

### SUMMARY FOR MARCH, 1977

March was unusually warm, a much welcomed change from the bitter cold of the previous months. The temperature averaged 44.7°, 6.6° above normal and the highest for the month of March since 47.2° in 1946. This was the fourth warmest March in the 107 years of official record. The month's high temperature of 81° on the 30th set a new record for that date, topping the previous high of 75° set in 1962. The average daily maximum was 52.5°, the average minimum was 36.8°, with the low on the 2nd, a mild 27°.

Precipitation totalled 4.76", .75" more than normal. The most rainfall in any 24 hours was 1.60" on the 22nd-23rd. Thunderstorms on 2 days were most unusual. Snowfall totalled 10.7", 2.7" above average. A major storm on the 18th-19th dumped 9.6". The seasonal total now stands at 58.0", 16.5" above average and the most in this period since 1963-1964.

Wind averaged 13.1 m.p.h. The storm of the 22nd had gusts of 60 m.p.h. from the Northeast. Considerable damage was noted in the Greater Boston area from the wind on that date.

### LOONS THROUGH CORMORANTS

The outstanding flight of Red-necked Grebes continued in April. Apparently they were staging before the flight northward. The largest flocks were found along the south shore. Here is the complete breakdown for the month:

#### March

1,2	Cohasset-Hull, Manomet	75, <u>192</u>	GRF, MBO staff
3,5	Cape Ann, Dennis	20+, <u>42</u>	MHM; WRP, RAF
5,6	Hull-Brant Rock, Nahant-Rockport	<u>306</u> , <u>77</u>	SH, RAF
6,11	Hull-Scituate, Nahant	30, <u>30+</u>	RRV, SZ
13	Dennis, Cohasset	87, <u>41</u>	BN, CAG; NSO
14,19	Marblehead, Cohasset	28, <u>136</u>	RSH, NSO
23,26	Marblehead, Marshfield	40, <u>31</u>	MK, NSO
27,30	Nauset, N. Scituate	125, <u>60+</u>	BN, CAG; RAF

Horned Grebes numbered 110 between Nahant and Rockport (RAF) and 110 on Nauset Beach, Eastham (CAG, BN). Fifteen Pied-billed Grebes were noted during the month - one was on a road in Dover (FRH) and two in the ocean off P.I. (JWB)! Gannets were migrating at a rate of 500 per hour past Nauset Light on the 27th (BN, CAG). One hundred-eighty seven Great Cormorants were noted off North Scituate (SH) and the first Double-crested Cormorants were noted on the 30th at Scituate where 14 were reported (JM).

### HERONS

The first Great Egrets arrived on the 27th at Wellfleet (CAG) and on the 30th in Marshfield (BT). Three Snowy Egrets were found on the 30th at Long Island (MK) and fifteen were observed in Marshfield on the 31st (BT). Only five Black-crowned Night Herons were reported -

the same number that was reported during February 1977. Three American Bitterns were noted; one each from Scituate Mar. 6 (RRV), Lancaster Mar. 29 (HM), and Plum Island Mar 29 (GLS#). A dead Glossy Ibis was picked up on the incredibly early date of March 5 in Beverly (fide J.Lazell). This is the earliest known date for this species in the state. Eleven Glossy Ibises were noted at Scituate on the last day of the month (FB).

#### WATERFOWL

Canada Geese totalled 1300+ on the 26th at Plum Island (RSH), while 1000 Brant were observed in the Squantum-Wollaston area and 2335 were counted in Brewster (PWC). Snow Geese at Plum Island peaked at month's end to over 100 individuals (MG) from two birds at the beginning of the month (GAW). At Townsend, 150-200 Snow Geese were noted on the 31st (MB). One adult "Blue" Snow Goose was noted at Plum Island on the 12th (RRV,MJL). Ducks began to increase by month's end from the low numbers of the previous cold months. Noteworthy were the counts of 130 Pintail at Plum Island on the 26th (RSH) and 60 Green-winged Teal on the 26th at Marshfield (WRP#). The first migrant Blue-winged Teal was found at Salisbury on the 7th (MHM) with a general arrival on the 12th-27th. A "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal was noted at West Harwich on the 20th and remained there through the 31st (DB#). A maximum of four Northern Shovelers were reported from P.I. Wood Ducks were first noted on Long Island on the 6th (RRV) and at Broadmoor, South Natick on the 9th (BL). A maximum of 16 were found in Lancaster (HM). The high count of Redheads was 48 at Falmouth on the 25th (AAC) with the only other count being 7 at Lakeville (RPE). Ring-necked Ducks totalled 122 on the 20th in North Carver (DB) and 154 on the 26th in Middleboro (DB). Over 250 Canvasbacks were found in Falmouth on the 12th (AAC), while there were close to 500 on the 14th in Falmouth last year (AAC). Rafts of 1500+ Greater Scaups were at Squantum (JM) and over 2000 were reported from Newburyport (HLJ#). A male Barrow's Goldeneye was seen at Squantum-Wollaston on the 1st (GAW) and from 1-3 were in Newburyport Harbor from the 5th-28th (v.o.). Oldsquaws built up to 300 in Newburyport Harbor (GLS#). Eleven Harlequin Ducks were present in Magnolia through the 18th and three remained the month in East Orleans (v.o.). A total of over 2100 Common Eider were present in Boston Harbor (JM,SZ). Over 300 Common Mergansers were counted in Brewster on the 7th (BN) and 129 were present at Cambridge Reservoir in Lincoln on the 29th (RHS).

The highlight of the month and most likely the "Bird of the Year" was the adult STELLER'S EIDER found by Robert Vernon off the Sand Hills section of Scituate on the 29th. This was a first for the state and only the 2nd record for the East coast, the other being one seen in 1929 off Scarborough, Maine. A reference of 3 Steller's Eiders being shot out of a flock of eight on January 4, 1967 in Maryland (Handbook of North American Birds, R. S. Palmer, 1975; vol. 3, pg. 10) is erroneous: the birds were Canvasbacks.

## RAPTORS

Turkey Vultures were noted in three places, one in Lancaster on the 15th and another one on the 26th (HM), while two were seen in Princeton on the 26th (PMR) and one in Framingham on the 28th (EM). Single Goshawks were reported from Dennis (PWC), Lynn (CJ) and South Peabody (RSH). Cooper's Hawks were seen in Wellfleet and Eastham (WWB,CAG) and on the 27th in Weston (LJR) and one on Plum Island on the 29th (GLS#). There was an early arrival of Broad-winged Hawks with an incredibly early date of March 3 in Bridgewater when 4 were seen (LR). One adult was seen in Eastham on March 8 (CAG,BN). Two Broad-winged Hawks were observed courting in Norwell on the 12th (MFL,BAL) and one on a nest in Bridgewater on the 27th (WRP). Another was recorded at Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary, Topsfield on March 20 (RSH). In March of 1976 none were reported and only two in 1975. Eleven Rough-legged Hawks were reported, with the first one on the 27th in Hingham (SH). Two immature Bald Eagles were present in Littleton on the 15th (VFS#), and one in Hingham on the 26th (BT#). The first Osprey arrived in Westport on the 20th (JJC). Three Merlins were reported - one each at Middleboro (DB), Sudbury (JL), and Plum Island (GLS#). A white-phased GYRFALCON was reported in the Boston-Cambridge area between March 6-19th. The bird was first seen on the 6th in Cambridge on the church at the corner of Brattle and Sparks Streets where it chased pigeons (R.Hooper). Upon further investigation, several people in that neighborhood mentioned a large white bird chasing pigeons most of that day. On the 16-19th this Gyr Falcon watched over the city of Boston from atop the old John Hancock Building (E.Smith,PMR#). Two different office firms had scopes set up on the bird and watched it for over 3 hours! (This writer sat in a traffic tie-up on Clarendon St., two blocks away, only to miss the bird by 3-5 minutes. It flew toward Cambridge and up the river.)

## RAILS AND SHOREBIRDS

A Sora Rail was picked up dead on the 3rd at First Cliff, Scituate (GRF). Very few Soras survive the winter, and this bird probably was an early migrant, blown off course during a storm in late February. The first Killdeers were reported during the early part of the month with a general arrival in all sections by the 24th. A Golden Plover was found on the 26th at Plum Island (HWF). Although no details were received, this would be the earliest record for this species, which normally migrates up the Mississippi River and across the plains in the spring. The only other recent March record is on 3/31/73 by Gardler. Only one Black-bellied Plover was reported from Long Island on the 20th (HM). Seventy Ruddy Turnstones were along the shore at Cohasset (SH). American Woodcocks arrived during the first week of March and 12 were seen courting in Rock Meadow, Belmont on the 12th (RHS). Nine Common Snipe were found in Concord on the 23rd (RAF) and 12 in Lancaster on the 26th (HM). One Greater Yellowlegs was found in Scituate on the 20th (MFL,BAL) and six were seen on Plum Island on the 28th (MHM). One Lesser Yellowlegs was seen on Plum Island on the 28th (MHM) and single birds were seen on the 30th at W. Harwich (RC), Scituate (BT), and Long Island (MK). On the 5th at Revere, 21 Red Knots were present (SZ) and on the 6th, 60 were observed in Cohasset

(SH). Over 800 Purple Sandpipers were present throughout the month in North Scituate (RRV#). This flock was present in February and is one of the largest counts in Massachusetts records. Pectoral Sandpipers arrived on the 30th-31st with one in Bolton (RAF), 4 in Truro (BN), and one in Concord (MHM). Dunlins totalled 350 in Scituate (GRF), 500 in Hingham (RPE), and 200 in Acoaxet (JJC). Over 300 Sanderlings were present all month along Revere Beach (SZ).

#### GULLS THROUGH ALCIDS

Fourteen Glaucous Gulls were reported during the month (cf. 6,6,6,11 for the last four years). Forty-two Iceland Gulls were present in Gloucester (RAF) and 80 were seen at the north end of Plum Island (WRP). Only 2 Black-headed Gulls were present at Newburyport and no Little Gulls were reported. On the 27th from Nauset Light, Black-legged Kittiwakes were heading north at a rate of 100 per hour. A possible Forster's Tern was reported from Newburyport on the 12th (J.Grugan). The Forster's Tern that was seen regularly at Newburyport from April 10-30, 1975 gives this record some credibility. The heavy concentrations of Thick-billed Murres of the previous months all but disappeared with the only exception being over 60 on the 20th off Provincetown (BN). Eight Thick-billed Murres were observed off Scusset on the 6th (JL#) and 10 were seen off Sandwich on the 20th (FA). A single Dovekie was reported from Andrew's Point, Rockport on the 3rd (MHM), and four Black Guillemots were seen there on the 6th (RAF). Other guillemot reports came from Nahant where 2 were reported on the 27th (SN), and one in Provincetown on the 6th (BN).

#### OWLS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Eight Screech Owls were heard calling in the Middleboro-Bridgewater area on the 12th (WRP) and singles were reported from eight other localities. Ten Great Horned Owls were reported from ten different localities. The two Snowy Owls continued in the Plum Island-Salisbury area through the 14th and one was seen in Mendon on the 27th and 28th (J.Ober). The Barred Owl continued in Cambridge throughout the month where it was observed on several occasions chasing squirrels in the Lowell House courtyard of Harvard University. Apparently successful, the remains of several squirrels were found at Lowell House and at Eliot House where the owl roosted. Other Barred Owls were found in Essex and three in Middleboro. Three Short-eared Owls were found in Squantum and one remained at Plum Island through the 20th. Another was found in Scituate on the 6th (GRF). Two Saw-whet Owls were found in Middleboro on the 12th (WRP) and one was seen in the New Pines on Plum Island (HTW#). Three Saw-whet Owls were present in Brewster on the 27th-30th (BN,CAG).

Pileated Woodpeckers were reported from Lancaster (HM), Dover (FRH), Weston (LL), Lincoln (RHS), and Topsfield (RSH). An adult Red-headed Woodpecker was found in West Boylston on the 25th (B.Barriere). The Red-bellied Woodpeckers remained throughout the month in Adamsdale (fide C.Wood) and through the 20th at Eastern Point, Gloucester (MK#). Another Red-bellied Woodpecker was seen in Hanover on the 16th (WRP).

#### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH SNOW BUNTING

The first Eastern Phoebes were single birds observed on the 9th in Dedham (JM), on the 11th in Sherborn (EWT), and on the 12th in Whitman (WRP). A general arrival throughout eastern Massachusetts occurred on March 20th. Tree Swallows first appeared on the 12th at Great Meadows in Concord (RW) and 2 were seen at Bridgewater on the 14th (LR). Small numbers of Tree Swallows began arriving after the 26th at various locations. One Purple Martin was seen on the 30th in Orleans (CAG). Only one Fish Crow was reported during the month from Roxbury (J.Murphy). The winter may have had a devastating effect on Carolina Wrens, with only 2 individuals being reported from Scituate and one from Marshfield.

A single Gray Catbird was reported from Dorchester on the 30th, an apparent survivor of the winter (J.Murphy). Brown Thrashers were reported from Falmouth (AAC) and South Hanson (WRP). Substantial counts of American Robins arrived at mid-month and in Waltham, 189 were seen migrating with blackbirds the morning after the big snowstorm. Hermit Thrushes were observed in Lynn on the 28th (P.W.Corrigan) and another was seen in Scituate on the 30th (MHM). Eastern Bluebirds were reported from E. Middleboro (EK), Horn Pond in Woburn (GG), three in Raynham (J.Cushman) and 2 in Boxford (GLS#). Fifteen Golden-crowned Kinglets were seen in Topsfield (MK). Water Pipits were reported from Bolton, where 7 were seen on the 13th (HM), and single birds were observed in Lancaster on the 29th (HM) and on the 31st in Marshfield (BT). A BOHEMIAN WAXWING was present on the 3rd and 4th on Nantucket (EFA), particularly unusual for that locality. Northern Shrikes were reported from seven localities throughout eastern Massachusetts with 3 individuals in the Plum Island-Salisbury area. A Loggerhead Shrike was well observed at close range in Wellfleet on the 12th (CAG,BN).

Only one Yellow-rumped Warbler was noted at Marshfield on the 26th (SSBC-N.S.Osborne). Eastern Meadowlarks arrived on the 11th in the Bolton-Lancaster area where as many as 10 were seen (HM), and eight were observed in Middleboro on the 19th (WRP). Redwinged Blackbirds were moving in large numbers during the month with 18,000+ individuals in W. Newbury on the 12th (RRV#) and 8000 in Waltham on the 18th (RHS). A single Northern Oriole was observed in Rowley on the 20th (RSH). Rusty Blackbirds were reported in good numbers. The first arrivals were on the 2nd in Lancaster, where as many as 10 were seen during the month (HM). Six Rustys appeared in South Peabody on the 5th (RSH) and on the 6th 45-50 were noted in E. Middleboro (DB). On the 13th 30 were seen at Bolton Flats (HM) and 75 were counted on the 16th in the Sudbury Valley (RAF). In West Newbury, 2000+ Common Grackles were noted on the 12th and over 4000 were migrating in the early morning of the 19th in Waltham (RHS). In the Bolton-Lancaster area, 600 were noted on the 13th (HM). Brown-headed Cowbirds totalled 200 in Bridgewater on the 6th (GRF), 800 in Weymouth on the 8th (RRV), and 320 in Topsfield on the 27th (RSH). Purple Finches were five times more abundant during February and March 1977 than during the same period in 1975 and 1976. High counts included 27 in Lancaster (HM), 15 in Weston (LJR), and 30 in Topsfield (RSH). Two Red Crossbills

were reported from Dana in the Quabbin area (BGB). Single Rufous-sided Towhees were reported from Westport (JJC), Topsfield (RSH), and Norwell (MFL,BAL). An "Oregon" Dark-eyed Junco was seen in South Peabody on the 28th (RSH). Chipping Sparrows made it through the winter and were reported from Lancaster (HM) and South Peabody (RSH). White-crowned Sparrows continued in Natick (Broadmoor) (EWT) and in Lancaster (HM). These two birds were reported all winter. Other White-crowned Sparrows were reported from Waban (EPG) and 4 were seen in Hingham (MFL,BAL). Fox Sparrows were seen in good numbers at the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary, Topsfield, where 21 were seen on the 20th (RSH). Other counts of Fox Sparrows include 12 on the 22nd in Lincoln (WWH) and 16 in Weston on the 27th (LJR). Song Sparrows were migrating and 50 were counted in the Sudbury Valley on the 12th (RAF), with 85 present at Marblehead Neck on the 14th (RSH). A single Lapland Longspur was found in Marshfield on the 26th (SSBC-NSO). Over 200 Snow Buntings were reported from P.I. on the 6th (MHM) and a single bird was found in Lancaster on the 16th (HM).

RHS,RRV

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