the average spring arrival date of April 17. Hudsonian Godwits are typically detected as fall migrants from as early as the first week of July. This year, a bird seen at Plum Island on June 23 was the earliest record this century, except for a May and early June record in 2016. It was a slow spring for Red Knot; the high count of three birds at Monomoy NWR on June 29 is the lowest high for June since 1999. (The highest, also at Monomoy, was 280 on June

28, 2012.) Berkshire County added its fifth record of Wilson's Phalarope, when two females were discovered at Ashley Falls, Sheffield on May 16 (see Schopp 2020 for a detailed report).

Covid-19 restrictions may have benefited breeding shorebirds, especially Piping Plovers. Norfolk County reported its first breeding record. This was the first year that breeding was documented—on two different beaches. A nesting pair produced young at Wollaston Beach, Quincy, and a pair were sitting on eggs at Cohasset. Prior to this year, the only records of the species in Norfolk County were in 2012 and 2019.

A count of 13 American Woodcock on Cuttyhunk Island on May 16 is a new high for Dukes County, eclipsing the previous high of seven birds on Martha's Vineyard.

An **Atlantic Puffin** was photographed at Race Point on June 14. Outside of the winter months of November–February, June is actually the month you are most likely to find one. Interestingly, although there are June records from Race Point in 2007, 2015, 2017, and 2020, there are no historical puffin sightings from Provincetown in either May or July.

The rarest gull of the period was a stunning adult **Franklin's Gull** photographed on the beach at Race Point on June 21. This is the seventh year this century in which this western species has been recorded in Massachusetts, and June is by far the most likely month in which to encounter one—see Figure 1. (The next is November, with four records this century.) A report of seven **Little Gulls** at Provincetown on May 16 is about average. An adult and immature Lesser Black-backed Gull were reported from Pittsfield on May 1. This species has been recorded in every county in Massachusetts, with Berkshire County being the last; the first eBird record for the county was only in 2015.

A **Sandwich Tern** that was present at Race Point Beach, May 25–27, was the first record for the state since a bird photographed on Nantucket in July 2018. Sandwich Tern is reported every three out of four years, with the bulk of the records coming from Cape Cod. This may be a good year for Black Skimmers. Counts of 22 (May) and 32 (June) are new monthly high counts for the state.

Both pelican species made their summer debuts in June. The four **Brown Pelicans** that flew over the Cuttyhunk to New Bedford ferry on June 5 represent a new state high count. An **American White Pelican** discovered on June 10 was similarly observed from a boat—this time a kayak on Wickett Pond in Wendell. It is only the second record for Franklin County after a bird found in Shelburne on January 9, 2008.

The presence and absence of **Cattle Egrets** has been noteworthy this year. This species has been recorded in the state every spring this century (except 2015) with an average arrival date of April 14. The latest arrival had been May 3, until this year when a bird finally put in an appearance at Dartmouth on May 19. Making up for seasonal tardiness, an appearance of a single bird at Cuttyhunk Island at the start of June added a new species to the island list. This has also been the first year this century that the species has (so far) not been recorded in Essex County—a traditional hotspot for the bird. Another Essex County regular was, however, present; up to two **White-faced Ibises** were in the Ipswich area for the first half of May.

*N. Hayward*

<b>Greater White-fronted Goose</b>				6/6	PI	1	W. Tatro#
5/2-5/9	Edgartown	1 ph	B. Shriber#	6/9	Gloucester (EP)	1	S. Williams
<b>Brant</b>							
5/1-5/16	Nahant	60 max	v.o.	5/1	Southwick	5	D. Holmes
5/3	PI	241	R. Heil	5/1	Wachusett Res. 2	1m+1f	B. Robo + v.o.
5/15-5/18	Pittsfield	40 max	J. Pierce + v.o.	5/3, 5/26	PI	5700,18	R. Heil, S. Williams
5/20	Salisbury	71	J. Carroll	5/15	Pittsfield (Onota)	7	J. Pierce + v.o.
6/15-6/29	Revere (POP)	2	R. Doherty + v.o.	6/9-6/17	Gloucester (EP)	9	S. Williams#
6/15-6/26	Barnstable	1	P. Trimble#				
<b>Mute Swan</b>							
5/5	Arlington Res.	12	N. Hayward	5/1	Quabbin Pk	13	T. Gilliland + v.o.
5/18	Boston (CHRes.)	14	R. Doherty	5/2	N. Scituate	20	G. d'Entremont
<b>Wood Duck</b>				5/2	Medford	8	J. Forbes
5/27	Wayland	26	B. Harris	5/4-5/14	Dorchester	20	L. Markley + v.o.
5/28	Hadley	17 1ad+16yg	G. d'Entremont#	5/5	Nahant	13	L. Pivacek
6/13	Orange	19	M. Lynch#	5/22-6/20	N. Truro	1	T. Bradford, v.o.
6/14	Petersham	31	M. Lynch#	<b>Common Goldeneye</b>			
<b>Blue-winged Teal</b>				5/1	Randolph	4 f	G. d'Entremont
5/1-5/10	Ipswich	2	v.o.	5/1-5/3	Mashpee	1	M. Keleher#
5/5	W. Harwich	2	P. Fang#	<b>Hooded Merganser</b>			
5/18	Chatham	2	F. Atwood	5/22	GMNWR	11 1f+10yg	B. Lee#
5/21	October Mountain	1 f	M & L Waters	5/28	Belchertown	4 1ad+3yg	G. d'Entremont#
<b>Northern Shoveler</b>				6/14	Petersham	14	M. Lynch#
5/13	Melrose	2 m	J. McCoy + v.o.	<b>Common Merganser</b>			
5/17-5/29	PI	2	v.o.	5/1	Quabbin Pk	33	L. Therrien
5/18	Nantucket	6	S. Fee	5/1-6/11	Sharon	1	E. Ganin + v.o.
<b>Gadwall</b>				5/2-5/10	Assabet R. NWR	10 max	v.o.
5/1	S. Deerfield	4	S. Griesemer + v.o.	5/6	MSSF	2 ad f	P. Briggs
5/18, 6/13	Nantucket	34,23	S. Fee	6/11	Quabbin (G8)	12 1f+11yg	M. Lynch#
<b>Eurasian Wigeon</b>				<b>Red-breasted Merganser</b>			
5/1	W. Newbury	1 m ph	M. Watson	5/1-5/26	PI	60 max	S. Williams+v.o.
<b>American Wigeon</b>				5/1	Wachusett Res.	1 m	N. Tepper#
5/2	Ipswich	2	v.o.	5/24	Quabbin (G33)	1 f	S. Griesemer
5/3	Stoneham	2	F. Porter	<b>Ruddy Duck</b>			
<b>Northern Pintail</b>				5/1-5/13	Boston (CHRes.)	10 max	L. Sokolow + v.o.
5/18	Nantucket	2	S. Fee	5/1-5/6	W. Newbury	1	v.o.
5/22	PI	1	M. Wilson	5/3	Turners Falls	1 f	A. Green
<b>Green-winged Teal</b>				<b>Northern Bobwhite</b>			
5/7	Chatham	4	B. Nikula	5/4-6/29	W. Roxbury (MP)	2	M.L. Kaufman + v.o
5/21	October Mountain	2 m	M & L Waters + v.o.	6/4	Eastham (FH)	3	J. Corrente
6/1-6/30	PI	9 max	v.o.	6/5	Truro	3	E. Goodman
6/10	Quincy	2 1pr	G. Hantsbarger	6/21	Saugus	1	B. Burke#
<b>Ring-necked Duck</b>				<b>Ruffed Grouse</b>			
5/1-6/30	Boston (CHRes.)	32	R. Doherty + v.o.	5/8	Boxford	1	J. Smith
5/2	S. Yarmouth	4	L. Hale	5/8	Sudbury	1	M. Brogan#
5/10	Cambr. (FP)	3	T. Mazerall + v.o.	5/16	Mashpee	4	N. Marchessault#
5/18-5/21	P'town	1	S. Johanne#	5/25	Townsend	1	J. Forbes
<b>Greater Scaup</b>				6/21	October Mountain	6 2ad+4yg	G. d'Entremont#
5/2	Randolph	2	V. Zollo	6/27	Plymouth	10 2ad+8yg	L. Schibley
5/9	Andover	1	M. McCarthy	<b>Pied-billed Grebe</b>			
6/9	Gloucester (EP)	1	S. Williams#	5/1-6/24	Richmond	2 max	Z. Adams + v.o.
<b>Lesser Scaup</b>				5/12-6/28	Belchertown	6 1ad+5yg	L. Therrien + v.o.
5/1	Randolph	2	G. d'Entremont	5/17-5/19	MBWMA	1	R. Heil + v.o.
5/3	W. Harwich	2	D. Proud	5/17	Wayland	1	B. Harris
6/30	Wachusett Res.	1	B. Robo#	5/31	Rockport	1	M. Sovay#
<b>Common Eider</b>				6/13	PI	1	F. Morello#
6/1-6/30	Lynn	250 max	v.o.	<b>Horned Grebe</b>			
6/1-6/19	Nahant	150 max	v.o.	5/1	Mashpee	1	M. Keleher#
6/1-6/27	Marblehead	94 max	v.o.	5/3	Pittsfield (Onota)	1	R. Wendell, R. Amuso
6/9	Gloucester (EP)	125	S. Williams#	6/1-6/24	Marblehead	1	A. Sanford + v.o.
<b>Harlequin Duck</b>				6/26	Chilmark	1	J. Peters
5/1	Rockport	16	D. Walters	<b>Red-necked Grebe</b>			
<b>Surf Scoter</b>				5/1	Wachusett Res.	3	B. Robo + v.o.
5/6-5/18	Rockport (HPt)	8 max	v.o.	5/1	Woburn (HP)	1	M. Rines + v.o.
6/15	Gloucester (EP)	2	M. McCarthy#	5/1	Westborough	1	C. Martone
<b>White-winged Scoter</b>				5/15-5/16	Pittsfield (Onota)	1	G. Hurley + v.o.
5/1	Wachusett Res.	4	B. Robo + v.o.	5/27	P'town (RP)	1	S. Williams
5/11	Lynn B.	45	S. Zende#	6/16-6/30	Gloucester	1	L. Bix + v.o.
5/15-5/18	Pittsfield	10	J. Pierce + v.o.	<b>Yellow-billed Cuckoo</b>			
5/17	P'town (RP)	320	B. Nikula	5/14-6/6	Boston (FPk)	2	S. Jones + v.o.
5/17-5/18	Quabbin Pk	6 max	L. Therrien+v.o.	5/31	Stoneham	3	C. Popp
<b>Black Scoter</b>				6/3-6/27	Assabet R. NWR	5 max	N. Tepper+v.o.
5/15	Rockport (HPt)	5	S. Sullivan#	6/4	MBWMA	4	J. Layman
				6/7	Mashpee	5	F. Atwood

Black-billed Cuckoo				American Oystercatcher			
5/4 Ipswich	1	C. Marchant		5/24 PI	2		S. Zhang
5/6-5/8 Boston (McW)	1	S. Jones + v.o.		6/8 Gloucester	3		M. Sovay#
6/2 Medfield	1	J. Bock		6/9 Chatham	21		D. Clapp#
6/3 Quabbin (G8)	1	M. Lynch#		6/11 Edgartown	10		F. Zeta
6/4-6/8 MNWS	1	v.o.		Black-bellied Plover			
6/5 Stoughton	1	G. d'Entremont#		5/1 Ipswich	6		v.o.
Common Nighthawk				5/29, 6/11 Longmeadow	1,2	D. Holmes, T. Gilliland	
5/15 Concord	2	C. Winstanley		American Golden-Plover			
5/21 GMNWR	18	J. Young		5/2 P'town (RP)	1		P. Flood
5/26 BFWMA	30	J. Bourget#		5/14 Barnstable	1		P. Crosson
5/26 Wakefield	3	M. Sovay		Killdeer			
<b>Chuck-will's-widow</b>				5/16 Arlington Res.	8		N. Hayward
5/5, 6/7 Nantucket	1	au S. Kardell, M. Eisenson		6/22 PI	12		R. Heil
5/8-6/30 Falmouth	2	max au E. Hill-Gest + v.o.		Semipalmated Plover			
Eastern Whip-poor-will				5/16 Longmeadow	8		M. Moore
5/3-5/22 Ipswich (CB)	5	max M.Brengle+v.o.		5/16 Williamstown	1		D. Schaller
6/3 Lancaster	10	J. Driscoll		5/19 BFWMA	9		J. Bourget#
6/8 Gloucester	2	J. Nelson		Piping Plover			
6/10 MSSF	3	G. d'Entremont#		5/16-6/30 Quincy	4	max n C.+S.Whitebread+v.o.	
6/12-6/23 PI	17	max S.Grinely#+v.o.		6/1-6/30 PI	18	pr n	DCR
6/25 Dover	3	P. Peterson		<b>Wilson's Plover</b>			
6/26 Quaboag IBA	14	M. Lynch#		5/6-5/7 Eastham (CGB)	1	ph	K. Burke#
Chimney Swift				6/19 PI	1	ph	B. Murphy
5/1-5/31 GMNWR	60	max v.o.		Upland Sandpiper			
5/10 Northampton	500	B. Finney		thr Westover	4	max L.+A.Richardson+v.o.	
5/10 Arlington Res.	20	N. Hayward		5/2 Concord	2		J. Hoye#
Ruby-throated Hummingbird				5/4 PI	1		J. Yoshida#
5/3-5/31 PI	9	max v.o.		5/11 Nbpt	1		S. Williams
5/13-5/31 GMNWR	2	max v.o.		5/14 Peru	1		J. McDonald
Clapper Rail				6/14-6/21 Boston (Logan)	1		M. Iliff + v.o.
4/28 Scituate	1	S. Avery		Whimbrel			
5/31 S. Dart. (APd)	1	G. d'Entremont		5/26 Gloucester	1		R. Heil
King/Clapper Rail				Hudsonian Godwit			
5/1-5/13 Harwich Port	1	B. Nikula		6/23 PI	1		S. Grinley
<b>King Rail</b>				Ruddy Turnstone			
5/10 N. Truro	1	au B. Nikula		5/26 Edgartown	155		B. Shriber
5/27 W. Harwich	1	ph S. Finnegan#		6/2 Ipswich (CB)	2		J. Berry
Virginia Rail				6/13 PI	1		J. Nathan
5/1-5/31 GMNWR	8	max v.o.		Red Knot			
5/1-5/26 Ipswich	4	max v.o.		5/17 Nbpt H.	2		R. Heil
5/17 Burlington	11	M. Rines		5/19 Chatham	47		F. Atwood
6/1-6/30 GMNWR	5	max v.o.		5/19 Nantucket	3		S. Kardell
6/20 Lenox	6	G. d'Entremont#		6/29 Monomoy	3		D. Boldyrev
Sora				Stilt Sandpiper			
5/1-5/23 IRWS	5	C. Lapite		6/7 Saugus	1		S. Zende#
5/4-5/22 Westborough	3	max S. Beattie + v.o.		Sanderling			
5/5-5/21 Westwood	3	M. McCarthy + v.o.		6/2-6/26 PI	10	max	v.o.
5/12-5/16 Millis	3	J. Mittermeier + v.o.		Dunlin			
5/13 Stow	3	N. Tepper		5/1 Ipswich	29		M. Bringle#
<b>Purple Gallinule</b>				6/7 S. Dart. (APd)	1		D. Burton#
5/4-5/20 Yarmouth	1	ph N. Villone		6/9, 6/18 PI	1		S. Babbitt# + v.o.
5/14 Plymouth	1	ph E. Dalton + v.o.		Purple Sandpiper			
<b>Common Gallinule</b>				5/2 N. Scituate	100		G. d'Entremont
thr				5/5 Winthrop B.	10		B. Burke
5/17-5/21 MBWMA	2	ph R. Heil + v.o.		5/21 Cohasset	5		V. Zollo
American Coot				5/26 Revere	7		S. Perkins
5/12-6/27 Nantucket	1	S. Fee#		6/26 P'town (RP)	1		F. Morello#
5/23-5/26 W. Harwich	1	P. Trimble#		Least Sandpiper			
5/25-5/28 Woburn (HP)	1	J. Thomas		5/6-5/7 Boston (FPk)	2		G. Denton + v.o.
Sandhill Crane				5/15 BFWMA	86		P. Sowizral
thr				5/15 Arlington Res.	41		N. Hayward
5/1-6/14 Worthington 4 2ad+2yg		M. McKitrick+v.o.		White-rumped Sandpiper			
5/1-6/15 Ashfield	2	1pr B. Finney + v.o.		5/7-5/8 Ipswich	6		N. Dubrow + v.o.
6/15 Peru	2	1pr D & I Ciaburri		5/15 Winthrop	1		J. Mcgeary
5/3-5/4 Burrage Pd WMA	6	max T.O'Brien + v.o.		6/9 PI	5		S. Perkins
5/5 Ashley Falls	2	1pr K. Schopp		Pectoral Sandpiper			
5/10-thr Burrage Pd WMA	3	2ad+1yg J. + B. Frost		5/2-5/16			Indiv. reported from 7 locations
5/10 Truro	2	T. Bradford		5/4-5/17 BFWMA	3	max	N. Dowling + v.o.
6/14 Duxbury	4	ad W. Lackey		5/16 Northfield	4		G. Watkevich
<b>American Avocet</b>				5/16 October Mountain	2		Z. Adams
6/16 PI	1	ph R. Heil + v.o.		5/16 E. Boston (BI)	2		S. Riley



Wilson's Storm-Petrel				Great Blue Heron			
6/18	Cuttyhunk I.	12	M. Sylvia	5/1-5/31	Cambr.(Alewife)	62pr+2yg	K. Johnson+v.o.
6/20	Stellwagen Bank	1	P. Roberts#	5/21	Burrage Pd	WMA 31	G. d'Entremont#
6/25	Cape Cod Bay	12	S. Finnegan	6/13	Orange	19	M. Lynch#
Leach's Storm-Petrel				6/24	Middleton	225 75n	J. Berry#
6/6	Penikese I.	2	H. Stevens	Great Egret			
6/18	Cuttyhunk I.	1	M. Sylvia	thr	PI	17 max	v.o.
Sooty Shearwater				5/3	Athol	1	B. Mallet + v.o.
6/20	Stellwagen Bank	1	P. Roberts#	5/23-thr	S. Dart. (APd)	5 max	v.o.
Manx Shearwater				6/10-6/22	Longmeadow	1	M. Moore
5/3	Cohasset	1	V. Zollo	6/24	Hadley	1	S. Surner
5/4	P'town (RP)	6	B. Nikula	Little Blue Heron			
5/23	Lynn H.	24	L. Pivacek	thr	Indiv. reported from	21 locations	
5/24	PI	2	S. Zhang	5/17	Kettle I.	4	S. Perkins
5/25	Revere B.	8	v.o.	Tricolored Heron			
Northern Gannet				5/2-6/25	Indiv. reported from	10 locations	
5/2	Eastham (FE)	1500	B. Nikula	5/15	Chatham	2	F. Atwood
Double-crested Cormorant				<b>Cattle Egret</b>			
5/18	Boston (CHRes.)	5	N. Hayward	5/19	Dartmouth	1	B. King
6/13	Orange	13	M. Lynch#	6/1-6/6	Cuttyhunk I.	1 ph	M. Sylvia
Great Cormorant				6/12-6/15	Fairhaven	1 ph	C. Longworth
6/18	Manomet	1	A. Kneidel	Green Heron			
<b>American White Pelican</b>				5/16	P'town (RP)	9	S. Williams
6/10	Wendell	1 ph	S. Tuler	5/17	Fairhaven	3	G. d'Entremont#
<b>Brown Pelican</b>				5/28	Amherst	3	G. d'Entremont
6/5	Dartmouth	4 ph	M. Sylvia	6/28	Sudbury	2	B. Harris
6/7	P'town	1 ad ph	B. Nikula	Black-crowned Night-Heron			
6/8	Edgartown	1	B. Clock	5/1-5/28	Nbpt	5 max	v.o.
6/8	Manomet Point	1	S. Mullin	5/17-5/18	Williamstown	1 ad	T. Richey + v.o.
American Bittern				6/1-6/30	Medford	17 max	v.o.
5/6	W. Warren	1	B. Zajda	6/21-6/23	Hadley	1 ad	J. Palmer + v.o.
5/17	E. Boston (BI)	1	S. Zende	Yellow-crowned Night-Heron			
5/18	Sharon	1	W. Sweet	5/4	Essex	2	N. Dubrow
5/22	GMNWR	1	B. Lee	5/25-6/28	Barnstable	2	v.o.
6/1-6/8	Concord	1	S. Perkins	Glossy Ibis			
6/5	Williamstown	1	So. Auer	5/1	Ipswich	160 max	v.o.
6/6-6/16	Blandford	1	L & A Richardson + v.o.	5/1-5/4	Wakefield	12	M. Sovay + v.o.
6/28	Lee	1	J. Felton	5/1-5/13	BFWMA	4 max	J. Young + v.o.
6/28	Sudbury	1	B. Harris	5/3-5/17	Hatfield	1	D. Allard + v.o.
Least Bittern				5/5	W. Harwich	37	P. Kyle
5/22	DWWS	2 1pr	B. Vigorito + v.o.	5/12	Newbury	34	R. Hodson
6/1-6/30	PI	3 max	v.o.	6/4	Medford	14	P. Roberts
6/1-6/30	GMNWR	2	v.o.	6/8	Gloucester	27	M. Sovay#
6/6-6/16	E. Brimfield	2	B. Zajda	6/13	Norfolk	9	K. Machado
6/10-6/30	Longmeadow	2 max	M. Moore	<b>White-faced Ibis</b>			
6/13	Wenham	2	P. Vale	5/1-5/28	Ipswich/PI/Newbury	2 max ph	N. Dubrow#+v.o.
6/30	Pittsfield	2	M. Kelly				

## VULTURES THROUGH DICKCISSEL

For the first three weeks of May, hawkwatchers at Lot 1 on Plum Island continued to monitor the spring migration of raptors. On May 2, favorable winds from the northwest pushed migrants close to shore in what was to be the last major migratory push. Totals included 104 American Kestrels, 63 Merlins, and 112 Sharp-shinned Hawks. Noteworthy reports during the period included **Swallow-tailed Kites** from West Harwich and from Cuttyhunk Island. **Mississippi Kites** were photographed from Lake Quinsigamond in Shrewsbury and from South Hadley. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) reported encouraging news on the Peregrine Falcon population; a total of **46** territorial pairs were documented nesting in the state. As of July 1, a team of biologists had successfully banded more than 40 chicks.

From mid-April, north winds and frequent rains stalled spring migration, frustrating birders all over the Northeast. On the night of May 2, radar across the eastern United States lit up with migrating birds. The winds had shifted from north to west-southwest, which together with light rain produced a major fallout on the morning of Sunday, May 3. Rick Heil and Sean Williams were separately on Plum Island and witnessed a significant movement during the first three hours



of daylight. High counts included 93 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 128 White-throated Sparrows, 66 Palm Warblers, and more than 450 Yellow-rumped Warblers. Exceptionally early reports for the date included Eastern Kingbird, White-eyed Vireo, and Orchard Oriole.

The favorable weather did not last long. A cold front brought snow to areas on May 6, and on Mother's Day, May 10, the temperature in Boston at dawn was 34 degrees. Migration was stalled again, delaying birds that otherwise were expected in good numbers during the first two weeks of May. On the night of May 15, warm temperatures and southwest winds finally produced a large movement. Throughout the night, birds were moving northeast along coastal New England. Overnight conditions consisted of heavy rain and strong southwest winds. Astute birders realized that the storms started too early for migrants to make it north of Boston. Cape Cod, with a later arrival of the storm front, was better placed for a fallout. On the morning of May 16, Sean Williams was at Race Point while Liam Waters and others were at High Head in North Truro. Some high counts from Race Point included 210 Eastern Kingbirds, 45 Blue-headed Vireos, 66 Lincoln's Sparrows, and 58 White-crowned Sparrows. Among the warblers noted were 420 Black-and-white, 60 Nashville, 181 Cape May, 114 Bay-breasted, and 770 Yellow-rumped warblers, as well as 890 Northern Parulas, and 35 Northern Waterthrushes. A full report of Sean's experience can be found at <https://birdcast.info/scientific-discussion/major-fallout-and-morning-flight-event-on-cape-cod-massachusetts-on-may-16th-2020/>. Significant movement also occurred that morning on Plum Island, Cape Ann, and in the Boston area. On Plum Island, high counts included 72 American Redstarts, 97 Northern Parulas, 47 Black-and-white, and 177 Yellow-rumped warblers. At Wingaersheek Beach in Gloucester, the early morning fallout netted 41 Northern Parulas and nearly 800 Yellow-rumped Warblers, while in Medford, 38 Black-and-white Warblers and 57 Northern Parulas were counted at the Brooks Estate.

Another migrant fallout occurred on Plum Island after a foggy morning on May 26. Three Olive-sided, five Yellow-bellied, and seven Alder flycatchers were tallied. High counts of warblers included 90 American Redstarts, 32 Black-and-white, 44 Magnolia, 12 Canada, and 8 Wilson's warblers.

The most unusual bird found during the period was a **Western Kingbird** photographed at High Ridge Wildlife Management Area in Gardner on June 7. This is only the fourth June record for the state, with the others coming from Chatham on June 30, 1986 (Veit and Petersen, 1993), Plum Island on June 15, 2005, and Martha's Vineyard on June 4, 2010. Thirty-four warbler species were reported during the period including two **Golden-winged Warblers** photographed at High Head in Truro and Cuttyhunk Island. **Prothonotary Warblers** were noted from seven locations, compared with just four reports in 2018 and 2019. Other highlights included sightings of eight adult **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, seven Clay-colored Sparrows, with **Summer Tanagers** reported from 13 different locations. **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were photographed from Plum Island and Race Point in Provincetown.

With the Covid-19 lockdown, birders were incentivized to visit and discover new areas closer to home. Bob Zajda of Palmer chose to do a "Big Spring" in West Warren, 18 minutes from his home. The area contains White's Swamp and the Quaboag River runs through the center of town. Bob birded almost every day in May and amassed a list of over 100 species. On May 16, the same day birders on Cape Cod, Cape Ann and Plum Island witnessed a major fallout, Bob and Joe Bourget tallied 102 species in West Warren. Some of Bob's more significant sightings during May were American Bittern, Northern Goshawk, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Prothonotary, Cerulean, Worm-eating and Kentucky warblers.

"Winter" finches, especially crossbills, are nomadic and, despite their name, can occur at any time of the year. During this period, **Red Crossbills** were noted from over 10 locations with as many as 35 noted from Mount Greylock. A few Evening Grosbeaks were seen mostly in northern Worcester County and the Berkshires. Unusually late reports included a Lapland

Longspur on May 16 and a Snow Bunting on May 19 (both from Provincetown), an American Tree Sparrow in Pittsfield on May 2, and a Dark-eyed Junco in Newton on June 28.

R. Stymeist

## References

Schopp, K. 2020. Wilson's Phalarope: Second Record for Ashley Falls and Fifth Record for Berkshire County, Massachusetts, *Bird Observer* 48 (4):251–252.

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Black Vulture				6/6	Hawley	2	M. Lynch#
5/2	Brewster	3	K. Burke	Northern Saw-whet Owl			
5/3	N. Truro	3	S. Finnegan#	5/7	MSSF	2	B. Vigorito
5/14-6/9	Sheffield	15 max	C. Caron	5/23	Washington	2	J. Trimble
5/15	Wrentham	3	L. Wilson	6/16	Amherst	1	J. Rose
5/26-6/30	Holyoke	5 max ph	C.Allen+v.o.	<b>Red-headed Woodpecker</b>			
5/29-6/10	Athol	4 max	V.Burdette+v.o.	5/1-5/19	Ayer	1 ph	v.o.
Turkey Vulture				5/2	Northampton	1 ad ph	D. Allard
5/17	MBWMA	14	R. Heil	5/11-5/12	Nantucket	1 ph	S. Kardell
6/12	Rowe	13	M. Lynch#	5/13-6/27	Plymouth	1 ad ph	L.Schibley+v.o.
Osprey				5/15	Gloucester	1 ad	M. Iliff
5/1-5/31	W. Warren	2 1pr n	B. Zajda	5/18	Cambridge	1	J. Trimble
6/21	Saugus	6	B. Burke#	5/18	Millbury	1 ad ph	M. Fritsch
<b>Swallow-tailed Kite</b>				6/10	Athol	1 ad ph	E. LeBlanc#
5/9	W. Harwich	1	P. Bono	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			
6/14	Cuttyhunk I.	1	M. Sylvia	5/3	Petersham	18	M. Lynch#
Northern Harrier				5/14	Hadley (Skinner SP)	6	G. d'Entremont#
6/4-6/26	October Mountain	2 1pr	J. Pierce	6/13	Orange	5	M. Lynch#
5/16	Wayland	3	B. Harris	6/20	Mount Greylock	4	G. d'Entremont#
6/19	PI	1	J. Barcus	6/21	October Mountain	3	G. d'Entremont#
Sharp-shinned Hawk				Northern Flicker			
5/2-5/17	PI	112	Hawkcount (P. Roberts#)	5/20	Arlington Res.	3	N. Hayward
5/2	W. Warren	2	B. Zajda	6/13	Orange	4	M. Lynch#
5/3	Cohasset	47	V. Zollo	Pileated Woodpecker			
Cooper's Hawk				5/14	P'town	1	B. Nikula
5/1-5/31	Arlington	2 1pr n	D. Bean + v.o.	5/16	N. Truro	1	P. Trimble#
5/1	MtA	2 1pr n	A. Parker + v.o.	6/20	Mount Greylock	2	G. d'Entremont#
Northern Goshawk				6/21	October Mountain	3	G. d'Entremont#
5/3	W. Warren	2	B. Zajda	6/25	Dover	3	P. Peterson
5/14	Ashburnham	1 ad	M. Lynch#	American Kestrel			
6/29	Princeton	1	D. Williams	5/2-5/14	PI	222	Hawkcount (P. Roberts#)
Bald Eagle				6/14-6/30	Somerville	2	B. Rusnica
5/1-5/31	Waltham	2 1pr n	v.o.	6/21	Nbpt	2	C. Duncan#
5/31-6/10	Milton	2	L. Meyer	Merlin			
<b>Mississippi Kite</b>				5/1-5/14	PI	63	Hawkcount (P. Roberts#)
5/18	South Hadley	1 ph	M. Fortier	5/16	Milton	1	D. Burton + v.o.
6/5	Shrewsbury	1 ph	C. Liazos	6/9	Gill	1	J. Smith
Red-shouldered Hawk				6/12-6/22	Williamstown	2 max	M.Morales+v.o.
thr	Stoughton	3 2ad+1yg	G. d'Entremont	6/21	Boston	1	N. Hayward
4/1-4/11	Middleton	2	J. Berry#	6/26	Nantucket	1	J. Olney
6/21	October Mountain	1	G. d'Entremont#	Peregrine Falcon			
Broad-winged Hawk				5/1-5/31	Lawrence	2 1pr n	C. Gibson + v.o.
5/13-5/14	Boston (AA)	2	J. Keyes + v.o.	5/1-5/31	Watertown	2 1pr n	R.Stymeist#+v.o.
6/21	October Mountain	3	G. d'Entremont#	Great Crested Flycatcher			
6/28	Sudbury	3	B. Harris	5/17	MBWMA	7	R. Heil
Eastern Screech-Owl				6/7	Stoughton	5	G. d'Entremont
5/28	Waltham	5	J. Forbes	6/16	Hadley (Skinner SP)	3	N. Hayward
Great Horned Owl				6/26	Quabbin (G8)	4	M. Lynch#
5/1-5/31	Middleton	2 1pr n	J. Berry#	<b>Western Kingbird</b>			
5/17	MBWMA	2	R. Heil	6/7	HRWMA	1 ph	L. MacMillan
5/23	Cuttyhunk I.	3	M. Sylvia	Eastern Kingbird			
Barred Owl				5/3, 5/26	PI	1,25	R. Heil, S. Williams
5/10	Wompatuck SP	3	G. d'Entremont	5/16	P'town (RP)	210	S. Williams

Eastern Kingbird (continued)				5/28-6/4	Cuttyhunk I.	1	M. Sylvia
5/16	N. Truro	31	L. Waters#	5/31	Nahant	1	G. Ellison
Olive-sided Flycatcher				Warbling Vireo			
5/15	Ware	1	M. Lynch#	5/4	Watertown	28	C. Cook
5/22, 5/26	PI	2	S. Zhang, S. Williams	5/5	W. Brookfield	19	M. Lynch#
6/1	E. Brimfield	2	B. Zajda	5/8	Arlington Res.	8	N. Hayward
Eastern Wood-Pewee				5/28	Hadley	5	G. d'Entremont#
5/4	P'town	1	B. Nikula	Red-eyed Vireo			
5/26	PI	12	S. Williams	5/23	Quabbin (G37)	41	G. d'Entremont#
5/29	Petersham	31	M. Lynch#	5/29	Petersham	198	M. Lynch#
6/6	Hawley	9	M. Lynch#	6/6	Hawley	160	M. Lynch#
6/7	Stoughton	9	G. d'Entremont	6/20	Mount Greylock	93	G. d'Entremont#
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher				Fish Crow			
5/24, 5/26	PI	2	S. Zhang, S. Williams	5/17	Arlington Res.	8	N. Hayward
6/1	E. Brimfield	2	B. Zajda	6/30	Lawrence	205	C. Gibson
6/2-6/3	Hadley	1	C. Elowe + v.o.	Common Raven			
6/2-6/4	Boston (McW)	1	S. Jones + v.o.	6/3	Chatham	3	F. Atwood
6/3	Harwich	1	R. Debenham	6/13	Salem	5	J. Paluzzi
6/7	Quabbin (Prescott)	1	L. Therrien	6/15	Nantucket	6	L. Dunn#
Acadian Flycatcher				6/28	Greenfield	25	E. Huston
5/25-6/26	Indiv. reported from 17 locations			Bank Swallow			
5/22-6/25	Granville	4 max	au D. Holmes	5/16-6/27	Medfield	4	J. Bock
5/22-6/14	Quabbin (G8)	3 max	au M. McKittrick+v.o.	5/17	Burlington	28	M. Rines
5/27	Essex	2 au	S. Grinley#	5/30	Cuttyhunk I.	120	M. Sylvia
6/3-6/16	Sandwich	2 au	P. Fang#, v.o.	6/22	PI	23	R. Heil
6/7-6/30	Amherst	2 max	au T. Gilliland, C. Elowe	Tree Swallow			
Alder Flycatcher				5/10	Wachusett Res.	300	M. Lynch#
5/20	W. Warren	2	B. Zajda	6/3	Quabbin (G8)	25	M. Lynch#
5/26	PI	7	S. Williams	6/13	Orange	19	M. Lynch#
5/27	Sharon	3	V. Zollo	Northern Rough-winged Swallow			
6/2-6/3	Boston (Fens)	2	J. Cushman + v.o.	5/10	Arlington Res.	6	N. Hayward
6/6-6/27	Wayland	2 max	B. Harris	Purple Martin			
6/12	Rowe	10	M. Lynch#	5/1-5/31	PI	30 max	v.o.
6/21	October Mountain	5	G. d'Entremont#	6/9	Wellfleet	22	A. Pasek
Willow Flycatcher				6/24	Barnstable	87 46ad+41yg	C. Walz
5/31	S. Dart. (APd)	7	G. d'Entremont	6/30	Mashpee	262 60ad+202yg	M. Keleher#
6/1-6/30	PI	10 max	v.o.	Barn Swallow			
6/1-6/30	GMNWR	4 max	v.o.	5/12	Arlington Res.	15	N. Hayward
6/21	Lenox	4	G. d'Entremont#	5/20	Quaboag IBA	59	M. Lynch#
6/29	Cuttyhunk I.	5	M. Sylvia	Cliff Swallow			
Least Flycatcher				5/2	Sunderland	5 n	S. Meatty
5/16	P'town (RP)	25	S. Williams	5/10	Arlington Res.	5	N. Hayward
5/16	Hardwick	21	M. Lynch#	5/10-5/11	W. Roxbury (MP)	5	M. McMahon + v.o.
5/16	Boston (Fens)	8	J. Cushman + v.o.	5/23	W. Harwich	2	P. Trimble
5/16	Cuttyhunk I.	7	M. Sylvia	6/1-6/30	Nbpt	10 max	v.o.
6/6	Hawley	19	M. Lynch#	6/12	Rowe	42 n	M. Lynch#
6/5-6/30	Medfield	1	J. Bock + v.o.	6/14	Haverhill	6	N. Landry
White-eyed Vireo				6/21	Lenox	6	G. d'Entremont#
5/3, 5/26	PI	1,2	S. Williams	Red-breasted Nuthatch			
5/15-5/25	W. Barnstable	3	P. Crosson	5/10	Wompatuck SP	2	G. d'Entremont
5/17	Acoaxet	3	G. d'Entremont#	5/21	Ware	17	M. Lynch#
5/30	Cuttyhunk I.	7	M. Sylvia	6/20	Mount Greylock	4	G. d'Entremont#
Yellow-throated Vireo				Brown Creeper			
5/14	Hadley (Skinner SP)	7	G. d'Entremont#	5/1-5/31	HRWMA	4 max	v.o.
5/16	N. Truro	1	L. Waters#	5/23	Quabbin (G37)	6	G. d'Entremont#
5/17	MBWMA	5	R. Heil	6/6	Hawley	4	M. Lynch#
5/20	Quaboag IBA	14	M. Lynch#	6/7	Stoughton	4	G. d'Entremont
6/1-6/23	GMNWR	7 max	v.o.	House Wren			
6/2	E. Brimfield	4	B. Zajda	5/7	Hardwick	29	M. Lynch#
Blue-headed Vireo				5/16	Cuttyhunk I.	19	M. Sylvia
5/1	PI	14	S. Williams + v.o.	5/17	MBWMA	13	R. Heil
5/13	Petersham	21	M. Lynch#	Winter Wren			
5/16	P'town (RP)	45	S. Williams	5/1	Easthampton	3	D. Allard
6/12	Rowe	13	M. Lynch#	5/2	Wompatuck SP	4	G. d'Entremont
Philadelphia Vireo				5/6	Mt Wachusett	6	P. von Rohr
5/17	Boston (FPk)	1	S. Jones + v.o.	5/11	Medfield	3	J. Bock
5/19	Amherst	1	J. Oliverio	6/6	Hawley	12	M. Lynch#
5/22-5/26	PI	2 max	S. Zhang	6/20	Mount Greylock	6	G. d'Entremont#
5/24	Waltham	1	A. Gurka#	Marsh Wren			
5/25	Boston (FPk)	1	S. Jones	5/1-5/31	PI	18 max	v.o.
5/27	Nbpt (Oak Hill Cem.)	1	M. Goetschkes#	5/4-6/24	Richmond	9 max	G. Ward + v.o.
5/27	MNWS	1	H. + H. Wales	5/23-6/21	Stockbridge	14 max	J. Trimble + v.o.

Marsh Wren (continued)				5/16	Milton	2	L. Meyer
6/1-6/24	GMNWR	16 max	v.o.	6/6	Hawley	3	M. Lynch#
Carolina Wren				6/20	Mount Greylock	4	G. d'Entremont#
5/10	Braintree	7	G. d'Entremont	Red Crossbill			
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher				5/21-6/21	October Mountain	4 max au	G. Hurley+v.o.
5/2-5/31	PI	8 max	S. Williams	6/14	Mount Greylock	35 au	J. Pierce + v.o.
5/4	W. Gloucester	8	S. Hedman	6/18	Williamstown	16 au	M. Morales
5/13	P'town	30	B. Nikula	6/20	Mount Greylock	5	G. d'Entremont#
Golden-crowned Kinglet				6/21	Savoy	3	M. Iliff
5/3-6/13	Falmouth	2	K. Fiske + v.o.	6/22	Mount Washington	3	J. Drucker, L. Fried
5/4-5/22	Sharon	2	W. Sweet	6/26	Boylston	1	D. Hollie
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				7/5	Barre	1	B. Robo
5/3	PI	93	S. Williams	Pine Siskin			
5/3	Gloucester (EP)	17	S. Hedman	5/9	Great Barrington	5	A. Seile
5/3	P'town	10	B. Nikula	5/17	Granby	2	T. Lincoln
Veery				5/18-5/19	Sandwich	2	S. Boutilier
5/11-5/27	PI	7 max	v.o.	Lapland Longspur			
5/16	Boston (Fens)	8	J. Cushman + v.o.	5/16	P'town (RP)	1	S. Williams
5/16	N. Truro	5	L. Waters#	Snow Bunting			
5/17	Freetown SF	14	G. d'Entremont#	5/9	Gloucester (EP)	1	S. Sullivan
5/28	Ware	37	M. Lynch#	5/19	P'town	1	K. Burke
6/21	October Mountain	17	G. d'Entremont#	Grasshopper Sparrow			
6/27	Groton	13	S. Wilson	5/3-6/28	Lancaster	9 max	V. Burdette+v.o.
Gray-cheeked Thrush				5/6-6/30	Westover	6 max	N. Kahn + v.o.
5/15	Lenox	1 ph h	J. Pierce	5/13-6/15	Turners Falls	4 max	R. Christensen
5/27	Nbpt (Oak Hill Cem.)	2	M. Goetschkes#	5/14	Falmouth	24	N. Marchessault
5/27	Nahant	1 au	C. Floyd	5/19-6/6	Weymouth	2 1pr n	V. Zollo
5/27	Assabet R. NWR	1 au	N. Tepper	6/1-6/30	Southwick	21 max	N. Main# + v.o.
5/28	Sharon	1 nfc	W. Sweet	Clay-colored Sparrow			
Swainson's Thrush				5/7	Royalston	1	E. LeBlanc
5/11-5/24	Cambr. (FP)	4 max	v.o.	5/12	Nbpt Cem.	1	D. Chickering + v.o.
5/13-5/31	MNWS	7 max	v.o.	5/13-5/21	Sheffield	1	J. Pierce + v.o.
5/16	P'town	15	P. Trimble	5/16	P'town (RP)	2	S. Williams
5/16-5/27	PI	4 max	v.o.	5/16	Mount Tom	1	D. Allard
5/19	MBO	1 b	T. Lloyd-Evans	5/17	Waltham	1	S. Prado-Irwin + v.o.
6/14-6/20	Mount Greylock	4 max	J. Pierce + v.o.	5/20-5/26	Amherst	1	M. McKittrick + v.o.
Hermit Thrush				Field Sparrow			
5/3-5/29	PI	7 max	v.o.	5/3	Montague	18	J. Coleman
5/13	Petersham	19	M. Lynch#	5/3	Charlestown	2	L. Nichols
6/20	Mount Greylock	7	G. d'Entremont#	5/15	Boston (McW)	2	S. Jones + v.o.
6/21	October Mountain	9	G. d'Entremont#	5/16	Boston (FPk)	2	J. Hanson
Wood Thrush				5/31	Stoneham	8	C. Popp
5/11-5/30	PI	3 max	v.o.	6/20	Mount Greylock	2	G. d'Entremont#
5/15	Falmouth	4	G. Hirth	American Tree Sparrow			
5/17	Warren	38	M. Lynch#	5/2	Pittsfield	1	Z. Adams
5/28	Hadley	7	G. d'Entremont#	Dark-eyed Junco			
6/25	Dover	3	P. Peterson	6/12	Rowe	7	M. Lynch#
Gray Catbird				6/20	Mount Greylock	19	G. d'Entremont#
5/1-5/31	PI	60 max	S. Zhang + v.o.	6/28	Newton	1	H. Miller#
5/17	Warren	146	M. Lynch#	White-crowned Sparrow			
5/17	MBWMA	62	R. Heil	5/4	Dorchester	2	L. Markley
Brown Thrasher				5/15	Charlestown	3	L. Nichols
5/1-5/31	PI	11 max	R. Heil + v.o.	5/15	Medfield	2	J. Bock
5/8	Medfield	2	J. Bock	5/16	P'town (RP)	58	S. Williams
6/3	Brookline	2	J. Weinberg	5/16	N. Truro	14	L. Waters#
Cedar Waxwing				5/16	Cohasset	2	S. Avery
5/27	Wayland	78	B. Harris	White-crowned Sparrow (Gambel's)			
6/12	Rowe	5	M. Lynch#	5/16	P'town (RP)	1 ph	S. Williams
6/13	Arlington Res.	12	N. Hayward	White-throated Sparrow			
American Pipit				5/3	PI	128	S. Williams+ v.o.
5/3, 5/8	PI	7.5	S. Williams, M. McCarthy#	5/3	Longmeadow	100	M. Moore
5/12-5/14	Hadley	16 max	A. Kallenbach+v.o.	5/6	MBO	43 b	T. Lloyd-Evans
5/15	Topsfield	2	v.o.	5/14	Ashburnham	19	M. Lynch#
5/16	Gloucester	2	M. Iliff	Vesper Sparrow			
5/24	Salisbury	1	S. Grinley#	thr	Indiv. reported from 18 locations		
Evening Grosbeak				thr	Hadley (Honeypot)	3 max	L. Therrien + v.o.
5/2	Royalston	2 1pr	M. Lynch#	5/5-6/28	Lancaster	3 max	V. Burdette + v.o.
5/13-5/16	Northfield	6	G. Watkevich + v.o.	5/21	Plymouth Airport	3	D. Peacock
5/14, 6/5	Ashburnham	2 1pr	M. Lynch#	Seaside Sparrow			
5/17-6/20	Warwick	3 max	D. Small + v.o.	5/15-6/30	PI	3 max	S. Zhang# + v.o.
5/25-6/12	Williamsburg	2 max	C. Elowe + v.o.	5/22-6/19	Barnstable (SN)	1	N. Sharp, v.o.
Purple Finch				5/29	Essex	1	P. VanDemark#
5/3	PI	19	R. Heil	6/10	Saugus	1	S. Riley

Nelson's Sparrow	5/26-5/30	PI	2	S. Williams + v.o.			
	6/3	WBWS	1	K. Burke			
	6/16	PI	1	A. Perkp			
Saltmarsh Sparrow	6/2	Quincy	2	J. Young + v.o.			
	6/22	PI	32	R. Heil			
Savannah Sparrow	5/7-5/14	Middleton	35 max	S. Sullivan			
	5/16	P'town (RP)	250	S. Williams			
	6/21	Saugus	42	B. Burke#			
Lincoln's Sparrow	5/16	P'town (RP)	66	S. Williams			
	5/16	N. Truro	6	L. Waters#			
	5/17	WWMA	2	T. Spahr			
Swamp Sparrow	5/20	Quaboag IBA	34	M. Lynch#			
	6/6	Hawley	7	M. Lynch#			
	6/13	Orange	5	M. Lynch#			
Eastern Towhee	5/15	Ware	42	M. Lynch#			
	5/16	Cuttyhunk I.	89	M. Sylvia			
	5/16	N. Truro	26	L. Waters#			
	6/10	MSSF	26	G. d'Entremont#			
	6/22	PI	23	R. Heil			
Yellow-breasted Chat	5/5-6/12	Indiv. reported from 9 locations					
<b>Yellow-headed Blackbird</b>	6/8	PI	1 juv	ph E.+J.Nelson#			
	6/16	P'town (RP)	1 ph	T. Green#			
Bobolink	5/3	PI	2	R. Heil			
	5/16	P'town (RP)	122	S. Williams			
	5/20	Quaboag IBA	45	M. Lynch#			
	5/27	Wayland	20	B. Harris			
	6/21	Saugus	35	B. Burke#			
	6/22	PI	9	R. Heil			
Eastern Meadowlark	5/1-5/22	Hanscom	4 max	v.o.			
	5/2	W. Warren	2	B. Zajda			
	6/1-6/30	Essex	5 max	L. Ireland + v.o.			
Orchard Oriole	5/3, 5/22, 6/5	PI	1, 14, 5	R. Heil, S. Zhang			
	5/25	Millis	4	J. Bock			
Baltimore Oriole	5/16	P'town (RP)	88	S. Williams			
	5/16	N. Truro	21	L. Waters#			
	5/17	MBWMA	22	R. Heil			
	5/20	Quaboag IBA	43	M. Lynch#			
Rusty Blackbird	5/1-5/4	Lynnfield	37 max	M. Sovay			
	5/1-5/6	Lexington	6 max	N. Yusuff + v.o.			
	5/2-5/14	W. Roxbury	37	R. Schain + v.o.			
	5/3	P'town	7	B. Nikula			
Ovenbird	5/10	Wompatuck SP	64	G. d'Entremont			
	5/15	Ware	218	M. Lynch#			
	5/16	P'town (RP)	23	S. Williams			
	6/7	Stoughton	56	G. d'Entremont			
	6/20	Mount Greylock	66	G. d'Entremont#			
Worm-eating Warbler	5/3-6/30	Mount Holyoke	7 max	C. Elowe + v.o.			
	5/7-5/21	Uxbridge	2 max	C. Martone + v.o.			
	5/14	Hadley (Skinner SP)	4	G. d'Entremont#			
	5/15-6/25	Leverett	2	S. Griesemer + v.o.			
	5/16	Falmouth	5	J. Carroll			
	5/22-6/30	Amherst	10 max	D. Kroodsma + v.o.			
Louisiana Waterthrush	5/5	W. Warren	2	B. Zajda			
	6/6	Hawley	5	M. Lynch#			
	6/6-6/27	Groton	2	D. Carr#			
	6/7	Carlisle	3	D. Swain#			
	6/26	Quabbin (G8)	4	M. Lynch#			
Northern Waterthrush	5/3	PI	6	R. Heil			
	5/16	P'town (RP)	35	S. Williams			
	5/16	Medford	6	M. Rines			
	5/17-5/18	W. Roxbury (MP)	7	M. Iliff			
	5/17	Freetown SF	6	G. d'Entremont#			
	6/7	Stoughton	3	G. d'Entremont			
	6/21	October Mountain	3	G. d'Entremont#			
<b>Golden-winged Warbler</b>	5/16	N. Truro	1 ph	L. Waters#			
	5/30	Cuttyhunk I.	1 ph	M. Sylvia			
Blue-winged Warbler	5/16	Warren	22	B. Zajda#			
	5/17	MBWMA	4	R. Heil			
	5/26	PI	2	S. Williams			
	6/7	Mashpee	2	F. Atwood			
<b>Brewster's Warbler (hybrid)</b>	5/6	Amherst	1	S. Surner			
	5/8-6/25	Medfield	1 ph	J. Bock			
	5/18	Byfield	1 ph	R. Ross			
	5/22	Rutland	1 ph	K. Locke			
	5/26	N. Truro	1 m ph	B. Nikula			
<b>Lawrence's Warbler (hybrid)</b>	5/5-6/30	Belchertown	1 ph	L. Therrien			
	5/7-6/18	Uxbridge	1 ph	C. Martone + v.o.			
	5/20	WWMA	1 ph	C. Liazos			
	5/20	W. Warren	1	B. Zajda			
	5/25-5/30	Shelburne Falls	1 ph au	Sa.Auer,K.Barnes			
	5/30-6/25	Wachusett Res.	1 ph	B. Robo + v.o.			
Black-and-white Warbler	5/13	Petersham	22	M. Lynch#			
	5/14	Medford	38	M. Rines			
	5/16	P'town (RP)	420	S. Williams			
	5/17	MBWMA	31	R. Heil			
	5/26	PI	32	S. Williams			
<b>Prothonotary Warbler</b>	5/3	W. Warren	1	B. Zajda			
	5/6	Gloucester	1 ph	M. Dyer			
	5/10	Wareham	1 ph	S. Klimchuck			
	5/12	Allston	1 ph	R. Doherty			
	5/19-6/8	Mashpee	1 ph	M. Keleher, v.o.			
	5/21	Nantucket	1 ph	T. Pastuszak#			
	5/27	Wayland	1 ph	B. Harris			
Tennessee Warbler	5/6, 5/16	P'town	1, 2	B. Nikula, S. Williams			
	5/15	Medford	3	M. Rines#			
	5/22	PI	8	S. Zhang			
Orange-crowned Warbler	5/2-5/26	Indiv. reported from 21 locations					
Nashville Warbler	5/3-5/27	PI	13 max	v.o.			
	5/16	P'town (RP)	60	S. Williams			
	5/16	Medford	10	M. Rines			
	5/23	Quabbin (G37)	5	G. d'Entremont#			
Mourning Warbler	5/16-6/12	Indiv. reported from 20 locations					
	5/14-6/30	Mount Greylock	6 max	G. DuPont + v.o.			
	5/17-6/5	Hadley	2 max	L. Therrien + v.o.			
	5/18-5/27	Middlesex Co.	7	v.o.			
	6/1-6/18	October Mountain	2 max	R. Hodson + v.o.			
	6/1	E. Brimfield	2 m	B. Zajda			
<b>Kentucky Warbler</b>	5/11	W. Warren	1	B. Zajda			
	5/27	PI	1	R. Osborne#			
Common Yellowthroat	5/16	P'town (RP)	120	S. Williams			
	5/26	PI	65	S. Williams			
	5/30	Cuttyhunk I.	93	M. Sylvia			
	6/1	E. Brimfield	34	B. Zajda			
Hooded Warbler	5/3	P'town	1 m	B. Nikula			
	5/5	Wrentham	1	H. Johnson + v.o.			
	5/10-5/15	Boston (CHRes.)	1	N. Hayward + v.o.			

Hooded Warbler (continued)			6/20	Mount Greylock	16	G. d'Entremont#	
5/16	W. Barnstable	3	S. Finnegan#	Palm Warbler			
5/16	Westfield	2	D. Holmes	5/2	Boston (CHRes.)	8	N. Hayward
5/17	Freetown SF	2	G. d'Entremont#	5/3	PI	28	R. Heil
6/7-6/30	New Marlborough	1	G. Ward	Palm Warbler (Western)			
6/7-6/8	Amherst	1	T. Gilliland + v.o.	5/6-5/7	Waltham	1	F. Morello + v.o.
American Redstart				5/7	Boston (FPk)	1	S. Jones + v.o.
5/16	P'town (RP)	30	S. Williams	5/15-5/16	PI	1	S. Williams
5/16	Medford	20	M. Rines	5/16	P'town (RP)	1	S. Williams
5/17	Warren	47	M. Lynch#	Pine Warbler			
5/17	MBWMA	29	R. Heil	5/3	Petersham	36	M. Lynch#
5/26	PI	90	S. Williams	5/10	Wompatuck SP	22	G. d'Entremont
5/28	S. Quabbin	31	G. d'Entremont#	5/13	P'town	32	B. Nikula
6/20	Mount Greylock	14	G. d'Entremont#	Yellow-rumped Warbler			
Cape May Warbler				5/3, 5/16	P'town	125,770	B. Nikula, S. Williams
5/11-5/27	PI	7 max	v.o.	5/3	PI	295	R. Heil
5/13-5/17	Boston (AA)	3	J. Miller + v.o.	5/3	Boston (CHRes.)	50	N. Hayward
5/15	Quabbin Pk	13	L. Therrien	5/16	Gloucester	775	M. Iliff
5/15	Florence	6	M. Merithew, B. Higgins	Yellow-throated Warbler			
5/16	P'town (RP)	181	S. Williams	5/10	Nahant	1	L. Pivacek
5/17	Sharon	7	M. Waters + v.o.	5/14	Wellfleet	1 ph	J. Sweeney
5/17	Fairhaven	3 m	G. d'Entremont#	5/15	Tidmarsh WS	1	L. Kras#
Cerulean Warbler				5/16	Edgartown	1	L. Johnson#
5/2	P'town	1	M. Kasprzyk	Prairie Warbler			
5/3-6/30	Mount Holyoke	7 max	C. Elowe + v.o.	5/3-5/29	PI	9 max	v.o.
5/14	Hadley(Skinner SP)	6 2f	G. d'Entremont#	5/6-5/31	MBWMA	10 max	v.o.
5/17-5/18	MBWMA	2	R. Heil	5/16	N. Truro	29	L. Waters#
5/31	Amherst	3	D. Allard + v.o.	5/16	P'town (RP)	13	S. Williams
Northern Parula				5/17	Falmouth	14	G. d'Entremont#
5/12-5/17	Boston (FPk)	29	S. Jones + v.o.	Black-throated Green Warbler			
5/16	P'town (RP)	890	S. Williams	5/15	Ware	17	M. Lynch#
5/16	Medford	57	M. Rines	5/16	P'town (RP)	160	S. Williams
5/16	Gloucester	41	M. Iliff	5/16	N. Truro	52	L. Waters#
5/17	MBWMA	50	R. Heil	5/26	PI	20	S. Williams
5/22	PI	34	S. Zhang	Canada Warbler			
6/27	Pittsfield	1	K. Hanson, S. Townsend	5/16	Medford	3	M. Rines
Magnolia Warbler				5/16	Brighton	3	R. Doherty
5/16	P'town (RP)	45	S. Williams	5/16	Boston (CHRes.)	3	E. Bashor
5/16	Medford	9	M. Rines	5/16	W. Roxbury (MP)	3	M. Sabourin
5/26	PI	44	S. Williams	5/26	PI	12	S. Williams
Bay-breasted Warbler				5/26	Boston (AW)	3	R. Schain
5/16	P'town (RP)	114	S. Williams	6/5-6/28	Ashfield	4 max	P. Gagarin + v.o.
5/17	Pittsfield	6	K. Hanson	6/6	Hawley	5	M. Lynch#
5/20	Boston (AW)	4	R. Schain	Wilson's Warbler			
5/22	PI	32	S. Zhang	5/12	Longmeadow	6	M. Moore
Blackburnian Warbler				5/16	P'town (RP)	34	S. Williams
5/16	P'town (RP)	17	S. Williams	5/16	Medford	6	M. Rines
5/17	Boston (FPk)	4	S. Jones + v.o.	5/16	Boston (CHRes.)	3	N. Hayward
5/26	PI	25	S. Williams	5/26	PI	8	S. Williams
6/6	Hawley	10	M. Lynch#	Summer Tanager			
6/20	Mount Greylock	31	G. d'Entremont#	5/4-5/24	Indiv. reported from 12 locations		
Yellow Warbler				5/16	P'town (RP)	2 ph	S. Williams
5/16	Hardwick	47	M. Lynch#	Scarlet Tanager			
5/16	P'town (RP)	40	S. Williams	5/16	P'town (RP)	26	S. Williams
5/22	PI	60	S. Zhang	5/22	PI	7	S. Zhang
5/30	Cuttyhunk I.	137	M. Sylvia	5/29	Petersham	32	M. Lynch#
Chestnut-sided Warbler				6/7	Mashpee	7	F. Atwood
5/16	Hardwick	48	M. Lynch#	Rose-breasted Grosbeak			
5/16	P'town (RP)	26	S. Williams	5/14	Amherst	12	G. d'Entremont#
5/26	PI	30	S. Williams	5/16	P'town (RP)	19	S. Williams
6/21	October Mountain	13	G. d'Entremont#	5/17	Warren	32	M. Lynch#
Blackpoll Warbler				5/17	MBWMA	16	R. Heil
5/16	P'town (RP)	45	S. Williams	Blue Grosbeak			
5/17	Arlington Res.	4	N. Hayward	5/3-6/30	Falmouth	4 max	v.o.
5/22	PI	21	S. Zhang	Indigo Bunting			
5/28	MBO	1 b f	T. Lloyd-Evans	5/13	Cambr. (FP)	9	J. Trimble
6/6-6/26	Mount Greylock	12 max	E. Huston + v.o.	6/12	Rowe	7	M. Lynch#
Black-throated Blue Warbler				6/20	Mount Greylock	6	G. d'Entremont#
5/16	P'town (RP)	140	S. Williams	6/27	New Braintree	13	M. Lynch#
5/22	PI	10	S. Zhang	Dickcissel			
6/12	Rowe	10	M. Lynch#	6/3	Natick	1	G. Long

## ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

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

Locations		PI	Plum Island
AA	Arnold Arboretum, Boston	Pk	Park
ABC	Allen Bird Club	PLY Co. seas	Plymouth County, offshore
AFB	Air Force Base	Pont.	Pontoosuc Lake, Lanesboro
AP	Andrews Point, Rockport	POP	Point of Pines, Revere
APd	Allens Pond, S. Dartmouth	PR	Pinnacle Rock, Malden
AthBC	Athol Bird Club	P'town	Provincetown
B.	Beach	R.	River
Barre FD	Barre Falls Dam	Res.	Reservoir
BBC	Brookline Bird Club	RKG	Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston
BFWMA	Bolton Flats WMA, Bolton & Lancaster	RP	Race Point, Provincetown
BHI	Boston Harbor Islands	SB	South Beach, Chatham
BI	Belle Isle, E. Boston	SF	State Forest
BMB	Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester	SN	Sandy Neck, Barnstable
BNC	Boston Nature Center, Mattapan	SP	State Park
BR	Bass Rocks, Gloucester	SRV	Sudbury River Valley
BRI Co. seas	Bristol County, offshore	SSBC	South Shore Bird Club
Cambr.	Cambridge	TASL	Take A Second Look, Boston Harbor Census
CB	Crane Beach, Ipswich	WBWS	Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary
CCBC	Cape Cod Bird Club	WE	World's End, Hingham
CGB	Coast Guard Beach, Eastham	WMA	Wildlife Management Area
Co.	County	WMWS	Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary
Corp. B.	Corporation Beach, Dennis	Wompatuck SP	Hingham, Cohasset, Scituate, Norwell
CP	Crooked Pond, Boxford	Worc.	Worcester
Cumb. Farms	Cumberland Farms, Middleboro	WS	Wildlife Sanctuary
DFWS	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary	WSF	Willowdale State Forest, Ipswich
DM	Dunback Meadow	WWMA	Westborough WMA, Westborough
DWMA	Delaney WMA, Stow, Bolton, Harvard	Other Abbreviations	
DWWS	Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary	*	first state record (pending MARC review)
EP	Eastern Point, Gloucester	!	subject to MARC review
FE	First Encounter Beach, Eastham	ad	adult
FH	Fort Hill, Eastham	au	audio recorded
FHC	Forest Hills Cemetery, Boston	b	banded
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
L.	Ledge	MARC	Massachusetts Avian Records Committee
MAS	Mass Audubon	max	maximum
MBO	Bird Observatory, Manomet	migr	migrating
MBWMA	Martin Burns WMA, Newbury	n	nesting
McW	McLaughlin Woods	nfc	nocturnal flight call
MI	Morris Island	ph	photographed
MNWS	Marblehead Neck Wildlife Sanctuary	pl	plumage
MP	Millennium Park, W. Roxbury	pr	pair
MSSF	Myles Standish State Forest, Plymouth	r	rescued
MtA	Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambr.	S	summer (1S = first summer)
MV	Martha's Vineyard	subad	subadult
NAC	Nine Acre Corner, Concord	v.o.	various observers
Nbpt	Newburyport	W	winter (2W = second winter)
ONWR	Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge	yg	young
Pd	Pond	#	additional observers
PG	Public Garden, Boston		

### 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

## Historical Highlights for September–October

Neil Hayward

### 5 YEARS AGO

*September–October 2015*

A **Brown Booby** continued off outer Cape Cod throughout the period, and an adult **Brown Pelican** was on Nantucket on September 2. Inland, an immature Brown Pelican was found malnourished in Southborough and was rescued on September 21. A **Purple Gallinule** was at the Westboro WMA on October 21–23. An **American Avocet** spent two days in Edgartown in mid-September. Two adult **Sabine's Gulls** were reported off Provincetown on September 12. The following day, an observer on Tuckernuck Island photographed a **Bridled Tern**. Great Barrington hosted a **Rufous Hummingbird** on October 11. Western flycatchers were well represented with nine **Western Kingbirds** and at least two **Say's Phoebes**. Single **Bell's Vireos** were reported from Newbury and Eastham, and another one was banded at Manomet. A **Northern Wheatear** spent the first six days of October at Wachusett Reservoir. A **Green-tailed Towhee** was a one-day wonder at Hatfield on October 27.



Best sighting: **Masked Booby**, West Atlantis Canyon, 90 miles south of Nantucket, September 10. This represents the first record for Massachusetts.

### 10 YEARS AGO

*September–October 2010*

A **Barnacle Goose** was in Acton and Concord from October 20 into mid-December. An adult **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** was photographed on South Beach, Chatham on October 9, a week after one was reported from nearby Minimoy Island. Prior to this, there had been only three records of this species, the last in Newburyport on October 15, 1989. A **Curlew Sandpiper** delighted many by spending three weeks on Plum Island in October. A **Gull-billed Tern** divided its time between Plum Island and Ipswich for a week in mid-September. A largely silent **Tropical/Couch's Kingbird** continued in Falmouth to November 2 yet failed to be identified to species. The Plum Island **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** disappeared just days short of a 3-month stay. Another was seen at Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard on October 27. A **Bell's Vireo**, the fourth state record, was found in Nahant on October 17–18. Warbler highlights were two **Black-throated Gray Warblers** (Middlesex Fells and Martha's Vineyard), and a **Swainson's Warbler** banded in Brewster, only the fourth record for the state. Great Meadows NWR hosted three species of *Ammodramus* sparrows (**LeConte's**, Grasshopper and Nelson's).



Best sighting: a juvenile **Common Ringed Plover**, South Beach, Chatham, on September 11. This represents the second record for the state after a bird seen on September 5, 1990, on nearby North Monomoy Island.



## 20 YEARS AGO

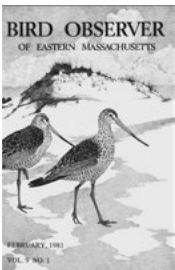


### *September–October 2000*

Gloucester's **Eared Grebe** and Sterling's **Tufted Duck** were both back for their sixth winter, while Agawam's female **Rufous Hummingbird** was back at the same feeder for her fourth year in a row. A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at Great Meadows NWR in Concord on October 10. A **Purple Gallinule** was found dead in Westboro in late October. A **Boreal Owl** was discovered in Boston's Back Bay on the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Gloucester Street, just across the road from where one had spent the winter of 1996–1997. Gay Head hosted a **Townsend's Warbler** on September 28 and a **Brewer's Blackbird** on October 22. A male **Mountain Bluebird** was in Concord at the end of October. A **Northern Wheatear** was on the Longmeadow sandbar in the Connecticut River on September 20–21. At least one **LeConte's Sparrow** was present in Northampton in October.

Best sighting: a male **Black-throated Gray Warbler**, Mount Auburn Cemetery, September 27–October 2. Despite foraging over a wide area, the bird was seen by many birders.

## 40 YEARS AGO



### *September–October 1980*

An out-of-place immature Northern Gannet was observed in Concord and Lincoln on October 16. A **Golden Eagle** was a surprise at Great Meadows on October 30. Two **Yellow Rails** were found on Cape Cod: one roadkill at Provincetown and another spotted during high tide at Fort Hill, Eastham. On Nantucket, a **Mew Gull** of the American race, *brachyrhynchus*, was found on October 10. The continuing **Burrowing Owl** on Martha's Vineyard flew into a picture window and was taken to Felix Neck Wildlife Sanctuary where it was treated and released. Manomet banded its first Red-bellied Woodpecker on October 17. A **Black-backed Woodpecker** was seen for two days in a Needham yard. A **Say's Phoebe** was on Nantucket, September 24. **Loggerhead Shrikes** were found on Monomoy, Essex and Salisbury, the latter appearing on September 13 and staying for over two months. **Brewer's Blackbirds** were found in South Peabody and Truro. A **Lark Bunting** was in Newburyport on September 20, single **LeConte's Sparrows** were on Nantucket and Monomoy, and a **Henslow's Sparrow** was found in Truro, mid-October.

Best sightings: the appearance of two **Fork-tailed Flycatchers**, at Chatham from September 22–October 4, and at Orleans from September 27–October 7 drew birders from across the continent. 🐦

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BARRED OWLETS BY SANDY SELESKY

# ABOUT THE COVER

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## Red-headed Woodpecker

The Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) is a strikingly colored bird that has long been a favorite among birders. Males and females are identical in plumage, a brilliant collage of red, black, and white. The entire head is a hood of crimson red that extends all the way down the neck and throat. The back and tail are black and the underparts white. Large white wing patches extend across the lower back and rump. In flight, the upperwing is black except for the white secondary and tertial feathers; the entire inner half of the under wing is white. Juveniles resemble adults but the hood is brown, there is some black in the secondaries, and they have faint streaking below. The white band of the secondaries and rump and the entire bright red head of this middle-sized woodpecker separate it from all other North American woodpeckers. The Red-headed Woodpecker is monotypic, although there is geographic variation in size, and western birds occasionally have red-tinged bellies.

The breeding range of the Red-headed Woodpecker covers all but a few spots in the eastern United States and extends into southern Canada in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The western edge of the range follows a diagonal from Montana through eastern Texas. Birds in the northern part of the range and much of the western part are migratory, wintering in the eastern United States to central Texas. Winter migration is variable and largely dependent on local mast crops. Poor mast crops promote migration. In Massachusetts, the Red-headed Woodpecker is an irregular, rare, and local breeder; an uncommon to rare migrant; and an occasional winter bird. Historically, its occurrence in the Northeast has always been variable. Migrant Red-headed Woodpeckers arrive in May and depart in the fall from late September through October.

Red-headed Woodpeckers are monogamous. The pair often remain together for several years and may produce two broods in a season. The call is a shrill *churr churr*, and they give various alarm, scolding, and rasping aggressive calls. In breeding season males give a variety of repetitive calls that function to attract mates and advertise their territory. Females also vocalize. In courtship, males and females chase each other, uttering loud calls. Both males and females drum and tap—a slow form of drumming that occurs mostly during breeding season and functions in courtship and territorial advertisement. Tapping often occurs near the nest cavity, and dual tapping may occur with the male inside the cavity and the female outside. Drumming frequently accompanies territorial disputes. Drumming may occur on a number of substrates, including trees, houses, telephone poles, metal roofs, and siding. Both sexes give aggressive displays with head held forward, wings drooping, and tail erect, and both sexes are pugnacious. They attack starlings or other species in addition to conspecifics that invade their territory both in the breeding season and during winter. In winter, Red-headed Woodpeckers, even juveniles, tend to be solitary and defend smaller territories.

Red-headed Woodpeckers prefer forest edge with open spaces for nesting. The male selects the nest site, usually in a dead tree or the dead part of a living tree, either

deciduous or coniferous. Sometimes they nest in odd places, such as telephone poles or farm buildings. The male does most of the excavation, but the female increasingly helps as the cavity progresses. They may excavate a cavity up to two feet deep and often use the same cavity for several seasons. The nest is lined with wood chips. Both parents develop a brood patch and both incubate the variable clutch that averages five white eggs for about two weeks until hatching. The hatchlings are altricial—helpless—with their eyes closed at hatching. Both parents feed the young for nearly a month until fledging. The young birds can fly and feed themselves soon after leaving the nest, although the parents continue to feed them unless they start a second brood, in which case they drive the young birds away.

The Red-headed Woodpecker is the most versatile forager among North American woodpeckers. It is one of four woodpecker species world-wide that stores food, caching insects and nuts in crevices in fence posts, cavities in dead trees, or under bark. They are the only woodpecker species to cover their stored food, usually with strips of bark. They sometimes defend their storage sites and may retrieve their stored food and re-cache it in a new location. These versatile feeders forage on both living and dead trees, glean bark, frequently hawk flying insects, and pounce on ground-dwelling prey. Their diet includes such plant materials as acorns and other nuts, seeds, corn, fruit, and sap. Their animal prey is mostly invertebrates, including grasshoppers, beetles, spiders, and earthworms. They also take bird eggs and nestlings, the occasional adult bird, and even mice. In winter, their diet consists mostly of acorns, beechnuts, and other mast; they will also come to suet feeders.

The Red-headed Woodpecker has experienced severe population declines since the early twentieth century. Human factors that have caused this decline include high mortality from collisions with automobiles, competition with the human-introduced European Starling, and the drastic alteration of their historical habitat. There was a period of increase in mid-century when the chestnut blight and Dutch elm disease provided an abundance of dead trees, but the decline began again and has continued into the twenty-first century. Breeding Bird Survey data indicate an annual population decline of 2.6% per year from 1970–2014, reducing the population level to one-third of the 1970 numbers. Conservation measures are clearly needed if future generations of birders are to enjoy this gorgeous woodpecker species. 🐦

*William E. Davis, Jr.*



# AT A GLANCE

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August 2020



JOHN MISSING

Autumn is generally the premiere season to witness the majesty of southward hawk migration, so it seems appropriate that this issue's mystery bird is a raptor. Diurnal raptors (i.e., eagles, hawks, and falcons) are magnificent but often challenging to identify because (1) they are often observed only in flight at a great distance, (2) some species exhibit sexual dimorphism in size or coloration, (3) some species are polymorphic or exhibit regional variation, and (4) adults and immatures often have distinct plumages. Consequently, a brief or distant view of an unknown raptor can sometimes leave a question mark on a checklist or in a field notebook.

Shape and flight style are often key identification points when encountering an unknown raptor in flight. Are the hawk's wings wide and broad, do the trailing edges of the wings exhibit a bulge in the secondaries, and is the tail fairly short and fan-shaped compared to a chunky body? If so, these are features of a *buteo*—a group of large soaring species. In contrast, an *accipiter*, such as a Sharp-shinned or Cooper's hawk, will have more rounded and parallel-edged wings, a longer and more narrow tail in proportion to the body, and usually a smaller head in front of the wings. In flight, an *accipiter* typically alternates between several rapid flaps and a brief glide. Finally, if the wings and tail of an unidentified raptor appear narrow and pointed and the bird exhibits rapid and direct open-air flight, it is probably a falcon. Though flight behavior is important in the field, we need to turn to shape and plumage characteristics to identify the raptor in the still photograph.

The mystery raptor is clearly not an eagle because of its generally pale coloration and lack of massive head and bill proportions. Likewise, the mystery raptor's wings

are not pointed at the tips and its tail does not appear to be narrow and pointed, which at once indicates that the bird is not a falcon. The short, fan-shaped tail and bulging secondaries on the trailing edge of the wings are not characteristic of an accipiter. By process of elimination then, the mystery hawk most clearly exhibits the characteristics of a *buteo*.

Assuming the hawk is a *buteo*, Red-tailed Hawk can at once be eliminated by the absence of a pronounced dusky bar on the leading edge (patagium) of each wing, and the lack of an unmarked white chest. A key feature to note on the mystery bird is the heavy and somewhat blurry streaking on the sides of the chest and marginally on the flanks (best seen in the online image). Equally significant is a white, relatively unstreaked area in the center of the chest. This white patch is often a hallmark of juvenile Broad-winged Hawks. Additionally, note the readily visible wide, dusky, terminal tips on the tail feathers, despite the heavy tail molt. And finally, notice the black tips on the fresh, incoming middle primary feathers. When this bird's molt is finished there will be a complete dark trim all around the outer edge of each wing—another leading feature of adult Broad-winged Hawks. A juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk, the species most similar in plumage to a juvenile Broad-wing, would exhibit subtly longer wings, have a slimmer tail, show finer and more extensive streaking on the breast, have a less distinct terminal tail band, and show clearly defined translucent crescents near the ends of the wings at the base of the primaries.

A final point in the photograph is the presence of a space or gap approximately five feathers in from the end of each wingtip. This gap is due to molting primary feathers, and when seen in a flying bird, the gap often gives the impression of a translucent crescent or window near the base of the primaries which can cause misidentification as a juvenile Red-shoulder. Yearling Broad-wings that show this stage of wing molt arrive in late May and early June, which is sufficiently later than the April arrival of immature Red-shoulders to provide a clue as to the correct identity. Collectively the features present in the photograph unequivocally indicate that the mystery hawk is a juvenile Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) in its first-summer plumage.

Broad-winged Hawks are common to uncommon summer residents throughout Massachusetts, uncommon spring migrants in April and early May, and very common to occasionally abundant fall migrants in September.

John Missing photographed this yearling Broad-winged Hawk in mid-June 2020 in Ripton, Vermont. 🦅

Wayne R. Petersen

## ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST

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### Edgar Allan Slothman

Edgar Allan Slothman is the pop art persona of Connecticut's award-winning ad agency creative/art director, Don Carter. Inspired by Andy Warhol and Charley Harper — a lifelong love of birds and art come together in his graphic reinterpretations of Audubon's classic *Birds of America* prints. Don has also illustrated seven children's books, created two interstitial series for Disney Junior and is a creative director with Adams & Knight, an integrated marketing and communications firm in Avon.

To see the rest of the Audubon 2.0 series, go to <[slothman.cargocollective.com](http://slothman.cargocollective.com)> 🦅

# AT A GLANCE

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DAVID CLAPP

Can you identify the bird in this photograph?

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

## **Volunteer Staff Opening at *Bird Observer***

### **Mailing Assistant**

The mailing assistant assists the mailing manager in preparing the printed issues of *Bird Observer* to be mailed in accordance with U.S. Post Office bulk mail regulations.

Initially, the job requires the assistant to be available at somewhat short notice for a couple of hours six times a year (usually during the last week of Jan, Mar, May, July, Sept, Nov), usually in the evening or on a weekend, to help the mailing manager at her residence in Medford with attaching the subscriber mailing labels and assembling the issues into coded bundles and then into tagged mail bags.

Ultimately, the assistant should become capable of taking over the entire mailing process if the mailing manager is unavailable for a given issue. To that end, the assistant will meet with the mailing manager to learn:

- the procedures for picking up the boxes of issues at the printer at Porter Square in Cambridge and for delivering the mailbags to the Area Distribution Center in Waltham.
- how to fill out the 6-page postal form to calculate the cost of the mailing.

The job does not require any knowledge of birds or any particular computer skills. The subscription manager recently created a computer spreadsheet to help with the postal costs calculations, but costs can also be computed with any hand-held calculator.

**To inquire about this position, contact Ren e LaFontaine, [dacooper@tiac.net](mailto:dacooper@tiac.net).**

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