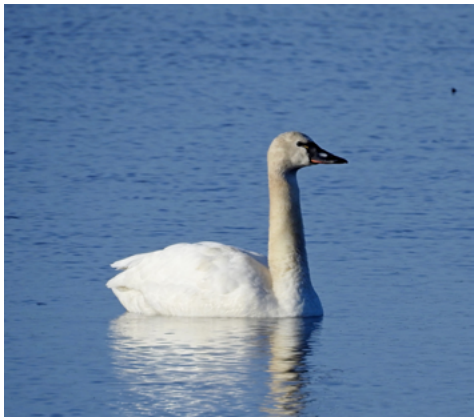
# Bird Observer

VOLUME 46, NUMBER 3 JUNE 2018

# HOT BIRDS



A **Tundra Swan** spent just over two weeks in the middle of March slumming with the Mute Swans and Canada geese on the Atwood Reservoir in Carver. Dan Prima took the photo on the left.

The **Mew Gull** influx into the state that began in January became almost ridiculous in April, with birds of three different subspecies (European, Asian, and western United States) being reported, and at least seven separate individuals, two of which were banded. The subspecies from the western United States occurs the least frequently of the three in Massachusetts. Sean Williams took the photo on the right.

The immature **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** that William Newstead found in Sandwich on April 13 was a one-day wonder, but several birders heard about the bird's presence and arrived to see it before the end of the day. Sue Finnegan took the photo on the left.

At least two and possibly three **White-faced Ibis** spent nearly a month circulating around wetlands in Essex, Newbury, and Ipswich with flocks of Glossy Ibis. Phil Brown first noticed one of them on April 18 near the Essex/Ipswich town line. Dan Prima took the photo on the right.

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should be:

White-eyed Vireo 11/1-11/9 Turner's Falls J. Smith

# Bird Observer

A bimonthly journal—to enhance understanding, observation, and enjoyment of birds
**VOL. 46, NO. 3 JUNE 2018**

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# Birding the Mud Flats and Tidal Marsh of Charlestown Breachway, Rhode Island

*Carlos Pedro*


The tidal mud flats and salt marsh areas on Ninigret Pond at Charlestown Breachway have provided local birders with many special birds and many fond memories. Known to Rhode Island birders simply as the Breachway, it is a premier location for birding during the summer shorebird migration season. During shorebird migration, the area is a must stop for local birders hoping to add to their year bird lists and perhaps find that rare visitor that will cause area birders to drop everything and head down to the Breachway. Birders are also able to observe many species that breed in the grassy marsh areas and are plentiful during the spring and summer months. The Breachway offers birding opportunities in all four seasons of the year, but the most enjoyable and productive times are late spring and summer. It doesn't get any better than a summer morning out on the tidal flats surrounded by migrating birds.

Because Charlestown Breachway is a popular area for summer activities, it can get busy during the middle of the day. There is a nice sandy ocean beach, and the jetty at the Breachway is well known for striped bass and scup fishing. Kayaking, boating, clamming, and sunbathing are popular activities on Ninigret Pond near the best birding areas. The area provides a great opportunity for combining various summer activities into an enjoyable day. The beach is never really crowded due to the limited number of parking spots in the lot. There is a state RV camping area for self-contained vehicles adjacent to the parking area.

Local birders are usually out on the mud flats by 8:00 am on weekends. The best birding times are before 10:00 am and after 3:00 pm when the birding area is less crowded. On weekend days between July 4 and Labor Day, the parking lot may fill by 9:00 am and stay full until 2:30–3:00 pm, so early arrival is critical to assure entry. When the lot is full, all cars are denied access at the entrance.

Season passes are checked and day parking fees are collected at the entry kiosk, which is staffed between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm. Entry before 8:00 or after 4:30 is free. Parking fees have varied over the past three years, so check the Rhode Island Division of Parks and Recreation website for current daily fees and season pass rates. Rates in 2017 for Rhode Island residents and nonresident seniors were $6 for a weekday daily pass, $7 for weekend days, and $30 for a season pass. Resident seniors paid $3 on weekdays, $3.50 on weekend days, and $15 for the season. For nonresidents, the weekday daily pass was $12, the weekend day rate was $14, and the season pass was $60.

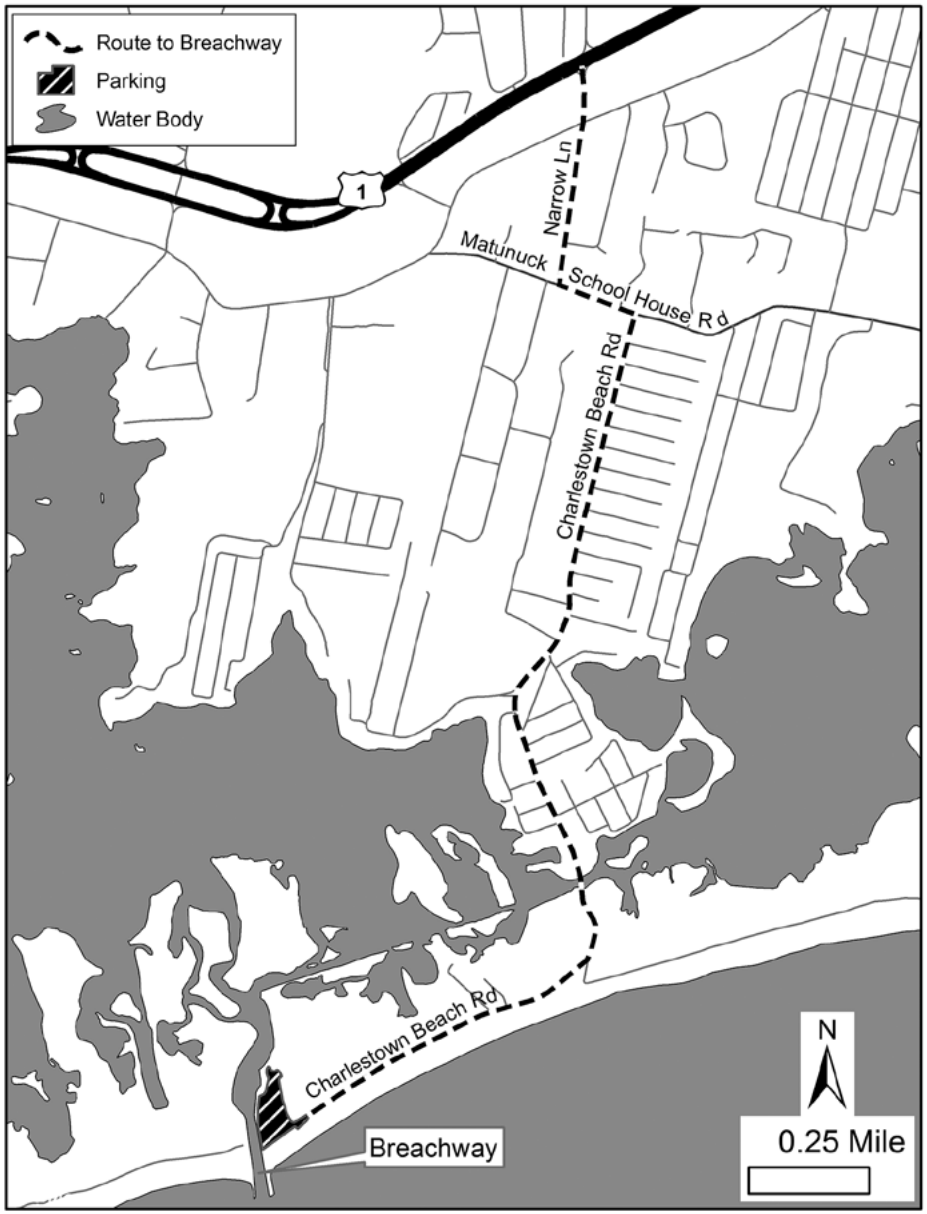



**Figure 1**. Map A: Directions to Charlestown Breachway

Charlestown Mud Flats. All photographs by the author.

**Directions**

The Charlestown Breachway mud flats and marsh are located on the south coast of Rhode Island in the town of Charlestown in Washington County. US Route 1 is the main thoroughfare that provides access to the shore. From the north, take Interstate 95 (I-95) South and bear left at Exit 9 to merge onto Route 4 (RI-4). In 9.9 miles, continue straight onto US Route 1 (US-1). Stay on Route 1 for 16.8 miles to the first Charlestown Beach/Breachway exit and make a U-turn. Take the first right after the exit turnaround onto Narrow Lane and go to the end, turn left onto Matunuck School House Road, then take the first right on to Charlestown Beach Road. Continue to the end of the road for the Charlestown Breachway parking area. It is 2.8 miles from the Route 1 Charlestown Breachway exit to the parking area. Note: Parking for Charlestown Beach is along Charlestown Beach Road, just before the road bends to the right. Do not pull into this lot by mistake, but continue all the way around the bend for approximately 0.5 mile to the end of the road and Breachway parking. See Figure 1 Map A for directions.

From the west, take Interstate 95 (1-95) North in Connecticut to Exit 92 and turn right onto Route 2 east (CT-2 E) toward Route 49 (CT-49) and Stonington; continue on Route 2 for 1.4 miles. Turn right to merge onto Route 78 (CT-78 E) toward Westerly/RI Beaches. Continue south on Route 78 for 4.6 miles to US Route 1 (US-1) and take a left onto Route 1 North. Continue for 10.7 miles and turn right at the third Charlestown Beach exit, just after the General Stanton Inn and Flea Market signs on your right. This will put you on Narrow Lane. Follow the directions in the paragraph above to reach Charlestown Breachway.

To get the most out of birding at the Breachway mud flats, you need to cross a tidal channel. Birding the marsh area is possible without crossing, and you can scope the mud flats without crossing the channel, but this limits the possibilities. The tidal channel at the crossing is approximately 50 feet across, and the water depth ranges from mid-thigh at low tide to mid-chest at regular high tides. Local birders often change into clothing suitable for the crossing in the parking area facilities; after birding, they change back into dry clothes.

Most birders cross the channel from early June through the summer. Crossing before June requires wearing waders, but I have found that it can be quite productive beginning in early May. Water temperatures range from the low 60s in early June to the 70s and 80s after the beginning of July. The channel floor at the crossing is hard packed sand. This makes it easy and safe. You may encounter muddy areas if you attempt to cross in other places. The tidal flats are mostly hard packed sand, but wet areas can be slippery, so caution is advised. Water shoes are highly recommended, and suitable footwear is a must because there are snails and broken clamshells that can do damage to bare feet.

To reach the recommended crossing point from the parking area, walk approximately 100 yards north through the RV park to the boat launch ramp. From the ramp walk right along the shoreline for about 100 yards to the narrow tidal channel at the point. The walk along the bank for these first 100 yards may be dry at low tide or up to two feet deep at high tide. Turn right, go a few yards, cross another narrow shallow tidal channel (depth up to two feet), and look immediately for a narrow, hard-packed sandy area to your left facing the wider channel to the north. This is the area that is most often used to cross. From this area, prior to crossing, it is possible to access tidal marsh grass areas and to use a spotting scope to search parts of the tidal mud flats. For crossing guidance, see Figure 2 Map B.

Another option for accessing the birding areas is to rent a kayak or bring your own, which allows you to visit the flats without a wet crossing and lets you explore the shoreline of Ninigret Tidal Pond on the other side of the Breachway channel. Many uncommon birds have been reported from this area, including Gull-billed and Royal terns and Tricolored Heron. The birding areas are a few hundred yards from the launch area. You can rent kayaks on Charlestown Beach Road, and there's a boat launch just before the entrance to the town beach parking area. To reach the boat launch, take a right to the Charlestown Beach parking area, and just before reaching the lot and entry kiosk, turn right into the launch area. Parking is free, even if you bring your own kayak, but the launch lot may fill by 10:00 am on weekends.

**Birds of the Tidal Mud Flats**

The Breachway mud flats, although fairly small, are a major stopover for migrating birds. During peak high tide there are almost no exposed flats where shorebirds can feed, but many birds roost on the limited exposed flats. At low tide there are extensive mud flats that you can walk in less than an hour, but I recommend that you spend more time as birds are always coming and going. Some birders bring chairs and stay for a couple of hours, looking over the constantly changing array of birds on the mud flats.

Stilt Sandpipers.

My preference is to bird the area around mid-tide and avoid the tidal extremes because birds are more spread out at low tide and less numerous at high tide. The best birding at the Breachway mud flats is during the shorebird migration periods. Birds begin arriving on their northern migration in large numbers in early May and continue until the middle of June. Southward migration picks up in late June and continues to the beginning of September. Peak season is from late June to the end of August. Over the past couple of years I have made an effort to get out there in May and have found numbers of shorebirds close to those of the peak times.

Migrating terns and gulls increase in numbers and diversity from the middle of July to the middle of August. Common and Least terns breed in the area and are common all summer. There are a few sightings of migrating Caspian Terns from late April to early June. Tern species expected each season include Forster's, Black, and Roseate. Black Skimmers and Royal Terns make an appearance most years. A Gull-billed Tern was seen and photographed in May of 2017. Laughing Gulls and an occasional Bonaparte's Gull use the tidal flats for roosting. Tern numbers have decreased over the years, probably due to increased boating and other summer activities, but every year there are notable sightings.

Herons and egrets are common throughout the summer. Great Blue Herons and Great and Snowy egrets feed out on the flats and are joined along the grassy and wooded shoreline by Green Herons and Black- and Yellow-crowned night-herons. The many fish species and fry provide food for a host of bird species. Juvenile and adult Yellow-crowned Night-Herons have been seen annually; in July and August they are usually in the area across from the main channel behind the sandbar.

One of my fondest birding memories occurred out on the mud flats in 2003 when a juvenile Reddish Egret landed 30 yards from us. It proceeded to feed and chase baitfish around for the next hour in typical Reddish Egret fashion. This Reddish Egret was a Rhode Island first, and it stayed in the area for the next two to three weeks, giving a lot of birders and photographers a show. Something special can turn up when you least expect it. In recent years, American Avocets seem to show up every couple of years. Three Black-necked Stilts also made an appearance one year and stayed for a few days.

Swallows are worthy of attention at the Breachway. Barn, Tree, Bank, and Northern Rough-winged swallows hawk insects out over Ninigret Pond and the tidal flats. Look for Cliff Swallows with other swallows beginning in early June. There is a Purple Martin house near the kayak launch area with nesting martins. During Tree Swallow migration in late summer, thousands fly over the area and roost in the shrubs and phragmites**.**

Birds of prey often cause havoc with feeding shorebirds. Peregrine Falcons and Merlins appear every year in August. Watching Peregrines circling in the distance and diving at lightning speed on feeding shorebirds is quite an experience when you're standing close to the action. Cooper's and Sharp-shinned hawks hunt close to the wooded edges.

Shorebirds are the main attraction. Every year, thousands of birds migrate through the Breachway and use the tidal flats as a rest and refueling stop. Some stay for one or two weeks and feed, others stop for a couple of minutes and continue their migration, and some fly over without stopping. At times during peak migration there are a thousand shorebirds in an area that you can scope while standing in one spot. This site attracts rare vagrants and Rhode Island firsts and is a must-bird area during late spring and summer. Common migrants include Piping, Semipalmated, and Black-bellied plovers; Killdeer; Least and Semipalmated sandpipers; Greater and Lesser yellowlegs; Short-billed Dowitchers; and Sanderlings. Willets are common; they breed in the marsh grass and are noisy and aggressive if you wander too close to their territory. Young chicks forage on the flats in August, usually close to marsh grass. Other shorebirds include Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, and Pectoral and White-rumped sandpipers. White-rumps are most numerous in May and June but present in fewer numbers at other times. Dunlin are common during the winter and spring and stay through the end of May. Western and Stilt sandpipers make an appearance almost every year. American Golden Plovers, Baird's Sandpipers, Buff-breasted Sandpipers, and Wilson's Phalaropes are seen some years, often in August. Rare vagrant shorebirds that have been recorded at the Charlestown Breachway mud flats include Lesser Sand-Plover, Little Stint, and on two occasions, Curlew Sandpiper.

A couple of my most memorable moments as a birder occurred on these tidal mud flats. The first was a lesson learned involving the Lesser Sand-Plover, known previously as Mongolian Plover. On my first visit to the mud flats in 1999, a couple of local birders told me that they had seen a Mongolian Plover, lost sight of it, and were searching to relocate it. New to birding, I figured that they must be mistaken, and I gave the search only a half-hearted 20-minute attempt. The bird was relocated right after I left. It stayed for a few days, and interested birders were able to observe this rare

Little Stint.

find. I had no knowledge of the birding hotlines that spread the word and missed out on seeing this great bird—all because I didn't take the initial report seriously enough to put the time into finding it.

Another memorable moment occurred on July 4, 2012. My wife and I often go to the beach on summer mornings to relax, and I usually take an hour to explore the flats. As I crossed the channel, I saw a lot of bird activity. As I got closer, I noticed a bright peep feeding with a group of more than 100 Least Sandpipers. It was a breeding-plumaged Little Stint. Fortunately, I had my camera and the bird was cooperative. After verification, the word went out and a few local birders came by that afternoon. The next morning many more birders showed up, but the stint was not seen again.

**Birds of the Grassy Tidal Marsh**

The Charlestown Breachway's grassy marsh areas offer their own birding rewards. Extensive areas of marsh grasses and reeds are intermingled in and surround the tidal mud flat area. Saltmarsh and Seaside sparrows are common nesters here. You can hear their songs beginning in May, and both species are easily seen. Saltmarsh Sparrows are prevalent in any short grass area. Seaside Sparrows seem to concentrate more in three areas close to the main tidal mud flats. The first, an area of short marsh grasses bordered by reeds, is east of the channel crossing. It can be reached by walking around the point just before crossing the tidal channels. Both sparrows can be found along this stretch. Just after you cross the channel, there are two islands of extensive grass areas bordered by short shrubs that the Seaside Sparrows use as singing platforms. The first island is directly ahead of the crossing and the other is just east of it. Virginia Rails and

Seaside Sparrow.

Willow Flycatchers are present during spring and summer. There is a tidal pond just south of the main channel crossing that can hold American Bitterns into early May. Virginia Rails also seem to concentrate in this area.

Birds recorded during the Christmas Bird Count include American Bittern, Wilson's Snipe, and in some years Nelson's and Saltmarsh sparrows. Dunlin are usually present in large numbers, and Black-bellied Plovers occur some winters.

**Strategy for Birding the Charlestown Breachway Mud Flats and Marsh Grass Areas**

For an enjoyable birding experience, plan to spend a couple of hours exploring the area. I prefer either early morning or mid to late afternoon. Try to avoid peak high tide when the birds may be limited to a small roosting area.

There are three main areas of mud flats that should get a birder's attention. The first is the substantial area of mud flats right after you cross the tidal channel. Walk to the right after crossing and continue between the two marsh grass islands. I use a combination of two strategies to bird this area. Many birders bring a spotting scope and position themselves in an area with a good view of this entire tidal flat and methodically examine the shorebirds in the area. Keeping an eye on the sky, noticing the new birds arriving on the scene, and being aware of those that are just flying through in migration are all part of this strategy. The composition of the species present is constantly changing with the arrival and departure of new individuals and groups of birds. The second strategy is to walk around the perimeter of the mud flat area with binoculars to obtain a closer view of feeding birds. The shorebirds are usually busy feeding and not too concerned with nearby birders, often walking to within a few yards

of people, but please be aware if you are causing nervousness in individuals or the flock and back away.

Another area to explore is a small island of mud flats just a couple of hundred yards to the east. This is a favored roosting area for gulls and terns and a feeding area for shorebirds. Roosting Caspian and Royal terns sometimes mix with the roosting gulls. This is where the Little Stint was found in 2012.

The third area is a sandbar on Ninigret Pond in the middle of the main boating channel that leads to the Breachway and provides access to the ocean. During high tide periods this sandbar can be completely underwater. It's located about 200 yards to the west of the northerly point of the main mud flat. This is a favored roosting area for terns, gulls, cormorants, and for feeding shorebirds. This sandbar has often rewarded birders with the more uncommon visitors such as Black Skimmers, Royal and Caspian terns, American Avocet, and Marbled Godwit. Access the area by walking in the water to the tip of the marsh grass island that is closest to the sandbar. The water is shallow and easy to navigate. This area provides you with a good scope view of the sandbar. Across the channel from the southern end of the sandbar is a muddy area along a wooded shoreline that is frequented by Black- and Yellow-crowned night-herons. Marbled Godwits have also occurred in this area. Visit the sandbar early in the morning, especially on weekends, as boaters anchor their boats and use the bar for sunbathing and other beach activities. For specific areas, see Figure 2 Map B.

The Charlestown Breachway mud flats are surrounded by areas of tidal marsh grass. In addition, the area is dotted with small islands of marsh grass and shrubs. These areas provide great habitat for breeding birds such as Seaside and Saltmarsh sparrows, Virginia Rails, Willets, and Willow Flycatchers. Virginia Rails can sometimes be heard calling from the marsh grass areas. The others are common and usually conspicuous. The two main areas for marsh birds are the grassy islands out on the mud flats and an area to the east of the main crossing. For locations, see Figure 2 Map B. The area east of the channel has many deer paths and paths made by duck hunters that you can use. Mosquitos can be a problem, so take precautions and bring repellant.

**Other Birding Spots along the South Coast**

There are many other excellent birding areas and opportunities along the south shore of Rhode Island. These are all easily accessible from Route 1. There is good birding in all seasons in southern Rhode Island.

The Frances Fleet out of Galilee does whalewatching trips to areas south and east of Block Island. Combining a whale watch with a morning at the Breachway can make for a productive day of birding. Cory's, Great, Sooty, and Manx shearwaters, Wilson's Storm-Petrels, Parasitic and Pomarine jaegers, and South Polar Skua (2017) have all been seen in the last couple of years. Whale watches normally depart at 1:00 pm and begin running on July 4. Contact the Frances Fleet or check their website for the summer 2018 schedule. To reach the Frances Fleet at Galilee take the Route 108 South exit off Route 1 (a few miles north of Charlestown Breachway Exit) and follow signs for Galilee.

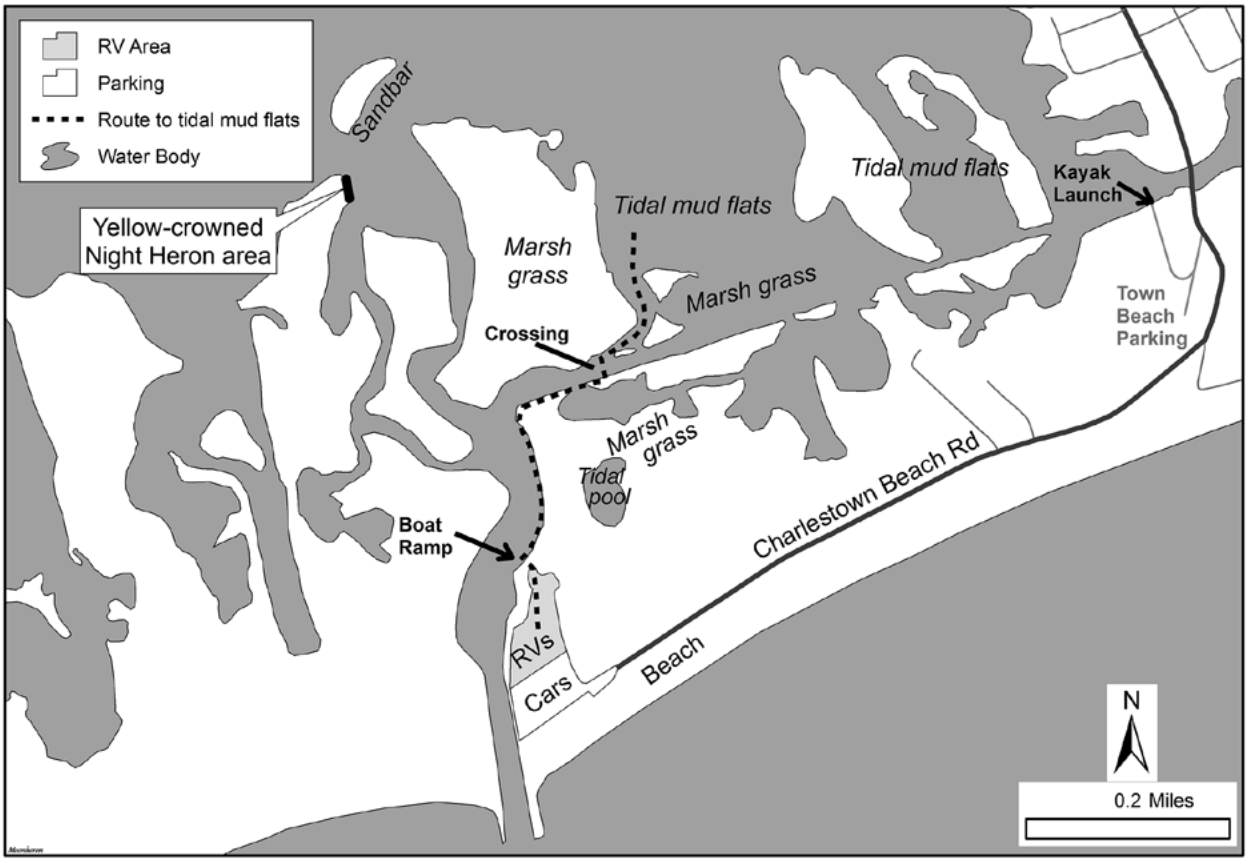



**Figure 2.** Map B: Tidal Mud Flats.

Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge offers good birding in all seasons. Migrating warblers, vireos, and thrushes are abundant in the spring and fall. Notable species such as Prothonotary and Golden-winged warblers, Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, and Philadelphia Vireos have been recorded. Breeders include Least Bitterns; American Redstarts; Black-and-white, Blue-winged, and Yellow warblers; and Common Yellowthroats. White-eyed Vireos are common breeders throughout the Refuge. Winter at Trustom is the season for waterfowl. In addition to the common species, Redheads, Eurasian Wigeon, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Tufted Ducks, Greater White-fronted Geese, and Tundra Swans have been recorded here. To reach Trustom NWR, take the Moonstone Beach Road exit off Route 1 (two exits north from the Charlestown Breachway Exit), go to the intersection at Matunuck School Road, and take a right. The entrance to the refuge will be a mile or so on the left.

Napatree Point at Watch Hill in Westerly, Rhode Island, is another prime shorebirding spot. The birding is excellent from May to mid-September. Parking during the summer months can be a problem. There is two-hour parking on the main road, but finding a spot in the middle of the day can be difficult. Walk through the private parking areas toward the beach. Go past the dirt uphill path to the beach and continue to the bay side. Most birders walk the bay side to the far end of the peninsula—where the best birding areas are—then walk back on the beach side. The entire trip is about three miles. Terns and shorebirds are abundant, and American Oystercatchers are present from May to October. A couple of pairs may breed in the area, but during the August migration there can be over 50 present.

Besides the excellent birding, the south coast of Rhode Island offers many opportunities for relaxing and enjoying a day or a few days in the area. There are great public beaches, such as Scarborough Beach in Narragansett, East Matunuck Beach in South Kingstown, Charlestown Beach, and the Charlestown Breachway Beach in Charlestown.

There are plenty of fine seafood restaurants. Within a couple of miles of the birding site are The Matunuck Oyster Bar and Grill on Matunuck Beach Road in South Kingstown and the Charlestown Breachway Grill, which is at the corner of Charlestown Beach Road and Matunuck School House Road. The town of Narragansett and the Galilee area offer many fine restaurant choices for every taste. From Westerly to Newport, there are plenty of lodging choices along the south coast of Rhode Island. Book early as the area has become a popular summer vacation destination.

***Carlos Pedro*** *has been an active Rhode Island birder for the past twenty years. He especially enjoys pelagic birding and has organized 25+ birding pelagics to Coxes Ledge and Block Canyon off the southern coast of Rhode Island. He likes to travel and combine birding with beaches and sightseeing, especially enjoys planning and doing self-guided birding trips, and has visited 32 countries on these birding adventures.*

# Conservation of Forest Birds in Massachusetts

*Jeff Ritterson*

Approximately ten acres of early successional habitat in Leominster, Massachusetts. Species using this habitat included Prairie Warblers and Field Sparrows. Photo was taken two-three years post-treatment. Photo by Jeff Ritterson.

Massachusetts is the eighth most forested state in the country. It is also the third most densely populated, with many people living among the state's approximately three million acres of forest. These forests provide residents with a range of ecosystem goods and services. For example, forests influence the quality and quantity of drinking water, provide flood and erosion control, sequester carbon which has climate change implications, and yield forest products such as timber and maple syrup. Of course, forests also support a diversity of wildlife that deliver additional goods and services and provide recreational opportunities, such as birdwatching.

The soils and climate of Massachusetts support vigorous forest growth. Following a disturbance, a forest will naturally regenerate, a process that may begin with herbaceous plants and perennial wildflowers and continue with the establishment of woody shrubs and saplings. Eventually a tall canopy of trees will form and be easily recognized as a forest. This successional process influences habitat conditions and what species of birds inhabit a forest.

Current habitat conditions in Massachusetts can be explained by a complicated land use history. Large-scale forest clearing began with European colonization in the

1600s and 1700s and, by the end of the 19th century, some 70% of forests had been cleared for pasture, farmland, and orchards. Fuel wood and timber were extracted from most other forests, and little virgin old growth remained. The rise of urban-industrial centers and better farming elsewhere led to the abandonment of farmlands, and the successional process began. However, new-found markets led to a second clearing of forests in the early 1900s. These markets declined between 1920 and 1950, and the forests were left to regrow. Now, most forests in Massachusetts are considered to be middle-aged, at approximately 80 to 100 years old. There is little young forest and less old growth (de la Crétaz et al. 2010).

Although it is difficult to neatly categorize each species, for the sake of simplicity forest birds can be placed into two groups: those that breed within early successional habitats (e.g., shrubland and young forest) and those that breed within older, closed-canopy forests.

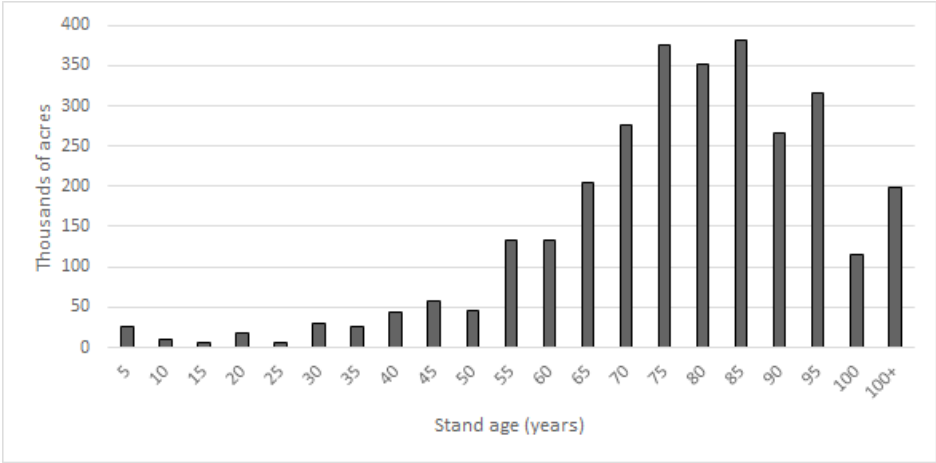
Early successional birds are categorically in decline, as evidenced by long-term bird monitoring programs such as the North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas. Of the 41 species identified by Schlossberg and King (2007) as early successional breeders in New England, 33 (80%) require conservation attention, with declines in abundance concentrated in southern New England. Although other factors can contribute to population declines, these losses can largely be attributed to the loss of breeding habitat.

Examples of early successional birds in decline include Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock, Whip-poor-will, Brown Thrasher, Blue-winged Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Canada Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrow, and White-throated Sparrow.

Other species considered to be early successional breeders are doing well, including Cedar Waxwing, Carolina Wren, Gray Catbird, and Northern Cardinal. These species may be thriving due to their ability to successfully nest within suburban yards. Also, Carolina Wren and Northern Cardinal have spread their ranges northward in recent decades, greatly contributing to their increased abundance in the state.

Young forests have traditionally composed the bulk of early successional habitat in Massachusetts. However, young forest is an ephemeral resource—suitable habitat is lost after 15–20 years of regeneration. Most forests have matured past the point of suitability for early successional birds, contributing to the loss of over 90% of this habitat in Massachusetts since 1950—a trend seen throughout southern New England.

Young forests are dependent on medium to large scale disturbances to reset the successional clock. Historic sources of disturbance include flooding from beaver activity, fire (particularly in the pitch pine-oak forests of the southeast), insect outbreaks, Native American activities, and major wind and ice storms. Of course, we now suppress beavers and fire, and Native Americans are no longer heavily influencing the landscape. Furthermore, our middle-aged forests are less susceptible to storm damage.




Estimated acreage of forest age classes in Massachusetts (USDA Forest Service FIA 2018).

Current sources of early successional habitat include wildlife management areas and utility rights-of-way that are specifically managed for this habitat. Forestry operations can create areas of young forest, yet a negative public perception of forestry and a struggling forest economy have reduced these practices. In some circles, "clear-cut" is considered a dirty word. In reality, it is simply a silvicultural term. Appropriately sized and well planned clear-cuts and related practices have proven to be effective in creating habitat for early successional birds.

Birds that breed within older, closed-canopy forest are collectively faring better than their early successional counterparts. These species include Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Pine Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Winter Wren.

However, some species are experiencing long-term declines such as Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, Veery, Northern Flicker, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Declines can be caused by factors on the breeding grounds. For example, species like Wood Thrush are area sensitive, and the fragmentation of forests into smaller areas maybe be causing low breeding success. Also, microhabitat features such as understory vegetation and cavity trees for nesting Veeries and Northern Flickers, respectively, may be deficient. Alternatively, factors during the migratory or wintering periods (e.g., building strikes and tropical deforestation) also may contribute to declines for migratory species. As a result, many research efforts are now focused on identifying conservation issues and actions throughout a species entire year-round range.

Even the most long-term monitoring programs only capture relatively recent population trends, and it is possible that currently stable species were more abundant several centuries ago. Regardless of their past numbers, all species could stand to have their populations bolstered to help overcome current and future conservation challenges, and enhancement of their breeding habitats can contribute to this goal.

High quality habitat is often described as structurally complex. A layer of leaf litter and other organic material on the ground provides nesting habitat for species like Ovenbird. Patches of an understory, up to five feet tall, are important for species like Black-throated Blue Warbler to nest. Areas of a developed midstory, five to 30 feet tall, are important for birds like Wood Thrush. Finally, a relatively tall canopy is where species like Scarlet Tanager nest. Other features of high quality habitat include snags (dead standing trees), which are decomposing and providing arthropod prey, cavity trees for certain species to nest in, logs and other woody debris on the ground, and gaps in the canopy.

These features of structural complexity are typical of old-growth forests and are generally reduced or absent in the middle-aged forests common in Massachusetts. Unfortunately, old-growth forest conditions will not naturally develop until a forest is at least 150 to 200 years old. However, the conservation value of emulating old-growth conditions with forestry practices has been demonstrated and can be used to enhance forest bird habitat (Rankin and Perlut 2015).

Habitat management through sustainable forestry is widely promoted by various state and federal agencies, academic institutions, and bird conservation organizations, but accomplishing on-the-ground habitat management has been easier said than done, in part due patterns of land ownership.

The federal government owns an insignificant amount of forest in Massachusetts. The state government, however, owns about 20% of the forests in Massachusetts, which fulfill various goals, including wildlife habitat and large areas of reserves where—appropriately—no management will ever occur. Meanwhile, about 65% of Massachusetts' forests are in private family ownership. To scale forest bird conservation efforts up to a more meaningful level, some management will have to occur on private lands, though implementing this approach has proved challenging.

In recent years, a conservation strategy has emerged to conduct habitat management on private lands. The program, titled "Foresters for the Birds," emerged in Vermont during discussions between Audubon Vermont and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. Several other states in the region have adopted the program, including Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and Connecticut.

In Massachusetts, the program is a partnership among the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Massachusetts Woodlands Institute, and Mass Audubon. Consulting foresters, who work directly with landowners, are trained to assess the current habitat conditions in a forest and then write a forest management plan featuring habitat management recommendations. This plan could include creating young forest habitat or enhancing the structural complexity of middle-aged forests. The landowner may also have other goals, such as management for timber or recreational opportunities, which need not preclude management for bird habitat.

By merging the forest management expertise of professional foresters and the ornithological experience of Audubon biologists, the program provides the technical assistance many landowners need to manage for birds, and that service is in demand. According to National Woodland Owner Survey data (Butler et al. 2016), almost

70% of respondents in Massachusetts indicated a desire to protect or improve wildlife habitat as a reason for owning land. Meanwhile, only about 26% of landowners have a forest management plan.

The conservation issues affecting forest birds are not only rooted in past land use history and human activity, but also in future environmental considerations. The forests of Massachusetts face many challenges that can alter ecosystem functions and spur the degradation or loss of habitat.

For example, parts of the state are facing high rates of development and forest fragmentation. Invasive plants are displacing native species and altering ecosystem processes. High densities of deer are overbrowsing forests—of particular detriment to understory nesting birds. Insects and disease are affecting various tree species, and climate change is affecting our forests through complex pathways.

These stressors do not act alone, but can work interactively to exacerbate each other's effects. For example, white-tailed deer preferentially browse on native plants, giving invasive species a greater competitive advantage. Climate change is expected to increase the prevalence of drought conditions, which will stress some tree species and make them more susceptible to insect pests.

While these issues are daunting, the conservation community recognizes several strategies to overcome forest stressors, mostly stemming from everyday conservation actions.

First and foremost, keep forests as forests. Simply put, no forests means no ecosystem goods and services. Local land trusts and conservation estate planning are important resources to combat forest loss.

Second, reduce as many stressors as possible. This work could include managing invasive plants or controlling deer populations. Robust populations of, for example, trees and birds provide the individual and genetic variability needed to overcome and respond to changes in environmental conditions and habitat. By extension, other causes of mortality for birds can be reduced. For example, domestic cats are estimated to kill 1.4 to 3.7 billion birds (and >6 billion small mammals) in the United States every year (Loss et al. 2013). Many prey items are not brought home, so some cats may appear to not be hunters (Loyd et al. 2013). A simple solution is to keep cats indoors.

A final strategy is to maintain or increase the resiliency or responsiveness of our forests (Millar et al. 2007). A resilient ecosystem is able to withstand a stressor and return back to normal in a relatively short amount of time. A responsive ecosystem may undergo a certain amount of change caused by prevailing conditions, yet retain its basic functionality. For instance, a resilient forest will be multi-aged with a diversity of tree species and tree ages. This concept is akin to putting eggs in many baskets to protect against changing conditions. These changes are somewhat predictable, so retaining or encouraging the growth of tree species predicted to do well in, for example, future climate conditions can increase the responsiveness of a forest.

Resilient and responsive forests are more easily able to withstand stressors and seamlessly provide habitat for birds and other wildlife. Luckily, many of the same recommendations to address habitat issues arising from our land use history are compatible with resiliency planning.

While the forest birds of Massachusetts are certainly not without conservation

concern, there is an active and engaged conservation community in the state working to protect forests and the wildlife they support. The success of these efforts hinges once again on land use choices. Harvard Forest and their collaborators describe their vision of a sustainable land use future in their *Wildlands and Woodlands* report (Foster et al., 2017). They suggest that 7% of New England be protected as forest reserves, termed wildlands, where natural processes will shape the landscape over time, and 63% be used as woodlands, which are managed to provide many services, including bird habitat. That's 70% of New England protected as forest! The remaining land area is devoted to farmland, cities, and communities.

Accomplishing this vision of a sustainable future requires the engagement of the public, and includes changes in behavior, such as reduced consumption rates and dietary shifts. There is plenty of work to do, but together we can achieve sustainability, including a thriving assortment of forest birds to enjoy and celebrate.

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# State Coastal Waterbird Expert Receives Mass Audubon's Inaugural Wildlife Conservation Award at Annual Birders Meeting

Carolyn Mostello with Roseate Tern at Buzzards Bay. Photographs by Mass Audubon/Margo Servison.

LINCOLN, MA—Mass Audubon's Birders Meeting, which took place Sunday, March 11, 2018, at UMass Boston, featured the inaugural presentation of its Hemenway + Hall Wildlife Conservation Award.

This new award recognizes an individual for success in the preservation, enhancement, and restoration of a New England species and/or their habitat, as well as an enthusiasm for sharing information about their efforts and a commitment to inspiring future generations of conservation professionals.

The awardee was Carolyn Mostello, a coastal waterbird specialist for the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife), who has devoted her career to restoring populations of federally endangered Roseate Terns and other island nesting species in Buzzards Bay.

Mostello holds an M.S. in Zoology (specialization in Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology) from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa and a bachelor's degree in Biology from the State University of New York at Binghamton.

Carolyn holding the inaugural Hemenway + Hall Wildlife Conservation Award with Mass Audubon President Gary Clayton.

The new award is named for Mass Audubon's founders, Boston cousins Harriet Hemenway and Minna Hall, who in 1896 began a campaign to stop the commercial killing of egrets and other birds whose feathers were used to adorn fashionable hats of the era.

The intrepid efforts of Hemenway and Hall not only resulted in the birth of the Massachusetts Audubon Society (the wellspring of the national Audubon movement), but inspired a national initiative that prompted federal legislation ending the large-scale hunting and helped protect multiple bird species.

Mass Audubon President Gary Clayton, who presented the award, noted that Mostello's important efforts on behalf of coastal waterbirds align with the legacy of the organization's founding mothers.

"Carolyn personifies excellence in wildlife conservation every day as she demonstrates her commitment to the biodiversity of the Bay State," Clayton said. "She has not only shown success in protecting endangered and threatened bird species, but has served as an inspirational role model for others to take up this crucial work. Thus she is a perfect choice to be the first honoree of the Hemenway + Hall Wildlife Conservation Award.

***Mass Audubon*** *protects nearly 38,000 acres of land throughout Massachusetts, saving birds and other wildlife, and making nature accessible to all. As Massachusetts' largest nature conservation nonprofit, we welcome more than a half million visitors a year to our wildlife sanctuaries and 20 nature centers. From inspiring hilltop views to breathtaking coastal landscapes, serene woods, and working farms, we believe in protecting our state's natural treasures for wildlife and for all people–a vision shared in 1896 by our founders, two extraordinary Boston women. Today, Mass Audubon is a nationally recognized environmental education leader, offering thousands of camp, school, and adult programs that get over 225,000 kids and adults outdoors every year. With more than 125,000 members and supporters, we advocate on Beacon Hill and beyond, and conduct conservation research to preserve the natural heritage of our beautiful state for today's and future generations. We welcome you to explore a nearby sanctuary, find inspiration, and get involved. Learn how at massaudubon.org.*

# Help State-listed Birds

MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program is requesting observations of breeding state-listed birds into the Vernal Pool and Rare Species (VPRS) Information System. Submitting observations to VPRS is one of the most effective ways of protecting and managing rare bird species. To be accepted into VPRS, observations must be in suitable nesting habitat and fall within the specific date range listed below.

| **Endangered** | **Threatened** | **Special Concern** |
|---|---|---|
| Pied-billed Grebe (5/10–8/1) | Bald Eagle (4/15–8/15)* | Common Loon (6/1–8/15)* |
| Leach's Storm-petrel (6/1–8/15)* | Northern Harrier (5/10–8/20)* | Common Moorhen (5/25–8/25) |
| American Bittern (5/15–8/1) | Peregrine Falcon (5/15–8/1)* | Common Tern (6/1–8/5)* |
| Least Bittern (5/25–8/1) | King Rail (5/15–8/1) | Arctic Tern (6/1–8/5)* |
| Upland Sandpiper (5/20–7/15) | Piping Plover (5/15–8-15)** | Least Tern (6/1–8/15)* |
| Roseate Tern (6/1–8/5)* | Northern Parula (6/1–8/10) | Barn Owl (4/1–8/1)* |
| Short-eared Owl (4/15–7/15) | Vesper Sparrow (5/10–8/5) | Long-eared Owl (4/1–8/1) |
| Sedge Wren (6/1–8/1) | Grasshopper Sparrow (5/25–8/10) | Blackpoll Warbler (6/5–8/10) |
| Golden-winged Warbler (5/20–8/1) | | Mourning Warbler (6/5–8/10) |
| | | Eastern Whip-poor-will (5/25–7/15) |

*The presence of an adult at an active nest is required.
**Pair demonstrating breeding behavior is required.

Visit **mass.gov/vprs** to register an account and to record rare bird breeding observations.

Have questions about VPRS?
Please email VPRSAdmin@state.ma.us.

**MASS.GOV/MASSWILDLIFE**

# Seventh Report of the Maine Bird Records Committee

*Louis R. Bevier*

Corn Crake, a first for Maine since 1889, was on Monhegan Island October 5, 2014. Photograph by Doug Hitchcox.

This 7th report of the Maine Bird Records Committee (hereafter ME-BRC or the committee) summarizes the assessment of 37 reports involving 23 species. Evaluation of and decisions by the committee for these reports occurred during 2017. The committee accepted 32 records for an acceptance rate of 86%. Although the majority of birds in this report were documented in 2016–2017, the years of occurrences range from 1953 to 2017.

Highlights in this report include four species accepted as documented for the first time in the state of Maine: Snowy Plover, Gray-tailed Tattler, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Fieldfare. In addition, the first state records for Garganey and Wilson's Plover, previously unreviewed but accepted provisionally, are accepted here. An older record of Vermilion Flycatcher that had been relegated to the hypothetical list is here accepted as the first for the state along with a recent record. These bring the total number of accepted species on Maine's state list to 456. The official list of bird species recorded in Maine, our review procedures, and members can be found at the committee's website: http://sites.google.com/site/mainebirdrecordscommittee.

Records in this report are grouped by species, with both those accepted and those not accepted listed within the same species account. Each account provides the

location, county (*italicized*), date(s) of occurrence, names of observers or contributors, and committee record number. Observers listed are those providing documentation to the committee, or in some cases, documentation harvested from publicly published Web sites. All reviewed materials and member comments are archived. If known, the names of finders are listed first and separated from other names by a semicolon. Photographic, video, or audio evidence reviewed is denoted by a dagger (†); written notes are denoted by an asterisk (*). As always, the committee strongly encourages written submissions even when there are photographs. Species accounts follow the current taxonomic classification and sequence adopted as of 2017 by the American Ornithological Society (list available at http://checklist.aou.org/taxa/).

**Species Accounts**

**Barnacle Goose** (*Branta leucopsis*). A pair spent ten days at Collins Pond, Caribou, *Aroostook*, October 11–20, 2016, and later at Lake Josephine, Easton, *Aroostook*, October 26, 2016 (Bill Sheehan†; Josh Fecteau†, Bruce Barker, Bruce Cole†, Bob Crowley†, Bob Duchesne†, Steve Mierzykowski†, Robert O'Connell†, Marian Zimmerman*; 2016-029). A report from October 29, also at Lake Josephine, was not accepted by the committee.

**Garganey** (*Spatula querquedula*). A male associating with Blue-winged Teal (*S. discors*) was present near Messalonskee Lake, Belgrade, *Kennebec*, June 20, 1994, (David Ladd* et al.; 1994-002). This is the first record for Maine (Despres and Brinker 1994). Ladd's original notes had not previously been reviewed, and attempts to recover notes by other observers cited as present (Arthur Stackhouse, Julie Suchecki, D. Winslow) were unsuccessful. The late June timing is perhaps later than expected for a vagrant, but there are other June records for Quebec, the Maritimes, and the Northeastern United States. The ornamental scapular plumes were not noted on this individual. They were either overlooked or not fully grown. The "elongated scapulars or tertials [are] sometimes not fully grown upon arrival in breeding areas" (Cramp et al. 1977). An April 1999 record of a male photographed at Weskeag Marsh, South Thomaston, *Knox*, remains unreviewed.

**Chuck-will's-widow** (*Antrostomus carolinensis*). One was heard and audio recorded at Ellsworth, *Hancock*, May 24–[about] June 7, 2016 (Stephanie Monk†; 2016-027). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: nebulous reports from Jefferson, *Lincoln*, mid-May to May 28, 2012, (unknown observer *fide* Kristen Lindquist; 2012-023) and Swans Island, *Hancock*, May 28–29, 2012, (unknown observer *fide* Bill Townsend; 2012-024) had no details on which to determine identification. A bird flushed and seen at a distance in Friendship, *Knox*, May 21, 2016, (2016-008) was thought by a majority of the committee as probably correct, but the brevity of the sighting along with minor details did not eliminate the possibility of error.

**Corn Crake** (*Crex crex*). An immature was photographed on Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, October 5, 2014 (Doug Hitchcox†; 2014-016). This is the second record for Maine and comes 126 years after the previous record, a specimen taken October 14, 1889, at Falmouth (unreviewed but specimen verified as this species; another

bird was taken at the same time but not preserved; Palmer 1949). The Monhegan bird was initially identified as an immature Sora (*Porzana carolina*) until corrected by Luke Seitz during review of photographs submitted to eBird. Formerly a casual vagrant to northeastern North America in the 1800s and early 1900s, vagrancy of this long-distance migrant diminished with declines of Corn Crake populations in western Europe. A significant increase in vagrants has occurred recently, however, with seven records in the New World from 2002 to 2017—Newfoundland, Guadeloupe, Bermuda, Brazil (first for South America; de Burgos and Olmos 2013), Maine, Pennsylvania, and New York.

Wilson's Plover was at Popham Beach, Maine, June 22–24 (here), 2016. Photograph by Brendan McKay.

**Black-necked Stilt** (*Himantopus mexicanus*). A first-year female with worn, retained juvenile outer primaries and outer secondaries as well as outer rectrices was at Weskeag Marsh, South Thomaston, *Knox*, August 2–12, 2017 (Dennis McKenna; Keith Carver†, Don Reimer†, and many observers submitting to eBird; 2017-025).

**Snowy Plover** (*Charadrius nivosus*). A male was present at Reid State Park, Georgetown, *Sagadahoc*, June 13, 2017 (Zac Fait†; Mimi Edmunson*, Lysle Brinker†, Josh Fecteau†, Noah Gibb†; 2017-016). This is a first for Maine and one of only a few for New England. Interestingly, two months prior to the Maine bird, a Snowy Plover, possibly the same male, was photographed at Goosewing Beach Preserve, *Newport*, Rhode Island, April 17, 2017 (Geoff Dennis, eBird). The other New England records are one in Massachusetts (summer 1994) and a bird in Connecticut (fall 2004) that is perhaps best regarded as Kentish/Snowy Plover (*C. alexandrinus/nivosus*).

**Wilson's Plover** (*Charadrius wilsonia*). One at Wells Beach, Wells, *York*, August 25, 1953 (Irma A. Werner; 1953-001) is the first for Maine (Werner 1953). The committee was initially split but ultimately agreed that the description supported the identification. Among concerns, late August was thought unusual for a species that typically occurs as a vagrant to New England from late spring into early summer. During the 1950s, however, this species bred as far north as New Jersey and was a somewhat more regular visitor to southern New England (Zeranski and Baptist 1990); vagrants in recent decades have lingered in Massachusetts until early September. One at Popham Beach, Phippsburg, *Sagadahoc* June 22–24 and July 11, 2016 (Laura Zitske; Doug Hitchcox†, Josh Fecteau†, Helmut Heuer*, Brendan McKay†; 2016-014). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A published report at Addison, *Washington*, September 2, 1993, (Wilhelm 1993, 1994; 1993-001) failed to gain acceptance. A fall occurrence during the 1990s met greater scrutiny. The description is somewhat flawed and did not eliminate a possible sand-plover (*C. mongolus/leschenaultii*). Moreover, the observer reported an extraordinary and unlikely ratio of

Gray-tailed Tattler, Maine's first and New England's second, flew over Matinicus Rock August 14, 2017. Photograph by Earl Johnson.

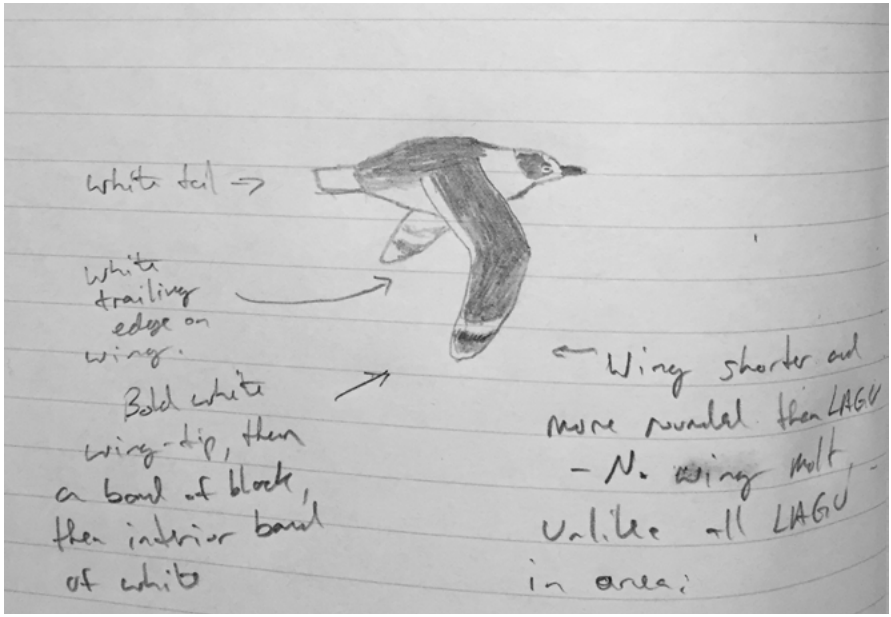
peeps (*Calidris* sandpipers), suggesting potential for error. Historical tracks for Hurricane Emily of 1993, cited as a possible transport mechanism, reveal that storm to have been highly unlikely as a source for a Wilson's Plover in New England.

**Gray-tailed Tattler** (*Tringa brevipes*). One was photographed at Matinicus Rock, *Knox*, August 14, 2017 (Earl Johnson; 2017-028). Johnson heard a two-note golden-plover-like call and wisely took photos of the flying bird. The call notes, a mellow *tuu-eet*, along with the images allow identification as Maine's first and New England's second Gray-tailed Tattler. Characters shown in the photos that support the identification include: mostly white sides and flanks with apparent fine barring; Wandering Tattler *(T. incana)* would be either broadly gray on its sides and flanks or extensively barred below); a whitish supercilium extending behind the eye (supercilium stops at the eye in Wandering Tattler); and upperparts that appear tinged brown and contrast with paler rump and dorsal tail (grayer and uniform without contrast on Wandering Tattler).

**Long-tailed Jaeger** (*Stercorarius longicaudus*). At least two, and possibly three, first-summer birds were off Bar Harbor, *Hancock*, July 21, 2017 (Kyle Lima†; 2017-024). The committee agreed that at least two were Long-tailed Jaegers, but failed to reach agreement on all three. Separate juveniles were photographed at Seal Island, *Knox*, July 21, 2017 (Keenan Yakola†, Will Kennerley, Earl Johnson, and John Drury; 2017-027) and July 28–August 5, 2017 (Keenan Yakola†; 2017-039). Two first-summer birds were at Seal Island, *Knox*, August 10–13, 2017 (Keenan Yakola†, Isabel Brofsky; 2017-041).

**Franklin's Gull** (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*). An adult in basic plumage was well described by an experienced observer off Rockland Harbor, *Knox,* August 24, 2016 (Christian Nunes*; 2016-024).

**Bridled Tern** (*Onychoprion anaethetus*). An adult in breeding plumage visited the tern colony at Machias Seal Island, *Washington*, July 6, 2017 (Ralph Eldridge† and Mark Dodds; Collette Lauzau*; 2017-020). Photos show white on the underwing extending as rays distally along the inner webs of outer primaries, a white supercilium extending posterior to the eye, and gray-brown upperparts. Sooty Tern *(O. fuscatus)* shows a sharp break from the white underwing coverts to the black underside of the primaries, a supercilium that stops at the eye, and blacker upperparts. This or another Bridled Tern spent about two weeks at a tern colony on Falkner Island, *New Haven*, Connecticut, arriving there twelve days after the Machias Seal Island sighting.




This Franklin's Gull was well-described and expertly sketched when seen off Rockland, Maine, August 24, 2016. Notes and sketch by Christian Nunes.

**Pacific Loon** (*Gavia pacifica*). Three records were accepted: off Biddeford Pool, *York*, November 18–25, 2015 (Andrew Aldrich† and Alan Murray; Kevin Couture†; 2015-013); off Biddeford Pool, *York*, December 2–4, 2016 (Derek Lovitch†; Josh Fecteau†, Pat Moynahan* 2016-033); off Cliff House, Cape Neddick, *York*, and later off Ogunquit, *York*, January 28–February 19, 2017 (Dennis McKenna*; Edward Flanders*, Derek Lovitch†, and Jeannette Lovitch; 2017-006).

**Magnificent Frigatebird** (*Fregata magnificens*). A juvenile was at Stratton Island, Saco, *York*, June 12, 2017 (Wray Gabel and Zeke Smith†; Josh Fecteau†, Timothy Fennell†; 2017-014). The brown triangular wedge extending medially at the breast sides combined with all-white head, gray bill, and triangular, white rear belly patch combined to eliminate Great Frigatebird (*F. minor*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED/ LOCATION-DATE UNCERTAIN: A secondhand report attributed to Kittery, *York*, October 1 or 3, 2016, (2016-028) was not certainly a frigatebird nor certainly seen in Maine.

Magnificent Frigatebird, a juvenile, was at Stratton Island June 12, 2017. Photograph by Zeke Smith.

**Brown Booby** (*Sula leucogaster*). An adult female, based on a dusky spot

Swainson's Hawk is a rare visitor to Maine, and this juvenile was at Millinocket September 26–October 4, 2016. Photograph by Rhonda Little.

anterior to the eye and yellow skin around the base of the bill, was photographed offshore over the Schoodic Ridges, *Hancock*, September 17, 2017 (Phillip Torrey†; 2017-033). (See photograph on page 189).

**Swainson's Hawk** (*Buteo swainsoni*). A juvenile visited the Millinocket Municipal Airport, *Penobscot*, September 26–October 4, 2016 (Anita Mueller† and Rhonda Little-Aifd†; many observers and photographs; 2016-026).

**Burrowing Owl** (*Athene cunicularia*). One was along Short Sands beach, York, *York*, June 7, 2017 (Courtney Smith; Jon Colcord†; 2017-015). The pattern on the underparts showing a white central divide to the breast band and then much diminished broken bars on the abdomen is consistent with western populations, *A. c. hypugaea*. Currie and McLaren (2012) discuss identification of Burrowing Owl subspecies and their occurrence in northeastern North America.

**Say's Phoebe** (*Sayornis saya*). Two records: one at Pemaquid Point, New Harbor, *Lincoln*, September 6–9, 2016 (Joe and Wendy Mallory†; Louis Bevier†, Josh Fecteau†, Doug Hitchcox†; 2016-025), and another on Monhegan Island, *Lincoln*, September 16–17, 2017 (Jess Foley*; Kristen Lindquist†; 2017-031).

**Vermilion Flycatcher** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*). A well-described male was on Isle au Haut, *Knox*, May 9, 1994 (Debra Schrader*and Dave Hiltz, Jr.*; 1994-003). Another male, apparently a first-year, visited Hog Island, *Lincoln*, April 17, 2017 (Arlene Beech, Olivia Brohammer†; Louis Bevier†, Josh Fecteau†, Nathan Hall†, Doug Hitchcox†; 2017-007). The Isle au Haut bird was previously published (Perkins 1994, Schrader and Hiltz, Jr. 1994) but long regarded as hypothetical, chiefly due to it being a sight report from a time of year outside the pattern of vagrancy for the species to the Northeast. The Hog Island bird provided fresh impetus to review the older report. This record was a remarkable find for other reasons too. It was first observed by a volunteer in the United Kingdom monitoring an Osprey nest camera hosted by National Audubon and Explore.org. News was shared, and a short video clip provided a close-up view of the bird (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcTGkbcmp9M). Given that most vagrants of Vermilion Flycatcher to eastern North America are immatures in fall, members discussed the potential that these spring records could involve austral migrants from populations that breed in southern South America (*rubinus* subspecies group) and would be in migration to northern South America during the boreal spring, a pattern shared with Fork-tailed Flycatcher (see below). These austral migrant Vermilion Flycatchers are regarded by some authors as a separate species, Scarlet Flycatcher

(Carmi et al. 2016, Gill and Donsker 2018). North American Vermilion Flycatchers (*mexicanus* subspecies group) are only separable from Scarlet Flycatchers in the field by vocalizations. Besides the Maine birds, the only other spring record in the Northeast is a male photographed at Burton Island, Delaware, May 2–5, 1993 (Hess et al. 2000).

**Fork-tailed Flycatcher** (*Tyrannus savana*). One adult male at Gilsland Farm, Falmouth, *Cumberland*, September 16–19, 2017 (Angus King†; Barbara Carlson†, Doug Gochfeld†, many observers; 2017-044). Photos show three deeply emarginated outer primaries consistent with the austral migrant, nominate *T. s. savana* (Zimmer 1937).


Burrowing Owl has been seen only once before in Maine. This one was at York June 7, 2017. Photograph by Jon Colcord.

**Fieldfare** (*Turdus pilaris*). Maine's first accepted record for this Eurasian thrush was at Newcastle, *Lincoln*, April 19–23, 2017 (Jeff Cherry†; many observers and photographs; 2017-008).

**Lesser Goldfinch** (*Spinus psaltria*). An adult male black-backed form visited a feeder at Whetstone Pond, Abbot, *Piscataquis*, August 3–5, 2015 (Ellen Blanchard; Cheryl Ring†, Louis Bevier†, Doug Hitchcox†, Margaret Viens†; 2015-015).

**Harris's Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia querula*). An immature visited a feeder at Belgrade, *Kennebec*, November 17, 2016 (Seabird McKeon†; 2016-031).

**Bullock's Oriole** (*Icterus bullockii*). A long-staying immature male was at Camden, *Knox*, November 14, 2016–April 2, 2017 (Melinda Sortwell†; many observers and photographs; 2016-032); another immature male was seen at Alexander, *Washington*, December 1–8, 2016 (Grazyna Kirsch†; 2016-034).

## Dedication

The committee lost one of its founding members in 2017. Peter Vickery passed away on February 28, 2017 (see *in memoriam* by Jan Pierson, a past committee member, and Malcolm Hunter, Jr. https://doi.org/10.1642/AUK-17-121.1). Peter's numerous contributions and expertise will be missed. His legacy will be a comprehensive volume on the status and distribution of Maine's birds, the topic that motivated Peter to establish the committee.

## Acknowledgments

The committee thanks Peter Vickery for help digging up old notes. Thank you to the following for help: Regina Hornung, coordinator of Osprey cameras, and Juanita Roushdy, both of whom alerted Maine birders about the Vermilion Flycatcher; Jason

Lesser Goldfinch, Maine's third, visited a feeder in the Abbot portion of Whetstone Pond, August 3–5 (here), 2015. Photograph by Louis Bevier.

Forbes, Chris Hepburn, and Sylvia Martin from the Brookline Bird Club; Greg Hanisek and Julian Hough regarding Connecticut records; and Steve Howell on frigatebird identification. Thank you to the following committee members and secretary who provided comments on drafts of this report: Tom Aversa, Doug Hitchcox, Becky Marvil, Trevor Persons, and Bill Sheehan. The committee as of June 2018 includes: Tom Aversa, Louis Bevier (chair), Lysle Brinker, Doug Hitchcox, Becky Marvil (secretary), Pat Moynahan, Will Russell, Luke Seitz, Bill Sheehan, and Margaret Viens. Trevor Persons, past chair of the committee, voted on many of the records in this report; Trevor rotated off the committee in fall 2017.

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Zebra, by Karen O'Neill

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# PHOTO ESSAY

## Birds of the Seventh Maine Report

Vermilion Flycatcher, apparently a first-year male, visited Hog Island April 17, 2017. Photograph from video taken by Arlene Beech who was monitoring camera hosted by Explore.org and National Audubon Society.

Snowy Plover, Maine's first, was this male at Reid State Park June 13, 2017. Photograph by Josh Fecteau.

Fieldfare, Maine's first, found at Newcastle April 19, 2017. Photograph by Jeff Cherry.


Fork-tailed Flycatcher, a male, was at Falmouth September 16–19, 2017. Photograph by Doug Gochfeld.

# MUSINGS OF THE BLIND BIRDER

## Connecting, Calming, Centering

*Martha Steele*

The start of 2018 was a challenging one for our family with respect to medical issues. I am thankful that full recoveries are expected, and I can turn my attention to the coming spring migration that, as of this writing, has already been sprinkled with early arrivals. These family crises do, however, heighten my appreciation of living in the moment and taking some stock of where I have been and where I am going.

What does all this have to do with birding? Birding is and will continue to be a big part of my life. The sheer pleasure of and fascination with birds permeates so many aspects of my life from planning daily activities to traveling around the world in pursuit of our avian friends. Although I started birding late in life, it was an extension of my bond with the natural world that centers and grounds me. It is a physical and emotional connections to birds and ecosystem diversity that help define my worldview and nourish my soul. Ascending high peaks for magnificent vistas, finding serenity in quiet woods, listening to gentle rustling of autumn leaves, staring at neatly outlined animal tracks in the snow, or standing in utter solitude letting the beautiful song of a Hermit Thrush fill me with joy, observing nature and its inhabitants provides a constant source of curiosity and wonderment.

I have had the unique perspective of starting my birding avocation able to see birds but unable to hear them, only to have these capabilities reversed as my vision declined and I received cochlear implants that opened the world of bird songs for the first time at the ripe old age of 58. Fortunately, birding is not just a visual experience and indeed, it is often primarily an auditory experience, especially when birding habitats favor hearing birds much more than seeing them. In some respects, if I had to choose one sense versus the other, I would choose being able to hear bird songs at the expense of seeing them rather than the other way around. It requires effort to identify a bird, by sight or sound, but so much less effort to just stand there and listen rather than struggle to find a small bird in dense foliage or stumble over obstacles to get a better angle on a flitting bird that you may be lucky to see for a second or two. By contrast, a bird's song fills the entire space around you, momentarily drowns out all other senses, often lasts longer than visual connections, freezes you in the moment, and can allow for more focused and lingering attention on the singing bird.

Still, I would not be honest if I said that I never miss seeing birds, particularly the more spectacular ones or those closest to our hearts.

Many of us are entering older decades of life, ever more aware of our mortality and increasing risk of personal issues that may affect our birding enjoyment. But precisely because we love to bird, our passion helps us navigate through the ups and downs of personal crises. I have so often gone birding or just for a walk outdoors to help me distract from whatever may be going on and to help lift my spirits. Even if our habits

for birding change with age, be it finding contentment in local and regional birding or thirsting for global travel to see as many birds as possible, our deep-rooted love for birds and birding never wavers regardless of our personal situations or affinities for birding locations.

For birders in the Northeast, there is no match for brightening our dispositions than the arrival of spring. Each spring is a re-awakening with the burst in song and the ever-increasing stream of migrants continuing ancestral practices carried across millennia. As bird song crescendos through the spring into early summer, so too does my overall outlook on life. Even as I recognize the challenges that bird populations face from human activities, I take great solace in their presence in the here and now, reveling in the return of "our" Wood Thrush in the exact same spot as previous years, or in "our" Northern Waterthrush returning to a specific marsh near our Vermont home. A dormant and silent winter gives way to a renewal of frenzied activity and bird song, a nonstop din of early morning hormonal activity, with birds flying here and there to set up territory, mate, raise young, and perhaps begin all over again for another brood before heading back south again.

There is no end of wonderment about what our migratory birds do, and there is no end of the extent to which they can lift me from valleys forged by life challenges to peaks of excitement and optimism. Of course, not everyone shares values of bird and habitat conservation, nor does the sight or sound of a bird stir in everyone unexpected connections to the bird. But for me, as I contemplate where I have been so fortunate to have gone and think about what lies ahead, birds, birding, and the natural world have been and will continue to be a common thread linking so much of my life together. I just love walking with my husband or birding friends when we simultaneously call out the name of the bird we just heard. These moments, unassuming yet special, are ones to savor and truly appreciate and try not to take for granted, especially as we move through our later years. Connecting, calming, centering, and grounding. Such are birding and outdoor peregrinations for me.

***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>.*

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# GLEANINGS

## Adapting to Climate Change

*David M. Larson*

There is widespread worry throughout the climate, ecology, and conservation fields about the species-level and ecosystem-level effects of anthropogenic climate change. For birds, two obvious problems are exposure to altered, higher temperatures at critical points in the life cycle and loss of the linkages between resource availability and breeding. Most importantly, strong selection pressure effects on breeding time, location, and success are expected during global and regional shifts in temperature and other habitat-critical climatic changes. Global temperatures have risen approximately 1°C during the last century. Long-term studies on bird populations seem best suited to sort out avian adaptations to such climatic shifts.

Birds can attempt to maintain their current maximum daily temperature in the face of climate warming by changing location to cooler places—moving their breeding territory to the north or to higher elevations—if they are trying to maintain optimal temperatures at the same breeding date. Alternatively, they can shift to earlier breeding times if they are trying to maintain optimal nesting temperature at the same location. Of course, they can do both to varying extent. If they cannot accommodate, they risk extinction.

Socolar et al. (2017) have taken advantage of a comprehensive survey of California terrestrial vertebrates, directed by Joseph Grinnell, the founding Director of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at the University of California, Berkeley, between 1904 and 1940. One century later, the Grinnell Resurvey Project (mvz.berkeley.edu/Grinnell/) is generating data from the same areas as the original survey to assess changes in habitats, distributions of vertebrates, and phenology. Socolar and colleagues focused on the full spectrum of avifauna from two areas of these projects, California's Southern Sierra Nevada (SN = 160 species) and Coast Range (CR = 150 species). The two study areas contain a total of 224 species over 6.5° latitude and 6.2° longitude. For current data, they used a database of more than 47,000 monitored nests from Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project NestWatch (nestwatch.org) to assess nest success versus ambient temperature.

Data sets were far too small to study changes in individual species, but using the entire avifauna provided an unparalleled view of breeding-season phenology for the suite of species. Nesting dates have shifted 5–12 days (mean of 8.6) earlier between the 20th and 21st century surveys. Overall, this temporal shift in breeding dates compensates for the 1°C increase in maximum daily temperature over the last century. The observed shifts are most significant in June and become less consistent in July.

Without any compensation for rising temperature, nesting success can suffer. Analyses of Project NestWatch data on 110 species suggest that temperature at the nest site is a complicated determinant of nest success. At the edges of the species' range, a

1°C increase in temperature changes the probability of fledging young birds by 0.03, both an increase at the cold end and a decrease at the warm end.

These analyses suggest that these birds adapt to increasing temperatures due to climate change by moving to earlier, cooler breeding dates, a phenological adaptation. This response could help to explain the lack of altitudinal changes in 16% of Sierra Nevada bird species and 37% of individual range margins found in previous studies by this research group.

While it is clear that birds would be most successful in evolutionarily determined temperature ranges, especially considering the low thermoregulatory capabilities of very young birds, the connection between phenological adaptation and resource tracking remains unclear. Of course, resources such as insect emergence probably track temperature but may be more dependent on winter conditions than spring warmth. If temperature tracking in birds diverges from resource availability, then geographical range shifts could compensate.

The strengths of this ongoing series of investigations lie in the long timeline and the large base of species included. Analyses from these studies are, of course, providing new and refined questions for future studies as the march of anthropogenic climate change proceeds.

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***David M. Larson, PhD**, is the Science and Education Coordinator at Mass Audubon's Joppa Flats Education Center in Newburyport, the Director of Mass Audubon's Birder's Certificate Program and the Certificate Program in Bird Ecology (a course for naturalist guides in Belize), a domestic and international tour leader, President of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, and a member of the editorial staff of* Bird Observer.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE BY SANDY SELESKY

# ABOUT BOOKS

## Zugunruhe And TANSTAAFL

*Mark Lynch*

**North on the Wing: Travels with the Songbird Migration of Spring**. Bruce M. Beehler. 2018. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books.

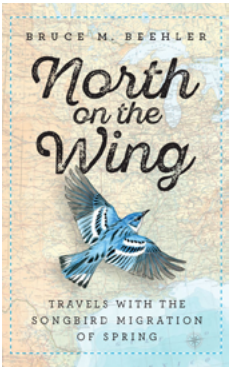
**Wildlife and Wind Farms, Conflicts and Solutions: Volume 1: Onshore: Potential Effects. Volume 2: Onshore Monitoring And Mitigation**. Martin R. Perrow, ed. 2017. Exeter, U.K.: Pelagic Publishing.

> "In February 1947, the naturalist Edwin Way Teale and his wife, Nellie, took an adventurous automobile trip in search of nature." (p. 1 *North on the Wing*)

Teale's goal was to follow spring north, from Florida to New England, looking not just at bird migration but all of nature en route. Teale wrote an account of his vernal voyage of discovery in *North with the Spring*, which was published in 1951. Ornithologist, naturalist, and conservationist Bruce Beehler first heard of Teale's written account of his northward migration in the late 1950s when, as a child, his mother read him passages before bedtime. He was entranced. Beehler is a research associate at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History who has conducted critical biodiversity surveys in New Guinea and Indonesia. As his professional career was winding down, in 2015 he decided to undertake his own version of Teale's journey. This time the focus of the voyage would not be all of nature, but the breeding wood warblers of the eastern half of North America. His goal would be to see each of the 37 species on their nesting habitats. Beehler would follow the migrants from the Gulf Coast of Texas up the Mississippi Flyway, deep into Canada, then around the northern edge of the Great Lakes, and end in the Adirondacks. Here he would climb a mountain he had climbed 40 years before and look for breeding Blackpolls. Whereas Teale and his wife just took their car, Beehler would drive from point to point, but then hike, bike, kayak, and camp out for however long it would take to get a sense of a place. *North on the Wing* is his account of that trip.

Beehler starts in coastal Texas visiting some of the migration hot spots well known to birders. This includes Mad Island, High Island, and Nunez Woods. Beehler, like every birder who visits the Texas coast in spring, is hoping for one of those legendary "fallouts" of migrants as they make their first landfall after crossing the Gulf. Looking for spring migrants here is not exactly the same as looking for migrants at South Quabbin or Mount Auburn:

> For those used to Mid-Atlantic birding, the remarkable thing about the arrival of songbirds along the Gulf Coast is that it takes place in the afternoon, not in the predawn hours. A woodland silent at 9 a.m. or 1 p.m. might start swarming with birds at 4 p.m., and birders can experience first-hand the phantomlike arrival of the migrants over the water in full daylight. (p. 39, *North on the Wing*)




For those who have trouble getting up in the pre-dawn hours, you may want to start booking your trip now. Even more unusual, as Beehler points out, migrant warblers here rarely if ever sing. That only starts as the birds move a number of miles inland.

Beehler is the perfect guide on this "trip of a lifetime." He is not only an enthusiastic birder but also a patient teaching ornithologist. Readers will get a sound introduction to migrant behavior, how birds find their way along their route at night, and what "our" warblers do in winter in Central and South America. Beehler also makes it his mission to introduce the readers to the researchers, state and national park guides, conservationists, and citizen scientists he meets along the way. *North on the Wing* is an inspiring overview of the hardworking individuals who study migration, educate visitors to the parks, and preserve critical habitat along the migratory routes.

The only organization that is soundly criticized by Beehler in *North on the Wing* is the Army Corps of Engineers.

> To many Americans, the Corps is synonymous with environmentally questionable boondoggles. The levee system that failed in 2005 during Hurricane Katrina, flooding the city of New Orleans, epitomizes the overexpenditure and underperformance of this massive federal bureaucracy. The next big failure is expected to be the Old River Control Structure in central Louisiana, which currently prevents the Mississippi from changing course and following the Atchafalaya to the Gulf. That failure, when it happens, will dwarf the economic impact of Katrina. (p. 75)

Each chapter focuses on one species of warbler. Though the wood warblers are the focus of his trip, Beehler takes time to marvel at the other wildlife and human history he comes across. Beehler takes particular interest in Native American and First Nation (Canada) history. The reader learns of the horrific history of the Trail of Tears and marvels at the sites of the Mississippian Mound Building Culture.

While at Caddo Lake State Park in northeast Texas, Beehler joins a herpetologist and his students from Texas A & M University as they do their annual herp surveys. Beehler is hoping for an alligator snapping turtle, a lifer, but has to settle for a three-toed *Amphiuma* and many more cottonmouths than most birders would be comfortable encountering. Beehler also writes about Caddo Lakes' other unusual residents. For example, the area hosts an important population of the endangered paddlefish: " a primitive ray-finned fish related to the sturgeons, it has a prominent, long, paddle-shaped snout and can boast relatives dating back 300 million years." (p. 93)

Caddo Lake seems to attract the unique and unusual, because Beehler also mentions that Caddo Lake is where there have been hundreds of sightings of Bigfoot, a.k.a. Sasquatch. Sadly, no effort is currently being made to preserve Sasquatch habitat here, unlike the paddlefish.

As Beehler moves ever northwards, the reader is introduced to a number of bird-

rich areas that are well known to locals but are poorly known to many in the Northeast. Readers will find themselves earmarking certain sections for potential future research for bird trips.

When Beehler begins his foray deep into northern Ontario along a long and lonely road past Pickle Lake, *North on the Wing* takes a dark turn. Beehler was expecting to find large tracts of virgin forests loaded with breeding warblers and with plenty of large mammals. What he found instead was sobering.

> What I found was a fire-scarred pine barren inhabited by an impoverished and underserved indigenous population who were living by their wits and largely forgotten by the rest of the world. This underdeveloped land was built upon a glacier-scoured shield of granite, with sand and gravel for soil. Because of past and present impacts of current fire, an array of gold-mining operations, and the centuries-long fur trade, the land was scarred and bruised. (p. 185)

For those readers, like myself, who have dreamt of traveling deep into interior Canada and experiencing an Eden of wildlife, this section will come as a rude awakening. The area is mostly scrubby jack pines, though not a single Kirtland's Warbler nests here. What breeding birds that are here are few and far between. Beehler works hard to see just a handful of birds every day he is here. Mammals are also rare or skittish because the native people have to subsist on them. Beehler sums up his Canadian foray this way:

> Was I disappointed by what I discovered? Like a person who has had a glass of cold water thrown in his face at an unexpected juncture, I was shocked and brought up short, but the experience was bracing and memorable. I got what I deserved. (p. 185)

When I interviewed Beehler recently, he also mentioned that perhaps he should have researched the area more thoroughly. Perhaps the imagined Great North Woods still does exist, just not in the area he traveled.

After the interior Canada misstep, *North on the Wing* gets back on track around the Great Lakes and ends successfully in New York.

*North on the Wing* is the kind of book that you wish lasted longer, and the reason is Beehler's wide range of interests and his writing. Beehler's prose perfectly captures the feeling of being in the piney woods, cypress swamps, oak glades, and other unique habitats he visits. The reader will also learn a lot about the warbler species we encounter in migration and during the breeding season here in New England. If you have ever sought the few remaining breeding Blackpolls high atop Mount Greylock here in Massachusetts, or even just marveled at the long voyage a Blackpoll makes every year, you will identify with Beehler's quest in *North on the Wing*.

I am the count compiler for the Sturbridge Christmas Bird Count. This year, for the first time, I fielded several complaints by sector leaders about the loss of habitat due to the erection of solar farms, large arrays of solar panels typically sited in neglected fields, former farms, or old sand lots. This has rapidly become an issue for birders in

Massachusetts. Though a few solar farms are erected with care for the larger environment, I have seen solar farms placed where there used to be populations of Grasshopper Sparrows, Whip-poor-wills, and other open-space-loving species. Who green-lighted these projects and why is a question that needs to be asked. MassBird has recently hosted comments about parts of the Cumberland Farms fields now being turned over to solar fields, so this is a situation all Massachusetts birders will eventually come across.


Solar fields and wind farms are supposed to be a big part of a green solution to help us move away from petroleum-based fuels and prevent a further descent into global climate change. So it seems anti-environment to criticize these supposedly ecologically sound efforts. To further complicate matters, it has become a politically charged issue, and you will hear or read certain politicos who are beholden to the oil companies shedding crocodile tears over the birds killed by wind farms.

To date, more serious scientific literature has been written about the effects of wind farms on wildlife. We can hope that similar efforts will be done with solar fields and their environmental problems. It has been long known that wind farms kill some birds, but what wasn't well understood globally was which species were most prone to collision and what can be done about it. Fortunately, there are researchers addressing those issues. In 2007 I reviewed in *Bird Observer* one of the first books concerned with bird collisions and wind farms. Its title was *Birds and Wind Farms: Risk Assessment and Mitigation* by Manuela de Lucas et al. This was a first attempt to bring together a variety of researchers to assess the risks of wind farms and suggest some remedies. The two volumes of *Wildlife and Windfarms, Conflicts and Solutions* continue this process.

> Although a wide range of monitoring and research studies have been undertaken, only a small body of that work appears to make it to the peer-reviewed literature. The latter is, however, burgeoning, concomitant with the interest in the interactions between wind energy and wildlife as expressed by the continuing CWW (Conference on Wind Energy and Wildlife Impacts) series of international conferences on the topic. In 2015, 391 participants from 33 countries attended CWW 2015 in Berlin. (p. ix, *Wildlife and Wind Farms, Conflicts and Solutions V. 1*)

The two thick volumes of *Wildlife and Wind Farms, Conflicts and Solutions* present a number of papers offering the latest information on what we know about the impact of land based, or "onshore," wind farms on wildlife and habitat. This includes not just birds, but also reptiles and amphibians, invertebrates, aquatic organisms, terrestrial mammals, and bats. Volume 1 identifies some of the potential conflicts; Volume 2 describes some potential solutions.

It's not just about collisions. Not only are some birds directly killed by wind farms, wind farms also cause serious displacement of breeding species. Some bird populations move away from the vicinity of wind farms. They just don't want to be near them. These are often *not* the same species associated with the greatest number of impacts. There is also the possibility of habitat fragmentation caused by wind farms. Some of the problems seem unique to wind farms. Barotrauma occurs in bats as a result of atmospheric pressure changes they experience when they fly close to turbines. (V. 2, p. 186)

> As is to be expected, large birds like raptors were among the first and easiest to identify as having collided with a wind turbine. This is changing. In "Birds: Collision" by Manuela de Lucas and Martin R. Perrow (V. 1, p. 155-90):
>
> New species continue to be found under turbine blades and in some cases passerines are being detected as one of the avian groups with the highest collision mortality rates. (V. 1, p. 182)

I cannot possibly summarize the wealth of information and ideas presented in these papers. But I will say that a lot of this seems to be a work in progress. There are promising ideas and plans, but no one solution fits all sites. We don't know a lot of what we need to know to make wind farms collision free. Each wind farm presents a complicated array of problems. We don't really even have a standard methodology for monitoring existing wind farms for collision kills. As Lucas and Perrow note:

> There is, however, some general agreement in the scientific community that a range of factors is important in bird collision, but the relative weight of each one seems to be different in each case. However, the interaction between different factors also complicates any comparison of mortality estimates between and among species and studies. A further clear source of variation among studies results from the methods employed, with bias among the number of collisions introduced by variables such as removal of bodies by scavengers, search efficiency and search radius, which are not always integrated in the experimental design and monitoring protocols. To standardize results across studies, it will be necessary to adopt common and rigorous methodologies. (V. 1, p. 182)

*Volume 2* presents a variety of monitoring schemes and plans. The reader will immediately want to ask who is monitoring our already erected wind farms using what protocols. There are papers on different designs of turbines and their effects on wildlife. Finally, an important paper is "A best practice approach to future planning" by Victoria Gartman et al. (V. 2, p. 185-208). This gives a sound outline of how to evaluate a proposed site and then how to monitor mortality caused by it after the wind farm is built.

As environmental activists will tell you, yes, wind farms cause some collisions, but compared to the long-term effects of climate change, these effects are minimal. So, we should sacrifice some raptors or grassland species *now* for the promise that somewhere in the distant future, everything will be better? Well, we are still learning how to

evaluate the effects of wind turbines as the papers in these two volumes indicate. We are making progress, but a lot is not well understood. What is not clearly addressed is what the overall effect will be if we have to build all the wind farms and solar fields we will need to meet our burgeoning global population's energy needs. It will require many, many miles of wind farms, and the cumulative effect of those obstacles may be very different than that of a single wind farm. Furthermore, is eating up other species' habitats to serve our energy needs really the best solution? Could we perhaps place solar panels in cities or along highways? Let's come up with some alternatives to the alternatives.

There is an old acronym: **TANSTAAFL**. It means "There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch." It has been used by writers as diverse as biologist Barry Commoner and science fiction author Robert Heinlein as well as a number of economists. It was derived from an observation that bars that served free food often raised the price of their drinks. In other words, you never get something for nothing. In the case of the current technology we have for alternative energy sources, they are certainly not "a free lunch" as far as the environment goes. But all of us need to decide how much we are willing to pay. We all need to become active in the ongoing and upcoming conversations and debates about siting and monitoring these wind farms and solar fields. Critical to those conversations is to become informed, and these two volumes of *Wildlife and Wind Farms, Conflicts and Solutions* will help.

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Brown Booby has been reported with increasing frequency in Maine. This female visited a lobster boat over the Schoodic Ridges September 17, 2017. Photograph by Phillip Torrey.

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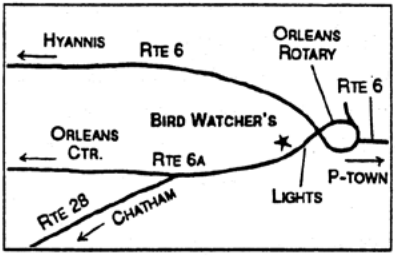


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# BIRD SIGHTINGS

## January–February 2018

*Neil Hayward and Robert H. Stymeist*

Birders who were geared up for a new year of birding awoke to some bone-chilling temperatures; in Boston, the high for the day was a raw 13 degrees, and the western part of the state and the hill towns of Worcester County saw in the New Year with temperatures below zero. A powerful winter storm on January 4 brought blizzard conditions up the East Coast from Virginia to Maine. Meteorologists dubbed this a "bomb cyclone": masses of cold air colliding with warm air to produce hurricane force winds. Gusts of 76 miles per hour were noted on Nantucket and 75 miles per hour in Wellfleet. Coastal areas experienced extreme high tides—associated with the super moon on January 1—and major flooding was noted in Scituate and Marshfield causing severe damage to homes. The high tide in Boston reached an all-time high of 15.16 feet, breaking the previous record of 15.1 feet set during the Blizzard of 1978. The bomb cyclone brought snow too: 13.4 inches in Boston, 16.6 inches in Worcester, and over 15 inches in parts of the south coast where Taunton exceeded 17 inches. Despite the cold start, temperatures for the month of January ended near normal with an average of 29 degrees. The high in Boston was 61 degrees on January 13 and the low was minus two on January 7. Rainfall totaled 4.92 inches in Boston, 1.56 inches above average, and the total snowfall was 17.8 inches, most of which fell during the January 4 storm.

February opened with a mild reading of 46 degrees. The month averaged 38 degrees, six degrees above normal. The high for the month was 72 degrees on February 21, the second highest reading in record keeping. (The previous record of 73 degrees was set just last year!) Don't let the mild temperatures fool you though; on Groundhog Day, Phil saw his shadow and predicted six more weeks of winter! Rainfall totaled 3.77 inches, almost an inch above normal. Boston recorded 8.3 inches of snow during the month, most of it falling during a fast-moving storm on February 17–18. Snowfall totals were highest north and west of Boston with areas in Middlesex and Essex Counties receiving more than seven inches. The highest snowfall was nine inches in Haverhill.

*R. Stymeist*

### WATERFOWL THROUGH HERONS

No longer a news flash these days: all eight species of goose on the Massachusetts State List were reported this period. **Ross's Geese** were found in four counties, including the continuing Boston bird from December, which represented the first record for Suffolk County. The **Barnacle Goose** in Westfield held on for the first day of the year before disappearing and then possibly reappearing a couple of days later on the Connecticut coast. A **Pink-footed Goose** in Berkley/Dighton in January and February is the first record for Bristol County. This area, along the banks of the Taunton River, also hosted some of the many **Greater White-fronted Geese** reported this period as well as a **Cackling Goose**.

This continues to be an excellent winter for **King Eider**, with birds reported from at least seven locations, including five individuals in Rockport. The male **Tufted Duck** continued through the period on Nantucket.

The rest of the duck news was mainly for subspecies aficionados. A male Eurasian Green-winged Teal was photographed at Peabody on February 20. This subspecies, *crecca*, considered

by the International Ornithological Union (IOU) to be a full species, is recorded annually in the state with birds sighted from November through June. Only the male—with a horizontal white stripe along the lower scapulars and lacking the vertical white stripe on the breast—is separable in the field from our native subspecies *carolinensis*.

Flocks of Common Eider continue to receive scrutiny from birders on the lookout for the rare northern *borealis* subspecies. Northern Common Eiders breed in Greenland and Arctic Canada and winter around Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. There are reports as far south as Long Island, New York, and over a dozen reports from Massachusetts. At least three birds were reported this period: a male and female along the Cape Cod Canal and a female in Rockport. *Borealis* eiders are relatively easy to separate from our regular *dresseri* subspecies—the males have brighter yellow (not green) bills with more white (and less green) in the face, whereas females are grayer than *dresseri*. Importantly, in both sexes the bill tapers to sharp points at the base, unlike the more rounded frontal lobes of *dresseri*. Females of the aptly named *sedentaria* subspecies of Hudson Bay are similarly cold gray in color, but have yet to be shown to reach the East Coast.

Winter storms brought impressive numbers of alcids close to shore. Flying past Andrews Point in Rockport, 1,972 Dovekies were counted on February 25. This is the third highest count this century, with the record going to 3,470 in November 2012, also from Andrews Point. These numbers are dwarfed, however, by the historical "wrecks" of the 1950s and 1960s when upwards of 10,000 birds appeared after winter storms. Razorbills put on a similarly impressive show, with an exceptional 8,500 spotted at Race Point on January 27. **Atlantic Puffins** were well represented including a rare chaseable bird sitting off Bass Rocks in Gloucester on February 10.

Lynn Beach was the place to be in February to "mews" over rare gull subspecies. This larid hot spot provided an almost unique opportunity to compare gulls from opposite sides of the planet. A European Mew Gull or "Common Gull", *Larus canus canus*, was present from February 18–24. A ring on the bird showed this to be the same Common Gull spotted last February on the same beach. The bird was banded as a chick on June 23, 2013, in Akureyrarflugvöllur, Iceland. On February 19, a second Mew Gull was found. The larger size, darker mantle color, greater spotting on the head and neck, thicker and yellower bill, paler eye, and the "string of pearls" wing pattern indicated the Kamchatka subspecies *L. c. kamtschatschensis* from Northeast Asia. This too may be a returning visitor to Lynn Beach: it closely matches "Bird A", the smaller of two possible Kamchatka Mew Gulls present in March 2015, and may even be the same Kamchatka Gull seen at this location as far back as 2009. Both the Kamchatka and Common gull subspecies have darker mantles than our native Mew Gull, *L. c. brachyrhynchus*, which breeds in the northwest of the continent. To add to the confusion, there is a fourth subspecies of Mew Gull, *heinei*, from Central Russia. Although never recorded in North America, its similarity to *kamtschatschensis* means that we probably can't rule it out, hence the conservative acceptance of records of the latter by the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee as *kamtschatschensis/heinei*.

Digital photography and eBird have made it much easier to stalk individual birds. Gull sleuths were able to reconstruct the flight plan of a **Slaty-backed Gull** originally discovered at Fresh Pond on February 16. Three days later the same bird was spotted again, this time loafing around with the gulls in Gloucester Harbor. It didn't hang around there for long; four days after visiting Cape Ann, the bird had upgraded its diet of fish for trash when it was relocated 127 miles northeast (as the gull flies) at a landfill site in Augusta, Maine. Slaty-backed Gulls breed in coastal northeast Asia and Alaska. This century has seen a marked increase in sightings in the Lower 48 (see Figure 1): Florida accepted its first record in 2002, New Hampshire in 2003, and Massachusetts in December 2007, when three birds were found in the space of only two days.

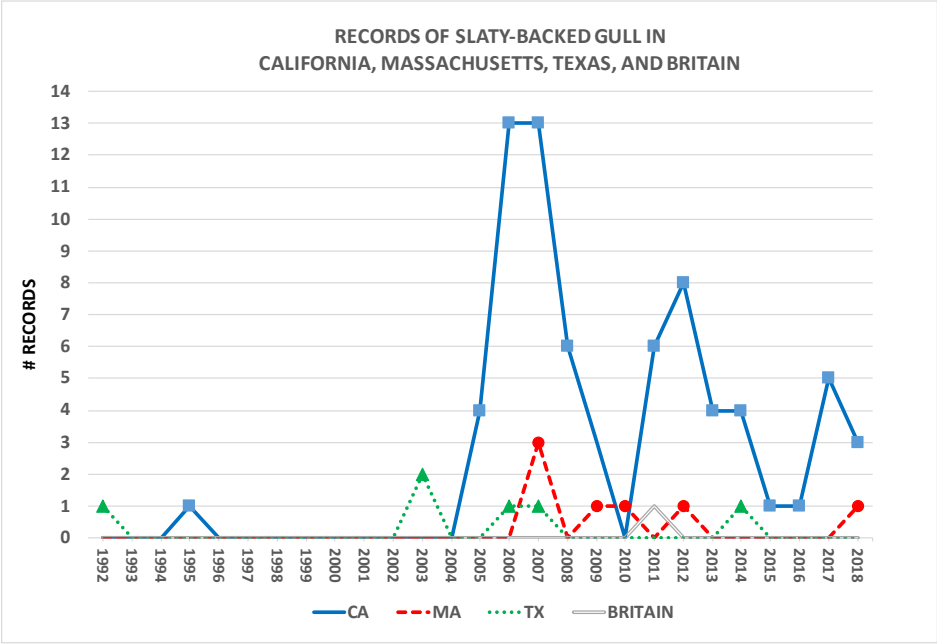


**Figure 1**. Increased occurrence of Slaty-backed Gull in California (solid line), Massachusetts (dashed line), Texas (dotted line) and Britain (double line). Although Texas and California recorded their first individual in the 1990s, it wasn't until the 2000s that a pattern of repeated vagrancy was established. This is also when birds started to appear in Massachusetts and elsewhere. There is even a record of this northeast Asian gull from Britain (London) in 2011. (2018 records for Massachusetts and California are provisional and yet to be reviewed and published by the relevant state committees.)

A total of six records have now been accepted for the state, with the most recent being an adult at Wellfleet in January 2012.

If you're sliding down the slippery slope that is gull identification (you're still reading!), then hybrid gulls provide the ultimate in esoterica. This period saw three interesting examples, all adults and probably offspring from hybridization with Herring Gulls: a Lesser Black-backed x Herring Gull and a Great Black-backed x Herring Gull, both at Race Point; and a Glaucous x Herring Gull (also known as "Nelson's Gull") in Lowell. Despite suffering the ignominy of being downgraded from a full species to a subspecies (of Iceland Gull) **Thayer's Gull** still shows its face in the state and this period saw two different adults at Race Point and a first winter bird at Gloucester.

**Pacific Loon** still makes headline news in the state despite multiple birds reported each winter. Its identification, however, remains a challenge; distant loons are frequently misreported as Pacific. Indeed, away from Race Point, the go-to place in the state to find this vagrant, the number of misidentified reports of Pacific Loon significantly exceeds that of genuine ones. Birders are encouraged to take photos of any suspected Pacific Loon—even to rule out Arctic Loon for which there are records as far east as Ohio and Vermont. This period at least one Pacific Loon was recorded off Race Point.

*N. Hayward*

Snow Goose
1/1-1/21 Saugus/Revere 2 S. Zendeh + v.o.
1/1-1/24 Eastham (FE) 3 C. Wagner + v.o.
1/3 Westfield 3 J. Hoye#
1/11, 2/13 Nantucket 3 H. Young
1/12-2/9 Wachusett Res. 2 max B. Abbot + v.o.
1/20 Chilmark 5 B. Shriber
2/26 E. Boston (BI) 4 P. Banducci
2/26 Winthrop 2 S. Jones
2/28 DWWS 4 R. Bowes
2/28 Concord (NAC) 1 blue P. Gilmore#

**Ross's Goose**
thr-1/29 Boston 1 ph A. Bean + v.o.
thr-2/19 Nantucket 2 max ad ph v.o.
thr-2/3 Nantucket 1 imm ph J. Trimble
2/4-2/11 Longmeadow 1 ph D. Holmes + v.o.
2/23-2/26 Hadley 1 ph L.Therrien + v.o.

**Greater White-fronted Goose**
1/3-2/25 Fairhaven 9 max ph C.Longworth+v.o.
1/11-1/20 P'town 1 ph W.Sprauve + v.o.
1/12-1/14 Nahant 5 ph D.Wilkinson + v.o.
1/21,2/4-2/5 Dighton/Somerset 1,1 ph F. Morello + v.o.
2/16-2/26 Arlington Res. 1 ph C. Gras + v.o.
2/19 Longmeadow 2 ph S. Motyl
2/22 Sheffield 1 ph K. Schopp
2/23 Hadley 1 L. Therrien
2/24-2/27 Acton, Concord 2 ph T. Swain + v.o.
2/26-2/28 Paxton 1 ph M. Lynch + v.o.

**Pink-footed Goose**
1/28-2/1 Dighton 1 ph G d'Entremont + v.o.
2/21 Swansea 1 ph L. Waters

Brant
1/3 Fairhaven 494 M. Lynch#
1/11 Boston 86 J. Layman
1/20 Bourne 84 M. Lynch#
2/19 Cohasset 68 V. Zollo
2/19 Ipswich 32 J. Berry#

**Barnacle Goose**
1/1 Westfield 1 ph L. Richardson

**Cackling Goose**
1/1 Westfield 1 L. Richardson
1/3 Fairhaven 1 M. Lynch#
1/13 Nahant 1 L. Kramer#
1/16-1/21 Somerset 2 J. Eckerson
2/3-2/25 Berkley/Dighton 1 ph I. Smith + v.o.
2/24 Arlington Res. 1 K. Hartel

Mute Swan
1/6 Falmouth 100 J. Ghadban
1/9 Acoaxet 163 M. Lynch#

Wood Duck
1/2 Brookline 5 T. Bradford
2/22 GMNWR 15 M. Stone#
2/27 Concord 12 D. Williams
2/27 Uxbridge 12 N. Demers
2/28 Bolton Flats 9 M. Lynch#

Blue-winged Teal
2/13-2/28 Barnstable 2 P. Crosson

Northern Shoveler
1/9 Clinton 5 M. McNamara
1/26 Plymouth 4 L. Schibley
2/8 Nantucket 5 S. Kardell
2/22 GMNWR 4 M. Stone#
2/24 Cheshire 2 J. Pierce

Gadwall
1/11 Quincy 7 P. Peterson
1/20 Bourne 8 M. Lynch#
1/27 Gloucester (EP) 16 J. Nelson
2/4 Plymouth 18 S. van der Veen
2/20 Peabody 14 R. Heil
2/28 PI 51 T. Wetmore

**Eurasian Wigeon**
1/20-2/27 Eastham 1 m ph J.Hoye# + v.o.
2/3 Somerset 1 m ph V. Zollo
2/22 Rockport (AP) 2 m, f R. Heil
2/23-2/24 PI 1 m ph T.Wetmore+v.o.

American Wigeon
1/1 Marston Mills 32 P. Trimble
2/4 Plymouth 25 S. van der Veen
2/23 Acoaxet 34 M. Lynch#
2/23 PI 14 T. Wetmore

American Black Duck
1/15 PI 160 T. Wetmore
1/20 Bourne 295 M. Lynch#
2/4 Saugus 300 J. Berry#
2/10 Marion 121 M. Lynch#
2/23 Westport 598 M. Lynch#

Northern Pintail
1/1 Marlborough 11 B. Lee
1/20-2/11 Pittsfield 5 max G.Hurley + v.o.
2/17 Barnstable 7 P. Crosson
2/20 Wachusett Res. 38 M. Lynch#
2/22 GMNWR 11 M. Stone#
2/23 Acoaxet 48 M. Lynch#
2/23 Chilmark 9 B. Shriber
2/24 PI 85 T. Wetmore

Green-winged Teal
1/21 Somerset 3 J. Eckerson
2/4 Plymouth 6 S. van der Veen
2/21 PI 45 D. Adrien
2/23 Westport 6 M. Lynch#
2/28 Bolton Flats 20 M. Lynch#

**Green-winged Teal (Eurasian)**
2/20 Peabody 1 m ph R. Heil

Canvasback
2/21-2/28 Norfolk Co. 1 m W. Sweet, D. Burton
2/23 Chilmark 2 B. Shriber
2/28 Nantucket 38 T. Pastuszak#

Redhead
1/1 Nantucket 13 S. Williams#
1/2-2/10 Falmouth 1 K. Fiske + v.o.
1/17-2/15 Easthampton 1 M. McKittrick + v.o.
2/22 Rockport (AP) 2 m, f R. Heil

Ring-necked Duck
1/7 Mashpee 175 S. Finnegan
1/8 Waltham 28 J. Forbes
2/20 PI 3 T. Wetmore
2/22 Southwick 85 S. Kellogg
2/22 GMNWR 15 M. Stone#
2/28 Sudbury Res. 78 M. Lynch#

**Tufted Duck**
thr Nantucket 1 m ph T.Pastuszak+v.o.

Greater Scaup
1/3 Fairhaven 840 M. Lynch#
1/20 Falmouth 700 G. d'Entremont#
1/20 Boston H. 330 S. Lamonde
1/20 Gloucester 120 P. + F. Vale
1/21 Chatham 261 R. Schain#
2/1 Nantucket 320 T. Pastuszak#
2/10 Marion 708 M. Lynch#

Lesser Scaup
1/8 Gloucester 10 J. Berry#
1/20 Falmouth 11 G. d'Entremont#
2/23 Acoaxet 13 M. Lynch#
2/28 Quabbin Pk 3 L. Therrien

**King Eider**
1/2 Wellfleet 1 m B. Lagasse#
1/21-2/26 Cohasset/Hull 1 ad m ph D. Burton# + v.o.
1/24 Rockport 1 imm m J. Berry#
1/25-1/26 Bourne 1 f ph S. Williams#
1/25, 2/18 Sandwich 1,1 ad m, imm m D.Furbish#
2/10-2/17 Gloucester (BR) 1 m ph M. Waters# + v.o.
2/10 Rockport 5 1 imm m, 4 f E. LeBlanc
2/12-2/26 Winthrop 1 f ph T. Bradford + v.o.

Common Eider
1/14 Scusset B. 2140 M. Lynch#
1/20 Chatham 10800 M. Faherty

Common Eider (continued)
1/20 Bourne 3375 M. Lynch#
2/19 Ipswich 950 J. Berry#
Common Eider (Northern, *borealis*)
1/14 Bourne 1 f ph S. Williams#
2/16 Sandwich 1 m ph K. Yakola
2/16-2/25 Rockport (AP) 1 f ph R. Heil
Harlequin Duck
1/7 Manomet 17 G. Gove#
2/4 Westport 9 M. Iliff
2/5 Rockport 90 P. Peterson
2/10 Cohasset 5 J. Baur
2/20 Gloucester (BR) 19 D. Burton
Surf Scoter
1/1 Nantucket Sound 3500 F. Gallo
1/20 Sandwich 300 G. d'Entremont#
2/10 Marion 180 M. Lynch#
White-winged Scoter
1/14 Scusset B. 300 M. Lynch#
1/20 Sandwich 1750 G. d'Entremont#
1/20 Gloucester 76 J. Berry#
Black Scoter
1/1 Nantucket Sound 3800 F. Gallo
1/16 Rockport 70 J. Berry#
1/20 Sandwich 750 G. d'Entremont#
Long-tailed Duck
1/1 Nantucket Sound 450 F. Gallo
2/10 Marion 44 M. Lynch#
2/24 P'town (RP) 380 B. Nikula
2/24 PI 130 T. Wetmore
Bufflehead
1/21 Chatham 475 R. Schain#
2/10 Marion 215 M. Lynch#
2/23 Westport 389 M. Lynch#
Common Goldeneye
1/1 Nantucket Sound 80 F. Gallo
1/3 Fairhaven 140 M. Lynch#
1/20 Bourne 42 M. Lynch#
2/10 Marion 36 M. Lynch#
2/20 Wachusett Res. 22 M. Lynch#
Common x Barrow's Goldeneye (hybrid)
2/16 Dorchester 1 m J. Layman
**Barrow's Goldeneye**
1/1-2/15 Dighton/Somerset 1 m ph B. King + v.o.
1/2-1/14 Lowell 1 m ph A.McDermott+v.o.
1/3 Wellfleet 2 O. Moss
1/11 Winthrop B. 1 m ph M. Sovay
1/13-1/20 Agawam 2 m, f ph D. Holmes
1/14, 1/20 Bourne 1 m M. Lynch#
1/16 Salisbury 1 f ph P. Roberts
1/20-2/16 Gloucester 1 m P. + F. Vale + v.o.
1/20 Westport 2 imm m, f M. Iliff
1/1-2/4 BHI (Deer I.) 1 m ph D. Adrien#
2/7 Nantucket 2 T. Pastuszak#
2/8-2/28 Cohasset 2 m, f ph D.Burton + v.o.
2/20 Fairhaven 2 m, f D. Hlousek#
2/25 New Salem 1 m ph J. Johnstone#
Hooded Merganser
1/7 Quabog IBA 32 M. Lynch#
1/9 Westport 85 M. Lynch#
1/20 Bourne 49 M. Lynch#
2/3 Eastham 55 G. d'Entremont#
Common Merganser
1/1 Mashpee 50 M. Keleher
2/23 Arlington 310 K. Hartel
2/25 Medford 425 J. Forbes
2/28 Sudbury Res. 94 M. Lynch#
Red-breasted Merganser
1/3 Fairhaven 400 M. Lynch#
1/4-2/28 Quabbin Pk 3 max L. Therrien#
1/14 Scusset B. 73 M. Lynch#
1/20 Bourne 126 M. Lynch#
2/9-2/24 Wachusett Res. 2 B. Robo + v.o.
Ruddy Duck
1/1 Somerville 1 R. Stymeist
1/20 Eastham 20 M. McCarthy
1/28 Quincy 1 D. Burton
2/3 Eastham 2 G. d'Entremont#
2/27 Uxbridge 2 N. Demers
Ring-necked Pheasant
1/28 Dighton 1 m G. d'Entremont
2/10 Cumb. Farms 1 m N. Marchessault
2/13 W. Newbury 1 m J. Nathan
2/26 Quabog IBA 1 m M. Lynch#
Ruffed Grouse
2/16 Quabog IBA 1 M. Lynch#
Wild Turkey
2/5 Rockport 30 P. Peterson
2/12 Woburn 40 J. Brown#
2/16 Quabog IBA 58 M. Lynch#
2/21 Yarmouth 52 E. Hoopes
2/26 Quabbin 42 M. Lynch#
Pied-billed Grebe
1/20 Wareham 1 M. Lynch#
2/24 Fairhaven 3 G. d'Entremont#
Horned Grebe
1/3 Agawam 1 L. Rich
1/8 Quabbin (G5) 1 L. Therrien
1/28 Everett 2 T. Sackton
1/28 Somerville 1 J. Forbes
2/14 PI 11 R. Heil
Red-necked Grebe
1/13-1/14 S. Quabbin 1 S. Surner
1/18 Turner's Falls 1 J. Rose
1/21 P'town (RP) 12 B. Nikula#
2/10 Gloucester (BR) 26 L. Waters#
2/10 Cohasset 5 J. Baur
2/14 PI 10 R. Heil
Virginia Rail
1/1, 2/20 Peabody 3,4 R. Heil
1/2 Truro 9 CBC (M. Faherty)
American Coot
1/15 Marlborough 2 A. Loveless
1/17 Brookline 1 P. Peterson
2/20 Peabody 1 R. Heil
**Sandhill Crane**
1/1 Rehoboth 2 B. King#
Black-bellied Plover
1/2 Truro 1 P. Crosson
1/21 Chatham 3 R. Schain#
Killdeer
1/29 Dighton 1 J. Gordon#
2/15 Nantucket 5 T. Pastuszak#
2/21 Northboro 2 B. Robo
2/23 Chilmark 2 B. Shriber
2/24 Fairhaven 2 G. d'Entremont#
2/26 Falmouth 2 P. Kyle
Ruddy Turnstone
1/16 Osterville 28 N. Villone
1/29 Revere B. 4 P. Peterson
2/6 Fairhaven 22 C. Longworth
Sanderling
1/20 Osterville 35 J. Hoye#
2/1 PI 75 T. Wetmore
2/10 Nahant 22 P. + F. Vale
2/23 Westport 61 M. Lynch#
Dunlin
1/21 P'town (RP) 500 S. Williams#
2/1 PI 145 T. Wetmore
Purple Sandpiper
1/20 Westport 13 M. Iliff
1/21 S. Boston 3 J. Taylor
1/24 Rockport 41 J. Berry#
1/27 PI 10 T. Wetmore
2/13 Gloucester (BR) 83 P. + F. Vale
2/19 Cohasset 15 V. Zollo

American Woodcock
2/21 N. Reading 2 P. + F. Vale
2/27 Tewksbury 2 D. Prima
Wilson's Snipe
1/2 Truro 1 M. Faherty
2/9 Mashpee 2 M. Keleher
Dovekie
1/29, 2/25 Rockport(AP) 188,1972 R. Heil
2/1 Westport 1 L. Waters
2/4, 2/24 P'town (RP) 12,4 L. Waters#, B. Nikula
2/12, 2/19 Gloucester (BR) 5,3 D. Burton
2/14 Revere (POP) 1 E. Harrison
2/27 Stellwagen Bank 105 P. Flood#
2/27 PI 2 T. Wetmore
Common Murre
1/21, 2/4 P'town (RP) 17,22 S. Arena, L. Waters#
1/29, 2/25 Rockport (AP) 99,66 R. Heil
2/23 PI 2 T. Wetmore
2/27 Stellwagen Bank 31 P. Flood#
Thick-billed Murre
1/13, 2/25 Rockport (AP) 6,19 R. Heil
1/21, 2/4 P'town (RP) 8,9 S. Williams#, L. Waters#
2/10-2/25 Cohasset 1 J. Baur + v.o.
2/10 Gloucester 2 A. Bean
2/15 Revere (POP) 1 d T. Bradford
2/17-2/28 Nahant 2 C. Dalton + v.o.
2/18 Salisbury 2 M. Watson#
2/27 Stellwagen Bank 2 P. Flood#
Razorbill
1/8 Cohasset 2 D. Burton
1/13, 2/25 Rockport (AP) 860,395 R. Heil
1/14 Scusset B. 2 M. Lynch#
1/27, 2/7 P'town (RP) 8500,1500 P. Flood, B. Nikula#
2/4 Westport 2 M. Iliff
2/12 Gloucester (BR) 7 D. Burton
2/28 PI 18 J. Willis#
large alcid sp.
1/13 Rockport (AP) 1570 R. Heil
Black Guillemot
1/7, 2/19 Cohasset 1,1 D. Burton, V. Zollo
1/20 Boston H. 3 MAS (D. Burton)
1/20 Bourne 1 M. Lynch#
2/10 Gloucester (BR) 8 L. Waters#
2/25 Rockport (AP) 7 R. Heil
2/27 Stellwagen Bank 2 P. Flood#
**Atlantic Puffin**
1/13, 1/29 Rockport (AP) 4,6 R. Heil
1/27, 2/4 P'town (RP) 1 ph P. Flood#
2/1 Gloucester (EP) 1 C. Johnson
2/5, 2/10 Gloucester (BR) 1 ph P. Brown + v.o.
2/27 Stellwagen Bank 1 P. Flood#
Black-legged Kittiwake
1/27 PI 4 T. Wetmore
1/29, 2/25 Rockport (AP) 344,145 R. Heil
2/27 Stellwagen Bank 2 P. Flood#
Bonaparte's Gull
1/12-1/13 Rockport (AP) 1 R. Heil
1/16 Gloucester 1 J. Berry#
**Black-headed Gull**
1/3 Fairhaven 1 adW M. Lynch#
1/3-2/23 Osterville 2 ad max ph S.Matheney
1/22-1/27 Hyannis 2 E. Hoopes + v.o.
**Mew Gull (European, *canus*)**
1/20, 2/18-2/24 Nahant/Swampscott 1 ph S. Williams + v.o.
**Mew Gull (*kamtschatschensis / heinei*)**
1/15 Nantucket 1 ph J. Trimble#
2/19 Swampscott 1 ph P. + F. Vale + v.o.
Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull (hybrid)
2/4 P'town (RP) 1 ad ph B. Nikula#
Herring x Glaucous Gull (hybrid)
2/9 Lowell 1 ad ph S. Sullivan
Herring x Great Black-backed Gull (hybrid)
2/4 P'town (RP) 1 ad ph B. Nikula#
Iceland Gull
1/2 BHI (Deer I.) 3 P. Peterson
1/11-2/28 Turner's Falls 8 max v.o.
1/12 Lowell 13 R. Stymeist#
1/14 Nantucket 22 J. Trimble#
1/20 Westport 2 M. Iliff
1/27 P'town (RP) 78 R. Heil
1/27 Lawrence 2 J. Berry#
2/1 Gloucester (EP) 3 R. Heil
2/3 Lynn/Swampscott 3 J. Keeley
2/10 Rockport 6 R. Heil
2/11 Needham 3 D. Burton
2/27 Quabbin Pk 2 L. Therrien
**Iceland Gull (Thayer's)**
1/21, 1/28 P'town (RP) 1,1 ad ph Williams#,Nikula#
2/19 Gloucester 1 1W, ph S. Williams + v.o.
Lesser Black-backed Gull
1/1-2/28 Turner's Falls 1 v.o.
1/4 Boston 1 S. Jones#
1/11-2/9 Lowell 1 1W C. Floyd + v.o.
1/15 Nantucket 54 J. Trimble#
1/17-2/17 Needham 1 ad M. Iliff
1/20 Westport 1 M. Iliff
1/21 Cohasset 1 K. Rawdon
1/28 Sharon 1 W. Sweet
2/10-2/24 P'town (RP) 3 2 ad, 1-2W B. Nikula#
2/15 GMNWR 1 ad A. Scholten
2/16 Cambr. (FP) 1 J. Trimble#
2/19 Gloucester 1 E. Nielsen
**Slaty-backed Gull**
2/16 Cambr. (FP) 1 3cy ph J. Trimble#
2/19 Gloucester 1 3cy ph S. Williams#
Glaucous Gull
thr Gloucester 2 max E. Nielsen
1/6-2/24 Lowell 3 v.o.
1/10-1/15 Rockport (AP) 1 A. List + v.o.
1/13 Medford 1 J. Layman
1/21 Blackstone 1 J. Young
1/27 Lawrence 2 J. Berry#
2/4-2/28 Turner's Falls 2 max v.o.
2/6-2/24 Revere B. 1 1W R. Heil + v.o.
2/9 Needham 2 1 ad, 1W M. Iliff
2/9 W.Roxbury 2 1 ad, 1W M. Iliff
Red-throated Loon
1/13-1/18 Somerville 5 C. Kaynor + v.o.
1/20 Rockport 3 J. Berry#
1/21 P'town (RP) 20 B. Nikula#
1/28 PI 5 T. Wetmore
2/18 Cambridge 3 J. Forbes
2/21 Milton 1 D. Burton
2/28 Medford 3 R. LaFontaine
**Pacific Loon**
1/16-2/1 P'town (RP) 1 ph B. Nikula# + v.o.
1/27 P'town (RP) 2 ph P. Flood#
Common Loon
1/20 Boston H. 43 MAS (D. Burton)
1/21 Gloucester (BR) 16 J. Smith
1/31 Cambr. (FP) 1 M. Sinclair
2/1 PI 17 T. Wetmore
2/4-2/6 Medford 1 A. Gurka + v.o.
2/10-2/13 Wachusett Res. 2 E. Kittredge + v.o.
2/10 Marion 14 M. Lynch#
2/19 Ipswich 41 J. Berry#
2/23 Quabbin Pk 1 L. Therrien
Northern Gannet
1/13, 2/25 Rockport (AP) 37,4 R. Heil
Double-crested Cormorant
1/6 Rockport 1 S. Grinley#
1/13 Salisbury 2 R. Richards#
Great Cormorant
1/20 Rockport 12 J. Berry#
1/20 Bourne 3 M. Lynch#
1/24 E. Gloucester 11 J. Berry#

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Great Cormorant (continued) | | | |
| 2/21-2/28 | Medford | 2 max | J.Kovner + v.o. |
| 2/23 | Westport | 18 | M. Lynch# |
| 2/24 | Boston | 1 | G. Fabbri |
| American Bittern | | | |
| 1/1-1/3 | Eastham (FH) | 2 | S. Priestnall |
| 2/27 | W. Harwich | 1 | D. Gray |
| Great Blue Heron | | | |
| 1/28 | Dorchester | 3 | P. Peterson |
| 2/19 | Plymouth | 3 | B. Griffith |
| 2/28 | Bolton Flats | 3 | M. Lynch# |
| Great Egret | | | |
| 1/3 | S. Dart. (APd) | 1 | L. Miller-Donnelly |

## VULTURES THROUGH DICKCISSEL

Raptor highlights for the period included continuing high numbers of Black Vultures, especially in southwest Berkshire County where as many as 35 were counted in Sheffield. Cumberland Farms is a traditional winter hot spot for birds of prey and some high counts this period included: 11 Northern Harriers, five Rough-legged Hawks, and five Short-eared Owls. Golden Eagles were noted from four localities, three more than last year. It was a big year for Snowy Owls with reports from nearly 50 locations, with a maximum of seven noted on Plum Island during January. The most bizarre report involving a Snowy Owl was one struck by a car inside the Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, Jr. Tunnel in Boston; it was captured and taken to Tufts Wildlife Clinic where it unfortunately died a few hours later. In Lexington, up to eight Long-eared Owls continued through the period. This area has a history of hosting winter owl roosts; in 1977 and 1981 a total of 22 Long-eareds were tallied. For more information, see the 1982 article by John W. Andrews "A winter roost of Long-eared Owls" in *Bird Observer* 10 (1): 13–22. A dead **Barn Owl** was picked up in this same grove on January 8, a victim of the blizzard in early January.

A winter roost of crows is an impressive sight. In Lawrence, an estimated 14,300 were tallied in February. These communal roosts may return to a specific location for a few years or may shift elsewhere in response to changing conditions. The crow roost in Lawrence has been studied on many occasions; see the recent 2018 article "A History of Winter Crow Roosts and a Visit to a Roost in Lawrence, Massachusetts" by Dana Duxbury-Fox, *Bird Observer* 46(1): 22–31.

The Truro Christmas Bird Count on January 2 reported some high counts of lingering passerines and an unusually high concentration of Red-breasted Nuthatches. A total of 142 were noted whereas other areas of the state reported very few. The winter storm of January 4, bringing several inches of snow and ice, surely had an effect on some of these hearty birds.

The **Townsend's Solitaire** first reported on November 12 was still present at Demarest Lloyd State Park in Dartmouth through at least mid-February. A **Summer Tanager**, first noted on December 8, continued at a feeder in Plymouth through most of January. Other unusual birds of the period included a Lark Sparrow in Concord, a Lincoln's Sparrow at Manomet, and an Indigo Bunting in Washington, which was a first February record for Berkshire County.

*R. Stymeist*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Black Vulture | | | |
| 1/20 | Blackstone | 15 | B. Abbott |
| 2/15 | Sheffield | 35 | C. Johnson |
| 2/17 | Westport | 10 | G. d'Entremont# |
| 2/28 | Ashley Falls | 28 | B. Lafley |
| Turkey Vulture | | | |
| 1/19 | Blackstone | 4 | E. Kittredge |
| 2/17 | Hamilton | 2 | J. Berry |
| 2/21 | Boxford | 2 | P. + F. Vale |
| 2/22 | Hyannis | 8 | S. Matheney |
| 2/23 | Westport | 32 | M. Lynch# |
| 2/26 | Quabbin | 29 | M. Lynch# |
| 2/28 | Nantucket | 16 | H. Young |
| Bald Eagle | | | |
| 1/8 | Sandwich | 5 | P. Trimble |
| 1/21 | Nbpt | 7 | J. Berry# |
| 1/24 | Webster | 11 | L. Tonna |
| 1/24 | Dorchester | 3 ad | P. Peterson |
| 1/27 | Quabbin | 10 2 ad, 8 imm | M. Lynch# |
| 1/27 | Groton | 8 | T. Murray |
| Northern Harrier | | | |
| 1/9 | Westport | 3 | M. Lynch# |
| 1/19 | Revere | 2 1 ad m | P. Peterson |
| 1/29-2/19 | PI | 3 | T. Wetmore + v.o. |
| 2/12 | Lynnfield | 2 m, f | C. Martone |
| 2/17 | Salisbury | 2 | R. Steber |

Northern Harrier (continued)
2/19 Cumb. Farms 16 1 m G. d'Entremont
Sharp-shinned Hawk
thr Reports of indiv. from 18 locations
Cooper's Hawk
thr Reports of indiv. from 7 locations
Northern Goshawk
1/3 PI 1 ph B. Peters
1/29 S. Dartmouth 1 J. Hoye#
2/20 Sterling 1 J. Pingeton
Red-shouldered Hawk
thr Reports of indiv. from 11 locations
1/9 Westport 2 M. Lynch#
2/19 Plymouth 2 B. Griffith
2/24 Fairhaven 2 G. d'Entremont#
Red-tailed Hawk (*abieticola*)
1/2-1/8 Lexington 1 ph J. Johnson + v.o.
1/19 Lawrence 1 R. Heil
Rough-legged Hawk
thr Reports of indiv. from 25 locations
1/9 Lexington 3 2 lt, 1 dk J. Bourget#
1/24-1/27 PI 3 2 lt, 1 dk MAS (D. Moon)
2/10 Cumb. Farms 5 N. Marchessault
2/19 Ipswich 2 1 lt, 1 dk J. Berry#
**Golden Eagle**
1/1 Worc. 1 ad M. Lynch#
1/14 Belchertown 1 L. Therrien
1/19, 1/20 PI, Newbypt 1 B. Volkle#, A. Steenstrup
1/29 Egremont 1 ad ph G. Ward#
Barn Owl
1/1-1/8 Lexington 1 d fide M. Rines
2/1 Nantucket 1 H. Young
Eastern Screech-Owl
1/16 Plymouth 2 A. Bartolo
Great Horned Owl
1/1-1/22 Cumb. Farms 2 J. Carlisle + v.o.
1/1 Stoughton 2 G. d'Entremont
1/2-1/7 Ipswich 2 J. Berry#
1/3 Marlborough 2 L. Phelps
1/27 Barnstable 3 E. Hoopes
1/28 PI 2 T. Wetmore
Snowy Owl
thr Reports of indiv. from 32 locations
1/1 Saugus 2 S. Zendeh#
1/2 Wellfleet 2 B. Lagasse#
1/13-1/28 PI 7 N. Landry + v.o.
1/13-1/19 Revere 2 P. Peterson
1/16 Quincy 2 D. Burton + v.o.
1/20 Salisbury 2 R. Rotberg
1/21 Gloucester (BR) 2 J. Smith
1/28-2/14 Worc. 2 max M. Lynch#
2/1 Ipswich (CB) 4 J. Berry
2/6 Nantucket 5 H. Young
2/7-2/26 Fairhaven 2 C. Longworth
2/10-2/24 Westport 3 M. Iliff + v.o.
2/13 Chatham 5 D. Lyon
Barred Owl
2/24 Woburn (HP) 2 P. Ippolito
Long-eared Owl
thr Lexington 8 max ph v.o.
1/8 Essex 2 J. Berry#
2/8 PI 1 M. Halsey
Short-eared Owl
1/1 Northampton 1 L. Therrien
1/3-1/11 S. Dart. (APd) 1 L. Miller-Donnelly
1/11 Westport 1 B. Adoette
1/19 Revere 1 P. Peterson
1/28 PI 1 S. Pierce
1/31 Saugus 3 T. Bradford#
2/3 Cumb. Farms 5 B. King#
2/17 Canton 1 C. Hartshorn
Northern Saw-whet Owl
1/1 Tolland 1 D. Holmes
1/2 Truro 6 CBC (M. Faherty)
1/8 S. Quabbin 1 L. Therrien
1/18 Winchester 1 B. Lee
1/27 Essex County 1 S. Wheelock#
**Red-headed Woodpecker**
thr Northampton 1 imm ph v.o.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
1/1-1/2 Warren 1 D. Evans
1/1-1/16 Franklin 1 R. Harpin
1/2 Ipswich 1 ad m J. Berry + v.o.
1/11-1/16 WMWS 1 B. Robo + v.o.
1/13 Athol 1 D. Small
1/27 Wellesley 1 M. Foos
1/30 Canton 1 O. Cunningham
2/6-2/8 Rutland 1 D. Wipf
2/16 Upton 1 L. Melanson
Northern Flicker
2/9 Cumb. Farms 7 K. Rawdon
Pileated Woodpecker
1/27 Canton 2 P. Peterson
2/26 Quabbin 2 M. Lynch#
American Kestrel
1/14, 2/5 Saugus 1,1 G. Wilson#
1/19 Revere 1 P. Peterson
1/20 Concord 1 C. Winstanley
1/21-1/27 Lynn/Nahant 1 P. + F. Vale + v.o.
1/21 BHI (Spectacle I.) 1 M. Iliff#
2/10 Nahant 1 P. + F. Vale
2/14-2/24 Medford 1 F. Lehman + v.o.
Merlin
thr Reports of indiv. from 10 locations
1/2 PI 2 P. Gilmore
Peregrine Falcon
1/20 Boston H. 2 MAS (D. Burton)
1/20 Gloucester 2 P. + F. Vale
1/21 Saugus 2 G. Wilson#
2/10 Quincy 2 J. Forbes
2/20 Peabody 2 R. Heil
large falcon sp.
2/7 Rockport (AP) 1 J. Willis#
Eastern Phoebe
1/11 Barnstable 1 S. Matheney
2/27 Millbury 1 S. LaBree
Northern Shrike
1/21 Acton 1 imm S. Miller#
1/25 N. Quabbin 1 D. Monette
1/26 Uxbridge 1 M. Ess-Why
Northern Shrike (continued)
1/29 Lancaster 1 M. Lynch#
2/14-2/27 Windsor 1 R. Hudson + v.o.
2/19-2/21 Barnstable 1 N. Villone
2/21 Montague 1 B. Kane
2/25-2/26 Pelham 1 B. Lafley
American Crow
2/13 Lawrence 14,300 R. Fox#
Fish Crow
1/6 Bourne 275 C. Gibson
1/17 Needham 210 M. Iliff
1/19 Lawrence 56 R. Heil
1/21 Blackstone 30 J. Young
2/3 Hyannis 25 G. d'Entremont#
2/9 W. Roxbury 12 M. Iliff
Common Raven
1/1 Wachusett Res. 4 M. Lynch#
1/11-2/1 PI 2 S. Miller + v.o.
1/26 Groton 16 T. Murray
1/29 Lakeville 5 G. Gove#
2/4 Quabbin 3 M. Lynch#
2/6 Easton 2 K. Ryan
2/12 W. Roxbury (MP) 2 M. Iliff
2/17 Canton 2 C. Hartshorn
2/17 Westport 2 G. d'Entremont#

Horned Lark
1/16 Egremont 200 R. Wendell
1/19 Cumb. Farms 50 J. Carlisle
1/21, 2/4 Saugus 85,200 G. Wilson#
1/21 Newbury 80 J. Berry#
1/25 Northampton 150 B. Lafley
1/29 PI 60 T. Wetmore
2/6 Acton 55 B. Lee
Tree Swallow
1/7 Nantucket 1 S. Kardell
2/25 Brookfield 1 J. Young
Red-breasted Nuthatch
1/2 Truro 142 CBC (M. Faherty)
1/2 Plymouth 2 G. d'Entremont
1/16 PI 2 T. Wetmore
1/21 Windsor 11 M. Lynch#
1/28 Mt Watatic 2 B. Lee
2/17 Quabbin (G35) 4 M. Ess-Why#
Brown Creeper
1/3 Mt Watatic 3 T. Spahr
2/9 GMNWR 2 M. Stone#
2/12 Reading 3 D. Williams
2/14 Ipswich 2 J. Berry
2/17 Eastham 4 K. Yakola
Winter Wren
1/3 Leverett 2 J. Tyler
Marsh Wren
1/1 GMNWR 1 B. Lee
1/16-2/19 Plymouth 1 A. Bartolo + v.o.
2/4 Brewster 1 J. Pratt#
2/17 Eastham (FH) 1 P. Kyle
Carolina Wren
1/10 Manomet 3 L. Schibley
1/17 Brookline 3 P. Peterson
1/20 Falmouth 6 G. d'Entremont#
2/21 Quabog IBA 9 M. Lynch#
2/24 Fairhaven 11 G. d'Entremont#
Golden-crowned Kinglet
1/3 Mt Watatic 7 T. Spahr
1/7 Lexington 10 J. Trimble
2/12 Bolton Flats 7 M. Lynch#
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
thr Reports of indiv. from 12 locations
2/16-2/24 Arlington Res. 2 B. Lee + v.o.
Eastern Bluebird
1/20 Concord 14 C. Winstanley
1/24 N. Dighton 7 M. Eckerson
1/27 New Braintree 14 M. Lynch#
2/3 Eastham 7 G. d'Entremont#
2/19 Ipswich 9 J. Berry#
**Townsend's Solitaire**
1/1-2/19 Dartmouth 1 ph v.o.
Hermit Thrush
1/2-1/8 PI 2 T. Wetmore
1/2 Truro 9 CBC (M. Faherty)
American Robin
1/2 Truro 1912 CBC (M. Faherty)
Gray Catbird
1/2 PI 2 T. Wetmore
1/3 Franklin 1 D. Allard
2/20 Boxborough 1 A. Bailey
2/21 Boston 1 M. Goldberg
Brown Thrasher
1/18-2/19 Nantucket 1 T. Pastuszak
1/18 Hadley 2 A. Goquan
Cedar Waxwing
1/2 N. Truro 465 CBC (M. Faherty)
1/26 PI 42 T. Wetmore
1/29 Wachusett Res. 26 M. Lynch#
2/6 Acton 80 B. Lee
2/12 Lynnfield 32 C. Martone
American Pipit
1/1 Saugus 2 S. Zendeh#
1/2 PI 1 J. Bourget#
1/3-1/6 Gloucester (EP) 1 C. Haines + v.o.
2/6 Orleans 1 D. Gray
Evening Grosbeak
1/1-1/17 Colrain 2 R. Olson
1/21 Windsor 3 M. Lynch#
Purple Finch
1/21 Windsor 5 M. Lynch#
2/3 Athol 1 D. Small
Red Crossbill
1/3 Mt Watatic 4 Type 3 T. Spahr
1/25 Washington5 Type 1 G. Hurley + v.o.
White-winged Crossbill
1/27 Mt Watatic 2 T. Swain#
Pine Siskin
1/5 Wayland 1 A. McCarthy#
1/24 Windsor 15 J. Pierce
Lapland Longspur
1/1-2/4 Saugus 3 max G. Wilson#
1/1, 1/10 Hadley 1,1 L. Therrien
1/6 Sheffield 2 G. Ward
1/7-1/28 Egremont 1 J. Pierce + v.o.
1/17 Hatfield 1 D. Schell
1/19 PI 4 T. Wetmore
1/22 Greenfield 1 B. Kane
2/6 Acton 1 B. Lee
2/9 Plymouth 1 B. Griffith
Snow Bunting
1/2 Winthrop B. 60 P. Peterson
1/16 Egremont 40 R. Wendell
1/21 Cohasset 40 D. Burton#
2/17 P'town (RP) 185 K. Yakola
2/18 Northampton 4000 D. Allard
2/22 PI 70 T. Wetmore
Eastern Towhee
1/6-thr Needham 2 max F. Lehman
1/17, 2/19 Newton 1 P. Peterson
American Tree Sparrow
1/3 Fairhaven 2 M. Lynch#
1/21 Cheshire 10 M. Lynch#
2/4 Saugus 5 J. Berry#
2/9 Hadley 70 M. Lynch#
Chipping Sparrow
thr-2/9 Westwood 1 E. Nielsen
1/4 Berlin 3 J. Gahagan
1/14 Scusset B. 2 M. Lynch#
1/15-1/17 Concord 2 T. Swain#
1/16 PI 1 F. Vale
Chipping Sparrow (continued)
1/24-1/25 Easthampton 1 K. Yakola
2/20 Sandwich 3 P. Kyle
Clay-colored Sparrow
2/9 Plymouth 1 B. Griffith
Field Sparrow
1/2 Truro 22 CBC (M. Faherty)
1/21 Uxbridge 7 J. Young
1/21 Sharon 2 J. Glover
1/26-1/27 Groton 2 T. Murray
1/26, 2/9 Plymouth 18 L. Schibley + v.o.
1/31 E. Brookfield 2 R. Jenkins
2/17 S. Dartmouth 2 G. d'Entremont#
Lark Sparrow
1/15-1/16 Concord 1 ph T. Swain + v.o.
Savannah Sparrow
1/1 Bedford 1 C. Winstanley#
1/20 Fairhaven 1 M. Iliff
2/3 Cumb. Farms 5 B. King#
2/4 Quincy 1 D. Burton
2/9 Plymouth 1 B. Griffith
Savannah (Ipswich) Sparrow (*princeps*)
1/3, 2/1 Ipswich (CB) 2,1 J. Berry
1/12 PI 1 T. Wetmore

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Saltmarsh Sparrow | | | |
| 2/17 | Wellfleet | 2 | K. Schopp |
| Fox Sparrow | | | |
| thr | Reports of indiv. from 18 locations | | |
| 1/4 | Andover | 2 | D. Cooper |
| 2/28 | Wakefield | 3 | M. Sovay |
| Lincoln's Sparrow | | | |
| 1/10-1/19 | Manomet | 1 ph | L.Schibley + v.o. |
| Swamp Sparrow | | | |
| 1/1 | Northboro | 1 | S. Miller# |
| 1/3 | GMNWR | 1 | A. Bragg# |
| 1/3 | W. Roxbury (MP) | 1 | M. Iliff |
| 1/23 | Brookline | 1 | M. Garvey |
| 2/10-2/17 | Plymouth | 2 | A. Kneidel + v.o. |
| White-crowned Sparrow | | | |
| 1/14-1/19 | Cumb. Farms | 2 | J. Carlisle + v.o. |
| 1/24 | Sheffield | 9 | G. Ward |
| 2/9 | Newburyport | 1 | R. Netherton |
| Eastern Meadowlark | | | |
| 1/1 | Saugus | 1 | S. Zendeh# |
| 1/3 | S. Dart. (APd) | 7 | L. Miller-Donnelly |
| 2/10-2/20 | Cumb. Farms | 12 | N. Marchessault + v.o. |
| 2/20 | Falmouth | 11 | K. Fiske |
| 2/27 | DWWS | 6 | T. O'Brien |
| Baltimore Oriole | | | |
| 1/1-1/2 | Orleans | 1 | C. O'Connor# |
| 1/1 | Sunderland | 1 | S. Griesmer |
| 2/14-thr | Brewster | 1 | D. Gray |
| Red-winged Blackbird | | | |
| 2/19 | Harwich Port | 250 | B. Nikula |
| 2/22 | GMNWR | 150 | M. Stone# |
| 2/28 | Bolton Flats | 1400 | M. Lynch# |
| Brown-headed Cowbird | | | |
| 1/9 | Westport | 40 | M. Lynch# |
| 2/2 | Concord | 15 | J. Keyes |
| 2/22 | GMNWR | 71 | M. Stone# |
| Rusty Blackbird | | | |
| 1/1-1/17 | Wayland | 42 | A. McCarthy# |
| 1/10 | Lexington | 5 | J. Layman |
| 1/19 | Plymouth | 12 | S. Avery# |
| 2/12 | Lynnfield | 6 | C. Martone |
| 2/15 | Barnstable | 8 | P. Trimble |
| 2/28 | Worcester | 5 | P. Meleski |
| Common Grackle | | | |
| 2/20 | Boxford | 75 | P. + F. Vale |
| 2/22 | GMNWR | 90 | M. Stone# |
| 2/23 | S. Peabody | 65 5 *purple* | R. Heil |
| 2/28 | Bolton Flats | 400 | M. Lynch# |
| Ovenbird | | | |
| 2/14 | Barnstable | 1 ph | P. Kyle |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | | | |
| 1/8-1/9 | Ipswich | 1 ph | M. Brengel |
| 1/14 | Revere | 1 ph | L. Hsu |
| Palm Warbler | | | |
| 1/2 | Cumb. Farms | 2 *western* | D. Furbish |
| 1/7 | Sandwich | 1 | S. Finnegan |
| Pine Warbler | | | |
| 1/2 | Plymouth | 6 | G. d'Entremont |
| 1/18 | Eastham | 4 | C. Molander |
| 1/20 | Sudbury | 1 | B. Black |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler | | | |
| 1/2 | Truro | 429 | CBC (M. Faherty) |
| 1/10 | Manomet | 9 | L. Schibley |
| 1/16 | PI | 11 | T. Wetmore |
| 1/20 | Falmouth | 6 | G. d'Entremont# |
| 2/10 | Marion | 7 | M. Lynch# |
| 2/24 | Fairhaven | 11 | G. d'Entremont# |
| **Summer Tanager** | | | |
| 1/1-1/22 | Plymouth | 1 ph | L. Meeks + v.o. |
| Rose-breasted Grosbeak | | | |
| 1/1-1/4 | Woods Hole | 1 | L. McCartin |
| 1/31-2/5 | P'town | 1 imm m | F. Mockler |
| Indigo Bunting | | | |
| 1/1 | Nantucket | 2 | S. Williams# |
| 2/28 | Washington | 1 ph | G. Hurley |
| Dickcissel | | | |
| 1/1 | Nantucket | 1 ph | T. Pastuszak# |
| 1/15-1/17 | Concord | 1 ph | T. Swain + v.o. |
| 2/13 | Marshfield | 1 imm | D. Furbish |

# BYGONE BIRDS

## Historical Highlights for January–February

*Neil Hayward*

### 5 YEARS AGO


*January–February 2013*

The Blizzard of '13 (Winter Storm Nemo) dumped more than two feet of snow on Boston, the fifth largest snowstorm on record for the city. It also made birding headlines: 52 Atlantic Puffins were counted whirring past Orleans, a record for Cape Cod. In the aftermath, dozens of Razorbills were washed up on beaches. A gray phase **Gyrfalcon** was found in Hadley on New Year's Day, and despite being present for almost two months, many birding vigils came up empty. A much more cooperative and unseasonal **LeConte's Sparrow** spent five days in Concord in February. A home in Taunton attracted a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** and scores of visiting birders for 20 days in January.

Best sighting: **Northern Lapwing** (again). The two birds on Nantucket were joined by a third (!), setting a new high count for Massachusetts, and tying the high count for all of North America.

## 10 YEARS AGO


*January–February 2008*

The photographic highlight of the period was an **American White Pelican** standing in the snow in the Connecticut River on January 9. This is only the second January record for the species. Up to four **Thayer's Gulls** (now considered a subspecies of Iceland Gull) were hanging out in Gloucester and a **Mew Gull** was found on Nantucket on February 10. Two **Western Tanagers** appeared at feeders at the end of January, in Merrimac and Brewster. The massive invasion of Common Redpolls continued, including reports of up to 14 **Hoary Redpolls**.

Best sighting: the adult **Slaty-backed Gull** found at Niles Pond, Gloucester, the previous month stayed throughout the period.

## 20 YEARS AGO


*January–February 1998*

An immature **Brown Pelican** fishing in the frigid surf off Nantucket in January was the first winter record of this species for the state. A **Gyrfalcon** arrived at Logan Airport on January 10 for a layover that lasted through February and into March. An Eastern Whip-poor-will on Martha's Vineyard was the first January record for the state, possibly a beneficiary of the mild winter that year, which was attributed to the El Niño effect.

Best sighting: **Ancient Murrelet,** Race Point, Provincetown, January 4. This was the second record for the state of this north Pacific alcid, the first being from Rockport in November 1992.

## 40 YEARS AGO


*January–February 1978*

Five **Cattle Egrets** in Westport on January 28 became the first winter record for this species in the state. A high count of 1,500 Canvasbacks in Assonet was not atypical for the period 1975–1981. An impressive 13 Goshawks were counted in January and a gray phase **Gyrfalcon** was present at Orleans February 11–15. Red Knots overwintered, including 50 at Revere Beach. **Boreal Chickadees** were recorded in West Boylston, Waltham and Clinton. A flock of European Starlings on Martha's Vineyard included a male **Brewer's Blackbird**. 1977–1978 saw an excellent flight of winter finches: 1,000+ **Pine Grosbeaks** in the state; 1,258 Pine Siskins on the Concord CBC, and 500 at one feeder in Lincoln; and Plum Island alone hosted 27 Red Crossbills and over 200 White-winged Crossbills.

Best sighting: **Eurasian Curlew**, Menemsha Pond, Martha's Vineyard, February l8. This bird, the second record for Massachusetts, stayed into March.

## ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taxonomic order is based on AOS checklist, 7th edition, 58th Supplement, as published in *Auk* 2017, vol. 134(3):751-773 (see <http://checklist.aou.org/>).

Locations

| | |
|---|---|
| AA | Arnold Arboretum, Boston |
| ABC | Allen Bird Club |
| AP | Andrews Point, Rockport |
| APd | Allens Pond, S. Dartmouth |
| B. | Beach |
| Barre FD | Barre Falls Dam |
| BBC | Brookline Bird Club |
| BHI | Boston Harbor Islands |
| BI | Belle Isle, E. Boston |
| BMB | Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester |
| BNC | Boston Nature Center, Mattapan |
| BR | Bass Rocks, Gloucester |
| BRI Co. seas | Bristol County, offshore |
| Cambr. | Cambridge |
| CB | Crane Beach, Ipswich |
| CCBC | Cape Cod Bird Club |
| CGB | Coast Guard Beach, Eastham |
| Corp. B. | Corporation Beach, Dennis |
| CP | Crooked Pond, Boxford |
| Cumb. Farms | Cumberland Farms, Middleboro |
| DFWS | Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary |
| DM | Dunback Meadow |
| DWMA | Delaney WMA, Stow, Bolton, Harvard |
| DWWS | Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary |
| EP | Eastern Point, Gloucester |
| FE | First Encounter Beach, Eastham |
| FH | Fort Hill, Eastham |
| FP | Fresh Pond, Cambridge |
| FPk | Franklin Park, Boston |
| G# | Gate #, Quabbin Res. |
| GMNWR | Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge |
| H. | Harbor |
| HP | Horn Pond, Woburn |
| HPt | Halibut Point, Rockport |
| HRWMA | High Ridge WMA, Gardner |
| I. | Island |
| IBA | Important Bird Area |
| IRWS | Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary |
| L. | Ledge |
| MAS | Mass Audubon |
| MBO | Bird Observatory, Manomet |
| MBWMA | Martin Burns WMA, Newbury |
| MI | Morris Island |
| MNWS | Marblehead Neck Wildlife Sanctuary |
| MP | Millennium Park, W. Roxbury |
| MSSF | Myles Standish State Forest, Plymouth |
| MtA | Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambr. |
| MV | Martha's Vineyard |
| NAC | Nine Acre Corner, Concord |
| Nbpt | Newburyport |
| ONWR | Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge |
| Pd | Pond |
| PG | Public Garden, Boston |
| PI | Plum Island |
| Pk | Park |
| Pont. | Pontoosuc Lake, Lanesboro |
| POP | Point of Pines, Revere |
| PR | Pinnacle Rock, Malden |
| P'town | Provincetown |
| R. | River |
| Res. | Reservoir |
| RKG | Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston |
| RP | Race Point, Provincetown |
| SB | South Beach, Chatham |
| SN | Sandy Neck, Barnstable |
| SP | State Park |
| SRV | Sudbury River Valley |
| SSBC | South Shore Bird Club |
| TASL | Take A Second Look, Boston Harbor Census |
| WBWS | Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary |
| WE | World's End, Hingham |
| WMA | Wildlife Management Area |
| WMWS | Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary |
| Wompatuck SP | Hingham, Cohasset, Scituate, Norwell |
| Worc. | Worcester |
| WSF | Willowdale State Forest, Ipswich |

Other Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| * | first state record (pending MARC review) |
| ! | subject to MARC review |
| ad | adult |
| au | heard / recorded |
| b | banded |
| br | breeding |
| cy | cycle (3cy = 3rd cycle) |
| d | dead |
| dk | dark (morph) |
| f | female |
| fl | fledgling |
| imm | immature |
| inj | injured |
| juv | juvenile |
| lt | light (morph) |
| m | male |
| MARC | Massachusetts Avian Records Committee |
| max | maximum |
| migr | migrating |
| n | nesting |
| nfc | nocturnal flight call |
| ph | photographed |
| pl | plumage |
| pr | pair |
| r | rescued |
| S | summer (1S = first summer) |
| subad | subadult |
| v.o. | various observers |
| W | winter (2W = second winter) |
| yg | young |
| # | additional observers |

## 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 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.

# ABOUT THE COVER

## Black-billed Cuckoo

The Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythropthalmus*) is a generally silent and secretive bird that has an amazing array of biological adaptations for its specialized breeding and feeding ecology. The sexes and juveniles are similar in plumage: drab brown tinged with olive above and light whitish-gray below, with a long tail with dull whitish spots, a dark decurved bill, and a red orbital ring. These characteristics help to distinguish it from its congener, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo *(C. americanus)*, that shows rufous in its primaries, has bold white tail spots, and a yellow lower mandible and orbital ring. The Black-billed Cuckoo shows no geographic variation in size or plumage and thus has no recognized subspecies. It is more closely related to the South American Gray-capped Cuckoo *(C. lansbergi)* than to the Yellow-billed Cuckoo with whose range it overlaps.

Black-billed Cuckoos breed from Alberta eastward across southern Canada to Nova Scotia and in the United States from Wyoming and Montana east through New England and south to Virginia, and farther south in the Appalachians. The breeding range covers more than one-third of the United States. In Massachusetts, it is an uncommon breeder, but may periodically be considerably more common in years when gypsy moth, tent caterpillar, or other caterpillar infestations occur. Black-billed Cuckoos are long-distance nocturnal migrants, wintering in South America as far south as Bolivia, but their cryptic plumage and behavior leaves their migration paths and winter distribution poorly known. In Massachusetts, they are considered uncommon to sometimes fairly common migrants. They tend to be late migrants, often not arriving until late May or early June. After their arrival, they appear to be somewhat nomadic, apparently searching for caterpillar infestations once they are on their breeding grounds. In fall, they migrate south from late August to occasionally as late as early October.

The breeding biology of Black-billed Cuckoos is not well known, but they are probably monogamous and single brooded. The most common call, given by both males and females, is a repetitive, somewhat liquid *cu-cu-cu-cu*, accompanied by tail pumping. They call most often during pair formation and nest building and regularly call at night during the breeding season. They also give a variety of calls and choking sounds during courtship and in alarm situations. Little is known about pair formation or nest building in this secretive species.

Black-billed Cuckoos prefer deciduous or deciduous-coniferous forests or woodland edges, often with water and scattered thickets nearby. In Massachusetts, they are particularly common breeders in the scrub oak forests and woodlands of Cape Cod and the Islands. Both parents may construct the usually flimsy nest, which is generally well concealed by foliage, three to six feet from the ground in forking branches. Nests are flimsy, shallow cups made of twigs and lined with leaves, pine needles, plant fibers, down, moss, or other fine materials. Sometimes, Black-billed Cuckoos are intraspecific brood parasites, laying their eggs in other Black-billed Cuckoo nests. They occasionally

lay eggs in the nests of other species such as American Robins, Gray Catbirds, or Northern Cardinals. This brood parasitism is apparently a response to abundant food as typified by extensive caterpillar infestations. The Black-billed Cuckoo egg color of blue green may be an example of egg mimicry as most of the species they parasitize lay blue green eggs.

In normal nesting situations, both parents develop brood patches, and both parents incubate the usual clutch of three to six eggs for the 10–11 days until hatching. The chicks are altricial, being nearly naked with eyes closed at hatching. Both parents feed the chicks crushed rather than regurgitated food. The young fledge in about a week, although they can't fly for another three weeks. This rapid growth is perhaps an adaptation to interspecific brood parasitism, when the young have to outgrow their foster siblings. The parents will defend the nest with aggressive postures, shoulders humped, tail fanned, and wings spread. They will sometimes even fly at intruders with bill open and tail spread while giving alarm calls. Chicks respond to intruders by remaining motionless with an erect posture, outstretched neck, and bill pointed to the sky, bittern-like.

Black-billed Cuckoos, when feeding on caterpillars or katydids, usually remain stationary until they sight their prey, then hop or run to glean prey from the branch or foliage. They may hover-glean foliage as well. They regularly rip open the tents of tent caterpillars, and sometimes even feed on the ground. They take mostly large prey such as caterpillars, crickets, grasshoppers, and butterflies. They also occasionally eat bird eggs and sometimes fruit in summer. Black-billed Cuckoos are versatile in their food preferences and will exploit almost any local concentrated prey. An interesting adaptation to extensive foraging on hairy caterpillars whose spines puncture the cuckoo's stomach lining and may obstruct digestion, is to slough off the stomach lining—spines and all—and periodically regurgitate it as a pellet.

Black-billed Cuckoo populations have generally declined, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, partially as the result of pesticide poisoning and reduced caterpillar availability due to extensive spraying. Predation is poorly known, but Black-billed Cuckoos are probably subject to the usual mammalian and avian predators, and many are killed in collisions with structures during migration. Their skulking behavior and dull plumage, however, probably help to reduce predation. Population trends are hard to follow because Black-billed Cuckoos are at least partially nomadic in their search for local outbreaks of caterpillars. We can only hope that populations of this secretive species will remain stable.

*William E. Davis, Jr.*

# ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST

## John Sill

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

# AT A GLANCE
## April 2018

WAYNE PETERSEN

This month's mystery bird should be a straightforward identification for anyone familiar with the species, even though the bird is not common in Massachusetts. Arguably the most prominent features of the mystery bird are its conspicuous white eye ring, tiny bill (for the size of the bird), relatively long tail, and uniform gray color. A careful look, especially at the online version in color, further gives a hint at some buffy markings on the folded wings.

Superficially, this bird resembles a Northern Mockingbird; however a mockingbird lacks the conspicuous eye ring, possesses conspicuous white wing bars, and has a longer and more down curved bill. Even the posture of the mystery bird is wrong for a mockingbird—a species that usually holds its tail elevated rather than pointing downward. The mystery species' bold eye ring, long tail, and even-colored back also vaguely suggest a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, but that species diminutive size, black-and-white tail, and super-fine bill at once remove it as a candidate.

Once Northern Mockingbird and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher are eliminated as identification possibilities, there really is no North American bird species other than Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*) that the mystery bird could be. If the wings were shown spread or in a side view, there would also be a buff-colored wing stripe running along the mid-wing, and the outer tail feathers would be white if the tail was not folded.

The Townsend's Solitaire is a casual and nearly annual late fall visitor to Massachusetts from the west that often lingers into winter, particularly in thickets where there are plenty of red cedar and other berries for them to eat. Most occurrences in the Commonwealth are from coastal areas. The author photographed this Townsend's Solitaire in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming on January 19, 2007.

*Wayne R. Petersen*

# AT A GLANCE

WAYNE PETERSEN

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

# MORE HOT BIRDS

A stunning adult male **Bullock's Oriole** appeared at Vi Patek's feeders in Nahant on April 20. It reappeared there the next day, to the pleasure of a crowd of birders, before leaving. Sean Williams took the photo on the left.

A **Swainson's Warbler** on Cape Cod, found by Peter Crosson on May 6, was the fifth documented record for the state. It was another one-day wonder, but several birders arrived in time to see it. Astonishingly, another one was well described from Amherst a few days earlier, but seen by only the birder who reported it, and not photographed. Neil Hayward took the photo on the right.

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**PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT BOSTON, MA**

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