

By Robert H. Stymeist, Cambridge

From the first settlement of the area in the early 1600s, Revere and Lynn are stated to have been covered with "sea-fowl." William Wood in New England's Prospect (1865) says that the marsh at the mouth of the Saugus River was crowded with creeks where lay "great stores of geese and other ducks." This was the area which furnished the first settlers with a supply of food. In Obadiah Turner's journal (July 28, 1630), relating to the first settlement, we find the following, "Of birdes wee saw great store ... manie of wch wee knew not ye names. But wee are of a truth in a paradise of those moving things yt be good for foode." In the same volume, under the date of 1638, it is stated:

"Upon ye beach they spied great multitudes of birdes of manie kindes, they being there to pick up ye wormes and little fishes. They have long bills wch they thrust into ye little holes in ye sand and pull up ye fat wormes with great relish. They lay eggs in ye sand and ye heate of ye sun being upon them they speedilie hatch, and ye little birdes betake themselves to feeding. Ye beach birdes are verrie shy and quick a-wing, but our sportsmen, nevertheless, do bring down great plentie for their own use and if need to supply their plantations."

The Revere-Winthrop area has not changed dramatically: there are still thousands of "sea-fowl" in Boston Harbor. Although the popularity of the area has decreased as a birding spot, it deserves much more attention than it currently gets. Because of the recent energy crisis, with gas availability a problem during the winter months, this is an ideal winter birding area. It is easily reached by public transportation; MBTA stops at Orient Heights, Revere Beach, and Wonderland are just minutes away from the harbor. It is, however, nearly impossible to cover the entire area in a single day by public transportation.

With the automobile the entire area can be well canvassed in half a day. To reach Revere Beach from Boston, take Interstate 95 north over the Tobin Memorial Bridge (toll 25 cents), to Rte. 16 to Revere Beach Parkway. At the rotary, stop and look at the breakwater to your right: you should see Common and Red-throated Loon, Red-necked and Horned Grebe, and Common Eider near the edge of the breakwater. On the rocks should be Dunlin, Purple Sandpiper, Sanderling and an occasional wintering Black-bellied Plover, Ruddy Turnstone or Red Knot. Follow the parkway north past the old amusement park toward the Point-of-Pines, the last stop before the Saugus River and Lynn. It will be rewarding to stop at various spots along the way to scan for rafts of sea-ducks, mostly Bufflehead and Goldeneye. Hundreds of Sanderlings can also be observed along the beach. In recent winters as many as 800-1000 have been counted. This is probably the largest concentration of Sanderlings wintering in Massachusetts. At the rotary at the end of the parkway, stop and scan for flocks of feeding gulls. There are a good number of Bonaparte's Gulls feeding here and across the bay at Little Nahant (a scope may be needed). Occasionally Black-headed Gulls, and more often Little Gulls, feed with the Bonaparte's. Continue north to the Saugus River, turning right on Rice Avenue, the last street in Revere. Follow Rice Avenue four blocks to the Point-of-Pines. There are no pines, but plenty of signs forbidding you to enter the private beach. Park your car near the corner of Wadsworth Avenue. Walk out to the sandy spit, where you may find other shorebirds among the Sanderlings and Dunlins. On a recent November trip, we observed 10 Western, 4 Least, 5 Semipalmated, and 8 White-rumped Sandpipers. In the beach grass you may find Horned Lark, Savannah Sparrow, Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting.

Before proceeding to Winthrop, a visit to the Lynn dump can be worthwhile. To get to the Lynn dump, head south on Revere Beach Parkway to Kelly's Roast Beef, where you take a right at the traffic lights. Take a left on Glendale Road and then a right on Bridge Street, a dead end. There is a pull-off on the side of the railroad tracks convenient for parking. Walk north along a path beside the tracks. There will be a very fine thicket to your left, where a number of landbirds can be seen. Be careful, for the overhead wires are very low. The tracks cross the marsh to the huge Lynn dump. Thousands of gulls can be seen, and among them a few white-winged gulls. This spot may well be the place where a Lesser-Black-backed Gull is hiding.

Return south on Route 1A. At Route 60, take a left (toward the ocean), then take a right on Ocean Avenue and continue to the rotary, where you began this side trip. Bear left toward Beachmont and Winthrop, and stay left to Simpson's Boatyard. The boat yard

has an excellent view of the breakwater.

Proceed south along Winthrop Parkway. At the Citgo station take a left and follow the road to an unmarked street (orange hydrant on corner) which leads to the Fort Heath apartment complex. Ask permission to park and walk toward the point. Here you should see more rafts of ducks, notably Red-breasted Mergansers. A Harlequin Duck and a Barrow's Goldeneye have been seen along the shore here in past years.

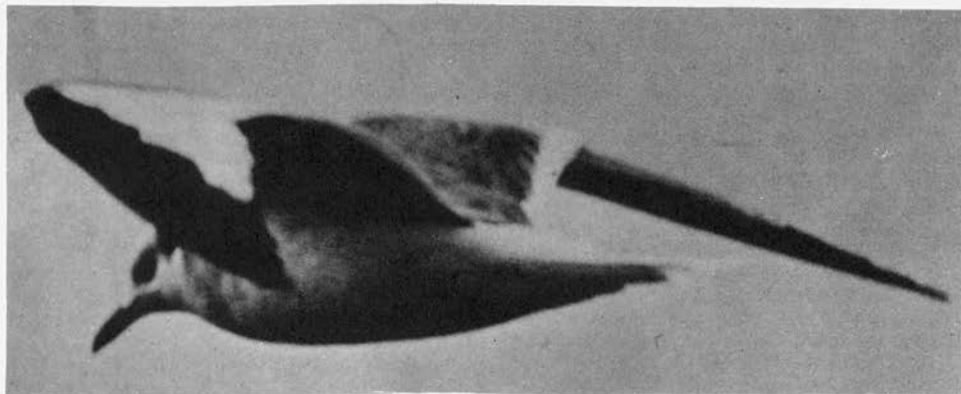
On leaving Fort Heath, take a left on Grovers Avenue and then another left at the Winthrop Shore Drive. At the end of the shore road, park on the other side of the rotary. This is the finest observation point along the entire Revere-Winthrop coastline. There are five breakwaters offshore and the beach here is an excellent spot for shorebirds. There will be hundreds of Dunlins, Purple Sandpipers, and Sanderlings. Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones and Black-bellied Plovers, Common and King Eiders, and Red-breasted Mergansers will be found along the edge of the breakwaters. Walk south along the sea wall toward Deer Island; there are usually large rafts of Scaup, Eider and Goldeneye here and further out toward the island.

Continue around the rotary to Beacon Street, take a left past the Governor Winthrop Hotel to the Winthrop Harbor public landing. In the past on changing tides you can find Black-headed Gulls feeding near the pilings of the Winthrop Yacht Club. (The gulls occasionally roost on nearby Snake Island.) Follow the Deer Island truck route to Point Shirley and the entrance to the Deer Island House of Correction. Written permission is necessary to enter Deer Island.

Follow the truck road back to Winthrop Square. At the Exxon Station take a left on Washington Avenue and then a right on Veterans Road. Park on the left side at the Norman Daw Playground and walk around Lewis Lake. At high tide you will be rewarded with many Black-headed Gulls. On recent winter trips as many as 16 of these gulls have been seen here. Common Snipe can be found along the lakeshore near the Phragmites; Northern Shovelers, Pintails, and Green-winged Teals can be seen with the Mallards and Black Ducks. If there is no snow, Killdeers can be found running along the greens of the golf course.

Follow Veterans Road back to Winthrop Parkway and go north. At the Citgo station take a left, and after .3 miles take a right to the Winthrop dump. Here you have another chance for white-winged gulls.

On the way back to Boston, take the road to the Sumner Tunnel. At Joey D's nightclub, take a left for a view of the East Boston marshes. Scan the marshes (in the direction of Logan Airport) for Snowy Owls. A junk-filled pond should yield shorebirds in an open winter. This pond is probably also a very fine shorebird stop-over point during migration. Continue south to the Sumner Tunnel and Boston.



SABINE'S GULL

Photo by Frank Gardner