



WINTER COASTAL BIRDING-CAPE ANN

## A GOOD DAY AT CAPE ANN

Herman D'Entremont, Newton

For me the New Year began at 7 A.M. as I headed north on Rte. 128 toward Cape Ann. Yesterday my year list totaled 307, but today, 1972 was as empty as the Martin houses at Plum Island.

After entering the Gloucester city limits, a right turn on Rte. 133 brought me to the harbor. At the intersection of Rte. 127, also known as Western Avenue, I made another right. Hesperus Avenue, the road to Magnolia intersects at 1.4 miles, where a left and 0.8 miles more took me to the Hammond Museum, my first stop.

To get to the sea overlook, I walked down the driveway. The nearest land jutting into Gloucester Harbor is Mussel Point, to the north (left). From November through March this vantage often yields Harlequins, which can also be found to the south near a large island known as "Norman's Woe Rock."

Across the harbor mouth stands the lighthouse at the end of the breakwater at Eastern Point, which I shall visit later. The sun had not been up too long and was shining in my eyes when I looked seaward. My list now read: Red-breasted merganser, Common goldeneye, and Common loon. Yet this area can also provide Great cormorant, all three scoters Common eider, Bufflehead, Greater scaup, Oldsquaw, and possibly King Eider.

Returning to Gloucester, I saw a small flock of Snow buntings in Stage Fort Park. Near the famous Fisherman's Statue there were Great cormorant, Horned grebe, Common eider, and more Common goldeneye. This is also a good spot to search for wintering Barrow's goldeneye and white-winged gulls.

At the intersection of Rtes. 127 and 128, I turned right onto East Main Street, the scenic shore drive, toward Eastern Point. Approaching this landmark, one finds two stone pillars with a sign that states that the area is private. A guard is stationed here in summer, and if a birder is stopped he should say that he is going to the Massachusetts Audubon Society sanctuary at Eastern Point; your membership card may be necessary.

This road follows the shore to the right for 1.4 miles, through a second set of pillars to a parking lot at the Coast Guard station, where a sign painted on a rock tells this is for the M.A.S. Note the breakwater extending from the Coast Guard station southward into Gloucester harbor.

Though it was bitter cold and windy, I walked to the end of the breakwater, and was rewarded with: Horned grebe, Common loon, Great cormorant, Common eider, Razorbill, Thick-billed murre, Bufflehead, Red-breasted merganser, Dovekie, Purple sandpiper, and Black guillemot. A Short-eared owl even flew overhead toward land. Alcids and an owl in the same place!

Driving back toward the stone pillars, I stopped at Nile's Pond. Depending on the weather and the ice on the pond, one can find Glaucous and Iceland gulls mixed in with the Black-

backs and Herrings. Before reaching the pillars, I turned right onto S-shaped Bemo Avenue to a beach called Brace's Cove. The rocks on both sides of the cove's entrance hold food for Purple sandpipers. On the beach were Killdeer, Dunlin, and Sanderling; on the water, gulls - Iceland, Bonaparte's, Ring-billed, Black-backed, and the ever-present Herrings. This place is also frequented by Horned and Red-necked grebes, loons, scoters, and other sea ducks.

One should continue northward toward Rockport along Atlantic Road; a small pine grove on the right often shelters Red and White-winged crossbills. Many sea ducks congregate in the frequent inlets along this rocky coast. At one such place, called Bass Rocks, opposite Windmere Road and the Moorland Motor Inn, an Eared grebe has been seen for eight consecutive years. He was not here today, but Horned grebes and Buffleheads were.

I continued along Atlantic Road until it joined Route 127A, Thacher Road, which I followed to Rockport town limits. I then turned right along Marmion Way. An old Coast Guard tower stands on a rocky ledge at "Straitsmouth" where one can find wintering Alcids, Grebes, and both Common and King eiders.

Just a couple of hundred feet offshore is Straitsmouth Island, owned by M.A.S. There I hoped to see a Snowy owl or Sparrow hawk. A flock of King eiders wintered there in 1970-71, and for two weeks in January, 1970, a Red phalarope was seen.

Driving on, I turned right onto Oldgarden Road, where there is a little park at the intersection of Marraden Avenue. There I looked for Red-necked and Horned grebes as well as Iceland gulls. Farther on I turned left at Norwood Avenue then right at Highland to Mount Pleasant Street, which is 127A to Rockport Center.

The Rockport Fishpier, at the foot of Broadway, is favored by Alcids and White-winged gulls, but I continued along Route 127 toward Pigeon Cove. After passing the Cape Ann Tool Co., I turned right onto U-shaped Philips Avenue and continued straight through the next intersection. Past the Waldo Emerson Inn is a stone slope where a Rock wren stayed for four weeks, December 1965 to January 1966. But in any year this location is a good overlook for Barrow's golden-eyes, Red-necked grebes, and other sea ducks.

Returning to the intersection, I made a right at Philips Avenue and continued to bear right to Point Dechene Avenue, which leads to Andrews Point. Another right brought me to a stone wall and a view of a rocky point where one or two Black guillemots usually winter. Here, too, all the Alcids have been found at one time or another. This site is excellent during northeasters, when Kittiwakes, Shearwaters, Gannets, Phalaropes, Jaegers, and Leach's petrels, among others, can be blown by. Yet it is a good idea to check all the overlooks around Andrew's Point in any weather.

Now I continued along Route 127 toward Gloucester via Annisquam, arriving at the Locust Grove Cemetery. Turning right at the second entrance to the cemetery, across from a Texaco gas station, I parked near a small building. By climbing a knoll adjacent to the right side of the road, I could peer directly across the road into a hole about 30 feet high, in the crook of a large branch. There, as he has been for five years, was the resident Screech owl.

It was getting late. As I turned homeward along Route 127, I began to think of the many fine restaurants in the Rockport-Gloucester area, a fitting way to celebrate a fine day of winter birding. For the hardy, yes, but a way to turn our "poorest" season into one of the best.

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#### BOOK REVIEW

Brunn, Bertel and Arthur Singer, The Hamlyn Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe (Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., 1970 London, New York.)

It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to see this excellent guide, the format of which is similar to that of Birds of North America by Robbins et al; this is hardly surprising as Mr. Brunn is one of the authors of the latter, and Mr. Robbins was a consultant on the former.

I found the Hamlyn Guide superior in many ways to other European guides such as my own Collins Guide to British Birds. The 1971 reprint edition is a 319-page paperback that seems to be well bound and Singer's color illustrations are good. It should be invaluable to anyone planning to visit Great Britain or Europe; for the non-traveller, it would be a source of information and pleasure.

The approximate equivalent of the price in Britain is \$3.50, although the cost might well be higher through a United States bookseller.

Arbib, R. and T. Soper, The Hungry Bird Book (Ballantine Books, N.Y.)

Robert Arbib's American revision of the successful English book by Tony Soper is a sensible, delightful paperback which probably has something in it to interest everyone, from tyro to connoisseur. In its 150 pages, it contains an amazing amount of practical information for anyone who wants to attract and provide both natural and contrived food and housing for birds. In addition to the chapters on plantings, feeding stations, nesting boxes, poisons, and so on, there are several excellent short appendices and a reasonably good vocabulary.

A.H.

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