



EDITOR'S PAGE

There are several areas such as Reading and Wilmington that are not covered in the Breeding Bird Survey. Anyone interested in participating in this activity should contact Richard Forster at the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Drumlin Farm, Lincoln. The telephone number is 259-9500.

NEWS ITEM

The five-foot tall Manchurian crane (red, white, black) was nearly wiped out during the Korean War. The demilitarized zone between North and South Korea has provided a wintering refuge, 720 square kilometers, for this bird and other animals, Massachusetts Audubon says. The population has increased from 30 cranes in 1952 to 253 in 1975.

THE IVORY GULL

The following is taken from Nature's Ways by Wayne Hanley, Massachusetts Audubon Society.

The hope that springs eternal has paid off again. This time the reward was an ivory gull.

That this rare Arctic gull was discovered at Salisbury Beach should be no surprise. Long before the first frost of autumn, all telescope-owners within weekend commuting distance have patrolled that beach for a second-coming of the Ross' gull. So far the Ross' gull has not made it. But birders are an optimistic lot who suppose that lightning may strike the same spot any number of times.

The Rev. and Mrs. C. Leon Strickland of Rochester, N.H., and their son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Carl L. Strickland of Union Springs, N.Y., discovered the ivory gull December 22. The bird was patrolling the jumble of ice blocks that the sea has stacked in the small inlet that serves as a boat-launching site for the state beach. The Ross' gull was discovered at the same site.

Mr. Strickland reported the discovery to Tudor Richards of the Audubon Society of New Hampshire and to James Baird and Richard Forster of the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Along with Paul Miliotis of Dunstable, they confirmed Mr. Strickland's identification the following day.

In the past, ivory gull visits usually lasted one day or less. The present bird gives promise of being more durable. While it has disappeared for entire days, so far it has reappeared the following day after each absence.

While not quite equal to that epitome of rareness enjoyed by the Ross' gull which was the only member of its species ever seen in New England, the ivory gull ranks high among exotics. It's the sort of bird that your father may have seen in his youth and if one does not come along in your lifetime there's still hope that your children might see one. Ludlow Griscom listed an ivory gull shot December 1, 1886, on Monomoy by a coastguardsmen; another was seen at Nauset in March, 1931; another at Newburyport January 14, 1940, and "two or three" the same day at Cape Ann; a sick bird was at Rockport, January 27, 1946, and an immature January 26 and 29, 1949, on Plum Island.

Forster saw the latest ivory gull from 15 feet. He reported a slight yellowish cast on its otherwise pure white plumage. Its bill was greenish-blue at the base, with the tip third greenish-yellow. Its size was near that of the laughing gull, which makes it a medium-sized gull, smaller than the herring gull.

Ivory gulls breed in northern Greenland and on Arctic islands in the vicinity. They remain in the far north the year around. In the darkness of Arctic winter, ivory gulls follow open leads in the pack ice, feeding on the offal of seals, polar bears and Arctic foxes. An occasional dead whale provides them a sumptuous repast. Most ornithologists have referred to them as voracious eaters, which is another way of saying that any animal which has so few chances of finding food makes the most of anything it finds.