

Bird Observer

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HOT BIRDS

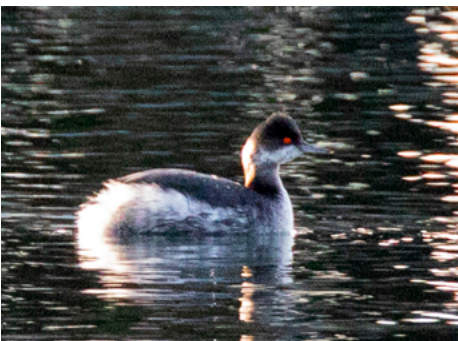
No bird in the state during this period attracted more attention or was more photographed than the **Trumpeter Swan** on Milford Pond. Bette Robo's eBird report was relayed by other birders to Facebook and from there to MassBird. The Trumpeter lingered in the area among 16+ Mute Swans for over two weeks, often seen resting on the ice as the pond gradually froze over. Like most recent New England records of the species, this bird is thought to have come from the re-introduced Great Lakes population. Bette Robo took the photo on the right.



The rarest bird of the period unfortunately was in a location where very few could enjoy it. A birder on Nantucket was keeping a friend's bird feeders filled when those feeders lured in a female **Varied Thrush!** The location was not suitable for crowds of birders, so only those who were able to arrange a visit through the feeder-filling caretaker were able to visit. The thrush was seen by birders for roughly a week, but the homeowner, upon being notified of the bird's identity, indicated that they had been seeing it since December without realizing what species it was. Trish Pastuszak took the photo on the left.



As seems to be usual in recent winters, **Pacific Loons** were reported from several coastal locations. Also as usual, very few allowed themselves to be documented clearly enough to eliminate potential confusion with other loon species. And also as usual, Race Point was an exception, with at least one Pacific Loon getting photographed there several times through February 23. Sue Finnegan took the photo on the right.



An **Eared Grebe**, originally found on New Year's Day by Scott Schwenk, continued to provide birders at MacMillan Wharf in Provincetown with dazzling upclose views through January 27. Neil Dowling took the photo on the left.

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Cover: Baltimore Oriole by John Sill © Massachusetts Audubon Society. Courtesy of the Museum of American Bird Art.

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Bird Observer

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Birding Nahanton Park, Newton, Massachusetts

Haynes Miller

Nahanton Park is a 55-acre mixed-use park owned by the city of Newton.

Located on the southern edge of the city, it is bounded by the Charles River, the Charles River Country Club, and the Jewish Community Center (JCC). Nahanton Street separates the park from the extensive Cutler Park Reservation wetlands that spread south to Millennium Park in West Roxbury. Nahanton Park is home to the Newton community garden plots, a nature center and kayak rental, and a soccer field. It includes a variety of habitats, from open grassland to riparian woodlands. This combination of location and diverse habitat makes Nahanton Park the most productive birding location in the city of Newton, with more than 180 species recorded to date, including 32 species of wood warblers and 17 sparrow species.

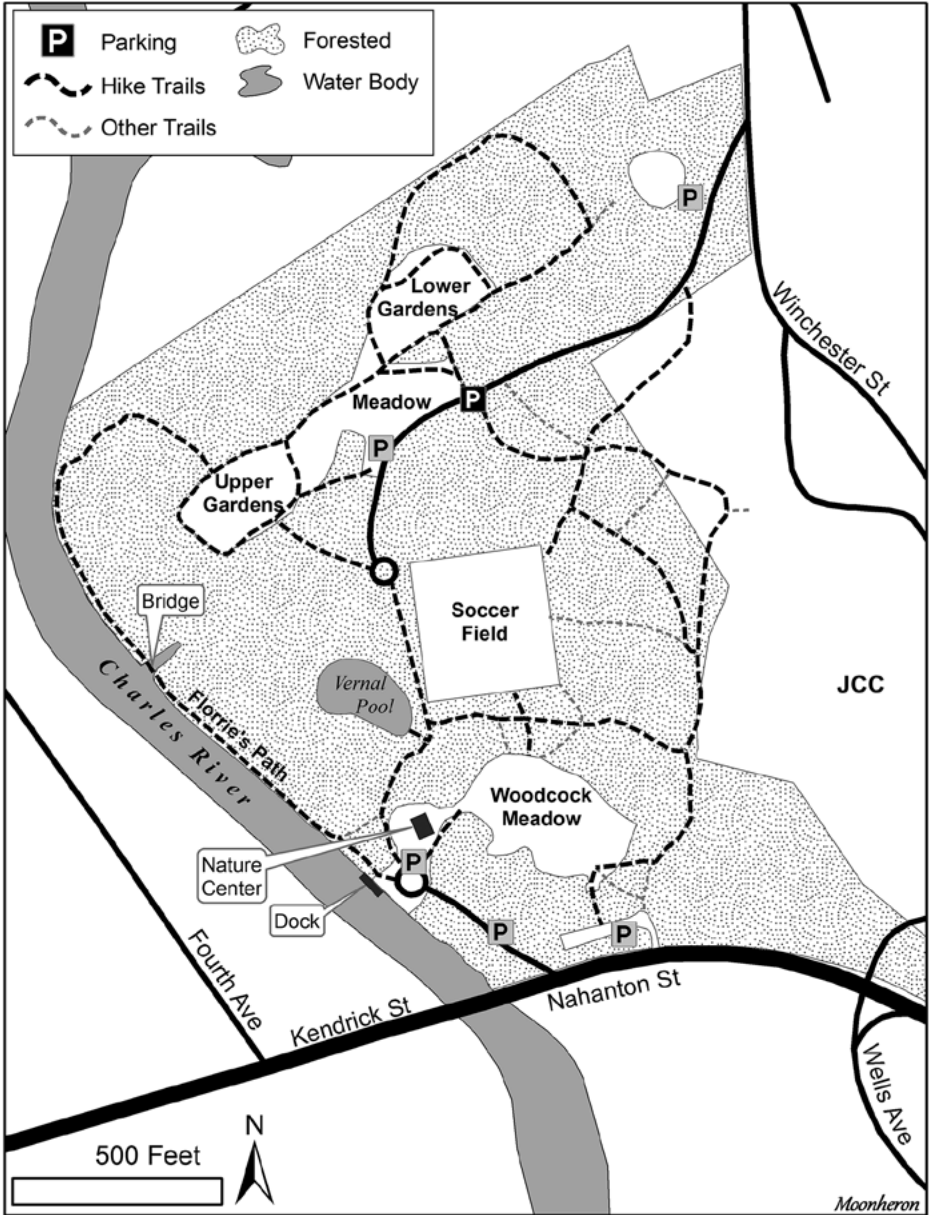
The park has hosted around forty breeding bird species, but for birdwatchers the park is most interesting during spring and fall migrations. The woodland margins attract a wide variety of spring warblers, and the garden plots attract migrant sparrows in the fall that are easy to observe.

From many locations, the convenient way to get to Nahanton Park is via the new Exit 19A off Interstate 95 (I-95) that opened in December 2017. Coming from the north, take Exit 19 (C, B, A) and follow the exit road parallel with the highway toward Exit 19B—Highland Avenue, but continue straight past Exit 19-B for 0.25 mile and take Exit 19A—Kendrick Street. Turn left on Kendrick Street. In 0.5 mile, you will cross the Charles River into Newton, at which point Kendrick Street becomes Nahanton Street. The nature center and kayak rental entrance to the park, 455 Nahanton Street, will be immediately on your left. You can use that parking lot or, to reach the starting point described in this article, continue driving straight past the JCC and Wells Avenue, turn left on Winchester Street, and in approximately 0.3 mile, turn left at the entrance to Nahanton Park, which is 525 Winchester Street. If you pass the golf course, you have gone too far. [Note: GPS directions to Nahanton Park will take you to the Nahanton Street entrance; you have to specify the street address for directions to the Winchester Street entrance.]

Coming up I-95 from the south, take Exit 19A—Kendrick St., turn right onto Kendrick Street, and continue as above.

Public transportation to Nahanton Park is limited. MBTA Bus 52 runs between the Watertown Yard (inbound) and the Dedham Mall (outbound) on weekdays but does not operate on weekends. You can also catch it outbound at the corner of Beacon and Centre streets close to the Newton Centre T stop on the Green Line D. Bus 52 takes





Nahanton Park, Newton, Massachusetts.



White-crowned Sparrow, Oct 14, 2016. All photographs by the author.

three alternative routes; see <<https://www.mbta.com/schedules/52/line>>. The easiest route to access Nahanton Park is via Winchester Street, with a bus stop at Goddard Street (outbound) or Rachel Road (inbound). Walk east along Winchester Street, and the park entrance will be on your right.

The other two routes are the Charles River Loop and the Dedham Mall route. The stop you want is Parker Street at Dedham Street, which is along the Charles River Loop route. Some of the Dedham Mall buses make this stop and some don't, so read the schedule carefully. From the corner of Parker Street, walk west on Dedham Street, turn south on Rachel Road, and then walk east on Winchester Street. The entrance to the park will be on your right.

This tour of Nahanton Park begins at the parking lot halfway down the entrance road at 525 Winchester Street. Take the short path to the lower garden. Keep an eye on the trees on both sides of this path. The small copse on the left contains nesting American Robins and Gray Catbirds and is a frequent perch for finches, sparrows, and Cedar Waxwings. A Saw-whet Owl was heard there in daylight hours on one occasion. Late season Eastern Towhees often occur here and nearby.

When you come to the lower garden, stop and let the birdlife settle down. The vine-covered patch to the left of the garden plots often hides Carolina Wren and, in season, Wilson's Warbler, Philadelphia Vireo, or other migrants. One year there were many Purple Finches here.

Walk slowly along the pathways between the garden plots. You will flush up Song Sparrows at any season, and White-throated and American Tree sparrows in

winter. During fall migration, this is an excellent spot for Lincoln's, White-crowned, Savannah, Field, and Chipping sparrows, as well as Nashville and other migrant warblers. Clay-colored Sparrow, Dickcissel, and Yellow-breasted Chat are almost annual. This is the most likely place in the park to observe Connecticut Warbler. A particularly productive spot is the far right (northernmost) corner of the lower garden plot, where there is a large population of breeding Yellow Warblers and Baltimore Orioles in the area. A Brown Thrasher put in an appearance there in fall 2017. The bird boxes are home to Tree Swallows and House Wrens. You will also find one of the three bat houses installed in Nahanton park in the fall of 2016 with the intention of attracting little brown bats. The breeding success of this species in the park is unknown.

A rough path extends parallel to the entrance road from the east corner of the lower garden. This is the original entrance road to the park—formerly known as Novitiate Park, with reference to the Xaverian Brothers who once owned much of it. This path was redeveloped several years ago by a Boy Scout troop but, sad to say, has not been kept up by the city of Newton. It is still possible to follow it in a large loop, ending up parallel with the golf course and returning to the west corner of the lower garden. This optional detour can bring surprises, such as Hooded Warbler. On Christmas Day 1994, I observed a Say's Phoebe along this path (a sighting distinguished by being one of the first to be rejected by the newly formed Massachusetts Avian Records Committee.

Whether or not you've taken the Boy Scout trail detour, continue now along the dirt road, with the so-called Wildflower Meadow—densely covered by invasive artemisia—on the left and the tall forest on the right. During the spring, these trees hold Chestnut-sided and Black-throated Green warblers, among many other migrants; in summer Red-eyed Vireo and Eastern Kingbird breed there.

When you reach the upper garden, walk through its pathways. This is another excellent sparrow trap in the fall, when Indigo Bunting and Common Yellowthroat are also common. The woods contain breeding Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Yellow-throated Vireo has been known to spend the summer nearby. Golden-winged Warbler and White-eyed Vireo have been observed here in recent years. A wide variety of fall migrant warblers, including Hooded, Tennessee, and Orange-crowned, use the margins of this garden area. The screen of trees at the far (southwest) end of the upper gardens warms up early and attracts a good selection of birds at any time of year, including Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Great Crested Flycatcher in the fall. Blue Grosbeak has been observed here several times. Northern Bobwhite was dependable in Nahanton Park in the mid 1990s; a stray put in an appearance in 2014. Eastern Bluebird used to breed regularly in the park's nest boxes but has appeared only occasionally since 2011.

You now have a choice of how to reach the Charles River. A rough and briefly steep path leads past the beehives and into the woods from the northwest corner of the upper garden. Barred Owl has been observed here. This trail borders on a wet, wooded area adjacent to the golf course. The path leads down to the river, then left along a rough trail to a simple bridge providing a connection to the end of Florrie's Path, a



Nashville Warbler, Sept 14, 2017

wheelchair accessible pathway that extends along the river to the parking area for the Nature Center. Prothonotary Warbler has been observed here in May 2005 and May 2014.

The other option from the upper garden to the Charles River is easier. Go back to the entrance road, either by following a short path through the woods or another path along the wood margin; both start at the east corner of the upper garden. Walk to the circle at the end of the roadway. The soccer field is in front of you. There's a small depression to the left that sometimes holds Northern Waterthrush or sparrows. You can walk along the margin of the soccer field, leaving it to your left, or along a path cut parallel to that edge of the field. The sun warms the tree margin, bringing in interesting birds, such as Brewster's Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat.

The pathway is heavily sheltered and can offer close views in any season—Hermit Thrush, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart (an occasional breeder), and Great Crested Flycatcher, among others. A small pool (home to spotted salamanders) lies to your right. There is a view into it from the trail, and after the path curves to the right at the end of the field, a set of concrete steps leads down to the edge. If there is water in the pool, you will find Mallards and Wood Ducks and, in the fall, Solitary Sandpipers or herons. In winter, this is a gathering spot for American Tree Sparrows. Springtime brings warblers—Black-and-white, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Yellow-rumped, Common Yellowthroat, and American Redstart—over the pond, and Blue-headed Vireo in the trees. One year, a Wood Thrush nested close over the trail here, and Yellow-throated Warbler has been recorded in this area.



Woodcock Field, Oct 23, 2017.

Continuing along the trail, you'll come out to the Charles River. Charles River Canoe and Kayak has an active rental center here in the summer. Turning right at the river takes you along Florrie's Path; this can be good for migrating fall warblers, such as Blue-winged. Common Yellowthroat, Warbling Vireo, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher breed along the river, and in 2018 Black-billed Cuckoo nested here. In May 2017, a Gray-cheeked Thrush was observed by many on Florrie's Path and in the parking circle in front of the Nature Center.

Walk out onto the boat dock. Upriver to the left, Barn Swallows breed under the Nahanton Street bridge. Tree and Northern Rough-winged swallows frequently hawk insects over the water. Scan the treetops on the other side of the river for Eastern Kingbirds. Spotted Sandpipers work the riverbank in the fall, and Northern Waterthrush in the spring. There are occasional Hooded Mergansers on the river in the fall, and sometimes a congregation of Green Herons.

Turn around and walk up the rise past the Nature Center. An Eastern Phoebe has traditionally nested in the eaves of this building. Attend to the trees in back of it and beyond; this is a good spot for Ruby-crowned Kinglet in early spring. You can find sparrows in the leaf litter near the path.

Walk along the grassland paths. This is known as Woodcock Meadow because of the dependable Woodcock display in February and March. One concludes that these birds breed in the neighboring woods, and they have been seen from time to time in summer. The best way to observe them is to park at the (south) end of Woodcock Meadow, in a lot with a separate access off of Nahanton Street. You can walk out onto

the field and have the sunset in front of you, making the Woodcocks easier to see. They start their display fifteen minutes after sunset on calm early spring evenings.

This field had become overgrown with white pine and other successional plants but has been restored by a joint effort of the city of Newton and volunteers. (The area had been rendered grassland in the 1950s as a Nike missile decoy site.) The bluestem grass is beautiful in the fall.

This is also an excellent place to find dragonflies. Walk through it via any of the narrow paths. The occasional trees often hold surprises—Least Flycatcher, Black-billed Cuckoo, or Golden-crowned Kinglet in fall, for example. If you walk along the southwest edge of the field in fall or early winter, inspect the forest floor to your right carefully for Eastern Towhees and White-throated and Fox sparrows. They often gather here and under the scrubby trees at the end of the field, adjacent to the parking lot. In spring, look for Magnolia or Blue-winged warblers.

Now you can return to the soccer field, walk along its eastern edge, and take a shortcut through the woods back to the parking lot. Or if you want to bird for a while longer, pick up the trail into the woods at the southeast corner of Woodcock Meadow. This trail leads through upland forest. Occasionally in early fall the forest floor fills with a huge flock of Common Grackles. I counted 740 one year. Downy, Red-bellied, and occasionally Hairy woodpeckers are found here. In summer, be alert for breeding Eastern Wood Pewee, Red-eyed Vireo, and Great Crested Flycatcher. The trail leads up to the highest point in the park, with the JCC visible to your right. Here you may find Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Wild Turkey, or other woodland species. In October 2018 a Barred Owl put in an appearance here. A brief detour to the red pine plantation at the JCC will produce breeding Pine Warblers and Chipping Sparrows in season.

The path leads back to the parking lot where we started. Other short trails lead off to the right through woodland that is always worth exploring. You can check out the newly planted lawn across the entrance road near Winchester Street for Dark-eyed Juncos and allies in fall and winter. In spring 2017, a Worm-eating Warbler held forth from the woods below this lawn for a week or so. Finally, turn down the roadway and recheck the parking lot.

Nahanton Park is a valued Newton resource, watched over by the Friends of Nahanton Park: <<http://www.nahantonpark.org/>>. It is ungated and open from dawn to dusk all year long.

Acknowledgements: Thanks to Suzette Barbier, Chris Hepburn, and Ian Reid for comments on this account. 🐦

Haynes Miller, mathematician by trade, has been birding the Newton area since 1986. His passion was stoked by a bird walk in Cutler Park, Needham, led by the late Elisha Atkins. A Yellow-throated Vireo put in an appearance, and no one could fail to appreciate the combination of the leader's instant recognition, his excitement at the discovery, and the sheer beauty of the bird. A believer in the dictum that anything can show up in one place if you wait long enough, Miller has recorded 183 species to date at Nahanton Park. But he also engages in international birding, traveling recently to Ecuador, Brazil, Colombia, China, and Kenya.

Embracing Bird Conservation at Home

Claudia Thompson



Cedar Waxwing feeds on native *Amelanchier* berries. All photographs by the author.

One of my very favorite birding spots in New England is at my own home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Sitting on my back porch or nestled somewhere in the garden, I have delightedly observed and documented 80 species of birds over the past decade. It is not a large property—the 7,300 square feet of land includes the substantial footprint of a two-family house—located in a residential neighborhood with rows of two-families lining the streets. Yet, my birding experiences here have been rich and wonderful, and the wide variety of species present has increased as I have created valuable habitat that these birds use in diverse ways. Often, they are foraging and eating caterpillars, insects or berries. Some of them sing, call, or hoot to announce their presence, proclaim their territory, or look for a mate. Larger birds such as Red-tailed Hawks hunt for prey, catching squirrels or crows. I was even delighted and surprised last year to see a Blue Jay catch and eat a House Sparrow. A few of these 80 bird species have taken up residence in my garden at times, and not just the predictable American Robin. The highlight to date has been the pair of Downy Woodpeckers that built their nest one year in a large snag that I had created for just that purpose. There, they successfully raised and fledged two young. Watching all this bird life has brought me and my husband tremendous pleasure. More important, this habitat that I steward is also supporting life for a large number of species of conservation concern, whose populations are declining throughout eastern North America.

Two species that have benefitted from my garden, American Woodcock and Wood Thrush, are on the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) Watch List denoting species of highest conservation concern and at risk of extinction, as reported in their *State of North America's Birds 2016* (available online at <<http://www.stateofthebirds.org/2016>>). For several years in a row, I have witnessed a migrating American Woodcock in the back garden where it stayed and rested overnight, before flying on find more suitable nesting ground. It appeared exhausted after what I assume was a long migratory flight, and it was able to rejuvenate and recoup its energy in a quiet and sheltered corner of my urban habitat. Wood Thrushes also have been regular visitors during the spring migration. They and other migrating thrushes particularly like the shrubby back edge of my garden, filled with sheltering Canada yew (*Taxus canadensis*) and gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*), and an understory of twigs and leaf litter that provides insects and arthropods to eat. Perhaps of value to both of these species is also the moisture that is sometimes present. The clay subsoil in this part of Cambridge is relatively impervious to water, and my back garden floods a bit in heavy rains. I appreciate that character of my land and, unlike many neighbors, have not tried to flatten out the subtle contours to create a level lawn.

Thirty-two of the bird species that have been using my garden are classified as Species of Moderate Concern in the NABCI report. Some of these are more at risk than others, but generally all have declining populations and other negative factors affecting their habitat, breeding, and their ability to sustain populations. Not surprisingly, the majority of those 32 species of concern that take sustenance from my garden are Neotropical migrants. Every spring many species of warblers actively forage for insects and caterpillars in the variety of native trees in my garden, such as shadbush (*Amelanchier* spp.), river birch (*Betula nigra*), silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), musclewood (*Carpinus caroliniana*) and others. Northern Flickers are regular visitors almost year-round, feeding on the open ground and on the trunks of trees. White-throated Sparrows are common as well. They dance forward and backward in the leaf litter throughout my garden, and especially like the area near the naturalistic granite bird bath that is tucked under the edge of a protective evergreen tree; there they regularly stir up lots of juicy insects to eat. I have also observed Louisiana and Northern waterthrushes, Swainson's Thrushes, Ovenbirds (rarely), flycatchers, and even a Scarlet Tanager. Throughout the summer, Eastern Screech-Owls feed in my garden at night, and my ears seem attuned to their descending whinnying calls that often wake me up at 3 or 4 am. (See Table 1 for a complete list of bird species observed in my garden.)

The remaining 46 avian species using my garden are of lower conservation concern. Many of these have stable, or even increasing, populations. Included, of course, are just a few dominant non-native species, such as House Sparrows and European Starlings. But the vast majority of these 46 other species utilizing my landscape are native, and ones that we all delight to watch. They include Red-tailed, Sharp-shinned, and Cooper's hawks; Ruby-throated Hummingbirds; Downy, Hairy, and Red-bellied woodpeckers; Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers; Eastern Phoebe and flycatcher species; Black-capped Chickadees; Tufted Titmice; White-breasted and Red-breasted nuthatches; Brown Creepers; House and Carolina wrens; Golden- and Ruby-crowned

Watch List Species

American Woodcock
Wood Thrush

Species of Moderate Conservation

Concern

Common Nighthawk
Eastern Screech Owl
Northern Flicker
American Kestrel
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
Warbling Vireo
Veery
Swainson's Thrush
Purple Finch
Pine Siskin
White-throated Sparrow
Eastern Towhee
Baltimore Oriole
Common Grackle
Ovenbird
Louisiana Waterthrush
Northern Waterthrush
Golden-winged x Blue-winged Warbler
hybrid
Black and White Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
American Redstart
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Wilson's Warbler
Scarlet Tanager
Indigo Bunting

Species of Low Conservation Concern

Mallard
Wild Turkey
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)
Mourning Dove
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Sharp-shinned Hawk

Cooper's Hawk
Red Tail Hawk
Great-horned Owl
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Barn Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
House Wren
Carolina Wren
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Hermit Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
House Finch
American Goldfinch
Chipping Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
White-crowned Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Northern Parula
Magnolia Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Northern Cardinal
House Sparrow

Total Number of species: 80

Watch List Species: 2
Species of Moderate Concern: 32
Species of Low Concern: 46

Table 1. Species seen in Claudia Thompson's yard, by NABCI status



Wilson's Warbler finds a caterpillar on the *Amelanchier* leaves.

kinglets; Hermit Thrushes; Northern Mockingbirds; Cedar Waxwings; at least four more species of warblers not on the “moderate concern” list; Northern Cardinals; various sparrows; Dark-eyed Juncos; American Goldfinches; and more. Wow! And I don't have nearly as much time just to sit in my garden and observe birds as I would like, so there may well be others I haven't seen.

How Did My Garden Come to Be Important Habitat for So Many Birds?

When my husband and I bought our house in 1992, we didn't think of our gardening efforts as a stewardship process or part of a larger conservation strategy. We selected plants primarily because of their aesthetic qualities and based on hardiness zones, and with a perhaps bit of consideration for our soil conditions. This conventional approach was driven (and still is for many people today) by the view that conservation and the protection of “nature” is done somewhere else—not at our homes, businesses, or institutions, but on larger pieces of land that have been set aside as parkland or restricted from development. But my Cambridge garden has taught me much, changing my viewpoint dramatically over these past 27 years.

One of our first actions was to take down the old decrepit garage on the property to maximize the available open space on our 7,300 square feet and increase the available planting area. Back in the 1990s much attention was starting to be paid to invasive species. Caring about conservation, I jumped on that bandwagon—removing Norway maple and common buckthorn trees, multiflora rose bushes, winged euonymus, and a number of other invasive species that were seeding in here and there from the neighborhood: Oriental bittersweet, garlic mustard, black swallow-wort, and goutweed.

In total, I have successfully managed and controlled 10 different invasive species that had started to take hold on my property.

While our original planting strategy in 1992 paid no attention to the evolutionary origin of plant species, fortunately I got interested in using native plants within just a few years. I am grateful that my interest was sparked early on, as I was starting to plant more trees and shrubs, and the choice of species was to have a big impact on my emerging garden. And then, a funny thing happened: the garden started teaching me. Happily, my skills as a naturalist kicked in so that I could learn some of the lessons it offered. I originally made the decision to plant more native trees and shrubs primarily because I appreciated their beauty in the landscape. I had grown up in a rural, woodland setting, and liked the native plant aesthetic. But little by little, I began to observe more and more birds in my garden. Interesting warblers became regular arrivals in spring; they and many different species would forage for insects among the tree canopy and along the tree trunks, especially finding prey in the exfoliating bark of the river birches. Cedar Waxwings arrived on cue every June as the *Amelanchier* berries ripened. Cardinals, Mockingbirds, and Catbirds loved eating the berries on my straight-species native winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*), but did not eat the larger berries on the much touted ‘Sparkleberry’ hybrid that I had planted because it had been acclaimed through prominent horticultural awards. (‘Sparkleberry’ is a cross between our native *Ilex verticillata* and the Japanese *Ilex serrata*.)

The reinforcing cycle had started. Seeing more birds and connecting them to the native plants in my garden prompted me to plant even more natives. Within that first decade of gardening I went from not even thinking about what was native to being committed to using predominantly native plants. I evolved my approach, now even taking out some of the non-natives I had planted earlier in the 1990s. Fifteen years in, I was so intrigued by the bird life in my garden, that in 2007 and 2008 I started making lists of the species I saw. These notes quickly evolved into an Excel spreadsheet documenting the species observed each year, with, if I remembered to write it down, the dates first seen in spring for the annual migrants. Concurrently, I got better at keeping records of every plant species added to my garden, and to some extent even recording the failures, the species I planted that didn’t survive or persist in the landscape.

Today, I have truly transformed this piece of land, planting well over 100 species of flora in my garden. The vast majority, more than 95%, are native; they feel right together and they grow well together. Much of my garden is a rich woodland environment with many tall trees and vigorous shrubs. Friends who visit and walk through it are amazed to learn that I have planted every single plant in this entire landscape of rich greenery, with the exception of one large silver maple at the back of the property, and one old rhododendron at the back corner of the house planted by the home’s owner back in the 1950s. It is a wonderful garden, constantly evolving, full of nooks and crannies and microclimates, and helping to support life for so many native bird species. They need many more places like this if they are to survive.

The Science Behind My Garden

Naturalists and ecologists have long observed the importance of insects as one of the principal food sources for birds. The current statistic popularized by Douglas Tallamy, the much-acclaimed author of *Bringing Nature Home*, that it may take between 6,000-9,000 caterpillars to raise just one clutch of chickadees, is based on original research on chickadees done by Richard Brewer in the 1950s and published in 1961. An even older, detailed, and worthwhile 1912 classic, *Some Ohio Birds* by Harry A. Gossard and Scott G. Harry, documents the food sources of birds on a species-by-species basis, illustrating their tremendous reliance on insects and, correspondingly, the value of birds to healthy gardens and farms because of their important role in controlling insect pests. (This report was republished in 2009 by Ohio State University as *Red Bird, Green Bird*, and it is an interesting read full of valuable data.) What is fundamental to understanding this issue writ large is to know that insects are the most important intermediaries in any ecosystem's food web, and that without a tremendous supply of insects, birds will simply not survive. Insects and arthropods are the predominant food source for a large number of bird species, and 96% of terrestrial birds raise their young exclusively on insects (Tallamy 2007). So a rich abundance of insects is critical to bird survival.

But what about native plants? Why do they matter in these equations and complex ecosystem relationships? What is much newer in our understanding of ecology is the essential role that native plants play in supporting insect life, and therefore bird life and the entire ecosystem itself. Douglas Tallamy has been researching this subject with his graduate students at the University of Delaware for several decades. Other researchers are studying these issues as well. The conclusions should not really surprise us. Native plants support far more insect life than do non-native ones. Plants and animals co-evolve together, and every ecosystem on earth is somewhat different in its species and relationships. Dr. Tallamy explains this subject in great detail in his wonderful book and sums up his discussion with a simple conclusion, "My own research has shown that native ornamentals support twenty-nine times more biodiversity than do alien ornamentals." So the oversimplified equation is: Native plants grow insects, and insects grow birds; therefore native plants are one of the most essential ingredients for bird life. Yes, my garden was trying to teach me that!

A New Conservation Paradigm for the Twenty-first Century

The birth of the conservation movement in the United States from the post-Civil War period of the late 1800s and into the twentieth century was logically focused on setting land aside for protection, with the expectation that nature would successfully regulate itself largely absent from human management and intervention. Indeed, a tremendous amount has been achieved by the creation of our national and state parks, nonprofit preserves and sanctuaries, and with the addition of other tools such as conservation easements on private lands. But we have been learning that our human impact is felt almost everywhere, and some land management actions are genuinely good and necessary. In addition, what the older conservation model doesn't account for is the amount of land in the United States that is in private ownership. Setting aside

a small percentage of land into “protected” status is clearly not solving the continuing problem of biodiversity and species loss. Since the end of World War II, the pattern of land development that subdivides large tracts of land into smaller and smaller parcels, vividly illustrates the challenge, and we know it has had a dramatically negative effect on wildlife and biodiversity. Habitat loss and habitat fragmentation are major drivers of the problem. Not only has this development pattern removed large tracts of second-growth forests that provided important habitat and food for birds, but the subsequent plantings on these properties with non-native ornamentals and lawn have almost no ecological value to our local fauna.

So what is to be done? The solution is simple, radical, and challenging and, *yes*, obvious. Every piece of land matters and deserves to be treated as part of our larger collective habitat, and as important to conservation. Our shared ecosystems are our shared commons. Take it from the birds, they don’t stop at the property line. They certainly don’t know what one is.

That became my approach to my garden. Here was a piece of land that I could steward without restriction, according to my values and my desire to create needed habitat for birds. What joy! The results have exceeded my expectations. If you had told me in 1992 that I could create garden habitat around my house that would result in its use by 80 bird species, I think I would have been quite skeptical. How wonderful that it simply happened as I experimented along the way and nurtured the process. I don’t claim that my garden fully supports those 80 species; it certainly does not. And that is exactly the point. It takes a village—well, interconnected habitat, to be exact. What I do conclude by the presence of so many diverse bird species are two things: 1) how important native plant landscapes are to bird life, and 2) how much the birds are searching for such habitat in a developed world where it is all too rare. I am certain they delight in finding my garden amidst a sea of more barren residential landscapes.

So, bird lovers, please join me in this quest and this passion. We humans can make a dramatic difference in the lives of our declining species. Our everyday actions do matter. Imagine if all property owners—residential and institutional— better integrated our human-built environment into functioning and healthy ecosystems with native plants at their foundation. Imagine that we no longer think of “nature” as out there, somewhere else, but rather right here where we are at this moment, and we are a part of it. Imagine that we planted all of our landscapes with predominantly native plants, gardened using ecological processes that respect the importance of soil and leaf litter, and stopped our love affair with pesticides and rodenticides and other destructive chemicals. And imagine that every trip outside of our houses greeted us immediately with butterflies, dragonflies, and yes, lots of birds.

The challenge is that this radical approach requires a wholesale and completely changed paradigm to the normal landscaping practices of our culture. It requires making concepts of ecology mainstream throughout our society and requires many of us to learn much more about botany. It will likely mean learning to use less technology in our everyday life rather than ever more. It requires that we place greater value on the organic biodegradable life processes that are inherently sustainable because of



In 2013, Downy Woodpeckers nested successfully in a snag created by the author.

how well they cycle nutrients and energy. It compels us to understand ourselves as organic beings, who like any other species on earth, are just as much a part of its ecosystem and the cycles of life and death. This is no small call to action.

Taking Action

Adopting this attitude and approach to conservation and stewardship is empowering and full of joy. It makes our home life even richer with lots of moments of discovery. It catalyzes other important environmental benefits, such as driving less to watch birds elsewhere, thus reducing excess CO₂ put into the atmosphere. It makes birdwatching easier and more accessible. I still marvel about

spring 2013, from March through early June, sipping a cup of joe on the back porch each morning and watching while just 75 feet away a pair of Downy Woodpeckers excavated a nest in the snag I created, mated and laid a clutch of eggs, and then fed and raised their young until they fledged. It was a balcony seat on a grand stage, and not something I would have experienced if I had had to go somewhere else every day to watch the show.

If you want to join in the fun and have the opportunity to steward a bit of land that falls under your care, here are some tips for action.

Plant primarily native species, especially trees and shrubs. This will greatly increase the bird food in your habitat, including Lepidoptera species (moths and butterflies), other insects, and arthropods. You can also choose species with fruits edible to birds.

Garden using ecological processes. Leave your leaf litter undisturbed in your woodland garden areas and anywhere that isn't lawn. A tremendous amount of life exists in this leaf litter layer that is so important to many ground feeding bird species. And the annual cycling of nutrients in this layer is vital to soil health.

Create a garden rich in layers, everything from high tree canopy (think orioles) to mid-level canopy from smaller trees (so many species) to shrubs (think sparrows and catbirds) to the herbaceous ground layer (think thrushes). Don't suppress your living system by using layers of bark mulch at the base level. Plant the ground layer under the trees and shrubs so that there is life happening everywhere.

Provide water. You don't have to be fancy; a simple birdbath that you fill regularly works well. Keep cats away, especially because you are now attracting birds and making them vulnerable by adding this water source.

Use dying and dead wood in your garden. Again, ecological processes provide important food sources. Good-sized logs can be a nice feature in the woodland garden as they decay over time. If you have the space and room, leave some standing dead wood. Many birds will start feeding on the insects that colonize these snags.

Provide secluded places for cover and protection, using evergreens and massings of deciduous shrubs where birds can feed privately and quietly, and perhaps even nest.

Get dirty. Enjoy transforming your landscape. You will be rewarded with many new bird observations!

When we embrace our stewardship role to include all land and understand that every one of our actions has consequences to the ecosystem— good or bad—we engender a larger human engagement in conservation. I fear the conservation movement has become somewhat marginalized in my lifetime because we have drawn an artificial boundary that puts “nature” somewhere else other than where we humans are. Only when we radically change this framework so that concern for the environment becomes part of how we think as a society and the province of everyone—in cities, suburbs, rural areas—can we repair this damage and invite everybody to care. And birds are one of the best catalysts we can possibly have for this new worldview. They are fascinating, intriguing, beautiful, beguiling. So let us join together to create more habitat for these many species we so love. Let us reverse the trends of declining populations. *It can be done.* Along the way, we will be doing much for biodiversity as a whole on this planet, and even improving the prospects for *Homo sapiens* ourselves. 🐦

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Claudia Thompson is a nationally recognized leader in the native plant movement and the founder of Grow Native Massachusetts. Her career as an environmental educator has included roles as the Director of Education for the Appalachian Mountain Club, Director of Mass Audubon's Drumlin Farm and serving as a trustee for the New England Wild Flower Society. A sought-after speaker, she teaches a variety of workshops about landscaping with native plants across Massachusetts and New England. Her in-depth workshop devoted to this particular subject, “Landscaping for Bird Diversity,” will be offered in Waltham, Massachusetts, on Saturday, June 8, 2019 (9:30-11:30am). Check out the many free resources and educational videos on the Grow Native website <www.grownativemass.org> or register for Claudia's workshop at <www.grownativemass.org/programs/workshops>.

The Birds of Reading, Massachusetts, Project

David Williams



Scarlet Tanager. All photographs by the author.

During late 2017, I began reading about 2018 being the Year of the Bird. The National Geographic Society and its partners urged people to “take a simple but meaningful action each month” to support birds. In response, I started to think about conducting a birding project right here in my home town of Reading, Massachusetts. Having lived and birded here for more than 38 years, I felt that I had a good handle on the birds of Reading. However, I was curious about the trends in our bird populations. I have noted the disappearance of Ruffed Grouse, Ring-necked Pheasant, American Kestrel, and breeding Prairie Warblers. Conversely, I am now seeing birds I never saw when I first started birding in Reading. Red-bellied Woodpecker and Carolina Wren can now be seen almost daily, and sightings of Bald Eagle and Common Raven are now possible.

Ultimately, I decided to conduct a collaborative, townwide Big Year in 2018. My primary goals were to celebrate the Year of the Bird and to get more people interested in birding in Reading. Besides having fun, I hoped to get more local residents involved in collecting data about our birds. By doing so, it was my hope that town residents would gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the birds in Reading.



Barred Owl.

Additionally, I felt that the information gathered could be shared for planning and historical purposes with the local town boards, MassWildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, the three local watershed associations serving Reading, and any other group needing the information. Eventually, I would like to use the Big Year data along with historic bird records I have obtained and my knowledge from almost 40 years of birding in Reading to create a Birds of Reading checklist.

I discussed my idea with David Swain who had previously conducted his successful three-year Concord Birds Project. He gave me a lot of

encouragement as well as tips on how to use the Cornell University online database, eBird, for data collection. I called the project BirdReadingMA and set up an eBird account to collect and share sightings in Reading. I contacted a number of friends in Reading who I knew had an interest in birding and explained the project to them along with the details of how to participate. I provided directions on how to get an eBird account and how to submit their sightings to the BirdReadingMA account. However, I did not want to discourage people from participating who, for whatever reason, did not want to use eBird. I provided everyone the option of sending me their sightings at <birdreadingma@gmail.com>. I then entered these emailed sightings into the BirdReadingMA account. I also shared this information on the Massbird email list for birders who might have been interested in helping out with this project.

To encourage more local residents to participate, I knew I would need a "hook" to spark their interest. I decided to make several presentations at the local library that I thought would be of interest to nonbirders. I decided that my first presentation would be called, "A History of the Birds of Reading." As it turned out, preparing this talk was the most enjoyable and rewarding component of the whole project for me. The research involved in putting this presentation together took me to interesting places.

I began by collecting observations to generate a Town of Reading bird list which, when this project kicked off, stood at 180 species. This list was compiled from numerous sources including my personal sightings from 1980 to the present, Town of Reading Annual Reports 1968–1970 submitted by David Galvin, and "On The Wing" columns from the *Reading Chronicle* 1965–1970 written by David Galvin. Included in these columns are sightings reported by Ann Blaisdell who led bird walks for the Reading Garden Club from 1965–1972. David Galvin was generous with his time. Now living in Seattle, he provided me with stories and a list of birds from his growing up in Reading.



Virginia Rail.

During my research, the name Whitney Nichols, a former Reading resident and birder, kept appearing. After numerous attempts, I finally made contact with him. In several email and phone conversations, he provided me with a wealth of birding information for the town, including a couple of bird lists from the late 1950s.

Marj Rines of *Bird Observer* sent me Reading sightings that she had gleaned from eBird. Sightings also included personal records provided in correspondence with long time Reading resident and birder Ida Girunias. John Keely, Mark Daley, Carol Sandberg, Kim and Will Finch, and others also shared their historical Reading sightings with me.

As a child, I remembered my parents filling out a postcard and sending it to the Massachusetts Audubon Society when they saw a Northern Cardinal at our feeder. I reached out to Wayne Petersen of Mass Audubon, and he provided me with copies of the Massachusetts Northern Cardinal and Tufted Titmouse census cards that were collected when that census was conducted in the 1960s.

I also used the book, *At Wood End*, for my research. This book was published in 1994 to celebrate the Town of Reading's 350th birthday. This coffee-table book was loaded with helpful old photographs, documents, and anecdotal stories.

In my presentation titled "A History of the Birds of Reading," I used photographs, documented sightings, and historical records to explore the history of birds in Reading and how the diversity of species has changed over the past 60 years. A large and enthusiastic crowd helped to make the presentation a success. So much so, that I gave an encore presentation a month later at the local bookstore.

The other two presentations I conducted, "The Mysteries of Bird Migration" and "Hawks, Owls, and Eagles of Massachusetts" were not as well attended as the first. I reached out to Reading residents for their photographs of hawks, owls, and eagles for the latter presentation.

Additionally, I led eight bird walks in town that were generally well attended by Reading residents. Most of the participants were new to birding and enjoyed not only the birds but also the open spaces. Many people on these walks were not previously aware of the conservation land and open spaces available to them. Reading may not become a birding destination for avid birders, however, it contains wonderful birding opportunities for people who want to explore the many parks, schools, backyards, cemeteries, and conservation lands.



White-crowned Sparrow.

During 2018, both the local newspaper and magazine published articles that focused on the project. The article in *The Readings* magazine included numerous photographs of Reading birds that I had taken. Both of these publications were well received by the local residents and generated interest in the project.

The BirdReadingMA project ended up identifying 139 species (Table 1). In excess of 17,000 individual birds were seen and more than 30 people contributed 270 reports, either to eBird or to me directly. Observations came from 33 locations in town. By far the most heavily birded area was the Reading Town Forest, a 290-acre site in the northwestern part

of the town. See Figure 1 for the map. The lifeblood of the Town Forest is the Ipswich River and its adjacent wetlands. The river serves as the boundary between North Reading and Reading. There is an abundance of old dirt roads that were previously used by the water department, as well as many well-marked walking trails. Both provide easy access for birding.

Bare Meadow Conservation land, an 84-acre parcel in the northeast part of town with ample access, was the second most birded area. A highlight of this site is the last remaining meadow in town. I previously wrote a “Where to Go Birding” article about Bare Meadow (Williams, D. 2011. Bare Meadow Conservation Area, Reading, Massachusetts. *Bird Observer* 39(5): 245–250.).

There were many birding highlights for me during the year. One early June morning, a friend and I got an early start and canoed on the Ipswich River. We paddled briefly upstream under Interstate 93 into Wilmington before heading back downstream and through the Reading Town Forest. The conditions were beautiful. We saw and heard Virginia Rails, Marsh Wrens, Yellow Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Wood Ducks, Chimney Swifts, Swamp Sparrow, Baltimore Oriole, Willow Flycatcher, and Barn, Tree, and Rough-winged swallows. A great morning of birding!

Another highlight for me was the Town Forest walk I led on May 27, 2018. Only four people showed up, but we had some really nice birds including Virginia Rail, Willow Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, and many more. But the best moment was the appearance of a very cooperative Mourning Warbler. Its loud song froze us in our steps and then it popped up only 10 feet away. For five minutes we were able to watch it move about and listen to its call. It was a town life bird for me.

It was particularly gratifying to see the excitement and enthusiasm people showed when they reported a special bird. Eastern Bluebird, Ring-necked Pheasant, Pileated Woodpecker, Wood Duck, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Kingbird, Indigo Bunting,

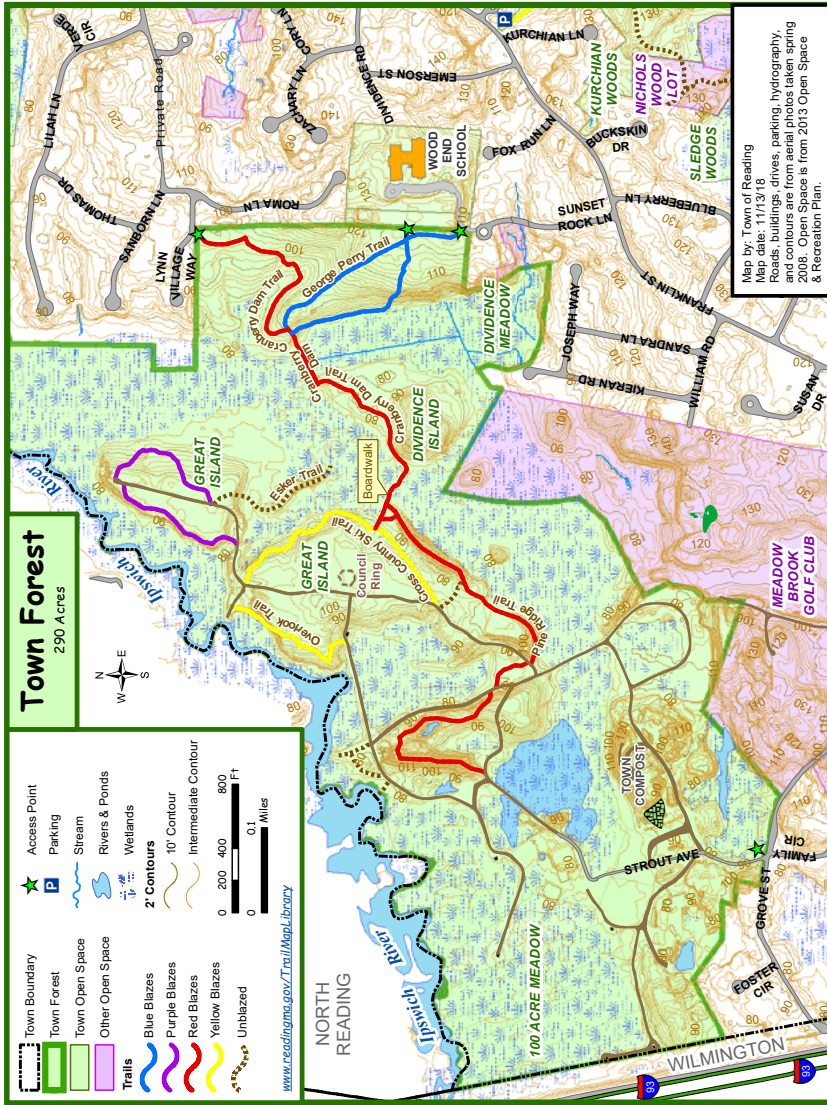


Figure 1. Map of the Town Forest in Reading, Massachusetts.



Red-bellied Woodpecker.

and Fox Sparrow were all birds that participants were excited to report. For these folks, I hope that their enthusiasm will continue and they will be motivated to bird even more.

I was pleased with the twenty species of warblers reported during the project, however, it was disappointing not to see a single Prairie Warbler, knowing that they nested here in town just 25 years ago. Eight duck species were reported with Common Merganser being the highlight. Overall, the number of ducks was less than what I expected. No falcons were seen in 2018, but there were a lot of good reports of the seven species of hawks observed. Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Osprey were notable. Great Horned and Barred owls were reported in good numbers, but only three reports of Eastern Screech-Owl were made. The Northern Saw-whet Owl still eludes the town list despite several attempts to locate one. Eleven species of sparrows was better than expected. Notable was the town's first Grasshopper Sparrow. There was only one report of Eastern Towhee, another former breeder here in town. While six species of woodpeckers were to be expected, the numerous reports of these birds were very satisfying. The project did not miss out on the eruption of winter finches with reports of Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin, and Purple Finch; Red-breasted Nuthatch was also reported.

The changes in bird populations in town are not unexpected and reasons probably include natural succession of field to forest leading to a lack of forest diversity, encroaching development contributing to habitat loss and degradation, the warming climate, and forest fragmentation. These reasons mirror what is going on in the state as well as the country. The town of Reading has done a good job in setting aside land for

1. Cooper's Hawk – 1/1
2. Mourning Dove – 1/1
3. Downy woodpecker – 1/1
4. Blue Jay – 1/1
5. White-breasted Nuthatch – 1/1
6. Dark-eyed Junco – 1/1
7. Northern Cardinal – 1/1
8. House Finch – 1/1
9. American Goldfinch – 1/1
10. House Sparrow – 1/1
11. Black-capped Chickadee – 1/4
12. Carolina Wren – 1/4
13. White-throated Sparrow – 1/4
14. Red-bellied Woodpecker – 1/5
15. Hairy Woodpecker – 1/5
16. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – 1/13
17. Tufted Titmouse – 1/21
18. Eastern Bluebird – 1/22
19. American Tree Sparrow – 1/22
20. Song Sparrow – 1/22
21. Golden-crowned Kinglet – 1/28
22. Red-tailed Hawk – 2/5
23. Northern Flicker – 2/5
24. Herring Gull – 2/5
25. American Crow – 2/5
26. Sharp-shinned Hawk – 2/7
27. Canada Goose – 2/12
28. Brown Creeper – 2/12
29. Red-winged Blackbird – 2/15
30. Northern Mockingbird – 2/15
31. Eastern Screech-Owl – 2/15
32. American Robin – 2/16
33. Mallard – 2/16
34. Red-breasted Nuthatch – 2/17
35. Pileated Woodpecker – 2/17
36. Common Grackle – 2/22
37. European Starling – 2/24
38. Hooded Merganser – 3/1
39. Rock Pigeon – 3/2
40. Fish Crow – 3/4
41. Ruby-crowned Kinglet – 3/4
42. Great Horned Owl – 3/4
43. Wood Duck – 3/7
44. Turkey Vulture – 3/10
45. Ring-necked Pheasant – 3/18
46. American Black Duck – 3/25
47. American Woodcock – 3/26
48. Green-winged Teal – 3/30
49. Bufflehead – 3/30
50. Great Blue Heron – 3/30
51. Killdeer – 3/30
52. Eastern Phoebe – 3/30
53. Tree Swallow – 3/30
54. Pine Warbler – 4/1
55. Chipping Sparrow – 4/3
56. Ring-billed Gull – 4/4
57. Wild Turkey – 4/7
58. Brown-headed Cowbird – 4/7
59. Winter Wren – 4/10
60. Ring-necked Duck – 4/10
61. Common Raven – 4/10
62. Northern Rough-winged Swallow – 4/10
63. Mute Swan – 4/10
64. Palm Warbler – 4/12
65. Rusty Blackbird – 4/12
66. Hermit Thrush – 4/13
67. Common Merganser – 4/14
68. Eastern Towhee – 4/14
69. Swamp Sparrow – 4/14
70. Bald Eagle – 4/17
71. Blue-headed Vireo – 4/18
72. Broad-winged Hawk – 4/21
73. Yellow-rumped Warbler – 4/21
74. Belted Kingfisher – 4/22
75. Savannah Sparrow – 4/23
76. Barred Owl – 4/23
77. Double-crested Cormorant – 4/24
78. Barn Swallow – 4/24
79. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher – 4/27
80. Northern Waterthrush – 4/27
81. Green Heron – 4/29
82. Chimney Swift – 4/29
83. Ovenbird – 4/29
84. Wood Thrush – 5/2
85. Black-and-white Warbler – 5/2
86. Black-throated Blue Warbler – 5/2
87. Black-throated Green Warbler – 5/2
88. Northern Parula – 5/3
89. Gray Catbird – 5/3
90. Common Yellowthroat – 5/3
91. Ruby-throated Hummingbird – 5/4
92. Rose-breasted Grosbeak – 5/4
93. Nashville Warbler – 5/5
94. House Wren – 5/7
95. Virginia Rail – 5/8
96. Eastern Kingbird – 5/8
97. American Redstart – 5/8
98. Blackburnian Warbler – 5/8
99. Yellow Warbler – 5/8
100. Baltimore Oriole – 5/8
101. Spotted Sandpiper – 5/10
102. Great Crested Flycatcher – 5/10
103. Warbling Vireo – 5/10
104. Bank Swallow – 5/10
105. Scarlet Tanager – 5/10
106. Least Flycatcher – 5/11
107. Swainson's Thrush – 5/11
108. Magnolia Warbler – 5/13
109. Cedar Waxwing – 5/16
110. Willow Flycatcher – 5/16
111. Red-eyed Vireo – 5/16
112. Wilson's Warbler – 5/16
113. Eastern Wood Pewee – 5/17
114. Black-crowned Night-Heron – 5/20
115. Marsh Wren – 5/20
116. Bay-breasted Warbler – 5/20
117. Blackpoll Warbler – 5/20
118. Canada Warbler – 5/20
119. Common Nighthawk – 5/22
120. Philadelphia Vireo – 5/24
121. Indigo Bunting – 5/25
122. Mourning Warbler – 5/27
123. Cliff Swallow – 5/28
124. Great Egret – 5/30
125. Eastern Whip-poor-will – 8/28
126. Osprey – 9/25
127. Greater Yellowlegs – 9/12
128. Dickcissel – 10/7
129. Red-shouldered Hawk – 10/7
130. Solitary Sandpiper – 10/7
131. Northern Harrier – 10/12
132. White-crowned Sparrow – 10/14
133. Purple Finch – 10/18
134. Grasshopper Sparrow – 10/22
135. Pied-billed Grebe – 10/28
136. Fox Sparrow – 11/14
137. Pine Siskin – 11/24
138. Evening Grosbeak – 12/1
139. Great Black-backed Gull – 12/3

Table 1. BirdReadingMA Project Results (First sightings by date in 2018)



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

conservation. The town also established a Trails Committee 10 years ago, and they do a wonderful job keeping the trails in good condition and promoting them. They co-lead an annual “Birds Before Breakfast” walk. However, they are limited in scope as to active land management.

The terms “birding” and “bird watching” are now part of the town’s lexicon, in part, due to this project. Bird watching is acknowledged and advertised as a recreation activity for residents. The challenge now before those of us who enjoy Reading’s open spaces is the management of these properties. The Trails Committee and several concerned residents have approached

the Conservation Commission about beginning to actively manage the lands. This discussion has been aided by this project. There is an effort afoot to restore the meadow in Bare Meadow to what it historically used to be, thus benefitting the American Woodcock that breeds here. A forester has been consulted to see what management options there are for the Town Forest. The Town Forest was created in April, 1930 when over 100,000 red and white pine, spruce, balsam, and scotch pine trees were planted by local Boy Scouts and other interested citizens. The “pine plantations” are now mature forests, almost 90 years old. It has become a monoculture that needs to be thoughtfully addressed if a healthy, diverse forest is desired. A sustained commitment to managing these properties will take effort and money.

One year of data collecting can’t answer all questions, but it can certainly generate questions for further inquiry. I would like to invite readers to make at least one birding trip to somewhere in Reading and then share their Reading eBird trip lists and field notes with BirdReadingMA. Trail maps of conservation lands in town are available at: <<https://www.readingma.gov/trailmaplibrary>>.

I plan to continue the BirdReadingMA project for two more years. There is still much to be learned about the town’s birds and their habitats. A big challenge is to access the Cedar Swap land on the eastern boundary. This 400-acre-plus swamp on the Reading, Lynnfield, Wakefield line is bordered by private property, the Reading Rifle and Revolver Club, and Camp Curtis Guild National Guard Camp with virtually no public trails. My only foray into this area along what I believed to be a gas line easement ended up in a confrontation with a home owner who claimed I was trespassing. Additionally, the swamp land in the southeast part of town bordering Wakefield along Walkers Brook and the B&M railroad tracks still needs to be explored. Again, access will be a challenge.

As part of this project, I will be conducting a collaborative Big Day in Reading on Saturday, May 18th, 2019. I hope that this event will generate enthusiastic participation from local residents and show them the fun and enjoyment from patch birding. There is no need to travel far and wide to learn about the pleasures of birding when the birds can be found in your hometown! 🐦

Dave Williams has lived in Reading, Massachusetts, all his life. He has been birding for more than 40 years. He is a retired middle school science teacher. He is a volunteer teacher/naturalist at Mass Audubon's Joppa Flats Education Center.

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Eighth Report of the Maine Bird Records Committee

Douglas P. Hitchcox, Tom Aversa, Louis R. Bevier, and Trevor B. Persons



Great Black Hawk, a first for Maine, found in Biddeford on August 6-9, 2018, was apparently the same individual found in Texas on April 24, 2018, representing the first United States record. It later was relocated in Portland where thousands of onlookers visited during the bird's eight-week stay. Photograph by Doug Hitchcox.

This 8th report of the Maine Bird Records Committee (hereafter ME-BRC or the committee) summarizes the assessment of 57 reports involving 27 species. Evaluation of and decisions by the committee for these reports occurred during 2018. The committee accepted 44 records for an acceptance rate of 77%. Although the majority of birds in this report were documented in 2017–2018, the years of occurrences range from 1988 to 2018.

Highlights in this report include six species accepted as documented for the first time in the state of Maine: Roseate Spoonbill, Great Black Hawk, Western Wood-Pewee, Gray Flycatcher, Cassin's Vireo, and Violet-green Swallow. In addition, the first state record for Swainson's Warbler, previously unreviewed but accepted provisionally, is accepted here. These bring the total number of accepted species on Maine's state list to 462. The official list of bird species recorded in Maine, our review procedures, and members can be found at the committee's website: <<https://sites.google.com/site/mainebirdrecordscommittee>>

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

location, county (italicized), date(s) of occurrence, names of observers or contributors, and committee record number. Observers listed are those providing documentation to the committee, or in some cases, documentation harvested from publicly published websites. All reviewed materials and member comments are archived. If known, the names of finders are listed first and separated from other names by a semicolon. Photographic, video, or audio evidence reviewed is denoted by a dagger (†); written notes are denoted by an asterisk (*). As always, the committee strongly encourages written submissions even when there are photographs. Species accounts follow the current taxonomic classification and sequence adopted as of 2018 by the American Ornithological Society (list available at <<http://checklist.aou.org/taxa/>>).

Species Accounts

Ross's Goose (*Anser rossii*). An adult spent three days in Fort Fairfield, Aroostook, September 28–30, 2017 (Bill Sheehan†; Steve Mierzykowski†, Josh Fecteau†, Louis Bevier*; 2017-036).

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*). A pair was present in Rockland, Knox, January 2–February 8, 2017, then a single bird continued through April 3, 2017. (Don Reimer†; Louis Bevier†, Rob Speirs†, Magill Weber†, Charlie Todd†; 2017-001). One was found September 26, 2017, at Collins Pond, Caribou, Aroostook, then at a private pond in northern Presque Isle, Aroostook, October 4, 2017, and again at Caribou on October 7, 2017 (Bill Sheehan†; 2017-035). Another bird was found nine days later on October 16, 2017, at Mars Hill Pond, Aroostook (Nancy Houlihan†, Pat Moynahan; 2017-045); photographs were not helpful for comparing to 2017-035 and some members felt this should be treated as the same bird. NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: The committee questioned whether a brief in-flight sight record from Readfield, Kennebec, on April 8, 2017, (2017-017) was seen well enough to be positively identified.

Garganey (*Spatula querquedula*). Maine's second record, first reported by Perkins (1999), was a male seen by many observers at Weskeag Marsh in South Thomaston, Knox, September 10–18, 1999 (Chris Hepburn*, Don Crockett†; 1999-002).

Rufous or Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus* or *sasin*). An immature male *Selasphorus* hummingbird visited a feeder in Portland, Cumberland, October 20–24, 2016 (Carole Jean; Doug Hitchcox†, Louis Bevier†; 2016-030). Although the committee rejected the record as definitively representing Rufous Hummingbird, it accepted it as Rufous/Allen's.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*). Six reports involving eight first-summer individuals were endorsed by the committee. The last bird from a flock of three off Bar Harbor, Hancock, July 21, 2017, was accepted as this species (Kyle Lima†; 2017-024)—the other two had been accepted in our 7th report (Bevier 2018). A single was off Bar Harbor, Hancock, July 13, 2018 (Robert Ostrowski*†; 2018-022). Another flock of three flew by Mount Desert Rock, Hancock, July 26, 2018 (Nathan Dubrow*†; 2018-023). Finally singles were recorded off Bar Harbor, Hancock, August 6, 2018 (Brent Boncamp *†; 2018-028), Mount Desert Rock, Hancock, August 25,



Mew Gull showing field marks consistent with *L. c. canus*, found in Eastport, February 10-15, 2018. Photograph by Chris Bartlett.

2018 (Nathan Dubrow†; 2018-030), and on the water at Two Lights State Park, Cape Elizabeth, Cumberland, September 1, 2018 (Glenn Hopkins†; 2018-035).

Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*). Presumably recurring from 2016, this bird was first photographed on May 21, 2017, in the waters around Machias Seal Island, Washington (Kyle Lima†), one of three locations where it was seen in 2016. Three days later it was found 100 miles west-southwest at Matinicus Rock, Knox, on May 24, 2017. (John Drury†; 2017-013). An Ancient Murrelet found at Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, Knox, seven miles northwest of Matinicus Rock, on June 6, 2018, (Keenan Yakola†; 2018-014) was accepted as a new record, but the odds are good that this bird was the same returning individual.

Franklin's Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*). An adult in basic plumage was photographed at Wharton Point in Brunswick, Cumberland, November 6, 2017 (Gordon Smith†; 2017-048). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Distant photos of an adult dark-headed gull off Criehaven, Knox, on June 3, 2018 (2018-013), the committee thought did not rule out an adult Laughing Gull.

Mew Gull (*Larus canus*). An adult identified as the nominate European subspecies *L. c. canus* (Common Gull) was seen sporadically February 10–15, 2018, at Eastport, Washington (Chris Bartlett†; 2018-001).

Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*). An adult first seen at Pond Island National Wildlife Refuge, Sagadahoc, August 3, 2018 was photographed the following day. (Will Kennerley†; 2018-025). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Despite the close association with the above record, the committee felt

a sight report of a bird seen during a whale watch off Boothbay, Lincoln, July 18, 2018 (2018-021) was not detailed enough.

Elegant Tern (*Thalasseus elegans*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: The description of an orange-billed tern seen at Popham Beach State Park, Phippsburg, Sagadahoc, August 15, 2016 (2016-036) was not sufficient to eliminate other species.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*). Two photo-documented records were accepted: One off Pine Point, Scarborough, Cumberland, September 22–24, 2015 (Jonathan Alderfer*, Howie Nelson, Noah Gibb†; 2015-012), and one off Fortunes Rocks, Biddeford, York, May 10, 2017 (Lena Moser*, Doug Hitchcox†; 2017-011). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A bird photographed off Great Wass Island, Beals, Washington, June 13, 2016, (2016-013) appeared to be an alternate plumaged Red-throated Loon (*G. stellata*). Sight records from West Quoddy Head, Lubec, Washington, January 21, 2017, (2017-004) off Biddeford Pool, York, January 29, 2017, (2017-005) and off Mount Desert Island, Hancock, February 19, 2018, (2018-002) were rejected due to lack of details and photo documentation for this frequently misidentified species.

Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche chlororhynchos*). An obliging subadult bird sat on the rocks at the north end of Pond Island National Wildlife Refuge, Sagadahoc, for over two hours on June 18, 2017 (Shannon Carvey†; 2017-018). It was identified as the expected Atlantic-breeding nominate subspecies (or species) *T. c. chlororhynchos* based on its bold, triangular eye patch. Although the shape of the base of the yellow culminicorn stripe where it meets the forehead is also said to differ between Atlantic and Indian Ocean breeders (*T. c. carteri*), published information is conflicting. For example, Howell (2012) states it is “broader and more rounded” on *carteri*, whereas Marchant and Higgins (1990) describe *carteri* as “tapering to a fine point at base,” versus “base of yellow culminicorn-stripe rounded” in *chlororhynchos*.

Audubon’s Shearwater (*Puffinus lherminieri*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Although reported by two competent independent observers on July 26 and 27, 1998, (1998-001) southwest of Petit Manan Island, Hancock and Washington, the committee ultimately decided that the brevity of these sightings, both by lone observers, was not sufficient evidence to support what would be a first state record.

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*). The committee sorted through multiple reports of this wide-ranging species, which seems to be rapidly expanding its northward wanderings. Coastal reports of immature Brown Pelican were widespread from northern Massachusetts to Maine from June 17 to August 11, 2017. At least five records were accepted by the committee. An apparent first-year bird was sighted at three locations in Saco Bay, Cumberland, June 17-23, 2017 (Ean Patry†, Tim Fennell*, Nini Pellet†, other observers, 2017-022). A pelican seen at Moody Beach, Wells, York, July 21, 2017, (Samuel Denault†; 2017-023a) was likely the same bird, but not definitively photographed so is considered a separate record. Within the same time frame, an immature was photographed at Ram Island and Higgins Beach, Scarborough,

Cumberland—several miles north of Saco Bay and approximately eight coastal miles from each other (Janet Farrington†; July 22, 2017-023b). These sightings may also have pertained to the same bird. Another first-year bird was at Kennebec Point, Georgetown, Sagadahoc, August 11, 2017, (Peter Woodruff; 2017-029) and may have been the same bird, but is treated separately here. Birds of undetermined age were at Metinic Island, Knox, June 4, 2018 (Nick Ferrauolo*; 2018-020) and Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, Knox, July 29, 2018 (Keenan Yakola†; 2018-024). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: Although reports at Harpswell, Cumberland, June 16, 2007 (2007-004) and Perkins Cove York, May 6, 2017 (2017-019) may have been Brown Pelicans, each lacked sufficient details.

Roseate Spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*). Maine's first Roseate Spoonbill, a juvenile, was present at an infrequently birded inland location at Sebec, Piscataquis, August 27–September 9, 2018. (Dennis Peacock†, Dan Furbish; Louis Bevier†, Fyn Kind†, Margaret Viens†, Lysle Brinker†, many observers; 2018-031). This and other extralimital records of the species from the Northeast and Upper Midwest in 2018 follow an extraordinarily successful breeding season for wading birds in southern Florida. Thanks to a small hole in the maxilla, at the base of the spoon on the right side, we determined that the Maine bird was the same individual as other sightings in the Northeast during the season. It was present at Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge, Sussex, New Jersey and Orange, New York, July 22–August 5, and after departing Maine visited coastal Connecticut at Stratford, Fairfield, and Milford, New Haven, September 15–October 5. A bird found at Saint-Martin, Quebec, on August 7 was only ~80 miles northwest of Sebec, but photographs were not good enough to determine if it was the same individual. If it was, it would constitute an impressive 370+ mile flight in two days from Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A bird reported from Windsor, Kennebec, August 11, 2018, (2018-027) lacked sufficient details.

Great Black Hawk (*Buteogallus urubitinga*). One of the most unexpected birds to ever show up in Maine was a juvenile Great Black Hawk found roosting in trees in a neighborhood near Fortunes Rocks Beach, Biddeford, York, August 6–9, 2018 (Christine Murphy; Doug Hitchcox†, many observers and photographs; 2018-026). Originally photographed by Murphy on August 6, her Instagram post was shared to the “What’s This Bird?” Facebook group, the bird was re-found by Hitchcox on the afternoon of August 8. During its stay, it was frequently mobbed by American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*). A detailed comparison of photographs, particularly of the underwing patterns by John Schmitt (pers.comm.), showed it to be the same individual that was observed at South Padre Island, Texas, April 24, 2018, potentially the first North American record (Great Black Hawks of the nominate South American subspecies present in southern Florida since the 1970s are of questionable origin). Presumably the same individual was photographed in Portland, Cumberland, October 29, 2018 (Bill Bunn†; 2018-040), suggesting the bird may have remained undetected in the region during the intervening period. This bird was rediscovered and present in Portland from November 29, 2018 until January 20, 2019, when found weakened



Western Wood-Pewee, Maine's first, was documented with photos and audio recordings on Roque Island on June 12, 2018. Photograph by William Hutcheson.

and taken into rehab. Severe frostbite compromised use of its legs and toes, resulting in euthanasia (specimen to be deposited at Maine State Museum). The committee did contemplate the question of race and age. Plumage indicates the bird is 1+ years old and began molt into basic II. Some feathers were similar to basic III and more adult-like. The pattern of these feathers suggested a bird that might have been from Middle America, *B. u. ridgwayi*, but racial determination might not be possible in subadult plumages.

Eastern Screech-Owl (*Megascops asio*). NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONED: A report from Kittery, York, August 19, 2018, (2018-029) lacked adequate description and documentation. However, the species has proved to be regular in extreme southern Maine, and the committee will no longer review records from York County.

Western Wood-Pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*). Maine's first Western Wood-Pewee was a singing bird photographed and recorded on Roque Island, Washington, June 12, 2018. (William Hutcheson†; 2018-016). An exhaustive search for the bird the following day was unsuccessful.

Gray Flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii*). Initially observed from Seitz's bedroom window, Maine's first Gray Flycatcher was on Monhegan Island, Lincoln, October 4,



Violet-green Swallow was the first of five new species added to Maine's list in 2018. Found in Bar Harbor April 14, 2018. Photograph by Louis Bevier.

2018. (Luke Seitz†, Jeremiah Trimble†, Ryan Doherty; Doug Hitchcox†; 2018-036). The bird likely departed overnight ahead of a cold front, as searches the following day were unsuccessful.

Cassin's Vireo (*Vireo cassinii*). Maine's first Cassin's Vireo was on Monhegan Island, Lincoln, September 29–30, 2017 (Luke Seitz*†, Jeremiah Trimble; Bill Thompson†, Marshall Iliff*; 2017-037). Committee members agreed that photos showed a "textbook" first-fall male Cassin's Vireo, including characters such as a blurry malar tract border, dull face and upperparts coloration, and narrow white borders to the outer rectrices. However, the record was accepted with the understanding that species (or subspecies) boundaries within the "Solitary Vireo" complex are imperfectly known, especially in western Canada where the breeding ranges of Cassin's and Blue-headed Vireo (*V. solitarius*) meet; and that future studies may call into question the ability to identify individuals resembling the Monhegan bird.

Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*). Maine's first was at Hamilton Pond in Bar Harbor, Hancock, April 14, 2018. (Nathan Dubrow†; Louis Bevier†, multiple observers; 2018-005). Tentatively sexed as a female, some on the committee felt that it might also be a second-year male due to the facial pattern and brightness of the upperparts.

Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*). The committee accepted six photo-documented Sedge Wren records: Rockland, Knox, July 13–14, 1988 (Jeff Wells, Peter Vickery†; 1988-001); Monhegan Island, Lincoln, September 29, 2003 (Jeremiah

Trimble†; 2003-005); North Yarmouth, Cumberland, September 17, 2007 (Derek Lovitch; Becky Marvil†; 2007-011); Viles Arboretum, Augusta, Kennebec, June 18, 2010 (Jay Adams; Margaret Viens†; 2010-020); Pleasant Point, Perry, Washington, November 9, 2014 (Chris Bartlett†; 2014-017); Monhegan Island, Lincoln, October 12–13, 2015 (Luke Seitz†; 2015-016).

Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*). An immature male visited feeders on Monhegan Island, Lincoln, November 11-13, 2017 (Angela Iannicelli†; Doug Hitchcox†, Louis Bevier†; 2017-049).

Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*). An apparently phenotypically pure immature female visited a private home in Bucksport, Hancock, September 11, 2017 (Beth Jordan†; 2017-030).

Swainson's Warbler (*Limnithlypis swainsonii*). Maine's first, previously unreviewed but provisionally included on the state list and first reported by Witt (1996), was a sight record by multiple observers at the Fabbri Picnic Area in Acadia National Park, Mount Desert Island, Hancock, September 22, 1996 (Matt Sharp†, Chris Witt†, John Brink; 1996-002).

Kentucky Warbler (*Geothlypis formosa*). One was photographed at Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, Knox, May 9, 2017 (Keenan Yakola†, Will Kennerley; 2017-010). A sight record from Hermit Island, Phippsburg, Sagadahoc, August 30, 2017, (Ian Turner; 2017-047) was scrutinized by the committee as a species often misidentified but was ultimately accepted.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to John Schmitt for providing comments on Great Black Hawk record. The committee as of April 2019 includes: Tom Aversa, Seth Benz, Lysle Brinker, Doug Hitchcox, Kyle Lima, Becky Marvil (secretary), Pat Moynahan, Will Russell, Bill Sheehan, and Margaret Viens (chair). Louis Bevier, past chair of the committee, and Luke Seitz voted on many of the records in this report; Louis and Luke rotated off the committee in fall 2018. 🐦

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PHOTO ESSAY

Birds of the Eighth Maine Records Report



Gray Flycatcher, Maine's first, was found on Monhegan Island on October 4, 2018.
Photograph by Doug Hitchcox.



Sandwich Tern found at Pond Island National Wildlife Refuge on August 3, 2018.
Photograph by Will Kennerley.



Cassin's Vireo in the Northeast present many identification challenges. Maine's first accepted record came from the vagrant trap, Monhegan Island, September 29-30, 2017. Photograph by Bill Thompson.



Roseate Spoonbill, a juvenile tracked across the Northeast thanks to a distinctive hole in the maxilla, was Maine's first in Sebec, August 27-September 9, 2018. Photograph by Louis Bevier.

MUSINGS FROM THE BLIND BIRDER

The Road Taken

Martha Steele

My work colleague, at a recent retirement gathering to celebrate his 32 years at the state health department, reflected that he had no great plan that resulted in him standing in front of us that day. As a college undergraduate, he was majoring in microbiology at an Ohio university when he needed a single credit to complete graduation requirements. He selected a course with the word epidemiology in it but had no idea what the course was. He became so smitten with the subject that he went on to pursue a doctorate in epidemiology in his native Philadelphia. He then set out to look for a job, saw an opening at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, interviewed, and landed the job in a city and region he knew little about.

Think of how vastly different his life would have been had he not breezily selected a course with little expectation of anything useful coming of it. And think of how different his life would have been had he not seen and applied for a job in Massachusetts.

Many, if not most, times we do not have any great plans, any idea of where we may be headed or how we move forward in time. But so many choices, whether made after careful deliberation or on the spur of the moment, that we make at various junctures in our lives have huge consequences on our futures. The start of my birding avocation is a perfect example. A casual decision to tag along with work colleagues on a May morning bird walk at Mount Auburn Cemetery sent me down the birding road to vastly different destinations than whatever road awaited me had I just decided to go directly to work.

As a child, my greatest interest lay in athletics, an interest that I parlayed into competitive school and amateur sports teams. In college, I discovered wilderness camping and climbed many New England peaks as well as other mountains in the United States and Canada, including a spectacular climb in January 1971 to the peak of one of Colorado's 14,000-foot-plus mountains. As a young adult, I lived and worked for nearly three years in Colombia, traveling throughout that country as well as Ecuador and Peru, including hiking in the Andes and lowland rain forest.

Through all of these travels, only two trips left spectacular memories of birds but neither turned me into a birder. The first was a 1977 voyage to the Galapagos Islands, a high-water mark in my life, full of fascinating and intimate encounters with birds as well as sea lions, iguanas, dolphins, turtles, and other wildlife. The second was a 1979 two-week canoe camping trip to the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota, where I was enchanted by Common Loons. We were treated to, even soothed by, daily haunting wails and stirring tremolo calls, often as the only human witnesses to their presence.

But still, my experiences with the wonderful birds in the Galapagos and the loons in Minnesota did not start me on my birding path. Perhaps it was that those experiences

involved large birds easily seen without binoculars, given that I was practically standing next to or swimming with boobies, penguins, albatrosses, or frigatebirds. Perhaps the Galapagos wildlife or Minnesota loons were overshadowed by the spectacular landscapes of nearly unimaginable beauty and serenity in exotic and remote areas. It would be another ten years before that morning bird walk ignited a spark that literally changed the course of my life.

What specifically caused that spark on that day? The Mount Auburn walk was just a short break before heading to work in a busy though beautiful urban area. The important catalyst was that I saw a very different type of bird for the first time.

I joined the group without any binoculars. Fortunately, my friend Martha Vaughan, who was leading us on the walk, had an extra pair. Through the lens of the binoculars, I saw magnificent little birds called warblers. They came in a kaleidoscope of colors, such stunning specimens in tiny bodies. It was hard to imagine that I had never really known of their existence. How could I have done so much camping and hiking throughout the Americas and not noticed these birds? At that time, I had narrow peripheral field but 20/20 central vision, so I could not entirely blame my vision. Due to my hearing impairment, I could not hear the birds with few exceptions, including those wonderful loons in Minnesota. But warblers, wrens, orioles, thrushes, vireos, or sparrows? They were beyond my hearing range and even though I must have walked through forests screaming with songbirds, those walks were silent save for the sound of our feet, other hikers, running water of trailside streams, or the rustling of leaves in gentle winds.

But here we were on that beautiful May morning, and I could not believe what was on the other side of those binocular lenses. I was most definitely hooked.

Almost immediately, I found myself wanting to shift my weekend forays and travel to locations noted for their birds. Where before I traveled for scenery or wilderness camping or other recreational trips, such as downhill skiing in the western mountains, I now ramped up the travel with new destinations such as Texas, southeast Arizona, Alaska, Nebraska, the Caribbean islands, Central and South America, Africa, Australia, and many more.

And then there is the matter of the birders themselves. New friendships and an instant community are revealed when birding. And for me, birding eventually led to another life changing event, marriage to my husband Bob Stymeist.

Like my work colleague, I had no plan either, only a medley of choices throughout my adult years that have led me along the path of life. I often reflect, not with remorse, but with wonderment, on how little choices are, in the end, so influential in where we end up going. What if I had chosen a different company to work for before choosing the Harvard Square company where I eventually joined a morning bird walk at Mount Auburn? I may never have discovered birds. Oh my goodness, how the roads we choose to take, sometimes with nary a passing thought, have such a huge impact on our lives. 🐦

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

GLEANINGS

Sex Ratios and Demographics

David M. Larson



Willow Warbler. Photograph by Mike Prince (CC BY 2.0).

In the bird world, it takes at least two to tango. Ratios of males to females in breeding populations may vary for a variety of reasons, even if there is equal probability of hatching in male and female. Often sex ratios are male-biased, especially in declining or small populations. There have been relatively few studies of the causes and consequences of male-biased breeding populations in bird species.

Morrison, et al. (2016), addressed these issues by studying country-wide population data from banding stations

in the United Kingdom, concentrating on Willow Warblers, *Phylloscopus trochilus*, migratory passerines which vary widely in abundance in the United Kingdom. Willow Warblers are more common in the north and west, and less common in the south and east. These banding stations all use the British Trust for Ornithology Constant Effort Sites protocol with mist nets in the same locations and same amounts of time during a set number of morning or evening sessions between May and August. Data from capture-recapture were used to estimate annual survival of adult birds for 34 stations. In addition, birds were sexed in the hand by banding station personnel. In this study, over 80% of adults were sexed on at least one capture. The other main data set used came from the national Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data. Between 1994 and 2010, BBS surveyors recorded bird abundance along two parallel 1 km transects in 1 km² survey blocks, twice per breeding season. Maximum counts of adult birds during the breeding season were fit to mathematical models as a function of latitude and longitude.

Use of these data sets yielded estimates for survival rates for adult birds and differential survival rates by gender. The authors found that estimated adult sex ratios, expressed as proportion of males, varied considerably among the Constant Effort Sites, with male-biased sites more common in the southeast. Throughout Britain, sex ratios have become more male-biased over time, from 50% males in 1994 to 60% in 2012. Including the abundance of Willow Warblers into the analyses, the banding sites with the highest density of Willow Warbler abundance had sex ratios close to equal, while those sites with lower predicted abundance had more male-biased populations. Annual survival of females was slightly less than males. The production of juveniles, as a

measure of local productivity, was highest at equal sex ratios and declined as sex ratios skewed. Significantly fewer juveniles per adult were produced at male-biased sites with low Willow Warbler abundance.

Male-biased sex ratios are a hallmark of small and declining populations, especially in endangered species. In Morrison, et al. (2016), the authors found male biases in areas with small Willow Warbler populations, and this phenomenon is increasing, possibly due to habitat fragmentation, especially in the southeast. So, what causes male-biased sex ratios? The drivers could include higher mortality in females, although the measured differences seem unlikely to be sufficient to drive this phenomenon. In marginal breeding habitat, higher female predation or loss due to breeding stress could be factors. However, the reasons could be behavioral. Higher rates of female natal dispersion, compared to males, could lead to females preferentially recruiting into breeding grounds with high abundance or higher quality habitat. In this study, higher dispersion of females could contribute to the described male bias and lower apparent female survival in lower quality breeding habitats.

When adults are unable to successfully breed in areas of skewed sex ratios, fewer young will be produced, which can exacerbate the problem. So, for conservation practices for declining species, it may make more sense to concentrate on higher quality habitats with robust populations rather than expend energy and funds to try to bolster sagging populations.

This paper uncovers an additional caveat for researchers who rely on bird song, typically more common in males, for estimates of breeding population. Males who have not found a mate will often continue to sing vigorously, advertising for nonexistent females, while successful males may tone it down. Hence using song as an easy proxy for estimating population may mask underlying problems, such as skewed sex ratios or female mortality, if much of that song is coming from the lovelorn nonbreeders. Similar effects could be manifest on our side of the Atlantic. Certainly, there is no dearth of declining species in North America. In Britain, the combination of widespread banding stations following a set Constant Effort Sites protocol and a rigorous Breeding Bird Survey protocol make asking these questions easier. 🐦

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ABOUT BOOKS

Voices from the Interior of Self and Ocean

Mark Lynch

Gulls of the World: A Photographic Guide. Klaus Malling Olsen. 2018. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Gulls Simplified: A Comparative Approach to Identification. Pete Dunne and Kevin T. Karlson. 2019. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

The Seabird's Cry: The Lives and Loves of the Planet's Great Ocean Voyagers. Adam Nicolson. 2018. New York, New York: Henry Holt and Company.

That, instinctively and subliminally, is what these birds mean to us, voices from the interior of self and ocean, bringing to consciousness those unseen worlds, making apparent what would otherwise be hidden. (p. 5, *The Seabird's Cry*)

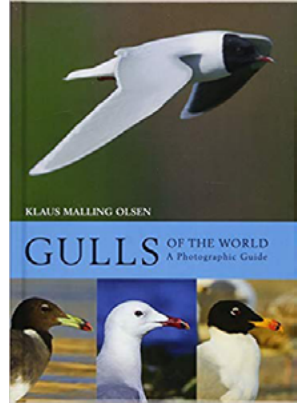
Seabirds hold a unique place in a birder's imagination and life lists. Some species, like the gulls and terns, can be seen near the coast or even well inland, but many species like the alcids or tubenoses need to be sought by going to the shore and looking out over the ocean. Here, scoping out over the rolling waves, views of the seabirds can be poor or fleeting. But the rewards are great too. Watching a shearwater effortlessly glide between huge wave troughs is to watch a creature at home in an environment distinctly hostile to us landlubber humans. In the hopes of seeing some of the more uncommon species, birders must venture out in ships onto the unpredictable oceans. You can be holding onto a ship's rail for dear life, trying to hold down breakfast, all the while buffeted by wind and spray, only to watch some tiny petrel flit by like it is no big thing to be out here in the elements. To add to the allure of seabirds, only a very few of us will ever see albatrosses, shearwaters, and petrels on their nesting territories because many seabirds breed on remote islands rarely visited by humans. Finally, as a group, sea birds can be very challenging to identify in the field. This is particularly true of gulls.

[T]he expression "you have to be madly in love to get into gull-watching" is very apt. (p. 9, *Gulls of the World*)

Gulls are the most consistently challenging group of birds to identify in the field. Many species look alarmingly alike even in adult breeding plumages and require close looks at small details to tell one species from another. Many species go through a series of dramatic plumage changes during the years from hatching to sexual maturity. This just further complicates field identification. If all that weren't enough, the taxonomy of some of the larger species is still being hotly debated, so that what in one guide may be called a species, in another guide may be designated as simply a subspecies. Just to make gull field identification even more daunting, hybrids between

certain species are regularly seen.

What makes this galling is that gulls, more often than other species, will allow close views as they loaf about in large flocks on a pier or beach, just sitting there defying you to identify them. Uncommon migrants and vagrants from the west, Europe, and Asia do appear yearly here in New England, but it requires persistence and patience to pick these out from the numerous look-alikes perched nearby. Which is why, if you are like most birders, you already have several books dedicated to gull identification on your bookshelves. To further strain your bird book buying budget, here are two new gull identification guides that have recently been published.



Gulls of the World by Klaus Malling Olsen is meant to be a comprehensive companion guide to his previous books on gulls. The identification details are thorough but concise and accompanied by several pages of color photography illustrating each species in various plumages. All species of gulls in the world and sub-species that can be determined in the field are described. *Gulls of the World* begins with short sections on subjects like how to age gulls; gull molt; how disease, oiling, and wear can affect a gull's appearance; gull hybrids; and tips on judging size and jizz. This portion of the book ends with a two-page topography of a gull. *Gulls of the World* then plunges into sixty-one species accounts, from Dolphin Gull to Red-legged Kittiwake.

Each species account includes good range maps, descriptions of all plumages, voice, status, habitat, distribution, and a nice section on similar species. Several pages of high quality color photographs follow the written accounts.

It is interesting to see how Olsen treats those gulls whose species status has recently changed or is being debated. For instance, the Common Gull (*Larus canus*) is described as a "complex." Kamchatka Gull, whose scientific name Olsen lists as *Larus (canus) kamtschatschensis*, is described as a "distinct taxon within the Common Gull complex" (p. 85) and given its own section. Short-billed Gull (*L. brachyrhynchus*) is described as within the Mew Gull complex but given its own section too.

Iceland and Thayer's Gulls are treated as separate species, while Kumlien's Gull (*L. glaucoides 'kumlieni'*) is "treated as a hybrid swarm between Iceland and Thayer's Gulls on the basis of enormous individual variation, presenting all types of intergrades between the two species." (p. 173)

The list of *Larus*-type gulls that superficially resemble our Herring Gull has grown in the last half century to include species like Yellow-Legged, Azores, Armenian, Caspian, Steppe, Vega Gull and others. For a reader just casually glancing through this book, it may seem to be composed of unending detailed descriptions of minute differences in primary patterns and orbital color, but that is what it takes to separate these species in the field. Still, by the time I got to Olsen writing about the impossibility of determining a hybrid "Vega X Heuglin's Gull ssp. *taimyrensis*" (p. 253), I found myself longing for spring and warbler migration. You may find yourself admitting that

you just don't have the obsessive-compulsive love of detail that it takes to become a real larophile. After a casual reading of *Gulls of the World*, you might find yourself asking if you are the kind of birder that discovers a Vega Gull in New England or are you going to be the birder standing in a group trying to pick out that Vega Gull that someone has already discovered and identified.

Gulls of the World is a solid reference book and an important contribution to the field identification of gull species, but I do have some minor criticisms. Frustratingly, species names do not head the photographic pages, so that you will find yourself flipping back till you reach the chapter title to know what gull you are looking at. This could be easily corrected in later printings. Surprisingly, there is no bibliography, though a short list of references ends each species account. This is not a field guide by any means. There is too much written detail to make it practical to use while you are in front of a flock of gulls. It's a book you might carry in your car but will more likely keep on the bookshelf at home until you return with a set of photos of some odd gull you might think is interesting. This is the book that will settle whether you have just seen a Mew Gull or a Common Gull.

Gulls of the World is a tool, a fine but utilitarian book that, if one is honest, you don't really enjoy reading. Like an instruction manual, the writing is dry and to the point. By contrast, Pete Dunne and Kevin T. Karlson's *Gulls Simplified* is designed to keep a reader's attention and encourage you to learn those plumage differences. It is a gull identification guide with an attitude and a sense of humor. Who would have thought such a thing possible?

So daunting is this family that one accomplished field trip leader of my acquaintance, a person who can identify any North American warbler in three notes or less, categorically asserts: "I don't do gulls." (p. 14)

Well-known birder and writer Pete Dunne is just the sort to pull this off, despite the fact that he didn't even want to write this book.

This is a book that begged to be written, and for years I tried to get someone else to write it—a treatment of gulls that presents them in the simplified, straightforward way in which we regard bird groups, most notably raptors. (p. 16)

Also supporting my standing to write this book is that, while I am an experienced birder, I harbor no deep fascination with gulls. I accord gulls the same levels of interest I bestow on any other bird group. (p. 16)

So with the help of co-author Kevin T. Karlson, Dunne has written and designed an identification guide for the average birder who wants to hone their gull identification skills. One way was to reduce the number of gulls discussed in the guide. *Gulls Simplified* mostly considers only those species that breed in North America. Species accounts are grouped into three general categories based on the way they appear to birders, not taxonomy. There are "Small to medium-sized gulls and hooded gulls," "Gray-backed white-headed gulls," and finally "Large dark-backed gulls." A final group of "Dark horse gulls" is dedicated to those species that are rarely seen in the

Lower 48 states like Ivory and Ross's gulls as well as a few extralimital species that have shown up in the Lower 48 like Slaty-backed and Kelp gulls.

Where Dunne and Karlson draw the line with regard to some taxonomically-challenged species is interesting to contrast with Olsen's *Gulls of the World*: "The implications of all your present field guides notwithstanding, there is no such species as Thayer's Gull anymore." (p. 126)

Each species account begins with a short one or two sentence description by Dunne (more on those later) and then includes a long "Profile" that contains a lot of information on jizz and behavior. This section excels at giving the birder a general sense of how this species of gull will appear in contrast to other species. An example in that section under Ring-billed Gull: "Longish legs and quick, mincing steps differ from Herring Gull's waddle-and-stride style of walking." (p. 104)

This is followed by a paragraph, with a color map, on status and distribution. Finally there is a longer section on details of adult and immature plumages. The numerous high-quality photographs are printed with the text, and the species name is found at the top of every right hand page, so you do not have to flip back to see what species you are looking at.

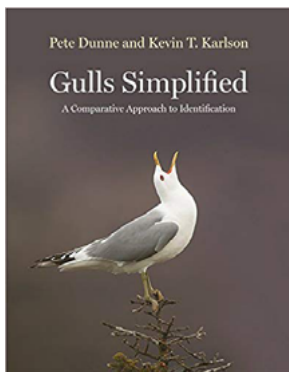
The text is clear and focuses on the essential identification points, contrasting those with similar species. Different species are often shown in the same photograph to show differences in behavior, shape, size, or plumage. *Gulls Simplified* ends with a seven page "Quiz and Review" section which has a large number of photos that the reader has to identify. The answers are discussed in detail at the end. This is a fun section and birders of any skill level will enjoy seeing how they fare.

As I mentioned above, for each species, Dunne has penned a one or two sentence introduction. These set the tone for the book. They are often funny, sometimes odd, and usually very apt. For Herring Gull: "It's the large, silver gray-backed gull with the six-pack holder around its neck, a testimony to its slim head and a token of its proclivities for landfill trolling and Dumpster diving." (p. 86)

Or under California Gull: "It's a Herring Gull drawn by El Greco with a Mormon cricket in its mouth." (p.96) This description will likely have a number of birders Googling the works of El Greco. For some reason, many of these pithy descriptions focus on food items in the gull's mouth and include items like sewage pipe unmentionables, a sesame seed bun, a boardwalk hot dog, a ham sandwich, corn dogs, tilapia, and, most cryptically, under Black-tailed Gull: "... with nothing in its bill because you aren't really seeing it." (p. 181)

Are these descriptions crucial? Of course not, but they do invite the reader to have fun looking at gulls, and that is a worthwhile goal.

Gulls Simplified benefits from having an author who has written a number of books on raptor identification over the decades, knows how to keep readers engaged, and



encourages them to have fun with identification challenges. Dunne also knows that there are things to look for in determining a field identification other than minute details of plumage alone. I think *Gulls Simplified* is a more enjoyable book because it is from an author who only reluctantly wrote this guide and who, by trial and error in the field, knew what he would like to see in a book about identifying gulls.

Each displays a different facet of the central question: how to exist in all three elements. They are the rarest form of creation, the only animals at home on the sea, in the sea, in the air and on land. (p. 7-8, *The Seabird's Cry*)

Though the previous two books will help you tell *what* you are looking at, *The Seabird's Cry* by writer Adam Nicolson explores *why* we find sea birds so fascinating. Nicolson is not a scientific seabird expert. He is an award-winning writer who has authored books on subjects like the Greek poet Homer. But he has had a lifelong passion for all seabirds. This began when he was a child and his father inherited one of the Shiant Isles, a small island group off the Hebrides. His family would periodically vacation on this rugged wind-blown isle where there was a small cottage with no electricity or other amenities. What there was on the Shiant Isles were thousands of nesting seabirds: fulmars, kittiwakes, gulls, cormorants. This experience of living among the nesting seabirds so affected Nicolson that for much of his adult life he has sought out seabirds of every kind where they nest and live, traveling around the world in search of seabirds. *The Seabird's Cry* is Nicolson's attempt to put into words why he and so many of us have a passion for these birds. In each chapter Nicolson looks at one of ten different species, pairs, or groups of seabirds: fulmars, puffins, kittiwakes, gulls, guillemots (what we call murre), cormorants and shags, shearwaters, gannets, Great Auk and its cousin Razorbill, and finally albatrosses. Though each chapter discusses at length numerous scientific studies, Nicolson is just as interested in the history of human interaction with seabirds.

A central concept that unites all the chapters is the concept of *umwelt*. This term was originated by late 19th and early 20th century German biologist Jakob von Uexküll. Nicolson crowns him "the Prospero and hidden mage of all modern seabird studies." (p. 17) *Umwelt* loosely translated means "surrounding world," and what von Uexküll was trying to convey with it was each creature's unique subjective view of the world based on how they sensed their environment. For example, in *The Seabird's Cry*, we read that many tubenoses, including the Sooty Shearwater, navigate across hundreds of miles of featureless oceans using a superb sense of smell. For the Sooty Shearwater, their mental map of their world is partially made up of olfactory cues, something we can only imagine.

The history of human cultures' interest and passion for seabirds has ranged from the poetic to the utilitarian to profligate wasting. Nicolson often quotes literature and poetry to investigate these human relationships with seabirds. He spends some time trying to identify the albatrosses' species in works by authors like Coleridge and Melville.

On the utilitarian side, the historic human population of the island of St. Kilda in

the Outer Hebrides centered their lives around the nesting of the fulmars and other seabirds:

The St Kildans, with little meat and next to no fish, ate the birds, above all the fulmar, of which they consumed more than 100 each year, plus young gannets, the puffins and mountains of eggs. The prominence of seabirds in St. Kilda life meant that from the seventeenth century onwards visitors recorded the seabird-human relationship in great detail. (p. 41)

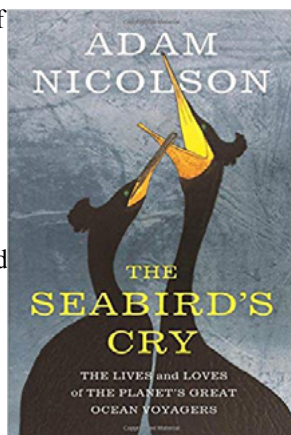
Every part of these seabirds were important:

The 12,000 oily chicks, handsomely provided for by their ocean-traveling parents, gave the St Kildans each year about 600 gallons of oil. Fulmar feathers were also collected and, more valuable than puffin or gannet feathers, they paid most of the rent up until about 1902. In 1847, each family had to give the landlord 7 St. Kilda stone (1,176 pounds) of feathers, most but not all from fulmars. Feathers from eighty fulmars were needed to make a single stone. (p. 45)

As humans explored the furthest parts of the world's seas, their use and abuse of seabirds increased. Kittiwakes were plundered by the thousands on their nesting cliffs for the international trade in feathers for women's hats. But those predations were just the beginning. It became in vogue for Victorian sportsmen to take a boat and sail by kittiwake nesting cliffs and just blast away, killing as many as they could, something called "shooting flying." (p. 91)

Though you may think you have read these tales of human carnage on seabirds before, Nicolson often brings in some new twist on the story. In the chapter on the Great Auk, Nicholson looks at the Victorians' strange fascination with this alcid that was already extinct by their time. The Victorians "made a fetish of absence" (p. 285) and furthermore sought "to keep loss palpable, not to be consoled but to feel the death—annihilation—as inspiration" (p. 285). The auk's extinction gave poignant meaning to a culture seeing the environmental destruction caused by the Industrial Revolution.

By the time we get to the later 20th century and afterwards, the impact of human society on seabird's lives has become greater still, but for different, more insidious, reasons. Dimethyl sulfide is a chemical that some seabirds can smell at great distances. It is given off by krill eating phytoplankton and is therefore a flag for seabirds which are searching for food in those areas. But it has now been discovered that some plastics after being in saltwater for a period of time also give off plumes of dimethyl sulfide, thus attracting seabirds to gulp the plastics down. Here the plastic inert refuse remains in the seabird's gut until it slowly kills the bird. We have dumped so much plastic into the world's oceans that almost all seabirds examined postmortem now have some plastics in their digestive systems. Ultimately there is global climate change, the coup de grâce for most seabirds for reasons too numerous to list here but well described



in *The Seabird's Cry*. “Over the last sixty years, the world population of seabirds has dropped by over two-thirds. One-third of all seabird species is now threatened with extinction.” (p. 336)

Thanks to the quality of Nicolson’s writing, *The Seabird's Cry* is a book to be savored and enjoyed. It describes humanity’s millennia-long love for and fascination with these birds that appear so at home on land, air, and sea. You cannot but be in total awe of an albatross that over the course of its lifetime may have flown “more than 5 million miles” (p. 324) over towering raging seas and through wild winds. Ultimately this book is a call to arms about our treatment of these amazing birds, their oceans, and the entire planet. 🐦



Masked Booby, by Dave Parrish

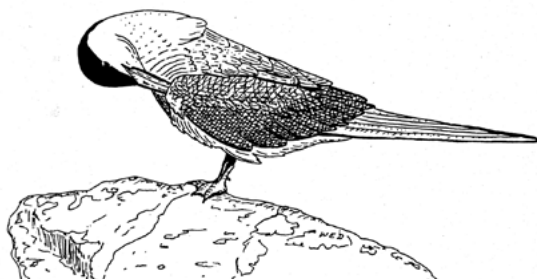
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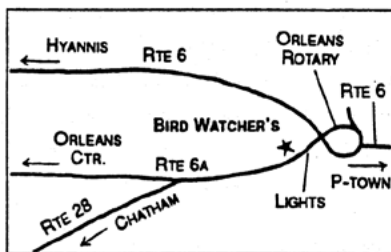
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BIRD SIGHTINGS

November–December 2018

Neil Hayward and Robert H. Stymeist

November began with a high of 70 degrees on the second and went downhill from there. The average temperature for the month in Boston was 43 degrees, two degrees below normal. It rained on three of the four weekends, with the city recording 9.26 inches of rain for the month, 5.27 inches above normal. The season's first widespread winter storm on November 15–16 dumped more than half a foot of snow in many areas, including Easthampton with 9.5 inches and Concord with 9 inches. Plymouth escaped with 2.5 inches and Boston ended up with only a dusting before switching over to sleet and rain. A record-breaking cold snap swept through the region on the morning of November 22. It was the coldest Thanksgiving on record, with Worcester registering a frigid seven degrees, breaking the city's previous low temperature record of 11 degrees and Boston tying its lowest high temperature record for the day of 24 degrees.

December was warmer, with Boston recording an average of 37 degrees, two degrees above normal for the month. The high for Boston for the month was 65 degrees, appropriately recorded on December 21, the first day of winter. This reading broke the previous record for the date of 62 degrees set in 1959. The warm temperature was accompanied by moderate to heavy rain and strong winds. Forecasters issued flood warnings for the Connecticut River towns of Northampton and Montague. Winds were strong—a gust of 70 mph was recorded at Blue Hill in Milton.

R. Stymeist

GEESE THROUGH IBISES

Of the seven species of goose on the Massachusetts state list, Brant was the rarest this period; it was the only one that wasn't recorded. A **Ross's Goose** that spent a day in Egremont is the second record for Berkshire County; the first was in April 2017. A **Pink-footed Goose** was more obliging, spending a week in Ipswich in November. Pink-footed Goose was added to the state list in 1999 and, excluding a miss in 2013, has been recorded annually since 2009, with the lion's share coming from Essex County. **Cackling Geese** were well distributed with records from 10 counties, which is a new high for the period.

Two family groups of **Tundra Swans** that were photographed this period are the first December records since 2014. This tundra-nesting species is less than annual to the state and generally appears any time from November through April, with March perhaps being your best chance of finding one.

Freshwater duck numbers were generally low—except for Canvasback and Redhead, which seem to be having a good winter (see Figure 1). Canvasback were recorded from eight counties, which is the most for this period this century, with 175 seen on Nantucket tying the highest count this century. Despite such numbers, the species appears to have eschewed Fresh Pond this winter. This is the first time they've not returned to Cambridge since *Bird Observer* records began in 1973. (For a history of Canvasbacks at Fresh Pond see Miller 2017). The 23 Redheads observed on Nantucket are the best period count since 1983. **Tufted Ducks** were reported from four locations and **King Eiders** from 12 locations. The northern *borealis* subspecies of Common Eider scored a new high count of six (three males and three females) at Sandwich on December 24, doubling the previous high of three set in March 2013.

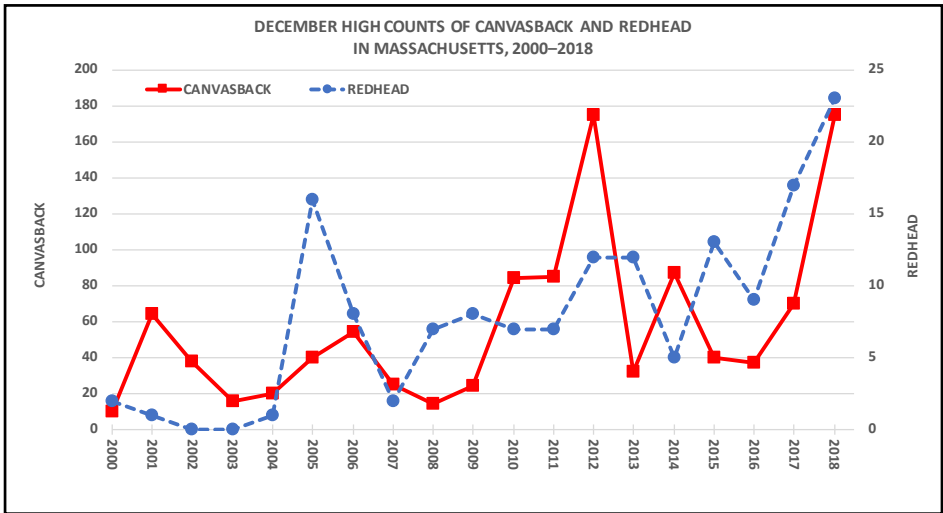


Figure 1. Canvasback and Redhead high counts in December in Massachusetts, 2000–2018. Data from eBird.org.

Hybrid ducks, offspring of the apparently indiscriminating Common Goldeneye, made the news this period. A male Bufflehead X Common Goldeneye returned to Orleans in December. This bird was first seen in April 2018 and is the only eBird record for the state. This hybrid is rare across the continent, with a number of recent multi-year records in the Montreal, Canada, area. Common Goldeneye X Hooded Mergansers were reported from Pembroke and Gloucester, both areas that have previously hosted this hybrid taxon. Three records of Common X Barrow’s Goldeneye is above average.

A **Western Grebe** spent two weeks off the coast of Rockport. There are only seven accepted records this century, with most appearing, like this bird, in November. The only other East Coast report this winter was a bird off Virginia Beach, Virginia, in December.

There were four records of Chimney Swift this period, with two of those being the first November records for Suffolk County. This is only the fourth year this century in which this species has been recorded in November. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Cambridge on November 12 ties last year’s late date. The latest date for the state is November 21, on Martha’s Vineyard (1954) and Nahant (2009).

This may have been a good year for **Common Gallinules**, with birds, mostly immatures, being reported from four counties. Last year there were none for this period.

Late departures—some of them exceptionally late—were the theme with shorebirds this period. The two records of Piping Plover, at Eastham on December 13 and Nantucket on December 30, are the only recent (eBird) December records for the state. In fact, there were only three years this century in which the species has lingered until November, with the previous late date being November 30, 2002. There are, however, historical records of Piping Plover in January and February typically on Cape Cod, suggesting the species has overwintered or has at least attempted to do so (Veit and Petersen 1993). A Spotted Sandpiper in Harwich on December 16 is the latest date this century for Massachusetts, beating by one day the previous record set in 2015. The latest historical date appears to be a bird found at Chatham on January 3, 1976 (Veit and Petersen 1993). Solitary Sandpipers are rare in November—there were none last year—and

this year's November 4 record is the latest since 2002. Two Red Phalaropes at Race Point on November 12 are notable.

This year will be remembered for the amazing flights of alcids. On December 16, Dovekies were seen streaming past Andrew's Point, Rockport, at a rate of over 100 per minute. The final count of 4,680 Dovekies seen that day crushed the previous recent record of 3,470 set on November 7, 2012. The Rockport number was quickly surpassed the following day at First Encounter Beach, Eastham, when at least 6,050 Dovekies were counted, flying past at 2,000 per hour. In fact, the number was probably closer to 7,000 extrapolating for gaps in observer attendance that morning. These numbers are historically significant. It's been a generation since the legendary flights of Dovekies in the 1950s and 1960s, including 12,000 at Chatham on November 2, 1969. The flight past Andrew's Point on December 16 also set a new state record of 438 Common Murres (the previous high of 420 was set on December 12, 2002), and produced thirty-four **Atlantic Puffins**, the third highest count for the state, and a new high for November.

The larid highlight of the period was the return of an old friend: vik581641, the band number of a European "Common" or **Mew Gull** at Lynn Beach on November 24 and again at the end of December. The band has allowed us to track this individual's life history: it was banded as a chick in Akureyrarflugvöllur, northern Iceland, on June 23, 2013 and first appeared in Massachusetts at Lynn Beach in February 2017, returning to the same beach in January and February the following year. It's now back at the same spot for a third winter. A Mew Gull, perhaps the same individual, was photographed at Rockport on November 27. A Herring X Great Black-backed Gull photographed in Sharon on December 3 is a first for Norfolk County and the first for the state away from the coast. Black Skimmers were reported from two locations and represent only the fourth year in which this species has been found in November.

Pacific Loons were photographed from Provincetown and Rockport, with the latter being the first December record since 2005. All four species of the regular shearwaters (Cory's, Sooty, Great and Manx) were reported this period, consistent with a recent trend of lingering later into the year. Numbers this year, however, were lower than in recent years.

A pair of **American White Pelicans** were reported in the Newburyport area on November 30 and were then photographed flying from Ipswich the following day. This pair may have quickly tired of each other; reports from neighboring states in December were only of single birds. This species is annual to this state, although would have been missed this year but for this last-minute record.

Hérons followed the lethargic lead of shorebirds and similarly stayed late into the season. A Great Egret at Eastham on December 31 is the latest since 2014. A Snowy Egret in Dennis on December 27 is the first December record since 2012. And Green Herons in Brookline and Barnstable are the first November records since 2014. November is typically a good month for Cattle Egrets and this year did not disappoint: they were reported from five counties (a high for the period), with four birds on Nantucket on November 23 being the latest state record since 2013.

N. Hayward



WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR

Snow Goose

11/1-11/13	N. Adams	1	M. Morales + v.o.
11/14,12/14-31	Amherst	6, 1	S.Zhang, L.Therrien+v.o.
11/19-20	Concord (NAC)	1	J. Forbes+v.o.
11/23-12/31	Nantucket	2	R. Ouren#
11/24	Fairhaven	1	adSSBC(G.d'Entremont)
11/28	Dighton	1	A. LeBlanc
11/30	Danvers	1	D. Walters
12/4-12/9	PI	1	T. Wetmore + v.o.
12/8	Sheffield	1	J. Pierce
12/12-13	Walpole	2	J. Tucker + v.o.
12/12	Turner's Falls	1 ph	J. Rose + v.o.
12/20-29	Hyannis	1	K. Yakola#

Ross's Goose

12/22	Egremont	1 ad ph	J. Pierce
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Greater White-fronted Goose

11/3	Nantucket	1 ph	D. Veit#
11/17	Nahant	1 ph	J. Offermann
11/19-20	Concord (NAC)	1 ph	J. Forbes+v.o.
12/7	Hampden	1 ph	A. Downey

Pink-footed Goose

11/8-11/15	Ipswich	1 ph	P. Brown + v.o.
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Cackling Goose

11/5-12/30	Dighton/Berkley	1 ph	M.Eckerson+v.o.
11/14-15	Haverhill	1 ph	K.Wilmarth+v.o.
11/16-12/30	Turner's Falls	2 max ph	J.Smith + v.o.
11/18-21	S. Peabody	1 ph	R. Heil + v.o.
11/21-12/23	Sheffield	1 ph	G. Ward + v.o.
11/25, 12/3-8	Rehoboth	1 ph	J.Eckerson# + v.o.
12/1-12/3	Rochester	1 juv ph	M.liff + v.o.
12/3	Northampton	1 ph	C. Martone
12/4	Topsfield	1 ph	N. Dubrow
12/6	S. Hamilton	1 ph	D. Walters
12/7-12/14	Amherst	1 ph	D.Griffiths + v.o.
12/10	Northfield	1 ph	J. Smith
12/11	Fall River	1 ph	L. Waters
12/12-16	Jamaica Plain	1 ph	T.Bradford + v.o.

Mute Swan

11/11	Framingham	50	N. Jacob
12/20	Ellisville	51	G. d'Entremont#

Tundra Swan

12/3	Douglas	4 2ad+2juv ph	M. Lynch#
12/7	Sheffield	7 2ad+5imm ph	K.Schopp#.

Wood Duck

12/6-12/30	Hatfield	8 max	L.Therrien + v.o.
12/16	Boston	7	G. d'Entremont#
12/27-31	Williamstown	4 ph	C.Johnson + v.o.

Blue-winged Teal

11/4	Concord	5	S. Perkins
11/4	Barre	4	W. Howes

Northern Shoveler

11/17	Marion	7	SSBC
11/24	Fall River	4	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
12/15	PI	7	J. Barcus
12/15-31	Nantucket	5	R. Ouren#
12/30	Marlborough	2	T. Spahr

Gadwall

11/17	Marion	82	SSBC
11/24	Fairhaven	100	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
12/2-12/16	PI	12	N. Landry
12/12	Gloucester (EP)	6	MAS (D. Moon)
12/20	Plymouth	34	M. Faherty#

Eurasian Wigeon

thr	Fairhaven	2 max 1pr	v.o.
11/12	PI	1 f	S. Benedetto
11/22	Somerset	1 m	D. Lima#
11/26-12/30	Nantucket	1 m ph	L. Kahle#
11/29-12/22	Sandwich	1 f ph	P. Crosson#
12/15	Westport	1 m	E. Nielsen#

American Wigeon

11/4	Concord	40	S. Perkins
11/4	PI	36	T. Wetmore
11/15	Marstons Mills	132	G. Cooperman#

11/17	Marion	55	SSBC
11/24	Fairhaven	56	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)

American Black Duck

11/24	Fairhaven	86	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
11/30	PI	750	R. Heil
12/6	Hatfield	58	L. Therrien

Northern Pintail

11/5	Turner's Falls	3	J. Rose
12/3	PI	26	D. Adrien
12/6	Hatfield	4	L. Therrien
12/22	Acton	7	C. Cook

Green-winged Teal

11/8	Topsfield	21	R. Stymeist#
11/12	Petersham	2	M. Lynch#
11/15	Longmeadow	23 max	M. Moore
12/13-22	PI	2	T. Bradford + v.o.

Canvasback

11/8	Attleboro	1	P. Capobianco
11/19-21	Fall River	1	A. Eckerson + v.o.
12/3-12/4	PI	2	T. Wetmore + v.o.
12/7-12/27	Southwick	6	D. Holmes + v.o.
12/7	Weymouth	1	E. LeBlanc
12/8-12/31	Haverhill	1 m	S. Mirick + v.o.
12/9-12/31	Eastham	6 max	P. Kyle# + v.o.
12/15-16	Yarmouth	1	S. Matheny#
12/17	Springfield	2	C. Roane
12/18	Randolph	1	R. Doherty
12/30	Nantucket	175	N. Bonomo, F. Gallo
12/31	Northampton	1	B. Finney + v.o.

Redhead

11/12-14	Everett	2	J.Forbes + v.o.
11/18-12/30	Eastham	2	K. Fiske, v.o.
12/29	Nantucket	23	J. + P. Trimble

Ring-necked Duck

11/2	Cambr. (FP)	130	R. Stymeist
11/3	New Salem	55	D. Small
11/12	Southboro	142	C. McPherson
11/21	Pittsfield	281 ph	J. Pierce
12/15	Mashpee	110	W. Sweet#

Tufted Duck

thr	Nantucket	1 m ph	v.o.
11/18-23	Peabody	1 f ph	Z. Poleretzky + v.o.
12/22-27	Wilmington	1 f ph	J. Keeley + v.o.
12/29	Nahant	1 f	L. Pivacek

Greater Scaup

11/1-11/21	Pittsfield	5 max	J. Pierce + v.o.
11/4	Danvers	16	D. Walters#
11/8	Framingham	7	C. Ewer
11/17	Lakeville	152	SSBC
11/17-12/31	Clinton	62 max	R. Lockwood +v.o.
12/12	Falmouth	600	G. Hirth

Lesser Scaup

11/3	Sharon	20	E. Ganin
11/5	Danvers	16	D. Walters#
11/12	PI	3	T. Wetmore#
11/17	Clinton	9	R. Lockwood
11/24	Harwich	125	C. Caron
12/8	Sheffield	5	G. Ward, J. Pierce

King Eider

thr	PI	2 max 2m ad+imm ph	v.o.
11/11	Hull	1 m ph	M. Dunham
11/17-12/27	Gloucester (BR)	1 m	L. Hunnewell + v.o.
11/17	Nahant	1 m ph	J. Trimble
11/23	Rockport	1 m	M. Goetschkes
11/24	Hyannis	1 f	S. Matheny
11/24	Eastham (FE)	1 imm m	J.Eckerson#
12/12-29	Ipswich (CB)	1 ad m ph	I. Pepper
12/15	Falmouth	1 m	S. Williams#
12/24-26	Bourne	1 m ph	S. Williams#
12/27-29	Sandwich	1 imm m	C. Milik#
12/31	Nantucket Sound	1 m ph	N. Bonomo#

Common Eider

11/9	Rockport (AP)	811	R. Heil
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Common Eider (continued)				11/4	Danvers	105	D. Walters#
12/27	Tuckernuck I.	12210	A. Black#	11/4	Eastham	66	G. d'Entremont
12/30	Nantucket	15157	F. Gallo#	11/4	Pittsfield	37	max J. Pierce, R. Wendell
Common Eider (<i>borealis</i>)				11/5	Chestnut Hill	80	R. Doherty
12/2-12/30	Rockport (AP)	1 m ph	S. Williams + v.o.	11/11	W. Newbury	98	P. + F. Vale
12/24	Sandwich	6 3m+3f ph	S. Williams	Northern Bobwhite			
Harlequin Duck				11/18	MSSF	1	L. Shibley
11/1	Scituate	8	D. Peacock	12/3	Stow	19	C. Daniliuk
11/12	Aquinnah	6	K. Costley	12/15	Mashpee	4	J. Trimble#
11/16	Rockport (AP)	187	R. Heil	Ring-necked Pheasant			
12/15	Westport	6	E. Nielsen#	11/17	Newbury	1	M. Resch
12/30	Rockport (HPt)	54	N. Dubrow	11/20	Hadley	4	D. Schell
Surf Scoter				12/1	E. Brookfield	5	C. McRae
11/1-11/4	Holyoke	1 ph	L. Richardson + v.o.	12/22-24	Cumb. Farms	1	L. Abbey#
11/5-11/18	Turner's Falls	1 ph	J. Rose + v.o.	Ruffed Grouse			
12/1	Revere	2500	S. Jones#	12/6	Paxton	2	R. Jenkins
White-winged Scoter				12/15	Mashpee	2	J. Trimble#
12/7	Southwick	1 ph	D. Holmes	12/29	Quabbin	5	M. Lynch#
12/26	Nahant	1100	S. Babbitt	Wild Turkey			
Black Scoter				11/20	Hardwick	55	C. Caron
11/2-11/4	Lee	2	J. Pierce + v.o.	12/15	Athol CBC	361	D. Small#
11/5-11/13	N. Adams	2	M. Morales + v.o.	12/15	Braintree	61	G. d'Entremont#
11/10	Rockport (AP)	60	J. Hoye#	12/16	Hadley	42	J. Rose#
11/11	PI	5000	P. + J. Roberts	Pied-billed Grebe			
11/12	Nantucket	4000	L. Dunn	11/3	Sharon	2	E. Ganin
Long-tailed Duck				11/4	Danvers	5	D. Walters#
11/4	Waltham	1	J. Forbes	11/8	PI	3	T. Wetmore#
11/5	Lincoln	1	R. Stymeist	11/8	GMNWR	1	A. Bragg#
11/13	Rockport (AP)	4490	R. Heil	11/10	Quabbin (G36-45)	3	C. Allen#
12/4	Turner's Falls	1	J. Smith	11/11	Westboro	1	M. Lynch#
Bufflehead				11/17	Wareham	2	N. Marchessault
11/4	Pittsfield	22	M. Kelly	Horned Grebe			
11/11	Westboro	5	M. Lynch#	11/1	Sharon	1	W. Sweet
11/23-12/31	Turner's Falls	5 max	J. Smith + v.o.	11/5	Danvers	4	D. Walters#
12/15	Falmouth	601	S. Williams#	11/5	Chestnut Hill	2	R. Doherty
Common Goldeneye				11/19	Quabbin Pk	18	A. Hulsey
11/18	Westport	64	M. Iliff	12/15	Westport	36	E. Nielsen#
12/14	Stockbridge	27 max	J. Pierce	Red-necked Grebe			
12/24	Wachusett Res.	57	M. Lynch#	11/17	Quabbin Pk	3	S. Sumer
12/30	Turner's Falls	58 max	J. Smith#	11/19	Manomet	41	A. Kneidel#
Bufflehead X Common Goldeneye				11/20	Turner's Falls	3	J. Smith
12/22-29	Orleans	1 ph	K. Burke, J. Harris#	11/25	Randolph	3	E. Nielsen
Barrow's Goldeneye				12/1	PI	25	T. Wetmore
11/11-12/31	Sharon	1	W. Sweet + v.o.	12/1-12/5	Pittsfield	3	J. Pierce + v.o.
11/25	Randolph	3 1m+2f	E. Nielsen	12/30	P'town	55	S. Arena
11/28-12/31	Fairhaven	1	C. Longworth + v.o.	Western Grebe			
12/24	Bourne	2 m	S. Williams#	11/19-12/1	Rockport	1 ph	S. Lamonde + v.o.
Common Goldeneye X Barrow's Goldeneye				Yellow-billed Cuckoo			
11/21	Randolph	1 m ph	M. McMahon	11/1	N. Dighton	1	A. Eckerson#
12/15	Mashpee	1 m ph	W. Sweet#	11/1	Cuttyhunk I.	1	M. Sylvia
12/29	Nantucket	1 m	J. Trimble#	11/2	DFWS	1	F. Sutti
Hooded Merganser				11/4	DWWS	4	B. Rusnica
11/18	Quabog IBA	101	M. Lynch#	11/4	Natick	1	G. Dysart
11/18	Littleton	92	D. Stokes	11/4	Quincy	1	C. Whitebread
11/28	Sharon	110	W. Sweet#	11/6-11/10	Manomet	1	J. Glydon + v.o.
12/1	Gill	78	M. Lynch#	11/8	Eastham (FH)	1	J. Wagner#
12/9	Haverhill	60	C. Marchant	11/12	Cambridge	1	J. Thomas
Common Goldeneye X Hooded Merganser (hybrid)				Chimney Swift			
11/17-18	Pembroke	2 m max ph	V. Zollo#	11/1	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	M. Iliff
12/26-31	Gloucester	1 m	R. Evans	11/4	Orleans	1	B. Nikula#
Common Merganser				11/5	Boston (PG)	2	M. Mulqueen
11/18	Quabog IBA	412	M. Lynch#	11/5	Brookline	1	M. Garvey
11/24	Fall River	226	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)	Ruby-throated Hummingbird			
11/30	W. Newbury	135	R. Heil	11/1-11/14	Cheshire	1 ph	G. Ward#
12/7-12/8	Southwick	1250 ph	D. Holmes	Clapper Rail			
12/14	Harwich	200	M. Faherty	12/16	Chatham	1	P. Trimble#
Red-breasted Merganser				Virginia Rail			
11/16	P'town	700	J. Leow	12/1,23	Barnstable	6,13	P. Crosson, J. Trimble#
12/1	Turner's Falls	2	D. Maxcy	12/25	Peabody	3	R. Heil
12/1	Pittsfield	1	J. Pierce	12/29	Northbridge	3	R. Jenkins
Ruddy Duck				Sora			
11/3	Cambr. (FP)	35	A. Trautmann	11/4	Eastham (FH)	1	T. Spahr

Thick-billed Murre (continued)				12/13-20	Sharon	1	W. Sweet + v.o.
12/29	Westport	1	B. King#	12/16-22	PI	1	T. Graham + v.o.
Razorbill				12/30	Turner's Falls	1	J. Smith#
11/4	Eastham (FE)	500	A. Kneidel	Common Tern			
12/2	Rockport (AP)	335	R. Heil	11/7	Plymouth H.	21	L. Schibley
12/11	Nbpt H.	26	R. Heil	11/11, 17	P'town (RP)	450,18	B.Nikula
12/16	Eastham	632	D. Clapp#	11/17	Kingston	1	A. Kneidel
12/22	Boston	27	S. Jones#	11/21	PI	1 ph	B. Batly#
12/22	PI	21	N. Landry	Forster's Tern			
12/28	Westport	49	A. Eckerson	11/7	Plymouth	2	H. + J. Levesque
large acid sp.				Black Skimmer			
11/4	Eastham (FE)	550	B.Nikula	11/6-11/9	Yarmouth	6	R. Debenham#
11/14	Orleans	440	B.Nikula	11/6-11/12	Plymouth	2 juv	F. Bowes + v.o.
11/17	P'town (RP)	255	B.Nikula	Red-throated Loon			
Black Guillemot				11/1	PI	140	T. Wetmore
11/30	Scituate waters	3	L. Waters#	11/5-11/8	Brookfield	1	D. Lusignan + v.o.
11/30	Boston	3	T. Buhl	11/12	Winthrop	64	R. Stymeist
12/2	Rockport (AP)	4	R. Heil	11/16	Rockport (AP)	1504	R. Heil
12/20	Stellwagen	11	P. Flood	11/18	Westport	75	M. Iliff
12/22	Westport	2	J. Eckerson	11/20	Turner's Falls	9	J. Smith
Atlantic Puffin				12/8	Hadley (Honeypot)	1 ph	M. Locher + v.o.
11/30	Jeffreys L.	2	S. Mirick#	Pacific Loon			
12/16, 21	Rockport (AP)	34,4	R. Heil, N. Dubrow	11/21-12/31	P'town (RP)	2 max ph	P. Flood# + v.o.
12/20	Stellwagen Bank	2	P. Flood#	12/16	Rockport (AP)	1 ph	N. Dubrow#
Black-legged Kittiwake				Common Loon			
11/3	Rockport (AP)	345	R. Heil	11/5	Westport	516	M. Iliff
11/5, 12/17	Eastham (FE)	80,121	A. Kneidel, B.Nikula	11/16	Rockport (AP)	303	R. Heil
11/14	Orleans	220	B.Nikula	12/11	Nbpt H.	18	R. Heil
11/17	P'town (RP)	235	B.Nikula	12/20	PI	20	T. Wetmore
11/20	Turner's Falls	1 ph	J. Smith	Cory's Shearwater			
11/30	Scituate waters	19	L. Waters#	11/3	Rockport (AP)	6	R. Heil
12/11	Nbpt H.	1	R. Heil	11/4	Eastham (FE)	3000	B.Nikula#
12/20	Stellwagen Bank	141	P. Flood#	Sooty Shearwater			
Bonaparte's Gull				11/4	Eastham (FE)	1	B.Nikula
11/3	Chatham	100	D. Forsyth#	11/11, 12/2	P'town (RP)	1	B.Nikula
11/8	Eastham (FE)	230	M. Harris	11/16	Rockport (AP)	1	R. Heil
11/17	Turner's Falls	1 ad ph	J. Smith	Great Shearwater			
12/3	Cohasset	4	D. Burton	11/3, 12/2	Rockport (AP)	395,2	R. Heil
12/16	Rockport (AP)	1 1W	R. Heil	11/4	Eastham (FE)	150	B.Nikula#
Black-headed Gull				11/11, 17	P'town (RP)	80,70	B.Nikula
12/4-12/26	Hyannis	1	J. Bosler#	11/11	Plymouth B.	1	S. van der Veen#
Laughing Gull				11/30	Scituate waters	2	L. Waters#
11/17	P'town (RP)	11	B.Nikula	Manx Shearwater			
Mew Gull				11/10, 21	P'town (RP)	15,1	B.Nikula, P. Flood
11/24, 12/23-28	Lynn/Swampscott	1 ad ph b	S. Sullivan + v.o.	Northern Gannet			
11/27	Rockport	1 ad ph	R. Doherty	11/7	PI	25	T. Wetmore#
Herring x Great Black-backed Gull (hybrid)				11/12	P'town (RP)	2450	J. Trimble#
12/3	Sharon	1 ph	W. Sweet	11/16	Rockport (AP)	640	R. Heil
Iceland Gull				Double-crested Cormorant			
11/16, 12/13	Sharon	1,2	W. Sweet	11/3, 11/18	Arlington	150,42	J. Forbes
11/17, 12/29	P'town (RP)	2,20	B.Nikula	12/16	Rockport (AP)	2	N. Dubrow
11/21	PI	1	N. Komar#	12/24	Shrewsbury	1	W. Millett
11/27	Pittsfield	1	J. Pierce	Great Cormorant			
11/30-12/13	Turner's Falls	9	J. Smith + v.o.	11/1	Sharon	1	W. Sweet
12/2	Rockport (AP)	3	R. Heil	11/5	Westport	9	M. Iliff
12/8-12/16	Lunenburg	1	T. Pirro + v.o.	11/10	Manomet	25	D. Bates
12/9	Cohasset	7	D. Burton	11/18	Cape Ann	18	B. Harris
12/12	Gloucester (EP)	2	MAS (D. Moon)	12/29-31	Ware	1	C. Allen# + v.o.
12/16	Lowell	1	D. McDermott	American White Pelican			
12/22	Westport	1	J. Eckerson	11/30	Nbpt area	2 ad ph	R. Heil#
12/28	Wilmington	5 1 thayeri	S. Sullivan	12/1	Ipswich	2 ad ph	J. Offermann#
Lesser Black-backed Gull				American Bittern			
11/3	Chatham	2	D. Forsyth#	11/1	Cuttyhunk I.	1	M. Sylvia
11/7	Wayland	2 ad	B. Harris	11/1-12/1	PI	1	D. Chickering + v.o.
11/10	P'town (RP)	2	B.Nikula	11/2-11/6	Woburn (HP)	1	R. Jilek + v.o.
11/21-12/31	Turner's Falls	4 max	J. Smith + v.o.	11/5	Amherst	1	D. Winkler, H. Allen
11/23	Wilmington	2	J. Keeley	11/8-11/12	S. Dart. (APd)	1	L. Waters + v.o.
12/13	Sharon	4 3ad+1imm	W. Sweet	11/16	Newton	1	C. Dalton
12/15	Mashpee	2	J. Trimble#	11/17	Randolph	1	P. Peterson
12/28	Westport	4 2ad+2 2W	A. Eckerson	11/17-12/2	E. Boston (BI)	1	B. Cromartie + v.o.
Glaucous Gull				11/21	Salisbury	1	J. Nathan
11/17-18	New Bedford	1	B. Alps + v.o.	12/19	Westport	1	B. King
11/25	Westport	1	N. Kirkos	12/22	Eastham (FH)	2	J. Trimble#

Great Blue Heron				11/2	Eastham	1 ph	R. Cook#
11/11	Worc.	3	M. Lynch#	11/3-11/14	Gloucester	3 max ph	M. Watson + v.o.
11/18	Quabog IBA	3	M. Lynch#	11/3-11/11	Hadley	3 max ph	J. Mallett + v.o.
Great Egret				11/3-11/7	Plymouth	2 ph	E. Vacchino + v.o.
12/1	Westport	1	B. King	11/9	Belchertown	1 ph	G. Fleming + v.o.
12/10-16	Winthrop	1	J. Hoye# + v.o.	Green Heron			
12/26	Duxbury	1	R. Bowes	11/2	Brookline	1	M. Kaufman
12/31	Eastham (FH)	1	K. Tomlinson	11/3	Barnstable	1	J. Young
Snowy Egret				Black-crowned Night-Heron			
11/1	PI	1	D. Prima	11/7	Gloucester	4	C. Haines
12/27	Dennis	1	J. Frost	12/1	Cambr. (FP)	1 imm	A. Kelonia#
Cattle Egret				12/16	WBWS	1	D. Clapp#
11/1-11/4	Lynnfield	1 ph	P. + F. Vale + v.o.	12/16	Brookline	1 ad	G. d'Entremont#
11/2-11/23	Nantucket	4 ph	v.o.				

VULTURES THROUGH DICKCISSEL

November is traditionally one of the best months for eagle watching. On November 4, migratory conditions were ideal along the ridges of the Wapack Range, producing 38 Bald Eagles during a six-hour watch from the summit of Mount Watatic. An above-average six **Golden Eagles** were reported in November. According to Paul Roberts, founder of the New England Hawk Watch, there was an unusually heavy movement of Golden Eagles early in the season throughout eastern North America. Early and heavy snowfall in eastern Canada and northern New England were likely contributors to the higher than usual numbers. Most sightings of this species are typically flybys, with birds unlikely to stick around. Breaking tradition was a bird photographed at Dunback Meadow, Lexington, that was present for two days. The Greenfield Christmas Bird Count (CBC) tallied a record 27 Bald Eagles on December 30, almost double the previous high set in 2017. Other noteworthy raptor reports included a high count of 16 Red-shouldered Hawks over Mount Watatic, Rough-legged Hawks from nine locations with three present most of December on Plum Island, and a late Osprey in Marshfield on December 26.

This was another good flight year for Snowy Owls with reports from 11 coastal locations. The first Snowy Owl of the period was noted from Cuttyhunk Island on November 1, nearly two weeks before the others began appearing. Norman Smith tallied 10 Snowy Owls and banded four during the Greater Boston CBC on December 16. Barred Owls were reported from over 35 locations, many of them in poor condition; they could be seen hunting during the day, a behavior typically associated with extreme hunger. Not surprisingly, many were found along roadways, victims of vehicle collisions. The highlight for the period was the discovery of a **Boreal Owl** on Nantucket, the first sighting in the state since a bird found in Topsfield on January 28, 2017.

November is typically one of the most exciting months for local birders with the possibility of far-flung rarities. This year the conditions were less than optimal: rain fell on three of the four weekends and much colder than normal temperatures caused early freezing of most small ponds. Last year, persistent and strong southerly winds produced a reverse migration, in which 24 White-eyed Vireos were reported from across the state. In contrast, this year the winds were out of the north and east, and only three White-eyed Vireos were reported. Despite the less-than-ideal conditions a number of vagrants brightened birders spirits. A **Gray Kingbird** was reported on Nantucket on November 4. This is only the third state record following previous records from Aquinnah in 2006 and a very cooperative bird in Hyannis that was seen for 12 days in October and November 2016. A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was noted from Salisbury on November 8. There are seven previous reports of this species during the period. A **Sage Thrasher** was found and photographed at Low Beach, Nantucket on November 25–26, which was only the fourth state record and the first for the island. A **LeConte's Sparrow** was discovered in Lakeville on the Taunton-Middleboro CBC on December 30 and is the fifth record for the period. A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was found at Phillips Beach in Swampscott on November 11. This individual delighted scores of birders as it foraged in the sand and among the rocks, sometimes just inches away. Sadly, the show was over five days later when the bird was snatched up by

a Cooper's Hawk. Rounding out the rarities was the discovery of a brightly-plumaged, and considerably less cooperative, male **Painted Bunting** in Newton.

Early reports of winter finches came in during October as predicted by Ron Pittaway's annual winter finch distribution report (Pittaway 2018). Sightings continued into this period with increased numbers of Evening Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and Common Redpoll. Pine Grosbeaks began appearing in small numbers in scattered locations including upwards of 42 in Windsor in Berkshire County. Red Crossbills were noted in over 30 locations with as many as 90 individuals present at Moose Hill Sanctuary in Sharon. In contrast, only a few **Bohemian Waxwings** were reported. A single **Hoary Redpoll** was documented among a group of over 80 Common Redpolls in Harvard.

R. Stymeist

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Black Vulture				12/24	Bolton Flats	1	M. Lynch#
11/7	Gloucester	1	R. Heil	Northern Goshawk			
11/8-12/27	Rockport	1	B. Harris + v.o.	11/4	Mt Watatic	1	S. Miller
11/10	Milton	5	K. Keleher	11/12	Rutland	1 ad	M. Lynch#
11/12	Dartmouth	5	J. Eckerson	11/28	Groton	1	M. Resch
11/23	Sheffield	8	K. Hanson, S. Townsend	Red-shouldered Hawk			
11/28	Greenfield	5	M. Fairbrother	11/4	Mt Watatic	16	L. Waters#
Turkey Vulture				11/4	Mt Wachusett	2	HawkCount (B. Rasku)
11/4	Russell	17	HawkCount (T. Swochak)	11/4	Princeton	2	HawkCount (B. Rasku)
12/13	S. Dartmouth	5	J. Hoyer#	11/11	Barre	2	HawkCount (D. Grant)
12/22	Blackstone	12	M. Lynch#	12/19	W. Roxbury (MP)	3	D. Sullivan
Osprey				Red-tailed Hawk			
thr-12/26	Indiv. reported from 15 locations			11/4	Princeton	22	HawkCount (B. Rasku)
12/3-12/9	Sharon	1	W. Sweet + v.o.	11/4	Mt Watatic	21	S. Miller
12/26	Marshfield	1	A. Alguero	11/4	Russell	20	HawkCount (T. Swochak)
Bald Eagle				11/4	Mt Wachusett	17	Hawkcount (B. Rasku)
11/4	Mt Watatic	38	A. Eckerson#	Red-tailed Hawk (<i>abieticola</i>)			
11/4	Ashby	7	J. Forbes	11/1	Newbury	1 ph	M. Watson
11/4	Princeton	3	HawkCount (B. Rasku)	11/1	Concord	1 ph	Bourget
11/7	Danvers	3	A. Sanford	11/5	Medford	1 ph	J. Layman
12/5	Pittsfield	6 max	G. Hurley	12/23	Ipswich	1 ph	N. Dubrow
12/29	Quabbin	5 4ad+1imm	M. Lynch#	Rough-legged Hawk			
12/30	Greenfield CBC	27	M. Fairbrother	11/18	Sharon	1	E. Ganin
Northern Harrier				11/23-24	Sheffield	1	K. Hanson + v.o.
11/4	DWWS	6	B. Rusnica	11/23-25	Hadley	1	N. Goodman
11/9	Salisbury	5	K. Elwell	11/24	Northampton	1	J. Coleman
11/18	Cumb. Farms	5	A. Kneidel	11/26, 12/24	Cumb. Farms	1,3	N. Marchessault, J. Sweeney
Sharp-shinned Hawk				11/28, 12/15	Wayland	1 dk	B. Harris
11/4	DWWS	7	B. Rusnica	12/5-19	Salisbury	1	MAS (D. Moon) + v.o.
11/4	Rockport	5	M. Iliff#	12/7	E. Boston (BI)	1	J. Young
11/5	Manomet	3	A. Kneidel#	12/14-31	PI	3 2dk+1lt	T. Wetmore
11/7	Medford	2	P. Roberts#	Golden Eagle			
11/18	Westport	3	M. Iliff	11/4	Turner's Falls	1 imm ph	T. Pirro, C. Caron
Cooper's Hawk				11/4	Russell	1 imm	HawkCount(Swochak)
11/10	Everett	2	R. Stymeist	11/10-11	Lexington (DM)	1 ph	B. Lipson + v.o.
11/10	Quabog IBA	1	M. Lynch#	11/10	Barre Falls	1 ad	Hawkcount (D. Schilling)

Golden Eagle (continued)				American Kestrel			
11/21	Westminster	1 imm	G. Watkevitch	11/5	Westport	1	B. King
11/24	Williamstown	1 ad ph	J. Pierce	11/8-12/26	E. Boston (BI)	1	R. Schain + v.o.
Barn Owl				11/12	Medford	1	M. McCarthy
11/30	Nantucket	3	T. Pastuszek	11/17	Essex	1	J. Nelson
Eastern Screech-Owl				12/9	Winthrop	1	S. Jones#
12/15	Boylston CBC	4	M. Lynch#	12/18	Nahant	1	L. Pivacek
12/23	Barnstable	18	J. Trimble#	12/19	BHI (Deer I.)	1	J. Layman
12/30	Marshfield	6	G. d'Entremont#	Merlin			
Great Horned Owl				thr	Indiv. reported from 32 locations		
12/15	Boylston CBC	7	M. Lynch#	11/1	Cuttyhunk I.	3	M. Sylvia
12/23	Barnstable	12	J. Trimble#	Peregrine Falcon			
12/29	Quabbin	3	M. Lynch#	thr	Indiv. reported from 15 locations		
Snowy Owl				11/22	Melrose	2	J. McCoy
11/1	Cuttyhunk I.	1	M. Sylvia	11/28	Worcester	2	J. Shea
11/17-24, 12/27	Ipswich (CB)	1	S. Hedman + v.o.	12/1	E. Boston (BI)	2	DCR (S. Riley)
11/18	Barnstable	2	D. Lomba	12/25	Woburn (HP)	2	J. Nathan
11/25-12/22	PI	3	max MAS (D. Weaver) + v.o.	thr	PI	2	T. Wetmore + v.o.
11/25	Fairhaven	1	C. Longworth	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher			
11/28-12/3	Chatham	1	D. Lyon#	11/4	Rockport	1 ph	M. Iliff#
12/8-12/31	Westport	1	M. Iliff + v.o.	Alder Flycatcher			
12/11	Hyannis	1	C. Walz	11/4-11/10	Eastham (FH)	1 ph au	P. Crosson#
12/12	Nantucket	3	H. Young#	Least Flycatcher			
12/15	Eastham	1	J. Wagner	11/1	Manomet	1 ph	E. Dalton
12/16	Boston (Logan)	10	CBC (N. Smith)	Eastern Phoebe			
Barred Owl				12/15	Westport	1 ph	L. Waters#
thr	Reported from 34 locations			12/15	Orange Airport	1 ph	J. Rose
12/8	Montague	3	J. Eckerson	12/16	Lunenburg	1 ph	S. Miller, C. Dengler
12/15	Boylston CBC	3	M. Lynch#	12/23	Burrage Pd WMA	1	C. Molander#
12/27	Deerfield	3	D. Sibley	12/29-31	Ipswich (CB)	1 ph	N. Dubrow + v.o.
Long-eared Owl				Western Kingbird			
11/24	Ipswich (CB)	1 ph	K. Bedard	11/4-11/7	Danvers	1 ph	D. Walters#
12/23	Barnstable	3	J. Trimble#	11/4	Nantucket	1 ph	T. Pastuszek#
12/30	Marshfield	2	D. Furbish#	11/5-11/12	Manomet	1 ph	E. Dalton#
Short-eared Owl				Gray Kingbird			
11/4, 12/24	PI	2,1	S. Grinley#, D. Prima	11/4	Nantucket	1 ph	K. and T. Griswold
11/15	Falmouth	1	J. Trimble#	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher			
11/18	Westport	1	M. Iliff	11/8-11/9	Salisbury	1 ph	J. Parrot-Willis + v.o.
12/10-13	Nantucket	2	R. Ouren#	Northern Shrike			
12/23	W. Gloucester	1	S. Hedman	thr	Indiv. reported from 12 locations		
12/23	Barnstable	1	J. Trimble#	12/30	Marshfield	2	1 ad + 1 imm G. d'Entremont#
12/27	Tuckernuck I.	2	A. Black#	White-eyed Vireo			
Boreal Owl				11/4-11/21	Rockport	1	M. Iliff + v.o.
12/16-18	Nantucket	1 ph	J. Corkish	11/8-12/8	WBWS	1	W. Mumford, v.o.
Northern Saw-whet Owl				11/15	Chatham	1	D. Clapp
11/4	Amherst	2	S. Zhang	12/30	Nantucket	1	J. Trimble#
11/8	N. Dighton	2	M. Eckerson	Blue-headed Vireo			
12/6	Wellfleet	4	T. Spahr	11/1	GMNWR	1	A. Bragg#
12/8	Bolton	3	N. Tepper	11/1	Woburn (HP)	1	J. Layman
12/15	Boylston CBC	3	M. Lynch#	11/5	Medford	1	M. McCarthy
12/23	Barnstable	13	J. Trimble#	11/12	S. Dart. (APd)	1	J. Eckerson
12/29	Quabbin	2	M. Lynch#	11/12-18	Rockport (HPt)	1	J. Barcus + v.o.
Belted Kingfisher				Philadelphia Vireo			
11/18	Quabog IBA	2	M. Lynch#	11/18	S. Peabody	1	R. Heil
12/19	W. Roxbury (MP)	2	D. Sullivan	Warbling Vireo			
12/30	Marshfield	3	G. d'Entremont#	11/4	Rockport	1	S. Sullivan#
Red-headed Woodpecker				11/17	Barnstable	1	N. Villone
11/6	Merrimac	1	B. + B. Buxton	Red-eyed Vireo			
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker				11/4-12/17	Rockport (HPt)	2	L. Manzi + v.o.
11/1	Boston (AA)	2	T. Bradford#	11/6	Eastham (FH)	1	T. Spahr
11/4	Boston (RKG)	4	R. Stymeist	11/8	Medford	1	R. LaFontaine
12/1-12/15	MtA	2	max A. Parker + v.o.	11/10	Rockport (AP)	1	N. Dowling
12/8	Westport	2	S. Wheelock	American Crow			
Hairy Woodpecker				11/4	Princeton	300	HawkCount (B. Rasku)
11/19	Sharon	10	L. Waters	11/23	Falmouth	550	C. Gibson
12/1	PI	5	G. d'Entremont#	12/13-20	Lawrence	25000	B. Fox#
12/29	Quabbin	6	M. Lynch#	12/28	N. Adams	1500	M. Morales
Pileated Woodpecker				Fish Crow			
12/3-12/25	Boston	1	M. Iliff	11/12	Needham	10	J. Bock
12/15	Athol CBC	16	D. Small#	12/15	Mashpee	89	J. Trimble#
12/29	Quabbin	5	M. Lynch#	12/19	Blackstone	150	R. Whetstone
				12/19	W. Roxbury (MP)	28	D. Sullivan

Common Raven				Eastern Bluebird			
thr	1-2 birds reported from 18 locations			11/4	DWMA	25	N. Tepper
11/4	Mt Wataatic	43	A. Eckerson#	11/4	Ashby	24	J. Forbes
12/29	Quabbin	9	M. Lynch#	11/30	Montague	21	J. Rose
Horned Lark				12/15	Boylston CBC	21	M. Lynch#
11/8	Concord	12	J. Forbes	Swainson's Thrush			
11/17	Northampton	104	J. Coleman	11/1	Manomet	1 b	M. Gray
11/17	Leicester	100	M. Lynch#	11/4	Rockport	1 ph	J. Trimble
11/17	Truro	60	P. Crosson	Hermit Thrush			
11/25	Saugus	75	S. Zende#	11/4, 12/1	Boston (RKG)	4,2	R. Stymeist, L. Markley
11/25	Rehoboth	66	J. Eckerson#	11/13, 12/17	Boston (McW)	2,1	S. Jones, P. Peterson
12/3	Rochester	50	L. Schibley	11/15	Westport	14	L. Waters
12/15	Orange Airport	54	J. Rose	12/14	Cape Ann	6	B. Harris
Tree Swallow				12/16	Boston	4	K. Dailey
12/1,16	Nantucket	50,1	S. Kardell#, R. Ouren#	12/20	Plymouth	2	L. Schibley#
12/1	Southwick	3 ph	D. Holmes	Gray Catbird			
12/17	PI	1	T. Wetmore	11/12, 12/15	S. Dart. (APd)	16,8	J. Eckerson, E. Lipton#
Northern Rough-winged Swallow				11/15	Westport	17	L. Waters
11/5	Westport	1	M. Iliff	11/18	Cumb. Farms	5	A. Kneidel
Bank Swallow				12/14	Cape Ann	6	B. Harris
11/3	Plympton	1	D. Furbish	12/29	Ipswich (CB)	5	N. Dubrow
11/7	Burrage Pd WMA	1	J. Sweeney	Brown Thrasher			
Barn Swallow				11/1	Belchertown	1	L. Therrien
11/5	Fairhaven	2	N. Brown	11/7	Pittsfield	1	G. Hurley
11/7	Burrage Pd WMA	1	J. Sweeney	11/12, 12/15	S. Dart. (APd)	5,1	J. Eckerson, E. Lipton#
11/12	S. Dart. (APd)	1	J. Eckerson	11/24	Fairhaven	1	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
11/26-30	Yarmouth	1	P. Trimble	Sage Thrasher			
Red-breasted Nuthatch				11/25-11/26	Nantucket	1 ph	L. Kahle#
11/19	Sharon	243	L. Waters	Bohemian Waxwing			
11/24	PI	6	T. Wetmore	11/2	Fitchburg	1	C. Caron
12/1	Montague	12	M. Lynch#	11/4	Eastham (FH)	1	T. Spahr
12/20	Ellisville	24	G. d'Entremont#	11/11	P'town	1	J. Offermann#
12/20	Plymouth	17	M. Faherty#	11/28-11/29	PI	2	max T. Martin + v.o.
Brown Creeper				12/15	Leicester	1	N. Paulson
12/1	Sharon	7	T. Spahr#	Cedar Waxwing			
12/15	Andover	3	N. Dorian#	11/27	Turner's Falls	265	J. Rose
12/27	GMNWR	4	M. Stone#	12/1	Montague	70	M. Lynch#
12/29	Quabbin	3	M. Lynch#	12/15	Mashpee	89	J. Trimble#
House Wren				12/20	Ellisville	35	G. d'Entremont#
11/4-12/19	Falmouth	1	R. Farrell, G. Hirth	American Pipit			
12/27	Truro	1	L. Waters#	11/4	Sharon	25	P. Peterson
12/29	Ipswich (CB)	1	N. Dubrow	11/7	PI	7	MAS (D. Moon)
12/30	Nantucket	1	CBC	11/10	Concord	9	T. + D. Swain
Winter Wren				11/11	Saugus	15	S. Zende#
thr	1-2 birds reported from 41 locations			12/31	Lakeville	8	E. Lipton#
11/17	Belmont	3	C. Floyd	Evening Grosbeak			
11/17	Waltham	3	C. Cook	thr	Reported from 107 locations		
12/23	Barnstable	3	P. Crosson#	11/12	N. Truro	17	J. Trimble#
Marsh Wren				11/14, 12/19	Marshfield	24,20	T. O'Neil#, J. Kriecher
12/11	Nbpt H.	3	R. Heil	11/30	Deerfield	25	D. Sibley
12/15	Westport	5	E. Nielsen#	12/1	Pittsfield	47	J. Pierce
12/20	Ellisville	2	G. d'Entremont#	12/15	Athol CBC	75	D.Small#
12/30	Marshfield	3	D. Peacock	12/17	Ipswich 47 Type	3	P. Brown
Carolina Wren				12/24	Littleton	20	T. Swain
11/24	Fairhaven	23	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)	12/28-31	Royalston	46	E. LeBlanc + v.o.
12/15	Braintree	21	G. d'Entremont#	12/30	DWWS	29	E. Vacchino#
12/16	E. Orleans	14	J. Trimble#	Pine Grosbeak			
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher				11/9	PI	1	E. LeBlanc
11/4-11/9	Rockport (HPT)	1	S. Williams + v.o.	11/28	Groton	1	M. Resch
11/8	Rockport (AP)	1	B. Harris#	12/7-12/31	Windsor	42	max.ph M.Morales + v.o.
11/23	Orleans	1	C. Thompson	12/11	Wachusett Res.	4 au	T. Spahr
Golden-crowned Kinglet				12/14	Leverett	1	L. Waters
11/1	Scituate	16	D. Peacock	12/15	Boylston CBC	1	M. Lynch#
11/4	Barre	18	W. Howes	12/15	Leicester	1	N. Paulson
11/9	Salisbury	18	K. Elwell	12/20	Medway	2	B. Roberts-Lee
12/29	Quabbin	13	M. Lynch#	12/30	Gill	3	B. Lafley, J. Lafley
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				12/31	W. Boylston	2	B. Abbott
thr	1-3 birds reported from 29 locations			Purple Finch			
11/4	Rockport (HPT)	7	J. Hoye#	11/1	Cuttyhunk I.	7	M. Sylvia
11/4	Boston (RKG)	4	R. Stymeist	11/4	Nantucket	35	A. Black#
11/7	PI	7	D. Prima	11/6	Lexington (DM)	18	R. Stymeist
11/9	Hingham (WE)	4	R. Schain	11/7	Wayland	49	B. Harris
11/12	S. Dart. (APd)	5	J. Eckerson	11/8	S. Dart. (APd)	28	L. Waters

Purple Finch (continued)				American Tree Sparrow			
11/11 Sharon	12	P. Peterson		11/5 Westport	41		M. Iliif
Common Redpoll				11/12 Nantucket	45		T. Pastuszak#
thr	Reported from 48 locations			11/12 Wayland	17		B. Harris
11/24 Sandwich	8	J. Trimble#		12/23 Barnstable	12		J. Trimble#
11/24 P'town	6	S. Williams#		12/29 Quabbin	16		M. Lynch#
12/5 Salisbury	40	MAS (D. Moon)		Chipping Sparrow			
12/6 PI	110	D. Chickering		11/16 PI	6		T. Wetmore
12/9 Wilmington	25	J. Keeley		11/29, 12/5 W. Roxbury	3,2		C. Hartshorn
12/15 Braintree	18	C. Whitebread#		12/16 Waltham	3		C. Cook#
12/16 Harvard	84	R. Lockwood		12/25 Concord	9		T. Swain
12/22 Carver	24	B. Vigorito#		12/30 Taunton	7		E. Lipton
Hoary Redpoll				Clay-colored Sparrow			
12/16 Harvard	1 ph	R. Lockwood		11/1 Somerville	1 ph		A. Trautmann
Red Crossbill				11/6-12/8 Sheffield	1 ph		G. Ward + v.o.
thr	Reported from 26 locations			11/10-11 PI	1 ph		MAS (D. Moon)+v.o.
11/4 Littleton	15	D. + T. Swain		11/12 Medford	1 ph		M. McCarthy
11/7 N. Dighton	4	J. Eckerson		12/16 Chestnut Hill	1 ph		R. Doherty
11/19 Sharon	90 Types 1,3, 10	L. Waters		Field Sparrow			
11/25 Millis	20 Type 10	J. Baur		11/5 Eastham	19		P. Crosson
12/5 Montague	6 au	J. Smith		11/8 S. Dart. (APd)	6		L. Waters
12/6 MSSF	12 Type 10	T. Spahr		11/19-23 Manomet	6		A. Kneidel + v.o.
12/9-12/10 Walpole	12 Type 10	V. Zollo		12/24 Plymouth	15		C. Jackson
12/13 PI	6	T. Bradford		12/29 Northbridge	8		R. Jenkins
12/16 Plymouth	14 Type 10	L. Schibley		Vesper Sparrow			
12/24 Medfield	21	J. Bock		11/4-12/13 Falmouth	1		J. Carroll
12/30 Wellfleet	8	K. Yakola#		11/9-11/24 Sheffield	1		M. Morales + v.o.
White-winged Crossbill				11/11, 12/1 Rockport	1,1		S. Williams#, J. Trimble
11/8 GMNWR	1	A. Bragg#		11/12 Orleans	1		J. Sweeney
11/30 N. Dighton	1	M. Eckerson		11/22 W. Newbury	1		N. Dubrow
12/1-12/8 Pittsfield	7	J. Pierce + v.o.		12/31 Lakeville	1		E. Lipton#
12/5 Easthampton	3	L. Therrien		Lark Sparrow			
12/6 Sharon	1	A. Eckerson		11/6-11/8 Manomet	1 ph		A. Kneidel + v.o.
12/31 Medfield	1	E. Nielsen		Savannah Sparrow			
Pine Siskin				11/12 Rutland	1		M. Lynch#
thr	Reported from 68 locations			11/17 Leicester	1		M. Lynch#
11/1 Worcester	38	S. Williams		12/1 Rockport	1		J. Trimble
11/1 W. Roxbury (MP)	15	M. Iliif		12/8 PI	3		T. Wetmore
11/4, 12/1 Nantucket	64 max	A. Black#		12/10 Northfield	1		J. Smith
11/8 S. Dart. (APd)	29	L. Waters		12/15 Westport	1		E. Nielsen#
11/11 Concord	14	T. Swain		Ipswich Sparrow			
11/12 Cheshire	33	J. Pierce		11/4-11/12 PI	1		E. Labato + v.o.
12/1 Rockport	16	J. Trimble		11/8, 12/2 Winthrop	1,1		R. Schain# S. Zende#
12/2 Wellfleet	22	C. Hight#		11/12 Duxbury B.	1		F. Bowes
12/11 Orange	12	L. Boudreau		11/18 Westport	1		M. Iliif
12/12 Sharon	47	L. Waters#		Grasshopper Sparrow			
12/20 Plymouth	24	L. Schibley#		11/4 Eastham (FH)	1		T. Spahr
12/22 Oak Bluffs	15	A. Quigley		11/16 Uxbridge	1 ph		M. Sughrue-Yacino
Lapland Longspur				LeConte's Sparrow			
11/12 Duxbury B.	2	F. Bowes		12/30-31 Lakeville	1 ph		B. Faherty + v.o.
11/18 Northfield	6	J. Smith		Nelson's Sparrow			
11/24 Hingham	2	P. Peterson		11/1 Revere	6		S. Jones#
11/25 Eastham (FH)	5	P. Trimble#		11/8 E. Boston (BI)	2		R. Schain#
11/25 Saugus	4	S. Zende#		11/8 S. Dart. (APd)	1		L. Waters
11/26 P'town (RP)	10	J. Vickery#		11/9 Fairhaven	1		C. Floyd
11/28 Groton	2	M. Resch		11/25 Eastham (FH)	2		P. Trimble#
Snow Bunting				Saltmarsh Sparrow			
11/8 S. Dart. (APd)	12	L. Waters		11/8 E. Boston (BI)	1		R. Schain#
11/9 Salisbury	150	A. McCarthy#		12/11 Nbpt H.	1		R. Heil
11/11-18 Plymouth B.	80	J. Sweeney + v.o.		Seaside Sparrow			
11/17 Ipswich (CB)	60	S. Hedman#		11/25 Eastham (FH)	3		P. Trimble#
11/18-12/15 Orange Airport	100	B. Lafley + v.o.		12/11 Nbpt H.	1		R. Heil
11/18 Egremont	50	K. Hanson, S. Townsend		Fox Sparrow			
11/23 Wrc.	130	M. Lynch#		11/8 Northfield	12		J. Coleman
12/2 Winthrop B.	45	S. Zende#		11/15 Longmeadow	11 max		M. Moore
12/16 Eastham	92	D. Clapp#		11/21 Lexington	14		C. Cook
12/16 Waltham	30	J. Forbes#		11/24 Fairhaven	9		SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
Eastern Towhee				12/13-31 Hardwick	1		W. Howes
12/15 S. Dart. (APd)	9	E. Lipton#		12/27 Westborough	1		J. Miner
12/15 Westport	3	E. Nielsen#		Lincoln's Sparrow			
12/23 Millbury	1	C. Errington		11/4 GMNWR	2		D. Kelly
12/30 Fairhaven	1	C. Longworth + v.o.		11/9 Hadley (Honeypt)	1		S. Surner

Lincoln's Sparrow (continued)			11/11	Canton	10	J. Baur	
11/11	DFWS	1	J. Kricher	12/6	PI	6 D. Chickering	
11/21	Lexington (DM)	1	J. Forbes	12/19	Wayland	16 C. Martone	
11/22	Carlisle	1	T. Brownrigg#	12/23	Sheffield	45 J. Pierce	
11/23	Sheffield	1	K. Hanson	Common Grackle			
11/23	Fairhaven	1	C. Goulart	12/14-20	Boston (FPk)	225 max R. Stymeist	
11/23	Boston	1	L. Nichols	12/22	Medford	2 J. Forbes	
11/24	Hingham	1	P. Peterson	Ovenbird			
12/10	Woburn (HP)	1	B. Lee	11/18	Rochester	1 J. Young	
12/23	Centerville	1	C. Caron#	12/23	Barnstable	1 B. Stymeist#	
Swamp Sparrow			12/27	Woburn (HP)	1	D. McDermott	
11/4	Eastham (FH)	15	G. d'Entremont	12/30	Nantucket	1 CBC	
11/8	GMNWR	14	A. Bragg#	thr-12/1	Boston (RKG)	2 max L.Markley + v.o.	
11/8	S. Dart. (APd)	13	L. Waters	Northern Waterthrush			
11/18	Cumb. Farms	15	A. Kneidel	11/1-11/10	Brookline	1 P. Peterson	
White-crowned Sparrow			11/11	P'town	1	J. Trimble	
11/1	Scituate	16	D. Peacock	12/16	E. Orleans	1 J. Trimble#	
11/1-12/19	Sheffield	10 max	K. Hanson + v.o.	12/29-30	Nantucket	1 J. Trimble#, S. Mirick#	
11/1	Cuttyhunk I.	8	M. Sylvia	Blue-winged Warbler			
11/1-12/20	Hadley (Honeypt)	5 max	L. Therrien + v.o.	11/12	Winchester	1 R. La Fontaine	
11/7	PI	4	T. Wetmore	11/17	Belmont	1 J. Layman	
11/11	Rockport	4	S. Williams#	Black-and-white Warbler			
11/15	Westport	3	L. Waters	11/5-11/12	Medford	1 ph R. LaFontaine + v.o.	
11/30	PI	1	imm Gambel's R. Heil	11/23	Sandwich	1 S. Matheny	
12/4	Cumb. Farms	6	imm Gambel's J. Sweeney	12/15	MTA	1 ph B. Jilek	
12/26	Boston (AA)	3	J. Mitchell	12/16	Cambr. (FP)	1 ph T. Mazerall #	
12/30	Nantucket	8	F. Gallo#	Prothonotary Warbler			
12/31	Barnstable	2	N. Villone	11/6-11/25	Ipswich	1 ph R. Heil + v.o.	
Dark-eyed Junco				Tennessee Warbler			
11/1	Southboro	1	oregon M. Garvey	11/4	Nahant	1 L. Pivacek#	
Yellow-breasted Chat				11/4	Eastham (FH)	1 T. Spahr	
11/4, 12/22	Eastham (FH)	1,1	G. d'Entremont, J. Hoye#	11/5-11/8	Boston (Fens)	1 J. Young + v.o.	
11/7	Manomet	1	L. Schibley	11/8	Danvers	1 N. Tepper	
11/12-18	Rockport (HPT)	1	J. Barcus + v.o.	Orange-crowned Warbler			
11/15, 12/15	Westport	1	L. Waters, E. Nielsen#	thr	Reported from 34 locations		
12/9	Winthrop	1	S. Jones#	11/4	Eastham (FH)	2 G. d'Entremont	
12/16	BHI (Thompson I)	2	CBC (M. Garvey#)	11/4	Rockport	2 J. Trimble	
12/16	E. Orleans	1	N. Dorian#	11/4	Newton	2 C. Dalton	
12/29	Ipswich (CB)	1	N. Dubrow	11/26, 12/6	Cambr. (FP)	2 J. Trimble	
12/30	Wayland	1	B. Harris	12/2	E. Boston (BI)	3 B. Burke	
Bobolink				12/24	Fairhaven	2 H. Zimmerlin	
12/4-12/5	Harwich	1	ph M. Faherty	12/30	Nantucket	3 F. Gallo#	
Eastern Meadowlark				Nashville Warbler			
11/12-11/25			S. Dart. (APd)	8	11/15	Westport	1 L. Waters
J. Eckerson + v.o.					11/18, 12/9-23	Winthrop	1 B. Burke, S. Jones+v.o.
12/3	Orleans	10	P. Trull	12/16-24	Fairhaven	1 C. Longworth + v.o.	
12/30	DWWS	18	E. Vacchino	12/23	Worc. (BMB)	1 J. Glover	
Orchard Oriole				Common Yellowthroat			
11/7	W. Boxford	1	T. Walker	thr	Indiv. reported from 24 locations		
11/8-11/19	Manomet	1	M. Ellen (?) + v.o.	11/12	S. Dart. (APd)	2 J. Eckerson	
Baltimore Oriole				11/24-12/31	Northfield	4 max ph J. Smith+v.o.	
thr-12/27	Indiv. Reported from 31 locations			Cape May Warbler			
11/6, 12/1-18	Eastham	2,1	T. Spahr, C. Wagner	11/11	MNWS	1 ph A. Sanford	
11/24-12/25	E. Brookfield	1	ph C. McRae	12/15	PI	1 ph J. Barcus	
12/19-27	Mashpee	1	ph M. Keleher#	Northern Parula			
12/23	Barnstable	1	ph J. Trimble#	11/6	Eastham (FH)	1 T. Spahr	
12/26	Duxbury	1	ph E. Vacchino	11/11	MNWS	1 A. Sanford	
Red-winged Blackbird				11/12	Natick	1 G. Dysart	
11/4	DWMA	240	N. Tepper	11/16	Reading	1 J. Keeley	
11/7	Groton	1000	T. Murray	Magnolia Warbler			
11/8	GMNWR	320	A. Bragg#	11/4	Eastham (FH)	1 T. Spahr	
12/30	Nantucket	231	F. Gallo#	11/7	DFWS	1 MAS (P. Sowizral)	
Brown-headed Cowbird				11/8	Medford	1 R. LaFontaine	
11/3	Hadley	700	L. Therrien	Bay-breasted Warbler			
12/6	Sharon	27	W. Sweet	11/2	Marblehead	1 J. Smith	
12/15	Wayland	92	B. Harris	11/7	Boston (AA)	1 R. Doherty	
12/31	Concord (NAC)	4	J. Forbes	11/11	Rockport	1 S. Williams#	
Rusty Blackbird				Yellow Warbler			
thr	Reported from 22 locations			12/30	Nantucket	1 ph P. Trimble	
11/4	Littleton	40	D. + T. Swain	Blackpoll Warbler			
11/5	Hadley	28	L. Therrien	11/8, 21	Winchester	5,2 R. Stymeist, R. LaFontaine	
11/7	Danvers	22	D. Walters	11/25	Newton	1 H. Miller	
11/8	S. Dart. (APd)	6	L. Waters	11/29	Sandwich	1 P. Crosson	

Blackpoll Warbler (continued)					
12/1	Sharon	1 ph	M. Waters#	Black-throated Gray Warbler	11/11-15 Swampscott 1 f ph D. Crowley + v.o.
Black-throated Blue Warbler				Wilson's Warbler	11/4-11/6 Eastham (FH) 1 T. Spahr
11/18-12/30	Brookline	1 f ph	J. Weinberg	11/8-11/13 Boston (McW)	1 T. Bradford + v.o.
11/25	MtA	1	J. Trimble	Summer Tanager	
12/24-31	Reading	1 ph	D. Williams	11/1-11/4 Belmont	1 ph J. Layman + v.o.
Palm Warbler				Tanager sp.	
thr	1-2 birds reported from 20 locations			11/14 Whately	1 ph C. Stern
11/1	Hardwick	6	W. Howes	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	
11/1	Groton	5	T. Murray	12/9 Chicopee	1 ph L. Bledzki
11/1	Scituate	4 western	D. Peacock	Grosbeak sp.	
11/4	Rockport	4	M. Iliff#	11/26 Gloucester	1 imm m J. Standley
11/8	Medford	1 western	N. Dorian	Blue Grosbeak	
11/18	Westport	1 western	M. Iliff	11/1-11/12 Barnstable	1 P. Crosson#
12/30	Nantucket	8	P. Trimble	11/4 Truro	1 D. Forsyth#
12/30	Concord	1 western	S. Perkins	11/7 Lincoln	1 M. Rines + v.o.
Pine Warbler				Indigo Bunting	
11/7	Lakeville	13	J. Sweeney	11/3 Nantucket	2 S. Kardell, K.
11/11, 12/1	Rockport	1	J. Trimble, S. Williams#	Blackshaw	
11/12	S. Dart. (APd)	2	J. Eckerson	11/4 Cuttyhunk I.	2 M. Sylvia
11/27	Belmont	1	K. Goodwin	11/7 Williamstown	1 ph M. Morales
Yellow-rumped Warbler				Painted Bunting	
11/4, 11/18	Rockport (HPt)	26,8	J. Hoye#, N. Tepper	12/26-31 Newton	1 m ph J. Hesterman + v.o.
11/24	S. Dart. (APd)	6	A. Eckerson#	Dickcissel	
12/26	Westport	6	D. O'Malley	11/1 Groton	1 T. Murray
12/29	Ipswich (CB)	10	N. Dubrow	11/1 Cuttyhunk I.	1 M. Sylvia
Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)				11/8-11/12 Manomet	1 C. Whitebread + v.o.
12/16	E. Orleans	1 ph	J. Trimble#	11/11 Rockport	1 S. Williams#
12/30	Nantucket	1 ph	F. Gallo#	12/2 Wellfleet	1 ph C. Hight#
Prairie Warbler				12/10-31 Georgetown	1 M. Watson
11/1	Scituate	2	D. Peacock	12/16 Eastham	1 D. Clapp#
11/4	Newton	1	C. Dalton	12/16-27 Boston (AA)	1 G. d'Entremont#
11/4	DWWS	1	B. Rusnica	12/20 Plymouth	1 L. Schibley#
11/4	Eastham (FH)	1	T. Spahr	12/20 Ellenville	1 G. d'Entremont#
Black-throated Green Warbler				12/21 Ipswich	1 N. Dubrow
11/1	Cuttyhunk I.	1	M. Sylvia	12/27 Brookline	1 P. Peterson
11/4	Newton	1	C. Dalton		
11/8	GMNWR	1	A. Bragg#		



PINE GROSBEAK BY NEIL DOWLING

BYGONE BIRDS

Historical Highlights for November–December

Neil Hayward

5 YEARS AGO

November–December 2013

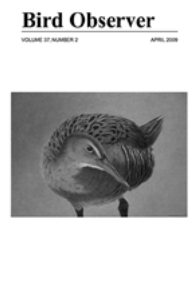


During the last week of the year, the “goose fields” of Argilla Road, Ipswich, hosted not just a **Ross’s Goose** and **Cackling Goose** but also a **Red-headed Woodpecker**. The winter of 2013–14 saw the largest invasion of Snowy Owls in eastern North America for over 50 years, with birds reported as far afield as Florida and Bermuda; Nantucket counted 33 Snowys compared to a previous high of four. A **White-winged Dove** was a one-day wonder at the JFK Library in Dorchester. Rare flycatchers included a **Say’s Phoebe** in Fairhaven and a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** on Nantucket. Other passerine highlights included a male and female **Western Tanager** a mile apart in Rockport, a **Bullock’s Oriole** in Chelmsford, **Harris’s Sparrows** in Wenham and Northampton, and a **MacGillivray’s Warbler** that was found on the Taunton-Middleboro Christmas Bird Count.

Best sighting: a female **King Eider** at Quabbin Reservoir on November 11 was a first for Hampshire County and only the third inland record for the state.

10 YEARS AGO

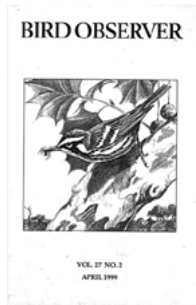
November–December 2008



A **Barnacle Goose** was at Charlton from December 3–13. “The” **Eared Grebe** that had been a mainstay at Gloucester each winter since 1995 failed to return. Rare gulls abounded with a **Sabine’s Gull** at Andrew’s Point on November 1, a **Franklin’s Gull** at Plum Island on November 5, and a rare inland record of **Little Gull** at Turner’s Falls on December 21. The continuing **Broad-billed Hummingbird** at East Dennis held on until December 13. Other highlights included a **Boreal Chickadee** in Windsor in November and a female **Mountain Bluebird** at Fort Hill, Eastham, from November 23–December 7.

Best sighting: an adult **Black-tailed Gull** at Herring Cove Beach, Provincetown, November 1–7 was the second record for the state and the first to be physically documented.

20 YEARS AGO



November–December 1998

There was a fallout of **Tundra Swans** across the state including a flock of 28 at Westport on November 22. Two **American Avocets** were on Plum Island at the start of December. Two Ash-throated Flycatchers were found this period including a long-staying bird in Mount Auburn Cemetery. Other western rarities included a MacGillivray's Warbler in the Mattapan neighborhood of Boston, December 13–16, a Townsend's Solitaire and Western Tanager in East Orleans, and a Varied Thrush in Annisquam. A Harris's Sparrow at Plum Island, November 11–18, was "very cooperative"—at one point it was observed standing on a birder's shoe.


Best sighting: a **Western Grebe** on a reservoir in Attleboro, December 23–26, represented the first inland record for the state.

40 YEARS AGO



November–December 1978

Ten **Fulvous Whistling-Ducks** dropped into Plum Island on November 7. Cape Cod hosted a **Franklin's Gull** at Monomoy on December 7 and an **American White Pelican** through November and the first week of December. A **Black-billed Cuckoo** on Nantucket on December 24 remains the only Massachusetts December record for this species. A **Boreal Owl** was found at Salisbury on New Year's Eve, and Fish Crows made their first recorded visit to Plum Island on November 19. A **Brewer's Blackbird** returned to Martha's Vineyard for the winter, with a second bird recorded in Truro in early November. Other highlights included the continuing **Lark Bunting** at Salisbury and a **Harris's Sparrow** at Acoaxet present from December 23 through February.

Best sighting: a **Great Gray Owl** found at Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary, Topsfield, on December 28 was the harbinger of the largest ever incursion of this species into the Northeast. 



WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

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

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

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO *BIRD OBSERVER*

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

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

ABOUT THE COVER

Baltimore Oriole

The Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*), with its striking plumage and song, has adapted well to suburban life, and is one of our best-known and appreciated songbirds. Males have a black head and back, a black tail edged in orange, and black wings with a white wing bar. The rest of the plumage is bright orange. Females are a smaller, duller, and paler version of males and tend to be brownish rather than black. Highly variable in color, some may be nearly as brightly plumaged as males. As females age, they often look more like males. Immature birds resemble females, and males don't achieve adult plumage until the fall of their second calendar year. The species was originally named "Baltimore bird" in 1731 because orange and black were the colors of the Baltimore family, rulers of the Maryland Colony.

Baltimore Orioles exhibit virtually no geographic variation, and no subspecies have been described. The taxonomic history of the Baltimore Oriole is interesting and complex. A zone of hybridization with the Bullock's Oriole (*I. bullockii*) in Nebraska and Colorado that was up to 200 miles wide led to the lumping of the two species in 1983 to form the Northern Oriole (*I. galbula*). Because subsequent studies indicated that the hybrid zone was stable and thus gene flow was restricted, the AOU Check-list Committee in 1995 split the Northern Oriole back into the Baltimore and Bullocks orioles. Recent DNA studies indicate that the two are not even each other's closest relatives.

Baltimore Orioles breed from northeastern British Columbia in a swath across southern Canada to Nova Scotia and south into the United States from the Rocky Mountains to the East Coast as far as Virginia. Inland, they breed farther south to central Louisiana and northeast Texas. They winter in southern Georgia, Florida, Cuba, Jamaica, and the Lesser Antilles. On the West Coast, they winter along the coast of southern California. They also winter from central Mexico throughout Central America to Colombia and Ecuador. In Massachusetts, Baltimore Orioles are a fairly common and widespread breeder and a common spring and fall migrant. They arrive in early May and depart in early August; some immature birds stay until the end of August. They are uncommon to rare in winter, when they occasionally survive the season at feeders.

Baltimore Orioles breed in open deciduous woodlands, forest edges, and in suburban habitats. Males usually sing from a high perch in their territory and their song serves the dual function of territorial advertisement and mate attraction. The male song consists of a series of notes separated by short pauses. The song is loud and has a flute-like quality. Females also occasionally sing but usually have a simpler song than males. Both sexes have chatter calls that are given in aggressive situations. Defending territory may include chases and sometimes attacks using wings, beak, and feet. Generally, males defend territory against both male and female intruders, but females only defend against other females. On the wintering grounds, Baltimore Orioles tend to roost communally, sometimes in the dozens, often with other bird species.

Baltimore Orioles are generally monogamous but extra-pair copulations may occur. They usually produce a single brood. Males arrive a week before females and establish territory. The female selects the nest site. Usually, the female constructs the nest in the outer part of a branch high in a tree, although the male may also bring in nest material. The nest is a hanging, gourd-shaped affair, often suspended from thin branches. It is woven from plant fibers but may include string, plastic, or wood, and is lined with soft plant materials such as milkweed seed plumes or willow cotton, and feathers. Only the female develops a brood patch and she alone incubates the clutch of four to five pale bluish or grayish eggs blotched with a variety of colors for the 12 days until hatching. The male may bring food to the incubating female. She also broods the chicks alone. The chicks are altricial: their eyes are closed, and they are nearly naked when they hatch. Both parents will mob intruders and both feed the young for the 12–13 days until fledging and continue to feed them for an additional two weeks until independence.

Baltimore Orioles are adaptable foragers, mostly gleaning tent caterpillars, other insects, and spiders from trees and shrubs. They also eat fruit and, on the wintering grounds, nectar. They occasionally even hawk flying insects.

Nest predators include grackles, crows, owls, jays, and squirrels. Both parents will attack cowbirds and will destroy cowbird eggs. Although orioles are killed by collisions with human structures, and pesticides have been linked to local population declines, the Baltimore Oriole's adaptability to human environments generally has been advantageous for the species. Breeding Bird Survey data suggest that most populations are stable, so it appears that we will continue to enjoy this lovely species in the future. 🐦

William E. Davis, Jr.

ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST

John Sill

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

Errata: In the Photo Essay of the February 2019 print issue of *Bird Observer*, the bottom photo on page 30 should have been captioned "Chipping Sparrow."

AT A GLANCE

February 2019



DAVID LARSON

As a confidence builder in the wake of the last issue's overly abstruse mystery bird, this issue offers readers a peace offering—a straightforward field identification problem. It should be obvious that in this issue we're looking at shorebirds, not some ambiguous species where even the family identity is in question.


When thinking about shorebird identification, a convenient way to begin is to place an unknown species into its correct family. Although it's true that there are a number of shorebird families, it is also true that the majority of Massachusetts shorebirds belong to either the family *Charadriidae* (plovers) or *Scolopacidae* (sandpipers and their allies). Distinguishing between members of these two groups is actually quite simple. Plovers have short, straight, blunt-tipped bills, stubby necks, abrupt foreheads, often angular-looking heads, plump bellies, and fairly large eyes. Sandpipers, on the other hand, have relatively longer, slimmer bills that can be either straight, upturned, or downturned; slim necks, rounded heads, generally slim bodies, and smaller eyes. Plovers also forage more deliberately than sandpipers (more like American Robins), and they generally have a more erect posture than most sandpipers. With these features in mind, it should be apparent that the mystery birds are plovers.

Plovers exhibit three primary ventral patterns: those with black underparts (e.g., Black-bellied Plover in breeding plumage), those with whitish, unbanded underparts (e.g., Black-bellied Plover in nonbreeding or juvenal plumage), and those with prominent dark neck collars which may be either partial or complete. A close examination of the plovers in the photograph (especially in the color version on the website) shows that both individuals have partial collars at the sides of their neck and

upper breast. In Massachusetts only two regularly-occurring plover species share these features, Semipalmated Plover and Piping Plover. Additionally, the dorsal coloration on Semipalmated Plovers is dark brown (the color of wet sand), while Piping Plovers are much paler above (the color of dry sand). So far everything is pointing to Piping Plover as the identity of the mystery birds—but wait! Better take more than a glance at these two plovers!

A close look shows that the plover on the left has a thinner, more pointed bill than the one on the right, it possesses a distinct black bar on its forehead, and its legs are gray. The right-hand plover has a stubbier, more blunt-tipped bill, no distinct black bar on its forehead, and its legs are bright orange. So what we have here are *two* look-alike plover species, a rare Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus*) on the left, and a Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) in nonbreeding plumage on the right.

The Snowy Plover is a rare vagrant in Massachusetts with only a single record for the state, while the Piping Plover is a federally threatened species in Massachusetts with only a coastal breeding population of approximately 650 pairs in the state. Piping Plovers typically arrive in Massachusetts in mid-March, and most have departed by mid-September.

David Larson photographed this interesting combination of plovers in southwestern coastal Louisiana in November 2017. 

Wayne Petersen

VOLUNTEER POSITIONS AT BIRD OBSERVER

Digital Production Manager to assist with some key online initiatives

- publishing the online edition of the bi-monthly journal
- production of digital artwork and PDF publications
- assistance with site maintenance and online services

Technically adept, detail-minded individuals are welcome. A creative flair for problem solving and persistence against unforeseen obstacles would be a bonus.

Contact Webmaster Eric Swanzey at <eric@swanzey.com>.

Bird Sightings Compiler for Worcester County

Our long-running Bird Sightings column relies on data from compilers around the state. The compiler for Worcester County would be responsible for sending in reports every two months of species seen in that county for the previous two months. Species are reported in a spreadsheet template and include sightings that are representative of high counts, early/late dates, and anything rare or unusual. The compiler should be familiar with the birds (and birders) of Worcester County, be comfortable with using a spreadsheet, and be able to use eBird.org to query sightings.

Contact Bird Sightings Editor Neil Hayward at <neil.hayward@gmail.com>.

AT A GLANCE



WAYNE R. PETERSEN

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

MORE HOT BIRDS

The state's **Tufted Duck** tally for this winter grew to at least three birds. The drake on Nantucket continues through at least its third consecutive winter on the island. A female/immature bird which appeared for a couple of days in Andover in mid-January appeared to be the same one observed near Christmastime in North Reading, and probably the same seen in Peabody around Thanksgiving. These two were joined by another adult male which was found in Harwich on January 17 by Mary Jo Foti; it remained in that area for at least a month. Chris Floyd took the photo on the right.



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