

# A Survey of Published Bird Records in New England

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In researching a book I am writing on the birds of Essex County, to update Charles Wendell Townsend's 1905 work on the same subject, my task has been to understand the changes in the county's birdlife over the past century, species by species. That has required a close study of the published bird records for the twentieth century, which of course are not always synonymous with Essex County records. The foundation has been Townsend's two definitive works, *The Birds of Essex County, Massachusetts* (1905) and a supplement thereto, published in 1920. Since then, published records have taken a variety of forms, including three decades' worth of monthly newsletters that reported bird sightings from all over New England. In this article I summarize the history of those regional records, and also how published sources evolved in the six New England states, whether concurrently with or subsequent to the regionwide publishing efforts.

Interestingly, some of the earliest published systematic bird records, other than books, were in Essex County. That was because of the character and energy of the founding members of the Essex County Ornithological Club, established in 1916 and still going strong today. The club began publishing annual *Bulletins* in 1919 and continued them through 1938. Those annual reports contain, in addition to many timely articles on various aspects of field ornithology, annual lists of all the species seen in the county that year by club members or other birders known to the members. Many of the rarities were documented in detail in articles by the observers. Thus, I had an excellent resource for county records for that twenty-year period.

However, the *Bulletins* ceased after 1938, and that was the end of published county records per se, at least for Essex County. (At least one other New England county has published bird records: Worcester County, where *The Chickadee* has been the mouthpiece of the Forbush Bird Club since 1930. If I have missed other bird-records publications associated with a single county, I apologize.) From then on, what records existed were published, understandably, on a state and even regional level, from which county records, if desired, must be extracted. For the purpose of this article, I abandon the county focus at this point and delve into the development of those regional and state records-publishing efforts.

## New England Regional Records

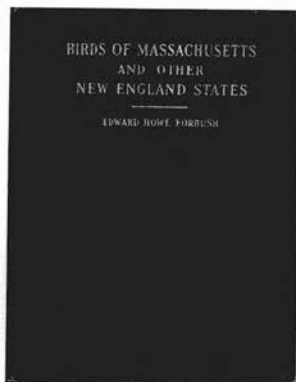
This story starts at least as far back as 1870, when Edward A. Samuels published the first *Birds of New England*, a work that seems to have faded into oblivion. It gets more interesting in 1876, when a seventeen-year-old boy named Henry D. Minot published a book called *The Land-Birds and Game-Birds of New England*. This remarkable young man was a critical observer and put his book together largely from his own field notes. His ability was such that, by the time he was thirty, he had become the youngest railroad president in the United States. Alas, within another year

he was killed in a railroad collision. But his book was so well-regarded that none other than William Brewster saw fit to edit a second edition in 1895, assuring the reader that "my editorial touches have been of the lightest." And, in fact, he kept his remarks mainly to footnotes so as not to detract from the author's style. Those footnotes were aimed at giving a broader picture of the species' status in the region, given Minot's limited birding experience outside Boston. There was no shortage of books dealing with New England birds in the nineteenth century, and Minot's treats only land birds (hence the title), but it is the one I am familiar with, and it is fascinating to read Brewster's footnotes, sometimes correcting but often affirming the words of a teenager who had learned so much so fast on his own.

Another New England classic, although little-known among today's birders, is Ralph Hoffman's *A Guide to the Birds of New England and Eastern New York* (1901). This book is more of a field guide than anything else, but it did have general statements about the range and abundance of each species in the region, and his introduction discussed what was then known about seasonality, migration patterns, and bird distribution vis-à-vis the life zones in New England that are still recognized today (Upper Austral, Transition, and Canadian).

The definitive accounts of species distribution in the New England region, detailed state by state, would await the landmark works of Edward Howe Forbush (1858-1929), the Massachusetts State Ornithologist for his last twenty-one years and first president of the New England (later Northeastern) Bird Banding Association. His two earlier well-known works, *Useful Birds and their Protection* (1907) and *A History of the Game Birds, Wild-fowl and Shore Birds of Massachusetts and Adjacent States* (1912), "were chiefly economic and treated only a part of the birds...., stressing their utility and the means of conserving them" (quoted from the preface to the next work). Indeed, Forbush's contributions to the field of conservation were immense, in a time when conservation was a new concept to most people. He was one of the founders of the Massachusetts Audubon Society and its president for twelve years. For over twenty years he was the New England field agent for the National Association of Audubon Societies. He was one of the prime movers behind progressive legislation in many states to reduce the wanton shooting of birds and mammals. He wrote countless articles and gave speeches on the need for better protection of the country's diminishing wildlife. He was instrumental in establishing several wildlife sanctuaries, and one in Berkshire County is named after him.

Forbush was also a consummate field ornithologist who spent the later years of his life writing the massive three-volume *Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States* (1925, 1927, and 1929). This landmark compendium, combining field marks and illustrations with behavioral accounts, nesting status, comprehensive distribution notes, and a few range maps, is a virtual bible of bird knowledge as of the 1920s. Most of the color plates were done by the great Louis Agassiz Fuertes, who unfortunately was killed in an automobile accident before the second volume was released. Forbush himself did not live to see his final volume, dying of pneumonia in March 1929. His assistant and successor as State Ornithologist, John B. May,



completed the work and wrote a biographical tribute to Forbush as an introduction to Volume 3.

But those were books, and books, no matter how definitive, are not easily updated. What about information on current sightings and trends? One of the early efforts was by Forbush himself, in the form of his monthly bulletins of bird sightings, issued under Massachusetts state auspices, variously called "Bulletin of Information" and "Items of Interest" (1921-1928). "These summarized the reports he received every month from numerous correspondents in this and other New England states, as well as Canada and along the North Atlantic seaboard..."

(from the Agricultural Commissioner's prefatory statement in Volume 1, above).

Another source of field reports, in this case national in scope, was Frank M. Chapman's *Bird Lore*, the forerunner of *Audubon Magazine*, which in turn spawned *Audubon Field Notes* (later *American Birds*, now *North American Birds*). This journal, begun by Chapman in 1899, soon started to include summaries of sightings from various regions of the country. The Boston region, consisting of New England, began reporting in 1917. Two of the compilers of this regular bimonthly report in the earlier years were John May (1927-1933) and Ludlow Griscom (1935-1954). In more recent years, Davis W. Finch of New Hampshire (most of the 1970s) and Peter D. Vickery of Maine (late 1970s and early 1980s) were our regional *American Birds* editors, distilling the records for both New England and the Maritimes for all four seasons with insightful commentary; since then the job has been made more manageable by having four different individuals write the four seasonal reports. Whatever the format or title, New England regional records in a national publication go back almost an entire century.

On December 1, 1936, the Bird Department of the New England Museum of Natural History in Boston, the predecessor to the Boston Museum of Science, published the first issue of a mimeographed newsletter called the *Bulletin of New England Bird-Life*. (The hyphen was dropped in 1939; perhaps the staff argued over it the way the American Ornithologists' Union argues about hyphens in bird names today.) Each month from then through the end of 1944, reports from around New England were compiled and sent to subscribers for the princely sum of fifty cents per annum for museum members, a dollar for nonmembers. The purposes of the *Bulletin* were "1. To record unusual occurrences; 2. To study activities (especially migrations) of all species, so far as space permits; and 3. To advise less experienced observers where and when to look for birds." The first compiler was Juliet Richardson (later Kellogg, later French), one of Ludlow Griscom's protégés, who first summarized the weather and avian highlights for the previous month and then presented the reports in a running, narrative style that focused attention on the more significant sightings and trends. (This pattern is used in *North American Birds* today.)

"Upon leaving the museum to get married" in the spring of 1939, Juliet turned her duties over to David Lloyd Garrison, curator of birds for several years at the New

England Museum, who instituted a columnar reporting system with each entry consisting, left to right, of species (in the current taxonomic order), date, place, number of individuals, and observer(s). This system has been widely used ever since and is followed in most of the state publications described later in this article. Narrative comments were still inserted where instructive. Several editors later, Juliet Richardson Kellogg returned as compiler for the *Bulletin's* last two years, 1943-1944. She died in 2001 at the age of ninety-one, within a few months of David Garrison. Garrison was ninety-four.

After eight years the museum relinquished editorship of the *Bulletin* to the Massachusetts Audubon Society (MAS), which picked it up in 1945 as *Records of New England Birds* and promptly quadrupled the price to a lofty \$2 a year (\$5 by 1956). This publication was at first issued as a supplement to the Society's regular monthly bulletin under the initial editorship of William and Annette Cottrell. Several coeditors were involved over the next twenty-four years until the Society ceased publishing regular bird records at the end of 1968. (There was also a hiatus from May 1961 through the end of 1963, when no records were published.) The primary coeditors over the years were Don Alexander (1906-1999), Henry Parker, Kimball Elkins (1903-1997), and James Baird. But the person who worked with all of them, almost from beginning to end, was Ruth P. Emery of Quincy. The *Records* were meticulously compiled and edited, with Ruth doing most of the compiling and also writing many of the monthly narrative summaries. She was the first "Voice of Audubon" in 1954, when MAS began its telephone hotline for birds. She later helped compile records for *Bird Observer* from its beginning in 1973 through 1989, and actively birded well into her eighties. She also compiled New England records for the national journal *Audubon Field Notes* and its successor *American Birds* for many years. Ruth Emery died in 1991 at the age of ninety-three. (The lesson seems clear: our passion for birds will help us live longer!)

## Massachusetts

The withdrawal of the Massachusetts Audubon Society from the publication of bird sightings left a huge hole in the continuity of ornithological record-keeping in New England. That hole was filled, at least in eastern Massachusetts, by the establishment in 1973 of a nonprofit corporation called *Bird Observer of Eastern Massachusetts*, which immediately began publishing a bimonthly journal of the same name. *Bird Observer* (to which the name of the journal was shortened in 1987) began as and still is an all-volunteer effort – typical for state bird-records publications. It has matured into a New England-wide journal of field ornithology containing articles on many aspects of birds and birding. Paula Butler was the first editor, followed in succession by Paul Roberts, Dorothy Arvidson, Martha Steele, Matt Pelikan, and Brooke Stevens. For some readers the core of *Bird Observer* is the bimonthly reports of bird sightings, which initially covered only the eastern half of the state and were expanded to include the whole state in 1999; compiling sightings throughout the six states of the region remains beyond the capability of the staff, and the other states have their own records vehicles anyway. Many people have played a role in the

compiling and editing of these reports since 1973, with Robert Stymeist organizing it from the beginning (with help from Ruth Emery!), and Marjorie Rines automating the process in the mid-1990s. The records format consists of species highlights listed in columns in taxonomic order, each of the two sections (one for each half of the checklist) preceded by a narrative summary of the more noteworthy sightings, nest records, behaviors, or population trends.

What about western Massachusetts before 1999? Despite the small size of the state, for some reason its birders never formed much of a unified front when it came to record-keeping. The western counties (or, more accurately, the bird clubs in the western half of the state) started a records newsletter called *Pioneer Valley Bird News* in 1960, well before the demise of *Records of New England Birds*. The founder and editor was Rudolph Stone, who kept that role until 1984. Organizers in the various bird clubs submitted their members' sightings to the editor. Within the first year the name was changed to *Bird News of Western Massachusetts*, which it remained until its merger with *Bird Observer* in 1999. (When *Bird Observer* started operations in 1973, its scope was limited to the eastern half of the state because the west already had a publication.) Seth Kellogg took over as editor in 1984 and ran it until the end; he is now the records coordinator for *Bird Observer* for the western part of the state.

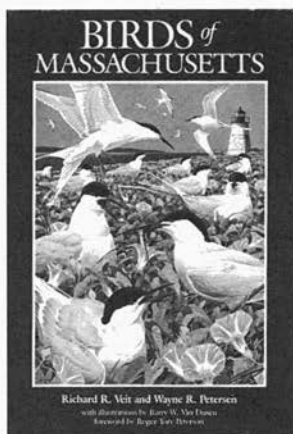
As for annotated checklists, no fewer than a dozen works were written on the birds of Massachusetts in the nineteenth century, but they are so old and outdated that they are of secondary interest today (not to mention hard to find). The more important works are naturally those from the twentieth century, all of which summarize many of the records earlier and elsewhere published. The first of these was *The Birds of Massachusetts* (1901) by Reginald Heber Howe and Glover M. Allen. Their intent, typical for an annotated checklist, was to summarize and consolidate in one volume all that was known about the status of each species in the state up to that point. Each of these industrious men, as will be shown below, also coauthored an annotated checklist for the birds of another New England state.

Skipping over Forbush, already covered, we come to *The Birds of Massachusetts: An Annotated and Revised Check List* by Ludlow Griscom and Dorothy Snyder, published in 1955 by the Peabody Museum of Salem (now the Peabody-Essex Museum). Ludlow Griscom (1890-1959), whose importance to field ornithology is legendary, was Research Curator of Zoology (later Research Ornithologist) at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology, among many other positions in the world of ornithology and conservation. Dorothy Snyder of Salem (1894-1984), then Curator of Natural History at the Peabody Museum, was one of his primary associates. They were careful observers who demanded accuracy and disdained sight reports of rare birds that were in their view improperly documented. At the same time, Griscom was one of the first to insist that birds could be identified visually and did not have to be collected to confirm their identity, though he certainly did his share of collecting. His methods were judgmental, and he did not endear himself to everyone, but his disciples were loyal, and his value to ornithology was immense. Their book gives as complete a picture of the state's birdlife in midcentury as can be found. Its bibliography is extremely well organized, with the journal articles (the bulk of it)

listed by journal, then by year for each journal, and then by author for each year. The books are also listed in chronological order, which I find very helpful.

An excellent supplementary volume, also published in 1955 and sponsored by Massachusetts Audubon, is *Birds in Massachusetts: When and Where to Find Them* by Wallace Bailey of Cape Cod. This work is not considered as definitive as Griscom and Snyder because Bailey was much more accepting of sight reports, though he was careful to say that they were selectively evaluated before being included. The book “does not attempt to equal Forbush in technical detail, but it does intend to offer a handy digest of field records.” It is a useful work with many nuggets of information that help complete the midcentury snapshot of Massachusetts birdlife.

The fourth volume, the bible of Massachusetts birders today, is *Birds of Massachusetts* (1993) by Richard R. Veit and Wayne R. Petersen. Dick Veit is an ornithology professor at the City College of New York who grew up in southeastern Massachusetts, and Wayne Petersen is a field ornithologist at Massachusetts Audubon and a long-time *Bird Observer* staff member. They collaborated on a definitive work that brought the status of the state’s birdlife up-to-date as of the early 1990s, and *Birds of Massachusetts* continues as the authoritative work on the subject. Like its predecessors, the book substantiates (or not) the older records of rare species that had been reviewed only by the previous authors since their original publication (if any), and does the same for rare birds reported since 1955. Fortunately, the state now has a rare-birds review mechanism, the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC), which functions, like its counterparts elsewhere, to accept or not accept specimens, photographs, sound recordings, or sight reports of rare species while the evidence is still fresh. The MARC was initiated in 1989 and has published six “annual” reports in *Bird Observer* since 1995.



Massachusetts also conducted the field work for a breeding-bird atlas from 1974-1979, the first statewide atlas project in the United States, modeled after earlier efforts in Britain. Sadly, the completion of the atlas was neglected for many years, and it has not yet been published, although many of the species maps prepared for it were incorporated in Veit and Petersen. More recently, Massachusetts Audubon, which had the lead for the project, decided that such a valuable database should be published however late, and the book is finally in press with an expected release date early in 2003.

Finally, since I have mentioned Townsend’s books on Essex County, it is only fair that I do the same for some of the other regional annotated checklists from the state, though space does not permit a detailed treatment of such works or even a complete list. Chronologically, the best-known of these are William Brewster’s *The Birds of the Cambridge Region of Massachusetts* (1906); *Birds of the Connecticut Valley in*

Massachusetts, by Aaron Bagg and Samuel Eliot, Jr. (1937); Griscom's *The Birds of Concord* (1949); Bartlett Hendricks's *Berkshire Birds* (1950), updated in 1994 as *Birds of Berkshire County*; Norman Hill's *The Birds of Cape Cod, Massachusetts* (1965); and Richard K. Walton's *Birds of the Sudbury River Valley – An Historical Perspective* (1984). The latter work is redolent with quotes from the journals of Thoreau, Brewster, Griscom, the author, and others going back a century and a half. *The Birds of Concord* is a signal work, devoted as much to the study of avian population trends as to the systematic list. Griscom also coauthored *Birds of Nantucket* (1948, with Edith V. Folger) and *The Birds of Martha's Vineyard* (1959, the year of his death, with Guy Emerson).

## Rhode Island

Bird records in Rhode Island go all the way back to the 1880s, when field notes and annotated lists appeared occasionally in the *Proceedings of the Newport Natural History Society*. For three years, 1900-1902, Reginald Heber Howe published a periodical called *Notes on Rhode Island Ornithology*. Subsequently, Harry S. Hathaway accumulated invaluable bird records in a card file, but no published notes appeared until 1940, when the *Bulletin of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island* commenced publication. That bulletin evolved into *The Narragansett Naturalist* in 1958, which continued the bird sightings and added occasional articles on the state's avifauna. Both publications benefited from the support of Roland Clement, director of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island (ASRI) in the 1950s, who had compiled the *Bulletin of New England Bird Life* for a while in the early 1940s, and who lives to this day in Connecticut.

The *Narragansett Naturalist* lasted until 1967, and was superseded in 1969 by *Field Notes of Rhode Island Birds*, a cooperative effort between the Rhode Island Ornithological Club and ASRI, which still publishes it. Severyn Dana was the first compiler/editor (he had edited the field notes in the predecessor publications since 1956), and was succeeded in turn by Charles Wood and David Emerson. Dave continues to write a weather commentary for current coeditors Richard Ferren and Chris Raithel. Dick writes the narrative commentary while Chris does the screening of records and the data input. *Field Notes* was monthly until the mid-1990s, when it went to a bimonthly schedule. A subscription can be obtained for \$10 a year for six issues from the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI 02917, or call the society at 401-949-5454, or email them at [audubon@asri.org](mailto:audubon@asri.org). The website is [www.asri.org](http://www.asri.org).

The state is one of five in New England that has published a breeding-bird atlas: *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Rhode Island* (1992), edited by Richard W. Enser; the field work for the atlas was conducted from 1982-1987. Meanwhile, Dick Ferren has been working on a comprehensive annotated checklist of the birds of Rhode Island for many years. Once published, it will supersede the only other such book in the state, *The Birds of Rhode Island*, published in 1899 by Reginald Howe and Edward Sturtevant. (This was two years before Howe and Allen's *The Birds of Massachusetts*.)

After an abortive attempt at forming a bird-records committee in the 1990s, a Rhode Island Avian Records Committee was formed early in 2002 to analyze recent sightings as well as to investigate older reports. Two preliminary reports on bird records were presented by Chris Raithel in the *Field Notes* shortly before the formation of the committee, and that newsletter will be the vehicle for publishing its deliberations once review procedures are established. Meanwhile, the committee has put together an updated Rhode Island field checklist that is in the process of being printed and distributed by ASRI. The one it replaces, the *Field-Checklist of Rhode Island Birds* (1992) by the late Robert A. Conway, is of interest because, in addition to the usual bar graphs for the regular species, it contains a detailed list of all individual records of the casual and accidental species through 1991.

## Connecticut

Published bird records in Connecticut go back only as far as 1981, when the Connecticut Audubon Society introduced a handsome quarterly periodical called *The Connecticut Warbler*. Like *Bird Observer*, this journal contains feature articles on many aspects of birdlife as well as bird sightings. Dennis Varza and Carl Trichka were the initial coeditors. Three years later the Connecticut Ornithological Association (COA) was formed, partly for the purpose of taking over publication of the journal. At this time the editorship passed to Anthony Bledsoe. In 1986 Betty Kleiner of Simsbury took over as editor, with the help of Fred Sibley of the Peabody Museum at Yale. Betty remains the editor today, with Greg Hanisek as field notes editor. To get subscription information, email Betty at ctwarbler@cs.com or send a check for \$18 to the COA at 314 Unquowa Road., Fairfield, CT 06430. Subscription is synonymous with membership in the COA, and a newsletter is also included.

Having published bird records naturally led to the question of how best to judge reports of the rare species, and by 1985 the Connecticut Rare Records Committee was formed. In addition to assessing current sight records, it faced the usual task of reviewing old rare-bird reports and passing judgment on their accuracy; like most bird-records committees, it took CRRC a few years to complete this task from the unpublished reports on file. The committee's reports are published in *The Connecticut Warbler*; its name has since been changed to the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut.

The final step in bringing the status of the state's birds up to date was the publication of two major books. The first, in 1990, was a long-awaited annotated checklist, *Connecticut Birds*, by Thomas R. Baptist and Joseph D. Zeranski. The only predecessor work was *The Birds of Connecticut*, a state-issued bulletin from 1913 by J. H. Sage, L. B. Bishop, and W. P. Bliss. The second was *The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Connecticut* (1994), edited by Louis Bevier, following field work from 1982-1986. Thus, within thirteen years all the major pieces in the state's bird-records machinery had been put in place.

Finally, I am aware of two regional annotated checklists from the state. One is *The Birds of Guilford, Connecticut* (1961) by L. MacKenzie. The other is *Birds of Storrs, Connecticut, and Vicinity* (1975), by Jerauld A. Manter. The third edition of



that book, this one by George Clark, Jr., was released in 1999 by the Natchaug Ornithological Society.

## Vermont

Published bird records in Vermont date from 1906, when the Vermont Bird Club issued annual *Bulletins* through 1914. After that it issued, irregularly, nineteen *Joint Bulletins* in conjunction with the Vermont Botanical Club through 1956. A seventeen-year hiatus ensued until the Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS) became the primary force behind published bird records in the state. VINS is the counterpart to the state Audubon societies in some of the other New England states (although Vermont also has several chapters of the National Audubon Society). The first VINS director, Richard B. Farrar, initiated *Records of Vermont Birds* in 1973 as an extension of his banding and distributional studies based in Woodstock. Sarah B. Laughlin, the second director, along with Nancy Martin, Walter Ellison, and others, were instrumental in solidifying the *Records* under the aegis of VINS, with Sally Laughlin as managing editor. (Notice how a pattern is developing, with several states starting up – or restarting – their bird-records newsletters or journals shortly after the cessation of *Records of New England Birds* in 1968). *RVB* has had several editors; the latest is Anne Aversa, whose brother Tom, a one-time Boston birder, is known to many readers of this journal. Julia Nicholson was editor for a while and has been the assistant editor “almost forever.”

*Records of Vermont Birds* is seasonal rather than quarterly, following the pattern of *North American Birds* with three months each for winter and spring, two months (June and July) for the summer nesting season, and four months for the fall migration. Seasonal editors are used to divide up the work. Not surprisingly, *RVB* is the vehicle for publishing the reports of the Vermont Bird Records Committee, which began operations in 1982. There is some question, however, whether *RVB* will continue in its present state or be transformed into a computer-based checklist project similar to what has evolved in Wisconsin and Quebec, so that in effect the records would be published online. Bird records in Vermont are in a transition period. The Institute's website, [www.vinsweb.org](http://www.vinsweb.org), is the place to look for updated information.

The older annotated checklists of Vermont birds took the form of reports from the state Department of Agriculture. The first was H. A. Cutting's *Catalogue of the Birds of Vermont*, included in the Eighth Vermont Agricultural Report (1884). Cutting's notes were known for being often anecdotal or even apocryphal, a rather common phenomenon in the old days. (Witness A. C. Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds*, the volumes of which are replete with correspondence describing amazing – even incredible – accounts of bird behavior). The next work was *A Preliminary List of the Birds Found in Vermont*, by George Perkins and Clifton Howe, from the 1901 agricultural report. In 1933 came *A List of Vermont Birds*, by H. C. Fortner, W. P. Smith, and E. J. Dole, in the form of a departmental bulletin. More recently, an independent work, *Birds of Vermont*, by a bird carver/naturalist named Robert N. Spear, was published in 1976. This is a small book, only eighty-six pages and dominated by seasonal bar graphs, but it contains a bibliography with all the older

references. As for regional annotated checklists, almost all of them seem to be short articles or unpublished manuscripts. One that took book form was *A List of Birds of Woodstock, Hartland and Vicinity in Windsor County, Vermont* (1935), by E. D. Morgan and R. M. Marble.

*The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Vermont* (1985), coedited by Sally Laughlin and Douglas Kibbe, is the definitive work on Vermont's breeding birds. The Vermont atlas was one of the first in the United States, and with its species accounts and maps on facing pages, it has served as a model for those of many other states. In addition, *Birdwatching in Vermont*, by Ted Murin and Bryan Pfeiffer, was published in 2002. Like many other state bird-finding guides (not otherwise covered in this article), it has a checklist of the state's birds, annotated with brief comments and bar graphs to summarize the status of each species. Where it goes beyond other such guides is by including an annotated list of every accepted occurrence of every accidental species in the state. The book thus provides something normally found only in a definitive annotated checklist.

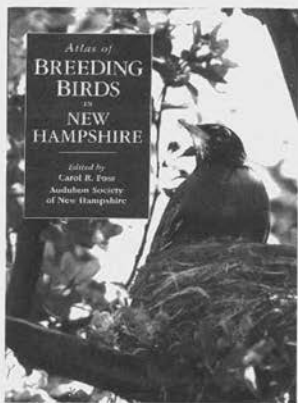
## New Hampshire

New Hampshire has a rich ornithological history. Published bird sightings go back a long way, prior to the *Bulletin of New England Bird Life*. The driving force has been the Audubon Society of New Hampshire (ASNH), whose publications date from 1921, beginning with the *ASNH Bulletin*, which included seasonal bird records. The vehicle changed format several times over the years; for a while it was *New Hampshire Bird News* (1951-1960), after which it became the *New Hampshire Audubon Quarterly* for many years. The critical period was the 1950s, when three people – Vera Hebert, Tudor Richards, and Robert Smart – did the lion's share of the compiling and made the state's records much more systematic. In 1982 it took on its current format, *New Hampshire Bird Records*, first edited by Robert A. Quinn, then by Diane De Luca, and since 1989 by managing editor Rebecca Suomala. This journal, like Vermont's, uses the seasonal format, with seasonal editors. It also contains feature articles on various aspects of New Hampshire field ornithology. Subscriptions are \$14 per year for ASNH members and \$20 for nonmembers. Check the ASNH website, [www.nh.audubon.org](http://www.nh.audubon.org), or call the Society at 603-224-9909 for details.

Annotated checklists also go way back. Glover M. Allen – the same Glover Allen who coauthored the 1901 *Birds of Massachusetts* – published *A List of the Birds of New Hampshire* through two different venues in 1902 and 1903. This is the long-out-of-print, but so far the only, annotated checklist for the whole state in book form. However, Charles F. Goodhue completed a remarkable manuscript in 1922 called "Fifty Years Among the Birds of New Hampshire," almost 500 pages of handwritten material on all the state's species, which he was going to publish but didn't when he found out about the impending Forbush volumes! Fortunately, it was recently reproduced (a dozen or so copies) under the aegis of Tudor Richards, who incorporated a commentary made on the work by Kimball Elkins (yet another nonagenarian, 1903-1997) decades earlier in a 1961 issue of *New Hampshire Audubon*

Quarterly. In addition, ASNH published Tudor Richards's own *A List of the Birds of New Hampshire* in booklet form in 1958, after it had run serially in five issues of *New Hampshire Bird News*. More recently, Allan R. Keith and Robert P. Fox, with assistance from Dennis J. Abbott, have been working on a new book on the birds of New Hampshire.

New Hampshire seems unique in that regional works have been every bit as important as statewide annotated checklists, and are better known. William Brewster (1851-1919) paid regular summer visits to Lake Umbagog (on both the New Hampshire and Maine sides of the lake) between 1871 and 1909; *The Birds of the Lake Umbagog Region* was published posthumously, with Ludlow Griscom actually completing the unfinished manuscript, in four *Bulletins* of Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology between 1924 and 1938. Southeastern portions of the state were covered by Ned Dearborn in *A Preliminary List of the Birds of Belknap and Merrimack Counties* (1898) and *The Birds of Durham and Vicinity* (1903). Horace Wright wrote *The Birds of the Jefferson Region in the White Mountains, New Hampshire* in 1911; that work was reprinted in 2000 through the efforts of David



Govatski, and for which Tudor Richards wrote a long second introduction annotating the principal changes that have taken place there over the last century. Beverly Ridgely wrote *Birds of the Squam Lakes Region* in 1977 and revised it in 1988. Countless articles, theses, and checklists have been written on birds of other New Hampshire regions, such as the White Mountains, Concord, the seacoast, and the Isles of Shoals. More recently, after field work from 1981-1986, the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in New Hampshire*, edited by Carol Foss, was published in 1994. It has the most thorough bibliography of any New England state ornithological work I am familiar with.

After a false start in the late 1960s, a bird-records committee finally took shape in 1994. It is called the New Hampshire Rare Birds Committee, "an independent technical advisory committee to *New Hampshire Bird Records*." This relieved the managing and seasonal editors of the burden of judging rare-bird reports by themselves. The committee publishes its annual reports in the *Records*.

## Maine

Maine is another state whose published field notes began well before the demise of *Records of New England Birds*. In fact, the state has an impressive, if not bewildering, sequence of publications dating back to 1899, apparently all of which included bird sightings. Most of these were associated with the Maine Audubon Society. Briefly, the older ones were the *Journal of the Maine Ornithological Society* (1899-1911); *The Maine Naturalist* (1921-1930); the *Bulletin of the Maine Audubon Society* (1945-1955) and its successor, *Maine Field Naturalist* (1956-1971); the short-lived *Maine Field Observer* (1956-1961); and the even shorter-lived *Maine Nature* (1969-1972).

The next newsletter in this remarkable series was begun in 1979 by Michael K. Lucey of Bangor. This quarterly newsletter, *Maine Bird Life* (later *Maine Birdlife*), was primarily a list of bird sightings, but they were extensively annotated where the records were significant, and from the beginning Lucey got contributors to write short pieces on aspects of Maine field ornithology. He also got editorial assistance from Norman Famous and Peter Vickery, and publishing assistance first from Maine Audubon and then from Stephen W. Weston of Winthrop. By 1984, Jody Despres of Turner joined on as field notes editor, since by this time the newsletter was pulling in a significant number of articles, announcements, and even state or local checklists, such as a revised state list done in 1984 by Peter Vickery and Jody Despres. Later that same year Stephen Weston assumed the editorship and went to a magazine format, with many more feature articles in addition to the field notes.

But this more ambitious version of *Maine Birdlife* faltered after a few more issues, and was replaced in 1987 by *Maine Bird Notes (MBN)*, with Jody Despres as editor and Jeff Wells as field notes editor, the latter replaced by Lysle Brinker in 1992. Support was obtained from the University of Maine-Machias when Charles Duncan taught there and ran its Institute for Field Ornithology, and from Maine Audubon until 1990. *MBN* retained the seasonal format with four issues a year. It included occasional feature articles like its predecessor, but did not go beyond the newsletter format, and relied on annotations in the field notes (and very thorough ones) to document significant records. Unfortunately, the publishing schedule got farther and farther behind; the last issue, released in 2000, covered the spring migrations of 1997, 1998, and 1999, but no other seasons from those years. The future of published bird records in Maine is thus in limbo.

But wait: Maine has another newsletter, unique in the country. This one is not strictly about birds, but about natural history in general. It is also the most humorous natural-history newsletter I have ever read. It is called the *Guillemot*, and since 1973 it has been written, edited, and mailed six times a year to the 700 or so subscribers by one person, William Townsend, a (now) retired science teacher from Bar Harbor. There are sections in it on astronomy, weather, invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds, primarily from downeast Maine, but occasionally ranging across the state to include sightings of interest. The bird reports, not surprisingly, take up most of the space, although they are essentially unfiltered. Beginning in 1988, Bill reversed the taxonomic order of the bird sightings in every other issue, starting with the finches instead of the loons. "This is due to running out of space and condensing the information about the time the editor gets to the last page." The *Guillemot* is the mouthpiece of an organization called the Sorrento Scientific Society, "which has never held a meeting, elected officers, formed committees, incorporated, or any of those neat organizational things." But you can go to the Society's annual tailgate picnic, and you can also order a decal. SSS decals "have been seen in such exotic places as Port Moresby in New Guinea and Boston in Massachusetts." Email Bill at [townsend@acadia.net](mailto:townsend@acadia.net) for subscription information. "There are two memberships, the regular which is \$5 per year and the sustaining which is any amount over the regular."

Maine has both annotated checklists and an atlas. Ora W. Knight wrote *A List of the Birds of Maine* in 1897 and followed it up with *The Birds of Maine* in 1908. Ralph S. Palmer published *Maine Birds* in 1949; an anticipated revision has been initiated by Peter Vickery, Jody Despres, and Louis Bevier (now a Maine resident). In the meantime, Peter published an *Annotated Checklist of Maine Birds* in pamphlet form in 1978. A few years later, the *Atlas of Breeding Birds in Maine, 1978-1983* (undated), was compiled and edited by Paul Adamus. Because of a lack of resources, this early atlas did not include any species accounts; just the maps. But the maps are the critical part, and still offer the breeding status of any species in the state at a glance. And like most breeding-bird atlases, it has a comprehensive bibliography of Maine ornithology.

Regionally, Maine deserves equal treatment in regard to Brewster's treatise on Lake Umbagog; although it dealt with the New Hampshire side as well, the complete name of the work is *The Birds of the Lake Umbagog Region of Maine*. Other regional works within this large state include a pair by F. V. Hebard, *Waterbirds of Penobscot Bay* (1959) and *The Land Birds of Penobscot Bay* (1960); several shorter pieces on the birds of various locations published in the *Bulletin of the Maine Audubon Society* or *Maine Bird Life*; and *Native Birds of Mount Desert Island* by James Bond (1971) (yes, the same James Bond who wrote *Birds of the West Indies* and was a close friend of Ian Fleming, creator of Agent 007).

Despite this amazing record of ornithological publications, Maine is apparently the only one of the fifty states not to have formed a bird-records committee. There was a false start some years ago, and to date the impetus has not returned. Perhaps within a few more years this gap in the state's records machinery will be plugged.

## Conclusion

This survey of the history of published bird records in New England has only scratched the surface. A look at the bibliographies of the recent state bird books or breeding-bird atlases will offer staggering numbers of books, pamphlets, and articles on the region's birdlife, most of which I cannot hope to touch on in such a short article. For example, I have not discussed the *Bulletins* of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, published between 1876 and 1883 (which were continued in 1884 as the journal of the fledgling American Ornithologists' Union, *The Auk*), or the many contributions of New England authors over the years to professional journals like the *Auk* or the *Journal of Field Ornithology*. Nor for the most part have I mentioned the various pocket-sized field checklists (or nonannotated checklists, if you will) for the several states or parts thereof. Finally, I have largely ignored the various state bird-finding guides, which, as I mentioned in the Vermont section, routinely provide some combination of briefly annotated bird lists, bar graphs of seasonal abundance, and (nonannotated) lists of accidental species. Many such helpful guides have come out in all six states just within the last decade, but they are a bit beyond the scope of this study of published bird records.

The possibilities for further reading to increase one's awareness of the region's rich birdlife and its history are endless. I hope this summary has sparked the interest of readers in learning more about their region's impressive ornithological literature.

**Jim Berry**, a member of the Bird Observer staff since 1991, is working on a new book on the birds of Essex County to update Townsend's of a century ago. His research into the historical records sparked his own interest in the history of New England ornithology. Most of the information in this article is, of course, published, but much of it was obtained by direct contact with authors, bird-records editors, and others with knowledge of the subject in all six New England states. These were Ted Davis, Steve Ells, Seth Kellogg, and Wayne Petersen (Massachusetts); Dave Emerson, Dick Ferren, Chris Raitchel, and Hugh Willoughby (Rhode Island); Greg Hanisek, Betty Kleiner, and Mark Szantyr (Connecticut); Anne Aversa, Walter Ellison, Nancy Martin, Ted Murin, and Julie Nicholson (Vermont); Steve Mirick, Bob Quinn, Tudor Richards, and Becky Suomala (New Hampshire); and Jody Despres, Bill Townsend, and Peter Vickery (Maine). Bob Fox and Allan Keith made helpful suggestions on more than one state, as did some of the other reviewers. Without their collective knowledge and assistance in providing information and reviewing drafts, this article would not have been remotely possible. Any errors or omissions are strictly the author's, although his brand-new first cousin-in-law twice removed cheerfully agreed to accept all responsibility.

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