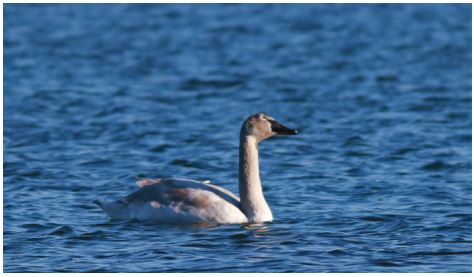
Bird Observer

VOLUME 50, NUMBER 1 FEBRUARY 2022

HOT BIRDS

Even one **Tropical Kingbird** in Massachusetts would likely have been the talk of the season, had that season not also included a Steller's Sea-Eagle. The state had only a single accepted record of the species as recently as 2018. Two more were added in 2019. "Hold my beer," said 2021 with double the state's total. A one-day wonder showed up in Provincetown on May 15; a mid-November bird stayed for five days at Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary; and in early December, one spent four days in Rockport. Benny Albro took the photo on the left.

On December 23, Skyler Kardell and Ginger Andrews encountered a swan on Sesachacha Pond, near the eastern end of Nantucket. They initially identified it as a Tundra Swan, but soon realized it was a **Trumpeter Swan**. The re-introduced population of this species around the Great Lakes has boomed in recent years, and is thought to be the source of recent New England records. This bird remained on the pond through at least mid-January. Skyler Kardell took the photo on the right.



A few weeks after the Trumpeter Swan was correctly identified, Ginger Andrews and Trish Pastuszak found a pair of **Tundra Swans** while scouting in advance of the Nantucket CBC. All three swans stuck around through the day of the count and one day beyond. A less cooperative pair of Tundras appeared briefly about a month earlier on the oxbow in Easthampton. They stayed long enough to be seen by Sally and Doug Pfeiffer, but vanished before other birders arrived. Trish Pastuszak took the photo on the left.

The Boston area was bracketed by a pair of **Ash-throated Flycatchers** late in the fall of 2021. One appeared for a couple of days in mid-November at Belle Isle Marsh at the northern end of the city. It was followed by a flycatcher that spent a couple of weeks on the South Shore in Hingham at Turkey Hill Farm and Weir River Farm. Marcia Dunham took the photo on the right.

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Bird Observer

A bimonthly journal— to support and promote the observation, understanding, and conservation of the wild birds of New England.

VOL. 50, NO. 1 FEBRUARY 2022

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: $25 for 6 issues, $48 for two years (U.S. addresses). Inquire about foreign subscriptions. Single copies $6.00, see <www.birdobserver.org/Subscribe>.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS and subscription inquiries should be sent to: Bird Observer Subscriptions, P.O. Box 236, Arlington MA 02476-0003, or email to Lynette Leka at <lynette.leka@yahoo.com>.

ADVERTISING: full page, $100; half page, $55; quarter page, $35. Contact Bob Stymeist at <ads@birdobserver.org>

MATERIAL FOR PUBLICATION: BIRD OBSERVER welcomes submissions of original articles, photographs, art work, field notes, and field studies. Scientific articles will be peer-reviewed. Email the editor at msalett@gmail.com. DO NOT embed graphics in word processing documents. Include author's or artist's contact information.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BIRD OBSERVER, P.O. Box 236, Arlington MA 02476-0003. PERIODICALS CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT BOSTON MA.

BIRD OBSERVER (USPS 369-850) is published bimonthly, 36 Lewis Avenue, Arlington MA 02474, a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation under section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Gifts to Bird Observer will be greatly appreciated and are tax deductible. ISSN: 0893-463

Letter from the Editor:

Welcome to Volume 50 of *Bird Observer*. We are celebrating our fiftieth anniversary year throughout 2022 with this volume of our journal. Other organizations might have waited until February 2023, the fiftieth anniversary of Volume 1, Number 1, in 1973. Not us. We cannot wait to highlight the success of our journal that, since its inception, has been produced entirely by an all-volunteer staff and supported by a volunteer board of directors.

Below is the masthead for the inaugural 1973 issue of *Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts* with Paula Butler at the helm. Compare it to our masthead on page 4 to see how staffing the journal has changed to reflect today's times.

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How many volunteers have worked on *Bird Observer* in the past 50 years? We will answer that question in a later issue. Indeed, we will be featuring articles about *Bird Observer* in all six of our 2022 issues starting in this issue with "*Bird Observer* Turns 50: Reflections of the Editors."

As exciting as our fiftieth year is, we have been completely upstaged by the birding phenomenon of a Steller's Sea-Eagle that showed up in Dighton, Massachusetts, in December 2021, for the first Massachusetts state record of this mega-rare bird from northeast coastal Asia. On December 30, the eagle showed up in Georgetown, Maine, for the first state record there, too. The latest sighting of the eagle before we went to press was in Boothbay Harbor, Maine.

The last such mega-rarity in Massachusetts turned up during the summer of 2004 with the first New World appearance of a Red-footed Falcon on Martha's Vineyard. *Bird Observer* devoted the entire December 2004 issue to the falcon, including our only cover in full color.

We are delighted to put the Steller's Sea-Eagle on the February 2022 cover and devote half the issue to this magnificent bird with an article written by Lisa Schibley and Marshall Iliff.. We could not have pulled this off without them. Lisa organized the outline and reached out to other birders for copy and photos. Marshall synthesized the data, provided photos from eBird, obtained permissions, and shared his experience of seeing the eagle in Dighton. Special thanks to Doug Hitchcox of Maine Audubon for writing the Maine segment in under 24 hours. It was an exceptional and adrenalin-fueled accomplishment, given the holidays and tight deadline.

We hope you enjoy this special issue.

Marsha C. Salett

Steller's Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus pelagicus*) Visits Massachusetts for a First State Record

Lisa Schibley and Marshall J. Iliff

Figure 1. Steller's Sea-Eagle in the Taunton River, Dighton, Massachusetts, December 17, 2021. Photograph by David Ennis.

A Steller's Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus pelagicus*), a bird of northeastern coastal Russia, Korea, and Japan, that wandered for 16 months around parts of North America—a continent on which it does not belong—was discovered in Dighton, Massachusetts, on December 12, 2021. It was seen again on December 17, but news only reached the birding community on December 19. Although it was missed in a search on December 19, it was refound by the Eckerson brothers on December 20 through shrewd and precision planning based on their knowledge of the Taunton River watershed.

In a normal year, the idea of someone photographing a Steller's Sea-Eagle visiting the Taunton River in southeastern Massachusetts would be ludicrous—the only likely explanation being an escaped bird or an odd photoshop joke. Steller's Sea-Eagles are one of the largest birds on the planet, with a wingspan of up to eight feet. They are one of the rarest eagles, with fewer than 5,000 individuals. There has never been a record

in Canada or the lower 48 United States; even inland records in Alaska are exceedingly rare.

But this has not been a normal year. Over the past 16 months, sightings of an adult Steller's Sea-Eagle have astonished the birding world. First, in August 2020, birder Josh Parks recorded an unusual interior record in Alaska; most sightings are coastal. Then on March 7, 2021, Kris and Jeff Groscop and Gene and Sandi Roesler were boating and fishing on Coleto Creek Reservoir in Victoria County, Texas. When they submitted pictures of a Steller's Sea-Eagle on a tree stump in the middle of the reservoir, it seemed to defy belief. Despite extensive searching, the bird was never refound. Birders speculated that it could have been the Alaska eagle, but there were not enough photographs for an extensive comparison. More to the point: how could such a rare, large, and distinctive eagle have flown 3,200 miles over two countries full of birders and photographers without being observed? The mystery quieted down until June 2021, when a Steller's Sea-Eagle appeared in New Brunswick, Canada, photographed first by Andrew Olive. Over the next two months, the Steller's Sea-Eagle flew from Chaleur Bay, New Brunswick, to Gaspé and Matane, Quebec. It disappeared for three months and reappeared in Falmouth, Nova Scotia, 300 miles away, where, after two days of sightings in early November, it vanished again.

Until Dighton, Massachusetts, where David Ennis photographed the adult Steller's Sea-Eagle on December 12. He eventually passed the photo to the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife), knowing it was unusual, but perhaps not knowing exactly how unusual it was.

The Search: Eckerson Brothers' Knowledge of Their Patch Pays Off

On December 19, Steve Grinley of Newburyport posted a cryptic message to the Massbird listserv. He relayed a report from Brian Cassie, of Foxborough—who had been told by a friend at MassWildlife—that a Steller's Sea-Eagle had been seen and photographed on the Taunton River in Bristol County on December 12, but that "no further information was available."

On Sunday night, December 19, Marshall Iliff and Jeremiah Trimble, who collaborate on Massachusetts eBird data quality and serve on the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, were busily trying to verify the report. Jeremiah was able to trace the information chain and received the original images by David Ennis. Since photo falsification is a growing problem with bird reporting, it was essential to inspect the photos and information chain in detail. The more Marshall and Jeremiah learned, the clearer it became that this report was credible. The first photo was hard to vet conclusively, but a second photo by David Ennis that emerged later that night provided the needed proof that the sighting was authentic and that the eagle might still be around. That image (Figure 1) was from Friday December 17 and included habitat that was a good match for the Taunton River.

Marshall immediately texted Matt and Jonathan Eckerson, who are from Dighton, to confirm that the information in the Massbird post was true and the eagle was likely still present. He and Matt began to discuss the coordination of the search and prepare

for what could be hundreds of chasers if the eagle were refound. Marshall knew that the four Eckerson brothers—Jonathan, Andy, Matt, and Joel—bird this stretch of river more than anyone and were familiar with every nook, cranny, and viewpoint. He had confidence that they would refind this bird if it were present. The brothers devised a plan to split up in order to cover more of the river. As the sun was coming up on Monday December 20, Jonathan Eckerson was positioned on Mallard Point, an old railroad bed. Before even full light, the Steller's Sea-Eagle flew directly in front of him, downriver from the north. The bird then perched in an oak tree, completely oblivious to the chaos that was about to erupt.

Joel Eckerson described the first moments:

> About ten minutes after first light, we were driving toward Shaw's Boatyard when Jonathan called and said, "I just had the Steller's Sea-Eagle fly right in front of me, and it's still here." We immediately turned around and got there in three or four minutes, and the eagle was perched high in this oak tree across the Taunton River from us. After about ten minutes, it swooped down to the water and nailed a decent-sized bait fish, barely getting the tips of its talons wet. This was the easiest I have ever seen a bird catch a fish.

The Eckersons immediately spread the word. Joel said, "I've been involved in chases where the bird gets away—like the Heermann's Gull—and I did not want that to happen again, so I started sending texts immediately." And by 8:00 am, the location of the Steller's Sea-Eagle had been shared on Massbird, the Massachusetts Rare Bird Alert GroupMe, the Mass RBA Facebook group, and other rare bird alerts in neighboring states. Phones across New England were abuzz.

Because of the speed with which the Eckersons got the word out, and because of the incredibly effective communication networks now available, hundreds of birders were able to see this magnificent eagle in those magic six hours between dawn and 1:00 pm when the bird flew to the north and disappeared. Joel Eckerson estimated the number of observers who saw the eagle at each spot: 120 at Mallard Point and the Somerset Boat Ramp, 40 at the private beach off Cliff Drive, and about 250 at Dighton Rock State Park. More than 180 observers made unique reports to eBird.

Joel summed up his reaction to the eagle:

> Such a rare bird in our backyard. I think about the map of New England and it is such a big area. The idea that this bird would fly right to the Taunton River and choose this river to eat fish, out of all the places it could have chosen. And of course, we wanted everyone to see it. Every time it flew, our hearts skipped a beat—was it going to disappear?

Marshall Iliff Continues the Narrative

The day's saga began for me at 6:58 am, when Jonathan Eckerson called to report that he had just seen the Steller's from the Somerset Boat Ramp area. I was ready for this moment. I had been up late vetting the reports from Sunday and helping to plan for the bird's rediscovery, specifically how much risk there would be of Steller's crowds

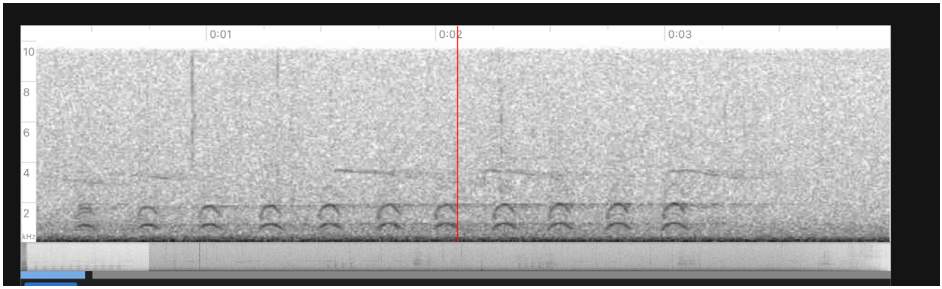

Figure 2. Spectrogram of the calling Steller's Sea-Eagle taken by Marshall Iliff. Previous to Dec 20, 2021, only two recordings of Steller's Sea-Eagle had been entered into eBird and the Macaulay Library.

overwhelming local communities or creating other problems with residents. Mega-rarities such as this can quickly try the patience of residents.

Once I finally mobilized—with my bundled-up four-year-old in tow— my first stop was Mallard Point, where the eagle had been sitting in a tall white pine no less than 1.4 miles distant to the northeast. It was so distant that when I peeked in Jeremiah Trimble's scope upon arrival, it took me eight to ten seconds to spot the bird, even though it was silhouetted against the horizon in one of the pines. I later realized that the striking white patches on the forewings break up the bird's outline in an incredibly effective way—especially against gray skies—which surely must make it less obvious to potential prey. Even in those views, it was distinctive, showing broad white shoulders, a dark head, a white tail, and a huge, yellow bill. It was perhaps even more distant than my views in South Korea.

A few of us opted to find a better vantage and split up. After checking Bayview Avenue in Berkley, I got in touch with Jeremiah, who had located the bird in the tall white pine, although views were still quite distant. While I was en route to help him triangulate for better views, texts started popping that the eagle had flown north. I immediately redirected toward Assonet Bay, which was my best decision of the day.

I went straight to the north side of Wescott Island and parked at a nearby private beach, which residents gave permission to use in the off season. I had a good view of the bay and systematically began checking the trees on the far side and scanning the sky for flying eagles. I knew Jeremiah was searching as well, so I called him as I continued to scan the trees. Just 20 to 30 seconds into our call, he said, "I see it," and I heard him fire 10 to 15 photos. I had a sense that he was looking north up the Taunton River toward Assonet Bay where I was, but our views were different. Jeremiah checked a map and told me it seemed to be perched on the left edge of Shoves Neck—the exact location I had been scanning. What was wrong with me? Could he have his bearings wrong? Could I? We compared landmarks, and his description made no sense to me. He clarified where it was, I calmed down and did a more careful scan, looking through all the trees instead of just in the openings with good views. I spotted it quickly right where he had said all along—on the left edge of Shoves Neck, perched high but not too

Figure 3. Some of the 250 people watching the Steller's Sea-Eagle at Dighton Rock State Park on December 20, 2021. Photograph by Lisa Schibley.

high. Boom. Scope. Amazing. Steller's point blank—almost, according to Google it was 621 meters or 2038 feet away—in Massachusetts.

The bird was calling. When I got out of the car and heard the yelping call coming from the direction of the perched eagle, I did not recognize it and deduced that it was no bird sound that I knew. It was loud—I did not think it sounded even a little bit like the wimpy Bald Eagle call although they are in the same genus—but it had to be the Steller's. I grabbed my iPhone and started recording. I looked through the scope in time to hear it call again and to see it call as it opened its beak in time with the sound just as an immature Bald Eagle flew right to left in the field of view. More than any other moment of this incredible day, that one will live in my memory—a ***calling*** Steller's Sea-Eagle in Massachusetts.

Figure 2 depicts the spectrogram of my recording of the Steller's. You can hear it at <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/397587661>

I reveled in the experience for a minute before stressing about getting other birders here. I made a few calls, sent a few pins, and then Jeremiah and Jennifer Trimble rolled up. We had amazing scope looks together for another 10 minutes, in awed silence. The eagle called a few more times. We had a few holy sh&* moments of simply reveling in this bird in this place.

I talked to a local landowner to prepare him for the coming onslaught of birder vehicles. Cars started rolling in—the onslaught arrived. The Eckersons were first. Liam Waters, who had missed it from Mallard Point, rolled in; when he looked through the scope, I watched a huge smile cross his face. Liam's mother Amy directed people to my scope while I helped cars park. A full van with Connecticut Audubon emblazoned on the side arrived. People were parking on both sides, nearly blocking the street. It felt like the problems with local residents I was worried about were going to start brewing.

Jenn Trimble and I walked away from the commotion to the town beach and enjoyed some quiet scope views from a new angle. I looked one more time and the

Figure 4. When the Steller's Sea-Eagle took flight around 1:00 pm, it was harassed by a persistent Common Raven. Photograph by Will Sweet.

huge yellow bill was missing. Had the eagle flown? Yes, it was flying dead away. In flight it was truly massive and showed the broad white shoulders impressively. It seemed to be headed straight to Shaw's Boatyard and Dighton Rock State Park.

We drove to Dighton Rock State Park, where the eagle had been refound. There were already 80 cars and counting; new cars arrived every minute for the next 90. Insanity. Perfect viewing. Birding bliss for all who arrived. No more stress about the residents becoming fed up with the birders. Many referred to it as an amazing reunion for all regional New England birders; it was hard to imagine a better occasion for this. (See Figure 3.)

I left at 12:30, but at about 1:00 pm, the Steller's Sea-Eagle suddenly took flight from its perch near Shaw's Boatyard. Harassed by a persistent Common Raven (see Figure 4), it flew in tight circles, gaining altitude steadily until it took off to the north-northwest, not to be seen again in Massachusetts.

Other Birders Come to See the Mega-Rare Sea-Eagle

Once the word of this mega-rarity got out, hundreds of birders from Massachusetts and nearby states showed up to see the Steller's Sea-Eagle. Several shared their experience at Dighton Rock State Park with *Bird Observer*. Paul Roberts, who founded the Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch, felt there had not been a moment like this in New England birding since the Ross's Gull at the mouth of the Merrimack River in 1975, an event attended by Roger Tory Peterson and Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger. Knowing that there were people all across the country making preparations to fly to see the Steller's Sea-Eagle reminded him of his friend Joseph Taylor, who flew from Kenya to Massachusetts to see the Ross's Gull, and then flew right back to his safari in Kenya.

Figure 5. Size comparison of the Steller's Sea-Eagle with two juvenile Bald Eagles at Shaw's Boatyard, Dighton. Photograph by Alex Lin-Moore.

Ben Griffin from Plymouth had been following the wanderings of the Steller's Sea-Eagle in Canada for some time: "Every time the sea-eagle disappeared from the Maritimes this summer and fall, I would dream it would show up in reasonable driving distance from my home. Luckily, its first New England appearance was an easy drive, and I was able to rush out to see one of the most spectacular birds in the world!"

Mary Keleher from Mashpee recounts that she was extremely fortunate to be able to drop everything and go:

> At 7:40 am on Monday December 20, 2021, I received a text message from Keelin Miller: "Refound!!!" No explanation needed. I immediately began the hour drive to the Taunton River area, where I was able to view this majestic beast perched in a tree with Bald Eagles that looked to be half the size of the Steller's Sea-Eagle. What an absolute amazing experience!

(See Figure 5 for a comparison.)

Alex Lin-Moore made the trip from Providence, Rhode Island:

> To say this bird was unmistakable would be an understatement. It was nearly double the size of the nearby Bald Eagle, with a clearly wedge-shaped white tail, prominent white patches on the shoulders, and most notably an absolutely colossal, bright yellow bill, like one of those prehistoric Terror Birds, which was visible with the naked eye from over 100 meters. In flight the strongly wedged tail was clearly visible, as well as the huge, broad, paddle-shaped wings, accentuated by the clean white extending up to the rear flanks from the tail and rump. This is a species I have dreamed of seeing

Figure 6. Mapping the Steller's Sea-Eagle's journey. Video by AvianDavies/Ian Davies. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fX0W1he-ZI>

> since first looking through my old *National Geographic* guide, and it did not disappoint. What an absolute behemoth!

Mary Ellen McMahon, from West Roxbury, made the right decision to chase the sea-eagle on Monday. "I got the word that a crazy, mega Steller's Sea-Eagle had been sighted in Massachusetts. I debated on waiting till the next day but luckily was able to drop what I was doing and head out the door. Upon arrival, I noted all of the happy faces on the hundreds of birders and I rushed to see what all were seeing—and there it was, perched, oblivious to all of the joyful birders."

Linda Ferraresso, a board member of the Brookline Bird Club, noted that

> Seeing the Steller's Sea-Eagle was reminiscent of old-time chases—arriving with no previous knowledge of location—this one changed five times while enroute—ecstatic to see a sought bird (missed it in Juneau, July 1993) and a joyous celebration of birding friends and community—old friends and shared camaraderie. For those a little late, here is hoping the next sighting is soon and nearby—not in someplace like Chile.

Then there were the folks who missed the eagle. Brian Rusnica, the current president of the Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch, made it down to Somerset the next day, Tuesday, December 21, 2021. Although the bird was gone, he sounded upbeat:

> I've said before that if you want to believe in miracles, get into birding—they happen all the time. The Steller's Sea-Eagle is another example of that. The wild journey that this bird must have taken is the kind of story that inspires people, whether you are a lifelong birder or not. It is a spectacular raptor, in terms of size and character. There is strong evidence of past hybridization with Bald Eagle that leaves open a potentially intriguing future

Figure 7. Steller's Sea-Eagle is refound in Georgetown, Maine, December 30, 2021. Photograph by Zachary Holderby from his kayak on December 31.

for this individual. Chasing rare birds is far from my favorite type of birding, but a rare raptor will always be worth a day or two of effort, even if it's one that got away.

The question on December 21 was: where will this Steller's Sea-Eagle be found again? Looking at the pattern in Canada, we know the eagle revisited previous sites. A bird that started its journey in Asia and moved through Alaska, Texas, Canada, and Massachusetts could appear absolutely anywhere and anyone could be the next discoverer of the Steller's Sea-Eagle. (For a map of the Steller's journey from Alaska to Dighton, see Figure 6.) The places to look would be along large bodies of water where Bald Eagles congregate, especially by the ocean and outflows of rivers.

The New England birding community did not have to wait too long for the Steller's to reappear. On December 30, 2021, the eagle was rediscovered and photographed approximately 155 miles north-northeast around Five Islands in Georgetown, Sagadahoc County, Maine, establishing yet another first state record. This eagle will continue to surprise and delight us if it keeps up its recent pattern.

Doug Hitchcox Continues the Narrative in Maine over New Year's Weekend

Reports of the Steller's Sea-Eagle surfaced in Maine thanks to a comment left on Nick Lund's blog, TheBirdist.com. After his retelling of the chase to Massachusetts to see the eagle, a Georgetown resident, Linda Tharp, left the comment "It's in Five Islands ME today, 12/30" and later provided Nick with diagnostic photos. She spotted it on the intertidal rocks and in the trees of Crow Island. No birders were successful in finding it by the end of the day on December 30.

The masses descended on December 31 and within a couple hours of searching, the bird was found at 8:20 on New Year's Eve morning at the south end of MacMahan Island. It slowly worked its way south to Crow Island around 9:10 am and worked the trees back and forth from Crow Island to Gotts Cove. The bird moved around at 10:30 am, becoming visible from the Five Islands wharf. It moved around the islands, often perching in one spot for more than 30 minutes, and sometimes landing in areas where it was not visible from the mainland. (See Figure 7).

Typical of many large raptors, the Steller's spent most of the day perched, favoring the tops of spruces and occasionally going down to rocky islands. During the afternoon, it moved downriver and sat on the Black Rocks offshore of Reid State Park. This is notable because despite being nearly two miles away, the bird could still be identified thanks to its large size when compared to nearby Bald Eagles and by diagnostic white markings on the wings.

The Steller's remained into the new year. On January 1, 2022, it was reported from the Five Islands wharf at 9:07 am. It moved to the back side of Mink Island at 10:45, where it was no longer visible from any publicly accessible sites. The last report of the day was that the eagle was seen flying north toward Five Islands around 3:00 pm. It consistently left the area between 3:00 and 4:20 every afternoon, so it was presumably going to roost somewhere up the Sheepscot River.

The bird was reported at 8:30 am on January 2 perched on the north end of Wood Island. It moved around during the morning and was back at Wood Island around 10:50. Last reports from the day were just after 3:30 pm, when the eagle had been flying between the Grey Havens Inn and Reid State Park; it was last seen flying north. Interestingly, there were few foraging attempts seen, and no successful feedings observed, though on January 2, it was seen chasing a Bald Eagle carrying an unidentified prey item. You can read more details about the sea-eagle's movements in Maine at <https://maineaudubon.org/news/rare-bird-alert-stellers-sea-eagle/>.

It was hard to keep count, but an estimated 600 people connected with the bird on that first day, December 31, 2021. From reports, it is conservative to say 1,500 people saw the bird by the close of the weekend ending January 2, 2022. While I am sure I missed some, I know we had birders from all New England states, as well as New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, Arizona, Washington D.C., Florida, Tennessee, Georgia, New Mexico, and California.

The greater Five Islands and Georgetown community made this a successful twitch and wonderful experience for visiting birders. The crowds were respectful of lobstermen pulling in their traps on the wharf, one of the only public areas from which to view the eagle. One fisherman started taking birders out in his boat—for free—to see the eagle when it was perched on back sides of the islands. The owners of the Grey Havens Inn allowed hundreds of folks on their property to observe the eagle; they brought out fresh coffee during the cold and wet vigil. Many thanks to these people and the rest of this small quiet Maine village that was overrun by birders over the New Year.

There were no confirmed reports as of 12:30 pm on January 3 and no sightings on

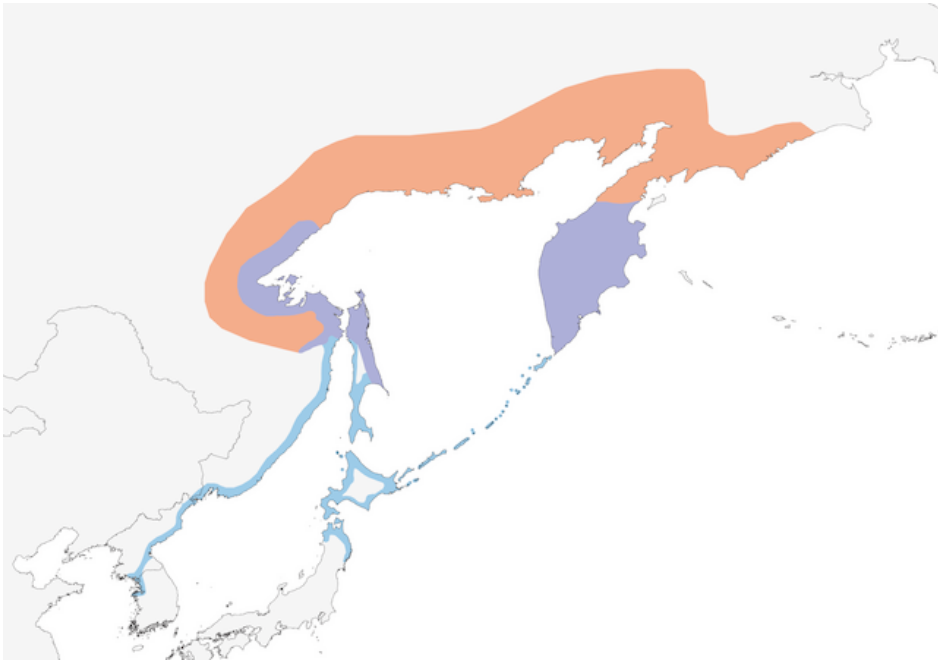

Figure 8. Range map for Steller's Sea-Eagle: Coastal regions along West Bering Sea and Sea of Okhotsk; winters south to Ussuriland, Korea and Japan. (Meyburg et al. 2020).

January 4. The Steller's Sea-Eagle was refound on January 6 in West Boothbay Harbor. It has been hanging out in the West Boothbay Harbor area through January 18, when *Bird Observer* went to press.

Characteristics and Distribution of Steller's Sea-Eagle

Steller's Sea-Eagle is the largest of 10 species in the genus *Haliaeetus*, a widespread genus of fish-eagles occurring on all continents except Antarctica and South America. The wingspan of adults is 1.9 to 2.5 meters long, and they can weigh 4.9 to 9 kilograms, about twice the mass of Bald Eagle, with females larger than males (Meyburg et al. 2020). The bill is massive, larger than any other species in the genus, and bright yellow in adults. Adults have striking plumage, being dark brown with an all-white, wedge-shaped tail, variable small white forehead patch, white thighs and undertail, and a large patch of white coverts on both upperwing and underwing that shows up as a huge white shoulder patch on perched birds. Immatures are dark brown with variable patches of white, somewhat similar to immature Bald Eagles, but they can usually be distinguished by their huge size and enormous bills. Like others in their genus, they feed primarily on fish—especially salmon—but also may scavenge and occasionally hunt mammals and birds.

Their distribution centers on coastal northeast Asia (see Figure 8), where they breed in eastern Russia from Koryakland and the Kamchatka Peninsula around the Sea of Okhotsk; they winter south to Ussuriland, the Korean Peninsula, and northern Japan (Meyburg et al. 2020). The most famous places to see them are on the Nemuro Peninsula of northern Hokkaido, where dozens may be seen feeding around leads in the

ice—narrow linear cracks that form when ice floes move—along with large numbers of White-tailed Eagles (*H. albicilla*).

In North America, vagrants have reached western Alaska islands, e.g., the Aleutians and Pribilofs, and areas of south coastal Alaska, including Dillingham and Kodiak Island. There were seven records through 2004 (Howell et al. 2014), and an impressive nine or ten Alaska records from 2012 to 2021 (eBird 2021), though the same individual may be involved in a few of those records. At least one other adult Steller's visited the North American mainland in 2021. Only two days after the first Steller's was discovered in Nova Scotia, another adult Steller's was seen November 6, 2021, at King Salmon, about 280 miles southwest of Anchorage, Alaska (Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR Data 2021).

Prior to 2021, the most widely seen Steller's in North America was also the southernmost, an eagle that returned each summer near Juneau from 1989 to 2002, and sometimes was seen paired with a Bald Eagle. Hybridization was never confirmed, but offspring from this pair could have accounted for an apparent Bald Eagle x Steller's Sea-Eagle hybrid that was photographed on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, in December 2004 (Clark 2008). In addition to Alaska, vagrant Steller's have been recorded from Midway Island, Kure Atoll, and Okinawa, Japan; a small number of records from Europe have traditionally been presumed to pertain to escapees. But in 2021, the vagrancy of Steller's Sea-Eagle was rewritten in grand style across six states and provinces within a single year.

Records, Movements, and Individual Features of This Particular Eagle

When truly outlandish vagrants appear far from home range, especially species with no comparable pattern of vagrancy, it is always important to consider whether escape from captivity or other non-natural occurrence, e.g., ship-assisted travel, could be a factor. Steller's Sea-Eagles are kept in captivity in several zoos—including the Franklin Park Zoo in Boston—so escape from a zoo could account for the appearance of a Steller's so far from its home. In 2021, there was a well-publicized account from the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, of an adult Steller's that escaped on September 25 and flew free in the city until October 3, when it was finally captured and returned to its enclosure. This bird could not have accounted for any of the sightings in Texas, Canada, Massachusetts, or Maine. However, if a different bird had escaped—maybe from a private collection—it could have accounted for most or all of the other sightings.

Since the summer of 2020, the following sightings of adult Steller's Sea-Eagle are believed to pertain to the same bird:

- Denali Highway, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska, August 30, 2020, by Josh Parks. (https://ebird.org/checklist/S73019041)
- Coleto Creek Reservoir, Victoria County, Texas, March 7, 2021, by Kris and Jeff Groscop and Gene and Sandi Roesler. (https://www.facebook.com/TexasBirdRecordsCommittee/photos/pcb.2074670586032639/2074663009366730/)

Figure 9. Steller's Sea-Eagle at Windsor, Nova Scotia, November 3, 2021. Photograph by Mike Jones. Macaulay Library <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/397606801>. The right wing shows a patch of missing barbs along the trailing edge of the fifth primary from the outermost. Such feather damage is not all that unusual but tends to occur in different places on different individuals, so can be useful for tracking the movements of individual birds.

- Mouth of Restigouche River, New Brunswick and Quebec, Canada, June 28 to July 2, 2021, and again on July 23, 2021.
- Gaspé, Quebec, Canada, July 7–17, 2021, and again July 30–31, 2021.
- Matane, Quebec, Canada, August 7-8, 2021. (https://ebird.org/qc/checklist/S92903188)
- Avon River mouth, near Windsor, Nova Scotia, Canada, November 3–4, 2021.
- Dighton, Berkley, Somerset, and Freetown, Bristol County, Massachusetts, December 12, 17, and 20, 2021.
- Five Islands, Georgetown, Sagadahoc County, Maine, December 30, 2021, to January 2, 2022.

Modern photography allows the movements of individual birds to be tracked based on individually identifiable features, as opposed to wing tags or numbered bands on their legs. This Steller's Sea-Eagle showed a distinctive white mark on the innermost primaries of the left wing that provides a near certain connection between the August 2020 Denali sighting (https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/259148021) and the June through August 2021 sightings from Canada (https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/353275871). The white primary mark was noted on all sightings through August 2021. However, eagles molt flight feathers more or less continuously, and may show up to three generations of feathers at once. By the time this eagle appeared in Nova

Figure 10. Steller's Sea-Eagle at Dighton, Massachusetts, December 20, 2021. Photograph by Severin Uebbing. Macaulay Library <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/397606801>. Note the same pattern of notching near the tip of the fifth primary from the outermost, perfectly matching the feather damage visible in the November photo from Nova Scotia.

Scotia, the inner primary with the distinctive mark seemed to have been replaced by fresh, new inner primaries. (See the very dark, blackish inner primaries here: <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/385257571>.)

Nevertheless, the connection still seemed solid because a new individually identifying feature became evident by late July. A distinctive notch appeared on the right wing near the tip of p6, the fifth primary from outermost (compare <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/360109411> from Quebec and <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/385257571> from Nova Scotia and <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/397606801> from Massachusetts). You can see this notch in Figures 9 and 10.

Also, a small spot of white in the central wingpit of both wings is visible on photos from Quebec (https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/358235201), Nova Scotia (https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/385257571), and Massachusetts (https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/397652701).

Another feature that appeared to support this connection—which might otherwise seem unlikely given the huge distances involved—is the pattern of the wing coverts, both above and below, particularly the sharp spurs extending to the trailing edge of the wing from the outer portion of the white upperwing patch. These patterns compared favorably among all individuals.

Taken together, these features help connect the Denali, Atlantic Canada, and Massachusetts sightings as the wanderings of a single individual, and recent photos from Maine also show this same suite of features.

Figure 11. Steller's Sea-Eagle perched high in a spruce tree in the center of Mink Island, Maine, with American Crow in background for comparison. Photograph by Zachary Holderby from his kayak on December 31.

The connection of the Texas sighting is more speculative and based largely on the extraordinary nature of the sightings from Canada and the northeast United States. The Texas Bird Records Committee has accepted the Texas sighting, finding no evidence or reason to suspect a wandering escaped captive (Eric Carpenter, pers. comm.). The Committee also viewed the unprecedented eastern Canada sightings and connection to the Denali Highway sighting as a possible connection to the Texas bird. The Texas record occurred within a couple of weeks of an unprecedented winter storm, which provided a potential explanation for this bird to move so far south (Eric Carpenter, pers. comm.). Unfortunately, there are no in-flight photos of the Texas sea-eagle, so the wing details used to connect the Denali, Canada, and Massachusetts sightings cannot be assessed.

The fact that a single individual can be connected from Denali to Atlantic Canada to Massachusetts to Maine strongly supports the notion that this bird is a natural vagrant. Escapees are less likely in Alaska, and the Denali sighting connects to other records just to the west and south in the state. The Texas record remains an outlier, but the movements are plausible and the late winter date following a harsh winter storm matches what one might expect. Given that few Steller's Sea-Eagles are kept in captivity, that they are valuable and typically widely reported when they escape, it seems exceedingly unlikely that this wandering bird is anything but a natural vagrant. Birders will continue to follow its movements and hope it crosses to their patch or home state. Will it end up pairing with a Bald Eagle somewhere? Will they raise the first confirmed hybrid young? Or will it be photographed back in Alaska at some point? Time will tell.

Vagrancy in Raptors

With more birders and better photographic documentation, it is increasingly evident that raptors are capable of impressive individual movements and previously underappreciated propensity for vagrancy, driven by both dispersal—especially by juveniles—and migratory errors. Raptor sightings can be fleeting and the identification of raptors challenging, but such movements have come into sharper focus in recent years, partly due to modern digital photography, which has often been a major player in establishing the identification and documenting the movements of individuals. A few notable examples are below:

- In 2018, the same first-cycle Great Black Hawk established state firsts for Texas on South Padre Island, April 24, 2018, and Maine from Biddeford to Portland from August 2018 to January 2019. Digital photos established that the same individual was involved, documenting a remarkable instance of vagrancy (Lees and Gilroy 2021).
- Crested Caracaras have shown an increasing pattern of dispersal far from their home range, with recent records in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Vermont, and Massachusetts.
- Zone-tailed Hawk is little known away from its home range. An old record from Newfoundland was unique in the Northeast until one roving bird established records in Nova Scotia, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Virginia in 2014 to 2015. Maryland scored another far-flung record in 2021.
- Short-tailed Hawk is largely resident but has been expanding north, colonizing Arizona and Texas as a breeder. A recent record hailed from Baja California Sur and South Carolina.
- Swainson's Hawk, which is highly migratory, has reached northern Alaska, Europe, and the Middle East.
- Black Kite has records from Midway Atoll, St. Paul Island, Alaska, and the Caribbean. Western Marsh-Harrier also has reached the Caribbean.
- Individually tagged Bearded Vultures and Egyptian Vultures have moved far beyond their home ranges, including the British Isles.
- California Condor, with well-monitored populations stemming from reintroductions, wanders widely, with sightings from central-eastern Utah, New Mexico, and even southeastern Wyoming.

Many other examples exist; there seems to be growing evidence that raptors wander widely at many seasons and that out-of-range records should not necessarily be viewed with excessive skepticism. Many raptors are excellent at soaring and can cover long distances with minimal energetic output. Many raptor species should be appreciated as having strong tendencies toward vagrancy, with non-natural occurrence raised only when evidence for captive provenance overwhelms that for natural vagrancy.

Steller's Sea-Eagle has a dozen or more records from western Alaska islands, and a few from the Alaska mainland, firmly establishing that natural vagrants cross the Bering Sea and reach North America on their own. Although past birds were not detected from beyond Alaska, that does not necessarily mean that they did not move into the North American mainland undetected. In Europe, unbanded Steller's Sea-Eagles from Norway, Poland, and Slovenia have been viewed as escapees in the past, but perhaps the occasional Steller's wanders west just as this individual from 2020 to 2022 has wandered east. Until and unless further evidence emerges, we will consider the Massachusetts Steller's Sea-Eagle a natural vagrant.

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Marshall J. Iliff *works remotely as Project Leader for eBird, focusing on data quality and taxonomy for the free, online database that now includes over a billion bird observations from around the world. He has lived in Massachusetts since 2006 and is currently serving a second term as chair of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee. He lives in Dedham, Massachusetts, with his wife, son, and two dogs, and splits most of his birding between Millennium Park, right next door, and Gooseberry Neck, Westport, when he needs a dose of salt spray and coastal bird migration.*

Northern Owl Species That Overwinter in New England

Sean Riley

The author holds a banded Northern Saw-whet Owl. Photograph by Casey Riley.

For most folks, September means the end of summer, but for me and many other owl researchers it means it is time to find all of the nets and banding equipment likely stowed away hastily after a number of sleepless months the year prior. October 1 is the official opening night of my Saw-whet Owl banding season, a date I carried over from my mentors, and also a rough, if unofficial, start to when most of our northern owl species begin their slow travel southward.

Unlike traditional bird migrations, the movements of some of our northern owl species are now seen as nomadic. Northern Saw-whet Owls, Long-eared Owls, Short-eared Owls, and Snowy Owls move south in varying numbers each year, with no real urgency and no set destination. Although all of these species can survive cold winters in the north, many individuals will choose to leave their breeding grounds for the milder weather and more abundant food to the south.

My day job as a state park manager and my night job as a researcher and bird bander have afforded me the opportunity to correlate birds banded at night with their arrivals in reservations in the day. For example, I often locate my first Long-eared Owl of the season within days of catching my first Saw-whet Owl. These birds all start moving at about the same time, despite their different habitat proclivities. Below, I will

Banding a Northern Saw-whet Owl. Photograph by Sean Riley.

Checking the molt of a Northern Saw-whet Owl. Photograph by Sean Riley.

describe aspects of each of the four northern owl species that regularly overwinter in New England.

Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*)

Although most people never see a Northern Saw-whet Owl, these secretive tiny owls are some of the most abundant owls in North America, as confirmed by banding data from a large network of owl banders. For each of the past nine years, I have spent most of October and November banding these small owls. My mentors have been Kathy Seymour, Jackie Pascucci, and their team, who have banded more than 1500 Saw-whets at Mass Audubon's Drumlin Farm Sanctuary in a 14-year long-term study. Even though COVID-19 made it almost impossible to run a banding station, I managed to band 89 Saw-whets—a low number—in the 2020 and 2021 seasons at my new location at Bradley Palmer State Park in Topsfield, Massachusetts.

On most cold nights in October and November, there is an army of tiny owls moving across the state under the cover of darkness. Many people will ask me—having already searched many of the state's premier birding locations without success—well, where is the best location to find a Saw-whet? I say, sure, you may find one at a well-known site, or you may find one wedged in a shrub in your backyard. Outside of their initial fall movements, however, Saw-whets will likely overwinter in a more traditional habitat than a backyard shrub. Look for a location that has good cover from nosy songbirds and lots of the small rodents on which they almost exclusively feed.

The more we learn about Northern Saw-whet Owls the more we see them as

Sean Riley Bands a hatch-year female Long-eared Owl. Photograph by Nanci St. George.

nomads of fortune. Although some adults, primarily in the boreal regions, may remain in a breeding territory year-round, many birds embark on postbreeding travel that may stretch across North America. My second owl of the 2021 season, a 96-gram female, was banded in 2020 in upper Minnesota, traveling more than 1450 miles to be recaptured in Topsfield, Massachusetts. Like many of our other northern owls, this bird may eventually breed on the other side of the continent from where she was born.

Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*)

Long-eared Owls are also seldom seen, although these owls are likely more common than reported or discovered. Similar to Northern Saw-whets, Long-eared Owls begin touching down in Massachusetts in early October, with most birds situated in their winter roosting locations by early December. As a communal roosting species, groups of these owls often can be found together in the winter months. Long-eareds are rarely solo in winter roosts. At the winter roosts I have monitored over the past decade, I have usually found a minimum of two or three birds with my maximum being eleven. If undisturbed by humans and at a site with adequate prey densities, Long-eared Owls may roost in the same tree, even on the same branch, from October until the following March or April, when they depart for more-northern breeding sites. Disturbance by humans and harassment by crows are usually the only reasons these birds move from their winter roosts.

Despite looking large in flight, Long-eared Owls are small birds. To put that further in perspective, male Long-eared Owls take the same size band as an Eastern Screech Owl, with females usually taking the next size up. Long-eareds almost exclusively eat small rodents. Of 450 Long-eared Owl pellets I have dissected, the prey was 80% meadow vole, 19% white-footed mouse, and 1% brown rat. The 450 pellets represented about one-half of the pellets under one winter roost; the others were too degraded to easily collect or examine. In addition to a robust rodent population for food and dense forest or thickets for roosting, Long-eareds usually prefer an open hunting ground at overwintering sites. That said, we are also finding an important correlation with open woodland paths and areas for perch hunting at night. When comparing otherwise similar habitats, those with fewer woodland paths seem to hold fewer Long-eared Owls in winter. In contrast to open grasslands and marshes where they may fall prey to Snowy Owls or Great Horned Owls, the woodland paths likely provide a safer area for the Long-eareds to hunt.

Although winter roosting sites hold Long-eared Owls year after year, evidence

Norman Smith bands Long-eared Owl chicks. Photograph by Nanci St. George.

so far supports overall nomadic behavior rather than the same birds returning year after year to the same roosts. Long-term studies being done by Denver Holt in Montana show the majority of birds at winter trapping sites are hatch-year birds (D. Holt personal communication). My observations, from banding or of birds I collected on site after being predated by other raptors, paint a similar picture. Habitat and prey density draw these birds in, but they do not seem to be the same birds as the previous winter. Before I was banding Long-eared Owls, I found this notion almost impossible to believe, as I often found an owl on the same tree branch that I found one perched on the previous season. However, for the most part, it seems newly arrived hatch-year birds just like the same types of deep cover that previous birds also found appealing.

Although historically not a common breeder in Massachusetts, some Long-eared Owl nests may be overlooked. Proper habitat and undisrupted roosts free from human harassment can attract breeding birds even in Massachusetts. In May 2021, I and another one of my raptor mentors, Norman Smith, banded Long-eared Owl chicks at a nest at a roost site in Massachusetts. This nest was the first to be confirmed in the state in 25 years, and we observed that at least three of the chicks fledged. Giving these birds their space during the winter months seems to make it possible for them to breed in Massachusetts.

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

Short-eared Owls, due to their crepuscular winter behavior, are observed more frequently than our other northern owls, excluding maybe Snowy Owls. That said, they often go undetected at many locations if their hunting schedules are shifted. I frequently see birds that hunt predawn or even in the dark after dusk and may therefore remain unreported. I am always amazed at the short time windows these birds use for hunting. Short-eared Owls may also show communal overwintering behavior. They are often found in groups roosting on the ground, and I have even found Short-eareds sharing winter roosts with both Long-eared Owls and Northern Harriers.

There are no recent records of breeding Short-eared Owls in Massachusetts. Our winter migrants now all come from out of state. There is limited information on these movements, but banding recaptures tell a similar story to the other northern owls.

A sick Snowy Owl is captured at Salisbury State Reservation. Photograph by Diane Seavey.

Short-eared Owls are highly migratory and have limited breeding-site fidelity, being another prey- and habitat-driven nomad (Clark 1975, D. Holt personal communication). At our survey and banding sites, the number of Short-eareds varies from year to year, typically ranging from one to six birds. Short-eareds also seem particularly sensitive to Snowy Owls within their smaller winter territories, because Snowy Owls will actively prey on the smaller owls. Short-eareds are another small-rodent specialist, so rodent densities are an important determinant of their length of stay and the number of birds a territory can hold.

Snowy Owls (*Bubo scandiacus*)

Snowys are the most iconic of the winter owls. These large beautiful raptors descend on Massachusetts in varying numbers each winter. Although once thought to have a robust global population, it now appears that there may be as few as 30,000 birds globally (Marthinsen et al. 2009). Due to their breeding niche in the arctic and tundra zones, Snowy Owls are sure to be a species severely affected by the rapid impacts of climate change.

In Massachusetts, open landscapes draw these birds in. Marshes, coastal beaches, and airports are typical habitats that resemble the open tundra of the far north (Fuller 2003). Once on their winter territories, these large powerful raptors take pretty much everything on the menu. In our study sites, I have seen them take eastern cottontails, Short-eared Owls, Long-eared Owls, brown rats, small rodents, multiple species of waterfowl including a Red-throated Loon, and even a Wild Turkey. Norman Smith,

a friend and one of the leading Snowy Owl researchers in North America, has seen them take Great Blue Herons, small songbirds on the wing, and everything in between, displaying both brute strength and speed-driven agility. Norman has banded and safely relocated more than 850 Snowy Owls from Logan Airport, and the information he has collected over decades of work has helped clarify the long-misunderstood ecology of these beautiful owls. Norman recaptured an owl at Logan Airport that he had banded 23 years earlier, an incredible banding record and reflective of how long these birds can live and how varied their travels must be to not be recaptured during that entire time span. Telemetry data also have shown that some birds actually move north in the winter to hunt on pack ice versus exclusively moving south (N. Smith personal communication).

One misconception that banding studies have changed is that Snowy Owls can be reliably sexed in the field. Although large, heavily barred birds are often females and predominantly white smaller birds are usually adult males, the overlap between less definitive birds can make it impossible to determine sex upon observation in the field. Instead, sex determination may require having the bird in hand to examine their secondaries and tail-feather barring (Seidensticker et al. 2011). Ultimately, you may not know the age or sex of the bird you are looking at.

Ethics with our overwintering owls

With the influx of affordable professional camera equipment and the exponential use of social media platforms, these winter visitors have, in recent years, had nonstop attention and ultimately considerable harassment from excited viewers who simply do not understand the life ecology and basic biology of the subjects they are pursuing. Those of us who are professionals in the field try to educate as best we can, but there are simply not enough of us to intercept or police the waves of people out looking for birds. Photographers are often upset when confronted about their behaviors with owls, not wanting to believe that their often daily pursuit of these animals has an impact on their health and well-being. However the accumulation of daily disruptions and their effects is really just simple math.

Imagine every night when you are trying to go to sleep, you are pestered to the point that you never fully rest, and sometimes you have to fly away to get any rest. Then repeat that every day for a few months. Then imagine trying to muster the energy to hunt and kill prey, sometimes prey that can even be dangerous to try to overpower, all while being sleep-deprived and poorly rested with reduced muscle mass. Raptors' rates of successful kills are not high to begin with, especially with young birds. Eventually they may be too weak to hunt or will make an error while hunting, and ultimately, either way, the results will likely be fatal. By the time folks like Norman Smith, I, or other banders and rehabbers are called out to trap and help rescue "bad-looking birds" it is almost always too late.

Snowy Owls are, for the most part, crepuscular and nocturnal hunters, so when they are sitting around during the day, they are attempting to sleep and rest. Long-eared Owls are strictly nocturnal and are sleeping during the day. Flushing small owls like Long-eared Owls or Short-eared Owls can very often be fatal as it exposes them

to a large list of predators that they typically do not have to interact with due to their roosting ecology. I've seen Short-eared Owls that have been flushed at inopportune times be predated by Red-tailed Hawks or fly into high tension wires, and I've seen Long-eared Owls flushed from a roost be killed by crows as they frantically search for a new hiding spot. It is hard to imagine how fragile these birds are until you take them out of their element and force them into situations that—without human disruption—they almost never have to navigate.

We all, at one time or another, make mistakes around these beautiful birds. I think if someone told you they have never flushed a bird by accident or lingered too long around a bird they would be lying. That said, the trajectory of human pressure on these birds cannot continue as it is. Photographers must not chase birds after they are flushed, try to force flight shots, or try to flush birds from daytime roosts, and people should not stand around all day chatting with friends while a roosting owl is trying to rest. Folks have to do better in these scenarios. The world we have forced these birds to survive in has too many human-made perils and stressors already—climate change, habitat loss, automobiles, poisons, and the list goes on. After all that, to then also be chased relentlessly whenever they are discovered is too much to adapt to, and this harassment has and will cause more bird fatalities if it continues.

My catch phrase in recent years has been—appreciate from a distance, take a few photos, and then move on. So, yes, of course, take a few photographs, but also stay a reasonable distance away and then be responsible and move along. With the state of the world around us, we all need to be responsible stewards to wildlife in whatever capacity we are able. This stewardship may mean watching a bird from a far-off distance or not getting the perfect photograph, but it especially requires doing what is right for the wildlife, even when no one else is around.

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Bird Observer Turns 50: Reflections of the Editors

[*Editor's Note: All the living former editors joined me in sharing our experiences at the helm of the journal. See Figure 1 for the list of all of* Bird Observer's *editors-in-chief. MCS.*]

Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts: Not Present at the Creation, But …

Paul M. Roberts, Editor 1978–1981

The origins of *Bird Observer* in a broad sense might be traced back to World War II. That conflict generated widespread, often unforeseen fundamental changes in society and behavior. Prior to the war, most birdwatching appeared to be done locally, in hometowns and environs, in one's own patch. After the war, the dramatic increases in automobile and fuel production and reductions in relative costs facilitated an explosive increase in personal mobility via the family automobile. Originally, bird clubs had scheduled railroad trips to Newburyport with long walks to Plum Island. Gradually those were replaced by auto caravans, with the numbers of birdwatchers and birdwatching trips growing exponentially.

In 1945, the Massachusetts Audubon Society began publishing field records in T*he Records of New England Birds*. In 1946, Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher published *Wild America*, a guide to great birdwatching areas across an increasingly accessible continent. In 1955, Wallace Bailey published *Birds in Massachusetts: When and Where to Find Them*, so new birders could know how to find various species. In 1960, the growing bird clubs of western Massachusetts began publishing field records in *Bird News of Western Massachusetts,* edited by Rudd Stone. Birding was becoming increasingly popular. (During the '80s "birding" largely replaced "birdwatching" as the common, "less passive" noun and now as the more inclusive term.)

Postwar economic development included new homes and businesses, especially in rapidly expanding suburbs with resultant loss of habitats and locales. The perceived threats stimulated burgeoning conservation organizations such as the Nature Conservancy (1951). Attitudes regarding personal mobility, recreation, nature, and birdwatching, all of which many of us take for granted today, were changing dramatically. In 1962, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* alerted the public to how we were poisoning our own environment. Iconic species of raptors, including the Bald Eagle, our national symbol, were almost extirpated. There was increasing widespread bipartisan concern for the environment and wildlife conservation. The Environmental Defense Fund was founded in 1967. The first global Earth Day was celebrated in 1970, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established by a Republican President. In 1972, DDT and similar pesticides were prohibited in the United States, and the Endangered Species Act was signed into law the following year.

It is difficult to convey the general sense of excitement in the birding world at that time. Environment, conservation, and ecology were becoming common words. There were fears of environmental threats and loss, but there were new perceptions of the importance of the natural world, birds, and more. You could go look for yourself and document if habitats or bird populations were declining or recovering.

Editor	From	To
Paula Butler	February 1973	December 1977
Paul M. Roberts	February 1978	April 1981
Editorial Board	June 1981	February 1983
Dorothy R. Arvidson	April 1983	February 1991
Martha J. Steele	April 1991	December 1996
Matthew L. Pelikan	February 1997	December 1999
Brooke Stevens	February 2000	December 2002
Terry Leverich	February 2003	August 2003
Brook Stevens (interim editor)	October 2003	December 2003
Carolyn B. Marsh	February 2004	December 2005
Paul Fitzgerald	February 2006	December 2007
Paul Fitzgerald; Mary Todd Glazer, managing editor	February 2008	December 2013
Marsha C. Salett	February 2014	

Figure 1. Editors of *Bird Observer* from 1973 to the present.

I was not present at the conception of the *Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts (BOEM)* in 1972. Bob Stymeist probably knows that story better than anyone. In 1968, Mass Audubon had stopped publishing the *Records of New England Birds,* so there were no longer published field records for eastern Massachusetts. *Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts* started publication in 1973 as an independent, nonprofit organization intended to correct that, with apparent encouragement from Mass Audubon and many members of the Brookline Bird Club. Paula Butler of Belmont was the founding editor.

My wife Julie and I were part of that first wave of baby boomer birders. I had moved to Boston in 1970 to teach at Boston College and married Julie in 1971. We began walking regularly in the Middlesex Fells and started noticing birds, particularly the Brown Thrasher and Rufous-sided Towhee. We bought a better pair of binoculars, the new *Golden Guide*, and then a second pair of better binoculars. We joined Mass Audubon—and birded their sanctuaries—and the Brookline Bird Club. As eager young birders, we subscribed to *BOEM* from the beginning. I remember being invited to a staff meeting at Paula's home several years later and afterward asked to join the staff. Julie joined the staff as well as an artist and designer, drawing maps for articles and casual bird art. I was impressed by everyone on the staff, some of whom were comparably more casual birders but interested and talented.

When Paula Butler retired as editor in 1977, I was invited to serve as editor, beginning with the February 1978 issue. It was a wonderful experience. I met and became much better acquainted with many outstanding people, some of whom I might never have seen in the field. Second, it gave me the opportunity to learn about birds

from people who knew a lot more than I did. Third, the staff and the job taught me a lot about publishing.

As a young nonprofit, *Bird Observer* used advanced technology in 1978. Everything was typed on state-of-the-art IBM Selectric Typewriters, using interchangeable font "golf balls." Volunteer writers and staff editors were necessary. Great typists were essential. There was no software to automatically identify typos. When a typo or mistake was found, you had to precisely realign the sheet, use white correction fluid to blot out the error, and then type over the correction as best as possible. Or you could retype the entire paragraph on a separate sheet and physically cut and paste it onto the original typescript. There were no digital memory tapes or cards or floppy disks. There was no digital archiving capability.

The field records editors dealt with small slips of monthly species reports mostly from regulars, active "bird observers" who provided their monthly lists in a timely way. I developed tremendous respect for how detailed and challenging their work was and still is today, even with all the conveniences of digital technology.

The Where to Go (WTG) articles that led off each issue were popular and helped establish the broad appeal of the journal. During 1978, *Bird Observer* published a 174–page paperback, *Where to Find Birds in Eastern Massachusetts*. Book coeditors Leif Robinson and Bob Stymeist took many of *BOEM*'s most popular Where to Go articles and solicited a few new ones to guide people to more than 30 birding locations, with beautifully drawn original maps and bird art by Julie and others. The book leveraged our WTG articles, providing an easy-to-carry guide for our subscribers and advertising the journal to a much larger audience.

I had been editor for approximately nine months when, on September 13, 1978, my life changed unexpectedly. That day, I was one of four hawk watchers at Wachusett Mountain who saw 10,213 hawks—10,086 were Broad-winged Hawks—migrate over the mountain in about three hours, the largest hawk flight reported in New England until that time. I had grown somewhat enamored of hawks in 1973–74, and in 1976 founded and ran the Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch (EMHW) to conduct fall and spring watches throughout the region. But it had not prepared me for that hawk watch at Wachusett Mountain in 1978. I was blown away by my single most memorable birding event. Two months later, I attended a joint conference of the young Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA, founded 1974), and the Raptor Research Foundation (1965) at Hawk Mountain. I met many of the leaders in hawk migration research and spoke briefly on our large flight. I was asked to serve as vice chair of HMANA under the founding chair, Michael Harwood, an internationally famous author. Being perhaps a tad naïve, I accepted, excited but not fully appreciating the magnitude of the commitment.

In March 1979, our first daughter Laura was born. That year I also made a major career change, working at Honeywell Information Systems as an editor. Then the HMANA board of directors elected me the second chair of the young organization. Running a young 700-person, all-volunteer international organization by carbon copy proved challenging. The new child, new career, and new chair all occurring in less than

a year soon suggested that I could not responsibly continue as editor of *Bird Observer*.

The *Bird Observer* board fulfilled the editorial responsibilities until Dorothy Arvidson agreed to serve as editor. That was perhaps my most important contribution as editor, setting the stage for Dorothy, whose leadership elevated the journal to a higher level of quality that it has maintained to this day. In 1990, *Bird News of Western Massachusetts* merged with *BOEM*, and its editor, Seth Kellogg, became the compiler of western Massachusetts sightings for the new Massachusetts bird journal of record, whose name was shortened to *Bird Observer*.

I benefited in many ways from my years on the staff of *Bird Observer.* I got to know and enjoy a number of people, from Ruth Emery and Herman D'Entremont to Louise DiGiacomo, Ted Atkinson, and Martha Vaughan Kricher. I learned a lot about birds and publishing.

Bird Observer is a rare vehicle that raises meaningful questions and discussion and often offers meaningful answers about the bird life of Massachusetts. It provides not only data but thought and analysis. And it provides insight and perspective, which might not be available on large internet endeavors or on silos of specialist Facebook groups. The feature articles and book reviews are gold mines of information, often not available anywhere else.

It is locally run and locally focused. Many of the people I first met when working on *Bird Observer* are still donating their time and skills to it. As with four other organizations to which I belong that are observing their golden anniversaries this decade, we are seeing a call go out to a new generation to perceive and meet the evolving needs of the birding community. I am incredibly grateful to the staff of *Bird Observer,* now and over the previous 50 years, for their immense contributions to the quality of birding life in the Commonwealth and am proud to have played a small part in it.

Restructuring Editorial Departments and Celebrating *Bird Observer's* Twentieth Anniversary

Martha Steele, Editor 1991–1996

My tenure as *Bird Observer* editor began when I succeeded Dorothy Arvidson, who held the position from 1983 through February 1991. Dorothy was a hard act to follow because of her strict attention to style detail, which was important for improving the young journal's quality and consistency of content from its initial years. I inherited from her an excellent style manual that was based on the classic *Chicago Manual of Style* and has been periodically updated by subsequent editors. Our manual is still the foundation for editing every article in every issue of *Bird Observer*.

In the latter stages of her tenure, Dorothy grew increasingly concerned about the volume of work required for the editor to publish the journal every other month. In response, staff debated how to alleviate the workload for the next editor. Thus was born the department head structure by which staff would be assigned responsibility for different content areas of the journal. My first issue as editor in April 1991

implemented the new structure, which continues today.

Our first class of department heads represented an all-star cast of the Massachusetts birding community: Jim Berry (Where to Go), John Kricher (Feature Articles and Field Notes), Alden Clayton (Book Reviews), Ted Davis (Cover Art), Bob Stymeist (Bird Sightings), and Wayne Petersen (At A Glance). Ted, Bob, and Wayne still hold these positions. Department heads were responsible for soliciting articles and conducting initial editing or peer review for material in their content area.

Another important change that occurred during my tenure was the nomenclature change from Field Records to Bird Sightings for the section containing monthly summaries of bird reports. Following the formation of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC) in 1989, *Bird Observer* staff debated whether the Field Records title was misleading by implying that all reports contained in that section had been verified similarly to the rigorous process used by the MARC and other state bird records committees. After considerable debate during the early part of my editorship, the editorial staff agreed to change the section title to Bird Sightings, beginning with the February 1992 issue.

Perhaps the most memorable issue for me was in February 1993, when we commemorated the twentieth anniversary of *Bird Observer*. The cover featured a collage of covers from the first 20 years and the contents contained historical perspectives on birding and the journal. For that issue, I interviewed Margaret Argue in her downtown Boston apartment in the Prudential Center about her birding experiences over the previous 50 years. I most remember her telling of birding one day during World War II on Plum Island. She took a train back to Boston after nightfall, with all the shades drawn so as not to draw the attention of potential enemy submarines lurking off the New England coast.

Other articles in that issue included Wayne Petersen's notes on the best birds seen during *Bird Observer'*s first 20 years. The unquestionable highlight was the Ross's Gull in Newburyport Harbor in 1975, the first record for this species in the lower 48 states of the United States. Wayne wrote that the bird was seen by thousands, and the sighting was one of the great birding events of the century, chronicled by *Time* magazine. The issue also contained an article on the legendary Ludlow Griscom, birding memories contributed by readers, a history of birding in Essex County, an overview of our cover art during the first two decades, and a list of everyone who had appeared on the journal's masthead to that point in time.

The longevity and unparalleled excellence of *Bird Observer* across 50 years of continual changes in an all-volunteer staff is, simply put, extraordinary. It has stood the test of time because it has responded to what regional birders want and enjoy. Even as other resources such as eBird have exploded onto the birding scene, *Bird Observer* continues to fill an important niche. What else can you easily consult for a quick summary of Bird Sightings, with weather details of specific events affecting bird movements? Where else can you get a mix—in every issue—of interesting regional locations to bird; feature articles on fascinating bird behaviors; tips on identifying a particular species; reviews of new books about birds, particularly by local authors; facts

about the life history or ecology of the species gracing our covers, with art donated by preeminent bird artists across the land; and musings about our birding experiences and passion? In addition, *Bird Observer* has slowly expanded its reach, moving from a focus on Eastern Massachusetts to include the entire state for bird sightings and all New England for Where to Go birding and other articles.

Massachusetts has a rich birding history, and *Bird Observer* has been an exemplary publication in helping to document that history. Peruse any issue of *Bird Observer* and you may be surprised, even amused, at what you find. Reflecting on which birds are highlighted in each issue during the reporting period for that issue can be interesting. For example, in the first issue in 1973, a Red-bellied Woodpecker visiting a feeder in Southampton was notable. Today, of course, this species is common throughout the state, and such a bird would not be flagged in the records.

Congratulations to each and every volunteer for 50 years of journalistic and creative excellence to make *Bird Observer* one of the premiere regional birding journals in the United States.

The Essence of *Bird Observer*

Matt Pelikan, Editor 1997–1999

I have never been much of a joiner. For many years, my contact with the birding community was mostly limited to ad hoc time with random birders in the field and frequent calls to the Voice of Audubon (259-8805, remember?). So I did not really know what to make of the round stickers emblazoned with a godwit and the words "Bird Observer" that I would sometimes see in car windows.

These were alluring! Godwits, for starters, are cool birds. But also, the word choice "observer" resonated strongly with me. It connotes serious intent, a deep focus on the subject, a desire for knowledge that goes beyond "watching" or "seeing." ("You have seen," Sherlock Holmes famously chides Dr. Watson, "but you have not observed." And, yes, in my mind it is still "Manomet Bird Observatory.") I wanted to be an observer.

At some point, perhaps while foraging in the periodicals room of the Arlington Public Library, I discovered that there was a journal associated with those stickers. Part of my meager graduate student income went to a *Bird Observer* subscription. I was not disappointed: the journal offered the perfect mix of bird-finding advice, identification help, behavioral interpretation, information on bird conservation, bird records, artwork (Zickefoose! Zemaitis! Van Dusen!), and avian science. As the name promised, it was a publication for observers, not just watchers. And I loved its unapologetic geographical focus on my personal birding universe of eastern Massachusetts.

It was undoubtedly Marj Rines who lured me into the gravitational field of the journal. I met Marj at Mount Auburn Cemetery, I am pretty sure it was, sometime in the mid-1980s. We birded together at random many times before we even bothered exchanging names, but over time, we got to know each other well. When the impending retirement of Dave Lange, the journal's subscription manager, created a vacancy on the

staff toward the end of 1994, Marj asked if I would consider filling it. Starting with the February 1995 issue, I spent a couple of years maintaining a database, chattering out labels on a dot matrix printer, and helping with mailings—chaotic but somehow always successful. When editor Martha Steele stepped away, I assumed the editor-in-chief role beginning with the February 1997 issue, marginally qualified by a couple of English degrees, experience founding a newsletter for young birders for the American Birding Association, and, of course, a lot of time in the field.

The journal's staff was small in those days, but then as now, it comprised recreational birders, academic ornithologists, all-around naturalists, and wordsmiths. I couldn't believe I was working with Wayne Petersen and Bob Stymeist, birding legends to folks in my age cohort. I was astonished at the amount of time and effort prominent academics John Kricher and Ted Davis contributed to the journal. Meetings and mailings percolated with talk of birds and bird sightings as well as of the journal's business. Change was always on the table, but the consensus lay with evolution, not revolution. We tweaked the masthead and cover design while sticking to the frugal black-and-white, saddle-stitched format that still prevails. We streamlined the editorial and production process. We made a conscious but cautious foray into coverage of western Massachusetts and indeed all of New England, not because we felt the journal needed to become bigger but because those areas were of increasing interest to birders in eastern Massachusetts.

My relocation to Martha's Vineyard in August 1997, pursuing a job opportunity for my wife, was the beginning of the end for my active involvement with *Bird Observer*. Those were the days of dial-up, long before Zoom meetings or even, really, before the Internet amounted to much more than balky email and America Online chat rooms. For a time, I made periodic overnight trips to the mainland for evening meetings to plan issues, often staying with Marj and her two exemplary indoor cats. But the time and effort of travel combined with the demands of my official jobs spread me too thin. I was driving myself bonkers and, worse, becoming a drag on the journal. My last issue was December 1999. The decision to step down was profoundly saddening; working on the journal—future obituary writer, take note—still stands out as one of the most rewarding things I have ever done.

I expect that in some dim, birdy way, a godwit starts its preposterous migration with a kind of confidence, even tranquility. Taking off and flying several thousand miles at a whack is simply what a godwit does, part of its essence. I predict that something similar will apply as *Bird Observer* launches into its next 50 years. Surely it will respond to advances in technology and in the study of birds. I hope it will find ways to help broaden the demographics of birding and ornithology. But I also hope it stays confidently true to its essence: a fun but serious, no-frills publication edited with passion, collaboration, and creativity, focused on a region with fine habitats, impressive avian diversity, and an unmatched history of bird study.

A journal for observers.

Steadfast through Uncertain Times

Brooke Stevens, Editor 2000–2002

My turn as editor came at a bumpy time for the journal; we were catching up on a lot. However, the core group remained steadfast, and new staff showed the same commitment and energy that has kept *Bird Observer* accessible, timely, and a great read all these years. Congratulations!

My Time as Editor Coincided with the Red-footed Falcon

Carolyn Marsh, Managing Editor 2004–2005

My active *Bird Observer* life covered 19 years, but only two of them were in an editorial capacity. And that itself was a choice of necessity. Dave Larson, Chris Floyd, and I were the nominating committee at the end of 2003, and we were stumped as to who would or could fill the several vacancies we were charged with filling. Finally, I challenged Chris, "I'll be the editor if you'll step up to be president." He said okay and the die was cast. This was quite nervy on my part because I had never been editor of anything other than multiple papers in college. And this is why I chose to be listed as managing editor. My two years at the helm were an education and a half, and I relied extensively on the advice and assistance of Marj Rines and Harriet Hoffman, who were ever ready with direction or inspiration when I needed help.

Twelve issues came out under my supervision, but by far the most exciting and memorable was December 2004 (Vol. 32, No. 6), which was devoted to the first New World appearance of the Red-footed Falcon on Martha's Vineyard.

For starters, it included our first cover printed in color, a fine illustration by David Sibley. The added cost for producing this was covered by funds donated from excited members of the board of directors. Several usual features such as About the Cover and About Books were omitted to allow space for the seven articles that covered the subject of the Red-footed Falcon from every angle we could discover.

Vern Laux wrote about his initial challenge of identifying the bird; he almost missed it. David Sibley described the fine points of identification. Wayne Petersen and Paul Bacich recounted the similarities between this and the record sighting of the Ross's Gull in Newburyport in 1975. There are four other articles of substance, and I think you will have a fine hour if you locate the issue on our website, www.birdobserver.org. One challenge you will find in the December 2004 *Bird Observer* is in the article by Bob Stymeist and Jeremiah Trimble on what vagrants might be expected next. See how their predictions have worked out. I don't know.

I cannot leave this subject without remembering again that Doug Chickering noted most aptly on the Massbird website that he found it most propitious that the bird of the year—indeed of the millennium—was a small gray falcon with Red Sox.

I remain proud of *Bird Observer* and am extremely pleased that it is continuing with such relevant content and good writing. And I remain delighted to have been a part of its earlier success.

Moving Toward the Digital Age

Paul Fitzgerald, Editor 2006–2013

Bird Observer board member Chris Floyd first approached me at a Nuttall meeting in 2005 about the editor's position. I agreed because I had formerly published a for-profit art magazine for several years and thought I could bring some new perspective to the publication. Editing, it turns out, is a lot harder than publishing. I am forever grateful to the editorial staff for bailing me out month after month.

Because I came on board during a seismic global paradigm shift from print to digital publication, I assumed the mantle of whiner-in-chief at board meetings about the need to transition from a traditional print journal to more of an online platform. That change did not happen under my watch, but I like to think I helped put the stone in the journal's shoe. *Bird Observer* has since been transformed by more capable hands into a vital online resource well suited to the habits and expectations of the next generation of birders and conservation activists.

Editing *Bird Observer* for 16 Years

Mary Todd Glaser, Managing Editor 2008–2013

When Marsha Salett announced the 50th anniversary of *Bird Observer*, I immediately reflected on the amazing longevity of the journal's all-volunteer staff. After looking through my back issues, I was surprised to learn that I have been an editor since 2006. It is my great fortune that I have been able to serve as both a managing editor and associate editor for various issues of *Bird Observer* throughout the past sixteen years.

I remember being excited about the prospect of joining a group of birders who know far more than I. When I first began to read *Bird Observer*, I was delighted to discover a whole world of knowledge and adventure around many species of birds.

One of the reasons why *Bird Observer* is unique is that its writers come from all backgrounds and work together building knowledge about migration patterns, mating rituals, and the ecosystems around a wide variety of birds.

For the past few years, I have primarily edited the book reviews of Mark Lynch, whose writings are detailed, magnificently reverent of his subjects, and full of astute observations that both delight and inform.

It has been my great honor to contribute to this journal, and I am looking forward to its further unfolding as an important twenty-first century document of the lives and journeys of our precious, feathered friends.

Shepherding *Bird Observer* into the Twenty-first Century

Marsha C. Salett, Editor 2014–present

At the Mass Audubon Birders Meeting in 2008, Marj Rines and Carolyn Marsh were pitching *Bird Observer* and I was curious enough to subscribe. It was a good decision. I was becoming a more active birder, traveling the United States

and the world, and was more curious about local New England birding, too. This compact journal was brimming with articles and field notes about bird behavior and conservation, places to bird by people who knew their patches—and how to describe them so others could follow along and find the birds—historical perspectives, book reviews that made me want to rush out and read the books, bird sightings, and more. The expertise and variety were impressive. For example, the first issue I received was 2008, Volume 36, No. 3, and it contained "Birding the Swedish Colony of Northern ME" by Bill Sheehan (pp. 133–147)—covering a place I had never heard of—and "Needham's Naturalist: The Bird Journals of Timothy Otis Fuller" by Gloria Polizzotti Greis (pp. 148–153)—about a birder from my hometown.

Fast forward a year or so: birding had enriched my life to the point where I decided it was time for me to contribute to the birding community. I saw that *Bird Observer* was looking for a copyeditor. As a writer and editor, I knew the position would be interesting but not overly time-consuming or taxing. I applied. The board of directors was interested in meeting me. Since the annual party at Carolyn and John Marsh's house in Wellesley was a couple of weeks away, why didn't I just come and meet everybody: board, staff, significant others. Jay Shetterly called and asked me what I would like to bring to the potluck.

Like Matt Pelikan, I am not a joiner—another reason why the copyediting appealed to me but the thought of attending a party with a group of strangers did not. Because the Marshes lived only a couple of miles away, I went. Delicious food, plenty of wine, engaging conversation—I felt welcome. The dedication to *Bird Observer* was catching. I was in.

Soon, I was in deeper than planned. I joined the board and then I became an associate editor in October 2011. When asked to be editor-in-chief in 2014, I was hesitant because my background is in journalism, not birding, but Wayne Petersen encouraged me and said he would help with his connections to the birding community in New England. (He still does.) I need to thank Wayne publicly because editing *Bird Observer* is the best job, paid or volunteer, that I have had. It is intellectually and creatively stimulating and I am constantly learning something new about birds and birding.

In the 2000s, *Bird Observer*, like many print journals and newspapers, was suffering declining subscriptions due to the rise of the Internet. Unlike many other journals, *Bird Observer* did not keep up with the times and go digital. By the time I became editor, it was clear that *Bird Observer* needed to adapt to the information age. Paul Fitzgerald and I stressed the need for an online presence, especially after one of my daughters told me, "No one under 40 is going to subscribe if they have to mail in a check." The problem was twofold. First, most of us were wordsmiths or nature people who had no background in computer technology; we had no idea where to begin. More important, however, was how to go digital without losing the character and essence of *Bird Observer*.

But the times and technology were a'changing and we needed a professional web designer and webmaster. John Marsh headed a search committee that found Eric

Swanzey, who led us into the twenty-first century—and keeps *Bird Observer* fully relevant—with a beautifully designed website, www.birdobserver.org, that showcases *Bird Observer* at its best, with online versions of our print journal and so much added value for the birding community, from a map that pinpoints our Where to Go Birding articles, to up-to-the-minute rarity listings, to the Bird Observer Store, and yes, the ability to subscribe online. Eric got it just right; the online journal dovetails with the print journal—plus the covers and photos are in full color on our website.

When board member John Nelson pulled together the Association of Massachusetts Bird Clubs, Eric created the New England Birding Calendar, hosted on the *Bird Observer* website, where clubs can post their trip and event calendars.

Bird Observer has branched out in other ways as well. Peter Vale, husband of the late, longtime indefatigable compiler Fay Vale, entered all our historic bird sightings records into eBird.

All of Bird Observer's content from 1973 to 2015 has been digitized to SORA, the Searchable Ornithological Research Archive at https://sora.unm.edu/. This archive is a resource that is open to the public.

During my tenure, several longtime staffers retired from key positions: Carolyn and John Marsh, Jim Berry, Sandon Shepard. Others switched to less demanding positions. Dave Larson, the former production editor, is now the science editor and Susan Carlson, the former proofreader, is now a copyeditor. Lynette Leka came onboard as treasurer and subscription manager. Production editor Peter Oehlkers calmly handles whatever I send him, even last-minute changes and corrections. First Christine King and now Mary McKitrick have been our eagle-eyed proofreaders. We had a brief existential crisis when Marj Rines retired as Bird Sightings editor in 2017 after overseeing all the bird sightings records since 1990. Neil Hayward stepped up and keeps the records running seamlessly.

I expanded the editorial staff so that we could publish on time without overburdening the team. Regina Harrison and Jeffrey Boone Miller joined Toddy Glaser as associate editors. Mindy LaBranche (now retired), Mary Beth Barilla, Jeffrey Gantz, and Mary O'Neil are the copyeditors along with Susan Carlson. *Bird Observer* continues to attract talented staff from myriad backgrounds.

The *esprit de corps* of past and present staff members—naturalists, scientists, teachers, writers, artists, web designers, and birders with a variety of day jobs—has kept this nonprofit, professional birding journal vibrant for the past 50 years and will keep it going in the future. Because what resonates with all of us is the essence and mission of *Bird Observer*: to support and promote the observation, understanding, and conservation of the wild birds of New England.

The Pecking Order at your Feeders

Birding Community E-Bulletin, December 2021

Supplied with a wonderful database of almost 100,000 bird interactions, the gang at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "Project FeederWatch" announced the decoding – a virtual pecking order – of feeder-visitors. This power-ranking, covering scores of species, made something of a splash last month, and the listing wasn't always related to a size-order as expected.

Yes, the grouping and chart-display did start with the hefty Wild Turkey at the top, and it ended with the small and retiring Brown Creeper toward the bottom, but a size-hierarchy wasn't always the rule. For example, Mourning Doves might outweigh other species, but they also give way to smaller species. Woodpeckers are tough – they peck after all – but the large Pileated Woodpecker also proves to be fairly docile.

Some bird rivalries at the feeder are too complex for a simple ranking. The House Finch usually dominates the Purple Finch, and the Purple Finch almost always dominates the Dark-eyed Junco. But when the House Finch and Dark-eyed Junco face off, the latter often dominates.

The most complex relationships are probably between American Goldfinches and the closely-related Pine Siskin. When these species show up – usually in flocks – they appear to get into serious squabbles both among themselves and with almost every other species.

Since 1987, thousands of backyard feeder-watchers across the U.S. and Canada have participated in Project FeederWatch, a project jointly run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Birds Canada. And since 2016, observers have been able to report specific bird power-interactions.

"The birds are at a food source, so it's a place where they're more concentrated and even more likely than usual to have these behavioral interactions," said Project FeederWatch leader Emma Greig.

In a 2017 study in Behavioral Ecology, Project FeederWatch researchers applied the first wave of their data into algorithms to condense the complex of relationships into a simple rank. Since the project had a network of 30,000 citizen-scientists, this meant the team could collect data at a continental scale. And now, a vastly expanded data set of 99,376 interactions among almost 200 species, up from 7,685 interactions in the 2017 study, is able to provide more serious findings.

For some of us, especially those with some bird-banding experience, it was a surprise to find that chickadees – both Black-capped and Carolina – often perceived to be quite feisty, were actually the least dominant of the more common feeder-birds.

For more see: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/11/28/bird-feeder-pecking-order/>

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-tuesday-edition-1.6268087/when-it-comes-to-bird-feeders-there-s-a-pecking-order-and-size-really-matters-1.6268088>

Birding Community E-Bulletin Archive: <https://www.refugeassociation.org/birding-community-e-bulletin/>

MUSINGS FROM THE BLIND BIRDER

Getting Into a Birding Pickle

Martha Steele

Most birders likely have a story or two to tell about getting into trouble or finding themselves in an uncomfortable position in pursuit of birds. For example, some skeptics view binoculars around a person's neck as an indicator of the potential for spying with malicious intent and may feel justified in calling the police or confronting the birder.

My friend Rick, who lives in Vermont, recalled how, while out for a walk during a visit to family in Tucson, Arizona, he noticed a hummingbird perched on a wire. He moved to a spot where the sun was behind him to get a better view of the bird on the wire. He raised his binoculars and repositioned himself several times for a better angle to the bird. Within minutes, an angry woman confronted him, demanding what the [expletive] he was doing. Immersed in his effort to identify the hummingbird, Rick had not realized that he was in front of an elementary school. Clearly, the woman had wrongly assumed that he was training his binocular sights on young children at the school with malicious intent. He pointed to the hummingbird still perched on the wire and said that he was from Vermont and wanted to identify a bird that he thought he had never seen. The woman was mollified and apologized for her assumptions. It was, nonetheless, an unsettling experience for Rick that someone would automatically assume that he, by virtue of looking through binoculars, might be a pedophile.

The Tucson woman is not the only one making assumptions about binocular-toting birders. Some years ago, a birder went to a Brighton neighborhood in search of a Eurasian Tree Sparrow that was reported visiting a feeder in the backyard of a house in a densely populated area. After seeing and recording the bird, the birder returned to his Watertown home. That evening, while dressed in his pajamas and watching television, he heard a knock on the door. When the birder opened the door, several men, including some police officers, asked to come in to talk to him. The police asked him where he was that afternoon and what he was doing. The birder patiently explained that he was at a house in Brighton looking for a rare bird. To help bolster his case, he pulled out several bird identification guides and showed the officers the sparrow. Satisfied, the officers explained that they were responding to a complaint of a suspicious person with binoculars lurking around the house of Joseph P. Kennedy II. The complainant had written down the license plate of the birder and then called the police. The incident was a reminder to be mindful of using binoculars near residences or other buildings that might engender suspicions of malicious intentions.

Birders often must travel on remote roads in search of particular birds. I have on many occasions been worried that we might get stuck in the middle of nowhere when we find ourselves on an increasingly narrow and rougher road that we are exploring in pursuit of great habitats for birds. If this happens on a trip abroad, it may be even more challenging to extricate ourselves from the situation.

A group of four American birders were driving a rented four-wheel drive vehicle on a muddy road in a remote region of Venezuela when their vehicle got stuck in the mud. Try as they might, they could not free the vehicle, instead spinning their wheels even deeper into the mud. Two of the birders started walking to try to find help somewhere and came upon a small village. Communication was challenging because one of the birders knew only a few words of Spanish. They tried to explain their predicament to the villagers but left to trudge back to their car unsure if their message got across. Once rejoining their friends, the four settled in for what they presumed was going to be a long night in the vehicle. But soon and in the darkness, they noticed big headlights coming toward them. An immense logging truck pulled up next to them to offer assistance. It turns out that the villagers had understood that the Americans needed help with their vehicle and were simply awaiting the return of the logging truck. The truck driver assessed the situation and went to the front left wheel, turned a knob in the middle of the wheel, stood up, and then walked to the other front wheel to do the same. He then waved his hands forward, signaling that someone should try to drive the vehicle out of the mud. Indeed, once in gear, the vehicle easily moved forward and out of the mud. The truck driver had simply turned the knobs to activate the front wheels of the four-wheel drive. Although some members of the group thought the front wheels had not been engaged because they did not turn while the back ones spun mud everywhere while digging themselves deeper, there was no manual to direct them on how to engage the front wheels. To make matters worse, the hours of delay returning to their lodging meant they had to climb over a high fence with birding gear in tow to get back into their rooms for the night.

Other sticky situations for birders include being admonished by a park ranger escorting you out of a park after its closure time or, worse, getting locked in for the night when you fail to exit in time while looking for nocturnal birds. The latter happened to two energetic Massachusetts teenagers who had birded the day at the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge in Texas. The consolation prize was witnessing the dawn chorus with the place all to themselves.

Pelagic trips can be legendary not only for rare birds but also for near terror on churning seas. Many birders have experienced a trip where they wondered whether they would make it home. Was possibly seeing a life White-faced Storm Petrel really worth this?

We can even admonish one another for trespassing to see a rare bird or trampling sensitive habitat for a better view or photograph. Ah, yes, we do want to see our birds and we sometimes go a little too far or do not realize that we may be heading down a difficult road. We can certainly learn from one another as we try to avoid birding pickles in the future.

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.*

ABOUT BOOKS

Becoming Enchanted

Mark Lynch

> ***Why Peacocks? An Unlikely Search for Meaning in the World's Most Magnificent Bird***. Sean Flynn. 2021. New York, New York: Simon & Schuster.
>
> There is always the potential when dabbling with birds—and this no one tells you beforehand—of becoming enchanted, and it is impossible to understand this until it happens. (p. 217)

What was the last bird you can honestly say you were "enchanted" by? Not just wowed briefly by its colorful plumage or awed by some crazy behavior or thrilled by how rare it was? There have certainly been birds I have momentarily been knocked out by, like the cassowary in Queensland that cornered us and started booming. In that case I am not sure I was not just exceedingly thrilled that we were not disemboweled. After some thought, my "closest to enchanted" moment was watching the Fairy Terns nest on Lord Howe Island. The shocking pure white of the adults was surreal looking. It seemed whiter than anything I had seen in birds before. This white contrasted with a solid dark eye and bill, giving the tern an unreal appearance. They lay their single egg on bare branches, with not even the idea of a constructed nest. When the young hatch, they cling to that branch for dear life. Every time we passed a nesting bird over the course of a week, I had to watch it. That may be as close as I have gotten to being enchanted by a bird.

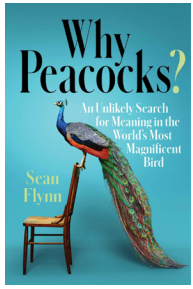
One of the threads that runs through *Why Peacocks?* is how Sean Flynn, admittedly "agnostic" about all birds at the start of the book, bit by bit falls under the spell of his peacocks. *Why Peacocks?* is also a story about how human families learn to understand and appreciate the non-human members of their family, particularly when those "pets" die.

Sean Flynn met his wife Louise on the north shore of Massachusetts. He is a reporter, writer, and journalist. Louise is also a writer. They marry, have two children, Emmett and Calvin, and eventually move to a small farm in North Carolina. Emmett wants a snake as a pet, and Sean buys him a small python dubbed Cosmo. Sean is also agnostic about snakes: does not fear them, does not love them. Through an unfortunate accident, the snake dies, and Emmett is heartbroken. They get two chickens, but that is not enough for Emmett. Finally, through a strange series of events, they decide to get some peacocks. That leap from owning two chickens to raising three peacocks seems a bit impulsive. Louise, not sure what they are getting into, wants to start with only one.

Louise has spontaneously volunteered to take a peacock because a peacock, in a fundamental sense, is not a bird that one possesses so much as experiences; as with an especially moving work of art, the simple act of looking at it will stir emotion. (p. 30)

But Sean wants more. Sean writes, "The reason to have a peacock, I would have

thought, is self evident." (p. 3) Really? Flynn offers, "Because Keats was right about truth and beauty." (p. 3) This refers to the final lines of John Keats's 1819 poem "*Ode on a Grecian Urn*": "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."



My thought was that this was an awful lot to expect from three domesticated peafowl, Keats, and art, I do not care how beautiful their train. I was wrong.

And with that, Sean and the book take a wild ride down the rabbit hole.

Sean Flynn knows he is going to have to build an enclosure of some kind to house his Keatsian wonders, so he turns to Martha Stewart's blog. It seems that Ms. Stewart has quite a number of peafowl and has instructions on her blog for building the perfect enclosure. "Martha Stewart's pen would be the best pen because Martha taught me how to make *Bŭche de Noël*. And I'm much better with a hammer than a jelly roll pan." (p. 34)

I admit to having a passing vision of Martha and her friend Snoop Dog in lounge chairs, smoking a big one and just digging Martha's peafowl.

Before we go any further, some peafowl basics. The collective term is *peafowl*, the male is a *peacock*, and the female a *peahen*. And it is not the peacock's *tail*, it is the *train*. The actual tail is quite ordinary and under the train.

After the peafowl coop is constructed, the next problem is where to buy peafowl. This is not as simple as you may think, but eventually Sean finds a woman, simply referred to as Danielle. She has been living on a rural farm since 1977 with many horses and many peafowl. She wants to sell the peafowl because, according to her, a resident Great Horned Owl is preying on them, biting off all of their heads. If that does not sound quite right, it is not. All I will write is that there is more to that story in the book. Sean buys three peafowl—two peacocks and a peahen. On first laying eyes on the birds, Sean is smitten, "It was the most magnificent creature I had ever seen." (p. 23)

They bag them unceremoniously headfirst in old feed bags with their feet hanging out, and Sean transports his treasures home. They are named by the family Ethel, Carl, and Mr. Pickle. At this point in the story, *Why Peacocks?* follows two main threads. One thread is Sean's challenges keeping such large, and frankly odd birds and his growing fascination with them. The peafowl get seriously sick several times, and this entails transporting them to the nearest avian veterinarian, Dr. Burkett, who becomes a major character in this tale. It proves to be extremely expensive to treat such exotic domestic fowl. This brings up the dreaded situation of measuring how much to spend on healing a pet your family loves before it becomes too much money.

Of course, Sean is waiting anxiously for one of his peacocks to display its legendary train. When it finally happens, his writing captures the psychedelic majesty of the event:

> Mr. Pickle turned toward me, his beak half open, as if he were mouth-breathing. His train was spread in a half-circle nine feet across, as high as my chin, and curling gently forward at the top. Except his feathers were no longer individual appendages. They were part of a woven whole, an elaborate tapestry of gold and blue and turquoise. His breast and neck were a tapered sapphire wedge against the green-gold scales between his shoulders, which formed a smaller, denser half-circle, like a nova core exploding. Mr. Pickle shuffled his feet, twisted a few degrees to the east, and the turquoise returned. The top of his arc began to deflate ever so slightly, and then he rattled his feathers and the arc was full again. The entire train was alive, rippling like water, yet the eye at the end of each feather appeared to be floating on the surface, barely disturbed. (p. 51)

Sean Flynn is just as elegant in describing the vocal displays of peacocks, something he was apprehensive about because of how loud and raucous it was supposed to be, and he has neighbors who might be annoyed.

> Mr. Pickle, a rising two-note burst, E above middle C, up to G, a quick slur down to F-sharp. He repeated it twice, which I could hear from inside the house. It was not a plaintive cry, desperate and whiny, but assertive, a robust announcement*: I am here*. A moment later, he encored with a triplet of single notes in the same range, *mow, mow, mow*. (p. 221)

The other thread of *Why Peacocks?* is Sean's considerable research into the lore, history, natural history, and scientific study of peafowl. He is a reporter and journalist, and this instinct to uncover all aspects of the peacock's history serves him well.

There are three species of peafowl in the wild: the India Blue, the Green, and the Congo. The first two are found in Southeast Asia and India; the last species is found in Africa. The Green and Congo species are declining and are listed as vulnerable or endangered according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature. This is due to deforestation and the massive conversion of forest to agricultural land. They are also threatened with Chinese hydroelectric schemes. Only the India Blue is not threatened and has become a widespread domesticated fowl.

Peafowl were well known to the Ancient Greeks and Romans, and from there, they spread over Europe. But they did not become established in North America until the late 1800s.

Sean becomes interested in the evolution of the peafowl. The evolution of such a spectacular train bothered Darwin: "The sight of a feather in a peacock's tail," Charles Darwin once wrote, "whenever I gaze at it, it makes me sick." (p. 99) We know more about the evolution of the train, and there have even been studies of what the peahen is looking at when the peacock is in full display:

> Mostly she looks at something else entirely. For every four minutes a peacock flaunts his train, a peahen ignores him for almost three. And when she does look, she is much more interested in the lower regions, in the swords and bottom-row eyespots, and, from the back, the wings. Jazz hands

> and rattling feathers catch her attention, but she's decidedly disinterested in the grand sprawl of the show. She barely glances at the upper eyespots, which appear to be more useful as a long-distance lure poking above low bushes and high grass. (p. 109–10)

There are many myths and stories about peacocks. Probably the best known is a Greek myth about how the eyes got on the train feather. It is too long a tale to relate here, but it involves Zeus, Hera, Io, and Argus the hundred-eyed giant. The peacock is also an important bird in the Hindu religion. Flynn does a fine job telling these and other myths and stories. I know this because I have lectured about peacocks in art for decades and had to do the considerable research myself.

For such visually spectacular birds, it is sobering that they were also eaten by the rich and powerful. Some of the historical-gastronomical information in *Why Peacocks?* borders on the grotesque:

> Henry III, for example, had 120 of them served at his Christmas feast in 1251, and the Archbishop of York had 104 prepared for a feast in the fifteenth century. Yet the peacock's beauty was always the point, even when it was being eaten. A regally prepared peacock would be skinned and dressed, roasted, and then covered again with its own skin for serving, feathers still lovely and gleaming. (p. 123–24)

Did peafowl taste particularly sumptuous? Not at all. This seems an extreme example of conspicuous consumption. The rich devouring extreme beauty simply because they could afford it.

Sean Flynn also travels to see collections of peafowl, to places like the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York City where peafowl have been in residence since the 1980s. In Scotland's Dumferline estate there is even a peacock warden. These travels pale in comparison to Flynn's trip to the Palos Verdes Peninsula in California. Here there was a large population of feral peafowl well known to many. How they got here is, in part, courtesy of Frank A. Vanderlip, Sr., a banker from New York who helped design the Federal Reserve. But these birds, loved and appreciated by many of the residents for many decades, have recently become the victims of an unknown serial killer. Since 2012, more than 60 birds have been shot with buckshot, shot with bolts from a crossbow, and otherwise tortured. There is even a police captain with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Los Angeles assigned to the case. So far, there are no good suspects. Why would people want to destroy such obviously beautiful birds? It is because under all those shimmering feathers, peafowl are just birds:

Gini figured it out. "People think they're cute," she told me. People drive into the Lanes and it is fairy-tale land. They see in those birds what I saw, elegant hallucinations on a fence rail, cobalt sylphs rising from the dust. They offer, just by standing there, a swirl of wonder, a glimpse of fantasy.

> And then they go and act like birds, whooping and pooping and trashing the garden. To a certain kind of person, it feels like a bait and switch, as if

they've been betrayed. It's the stuff of pulp fiction and tabloid crime, beauty and betrayal, and it always ends badly. (p.153)

Why Peacocks? ends, like it began, with the sad passing of a pet, their cat Okra this time, and how they break the news to their sons about their pet's illness and eventual passing. But the final word, which I will not spoil in this review, is about the peafowl.

Why Peacocks? is a unique bird book. A bird book written by a person who is not a birder or an ornithologist. As a matter of fact, at the beginning of *Why Peacocks?,* Sean Flynn seems not to care one way or another about birds. But by spending time with the peafowl, getting to know them as individuals, and letting his reporter's instincts lead him to ferret out all the considerable lore about his birds, he does become truly enchanted.

To listen to Mark Lynch's conversation with Sean Flynn, go the WICN podcast website: <https://www.wicn.org/podcast/sean-flynn/>

Volunteer Staff Openings at Bird Observer

BIRD SIGHTINGS COMPILER OR TWO FOR WORCESTER COUNTY

Bird Observer is looking for a Bird Sightings Compiler for Worcester County; two people may share this position. 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 the county for the previous two months. Species should be reported in a spreadsheet template and include sightings that are representative of high counts, early and late dates and anything rare or unusual. The compiler should be familiar with the birds (and birders!) of Worcester counties, be comfortable with using a spreadsheet and be able to use eBird.org to query sightings. This is a volunteer position.

Interested candidates should contact Bird Sightings Editor, Neil Hayward at: neil.hayward@gmail.com.

JUVENILE BALD EAGLE AND STELLER'S SEA-EAGLE BY MARY KELEHER

BALD EAGLES BY SANDY SELESKY

BIRD SIGHTINGS

September–October 2021

Neil Hayward and Robert H. Stymeist

Weather

The month opened with Hurricane Ida wreaking havoc on the East Coast; on September 2–3 torrential rains caused severe flooding throughout the region. The state's sixth tornado of the year touched down in Dennis with wind speeds of up to 75 miles per hour. New Bedford recorded 9.50 inches of rain and nearby Fairhaven received 7.86 inches. Boston escaped with 4.23 inches and ended the month with a total of 7.47 inches of rain, 3.91 inches above average for the month. Despite the early rainy days, the first half of September was mild, averaging 79.5 degrees with a high of 86 degrees on September 15.

October 2021 was the fourth warmest October on record for Boston and the eleventh warmest for Worcester. The high for Boston was 78 degrees on October 13, with the average temperature for the month being 59.9 degrees. Rainfall in Boston totaled 5.11 inches for the month, 1.08 inches above average. A late autumn nor'easter on October 26 was felt mainly on Cape Cod and the Islands; the highest gust reported was 94 miles per hour from Edgartown, while Provincetown reported a peak gust of 72 miles per hour. Farther north, Cape Ann experienced gusts up to 65 miles per hour, while Logan Airport in Boston reported 52 miles per hour.

R. Stymeist

GEESE THROUGH IBISES

Cackling Geese were reported from five counties, including a first September record for Bristol County. The first **Greater White-fronted Goose** of the season was found at Longmeadow on October 22—the latest arrival date for the state since 2009.

The period included some impressive duck numbers. A high of 63 Blue-winged Teal at Monomoy on September 4 is the highest period count in a decade. Martha's Vineyard scored a new eBird high count of **European Wigeon**—two males—and its first October record of the species since 2000. This species was more abundant on the island in the first half of the last century; Griscom and Snyder (1955) noted that up to "nine drakes in one day" were seen during the years 1920–1950. A count of 2,000 Green-winged Teal at Dennis on October 13 beats the eBird high count for the state of 1,350 set in 1999. A count of 700 Ring-necked Ducks at Carver on October 31 is the highest count for Plymouth County in October since 1994 and the highest October count for the state since 2013. The observer hypothesized that the large count was associated with the passage of the storm system earlier that week. October is the best time to find scoters away from the coast as they make their annual fall migration over our state. All three species of scoter were observed inland during October. An early Black Scoter at Northfield on September 30 is the first September record for Franklin County.

A count of two **Eared Grebes** at Cohasset Cove on October 29–30 appears to be a new high count for the state. The record is shared by Norfolk and Plymouth counties because the birds swam across the county line that bisects the cove.

Common Nighthawks completed their fall migration through the state with the main flight following the Connecticut River Valley. Most of these caprimulgids had already departed by the

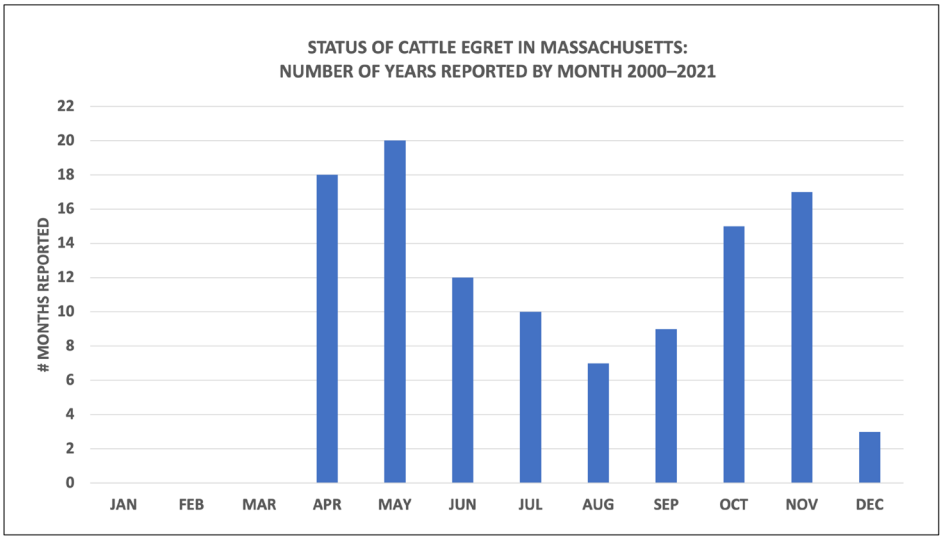


Figure 1. Frequency of Cattle Egret reports in Massachusetts by month for the period 2000–2021. Data from eBird.org.

end of August; long-time nighthawk watcher Tom Gagnon added 846 birds in September to the 4,923 he reported in August. A **Rufous Hummingbird** was visiting a feeder in Brookline at the end of the period. This is the first record for Norfolk County since 2015. The bird was banded and identified as a hatch-year female.

A Clapper Rail at Wood Island Bay Marsh in East Boston is the first Suffolk County record for October, and only the third county record this century. An immature **Common Gallinule** at Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary is the first Norfolk County record for October, and only the fifth eBird record for the county. All but one have come from Stony Brook. A count of 45 Soras along the North River in Hanover on October 3 smashed the previous eBird high count of just four birds for the month. It is the second-highest count for the species this century after a record count of 81 birds, also along the North River, on September 28, 2019. These impressive contemporary numbers are still a far cry from those of the 1950s and 1960s, when up to 1,500 Soras could be seen in West Newbury.

A **Yellow Rail** was reported from Kaveski Farm, Concord, on October 2. The observer, Jason Forbes, reported that the bird was "roughly Sora-sized, buffy brown and streaky above. Secondaries were extensively white, which was about the most obvious feature. It dropped into the thick stuff in the middle of the field … and that was it. A small search party walked the field a bit about an hour later, nothing flushed." This would be the first record from Middlesex County this century. Historically, this species was much more abundant. Veit and Petersen (1993) note that 44 specimens were collected between 1867 and 1937—albeit with the help of a gun and a trained dog. Twelve of those birds came from the Sudbury River and Wayland. Without a similar hunting strategy, it is hard to know just how much rarer the species is these days. Given their cryptic behavior, only a very small percentage are ever detected.

The shorebird highlight of the period was a **Pacific Golden-Plover**—the fifth record for the state. It was found by Suzanne Sullivan at the Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm in Newbury on September 25. The bird stayed for four days and attracted a large crowd of admirers. The first record for the state came from nearby Plum Island in April 2002, with a bird molting into its

bright and distinctive alternate plumage. Subsequent records were all fall migrants: Plymouth Beach in July 2013, Monomoy in July and August 2019, and Nantucket in August 2020.

The western subspecies of Willet, *Tringa semipalmata inornata,* was reported from five counties, including an October high count of 14 from Chatham on October 16. At this time of year, all our breeding Willets of the *semipalmata* subspecies have left the country, mostly to winter in South America.

A Hudsonian Godwit in Chilmark in mid-October is the first October record for Martha's Vineyard since 1998. Sightings of Red Knot away from the coast are very rare. A single bird at East Meadows, Northampton, on September 2 appears to be the first record for Hampshire County. Other records for the western part of the state include Pittsfield in August 1946 (eight birds), Deerfield in August 1976, Longmeadow in August of 1982, 1985, and 1999, and Richmond in July 1986.

Coastal storms in Massachusetts will sometimes produce large numbers of seabirds in Cape Cod Bay—either blown in or seeking refuge. As the storm dissipates these birds reorient themselves and head back to the open ocean. First Encounter Beach, located on the western bay side of Outer Cape Cod, has traditionally been one of the best places to watch these birds as they stream north to head out of the bay. This was the scene on October 28 this year in the aftermath of the recent nor'easter. During that morning, 642 Red Phalaropes flew past observers, a new high for the month and the sixth-highest count for the state. The Dovekie count was 634—apparently a new October high for the state, beating the previous high of 120 set in 2012. The storm watch also produced two **Great Skuas**.

Tom Johnson was back in Massachusetts waters in October, conducting a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) pelagic survey. The highlight was a **Great Skua** logged on October 23. This sighting, together with the storm-blown birds almost a week later and a record from Eastham on April 4, 2020, are the only records of Great Skua for the state since 2015. The survey vessel also recorded a **South Polar Skua** on October 25. South Polar Skuas are summer visitors to our waters, returning to the southern hemisphere before the onset of our northern winter. While there are several October records for the state, the NOAA observation is the latest, eclipsing the previous late date of October 12 set in 2019.

The larid highlight of the period was a **Franklin's Gull** photographed at King's Beach in Lynn and Swampscott on October 17. This is the second record of this rare, western gull this year after a bird photographed in nearby Nahant on July 22. **Little Gulls** were reported from five counties, including the first record for Norfolk County—an adult bird in basic plumage photographed at Quincy on October 24.

A **Pacific Loon** in alternate plumage was reported from Race Point, Provincetown, on October 16. A bird flying past Gooseberry Neck, Westport, on October 23 was only the third record for Bristol County and the first for October.

An adult **Wood Stork** was reported from Niles Pond, Gloucester, on October 29. The sighting was from a lone observer and lacked a photograph. The report gained credence the following month, when immature Wood Storks were found in Gloucester and at Horn Pond, Woburn. The Niles Pond bird represented the sixth record for the state this century.

Brown Boobies were reported from Cape Cod in October, including the storm watch at First Encounter Beach. This species has exhibited an extraordinary range expansion into the Northeast, with more than 30 records since the second record of the species was reported just a decade ago. Most of these birds have been seen between July and October. **American White Pelican** is another vagrant that is reported increasingly in Massachusetts. During this period

individuals were reported from three counties.

There were reports of lingering Least Bitterns at Great Meadows on October 13 and at Plum Island until October 22. While most birds leave the state by the end of September, there are a few October records, as well as a November record from Plum Island on November 3, 1973. The only winter record for the species is a moribund bird at Fall River on February 18, 1939 (Veit and Petersen, 1993).

A Tricolored Heron on Nantucket on September 9–14 is the only September record for the island—perhaps long overdue given that there are records for the rest of the state well into October and even November.

A **Cattle Egret** observed at an equestrian center in Southwick on October 31 is the first record for Hampden County. Additional Cattle Egrets were seen in Barnstable, Essex, and Plymouth counties. Cattle Egrets are typically reported in April–May and October–November (see Figure 1).

A count of 46 Yellow-crowned Night-Herons at Eastham on September 3 is the second-highest count for the state, after 56 birds at the same location on August 25, 2019. A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron seen flying off at dusk from Squantum Point Park, Quincy, on October 31 ties the eBird late date for the state, which was set on Plum Island in 2015. There are historical records of wintering birds; Veit and Petersen (1993) report three December records of immatures as well as an adult at Bourne on February 17, 1965.

N. Hayward

Snow Goose
10/6-10/16 PI 2 max W.Klockner+v.o.
10/26 Deerfield 8 J. Craig
10/31 Nantucket 1 T. Pastuszak
Greater White-fronted Goose
10/22 Longmeadow 1 ph T. Gilliland
10/25-31 Acton/Concord 2 max ph J. Forbes + v.o.
Brant
10/19 Quabbin Pk 1 L. Therrien
10/23 Williamstown 50 J. Pierce
Cackling Goose
10/5-10/31 N. Adams 2 max ph So. Auer + v.o.
10/9 Middleton 1 ph S. McDonald
10/18 Lee 1 ph J. Pierce
10/19-31 Egremont 1 ph J. Pierce# + v.o.
10/21-31 GMNWR 1 ph J. Hennessey#
10/22 Longmeadow 1 ph T. Gilliland
10/23 Danvers 1 ph R. Heil
10/24-25 Plymouth 1 ph V. Burdette + v.o.
10/29-31 Topsfield 1 phJ. Hannafee + v.o.
Wood Duck
thr Longmeadow 83 max M. Moore + v.o.
9/8 Weston 42 J. Forbes
9/12 Petersham 91 M. Lynch#
Blue-winged Teal
9/4 S. Monomoy 63 M. Sylvia
10/4-10/16 PI 14 max T.Wetmore + v.o.
10/11 Nantucket 15 J. Vohs
Northern Shoveler
9/15-10/25 Longmeadow 5 max E. Quirk + v.o.
10/6 Nantucket 9 Z. Korpi
10/20 S. Monomoy 34 M. Miller#
Gadwall
9/5 S. Monomoy 132 A. Burdo#
9/11 Turners Falls 1 E. Huston
10/1-10/31 PI 40 max T.Wetmore + v.o.
Eurasian Wigeon
9/4 S. Monomoy 1 M. Sylvia
10/9-26,31 Edgartown 2 m max ph S.Fee#,R.Culbert+v.o.
10/10-31 PI 1 m ph A. Sanford + v.o.
American Wigeon
10/4-10/31 PI 70 max S. Miller + v.o.
10/9 Acoaxet 25 G. d'Entremont
American Black Duck
10/10 PI 540 G. d'Entremont#
Northern Pintail
9/5 S. Monomoy 27 A. Burdo#
10/1-10/31 PI 110 max S. Babbitt + v.o.
Green-winged Teal
10/1-10/31 PI 350 max G. d'Entremont+v.o.
10/9 Lincoln 40 J. Forbes
10/13 Dennis 2000 B. Nikula
10/31 Saugus (Bear Ck) 120 G. Wilson# + v.o.
Canvasback
10/31 Nantucket 6 L. Thompson
Ring-necked Duck
9/24-10/31 New Salem 172 max B. Lafley + v.o.
10/29 S. Monomoy 149 M. Miller#
10/31 Carver 700 Anon. + v.o.
Greater Scaup
10/18-20 Pittsfield (Pont.) 6 max T. Kirby + v.o.
10/21 Wachusett Res. 16 M. Lynch#
Lesser Scaup
10/19-22 Richmond 2 max G. Ward + v.o.
10/20 Pittsfield (Pont.) 4 max G. Hurley + v.o.
King Eider
10/18-23 Rockport (HPt) 1 m ph A.+A.Kanghattam+v.o.
Common Eider
9/3 Chatham 125 G. d'Entremont#
10/3 Rockport (AP) 140 R. Heil
10/28 Eastham (FH) 10415 J. Trimble#
Harlequin Duck
10/22-31 Rockport (HPt) 26 max v.o.
10/28 Eastham (FH) 1 J. Trimble#
10/29 Chilmark 22 S. Whiting#
Surf Scoter
10/11-17 Quabbin Pk 3 max L. Therrien+v.o.
10/27 Rockport (AP) 905 J. Trimble

Surf Scoter (continued)
10/28 Eastham (FH) 6465 J. Trimble#
White-winged Scoter
10/1-10/31 PI 250 max T. Wetmore#+v.o.
10/27 Wachusett Res. 15 m M. Lynch#
10/28 Eastham (FH) 2714 J. Trimble#
Black Scoter
9/30 Northfield 1 m B. Lafley
10/18-20 Quabbin Pk 137 max S. Surner# + v.o.
10/20 Brewster 5000 S. Finnegan
10/28 Eastham (FH) 3990 J. Trimble#
10/29 Aquinnah 1250 B. Shriber
Long-tailed Duck
10/19-25 Quabbin Pk 2 max L. Therrien + v.o.
10/27 Rockport (AP) 587 J. Trimble
10/28 Eastham (FH) 308 J. Trimble#
Bufflehead
10/19-31 N. Adams 5 max So. Auer + v.o.
10/21 Wachusett Res. 6 M. Lynch#
Common Goldeneye
10/22-27 Richmond 1 J. Pierce# + v.o.
10/27-29 Turners Falls 1 S. Griesemer + v.o.
Hooded Merganser
9/5 Paxton 6 imm M. Lynch#
10/29 Quaboag IBA 13 M. Lynch#
Common Merganser
10/27 Wachusett Res. 85 M. Lynch#
10/31 Lincoln 5 J. Forbes
Red-breasted Merganser
10/16 N. Adams 1 L. Lister
10/25-28 Quabbin Pk 3 max L. Therrien
Ruddy Duck
10/23 Danvers 132 R. Heil
10/29 S. Monomoy 156 M. Miller#
10/31 Southboro 110 J. Forbes
Northern Bobwhite
9/11 Middleton 1 J. Keeley
10/15 Eastham (FH) 8 W. Mumford
Ruffed Grouse
9/4 HRWMA 2 J. Forbes
10/8 Washington 3 G. Hurley
Pied-billed Grebe
9/5-10/31 Turners Falls 3 max J. Oliverio + v.o.
9/11-10/24 Longmeadow 3 max D. Peake-Jones + v.o.
10/2 Eastham 2 SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
10/21 Wachusett Res. 2 M. Lynch#
10/24 GMNWR 2 G. d'Entremont#
10/29 Quaboag IBA 3 M. Lynch#
Horned Grebe
9/1-10/3 Marblehead 1 J. Smith + v.o.
10/11-31 Quabbin Pk 6 max M. McKitrick + v.o.
10/18 Pittsfield (Pont.) 1 J. Pierce
10/19 Waltham (Cambr. Res.) 1 J. Forbes
Red-necked Grebe
9/6 Turners Falls 1 J. Linker + v.o.
9/10 Quabbin (G35) 1 B. Lafley + v.o.
9/19 Waltham (Cambr. Res.) 2 J. Forbes
Eared Grebe
10/29-30 Cohasset 2 ph A. Donovan + v.o.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
10/6 MBO 2 b imm T. Lloyd-Evans#
10/8 BHI (Spectacle I.) 3 S. Jones
10/24 Quincy 1 C. George
Black-billed Cuckoo
9/13 Hadley 1 C. Elowe
10/2 E. Boston (BI) 1 S. Riley + v.o.
10/16 Hatfield 1 L. Farlow, S. Winn
Common Nighthawk
9/4 Rowley (RMWS) 68 R. Heil
9/6 New Salem 85 B. Lafley
9/6 Foxborough 34 J. Bougioukos
9/7 Northampton 653 T. Gagnon
9/28 E. Sandwich 1 K. Rawdon#
Eastern Whip-poor-will
9/1-9/18 PI 6 max v.o.
9/4-9/18 Quabbin Pk 2 max L. Therrien
9/13 W. Tisbury 1 D. Oster
9/13 Falmouth 1 J. Carroll
Chimney Swift
9/11 Concord 17 J. Forbes
10/12 Agawam 1 A. Robblee
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
10/3 Brewster 2 D. Clapp#
10/11-13 Belmont 1,1 A. Gurka#, C. Gras
Rufous Hummingbird
10/28-30 Brookline 1 imm f ph b M.Garvey+v.o.
Clapper Rail
thr Fairhaven 5 max C. Longworth + v.o.
10/2 E. Boston 1 M. Iliff + v.o.
10/14 WBWS 2 M. Miller#
10/17 Eastham (FH) 1 M. Harris
10/20 Ellisville 1 B. Vacchino#
10/22 Wellfleet 1 R. Sormani
Virginia Rail
9/1-9/28 Belchertown 2 max L. Therrien+v.o.
9/5 Warren 3 M. Lynch#
9/25 Cuttyhunk I. 10 N. Tepper#
10/11 PI 3 S. Zhang
Sora
9/1-10/20 GMNWR 2 max v.o.
9/5 S. Monomoy 1 A. Burdo#
9/14-10/2 PI 1 S. MacDonald + v.o.
10/3 Hanover 45 N. Marchessault#
10/22 Wellfleet 1 R. Sormani
Common Gallinule
9/4-9/28 S. Monomoy 7 max M. Miller#+v.o.
10/15-19 Stony Brook WS 1 imm ph N. Crosby + v.o.
10/21 Taunton 1 imm ph K. Ryan
10/31 Hatfield 1 imm ph L. Farlow, S. Winn
American Coot
9/10-9/19 GMNWR 3 max S. MacDonald + v.o.
10/29 S. Monomoy 43 M. Miller#
Yellow Rail!
10/2 Concord 1 J. Forbes
Sandhill Crane
9/1-10/24 Worthington 4 2ad+2juv T. Gessing + v.o.
10/17 Halifax 12 E. Finizio
10/29-31 Plympton 7 T. Lloyd-Evans
American Avocet
9/1 N. Truro 1 J. Brandin
10/30-31 PI 1 ph S. Babbitt + v.o.
American Oystercatcher
9/7 Nantucket 53 S. Fee
9/12 Edgartown 16 S. Whiting
9/30 Chatham 87 K. Rosenberg
10/8-10/23 Quincy 3 G. Hantsbarger
Black-bellied Plover
9/14 PI 143 S. Zhang
9/21 Monomoy NWR 1780 A. Kneidel#
10/24 Chatham (SB) 485 B. Harrington#
American Golden-Plover
9/2-10/9 Northampton 10 max S. Surner# + v.o.
9/8-10/7 Longmeadow 3 max J. Hutchison+v.o.
9/13 PI 5 T. Wetmore
9/14-10/23 S. Boston 16 G. O'Brien + v.o.
9/20 Chilmark 6 L. Waters#
10/2 P'town 3 M. Faherty#
Pacific Golden-Plover
9/25-9/28 Newbury 1 ph S. Sullivan + v.o.
Killdeer
9/27 Newbury 62 N. Hayward#
10/3 Mashpee 65 S. van der Deen
Semipalmated Plover
9/1 Rowley (RMWS) 90 R. Heil
9/3 Barnstable (SN) 1500 P. Crosson
10/1-10/31 PI 80 max T. Wetmore+v.o.

Piping Plover
9/1-19,10/3 PI 9,1 max A.Choquette+v.o.
9/10 Quincy 1 L. Waters
10/6-10/14 Ipswich (CB) 2 I. Pepper + v.o.
Whimbrel
9/1-9/25 PI 3 max v.o.
9/15 Wellfleet 25 A. Kneidel#
9/25 Chappaquiddick 4 S. Fee
Hudsonian Godwit
9/1-9/30 PI 4 max v.o.
9/7 Tuckernuck I. 2 R. Veit#
9/16 Scituate 2 M. Illif
9/25 S. Monomoy 2 J. Junda#
10/1-10/23 PI 9 max v.o.
10/10-19 Chilmark 1 S. Whiting#
Marbled Godwit
9/3-10/21 Chatham 2 P. Gose + v.o.
9/7 Lynn 1 J. Quigley
9/7-9/18 Nantucket 1 S. Fee
9/13, 10/3-18 Chatham 1,3 M. Miller, D. Bates + v.o.
10/8 Edgartown 1 T. Gilliland
10/10 PI 1 N. Paulson#
Red Knot
9/2 Northampton 1 M. McKitrick + v.o.
9/21 Monomoy NWR 330 A. Kneidel#
9/21 Chatham (SB) 235 A. Kneidel#
10/1-10/24 PI 15 max J. Young# + v.o.
Stilt Sandpiper
9/1-9/30 PI 11 max D. Prima + v.o.
9/1 Longmeadow 1 F. Bowrys + v.o.
9/3-10/17 E. Boston (BI) 3 S. Jones + v.o.
9/16 Topsfield 1 J. Hannafee
10/14-24 Arlington Res. 1 J. Forbes + v.o.
10/16 Chilmark 1 S. Whiting#
Sanderling
9/3 Barnstable (SN) 1600 P. Crosson
9/21 Monomoy NWR 3720 A. Kneidel#
10/24 Chatham (SB) 4000 B. Harrington#
Dunlin
9/24 Northampton 1 L. Farlow, S. Winn
10/10 PI 730 G. d'Entremont#
10/17 Essex 126 D. Brown
10/24 Chatham (SB) 3500 B. Harrington#
Purple Sandpiper
10/14 PI 1 T. Bradford#
Baird's Sandpiper
9/1-9/2 Longmeadow 4 max L.+A.Richardson+v.o.
9/2 Northampton 2 max M. McKitrick + v.o.
9/7 Nantucket 2 ph L. Dunn
Least Sandpiper
9/1 Rowley (RMWS) 85 R. Heil
10/1-10/31 PI 18 max T. Wetmore + v.o.
White-rumped Sandpiper
9/1-9/30 PI 40 max v.o.
9/2 Northampton 1 ph M. McKitrick + v.o.
10/1-10/26 PI 10 max T. Wetmore + v.o.
10/28 Eastham (FH) 4 J. Trimble#
Buff-breasted Sandpiper
9/2 Northampton 3 B. Bieda + v.o.
9/7 Nantucket 2 S. Fee
9/10 Hadley (Honeypot) 2 L. Therrien
Pectoral Sandpiper
9/1-10/22 Longmeadow 9 max L.+A. Richardson+v.o.
9/15 S. Boston 6 S. Jones
9/16 Chilmark 5 S. Whiting
10/3 Eastham 11 N. Tepper
Semipalmated Sandpiper
9/1-9/30 PI 600 max v.o.
9/3 Barnstable (SN) 1250 P. Crosson
9/16 Arlington Res. 25 J. Forbes
Western Sandpiper
9/2-9/23 PI 2 max v.o.
9/3-9/10 Barnstable (SN) 2 P. Crosson
9/5-10/3 PI 2 max S. Zhang + v.o.
9/19 Winthrop B. 1 S. Zendeh
Short-billed Dowitcher
9/1-9/30 PI 25 max v.o.
10/28 Eastham (FH) 1 J. Trimble#
Long-billed Dowitcher
9/1-9/30 PI 8 max v.o.
9/6 Wellfleet 2 T. Auer
10/1-10/16 PI 5 max v.o.
American Woodcock
9/4-9/30 Rowley (RMWS) 2,1 R. Heil
9/18 Weymouth 3 E. LeBlanc
9/20 Northampton 8 L. Therrien
Wilson's Snipe
10/29 Quincy 3 P. Peterson
10/31 Saugus (Bear Ck) 7 G. Wilson# + v.o.
Spotted Sandpiper
9/1-10/15 Northampton 2 max L. Therrien + v.o.
10/18 Williamstown 2 So. Auer
10/24 Arlington Res. 2 G. d'Entremont#
Solitary Sandpiper
10/3 Mattapan (BNC) 2 BBC Board
10/11-24 Hadley 2 max C. Elowe + v.o.
Lesser Yellowlegs
thr PI 40 max S.McDonald+v.o.
9/1-10/22 Longmeadow 20 max M. Moore + v.o.
9/8-10/29 Arlington Res. 14 max B.Lee+D.Williams+v.o.
Willet (Eastern)
9/4-9/5 Winthrop 1 T. Bradford#
9/19 Nantucket 2 Y. Vaillancourt
9/26 WBWS 7 S. Sullivan#
Willet (Western)
9/6 Cohasset 2 V. Zollo
9/18 Quincy 1 J. Bock + v.o.
10/16 Chatham 14 min G. Ward
Greater Yellowlegs
10/1-10/31 PI 150 max T.Wetmore+v.o.
10/20 Rowley (RMWS) 63 R. Heil
Wilson's Phalarope
10/17-31 E. Boston (BI) 1 T. Bradford + v.o.
Red-necked Phalarope
10/9 P'town (RP) 9 B. Nikula
10/27 Sandwich 1 J. Sweeney
Red Phalarope
9/16 S. Deerfield 1 V. Woodring
10/23 SE. of Nantucket 10 T. Johnson#
10/27 Sandwich 12 P. Crosson
10/28 Eastham (FH) 642 J. Trimble#
10/29 Barnstable (SN) 24 M. Perrin
10/29 Plymouth B. 5 Anon. + v.o.
Great Skua
10/23 SE. of Nantucket 1 T. Johnson#
10/28 Eastham (FH) 2 ph J.Trimble,M.Iliff#
South Polar Skua
10/25 Nantucket Shoals 1 T. Johnson#
Pomarine Jaeger
10/23 SE. of Nantucket 9 T. Johnson#
10/27 Rockport (AP) 99 J. Trimble
10/27 Cohasset 16 M. Iliff
10/27 Scituate 8 J. Frost + v.o.
10/28 Eastham (FH) 349 J. Trimble#
10/28 P'town (RP) 87 P. Flood
Parasitic Jaeger
9/19 P'town (RP) 22 B. Nikula
9/25, 9/19 P'town (RP) 13 B. Nikula
10/28 Eastham (FH) 7 J. Trimble#
Long-tailed Jaeger
9/6 P'town (RP) 1 1S ph B. Nikula#
Dovekie
10/28 Eastham (FH) 634 J. Trimble#
10/28 P'town (RP) 117 P. Flood
Common Murre
10/29 Rockport (AP) 1 A. Sanford#

Thick-billed Murre
10/28 P'town (RP) 1 P. Flood
Razorbill
10/3 Rockport (AP) 1 R. Heil
10/9 P'town (RP) 11 B. Nikula
10/27 Rockport (AP) 22 J. Trimble
Black Guillemot
9/1-10/1 PI 1 v.o.
10/25-27 Rockport (AP) 2 J. Trimble, M. Brengle
10/29-31 Lynn 1 M. Dolan + v.o.
Atlantic Puffin
10/27 Rockport (AP) 3 J. Trimble
Black-legged Kittiwake
10/27 Rockport (AP) 413 J. Trimble
10/27 Manomet Point 16 B. Vigorito#
10/27 Quabbin Pk 3 max T. Gilliland+v.o.
10/28 P'town (RP) 1150 P. Flood
10/28 Eastham (FH) 273 J. Trimble#
Bonaparte's Gull
9/2 Wachusett Res. 1 M. Lynch#
10/7 Lynn 600 J. Quigley
10/17-27 Quabbin Pk 2 max L. Therrien + v.o.
10/22 P'town (RP) 300 B. Nikula
Black-headed Gull
9/11 Westport (GN) 1 K. Barlow
10/2 WBWS 1 ad ph B. Harrington
10/19-20 Nbpt H. 1 ad ph S. Grinley# + v.o.
Little Gull
9/22-10/18 Revere (POP) 2 ph S. Jones + v.o.
10/6-10/22 Lynn/Swampscott 2 max ph S. McDonald# + v.o.
10/16 P'town (RP) 2 ad B. Nikula#
10/19 Nbpt H. 1 1W ph S. Grinley#
10/24 Quincy 1 ad ph D. O'Brien
10/25 Dorchester 1 ad M. Iliff
10/27 Rockport (AP) 1 1W J. Trimble
10/28 Manomet Point 2 ad L. Schibley
10/28 Eastham (FH) 1 ad J. Trimble#
10/31 Marion 1 ad D. Furbish
Laughing Gull
9/11 Squantum 80 G. d'Entremont
9/12 P'town (RP) 950 B. Nikula
10/13 Rockport (AP) 56 R. Heil
Franklin's Gull
10/17 Lynn/Swampscott 1 ph S. Sullivan#
Iceland Gull
10/27 Sandwich 1 J. Sweeney
10/27 Revere B. 1 M. Iliff
Lesser Black-backed Gull
9/12 P'town (RP) 11 B. Nikula
9/16 Scituate 14 juv M. Illif
9/17 MtA 1 J. Trimble, M. Iliff
9/21 Chatham (SB) 24 A. Kneidel#
9/29 Eastham 82 L. Waters
10/10 Chilmark 27 S. Whiting
10/14-16 South Hadley 1 T. Gilliland + v.o.
Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull (hybrid)
9/5–9/25 P'town (RP) 1 ad B. Nikula#
Least Tern
9/1-9/14 PI 4 max v.o.
Caspian Tern
9/15 Quincy 2 L. Eyster
9/16 PI 2 V. Burdette
9/17 Woburn (HP) 2 A. Flynn#
9/20 Plymouth B. 7 R. Timberlake
9/29 Sandwich 2 K. Rosenberg
10/21 Eastham (CGB) 3 T. Spahr
Black Tern
9/5 Quaboag IBA 1 M. Lynch#
9/10 Nantucket 30 L. Dunn
9/11 Rowley (RMWS) 1 R. Heil
Roseate Tern
9/6 P'town (RP) 800 B. Nikula
10/9 Wellfleet 1 B. Nikula
Common Tern
9/16, 10/27 PI 30,1 D. Adrien + v.o.
9/18 Quabbin (G25) 1 B. Lafley
9/19 P'town (RP) 6000 B. Nikula
Arctic Tern
9/26 WBWS 1 S. Sullivan#
Forster's Tern
9/25 WBWS 290 B. Harrington#
10/2 Eastham (FE) 40 SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
10/16 P'town (RP) 19 B. Nikula#
Black Skimmer
10/3 Chatham 2 D. Bates
Red-throated Loon
10/20-27 Stockbridge 1 J. Pierce + v.o.
10/27 Rockport (AP) 127 J. Trimble
10/28 Eastham (FH) 91 J. Trimble#
Pacific Loon
10/16 P'town (RP) 1 ph alt P. Flood#
10/23 Westport (GN) 1 ph M. Iliff
Common Loon
thr Quabbin Pk 14 max L. Therrien + v.o.
10/21 Wachusett Res. 14 M. Lynch#
10/28 Eastham (FH) 42 J. Trimble#
Wilson's Storm-Petrel
9/6 Cohasset 8 V. Zollo
Leach's Storm-Petrel
9/2 Eastham (FE) 6 B. Albro
10/27 Sandwich 7 P. Crosson
10/28 Eastham (FH) 5 J. Trimble#
Northern Fulmar
10/11 P'town (RP) 1 P. Flood#
Cory's Shearwater
10/23 SE. of Nantucket 230 T. Johnson#
10/28 Eastham (FH) 4 J. Trimble#
Great Shearwater
10/25 E. of Nantucket 150 A. Black#
10/28 P'town (RP) 68 P. Flood
10/28 Eastham (FH) 6 J. Trimble#
Manx Shearwater
9/19 P'town (RP) 450 B. Nikula
10/25 E. of Nantucket 230 A. Black#
10/27 Rockport (AP) 3 J. Trimble
Wood Stork
10/29 Gloucester 1 ad B. Tucker
Brown Booby
10/9 P'town (RP) 1 ad ph B. Nikula#
10/28 Eastham (FH) 1 ad ph J. Trimble#
10/28 P'town (RP) 1 imm ph P. Flood
Northern Gannet
10/3 Rockport (AP) 97 R. Heil
10/28 P'town (RP) 4200 P. Flood
10/28 Eastham (FH) 2494 J. Trimble#
Great Cormorant
9/16 PI 1 T. Wetmore#
Double-crested Cormorant
10/3 Mattapan (BNC) 62 BBC Board
10/23 Easton 1,175 K. Ryan
10/27 Wachusett Res. 52 M. Lynch#
American White Pelican
9/4-9/8 Nantucket 1 ad ph v.o.
9/8, 9/14 Orleans 1 ph M. O'Connor, H. Gallo
9/25-10/16 Acoaxet 1 imm ph A. Eckerson+v.o.
10/29-31 Nantucket 1 B. Gooch, L. Thompson
American Bittern
9/16 S. Monomoy 1 M. Miller#
10/16 PI 1 M. Halsey#
10/16-27 Pittsfield 1 S. Townsend
10/21 Cambridge 1 J. Forbes
Least Bittern
9/2-9/11 Longmeadow 1 R. Desrochers + v.o.
10/11-22 PI 1 J. Layman + v.o.

Least Bittern (continued)			
10/13	GMNWR	1	P. Alden
Great Blue Heron			
10/3	Eastham (FH)	58	M. Faherty#
10/6	WBWS	35	P. Kyle
10/11	Quincy	17	G. d'Entremont
Great Egret			
9/5	Barnstable	123	N. Tepper
10/1-10/16	PI	100 max	v.o.
10/3	Eastham (FH)	38	M. Faherty#
Snowy Egret			
9/1-9/30	PI	150 max	v.o.
9/5	S. Monomoy	64	N. Tepper#
9/5	Barnstable	58	N. Tepper
Little Blue Heron			
9/1-9/30	Gloucester	8 max	v.o.
9/1-9/25	PI	4 max	v.o.
9/4	Edgartown	4 ph	S. Allen
9/6-10/19	E. Boston (BI)	2	C. Kaynor + v.o.
10/18-22	Gloucester	1	S. Hedman
Tricolored Heron			
9/14-9/16	Nantucket	1	C. Duffy
Cattle Egret			
10/22-31	Plymouth	2 ph	Anon. + v.o.
10/22	S. Monomoy	1	M. Miller
10/23-24	P'town	1 ph	P. Flood#, B. Nikula#
10/25	Carver	1 ph	Anon. + v.o.
10/30-31	W. Newbury	1 ph	M. Watson + v.o.
10/31	Southwick	1 ph	D. Holmes#
Green Heron			
9/1-9/24	Belchertown	11 max	L. Therrien + v.o.
9/3	Truro	2	G. d'Entremont#
10/18	N. Reading	1	L. Bruin
Black-crowned Night-Heron			
9/3	Eastham	63	D. Clapp#
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron			
9/3	Eastham	46	D. Clapp#
9/4-10/30	Quincy	4 juv	E. Ross + v.o.
10/1-10/15	Nbpt	3 max	v.o.
10/11	PI	5 ph	S. Zhang
10/31	Quincy	1	E. Ross
Glossy Ibis			
9/14	Wellfleet	3	A. Kneidel
9/15	Chatham	5	T. Marvel

VULTURES THROUGH DICKCISSEL

Each year, September draws hawkwatchers to mountaintops in the Northeast to witness the spectacular fall flight of Broad-winged Hawks. The most popular sites in Massachusetts are Wachusett Mountain in Princeton and Mount Watatic in Ashburnham. At Wachusett Mountain this September, hawkwatchers recorded 4,422 Broad-winged Hawks, down from 6,869 tallied during September 2020 but much higher than the dismal numbers of September 2019, when only 2,832 were counted. Eric Mueller, the official counter on September 13, commented on the 1,902 Broad-winged Hawks seen that day, "An amazing day, the best numbers since September 18, 2020. The Broadwings came in droves, streaming in from the northeast and forming dozens of kettles of 25 birds or more, with multiple kettles of 80 birds or more, and one thermal that contained three separate kettles with a total of 385 birds in it. Many kettles fell apart with disorganized peels, which made it tough to get accurate counts. Our Broadwing numbers are probably undercounted."

Six **Golden Eagles** were reported during the period, all during the month of October. Three records came from the hawkwatch on Wachusett Mountain, already a record-tying season for Golden Eagles at this site. Peak Golden Eagle migration is usually the first two weeks of November and is associated with strong cold fronts. It was encouraging to see the large number of Bald Eagle sightings; a total of 147 individuals was tallied during the period at Wachusett Mountain, up from 77 during the same period last year. The first Rough-legged Hawks of the season arrived on the last days of October.

Fall birding in Massachusetts can be an exciting time for birders. Historically, more vagrants are found in the fall than in the spring, and each fall we come to expect certain rarities: Western Kingbird, Lark Sparrow, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and Summer Tanager. This year, in addition to the usual suspects, birders found an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** in Quincy, as well as two **Say's Phoebes**—one in Pittsfield and one in Townsend. A **Bell's Vireo** was recorded for the third straight fall, this time at Fort Hill, Eastham. A **Loggerhead Shrike** was photographed on Tuckernuck Island and **Northern Wheatears** were seen in Yarmouth and East Sandwich.

Thirty-four species of warblers were noted during the period. It was a good year for Connecticut Warblers, with multiple individuals reported in several areas; some persisted for several days. Among the more unusual warbler reports were two **MacGillivray's Warblers**, of which one was banded on Monomoy Island and the other was at Fort Hill in Eastham. A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was photographed in Sudbury, with another individual present

at the Chestnut Hill Reservoir area in Brighton. **Yellow-throated Warblers** were noted from five locations, including Greenfield—only the third record for the Connecticut Valley. This fall saw multiple Blue Grosbeaks, with four individuals at the Honeypot in Hadley and three birds on Cuttyhunk Island. Dickcissels also had a good season, with three individuals from Northampton, four on Cuttyhunk Island, and four from Aquinnah on Martha's Vineyard.

R. Stymeist

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Black Vulture
- 9/14-9/20 Mt Watatic 1,1 Hawkcount (B. Rusnica)
- 10/16-17 Amherst 9 J. Blue# + v.o.
- 10/17 Blackstone 10 M. Lynch#
- 10/23 Great Barrington 8 J. Rose

Turkey Vulture
- 10/1-10/31 Mt Wachusett 895 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 10/1-10/31 Granville 590 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)

Osprey
- 9/1-9/30 Mt Wachusett 132 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 9/4-9/26 Mt Watatic 43 Hawkcount (B. Rusnica)
- 9/4-9/30 Granville 19 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)
- 9/10-9/30 Russell 22 Hawkcount (T. Swochak)
- 10/1-10/18 Mt Wachusett 29 Hawkcount (R. Chase)

Golden Eagle
- 10/15 New Ashford 1 ph M. Morales
- 10/20,28,29 Mt Wachusett 1,1,1 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 10/24 Mount Washington 1 ad G. Ward#
- 10/28 Granville 1 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)
- 10/31 Middleton 1 ph S. Sullivan#

Northern Harrier
- 9/4-9/26 Mt Watatic 20 Hawkcount (B. Rusnica)
- 9/4-9/30 Granville 7 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)
- 10/1-10/31 Granville 7 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)

Sharp-shinned Hawk
- 9/1-9/30 Mt Wachusett 224 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 9/4-9/26 Mt Watatic 158 Hawkcount (B. Rusnica)
- 9/4-9/30 Granville 105 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)
- 10/1-10/31 Mt Wachusett 171 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 10/1-10/31 Granville 74 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)

Cooper's Hawk
- 9/1-9/30 Mt Wachusett 71 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 9/4-9/26 Mt Watatic 57 Hawkcount (B. Rusnica)
- 10/1-10/31 Mt Wachusett 83 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 10/1-10/19 Russell 54 Hawkcount (T. Swochak)
- 10/1-10/31 Granville 23 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)

Northern Goshawk
- 10/6 W. Newbury 1 C. Decker
- 10/17 Granville 1 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)
- 10/23 Malden 1 Hawkcount (C. Jackson)
- 10/24 Rutland 1 imm M. Lynch#

Bald Eagle
- 9/1-9/30 Mt Wachusett 147 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 9/4-9/26 Mt Watatic 129 Hawkcount (B. Rusnica)
- 10/1-10/31 Mt Wachusett 68 Hawkcount (R. Chase)

Red-shouldered Hawk
- 10/1-10/31 Granville 18 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)
- 10/12-31 Mt Wachusett 36 Hawkcount (R. Chase)

Broad-winged Hawk
- 9/1-9/30 Mt Wachusett 4422 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 9/4-9/26 Mt Watatic 4790 Hawkcount (B. Rusnica)
- 9/4-9/30 Granville 965 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)
- 9/10-9/30 Russell 1173 Hawkcount (T. Swochak)
- 10/1-10/13 Mt Wachusett 13 Hawkcount (R. Chase)

Red-tailed Hawk
- 10/1-10/31 Mt Wachusett 89 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 10/1-10/31 Granville 23 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)

Rough-legged Hawk
- 10/17 Essex 1 D. Brown
- 10/28 Mt Wachusett 1 Hawkcount (R. Chase)

Barn Owl
- 9/4-9/28 S. Monomoy 1 A. Single#
- 9/12-10/7 Edgartown 2 v.o.
- 9/24,10/31 Nantucket 1,1 J. Gendzier, M. Perrin

Snowy Owl
- 10/26 Boston (Logan) 1 N. Smith

Barred Owl
- 9/11 Ware R. IBA 2 M. Lynch#
- 10/8 Petersham 2 M. Lynch#

Northern Saw-whet Owl
- 10/2-10/25 MBO 8 b T. Lloyd-Evans#

Belted Kingfisher
- 9/9 Wachusett Res. 4 M. Lynch#

Red-headed Woodpecker
- 9/20 Aquinnah 1 ad A. Burdo#
- 9/21 Amherst 1 imm M. Eckerson + v.o.
- 9/25 Mt Wachusett 1 ad E. Mueller
- 10/16 Sherborn 1 ad K. Winkler
- 10/19 Nantucket 1 imm ph G. Andrews

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- 9/30 Rowley (RMWS) 5 R. Heil
- 10/1-10/16 PI 7 max v.o.
- 10/2 Cuttyhunk I. 3 L. Waters#
- 10/23 WBWS 3 J. Junda#

Northern Flicker
- 9/17 Ware R. IBA 21 M. Lynch#
- 10/8 Petersham 13 M. Lynch#

Pileated Woodpecker
- 9/17 Ware R. IBA 4 M. Lynch#

American Kestrel
- 9/1-9/30 Mt Wachusett 145 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 9/4-9/26 Mt Watatic 72 Hawkcount (B. Rusnica)
- 9/4-9/30 Granville 61 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)
- 10/1-10/31 Mt Wachusett 48 Hawkcount (R. Chase)

Merlin
- 9/1-9/30 Mt Wachusett 43 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 9/4-9/26 Mt Watatic 30 Hawkcount (B. Rusnica)
- 10/1-10/31 Mt Wachusett 19 Hawkcount (R. Chase)
- 10/1-10/31 Granville 9 Hawkcount (J. Weeks)

Peregrine Falcon
- 9/1-9/30 Mt Wachusett 13 max Hawkcount(R.Chase)
- 9/4-9/26 Mt Watatic 6 Hawkcount (B. Rusnica)
- 10/1-10/31 Mt Wachusett 12 Hawkcount (R. Chase)

Monk Parakeet?
- 9/2-10/17 Winthrop 2 A. Vigil + v.o.

Ash-throated Flycatcher

9/27	Quincy	1	M. McWade

Great Crested Flycatcher

9/11	Squantum	1	G. d'Entremont#
9/12	PI	1	N. Landry
9/26	Hadley (Fort R.)	1	S. Winn

Western Kingbird

9/11	Northampton	1 ph	L. Therrien + v.o.
9/17-9/18	Williamstown	1 ph	M. Morales + v.o.
10/3	Southborough	1 ph	N. Dowling
10/9	Rockport (AP)	1 ph	T. + M. Hibbitts + v.o.
10/17	Nantucket	1 ph	T. Pastuszak

Eastern Kingbird

9/20	Cohasset	1	S. Avery
10/10-12	PI	1	J. McCoy + v.o.

Olive-sided Flycatcher

9/17	Amherst	2	M. Eckerson
9/18	Longmeadow	1	M. Moore
9/25	Aquinnah	1	B. Shriber

Eastern Wood-Pewee

10/6	Quincy	1	L. Waters + v.o.
10/11	Topsfield	1	J. MacDougall
10/11	Barnstable	1	P. Johnson-Staub#

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher

9/4	HRWMA	1	J. Forbes
9/18	PI	1	S. Grinley#
9/20	S. Monomoy	1 b	M. Miller#
9/25	Easthampton	1	A. Hulsey, J. Oliverio

Acadian Flycatcher

9/15	Longmeadow	1	R. Desrochers

Alder Flycatcher

9/7	Brewster	1 b	S. Finnegan#
9/17	Hatfield	1 au	A. Hulsey

Willow Flycatcher

9/5	IRWS	1	J. Barcus#
10/2	Rockport	1	J. Keeley#
10/7	Sheffield	1	G. Ward

Least Flycatcher

10/5	Boston (FPk)	1	T. Bradford
10/6	Mount Greylock	1	G. Hurley
10/8	Northampton	1 au	M. McKitrick

Eastern Phoebe

10/1-10/14	PI	11 max	v.o.
10/2	Cuttyhunk I.	23	L. Waters#
10/23	Quaboag IBA	5	M. Lynch#

Say's Phoebe

10/1	Pittsfield	1 ph	J. Pierce + v.o.
10/11	Townsend	1 ph	R. Gervais

Loggerhead Shrike

9/16-9/18	Tuckernuck I.	1 ph	R. Veit#

Northern Shrike

10/20	Rowley (RMWS)	1	R. Heil

White-eyed Vireo

9/15-9/18	MtA	1	G. Schmidt + v.o.
9/24-10/11	BHI (Spectacle I.)	1	S. Jones + v.o.
9/25	Cuttyhunk I.	11	N. Tepper#
9/29-10/1	Newton	1	J. Bock
10/2	Boston (McW)	1	L. Grimes + v.o.
10/8	Easton	1	K. Ryan
10/9	MNWS	1	A. Sanford
10/10	Rockport (AP)	1	N. Dubrow
10/19	MBO	1 b imm	T. Lloyd-Evans#

Bell's Vireo

10/28	Eastham (FH)	1 ph	P. Felker

Yellow-throated Vireo

9/1	Rowley (RMWS)	1	R. Heil
9/14	PI	1	W. Klockner
9/17	Boston (CHRes.)	1	R. Doherty
9/27	Easthampton	1	C. Sokoloski

Blue-headed Vireo

10/3	Mattapan (BNC)	2	BBC Board
10/29	Beverly	1	C. Nehrkorn
10/31	PI	1	E. Labato

Philadelphia Vireo

9/11	Mashpee	3	M. Keleher
9/11	Medfield	2	E. Nielsen + v.o.
9/25	Cuttyhunk I.	3	N. Tepper#

Warbling Vireo

9/5	Warren	5	M. Lynch#
10/8	PI	1	S. Sullivan
10/11	WBWS	1	J. Junda#

Red-eyed Vireo

9/1-9/30	Rowley	14,23	R. Heil
9/11	Ware R. IBA	26	M. Lynch#
10/1-10/8	PI	6 max	v.o.

Fish Crow

9/12	Stoughton	125	G. d'Entremont

Common Raven

9/11	N. Truro	7	M. Faherty#
9/22	New Braintree	5	M. Lynch#
10/13	PI	4	E. Labato

Horned Lark

10/11	PI	2	S. Zhang
10/31	Saugus (Bear Ck)	7	G. Wilson# + v.o.

Bank Swallow

9/2-9/11	Hadley (Honeypot)	20	M. Maity# + v.o.

Tree Swallow

9/4	Rowley	35000	R. Heil
9/5	PI	15000	G. d'Entremont
9/5	S. Monomoy	3000	A. Burdo#
10/5	Barnstable	5000	C. Walz#

Northern Rough-winged Swallow

10/22	Marshfield	1	L. Schibley

Purple Martin

9/1-9/3	PI	2 max	v.o.
9/6	P'town (RP)	2	P. Flood#

Barn Swallow

9/12	Sunderland	2	W. Howes
9/15	Northampton	3	C. Elowe#
10/11	Wayland	1	S. Miller#

Cliff Swallow

9/6	Deerfield	1	D. Sibley
9/6	Amherst	1	L. Seitz#
9/11	P'town (RP)	1	D. Burton#

Red-breasted Nuthatch

9/3	Ware R. IBA	23	M. Lynch#
9/3	Norfolk	1	L. Schibley
10/2	Concord	1	J. Forbes

Brown Creeper

9/27	MBO	9 b	T. Lloyd-Evans#
10/14	Ware R. IBA	3	M. Lynch#
10/18	S. Monomoy	10	M. Miller#

House Wren

9/22	New Braintree	4	M. Lynch#
10/3	Quaboag IBA	4	M. Lynch#

Winter Wren

10/6	Hardwick	1	M. Lynch#
10/15	Quabbin (G8)	1	M. Lynch#
10/18	Weston	3	J. Forbes

Sedge Wren

9/25	Somerset	1	A. Cembalisty
9/25	Wayland	1 ph	B. Harris
10/2	PI	1	J. Smith#

Marsh Wren

9/18,10/25	Quincy	2,1	J. Bock, K. Ryan + v.o.
10/21	W. Roxbury (MP)	2	M. Iliff
10/24	Hadley	1	L. Therrien
10/31	E. Boston (BI)	1	J. Hanson + v.o.

Carolina Wren

9/4	DWWS	9	SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
10/6	Rowley	9	R. Heil
10/17	Blackstone	16	M. Lynch#

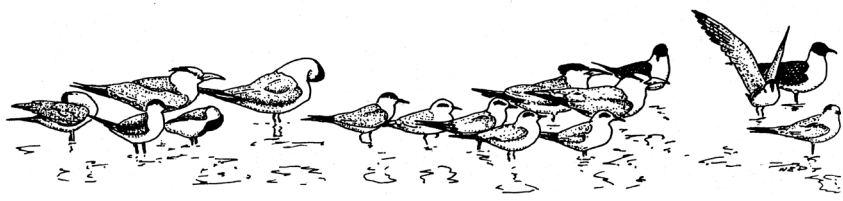
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

10/23	Rockport (HPt)	1	M. Sovay#

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (continued)
10/29 Cambr. (Alewife) 1 B. Shamgochian
Golden-crowned Kinglet
9/30 Rowley (RMWS) 22 R. Heil
10/29 S. Monomoy 38 b M. Miller#
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
9/30 Rowley (RMWS) 28 R. Heil
10/8 Petersham 34 M. Lynch#
Northern Wheatear
9/21 Yarmouth 1 ph A. Burdo + v.o.
9/27-9/29 E. Sandwich 1 ph Anon. + v.o.
Eastern Bluebird
10/3-10/10 DFWS 18,11 P. Sowizral
10/6 Hardwick 17 M. Lynch#
Veery
9/16 Lexington (DM) 1 C. Cook#
9/17-9/18 Woburn (HP) 1 A. Flynn#
9/20 Deerfield 1 V. Woodring
Gray-cheeked Thrush
10/1 WBWS 2 b M. Miller#
10/2 Rockport (HPt) 1 au L. Grimes#
10/3 PI 1 b fide P. Vale
Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush
10/14 Mount Tom 1 J. Harrison
Swainson's Thrush
9/3 Assabet R. NWR 3 nfc N. Tepper
10/6 Rowley (RMWS) 2 R. Heil
10/17 PI 1 b fide P. Vale
10/24 Newton 1 G. d 'Entremont#
Hermit Thrush
10/14 Ware R. IBA 22 M. Lynch#
10/31 Boston (RKG) 9 R. Stymeist#
Wood Thrush
10/5 Concord 1 W. Hutcheson
10/8 Amherst 1 T. Danielson
10/11 Chicopee 1 D. Narango
Gray Catbird
9/1-9/30 MBO 274 b T. Lloyd-Evans#
9/16 Tuckernuck I. 150 R. Veit#
10/1-10/31 MBO 59 b T. Lloyd-Evans#
Brown Thrasher
10/3 Easthampton 1 V. Woodring
10/5 MBO 2 b imm T. Lloyd-Evans#
10/10 Pittsfield 1 S. Townsend
Cedar Waxwing
9/5 Warren 93 M. Lynch#
9/5 Burlington 40 J. Forbes
10/29 Lexington 50 J. Forbes
American Pipit
9/12-10/31 Northampton 46 S. Surner# + v.o.
10/7 E. Boston (BI) 94 S. Jones
10/29 Middleboro 23 K. Ryan
10/31 Saugus (Bear Ck) 12 G. Wilson# + v.o.
Evening Grosbeak
10/1 Ware R. IBA 1 M. Lynch#
10/13 New Salem 1 B. Lafley
10/23 Rockport 1 M. Sovay
10/24-25 Concord 1 W. Hutcheson
Purple Finch
9/7 Medfield 2 J. Bock
10/10 PI 5 G. d'Entremont#
10/18 Weston 2 J. Forbes
10/21-29 W. Roxbury (MP) 2 M. Iliff
Common Redpoll
10/20 Quabbin Pk 1 M. McKitrick
Red Crossbill
9/1-10/17 October Mountain 4 max P. Sibner + v.o.
9/8 Heath 1 F. Bowrys
9/9 Medford 1 J. Layman
9/11 WBWS 1 M. Faherty
10/31 New Marlborough 1 G. Ward
White-winged Crossbill
10/12 Belmont 1 J. Barcus
10/15 Revere (POP) 1 L. Grimes + v.o.
10/18 Quincy 1 D. Burton
European Goldfinch?
10/20 DFWS 1 ph D. Crouse
Pine Siskin
9/13 Orange 8 B. Lafley
10/7 New Salem 6 B. Lafley
10/20 Sharon 3 L. Waters + v.o.
10/21 W. Roxbury (MP) 1 M. Iliff
Lapland Longspur
10/10 Scituate 4 M. Illif + v.o.
10/13-29 PI 1,1 J. Layman, T. Wetmore
10/21 Burrage Pd WMA 1 J. Sweeney
Snow Bunting
10/7 PI 1 S. Laks
10/20 Rockport (AP) 2 L. Manzi
10/22 Northampton 1 S. Lambdin#
Grasshopper Sparrow
9/11-9/26 Shutesbury 1 K. Weir
9/14-9/30 Northampton 1 J. Oliverio + v.o.
9/26 Wayland 1 B. Harris
9/30-10/1 Camp Edwards 4 J. McCumber
Lark Sparrow
9/1-9/2 PI 1 v.o.
9/5 Rockport 1 ad J. Keeley
9/6, 9/18 P'town (RP) 2,1 J. Young, R. Sormani
9/7 Gloucester 1 imm M. Iliff
9/16 S. Monomoy 1 b M. Miller
9/18 Middleton 1 K. Marshall#
9/25 Chatham 1 T. Voytko
9/29 Falmouth 1 M. Kasprzyk#
10/17 Orleans 1 N. Tepper
Chipping Sparrow
10/8 Petersham 73 M. Lynch#
Clay-colored Sparrow
9/19 Barnstable 2 P. Crosson
9/24 BHI (Spectacle I.) 4 S. Jones + v.o.
9/24-10/24 W. Roxbury (MP) 2 T. Bradford + v.o.
9/30-10/14 Boston (FPk) 2 S. Jones + v.o.
10/2 Orleans 3 N. Tepper
10/3-10/15 PI 2 max v.o.
Field Sparrow
9/18 Weymouth 8 G. d'Entremont#
10/15 Falmouth 25 P. Sweet
10/16 Arcadia WS 3 G. d'Entremont#
Fox Sparrow
10/5 Stow 1 S. Miller
10/9 Assabet R. NWR 1 M. Gooley
American Tree Sparrow
10/24 Williamstown 2 D. Griswold
10/29 Northampton 1 L. Therrien
Dark-eyed Junco
9/13 Sharon 1 V. Zollo
10/17 Blackstone 29 M. Lynch#
White-crowned Sparrow
9/27 MBO 1 b imm T. Lloyd-Evans#
9/30 Barnstable 4 N. Villone
10/11 Quincy 6 G. d'Entremont
10/25 Quincy 12 K. Ryan
White-throated Sparrow
10/3 Quaboag IBA 236 M. Lynch#
10/24 Newton 35 G. d'Entremont#
10/29 MBO 20 b T. Lloyd-Evans#
Vesper Sparrow
10/10 DFWS 1 P. Sowizral
10/21-25 W. Roxbury (MP) 2 T. Bradford + v.o.
10/21-23 Quincy 1 M. Dunham
10/23 Quaboag IBA 1 M. Lynch#
10/24 Falmouth 2 J. McCumber
Seaside Sparrow
9/28 PI 1 B. Gress
Nelson's Sparrow
9/20-10/31 PI 3 max T. Wetmore# + v.o.

Nelson's Sparrow(continued)
9/27 Quincy 12 J. Bock + v.o.
10/16-31 E. Boston (BI) 11 S. Jones + v.o.
Saltmarsh Sparrow
9/16-9/28 PI 5,7 T. Wetmore, B. Gress
9/27 WBWS 5 J. Barcus
9/27 Quincy 2 J. Bock + v.o.
Savannah Sparrow
9/16 Tuckernuck I. 40 R. Veit#
10/1-10/16 PI 25 max v.o.
10/16 Arcadia WS 50 G. d'Entremont#
10/31 Saugus (Bear Ck)90 G. Wilson# + v.o.
Ipswich Sparrow
9/24 Hadley 1 C. Elowe
10/8 PI 1 S. Sullivan
10/9 Quincy 1 M. Iliff
10/31 Saugus (Bear Ck) 2 G. Wilson# + v.o.
Lincoln's Sparrow
9/5-9/13 PI 1,1 G. Graham, T. Wetmore
9/6-9/10 Middleton 1,1 S. Sullivan#, J. Keeley
9/11 Rockport 1 M. Sovay
10/3 Quaboag IBA 8 M. Lynch#
Swamp Sparrow
10/3 Quaboag IBA 98 M. Lynch#
10/17 Eastham (FH) 17 M. Harris
10/25 Quincy 8 K. Ryan
Eastern Towhee
9/11 Ware R. IBA 33 M. Lynch#
9/18 Weymouth 7 G. d'Entremont#
9/25 Cuttyhunk I. 121 N. Tepper#
Yellow-breasted Chat
9/6-10/6 E. Boston (BI) 1 S. Riley + v.o.
9/13 Hadley 1 C. Elowe
9/13-10/1 Northampton 1 M. Harris + v.o.
9/25 Cuttyhunk I. 2 N. Tepper#
9/29, 10/6 Quincy 1,1 J. Bock
9/29 WBWS 3 b M. Miller#
10/8 Medford 1 E. Labato
10/19 MBO 1 b imm T. Lloyd-Evans#
Yellow-headed Blackbird
9/11-9/13 Northampton 1 imm phJ.Young+v.o.
10/7 Northampton 1 ad ph L. Therrien
Bobolink
9/4 DWWS 10 SSBC (G. d'Entremont)
9/5 PI 10 G. d'Entremont
9/19 Worcester Airport17 M. Lynch#
9/20 Aquinnah 25 F. Murphy
Eastern Meadowlark
10/29 Chilmark 8 S. Whiting#
10/31 Plymouth 2 G. d'Entremont
Orchard Oriole
9/6 Northampton 1 B. Finney
9/8 Gloucester 1 M. Iliff
10/4-10/5 Newbury 1 I. Pepper + v.o.
Baltimore Oriole
10/8 PI 1 S. Sullivan
10/11-29 Shutesbury 1 K. Weir
10/31 Southboro 1 J. Forbes
Rusty Blackbird
10/7 Aquinnah 5 L. Waters#
10/12 Weston 40 J. Forbes
10/13 PI 2 J. Layman
Ovenbird
10/22 Lexington (DM) 1 C. Gras
10/31 Boston (RKG) 2 R. Stymeist#
Northern Waterthrush
10/6 Waltham 1 E. Szczypek
10/22 MtA 1 E. Rudden
Golden-winged Warbler
9/6-9/8 Lexington 2 max ph C. Cook#
9/7-9/8 S. Monomoy 1 imm m b M. Miller#
9/16 MtA 1 J. Layman
9/18 W. Bridgewater 1 ad m L. Waters#
Blue-winged Warbler
9/9-9/12 Hadley (Fort R.) 2 max L. Therrien + v.o.
10/20 MNWS 1 B. Smith
Black-and-white Warbler
9/10 Quabbin (G35) 2 AthBC (J. Johnstone)
9/30 Rowley (RMWS) 8 R. Heil
10/24 Hadley 1 L. Farlow, S. Winn
Tennessee Warbler
9/11, 9/18 Quincy 4,2 L. Waters, J. Bock + v.o.
10/29 Florence 1 C. Stern
Orange-crowned Warbler
9/19 Washington 1 M. Watson
10/24 Sandwich 2 P. Johnson-Staub
10/28 Medford 1 R. Stymeist
Nashville Warbler
10/3 Mattapan (BNC) 3 BBC Board
10/10-28 Easthampton 12 max D. Allard
Connecticut Warbler
9/3 Newton 1 H. Miller
9/12-9/15 Groton 3,1 S. Wilson#, T. Murray
9/13-9/19 PI 1,1 b P. Vale#, J. Barcus
9/19 Barnstable 2 P. Crosson
9/27 Brewster 2 b S. Finnegan#
10/15-16 Medford 1 J. Levy + v.o.
10/16 Lexington (DM) 1 A. Laquidara
MacGillivray's Warbler
10/8 S. Monomoy 1 b J. Junda#
10/23 Eastham (FH) 1 au T. Spahr
Mourning Warbler
9/3-9/15 PI 1,1 J. Layman#, T. O'Malley
9/6-9/18 Quabbin Pk 2 max L. Therrien
9/6 Pittsfield 1 J. Pierce
9/7-9/13 MNWS 1 J. Smith
9/12 Boston (RKG) 1 M. Garvey
9/12 Medford 1 V. Burdette
9/19-20 Newton 1 H. Miller#
10/2-10/3 Eastham (FH) 1 T. Spahr
10/3 Deerfield 1 G. Mapel
Kentucky Warbler
9/5 Woburn (HP) 1 N. Landers
9/9-9/14 Medford 1 ph J. Mott + v.o.
Common Yellowthroat
9/1-9/4 Rowley 15,14 R. Heil
9/3 Ware R. IBA 13 M. Lynch#
9/16 Tuckernuck I. 50 R. Veit#
Hooded Warbler
9/7 MBO 1 b imm m T. Lloyd-Evans#
9/25 Cuttyhunk I. 1 N. Tepper#
9/30 Rowley 1 R. Heil
10/3-10/6 WBWS 1 b M. Miller#
10/9-10/13 MNWS 1 J. Smith + v.o.
American Redstart
9/1-10/9 Northampton 19 maxL.Therrien+v.o.
9/5 Warren 8 M. Lynch#
9/16 Tuckernuck I. 10 R. Veit#
Cape May Warbler
9/4 Quincy 1 J. Bock + v.o.
9/11 Cuttyhunk I. 5 M. Sylvia
9/20 S. Monomoy 3 M. Miller
10/14 Amherst 1 H. Scott
10/24 S. Monomoy 1 b M. Miller
Cerulean Warbler
10/2 MBO 1 b imm m T. Lloyd-Evans#
Northern Parula
9/20 Northampton 19 L. Therrien
9/25 Cuttyhunk I. 17 N. Tepper#
10/8-10/14 PI 1,1 S. Sullivan, T. Bradford#
10/31 Cambridge 1 L. Bix
Magnolia Warbler
9/11 Lexington (DM) 3 v.o.
10/3 Mattapan (BNC) 1 BBC Board
10/21 MNWS 1 J. Smith

Bay-breasted Warbler
9/11 Ware R. IBA 1 M. Lynch#
9/14 PI 3 W. Klockner
10/7 Florence 1 C. Sokoloski
Blackburnian Warbler
10/1 Newbury 1 K. McGowan
10/5 S. Deerfield 1 V. Woodring
10/6 Quabbin (G33) 1 E. LeBlanc
10/7 Vineyard Sound 1 C. Rimmer#
Yellow Warbler
10/1-10/8 Northampton 1 L. Therrien + v.o.
10/16 Newton 1 H. Miller#
Chestnut-sided Warbler
9/5 Warren 3 M. Lynch#
10/3 Deerfield 1 C. Elphick
10/12 Amherst 1 M. Eckerson
Blackpoll Warbler
9/1-9/30 MBO 99 b T. Lloyd-Evans#
9/20 Aquinnah 44 A. Burdo#
10/1-10/31 MBO 136 b T. Lloyd-Evans#
10/2 Orleans 38 N. Tepper
Black-throated Blue Warbler
9/3 Sharon 2 V. Zollo + v.o.
10/10 PI 1 G. d'Entremont
10/19 Amherst 1 A. Eckerson
10/23 Boston (McW) 1 L. Grimes
Palm Warbler
10/3 DFWS 18 P. Sowizral
10/6 Hardwick 14 M. Lynch#
10/15 Edgartown 20 S. Whiting
10/16 Arcadia WS 15 G. d'Entremont#
Pine Warbler
9/11 Ware R. IBA 39 M. Lynch#
10/6 Easton 8 K. Ryan
10/18 Weston 1 J. Forbes
Yellow-rumped Warbler
10/1-10/16 PI 103 max v.o.
10/2 Orleans 160 N. Tepper
10/20 Rowley 55 R. Heil
10/29 S. Monomoy 97 b M. Miller#
Yellow-throated Warbler
9/17 Greenfield 1 F. Bowrys
9/19 Barnstable 1 ph P. Crosson
9/26 PI 1 ph B. W.
10/3 Orleans 1 ph N. Tepper
10/14 Dartmouth 1 B. King, S. Walas
Prairie Warbler
9/3 Ware R. IBA 2 M. Lynch#
10/3 Montague 1 C. Elowe
10/3 Newton 1 H. Miller
10/6 Groton 1 T. Murray
Black-throated Gray Warbler
9/28 Sudbury 1 ph N. Massarotti
10/4-10/6 Boston (CHRes.) 1 ph R. Doherty + v.o.
Black-throated Green Warbler
9/5 Warren 11 M. Lynch#
9/12 Petersham 3 M. Lynch#
10/21 Cambridge 1 J. Forbes
Canada Warbler
9/5 Woburn 1 J. Forbes
9/13 PI 1 b P. Vale#
9/19 Cambr. (Danehy Pk) 1 K. Hartel
9/21 Longmeadow 1 T. Gilliland
Wilson's Warbler
9/6 Cohasset 2 V. Zollo
9/13 PI 1 S. Grinley#
10/3 Pittsfield 1 S. Townsend
Summer Tanager
9/8 Boston (FPk) 1ph S. Jones
9/25 Cuttyhunk I. 1ph N. Tepper#
Scarlet Tanager
9/1-10/7 Arcadia WS 5 max L. Therrien + v.o.
9/15 Warren 4 M. Lynch#
10/8 Lexington 1 J. Forbes
10/8 Waltham 1 J. Forbes
10/31 Cambr. (FP) 1 J. Trimble
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
9/1-10/8 Northampton 5 max L. Therrien + v.o.
9/15 Warren 2 M. Lynch#
10/8 Northampton 1 M. McKitrick
10/11 Concord 1 J. Barcus
10/11 Medfield 1 J. Bock
Blue Grosbeak
9/1-9/27 Hadley (Honeypot) 4 max L. Therrien + v.o.
9/25 Cuttyhunk I. 3 N. Tepper#
10/3-10/11 Belmont (RM) 2 max v.o.
10/22 MtA 1 E. Rudden
10/24 W. Roxbury (MP) 1 A. Scott
Indigo Bunting
9/1-10/21 Northampton 11 max L.Therrien+v.o.
9/1-10/21 Williamstown 10 max M.Morales+v.o.
9/4 HRWMA 4 J. Forbes
Dickcissel
9/4-9/30 Northampton 3 max M.McKitrick+v.o.
9/25 Cuttyhunk I. 4 N. Tepper#
10/3-10/14 PI 1,1 T. Wetmore#
10/7 Aquinnah 4 L. Waters#



ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taxonomic order is based on AOS checklist, Seventh edition, 62nd Supplement, as published online at <http://checklist.aou.org/taxa> (see also <http://checklist.americanornithology.org/>).

Locations

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

Other Abbreviations

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

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO *BIRD OBSERVER*

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

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

BYGONE BIRDS

Historical Highlights for September–October

Neil Hayward

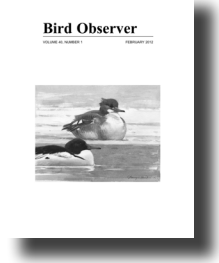
5 YEARS AGO

September–October 2016

Rufous Hummingbirds were confirmed in Westborough and Andover in October. The Brookline Bird Club pelagic trip on September 24 produced three **White-faced Storm-Petrels**, three **Audubon's Shearwaters**, and a **South Polar Skua**. A **Yellow-nosed Albatross** was seen at First Encounter Beach in Eastham on October 10 and again on October 14. A rare inland **American White Pelican** was photographed at The Oxbow in Northampton on September 15, and three days later at Longmeadow. A **Yellow Rail** was observed by many at Fort Hill in Eastham on October 29–31. Also present was a **Bell's Vireo**. A **Harris's Sparrow** was found at Westborough WMA at the end of October. A **Northern Wheatear** was a one-day wonder in Sandwich on September 13 and a **Townsend's Solitaire** was photographed on Plum Island on October 18. A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was in Aquinnah on October 8.

Best sighting: a **Gray Kingbird**—the second record for the state—was seen by many at Ocean Avenue Beach in Hyannis, October 23–November 2.

10 YEARS AGO



September–October 2011

A **Pink-footed Goose** at Turners Falls at the end of October was a first for western Massachusetts. Female **Rufous Hummingbirds** were visiting feeders in Wareham and Lunenberg. Both were banded and stayed throughout the period. The Nantucket Birding Festival scored a **Magnificent Frigatebird**, which was observed flying over the town dock. A **Brown Booby** spent the reporting period in Provincetown and a **Brown Pelican** continued on Cuttyhunk until September 6. A **White Ibis** was viewed by many in the Newbury area on September 4. Shorebird highlights in September included a **Wilson's Plover** on South Beach, Chatham, and a **Curlew Sandpiper** on Plum Island. **Gull-billed Terns** were reported from Plum Island and Provincetown. Flycatchers included a pair of **Ash-throated Flycatchers** on Plum Island, three **Western Kingbirds**, and a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** on Nantucket. **Townsend's Solitaires** were found on Nantucket and in Chatham. Two **Northern Wheatears** were reported from Hull and Nantucket. Other passerine vagrants included a **MacGillivray's Warbler** in Squantum, a **Lark Bunting** in Gloucester, a **Western Tanager** in Dorchester, and **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** in Revere and East Boston.

Best sighting: a **Yellow-green Vireo** was banded on Plum Island on September 5. This was a first record for Massachusetts, and the first record of this species on the East Coast north of Florida.

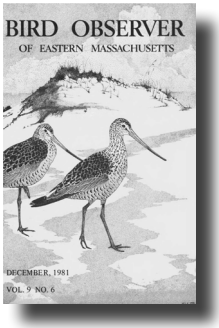
20 YEARS AGO

September–October 2001

Old friends returned to the state to winter; the female **Rufous Hummingbird** came back to the same feeder in Agawam for the fifth consecutive year, while the **Eared Grebe** returned to East Gloucester for its seventh winter. A **Pacific Loon** was spotted from Plum Island on October 31. A **White-faced Storm-Petrel** was observed from a tuna boat near Atlantis Canyon on September 7–9. A **Ross's Goose** on Martha's Vineyard on October 14–22 was just the second record for the state. Rare raptors included a **Mississippi Kite** over Mount Wachusett and a **Swainson's Hawk** and a dark **Gyrfalcon** at Plum Island. A **Yellow Rail** was reported at the Daniel Webster Sanctuary in Marshfield. A **Northern Wheatear** spent four days on Plum Island in early September. An "invasion" of **Boreal Chickadees** was heralded by the early arrival in mid-September of birds at Mount Watatic and Mount Tom.

Best sighting: a **Couch's Kingbird** found on Plum Island on September 7. This first—and only—record for the state came only 10 months after the first state record of the very similar Tropical Kingbird at World's End, Hingham in November 2000.

40 YEARS AGO



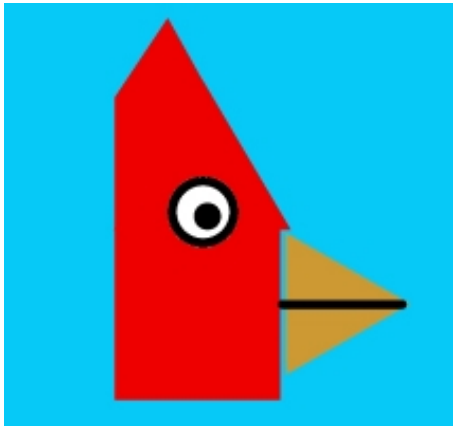
September–October 1981

A Black Vulture—a scarce rarity at the time—was photographed in Truro, Eastham, and Nantucket during the period. A Ruffed Grouse was seen in Newton. An adult **Purple Gallinule** was found at Great Meadows on September 17. A Brookline Bird Club pelagic trip on October 25 was "wing-to-wing" with gulls with over 20,000 Herring Gulls. An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull was a life bird for 90 percent of those on board. A **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** appeared again in the same location in Chatham as the previous year. A **Redwing** was heard and seen on Plum Island on October 4. The record was not accepted and the species has yet to make it on the state list. The same day, a **Bell's Vireo** was reported from Truro. A **Sedge Wren** was found at Great Meadows in Concord. Three **Brewer's Blackbirds** were reported from Dwyer's Farm in Marshfield on October 24–25. A **Henslow's Sparrow** was at Squantum on October 18–19.

Best sighting: A first winter **Mew Gull** of the North American race *Larus canus brachyrhynchos* was reported from Nantucket. Mew Gull was split by the AOS in 2021, and so this report (if accepted as such) would represent the new North American taxon, **Short-billed Gull**.

Ray Brown's Talkin' Birds

A Weekly Radio Show about Birds, Birding, and Conservation



Recent Guests -

Purbita Saha and Martha Harbison, Co-founders of The Galbatross Project and Female Bird Day

David Lindo, UK naturalist and host of the Urban Birder website

Danielle Kaschube, Bird Bander and MAPS Coordinator at the Institute for Bird Populations

Holly Merker, Co-author of the Mindful Birding book, Ornitherapy

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AT A GLANCE

December 2021

WAYNE R. PETERSEN

It is safe to assume that most readers of this journal will recognize this issue's mystery bird as a shorebird, however, the species may not be quite so obvious. Considering that a total of 60 shorebird species have been recorded in the Commonwealth, the mystery bird has several similar-looking peers. Some of these are rarities that have appeared in the state only once or twice. Many other shorebirds, such as Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, American Oystercatcher, and Long-billed Curlew, are unlikely to be confused with the mystery species.

One of the first things to do when confronted with an unfamiliar shorebird is to determine whether the bird is a plover or a sandpiper. Plovers are characterized by having short, straight, and somewhat thick, blunt-tipped bills. Sandpipers, on the other hand, often have longer and more slender pointed bills and the shape may vary from upturned to straight to down-curved.

Plovers also have more robust chests, and somewhat angular-shaped heads with steeper foreheads and larger eyes than sandpipers. Several species of plovers have one or more dark rings around their chest. Other plovers have black underparts in breeding plumage; adults in nonbreeding plumage and juveniles have plain underparts with only fine streaks on their breast.

When feeding, many sandpipers probe vigorously in the sand or mud for their food, while plovers behave more like robins on a lawn in their search for prey. Even though some of the differences between plovers and sandpipers appear in the photograph, you cannot see the distinctive differences in their feeding behaviors in the picture.

Upon careful examination, it is clear that the shorebird is a sandpiper, not a plover. Specific field marks to note are the bird's dark legs, fairly short and slightly curved bill, white supercilium over the small eye, and the thin dark necklace of streaks across the chest. And perhaps most important is a small but distinct yellowish brown patch at the base of the lower mandible, which is possible to see in the color photograph on our website. This combination of features, especially the color of the base of the lower mandible, is 100% diagnostic of a White-rumped Sandpiper (*Calidris fuscicollis*). Although other sandpipers may share some of these features, none show all of them. A Pectoral Sandpiper may superficially resemble this image of a White-rump, but a Pectoral Sandpiper always has conspicuous yellowish legs and a longer bill with more orange at the base.

White-rumped Sandpipers are uncommon spring migrants in Massachusetts and can be locally common from late summer through mid-fall at favored coastal localities such as Plum Island and Outer Cape Cod. They are generally uncommon to scarce inland at any season. This juvenile White-rumped Sandpiper was photographed by the author on Nauset Beach in Orleans, Barnstable County, on November 15, 2009.

Wayne R. Petersen

ABOUT THE COVER PHOTOGRAPHER

Zachary Holderby

I have been birding since about fifth grade, for almost 30 years now. Originally from Washington, I started doing field research in high school. I continued with a BS in Wildlife Ecology from Washington State University and a MS in Wildlife Ecology at Texas State University. My thesis involved studying polymorphism in Reddish Egrets and how this affects their breeding and foraging. I have done bird survey work in Arizona and Colorado and terrestrial vertebrate monitoring for Channel Islands National Park; I have worked with parrots in South America and done squirrel research in the Yukon.

Currently, I am living in Penobscot, Maine, with my wife and two kids; I try to find some time to go birding. I am working three jobs: substitute teaching, working on the Maine Breeding Bird Survey and Atlas, and sea kayak guiding for Stonington Paddle. Like many New England birders, I have been thinking about this Steller's Sea-Eagle since it showed up in Canada this summer, a bird that has long been near the top of my world bucket list.

When the eagle was spotted in Georgetown, Maine, I took my kayak so I could get good photos. When the bird flew out of sight, I figured it would not ruin anyone else's experience if I cautiously paddled out to the back side of the island where I last saw it. When I was 70 meters away, it was unperturbed. At 40 meters out, it still did not care as I slowly worked my way back and forth in a broad arc, a similar but more cautious approach than I use for Bald Eagle when I am guiding. I took pictures with my telephoto 150–600 mm Tamron lens on a Canon Rebel on a cloudy day.

AT A GLANCE

DAVID CLAPP

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

MORE HOT BIRDS

Hampshire County's Monday Morning Birders group noted that an unusually late meadowlark in the Hadley Honeypot was unusual in more ways than one. Local birders quickly accumulated a library's worth of photos and audio recordings, establishing the bird as a **Western Meadowlark**. Massachusetts has had fewer than five confirmed records over the past decade. Sara Griesemer took the photo on the left.

The **Painted Buntings** that appeared at birdfeeders in Massachusetts this fall bucked the usual trend of greenish immature birds; all three were beautiful adult males. A one-day wonder in Mashpee kicked things off. An individual in Nantucket followed, lingering for just over a week. The third appeared in the most unusual location, visiting Sheffield in the far southwestern corner of the state. Trish Pastuszak took the photo on the right.

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VOL. 50, NO 1, FEBRUARY 2022

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