

## RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD IN NEW ENGLAND, 1986

by Kyle Jones, Bar Harbor, Maine

Maine and Massachusetts both established first records for Red-billed Tropicbird in the autumn of 1986. A great deal of similarity in the two events prompted this review. The sightings establish new northerly limits for the species in the northwestern Atlantic.

To make a comparison of the two sightings, I examined the published information on the Martha's Vineyard discovery (Arvidson 1986; Rosenwald 1986), notes from the Mount Desert Rock appearance provided by David James and Harriet Corbett, photographs from Jonathan Alderfer (in Rosenwald 1986) and Corbett, and personal experience with the Martha's Vineyard bird.

The Red-billed Tropicbird was seen at Mount Desert Rock, Maine, on August 31, 1986 (see Corbett, this issue). Fifteen days later another Red-billed Tropicbird was documented on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts (September 15, 1986), although the bird may have been present there for as much as "two weeks" prior to its identification (Rosenwald 1986). Both sightings occurred after the passing of Tropical Storm Charley in mid-August, but no signs of storm-caused wear were apparent (e.g., abraded flight feathers, broken tail streamers, fatigue).

Aside from the temporal similarities of these events, the physical appearances are also noteworthy. Both records are of adult-plumaged birds in an apparently healthy condition with full tail streamers and very pale dorsal barring.



*Red-billed Tropicbird*  
Martha's Vineyard, MA September 15, 1986

*Photo by Jonathan Alderfer*

A look at past records for this species in the northwestern Atlantic include single dead or dying specimens from New York and Rhode Island. Reference for the Newfoundland Banks (A.O.U. 1957) was reported by Arvidson (1986) as "unsubstantiated." Thus, the Maine record establishes the most northerly record for the species, and both sightings provide first state records.

What does all of this mean? To me, it suggests that the same individual may have been responsible for both appearances. One possible scenario is that the bird came north, with or without the assistance of Tropical Storm Charley, briefly visited Mount Desert Rock, and then turned up on Martha's Vineyard, 165 nautical miles to the southwest, sometime in the first half of September.

No conclusive evidence has been found to prove or disprove this hypothesis, but it provides stimulating possibilities for the comment posed by the Massachusetts Audubon Society's public service information release about ". . . what it was doing for two weeks prior to being seen" (M.A.S. 1986).

I thank those authors and photographers kind enough to publish details on this important event, Harriet Corbett and David James for allowing me access to their personal notes and photographs, and *Bird Observer* and the Massachusetts Audubon Society for bringing the discoveries to the public.

#### REFERENCES

- American Ornithologists' Union. 1957. *The A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds*, fifth edition. A.O.U., Lawrence KS.
- Arvidson, Dorothy R. 1986. Another Massachusetts First: Red-billed Tropicbird. *Bird Observer* 14: 241.
- Massachusetts Audubon Society. 1986. First Record for Red-billed Tropicbird in Massachusetts. *M.A.S. Public Service Information Release* (9/28/86). M.A.S., Lincoln, MA.
- Rosenwald, Julius, II. 1986. How About That Tail? *Bird Observer* 14: 238.

KYLE JONES lives in Bar Harbor, Maine, and works for Acadia National Park. His experience in Massachusetts includes working with tern colonies on Cape Cod, an internship and several pelagic cruises for the Manomet Bird Observatory, and regularly sneaking into the state to capitalize on birding opportunities not found downeast. He has begged, blundered, and beaten his way into such avian delights as Ross' Gull, Red-billed Tropicbird, and Sooty Tern.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION  
For the Period Ending 12/31/78

1. TITLE OF PUBLICATION  
**Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts**

2. ISSUANCE INFORMATION  
 a. NO. OF ISSUES PUBLISHED IN PRECEDING 12 MONTHS: **12**  
 b. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: **\$12.00**

3. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF KNOWN OFFICE OF PUBLICATION (Street, City, County, State and ZIP+4 Code)  
**462 Trapelo Road, Belmont, Middlesex, Massachusetts 02178-1421**

4. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF THE HEADQUARTERS OF GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHER (See previous page as item 4)

5. FULL NAMES AND COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESSES OF PUBLISHER, EDITOR AND MANAGING EDITOR (See item 4 if not in items 3, 4 or 5)

**Publisher:** Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts Inc., 462 Trapelo Road, Belmont, MA 02178  
**Editor:** Home and Country Weekly address  
**Dorothy S. Arvidson, 1 School Street, Arlington, MA 02174**

6. PUBLISHER'S HOME AND COUNTRY WEEKLY ADDRESS  
**N/A**

7. OWNER (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address as well as that of each individual must be given. If the publication is published by a proprietor, his name and address must be stated. Other names must be furnished.)

FULL NAME	COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS
<b>Bird Observer of Eastern Mass. Inc.</b>	<b>462 Trapelo Road, Belmont, MA 02178</b>

8. KNOWN BONDHOLDERS, MORTGAGEES AND OTHER SECURITY HOLDERS OWNING OR HOLDING 1 PERCENT OR MORE OF TOTAL AMOUNT OF BONDS, MORTGAGES OR OTHER SECURITIES OF THIS PUBLISHER (See item 7)

FULL NAME	COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS

9. FOR COMPLETION BY NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AUTHORIZED TO RECEIVE SPECIAL RATE (Section 402 (j) (2) (B) (vii))  
 The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes: Check one:  
 HAS NOT CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS  
 HAS CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS (If changed, publisher must attach explanation of change with this statement.)

10. EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION (Give estimates unless otherwise indicated. Use the following as a guide.)

	COPIES THIS YEAR	COPYING OR REPRODUCTION OF THIS YEAR'S COPIES
A. TOTAL NO. COPIES (Net Press Run)	858	850
B. PAID AND/OR REQUESTED CIRCULATION (See item 10B. (1) and (2))	0	0
1. Mail Subscriptions (Net and/or requested)	675	680
C. TOTAL PAID AND/OR REQUESTED CIRCULATION (Sum of 10B. (1) and (2))	675	680
D. FREE DISTRIBUTION BY MAIL, CARRIER OR OTHER MEANS (SAMPLES, COMPLIMENTARY, AND OTHER FREE COPIES)	51	31
E. TOTAL DISTRIBUTION (Sum of 10B. (1) and D)	726	711
F. COPIES NOT DISTRIBUTED (Offices use, left over, unsold, returned, etc.)	132	139
G. TOTAL (Sum of E, F, and 2. unless noted see note on item 10.)	858	850

11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.  
 Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager or Owner:  
**Dorothy S. Arvidson** Business Manager

PS Form 3526, July 1973

# Smaller! Lighter! Brighter! NEW NIKON ROOF PRISM BINOCULARS



Who would have thought binoculars this light and compact could be so bright and sharp, even on cloudy days or in fading light! It's the unique Nikon combination of ingenious design, superlative coated optics and rugged precision construction that makes it possible. Choose the all-purpose 7x26 or extra powerful 9x30, from the maker of the famous Nikon camera system. See the difference Nikon quality makes.

For literature and discount prices covering a complete line of sporting optics and accessories, write to the "Optics Headquarters for the Outdoorsman."

## BIRDING

P.O. BOX 580  
AMSTERDAM, N.Y.  
12010

## 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)

Proprietors,  
Soheil Zende and Doug Packard

