# SUMMARY FOR APRIL, 1977

April in Boston was very warm and sunny, with more rain than normal. The temperature averaged  $51.3^{\circ}$ ,  $2.7^{\circ}$  above the average. This was  $3.8^{\circ}$  cooler than the record April of last year, yet it was the second warmest April since 1945. The lowest temperature was  $26^{\circ}$  on the 9th, only  $2^{\circ}$  over the record low for the date. The old saying goes, "If you don't like the weather in New England, just wait." Well, on the 12th, the temperature was a hot  $85^{\circ}$ , and on the 13th, the mercury hit  $86^{\circ}$ , topping the old record of  $84^{\circ}$  set in 1896. The month's high temperature was  $88^{\circ}$  on the 22nd, a new high mark for that date, beating  $84^{\circ}$  set in 1973. The last freeze came on the 11th, three days later than average.

Rain totalled 4.07", 0.58" above normal and the most in April since 1973. The most rain to fall in any 24-hour period was 1.53" on the 23-24th. Snow was limited to trace amounts on the 2nd and the 8th, leaving the seasonal total at 58", 15.8" over average and the most in a decade.

On the cape, according to Blair Nikula, "The weather was pleasant, but not conductive to good waves. The only exceptions were on the 22nd-23rd and on the 30th. The only southern storm occurred on the 5th and produced a few vagrants. The hawk flight was disappointing probably due to a lack of persistant southwest winds. Significant movements did occur on the 22nd and 30th. Herons were very scarce with some species unrecorded. Swallows were also few and far between. There were no southern warblers seen during the month, for the first time in my memory."

# LOONS AND GREBES

A single Common Loon was seen flying over Lincoln April 25th (JB), while out at sea a total of 25 were seen over Georges Bank April 27th (MBO staff). Roughly 376 Red-necked Grebes continued along the coast from Essex County to Cape Cod; the higher individual counts made were 118 between Scituate and Brant Rock April 2 (WRP#), 45 at Winthrop on the same date (SZ), 152 at Manomet Point April 7 (MBO staff) and 10 as late as April 27 at Marblehead (CWL). Eighty-five Horned Grebes occurred at P.I. April 2 (RAF) and two were recorded inland at Lakeville April 10 (WRP). Pied-billed Grebes totalled 7 from six localities.

#### GANNET THROUGH HERONS

"Hundreds" of Northern Gannets were noted migrating northward from shore on Nantucket April 15-18 (SZ) and 200+ were estimated on Georges Bank on the 15th (MBO staff). Other counts from traditional vantage points include 119 from Rockport April 23rd (HD'E) and 100 from Barnstable April 24 (WRP). The general arrival of migrant Double-crested Cormorants occurred on the 9th-10th, when 300+ were noted flying northward offshore from Scituate April 9 (RRV,MJL) and 200+ appeared in Newburyport April 10 (HWM). The "last" Great Cormorant report for the month was of 2 at Rockport April 23 (HD'E). Six adult Little Blue Herons arrived in Manchester, close to their nesting location of last year on House Island, on April 9 (P.Parsons), while other adults occurred at Scituate April 2 (GRF), at North Scituate April 22 (WRP) and at Marion April 27 (G.Mock). An "immature", presumably a pied individual in its first winter, was seen at Squantum April 18th (M.Argue). Cattle Egrets totalled 20 from 7 localities (cf. 34,16,9,39 since 1973) including birds as early as April 1 in Halifax (H.Maxim) and 2 birds April 2 in Marshfield (WRP). The extensive farmlands in Ipswich harbored 8 of these birds April 16-30 (v.o.). Great Egrets numbered a high 22 in the region and seem to be experiencing a steady increase locally (cf. April totals since 1973, 5,12,16,12). The highest counts came from Marshfield (8 on April 9, BAL, MFL) and Westport (5 on April 16, RRV, RHS#). A Snowy Egret at Lancaster April 28 was somewhat unusual for that inland locality (HWM). An adult Yellowcrowned Night Heron in Eastham April 22-26 was unique to our region (BN,CAG), while Louisiana Herons occurred at Plum Island April 9-19 (NMO) and 1 or 2 in the Marshfield-Duxbury area April 30 (WRP). Although virtually entirely absent from the cape, Glossy Ibis continue to increase substantially as migrants (?) along our north shore. The higher counts include 45 at Topsfield April 2 (RAF), 51 at Marshfield April 9 (RRV), 86 in Rowley April 9 (JWB), 51 in Rowley April 12 (M.Gardler) and 254 in Ipswich April 25 (P.Parsons).

#### WATERFOWL

Two of the smaller forms of Canada Goose appeared in the state this month: an almost definite "Richardson's" Goose at P.I. April 17 (RRV,MJL), identified by its very small size and general light coloration (color of back matching color of underparts), and a small dark individual, possibly a northwestern form, at Lincoln April 4-30 (WWH#). Brant numbered 1000 in Duxbury Bay April 10-24 (GRF#) and 150 in Newburyport April 27 (J.Murphy). The Snow Goose flock at the Plum Island marshes reached maximum porportions at 435-460 April 2-17 (v.o.), this flock containing one adult "Blue" Snow Goose. Additional migrant flocks included 25 at Scituate April 9 (RRV, MJL), 21 in Wellesley April 15-16 (RAF) and 40-50 in Lancaster April 8 (HWM). Waterfowl of a western affinity at P.I. included 30 Gadwalls April 17 (RRV), 29 Pintails April 2 (WCD) and 350 Green-winged Teal April 10 (RSH). American Wigeon numbered 32 in Belmont April 2 (RHS) and reports of 27 Northern Shovelers included one female inland at Bolton April 25 (HWM). A single Redhead in Wayland April 4 was somewhat surprising (MHM) and counts of Ring-necks included 18 at Lynnfield April 1 (VA), 55 in Middleboro April 10 (WRP), 15 at Topsfield April 14 (MHM), and 14 at Concord April 10 (OK).

Two drake Barrow's Goldeneyes remained in Newburyport Harbor until the 10th (v.o.) and a single drake appeared in Manomet on the 12th (MBO staff). Wintering Oldsquaw lingered at Nantucket until at least April 18 when 5000+ were estimated (SZ); 284 were counted at Cape Ann April 23 (HD'E) and 100 remained in Newburyport to the 30th (P.Parsons). Up to four Harlequin Ducks continued intermittently at East Orleans, where they wintered throughout the month, and 12 were still at Magnolia on the 12th (J.Grugan). The <u>Steller's Eider</u> discovered in late March in Scituate remained to be seen until April 7th. Two Hooded Mergansers in Lincoln April 2 were unique (HWF), and Common Mergansers numbered 20 at Newburyport April 2 (WCD) and 14 in Lincoln April 23 (RAF).

## RAPTORS

Pronounced flights of accipiters, falcons and Broad-winged Hawks occurred coastally on the 23rd and 30th, while inland no flight was apparent and numerous observers at traditional inland lookouts such as Mt. Wachusett noted a scarcity of Broad-wings. Turkey Vultures were plentiful and widespread with 17 individuals reported, (cf. 6,5,16,10 since 1973). Most reports were of singles except 5 at Provincetown April 22-23 (BN, CAG) and 3 at Wachusett April 21 (MHM). Two Goshawk nests were located during April; one in Weston (LJR) and one in Boxford where the species has nested previously (v.o.). Other Goshawks (singles) were noted a P.I. on the 9th and 17th (E.Pyburn; BAL, MFL). On April 23rd, 10 Sharp-shinned Hawks passed Provincetown, and on the 30th 52 were counted at P.I. (PMR), 15 in Provincetown (BN) and 2 in Cambridge (P.Butler). Three to four Cooper's Hawks were recorded on the outer cape, one was found in Lancaster April 12 (HWM) and one was present in the Newburyport-P.I. region April 15-16 (CWL, RSH). A meager four Red-shouldered Hawks were reported, and the only perceptable movement of Broad-wings was 40 at Provincetown April 30 (BN).

Rough-legged Hawks lingered until the 13th at Whitman (LR) and the 16 in Newbury (CWL,D.Briggs). A Bald Eagle in Eastham was unique this month, although the exact date of occurrence was unreported (fide BN), and three Peregrine Falcons were observed; one in Scituate April 23 (GRF), one on P.I. April 23 (J.Nove) and one on Duxbury Beach April 29 (PFC). Merlins totalled 8 for the month and American Kestrels were noted moving on the 16, 23, and 30th.

#### RAILS AND SHOREBIRDS

A King Rail, presumably a migrant, was observed dead in the talons of a Marsh Hawk April 10 in East Orleans (BN,CAG) and a second was seen at GMNWR April 21-23 (R.Walton). A Clapper Rail was seen in Marion on the 24th (G.Mock).

American Oystercatchers arrived in Chatham on April 16 (P.Trull), and 5-6 were present on Monomoy April 30 (BN, CAG). Of particular interest were two separate Golden Plovers occurring during the month. One appeared at Squantum on the 21st and remained until the 30th (BM) and the second appeared at Bridgewater on the 23rd (WRP,KSA), and at least the latter was examined for a differential diagnosis from the Eurasian Greater Golden Plover. A count of 91 Common Snipe April 15 in Bolton was noteworthy (HWM), and 55 wintering Ruddy Turnstones continued at Scituate April 9 (RRV). A Whimbrel occurred at P.I. April 22 (J.Murphy) and 6 were at WBWS April 30 (WWB). An Upland Sandpiper April 9 in South Duxbury was particularly early (WRP); 21 others were reported from 8 localities during the remainder of the month. A Willet occurred at Squantum April 29 and two were on Monomoy April 30; Greater Yellowlegs built up at Newburyport from 11 on the 2nd (RAF) to 20 on the 16th (S.Grinley) with 99 on the 27th (RRV). Lesser Yellowlegs totalled a rather high 37 for April (cf. 4,11,4,14 since 1973) following a number of early migrants in late March.

The higher counts of Pectoral Sandpipers were 46 at Marshfield April 2 (WRP), 44 in Bolton April 17 (HWM) and 85 in Newburyport April 20 (MG), and Least Sandpipers arrived in Newburyport on the 29th with 35 reported (RRV). A <u>Stilt Sandpiper</u> seen April 10-30 in Newburyport Harbor represents the earliest New England record by six weeks (RRV#). The bird remained into May and was observed to attain full alternate plumage by the end of April. A report of a very early Semipalmated Sandpiper April 16 on P.I. was intriguing, although unaccompanied by complete details (RSH). Finally, observers on Nantucket reported the appearance of a female <u>Ruff</u> and an <u>American Avocet</u> on the same day, April 26 (EFA, Chester Fauna).

# GULLS AND TERNS

Lingering Glaucous Gulls numbered 6, all coastally, and higher counts for Iceland Gulls were 40+ at P.I. April 8 (RAF) and 22 in Gloucester April 17 (J.Nove). In Addition, 16 Iceland Gulls were on Nantucket April 17 (SZ). Two adult Black-headed Gulls occurred in East Boston April 2 (SZ) and another was in Newburyport the same day (RAF). A single adult was seen in Squantum April 24 (B.Morrissey), although the wintering flock never materialized in Boston Harbor this year. Single Laughing Gulls appeared on the coastal plain by April 3 at Dartmouth (JL), April 8 at Nahant (SZ) and April 10 at Cape Ann (J.Grugan), and 4 adult Little Gulls were present in Newburyport Harbor throughout the month (RRV#). Three Common Terns were seen at Chatham on the 10th (AAC), and by month's end 50 were observed on Monomoy (CAG#). In Squantum 1-2 Caspian Terns were reported, unusual for the month; a single bird appeared on the 20th (JTL,PRB) and on the 26th two birds were seen (B.Morrissey).

#### ALCIDS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Aboard the <u>Albatross IV</u>, 12 Razorbills were reported from Georges Bank between the 17-19th (AWN-MBO). A single Razorbill was reported from Barnstable on the 24th (WRP), and on the 15th two Thick-billed Murres were observed at Provincetown, with one on the 16th (S.Stanne). As many as 7 Black Guillemots were observed at Nahant (SZ), and 6-8 were seen off North Scituate on the 16th (WRP). Single Black Guillemots were observed at Provincetown on the 15th (S.Stanne), off Magnolia on the 17th (D.Briggs), and one was still present at Nahant on the 23rd (SZ).

On board the <u>Albatross IV</u>, the NOAA Research Vessel, Bert Nickerson reported 16 <u>Common Puffins</u> on Georges Bank from April 17-26th, for Manomet Bird Observatory. A single Common Puffin was reported from Provincetown on the 2nd (BN,CAG). A <u>Dovekie</u> was observed on Georges Bank on the 22nd (AWN-MBO).

A Barn Owl was reported from Brewster on the 26th (R.Prescott). The Harvard University Barred Owl continued chasing squirrels throughout the month, and a Saw-whet Owl was picked up dead on P.I. on the 16th (C.Baines). Whip-poor-wills were reported on the 18th from Manomet (MBO staff) and in Marblehead (RSH), one was heard in Acton on the 21st (SPG), and another was found dead in Cambridge on the 22nd (RHS). A Chimney Swift was observed in Lincoln on the 22nd (RAF). An early <u>Ruby-throated Hummingbird</u> was observed at Rockport on the 18th (R. Norris). Single Pileated Woodpeckers were reported from 5 localities and the <u>Red-bellied Woodpeckers</u> continued in Adamsdale (fide C.Wood). The adult Red-headed Woodpecker continued through the 3rd in West Boylston (FMcM). Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers arrived in several localities on the 12th and 17 individuals were reported (v.o.).

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WRENS

Phoebes finished nest-building on April 2 at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, where 8 birds were reported throughout the month. A <u>Greatcrested Flycatcher</u> was carefully observed at Provincetown on the very early date of April 16 (S.Stanne). Thirty Horned Larks were observed at Plum Island on the 16th (BBC-SPG).

The first Tree Swallows arrived in scattered locations between the 9th and 15th. On the 16th 150 were found on Plum Island (BBC-SPG), building up to over 800 individuals by the 30th (BBC-P.Parsons). On the 21st, Tree Swallows were seen feeding young in a nesting box (Mrs.E. Schoolman). Bank Swallows were reported from Bolton on the 17th (HM), from Westport on the 24th (RRV#), and from Milton on the 27th (B.Morrissey). Rough-winged Swallows arrived on the 14th in Marblehead (MK), on the 17th in Gloucester (J.Nove), 15 were counted in Milton on the 27th (B.Morrissey) and over 20 were observed in Falmouth on the 29th (AAC). Single Barn Swallows were reported from scattered localities through the 17th, with more individuals reported by month's end. Cliff Swallows were reported from Halifax on the 9th (WRP), from Belmont on the 21st (C.Oberhauser), and from Milton on the 27th (RPE#). Purple Martins arrived on the 2nd at P.I. (RAF), single martins were reported from Marshfield on the 3rd (T.Raymond), on the 9th in Halifax (WRP), on the 10th in Danvers (J.Grugan), and one was seen in Lancaster on the 29th (HM); by the 30th over 40 pair of Purple Martins were on territory in 5 places in the town of Middleboro (RCM#).

Fish Crows were reported from 4 locations, with 14 being reported from Scituate on the 21st (GRF). Twelve Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported from six locations, and 5 Brown Creepers were observed on the 20th at Marblehead Neck (MK). House Wrens arrived on the 18th in Lancaster (HM), on the 21st in Saugus (S2) and Marblehead (MK). Winter Wrens were reported from 8 localities, with three individuals in Marblehead on the 18th (MK#), and 4 from Milton on the 27th (RRV,MJL). Only six Carolina Wrens were reported and all the reports came from south shore communities. This species should be closely watched this breeding season, since the very cold winter could have been destructive to the population. A single Long-billed Marsh Wren was reported from Plum Island on the 16th (BBC-SPG).

#### MIMICS THROUGH SHRIKES

The first Gray Catbirds were reported on the 14th from Scituate (J.Williamson) and on the 18th from Chestnut Hill (E.Cushman). Singles were reported from many localities on the 30th. Brown Thrashers arrived on the 17-18th, and were reported in higher numbers by month's end. Sixty American Robins were reported from Gloucester on the 17th (BBC-J.Nove). Wood Thrushes were reported from three localities, arriving on the 22nd in South Peabody (RSH). Hermit Thrushes arrived in small numbers at the beginning of the month, with a general arrival on the 12th. At Mount Auburn Cemetery, 11 were reported on the 15th (fide RHS); also on the 15th, 10 were seen in Marblehead (MK), and 7 were observed in South Peabody (RSH). A <u>Veery</u> was reported from Marblehead Neck on the 23rd (JTL,RHS). The only other April report since 1973 was on April 23, 1974. Eastern Bluebirds were nesting in 2 places in Lincoln (WWH,P.Brooks) and in Middleboro (D.Briggs).

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were reported from 10 localities with an early report on the 12th from Newburyport (MLG). From the 21st as many as 7 were seen at Mount Auburn Cemetery (fide RHS), and 4 were banded at MBO during the week of the 24th. Golden-crowned Kinglets were virtually absent during April with only 9 individuals reported. The maximum for Mount Auburn was only 2 birds, as compared with a high of 32 during April, 1976. Ruby-crowned Kinglets on the other hand were migrating at regular numbers with a maximum of 38 on April 20 at Mt. Auburn (fide RHS). On the 20th over 50 were observed at Marblehead Neck (MK#) and on the 26th 22 were banded at MBO. A mass arrival of Ruby-crowned Kinglets occurred on the 20-24th. Water Pipits were reported from the 1-15th in Bolton (HM) and from the 3-30th in Marshfield (JWB, v.o.). A single Cedar Waxwing was reported from Wellesley on the 29th (RAF). A Northern Shrike was found on Plum Island on the 2nd (RAF#). Loggerhead Shrikes were reported from April 2-12th at Marshfield (WRP) and another was seen in Marion on the 10th (G.Mock).

## VIREOS THROUGH WARBLERS

A White-eyed Vireo was singing in Westport on the l6th (RHS#) and one was present at Marblehead Neck from April 20-27 (MK#); another was observed on Nantucket (EFA#). A Solitary Vireo was found on the l6th at Plum Island (P.Parsons#), but the general arrival occurred after the 20th. At Mt. Auburn as many as nine were reported (fide RHS).

A very early Black-and-White Warbler was reported on the 10th in Pembroke (ECP). There were 11 other reports after the 22nd. A <u>Prothonotary Warbler</u> was found on the 20th at Marblehead Neck (C.Blasczak#,v.o.). The bird remained at the sanctuary until the 27th. Nashville Warblers were found at Mt. Auburn on the 24th (J.Grugan), a Northern Parula was observed at Marblehead Neck on the 14th (MK). Yellow Warblers arrived on the 30th in Bolton (HM) and in Nahant (RRV), a week later than usual. A <u>Cape May Warbler</u> was well observed on the 22nd in Weston (LJR). This is only the 2nd April record since 1973. The big flight of Yellow-rumped Warblers began at mid-month with the general first arrivals. On the 22nd there were over 50 at Mt. Auburn (fide RHS), 45 at S. Peabody (RSH), and 45 at Marblehead Neck (MK). At Provincetown <u>250</u> Yellow-rumped Warblers were noted on the 23rd.

Black-throated Green Warblers were noted on the 16th in North Scituate (GRF), three were seen at Boxford on the 17th (RRV#) and another was reported from Marblehead on the 18th (MK). A Blackburnian Warbler was

observed in Baldwinville on the 17th and 18th (J.O'Regan). The best warbler of the month was the Yellow-throated Warbler found on the 14th at Mount Auburn (D.Verger, T.Marvin, v.o.). The bird sang constantly along Indian Ridge for two days and was seen by many observers. Last year, a Yellow-throated Warbler was found there on April 25. Southern warblers (Prothonotary, Yellow-throated) are likely to show up after a strong southwest wind during the month of April. Pine Warblers were reported from eight localities, arriving at mid-month. The Palm Warbler is a common April migrant, and although early arrivals often appear in the first two weeks, it is not until April 13-17 that the appearance becomes widespread. Maximum abundance occurs in the last weeks of April, and 28 were found at Mt. Auburn on the 22nd (fide RHS). 50 were reported the same day from Chestnut Hill (E.Cushman#), and 25 were seen at South Peabody (RSH). On the cape, over 10 were seen at Provincetown (GAG), this representing the highest spring count for the cape to date. Northern Waterthrushes were found on the 25th on Nantucket (J.Alward) and at Marblehead Neck (MK). Louisiana Waterthrushes were on territory by month's end in Boxford, where three were reported (HTW). Single birds were reported from six other localities. A Yellowthroat was found at Falmouth and in Sandwich an American Redstart was noted on the 27th.

# BLACKBIRDS THROUGH LONGSPUR

The first Northern Orioles were reported on the 28th in So. Bridgewater (R.Beckman) and on the 30th in Falmouth (AAC). Rusty Blackbirds were noted in many localities with 30 reported from Provincetown on the 23rd (BN#). This is the highest count for the cape in spring. An immature male Summer Tanager was present from April 10-16 in Wellfleet (Mrs.Hall, v.o.). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported from Wellfleet (fide P.Bailey), Chatham (BN), and Woods Hole (AAC). Blue Grosbeaks, like the Summer Tanager, occasionally appear in April after southerly storms. In Pembroke many observers recorded a Blue Grosbeak on a feeder from April 7-13 (P.McKenna#). One was picked up dead in Chatham on the 10th (fide B.Nikula). On the 29th and 30th two Blue Grosbeaks were reported from Nantucket (Mrs.Oldham), and a female was found in Provincetown (BN). Single Indigo Buntings were reported from Chatham on the 9th (E.Soja), South Dennis on the 23rd (C&BH) and on the 26th on Nantucket (J.Alward#). A Dickcissel was reported from a feeder in Billerica (THS). Dickcissels are rare in spring with an occasional bird hanging aroung feeders until April. Over 50 Purple Finches were counted in Baldwinville on the 23rd (JO'R). Two dead Common Redpolls were found by smell in a classroom at Brookline High School on April 25 (JTL). Where they came from is a mystery, but one thing was for sure, they had been there over the warm weekend! Two Red Crossbills were found at the New Pines from April 4-23 (v.o.). Rufous-sided Towhees arrived in small numbers early in the month, but the general arrival occurred on the 22nd when 18 were found at Mount Auburn (fide RHS) and 25 were noted at Marblehead Neck (MK).

Savannah (Ipswich) Sparrows were found on Gooseberry Neck, South Dartmouth on the 16th (RRV#) and possibly the same bird was noted at Demarest-Lloyd State Park on the 18th (RPE#). A <u>Seaside Sparrow</u> was banded at MBO on the rather early date of April 29. Vesper Sparrows were reported from Plum Island on the 10th (RSH#), in Dover on the 15th (FRH), in South Peabody on the 17th (RSH) and 2 were in Bridgewater on the 23rd (EA#). Chipping Sparrows arrived at mid-month with a maximum of 10 being seen at Mt. Auburn (RHS#). Wintering Whitecrowned Sparrows continued in South Natick (EWT#), Lancaster (RK), Truro (CAG), with three on Nantucket (SZ). Over <u>500</u> White-throated Sparrows were reported from Provinctown on the 23rd (BN). On the same day, 100 were reported from Marblehead Neck (MK) and 50 were at Nahant Thicket (JTL#). On the 26th, 52 were banded at MBO. The last Fox Sparrows were noted on the 16th with one at Mt. Auburn (RHS) and one in Weston (LJR). <u>Two</u> Lapland Longspurs were last reported on the 16th in Salisbury (D.Briggs).

RRV, RHS

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