

American Birds

SPRING

GUIDE

April–June 1992

The late-winter birding doldrums are over, and the mad rush of the spring migration is bearing down upon us. The famine is about to turn to feast as raptors, shorebirds, and songbirds funnel northward toward their lands of connubial bliss. Break out the black fly repellent, tune up your ears, and go check out our list of 25 birding hot-spots for spring.

Whether you prefer boreal-breeding birds or southern swamp swimmers, it's time to bone up on the fine points of warbler identification (mercifully, in breeding plumage!) and re-learn all the songs you may only hear once or twice per year. Keep one eye on the calendar, the other on the weather, and head out for the spring extravaganza of your choice.

1. ACADIA NATIONAL PARK, MAINE

In late spring, just before the summer crowds arrive, Acadia can be an excellent birding area. The shoreline is picturesque, but most of the birding action is in the woods, with a wide variety of nesting warblers, vireos, thrushes, and other songbirds. Also see: *A Birder's Guide to the Coast of Maine*, Elizabeth Cary Pierson & Jan Erik Pierson, publ. 1981.

2. FOREST PARK, NEW YORK CITY

Although not as famous as Central Park, this large park in Queens often has good

numbers of migrant warblers in May, even on days when Central Park is relatively quiet. Near the east end, a low spot called the "waterhole" concentrates water—and warblers. Most years in May, some 30 species of warblers will be recorded in the park. Also see: *Where to Find Birds in New York State: Top 500 Sites*, Susan Roney Drennan, publ. 1981.

3. LETCHWORTH STATE PARK, NEW YORK

The Genesee River Gorge, with its notable geology, three waterfalls, and

impressive forests, forms a spectacular backdrop for spring and summer birding. This is one of the best places in western New York for a wide variety of nesting warblers; resident birds include Wild Turkey, Ruffed Grouse, and Pileated Woodpecker. For reference, see previous listing.

4. RIDLEY CREEK STATE PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

Easily accessible from Philadelphia, Ridley Creek is a nesting area for many birds of woodland, streamside, and open country. Acadian Flycatcher, Louisiana Waterthrush, Prairie Warbler, and Scarlet Tanager are among the regular summer residents. In April and May, good numbers of migrants add to the quality of birding. Also see: *Birding the Delaware Valley Region*, John J. Harding & Justin J. Harding, publ. 1980.

5. FRANCIS BEIDLER FOREST, SOUTH CAROLINA

This Audubon sanctuary in the "Four Hole Swamp" region embraces the finest stand of old-growth swamp forest on the southern Atlantic seaboard. Spring is the best season for a visit, with high numbers of Prothonotary Warblers, Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, Pileated Woodpeckers, and other birds. Also see: *Birds of the Carolinas*, E. F. Potter, J. F. Parnell & R. F. Teulings, publ. 1980.

6. FORT DESOTO COUNTY PARK, FLORIDA

Located on an island at the mouth of Tampa Bay, this park is one of the best spots in Florida for observing spring songbird migration. After a storm from the west, the

numbers of warblers and other migrants here can be spectacular. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Florida* (Lane Series), James A. Lane, rev. by Harold R. Holt, rev. 1989.

7. WHITEFISH POINT BIRD OBSERVATORY, MICHIGAN

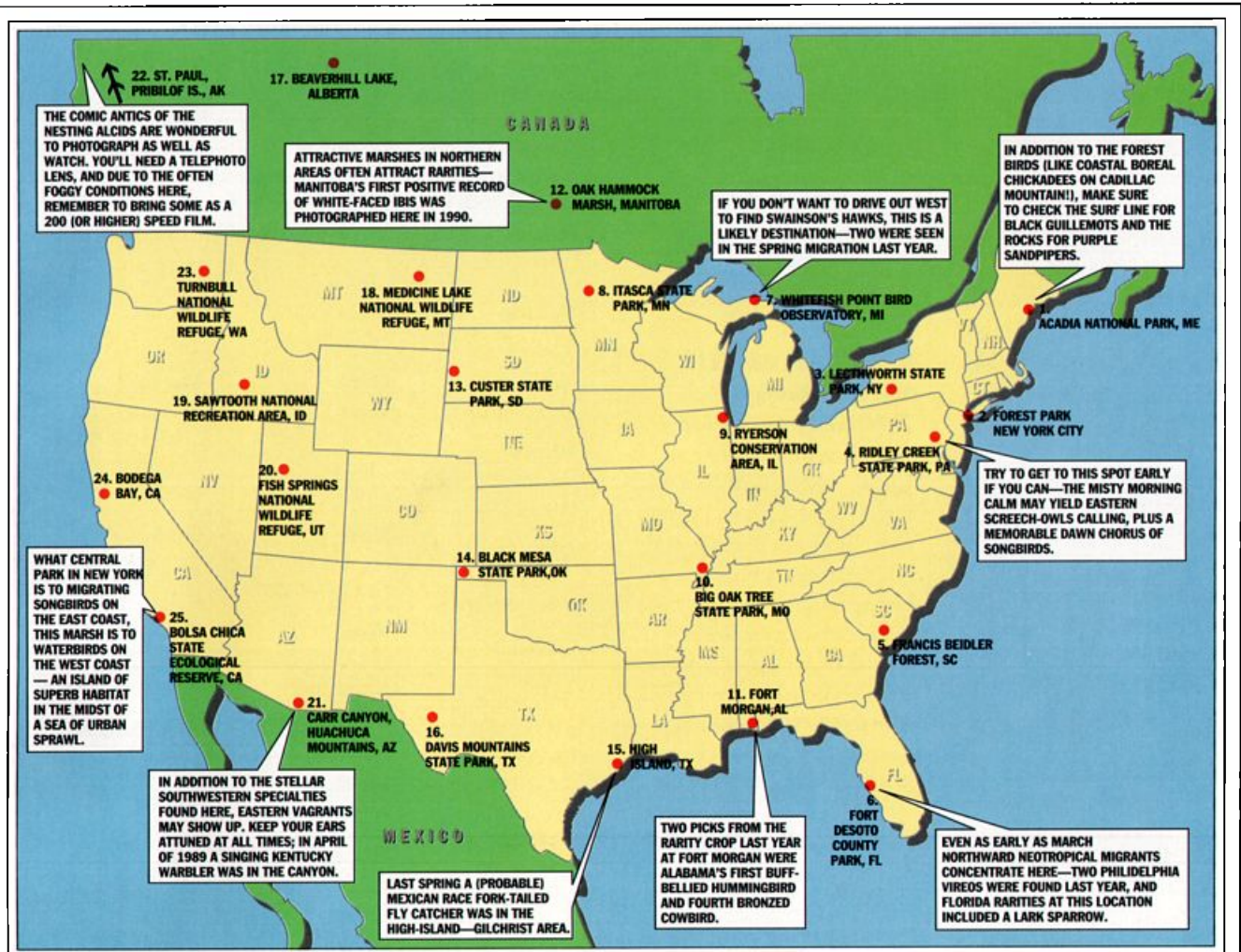
Located on the upper shore of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Whitefish Point separates Whitefish Bay from the main body of Lake Superior. Graced with such geography, it is a natural concentration point for migrating raptors, owls, waterfowl, and songbirds—both northbound and southbound. Nearly 300 species of birds have been recorded here. Also see: *Enjoying Birds in Michigan*, Michigan Audubon Society, rev. 1989; *Checklist to Birds of Whitefish Point Bird Observatory*, David Evers & Jim Granlund, rev. 1991.

8. ITASCA STATE PARK, MINNESOTA

Besides being the headwaters of the Mississippi River, this area of northern forest has an outstanding variety of nesting birds in late spring and summer. Black-backed Woodpecker, Golden-winged Warbler, Winter Wren, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Common Loon are just a few of the species present in summer. Also see: *A Birder's Guide to Minnesota*, Kim R. Eckert, rev. 1983.

9. RYERSON CONSERVATION AREA, ILLINOIS

In the northern Chicago suburb of Deerfield, this area of mature oak-maple forest has nesting Veeries, Eastern Bluebirds, Kentucky and Cerulean warblers, Ovenbirds, and many others. During spring migration, warblers and other songbirds



concentrate in large numbers. Also see: *The Birds of Illinois*, H. David Bohlen, publ. 1989.

10. BIG OAK TREE STATE PARK, MISSOURI

A remnant of Mississippi River bottomland forest is the main feature of this park. Habitat mismanagement seems to have eliminated the Swainson's Warblers that once nested here, but a wide variety of other "southeastern" breeding birds can still be found, and concentrations of migrants are often impressive. Also see: *Birds of Missouri*, Mark B. Robbins & David A. Easterla, publ. 1992.

11. FORT MORGAN, ALABAMA

Location is the key to quality birding here. At the tip of a

peninsula, Fort Morgan is a likely first landfall for migrants or vagrants coming off the Gulf of Mexico. Many outstanding rarities have been found; shorebirds and terns are present in good variety, and the numbers of migrant land birds can be phenomenal at times.

12. OAK HAMMOCK MARSH, MANITOBA

This wetland just north of Winnipeg has an abundance of breeding waterfowl, as well as Franklin's Gulls, Wilson's Phalaropes, Black Terns, Le Conte's and Sharp-tailed sparrows. Big numbers of migrant shorebirds make the area even more productive in late spring. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Southeastern Manitoba*, Manitoba Naturalists Society, rev. 1988.

13. CUSTER STATE PARK, SOUTH DAKOTA

The Black Hills region is of exceptional interest as an eastern outpost for many birds from the Rockies: Western Tanager, MacGillivray's Warbler, Townsend's Solitaire, Pygmy Nuthatch, and others. This is the summer range of the "White-winged" form of Dark-eyed Junco, considered a full species in the past (and perhaps in the future). Also see: *A Birdwatcher's Guide to the Black Hills*, Richard A. Peterson, publ. 1990.

14. BLACK MESA STATE PARK, OKLAHOMA

For birders crossing the southern plains, Black Mesa is where the West begins. Scaled Quail, Pinyon Jay, Scrub Jay, Gray Vireo, and

other birds are there to attest to that fact. In spring, in isolated groves of trees, concentrations of migrants include a mix of eastern and western species. Also see: *Guide to Birding in Oklahoma*, Tulsa Audubon Society, rev. 1986.

15. HIGH ISLAND, TEXAS

One of our famous migrant traps, this town is an "island" of trees surrounded by coastal marsh and prairie. When a weather front in spring blocks migrants coming across the Gulf, the trees can seem to drip with warblers, vireos, thrushes, tanagers, buntings, and other birds. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Texas*, Edward A. Kutac, rev. 1989; *Birder's Guide to Texas Coast* (Lane Series), James A. Lane & Harold R. Holt, rev. 1988.

16. DAVIS MOUNTAINS STATE PARK, TEXAS

In recent years this area has become noted as a good place to find Montezuma Quail, but many other southwestern birds nest here, including Cassin's Kingbird, Crissal Thrasher, Common Poorwill, and Hepatic Tanager. April and May offer the best mix of migrant and breeding birds. For references, see above.

17. BEAVERHILL LAKE, ALBERTA

This lake just east of Edmonton offers spectacular birding in spring, as successive concentrations of geese, ducks, cranes, and shorebirds move through during the season. Among the tens of thousands of birds often present, many rarities have been found. Also see: *A Bird-finding Guide to Canada*, J. Cam Finley, publ. 1984

18. MEDICINE LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, MONTANA

The marshes of Medicine Lake hold the greatest variety of birds during migration, but many birds remain to nest, including Western and Eared grebes, Willets, and many ducks. Baird's Sparrows and Sharp-tailed Grouse are found on the upland prairie.

19. SAWTOOTH NATIONAL RECREATION AREA, IDAHO

State Highway 75 provides access to the heart of this rugged area, where the birder may find Blue Grouse, Spruce Grouse, Williamson's Sapsucker, Pine Grosbeak, Cassin's Finch, and a variety of other northern/montane birds...with some extraordinary scenery as a fringe benefit.

20. FISH SPRINGS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, UTAH

Off the beaten path but worth the side trip, this desert-oasis refuge plays host to large

numbers of migrant shorebirds during the spring. As the migrants begin to disperse, focus shifts to the nesting birds: herons, White-faced Ibises, Snowy Plovers, and several species of waterfowl. Also see: *Utah Birds*, William H. Behle & Michael L. Perry, publ. 1975.

21. CARR CANYON, HUACHUCA MOUNTAINS, ARIZONA

The road is rough in places, but the top of Carr has Greater Pewee, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Virginia's Warbler, and other Arizona specialties. Late spring and summer have produced such rarities as Aztec Thrush, Eared Trogon, and Berylline Hummingbird. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Southeastern Arizona* (Lane Series), Harold R. Holt, rev. 1989; *Birds in Southeastern Arizona*, William A. Davis & Stephen M. Russell, rev. 1990.

22. ST. PAUL, PRIBILOF ISLANDS, ALASKA

Red-legged Kittiwakes, Red-faced Cormorants, Northern Fulmars, and seven species of alcids are among the birds nesting in huge colonies on the cliffs of St. Paul. That spectacle alone is well worth the trip; but in late May and early June, an added attraction is the possibility of stray shorebirds and others from Asia. Also see: *Guide to the Birds of Alaska*, Robert H. Armstrong, rev. 1990.

23. TURNBULL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, WASHINGTON

In the dry country of eastern Washington, the lakes of Turnbull attract large numbers of migrant waterfowl and shorebirds. Among the many birds remaining to nest are Red-necked Grebe, Cinnamon

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	Lower Keys (305) 294-3438	Montana (406) 721-2935
Alaska (907) 248-2473	Illinois Central (217) 785-1083 Chicago (708) 671-1522	New York Rochester (716) 461-9593 New York City (212) 832-6523
Alberta Calgary (403) 237-8821	Idaho Southeast (208) 236-3337	Oklahoma Oklahoma City (405) 373-4531
Arizona Tucson (602) 798-1005	Maine (207) 781-2332 5pm-8am weekdays; 24 hr. weekends	Pennsylvania Philadelphia (215) 567-2473
California Northern (415) 528-0288 or (415) 524-5592 Los Angeles (213) 874-1318 San Francisco (415) 528-0288	Michigan (616) 471-4919	South Carolina (704) 332-2473
Florida Statewide (813) 984-4444 Miami (305) 667-7337	Minnesota Statewide (612) 544-5016 Duluth (218) 525-5952	Texas (713) 992-2757
	Missouri (314) 445-9115	Utah (801) 538-4730
		Washington (206) 526-8266

Teal, Wilson's Phalarope, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Also see: *Guide to Bird-finding in Washington*, Terrence R. Wahl & Dennis R. Paulson, rev. 1991.

24. BODEGA BAY, CALIFORNIA

Variety of habitats makes this a prime birding spot in all seasons. Look for migrant shorebirds on the harbor mudflats, lingering scoters and grebes in the open bay, and Black Oystercatchers and others on the jetties. Odd landbird migrants are possible in the trees on Bodega Head. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Northern California*, LoLo & Jim Westrich, publ. 1991;

Birding Northern California, Jean Richmond, publ. 1985.

25. BOLSA CHICA STATE ECOLOGICAL RESERVE, CALIFORNIA

In the midst of heavily populated Orange County, this little gem of a reserve plays host to nesting Black Skimmers and Least, Elegant, Caspian, Forster's, and Royal terns. The scarce Belding's race of Savannah Sparrow is resident here, and many shorebirds and other species stop through in migration. Also see: *Where Birders Go in Southern California*, Henry E. Childs, publ. 1990.

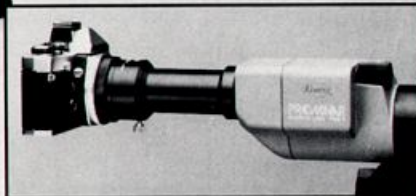
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BIRDS IN JEOPARDY



The Imperiled and Extinct Birds of the United States and Canada Including Hawaii and Puerto Rico

Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, and Darryl Wheye

As the impact of society spreads, more and more familiar birds are on the decline. Why? How can we reverse the trend? This first comprehensive review of the status of 184 endangered or extinct species, by the authors of *The Birder's Handbook*, alerts us to factors critical in the work of conservation and recovery. Striking color portraits by Darryl Wheye. xii+259 pp. Cloth, \$45.00; paper, \$17.95

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INTRODUCING THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA

The American Ornithologists' Union and the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia are introducing the first installments of a

Jack Gartner, manager of aeronautical services at JFK. "We've always approached shooting as a last resort," he said.

The shootings were performed by U.S. Department

resulted, there were approximately 40 aborted takeoffs in that 11-year period.

HELPING NEOTROPICAL MIGRANTS

At least 70 percent of all neotropical migrant species in the Western Hemisphere are declining, according to a recent report in *Wildlife Conservation* magazine. The numbers of Bay-breasted and Tennessee warblers, for example, decreased by more than ten percent in just nine years from 1978-1987.

In an effort to combat these declines, The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Program was launched last spring. The program's objectives are to improve the monitoring of bird populations, identify species most at risk, and develop management techniques and plans for protecting habitat. Taking part in this cooperative effort are several governmental agencies, private conservation groups including the National Audubon Society, volunteer birders, and scientists in Caribbean, Central and South American countries.

John Turner, director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, one of the participating agencies, asserts, "We simply are not going to have these birds in the future unless we make a serious effort to conserve their habitats throughout our hemisphere."

EARED TROGON MAKES HISTORY

October 15, 1991 has become an important date in the history of the Eared Trogon. That's the day Sherri Williamson, preserve manager for Ramsey Canyon in Arizona, officially announced that Eared Trogons were found nesting in the United States for the first time.

The initial sighting apparently occurred in August, but it wasn't until October that birders saw the brilliant, long-tailed bird fly into a hole in a dead maple tree carrying a beakful of food. This indicated the bird had a family to feed, and indeed nesting noises were heard.

The trogon was not the only rare bird to recently breed in Arizona. A Berylline Hummingbird built the fourth nest found in the United States very close to Ramsey Canyon's visitor's center in June 1991. And then in September, a pair of Aztec Thrushes joined the birding party.

FERRUGINOUS HAWK HITS HARD TIMES

Three conservation groups have petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list the Ferruginous Hawk as threatened or endangered. The petitioning organizations, the Utah chapter of the National Audubon Society, HawkWatch International, and the Ferruginous Hawk Project, claim the current population of this species hovers near 10,000. That is fewer than the number of Bald Eagles in the lower 48 states. Canada, where 500-1000 pairs breed, declared the species threatened in 1980.

The largest hawk in North America, the Ferruginous Hawk nests from eastern Washington and southern Saskatchewan south to eastern Oregon, southeastern Arizona, and northern Texas.



major new serial publication, *The Birds of North America*. In the spirit of A.C. Bent's *Life Histories*, *The Birds of North America* will provide histories and up-to-date summaries of what is known (and not known) about each of our nesting birds. Eight accounts will be published this spring, with 30-40 available by the end of the year.

For more information, contact *The Birds of North America*, c/o The Academy of Natural Sciences, 1900 Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, PA 19103-1195. FAX: (215) 299-1182.

THOUSANDS OF GULLS SHOT

Nearly 15,000 gulls were shot at John F. Kennedy Airport last year because airport officials were concerned about the large number of birds crashing into planes.

The shootings, documented in a federal study, were an act of desperation at an airport located next to a wildlife refuge, according to

of Agriculture biologists at the request of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The gulls were damaging planes and endangering passengers, a Port Authority spokesperson said.

Richard A. Dolbeer, a scientist with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and author of the federal report, wrote that collisions between gulls and planes destroyed or damaged 37 airplane engines near JFK between 1979 and 1990. Although no human injuries



Bay-breasted Warbler