

## Latest Rumors

This is a brief recounting of some of the exciting bird occurrences that have come to our attention recently. We make no claims for the completeness of this summary. Although we believe that all of the records cited here are probably correct, we have not been able to check most of them out personally; readers desiring further information should consult the appropriate regional publications, or the regional reports in *American Birds*.

There seemed to be a remarkable number of birdwatchers prowling southern Florida in early May; those who journeyed out to the exotic islets of the Dry Tortugas must have numbered in the hundreds. And the Tortugas put on quite an avian show for the visitors. Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster*, not unusual there, were present in numbers, and two **Masked Boobies** *S. dactylatra* evoked much interest, but the prize was a **Red-footed Booby** *S. sula* coming in nightly to roost with the Browns on Bush Key (the Red-foot was reported at least into June). A counterpoint to these tropical sulids was provided by an adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* present at the same time. The **Black Noddy** *Anous tenuirostris* was seen by the fortunate; among the numerous migrants at least one Connecticut Warbler *Oporornis agilis* was noted; and a White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica* seen there could have strayed in from any of several different directions. — On the mainland, the **Key West Quail-Dove** *Geotrygon chrysis* in Everglades National Park continued to add birders to its list. — At sea, a pelagic trip off northern Florida May 3 recorded a minimum of 40 to 45 **Black-capped Petrels** *Pterodroma hasitata*, tripling the previous one-day high for Florida. At least one White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* was noted from a boat off Key West; however, this may have been upstaged in a grand way, for we heard that **two Red-billed Tropicbirds** *P. aethereus* were recorded off North Carolina in May. — The New York City area was graced by the presence of two **Mississippi Kites** *Ictinia mississippiensis* (probably a first state record) that stayed for several days, feasting upon cicadas. Not a first for the state, but possibly more unexpected than the kites anyway, was a **White-faced Ibis** *Plegadis chihi* on western Long Island in early June. — In early May the nest of a pair of **Hook-billed Kites** *Chondrohierax uncinatus* was found at Falcon Dam, Texas, a considerable step up the Rio Grande from Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge where previous U.S. nestings have been recorded. At Big Bend National Park, western Texas, where single **Rufous-capped Warblers** *Basileuterus rufifrons* have been recorded in the past, a pair was present in May. — A surprising report came from southwestern New Mexico: a trogon that was evidently not a Coppery-tailed *T. elegans* was seen in the Animas Mountains in mid-June; the details (and geographic logic) suggested Eared Trogon *Euptilotis neoxenus*. — Arizona had very little in the way of Mexican border bird excitement in late spring-early summer; even the single White-eared Hummingbird *Hylocharis leucotis* that had appeared in March disappeared by mid-May. The most notable bird there was a misguided **Cave Swallow** *Petrochelidon fulva* that frequented the vicinity of a Cliff Swallow *P. pyrrhonota* colony at Tucson through most of May, for a first state record; local birders were also thrilled by a singing male Cerulean Warbler *Dendroica cerulea* that was photographed for a first confirmed Arizona record. — **Mississippi Kites** *Ictinia mississippiensis*, first recorded in New York this spring, also put in their first

Nevada appearance with two at Corn Creek in mid-May. — California's army of vagrant-hunters found, as usual, a remarkable array of eastern species during the late May-early June push. Among the more notable finds in the desert oasis situations of the interior were Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*, White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*, Yellow-throated Vireo *V. flavifrons*, Black-throated Blue Warbler *Dendroica caerulescens* (regular in fall, almost unheard-of in spring), and Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula* (there was another Common Grackle in northern California in late May). Good eastern birds on the coast included Cerulean Warbler *Dendroica cerulea* and Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea* near San Diego and Kentucky Warbler *Oporornis formosus* on the Farallons, while six Yellow-throated Warblers *Dendroica dominica* at various coastal points between April and early June (plus one in Arizona in April) added up to an "invasion" for this very infrequent vagrant. — A **Wilson's Plover** *Charadrius wilsonia* in southern California from late April into June was a notable straggler from the south. A pair of Little Blue Herons *Florida caerulea* south of the Salton Sea established California's first nesting record. More remarkable was the female **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** *Muscivora forficata* incubating eggs in southeastern California in June; this is hundreds of miles from any previous nesting locality, but no male was in evidence, so it may not qualify as an actual breeding occurrence. — From the northern interior of the continent, we heard that **Mountain Plovers** *Charadrius montanus* were found nesting in southeastern Alberta, for the first definite breeding record for Canada.

The spring migration in western Alaska is always a story in itself. Some of the Asiatic species not illustrated in the standard field guides have proven (with the recently-increased birding coverage) to be so regular that their appearance no longer elicits comment; thus, no one will be surprised to learn that the contingent of vagrant-hunters on Attu this spring found Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Smew *Mergus albellus*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, and Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*. Some species of greater excitement value that we heard about included **Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis* on Attu; **Mongolian Plovers** *Charadrius mongolus* (several) on Attu and at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island; **Ringed Plover** *C. hiaticula* at Gambell; a wealth of shorebirds including **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*, **Greenshank** *T. nebularia*, **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*, **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*, and **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* on Attu; an unidentified *Cuculus* (either Common Cuckoo *C. canorus* or Oriental Cuckoo *C. saturatus*) at St. Paul, Pribilof Islands; **Eye-browed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* on Attu; **Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia calliope* both on Attu and at St. Paul; **Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi* and **Indian Tree-Pipit** *A. hodgsoni* on Attu; and **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* on Attu. But without a doubt, the prize find in Alaska this season was a **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* on Attu: apart from a single-observer sighting on Attu in 1978, there were no previous records for North America.

It seems appropriate to close this discussion of rare birds in Alaska by mentioning a most bizarre extralimital record of an Alaskan bird: a possible Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica* was reported in May in the British Isles, half a world away from the species' normal range.