

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MASSACHUSETTS AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE (MARC)

By Wayne R. Petersen, MARC Secretary

This summary is the Third Annual Report of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC). Previous summaries of the MARC's activities have appeared in the June 1992, October 1995, and August 1997 issues of *Bird Observer*. Readers wishing to obtain specific information about the history, objectives, MARC Bylaws, and activities of the MARC are advised to consult these reports.

The Second Annual Report of the MARC in 1997 indicated that the committee's actions subsequent to the publication of the 1995 report resulted in revising the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee State List to include 460 fully accepted species, plus an additional six species on the Supplemental List (i.e., species which the MARC believes may represent wild occurrences in the state, but for which captive origin cannot be discounted). Since publication of the 1997 report, further MARC actions have resulted in the addition of Ross's Goose, Northern Lapwing, Band-tailed Pigeon, and Violet-green Swallow to the state list, bringing the state list total to 464 fully accepted species as of December 1998. Six additional species currently on the Supplemental List are Barnacle Goose, Cinnamon Teal, Steller's Eider, Black-billed Magpie, Common Chaffinch, and Eurasian Siskin. Species reports currently being circulated by the committee that would affect the state list total if accepted are Arctic Loon, Pacific Loon, Black Swift, and Common Chaffinch. Arctic and Pacific loons would assume full species standing on the main list and would eliminate the current status of "Pacific/Arctic Loon"; Black Swift would be a first state record, and Common Chaffinch could potentially move from the Supplemental List to the main list. If all these reports are accepted, the state list would total 467.

In order to remain consistent with the publication in 1998 of the seventh edition of the *American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds*, the MARC state list has been revised to reflect two recent taxonomic splits: Long-billed Murrelet (*Brachyramphus perdix*) as distinct from Marbled Murrelet (*B. marmoratus*) and Blue-headed Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*) as distinct from Plumbeous Vireo (*V. plumbeus*) and Cassin's Vireo (*V. cassinii*). Also, the list has been revised to conform with the 1998 A.O.U. Check-list order.

Birders are reminded that the purpose of the MARC is to evaluate (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 on its Review List; or (4) any record of a species that is judged by the MARC to be geographically or temporally rare. With these criteria in mind, along with guidance provided by

the MARC's Review List accompanying this report, birders are encouraged to submit carefully written details or photographic evidence to the MARC whenever they observe an unusual bird species in Massachusetts. By doing this conscientiously, observers can maintain the strong ornithological tradition that has existed in the Bay State for over a century and a half.

Since publication of the last MARC report, five-year MARC committee member Robert Stymeist resigned and was replaced by Christopher Leahy. Additionally, after serving the maximum of two consecutive three-year terms allowed by the Bylaws, Kathleen Anderson, Mark Lynch, and Wayne Petersen rotated off the committee and were replaced by Peter Alden, Steven Arena, and Richard Veit. Marj Rines, who so ably served as MARC Secretary for the past five years, also stepped down and was replaced by outgoing MARC Chairman, Wayne Petersen. All of these dedicated committee members deserve thanks for their considerable contribution of time and expertise during the period of their respective tenures.

The MARC **accepted** the following reports. County names follow town or community names in parentheses.

Diomedea albatross species - #96-10: An albatross observed off North Beach from Morris Island, Chatham (Barnstable), 21 September 1996 (W. W. Harrington, W. Bailey) was reported as a Black-browed Albatross (*Diomedea melanophris*). Although there is precedent for the occurrence of this southern hemisphere "mollymawk" in the western North Atlantic Ocean, including Massachusetts waters, the MARC felt that the distance involved in making the identification was sufficiently great that the record should be conservatively treated as *Diomedea* species. Despite a number of Black-browed Albatross sight records off the North American East Coast, none have ever been photographically documented.

Puffinus shearwater species - #98-4: A carefully described all-dark shearwater observed following a storm at First Encounter Beach, Eastham (Barnstable), 17 January 1998 (B. Nikula) was probably a seasonally very rare Sooty Shearwater (*P. griseus*); however, a report of a Short-tailed Shearwater (*P. tenuirostris*) off Virginia the next day prompted the observer to conservatively report the bird as a "large, dark *Puffinus* shearwater."

Audubon's Shearwater (*Puffinus lherminieri*) - #97-9: One, Stellwagen Bank, 12 July 1997 (R. Lockwood). Although apparently regular in the warm shelf waters south of Martha's Vineyard in summer, Audubon's Shearwater is very rare in the cooler surface waters away from the Gulf Stream, especially when unassisted by tropical storms.

American White Pelican (*Pelicanus erythrorhynchos*) - #97-4: One, North Scituate (Plymouth), 19 July 1997 (details provided by S. & L. Hennin) and later at Plum Island (Essex), 25 July 1997 (details provided by M. Pelikan) was

presumed to be a bird first observed in Kingston (Plymouth) 13 July (T. Lloyd-Evans).

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*) - #97-16: Two, Sunderland (Franklin), 25-26 March 1997 (P. Champlin, v.o.). A long-awaited first state occurrence, since this species has apparently undergone a range shift and population increase commensurate with that shown by other Arctic-nesting white geese in recent years.

King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*) - #97-23: One male, Worcester (Worcester), 22-23 November 1997 (F. McMenemy, v.o.). A first for Worcester County, this is also one of very few inland occurrences for Massachusetts.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) - #97-14: One, Orleans (Barnstable), 28 May-4 June 1997 (M. Prue, v.o.). Virtually of annual occurrence in Massachusetts in recent years, this kite was photographed and enjoyed by many observers before it succumbed to unknown causes and was found dead on 5 June (contra *Bird Observer* 25:269). The specimen is at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) - #97-5: One light morph adult photographed, Provincetown (Barnstable), 25 June-11 October 1997 (K. Jones, v.o.). Despite the apparent increase of this species in the Northeast during migration, there is only one previous summer record for New England.

Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) - #96-25: One, Chilmark, Martha's Vineyard (Dukes), 26-30 December 1996 (A. Keith, v.o.). A first record for Massachusetts and only the third for New England of this spectacular Old World shorebird. The most recent New England occurrence was 1932, when one was found dead on Block Island, RI.

Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*) - #95-13: One, Middleboro (Plymouth), 17 November 1995 (E. Weinheimer). The latest occurrence in Massachusetts and the first record for November.

Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) - #97-30: One in basic plumage photographed, Plymouth (Plymouth), 29 December 1997- 12 February 1998 (J. Trimble, J. Sones, v.o.). This was the first winter record of Bar-tailed Godwit for New England and, like the majority of Massachusetts reports, was of the nominate *lapponica* race. It is thought that this individual was likely the same godwit that spent much of the autumn at Cape Sable, Nova Scotia.

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*) - #97-6: One photographed, Holden (Worcester), 10-13 August 1997 (R. Bradbury, M. Lynch). Although not on the MARC Review List, this species is rare inland in Massachusetts and the record was a first for Worcester County, therefore, this report was reviewed by the committee.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicauda*) - #96-18: One dead adult photographed, North Truro (Barnstable), 23 September 1996 (R. Spinale).

Although this report pertains to a dead individual, Long-tailed Jaeger is sufficiently rare in Massachusetts to warrant its consideration by the MARC.

Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*) - #97-19: One, West Bridgewater (Plymouth), 26 October 1997 (S. Arena). Despite its somewhat regular occurrence in Massachusetts, the great majority of previous records are from the immediate coast.

Gull-billed Tern (*Sterna nilotica*) - #97-8: One, Plum Island (Essex), 11 May 1997 (A. Magee). The timing of this report was consistent with other non-storm related reports in recent years. Since Gull-billed Terns now nest on Long Island, NY, it is reasonable to expect more spring reports in years to come.

Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*) - #97-21: One photographed in basic plumage, Worcester (Worcester), 2-3 November 1997 (S. Carroll, M. Lynch et al.). Despite this species' frequency on the coast, both the late date and the remarkable inland location make this record especially significant.

Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) - #98-1: One, Provincetown (Barnstable), 4 January 1998 (B. Nikula, J. Trimble). Impeccably described, this remarkable record represents the second for Massachusetts, the first having occurred at Rockport, 29 November 1992. As is the case with the Long-billed Murrelet (*Brachyramphus perdix*), there are quite a number of records of this northern Pacific alcid from places as far inland from the Pacific Ocean as Nebraska, the Great Lakes region, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Louisiana.

Band-tailed Pigeon (*Columba fasciata*) - #95-4: One photographed, Brookline (Norfolk), 29 May-4 June 1995 (M. Vose). That this bird appeared at a season consistent with the species' migratory period and was present at a feeder only for a few days suggests that it was a wild bird. Accordingly, the species was added to the state list as a first state record. There are at least six previous occurrences of this wide-ranging western columbid in New England, including New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Maine, as well as many casual records throughout nearly all parts of the United States. Although there is always the possibility that some of these reports pertain to escapes from captivity, a pattern of vagrancy exists nonetheless. Interestingly, another Band-tailed Pigeon was reported at Nantucket, 22-25 June 1996 (see *Bird Observer* 24: 274); however, this report has yet to be evaluated by the MARC.

Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) - #96-20: One, Weston (Middlesex), 23 October 1996 (D. Morimoto et al.). This was the first of several Boreal Owls to appear in Massachusetts during the fall of 1996.

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) - #96-3: One, Plum Island (Essex), 22 May 1996 (C. Ralph, L. Nachtrab). Despite a number of previous records in Massachusetts, this is the first spring occurrence of this widespread western flycatcher.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) - #97-24: One photographed, South Monomoy Island, Chatham (Barnstable), 14 September 1997 (B. Nikula, J. Trimble). An aberrant individual showing signs of leucism in the primaries of both wings, this report represents at least the tenth record for Massachusetts.

Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*) - #97-11: One, Provincetown (Barnstable), 12 May 1997 (M. Tuttle, J. Sones, et al.). A well observed and carefully described individual seen in comparison with a group of Tree Swallows made this a first Massachusetts record. Previous eastern sight records include Nova Scotia, New Hampshire, and New Jersey.

Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) - #97-15: One, Rockport, 30 March-22 April 1997 (J. Berry, v.o.). A third occurrence for Massachusetts, it is probable that this individual actually spent the winter in Rockport but was not discovered until spring.

Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) - #97-10: One male, New Braintree (Worcester), 13 May 1997 (L. Merkel). A bird briefly present in a Worcester County backyard was carefully documented and perfectly described. This is only the fourth occurrence for Massachusetts.

Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*) - #96-24: One (possibly two), Vineyard Haven, Martha's Vineyard (Dukes), 14-30 December 1996 (M. Sibert, v.o., details provided by G. Daniels).

Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*) - #87-4, #97-7: #87-4, One photographed at feeder, Framingham (Middlesex), 16-30 December 1987 (J. Holmes); #97-7, One, Provincetown (Barnstable), 4-7 May 1997 (S. Miller, J. Sones). This record represents the second spring occurrence for Massachusetts and one of five fully documented records for the state.

Hermit Warbler (*Dendroica occidentalis*) - #97-29: One photographed (see *Field Notes* 52: 270), Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard (Dukes), 21 December 1997-3 March 1998 (M. Pelikan, v.o.). This bird represented the third record for Massachusetts.

Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) - #97-3: One, Nahant (Essex), 28 May 1997 (L. Pivacek). Although not a species on the MARC Review List, because the Connecticut Warbler's migration route takes it up the Mississippi Valley in spring, it is sufficiently rare in New England at that season that all such reports deserve documentation. There are only two previous well-documented spring occurrences for Massachusetts.

LeConte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*) - #94-17: One, Rochester (Bristol), 28 October 1994 (M. Sylvia). This species, while now nearly annual in Massachusetts, is sufficiently difficult to identify that all occurrences require full documentation.

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) - #97-31: One adult male, Northampton (Hampshire), 7 November 1997 (G. LeBaron). Occurrences of

Brewer's Blackbirds were practically annual from the early 1970s through the early 1980s; however, in more recent years, the species' appearance in Massachusetts has seemed to diminish somewhat.

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

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) - #97-32: One photographed, Shutesbury [Quabbin Reservoir] (Franklin), 26 October 1997. Written documentation and photographs did not convincingly eliminate Common Loon as an alternative possibility.

Black-browed Albatross (*Diomedea melanophris*) - #96-10: See #96-10 under accepted species.

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*) - #95-10: One, Weymouth (Norfolk), 18 October 1995. Although an accurate sketch accompanied this sighting, there were extenuating details that suggested that confusion with some other species might have been possible.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*) - #96-22: One, South Peabody (Essex), 5 October 1996. A bird seen in flight with a flock of migrating Snow Geese was not able to be sufficiently studied to definitively eliminate Snow Goose as a possibility. At the time that this observation was made, it would have been a first state occurrence for Ross's Goose.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) - #93-24: One, East Brookfield (Worcester), 14 May 1993. Although this species is becoming increasingly frequent in spring in Massachusetts, the details provided did not positively eliminate other raptor species.

Mew Gull (*Larus canus*) - #96-23: One immature, Katama, Martha's Vineyard (Dukes), 21-22 October 1996. Although this bird was photographed, the pictures could not positively eliminate Ring-billed Gull, and no written documentation accompanied the report.

Western Gull (*Larus occidentalis*) - #97-33: One adult, Pittsfield (Berkshire), 9 November 1997. Details and evidence submitted failed to eliminate other large gull species.

Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) - #96-12: One calling, Petersham (Worcester), 2 November 1996. Due to the rarity of this species in Massachusetts and the descriptions given of the calls heard, other owl species could not positively be eliminated as possibilities.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*) - #95-3: One, Attleboro (Bristol), 21 May 1995. Despite the distinctive appearance of this species, the brief views obtained and the documentation provided could not conclusively eliminate other species as possibilities.

Gray Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*) - #97-20: One, Holbrook (Norfolk), 19 November 1997. Documentation insufficient to eliminate other possible species.

Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*) - #96-16: One, Haverhill (Essex), 10 February 1996. Description failed to include enough detail to effectively remove other similar species (e.g., Northern Mockingbird) as possibilities.

MacGillivray's Warbler (*Oporornis tolmiei*) - #97-17: One, Hadley (Hampshire), 19 September 1997. Details insufficient to eliminate other possible warbler species.

Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*) - #97-1: One, Natick (Norfolk), 6 February 1997. Details provided insufficient to eliminate other possible sparrow species.

Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*) - #93-25: One photographed, Salisbury (Essex), 31 December 1993. Rejected because no written description accompanied the report and the photos are inconclusive.

The current MARC members are Peter Alden, Steven Arena, Bradford Blodget, Richard Heil, Christopher Leahy, Trevor Lloyd-Evans (Chairman), Blair Nikula, Jan Ortiz, and Richard Veit. The Secretary of the MARC is Wayne Petersen.

Additional information on the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, including the entire Massachusetts state list, can be found on-line at:

<http://people.ne.mediaone.net/marjines/MARC.htm>

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MASSACHUSETTS AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE
REVIEW LIST

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

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. Reports of these species should be accompanied by details and sent to Wayne R. Petersen, MARC Secretary, Massachusetts Audubon Society, Lincoln, MA 01773.