

OCTOBER 1, 1977: NAUSET BEACH, EASTHAM

by Nan Turner Waldron, Sharon

On September nights a mild, moist south wind brings the small birds in off the ocean to the shelter of the coastal lands. In the isolation of the Outer Beach and Nauset Marsh, I have been snapped awake by the clear call of a hermit thrush piercing the dark corners of the night. The Outermost House is like that--full of extravagant surprises. Whenever I begin to think that I have enjoyed just about every possible change of scene, something happens.

It was a quiet, gray morning, and we were debating whether to light the wood stove when my husband pointed to the south window. "What have we got on the post out here? It isn't quite right for a phoebe." I grabbed my glasses and focused through the sand-blasted window as best I could. "If I didn't know better, I'd say it is a Say's Phoebe."

Being ignorant about rarities but feeling that a picture at least establishes the sighting, I eased out the door with my "big lens" in hand. My policy of snap first, approach afterwards, became frustrating. The bird was obviously delighted to be feeding. A Red-breasted Nuthatch carefully dismantled a moth directly in front of me, and neither seemed to care how closely I approached. Since I had no 135-mm. lens in my pocket, I backed up to take more pictures!

I can now say, "It was a Say's!" However, I talk softly of such experiences and let other establish records. My report will not be on the Voice; no one will search madly for the bird; and three weeks later the picture will be of historical interest only. The real rarity is the opportunity to share quietly an early morning moment completely at ease with another creature.

Say's Phoebe, photograph by Nan T. Waldron, Nauset Beach, October 1, 1977

