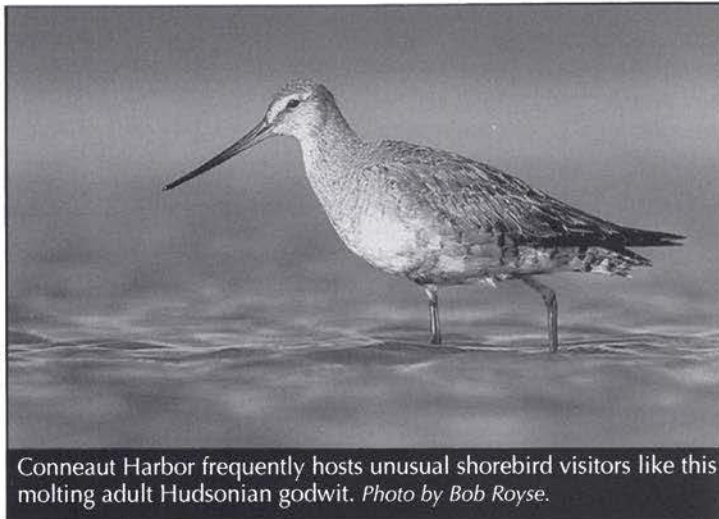


# The Outer Limits: Fourteen Years of Conneaut Birding Trips

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It all started simply enough. While talking with my dad one September day I heard him mention difficulty launching his pleasure boat. He said the water was very low at Ashtabula, so he had gone to Conneaut, but the water was too low there, too.



Conneaut Harbor frequently hosts unusual shorebird visitors like this molting adult Hudsonian godwit. *Photo by Bob Royse.*

I had made many visits to Walnut Beach in Ashtabula, though it was a site of declining value for shorebirds. But Conneaut Harbor, fourteen miles still farther east and almost to the Pennsylvania border? I'd never been there.

I pulled into the "Planet Conneaut" on 15 September 1991, and said, "Eureka!"

A large bar of mud and sand enclosed a lagoon. It was un-vegetated then. A marbled godwit was an exciting find, as were black-bellied and American golden-plovers. The next week brought western and Baird's sandpipers.

On my third visit came nirvana. I drove up within feet of a molting adult Hudsonian godwit as it picked at washed-up plant material. Eventually it flew off, giving a low call. I began



This semipalmated sandpiper is typical of some of the in-your-face views of shorebirds available at Conneaut. *Photo by Lana Hays.*

making regular visits to Conneaut after that, collecting a lot of data as well as some funny moments. Below I offer an occurrence graph derived from these data.

Other species reliably reported by others during this fourteen-year period include piping plover, Wilson's phalarope, and red-necked phalarope.

My favorite birding moments include the

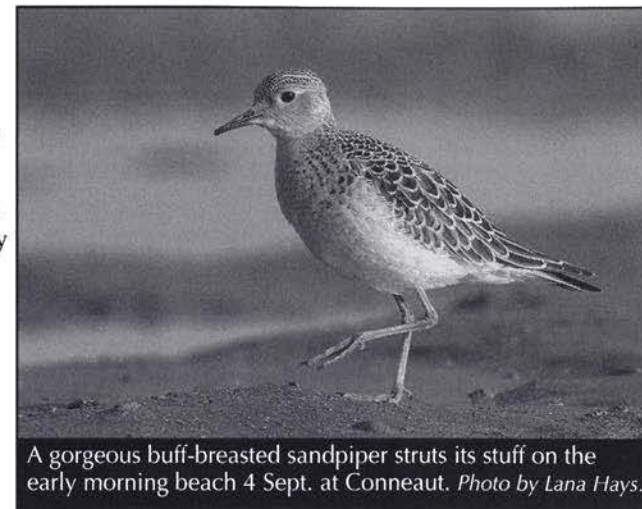
sound and sight of a peregrine stooping on a juvenal Hudsonian godwit, a black-necked stilt foraging in snow flurries, 43 American golden-plovers arriving in one fell swoop, American avocets and willets, whimbrels and red knots, and 28 striking adult ruddy turnstones—in fall! Buff-breasted sandpipers from the west have put on yearly cameos here in easternmost Ohio. Long-distance purple sandpipers,



Semipalmated plovers, like this 6 Sept. individual, are regular spring and fall up-close visitors. *Photo by Lana Hays.*

point-blank white-rumps and stilt sandpipers... Conneaut is truly a shorebird migrant trap. At Conneaut Harbor, human disturbances can vary from nil to "time to pull out," and strange human-style things can happen. One year on 1 November I thought I saw a body along the shore. As I walked up to boot it, I saw it was a Halloween dummy! Only then did the local police come flying over to check it out. I'm sure the authorities have had to come out to the sand-flats many times. Once I saw three pick-up trucks chained together trying to get unstuck. Among humans as well as birds, it seems anything can happen at Conneaut.

In my next account, I'll take on the non-shorebird highlights of the past 14 years. In the chart that follows, open circles represent a single record, a crossed circle 2-3 records, and a solid circle 4+ records. ▲



A gorgeous buff-breasted sandpiper struts its stuff on the early morning beach 4 Sept. at Conneaut. *Photo by Lana Hays.*

SEASONAL OCCURRENCE OF

SPECIES	JAN				FEB				MAR				APR				MAY				
	1-7	8-15	16-23	24-31	1-7	8-15	16-23	24-29	1-7	8-15	16-23	24-31	1-7	8-15	16-23	24-30	1-7	8-15	16-23	24-31	
Black-bellied Plover													○	⊗	●	○					
American Golden-Plover																					
Semipalmated Plover																●	●	●			
Killdeer								⊗	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			
Black-necked Stilt																					
American Avocet																					
Greater Yellowlegs								○				●		○	⊗						
Lesser Yellowlegs												○	⊗	●	⊗	⊗					
Solitary Sandpiper																					
Willet																					
Spotted Sandpiper													○	●	○	●	●	●	●		
Whimbrel																					
Hudsonian Godwit																					
Marbled Godwit																					
Ruddy Turnstone																○	●				
Red Knot																○	○				
Sanderling																○	⊗	⊗			
Semipalmated Sandpiper																●	●				
Western Sandpiper																○	○				
Least Sandpiper																●	●	●	●		
White-rumped Sandpiper																○	○	●			
Baird's Sandpiper																					
Pectoral Sandpiper																					
Purple Sandpiper																					
Dunlin													○	⊗	○	●	●	●			
Stilt Sandpiper																					
Buff-breasted Sandpiper																					
Short-billed Dowitcher																○	○				
Long-billed Dowitcher																					
Wilson's Snipe								○													
Red Phalarope																					

CONNEAUT SHOREBIRDS '91 - '04

SPECIES	JUN				JUL				AUG				SEPT				OCT				NOV				DEC				
	1-7	8-15	16-23	24-30	1-7	8-15	16-23	24-31	1-7	8-15	16-23	24-31	1-7	8-15	16-23	24-30	1-7	8-15	16-23	24-31	1-7	8-15	16-23	24-30	1-7	8-15	16-23	24-31	
Black-bellied Plover					○		⊗	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	⊗	●	⊗							
American Golden-Plover								○	○	○	⊗	●	⊗	⊗	●														
Semipalmated Plover	●	⊗			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○											
Killdeer	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○										
Black-necked Stilt																													
American Avocet					○		⊗	●	○	○		○		○															
Greater Yellowlegs	○				⊗	⊗	⊗	●	●	●	○	●	●	⊗	⊗	⊗	●	⊗	●	⊗									
Lesser Yellowlegs					⊗	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	⊗	○	●	●	⊗										
Solitary Sandpiper								⊗	○																				
Willet								⊗		○	●																		
Spotted Sandpiper	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○													
Whimbrel								⊗	○	○	○																		
Hudsonian Godwit																													
Marbled Godwit																													
Ruddy Turnstone																													
Red Knot																													
Sanderling																													
Semipalmated Sandpiper	●	⊗			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	⊗	●	⊗	⊗	○	○	○								
Western Sandpiper																													
Least Sandpiper																													
White-rumped Sandpiper	⊗	○																											
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