

New England

For much of the spring, the weather throughout the Region was cold and wet, owing mainly to a persistent, deep north-south loop in the jet stream that, for weeks, spun off a procession of low-pressure areas, and at the same time, opened the northern door, allowing cool Canadian air to seep southward across the Region. This pattern set up a dichotomous (and for the less hardy species, unfortunate) situation in which a deep, southerly, upper-level flow extending most of the length of the Atlantic Seaboard brought migrants northward but also spawned the lows that, in turn, produced the cold, wet weather pattern with mostly easterly and northeasterly winds in New England.

Coming on the heels of one of the most severe winters in many years, this pattern apparently had all the expected effects: delaying the passage of some migrants through the Region, delaying the arrival or reducing overall numbers of others, and disrupting the beginning of the nesting season for many breeding residents. It may also have resulted in above-average levels of mortality among, for example, some of the year-round residents such as Carolina Wren, early nesters such as herons and egrets, and early-nesting insectivores such as Eastern Phoebe and swallows.

The body of spring bird records at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, MA has always been a fairly reliable indicator of avian patterns Regionwide; this year, the "Mayor of Mount Auburn," Bob Stymeist, put it this way on the last day of May: "[...] a continuing assortment of migrants still are about. Of all the years for which I have notes [a lot!—ed.], this year surpasses all others for the number of different species of migrants for such a late date."

Despite (or perhaps, in some cases, because of) the rough weather, rarities were on hand in spades. Perhaps the deep southern loop in the jet stream accounted for the distinctly southern flavor to the list of rarities. Headliners from the Southeast included Red-billed Tropicbird, multiple White Ibis, Black Rail, and Painted Bunting, while those that probably arrived from points somewhat farther west included Yellow Rail, White-winged Dove, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Say's Phoebe; and Bell's Vireo.

Abbreviations: H.B.S.P. (Hammonasset Beach S.P., Madison, CT); Martha's Vineyard (Martha's Vineyard I., Dukes, MA); Monhegan (Monhegan I., Lincoln, ME); Plum I. (Plum I., Newburyport/Newbury/Rowley/Ipswich, Middlesex, MA).

LOONS THROUGH IBISES

Pacific Loons were reported only from Massachusetts. One to 2 were present at Race Pt. in Provincetown throughout Mar (BN), an individual was in Plymouth 9 Mar (D. Furbish), and another was in Rockport 15 Mar (J. Paluzzi). In addition to the perennial Eared Grebe that spent yet another winter and spring



in Gloucester, MA (through 8 Apr), 2 singles were in Connecticut at Waterford 22-23 Mar (G. Williams) and East Hampton 23 Apr (MSz). Subregional Editors in Rhode Island and Connecticut commented on a major influx of Red-necked Grebes in Mar and Apr into bays, inlets, and coastal ponds, away from more typical, outer coastal locations. Some, presumably from this flight, also appeared inland; several were noted in Connecticut, and a minimum of 7 at various interior sites in Massachusetts in the first two weeks of Mar moved inland earlier than usual (B.O.). A high inland count of 10 Red-neckeds came from Gill, MA 10 Apr (CM).

One or 2 American White Pelicans usually pop into New England every year, but they usually do so at coastal sites. This spring, an individual put in a surprise visit at Arnold Bay, Pantown, VT 9 May (*vide* WS). If accepted by the state records committee, the report of 7 fly-over Northern Gannets at Moncton Pond, roughly 25 km se. of Burlington, VT (heading in the direction of L. Champlain) 4 May would

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represent a record-high number for Vermont, the first spring record, and one of very few away from L. Champlain (JP).

A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in Middletown, RI 6 Apr (J. Manning) set a new record-early date for the state, and 10 Glossy Ibis in Narragansett, RI 23 Mar provided the 2nd earliest for the state. This spring may have been the first time ever that White Ibis was known to have occurred in three different New England states in the same year. An individual wearing a color band in S. Dartmouth, MA 27 Apr remained at least through 2 May (R. Fox); an unbanded bird, representing Rhode Island's 7th state record, was in Jamestown 9 May (W.

Munns), and 3 sightings in Connecticut included a flyby at H.B.S.P. 12 May (C. Raford), another flyby at Greenwich 18 May (L. James), and one at Stonington 21–23 May (B. Dewire et al.). Obviously, the first two records pertained to different individuals, but as for the Connecticut records...flip a coin. The color-banded individual in the Bay State was initially suspected of being an escapee, but the appearance of the unbanded bird in Rhode Island, and the possibility that the Connecticut records pertained to additional individuals provided a modicum of optimism to those hoping to add White Ibis to their respective lists.

TROPICBIRDS THROUGH WATERFOWL

The runner-up for top honors as "Bird of the Season" was the Bay State's 4th Red-billed Tropicbird at Muskeget I., Nantucket, MA 2 May (I. Nisbet). Black Vulture continues to make inroads farther into New England. North of Connecticut, reports included 3 singletons in sw. Massachusetts where, at certain sites, they are now seen regularly; one on outer Cape Cod at Truro, MA 30 Apr (D. Manchester), where they are still very rare; and another in Grand Isle, Aroostook, ME 27–28 Apr (B. Sheehan). This latter record, from a point in the "top" of Maine, near the New Brunswick border, no doubt represents one of the northernmost ever on the Eastern Seaboard. This same bird or perhaps a different individual was seen 3 May some 76 km n. of Bangor, Penobscot, ME (S. Otto).

A total of 13 Greater White-fronted Geese was probably a new seasonal high for the Region. Among these were 4 in Connecticut, 2 in Vermont, and 7 in Massachusetts. Two of the Bay State birds were on the Connecticut R. in Gill, and these may have been the same individuals as the 2 Vermont birds that were seen six days later, also on the Connecticut R., in Springfield. Four Tundra Swans were noted in Southwick, MA 19 Apr (fide SK), and another 4 on the Kennebec R. near Augusta 26 May (J. Rodrigue) were very late leaving the Region.

Eurasian ducks were well represented this spring. They included Regional totals of 9 Eurasian Wigeons, 5 Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal, and 3 Tufted Ducks. The teal included singles in w.-cen. Massachusetts (Groton/Sunderland), where they are rarely

detected, and the Tufted Ducks included a female at Westport, MA 15 Mar (E. Nielsen), another female at S. Kingston, RI through 10 Apr (fide R. Farrell), and a drake at Providence, RI on 1–9 Mar (M. Lynch). Other waterfowl records worthy of mention include high counts of sea ducks off Martha's Vineyard and Rhode Island. Estimated totals of 10,000+ Common Eiders and 5000+ Black Scoters were noted off the Vineyard in Mar (fide A. Keith), and ~7500 Surf Scoters and 2000 Black Scoters were counted in Mar off Charlestown, RI

(S. Tsagarakis). Tardy migrants included a state record-late Harlequin Duck at Greenwich Point, CT 15 May (MS); an even later Harlequin in Rockport, MA 29 May (RSH); 2 identifiably different (ad. and imm.) King Eiders that overlapped one day (14th) between 8 & 15 May in Rye, NH (SM); and single drakes Kings in Charlestown, RI on 17 May (D. Finizia) and Cape Elizabeth, ME 21 May (LB).

RAPTORS THROUGH CRANES

The latest chapter in the ongoing story of breeding Bald Eagles in New England featured the first successful nesting in Rhode Island (Scituate Reservoir) and the establishment of two new nesting sites in Massachusetts, in Haverhill and Brookfield. The sole Mississippi Kite of the season, at Providence, RI 14 May (A. Strauss, DF et al.; ph.), preserved the 10+ year Regional record for its "annual" status in spring. The relative dearth of kites this year was no doubt directly related to the preponderance of northeasterly winds and the associated inclement weather that held sway during kite prime-time around Memorial Day. Connecticut's first spring Swainson's Hawk (dark-morph imm.) came from Preston 11 May (D. Provencher). A total of 4 migrant Golden Eagles were logged at two cen. w. Massachusetts hawkwatch sites (Barre/Granville) between 25 Mar and 15 Apr (B.O.), and a Golden that may have spent the winter locally was present at Pawlet, VT 9–16 Mar (fide WS). The 2nd consecutive winter visit by the South



Most records of Mew Gull in the Northeast involve the European nominate race, also known as Common Gull. This excellent flight shot shows the diagnostic wing pattern of *Larus canus canus*, with more extensive black in the primaries, especially on P8, than in *brachyrhynchus* Mew, as well as the more distinct streaking on the head and nape. Photograph by Erik I. Johnson.

Boston, MA Gyrfalcon came to a close 2 Mar (B.O.), and several lucky hawkwatch regulars were rewarded for their diligence by a flyby white-morph Gyrfalcon at Truro, MA 29 Mar (D. Manchester et al.).

Beating out the tropicbird by a bill for top honors was New Hampshire's first Black Rail. What put this bird over the top in this esteemed category was its uncharacteristically cooperative behavior. Seen and heard by at least 100 people in Greenland between 19 & 26 May (M. Tarr et al.), it vocalized frequently and several times even revealed itself at close range to crowds of birders. A Yellow Rail was heard briefly but clearly in an extensive cattail marsh in Lynnfield, MA 17 May (M. McWade, P. Fitzgerald). None of the veteran Massachusetts birders queried by this editor could remember a previous record of a singing Yellow Rail in the state, though several "tickers" were heard 10+ years ago during a series of spring marsh bird surveys in ne. Maine. Two King Rails, the only ones reported anywhere in the Region, were also in the Lynnfield marshes the same night.

The Sandhill Crane that returned for the 5th consecutive year to Munroe, NH on the Connecticut R. may have accounted for reports from Walden, VT 4 Apr (fide WS) and Lancaster, Coos, NH 5 May (M. Hinten). Likewise, the same 3 birds may have accounted for reports in Connecticut of 3 Sandhills in Greenwich 22 Mar (MS), Mansfield 28–30 Mar (M. Rubega), and Lebanon 2 Apr (D. Rottino). A flock of 5 Sandhills was seen over Provincetown, MA 31 May (G. Page, B. Pease et al.). While a count of 5 or more is very unusual in the Region, such sightings may become more frequent now that Sandhills are nesting in upstate New York and Maine.

PLOVERS THROUGH ALCIDS

The only American Golden Plover of the season arrived a bit early in Westerly, RI on 10–29 Apr (R. Larsen et al.); also in Westerly was the season's only Ruff (Reeve) 4 May (BN, J. Sones). The Breachway in Charlestown, RI is emerging as one of the premier shorebird spots in the state (remember the Mongolian Plover). The avian highlights there this spring were 3 Black-necked Stilts 22–28 May (JSJ et al.). Two Red-necked Phalaropes in the Springfield Reservoir, Springfield, VT 25 Apr were a rare (and somewhat early) spring find for the state.

Little Gull reports included 8 birds in Connecticut, 3 in New Hampshire, and 4 in Lynn, MA, the latter of which were present for



Mississippi Kites have been moving northward for over a decade and now regularly make appearances in New England. Though just a silhouette, this shot shows the distinctive kite shape as well as the short tenth primary. Photograph by Susan Talbot.

roughly a week in late Apr/early May among a flock of roughly 1500 Bonaparte's Gulls (B.O.). Inexplicably, Mew Gull is found nowhere more regularly in the e. United States than in Boston and Newburyport Harbors. Despite this relatively high frequency of occurrence, however, their racial identity has very seldom been determined. Hence, we still have a rather poor sense of the local ratio of *canus* to *brachyrhynchus*, though the former is probably more likely here. The racial identity of an ad. *canus* in Newburyport, MA 8–10 Mar (JB, P. Baicich et al., ph., vt.) was determined by the examination of photographs of the bird in flight, revealing the all-important primary pattern. Did the lack of reports of Lesser Black-backed Gull in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Connecticut really mean that this species was not seen in these four states, or are birders becoming a bit complacent about reporting them now that the species has become so regular? For the record, one was reported from Rhode Island, and 11 were reported from Massachusetts.

High counts of Common Murre included 7 at Cox's Ledge off Massachusetts/Rhode Island 8 Mar (G. Williams et al.) and 11 at Provincetown, MA the same day (BN). Two tardy, breeding-plumaged Commons flew by Andrew's Point at Rockport, MA 27 May (RSH), and another (?) 2 frequented the Isles of Shoals (Maine/New Hampshire) through May (and beyond).

DOVES THROUGH CORVIDS

A White-winged Dove that dropped in at Monhegan 30–31 May (L. Bevier et al., ph) furnished about the 9th Maine record. The Chuck-wills-widow that has spent the last few summers in Wellfleet, MA was first noted back on territory on 16 May (L. de la Flor). Chucks have yet to be found nesting in the state, but given the fact that territorial birds have been present on the Cape and Islands sporadically for roughly 30 years, and annually for at least the last 10, there can be little doubt that they already have.

A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher brightened the scene in Prospect Harbor, Hancock, ME 11–14 May (P. Altman, J. Smith, ph.), and a Say's Phoebe in Bedford, MA 17–18 May (D. Ranney et al., ph.) furnished a very rare spring record for the Region. Monhegan was jumping this spring, especially during the last ten days of May. The jewel in the crown was a Bell's Vireo (judged to be an Eastern Bell's) 20–21 May (PN, R. Eakin, G. Dennis, ph.). Representing the 2nd state and Regional record, the bird was photographed by Geoff Dennis who, several years earlier, also succeeded in securing photos of the Region's first (and still only) Virginia's Warbler—also on Monhegan. The previous Bell's record came on 23 Oct 1998 (P. Donahue, *fide* JD).

Fish Crows appeared to be more widespread at the ne. limit of their range in Maine.

SA The most disheartening story of the spring was the news of yet another offshore oil spill, this one just off the south coasts of Rhode Island and Massachusetts. On 27 Apr, roughly 98,000 gallons of number 6 fuel oil were lost from a barge that struck a ledge while under tow, and as of this writing, the crude had impacted at least 150 km of shoreline. Compared to many spills, this one was relatively minor both in terms of the quantity of oil and the apparent impacts it had on local wildlife—which is not to say impacts were negligible. But it could have been much worse; the barge was carrying 4 million gallons. Though migrant loons appeared to be the hardest hit, the most dire threat to local breeding species was to the large numbers of Roseate Terns that nest in Buzzards Bay. Roughly half of them nest on Ram I., Mattapoisett, MA, the perimeter of which was heavily oiled. If the birds, which were still returning from migration, had returned to the colony, they almost certainly would have become badly oiled themselves. So, the decision was made to install noise-makers on Ram I. to discourage the terns from settling, and at the same time, place decoys and tern-call-playback devices on nearby Penikese I. in an effort to induce the Ram I. birds to settle at this relatively unscathed site for the season. More details regarding these outcomes and specific effects on nesting birds, particularly the Roseate Terns, will be forthcoming in the Nesting Season issue.

Reports came from Biddeford, Falmouth, Lewiston, Topsham, Portland, and Camden. Fish Crows also returned to Burlington, VT, the only known nesting locale in the state (TM). Three Common Ravens were seen well into the species' breeding season at Durfee Hill, RI 27 Mar (JSJ), and this spring also featured a record-high number of Common Ravens in e. Massachusetts. Pairs returned to nesting sites newly established last year at Blackstone and Foxboro, and (prospecting?) singles were noted at Rockport (25 May), Boxford, Maynard, Concord, Wayland, and Canton. The latter area was where one or more adults were seen carrying food last year, although no nest or fledged young were discovered.

SWALLOWS THROUGH BLACKBIRDS

Early swallows in Massachusetts included Barns on 25 Mar (Maynard) and 27 Mar (Truro), and an early Barn in Rhode Island appeared at Trustum N.W.R. 27 Mar. We have to wonder how these birds fared thereafter, given how long they had to go before spring weather arrived to stay. We may have to wait until the results of the next series of Christmas Bird Counts before we can quantitatively evaluate what impact the severity of this past winter and spring had on Carolina Wrens. It had been a long time since they had had to endure such conditions, and while empirical data are lacking so far, anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that this species took a big hit.

In addition to the White-winged Dove and Bell's Vireo, birders on Monhegan in the last ten days of May were treated to a parade of other fancy visitors. These included Golden-winged Warbler (2), Worm-eating Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Summer Tanager (2–3), Lark Sparrow, and Dickcissel. Incidentally, the Summer Tanagers on Monhegan outnumbered the total reported from the entire state of Connecticut (one). Elsewhere in Maine, single Yellow-throated Warblers were seen at Portland and at Saco, a Kentucky was at Boothbay 16 May, and an ad. male Audubon's Warbler appeared at Whitefield, Lincoln 5 May (PN). In Massachusetts, high counts (for spring) of Palm Warblers

included 125 at Plum I. 29 Apr (RSH) and 80 at Hingham 4 May (R. Finch). A single late Palm was still at Hingham 26 May (C. Dalton). Northernmost among annual s. "overshooters" were a Summer Tanager at Lyndonville, VT 6–8 May (*fide* WS), a Yellow-throated Warbler at Hanover, NH 3 May (M. Krenistsky), and a Blue Grosbeak at Bangor, ME 15 May (*fide* JD).

An overwintering Clay-colored Sparrow in Newburyport, MA remained until 20 Apr (B.O.), and Clay-colored in May (by which time they are usually acting territorial if not actually nesting) included singles at Athol, MA, Grand Isle, VT (site of prior nesting), Charlestown, RI (singing male), and Windsor, CT. Fox Sparrows were reported from New Hampshire in above-average numbers (e.g., 10 at one feeder), and a high count of 21 Fox Sparrows came from Lincoln on 12 Apr (MR). In addition to the Monhegan Lark Sparrow, another Lark was noted at Springfield, MA 14 Apr (E. Rutman).

An ad. male Painted Bunting made a one-day splash at a feeder at Brunswick, Cumberland, ME 15 May (K. Taber et al.), a Yellow-headed Blackbird put in a brief visit at Northampton, MA 3 Mar (A. Magee), and 2 other Yellow-headed, both in Maine, were found at Greene/Wales, Androscoggin 2 May (E. Eklund) and at Scarborough, Cumberland 13 May (L. Eastman). One or two pairs of Boat-tailed Grackles were present again at the Great Meadows Marsh, Stratford, CT (*fide* GH).

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