

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

by Wayne R. Petersen, MARC Chairman

This report represents the Second Annual Report of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC). Since the First Annual MARC Report appeared in the October 1995 issue of *Bird Observer*, several events affecting the operation of the MARC resulted in the regrettable delay of the second annual report.

Included with the June 1994 issue of *Bird Observer* was a copy of the **Massachusetts Avian Records Committee State List** that listed 450 accepted species for Massachusetts. As reported in the First Annual Report of the MARC in 1995, a Common Ringed Plover report under review at the time of the printing of the 1994 state list was subsequently accepted by the committee as a first state record, thereby bringing the list total to 451. Subsequent actions by the MARC have resulted in the addition of Snowy Plover, Thayer's Gull, and Vermilion Flycatcher to the state list. Additionally, Garganey and Brambling, which appeared on the 1994 Supplemental List, have since undergone further review and are now listed as fully accepted species for Massachusetts. Recent taxonomic changes by the American Ornithologists' Union in its 1995 A.O.U. Checklist Supplement (*The Auk* 112:819-830) have further resulted in the addition of Bicknell's Thrush (split from Gray-cheeked Thrush), Spotted Towhee (split from Rufous-sided Towhee), Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (split from Sharp-tailed Sparrow), and Bullock's Oriole (split from Northern Oriole) to the state list.

The collective changes brought about by these different actions have elevated the Massachusetts state list to 460 fully accepted species. Black-billed Magpie has been added to the Supplemental List (i.e., The MARC believes that wild individuals of this species may have occurred in the state; however, a captive origin cannot be discounted). Other species pending action by the MARC that could affect the state list if accepted are Ross' Goose, Northern Lapwing, Band-tailed Pigeon, Black Swift, and Violet-green Swallow.

Accompanying the Second Annual MARC Report, readers will find a copy of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee Review List. This tabulation provides observers with a list of those species that require written, photographic, video, or sound recorded documentation whenever they are reported to regional compilers at *Bird Observer* or *Bird News of Western Massachusetts*. It should be obvious from the list that most of the species listed are vagrants or rarities; however, there are some more frequently occurring species that also appear on the list because of the unique difficulties associated with their identification.

To place the Review List in an overall context, readers are reminded that the MARC specifically deliberates upon (1) any first state record; (2) any species recorded in Massachusetts fewer than ten times overall or fewer than five times in the last twenty years; (3) any rare or difficult-to-identify species as designated by the MARC; or (4) any record of a species that is judged by the MARC to be geographically or temporally rare. It is to be hoped that these guidelines, along with the Review List, will reduce ambiguity about which species require the most extensive possible accompanying documentation and which ones require less detail. For additional guidance and information about reporting and documenting unusual bird reports, readers should see Mark Lynch's article, "The Importance of Documenting Birds" (*Bird Observer* 23:276-283, 1995).

Other MARC business since the last report is that resignations on the part of original MARC members Seth Kellogg and Simon Perkins have been filled by Jan Ortiz and Trevor Lloyd-Evans. Kudos to both Seth and Simon for their many efforts in helping to get the original MARC up and running.

Sadder to report, a current vacancy on the MARC exists because of the recent passing of Richard Forster in April 1997. Dick was one of the principal architects of the original MARC By-laws and was a virtual font of information about the status and history of Massachusetts birds. Needless to say, the entire Committee, along with the rest of the Massachusetts birding community, mourns the loss of Dick's presence and his vast knowledge about all things that fly.

**The MARC accepted the following reports:**

Location in parentheses, following town or community, is the county.

"doc." = documentation received by a person other than the initial observer.

**Pacific/Arctic Loon (*Gavia pacifica/arctica*)**

#94-2 3/26/94 Dennis (Barnstable) E. Salmela, D. Oliver, I. Giriunas  
In the First Annual MARC Report, considerable discussion was devoted to the difficulty involved in conclusively distinguishing between loons in the *pacifica/arctica* complex. Although controversy still exists over this problem, recent articles by Reinking and Howell (*Western Birds* 24:189-196, 1993) and Birch and Lee (*Birding* 29:106-115, 1997) have done a good job in elucidating the differences between these similar sibling species. Indeed, it seems likely that it is only a matter of time before a loon of one or the other of these species will be conclusively added to the state list. In the meantime, the MARC continues to maintain a conservative position on reports of *arctica/pacifica* loons and has relegated all accepted reports to the combined status of Pacific/Arctic Loon, including this basic plumage bird reported as *arctica*.

**Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*)**

#94-1	1/25-3/7/94	Rockport (Essex)	D. Lane (C. Marantz doc.)
#94-20	12/17/94	Wareham (Plymouth)	W. Petersen et al
#95-1	1/14-2/12/95	E. Orleans (Barnstable)	S. Arena
#95-18	12/23/95	Gloucester (Essex)	M. Lynch
#96-13	10/16/96-2/8/97	Gloucester (Essex)	J. Soucy (M. Lynch doc.)

Eared Grebes are reported with considerable regularity in the coastal zone of Massachusetts. It is quite possible that some reports represent individuals returning from one year to the next.

**American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)**

#96-1	7/14-8/29/96	S. Dartmouth (Bristol)	B. Eliason (M. Lynch doc.)
#96-9	11/10/96	Falmouth (Barnstable)	J. Liller, M. Lynch

Prior to 1960, Massachusetts could lay claim to only six American White Pelican records; since the early 1980s, the species has appeared almost annually along the coast. The #96-9 sighting was of two birds, possibly from a group of eight seen in Hyannis September 25 to October 16, 1996.

**Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)**

#95-5	6/11-12/95	West Gloucester (Essex)	J. Axelrod, H. Lacey
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Historically a rarity in the Northeast, the status of the Brown Pelican appears to be changing slightly with the steady increase of the species on the Mid-Atlantic Coast. In recent years, pelicans have been recorded with increasing frequency in New Jersey and off of Long Island, NY, so increased appearances in Massachusetts are probably to be expected.

**Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*)**

#94-18	11/16-12/11/94	Cotuit (Barnstable), photo	A. Hughes (C. Marantz doc.)
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Prior to 1994 there were no more than four or five reports of Wood Stork in Massachusetts. Unlike other long-legged waders from the south, this species seldom ventures as far north as New England. This immature birds represents the first fully-confirmed report in almost 40 years.

**Garganey (*Anas querquedula*)**

#68-2	5/4-25/68	Plum Island (Essex)	P. Wade et al
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A controversial species due to the possibility of reports pertaining to escaped captive birds. Originally placed on the MARC's Supplemental List, a re-evaluation of the situation in light of the pattern of increasingly regular occurrence of the species in eastern North America (see Spear et al, *American Birds* 42:385-392, 1988) led to the placement of this species on the main MARC state list. There are also two additional Garganey reports for Massachusetts, one for April 1978 and one for May 1985.

**Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)**

#96-14	9/31-11/24/96	Sterling (Worcester)	F. McMenemy (M. Lynch doc.)
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**Swainson's Hawk** (*Buteo swainsoni*)

- #94-14 9/8-9/94 Provincetown (Barnstable), photo P. Champlin  
 #95-11 9/31-11/12/95 Middleboro (Plymouth), photo T. Aversa, M. Rines  
 #96-6 9/21/96 Plum Island (Essex) J. Ortiz, A. Magee

Swainson's Hawks are regular, albeit rare, migrants at a number of major eastern hawk-watching locations. As such, it is reasonable to suppose that the species is more or less regular in Massachusetts, particularly during fall migration. These records support this contention.

**Gyr Falcon** (*Falco rusticolus*)

- #95-17: 12/11/95 Plum Island (Essex) A. Knue

**Snowy Plover** (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

- #94-23 6/11/94 Chatham (Barnstable) Z. Boyajian  
 6/21/94 Mashpee (Barnstable) K. Spectre  
 6/23-7/10/94 Yarmouth (Barnstable), photo S. Hecker et al

The nearly cosmopolitan Snowy Plover made its first-ever appearance on the Atlantic Coast north of North Carolina when a male in badly worn plumage variously appeared at several Cape Cod locations. Careful examination of the plumage and coloration of the plover strongly suggested that it was of the *nivosus* race from the United States Gulf Coast population.

**Wilson's Plover** (*Charadrius wilsonia*)

- # 96-4 5/4/96 Chatham (Barnstable) B. Nikula

Always a rarity in Massachusetts, this record (a female) fits the seasonal pattern typical of many previous reports. It appears likely that many Wilson's Plovers appearing in New England in spring are birds that have overshot their Mid Atlantic Coast breeding areas. Most individuals in spring seldom remain more than a day or two.

**Long-billed Curlew** (*Numenius americanus*)

- #95-16 12/6-7/95 Plum Island (Essex), photo C. Ralph, L. Nachtrab

A most unusual and unseasonal occurrence; there are fewer than ten definitive records in Massachusetts this century.

**Black-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa limosa*)

- #94-4 5/19-6/1/94 S. Wellfleet (Barnstable), photo J. Sones et al

This individual in alternate plumage was only the third state record, and may have been the same individual as one observed at Monomoy Island in 1993.

**Thayer's Gull** (*Larus thayeri*)

- #81-2 4/25/81 Stellwagen Bank, 20 mi E. of Boston, photo W. Petersen  
 #82-2 3/23/82 Plum Island (Essex) R. Veit, J. Hatch, R. Heil

Unquestionably one of the most controversial taxa in North America, Thayer's Gull was tabled by the MARC during the process of producing the MARC State List in expectation that the species was going to be lumped, probably with Iceland Gull, in the forthcoming American Ornithologists' Union Checklist or one of its supplements. Since this has yet to happen, the MARC took action on

two records that were supported by photographic and specimen documentation, respectively. #82-2 was collected, examined and confirmed by Joseph R. Jehl, Jr. (specimen #331163 at Harvard University's Museum of Comparative Zoology).

**White-winged Dove** (*Zenaida asiatica*)

#96-17 6/23-7/4/96 Provincetown (Barnstable), photo N. Champlin

**Boreal Owl** (*Aegolius funereus*)

#96-11 10/23/96 Weston (Middlesex) D. Morimoto, M. Frankel

***Selasphorus* species**

#94-10 9/30/94 Sandwich (Barnstable) T. Aversa

#94-11 10/2-3/94 Westport (Bristol) M. Sullivan, M. Boucher, R. Bowen

#94-19 11/24/94 Swansea (Bristol) V. Geldart

#95-6 9/23-10/22/95 Northampton (Hampshire) J. Rankin (M. Lynch doc.)

#95-7 9/24-10/15/95 Orange (Franklin) A. Spring (M. Lynch doc.)

What could almost be described as a minor invasion of *Selasphorus* hummingbirds took place during the autumn seasons of 1994 and 1995. Hummingbirds of this genus seem to be appearing increasingly often throughout the Northeast, but in most cases their specific identification remains indeterminate. These records were all well documented at the generic level.

**Vermilion Flycatcher** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*)

#95-9 10/14-15/95 Plum Island (Essex) B. Zuzevich, R. Forster et al

The first well-documented state record, this female was initially thought to be a Say's Phoebe by a number of observers until Forster fortuitously arrived to elucidate the situation.

**Northern Wheatear** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

#93-23 9/18-23/93 Northampton (Hampshire) P. Yeskie (C. Marantz doc.)

**Mountain Bluebird** (*Sialia currucoides*)

#94-5 5/29/94 Rutland (Worcester), photo T. Mann (A. Schmierer doc.)

#95-2 1/27-3/14/95 Wellfleet (Barnstable) E. Hoopes et al

These records represent only the second and third occurrences for Massachusetts

**Townsend's Solitaire** (*Myadestes townsendi*)

#96-19 12/29/96-3/16/97 W. Barnstable (Barnstable), photo V. Laux et al

There are fewer than ten records of this species for Massachusetts.

**Yellow Warbler** (*Dendroica petechia*)

#94-22 12/27/94-1/1/95 S. Boston (Suffolk) R. Donovan

One carefully identified and meticulously described, this record represents an unprecedented winter occurrence in Massachusetts for this early fall migrant.

**Townsend's Warbler** (*Dendroica townsendi*)

#93-21 12/28/93 Barnstable (Barnstable) R. Forster

#95-15 12/4-5/95 S. Boston (Suffolk) R. Donovan

There are fewer than ten occurrences of this western vagrant in Massachusetts.

**Hermit Warbler** (*Dendroica occidentalis*)

#95-14 11/19-27/95 N. Amherst (Hampshire), photo D. Quilty, S. Surner  
(C. Marantz doc.)

This is only the second state record of this western vagrant.

**Spotted Towhee** (*Pipilo maculatus*)

#95-20 12/5/94-4/15/95 Acushnet (Bristol), photo M. LaBossiere  
(C. Marantz doc.)

A species new to the Massachusetts state list resulting from the recent taxonomic split of the "Rufous-sided" Towhee into Eastern Towhee and Spotted Towhee, the latter the western counterpart of the Eastern Towhee. Several state reports of Spotted Towhees were established before this recent taxonomic split.

**Le Conte's Sparrow** (*Ammodramus leconteii*)

#94-12 10/17/94 Wayland (Middlesex) G. Long  
#94-15 10/20/94 N. Attleboro (Bristol) G. Valade  
#94-24 10/1-6/94 Northampton (Hampshire) T. Gagnon (C. Marantz doc.)

The apparent increase of this species as a fall migrant in Massachusetts is reflected in these reports.

**Harris' Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia querula*)

#93-20 10/6-9/93 Northampton (Hampshire) K. Fay et al (C. Marantz doc.)

**Bullock's Oriole** (*Icterus bullockii*)

#76-3 11/75-2/22/76 Abington (Plymouth), photo Lynde (W. Petersen doc.)  
There were a number of state reports of Bullock's Oriole in Massachusetts prior to its lumping with Baltimore Oriole as "Northern" Oriole in 1983.

**Brambling** (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

#79-2 2/79 Mansfield (Bristol), photo R. Everett  
Much like the Garganey described above, Brambling was previously on the MARC's Supplemental List as a species whose origin in Massachusetts was questionable. More recent discussion by the MARC led to the conclusion that quite possibly all four of the existing Brambling records for Massachusetts pertain to wild birds. The pattern of vagrancy for this species elsewhere in the eastern United States is consistent with Massachusetts records.

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

**Arctic Loon** (*Gavia arctica*) - #94-2: This report was ultimately accepted, as described above, as a Pacific/Arctic Loon.

**Pacific/Arctic Loon** (*Gavia pacifica/arctica*) - #96-7, #97-2: Unfortunately, neither of these reports contained sufficient evidence to convince the MARC that some other loon species might not have been involved. #96-7: One in basic plumage, Newburyport (Essex), November 30, 1996; #97-2: one in basic plumage, Long Island, Quincy (Norfolk).

**Yellow-billed Loon** (*Gavia adamsii*) - #93-22: One in basic plumage, Fresh Pond, Cambridge (Middlesex), December 27, 1993, lacked sufficient detail to eliminate Common Loon in a corresponding plumage.

**Anhinga** (*Anhinga anhinga*) - #94-3, #94-6: Regrettably, none of the recent Massachusetts Anhinga reports involve birds on the ground. The similarity between Anhingas and Double-crested Cormorants in flight is sufficiently great that most Anhinga reports cannot conclusively eliminate cormorants. #94-3: Two, Wayland (Middlesex), May 2, 1994; #94-6: one, Stow (Middlesex), July 4, 1994.

**White-tailed Kite** (*Elanus leucurus*) - #92-2, #96-8: Both of the reports were sufficiently lacking in appropriate details to conclusively eliminate other species of raptors. #92-2: One, Mt. Tekoa, Russell (Hampden), November 10, 1992; one, Framingham (Middlesex), September 25, 1996.

**Western Sandpiper** (*Calidris mauri*) - #95-19: One, Westport (Bristol), January 14, 1995. The unseasonal date and documentation provided could not rule out the possibility of some other *Calidris*.

**Red-necked Stint** (*Calidris ruficollis*) - #94-9: One in partial (?) breeding plumage, Plum Island (Essex), August 15, 1994. Details of this report suggested that this sandpiper may have been an abnormally plumaged, or in some way feather stained, individual of another species.

**Little Stint** (*Calidris minuta*) - #94-8: One (age uncertain), Squantum (Norfolk), August 12, 1994. The date of this report and the indeterminate age of the bird could not remove some other shorebird species in juvenal plumage as a possibility.

**Franklin's Gull** (*Larus pipixcan*) - #94-13: One molting adult, Provincetown (Barnstable), September 10, 1994. The supporting details could not conclusively eliminate Laughing Gull as a possibility.

**California Gull** (*Larus californicus*) - #94-16: One adult, Littleton (Middlesex), December 2, 1994. The viewing distance and the details provided could not conclusively remove other species of larids as identification possibilities for this western rarity.

**Rufous Hummingbird** (*Selasphorus rufus*) - #94-7: One, S. Acton (Middlesex), July 26, 1994. Details submitted were insufficient enough to make definitive identification impossible, even at the genus level.

**Say's Phoebe** (*Sayornis saya*) - #94-21: One, Newton (Middlesex), December 25, 1994. An intriguing report with seasonal precedent; however, supporting details insufficient to eliminate other species.

**Painted Bunting** (*Passerina ciris*) - #95-8: One female, Williamstown (Berkshire), October 11, 1995. Details insufficient to eliminate other confusing species for this, a species never before recorded in Berkshire County.

**Le Conte's Sparrow** (*Ammodramus leconteii*) - #96-2: One, Newton (Middlesex), May 19, 1996. An intriguing first spring report for Massachusetts,

but supporting details could not conclusively eliminate other *Ammodramus* species.

**Lapland Longspur** (*Calcarius lapponicus*) - #96-5: One, N. Monomoy Island, Chatham (Barnstable), July 10, 1995. The improbable date and ambiguity of plumage description (i.e., bird not in breeding plumage) made evidence insufficient for confirmation.

**Smith's Longspur** (*Calcarius pictus*) - #93-18: One, Northampton (Hampshire), April 1, 1993. Details of observation insufficient to eliminate other *Calcarius* species.

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

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** (*Passer montanus*) -#95-12: One male photographed and video taped at feeder, Brighton (Suffolk), November 6–December 31, 1996 (R. Hastie, M. Rines, J. Heywood, W. Petersen et al). A most interesting report in that several Eurasian Tree Sparrows were noted well east of their Missouri stronghold the same winter (see *Audubon Field Notes* 50:139).

**The current MARC members are:** Kathleen Anderson, Bradford Blodget, Trevor Lloyd-Evans, Mark Lynch, Blair Nikula, Jan Ortiz, Wayne Petersen (Chairman), and Robert Stymeist. The Secretary of the MARC is Marjorie Rines. Due to the untimely death of Richard Forster, there is currently one vacancy on the MARC.

**Wayne R. Petersen** is a field ornithologist with the Massachusetts Audubon Society and co-author of *Birds of Massachusetts*.

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MASSACHUSETTS AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE

Review List - June 6, 1997

Pacific/Arctic Loon	Eskimo Curlew
Eared Grebe	Eurasian Curlew
Western Grebe	Long-billed Curlew
Black-browed Albatross	Black-tailed Godwit
Yellow-nosed Albatross	Bar-tailed Godwit
Black-capped Petrel	Rufous-necked Stint
Audubon's Shearwater	Little Stint
White-faced Storm-Petrel	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Band-rumped Storm-Petrel	Curlew Sandpiper (nonalternate plumage)
White-tailed Tropicbird	Long-tailed Jaeger
Red-billed Tropicbird	Great Skua
Brown Booby	South Polar Skua
American White Pelican	Franklin's Gull
Brown Pelican	Mew Gull
Anhinga	California Gull
Magnificent Frigatebird	Thayer's Gull
Little Egret	Ross' Gull
Western Reef-Heron	Ivory Gull
Reddish Egret	Gull-billed Tern
White-faced Ibis	Bridled Tern
Wood Stork	Sooty Tern
Fulvous Whistling-Duck	White-winged Tern
Garganey	Brown Noddy
Tufted Duck (female & imm.)	Marbled Murrelet
Masked Duck	Ancient Murrelet
White-tailed Kite	Common Ground-Dove
Mississippi Kite	Common Cuckoo
White-tailed Eagle	Northern Hawk Owl
Swainson's Hawk	Burrowing Owl
Eurasian Kestrel	Great Gray Owl
Yellow Rail	Boreal Owl
Black Rail	Black-chinned Hummingbird
Snowy Plover	Rufous Hummingbird
Wilson's Plover	Allen's Hummingbird
Common Ringed Plover	Lewis' Woodpecker
Mountain Plover	Three-toed Woodpecker
Spotted Redshank	Western Wood-Pewee
Wandering Tattler	Hammond's Flycatcher
Terek Sandpiper	

Gray Flycatcher  
Say's Phoebe  
Vermilion Flycatcher  
Ash-throated Flycatcher  
Sulphur-bellied/Streaked  
Flycatcher  
Cassin's Kingbird  
Gray Kingbird  
Fork-tailed Flycatcher  
Brown-chested Martin  
Gray Jay  
Eurasian Jackdaw  
Rock Wren  
Bewick's Wren  
Northern Wheatear  
Mountain Bluebird  
Townsend's Solitaire  
Fieldfare  
Sage Thrasher  
Sprague's Pipit  
Phainopepla  
Lucy's Warbler  
Black-throated Gray Warbler  
Townsend's Warbler

Hermit Warbler  
Swainson's Warbler  
MacGillivray's Warbler  
Painted Redstart  
Western Tanager  
Black-headed Grosbeak  
Painted Bunting  
Green-tailed Towhee  
Spotted Towhee  
Brewer's Sparrow  
Lark Bunting  
Henslow's Sparrow  
Le Conte's Sparrow  
Golden-crowned Sparrow  
Harris' Sparrow  
McCown's Longspur  
Smith's Longspur  
Chestnut-collared Longspur  
Western Meadowlark  
Brewer's Blackbird  
Boat-tailed/Great-tailed Grackle  
Bullock's Oriole  
Brambling  
Hoary Redpoll

Recognizable subspecies found out of range should be submitted to the MARC for possible future evaluation if they should reach full species status in the future.

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## SHRIKE LECTURE AT BROADMOOR

**Dr. Reuven Josef**, Director of the International Birding Center in Eilat, Israel, will be presenting a lecture on shrikes of the world at Massachusetts Audubon's Broadmoor Sanctuary (280 Eliot Street, South Natick, MA 01760) on September 10, 1997, at 7:30 p.m. Dr. Josef is widely acknowledged as a world authority on shrikes, a widespread, fascinating, and ecologically important avian family. Admission to the lecture will be \$6 for MAS members, \$8 for nonmembers. To register, or to obtain further information, please call the sanctuary at (508) 655-2296.

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*(announcement)*

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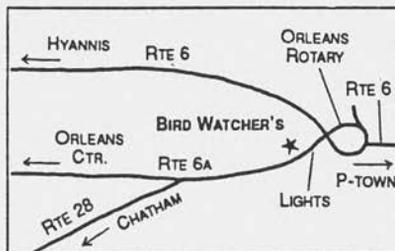
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