THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology

Volume 18, No.1 **January 1998** Pages 1 - 48

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ABOUT OUR COVER

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*)

by Paul Fusco

We are pleased to have Paul Fusco's artwork once again grace the cover of *The Connecticut Warbler*.

Paul is employed by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Wildlife Division, as a Visual Media Designer. His excellent photos and drawings are found in the *Connecticut Wildlife* publication, and several of his photos have appeared in "The Warbler." Paul is currently Conservation Chairman of the Connecticut Ornithological Association.

A CONNECTICUT BIRDING YEAR - PART 1

David Provencher

Introduction to Series

This is the first installment of a four part, year long series on birding in Connecticut. The intent of these articles is to make your birding in Connecticut more productive and hopefully, more enjoyable. Each issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* during 1998 will contain an article about birding during that calendar quarter. The choice of calendar quarters versus the natural seasons is for ease of reference for beginning and intermediate birders. The natural birding seasons do not fall into the usual calendar quarters and they do not all consist of three months. The summer birding season, for instance, is considered to be only the months of June and July. Since the period this series will cover is a calendar year, we will begin with the period January through March.

In each article we will discuss where to go, when to go, and why to go to birding sites and locales to find the bird species most likely to be present in Connecticut at that time. Giving explicit directions to the many locations listed goes beyond the scope of these articles; therefore the use of a site guide such as *Connecticut Birding Guide* (Devine and Smith, 1996) is strongly suggested. We will also help you to understand the role weather plays in birding and how to be in "the right place at the right time." In addition to this, these articles will discuss how migration, bird distribution, population trends, and just plain good luck affect your birding success. The recommendations made in this series will be based upon one very important concept, the concept of probability. At any given time, at any given place, it can be predicted with a fair amount of confidence which species will probably be present, based upon historical data acquired over many years in Connecticut. This concept of probability allows a successful strategy to be developed for finding the bulk of the species present in Connecticut during a given period of time.

Throughout these articles reference will be made to the relative abundance in our area of the species mentioned. It must be remembered that abundance of a species may well change from season to season. A particular species may be very common in summer but virtually absent in winter, etc. Some species move into our area in an unpredictable way, being present in numbers some years and absent in others. This behavior is called "irruptive" and is tied to

food sources to our north. Any species described as irruptive may or may not be found in Connecticut in a given year. Some species are very common and found with ease at many locations, such as Mallard, and are usually not mentioned in the text.

Finally, we will include tips and suggestions on finding rarities in Connecticut for the advanced birder. A well thought out strategy will allow even a casual birder spending just a few days a month birding to observe over 200 species of birds in Connecticut during a calendar year. With a more serious commitment you should be able to push that number to 250 and beyond!

January and February: Introduction

New Year's Day is an exciting day for birders because every species seen that day is new for the year. On January first, there are probably more birders in the field in Connecticut than on any other day of the year. While most people are sleeping in after New Year's Eve parties, birders are grabbing their coats and binoculars and heading out at the crack of dawn, or earlier.

There are typically fewer bird species present in Connecticut during January and February than at any other time of the year. While this is a lean time for diversity, it is an important time to try to find certain species. It is at this time that birders are seeking out such winter visitors as waterfowl, eagles, owls, and finches as well as a number of other cold weather birds. The shoreline and river valleys tend to be the most productive areas during January and February due to their inherently more moderate weather conditions and available food sources. However, upland areas can be good for irruptive species such as northern finches, Northern Shrike, or perhaps a wintering Golden Eagle.

January and February: General Strategy

These two months are essentially identical in the birding opportunities they afford. This allows you to search for the bulk of the species present over a period of weeks. Birds wintering in Connecticut tend to be most concentrated around open water and therefore the most productive birding strategy is one heavily involving water. Most of your trips should be to areas such as Long Island Sound, river valleys, open lakes and ponds, reservoirs, and coastal marshes. Habitats of secondary importance include agricultural land, weedy fields, tracts of coniferous trees, and birdfeeders. Birdfeeders can create bustling little mobs of hungry birds while the surrounding woodland is remarkably empty of birds and ominously silent.

The prime birding objective of these two months should be water birds. These include loons, grebes, waterfowl, and other birds associated with water environment, such as gulls. Finding as many species of water birds as possible will require a few trips but you will be rewarded with different species each time, and there is always the possibility of finding something rare or unusual. Several different locations can be visited in a morning and repeated trips to one spot will often produce different birds. While making these trips to wet habitat, you will often be near productive land habitat and you will find many species of "land" birds by simply "bumping" into them.

While you can, to some degree, bird the shoreline with binoculars alone, the distances involved make a spotting scope an immense help, and at times essential.

Discussion

Winter's cold has settled in and so have the winter water birds. Nearly anywhere on the waters of Long Island Sound you should be able to find Red-throated and Common Loons, Horned Grebe, Common Goldeneye, and Red-breasted Merganser. Other common species of the open Sound you may see include Great Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant (wintering more often in recent years), Greater Scaup, Oldsquaw, Surf Scoter, and White-winged Scoter. Uncommonly you may find Red-necked Grebe, Northern Gannet, Common Eider, Black Scoter, Barrow's Goldeneye, and Bonaparte's Gull. Some of the water birds of the Connecticut shoreline at this time include American Black Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, and Great Black-backed Gull. Uncommon shoreline birds include Brant, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon (locally common), Canvasback (locally common), Lesser Scaup, American Coot, Sanderling, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin (locally common), and Iceland Gull (virtually all immature birds). The severity of the winter will have a direct affect on the species present and the number of birds. A severe winter will freeze more habitat to our north and drive more water birds into our area. A severe winter will drive some species out of our area as well. As an example, a hard winter will typically mean more Common Goldeneyes on Connecticut waters but fewer Green-winged Teal. Species that stay north in small numbers during mild winters but depart during hard winters are referred to as "half-hardy".

While searching coastal Connecticut it is important to explore any coastal marshes. These are now all too rare in our state. They

offer a unique habitat and often harbor species of particular interest in winter. Species that may be found using coastal marshes include American Bittern (uncommon), Great Blue Heron, Northern Shoveler (rare), Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk (irruptive), Peregrine Falcon (rare), rails (uncommon), Dunlin, Snowy Owl (irruptive), Short-eared Owls (irruptive), Horned Lark (uncommon), Yellow-rumped Warbler, Savannah Sparrow (uncommon), Sharp-tailed Sparrows (rare), Swamp Sparrow, Lapland Longspur (rare), Snow Bunting, Eastern Meadowlark (uncommon), and Common Redpoll (irruptive). Brush, trees, and weedy fields adjacent to coastal marshes often harbor wintering sparrows and finches such as American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow (rare), Dark-eyed Junco, Common Redpoll (irruptive), and American Goldfinch.

Rivers and river valleys offer the combination of fresh water and shelter from the winter's cold weather. Trees, brushy areas, and fields in these river valleys also often offer more food sources to wintering birds than upland areas. Fresh water marshes, when present, add to this attractive habitat. Species that can be found wintering in these areas include Common Merganser, Common Snipe (rare), Belted Kingfisher, Carolina Wren (uncommon), Eastern Bluebird (locally common), American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, wintering sparrows, Red-winged Blackbird (uncommon), and American Goldfinch. Eastern Screech-Owl is a permanent resident in Connecticut and it is often found near water. It can sometimes be seen roosting in holes in deciduous trees around water but may also be found in trees in parks and residential areas, particularly in the western half of the state. The recovery of the Bald Eagle from its brush with extinction has made the lower Connecticut River famous as an Eagle spotting area in recent years. During harsh winters when much of the inland waters to our north freeze these majestic birds can be almost common on stretches of the river. In addition to this, the lower Connecticut River valley tends to concentrate a number of wintering hawks and it can be very productive and enjoyable to spend a morning visiting the various lookouts along the river. Even a Golden Eagle or two has been discovered among the other raptors during recent years. The Housatonic River and its impoundments is another good area to search for Bald Eagles.

Fresh water ponds and lakes, when open, are also productive. A number of species have a strong preference for fresh water and when it freezes in our area will move further south. Species to look

for on ponds and lakes include, Pied-billed Grebe (uncommon), Canvasback, Redhead (rare), Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck (locally common to rare), and American Coot (uncommon).

Gulls are found throughout Connecticut. In some areas they are found in large numbers. When you come across a roosting group of gulls it is well worth your time to have a look. The common species in Connecticut at this time will be Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, and Great Black-backed Gull. In addition to these three you may find Iceland Gull (uncommon in the eastern end of the state and rare in the west), Lesser Black-backed Gull (rare), or Glaucous Gull (rare). On Long Island Sound you may find Bonaparte's Gull (uncommon), or Black-headed Gull (a rarity from Europe). Gulls can concentrate in large numbers at landfills and at favored roosts such as the flat roofs of large buildings, grassy fields, frozen ponds, and ball fields. These large gatherings offer a real challenge to anyone willing to spend some time sifting through the ever moving throng. Some landfills allow birders in to look through the gulls. You must stay out of harm's way and respect the right of way of the employees and users. There is nothing quite like standing on a foul smelling landfill on a bitterly cold and windy day!

Upland birding during the dead of winter, that is to say forests and interior areas of the state, can be mostly unproductive. It can, however, be locally quite productive. Valleys and swales can harbor areas of natural food sources which attract such birds as Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush (uncommon), American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Northern Shrike (irruptive), and Northern Cardinal. Coniferous stands deserve special attention. In these stands you may find such species as Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Long-eared Owl (uncommon), Northern Saw-whet Owl (uncommon), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (rare), Red-breasted Nuthatch (irruptive), Brown Creeper (uncommon), Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush (uncommon), and finches. Perhaps the best known group of irruptive birds are the "winter finches." These finches irrupt into our area on an unpredictable cycle and in varying numbers. These species include Pine Grosbeak, Purple Finch (an uncommon breeder), Red and White-winged Crossbills, Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin, and Evening Grosbeak. The northwest corner of Connecticut is perhaps the best area to search for these species but they can be entirely absent or in very low numbers. The best habitats to look in for these are conif-

erous tracts, fruit bearing trees, and birdfeeders. The best way to actually find them is probably by word of mouth, the best birding information source going. Never be afraid to ask other birders what they've seen. Most birders are quite happy to share their sightings.

Where, When, and Weather

The most productive birders are the ones who really bird a location well. Taking the time to really look around a spot can add to the day's bird list. While the prime target of these two months are water birds, you should poke and peer into all the other habitats you are in and around. Some winter species continuously creep southward over the course of a winter searching out new food sources. This can bring some winter visitors into our area for the first time late in the season, such as Common Redpoll.

There are some locations that are nearly "must visit" sites for birding Connecticut in January and February. These are headed by Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, simply the single best birding site in Connecticut throughout the year. Hammonasset offers waterbirds, hawks, marsh birds, shorebirds, gulls, owls, sparrows, and more. Hammonasset is also one of our most reliable locations for Lapland Longspur and has been good for American Bittern and rails. Another location quite similar to Hammonasset is Sherwood Island State Park in Westport which offers many of the same species. During the winter months Greenwich Point Park is open to the general public and offers excellent birding possibilities. Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford offers waterbirds, marsh birds, and fields. It also is perhaps the best location in the state for Common Eider. Though still rare, this species is becoming more and more common in southern New England waters. White Sands Beach (accessible to non-residents in the off season) and adjacent Griswold Point with the Great Island marshes offers varied habitat at the mouth of the Connecticut River. Such species as Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, and Short-eared Owl have been found here. This area, together with North and South Coves across the river in Old Saybrook, create a unique complex of habitats in a relatively small area. It is perhaps the most productive habitat complex of the Connecticut shoreline. This area is best birded during the morning hours when the birds are more active and the human population is less active. North and South Coves, Old Saybrook offer such birds as wintering Pintail, Canvasback, both Scaup, Ruddy Duck (uncommon), and gulls such as Iceland (uncommon), and Lesser-black Backed

(rare). New Haven harbor and adjacent shoreline, particularly to the west, can be very productive. Large rafts of Greater Scaup highlight an area that may also produce American Wigeon, Eurasian Wigeon (rare), Canvasback, Redhead (rare), Oldsquaw, Common Goldeneye, and much more. Milford Point in Milford and Great Meadows Marsh in Stratford offer a good variety of waterbirds and the best salt marshes in Connecticut. You should explore any access to Long Island Sound you can find.

It is important to visit locations more than once and to visit them at different times of the day and at different tides. Coastal species' life cycles are closely tied to tidal swings and different tides will often result in different birds being present. Any single site can seem very quiet one day and be alive with birds the next.

Fresh water locations that deserve special attention include Bantam Lake in Litchfield, the Connecticut River at the confluence of the Salmon River (good for eagles), the Connecticut River Museum in Essex (good for eagles and hawks), Gulf Pond in Milford, and the Groton Reservoir in Groton (good for Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Coot, and gulls). Any open fresh water near rivers or the shoreline deserves a look.

The best weather to search in is a dead calm under a cloudy sky. Under these conditions, every bird sitting on the water stands out in sharp relief, making finding them and studying them much easier. Windy conditions make it difficult to find the birds on the disturbed water or see them well. Bright sun often creates harsh glare. Prolonged cold spells freeze habitat to our north and drive more winter birds into Connecticut. If winter finches are visiting our area, it is well worth paying attention to bird feeders after a snow fall. Snow cover removes ground feeding opportunities from these birds, particularly Redpolls, and drives many of them to feeders.

Advanced Birding Tips

Long Island Sound offers a very real chance for rarities. This is particularly true during winter storms but even calm weather offers possibilities. A number of species rare or uncommon in Connecticut waters are found not very far away in the open waters of the Atlantic. Strong easterly winds may drive some of these more pelagic birds into Long Island Sound. This is particularly true if the winds blow for a prolonged period tiring the birds and interfering with their ability to feed. Species that may be affected include Northern Gannet, Common Eider, King Eiders, Black-legged Kittiwake, and alcids, particularly Razorbill. Perhaps the best location

to watch during these storms is in the eastern end of the sound, the area around the mouth of the Thames river and Harkness Memorial Park in Waterford. If you don't want to brave the foul weather, which can be very unpleasant, it can be productive to search Long Island Sound immediately after the storm abates. This is when the birds blown into the sound will be working their way back out to open water again, sometimes through the western sound. Strong westerly winds at this season make for a good day to study field guides in the comfort of your home.

A note here, Pacific Loon has been recorded more and more on the east coast in recent years. This species prefers deeper water than Common Loon but still should be looked for in the sound. If seen well, this species can be specifically identified in basic plumage. It may well be missed when present if not looked for. As of this writing there is one sight record of Pacific Loon for Connecticut but a number of records for Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

March: Introduction

The grip of winter weakens during March and the first tangible signs of spring migration slowly come to Connecticut. Probably the first people to feel the approach of spring are birders. While other people are still bundled against the cold, birders are out searching for returning species and species preparing for the upcoming breeding season. While you are not likely to add a great many species to your year list this month, it is still an exciting time. The courtship of waterfowl, the voices of owls in the night, and the dramatic flights of Woodcock speak eloquently of things to come.

March: General Strategy

During March birders tend to seek out specific species. The strategy of finding as much as possible during January and February gives way to looking for birds missed during those months and looking for the early spring migrants. Waterfowl are beginning to gather at favored locations before heading on to their breeding grounds; this behavior is called staging. Since things are "shaking up," this is the time to look for the water birds of winter that you have missed so far. It is also a good time to look for some rare but regular visitors, such as Black-headed Gull.

Discussion

Water habitat, sheltered valleys in the south, and coastal areas are still the most productive. Staging and migrating waterfowl of-

fer an opportunity to find species missed during winter. Red-throated Loon numbers on the sound can be quite impressive this month. Red-necked Grebes are moving and may show up at various coastal locations. A few early herons and egrets usually pop up at this time and Wood Ducks and Blue-winged Teal reappear. Scoters will be moving through the sound and can be seen flying in low strings eastward. Bonaparte's Gulls gather in large numbers at favored staging areas and vagrant Little Gulls and Black-headed Gulls can sometimes be found with them.

In March, woodland owls will send their haunting voices into the night announcing their presence, woodpeckers will be drumming on hollow trees, and the one of the most important birding aids really begins in earnest, birdsong. A highly recommended way to make your birding much more productive is to learn some of the songs and calls you will hear in the field. With a number of commercial recordings on the market, such as Peterson's Eastern Birds, it is quite easy. Your birding success, and enjoyment, will be greatly enhanced by knowing what unseen species you are hearing.

Large flocks of blackbirds start moving north through our area and can sometimes be seen like long black serpents along highways or rivers. These flocks will be a mixture of Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and Brown-headed Cowbirds but may contain a few Rusty Blackbirds.

Finally, spring has truly sprung, when you hear the burry song of the first returning Eastern Phoebe.

Where, When, and Weather

In searching for missed wintering species you should search the same locations you visited in January and February. Northern Gannets will migrating north again so keep a wary eye out for the odd one out over Long Island Sound. Any location with a good panoramic view of the sound is worth watching for sea ducks such as scoters and Oldsquaw moving eastward to leave the sound before turning north. Wooded swamps and the brushy edges of ponds and lakes may turn up gaudily patterned male Wood Ducks and their mates. Some locations, such as Station 43 in South Windsor, can hold significant numbers of Wood Ducks. Blue-winged Teal are returning now and can often be found in the same areas as Green-winged Teal, though in much lower numbers. Milford Point in Milford, Station 43, and Watch Rock in Old Lyme are traditional locations for Blue-winged Teal but they might be found in any marshy, shallow waters. One of the true delights of

March is the display flight of the American Woodcock. Usually a very shy and cryptically patterned denizen of woodlands, courtship makes this rotund little fellow quite demonstrative. The male flies upward in wide circle to a considerable height and then glides back to earth like a falling leaf while making loud twittering sounds. He then will sit and emit his nasal "peent" until he launches upward to repeat his performance. This bizarre display occurs at dusk and dawn and as a general rule is only done at temperatures of about 40 degrees Fahrenheit or warmer. Look for these performances where woodlots meet open areas such as fields or marshes.

The staging of north bound Bonaparte's Gulls results in impressive flocks that often fly in unison like a school of fish. This staging is usually at traditionally favored locations. Two such locations are Oyster River mouth in Woodmont and South Cove in Old Saybrook. When the tide is out at these locations the gulls gather on the mudflats in tight flocks to roost. Among these elegant little birds one can, with a little luck, find the Eurasian vagrants Little Gull and Black-headed Gull. These gatherings begin around the beginning of March and continue into early April.

The month of March is a month of contrasts. While the northwestern part of Connecticut may still be locked in the frozen fist of winter, the coastline and lowlands of the south can be quite balmy by comparison. During March the first insect eaters start to return and by visiting sheltered warm habitat, particularly around ponds and marshes, birders can usually find the first few Tree Swallows and maybe an Eastern Phoebe or two. These early birds sometimes pay a heavy price when winter weather returns with a late snow storm or bitter temperatures.

Advanced Birding Tips

During the winter months alcids gradually move southward on the open waters of the Atlantic. They reach their most southerly extension about this time and then slowly head northward again. This southern extension and turnabout raises the possibility of a few birds entering Long Island Sound. The most likely candidate to do this of its own accord immature Razorbill. Careful and patient birders have observed alcids in Long Island Sound even during calm weather. It is likely that alcids enter Connecticut waters more often than we realize, though they remain quite rare here. These pelagic birds are rarely close to shore and require a working knowledge of alcid plumages to identify. The two most likely alcids to enter the sound are immature Razorbill and Thick-billed

Murre. This pair offers a real identification challenge. March storms with easterly winds offer the best opportunity for finding alcids and the eastern sound may be the best area to search. Another rarity that should be watched for now is one of the most sought after species in North America, Ross' Gull. This rarity almost always associates with Bonaparte's Gulls during their migration and should be looked for at their staging sites. While there is only one record of this Asian species in our state, Ross' Gulls have been seen in recent years among staging Bonaparte's Gulls on Long Island, New York.

Conclusion

As winter winds down, the promise of spring migrants fills every birder's mind. By the end of March you should have found almost 100 species in Connecticut, possibly more. It is possible to find over 100 species during the month of January alone but this takes a fair amount of experience and a fairly serious commitment. Whatever total you have achieved, the reward of seeking and finding new species is the same for everyone. A new birder has a big advantage over an experienced birder; he or she has many more species to experience for the first time!

As you go to bed on the last night of March, to our south there will be millions of birds of many species that will soon be heading our way. Get your rest; you're going to need it.

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DAVID PROVENCHER, 43 Branch Hill Rd., Preston CT 06365

CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

Compiled by James M. Zingo

Beginning with this issue, The Connecticut Warbler will provide an ongoing, comprehensive bibliography of literature and other media specific to Connecticut ornithology or representing other contributions by Connecticut scientists and birders to the science or appreciation of birds. It will include books, papers in professional and popular journals, state and federal publications, and graduate theses and dissertations. I will also include other publications that, in my subjective judgment, are particularly relevant or otherwise worthy of note. For this first installment, I list a selection of publications from the last few years. At the end of each citation, the postal and/or e-mail addresses (if available) of the corresponding author or publisher are given in brackets followed by my own comments (if any) in italics. Despite trying to make this bibliography as complete as possible over the long-term, I will undoubtedly omit some ornithologically significant contributions. I would be grateful if readers would inform me of omitted works, errors, and future publications, and I encourage authors to provide reprints or citations of their work. Comments, suggestions, citations, and reprints may be sent to me via post (Department of Forestry & Wildlife Management, University of Massachusetts, Amherst,MA 01003-4220) or e-mail (jzingo@forwild.umass.edu).

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SHRIKE IDENTIFICATION NOTES (PITFALLS?)

Avian Records Committee of Connecticut

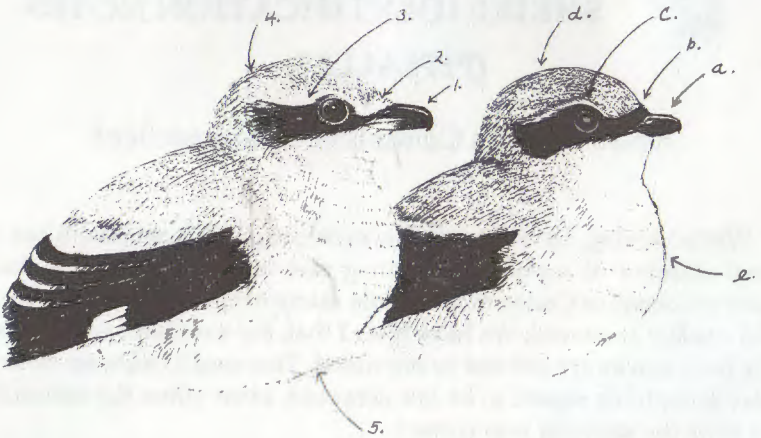
While serving on the Avian Records committee, members see a great number of reports concerning rare and unusual birds that have occurred in Connecticut. While many of these reports are fine and readily reviewed, we have found that, for a number of species, key field marks are left out or not noted. This could cause an otherwise acceptable report to be not accepted, even when the committee feels the sighting was correct.

In this and subsequent issues of the Connecticut Warbler, members of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut have chosen a species or group of species whose identification has proven problematic. We have researched the keys to help in the identification process, keeping with marks that are of use in the field in normal conditions. We publish these, not to show how much we know, but with hope that future reports of these birds will be well documented and add vital information to the natural history and occurrence of Connecticut's birds.

If you have any species that you would like to see covered in these pages, or if you have information that you would like to add to any of these identification notes, please contact Mark Szantyr, Secretary, Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, 2C Yale Road, Storrs, Connecticut 06268.

Shrike Identification Notes

Mark Szantyr, Avian Records Committee of Connecticut



Northern Shrike
Lanius excubitor

1. Bill long and strongly hooked. Often shows pale basal area but note that it can be all dark in late winter and early spring.

2. White nasal tufts and white loral area. Some may show slight black across top of bill, not as prominent as in Loggerhead.

3. White area above eye and mask continuous from lore can be quite prominent and sets off dark eye. On young birds in the early winter, the mask can be faint.

Loggerhead Shrike
Lanius ludovicianus

a. Short bill, usually all black though can show a slight pale base. Bill not strongly hooked.

b. Black of mask extends over top of bill and is usually quite prominent but caution should be used in this determination. Dark loral area.

c. Mask usually surrounds eye making eye hard to discern; may show a thin area of white above mask but not as much as in Northern Shrike. Usually a darker gray than Northern Shrike but this is variable and can be influenced by lighting.

Northern Shrike (cont'd)

4. Usually a pale gray but variation in races of Northern Shrike make identification by tone of gray troublesome. Light conditions can alter the perceived shade of gray. Young birds have a decidedly brownish cast that fades in late winter.

5. Undersides often show faint to sometimes obvious barring; most prominent in young birds in early winter. May sometimes be missing. Very often this barring is brownish in young birds.

Notes: Northern Shrike has longer wings and tail than Loggerhead Shrike. Primaries project farther from tertials than on Loggerhead. Northern, a larger bird, sometimes confused with American Kestrel when seen on an exposed perch. Northern often gives a more pale overall impression than Loggerhead. In winter, young birds appear considerably warmer brown than adult Northern or Loggerhead Shrike.

Loggerhead Shrike (cont'd)

e. In Southeastern birds, undersides usually a pale gray to white without barring of Northern Shrike; white throat set off by dark-headed look. Western birds which may occur in our area show faint vermiculations to underside. This is usually grayish. Could be confused with Northern Shrike.

Notes: Loggerhead Shrike smaller, more like a small Mockingbird. Usually gives the appearance of being darker than Northern Shrike. Loggerhead Shrike has very short wings and projection of primaries beyond tertials is quite short. Large head and smaller overall size result in a bull-headed look.

ORNITHOLOGY AT FALKNER AND GOOSE ISLANDS: OVERVIEW AND HISTORICAL RECORDS

James M. Zingo

Historically, the primary ornithological attraction of Falkner and Goose Islands has been a mixed colony of Common (*Sterna hirundo*) and Roseate (*S. dougallii*) Terns which have nested on one or the other island since at least as early as the 1600s (Sibley 1981). Falkner Island, located at 41°13'N, 72°39'W in Long Island Sound approximately 5 km off the coast of Guilford, New Haven County, Connecticut, is a 2-ha island consisting of a densely-vegetated plateau with generally steep slopes surrounded by a rocky beach (Figure 1). Owned by the U.S. government since 1801 and by the U.S. Coast Guard since 1939, Falkner Island has been part of what is now known as the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge since 1985 (Figure 2). Goose Island, about 1 km to the west-southwest, is much smaller than Falkner and, except for several large boulders, the main hummock of this low rocky landmass is the only portion of the island exposed at high tide. Goose Island is currently owned by Joel Helander, a Guilford resident and historian. More detailed descriptions of these islands are given by Satter (1978), Spendelow (1982), and Helander (1988).

The tern colony nested on Goose Island during most years from the mid-1800s through the mid-1900s, and has been nesting on Falkner ever since (Mackenzie 1961; Nisbet 1980, 1989; Spendelow 1983, 1994a, 1994b). Human disturbance in 1884 temporarily dispersed the colony, with no nesting Roseates from 1888-1913 (Sage et al. 1913) or later. Some Common Terns may have continued to nest throughout this period (Sage et al. 1913), but Hill (1901) stated that a house built and occupied on Goose Island dispersed the entire colony by 1901. The small shanty stood from about 1888-1912, but Goose Island was still occupied during the summer until about 1926; terns had resumed nesting there sometime between 1913 and 1930 (Helander 1988). Herring (*Larus argentatus*) and Great Black-backed (*L. marinus*) Gulls began nesting on Goose Island in 1949 and 1952, respectively, and displaced the terns to Falkner Island by 1958 (Mackenzie 1961). Many of the gulls, in turn, were displaced by nesting Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) in 1982 (Spendelow et al. 1983). Since 1978, the terns, gulls, and cormorants have been studied and protected by the research staff of the Falkner Island Tern Project (FITP).

Figure 1. An aerial view of Falkner Island c. 1988 (reprinted from Helander 1988 with the permission of the author/publisher).

Figure 2. Common Tern calling from its perch on a Falkner Island refuge sign on 23 May 1993.
photo by James M. Zingo

Historical records and long-term data are essential for successfully following trends in avian distribution and abundance, and thus essential for effective population management. This paper attempts to provide an overview of ornithological studies at Falkner and Goose Islands as well as a review of the birds found on these islands and in surrounding waters prior to the recent intensive studies. I have attempted to provide as comprehensive a review as possible of the historical records. Many of the available records are marked by uncertainty and discussed accordingly, and there are obviously huge gaps in our recorded knowledge of the avifauna of these islands, underscoring the importance of careful and consistent record keeping in ornithological monitoring.

Overview of Ornithological Studies

The birds of Falkner and Goose Islands probably first received significant attention from Captain Oliver N. Brooks, lighthouse keeper on Falkner from 1851-1882, who hunted and collected extensively on and near the islands during his tenure (Helander 1988). Although he collected, ate, and sold some tern eggs (Anon. 1881, Baird et al. 1884), he apparently also protected the colony from excessive depredations by millinery hunters and other collectors (Sage et al. 1913, Helander 1988). Subsequently, except for visits during the 1880s made by L.B. Bishop (Sage et al. 1913) and vis-

its from 1945-1960 made by Locke Mackenzie and Winston Bullard to the tern colony on Goose Island (W. Bullard pers. comm.), relatively little ornithological study occurred on the islands until the 1970s. Associates of the American Museum of Natural History's Great Gull Island Project, directed by Helen Hays, made irregular visits to the tern colony on Falkner Island in the early to mid-1970s, and Satter (1978) conducted a study of Herring Gull reproduction and behavior on Goose Island from 1976-1977.

After Fred Sibley and Jeffrey Spendelow of Yale University visited Falkner Island several times in 1977 to help band the nesting terns (Figure 3), they started the FITP in 1978 and served as co-directors for three years. When Spendelow assumed sole directorship in 1981, he changed the focus of the study to concentrate on Roseate Terns (Figure 4). Sarah Richards of Little Harbor Laboratory in Guilford oversaw the fieldwork from 1983-1985 when Spendelow moved to Louisiana to begin work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Spendelow resumed fieldwork in 1986 after he was transferred to the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland. In addition to tern studies, FITP fieldwork has included: 1) monitoring and banding the gulls and cormorants which nest on Goose Island (Spendelow et al. 1983 and unpubl. data), 2) mist-netting and banding other nesting species and spring and fall migrant landbirds on Falkner Island (Sibley 1984, Spendelow unpubl. data), and 3) recording species seen or heard on or near these two islands (Spendelow unpubl. data). Thus far, the FITP has documented the occurrence of 184 species of birds from 1978-1996 and has produced 48 published and unpublished papers and reports (Appendix).

Much of the FITP research done since 1987 has been part of a cooperative long-term study, coordinated by Spendelow, of the regional metapopulation dynamics and ecology of Roseate Terns in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York. In addition to the ongoing long-term research, three new projects were undertaken in recent years in either cooperation or collaboration with the FITP: the refuge staff conducted surveys in 1994-1995 in Long Island Sound to identify foraging sites used by the Roseate Terns nesting on Falkner Island; a pilot study examining potential impacts of trapping and banding activities on reproductive success of Roseate Terns was conducted in 1994 and continued as a Masters degree study in 1995-1996 through the Massachusetts Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and the University of Massachusetts (Amherst); and David Shealer, a recent Ph.D. from Rutgers University, conducted studies in 1995-1996 of courtship feeding and

chick provisioning and their effects on breeding performance among known-age Roseate Terns.

Pre-FITP Historical Records through 1977

To compile the list of species recorded prior to 1978 (Table 1), I reviewed the pertinent literature, investigated selected museum holdings, and consulted Bird Banding Laboratory records (Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Maryland). To conserve space in the following text and in Table 1, I used only common names of birds; see American Ornithologists' Union (1983, 1989) for current scientific names.

Though undoubtedly incomplete, this historical list covers the period roughly from the mid-1800s through 1961, with few records prior to the 1800s and between 1961 and 1978. Most of these records come from the late 1800s. Helander (1988) presented anecdotal records, mainly from log books (which he allowed me to review) kept by Capt. Brooks in 1851-1854, 1865, and 1871, and published a photograph of some of Brooks' specimens (p. 94). Helander (pers. comm.) suggested that Capt. Brooks, given his penchant for collecting and taxidermy, must have kept more detailed ornithological notes, and the most likely current location of these would be the Yale Peabody Museum (YPM). Fred Sibley (pers. comm.), Collections Manager of the ornithology section of the museum, was not aware of any such records, and Mackenzie apparently searched through YPM's holdings without finding them (J. Helander pers. comm.). Mackenzie (1961) and Bullard (pers. comm.) believed that Capt. Brooks' ornithological notes were lost when his mainland house caught fire after his retirement; Helander (pers. comm.), while researching the history of Falkner Island and its lightkeepers, did not find any records of this fire. Since some log books still exist, others may as well, but their whereabouts are unknown.

Capt. Brooks supplied nearly all of the records presented by Merriam (1877) for Falkner and Goose Islands. Because of his year-round residency and hunting activities, he was able to document species which occurred during the winter months and for which there are few, if any, recent records near the islands. Although Brooks and others apparently encountered many small landbirds, especially from lighthouse collisions during migration in the 1800s (Linsley 1843, Merriam 1877), there are few written records of specific species. Anon. (1881) listed some of the specimens in the Brooks collection, taken mainly from the vicinity of the

Figure 3. Common Tern brooding its chick on Falkner Island in July 1991. *photo by James M. Zingo*

Table 1. Bird species recorded from on or near Falkner (FI) and Goose (GI) Islands in Guilford, New Haven County, Connecticut, prior to 1978. Common names and taxonomic order follow the 6th edition of, and supplements to, the AOU *Check-list of North American Birds*. See Miscsllaneous Species for other possible species too uncertain to list here.

Breeding Species	Source	Site	Breeding Species	Source	Site
Red-throated Loon	B,c		Lesser Golden-Plover	B,F	
Common Loon	a,C,E,H		Long-billed Curlew (+)	B	
Red-necked Grebe	F		Ruddy Turnstone	E,F	
Leach's Storm-Petrel	B,F		Purple Sandpiper (+)	B,G	
Northern Gannet (+)	B,c		American Woodcock (+)	c	
Great Cormorant (+)	B,F		Bonaparte's Gull	B,G	
Double-crested Cormorant	a,B,c,F,H		Herring Gull	B,F	FI,GI
Magnificent Frigatebird	B,c		Glaucous Gull	H	
Great Blue Heron	a,c		Great Black-backed Gull	F	GI
Green Heron	a,B		Roseate Tern(+++)	A,B,c,D,E,F,H	GI,FI
Mute Swan	G		Common Tern(+++)	A,B,E,F,H	GI,FI
Brant	B,G,H		Sooty Tern	B,c,F	
Canada Goose	a,B		Black Tern	B	
American Black Duck	A,B,G		Dovekie (++)	c	
Mallard	a,B,c		Common Murre (++)	C	
Gadwall	B,F		Thick-billed Murre (+)	B,E	
Oldsquaw	A,B		Razorbill (++)	c	
Surf Scoter (+)	A,B.G		Great Horned Owl	a	
Common Goldeneye	B		Snowy Owl	A	
Bufflehead	a		Northern Saw-whet Owl	c	
Hooded Merganser (+)	A,F		Purple Martin	B	FI
Red-breasted Merganser	B,c		Cedar Waxwing	c	
Osprey (++)	A		Shrike sp. or spp.	c	
Bald Eagle	c		Northern Parula	c	
Rough-legged Hawk (++)	c		Black-and-white Warbler	c	
Peregrine Falcon	B,c,D		Common Yellowthroat	c	
Rail sp. or spp.	c		Scarlet Tanager	c	
			Rufous-sided Towhee	c	

Historical records from the following:

A = Helander 1988
B = Merriam 1877
C = Anonymous 1881
D = Baird *et al.* 1884
E = Sage *et al.* 1913
F = Mackenzie 1961
G = c. 1960s (Richards pers. comm.)
H = Yale Peabody Museum

Lowercase letters indicated specimens from Capt. Brooks' collection (most of which was obtained at or near Falkner and Goose Islands), but the exact site where each was taken is uncertain.

(+) = see discussion of historical records
(++) = Speculative or uncertain, see discussion of historical records
(+++) = further records for this century amy be found in references cited by Nisbet (1980)

Figure 4. A colorbanded Roseate Tern on Falkner Island on 27 June 1993. *photo by James M. Zingo*

Brooks on the natural history of Roseate Terns and on the Peregrine Falcon as a predator at Goose Island. Sage et al. (1913) and Mackenzie (1961) provided additional records up to 1961 and also referred to some of the older works mentioned above.

An extensive literature search was conducted by Mackenzie and his colleagues (W. Bullard pers. comm.), and Mackenzie (1961:6) stated that "All available texts have been consulted, and the literature searched for isolated records." Therefore, I felt that an intensive review of the scientific literature prior to 1961 was not necessary. Sarah Richards (unpubl. data) supplied several sight records from the 1970s, and Robert Dubos and George Clark of the University of Connecticut checked the holdings of the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (no specimens from Falkner or Goose). Because many Connecticut bird specimens are in numerous scattered holdings (Clark 1981 & pers. comm.) and thus very difficult to locate, I did not make a concerted effort to survey museum collections other than at YPM. I was unable to find additional species in Bird Banding Laboratory records.

For Table 1, I cited a later reference for a species only if it supplied additional records beyond those of earlier works. There is probably some overlap of records between the ornithological works (Merriam 1877, Sage et al. 1913) and the specimens from Anon. (1881), Helander (1988), and YPM, but I felt that some duplication was better than possibly overlooking corroborating records. I used primarily Merriam (1877), Forbush and May (1939), and Banks (1988) to determine the current species names for birds given in Anon. (1881) and Helander (1988). The following sections of text address species which I felt warranted discussion and those which I list as speculative or uncertain; details and references are given to allow for alternative interpretations.

Miscellaneous Species

Capt. Brooks listed a "Long Tail Duck," "Terns Eggs," "Duck," "Blue Bird," "2 Birds," "Bird Wings," "Cannary Bird," "Gull Eggs" (probably tern eggs), "Bird (Bunting)," and "Bird" in his cash accounts for 1865, some possibly as taxidermy fees or as items collected and sold. The "Long Tail Duck" probably was an Oldsquaw, which Brooks also called "old wive" and "old squaw"; "Blue Bird" might refer to the Eastern Bluebird, or it might mean simply a blue bird, such as an Indigo Bunting or a Blue Jay; "Cannary Bird" might have been a canary, an American Goldfinch, or a Yellow Warbler; and "Bird (Bunting)" might have been any of several species (Merriam 1877, Forbush and May 1939, Banks

1988). In addition to specific species, Anon. (1881:1) listed "...loons, ducks, cormorants, auks, owls, mergansers, shelldrakes, divers...blackbirds," each term applicable to more than one species, as part of Capt. Brooks' collection. However, it seemed that Capt. Brooks distinguished between "loons" (Common Loon) and "divers" (Red-throated Loon), and between "mergansers" (Red-breasted Merganser) and "shelldrakes" (either Common or Hooded Merganser). Helander (1988:92) wrote that on 18 November 1851, Capt. Brooks shot "one Ale wife" (Common Snipe), but in reviewing the log books of Capt. Brooks, I found that it actually read "shot 1 old wive" (Oldsquaw).

Northern Gannet

Merriam (1877) stated that Capt. Brooks, writing from Falkner Island, had only seen two specimens, one of which was killed near mainland Guilford and became part of his collection. Thus, it was implied that the other was seen in the vicinity of Falkner Island. Although Anon. (1881) listed "Soland geese" (Northern Gannets; Forbush and May 1939, Banks 1988) as part of Brooks' collection, it seems likely that this was a mistaken use of the plural.

Great Cormorant

Merriam (1877), based on word from Capt. Brooks, reported the occurrence of Great Cormorants in the spring and fall, but Mackenzie (1961) believed these must have been Double-crested Cormorants. However, it might be significant not only that Capt. Brooks distinguished between the species, considering Great Cormorants abundant at times and often seeing Double-cresteds in large flocks, but that 1) Sage et al. (1913) reported a specimen of Great Cormorant taken in 1904 from nearby Branford, Connecticut, 2) the YPM collection contains three specimens taken from Branford in September 1933, and 3) Mackenzie (1961) reported sightings in 1940 and 1954 off the coast of Guilford.

Osprey (speculative)

The North American aboriginal name for Falkner Island was *Mashequanauk* (or *Massancummock*), which meant "place of the great fish hawks" (Helander 1988). Although a tern might have been referred to as a "fish hawk," it would seem odd to call them "great" (i.e., large in size). This name presumably refers to Osprey, formerly known as "Fish-hawk" (Forbush and May 1939, Banks 1988, Clark 1991). In fact, Sarah Richards and Alan Poole ventured out to Falkner Island in 1972 specifically to look for Osprey and as-

sess the island's suitability as nesting habitat for the species (S. Richards pers. comm.).

Rough-legged Hawk (speculative)

One of the birds in Capt. Brooks' collection was a "Rough-Legged Falcon" (Anon. 1881:1), and thus I list Rough-legged Hawk as speculative, given that the terms falcon and hawk may have been somewhat interchangeable to the layperson, although Forbush and May (1939) and Banks (1988) did not list such a species name. The possibility for this species is not necessarily remote; L.B. Bishop had seen them frequently between New Haven and Guilford from 1895-1901, and in later years there were several sightings from Guilford, including one along the shore in 1950 (Mackenzie 1961).

Falcons

In the early 1600s, the Dutch name for Falkner Island was *Valcken-eylandt* (or *Valken Eylant*) and the English name was *Falcon Island* (Helander 1988), names which probably mistakenly refer to the nesting terns rather than to actual falcons.

Surf Scoter

On several days in 1851 and 1852, Capt. Brooks bagged a "coot" (Helander 1988). Black Scoter, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Ruddy Duck, and American Coot have all been known by some variation of the name "coot" (Merriam 1877, Forbush and May 1939, Banks 1988). Because Capt. Brooks apparently only mentioned Surf Scoter (probably as "Sea Coot") and not the other species in his correspondence with Merriam (1877), I felt that Surf Scoter was the most likely translation of "coot." Therefore, I did not list the other two scoters, Ruddy Duck, or American Coot.

Mergansers

According to content in Merriam (1877) and Anon. (1881), Capt. Brooks seemed to distinguish between Red-breasted Mergansers and other mergansers, or "sheldrakes." He "killed two shell drakes at one shot" on 22 January 1852 (from log books), presumably from near Falkner and Goose Islands where he usually hunted. Because Common Mergansers are seldom found on salt water, and because Capt. Brooks wrote to Merriam (1877) that they were only occasionally found about Guilford Harbor (and didn't mention Falkner Island), it seemed more likely that his "shell

drakes" were Hooded Mergansers, which have been seen as far off the coast as Falkner Island (Mackenzie 1961).

Long-billed Curlew

Mackenzie (1961) considered Capt. Brooks' sightings of Long-billed Curlew, as reported by Merriam (1877), to be too uncertain to include in his list of birds for Guilford.

American Woodcock

Although the Pileated Woodpecker was also known as "woodcock" and "black woodcock" (Forbush and May 1939, Banks 1988), I felt that an American Woodcock would be more likely to be found at Falkner Island (and recently has been) than would a Pileated Woodpecker, although I do not know exactly where the specimen mentioned by Anon. (1881) was collected. Thus I listed the former and not the latter species.

Alcids

Capt. Brooks' collection reportedly contained "auks" (Anon. 1881:1). Dovekie, one of its former names being Little Auk (Forbush and May 1939, Banks 1988), had been collected off Guilford and Stony Creek in 1879, 1891, and 1894 (Sage et al. 1913), as well as sighted along the Connecticut coast in the winter of 1938 (Mackenzie 1961). There are at least 10 specimens of Dovkie from Connecticut in the YPM collection. Razorbills, once known as Razor-billed Auk (Forbush and May 1939, Banks 1988), have been sighted off the coast of Connecticut in recent years (pers. obs.; Kaplan 1991, 1992, 1993). Either, or both, of these species is possible.

Merriam (1877) stated that Capt. Brooks took a specimen (c. 1869) of Foolish Guillemot or Murre, now known as Common Murre (Forbush and May 1939). However, Sage et al. (1913) reported that this specimen was actually a Thick-billed Murre. The "Foolish Gillemot" knocked over with an oar near the island and in Capt. Brooks' collection may have been this same specimen (Anon. 1881). If not, the species identification is thus uncertain, although Thick-billed Murre would be more likely because Common Murre has not otherwise been recorded in Connecticut (Connecticut Rare Records Committee 1989, L. Bevier pers. comm.).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank the Bird Banding Laboratory for access to banding records; Winston Bullard for reviewing the species list; George

Clark and Bob Dubos for their help in checking specimen collections; Joel Helander for allowing access to Capt. Brooks' log books, for granting permission to reproduce the photograph of Falkner Island (Figure 1), and for useful discussions about pursuing historical records; Sarah (Sally) Richards for reviewing her log books from the 1970s; and Fred Sibley for access to, and useful discussion about, the holdings at the Yale Peabody Museum. Many organizations and individuals have supported the FITP over the years, including: Bayberry Creek Marina, Inc.; Connecticut Audubon Society; Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection; Fulton Foundation; Guilford Yacht Club; Little Harbor Laboratory, Inc.; Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy; Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (formerly U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, currently Biological Resources Division, U.S. Geological Survey); Yale Peabody Museum; and numerous volunteers and anonymous donors. Louis Bevier, Peter Capainolo, and Jeff Spendelow reviewed and provided useful comments on the manuscript.

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BIRD BEHAVIOR NOTES

RAPTOR HUNTING DURING PLOWING

The adaptability of raptors in adjusting their hunting techniques to human activities is well known. For example, many hawks and owls adopt favorite telephone poles along roadways for hunting small mammals and birds that are exposed as they cross the road and the adjacent grassways. In other cases, raptors have been seen following trains to catch prey scared up from cover by the passing of the train. Still other raptors forage along the edges of airport runways, looking for prey during aircraft departures and landings.

In this behavioral note I report several observations that I have made of hawks following tractors during plowing to take small mice scared out of their burrows. Two observations were made in Cache Valley, Utah and a third observation of this raptor behavior was in the farm fields near Durham, Connecticut.

My first two observations of raptors following tractors took place in a winter wheat farm field in Smithfield, located just north of Logan, Utah in late June. In the first, and most extensive, I observed Swainson's Hawks (*Buteo swainsoni*) and Ferruginous Hawks (*Buteo regalis*) while in the second, which took place a year later, I observe Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) and Swainson's Hawks. In both instances the hawks perched on nearby fence posts or within a few feet of a tractor during plowing. As the plow was pulled along the field, the raptors quickly flew to and pounced on exposed mice just behind the plow. None of the raptors showed any evident fear or concern about the tractor and several stood only a couple of feet from the pathway or simply walked out of the pathway as the tractor approached. Then immediately walked or flew into the newly plowed furrows just after the plow went by. Interestingly, the observations of Ferruginous Hawks in Cache Valley are apparently the first of that species for the area and were later confirmed by the Cache Valley Ornithological Society.

In late March of 1995 I observed three Red-tailed Hawks exhibiting the same "tractor following" behavior in a farm field near Durham, Connecticut. The three hawks—all adults—perched on fence posts as the tractor went by. At first the hawks made no response and seemed to ignore the tractor, but at the third plow furrow two of the three hawks flew into the newly plowed furrows and "walked" among them, intently searching for prey. As the

farmer continued to plow the field all three hawks at times walked among the furrows and at other times made short flights to attack prey. This behavior continued until the plowing was finished. Of nine prey catching attempts observed, at least four resulted in captures.

Anecdotal observations of this hunting technique by Swainson's Hawks during plowing was mentioned in Alexander Cleveland Bent's Life History of North American Birds of Prey. Apparently our observations of Ferruginous Hawks and Red-tailed Hawks hunting during plowing are unique.

Dwight G. Smith

LIKE MOTHS TO A FLAME

In my studies of ornithological literature, I recall with great interest, accounts of thousands of songbirds perishing each spring and fall due to collisions with lighted towers and tall buildings along their migration routes. Recently, I had the opportunity to observe, first hand, how such events may occur. On 5 October, 1997, I was completing some paperwork in my office at Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton, Connecticut. As I was getting ready to leave, at approximately 2050 EDT, I heard a light thump against the office window. I immediately recognized the sound as that of a small songbird hitting the glass. The collisions was followed by a second thump, this time against the adjacent window in the Center's gift shop. No less than three seconds later, I heard fluttering against the office window and looked up to see a Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hymnals*) fluttering against the glass as though trying to enter the building. While observing this individual, I heard yet another thump on the gift shop window, followed by similar fluttering against that window pane.

Upon leaving the building a few minutes later, I examined the areas beneath the two windows. There was no sign of dead or injured birds and, in fact, the collisions against the glass were not severe. The evening was warm with temperatures above 60°F. The night sky was clear, but dark, as a first quarter moon had set perhaps an hour earlier. There are no street lights in the vicinity and I had not turned on the lights in the parking lot or in front of the building. My assumption is that this migrating flock of juncos was drawn to these two small building lights in an otherwise dark area. These are not large windows, measuring 42 by 22 inches. One wonders how many other minor collisions between birds and buildings may occur throughout the northeast during peak songbird migration prior to the harvest moon.

Jay Kaplan

BOOKS ON BIRDS

Alan H. Brush

First published in Australia in 1984, the current manifestation of the *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* edited by K. Simpson and illustrated by Nicolas Day, has resurfaced as ***The Princeton Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*** (1996. Princeton University Press, $39.50. vii+400 pg., Princeton, NJ. ISBN 0-691-02575-4). It is essentially a fifth, and much changed, edition. Ken Simpson is a well known Australian bird-type, and handles several problems and potential pitfalls very well. Before going into more of the details, I will state simply: this is currently the best book for the field identification of Australian birds.

Birding in Australia is a daunting task, but eminently enjoyable. The country is a feast for the eyes and just about every place is interesting. No, all residents are not like Mick "Crocodile" Dundee, but almost! Travel is easy, but the distances are great. Remember Australia is about the same size as the continental U.S. The extraordinary variety of bird life (770 species included here) is reflective of the numerous habitats and its isolation from the rest of the world.

Because of the size and complexity of the avifauna, Simpson recruited a galaxy of authors to insure comprehensive and complete coverage. Strict editorial control has produced consistent quality in descriptions and distribution maps. All of the illustrations (there are 2000+ color images on 132 plates) are by Day and they are excellent. The species are numbered which makes for easy indexing (e.g., it is "user friendly"), and many subspecies are illustrated. The species descriptions include codes for abundance and movements, distribution maps, and occasional 'darts' to indicate identifying features.

There are some plates where size scales would be useful. But the drawing that caught my eye is opposite page 156. The illustration of the White-throated Needletail (formally Spine-tailed Swift) shows what appears to be a dead bird. No, not a lifeless rendition, but an on-the-back, feet-in-the-air, eyes-shut dead bird! True, the 'spiny' retrices are nicely shown as are the white throat and the iri-

descent green upper body parts. Still, I admit to being taken aback. Certainly not what I anticipated.

There are two additional features of the book that deserve mention. The last 100 pages constitute "The Handbook." This is information not always included in guides, but of more general interest. There are some basic facts on avian biology. But more to the point is a discussion of the vegetation and landforms—the habitats—of Australia. These provides clues as to what birds might be where, and how to understand more of what you see. The marine environment is excluded, but that is acceptable. By the way, many southern hemisphere pelagic species can be seen not far from shore. There are also check lists for the off shore islands.

The Handbook features brief summaries of the avian families of Australia. These include black & white sketches of a particular feature or two, plus breeding season information by species. Each family description also includes (bracketed in smaller type) the recent taxonomic proposals of Sibley & Ahlquist (Yale Univ. Press, 1990). To my knowledge this is the first guide to do this. The work is based on DNA X DNA hybridization data and, it turns out, has broad implications for the Australasian fauna. Although these proposals have not been accepted by all ornithologists, Simpson treats the material well. As one consequence of the inclusion of both traditional and the 'new' classifications, the family sequence in the field guide section and the Handbook do not match. This is deliberate and, in my opinion, is a good approach. Users will be comfortable with the field guide sequence. With a few exceptions it is used in most of the world checklists of birds. Sibley & Ahlquist propose some radical changes, which have not been broadly accepted by ornithologists. Thankfully, none of this is graven in stone. It is valuable to have both approaches at hand for comparison. Which is "correct" of course is really not the issue here. The questions of phylogeny and classification, while interesting, are not those of field identification. And it is in the role as a field guide that this volume excels.

When you go, and you should, this is the book to take.

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CORRECTION

Volume 17, No. 4: In the Table on page 178 of the Summer Bird Count, under ST (Storrs), Barn Owl (2) should be deleted and 2 Barred Owls added for that count. The 1997 State Total for Barn Owl should be changed to zero and the State Total for Barred Owl changed to 69.

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Greg Hanisek

SUMMER, JUNE 1 TO JULY 31, 1997

The summer season produced no weather extremes likely to have had an effect on breeding success. However, cold and rainy weather in late May pushed a number of northbound migrants into early June. The season also produced an interesting array of lingering waterbirds, some uncommon shorebirds, and a Chuck-will's-widow on a June count. In the following summary, the season is broken down into several components.

Northbound Migration

Greater Yellowlegs were still passing through in early June, with one at Lake Zoar in Southbury June 1 (DR) and one at Little Pond in Litchfield June 8 (RN). A White-rumped Sandpiper, one of the later-moving shorebirds, was still at Milford Point June 11 (FM). A Dunlin June 17 at Cove Island Park in Stamford was most likely a tardy spring migrant (PDu). Tardy (or stalled) shorebirds at Milford Point on June 19 included two Ruddy Turnstones, four Semipalmated Plovers and four peeps (PCo).

A Swainson's Thrush at Boston Hollow in Union, June 5 was probably a late migrant, but this species may occasionally breed in the state (PCo,CM). Magnolia Warblers staged a heavy movement in late May, which left one straggling through Greenwich June 10 (MPo). Another straggler, a Cape May Warbler, was at Lake Quassapaug in Woodbury June 1 (BO). The latest of the typically late-moving Blackpoll Warblers were singles June 5 at Boston Hollow (PCo,CM) and June 6 at Rose Hartman Park in Stamford (PDu). Single Mourning Warblers sang June 1 in Southbury (RN) and Kent (BFi), and one visited a backyard in Sterling June 2 (R&DL), typical migration dates for this species. A White-crowned Sparrow June 1 in Roxbury was about two weeks behind its May migration schedule (BC).

Lingerers, Strays and Post-breeding Wanderers

A few Common Loons summered on Long Island Sound as usual. More unexpected was a Red-throated Loon lingering to at

least July 2 at Milford Point (m.ob). A single adult Great Cormorant, a species showing up more and more at unusual times and places, was off Guilford July 18 (PCo). Even more unusual was a Red-necked Grebe observed at length on June 15 in Branford harbor (RE).

Because of the rarity of all tubenoses inside Long Island Sound, a report of a large shearwater July 7 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (hereafter HBSP) is of special interest. Three observers on the Meig's Point platform described and sketched a bird believed to be a **Cory's Shearwater** passing by after a storm (SR et al.). If accepted by the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (hereafter ARCC) it would be the third confirmed record for the state.

Falkner Island, despite a lack of marshes, held five Great Egrets July 13 (JS). Other visitors included a Snowy Egret June 13 (JS), a Cattle Egret July 22 (MT), a Green Heron June 19 (JS), and three Glossy Ibis July 15 (PCo). Little Blue Herons were scattered along the coast in small numbers (m.ob.), but Tricolored Heron reports could be counted on one hand.

The usual motley collection of lingering waterfowl had a little more pizzazz than usual, including a Brant June 22 at Milford Point (FM), a Northern Pintail June 16 at Southfield Park in Stamford (PDu), a drake **Eurasian Wigeon** July 5 in Lyme (PR,LC), a drake Greater Scaup at Laurel Reservoir in Stamford throughout the period (PDu) and two Oldsquaws June 8-17 at Milford Point (PDe,PCo). Up to three Oldsquaws were present off Compo Beach in Westport in June and July (FM). Also at Compo was a male Common Goldeneye, apparently with a damaged wing, through June 18 (FM). In keeping with a recent increase in the state, including unusually high numbers last winter, a male and female **Common Eider** were off Milford Point through June 17 (PDe et al.).

A Bald Eagle was seen in the Lord's Cove area of Old Lyme June 10 and 28 (HG,JMe,MO) and another was at Stratford Great Meadows June 19 (PCo). Ospreys on the Connecticut River north of Hartford, where they are not known to breed, included three from Windsor Locks to South Windsor on July 12 (PDe). There is no way to neatly tie a seasonal status to a Peregrine Falcon at Falkner Island July 20 (JZ), and single Merlins there June 26 and July 15 certainly were seasonally ambiguous (MPa et al.).

A **Black-necked Stilt** was seen briefly but was well-described June 23 at Greenwich Point, which is closed to non-Greenwich residents in summer. The observers watched it fly toward New York and it was not seen again (M&AM). It was hard to figure out the

agenda of a **Wilson's Phalarope** that appeared June 11 at Griswold Point in Old Lyme (HG,PS). Single Bonaparte's Gulls July 12 at Falkner Island (JS) and Milford Point (FM), and July 28 at HBSP (JG) maintained a recent string of mid-summer sightings in the Sound. A Royal Tern was seen from a boat near Falkner Island July 16 (PCo), and two Forster's Terns at the mouth of the East River in Guilford July 16 (PCo) were the vanguard of later arrivals from the south. From one to three Black Skimmers were reported in June and July at various locations from Milford Point to Norwalk, with their characteristic nocturnal feeding noted at the latter site (RBA). Most of these birds probably originated from a sizeable nesting colony across the Sound in Huntington Bay, Northport, NY (WK fide FM).

Southbound migration

The arrival of one Green-winged Teal and two Blue-winged Teal July 29 at HBSP (JG) was typical for post-breeding dabbling ducks, which begin to make an inconspicuous appearance in late summer. By July 27, 100+ Semipalmated Plovers had accumulated at Milford Point (GH), and an American Golden Plover showed off alternate plumage there on July 24-28 (PCo,FM et al.). But the exodus from the tundra begins earlier than that, as illustrated by two Greater Yellowlegs at Milford Point July 2 (PCo). The first Whimbrel of the season made it to Milford Point by July 5 (PDe); another flew by Shippan Point in Stamford July 25 (PDu). A Whimbrel at Windham Airport July 25 was only the second ever recorded for northeastern Connecticut (MS). Once the movement starts, it snowballs: 75 Semipalmated Sandpipers at Milford Point July 8 (PCo) grew to 2,000+ by July 21 (GH), when the first Red Knot also was present along with 100+ Ruddy Turnstones (GH). Falkner Island logged its first migrant Least Sandpiper July 13, with 18 there on July 17 (JS). Pectoral Sandpipers were first noted July 19 and July 28 at HBSP (DS,JBa), and a Stilt Sandpiper there July 17 (JG) was followed by three in Stratford July 19 (TK). A rare sighting of **Curlew Sandpiper** involved a stunning adult in virtually full alternate plumage discovered July 20 at Milford Point. It was seen through July 29 (DS, m.ob). A Buff-breasted Sandpiper was quite early July 22 at HBSP (JG,CR). Among the season's first arrivals were 15 Short-billed Dowitchers July 5 at Griswold Point in Old Lyme (HG).

An observer looking (unsuccessfully) for the Curlew Sandpiper got a more-than-adequate consolation prize when he found an adult **Sabine's Gull** standing on the gravel bars at Milford Point at

dawn on July 24, observing it briefly before it flew off (DP). If accepted by the ARCC, this would be a second state record.

A participant in the Woodbury-Roxbury Summer Bird Count June 1 heard a **Chuck-will's-widow** call at dawn at Janie Pierce Park in Southbury (AD). Several other participants were able to hear the bird again that evening. This species is now making annual (three years in a row) appearances in the state.

Anyone with the inclination to look can find swallows migrating in July. When Dugan looked July 17 at Cummings Beach in Stamford he counted 678 swallows of mixed species in less than an hour and a half. Two Yellow Warblers, among the earliest of parulid migrants, flew over Milford Point July 31 (GH). A Northern Waterthrush was on the move July 31 in Westbrook (PCo). Two Bobolinks were on the front end of their normal migration schedule when they stopped off in Stamford July 18 (PDu).

BREEDING SEASON

GREBES THROUGH RAPTORS

A Pied-billed Grebe was on Laurel Reservoir in Stamford July 17 without evidence of breeding (PDu). American Bittern was at one of its strongholds, White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield, in June (DR,JL); one was less expected July 6 in Southbury (RN) and another turned up July 31 at Stratford Great Meadows (PCo). The elusive Least Bittern was observed July 16 at Lord's Cove in Old Lyme, with two present in the same area July 26 (HG). Up to two Least Bitterns were reported several times in June at Station 43, South Windsor. A Great Blue Heron colony containing three or four nests was found in an Atlantic white-cedar swamp in Thompson (fide FG) and another with three nests was well off the nearest road in Middle Haddam (GH). These were dwarfed by a colony with 20+ nests north of Hartford (PCo). Other Great Blues included three on June 7 in South Windsor and one June 21 in Hartford (PDe). The usual scattering of the less common waders along the coast included a few Yellow-crowned Night-Herons and larger numbers of Glossy Ibis. A July 8 survey of a rookery on Cockenoe Island - one of the Norwalk Islands - revealed one pair of Glossy Ibis, one pair of Yellow-crowned Night Herons, 125+ pairs of Black-crowned Night Herons, 15 pairs of Snowy Egrets, 30 pairs of Great Egrets, an excellent 10 pairs of Little Blue Her-

ons and two pairs of Green Herons (PCo). A Cattle Egret was seen flying at the same site (DV).

Stratford Great Meadows held 18 Gadwalls, most of them young, July 31 (PCo). At what has become a regular breeding site along the Pomperaug River in South Britain, a Common Merganser hen had 15 young through the period (RN,JN).

A Black Vulture was soaring over Gaylordsville June 1 (FM), and two were at River Rd., Kent the same day (BFi). An adult Sharp-shinned Hawk, perhaps the least common of the state's three breeding accipiters, was in Watertown July 1 (RN). An immature Northern Goshawk was found in Nehantic State Forest in late June (DP). Two observers doing a butterfly census July 6 looked up long enough to see a pair of Broad-winged Hawks cavorting over Plymouth. One of them was a leucistic bird that was almost entirely creamy white (MS,GH). A male Northern Harrier was observed flying over the Stratford Great Meadows carrying prey when a female rose up from the reeds and took it (PCo). A food pass is highly suggestive of breeding at a site where this declining species has been seen in summer for the past several years. There are no recent confirmed breedings in the state. A Peregrine Falcon was seen occasionally in the Bridgeport area, raising hopes that the recent breeding attempts in Hartford will be repeated there. The Stamford Peregrine show ran through June 30, again with no signs of breeding (PDu). A single adult Peregrine was videotaped atop the Norwalk Harbor power plant during a brief stay June 7-10 (FM,RG)

QUAIL THROUGH PARAKEETS

A Northern Bobwhite was heard calling July 16 in North Stonington, an area where the species may still maintain a small breeding population (NC). More surprising was one singing in a suburban yard in Old Saybrook June 18 (SR); another was at Durham fairgrounds June 1 (E&PN).

Virginia Rails at HBSP July 1 and July 24 underscored how little we know about this species' breeding status around the brackish edges of the Sound (EN,CC). After an ARCC meeting June 8, a participant stopped off after dark at a small freshwater marsh in Woodbury in hopes of hearing Sora or Virginia Rail. He was surprised and thrilled to hear a **Black Rail** calling consistently from the center of the marsh, which comprised primarily Burr-reed (*Sparganium*). A few phone calls quickly reconvened a portion of the committee as the rail continued to sing. It was heard by

many observers over the next two nights (FM,m.ob). Several pairs of Soras were in residence at Little Pond in Litchfield and the aforementioned marsh in Woodbury (RN).

Two pairs of American Oystercatchers had two downy young June 11 (FM) and three downy young July 21 (GH) at Milford Point. The Falkner Island Tern project estimated the number of breeding pairs on this island off Guilford as 3,600 for Common Terns and 150 for Roseate Terns. Roseate production was poor at two-thirds chick per pair, but was still higher than last year's one-half per pair (JS et al.). At Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford, 10 Roseates were feeding in the Sound off the beach June 22 (DP). Monk Parakeets continued to successfully nest, with stronghold populations still in Bridgeport and Westport (FM et al.).

CUCKOOS THROUGH VIREOS

Cuckoos presented a mixed bag, with observers in the west finding them scarce but better numbers reported east of the Connecticut River (DP,PDu). A hatching year Black-billed Cuckoo was banded June 26 on Falkner Island (JS). A concerted effort by one observer turned up 19 calling Whip-poor-wills at four locations in the southeast part of the state in June (DP). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was pushing the southern limits of its breeding range in June and July in Southbury (RN). Illustrating a classic identification pitfall, a juvenile Hairy Woodpecker present June 20 to July 7 in Simsbury exhibited a yellow patch on its head, as expected in the boreal species (BK).

A pair of Acadian Flycatchers had young June 29 at Devil's Hopyard State Park in East Haddam (E&PN), and three males were singing on territory in a Southbury hemlock glen through the period (RN). Two Alder Flycatchers were in East Killingly in late June (DP).

A drawbridge at the town boatlaunch in Norwalk held 10+ pairs of nesting Cliff Swallows (PCo); one June 15 at West Hartford Reservoir No. 1 was worth noting (PDe). Quinebaug Valley Fish Hatchery in Plainfield hosted 14 Purple Martins July 2 (R&LD), and two inspected backyard housing June 3 through July 5 in Sterling without settling in (R&LD); other sightings in the northeast included four in Plainfield July 5 and two elsewhere in Sterling July 17 (R&LD).

A pair of Common Ravens nested and fledged at least two young in Southington. This is in the central part of the state, away from traditional nesting areas in the northwest and northeast (BF). In the

Naugatuck Valley, up to three were seen in July in Waterbury (RN). White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield yielded 25+ Brown Creepers, consisting of breeding pairs and young, during the period (RN,LW). Devil's Hopyard State Park held four Winter Wrens June 29 (EN). Inland locations for Marsh Wrens included Mallard Marsh at White Memorial, which had five+ singing males, Swamp Road in Woodbury, which held two+ pairs (RN), and Station 43 in South Windsor (FM). Golden-crowned Kinglets, very spotty as breeders, included three on June 20 at West Hartford Reservoir No. 6 (PCi). White-eyed Vireo was noted at Station 43 June 7 and July 12 (PDe), and up to four pairs were resident in Watertown (RN); two were present June 20 at West Hartford Reservoir No. 6 (PCi).

WARBLERS THROUGH GROSBEAKS

A Lawrence's Warbler was seen in a Sterling backyard June 1 and 23 (R&LD). A very late singing Northern Parula June 9 at Pond Brook, Upper Paugusset State Forest, Newtown, suggested possible breeding (RWi fide FM). A Yellow-rumped Warbler, which seems to be expanding as a breeder, was seen June 15 at Reservoir No. 6 in West Hartford, where it was carrying food for young (PDe). Blackburnian Warbler was considered a potential breeder at the same reservoir June 15 (PDe). Two or three Black-throated Blue Warblers were in good breeding habitat June 1 in Woodbury, which is south of their breeding strongholds (BO). Singing male Kentucky Warblers were reported from Flanders Nature Center in Woodbury June 1 (RB), Falls Village June 14 (RN,DL) and another section of Woodbury June 20 (RN). The Woodbury-Southbury area held at least four pairs of Hooded Warblers (RN,BO).

A male Dickcissel visited an Eastford feeder June 1-2, and was photographed (JW fide FM). A field in Manchester held at least three singing Grasshopper Sparrows June 3 (PCo) and five birds were noted at Windham Airport July 4 (MS). Territorial Dark-eyed Juncos included two pairs in Woodbury June 1 (RB), two singing on Talcott Mountain in Simsbury June 22 (PCi), a singing male at Steep Rock Reserve in Washington June 1 (CW), a singing male June 14 in Falls Village (RN,DL) and one June 16 in Windsor (PCo).

Following the state's first breeding record in 1995, **Boat-tailed Grackle** now seems to be establishing itself at the Great Meadows in Stratford, a portion of the Stewart B. McKinney

National Wildlife Refuge. At least one pair was present in thick brush at the edge of the saltmarsh, and a female was seen June 8 carrying food into a well-concealed nest site (FG,PCo et al.). Other observations were made during the season at Milford Point (GH) and at HBSP (PCo,m.ob).

A pair of Orchard Orioles had young in Pomfret July 23, which is near the end of the period when this species is still present in the state (RD). At Southbury Training School, four pairs fledged young (RN), and up to four were present at Bent of River Preserve in South Britain (JN). A pair of Evening Grosbeaks was at a feeder near Winsted July 15, adding to recent suggestions of breeding in the northwest (RBA).

Exotics: Single Ruddy Shelducks were in East Hartford May 15 (RBA) and at Shenipsit Lake in Tolland in late June (RBA). A male Red Bishop was at Greenwich Point June 2-27, where it was photographed (JBo) and seen by many (FM et al.). Another sighting, but probably the same bird, was at Cove Island June 29-July 4 (PDu).

[Editor's Note: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (species marked with an asterisk on the most recent COA checklist) require that documentation be submitted to the Secretary of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (Mark Szantyr, 2C Yale Rd., Storrs, CT 06268) if they are to be included in the field notes].

OBSERVERS, CONTRIBUTORS (**Boldface**): **James Bair** (JBa), Ray Belding, John Bova (JBo), C. Carmody, Bob Cartoceti, Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), **Patrick Comins** (PCo), **Neil Currie**, Larry Cyrulik, **Paul Desjardins** (PDe), Angela Dimmitt, **Robert & Linda Dixon**, **Patrick Dugan** (PDu), **Richard English**, Bruce Finnan (BFi), Brian Franczak, **Frank Gallo**, **John Gaskell**, **Hank Golet**, Robert Gunderso, **Greg Hanisek**, Tom Kilroy, **Betty Kleiner**, Patty & William Kolodnicki, Dave Leidlich, John Longstreth, Merle and Alvin Malthaner, **Frank Mantlik**, John Maynard (JMa), Jerry Mercereau (JMe), Clark Moseley, **Russ Naylor**, Jim Nolan, **Elaine and Patrick Nye**, Mike O'Leary, Ben Olewine, Mary Paul (MPa), Matt Popp (MPo), **Dave Provencher**, Charlie Rafford, Sally Ranti, Rare Bird Alert (RBA), Pat Rasch, Steve Rogers, Dave Rosgen, **Dori Sosensky**, **Jeff Spendelow**, Paul Spitzer, **Mark Szantyr**, Maggie Teets, Dennis Varza, Leigh Wells, Jane White, Rob Winkler, **Chris Wood**, Jim Zingo.

Falkner Island reports refer to the Falkner Island Unit of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge and are provided by staff of the Tern Project.

Greg Hanisek, 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury CT 06708

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Julian Hough

ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 21

Because I feel that monochrome mystery photographs are totally frustrating I will throw you a clue for free and inform you that it is fall on the east coast.

A small, fall-plumaged passerine actively moves through the tree in front of you, partly obscured by foliage. You reach for your binoculars, but the bird is a fast little critter, and is gone before you can take in any plumage details. From its active behavior and comparing its size with that of the surrounding leaves, we ascertain that it a smallish passerine, almost certainly a warbler or vireo. The bold, double wingbar, clean underparts and pale eye ring are all shared by White-eyed, Solitary and Yellow-throated Vireos. However, the bill seems rather small and pointed, lacking the slightly-curved culmen which makes vireo bills rather stout-looking. Also, the head pattern does not seem as strong or contrasting for any of the above species.

So, we must consider the warblers, and those candidates showing the above combination of features include: Pine, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Chestnut-sided and Cerulean. Compared with Cerulean and 'Baypoll' warblers, which show more obvious superciliums behind the eye, Pine and Chestnut-sideds have the palest area before the eye and, like our mystery bird, show more pronounced eye rings. However, the mantle streaking visible in the photograph eliminates both Pine Warbler and Cerulean, as these species are plain-backed in all plumages.

So, by a process of elimination we are left with Chestnut-sided,

Blackpoll and Bay-breasted Warbler. A quick glance at the leg color, reveals palish legs with noticeably paler soles, a feature which is wrong for Bay-breasted (which has wholly dark legs) but right for Blackpoll and Chestnut-sided.

In fall plumage, compared with Bay-breasted, the majority of Blackpolls show some visible 'blurry' streaking on the breast and flanks (though this may be barely discernible on first-basic females). However, our mystery bird is clean and unmarked, showing no trace of any such streaking. Only one species combines the above features with unstreaked underparts - Chestnut-sided Warbler.

In real life, this is a gem of a bird, sporting a very distinctive lime-green crown and mantle and white eye rings which stand out in a gray-washed face. A thin trace of chestnut along the flanks, when seen to be present, sex those individuals as males, though not all males exhibit this feature and are not separable from females.

This first-winter Chestnut-sided Warbler was photographed by myself at Jones Beach, New York in October 1997.

JULIAN HOUGH, 21 Walnut Street, Naugatuck, CT 06770

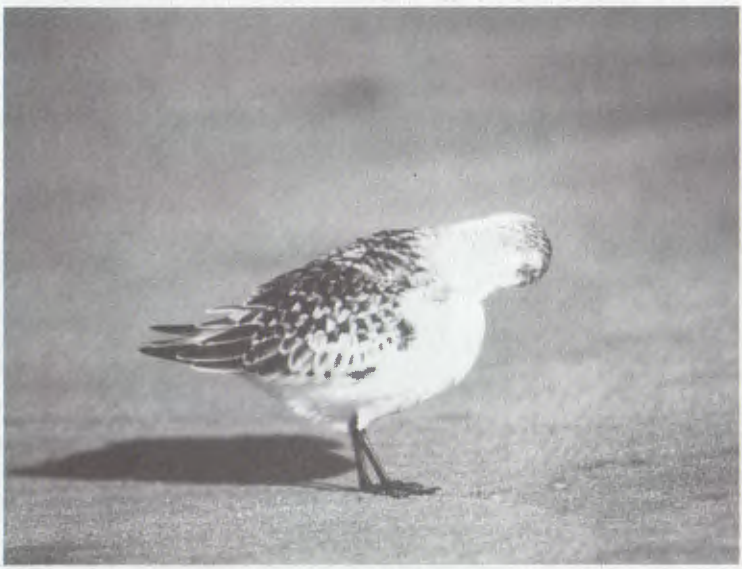

Photo Challenge 22. Identify the species. Answer next issue.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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The Connecticut Warbler (ISSN 1077-0283) is devoted to the study of birds and their conservation in Connecticut and is published quarterly (January, April, July and October) by the Connecticut Ornithological Association.

Send manuscripts to the Editor. Please type double spaced with ample margins, on one side of a sheet. Submit a copy on a computer disk, if possible. Style should follow usage in recent issues. All manuscripts receive peer review.

Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

Membership, including subscription to *The Connecticut Warbler* and *COA Bulletin*, is based on a calendar year and is renewable in January: Individual, $12.00; Contributing, $25.00; Family, $18.00; Sustaining, $40.00. Life membership is $300.00, payable in three annual installments. Send membership application, dues, change of address, and checks payable to: Connecticut Ornithological Association, 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430.

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Volume 18, No. 1, 1998

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology

Volume 18, No.2 **April 1998** Pages 49 - 104

The Connecticut Warbler
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ABOUT OUR COVER

American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*)

by Nancy Cleary

Our cover artist was profiled in the April 1997 issue of "The Warbler." Her current cover was inspired by birds seen at Milford Point. Both this and the previous cover are rendered in a scratchboard technique: ink laid down with pens and brushes on a clayboard surface, which then has details scratched out with various tools. It allows for dramatic contrast, and lends itself to the slightly stylized results that our artist favors.

Nancy and her husband Bob have done a great job of handling the mailing of *The Connecticut Warbler* for the past few years. They are moving to Cape Cod and we will miss them. We thank them for their hard work.

THE MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT AWARD

Editor's Note: The following is the presentation by Milan Bull of the Mabel Osgood Wright Award at the Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Ornithological Association on March 28, 1998.

It is an honor for me to present the Mabel Osgood Wright Award again this year.

The Mabel Osgood Wright Award is presented each year to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to Connecticut Ornithology. Education, research and public awareness are all areas in which individuals have made Connecticut a better place for birds and people.

Some past recipients of this award include Ann Gaylord, Roland Clement, George Clark, Don Hopkins, Bob Askins, Fred Sibley, Gordon Loery, and many others who have so clearly made a positive impact on ornithology in this state.

This year the committee has taken a slightly different direction in making this award, in that this year's honor is awarded posthumously to Dr. Roger Tory Peterson.

Dr. Peterson, who lived in Old Lyme for over 30 years, is certainly no stranger to any of us here.

He began an active campaign to prevent the spraying of DDT in Connecticut in the 1970's and worked hard to help us bring back the Osprey. Dr. Peterson aided C.O.A. during its fledgling years.

I have been fortunate enough to have birded with him twice in the early 1970's on the regional Christmas Count that he hosted for many years, and always found him to be approachable, friendly, and ever willing to sign seemingly endless copies of his field guides.

It would literally take an hour to effectively describe all the accomplishments of this remarkable man, so please forgive me if I simply skim some of the highlights of his career over the last 60 or so years.

Dr. Peterson was perhaps the best known naturalist of our time and a recipient of the United State's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which he received in 1980 from President Carter. The inventor of the modern field guide, Dr. Peterson is best know for his *A Field Guide to the Birds* and *A Field Guide to Western Birds*, which have taught countless millions since 1934, how to identify birds. The Peterson Field Guide Series, of which he was editor and sometimes author or illustrator, consists of about 50 titles on such diverse nature subjects as birds, butter-

flies, fish, trees, mammals, animal tracks, stars, etc. His European bird guides have been translated into 14 languages.

Born in 1908 in Jamestown, New York, Dr. Peterson became interested in birds as a boy of 11 after one of his teachers started a Junior Audubon Club. His genius manifested itself early in life; under his high school yearbook picture is the caption "the makings of a great naturalist." This gifted lad was also a talented artist in his youth, and as his father felt it would be difficult to make a living at birds, Roger went on to New York City, after graduating from high school, to study at the Art Student's League, and then to the National Academy of Design.

After completing his studies, he became a painter of Chinese lacquered cabinets at a factory in his hometown. Later he taught art and natural history at a private school in Boston, where he wrote and illustrated the book that would make him famous, *A Field Guide to the Birds.*

Dr. Peterson has been the recipient of 23 honorary degrees and has received virtually every award in the field of wildlife, conservation, and the environment.

An internationally known lecturer, film maker, and photographer, Dr. Peterson has taught millions to appreciate and respect the natural world, and has been credited with helping to build the modern environmental movement. In recognition of the impact of his work, he has twice been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

One of the grandest tributes to Dr. Peterson was given by another of my favorite people, S. Dillon Ripley, former head of Yale's Peabody Museum and then the Smithsonian. Ripley wrote the foreword to the book *The Field Guide Art of Roger Tory Peterson* and said that if he were to draw up a short list of people who could be considered to be family icons, it would be fair to include in such a list Roger Tory Peterson, who has gained international fame throughout the years, and has personally influenced more people than a variety of Popes, Metropolitans, and perhaps the Dalai Lama. I couldn't agree more, could you?

Mrs. Peterson regrets that she is unable to attend today, so I am pleased to present this award to the long-time friend and associate of Dr. Peterson, Mrs. Jane Kinne.

A CONNECTICUT BIRDING YEAR - PART 2

DAVID PROVENCHER

Introduction to Part 2

This installment of the year long series covers the months April through June. This period is one of great change in the birds present in Connecticut. A flood of migrants return to their northern breeding grounds. Some of these species will be Connecticut breeders while others will pass through on their way to more northerly territories. The returning breeders are full of song, and a working knowledge of bird songs and calls is immensely helpful. At the end of this article we will discuss what audio resources are commercially available to birders to learn the vocalizations of the species present in our state. There is nothing quite so beautiful as the chorus of bird songs during the first blush of a morning in May. Being able to identify which species are singing without actually seeing the birds is icing on the cake.

It is highly recommended that you use one of the recently published site guides on birding in Connecticut in tandem with the strategies laid out in this series.

In order to bird these months effectively you must have a basic understanding of spring migration and its manifestation in Connecticut. Before we discuss the months of April, May, and June, we will discuss the spring migration phenomena.

Understanding Migration: The Key to Spring Birding

It isn't necessary to be an authority on migration; knowing just a little will help immensely. Volumes have been written about migration but we will cover just the basics you need to know to put more birds in your birding.

Spring migration is driven by the instinct to reproduce. Usually the males of a species migrate first to set up territories to attract mates. The females will follow after. The instinct to migrate is very strong and pushes individuals to take great risks to reach the breeding grounds. This is somewhat different from fall migration in that birds will move north even in adverse weather. In fall birds tend to wait for favorable weather to move south. Still, the largest spring movement of birds occurs with favorable weather. Nearly all the Spring migration occurs from the second week in April through the first week in June. The heaviest migration into and through Connecticut occurs between the last week in April and the third week in May. Large numbers of birds, or "waves", can sud-

denly occur in Connecticut if inclement weather blocks migratory movement for a couple of days or longer. This inclement weather is referred to as "blocking weather" because while it occurs it blocks much of the migration. The birds tend to "pile up" behind the foul weather and wait for clear skies. When blocking weather moves away it is usually followed by clear nights and a southwest wind. When this occurs a heavy movement of birds is likely. Birding these beautiful mornings can be very productive. It is a very good idea to be an amateur meteorologist and to watch what weather is occurring to our south, where the birds are coming from. Watch for these migration dams and be ready to hit the field when they break. During this period, clear nights with southwest winds means birds, plain and simple.

Most songbird species, but not all, migrate at night. They arrive in the early hours and begin to disperse and forage at first light. In spring many of these birds will be in song, helping the birder find them. This is where a working knowledge of bird song can be an immeasurable help. The early migrants favor habitats of low elevation sheltered areas such as wetlands. These low lying areas are warmer and tend to be where the first insect blooms occur. These insect blooms will be an important food source for the returning migrants. Locations such as river valleys, wooded swamps, coastal marshes, pond and lake edges are where you are most likely to find the first returning songbirds. As the migration continues the birds will move further into our state and will be found at higher elevations. To envision where the migrants are likely to be most concentrated in the state during the migration, imagine the progression of an immense flood covering Connecticut. At the start, the low coastal areas would be covered. As time progressed the water would work up river valleys and fill wetlands. During the middle of the flood the intermediate elevations and low hills would be covered. Lastly, the highest elevations would be flooded. This flooding model is a rough approximation of how the migrant birds return to our state.

Different species have different peak times for migration in Connecticut. Yellow-rumped Warbler is an early migrant easily found in the third week of April while Yellow-bellied Flycatcher is a late migrant found passing through as late as the first week in June. Knowing when a species should be present will increase your chances of finding it. Migrants are often found in habitat that reflects their breeding habitat. When searching for particular species this should be borne in mind. As a rule, the further north a species breeds, the later it migrates. Therefore more southerly breeders such as Blue Grosbeak arrive on their breeding grounds before northern breeders like Mourning Warbler.

The number of species and the number of individuals that pass through Connecticut during this period is very impressive. This article cannot cover the detail and complexity of this phenomena but will cover generalities in attempting to improve your birding strategies during this wildest period of the birding year.

April: Introduction

April usually arrives just as March went out, full of promise but often dreary and wet. The wintering birds are now heading north and this is a good time to see some of these species in their breeding plumage. Common Loons, Horned Grebes, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, and many other species will be in various stages of molt. Some may be virtually complete. As these birds head north, the first real push of migrants from the tropics and beyond fly into southern New England. From a birder's perspective, winter finally departs and spring arrives during the month of April.

April: General Strategy

During April we transition from winter birds to summer birds. The departing birds of winter often hold a surprise or two as birds move through our area, so pay attention to waterfowl areas early in April. The first arriving birds of summer occur coastally and at the low, wet, warm areas we have discussed. Therefore the most productive birding will occur in these areas. Try to visit coastal areas if you can but, wherever you bird, look for low sheltered wetlands. These warm pockets are going to be where you find the spring arrivals first. Think low elevation, think sheltered warmth, think wetland, find birds! By the end of the month things will be getting very busy indeed.

April: Discussion

If there are wintering species you still haven't seen, the first week in April is likely to be your last chance until the end of the year. Waterfowl will be in full migration now and large numbers of loons, grebes, geese, and ducks will be passing through. Wood Duck and Blue-winged Teal are now to be found and often Snow Geese will be seen passing high overhead. Listen for their distinct honking, this will alert you to look for the very high white 'vee' formations. While many Snow Geese may pass over on migration they seldom land in any numbers in Connecticut. Remember, birding is three dimensional, always keep an eye on the sky!

A visit or two to the coastal marshes and beaches during the first week of April will likely be productive with the return of early shorebirds such as Piping Plover, yellowlegs, Ruddy Turnstones,

and a few others. The marshes will now have Ospreys displaying above them and early herons and egrets hunting in them. Little Blue Herons and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, both rather uncommon in Connecticut, are sometimes found now among Great Egrets and Snowy Egrets. Coastal marshes are excellent locales to find the first swallows to come back. Tree Swallows and Barn Swallows are usually the first to arrive with Cliff Swallows being the last.

During the second week of April the real song bird migration starts to arrive. We are now entering a four or five week period during which birders want to be everywhere at once. As the British say, it's all go now! With so much to look for and so little time to look, it is imperative to be smart in your choices of places to go. Some of the first species that will turn up are swallows, Eastern Phoebe, Hermit Thrush, both kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Louisiana and Northern Waterthrushes, Palm Warblers, and others. As the third and fourth weeks of April roll in the number of returning bird species grows rapidly. Repeated visits to an area will turn up different bird mixes daily. Find an area that is attracting birds and visit it often. Raptors are also returning now and you should watch the sky for such species as Red-shouldered Hawk and Broad-winged Hawk.

Inclement or gray weather in the last two weeks of April are good for checking coastal marshes for birds such as herons, egrets, migrant falcons, shorebirds, and rails. While a good number of these may be around all summer, the marsh vegetation will be short and brown now, allowing for much easier spotting and viewing of birds. Be alert for anything and keep those ears open!

Where, When, and Weather

We have already discussed weather. Remember to watch for migration weather; southwest winds will carry migrants into Connecticut. Northerly or easterly winds at this time are not good news for birding.

The best birding of the day will usually be early, very early. If you want to see the most birds you need to be out at first light. Many species migrate at night and will be roving and feeding during the early hours. These birds will be less active and quieter later in the day. It is a given that the most serious birders will be sleep deprived during April and May!

Coastal marshes that are very productive include Sherwood Island State Park in Westport, Great Meadows in Stratford, Milford Point in Milford, Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, Great Island Marsh at the mouth of the Connecticut River, Rocky

Neck State Park in Niantic, and Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Stonington.

For returning land birds numerous low lying areas and wetlands exist. Try to find areas near you and visit these repeatedly throughout the migration. State Parks and Forests often offer good birding possibilities. You may have heard the term "migrant trap" used. A migrant trap is a location that tends to concentrate migrating birds. A spring migrant trap is usually an area of natural habitat surrounded by an urban area, such as a city park. In Connecticut there is one famous and very productive spring migrant trap, East Rock Park in New Haven. This park is dominated by a massive forested rock formation with a trail system in the middle of a city that acts as a magnet to spring migrants. East Rock Park has seen some very impressive concentrations of spring migrants over the years. Coastal peninsulas can also cause concentrations of migrants.

May: Introduction

There are more species of birds present in Connecticut during May than during any other month of the year. This fact makes it a very busy month for birders. All the breeding species are on territory and a number of through migrants are present. The first two weeks of the month are the peak of the birding year. It is a time when you need to be everywhere at once. Species that breed in Connecticut do not necessarily do so evenly throughout the entire state. In order to find most of them you have to visit different parts of the state. It is nearly impossible to do justice to birding the month of May in an article of this nature.

May: General Strategy

There are two general groups of migrants we need to discuss. One is the returning Connecticut breeders, and the other is through migrants, species that are heading further north to breed. The first two weeks of May should be utilized to look for the species that are migrating through. Species that breed to our north will be easier to find now when they are singing, such as Cape May Warbler. If you know of a migrant trap such as East Rock Park, it pays handsome rewards to visit it repeatedly during these two weeks. Migrants can be everywhere now, even in a lone tree in your backyard or in the parking lot at work. Explore all habitats you can to find different species. During the second half of May you can turn your attention to breeding species. This will require visiting different geographic areas in Connecticut. The best strategy for the month of May is bird often, bird hard, bird everywhere! Well, do the best you can.

May (the first half): Discussion

Good weather during the first half of May should be dedicated to searching for migrant land birds such as flycatchers, thrushes, vireos, warblers, and sparrows. Inclement weather or days with easterly winds should be used to search coastal areas for migrant waterfowl, herons and egrets, shorebirds, gulls, and terns. If your birding time is limited during May, you should concentrate on songbird migration at the expense of shorebirds and other coastal species. You will get a chance for many of these again during the fall migration.

When searching for songbirds you should either visit migrant traps where you will find a nice mixture of species, or visit different habitat types to find the greatest number of species. Forests will produce species such as Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, thrushes, vireos, a mixture of warblers including Northern Parula, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, Cerulean, Black-and-white, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Baltimore Oriole. Forest edges and brushy areas such as powerline cuts will produce species such as Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Eastern Kingbird, Brown Thrasher, White-eyed Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo (rare in spring), Golden-winged Warbler (rare), Prairie Warbler, Palm Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrow, and White-crowned Sparrow. Wet woodlands can produced a species mixture that may include Acadian Flycatcher, Winter Wren, both waterthrushes, Hooded Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Canada Warbler, and Lincoln's Sparrow. Coniferous tracts, especially ones with some spruces, can have Swainson's Thrush, Cape May Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Pine Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, and Blackpoll Warbler. Riparian areas may have Solitary or Spotted Sandpipers, Belted Kingfisher, Bank Swallow, and Cerulean Warbler. Fresh water marshes and swamps could produce Least Bittern, Green Heron, Rails, Common Snipe, Willow and Alder Flycatchers, swallows, Marsh Wren, Yellow Warbler, and Swamp Sparrow. Open grassy areas with a few trees may have Vesper Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow (local), Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, and Orchard Oriole. Coastal marshes should produce a wide variety of species including herons and egrets, ibis, rails, shorebirds, terns, Willow Flycatcher, swallows, Salt-marsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow, and Seaside Sparrow.

Prioritize your birding locations. If you happen to be retired or independently wealthy you can go everywhere. This luxury is not the norm among birders unfortunately. During the first two weeks of May the priority should be, from most important to least, mi-

grant traps such as East Rock Park, wooded swamps and fresh water marshes, river bottoms, woodlands with brushy edges, coastal marshes, grassland habitat.

May (the second half): Discussion

The more northerly breeders are now passing through, as well as the females of earlier species. Additionally, many birds are now on territory in Connecticut. Migrant traps are still worth checking but you may not want to make them your first priority. To find the later migrants it often is better to search particular habitats. It is still a good idea to make an effort to find through migrants, but now you can start a more serious search for uncommon or local breeders. Some late migrants and their favored habitats include Olive-sided Flycatcher in wet or open areas with dead trees, Eastern Wood-Pewee in any woodland, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in deep forest often at a higher elevation, Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrushes in deep forest, and Mourning Warbler in dense and damp woodland. By this time the more northern sections of Connecticut are starting to get quite "birdy." Some breeding species have limited ranges in Connecticut and are mostly found in the higher elevations. These include Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Alder Flycatcher, Common Raven, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Dark-eyed Junco.

By the last week in May you should be heavily targeting uncommon and local breeders. These include the following, Least Bittern, Northern Bobwhite (may be extirpated as a sustained breeder), Upland Sandpiper, Sora, Common Raven, Golden-winged Warbler, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Orchard Oriole. Word of mouth is often the best way to find where these species can be found in Connecticut but a site guide such as the Connecticut Birding Guide (Devine & Smith) can be a big help. As of this writing both Upland Sandpiper and Grasshopper Sparrow breed on parts of Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks. While you are searching these out you will undoubtedly turn up other new species for the year as well.

A number of species are best found at night. This is a good time to look for them by spending a few hours listening in the dark. Judicious use of taped vocalizations of these species can help a great deal to find and see them but PLEASE do not use tapes liberally. Heavy use of bird tapes is widely considered detrimental to the breeding birds and birders nearly always play them more loudly than necessary. The birds only have to hear the tape, not be blown off the nest. These night birds include Virginia Rail, Clapper Rail, King Rail, Black Rail (very rare), Soras, several species of owl, Common Nighthawk (mostly migrant), and Whip-poor-will. Some

of these species are very local breeders, like King Rail, and in the case of Whip-poor-will need large tracts of unbroken woodland. Many nocturnal species, and some diurnal species, will vocalize to tapes of owls such as Eastern Screech-Owl. It is always a good idea to try this first.

As time permits you may spend some time shore-birding. You are unlikely to see anything that you won't see on fall migration but you will see some of these species in their breeding plumage now.

Where, When, and Weather

Find out where a migrant trap exists near you and visit it. If you know of no such place, try coastal parks and forest, especially on coastal peninsulas. Some such places are Greenwich Point Park in Greenwich, Sherwood Island State Park in Westport, East Rock Park in New Haven, Hammonasset State Park in Madison, Nehantic State Forest in Old Lyme, Bluff Point State Coastal Reserve in Groton, and Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Stonington. As the month wears on visit forest and wetlands in the interior. River Road in Kent is one of the best known spring birding locations in Connecticut. This location is always productive in the second half of May and has the largest concentration of Cerulean Warblers in our state. This is also an excellent locale to find Black Vulture, a very local species in Connecticut.

When? During May, when you are awake you should be birding, and try not to sleep anymore than you have to! The previous discussion on weather still holds true. When the weather is good for migration then bird for songbirds. When the weather is inclement or otherwise not conducive to songbird migration, spend time birding for coastal birds such as terns and shorebirds.

April and May Advanced Birding Tips

Prolonged blocking weather in April is sometimes followed by clear weather with a very strong southwest wind. When this occurs there is often a number of southerly species that overshoot their normal ranges and end up in the northeast. Summer Tanager and Blue Grosbeak are notorious for this. The possibility of even better rarities exists however. When these conditions occur you should be alert for such species as Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites, Chuck-will's-widow, Yellow-throated Warbler, and even Swainson's Warbler. You should also be alert for southern shorebirds during the April/May period, American Avocet, Wilson's Plover, and Snowy Plover are real possibilities. When a southwest wind howls in late April, start looking for rarities from the south.

June: Introduction

During June a few species are still migrating north through Connecticut, such as Olive-sided Flycatcher. For the most part however it is time for the birds to breed and raise young. This month is the time to find all the uncommon breeders you haven't yet seen this year. It is also a good month for rarities.

June: General Strategy

Target the breeders you still need. It is the lucky birder indeed, who "gets" everything on migration. It often takes searching for breeders to fill the year's list out. It is well worth the effort to visit forest, fields, and beaches, during the month. If there are summer bird counts or breeding surveys in your area, get involved. Rare and uncommon species are often found on these counts, and you will be making an important contribution. Try to bird areas where you haven't been yet this spring.

June: Discussion

Breeding is now occurring at a fast and furious pace. Many of the long-distance migrants only spend a brief time here. Once the eggs have hatched it's time to feed hungry mouths. The chore of feeding the new members of the species is not an easy one; it requires much effort. The hard working parents of some species are sometimes much easier to find now than at any other time. This is particularly true of raptors and owls. It is not unusual to see frazzled Great Horned Owls hunting in daylight to feed their fast growing offspring. For the birder, the hectic frenzy of May has finally subsided and June allows for a more relaxed style of birding. By the end of the month the focus of birding will be switching back to shorebirds and the coast. The amount of time we spend looking at the feathered gems we call warblers is amazingly and regrettably brief. Take the time to appreciate these lovely creatures while they visit us.

It's the end of June and the southward migration has already begun. Female Wilson's Phalaropes have left the young in the care of the males and are headed for winter quarters. It is possible to have a Wilson's Phalarope migrating south past a north-bound Olive-sided Flycatcher. It's a wild world isn't it?

June: Advanced Birding Tip

The month of June is known as one of the best months for rarities to show up. It is prime time for species such as Mississippi Kite, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Even Bridled Tern is a possibility. When a bird fails to find a mate or loses a battle for territory, it sometimes starts wandering. These

wandering individuals sometimes show up out of the species' normal range. Additionally some rarities are found during bird counts and breeding bird surveys. The point is, just because spring migration has pretty much ended, you shouldn't take the month off from birding. Try visiting areas you haven't birded yet this spring. Who knows when you are going to stumble onto that Henslow's Sparrow singing in the wet field down the street? You know, the one you drive past every day without stopping.

Recommended Bird Recordings for the Birder

You can do nothing more effective to improve your spring birding success than improving your birding by ear. The single most important commercially offered product is the Peterson's Field Guide to Bird Songs-Eastern/Central North America. This set of cassettes or compact disks covers nearly all the songbirds to be found in Connecticut and it is the cornerstone of an audio reference library for our area. Another worthwhile product is Guide to Bird Sounds from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology keyed to the National Geographic *Field Guide to the Birds of North America.* This does not cover the full spectrum of Connecticut species, however. Cornell's Songs of the Warblers of North America is excellent for the birder who wants to expand his knowledge of this group of impressive migrants. Quite useful to the beginner/intermediate birders is the Birding By Ear series. These tapes use a comparison methodology presenting similar songs to the listener to teach the the differences. A number of other recordings are available that specialize in specific bird groups, but these are only helpful if you have already mastered the basics.

Conclusion

By the end of June your year list of species seen in Connecticut should be around 200 species or more. Experienced Connecticut birders routinely exceed 250 by the end of June, but this requires a serious time commitment. Whatever your total is for the year at this point, it is time to radically change the birding pace. The need to be everywhere at once and the possibility of finding new birds almost anywhere is over. Now comes the challenge of the fall shorebird migration, perhaps the biggest challenge of the birding year. Finding and identifying as many species as possible really requires a very well thought out plan. The next installment of this series will address that challenge.

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David Provencher, 43 Branch Hill Rd., Preston, CT 06365

IDENTIFICATION NOTES

STINTS AND SANDPIPERS

Problems, Pitfalls and Misconceptions

JULIAN HOUGH

In the last few decades, it is probably the small North American sandpipers, affectionately referred to as 'peeps', and Eurasian stints which have caused some of the most controversial and heated identification debates.

This intriguing group of birds has caused many headaches for birders due to a superficial similarity to more common species. It is easy be fooled by a 'funny' looking sandpiper into thinking you have a 'good' bird. To avoid any unnecessary migraines it is vital that you be familiar with the 'common' species and be wise to their 'disguises' before claiming a rarity. How often have you been panicked into thinking you have 'something good' only to realize it's just a Semipalmated or Least Sandpiper? I'm sure this scenario is uncomfortably familiar. These latter species are often the culprits for mistaken identities due to plumage variation, either very bright or dull in both breeding and winter plumages.

That Little and Red-necked Stints are occurring in the northeast is hinted at by records of both species from New York and Massachusetts.

The Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (ARCC) often receives reports of such rarities, but unfortunately many involve common species in unfamiliar or extreme plumages. As a correct identification usually involves a critical assessment of individual feather patterns, it is often difficult to 'prove' a record and some 'good' reports are likely to be thrown away with the 'bad' ones. This article hopes to inform the observer of some of the pitfalls and main identification criteria required to substantiate a claim of a stint. We hope that it will lead to an accepted record for Little and/or Red-necked Stint in Connecticut in the near future.

As a result of advances in identification criteria, some of the pieces of the stint-jigsaw have fallen into place, though the finished picture is far from complete, particularly regarding the identification of Red-necked Stint in juvenile plumage. A long-distance migrant, breeding in Siberia and parts of Alaska, it occurs occasionally along the west coast and sporadically in the east. That there

are no acceptable records of juveniles outside of Alaska is wholly due to the perplexing identification difficulties in separating them from juvenile Semipalmated Sandpipers. It is this fact alone which is shrouding the true status of Red-necked Stint in North America.

The following article summarizes the main identification points of juvenile Semipalmated and Western Sandpiper in reference to their separation from Eurasian vagrants such as Little and Red-necked Stints.

The text refers to juvenile plumages (unless otherwise stated) and is drawn from many hours of field observation as well as incorporating a distillation of the current identification literature. It is not my intention to offer a complete description of plumage features, but to focus on the points which are likely to be of value in the identification process.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*)

This forms a species pair with Western Sandpiper and shares with that species partially webbed toes (hence its name). This feature, when seen to be present, helps eliminate all other confusing species. Semipalmateds are aggressive toward other shorebirds, often engaging in fights, and will vigorously defend a feeding territory. It is a common bird in spring and fall in Connecticut.

Size and Structure

Semipalmated Sandpipers are larger than Little Stint, appearing long-legged with a deep-based, 'blob-tipped' bill. Bill size is very variable and some individuals may show a longer, slightly decurved bill and require careful separation from Western Sandpiper (see under that species).

The primary projection (the amount of primaries exposed beyond the longest tertial) is small with just two primary tips visible which imparts a less elongated or accentuated 'jizz' when compared with either Red-necked or Little Stint.

Head Pattern

Invariably well-defined, showing distinctly streaked crown contrasting with an obvious whitish supercilium creating a capped effect. A dark, loral eyestripe and streaked ear coverts create a noticeable dark 'cheek' patch.

In some juveniles, a ginger wash is apparent on the crown and ear coverts and may approach rufous in unusually bright individuals.

Juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper, Cape May, NJ, August 1995 (Julian Hough) A typical juvenile, showing broad-based, blunt-tipped bill and a small primary projection. Note also the distinctly streaked crown contrasting with a pale supercilium and the brown-washed ear coverts. The subterminal 'anchors' on the greater coverts are visible.

Upperparts

Grayish mantle (sometimes washed with pale rufous) typically lacking a conspicuous white 'V'. When seen from behind, the white tips to the lower scapulars often form vague white 'braces' but this should not be confused with the prominent mantle 'V' shown by many juvenile Little Stints. Some Semipalmateds may give an impression of a mantle 'V', but it is never so bold or prominent as on a classic Little Stint.

The scapulars are gray-brown, tipped white with obvious subterminal 'anchors' (see figure 1). Wing coverts are similar to the lower scapulars but show finer dark shafts and broader whitish fringes. The tertials are blackish-brown, becoming grayish on the outer edges. The pattern of the greater coverts is important; unlike other confusing species they show a fine subterminal 'anchor' to each feather.

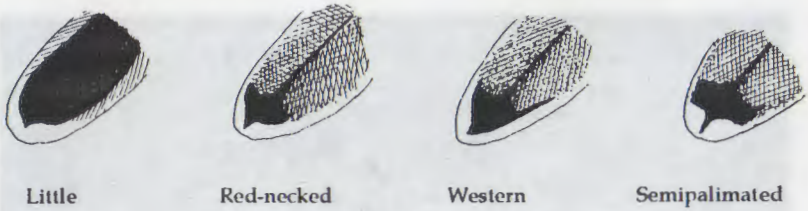


Figure 1. Scapular Patterns

Underparts

Whitish. Breast-sides gray-buff with fine spots/streaks. Fresh individuals often show a peachy breast band but this is quickly lost through wear.

Call

A short, harsh "churrt" or 'chut'.

LITTLE STINT (*Calidris minuta*)

This long-distance migrant breeds on Arctic coasts from eastern Norway to Asia, passing through Great Britain on its way to wintering grounds in South Africa. As a result of their easterly origin they are more irregular in occurrence than Red-necked Stint.

Size and Structure

Very similar overall to Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers. Little Stints are smaller with a finer-tipped bill which is not so deep at the base as Semipalmated.

Little Stints often appear long-bodied due to a longer primary projection with three primary tips often visible. This is a good feature, though it may not be apparent on some individuals.

Head Pattern

More Western-like, showing grayer crown sides and a darker, contrasting central 'ridge'. Many individuals show a 'split-supercilium' effect where the supercilium forks just before the eye. Unlike Semipalmated the ear coverts are grayer and do not form a dark patch.

Upperparts

The upperparts are generally more rufous or chestnut-toned (somewhat like a washed-out Least) and have solidly dark centers with gray-buff fringes which extend around the whole feather and

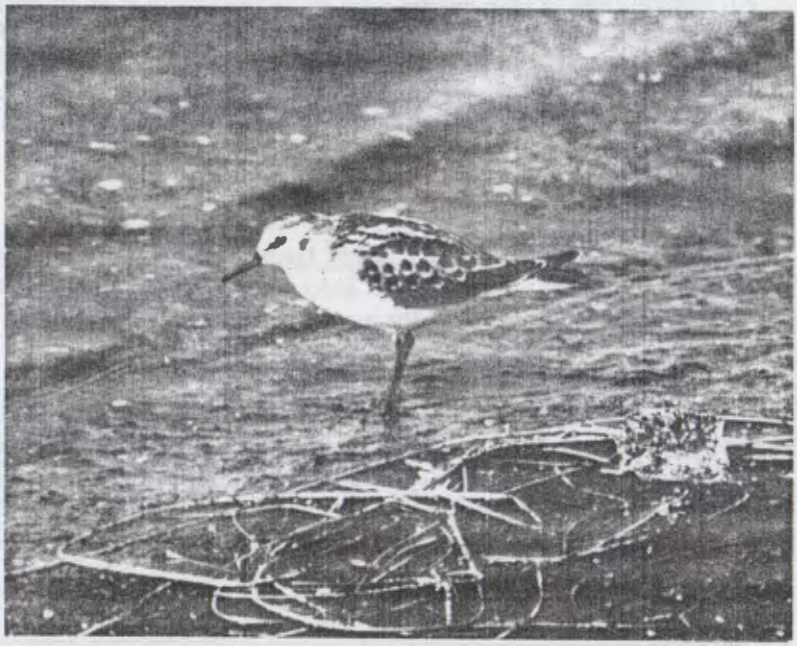
are not restricted to the tip as on Semipalmated. The overall tone to the upperparts and tertials is a warm chestnut tone. The mantle often shows a bold white 'V', though this may be reduced on some individuals.

Underparts

Whitish. The breast-side pattern is similar to that of Western Sandpiper with a narrow band of streaks extending toward the center of the breast.

Call

A high-pitched 'stit'.



Juvenile Little Stint, England, September 1991 (Steve Young)

A 'classic' individual, showing clean cut plumage features. The bill is short, straight and fine-tipped and note the long primary extension. Note also the pale nape and dark central ridge of streaks along the crown as well as the dark "cheek" spot. The upperpart feathers have solidly black centers, particularly the tertials and inner greater coverts and the mantle has a strong white 'V'.

Discussion

Separating juvenile Little Stint and Semipalmated requires great care and attention. Generally Little Stints are warmer-toned, longer-winged and show a prominent mantle 'V'. The solidly dark scapulars and lack of 'anchors' to the upperparts and greater coverts are important pro-Little Stint features. The greater coverts also lack the subterminal anchors shown by Semipalmated. The call, when heard, is also diagnostic.

Least and bright Semipalmated Sandpipers are often responsible for North American claims of Little Stint. Least Sandpiper has short, yellowish legs and unlike the latter two species has a short, slightly decurved, fine-tipped bill and the shortest primary projection of them all!

WESTERN SANDPIPER (*Calidris mauri*)

An uncommon to rare spring bird in Connecticut, it is slightly more regular in fall. As its name implies it is predominantly a bird of the west coast of North America.

The separation of this species from Semipalmated Sandpiper is one of the classic 'trial-by-fire' identifications among North American shorebirds.

Size and Structure

A miniature Dunlin! Slightly larger than Semipalmated with a typically long, 'drooping' bill and long legs. The flat back, slim body and long legs give Westerns a rangier appearance.

Head Pattern

Plain crown, darker along the central crown and grayer and more finely streaked at the sides. Rarely, if ever, do they show a capped effect as that shown by Semipalmated. Ear-coverts 'cleaner' and do not form such a dark ear-covert patch. Supercilium whitish, often 'bulging' in front of the eye and forming an obvious 'V' when seen head-on.

Upperparts

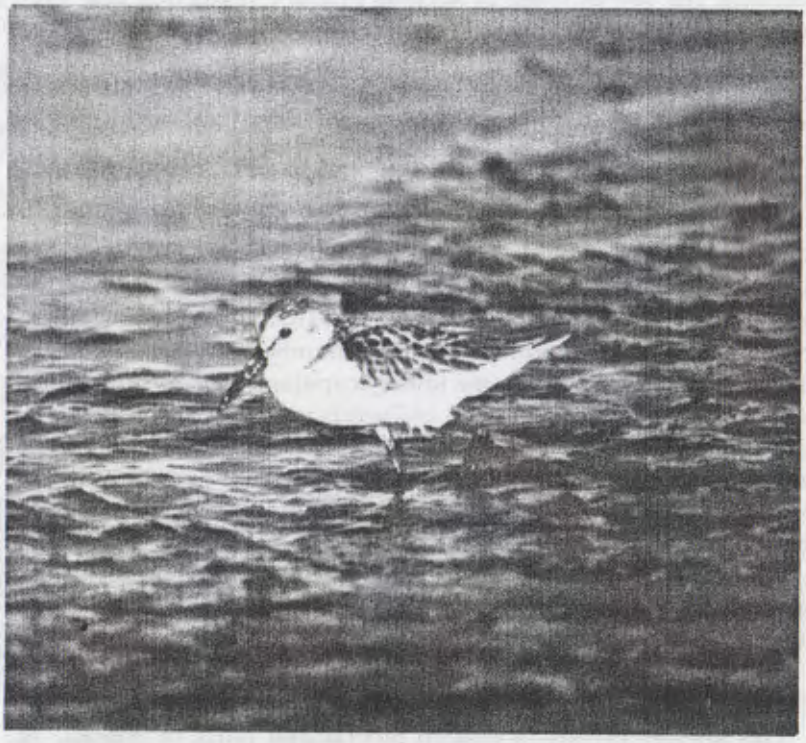
Upper scapulars have black centers and broad, bright rufous edges which contrast with the grayer wings. The rear lower scapulars have pale gray centers, heightening the contrast with the rufous upper scapulars. While some bright Semipalmateds may show pale rufous fringes to the scapulars, the contrast is not as pronounced as that shown by a typical Western. Wing coverts

have fine shaft streaks and pale buff fringes. Tertials blackish, or grayish, fringed whitish or pale rufous.

When faced with a puzzling or atypical individual (i.e. a short-billed Western or a long-billed Semipalmated), the feather pattern of the upper scapulars is an important detail.

Underparts

White. The fine streaking at the breast sides is usually better defined, but more restricted, than Semipalmated. Often appears as a 'band' rather than a 'patch'.



Juvenile Western Sandpiper, Cape May, August 1995 (Julian Hough) A fairly typical individual, with a longish, fine-tipped bill, long-bodied appearance. The supercilium is broad before the eye and the ear coverts and crown is less capped. The upperparts are grayer, particularly the wing coverts.

Call

A rippling, high-pitched "treeet" or 'cheet'.

Behavior

As an aid to identification, Westerns, due to their longer bill and legs are more prone to wade, belly deep in water during feeding. The feeding method often involves much probing rather than pecking.

Discussion

To summarize, the main differences from Semipalmated lie in the subtleties of structure, head pattern and bill length. Two more tangible fieldmarks are the rufous, upper scapulars and the shape of the 'anchor' marks on the lower scapulars. Contrary to some authorities, the use of features such as primary projection and eye-ring are unreliable and should not be used as points of difference between Semipalmated and Western. Confusion is only likely when found with a long-billed Semipalmated or or short-billed Westerns. Extremely long-billed Semipalmateds are rare, and after nine autumns in New Jersey I have yet to see one with a bill as extreme as the Felixstowe individual (See photo).

Another aspect to consider in this identification process is the fact that Westerns have an earlier molt from juvenile to first winter plumage than Semipalmated. This involves head and body feathers but not the tail and wings. This means that by early September, most Westerns have replaced quite a number of juvenile crown and mantle feathers and some lower scapulars. This has the effect of making the upperparts more uniformly gray, but may also highlight the unmolted rufous, upper scapulars. The similar molt in Semipalmated is significantly later and they still appear in full juvenile plumage into October. Thus, a molting juvenile sandpiper in late August-September should be a Western. Note the possibility that some birds, particularly vagrants, may suspend their molt during migration and appear in full juvenile plumage later than normal.

RED-NECKED STINT (*Calidris ruficollis*)

This species breeds in eastern Siberia and parts of Alaska. A rare, but annual visitor to North America with all records outside of Alaska involving adults. Surely it is only a matter of time before a juvenile is found, most likely on the west coast where numbers of Semipalmated Sandpipers are low and it would be harder for them to be overlooked.

Size and Structure

Very similar overall to Little Stint, being long-bodied and having a relatively longer primary extension. The bill is generally short and does not match the variation in bill length as shown by Semipalmated Sandpiper.

The legs are comparatively short which gives them a 'low-profile' or horizontal carriage.

Head Pattern

Juveniles show a plainer crown than do Semipalmateds and often lack the distinctive 'capped' effect. This feature was regarded by Alstrom (in litt) as one of the best pro-Red-necked features.

Upperparts

The upperparts are generally warmer or more rufous-toned than Semipalmated but grayer than a typical Little Stint. Some often show a pale mantle 'V' like Little Stint, but an absence of this feature is not detrimental to an identification as Red-necked. The pattern of the upper scapular feathers may have diffuse 'anchors' (similar to Semipalmated) or be dark-centered (like Little). The wing coverts are grayish, narrowly fringed white and contrast with the warmer-toned scapulars and tertials.

From behind, the centers to the tertials and greater coverts are grayish, not blackish (like Little). This requires precise determination and must take into acccount the light conditions and viewing angle.

One feature I have found to be of use is that on Red-necked Stint the central tail feathers are longer than those of Little Stint and Semipalmated Sandpiper. As a result, the tail can be seen to project beyond the wingtips on a standing bird and this seems fairly consistent in the photographs that I have examined.

Underparts

Whitish. The breast patches are often more diffuse; any streaking looks washed out.

Call

As Little Stint, and thus distinct from Semipalmated.

Discussion

One identification pitfall not fully appreciated by novice observers is the potential confusion between Semipalmated Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint. This problem, is further complicated by the

variation in plumage tones of Red-necked Stint from 'rufous types' to 'gray types', the former being a potential pitfall for Little Stint.

Due to their proportions Red-necked is very long-bodied and although it is the longest winged stint, the primary projection often appears relatively short. This must be a result of the longer tertials which cloak the primaries at rest. Jizz is likely to be the best feature for picking out a distant Red-necked from a flock of Semipalmateds before finer detail can be seen; the short legs and horizontal carriage should set off the alarm bells compared with the long-legged, shorter-bodied Semipalmateds, and may impart a more 'shuffling' gait.

Up close, the tertials and inner greater coverts of Red-necked are grayer and, given close views, the greater coverts lack the subterminal 'anchors' shown by Semipalmated.

Problem Birds

Occasionally, unusual individuals occur which cause identification problems. It is these 'problem' birds which offer the most valuable learning experience for the identification buff and it is almost always a case of 'learning by your mistakes'.

Felixstowe, England 30th October 1982 - 16th April 1983

This bird was thought by many to be Britain's sixth Western Sandpiper. It took ten years before the bird was finally accepted - as a Semipalmated! Inexperienced English observers presumed the bird had to be a Western due to this individual being incredibly long-billed and long-legged, a likeness favoring an identification as Western rather than Semipalmated. Extremely long-billed individuals do occur but I doubt many people, even on this side of the Atlantic have seen one like this! Also, remember that stint identification was still in its infancy in the early eighties, and it might seem more obvious now due to the advances in their separation.

If you consider the fact that the bird was in almost full juvenile plumage at the beginning of its stay (21 November 1982), this is late for Western, which molt earlier. The pattern visible on the retained juvenile lower scapulars are typical of Semipalmated (figure 1) and it is unlikely that a Western would show the retained juvenile mantle and crown feathers at this late date having already molted into a grayer, first-winter plumage.

Stints and sandpipers cause much confusion. The only way to master their identification is to get out in the field and sort through the bewildering array of plumages. It will be hard work, but the rewards of a rare shorebird are worth the effort.

Semipalmated Sandpiper, Felixstowe, England, November 1983 (Tim Loseby) An unusually long-billed individual. The state of molt and the shape of the retained juvenile lower scapulars and crown streaking are typical of Semipalmated.

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CONNECTICUT'S 1997 FALL HAWK MIGRATION

NEIL CURRIE

Accompanied by towering cumulus clouds and gentle northerly breezes, a succession of August cold fronts brought all kinds of migrants. The weather pattern was the kind hawks and hawkwatchers alike look for as the fall migration season approaches. By late August a trickle of raptor migrants began. At Connecticut's two hawkwatching hot spots, Quaker Ridge in Greenwich and Lighthouse Point in New Haven, watcher-counters were on hand prior to the last week of August. At Lighthouse Point on the east side of New Haven Harbor, southwest headwinds on August 22 brought the fall's first hawks, four Ospreys and a Cooper's Hawk. At Quaker Ridge northwest winds on August 24 carried the year's first Bald Eagle as well as three Ospreys, three Broad-winged Hawks, and two other unidentified hawks. At Lighthouse on that day 14 hawks were noted. By the end of the month Quaker Ridge had recorded 211 hawks, 125 of them Broadwings; and at Lighthouse watchers had seen 106 hawks pass to the west.

The weather pattern of cold fronts, gentle northerly breezes, and cumulus clouds continued into September. The first heavy push of migrants came somewhat early on September 4 and 5. Northwest winds brought 807 hawks, including 130 Ospreys, 345 Sharp-shinned Hawks, and 208 Broadwings to Lighthouse Point. At Quaker Ridge there were 338 hawks on those days, including 28 Ospreys, 93 Sharpies, and 186 Broadwings. By the end of September 9,761 hawks had passed at Lighthouse Point. Almost half, 4769, were Sharpies (see Table 3).

At Quaker Ridge, four slow days followed the flights of September 4 and 5. September 10th saw the beginning of the now expected heavy flights; however, that day brought mostly Sharp-shins, 104, rather than the expected number of Broadwings. A day of rain on September 11th shut down all Connecticut lookouts, but a cold front passed through the state during the night of September 12. Now, into the peak Broadwing migration week, inland lookouts were manned for the first time. Northwest winds continued for the next five days, but counts at sites throughout the state were less than expected. Not until September 14 did large numbers of Broadwings appear. The migration spread over six days, rather than the typical two or three as in most years. It was also more widespread geographically. This produced lower than expected

daily numbers at most watch sites (See Table 2). At the tip of the funnel in Greenwich, however, there were six days during which over 1,000 hawks were counted and on September 22nd over 4,800 passed. The Quaker Ridge count there of 15,018 Broadwings compares to the yearly average of just under 18,000.

Broad-winged Hawks make up approximately 70 percent of Connecticut's fall total and at inland lookouts they account for over 90 percent of the migrating hawks. Other hawk species do not migrate inland in large groups or kettles as do the Broadwings. They remain more dispersed and it is not until they approach the north shore of Long Island Sound, where they turn to the southwest to avoid a water crossing, that they appear in numbers, joining other hawks filtering down the coast from the northeast. Some Broadwings reach the Sound as far east as New Haven, rarely beyond to the east, but most remain inland as they migrate towards the southwest. This course carries them over the Greenwich area in great numbers (Tables 1 and 2). The birds continue over southeast New York State, some over Butler Sanctuary in Bedford and Hook Mountain on the Hudson River; then over Montclair Quarry, a long established lookout in northeast New Jersey. Recently hawk watchers have discovered that large numbers of these hawks are even passing over Central Park and New York City. In Pennsylvania a project, now three years old, has established lookouts five miles apart across a distance of fifty miles between Hawk Mountain and Philadelphia. Hawk watchers have found, as they had expected, that Broadwings are migrating down this wide band in very large numbers. Apparently most of Connecticut's Broadwings are moving over northern New Jersey and southeastern Pennsylvania through this band between Hawk Mountain and Philadelphia. The entire course is directed towards Texas, where these birds will join streams of other Broadwings from the Great Lakes and midwestern regions.

Along the Connecticut shoreline numbers of other hawks species are far greater than those seen at inland lookouts. As a result, coastal counts continue into November at Lighthouse Point and Quaker Ridge. (See Tables 1, 3, and 4). Flights of Sharp-shinned Hawks, Ospreys, and American Kestrels continued well into October at both lookouts, when Turkey Vultures also began to migrate. In September, inland sites, such as Chestnut Hill in Litchfield, do not count Turkey Vultures because they are considered resident birds and are not yet migrating. Black Vultures put in an appearance at two lookouts. Quaker Ridge recorded one while two were seen at Botsford Hill in Bridgewater. About forty of these birds are wintering in the New Milford area this year, thus the two at Botsford Hill might not have been migrating.

At Lighthouse Point during September and October there were one thousand hawk days on three dates. The September 21st flight was heavy because 770 unexpected Broadwings appeared. October 1st and 2nd brought the other two big days. On seven other days there were flights of over 500 hawks. These days helped to raise the fall total to 16,247 hawks, well above the previous two years' counts.

Of the year's highlights, two Swainson's Hawks were seen at Quaker Ridge in October, and another circled over excited observers at Lighthouse Point, a first for this site. Since it came at a later date, this Swainson's Hawk was not one of the birds seen at Quaker Ridge. Table 4 reflects surprising changes in the number of Broadwings passing Quaker Ridge over the past three years. In general numbers of Broadwings were thought to be low throughout the East this past fall. Bald Eagles continue to increase in number and are being seen regularly at all lookouts. Sharp-shinned Hawks, in decline throughout the East in recent years, appear to have made a small comeback. Tables 3 and 4 reveal that Red-tailed Hawks did not move as far south this fall as usual. Further confirmation is the good numbers that were perched and soaring along interstate highways this past winter. There were no Golden Eagles sighted at Quaker Ridge last fall compared to 23 two years ago. Again, two of them were found to be wintering near Canaan Mountain and another was sporadically reported over the Connecticut River near Essex.

COMPILERS AND COUNTERS

The following watchers and compilers at Connecticut hawk sites hope you will join them in the fall of 1998: Bill Banks, Dan Barvir, Trudy Battaly, Ron Bell, Tom Baptist, Ray Belding, Tom Burke, Paul Carrier, Barbara Cole, Jim Cortina, Neil Currie, Mary Ann Currie, Fritz Davis, Ayreslea Denny, Paul Desjardins, Patrick Dugan, Cynthia Ehlinger, Dick English, Larry Fischer, David and Ann Fiske, Joyce Grohoski, Frank Guida, Tony Hager, Anki Hamback, Greg Hanisek, Bo Hopkins, Seth Kellogg, Paul Kennedy, Phyllis Kitchin, Tom Kilroy, Lois Lounsbury, Frank Mantlik, Tom Mason, Jim McBride, Mike Newhouse, Brian O'Toole, Drew Panko, Janet Petricone, Matt Popp, Steve Potter, Jerry Ross, Al and Betty Root, Meredith Sampson, Fred Schroeder, Ray Smith, Art Titus, Tony Tortora, Bill Wallace, Edith Wells, Joe Zeranski, and Jim Zipp. As always, apologies to those whose names I have inadvertently omitted.

NEIL CURRIE, 10 Mountain Laurel Ln., Sandy Hook, CT 06482

1997 HAWK WATCH SITE LOCATIONS

Booth Hill - West Hartland
Beelzebub Road - South Windsor
Johnnycake Farm - Harwinton
Woodchuck Lane - Harwinton
Chestnut Hill - Litchfield
Upper Grassy Hill - Woodbury
Botsford Hill - Bridgewater
Whippoorwill Hill - Newtown
Huntington State Park - Redding
Maltby Lakes - Orange
East Rock Park - New Haven
East Shore Park - New Haven
Lighthouse Point Park - New Haven
Seaside Park, Bridgeport
Route 7, Norwalk
Quaker Ridge - Greenwich

Figure 1. 1977 Hawk Flight Lookout Sites

Table 1: Connecticut - All Lookouts - Fall 1997

SITES	Tot. Hrs.	SPECIES																		
		BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	Total
Booth Hill, West Hartland	21			26	2	1	60	1			710					5		1	14	820
Beelzebub Road, South Windsor	56			15	1	2	22				1635					7			28	1710
Johnnycake Farm, Harwinton	13			21	2	3	31	8		2	1027					16	3		2	1115
Woodchuck Lane, Harwinton	10			27	1	1	26	7		2	803		10			4	2		3	886
Chestnut Hill, Litchfield	56			75	12	4	74	10	2		3983					30	4		18	4212
Upper Grassy Hill, Woodbury	34			17	3	1	22	3		1	1416		2				1		7	1473
Botsford Hill, Bridgewater	22	2		16		2	23	3			1017				1	7	1		4	1076
Whippoorwill Hill, Newtown	50			79	10	7	162	12		5	3378		44			30	2	2	15	3746
Huntington State Park, Redding	31			19			70	12		1	903		1		1	13	3			1023
East Rock Park, New Haven	10		23	10		4	56	7	3	23	292		9			25	3			455
East Shore Park, New Haven	37		104	196	13	12	988	88	2		1463		16			135	12	9	43	3081
Lighthouse Point, New Haven	543		206	1811	38	459	8212	876	12	50	2054	1	212		1	1865	242	53	155	16247
Maltby Lakes, Orange	66		13	288	10	18	259	17		6	4227		5			95	1	1	26	4966
Seaside Park, Bridgeport	9			64		6	117	4			27					33	2			253
Route 7, Norwalk	2			10	1	1	108	1			173					23	1			318
Quaker Ridge, Greenwich	590	1	554	610	67	127	3360	368	13	126	15018	2	290			700	93	23	70	21422
Total	1550	3	900	3284	160	648	13590	1417	32	216	38126	3	589	0	3	2988	370	89	385	62803

SPECIES ABBREVIATIONS

BV - Black Vulture
TV - Turkey Vulture
OS - Osprey
BE - Bald Eagle
NH - Northern Harrier
SS - Sharp-shinned Hawk
CH - Cooper's Hawk
NG - Northern Goshawk
RS - Red-shouldered Hawk
BW - Broad-winged Hawk
SW - Swainson's Hawk
RT - Red-tailed Hawk
RL - Rough-legged Hawk
GE - Golden Eagle
AK - American Kestrel
ML - Merlin
PG - Peregrine
UR - unidentified raptor

Table 2: Broad-winged Hawk Flights - Fall 1997

SITES	September 1997														Oct. 1997	Total
	Pre-12	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	24	25-30		
Booth Hill, West Hartland			16	377						44	273					710
Beelzebub Road, South Windsor	3	3		72	40	927	483		3		104					1635
Johnnycake Farm, Harwinton						877			75		74	1				
Woodchuck Lane, Harwinton			13	748							42					803
Chestnut Hill, Litchfield	27		59	1072	425	246	125	1456			300	26	247			3983
Upper Grassy Hill, Woodbury	14	2	39	189	244	273	606	49								1416
Botsford Hill, Bridgewater	2		21	410	206	378										1017
Whippoorwill Hill, Newtown	27	26	52	762	737	1092	524	69			89					3378
Huntington State Park, Redding			9	345	99	393	53				4					903
East Rock Park, New Haven						252		40								292
East Shore Park, New Haven	150										605	80	40	68	520	1463
Lighthouse Point, New Haven	273		6	16	40	1	48				770	8	143	292	457	2054
Maltby Lakes, Orange	81	33	159	343	234	1062	398		12		615	1214	76			4227
Seaside Park, Bridgeport											27					27
Route 7, Norwalk				173												173
Quaker Ridge, Greenwich	374	50	133	1122	1565	2464	1022	73	28		365	4843	2208	665	106	15018
Total	951	114	507	5629	3590	7965	3259	1687	118	44	3268	6172	2714	1025	1083	38126

Table 3: Lighthouse Point Park Hawkwatch, New Haven, CT - Fall 1997

MONTH		SPECIES																	
	Hrs.	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	Total
August	36			55		10	6	9			1					17	8			106
September	203		38	1324	22	220	4763	348		7	1595		16		1	1130	98	16	77	9655
October	190		116	431	14	185	3295	488	11	30	457	1	67			713	122	31	70	6031
November	114		52	1	2	44	148	31	1	13	1		129			5	14	6	8	455
1997 Total	543		206	1811	38	459	8212	876	12	50	2054	1	212		1	1865	242	53	155	16247
1996 Total	528		180	1384	26	259	5639	538	27	52	1212		404	1	6	1887	204	71	133	12023
1995 Total	513		181	1407	33	481	5386	688	7	62	766		717	1	0	1879	307	53	207	12175

Table 4: Quaker Ridge Hawkwatch, Greenwich, CT - Fall 1997

MONTH		SPECIES																	
	Hrs.	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	UR	Total
August	53		1	45	2	7	11	2		1	125					14	3			211
September	264	1	31	459	52	56	1928	126	3	8	14787		38			417	48	9	36	17999
October	224		451	106	13	59	1379	226	8	78	106	2	180			266	42	14	32	2962
November	50		71			5	42	14	2	39			72			3			2	250
1997 Total	590	1	554	610	67	127	3360	368	13	126	15018	2	290			700	93	23	70	21422
1996 Total	557		295	306	68	62	1549	157	7	180	8071	2	336		2	383	49	12	47	11526
1995 Total	632	3	617	627	55	258	3123	259	15	260	36632		742		23	970	78	16	101	43779

See Table 1 for definition of species abbreviations

THE 1997-1998 CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Stephen P. Broker

Headline-grabbing news emerging from the Connecticut Christmas Bird Count results sometimes focuses on new species or rarities, occasionally notes vast numbers of flocking birds, and more often than not makes reference to distinct weather conditions. This year, the big story must be that we had the first genuine winter finch year since 1981-82. Not since that winter of 16 years ago have we had such robust numbers of crossbills and redpolls, siskins and goldfinches, all occurring in the same year. True, Pine Grosbeak was represented only by a count week record at Woodbury-Roxbury, and 41 Evening Grosbeaks distributed among Barkhamsted, Litchfield Hills, and Pawling are a mere remnant of the numbers recorded before the bottom fell out of this species' Connecticut winter population in the last decade. Nonetheless, winter finch fans had far more than memories to work, on out in the field this year.

This brief summary of the count and the accompanying tables are intended to give some additional focus to the 426,982 birds described in Connecticut during the period Friday, December 19 through Sunday, January 4. Unusually mild weather and favorable skies contributed to a large turnout of field observers and fewer than usual feeder watchers, as 17 area bird clubs and Audubon societies participated in the 1997-98 Christmas Bird Count. Once again, ten of the counts were held on the first weekend of the CBC period, and three took place on the last weekend. Saturday, December 20 was characterized by temperatures in the high 20s to 40s and low 50s and partly cloudy conditions. Skies cleared for Sunday, December 21, but temperatures dropped 10 degrees. The weekend of January 3-4, temperatures soared to the mid-40s during mornings and to the toasty low 60s in the afternoon under partly cloudy skies. Of the four counts held during the middle period of December 26 through January 1, only Pawling (Hidden Valley), NY-CT experienced the chill of winter, with New Year's Day temperatures ranging from 2 to 19 degrees Fahrenheit.

The statewide species tally of 161 Count Day and six Count Week species represented an average total. Highlights of this year's count were three Tundra Swans at Old Lyme-Saybrook, Greater White-fronted Goose at Edwin Way Teale - Trailwood, a

"blue-morph" Snow Goose at Oxford, King Rail and Common Moorhen at New Haven, Lesser Yellowlegs at Trailwood, a remarkable flock of 60 Tree Swallows at Fisher's Island, New York for the New London count and one additional Tree Swallow on the Old Lyme-Saybrook count, Ovenbird seen count week at New Haven, and Bullock's Oriole at Litchfield Hills. Other noteworthy sightings were a count week Barrow's Goldeneye at Old Lyme-Saybrook, a count week Golden Eagle at Lakeville-Sharon, and a Black-headed Gull at Greenwich-Stamford.

Northern, Mid-state, and coastal results were at least as interesting as were those made on a statewide basis. Tops among regional records was the first noncoastal occurrence of Black Scoter on a Connecticut CBC. This species, which is very rare in winter on large inland lakes, was seen at Litchfield Hills. Also reported here was a White-winged Scoter, considerably more common along the coast but still very unusual inland. Among mid-state counts, Woodbury-Roxbury located a remarkable 28 Black Vultures, signaling a major jump in this species' numbers in the state. On the coast, the Common Moorhen found at New Haven's Beaver Ponds was only the third record of this species on a Connecticut CBC in the last 20 years. High species totals were recorded in the north at Hartford (87 count day + 2 count week species), mid-state at Quinnipiac Valley (85 CD) with Woodbury-Roxbury equally impressive (84 CD + 4 CW), and along the coast by Old Lyme-Saybrook (a stunning 129 CD + 1 CW species). The Old Lyme-Saybrook species total is considerably more remarkable in that just 38 field observers did the leg work to find the birds, everything coming together in the effort this year.

Twenty year trends in Connecticut's early winter bird populations present few if any surprises. Common Loons were at an all time high, and several duck species continue their population growth, most notably Hooded Merganser. Eight counts recorded Ruddy Duck at record high numbers, and the statewide total (545) of these stiff-tailed ducks far exceeds the previous high of 194 in 1994-95. Cooper's Hawk numbers continue to climb, as Sharp-shinned Hawk numbers remain elevated. Red-bellied Woodpecker is the greatest long-term avian growth industry in the state, up another 5% from the previous year's total. Monk Parakeet is another high performer, in its second decade as a Connecticut breeding species and more than doubled in population from a year ago. All the above species have shown a minimum of ten years of population growth, as noted in previous CBC reports.

Species recorded in twenty year low numbers make a familiar

list, as well. The number of American Kestrels seen statewide was 15, tying last year's all time low. This small falcon's decline now extends back a decade. Two additional species of farms and fields, open country and grasslands which have reached new low numbers are Ring-necked Pheasant and Horned Lark. Field Sparrow was at a new low, and a case can be made for a genuine drop in numbers of this species over the last five years. Herring Gull continues to be one of the most ubiquitous species we have, but its 15,000+ total for this year is a mere one third of the numbers seen in the early to mid-1980s.

Figure 1 which is approximately drawn to scale, depicts the count areas covered for Connecticut. As can be noted, a significant portion of the state is covered by this count.

Christmas Bird Count data are a rich source of information about changing bird populations in Connecticut, the Northeast, and the nation, providing insights into rising and falling early winter populations, rarities and vagrants, the relation between weather conditions and bird occurrences, and a wealth of social commentary about those of us who pay attention to the rhythms of nature. See what you can find in the data that follow.

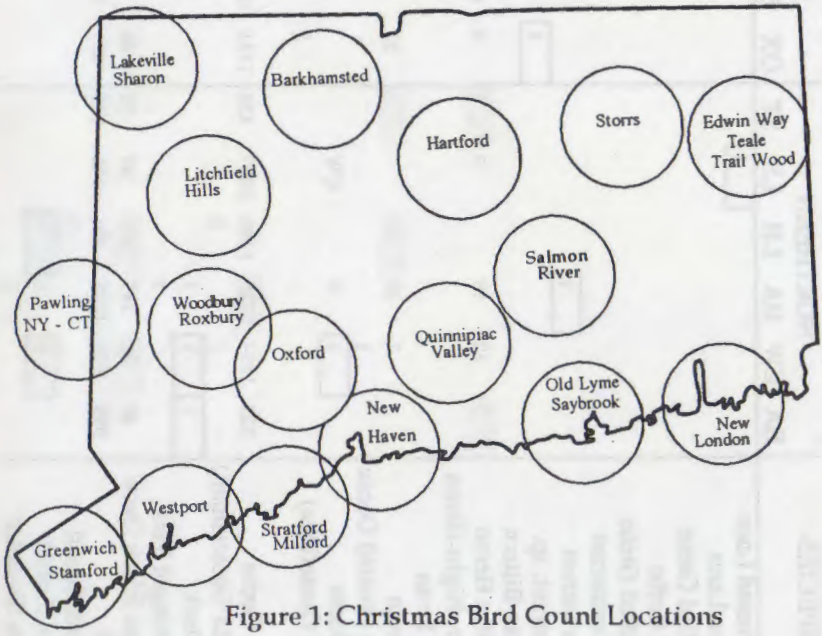

Figure 1: Christmas Bird Count Locations

STEPHEN P. BROKER , 50 Hidden Place, Cheshire, CT 06410-3723

CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1997-98

SPECIES	NORTHERN						MID-STATE					COASTAL						STATE
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Red-throated Loon					1							28	61	26	37	35	27	215
Common Loon												4	54	43	24	8	2	135
Pied-billed Grebe											1	8	10	10	18	6	5	58
Horned Grebe												24	41	74	10	22	32	203
Red-necked Grebe												1						1
Great Cormorant										17		35	24	24	75	45	6	226
D.c. Cormorant			1							13		3	3	28	6	11	3	68
Cormorant, sp.							1					1	2		4	1	5	14
American Bittern															3			3
Great Blue Heron	3	12	19		3	5	9	CW	5	3	7	27	36	55	50	20	31	285
Black-cr. Night-Heron												6		4		1	2	13
Tundra Swan															3			3
Mute Swan		2	12	37		2	23	29	213	77	49	66	543	317	208	73	217	1868
Gr. Wh.-fronted Goose		1																1
Snow Goose		1	6		CW				4		3	5	31	3		2		55
Snow Goose(blue)							1											1
Brant												CW	6	199	16		150	371
Canada Goose	222	1354	9729	1290	3807	330	1131	1277	2843	549	8350	3018	3623	2556	1183	2953	3958	48173
Canada Goose(small)				2														2
Wood Duck	1	1	5					1		10	9		9	1	1		1	39
Green-winged Teal			7									1	25	1	8	6	42	90
American Black Duck	49	61	187	206	48	28	46	19	110	56	153	598	1114	817	575	800	914	5781
Mallard	398	923	1848	776	146	135	431	300	1079	326	754	1336	1651	1459	773	709	1361	14405
Mallard Hybrid				3								1	3			13	17	37
Northern Pintail		3	1	4					2		CW	3	---	2	11	1	1	28
Northern Shoveler			1										CW					1

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Gadwall			2						2			45	242	35		306	20	652
Eurasian Wigeon													2					2
American Wigeon			2		2							**19**	143	81	10	122	176	555
Canvasback												9	55	205	44	184	41	538
Redhead														1			1	2
Ring-necked Duck	18			1	36		30	26	1	3	8	50	63	181	16	89	34	556
Greater Scaup												2026	2528	120	445	13	19	5151
Lesser Scaup								CW	2			10	75	12	1	1	1	102
Scaup, sp.																	13	13
Oldsquaw												157	404	7	8	38	177	791
Black Scoter				1									2	2	1	3		9
Surf Scoter												CW	214	10	54	1	2	281
White-winged Scoter				1									540	7	2	32	46	628
Scoter, sp.												2	20					22
Common Goldeneye	CW	24		3	24			2		2		203	240	216	231	258	190	1393
Barrow's Goldeneye															CW			CW
Bufflehead				1	11			4				517	165	555	149	62	208	1672
Hooded Merganser	71	7	2	10	34		17	17	26	3	20	222	128	408	7	83	175	1230
Common Merganser	62	12	144	169	65	10	162	659	110	25	626	352	108	64	266	33	**12**	2879
Red-br. Merganser												228	219	726	200	189	261	1823
Ruddy Duck				26	19	1	1	68	67	18	13	71	5	128	25	30	73	545
Duck, sp.		24				3												27
Black Vulture								CW			28							28

BA - Barkhamsted
EW - Edwin Way Teale-Trail Wood
GS - Greenwich - Stamford
HA - Hartford
LH - Litchfield Hills
LS - Lakeville - Sharon
NH - New Haven
NL - New London
OL - Old Lyme - Saybrook
OX - Oxford
PA - Pawling NY - CT (Formerly Hidden Valley)
QV - Quinnipiac Valley
SM - Stratford - Milford
SR - Salmon River
ST - Storrs
WE - Westport
WR - Woodbury - Roxbury

CW Count Period
--- First time not seen in 20 yrs.
XX Rare Species
XX New High Count
XX New Low Count (Bold)
XX New Species for Count

CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1997-98

SPECIES	NORTHERN						MID-STATE					COASTAL						STATE
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Turkey Vulture		11				15	4	CW	15		54	40	5	2	21	1	55	223
Osprey													1					1
Bald Eagle	4		1	3	3		2	9		2	6		1	2	25	1	2	61
Northern Harrier			5	1	1	1			4			1	8	3	21	14	1	60
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	2	18	11	2	2	9	2	8	4	9	10	17	11	8	9	8	132
Cooper's Hawk	1	2	6	4	2	2	2	3	5	4	12	14	9	3	6	6	4	85
Northern Goshawk			1					1				1		1	1	1		6
Accipiter, sp.						1										1	3	5
Red-shouldered Hawk		1	3	1		7	1		1	4	1	3	4	1	6	3	1	37
Red-tailed Hawk	26	22	146	55	58	17	35	50	42	33	85	71	59	21	41	29	57	847
Rough-legged Hawk								1						1				2
Buteo, sp.	2																2	4
Golden Eagle					CW													CW
American Kestrel		2	3		1			CW	1				3	2	1	2		15
Merlin			CW	1						1		CW			1	2		5
Peregrine Falcon			1									1	2			1		5
Falcon, sp.												1						1
Ring-necked Pheasant	2		11	4	1	3	1	3	5	4	6	3	1	3	2		9	58
Ruffed Grouse	7	1		6	7	5	1	1		4	4		1		5	1	---	43
Wild Turkey	105	14	115	450	332	65	34	69	16	15	24	17	53	CW	14	27	51	1401
Northern Bobwhite											8			1				9
Clapper Rail													9		1	1	1	12
King Rail													1					1
Virginia Rail									1				5	3	11			20
Common Moorhen													1					1
American Coot			1	102	68	6		206	80		21	378	10	57	53	12	20	1014

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Black-bellied Plover												6		19	25		22	72
Killdeer			1						2	1		15	28		6	6	21	80
Greater Yellowlegs												CW	4	1		3	3	11
Lesser Yellowlegs		1																1
Ruddy Turnstone												38	12	5	30		89	174
Sanderling													94		122	84	75	375
Purple Sandpiper												20	138	38	160			356
Dunlin												16	---	13	105	3	771	908
Common Snipe		CW	1			1			3				2	2	1			10
American Woodcock									1			2	1	2	3	1		10
Black-headed Gull												1						1
Bonaparte's Gull												105	10	80	225	17	53	490
Ring-billed Gull	1100	271	3419	241	135	72	285	593	1107	113	426	2316	2453	725	899	2751	921	17827
Herring Gull	70	83	4128	**20**	47	85	288	73	**81**	157	**93**	1054	1712	**1888**	508	3210	**1766**	**15263**
Iceland Gull		1	4											1	1			7
Lesser Bl.-backed Gull		1										1				2		4
Glaucous Gull			3															3
Great Bl.-backed Gull	22	41	711	1	6	7	13	9	19	26	27	142	227	268	141	416	191	2267
Gull, sp.		1				3												4
Rock Dove	178	**44**	2033	136	692	209	458	173	379	52	222	550	896	722	448	665	589	8446
Mourning Dove	237	130	2144	393	273	**168**	90	254	**234**	195	503	520	903	429	282	234	**288**	7277
Monk Parakeet												5	67			171	211	454
Eastern Screech-Owl	1	3	13	14	4		8	9	**21**	4	20	36	5	1	8	2	21	170

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CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1997-98

SPECIES	NORTHERN						MID-STATE					COASTAL						STATE
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Great Horned Owl	8	1	6	11	8	4	3	11	9	12	23	13	9	7	16	3	10	154
Barred Owl	1	2	2	3	1	2		1		2	2	3	CW	2	2			23
Long-eared Owl									2		1							**3**
North. Saw-whet Owl	3		1	4	1	1		2		2	5	1	1	4	4		1	30
Belted Kingfisher	4	2	21	6	4	3	10	5	6	10	12	**13**	36	26	14	14	18	204
Red-hdd. Woodpecker			CW															CW
Red-bld. Woodpecker	25	17	123	28	21	25	19	47	19	48	100	97	85	21	77	23	36	811
Yellow-bld. Sapsucker	2		7		3			6	5	2	15	11	9	2	9		3	74
Downy Woodpecker	63	41	466	136	68	93	61	113	53	105	257	227	207	92	126	37	114	2259
Hairy Woodpecker	25	7	59	31	21	13	11	46	9	16	52	36	29	5	17	10	20	407
Northern Flicker	9	18	129	16	12	5	20	17	47	49	57	29	119	43	30	24	19	643
Pileated Woodpecker	12	1	2	2	5	2	2	4		2	13	7	3		4		3	62
Eastern Phoebe					1	1				2					1			5
Horned Lark		20	---	23	171	12		50			**37**	CW		17	21	161		**512**
Tree Swallow														60	1			61
Blue Jay	585	202	896	371	248	414	173	387	238	462	775	430	548	152	428	135	157	6601
American Crow	425	227	35000	897	1028	622	980	1315	841	606	3210	2536	5444	930	607	1358	4177	60203
Fish Crow			14				4	1	2		2	3	77	1	3	26	14	147
Common Raven	3			3	6		2	3	1									18
Black-cpd. Chickadee	1067	347	1740	1590	611	714	534	639	407	811	1424	833	677	712	648	224	448	13426
Tufted Titmouse	225	**92**	905	363	148	285	173	327	186	510	520	503	345	134	468	149	290	5623
Red-br. Nuthatch	30		19	15	15	4	1	2	2	1	6	39	28	2	5	3	8	180
White-br. Nuthatch	156	71	327	231	74	106	59	148	50	145	236	238	109	63	181	27	99	2320
Brown Creeper	15	5	27	12	12	**3**	5	14	2	7	13	9	6	2	7	4	2	145
Carolina Wren	1	3	23			3	3	3	4	17	28	42	27	55	41	9	15	274
House Wren								1	2					1		1	1	6

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Winter Wren	1	1	5	1		2				2	3	12	5	3	2	1	2	40
Marsh Wren										1			4	2	6	1		14
Golden-crnd Kinglet	42	5	27	48	10	17	26	33	10	41	86	31	43	29	77	4	13	542
Ruby-crowned Kinglet			1	1		1		2	8		2	3	6		5			29
Eastern Bluebird	57	62	142	115	65	98	143	35	28	141	348	75	20	33	141		92	1595
Hermit Thrush			5	2		1	4	2	6	7	23	**5**	6	10	8	1	1	81
Catharus, sp.																1		1
American Robin	636	171	854	516	158	174	739	9	684	356	589	158	801	75	122	223	19	6284
Gray Catbird	3		10	1		3	3	2	2	4	5	11	13	17	11	7	4	96
Northern Mockingbird	17	36	207	27	10	49	39	44	**36**	38	**69**	130	152	136	**10**	59	**47**	**1106**
Brown Thrasher										1			1		8			10
American Pipit									6							1		7
Cedar Waxwing	559	100	160	218	178	94	87	17	35	257	290	286	70	217	219	7	15	2809
Northern Shrike									1									1
European Starling	1005	**783**	60000	6555	2189	1993	2785	864	5890	1149	3775	2351	4596	3869	**1310**	2182	1874	103170
Yellow-rmpd. Warbler	1	1	22	2	1		16	6	64	27	9	26	36	251	37	41	40	580
Pine Warbler															1			1
Palm Warbler		1													1			2
Ovenbird													CW					CW
Common Yellowthroat									2		1	1		3				7
Yellow-breasted Chat														1	1			2
Northern Cardinal	100	54	698	166	61	122	123	169	145	155	282	291	330	213	182	109	168	3368
Eastern Towhee							5	1		2	CW	5	7	10	9	7	2	48

BA - Barkhamsted
EW - Edwin Way Teale-Trail Wood
GS - Greenwich - Stamford
HA - Hartford
LH - Litchfield Hills
LS - Lakeville - Sharon
NH - New Haven
NL - New London
OL - Old Lyme - Saybrook
OX - Oxford
PA - Pawling NY - CT (Formerly Hidden Valley)
QV - Quinnipiac Valley
SM - Stratford - Milford
SR - Salmon River
ST - Storrs
WE - Westport
WR - Woodbury - Roxbury

CW Count Period
--- First time not seen in 20 yrs.
XX Rare Species
XX New High Count
XX New Low Count (Bold)
XX New Species for Count

CONNECTICUT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1997-98

SPECIES	NORTHERN						MID-STATE					COASTAL						STATE
	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
Amer. Tree Sparrow	162	41	520	408	285	126	104	266	175	98	299	77	356	106	238	155	62	3478
Chipping Sparrow			1									1	1					3
Field Sparrow			18	1		31	13	1	11	18	33	15	**30**	49	13	17	16	**266**
Vesper Sparrow									1				1					2
Savannah Sparrow			4				3		8		1		9	2	15	13	13	68
'Ipswich' Sparrow																2		2
Sharp.-tld Sparrow, sp.															2	1		3
Fox Sparrow							2		1		CW	19	7	4	5	4	2	44
Song Sparrow	36	49	373	69	28	58	150	30	196	78	239	272	382	231	150	202	164	2707
Lincoln's Sparrow											1							1
Swamp Sparrow	4	2	8	8		14	11	6	16	9	7	18	33	17	39	11	6	209
White-thr. Sparrow	71	120	681	143	81	103	621	197	354	177	653	828	809	404	299	278	231	6050
White-crnd. Sparrow			4					1	7	1			1	1			1	16
Dark-eyed Junco	765	253	1546	1016	326	484	673	792	428	777	1396	992	554	322	377	212	459	11372
Lapland Longspur															1	1		2
Snow Bunting	1				2		2					CW	1	130	2	32	18	188
Red-winged Blackbird	5		1787	1	26				37	69	20	4	1033	18	1038	96	8	4142
Eastern Meadowlark							6		12				15		5			38
Rusty Blackbird			57		52		3			2	1	1	29		2		4	151
Common Grackle			4442	2					800	13	1	3	1136	**1**	221	101	13	6733
Brown-hdd. Cowbird	59	12	1638	87	46		4		214	11	47	---	272	**1**	300	29	5	2725
Baltimore Oriole												CW						CW
Bullock's Oriole				1														1
Oriole, sp.															1			1
Pine Grosbeak											CW							CW
Purple Finch	8	6	**3**	34	3	1	24	6	10	8	24	4	5	11	7	9	**2**	165

SPECIES	BA	EW	HA	LH	LS	ST	OX	PA	QV	SR	WR	GS	NH	NL	OL	SM	WE	TOTAL
House Finch	**88**	82	1087	384	152	203	447	266	212	242	**24**	897	653	511	363	498	314	6423
Red Crossbill				2						2	7	7	1	2	1			22
White-winged Crossbill				2						CW	21	11	4	5	7			50
crossbill, sp.	9																	9
Common Redpoll	288		213	10	2		20	457			69	85	22	35	12		7	1220
Pine Siskin	55	CW	48	75	6	32		131	6	10	7	2			31	3	4	410
American Goldfinch	265	131	2008	325	187	179	161	281	380	301	970	458	649	294	294	93	181	7157
Evening Grosbeak	15			6				20										41
House Sparrow	309	133	1636	592	138	402	164	230	381	345	472	1082	904	1053	502	991	732	10066
TOTALS			NORTHERN					MID-STATE						COSTAL				
Individuals	9801	6155	142706	18533	12292	7682	11521	10868	18540	8872	28104	27674	39887	23079	16430	21426	23412	426982
CD Species	66	65	87	79	70	64	71	75	85	79	84	109	122	119	129	109	108	161
CW Species	1	2	2	0	2	0	0	5	0	1	4	7	3	1	1	0	2	6
Field Observers	21	15	155	42	35	16	33	19	20	43	43	72	87	46	38	24	58	767
Feeder Watchers	7	0	71	7	5	1	0	11	2	5	0	32	7	8	4	0	18	178
Total Observers	28	15	226	49	40	17	33	30	22	48	43	104	94	54	42	24	76	945
Party Hours	87	53	466	134	71	64	73	70	61	85	138	233	191	105	167	99	146	2241
Party Miles	620	219	906	852	527	327	406	420	453	353	619	743	610	393	780	386	468	9081
Individuals			197169						77905					151908				
CD Species			109						114					151				
CW Species			2						1					4				
Field Observers			284						158					325				
Feeder Watchers			91						18					69				

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XX New High Count
XX New Low Count (Bold)
XX New Species for Count

BOOKS ON BIRDS

Julian Hough

Peterson Field Guide to the Warblers of North America. Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett. (1997, Soft Cover, 656 pg., Houghton Mifflin, Boston $20).

This latest offering from the immensely successful Peterson Field Guides series strays from its standard format to cover the identification of only one particular group of birds - the Nearctic wood warblers. Whether watching a feeding flock in North America or vying for a glimpse of a wind-blown waif on a Cornish headland, it is hard not to become seduced by this group of day-glo sprites. This is undoubtedly one of the most popular groups of vagrants among European birders.

The authors, Dunn and Garrett, are well respected and renowned field birders and as result the text is both extremely authoritative, accurate and well-researched.

In some ways, Dunn and Garrett's book stands above Houghton Mifflin's earlier treatment of this group, *Warblers of the Americas* (Curson and Quinn.1994), most noticeably in the impressive 644 pages which contain 140 color photographs and 60 color distribution maps. The paper quality is excellent although the book suffers in having a flimsy cover.

Unlike *Warblers of the Americas,* which covers all the species of the Americas, this book's pages are devoted only to the 60 species which breed in North America, or have shown an established pattern of vagrancy. As a result, there is a large amount of information devoted to each species. It includes sections on habitat, behavior, voice, distribution, status and conservation, similar species, and plumages and molts. The range maps are (refreshingly) detailed and annotated; they show ranges of any subspecies and any zones of interbreeding between closely related species.

Though the plates are not as appealing to me as those by Quinn and Beadle in *Warblers of the Americas,* artists Cindy House and Thomas Schultz have done an admirable job. The latter's 'jizzy' plates of Blackburnian and Cerulean, Bay-breasted and Blackpoll, and Connecticut and Kentucky Warblers are particularly pleasing and accurate. For some of the more complex and variable species,

notably 'Yellow-rumped' and Yellow Warblers, there are over 17 plumages depicted! Each plate carries the hallmark of the Peterson system - 'pointer' arrows to indicate the most important fieldmarks for each species.

The photographs are located within each species' section, usually depicting between three and five plumage states. For the most part the photos are of a high standard. One disappointment is the inclusion of several species (e.g., Black-throated Green, Mourning, and Fan-tailed Warblers) which look as though they were taken in captivity, or in a controlled environment. As a photographer and artist, I find such contrived-looking images a detraction from an otherwise excellent selection of photographs.

There is an invaluable collation of material contained within its 7"x 5" frame and considering the price of $20.00, I can enthusiastically recommend it to any serious birder with an interest in these dazzling leaf-gleaners.

JULIAN HOUGH, 21 Walnut St., Naugatuck CT 06770

Corrections:

In Vol. 18, No. 1, the last sentence on the bottom of page 22 and top of page 26 should read: Anon. (1881) listed some of the specimens in the Brooks collection, taken mainly from the vicinity of the islands. Baird et al. (1884) published some notes from Capt. Brooks on the natural history of Roseate Terns and on the Peregrine Falcon as a predator on Goose Island.

In Table 1 on page 24 the word "Breeding" should appear above the word "Site" not Species.

At the top of page 32 above PUBLICATIONS AND THESES the following was inadvertently omitted "APPENDIX. Publications, theses, and unpublished reports produced by the Falkner Island Tern Project since 1978."

CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Greg Hanisek

FALL, August 1 to November 30, 1997

Everyone loves those May warbler flights, but there's no denying that Connecticut birding really hits its stride in autumn. Our geography dictates it. Large numbers of landbirds and raptors heading south encounter our east-west coastline and balk at crossing Long Island Sound. As a result, migrants become concentrated along the coast, especially in the national-caliber flight funnels at Bluff Point in Groton and Lighthouse Point in New Haven. This season produced good to spectacular landbird flights at Bluff Point (including an overwhelming 25,000 birds on October 7), good hawk flights at Lighthouse, an exciting movement of northern finches in late November and a juicy selection of rarities scattered around the state.

GREBES THROUGH FALCONS

Laurel Reservoir in Stamford held 15 Pied-billed Grebes October 14 (PDu). Two Red-necked Grebes were at Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford October 16 (PCa), and one was at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport November 2 (FM). Northern Gannets were first noted off Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP) in Madison on October 18 (C&SR) with just scattered sightings thereafter. The recent appearance of Great Cormorants inland continued, with one October 29 at Lake Quassapaug in Middlebury (GH); the first was noted October 19 in New Haven (FM). A light-phase **Northern Fulmar** was a stunning find September 14 for birders who went chumming from a boat off Stamford in search of a jaeger that had been seen from shore a couple days earlier. Good photographs were obtained. This would be a second confirmed state record if accepted by Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (PDu,MMo,AC).

At HBSP in October and November, American Bitterns were fairly conspicuous, at least by bittern standards, with a high count of three on November 5 (JZ); there were seven other reports along the coast (CB,HG,TH,AG et al.). The high count of wandering Great

Egrets inland was six at three locations in the Northwest Corner in late August (DR); one was still present in Westport on November 27 (TR). Snowy Egrets peaked at 53 on August 28 at HBSP (C&SR); a late one was in Stratford November 2 (GH). A Little Blue Heron lingered to November 10 at Sherwood Island (fide MSz), and three Tricolored Herons were at Milford Point August 24 (PF). The high count of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons was four immatures August 23 at Milford Point (FM). An excellent concentration of 45 Glossy Ibis was at HBSP August 6 (C&SR).

A flock of nine **Tundra Swans**, very hard to find in the state, flew down the Connecticut River at its mouth and headed west November 28 (DP). The recent spate of **Greater White-fronted Goose** sightings continues. At least four were reported for the season by various observers, including two in the Manchester area in November (PCo et al.). The season's first two Snow Geese dropped in at HBSP September 16 (DS), and 4,000 were over Quaker Ridge hawkwatch in Greenwich November 16 (PDu); five blue morphs were at Globe Hollow Reservoir in Manchester October 4 (PCo). The high count of Brant was 1,400 passing Shippan Point, Stamford, on October 25 (PDu), and 2,000 Canada Geese passed Quaker Ridge November 16 (TG). Trap Rock Pond in Wallingford, an apparent staging area for Wood Ducks, held 135 on October 12 (WS); family groups gathering at Long Meadow Pond in Middlebury produced a count of 110 on August 20 (GH). A Blue-winged and a Green-winged Teal at HBSP on August 4 (C&SR) were typical of fall-arriving dabbling ducks, which begin to appear much earlier than other waterfowl groups. Also fitting this pattern was a female Northern Shoveler August 29 at Cemetery Pond in Litchfield (DR) and two in Old Lyme August 24 (DP); one female was at Sherwood Island October 8 (FM) and two were at Bishop Pond, Meriden, October 27 (WS). A **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Furnace Pond in East Haven November 15 (ABr), and one or more were at Aspetuck Reservoir in Easton October 4 (BM). Shenipsit Lake in Tolland held 14 Lesser Scaup October 9 (CE), and 265 Ring-necked Ducks flocked at Laurel Reservoir in Stamford October 21 (PDu).

Bantam Lake in Litchfield held four Oldsquaws October 26 (BD); a summering bird was still at Compo Beach, Westport, on September 3 (FM). Single White-winged Scoters, either early or still lingering, were at Sandy Point in West Haven August 30-September 13 (BD,DP et

al.) and at HBSP September 14 (EN); inland one was on Bantam Lake November 14-17 (BD et al.), three were in Bloomfield November 23 (JMy) and 40 were exceptional October 9 at Shenipsit Lake in Tolland (CE). The high count for Surf Scoter was 150 on October 25 at Sherwood Island (FM et al.). An unseasonable female Black Scoter appeared August 23-24 at Brookfield Farm in Durham (WS). Five more females made a quick stop at Nepaug Reservoir in New Hartford November 20 (DR), 12 visited Rogers Lake in Old Lyme November 7 (HG) and a drake was at Union Pond in Manchester November 24 (PCo). There were scattered coastal reports from October 8 to November 8 (FM,DP et al.). An injured summering Common Goldeneye remained at Compo Beach through August 3 (MSi). A female Red-breasted Merganser, rare inland, was on Bantam Lake November 26 (DR). Ruddy Ducks staged another good fall flight, with a peak count of c. 300 in early November at Bantam Lake (RN et al.); other noteworthy flocks included 183 on Laurel Reservoir October 21 (PDu); 125 on Pachaug Pond in Griswold November 26 (DP); 150 each on Lower Bolton Lake November 30 (CM) and North Cove in Essex October 29 (TH,ABu); and 250 on North Farms Reservoir in Wallingford November 20 (WS).

In addition to the hawk migration reports elsewhere in this issue: Two **Black Vultures** October 21 in Torrington were a bit north of their usual haunts (RBa) and one was over Quaker Ridge September 20 (fide PDu). An Osprey lingered to November 23 at Salmon River Cove in East Haddam (HG,CH). A Bald Eagle was seen eating a Canada Goose November 2 in Wallingford (WS). A flight of 450+ Broad-winged Hawks was noted at HBSP October 2, a typically late coastal date (JMa et al.). A leucistic Red-tailed Hawk was in the Middlebury area throughout the period (RN et al.). The recent increase in **Swainson's Hawk** reports continued with a light-phase immature at Lighthouse Point October 1 (GH,DB,JZ et al.) and another possible one there October 19 (FM,TK et al.), plus one over Quaker Ridge October 11 (BO et al.). A Rough-legged Hawk in Middlefield November 28 was the only one reported (WS). An early Merlin was in Stratford August 13 (CB).

RAILS THROUGH SKIMMERS

Soras, not known to breed along the coast, were on the move in August with one at HBSP on the 22nd (MMr) and five at North Cove, Old

Saybrook, on the 24th (DP). The annual accumulation of American Coot at Bantam Lake climbed to nearly 400 in late November (RN et al.); Laurel Reservoir held 248 on October 21 (PDu), and North Cove in Essex had 125 on October 29 (TH). A Common Moorhen was at Station 43 in South Windsor September 14 (PCo). Single **Sandhill Cranes** were good finds September 22 over Chestnut Hill in Litchfield (RSm) and October 13 in Greenwich (SrS,FL).

The high count of Black-bellied Plovers was 200 at Milford Point on September 9 (FM). The first of about 20 American Golden Plover reports was one at Milford Point August 18 (FM); one was inland at Mansfield Hollow September 24 (BC). Milford Point held 200 Semipalmated Plovers August 10 (FM). Cummings Park in Stamford had a nice high of 10 American Oystercatchers during the season (PDu). An **American Avocet**, less than annual in the state, was found October 2 at Barn Island in Stonington (LK,RPr). Watch Rock in Old Lyme held a fine concentration of 120 Lesser Yellowlegs August 6 (TH). An unusual diurnal flight of Solitary Sandpipers resulted in seven (groups of two and three plus two singles) passing over Lighthouse Point August 19 (GH). Away from Bradley airport there were three reports of Upland Sandpiper, all in August, involving six birds (TK,PDu). About 15 Whimbrel were reported for the season. A juvenile **Hudsonian Godwit** arrived November 2 at HBSP and remained around the rain pools at the west end of the park through period's end (BM,m.ob.). Other singles were at Great Pond in Simsbury, an unusual inland location, on October 7 (LK,RPr), at Griswold Point August 27 (BG), and at Milford Point on November 2 (PDe). A **Marbled Godwit**, which recently has been the less common of the two, was seen September 8 in Old Lyme (TH); reports of singles, possibly involving the same bird, ranged from August 24 to September 14 at Milford Point (EJ,CB,RW). The high count of Red Knots was 30+ August 8 at Sandy Point in West Haven (BD).

Interesting, but never conclusively identified, was an albino peep August 11-27 at HBSP that was either a Western or Semipalmated Sandpiper (JG et al.) The Semipalmated Sandpiper high was 3,000 at Milford Point August 10 (FM), and Western Sandpiper topped out at six on August 26 at Griswold Point (DP). The first White-rumped Sandpiper was noted August 9 at HBSP (DS), with scattered coastal sightings thereafter. Two Baird's Sandpipers were at HBSP September 11 (NC,FG),

with singles there September 4 and 9 (JG,BY,JMa); another was in Old Lyme September 6-8 (TH,AG). Pectoral Sandpipers were present throughout August at HBSP, with a high of 20+ on August 21-23 (DS, JHu). It was a good season for Stilt Sandpipers, with up to three present at HBSP sporadically from August 4 to November 2 (C&SR,JG et al.) and a few singles elsewhere on the coast. A single Buff-breasted Sandpiper was reported from HBSP September 12-13 (PCo) and one was an unexpected fly-over September 8 at Lighthouse Point (GH). Three Long-billed Dowitchers September 24 to October 8 at Mansfield Hollow were a first for the Storrs area (MSz,BC); two were reported from Great Pond in Simsbury October 5-7 (JMy et al.); singles were noted in Old Lyme October 12 and November 3 (TH). A November 14 storm grounded migrating American Woodcocks, forcing four to strike windows in New Hartford; two died on impact and two were brought to Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton (JK). A **Red-necked Phalarope**, very hard to find in the state, was beautifully photographed August 24 at Little Pond in Litchfield, an inland location (JF); another was in a similar situation in Pomfret August 12 (AR). Single **Wilson's Phalaropes**, always good finds, were present August 4-6 at HBSP (RSc,JB et al.) and August 16-17 in Stratford (TK,CB et al.).

A light adult **Parasitic Jaeger** was a great find off Shippan Point in Stamford September 12 (PDu,JMh et al.). Even more exciting was a light adult **Long-tailed Jaeger** grounded briefly by a storm August 29 at Sandy Point in West Haven (JMh,GA,ASm) during its typical overland migration period. Three **Iceland Gulls** and about a half-dozen **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were reported for the season (CB,DV,PDu et al.). Single **Glaucous Gulls** were reported November 1 at Harkness (DP), November 26 at HBSP (PCo,WB), and in late November at Manchester landfill (PCo). The only Caspian Tern sightings were singles August 17 at Milford Point (MSz) and September 16 in Old Lyme

Red-necked Phalarope, Photo by Jeff Feldmann

(TH). A Royal Tern flew by September 4 at Cove Island in Stamford (PDu). West of nesting areas, a Roseate Tern was at Sandy Point August 31, along with 400 Common Terns (FM,FG). A count of 129 Forster's Terns at Shippan Point in Stamford on October 29 was unprecedented, but the date wasn't so surprising for this noted late lingerer (JD,PDu); normally the several other counts in the teens scattered from Griswold Point (DP) to Fairfield in October (CB) would have been considered very good. A Forster's Tern September 8 in Wethersfield Cove was unusual so far from the coast (JK). Single Black Terns were at HBSP August 21 (EN), Griswold Point August 26 (DP) and Milford Point August 31 (DP et al.). Five Black Skimmers at Sandy Point in early August were seen by many, but more impressive were 12 at the mouth of the Saugatuck River in Westport in mid-August (TL); one was at Milford Point September 30 (CB).

OWLS THROUGH VIREOS

A Barred Owl had already moved onto Willard's Island at HBSP by September 6 (C&SR). A half-dozen Short-eared Owls were reported from the usual coastal locations. A new banding operation accounted for a total of 23 Northern Saw-whet Owls on eight dates from October 12 to November 6 at Quaker Ridge, with a high of nine on November 6 (TG). HBSP had a high of seven on October 18 (PF,ASa et al.). In a good overall migration for Common Nighthawks, a massive flight of 1,000+ was reported in the Vernon area August 31 (fide MSz); there were 300+ at HBSP August 29 (DS et al.), 270 in Norwalk September 1 (FM) and a very heavy movement involving hundreds of birds in the I-91 corridor from Wallingford to North Haven on August 29 (WS).

A **Rufous Hummingbird**, apparently an adult male, was found in a weakened condition in North Madison during the second week in November (IR). It was taken to a rehabilitator but subsequently died and is being prepared as a skin at Peabody Museum at Yale University. It represents the third record for the state and the first specimen. The high count of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at Lighthouse Point was 14 on September 5 (GH et al.) A late Chimney Swift was at Lighthouse Point November 3 (GH). Single Red-headed Woodpeckers passed Booth Hill in West Hartland September 21 (PCa) and Lighthouse Point October 12 (DP); others were in East Hartford September 21 (PDe), Old Lyme October 12-13 (TH,HG) and Newtown November 19-20 (fide PB). The first

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker arrived September 27 at HBSP (FD'A et al.). A passage of 350 Northern Flickers was noted October 7 at Bluff Point (DP).

The recent upsurge in **Western Kingbirds** continued, beginning with one August 31 at HBSP (PDe,JG). Others were at Lighthouse Point August 30 (RBe), September 15 (GH,TT et al.) and September 17 (fide JMa). The high count of Eastern Kingbirds passing Lighthouse Point was 87 on August 25 (GH). Single Olive-sided Flycatchers were noted September 4 at Bluff Point (DP) and September 6 at Westbrook (PCo). Bluff Point had 200 Eastern Phoebes October 7 (DP). A good, if not overwhelming, Blue Jay flight produced 10,000 at Lighthouse Point October 7 (GH). A Common Raven September 3 near Durham (PCo) continued the trend of sightings away from the northern hills. The flight of Red-breasted Nuthatches wasn't huge, but it began early with small numbers regular at Lighthouse Point and elsewhere in late August (m.ob.); Bluff Point noted 50 on September 14 (FM). At the breeding colony at Little Pond in Litchfield, six+ Marsh Wrens were still present September 15 (DR). An October 17-18 flight at Bluff Point produced 550 Golden-crowned Kinglets, 375 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and 20 Hermit Thrushes (DP). At Great Island in Old Lyme, observers noted 60 Eastern Bluebirds passing on October 29, along with 100 American Pipits (DP). Seasonal movements of the Northern Mockingbird are little-known, but they are detectable at Lighthouse Point. A count of 27 on August 24 was exceptional. Some may have been local birds, but clearly a movement was underway (PDe et al.). A White-eyed Vireo was a bit late October 4 in Windsor (PDe) and a Red-eyed Vireo was extraordinarily late November 5 at Watch Rock in Old Lyme (DP). Bluff Point noted single Philadelphia Vireos September 22 and October 3 (DP); one was in Canton October 3 (JK).

WARBLERS

The fall warbler migration is a long and complicated affair that needs to be broken down into digestible segments:

Early Movement: The coast offers a window on the front end of migration, which involves a number of species that nest inland in the state. One of the earliest species on the move is Northern Waterthrush, which appeared August 4 at Cove Island Park in Stamford (PDu). At HBSP this species appeared August 14 and 16, with two on the latter date along with a Worm-eating Warbler (EN). The same location produced Magnolia Warbler, Black-and-

White Warbler and American Redstart August 23-24 (CR,SSt), followed by Canada Warbler August 31 (SSm). A flurry August 17 in Sherman included a Tennessee Warbler, four Black-throated Green Warblers, four Magnolia Warblers and a Black-throated Blue Warbler (DR et al.).

Late Movement: Noteworthy for their tardiness were a late and coastally rare Golden-winged Warbler October 4 at Bluff Point (DP); a very late Magnolia Warbler November 23 in New Haven (PH); a very late Chestnut-sided Warbler November 16 in Hamden (ABr); a straggling Pine Warbler November 18 in Sterling (R&LD); a late Black-and-White Warbler October 27 at Cove Island (PDu); and a late Wilson's Warbler October 18 at HBSP (PDe).

Migration Highlights: A count of 25+ Pine Warblers September 15 in the Woodbury-Litchfield area was interesting in that it probably represented resident birds that had not yet begun to move (RN et al). The first two Palm Warblers were a bit early September 15 at HBSP (PCo). Two Cape May Warblers appeared in Woodbury September 14 (RN). A count of 12 Bay-breasted Warblers September 2 at Lake Zoar in Southbury was very good away from the coastal concentration points (DR). A heavy movement September 5 in Westbrook produced 100 American Redstarts (PCo). Westbrook also had three Mourning Warblers from August 22 through September 22 and a Connecticut Warbler September 22 (PCo). Cove Island recorded a Connecticut Warbler October 1 (PDu,JMh), two were at Westport Nature Center in early October (EH) and one was at Greenwich Point October 7 (MSa). Yellow-breasted Chats appeared August 31 at White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield (R&LD); September 2 in Windsor (PCo); September 7 and October 6 at Cove Island (PDu); September 17-18 at HBSP (CR); and October 6-10 at Quaker Ridge (TG,BO).

Bluff Point: In a class by itself, this location's morning flights produce numbers unrivaled anywhere north of Cape May. Highlights, provided by Provencher, included three **Orange-crowned Warblers** for the season; 15 Northern Parulas as late as October 7; 40 Black-throated Blue Warblers and 30 Black-throated Green Warblers still moving October 7 in a massive flight of 10,000 Yellow-rumped Warblers; 75+ American Redstarts on September 4; two Connecticut Warblers, two Mourning Warblers and an unidentified *Oporornis* for the season; 50 Common Yellowthroats on October 7 along with three Wilson's Warblers. Big days before Yellow-rumped season

provided overall counts of 600 warblers September 14, 500 on the 21st, 300 on the 22nd, 200 on the 24th and 150 on the 25th. Other yellow-rumped highs included 2,000 on October 11, 1,000 on October 17 and 500 on October 12.

TANAGERS THROUGH WINTER FINCHES

Almost lost in the season's array of rarities - because it came and went so fast - was a flyby **Western Tanager** reported October 4 at Bluff Point (DP). **Blue Grosbeak** was reported three times in Groton from September 29 to October 18 (DP), and one was in Old Saybrook October 20-21 (TH,HG). A **Dickcissel** October 26 in vegetable fields in Southbury (JHo) was a good find, as was one at a feeder in North Guilford October 7-8 (LC). But careful looking and listening at Lighthouse Point has revealed how regular a migrant this species is. One observer making hawk-watch visits at least once a week recorded nine for the season, including three on October 6, meaning the actual seasonal total was much higher (GH,FDv et al.). Other reports included two for the season at Bluff Point (DP). Bluff Point noted 300 Eastern Towhees on October 7, along with 4,000 White-throated Sparrows and 5,000 Dark-eyed Juncos (DP). The only report of **Clay-colored Sparrow** came September 24 from Westbrook (PCo). Vesper Sparrow is always a good find and they were widely reported as singles, mostly along the coast (PH,DP et al.); inland nine observations were made October 11-18 in Southbury (RN). A count of 100+ Savannah Sparrows at Manchester landfill October 11 (PCo) was noteworthy. A Grasshopper Sparrow was at HBSP October 7 (DP). The newly split Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was reported from several coastal locations in October and November as the state's birders attempt to work out the racial identity and migration timing of this challenging species complex (FM,PCo,DP et al.). Lincoln's Sparrows were widely reported, with early ones September 7 in Southbury (GH) and September 8 at the Quinebaug Fish Hatchery in Central Village (R&LD). A major fallout produced 365 Swamp Sparrows in the Litchfield area October 11-12 (DR). A White-crowned Sparrow with pale lores and an orangish bill, suggesting the western race *gambelii*, was in Bristol October 1 (JHo); the town gardens in Simsbury held a good inland flock of 12 White-crowned Sparrows October 13 (JB) and a similar number were at Farmington Meadows October 11 (BD). The season's first Dark-eyed Junco appeared Sep-

tember 24 at HBSP (CM). The first Lapland Longspur was a bit early October 5 in Old Lyme (TH), followed by one October 24 at HBSP (J&LC), which held four on November 18 (BK).

Among the many interesting migratory phenomena on display at Lighthouse Point is the early movement of Red-winged Blackbirds. This was exemplified by 1,400 in less than three hours on August 19 and almost 900 on August 25 (GH). This dropped off to almost nothing by September and remained that way until the better-known push from mid-October into November. A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was found November 19 in East Hartford, where one wintered last year (MB,JHi); another was reported from Stratford September 7 (TK). Farmington Meadows held 30+ Rusty Blackbirds October 11 (BD). Up to six **Boat-tailed Grackles** (two females and four immatures) were at Sikorsky Airport in Stratford in August (TK, PDu), near the state's only known nesting location. The Southbury area held 10+ Orchard Orioles August 1-3 (DR), which could have represented passage by this early migrating species. One of the best birds of the season was a beautiful adult male **Bullock's Oriole** that appeared in late October at the Lang feeder in West Goshen and remained deep into winter (JL,m.ob.). It was photographed and seen by many for a second confirmed state record. Late Baltimore Orioles were in Sterling November 10 (R&LD) and HBSP November 23 (ABr,MSz).

The beginning of a major invasion of northern finches, primarily redpolls and crossbills, marked the final weeks of the season. One harbinger was the appearance of 10 Pine Grosbeaks on the rather early date of November 25 in Canaan (GH). Purple Finches were on the move from late August to mid-October, but then tailed off and appeared in only modest numbers. However, crossbills staged a major flight beginning with four White-winged Crossbills November 15 in Branford (ABr), and subsequent scattered sightings of flybys at hawkwatch locales such as Quaker Ridge and Lighthouse Point. By the end of the month White-winged Crossbills were being seen regularly, along with a few Red Crossbills, in the pines near the beach at HBSP, which became an exciting watchpoint for finches moving west along the coast (RPe et al.). A few Pine Siskins joined this push, but the biggest numbers involved American Goldfinch - 3,000 at HBSP November 29 (m.ob.) and 2,000+ at Lighthouse Point November 24 (GH), - and Common Redpolls - total of c. 1,000 at HBSP November 29-30 (m.ob). The first redpolls

were noted in early November in the Hartford area (PCo), and 20+ Pine Siskins were in Canton Oct. 29 (BK). Evening Grosbeaks staged a more typical flight, with scattered flocks of up to 20 from mid-October into early November; exceptional was a flock of 60 over Manchester November 10 (PCo).

EXOTICS: A Chilean Flamingo on the Connecticut River in East Hampton in late September was determined to be an escape from the Ripley collection in Litchfield; it was later recaptured in Quebec (HT). A Red-crested Pochard was at Bantam Lake in Litchfield November 16-17 (BD et al.)

[Editor's Note: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (species marked with an asterisk on the most recent COA checklist) require that documentation be submitted to the secretary of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (Mark Szantyr, 2C Yale Rd., Storrs, CT 06268) if they are to be included in the field notes.]

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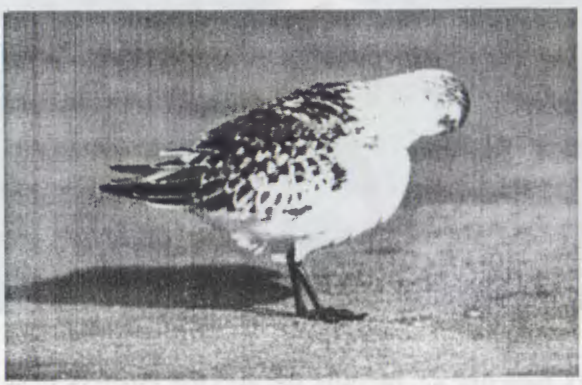
PHOTO CHALLENGE

Julian Hough

ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 22

A fall shorebird. Unfortunately, the bird has been asleep since you noticed it. However your luck turns, the bird stirs to preen and you take that all-important "I'll identify it later when I have more time" photograph. To add insult to injury, the photo shows the bill and head are turned which negates an important part of the problem-solving process. However, let's be optimistic and see what we have. No size comparison with other species is available, but it is short-legged and compact and doesn't give the impression of being anything other than a typical Calidris sandpiper - the genus to which most of the smaller sandpipers (affectionately known as 'peeps') belong.

Firstly, the upperparts look fresh and appear uniformly patterned, a feature indicative of juvenile plumage. The blackish legs eliminate all those species with pale legs and leave us with Semipalmated, Western, White-rumped and Baird's Sandpipers and the larger Dunlin and Sanderling. The primary projection is too short for either White-rumped or Baird's, both of which show three-four primaries extending beyond the longest tertial and extend noticeably past the tail. The legs are too short for the longer-legged, rangier Western and are also a little too short for Semipalmated. So, just on a couple of features we have eliminated most of the contenders.



The general proportions, leg length and primary projection fit Dunlin, but let's look more closely at the pattern of the upperpart feathers, particularly the lower scapulars. They are very dark-centered with a broad whitish fringe, which gives the whole upperparts a 'spangled' effect. This 'star-shaped' pattern is also shown on the inner greater coverts and tertials. More important is the fact that all the upperpart feathers are of the same generation, i.e., they do not show any new and contrasting adult-like feathers of first-winter plumage. Unlike most Calidris sandpipers, Dunlin are unlikely to be seen in full juvenile plumage in Connecticut. The reason is that the post-juvenile moult to the grayer first-winter plumage occurs quickly in Dunlin. Also, being a later migrant, by the time they reach our shores the majority of fall juveniles have already replaced their juvenile feathers with grayer, adult-like feathers. Also, the upperbreast is relatively well-streaked in juvenile Dunlin. This is at odds with our bird. The clean breast and pattern of the upperparts is that of a classic juvenile Sanderling. In life, in contrast to the more uniform frosty adults, juvenile Sanderlings are beautifully marbled in silver, black and buff. Another feature which immediately helps separate this bird from its congeners is its lack of a hind toe - a feature unique among calidrids!

This juvenile Sanderling was photographed by me at Cape May, New Jersey in August 1995.

JULIAN HOUGH, 21 Walnut St., Naugutuck, CT 06770

Photo Challenge 23. Identify the species. Answer next issue.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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Send manuscripts to the Editor. Please type double spaced with ample margins, on one side of a sheet. Submit a copy on a computer disk, if possible. Style should follow usage in recent issues. All manuscripts receive peer review.

Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

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Volume 18, No. 2, 1998

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology

Volume 18, No.3 **July 1998** Pages 105 - 160

The Connecticut Warbler

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Volume 18, Number 3 July 1998

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Eastern Screech Owl (*Otus asio*)

by Brian Kleinman

Brian's Kleinman's drawing of an Eastern Screech Owl with a Polyphemus Moth is his most recent contribution to the cover art for *The Connecticut Warbler*.

Brian has one semester left toward his degree in biology at Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire. This summer he is employed as a Naturalist/Camp Counselor at Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton where he has taught several classes in wildlife drawing.

A CONNECTICUT BIRDING YEAR - PART 3

DAVID PROVENCHER

Introduction

This installment covers the period July through September. Four events are the primary focus of this period. They are the shorebird migration, the start of fall "landbird" migration, hawk migration, and the post-breeding appearance in Connecticut of a number of species. We will discuss the phenomena of fall migration of shorebirds and landbirds, first in general and then in greater detail. This three month period may be the most important time of the birding year to apply a logical strategy to your efforts. The occurrence of the different shorebird species in Connecticut is quite predictable to where and when. Therefore, to improve your ability to find the greatest species list of these impressive migrants it is essential to understand this predictability. The fall migration of shorebirds is very important to the birding year and it falls virtually entirely within this three month window. The songbird migration peaks during the months of September and October. Therefore, we will put emphasis on shorebirds and related birding in this article and continue the songbird discussion in the last installment of this series.

The intention of this series is to help beginning and intermediate birders improve their skills. Advanced birders are not forgotten however and at the conclusion of this article we discuss advanced birding tips for this period. These will include rarities to hope for and how to bird that most impressive weather event, the hurricane!

Fall Migration Generalities

The avian migration to winter quarters is generally more protracted than the spring migration. Now there are young birds hatched this year migrating for the first time. Adult birds are no longer under the pressure to arrive quickly on the breeding grounds, to establish and defend territories and attract mates. Adults generally migrate before their offspring and they migrate more directly and efficiently. Thus adults will pass through Connecticut first. Some shorebird species migrate mostly through the interior of the continent and only a few young birds or an occasional adult may appear in the northeast during a given fall. Examples of such species are Baird's Sandpiper and Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

The pressure of reproduction pushes birds to move northward

at any opportunity. During fall migration birds have the luxury of picking good flying conditions. Long distance flight is most efficient in cool stable air. This means most birds will move southward in the nice cool clear weather following the passage of a cold front. This is particularly true of young birds since some adults will migrate on any night with decent weather. These cold fronts roll across the continent with regularity during August and September and produce helpful tailwinds as well.

There are some special considerations to be aware of with shorebird migration and we will discuss them presently.

Shorebird Migration

In order to find the greatest mix of shorebird species you need to have a working knowledge of their migratory habits, habitat preferences, and what plumages they will be sporting when they're here. During migration shorebirds use specific and predictable stopover locations on their way to wintering quarters. Depending on the species, wintering quarters may be as near as the east coast of North America including Connecticut, or as far away as Argentina and Chile, the so-called "Southern Cone." It is fascinating to think that the Whimbrel we flush as we walk a Connecticut beach may have been flushed from its nest on the tundra by a foraging Polar Bear a few weeks earlier. In a few weeks hence, it may be flushed from a well deserved nap on the rocky coastline of Chile by a Southern Sea Lion crawling out of the Pacific Ocean to sunbathe. Inconsiderate mammals at every turn!

South-bound shorebirds start arriving here in July and continue to pass through for months. The first to arrive are adults in worn breeding plumage. After this we start to see a mixture of worn breeding plumage and adult birds molting into winter plumage. When juveniles begin to show up here most of the adults we still see will be far along in their molting into winter plumage. Finally, late in the migration, nearly all shorebirds here will be juveniles with the exception of those species which will winter here, such as Dunlin.

As with other species, shorebirds migrate when the weather is favorable. In addition to this they make shorter migratory movements based upon the tidal cycle. While they are migrating, shorebirds are either eating or roosting. As a rule they roost at the high tide and feed during falling, rising, and low tide. When the tide goes high some birds will resume their southward trek. These movements are relatively short and these individuals will usually stop at another high tide shorebird roost site. By watching a roost

site fill up with shorebirds not only will you see a great many of the local birds but occasionally you will observe some of these tidal migrants fly in. This raises another point of importance, you MUST obtain a tide chart for Connecticut if you want your shorebirding to be the most productive. They are available free at fishing stores as well as on the internet. Some limited information is usually published daily in most newspapers.

Perhaps the most important information a birder needs in order to find the most species during migration is the habitat preferences of those species. There are two types of habitat preferences, roosting habitat and feeding habitat. The following lists are the different feeding habitats in Connecticut available to shorebirds and which species usually prefer them. Some species utilize several habitats. This listing is generally true but not carved in stone; you may find shorebirds feeding in unusual locations during migration.

Shorebird Feeding Habitats

Sand bars, sand and pebble beaches

Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher, Spotted Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Sanderling.

Tidal mudflats and salt marshes

Black-bellied Plover, American Golden-Plover, Semipalmated Plover, American Oystercatcher, American Avocet (rare), Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Willet, Whimbrel, Hudsonian Godwit, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Curlew Sandpiper (rare), Stilt Sandpiper, Ruff (rare), Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Phalarope.

Fresh water marshes, pond edges, and fresh water mudflats

Killdeer, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Common Snipe, Wilson's Phalarope.

Areas of short grasses and barrens such as airports, fields, and gravel/grass parking lots

American Golden-Plover, Killdeer, Upland Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Common Snipe.

Coastal rocky areas and stone breakwaters
American Oystercatcher, Ruddy Turnstone, Purple Sandpiper

Red-necked Phalarope and Red Phalarope are very rarely seen in Connecticut. Both species winter at sea and predicting where they will turn up on shore during migration is extremely difficult at best.

In general, shorebirds feed on invertebrates exposed by the falling tides. As the waterline recedes the birds follow it to find newly exposed areas that haven't been picked over yet and where the invertebrates are more readily obtained. Some species will feed on the exposed mud while others feed in the shallowing waters. When the tide is completely out the birds will be spread out feeding over a large area. This is the most difficult time to find a particular bird or to be sure you have seen all the shorebirds present. When the tide is coming in the feeding birds tend to be "pushed" ahead of it by the incoming water. Mid-tide and higher can be one of the best times to search as the birds are concentrating ahead of the rising water. Finally, as the tide nears the high point, groups of shorebirds will start heading for roost sites and the shoreline will be abuzz with these flocks zipping up and down the beaches until they settle down to preen and sleep. Discussion of specific roost sites for shorebirds will be discussed later in this article.

There is one last habitat to check for shorebirds, one that experienced birders realize can be extremely exciting. Rain puddles. That's right, rain puddles. During and immediately after rainy weather an amazing variety of shorebirds can be found in fields and parking areas that have standing water, particularly near the coast. These puddles may yield virtually any shorebird on the Connecticut list, and perhaps, if you are living right, a species not yet on it! You can make no better shorebirding decision than to go check the puddles in the grassy areas of Connecticut's shoreline on a rainy day, particularly at high tide. While the coast is the most productive locale, inland fields can be surprisingly productive during rainy weather. Don't just drive by that flooded farm field, have a peek. You may just make your own day!

"Land Bird" Migration

The fall migration of songbirds actually begins in July with species such as Cerulean Warbler and Louisiana Waterthrush winging their way to winter haunts. The migration continues slowly until the last half of August when things really start to pick up. During September the landbird migration is in full swing. Most migrant

species during this period are insectivores and as with shorebirds the adults head south earliest. The bulk of the species migrate at night and often concentrate at coastal locations in Connecticut during the day. This is because the general direction of migration is due southward, particularly with first year birds. As these nocturnal travelers fly south they reach the coastline of the northeast United States which falls away to the southwest. Connecticut's shoreline runs east to west, directly opposed to the general flow of migration. Songbirds need to stay over landmasses during migration. Those that manage to find themselves far out at sea when dawn breaks will in all probability perish. Thus our shoreline acts as a barrier and fall mornings can find birds "piled" up against it. However they can be locally numerous nearly anywhere in the state on a given morning. We will discuss the fall landbird migration in greater detail in the last installment of this series.

The most promising weather for good landbirding is the passage of a sharp cold front. This results in cool clear skies at night, excellent conditions for migration, and usually northwest winds. This creates nights of heavier movement with more birds passing through our area. The trees and bushes of Connecticut often have many foraging migrants after these nights. It is most productive to be out birding early, very early. You should be in the field to bid the sunrise good day. Birding can help cure the occurrence of insomnia since you don't really have much time to spend in bed anyway!

Some through-migrants are more easily found in Connecticut during the fall than during the spring. Such species as Philadelphia Vireo and Cape May Warbler are good examples. We will discuss specifics under the sections on the months.

July

As June ends and July begins landbirds are very busy raising their broods. Anyone who feeds birds throughout the summer can testify about how noisy the fledglings are as they beg for food from their parents. The first week of July is a transition time for birders when our attention shifts from woodlands to water habitat. While it is still enjoyable to search for thrushes and warblers, by the second week in July you should be thinking shorebirds! If your desire is to see the greatest number of species during the year, or at least you wish to study the greatest assortment of species possible, then you should devote the entire month of July to looking for shorebirds and other species associated with shorebird habitat. With the exception of species that breed in Connecticut all the shorebirds

appearing here now should be in worn, or not so worn, breeding plumage. Species that you should have no trouble finding now include Semipalmated Sandpiper, Piping Plover (at breeding sites), Killdeer, American Oystercatcher, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, Spotted Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, and Short-billed Dowitcher. Less common at this time but good possibilities are Black-bellied Plover, Lesser Yellowlegs, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Sanderling, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Stilt Sandpiper. Uncommon to rare species that might be found by a lucky birder during July include American Avocet, Upland Sandpiper (away from breeding sites), Hudsonian Godwit, Marbled Godwit, Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff, and Wilson's Phalarope. Some species enter into the Connecticut birding scene after breeding. These species typically are water habitat related and include herons, gulls, and terns. Laughing Gulls breed in large numbers on Long Island, New York but as yet are not Connecticut breeders. By July however they start to pour in and will be a fixture of the Connecticut waterfront until November. More interesting to birders (a natural prejudice is at work here!) is the appearance of elegant Roseate Terns feeding off the beaches and roosting with the more numerous Common Terns that are also now moving to the mainland. Both these species breed on islands in Long Island Sound and spend more and more time on mainland beaches and sandbars after the young have hatched and fledged. Indeed some of the juvenile terns eventually will join the adults here. Common Terns can be found at nearly all waterfront locations but the Roseates are much less common and harder to find. Consistently good locations for Roseate Terns have been the waterfront near Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford, the mouth of the Connecticut River, Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, and the sandbars off Milford Point in Milford. Listen for the distinctive "look-it" call they bark out and the whiter appearance of this endangered species to find them among the Common Terns. Endangered Least Terns are raising their young at sites such as Sandy Point in West Haven and Milford Point but may be seen at a number of other locations as well. The big terns may start to put in appearances now as well. Royal Tern may show up in small numbers in Connecticut waters and be found roosting with other terns or gulls. Caspian Terns tend to be one-day-wonders (one-tide-wonders actually) and are unpredictable but the combination of saltmarsh and beach together are your best bet. As a rule you should look every roosting group of gulls or terns over carefully for un-

common to rare species. A roosting Caspian Tern is big enough to "blend in" with roosting gulls and you won't be the first birder to miss one that is actually in your view, if you aren't careful.

There is only one way to get better at identifying shorebirds, and that is careful study of birds in the field. Do not write them off as too hard, or they surely will be for you! Since the species mix around at this time usually is fairly limited, it is an excellent time to study them. Pay a great deal of attention to the structure of birds you can identify. This will be an enormous help when you see birds that appear odd due to various molt stages. Least Sandpiper is sometimes misidentified as the Little Stint of Eurasia. A quick glance at the bill by a birder who has studied structure before will quickly eliminate any such capricious thoughts however.

Unfortunately Connecticut shoreline locations open to the general public are not numerous. Some of the best locations are state parks and preserves. There are three outstanding locations for general shorebirding in Connecticut. From east to west they are: the mouth of the Connecticut River (access here limited to boat launch until Labor Day) including Griswold Point, Great Island Marsh, and the associated mudflats; Hammonasset Beach State Park; and Milford Point. There are many other locations that are good as well including Bluff Point State Park in Groton, North Cove in Old Saybrook, New Haven Harbor particularly at Sandy Point in West Haven, Sherwood Island State Park in Westport, and Greenwich Point in Greenwich (only open to residents in season). Anywhere you find access to tidal mudflats or salt-marshes have a look, you may be surprised. A word about personal responsibility. These birds are under a great physical stress during migration. They need the opportunity to feed and rest for the long arduous journey to winter quarters. They will be disturbed many times by beach-walkers, dogs, predators, and more. Please do not add birders to that list. Make every effort practicable to not disturb them; it could mean life or death for some individuals.

Visiting a heavily used feeding area or roost site repeatedly is bound to pay off. There is a constant flow of migrants through these locations and you will be the likely birder to find the rarity if you persist. Try and visit each of the different habitats as many times as possible during the period. You will not get every species of shorebird in one habitat.

August

August is a month of great opportunity for the birder in Connecticut. Shorebirding is reaching its peak, the landbird migration

is picking up, and it's the first good opportunity of the fall for rare and uncommon species. While the landbird migration is starting now it is probably best for beginning and intermediate birders to continue to concentrate on shorebirds and shorebird habitat. All the shorebird species listed for July will be present and perhaps more numerous. In addition, you may find an adult American Golden-Plover or two, Solitary Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, or White-rumped Sandpiper. You should visit the same locations as July and it is a good idea to check out mudflats around fresh water now for Solitary Sandpiper. Rain puddles and rain related mud is a must check near coastal locations and inland. I once stopped at a flooded farm field in August and found Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, and Pectoral Sandpiper all feeding together in a puddle less than fifteen feet across. Similarly, I once checked a flooded lawn in Old Lyme after a rain storm and found 19 Common Snipe huddled in the wet grasses!

Adult shorebirds will be heavily molting now and by the end of the month some juvenile migrants will be in evidence as well. Again, study the common species. You will be amazed at the variation in individuals within a species, such as Semipalmated Sandpiper. While looking for the more uncommon species you may be well rewarded by looking for roost sites in salt-marshes. Some species decidedly prefer roosting within marshes to roosting in the open on sandbars and beaches. These species include Whimbrel, godwits, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Ruff (rare), and dowitchers. One such location that is easily observed is the marshes around the Meigs Point parking area in Hammonasset Beach State Park. This has been a particularly good spot in recent years for a declining species hard to find in Connecticut, Stilt Sandpiper. This species is sometimes passed-off as a Dowitcher by beginning birders. Learn structure! Airports and open areas of short grass should be checked for American Golden-Plover, Upland Sandpiper, and Pectoral Sandpiper as well as Cattle Egret. One experienced Connecticut birder checked the fields at Sikorsky Field in Stratford for these species and found Connecticut's only second record of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. While the sandpiper may not have been impressed by the man standing near the fence, I can assure you the man was impressed by the sandpiper! Other productive locations for these species include Groton/New London Airport in Groton and the fields in Hammonasset Beach State Park. Indeed, perhaps the single best

shorebirding decision you can make is to go to Hammonasset on a rainy late August day, especially at the high tide.

One of the most impressive events you may witness while shorebirding is the attack of a falcon. If while you are studying a roosting flock it suddenly explodes into panicked flight, the odds are either a Merlin or Peregrine Falcon is hurtling your way. These feathered rockets are part and parcel of the shorebird migration. If you think sleeping on a beach is idyllic, imagine cracking open an eye and seeing a hungry Grizzly Bear tearing across the sand towards you. Now you know how a shorebird feels when it awakes to find itself in the cross-hairs of a Peregrine! By watching the movements of the fleeing birds you can guess where the falcon is and usually see it. These attacks are over fast, but they will probably be repeated if the falcon misses.

Terns are still in evidence and finding Roseates should be at its easiest. Least Terns depart early and will be thinning out noticeably by now, but the appearance of the first Forster's Terns and Black Terns more than makes up for it. Black Terns should be looked for among tern roosts while Forster's Terns prefer to stay within marshes, though they can be found roosting with other terns as well. Check any terns feeding deep within marshes for Forster's. Royals and Caspians should be looked for at roosts as well. One thing you will notice now is the number of juvenile terns on Connecticut beaches. These youngsters will often follow the adults around incessantly begging. Those of you who are parents will understand why the adults seem fed up with these demands.

There are other species to watch for around shorebird haunts. In fresh water marsh habitat watch for Least Bittern, rails, and mixed flocks of swallows. Cliff Swallow is possible anywhere swallows are now gathering. At coastal marshes watch for Little Blue Heron (particularly immatures), rails, swallows, and migrating Eastern Kingbirds. Swallow flocks can be enormous during August and can contain all the eastern species. While you are around saltmarshes scan the edge of the mudflats where they meet the marsh grasses, for rails. Clapper is the most likely but you may find migrating Virginia Rails and Soras, or even something better. The marshes of the lower Connecticut River were once famous for rail hunting. Around the turn of the century Soras migrating down the river at dusk were noted in "flocks"! Times have changed but these marshes are still excellent for rails in migration.

Many species of landbird are migrating now, particularly adult birds. If you want to take a break from shorebirds and water birds, pick a morning after a clear night and search coastal areas or edge

habitat (areas where woodlands meet fields, etc.) for these birds. You may find migrant adult warblers and others. Finding landbirds now can be a little hit or miss and generally speaking your time is better spent on shorebirds, etc. One landbird species to especially watch for at this time is Olive-sided Flycatcher. This species has declined significantly in recent years. It migrates early and should be looked for at the very top of dead trees around water. Its habit of sitting at the very top makes it easier to see but its low numbers considerably reduce your chances of finding one on a given year. You won't find one unless you look though! Beware the odd pewee that occasionally sits high in the open to taunt hopeful birders.

Nighthawks become a real possibility in the evening sky as August comes to an end. I highly recommend going to Hammonasset for sunset at the end of the month. While you stand and enjoy the colors of the evening sky you may be treated to dozens of Common Nighthawks bounding about the park. Some will go bouncing by at head level. If this combination of beauty and birds doesn't give you goosebumps, just why do you bird anyway?

September

While August is a month of opportunities, September is a month to be opportunistic. Your birding decisions should be entirely driven by weather and tidal conditions. Shorebird migration continues and some of the more uncommon species are most likely this month. Landbird migration hits full stride now and can be wonderful on the right days. Migrating hawks are at peak numbers and can be quite impressive on the right days. So which days are the right days for what birds?

As discussed previously, the passage of a sharp cold front results in cool stable air and northwest winds. These conditions mean heavier migration of landbirds and hawks through Connecticut. The birding emphasis now swings back to landbirding, though some shorebirding is still important. Generally speaking the most productive time to search for landbirds is first thing in the morning. The first two or three hours of light can be dedicated to looking for thrushes, vireos, warblers, sparrows and other songbirds. Hawks tend to start moving a little later in the day when the combination of warm thermals created by the sun combine with the northwest wind to create the most efficient conditions for diurnal (daylight) migration. So after you have spent two or three hours landbirding you can head to a hawk-watch site and take in the show. A muggy overcast day, or a cool drizzly day, are days to

shorebird. Since shorebirding is also directly tied to tides, you may be able to do all three during a marathon day of birding if the optimal tidal conditions are in the afternoon. One consideration to make, however, is that the passage of a sharp cold front also tends to send shorebirds on their way as well and the pickings may be a little thin in the front's wake. The unstable and inclement weather preceding the cold front can be excellent for shorebirding.

There is one unique weather/migration phenomena to discuss here. It is called "blocking weather" and it is inclement weather that persists over several days. It stops movement and causes migrants to concentrate where they meet it. If the inclement weather is mostly to our south and the edge of the rain and clouds are in our area we may have these delayed birds around in good numbers. Thus even drizzly weather can be good for warblers. When the blocking weather finally clears, larger than usual numbers of birds will move at once. This can create excellent birding days. Good birders are weather watchers!

Juvenile shorebirds will be at their peak during this month. Species of note to watch for are American Golden-Plover, Western Sandpiper (most Westerns we see here are juveniles), Baird's Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher (a surprisingly difficult species to find in Connecticut), and Wilson's Phalarope (nearly always juveniles). Most Baird's Sandpipers migrate through the interior of the continent and some years they are virtually absent from the northeast. The best place to find Buff-breasted Sandpiper in recent years has been the Groton/New London Airport with more than a half dozen birds on many days. These birds may be difficult to see well as they are usually quite distant from the road and access to the airport is not extensive. A better place to see these attractive little gems well is Hammonasset Beach State Park. Check all the parking areas and fields. These birds love short grass areas and should be looked for where that habitat exists. September is one of the better months to find Hudsonian Godwit in Connecticut, usually juveniles.

When that cold front passes and a good night for migration occurs, plan on looking for landbirds in the morning. As discussed before, coastal locations are best, but if you can't get to the coast you can do quite well anywhere in the state with a little luck. Early in the morning these nocturnal migrants are quite active and tend to be found in little roving flocks. Listen for the tell-tale chip notes. There will almost always be more birds present than it sounds like since many will be silent at any given moment. Some of the species that may be in these flocks include chickadees, kinglets, vireos,

warblers, and tanagers. Philadelphia Vireo is very rare in Connecticut during the spring and uncommon but regular in fall. The best place to see this species has been Bluff Point Coastal Preserve in Groton where this species is annually seen with as many as three recorded in a single day. This state preserve also happens to be the best place in Connecticut to see the migration of songbirds. Just as you enter the park you pass under a railroad bridge. Immediately after that the woods on your left has been nicknamed the "Hot Corner" and on peak days over twenty thousand warblers have been observed passing through in the behavioral phenomenon called "Morning Flight". This phenomenon occurs wherever nocturnal songbirds are and can be seen to a lesser extent at other locations such as Hammonasset, Sherwood Island State Park, etc. This is a complex and little understood phenomenon and is beyond the scope of this article. For shear numbers the Bluff Point manifestation of this phenomenon has to be experienced, and birders from as far away as Vermont, Maine, and New Jersey have traveled here to do just that. The day or two after a cold front can be mind boggling with so many birds flying out that birders often flinch from fear of being hit! Of course you don't have to travel to Groton to look for songbirds. Wherever you do go just be aware that any tree or bush may hold a bird or two or twenty!

Hawk-watching is a form of birding that enthralls some people and they do little other birding. For the birder who wants to see every species they can some hawk-watching is highly recommended, if for nothing else than the experience! Odds are that you will see something good fly over and there may be no better place to learn from more experienced birders than yourself. Premier hawk-watching sites in Connecticut include Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven and Quaker Ridge in Greenwich, as well as other locations. The beauty of hawk-watching however is it can happen anywhere! Wherever you are birding you should keep an eye on the sky. Inland areas of ridges and hills are best for Broad-winged Hawks and mid September is the peak time of their migration. Enormous flocks, or "kettles" can be seen on the right days. Inland locations are also good for species such as Red-shouldered Hawk and Red-tailed Hawk. Shoreline locations are good for harriers, accipiters such as Sharp-shinned Hawk, and falcons such as American Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon. Hawks are daylight migrants. They take advantage of weather conditions and terrain that make their movement more efficient. Those conditions are rising thermals caused by the sun to give lift, and northwest winds to give an added boost. Terrain features that assist in thermal cre-

ation are ridge-lines and hills and inland hawk-watch sites tend to be located on or near these. Hawk-watchers are great sources of information and hawk-watch sites are great places to learn how to identify hawks in flight. Don't be afraid to ask how the bird flying over was identified; most hawk-watchers are only too happy to share their knowledge.

Let's summarize the weather conditions and the recommended birding associated with those conditions:

Beautiful clear days with northwest winds after the passage of a cold front: Landbirds at coastal locations, edge habitat anywhere, and secondarily, in any tree or bush you walk by! Hawk movement at hawk-watch sites and in the sky wherever you are birding. Shorebird habitat later in the day. The are some landbird migrants that often are associated with shorebird habitat as well, such as American Pipit, so be alert. If you can find a quiet area away from human noise, go out at night and listen carefully to the sky. There are birds up there and if you listen long enough you should hear the chips and calls of these travelers. Pure magic!

Rain showers and periods of extended fair days with little or no wind: Landbirds will be moving through steadily and so will shorebirds. Depending on which species you still need to find for the year, or which birds you just want to see again, you can pick which habitats to search. This is not prime hawk finding weather however. It is a good time to sneak in a pelagic trip out of state actually!

Extended rainy periods: Shorebird habitat, rain puddles, flooded fields. Rainy days in September are good birding days so get a little wet! Remember, if the rain and clouds are immediately to our south landbirds will be arriving here anyway and should be searched for. When these extended rainy periods end you MUST get out and search for songbirds.

Hot, humid, hazy, periods: Shorebird habitat is most productive and therefore recommended. Land migration will still be happening but can be quite desultory. Your time is better spent on the shore, where you will feel cooler anyway!

September is a month of great movement. Bird often, bird smart.

Advanced Birding Tips

There are so many possibilities it is impossible to address them all in this article. First let us list rarities that are good possibilities by month. **July**: Curlew Sandpiper, Little Gull, Loggerhead Shrike. Also as an outside possibility during periods of very humid oppressive weather you should watch Long Island Sound for

Wilson's Storm-Petrel. I can't explain why they sometimes venture in during this weather but they do. **August**: Cattle Egret, White Ibis, Purple Gallinule, American Avocet, Ruff, Western Tanager. **September**: Eared Grebe, Sandhill Crane, phalaropes, Western Kingbird, Sedge Wren, Northern Wheatear, Blue Grosbeak, Henslow's Sparrow.

These are a few of the species that are possible. Others include such gems as Anhinga, Swallow-tailed Kite, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, and many, many more. This period is absolutely rife with possible rarities, especially during extended periods of strong southwest wind flows. The best approach is simply to be prepared for anything!

The wildcard weather event of the year can occur during this period, the hurricane. These expressions of nature's power bring great destruction and hardship for humans. They also bring birds. In Connecticut these storms are infrequent and usually arrive when they are weakening or are essentially spent. When one of these storms runs up the eastern seaboard, or arrives here from out over the Atlantic, we have the potential for superb rarities. I don't need to stress that your safety comes first. Don't be out birding if the storm is strong enough to pose a real threat to you. What good is a new life bird if it costs you your life? Most storm driven rarities are found as the storm subsides or is already over.

Long Island forms a natural barrier to the Atlantic Ocean for us. Long Island Sound sees very few pelagic birds because of this. Here in Connecticut we pay a price for that with few pelagic species on the state list, and very few lucky birders who have some on their state lists. When a hurricane travels across the ocean pelagic birds are unable to feed due to the tremendous wind and waves. These birds are often kept in the storm because of the storm's rotation. These birds weaken quickly and many die. Some survive the storm but are carried many miles by it and escape in a weakened state. Many of these perish as well. When a hurricane hits our area and it has stayed out over the water many pelagic birds are driven to land and some are driven far inland. In recent years strong hurricanes have resulted in impressive stranding of pelagic birds, such as Black-capped Petrels on the Great Lakes! Not just pelagic birds are affected by these storms either. Coastal species are often victims as well. If a hurricane hits here, and you have the chance, get out and look for these storm-blown birds. Safety first remember!

In the wake of a hurricane that has come up the seaboard you should search for possible species such as Brown Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird, Reddish Egret, Wood Stork, Purple Gallinule, Wilson's Plover, Red and Red-necked Phalaropes, jaegers, Sabine's

Gulls, Sandwich Tern, and southern breeders such as Prothonotary Warbler and others. If enough of the storm is out over the water, or it arrives here from the open Atlantic, then every pelagic species is a possibility to enter our state. In addition to those, many southern species are possible as well, such as Audubon's Shearwater, Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, tropicbirds, Masked and Brown Booby, jaegers, Arctic Tern, Bridled and Sooty Tern, and things even rarer! If the storm goes inland to our south we may still see rarities from it as weakened and displaced birds try to recover and find their way back home.

The places to search are primarily coastal locations but large bodies of fresh water should be searched as well. If the storm is strong enough there may be birds blown well inland. After a strong storm an Audubon's Shearwater was found in Connecticut on a lake that borders Massachusetts! Many of these weakened birds will be found in odd places and shearwaters have been picked up off streets and lawns in the wake of these incredible storms. Beaches and sandbars may have storm ravaged survivors sitting among the usual species. You may see other storm birds sitting on the water or flying through the sound searching for a way back to the real ocean. So remember, the next time a hurricane hits Connecticut the best birds of the year may have arrived with it. See you in the field.

Conclusion

This period is an exciting and busy time for birders. Birders want to be everywhere at once, but of course we can't. The best laid strategy and the most time spent in the field doesn't mean you will see everything, or even the best things. It does raise your chances tremendously however. The limitations of these articles is that they can't possibly cover all the information and advice that I would like to give to the reader. There is just so much to know. As I have said before, don't be afraid to ask advice from more experienced birders. No one knows everything (beware the birders that think they do!) but everyone knows something! I believe it is our ethical responsibility to teach others what little we know about birding and that is what I have tried to do in these articles. I hope you have learned something from them.

The next installment will conclude the series and will cover the months of October, November, and December. It will also include a section on the informational resources available to birders to improve anyone's Connecticut Birding Year.

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REPRODUCTIVE SUCCESS OF OSPREYS AT TWO SITES IN CONNECTICUT

Donna Christine O' Neill and Robert A. Askins

Abstract

Nest success rates and rates of fish delivery to nests were determined for two large Osprey populations in Connecticut, one at Groton Reservoir, Groton, and one at Great Island, Old Lyme, during 1996 and 1997. Between 1993 and 1996 these Osprey populations had substantially different rates of nest success. Great Island Ospreys fledged few young while Groton Reservoir Ospreys had good nest success. During 1997, however, fledging rates were similar at the two sites. In 1996, low nest success at Great Island resulted from high predation rates, probably due to raccoons. The higher nest success rate at this site in 1997 appears to be due to low predation rates because of the installation of new predator guards on all nest platforms. There was no evidence of raccoon predation at Groton Reservoir in either year. In 1996 Ospreys delivered fish to their nests at a similar rate on Great Island and Groton Reservoir. In 1997 Great Island Ospreys made more fish deliveries to their nests than Groton Reservoir Ospreys.

The Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) became a symbol of the environmental movement during the 1960's and 1970's. Several studies at that time showed that this once abundant fish hawk had declined radically in numbers. In the Connecticut River estuary and surrounding areas, more than 200 active Osprey nests were documented in 1940, but by 1970 only eight active nests remained (Spitzer 1980, as cited in Poole 1989). The Osprey's decline was eventually traced to the chemical DDT and other organochlorines that were commonly used as pesticides and routinely sprayed on marshes to control mosquitoes during the 1940's and 1950's (Ames 1966). Since the use of DDT and other insecticides was banned in the 1970's, Osprey numbers along the East Coast have been increasing (Spitzer et al. 1978).

In some areas, such as the Delaware Bay and the Chesapeake Bay, Osprey populations are not making a full recovery. Predation by the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) was advanced as the most likely cause for nest failures along the New Jersey side of the Delaware Bay (Steidler et al. 1991), while food shortage and sibling aggression were deemed the reason for nest failures in the Chesa-

peake Bay (McLean and Byrd 1991). Sibling aggression and brood reduction, which were common in Chesapeake Bay Ospreys, are often caused by food shortage, but are rarely observed in Ospreys with no food stress (O'Conner 1978; Stinson 1979; Poole 1984). Also, during the nesting months the male Osprey does 99.9% of the hunting for his family (Poole 1989). Food stress could be an indirect cause of the nest failure of Ospreys; if the male cannot find enough food, the female may be forced to hunt also, thereby leaving eggs or chicks vulnerable to predation.

There were 106 active Osprey nests (nests with eggs) in Connecticut during 1996 and 131 active nests during 1997 (Victoria 1996, 1997). The last stronghold for nesting Ospreys in Connecticut during the DDT years was Great Island, a salt marsh located in Old Lyme. Historically, the densest colony of Ospreys in Connecticut has been located in this marsh, and the nests at this site have had a high success rate. During the late 1970's and into the 1980's, when Ospreys began to recover from organochlorine poisoning, Great Island Ospreys continued to increase in numbers and to reproduce effectively. Since 1991, however, the number of successful nests on Great Island had declined dramatically, falling to zero in 1993 and remaining low through 1996 (Victoria 1996; Figure 1). The number of nesting Osprey pairs on Great Island remained high, but their nests produced few fledglings.

Groton Reservoir in Groton, Connecticut has a similar number of nesting pairs to the Great Island population. The Groton Reservoir Ospreys have been very successful at producing young during the same time period that the Great Island Ospreys were reproducing poorly (Figure 1). Great Island Ospreys fish mostly on Long Island Sound and surrounding brackish estuaries, while the Groton Ospreys appear to be fishing mainly at the freshwater reservoir where they nest (personal observation).

New England Ospreys living along the coast apparently rely mainly on three species of fish; winter flounder (*Pleuronectes americanus*) make up 50% of the bird's diet, Atlantic menhaden (*Brevoortia tyrannus*) account for 20% and river herring (*Alosa spp.*) account for 20% (Poole 1989). Survey trawls by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Fisheries Division, showed that the abundance of winter flounder off the Connecticut coast in 1995 was the lowest since data collection began in 1979 (Simpson et al. 1995; Figure 2). The decrease in winter flounder coincided closely with the initial decrease in nest success at Great Island. If the prey species that makes up 50% of the Osprey diet was less available to Ospreys at Great Island, this might affect

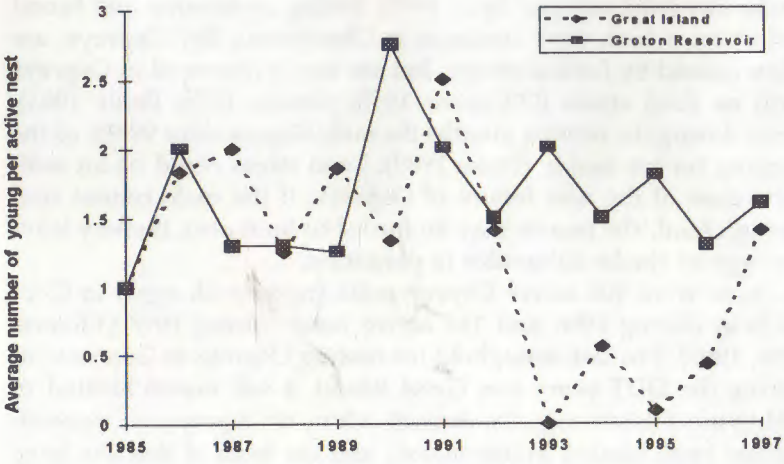

Figure 1. Average number of young fledged per active nest at Great Island and Groton Reservoir, Connecticut, 1985-1997 (from Victoria, 1997).

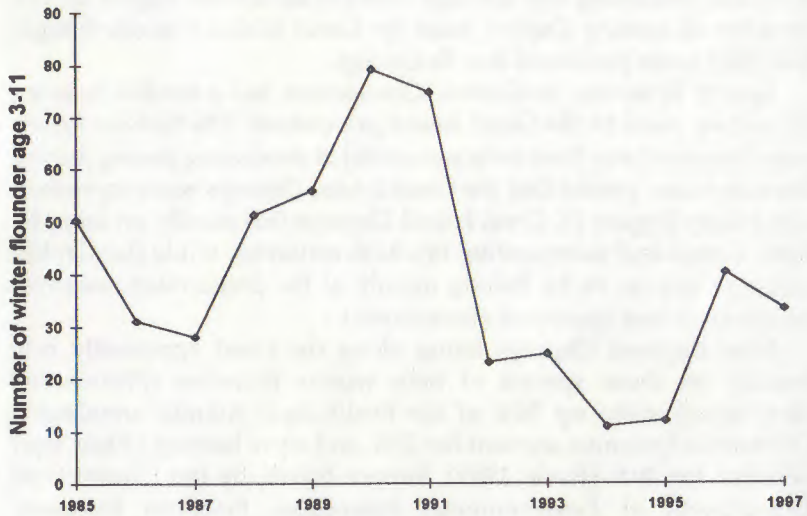

Figure 2. Geometric mean of abundances for 3-11 year old flounder per tow for Long Island Sound along the coast of Connecticut, 1985-1997. (from Penny Howell, CT DEP Marine Div., personal communication, 1998)

nest success. Moreover, the Osprey population at Great Island is large, so there might be many males trying to find enough food for their families in approximately the same area. In contrast, the Groton Reservoir Ospreys apparently feed mainly on freshwater fish, so they would not be affected by the decline in fish populations in Long Island Sound.

This study focused on comparing the diets of Ospreys at Great Island and Groton Reservoir. The main goal was to determine whether the amounts of fish delivered to nests at the two sites were similar. Also, observations on any human and animal activity that might affect the Ospreys were recorded to attempt to determine whether there are other reasons that Great Island Ospreys were unsuccessful at breeding while Groton Reservoir Ospreys were successful.

Study Areas

Great Island is a 122-hectare salt marsh located in Old Lyme, Connecticut. It is separated from the mainland by about 30 meters. It is easily accessible to animals like whitetail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and raccoons (*Procyon lotor*). The area is also heavily used by people during summer weekends for recreational activities like canoeing, kayaking, fishing and crabbing. Ospreys nesting on Great Island use artificial nesting platforms which are about 4 meters high. Nest platforms are within sight of each other. Almost all nests on Great Island are equipped with metal sheets designed to keep ground predators out of the nests. These metal sheets wrap around the nesting poles immediately underneath the platforms. There were 14 nesting pairs of Osprey on Great Island during 1996 and 16 pairs in 1997. During both years there were several young birds that did not build nests. In 1997, Great Island was closed to recreational activity by the Department of Environmental Protection during the incubation and hatching periods, from May 26 to July 7.

The Groton Reservoir is a system of interconnected freshwater reservoirs covering about 216 hectares. The area is fenced and locked to keep the public out but is heavily used by Groton town employees. Trucks and lawnmowers are constantly passing by the Osprey nests. Fishing, hunting and all types of water recreation are prohibited in the Groton Reservoir. Groton Ospreys use converted utility poles that have platforms attached on the tops for nest sites. These poles are 9 meters high, so the Groton Ospreys were nesting much farther off the ground than the Great Island Ospreys. The Groton poles are not equipped with predator guards. The nests are

located farther apart than those at Great Island; in many cases, they are not within sight of other Osprey nests. Some of the poles are close to electrical high tension wires, but none are directly connected to any electrical wires. There were 12 pairs of nesting Osprey at Groton Reservoir during 1996 and 16 pairs during 1997.

Methods

Osprey nests were studied from May 28 to July 18, 1996 and May 30 to July 18, 1997. Initially 13 nests at Great Island and 12 nests at Groton Reservoir were monitored in 1996, but observations were concentrated at nests that continued to have chicks as the summer progressed. In 1997, 16 nests were initially monitored at each site. Observations were made in two-hour periods per nest for six hours per day. Nests were watched on a rotating schedule so that each nest was observed during each time slot. Observations were from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. or 1 p.m. to 7 p.m., also on a weekly rotating schedule. Weather conditions were recorded for each observation period. Deliveries of fish to nests were also recorded. Where possible, fish species were identified. Confirmation of fish identifications were made by checking remains at the base of the nests.

A nest check was made at Great Island in the early part of the study and then again for banding purposes at both Great Island and Groton Reservoir in the last week of June, 1996 and the second week of July, 1996. Numbers of eggs and chicks were recorded, and during the second nest check inviable eggs were collected for contaminant testing by Environmental Research Institute, Storrs, Connecticut. Evidence of sibling aggression was also recorded.

In the fall and winter of 1996, new predator guards designed specifically to deter raccoons were installed on all nests at Great Island. These guards were concave metal disks placed about one meter under the base of the Osprey platform. The circumference of the discs was 71 cm, wide enough so that a raccoon would be unable to reach over the edge. They resembled squirrel guards placed under backyard bird feeders, only much larger.

From March 16 to June 19, 1997, weekly nest checks were made on Great Island with a mirror pole to make exact egg and chick counts. These checks were impossible at Groton Reservoir due to the height of the Osprey platforms. Banding was again conducted at both Groton and Great Island from the end of June and continued to mid July.

It was unusual for Ospreys to deliver more than one fish to their nest during an observation period, so the chi-square test was used

to analyze the frequency of fish deliveries. The analysis was based on whether fish were or were not delivered during an observation period.

Results

There were no significant differences in the rate of fish deliveries for Ospreys at the two study sites in 1996 (χ^2= 0.25, P= 0.62). Ospreys delivered either one fish or no fish during the two-hour observation periods in 1996. In 1996, more of the observation periods were cloudy or rainy, which might result in reduced hunting success, at Groton than at Great Island, but there was no significant difference in the rate of fish delivery between the sites when only sunny days were compared (χ^2= 0.38, P= 0.54). Also, there were no significant differences in the rate of fish deliveries on cloudy and rainy days compared with sunny days (χ^2 =0.29, P=0.59), or for early summer (May 28 - June 15) in 1996 χ^2 =0.39, P=0.24).

In 1997, the rate of fish delivery was higher at Great Island than at Groton Reservoir (χ^2= 7.27, P=0.007). Although, there were more cloudy or rainy observation periods at Great Island than at Groton Reservoir, the rate of fish delivery was still significantly higher at Great Island when only sunny days were compared (χ^2=3.96, P= 0.046).

Ospreys at Great Island made use of a variety of fish species, with flounder, herring, menhaden, scup (*Stenotomus crysops*), and striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*) observed. At Groton Reservoir, it was difficult to identify fish because of the height of the Osprey nest poles. Large mouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) were carried to nests by Ospreys, but no fish remains were located at the base of nest poles at Groton during either year. A fishing expedition in two of the main reservoirs in 1996 yielded perch (*Perca flavescens*) and large mouth bass as the predominant catch.

Reproductive success at Great Island remained low in 1996, with only six birds fledged from 14 active nests. In contrast, Groton Reservoir fledged 16 birds from 12 active nests. This was a significant difference (χ^2= 6.62, P= 0.01). During 1996, Groton Reservoir nest productivity was the lowest in six years but still within the recent normal range for the site (Figure 1). During the nest check on June 12, 1996, one dead chick was recovered. Three dead chicks were found in nests during the June 24, 1996 nest checks at Groton Reservoir, which were made following a five-day period of rain and fog.

Nest success was much greater at Great Island in 1997 than in

1996, with 23 chicks fledging. In contrast to 1996, there was no significant difference in the number of successful nests at the two sites (χ^2= 0.58, P= 0.44) or in the number of chicks fledged at the two sites (χ^2= 1.53, P= 0.67) for 1997. There were no extended periods of rain or fog in the 1997 season, and no dead bodies of chicks were discovered at either site in the 1997 season.

Sibling aggression was noted in one nest with three chicks at Groton Reservoir in 1996. A larger chick was observed pushing two smaller nest mates to the edge of the nest and pecking them viciously when they tried to obtain food from the parent Osprey. The two smaller chicks in this nest had disappeared by the June 24, 1996 nest check. There was no evidence of sibling aggression at Great Island in 1996. There were no incidents of sibling aggression noted at Groton reservoir in 1997, but two incidents were observed in different nests at Great Island in 1997.

Eight of the nest poles on Great Island had raccoon claw marks in 1996. The claw marks were three-lined and were located along the base and up the length of the support poles of the Osprey nesting platforms. Also, a raccoon family was found living in a Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) nesting box which was located on Great Island. This box was covered with the same three-lined scratch marks that were found on the nesting poles. There were no obviously fresh raccoon marks found on nest poles at Great Island in 1997, after the new predator guards had been installed and the Barn Owl box had been removed.

On Great Island nests rest on wire mesh that makes up the inside support of the Osprey platforms. At one nest, eggs had dropped through the nesting material and the wire mesh platform. At another site in Old Lyme located upriver from Great Island, three chicks dropped through the nesting material, two died on the ground and one died caught in the wire mesh of the platform (Hank Golet, pers. communication). At Groton Reservoir the platforms are made of solid wood, so nothing could drop through them.

Discussion

In 1996 male Ospreys at Great Island and Groton Reservoir delivered fish to nests at a similar rate, but nest success was substantially higher at Groton Reservoir. Great Island Ospreys fledged few chicks in 1996. Groton Reservoir had slightly lower nest success in 1996 than in previous years, but it was still within the normal range for the past ten years. The entire State of Connecticut had slightly lowered nest success in 1996 (Figure 3). This could

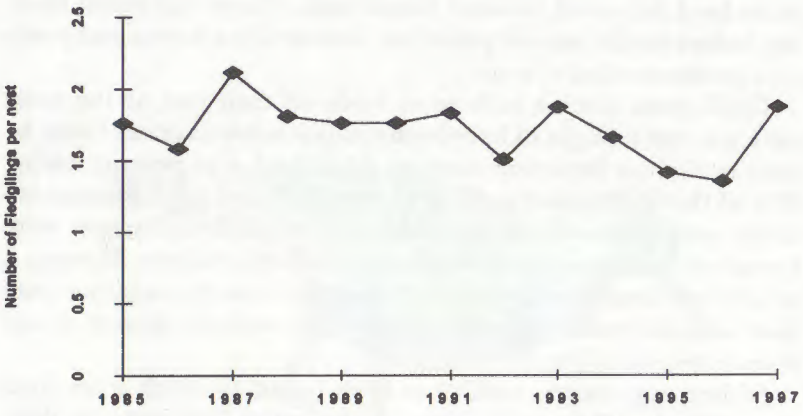

Figure 3. Average number of Ospreys fledging per active nest for Connecticut from 1985 to 1997 (from Victoria, 1997).

have been a result of the extended periods of rain and fog, which may have interfered with the male Ospreys' hunting success. Groton Reservoir personnel noted that the reservoir water levels were very high in 1996 due to the large amounts of rain during the summer. The reservoir generally has steep sides and when completely filled it has few shallow areas, so fish may not have been as available to the Ospreys in 1996 compared to other summers when the water levels became lower as the summer progressed. At Great Island fog occurred down to the water level for an extended period, but nests had already lost their chicks at this site before the inclement weather developed, so weather was probably not a major factor in fledging success at Great Island in 1996.

In 1997 there was no significant difference in fledging success between Groton Reservoir and Great Island. Significantly more fish were delivered to nests at Great Island than at Groton Reservoir, and there were no extended periods of rain or fog that might have affected hunting success in 1997 at either site. For a number of reasons fledging rates may have been similar at the two sites even though more fish deliveries were made at Great Island. First, the fish caught at Great Island may have been smaller or nutritionally inferior to those caught at Groton Utilities. This would require more fish to be delivered to Great Island nests to equal those delivered at Groton Utilities. Another possibility is that other factors besides food availability were involved in limiting Osprey fledging success and had these factors not been present, Great Island would have fledged more chicks than Groton Reservoir because there was

more food delivered to Great Island nests. These additional limiting factors might include predation, human disturbance and pesticide contamination of eggs.

Food stress forcing both adult birds off their nest at the same time was not thought to have been a major factor at either Great Island or Groton Reservoir since an adult bird was present during 90% of the observation periods in both 1996 and 1997. Human activity was the most common reason both parent Ospreys were forced off their nests at the same time at both locations. However, at Groton Reservoir food stress resulting from the weather may have affected nest success in 1996, which was the lowest it had been in six years (Figure 1).

Sibling aggression, which has been found to result from food stress (Poole 1984), was observed at Groton Reservoir in 1996, which supports the hypothesis that starvation contributed to nest failures there. Also, during nest checks at Groton Reservoir in 1996, several large dead chicks were found. The dead chicks at Groton Reservoir were discovered subsequent to the extended period of rain and fog. Nestling Ospreys often starve during prolonged storms (Poole 1989).

At Great Island in 1996 the remains of eggs were found, but no bodies of nestlings, and no incidents of sibling aggression were observed at the three nests with fledglings.

Sibling aggression was also noted at Great Island in 1997, even though more food deliveries were made there than at Groton Reservoir. The incidents occurred in two separate nests. However, only two incidents were recorded. If food were in short supply for the Great Island Osprey population, this probably would have resulted in more widespread sibling aggression affecting more nests.

Another possible factor is the nesting experience of the birds at Great Island. Because the same Ospreys usually return to nest at the same site from year to year (Poole 1989), many of the birds at Great Island had their first successful clutch in four years in 1997. Some of the younger birds may never have had a successful clutch. This would make them inexperienced parents and may have affected their nest success rate. If this is true, it would explain the sibling aggression at certain nests on the island in 1997, even though there seemed to be abundant food overall. It would also help explain why more chicks were not fledged on the island compared to Groton Reservoir, even though fish delivery rates were higher at Great Island.

At Great Island the evidence for raccoon predation in 1996 was strong. Most of the eggs or chicks disappeared before they were

visible from the ground. Eight of the nest platform poles showed evidence of raccoon marks, but it could not be determined from physical evidence that raccoons had actually made it to the platforms themselves. The nests that fledged young on Great Island in 1996 were nests that were located away from the nest box inhabited by raccoons, except for one nest, which had an extra long predator guard. No evidence of predation was noted at Groton Reservoir, perhaps due to the great height of the Osprey nesting poles.

In 1997 there were no fresh raccoon claw marks noted on the poles at Great Island, and there was a significant increase between 1996 and 1997 in the number of young that hatched and survived to fledge, indicating that removal of the nest box from the island and installing better predator guards improved nest success. A volunteer described another nest located upriver from Great Island that also had an improved predator guard installed which had fresh raccoon claw marks under the guard but none above the guard (Hank Golet, pers. comm.). One hundred of these predator guards were installed on poles along the Connecticut shore before the 1997 season, and Connecticut experienced a rise in fledging success rate for 1997, which reversed a three-year decline. Possibly raccoons had an impact on Osprey nest success throughout coastal Connecticut.

Two clutches of eggs on Great Island in 1997 did not hatch for unknown reasons. These eggs were removed for contaminant testing. At least one clutch of eggs on the island dropped through the 2 inch by 4 inch mesh screen that made up the base of the platforms on Great Island. Several of the nests on Great Island had scanty nest cups in 1997, and the lack of nesting material may cause eggs to drop through the mesh. Also, it is possible that raccoons could have pulled eggs through the mesh of scanty nests before the improved predator guards were installed.

Human disturbance could have been a factor in the failure of Osprey nests at Great Island. Weekdays during the summer were very quiet, with little or no human activity. On the weekends in 1996, however, a constant stream of people moved around Great Island. Kayakers were observed pausing for many minutes directly under Osprey nests in 1996 while the parent birds circled overhead. Crabbers ran motor boats in all the mosquito ditches they could navigate and a dog from a nearby anchored recreational power boat was also observed running on the marsh. This activity removed parent birds from their nests for extended periods on the weekends. No predation was observed during these events, but

the absence of parents could have had a detrimental effect on the incubation of eggs. Perhaps if this activity had occurred regularly, like the human activity at Groton Reservoir, the Ospreys would have become habituated to it. At Groton Reservoir noisy mowers were observed going right up to the base of Osprey poles while the parent birds looked on unconcernedly. In contrast, the osprey in a nest located in a remote part of the Groton Reservoir was repeatedly disturbed whenever anyone passed by. A study of the effects of human activity on Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) in the northern Chesapeake Bay suggested that the more frequent the disturbance, the greater the chance that the eagle would adjust to it (Buehler et al. 1991). The fact that Ospreys have been known to nest at airports and even on a tower in a busy parking lot at Ocean Beach Park, New London, suggests that they can become habituated to regular human activity.

In 1997 Great Island was closed to human activity for the initial part of the nesting season. One of the nests which had eggs that did not hatch for unknown reasons was located at the end of a dock where human activity kept the parent birds off the nest for extended periods. This occurred early in the season in fairly cold weather, so the eggs may have been chilled enough to prevent hatching.

Osprey nest success throughout Connecticut was the lowest in 10 years in 1996 (Figure 3), possibly due to weather conditions. Twenty dead chicks were found statewide during late season nest checks, which is above the normal number (Victoria 1996). Results from postmortems at the Northeast Research Center for Wildlife Diseases at the University of Connecticut indicated that some of the birds had infections ranging from fungal pulmonary infection to yeast infection in the crop and inflammation of the caeca or appendix (Victoria 1996). The chicks may have been weakened due to lack of food following inclement weather, making them more susceptible to infection. No adult birds were known to have succumbed to infection.

In 1997 statewide nest success reached the second highest that it has been in twelve years. Winter flounder populations for 1996 and 1997 were slightly higher than during the previous four years, but not nearly as high as they were in 1990 and 1991 (Figure 2). Flounder populations were actually higher in 1996 than 1997. Most of the fish deliveries at Great Island in 1997 were of species other than flounder. This confirms that Osprey are very adaptable in their choice of prey species, which is consistent with the hypothesis that

food availability was not the limiting factor for Osprey fledging success at Great Island.

Pesticide residues in eggs are not thought to have played a large part in nest failures. Data concerning organochlorines were available for inviable eggs collected in 1994 and 1995 (Victoria 1995 and 1996). There was very little difference in the major organochlorine contaminants in eggs collected from Groton Reservoir and Great Island during these years, but sample sizes were small. The levels of Aroclor (PCB) at both sites exceeded 5 ppm, a level which has been shown to negatively affect hatching rates (Victoria 1996). In 1996 most nest failures occurred early in the season at Great Island, and later in the season when the chicks were already quite large at Groton Reservoir, indicating that dissimilar causes of mortality were at work at the two sites.

Conclusions

Similar rates of fish delivery occurred at Osprey nests at Groton Reservoir and Great Island in 1996, but there were significantly fewer chicks fledged at Great Island that year. In 1997 significantly more fish deliveries were made at Great Island than at Groton Reservoir, but there was no significant difference in the number of chicks fledged. Similar fledging success rates at the two sites in 1997 resulted from a significant increase in the number of chicks fledged at Great Island between 1996 and 1997. The removal of the raccoons from Great Island and the installation of the improved predator guards before the 1997 breeding season probably protected the eggs and chicks past the vulnerable early stages and allowed them to fledge. The fact that nest success rate was much improved for the entire state of Connecticut in 1997, but was not correspondingly greatly improved in Rhode Island (L. Suprock, pers. comm.) or Massachusetts (B.Davis, pers. comm.), may have been a result of the new predator guards installed on most nest poles in Connecticut. Predation may be one of the strongest potential limiting factors on Osprey nest success.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study was supported by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Wildlife Division; the Connecticut Ornithological Association; the Connecticut Endangered Species/ Wildlife Income Tax Fund; the Nature Conservancy, Connecticut Chapter; USFWS Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge; Connecticut College; the National Audubon Society; the Pequot Audubon Society; and the Potopaug Audubon Society.

Many sincere thanks to Julie Victoria of the Connecticut State Department of Environmental Protection, Wildlife Division; the employees of Groton Utilities, especially Rick Stevens and Ben Gardner, Jerry Mersereau, Jennifer Hillhouse, Larry Chick, Jim Morgan, and the many Osprey Watch volunteers, for their help with this study. Justin Scace and Hank Golet assisted in the field work in 1997.

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FORAGING TACTICS OF THE BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER

JOHN P. ROCHE

The Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) (family Charadriidae) is North America's largest breeding plover. It nests at high latitudes and winters in temperate and tropical areas throughout much of the world, and is a common bird along Connecticut's shore during its spring and fall migrations. The foraging behavior of this plover with the conspicuous dark belly in breeding plumage has been studied extensively. The feeding tactics of plovers are particularly interesting to ornithologists because plovers have relatively high rates of metabolic energy expenditure for their size (Kerston and Piersma 1987). Their high rate of daily energy expenditure places strong natural selection on plovers to gather energy economically. That is, traits allowing them to gather more calories in less time should assist them in surviving and successfully raising offspring, and such traits should thus increase in plover populations (Schoener 1971).

Unlike many sandpipers, which search for tactile cues by moving their bills through a substrate (e.g., sand), plovers search for visual cues on the surface of a substrate (Barnard 1985). Black-bellied Plovers have a simple foraging repertoire familiar to all shoreside bird watchers. They run rapidly to a spot on the substrate, stop, and scan visually from a standing position for cues associated with prey. If they sight a prey item, they run to it and peck at it, and if they capture it they pull it from the substrate and consume it. If they scan from one location for a period of time without spotting signs of a prey item, they run to a new location (Pienkowski 1983a; Paulson 1995). This sequence of behaviors appears stereotyped and unvarying, but quantitative studies have revealed that plovers adjust the components of this sequence to environmental conditions in sophisticated ways. In the present paper, I summarize some of these findings on the foraging tactics of Black-bellied Plovers and discuss the relationship these tactics have to foraging efficiency and environmental conditions.

Diet

On their breeding areas and on inland migratory stopovers, Black-bellied Plovers rely primarily on insects, although they will occasionally eat freshwater crustaceans, seeds, and berries

(Paulson 1995). In the shoreline habitats they frequent during migration and during winter, however, they rely on marine invertebrates, especially polychaete worms, crustaceans, and bivalves (Johnsgard 1981; Paulson 1995). They also consume nemerteans and snails and have been observed to take sea anemones and sea urchins. Their selection of prey items varies with the specific composition of invertebrates in particular habitats. Large polychaete worms such as clam worms (*Nereis* sp.) and lug worms (*Arenicola* sp.) are preferred where they are available (Pienkowski 1982).

General Foraging Pattern

Black-bellied Plovers display what is known as "saltatory search" (O'Brian et al. 1989; Anderson et al. 1997), in which they alternate periods of sit-and-wait predation, when they stand in one spot and scan the substrate for signs of prey items, with periods of travel toward prey items or travel toward new waiting positions. The basic foraging sequence has been described as "Stop-Run-Peck," in instances when a prey item is spotted from a waiting position, and "Stop-Run-Stop," in instances when a prey item is not spotted from a waiting position (Pienkowski 1983a). When waiting, they can display either an "Up" posture or a "Down" posture. When they display the Up posture, they are standing erect with their head up; when they are displaying the Down posture, they are standing with their head tilted part of the way down toward the substrate. The Up posture is the one most commonly observed in scanning black-bellied plovers. The Down posture, which is less frequently seen, is believed to be used by the bird to gain a better view of a prey item. This posture is sometimes used when a bird sees a cue from a distance, runs toward the cue, and then stops and tilts its head down to better locate the prey item (Pienkowski 1983a).

Foraging Pattern and Energetic Efficiency

As mentioned above, Black-bellied Plovers are subject to pronounced energetic stringency because of their high metabolic rates. Their metabolic rates may be high because the birds are relatively poorly insulated against heat loss (Kersten and Piersma 1987; Paulson 1995). Their poor insulation means that they lose heat rapidly to the environment in the low temperatures experienced in their high latitude breeding grounds and mid latitude wintering grounds. This lost heat energy must be replaced by metabolizing food. Black-bellied Plovers also undergo long, energetically-costly migrations, a further factor that should cause strong selection for

efficient foraging (Kersten and Piersma 1987). Black-bellied Plovers do succeed in gathering prey at a rapid rate. For example, Baker (1974), in a study on the foraging behavior of Black-bellied Plovers in Connecticut, observed that the median interval between prey captures for birds during spring and fall migrations ranged from 23 to 28 s.

MacArthur and Pianka (1966) predicted that animals should display shorter search times per item captured when more types of items are included in the diet than when fewer are. In other words, the more of a generalist that an animal is in a given situation, the less time it should have to spend searching for each prey item. Baker (1974) observed just such a relationship in Black-bellied Plovers in Connecticut. He found that when more alterative prey types were included in plovers' diets, they displayed shorter mean search times per item captured.

Being a generalist offers an advantage in terms of reduced mean search times, but this does not mean that being a generalist is always the most economical strategy. Black-bellied Plovers show selectivity for large prey items, notably polychaete worms (such as *Nereis* and *Arenicola*) and clams (such as *Mya* sp.). Selection of large prey items does impose a cost in terms of requiring longer amounts of time to "handle" individual prey items. For example, Pienkowski (1983a) observed that the handling times for small prey items ranged from only 0.65-0.76 s but handling times for large polychaetes ranged from 4.57-7.76 s. However, large prey items make up for their long handling times by offering more energy per time spent handling them.

Black-bellied Plovers display a flexible shift in prey selectivity during a waiting period. Early in individual waiting periods, the plovers concentrate on searching for cues from large polychaetes. As they get later in a waiting period without successfully spotting a large prey item, however, they become increasingly less selective in terms of size, eventually accepting small prey items (Pienkowski 1983a). This flexible selectivity toward prey size also adjusts to the estimated concentration of large prey items in a given environment. In environments where large prey items are more abundant, plovers will be more selective longer into their waiting periods than in environments where large prey items are less abundant (Pienkowski 1983).

Black-bellied Plovers also show flexibility in the duration of the amount of time they will unsuccessfully search in one waiting spot before "giving up" and moving to a new spot (the "giving-up time"). Pienowski (1983) observed that plovers tended to search

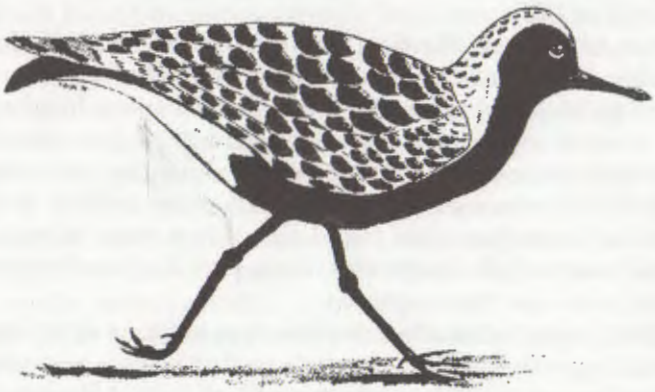

Figure 1 - Black-bellied Plover running between scan sites.
Illustration by Ron Talyn

Figure 2 - "Up" posture in a Black-bellied Plover
Illustration by Ron Talyn

Figure 3 - "Down" posture in a Black-bellied Plover
Illustration by Ron Talyn

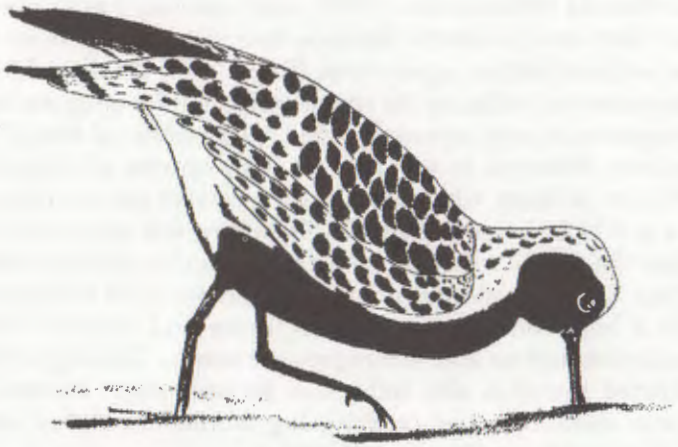

Figure 4 - Black-bellied Plover capturing a prey item.
Illustration by Ron Talyn

longer from individual scanning locations when they were catching prey less frequently (i.e., when the duration between prey captures was longer). In other words, when the amount of time that plovers had to wait until capturing a prey item tended to be longer, they tended to be more persistent when faced with an unsuccessful search in one spot before moving to a new location. This pattern could be the result of information constraints on the assessment of individual feeding locations. For example, in a location with low prey densities, plovers may be more persistent simply because it takes longer to find prey at low quality sites than at high quality sites (Stephens and Krebs 1986, Chap. 4; Kacelnik et al. 1987; Roche 1996; Roche et al. 1996; Roche and Glanz 1996; Roche and Glanz in press).

The prey of Black-bellied Plovers are often distributed unevenly in the environment (Baker 1974). In some locations prey occur in concentrated clumps or "patches," whereas in other locations prey are present in lower densities. Plovers will therefore gain an energetic advantage if they can concentrate their foraging efforts in rich patches of prey (Stephens and Krebs 1986; Stephens 1990). Black-bellied Plovers do succeed in concentrating their foraging in concentrated patches of prey and they do so with an extremely simple, but effective mechanism. After giving-up after a period of unsuccessful search, the plovers tend to move far enough so that they can scan a new area of the substrate. That is, they move approximately twice the distance of their effective search radius (Pienkowski 1983a; Paulson 1995). After catching a prey item, however, they move a shorter distance than when they give up a location without finding a prey item (Baker 1974; Pienkowski 1983a). This pattern of reducing the spatial pattern of foraging movements in response to prey capture is called "area-restricted search" and it has been observed in a variety of other species of animals (Bell 1991). In addition, when Black-bellied Plovers are searching in an area in which they are cumulatively finding few prey, they will increase the distance they travel between waiting spots (Pienkowski 1983a). These simple adjustments serve to keep the bird in an area with a high concentration of prey items and to move the bird quickly through an area where prey are scarce. The degree of area-restricted search is also influenced by prey size. Plovers move shorter distances after catching lug worms than after catching smaller prey items (Pienkowski 1983a).

Adjustment of Foraging Pattern to Environmental Factors

Black-bellied Plovers can adjust their basic foraging sequence to

a range of different environmental conditions. For example, when temperature increases, plovers move farther distances when traveling between waiting spots (Pienkowski 1983a). This increase in moving distance with temperature may be related to the behavior of the plover's prey; polychaetes move to the surface of the mud when the mud temperature increases. Therefore, if the density of polychaetes on the substrate surface increases, and if polychaetes can be seen from longer distances than can smaller prey items, plovers should be able to move longer distances between waiting spots. Baker (1974) observed that the foraging success of black-bellied plovers in Connecticut was 40% during the spring and 48% in the fall. This seasonal difference may have been a result of the effects of temperature on polychaete behavior; temperatures were higher in the fall during Baker's study and therefore polychaetes may have been more conspicuous in this season (Baker 1974).

Foraging behavior is also influenced by the tidal cycle (see Burger et al. 1977). As the tide goes out, exposing invertebrate burrows, Black-bellied Plovers increase their feeding rates (Baker 1974). Then, as the tide goes further out and the substrate dries up, their foraging rate eventually decreases.

When the velocity of wind is higher, plovers have been observed to catch prey less frequently (Pienkowski 1983a), perhaps because prey are less available on the surface when wind activity is pronounced. Plovers also sometimes move into tidal creeks to forage when winds are strong (Pienkowski et al. 1984), perhaps because they are in search of higher densities of available prey or because they seek to avoid the physical effect of the wind on their own bodies. The frequency of Down postures has been observed to increase with increases in temperature and with decreases in wind velocity. This makes sense: the frequency of down postures increases when prey availability is higher, and an increase in temperature and a decrease in wind velocity would both tend to increase prey availability at the substrate surface.

Black-bellied Plovers are quite effective at foraging for prey at night and they often do so, especially at high latitudes. Nocturnal foraging allows plovers to gather more energy within a 24-hour period than if they foraged in daylight alone, energy that may be critical when thermoregulatory demands are high and day length is short (see Paulson 1995). Black-bellied Plovers are well equipped to forage at night. They have large eyes and their eyes have dense concentrations of rods, the visual cells in the retina that are most sensitive to low light levels (Rojas et al. 1993). These adaptations permit them to visually locate prey in low light conditions. The

low light levels at night limit the plovers' foraging effectiveness, however. They display slower peck rates on moonless nights than in daylight (Pienkowski 1982) and they also display fewer Down postures (Pienkowski 1983a). In addition, they move shorter distances between waiting spots, presumably because the radius at which prey can be detected is decreased (Pienkowski 1983a). When wind velocities are high at night, the disadvantages of night foraging are magnified and Plack-bellied Plovers forage less (Pienkowski 1982).

Foot Trembling

In the scanning-while-standing component of the basic Stop-Run-Peck sequence, many species of plovers exhibit a behavioral trait that may serve to increase the conspicuousness of prey further; they rapidly tap or "tremble" one foot against the substrate (e.g., Pienkowski 1983b; Barnard 1985; Haig 1992; Page et al. 1995; Paulson 1995). This behavior has been hypothesized to move prey toward the surface. Barnard (1985) tested this hypothesis in an experiment in which he tapped the surface of the soil with a 4-mm diameter steel rod for one minute at a rate of either 60 or 120 taps per minute. Prey densities were numerically greater at the surface of the soil after tapping than in control sites where there had been no tapping. Prey densities were also numerically higher in sites with higher tapping rates than sites with lower tapping rates. It is thought that tapping may draw invertebrates to the substrate surface by mimicking rain; invertebrates often move toward the surface during rain to reach moister substrates (Barnard 1985). Foot trembling may also mimic tidal action, which may also increase prey activity (Barnard 1985; Paulson 1995). Black-bellied plovers sometimes display this foot trembling tactic, but only rarely (Paulson 1995). Many smaller plovers, on the other hand, frequently display this trait. This raises an interesting question: What is it about the Black-bellied Plover's ecology or evolutionary history that can explain why it rarely displays a behavioral trait commonly observed in its close relatives?

Conclusion

The extensive observations conducted to date on the Black-bellied Plover have established that it can maintain an economical net rate of energy intake by fine-tuning a simple behavioral sequence to a wide range of conditions. No quantitative studies have yet been conducted on the foraging behavior of Black-bellied Plovers on their breeding grounds (Paulson 1995); such studies would

yield exciting insights into how these plovers adjust their foraging tactics in response to the rigors of raising a brood. Also, quantitative observations of black-bellied plovers immediately before migration would add insight into how the birds adapt to the energetic stresses of long distance flight. Detailed comparative studies on the similarities and differences among different plover species offer particularly rich potential to increase our understanding of not only the habits of plovers, but also of the evolution of feeding adaptations and how such adaptations provide fine-tuning between an animal and its environment.

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CONNECTICUT ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

Compiled by James M. Zingo

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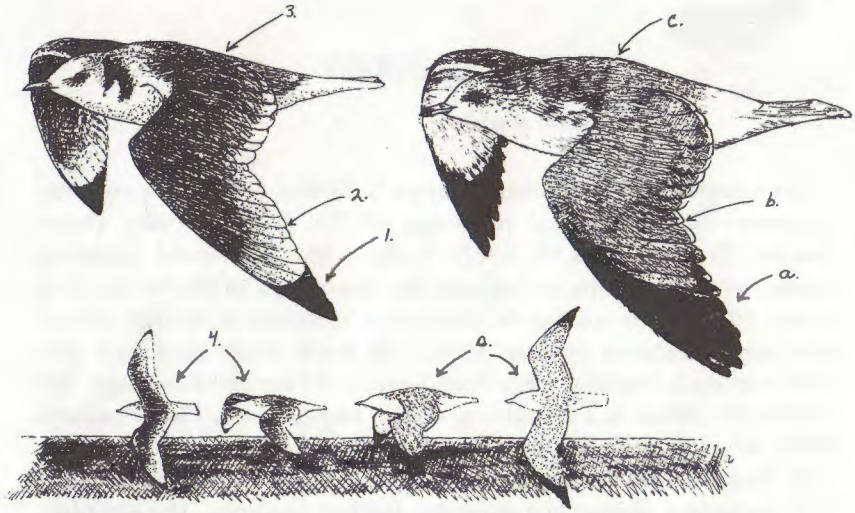
BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE AT A DISTANCE

Mark Szantyr
Avian Records Committee of Connecticut

Identifying gulls is difficult under the best circumstances. Add a stiff ocean breeze and temperatures approaching the freezing mark and it is no longer fun. Now put the birds a quarter of a mile out over the shimmering surface of Long Island Sound. This is probably the scenario you will face if you want to see a Black-legged kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), in Connecticut waters. Certainly, these conditions pose identification problems but they also allow identification opportunities. Kittiwakes are not difficult to identify when seen well and at close distances. The small size, all yellow bill, dark hind-neck marks, deep gray mantle, and small, neat black wing tips are diagnostic of the adult bird. Likewise their buoyant and masterful flight style is easily recognized. However, when seen at a distance and in a strong wind, most of these identifying characters fall away. I have personally and have been in the presence of others who have mistaken many species for Black-legged Kittiwake in these conditions. The most common culprit in this mis-identification is a second winter Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*). In this plumage, Ring-billed Gull has many superficial similarities to Black-legged Kittiwake and we all know how powerful an expectant imagination can be. The following characters can help sort out adult Kittiwakes from the similar second winter Ring-billed Gulls. Juvenile Kittiwakes are a bit easier and will be dealt with in another Identification installment.



Black-legged Kittiwake
Adult winter

1. Small, neat black wing tips, with the black limited to the tips of the outer three or four primaries.

2. Pale silvery gray area inside of black tips and extending along and merging with the white trailing edge of wing. This area separates the wing tip color from the gray mantle color.

3. Darkish gray mantle, approaching but not as dark as that of Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*).

4. When seen out over the sound at a distance, the black wing tips all but disappears. The most striking plumage character is the flash of white in the outer hand of the wing and the darker upper mantle. This gives a two toned effect to the upper wing. This flash can be seen at great distances, even when the black wing tip can not be seen.

Ring-billed Gull
Second winter

a. Extensive black wing tip, with black extending up the leading edge of the forewing and back a bit across the trailing edge of the outer primaries.

b. Inner wing pale gray, very similar to mantle and not contrasting greatly with mantle color.

c. Mantle even and pale gray. Remember that light conditions have a lot to do with how we perceive gray coloration.

d. At a distance, black wing tips usually seen. Upper parts of bird do not show the distinct white flash of Kittiwake and two toned upperparts not distinct as in Kittiwake. My rule is that if you can see wing tips it probably isn't a Kittiwake.

BOOKS ON BIRDS

Alan H. Brush

In ***Songbirds. Celebrating Nature's Voices*** (1997. 244 pg., numerous color plates and paintings by B.V. MacKay, Key Porter Books, Toronto, $34.95. ISBN 1-55013-881-2) Ronald Ornstein treats, in a semi-popular fashion, the passerines of the world. Not every species but enough to illustrate the nature of songbirds and the major features of their lives. The book is divided into nine chapters each treating some broad aspect of songbird biology. The chapters - What Is a Songbird, Avian Imperatives, Fine Feathers, Why Sing?, Family Values, The Appetite of a Bird, On the Wing, and Mineshaft Canaries, are followed by a series of appendices that include a listing of resources, further readings, the scientific and common names of the 560 species mentioned in the text, and a general index

The text is presented in an informal manner, but it is neither chatty nor patronizing. Ornstein is knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Much of the information is related through the narrative that involves first hand observation or anecdotes, but it is directed toward discussing relevant issues and answering some basic questions. His years of field experience are an ally to his writing. More information is presented in his descriptions of the experiences and experiments of professional ornithologists. The text is clear and accessible to the reader. While not primarily a picture book, the photos are uniformly clear and relevant. This is all welcome. Ornstein combines his text and the illustrations to deal with some rather complex issues. These range from taxonomy, population variation and diversity, distribution, breeding and feeding behavior, both song learning and production, feather structure and plumage color, and conservation and extinction. Just about every chapter contains inserts on subjects such as "Feeding stations", "Getting the names right", "Field guides and more", "Out in the field", "Using your ears" or "From birding to ornithology". Each is helpful as they address many of the questions beginners often ask.

The book is user-friendly. Ornstein explains complex issues well. He also uses common experiences or easily observed behavior and activities to illustrate his points. The descriptions and explanations are often elegant. Exceptions to the general case are dis-

cussed and interpreted wisely. Counter-examples to many standard behaviors illustrate the amazing adaptations of birds. The book is aimed at birders of all levels. The photos are uniformly crystal clear. The information content is high and examples from species world-wide. One comes away with a delightful feeling of curiosity satisfied, a desire to get out and look at birds, and a list of things to learn more about.

NB. In the October 1997 issue I mentioned Alan Feduccia's "*The Origin and Evolution of Birds.*" Among other things he advocates a particular evolutionary origin of birds and a specific scenario of the evolution of flight. Quite contrary positions are presented in "*The Origin of Birds and Their Flight*" by Kevin Paden and Luis M. Chiappe in the February 1998 issue of *Scientific American* (Vol. 278 #2). The evidence that birds were derived from therapod dinosaurs and that flapping flight evolved from cursorial (ground dwelling) ancestors is becoming increasingly accepted. Undoubtedly, the last word on these and related issues have not been said—or written. The what-appears-to-be-daily discovery of new species (for example the material from China, chosen one of the "100 top science stories of the year" in *Discover* Magazine) and new experimental evidence of the capacities of birds is almost dazzling. Avian origins continue to be a fascinating topic!

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CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Greg Hanisek

WINTER, December 1, 1997 to February 28, 1998

It would be hard to dream up a more interesting winter. Amid strange weather spawned by an El Nino of especially large proportions, came an array of unseasonable reports that might be linked in some way to global meteorology. Superimpose on that a major finch flight with record numbers of American Goldfinches, Common Redpolls and crossbills. Then spice it up with a nice mix of western vagrants. That's a recipe for great birding, as well as rampant speculation about what caused it all. Reacting to conditions on their breeding grounds, the finches came in wave after wave despite the warm, snowless weather tied to events half a world away. When things really turned unseasonable in late December and January, there was a flurry of sightings that suggested something significant was going on, perhaps a reverse migration or other abnormal movement, rather than simple lingering past usual departure dates. (See accounts below of Broad-winged Hawk, Ovenbird and other warblers, for example). How it all squares with the arrival of Black-headed Grosbeak, Thayer's Gull, and Lark Sparrow is anyone's guess.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A count of 60+ Red-throated Loons February 28 from West Haven to Milford was typical of late winter staging (DR). A good seasonal count of 12 Pied-billed Grebes was made December 24-26 at Rogers Lake in Lyme (HG). The few Red-necked Grebes were concentrated in the western end of Long Island Sound, with one on the Greenwich-Stamford CBC, and sightings of singles from January 27 to February 28 off Shippan Point in Stamford (PDu). A few Northern Gannets began to appear in the Sound in the last week of February (FM,PCo). As usual, a few American Bitterns wintered: one at Great Island in Old Lyme January 4 (FM,CT) and one at Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP) in Madison on January 11 (DS,JK). A noteworthy inland total of 30 Great Blue

Herons was reported at Quinebaug Fish Hatchery in Plainfield on January 8 (MS). Great Egrets sometimes linger into early winter, but one through the season at Seaside Park in Bridgeport was unexpected (NC,CBa et al.); it may have been one of two that were at Stratford Great Meadows February 20 in defiance of any good explanation (PCo). A small group of Black-crowned Night Herons wintered as usual in the Lordship area (GH et al.), but an adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron January 6 at Grass Island in Greenwich (BO) fit into the "strange doing" category.

Among the most closely watched birds of the season were three **Tundra Swans** discovered December 18 in North Cove in Essex (AG,JHa); they stayed throughout the period, and a single was seen on the Duck River in Old Lyme February 10 (HG,THe). **Greater White-fronted Geese** continue to show up in good numbers. Reports for the season included one in the Storrs area January 1 (fide MS); an immature January 24-25 in Hamden (DB,DS); two at Batterson Pond in Farmington February 7-28, when the number increased to three (PCi,RA); and two at Broad Brook Pond near Hartford February 8-12 (DH). A wintering flock of about 30 Snow Geese at the Oyster River in Milford/West Haven was unusually large by a factor of 10 (SH, m.ob.). The wintering group of Brant in Norwalk harbor peaked at 500 on January 29 (FM).

A count of 115 American Black Ducks December 17 at Bantam Lake in Litchfield was a good inland total; the same spot held 495 Mallards (DR). There were scattered reports of single Northern Pintails, as well as a few Green-winged Teal wintering. A Northern Shoveler was reported from two locations in West Hartford to mid-January (DH et al.); singles were at Bishop Pond in Meriden January 11 (WS) and on the Yantic River in Norwich February 1-21 (PT,DP). The Stratford Great Meadows held 100+ Gadwall December 28 (RBe), and Seaside Park in Bridgeport held 110 American Wigeon January 16 (FM). The seasonal total of about six **Eurasian Wigeon** was a bit higher than normal (m.ob.). The maximum count for Canvasback was 254 on February 8 at Frash Pond in Stratford, which also held 17 Lesser Scaup (SK). The high count of Greater Scaup was 3,000 in West Haven harbor January 26 (FG). The state's meager allotment of Redheads consisted of one December 7 at Groton Reservoir (DP), one December 21 to February 22 in Norwalk harbor (FM,TK), and

one February 17 in North Cove, Old Saybrook (DP).

After a couple years of high numbers, the only **Common Eider** report involved a single female off Westbrook December 8 (GH,NC). The waterfowl highlight was a drake **Harlequin Duck** that made a brief appearance off Meigs Point at HBSP January 2 for a handful of lucky observers (RDe,BB et al.); it was only the second or third report in the '90s. An Oldsquaw was unusual far up the Connecticut River in Enfield February 8 (DH); 200+ were at Saugatuck Shores in Westport on January 16 (FM). A male Black Scoter was unexpected on Lake Waramaug in New Preston from late December to February 13 (EA, m.ob.), but the real news at this picturesque inland locale was a scoter trifecta. In addition to the Black, a basic-plumaged Surf Scoter was present through December, and a male White-winged Scoter dropped in on December 21 (DTr et al.). **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were present for most of the season at North Cove in Essex, which held a drake (DP et al.), and off Sherwood Island State Park in Westport, where a pair was present (CBa et al.). Staging Common Goldeneyes built to an impressive feeding and courting flock of 540 February 3 at the mouth of the Saugatuck River in Westport (FM). Nearby Saugatuck Shores had 100 Buffleheads January 16 (FM). Bantam Lake held an impressive 55 Hooded Mergansers on December 7 (RN, DR), but Common Merganser is the real star at this location, with a massive flock of 2,500 the same day (DR et al.). A female Red-breasted Merganser was unexpected January 18 at Lake Zoar in Southbury (RN). Following the major fall incursion, Ruddy Ducks were scattered around the state as open water allowed.

RAPTORS THROUGH GULLS

A vulture roost in New Milford held a record 40 **Black Vultures**, along with at least 65 Turkey Vultures, on February 3 (PM), and Blacks were well-represented in their western Connecticut stronghold by up to five in the Bethel area in January (BF) and two wintering in Bethlehem (BD et al.). One in Windham in early December was the third for northeastern Connecticut (THa). The high Bald Eagle count occurred February 21 at Shepaug Dam in Southbury, when the first northbound migrants swelled the wintering total to 23 (DR). A roost in phragmites at the Stratford Great Meadows held at least six Northern Harriers December 28 (FM). Away from upland locations, an immature Northern Goshawk showed itself often for birders in January and February at HBSP (m.ob);

two were present all winter at Saugatuck Reservoir in Weston/Redding (LH); one was in Deep River January 4 (PP), and one was in Killingworth December 23 (JHi). Winter reports of Broad-winged Hawk usually carry no credence whatsoever. But one was seen and described on January 11 in Guilford by a very experienced observer and long-time hawk-bander (JZ). A second report, which very likely involved the same individual, came a few days later a few miles away by another experienced observer (RCl). This occurs in the context of a confirmed wintering bird in the Maritimes and a report from Massachusetts. A Red-shouldered Hawk eating suet January 18-31 at a Woodbridge feeder (CBe) was an unusual but not unprecedented sight. Immature Golden Eagles were reported from two of the state's most reliable wintering locales, Canaan Mountain (CW et al.) and the central Connecticut River valley (SS et al.). Once again Merlins outnumbered American Kestrels, with only about a half-dozen reports of the latter. Peregrines wintered at Milford Point, Stamford and Hartford (m.ob.).

Rails took advantage of unfrozen marshes to linger deep into the season. The latest reports were of a Clapper Rail at Pine Creek in Fairfield on January 10 (FM,CBa) and two Virginia Rails on January 4 in Essex (FM,DTi). Following the large and widespread autumn flight, Laurel Reservoir in Stamford held 370+ American Coot December 21 (EJ), 325 were on Bantam Lake December 7 (DR et al.) and Candlewood Lake in New Fairfield had 200 January 1 (DR). One of the season's extraordinary lingerers (or unseasonable arrivals) was a Lesser Yellowlegs January 3-8 at the Quinebaug Fish Hatchery in Plainfield (BC,MS,RDi). Falkner Island held a good count of 38 Purple Sandpipers December 18 (WK). The mild winter produced many February reports of displaying American Woodcock, including one on the very early date of February 1 at Salt Meadow National Wildlife Refuge in Westbrook (WK).

An adult **Black-headed Gull** wintered in Stamford (PDu et al.), and another was in Stratford December 14 (JHo). The bird of the season, in a season full of good ones, was a **Thayer's Gull** in immaculate first-winter plumage February 13-14 at Manchester landfill (PCo,MS,CM). The bird was photographed and videotaped, and it was seen well by a number of observers on the 14th, which was a COA gull workshop. If accepted by ARCC, it would be the second state record and the first fully documented one. The season produced about 20 reports of **Ice-**

land (Kumlein's) Gulls, most of them first-winters as expected, but an adult wintered at Middle Beach in Westbrook (JMo et al.). The **Lesser Black-backed Gull** total was about ten. The only **Glaucous Gull** reports came from Manchester landfill December 27-January 3 and Westbrook on January 14 (PCo). A bird that fit the particulars for "Nelson's" Gull, a well-known hybrid between Herring and Glaucous Gull, was at the Manchester landfill February 14 (MS,JHo et al.). The Shepaug Dam attracted up to 60 Great Black-backed Gulls January 7, a good inland count away from a landfill (DR).

PARAKEET THROUGH ICTERIDS

The high count for Monk Parakeet was 130 on the lawn at Compo Beach in Westport on December 17 (FM). The only Barn Owls were singles December 28 at Greenwich Point (JHu) and to early January in Bridgewater, at a site where a pair bred in 1997 (fide RN). The season's only **Snowy Owl** was at Compo Beach and Little Cockenoe Island in Westport January 2-5 (JBo,FM et al.). There were only a handful of reports of Long-eared Owl, none involving multiple-bird roosts (CBa,RN et al.). Single Short-eared Owls were reported from Pine Creek in Fairfield December 7 (RCa) and on several occasions at Milford Point (PCo,SK et al.). Ten reports of Northern Saw-whet Owls were scattered from Redding to Lyme and from Sherman to Barkhamsted (CBa,FM,JMk). The season's two reports of Red-headed Woodpecker came from Monroe on February 8 (BS,PK) and February 26 in Essex (DV,RSc). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was a surprise visitor to the State Capitol grounds in Hartford January 5 (SK).

The season's strange weather leaves it anyone's guess how or why single Eastern Phoebes were in Lyme on January 4 (HG) and at Lake Zoar in Southbury February 1 (RN). A Tree Swallow surprised observers January 11-12 at HBSP (CR et al.), but considering an unprecedented 60 had been present on Fisher's Island for the New London CBC, there's really little mystery in this occurrence. The recent trend toward sightings of Common Ravens in the southern tier continued, with scattered reports all winter from the Hamden-North Haven area (RW,AB et al.). In the lingerer category were single Marsh Wrens December 7 in South Windsor (PDe), January 4 in Essex (FM,DTi) and January 17 in the Quinnipiac marshes in New Haven (PH). Fruit-eating species were present in good numbers, and a roost of 2,000+ American Robins in Burlington

in late December was noteworthy (JS). American Pipits, in typical fashion, weren't reported any later than December 17 at Sherwood Island (RSo). Amid the flurry of northern finches, eight **Bohemian Waxwings** were observed briefly February 12 in Pomfret (MS). The best count of Cedar Waxwings was 250 December 26 in Torrington (RBl). **Northern Shrikes** were essentially absent, with the only reports from a traditional locale in Canaan in late December (BD) and from Black Rock Dam in Thomaston December 22 (DR). A Blue-headed Vireo lingered to December 7 at Station 43 in South Windsor (PCi). Although **Orange-crowned Warblers** sometimes winter, one that showed up briefly January 16 at a small, closely watched patch of urban habitat, Cove Island Park in Stamford, seems to fit into a mid-winter arrival pattern (PDu). The same might be true for a Palm Warbler at the same spot January 7 (PDu), and two more Palms at Quinebaug Valley Fish Hatchery February 15 (RDi). On December 8, a group of birders took the time to count the Yellow-rumped Warblers at HBSP; they got 100 (DR et al.). Adding to the feeling that something strange was happening, an **Ovenbird** was closely observed at a feeder in Woodbridge from late December to mid-January (RBe), and another was at a feeder in New Canaan from Dec. 28 through the period (fide EJ). More typically, a Common Yellowthroat lingered to December 21 in Southbury (BJ), and a Yellow-breasted Chat was in Clinton January 4 (PDe).

One of the season's highlights was a well-photographed immature male **Black-headed Grosbeak** that appeared at a feeder in Hamden in mid-January and remained through the season (JBu, m.ob.) A lingering Chipping Sparrow was at a feeder in Sterling December 10-12 (RDi). Field Sparrow, a species showing a decline in CBC numbers, was well-represented at Shepaug Dam in Southbury, with 10 on December 16 and 18 four days later (DR). Adding to the roster of rarities was a **Lark Sparrow** discovered January 19 and present through the period at Veteran's Park in Norwalk (NJ). "Ipswich" Sparrows were easy to find all winter on Long Beach in Stratford (FM,CBa et al.) Tardy Baltimore Orioles were well-represented by singles December 6 at HBSP (JHo, MS), January 1-9 in Old Lyme (JA et al.). and January 31 in West Redding (MB,CBa). The fall season's adult male **Bullock's Oriole** continued to visit feeders in West Goshen into mid-February (JL et al.). An Eastern Meadowlark was still present December 1 at a grassland site in Vernon (CM), but

farmland in the central part of the state held unusually high numbers: 24 on December 6 in Wallingford on manure spread on a hay field; five on December 14 in Middlefield; nine on December 27 at Durham fairgrounds; and 28 in hayfields at another Wallingford location from January 11 through February (WS).

THE FINCH FLIGHT

The heavy push of Common Redpolls was primarily a November event, with good numbers scattered around the state in early December, i.e., 250 in Litchfield December 7 (DR). By Christmas Count time, numbers had begun to drop off, but the CBCs still produced record numbers of this species and American Goldfinches. A few good flocks of redpolls were scattered throughout the season, i.e., 175+ January 1 in New Milford (AD), with a secondary push in February. Pine Siskins were never numerous anywhere, although there were widely scattered reports; a count of 100 on January 1 in Sherman was exceptional (DR,RN). Evening Grosbeaks were limited to a modest number of flocks in the northern tier. Pine Grosbeaks, absent entirely in some years, were most conspicuous in January when a few flocks of up to 25 birds were found in the north, especially in Goshen and Norfolk (RSm et al.). Purple Finches were spotty and absent in many areas.

Crossbills were the star attraction. White-winged Crossbills and smaller numbers of Red Crossbills were on the move throughout the season. There were reports from around the state, but birds never settled in anywhere. However, they could be found consistently in a small stand of ornamental pines at HBSP Table 1). The changing species mix and numbers, coupled with short stays, suggested that crossbills were heading south all winter, moving westward along the coastline, and being drawn like a magnet to this stand of trees, which was surrounded by beach, turf, saltmarshes, deciduous woods and cedar fields. An occasional flock may have lingered in the area for a day or two, but overall this seemed to be a gauging station for a season-long movement. This spot was closely watched all winter by many observers, and crossbills often arrived and left while birders were present. (See accompanying Table 1 of HBSP crossbill sightings maintained by Charlie and Shirlie Rafford). The same thing happened on a smaller scale at Sherwood Island, Lighthouse Point and Salt Meadow.

Table 1 - Hammonasset Beach St -- Winter 1997-1998 "Winter Finches"

West Beach Parking Area - Japanese Black Pine grove

	12/1	!2/9	12/14	12/15	12/16	12/17	12/19	12/20	12/21	12/22	12/24	12/28	12/31
Pine Siskin													
Redpoll													
White-winged Crossbill	3	2		2	2		1	50	10	7	30	4	13
Red Crossbill			2	2	2	4	1	1					4
American Goldfinch	(small numbers all winter)												

	1/1	1/3	1/4	1/6	1/10	1/11	1/12	1/16	1/19	1/26	1/28	1/29	1/30
Pine Siskin	1												
Redpoll													
White-winged Crossbill	30	4	2	5	3	45	12		1	2		2	20
Red Crossbill		4	7		2	5	2	7	8	100	4		7
American Goldfinch													

	2/2	2/3	2/5	2/7	2/12	2/14	2/16	2/17	2/19	2/22	2/30	3/1	
Pine Siskin													
Redpoll	8			3									
White-winged Crossbill	10			30	18	10	4	40		11			
Red Crossbill	50	25	6	30	12	30		20	3	4	3	7	
American Goldfinch													

Notes:

Most birds were observed East to West migrants that spent only a few minutes to a few hours in the groves. Birds observed by C. and/or S. Rafford. Observations were extracted from birders' log.

EXOTICS:

A Black Swan wintered in Norwalk Harbor (FM); Bantam Lake held a Paradise Shelduck January 3-24 (BF) and a Red-crested Pochard January 24 (BD); and a Ruddy Shelduck appeared on the Shetucket River in Norwich December 28 (GW).

[Editor's Note: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (species marked with an asterisk on the most recent COA checklist) require that documentation be submitted to the secretary of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (Mark Szantyr, 2C Yale Rd., Storrs, CT 06268) if they are to be included in the field notes.]

OBSERVERS, CONTRIBUTORS **(boldface)**

Ralph Amodei, Judy Archer, Elliott Ashe, **Jim Bair** (JBa), Bill Banks, **Robert Barbieri** (RBa), **Charles Barnard** (CBa), Dan Barvir, Carol Bedworth (CBe), Ray Belding (RBl), Ron Bell (RBe), John Boldt (JBo), **Andy Brand**, **Polly Brody**, Jean Buck (JBu), Milan Bull, Bruce Carver, **Paul Cianfaglione** (PCi), Robert Clark (RCa), Roland Clement (RCl), **Patrick Comins** (PCo), **Neil Currie**, **Paul Desjardins** (PDe), Buzz Devine, Robert Dewire (RDe), **Angela Dimmitt**, **Robert Dixon** (RDi), **Patrick Dugan** (PDu), **Carl Ekroth**, **Bruce Finnan**, **Frank Gallo**, **Ted Gilman**, **Hank Golet**, Andy Griswold, Don Haight, Peter Hamback, Stacy Hanks, Jay Hand (JHa), **Greg Hanisek**, Tom Harrington (THa), Larry Havey, **Ted Hendrickson** (THe), **John Himmelman** (JHi), Julian Hough (JHo), Jim Hunter (JHu), Buck Jenks, **Elsbeth Johnson**, Norma Jordan, **Jay Kaplan**, Peggy Kern, Tom Kogut, William Kolodnicki, **Steve Kotchko**, Joan Lang, **Frank Mantlik**, Jim Mockalis (JMk), Peter Moore, Joe Morin (JMo), **Clark Moseley**, **Russ Naylor**, Brian O'Toole, Patty Pendergast, **Dave Provencher**, Charlie Rafford, **Dave Rosgen**, **Wilford Schultz**, Jon Schwartz, Ray Schwartz (RSc), Bill Shaffer, Richard Soffer (RSo), **Dori Sosensky**, **Ray Smith** (RSm), Steve Smith, Bruce Stevenson, **Mark Szantyr**, Pat Tamborra, Clay Taylor, Dave Titus (DTi), Dave Tripp (DTr), Dennis Varza, Glen Williams, **Chris Wood**, Rob Wilson, **Jim Zipp**.

GREG HANISEK, 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Julian Hough

ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 23

It's mid-April and a small gull wings its way casually along the tideline. The narrow, pointed wings, slim darkish bill and obvious white blaze along the outer primaries are sufficient to identify it, at a glance, as a Bonaparte's Gull. What was so difficult about that right?. An easy challenge this month - or was it? As it heads away, a double-take of your initial cursory glance troubles you and makes you think twice about your identification. But what else could it be?

Only one other species regularly recorded along the eastern seaboard shares the same basic features - Black-headed Gull. This Old World species is recorded annually, but sporadically in Connecticut. So, how do I know if it was a Black-headed or a Bonaparte's on such a view? Firstly, the dark trailing edge to the wing and dark bar along the forewing age it as a first-year. The unmarked mantle and palish head show no signs of any obvious retained juvenile feathering and indicate that this bird is near to completing the partial molt to first-alternate plumage. At this age, many individuals of both species have often developed partial dark-hoods by late winter/early spring. Experienced observers may clue in to the slightly longer, stouter bill, which is often more orange-toned (not blackish) in first-year Black-headed Gull. Although there are no other birds for comparison, the jizz is slightly heavier and less tern-like than Bonaparte's. That aside, there is nothing very helpful in the photograph to help separate these two species on plumage.

The key to the identification, as with most gulls, is in the wing pattern. In Black-headed and Bonaparte's Gull, the main distinction lies in the pattern of the underside of the primaries. If you watch Bonaparte's Gulls flying at a distance, their tern-like appearance is accentuated by the fact that the underside of all the primaries are very translucent and 'glow' bright white when backlit by the sun. On Black-headed Gull, it is only the outer two primaries which appear translucent; the rest are blackish-gray and appear as a dark 'block' across the rest of the primaries. This is easily seen at long range and is easy to make out. Also, the wing 'bars' are often more blackish on young Bonaparte's (more brownish in Black-headed) and typically appear more 'crisp'. This pattern fits our bird perfectly and we feel confident about the bird being a Black-headed Gull. Another distinction, but one that requires close scrutiny, is that on juvenile and first-basic Black-headeds: the outer two to three greater primary coverts are unmarked whitish while the inner coverts are dark-centered. This pattern is reversed on Bonaparte's Gull. Unfortunately, this may be reduced through wear and may not be readily apparent. Still, it is a good distinguishing feature when looked for. The featured bird shows the former pattern which confirms the identification.

This first-alternate Black-headed Gull was photographed by me at Beidaihe, Hebei Province, China in late April 1996.

JULIAN HOUGH, 21 Walnut Street, Naugatuck, CT 06770

Photo Challenge 24. Identify the species. Answer next issue.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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The Connecticut Warbler (ISSN 1077-0283) is devoted to the study of birds and their conservation in Connecticut and is published quarterly (January, April, July and October) by the Connecticut Ornithological Association.

Send manuscripts to the Editor. Please type double spaced with ample margins, on one side of a sheet. Submit a copy on a computer disk, if possible. Style should follow usage in recent issues. All manuscripts receive peer review.

Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

Membership, including subscription to *The Connecticut Warbler* and *COA Bulletin*, is based on a calendar year and is renewable in January: Individual, $12.00; Contributing, $25.00; Family, $18.00; Sustaining, $40.00. Life membership is $300.00, payable in three annual installments. Send membership application, dues, change of address, and checks payable to: Connecticut Ornithological Association, 314 Unquowa Road, Fairfield, CT 06430.

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– Address Correction Requested –

Volume 18, No. 3, 1998

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology

Volume 18, No.4 **October 1998** Pages 161 - 216

The Connecticut Warbler

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology

Volume 18, Number 4 October 1998

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*)

by Paul Carrier

Our cover artist Paul Carrier, has a deep interest in birds and enjoys all aspects of nature. This is his sixth cover for *The Connecticut Warbler*. He leads field trips, including spring and fall hawk watches for the Hartford Audubon Society and illustrates the front cover of their bimonthly newsletter. He has also prepared a well received, hawk picture guide, and has illustrated several books. Paul has his own advertising and design studio in Harwinton, Connecticut.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Fellow Members,

Receiving this publication each quarter is something I know all of you look forward to, as I do. So when we in the leadership decided to do something exciting for our members, we felt adding something special to an issue of *The Connecticut Warbler* was a logical and easy choice. In this special issue of The Connecticut Warbler we are very pleased to offer to you something a little different, a dash of color. The color identification plates included in this issue are the result of the considerable knowledge and talents of the artist, Mark Szantyr, and the impressive editorial efforts of Betty and Gil Kleiner. These individuals, who I am honored to call friends of mine, have gone the extra mile to help make this a very special edition of the journal of The Connecticut Ornithological Association. It is with great pleasure and pride that my fellow officers, the Board of Directors, the editorial staff, myself, and all the talented and generous contributors to this unique effort, present it to the membership of The Connecticut Ornithological Association.

The leadership of COA is dedicated to making this organization the best it can be, and a big part of that is responding to what our members tell us they want in the way of membership benefits. The design and content of this journal is a direct reflection of that response. It took a great deal of effort and time to produce the quality product you are about to explore. We dedicate that time and effort, and of course this very special issue, to you the membership of The Connecticut Ornithological Association. Enjoy.

David F. Provencher

EIGHTH REPORT OF THE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE OF CONNECTICUT

Frank Mantlik, Mark Szantyr, Greg Hanisek, Julian Hough, and Christopher Wood

This eighth report of The Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (ARCC) of the Connecticut Ornithological Association (COA) is the result of the cooperative efforts of many volunteer observers/submitters of reports and the dedicated effort of the committee. Current members are the above authors, as well as Polly Brody, Buzz Devine, Richard Soffer, John Gaskell, and Dave Provencher. The ARCC files are now largely up to date.

The committee's principal aim is to provide a complete and accurate record of rare birds reported in Connecticut. A rare records committee can neither verify nor invalidate any records, but can provide a judgment on the adequacy of the evidence presented in support of unusual sightings. In other words, this committee, in its rulings, is not concluding that a person did or did not see a particular rare bird. Instead, it is ruling on the adequacy of the written documentation and other evidence.

All reports, including original field notes, photographs, sketches, tape recordings, descriptions, and members comments on each record are archived at the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. For an overview of the committee and its operation, see Bevier (1996).

HIGHLIGHTS

This report contains 86 records of 49 species, plus two subspecies and one hybrid, reviewed by the ARCC. This includes one record (of Bohemian Waxwing, 96-24) that was slated for the Seventh Report but inadvertently omitted. The committee accepted 77% of all records reported here. The records span dates from 1973 to 1998, but most are from 1996-97. Please note that the ARCC does not routinely evaluate reports of subspecies, but does so at its own discretion.

Significant Connecticut records in this report include the following: first record for Pink-footed Goose and Cinnamon Teal; first and second records for Bullock's Oriole; second record for Northern Fulmar, Anhinga, Mississippi Kite, Thayer's Gull, Gull-billed Tern, White-winged Dove, and Bohemian Waxwing; second and third records for White-faced Ibis; third record for Rufous Hummingbird; fourth record for Long-tailed Jaeger.

STATE LIST AND REVIEW LIST

This report provides details on two additions to the Connecticut state bird list, which now stands at 401species. The most recently published (Oct. 1997) state list contains 399 species and is available from the COA (314 Unquowa Rd., Fairfield, CT 06430). The committee depends on observers to submit their reports of species on the Review List - these are species marked with an asterisk on the COA Field Checklist - and any species new to the state. Submit written reports along with any photographs or other documentary material to the current ARCC Secretary, Mark Szantyr (address below).

FORMAT

This report continues the format of previous reports. In the case of accepted records, only observers who submitted reports are listed, with the original finder listed first and followed by an asterisk. Observers who submitted a photograph are acknowledged with † following their names. Hyphenated numbers (e.g., 98-11) following the observers are ARCC file numbers. The species are listed in order according to the A.O.U. Checklist (1983) and Supplements. Records of a particular species are listed chronologically.

Abbreviations are: AB (American Birds), AFN (Audubon Field Notes), CW (The Connecticut Warbler), Hammonasset (Hammonasset Beach State Park), m.ob. (many observors), NASFN (National Audubon Society Field Notes), RX (no longer on the Review List), SRO (sight record only).

Months of the year are shortened to their first three letters.

ACCEPTED RECORDS

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE (*Anser brachyrhynchus*). An apparent adult discovered with a flock of Canada Geese 21 Mar 1998 at Stearns Farm in Mansfield (S. Morytko*, M. Szantyr †, G. Hanisek, B. Finnan †; 98-11) remained through 25 Mar, allowing dozens of birders to see it. As with many vagrant waterfowl, the question of origin (wild vs. escaped/captive) arose. The closest the species breeds is Greenland (and Iceland). Szantyr conducted an extensive investigation, contacting authorities worldwide, about this question. The overwhelming evidence clearly pointed to this bird being of wild origin. Among the strongest evidence was that the species is very rarely kept in captivity (with only about 30 individuals throughout North America) and that the flock also contained two neck-banded Canada Geese previously banded in 1996 as northbound migrants on Prince Edward Island (headed to at least Labrador to breed), as well as a Greater White-fronted Goose of the subspecies *flavirostris*,

which breeds in Greenland. This record constitutes the first documented record for Connecticut, and about the eleventh for North America (the first fully-accepted record in the lower 48 states).

NORTHERN FULMAR (*Fulmarus glacialis*). An adult, well described and photographed, in Long Island Sound about 1.5-2.0 miles off Stamford was observed in flight 14 Sep 1997 (P. Dugan*†, et al.; 98-10). In a speedboat, Dugan, A. Collins, and M. Moccio pursued this bird at speeds up to 30 mph, as far east as Westport, in order to photograph it. A determined and successful bit of documentation, indeed. This was a remarkably early date for this rare pelagic visitor, providing only the second Connecticut record, the first, a specimen taken off Branford 10 Oct 1909 (Zeranski & Baptist, 1990).

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). An adult was observed and photographed roosting on rocks in eastern Niantic Bay, Waterford on 23 Jul 1996 (M. Szantyr†; 96-49).

A flock of four flew over HBSP on 27 Oct 1996 (V. & S. Guarino; 96-60). The flock was relocated later that day off Tuxis Is., Madison, and seen by a number of observers both there and at Chaffinch Is., Guilford through 29 Oct (m.ob.). There were a number of American White Pelicans throughout the east and northeastern U.S. during that time period.

ANHINGA (*Anhinga anhinga*). A female flew northwest past the Quaker Ridge hawkwatch site at the Audubon Center in Greenwich on 14 Sep 1996, in clear view by a number of experienced observers (T. Burke*; 96-55). The detailed description and sketch effectively eliminated a cormorant. Unfortunately no photograph was obtained for this second accepted state record; thus the species remains in SRO status.

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*). One apparently first-year bird fed with Glossy Ibises in a wet grassy field in Stonington 1-5 May 1996 (B. Shaffer*, P. Kern*, M. Szantyr†, S. Suter, G. Hanisek; 96-33; CW 16:170) and was seen by many observers. One adult, though largely lacking the white facial color (not an uncommon appearance) was at HBSP 5 May - early Jul 1998 (B. Finnan*†, G. Hanisek, P. Lehman; 98-13) and was seen by numerous observers. These are the second and third accepted records for Connecticut.

CINNAMON TEAL (*Anas cyanoptera*). One male in alternate plumage, initially reported 15 Nov 1994 in the salt marsh at Milford Point, Milford, by Tom Koronkiewicz (R. Naylor, N. Proctor, M. Szantyr, R. Muller, R. Schwartz†; 95-06). It lingered for numerous observers to see

before it was shot 9 Jan 1995 by a hunter, with the specimen prepared beautifully as a mount. The committee deliberated on this record for a long time, as new evidence and information trickled in, and as the question of origin was pondered and investigated. A controversial point was whether the lack of fat reserves, as reported by the taxidermist, was evidence for or against the bird's wild origin. Outside experts aided in this analysis. This constitutes the first accepted record for Connecticut, albeit under the committee's new voting category of "Accept, origin uncertain."

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*). One adult male was at North Cove, Old Saybrook 11 Feb - 22 Mar 1997 (G. Hanisek, P. Kern†, B. Shaffer†, R. Naylor; 97-05; CW 17:137,189). One adult male was at Bride Lake, East Lyme (Niantic) 9-24 Mar 1998 (G. Knoecklein, D. Provencher†; 98-09).

HARLEQUIN DUCK (*Histrionicus histrionicus*). One first-winter male was seen by 8 observers at HBSP, Madison 2 Jan 1998 (R. Dewire; 98-06).

KING EIDER (*Somateria spectabilis*). One female was off Neck Road, Madison 1-10 Mar 1995 (J. Hough; 96-29; CW 15:105, 143). Two females were off Milford Point, Milford on 18 Dec 1995 (J. Hough; 92-28). One probable female was at Lighthouse Point, New Haven 24-25 Nov 1996 (T. Kilroy, G. Hanisek; 97-09). The aging and sexing of eiders can be problematical. Field marks on this last individual resulted in disagreement as to whether it was a female or an immature male. Hanisek's review of several references pointed out that even expert authors disagree on these ageing/sexing points.

MISSISSIPPI KITE (*Ictinia mississippiensis*). One immature/subadult was seen in flight at Station 43 Preserve, South Windsor 5 May 1997 (M. Szantyr; 97-15). This the second accepted state record.

SWAINSON'S HAWK (*Buteo swainsoni*). One immature dark-morph was captured, banded, photographed, and released by a hawk-bander at HBSP, Madison on 5 Oct 1996 (S. Roxbrough, J. Young †; 97-1) for the 6th accepted CT record. One light-morph immature was well seen in flight by numerous experienced observers hawk-watching on 1 Oct 1997 at Lighthouse Point, New Haven (G. Hanisek; 97-44). This species seems to be increasing in the northeast during fall migration.

GYRFALCON (*Falco rusticolus*). One white or pale gray-morph was seen in flight at HBSP, Madison on 16 Dec 1995, and again indepen-

dently by another observer 23 Dec (C. & R. Pelletier, T. Harrington; 96-1). Several Gyrfalcons were noted in the northeastern U.S. (MA, NY) that winter.

BLACK RAIL (*Laterallus jamaicensis*). One was heard calling at Lordship marshes, Stratford, 26-27 May 1996 (D. Abbott*, G. Hanisek; 96-31). Although very vocal, it performed in true Black Rail fashion, calling from just a few feet away, yet remaining frustratingly invisible to its would-be viewers! A particularly vocal individual was heard at a small marsh in Woodbury, 8-9 June 1997 (F. Mantlik*, R. Naylor; 97-30). Ironically, it was discovered by the ARCC chairman who stopped to listen for Virginia Rails on his way home from a records meeting.

AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*). Basic-plumaged individuals were at Sherwood Island, Westport, 13 Aug 1996 (C. Barnard*; 96-51) and Barn Island, Stonington, 2 Oct 1997 (L. Kendall*; 98-07). Both individuals were equally short-stayers seen only by the listed observers.

CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Calidris ferruginea*). One in alternate plumage frequented the gravel bars at Milford Point, Milford, 20-29 July 1997 (G. Hanisek; 97-37; CW 18:41). Its fairly short bill suggested a male, though it was not possible to conclusively sex this bird. Although sometimes elusive, this summer-garbed Eurasian shorebird attracted many visitors during its stay. The committee was disappointed to receive little documentation on this particularly rare and well-observed individual; the only report submitted was from a committee member.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus lobatus*). A juvenile was along the Bantam River, Litchfield, 24 Aug 1997 (J. Feldman*†; 97-35). This confiding individual was photographed at close range while the observer was out kayaking. This record is unusual in that reports of this species in the state are mostly a result of coastal storms in the autumn.

PARASITIC JAEGER (*Stercorarius parasiticus*). A light-morph adult passed Camp Harkness, Waterford, 20 Oct 1996 (D. Provencher*; 96-62).

LONG-TAILED JAEGER (*Stercorarius longicaudus*). A well-described adult, seen briefly after a thunderstorm, was at Sandy Point, West Haven, 29 Aug 1997 (J. Mehmel*, A Smith; 97-39). The early date fits the pattern for Long-tailed, which migrates earlier than the other two species. Though typically highly pelagic, jaegers often undertake extensive

overland migrations. This strategy is essentially used as a short-cut to and from their breeding grounds. It is likely that this individual had arrived from such an overland route and was forced to arrest its journey due to a violent thunderstorm which passed northeast along the coast. Whatever the bird's origin, it was an exciting and enviable find.

THAYER'S GULL (*Larus thayeri*). A first-basic bird was discovered among the throng of gulls at the Manchester Landfill, Manchester, 13-14 Feb 1998, (M. Szantyr*, G. Hanisek, J. Hough†, D. Provencher†, F. Mantlik†; 98-02). This constitutes only the second state record, the previous record being an adult in Shelton, 25 Jan 1988 (CW 8:65). The Manchester bird was fully documented with photographs and even video footage. Although the bird performed superbly to a small crowd on its second day, it was never seen again much to the dismay of many would-be observers. The occurrence of Thayer's Gulls in the northeast is probably more regular than current records suggest. Nonetheless, the sharp-eyed observers, who included P. Comins and C. Moseley, should be congratulated on the discovery and identification of a difficult and educational record. See elsewhere in this issue for a full account of this occurrence.

LITTLE GULL (*Larus minutus*). A basic-plumaged adult was at Griswold Point, Old Lyme, 4 April 1994 (D. Provencher*†; 97-27). A first-alternate molting to second-winter plumaged bird was along the Poquonock River at Bluff Point, Groton, 25 July 1995 (D. Provencher*; 97-28). The latter individual was also seen off Millstone Point, Waterford, 26 July 1995, (D. Provencher*; 97-28). An adult in basic plumage was at South Cove, Old Saybrook, 22 March 1997, (B. Shaffer*†; 97-22). Often found among the large gatherings of Bonaparte's Gulls at their traditional spots, Little Gulls are now annual in spring (late March-April). As a result, this species has been removed from the review list, although the committee will consider any previously unsubmitted records.

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Larus ridibundus*). An adult in basic plumage was near Pine Creek, Fairfield, 30 Jan 1997 (C. Barnard*; 97-21). A bird in almost full alternate plumage was at South Cove, Old Saybrook, 22 March 1997, (B. Shaffer*†; 97-20). The latter, present with an adult Little Gull, gave the observer a double photo-whammy!

This European species is almost annual in the state with several reports involving the same returning individuals. Its occurrences peak in winter and early spring, when they may often be found accompanying Bonaparte's Gulls. As with Little Gull, this species is no longer considered a review species by the committee, though past reports will be considered.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*). An adult was off Camp Harkness, Waterford, 10 Jan 1997 (D. Provencher*; 97-26).

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Sterna nitlotica*). Two adults were at Sand Island, Greenwich Point, Greenwich, 15 June 1996, (C. Ehlinger*, M. Sampson*†; 96-35). Although the written description was enough to convince the committee, unfortunately the photographic evidence was of little value in judging this second accepted state record. Photographic or specimen evidence of occurrence in Connecticut is still needed for this species.

SOOTY TERN (*Sterna fuscata*). An adult was seen from Griswold Point, Old Lyme, 14 July 1996 (D. Provencher*, D. Sosensky; 96-47). Although the bird was distant, most of the salient structural features were described well enough to rule out Bridled Tern. The occurrence was a direct result of the passing of Tropical Storm Bertha, which brought three other Sooty Terns to New York and one to Massachusetts. Interestingly, an exhausted Sooty Tern was picked up on the same day as the Griswold Point record, at Caumsett S.P. on the north shore of Long Island, NY. It may or may not have been the same individual.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*). The lone observer was alerted to this unexpected visitor to his Sterling yard when he heard cuckoo-like calls in the early evening of 18 May 1997 (R. Dixon*; 97-14). In failing light he obtained video, which by itself was probably insufficient to confirm the bird's identity. However, he augmented it with annotated sketches and a written description of the bird and its calls. This is an example of using every possible means to document a rarity. This represents the second state record (Zeranski & Baptist, 1990). The committee discussed the question of this bird's origin, because doves of all kinds are sometimes kept in captivity. However, this southwestern species shows a strong pattern of vagrancy, and this record falls in a time period when others have been found in the northeastern U.S.

BOREAL OWL (*Aegolius funereus*). A single bird was found on 1 Nov 1996 in an evergreen grove at Hammonasset, Madison (G. Hanisek, B. MacDonnell†; 96-64). The finders, J. Connolly, C. Taylor and S. Henckel, passed the word, and the owl was seen by many birders that day. It was not relocated the next day despite an extensive search. It was the eighth state record for this secretive visitor from the north, and only the second since the 1940s (Zeranski & Baptist, 1990). Its arrival coincided with a widespread southward incursion that included seasonal totals of four in eastern Massachusetts, 125 banded at Tadoussac, Quebec, and 163 banded at Whitefish Point, MI. (NASFN 51:1).

CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*). Can a rare bird be confirmed by voice alone? In this case the committee said yes. The bird was first heard at 4:30 a.m. on 1 Jun 1997 at Janie Pierce Park, Southbury, by a participant in the Woodbury-Roxbury June Count (A. Dimmitt*, C. Wood, R. Naylor; 97-25). Additional observers heard it that evening. Chuck-will's-widow reports have been increasing in the state, along with a northward range extension that has been underway for more than 20 years. This southern species is now regular as close as Long Island, NY.

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus rufus*). A male, probably an adult, was found in moribund condition in Madison 11 Nov 1997 (I. Ruth, M. Szantyr; 98-04). It was taken to a veterinary clinic and turned over immediately to a rehabilitator, though it died within an hour of retrieval from the clinic. The specimen was photographed and turned over to Yale Peabody Museum for preparation as a study skin. This constitutes the third accepted CT record. The increased discovery of western hummingbirds east of their normal range has been an exciting development in the 1990s. This is the most likely species, but recent confirmation of Black-chinned and Calliope Hummingbirds in New Jersey suggests that at least several species are possible. Note that identification of this group is difficult and may require sharp photographs or in-hand examination.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). The state's second accepted sighting of this southwestern species occurred 30 Nov - 3 Dec 1996 after it was found near White Sands Beach, Old Lyme (B. Devine*, J.Gaskell*, M. Szantyr †, D. Provencher †, G. Hanisek; 97-07). The dates fall within the typical vagrancy window for this species in the northeast U.S.; it would be an extraordinarily late date for the state's common breeding *Myiarchus*, the Great Crested Flycatcher.

WESTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus verticalis*). One was found 7 Oct 1996 by T. Green at Crook Horn Road, Southbury, an unusual location because almost all records are from the immediate coast (G. Hanisek; 96-61). Also unusual was the length of stay. This species usually appears briefly, often for only hours or minutes, but this one was found the next day. Presumably it was the same bird that was relocated 27-29 Oct at the same spot. The date was typical for this species, but one seen flying by Bluff Point, Groton on 30 Aug 1996 was a bit early (D. Provencher*; 96-63). It passed with a small flock of Eastern Kingbirds. Another fly-by was recorded by four observers at Lighthouse Point, New Haven on 15 Sep 1997 (G. Hanisek*; 97-38).

NORTHERN WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). This Eurasian species appeared 15-19 Sep 1996 at W Lot at the University of Connecticut, Storrs (M. Szantyr*; 96-54). A detailed sketch accompanied the submission. The inland location and multiple-day stay were both unusual for this species, which is noted for quick stops along the coast. However, another stayed for several days in the Storrs area in 1995.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING (*Bombycilla garrulus*). A single adult was seen perched with a group of Cedar Waxwings on 28 May 1990 at White Memorial Foundation, Litchfield (R. Berleant*, 96-38). The May date is unusual, but the bird was carefully studied at close range by four observers. A flock of three, with one Cedar Waxwing, was at Hammonasset, Madison, 27 Nov 1995 (P. Comins; 96-24). This is the second accepted CT record, and was to appear in the 7th Report, but was inadvertently omitted. A flock of eight was seen perched and in flight on 12 Feb 1998 on Route 101 in Pomfret, and on 17 Mar 1998 one was seen perched in the same area (M. Szantyr*; 98-03).

YELLOW-RUMPED [AUDUBON] WARBLER (*Dendroica coronata auduboni*). A bird in basic plumage was observed 15 Oct 1996 at Sherwood Island, Westport (R. Soffer*, 96-59). This subspecies is the western counterpart of the eastern Myrtle Warbler and has in the past been regarded as a separate species. The committee encourages reports of well-marked subspecies seen out of range. They help broaden the understanding of our state's avifauna, and today's distinctive subspecies could become tomorrow's species.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (*Dendroica dominica*) (RX). An adult was seen 19 May 1996 in the observer's backyard in the Riverside section of Greenwich (J. Wells, Jr.; 96-44). This species is an early migrant, usually arriving in April as an overshoot from the south, but there are a number of May records as well as at least one breeding attempt.

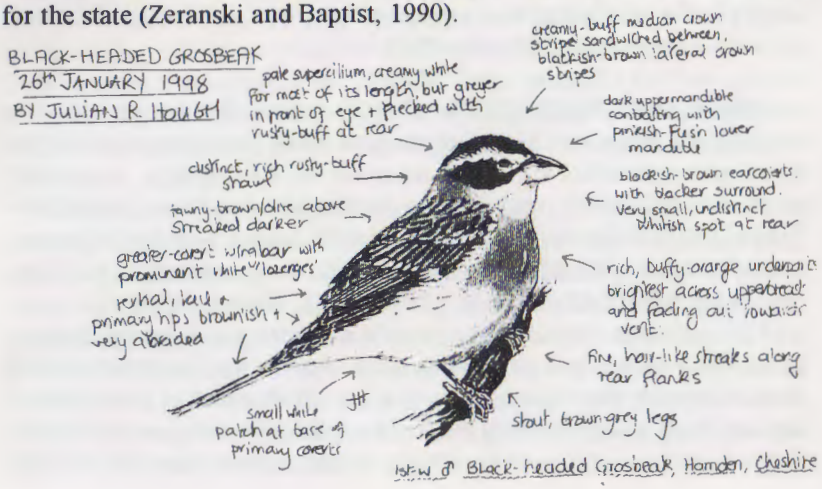
PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (*Protonotaria citrea*). A male was identified and photographed at Stamford's Cove Island Park 26 Apr 1996 (M. Moccio†; 96-41). The bird remained the next day to be observed by others. The regularity of spring occurrences of this species in Connecticut has led to its removal from the ARCC review list, except for possible breeding records.

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*). Based on distant but recognizable photographs and a verbal description to a committee member, this record (C. Kobak†; 96-43) from Guilford 24 April 1996 was accepted. Others saw this bird but did not submit reports. The sex of the bird was

not conclusively determined. Key identification points included an orange cast to the plumage, lack of black in the wings and tail, and bright orange-red undertail coverts. The likelihood that this was a migrant overshooting its normal breeding range, which extends north into New Jersey (DeGraff and Rappole, 1995), is enhanced by the early date. The earliest Connecticut date recorded for Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) is 23 April; the earliest dates for Summer Tanager are 8, 21, and 27 April (Zeranski and Baptist, 1990).

WESTERN TANAGER (*Piranga ludoviciana*). Seen well and photographed by numerous observers, thanks to the hospitality of Peggy Lawrence and Dan Ross, at whose Granby feeder the bird had appeared in mid-Jan 1997, this female was first conclusively identified about 2 weeks later on 23 Jan 1997 (J. Kaplan*, B. Kleiner, M. Szantyr, F. Mantlik†; 97-04; CW 17:141 [with photo], 196). It remained through Mar 30. There are only a handful of reliable records for this species in Connecticut, so this cooperative bird was a special treat for many Connecticut birders; over 100 people got to see it during its stay. See Szantyr's Identification Pitfalls: Grosbeaks, Orioles, and Tanagers, elsewhere in this issue, for details on the identification of this and similar species.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*). This was another reliable feeder bird, and another cooperative and hospitable home owner (Jean Buck) permitted many Connecticut birders, often with the aid of Jim Zipp, to see this species for the first time in Connecticut, in Hamden, 20 Jan - Mar 23 1998 (M. Szantyr*, G. Hanisek, F. Mantlik, J. Hough; 98-01). Plumage characteristics showed the bird to be a first-year male. This record is one of only a few over the past 50 years for the state (Zeranski and Baptist, 1990).



BLUE GROSBEAK (*Guiraca caerulea*). A well-described, first summer male was found at Northwest Park, Windsor, 4 June 1995 by F. Mantlik and remained through 6 June (M. Szantyr*; 97-43). Although no longer a review species for migratory occurrence, possible breeding Blue Grosbeak records are still reviewed, and occurrences this late in migration justify careful field study. An adult male at the same park the following year was found even later in the season, 29 June 1996 (L. Brinker*; 96-36). It did in fact result in observations of a mated pair attending 3 young on 15 July (Hanisek, CW 17:47-48). This species extended its nesting range into New Jersey in the early 1960's (Bull 1964), but its preference for early successional shrub habitat (DeGraff and Rappole, 1995), which is ephemeral and limited in Connecticut, may reduce the likelihood of a range expansion into lower New England. Further justification for delisting this species came from another record of an immature male 29 May 1996 in Fairfield (C. Harrison*†, M. Bull; 96-42).

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (*Spizella pallida*). An adult was in Hamden 24-27 Apr 1997, and seen by several observers (R. Naylor; 97-31). For Connecticut this record constitutes only about the fifth spring record, all of which are inland; the species is more typically a fall migrant (Zeranski and Baptist, 1990).

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*). One was at Hammonasset, Madison, 11-14 Sep 1996 (G. Hanisek*, D. Provencher; 96-53). One immature was at Longshore Park, Westport, 26 Oct 1996 (F. Mantlik*, C. Barnard; 97-03). An adult was at Veteran's Park, Norwalk, 18-19 Jan 1998 and relocated 19 Feb - 28 March 1998 (N. Jordan*, G. Hanisek, F.Mantlik†; 98-08). The latter was seen by many, and represents a late winter occurrence, compared to a previous late date of January 14, 1987 (Zeranski and Baptist, 1990).

"OREGON" DARK-EYED JUNCO (*Junco hyemalis*). A bird showing the characters of an Oregon-type Junco, and controversially determined by spcialists to possibly represent the subspecies *J. h. mearnsi*, or "Pink-sided Junco", was seen and photographed in Storrs from 9 Jan - 7 Apr 1993 (M. Szantyr†, L. Bevier; 95-05). A bird showing the characters of an adult, probably male Oregon Junco, *J. h. oreganus*, was photographed at a Fairfield feeder on 4 Feb 1996 (S. Fromm, 96-46).

This committee does not as a general rule review subspecies. In these cases, the evidence was either reasonably clear or was important enough ornithologically that exceptions were made. Adult males of many subspecies are fairly straightforward but females and immatures can be very difficult. Extreme overlap in characteristics and extreme variation in char-

acters within a subspecies make sight records virtually impossible to assign to a subspecies with confidence. Even with photos, this determination is difficult at best. The Fairfield bird seems to be a clear example of a "typical" Oregon Junco, *J. h. oreganus*. This form breeds from southeast Alaska through California. The Storrs bird, however, is not as easy. Many characters have been interpreted by specialists to pertain to the "Pink-sided" Oregon Junco, *J. h. mearnsi*, that breeds from southeast Alberta to southwest Saskatchewan and south into southeastern Idaho. The color and shape of the hood, the blackish lores, the color of the back, and the width of the pinkish flanks seem to be consistent with this form. While this might be possible, this committee adopted a cautious position and considered the bird to be an "Oregon-type" Junco of undetermined subspecies.

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus major*). A territorial male at the Lordship Marshes, Stratford, 1 Jun 1995, was subsequently seen with two females, and were observed exhibiting breeding behavior, including carrying food to a suspected nest site, through early Jul (F. Mantlik*†, M. Szantyr†; 97-43; CW 16: 55). If the ARCC, in later deliberations on breeding records, accepts this evidence for breeding of the Boat-tailed Grackle, this would constitute a first confirmation of breeding in Connecticut, not unexpected given recent range expansion onto Long Island, NY (Zeranski and Baptist, 1990). Another adult male at the same Stratford location 22 Apr 1998 (C. Barnard*; 98-12) was accompanied through at least May 1998 by at least one female, and offers further evidence for the likelihood of subsequent breeding.

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE (*Icterus bullockii*). An adult male reported 20 Jan 1977 visiting a West Hartford feeder (the Morgans) was present approximately 6 Jan - 6 Feb, and was seen by several local observers (D. Coolidge†, F. Mantlik*†; 97-06). This report, submitted with photographs and a good description, was accepted as the first documented record of this species in Connecticut. Bullock's Oriole and Baltimore Oriole were formerly considered to be one species, until a fairly recent AOU split.

An adult male visiting feeders (J. & L. Lang) in Goshen 31 Oct 1997-mid-Feb 1998 was seen and photographed by many observers and was reported with photos in a local newspaper (W. Haskell*, G. Hanisek, R. Naylor; 97-41). This is the second accepted CT record. This was an unequivocal occurrence, unlike many reports of females that are much more difficult to identify conclusively (see Lee and Birch, 1998). With the resplit of Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles, more reports of the latter are being made. Birders are encouraged to make careful and detailed observations of any possible Bullock's occurrences.

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, identification questionable.

MANX SHEARWATER (*Puffinus puffinus*). A single bird was reported off Falkner's Island, Guilford, in Long Island Sound on 20 Jun 1996 (97-40). While the bird was possibly a Manx Shearwater, the lack of specific details eliminating Audubon's Shearwater (*P. lherminieri*) or other small contrastingly marked shearwaters did not allow the committee to accept this sighting.

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). More than one bird was reported from Hammonasset, Madison in "late Feb" 1997 (97-24). While no number was specified in the information submitted to the committee, it is believed that the report refers to three birds seen sporadically in this area during the early months of 1997. The observers chose not to submit descriptions and retracted their reports after learning that more than one species of "white" pelican exists. It is important to carefully, surely, and independently identify suspected rarities. While this report almost certainly refers to *P. erthrorhynchos*, it is interesting to note that White Pelican (*P. onocrotalus*) of Eurasia and Africa has occurred in North America and, while of suspect origin, must be eliminated when identifying any extralimital "white" pelican. Another regrettable aspect of this report is that, despite these birds being repeatedly seen through early 1997 by numerous observers, no other reports were submitted for review by the ARRC.

COMMON EIDER (*Somateria mollissima*). Two females were reported from Long Island Sound east of Latimer Point, Mystic on 26 Jan and 2 Feb 1996 (97-17). Although this species seems most likely, little or no description of the birds was provided. Observers are reminded that, no matter how certain an identification seems, clear and explicitly detailed description is essential for a records committee to evaluate the evidence. A review of the status of Common Eider in Connecticut shows that it is now regular enough to warrant removal from this committee's review list.

KING EIDER (*Somateria spectabilis*). One sub-adult male and two females were reported over several dates from 12 Jan - 2 Feb 1997 from Long Island Sound east and northeast of Enders Island, Mystic (97-13). The identification of female and sub-adult male eiders is difficult and important details of plumage and structure must be noted to confidently identify individuals to species. Many viewing conditions can make seeing these details nearly impossible. The details noted in this report did not definitely eliminate the more likely Common Eider (*S. mollissima*).

SWAINSON'S HAWK (*Buteo swainsoni*). An atypical dark-morph bird was reported on 29 Sep 1996 from the Hawk Watch at the Greenwich Audubon Sanctuary in Greenwich (97-12). As the observer remarked, characters of this bird seemed inconsistent with typical Swainson's Hawks and, in fact, seemed wrong for any expected raptor species. While some committee members agreed that certain characters of the bird (wing length and shape, size) seemed to support the identification, the committee finally decided on a cautious conclusion. Under many circumstances, identifying flying buteos is an underrated identification challenge. As in so many other difficult species, sometimes it is best to take notes, photos, or recordings and file the experience away under "I don't know!"

CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Calidris ferruginea*). A bird described as in first basic plumage was reported from Hammonasset, Madison on 3 Nov 1996 (97-10). The identification of Curlew Sandpiper in definitive alternate plumage is a relatively easy task. Very few other shorebirds share its range of distinctive characters. First basic plumage is another matter. In this plumage, Curlew Sandpiper shares several characters of structure and plumage with a host of similar shorebirds. The observer reported being relatively inexperienced with this species and arrived at the identification by process of elimination. While possibly correct, this report was deemed inadequate to document such a rare species in Connecticut. Once again, it is unfortunate that the host of observers in the park that day were not alerted to this bird's presence so that corroborating information could have been attained.

PARASITIC JAEGER (*Stercorarius parasiticus*). A bird described as a dark-phase juvenile was reported to be patrolling Griswold Point, Old Lyme on 21 Sep 1996 (96-58). In spite of the observer's wealth of experience and what seems to have been ample opportunity for study, the details provided to the committee neither conclusively pertain to this species nor eliminate other possible jaeger species. The identification of jaegers in immature plumages is difficult even under the best conditions. Careful study and exhaustive descriptions of structure, pattern, and coloration are necessary to convincingly document their occurrence.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*). A bird described as an adult was reported off Meig's Point at Hammonasset, Madison on 17 Jul 1996 (96-52). Details of the report do not conclusively eliminate other gull species potentially seen under these conditions, and in fact, certain elements of the report seem to support Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) as a possible candidate. Identifying kittiwakes over Long Island Sound can be tricky with weather, lighting, wind, and dis-

tance being key in the appraisal of perceived field marks. For a discussion of this identification challenge, see the Connecticut Warbler, Vol 18, No.3, pages 146-147.

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus rufus*). A bird described as an adult male was reported from New Canaan on 27 Aug 1992 (98-05). The committee only just received this report as it was lost in an intermediary's files for six years. While the date and the description are highly suggestive of this species, insufficient detail is provided to confidently eliminate other hummingbirds of this genus or to positively eliminate certain "look-alike" moth species.

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*). A bird of this species was reported from the Guilford Sluice in Guilford on 21 Sep 1996 (96-56). Shrike identification can be difficult. Both Loggerhead Shrike and Northern Shrike (*L. excubitor*) share many plumage characteristics. Details of head structure and patterning, including close study of the color and structure of the bill are necessary to identify a shrike to species (Szantyr, CW 18:15-17). While the date is highly suggestive of Loggerhead Shrike, it alone, without adequate description, does not enable confident acceptance. Loggerhead Shrike is increasingly rare in Connecticut, with far fewer than one sighting per year for some time now. Every effort should be made to carefully document any suspected occurrences.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING (*Bombycilla garrulus*). Approximately fifteen to twenty birds were reported from Groton on 23 May 1996 (96-39). Details in this report neither conclusively fit Bohemian Waxwings, nor eliminate the more likely Cedar Waxwing (*B. cedrorum*). The date would be extraordinary for Bohemian Waxwing in Connecticut.

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*). A bird of this species was reported from New Canaan on 21 May 1996 (96-32). While the report is probably correct, insufficient detail was included in the account to conclusively eliminate other sparrow species.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (*Spizella pallida*). One was reported from Ansonia on 15 Oct 1995 (96-2). While probably correct, this report does not conclusively eliminate other possible sparrows, including Chipping Sparrow (*S. passerina*). Clay-colored Sparrow is becoming increasingly common in our area and a review of recent reports indicate that it is now frequent enough to warrant removal from this committee's review list.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*). A bird was reported from the Stratford-Milford CBC on 27 Dec 1990 (96-45). The report does not give a location other than on a wet, wooded edge of a farm field. While the identification was possibly correct, insufficient detail was included to eliminate Rusty Blackbird (*E. carolinus*) or to positively identify this as a Brewer's Blackbird. Brewer's Blackbird can be a most difficult identification challenge and important characters of plumage and structure must be noted in order to be convincing.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH X PINE SISKIN (*Carduelis tristis X Carduelis pinus*). An individual, thought to be a hybrid of these species, was reported from Southbury on 9 Mar 1997 (97-16). This committee ordinarily does not evaluate hybrids. In this case, however, substantial descriptive notes were submitted, and in light of the observer's efforts and because of the ornithological significance this report might provide, the committee agreed to review the file. While some characters of this bird suggest what a cross between these species might resemble, the committee could find no previous information on which to base this presumption. If this individual were a hybrid, there is no way of being certain that the parents were in fact those suggested above.

Pine Siskin shares a range with all of the North American goldfinches. Characters described for this bird leave open the possibilities of 1) Some other species, 2) an unusual variant within an expected species, 3) an abnormal molt in an expected species, or 4) a variant due to some other factor. Hybridization between species was not conclusively shown. The committee warns of the difficulty in identifying hybrids without conclusive proof of parentage. Ideally, identification of rare hybrids should be based on genetic material that can provide conclusive evidence.

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, origin questionable.

BARNACLE GOOSE (*Branta leucopsis*). A single bird was seen for at least a month after 11 Aug 1997 in Essex (97-36). Barnacle Geese of wild origin undoubtedly reach North America from their Old World range. Unfortunately, there are so many of them in (and escaped from) captivity in this country that assessing any record becomes a nightmare of uncertainty and supposition. In reviewing the timing of Barnacle Goose occurrence in the east, there seem to be two peaks. These correspond to the April and November migration swells of Canada Geese. This August record, well outside of this migration window, suggests a captive origin. The facts that the bird was with a small group of non-migratory Canada Geese and that it stayed for upwards of a month also support this interpre-

tation. Sooner or later we will be able to show the origin of a genuinely wild Barnacle Goose, but not this time.

RUDDY SHELDUCK (*Tadorna ferruginea*). Three birds were reported from the Lisbon Golf Course in Lisbon on 14 May 1996 (96-66), and single birds were reported from Durham on 18 May 1996 (96-48), and from Mansfield (96-65). This species might well be the "poster bird" for why we need to keep field notes and documentation on rarities, yes, even rarities "undoubtedly" from captivity. This species is widely kept by aviculturalists. It is frequently encountered "in the wild" and just as often ignored as someone's lost cage bird. Recent information from Europe suggests that this species is greatly increasing in numbers and expanding its range. Birds have been found colonizing the Azores and it has been recorded on Iceland (Julian Hough, pers. com). With so many of these birds turning up in such a short time in Connecticut, the committee believed that investigation was in order. Were we seeing the first wave of a North American colonization attempt by Ruddy Shelduck? Sadly, our investigation turned up a more local source for these handsome ducks. Nonetheless, Ruddy Shelduck, Barnacle Goose, and other exotic fowl seen in Connecticut under "wild-appearing" conditions should be carefully documented. Remember the Pink-footed Goose!

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET (*Psittacula krameri*). Two were videotaped at a feeder in Fairfield during Apr and May 1973 (96-50). While these birds were undoubtedly of captive origin, the committee thanks the reporter for the careful documentation provided. As with waterfowl, documentation of any and all exotic birds observed "in the wild" in Connecticut is gladly accepted by this committee.

CONTRIBUTORS

The committee greatly appreciates the time and effort expended by the following people who submitted reports or photographs of rarities: Dennis Abbott, Adrienne Ackerman, James Bair, Charles Barnard, Jr., Riva Berleant, Lysle Brinker, Polly Brody, Milan Bull, Thomas Burke, Dexter Chaffee, Patrick Comins, David Coolidge, Julio De la Torre, Buzz Devine, Robert Dewire, Angela Dimmitt, Patrick Dugan, Cynthia Ehlinger, Jeff Feldman, Bruce Finnan, John Gaskell, Val & Shari Guarino, Greg Hanisek, Tom Harrington, Chris Harrison, Patricia Hatton, Julian Hough, Jay Kaplan, Len Kendall, Peggy Kern, Tom Kilroy, Betty Kleiner, George Knoecklein, Paul Lehman, Bob MacDonnell, Frank Mantlik, Janet Mehmel, Michael Moccio, Steve Morytko, Robert Muller, Russ Naylor, Sherrie Neilson, Drew Panko, Mary Maxey Paul, Cathi & Ron Pelletier, Noble Proctor, David Provencher, Scott Roxbrough, Irene Ruth, Meredith

Sampson, Lee Schlesinger, Ray Schwartz, Bill Shaffer, Alice Smith, Richard Soffer, Dori Sosensky, Robert Dixon, Sherman Suter, Mark Szantyr, Jeff Young, John Wells, Jr., Christopher Wood.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several people helped the committee with its decisions in this report. We offer our appreciation to Paul Lehman, Louis Bevier, Patrick Comins, Jay Kaplan, Paul Merola, Mike O'Leary, Mike Bean, and to any others whom we inadvertently overlooked. A special thank you to George Clark for his final editing of this report.

CORRECTIONS TO THE SEVENTH REPORT (CW17: 97-122)

Bohemian Waxwing (96-24) was inadvertently omitted, and now appears in this report.

Date of Mansfield **Swainson's Hawk** (95-34) was 25 Oct (incorrectly reported as 26 Oct).

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IDENTIFICATION NOTES

The Western Hat Trick: Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole, and Western Tanager.

Mark Szantyr and the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut

These three species, Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*), and Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*), are all very beautiful, well-marked, and distinctive as adult males. The females and first basic plumage males, as well as some adult males not in definitive alternate plumage, are a different story. To fully explore these identification challenges could take volumes. The Avian Records Committee of Connecticut thought that by providing some straight forward analysis of the plumage in question and by making comparisons to possible confusing identification contenders, we might all be better prepared to score "the Hat Trick."

GROSBEAKS: BLACK-HEADED AND ROSE-BREASTED

(Figure 1, Page 185)

The Black-headed Grosbeak the western counterpart to our Rose-breasted Grosbeak, (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) is highly distinctive as an adult male. In the fall, however, Rose-breasted Grosbeak females and first fall males attain plumages that approach quite closely those of female and young male Black-headed Grosbeaks. By concentrating on certain aspects of plumage and color, where the color is located, where the streaking is (and where it isn't), and how bold the streaking is, a confident identification can be made. As in all identification challenges, some individuals will not fit neatly into an expected series of plumage characters. It is probably best to take copious notes and photos and not ascribe such individuals to a particular species.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak - Female

1. Supercilium and central crown stripe white, sometimes a hint of buffy color.
2. Throat very pale to white, sometimes finely streaked.
3. Underparts usually boldly streaked, streaks broad. Under-

parts from whitish to pale buff, strongest in the flanks. Streaking often extends up to bill in moustachial area.

4. Bill pale bone color to pinkish white, with little contrast between upper and lower mandible.
5. Underwing linings pale lemon yellow.
6. Rump a pale olive brown, contrasts faintly with dull brownish upperparts when seen in flight.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak - First basic male

7. Supercilium and central crown stripe white, sometimes a hint of buff color.
8. Throat white, usually contrasting strongly with strong buffy upper chest.
9. Underparts finely streaked in flanks and usually across the upper breast. Upper breast and flanks buffy, usually strongest in the upper breast below the throat where the red in the adult male will be present. This color may be quite intense orange to pinkish buff. Sometimes the streaking is lacking or very faint in the center of the breast. Sometimes a pinkish or reddish feather or two may appear in this central breast area.
10. Bill pale bone color to pinkish white, with little contrast between upper and lower mandible.
11. Underwing linings pinkish red to red.
12. Rump a pale olive brown, contrasts faintly with dull brownish upperparts when seen in flight

Black-headed Grosbeak - Female

a. Supercilium and central crown stripe mostly buffy, some times whitish near to the eye.
b. Throat usually washed with buff up to the chin. Chin whitish. Little to no contrast with upper chest. Contrast between the whitish submoustachial stripe and the buffy throat.
c. Underparts warm buffy color, palest in the lower belly. Finely streaked in entire flanks to upper breast but not crossing breast, leaving center of breast usually unstreaked. Streaks much finer and sparser than Rose-breasted Grosbeak and underparts color usually more intense buffy or ochre.
d. Bill appears darker than Rose-breasted Grosbeak, with upper mandible darker than lower mandible.
e. Underwing linings lemon yellow.
f. Rump is a bright buffy and contrasts well with darker upperparts. This species appears more overall golden ochre in color than Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Black-headed Grosbeak - First basic male

g. Supercilium and central crown stripe mostly buffy, sometimes whitish near to the eye.

h. Throat usually washed with buff up to the chin. Chin whitish. Little to no contrast with upper chest. Contrast between the whitish submoustachial stripe and the buffy throat.

i. Underparts very warm buffy color, palest in the lower belly and strongest in the upper breast. Usually shows very sparse, thin streaks in the rear flanks but may show none.

j. Bill appears darker than Rose-breasted Grosbeak, with upper-mandible darker than lower mandible.

k. Underwing linings rich lemon yellow.

l. Rump is a bright buffy and contrasts well with darker uppeparts. This species appears more overall golden ochre in color than Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

ORIOLES: BULLOCK'S AND BALTIMORE

(Figure 2, Page 186)

Every fall and winter, rare bird alerts and rare records committees in the east receive reports of Bullock's Orioles. Most of these that can be checked out, or for which photographs exist, usually prove to be female and immature Baltimore Orioles. Those that are correctly identified are usually the distinct adult males. Separating female and immature Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles in the winter in the east is a significant identification challenge. This challenge is increased by the sparse, and in some cases, erroneous, treatment these forms receive in the popular field guides. Baltimore Oriole in female and immature plumage is highly variable. Many characters that have been attributed to Bullock's Oriole as "field marks" are shared by some Baltimore Orioles. The age-old belief that having a white belly and gray back makes an oriole a Bullock's does not hold true. Herein, we hope to highlight a few characteristics that are key in separating these two species.

Baltimore Oriole - Female/immature

1. Very plain-faced. Usually little to no contrast between the face and crown. Color can vary from dark brownish with black flecking to very pale orange, sometimes to yellowish orange. The dark extremes can appear hooded.

2. Underparts usually orange to yellow orange. This color pales toward the belly. The under tail coverts are usually the same color as the breast. These underparts can vary widely in color

from orange to yellow-orange, to grayish yellow-orange and can vary greatly in intensity of color. Some palest birds appear to be white in the belly and flanks.

3. The back is usually olive-gray or brownish-gray and usually shows streaking. This is highly variable and pale gray backs with virtually no streaking can occur. The rump is usually washed with orange and contrasts with the back.
4. The white wing bars contrast strongly with the largely blackish wing feathers. The anterior wingbar usually appears broader than the posterior and appears broader than on Bullock's Oriole. The literature states that this is because the white covert tips are broad and evenly cut, the black centers not intruding into the white tips as in Bullock's. On Bullock's, this intrusion causes a sawtooth pattern on the inner side of the anterior wingbar.
5. Tail is usually dark washed with orangish or sometimes yellow-orange.

Summary:

Overall a more orange bird than Bullock's. The face is always plain with little to no contrast between the crown and face and little to no evidence of a superciliary line or dark eyestripe. The cheeks may appear slightly darker than the rest of the head but as stated, generally very plain-faced. The white wing bars contrast strongly with the black wing feathers and the anterior wingbar is usually broader than the posterior wingbar. The back is highly variable but evidence of streaking better for Baltimore. The underparts are highly variable and can approach white. Remember, a gray back and white belly does not necessarily mean Bullock's Oriole!

Bullock's Oriole - Female

1. Pale supercilium contrasts with darker crown and set off by dark or dusky eyeline that is continuous from the lores to the top of the auricular area (cheek). Eyeline and rest of face similar in color, usually a lemon yellow though sometime tinged with a touch of peachy orange. This results in a more striking face pattern than Baltimore Oriole, which is distinctly plain-faced.
2. The underparts are pale lemon yellow, paling even more to a white or grayish white belly. The flanks are grayish white. The undertail coverts are similar in color to the breast but may be white.
3. Back is pale gray and usually showing little to no streaking.

There are dark shafts to the back feathers and some streaking may be evident. The gray back is not a conclusive field mark. The rump is usually gray with little to no coloration. It usually does not show marked contrast with the back.

4. Two white wing bars contrast more weakly with the rest of the wing than in Baltimore Oriole as the flight feathers are dark grayish and not blackish. The wing bars usually appear more equal in width and the anterior wingbar shows a sawtooth pattern along its inner edge caused by dark grayish intrusions into the white of the covert tip.
5. Tail is usually grayish and can be suffused with yellow.

Summary:

Bullock's Oriole is less variable than Baltimore Oriole. Overall more yellow, white and gray than Baltimore Oriole. While some birds may appear slightly orangish, this color is more of a peachy orange and more limited than in Baltimore Oriole. Face distinctly patterned showing a bright supercilium contrasting with dark crown and a dusky eyeline. Overall less contrast in plumage than in Baltimore. While usually gray backed and white-bellied, these are **NOT** conclusive for this species.

TANAGERS: SCARLET, SUMMER AND WESTERN

(Figure 3 & 4, Pages 187 and 188)

As with the two previous species groups, adult male tanagers in definitive alternate plumage don't create many identification difficulties. The females, immatures, and fall and winter males, however, can be quite similar and we will discuss these forms below. We are including Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) in our discussion. A regular spring overshoot to Connecticut, this species seems to be poorly understood and descriptions received by this committee often lack convincing details and lack clear contrast to the more variable Scarlet Tanager (*P. olivacea*).

Scarlet Tanager - Fall/winter male

1. Largely yellow to yellow-green. Darker dorsally, with crown, nape, back, and rump similar in color with little to no contrast. Wings black or with contrasting black feathers. Tail black. Bill pale bone to slightly silvery gray in color. Overall, male usually brighter yellow than female, with black wings and tail contrasting well with body plumage. Important to notice that the back, nape and rump are all about the same color with little

(cont'd on page 193)

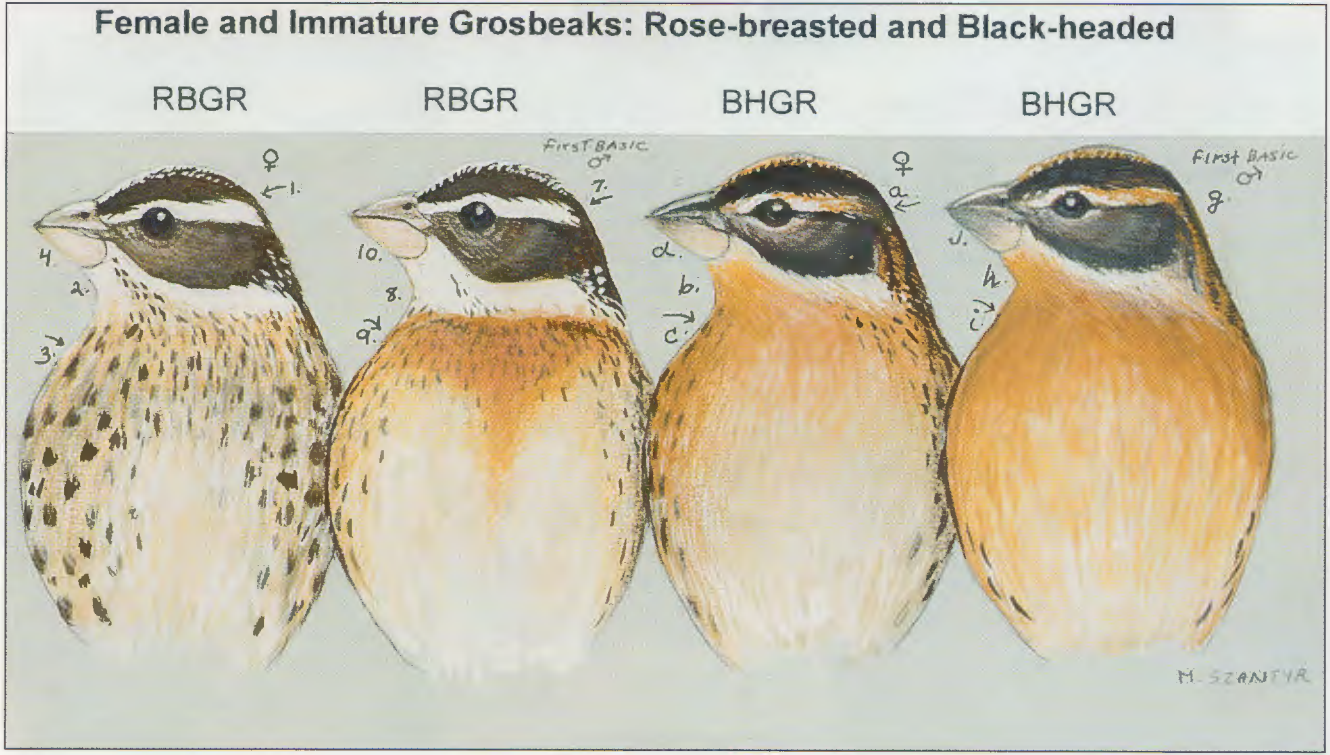

Figure 1. Grosbeaks

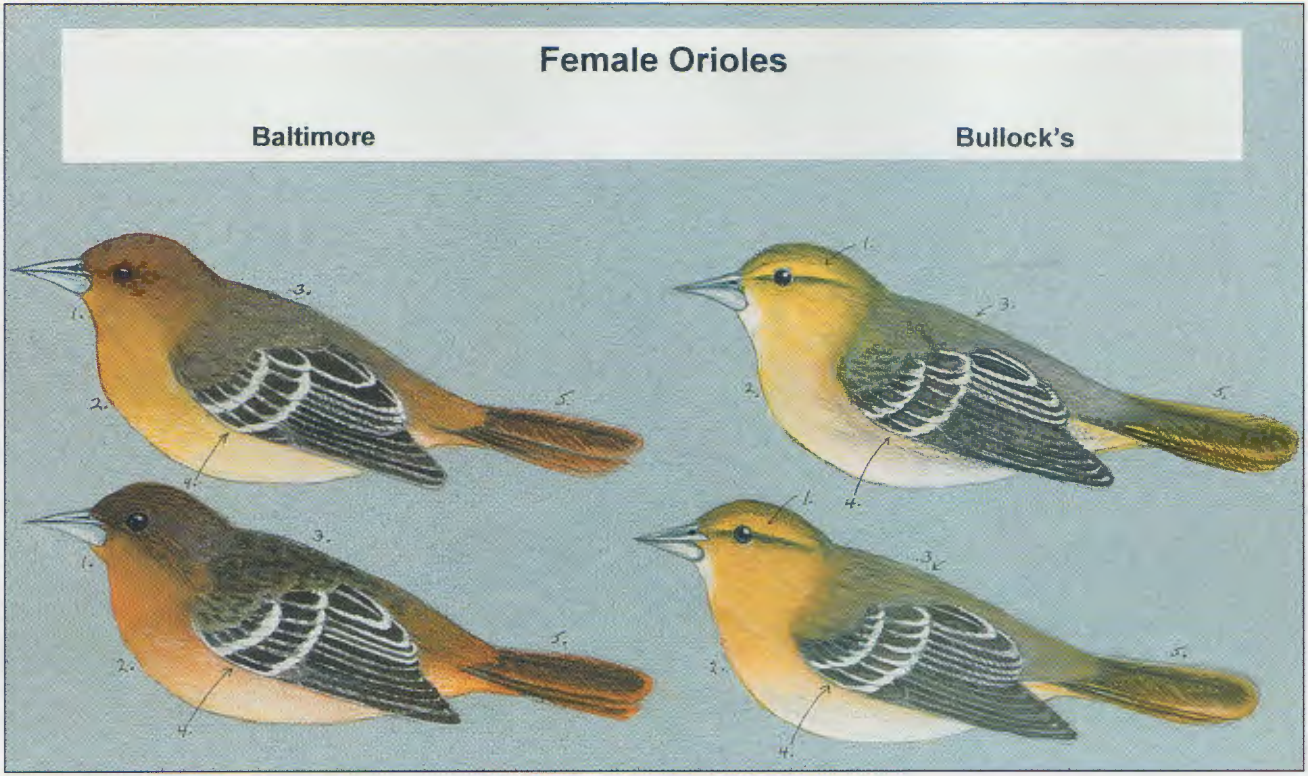

Figure 2. Orioles

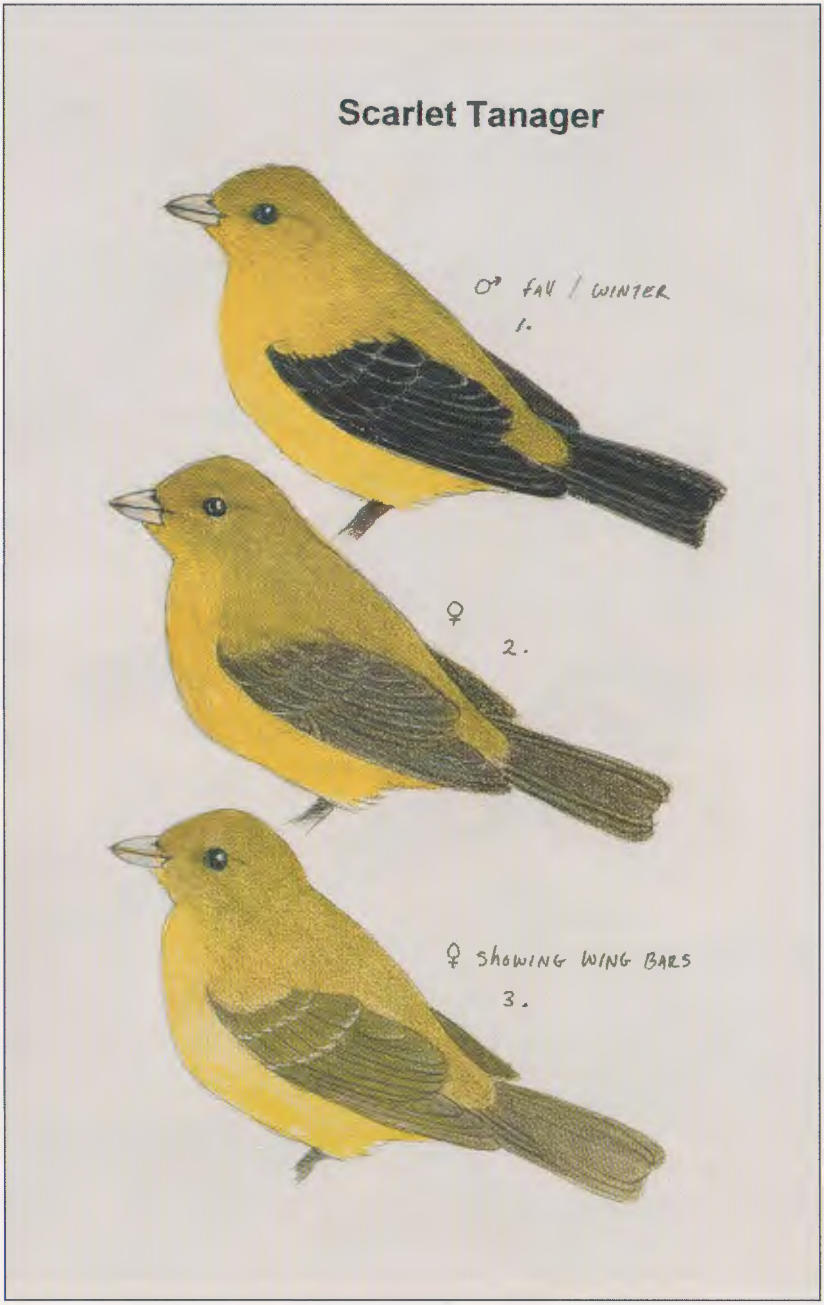

Figure 3. Tanagers - Scarlet

Figure 4. Tanagers - Summer and Western

Northern Fulmar, Stamford, CT
Photo by Patrick Dugan
14 September 1997

Pink-footed Goose, Mansfield, CT
Photo by Mark Szantyr, 23 March 1998

Cinnamon Teal, (mounted specimen) - Nell's Is., Milford, CT
Photo by Ray Schwartz, January 1995

Swainson's Hawk, Hammonasset Beach S. P., Madison, CT
Photo by Jeff Young, 5 October, 1996

Thayer's Gull - 1st Winter,
Manchester, CT
Photos by Julian Hough
14 February 1998

Ash-throated Flycatcher,
Old Lyme, CT
Photo by Mark Szantyr
3 December 1996

Boreal Owl, Hammonasset
Beach S. P., Madison, CT
Photo by Bob MacDonnell, 1 November 1996

Rufous Hummingbird - male, North Madison, CT
Photo by Mark Szantyr, 11 November 1997

Bell's Vireo, Longshore Club Park, Westport, CT
Photo by Frank Mantlik
14 October 1991

Bullock's Oriole - male,
West Hartford, CT
Photo by David Coolidge, January 1977

Black-headed Grosbeak - male, Hamden, CT
Photo by Mark Szantyr, 21 January 1998

contrast between these areas, yet good contrast between these areas and the wings.

Scarlet Tanager - Female/immature

2. Pale yellowish-olive green with dull brownish gray wings and tail. The wings and tail may approach black but are not the rich velvety black of the adult male. Variation in body color from dull greenish gray to a clearer yellow-green. As in male, the nape, back and rump are similar in color and contrast little with each other. Contrast between the wings and back is not as great as in male but still is evident. Bill as in male, sometimes slightly darker.

Scarlet Tanager - wing bars!

3. Occasionally in the fall, immature male and female Scarlet Tanagers can show pale to whitish tips to the greater and median wing coverts. These can sometimes appear quite bold and can resemble the wing bars of Western Tanager. Check to make sure these wing bars are symmetrical and complete as sometimes they are not in Scarlet Tanager. To positively separate wing barred Scarlet Tanagers from Western Tanagers, check the back. Western Tanager shows a back that contrasts as darker than the nape and rump, and is more similar in color to the wings. This causes a saddle-backed effect. Scarlet Tanager shows the back, nape, and rump as fairly uniform in color and the back contrasts well with the wings.

Summer Tanager - Female/first year male

a. Usually Summer Tanager is a warmer, more golden yellow than the olive or lemon yellow of Scarlet Tanager. There is usually varying amounts of reddish or orangish feathering in the underparts especially the under tail coverts, and sometimes in the wing and tail. The amount of red can vary, with immature females showing the least and some immature males and older females being hard to separate. The wings are usually a warm, brownish gray, lacking the olive tones of Scarlet Tanager. The tail usually brown to reddish, unlike the dark grayish or black tail of Scarlet Tanager. The bill is longer and heavier than Scarlet Tanager and is a very pale bone or yellowish bone color in the spring. It may be darker during the non-breeding season. Overall, Summer Tanager is more uniform in coloration with less contrast between the body

plumage and wings and with a more prominent bill than Scarlet Tanager.

Western Tanager - Fall/winter male

b. Bright yellow body plumage but a bit darker on the crown and nape. Varying amounts of red on face and it can show no red. The wings are black with two distinct wing bars. The anterior wing bar usually tinged with yellow and the posterior wing bar usually white. The back is black as are the wings, contrasting with the paler yellow nape and rump causing the diagnostic saddle-backed effect. The tail is black. The bill is pale with sometimes a slightly darker upper mandible.

Western Tanager - Female

c. Usually a pale olive gray or a pale greenish olive. Paler and more yellow on the underparts. The wings and tail are a darker grayish olive to brownish olive and show two distinct wing bars. As in the male, the anterior wing bar is usually tinged with yellow while the posterior wing bar is usually white. As in the male, the back is darker than the nape and rump and more closely resembles the wings in coloration, again causing the distinctive saddle-backed effect. This dark backed look separates Western Tanager from Scarlet Tanagers with wing-bars. Bill as in male.

Summary:

Scarlet Tanager is highly variable and must be conclusively eliminated before attempting to identify any tanager not in definitive alternate male plumage. Summer Tanager is plainer and warmer in coloration. It is more often to appear suffused with reddish than the other tanagers. It is larger and paler billed. Western Tanager in all plumages shows a distinct saddle-backed look that separates it from the other likely tanagers.

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FIRST BELL'S VIREO FOR CONNECTICUT

Frank Mantlik

While doing some local birding and bird photography on Columbus Day, October 14, 1991, between 2 and 4:30 PM, I visited the brush dump at the town-owned Longshore Club Park, Westport, a proven autumn site for seeing a variety of sparrows and other passerines. About 2:30, a small warbler-like bird, actively foraging among the low weeds, popped up in front of me about 25 feet away. Not being sure of its identification I became excited and walked a bit closer (20 feet) and was able to see through Leitz 10X40 Trinovids the stout vireo-like bill. Thinking this bird might be something unusual, I quickly made mental notes of the field marks while getting off three photos with my Canon F-1 and 400mm/f4.5.

After about three minutes of viewing, all the birds in the area fled for cover as a flock of noisy jays flew over. For the next 15 minutes I searched to relocate the vireo, until finally I saw it again at 50 feet about 120 feet from the initial spot. Since it was beyond photographic range, I carefully studied the field marks again, reconfirming my initial notes. After about 45 seconds, the bird flew out of view into some brush, not to be seen again. I had hoped to spot it again later while doing some sparrow photography from my car. Upon my return home, I consulted a number of field guides, which led me to think that the bird might be a Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*). At 8:30 AM the next day, I phoned Tom Rochovansky of Westport and Fred Purnell of Darien to tell them of the possible rarity. That evening Fred called back to say he had no luck in finding the bird. We discussed the possibility that the mystery bird was an immature White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*), a much more likely species.

Two weeks later, the photos arrived, which clearly indicated the field marks more indicative of Bell's Vireo. On November 8, I showed the photos to Louis Bevier, who agreed with the identification. A written report and copies of the photos were deposited with the Connecticut Rare Records Committee (now named the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut) (record No. 91-28). The Committee accepted the sighting as a first record for the state and published it in its Fifth Report (CW 13:8). It also represented, at that time, only the second record for New England.

Description: General size, shape, and color pattern like that of a warbler (such as a Tennessee). Upperparts, back and wings, olive-green; back unstreaked. Two whitish wing bars, lower one more prominent. Head grayish. Ill-defined though complete white eye ring and spectacles, not at all prominent or bold as in Blue-headed Vireo. Iris color dark. Bill fairly long but stout and vireo-like; upper mandible dark, lower mandible pale (as illustrated in photos). Underparts, including throat, chest, and belly,

unstreaked white, but with pale yellowish wash on flanks and undertail coverts. Tail long, olivey; no tail spots noticed.

Behavior: Actively foraging for insects on leaves and stems in low dense herbaceous weeds (goldenrod, lamb's-quarters, smartweed, etc.), much as a warbler would, constantly looking around for insects, and every few seconds flitting a few inches to another perch. At least once, it looked up at the underside of a leaf. During the period of observation the bird was always low, one to three feet off the ground, and oblivious to observer; resulting views were excellent, especially with sun at observer's back. Such active behavior seemed odd for a vireo, though bill shape suggested one. I did not notice the supposedly characteristic behavior of tail-flicking or tail-cocking, but I was preoccupied with simultaneously studying the field marks and obtaining photos. The bird was by itself, not associating with the numerous sparrows or other birds. No vocalizations were heard.

Weather: Beautiful bright sunny day, though cold in the A.M. (37-60°F).

Similar species: White-eyed Vireo (immature) has yellow, more prominent spectacles, sluggish behavior. Hutton's Vireo has shorter bill, broken eye-ring, sluggish behavior. Blue-headed Vireo is larger with slate gray head, all dark bill, and bold, prominent white spectacles. Philadelphia Vireo lacks wing bars, has a white supercilium and contrasting black eye-line. Tennessee Warbler lacks wing bars, has a thinner bill and white supercilium with black eye-line. Pine Warbler is larger, with yellow on throat/breast, dark cheek patch/eye-line, white spots in tail, and slimmer bill. Ruby-crowned Kinglet is smaller and chunkier, with a shorter tail, smaller, slimmer bill, broken eye-ring without spectacles, and wing-flicking behavior.

Among the seven or eight references consulted, the bird observed is best illustrated by Godfrey's *Birds of Canada*, rev.(1986), plate 59, and by Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern United States* (1980), p. 229.

The bird was clearly of the eastern "interior" form, more olivey and yellowish. The normal range of Bell's Vireo extends as far east as Indiana, and is accidental in the eastern U.S. Zeranski and Baptist's *Connecticut Birds* (1990) mentions one previous Connecticut sighting by three observers in Redding on May 11, 1947 (*Auk* 65:613), but that this record was not accepted by the CRRC. Bull's *Birds of the New York Area* (1964) states "wanders eastward in migration to New Hampshire (specimen), New York, and New Jersey (specimen)." Records for New York include a bird banded and photographed Sept. 25, 1959 at Tiana Beach, Long Island. Another individual was netted and collected that same fall on September 15 at Island Beach, NJ.

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THAYER'S GULL IN MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT: SECOND STATE RECORD

Julian Hough

On 13 February 1998, while scouting for an upcoming gull workshop, Mark Szantyr, Patrick Comins, and Clark Moseley were birding at the Manchester landfill, Hartford County. There was a large concentration of gulls feeding at the landfill, estimated by the observers to involve between 3,000 and 5,000 birds. Among the usual species, three or four Kumlien's Gulls, two Lesser Black-backed Gulls and a possible Glaucous Gull were identified in the swirling melee.

While searching through the mix of gulls, Comins noticed what he assumed to be a first-basic Kumlien's Gull and brought it to the attention of the other observers. While superficially recalling a white-winged gull from below, Szantyr noted that this individual was somewhat darker overall, showed a solid tail band and had dark outer primaries - all features anomalous with a typical Kumlien's. The bird soon landed among the other gulls and afforded the observers a chance to scrutinize its plumage. Based on the pattern of the tail, primaries and tertials, Szantyr suspected the bird might be a Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*), a species primarily wintering on the west coast and rarely recorded in the east. The bird was watched for more than 30 minutes, in which time video footage was obtained. That night after Szantyr had discussed his observations with Julian Hough, Dave Provencher, Frank Mantlik and Greg Hanisek, he was convinced that the bird had to be a Thayer's Gull.

The following morning, 14 February 1998, a small group (including the aforementioned observers) gathered in anticipation at the Manchester landfill. The bird did not reappear. Up to three Lesser Black-backed Gulls, three Kumlien's Gulls and a hybrid Glaucous X Herring Gull (colloquially referred to as "Nelson's" Gull) helped to lift the air of disappointment. Suddenly, the immortal words were uttered, "I think I've got it!" The bird was feeding with the many gulls at the head of the landfill and was exceptionally confiding and surprisingly easy to locate among the feeding mass of gulls. Many photographs were obtained and with such great looks, its identification as a Thayer's Gull was confirmed beyond a doubt. This was the first fully-documented occurrence in the state and constituted only the second state record. The first occurrence concerned an adult in Shelton, 25 January 1988 (CW 8:65).

Description

The following is based on Szantyr's notes made between 13-14 February 1998.

Overall Appearance: The bird was smaller than a first-year Herring Gull but slightly larger than the Kumlien's Gulls nearby. Compared with Kumlien's Gull, it seemed shorter winged, slightly heavier and was darker overall.

Bill: The bill not as long as that of Herring Gull showing little gonydeal angle but appeared slightly longer, or stouter than Kumlien's Gull. The bill appeared overall blackish, but in good light, the basal third appeared to be dark flesh.

Head: Similar to Iceland Gull, but with more of a soft slope to the forehead, causing it to appear less rounded. Color was a buffy-gray, with a darker "smudge" around the eyes and loral area. Scattered streaking over the rest of the head, especially in the area of the crown and nape.

Closed wing: Primaries appeared to be a dark, gray-brown with obvious pale crescents at their tips which extended and broadened along the outer edge of the inner web of each feather. The primaries were significantly darker than the rest of the closed wing except the tertials. The tertials consisted of solid dark centers, approximately the color of the primaries, with pale fringe and very slight marbling at the tip. The primaries and the tertials contrasted greatly with the rest of the upperparts.

Open wing (from above): The outermost primaries were dark on the outer web, with a small area of dark crossing to the inner web subterminally. The inner primaries were pale. The secondaries showed as a dark bar, formed by the dark outer webs. This gave the impression of dark-light-dark to the open wing.

(from below): It appeared very much like a white-winged gull, with all flight feathers appearing translucent silvery-white when against the sun. From below, there was a dark bar visible on the trailing edge to the outer primaries, a result of the dark shaft hooking back across the inner webs.

Tail: The open tail from above appeared solid and dark charcoal gray, with a narrow pale tip. The base of outer tail feathers was paler with faint marbling. The tail appeared similar to that of a *smithsonianus* Herring Gull, but somewhat washed out. The undertail coverts showed as heavily barred against the pale undertail.

Underparts: The underparts of the bird were pale gray buff, similar in overall appearance to the rest of the bird. A faint marbling was visible on close inspection.

Legs: The legs appeared a dull, dark pinkish.

Identification

Thayer's Gulls appear intermediate between Herring Gull and Kumlien's Gull. First-winter birds show a range of features that, when combined, may help to rule out dark extremes of Kumlien's Gulls or unusually plumaged Herring Gulls. They appear larger, stocky-bodied and have a proportionately heavier bill than Kumlien's Gull. They also show more solidly dark tails and tertial centers (vermiculated only at the extreme base), a characteristic 'venetian-blind' pattern to the primaries and, when seen from below, translucent flight feathers with a narrow dark trailing edge. On the ground the primaries are dark brown with distinctive pale fringing and project only a short way beyond the tail. Although some dark Kumlien's can match Thayer's in some of these respects, they rarely, if ever, show them all in combination. Thayer's Gulls have proven to be highly variable in plumage color and tone. This fact, coupled with the occurrence of Thayer's-like hybrids from mixed pairings of other gull species and the extreme variation of Kumlien's Gulls in the east (some of which closely resemble Thayer's), has compounded the identification process of this species.

Taxonomic Status and Distribution

Thayer's Gulls breed in northeastern Canada and winter primarily along the west coast. Currently Thayer's Gull is treated as a full species. However, there is some anticipation that its taxonomic position may be reversed due to the unclear relationship within the range of Kumlien's Gull. Some authorities have proposed that Thayer's Gull is the western subspecies of Kumlien's Gull and represents the extreme end of a cline that starts in the east with Kumlien's Gull. As would be expected with this hypothesis there is likely to be a zone of overlap where both forms meet. It is not hard to logically conclude that this would be somewhere in the 'middle' of such a clinal distribution and so-called 'intermediates' have been reported regularly from the Great Lakes regions. Presently, the taxonomic position of Thayer's Gull is poorly understood and until further research is undertaken, the picture is not likely to become clearer.

As it is a long-distance migrant, its occurrences in the east should not be surprising. It is likely that Thayer's Gulls are more regular than current records suggest. What is surprising, is the fact that it has occurred three times in Europe - all in Ireland! The most recent record, in Donegal in February 1998, was the Western Palearctic's first adult.

Armed with a sound grip on the variability of both species, observers find that Thayer's Gulls exhibit a range of features which give them a certain distinctive look which once learned may lead to an upsurge in reports in the northeast.

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A CONNECTICUT BIRDING YEAR - PART 4

David Provencher

Introduction

This is the fourth and last installment of this series dedicated to enhancing the knowledge and success of beginning and intermediate birders in Connecticut. The time period we will cover in this final article will be October through December. We will revisit the phenomenon of Fall Migration and so will discuss the month of September a little as well. This period is full of "little brown jobs", that is to say sparrows. It also is the best period of the year for rarities. We will of course discuss the birding opportunities and strategies of the period. We will also cover Christmas Bird Counts, tips for advanced birders, and the informational resources available for Connecticut birding.

Songbird Migration Revisited

In the third installment we briefly discussed the phenomenon of the Fall Migration. It is very important to understand how that phenomenon dictates our birding strategy so we will now revisit it in a larger context. Another migratory phenomenon comes into play at this season as well, irruptive migration, which we'll discuss later.

We often refer to species such as warblers as "our" birds. In reality we enjoy their presence here for only a small portion of the year. These species are better described as visitors to our part of the world. Their instinctual task here is to reproduce and when that is accomplished they return to their primary wintering range. Most long-distance songbird migrants are nocturnal migrants; they travel at night. There are several reasons we are aware of for this behavior but probably the most significant is the atmosphere of the night sky is cooler and more stable and therefore prolonged flying is more efficient and navigation more accurate. Nocturnal migrants, particularly young birds, generally migrate on a "broad front", meaning they are essentially flying by compass direction rather than by following specific landmarks. When the conditions are right the night time sky can be full of these birds. An hour or two before daylight these travelers come back to earth to rest. If you think nocturnal navigation by birds is a miracle, imagine landing in a tree in the dark without skewering yourself! When daylight comes many, but not all, of these species continue moving in a phenomenon known as "morning flight." This little understood behavior turns these nocturnal migrants into diurnal (daylight) migrants and as such their navigational behavior changes as well. Diurnal migration is primarily accomplished by leading edge navi-

gation. That is to say that they follow topographical features rather than a general compass heading. Morning flight occurs during the first few hours of daylight, after which the migrants feed and rest from their Herculean efforts. These briefly outlined facts are important to building a birding strategy in Connecticut. Nocturnal navigation is "broad-front" and directional so our east-west shoreline is a "barrier" to the southbound migration since these travelers must be over landmasses or be able to reach land when morning arrives, or they may perish. When morning does arrive the "morning flyers" will undertake leading edge migration, that is to say they will follow the ridge lines, river valleys, or the coastline as they continue to move in a direction that takes them closer to their winter homes. These facts help give us the "where" to best bird the fall migration. The most productive locations tend to be coastal parks or other shoreline areas of natural habitat, high ridge lines, especially around edge habitat such as powerline cuts, or river valleys and their associated wetlands. Virtually anywhere can be locally good on a given day however, so if you can't travel to bird you should at least be aware of when the "good" days are. If you know it's been a good night for migration you can skip lunch and bird the park down the street. So what days are good days?

As discussed before, adult birds generally migrate before their young. Their migratory experience also allows them to travel when weather conditions are not necessarily prime but acceptable. There is some advantage to arriving on the wintering grounds early to stake out feeding territories first. So some migration occurs on every decent fall night. But the nights of heaviest movement are quite predictable. After a cold front passes the atmosphere is cooler and more dense. There is usually a northwest wind as well. These factors make the first clear night after a cold front passes a very good night for migration. On the subsequent nights the atmosphere is often just as cool and dense but with little or no wind. This makes for a more stable atmosphere which means more efficient flight conditions. So in practice, the first two or perhaps three clear nights following the passage of a cold front will see the most migratory songbirds in Connecticut. Knowledgeable birders eagerly anticipate these days and often call in "sick" to work when they occur, or so I've heard. If several days of inclement weather precede the cold front then the number of migrants moving will be higher. The months of September and October are THE months for these highlight events of the birding year. September cold fronts will produce the greatest species diversity and October, particularly early October, will produce the greatest number of individuals. The key is to be out early on these prime days, beat the sun to the birding spots and you will be amply rewarded. Fall mornings are beautiful by themselves but the addition of numerous migrants makes you truly appreciate being alive!

Irruptive Migration

We have discussed the annual migration of songbirds. An understanding of the how and why of this phenomenon is essential to birding Connecticut. Wood-warblers alone represent nearly ten percent of all the species ever recorded for our state. Another form of migratory behavior is not as predictable, the form we call "irruptive." Essentially all migration is tied to the availability of food sources. Neotropic migrants evolved to take advantage of the huge insect population in the northern hemisphere during our summer. A number of species occur to our north that also normally winter mostly to our north, such as Snowy Owl. These species irregularly, and unpredictably, move further south on years when their northern food sources are poor. They thus "irrupt" into our area. These species are typically either birds of prey, finches, or sparrows. Some western species fit this category as well, such as Bohemian Waxwing. The species that we can reasonably hope for on most years include Rough-legged Hawk, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Lapland Longspur, Pine Siskin, and Evening Grosbeak. Species that irrupt into our region less often include Gyrfalcon, Boreal Chickadee, Bohemian Waxwing, Northern Shrike, Pine Grosbeak, both crossbills, Common Redpoll, and Hoary Redpoll. On truly exceptional years we have had occurrences of Great Gray Owl and Boreal Owl as well. Predicting the years when irruptions occur is currently less scientific than astrological. The best way to find out when they will occur is to be aware when they are actually happening. Following rare bird alerts for states and provinces to our north is one way to anticipate them but perhaps the best way to find out is by word-of-mouth. Once again we assert that one of the best birding resources available is other birders.

October

We left off our discussion in part three of this series in the middle of songbird migration. During October this event is still in mid stride. As the neotropic migrants wind down the North American migrants pick up. This month the bulk of the sparrows will arrive. Sparrows are typically more terrestrial than Neotropic migrants and the habitat to search for them is therefore somewhat different. While the warblers are passing by you always seem to be looking upward but when the sparrows arrive you always seem to be looking down. Any areas offering seed such as edge habitat, fields, brush, gravel pits, and grass/dirt parking lots are prime spots for sparrows. Species to expect include Chipping, Field, Savannah, Song, Lincoln's, Swamp, White-throated, White-crowned, and Dark-eyed Junco. Less common species to hope for include Clay-colored, Vesper, Lark, and Grasshopper Sparrow. Very rare possibilities include Henslow's, Le Conte's, and Harris' Sparrow. Marshes, particularly salt

marshes, offer other species such as Salt-marsh Sharp-tailed, Nelson's Sharp-tailed, and Seaside Sparrow. The migratory behavior of sparrows is essentially the same as we discussed for songbirds in general so the methodology of predicting their occurrence is also the same. Many birders consider sparrows to be an identification nightmare but they needn't be. Take the time to study the common species such as Song Sparrow and Savannah Sparrow. A working knowledge of the common stuff is invaluable when you find yourself looking at the uncommon. When working an area that has many sparrows, such as an agricultural field gone to seed, you should work slowly and deliberately. Sparrows will give you good looks if you move deliberately and patiently. However, a good rule of thumb is that when you are sure you have seen every bird in an area, you haven't! Work the spot again. With the recent advent of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow being given species status many birders have searched for this salt marsh denizen. The one to expect here is the race that breeds in the north of New England and into the Maritimes of Canada. October is the time to find this dull, faded relative of our local breeders and you should search salt marshes for it, particularly at the high tide.

While October is the month to tally your sparrows for the year, they are not the only birds to look for. As a general rule you will always find other interesting birds while you are looking for sparrows. Be alert for little gems like Sedge Wren, Blue Grosbeak, or Dickcissel. This is a time of transition from the birds of summer to the birds of winter. This transitional period is the time to look for species that pass through Connecticut on their way to winter quarters. Long Island Sound should be watched for loons and grebes, Northern Gannet (uncommon), Great Cormorant, Brant, scoters, and Forster's Tern. Virtually all other terns are gone by now. Coastal marshes and shorebird habitat should be checked for American and Least Bitterns (both uncommon), returning ducks especially Blue-winged Teal and Northern Shoveler (rare), Northern Harrier, Common Moorhen (rare), late shorebirds such as juvenile Long-billed Dowitcher (rare), Dunlin, Short-eared Owl (irruptive), and Eastern Meadowlark. Open marshes or agricultural habitat should be watched for Northern Harriers or Rough-legged Hawks. Woodland species worth looking for include Long-eared Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl. These birds often roost within fir trees or in tangles of vines and brush. Please be very aware of the negative impact that birders can have on owl roost sites. The disturbance caused to these birds in the past by birders has led to many sightings of these birds now going unreported. Please bird ethically when owling; the goal is to NOT FLUSH the owls. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, and if you,re lucky Red-headed Woodpeckers, are possibilities now. One of the most reliable places to see Red-headed is the Lighthouse Point Park hawkwatch in East Haven. They are usually flyby birds here so know the

back pattern to recognize these woodboring missiles as they bound by. Winter Wrens are passing now as well, listen around brush for a call note similar to Song Sparrow but doubled up. Both species of kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler (uncommon), Dickcissel (uncommon), Eastern Towhee, Rusty Blackbird, Purple Finch, and the first Evening Grosbeaks (irruptive) are all species to expect in October. This is a great month for hawk-watching and the big birds are moving now. To the mix of Red-tailed Hawks and Red-shouldered Hawks you can hope for Bald Eagle or even Golden Eagle to spice it up.

As a general strategy for the month you should bird the songbird migration as you did in September. Start the month looking for the neotropic species you have missed so far, as well as the start of intra-North American migrants. Warblers early in the month, sparrows starting in the middle of the month, and waterfowl and water associated species at the end of the month. Check edge habitat regularly this month, as well as fields and agricultural habitat. Wherever you find flocks of Yellow-rumped Warblers, and you will find flocks, sift through them for other species. Many an Orange-crowned Warbler has been found among a hoard of Yellow-rumps. On any day with northwest winds think hawk-watching. This is one of the most pleasant months of the year to be out birding. Enjoy.

November

Hello Old Man Winter. Every year I am struck by the stark change in our natural world that occurs by the month of November. Woodlands full of singing warblers and flycatchers seem almost a dream now. So bundle up and let's go see what we can find.

One of the species that we hope to find in Connecticut annually, but don't, is Tundra Swan. Their migratory route usually does not include Connecticut. If they show up here at all, this is the time to look for them. In recent years the lower Connecticut River has been a relatively good spot to find them. A word of caution however. Other species of swans are now being raised, or "hacked" in the northeast and Canada by conservation organizations trying to replenish and reestablish dwindling species such as Trumpeter Swan. When you find a species of swan with a black bill, be sure to identify the species properly! Other waterfowl are moving in at this time and this the best time to find certain species in our area. Snow Geese are moving through and any flocks should be scanned for Greater White-fronted Geese. They should also be carefully scanned for Ross' Goose, a species not yet recorded for Connecticut. This is a particularly good time to look for scoters in Long Island Sound. Later in the season they will be less in evidence. Black Scoter is the most difficult scoter

to find in Connecticut waters and is best looked for in the eastern sound. The area around the mouth of the Thames River in Groton/New London has been very reliable for these elegant ducks. This area is also a good bet for Common Eider, a species once extremely rare in southern New England but now increasing significantly here. Another prized find in Connecticut is Harlequin Duck, and November is prime time to search for one. Rocky outcroppings or jetties are often where these rarities turn up. And while you are searching those spots check the rocks themselves, there's a decent chance there will be Purple Sandpipers clinging to them. Birders residing inland should be aware that waterfowl which winter on salt water are sometimes found on inland bodies of water. Any lake or large pond should be checked for these species. Bantam Lake in Litchfield is one spot that has a long list of good waterfowl sightings. Gulls also play a role in November birding with Iceland and Glaucous being the expected visitors. Be alert to better finds however, such as Thayer's (very rare), Black-legged Kittiwake (rare on the sound and extremely rare on shore), or dare I mention it, Ross' Gull. Have a free morning? How about spending it on a landfill, like Manchester's? Yum, Yum, a smelly, dirty landfill! Best place for Lesser Black-backed Gull and as yet the ONLY place for Thayer's Gull in our state. The area of gull identification is a rapidly growing part of birding and we are seeing some very interesting gull discoveries in the northeast, such as Black-tailed Gull in Rhode Island.

Sparrows are still going strong in early November and American Tree Sparrow will be around by now. Open areas such as grass/gravel parking lots and agricultural fields may have Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, and Lapland Longspurs (uncommon). Watch carefully for other longspurs such as Smith's or Chestnut-collared, very rare here but possible. Large flocks of blackbirds are moving southward now as well and if the opportunity arises you should watch for Yellow-headed Blackbirds in the mix. They are quite uncommon but probably occur annually in Connecticut. Rusty Blackbirds sometimes winter in Connecticut in very small numbers and you should be alert to their possible presence in wooded swamps and fresh water marshes.

November is also the month for irruptions and rarities. It is prime time to search for Rough-legged Hawks and Snowy Owls. Open areas are best, such as marshes or large fields. These irregular visitors are usually young birds since the adults will attempt to stay as close to the breeding grounds as possible. Open coastal habitat may even turn up a Gyrfalcon. If you find one of these, buy a lottery ticket on the way home since your luck is running so high! Winter finches will be arriving now, if at all. Watch feeders or trees with catkins for the roving flocks. Better yet learn the flight vocalizations of these hardy little birds, they will most often be en-

countered as fly- overs. Another way to watch for winter finches is to "fish" for them with bird feeders. Black oil sunflower and niger seed feeders might just "land" that big one in your yard. Besides, there is no better way to study the common birds than to have them come to you!

As a general strategy for November, search edge habitat and open areas often for sparrows, buntings, and finches; start looking for the species of waterfowl that you have missed so far this year; look for owls such as Long-eared, Short-eared, Saw-whet, or Snowy; and watch feeders and listen for irruptive finches. Most definitely you should always search through any Yellow-rumped Warblers you find, eventually you will find something good in with them. Most importantly, ask other birders what they are seeing; this is likely to be your first clue that irruptive species are moving on a given year. And lastly, always watch the sky, something cool might just be flying over your head, like a Sandhill Crane!

December

The last month of the year! One thing experienced birders have discovered is that this month can sometimes be a bit boring for listers. There will usually be few new species to add to your year list during this month. The thing to do is to actively search out the glaring misses on your list, such as Eastern Screech-Owl or Lapland Longspur. If irruptive species are around you can search for them as well. Chasing rarities found by other birders is something most of us engage in quite often this month. It is after all the season of Christmas Bird Counts. Not infrequently these counts turn up a goodie such as Townsend's Solitaire or Ash-throated Flycatcher. I strongly suggest you participate in these annual counts. It is a great opportunity to learn from more experienced birders and it is really quite enjoyable. These bird censuses are held throughout North America and beyond and are important sources of information on bird populations. December is also a good time to chase rarities in neighboring states. If an Ivory Gull shows up in Maine (again), then traveling there to observe it will increase your experience and skill and make your Connecticut birding that much more successful in the future. By the end of this last month your species list for the year should exceed 200. How much it exceeds the double-century mark depends upon how much of an effort you made. It is possible to routinely exceed 270 in Connecticut, but that requires quite a commitment. The real measure of success is whether you had fun birding this year. If when all is said and done you are happy with your effort, then what difference does it make if you saw 100 species or 250? When listing becomes too stressful because of the species you haven't seen, you are birding the wrong way!

The general strategy for December; well let's see, what are you missing? If it's Canada Warbler then better luck next year. If it's White-

winged Scoter, then go search the sound. If the going is slow then take time to study whatever is around, this knowledge will serve you well in the future. The strategy for this final month of a Connecticut birding year is really that simple. Fill in whatever holes in your list you still can; participate in Christmas Bird Counts; talk to other birders about possible rarities or irruptions; and finish your Christmas shopping. And oh yes, when you are welcoming in the new year with a glass of champagne on New Year's Eve, remember that a new birding year starts tomorrow. You WILL be getting up early in the morning, or better yet, just head out after midnight and start looking for owls!

Advanced Birding Tips

During the month of October much is happening in the avian world in Connecticut. Birders need to be alert. One area of opportunity is the nor'easter. At this time there are many Laughing Gulls in and around Long Island Sound. In recent years it has come to be understood that a number of Parasitic Jaegers get into these flocks. As many as six Parasitic Jaegers have been seen off Montauk Point, Long Island recently. A nor'easter has the potential to drive these jaegers into Connecticut waters. The author has seen just this very thing happen while watching from the eastern Connecticut shoreline during a storm. Any strong storm with persistent easterly during this three month period offers rare pelagic opportunities for us. October holds the potential for Leach's Storm-Petrel, Northern Gannet, Parasitic Jaeger, or something rarer. November may yield Northern Fulmar (if it is a truly nasty storm and you are a very lucky person), Northern Gannet, Common or King Eider, Pomarine Jaeger (same comment as fulmar), Black-legged Kittiwake, Thick-billed Murre (lucky again), or Razorbill. While it is true that Long Island Sound can be a very "unbirdy" place, it still has the potential for some of a Connecticut birding year's best highlights.

Conclusion to series

This article brings this series to a close. I hope it has been of some small help to some of you. When I undertook this effort I didn't truly appreciate how difficult it was going to be to cover an entire year in four short installments such as these. I hoped to pass on as much of what I have learned as I could. All I can say is that I have done my best. There is one fact that has been borne home to me on more than one occasion, the more you learn about birds and birding the more you realize how ridiculously little you know. Always keep an open mind and open eyes, the natural world will have something new to show you as long as you live. And when a new birder walks up to you and asks for help, do the best you can to pass on a little of what you have learned. It is the right thing to do. I bid you all "Good birding!"

Informational Resources Available

The first ornithologists and naturalists who came to the New World had no guide to tell them what species they would find here. They had to observe the unknown birds for countless hours and collect many specimens to begin to understand what the different species were. Indeed, so little was known of the birds of the New World that on a number of occasions female birds were first thought to be a different species than the males. Thankfully we do not have to work as hard as those early explorers did. We now have many resources available to help us find and identify the different bird species of Connecticut. It isn't necessary to obtain every field guide or audio recording on the market but some are essential for successful birding.

Field Guides: The single most important field guide to own is National Geographic's *Field guide to the Birds of North America*. This is an excellent all around guide considered by many to be the bible of North American birders. This should be the foundation of your birding library. The next field guide you purchase really depends on personal preference but you should choose from one of the following: The Peterson Field Guides series *Eastern Birds*; Golden Guide's *A Guide to Field Identification Birds of North America*; An Audubon's Handbook's *Eastern Birds*; or *Stokes Field Guide to Birds* Eastern region. As your birding library grows you can start to add some of the superb, but sometimes pricey, references such as *Shorebirds an Identification Guide* by Hayman, Marchant, and Prater; *The Sparrows of the United States and Canada* by James D. Rising; or Peterson Field Guide's *Warblers* by Dunn and Garret. There are numerous tomes available now dedicated to particular bird families such as gulls. One book that is a good inexpensive addition is Peterson Field Guide's *Advanced Birding* by Kenn Kaufman, it's really not just for advanced birders. For information specifically about Connecticut birds and where to find them you should check out *Connecticut Birds* by Zeranski and Baptist, *Connecticut Birding Guide* by Devine and Smith, and *Finding Birds in Connecticut* by Rosgen and Billings.

It is highly advisable that you purchase and study audio references as well. Essential to Connecticut birding is the Peterson series *Field Guide to Bird Songs-Eastern/Central North America*. This is the single most important audio reference to start your library with. Next you should chose one or more of the following; *Guide to Bird Sounds* by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology; *Birding by Ear; Guide to Bird Song Identification* and *More Birding by Ear: Eastern and Central* both by Walton and Lawson. One last highly recommended addition for warbler enthusiasts like myself, *Songs of the Warblers of North America* by Borror and Gunn.

All the above resources and more are available at birding stores and through mail order catalogs such as the American Birding Association's *The Birder's Catalog*. Once you have acquired some of these references you can start your studying! Remember the saying, chance favors the prepared mind. It really does!

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CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Greg Hanisek

SPRING, MARCH 1 TO MAY 31, 1998

To sum up the spring season, it began with some extraordinary early records; the heart of the migration was generally slow and uneventful; then the last week of May produced a good flurry of the typically later species with some decent warbler movements, i.e., 14 species at Willards Island at Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP) on May 24 (CR). The most noteworthy early records were so strange (following a strange El Nino winter) that they're worth partitioning off here in the introduction to the seasonal reports: an Eastern Wood-Pewee was seen and heard March 29-31 in Killingworth (JHi). This was followed in quick succession by a Veery singing March 30 in Westport (E&LHi), a Wood Thrush singing April 4 in Wilton (JHu) and a Yellow Warbler April 5 in Southbury (RN). These were all record early dates by at least two weeks. There also were Broad-winged Hawks reported March 26 in Ridgefield (LHa) and March 31 in Manchester (PCo). Together these reports create a solid, if rather inexplicable, pattern.

Following are some first arrival dates for regular migrants. These generally fall into the typical range, although in keeping with the character of the 1998 season, a number are on the early side.

Spotted Sandpiper - April 30 in West Hartford (DR); Common Snipe - March 17 in Watertown (GH); Chimney Swift - April 20 in Kent (GH); Eastern Phoebe - March 24 in Westbrook (PCo) and Southbury (PB); Great Crested Flycatcher - May 1 in New Milford (AT); Purple Martin - April 10 in Kent (CW); Tree Swallow - March 2 in Chester (PCo); Northern Rough-winged Swallow - March 31 in Southbury (PB); House Wren - April 22 in Hartford (GH,MS); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - April 5 in New Haven (PDe) and Killingworth (JHi), a record by four days; Wood Thrush - April 25 in New Hartford (DR): Gray Catbird - April 29 in Greenwich (TG) and Trumbull (DV); Brown Thrasher - April 14 in Stratford (DV); American Pipit - March 29 in Farmington (GH); Blue-headed Vireo - April 11 in Southbury (PB); Warbling Vireo - April 30 in Greenwich (TG); Northern Parula - April 26 in New Haven (RN); Black-throated Green Warbler - April 30 in Greenwich (TG); Blackburnian Warbler - April 30 in Fairfield (CB); Pine Warbler - March 26 in Litchfield (DR); Prairie Warbler - April 30 in Waterbury (RN); Black and White Warbler - April 25 in Barkhamsted (GH); Ovenbird - April 29 in Greenwich (TG)

and Trumbull (DV); Louisiana Waterthrush - April 4 in Canton (JK); Common Yellowthroat - April 29 in Greenwich (TG); Rose-breasted Grosbeak - April 26 in Manchester (JLa); Eastern Towhee - April 3 in Milford (DV); and Baltimore Oriole - April 30 in West Hartford (DR).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Nepaug Reservoir in Canton held an excellent 26 Common Loons May 3 (JM). Single Red-necked Grebes were off Shippan Point in Stamford in early March (PDu), at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport April 10 (CB) and at Long Beach in Stratford March 27-28 (JM,DV). A calling Pied-billed Grebe suggested possible breeding April 5 at Asekonk Swamp in North Stonington (RD). Northern Gannets were seen almost daily March 20-April 9, with up to four at a time, off Southport (CB). An immature Great Cormorant April 11 at Transylvania Pond in Southbury continued a recent trend of inland appearances (RN).

Two American Bitterns were in a likely breeding area in Litchfield April 21 (PF) and calling birds that were probably territorial included two on May 16 in Sharon (DS et al.) and one May 27 in Cornwall (DP). Others were reported throughout March at HBSP; March 22 at Transylvania Pond in Southbury, an early date (RN); in April from two locations in Old Lyme (HG); April 19 at Hesseky Meadow Pond in Woodbury (RN); and May 13 in Milford (FM). A Little Blue Heron was quite early March 28 at East Rock Park in New Haven (WSt). A good supply of Tricolored Herons included reports from Great Island April 21 (HG et al.), Great Meadows in Stratford May 27 (CB), and Barn Island in Stonington May 12 (GW). Single Cattle Egrets were at HBSP May 11 (GH,NC), at Sherwood Island May 7(CB) and at Seaside Park in Bridgeport May 10 (CB). Two alert observers found a **White-faced Ibis** in less than pristine plumage on May 10 at HBSP; it was present through the end of the period for a third state record, all in the '90s. (BF,KF,m.ob., photos). The season's high count of Glossy Ibis was 39 at Salt Meadow in Westbrook April 23 (PCo); the first were five seen March 29 in Westbrook (JLi).

The three **Tundra Swans** that wintered in North Cove, Essex, were still present in early March, and another was in the Great Island area of Old Lyme, March 4-20 (TH, HG). A **Pink-footed Goose**, present March 21-25 on farm fields in Mansfield, in the northeastern part of the state, was the season's star attraction and represented a significant North American record as well as a first for the state (SM,m.ob., photos). It was with a flock of several hundred Canada Geese and one well-marked Greater White-fronted Goose of the Greenland race (MS). The white-fronted stayed through at least March 28 (PCi). Five others were

recorded for the season as the recent increase in this species continues. A flock of 42 Snow Geese March 27 at Greenwich Audubon Center included one blue morph (TG).

Bantam Lake held three Northern Shovelers March 29 (BF); four were at Milford Point in late March (m.ob.); and two at Mills Pond in Canton March 29 were a first for the area (JK). In addition, one was in Pomfret March 25 (RD) and two were present April 6 at Great Meadows, Stratford (CB). A pair of Gadwall, increasing as nesters, were seen mating near Barn Island May 9 (P&BS). A **Eurasian Wigeon** was a good inland find March 28 at Station 43 in South Windsor (PCi,JM). An adult male **Tufted Duck** was found March 9 on Bride Lake in Niantic. It stayed for more than a week (GK) and was probably the same bird seen at North Cove, Old Saybrook, March 23 (PCo). A drake **Barrow's Goldeneye** remained to mid-March at North Cove in Essex. A late Oldsquaw was in Old Lyme May 22 (TH) and one was far inland in Somers March 13 (PDe,WP). Common Merganser numbers built to about 1,000 March 24 at Bantam Lake (DR); two were late near the coast May 25 at Lords Cove in Lyme (TH).

RAPTORS THROUGH GULLS

Black Vulture is well-established in western Connecticut but seldom seen along the coast, so two over East Norwalk April 5 were noteworthy (FM). One was in Greenwich April 27 (BO), and another was over New Haven March 4. Ospreys established a new nest site on a telephone pole at Pleasure Beach in Bridgeport (CB). An immature Golden Eagle soared over the Salmon River in East Haddam March 6 and sparred with an immature Bald Eagle that tried to rob it of prey (TH,HG). Another Golden Eagle was seen March 23 in Manchester eating a goose (BA).

A good count of nine Virginia Rails was made May 3 at Little Pond in Litchfield (DR). Both Virginia Rail and Sora were in Ellington May 13 (CE). Two King Rails, described as chasing each other and making territorial grunt calls, were reported from HBSP May 25 (LB fide PCo). A Barn Owl flew across I-91 in Meriden before dawn April 3 (PCo). A Northern Saw-whet Owl was at Waldo Park in Southbury, a possible breeding location, March 8 (LF).

Warblers overshadow shorebirds in May, but the waders are moving right through the end of the month as noted by this count May 28 at Milford Point: 237 Black-bellied Plovers; 26 Semipalmated Plovers; one Greater Yellowlegs; 45 Ruddy Turnstones; two Red Knots; 24 Sanderlings; 56 Semipalmeted Sandpipers; 20 Least Sandpipers; one White-rumped Sandpiper; 19 Dunlin and 18 Short-billed Dowitchers (PCo,LK,RP). A Greater Yellowlegs on March 22, far from the coast in Mansfield, probably was a

legitimate early migrant, rather than a winterer (GH et al.). A Whimbrel was at Milford Point May 7 (FM). Sandy Point in West Haven held 18 Red Knots May 30 (DS). A Western Sandpiper, rare in spring, was at Milford Point May 19-20 (PCo,BKo). There were nine Pectoral Sandpipers April 21 at the mouth of the Black Hall River in Old Lyme (HG et al.). A **Wilson's Phalarope** was at HBSP May 17-18 (AA) and one was at a pond in Durham May 28 (WSc), a good showing for this species.

The mid-April flight of Bonaparte's Gulls brought reports of at least six **Little Gulls** at scattered sights on the coast (PDu,BO,CB et al.). This movement also included about five **Black-headed Gulls**, and another was present in March at Holly Pond in Stamford (PDu). The high Bonaparte's Gull count was 5,000+ off Stamford April 5 (PDu et al.). Ring-billed Gulls have become part of the landscape, but 800 was a noteworthy inland number March 24 at Bantam Lake in Litchfield (DR). There were at least 10 Lesser Black-backed Gulls reported for the season (m.ob.). The Manchester landfill held two or three **Iceland Gulls** and one **Glaucous Gull** into mid-March (PCo). Two **Black Skimmers** returned May 27 to Sandy Point in West Haven, where a pair nested unsuccessfully last year (ARs,NR). That was the state's second breeding record, and its third was foretold by a pair seen copulating May 30 (DS).

CUCKOOS THROUGH FINCHES

Two Yellow-billed Cuckoos were at Wethersfield Meadows May 14 (SK); one was in Canton May 19 (JK). Black-billed Cuckoos were a bit more widespread. Whip-poor-wills seem to be well-scattered around the state, with four in Ellington April 29 (CE), one at Lake Quassapaug in Woodbury in May (ARo), two+ at Salt Meadow in Westbrook May 3 (BKo), and five+ on the Waterbury-Plymouth line in early May (GH). An Olive-sided Flycatcher was in Nehantic State Forest in Lyme May 22-23 (TH), and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers staged a good movement in the last week of May, with some spilling over into June (MS et al.). A **Western Kingbird** provided a noteworthy spring record at HBSP on May 30 (DA, et al.). The ever-increasing Common Raven included up to five over the rugged cliffs south of Naugatuck in March. Others included singles in Wilton March 3 (JHu) and Hamden March 7 (AB), four at Shepaug Dam in Southbury March 8 (DR), and two at Westport-Wilton line March 28 (PM).

Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrushes were present May 19 & 23 in Canton (JK); Swainson's Thrushes were a bit more findable, but not by much. A single **Bohemian Waxwing** was found in Pomfret, in the northeast corner of the state, on March 17 (MS), in the same spot where a small flock was reported a month earlier. There are

still less than a half-dozen accepted records for the state, including one of multiple long-staying birds. The first White-eyed Vireo was reported April 30 at Greenwich Audubon Center (TG). Philadelphia Vireos are rare and difficult to find in spring; most records occur in late May, such as one May 28-29 at HBSP (DC,BY et al.).

A Brewster's Warbler was in Canton May 13-14 (JK,JM) and a Lawrence's Warbler was in Southbury May 30 (RN). Spring records of **Orange-crowned Warbler** are always worth noting: one was in Stratford April 23 (PCo). A singing male **Yellow-throated Warbler** was found April 19 at White Memorial Foundation in Litchfield, and was joined a week later by a second singing male. They counter-sang through the end of the period, but there were no signs of breeding (DR, m.ob.) However, at River Road in Kent, the state's traditional spot for this species, a pair was seen nest-building in a sycamore in early May (RN,TK,m.ob). Yet another was present one day only, April 24, in Stamford (PDu). It was an especially good spring for Cerulean Warbler, with 25+ reported from River Road, Kent, in late May (DR et al.); two were in Shelton May 11 (TK) and one on May 24 at HBSP was unusual along the coast (PDe). An adult male **Prothonotary Warbler** April 18-19 in Shelton (fide SH) was the only one for the season. Worm-eating Warblers were in good supply, e.g., 10+ in Nehantic State Forest in Lyme on May 8 (DP). A Kentucky Warbler was found May 5 in Hamden (JZ). In the last week of May Mourning Warblers made strong showing throughout the state (FD,DP,RN, DS,AB, PCi et al.). A Yellow-breasted Chat on March 31 in Chester (PP) could have been a winterer, but given the strange goings on, an early arrival doesn't seem out of the question; one was more typical at HBSP May 20-22 (PL et al.).

The **Black-headed Grosbeak** detailed in the winter report remained at a feeder in Hamden through mid-March (JB). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was a good find May 8 in Manchester (BM), and Chipping Sparrows were very early March 28 at Station 43 (PCi,JM) and March 31 at Greenwich Audubon Center (TG). A few Savannah (Ipswich) Sparrows wintered at Long Beach in Stratford, but seven together there March 16 seemed to represent a northbound movement (GH,NC). A Grasshopper Sparrow was at a potential nesting location at Thompson Lake Park in Thompson May 1-25 (R&LD). A Vesper Sparrow was in Vernon April 19-20 (CM). A **Lark Sparrow** that overwintered in a small bit of appropriate habitat in Norwalk harbor, stayed to at least March 28 (NJ,JM et al.). A **Dark-eyed Junco** showed up on Falkner Island off Guilford on the late date of May 27 (fide PCo).

A very late Rusty Blackbird was in Litchfield May 26 (DR). Several

Boat-tailed Grackles, at least two males and two females, were back in the Lordship marshes in Stratford, where the state's first breeding was proven a few years ago. The birds were first noted April 22 (CB) and were seen by many through the period. Territorial behavior (singing from high perch, chasing crows and harriers) was noted several times. After the heavy winter incursion, there were scattered reports of both **Red** and **White-winged Crossbills** through mid-May, mostly along the coast (m.ob.). This included as many as 13 on May 18 at HBSP (AA). The biggest flock of Evening Grosbeaks was 75 on March 2 in Norfolk (GB).

EXOTICS:

Three Ruddy Shelducks were at a West Hartford Reservoir April 18 (SK).

[Editor's Note: Reports of rare or unusual bird species in Connecticut (species marked with an asterisk on the most recent COA checklist) require that documentation be submitted to the secretary of the Avian Records committee of Connecticut (Mark Szantyr, 662 Phoenixville Rd., Chaplin, CT 06235) if they are to be included in the field notes.]

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PHOTO CHALLENGE

Julian Hough

ANSWER TO PHOTO CHALLENGE 24

It's February and as you stand beaten by a nor'easter you notice a low-set bird bobbing up and down close offshore. The black and white plumage initially suggests a winter-plumaged Horned Grebe or Common Loon. The crisp plumage, lacking any pale fringes to the upperparts, extensively dark face and 'thick' neck rule out a loon. It is also small and Horned Grebe is quickly ruled out on bill size and shape. Your heart begins to race - the strongly contrasting upperparts, combined with the general overall shape, indicates an alcid species. But which one? The lack of a white wingpatch quickly eliminates Black Guillemot and leaves us to contend with either Razorbill, Common Murre, Dovekie, or Thick-billed Murre. On probability alone, it is likely to be either Thick-billed Murre or Razorbill, but we must consider all contenders, however unlikely. Thankfully the bird is close affording good looks.

Dovekies are incredibly tiny and squat. They have a

Head Patterns of basic-plumaged alcids (Julian Hough)

Thick-billed Murre

Note the short, thick bill, 'knobbly' forehead and "hooded apppearance

Razorbill

Note bill shape and 'squarer' shaped area behind the eye.

Common Murre

Slim, 'dagger-shaped' bill, rounded rear crown, and dark line extending back from the eye.

stumpy, short bill and a pale crescent which curves up behind the ear coverts quite unlike our bird. Separating Common Murre from Razorbill can sometimes be difficult, but given good views, it is also straight forward. In basic plumage, Common Murre shows a longish, 'dagger' shaped bill. They show a noticeable amount of white behind the eye which curls around the rear of the ear coverts leaving a dark 'teardrop' extending back from the eye. The overall color of the upperparts is more brownish than Razorbill. These features are not compatible with our mystery bird. Indeed, the stumpy, thick bill, the dark-hooded appearance and the very dark upperparts are all more suggestive of Razorbill. But what about Thick-billed Murre? There have been several records of this species from Connecticut shores, typically after strong storms or nor'easters. It needs to be considered in the identification process of any alcid occurring in our waters.

On closer examination, the bill is not only short and broad-based but has a slight curvature to the culmen. Immediately, above the base of the bill, the forehead is concave giving way to a rounded crown (recalling Common Loon). There is also a prominent dark 'spur' projecting toward the center of the breast and the tail projects only a short way past the wingtip. When combined, these are all classic features shown by Thick-billed Murre. The Razorbill, although more 'hooded' than Common Murre, still shows a paler area curving up behind the eye and a longer, pointed tail features lacking in Thick-billed Murre. Given a good view the diagnostic white tomium stripe (gape line) should be seen, but even without this, the distinctive head and bill shape, thick neck and jet black upperparts are all good indicators of Thick-billed. Like all alcids, they are pelagic birds, often forced inshore during the winter by severe weather. This basic-plumaged Thick-billed Murre was photographed by me at Gloucester Harbor, Massachusetts in February 1998 - one of five seen that day!

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Photo Challenge 25. Identify the species. Answer next issue.

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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The Connecticut Warbler (ISSN 1077-0283) is devoted to the study of birds and their conservation in Connecticut and is published quarterly (January, April, July and October) by the Connecticut Ornithological Association.

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Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

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Volume 18, No. 4, 1998

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

A Journal of Connecticut Ornithology

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