

American Birds

SPRING

GUIDE

April–June 1991

Witnessing the Spring migration is the highlight of the birding year for millions of birders. It's time for welcoming and recognizing old avian friends returning from temporal and spatial absences. Birding at this time presents the ideal situation for becoming better acquainted with birds' plumages and for refamiliarizing yourself with winter-rusty field techniques.

These twenty-five sites are some of the best in the country at which to watch birds both in spring and well into the summer months. At some, birds arrive in such large numbers and species that many people find the phenomenon unbelievable. Several sites have been listed because of their wealth of breeding birds.

Every site is guaranteed a winner. See what you can find and good birding!

Recommended location guides and references are included at the end of each site description.

BONAVENTURE ISLAND, QUEBEC

Circled daily in summer by tour boats out of Percé, Bonaventure hosts a spectacular cliff-nesting colony of kittiwakes, murre, Razorbills, and gannets. By landing at the island, weather permitting, one can explore the quiet woods for warblers and then view the noisy gannets going through their antics at point-blank range. (*Bird-finding Guide to Canada*, J. Cam Finlay, publ. 1984.)

BAXTER STATE PARK, MAINE

A big but accessible piece of northern forest, to explore for Spruce Grouse, Black-backed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee, and a wide variety of breeding warblers in early summer. (*Enjoying Maine Birds*, Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr., ed., publ. 1985.)

ELK LAKE, NEW YORK

One of the most beautiful sites in the Adirondacks, and one of the best places in New York State for early summer birding, with Olive-sided, Yellow-bellied, and Alder flycatchers, Ruffed Grouse, Boreal Chickadees, and at least 15 species of warblers. (*Where to Find Birds in New York State: Top 500 Sites*, Susan Roney Drennan, publ. 1981.)

SCHERMAN-HOFFMAN SANCTUARIES, NEW JERSEY

These rich forested areas are full of birds all year, but especially in May, when migrants mingle with the local breeding Kentucky and Worm-eating warblers, Yellow-throated Vireos, Louisiana Waterthrushes, and many others. (*Bird-finding Guide to New Jersey*, William J. Boyle, Jr., Rev. 1989.)

DELAWARE BAYSHORE, NEW JERSEY AND DELAWARE

This is where they converge: horseshoe crabs coming out of the sea to lay their eggs, and shorebirds coming from

South America on their way to the Arctic. For two or three weeks in May, favored beaches on Delaware Bay host literally hundreds of thousands of shorebirds, with Sanderlings, Semipalmated Sandpipers, and Red Knots predominating. (*Birding the Delaware Valley Region*, John J. & Justin J. Harding, publ. 1980; *Finding Birds in the National Capital Area*, Claudia Wilds, publ. 1983.)

HUNTLEY MEADOWS COUNTY PARK, VIRGINIA

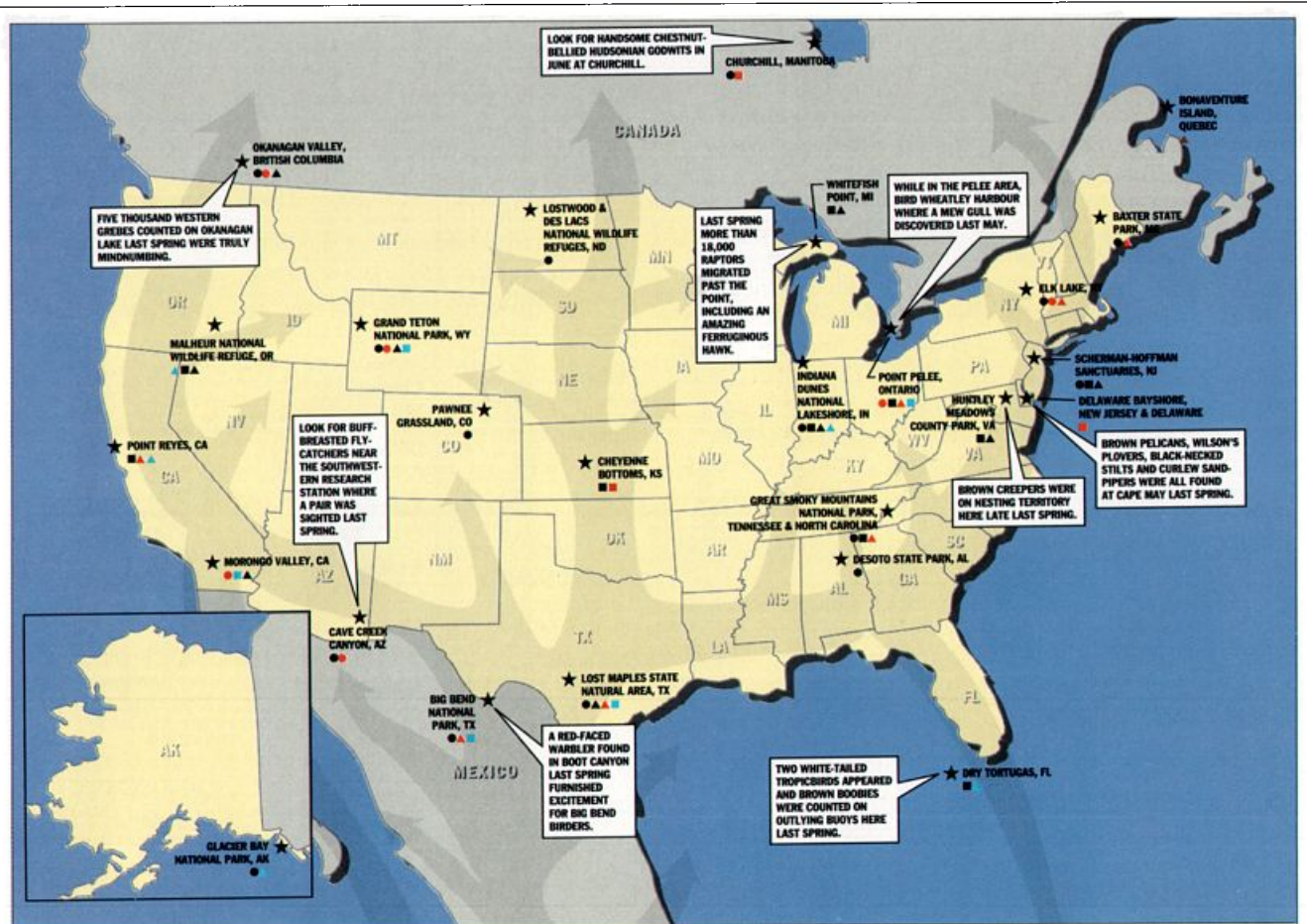
Readily reached from the U.S. capital, this area of marsh, swamp, and woodland has King Rails, bitterns, Prothonotary Warblers, night-herons, and many other choice migrants in spring and resident songbirds in summer. (*Finding Birds in National Capital Area*, Claudia Wilds, publ. 1983.)

DRY TORTUGAS, FLORIDA

These coral islands host big nesting colonies of Sooty Terns and Brown Noddies, with smaller numbers of visiting Brown and Masked boobies, Black Noddies, White-tailed Tropicbirds, and sometimes rare strays from the Caribbean. In April and early May, fallouts of northbound migrants vary from mild to wild. (*Spring Migration at the Dry Tortugas* (video), Karis & Don Herriott, publ. 1990; 55 minutes VHS videotape.)

WHITEFISH POINT, MICHIGAN

In a remote area, but worth the trip, Whitefish Point produces big spring flights of loons, scoters, hawks, songbirds, and even owls. In most seasons, a few vagrant birds from all points of the compass turn up here to add to the excitement. (*Enjoying Birds in Michigan*, Michigan Audubon Society, rev. 1989.)



Migrating males of many species of songbirds precede the females to stake out a breeding territory.

Hawk migrations reach peak intensities on warm sunny days when thermal updrafts are well developed.

Northbound migrants along the western Gulf of Mexico often encounter severe headwinds which forces millions down into the sparse vegetation along coastal Texas, Louisiana and Alabama.

Waterfowl tend to be confined to a narrow corridor determined by the availability of suitable habitat. Many kinds of waterfowl begin to move northward as soon as the lakes and ponds are released from the grip of ice.

POINT PELEE, ONTARIO

This is one of the continent's top migrant traps, although on peak weekends in May you might see as many birders as birds. Warblers, tanagers, vireos, thrushes, and hordes of other migrants pile up on the point, all in bright spring plumage, many of them singing. Connecticut Warbler and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher are special attractions in late May, after the peak of most migration. (*Bird-finding Guide to Ontario*, Clive E. Goodwin, publ. 1982.)

INDIANA DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE, INDIANA

Migrants sometimes flood the woods here in May, but even after they depart, the

area hosts a fine variety of nesting songbirds. Interesting waterbirds may show up along the lakeshore any time. (*Birds of the Indiana Dunes*, Kenneth J. Brock, publ. 1986.)

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK, TENNESSEE-NORTH CAROLINA

Today, when fragmentation of forest may be causing declines in many songbirds, the Smokies represent a huge solid block of prime eastern forest. This is a place to see how the eastern USA once looked, to see forest breeding birds in their natural densities. An added attraction is a fine warbler migration, peaking in late April. (*Bird-finding in Tennessee*, Michael Lee Bierly, publ. 1980.)

DESOTO STATE PARK, ALABAMA

Located in the upland of northeastern Alabama, this forested park has a wide variety of nesting birds including a number of species not found farther south in the state, such as Whip-poor-will and Scarlet Tanager.

CHURCHILL, MANITOBA

At the southernmost edge of the Far North, Churchill offers an accessible taste of Arctic birding, with ptarmigan, loons, eiders, jaegers, redpolls, tundra-nesting shorebirds, and so on. Localized nesters include Hudsonian Godwit, Harris' Sparrow, and Smith's Longspur; in some summers, Ross' Gull is present. (*A Birder's Guide to Churchill*

GUIDE TO SYMBOLS

SPECIES	KEY
Breeding Birds	●
Flycatchers	●
Migrants	■
Shorebirds	■
Songbirds	▲
Warblers	▲
Waterbirds	▲
Vireos	■

(Lane Series), Bonnie Chartier, rev. 1988.)

LOSTWOOD AND DES LACS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES, NORTH DAKOTA

These two refuges just outside Kenmare give a glimpse of the fabulous birdlife of the original prairies. Baird's Sparrows, Sprague's Pipits, Sharp-tailed Grouse, and other
(Continued on next page)

specialties inhabit the grasslands, while the sloughs are filled with grebes, pelicans, Franklin's Gulls, and many ducks. (*Birder's Guide to North Dakota*, K.J. Zimmer, publ. 1979.)

CHEYENNE BOTTOMS, KANSAS

Peak shorebird migration in May brings large numbers of Baird's, White-rumped, and other sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitchers, Wilson's Phalaropes, Franklin's Gulls, all in breeding plumage. In early summer this is a good spot for rails and other marsh birds. (*A Guide to Bird Finding in Kansas and Western Missouri*, John L. Zimmerman & Sebastian T. Patti, publ. 1988.)

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK, TEXAS

May is the best time for a hike to the upper elevations of the Chisos Mountains, to see the Colima Warbler on its only nesting ground north of the border. Black-chinned Sparrows, Gray Vireos, and many other western birds are also here. (*Field Guide to Birds of the Big Bend*, Roland H. Wauer, rev. 1985.)

LOST MAPLES STATE NATURAL AREA, BANDERA COUNTY, TEXAS

Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo are the headline attractions, but the rich mix of typically eastern and western breeders makes this a very rewarding area for general birding from April through June. (*Birder's Guide to Rio Grande Valley* (Lane Series), James A. Lane & Harold R. Holt, rev. 1988; *Birder's Guide to Texas*, Edward A. Kutac, rev. 1989.)

GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING

Less crowded than Yellowstone, but no less birdy, Grand Teton has Trumpeter Swans, Williamson's Sapsuckers, Cassin's Finches, and many other birds. The highest elevations, reached by aerial

tram or rugged hike, are home to the gorgeous "Black" form of the Rosy Finch. (*Birds of Grand Teton National Park and Area*, Bert Raynes, publ. 1984.)

PAWNEE GRASSLAND, COLORADO

An excellent place to see typical breeding birds of the short-grass prairie in May and June: Mountain Plover, McCown's Longspur, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Ferruginous Hawk, and many others. (*Birder's Guide to Colorado* (Lane Series), Harold R. Holt & James A. Lane, rev. 1987.)

GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK, ALASKA

Daily boat tours up the bay in June produce the continent's best views of Kittlitz's Murrelet, plus many other alcids, gulls, Bald Eagles, waterfowl... and incredible glacier scenes. Blue Grouse and Three-toed Woodpeckers are common near the park lodge. (*Guide to Birds of Alaska*, Robert H. Armstrong, rev. 1990.)

OKANAGAN VALLEY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Blessed with a variety of isolated habitats (and with its own bird monograph, by the Cannings brothers), the Okanagan marks the northern limit for Gray Flycatcher, White-headed Woodpecker, Sage Thrasher, and several other birds that are rare elsewhere in Canada. A wealth of other western birds makes this a prime destination for non-Canadian birders as well. (*Birds of the Okanagan Valley, B.C.*, Robert A., Richard J. & Sydney G. Cannings, publ. 1987.)

MALHEUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, OREGON

This oasis in the desert supports huge numbers of waterbirds in spring and summer, with concentrations of avocets, ibises, pelicans, grebes, and several species of ducks. In addi-

INVALUABLE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Although coverage and information varies from place to place, rare bird alert telephone services that use taped messages are a real boon for peregrinating birders. These detail current rare or unusual birds sighted and how to get to the place where last reported. Use this listing when visiting the places on our spring birding map.

Alabama (205) 987-2730	Colorado (303) 973-7207
Alaska (907) 248-2473	Delaware (215) 567-2473
Arizona Tucson: (602) 798-1005	Indiana (317) 259-0911
British Columbia Vancouver: (604) 876-9690	Kansas (316) 343-7061
California Northern: (415) 528-0288 or (415) 524-5592 Los Angeles: (213) 874-1318 San Diego: (619) 435-6761 (619) 479-3400	Maine (207) 781-2332
	Michigan Statewide: (616) 471-4919 Southeastern: (313) 278-4288
	New Jersey Statewide: (201) 766-2661

Cape May:
(609) 884-2626

New York
Albany:
(518) 439-8080

Ontario
Windsor/Pt. Pelee:
(519) 252-2473

Oregon
(503) 292-0661

Quebec
Eastern (in French):
(819) 778-0737

Tennessee
(615) 356-7636

Texas
Statewide:
(713) 992-2757
Austin:
(512) 451-3308
Lower Rio Grande
Valley:
(512) 565-6773
San Antonio:
(512) 733-8306

Virginia
(804) 929-1736,
(301) 652-1088

Wyoming
(307) 265-2473

tion, the trees around refuge headquarters are famous for attracting a bizarre variety of lost migrant songbirds in late spring and early summer. (*The Birder's Guide to Oregon*, Joseph E. Evanich, Jr, publ.1990.)

POINT REYES, CALIFORNIA

Eastern spring migrants that wander west by mistake get delayed, as well as lost, and some of them wind up on Pt. Reyes surprisingly late in spring— up to late June. Observers who do not happen to run across any vagrant eastern warblers can still enjoy a good variety of typical western coastal birds on the rocky shoreline. (*Birding Northern California*, Jean Richmond, publ. 1985; *Field Checklist of Birds, Point Reyes National Seashore*, Rich Stallcup, publ. 1988.)

MORONGO VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

In late spring, southern California birders come here to see Vermilion Flycatchers, Summer Tanagers, Bell's

Vireos, Brown-crested Flycatchers, and other "southwestern" birds near their northwestern limits. (*Birder's Guide to Southern California* (Lane Series), Harold R. Holt, rev. 1990.)

CAVE CREEK CANYON, ARIZONA

Amid spectacular surroundings, birders here seek summer residents of the Mexican border region, including Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Hepatic Tanager, Whiskered Screech-Owl, Painted Redstart, and the largest population of Elegant Trogons in the United States. (*Birder's Guide to Southeastern Arizona* (Lane Series), Harold R. Holt, rev. 1988; *Birds in Southeastern Arizona*, William A. Davis & Stephen M. Russell, rev. 1990.)



Bausch & Lomb clarity separates the Wandering from the Gray-tailed.

Serious birding tests one's ability to determine the subtle differences in bird features not readily evident even at close range. Differentiating between the Gray-tailed and the Wandering Tattler (pictured here) requires the highest quality optics.

Because of their superior light transmission and high resolution of image detail, Bausch & Lomb® binoculars and spotting scopes have long been the choice of ardent birders. Working with internationally renowned naturalists, Bausch & Lomb provides

the advanced optical design of the Custom® binocular series. Endorsed by the

National Audubon Society, Custom offers models in 10x40, 8x36, and 7x26 configurations.

The most coveted birding binocular of all is the world famous Bausch & Lomb® Elite®, available in 8x42 and 10x42. The Elite sets the standard by which all other binoculars are measured. It is built to the most exacting tolerances with fully multi-coated lenses, close-focusing ability to twelve feet, field-proven construction, and long eye relief to comfortably accommodate eyeglass wearers.

The more you know about birds, the easier it is to separate a Wandering from a Gray-tailed Tattler.

Similarly, the more you know about binoculars, the more apparent Bausch & Lomb superiority will become.



BAUSCH & LOMB

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE LACKS RESOURCES TO PROTECT ENDANGERED SPECIES

A report issued recently by the Interior Department indicates that the Fish and Wildlife Service's management of the Endangered Species Act is severely hampered by lack of adequate



Guam Rufous-fronted Fantail

resources. The report concludes that unless the Fish and Wildlife Service receives additional funding, it is unlikely that hundreds of endangered species not currently listed under the act will receive protection.

The report states that in addition to the 550 species identified by the Fish and Wildlife Service as endangered or threatened, "an additional 600 known and 3,000 probable endangered or threatened animals and plants have not been listed."

Thirty-four plant and animal species have been declared extinct since 1980, none of which had ever received protection under the Endangered Species Act. Two birds are among this total: the Texas Henslow's Sparrow and the Guam Rufous-fronted Fantail.

The last time the Texas Henslow's Sparrow was seen in the wild was in 1982. Its grassland prairie habitat outside Houston has been completely destroyed by development. The Guam Rufous-fronted Fantail succumbed to predation by the brown tree snake which was imported to Guam about 20 to 30 years ago. By the late 1970s probably one fantail remained alive.

FIGHT TO PROTECT THE HAWAIIAN CROW

The Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, on behalf of Hawaii Audubon and National Audubon, has filed an intent to sue the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service because of its failure to protect the endangered Hawaiian Crow, or Alala, under the Endangered Species Act.

Most of the existing Alala population (10 to 15 birds) live on the 100,000 acre McCandless Ranch which consists of private and leased state land. The McCandless Ranch owner, Cynthia Salley, is denying state officials access to the state-owned parcel of land.

Officials must enter the land in order to conduct a breeding bird survey. A planned captive breeding program cannot proceed without access to the ranch. Both National Audubon and Hawaii Audubon support the breeding program.

The Fish and Wildlife Service asserts that it cannot forcibly enter the ranch unless it has evidence that the birds are being harmed. The National Audubon Society asserts that landowner consent is unnecessary in order to protect an endangered species under the Act.

TEST RELEASE OF ANDEAN CONDORS IN CALIFORNIA

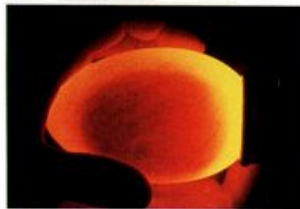
Andean Condors, released in California as a test to predict the success of future California Condor releases, indicate that zoo-raised condors will be able to survive. This outcome bodes well for the California Condor.

In the study conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Los Angeles Zoo, thirteen zoo-raised Andean Condor fledglings were released in the Los Padres

National Forest in California. Ten of those fledglings adapted successfully. Before the California Condors are released, the Andean Condors will be recaptured so that no interbreeding between the two species occurs.

TWO EGGS LAID BY CAPTIVE CONDORS

Two pairs of California Condors have each laid a single egg in California zoos. Officials hope that



Condor Egg

these breeding pairs can be eventually released into the wild with the hope that they will reproduce there.

The eggs were placed in incubators in the Los Angeles Zoo and the San Diego Wild Animal Park. Twelve captive condors have been born since 1988 and all have survived.

PROPOSED REFUGE ALONG WALLKILL RIVER

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed creating a 7500-acre national wildlife refuge along the banks of New Jersey's Wallkill River. The proposed area consists of 4200 acres of wetland and a 3300-acre buffer zone of forests and uplands.

The New Jersey Conservation Fund and New Jersey Audubon Society maintain that the river is invaluable to migrating birds as well as a critical nesting habitat for many of New Jersey's waterfowl.

TOXIC LEVELS OF LEAD IN EAGLES

Toxic levels of lead in the blood of Golden and Bald Eagles in Montana were discovered in a study conducted by HawkWatch International.

All 23 birds—17 Golden Eagles and six Bald Eagles—captured by researchers in March 1990 were affected. Stephen W. Hoffman, president of HawkWatch International, said that the high levels of lead concentrations should be considered an environmental warning.



Golden Eagle

PHOTOGRAPHS LEFT TO RIGHT: R.W. HOWE/VIREO, RON GARRISON, A. CAREY/VIREO