

BOSTON

to New Bedford

to Providence

WASHINGTON ST.

ROYAL ST.

UNIVERSITY AVE
R. R. STATION

CANTON

to New Bedford

RANDOLPH

BRAINTREE

RT. 138

MAPLE AVE

GOLF COURSE

FARM

CAMP

RT. 128

RT. 64

RT. 138

GREEN STREET

SKYLINE TRAIL

section of private property

FOW/ Meadow

BIRMA ROAD

BRUSH

BLUE HILL AVENUE

CANTON AVENUE

HILL ROAD

UNUNITY ROAD

STREET

RT. 128

RT. 65

BLUE HILL RIVER ROAD

Houghton's Pond

SKYLINE TRAIL

BUCK HILL

RT. 28

RT. 66

RT. 128

RT. 67

CHICKATAWBI T. ROAD

CHICKA TAWBUT HILL

ROGEEWOOD RD

RANDOLPH AVENUE

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP

RT. 128

RT. 66

RT. 24

Swamp

GREAT CEDAR

Braintree Pass Path

Bouncing Brook Path

SKYLINE TRAIL

RESERVOIR

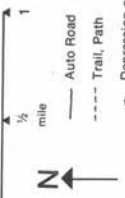
PIPE LINE

THE CRAGS

FINNEC BROOK

QUINCY

DUMP



Legend:
— Auto Road
- - - Trail, Path
* Depression or Quarry
--- Neponset River
--- Reservation Boundary
--- Reservoir
--- Blue Hills Reservation are not shown on map.

0322C

NATURE WATCHING IN THE BLUE HILLS RESERVATION

AND FOWL MEADOW

by Robert Abrams, Milton

I have lived for twenty-eight years in the shadow of the Blue Hills Reservation, and I am still amazed when I think that all these years I have lived but a single mile from Boston's urban border and only a two-minute walk from these marvelous woods and hills. Although the reservation is entirely surrounded by suburbs, it is extensive and accommodating to all the wild species within.

The best place to learn about this area is the Trailside Museum on Route 138 in Milton. The museum is full of informative displays on the geography, history, plants, animals and future of the Blue Hills. Here you can try to outstare Bubo virginianus, feed the ducks or the deer, watch the otters play, or purchase a map for one dollar and set out to explore the 5700 acres and several hundred miles of trails and bridle paths that constitute the reservation.

The Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) police govern this area and allow parking throughout the reservation, as long as the vehicle is well away from the traffic lane and does not block any of the fire gates. Parking is not allowed on Routes 28 and 138, which are state highways.

The Blue Hills include six major sections of land divided by paved roads with several smaller areas attached to these. Although these sections lie within five towns, it is not difficult to find the Blue Hills. There are four exits from Route 128 (64, 65, 67, and 68) that will take you to all parts of it. (Exit 64 north leads to the Trailside Museum.) Each section has one major trail with easy access and good walking with many other trails breaking off from it. Most of these secondary trails provide easy walking, but some do not. In springtime or after heavy rains, many of the steeper rocky trails become small streams but are still fun to walk if you don't mind getting damp.

Great Blue Hill.

This area is the one most often visited and has the most visible access. Exit 64 north from Route 128 will put you on Route 138 north and bring you to the Trailside Museum at the foot of Great Blue Hill. There is parking here in two large lots that flank the museum. In winter, the first lot on the right may be full of skiers' cars, so continue over the rise past the museum to the next lot, also on the right.

Wolcott Path. This is the major trail that leads from the museum and is a fair area for owling. I have "jumped" a few

Great Horned Owls on this path as well as a couple on Wildcat Notch Path just off Wolcott. The fields at the beginning of Wolcott Path are usually reliable for screech-owls at dusk and dawn. Give a hoot, and you may get an answer. Barred Owls are to be found here, too, with Coon Hollow Path near the top of Great Blue a likely spot for them. Coon Hollow Path has also had Worm-eating Warblers calling for five of the last six springs. A little farther down Wolcott Path at Five Corners Path, a Nashville may be calling from the north side of the path. He will be easier to find if you walk up the Skyline Trail fifty feet or so toward the summit of Hancock Hill. Nashvilles have nested here for years.

Continue up this trail, and the Prairie Warblers' calls will become more noticeable until you may be surrounded by them. I love these calls, buzzing slowly up the scale and winding into silence. Along with the Prairie's song, a few scattered Field Sparrows can be heard for comparison. In my experience the two songs may be confused. Prairie Warblers abound on all of the scrub-covered, higher hills and are among the first nesting warblers to arrive. Though it may be hard to spot these birds at first, concentrate on the general direction of the song and eventually one will pop to the top of a little scrub oak and give you a nice view.

Border Path. If you return to Wolcott Path and head back to the museum, a nice trail to explore will appear on the right - Border Path. The other end of this path can be reached by parking near the fire gate where the trail intersects Unquity Road. Entering here, you will be walking parallel to a stream. On the left, across the stream on a hillside, is a wonderful sight - a stand of huge Canadian Hemlocks. As you approach these great trees, look up, ignoring the litter thoughtlessly scattered about, and you will really enjoy a magnificent sight. The stream may have Spotted Salamander around it and will surely have the red-backed species under the rocks and logs near it. Not far from a here a rare Marbled Salamander was found. Farther up the path, there is usually grouse activity (Ruffed Grouse are found throughout the reservation wherever there is suitable habitat), and drumming may be heard here in the spring. I have also surprised a goshawk on this path in a stand of tall White Pines on the left. He stayed within a hundred-yard circle of me, going from tree to tree, probably being possessive about a recent kill.

On the rocky south side of Great Blue Hill, the rising thermals are utilized by hawks. Here I once saw a Red-tail take a four-foot black racer. As I watched this event with great excitement, I thought what a horrible way for such a useful serpent to go, especially with all of the fat chipmunks and mice around for the hawk to feed on. It then struck me that hawks must eat their competition too.

Houghton's Pond and Buck Hill Section.

One of the finest places to stand in eastern Massachusetts is at the summit of Buck Hill, the highest peak in this part of the Blue Hills. From this summit, you have a full circle view of the neighboring hills, endless suburbia, Boston, and the harbor. Bringing a scope up here is well worth the effort, for raptors frequent the rising air around the hill. To the south, the great number of birds seen will be gulls rising up from Ponkapoag and Great ponds.

Buck Hill is bordered by Hillside Street, Chickatawbut Road, Randolph Avenue (Route 28), and Route 128. The easiest approach is to park near the fire gate on Chickatawbut Road across from Forest Street. Walk in here and turn immediately right so that you are going along parallel to Chickatawbut Road. Follow the horse droppings to the second path on the left - Buck Hill Summit Path.

Buck Hill Summit Path. This well-worn, rocky path is a steep climb but easy to walk if you stop about halfway along to listen for Prairie Warblers. In spring, this is a good hill also for towhee and Brown Thrasher, especially at the summit. You never know what may glide by up here. Turkey Vultures are regularly observed, and crows may be seen harassing birds of prey in the distance. Barn and Tree swallows wing along down in the surrounding valleys below. A year or so ago, two friends and I headed west from the top down the Skyline Trail. A large bird floating just to the right caught our attention, and we turned in time to see a Bald Eagle arcing smoothly round the hill and out of view.

Blue Hill River Road. This paved road, parallel to Route 128, between it and Houghton's Pond, is closed to autos and is a good level road to walk at night. The heavy pine woods along it hold Barred, Great Horned, and screech-owl. On a wet, warm spring night, several species of frogs, toads, and salamanders come out on the pavement to absorb its warmth, eat a few insects, and hop or crawl about. Leopard, Wood, Green, and Pickerel frogs show up, with an occasional Bullfrog, our largest native frog, arriving to feed upon them. Spotted Salamanders may also be seen. Here, too, Ruffed Grouse are present, and thrushes are well represented in most of the lower forest. Great Crested Flycatchers, Indigo Buntings, and phoebes may be seen here as well as throughout the reservation. They seem to occur at all elevations with buntings preferring the higher and phoebes the lower areas.

Chickatawbut Section.

This is the largest part of the reservation, and the hills of this area rise up on the north side of Route 128 between exits 67 and 68. Follow Route 28 (exit 67) north of 128 for about a mile to a set of lights; this is Chickatawbut Road.

Turn right and find a small parking area to the immediate right. Here, as at many of the parking areas throughout the reservation, you will find a small billboard with a map and some literature about the hills posted on it. The map indicates that you are at the north end of Braintree Pass Path. Follow this trail south to Bouncing Brook Path and turn left.

Bouncing Brook Path leads into a good forest birding area and takes you to the Great Cedar Swamp where, in the spring of 1983, I heard a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers calling. Pewees and phoebes can be heard here along with many other birds that nest in the swamp area such as Hairy and Downy woodpeckers and flickers. On the left of the path a short way up the hill, Whip-poor-wills have nested. In the pools between the cedars, you can often see Painted and Spotted turtles sunning or an occasional Northern Water Snake, the only large water serpent found in the swampy areas throughout the hills.

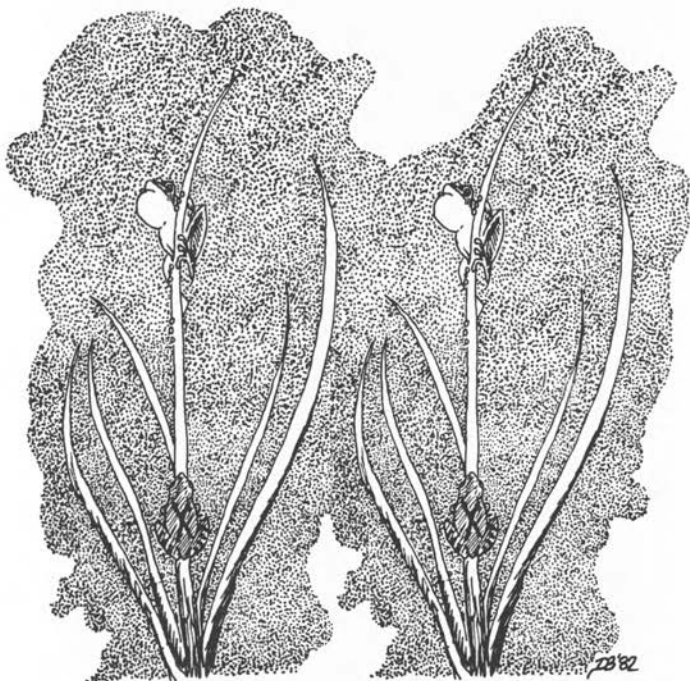
Chickatawbut Hill. Leading from Bouncing Brook Path are several paths that will take you to the top of Chickatawbut Hill and some more scenic views. At the summit is a group of buildings enclosed by a chain link fence - a Trailside Museum interpretive center run by Massachusetts Audubon. Near the western or Randolph Avenue side of the summit, there are some bird houses in which House Wrens and some bluebirds nest. This is another fine vantage point for hawkwatching.

Quarry Section.

To reach this part of the reservation, return to your car and continue driving up Chickatawbut Road past a small steep-sided reservoir enclosed by a chain link fence. One quarter mile beyond this, bear left on Wampatuck Road until you come to a parking area on the left. This is a good place to stop and explore what is known as the quarry section of the Blue Hills. A map is essential to avoid getting lost in this area.

Pipe Line Path and Chimney Crags. From the parking lot it is easy to find a grassy, elevated trail that covers a pipeline leading from the reservoir you passed on Chickatawbut Road, and parallel to it on the right is the lower Indian Camp Path. If you drop down to this path, you will see the Chimney Crags on the right, rocky cliffs that it is better just to admire rather than try to negotiate. Many rock-climbing clubs train on these cliffs, and this is where the local national ski patrol teaches its recruits the basics of climbing. I have not seen many birds on the crags, but a friend found phoebes nesting one spring in a fissure in these rocks. Throughout much of the area north of the crags old granite quarries are hidden among the trees.

Saw Cut Notch Path, which gets its name from the rocky notch at its mid-point, is a good path through this section. As



Spring Peepers

Illustration by Denise Braunhardt

usual, there are many subsidiary paths to explore, and here is where you will need a map. Near the Wampatuck Road end of this trail, there are numerous quarries off the beaten path. Many are difficult to see and even more difficult to climb out of should you fall in; so watch your step. On the north side of the path, there are two large landfill areas (dumps) and plenty of gulls in the air. These dumps are good sites for Red-tailed and Rough-legged hawks.

A short trip up Saw Cut Notch Path at the Route 28 end can also be productive. You can park off Route 28 in Milton at the path's entrance, which is about three-eighths of a mile beyond Ridgewood Road or half way to the entrance to the Milton town dump. There is a swampy area on the right along the path with towhees singing and Spring Peepers peeping. Red-tailed Hawks may be perched low in the trees here, probably to escape the many crows in the area. Either of two trails on the left leads to the backside of the Milton town dump. The weedy area around an old stone foundation is an excellent spot for sparrows - Field, Song, Tree, Savannah, and White-throated sparrows as well as juncos. Of the numerous crows mixed in with the Ring-billed, Herring, and Black-backed gulls, a good number are Fish Crows. Killdeer are here, too, and after heavy rains, I have found a dozen or so Least Sandpipers scattered about during migration. Pileated Woodpeckers cruise this area fairly often. Milk Snakes and

Black Racers sometimes lurk about the rubble, drawn here by the rodents that also attract a healthy number of hawks to the area.

Ponkapoag Section.

This is one of the more diverse sections of the reservation due to the large body of water that attracts flocks of waterfowl and an extensive bog bordering it with a great variety of plants and animals. You can enter the Ponkapoag area at three different places. Three-quarters of a mile south of Route 128 on Route 138 in Canton, there is a traffic light. Turn left here and enter a large parking lot next to an ice rink. This is also the parking lot for the Ponkapoag Golf Course. Beyond the clubhouse, a paved road bordered by Sugar Maples leads within half a mile to Ponkapoag Pond. Here, the dirt road straight ahead is Acton Path, and the one to the left is Redman Farm Path; both are part of the path system that encircles the pond. The road runs between several fairways; so, watch out for flying golf balls if you take this way in.

Another way in to the area is a dirt road off Randolph Street in Canton. To get here, continue to the second set of lights on Route 138 south and turn left. Another mile along on the left is a dirt road across from a large horse barn and corral. This path is marked with MDC signs and has a number of crude parking spots between the trees before you encounter the gate where Acton Path begins winding its way around the pond.

Ponkapoag Trail. The most convenient access for travelers on Route 128 is to leave at exit 65 and head south. Here a large paved drive funnels between guard rails to the fire gate. Below this entrance flows the Blue Hill River. Drive past the state trooper who may be stationed here, and park anywhere along the two guard rails. This is the beginning of the Ponkapoag Trail, which leads to the pond and also toward the YMCA camp that sits between the bog and the golf course. Do not drive through the gate because it may be locked on your return. Following Ponkapoag Trail in, you will come upon an intersection of paths. A right turn here heads you bogward along Redman Farm Path, which skirts the bog that in spring is full of activity. Swamp, Song, White-throated, Tree, and Field sparrows frequent this border. Winter Wren, Northern Shrike, Merlin, Cooper's Hawk, and Pileated Woodpeckers have been seen here. Redman Farm Path will bring you to a dirt parking area on the left. Cut through the parking lot and follow the edge of the bog.

Bog Walk. A short walk through the pines leads to one of the real treats of the reservation - the Bog Walk. This is a boardwalk that appears just past a couple of boulders on the edge of the bog to the left and extends for half a mile to Ponkapoag Pond. After a heavy rain, there may be a few inches of water covering the first fifty feet or so. In warm weather, garter, ribbon, and water snakes are common along

the first hundred yards of the walk. They emerge from hibernation with the warmth of the spring sun and glide among the skunk cabbage and cedars, foraging for worms, frogs, salamanders, and fish. Two other interesting predators occur a little farther out on the walk. These are insectivorous wildflowers - "open-mouthed" Pitcher Plants, which digest the unlucky insects that fall in and are trapped in the water at the base of the pitcher, and tiny red clusters of Sundew, small and inconspicuous among the Sphagnum Moss, but growing right out of the logs of the walk. Cedar Waxwings and Purple Finches are often seen along the walk, and large feeding flocks of chickadees, kinglets, and juncos swing to and fro.

Ponkapoag Pond. When you reach the pond, approach slowly to avoid startling any waterfowl that may be floating near or roosting on the end of the walk. I have seen a number of species - Canada Goose, Black, Wood, and Ruddy ducks, coot, Common and Hooded mergansers, Mallard, Redhead, Canvasback, Common Loon, Green-winged and Blue-winged teal, Great and Double-crested cormorants, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Pied-billed Grebe, and Great Blue and Green-backed herons. Osprey, Cooper's, Sharp-shinned, Red-tailed, and Rough-legged hawks have been seen here, as have Merlin and Bald Eagle. At night, foxes and raccoons use the outer walk as a highway, and opossums and skunks move along nearer the shore. Whole families of raccoons may be encountered here, and foxes den in the vicinity of the golf course. A Great Blue Heron skull was found at the entrance to one of these dens.

Redman Farm Path, Acton Path, and Fisherman's Beach. When you return along the boardwalk to the path and turn left, you may find screech-owls in the pines along the road. Just before Redman Farm Path enters the golf course, there is a low boggy area with a stream running under the road. In spring, this little corner has been packed with warblers. Grouse and woodcock occur here as do creepers, woodpeckers, nuthatches, and titmice. When you get to the golf course, cut across the fairway (if there are no golfers at the tee on the left) and watch the edge of the swamp for snipe and various sparrow species. This road (Redman Farm Path) continues along the edge of the golf course until it becomes Acton Path and passes beside one of Ponkapoag Pond's large shallow coves where Wood Ducks, herons, and Solitary Sandpipers may be seen. A few big water snakes may slide off the edge of the road on your approach. Across the cove, Red-winged Blackbirds and Eastern Kingbirds nest.

The pond is quite large, and to walk completely around it requires a minimum of two hours. A boat (no motorboats permitted) may be launched from the Randolph Street access. The craft must be carried about a hundred yards down the dirt road to Fisherman's Beach. The edge of the bog is a good place to cruise for birds or to fish. Ponkapoag has Eastern Chain Pickerel, some bass, excellent panfish, and a few Northern Pike added by the fish and game people five years

ago. Ponkapoag attracts a good number of visitors during the fall waterfowl migration. Hooded and Common mergansers are present along with coot, Canvasback, Ruddy Ducks, Pied-billed Grebe, Bufflehead, and Common Goldeneye. For sheer numbers of ducks, "Ponky" never comes close to Great Pond in Brain-tree, which is the real hotspot in the area for waterfowl.

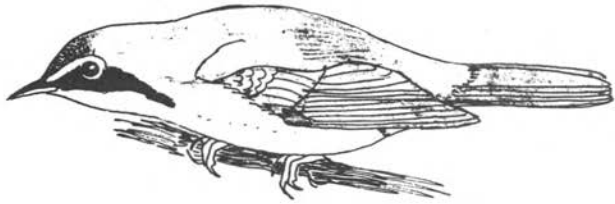
Most of the wood duck boxes along the shore have Tree Swallows nesting inside. Along this bog I have seen Cooper's Hawks chasing Black Ducks, Osprey fishing, and Great Blue and Green-backed herons feeding on whatever moves. Some of the biggest Snapping Turtles I have ever encountered are in Ponkapoag Pond. At times you can pick out four or five of their glistering triangular heads as you scan the pond. These omnivorous reptiles feed on aquatic invertebrates, fish, reptiles, birds, mammals, carrion, and a surprisingly large amount of vegetation.

If you undertake the long walk around the pond or spend a hot day in a canoe on a sunny pond, a swim at Fisherman's Beach is a good way to cool off.

Fowl Meadow.

This area is actually a part of the Neponset River Reservation. It has one long, more or less straight path running through it called Burma Road. There are access points at both ends of this road. One way to enter this area is to take Interstate 95 off Route 128 north and simply pull off the cloverleaf to the right before you actually get on 95, which ends just after it crosses Route 128. Were it not for the strong efforts of many concerned citizens, Route 95 would now be slicing Fowl Meadow in two. The more usual way to enter Fowl Meadow is where it meets Brush Hill Road in Milton. To get here from Route 128, take Route 138 north and as you pass the Trailside Museum's second parking lot, you must bear right onto Canton Avenue and take the first left. Beyond the light about half a mile down bumpy Brush Hill Road, there is a fire gate on the left. Park here or go another hundred yards up the road to a small parking lot on the left. Here, another map of the Blue Hills is usually posted. Beyond this poster is a short dirt path that leads back to the fire gate and the beginning of Burma Road.

Burma Road. There is water on the left and a tangle of thickets on the right. The water level and the number of water fowl in here depend upon the spring rains. In May, when the level is high, a number of Wood Ducks are seen along with Mallards, Blue-winged and Green-winged teal, Black Ducks, and a few Canada Geese. Green-backed Herons fish in this area and nest regularly in the meadow. A few Great Blue Herons will provide a long look as they slide across the water lilies toward Great Blue Hill to resume feeding. Occasionally, a Little Blue Heron has been seen here.



Kentucky Warbler

Illustration by Denise Braunhardt

In the willow trees on the right, Warbling Vireos nest, and there are warblers in the thickets in spring. Along the first part of Burma Road, Northern Orioles, Swamp Sparrows, Cardinals, Common Yellowthroats, and Red-winged Blackbirds sing. About two hundred yards along on the right is a small isolated Oxbow Lake, a remnant of the Neponset River that flows just beyond the tree line. On the little peninsula within the oxbow the "fitz-bew" call of the Willow Flycatcher is heard. Several nest along this line of trees. Palm Warblers, Yellow Warblers, goldfinches, and Savannah Sparrows are also some of the early visitors to this piece of land. Solitary Sandpipers can be seen walking in the tangles along the shoreline. There are rare Red-fin Pickerel and Sunfish in the meadow, and kingfishers and Hooded Mergansers have been seen feeding along the road when the water level is high.

King, Virginia, and Sora rails are present in the cattails along the left side of the road. The first time I saw a Virginia Rail take off on a short, nervous flight, my impulse was to catch the poor creature and nurse it back to health. I had never seen a more feeble flight from a bird that was not sick. I have seen as many as forty snipe at once coursing around the sky above the marsh, and at dawn and dusk, small numbers of bats may be feeding on the wing, finding their insect prey by echolocation. At one time or another, I have seen Turkey Vultures, Cooper's, Sharp-shinned, Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, and Broad-winged hawks over this area.

Also along the Burma Road among the log piles, several weasels may be on the hunt. One year I noticed a starling that had her youngsters safely hidden in the hollow of a dead tree above one of these piles. But the following week, a weasel stuck its head out of the hole. Mink, another member of the weasel family, live in Fowl Meadow, and there is speculation that there may be otters here, too. Certainly, the Striped Skunk lives in these parts.

When you enter a deciduous area farther along, you may hear House Wren, Veery, and Wood Thrush along with Scarlet Tanager, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and many other nesting and migrant species. Well over two hundred species have been seen in Fowl Meadow. In the spring of 1983, Kentucky Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, and Clay-colored Sparrow were all present and singing and stayed long enough to provide a real treat for birders. The same season, a Purple Gallinule was present for a short time as were Golden-winged Warbler, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Blue Grosbeaks.

Neponset River. Three-quarters of a mile from the start of Burma Road is a crossroads where a right turn leads to the Neponset River through some good warbler habitat. On occasion, I have seen woodchucks waddling down this path, and the frogs rocketing off on both sides are mostly Leopard Frogs with an occasional Wood or Pickerel Frog among them. There are a few hollow trees around that house raccoons or opossum. From this path down to the river, another path goes off to the left to an area with large White Pine trees where Blue-winged Warblers are to be found. Towards the end this road becomes a little swampy. This is where woodcock have congregated and put on their spring mating flight displays. Snipe also soar about creating the unusual "winnowing" noise made by spreading and lowering outer tail feathers. Head back into the pines and cross a concrete culvert, a small path leads off to the right and back to Burma Road. If the water level is very high, stretches of this path will be under water, and Black Ducks, Wood Ducks, and teal may be seen. Also, watch for Blue-gray Gnatcatchers here. Garter snakes and DeKay's Snakes may be found on this trail. DeKay's or Northern Brown Snakes are tiny cinnamon-colored wrigglers that are often overlooked because of their size and excellent camouflage.

As you continue down Burma Road, there are some amphitheater-like clearings that provide good warbler and sparrow watching. At the end of Burma Road, go beyond the gate and bear sharply to the left, heading away from the highway and onto a paved road. Rough-winged Swallows have been seen here, and Barn Swallows nest in the large aluminum building behind the chain link fence. This is the area where the Clay-colored Sparrow sang its song, or buzzed its buzz, in 1983. Follow this tar road to a chain that is strung across the road where it turns to dirt. Bear to the left and you will stay clear of private land. A few more left turns will take you through a prime warbler area, and when you come to a few large rocks on the road, you are back on your way to the crossroads and Burma Road. Every year many fine birds are seen along these paths with an occasional unexpected treasure.

There are many trails through the Blue Hills that I have not mentioned which you may wish to explore. I remember vividly my first experiences (1966) with most of these trails, usually whizzing along in the Trailside Museum's jeep on

field trips to collect water snakes or Wood Frogs or Box Turtles. Now that I have slowed down to walking speed and carry binoculars, I am appreciating more and more the many beauties that these fine woods hold.

ROBERT ABRAMS has lived in Milton most of his life and has been birding for about five years. A carpenter and wood-cutter by trade, his hobbies include scuba diving, fishing, herpetology, and travel, as well as birdwatching. Bob says, "I have always had a strong interest in nature and have spent most of my life either in the woods, on the beaches, or underwater, from Nova Scotia to Key West."

Join the Flock!

GET YOUR RABBIT, DASHER, VOLVO,
DATSUN, TOYOTA, HONDA OR RENAULT
REPAIRED AT:

CO-OP GARAGE
106 Pleasant Street
Watertown
923-0941
(Convenient to MBTA)



Coming Events

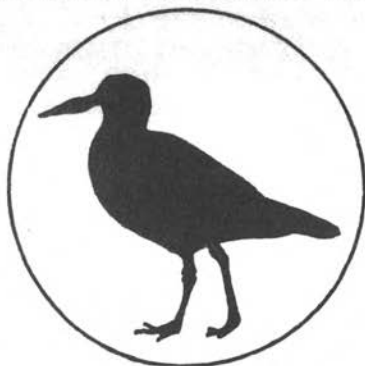
MANOMET BIRD OBSERVATORY ANNUAL BIRDATHON AND

THE NORTHEAST BIRD ART SHOW SEPTEMBER 15 & 16

Manomet Bird Observatory is celebrating its fifteenth birthday with the 1984 fund-raising birdathon and the opening of the Northeast Bird Art Show. Seventeen artists, including Roger Tory Peterson and Great Britain's John Busby, will be at the show to discuss their portfolios and sell their work. For information about the weekend birdathon and tickets to the opening party and art auction, to be held September 16 at University Place, 124 Mt. Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA, contact MBO, Box 936, Manomet, MA 02345. Tel. 617-224-6521.

MONOMOY ISLAND TOURS

Ferry Service



Guided Hikes

Jeff Russell • USCG Licensed Operator • 945-0681
or Birdwatchers General Store • 255-6974

*natural history,
illustrated volumes,
art books, first editions
and general stock*

*open 12-6 tuesday~
saturday*

*Saxifrage
books*

14 Derby Square, Salem, Mass. 617-745-7170



Dedham Travel Agency

a complete travel service

9 Eastern Avenue
Dedham, MA 02026

Tel. 329-1160

