

# BIRD OBSERVER

OF EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS



JUNE 1985

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# BIRD OBSERVER

## OF EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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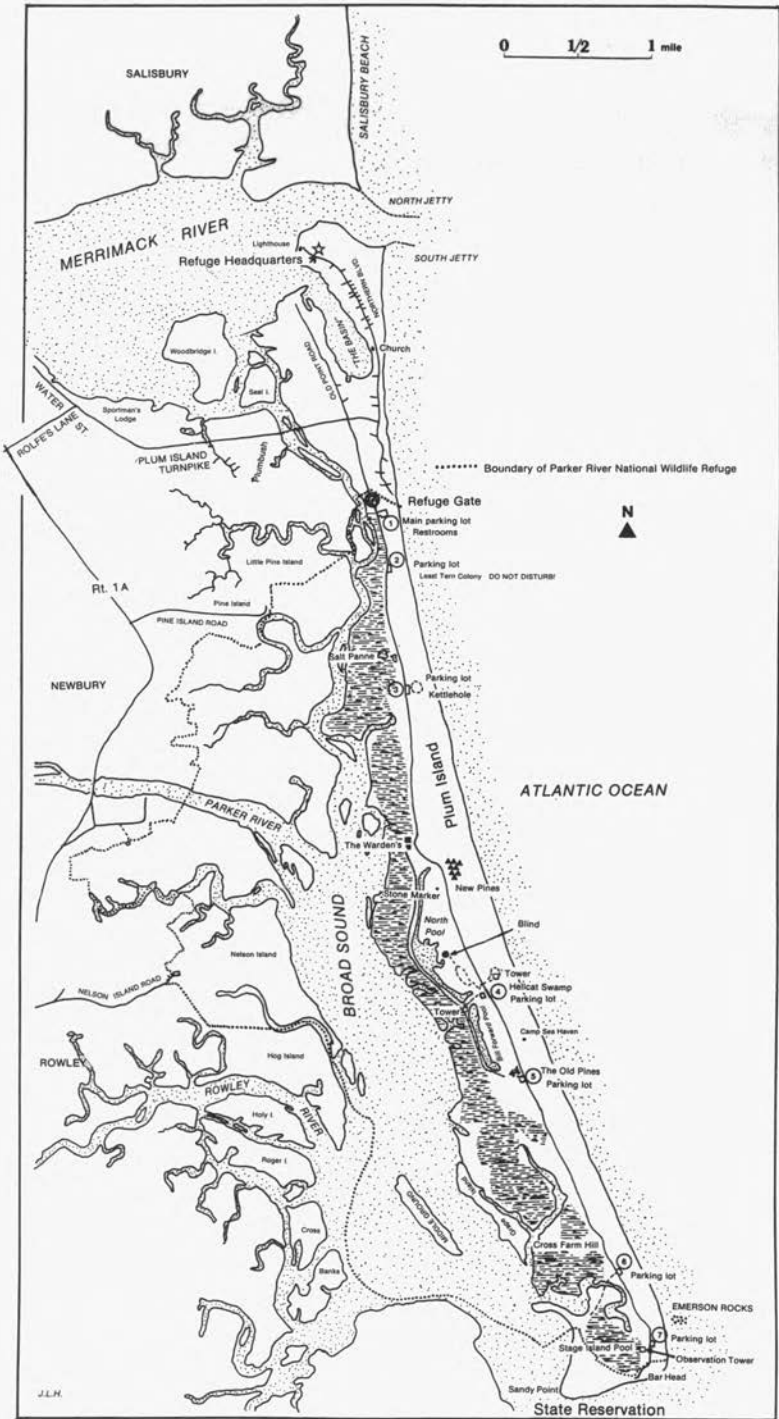
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## BIRDING PLUM ISLAND

by Richard A. Forster, Massachusetts Audubon Society

No other area in Massachusetts receives as intensive birdwatching coverage as Plum Island and the surrounding environs of Newburyport and Salisbury. The reason becomes obvious once the observer makes the initial visit. Plum Island is a classic barrier beach with open ocean and a sandy beach on the seaward side. An extensive dune system vegetated predominantly with beach plum, bayberry, and other shrubby trees runs the length of the island fronting the beach. On the landward (western) side of the road that bisects the island is an extensive salt marsh. Three manmade wetland impoundments provide good habitat for marsh and waterbirds. There are two areas of planted pines located on the main portion of the island that provide additional habitat. The most interesting seasons are the spring and fall migration. The winter landscape can be bleak, but there is always the possibility of the one rarity that can turn an otherwise dismal day into a lifelong memory.

The island can be divided into three entities. The northern quarter of the island is densely populated with summer and year-round cottages. Birding opportunities are limited here, but brief stops can be productive on occasion, especially in winter. The major portion of the island south of the access road from Newburyport is the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge administered by the Department of the Interior, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. There is an information booth at the entrance to the refuge which dispenses bird checklists, rules and regulations pamphlets, maps, and other pertinent information. A birdwatching permit is also available (at the booth or the headquarters) that allows parking and admittance to otherwise restricted areas at designated times of year. The permit is issued for a calendar year and is free of charge. Birdwatchers without a permit who violate these privileges are subject to substantial fines (which are enforced). The federal refuge is the destination of most birdwatchers and other outdoors buffs. The refuge provides limited parking, and once the 350-vehicle capacity is reached, the refuge is closed. This is standard procedure on summer weekends - and even on weekdays - when the weather is good. Increasingly, the visitor will find the refuge filled to capacity and closed early in the day on weekends throughout the year when ideal weather conditions exist. However, the gate usually is reopened by 3:00 P.M., even during the summer. Refuge hours are from dawn to dusk. Additional information can be obtained at the refuge headquarters on Northern Boulevard, Plum Island, Newburyport, MA 01950; telephone (617) 465-5753.

The southernmost seventy-two acres of the island comprise the Plum Island State Reservation administered by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management. The parking capacity of the two small lots at this end is about fifty cars. This area is primarily a beach area, but a self-guided nature trail is also to be found here. The rules and regulations are generally in keeping with federal standards.

The approach to the island. Plum Island can be reached from Newburyport on only one road - the Plum Island Turnpike. From the intersection of Rolfe's Lane and Water Street along the edge of Newburyport Harbor,

proceed east toward Plum Island. Almost immediately on the left is the Sportsman's Lodge, an eating establishment with a large parking lot. The edge of the parking area is an excellent vantage point for checking the harbor for shorebirds, gulls, and waterfowl on rising and falling tides. About half a mile farther along, the Plum Island Airport is located on the right. The field across from the airport is worth checking for shorebirds at high tide in spring and again from mid-July through October. The field is usually mowed in late August, and shorebirds are more easily seen then. Species most frequently encountered here are both yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, and Pectoral Sandpiper (fall). Upland Sandpiper, which breeds nearby, is always a possibility. Rarities that have been seen here include Ruff and Buff-breasted and Baird's sandpipers. During high tides in late summer and fall, a walk along the edge of the field and the harbor will likely produce Marsh Wren and Sharp-tailed and Seaside (uncommon) sparrows. Be prepared to get your feet wet.

Farther along the road there is a pink house on the right. Turn right 0.3 mile past the pink house on a well-concealed dirt track. This is the area referred to as Plumbush by local birders. This is another location for resting shorebirds at high tide, and Whimbrel is often encountered here in the fall. A dirt track leads into the salt marsh. Sharp-tailed Sparrow is found along the edges of the tidal creeks in late spring and summer, and Willet, which nest in the marsh, may fly around noisily protesting your approach. Upland Sandpiper is often found in this area in summer.

As you approach the bridge leading to Plum Island proper, pull off to a small parking area on the right immediately before the bridge. Walk to the top of the bridge where the elevation affords good vistas of the marsh to the north and south. This is an excellent place to search for Snowy Owl in winter. Look for them perched on hunting blinds, hay staddles, or other marsh debris that affords elevation. This is also a good location for Snow Geese in April and Glossy Ibis during the latter part of April.

Continuing over the bridge toward the island proper, the first (and only) road to the right leads to the entrance of the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge (PRNWR).

#### The North End of the Island.

Before entering the Parker River Refuge, the observer may opt for checking the northern portion of the island. A cursory investigation of the area may take less than half an hour while an in-depth search should take less than two hours. Shortly beyond the turnoff to the PRNWR, the road makes a 90° turn to the left (north). There is a small parking area just at the bend in the road. Park here and walk to the beach to scan the ocean.

The best seasons for birding here are fall, winter, and especially spring. Loons, grebes and sea ducks are frequently seen. Northern Gannet is fairly routine in fall (October to early November) and again in spring (April to early May) especially when winds are onshore.

During strong northeast winds in fall, Black-legged Kittiwake and alcids are possible. From here, proceed to the northern end of the island where there is a large parking lot near the Coast Guard Station (just beyond the PRNWR headquarters). This area affords a view of the outer harbor and the two jetties embracing the mouth of the Merrimack River. Viewing the outer harbor in fall, winter, and spring should produce Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, and Oldsquaw. Gulls often trade back and forth at the mouth of the river. Bonaparte's Gull can be seen both spring and fall and occasionally in winter. Alert observers will be on the lookout for Little Gull and Common Black-headed Gull or perhaps something even rarer - Ross' Gull has been seen here on more than one occasion. In winter, a walk to the jetty will almost certainly produce Iceland Gull, Purple Sandpiper, and an occasional Glaucous Gull. A small flock of Common Eider is usually present here in winter, and the odd King Eider is always possible. Rarer sea ducks and alcids are occasionally seen. On the walk to the jetty, Horned Lark, Snow Bunting, and an occasional Lapland Longspur may be found,

When departing the north end, a quick look at "the Basin" may be in order. It is located 0.8 mile south of the refuge headquarters on the west side of the road. Access is from the church parking lot. This is a good location for viewing shorebirds in spring and fall on rising and falling tides when the extensive flats of the harbor are not fully exposed. It is a good location for Hudsonian Godwit in fall and Iceland Gull at high tide in winter.

#### The Parker River Refuge.

At the entrance, ask for maps, regulations, and a bird list. Just beyond the gate is the main parking lot. Birders usually stop here and scan the marsh. Restrooms and drinking water are available here, but this building is closed in winter. (Future plans call for a year-round facility.) An active Purple Martin colony is adjacent to the restrooms, and others are obvious farther down the island. The moor just south of the parking area has breeding Horned Lark and Savannah Sparrow, and Vesper Sparrow has bred here and may still occur on migration. If you arrive early in the morning, take a quick look at the two shrubby hillocks just south and to the west of the parking lot. If a good migration is in progress, these usually harbor an assortment of passerine species and may dictate how you wish to birdwatch on the remainder of the island. Continuing south, the road roughly bisects the island with salt marsh on the right and dunes with thickets on the left. In late fall and early winter, watch for Snowy Owl perched upon the dunes. The first landmark is Parking Lot #2 on the left. This is usually closed from May to September to prevent access and avoid disturbance to the Least Tern colony located on the outer beach.

The Salt Panne or Shorebird Pool. The next obvious landmark is on the right about one mile south of the main parking lot. Variouslly known to birders as the salt flats or salt pans, whatever its name, this area is one of the main focal points of activity on the island. Shorebirds roost here at high tide, and the road has been widened to provide live nature study for birdwatchers and other onlookers. The prime feature here is shorebirds in May and from July to October. The spring migration is fairly routine with few oddities noted. Wilson's Phalarope,



*Spotted Redshank at Salt Panne  
July 28, 1981*

*Photo by Joyce Cloughly*

which breeds in the marshes, and White-rumped Sandpiper are regularly seen. Snowy Egret and other herons are routine and increase in numbers as the season progresses. Beginning in July and continuing into fall, an increasing number of shorebirds are present. Among the first migrants to arrive are Short-billed Dowitchers followed closely by two of the regular specialties - Hudsonian Godwit and Stilt Sandpiper. The Hudsonian Godwit is invariably present until at least mid-September, but Stilt Sandpiper numbers build quickly to a peak in early August and dwindle shortly thereafter. Another feature is the Long-billed Dowitcher. The first arrivals may appear in late July, but they can be readily found, if identified, from mid-August to late September. Both Stilt Sandpiper and Long-billed Dowitcher prefer to feed in brackish pools and tend to shun the mudflats of the harbor. Consequently, a visit here when the tide is low in the harbor will reveal these species still present. Other uncommon species which can be expected but not always seen are Red Knot, Lesser Golden-Plover, White-rumped and Western sandpiper. To provide a complete list of shorebirds that have been recorded here would read like a "Who's Who" of shorebirds in Massachusetts. Suffice to say that the possibilities are broad.

Another midsummer speciality is the heron congregation, especially in early morning. Snowy Egret is numerous, and Glossy Ibis less so but still regular. Little Blue Heron is scarce but does occur occasionally. This pool is an excellent place to study the plumage differences between adults and immatures. Sharp-tailed Sparrow is another species encountered around the edge of the pool. They are usually seen flying feebly for short distances but are occasionally found feeding on exposed mud where





*Snowy Owl on Dune at Plum Island*

*Photo by John Gavin  
Courtesy of MAS*

they scurry mouselike between grassy clumps. Small numbers of gulls and terns rest with the shorebirds and are worthy of scrutiny for something different.

The Kettle Hole is found shortly beyond the salt pans at Parking Lot #3. A circular trail through this densely wooded area is worth a look-see during migration season although this writer has experienced a singular lack of success here even during periods of heavy migration. Across the road from the parking lot is another marsh pool that often has the same birds as the Shorebird Pool. This pool is smaller and has fewer birds which are farther away but is still worth checking.

The Warden's. Another mile down the island is a maintenance area (also known as sub-headquarters) with a small parking lot (permit required). This is a likely location for sparrows in the fall, especially the more uncommon, open-ground species like White-crowned, Clay-colored, and Lark. The small pond and surrounding salt marsh are worth scanning for shorebirds and herons, while the bushes often have landbirds. There are several Purple Martin colonies here, and Cliff Swallows have nested on the building.

Beyond the maintenance area and extending south for about two miles are two freshwater impoundments - North Pool and Bill Forward Pool. The main access point is the dike separating the two at Hellcat Swamp (Parking Lot #4). Before reaching Hellcat Swamp, there are several areas worth examining according to the season. Scan the drier portions of the east side of the road in fall for Whimbrel, Lesser Golden-Plover, or Buff-breasted Sandpiper. In spring, the wet, flooded portions are worth

checking for Common Snipe, Pectoral Sandpiper, both yellowlegs, or a possible Ruff. Parking is allowed in winter (again, permit required) along the side of the road near the prominent stone marker designating the Newbury/Rowley town line. This affords access to trails meandering through the New Pines. In some years Northern Saw-whet and/or Long-eared owls are present here as are winter finches, especially crossbills, and Red-breasted Nuthatches. In keeping with the vagaries of these northern visitors, in some years a walk through the area will produce virtually nothing.

Hellcat Swamp is another prime birding location, and deciding what to do first is dictated by the time of year and the observer's main interests. A series of trails and boardwalks lead through Hellcat Swamp including a self-guiding nature trail (pamphlet available). Fundamental restrooms are also available here.

A viewing platform located along the boardwalk on the high dune immediately to the east of Hellcat Swamp has proved a reliable spot for hawk-watching enthusiasts in recent years during spring migration. Favorable westerly winds in April bring hawks bounding over the dunes often close enough that binoculars are useless. The bulk of the migrants consists of Sharp-shinned Hawk and American Kestrel with lesser numbers of Merlin, Northern Harrier, Osprey, and Cooper's Hawk, with always a chance for a Peregrine Falcon. In fall there is no definitive hawk flight but Peregrine, Merlin, and Sharp-shinned Hawk can be encountered often in desperate pursuit of a shorebird or duck.

The wooded thickets on both sides of the road offer suitable habitat for migrant vireos, warblers, thrushes, and flycatchers. Because the emergence of the vegetation is retarded by the cool ocean water, the normal May migrants tend to be more prevalent in the latter half of May unlike the situation in warmer inland localities, which foliate earlier. Often there is a wave of migrants in early June that features such uncommon species as Mourning Warbler and the flycatchers, especially Yellow-bellied and Olive-sided. Unlike the late spring migration, the typical April migrants featuring kinglets, Hermit Thrush, White-throated Sparrow, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker occur on the same time schedule as in inland areas. Fall migrants become obvious in mid-August with the best variety usually occurring in late August or early September. The uncommon Cape May and Bay-breasted warblers are often a major component of this flight. Fall migration provides a better chance for seeing such uncommon, or overlooked, species with a more westerly breeding distribution. Philadelphia Vireo and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher are two species which come immediately to mind that can reasonably be expected, and a fortunate observer might glimpse a Connecticut Warbler or a chat.

A well-marked trail leads to an observation blind that overlooks the freshwater marsh. Ducks can be seen from here in spring, and marsh birds are occasionally heard and more rarely seen. Seed is spread on the ground, and this attracts blackbirds and sparrows. Yellow-headed Blackbird has been seen here on several occasions in late August or early September. A boardwalk extends off the trail and leads in a loop through the marsh. Marsh Wren is a conspicuous summer resident along the trail. Rails and Least Bittern are resident but much more difficult to see.

The dike at Hellcat separating two Impoundments leads to an observation tower. This dike offers sufficient elevation to view both impounded areas. The tower is very shaky in moderate winds or when people are climbing. The southern (Bill Forward) pool is the more interesting of the two. The water level is usually lower, and extensive "flats" are present. During spring and fall, various ducks (teal, pintail, and shoveler) can usually be found, and from July to October numerous shorebirds rest and feed here at high tide. Most of the commoner shorebirds occur here in varying numbers, and Stilt, Buff-breasted, and Baird's sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitcher, and Lesser Golden-Plover can be expected especially in the late August and early September period. Limited access is allowed by permit along the north and south dikes from July 15 to September 30 allowing closer examination of the shorebirds. However, the lighting conditions can prove difficult in the morning. A check of the marsh pools behind the dike may yield a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron.

The Old Pines. Once the birding opportunities at Hellcat Swamp are exhausted, it is time to move on to the next destination - the Old Pines by Parking Lot #5. This area doesn't offer any new birding possibilities, but one advantage for the observer here is that the pines are open and the birds easier to see. The trail leading through the pines can be good for landbirds. The marsh and pools are worth a scan from the edge of the parking lot or from the pines. Herons and egrets are frequently seen, and Tricolored Heron is a possibility. Ducks often concentrate here in late March and April. During high tides in November the number of American Black Ducks can be impressive.

Cross Farm Hill. Continuing on, the next mile or so borders that salt marsh and is generally unproductive but is worth an occasional glance. A prominent grassy knoll, Cross Farm Hill, is worth checking in the fall. Numerous Canada Geese browse on the hill, and a small group of Snow Geese frequently accompanies them in late fall. The area appears to be attractive to raptors with Northern Harrier frequently present except in summer and an occasional Rough-legged Hawk in winter. Just south of Cross Farm Hill is a small marsh pool which can be easily viewed from the road. The pool and surrounding marsh are surprisingly good for shorebirds in season at high tide and for ducks and herons.

Stage Island Pool is the next birding hotspot on the island with access at two points - Parking Lots #6 and #7. Water conditions here can vary dramatically from year to year depending on climatological conditions and/or management decisions. Normal conditions are wet in spring and early summer and drying up with edge and muddy flats later in summer, continuing into fall. The winter's ice usually breaks up in March at which time ducks begin arriving. During April the usual assortment of freshwater ducks is present with sporadic visits by Bufflehead, scaup, and others. Ruddy Duck usually put in an appearance and may remain to breed if conditions are right. By May, marsh birds appear. Rails, Marsh Wren, Least Bittern, possibly American Bittern, and Common Moorhen may be heard or seen. On cool, cloudy days in May, swallows can be found in numbers skimming over the surface of the water. The summer months can be exciting with roosting or feeding gulls, terns, shorebirds, and herons all present. The array of rarities belonging to these species

groups that have been recorded here over the years is seemingly endless. The shorebird group is probably best represented with Buff-breasted and Baird's sandpipers regular if the proper water levels exist. Viewing is required from both access points because each affords different views of the rather expansive area. The tower at Parking Lot #7 is a must for observation, and a telescope is a necessity. Generally speaking, the area seen from the tower is more productive, especially for herons and terns. [A note of caution: in the summer months beach users prefer the southern end, and the parking lots fill early.]

Stage Island Pool is currently the site of an evening roost for herons and egrets. More birds can be seen in an evening flying in than one can observe in an entire summer scanning the marshes. Little Blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, Glossy Ibis, and Great Egret are usually present in the congregation.

As fall approaches, the ducks begin to increase. American Wigeon sometimes occur in some numbers, and rarely, a Eurasian Wigeon is found. During October and November, ducks of various species dominate the scene.

A walkway leads from Parking Lot #7 across the dune area to the beach where it affords a view of Emerson Rocks. The rocks are completely covered at high tide, and even in winter; this seems to be the worst time to look for birds. In summer, Red Knot and Ruddy Turnstone are frequently seen feeding on the exposed rocks but are surprisingly inconspicuous as they walk about. In fall, winter, and spring look for loons, grebes, sea ducks (especially scoters) and gulls. Harlequin Duck and King Eider are seen here rarely, and Purple Sandpiper is infrequent on the rocks.

Plum Island State Reservation. Shortly after departing from Parking Lot #7, you leave the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge and enter the state reservation, also known as Sandy Point. Park at the southern terminus of the road and walk out along the beach. A small colony of Least Terns nests here, and a pair or two of Piping Plover can usually be found. Although the state reservation is infrequently birded, it can be a surprisingly productive area for shorebirds in August and September. There are usually some roosting terns along the water's edge at the higher tides and among them, a few Roseate Terns. Royal Tern is seen rather frequently in summer, either feeding offshore or resting on exposed sandbars at lower tides. Look for shorebirds feeding along the tidal wrack. As you continue along the beach, you will come to a cove that harbors a good variety of shorebirds at low tide. From here, you can return along the beach or along the old road, now a nature trail, which leads from the back side of Stage Island to the state reservation parking lot. One final thought: the woody hillside (known as Bar Head) adjacent to the parking lot is worth a look-see, especially in fall. It can be surveyed either along the trail or from the perimeter.

#### Helpful hints.

1. Landbirds can occur anywhere on the island from the hillocks near the the main parking lot at the entrance all the way down the island to Bar Head on the state reservation.

2. Sparrows are best seen along the roadsides and around the parking lots.
3. In the fall keep a close lookout for exposed perches where a Western Kingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, or even a Red-headed Woodpecker might be seen; in winter, do the same for Northern Shrike.
4. During summer or good weekends in spring and fall, be prepared for crowds and arrange to arrive early to gain entrance to the refuge. Also in summer from July to mid-August, the greenhead flies can be unbearable. Long sleeves and repellent are advised.
5. Obey all rules and regulations of the refuge. Report sightings of rarities to the attendant at the main gate.

RICHARD A. FORSTER has estimated that during the more than twenty-five years that he has been studying the birds of New England, he has visited Plum Island close to a thousand times. Associated with Massachusetts Audubon Society for many years as bird expert, biologist, natural historian, and tour leader, Dick is best known for his work on the records of Massachusetts birds, the Breeding Bird Atlas, the Tern Project, and for his addiction to the birds of Heard's Pond and "The Valley" - Sudbury, of course.

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FOR SEAGULLS AND SUNDRY OTHER FOWL OF THE SEA AND SHORE

by Bradford G. Blodget, State Ornithologist,  
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

A question I am frequently asked goes something like this: "What does the State Ornithologist do?" Actually, the greatest amount of my time and effort is spent collecting information and keeping tabs on the approximately 210 species of birds, particularly the rarer ones, that nest in Massachusetts. With this intelligence, effective recommendations can be made for their conservation, and I can answer other frequent queries like, "Where have all the bluebirds gone?"

While various specialized investigations and censuses of the state's avifauna are routinely handled, 1984 turned out to be anything but routine. One morning last spring, Ralph Andrews, a coastal bird specialist for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), telephoned me to announce that the service was undertaking a colonial waterbird census along the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Virginia to update a census done in 1977. He asked me whether I would be willing to coordinate the census in Massachusetts, thus setting in motion what has turned out to be probably the largest and most comprehensive bird census handled to date by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Non-game and Endangered Species Program (DFW - NESP).

Plundered by plume hunters in the 1890s, forced by human encroachment to abandon many of their natural nesting habitats and battered by the onslaught of environmental toxicants, the colonial waterbirds are survivors. Some species are still threatened today, while others - witness the gulls - rank among textbook examples of biological capitalists and flourish in vast numbers, scavenging the byproducts of the seafood industry and our "throw-away" society. The colonial waterbirds include cormorants, storm-petrels, egrets, herons, ibises, gulls, terns, and skimmers. They nest in the spring and summer in colonies, primarily on beaches and islands found along the coast. The same colonial habits that rendered them conspicuous and vulnerable targets for commercial exploitation - their dense concentrations in time and space during the nest season - make colonial waterbirds as a group relatively easy to census. The greatest difficulty is access to their remote nesting sites, the very same difficulty that once helped save some species from the plume hunters.

The group has been subdivided into colonial seabirds (cormorants, storm-petrels, gulls, terns, and skimmers), which spend most of their lives upon the ocean, and colonial wading birds (egrets, herons, and ibises), which frequent marshes and mudflats of the estuarine environment. Colonial seabirds in Massachusetts generally lay their eggs in simple ground nests. These may be the shallow scrapes in the sand made by terns and skimmers or bowls of interwoven grasses and twigs fashioned by gulls and cormorants. One exception is the rare Leach's Storm-Petrel



*Gulls swirl noisily overhead as the author searches for gull nests at Milk Island in Rockport.*

*Photo by Bill Byrne. Courtesy of DFW.*

(*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*), which deposits its eggs underground at the end of arm-length-deep burrows. Colonial wading birds tend to nest off the ground in dense thickets of shrubs and low trees.

There are three reasons why censuses of colonial waterbirds are done. First and most fundamentally, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) is charged with the responsibility for conservation and management of all wildlife in the best interests of the citizenry. Colonial waterbirds, like all wildlife, are strictly protected under the laws of the federal and state governments, and are maintained in what amounts to a public trust. Unlike most natural resources that stay put in one place and can be measured, wildlife resources, especially birds, move about constantly and increase and decrease. To accomplish its mandate, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife must periodically take stock of the resources involved and undertake status evaluations. Knowledge of the locations, types, and numbers of colonial waterbirds is essential if we are to protect the rarer forms effectively or to act in the event certain populations increase to the point where they constitute a threat to public health and safety.

Second, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife needs good data on the whereabouts of colonial waterbirds in order to comment responsibly on environmental reviews of proposed activities. In working closely with project planners, efforts are made to avoid or mitigate any damage to colonial waterbirds or their habitat.

And third, colonial waterbirds live at the tops of food chains and are considered to be potentially useful as environmental barometers indicating the health of ecosystems. Good baseline data on population levels allow biologists to monitor fluctuations over a period of time. When population levels swing to extreme highs or lows, it may indicate a malfunction in the system. This was graphically demonstrated in the 1960s when some species, their tissues contaminated by pesticides, experienced reproductive failures.

Counting all the colonial waterbirds along the Massachusetts coastline is not something to be done in one day's work. Of all the states from Maine to Virginia, Massachusetts has the second longest coastline, about 1200 miles. With the assistance of Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Recreational Vehicles Commissioner Walter E. Bickford, an agreement was worked out between Division of Marine and Recreational Vehicles Director Fred Nataloni and Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Director Richard Cronin, under which a boat and crew were placed in dedicated service for a ten-day period, transporting Fisheries and Wildlife personnel to approximately thirty nesting islands, from Egg Rock, Nahant, northerly to the Dry Salvages off Rockport. In addition, Alan McGroary, Director of the Division of Law Enforcement, made available the marine patrol in Buzzards Bay to assist personnel with transportation to the outer Elizabeth Islands in Gosnold.

Many other organizations became involved in the effort. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service itself provided a plane and pilot for aerial photography and manpower to census Monomoy Wilderness Area in Chatham, Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Essex County, and with special permission from the United States Navy, remote Nomans Land, a lonely ocean outpost three miles southwest of Martha's Vineyard. In addition, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service reimbursed three-quarters of the state's cost under provisions of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act.

The National Park Service assigned a resource specialist, park rangers, and summer seasonal personnel to assist with the count along the great outer beach from Eastham to Provincetown within the Cape Cod National Seashore. Many of our state's tern colonies have been carefully censused annually since 1974 by summer season tern wardens hired by the Massachusetts Audubon Society and other organizations. Massachusetts Audubon personnel provided important coverage at eighteen tern colonies between Scituate and Eastham. The Trustees of Reservations, which independently operates tern conservation and management programs on its own properties at Crane's Beach (Ipswich), Cape Poge (Edgartown), and Coate (Nantucket), joined in the cooperative effort, providing coverage at some sixteen colonies.

Dr. Jeremy Hatch of the Biology Department, University of Massachusetts Harbor Campus, in addition to flying with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for aerial surveys, provided data on some twenty



## Colonial Waterbird Populations in Massachusetts: DFW Summary Data 1984

| SPECIES                   | NUMBER OF COLONIES |  | TOTAL         | RANGE IN COLONY SIZE |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--|---------------|----------------------|
|                           |                    |  | NESTING PAIRS |                      |
| Great Cormorant           | 1                  |  | 1             | -                    |
| Double-crested Cormorant  | 14                 |  | 4957          | 33 - 1135            |
| Leach's Storm-Petrel      | 1                  |  | 10            | -                    |
| Great Egret               | 4                  |  | 5             | 1 - 2                |
| Snowy Egret               | 14                 |  | 888           | 1 - 350              |
| Little Blue Heron         | 2                  |  | 5             | 1 - 4                |
| Cattle Egret              | 1                  |  | 2             | -                    |
| Black-crowned Night-Heron | 16                 |  | 1223          | 5 - 270              |
| Glossy Ibis               | 4                  |  | 27            | 1 - 11               |
| Laughing Gull             | 2                  |  | 1054          | 254 - 800            |
| Common Black-headed Gull  | 1                  |  | 1             | -                    |
| Herring Gull              | 63                 |  | 35655         | 1 - 13951            |
| Great Black-backed Gull   | 56                 |  | 10768         | 1 - 4933             |
| Roseate Tern              | 8                  |  | 1820          | 2 - 1650             |
| Common Tern               | 26                 |  | 6953          | 1 - 1540             |
| Arctic Tern               | 4                  |  | 16            | 1 - 6                |
| Least Tern                | 46                 |  | 2515          | 1 - 509              |
| Black Skimmer             | 2                  |  | 3             | 1 - 2                |

Comparison of Massachusetts DFW Coastal Colonial Waterbird  
 Nesting Surveys, 1977 and 1984  
 All reported results are in pairs.

| SPECIES                               | NUMBER OF COLONIES |      | TOTAL NESTING PAIRS |       | MEAN COLONY SIZE |      |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|------|---------------------|-------|------------------|------|
|                                       | 1977               | 1984 | 1977                | 1984  | 1977             | 1984 |
| Great Cormorant <sup>1</sup>          | -                  | 1    | -                   | 11    | -                | 1    |
| Double-crested Cormorant              | 11                 | 14   | 1760                | 4957  | 160              | 354  |
| Leach's Storm-Petrel                  | 1                  | 1    | 20+ <sup>2</sup>    | 10    | 20               | 10   |
| Great Egret                           | 3                  | 4    | 6                   | 5     | 2                | 1    |
| Snowy Egret                           | 12                 | 14   | 459                 | 888   | 38               | 63   |
| Little Blue Heron                     | 4                  | 2    | 19                  | 5     | 4                | 3    |
| Tricolored Heron                      | 1                  | -    | 1                   | -     | 1                | -    |
| Cattle Egret                          | 1                  | 1    | 10                  | 2     | 10               | 2    |
| Black-crowned Night-Heron             | 14                 | 16   | 1958                | 1223  | 140              | 76   |
| Glossy Ibis                           | 3 <sup>3</sup>     | 4    | 112                 | 27    | 56               | 7    |
| Laughing Gull                         | 1                  | 2    | 200                 | 1054  | 200              | 527  |
| Common Black-headed Gull <sup>1</sup> | -                  | 1    | -                   | 11    | -                | 1    |
| Herring Gull                          | 61                 | 63   | 35251               | 35655 | 577              | 566  |
| Great Black-backed Gull               | 50                 | 56   | 7344                | 10768 | 147              | 192  |
| Roseate Tern                          | 6                  | 8    | 1327                | 1820  | 221              | 228  |
| Common Tern                           | 30                 | 26   | 4475                | 6953  | 149              | 267  |
| Arctic Tern                           | 7                  | 4    | 73                  | 16    | 10               | 4    |
| Least Tern                            | 32                 | 45   | 1551                | 2415  | 48               | 58   |
| Black Skimmer                         | -                  | 2    | -                   | 3     | -                | 2    |

<sup>1</sup>First nesting record for Massachusetts.

<sup>2</sup>Based on previous years' estimates.

<sup>3</sup>Includes one colony site at which the species may have bred but for which no estimate was available.



*Gulls and cormorants nest among the rocks at Milk Island in great density. Nests are bulky affairs of grass and twigs wedged between the rocks. Photo by Bill Byrne. Courtesy of DFW.*

colonies scattered among the Boston Harbor islands and nine others of the South Shore and around Buzzards Bay. Kathleen Parson, a research affiliate at Manomet Bird Observatory, provided 1984 census data from Clark's Island, Plymouth. In all, some sixty persons were directly involved, contributing an aggregate total of some 145 man-days of effort.

By far the most abundant of the colonial waterbirds are the gulls, collectively known to most persons as simply "seagulls." The most common and widespread is the familiar Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), with an estimated nesting population of 35,655 pairs distributed among 63 colonies. This many gulls, wingtip to wingtip, would stretch fifty-four miles, about from Boston to the Cape Cod Canal! Included in the total is the Monomoy Wilderness Area, where 14,521 pairs were estimated, possibly the largest Herring Gull colony in North America. Other large colonies included Clark's Island, Plymouth (1813 pairs), Middle Brewster Island, Boston (1400 pairs), Milk Island, Rockport (1330 pairs), Nomans Land, Chilmark (1200 pairs), and Straitsmouth Island, Rockport (1135 pairs). Virtually unknown as a nesting species in Massachusetts prior to 1930, the population increased steadily until about 1965, after which it has remained high and essentially stable. Unfortunately, such enormous populations are not achieved without some cost. Other colonial nesting species, particularly terns, have been adversely affected as the more dominant gulls have usurped nesting islands and systematically taken control of more and more nesting space. Gulls, known to eat the chicks of other birds, may even be partly to blame for the decline and disappearance of the Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) in some areas. The Piping Plover is currently being proposed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as an endangered and threatened species.



A gull nest is checked. A special egg gauge is used to distinguish between clutches of Herring and Great Black-backed gull eggs. Slightly smaller, the Herring Gull eggs readily slip through the gauge.

Photo by Bill Byrne. Courtesy of DFW.

Closely tied to the Herring Gull and usually nesting in close association with it is the Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*), found to number 10,768 pairs at fifty-six sites. Large colonies were found at Monomoy (4933 pairs), Muskeget Island, Nantucket (750 pairs), and Milk Island, Rockport (700 pairs). This gull, the largest species in the world and a particularly powerful and aggressive type, also arrived in the state about 1930 but increased much more gradually than the Herring Gull, reaching only some 2575 pairs by 1965. However, since 1965 the Great Black-backed Gull seems to have expanded much more dramatically, possibly at some expense of the Herring Gull. Our findings this year indicate a 47 percent increase since 1977.

The Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*) is basically a warm-water gull that appears here only in the summer. The Bay State's migratory nesting group seems to be a specialized cold-water-adapted population that survives disjunct from the main range extending from New Jersey southward. Its fortunes have risen and fallen over the years. Numbers expanded at Muskeget Island from 1900 to a peak of 20,000 pairs in the 1940s after which numbers dwindled to a handful in the early 1970s. With Herring and Great Black-backed gulls firmly in control at Muskeget Island, Laughing Gulls shifted to Monomoy Island, where 200 pairs nested in

1977. Further improvement was evident in 1984 with 800 pairs at Monomoy and 254 pairs at an additional site in Eastham. It was among the Laughing Gulls that a pair of Common Black-headed Gulls (*Larus ridibundus*), a European form, turned up nesting for the first time in the state.

The four species of nesting terns have received the greatest amount of attention over the years. By far the most abundant type has always been the Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*). At its zenith around 1940, the population reached 30,000 pairs, but as gulls inexorably rose to dominate the scene, and the activities of man further encroached upon nesting areas, the Common Tern fell upon harder times. Since 1972, the population has fluctuated between 4000 and 8000 pairs, with 6953 pairs counted in 1984. About 68 percent of these birds are contained in only four colonies at Plymouth Beach, Nauset-New Island in Eastham, Monomoy in Chatham, and Gray's Beach in Yarmouth.

The Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*) has declined approximately 60 percent from an estimated peak of 5000 pairs in the 1930s but seems to have stabilized during the last decade at about 1500 to 2000 pairs. In 1984, about 1820 pairs were estimated with 1650 pairs (91 percent) concentrated at Bird Island in Marion, the largest colony of this rare bird in the Western Hemisphere. Because of its global rarity and its concentration in only a few large colonies around the world, mostly in the tropics, some have suggested listing the Roseate Tern as a threatened species.

The Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) has always maintained a small outpost population, the southernmost in the world, in Massachusetts. Although never exceeding 250 pairs, the population had shrunk to fifty-three pairs by 1978 and, unfortunately, the downward trend continued into 1984 with only sixteen pairs counted. Being at the fringe of its circumpolar range, the Arctic Tern may not find conditions in Massachusetts entirely to its liking.

The fourth species of nesting tern is the Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*). This small, yellow-billed variety, almost exterminated near the turn of the century, has slowly and steadily increased over the last decade, attaining a historic high of 2415 pairs in 1984, a 56 percent increase since 1977. Its improved status suggests it has been a chief beneficiary of tern management efforts. String and post fences are erected around nesting areas on bare, sandy beaches by wardens from the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the Trustees of Reservations, and other organizations. Such "symbolic fencing" serves to divert over-sand vehicle and pedestrian beach traffic that can unwittingly intrude upon and demolish a colony. The previous three larger types of terns have not benefited as directly from these efforts, since they generally eschew mainland nesting sites, retiring instead to islands where they must face tough competition from gulls for space.

The Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) is truly in the midst of a population boom. After tripling between 1972 and 1977, census data for 1984 show it has again tripled, reaching 4957 pairs at fourteen colonies! Twelve of these cormorant colonies, harboring about 75 percent of the birds, are located in the Boston Harbor area northward, with the largest groups found at Little Calf Island (971 pairs)



The most abundant nesting heron in Massachusetts is the Black-crowned Night-Heron.

Photo by Bill Byrne. Courtesy of DFW.

and Shag Rocks (886 pairs) in Boston, and at Milk Island, Rockport (717 pairs). The largest colony, however, occurs far to the south at the Weecket Islands in Gosnold. Numbering 1135 pairs, this colony also has the distinction of being probably the southernmost colony in New England. Embedded within this colony, Jeremy Hatch discovered a pair of Great Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), another first-ever nesting record for the state and a southernmost-ever nesting for the species.

At nearby Penikese Island, approximately ten pairs of nesting Leach's Storm-Petrels (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*), the only ones in the state, were estimated. These mysterious birds of the ocean maintain their southernmost nesting station at Penikese, where they were first discovered to be nesting in 1930 in and around the ruins of a leper hospital that the Massachusetts Department of Public Health once operated. Since 1930, varying estimates of from six to ninety pairs have been made.

With the exception of the Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*), which approximately doubled from 1977 to 1984, most of the colonial wading birds seem to have declined in the same period. More than any other single factor, this may be accounted for by the demise of two major colonies that were flourishing in 1977 at House Island, Manchester, and Madaket, Nantucket. In the former case, almost 1000 pairs of herons, egrets, and ibises nested in 1977 in extremely dense clusters. Inspection of House Island this year revealed that drastic habitat devastation had occurred, and no birds were found. It would appear that the birds, in the process of nesting and raising their young in great density, had literally ruined their own habitat. This state of affairs arises in

dense heronries because of the production of copious amounts of excrement. This results in overfertilization, acid burn, and inevitable die-back of the understory vegetation to the extent that the area is no longer desirable as a nesting ground. A similar situation may have occurred at Madaket. Under normal circumstances, the birds just move on to other areas. The 1984 results show that herons were indeed reported from seven new colony locations and increased at other colonies but in no way near large enough numbers to offset the losses. Such fluctuation over a period of time seems to be normal for colonial wading birds, and colony locations are notoriously subject to sudden abandonment and relocation.

The Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), although down 38 percent from 1977, was still the most common of the colonial wading bird group with 1223 pairs reported from sixteen sites versus fourteen in 1977. Historically, the Black-crowned Night-Heron attained a documented high of about 3600 pairs at ten colonies in 1955. Over the last fifteen years, the Snowy Egret has emerged as the second most abundant bird in this group. This type, which only began to nest here in 1955, has demonstrated a steady general increase, especially since 1960. A total of 888 pairs, censused in 1984, represents a 93 percent increase since 1977.

To summarize this, our colonial waterbird populations, while facing many problems, are in very good shape. Including five other peripheral species that maintain small populations in the state - Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*), Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), and Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) - eighteen species of colonial waterbirds were nesting along the Massachusetts coast in 1984 at some 119 locations. Two species were first-time nesters here. Of the remaining sixteen, six showed major increases, two underwent major declines, and the balance of eight remained basically unchanged from the 1977 census.

Interaction with humans and the forces of nature assure that fluctuation and change will continue to be the rule rather than the exception among this interesting group of birds. So, stay tuned, the census-taker will call again in 1989.

BRADFORD G. BLODGET, well-known to most birders as the State Ornithologist, which he has been since 1977, was well prepared for this position. Interested in birds from the age of nine, he graduated from Clark University, took an M.S. in Wildlife Biology at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and held positions in this and related fields at Massachusetts Audubon Society (Wellfleet Bay Sanctuary), at the Worcester Science Center, at New England Research, with the National Park Service, and finally with the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW). He has been active in the Forbush Bird Club and as editor of The Chickadee, is a member of Nuttall and the A.O.U., and has served with the Worcester Conservation Commission. Brad gave Bird Observer permission to cut his article "down if it is too long or whatever" and bade us to "enjoy it." We did not cut it, we lengthened it - by adding the summary tables prepared by the Massachusetts DFW - and we enjoyed every bit of it!

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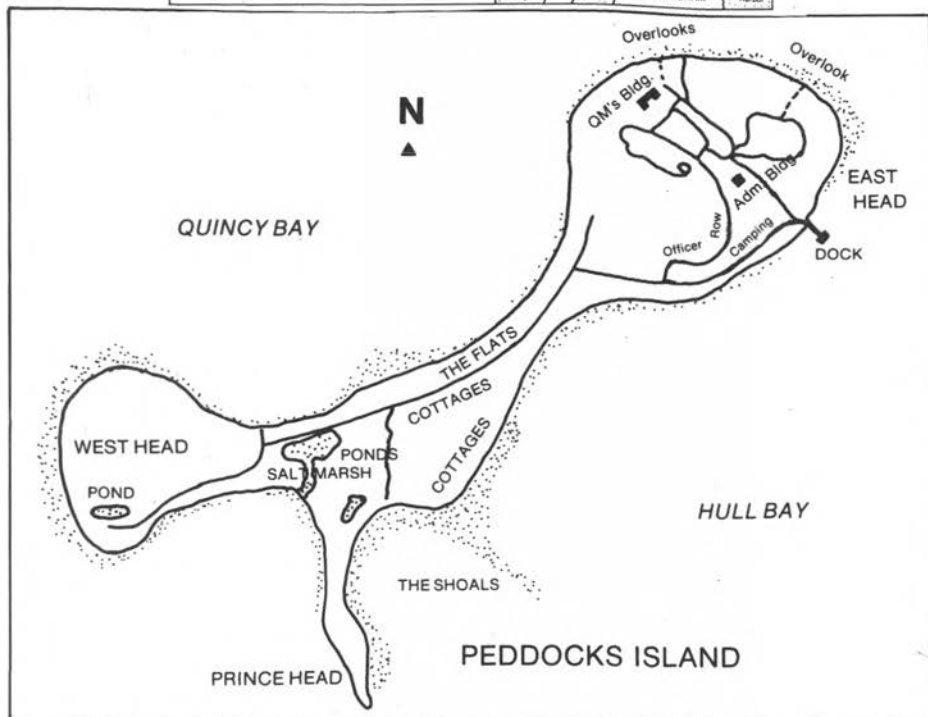
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*Peddocks Island is approximately 1.5 miles long and is 188 acres in size. It is formed from five drumlins connected by low gravelly flatlands. There are splendid views of Boston and the Harbor Islands from the overlooks.*

*Map by P.S.S./J.L.H.*



## PEDDOCKS ISLAND BIRD LIFE, JUNE TO OCTOBER, 1984

by Polly S. Stevens, Somerville

This report was written to make available to the Peddocks Island Trust staff and my friends the results of a survey of birds on Peddocks Island during the summer and early fall of 1984. My original intention was only to visit the island a couple of times, see what birds were breeding there, and share that information primarily with some birdwatching conferees who intended to visit other Boston Harbor islands with the same purpose. The joint venture seems to have drifted apart, but I became addicted to recording the bird life on Peddocks, which has a pleasing diversity of habitats and lots of room for roaming (188 acres). As a result, enough information was collected to make the writing of a report worthwhile. Here, then, is my account of the bird life on Peddocks Island, including a summary of the breeding birds, some general impressions, and descriptions of some particularly memorable observations.

Two caveats are in order. The first is that the study was not begun until June 30, by which time much of the breeding behavior of courtship, mating, and nest building was already completed, and first broods may already have fledged. Consequently, some species that were undoubtedly breeding on the island are relegated to a category of lesser certainty simply because I did not visit when they were exhibiting breeding behavior. The second warning concerns the adequacy of the sample of observations. The small number of visits during the breeding season (generally considered to be June and July), the large area of the island, and the viewpoint of only one observer all tend to make the information in the following summary incomplete. On the whole, though, I am satisfied that I am offering a representative picture of Peddocks Island bird life.

My records of the birds observed at Peddocks Island between June 30 and October 19, inclusive, show that a total of sixty-eight species used the island and its shoal waters during that time. Included in this total are three entries for birds that I was not able to identify to the species level: dowitcher, an owl, and the group of small shorebirds known as "peep." Not included are any of the birds that I could only tentatively identify, including a possible Indigo Bunting seen briefly in very poor light, and some migrating fall warblers. Also omitted is White-winged Scoter, a wintering duck, seen some distance offshore.

Of the sixty-eight species "using" the island - that is (among other things) feeding, hunting, rearing young, holding territory, or just resting - twenty-one species were likely to have been breeding on the island. My criteria for breeding birds were those used for the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas Project, 1974-1978, a cooperative venture of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Game and the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Under these criteria, likely breeding birds are divided according to their behaviors and other evidence into three classes: confirmed breeding, probable breeding, and possible breeding.

On Peddocks Island, there were seven species of confirmed breeding birds: American Black Duck, Gray Catbird, Yellow Warbler, Common

Yellowthroat, Northern Cardinal, Song Sparrow, and American Goldfinch. These birds presented, aside from suggestive behaviors such as the singing of males, at least one of the following decisive indications of breeding: feeding of young, nest with young, downy young of waterfowl (American Black Duck), recently fledged young, or distraction displays which involved in both observed instances - Common Yellowthroat and Song Sparrow - the feigning of injury. I have added to this list the feeding call of cardinal young, a distinctive sound that seems to me to be similar to the sound made by tapping crystal with a fork.

There were six species of probable breeding birds: Northern Bobwhite, Barn Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Rufous-sided Towhee, Red-winged Blackbird. The characteristic behavior exhibited by these probable breeding birds on Peddocks Island included the visiting of likely nest sites, holding territory by chasing others of the same species, and agitated behavior or anxiety calls from adults. Further, for each of the species in this category, a singing male was present on two or more days at least a week apart in the same area.

The eight species of possible breeding birds were Rock Dove, Tree Swallow, American Crow, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Red-eyed Vireo, Common Grackle, and House Finch. This group comprises birds seen during the breeding season in possible nesting habitat but not qualified for classification as confirmed or probable breeders. The evidence here was somewhat stronger than what the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas project required, because each of these species was seen on different occasions at least a week apart in the same area, and all were close candidates for probable breeders. The European Starling, Common Grackle, and Rock Dove failed because of my inadequate note taking. A singing male Red-eyed Vireo was seen on consecutive days in early July in a wooded area on East Head. Another was seen two weeks later but in quite a different habitat - the meadow by the Quartermaster's Storehouse - and so did not qualify on the basis of these observations. The Brown Thrasher was seen frequently enough but never when singing. And so it goes.

Species that were seen regularly at the island during the nesting season but for which there was no evidence of breeding there were placed in the category of neighborhood breeding birds, which included the following: Double-crested Cormorant, Snowy Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, and Common Tern.

Finally, to tie up a few loose ends, it should be noted that Mourning Dove and Eastern Kingbird were plausible breeding birds, but they did not quite fit the criteria spelled out above. Other species, including Northern Oriole, needed some more study.

One of the nicest things to discover from this survey was how interesting it is to return regularly to the same birding area over a period of months. Most of my previous birding had been of the peripatetic kind, and, aside from my frequent visits to a tiny Cambridge woods, I had no sense of the continuity in birds' lives. One of the most striking things I learned from my summer birding at Peddocks was how faithful breeding birds are to their territories. They stay in their same, rightful places and are still there, say, two weeks later. There was a pleasure in

climbing East Head after an absence and listening for the towhee and cardinal families established there and in anticipating a sighting of the bobwhites around the administration building. The two broods of black ducks on the freshwater pond were there the weekend of June 30, and some were still there on August 18. But you always had to approach stealthily to see them, for they hid silently into the reeds at the slightest sign of intrusion.

Another interesting, unanticipated phenomenon was the appearance, disappearance, or flocking of the different species. Red-winged Blackbirds were almost drearily omnipresent through July 22, but from August 4 on, I saw less than a handful. I don't think they were skulking - they were gone. Almost simultaneously, the Common Yellowthroat and Yellow Warbler dropped out of sight, although here the change was not so abrupt, and silent adults were seen later in the season. The goldfinches, in contrast, were merrily present into the fall, the males doing their engaging roller coaster flight overhead, and a nest with downy young was found on September 8. The catbirds also continued through the summer, eventually changing their multilingual songs of imitation to more mournful angst calls.

While some of the songbirds were dropping out, new visitors were arriving. Shorebirds that breed in the Arctic began arriving in July - the dowitcher the first to migrate through, then Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Semipalmated and Black-bellied plovers, and Ruddy Turnstones passing through in August and September. By October 19, few shorebirds were left, and wintering ducks had appeared - Red-breasted Merganser in the shoals by Prince Head and White-winged Scoter well off in Quincy Bay.

The flocking of birds started early in August with a swarm of starlings wheeling over the salt marsh, and a cloud of nearly seventy Barn Swallows sliding in for a dip and sip at the freshwater pond. There were family groups, too, with a covey of seventeen bobwhite flushed in the meadow by the flats. But most stunning was the flock of Cedar Waxwings. In the golden slanting afternoon sunlight on September 1, I caught sight of these elegant birds in a tree by the Quartermaster's Storehouse. I started counting the sleepy birds soaking up the rays, and as leaves shifted and the light played on the shadows, more quiescent forms were revealed. I kept on counting as birds arrived and left and foraged for berries in a nearby tree, and I did a final confirmatory count as the whole flock lifted off, calling their contact notes and starting another leg of migration. There had been upwards of eighty birds, adults and immatures.

In addition to the routine occurrences, there were some gripping behavioral displays. One of the most dramatic took place over the salt marsh in late July. On the south side of the marsh, where the outlet flows from the large saltwater pond, a sizable mixed flock of gulls had settled on the beach, and four Common Terns were circling. Snowy Egrets preened on the beach grass, and a Black-crowned Night-Heron stalked the pond - bird heaven until absolute bedlam set in as a Red-tailed Hawk drifted in from East Head. The birds scattered in a violent flurry - except for one Common Tern. The tern, despite its small size, took off after the hawk, loading it upwards with side swipes and a rat-a-tat clatter. As the hawk

ponderously gained altitude, the tern followed, harassing with its furious cries until, just visible as a sliver of white light high overhead, it drove the hawk off, and the Redtail, catching a thermal, escaped back to East Head.

The first kestrel I found on Peddocks launched an equally dramatic display. One late afternoon, a female kestrel appeared above the forest canopy of East Head and, uttering the "klee" call, repeatedly dive-bombed into the tree tops. Her manner was so agitated and the call so urgent that I felt her distress. The underbrush was too impenetrable for me to get near enough to discern the cause, and the behavior remains unexplained. One natural interpretation would be that she was attempting to drive a predator away from a nest; but aside from the presence of a male (?) kestrel the next morning, there were no more sightings of kestrels on the island until October and no further signs of nesting.

One of the more pleasant moments of birdwatching on the island was seeing a female flicker pop her head out of a possible nesting hole by the gym, while a male held forth from Officers' Row. Despite all the hours of Peddocks birding, finding a bird's nest was a rare accomplishment and very satisfying. However, like the kestrels, the flickers were not seen again until fall.

One night, I went on an owl prowl, playing a tape of calls in the hopes of eliciting an owl's answering call or its appearance. The night was lit only by a quarter moon and starlight, and the only sounds were rustlings. Listening to the quavering, eerie recordings against the unfamiliar night sounds, my nerve failed. Perhaps an owl might assume I was edible or think that I was a rival and attempt to drive me off - if my suddenly wobbly legs would carry me. I turned off the tape, told my knees to behave, and tottered along toward a harbor lookout and Boston's bright lights. There, swooping low over the bluff, head down, intent on hunting was an owl who had not deigned to answer the artificial hoots coming from a two-legged creature that was too big to eat and no threat at all.

From the noise and bustle of the late June birds to the quiet beauty of the birds of October, Peddocks was a continuing feast of great diversity, interest, and amusement. We are awfully lucky it is there. This report is my way of thanking the Peddocks Island Trust for their stewardship of the island and the staff for their interest and hospitality.

POLLY STEVENS, a staff attorney for the Massachusetts Appeals Court, got her first binoculars in 1980, took them along on a winter holiday in the Yucatan, and became a confirmed birdwatcher. Her activity was limited for awhile by a serious back ailment, but despite this incapacity, she had herself carried up Mt. Watatic on a mattress to participate in a hawk-watch in the fall of 1981. When fit once again, Polly censused birds at Norton Woods in Cambridge and spent the summer of 1984 studying the birdlife on Peddocks Island, from which this paper resulted. She has repeated her Yucatan visit and has also birded in Florida, Texas, and Arizona.

## AN EXALTATION OF LARKS

by William E. Davis, Jr., Foxborough

Not long ago, at a flea market, I happened across a marvelous little book, An Exaltation of Larks by James Lipton (1977, Viking Press, New York), which I have found to be delightful and provocative. The book deals in a charming way with those words that describe a group of some sort, referred to variously as "nouns of multitude," "company terms," "collective nouns," "group terms," "terms of venery," or my favorite - "nouns of assemblage." We are all familiar with the most common of these nouns of assemblage, for example, a school of fish, a covey of quail, a flock of sheep, a bouquet of flowers, to name but a few. Most people are familiar, as well, with some of the less commonplace nouns such as a pride of lions, a kit of foxes, or even some that describe inanimate objects, such as a cluster of stars, but I was unprepared for the enormous number of such nouns that deal with birds! Some are still so commonplace that you don't even think about them: a brood of hens, a covey of partridges, a flock of birds, a clutch of eggs. Others, which are more uncommon, are, as Lipton described them, ". . . authentic and authoritative. They were used, they were correct, and they are useful, correct - and available - today." He lists a murder of crows, a rafter of turkeys, a walk of snipe, a fall of woodcock, a dule of doves, a wedge of swans, a party of jays, a company of parrots, a colony of penguins, a covey of coots, a sord of mallards, a peep of chickens, a pitying of turtle doves, a paddling of ducks, a seige of herons, a charm of finches, a skein of geese (flying), a gaggle of geese (sitting), a tidning of magpies, a cast of hawks, a deceit of lapwings, an ostentation of peacocks, a bouquet of pheasants, a congregation of plovers, an unkindness of ravens, a building of rooks, a host of sparrows, a descent of woodpeckers, a mustering of storks, a flight of swallows, a watch of nightingales, a murmuration of starlings, a spring of teal, a parliament of owls, a dissimulation of birds and, of course, an exaltation of larks.

The origin of these nouns of assemblage dates back in many cases to the fifteenth century, when "social primers" or "books of courtesy" often contained lists of these nouns, usually associated with hunting, that were part of the proper gentleman's vocabulary. Since that time hundreds of these colorful expressions have been coined. In fact, inventing witty or interesting nouns of assemblage has become a great semantical game. Some of these nouns describe the sounds produced by a group of the animal described, such as a gaggle of geese, or the behavior of the group - a paddling of ducks or a wedge of swans, or a general comment as in a parliament of owls.

These fascinating terms are much more common than I had ever supposed, and since reading Lipton's book, I now seem to find them everywhere. I recently was reading one of William Beebe's natural history books, High Jungle, and found a grace of tree ferns mentioned, a term not recorded by Lipton. I even found that I had published one of my own without realizing it in an article in the Naturalist Magazine, when I had described a half-dozen dumpy, yellow, black, and white birds actively feeding in a shrub laden with flowers as a tumble of Bananaquits! Once,

in Panama, I was seized by another fit of "nourning" as I watched a dozen or so toucans in the canopy of a tree. I couldn't stop myself: a schnozzle of toucans. It is an insidious word game that even lends itself to punning: a gulp of swallows, for example.

If you should ever run across James Lipton's little book, be sure to buy it. This volume demonstrates the brilliantly interwoven fabric of the history of language and the richness of the English tongue, and above all, invites the reader to join ". . . a game that amateur semanticists have been playing for over five hundred years."

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## An Auction of Natural History Items

The South Shore Regional Office of the Massachusetts Audubon Society and W. Torrey Little, Inc., Auctioneer, are presenting an auction of natural history materials in August of 1985. This will be a full day dedicated to the resale of quality items that relate to our natural world. There are already two John James Audubon prints (Havell) and a set of *Birds of Massachusetts* (Forbush) committed to the auction.

This is an opportunity for you to consign any item that you have that is of reasonable value. It is presumed that first edition books, collections of field guides, works of art and other similar items will be gathered. The consignor will receive 90 percent of the hammer price for those items over \$500 in value and 85 percent for items under \$500. A 10 percent fee will be charged to the purchaser above the hammer price. Any items donated outright to the Society will be valued at the hammer price and are tax-deductible.

Please call the Massachusetts Audubon Society's South Shore Regional Office at (617) 837-9400 for information on entering pieces in the auction.

Catalogs should be available two or three weeks ahead of time. There will be a printing and mailing fee for the catalog. W. Torrey Little, Inc. will donate all proceeds, above expenses to the Society.



### MASSACHUSETTS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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## SOME ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ON RECORDS

by Blair Nikula, Chatham

The recent article by Dorothy Arvidson on bird records and the letter from Eirik Blom (Bird Observer, 13: April 1985, 78) regarding the March 25, 1984 record of Mew/Common Gull from Falmouth prompt me to offer some additional thoughts.

As one of the regional editors for American Birds, it is my responsibility to make a decision about the many spring records (including the questioned gull) submitted from throughout the northeast. It is a chore that is both fascinating and frustrating. It is also a very effective way to make enemies! Ideally, when a records editor sits down to write a seasonal summary, he or she will have access to complete documentation for all rarities, preferably in the form of good quality photographs or, at the least, a thorough written description from one or more of the observers. Even better, the record and all documentation will have been reviewed by an avian records committee before it is included in any seasonal summary. Unfortunately, the former (documentation in any form) is still all too seldom submitted and the latter (committee review prior to publication) is seldom practicable.

Massachusetts does have an avian records committee which, regrettably, has been essentially dormant since its formation a few years ago - at least as far as current records are concerned. It is hoped that it will become more active in the near future but, even so, will have little effect upon the publication of questionable records. Based on the situation in other states, even where there is a very active committee, the review of records generally takes at least a year and often as much as two or three years, whereas the time constraints of regional publications usually require publish/not publish decisions to be made within two to five months after the sighting. Consequently, decisions are often based upon little more than the editor's gut feelings, bolstered perhaps by discussions with others who are familiar with the particular observation and/or observer(s). In some instances, the editor(s) may have little or no personal experience with the species in question. Thus, faulty editorial judgments are not infrequent.

Editorial errors are of two basic types. One is an error of omission, in which a valid report is rejected; the other is an error of commission, i.e., an incorrect report is accepted and published. Most editors would argue that the latter is the more serious error as it is very difficult to "erase" a record once it has appeared in print. Just as the observer faced with a difficult identification should begin by assuming that the bird is the most likely species until it can be proven otherwise, a reviewer should assume that a report of a rare bird is incorrect, or at least unpublishable, until supporting evidence is offered. THE BURDEN OF PROOF LIES WITH THE OBSERVER: with the exhilaration of discovering a rarity comes the responsibility for providing complete documentation. Although highly desirable, written documentation is not a panacea, however. For example, one spring I received a well-written description of a bird identified as a Western Sandpiper, a very rare spring bird in the northeast. I know the observer and believe the person to be careful and

competent. However, the description failed to eliminate White-rumped Sandpiper and was actually more suggestive of that species. Having misidentified White-rumps as Westerns on more than a few occasions myself and faced with an ambiguous description, I felt compelled to reject the record even though my gut reaction was that it was probably correct.

In another, more extreme case, I received four typewritten, single-spaced pages (!) describing in minute detail Newfoundland's "first" House Finch, which was seen at very close range at a feeder over a period of several days. The report seemed perfectly plausible given the species' continuing expansion, and had I nothing further upon which to base my decision, the record might well have appeared in American Birds. However, the report was also accompanied by two good-quality color slides clearly depicting a Purple Finch - slightly aberrant perhaps but most certainly not a House Finch. What the observer saw (and described at length) did not match what the camera recorded!

After again reviewing the description of the Falmouth Mew/Common Gull, I will admit to being rather lax in accepting the record. In addition to the written description, portions of which were excerpted in Bird Observer, I was also given a verbal description of the bird by another of the observers a few hours after it was first found. The bird was apparently very well seen by a number of people, and the sighting fits in very well with an established (and well-documented) pattern of Mew/Common Gull occurrence in the northeast. I consequently overlooked some of the discrepancies in the written description. While I am not at all convinced that the bird was an aberrant Ring-billed Gull, Eirik Blom's letter certainly raises some valid objections to the original identification. Reportedly, a series of photographs was taken of the bird but, to my knowledge, they have not been examined by anyone experienced with Larus canus. It is hoped that copies of these photos will be submitted to the Massachusetts avian records committee for eventual review.

It must be emphasized that the current system of records review and publication is, and always will be, flawed. Some of the problems can be alleviated, but as long as human nature is involved, the system will always be imperfect, and anyone using the records in American Birds or any regional publication needs to be fully aware of the inherent shortcomings. A healthy degree of skepticism and discretion is essential.

I agree wholeheartedly with Dorothy Arvidson's comments and urge all Bird Observer readers to help improve the system by providing thorough documentation for all unusual sightings. I also urge observers to develop a thick skin with respect to your reports. Rather than throwing up your hands in disgust and anger when a report is rejected, try to understand why it was rejected. Most editors are very willing to participate in a rational, unemotional discussion of their decisions. We must all, observers and editors alike, be quick to recognize our fallibility. The best, most respected birders in the country are characterized not only by their exceptional abilities, but by their caution, their willingness to admit to uncertainty when it exists, and their awareness that some birds simply cannot be identified. The acclaim that attends the discovery of a vagrant is a powerful intoxicant, but we must strive to prevent it from tainting our judgments and, ultimately, our understanding of the region's avifauna.





# Field Records

## January 1985

by George W. Gove, Robert H. Stymeist, Lee E. Taylor

January 1985 was cold, dry, and cloudy; the temperature averaged 24.4°, 5.2° below normal. The only record broken was on January 21 when the mercury rose only to 12°; the previous low maximum for that date was 13° set in 1888. The cold temperatures of January nearly balanced out the 5.8° excess of December. January, in fact, averaged 15.1° colder than December, the second greatest decline in 115 years and the greatest since 18.0° in 1911-12. Only four days averaged above normal; however, no extreme cold occurred.

Precipitation totaled 1.12 inches, 2.87 inches less than normal. This was the sixth driest January in 115 years. Snow totaled 7.0 inches, 5.6 inches less than normal. Freezing rain on January 1 and 2 caused glazing conditions. R.H.S.

### LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Nineteen observers participated in the annual Boston Harbor Census held on January 26 and tallied twenty-six species of waterbirds not including gulls or shorebirds. All of the counts were considerably less than a similar count held on January 7, 1984; for example, only 1032 Brant were counted as compared with 5066 in 1984. Other noticeable differences were nearly a thousand fewer American Black Duck, 5647 fewer Common Eider and 1214 fewer Common Goldeneye. Barrow's Goldeneye remained at four individuals both years.

At Low Beach, Nantucket good numbers of both Common and Red-throated Loons were still present most of the month. An Arctic Loon was noted at Nahant where it was seen in direct comparison with a Common Loon.

Almost thirty Double-crested Cormorants were reported in January; seventeen of those were seen in Boston Harbor on January 26. A Snowy Egret at Osterville on January 1 was the heron highlight of the month.

An immature Tundra Swan was present at Field Park in Brockton through January 12, and three immature Tundra Swans were also seen on Martha's Vineyard. A total of 160 Red-heads on Long Pond, Nantucket, eclipsed all other counts in the state, and in the lower Taunton River, over 1200 Canvasbacks were censused between the towns of Dighton and Somerset. Special interest ducks included as many as eight King Eider, five Harlequin Ducks, many Barrow's Goldeneye and a good number of Hooded Mergansers from many different areas. R.H.S.

| <u>SPECIES/DATE</u> | <u>LOCATION</u>        | <u>NUMBER</u> | <u>OBSERVERS</u>         | <u>JANUARY 1985</u> |
|---------------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Red-throated Loon:  |                        |               |                          |                     |
| 19                  | Nantucket (Low Beach)  | 60            | M.Litchfield             |                     |
| Arctic Loon:        |                        |               |                          |                     |
| 26                  | Nahant (East Pt)       | 1             | J.Barton                 |                     |
| Common Loon:        |                        |               |                          |                     |
| 1,3                 | Nantucket, Barnstable  | 60, 20        | R.Stymeist#, P.Trimble   |                     |
| Pied-billed Grebe:  |                        |               |                          |                     |
| 5                   | Cambridge (Fresh Pond) | 3             | A.Bennett                |                     |
| 5-31                | five locations         | 6 individuals | v.o.                     |                     |
| Horned Grebe:       |                        |               |                          |                     |
| 3                   | Barnstable (SN)        | 50            | P.Trimble                |                     |
| Red-necked Grebe:   |                        |               |                          |                     |
| 5,19                | Cape Ann, Nantucket    | 2, 10         | D.+D.Hale#, M.Litchfield |                     |

| SPECIES/DATE                  | LOCATION   | NUMBER          | OBSERVERS                     | JANUARY 1985 |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Red-necked Grebe (continued): |  |                 |                               |              |
| 27                            | 3 S.Shore spots,Barnstable                               | 3, 5            | R.Abrams#, M.Lynch#           |              |
| Northern Gannet:              |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1,5                           | Nantucket, Eastham                                       | 1200+, 200+     | R.Stymeist#, D.Arvidson#      |              |
| Great Cormorant:              |  |                 |                               |              |
| 5,6                           | Cape Ann, outer Cape                                     | 152, 40         | D.+D.Hale#, R.Abrams#         |              |
| 13,20                         | Nahant,Eastham (Coast Guard Station)                     | 116, 75         | S.Carroll#, B.Nikula#         |              |
| Double-crested Cormorant:     |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1                             | Plymouth, P'town, Newbypt.                               | 1 imm., 1 imm., | 1 G.d'Entremont#,B.Nikula,BBC |              |
| 6,8-18                        | Eastham, Somerville                                      | 4, max. 4 (1/8) | W.Petersen#, J.Berry          |              |
| 12,26                         | Newbypt., Boston Harbor                                  | 1 (dead), 17    | J.Berry, TASL (S.Zendeh#)     |              |
| American Bittern:             |  |                 |                               |              |
| 31                            | Nantucket  | 1               | M.Litchfield                  |              |
| Great Blue Heron:             |  |                 |                               |              |
| 3,5                           | Milton, Cape Ann   | 20, 3           | R.Abrams, BBC                 |              |
|                               | Single birds reported from                               | 16 locations.   |                               |              |
| Snowy Egret:                  |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1                             | Osterville   | 1               | R.Barber                      |              |
| Black-crowned Night-Heron:    |  |                 |                               |              |
| 19                            | Nantucket  | 7               | M.Litchfield                  |              |
| Tundra Swan:                  |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1-12,15                       | Brockton, M.V.   | 1 imm., 3 imm.  | R.Wilson# + v.o., fide V.Laux |              |
| Mute Swan:                    |  |                 |                               |              |
| 27                            | Falmouth, Westport                                       | 94, 202         | M.Lynch#, G.Gove#             |              |
| Snow Goose:                   |  |                 |                               |              |
| thr.                          | N.Chatham  | 4               | J.Redfern + v.o.              |              |
| 1,6                           | Newbypt., Wareham  | 24, 2           | BBC, SSBC                     |              |
| Brant:                        |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1,13                          | Quincy, Plymouth Harbor                                  | 92, 950+        | A.Bennett#, R.Stymeist#       |              |
| 13,19                         | Nantucket, Plymouth Beach                                | 125+, 1200+     | E.Andrews#, T.Raymond         |              |
| 26,27                         | Boston Harbor, Eastham (Town Cove)                       | 1032, 230       | TASL, B.Nikula                |              |
| Wood Duck:                    |  |                 |                               |              |
| 3,6                           | Stoughton, S.Peabody                                     | 1, 1            | R.Titus, R.Heil               |              |
| 19,26-30                      | Nantucket, Belmont                                       | 2, 2 m.         | S.Perkins#, C.Bishop          |              |
| American Black Duck:          |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1,12                          | Newbypt., Boston Harbor                                  | 650, 1000       | BBC, J.Barton#                |              |
| 26,27                         | Boston Harbor, Middleboro                                | 1309, 500       | TASL (S.Zendeh), W.Petersen#  |              |
| Northern Pintail:             |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1                             | Newbypt.   | 26              | BBC (A.Blaisdell)             |              |
|                               | Other reports of 1-3 individuals from various locations. |                 |                               |              |
| Northern Shoveler:            |  |                 |                               |              |
| 2,4-31                        | P.I., Nantucket  | 2, 1            | M.Argue#, D.Beattie# + v.o.   |              |
| 13,15                         | Plymouth, Watertown                                      | 1, 1            | R.Stymeist#, M.Hall           |              |
| Gadwall:                      |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1                             | Plymouth, Newbypt.                                       | 8, 4            | M.Lynch#, BBC (A.Blaisdell)   |              |
| 31                            | Cambridge (Charles River)                                | 1 m.            | R.Stymeist                    |              |
| Eurasian Wigeon:              |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1-6,1-13                      | Nantucket, Plymouth                                      | 1 m., 1         | R.Stymeist#, D.Evered# + v.o. |              |
| 27                            | Eastham (Salt Pond)                                      | 1               | B.Nikula                      |              |
| American Wigeon:              |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1                             | Plymouth, Nantucket                                      | 47, 80          | A.Bennett#, R.Stymeis.#       |              |
| 5                             | Belmont  | 20              | BBC (R.Clayton)               |              |
| Canvasback:                   |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1,5                           | Wareham, Dennisport                                      | 120, 68         | L.Robinson, D.Arvidson#       |              |
| 12                            | Dighton-Somerset (lower Taunton R.)                      | 1200            | W.Petersen#                   |              |
| 20,28                         | Westport, Dennis   | 80+, 246        | R.Laubach, P.Trull            |              |
| Redhead:                      |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1                             | Nantucket, Plymouth                                      | 160, 8          | R.Stymeist#, M.Lynch#         |              |
| 2,5                           | Gloucester, Eastham                                      | 1, 1            | M.Argue#, B.Nikula#           |              |
| 15,27                         | M.V., Falmouth   | 15, 12          | P.Trimble#, M.Lynch#          |              |
| Ring-necked Duck:             |  |                 |                               |              |
| 3,5                           | Stoughton, Eastham                                       | 3, 38           | R.Titus, D.Arvidson#          |              |
| 19,26                         | Brookline, Framingham                                    | 3 m., 2 m.      | R.Stymeist#, R.Forster        |              |
| 27                            | Lakeville, Falmouth                                      | 1, 25           | W.Petersen#, P.Trimble        |              |
| Greater Scaup:                |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1,6                           | Quincy, Falmouth   | 200, 800        | R.Abrams, M.Argue#            |              |
| 26                            | Boston Harbor  | 1579            | TASL (S.Zendeh)               |              |
| Lesser Scaup:                 |  |                 |                               |              |
| 1                             | Lynn, Plymouth   | 40, 4           | R.Heil, M.Lynch#              |              |
| 27                            | Falmouth   | 47              | S.Carroll#                    |              |
| Common Eider:                 |  |                 |                               |              |
| 13                            | Plymouth Beach   | 5000            | R.Abrams                      |              |
| 26                            | Boston Harbor  | 3330            | TASL (S.Zendeh)               |              |

| <u>SPECIES/DATE</u>     | <u>LOCATION</u>        | <u>NUMBER</u>       | <u>OBSERVERS</u>            | <u>JANUARY 1985</u> |
|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| King Eider:             |                        |                     |                             |                     |
| 1-13                    | Plymouth               | max. 2 ad. m., 1 f. | M.Lynch# + v.o.             |                     |
| 3-31,13-31              | Manomet (2 locations)  | 1 imm. f., 1 ad. m. | D.Evered                    |                     |
| 6,8                     | E.Orleans, Marblehead  | 1, 1 ad. m.         | W.Petersen#, M.Kasprzyk     |                     |
| 26                      | Rockport               | 1 f.                | B.Cassie#                   |                     |
| Harlequin Duck:         |                        |                     |                             |                     |
| thr.                    | N.Scituate             | max. 3              | N.+S.Osborne# + v.o.        |                     |
| 6,13                    | E.Orleans, Brant Rock  | 1, 1 f.             | W.Petersen#                 |                     |
| Oldsquaw:               |                        |                     |                             |                     |
| 27                      | Falmouth               | 40                  | P.Trimble                   |                     |
| Black Scoter:           |                        |                     |                             |                     |
| 5,14                    | Cape Ann, Buzzards Bay | 30, 50+             | BBC, D.Briggs               |                     |
| White-winged Scoter:    |                        |                     |                             |                     |
| 6,27                    | Ipswich, Falmouth      | 600+, 600+          | J.Berry, P.Trimble          |                     |
| Common Goldeneye:       |                        |                     |                             |                     |
| 6,12                    | Newbypt.               | 85+, 400+           | A.Bennett, J.Berry          |                     |
| 26                      | M.V., Boston Harbor    | 900, 790            | T.Raymond, TASL (S.Zendeh)  |                     |
| Barrow's Goldeneye:     |                        |                     |                             |                     |
| thr.                    | N.Chatham              | 2                   | J.Redfern#                  |                     |
| 6-20                    | Newbypt                | 1-2                 | R.Stymeist# + v.o.          |                     |
| 8,9                     | Hull, Magnolia         | 1 m., 1 f.          | R.Abrams, M.Kasprzyk        |                     |
| 20-26                   | Quincy (Houghs Neck)   | 2-3                 | G.d'Entremont# + v.o.       |                     |
| 26                      | Gloucester             | 2                   | BBC (I.Giriunas)            |                     |
| Bufflehead:             |                        |                     |                             |                     |
| 26                      | Boston Harbor          | 872                 | TASL (S.Zendeh)             |                     |
| Hooded Merganser:       |                        |                     |                             |                     |
| thr.,5                  | Danvers, S.Carver      | 6, 8                | R.Heil, K.Anderson          |                     |
| 5                       | Cambridge, Westport    | 6, 8                | A.Bennett, R.Laubach        |                     |
| 6                       | Orleans, Falmouth      | 7, 11               | W.Petersen#, M.Argue#       |                     |
| 6,9                     | Buzz. Bay, Watertown   | 17, 4               | SSBC, M.Hall                |                     |
| 11-31                   | Somerville             | 10-15               | J.Berry                     |                     |
| 27                      | Falmouth               | 19                  | M.Lynch, S.Carroll          |                     |
| Common Merganser:       |                        |                     |                             |                     |
| 1                       | Braintree, Plymouth    | 20, 75+             | R.Abrams, A.Bennett#        |                     |
| 3,6                     | Braintree, Wareham     | 64, 17              | R.Abrams, SSBC              |                     |
| 12,13                   | Assonet, Quincy        | 50, 60+             | W.Petersen#, G.d'Entremont# |                     |
| Red-breasted Merganser: |                        |                     |                             |                     |
| 20,27                   | Hull, Falmouth         | 450, 400            | R.Titus, P.Trimble          |                     |

#### EAGLES THROUGH QUAIL

A total of six Bald Eagles with observed plumage differences was noted in the Lakeville area, and there were two to four in the Newburyport area, one of which was sporting a bright blue tag on the right wing. Up to six possible Cooper's Hawks were reported this month as were five Northern Goshawks. Five Red-shouldered Hawks were seen, a good number for that species, but the infrequent sightings of Rough-legged Hawks during the month was a disappointment for birders. Four each of Merlin and Peregrine were reported including one (presumably the same) Peregrine that has been present in Cambridge since October. G.W.G.

|                      |                                 |                |                                 |  |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Bald Eagle:          |                                 |                |                                 |  |
| thr.                 | Lakeville area                  | 6 total        | D.Briggs, K.Holmes, K.Anderson# |  |
| thr.                 | Newbypt. area                   | 2-4 total      | v.o.                            |  |
| 9,27                 | Manchester, Nantucket           | 1 (2W), 1 imm. | C.Romano#, D.Beattie#           |  |
| Northern Harrier:    |                                 |                |                                 |  |
| thr.                 | Newbypt.-P.I.                   | max. 9 (1/6)   | v.o.                            |  |
| 5,27                 | Bridgewater, Scituate           | 3, 3           | W.Petersen#, E.Nielsen          |  |
| 6,15                 | Ipswich, M.V.                   | 3, 3 (2 m.)    | J.Berry, P.Trimble              |  |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk:  |                                 |                |                                 |  |
| 6                    | IRWS, W.Newbury                 | 1 ad., 1       | M.Kasprzyk, R.Stymeist#         |  |
| 20,27                | Westport, Quabbin               | 2, 2           | R.Laubach, BBC                  |  |
|                      | Seven reports from 7 locations. |                |                                 |  |
| Cooper's Hawk:       |                                 |                |                                 |  |
| 12,18                | Bridgewater, Lakeville          | 1, 1           | N.+S.Osborne, K.Holmes          |  |
| 15,26                | Quincy, M.V.                    | 1, 1 ad.       | R.Emery#, V.Laux                |  |
| 27,30                | Lakeville, WBWS                 | 1 ad., 1 ad.   | W.Petersen, P.Trull#            |  |
| Northern Goshawk:    |                                 |                |                                 |  |
| 6,18                 | Brockton, Halifax               | 1 ad., 1 ad.   | G.d'Entremont, K.Anderson       |  |
| 14,21                | Easton, WBWS                    | 1 ad., 1       | R.Titus, R.Prescott             |  |
| 27                   | Westport                        | 1 ad.          | J.Gordon#                       |  |
| Red-shouldered Hawk: |                                 |                |                                 |  |
| thr.                 | Orleans                         | 1              | v.o.                            |  |
| 11,15                | Randolph, Newbypt.              | 1 ad., 1       | R.Titus, J.Grugan               |  |

| SPECIES/DATE                     | LOCATION              | NUMBER    | OBSERVERS                | JANUARY 1985 |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Red-shouldered Hawk (continued): |                       |           |                          |              |
| 19,30                            | Concord, Easton       | 1, 1      | R.Walton, K.Ryan         |              |
| Red-tailed Hawk:                 |                       |           |                          |              |
| 12,20                            | Rowley, SRV           | 7 ad., 14 | J.Berry, R.Forster#      |              |
| 26                               | Newbypt. area         | 16        | P.Roberts                |              |
| Rough-legged Hawk:               |                       |           |                          |              |
| thr.                             | Newbypt. area         | max. 4    | v.o.                     |              |
| 12-25                            | Middleboro            | 1         | D.Briggs                 |              |
| 18,23                            | Halifax, E.Middleboro | 2, 2      | K.Anderson               |              |
| American Kestrel:                |                       |           |                          |              |
| 5,14                             | Belmont, Salisbury    | 1, 2      | BBC, J.Carter            |              |
| 20,26                            | Squantum, Newbypt.    | 2, 1      | O.Kerr, BBC              |              |
| Merlin:                          |                       |           |                          |              |
| 13,15                            | Newbypt., Scituate    | 1, 1      | M.Kasprzyk, R.Campbell   |              |
| 20,28                            | Squantum, M.V.        | 1, 1      | R.Abrams#, B.+R.Caldwell |              |
| Peregrine Falcon:                |                       |           |                          |              |
| 13,22                            | Wollaston, Truro      | 1, 1 ad.  | O.+W.Kerr, R.Titus       |              |
| 26                               | Cambridge             | 1         | R.Campbell               |              |
| Ring-necked Pheasant:            |                       |           |                          |              |
| 6,27                             | Nahant, Ipswich       | 5, 3      | G.d'Entremont#, J.Berry  |              |
| Ruffed Grouse:                   |                       |           |                          |              |
| thr.                             | Easton                | 2         | K.Ryan                   |              |
| 6,20                             | IRWS, Ipswich         | 2, 1      | M.Kasprzyk, J.Berry      |              |
| Northern Bobwhite:               |                       |           |                          |              |
| thr.                             | Pembroke              | 1 f.      | E.Pearson                |              |
| 31                               | Easton                | 12        | K.Ryan#                  |              |

#### RAILS THROUGH ALCIDS

Six Virginia Rails were calling in a marsh on Nantucket and 15 or so American Coot were present in Lynn throughout the month. Black-bellied Plover remained in the Quincy area through January 20, and Killdeer were seen at three locations. Only one Greater Yellowlegs was seen this January; but very unusual was a report of two Lesser Yellowlegs, this being the first January report in Bird Observer records. At Nantucket, 28 Ruddy Turnstones included one very dark individual which, on the CBC there, was speculated to be a possible Black Turnstone but proved to be a dark Ruddy. Red Knots were seen at Scituate and there were four groups of Sanderling reported. The winter shorebirds, Dunlin and Purple Sandpipers, were noted in usual numbers and a dowitcher, most likely a Long-billed, was reported from Falmouth.

The January 3 Mew Gull (Larus canus) in Plymouth is described below by excerpts from the details provided by the reporter who noted that he is very familiar with this species in all plumages in Europe and is aware of the variations in plumages of Ring-billed Gulls (Larus delawarensis).

The bird was in first winter plumage and, in direct comparison with Ring-billed Gulls, was decidedly smaller with a strikingly small bill and a rounded head, the latter characteristics giving it a pigeon- or dove-like appearance. It had a darker mantle than Ring-billed Gull, a very pronounced tail band, and less contrasting wing patterning. It had no chevrons on the flanks - just a little diffuse mottling. It was a much more compact gull on the wing with shorter, rounder-looking wings and a faster wing beat.

The description that follows of the January 6 Mew Gull in Provincetown is also excerpted from that reporter's details, and comparisons are also made with Ring-billed Gull.

The bird was an adult and was well-observed at about 125 yards with 10X binoculars and 20X scope for about ten minutes. It had an entirely yellow, thin bill, a round dove-like head, large dark eye, pale legs, and a slightly darker gray mantle. Conspicuous white wing mirrors were noted when the bird was in flight.

The Mew Gull reported on January 5 in Plymouth was described as an adult, as was the bird of January 12 in Wollaston.

Two Common Murre were reported, and Razorbill numbers built to 900+ in the Provincetown area where up to 105 guillemot were also counted. G.W.G.

|                |                     |      |                            |  |
|----------------|---------------------|------|----------------------------|--|
| Virginia Rail: |                     |      |                            |  |
| 1,19           | Nantucket           | 6, 7 | R.Stymeist#, M.Litchfield# |  |
| 12             | Ipswich             | 1    | J.Berry                    |  |
| American Coot: |                     |      |                            |  |
| thr.           | Lynn                | 15+  | R.Heil                     |  |
| 6              | Lakeville, Plymouth | 2, 4 | SSBC, H.Wiggin             |  |

| SPECIES/DATE              | LOCATION                     | NUMBER                       | OBSERVERS                         | JANUARY 1985 |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Black-bellied Plover:     |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 1-20                      | Quincy                       | max. 14 (1/13)               | v.o.                              |              |
| 3,15                      | Plymouth, M.V.               | 4, 1                         | D.Evered, P.Trimble               |              |
| Killdeer:                 |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 5,12                      | Nantucket, Dighton           | 2, 2                         | M.Litchfield, W.Petersen#         |              |
| 19,27                     | Bridgewater                  | 1, 1                         | W.Petersen#                       |              |
| Greater Yellowlegs:       |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 20                        | E.Harwich                    | 1                            | H.Stabins#                        |              |
| Lesser Yellowlegs:        |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 4                         | WBWS                         | 2                            | P.Trull                           |              |
| Ruddy Turnstone:          |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 1,12                      | Nantucket                    | 28, 11                       | S.Perkins, E.Andrews              |              |
| 12,20                     | Rockport                     | 1, 1                         | R.Stymeist#, P.Trimble            |              |
| Red Knot:                 |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 9,27                      | N.Scituate, Scituate         | 30, 1                        | S.Higginbotham, E.Nielsen         |              |
| Sanderling:               |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 3,8                       | Manomet, Nantucket           | 47, 60                       | D.Evered, M.Litchfield            |              |
| 6,27                      | Bourne, Scituate             | 40, 3                        | SSBC, E.Nielsen                   |              |
| Purple Sandpiper:         |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 9,13                      | N.Scituate                   | 300, 500                     | S.Higginbotham, M.+B.Litchfield   |              |
| 12,20                     | Boston, Gloucester           | 40, 60                       | J.Barton, P.Trimble               |              |
| Dunlin:                   |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| thr.                      | Plymouth                     | max. 60 (1/2)                | v.o.                              |              |
| 1,4                       | Squantum, Scituate           | 50, 150                      | R.Abrams, D.Evered#               |              |
| 26                        | Boston Harbor                | 76                           | TASL (S.Zendeh)                   |              |
| dowitcher species:        |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 26                        | N.Falmouth                   | 1                            | F.Bygate#                         |              |
| Common Snipe:             |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 6                         | W.Newbury, Buzz. Bay         | 3, 3                         | R.Stymeist#, SSBC                 |              |
| 12,28                     | Ipswich, Orleans             | 2, 3                         | J.Berry, S.+R.Higginbotham        |              |
| American Woodcock:        |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 15-19                     | Chatham                      | 1                            | B.Nikula                          |              |
| Little Gull:              |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 22                        | Nantucket                    | 2 (1 ad. + 1 1W)             | M.Litchfield                      |              |
| Common Black-headed Gull: |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| thr.                      | P'town                       | 1 ad                         | v.o.                              |              |
| 1,8                       | Lynn, Quincy                 | 1 ad., 1 ad.                 | R.Heil, R.Abrams                  |              |
| 16,26                     | Nantucket, Winthrop          | 1 ad., 1                     | M.Litchfield, TASL (S.Zendeh)     |              |
| Bonaparte's Gull          |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 1,8                       | Lynn, Quincy                 | 900+, 300+                   | R.Heil, R.Abrams#                 |              |
| 9,16                      | Nantucket                    | 300, 475                     | M.Litchfield                      |              |
| Mew Gull:                 |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 3,6                       | Plymouth, P'town             | 1 (details), 1 ad. (details) | D.Evered#, W.Petersen#            |              |
| 5,12                      | Plymouth, Wollaston          | 1,1                          | J.Barton                          |              |
| Ring-billed Gull:         |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 1,6,27                    | Newbypt., Brockton, Falmouth | 55, 200, 75                  | BBC, R.Titus, P.Trimble           |              |
| Herring Gull:             |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 1                         | Newbypt.                     | 1000+                        | BBC                               |              |
| Iceland Gull:             |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 5,6,12                    | P.I., P'town, Gloucester     | 8, 5, 19                     | R.Titus, R.Abrams#, R.stymeist    |              |
| 24,26                     | Nant., Salisbury             | 20, 6                        | M.Litchfield, B.Cassie#           |              |
|                           | Many other reports of 1-4    | individuals.                 |                                   |              |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull: |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 1                         | Nantucket                    | 1 (3W)                       | G.Gove#                           |              |
| Glaucous Gull:            |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| thr.; 2                   | P'town; Gloucester, Rockport | 1; 1,1                       | v.o.; H.Wiggin#                   |              |
| 13,20                     | Squantum, Sudbury            | 1 (2W), 1 ad.                | G.d'Entremont#, R.Forster         |              |
| 24,27                     | Nantucket, Woods Hole        | 1 ad., 1 (1W)                | M.Litchfield, P.Trimble           |              |
| Great Black-backed Gull:  |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 1                         | Newbypt.                     | 250                          | BBC                               |              |
| Black-legged Kittiwake:   |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 2,12,22                   | Rockport, Marshfield, P'town | 6, 6, 350                    | M.Argue#, S.Higginbotham, R.Titus |              |
| large alcid sp.:          |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 20                        | Eastham                      | 20                           | B.Nikula#                         |              |
| Common Murre:             |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 4,22                      | N.Scituate, P'town           | 1, 1                         | D.Evered#, R.Titus                |              |
| Thick-billed Murre:       |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 20                        | Eastham                      | 1                            | B.Nikula#                         |              |
| Razorbill:                |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| 1; 6,22                   | Nantucket; P'town            | 10; 900+, 105                | R.Stymeist#; W.Petersen#, R.Titus |              |
| Black Guillemot:          |                              |                              |                                   |              |
| thr.                      | P'town                       | max. 105 (1/31)              | v.o.                              |              |

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|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Black Guillemot (continued): |                       |               |                      |                     |
| 4,6                          | N.Scituate, Nantucket | 5, 6          | D.Evered#, E.Andrews |                     |
| 20                           | Rockport              | 4             | P.Trimble            |                     |

DOVE THROUGH WOODPECKER

Up to 104 Mourning Doves frequented a feeder in Brookline - quite a sizeable mob to feed. All the Massachusetts owl species were reported. Six Snowy Owls were banded at Logan International Airport and three of these were later picked up dead. A very white Snowy Owl was seen at Squantum. Northern Saw-whets were noted at Quabbin and at Nantucket. The Red-headed Woodpecker at Plymouth provided many birders with a year bird, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was noted in Manomet. One observer noted his highest one-day count of Hairy Woodpeckers and another observer remarked that they are "hard to find"! Pileated Woodpeckers evidently were not scarce, for they were noted from four locations. G.W.G.

|                           |                        |                 |                         |  |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--|
| Mourning Dove:            |                        |                 |                         |  |
| thr.                      | Brookline              | max. 104        | H.Wiggin                |  |
| Common Barn-Owl:          |                        |                 |                         |  |
| 19                        | Middleboro             | 1               | SSBC (W.Petersen)       |  |
| Eastern Screech-Owl:      |                        |                 |                         |  |
| 6,15                      | W.Newbury, M.V.        | 1 (red), 2      | R.Stymeist#, P.Trimble  |  |
| 27                        | Kingston               | 3               | A.Bennett               |  |
| 27                        | Bridgewater-Middleboro | 6               | W.Petersen#             |  |
| Great Horned Owl:         |                        |                 |                         |  |
| thr.                      | Cambridge              | 1               | L.Robinson              |  |
| 5,11                      | Lexington, Milton      | 1, 2            | R.Stymeist#, D.Brown    |  |
| 19,27                     | Middleboro,Bridgewater | 6, 5            | W.Petersen#             |  |
| Snowy Owl:                |                        |                 |                         |  |
| thr.                      | Newbypt.-P.I., Boston  | max. 2, total 6 | v.o., N.Smith           |  |
| 19-24                     | Squantum               | 1 (very white)  | R.Stymeist#             |  |
| 13                        | Westport               | 1               | R.Laubach               |  |
| Barred Owl:               |                        |                 |                         |  |
| 6,10                      | Hamilton, Middleboro   | 1, 1 calling    | A.Bennett, D.Briggs     |  |
| Long-eared Owl:           |                        |                 |                         |  |
| 7                         | Marblehead             | 1               | J.Smith                 |  |
| Short-eared Owl:          |                        |                 |                         |  |
| 12,14                     | P.I., Salisbury        | 1, 2            | BBC, J.Carter           |  |
| 20                        | Nantucket, S.Dartmouth | 1, 1            | M.Litchfield, R.Laubach |  |
| Northern Saw-whet Owl:    |                        |                 |                         |  |
| 27,30                     | Quabbin, Nantucket     | 1+, 1           | BBC, E.Andrews          |  |
| Belted Kingfisher:        |                        |                 |                         |  |
| 12,13                     | Newbypt., Plymouth     | 2, 2            | J.Berry, G.Gove#        |  |
| 20,26                     | Ipswich, Medford       | 1, 1            | J.Berry, C.Jackson      |  |
| Red-headed Woodpecker:    |                        |                 |                         |  |
| thr.                      | Plymouth               | 1 (from Sept.)  | v.o.                    |  |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker:   |                        |                 |                         |  |
| thr.                      | Middleboro             | 1               | v.o.                    |  |
| 26                        | M.V.                   | 3               | T.Raymond               |  |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: |                        |                 |                         |  |
| 13                        | Manomet                | 1               | D.Evered                |  |
| Hairy Woodpecker:         |                        |                 |                         |  |
| 6,27                      | Boxford, Weston        | 5, 5            | A.Bennett, L.Robinson   |  |
| Northern Flicker:         |                        |                 |                         |  |
| 19,26                     | Waltham, Quincy        | 1, 2            | L.Taylor                |  |
| 27                        | Bridgewater            | 6               | W.Petersen              |  |
| Pileated Woodpecker:      |                        |                 |                         |  |
| 1,6                       | Lincoln, IRWS          | 2, 1            | J.Kerr, M.Kasprzyk      |  |
| 25,31                     | Wellesley, Carlisle    | 1, 1 m.         | W.Sharron, D.+L.Stokes  |  |

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WARBLERS

January was noteworthy for the variety of species that lingered in above average numbers. Western Kingbirds on Nantucket and a House Wren in Salem stayed until the really cold weather hit. The total of eleven Ruby-crowned Kinglets exceeded the January counts for the last seven years, including the recent high of six in 1984. Many American Robins remained all month throughout the region, and Eastern Bluebirds occurred in slightly above average numbers in their usual winter haunts in southeastern Massachusetts. A remarkable two Ovenbirds, on Martha's Vineyard and in Lexington, remained until late in the month.

Due very likely to the mild weather and also to good food supplies farther north and west, some typical winter irruptive species failed to materialize in January.

Included in this category were Red-breasted Nuthatch and Northern Shrike.

More unusual species for the month included the two Nantucket Jackdaws and a Varied Thrush that set up residence and was photographed in a yard in Boxford. L.E.T.

| <u>SPECIES/DATE</u>             | <u>LOCATION</u>          | <u>NUMBER</u>                 | <u>OBSERVERS</u>              | <u>JANUARY 1985</u> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| <u>Western Kingbird:</u>        |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 1-6                             | Nantucket                | 1                             | R.Stymeist#                   |                     |
| <u>Horned Lark:</u>             |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 5-27, 6-27                      | Bridgewater, P.I.        | 200 max. (1/5), 60 max. (1/6) | W.Petersen#, v.o.             |                     |
| 14, 27                          | Concord, Scituate        | 45+, 60                       | J.Carter, E.Nielsen#          |                     |
| <u>American Crow:</u>           |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 6, 12                           | Peabody, Bridgewater     | 225, 100+                     | M.Kasprzyk, N.Osborne#        |                     |
| 19, 28                          | Brookline, Middleboro    | 195, 800                      | G.Gove#, D.Briggs#            |                     |
| <u>Fish Crow:</u>               |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 11                              | Milton                   | 4                             | R.Titus                       |                     |
| <u>Jackdaw:</u>                 |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| thr.                            | Nantucket                | 2                             | E.Andrews#                    |                     |
| <u>Black-capped Chickadee:</u>  |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 10, 13                          | Hardwick, Stoughton      | 38, 76                        | M.Hall, R.Titus               |                     |
| 19, 27                          | Boxford, Weston          | 70+, 150+                     | A.Bennett#, L.Robinson        |                     |
| <u>Red-breasted Nuthatch:</u>   |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| thr., 1-12                      | Baldwinville, Newbypt.   | 2+, 2 max. (1/6)              | J.O'Regan, BBC                |                     |
| 5, 9, 27                        | Hardwick, Milton, Weston | 7, 2, 1                       | M.Lynch#, D.Brown, L.Robinson |                     |
| <u>White-breasted Nuthatch:</u> |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 9                               | Milton                   | 20                            | D.Brown                       |                     |
| <u>Brown Creeper:</u>           |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 13, 19                          | Stoughton, Concord       | 6, 4                          | R.Titus, J.Carter             |                     |
| <u>Carolina Wren:</u>           |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| thr., 10-31                     | Westport, Wayland        | 3 max. (1/27), 1              | v.o., T.Hart                  |                     |
| 23, 26-30                       | Carlisle, Falmouth       | 1, 5 max. (1/27)              | B.Dee, v.o.                   |                     |
| 27, 29                          | Marshfield, Weymouth     | 2, 2                          | A.Bennett, E.Richards         |                     |
| <u>House Wren:</u>              |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 6                               | Salem                    | 1                             | R.Heil                        |                     |
| <u>Winter Wren:</u>             |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 5, 6                            | Boxford, S.Peabody       | 1, 1                          | E.Nielsen, R.Heil             |                     |
| 7, 12                           | Marblehead, Lakeville    | 4, 2                          | J.Smith, W.Petersen#          |                     |
| <u>Marsh Wren:</u>              |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 1                               | Nantucket                | 2                             | v.o.                          |                     |
| <u>Golden-crowned Kinglet:</u>  |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 5, 14                           | Boxford, Easton          | 12, 8                         | E.Nielsen, R.Titus            |                     |
| <u>Ruby-crowned Kinglet:</u>    |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 1-13, 1                         | six locations, Nantucket | 6 singles, 2                  | v.o., E.Andrews#              |                     |
| 20, 27                          | Gloucester, Marshfield   | 1, 2                          | C.Leahy, E.Nielsen#           |                     |
| <u>Eastern Bluebird:</u>        |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| thr.                            | E.Taunton, Hardwick      | 5, 6+                         | R.Turner#, J.Aylward#         |                     |
| 15                              | M.V.                     | 7 m. + 2 f.                   | P.Trimble                     |                     |
| <u>Hermit Thrush:</u>           |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 1-23, 6                         | 5 locations, Salem       | 5 singles, 1                  | v.o., R.Heil                  |                     |
| 6, 27                           | Topsfield, Falmouth      | 1, 1                          | A.Bennett, P.Trimble          |                     |
| <u>American Robin:</u>          |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 1, 4                            | Nantucket, E.Middleboro  | 60, 50                        | R.Stymeist#, K.Anderson       |                     |
| 6                               | E.Orleans, Salem         | 400, 22                       | W.Petersen#, R.Heil           |                     |
| 20, 27                          | Eastham, Falmouth        | 400, 150                      | B.Nikula#, P.Trimble          |                     |
| 29                              | Norwell, Sudbury         | 50, 30                        | C.Hager, R.Forster            |                     |
| <u>Varied Thrush:</u>           |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 4-31                            | Boxford                  | 1 ph                          | B.+J.Wasserman#               |                     |
| <u>Gray Catbird:</u>            |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| thr., 2                         | Nantucket, E.Orleans     | 3 max., 2                     | E.Andrews#, A.Williams        |                     |
| 1-27, 27                        | 12 locations, Squantum   | 12 singles, 1                 | v.o., E.Nielsen               |                     |
| <u>Brown Thrasher:</u>          |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 6, 19                           | Chatham, Norwell         | 1, 1                          | B.Nikula, B.Litchfield#       |                     |
| 25                              | Sudbury                  | 1                             | R.Forster                     |                     |
| <u>Water Pipit:</u>             |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 12-27                           | Bridgewater              | 15 max. (1/19)                | W.Petersen#                   |                     |
| <u>Cedar Waxwing:</u>           |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 6                               | Wellfleet, Newbypt.      | 25, 27                        | W.Petersen#, BBC              |                     |
| 20, 25                          | Concord, IRWS            | 135, 400+                     | R.Walton, v.o.                |                     |
| <u>Northern Shrike:</u>         |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 20                              | Nantucket                | 1                             | M.Litchfield                  |                     |
| <u>Orange-crowned Warbler:</u>  |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 5-7                             | Marblehead               | 1                             | J.Smith                       |                     |
| <u>Yellow-rumped Warbler:</u>   |                          |                               |                               |                     |
| 12, 13                          | P.I., Salisbury          | 1, 1                          | J.Berry, M.Kasprzyk           |                     |

| SPECIES/DATE                       | LOCATION             | NUMBER      | OBSERVERS               | JANUARY 1985 |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Yellow-rumped Warbler (continued): |                      |             |                         |              |
| 24-27,27                           | Squantum, Barnstable | 45 max., 16 | v.o., S.Carroll#        |              |
| Pine Warbler:                      |                      |             |                         |              |
| 13                                 | Pembroke             | 1           | E.Pearson               |              |
| Palm Warbler:                      |                      |             |                         |              |
| 1,6                                | Wareham, Bourne      | 1, 2        | L.Robinson, W.Petersen# |              |
| 6,15                               | Buzz. Bay, Westport  | 1, 1        | SSBC, R.Laubach         |              |
| Ovenbird:                          |                      |             |                         |              |
| 13-31,21                           | Lexington, M.V.      | 1, 1        | fide R.Forster, V.Laux  |              |
| Yellow-breasted Chat:              |                      |             |                         |              |
| 6                                  | Eastham              | 1           | W.Petersen#             |              |

#### TANAGER THROUGH EVENING GROSBEAK

A total of three Western Tanagers, in East Harwich, Manomet, and Millis, was a good count for this comparative rarity. Another unusual vagrant for our area in winter was the Lark Sparrow that spent the latter part of the month at Squantum. Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings were seen in significant numbers at Logan Airport in East Boston, not one of the traditional sites for these species. A male House Finch in the orange plumage spent the month at a Milton feeder. This morph is much more common in the western part of the country.

Good numbers of Red-winged Blackbirds lingered in widely scattered sites in our region this January. In the low count department, the winter finch flight was virtually nonexistent, consisting entirely of a few Pine Siskins, mostly at far inland localities. The only significant counts of Evening Grosbeak were from Middleboro. L.E.T.

#### Western Tanager:

|                         |                           |                    |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 4,5-31                  | MBO, E.Harwich            | 1 (details), 1     | D.Evered#, MacLean#       |
| from Dec.-31            | Millis                    | 1                  | P.Hallowell               |
| Dickcissel:             |                           |                    |                           |
| thr.                    | Orleans                   | 1                  | v.o.                      |
| Rufous-sided Towhee:    |                           |                    |                           |
| thr., 1                 | Easton, Nantucket         | 2, 2               | K.Ryan#, v.o.             |
| 2,6-26                  | Gloucester, 6 locations   | 1 m., 6 singles    | H.Wiggin#, v.o.           |
| 26-27                   | Falmouth                  | 2                  | v.o.                      |
| American Tree Sparrow:  |                           |                    |                           |
| 4-19,19                 | Concord, Bridgewater      | 50, 150            | J.Carter, W.Petersen#     |
| 19,28-31                | Marshfield, Nantucket     | 60, 1              | T.Raymond, E.Andrews      |
| Chipping Sparrow:       |                           |                    |                           |
| 18,19                   | Mt.A., Bridgewater        | 1, 1               | S.Perkins, W.Petersen#    |
| Field Spprow:           |                           |                    |                           |
| 6,7                     | Salem, Halifax            | 2, 3               | R.Heil, K.Anderson        |
| 10,20                   | Westport, Cohasset        | 4, 3               | R.Laubach, S.Higginbotham |
| Lark Sparrow:           |                           |                    |                           |
| 19-31                   | Squantum                  | 1 ad.              | R.Stymeist#               |
| Savannah Sparrow:       |                           |                    |                           |
| 6,13-31                 | Bourne, Ipswich           | 1, 10 max. (1/13)  | SSBC, J.Berry             |
| 13,27                   | E.Middleboro, Bridgewater | 3, 5               | K.Anderson, W.Petersen    |
| "Ipswich" Sparrow:      |                           |                    |                           |
| 11-15,18                | P.I., Barnstable (SN)     | 3, 2               | v.o., D.Briggs            |
| 20,27                   | Westport, Scituate        | 3, 3               | R.Laubach, E.Nielsen      |
| Fox Sparrow:            |                           |                    |                           |
| 5,5-31                  | Boxford, 6 locations      | 1, 6 singles       | E.Nielsen, v.o.           |
| 19                      | Dover                     | 2                  | P.Hallowell               |
| Swamp Sparrow:          |                           |                    |                           |
| 1,18                    | Plymouth, Westport        | 5, 3               | A.Bennett#, R.Laubach     |
| 20                      | Hingham, Wayland          | 3, 1               | S.Higginbotham, R.Forster |
| 27                      | Bridgewater               | 14                 | W.Petersen#               |
| White-throated Sparrow: |                           |                    |                           |
| thr.,11                 | Pembroke, E.Middleboro    | 30, 12             | E.Pearson, K.Anderson     |
| 14,27                   | Sharon, Ipswich           | 33, 7              | R.Titus, J.Berry          |
| White-crowned Sparrow:  |                           |                    |                           |
| 31                      | Nantucket                 | 2 imm.             | M.Litchfield              |
| Dark-eyed Junco:        |                           |                    |                           |
| 6,13                    | Newbypt., Stoughton       | 134, 65            | BBC, R.Titus              |
| Lapland Longspur:       |                           |                    |                           |
| 1-26,15-27              | P.I., Scituate            | 20 max. (1/26), 3  | v.o., R.Campbell#         |
| 20-26                   | E.Boston                  | 59 max. (1/26)     | R.Stymeist#               |
| Snow Bunting:           |                           |                    |                           |
| thr.,1-27               | P'town, P.I.              | 75+, 50 max. (1/1) | B.Nikula, v.o.            |
| 26,27                   | E.Boston, Middleboro      | 100, 150           | R.Stymeist#, W.Petersen#  |



| SPECIES/DATE                 | LOCATION               | NUMBER                  | OBSERVERS               | JANUARY 1985 |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Red-winged Blackbird:        |                        |                         |                         |              |
| 6,14                         | S.Peabody, Stoughton   | 24, 98                  | R.Heil, R.Titus         |              |
| 19,24                        | Lakeville, Cambridge   | 150+, 70                | W.Petersen#, L.Robinson |              |
| 26                           | Wayland/Sudbury        | 67                      | R.Forster               |              |
| Eastern Meadowlark:          |                        |                         |                         |              |
| 12,13                        | Marshfield, Ipswich    | 2, 1                    | S.Higginbotham, BBC     |              |
| 13,19                        | E.Middleboro, Westport | 45, 1                   | K.Anderson, C.Laubach   |              |
| Rusty Blackbird:             |                        |                         |                         |              |
| 5-21,6                       | Whitman, S.Peabody     | 25 max. (1/21), 2 m.    | W.Petersen, R.Heil      |              |
| 10-12,13                     | Lakeville, Medway      | 45 max. (1/12), 53      | v.o., W.Reagan#         |              |
| 29                           | Sudbury                | 1                       | R.Forster               |              |
| Brown-headed Cowbird:        |                        |                         |                         |              |
| 9                            | Scituate               | 30                      | S.Higginbotham          |              |
| Northern Oriole:             |                        |                         |                         |              |
| thr.                         | Eastham                | 2 at feeder             | W.Swift                 |              |
| Northern "Bullock's" Oriole: |                        |                         |                         |              |
| 1-7                          | Worcester              | 1 f.                    | M.Lynch#                |              |
| Purple Finch:                |                        |                         |                         |              |
| 4-19,5-26                    | Concord, Ipswich       | 16 max. (1/19), 13 max. | (1/5) J.Carter, v.o.    |              |
| 6,13                         | Lexington, Belmont     | 10, 2                   | D.Dillavou, L.Taylor    |              |
| House Finch:                 |                        |                         |                         |              |
| thr., 19                     | Milton, Framingham     | 1 (orange), 82          | R.Abrams, R.Forster     |              |
| Pine Siskin:                 |                        |                         |                         |              |
| 11-31,26                     | Baldwinville, Newbypt. | 50, 2                   | J.O'Regan, E.Nielsen    |              |
| Evening Grosbeak:            |                        |                         |                         |              |
| thr., 1                      | Middleboro, Boxford    | 35, 1                   | D.Briggs, E.Nielsen     |              |
| 13,27                        | Ipswich, Lakeville     | 3, 2                    | BBC, W.Petersen         |              |

## MONOMOY ISLAND TOURS

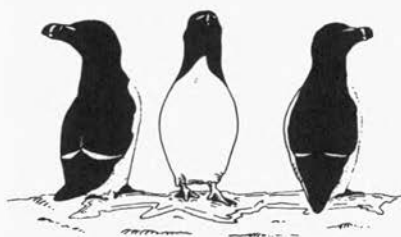
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Corrigendum and another apology. Here is a corrigendum courtesy of Chris Englund of Somerville who recognized the misquote in our apology for publishing only one month of records in the April issue. Chris writes, "Please note that the March Hare is a character in Alice in Wonderland. In Through the Looking Glass, the Red Queen says to Alice, 'Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that.'" We apologize for the misquote - our intentions were good, and the truth is there, somewhere. We have run at least "twice as fast" to include three months of records in this issue, but this has not got us "somewhere else" - only enabled us to "keep in the same place."  
D.R.A.



# Field Records

## February 1985

by George W. Gove, Robert H. Stymeist, Lee E. Taylor

The month of February 1985 was mild, dry and sunny. The temperature averaged  $32.8^{\circ}$ ,  $2.1^{\circ}$  above normal, and the high mark of  $70^{\circ}$  on February 24 broke the previous high of  $67^{\circ}$  set in 1930. The first nine days of the month were a continuation of January's cold pattern; in fact, the first day without freezing did not come until February 22, ending a fifty-three day stretch of days with temperatures at  $32^{\circ}$  or below. This was the longest run since a stretch of 58 days, eight winters ago.

Precipitation totaled 1.83 inches, 1.87 inches under normal, making this the driest February since 1980 (0.88 inch). Snowfall totaled 10.2 inches, 1.4 inches less than average. Total snow for the season reached 20.9 inches, 12.1 inches less than normal.  
R.H.S.

### LOON THROUGH MERGANSER

Red-necked Grebe numbers started their annual build up off Manomet, increasing to eighty-seven by the end of the month. A Western Grebe, dark morph, was seen at North Scituate on February 18. More than three hundred Great Cormorants were noted flying into Woods Hole in the late afternoon and single Double-crested were seen in East Boston and at Newburyport. An American Bittern was noted at Plum Island on the third.

A Tundra Swan spent the last two weeks of the month at Nantucket and Snow Geese were present throughout the month at East Harwich and on the Vineyard. Brant were present in good numbers in the Duxbury-Plymouth area and at Squantum but the number reported from Eastham seems extremely low; the latter may be due to the presence of hunters. Wood Ducks were seen in two locations, and a male Northern Shoveler continued from December in Plymouth where a male Eurasian Wigeon was also seen. Two male Eurasian Wigeons were at Nantucket. Harlequin Ducks were present on the Cape and South Shore but apparently have forsaken their usual haunts around Magnolia. Several small flocks of Hooded Mergansers wintered at several locations.  
G.W.G.

| <u>SPECIES/DATE</u>   | <u>LOCATION</u>       | <u>NUMBER</u>  | <u>OBSERVERS</u>          | <u>FEBRUARY 1985</u> |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Red-throated Loon:    |                       |                |                           |                      |
| 2,6                   | Salisbury, Barnstable | 3, 2           | J. Berry, P. Trimble      |                      |
| 15,24                 | Nantucket, C. Ann     | 8, 2           | M. Litchfield, P. Trimble |                      |
| Common Loon:          |                       |                |                           |                      |
| 2,18                  | Salisbury, C. Ann     | 10, 10         | J. Berry                  |                      |
| 19,23                 | Nantucket, Gloucester | 30, 25         | M. Litchfield, BBC        |                      |
| Pied-billed Grebe:    |                       |                |                           |                      |
| 9,21                  | Lakeville, Sandwich   | 1, 1           | K. Holmes, P. Trimble     |                      |
| Horned Grebe:         |                       |                |                           |                      |
| 3                     | Cape Ann, P. I.       | 19, 12         | SSBC, G. Bertrand         |                      |
| 18,24                 | Cape Ann, Nahant      | 5, 11          | J. Berry, BBC             |                      |
| Red-necked Grebe:     |                       |                |                           |                      |
| 3,10                  | C. Ann, Rockport      | 12, 20         | SSBC, L. Robinson#        |                      |
| 6,23                  | Manomet               | 40, 87         | D. Evered                 |                      |
| <u>Western Grebe:</u> |                       |                |                           |                      |
| 18                    | N. Scituate           | 1 (dark morph) | M. Argue+H. Wiggin        |                      |
| Northern Gannet:      |                       |                |                           |                      |
| 10,21                 | P'town, Scituate      | 1 ad., 2       | E. Nielsen#, W. Petersen# |                      |
| 24                    | Rockport              | 6              | J. Berry                  |                      |
| Great Cormorant:      |                       |                |                           |                      |
| 3,17                  | C. Ann, Newbypt       | 45, 30         | SSBC, BBC                 |                      |
| 19,23                 | Woods Hole, Salisbury | 300+, 12       | P. Trimble, BBC           |                      |

| <u>SPECIES/DATE</u>                | <u>LOCATION</u>            | <u>NUMBER</u>                              | <u>OBSERVERS</u>                  | <u>FEBRUARY 1985</u> |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Double-crested Cormorant:<br>16,17 | E.Boston,Newbypt           | 1, 1                                       | G.d'Entremont#,BBC                |                      |
| American Bittern:<br>3             | P.I.                       | 1  | v.o.                              |                      |
| Great Blue Heron:<br>2,3           | Falmouth,Wareham           | 7, 4                                       | J.Berry,L.Robinson                |                      |
| 24,26                              | Westport,Sandwich          | 3, 2                                       | R.Laubach,P.Trimble               |                      |
| Black-crowned Night-Heron:<br>10   | Eastham                    | 4  | E.Nielsen#                        |                      |
| Tundra Swan:<br>15-28              | Nantucket                  | 1  | E.Andrews                         |                      |
| Mute Swan:<br>2,28                 | Falmouth,Nantucket         | 74, 87                                     | J.Berry,E.Andrews                 |                      |
| Snow Goose:<br>thr.                | E.Harwich,M.V.             | 4, 4-10                                    | v.o.,V.Laux                       |                      |
| Brant:<br>10                       | Eastham,Duxbury            | 75, 1000+                                  | M.Lynch#,W.Petersen#              |                      |
| 20,28                              | Squantum                   | 800, 1200                                  | O.Kerr#,R.Emery#                  |                      |
| 24                                 | Plymouth                   | 1000+                                      | S.Carroll#                        |                      |
| Canada Goose:<br>10,19             | Eastham,Falmouth           | 125+, 200                                  | M.Lynch#,P.Trimble                |                      |
| 16,23                              | P.I.,Salisbury             | 450, 250                                   | BBC                               |                      |
| Wood Duck:<br>11,12-19             | Sandwich,Cambridge         | 1, 1 m.                                    | J.Aylward,L.Robinson              |                      |
| Green-winged Teal:<br>23,24        | Abington,Halifax           | 1, 2                                       | W.Petersen#                       |                      |
| American Black Duck:<br>11,23      | Middleboro,Nantucket       | 200+, 40                                   | D.Briggs,M.Litchfield             |                      |
| Northern Pintail:<br>thr.          | E.Orleans                  | 1 m.                                       | B.Nikula#                         |                      |
| 24                                 | Arlington,Westport,Halifax | 1 pr.,5,5                                  | L.Taylor,R.Laubach,W.Petersen     |                      |
| Northern Shoveler:<br>10-28        | Plymouth                   | 1 m. (fr. Dec.)                            | v.o.                              |                      |
| Gadwall:<br>4,12-28                | Scituate,Nantucket         | 1, max. 7 m. + 3 f.                        | S.Higginbotham,E.Andrews          |                      |
| 21                                 | Plymouth,Sandwich          | 7, 15                                      | W.Petersen,P.Trimble              |                      |
| Eurasian Wigeon:<br>11-23,21       | Nantucket,Plymouth         | 2 m., 1 m.                                 | E.Andrews+M.Litchfield,W.Petersen |                      |
| American Wigeon:<br>14-23          | Nantucket                  | max. 69                                    | E.Andrews                         |                      |
| 19,24                              | Falmouth,Lexington         | 8, 26                                      | P.Trimble,L.Taylor                |                      |
| Canvasback:<br>2,4                 | Falmouth,Wareham           | 11, 50                                     | J.Berry,L.Robinson                |                      |
| 15,16-25                           | Yarmouth,Nantucket         | 85, max. 75 (2/23)                         | D.Williams,E.Andrews+M.Litchfield |                      |
| Redhead:<br>5-23,16-23             | Plymouth,Nantucket         | max. 11 (2/23), max. 125 (2/23)            | v.o.                              |                      |
| Ring-necked Duck:<br>thr.          | Lakeville                  | max. 35 (2/24)                             | v.o.                              |                      |
| 16,19                              | Nantucket,Falmouth         | 8, 50                                      | E.Andrews,P.Trimble               |                      |
| Greater Scaup:<br>2,20             | Milton,Squantum            | 500, 400                                   | R.Abrams,O.Kerr#                  |                      |
| 23                                 | Newburyport                | 26   | BBC                               |                      |
| Lesser Scaup:<br>21,26             | Plymouth,Sandwich          | 1, 1 m.                                    | W.Petersen,P.Trimble              |                      |
| Common Eider:<br>thr.              | Nantucket,Plymouth         | max. 10,000+ (2/16)<br>max. 10,000+ (2/24) | M.Litchfield,M.Lynch#             |                      |
| King Eider:<br>1-16,6              | N.Scituate,Manomet         | 1 m., 1 ad. m. + 1 imm. f.                 | v.o.,D.Evered                     |                      |
| 6                                  | Sandwich                   | 1 f.                                       | P.Trimble                         |                      |
| Harlequin Duck:<br>thr.            | E.Orleans                  | 1 m.                                       | v.o.                              |                      |
| 10-23                              | Scituate                   | 1 m., 2 f.                                 | v.o.                              |                      |
| 11-23                              | Manomet                    | max. 3 (2/19)                              | v.o.                              |                      |
| Oldsquaw:<br>thr.                  | Newburyport                | max. 150 (2/23)                            | v.o.                              |                      |
| Black Scoter:<br>18,24;25          | Rockport;Nantucket         | 4, 5; 29                                   | J.Berry;M.Litchfield              |                      |
| Surf Scoter:<br>21                 | Barnstable                 | 60   | P.Trimble                         |                      |

| SPECIES/DATE                   | LOCATION            | NUMBER                            | OBSERVERS              | FEBRUARY 1985 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| <b>White-winged Scoter:</b>    |                     |                                   |                        |               |
| 3,23                           | Cape Ann            | 40, 100                           | SSBC, BBC              |               |
| 16                             | Ipswich             | 250                               | BBC                    |               |
| <b>Common Goldeneye:</b>       |                     |                                   |                        |               |
| 3,23                           | E.Orleans, Newbypt  | 1000, 700+                        | A.Williams,W.Petersen# |               |
| 24                             | Lakeville           | 60                                | W.Petersen#            |               |
| <b>Barrow's Goldeneye:</b>     |                     |                                   |                        |               |
| thr.                           | N.Chatham,Newbypt   | max. 3 m., max. 2 m.+ 3 f. (2/23) | B.Nikula#, v.o.        |               |
| 8,24                           | Plymouth, Rockport  | 4, 1 f.                           | D.Evered, J.Berry      |               |
| <b>Bufflehead:</b>             |                     |                                   |                        |               |
| 3,9                            | Cape Ann, Newbypt   | 50, 67                            | SSBC,M.Lynch#          |               |
| 23                             | Nant., Gloucester   | 18, 40                            | M.Litchfield, BBC      |               |
| <b>Hooded Merganser:</b>       |                     |                                   |                        |               |
| 2,11                           | Falmouth,Somerville | 18, 6-10                          | J.Berry                |               |
| 17                             | Lakeville,Falmouth  | 6, 5 f.+ 4 m.                     | W.Petersen,E.Nielsen#  |               |
| 24,26                          | Belmont,Watertown   | 3 m. + 1 f., 2 m. + 1 f.          | L.Taylor, M.Hall       |               |
| <b>Common Merganser:</b>       |                     |                                   |                        |               |
| 2,4                            | Milton,Lakeville    | 50, 50                            | R.Abrams, K.Holmes     |               |
| 10,24                          | Eastham,Wayland     | 65, 65                            | S.Carroll#, R.Forster  |               |
| <b>Red-breasted Merganser:</b> |                     |                                   |                        |               |
| 2,20                           | Milton, P'town      | 200, 1000                         | R.Abrams, P.Trimble    |               |
| 28                             | S.Dartmouth         | 18                                | R.Laubach              |               |

#### RAILS THROUGH ALCIDS

A Clapper Rail was found freshly dead at Wellfleet, and a Sora was seen in Lakeville. It should be noted that the report of a possible Yellow Rail in Nantucket in the December records noted that the bird was in a cattail marsh. This was incorrect; the bird was in a *Spartina* marsh which was surrounded by a cattail marsh. American Coot were noted at four locations; whether these are wintering birds or migrants is open to speculation.

The first migrant Killdeer were seen toward month's end in a few inland locations. Most of the other shorebirds reported are probably wintering birds with the exception of American Woodcock, several of which were seen and heard on February 24. Purple Sandpiper were reported in lower than usual numbers.

An adult Little Gull was seen on a pelagic trip out of Boston to Stellwagen Bank. Other birds seen on that trip included four Iceland Gulls, 400-500 kittiwakes, and an estimated 700 Razorbills. Common Black-headed Gulls were seen at three locations including two or three birds at Newburyport. The *Mew Gulls* continued at Plymouth and at Provincetown. See the January records for details. High counts of Iceland Gulls were made at Cape Ann and at Newburyport, and three Lesser Black-backed Gulls were noted at Plymouth, one adult and two first-winter birds. Among the details noted were the all-dark primaries, secondaries, and median wing coverts.

An *Ivory Gull* was found at Plum Island sitting on a duck banding trap and feeding on a duck carcass near Stage Island. A few observers were fortunate to see this bird during the two days it was there and before it disappeared. One wonders where such a striking and readily identifiable bird can disappear to, especially in such a heavily birded area. There was a report of a Ross' Gull at the same time, but no details were received, and no other observers saw the bird. A leucistic Herring or Iceland Gull, described as having totally white body plumage, possible pink primary veins, and a strikingly adult yellow bill with a red spot, was seen at Nantucket.

Common and Thick-billed murres were present at Cape Ann where up to fifteen Black Guillemots were also noted. Three adult *Atlantic Puffins* were seen at Provincetown. A movement of Razorbills in midmonth at Nantucket and the number seen at Stellwagen the next day is indicative of a major midwinter flight - very unusual. G.W.G.

|                              |                    |          |                          |  |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----------|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Clapper Rail:</b>         |                    |          |                          |  |
| 5                            | WBWS               | 1 (dead) | R.Prescott               |  |
| <b>Sora:</b>                 |                    |          |                          |  |
| 4                            | Lakeville          | 1        | K.Holmes                 |  |
| <b>American Coot:</b>        |                    |          |                          |  |
| 3,11                         | Plymouth,Lakeville | 14, 1    | v.o., K.Anderson         |  |
| 11,26                        | Sandwich           | 10, 6    | J.Aylward,P.Trimble      |  |
| 16,21                        | Nantucket          | 6, 6     | E.Andrews                |  |
| <b>Black-bellied Plover:</b> |                    |          |                          |  |
| 2                            | Quincy             | 2        | R.Abrams                 |  |
| <b>Killdeer:</b>             |                    |          |                          |  |
| 14,24                        | Nant.,Bridgewater  | 1, 3     | M.Litchfield,W.Petersen# |  |
| 24,26                        | Cambridge, Easton  | 1, 2     | L.Taylor, K.Ryan         |  |

| SPECIES/DATE              | LOCATION   | NUMBER             | OBSERVERS                 | FEBRUARY 1985 |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Ruddy Turnstone:          |  |                    |                           |               |
| 3,9                       | Cape Ann,Nantucket                               | 1, 10              | BBC, E.Andrews            |               |
| 18                        | N.Scituate                                       | 5 (1 ad. + 4 imm.) | H.Wiggin + M.Argue        |               |
| Red Knot:                 |  |                    |                           |               |
| 18                        | N.Scituate                                       | 3                  | H.Wiggin + M.Argue        |               |
| Sanderling:               |  |                    |                           |               |
| 9,10                      | Nant.,Salisbury                                  | 100, 82            | M.Litchfield, F.Bouchard  |               |
| 20                        | P'town, Manomet                                  | 25, 35             | P.Trimble, D.Evered       |               |
| Purple Sandpiper:         |  |                    |                           |               |
| thr.                      | Rockport   | max. 35            | v.o.                      |               |
| 18-23                     | N.Scituate                                       | max. 125           | v.o.                      |               |
| Dunlin:                   |  |                    |                           |               |
| 3,10                      | Salisbury,P'town                                 | 30, 15             | BBC,E.Nielsen#            |               |
| 24                        | Plymouth   | 50                 | M.Lynch#                  |               |
| Common Snipe:             |  |                    |                           |               |
| 16                        | Ipswich  | 2                  | BBC                       |               |
| American Woodcock:        |  |                    |                           |               |
| 24                        | E.Bridgewater,S.Peabody                          | 1, 1               | W.Petersen#,D.Hill        |               |
| 24                        | Lincoln,Concord                                  | 1, 1 (display)     | M.Montgomery,R.Walton     |               |
| Little Gull:              |  |                    |                           |               |
| 16                        | Mass.Bay   | 1 ad.              | T.Rumage                  |               |
| Common Black-headed Gull: |  |                    |                           |               |
| 2                         | Salisbury,Winthrop                               | 1 (details), 2     | J.Berry,S.Carroll#        |               |
| 5,17,23                   | Newbypt 2 ad., 1, 2                              | (1 ad. + 1 Imm.)   | P.Trimble,BBC,W.Petersen# |               |
| thr.                      | P'town   | 1 (2W)             | v.o.                      |               |
| Bonaparte's Gull:         |  |                    |                           |               |
| thr.,3                    | Quincy,Cape Ann                                  | 300, 15            | R.Abrams,BBC              |               |
| Mew Gull:                 |  |                    |                           |               |
| 3,10                      | Plymouth,P'town                                  | 1 (1W), 1          | D.Evered#,E.Nielsen#      |               |
| Ring-billed Gull:         |  |                    |                           |               |
| 10,15                     | Plymouth,Quincy                                  | 400, 800           | W.Petersen#,R.Abrams      |               |
| 28                        | Abington   | 400                | W.Petersen#               |               |
| Iceland Gull:             |  |                    |                           |               |
| 3                         | Cape Ann,P.I.                                    | 25, 40             | SSBC,E.Nielsen#           |               |
| 10,23                     | Nantucket,Newbypt                                | 12, 25             | M.Litchfield,BBC          |               |
| 16                        | Stellwagen                                       | 4                  | T.Rumage                  |               |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull: |  |                    |                           |               |
| 2,3                       | Manomet  | 3 (details)        | D.Evered#                 |               |
| Glaucous Gull:            |  |                    |                           |               |
| 2,3:4                     | Manomet;Salisbury                                | 1 (2W); 4          | D.Evered#                 |               |
| 10,19;20                  | Nantucket;P'town                                 | 1 ad.; 2           | M.Litchfield;P.Trimble    |               |
| Black-legged Kittiwake:   |  |                    |                           |               |
| 3,10                      | Chatham,P'town                                   | 300, 300           | E.Nielsen#                |               |
| 16                        | Stellwagen                                       | 400-500            | T.Rumage                  |               |
| Ivory Gull:               |  |                    |                           |               |
| 2-3                       | P.I.   | 1 (1W)             | R.Secatore+v.o.           |               |
|                           | sitting on banding trap, feeding on duck carcass |                    |                           |               |
| Dovekie:                  |  |                    |                           |               |
| 21                        | Nantucket  | 1 (winter plum.)   | M.Litchfield              |               |
| Common Murre:             |  |                    |                           |               |
| 23                        | Gloucester                                       | 1 (br. pl.)        | M.Argue+H.Wiggin          |               |
| Thick-billed Murre:       |  |                    |                           |               |
| 17-24                     | Rockport   | max. 2 (2/23)      | v.o.                      |               |
| Razorbill:                |  |                    |                           |               |
| 10,15                     | P'town,Nantucket                                 | 3, 131(in 15 min.) | E.Nielsen#,M.Litchfield   |               |
| 16,20                     | Stellwagen,Falmouth                              | 700, 12            | T.Rummage,P.Trimble       |               |
| Black Guillemot:          |  |                    |                           |               |
| thr                       | Rockport   | max. 15 (2/24)     | v.o.                      |               |
| 3,10                      | N.Scituate,P'town                                | 6, 1               | S.Higginbotham,E.Nielsen# |               |
| Atlantic Puffin:          |  |                    |                           |               |
| 10                        | P'town   | 3 ad.              | E.Nielsen#                |               |
| Large alcid sp.:          |  |                    |                           |               |
| 16,17                     | Eastham,P'town                                   | 3, 9               | B.Nikula                  |               |

#### TURKEY VULTURE THROUGH WILD TURKEY

Four or five early migrant Turkey Vultures were seen this month. Up to five Bald Eagles were present in the Lakeville area, where a Golden Eagle was also seen, and two Bald Eagles were in the Newburyport area. Cooper's Hawks were reported from seven locations and Northern Goshawks from five. An adult Red-shouldered Hawk was seen in Orleans throughout the month. In addition to the included reports of Red-tailed Hawks, there were many other reports totalling 20 birds of this species. An adult female

| <u>SPECIES/DATE</u> | <u>LOCATION</u> | <u>NUMBER</u> | <u>OBSERVERS</u> | <u>FEBRUARY 1985</u> |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------|
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------|

Merlin was seen Feeding on a Horned Lark in Salisbury. A dark subadult Peregrine Falcon was noted on Nantucket where a gray phase Gyrfalcon, possibly the one seen on the Christmas Count there, was also noted. G.W.G.

**Turkey Vulture:**

|       |                |      |                       |
|-------|----------------|------|-----------------------|
| 17,22 | Athol,Uxbridge | 1, 1 | R.Stymeist#,C.Quinlan |
| 24    | Medfield,Dover | 2, 1 | W.Reagan,B.Wicks      |

**Bald Eagle:**

|      |              |                     |          |
|------|--------------|---------------------|----------|
| 3-16 | Quabbin      | max. 4 ad. + 3 imm. | v.o.     |
| thr. | Lakeville    | max. 3 ad. + 2 imm. | K.Holmes |
| 2-17 | Newbypt-P.I. | max. 1 ad. + 1 imm. | v.o.     |
| thr. | S.Dartmouth  | 1 imm.              | A.Hankin |

**Northern Harrier:**

|       |                 |               |                     |
|-------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 3-17  | Newbypt-P.I.    | max. 5 (2/17) | v.o.                |
| 20,23 | P'town,Westport | 2, 1 f.       | P.Trimble,R.Laubach |

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:**

|      |                     |      |                         |
|------|---------------------|------|-------------------------|
| 2,15 | E.Orleans,Nantucket | 1, 1 | A.Williams,M.Litchfield |
| 4-24 | S.Dartmouth         | 1    | A.Hankin                |

**Cooper's Hawk:**

|       |                  |            |                              |
|-------|------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| 4,15  | Lakeville,Canton | 1, 1       | K.Holmes,K.Ryan              |
| 16,21 | Ware,E.Orleans   | 1, 1 imm.  | W.Petersen,P.Trull           |
| 24    | SRV;Petersham    | 2, 1; 1 f. | R.Walton,R.Forster;E.Nielsen |

**Northern Goshawk:**

|       |                  |           |                   |
|-------|------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| 4,10  | Brookline,Weston | 1 imm., 1 | H.Wiggin,W.Reagan |
| 16,17 | Quabbin,Harvard  | 1 imm., 1 | SSBC,S.Carroll#   |
| 21    | Medfield         | 1         | W.Reagan          |

**Red-shouldered Hawk:**

|      |                     |       |                   |
|------|---------------------|-------|-------------------|
| thr. | Orleans             | 1 ad. | v.o.              |
| 3,24 | Worcester,Braintree | 1, 1  | M.Lynch,S.Carroll |
| 24   | Concord             | 1     | R.Walton#         |

**Red-tailed Hawk:**

|       |                      |       |                       |
|-------|----------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| 10    | Marshfield,Salisbury | 5, 8  | W.Petersen#,P.Roberts |
| 3     | Newbypt-Salisbury    | 11    | R.Forster             |
| 15,16 | Nantucket,Ipswich    | 3, 7  | M.Litchfield,BBC      |
| 24    | SRV,Medfield         | 24, 7 | R.Walton#,W.Reagan    |

**Rough-legged Hawk:**

|      |                           |      |                       |
|------|---------------------------|------|-----------------------|
| 4,10 | Salisbury-P.I.,Marshfield | 6, 7 | D.Evered#,W.Petersen# |
| 24   | Bridgewater,Middleboro    | 2, 2 | E.Pearson,W.Petersen# |

**Golden Eagle:**

|    |           |   |           |
|----|-----------|---|-----------|
| 24 | Lakeville | 1 | K.Holmes# |
|----|-----------|---|-----------|

**American Kestrel:**

|      |                   |      |           |
|------|-------------------|------|-----------|
| 4-10 | S.Dartmouth       | 1    | A.Hankin  |
| 17   | Salisbury,Newbypt | 1, 1 | BBC       |
| 24   | Bridgewater       | 1    | E.Pearson |

**Merlin:**

|       |                     |             |                     |
|-------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 5,10  | S.Harwich,Salisbury | 1, 1 ad. f. | B.Nikula,P.Roberts  |
| 17,18 | P'town,Eastham      | 1, 1        | B.Nikula,J.Aylward# |

**Peregrine Falcon:**

|   |           |               |              |
|---|-----------|---------------|--------------|
| 7 | Nantucket | 1 dark subad. | M.Litchfield |
|---|-----------|---------------|--------------|

**Gyrfalcon:**

|    |           |        |                     |
|----|-----------|--------|---------------------|
| 10 | Nantucket | 1 gray | D.Beattie+G.Perkins |
|----|-----------|--------|---------------------|

**Ruffed Grouse:**

|       |                 |      |                      |
|-------|-----------------|------|----------------------|
| 23,24 | Quabbin,Wayland | 1, 2 | S.Carroll#,R.Forster |
|-------|-----------------|------|----------------------|

**Wild Turkey:**

|    |              |    |          |
|----|--------------|----|----------|
| 22 | W.Brookfield | 24 | M.Lynch# |
|----|--------------|----|----------|

OWLS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A Great Horned Owl wintered on the A.D. Little land in Cambridge. Snowy Owls occurred in about average numbers for a non-irruptive year. The East Boston report was from Logan Airport, and another individual was seen in downtown Worcester.

Both Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers were reported, with the only numbers of the latter occurring on Martha's Vineyard where that species is established. The five Pileated Woodpeckers in the eastern part of the Quabbin Reservation constituted a very good single-day count.

Numbers of flickers reported were way down from the unprecedented December total.

L.E.I.

**Eastern Screech-Owl:**

|      |                 |          |                   |
|------|-----------------|----------|-------------------|
| 3,11 | Newbypt,Ipswich | 1 red, 1 | H.Wiggin#,J.Berry |
|------|-----------------|----------|-------------------|

| <u>SPECIES/DATE</u>                            | <u>LOCATION</u>                          | <u>NUMBER</u>        | <u>OBSERVERS</u>                           | <u>FEBRUARY 1985</u> |
|--|--|----------------------|--|----------------------|
| Great Horned Owl:<br>from Jan.-14,2-3<br>10-18 | Cambridge,Milford<br>P.I.,Rockport       | 1, 2 at nest<br>1, 1 | L.Robinson,A.Williams<br>P.Roberts,J.Berry |                      |
| Snowy Owl:<br>2-23,16<br>16                    | P.I.-Salisbury,E.Boston<br>Worcester     | 3 max., 1<br>1       | v.o.,T.Rumage<br>S.Carroll#                |                      |
| Barred Owl:<br>23                              | Hardwick                                 | 1                    | M.Lynch#                                   |                      |
| Short-eared Owl:<br>5-9,10<br>21               | P.I.-Salisbury,Marshfield<br>E.Orleans   | 2 max., 1<br>2       | v.o.,W.Petersen#<br>P.Trull                |                      |
| Northern Saw-whet Owl:<br>2                    | Nantucket                                | 1                    | E.Andrews                                  |                      |
| Belted Kingfisher:<br>9,10<br>10-26,24         | Brookline,Eastham<br>6 locations,Concord | 1, 1<br>6 singles, 2 | R.Thayer,S.Carroll#<br>v.o.,R.Walton       |                      |
| Red-headed Woodpecker:<br>thr.<br>Dover        |  | 1                    | F.Hamlin                                   |                      |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker:<br>7,10                | M.V.,Brookfield                          | 6+, 1                | V.Laux,M.Argue#                            |                      |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:<br>7-20,7            | Manomet,M.V.                             | 1 f., 2              | D.Evered,V.Laux                            |                      |
| Northern Flicker:<br>2,4<br>11,24              | Belmont,Nantucket<br>Halifax,Saugus      | 1, 8<br>1, 1         | L.Taylor,M.Litchfield<br>D.Briggs,BBC      |                      |
| Pileated Woodpecker:<br>23                     | Hardwick                                 | 5                    | M.Lynch#                                   |                      |

#### HORNED LARK THROUGH EVENING GROSBEEK

A flock of sixty-five Fish Crows in Sudbury was the highest count ever at that site in the knowledge of the observer. A House Wren was carefully observed and heard singing at Manomet. American Robins continued to be reported in numbers, especially from Greater Boston southward. The Lexington Ovenbird remained until February 7. Among the irruptive winter species, including Red-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Shrike and the finches, numbers continued low and tended to be from interior sites. The exceptions were the only Pine Grosbeak, from East Orleans, and the sole Common Redpoll, on Nantucket. Evening Grosbeak counts remained notably low, and again surprisingly were mainly from Plymouth County. The Jackdaw count on Nantucket diminished to a single bird in February; no information on the fate of the missing individual was received. In the other direction, the Boxford Varied Thrush was augmented by a second, in Upton. Four-day sessions of warm, southwest wind on February 14-17 and 21-24 stimulated a variety of springtime avian activities. Song Sparrows were vocal on the fifteenth. Also, migrant blackbirds arrived in numbers, redwings beginning about the seventeenth and grackles around the twenty-third. L.E.T.

|                                    |   |                                |   |
|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| Horned Lark:<br>3-23,3<br>7,24     | Salisbury, Worcester<br>Middleboro,Halifax                | 60 max. (2/23),2<br>100+, 100+ | v.o., M.Lynch#<br>E. Akers, W. Petersen                     |
| American Crow:<br>4,11             | Concord,Middleboro  | 86, 600+                       | D.Stokes#,D.Briggs  |
| Fish Crow:<br>2;10                 | Cambridge, Natick; Sudbury                                | 2,2; <u>65</u>                 | J.Heywood,S.Carroll#;R.Forster                              |
| Common Raven:<br>24                | Petersham   | 2                              | E.Nielsen#  |
| Jackdaw:<br>thr.                   | Nantucket   | <u>1</u>                       | E.Andrews#  |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch:<br>16,23;24 | Ipswich,W.Newbury;Hardwick,Petersham                      | 1,2;10,15                      | BBC;E.Nielsen#  |
| Brown Creeper:<br>24               | Hardwick,Petersham  | 10,20                          | E.Nielsen#  |
| Carolina Wren:<br>7,10,24<br>24;26 | Somerset,Eastham,Lakeville<br>Westport;Sandwich,Hopkinton | 2, 1, 1<br>4; 2, 1             | J.Carton,M.Lynch#,W.Petersen#<br>G.Gove#;P.Trimble,J.Gordon |
| House Wren:<br>14                  | Manomet   | 1 singing                      | D.Evered  |
| Winter Wren:<br>21                 | Sandwich  | 1                              | P.Trimble   |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet:<br>23      | W.Newbury,Hardwick  | 3, 15                          | BBC, S.Carroll#   |
| Eastern Bluebird:<br>thr.          | Harwich, M.V.   | 4+, 15                         | v.o., V.Laux  |

| <u>SPECIES/DATE</u>                     | <u>LOCATION</u>             | <u>NUMBER</u>         | <u>OBSERVERS</u>               | <u>FEBRUARY 1985</u>  |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Hermit Thrush:<br>3,7-9,17-19           | E.Middleboro,Nant.,Falmouth | 1, 2 ind., 1          | K.Anderson,E.Andrews#,v.o.     |                       |
| American Robin:<br>2,4-25,18            | Chatham,Nant.,Marshfield    | 100, 300 max.(2/23)   | 90 B.Nikula,v.o.,D.Clapp       |                       |
| 23,24,28                                | Waltham,Lakeville,Braintree | 31, 50, 35            | L.Taylor,E.Pearson,R.Campbell  |                       |
| <u>Varied Thrush:</u><br>From Jan. thru | Feb., 2-7                   | Boxford, Upton        | 1 ph., 1 m.                    | B.Wasserman#, G.Shea# |
| Gray Catbird:<br>3,7-9,10               | E.Orleans,Nant.,Eastham     | 1, 1, 3               | A.Williams,E.Andrews#,M.Lynch# |                       |
| Cedar Waxwing:<br>thr.,2                | Middleboro, Concord         | 70 max.(2/6), 45      | D.Briggs,R.Forster             |                       |
| 3,4-23                                  | Worcester, Nant.            | 135, 200 max.(2/18)   | M.Lynch,v.o.                   |                       |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler:<br>24            | Weston                      | 1                     | L.Robinson                     |                       |
| Pine Warbler:<br>10                     | Sudbury                     | 1                     | R.Walton                       |                       |
| Ovenbird:<br>from Jan. - 7              | Lexington                   | 1                     | L.Bhimas                       |                       |
| Rufous-sided Towhee:<br>1-3,4-28,8      | Pembroke,S.Dartmouth,Groton | 1 f., 2, 1 m.         | E.Pearson,A.Hankin#,P.Lynn     |                       |
| American Tree Sparrow:<br>17,20         | Bolton,P'town               | 12, 10                | M.Lynch#,P.Trimble             |                       |
| 23                                      | P.I.,Waltham                | 25, 70                | BBC, L.Taylor                  |                       |
| Savannah Sparrow:<br>3,11,23            | Ipswich,Nant.,Salisbury     | 6, 5, 2               | J.Berry,M.Litchfield,BBC       |                       |
| "Ipswich" Sparrow:<br>3-23              | P.I.                        | 1 max.                | v.o.                           |                       |
| Fox Sparrow:<br>5,16-19                 | E.Middleboro,Yarmouthport   | 1, 1                  | K.Anderson,J.Aylward           |                       |
| Song Sparrow:<br>15,26                  | Nant.,Watertown             | 1 singing, 8 singing  | M.Litchfield,M.Hall            |                       |
| Swamp Sparrow:<br>thr.                  | Nant.                       | 3 max. (2/5)          | E.Andrews#                     |                       |
| White-throated Sparrow:<br>18,25        | Ipswich,Nant.               | 8, 6                  | J.Berry,M.Litchfield           |                       |
| White-crowned Sparrow:<br>6-11          | Nant.                       | 2 imm. max.           | M.Litchfield                   |                       |
| Dark-eyed Junco:<br>3,7,23              | Hardwick,Easton,Waltham     | 110, 50,55            | M.Hall,K.Ryan,L.Taylor         |                       |
| Lapland Longspur:<br>3;9                | P.I.,E.Boston;Salisbury     | 10, 47; 11            | M.Argue#,R.Stymeist#;W.Smith   |                       |
| Snow Bunting:<br>3-10,3                 | P.I.,Salisbury              | 75 max.(2/3), 6       | v.o.,M.Lynch#                  |                       |
| 11-17,17                                | Middleboro,P'town           | 200 max.(2/17), 100   | v.o.,B.Nikula                  |                       |
| Red-winged Blackbird:<br>2,7            | Sudbury,Easton              | 60, 10                | R.Forster,K.Ryan               |                       |
| 17 on, 24                               | many locations, Middleboro  | general arrival, 1000 | v.o.,W.Petersen#               |                       |
| Eastern Meadowlark:<br>3,9              | E.Orleans,Salisbury         | 2, 2                  | A.Williams,S.Carroll#          |                       |
| Rusty Blackbird:<br>2,10                | Middleboro,Whitman          | 15, 80+               | D.Briggs,W.Petersen#           |                       |
| 23,24                                   | Hardwick,Wayland            | 1, 19                 | M.Lynch#,R.Forster             |                       |
| Common Grackle:<br>5,21                 | Lakeville,Sandwich          | 1, 2                  | K.Holmes,P.Trimble             |                       |
| 23 on,24                                | many locations,Plymouth     | tens, 100+            | v.o.,M.Lynch#                  |                       |
| Brown-headed Cowbird:<br>23             | Manomet,Middleboro          | 2, 2                  | K.Holmes#                      |                       |
| Pine Grosbeak:<br>3                     | E.Orleans                   | 1                     | A.Williams                     |                       |
| Purple Finch:<br>4,25-28                | E.Middleboro,S.Dartmouth    | 1 m., 3               | K.Anderson,A.Hankin#           |                       |
| Red Crossbill:<br>10                    | Hardwick                    | 3                     | H.Wiggin#                      |                       |
| Common Redpoll:<br>13-14                | Nantucket                   | 1 f.                  | E.Andrews#                     |                       |
| Pine Siskin:<br>10-23,24                | Hardwick,Petersham          | 50 max., 35           | v.o.,E.Nielsen#                |                       |
| American Goldfinch:<br>21,23            | Medfield,Petersham          | 100, 6                | W.Reagan,M.Lynch#              |                       |
| Evening Grosbeak:<br>thr.,3             | Middleboro,Lakeville        | 35 max., 12           | D.Briggs#,K.Holmes             |                       |
| 23,24                                   | Hardwick,Petersham          | 8, 8                  | M.Lynch#,E.Nielsen#            |                       |





# Field Records

## March 1985

by George W. Gove, Robert H. Stymeist, Lee E. Taylor

March 1985 was very much like February - mild, dry, and very sunny. The temperature averaged 40.4°, 2.0° above normal. The high mark was 74° on March 28, and the low was 18° on both March 4 and 19. The 60° mark on March 2 tied the record for that date set in 1973. Precipitation totaled 2.27 inches, 1.86 inches less than normal. The January to March total now stands at only 5.22 inches, a new record low in the 115 years of official records, and is second only to 3.48 inches in 1834 for 168 years of total record. Snowfall was but 3.7 inches, 4.1 inches under normal. The season total is now 24.6 inches, 16.2 inches under normal; only about one season in eight has this little snowfall - all in all, a very dry year thus far. March winds averaged only 12.4 mph with a peak gust of 55 mph on the twelfth during a squall from the northwest in which small hail fell and some suburbs reported thunder.

### LOONS THROUGH HERONS

Good numbers of both Common and Red-throated loons represented migrants as well as winterers at Nantucket at the end of the month. An Arctic Loon was found in Rockport, perhaps the same individual reported there in December and January. A Western Grebe was reported off Gooseberry Neck in South Dartmouth where it was present the last eight days of the month. Red-necked Grebe numbers were average with the high count of 42 reported from Swampscott to Marblehead on March 17. Good numbers were also reported from Dennis and North Scituate. A few Double-crested Cormorants reported at month's end were returning residents.

Hérons began to arrive around March 24 when Great Blue Herons returned to their nesting grounds at Westboro. The first Snowy Egrets were reported from Nantucket on March 27 and from mainland areas on March 30. Great Egrets were noted from four locations after March 28, and the first Glossy Ibis returned to the "new" Squantum on the thirty-first.  
R.H.S.

| <u>SPECIES/DATE</u>              | <u>LOCATION</u>            | <u>NUMBER</u> | <u>OBSERVERS</u>             | <u>MARCH 1985</u> |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Red-throated Loon:               |                            |               |                              |                   |
| 27,30                            | Nantucket, Westport        | 75, 28        | D.Holt, SSBC(S.Higginbotham) |                   |
| Arctic Loon: (details submitted) |                            |               |                              |                   |
| 3                                | Rockport                   | 1             | L.Robinson                   |                   |
| Common Loon:                     |                            |               |                              |                   |
| 3,17                             | Gloucester, P.I.           | 20, 25        | L.Robinson, E.Nielsen        |                   |
| 25,27                            | Manomet, Nantucket         | 75, 400       | D.Evered, D.Holt             |                   |
| Pied-billed Grebe:               |                            |               |                              |                   |
| 20,23                            | Wayland (2 locations)      | 1, 1          | R.Forster                    |                   |
| Horned Grebe:                    |                            |               |                              |                   |
| 3;9                              | Gloucester; P.I., Winthrop | 50; 16, 11    | L.Robinson; BBC, M.Atkinson  |                   |
| 17                               | Swampscott-Marblehead      | 28            | R.Forster                    |                   |
| 23                               | N.Scituate, Plymouth Beach | 50+, 55+      | R.Abrams, D.Evered           |                   |
| 29,30                            | Manomet Beach, S.Dartmouth | 107, 150+     | D.Evered, SSBC               |                   |
| Red-necked Grebe:                |                            |               |                              |                   |
| 2,3                              | N.Scituate, Gloucester     | 24, 35        | W.Petersen, L.Robinson       |                   |
| 17,30                            | Dennis                     | 31, 25        | B.Nikula#                    |                   |
| 17                               | Swampscott-Marblehead      | 42            | R.Forster                    |                   |
| 23,27                            | N.Scituate, Nahant         | 32, 18        | R.Abrams, L.Pivacek          |                   |
| Western Grebe:                   |                            |               |                              |                   |
| 24-31                            | S.Dartmouth                | 1             | fide D.Brown + v.o.          |                   |
| Gannet:                          |                            |               |                              |                   |
| 16,23                            | Nantucket, Stellwagen      | 325, 60       | BBC, I.Giriunas#             |                   |

| SPECIES/DATE               | LOCATION             | NUMBER    | OBSERVERS               | MARCH 1985 |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------|-------------------------|------------|
| Great Cormorant:           |                      |           |                         |            |
| 17,24                      | N.Scituate           | 35, 100+  | R.Abrams#               |            |
| 29                         | Westport area        | 45        | SSBC                    |            |
| Double-crested Cormorant:  |                      |           |                         |            |
| 9,29                       | Newbypt, Westport    | 1, 3      | M.Lynch#, SSBC          |            |
| 31                         | Squantum             | 4         | R.Abrams                |            |
| American Bittern:          |                      |           |                         |            |
| 26                         | S.Carver             | 1         | R.Turner                |            |
| Great Blue Heron:          |                      |           |                         |            |
| 24,27                      | Westboro, Dover      | 9, 6 mig. | B.Blodget, R.Forster    |            |
| Great Egret:               |                      |           |                         |            |
| 28                         | Eastham, Chatham     | 2, 1      | E.Gill, R.Prescott#     |            |
| 29,30                      | Nantucket, Westport  | 1, 6      | J.VanVorst, P.Trimble   |            |
| Snowy Egret:               |                      |           |                         |            |
| 27,28                      | Nantucket            | 1, 4      | E.Andrews#, D.Beattie   |            |
| 30                         | Scituate, Westport   | 6, 1      | M.Litchfield, P.Trimble |            |
| 31                         | Gloucester, Squantum | 2, 3      | M.Farrow#, R.Abrams     |            |
| Black-crowned Night-Heron: |                      |           |                         |            |
| 16,27                      | Nantucket, Cambridge | 5, 4      | BBC, L.Robinson         |            |
| 29                         | Hingham              | 3         | R.Emery#                |            |
| Glossy Ibis:               |                      |           |                         |            |
| 31                         | Squantum             | 10        | R.Abrams                |            |

#### WATERFOWL

A Tundra Swan was present at Nantucket through March 7, and a female Mute Swan was found sitting on a nest with nine eggs as early as March 27. Snow Geese were present from midmonth at Plum Island where a maximum of nine birds was counted. Brant continue to be present in exceptional numbers, especially in the Plymouth and Wollaston areas. Wood Ducks were reported from a wide area after March 15 as were increasing numbers of both species of teal. Eurasian Wigeon were found at four locations, three of which have been regular locations during recent years. As many as 162 Redhead were counted at Nantucket, where 75 Canvasback were also tallied. Over fifty thousand Oldsquaw were seen flying to an evening roost off Nantucket, and Oldsquaw numbers built up to twenty-five hundred individuals in Newburyport Harbor. Unusual waterfowl included three King Eider, six Harlequin Duck, and eighteen Barrow's Goldeneye, fifteen of which were found in Newburyport Harbor. R.H.S.

|  |                               |                   |                              |  |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Tundra Swan:   |                               |                   |                              |  |
| 1-7  | Nantucket                     | 1                 | E.Andrews                    |  |
| Mute Swan:   |                               |                   |                              |  |
| 27   | West Carver                   | 1 f. on 9 eggs    | R.Turner                     |  |
| Snow Goose:  |                               |                   |                              |  |
| 17-31  | Newburyport-P.I.              | max. 9            | v.o.                         |  |
| 23   | Plymouth Beach                | 6                 | D.Evered                     |  |
| Brant:   |                               |                   |                              |  |
| thr.   | Squantum area                 | max. 3000+ (3/11) | v.o.                         |  |
| thr.   | Plymouth area                 | max. 3000+ (3/23) | D.Evered                     |  |
| 24   | Winthrop, Ipswich             | 1000, 6           | J.Cumming, J.Berry           |  |
| Canada Goose:  |                               |                   |                              |  |
| 23,31  | Newburyport                   | 1, 5              | J.Grugan, M.Smith            |  |
| These birds had yellow neck bands - banded in Delaware during the winter of 1984.    |                               |                   |                              |  |
| Wood Duck:   |                               |                   |                              |  |
| 2,4  | Concord, Raynham              | 1, 4              | M.Atkinson, T.Raymond        |  |
| 9,18   | Lakeville, S.Hanson           | 2, 7              | W.Petersen, R.Turner         |  |
| There were other reports of 1 - 4 individuals from various locations after March 15. |                               |                   |                              |  |
| Green-winged Teal:   |                               |                   |                              |  |
| 3  | Newbypt, Wayland (Heards Pd.) | 30, 3             | BBC, R.Forster               |  |
| 9  | E.Orleans                     | 30                | J.Aylward                    |  |
| 16,17  | P.I., E.Orleans               | 200, 40           | R.Forster, A.Williams        |  |
| Northern Pintail:  |                               |                   |                              |  |
| thr.   | P.I.                          | max. 115 (3/16)   | SSBC (J.Kenneally) + v.o.    |  |
| 10,13  | Yarmouthport, S.Monomoy       | 41, 10            | J.Aylward, J.Russell# + v.o. |  |
| 9,30   | S.Hanson, GMNWR               | 11, 11            | W.Petersen, J.Cumming        |  |
| Blue-winged Teal:  |                               |                   |                              |  |
| 24,31  | Bolton Flats, P.I.            | 2, 12             | M.Lynch#, S.Carroll#         |  |
| Northern Shoveler:   |                               |                   |                              |  |
| 13,23  | S.Monomoy                     | 4, 7              | J.Russell# + v.o.            |  |
| 18,26  | E.Orleans, Wayland            | 1, 3              | A.Williams, R.Forster        |  |
| Gadwall:   |                               |                   |                              |  |
| 13,23  | S.Monomoy                     | 35, 15+           | J.Russell#                   |  |
| 24   | Ipswich (2 locations)         | 55                | J.Berry                      |  |
| Other reports of 2 - 10 individuals from various locations.                          |                               |                   |                              |  |

| SPECIES/DATE            | LOCATION                    | NUMBER                           | OBSERVERS              | MARCH 1985 |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Eurasian Wigeon:        |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 1,17-18                 | Nantucket, E.Orleans        | 1 m., 1 m.                       | E.Andrews, A.Williams  |            |
| 22,23-29                | M.V., Wayland(Heard's Pd.)  | 2, 1 m.                          | W.Manter, R.Forster    |            |
| American Wigeon:        |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 1,14,21                 | Nantucket                   | 37, 6, 2                         | E.Andrews              |            |
| 16,30                   | P.I.                        | 35, 7                            | SSBC, BBC              |            |
| 23-31,30                | Wayland(Heard's Pd.),GMNWR  | max.9(3/25), 6                   | R.Forster, J.Cumming   |            |
| Canvasback:             |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 16,29                   | Nantucket                   | 75, 2                            | BBC, E.Andrews         |            |
| 24                      | Falmouth, Westport          | 35, 35                           | P.Trimble, M.Lynch#    |            |
| Redhead:                |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| thr.                    | Nantucket                   | max. 162 (3/21)                  | E.Andrews              |            |
| Ring-necked Duck:       |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 26                      | Concord (GMNWR)             | 25                               | R.Forster              |            |
| 27                      | West Carver                 | 150+                             | R.Turner               |            |
| Greater Scaup:          |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 4,23                    | Squantum area               | 1000+                            | R.Abrams               |            |
| 27,30                   | W.Newbury, Newburyport      | 85, 200                          | BBC                    |            |
| Lesser Scaup:           |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 1,17                    | Nantucket                   | 40, 2                            | E.Andrews, BBC         |            |
| 16                      | Ipswich, W.Newbury          | 3, 1                             | R.Forster, BBC         |            |
| Common Eider:           |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 3,24                    | Winthrop                    | 250+, 200                        | J.Cumming              |            |
| 23                      | Hull                        | 1000                             | R.Abrams               |            |
| King Eider:             |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 9,17-24                 | Sandwich, Scituate          | 1 imm. m., 1 m.                  | D.Briggs#, D.Clapp#    |            |
| 14-17                   | Nantucket                   | 1 m.                             | M.Sohol# + v.o.        |            |
| Harlequin Duck:         |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 1-24                    | N.Scituate                  | 1 m., 2 f.                       | W.Petersen + v.o.      |            |
| 2,24                    | Gloucester, Winthrop        | 1, 2                             | R.Vernon#, J.Cumming   |            |
| Oldsquaw:               |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| thr.                    | Newburyport Harbor          | max. 2500 (3/1)                  | P.W.Smith# + v.o.      |            |
| 16,17                   | Nantucket                   | 50,000±                          | BBC(C.Jackson)         |            |
| Black Scoter:           |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 17,29                   | Nantucket, S.Dartmouth      | 200, 50                          | BBC, SSBC              |            |
| Surf Scoter:            |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 16,17                   | Nantucket                   | 250                              | BBC(C.Jackson)         |            |
| 17                      | Swampscott-Marblehead       | 25                               | R.Forster              |            |
| 29,30                   | Westport, P.I.              | 30, 1                            | SSBC, BBC              |            |
| White-winged Scoter:    |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 16,17                   | Nantucket                   | 5000                             | BBC                    |            |
| Common Goldeneye:       |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 3,10,17                 | Newburyport                 | 1200+, 3200+, 1200+              | J.Grugin + v.o.        |            |
| 30                      | Wayland (Heard's Pond)      | 1 m.                             | J.Cumming              |            |
| Barrow's Goldeneye:     |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| thr.                    | Newbypt                     | max. 15 (8 m., 7 f.) (3/1 +3/10) | P.W.Smith# + v.o.      |            |
| 2,9                     | Scituate, Plymouth          | 1 m., 1 m. + 1 f.                | W.Petersen, P.W.Smith  |            |
| 19                      | Yarmouth                    | 1                                | J.Aylward              |            |
| Bufflehead:             |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 9                       | Lakeville, Newbypt          | 75, 100+                         | W.Petersen#, M.Lynch#  |            |
| 17                      | Nahant, E.Orleans           | 500, 80+                         | R.Forster, A.Williams  |            |
| 30                      | GMNWR, Wareham              | 10, 30                           | J.Cumming, L.Robinson  |            |
| Hooded Merganser:       |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 9                       | Wellesley;Lakeville,Halifax | 5; 7, 5                          | R.Forster; W.Petersen  |            |
| 17                      | Lakeville, E.Quabbin        | 6, 16                            | D.Briggs#, W.Drummond# |            |
| 26,28                   | GMNWR, Sudbury              | 2, 2                             | A.Bennett, R.Forster   |            |
| Common Merganser:       |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 2,3                     | Wayland, Winchester         | 42, 51                           | R.Forster, L.Taylor    |            |
| 16,17                   | Westwood, Waltham           | 47, 21                           | W.Reagan, R.Forster    |            |
| 23,24                   | Wayland, Marshfield         | 43, 30                           | R.Forster, D.Clapp     |            |
| Red-breasted Merganser: |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 17,24                   | Nantucket, Falmouth         | 300, 500                         | BBC, P.Trimble         |            |
| 27,29                   | Newburyport, Westport       | 7, 300                           | BBC, SSBC              |            |
| Ruddy Duck:             |                             |                                  |                        |            |
| 2,17                    | Norton, Nantucket           | 1, 1                             | B.Cassie, BBC          |            |
| 23,28                   | S.Monomoy, Waltham          | 5, 1                             | B.Nikula#, M.Paine     |            |

#### RAPTORS

Turkey Vultures were reported from nine locations with a maximum of eighteen noted from the Quabbin area. Ospreys were back in their nesting sites as early as March 17 at Lakeville, and over twenty individuals were back at nests on the Westport River by

by March 28. As many as fifteen Bald Eagles were counted with ten noted from the Quabbin area. Red-shouldered Hawks were found in ten locations, and at least one of these birds was on the nest by March 31 in Norwell. Highlights included Golden Eagles in Lakeville and Quabbin, and the gray Gyrfalcon was present at Monomoy most of the month.

R.H.S.

| SPECIES/DATE  | LOCATION                    | NUMBER               | OBSERVERS                        | MARCH 1985 |
|---|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Turkey Vulture:</b>                                |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 2,17  | Shrewsbury, Hardwick area   | 2, 18                | M.Lynch, S.Carroll               |            |
| 21  | Middleboro, Essex, Milford  | 1, 1, 1              | D.Briggs, D.Brown, B.Sorrie      |            |
| 26  | W.Tisbury, Nantucket        | 1, 1                 | V.Laux, D.Holt                   |            |
| 28,29   | Sudbury, Milton             | 2, 2                 | R.Forster#, D.Morimoto           |            |
| <b>Osprey:</b>  |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 17,23   | Lakeville                   | 1, pair on nest      | R.Turner# + v.o.                 |            |
| 20,28   | M.V., Westport              | 1, 20+               | J.Taylor#, S.Higginbotham#       |            |
| 31  | Nantucket                   | 1                    | J.VanVorst                       |            |
| <b>Bald Eagle:</b>                                    |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 3   | Quabbin(Gate 43)            | 4 ad. + 6 imm.       | M.Lynch + S.Carroll              |            |
| 9   | Lakeville                   | 1 imm. (1st year)    | W.Petersen                       |            |
| 10  | Near P'town                 | 1 ad.                | N.Waldron                        |            |
| 14  | Walham (Camb. Res.)         | 1 ad.                | J.Clancy + v.o.                  |            |
| 17-22   | Lakeville                   | 1-2 ad. (3/22)       | D.Briggs, R.Turner + v.o.        |            |
| <b>Northern Harrier:</b>                              |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 2,3   | Norton, Middleboro          | 1, 1                 | K.Ryan, K.Holmes                 |            |
| 9,16-17   | Salisbury-P.I., Nantucket   | 4, 7                 | M.Lynch#, BBC(C.Jackson)         |            |
| 30  | Marshfield (Dwyer Farm)     | 7                    | D.Clapp, K.Anderson# + v.o.      |            |
| <b>Sharp-shinned Hawk:</b>                            |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 16-31   | 6 locations                 | 6 singles            | v.o.                             |            |
| <b>Cooper's Hawk:</b>                                 |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 1,29  | Nantucket, E.Middleboro     | 1, 1                 | E.Andrews#, K.Anderson           |            |
| <b>Northern Goshawk:</b>                              |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 10,24   | Mt. Wachusett               | 1, 1 imm.            | T.Lipsky, P.Roberts              |            |
| 16  | Newburyport                 | 1 imm.               | W.Petersen# + v.o.               |            |
| <b>Red-shouldered Hawk:</b>                           |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 4-31  | E.Middleboro                | 1-2 seen daily       | K.Anderson                       |            |
| 9,9-31  | Bridgewater, Boxford        | 1, pr.               | W.Petersen, E.Nielsen + v.o.     |            |
| 10  | Hardwick, Petersham         | 2, 2                 | E.Nielsen                        |            |
| 10,14   | near P'town, Lincoln (DFWS) | 1, 2                 | N.Waldron#, R.Forster            |            |
| 18,21   | Millis, Easton              | 1, 2                 | M.Paine, K.Ryan                  |            |
| 31  | Norwell                     | 1 on nest            | R.Abrams + v.o.                  |            |
| <b>Red-tailed Hawk:</b>                               |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 9,10  | P.I.                        | 5, 4                 | F.Bouchard#, P.Roberts#          |            |
| 16,17   | Nantucket                   | 5                    | BBC(C.Jackson)                   |            |
| Other reports of 1-2 individuals from many locations. |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| <b>Rough-legged Hawk:</b>                             |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| thr.  | Marshfield(Dwyer Farm)      | max. 8 (5 dk. phase) | D.Evered# + v.o.                 |            |
| 1-17  | Middleboro                  | 1-2                  | v.o.                             |            |
| 1-16  | P.I. area                   | max. 4 (3/10)        | P.Roberts# + v.o.                |            |
| 5,10,23   | Bourne, Nant., Falmouth     | 1, 1, 1              | P.Anderson, E.Andrews, P.Trimble |            |
| <b>Golden Eagle:</b>                                  |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 3   | Lakeville; Quabbin          | 1; 1 ad.             | K.Holmes#; M.Lynch + S.Carroll   |            |
| <b>American Kestrel:</b>                              |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| thr.  | P.I. area                   | max. 4 (3/9), (3/30) | v.o.                             |            |
| 31  | Middleboro                  | 4                    | K.Holmes                         |            |
| <b>Merlin:</b>  |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 3,10,23   | P.I., Lakeville, S.Monomoy  | 1, 1, 1              | BBC, BBC, B.Nikula#              |            |
| <b>Peregrine Falcon:</b>                              |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 10 + 24   | Nantucket                   | 1                    | E.Andrews# + D.Holt              |            |
| 15  | Chatham                     | 1                    | J.Russell# + v.o.                |            |
| 18,25   | Boston                      | 1 ad.                | W.Reagan, J.Grugan               |            |
| <b>Gyrfalcon:</b>                                     |                             |                      |                                  |            |
| 11,13;18  | Monomoy                     | 1 gray               | J.Russell + v.o.; D.Holt         |            |

#### COOT THROUGH ALCIDS

As usual a few Piping Plovers were reported from nesting areas late in the month. American Oystercatchers are now well established as breeding residents in the state. Normally first arrivals appear in mid-March with this year's arrivals being slightly on the early side. Reports of both yellowlegs species reflect a recent trend of late March records while counts of Dunlin and Sanderling were almost certainly of overwintering birds. Reported numbers of Purple Sandpipers continued on the low side. Common Snipe were generally lacking until the warm spell at month's end. Woodcock were seen and heard displaying.

Two Mew Gulls were reported again this month bringing to five the number of locations from which this species has been reported since December. The following text is excerpted from the details provided by H. C. Floyd.

This bird may have been the same individual observed six weeks earlier at the same location. At that time, the rising tide was covering the nearby flats, and Ring-billed Gulls were coming in to roost. Two aspects of one bird caught the observer's attention; no ring could be seen on the bird's all-yellow bill and the amount of white in the wing, particularly between the gray mantle and the black outer primaries. The sighting was brief with both 10X binoculars and a telescope used. The bird was seen the following day by several observers.

Up to twenty Iceland Gulls were reported from the Newburyport area, and Lesser Black-backed Gulls continued at Manomet and at Nantucket. Over one thousand kittiwake were seen from Provincetown on March 10. The only spring/summer record of Dovekie for Martha's Vineyard was established on March 12. Two Common Murres were reported from Nantucket, and one was reported from Stellwagen Bank as were twelve Razorbills. At North Scituate, twenty-nine Black Guillemot were seen. G.W.G.

| SPECIES/DATE              | LOCATION                | NUMBER                        | OBSERVERS                  | MARCH 1985 |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|
| American Coot:            |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 24,29                     | Falmouth, Nantucket     | 1, 2                          | P.Trimble, E.Andrews       |            |
| Black-bellied Plover:     |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 2,31                      | Nantucket, P.I.         | 4, 1                          | E.Andrew, M.Lynch#         |            |
| Piping Plover:            |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 30,31                     | Westport, Duxbury       | 1, 1                          | P.Trimble, P.W.Smith#      |            |
| Killdeer:                 |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 2                         | Concord, Medfield       | 3, 1                          | R.Forster, W.Reagan        |            |
| 9,17                      | Nantucket, Rowley       | 5, 4                          | T.+ M.Sutherland#, J.Berry |            |
| 24,31                     | Marshfield, Salisbury   | 4, 12                         | D.Clapp, S.Carroll#        |            |
| American Oystercatcher:   |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 11                        | Chatham                 | 2                             | P.Trull                    |            |
| 17-19, 18                 | Nantucket, Chatham      | 2, 2                          | BBC, fide R. Forster       |            |
| 23,28                     | N.Monomoy               | 3, 7                          | B.Nikula#                  |            |
| Greater Yellowlegs:       |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 27,31                     | P.I., Squantum          | 1, 3                          | BBC                        |            |
| Lesser Yellowlegs:        |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 18,30                     | P.I.                    | 1, 4                          | J.Grugan#, BBC             |            |
| 22                        | Yarmouthport            | 1                             | J.Aylward                  |            |
| Ruddy Turnstone:          |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 16,17                     | Nantucket               | 20                            | BBC                        |            |
| Sanderling:               |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 3;16,17                   | Nantucket               | 250; 5                        | E.Andrews#; BBC            |            |
| Purple Sandpiper:         |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 2;16,17                   | Rockport; Nantucket     | 20; 10                        | BBC                        |            |
| 30                        | Winthrop                | 23                            | J.Cumming                  |            |
| Dunlin:                   |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 13,30                     | Plymouth, Acoaxet       | 186, 110                      | D.Evered, SSBC             |            |
| Common Snipe:             |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 11,16                     | Marshfield Concord      | 3, 4                          | D.Evered#, M.Lynch#        |            |
| 31                        | W.Bridgewater, Squantum | 20, 29                        | W.Petersen, R.Abrams       |            |
| American Woodcock:        |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 8-27                      | Hopkinton               | max. 12                       | J.Gordon                   |            |
| 9                         | Bridgewater-Middleboro  | 8                             | W.Petersen                 |            |
| 11,21                     | Marshfield, Lancaster   | 5, 9                          | D.Evered#, M.Lynch#        |            |
| Laughing Gull:            |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 23,28                     | Woods Hole, Chatham     | 1, 15                         | P.Trull, B.Nikula          |            |
| Common Black-headed Gull: |                         |                               |                            |            |
| thr.                      | Newburyport             | max. 4 (2 ad. + 2 imm.) (3/2) | v.o.                       |            |
| 21,24                     | Quincy, E.Boston        | 1 (1W), 1 ad.                 | D.Brown, J.Cumming         |            |
| Bonaparte's Gull:         |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 9                         | Newburyport             | 8                             | S.Carroll#                 |            |
| Mew Gull:                 |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 2,3;23                    | Newburyport             | 1 (details); 1 (1W)           | H.C.Floyd#; J.Grugan       |            |
| 16,21                     | Quincy                  | 1 ad.                         | R.Abrams#, D.Brown         |            |
| Ring-billed Gull:         |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 3-17                      | Newburyport             | max. 1175 (3/10)              | v.o.                       |            |
| 6-26                      | E.Middleboro            | max. 150 (3/26)               | K.Anderson                 |            |
| Iceland Gull:             |                         |                               |                            |            |
| thr.                      | Gloucester              | max. 3 imm. (3/31)            | v.o.                       |            |
| thr.                      | Newburyport-P.I.        | max. 20                       | v.o.                       |            |
| 10,24                     | P'town, Falmouth        | 4, 2                          | P.Trimble                  |            |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull: |                         |                               |                            |            |
| 3;16,17                   | Manomet; Nant.          | 1 ad., 1 ad.                  | D.Evered#, BBC             |            |

| SPECIES/DATE            | LOCATION             | NUMBER           | OBSERVERS                | MARCH 1985 |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Glaucous Gull:          |                      |                  |                          |            |
| 16,17;18                | Nantucket; Newbypt   | 1 (1W); 1        | BBC; J.Grugan            |            |
| 31                      | Braintree            | 1 (1W)           | R.Abrams                 |            |
| Black-legged Kittiwake: |                      |                  |                          |            |
| 10,23                   | P'town, Stellwagen   | 1000+, 5         | P.Trimble, BBC           |            |
| Dovekie:                |                      |                  |                          |            |
| 12                      | Martha's Vineyard    | 1                | F.Harrington + S.Whiting |            |
| Common Murre:           |                      |                  |                          |            |
| 16-19                   | Nantucket            | max. 2           | v.o.                     |            |
| 23                      | Stellwagen           | 1                | BBC                      |            |
| Thick-billed Murre:     |                      |                  |                          |            |
| 2,30                    | Gloucester, Nant.    | 2, 1             | BBC, E.Andrews#          |            |
| Razorbill:              |                      |                  |                          |            |
| 10, 16-19               | P'town, Nantucket    | 3, max.17 (3/17) | P.Trimble, v.o.          |            |
| 23                      | Stellwagen           | 12               | BBC                      |            |
| Black Guillemot:        |                      |                  |                          |            |
| 2                       | N.Scituate, Rockport | 29, 9            | W.Petersen, BBC          |            |
| 23                      | Stellwagen           | 1                | BBC                      |            |

#### DOVE THROUGH WOODPECKER

A Mourning Dove was seen on a nest in Concord on March 16. In the Middleboro-Bridgewater area, six screech, four Great Horned, two Barred, and one Long-eared owls were counted on March 9. Great Horned Owls were also present in five other locations, including one on a nest in the heron rookery in Westboro. Snowy Owls were noted at four locations, including one inland, after a winter of relatively few except at Logan International Airport. Up to three Long-eared Owls spent a good portion of the month in Belmont and eleven Short-eared Owls were noted on Nantucket. A Northern Saw-whet Owl was heard calling in Brookline. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was reported from Boston and Pileated Woodpeckers were noted from four locations. G.W.G.

|                           |                         |                |                            |  |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|--|
| Mourning Dove:            |                         |                |                            |  |
| 16                        | Concord                 | 1 (on nest)    | R. Forster                 |  |
| Common Barn-Owl:          |                         |                |                            |  |
| 30                        | Nantucket               | 1              | D.Holt                     |  |
| Eastern Screech-Owl:      |                         |                |                            |  |
| 9                         | Worcester, Topsfield    | 1 gray, 1      | S.Carroll#.G.d'Entremont   |  |
| 9,16                      | Bridgewater, W.Newbury  | 6, 1           | W.Petersen, BBC            |  |
| 27,30                     | Newbury, W.Barnstable   | 1, 1gray       | BBC, P.Trimble             |  |
| Great Horned Owl:         |                         |                |                            |  |
| 3,9                       | P.I., E.Middleboro      | 1, 4           | J.Cumming, K.Anderson      |  |
| 2,9                       | Rockport, Braintree     | 2, 2           | J.Nove, M.Murphy#          |  |
| 16,31                     | Westboro, Milton        | 1 (on nest), 1 | M.Lynch#, BBC              |  |
| Snowy Owl:                |                         |                |                            |  |
| thr.                      | P.I.                    | 1              | v.o.                       |  |
| 9,12                      | Plymouth, N.Middleboro  | 1, 1           | S.Dolder#, K.Holmes        |  |
| 14                        | M.V.                    | 1              | R.Fountain                 |  |
| Barred Owl:               |                         |                |                            |  |
| 9,9-16                    | Bridgewater, Boxford    | 2, 2           | W.Petersen, v.o.           |  |
| 24                        | Hamilton                | 1              | P.Arriago                  |  |
| Long-eared Owl:           |                         |                |                            |  |
| 10,11,27                  | Belmont                 | 3, 3, 1        | v.o.                       |  |
| 9,30-31                   | E.Middleboro, Nantucket | 1, 2           | K.Anderson, D.Holt         |  |
| Short-eared Owl:          |                         |                |                            |  |
| 11;21                     | Marshfield; M.V.        | 2; 1, 1        | D.Evered; V.Laux           |  |
| 20-31                     | Nantucket               | 11             | D.Holt                     |  |
| Northern Saw-whet Owl:    |                         |                |                            |  |
| 17,25                     | Nantucket, Brookline    | 1, 1           | BBC, H.Wiggin              |  |
| 29,29-30                  | Wellfleet, Nantucket    | 1, 1           | P.Trull, D.Holt            |  |
| Belted Kingfisher:        |                         |                |                            |  |
| 10                        | Salisbury               | 1              | P.Roberts                  |  |
| Red-headed Woodpecker:    |                         |                |                            |  |
| thr.                      | Dover                   | 1 (from Feb.)  | F.Hamlen#                  |  |
| 9                         | W.Newbury               | 1              | BBC                        |  |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: |                         |                |                            |  |
| 21                        | Boston                  | 1              | M.Atkinson                 |  |
| Downy Woodpecker:         |                         |                |                            |  |
| 23,31                     | Hardwick, Milton        | 5, 6           | S.Carroll#, G.d'Entremont# |  |
| Northern Flicker:         |                         |                |                            |  |
| 2                         | Ipswich, Harvard        | 3, 2           | I.Giriunas#, M.Lynch#      |  |
| Pileated Woodpecker:      |                         |                |                            |  |
| thr.                      | Milton                  | 2              | D.Brown#                   |  |

| SPECIES/DATE               | LOCATION          | NUMBER | OBSERVERS      | MARCH 1985 |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--------|----------------|------------|
| Pileated Woodpecker cont.: |                   |        |                |            |
| 3,10                       | Quabbin (Gate 43) | 2      | M.Lynch#       |            |
| 17-30                      | Quabbin (Gate 40) | 1-3    | S.Carroll#     |            |
| 28                         | Sudbury           | 1      | fide R.Forster |            |

#### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH EVENING GROSBEAK

There were two notable pulses of first arrival migrants at the beginning and at the end of the month. On the first weekend, and presumably associated with the warm south-westerly winds prevailing, single Eastern Phoebes and Tree Swallows and a few Fox Sparrows were reported. Phoebe and Fox Sparrow movement continued throughout the month. General Tree Swallow arrival occurred from March 26 on. High numbers of Brown Creeper were reported throughout the month. During the last few days of the month, a remarkable early Eastern Kingbird was seen on Nantucket and first Hermit Thrushes, an early Brown Thrasher, a number of Pine Warblers in Wareham, and Chipping Sparrows were reported. Northern Shrikes were lightly reported during most of the winter; the few which were seen in March may well have been returning after wintering farther south.

Some of the regular winter species continued this year's trend of low numbers. American Tree Sparrows were noticeable in this respect, as were all of the winter finches. Of the few winter finch species which were reported, including Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak, most reports were from the interior--Worcester County. A female redpoll on Nantucket presented quite an anomaly. It was carefully scrutinized to ascertain its identity. It was almost certainly a Common Redpoll as Hoary Redpoll has never been recorded in a nonflight year of Common Redpoll and is very rare even during major irruptions.

Rarities for the month included the single, and now expected, Nantucket Jackdaw, a Bohemian Waxwing in Ipswich, and a Lark Sparrow at Squantum. The latter bird was probably the same individual as was discovered in January, though no intervening February sightings were reported. L.E.T.

|                         |                       |                               |                           |  |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Eastern Phoebe:         |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 2,10                    | Millis, Medfield      | 1, 1                          | B.Cassie, W.Reagan        |  |
| 13-28, 29               | 15 locations, Wareham | 17 total, 4                   | v.o., L.Robinson          |  |
| 30, 31                  | Hardwick, Mt. Auburn  | 4, 5                          | M.Lynch#, R.Stymeist      |  |
| Eastern Kingbird:       |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 29                      | Nantucket             | 1                             | D.Beattie                 |  |
| Horned Lark:            |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 9-17, 10-31             | P.I., Salisbury       | 16 max. (3/9), 23 max. (3/10) | v.o.                      |  |
| 17                      | Hardwick              | 6                             | S.Carroll#                |  |
| Tree Swallow:           |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 2, 16; 23               | Medfield; Plymouth    | 1, 8; 1                       | W.Reagan; D.Evered        |  |
| 26, 30                  | GMNWR, W.Peabody      | 50+, 20+                      | A.Bennett, G.d'Entremont  |  |
| 30, 31                  | SRV, Lakeville        | 300, 11                       | R.Forster, K.Holmes       |  |
| American Crow:          |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 6-11, 16-31             | E.Middleboro, Milton  | 150 max., 100                 | max. K.Anderson, R.Abrams |  |
| 23                      | Medford               | 275                           | P.Roberts                 |  |
| Fish Crow:              |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 3, 9-31                 | Dover, 4 locations    | 15, 4 singles                 | R.Forster, v.o.           |  |
| 23, 27                  | Medford, Wrentham     | 4, 5                          | P.Roberts, B.Sorrie       |  |
| Common Raven:           |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 3, 10                   | Hardwick, Princeton   | 1, 2                          | M.Lynch#, T.Lipsky        |  |
| Jackdaw:                |                       |                               |                           |  |
| thr.                    | Nantucket             | 1                             | E.Andrews#                |  |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch:  |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 14-24, 10-17            | Hamilton, Hardwick    | 2, 24 max.                    | J.Berry, S.Carroll#       |  |
| Brown Creeper:          |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 10, 17                  | Weston, Hardwick      | 10, 25                        | L.Robinson, W.Drummond    |  |
| 28, 31                  | Nantucket, Boxford    | 6, 10                         | D.Holt, J.Berry           |  |
| Caroline Wren:          |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 2, 18                   | Milton, S.Dartmouth   | 1, 3                          | G.d'Entremont, R.Maker    |  |
| 24, 30                  | Falmouth, Westport    | 4, 3                          | P.Trimble, SSBC           |  |
| Winter Wren:            |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 23                      | Hardwick              | 1                             | M.Lynch#                  |  |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet: |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 2-31, 14                | Milton, Hamilton      | 5 max. (3/2), 2               | G.d'Entremont, J.Berry    |  |
| 17, 24                  | Hardwick, Boston      | 16, 2                         | W.Drummond, J.Cumming     |  |
| 31                      | Boxford, Mt.Auburn    | 4, 26                         | J.Berry, R.Stymeist       |  |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet:   |                       |                               |                           |  |
| 10, 30                  | Carver, Sandwich      | 1, 1                          | BBC, P.Trimble            |  |
| 31                      | MNWS                  | 3                             | J.Smith                   |  |

| <u>SPECIES/DATE</u>     | <u>LOCATION</u>         | <u>NUMBER</u>   | <u>OBSERVERS</u>            | <u>MARCH 1985</u> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Eastern Bluebird:       |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 17-23,21-28             | Petersham,Marshfield    | 2, 1 m.         | v.o.,D.Clapp                |                   |
| 29                      | Bridgewater             | 2               | B.Cushman                   |                   |
| Hermit Thrush:          |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 30-31,31                | Sandwich,Bridgewater    | 2, 2            | P.Trimble,K.Holmes          |                   |
| American Robin:         |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 17,18                   | SRV,Newton              | 75, 10          | R.Forster,M.Murphy#         |                   |
| 21,30                   | Marshfield,Newbypt.     | 120, 200        | D.Clapp,BBC                 |                   |
| Gray Catbird:           |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| from Feb.-17,22         | E.Orleans,Yarmouthport  | 1, 1            | A.Williams,J.Aylward        |                   |
| 23                      | Ipswich,Nantucket       | 1, 1            | J.Paputseanos,D.Holt        |                   |
| Brown Thrasher:         |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 31                      | MNWS                    | 1               | J.Smith                     |                   |
| Water Pipit:            |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 23,31                   | Plymouth,Halifax        | 1, 100          | D.Evered,K.Anderson         |                   |
| Bohemian Waxwing:       |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 17-21                   | Ipswich                 | 1 (details)     | J.Berry#                    |                   |
| Cedar Waxwing:          |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| thr.,9                  | Ipswich,Medfield        | 80 max. (3/30), | 160 J.Berry#,W.Reagan       |                   |
| 18,22                   | Newton,Yarmouthport     | 14, 28          | M.Murphy#,J.Aylward         |                   |
| Northern Shrike:        |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 10,18                   | Medfield,Duxbury        | 1, 1            | W.Reagan,A.Bennett          |                   |
| 23,24                   | Provincetown,Ipswich    | 1, 1            | N.Waldron,J.Berry#          |                   |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler:  |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 9,21                    | Sandwich,Falmouth       | 30+, 3          | D.Briggs#,P.Trimble         |                   |
| 28,30                   | S.Dartmouth,GMNWR       | 5, 2            | R.Maker,J.Cumming           |                   |
| Pine Warbler:           |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 10,28                   | Lakeville,Nantucket     | 1, 1            | BBC,D.Holt                  |                   |
| 29                      | Wareham                 | 4               | L.Robinson                  |                   |
| Dickcissel:             |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 6-21                    | Manchester              | 1 f.            | H.Weissberg#                |                   |
| Rufous-sided Towhee:    |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 1-5,31                  | S.Dartmouth,Milton      | 1, 1 f.         | R.Maker,R.Abrams            |                   |
| 31                      | MNWS                    | 1               | J.Smith                     |                   |
| American Tree Sparrow:  |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| thr.                    | Nantucket,6 locations   | 1, 16 total     | E.Andrews,v.o.              |                   |
| 19                      | Scituate                | 20              | R.Abrams                    |                   |
| Chipping Sparrow:       |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 30,31                   | Newton,Mt. Auburn       | 1, 1            | M.Vaughan,R.Stymeist#       |                   |
| Field Sparrow:          |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| thr.                    | Middleboro              | 3               | D.Briggs                    |                   |
| Lark Sparrow:           |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 31                      | Squantum                | 1               | BBC                         |                   |
| Savannah Sparrow:       |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 2,29                    | Medfield,S.Dartmouth    | 1, 1            | W.Reagan,R.Maker            |                   |
| "Ipswich" Sparrow:      |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 9,13                    | Plymouth,S.Monomoy      | 1, 3            | W.Smith#,B.Nikula#          |                   |
| 23,29                   | S.Monomoy,Nantucket     | 2, 1            | B.Nikula#,D.Holt            |                   |
| Fox Sparrow:            |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 2,2-31                  | Carver, 20 locations    | 4, 31 total     | L.Robinson,v.o.             |                   |
| 17,27                   | Hardwick,Nahant         | 14, 6           | S.Carroll#,L.Pivacek        |                   |
| Song Sparrow:           |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 24,29                   | Falmouth,Westport       | 25, 20          | P.Trimble,SSBC              |                   |
| 30,31                   | Nahant,Squantum         | 24, 30          | W.Crawford,BBC              |                   |
| Swamp Sparrow:          |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 31                      | GMNWR                   | 3               | A.Bennett                   |                   |
| White-throated Sparrow: |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| thr.                    | Ipswich,E.Middleboro    | 7 max. (3/3),   | 12 J.Berry,K.Anderson       |                   |
| 24                      | Falmouth,Boston         | 5, 15+          | P.Trimble,J.Cumming         |                   |
| Dark-eyed Junco:        |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 2,3                     | Sharon,P.I.             | 41, 35          | B.Sorrie,BBC                |                   |
| 17,24                   | Hardwick,Boston         | 48, 15          | S.Carroll#,J.Cumming        |                   |
| Lapland Longspur:       |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 3,9                     | Hardwick,P.I.           | 8, 3            | M.Lynch#,v.o.               |                   |
| Snow Bunting:           |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 1-16,9                  | P.I.-Salisbury,Plymouth | 50 max. (3/1),  | 60 v.o.,W.Smith             |                   |
| 9,23                    | Middleboro,Princeton    | 250, 20         | W.Petersen,T.Lipsky         |                   |
| Red-winged Blackbird:   |                         |                 |                             |                   |
| 2-16,3                  | P.I.,Nantucket          | 100 max. (3/2), | 14 m. + 1 f. v.o.,E.Andrews |                   |
| 12,24                   | Braintree,Bolton        | 500, 150        | G.Wilson,S.Carroll#         |                   |



| SPECIES/DATE                 | LOCATION                       | NUMBER             | OBSERVERS                     | MARCH 1985 |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Eastern Meadowlark:</b>   |                                |                    |                               |            |
| 9                            | Concord, Newbypt               | 1, 2               | R.Walton#, G.d'Entremont      |            |
| 17-18,21-31                  | E.Orleans, Marshfield          | 9, 6               | A.Williams, v.o.              |            |
| <b>Rusty Blackbird:</b>      |                                |                    |                               |            |
| 2,8,27                       | Bolton,E.Middleboro,Wayland    | 35, 200, 20+       | M.Lynch#,K.Anderson,R.Forster |            |
| <b>Common Grackle:</b>       |                                |                    |                               |            |
| 2-7,4                        | P.I., E.Middleboro             | 70 max., 75        | v.o., K.Anderson              |            |
| 17,27                        | Rowley, Dover                  | 200, 2000          | J.Berry, R.Forster            |            |
| 28                           | Nantucket                      | 750+               | E.Andrews                     |            |
| <b>Brown-headed Cowbird:</b> |                                |                    |                               |            |
| 2,11                         | Concord, Cambridge             | 1, 2               | H.Wiggin#, L.Robinson         |            |
| 17,31                        | Randolph, S.Dartmouth          | 50, 26             | G.d'Entremont, R.Maker        |            |
| <b>Purple Finch:</b>         |                                |                    |                               |            |
| 7,17                         | Hardwick, Wayland              | 32, 21             | S.Carroll#, R.Forster         |            |
| 24,31                        | Hamilton, Nantucket            | 40+, 2             | J.Berry, E.Andrews            |            |
| <b>House Finch:</b>          |                                |                    |                               |            |
| 16,24                        | Nantucket, Falmouth            | 50, 40             | BBC, P.Trimble                |            |
| <b>Red Crossbill:</b>        |                                |                    |                               |            |
| 10-23                        | Hardwick                       | 2                  | M.Lynch#                      |            |
| <b>Redpoll sp.:</b>          |                                |                    |                               |            |
| 11-16                        | Nantucket                      | 1 f.               | E.Andrews#                    |            |
| <b>Pine Siskin:</b>          |                                |                    |                               |            |
| 3-30,23                      | Petersham-Hardwick, Ashburnham | 64 max. (3/17), 8  | v.o., L.Robinson              |            |
| <b>American Goldfinch:</b>   |                                |                    |                               |            |
| thr.,17                      | Milton, Hardwick               | 20 max. (3/2), 55  | v.o., W.Drummond              |            |
| <b>Evening Grosbeak:</b>     |                                |                    |                               |            |
| 10-30,20                     | Petersham-Hardwick, Sudbury    | 63 max. (3/23), 18 | v.o., R.Forster               |            |
| thr.,24                      | Middleboro, Hamilton           | 30, 10             | D.Briggs, J.Berry             |            |

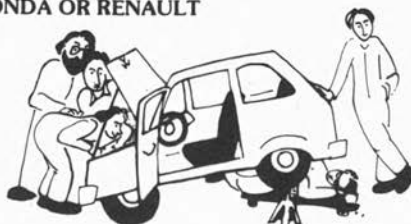
### NEW VOLUME AVAILABLE

The Birds of Sandwich & Barnstable on Cape Cod Bay (Wayside Studio, 1985) is now available. "Anyone who wants to stop by my home to pick up a copy will be most welcome," cordially invites author Robert Pease, a familiar figure at Sandy Neck - especially if a nor'easter is predicted. Bob's address is Howland Lane, East Sandwich, MA 02537, and the price is a reasonable two dollars. The author will mail you a copy if you send him a large, self-addressed, stamped envelope - the slender volume is 6 x 9 inches and requires 44 cents postage. This booklet represents one of the most comprehensive regional works undertaken in several decades, particularly in an area where such work is generally lacking. It is a summary of bird sightings since 1972 - with perhaps a surprise or two! The author has included some unsubstantiated sightings of rarities that in more scholarly works would be categorically rejected. However, in the preface he explains that "whenever there has been doubt, this has been indicated, but the report stayed in. In this way the onus of the decision, to accept or reject, is shifted to the reader." His rationale bears some merit. The book also includes instructions on where to bird in the area bounded by the canal, the mid-Cape Highway, and the Barnstable-Yarmouth line. The author undertook the study because he feels that "almost any serious active birder can select a limited area and by keeping accurate records for that area over a period of years . . . make a valuable contribution to . . . our knowledge of a much larger region." Robert Pease has succeeded in doing just that!

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April's mystery bird does not leave the viewer much to work with in the way of concrete field characters. At once we are struck by a bill that can only belong to a finch, sparrow, or blackbird. The bird's size is difficult to ascertain without a known object in the picture for comparison. However, the legs and feet suggest a sturdy bird when viewed against the pine twig that it is perched on. The appearance of pale tips on the greater wing coverts is suggestive, although not a definitive indication, that the bird is in juvenile or immature plumage. The underparts are disconcertingly hidden from view. Fortunately, however, we have a clear look at the back, which plainly exhibits a unique scaled appearance - a feature confined to only one species in our area when combined with the other visible features of the bird in the picture.

Considering the above, species which should be considered when trying to identify the mystery bird might include the females of the House Finch and the Indigo Bunting, along with the juvenile Brown-headed Cowbird. The bill of a House Finch would likely show a more curved culmen, giving the bill a stubby and thick-based appearance. Likewise, a female House Finch would show dorsal streaking, not scaling. The female Indigo Bunting shows an unstreaked back - a back that under most circumstances looks remarkably even in tone. Thus, we are left with juvenile Brown-headed Cowbird as the AT A GLANCE species. The bird's combination of uniform, drab appearance, finch-like bill, faint wing bars, and an obviously scaly back all typify Molothrus ater. If we could see the underparts, we would find faint gray breast streaks on an otherwise light gray breast. While familiar enough when observed begging food from a smaller songbird, the lowly cowbird can also be seen to present a field problem when seen out of context. The individual pictured was photographed at Monomoy in early September.

W.R.P.



*Brown-headed Cowbird* Photo by Wayne R. Petersen

# At a Glance . . .

Photo by Wayne R. Petersen



Can you identify this bird? Identification will be discussed in next issue's *At a Glance*. Bird Observer will award a PRIZE to the reader who submits the most correct answers in 1985. Please send your entry on a postcard to Bird Observer, 462 Trapelo Road, Belmont, MA 02178 before the answer is published.



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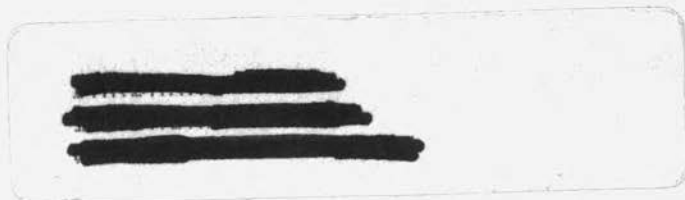


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