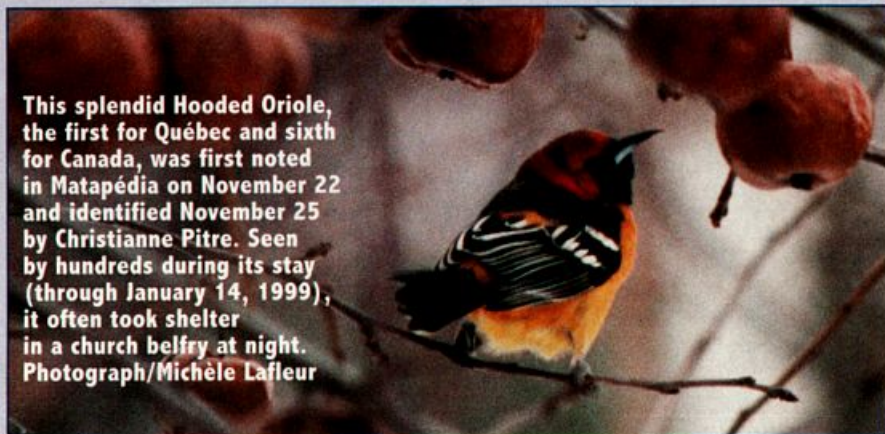


OUTSTANDING RARITIES OF FALL 1998

This splendid Hooded Oriole, the first for Québec and sixth for Canada, was first noted in Matapédia on November 22 and identified November 25 by Christianne Pitre. Seen by hundreds during its stay (through January 14, 1999), it often took shelter in a church belfry at night. Photograph/Michèle Lafleur



Olive-backed Pipits are rare anywhere in North America (the 1998 spring fallout at Attu excepted . . .) but virtually unknown outside Alaska—which means, of course, that it was only a matter of time before California's Southeast Farallon Island turned one up! Other state "firsts" discovered here in past years were fellow Siberian vagrants such as Dusky and Lanceolated warblers, Brown Shrike, and Red-flanked Bluetail. This bird was found September 26 and remained until the 29th. Note the olive cast to the upperparts, bright buffy wash around the upper breast, and the strongly patterned face, especially the strong supercilium. Photograph/Peter Pyle



Merlins passed Kiptopeke, Virginia, in great squadrons in autumn. Of several banding operations in the area, one turned up this dilute-plumaged leucistic bird (pictured here with a normally pigmented nominate bird) at Wise Point, the southernmost tip of the Delmarva Peninsula, October 6. This is apparently the first documentation of this plumage in North America. Photograph and capture/Reese F. Luke Jr.



Cape May does it again: North America's second Whiskered Tern, discovered by Richard Crossley at South Cape May Meadows August 8, remained for four more days. This is the same area that produced the continent's first record in 1993. Photograph/Kevin T. Karlson



At Barrhead, Alberta (way up north!), a feeder hosted a Curve-billed Thrasher from the early fall through at least mid-March, Canada's first substantiated record. The whitish throat, well-defined breast spots, orange eye, and white tail corner point to the *curvirostre* subspecies group, and the short bill and stage of molt indicate a young bird. The bird dined in part on meal worms kept warm by an electric coffee mug warmer! Photograph/Jerry Urlacher



Rarity is relative. For those who have sought out West Indian Whistling-Ducks in buggy Caribbean marshes without satisfaction, the eye is drawn to the left. But the vagrant here is the Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, found September 27 at Hog Cay, Long Island, Bahamas. Fred Sibley confirms that this bird was of the southern subspecies, *discolor*, found from eastern Panama southward and distinguishable by gray plumage in the upper breast and lower back. This bird may be a key in the puzzle of recent records in the East: birders should attempt to discern the subspecific identity of Black-bellies out of range (one in Nova Scotia stayed through the fall!). Photograph/Bruno Dittmar