

## FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MASSACHUSETTS AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE (MARC)

by Wayne R. Petersen, MARC Chairman

This report represents the First Annual Report of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC) since the announcement of the MARC's creation in the June 1992 issue of *Bird Observer*. That article defined the objectives of the MARC as being (1) to establish a protocol for processing unusual Massachusetts bird reports; (2) to finalize a set of bylaws that would direct the future activities of the Committee; and (3) to produce the MARC's state list of Massachusetts birds.

Since the appearance of the 1992 article, the MARC has been at work on a variety of tasks, all aimed at meeting the objectives stated above. In the June 1994 issue of *Bird Observer*, the Committee provided not only a summary of its activities to date, but also produced and distributed with the magazine a first edition of the MARC State List. Among the elements included in the 1994 summary article was a listing of all of the reports that the MARC had taken action on up to the time of the publication of the article. A report of Common Ringed Plover under consideration at the time of the 1994 article has since been accepted by the Committee, thus bringing the total of accepted species on the Massachusetts state list to 451. Other species currently awaiting action by the MARC that could further increase the state list total are Snowy Plover, Thayer's Gull, Band-tailed Pigeon, and Black-billed Magpie.

Before presenting the First Annual Report, a brief review and summary of the history and the mechanics of the MARC is provided in order to assist readers in understanding the purpose and the process of the Committee's activities. The MARC is a nine-member group (plus a nonvoting secretary) comprising active birders whose collective expertise, experience, and geographical distribution is intended to equitably represent the Massachusetts birding community in the process of evaluating unusual or outstanding field reports in a responsible and systematic fashion. The creation of the MARC came about as a result of a mutual interest on the part of the existing members of the Committee. The Committee's bylaws call for the election or replacement of three of its members every three years, with the added provision that no member may serve more than two consecutive three-year terms. In this way, the MARC will regularly enjoy an infusion of new members. Nominations for new members of the Committee can only be made by voting members of the Committee, who elect at the Committee's annual meeting the new voting members or re-elect for a second term current members.

When a bird report is submitted to the MARC for review, the report is assigned a MARC file number and is then distributed by mail to members of the

Committee for comment and voting. If all, or all but one, of the voting members concur with the proposed identification, the report is accepted. If a majority of the voting members does not concur with the proposed identification, the report is rejected. In the event of a vote other than the above, the report, along with all members' comments, is recirculated for a second round of balloting. If the report receives a second nondecisive vote (i.e., 5 yes, 4 no; 6 yes, 3 no; or 7 yes, 2 no), the report is discussed at a meeting of the MARC and then voted on again. This is in an effort to allow all members to personally offer comments and to interact with other members of the Committee before voting for the last time. If on the final vote the report does not receive a unanimous vote or a vote of 8:1 in favor of acceptance, the report is rejected.

Inevitably, with the creation of a state bird records committee, questions emerge concerning the kinds of reports that should be submitted to the committee, the kind of documentation that should accompany such reports, and the way in which the results of a committee's deliberations should be shared with the birding community. In Massachusetts the MARC has determined that in addition to first state records, the Committee will deliberate upon (1) any species recorded in Massachusetts fewer than ten times overall or fewer than five times in the last twenty years; (2) any rare or difficult-to-identify species as designated by the Committee; or (3) any record of a species that is judged by the Committee to be geographically or temporally rare.

For readers seeking additional information and guidance about what sorts of reports require submission to the MARC, and specifically the sort of documentation that is appropriate for such submissions, the reader is referred to the fine accompanying article by Mark Lynch on "The Importance of Documenting Birds" appearing elsewhere in this issue of *Bird Observer*.

In this First Annual Report, the MARC provides details on the reports listed in the 1994 article and presents the format that the Committee will follow in all future annual reports. As has been the tradition to date, all reports of the activities of the MARC will appear in *Bird Observer* and *Bird News of Western Massachusetts*.

#### **The MARC accepted the following reports:**

**Pacific/Arctic Loon (*Gavia pacifica/arctica*)** - #84-4, #84-5, #87-3 and #88-2: For years, observers in Massachusetts have been reporting birds belonging to this disconcertingly similar species pair. The fact that in 1985, the loon species formerly called Arctic Loon (*G. arctica*) by the American Ornithologists' Union, was taxonomically split into an exclusively New World form called Pacific Loon (*G. pacifica*) and a predominantly Old World form that retained the original name, Arctic Loon (*G. arctica*), did little to improve the situation. No Massachusetts specimen exists for either species. Furthermore, some controversy (albeit diminishing) continues over the specific identifiability

of such loons in winter plumage. Indeed, winter-plumaged loons showing distinct chin straps (purported to be unique to *pacifica*) have been reported in the state, as have loons showing flank patches (#84-5 and #88-2, purported to be unique to *arctica*). In fact, even birds in breeding plumage (#84-4) have been reported in the state. Given the fact that no eastern North American specimens currently exist for *arctica*, along with the apparent ambiguity in the value of certain field marks for distinguishing *arctica* from *pacifica*, the MARC has taken a conservative posture and relegated all the reports above to definitely belonging to the *arctica/pacifica* complex, but not positively to one or the other species. Data on the records listed are: #84-4: one in breeding plumage (reported as *arctica*), Manomet, 27-28 May 1984 (J. Loughlin, T. Lloyd-Evans, B. Harrington, B. Mallory). #84-5: one immature (reported as *arctica*), Plymouth Beach, 29 October 1984 (D. Evered, L. Messick). #87-3: one adult in winter plumage (reported as *pacifica/arctica*), Rockport, 12 December 1987 (S. Perkins, F. Bouchard, T. Maloney et al.). #88-2: one in immature plumage (reported as *pacifica/arctica*), Plum Island, 24 July 1988 (M. Lynch, S. Carroll, D. Oliver, B. Howell).

**Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*)** - #93-7: The Eared Grebe has been reported in Massachusetts over twenty-five times since 1955, primarily in the coastal zone. Many of these reports have been unaccompanied by any details, but the MARC acted on a well-described bird in near-breeding plumage at Duxbury Beach, 18 September 1993 (J. Kenneally et al.)

**Black-browed Albatross (*Diomedea melanophris*)** - #73-1 and #76-1: The Committee accepted two reports of this species, the most widespread of the world's albatross species. The first was a subadult seen from the ferry between Hyannis and Nantucket, 16 September 1973 (R. Veit: #73-1); the second, an adult, was observed twenty miles east of Newburyport at Jeffrey's Ledge, 11 July 1976 (R. Heil, M. Kasprzyk, S. Garrett: #76-1). Quite possibly this second individual was seen again at Newburyport, 24 July 1976 (see report of *Diomedea* species: #76-2). Although rare at this latitude, this species seems particularly inclined to wander north of the equator, both in the eastern and western Atlantic Ocean. There is at least one other sight report of two albatrosses probably pertaining to this species in Massachusetts waters.

**Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Diomedea chlororhynchos*)** - #71-1: The first record for Massachusetts was a subadult clearly observed and well sketched and described off Bird Island in Buzzards Bay, 24 July 1976 (I. Nisbet), the same season as a number of other North American records. Although primarily a bird of southern oceans, a few regularly penetrate north to the western North Atlantic. The only other convincing sight report for the state pertains to a bird seen on Georges Bank, 14 June 1976.

***Diomedea* species** - #76-2: An albatross identified as a probable Black-browed Albatross seen flying over the Plum Island causeway at Newburyport,

24 July 1976 (R. Heil), was insufficiently observed to positively rule out other species of mollymawks. The observer suspected that the bird may have been an individual previously seen at Jeffrey's Ledge, 11 July 1976 (see #76-1 above).

**Black-capped Petrel** (*Pterodroma hasitata*) - #91-1 and 91-2: A *Pterodroma* petrel photographed and well described on the southwest corner of Stellwagen Bank, 22 April 1991 (S. Highley: 91-1), was positively identified from the photos as *P. hasitata*. The photographs (on file at MAS) and detailed description convincingly eliminated the similar and very rare Bermuda Petrel (*P. cahow*). A second Black-capped Petrel was observed, well described, and sketched as it battled the fury of Hurricane Bob in Cape Cod Bay off South Sunken Meadow Beach, Eastham, 19 August 1991 (R. Heil and J. Smith: 91-2). These represent the second and third records for Massachusetts waters.

**White-faced Storm-Petrel** (*Pelagodroma marina*) - #93-16: A closely observed and perfectly described White-faced Storm Petrel, approximately 18 miles south of the Muskeget Channel buoy between Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket (40°57.03' N, 070°29.71' W), 24 August 1993 (S. Highley), was unusual by its appearance over inshore continental shelf waters, although it was precisely at the season of most previous Massachusetts records.

**Band-rumped Storm-Petrel** (*Oceanodroma castro*) - #84-1: A convincing report and description of this wide-ranging, warm water storm-petrel near Hydrographer Canyon (40°57.03' N, 070°02' W), 20 August 1984 (R. Veit, W. Petersen, M. Smith, M. Vaughan), was a first for New England waters, although storm-driven individuals have been recorded north to Ontario. Several subsequent sight reports of this difficult-to-identify species suggest it may occur more often in warm, deep waters near the continental slope than records would indicate.

**Anhinga** (*Anhinga anhinga*) - #87-1 and #91-3: There have been at least six sightings of Anhingas in Massachusetts dating back to 1974. All were soaring birds; in fact this species has never been reported on the water or ground anywhere in New England. Both reports acted on by the MARC were carefully documented. One was a female seen soaring over Nahant, 25 May 1987 (R. Forster, C. Seeckts: #87-1), and the second a male soaring over Lincoln 18 April 1991 (I. Nisbet: #91-3).

**Little Egret** (*Egretta garzetta*) - #89-1: An adult in nonbreeding plumage appeared among a flock of Snowy Egrets (*E. thula*) at Plum Island, 12 August 1989 (R. Forster et al., cf. *Bird Observer* 17:239-244), and was subsequently viewed and photographed by hundreds of observers through at least 10 September 1989. This record constituted the first United States record for Little Egret.

**White-faced Ibis** (*Plegadis chihi*) - #84-2, #90-2, #90-3: The first record of this species in Massachusetts (#84-2) was an adult in breeding plumage discovered feeding with nine Glossy Ibis (*P. falcinellus*) in a pasture in Essex,

24 April 1984 (R. Forster). The diagnostic ruby red iris was observed, leaving no doubt as to its specific identity. In 1990 an adult in breeding plumage was photographed (cf. *American Birds* 44:1113) in Topsfield, 24 June (S. Perkins: #90-2), and a sight record of a breeding plumaged adult, possibly the same individual, was made inland at Holden, 25-27 July (B. G. Blodget: #90-3).

**Greater White-fronted Goose** (*Anser albifrons*) - #23-1: Greater White-fronted Geese uncontestedly have occurred in Massachusetts; however, the origin of some of the reported birds sometimes has been controversial. An immature collected out of a flock of seven at North Truro, 1 November 1923 (J. Peters), is believed to have been a wild bird. The subspecific identity of many of the Massachusetts reports is somewhat suspect, especially since published information pertaining to bill coloration differences between races is ambiguous (see Kaufman, *Birding* 26: 380-382).

**Tufted Duck** (*Aythya fuligula*) - #54-3 and #92-8: Since the initial sighting in 1954, Tufted Ducks have been seen with increasing frequency, primarily in eastern Massachusetts, and usually without any specific documentation by the observers. The MARC has formally acted on only two of these sightings, one being a drake at Newburyport, 24 January - 15 February 1954 (S. Eliot: #54-3) - the first record for Massachusetts. The second record pertains to a drake in Plymouth, 19-21 April 1992 (S. Arena: #92-8).

**Masked Duck** (*Oxyura dominica*) - #1889-1: The sole Massachusetts record is a drake in breeding plumage collected at Malden, 27 August 1889 (*vide* C. Cory, see *Auk* 6: 336). This species has a history of wandering, and records well north of its range exist for Wisconsin, Maryland, New Jersey, and possibly Vermont (origin questionable). Furthermore, there is no evidence of Masked Ducks having been kept in captivity in the late 1800s.

**White-tailed Kite** (*Elanus leucurus*) - #10-1: An adult was watched at close range for a very long time as it perched and hunted over a meadow on Martha's Vineyard, 30 May (and several days later) 1910 (S. Fay, C. Brown). A rare vagrant to the East Coast, this record stands as the only accepted Massachusetts record.

**Common Ringed Plover** (*Charadrius hiaticula*) - #90-5: A Common Ringed Plover was heard (of critical importance for identification), observed (S. Perkins, R. Prescott et al.), and later photographed (R. Everett), at North Monomoy Island, 5 September 1990. This represents the first satisfactory record for the lower United States. In an effort to properly evaluate the report of this hard-to-identify species, photographs and field notes were shown to leading international experts (K. Mullarney, L. Jonsson, R. Chandler, and B. Mactavish), and all agreed that the identification was correct.

**Terek Sandpiper** (*Xenus cinereus*) - #90-1: A one-day appearance of an adult in breeding plumage at Plum Island, 23 June 1990 (D. Stemple et al.), represented not only the first record for Massachusetts, but also for eastern

North America. For more details, see Stemple (*Bird Observer* 18: 286-290) and Stemple et al. (*American Birds* 45: 397-398).

**Black-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa limosa*) - #93-5: A bird in breeding plumage at North Monomoy Island, 23 June - 7 July 1993 (B. Nikula et al.) was definitively photographed and enjoyed by hundreds of observers. It represented only the second record for the state.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa lapponica*) - #91-5, #91-7, #92-9 and #92-10: In recent years, Bar-tailed Godwits have been appearing along the Atlantic Coast of North America with increasing frequency. There are approximately twenty Massachusetts records. All but one Massachusetts record refer to birds of the race *lapponica* in nonbreeding plumage, although #92-10 was a bird in breeding plumage which occurred simultaneously with #92-9 - apparently the first occurrence of two birds together in eastern North America. The records listed above were all made at North Monomoy Island by B. Nikula on the following dates: #91-5 (19 May 1991); #91-7 (11-14 August 1991); #92-9 (3 June - 28 October 1992); #92-10 (8 July - 5 September 1992).

**Rufous-necked Stint** (*Calidris ruficollis*) - #80-1 and # 80-2: A bird in partial breeding plumage on North Monomoy Island, 24-28 June 1980 (R. Veit, V. Laux et al.: #80-1) was the first record for the state and was remarkably coincidental with the state's first record of Little Stint. Even more remarkable, the second record of Rufous-necked Stint for the state was photographed at Third Cliff, Scituate, 17-24 July 1980, only a few weeks later (W. Petersen et al.: #80-2).

**Little Stint** (*Calidris minuta*) - #85-1: A bird photographed in breeding plumage at Third Cliff, Scituate, 25 July - 5 August 1985 (W. Petersen et al.), was the second record for the state. With the increase of Little Stints in eastern North America generally, it is not surprising that there are now at least five definite records for Massachusetts.

**Baird's Sandpiper** (*Calidris bairdii*) - #92-1: A bird at Newburyport, 17 November 1991 (T. Leukering), established a late date for Massachusetts.

**Franklin's Gull** (*Larus pipixcan*) - #91-6: An adult Franklin's Gull in breeding plumage sitting on the beach at Sandy Neck, Barnstable, 5 August 1991 (B. Nikula), while slightly earlier than most regional records, was nonetheless consistent with both the seasonal pattern and increasing frequency of this highly migratory prairie gull on the Atlantic Coast of the United States.

**California Gull** (*Larus californicus*) - #88-1: A California Gull in second-summer plumage was closely observed and meticulously described while in direct comparison with Herring and Ring-billed gulls in a field at Newburyport, 24 April 1988 (R. Forster). The detailed notes taken and the increasing precedent of occurrence in eastern North America for this species made the record acceptable as a first for Massachusetts.

**White-winged Tern** (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) - #54-1: The presence of two

adult (including one in breeding plumage) White-winged Terns at Scituate, 25-27 May 1954 (J. May et al.), stands as the only unambiguous record of this wide-ranging vagrant in Massachusetts. Increasing occurrences elsewhere in eastern North America suggest the possibility for future records in the state.

**Ancient Murrelet** (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) - #92-5: The first and only definite record for Massachusetts was a bird well observed and described by a number of observers at Rockport, 29 November 1992 (L. Brinker, J. Askildsen T. Burke, R. Kurtz et al.). This northern Pacific alcid is a known wanderer with records of over twenty occurrences in eastern North America. Curiously, there is an old Ancient Murrelet specimen in the Reading, Pennsylvania, County Museum with incomplete data that suggest that it may have been taken in Massachusetts (see *Bird Observer* 22: 79-83).

**Common Ground-Dove** (*Columbina passerina*) - #73-2: The first and only record of Common Ground-Dove for Massachusetts was a bird found and photographed on Monomoy Island, 7 October 1973 (T. Howell et al.). This bird was discovered on an American Ornithologists' Union field trip, when over forty people had a chance to confirm the report (see *American Birds* 28: 126).

**Rufous Hummingbird** (*Selasphorus rufous*) - #92-4: A female present at a feeder in Holyoke, 18 October-24 December 1992 (L. Upatham et al.), was photographed and definitively videotaped (S. Perkins). The MARC was able to conclusively separate this individual from other *Selasphorus* species by critically examining a stop-action videotape that provided a detailed view of the pattern and configuration of the tail feathers. Although this rare western vagrant has increasingly been appearing in eastern North America, including New England, this was the first of several Massachusetts *Selasphorus* reports to be specifically referable to *rufous*.

***Selasphorus* species** - #78-1: One male in nearly adult plumage was well photographed in Newton, 15-17 May 1978 (A. McGowan). Despite the quality of photographs taken and the nearly adult plumage of the bird, two western authorities could not say with absolute certainty that this individual was a Rufous Hummingbird (*S. rufous*), which the photos most closely suggested. While distribution patterns on these species suggest *rufous*, the existence of a Massachusetts specimen of Allen's Hummingbird (*S. sasin*) made the Committee reluctant to accept this report as *rufous*.

**Ash-throated Flycatcher** (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) - #93-17: This species has been reported at least eight other times in Massachusetts, but its similarity to other *Myiarchus* flycatchers may result in other occurrences going unreported. This individual was found in Arlington, 7 November 1993 (L. Taylor), where it stayed through November 13, obligingly making regular appearances for numerous other fortunate observers.

**Sulphur-bellied/Streaked Flycatcher** (*Myiodynastes luteiventris*/*M. maculatus*) - #83-2: The state's only record of a *Myiodynastes* flycatcher is of an

individual observed near Squibnocket Pond on Martha's Vineyard, 12 November 1983 (W. Manter). This bird was carefully viewed the following day by other observers, but it subsequently disappeared and could not be relocated. A critical review of photographs (S. Whiting) by R. Ridgely, R. Forster, and R. Veit suggested that this bird was *M. luteiventris*. However, the MARC felt that the photos could not rule out *M. maculatus* and voted to accept the record as Sulpher-bellied/Streaked Flycatcher.

**Eurasian Jackdaw** (*Corvus monedula*) - #82-4: A jackdaw originally seen on Nantucket, 28 November 1982 (S. Perkins, R. Stymeist), was the first of a number of sightings in eastern North America. The bird remained through December 1986, during which time it was joined by a second individual on 9 July 1984. During their stay on Nantucket one or both were seen and photographed by numerous observers. These are the only records for jackdaw in Massachusetts.

**Bewick's Wren** (*Thryomanes bewickii*) - #75-1: A carefully described Bewick's Wren observed on Cuttyhunk Island, 27 September 1975 (W. Petersen, B. Sorrie), provided the first accepted record for Massachusetts. Three earlier reports from inland areas at inappropriate times of the year lack details or documentation; however, two more compelling subsequent reports exist for Cape Cod.

**Townsend's Solitaire** (*Myadestes townsendi*) - #93-9: Only the fifth record for Massachusetts, this individual was reported from Hingham, 13 November 1993 (D. Cooper), and subsequently seen and photographed by many other observers through January 1, 1994.

**Phainopepla** (*Phainopepla nitens*) - #77-1: A single Phainopepla observed on Tuckernuck Island, 7 October 1977 (M. LaFarge), was apparently the second record for Massachusetts. The bird was an immature male, well observed at close range, and later substantiated by the observer when she examined Phainopepla skins at Yale University's Peabody Museum. An earlier and convincing sight record at Nantucket, February 1973, constituted the first state record. There is at least one other well-documented record for New England - a bird at Block Island, RI, 14 November 1975.

**Lucy's Warbler** (*Vermivora luciae*) - #79-1: The single Massachusetts record of Lucy's Warbler was found at Clark's Pond in Ipswich, 1 December 1979 (R. Heil), and described in careful detail (cf. *American Birds* 35:139-141, Heil). Although seen on only one day, a number of other observers saw the bird.

**Hermit Warbler** (*Dendroica occidentalis*) - #64-1: This record represented not only the single Massachusetts record for this species, but the first record for eastern North America. It was first observed singing at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, 16 May 1964 (O. Earle), and seen subsequently by many observers.

**Le Conte's Sparrow** (*Ammodramus leconteii*) - #93-1, #93-15: While this species has become an almost annual visitor to the state over the past decade, its comparative rarity and tricky identification make it important to document all sightings with written details. An individual seen in Middleboro, 20 March 1993 (M. Sylvia), and another in Marshfield, 30 October 1993 (D. Brown), were both described to the satisfaction of the MARC.

**Smith's Longspur** (*Calcarius pictus*) - #68-1: A male in winter plumage was studied through a telescope among a flock of Lapland Longspurs for an hour at Salisbury Beach, 12 October 1968 (C. Leahy). This report, although unsupported by a specimen or photograph, was convincingly described and represents the sole Massachusetts record. Records also exist for Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.

**Boat-tailed/Great-tailed Grackle** (*Quiscalus major/mexicanus*) - #86-2: The only convincing report for Massachusetts is of two well-described females briefly seen at Newbury, 24 April 1986 (R. Forster). Although it is likely that this report pertains to *Q. major*, a species then breeding on Long Island, New York, and recorded in both Connecticut and Rhode Island, the details of the observation were insufficient to positively rule out *Q. mexicanus*.

**The MARC believes that wild individuals of the following species may have occurred in the state; however, a captive origin cannot be discounted.**

**Barnacle Goose** (*Branta leucopsis*) - #1885-1: This record was of a bird shot at North Eastham, 1 November 1885. There are many recent reports, including birds that are known to have escaped from captivity.

**Garganey** (*Anas querquedula*) - #68-2: An individual at Plum Island, 4 May 1968, and two subsequent sightings are considered to be potentially of captive origin, although an increasing series of records in eastern North America provides compelling evidence for the possibility of wild origin.

**Cinnamon Teal** (*Anas cyanoptera*) - #78-2. A duck in breeding plumage at Monomoy Island, 11 May 1978, was unquestionably a Cinnamon Teal; however its origin as a wild bird was considered suspect.

**Steller's Eider** (*Polysticta stelleri*) - #77-2: An unmistakable male was seen in Scituate from 29 March to 9 April 1977 by a host of observers. The infrequency of this species in captivity strongly suggests the possibility of wild origin for this bird.

**Common Chaffinch** (*Fringilla coelebs*) - #61-1: The report acted upon by the Committee was one filmed at Chatham, 1-3 April 1961. The only other report for the state was one photographed in Windsor, 26-27 March 1988.

**Brambling** (*Fringilla montifringilla*): One present and photographed in Mansfield in February 1979 (#79-2) and another seen and carefully described at a feeder in Groveland, 8 November 1993 (#93-12), were the only reports reviewed by the MARC.

**Eurasian Siskin** (*Carduelis spinus*) #83-3. A bird banded and photographed in the hand at Rockport, 5 May 1983, was positively this species. However, the Committee did not accept this report because of the known illegal trade in this species and the possibility that the bird was not of wild origin. There are two previous records of this species in Massachusetts, one each in 1904 and 1969, also of uncertain origin.

**The MARC did not accept the following records based on "identification questionable." Although in some cases the identification may have been correct, the documentation provided was not sufficient to allow acceptance.**

**Arctic Loon** (*Gavia arctica*) - #83-1: A report from Rockport, 21 January 1983, came before Arctic and Pacific loons were split. Details as received by the MARC were insufficient to eliminate other loons.

**Yellow-billed Loon** (*Gavia adamsii*): There were three reports of this species, which is accidental east of the Mississippi River (one record from Long Island, New York). The reports are single individuals: Salisbury, 14 November 1982 (#82-3); Tuckernuck Island, 14 April 1987 (#87-2); and Nantucket Sound, 16 March 1985 (#85-2). The last report was in alternate plumage; the other two in basic plumage. All of the reports lacked critical field marks to conclusively eliminate Common Loon in corresponding plumages.

**Brown Pelican** (*Pelicanus occidentalis*) - (#93-2): Although the date and location of a bird reported in Erving on 21 March 1993 were highly unlikely for this very rare visitor, the report was preceded only a week earlier by a severe storm. Nonetheless, the Committee felt that the period of observation while driving by in a car was too brief and the details as received by the MARC were too sketchy for this report to be accepted.

**Anhinga** (*Anhinga anhinga*) - #81-1: An Anhinga was reportedly seen from a highway north of Boston, 13 June 1981. Although the description was good, it could not definitively eliminate Double-crested Cormorant.

**Magnificent Frigatebird** (*Fregata magnificens*) - #93-14: A female was reported from West Newbury, 21 May 1993. Details as received by the MARC were insufficient to eliminate other frigatebird species.

**Mississippi Kite** (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) - #93-10: A description and drawing of an individual reported from Ipswich, 12 September 1993, could not eliminate a small falcon.

**Swainson's Hawk** (*Buteo swainsoni*) - #92-7: This bird reported from Wareham, 29 November 1992, was seen soaring at quite a distance, and some of the more critical field marks were not noted. The late date falls outside the more typical period of occurrence for this rare visitor in northeastern North America.

**Northern Hobby** (*Falco subbuteo*) - #86-1: An intriguing small falcon was seen by several experienced observers at Monomoy Island, 28 September 1986.

The wings, which were shorter than the tail when perched, and barring on the flanks precluded this being a hobby. Although the MARC believed that the bird was not a Northern Hobby, no one to date has suggested an alternative identification.

**Greater Golden-Plover** (*Pluvialis apricaria*) - #86-3: A basic-plumaged individual was reported from Monomoy Island, 23 November 1986. Although this bird was suggestive of Greater Golden-Plover, the report was not accepted because the observer did not hear the bird call and the description of this difficult-to-identify species was inconclusive.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa lapponica*) - #93-8: A bird of the race *L. l. baueri* was reported from Monomoy Island, 2 September 1993. Details as received by the MARC and photographic evidence could not eliminate a small Marbled Godwit.

**Franklin's Gull** (*Larus pipixcan*) - #92-11. A bird thought to be an adult Franklin's Gull in breeding plumage was reported from Wellesley, 7 September 1992. Although possibly correct, the report lacked enough critical details for the report to be accepted.

**Ivory Gull** (*Pagophila eburnea*) - #93-3: An individual of this species was reported from Nantucket, 14 March 1993. Details as received by the MARC were insufficient to eliminate Iceland Gull.

**Vermilion Flycatcher** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) - #54-2: An immature male reported independently by two different parties at Plum Island, 22 October, 1954. The Committee found this a very difficult report to evaluate. Vermilion Flycatchers subsequently appeared in the Northeast, and the date was appropriate for an accidental vagrant from the west. The lack of even a vague description on which to make a decision hindered the Committee in voting positively on this report. This is a classic example of the difficulty in trying to verify an old record without supporting evidence.

**Hermit Warbler** (*Dendroica occidentalis*) - #92-6: A bird reported from Martha's Vineyard, 20 October 1992, was seen briefly as it perched on a telephone wire. Members felt the period of observation was too brief and details as received by the MARC were insufficient to eliminate similar warbler species.

**Black-headed Grosbeak** (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*): Two individuals of this species were reported less than a week apart. One was in Rockland, 20 May 1992 (#92-1), and the other in Leverett, 14 May 1992 (#92-3). In both cases the details as received by the MARC were insufficient to accept the report.

**Black-throated Sparrow** (*Amphispiza bilineata*): Two reports of this accidental vagrant to Massachusetts fall into the same category as the Vermilion Flycatcher (#54-2): old reports with only scanty details. The first bird was reported from Deerfield, 4 November 1959 (#59-1), the other from Amherst, 12 April 1963 (#63-1). The latter individual was reported at two different feeders during a one-week period. The Committee felt that the available details were

insufficient to accept the report.

**Henslow's Sparrow** (*Ammodramus henslowi*) - #93-10: A report of a bird seen in Salem, 16 October 1993, did not mention several key field marks.

**Harris' Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia querula*) - #93-4: One reported from Newton, 18 April 1993, did not include sufficient details to accept the report.

**Scott's Oriole** (*Icterus parisorium*) - #93-11: A bird reported from Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, on 22 May 1993 was described as a first-year spring male. The MARC felt that conclusive details were lacking.

**Cassin's Finch** (*Carpodacus cassinii*) - #90-4: An extensively documented individual was observed in Athol, 29 January 1990. This bird was seen by many observers, including most Committee members, and was generally thought to be an aberrant House Finch.

**The MARC did not accept any reports of the following species based on "questionable origin."**

**Greater Flamingo** (*Phoenicoptera ruber*): All reports of this distinctive species are presumed to be of captive origin.

**Common Shelduck** (*Tadorna tadorna*): An immature female collected in Ipswich, 5 October 1921, is considered to be of captive origin. Although this record has been listed in most state bird books - Bailey (1955), Griscom and Snyder (1955), and Veit and Petersen (1993) - its natural occurrence is not accepted by the American Ornithologists' Union (1983) and the American Birding Association's checklist committee (1990). The MARC's decision reflects that wisdom.

**European Goldfinch** (*Carduelis carduelis*): Individuals of this species are reported almost annually, usually at feeding stations during the winter months. There is no evidence that any of these individuals represent birds of wild origin since the local introduced population on Long Island, New York, was extirpated in the late 1950s. The species is apparently commonly kept in captivity.

**The current MARC members are:** Kathleen Anderson, Bradford Blodget, Richard Forster, Seth Kellogg, Mark Lynch, Blair Nikula, Wayne Petersen (Chariman), and Robert Stymeist. The secretary is Marjorie Rines. Due to a resignation, there is currently one vacancy on the Committee.

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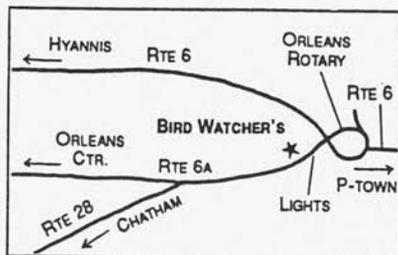
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