

lessen the threat from predatory gulls. Masters of graceful flight at sea, Manx Shearwaters are clumsy on land, sometimes stumbling along using their beak and wings to help them get to their burrows or to flight launching sites.

Courtship in this species is not well known; however, courtship feeding has been observed. The single egg is white and incubated by both parents for about seven weeks, with parental shifts lasting an average of six days. Both parents feed the chick at night, with a day or two between feedings. The parent birds forage up to several hundred miles from the colony. They feed while hovering over or swimming at the surface, or by making shallow dives. They frequently flap their half-open wings and paddle with their feet while chasing prey underwater. They have a well-developed sense of smell that may help them locate food. They feed the young bird mostly partially digested fish and oil. The adults also feed on small crustaceans, squid, and floating offal. The chicks weigh up to twice the weight of the adult by the end of seven or eight weeks, at which time they are gradually fed less until they are finally abandoned. The chicks then move to the mouth of the burrow, exercise their wings, and eventually fledge on their own at an age of about ten weeks.

The major predators of Manx Shearwaters are large gull species, but some colonies have been exterminated by introduced rats. Nevertheless, they appear to be expanding their range. Regular sightings of the Manx Shearwater in Massachusetts waters began in the early 1950s, and they have been increasing in frequency since then. They are commonly sighted on Stellwagen Bank, east of Boston, from July through September, where up to two hundred have been reported in a single day. If their range expansion continues, they may become an even more common sight for Massachusetts birdwatchers. W. E. Davis, Jr.

MEET OUR COVER ARTIST

Bird Observer subscribers are now familiar with Barry Van Dusen's superb artwork. Barry has been an independent professional artist for nearly fifteen years. He continues to garner national recognition for his work. For the second year in a row, his artwork will be included in the important international show, "Birds in Art," at the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau, Wisconsin. This year's piece is titled "Among the Hickory Buds: American Redstart." Closer to home, Barry's work will be included in the exhibit, Birds of the Coast, to be held at the Massachusetts Audubon Society's South Shore Regional Center in Marshfield, Massachusetts, from September 4-30, 1992. For exhibit hours, call 617-837-9400. For future scheduled exhibits or additional information, Barry can be reached at 13 Radford Road, Princeton, Massachusetts 01541.

M. Steele