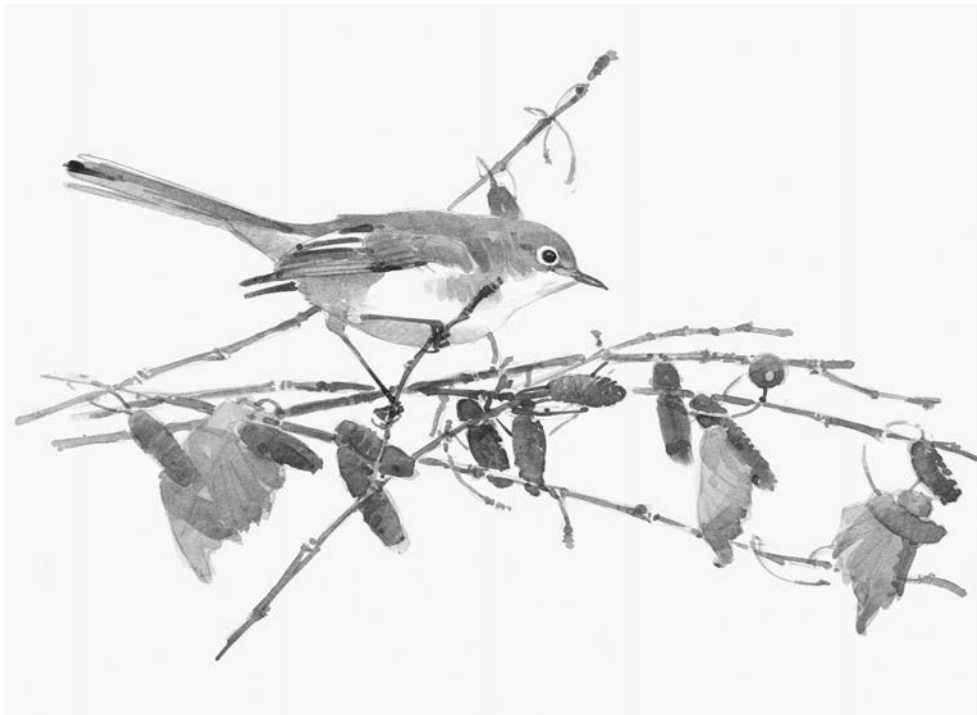


Bird Observer

VOLUME 41, NUMBER 3

JUNE 2013



HOT BIRDS

After the invasion of **Northern Lapwings** (right) last fall and winter, we figured we'd seen the last of these in Massachusetts for a long, long time. So imagine their surprise when Steve Arena and Amy O'Neill spotted this one flying over Bolton Flats on April 27. Photograph copyright by Steve Arena.



Gael Hurley was on a Hoffman Bird Club trip to Williamstown on April 28 when she spotted this gorgeous **Mountain Bluebird** (left). Many folks got to see it, including Ian Davies who took this stunning portrait.

On May 20 Suzanne Sullivan was scanning the Semipalmated Plovers at Sandy Point on Plum Island when she spotted a bird that was slightly different. After photographing and studying it she realized it was a **Common Ringed Plover** (right), only a third state record.



On May 27 two **Mississippi Kites** (left) were sighting flying over the Pilgrim Heights Hawkwatch. Blair Nikula scouted the area and relocated and photographed this one over Provincetown.

Cave Swallows (right) are mostly seen in the fall and on the coast in Massachusetts, so it was astonishing when Cole and Jalen Winstanley spotted and Jalen photographed this one at Great Meadows in Concord on May 27. [Cave Swallow flying over a Tree Swallow in this photograph]



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BIRD OBSERVER ONLINE

Bird Observer is considering offering a web-based electronic version of the journal in addition to the current printed version. The subscription rate would likely be lower for those who choose to no longer receive the printed copy.

AS A TRIAL, we have posted the entire February issue on the *Bird Observer* website <<http://www.massbird.org/birdobserver/>>. We encourage you to take a look and send us your thoughts.

If you are a current subscriber, choose a response from below:

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VOL. 41, NO. 3 JUNE 2013

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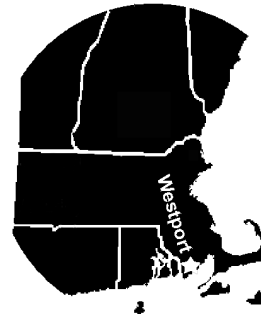
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A Birding Guide to Horseneck Beach State Reservation including Gooseberry Neck, Westport, Massachusetts

Paul Champlin



The stretch of coastline from the village of Acoaxet in Westport to the mouth of the Slocum River in South Dartmouth offers some of the most dynamic late-summer, fall, and winter birding in New England. Located in the heart of the region known as the Southcoast, this wide expanse of permanently protected lands owned by the state and private land-protection organizations represents more than ten miles of shoreline habitat available for exploration. Although too much habitat exists to cover in one visit, this guide will offer suggestions about when and where to bird one of the more productive areas along this shoreline, Horseneck Beach State Reservation in Westport, Massachusetts. A constant flow of southbound migrants provides a regular influx of new birds throughout late summer, fall, and early winter, the seasons covered by this guide. Habitats in this area include barrier beach, sand dune, tidal marsh, pitch pine, and coastal shrubland. Combining a trip to Horseneck Beach State Reservation with any of the surrounding areas can make for a productive day of birding. For example, during late summer through mid-fall, Gooseberry Neck is often a good place to start. Once you have exhausted the productive birding there, Mass Audubon's Allens Pond Sanctuary will introduce different habitats and provide opportunities to find other birds that have stopped over or are seasonal residents. A guide to Allens Pond will follow in a future issue of *Bird Observer*. On this stretch of coastline alone, a birder will never have enough time to explore even half of the available habitats in a single visit, but it can be rewarding to try.

As is the case with many other birding sites in New England, weather conditions dictate birding success on the Southcoast. The geomorphology of this east-west oriented shoreline focuses southbound migration along the immediate coast. Many New England birders are familiar with the way local bird diversity is influenced by the passage of weather fronts over New England during southbound migration. Typically, northwesterly winds following strong cold fronts push wayward migrants against the Southcoast, where they often pause before reorienting themselves and continuing west along Long Island Sound in search of a land-based route south. Northwesterly winds, however, are not the only winds that bring birds to this region of Massachusetts. Westerly and southwesterly winds from Long Island Sound often blow nocturnal migrants from Long Island out over our coastal waters, and these birds eventually find their way to the Southcoast. Southwesterly winds extending from the interior of the continent can blow reverse migrants and vagrants from more distant regions into New England, and some of these are then pushed against the Southcoast



by the northwesterly winds that typically follow such fronts. Predictably, strong late-fall and winter winds out of the south quarter drive numbers of seabirds and sea ducks against the shore of Buzzards Bay, but these movements don't approach the magnitude of seabird movements around Cape Cod Bay or the North Shore. Even with the warmer temperatures of the Southcoast and the expanse of habitat available for searching, this area receives far less birding attention than it deserves.

A note about an important resource: Restrooms are scarce in the region covered by this guide. Men's and women's rooms at Horseneck Beach are available into October, and the "family" restroom, located in the same building as the men's and women's rooms, remains unlocked into November. Port-a-johns are available on Gooseberry Island at least into October, but the timing of their removal depends on staffing, which varies from year to year. Allens Pond Field Station, one mile to the east, provides access to a restroom when staff occupies the building, but that schedule varies by season. The most recent change is the addition of the restroom at the new Stone Barn Farm at Allens Pond, a facility that is open spring through fall (the facility is located in the old stone barn itself). The small restaurants that dot the coast offer restrooms, but require patronage, and their days and hours of operation vary throughout the year. Finally, with a four-mile drive north from the Route 88 bridge, visitors to the Southcoast can find a public restroom in the center of Westport at Lee's Market, which also has food, including a full deli, etc. Go west (left) on Hixbridge Road, then north (right) on Main Street.

Horseneck Beach State Reservation

Horseneck Beach is a facility owned and managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and consists of 600 acres of barrier beach, saltmarsh estuary, sand dunes, pitch pines, cranberry bogs, shrubland, and coastal hammock. Gooseberry Neck is a distinct part of Horseneck Beach State Reservation, and is covered separately below. During the summer beach-going season (typically the days outside the school season), the public beach portion of Horseneck Beach State Reservation requires a fee for parking, \$7.00 in summer 2012, but free for senior citizens with the proper pass obtained at the main office, 200 yards left of the entrance booth. After approximately 4:00 p.m. DCR ceases charging, and gates stay open until 8:00 p.m. unless otherwise indicated at the entrance booth. Outside the summer season, access is usually free. The gates at Horseneck Beach generally open and close according to posted schedule, but this schedule is not always reliable due to variable staffing.

Main Entrance: Birding at Horseneck Beach is hit or miss. Some days it can be very rewarding, other days it provides a nice walk at the shore. Depending on the season, birding can start right in the parking lot. From late summer through winter, mixed-species flocks often move through the thickets and pine forests around the perimeters of the parking lots, which occasionally host fall and early winter Yellow-breasted Chats and Orange-crowned Warblers. Beginning in November, flocks of Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, and occasionally Lapland Longspurs forage among the tussocks of grass in the parking lots. During the swallow incursions of October and



Horseneck Beach State Reservation, east. View from the tall sand dune behind the Horseneck Beach main building, showing the forested area of The Let (left of the John Reed Road telephone poles), parking lot 3 (including the large puddle with roosting gulls), Gooseberry Neck in the distance to the right of center. During fall cold fronts, this vista can be a good site from which to watch for migrant raptors and Cave Swallows.

November, Horseneck Beach hosts small flocks of Cave Swallows as they move west along the shore. During these events, the Cave Swallows can be observed from the main parking lot as they congregate over the dunes immediately to the west. Watch for them to briefly circle back overhead as they try to find the quickest way south over land.

From the main parking lot, it can be rewarding to walk across John Reed Road north to the Westport River's edge to scan for marsh birds, shorebirds, waterfowl, and raptors (a scope is recommended). Areas where you can safely scan the expanse of river and marsh are plentiful and obvious from the parking lot, but be careful as you cross the road. During late summer through fall and winter, watch for raptors as migrants move along the Southcoast and residents forage over the river, marsh, and shrubland. Wading birds congregate here throughout the fall and can be easily observed, with flocks flying to or from roosts on riverine islands. During the winter of 2008, a Rough-legged Hawk spent much of its time perched atop the line of trees and shrubs to the east of the visible marsh, and Short-eared Owls and Bald Eagles make regular appearances on or over the marsh. This site represents a great location from which to watch for marsh birds as they are driven from the river marshes by storm-blown or astronomically high tides.

Beach Road: Beach Road, a 1.75-mile paved path stretching along the foredune of the park, provides access to dune and scrub habitats. From the parking lot, walk toward the beach on either the access boardwalk or the access road near the entrance booth. Once at the beach, scan the ocean and (if the beach is relatively devoid of patrons) look for shorebirds. Turn right and walk west along Beach Road for half a mile. Shortly after the road enters the dunes, take the small sand road that angles north toward the pine forest to the park's debris site for debris gathered from beach raking. Watch for mixed flocks among the shrubs and pines. Return to Beach Road and continue west, watching for birds among the low shrubs. A few trails enter the sand dunes. These areas are greatly neglected by birders, even though small bogs and wetlands are scattered among the dunes.



Horseneck Beach State Reservation, west. View from the tall sand dune behind the Horseneck Beach main building, showing parking lots 1 and 2, Buzzards Bay (left) and the Westport River (right) in this panoramic photograph by the author.

The road eventually terminates at Bridge Road, which provides immediate access to the beach. Turn left and walk over the hill to the beach. Birders can continue west as far as the mouth of the Westport River, an additional round-trip of two miles, and can expect to find terns, shorebirds, loons, and sea ducks. Hurricane Irene deposited several Black Skimmers at the mouth of the river, where they remained for several weeks. The majority of the shorebirds, however, congregate near the Bridge Road beach entrance, so the additional two-mile walk isn't necessarily worth the time. Within Horseneck Beach State Reservation, various trails access the dunes, pitch pines, and deciduous forest between Beach Road and John Reed Road, but are virtually ignored by birders.

The Beach (especially the west end): Unlike most shorelines of Massachusetts, Horseneck Beach supports a healthy population of *Emerita talpoida*, otherwise known as mole crabs, which scurry around in the sand within the breaking waves. As the waves recede, a keen eye can spot tens of thousands as they quickly burrow back into the sand. Digging as a wave recedes can net you dozens. Although many that remain beneath the sand attain a large size (>1 inch), the majority are approximately half an inch long—a perfect food item for Sanderlings, which gorge themselves on mole crabs for much of the day. Public use of the beach disturbs the birds to some degree, so rainy days or low-traffic times of any day (5:00–8:00 p.m. or between dawn and 9:00 a.m.) are the best times to view the hundreds of Sanderlings, Dunlin, Semipalmated Sandpipers, and Semipalmated, Piping, and Black-bellied plovers that forage there during midsummer through early fall. In 2010, a Marbled Godwit associated with the large flock of 50+ Willets that gathers annually. Flocks tend to congregate at the far west end of the park property (**map item A**), approximately 0.5 mile west of the main beach. Few birders make the trip to view these birds, though the area is a reliable birding resource at all tides, since the food source moves with the rising and lowering tides.

On the eastern part of the public beach, Beach Road continues all the way down to Gooseberry Neck, the body of land visible to the southeast of the main beach. This stretch of Beach Road is generally quiet but hosts Short-eared Owls and Ipswich Sparrows during the winter. I have always thought that the habitat looked great for open-country species.

Lot 3: Another unlikely shorebird resource at Horseneck Beach during late August and September is the large parking lot to the east of the main beach and the beach headquarters. This parking lot, Lot 3, is often closed. If the lot is open, enter the beach parking area, turn left at the entrance booth, and drive over the rise into Lot 3. If it is closed, walk the access road behind the main building to the far eastern end (**map item B**). For a few days after a substantial rain or during roosting periods and unfavorable foraging conditions along the shoreline (e.g., during storms), as many as 200 Semipalmated Plovers, Piping Plovers, Killdeer, Semipalmated Sandpipers, and other shorebirds congregate around the many puddles and tussocks of grass that dot the parking lot. Often a large puddle forms in this lot, and has hosted as many as three Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Later in the season, the entrance to Lot 3 often holds fall migrant flocks including an occasional Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, or Clay-colored Sparrow.

Horseneck Campground: A continuation of the Horseneck Beach birding experience can be found at the Horseneck Beach campground. When birds are present, birders tend to get good looks at them. That said, when the area is quiet, it makes for no more than a pleasant if bird-free walk. Making a loop through the campground can vary between one and two miles, mostly on pavement. While there is access to the campground throughout the year, care should be exercised to avoid disturbing campers in what are legally their temporary residences. The campground is usually sparsely occupied in September and October and is usually closed for the



During winter the parking lots at Horseneck Beach host flocks of terrestrial migrants such as these Snow Buntings. Photograph by Dan Lane.

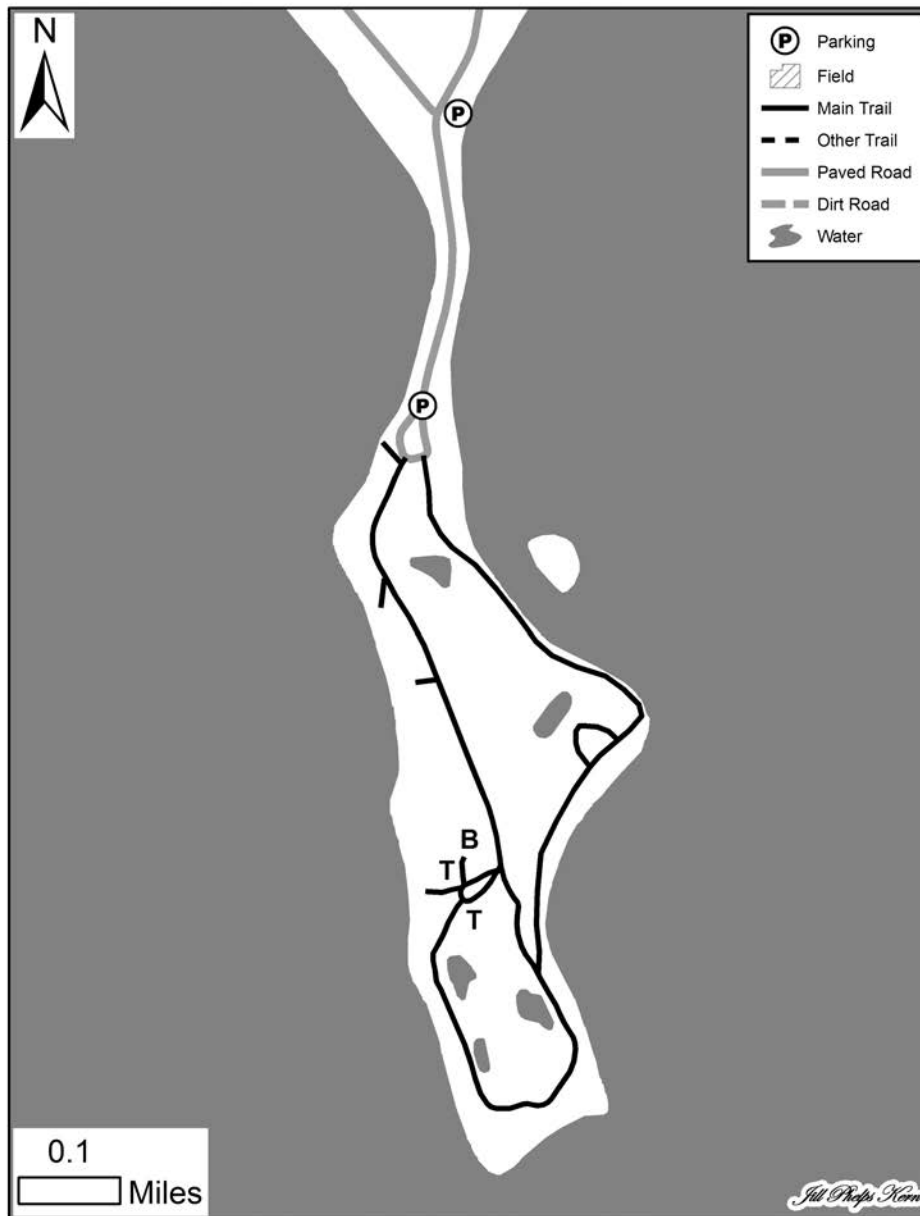
season after Columbus Day weekend. Free access can be easily gained from the small, gravel public parking lot (**map item D**; town of Westport property) immediately before the causeway to Gooseberry Neck. Instead of heading out onto the causeway, walk west on Beach Road approximately 100 yards to the closed DCR gate (closed to vehicles only). The shoreline parallel to the road often hosts a large flock of gulls, as they forage among the mats of invasive red seaweed that are often thrown up on the shore by south winds.

Walk Beach Road to the first intersection, and pause to scan the water for sea ducks, loons, and grebes. At the intersection, hug the perimeter of the campground to the right. In October and November check the sandy area on the eastern end for migrant sparrows and watch for Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, and Horned Larks that tend to use the east end more than the rest of the campground. Probe the various shrub, grass, and pitch pine habitats around the campground, and look for the regularly occurring Field Sparrows and the occasional Vesper Sparrow. In the northwest corner of the campground, a sand/gravel track (**map item C**) heads into the pine woods and doubles back to Beach Road. This track is one of the better birding sites in the campground and in 2012 produced an Oregon Junco as well as both Red and White-winged crossbills. Continue along the track to Beach Road, turn left (east), and head back to the parking area, searching the ocean for seabirds and the grass/scrub for "Ipswich" Savannah Sparrows and other ground birds. Short-eared Owls often forage over the campground and dunes during incursion years.

Storm birding (or pre-storm birding) from Horseneck Beach Reservation can be worthwhile depending on the wind direction and duration. During both Hurricanes Irene and Sandy, access to the base of the Gooseberry Neck causeway remained open well into each storm and provided open areas from which to view the water. Since East Beach Road regularly washes over and was damaged by both those hurricanes, the town of Westport now closes the southernmost end of Horseneck Road immediately before a tropical cyclone and the Route 88 bridge well before hurricane landfall, so coastal access at Horseneck Beach during such strong storms is limited or not allowed. Though direct access to East Beach Road in Westport is closed, the town usually closes Horseneck Road immediately south of Mass Audubon's Allens Pond Sanctuary. This sanctuary offers parking and a good vantage point from which to scan for wayward seabirds.

Gooseberry Neck

Jutting more than a mile south into Buzzards Bay from Horseneck Beach, this former island is now connected to the mainland via a substantial causeway, terminating in a small dirt parking lot on its north end (often full during warm summer days). The island of approximately 70 acres is dominated by low shrubland, with scattered small trees and large patches of beach grass and phragmites. Visitors should keep in mind that following hurricanes, or during late fall and winter, the main Gooseberry parking lot may be closed. If this is the case, park in the small gravel lot immediately before the causeway and walk the causeway to the island. Be aware that dogs are permitted on the island, so be prepared for furry Fido to come check out



what you're doing. Remember, birders own dogs too. Interestingly, the dogs don't seem to have an effect on most birds here, as many are moving quickly toward the north, trying to get off the island, or are foraging actively to replenish the fuel they need to leave the island and continue south along the coast. A surprising thing I have learned is that great mornings on Gooseberry Neck do not tend to translate into productive birding days on the mainland.

Birding at Gooseberry Neck can be one of the most frustrating yet rewarding experiences of the birding year, although “the early bird gets the worm” and “timing is everything” often (but not always) apply here. This is arguably one of the most predictable fall birding sites in the region, with weather and radar ornithology playing roles in birding success. It is well worth getting to know how to interpret radar images (a relatively easy task), and a simple Internet search for “bird radar” will produce plenty of information on the subject. For more information on predicting the magnitude of migration through Gooseberry Neck, see Southcoastbirder.blogspot.com, and keep checking back for updates during each spring and fall migration season. Skill at radar interpretation is not entirely necessary though, and though I will mention radar images in relation to wind strength, direction, and migration intensity, radar will play only a minor role in this site guide. Since many of the birds you will encounter will be in migration—actually in flight to the mainland and on to points west and south—large numbers of birds will be seen only briefly, and some will be seen only once. Thus, to get the full benefit of this magnificent birding site, the ability to identify birds by *chip/zeep* notes and the ability to interpret size, shape, and color of birds in flight are valuable assets.

This is a challenging set of skills to acquire, but even without them birders can have a rewarding birding experience at this site. Heaven knows—and other birders know—I am still working at these skills, and I have great luck birding at Gooseberry. During both fall and spring migrations I have had single-day warbler species-counts in the high teens and fall sparrow species-counts approaching ten, along with good numbers of buntings, grosbeaks, juncos, etc. Although this guide covers the period during southbound migration, many of the scenarios described here (radar, weather factors, positioning, etc.) hold for spring migration as well, though rather than northwest winds, southwest winds overnight are best, and dawn is far earlier than in the fall. There are often fewer birds than during fall, but the birds are in breeding plumage, making the birding well worthwhile. For example, May 16, 2013, produced a dawn to noon flight that included 70 species, with 17 species of warbler, including Kentucky, Bay-breasted, and Canada.

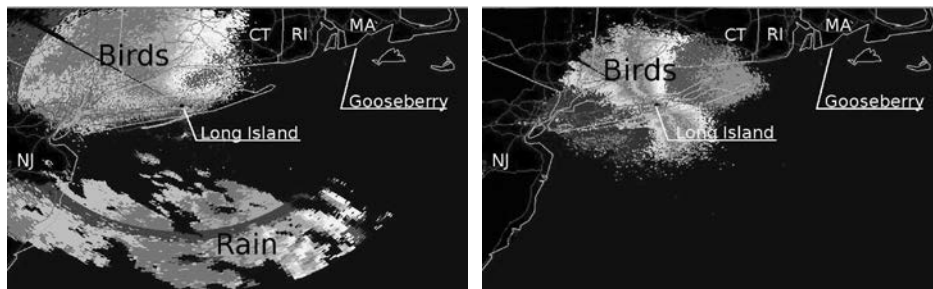
Whether or not you plan your trip around the weather, pay close attention to it, as it will determine how much time you can spend at Gooseberry before departing for Horseneck Beach or Allens Pond. If you can plan your trip around the weather, aim your efforts toward the first couple of mornings following the passage of a cold front, especially if the winds persist from the northern quarter overnight and into the morning (although a calm night followed by north winds after dawn is often just as productive). If the north or northwest winds continue well into the day, you may be in for an amazing morning. Even an average morning provides a birding experience that is nearly unique in Massachusetts.

The funneling of fall migrants onto and over Gooseberry occurs in several ways, depending on the weather patterns. During northerly winds, nocturnal migrant birds are pushed out over Buzzards Bay and find themselves over open water at dawn. At first light, many of these birds turn back north toward land, aiming for the peninsula of Gooseberry Neck, the body of land that locally juts farther out into Buzzards Bay

than any other. Migrants that have found their way to Gooseberry in the middle of the night depart at first light, heading north toward Horseneck Campground. Many other birds that find themselves over the water at first light continue to work their way back toward the mainland well into the morning. They aim for Gooseberry, funnel through the thickets, and find themselves at the north end of the island. Here they are hesitant to cross the open water to the mainland, so many can be seen in the shrubs surrounding the parking lot.

The magnitude of nocturnal migration can be detected using radar sites available on the Internet. I use <http://weather.rap.ucar.edu/radar/>, which archives radar images for four days and provides multiple-image loops. I also use <http://radar.weather.gov/>, which is easier to navigate but archives only two hours; for either site, select “storm velocity” and a radar station; cool colors are inbound birds and warm colors are outbound birds. Because the radar station nearest to the Southcoast is approximately 30 miles north in Taunton and north is the direction from which birds arrive in fall, the Taunton radar station provides a good indication of the magnitude and direction of bird movement overnight and how birding at Gooseberry will be in the morning. During pre-dawn hours, the Taunton radar station detects birds returning to land after overshooting the Southcoast overnight and finding themselves over Buzzards Bay at dawn. Although the Taunton Station is too distant to detect birds flying low over the water, higher birds are detected. The density of returns can be an indicator of the magnitude of the morning migration through Gooseberry. Current smartphone technology even allows birders standing in the Gooseberry parking lot to make a nearly real-time assessment of the magnitude of migration off Buzzards Bay.

The next closest radar station is near the center of Long Island. One might ask how this station could show the magnitude of migration over Gooseberry since the station is south and west of there. Intuitively, we know that strong west and southwest winds push birds east from the west end of Long Island, and radar returns show this. Strong winds of relatively long duration push migrants east over Long Island and Block Island Sounds, and eventually over Buzzards Bay, especially during spring migration. While reading radar images, one key radar feature to pay attention to in



Radar images of Long Island bird migration: Left. Long Island migration (good, but Gooseberry was poor) on 5/19/2013; Right. Gooseberry was great on 5/15/2013. See text for details.

determining if migration over Gooseberry will be good in the morning is Long Island's East Fork. If much of the East Fork is obscured by radar returns of migrant birds for several hours overnight, in all likelihood many of those migrants will funnel through Gooseberry in the morning. If migrants have not obscured the East Fork, most birds have moved to the west of our area. Gooseberry may still have birds, but there is less likelihood of large numbers of birds funneling through. During the fall, fewer migrants are willing to move with southwest winds, but some still do, and the radar station in the center of Long Island will show birds moving east. Since there are fewer birds moving north during fall southwest winds, Long Island's East Fork is less likely to be obscured, but the magnitude of birds moving east along Long Island is a good indicator of the magnitude of migration through Gooseberry the following morning. Neither radar station is positioned properly to detect and track the birds all the way from Long Island to Buzzards Bay, but if radar detects many birds moving east off Long Island, an hour or two after their departure the Taunton station often picks them up, an indication that those birds made it to Buzzards Bay.

Finally, northeast winds occasionally affect bird numbers on Gooseberry, with the Taunton radar images hinting at the density of birds coming off the Gulf of Maine. These birds then follow the modus operandi of migrants blown by the north winds, as well as birds migrating from the islands to the east, and end up on or over Gooseberry. On a more consistent basis, migrants moving from points east (Cuttyhunk, Martha's Vineyard, etc.) also pass over Buzzards Bay, and often drop into the thickets of Gooseberry or fly overhead as they work their way west along the coast. Whatever the case, note that even on days when few birds are moving, some of those birds could be very interesting species (e.g., Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Connecticut Warbler). I rarely go away from Gooseberry without it having been worth the visit, but an early start is often essential.

Other than the overall predictability, one of the most exciting things about watching migration at Gooseberry is that just about anything is possible in terms of species. Species diversity and makeup follow typical season trends, with the strongest passerine migration peaking in early October and nearly ending around December 1st. More than 260 species have been recorded here, including rarities such as Pacific Loon, Western Grebe, Brown Pelican, White Ibis, Sabine's Gull, Sooty Tern, Sandwich Tern, and White-winged Dove. The following have also been recorded: Red-headed Woodpecker, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Cave Swallow, Sedge Wren, Yellow-throated Warbler, Lark Bunting, and Brewer's Blackbird. Gooseberry is a reliable site at which to regularly encounter uncommon species such as American Golden-Plover, Yellow-breasted Chat, Orange-crowned Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Dickcissel. For example, during 2012 I encountered seven different Dickcissels during eight birding trips to Gooseberry; they were migrating fly-over birds, calling as they headed to the mainland and west. Most years produce multiple Yellow-breasted Chats in the thickets of the island, but I didn't hear of a single one during 2012. Meanwhile, I personally tallied six Orange-crowned Warblers throughout the fall. Nearly every fall visit to Gooseberry produces at least one Merlin, sometimes many more in a morning.



Clay-colored Sparrows. It is often worth the walk to the south end of Gooseberry Neck. These Clay-colored Sparrows were among the many found in the fall of 2012. Photograph by the author.

As an example of a relatively typical morning on Gooseberry, on September 11, 2010, Brian Cassie of Foxboro tallied the following passerines between 6:00 and 7:30 a.m.: Red-breasted Nuthatch (5), Northern Flicker (3), Great Crested Flycatcher (1), Eastern Kingbird (1), Yellow-throated Vireo (1), Northern Parula (2), Black-throated Green Warbler (1), Palm Warbler (3), Blackpoll Warbler (1), Yellow Warbler (3), Magnolia Warbler (2), Wilson's Warbler (2), Connecticut Warbler (1), Northern Waterthrush (1), Common Yellowthroat (5), American Redstart (18), Lincoln's Sparrow (1), Dickcissel (2), and Rose-breasted Grosbeak (2). He also mentioned seeing Lesser Black-backed Gull and Wood Duck among the typical coastal avifauna. Not bad for practically standing in one spot for ninety minutes! (Reminder: standing still in even relatively warm conditions can make a birder chilly. Dress properly, and keep a snack, water, and a layer or two in the car. Gooseberry tends to be much windier than the mainland Westport forecast.)

Gooseberry's parking lot produces some of the best birding for this site. For example, from September 2012 until May 2013, I tallied 30 species of warbler, including several Connecticut and Kentucky warblers as well as the Orange-crowned Warblers mentioned above. On some days during migration, remaining in or near the parking lot until mid- to late morning is advised. If the proper weather conditions and

migrants converge, you may experience some of the best birding in the state. Birds work their way along the island at different rates, headed north toward the mainland. Often, predawn pulses of migrant warblers, tanagers, flycatchers, or thrushes depart the island, flying over, by, or through the parking lot. Most of these initial pulses of birds go unidentified due to low-light conditions (hence the advantage of being able to identify birds by flight call). Not all birds depart before dawn, however, and birds come in off of Buzzards Bay and trickle by in pulses at variable rates throughout the morning and often into the afternoon. Migrants spotted over the water occasionally (tragically) plummet to their deaths into the sea. The vegetation-free gap between the Gooseberry Neck parking lot and the mainland deters many birds from comfortably crossing the gap and often allows for extended looks at birds in flight as they hesitate before making the crossing to the mainland. Often, second, third, or even more looks can be obtained at birds that abort crossing attempts and instead double back into the thickets, only to try again a few minutes later. As they do so, they may fly between observers, sometimes nearly landing on birders standing near the trailhead. Don't let a brief lull in activity convince you to leave. Birds may still be over the bay, or funneling toward the parking lot. I have often missed good looks at great birds in the parking lot while I worked my way south on the island.



Wax myrtle is not the usual habitat for a Blue-headed Vireo, but it is the dominant vegetation on Gooseberry Neck. Photograph by the author.

Small elevated areas within the parking lot offer good vantage points from which to observe most birds passing by, but better looks at perched birds can be obtained closer to the trailhead or even on the trail itself. Strong northerly winds (10 mph or more) may prevent some birds from crossing to the mainland altogether, keeping them in the bushes and grass surrounding the parking lot and trailhead. For the best early morning lighting, stand on the east side of the vegetation near the trailhead, yet remain aware of the general flow of birds, as they may shift to the west side of the trail and parking lot. If birds shift to the west of the trail, especially during north or northeasterly winds, stand near the trailhead or even part way up the trail. If the winds are from the north or due west, the flow of birds can be relatively constant through the morning; southerly winds have the opposite effect, with birds moving quickly to the mainland.

While visiting Gooseberry, a birder is well advised to scan the mainland and surrounding waters as well for seabirds, raptors, ravens, herons, egrets, cranes, etc., moving along and over the shore. Later in the season, scan both sides of the island for winter waterfowl, as flocks of Goldeneyes, Buffleheads, scoters of all three species, and Common Eiders commonly forage among the rocks. Harlequin Ducks are often seen from the causeway foraging among the small set of rocks on the west side of the causeway's base. While searching the rocks, keep watch for Purple Sandpipers, which



Gooseberry Neck. View looking north from the bunker at the south end. Photograph by the author.

can also be seen foraging or roosting. During winter storms, an occasional Razorbill and even Dovekies scoot by the causeway, and Northern Gannets occasionally fly over it, although seabirds remain sparse in Buzzards Bay during the fall and early winter. For example, a strong front packing southerly winds with gusts of 80 mph on January 31, 2013, produced four Dovekies, four Razorbills, and a Black-legged Kittiwake during 90 minutes of morning scanning. Whether the wind is from the east or west, the position of Gooseberry Neck provides a large patch of quiet water on which Horned Grebes and both Common and Red-throated loons commonly forage or roost in the quiet coves on either side of the causeway. For the more hearty seabird enthusiast, the best vantage point for viewing seabirds is by standing, tucked behind the north (small) tower on the island, with the tower offering a lee from the wind and weather. Note that substantial April seabird movements have been documented from this location.

From the parking lot, a well-established gravel primary trail runs two-thirds the length of the island, a half-mile, and ends at the two towers that are visible from most parts of the island (**T on the map**; both towers are closed to public access). As the flow of passerines slows down through the morning, birders are encouraged to work the thickets on either side of the trail, keeping in mind that during windy days many of the birds remaining on the island tend to congregate around areas of quiescence, where they are also easier to view. The tallest stands of sumac near the center of the island tend to hold loose flocks. Take advantage of the island's topography; the leeward side of the first rise and just over the top of the second rise tend to be productive, but birds can be found anywhere.

Immediately before the towers, the main trail bears right and a narrower trail heads straight south. This secondary trail is the beginning of a loop-trail out to the southern tip of the island (0.6 mile), a loop that returns to the towers and the larger trail. Beach grass, low shrubs, and Phragmites dominate the tip of the island, and the trail tends to be rocky, depending on the result of the most recent storm. Search the thickets for migrants the entire way. The grassy, weedy tip of the island often hosts Savannah Sparrows of the Ipswich subspecies during late fall and winter and mixed passerine congregations during migration. During late summer and early fall, search the surrounding waters for flocks of terns. Black Terns have been congregating here in larger numbers for the last several years. Flocks of 70 or more have been seen foraging above schools of bay anchovy driven to the surface by feeding bluefish. During late summer, Roseate Terns frequent the tip of Gooseberry along with the other common tern species. Scan among the rocks for winter waterfowl and shorebirds, which congregate among the cobbles and roost atop some of the boulders. Whimbrels and American Golden-Plovers often roost and forage at the southern tip at low tide.

Along the interior trails, mild topography provides for an easy walk. There are small swales where birds may escape the wind and forage. Minor trails depart the main trail for the shoreline, which one can also walk, though the going gets difficult due to the thick brush and abundant cobbles on the shore. Return to the main trail and take a short trail that heads due north from the tallest tower and terminates atop an old military bunker (**B on the map**). The trail climbs the ten-foot slope and mounts the bunker. This rise provides a grand vista of the entire south side of the island and surrounding waters. It also provides a lee and a different topography and vegetative structure for birds. Migrants often congregate around this feature, escaping the wind and the many raptors that visit the island. Don't forget to scan the water for sea ducks, gannets, etc.

Although the rocky shore can make for unstable footing, walking the beach and berm during strong westerly winds is an alternative to taking the central trail. Hug the east side of the bushes along the east side of the island. Strong westerly winds push exhausted birds toward the eastern shore, where they find a quiet lee and a sun-warmed environment. This trail is a good alternative to the walk in either direction, but for this guide I will address the return trip to the parking lot, with the sun at your back. Where the tip-loop trail emerges from the thickets onto the shore, bear left along the shoreline (the trail to the southern tip continues to the right). As you work your way back toward the parking lot, be sure to stay up against the shoreline thickets in order to view foraging passerines. Small grassy patches allow for easier walking and viewing and sometimes host Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, and other grassland species. Occasionally check Buzzards Bay for waterfowl, gulls, terns, and both species of cormorant, in season.

The Let

On the north side of John Reed Road (bisecting Horseneck Beach State Reservation) is a large area of pitch pine and oak, interspersed with cranberry bogs, grassy patches, dunes, and salt marsh. Few trails provide access, but mixed flocks often congregate there. The access with the least traffic is via the gated access to Lot 3 (walk 0.1 mile east from the Lot 3 gates to John Reed Road and cross to the north side of the road), although you can also walk 0.4 mile east along John Reed Road from the park's main entrance. A small pulloff and concrete blocks tucked in the pine forest mark the trailhead. (Avoid the small gated dirt road 100 yards west of this entrance, and opposite the Lot 3 gate. It dead-ends in dense poison ivy, and the going is difficult.) Enter and continue due north, not parallel to John Reed Road. This trail goes through dense thickets with low pine and oak forest canopy, and several native cranberry bogs are widely scattered, creating openings in the forest. Listen for mixed flocks led by Black-capped Chickadees as you work your way north and northwest. As many as 10 species of warbler have been seen here on a busy fall migration day. After 0.2 mile, the trail tops a forested hill that provides a vista from which to view the marsh and thickets of the Westport River. To your right (east) is a wide expanse of marsh and thicket known as The Let. Although access from this point can be a little unclear, if you work your way east (0.1 mile) along the shore of this peninsula, you will eventually emerge into an area of scattered trees, shrubs, and mixed brackish marshy grassland that looks ideal for rails. This grassland area has produced various raptors such as American Kestrels, Rough-legged Hawks, and Northern Harriers, as well as several Blue Grosbeaks. The area deserves close scrutiny, as it is a likely travel corridor for birds cutting the corner from the Allens Pond area to the Westport River; it also hosts some of the migrants that depart Gooseberry Neck.

Directions

From Interstate 195 in Westport, take Exit 10 (Route 88 South). Follow Route 88 to the very end (bridge over Westport River). Horseneck Beach State Reservation begins immediately after the bridge, but the main entrance is 0.75 mile after the bridge. To reach Gooseberry Neck, continue 1.2 miles past the main park entrance to the T intersection with East Beach Road. Turn right and continue 0.3 mile to the dirt parking lot at the base of the causeway. If the causeway is open, continue to the parking lot on the island. Otherwise, park in the small lot on the left before the causeway. 🦋

Paul Champlin has been birding since the age of eight, when his parents often made spring visits to Point Pelee from his suburban Detroit home. Summers spent at Mission Bell, a Provincetown dune shack, greatly influenced his love of nature and birds, and he often placed sticks near Piping Plover and Least Tern nests so vehicles would avoid them. Paul got his BS degree in wildlife management at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and spent far too much time birding the Pioneer Valley with the friendly and helpful birders of the Hampshire Bird Club. While at UMass, he spent 18 months in tropical locales such as Peru, Bolivia, Belize, and Mexico and worked throughout the eastern United States on various avian research projects. The rarity of bird-related career-jobs in New England forced him to venture to South Carolina. There he worked with many species for the USDA Forest Service, eventually

designing, developing, and seeing through his MS program at Clemson University, where he researched Henslow's Sparrows and other winter grassland birds at the Savannah River Site. Because Massachusetts is where Paul's heart is, eight years after leaving he returned to a less snowy part of the state, to work at the Newport Naval Base. Paul currently resides in Westport, Massachusetts. My thanks to Alice Morgan for her first edits to this manuscript; Dan Logan for his enthusiasm during early mornings and for providing photographic support for identification of migrants; Brian Cassie, who urged me to try Gooseberry more often; and Marshall Iliff for also stating the obvious—that Gooseberry should be birded more often. May this guide encourage others to follow suit.



MALE AMERICAN KESTREL LEAVING FEMALE BY SANDY SELESKY

The Allen Bird Club—100 Years Young

George C. Kingston

The early part of the twentieth century saw the founding of hundreds of natural history clubs as city dwellers gained access to the countryside through the expansion of streetcar lines. Most of these clubs survived only a limited time, but the Allen Bird Club is still going strong 100 years later.

In 1864 Joel A. Allen published the first list of birds in the Springfield area. His “Catalogue of the Birds found at Springfield, Mass, with notes on their Migrations, Habits, etc.; together with a List of those Birds found in the State not yet observed at Springfield” was published in Volume 4 of the *Proceedings* of the Essex Institute in Salem, Massachusetts. This publication is available online through Google Books. The next significant account of the local bird life was Robert O. Morris’s *Birds of Springfield and Vicinity*, which was published in 1901, but which summarized as many earlier records as he could find, including his own observations over the previous 20 years.

During the autumn of 1911, Mrs. Grace Pettis Johnson, the Director of the Springfield Museum of Natural History, and Miss Fannie Stebbins, the Supervisor of Elementary School Science in the Springfield School Department, began discussing the formation of a club for the study of wild birds in the local area. On the afternoon of Monday, January 8, 1912, they met with a group of amateur naturalists whom they had invited to the Museum and organized the Springfield Bird Club. The purpose of



Fig 1. The Allen Bird Club, 1918. Fannie Stebbins is second from the left in the front row. Grace Johnson is fourth from the left in the second row. Rev. Herbert Thayer is third from the left in the back row.

the club was to attract, conserve, and study birds. Among the charter members of the club were the Reverend Herbert Thayer, pastor of the Park Memorial Baptist Church, who was elected as their first president, and Robert O. Morris, Miss Effie Wilcox, C.H. Hardy, George B. Affleck, Miss Rebecca Harding, and Miss Rachel Phelps.

Two weeks later, the club met again. Its first order of business was to select a proper name for the club. It was the custom at the time to name natural history societies after prominent men in the field. The first proposal was to name the club the Robert O. Morris Bird Club in honor of one of the charter members, the Springfield Clerk of Courts, who had written *The Birds of Springfield and Vicinity*. Mr. Morris declined the honor and suggested that the club be called the Allen Bird Club in honor of Springfield native and prominent ornithologist, Dr. Joel A. Allen, the Curator of Birds at the American Museum of Natural History. The members agreed to this name. They then took their first action for bird conservation by composing a letter to the Springfield newspapers in support of a bill in the state legislature that would require the licensing of cats. The bill did not pass.

On February 12, the club held its first public lecture and brought Professor C.S. Hodge of Clark University from Worcester by train to talk on "How to Make the Most of Our Bird Life." The lecture was held in the physics lecture room of Springfield Central High School.

From this modest beginning, the club has continued to study and record the seasonal movements of birds for 100 years, making it the oldest continually active bird club in Massachusetts, one year older than the Brookline Bird Club and only three years younger than the Hartford Bird Study Club, now known as Hartford Audubon.

The club was founded to bring together the people who had been independently keeping records of birds and reporting them to Mrs. Johnson, who collated and preserved the information. Using these records, she had updated *The Birds of Springfield* and issued a second edition in 1911. She would go on to publish five more editions, the last in 1949. For the first half of the twentieth century these slim red volumes were sold by the Springfield Museum of Natural History (later renamed the Springfield Science Museum) and used as annual checklists by area birders. Her work has been continued by others, including Robert Sherwood, Edward Yates, and Moreton Bates and today is carried out by Dr. Seth Kellogg.

In the early days of the club, field trip destinations were limited by the available transportation, with the members often taking streetcars to get to birding spots. In 1913, a newspaper article announcing a trip to South Amherst stated "members will leave Court Square on the 8:37 trolley or take the 9:10 train connecting in either case in Holyoke with the 9:30 Amherst and Sunderland car. The party will leave the car at Bay Road and will then have a good mile and a half walk through a good bird district to the summer home of Miss Fannie Stebbins where luncheon will be served. In the afternoon a walk through the woods will be taken." Beginning in 1918, the club began issuing an annual program book to help the members plan their participation in the field trips and meetings. The first of these consisted of a single folded sheet of paper,

but by the 1930s the programs had acquired covers and were adorned with line drawings of birds. These books were published every year thereafter and are still issued today.

Trips farther afield might involve a journey by train, but little by little, automobiles became available and members could more easily explore the countryside. This early lack of mobility was balanced by the availability of excellent bird habitat close to home. Allen Street and Sixteen Acres were largely rural at that time, and their woods and fields were filled with bird song in the spring. Some of the field trip destinations, like Forest Park, Longmeadow Flats, and Agawam are still visited by the club today. Others, like Calla Shasta, the Springfield Yacht and Canoe



Fig. 2. An early field trip

Club's camp on the Connecticut River in Agawam, are now gone forever. Some, like the Black River Valley in West Springfield were developed, but others, like Bemis Pond in Chicopee and Atwater Park in Springfield were simply replaced by more interesting destinations. On these early trips, the members dressed formally, the men in suits and ties, the women in long, full dresses.

The club grew rapidly and by the end of 1912 had more than 100 members, including the naturalist and children's author, Thornton Burgess, along with Rachel Phelps, Robert Morris, and Robert Sherwood. Samuel Eliot, a drama professor at Smith College, was elected an honorary member. Eliot was an amateur ornithologist who co-authored *The Birds of the Connecticut Valley in Massachusetts*, which was for many years the bible for bird watchers in this part of the state.

The original dues were \$0.50 a year. This was raised to \$1.00 in 1922. The dues today are only \$12.00.

In 1917, the Allen Bird Club joined the New England Federation of Natural History Societies. This was a regional group that included not only bird clubs, but also naturalist, mineral, wildflower, and other societies. Its purpose was to bring these

groups together to share experiences. In September 1918 the club hosted a meeting of the Federation, including a business session, the reading of papers, field trips, and a banquet. The club would again host the fall conference in September 1929. In 1931 the Federation was finally disbanded.

During its first year, the club established its tradition of holding evening meetings with speakers and field trips. Most of the trips were in the spring and summer. However, the club did hold a Christmas Count on Christmas morning in 1912 and sent its results to the magazine *Bird Lore*, which compiled the national results. The tradition of participating in the national Christmas Count continues to this day, although the count is now held on a Saturday during the season, not on Christmas Day itself.

Through the early 1940s, meetings were held twice a month, on the first and third Mondays. Sometime after that, the club went to a once a month schedule on the first Monday, which it still observes.

The first overnight trip sponsored by the club was held during the 1920s, when members journeyed to Saybrook, Connecticut, and stayed at Saybrook Manor, the summer home of one of the members, Miss Jennie Perry.

In 1928, the club, concerned about the proposal to flood the Swift River Valley to create the Quabbin Reservoir, sent letters to its state representatives asking that the government controlled land around the reservoir be kept as a wildlife sanctuary. Today, Quabbin is a premier birding destination where wildlife is protected, except for managed hunts to control the deer population.

In 1930, the club contributed \$10.00 toward the purchase of 800 acres of land for a bird sanctuary on Plum Island, to be called the Annie H. Brown Wildlife Sanctuary. This was incorporated into the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge when it was established in 1941, and today Plum Island continues to be a special place for the club.

During the 1930s, the club began its tradition of counting hawks during fall migration. The first hawk watches were held at Mount Tom.

In 1941, the City of Springfield honored the club's founder, Mrs. Grace P. Johnson, with the Pyncheon Medal, its highest honor, for her work as director of the Springfield Science Museum.



Fig 3. Twenty-fifth anniversary celebration, 1937



Fig 4. Robert Sherwood,
President 1919–1922

The annual Christmas census or count, which had first been done in 1912, was conducted again in 1931. It was started on an annual basis in 1946, 34 years after the first one, but was run independently of the club with only a few members participating. The 1951 count tallied 37 species, including a towhee, a cowbird, and two Bald Eagles. The following year, 1952, the club took charge of the census and named William Tompkins as the coordinator. In 1954, the census became a part of the official National Audubon Christmas Count. The club has continued to participate in that annual effort up to the present.

The first of the annual Mount Greylock overnight trips occurred in 1947. The members got a bed and a breakfast at the Mount Greylock Lodge for a total cost of \$1.50 per person.

The first spring woodcock watch was held in 1950 at the Hampden Country Club on Stony Hill Road in Hampden. In November of the same year, the club took its first trip to the Massachusetts coast, visiting Newburyport.

In 1965, the woodcock watch was moved to the Stebbins Refuge from Stony Hill Road. It remained there until 2003, when it was relocated at Meadowbrook School in East Longmeadow.

The first chartered bus trip took place in 1952 with a day trip to Saybrook, Connecticut. Charter bus trips continued to be scheduled a few times a year, often in conjunction with the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Laughing Brook Sanctuary, especially for trips to the shores north and south of Boston. These trips lasted until 1989, when the cost became prohibitive. They were all day affairs that had something of a party atmosphere to them, and they provided club members an opportunity to observe sea birds and shore birds that were rarely seen in western Massachusetts.

In 1956, Mr. Otis, Director of the Springfield Natural History Museum, announced that henceforth the bird club and other educational groups would be encouraged to meet at the museum free of charge, although the Bird Club still had to pay for a projectionist. Even today it pays for a security guard to open and lock the hall.

In 1957, dues were raised to \$3.00 per year to help pay for the increasingly expensive Audubon lecture series. Serious consideration was also given to finding ways to make the club more attractive and gain new members. The club had about \$800 in its treasury. In December, cardinals and Carolina Wrens were observed as unusual records. The Massachusetts Audubon Society started to ask birders to look for cardinal breeding records.

In January 1958, the club held a bus trip to Rockport and Cape Ann. During the late 1950s the club observed Audubon Day in May by holding a spring count. The

cost of an overnight stay at the Mount Greylock Lodge had increased from \$1.25 to \$2.50. The treasury had increased to about \$1000.

During the 1960s and 1970s Dr. Robert MacLachlan, Francis Pike, and Mary and Alan Muir operated a bird banding station in the Stebbins Refuge.

In May 1960 the club began publishing the *Pioneer Valley Bird News*. The club was selling binoculars and telescopes to its members at a 20% discount, with 10% going to the club and 10% to the buyer. In 1962, the club had a heightened interest in legislative support for environmental issues and, at the instigation of the president, Ben Breitung, established a committee on legislation. Over the next few years, the club would contribute money to various lobbying committees in support of environmental legislation.

Concern about the cost of the Audubon screen tours continued into 1963, when a complete season of three programs cost \$450. At the time, the club's treasury held only about \$1000. An arrangement was made with the National Audubon Society to allow the club to buy individual programs. With increased publicity the screen tours turned a profit and were repeated for many years.

The club also took an activist stand on local environmental issues. In 1964, members sent over 100 letters to the Springfield Park Department protesting plans to spray DDT in the parks as a measure against Dutch elm disease. By 1964, the club had 232 members and was comparable in size to what it is today.

In the 1970s and 1980s hawk watching occurred at a number of sites, but in 1987 the official club hawk watch site was established on Blueberry Hill in Granville. For many years, John Weeks manned this site on an almost daily basis, although other club members often joined him, especially on weekends. Every fall, one Saturday is chosen for a potluck picnic at the hawk watch site. This event attracts up to 100 birders.

The club has run a spring census for most of its existence. Until 1985, this census was done during the entire month of May, but from 1986 onwards it was consolidated into 24 hours starting at 6 o'clock in the evening on a Friday and ending on Saturday with a potluck compilation dinner.

During the 1990s, with the encouragement of John Hutchinson, the club added the coast of Maine to its regular field trip schedule. Two trips are generally run, one to the south coast of the state and one to Monhegan Island in September for the fall warbler migration. In 1991, the regular spring walk in Robinson State Park was moved to the morning of Mother's Day, a tradition that continues 22 years later.

The club took its first pelagic trip in 1990, sailing from Provincetown to Stellwagen Bank for petrels and shearwaters.

In the 2000s, regular trips were scheduled to Rhode Island, Vermont, and New Hampshire to locate birds that did not occur regularly in Massachusetts. Tom Swochack initiated the Rhode Island Blitz, an intensive two-day tour of that state, and a Vermont Blitz was also held for several years.

Many famous speakers have addressed the club, including the artist and field guide author, Roger Tory Peterson, who visited the club twice as part of the National Audubon screen tour series, which the club hosted from 1968 to 1995. Others of note were Aaron T. Bagg, who co-authored *The Birds of the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts* with Samuel Eliot; Thornton Burgess; Massachusetts State Ornithologist Edward Forbush; and prominent ornithologists Dr. Alan Cruikshank, Alexander Sprunt, Owen Sewell Pettingill, Richard Pough, Arthur A. Allen, Don Kroodsma, and Wayne Petersen. A frequent speaker was Alvah Sanborn, the Director of Massachusetts Audubon Pleasant Valley Sanctuary in the Berkshires.

Among the birds found and reported by Allen Bird Club members were numerous records of rare birds. These included the third New England and second Massachusetts record for the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, a bird from the desert in the United States Southwest. It was sighted in 1933 in West Springfield by Fannie Stebbins on the farm of George Bartlett known as Fruit Acres. After many local birders had observed it, the bird was shot and collected by Harvard Professor of Ornithology, Ludlow Griscom. The skin is now in the Boston Museum of Science. Other first regional records include Western Grebe by Albert Dietrich in 1934, Glossy Ibis by Fannie Stebbins in 1926, and Eurasian Widgeon by Sam Eliot in 1931. In 1923 Alice Bowen contributed the second record of Barrow's Goldeneye at Calla Shasta; Albert Dietrich reported the third in 1935. Ida Wemple contributed the first spring record of Yellow Rail in 1918, and Sam Eliot recorded Baird's Sandpiper in 1933.

Up until 1950, a different bird graced the cover of each year's program booklet. At the November 20, 1950, meeting of the club, it was decided to adopt an official Allen Bird Club bird, and the members were presented a slate of eight nominees. They chose the American Goldfinch by secret ballot, and it has remained the club bird to this day. The following month, the club started issuing Allen Bird Club membership cards.

In the 1940s, the club established a fund to be used for building an observation tower at the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Arcadia Sanctuary in Easthampton. Although the fund grew to several hundred dollars, it was not enough to pay for a tower. At the suggestion of the Arcadia superintendent, Mr. Edwin Mason, the club decided to let the sanctuary use the funds to publish an information pamphlet about itself. The money obtained by selling the booklets was used for the erection of a fireplace with a bronze plaque indicating that it was a gift from the Allen Bird Club. In 1956, Mr. Mason asked the club to have a member serve ex-officio on the Advisory Committee of Arcadia Sanctuary. This and the frequent appearance of Alvah Sanborn before the club were examples of the close cooperation between the club and Mass Audubon in the middle years of the twentieth century.

Perhaps the largest undertaking by the Allen Bird Club was the establishment of the Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge in Longmeadow. The idea for creating a refuge was discussed among the members beginning in the late 1940s. In September 1949, the club appointed a committee of five members, led by Mr. Harold Dickey and including Grace Johnson, to look into the possibility of acquiring land. By May 1950,

the site committee had made enough progress to advise the club to appoint another committee to raise the money needed to purchase and maintain land for the sanctuary. In January 1951, the committee announced that it had selected 175 acres in Longmeadow along the Connecticut River in the area known as the flats. This area of swamps and forests was often visited on club field trips.



Fig 5. Fannie Adele Stebbins

In March, the club voted to name the sanctuary after one of its founders, Fannie Adele Stebbins, who had died in 1949, and it began serious fund raising. Initially, it raised \$800 from members to pay for preliminary legal and real estate expenses, including incorporating the sanctuary. The land was inexpensive and contained important breeding habitat for many birds including Wood Ducks and Bald Eagles. The sanctuary was incorporated on November 28, 1951, and in 1952 the club was able to purchase 59 acres and lease an additional 48 acres. Creative fund raising helped. Contributions were solicited from retired Springfield schoolteachers in honor of Fannie Stebbins, who had been the department head for science teaching in the Springfield system. By May 1953 the size of the sanctuary had reached 114 acres of

which 48 were leased. By 1963 it had reached 220 acres due in part to a donation of six acres by Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Page of Longmeadow. That land is now the Page Section of the refuge. In the 1960s, fill and topsoil from land along Pondsides Road was sold to the state highway department for the construction of Interstate 91. Not only did the sale provide funds, it transferred the land that the refuge had been leasing to the ownership of the refuge.

More land has been added, including 50 acres purchased with a legacy of \$10,000 from club member Rachel Phelps. In the 1960s the Reverend Robert Hatch, Episcopal Bishop of Western Massachusetts, served as a trustee of the refuge. In 1972, the refuge was named a National Environmental Education Landmark, a title that was later changed to National Natural Landmark. The refuge is still owned and managed by the club, in cooperation with the Town of Longmeadow, which owns a large amount of conservation land nearby. Together these lands have been officially recognized as an Important Bird Area.

During the 1940s and 1950s and into the early 1960s, the club ran an annual rummage sale at the YWCA to raise funds, first for the club itself and then for the refuge as well. At various times, the club also sold binoculars, telescopes, field guides, and bird food at discount prices to its members.

The youngest member ever to join the club was Richard Wayne Longley, 24 days old, who was enrolled by his parents Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Longley, Jr.

No history of the Allen Bird Club would be complete without a mention of Helen and Moreton Bates. Helen joined the club in October 1953 and Mort joined a year later in September 1954. They both quickly moved into leadership positions, with Mort taking over as Publicity Chairman in 1955. They remained the soul of the club through the 1990s. Mort was the keeper of bird records, and Helen was a field trip leader and the Western Voice of Audubon. For many years she also wrote a column on birds for the Springfield newspapers. Each served as president of the club.

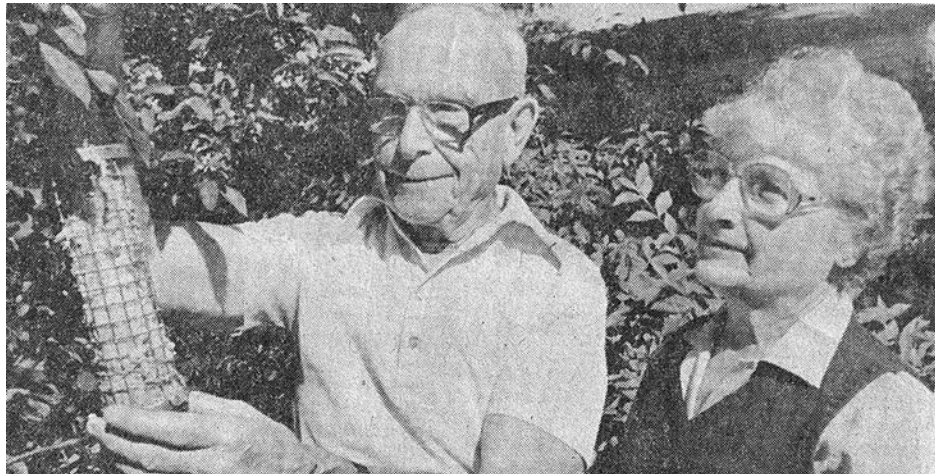


Fig 6. Moreton and Helen Bates

Rudolph "Rud" Stone, a dedicated and expert birder, joined the club two weeks after Helen Bates. Among his accomplishments, Rud was a curator for the natural history collection at the Wisteriahurst Museum in Holyoke. Ben Breitung joined the club in April 1955.

In 1969, more overnight trips were introduced; the first one was to Brigantine, New Jersey. These eventually included far-flung destinations, such as Cape May, New Jersey; Monhegan Island, Maine; and the Adirondacks. One trip was actually made to North Carolina.

In mid-2000s the club received a bequest of \$43,000 from the estate of charter member Rachel Phelps. It donated \$25,000 of that gift to the Town of Wilbraham to acquire land from the Rice Farm to help establish the Rice Nature Preserve on Wilbraham Mountain and a further \$17,000 to the Town of Southwick to help preserve open land along the Connecticut border.

Social events have always been an important part of the club. In the early days, a Christmas party was held annually at the Springfield Museum of Natural History, a tradition that continues in a modified version even today. But perhaps the most popular events are the compilation potluck dinners held after the annual Christmas Count and Spring Census. The first annual banquet was held in conjunction with the annual meeting on May 11, 1964, at the suggestion of President Ben Breitung, and this tradition continued until 2010.

Today the club has 237 members and holds more than 80 field trips a year. The Allen Bird club looks forward eagerly to its next hundred years. 🐦

George Kingston is a retired engineering manager who has been actively birding since 1977. He is a past president of the Allen Bird Club, and this article is a version of a booklet he wrote for that club in 2011. George is also the author of a book, *James Madison Hood: Lincoln's Consul to the Court of Siam*, which was recently published by McFarland.



MAGNOLIA WARBLER IN FLIGHT BY SANDY SELESKY

Exploring the World through Black's Nook: An Experiment in Collaborative Patch Birding in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Andrew Hrycyna

In a recent NPR commentary called "Seeing the World in a Grain of Sand," astrophysicist Adam Frank wrote that "through the lens of science we can see how even the smallest thing can be a gateway to an experience of the extraordinary, if only we can practice *noticing*." A group of us in Cambridge are putting this "gateway" theory to the birding test.

In 2012, with the help of the City of Cambridge, I organized a volunteer project to document the way birds use a small wooded area around a small pond in Fresh Pond Reservation called Black's Nook—a tiny corner of a city park. Why bother with a project so small in scale? What interesting things could this teach us that we don't already know? Two key aspects distinguish our birding project: 1) it is collaborative and 2) it is ultra-local. With tools that we have available today, collaborative, ultra-local birding can yield sharp insights.

History of the site and project

The five-acre Black's Nook site is a creation of the 19th century when its pond was cut off from Fresh Pond by landfill. Through the early 1960s, Black's Nook was used as an unofficial dumping site (Sinclair, 2009). Volunteers over the years have helped clean it up. In 2011, the site became the object of a new ecological restoration project funded by the city. Today, red maple swamp and upland woods surround Black's Nook pond.

The original goal of our Black's Nook bird project was to provide public evidence that the substantial investment in native plants and landscaping is worth protecting. A decision to fence the site off and forbid dogs from the area was controversial; some citizens want the fences taken down. By displaying the scope of avian biodiversity at Black's Nook, our project aims to encourage support from the community for protecting it. We publicize our results in posters and emails and educate the public about local birds. But the insights the project offer go beyond educating nonbirders.

Collaborative aspect

Our project runs on the collaborative framework provided by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird project (Sullivan et al., 2009). Using eBird, we can submit, share, and review records at our leisure. We don't have a schedule for the observations; observers go when they choose. We first established Black's Nook as a shared personal location in the database. Then, on Cornell's advice and with their help, we made it a hotspot location in eBird. Observers record their notes according to eBird

protocols and include species, counts, time and distance covered, behavioral notes, even photographs. eBird software compiles and summarizes the checklists. The result is an easily maintained, easily expanded, public portrait of Black's Nook in the form of birding data. The website's tables, graphs, and maps allow anyone to explore the data in an interactive way.

In the first seven months of the project, we collected more than 730 records from 12 observers across 75 checklists and more than 50 hours of observation (eBird, 2013). We have together recorded 64 species of birds at Black's Nook. Last summer, we identified 16 probable or confirmed nesting species, with another 8 possible. [Table 1.]

	Jan	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Canada Goose*		24	4	19	2	2	1		4	8	
Wood Duck										3	
American Black Duck										2	2
Mallard		1		2			1			2	
Ring-necked Duck									1		
Hooded Merganser		6				1	1	1	4	16	9
Double-crested Cormorant				1	1	1					
Great Blue Heron		1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	
Great Egret				1	1		1				
Green Heron*				2	2	6	6	2			
Black-crowned Night-Heron					1	4	1				
Accipiter sp.		1									
Red-tailed Hawk	3	1	1						1	2	
Spotted Sandpiper				1							
Herring Gull				1		3					
Mourning Dove		2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1		
Barred Owl									1	1	
Chimney Swift				1		1	3				
Ruby-throated Hummingbird					1						
Belted Kingfisher		1		1		1	2	1	2		
Red-bellied Woodpecker									1		
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker									1		
Downy Woodpecker	1	3	1	1	1		1	1	3		2
Hairy Woodpecker				1							
Northern Flicker			1	1		4		1			
Eastern Phoebe		1				1		2			
Eastern Kingbird				2	1	3					
Warbling Vireo*			1	5	3	3	3	3			
Red-eyed Vireo				1				1	1		
Blue Jay*		1	2	3	2			5	4	6	
American Crow							1			1	
Tree Swallow*		6	3	2	4	2					
Black-capped Chickadee*	2	2	1	2	4	4	1	3	2	3	3
Tufted Titmouse			2			1					1

	Jan	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Red-breasted Nuthatch										1	
White-breasted Nuthatch	2	2			1	1		2	2	1	1
Brown Creeper	1							1	1	1	
Golden-crowned Kinglet			2								1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet									1		
American Robin*	3	6	20	12	5	8	5	10	25	18	1
Gray Catbird*			1	3	3	2	2	3	3		
Northern Mockingbird	1					2					
European Starling	100									75	
Cedar Waxwing				4	3	3			8		
Common Yellowthroat									2		
Black-and-white Warbler				1							
American Redstart				2	1						
Yellow Warbler*				3	2	2		1			
Blackpoll Warbler								1	2		
Black-throated Blue Warbler				2							
Palm Warbler			1								
Yellow-rumped Warbler									9		
Song Sparrow*	1	6	3	3	2	3	1	1	3	3	2
White-throated Sparrow	1			1					1		
Northern Cardinal*		2	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	1	
Red-winged Blackbird*		1	4	4	3				4		
Common Grackle*		24	40	20	6	11	3	1	40		
Brown-headed Cowbird				4	1						
Baltimore Oriole*			2	3	2	1	2				
Orchard Oriole				2							
Purple Finch									1		
House Finch				2	4	4					
American Goldfinch*		2	5	6	4	4	8	2	6		
House Sparrow*				10	5	5		3			

Table 1. Bird sightings, Black's Nook, March 2012-May 2013. Maximum count on a single checklist, by month. (No data from February 2013.) Species marked with asterisk (*) met Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas criteria for inclusion in "probable" or "confirmed" nesting categories, based on dates, numbers, fledglings, behavior, etc.

One lesson we have learned is that eBird can be at a local level what it surely is globally—a fantastic tool of collaboration, of pooling volunteer effort. As a group, we have described an assemblage of birds that no individual saw alone.

What we can learn from putting the ultra-local in a wider context

But what can we make of what we saw? What insights do the data provide?

First, information that birders might take for granted can be interesting to nonbirders. Most visitors to Fresh Pond probably don't know that Yellow Warbler, Warbling Vireo, and Orchard Oriole live in the city during the summer, and they probably wouldn't suspect that Black's Nook alone supports 15 or more nesting species. For Massachusetts birders, though, none of the birds we recorded comes as a

huge shock. None is a rarity. The act of publishing the data for the nonbirding public can serve a useful function, and we hope it generates new respect for the value of this protected space.

In the old days, local observations would be relegated to remaining local. What happened in Black's Nook would stay in Black's Nook. If you dig a little deeper, though, the Black's Nook data reveals interesting patterns that could be easily overlooked. Today, through resources such as eBird, we can position local observations in a wider context and read their significance. The ability to connect the ultra-local patterns to regional ones at various spatial scales gives surveys like ours new opportunities to inform our collective understanding of birds.

Here are some examples:

Spatial distribution of diversity, part I: compared to Fresh Pond as a whole

During the months in which our project accumulated 64 observed species, observers at Fresh Pond Reservation as a whole chalked up more than 130. But Fresh Pond Reservation is 160 acres (320 acres if you count the reservoir itself). Black's Nook is 5 acres. Leaving aside that there were many more observers and observation hours at Fresh Pond, the number of species we saw can seem remarkable. In only 1.5–3% of the total area of the park, you can see nearly half of the avian diversity that the site as a whole supports—an important fact about the nature of the distribution of birds in this kind of space. Although there are specialized habitats around Fresh Pond (like the middle of Fresh Pond itself), many birds seem to treat the park as one continuous space.

Spatial distribution of diversity, part II: compared with nearby residential neighborhoods

Even a mile away in the tree-lined residential neighborhoods of mid-Cambridge, you will almost never encounter nesting Tree Swallows or Yellow Warblers or Warbling Vireos. This wasn't always the case. In 1860, William Brewster recorded all three species nesting on his property near Brattle Street. By 1940, all three (and others) were gone from that exact neighborhood (Walcott, 1974). Brewster himself attributed the loss of Tree Swallows to competition with invading House Sparrows. But Tree Swallows and House Sparrows co-exist today at Fresh Pond. Certainly, most critical for the insectivorous swallow, warbler, and vireo was the loss of suitable habitat as the city changed. Historical maps show there used to be wetlands and open water nearby, gradually filled in (Sinclair, 2009). All three species show a preference for nesting near water. Black's Nook in this way becomes a kind of window into the past; it represents what much of Cambridge used to look like. Stepping out of the developed city into this park is like stepping into the past.

Missing birds

One Fresh Pond bird that didn't appear during nesting season in Black's Nook is Pine Warbler. We know that Pine Warblers nest at Fresh Pond in the large pine grove on Huron Avenue. Black's Nook has a pine grove of its own, but it is small, and

essentially embedded in a hardwood woodland with mixed understory Pine Warblers don't seem to find it an attractive nesting area. The scientific literature supports our observation: these pine specialists seem to need a certain patch size for breeding territory and tend to inhabit pure stands without a mixed understory (Rodewald, Withgott, & Smith, 1999). Fresh Pond Reservation exhibits patches that are too small as well as ones that are big enough. What you don't see in Black's Nook can also be interesting.

Signals of regional seasonal patterns

Based on eBird's regional reports of early movements of Tree Swallows in the unusually warm winter and early spring of 2012, we put up swallow boxes earlier in March than usual. The Black's Nook project then recorded the earliest arrival of Tree Swallows at Fresh Pond in the eBird database (out of 1000+ checklists for Fresh Pond) on March 18. This gave us a local window into the ecological forces that drive Tree Swallow migration. Late-winter and early-spring temperatures in wintering locations and along migratory routes can influence the timing of many birds' migration (Hurlbert & Liang, 2012), and in early springs, Tree Swallows race north early to compete for nesting sites (David W. Winkler et al., 2011). There aren't many standing snags at Fresh Pond. But nest boxes can take their place. And partly because we were paying close attention to larger patterns, we were there to notice an early arrival.

Value of small wetlands

We saw four species of heron use the space—Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Green Heron, and Great Egret. I can find no other nearby eBird hotspot that reported all four birds that summer—including Mt. Auburn Cemetery. More broadly, Black's Nook fits into a network of wet spaces in the area, frequented by herons, extending from Mt. Auburn to Upper Mystic Lake; eBird's on-line maps of sightings of these four species allow one to visualize this clearly. Seeing the place this way tremendously changes the meaning of our observations. Black's Nook becomes a member of an interconnected set of green spaces, not an isolated backwater.


We recorded the fledging of Green Herons at Black's Nook in the first summer after the restoration efforts. Although we cannot attribute their success to specific features of the restoration, we can at least say the work done did not disturb this relatively rare, urban breeding habitat for Green Herons. This part of Cambridge used to be peppered with wetlands and small water bodies. Landfill replaced them with the Fresh Pond Mall and other paved areas. Nonetheless, on the edge of a sea of parking lots, Green Herons still can find a way to make a home, if we protect it.

Conclusion

Looking closely at Black's Nook reinforces the insight: *Nature isn't somewhere else; it's here.* I don't mean this as a spiritual insight (although it probably is that, too). I mean that birds make a living in the same places people do, even in our most densely populated cities. This happens despite our efforts to make coexistence

difficult, and whether or not we usually notice the birds. Indeed, most birders would pass by Black's Nook quickly on their way to Mount Auburn Cemetery in May or to the Fresh Pond perimeter path in the winter to see ducks; of course, many travel out of town altogether to Plum Island or Cape Cod.

But pause, look closely, and collaborate, and you can see more diversity than you might expect. You can also see that the same ecological dynamics that explain the distribution of birds across the wider landscape are at work right here—in our urban backyards. These urban spaces may even have conservation value for birds. Large, unfragmented refuges are, of course, critical for maintaining stable populations for many species. But for our Green Herons, tiny Black's Nook is an effective urban refuge, even 100 yards from the constant traffic of Concord Avenue.

My experience of noticing closely at this small urban patch with my colleagues and through the lens of modern technology has given me a new window on my home. I have noticed things I didn't expect. I have come to love a tiny corner of Cambridge, and see it as intimately tied to a larger terrain. I hope our enjoyable, successful experiment in local collaborative birding will lead others to try experiments of their own, in urban areas and beyond. 

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FIELD NOTES

The Tree Swallow and the Great Egret

Rob Napier

In early September 2011, my wife Sherry and I headed to the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge because we had heard that the Tree Swallows were in town for their annual premigratory staging to fatten themselves for their southward journey. We stopped at the North Pool Overlook, one of the better vantages in the refuge. Among other things, as usual, we expected to see a couple of Great Egrets standing patiently at the edge of the water, looking for fish.

On that day, however, thousands of Tree Swallows were swooping east to west over the pool, dipping close to the surface of the water. Even though I doubt that they actually invaded the space normally occupied by egrets (it was shadowed by tall phragmites), the roiling waves of little birds seemed to threaten the space. No egrets were there.

Near the overlook, at the north end of the North Pool, there is a group of grassy islets. In the center of one stands a scraggly evergreen, likely a cedar tree. There, perched on slender branches near the top of the tree, were two Great Egrets. Their heads were just about even with, or slightly above, the spindly top of the tree. As the waves of Tree Swallows rose off the water to avoid the phragmites, they streamed past the Great Egrets.

I know it is probably not a good idea to anthropomorphize wildlife. Nonetheless, it seemed to Sherry and me and the other four people at the overlook that the Tree Swallows were annoying the egrets. The egrets appeared agitated, looking this way and that with motions much quicker than they use when stalking fish. The swallows were definitely in the egrets' space.

Suddenly lunging to the side with its beak, one egret plucked a swallow out of the air. The move startled the six of us. We all had binoculars, but unfortunately none of us had a camera that would be effective at that range. We could witness, but we could not record.

Trapped in the white bird's yellow beak, the swallow struggled, its wings flapping, for several minutes, trying to get free. But the Egret held on until the wings stopped moving. I suspect the little bird was dead. Then, with its beak, the egret started flipping and turning the swallow with little tosses and grabs, just like it would maneuver a fish for headfirst ingestion. The egret wanted to swallow the swallow, that's certain. The egret worked at this for another several minutes.

When it seemed as if the swallow needed only another toss to be properly aligned, the egret dropped it. The egret clearly knew what had happened. It peered straight down, along its slender black legs and feet, past the branch, toward the

ground. It was looking for the swallow. We could not tell if the egret could see the swallow. But it seemed as if the egret was trying to gauge if it could get to the ground through the thicket of tree branches and other constricting vegetation. Perhaps the egret was also trying to determine whether or not, if it actually retrieved the swallow, it could get out of the thicket.

Finally, the Great Egret gave up and looked up; the episode was over, and our concentration was broken. The other Great Egret had never left its perch on the neighboring branch. Tree Swallows were still swarming around, but the bulk of their flock had moved away.

In all, the episode took about fifteen to twenty minutes and was divided into three parts: while the swallow struggled in the egret's grasp, while the egret maneuvered the limp swallow to swallow, and while the egret peered toward the ground. The periods were about equal in length, with the first two being longer than the last one. It seemed incredible that the egret could catch a flying bird. However, it seemed less amazing when we realized that catching a bird from the air was similar to catching a fish from the water. The air and water were simply different fluids that contained prey. 🦅

[Editor's note: Great Egrets, like other herons, are opportunistic feeders, with prey items mainly fish but also invertebrates, particularly crustaceans and insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and small mammals (Mccrimmon, et al., 2011), though there are few direct observations of predation of birds other than rails (e.g., Evens and Page, 1986) and marsh breeding sparrows. A graphic account of a Great Egret consuming a juvenile Seaside Sparrow appeared in a recent blog (<http://freidaybird.blogspot.com/2011/06/salt-marsh-morning.html>). Predation of flying birds is poorly documented, though hummingbirds have been described as egret prey items (Hilton Pond Center, 2007).

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Great Egret Bathing

William E. Davis, Jr.

On Wednesday, January 30, 2013, I was watching birds at the canal next to the visitor's center at Shark River National Wildlife Refuge, adjacent to Everglades National Park in South Florida. Starting at about 2:45 p.m., I watched and



Figures 1 (left) and 2 (right) showing a Great Egret bathing; photographs by the author

photographed a Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) that was immersed to its belly in the canal (Figure 1). It immersed farther until it was about half under water (Figure 2). Then the bird ducked down in the water, head immersed, and puffed and fluffed its feathers and beat its half-immersed wings in the water for several seconds. It remained half-immersed and repeated the near total emersion and the fluffing and fluttering twice over the next 12 minutes. It then walked ashore and fluffed all its feathers, revealing reddish skin, particularly under the aigrettes, and for about 15 seconds scratched its neck with a pectinated claw. I have seen many similar performances by passerines in birdbaths in my front yard.

Bathing by Great Egrets, and herons in general, appears to be a rare behavior. I have observed thousands of individuals among 51 species of herons on six continents and, and to my recollection, this was the first heron I have observed bathing. In the *Birds of North America* species account (McCrimmon et al. 2001) under the sub-heading: ***Preening, head-scratching, stretching, bathing, etc.*** there is no mention of bathing although it does mention shaking out of plumage (Meyerriecks 1960). Nor is there mention of bathing in the congener Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) account (Butler 1992) or in *The Great Blue Heron* (Butler 1997). There is no mention of this behavior in the index of *The Herons Handbook* (Hancock and Kushlan 1984) or in its update, *Herons* (Kushlan and Hancock 2005), both of which deal with all the world's heron species. Neither is there mention in *Wading Birds* (Sprunt et al. 1978). These are three of the more important books describing, among other things, heron behavior, including that of the Great Egret.

The reason for birds bathing is somewhat enigmatic. The conventional wisdom suggests that it facilitates oiling and preening, cleans feathers, and may be used for cooling in hot weather. I suggest that in cases where bathing is rare, as in the Great Egret, it may be an attempt to remove or drown feather or skin parasites that are irritating the bird. 🐦

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- [Ted Davis would like to thank John Kricher for helpful comments on the manuscript.]

A Peregrine Caches Woodcocks

Susan Carlson

I am fortunate to have a bird's-eye view of Boston from my office in the Longwood Medical Area, where an adult Peregrine Falcon hunted Rock Pigeons early this spring.

On April 1, I noticed the peregrine on the tenth-floor ledge of a neighboring building plucking something that was definitely not a pigeon. On April 2, better optics revealed eleven American Woodcocks on the ledge, a few dismantled but most lying intact, bills pointing skywards. A quick walk around the outside of the building, my eyes to the ground, raised the total to fourteen.

The single adult peregrine gained a companion on April 3, the two perching high on ledges above Blackfan Circle. The woodcock cache steadily diminished, with only



Cache of woodcocks; all photographs by the author

two birds remaining on April 8. I haven't seen the adults since then, but an immature peregrine made a one-day visit on April 9. And my camera still makes the daily trip into Boston, just in case. 🦅



Woodcock for lunch



Peregrine Falcon and American Woodcocks

ABOUT BOOKS

The Naked and the Dead

Mark Lynch

THE UNFEATHERED BIRD. Katrina van Grouw. 2013.
Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Note: Unattributed quotes are all taken from my interview with Katrina van Grouw, recorded for WICN (90.5FM) on April 11, 2013.



People have always been fascinated by what lies beneath the skin. With animals it was easy. We killed them, dressed them, and ate them, and the curiosity ended there. But were we made the same way internally as animals? In the beginning, it was only after some violent battle or gruesome accident that the curious were allowed a peek into the complex workings of our functioning organs, muscles, skeleton and circulatory system. From the beginning, art has depicted that hidden person who lies just below the surface we normally see. There are Pre-Columbian stone heads that are half face and half skull. A classical myth tells of the mortal Marsyas who competed in a musical contest with a proud and jealous Apollo. Of course, Marsyas lost; he was a mere mortal satyr after all, and Apollo exacted a cruel punishment. We know this myth was popular because there are a number of Roman stone sculptures of a flayed Marsyas that shockingly capture the look of actual human muscles without the skin. One example in the Worcester Art Museum is particularly gruesome. In many cultures human dissection was outlawed. So from the time of the Renaissance on, artists and early medical practitioners with an itch to learn about what makes the body tick stole bodies of recently executed criminals that were swaying from gallows. They risked prison and death just for the privilege of seeing what lay under the skin. As medicine became more of a science, the demand for illegally gotten cadavers grew, and sinister “resurrection men,” the polite term for grave robber, supplied the bodies fresh from the source.

Only a short time after Wilhelm Röntgen discovered X-rays, John Hall-Edwards of Birmingham England radiographed a needle stuck inside the hand of his assistant (January 11, 1896), and X-rays of the human body became all the rage. Today we have sonograms, CAT scans, PET scans, and MRIs, all giving us complex portraits of the person beneath the skin. Even today, when a basic understanding of human anatomy is common knowledge, we have remained morbidly captivated by skeletons and the rest of our internal topography. If you have ever confronted a real human skeleton in a lab or classroom, face to skull as it were, you know that eerie feeling, an uneasy mixture of curiosity, repulsion, and recognition. When I was a boy, two trendy toys were the Visible Man and Visible Woman. These were plastic model kits of the human body with removable organs that you painted yourself. For a while these were as popular as hula-hoops. There has always been, and always will be, a deep interest

in the hidden world that lies just underneath the outward appearance, for here are found the real secrets of how we move, how we think, how we live, and how we die.

This fascination is why *The Unfeathered Bird* is such a revelation and delight. Birding trains us to care only about the outward appearances of a bird. We look for the pattern and wear of feathers, the shape of the bill, and the color of the orbital ring. But we never consider what lies beneath, what the bird would look like without the feathers. *The Unfeathered Bird* shows us birds as we have never seen them.

Katrina van Grouw is the former curator of the ornithological collections at London's Natural History Museum. She is also a taxidermist, a bird bander, a birder, and most of all an artist. *The Unfeathered Bird* was twenty-five years in the making. As an undergraduate student she started drawing pictures of birds and learning bird anatomy. One day she found a dead duck on the beach, named it Amy, and spent months dissecting it and drawing the process as she went. Katrina was hooked and came up with an idea for a book of fine drawings of bird skeletons. Most of the twenty-five years was spent not on necro-birding, but on shopping the project around and trying to find the right publisher. Many of the already dead birds were given to her friends, scientists, and other taxidermists. For some of the rarer or exotic species like the Dodo and Cassowary, she had to rely on museum specimens. No birds were harmed during the making of this book. Her husband did a lot of the preparatory work, boiling bones and articulating the skeletons. Now, that's devotion!

Katrina van Grouw explains in her introduction that she did not want to produce just another technical anatomy book. *The Unfeathered Bird* is therefore not an impersonal "scientific" text, but an idiosyncratic art project that tries to convey the excitement that Katrina felt as she learned what these birds looked like sans feathers. Her work shows nothing within the skeletons, no organs, though muscle and skin are sometimes shown. Part One of the book is titled "Generic." This section consists of an anatomical overview of different areas of a generic bird: the trunk, the head and neck, the hind limbs, and the wings and tail. The emphasis is less on technical nomenclature and more on the behavior of birds.

This is truly a book for artists and birders and not an ornithology text. *The Unfeathered Bird* focuses on living birds and how they behave by linking gross anatomy to behavior. Katrina van Grouw shows us the birds as we would see them in the field if, like Superman, we had X-Ray vision. So a skeleton of a Wandering Albatross is shown in its natural habitat, soaring over an angry sea. A parrot is drawn chewing on a pencil or looking at itself in a mirror. A skeleton of a Wilson's Storm-Petrel is pattering on the surface of the ocean. A Eurasian Bittern skeleton is shown with its neck stretched up and bill held to the sky in the classic camouflage posture. A rear view of a Eurasian Oystercatcher skeleton sleeping on one leg allows the viewer to understand how shorebirds balance their bodies when resting.

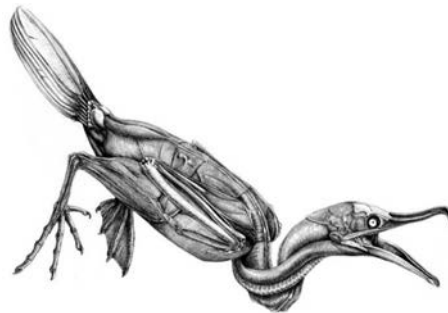
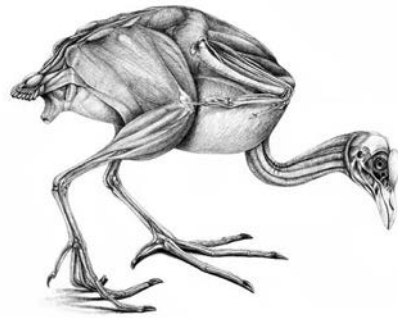
There are a number of detailed drawings of a species' anatomy. Many birds' feet are shown in this collection because Katrina van Grouw simply "loves" birds' feet. She feels that most bird artists have given that part of a bird's anatomy short shrift and sometimes have even hidden them in their pictures. So there are wonderful

detailed renderings of a grebe's unique feet, an Osprey's powerful talons, and the ridiculously long legs and feet of the Secretary Bird. There are also many fine representations of bird skulls and bills. The skull drawing of the domestic Crested Duck reveals a bizarre network of bony tendrils under that puffy topknot of feathers. Katrina did not know about this until she dissected the duck. The full page drawing of a Northern Shoveler's bill features three perspectives and details of the lamellae. The skulls of various species are shown on a single page so the reader can compare, contrast, and marvel.

There is also sly humor in some of the drawings. A drawing titled "Feathers removed and feathers being removed" shows the skeleton of a Eurasian Sparrowhawk mantling and plucking a Collared Dove. There are also drawings of Cornish Broilers, which are commercial meat chickens, and another plate of "Plucked chickens ready for the pot." After viewing these you will never look at a plate of buffalo wings quite the same way again.

Most of the works in *The Unfeathered Bird* are detailed drawings. Some of the backgrounds, especially of seabirds, are done in acrylic paint. There is the look of 17th and 18th century anatomical drawings to the works in *The Unfeathered Bird*, and this is further emphasized by their sepia tone and the worn old typeface used in the introductions to each chapter. These were specific choices of the artist. Katrina van Grouw has spoken of trying to capture "the beauty of old illustrations combined with a modern knowledge of evolution."

Though *The Unfeathered Bird* is not supposed to be a book about bird anatomy, the viewer cannot help but learn about how birds move and behave by looking at these amazing drawings. The two-page Ostrich skeleton is drawn to emphasize the birds' massive bones and weight. The perched Great Hornbill skeleton shows how the bird balances precariously on a branch with its massive bill and casque. Some of the illustrations even show the process of dissection. A two page series on the Barn Owl



Illustrations from *The Unfeathered Bird*

shows the “facial feathers, skin and muscles removed in steps to show ear flap, ear opening, underlying muscles and skull” (pp. 50–51). Other drawings are simply fine works of art. A two-page drawing of a Gentoo Penguin with the skin removed shows the bird leaping out of the ocean and momentarily soaring, a perfect reflection of its form cast on the sea below. It is bizarre yet at the same time wonderful.

The Unfeathered Bird is a unique and beautiful collection of artworks. We may have birded for most of our lives, but we have never seen birds like this. In her drawings of dissected birds behaving as if alive, Katrina van Grouw’s *The Unfeathered Bird* harkens back to older classic illustrated books on human anatomy. In the 16th century, one of the founders of the science of human anatomy, Andreas Vesalius, published his revolutionary text *De humani corporis fabrica*. In this beautiful book, dissected human bodies and skeletons are depicted behaving as if they were still alive: strolling around the countryside, resting on a stick, leaning against a wall, and even contemplating another skull. This proved to be a marvelous way to educate the reader on how muscles and bones move in real life. Though *De humani corporis fabrica* was a groundbreaking scientific work, it was also collection of stunning artwork. Katrina van Grouw has created a similar seamless blending of scientific anatomy and dazzling art in her drawings in *The Unfeathered Bird*. 🐦



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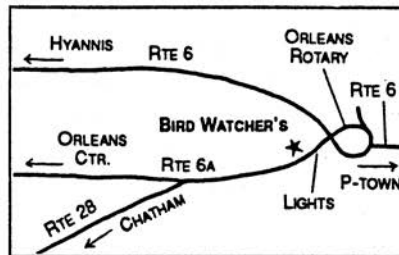
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BIRD SIGHTINGS

January/February 2013

Seth Kellogg, Marjorie W. Rines, and Robert H. Stymeist

January 2013 was almost a carbon copy of January 2012 with above average temperatures and below average snowfall. The average temperature in Boston was 31.5°, 2.5 ° above normal. There were a few bone-chilling days beginning on January 23 when the morning lows ranged between 4° and 8° in Boston and zero to below zero in the western half of the state. Rainfall in Boston totaled 1.08 inches, 2.28 inches below average, and snowfall totaled 5.0 inches, 7.9 inches below average. The biggest storm fell into the morning of January 16 and tallied only 3.2 inches, but caused black ice resulting in many collisions on the roadways.

February had near-normal temperatures but near-record snowfall. The Blizzard of 2013 on February 8–9 was the fifth largest snowstorm on record for Boston. The storm dumped more than two feet of snow across Middlesex and Norfolk counties, but the highest totals were in Worcester County, where a record 31 inches fell in Spencer. Shoreline communities especially suffered, Scituate being one of the hardest hit with power knocked out for several days. Salisbury and Plum Island experienced several feet of beach erosion. On the eastern shore of Nantucket waves tore as much as 30 feet off the cliffs that run along Siasconset Beach. The storm also ripped open a breach on South Beach that may be as wide as one thousand feet.

R. H. Stymeist

WATERFOWL THROUGH ALCIDS

For the first time in eight years there were no reports of Greater White-fronted Goose during this period. A group of three **Cackling Geese** was discovered in farm fields in Newbury on January 14, and presumably the same three were spotted a week later in Newburyport Harbor. Canvasbacks are not common in the state and are often restricted to a few “specialty” locations, but there were an exceptional number reported statewide. **Redhead** can be downright rare, but like its congener, Canvasback, it was unusually well reported. A **Tufted Duck** was discovered in Nahant on January 26 and was enjoyed by many.

Pacific Loons are now virtually annual at this time of year—2012 was the only year since 1999 that one did not appear. Sightings in 2013 were in the most likely locations on outer Cape Cod and Cape Ann. One of the four **Western Grebes** that were discovered on Plum Island in November lingered until February 22.

Only a decade or so ago there were just a handful of places in Massachusetts where you could reliably find Bald Eagles in winter: the Connecticut River Valley, Quabbin Reservoir, and the Merrimack River. Now eagles are seen anywhere in the state where there is a large body of water. This increase is testimony to the state’s restoration program in the 1980s. It was a good winter for Rough-legged Hawks, with reports of multiple individuals from traditional locations.

There was an “invasion” of **Northern Lapwings** in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, beginning on October 30, 2012. One individual lasted through New Year’s Day in Bridgewater, but two on Nantucket lasted until the end of February and were joined by a third on February 26. Because local birders had been keeping careful track of these birds, the appearance of the third was mystifying; could it have been the bird from Bridgewater or from some other

location? Several other individuals lingered elsewhere in the Northeast in Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Maryland.

A **Mew Gull**, discovered in Nahant on January 3, was enjoyed by many birders through January 20. This species used to be regular in Boston Harbor, but sightings have declined since the harbor cleanup. Two **Thayer's Gulls** were discovered on Nantucket on January 4. Gull taxonomy is difficult, and Thayer's Gull may be the most controversial, as it inhabits a spot somewhere between Herring Gull and Iceland Gull.

In the aftermath of winter storm Nemo, Blair Nikula went looking for sea birds in Cape Cod Bay. Because his first choice, First Encounter Beach in Eastham, was closed, he ended up at Skaket Beach in Orleans. During a three-hour vigil he tallied an astonishing 52 **Atlantic Puffins**. This was the highest number ever recorded on Cape Cod, and statewide, second only to a count of 104 from Andrew's Point on October 12, 2002.

Alcids in general had a tough winter all along the Atlantic Coast. In early December Razorbills started showing up in Florida, a rare occurrence. Sadly, dozens were discovered dead along their beaches, many in an emaciated state. As the winter progressed, Dovekies were discovered dead or sick along beaches from Long Island (New York) and north. Nemo seemed the last straw, and after the storm many Razorbills and a handful of Murres were discovered dead on Massachusetts beaches. It is impossible to know if the storm killed these last birds, or if it dealt a deathblow to birds already afflicted with some as-yet-unknown condition.

M. Rines

Snow Goose				1/5	Marstons Mills	12	J. Hoye#
thr	Nantucket	4	M. Brogan	1/14	Plymouth	113	M. Faherty
1/12, 2/20	Newbypt H.	4, 2	v.o.	1/19	Falmouth	59	G. d'Entremont#
1/15	WBWS	2	M. Faherty	2/4	Hadley	3	L. Therrien
1/15	Cumb. Farms	11	P. + F. Vale	2/16	Nantucket	175	V. Laux
2/14	Fitchburg	6	D. Bernstein		American Black Duck		
Brant				1/5	P'town H.	260	SSBC (Petersen)
1/13	Nahant	350	TASL (L. Pivacek)	1/14, 2/22	PI.	2000, 1035	v.o.
1/13	Dorchester	102	P. Peterson	1/15	Longmeadow	33	T. Gagnon
1/28	Manomet	33	M. Faherty	2/2	Acoaxet	324	M. Lynch#
2/23	Eastham (F.E.)	800	D. Pettee	2/15	Westfield	35	S. Kellogg
2/24	Plymouth	55	S. Fenwick	2/21	Rowley	340	J. Berry
Cackling Goose					Mallard		
1/14	Newbury	3	R. Heil	1/1	Wrentham	200	J. Baur
1/21	Newbypt H.	3	S. Sullivan#	1/1	Charlton	600	M. Lynch#
Wood Duck				1/6	Boston	302	BBC (R. Stymeister)
1/19	Chicopee	2	A. & L. Richardson	1/27	Newbypt	300	J. Berry#
2/12	Plainville	3	J. Fecteau		Blue-winged Teal		
2/21	Medford	3	J. Kovner#	1/1-9	Marstons Mills	1-3	v.o.
2/24	W. Bridgewater	4	D. Cabral		Northern Shoveler		
2/28	Concord	3	C. Winstanley	thr	Marstons Mills	2-3	v.o.
Gadwall				thr	Nantucket	4 max	v.o.
thr	PI.	189 max	v.o.	1/10	Seekonk	3	A. Morgan
1/4	Gloucester (E.P.)	32	J. Nelson	1/14	Longmeadow	1	A. & L. Richardson
1/14	Yarmouth	36	E. Hoopes	1/19	Seekonk	2	A. Morgan
1/14	Plymouth	145	M. Faherty		Northern Pintail		
1/19	Wareham	31	R. Sawyer	thr	PI.	95 max	v.o.
1/19	Seekonk	40	A. Morgan#	1/19	Sudbury	12	K. Crispell
2/20	Falmouth	17	G. d'Entremont#	1/22	Marlboro	21	T. Spahr
Eurasian Wigeon				1/24	Plymouth	5	R. Bowes
thr	Falmouth	1-2	v.o.	2/2	Hadley	13	O. Burton
thr	Nantucket	1-3	v.o.	2/13	Newbypt	5	P. Peterson
1/thr	Marstons Mills	1	v.o.		Green-winged Teal		
1/11	Sandwich	1	M. Keleher#	1/1-21	Newton	5	D. Levenson
1/14-21	PI.	1	v.o.	1/11	Medford	4	J. Restivo
1/20	Orleans	1	B. Nikula	1/19	Seekonk	4	A. Morgan#
2/1-12	Sandwich	1	v.o.	1/25	Salisbury	40	S. McGrath
American Wigeon				1/25	W. Springfield	2	B. Hodgkins
1/2	Wrentham	16	J. Fecteau	2/1	Marstons Mills	10	R. Debenham

Green-winged Teal (continued)				2/23	P.I.	170	E. Nielsen
2/20	Plymouth	14	G. Gove#	Long-tailed Duck			
Canvasback				1/11	Boston (Deer I.)	79	P. Peterson
thr	Reports of 1-4 indiv. from 16 locations			1/17	Gloucester	12	P. + F. Vale
thr	Nantucket	225 max	v.o.	2/14	P.I.	50	T. Wetmore
1/14	P.I.	18	R. Heil	2/16	Nantucket	25000	V. Laux
1/14	Northampton	12	D. McLain	Bufflehead			
1/14	Duxbury B.	16	R. Bowes	1/3	Wellfleet	440	L. Waters
1/17	Wrentham	7	J. Fecteau	1/3	Nahant	220	L. Pivacek
1/19	Cambr. (F.P.)	6	P. Guidetti	1/6	S. Quabbin	4	L. Therrien
1/20	Wachusett Res.	7	J. Liller#	1/13	Nantucket	100	K. Blackshaw
1/20	Randolph	6	J. Carlisle	2/2	Cape Ann	120	J. Berry#
1/20	Wenham	5	J. Berry	2/2	Acoaxet	193	M. Lynch#
1/21	Nantucket	12	P. Hunt#	Common Goldeneye			
Redhead				thr	P.I.	56 max	v.o.
thr	Falmouth	7-12	v.o.	1/19	Agawam	60	S. Svec
thr	Jamaica Plain	1	v.o.	1/20	Wachusett Res.	66	J. Liller#
1/1	Nantucket	15	BBC (GdE)	1/21	Boston (Deer I.)	40	P. Peterson
1/1-13	Orleans	1	v.o.	2/2	Cape Ann	50	J. Berry#
1/1-3	Chestnut Hill	5	v.o.	Barrow's Goldeneye			
1/5	Cambr. (F.P.)	4	P. Wilton	thr	Boston (Deer I.)	1 m	R. Stymeist
1/5	Eastham	1	J. Hoye#	1/1-2/6	Wellfleet	1	v.o.
1/31	Turners Falls	1	Z. Jakub	1/1	Wachusett Res.	2 f	M. Lynch#
2/1-26	Brookline	1	v.o.	1/4	Rockport	1 f	J. Nelson
Ring-necked Duck				1/4	Nantucket	1	V. Laux
1/5	Plymouth	475	G. d'Entremont#	1/19-25	Agawam	2	S. Svec#
1/15	Brewster	135	P. Trull	1/28	Manomet	1 m ad	M. Faherty
1/19	Wrentham	400	K. Ryan	2/23	Cohasset	4	R. Schain
1/20	Wachusett Res.	50	J. Liller#	Hooded Merganser			
2/13	Nantucket	260	V. Laux	1/1	Chestnut Hill	50	D. Anderson
2/25	Waltham	150	J. Forbes	1/4	Lynn	75	D. Wilkinson
Tufted Duck				1/15	Chestnut Hill	66	R. Stymeist
1/26-27	Nahant	1 f	L. Pivacek + v.o.	1/19	Wrentham	150	K. Ryan
Greater Scaup				1/27	Newbury	77	J. Berry#
1/1	Nantucket	1200	BBC (GdE)	2/16	Nantucket	60	V. Laux
1/9	Gloucester H.	49	P. Brown	Common Merganser			
1/13	Wachusett Res.	102	N. Paulson	thr	Medford	155 max	M. Rines
2/20	Plymouth	200	G. d'Entremont#	1/1	Attleboro	51	J. Sweeney
Lesser Scaup				1/4	Plymouth	65	R. Bushnell
1/1	Turners Falls	5	T. Gagnon	1/4	S. Quabbin	57	L. Therrien
1/1	Nantucket	32	BBC (GdE)	1/5	Plymouth	125	G. d'Entremont#
1/5	Plymouth	50	G. d'Entremont#	1/28	Holyoke	43	L. Therrien
1/19	Falmouth	50	G. d'Entremont#	Red-breasted Merganser			
1/23	Wachusett Res.	49	T. Spahr	1/5	P.I.	300	T. Wetmore
King Eider				1/9	Newbypt. H.	1500	D. Weaver
thr	Gloucester	1 m	J. Berry	1/15	W. Springfield	1	T. Gagnon
2/14	Newbypt	1 m	J. Nelson	2/2	Cape Ann	85	J. Berry#
2/16	P.I.	1 m	N. Landry	Ruddy Duck			
Common Eider				thr	E. Gloucester	75 max	v.o.
1/1	Nantucket	20000	BBC (GdE)	1/1	Nantucket	150	BBC (GdE)
1/5	Truro CBC	5186	T. Lipsky	1/1	Attleboro	72	J. Sweeney
2/12	Chatham	4000	M. Faherty	1/5	Eastham	120	J. Hoye#
2/26	E. Gloucester	245	J. Berry	1/5	Plymouth	100	G. d'Entremont#
2/28	Salisbury	220	P. + F. Vale	2/2	Gloucester (E.P.)	75	J. Berry#
Harlequin Duck				Northern Bobwhite			
1/4	Rockport	75	J. Nelson	1/25	Cumb. Farms	3	J. Sweeney
1/5	Dennis (Corp. B.)	2	B. Nikula	Ring-necked Pheasant			
1/9	Duxbury B.	4	R. Bowes	1/2	Essex	1 m	J. Berry
1/13	Nantucket	23	K. Blackshaw	1/12	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	1	N. Paulson
1/17	Manomet	5	L. Fuller	Ruffed Grouse			
2/3	Westport	1	A. Morgan	1/12	Ware R. IBA	1	M. Lynch#
Surf Scoter				Wild Turkey			
2/2	Westport	19	M. Lynch#	1/4	W. Gloucester	26	J. Nelson
2/2	Cape Ann	75	J. Berry#	1/6	Newbury	35	J. Berry#
White-winged Scoter				1/14	Sandwich	24	E. Hoopes
1/1	Nantucket	20000	BBC (GdE)	1/27	Rutland	40	M. Lynch#
1/12	Marblehead	45	J. Berry#	Red-throated Loon			
1/16	Cambr. (F.P.)	1	J. Trimble	1/4	Cambr. (F.P.)	1	A. Gurka
2/19	P.I.	60	T. Wetmore	1/6	Salisbury	6	J. Berry#
2/26	E. Gloucester	54	J. Berry	1/6	S. Boston	10	BBC (R. Stymeist)
Black Scoter				1/13	Winthrop	5	P. + F. Vale
1/1	Nantucket	200	BBC (GdE)	2/21	Jamaica Plain	1	M. Barber#

Pacific Loon				Bald Eagle			
1/21	N. Truro	1	J. Young	1/4	Wenham	7 imm	R. Buchsbaum
1/26	Rockport	1	T. Young	2/6	Newbypt H.	6	MAS (B. Gette)
2/23	P'town	2	B. Nikula	2/18	Amesbury	9	T. Murray
Common Loon				2/21	Medford	5	J. Kovner#
thr	P.I.	26 max	v.o.	Northern Harrier			
1/13	Wachusett Res.	4	M. Lynch#	thr	P.I.	5 max	v.o.
2/11	Nahant	24	J. Malone	1/1	Nantucket	2	BBC (GdE)
2/12	Ipswich (C.B.)	12	J. Berry	1/2	Bridgewater	8	D. Clapp#
2/23	Quabbin Pk	3	L. Therrien	1/3	Hadley	2	T. Gagnon
2/26	E. Gloucester	18	J. Berry	1/25	Cumb. Farms	6	J. Sweeney
Pied-billed Grebe				2/26	W. Bridgewater	4	E. Giles
1/1	Nantucket	16	BBC (GdE)	Sharp-shinned Hawk			
1/2	Jamaica Plain	2	B. Mayer	1/19	Blackstone	2	M. Lynch#
1/3	Medford	2	M. Rines	Cooper's Hawk			
1/13	Cambr. (F.P.)	3	C. Cook	1/1	Nantucket	3	BBC (GdE)
2/20	Plymouth	3	R. Bowes	1/13	Worcester	2	M. Lynch#
Horned Grebe				Northern Goshawk			
1/12	P.I.	30	T. Wetmore	1/13	Salisbury	1 f ad	K. Elwell#
1/21	Boston (Deer I.)	13	P. Peterson	2/21	Amherst	1	T. Gagnon
1/26	S. Quabbin	12	L. Therrien	Red-shouldered Hawk			
2/2	Cape Ann	20	J. Berry#	1/2	Leverett	2	M. Wilson
2/11	Nahant	12	J. Malone	1/17	Rehoboth	pr	K. Bartels
Red-necked Grebe				1/28	Mansfield	pr	M. Fox
thr	P.I.	23 max	v.o.	2/2	Westport	3	M. Lynch#
1/12	Marblehead	6	J. Berry#	2/5	Easton	pr	K. Ryan
1/23	Gloucester (B.R.)	40	MAS (B. Gette)	Red-tailed Hawk			
2/28	Arlington	1	M. Rines	1/5	Hadley	17	M. Lynch#
Western Grebe				1/25	Cumb. Farms	9	J. Sweeney
1/1-2/22	P.I.	1	v.o.	Rough-legged Hawk			
Northern Fulmar				thr	P.I.	3 max	v.o.
2/10	Orleans	4	B. Nikula	thr	Cumb. Farms	4 max	v.o.
2/15	Nantucket	4	T. Johnson	1/thr	Hadley	1	L. Therrien,#
Northern Gannet				1/2	Bridgewater	3	D. Clapp#
1/1	Nantucket	150	BBC (GdE)	1/3	IRWS	1 lt	A. Prazar
1/8	P.I.	43	P. + F. Vale	1/6	Sheffield	1	G. Hurley
2/3	Stellwagen	17	J. Berry#	1/23	Rowley	3	J. Hoye#
2/10	Orleans	65	B. Nikula	1/26	Wakefield	1	P. + F. Vale
Double-crested Cormorant				1/27	Boston (Logan)	1	P. Trimble
1/13	Cambridge	3	J. Restivo	2/5	Westport	1	P. Champlin
1/20	Nantucket	10	K. Blackshaw#	Clapper Rail			
1/26	Brookline	3	R. Mayer	1/12	Chatham	1	R. Schain
2/11	Medford	5	J. Restivo	Virginia Rail			
Great Cormorant				1/1	Nantucket	1	BBC (GdE)
thr	Medford	16 max	2/28 M. Rines	1/7	Cotuit	2	M. Keleher
1/19	Boston H.	90	P. Peterson	1/8	S. Peabody	4	R. Heil
2/2	Acoaxet	47	M. Lynch#	American Coot			
2/2	Cape Ann	30	J. Berry#	thr	Woburn (HP)	46	M. Rines
2/3	P'town H.	12	B. Nikula	thr	Nantucket	245 max	v.o.
2/4	Cohasset	40	V. Zollo	1/4	Plymouth	132	R. Bushnell
American Bittern				1/4	Jamaica Plain	50	B. Mayer
2/12-22	P.I.	1	v.o.	1/5	Eastham	100	J. Hoye#
Great Blue Heron				1/19	Plymouth	75	G. d'Entremont#
2/3	Nantucket	5	K. Blackshaw#	1/20	Jamaica Plain	73	P. + F. Vale
2/6	Cambridge	5	G. Fabbri	Northern Lapwing			
2/20	Falmouth	5	G. d'Entremont#	thr	Nantucket	2, 3 on 2/26	v.o.
Great Egret				1/1	Bridgewater	1	C. Turnbull#
thr	Wellfleet	1-2	v.o.	Black-bellied Plover			
1/11	Nantucket	1	S. Perkins	1/5	P'town (R.P.)	8	SSBC (Petersen)
1/27	Harwich	1	B. Nikula	1/5	Eastham (CGB)	3	SSBC (Petersen)
Black-crowned Night-Heron				1/9	Duxbury B.	3	R. Bowes
1/1	Gloucester (E.P.)	3	M. Taylor#	2/3	Plymouth	3	S. van der Veen
Black Vulture				Killdeer			
1/10	Sheffield	25	B. Lafley	1/19	Nantucket	12	P. Covier
1/31	Blackstone	6	N. Paulson	1/20	Fairhaven	9	J. Sweeney
2/21	Westport	2	G. Perkins	2/26	W. Roxbury (MP)	3	P. Peterson
Turkey Vulture				2/28	Uxbridge	4	J. Lawson
1/21	Malden	3	C. Jackson	American Oystercatcher			
1/27	Nantucket	4	K. Blackshaw#	1/1-2/16	Chatham	1	v.o.
2/7	Blackstone	11	J. Hoye#	Greater Yellowlegs			
2/21	Westport	30	G. Perkins	1/12	Westport	1	N. Paulson
2/28	Bourne	18	P. Kyle	1/13	Winthrop	1	F. Vale
				2/3	W. Harwich	2	B. Nikula

Ruddy Turnstone				2/25	Turners Falls	3	J. Smith
1/1	Nantucket	20	BBC (GdE)	Lesser Black-backed Gull			
1/19	Falmouth	9	G. d'Entremont#	thr	Turners Falls	1	v.o.
1/23	Revere B.	1	P. Peterson	1/4	Nantucket	100	V. Laux
2/15	Rockport (A.P.)	1	D. Anderson	1/6	Boston	1	BBC (R. Stymeist)
Sanderling				1/12	Rehoboth	1	J. Sweeney
thr	P.I.	95 max	v.o.	1/12	Agawam	1	B. Bieda#
1/5	P'town (R.P.)	119	SSBC (Petersen)	1/13	Cambridge	1	R. Stymeist
1/13	Nantucket	75	K. Blackshaw	2/2	Falmouth	1	B. Nikula
2/15	Rockport	80	P. Peterson	2/16	Chatham	2	J. Trimble#
Purple Sandpiper				Glaucous Gull			
1/4	Rockport (A.P.)	60	J. Nelson	1/4	Nantucket	2	V. Laux
1/9	Salisbury	30	MAS (D. Larson)	1/4	Plymouth	1	A. Morgan#
1/27	Nantucket	24	K. Blackshaw#	1/7	Wachusett Res.	1	B. Kamp
2/2	Falmouth	16	B. Nikula	1/11	Agawam	1	S. Motyl#
2/26	E. Gloucester	47	J. Berry	2/12	P'town (R.P.)	3	M. Sylvia
Dunlin				2/24	Northampton	1	J. Drucker
1/5	Eastham	1350	SSBC (Petersen)	2/25	P.I.	1	C. Gras
1/12	Brewster	800	B. Nikula	Dovekie			
1/14	P.I.	150	T. Wetmore	1/9	P.I.	1	S. Sullivan
2/5	Duxbury	1550	R. Bowes	1/12	Wellfleet	2	J. Hoye#
2/12	Ipswich (C.B.)	97	J. Berry	1/17, 2/12	Rockport (A.P.)	1, 1	P. + F. Vale
Wilson's Snipe				1/19, 2/16	P'town H.	2, 4	B. Nikula
1/4	Boston (A.A.)	1	B. Mayer	1/20	Falmouth	1	G. Hirt
1/10	Sheffield	1	R. Wendell	1/31	Westport	4	P. Champlin
1/26	Dorchester	1	P. Peterson	2/10	Orleans	1	B. Nikula
1/30	Newbypt H.	2	W. Tatro	2/16	Nantucket	10	T. Johnson
American Woodcock				Common Murre			
1/19	Barnstable	2	M. Iliff	1/5	P'town (R.P.)	1	SSBC (Petersen)
2/28	Newbury	2	L. Wetmore	2/thr	Gloucester (B.R.)	1	v.o.
Black-legged Kittiwake				2/12	Rockport (A.P.)	2	J. Hoye#
thr	P.I.	20 max	v.o.	2/16	P'town	8	J. Trimble#
1/19	N. Truro	175	B. Nikula	2/16	Nantucket	5	T. Johnson
2/3	Stellwagen	18	J. Berry#	Thick-billed Murre			
2/10	Orleans	105	B. Nikula	1/1	P.I.	1	K. Hartel
2/16	Nantucket	30	T. Johnson	1/4	Rockport (A.P.)	1	J. Nelson
Bonaparte's Gull				1/13	Swampscott	1	BBC (L. Pivacek)
1/2	P.I.	10	T. Wetmore	2/10	Orleans	1	B. Nikula
1/4	Nantucket	10,000	V. Laux	2/16	P'town	3	J. Trimble#
1/13	Swampscott	16	BBC (L. Pivacek)	Razorbill			
2/21	Revere B.	6	D. Anderson	thr	Rockport (A.P.)	123 max	v.o.
Black-headed Gull				thr	P.I.	156 max	v.o.
thr	Hyannis	1-3	v.o.	1/4	Nantucket	100	V. Laux
thr	Nantucket	1-4	v.o.	1/6	Boston (Deer I.)	2	J. Restivo
1/11-20	Worcester	1	Y. Laskaris#	1/9	Duxbury B.	3	R. Bowes
1/13	Nahant	1 1W	L. Pivacek	1/19	P'town	40	B. Nikula
1/27	Dennis (Corp. B.)	1	P. Flood	2/10	Orleans	600	B. Nikula
Little Gull				2/13	Nantucket	100	V. Laux
1/1-21	Nantucket	1-2	v.o.	Black Guillemot			
Mew Gull				thr	Gloucester	7 max	v.o.
1/3-20	Nahant	1 ad ph	L. Pivacek	1/1	Sandwich	1	M. Keleher#
Thayer's Gull				1/5	P'town	1	SSBC (Petersen)
1/4	Nantucket	2 ad	V. Laux	1/14	P.I.	1	T. Wetmore
Iceland Gull				1/19	Boston H.	2	P. Peterson
thr	Nantucket	35 max	v.o.	1/21	Nantucket	1	P. Hunt#
thr	Boston (Deer I.)	28 max	v.o.	2/11	Nahant	1	J. Malone
thr	Gloucester	7 max	v.o.	Atlantic Puffin			
1/22	Northampton	3	T. Gagnon	1/31	Hull	1	K. Jordan
2/12	P'town (R.P.)	22	M. Sylvia	2/3	Stellwagen	2	J. Berry#
2/16	Agawam	5	S. Kellogg	2/10	Orleans	52	B. Nikula
2/23	N. Truro	12	B. Nikula	2/16	Nantucket	4	T. Johnson

OWLS THROUGH FINCHES

It was an average flight year for Snowy Owls, unlike last year when over 40 individuals were recorded passing through Logan Airport in Boston. Barred Owls, on the other hand, were reported from many locations, and several road kills were noted during the period.

Hummingbirds reported in late fall and early winter have historically been vagrants, but this winter there were three **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds**, all confirmed in hand and banded in North Falmouth, Orleans, and Edgartown. There were also three reports of **Rufous Hummingbirds**, two of which were netted, measured, and banded; photographs confirmed another. Yet another *Selasphorus* came to a feeder on Nantucket.

A gray **Gyr Falcon** was discovered late in the afternoon on New Years Day in Hadley and for the next two months either delighted or disappointed the many birders who descended on this quiet town along the Connecticut River. The falcon watchers and waiters were finding lots of good birds in the area, often the case when a rare bird appears. Snow forced many of the seed-eating birds to the sides of the roads, and there were excellent views of Horned Larks, Song and Savannah sparrows, and Snow Buntings as well as several Common Redpolls, a few Lapland Longspurs, a Vesper Sparrow, and two Clay-colored Sparrows.

An immature **Red-headed Woodpecker**, first noted on December 20 in the Fenway section of Boston, was last seen on February 6. Sapsuckers were found in over 20 locations as compared with just 12 during this same period last year. Northern Shrikes were also noted in higher numbers this year with reports of individuals from 23 locations compared with 11 last year. The first half of January was quite mild and no doubt was responsible for many lingering birds from the Christmas Bird Counts, notably a Northern Waterthrush on Nantucket, three Black-and-white Warblers, and three Lincoln Sparrows.

Among the rarities was a one-day sighting of a **Varied Thrush** in Provincetown and a very cooperative **LeConte's Sparrow**, which delighted hundreds of birders in its five-day stay in Concord. It is likely that some rarities go undetected when they visit the feeders of most backyard feeder watchers, but when one visits a birder's feeder it makes an impression! This year Bob and Dana Fox welcomed everyone into their kitchen to see a Cape May Warbler, and Bob and Bonnie Buxton shared the Blue Grosbeak coming to their Merrimac backyard. Finally, the Davenportes of Taunton, who consider themselves backyard birders, found out that a mega rarity, a **Black-throated Gray Warbler**, would bring scores of birders their home every morning for more than 20 days.

The winter finch irruption continued from December with increased numbers of Pine Grosbeaks, continuing large flocks of crossbills, and many Common Redpoll flocks of more than 100 with as many as eight Hoary Redpolls among them. Purple Finches were scarce as were Evening Grosbeaks.

R. H. Stymeist



HOARY REDPOLL BY
DAVID CLAPP

Barn Owl				2/26	Melrose	2	D. + I. Jewell
1/1	Nantucket	1	BBC (GdE)	2/26	Lowell	pr	A. Gaudet
Eastern Screech-Owl				Red-headed Woodpecker			
1/13	Worcester	2	M. Lynch#	1/2-2/6	Boston (Fens)	1 imm	v.o.
1/25	Cumb. Farms	2	J. Sweeney	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			
2/2	Westport	4	M. Lynch#	thr	Reports of indiv. from 22 locations		
2/21	Arlington	2	R. Stymeist	1/2	Boston (A.A.)	3	M. Garvey
Great Horned Owl				Northern Flicker			
1/1	Worcester	3	M. Lynch#	1/1	Nantucket	5	BBC (GdE)
1/5	Waban	pr	P. Gilmore	2/2	Westport	9	M. Lynch#
1/5	Brewster	5	SSBC (Peterson)	2/3	E. Bridgewater	5	J. Carlisle
1/12	N. Marshfield	3	G. d'Entremont#	2/5	Easton	3	K. Ryan
1/12	Rutland	2	T. Purcell	2/23	Fairhaven	4	G. d'Entremont#
1/27	Berlin	2	R. Langer	Pileated Woodpecker			
2/9	Woburn	pr	P. Ippolito	1/6	Westford	2	D. Cabral
Snowy Owl				1/21	Milton	pr	R. Mussey
1/5	Duxbury B.	1	R. Bowes	1/27	Hadley	2	SSBC (E. LeBlanc)
1/6	Boston (Logan)	4	N. Smith	Eastern Phoebe			
1/27	Rockport	1	D. Bernstein	1/2	DFWS	1	P. Sowizral
2/6	Chatham	1	D. Lyon	1/5	Truro CBC	3	T. Lipsky
2/23	Rowley	1	K. Elwell	1/21	Plymouth	1	K. Doyon
2/26	P.I.	2	S. McGrath	1/26	Saugus	1	K. Marshall
Barred Owl				2/9	Holliston	1	P. Rennert
thr	Reports of indiv. from 24 locations			2/18	Rochester	1	G. Gove#
1/1	Worcester	2	M. Lynch#	Northern Shrike			
2/3	P.I.	2	T. Wetmore	thr	Reports of indiv. from 23 locations		
2/18	Hamilton	2	J. Berry#	American Crow			
2/26	Bolton	2	J. Moosbrucker	1/14	Ipswich	450	J. Berry
Long-eared Owl				1/20	Worcester	3500	M. Lynch#
thr	Hadley	1	v.o.	Fish Crow			
1/22	Harwich	1	J. Towne	1/6	Concord	2	W. Hutcheson
2/4	Westboro	1	T. Spahr	1/30	Roslindale	250	P. Peterson
2/16	Hamilton	1	J. Berry	2/14	Wayland	2	G. Perkins
Short-eared Owl				2/19	N. Reading	10	D. Wilkinson
1/thr	Orleans	1	C. Thompson#	2/23	Mansfield	11	M. Fox
1/1	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	1	D. Logan	Common Raven			
1/8	Hadley	1	L. Therrien	thr	Reports of 1-2 indiv. from 32 locations		
1/26	Boston (Logan)	1	J. Trimble	1/29	GMNWR	4	C. Johnson
2/2	P.I.	4	S. Riley	Horned Lark			
2/2	Westport	1	M. Lynch#	thr	Cumb. Farms	313 max	v.o.
2/28	Cumb. Farms	1	J. Carlisle	thr	Northampton	130 max	v.o.
Northern Saw-whet Owl				1/1	Ipswich	125	J. Nelson#
1/1	Ware R. IBA	3	M. Lynch#	1/4	Lincoln	160	S. Perkins
1/10	P.I.	1	S. Riley	2/10	Hadley	520	S. Svec
2/26	Sudbury	1	J. Hoye#	2/13	Nantucket	106	V. Laux
Ruby-throated Hummingbird				Tree Swallow			
1/1	N. Falmouth	1 b	I. Nisbet	1/7	Nantucket	1	T. Pastuszek
1/3	Edgartown	1 ph	L. McDowell	1/10	Aquinnah	3	T. Day
1/19	Orleans	1 b	fide S. Finnegan	Red-breasted Nuthatch			
Rufous Hummingbird				1/1	Nantucket	12	BBC (GdE)
1/1-14	Wellfleet	1 b	fide S. Finnegan	1/6	Salisbury	15	J. Berry#
1/1-24	Concord	1 f ad b	L. LeVan	1/6	New Salem	12	B. Laflay
1/5-31	Wellfleet	1 ph	T. Lipsky	2/16	W. Boylston	15	J. Lawson
Selasphorus species				2/23	Ware R. IBA	24	M. Lynch#
1/1	Nantucket	1	E. Ray + v. o.	Brown Creeper			
Belted Kingfisher				1/6	New Salem	2	B. Laflay
1/3	Medford	2	P. Roberts	1/12	Ware R. IBA	2	M. Lynch#
1/24	Framingham	2	J. Malone	1/19	Winchester	2	R. LaFontaine
2/13	Longmeadow	2	M. Moore	2/11	GMNWR	2	K. Dia#
American Kestrel				2/13	Becket	2	R. Laubach
thr	Reports of indiv. from 15 locations			2/16	Hingham	2	D. Connolly
1/1	Hadley	2	SSBC (E. LeBlanc)	Carolina Wren			
Merlin				1/26	S. Dartmouth	8	R. Stymeist#
thr	Reports of indiv. from 33 locations			2/2	Westport	16	M. Lynch#
Gyrfalcon				2/20	Falmouth	16	G. d'Entremont#
1/1-2/27	Hadley	1 ph	v.o.	2/23	Fairhaven	27	G. d'Entremont#
Peregrine Falcon				Winter Wren			
thr	Hadley	1-3	T. Gagnon#	1/8	Peabody	2	R. Heil
1/1	Gloucester	2	M. Taylor	1/21	Plymouth	2	K. Doyon
1/8	Boston	3	P. Peterson	1/21	Wellfleet	3	J. Young
2/5	Lawrence	pr	C. Gibson	2/3	Medford	4	R. LaFontaine
2/19	Woburn	pr	M. Rines	2/23	Fairhaven	3	G. d'Entremont#
2/23	Fairhaven	2	G. d'Entremont#	2/28	W. Roxbury	2	M. Iliff

Marsh Wren											
1/1	Sandwich	1	R. Finch	1/1	S. Berkshire	222					CBC
1/4	W. Roxbury (MP)	1	M. Iliff	1/1	Hadley	180					T. Gagnon
1/8	S. Peabody	1	R. Heil	1/6	Boston (Deer I.)	80					P. + F. Vale
1/14	Barnstable	5	M. Keleher	1/13	Nantucket	65					K. Blackshaw
1/15	Ipswich	2	J. Berry	1/13	Dorchester	70					P. Peterson
2/13	GMNWR	2	G. d'Entremont#	2/2	Gloucester	45					J. Berry#
Golden-crowned Kinglet				2/4	Concord	125					M. Rines
1/1	Chestnut Hill	3	D. Anderson	2/23	Worcester	70					M. Lynch#
1/7	GMNWR	4	K. Dia#	2/24	Northampton	50					J. Drucker
1/12	Ware R. IBA	3	M. Lynch#	Northern Waterthrush							
1/13	Worcester	4	M. Lynch#	1/5	Nantucket	1					V. Laux
1/20	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	3	A. Morgan	Black-and-white Warbler							
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				1/thr	Carlisle	1					K. Harte
1/6	Boston (PG)	1	BBC (R. Stymeist)	1/1-17	Holyoke	1					S. Motyl#
1/14	Lexington	1	A. Gurka	1/8	Medford	1					A. Brandt
1/31	Woburn (HP)	1	M. Rines	Orange-crowned Warbler							
2/3	Holyoke	1	G. Saulman	1/22	Plymouth	1					G. Harriman
2/14	Plainville	1	J. Fecteau	Common Yellowthroat							
2/15	Mt.A.	1	R. Stymeist#	1/5	GMNWR	1					D. Hefferon
Eastern Bluebird				1/13	Salisbury	1					K. Elwell
1/15	Ipswich	9	J. Berry	1/30	Lexington	1					S. Dowds
1/20	Southbridge	49	M. Lynch#	Cape May Warbler							
1/21	W. Roxbury (MP)	9	M. Iliff	1/4-24	N. Dover	1					D. + B. Fox + v.o.
2/1	Wellfleet	9	M. Keleher	Palm Warbler							
2/11	GMNWR	8	K. Dia#	1/1	Hadley	1					D. Griffiths
2/13	Sheffield	25	G. Hurley	1/5	Nantucket	11					V. Laux
2/22	Ipswich	9	J. Berry	1/5	GMNWR	1					D. Hefferon
Hermit Thrush				1/13	Dorchester	1					P. Peterson
thr	Reports of indiv. from 15 locations			1/17	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	6					P. Champlin#
1/14	Barnstable	4	M. Keleher	2/3	IRWS	1					N. Landry
1/28	Marstons Mills	3	M. Keleher	Pine Warbler							
2/2	Westport	10	M. Lynch#	1/2	Williamstown	1					P. Weatherbee
2/2	Rockport	2	BBC (Drummond)	1/5	GMNWR	1					D. Hefferon
2/10	Longmeadow	2	L. Richardson#	1/17	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	5					P. Champlin#
Varied Thrush				1/19	Brewster	3					P. Trull
2/18	P'town	1	J. Taylor	1/20	Nantucket	2					K. Blackshaw#
Gray Catbird				2/9	Manomet	6					K. Doyon
1/1	Nantucket	2	BBC (GdE)	Yellow-rumped Warbler							
1/11	Somerset	1	R. Stymeist	1/1	Rowley	3					P. + F. Vale
1/21	E. Bridgewater	1	J. Carlisle	1/26	W. Bridgewater	12					K. Ryan
1/29	Acushnet	1	K. Langevin	1/27	Nantucket	60					K. Blackshaw#
2/2	Gloucester (E.P.)	1	S. Hedman#	2/1	Wellfleet	50					M. Keleher
2/6	P.I.	1	T. Wetmore	2/23	Fairhaven	3					G. d'Entremont#
2/10	W. Bridgewater	1	D. Cabral	Black-throated Gray Warbler							
Brown Thrasher				1/1-23	Taunton	1 m					R. Davenport + v.o.
1/11	Aquinnah	2	T. Day	Yellow-breasted Chat							
1/28	Marstons Mills	1	M. Keleher	1/1	Boston (Fens)	1					M. Garvey
2/2	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	1	E. Nielsen	1/3-20	Burlington	1					J. Keeley#
2/14	Harwich	1	S. Riley	1/13	Aquinnah	1					E. Hynes
American Pipit				1/13	Nahant	1					J. Malone
1/2	Bridgewater	7	D. Clapp#	1/14	Plymouth	1					M. Faherty
1/3	Aquinnah	7	T. Day	Eastern Towhee							
1/5	W. Barnstable	5	B. Nikula	1/12	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	2					N. Paulson
1/5	Nantucket	38	V. Laux	1/19	Falmouth	5					G. d'Entremont#
1/14	Hadley	8	I. Lynch	2/2	Westport	3					M. Lynch#
1/20	Concord	25	D. Sibley	2/2	E. Bridgewater	2					J. Carlisle
1/21	P.I.	18	BBC (I. Giriunas)	2/9	Nantucket	4					T. Pastuszak
1/25	Cumb. Farms	5	J. Sweeney	American Tree Sparrow							
2/16	Revere B.	3	J. Keeley	1/1	Quabog IBA	50					M. Lynch#
Cedar Waxwing				1/5	E. Bridgewater	40					J. Carlisle
2/2	Lincoln	15	J. Forbes	1/25	Cumb. Farms	130					J. Sweeney
2/15	Southwick	55	S. Kellogg	1/26	Dorchester	53					P. Peterson
2/16	Boston (A.A.)	10	D. Sullivan	2/6	Newbury	50					J. Hoye#
2/19	Lynn	36	P. Peterson	Chipping Sparrow							
Lapland Longspur				1/2	Wareham	9					D. Clapp#
1/1	Ipswich	3	J. Nelson#	1/21	Concord	2					C. Winstanley
1/1	Hadley	4	L. Therrien	1/26	Falmouth	10					G. Hirth
1/2	P.I.	3	T. Wetmore	2/7	Lexington	2					M. Werbeloff
1/27	Saugus	2	S. Zende#	Clay-colored Sparrow							
1/27	E. Bridgewater	2	J. Carlisle	1/1-2/16	Hadley	2					T. Gagnon#
2/17	Northampton	4	T. Gagnon	1/6	Sheffield	1					G. Hurley
2/18	Cumb. Farms	2	J. Carlisle	1/8	S. Quabbin	1					L. Therrien

Field Sparrow				2/13	Sheffield	6	G. Hurley
1/2	Bridgewater	2	D. Clapp#	2/19	Norfolk	4	J. Fecteau
2/1	WBWS	6	M. Keleher	2/22	Ipswich	1	J. Berry
2/2	Worcester	2	J. Young	2/26	W. Roxbury (MP)	3	P. Peterson
2/6	Plainville	10	J. Fecteau	Common Grackle			
2/15	W. Tisbury	2	S. Perkins#	1/1	Centerville	500	M. Keleher#
Vesper Sparrow				1/2	Cumb. Farms	1500	P. + F. Vale
1/1-2/22	Hadley	1-2	L. Therrien#	Brown-headed Cowbird			
1/24	Northampton	1	T. Gagnon	1/15	Cumb. Farms	1000	P. + F. Vale
2/16	Cumb. Farms	4	J. Sweeney	1/20	Southbridge	12	M. Lynch#
2/22	Hatfield	1	J. Drucker	2/2	Lincoln	10	J. Forbes
Lark Sparrow				2/5	Easton	10	K. Ryan
1/5-21	Wellfleet	1	T. Lipsky	Bullock's Oriole			
Savannah Sparrow				1/12	Marblehead	1 f	J. Berry#
1/1	Hadley	50	T. Gagnon	Baltimore Oriole			
1/3	Concord	2	D. Sibley	1/1	Harwich	1	A & T Dorazio
1/12	P.I.	18	J. Trimble	1/1	Roxbury	1	D. Sullivan
1/25	Cumb. Farms	24	J. Sweeney	2/8	Jamaica Plain	1	R. Mayer
1/26	E. Bridgewater	6	J. Carlisle	2/24	Roslindale	1	D. Sullivan
1/26	S. Dartmouth	6	R. Stymeist#	Pine Grosbeak			
Ipswich Sparrow				thr	Newbypt	12 max	v.o.
1/12	P.I.	1	J. Trimble	1/1-13	Wilmington	30	v.o.
1/21	Duxbury B.	2	R. Bowes	1/1	Royalston	14	D. Larson
2/2	Ipswich (C.B.)	4	J. Berry	1/2	Easthampton	17	J. Doppler
Le Conte's Sparrow				1/4	W. Boylston	16	G. Dysart
2/12-16	Concord	1 ph	P. Gilmore + v.o.	1/31	Shrewsbury	16	T. Spahr
Fox Sparrow				2/3	Marlboro	25	J. Trimble
thr	Reports of indiv from 12 locations			2/10	Worcester	14	T. Spahr
1/9	Wareham	2	J. Young	Purple Finch			
1/13	Carlisle	2	T. Brownrigg	1/5	Truro CBC	9	T. Lipsky
1/19	Falmouth	2	G. d'Entremont#	1/23	DFWS	1	P. Sowizral
2/2	Lexington	2	R. Stymeist	Red Crossbill			
2/23	Fairhaven	2	G. d'Entremont#	thr	P.I.	19 max	v.o.
Lincoln's Sparrow				1/thr	Salisbury	30 max	v.o.
1/5	Wellfleet	1	T. Lipsky	1/8	Barre	10	P. Morlock
2/16	Reading	1	I. Giriunas	1/9	Duxbury	8	R. Bowes
2/20	Winchester	1	M. Rines#	1/11, 2/13	Nantucket	15, 6	V. Laux
Swamp Sparrow				1/12, 2/23	Ware R. IBA	10, 10	M. Lynch#
1/2	Bridgewater	3	D. Clapp#	1/12	Harwich	13	A. & T. Dorazio
1/14	P.I.	6	R. Heil	1/13	Revere B.	13	J. Restivo
1/25	Cumb. Farms	8	J. Sweeney	1/18	Salisbury	15	T. Spahr
2/3	Westboro	4	T. Spahr	1/19	Mashpee	2	M. Keleher
2/10	Longmeadow	3	A. & L. Richardson	2/16	W. Boylston	3	J. Lawson
2/11	GMNWR	5	K. Dia#	2/27	Plymouth	2	M. Sheldon
2/23	Fairhaven	3	G. d'Entremont#	White-winged Crossbill			
White-crowned Sparrow				thr	Salisbury	85 max	v.o.
1/19	Nantucket	4	P. Covier	thr	P.I.	70 max	v.o.
1/24	Northampton	4	T. Gagnon	thr	Nantucket	85 max	v.o.
1/25	Cumb. Farms	3	J. Hoye#	1/11	Sandwich	24	M. Keleher#
2/16	Longmeadow	2	N. Eaton	1/17	Mashpee	21	P. Kyle
Dark-eyed Junco				1/31	Boston (A.A.)	11	P. Peterson
1/1	Quabog IBA	84	M. Lynch#	2/3	Harwich	11	P. Kyle
1/2	Bridgewater	120	D. Clapp#	Common Redpoll			
Oregon Junco				1/6	Rowley	100	J. Berry#
1/17	Marlboro	1	T. Spahr	1/9	Duxbury B.	175	R. Bowes
Blue Grosbeak				1/12	Woburn	60	L. Kaplan
1/6-2/28	Merrimac	1	B. + B. Buxton	1/16	Worthington	200	S. Lewis
Red-winged Blackbird				1/20	Cumb. Farms	200	H. Levesque#
1/1	Ipswich	100	J. Nelson#	1/20	Lenox	80	A. Spring
1/2	Cumb. Farms	1500	P. + F. Vale	1/21	Savoy	250	T. Gagnon
Eastern Meadowlark				1/28	Northampton	89	L. Therrien
1/1	Wachusett Res.	1	K. Bourinot	2/1	Brimfield	100	J. Stuart
1/1	W. Boylston	1	K. Bourinot	2/3	Royalston	90	R. Stymeist
1/7	Hadley	4	D. McLain	2/10	Hadley	200	J. Pierce
1/12	P.I.	1	T. Wetmore	2/28	Uxbridge	70	J. Lawson
1/25	Cumb. Farms	9	J. Sweeney	Hoary Redpoll			
2/28	Uxbridge	1	J. Lawson	thr	Marlboro	1 ph	T. Spahr
Rusty Blackbird				1/9	Duxbury B.	2 ph	R. Bowes
thr	Wayland	21 max	B. Harris	1/12	Natick	1	T. Spahr
1/6	Lexington	1	J. Forbes	1/13	Nahant	2	TASL (L. Pivacek)
1/14	W. Barnstable	3	M. Keleher	1/27	Royalston	1	SSBC (E. LeBlanc)
1/27	Cumb. Farms	13	P. Gilmore#	2/23	Rowley	1	K. Elwell
2/4	Wayland	15	B. Harris				

Pine Siskin				2/17	Rehoboth	14	K. Bartels
1/18	Norwell	150	C. Patterson	Evening Grosbeak			
1/21	Southwick	15	S. Kellogg	1/1	Royalston	8	D. Larson
1/31	Sharon	60	C. Turnbull	1/5	Hardwick	20	A. Marble#
2/5	Easton	40	K. Ryan	2/24	W. Newbury	1	P. Reeser

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taxonomic order is based on AOU checklist, Seventh edition, up to the 53rd Supplement, as published in *Auk* 129 (3): 573-88 (2012) (see <<http://checklist.aou.org/>>).

Locations				ONWR	Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge
Location-#	MAS Breeding Bird Atlas Block			PG	Public Garden, Boston
A.A.	Arnold Arboretum, Boston			P.I.	Plum Island
ABC	Allen Bird Club			Pd	Pond
A.P.	Andrews Point, Rockport			POP	Point of Pines, Revere
A.Pd	Allens Pond, S. Dartmouth			PR	Pinnacle Rock, Malden
B.	Beach			P'town	Provincetown
Barre F.D.	Barre Falls Dam			Pont.	Pontoosuc Lake, Lanesboro
B.I.	Belle Isle, E. Boston			R.P.	Race Point, Provincetown
B.R.	Bass Rocks, Gloucester			Res.	Reservoir
BBC	Brookline Bird Club			RKG	Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston
BMB	Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester			S.B.	South Beach, Chatham
BNC	Boston Nature Center, Mattapan			S.N.	Sandy Neck, Barnstable
C.B.	Crane Beach, Ipswich			SRV	Sudbury River Valley
CGB	Coast Guard Beach, Eastham			SSBC	South Shore Bird Club
C.P.	Crooked Pond, Boxford			TASL	Take A Second Look, Boston Harbor Census
Cambr.	Cambridge			WBWS	Wellfleet Bay WS
CCBC	Cape Cod Bird Club			WE	World's End, Hingham
Corp. B.	Corporation Beach, Dennis			WMWS	Wachusett Meadow WS
Cumb. Farms	Cumberland Farms, Middleboro			Wompatuck SP	Hingham, Cohasset, Scituate, Norwell
DFWS	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary			Worc.	Worcester
DWMA	Delaney WMA, Stow, Bolton, Harvard				
DWWS	Daniel Webster WS			Other Abbreviations	
E.P.	Eastern Point, Gloucester			ad	adult
F.E.	First Encounter Beach, Eastham			b	banded
F.H.	Fort Hill, Eastham			br	breeding
F.P.	Fresh Pond, Cambridge			dk	dark (morph)
F.Pk	Franklin Park, Boston			f	female
G40	Gate 40, Quabbin Res.			fid	on the authority of
GMNWR	Great Meadows NWR			fl	fledgling
H.	Harbor			imm	immature
H.P.	Halibut Point, Rockport			juv	juvenile
HP	Horn Pond, Woburn			lt	light (morph)
HRWMA	High Ridge WMA, Gardner			m	male
I.	Island			max	maximum
IRWS	Ipswich River WS			migr	migrating
L.	Ledge			n	nesting
MAS	Mass Audubon			ph	photographed
MP	Millennium Park, W. Roxbury			pl	plumage
M.V.	Martha's Vineyard			pr	pair
MBWMA	Martin Burns WMA, Newbury			S	summer (1S = 1st summer)
MNWS	Marblehead Neck WS			v.o.	various observers
MSSF	Myles Standish State Forest, Plymouth			W	winter (2W = second winter)
Mt.A.	Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambr.			yg	young
NAC	Nine Acre Corner, Concord			#	additional observers
Newbypt	Newburyport				

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO BIRD OBSERVER

Sightings for any given month must be reported in writing by the eighth of the following month, and may be submitted by postal mail or email. Send written reports to Bird Sightings, Robert H. Stymeist, 36 Lewis Avenue, Arlington, MA 02474-3206. Include name and phone number of observer, common name of species, date of sighting, location, number of birds, other observer(s), and information on age, sex, and morph (where relevant). For instructions on email submission, visit: <<http://massbird.org/birdobserver/sightings/>>.

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 Matt Garvey, 137 Beaconsfield Rd. #5, Brookline, MA 02445, or by email to <mattgarvey@gmail.com>.

ABOUT THE COVER

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*) was considered an accidental in New England in the early 20th century but has gradually extended its range north until it is now frequently sighted as far north in our area as southern Maine. It did not breed in New England until the late 1950s. Its genus and species names fit its general description; *Poliophtila* means “gray-feathered” in Greek, and *caerulea* means blue. This tiny, thin-billed songbird is bluish-gray above and light gray below and sports a long, black tail edged in white. The tail is nearly half the bird’s total length. The bird has a prominent white eye ring. Gnatcatchers forage actively, often energetically, fanning and flipping their tails as they do so. The sexes are similar in appearance, and in breeding plumage both sexes have bright blue backs. They are not easily confused with other species in the Northeast but can be confused with other gnatcatchers in the far West, Mexico, and Central America. Some taxonomists recognize seven subspecies, two of which occur in the United States. In eastern North America the nominate race, *P.c. caerulea* is the dominant subspecies but is replaced in the west by the race *P.c. amoenissima*. The other five subspecies are found in Mexico and northern Central America. The breeding range of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher covers most of the eastern half of the United States and parts of southern Canada, as well as most of the southwestern United States. The range also extends south through Mexico to Belize and Guatemala. In most areas the breeding range is patchy with most nesting taking place in deciduous forests in lowland areas near rivers and lakes. Gnatcatcher populations occurring north of the Gulf Coast and southern California are migratory, and they winter from the Gulf Coast south through Cuba and Mexico south to Nicaragua. In New England their breeding range includes most of New Hampshire, Vermont, and much of southern Maine. In Massachusetts this species is a fairly common local breeder along lowland watercourses. It is an uncommon to fairly common migrant in both spring and fall. Gnatcatchers begin to arrive in mid- to late April and depart from mid- to late August through early October.

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are monogamous and prefer mature or second growth forest near water for nesting, although in more arid portions of their range they also nest in scrublands. The male’s song is a soft, complex jumble of whistles, chips, and mews that at times may mimic other common forest songbirds. The role of song is not entirely clear. Males tend to sing near territorial boundaries, and song thus serves as territorial advertisement, but it may also serve to attract and maintain contact with females. Males tend to sing from perches, although they apparently have no single song perch and often sing while foraging. Both males and females attack and chase intruders of the same sex, activities that may lead to breast-to-breast fights with wings fluttering and bills snapping. One aggressive posture includes leaning forward with tail cocked and fanned. Courtship behavior includes maintaining an upright posture with lowered tail fanned, while the bird utters a soft song. It may wave the head back and forth with bill open, or it may crouch with wings fluttering. Males may guard their mate during the nest building and egg-laying phases of the breeding cycle.

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are relatively early nesters, beginning in New England as early as late April. Both mates search for nest sites, which may vary from two to more than 25 feet from the ground. Both sexes also build the nest, which is often a cup saddled on a horizontal branch, but sometimes placed in a fork. The nest typically consists of bark and grasses with a high-walled outer layer held together by caterpillar silk or spider web and decorated with lichens. The nest is usually lined with plant down, feathers, or hair. The usual clutch is four or five pale blue eggs, spotted with red or brown. Only the female develops a brood patch, but both parents share incubation about equally during the 13 days until hatching. The adults defend the nesting area against intruders, including birds as large as American Robins and Red-winged Blackbirds. The young are altricial—nearly naked and helpless, with eyes closed at hatching. The female does most of the early brooding while the male provides her with food. Both parents feed the young during the latter part of the 10 to 12 days until fledging. The adults feed the fledglings for several weeks, and the young reach independence after about three weeks.

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers forage mostly by gleaning and hover-gleaning foliage, and they will also hawk insects from the air. Their nearly constant tail movement during foraging may function to flush prey. In winter, gnatcatchers regularly join mixed-species foraging flocks. Their prey consists of small insects and spiders, including caterpillars, moths, and grasshoppers.

Not much information is available on nest predation, but it is assumed that they fall prey to the usual small mammal and avian predators. Brown-headed Cowbirds heavily parasitize nests in some areas and only lightly in others. Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data from 1966–1987 reflected a modest increase in eastern and western gnatcatcher populations, but slight declines in the central-region populations. The significant increase in the species' range in the last half-century or so suggests that the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher is doing well and should continue to do so into the future. 🐦


William E. Davis, Jr.

About the Cover Artist: Barry Van Dusen

Once again, Bird Observer offers a painting by the artist who has created many of our covers, Barry Van Dusen. Barry is well known in the birding world, especially in Massachusetts, where he lives in the central Massachusetts town of Princeton. From May 6 to June 17, 2013, Barry's work will be on exhibit at Tower Hill Botanic Gardens in Boylston, Massachusetts, and he will be the Artist-in-Residence at Tower Hill for the 2013 season.

Barry has illustrated several nature books and pocket guides, and his articles and paintings have been featured in *Birding*, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and *Yankee Magazine* as well as *Bird Observer*. Barry is currently at work on illustrations for the second volume of *Birds of Brazil* by John Gwynne, Robert Ridgely, Guy Tudor, and Martha Argel, published by Comstock Publishing, a division of the Cornell University Press.

For this work he is illustrating the shorebirds and their allies along with the gulls and terns.


Barry's interest in nature subjects began in 1982 with an association with the Massachusetts Audubon Society. He has been influenced by the work of European wildlife artists and has adopted their methodology of direct field sketching. Barry continues to enjoy teaching workshops at various locations in Massachusetts. In 2013 he will conduct workshops at Fruitlands Museums, Concord Art Association, and Tower Hill Botanic Gardens. More information on these is posted on Barry's website at <http://www.barryvandusen.com>. 

(At a Glance continued from page 190)

Once you have gotten this far, it should be easy to locate the bird's wings, one on each side, but curiously with only the *underside* of each wing visible rather than a typical dorsal view. With this perspective in mind, the final and most obvious identification clue is provided by the light colored, fan-shaped tail visible in the center of the picture. The tail has conspicuous white tips to the ends of the outer feathers along with a partial, dark subterminal band running across most of its width.

The distinctive tail pattern is vaguely reminiscent of an American Kestrel; however, the pale color at the base of the mystery bird's spread tail is not at all characteristic of a kestrel. Indeed, there is only one regularly-occurring bird species in Massachusetts that exhibits the unique combination of a fairly long, pale-based tail with white corners to the outer feathers and a dark subterminal band running across its width—the Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*).

None of these details however, explain the odd perspective of the mystery bird. The Killdeer in the picture is not, contrary to a possible initial misimpression, a roadkill. Rather it is exhibiting a characteristic distraction display—a behavior used as a ruse to lure would-be predators away from its nest or young in the event of a threat. Accompanying the spread tail and dragging wing display are typically loud vocalizations that attract the attention of predators and lead them in pursuit of the adult, mistakenly thinking that the bird is injured and likely easy prey. Meanwhile, the nest and young are safe while the predator engages in a wild Killdeer chase in an effort to obtain what it perceives as an easy meal. Once the Killdeer's nest or young are safely out of harm's way, the adult Killdeer flies away, leaving the flummoxed predator to seek a meal elsewhere.

Killdeer are common migrants and are widespread as breeding birds in Massachusetts. They prefer dry fields, stony areas, railroad tracks, and even gravel-roofed buildings for nesting. Small numbers of Killdeer also winter in the state, most often along the coast. The author photographed the displaying Killdeer near its nest in Montana on June 10, 2010. 

Wayne R. Petersen

AT A GLANCE

April 2013



WAYNE R. PETERSEN

For many years, the “At a Glance” column in *Bird Observer* has challenged readers with a wide variety of species in an equally wide variety of situations. Some of the printed images have been deliberately cryptic, while others simply featured poor pictures. Many images represented birds slightly obscured, flying away, or otherwise rendered less than obvious. At least one image was actually printed upside down, another was an insect and not a bird! There was a window-stunned sapsucker that resembled a ball of fluff, and several other mystery species were practically unidentifiable from the picture (e.g., Western Wood-Pewee, Fish Crow). So, dear reader, almost anything could appear in this column.

With this preface in mind, one might logically assume: oh, this month we’re looking at a roadkill! Indeed the mystery photograph bears a superficial resemblance to a roadkill, but closer scrutiny suggests a different possibility. Perspective is the operative word with this mystery image. What are we really seeing? Most helpful is to first locate the head of the pictured creature. Perhaps not surprisingly, the head is central to the image, except that it is only partly visible and is facing away from the reader (which should come as no surprise!). If you are still struggling with orientation, notice that the head features a bold white stripe above and behind the eye, which is just barely visible in the picture.

(continued on page 189)

AT A GLANCE



WAYNE R. PETERSEN

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

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