

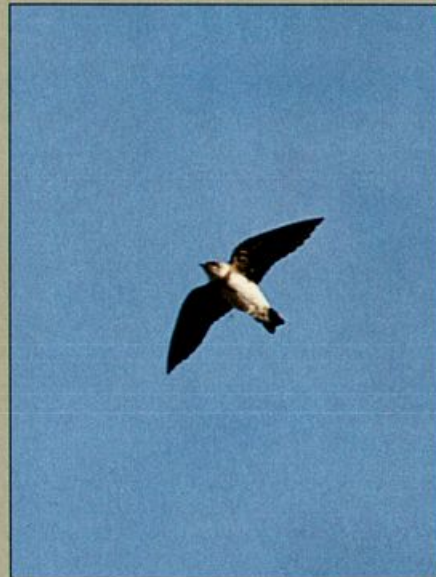
OUTSTANDING RARITIES OF AUTUMN 1997

Brown-chested Martin



Present at Cape May, New Jersey, November 6 to 15, 1997, this Brown-chested Martin (*Progne tapera*) furnished a second definite record for North America; the first had been at Monomoy Island, Massachusetts, in June 1983. Near the size of a Purple Martin but with a pattern suggesting a Bank Swallow, the species could be overlooked at times.

Brown-chested Martins have two major populations: a resident race (*tapera*) in northern South America, and a migratory race (*fusca*) that breeds in southern South America and migrates north to northern South America and Panama during the austral winter. The Cape May bird belonged to the migratory race, as indicated by the line of dark brown spots extending down the center of the lower breast, just visible in this photo of the perched bird. The apparent pattern of the underparts changed with the bird's posture; on the cover portrait, taken during the same session, the dark spots were not visible. Notice also the prominent brown wash down the sides and flanks. Photograph/Kevin T. Karlson



In this shot of the Brown-chested Martin overhead, we can see how this species might be passed off as a Bank Swallow, if it were seen against the sky with nothing for size comparison. However, the flight style—lacking the rapid fluttering wingbeats of Bank Swallow—and the more bulky shape would be tip-offs that something was different. Photograph/Kevin T. Karlson



Two more photos of the Cape May bird in flight, to show the broad-based wings, bulky body, thick neck, and rather large head of the Brown-chested Martin. The head pattern, with a prominent pale collar extending up the side of the neck, is seen to good advantage here. Photographs/Steve Kerr



Two national boundaries beyond its normal range was this Mexican endemic found in Canada. Native to Baja, Xantus's Hummingbird (*Hylocharis xantusii*) had been found twice in southern California, but was totally unexpected at Gibson's, southwestern British Columbia, where this individual showed up on November 16, 1997. Naturally, some questioned its origins; see the discussions in the British Columbia-Yukon region report and in the Changing Seasons column.

Photograph/Ruth Sullivan



At the opposite end of Canada from the Xantus's Hummingbird, and just as bizarrely out of range, this Brown Shrike (*Lanius cristatus*)—a stray from Asia—was observed in Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 22 to December 1, 1997. Its identity sparked international debate on the Internet, with experts from Hong Kong and Britain weighing in. The plain-looking wing coverts on this bird suggested it was an adult; the combination of dark brown upperparts, strong black mask, pale supercilium, rusty wash on the underparts, and lack of any white spot at the base of the primaries helped to rule out the similar Red-backed and Isabelline shrikes. (Incidentally, an Asian passerine in the Maritime Provinces is not quite without precedent: North America's first Stonechat, in New Brunswick in 1983, was of an Asian race; see *American Birds* 40: 16–17).

Photograph/Azor Vienneau



When the first Slate-throated Redstart (*Myioborus miniatus*) for the United States was found in April 1962, it was on the high plains of southeastern New Mexico and almost certainly had crossed at least a hundred miles of western Texas to get there. Since then there have been a few Arizona records and one Texas report, but documentation has been slim because the bird is difficult to photograph. The species moved solidly into the "confirmed" column for Texas when this bird was photographed in the Davis Mountains on August 2, 1997. Remarkably, there may have been two individuals present here.

Other outstanding rarities have been found in the Davis Mountains recently, including some this season; see the Texas region report for more details. Photographs/Greg W. Lasley

