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ON THE COVER
Bridled Tern

Sean Murtha of Norwalk debuts as a cover artist with his exquisite portrait of one of the fall season's array of exciting rarities - Connecticut's second Bridled Tern posing for boatloads of birders at Falkner Island in Guilford.

TWENTY-THIRD REPORT OF THE
AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE OF
CONNECTICUT

By Jay Kaplan and Greg Hanisek

This is the 23rd Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (ARCC). The Connecticut Ornithological Association (COA) checklist for Connecticut birds has been updated on the COA web page and the new print list is tentatively scheduled to be reprinted in 2019. With the increased use of web-based services, the printed lists are not used as frequently as in the past. The committee tentatively plans to create a downloadable checklist on the web and to reprint checklists every five years or as needed.

In the last report (see the 22nd Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, Vol. 36 No. 2), California Gull and Sprague's Pipit were added to the State List. Thayer's Gull (formerly *Larus thayeri*), recently lumped with Iceland Gull (*L. glaucooides*), has been removed from the State List. Two new species, Gray Flycatcher and Mexican Violetear, have



Benjamin Torres photo
A homeowner documented a state first when this Mexican Violetear, a species native to Mexico and Central America, visited his Winchester feeder on 27 Aug 2017.

been added to the State List, which now stands at 440. Both records were, unfortunately for Connecticut's birding community, single-observer sightings that came with excellent photographic documentation. Photos of the flycatcher, one of the difficult *Empidonax* genus, were verified by western experts. The Violetear, a Mexican and Central American hummingbird recently split from the Green Violetear, came to a feeder in Litchfield County. An unverified report of another Violetear hummingbird in New Haven County during the same season was unverified but intriguing. Another exciting report was that of the "Great White Heron" form of Great Blue Heron, a first for Connecticut.

This year the committee voted on 37 records, continuing a higher-than-average number of records submitted annually. This higher number is likely now the norm since, as previously mentioned in these reports, technological advances have made it easier to submit well-documented records. The committee does ask birders to do more than submit photographs. In order to discuss potential new state records, the committee requests written reports that accompany photographs for all submitted records. Information on how to develop a report may be found on the ARCC web page on the COA web site (www.ctbirding.org).

The committee continues to wrestle with records of geese of possible hybrid origin. This year, yet another report for Ross's Goose came with questions concerning the bird's ancestry. This report was distributed to goose experts who felt that there appears to be variability with juvenile Ross's Geese and there was, at this time, no reason to consider hybrid status for this particular individual. Should additional information come to light, the committee can reopen old records and consider changing their status.

Each year, the committee evaluates the review species list. This year, five reports were received for Ross's Goose, all of which were accepted. Three records for LeConte's Sparrow were also accepted. If these trends continue, it's possible these and other species will eventually be removed from



Frank Gallo photo
Stormy weather brought this striking juvenile Sabine's Gull to the Westport shoreline on 3 Sep 2017.

the review list. Common Loon was added to the list of rare breeding species as the result of recent confirmed nesting in Litchfield County.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Members, in addition to the authors, who voted on records in this report include Nick Bonomo, Bob Dixon, Frank Gallo, Tina Green, Julian Hough, Frank Mantlik, Dave Provencher, Phil Rusch, Dave Tripp and Glenn Williams. Bob Dixon informed the committee that he would be retiring and moving out of Connecticut. The committee thanked Bob for his service.

STATE LIST AND REVIEW LIST

The committee depends on observers to submit their reports of species on the Review List (they are species marked with an asterisk on the COA Checklist plus any species new to the state). The most recent State List and Review List can be viewed on the COA Website at www.ctbirding.org. Submit written reports along with documentary material to Jay Ka-



Chris S. Wood photo

In an excellent season for this species, these two Ross's Geese put in an extended winter stay on Lake Zoar in Southbury, starting on 10 Jan 2018.

plan, ARCC chairman (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 followed by an asterisk. Photos are acknowledged with ‡. Hyphenated numbers (e.g. 02-01) preceding the observers are the ARCC file numbers. For reopened files, an "R" follows the numbers. The species are listed in order according to the American Ornithological Society (AOS) Checklist. Multiple records of a particular species are listed chronologically. Months of the year are shortened to their first three letters.

ACCEPTED RECORDS

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) One was found on 21 Dec 2017 on Boombridge Road, North Stonington (17-35 Anthony Vicciarelli‡). It had previously been seen on the Rhode Island side of the Pawcatuck River. More than

30 birders entered eBird checklists with this bird, many with photos through Jan. 15. This is the 10th accepted record since the first one in Mar 1998 in Mansfield, which was the first fully documented record for the Lower 48 States.

ROSS'S GOOSE (*Chen rossii*) An adult was found on 19 Dec 2016 at Holly Pond, Cove Island Park in Stamford during count period for the Greenwich-Stamford Christmas Bird Count. It remained through 21 Dec (18-03 Patrick Dugan‡, Stefan Martin). What appears to have been as many as six different Ross's Geese were found in winter 2017-18. That equaled the total number of previous state records dating back to 2003. An adult was found on 27 Dec 2017 in North Stonington. Apparently the same bird was in fields nearby in Ledyard on 29-30 Dec 2017 (17-37 Paul Wolter,* Maureen Wolter*, Anthony Vicciarelli‡, David Provencher‡). A juvenile bird was found on 30 Dec 2017 in the Farmington Meadows and was seen there and at adjacent Tunxis Mead Park, Farmington, through 3 Jan 2018 (17-34 Darlene Moore*, Michael Aronson*‡). Two birds, an adult and a juvenile, were found on Lake Zoar in Southbury on 10 Jan 2018 and were seen by many observers through 17 Feb 2018 (18-02 Russ Naylor*, Frank Gallo‡, Chris S. Wood‡). An adult was found 14 Jan 2018 at the Stratford Greenway and ranged widely around Stratford, Milford and Fairfield, seen by many through at least 29 Jan 2018 (18-04 Angela Dimmitt*, Frank Mantlik‡). An adult was found in farm fields in Suffield on 2 Feb 2018 and at the Donald W. Barnes Boat Launch in Enfield on 3 Feb 2018. Presumably the same bird then appeared in the Storrs area 12-22 Feb 2018 (18-08 Dorrie Holmes*‡, Annette Pasek).

(BLACK) BRANT (*Branta bernicla nigricans*) An adult of this western subspecies was found on 26 Mar 2017 at Seaside Park in Bridgeport. It was a fourth state record, all by the same observer (17-42 Nick Bonomo*‡).

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*) For the second year in a row, a female wintered at Captain's Cove in Bridgeport, presumably the same individual. It was present from 1 Jan to



Robert Dixon photo

This Eared Grebe, shown here on 4 Feb 2018, was easy to find in Stonington harbor.

18 Feb 2018 (18-05 Jeremy Nance*, Frank Mantlik†). One was also present there in late winter 2015. More than 50 observers submitted eBird checklists with the 2018 bird.

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*) One was found 4 Feb 2018 at the Stonington Town Dock, where it was observed through at least 11 Mar 2018 (18-07 Doug Warner*, Robert Dixon*†). More than 40 observers submitted eBird checklists with this bird.

CORY'S SHEARWATER (*Calonectris diomedea*) For the second time in three years, Cory's Shearwaters entered the eastern end of Long Island Sound without hurricane assistance, drawing birders to the New London-Orient, N.Y., ferries and other types of watercraft in search of this pelagic species. Sightings were recorded from 10-20 Aug 2017. Two were seen from the ferry by a single observer on 10 Aug (17-22 Dan Rottino*†). Two were seen 16 Aug by five observers from a private boat (17-21 Frank Gallo et al.*†). The latter birds were determined to be the subspecies *borealis* based on the broad dark tip of the underwing. All of the birds were

determined to be in Connecticut waters based on GPS on cell phones.

GREAT SHEARWATER (*Puffinus gravis*) An adult in very poor condition was found on the West Beach at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison on 19 Jun 2017 (17-15 Ewa Holland*†). Efforts were made to place it in a box for transfer to a rehabilitation facility but it expired. At the time of this discovery numerous dead and dying Great Shearwaters in emaciated condition had washed up on beaches on the South Shore of Long Island, NY, and as far south as Cape May, NJ.

GREAT BLUE HERON (white form) (*Ardea herodias*) This color form of the common and widespread Great Blue Heron, seldom seen away from peninsular Florida, was observed on private property in Weston on 23 Aug 2017 (17-33 Eric R. Kaufman*†). The bird was photographed that day on a pond on the West Branch of the Saugatuck River but was not found thereafter. This is the first record of this form, known as



Cedric Duhalde photo

Connecticut's second Bridled Tern lingered long enough at the Falkner Island tern colony to allow many birders to make its acquaintance starting on 28 July 2017.

Great White Heron, for Connecticut. It falls in line with a few other records from the northeastern states.

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) Two were found on 19 Apr 2017 in a marsh on the Clinton/Westbrook line and were subsequently seen by many observers through 6 May 2017 at Indian River marshes farther west in Clinton (17-27 Greg Hanisek*, Frank Mantlik‡). Two were found on 17 May 2017 in a Glossy Ibis flock on River Road in Mystic (17-25 Dylan Pedro*‡). One was at Barn Island Wildlife Management area in Stonington from 29 May to Jun 4 2017 (17-26 Anthony Vicciarelli*‡).

YELLOW RAIL (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) One was flushed from saltmarsh grass (*Spartina patens*) on 13 Nov 2017 in the first impoundment at Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Stonington (17-14 Phil Rusch*). The experienced observer's short view allowed time to see the rail's small size, weak flight and distinctive white secondaries. It was the third time this highly secretive migrant was flushed at Barn Island since 2006, all from *Spartina patens* and all on falling tides from mid-Nov to mid-Dec.

RED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) One was photographed at Batterson Pond, Farmington, on 18 Oct 2016 (16-36 Derek LaFlamme*‡).

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*) One was seen by eight observers participating in the New London and Orient, N.Y., Christmas Bird Counts on 30 Dec 2017 (17-36 Frank Mantlik*‡). The observation was made on a New London-Orient ferry route, the source of most state records of this species.

SABINE'S GULL (*Xema sabini*) A juvenile was found 3 Sep 2017 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport. It remained close to shore for several hours, both on the water and in flight, at both Sherwood and nearby Compo Beach, allowing many observers to see this second state record (17-24 Tina Green*‡, Frank Gallo‡, A.J. Hand‡). The weather was rainy with steady east winds (25 mph), the remnants of Hurricane/



Anthony Vicciarelli photo
This Thick-billed Murre offered some amazingly good views when it found its way to the Stonington Town Docks on 4 Feb 2018.

Tropical Storm Harvey.

FRANKLIN'S GULL (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) An adult was seen 19 Sep 2018 feeding off Avery Point in Groton with Laughing Gulls during Tropical Storm Jose (17-32 Frank Mantlik,* Tina Green*). An unprecedented eastward movement in Nov 2015 brought dozens to Connecticut, but setting aside that anomalous event, this was only the third state record.

MEW (KAMCHATKA) GULL (*Larus canus kamtschatschensis*) An adult of this large Asian race of Mew Gull was seen and well photographed feeding on shore at Russian Beach, Stratford, on 20 March 2017 during a bout of surface feeding on zooplankton by gulls and waterfowl (17-16 Nick Bonomo*‡). The observer had provided documentation for the first state record, seen at two locations in April 2015, including wing pattern details that showed one individual to be involved. Based on his study of the 2015 and 2017 birds, the observer believes the same individual was again involved and may also account for Nantucket, MA, records from the winters of



Lea Kessler Shaw photo
A series of good photos led to identification of the state's first Gray Flycatcher, found 13 Oct 2017 at Cove Island Park in Stamford.

2013-14 and 2014-15.

BRIDLED TERN (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) Tern colony monitors on Falkner Island, Guilford, found the state's second confirmed record associating with resident Common and Roseate Terns on 28 July 2017 (17-23 Cedric Duhalde*‡, James Heuschkel‡, Frank Gallo‡). The island is closed to the public, but many birders were able to see this charismatic individual from private and chartered boats through at least 11 Aug 2017. The first state record, in summer 1992, was also from Falkner Island.

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) One was seen on 4 Sep 2016 when it flew in and landed briefly on a rock at Stratford Point (16-34 Tina Green*). Another was seen on 18 May 2017 at Long Beach, Stratford, close to the place where the 2016 bird was observed (17-29 Frank Mantlik*‡).

THICK-BILLED MURRE (*Uria lomvia*) One paid a rare visit

close to shore on 4 Feb 2018 at Stonington Point and Stonington Town Dock (18-06 Anthony Vicciarelli*‡, Dan Rottino‡, Robert Dixon). A second observation at the same location on 16 Feb 2018 may receive review as possibly a different individual.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) One was found 9 May 2017 at the Atwater Preserve in East Haven (17-39 Ed Haesche*‡, Tina Green).

MEXICAN VIOLETEAR (*Colibri thalassinus*) The homeowner saw a large, unfamiliar hummingbird at his home in Winchester on 27 Aug 2017, took photos and secured a first state record of a species with a history of forays into the United States and even Canada (17-30 Benjamin Torres*‡). Formerly known as Green Violetear, the species was split in 2016 into Mexican Violetear and Lesser Violetear, which occurs in South America. The two are separable on plumage characters, notably the violet-blue breast of Mexican. Lesser lacks blue on the breast and chin. All records north of Mexico have been found to be Mexican Violetear. There are many records from Texas, with a number north through the central part of the continent to the latitude of the Great Lakes. Records in the Northeast are much sparser and include mid-Aug sightings from Maine (2007) and New Jersey (2005).

GRAY FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax wrightii*) One was found at Cove Island Park in Stamford on 13 Oct 2017, establishing a first state record for this southwestern species (17-17 Lea Kessler Shaw*‡). Although understandably uncertain about species identification, the observer took an excellent series of photos and made note of the bird's behavior. Its tail dipping was a key to positive identification, and its habit of foraging low along a scrubby fence line and dropping to the open lawn were also typical of Gray Flycatcher. The committee consulted three outside experts with extensive western experience. All readily agreed on the ID.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) It's never too late to submit a record. The observer was curat-



Michael Carretta photo
This Ash-throated Flycatcher was found at Long Beach in Stratford on 26 Nov 2011, a typical date for this species in Connecticut.

ing old photos for entry in eBird when he came across images of a bird he had assumed in 2011 was a Great Crested Flycatcher. He now suspected the bird seen on 26 Nov 2011 at Long Beach in Stratford was an Ash-throated Flycatcher, a southwestern species with a history of appearances in the Northeast in November and December – after Great Crested Flycatchers have migrated out of the area. His photos confirmed a seventh state record, all in the expected time frame (18-01 Michael Carretta*‡).

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER (*Tyrannus forficatus*) One was seen on a utility wire and photographed 17 May 2017 on Flood Bridge Road in Southbury (17-40 Donna Marschalk*‡). Unlike most western species, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers occur here more often in May-June than in autumn.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING (*Bombycilla garrulus*) Two were seen and heard on 5 Feb 2016 in Winchester, flying with a

flock of six American Robins. (16-29 David Rosgen*).

LeCONTE'S SPARROW (*Ammodramus leconteii*) One was found on 21 Oct 2017 at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford (17-18 David Winston*‡). Ten other people submitted eBird checklists from the bird's one-day stay. One was found at Stratford Point on 26 Oct 2017 (17-19 Stefan Martin*, Julian Hough, Frank Mantlik). One was found on 5 Nov 2017 at Old Farm Road in Newtown (17-20 Patrick Dugan*‡, Wendy Knothe). The latter two records were also one-day only. Three in a single season was extraordinary for a secretive species that occurs less than annually.

PAINTED BUNTING (*Passerina ciris*) An immature was seen on 13 Sep 2016 and apparently the same bird was relocated on 12 Oct 2016, both at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport (16-21 Tina Green*‡). One was seen 8-15 April 2017 at a home in Darien (17-31 David Alper*‡, Frank Mantlik‡). The bird was believed to be an adult female.

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

ARCTIC TERN (*Sterna paradisaea*) One was reported from Westport on 28 Jun 2017 (17-38). This bird did not provide an opportunity for the observer to see the complete suite of characteristics needed to fully document a species in a difficult group that remains very rare in Connecticut, mainly because of its pelagic migratory passage.

POMARINE JAEGER (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) Two observers reported two and provided photos of at least one from the New London-Orient N.Y. ferry on 19 Aug 2017 (17-41). This is one the most difficult groups to identify, in part because most field characters are subjective and in part because viewing conditions are often difficult. After study of the photos, the committee agreed the bird (s) were Parasitic Jaegers.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING (*Bombycilla garrulus*) One was reported in a flock of Cedar Waxwings on 18 Mar 2017 in Stamford (17-28). The bird proved rather elusive, providing

what the committee considered to be inconclusive views and an inconclusive photo.

CORRECTION

In the 22nd Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (Vol. 36 No. 2), file numbers were omitted for two records: Ross's Goose (17-04) and Slaty-backed Gull (16-06).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Fall Season – Aug. 1 through Nov. 30, 2017

By Greg Hanisek and Frank Mantlik

It was an extraordinary autumn season in a number of ways. Two new species, Mexican Violetear and Gray Flycatcher, were added to the state list, despite being seen by a minimum number of people. A couple of birds almost as good, Sabine's Gull and Bridled Tern, were enjoyed by many, although it took quick reaction for the gull and a boat trip for the tern. Some common migrants – such as Double-crested Cormorant, Red-shouldered Hawk, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Eastern Kingbird - produced memorable flight days. Bluff Point in Groton, a premier location for morning flight by nocturnal passerine migrants, offered up a historic movement on Sept. 9. Remove all of those noteworthy events and you still have a season with plenty of uncommon birds and exciting migration events. Hopefully the rest of this account does it all justice.

Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** were the first of about five for the season on Oct. 6 at a farm pond in East Windsor (JCo). The first reports of Snow Geese were flyover flocks of 12 and 26 on Sept. 29 in Harwinton (PCa). The first Cackling Goose appeared Sept. 30 in Durham (NB). Late August produces a small and inconspicuous first arrival of southbound dabbling ducks, as illustrated by an American Wigeon on Aug. 29 at Mondo Ponds in Milford (FG). Two female **King Eiders** appeared Nov.

13 at Long Beach in Stratford (FM), where they were joined by a third on Nov. 20 and stayed through period's end. Another female was at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford Nov. 24-26 (AV). Common Eiders have become regular, sometimes in large numbers, in eastern Long Island Sound, but one was noteworthy at various locations farther west around the mouth of the Housatonic River in Stratford and Milford Nov. 12-27 (FM et al.). A male **Harlequin Duck** on Nov. 16 at Stratford Point

attracted a lot of one-day observers (TM et al.). Black Scoters dropped onto several inland lakes Oct. 23-30, with a high of 33 on Oct. 23 at Twin Lakes in Salisbury (PCa). Another good count was 27 on Nov. 4 at Bantam L. in Litchfield (BD). During the late October flight, four Surf Scoter visited Coventry Lake Oct. 27 (CE). A female **Barrow's Goldeneye** Nov. 14-18 at Sunken Island in Fairfield presaged a good winter for the species (FM et al.). Many triple digit counts of Ruddy Ducks included

a high of 350 on Oct. 29 at Broadbrook Reservoir in Cheshire (SB et al.).

A good flight of 33 migrant Common Loons – in flocks of 16, seven and five – passed over the Lighthouse Point hawk watch in New Haven on Oct. 18 (HS). An **Eared Grebe** made a one-day appearance Nov. 19 at Broadbrook Reservoir in Cheshire (MB). The rarity of shearwaters in Long Island Sound inspired a number of observers to ride the New London-Orient, N.Y., ferries in search of **Cory's Shearwaters** found

there in August. One to three were reported in Connecticut waters Aug. 10-29 (DRo et al.). More amazing was a close flyby Cory's photographed at Stratford Point on Aug. 29 (SMA). Small numbers of **Wilson's Storm Petrels** were also seen by ferry-riding birders late July to August. An impressive flight of 750 Double-crested Cormorants passed Lighthouse Point Oct. 24 on strong SSE winds ahead of a rain storm (BB). An **American White Pelican** was seen over both Stratford and Milford on Nov. 18 (JT, WS, FM). An American Bittern, seldom detected during fall migration, was at Fred Wolfe Park in Orange on Oct. 18 (TM). Singles were also seen in flight over Nell's Island marsh in Milford Oct. 8 and Nov. 6 (FM et al.). A seasonal highlight was the state's first **Great White Heron** on Aug. 23 in Weston (EKa). A Little Blue Heron was a good inland find Aug. 22 at Little Pond in Litchfield (PCa).

A flyover **Mississippi Kite** on Aug. 9 in Redding was a significant find of species most often seen as a spring migration overshoot (JT).

Quaker Ridge hawk watch in Greenwich set a one-day record with 275 Red-shouldered Hawks on Nov. 8 (RM et al.). An ill first-year **Swainson's Hawk** in Canterbury was brought into rehab Oct. 4 (fide NB). An early Rough-legged Hawk flew by the Lighthouse Point hawk watch in New Haven on Oct. 10 (BB et al.). Away from the hawk watches, a Golden Eagle was in the Milford area on Oct. 31 (FM et al.). A **Yellow Rail**, Connecticut's least-detected regular migrant, was a great find Nov. 13 at Barn Island WMA in Stonington (PR). Tidal wetlands with Wild Rice along the lower Connecticut R. are a major migratory stopover place for Soras. Locations such as Whalebone Creek in Hadlyme and the private Glastonbury Meadows offer some of the best opportunities to hear – and sometimes see – these secretive rails. Their presence this fall from Aug. 27, when a high count of seven was noted at Glastonbury (BA), to the last report from Whalebone on Oct. 23 at Hadlyme (FM) probably encompasses their typical staging period. The season's only **Common Gal-**



Eric Kaufman photo
This Great White Heron seen on Aug. 23, 2017, in Weston was a seasonal highlight as well as a state first.



Paul Fusco photo
This elegant Marbled Godwit towers over Sanderlings on Sept. 17, 2017, on the gravel bars at Milford Point.



Julian Hough photo
Baird's Sandpipers, such as this one on Sept. 4, 2017, at Sandy Point in West Haven, are always a much-sought species in autumn.



Bruce Finnan photos
The Lighthouse Point hawk watch in New Haven is a great place to work on difficult hawk identifications, such as this immature Cooper's Hawk (below), and an immature Red-shouldered Hawk (above), both migrating on Nov. 7, 2017.



linule put in an extended stay at Bishop's Pond in Meriden from Oct. 2 through at least Nov. 11 (PDe et al.). A **Sandhill Crane** flew by Lighthouse Point hawk watch on Oct. 12 (DMo), four were over Edgewood Park in New Haven on Nov. 4 (JOs) and three passed Quaker Ridge on Nov. 7 (RM et al.).

The high count of American Golden-Plovers was five on Sept. 11 at Milford Point (SSp, FN). Whimbrels were widely reported along the coast to a late date of Oct. 10 at Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven (BB, BF). The largest number came from Milford Point, with a seasonal high there of four on both Sept. 17 (SMu) and Sept. 23 (DMe, RW). An **American Avocet** was seen Sept. 12 only at Four Mile River in East Lyme (BMa et al.). An unusually long-staying Marbled Godwit was at Milford Point Sept. 11-25 (CF, FM et al.). A Sanderling was a good inland find Sept. 26 at drawn down Colebrook Reservoir (DRs). The first report of Red Knot, three on Aug. 19 at Stratford Point, attracted many observers, indicative of how rare this declining species has become

(FM et al.). The majority of reports involved single birds at Milford Point and Sandy Point, with a high of just four on Aug. 27 at Milford Point (CL et al.). The latest report was Oct. 18 at Milford Point (FM). Baird's Sandpiper reports ranged from Aug. 7 at Old Saybrook (AG) to Oct. 25 in New Haven (SU), with a high count of three on Sept. 5 at Sandy Point (JOs). The first report of the always scarce Western Sandpiper involved two juveniles on Aug. 23 at Stratford Point (FM). The high count of Stilt Sandpipers was three on Sept. 5-7 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, hereafter HBSP, (JCa, PH). The latest White-rumped Sandpiper hung in until Nov. 18 at HBSP (CL, MV). A Pectoral Sandpiper lingered to Nov. 15 at Portland Fairgrounds (TA, LN). The high count of Buff-breasted Sandpipers was three on Sept. 2 at HBSP (JR et al.). Single Long-billed Dowitchers were good finds Aug. 24-29 at HBSP (FG, JSc), Aug. 29 at Sherwood Island (TG) and Oct. 27 at Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme (DPe). An above-average three **Wilson's Phalaropes** were singles reported from

Milford Point on Aug. 24 (MC et al.); Rocky Neck State Park on Sept. 11 (DPe); and Sept. 27 at Milford Point (DG, JOI),

In a season full of significant rarities, a juvenile **Sabine's Gull** - the state's second - found Sept. 3 at Sherwood Island proved very cooperative for several hours of its one-day visit, allowing many birders to get excellent views and photos (TG m. ob.). It overshadowed another rare larid, a **Franklin's Gull** seen flying with Laughing Gulls off Groton on Sept. 19 (FM, TG). A **Black-headed Gull** arrived at a wintering spot at Stonington Point on Nov. 25 (RS). The first Glaucous Gull was reported Nov. 6 at Milford Point (SSp). An unusually cooperative juvenile Black Skimmer spent Sept. 3-10 at Birdseye boat ramp in Stratford, allowing close up views by many observers (FM et al.). The season's latest report was of two on Oct. 7 at Milford Point (MN).

The state's second **Bridled Tern**, which was found in late July at Falkner Island, Guilford, remained to at least Aug. 11 (CD m.ob.). Boat trips to see the Bridled

Tern produced many Black Tern reports, including the season's high count of four on Aug. 5 (ABu, JT). The last sighting was Sept. 15 at Eastern Point in Groton (AV et al.). The high count of Caspian Terns was three at Sandy Point on Aug. 23 (SZ et al.). A significant gathering of Forster's Terns in late October included 55 at Menunketesuck Flats in Westbrook on Oct. 28 (CL, MV) and counts of 75 and 60 at different locations in Old Saybrook on Oct. 29 (TA, TG et al.). It was a good season for Royal Terns with numerous reports during the first three months, including a high count of 16 off Guilford on Oct. 15 (MA). A late one was at Sandy Point Nov. 3 (EHo). Always a good find in Long Island Sound, two **Parasitic Jaegers** were seen from a ferry off New London on Aug. 19 (RS, SW) and singles were reported from Shippan Point, Stamford, on Aug. 17 (PDu) and Cornfield Point in Old Saybrook on Oct. 23 (FM). Single unidentified jaegers were off Old Saybrook on Sept. 15 (AG) and off Shippan Point Oct. 13 (PDu). The season's first Razorbill passed Harkness Memorial

State Park in Waterford on Nov. 17 (AV).

A late Yellow-billed Cuckoo was at Walnut Beach in Milford on Nov. 11 (TM). A good flight of **Snowy Owls** began early with an inland report Nov. 18 in New Hartford (RBe et al.). That bird eventually was hit by a car and succumbed in rehab Nov. 20 (JK). Lighthouse Point hawk watch occasionally logs flyover migrating Short-eared Owls, but three on Nov. 4 were extraordinary (SMY, NB, AV et al.). Good flights of Common Nighthawks included 195 on Aug. 27 in Mansfield (DMo), 229 on Aug. 31 in Stamford (PDU), 163 on Sept. 4 at American Legion State Forest in Barkhamsted (DRs, JMa) and 136 on Sept. 11 at Allen's Meadow in Wilton (JB). A very late one was photographed Nov. 9 at Harkness (AV).

A late Chimney Swift passed Lighthouse Point hawk watch on Nov. 7 (PDe et al.), and that productive site produced a tally of 202 migrating Ruby-throated Hummingbirds on Sept. 4 (GH, BB et al.). A **Selasphorus sp.**, probably a female Rufous Hum-

mingbird, visited an East Hampton feeder in November (JSt, SSt). A rare hummingbird joined the state list on Aug. 26, when a **Mexican Violetear** made a one-day visit to feeders at a private residence in Winchester (BT). It was the state's sixth hummingbird species. Fewer than 10 Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported for the season, compared to more than 20 the previous fall.

The first of about 15 Olive-sided Flycatcher reports was Aug. 22 at Greenwich Audubon (MW). When an alert observer found an *Empidonax* flycatcher on Oct. 13 at Cove Island Park in Stamford she recognized the degree of difficulty in making an identification. She took an excellent series of photos that led to acceptance of Connecticut's first record of **Gray Flycatcher** (LKS). Sherwood Island State Park in Westport experienced a significant flight of 375 Eastern Kingbirds on Aug. 21 (TG). An impressive gathering of 300 Fish Crows was near Rentschler Field in East Hartford on Sept. 12 (DCi). A Northern Shrike was an unexpected early arrival on Oct. 22 at Trout Brook Valley in Easton (AK,

EK). An early flurry of **Cave Swallows** produced the following reports: two at Silver Sands, Milford, (SSp) and one at Stratford Point (SMa, FM) on Oct. 30; two at Lighthouse Point (BB, SSa) and one at Long Beach (SMa) on Oct. 31; and one in Westport on Nov. 1 (TG)..

One of two **Sedge Wrens** found in late July at an open space tract in Newtown was still present Aug. 1 (BB, GH, BF). Another was found Oct. 4 at Lower Greenwoods Recreation Area in Barkhamsted (DRs). The Sept. 9 movement (see related article) generated an unprecedented morning flight of 180 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers leaving the northwest corner of Lighthouse Point Park (JH). The next day, with north winds persisting overnight, another 160 gnatcatchers were logged at Lighthouse (JH). The hawk watch there consistently logs gnatcatcher flights in late August and early September, but high counts are typically in mid-double figures. A very late Swainson's Thrush that had been present around a house in Granby for several weeks was last reported on Nov. 25 (JW). A late Wood Thrush was at Lighthouse

Point on Nov. 11 (NB).

At a nocturnal flight call monitoring station in Westport, good southbound passerine movements were noted Aug. 6-7 (PL). High species counts included 19 American Redstarts on Aug. 6 and 32 redstarts and 12 Northern Waterthrushes on Aug. 7. Noteworthy were a Canada Warbler each night and a Mourning Warbler Aug. 6 that was the first of the season (PL). In fact the only August reports of Mourning Warbler were the 11 detected at this station, with a good peak flight metric of five on Aug. 20 and four on Aug. 23 (PL). Another big night occurred on Sept. 7, when the station's microphone and software identified in descending numerical order 120 American Redstarts, 50 Common Yellowthroats, 40 Chestnut-sided Warblers, 30 Ovenbirds, 14 Cape May Warblers and three Mourning Warblers (PL). Another 298 warbler sp. were of unidentifiable call complexes with many likely Black-throated Green and Magnolia Warblers (PL). The next morning at Bluff Point yielded 14 species of warblers (DPe), and good spe-

cies counts continued there deep into September with 18 on Sept. 29 and 15 the same day at Trout Brook Valley in Easton (JN).

The single report of Golden-winged Warbler, now a major rarity, came from the Racebrook Tract in Orange on Oct. 9 (CL). The season's only Brewster's Warbler was at Kellogg Environmental Center in Derby on Aug. 26 (CL). Two wood warblers that are scarce in fall migration, Prothonotary Warbler and Cerulean Warbler, were both found on Aug. 14 at Pine Creek in Fairfield (JP, ABu). There were just five reports of Connecticut Warblers. The only reports of Kentucky Warbler came from Southbury on Aug. 27 (NB) and Mystic on Oct. 30 (fide GW). Cape May Warblers, usually hard to come by in Connecticut, staged a noteworthy flight of the type associated with Spruce Budworm outbreaks on boreal breeding grounds. A heavy flight was detected Sept. 7 when 14 were recorded at the nocturnal flight call station in Westport (PL). On the biggest nocturnal passerine flight day, Sept. 9, there were 15 in Winchester

(DRs) and six in New Hartford (JMa). On Sept. 21, nine were counted at Lighthouse Point, including a flock of six (NB). A Northern Parula was late Nov. 12 in Coventry (DMA). A late Magnolia Warbler was at Fresh Meadows in Cheshire on Oct. 28 (CU). Bay-breasted Warbler, another beneficiary of budworm outbreaks, also appeared in good numbers, such as 10 on Sept. 9 at Trout Brook Valley in Easton (JN). The season's only **Yellow-throated Warbler** was a good find Oct. 14 at Silver Sands State Park (JH). A Canada Warbler was quite late Nov. 24 at Sherwood Island (JT). It was a good season for Yellow-breasted Chats, with reports through Oct. 21 from at least nine locations, with two on Sept. 17 at HBSP (KS).

The season's first American Tree Sparrows were singles detected Oct 26-27 at the nocturnal flight call station in Westport (PL). The now-normal extensive arrival of **Clay-colored Sparrow**, once a significant rarity, began with one on Sept. 13 in Wilton (MW). Productive Trout Brook Valley produced a nice high count of five Vesper Sparrows on Oct. 21

(JN). Many observers were able to see a normally very secretive **LeConte's Sparrow** on Oct. 21 at Cove Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Stamford (DW et al.). A second one for the season turned up at Stratford Point on Oct. 26 (SMa, FM, TM), and a remarkable third was in good habitat in Newtown on Nov. 5 (PDu, WK). The season's first Nelson's Sparrow was found Sept. 23 at Sandy Point (NB et al.). A White-throated Sparrow far from any known breeding area was an unusual find Aug. 2 in Madison (JCa). The first arrival of White-crowned Sparrows was noted Sept. 22 in Wilton (MW) and Fairfield (JT),

Late Indigo Buntings were reported at HBSP on Nov. 12 (TZ) and in Stamford Nov. 27 (VD). **Blue Grosbeaks** were reported from eight locations, ranging from Aug. 20 at Pine Creek in Fairfield (JT, BMu) to Oct. 7 at Lake Mohegan in Fairfield (AK). Dickcissels, once considered a rare species, are now regu-

lar in fall in weedy fields and as flyovers at hawk watches. Reports came throughout the season from more than 20 locations, with sightings on multiple days from at least half of these.

Lighthouse Point hawk watch offers the best window on the diurnal migration of Bobolinks. Sept. 8 was an especially good day, with 2,500 recorded (DCa). Four reports of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** came from Sandy Point in West Haven Sept. 21-22 (RS et al.); Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Stratford on Sept. 10 (TG); Stratford Point on Oct. 16 (GM); and Lighthouse Point in New Haven on Nov. 7 (BF et al.). Away from the species' Stratford stronghold, three Boat-tailed Grackles settled into a long stay first detected Nov. 18 in Old Saybrook (TA). A major continental irruption of Red Crossbills failed to reach Connecticut. The only reports were of three in Canton on Nov. 5 (JK, SF).

A Major Passerine Flight Day

On Sept. 9, 2017, a clear morning with northwest wind, it was no surprise that an eager crowd of morning flight enthusiasts gathered at Bluff Point State Park in Groton. They were treated to what Bluff Point regular Glenn Williams described as “the best morning flight in years.” Based on the efforts of experienced observers, total warbler numbers ranged from 8,000 to 10,000. Williams’ summary on the CTBirds listserv included these “hot corner” highlights:

“9500 warblers of 19 species, a few hundred more as we walked in later, and hundreds of other passerines. They began really pouring out at about 6:20 a.m. and kept a furious pace for about 90 minutes, though some birds were still doing morning flight after 9 a.m. Most birds went unidentified, as they were flying fast and low. Many also went out behind us to the east. The majority were American Redstarts, with perhaps Northern Parula a distant second. Many missed and under counted species.”

Chris Elphick, who took on the overwhelming task of tallying, said, “In all I saw 69 species from 6 to 11:30 a.m. And others added at least another 10 to 15 species. After consulting with others the warbler species tally rose to 20. The overall count included six species of flycatchers, four species of vireos and more than 80 thrushes, mostly Veerys.”

This flight was reflected across the state, with reports of big movements from Trout Brook Valley in Easton, Lighthouse Point in New Haven and Quaker Ridge in Greenwich. At Trout Brook Valley Jeremy Nance said, “The highlight for me was 10 Bay-breasted Warblers, a species that I had only seen here in the fall once before today.” At Quaker Ridge, Ryan MacLean said, “Between 6:30-9:00 a.m. Stefan Martin and I were treated to one of the more awesome morning warbler flights we’ve ever seen at Audubon Greenwich. The front fields and apple orchard around the hawk watch lawn were under constant barrage of hundreds of warblers dropping into the trees.”

Observers – Tim Antanaitis, Mark Aronson, Bill Asteriades, Renee Baade (Rba), Bill Banks, Melissa Baston, William Batsford, Joe Bear, Ray Belding (Rbe), Nick Bonomo, Aaron Bourque (ABo), Steve Broker, Alex Burdo (ABu), Dana Campbell (DCa), Jim Carr (JCa), Paul Carrier (PCa), Malcolm Chesworth, Dan Cimbaro (DCi), Jan Collins (JCo), Patrick Comins (PCo), Vanessa David, Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine, Angela Dimmitt, Robert Dixon, Patrick Dugan (PDu), Cedric Duhalde, Chris Elphick, Sarah Faulkner, Bruce Finnan, Corrie Folsom-O’Keefe, David Funke, Paul Fusco, Frank Gallo, Tina Green, Devin Griffiths, Andy Griswold, Ed Haesche (EHa), Greg Hanisek, Ernie Harris (EHr), Philip Henson, William Hobbie, Ewa Holland (EHo), Julian Hough, Christine Howe, Jay Kaplan, Eric Kaufman (EKa), Aidan Kiley, Erika Kiley (EKi), Wendy Knothe, Micky Komara, Alex Lin-Moore, Chris Loscalzo, Preston Lust, Bob MacDonnell (BMa), Ryan MacLean, Frank Mantlik, John Mar-

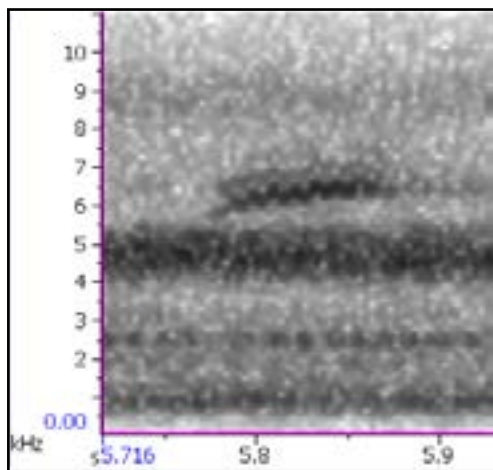
shall (JMa), Stefan Martin (SMa), Gail Martino, David Matthieu (DMa), Steve Mayo (SMY), Dan Mercurio, (DMe), Jamie Meyers (JMe), Marty Moore, Don Morgan (DMo), Keith Mueller, Tom Murray, Brendan Murtha (BMu), Sean Murtha (SMu), Jeremy Nance, Russ Naylor, Franklin Nejame, Larry Nichols, Michael Nicosia, James Oliverio (JOI), John Oshlick, (JOs), Dylan Pedro (DPe), Dave Provencher (DPr), James Pucsell, Jason Rieger, Dave Rosgen (DRs), Dan Rottino (DRo), Phil Rusch, Sol Satin (SSa), Will Schenck, John Schwarz (JSc), Kathy Seymour, Lea Kessler Shaw, Russ Smiley, Donna-Rose Smith, Steve Spector, (SSp), Joan Stasiak (JSt), Stan Stasiak (SSt), Howie Sternberg, Jory Teltser, Ben Torres, Severin Uebbing, Chris Unsworth, Marianne Vahey, Anthony Vicciarelli, Mike Warner, John Weeks, Glenn Williams, Stuart Winquist, Dave Winston, Ryan Wirtes, Chris Wood, Sara Zagorski, Terence Zahner, Fran Zygmont

DETECTING EARLY FALL MIGRANTS THROUGH NOCTURNAL FLIGHT CALL RECORDINGS

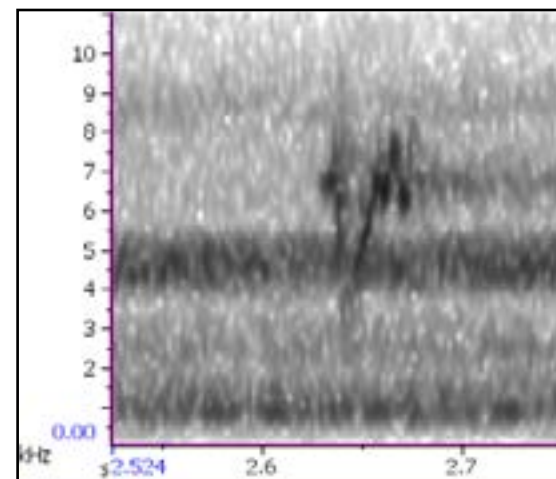
By Preston Lust

At times, it may be difficult to tell whether a bird you see in early August, or even in July, is simply a local breeder, a bird in post-breeding dispersal or a migrant. Indeed, most birds become considerably more quiet compared to spring – and songs do not aid in this careful distinction. The lushness of the trees and bushes hinders detection of skulking migrants, who silently glean the leaves away from human notice. Factors such as these tend to mask early fall arrival dates to a considerable degree – whereas in April, a singing Louisiana Waterthrush or Northern Parula in the recently budded trees poses no such difficulty.

Automated flight call recording, however, is a great way to figure out exactly when migrants are moving – especially in early autumn. My Old Bird 21c Microphone has been recording nocturnal flight calls for two falls and two springs now, and in conjunction with my personal night listening and in-



A spectrogram of a Blue-winged Warbler flight call

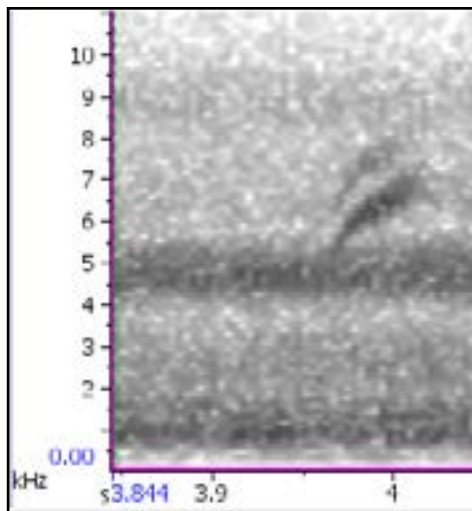


A spectrogram of a Canada Warbler flight call

spection of morning flight, I have been surprised to see how early many species start to move through.

On Aug. 1, 2017, for instance, I recorded about four Northern Waterthrushes, four American Redstarts, two Chipping Sparrows and 17 unidentified warblers of the genus *Setophaga* (more specifically, the “zeep” call note complex), most of which were probably Yellow Warblers. On July 26, 2016, I noticed a lesser movement of similar species in my yard: a Northern Waterthrush in the brook, and a couple Yellow Warblers briefly touching down in an oak tree and then resuming flight. So there was evidently a good smattering of species migrating in early August.

By Aug. 6, 2017, more species were starting to join the mix, such as Indigo Bunting, Black-and-white Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Ovenbird, and even Canada Warbler and Mourning Warbler. The night of Aug. 6/7 yielded six species of nocturnal migrants and 253 calls – which impressed me thoroughly. Even in the first week of August, there was an appreciable abundance and concentration of warblers. However, considering that these birds necessarily made landfall, my attempts to find them in the morning proved disappoint-



A spectrogram of a Mourning Warbler flight call

ing at best – emphasizing that an observer’s failure to locate early migrants does not mean they do not abound.

A quintessential migrant of August nights, my first Veery of 2017’s fall migration season showed up on the night of August 23/24 – a date around which considerable movement is typically underway. For instance, on that night I recorded 24 Canada Warblers – which was likely an underestimate based off of 68 calls. I also recorded hundreds of others warblers, and a few Bobolinks, which also usually show up around this time.

Besides the expected species, I have recorded a few interesting migrants early in the fall season – one such species being a Field Sparrow on Aug. 16, accompanied by a Cape May Warbler (the fall of 2017 was an amazing season for Cape Mays). Highlights from the entire fall include Brant, Vesper Sparrow, 125 American Redstarts in one night, 107 Chipping Sparrows in one night, and a few Dickcissels.

Preston Lust, 16, a member of the Connecticut Young Birders’ Club, is a junior at Staples High School in Westport.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Mark Szantyr

So bird identification can be tricky. Age, sex, time of year, location, expectations (sometimes VERY HIGH expectations) all can color how you look at a bird and in fact, what you actually see.

This bird might obviously be a thrush. It’s brown, speckled below, sort of long legged, and has a medium length pointed bill. It doesn’t really look like any thrush in your field guides at first glance. Oh oh. You seem to remember the geek birders you know talking about a 15 hour drive to somewhere in Canada to see a first North American record of...MISTLE THRUSH!

Could this be it? Sadly, no. This geek has not yet made that pilgrimage. This is a common bird that we all can see every year in Connecticut. We usually don’t see this plumage unless you spend time in the deep woods in the summer. Look at it. What do you know about our eastern woodland



thrushes? Anything stick out as familiar? How about that reddish tail contrasting with that brown back?

This is a juvenal Hermit Thrush, fresh off the nest in the North Maine woods on 19 July 2016. Structure should have led us away from the genus *Turdus* and toward genus *Catharus*.... but.....Mistle Thrush!



Photo Challenge No. 101

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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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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