

American Birds

SUMMER GUIDE

July–October 1991

The dog days of summer are back again, and what better way to spend them than watching for birds? Herewith, a list of twenty-five of the hottest birding spots around the country. Whether you plan to head for the hills or the ocean this summer, our guide is packed with ideas for birding while you're on vacation.

Many of the sites listed are exciting all summer long for a rich variety of shorebirds. Others are more interesting later in the season, when early migrants, including many warblers and hawks, start their journeys southward. All are guaranteed to offer terrific birding. Have a great summer and we'll be back with more suggestions in fall.

Recommended location guides and further references are included at the end of each site description.

1. GRAND MANAN ISLAND, NEW BRUNSWICK

In the woods and marshes of this scenic island, by the time summer bird song begins to decline, fall migrants are already arriving. This season features a wide variety of passerines and waterbirds, with the chance for surprises, including strays from farther south. Also see: *Bird-finding Guide to Canada*, J. Cam Finlay, publ. 1984.

2. BLOCK ISLAND, RHODE ISLAND

Early October is traditional for a Block Island pilgrimage, and the best time for hawks and sparrows, but the

island can produce a bigger list of migrants in September. Just after passage of a weather front, this can be the most exciting early fall birding in New England. Also see: *Checklist of Rhode Island Birds*, Rhode Island Ornithological Club, publ. 1983; and *Bird Finding in New England*, Richard K. Walton, publ. 1988.

3. CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY

The October flights of falcons and other hawks are world famous. For smaller migrants, the peak is earlier: September, or even August, for the greatest variety of warblers. Any kind of

weather front in late summer or early fall may bring a remarkable fallout of early transients. Also see: *Bird-finding Guide to New Jersey*, William J. Boyle, Jr., Rev. 1989.

4. BOMBAY HOOK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, DELAWARE

Any time after the Fourth of July, this can be one of the best spots on the Atlantic Coast for rare shorebirds. Greater Golden-Plover, Rufous-necked Stint, and White-winged Tern have turned up in the past. Even without stellar rarities, the rich assortment of regular shorebirds makes this stop a must. Also see: *Birding the Delaware Valley Region*, John J. & Justin J. Harding, publ. 1980; and *Finding Birds in the National Capital Area*, Claudia Wilds, publ. 1983.

5. CAPE HATTERAS, NORTH CAROLINA

The Outer Banks of North Carolina furnish good birding all year, but outermost Cape Hatteras is especially good in summer and early fall. Notable terns turn up here, including Sooty and Roseate on a regular basis, shorebirds stop over, and seabirds sometimes pass close by the point. Also see: *Birds of the Carolinas*, E.F. Potter, J.F. Parnell & R.F. Teulings. Publ. 1980; and *Finding Birds in Carteret County*, John O. Fussell III. Publ. 1985.

6. JEKYLL ISLAND, GEORGIA

A fine birding site at all seasons, Jekyll is especially good in late summer/early fall, when landbird migrants may pile up in the thickets while shorebirds and terns congregate on the flats at the south end of the island. Also see: *A Birder's Guide to Georgia* (3rd edition), Terry Chesser, ed., rev. 1988.

7. BILL BAGGS / CAPE FLORIDA STATE RECREATION AREA, FLORIDA

Just outside Miami, this isolated cape is a natural concentration point for mi-

grants, including many warblers and hawks in early fall. It also is perfectly positioned to be the landfall for strays from the Caribbean: The first proven Thick-billed Vireos for the United States were found here in September 1989. Also see: *Birders Guide to Florida* (Lane Series), James A. Lane, rev. 1989; *Florida's Birds: A Handbook Reference*, Herbert W. Kale II & David S. Maehr, publ. 1990; and *Birds of South Florida*, Connie Toops & Willard E. Dille, publ. 1986.

8. ST. MARKS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, FLORIDA

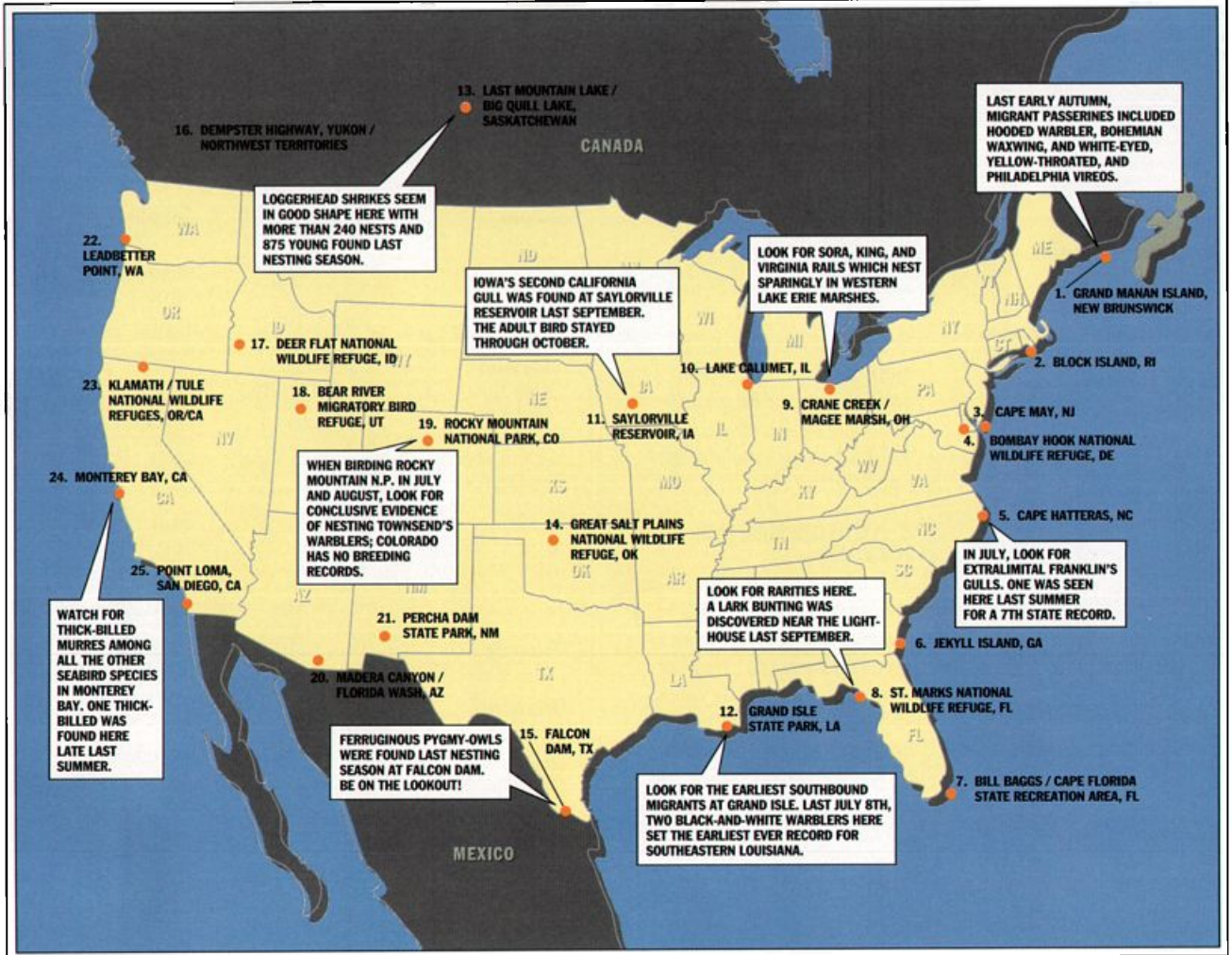
With tidal flats, salt marshes, and freshwater impoundments, this big refuge on the Gulf Coast produces a wide variety of birds at any season. In late summer, southbound shorebirds and songbirds mingle with the local herons, Anhingas, Ospreys, and others. Also see: *Birders Guide to Florida* (Lane Series), James A. Lane, rev. 1989; *Florida's Birds: A Handbook and Reference*, Herbert W. Kale II & David S. Maehr, publ. 1990; and *Birds of South Florida*, Connie Toops & Willard E. Dille, publ. 1986.

9. CRANE CREEK / MAGEE MARSH, OHIO

One of the best birding sites in the upper Midwest, with fields, marshes, and woodlots just inland from the edge of Lake Erie. Many rare visitors have been found here, and the concentrations of migrants are often impressive. Also see: *The Birds of Ohio*, Bruce G. Peterjohn, publ. 1989.

10. LAKE CALUMET, ILLINOIS

It may not win prizes for scenic beauty, but this southside Chicago urban lake and marsh produces fine birding. This is the most likely spot for Tricolored Heron in the upper



Midwest, other herons and egrets are numerous, and shorebird concentrations can be impressive in late summer. Also see: *The Birds of Illinois*, H. David Bohlen, publ. 1989; and *Bird-finding in Illinois*, Elton Fawks & Paul H. Lobik, publ. 1975.

11. SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR, IOWA
Regular coverage by Des Moines birders has revealed the surprising potential of this reservoir. Many species regular here were formerly considered scarce in Iowa. Waterfowl, gulls, terns, and shorebirds all join the annual parade, and late summer can be especially productive if water levels are right.

12. GRAND ISLE STATE PARK, LOUISIANA
The woods in the town of Grand Isle provide a last stopover point for south-

bound songbirds that hesitate when they confront the Gulf of Mexico. Others may be found in the thickets at the state park, while many waterbirds haunt the edges. Also see: *A Bird Finder's Guide to S.E. Louisiana*, Dan Purrington et al, publ. 1987.

13. LAST MOUNTAIN LAKE / BIG QUILL LAKE, SASKATCHEWAN
The concentrations of Sandhill Cranes stopping over at these lakes in early fall have been famous for decades. More recent surveys have revealed that phenomenal numbers of shorebirds also use these lakes, with tens of thousands present at times in spring and again in late summer. Also see: *Bird-finding Guide to Canada*, J. Cam Finlay, publ. 1984.

14. GREAT SALT PLAINS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, OKLAHOMA
Nesting Snowy Plovers and American Avocets at the salt flats are joined by many southbound shorebirds after mid-July, while many ducks, wading birds, and pelicans are here by the end of the summer. In early October, spectacular numbers of Franklin's Gulls stage around the impoundments. Also see: *Guide to Birding in Oklahoma*, Tulsa Audubon Society, rev. 1986; *Date Guide to the Occurrence of Birds*, Joseph A. Grzybowski, publ. 1986; and *Distribution of Oklahoma Birds*, D. Scott Wood & Gary D. Schnell, publ. 1984.

15. FALCON DAM, TEXAS
Summertime here can be oppressively hot, but throughout the fall this area

offers some of the finest birding in the lower Rio Grande Valley, including species that are scarce farther downriver, like Audubon's Oriole, Brown Jay, and Red-billed Pigeon. Also see: *Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley* (Lane Series), James A. Lane & Harold R. Holt, rev. 1988; and *Birder's Guide to Texas*, Edward A. Kutac, rev. 1989.

16. DEMPSTER HIGHWAY, YUKON / NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
Best in late summer, this is a route for adventurous birders who want to drive to the Arctic. This 460-mile gravel road traverses mostly areas north of treeline, summer home of nesting loons, ptarmigan, waterfowl... and, in riverside willow thickets, the elusive Siberian Tit. Also see:

(Continued on next page)

Birds by the Dempster Highway, Robert Frisch, rev. 1987.

17. DEER FLAT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, IDAHO

In late summer, the large nesting populations of grebes, ducks, herons, and other birds here are augmented by the first southbound migrants, including a good variety of shorebirds. Also see: *Checklist for Birds of Southwest Idaho*, D.A. Stephens & T. D. Reynolds, undated.

18. BEAR RIVER MIGRATORY BIRD REFUGE, UTAH

This famous refuge on the edge of the Great Salt Lake was largely flooded out in the mid-1980s but is now very productive again. In late summer, the sheer numbers of birds present can be unbelievable, leading the active birder to think that there must be something unusual present (and there usually is). Also see: *Utah Birds*, William H. Behle & Michael L. Perry, publ. 1975; and *Birds of Utah*, Mark Bromley & Merrill Webb, rev. 1990.

19. ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK, COLORADO

Late summer is the season to seek the White-tailed Ptarmigan with its young amid tundra wildflowers at high elevations in the park. Around aspen groves and lakes at lower elevations, attractions include Williamson's Sapsuckers, Black Swifts, Blue Grouse, and many others. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Colorado* (Lane Series), Harold R. Holt & James A. Lane, rev. 1987; and *Birds of Grand County, Colorado*, David A. Jasper & Walter S. Collins, rev. 1987.

20. MADERA CANYON / FLORIDA WASH, ARIZONA

When summer rains bring the grasslands to life, Florida Wash abounds with Rufous-winged and Botteri's spar-

rows, Varied Buntings, and others, while nearby Madera Canyon buzzes with hummingbirds of a dozen species. Trogons, tanagers, orioles, Painted Redstarts, and a host of other borderland birds may be found into early fall. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Southeastern Arizona* (Lane Series), Harold R. Holt, rev. 1988; *Birds in Southeastern Arizona*, William A. Davis & Stephen M. Russell, rev. 1990; and *Birds of the Lower Colorado River Valley*, K.V. Rosenberg et al, publ. 1991.

21. PERCHA DAM STATE PARK, NEW MEXICO

The groves and thickets here are often swarming with migrant songbirds in late summer and early fall. Nearby waters, including the reservoir above Caballo Dam, host many waterbirds such as Western and Clark's grebes. Also see: *New Mexico Bird-finding Guide*, Dustin Huntington & Dale A. Zimmerman, publ. 1984; *Birds of New Mexico Field Checklist*, New Mexico Ornithological Society, publ. 1989.

22. LEADBETTER POINT, WASHINGTON

This point at the outer perimeter of Willapa Bay provides some of the best shorebirding in coastal Washington during late summer and fall. Also see: *Guide to Bird-finding in Washington*, Terence R. Wahl & Dennis R. Paulson, rev. 1991.

23. KLAMATH/TULE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES, OREGON/CALIFORNIA

These well-known "duck factory" refuges produce plenty of birds besides ducks. Birders visiting in late summer may be most impressed by big numbers of grebes, but these refuges are also good for shorebirds, Tricolored Blackbirds, and other species. Also see: *The Birder's Guide to Oregon*, Joseph E. Evanich, Jr., publ.

RARE BIRD ALERTS

Arizona

Tucson: (602) 798-1005

California

Arcata: (707) 826-7031

Monterey: (408) 375-9122

Northern: (415) 528-0288, or (415) 524-5592

Los Angeles: (213) 874-1318

San Diego: (619) 435-6761

(619) 479-3400

San Francisco: (415) 528-0288

Colorado (303) 973-7207

Delaware (215) 567-2473

Florida Statewide: (813) 984-4444

Miami: (305) 667-7337

Lower Keys: (305) 294-3438

Georgia (404) 509-0204

Illinois Central Illinois: (217) 785-1083

Chicago: (708) 671-1522

Idaho Southeast: (208) 236-3337

Iowa Sioux City: (712) 262-5958

Statewide: (319) 338-9881

Louisiana Baton Rouge: (504) 293-2576

New Orleans: (504) 246-2473

Maine (707) 781-2332

New Jersey Statewide: (201) 766-2661

Cape May: (609) 884-2626

New Mexico (505) 662-2101

North Carolina (704) 332-2473

Ohio SW Ohio: (513) 277-6446

Cleveland: (216) 289-2473
Youngstown: (216) 742-6661

Oklahoma Oklahoma City: (405) 373-4531

Oregon (503) 292-0661

Rhode Island (401) 231-5728

Texas Statewide: (713) 992-2757

Lower Rio Grande Valley: (512) 565-6773

San Antonio: (512) 733-8306

Utah (801) 538-4730

Washington (206) 526-8266

CANADA New Brunswick

Provincewide: (506) 450-3825

Saskatchewan Regina: (306) 545-2825

1990; and *Birder's Guide to Northern California*, Lolo & Jim Westrich, publ. 1991.

24. MONTEREY BAY, CALIFORNIA

The deep waters of Monterey Bay furnish the best seabird watching in North America. Action peaks in September and October, with millions of shearwaters, huge rafts of storm-petrels, a fine sprinkling of alcids, and other seabirds, all accessible via short offshore trips from Monterey. Also see: *Birding Northern California*, Jean Richmond, publ. 1985; *Birder's Guide to Northern California*, Lolo & Jim Westrich, publ. 1991; *Monterey Birds*, Don Roberson, publ. 1985; and *Pelagic Birds of Monterey Bay*, Richard W. Stallcup, publ. 1981.

25. POINT LOMA, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

One of the most exciting spots for migrants on the southern California coast. Surprising numbers of eastern warblers turn up on Point Loma every fall, and most eastern migrant songbirds have been found at least once. On slow days, observers can enjoy gulls and shorebirds along the rocky shoreline. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Southern California* (Lane Series), Harold R. Holt, rev. 1990; *The Birds of San Diego County*, Philip Unitt, publ. 1984; *Where Birders Go in Southern California*, Henry E. Childs, Jr., publ. 1990; and *Introduction to Southern California Birds*, Herbert Clarke, publ. 1989.

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Wandering Albatross

LONGLINERS HARASS ALBATROSSES

American longline fishermen have been harassing and killing albatrosses off the coast of Hawaii. Both albatrosses and seals feed on the bait hooked on the longlines. This angers fishermen who fear reduced commercial catches. The list of atrocities includes: beak hacking, spray-painting, shooting, and placing poison pellets in the bait to kill birds. Albatrosses range thousands of kilometers so the extent of this harassment among longliners is unknown.

After learning of the slaughter, Audubon registered a strong request to the Pacific Fisheries Regional Management Council to close the waters to longliners within a 50-mile zone around the northwestern Hawaiian islands.

The massacre and harassment by longliners seems to be having a deleterious effect on one albatross species in particular. Wandering Albatrosses that breed near Antarctica are declining at a rate of one percent per year, report researchers J. Croxall, P. Rothery, S. Pickering and P. Prince (*Jour. of Anim. Ecology*, vol. 59). New data, collected by satellite tracking, show that more females than males go into temperate latitudes in the

nonbreeding season, putting them within range of longline fishing. Most of the birds not returning to breed are adult females.

Observers on commercial fishing vessels have begun to realize the extent to which albatrosses are being caught on longlines. For example, it is estimated that in the southern hemisphere, 44,000 albatrosses die each year after taking longline bait set out for tuna. The picture being pieced together reveals that the level of albatross mortality on longlines is enough to account for the declining population.

Some Japanese fishermen are now voluntarily reducing incidental kills of albatrosses by changing the way in which their longlines are laid out, but the effect of these changes remains to be seen.

GEORGE MILLER STEPS IN FOR MO UDALL

Representative George Miller (D.-Ca.) was recently named Acting Chairman of the House Interior Committee, Interior and Insular Affairs. He has stepped in for Mo Udall (D.-Az.), who, though active in environmental issues, had been slowed down in recent years by Parkinson's Disease.

Representative Miller engineered California's

Emergency Drought Bill, which contains a provision that would allow water to be diverted to fish and wildlife. That bill cleared the path for a much more important piece of environmental legislation: Miller's California Fish and Wildlife Protection Act of 1991 that directs the Secretary of the Interior to divert water resources to California's vital Central Valley wetlands.

Once comprising a territory of more than 4 million acres, these wetlands have been decimated by lack of water: Only 290,000 acres now remain. The Central Valley, used by well over half the migratory waterfowl on the Pacific flyway, is one of the most important wintering areas for waterfowl in the United States.

WHOOPING CRANES IN TROUBLE AGAIN

For 50 years conservationists have watched the last wild flock of Whooping Cranes return from the edge of extinction. In 1941, there were only 15 of the birds remaining; in 1990, 146 were counted. But now there's fresh cause for concern, with the mysterious deaths of eleven Whooping Cranes in Aransas National Wildlife Refuge last winter. It was the first winter decline in 10 years.

Thomas Stehn, a biologist at the refuge, says that he and his colleagues have been frustrated in their efforts to determine the reason for the deaths, because the terrain at Aransas, largely marsh, makes it very difficult to recover carcasses for testing. The worst-case scenario, says Stehn, is avian tuberculosis, a highly contagious disease that claimed one crane in 1989. Drought conditions at Aransas may also be the cause.

Stehn and his colleagues

are already putting into place intensive monitoring efforts for next winter, including stand-by helicopters and volunteer search parties. If the deaths continue, radio telemetry and a banding program may also be established. "Let's just hope we don't have to use any of this," says Stehn. "I'd rather let the deaths remain a mystery than lose one more bird."

PENGUINS CAUGHT IN DRIFTNETS

Rockhopper Penguins are being killed in driftnets off the island of Tristan de Cunha in the south Atlantic Ocean. Ninety-five percent of the world's Rockhopper Penguins breed at Tristan de Cunha and Gough islands. Never before has a penguin population been threatened by commercial fishing practices.

The emergence of driftnetting in the Atlantic Ocean is a relatively new occurrence, despite the United Nation's call to stop the spread of driftnetting outside the Pacific. Owing to the clandestine nature of the foreign fleet operations, it is difficult to accurately quantify the true extent of incidental bird mortality from driftnetting.

As part of its marine conservation activities, under the direction of Carl Safina, Audubon is working to eliminate permanently the threat of driftnetting in the Atlantic Ocean.



Rockhopper Penguins