

## MORE BIRDING FROM A TRAIN SEAT

by John Nove, Ipswich

Before moving to Ipswich, from where I now commute with Jim Berry (see his "Birding from a Train Seat," Bird Observer 4, 12), I lived in Manchester and traveled to Boston and/or Beverly by train daily. For the orientation of non-North Shore residents, the tracks of the Eastern Division of the Boston and Maine Railroad extend northeastward from Boston to Beverly, at which point they split into two branches--an inland route extending through North Beverly, Wenham, and Hamilton to Ipswich and Newburyport, and a coastal route passing through Beverly Farms, Manchester, Gloucester, and Rockport. I'd like to supplement Jim's article by describing a portion of this coastal route as well as contributing other species to his list of North Shore train-birds.

As far as stations go, Manchester's gets my vote as being the best for birding, based on the fact that during a single week in May, 1975, I saw a Peregrine Falcon, several Cliff Swallows and a Pileated Woodpecker--all while waiting for a train to arrive!

From Manchester station, the tracks pass over a narrow section of the Manchester Harbor. The calmer water on the right often holds hundreds of gulls, including Iceland and Glaucous during the winter. Peppered throughout the rest of the harbor are Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, Red-breasted Mergansers, occasionally several Coots, and always Black Ducks and Mallards (including a variety of hybrids). During last winter a pair of Canada Geese remained among the ice floes.

The tidal inlet on the right, about a hundred yards beyond the bridge, hosts a Green Heron and Belted Kingfisher during the spring and summer, and it seems to be one of the first places incoming Cattle Egrets visit. Tuck's Point and the flats behind have contained as many as four wintering Great Blue Herons. Snowy Egrets are often present at low tide, and once I observed a single Great Egret. Black Cove offers a variety of diving ducks, including this year, a dozen Common Eiders. On two occasions, I observed Sanderlings scurrying along the beach.

The most consistently rewarding area along the route has been Chubb Marsh, which straddles the Manchester-Beverly border. Activity in this area is primarily a result of the breeding heron-egret-ibis population on nearby House Island. In addition to being a popular feeding area, the marsh lies on the local "flyway;" if the marsh does not yield an interesting find, the sky above it usually will. On a sunny day this past June, I observed one Little Blue Heron, 12 Snowy Egrets, a Great Egret, two Great Blue Herons, four Glossy Ibises and a pair of Black-crowned Night Herons. The tree-covered island adjacent to the tracks in the center of the marsh seems to be a favorite perching place for Merlins and American Kestrels. Only during migration have I ever seen a Marsh Hawk in the area.

In the spring the brush and brambles across from the station at Pride's Crossing attract Gray Catbirds, Common Yellowthroats and Yellow-rumped Warblers. This is the only area in which I've ever observed warblers from the train, probably because it's a lot easier to focus on a small bird from a stationary train than from a moving one. The only other area of interest lies on either side of the tracks in the Montserrat section of Beverly adjacent to the Hancock Nursing Home. The wet meadow/field has a breeding pair of American Kestrels, Common Snipes in season, Ring-necked Pheasants, numerous Eastern Kingbirds and a reliable Red-tailed Hawk. This is the only area in which I've ever observed a Goshawk.

Following are additions to Jim Berry's list of North Shore train-birds, bringing the total number of species to 93: Common Loon, Horned Grebe (in the Mystic River), Little Blue Heron, Mute Swan (four in Beverly Harbor daily for several weeks), Green-winged Teal, Common Eider, Turkey Vulture (my best train-bird--it was perched in a tree at close range in the Highland Park area of Salem), Goshawk, Marsh Hawk, Merlin, Ruffed Grouse (seen at the back edge of the golf course in Wenham), Sora (could repeated sightings of this bird from the train be the origin of the word railroad?), American Coot, Wilson's Phalarope (in Lynn Harbor during a fortuitous "unscheduled" stop), Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Gray Catbird, Water Pipit (in a mowed portion of the Saugus marshes), Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Evening Grosbeak, House Finch, and Song Sparrow.

