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The Norton Reservoir is a 189 hectare (467 acres) shallow water impoundment located on Rt. 140 between the towns of Mansfield and Norton in southeastern Massachusetts. The Rumford River flows into the reservoir on its northwestern side and exits at a dam on the eastern side. The extensive tract known as the Great Woods almost abuts the reservoir on its western side.

The reservoir is extremely shallow throughout and is undergoing nutrient enrichment from natural sources as well as from fertilizer runoff and water outflow from the Mansfield sewage treatment plant (the reservoir is not used for drinking water). The nutrient inputs coupled with the shallow depth combine to produce massive algal blooms during the summer months.

The best time to bird the Norton Reservoir is late summer and early autumn. The area never seems to attract diverse species of waterfowl, but during the time of low water in late summer, it does provide ample exposed mud flats which attract migrant shorebirds. This past August the water level was extremely low, more so than in previous years. Because of this phenomenon, which may or may not be repeated in succeeding years, the reservoir attracted unusually large numbers of shorebirds and herons. The species referred to in this article were those seen this past August and September, 1977.

The Norton Reservoir is easily accessible from the road. Two roads, Rt. 140 and Reservoir Avenue, allow one to make a complete five mile circle around the reservoir, stopping frequently to bird. From the intersection of routes 123 and 140 in Norton, drive north on 140 (North Main Street) toward Mansfield for 0.3 mile. At that point, Reservoir Avenue forks to the right and Rt. 140 continues straight. It makes no difference which way one decides to go since the route is circular but, for this essay, we will follow the Reservoir Avenue fork.

Driving 0.7 mile from the fork on Reservoir Avenue, you come to Lakeside Liquors. Across from this store is a lagoon which has exposed mud around its edge when the water is low. Semipalmated, Least, and Spotted Sandpipers were quite regular on these muddy areas. Semipalmated Plovers were also frequent and Killdeers were often present in large numbers. In addition, both yellowlegs species and Solitary Sandpipers sporadically appeared. One or more Great Blue Herons could usually be found along the edge of the lagoon.

Just 0.3 mile beyond the lagoon is a bridge where the Rumford River exits from the Norton Reservoir via a spillway and dam. The river is small and resembles a creek more than a river. Parking is easy and a few minutes of birding in the area of the spillway often produces Belted Kingfishers and Green Herons. Both of these species are always quite common throughout summer and can be found almost anywhere around the reservoir, but the spillway is perhaps the most dependable place. In addition, Gray Catbirds, Brown Thrashers, Rufous-sided Towhees, Common Yellowthroats, and Yellow Warblers are frequently seen. Spotted Sandpipers usually can be

found teetering on the rocks in the Rumford. In early spring, the spillway area is an excellent place to find Wood Ducks.

Continuing 1.3 miles along Reservoir Avenue, you will cross a small bridge where Back Bay Brook enters the reservoir to your left from a lagoon on your right. This brook represents the source of input from the Mansfield Sewage treatment plant. Limited parking is available just beyond the bridge. Cattails grow extensively around the reservoir adjacent to the road and wide mud flats occurred here this past summer. Consequently, this area was excellent for shorebirds. Flocks of up to 100 Semipalmated Sandpipers and up to 60 Least Sandpipers visited here quite regularly. In addition, both species of yellowlegs, Killdeers, Semipalmated Plovers, Spotted Sandpipers, and Solitary Sandpipers were commonly seen. On August 9th, two Baird's Sandpipers occurred on the higher flats in a grassy area. All of the shorebird species, including the Baird's, were very easy to approach closely and a spotting scope provided outstandingly close views for plumage comparisons. Other species commonly sighted at this area included Green and Great Blue Herons, Herring and Black-backed Gulls, Mallards, Black Ducks, Canada Geese, and flocks of Blue-winged Teals. During spring migration, the cattails occurring on both the reservoir and lagoon sides of the road are good places to search for rails and bitterns and the thickets provide good habitats for migrating warblers (including an occasional Prothonotary).

After visiting the Back Bay Brook area, proceed along Reservoir Avenue until it reintersects Rt. 140 (0.3 mile). Turn left onto Rt. 140 and stop immediately at a grassy area adjacent to Raschel's Transit Seeding, Inc. Behind this company is a marshy area which was outstanding for shorebirds during August and September. Before birding, it is wise to obtain permission from someone at Raschel's since they own the land. They have always granted permission graciously.

From the area behind Raschel's, it was possible to observe all the species of shorebirds previously mentioned, with the exception of the Baird's. In addition, Common Snipes, Pectoral Sandpipers, and Stilt Sandpipers were frequent. In addition to Green and Great Blue Herons, this area produced Great Egrets and an adult Black-crowned Night Heron. One to three juvenile Double-crested Cormorants were often perched along the reservoir edge or on one of the old stone walls whose top just projected above the low water. An immature Red-tailed Hawk, an adult Broad-winged Hawk, or an Osprey often flew overhead.

Just 0.2 mile south of Raschel's is Captain Jack's restaurant. From the parking lot you can walk down to the water's edge. This outlook often provides closer views (in better light) of many of the species just mentioned.

One mile south of Captain Jack's is a mobile home park and the Norton Real Estate office. Just 0.3 mile beyond is Jimmy's Restaurant. Both of these locations afford excellent outlooks of the reservoir. These two locations are best for Ospreys (often two) and hawks in general, as well as ducks, geese, Double-crested Cormorants, and Pied-billed Grebes. As many as five or six Great Blue Herons as well as the other heron species previously mentioned can be seen here. During early spring, Common Mergansers are always on these waters. Many Herring and Great Black-backed

Gulls also often congregate there.

Norton Reservoir has been underbirded. The area affords variety and accessibility and will probably yield many other species if it receives more attention.

ORNITHOLOGICAL DETENTE

A United States-Soviet Union treaty on the conservation of migratory birds and their environment, is the newest in a series of international agreements designed to protect wildlife.

The treaty extends the protection provided many species of birds and provides a means for U.S. and Soviet scientists and wildlife managers to cooperate in the conservation of these birds and the habitats upon which they depend.

The treaty applies to all areas under the jurisdiction of both countries and covers more than 200 species representing 36 families of birds of mutual interest to the United States and the Soviet Union.

Some of the major agreements of the new treaty:

--provides that both nations will protect and enhance the habitat of these birds; recognizes that special concern must be paid to species of birds that are threatened with extinction and provides for cooperation in protecting them; provides authority for the U.S. Government to conserve some species of migratory birds not covered by existing authorities; recognizes that indigenous inhabitants of Alaska and parts of the U.S.S.R., such as Eskimos, may take certain birds for their own nutritional and other essential needs under regulated circumstances; provides for each nation to notify the other in the event of calamities which may pose a threat to significant numbers of migratory birds or their environment, and provides for cooperation in eliminating such hazards; provides authority to control the introduction of wild exotic plants or animals which may be harmful to migratory birds or their environment; encourages both nations to establish refuges and other protected areas for the conservation of migratory birds and their environment and to manage such areas so as to preserve and restore the natural ecosystems.

Although the new treaty is between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., both nations recognize that the birds in question visit or are of interest to many other countries and have agreed to explore the possibility of expanding the treaty to allow other nations to sign.