



## COX'S LEDGE FROM GALILEE, RHODE ISLAND

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Cox's Ledge is an ocean shoal approximately thirty miles southeast of Point Judith, Rhode Island. It had been birded only infrequently until 1974, when interest suddenly blossomed as knowledge of the birding possibilities became more widely known. Since then there have been more than seventy trips to the Ledge. These trips emanate from either Galilee, R.I., or Montauk, N.Y., Only the Rhode Island excursions are included in the data compiled for this article.

A large number of the east-coast pelagic species can be seen on a fairly regular basis on these trips. Included are: Cory's and Greater Shearwaters (seen consistently from the first of June through September), Sooty Shearwater (June through August), Manx Shearwater (irregularly; in June), Northern Fulmar (early June and early October), Wilson's Storm-Petrel (in good numbers throughout the summer), Northern Gannet (early June and October), Northern and Red Phalaropes (late August through October), Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers (in small numbers from May through October), Long-tailed Jaeger (uncommon in early June and again in September), and Black-legged Kittiwakes (from late September on). Sightings of Skuas are infrequent but fall mostly in the first two weeks of June. Other species which have been sighted include Arctic Loon in breeding plumage (off Pt. Judith), Sabine's Gull, and (in late fall) both Dovekie and Razorbill.

An unusual aspect of Cox's Ledge trips in the fall is the abundance and variety of land-birds. At least twenty species have been observed, including Connecticut Warbler. The right conditions for land-birding at sea are northwest winds on clearing skies and occurring from late August through October. The birds are blown out to sea and are thus usually seen in state of exhaustion. They sometimes land on the boat, where they can be readily picked up and examined.

During the warmer months, trips to Cox's Ledge are made daily from Galilee, R.I. To get to Galilee, take Interstate Route 95 south from Providence to Route 4. Route 4 merges into Route 1 south. Proceed on Route 1 until you see the exit for Route 108 to Point Judith. Stay on Route 108 for approximately five miles, where you will see a sign for Galilee and the Block Island Boat. This is Galilee Road. Go about one mile west to the end of the Galilee Road; there, turn right and then take an immediate left to the docks used by the charter fishing boats.

The best boat for observing birds is the Nautican II. This craft is 106 feet long, and you can bird from atop the cabin for better viewing. The boat is owned and operated by Capt. Lou O'Donnell of 2 Shore Road, Narragansett, R.I. His telephone number is (401) 789-6993. He runs the Nautican II daily from May 1 to the end of October. If the fishing has been poor at the Ledge, however, the Captain may go only to the fishing grounds off Block Island, where the birding is likely to be less varied than it is farther at sea. For this reason, it might be wise to call in advance to be sure of the destination for a particular day. The boat leaves the dock at 6:00 A.M. and reaches the Ledge in about two hours. Return to the dock is at about 4:00 P.M. Upon boarding the boat, be sure to inform the crew that you are a birder, whereupon you will be directed to the cabin roof--where you will have the best vantage point and also be out of the way of the fishermen. Another reason for making your errand known is that the fee for birders is reduced from that of fishermen; last year's fee per birder was \$8.00. Also, the crew has become familiar with some of the species which are actively sought, and they can often tell you what interesting species have been seen during the preceding several days.

Light refreshments are available in the galley. Important: bring a hat and sunglasses; even on days when the pre-dawn is foggy in port, the sky can be very bright by noontime over Cox's Ledge.