

American Birds

SPRING GUIDE

April-June 1993

Every early sign of spring teases with promise: Noisy Red-winged Blackbirds flash their epaulets. Weather reports are watched with careful scrutiny. All this activity builds our anticipation for warblers in Rhode Island, herons in Alabama swamps, or migrant waterbirds in Montana. Now spring is really here. As birds step out into the field, we encourage you to take notebooks along with optical equipment. Field notes and migration data are important in monitoring species' status. And, oh yes—have fun!

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

1. CAPE ST. MARY'S SEABIRD SANCTUARY Newfoundland

Perhaps the most accessible seabird colony in the western North Atlantic is at Cape St. Mary's. Thousands of Northern Gannets, Black-legged Kittiwakes, and Common Murres crowd the ledges, while Thick-billed Murres are present in smaller numbers. Late April to July is the best season for a visit. Also see: *Birding in Atlantic Canada: Newfoundland*, Roger Burrows, publ. 1989.

2. FUNDY NATIONAL PARK New Brunswick

Spring migration can be impressive along the coastal edge of this park on the Bay of Fundy. Movements of

loons and sea ducks take place just offshore, hawks follow the coastline, and warblers and other small birds concentrate in woods. After migration wanes, breeding birds provide interest: Nearly 100 species nest here. Also see: *Bird-finding Guide to Canada*, J. Cam Finlay, publ. 1984.

3. NINIGRET NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE Rhode Island

A variety of habitats makes Ninigret a prime spring birding site. The ponds are good for shorebirds and marsh dwellers, while nesting landbirds include Yellow-breasted Chat, White-eyed Vireo, and Blue-winged Warbler. Warblers and other songbirds

come in migration. Also see: *Checklist of Rhode Island Birds*, Rhode Island Ornithological Club, publ. 1983.

4. CONNETQUOT RIVER STATE PARK New York

The waterways, woodlands, and old fields here represent one of the best areas for nesting landbirds on Long Island. Pine and Prairie warblers, American Woodcock, Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Hairy Woodpecker, and Wood Duck are just a few of the species present in late spring. Also see: *Where to Find Birds in New York State: Top 500 Sites*, Susan Roney Drennan, publ. 1981.

5. POCOMOKE SWAMP Delaware/Maryland

This swamp was once famous as the northern outpost of Swainson's Warbler, no longer reliable. But other birds of wet woods abound. Spring and summer highlights include Louisiana Waterthrush, Yellow-throated and Worm-eating warblers, and Summer Tanager. Also see: *Finding Birds in the National Capital Area*, Claudia Wilds, rev. 1992.

6. MOUNT MITCHELL STATE PARK North Carolina

The highest point in North Carolina, Mt. Mitchell is a southern outpost for many species that breed farther north, such as Blackburnian Warbler, Solitary Vireo, and the Carolina race of Dark-eyed Junco. In late April and early May, migrant warblers can be impressive. Also see: *Birds of the Carolinas*, E. F. Potter, J. F. Parnell & R. F. Teulings, publ. 1980; *Birds of the Blue Ridge Mountains*, Marcus B. Simpson, Jr., publ. 1992.

7. HIGHLANDS HAMMOCK STATE PARK Florida

Birds of the pinelands and

swamps, as well as those of the forested "hammocks," are easy to observe at this central Florida park. Barred Owls, Eastern Bluebirds, and Pine Warblers are found all year. American Swallow-tailed Kites are present in spring, and migrant songbirds can be common in the wooded areas. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Florida* (Lane Series), James A. Lane & Harold R. Holt, rev. 1989; *Birds of South Florida*, Connie Toops & Willard E. Dilley, publ. 1986.

8. PRINCE EDWARD POINT Ontario

This favorite haunt of the Kingston Field Naturalists is productive all spring, with large numbers of migrants concentrated by the geography of the point. Passage of loons, grebes, waterfowl, and hawks is usually heaviest before mid-May; songbirds can be abundant throughout May and into early June. Also see: *Bird-finding Guide to Ontario*, Clive E. Goodwin, publ. 1982.

9. SHIAWASSEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE Michigan

Although it is located on the outskirts of Saginaw, this refuge is a very productive birding spot. Waterfowl are numerous, often including large concentrations of Canada Geese. In late spring, interesting shorebirds are likely to turn up. Also see: *Enjoying Birds in Michigan*, Michigan Audubon Society, rev. 1989.

10. NATCHEZ TRACE STATE PARK AND FOREST Tennessee

A network of hiking trails here provides access to a fine expanse of pine and deciduous forest. Songbird migrants can be numerous in late April and May, and those that stay to nest



include Acadian Flycatcher, Kentucky Warbler, and Scarlet and Summer tanagers. Also see: *Bird-finding in Tennessee*, Michael Lee Bierly, publ. 1980.

11. CHOCTAW NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
Alabama

Along the bottomlands of the Tombigbee River, this refuge has impressive areas of swamps and mature forest. Several kinds of herons, egrets, and ibises nest here in large numbers, and the refuge has good numbers of Wood Ducks all year. Birders visiting in spring will also find songbirds abundant in the forested areas.

12. LEDGES STATE PARK
Iowa

Largely surrounded by open farmland, the wooded valley of Ledges State Park is a haven for many birds. In late

spring, northbound migrant songbirds are often concentrated here. Species remaining for the summer include Wood Thrush, Bell's Vireo, and Scarlet Tanager.

13. SAND LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
South Dakota

Although concentrations of geese and ducks reach their peak by mid-April, late spring is better for seeing a variety of species at Sand Lake wildlife refuge. Shorebird migrants can be abundant at the end of May. Nesting species include Eared Grebes, Franklin's Gulls, Black Terns, and many others. Also see: *The Birds of South Dakota*, South Dakota Ornithologists' Union, publ. 1991; *A Birdwatcher's Guide to the Black Hills*, Richard A. Peterson, publ. 1990.

14. CHAPLIN NATURE CENTER
Kansas

Operated by the Wichita Audubon chapter, this plot near Arkansas City offers fine birding in spring and summer. Migrating warblers can be numerous in woods along the river, while nesting birds include Wild Turkey, Chuck-will's-widow, Pileated Woodpecker, Summer Tanager, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Also see: *A Guide to Bird Finding in Kansas and Western Missouri*, John L. Zimmerman & Sebastian T. Patti, publ. 1988.

15. BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE
Texas

Even without the past rumors of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, Big Thicket is a fascinating area to explore for birds. Nesting birds that are conspicuous (at least by song) in late spring include

Swainson's and Hooded warblers, Bachman's Sparrow, Louisiana Waterthrush, and many others. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Texas*, Edward A. Kutac, rev. 1989.

16. BOWDOIN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
Montana

Most of the action here is around the lakes, with migrant waterbirds as well as nesting Wilson's Phalaropes, Willets, Western Grebes, and others. Visiting birders may be more interested in the grasslands, with its Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Sharp-tailed Grouse, and other typical prairie birds. Also see: *Birds of West-Central Montana*, Richard L. Hutto, ed., publ. 1986.

17. CHERRY CREEK RESERVOIR
Colorado

A popular birding spot on the edge of Denver, this

reservoir is great in migration for grebes, ducks, terns, and shorebirds. Many rare waterbirds have been found here. Nearby groves of trees, especially near the upper end of the lake, can have many landbirds during migration. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Colorado* (Lane Series), Harold R. Holt & James A. Lane, rev. 1988; *Birding Guide to Denver-Boulder Region*, Robert Folzenlogen, publ. 1986.

18. MAXWELL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
New Mexico

Maxwell is a small refuge, but rewarding. Ducks and shorebirds can be numerous on the three lakes, while the isolated tree groves may have many songbird migrants in season. Summering species include American Avocet and Swainson's Hawk, plus "eastern" species like Red-headed Woodpecker and Eastern Kingbird. Also see: *New Mexico Bird-finding Guide*, Dustin Huntington & Dale A. Zimmerman, publ. 1984; *Birds of New Mexico's National Parklands*, John P. Hubbard & Claudia L. Hubbard, publ. 1979.

19. MINIDOKA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
Idaho

Based on artificial impoundments of water from the Snake River, Minidoka plays host to marsh birds and waterbirds. Several kinds of grebes, ducks, and herons nest here. Many more stop over in spring migration.

20. LAHONTAN VALLEY
Nevada

Although this valley is plagued with water problems, it remains one of the great concentration areas for waterbirds. Ten thousands of shorebirds may be present in May. Species like American White Pelicans, American

Avocets, and others nest here in large numbers.

21. CATALINA STATE PARK
Arizona

There is exceptionally good desert birding at this park northwest of Tucson. Crissal Thrasher, Abert's Towhee, Lucy's Warbler are conspicuous on spring mornings. Night birds include Elf Owl, Buff-collared Nightjar, and Common Poorwill. See also: *Birder's Guide to Southeastern Arizona* (Lane Series), Harold R. Holt, rev. 1989; *Birds in Southeastern Arizona*, William A. Davis & Stephen M. Russell, rev. 1990.

22. POTTER MARSH
Alaska

Close to the highway south of Anchorage is this large marsh, flanked by parking areas and observation platforms. Waterbirds include nesting ducks and geese, specialties like Hudsonian Godwit, and birds near their northwestern limits, such as Canvasback and Red-winged Blackbird. See also: *Guide to the Birds of Alaska*, Robert H. Armstrong, rev. 1990; *Field Guide to Birding in Anchorage*, Robert L. (Buzz) Scher, publ. 1989.

23. SEWARD PARK
Washington

On the edge of Seattle, Seward Park is a fine spot for woodland birds such as Winter Wren, Hutton's Vireo, and Western Screech-Owl. Because it forms a peninsula on Lake Washington, the park can concentrate numbers of warblers, flycatchers, and others during migration. Grebes, ducks, and waterbirds may be seen offshore. See also: *Guide to bird-finding in Washington*, Terrence R. Wahl & Dennis R. Paulson, rev. 1991; *Birding in Seattle and King County*, Eugene S. Hunn, publ. 1982.



INVALUABLE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Although coverage and information varies from place to place, rare bird alert telephone services that use taped messages are a real boon for peregrinating birders. These detail current rare or unusual birds sighted and how to get to the place where last reported. Use this listing when visiting the places on our Spring birding map.

Alabama (205) 987-2730	Idaho Southeast (208) 236-3337	New Mexico (505) 662-2101
Alaska (907) 338-2473	Iowa (319) 338-9881	New York NYC/Long Island (212) 979-3070
Arizona Tucson (602) 798-1005	Kansas (913) 372-5499	North Carolina (704) 332-2473
California San Diego (619) 479-3400	Maryland (301) 652-1088	Ontario Provincewide (519) 586-3959
Northern (510) 528-0288 (510) 524-5592	Michigan (616) 471-4919	Rhode Island (401) 231-5728
Colorado (303) 279-3076	Montana (406) 721-2935	Tennessee (615) 356-7636
Florida Statewide (813) 984-4444	Nevada (702) 649-1516	Texas Statewide (713) 992-2757
	New Brunswick (506) 450-3825	Washington (206) 526-8266

24. AÑO NUEVO STATE RESERVE
California

Access is restricted in winter (to protect breeding elephant seals), but in late spring this state reserve is a great seawatching site. Loons, grebes, scoters, Pelagic Cormorants, Pigeon Guillemots, and Marbled Murrelets are all regular offshore, while the coastal rocks are likely to host Black Oystercatchers and Surf-birds. See also: *Birder's Guide to Northern California*, LoLo Westrich & Jim Westrich, publ. 1991; *Birding Northern California*, Jean Richmond, publ. 1985.

25. ANZA-BORREGO DESERT STATE PARK
California

On the dry side of the mountains east of San Diego, Anza-Borrego is a great place for desert birds. Costa's Hummingbird, Cactus Wren, Black-throated Sparrow, and others are common; Le Conte's Thrashers are present but scarce. Migrants often concentrate around Yaqui Wells and other oases. See also: *Birder's Guide to Southern California* (Lane Series), Harold R. Holt, rev. 1990; *Where Birders Go in Southern California*, Henry E. Childs, Jr., publ. 1990.