THE CHANGING SEASONS: The Summer in Brief

Edward S. Brinkley

9 Randolph Avenue

Cape Charles, Virginia 23310

This essay will be shorter than usual, in order to make room for the expanded contents of this special issue on Caribbean birds. Most of the regional reports from June and July 2003 largely affirm and expand upon themes from the spring season's essay: late migrants continued to linger south well into June (flycatchers, thrushes, certain warblers), doves (Bermuda got its first White-winged) and other expanding or overshooting southern species continued to be detected well north of their usual ranges (Brown Pelican, southern waders, Painted Bunting), and a handful of northern species stayed south to oversummer (eiders and other seafowl, loons). All in all, the season was without dominant, unusual, or obvious trends, as is often the case, but the relative quiet of these months permits reflection on minor themes that do arise.

The weather in June continued May's pattern: the cool, wet La Niña in the East and eastern Midwest persisted well into month's end and tapered off only in early July, bringing warmer, much drier weather east of the Great Plains, while warm, very dry weather remained the norm in the West, almost everywhere, well into Alaska, where Thede Tobish called it "a strong, high-pressure-filled, glorious summer." Worldwide, 2003 had the third warmest northern-hemisphere on record in 150 years; in North America, this was experienced mostly in the West. Probably as a result of these conditions (and the early, warm spring) in Alaska, observers noted breeding conditions and timing there to be 10-14 days ahead of long-term averages. The mild Arctic summer was generally credited with good nesting success for Brant and other geese and for high-latitude shorebirds, for which there were several record-early "fall" arrivals of juveniles (e.g., Least Sandpiper in southern Ontario on 7 July). On the Atlantic coast, by contrast, easterly winds and storms in June reduced nesting success in colonial and beach nesters from New York to Virginia, and the cooler, wetter weather negatively impacted early nesters, such as raptors and swallows, from the eastern Great Lakes eastward, but may have benefited many marsh- and field-nesting species. Tropical systems were few: *Claudette* in Texas and *Bill* in Louisiana entrained a few seabirds, but these storms' fallouts were modest, other than several large counts of Magnificent Frigatebirds in Texas.

East/west

Alaska's many Siberian birds in June—multiple Red-breasted, Gray-spotted, and Siberian Flycatchers among them—and the Alpine Swift on Guadeloupe 21 June and later are reminders that the supposed June doldrums are deceptive. Less dramatic examples of vagrancy *within* the continent, such as New Brunswick's first Golden-crowned Sparrow on Machias Seal Island 28 June, underscore several points made in the lead article of the last issue, among them that certain "vagrants," especially those that appear in summer, fail to fit established patterns for the given species but may reflect a general tendency of failed breeders or pre-breeders to wander widely at this season (Buckley and Mitra 2003). A Western Tanager on that same Machias Seal Island 21 July, however, was the only other exemplary western bird east!

In the West, where eastern birds can be legion in the month of June, "slim summer lists" of eastern birds came from most California compilers, although there were several remarkable records, including rare nestings. An Eastern Wood-Pewee (*singing*, mercifully) was at Sacramento 22 June, a sixth for the Middle Pacific Coast region, while a Least Flycatcher near Chester, California 24-25 June was probably also a late lingering spring vagrant. A Least Flycatcher in Humboldt County 2 July was found *nesting*, only the second such record for the state. While these records may give us pleasure as hunters of the uncommon, it's worthwhile repeating here how important it is to follow up on reports of late-spring vagrants, as many of them could be potential pioneer settlers—especially to states such as California, where "vagrants" sometimes arrive by the bushel in late spring. Gray Catbird, for instance, normally shows up in California in autumn, but this late spring saw four in the northern part of the state, and the species does nest in Oregon. Confirming a new nesting species for a state or province (or country—see the articles in this issue) is surely as thrilling as finding a new species overall, yes?

Eastern species west were otherwise few and far between, at least in comparison to more fecund years. Washington had its fourth summer-season record of Myrtle Warbler, with another in Oregon, but these were seen in early June only. A singing Black-throated Green Warbler near Vantage, Washington 14 June was more remarkable, only a second for the state. For the first time in almost a quarter century, American Redstarts—frequent spring visitors out West—nested in Arizona, with a pair and young seen from late June through mid-August at the South Fork of the Little Colorado River, near Eagar. In New Mexico, a Wood Thrush in Frijoles Canyon 19 July was the first July record for that state, and one at Boise, Idaho 6 June would represent a first record for that state.

Overshooters—some stay; some nest; some transgress

Most tundra-nesting species that linger in the Lower 48 well into summer are probably pre-breeders, injured or ailing birds, or just, for whatever reason, taking the breeding season off. Pacific Loons in Tennessee (road-killed), North Carolina, and Montana were not prospecting new nesting areas, nor were the Common Eider in Michigan, King Eider in New York, or Harris's Sparrow in Missouri. Southern species found well north of breeding range, however, are usually associable with familiar patterns of "over-

shooting" or "expansion" of some sort, and some of these may well be considered prospectors to potential new nesting areas, even unlikely long-distance overshooters such as Alaska's Northern Mockingbird and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, which have nested exceptionally as far north as Labrador City, Newfoundland & Labrador, and Wells, Maine, respectively.

Brown Pelican is a species that has defied expectations for three decades, or roughly a decade after the banning of DDT. Despite four centuries of ornithological observations from coastal Virginia, for instance, there were no indications of its presence, at all, in that state until the twentieth century; the formation of small nesting colonies in 1987 has resulted, within a decade, in counts of as many as 1500 nests per year. Nesting in Maryland, and attempted nesting ("practice nesting") as far north as New Jersey, have quickly followed. With the recent records of the species from Alaska, perhaps we should not be shocked that New Brunswick confirmed its first record—in the northern part of that province—this season and that Newfoundland's first record also came this year, with another bird to the south in Nova Scotia, where still a major event. Québec also had at least one Brown Pelican this season. (Some eastern Canadian records surely involved the same individual.) With all this wandering and the attempted nestings in the Hudson-Delaware region, the questions arise: What limiting factors might there be in the strong northward expansion of this species? Is lack of potential nesting areas one such limitation? Could Brown Pelican nest well into southern New England, if undisturbed sandy islands were available there? Are there reasons to consider creation of artificial spoil-island habitat for this and other beach-nesting colonial waterbirds in the Northeast, given the intense human pressure on mainland beaches? (The answer, by the way, is *yes*.)

Southern ardeids and allies are likewise prized in the north country, and the usual roamers (whether as spring overshooters or post-breeding wanderers) are lately joined out of range by even more southerly southerners, such as Roseate Spoonbill and Reddish Egret. This phenomenon, like the extralimital appearances of Brown Pelicans (see the fall 2002 regional reports), extends across most of the continent, although the patterns are still fairly weak. In New Mexico, two Roseate Spoonbills turned up 12 July at Bitter Lake N.W.R., while in Missouri and Illinois, single spoonbills were found 30 June and 22 June, respectively. Closer to breeding areas, two July spoonbills in "upstate" Louisiana were thought to have been refugees from Tropical Storm *Bill*; the same is conceivably true of a bird at Noxubee N.W.R. in Mississippi and 8 birds in Desha County, Arkansas, but their dates of discovery followed the storm's passage by some weeks. We should consider, too, that this species nests well to the south of the United States—a new colony was discovered this season in El Salvador, for instance, a first for that country—and that vagrants to northern sites may well be from Central American populations, as with Wood Storks and other waterbirds. Much the same could be said of the animated Reddish Egret, individuals of which turned up in Virginia (its first, 20 June), Kansas (first, 21 June), Maryland (first, 23 June), New Mexico (first documented, 28 June), Rhode Island (first, 5 July+), and Massachusetts (fourth, 20 July). (The Virginia/Maryland and Rhode Island/Massachusetts birds were reportedly of different ages, but probably no more than two birds were involved in these four records.) Two Reddish Egrets at Green Turtle Cay in the Bahamas were north of the species' range—21 June, in the same week as other records.

Those waterbirds known to be in decline in most parts of range tend not to produce records out of range, or at least fewer records. A Wilson's Plover at Mecox Bay, Long Island, New York 7-8 June and another in Massachusetts at Crane's Beach, Ipswich 6 June were possibly Virginia breeders whose nests had been overwashed in the easterly gales of the earlier part of that week. Such birds are not likely to find appropriate nest sites to the north of the Delmarva, where the species has been extirpated at the northern end of its breeding range (New Jersey) for four decades.

Wandering birds from the south do, sometimes, put down roots. California enjoyed it first nesting of Ruddy Ground-Dove at Calipatria this year (following a large fall flight in 2002), while Louisiana had its first nesting of Gray Kingbird at New Orleans. (Another Gray Kingbird was noted, much farther out of range, in Ontario in late July, a mid-summer record for which there is precedent [see Armistead and Iliff 2003].) What other species might we watch carefully for signs of breeding? Will tongues cluck and wag if I suggest Green Violet-ear? In addition to the wayward individual that spent the entire summer in West Virginia, only a few meters from Maryland, the two violet-ears found in spring near Johnson City, Texas stayed through most of July, as did two more in Texas together near Garner State Park and another in the Davis Mountains of that state (perhaps the best potential breeding habitat?) in early July. These birds, like the ground-doves, were long-stayers that could easily set up shop in Texas; Green Violet-ear nests as far north as San Luis Potosí state in Mexico, which is just south of Tamaulipas. Other southerly montane nesters out of known nesting range in the United States included Painted Redstarts in the Davis Mountains (three birds) and in Kansas (!) and an Elegant Trogon in Texas's Chisos Mountains. A Yellow Grosbeak reported in the same state at Big Bend will be scrutinized for possible signs of captivity. Finally, scattered sightings of long-staying Zone-tailed Hawks from southwestern Utah, from Monterey County, California, and from Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico should be monitored—only one more bird (of the opposite sex) is needed for a local breeding record.

Wide-wandering individuals sometimes find themselves inclined to nest but in a situation of mate scarcity, and so they pair with the next-best thing. The situation in southern Arizona with Berylline Hummingbirds and Flame-colored Tanagers continues to be difficult in this regard, as hopeful observers often report "pure" individuals (rarely documented or photographed) of both, but local ornithologists and birders tend to find hybrids or backcrosses more often. Nevertheless, a pure pair of Flame-colored Tanagers stayed the season in Madera Canyon, and a male was in Miller Canyon again this year, with at least four apparent hybrids reported from Rucker, Madera, and Carr Canyons through the summer. Extralimital wandering in Glossy Ibis (two in Southern California this summer) continued to result in apparent hybrids with White-faced Ibis in the Salt Plains of Oklahoma this season, where up to three apparent hybrids were documented (cf. Arterburn and Grzybowski 2003).

Some hybrid combinations are fairly well known and expected—such as Lazuli x Indigo Bunting (in Manitoba) or Cinnamon x Blue-winged Teal (in Alberta this season)—whereas others are rather novel. Despite a fairly broad overlap of range in the center of the continent, East-

ern and Western Kingbirds had been documented nesting together only once or twice in Michigan and less certainly in Nebraska, Indiana, and Ohio. In Maryland, a Western Kingbird returning to Fort McHenry in Baltimore shared nest duties with an Eastern Kingbird for the summer, raising young through the end of July. The young birds, however, showed no outward sign of Western Kingbird genes; all appeared to be typical Eastern Kingbirds. Day and Iliff attribute this outcome to the "swinging" habits of kingbirds, in which extra-pair copulations are hardly uncommon (see the Middle Atlantic regional report for full details). Such a pairing can certainly be called extralimital "nesting," even if interspecific gene exchange has not occurred.

Interbreeding between distinct *sub*species—which this journal does not normally term "hybridization" (see this issue's article on Cayenne Terns nesting with Sandwich Terns)—results in fascinating but often very difficult-to-characterize individuals, such that regional editors refer to "flickers displaying phenotypic characteristics of Yellow-shafteds," rather than simply to vagrant "Yellow-shafted Flickers," across wide areas of the West. The hybrid warbler from New Jersey pictured in the Pictorial Highlights poses a similar difficulty: hybrids sometimes display a plumage with characters not consonant with either parent. Several possible parents for this bird have been suggested, among them Yellow-throated Warbler, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. (This individual appears to be the same one reported in 2002, perhaps prematurely, as a "Sutton's Warbler," which is thought to be the F_1 hybrid of Yellow-throated Warbler and Northern Parula.) In the area under consideration, Stokes State Forest in northwestern New Jersey, none of the postulated parent species is numerous as a nester, and in my limited experience there (as a participant in the World Series of Birding), I would not expect breeding from any of the four at that corner of Grau and Skellinger Roads! So perhaps here is a case of multiple mate scarcity. The product, whatever the parentage, is a very fetching bird, most worthy of documentation.

Seabirds

The Pacific Ocean in this journal's area of coverage stretches from the Bering Sea south to the Eastern Tropical Pacific off southern Central America; we also cover waters around the Hawaiian Islands. In this vast expanse, we expect the unexpected. Perhaps few expected, though, a Townsend's Shearwater in the waters over Swiftsure Bank, west of the U.S./Canadian border; this Endangered species is not known north of Baja California Sur. Much farther to the southwest, pelagic coverage around Hawaii has improved in recent years, and three Buller's Shearwaters, rare here, were documented there this season, along with record-high counts of nesting Bulwer's Petrels.

On the continent's other side, Yellow-nosed Albatrosses are lately turning up everywhere except in my backyard, with good reports this season from Florida (two) and Massachusetts—and watch for an exciting report of one in Texas waters in September! Following the spring report from Dominica, a Bulwer's Petrel turned up off Guadeloupe, noted from a seawatch—only the third for the Caribbean, although there are several reports from Barbados waters. With most vagrant seabirds, potential nesting well out of range seems unlikely, and presumably these records refer to migrants passing from the Southern Atlantic back to nesting islands in the eastern North Atlantic. But as Bulwer's Petrel does nest at this latitude in the eastern North Atlantic, sparingly at many sites, might it not nest undetected in the Caribbean? The first Caribbean record was of a dead bird found on Soldado Rock off Trinidad, but this was probably a wrecked wintering bird on the edge of typical range (ffrench 1963). Nonetheless, night-listening in May at offshore seabird colonies in the area might net a first nesting record for the New World. As the lead article in this issue illustrates, seabirds are some of the least-known inhabitants of the Caribbean, and there is much to be uncovered still (Costa Rica's first Cory's Shearwater noted only this year). Forest wardens at Dominica, for instance, have known of local nesting of gadfly petrels (presumably Black-capped Petrels!) for some time in their area and can imitate their calls—yet these remain to be verified and documented. (Anyone good at rock-climbing?)

Freshwater marsh nesters & the "Green List"

For those who have long struggled with the various classifications of birds whose North American populations are considered imperiled, there is reason to take heart. The American Bird Conservancy (ABC), using data gathered from many sources, in particular from Partners in Flight (PIF), has assembled a "Green List" of North American birds of conservation concern (Table 1; <http://abcbirds.org/greenlist.htm>). In the words of the ABC website: "This is the first time that a single, consistent set of criteria has been used for all birds in order to produce a comprehensive set of priority species for conservation." The three categories (Highest Continental Concern; Moderately Abundant Species with Declines or High Threats; and Species with Restricted Distributions or Low Population Size) are not as pithy as older categories such as "Endangered" or "Threatened," but then these had to be qualified and clarified so often that their usefulness was often limited in any case. The Green List is a step in the right direction.

The new categorizations validate our own field experiences, I believe, to a higher degree than past lists (although the interactive "Blue List" should be remembered here for its nuance). The declining Mountain Plover, for instance, which shamefully has no federal listing in the United States, is correctly listed as of "Highest Continental Concern" by the ABC. Henslow's Sparrow, which figures on several state lists as "threatened," also received the ranking of "Highest Continental Concern," which certainly accords with our experiences of decline in the eastern prairies and in the Northeast (see the Hudson-Delaware report), although the species appears to be gaining ground along the western border of its range. In the near future, we might see Common Nighthawk appear in one of these categories, as correspondents to this journal have detected sharp declines in the Midwest and Northeast in recent decades. Arguably, this bird could already be included in the second category.

With the long-term, massive decline in freshwater wetland acreage (and degradation of existing wetlands) across most of the continent, species that nest in such habitats are often found in very small numbers (or are locally extirpated) where once very common nesters, and some dozen of the Green List's birds are tied to such habitats. I would like to consider this season's reports of King and Black Rails, Common Moorhen, American Bittern, Black-necked Stilt, and Sandhill Crane in the context of the new list.

Of these species, only the rails are included on the Green List, and both are of "Highest Continental Concern." King Rails received little comment from their core range (southeastern states) but were

TABLE 1. AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY GREEN LIST (DECEMBER 2003).

HIGHEST CONTINENTAL CONCERN

- Short-tailed Albatross
- Bermuda Petrel †
- Black-capped Petrel
- Pink-footed Shearwater
- Ashy Storm-Petrel
- California Condor †
- Steller's Eider *
- Spectacled Eider *
- Gunnison Sage-Grouse
- Lesser Prairie-Chicken
- Yellow Rail
- Black Rail
- King Rail
- Whooping Crane †
- Snowy Plover §
- Piping Plover †
- Mountain Plover
- Eskimo Curlew †
- Long-billed Curlew
- Marbled Murrelet §
- Xantus's Murrelet
- Craveri's Murrelet
- Thick-billed Parrot
- Red-cockaded Woodpecker †
- Ivory-billed Woodpecker †
- Black-capped Vireo †
- Florida Scrub-Jay †
- Island Scrub-Jay
- Bicknell's Thrush
- Bachman's Warbler †
- Golden-winged Warbler
- Colima Warbler
- Golden-cheeked Warbler †
- Kirtland's Warbler †
- Bachman's Sparrow
- Henslow's Sparrow
- Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow
- Tricolored Blackbird

MODERATELY ABUNDANT SPECIES WITH DECLINES OR HIGH THREATS

- Horned Grebe
- Greater Shearwater
- Audubon's Shearwater
- Band-rumped Storm-Petrel
- Brandt's Cormorant
- Pelagic Cormorant
- Little Blue Heron
- Brant
- American Black Duck
- Black Scoter
- Swallow-tailed Kite
- Swainson's Hawk
- Greater Sage-Grouse
- Blue Grouse
- Greater Prairie-Chicken ¶
- Scaled Quail
- American Golden-Plover
- American Avocet
- Lesser Yellowlegs
- Solitary Sandpiper
- Upland Sandpiper
- Whimbrel
- Marbled Godwit
- Sanderling
- Semipalmated Sandpiper
- Western Sandpiper
- Dunlin
- Stilt Sandpiper
- Short-billed Dowitcher
- Wilson's Snipe
- American Woodcock
- Wilson's Phalarope
- Red Phalarope
- Gull-billed Tern
- Roseate Tern ¶
- Least Tern ¶
- Black Skimmer
- Razorbill
- Pigeon Guillemot
- White-crowned Pigeon
- Band-tailed Pigeon
- Mangrove Cuckoo
- Short-eared Owl
- White-throated Swift
- Rufous Hummingbird
- Elegant Trogon
- Red-headed Woodpecker
- Olive-sided Flycatcher
- Willow Flycatcher ¶
- Bell's Vireo ¶
- Pinyon Jay
- Oak Titmouse
- Brown-headed Nuthatch
- Wood Thrush
- Sprague's Pipit
- Grace's Warbler
- Prairie Warbler
- Bay-breasted Warbler
- Cerulean Warbler
- Prothonotary Warbler
- Worm-eating Warbler
- Kentucky Warbler
- Canada Warbler
- Brewer's Sparrow
- Baird's Sparrow
- Harris' Sparrow
- Varied Bunting
- Painted Bunting
- Dickcissel
- Rusty Blackbird

SPECIES WITH RESTRICTED DISTRIBUTIONS AND LOW POPULATION SIZE

- Yellow-billed Loon
- Clark's Grebe
- Laysan Albatross
- Black-footed Albatross
- Cory's Shearwater
- Flesh-footed Shearwater
- Buller's Shearwater
- Manx Shearwater
- Black-vented Shearwater
- Black Storm-Petrel
- Least Storm-Petrel
- Red-faced Cormorant
- Magnificent Frigatebird
- Reddish Egret
- Emperor Goose
- Mottled Duck
- Harlequin Duck
- Mountain Quail
- Montezuma Quail
- Pacific Golden-Plover
- Wilson's Plover
- American Oystercatcher
- Black Oystercatcher
- Bristle-thighed Curlew
- Hudsonian Godwit
- Bar-tailed Godwit
- Black Turnstone
- Surfbird
- Red Knot
- Buff-breasted Sandpiper
- Heermann's Gull
- Yellow-footed Gull
- Red-legged Kittiwake
- Elegant Tern
- Aleutian Tern
- Bridled Tern
- Kittlitz's Murrelet
- Ancient Murrelet
- Whiskered Auklet
- Flammulated Owl
- Elf Owl
- Spotted Owl §
- Antillean Nighthawk
- Black Swift
- Costa's Hummingbird
- Calliope Hummingbird
- Allen's Hummingbird
- Lewis's Woodpecker
- Nuttall's Woodpecker
- Arizona Woodpecker
- White-headed Woodpecker
- Thick-billed Kingbird
- Gray Vireo
- Yellow-billed Magpie
- California Gnatcatcher†
- Black-capped Gnatcatcher
- Wrentit
- Bendire's Thrasher
- California Thrasher
- Le Conte's Thrasher
- Blue-winged Warbler
- Virginia's Warbler
- Lucy's Warbler
- Hermit Warbler
- Swainson's Warbler
- Red-faced Warbler
- Abert's Towhee
- Rufous-winged Sparrow
- Five-striped Sparrow
- Black-chinned Sparrow
- Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow
- Seaside Sparrow ¶
- McCown's Longspur
- McKay's Bunting
- Audubon's Oriole
- Black Rosy-Finch
- Brown-capped Rosy-Finch
- Lawrence's Goldfinch

Cross-referencing key to U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service listings: *† = all populations Endangered * = all populations Threatened ¶ = local populations or subspecies Endangered § = local populations or subspecies Threatened*

noted to have bred successfully in Missouri and in Indiana, at two sites each, and outlying birds were reported from far western Texas and central Veracruz, Mexico. Black Rails away from coastal areas were reported from Ohio, New Hampshire, and New Mexico, as well as along the Río San Telmo on the Baja California peninsula, in keeping with recent reports out of known range. Considering the massive number of field-hours represented in the 33 regional reports herein, these few reports of Black and King Rail seem to indicate genuine scarcity in areas where breeding habitat is now limited or absent. A forthcoming paper on the apparent decline of Black Rail in North America, by former regional editor Henry T. Armistead, is well underway. If you have unpublished or interesting data on this species from your state, contact him at harryarmistead@yahoo.com.

Common Moorhen is a species that, so it seems to me, gets overlooked by conservation workers, perhaps because it is relatively common and conspicuous in the southern parts of its range. But if this journal's reports are any indication, this species too is declining over large areas. Only in Illinois and Indiana were moorhens called "more widespread than normal," with reports from 14 sites (nesting confirmed at three). Elsewhere, there were a few broods in Missouri, one brood each in Iowa, Kentucky, and northern Minnesota, and three individuals in Utah and one in Nevada. The species was called "disturbingly scarce" along the southern Lake Ontario shore, while in downstate New York, they appear to be "quietly disappearing." One out-of-range individual was reported—from Pueblo West, Colorado in June, that state's tenth. Although the species is far more widespread and numerous than are Black and King Rails in most of North America, Common Moorhen bears watching.

American Bittern is another borderline species usually said to be declining through much of the southern ends of its range. This season's reports include a juvenile captured at Anahuac N.W.R. on the coast of Texas (first local breeding in over 60 years), one near Sabine Woods, also in coastal Texas, and another in El Paso County, far western Texas, a first local summer record. The counties of Santa Cruz and Sonoma in California also had rare summering bitterns. Counts from upstate New York peaked at nine in a morning, a respectable total. The past two fall migration seasons have shown, perhaps, a slight increase in sightings of migrant and wintering American Bitterns, and so it may be that populations are stable or recovering, rather than continuing to decline. A lack of good data, as in the case of other retiring marsh dwellers, clouds our understanding of its inter-annual status. Nevertheless, I would love to see this species, along with Black Tern, American Coot, and perhaps Common Moorhen, considered for inclusion in the "Moderately Abundant Species with Declines or High Threats" category.

By contrast, both Black-necked Stilt and Sandhill Crane have shown clear signs of breeding-range expansion and a consolidation of recent gains. The stilt was again numerous in Alberta, with up to 21 birds in neighboring Saskatchewan (see Gratto-Trevor 2001), and in eastern Canada, a vagrant reached Wolfville, Nova Scotia, where it remained for almost two weeks. Michigan's third record of the species was comprised of *two nesting pairs*, each with four fledged young! Farther south, Kentucky noted multiple extralimital birds, but, as co-editors Sloan and Palmer-Ball indicate, high counts from western Tennessee—of up to 182 birds—may make these wanderers "the norm" in years to come. Sandhill Cranes were found nesting in new areas in both Missouri and Iowa, and a pair nesting in upstate New York at Savannah was that state's long-awaited first. The Témiscamingue region of Québec again had nesting birds, and both New York and Québec had singles or pairs oversummering at widely scattered locations, as did Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. Maine had nesting cranes again this year; its first nests were documented only in 2000 (Melvin 2002). South Dakota had its first crane nest since 1910. The absence of Black-necked Stilt and Sandhill Crane on the Green List, despite their patchy, local distribution and small numbers away from core range, seems appropriate.

Of interest is that no species of swan is included on the Green List. Trumpeter Swan, which nests on freshwater bodies, is in a mode of expansion, certainly, and is no longer listed by any governmental agency as Threatened. In Manitoba, four nests of the species were located in Riding Mountain National Park, the first such nestings there; 20 adults and 10 cygnets were counted in August there. The effects of these great birds upon other beleaguered freshwater marsh nesters are unknown, but there is a marvellous opportunity right now to study their impacts.

Larids

The larids, especially the gulls and terns, echo *in nuce* many of the matters considered above: the increase in extralimital southern species to northern climes; the appearance of tropical species in the southern United States; the summertime vagrancy of Old World species to North America; and the difficulties posed by hybridization or interbreeding.

Once again, maritime eastern Canada produced an impressive variety of southern terns, including a Royal in New Brunswick, a Sandwich in Nova Scotia, and Gull-billeds in New Brunswick and Newfoundland. The only other extralimital Gull-billed Terns, interestingly, came from Pennsylvania. In North Carolina, a Cayenne Tern (the *eurygnatha* race of Sandwich Tern) was found near Fort Fisher, for at least the eighth report in the state. A Black-tailed Gull in Wisconsin, that state's first, wandered to Illinois and Indiana, providing still more first state records; curiously, reports of this eastern Asian gull from the Atlantic Seaboard have fallen off sharply in the past two years. Single White-winged Terns in Maine and Alaska were first and fourth there, respectively, and like Black-tailed Gulls, these have become increasingly scarce since the heyday of the early 1990s, when a few visited Delaware regularly. (In both cases, probably only a few individuals are responsible for multiple records over large areas and several years.) But no Palearctic vagrant was as unexpected as the apparent *longipennis* Common Tern found in coastal New Jersey on 14 July (see Pictorial Highlights). This Siberian breeder, found in Alaska only on western islands in the Bering Sea, has no track record of vagrancy in the New World, but it is known well out of range in the Old, as far as Cocos–Keeling Islands and even New Zealand (Marchant and Higgins 1990) and probably as far west as Israel (Shirihai 1996). Shirihai (1996) notes that "tens of [Common Tern] migrants aged 2nd-summer or older" that resemble *longipennis* are seen between April and June at Eilat, Israel. He notes, however, that such birds could be from the broad zone of overlap between *hirundo* and *longipennis*, a population that was once known as subspecies *minussensis* (Vaurie 1965). The ultimate judgment on this record has not been made, but the photographs do show something quite unusual for the East

Coast, whatever the bird is judged to be.

More expected in recent decades, summering Lesser Black-backed Gulls were noted coastally from Newfoundland to North Carolina and in the interior westward to Québec and Ontario, including adult birds. A nearly adult Yellow-legged Gull was nicely photographed at La Malbaie, Québec 14 June by an Icelander familiar with the species both in western Europe and as a recent vagrant to Iceland. The only other provincial record is from the Madeleine Islands in August 1973. This species is hardly known in North America, despite the documentation of many good candidates, and there are good reasons for caution in claiming this species out of range—the best being that the taxonomy and identification of this group are still quite unsettled (the taxonomic placement of populations nearest North America especially so). Another good reason is the recently documented hybridization of Yellow-legged Gulls with both Herring Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull in Belgium (see <http://www.surfbirds.com/ID%20Articles/adriaensgulls1203.html>) and the successful nesting of such hybrids with Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Although pure Yellow-legged Gulls clearly outnumber such hybrids, the appearances of many of the hybrid birds documented in the article, *including* those between Herring Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull, resemble Yellow-legged Gulls in some cases. Given the massive increase in Lesser Black-backed Gulls in North America in recent decades, and their presence right through the nesting season, it seems only a matter of time before North American nesting is documented, intraspecific or otherwise. Other apparent hybrid gulls observed were single Herring x Glaucous Gulls at Plymouth, Massachusetts and at Fort McMurray, Alberta, a relatively well-known combination, and a Herring x Great Black-backed Gull at Nahant, Massachusetts, a hybrid little known away from the Northeast and Great Lakes regions, where it is still very rare and poorly documented, with only a few specimens and photographs of hypothetical hybrids.

And speaking of Québec's Madeleine Islands and problems of larid hybridization: a Roseate Tern was found paired with a Common Tern there in June. Could the young bird resemble a Roseate Tern sufficiently to be reported as such? Roseate Tern reports from the continent's interior are extraordinarily few, and this mixed pair should give us pause when studying white terns, especially birds that appear to be extralimital. (Hybridization of White-winged and Black Terns is documented in the Great Lakes area, another cautionary tale.)

There are lessons to be taken from these rare instances of hybridization for field ornithologists and birders, among them that slightly atypical plumages in birds far out of range should be cause for keen scrutiny. Some individuals that appear to be perfect phenotypic matches for a vagrant species could well be "mongrels," as it were, either hybrids resembling another species altogether or individuals with a minor amount of genetic material from another species. Several warblers in New York—the Hermit Warbler at Jones Beach and the possible MacGillivray's Warbler at Braddock Bay—illustrate limit-cases in which the birding community found it difficult even to *name* the birds, in the first example because the bird's appearance suggested genetic material from (almost surely) Townsend's Warbler, in the second because the extent of variation in Mourning Warbler is poorly known. How much genetic material from another species makes a bird a "hybrid" in the conventional sense? Is a Hermit Warbler showing introgression from the Townsend's Warbler gene pool best called a "hybrid"—and do we likewise (dis)qualify a Blue-winged Warbler with a yellow cast to the wingbars? Are we certain that these features are not buried in a species' ancestral genotype, or are not just a result of routine recombination or mutation of genetic material without actual "hybridization" having occurred? In other words, could it be that there is a leap of thinking in our frequent application of the label "hybrid" to birds we see, an application that is "easier," in a sense, than recognition of other scenarios that are equally frequent or more so? By contrast, how often do we fall prey to assumptions of species-level "integrity" based on outward appearances of birds? How many orioles, hummingbirds, juncos, and flickers identified by sight as "pure" based on appearance (phenotype) actually harbor masked (or neutral) genetic material from other species? In modern science, occasional hybridization between members of valid biological species-pairs is no longer considered extraordinary or a bar to a species' taxonomic or biological integrity in most cases. What matters is whether hybrids are at a greater selective disadvantage than parental species, especially outside of a (frequently narrow) hybrid zone: e.g., Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles. At the level of subpecies, New Jersey's potential *longipennis* Common Tern and North Carolina's Cayenne Terns raise difficult questions about taxonomic integrity and the field diagnosability of many subspecies.

Problematic individual birds generate marvellous discussions in scientific circles, where the significance of hybridization is energetically debated, but among birders they are sometimes perceived as "problems" in a negative sense, as they fail to fit the species-level pigeonholes with which many recreational birders operate. And so such birds are sometimes left out of field notes, off local summaries and monographs Should we not instead study, even celebrate the diversity they represent—and appreciate the intellectual exercise they provide, the redoubled caution they recommend? Our recent attention to hybrid albatrosses, hybrid ibises, and hybrid gulls and terns should give some indication of an answer, but we are equally interested, as are our friends at *Birding* magazine, in coming to grips with the many variations in plumage within a species—whatever their genesis.

Literature cited

Armistead, G. L., and M. J. Iliff. 2003. The vagrancy of Gray Kingbird in North America. *North American Birds* 57: 148-161.

Arterburn, J. W., and J. A. Grzybowski 2003. Hybridization between Glossy and White-faced Ibises. *North American Birds* 57: 136-139.

Buckley, P. A., and S. S. Mitra. 2003 Williamson's Sapsucker, Cordilleran Flycatcher, and other long-distance vagrants at a Long Island, New York stopover site *North American Birds* 57: 292-305.

ffrench, R. 1963. Bulwer's Petrel (*Bulweria bulwerii*) in Trinidad, West Indies. *Auk* 80: 379.

Gratto-Trevor, C. L. 2002. Bucking the trend: Increasing numbers of Black-necked Stilts in Canada. *North American Birds* 56: 246-249.

Marchant, S., and P. J. Higgins. 1990 *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand, and Antarctic Birds*. Volume 3: Snipe to Pigeons. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, Australia.

Melvin, S. 2002. First breeding records and historical status of Sandhill Cranes in Main and New England. *Northeastern Naturalist* 9: 193-202.

Shirihai, H. 1996. *The Birds of Israel*. Academic, London.

Vaurie, C. 1965. *The Birds of the Palearctic fauna*. Non-Passeriformes. Witherby, London.