

new england region



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Autumn 1998 in New England was dry and warm, notably warm in Sep. and especially dry and snowless in Nov. Although temperatures returned to average late in the season, the weather never got exceptionally cold; much of New England experienced little or no killing frost. Lack of boreal irruptions made late season raptor and finch watching dull. A major flight of reversed migrant passerines in mid-Oct. that featured especially large numbers of Blue Grosbeaks and Indigo Buntings added interest to birding on the southeast coast. Far more Tundra Swans were pushed east into the Region than usual, as were excellent numbers of such regular low density migrants as Orange-crowned Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Dickcissel. Half-hardies and even *non*-hardies started to appear in late Nov., but this phenomenon flowered more fully in Dec. Coverage of Lake Champlain improved with increased boat exploration and shore-based lake-watching. The best birds of a good season for rarities were **Little Egret**, **Red-necked Stint**, **Long-billed Murrelet**, **Fork-tailed Flycatcher**, **Cassin's Kingbird**, **Bell's Vireo**, and **Violet-green Swallow**. Some of these had crowd-pleasingly long stays. In short, this was another dynamic and unpredictable autumn migration.

Abbreviations: Bluff Pt. (*Bluff Pt., Groton, New London Co., CT*); Dead Creek (*Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area, Addison, Addison Co., VT*); GMNWR (*Great Meadows N.W.R., Concord, Middlesex Co., MA*); Lighthouse Pt. (*Lighthouse Pt., New Haven, New Haven Co., CT*); MARC (*Massachusetts Avian Records Committee*); Monhegan (*Monhegan I., Lincoln Co., ME*); Monomoy (*Monomoy N. W. R., Chatham, Barnstable Co., MA*); Plum I. (*Plum I., Newbury & Rowley, Essex Co., MA*); Rockport (*Andrew's and Halibut Pts., Rockport, Essex Co., MA*); S. Beach (*South Beach I., Chatham, Barnstable Co., MA*); Thompson's Pt. (*Thompson's Pt., Charlotte, Chittenden Co., VT*); Tuckernuck (*Tuckernuck I., Nantucket Co., MA*)

LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

The coastal flight of Red-throated Loons was largely concentrated into a single day, with a record count of 3000 passing Wasque Pt., *Dukes*, Nov. 22 (VL et al.). Observers on L. Champlain noted a record count of 10 Red-throated Loons passing Thompson's Pt. Oct. 25 (TGM). **Pacific Loon** reports included Vermont's 3rd and L. Champlain's 2nd at W. Addison Oct. 27 (†SWM) and one in alternate plumage at Rockport Oct. 9 (†RH). The best count of Com. Loons was early Oct. 11, with 452 counted from 3 sites in coastal Massachusetts (*vide MR*). Forty Red-necked Grebes Oct. 24 in Addison and Panton on L. Champlain was an excellent inland tally (RBL). **Eared Grebe** reports were well above average, with New Hampshire's first Sep. 14 at Rochester, *Strafford*, NH (†SM, D. Abbott, D. Finch et al.); two at Laurel Res., Stamford, *Fairfield*, CT, Sep. 7 (P. Dugan et al.); one videotaped at Little Compton, *Newport*, RI, Sep. 14–15 (R. Emerson et al.); another in the Ocean State at Trustom Pond N.W.R. Oct. 3–19 (C. Raithel et al.); and one returning to Brace's Cove, Gloucester, *Essex*, MA, Oct. 7 (JS et al.).

Although all of the expected tubenose species were reported, numbers were generally unremarkable. Cory's Shearwaters were scarce and far out at sea. An unexpectedly strong onshore flight of pelagics was seen at Rockport Aug. 12, when 487 Greater, 31 Sooty, and an impressive 64 Manx shearwaters were counted by Heil. Ten Audubon's Shearwaters were at Hydrographer Canyon

Sep. 11–13 (RD). Two different juv. N Gannets turned up inland on L. Champlain, Oct. 16 at N. Hero, *Grand Isle* (†FP, †ph. RBL), and Oct. 23–25 in Addison and Panton (†ph. RBL, †FP et al.). Just two Great Cormorants were detected inland, with one each in Maine and w. Massachusetts. The burgeoning L. Champlain Double-crested Cormorant population yielded a staggering mid-Aug. count of 12,000–14,000 between Grand Isle and Alburg (RBL).

Forty-five Am. Bitterns were about average, and reports of Least Bittern were one Aug. 3 at Bangor, ME (J. Markowsky), and an adult with two juveniles at GMNWR throughout Aug. (m. ob.). Reports of **Little Egret** continue to proliferate. Rhode Island's first was found on Block I. Sep. 14 (†SP et al.) and stayed until late Sep.; another continued from the summer at Newmarket, *Rockingham*, NH, until Aug. 14 (SM et al.). Snowy Egret has been rare inland in n. New England of late, so one at Woodstock, *Windsor*, VT, Sep. 13 was noteworthy (JMN). Also notable were two Little Blue Herons in the Connecticut Valley of Massachusetts in Aug. (*vide SK*). A Tricolored Heron was far to the north at Fort Kent, *Aroostook*, ME, Aug. 11 (G. Thibodeau). Cattle Egret is less numerous than in years past, and few were reported save for 40 at Shelburne, *Chittenden*, VT, Aug. 22, visiting from New York's Four Brothers Is. colony (WE, NLM). Very late for Vermont was a Green Heron Nov. 7 at Charlotte, *Chittenden* (FP). Yellow-crowned Night-Herons included Vermont's 6th, an adult Sep. 12 at Shelburne (†D. & M. Poley); one way Down East in Machiasport, *Washington*, ME, Aug. 9 (PD); and a good count of 17 Aug. 24 at Milford Pt., *New Haven*, CT (FM et al.). Glossy Ibis was reported twice in Vermont where they are scarce, Aug. 1–8 at Grand Isle (†ph. DH) and Aug. 23 at Ferrisburg, *Addison* (B. Guyett). Apparently established in w. Connecticut, Black Vulture nested in Massachusetts this summer at the Blue Hills Reservation in Milton, *Norfolk*. The nestlings fledged there Aug. 2 (N. Smith). Black Vultures were also regularly seen in s. *Berkshire* at Sheffield (*vide SK*). They remain very rare in Rhode Island, thus one at W. Kingstown, *Washington*, Oct. 31 was of note (MT).

WATERFOWL

A half-dozen Greater White-fronted Geese included two at Button Bay S.P., Ferrisburg, VT, Nov. 16 to Dec. (CG, OM et al.); one in Carlisle, *Middlesex*, MA, Oct. 11–15 (T. & D. Brownrigg); and three in Connecticut (*fide* GH). The Snow Goose wave at Dead Cr. crested at 25,000 in mid-Oct. (TGM). There was a remarkably large and early coastal flight of Snow Geese Oct. 3–5, with many flocks seen passing over the sea, including 7150 off Block I. (R. Ferren). Vermont had three Ross's Geese Oct. 11–Nov. 11 at Dead Cr., including one blue and two white morphs (m. ob.). A Richardson's Canada Goose was reported from Dead Cr. Oct. 19 (DH). Brant were reported in unprecedented numbers on L. Champlain, with a major flight of 1290 Oct. 24–25 at Thompson's Pt. (TGM). Coincident with this flight were 33 at Quabbin Res., MA, Oct. 25 (*fide* SK). Two Barnacle Geese were also found at Thompson's Pt. Oct. 23 (†TGM, DH et al.). An extraordinary flight of Tundra Swans blanketed all of the Region except Maine, with 110+, including high counts of 14 in Newport, *Orleans*, VT, Nov. 25–27 (B. & J. Prue); eight in Newmarket, NH, Nov. 15 (†SM); 16 at Brookfield, *Worcester*, MA, Nov. 12 (ML et al.), and 28 in Westport, *Bristol*, MA, Nov. 21–22 (m. ob.). Whooper Swans continue to breed ferally in *Essex*, MA, in spite of local game authorities' desire to stop them. A Whooper of uncertain origin took up winter residence in Lubec, *Washington*, ME, Oct. 12 (J. Merrill et al.).

Eur. Wigeon continues its renaissance in the Region, with an excellent tally of 20. These included maxima of 5 in Carver, *Plymouth*, MA, Nov. 21 (MS), and five in Greenland, *Rockingham*, NH, in late Nov. (SM, A & BD et al.), and Vermont's first autumn report in over a half-century, a flyby at Thompson's Pt. Oct. 21 (†TGM). Numbers of Am. Wigeon continue to rise on New Hampshire's Great Bay, with up to 300 there in late Oct. and early Nov. (m. ob.) The current dip in Canvasback and Redhead numbers continued, with all counts of the former <100 and only 18 of the latter, although 8 Redhead at Pontoosuc L., MA, Oct. 31 was a good *Berkshire* count (*fide* SK). Two drake **Tufted Ducks** at Chickawaukie Pond, Rockland, *Knox*, ME, Nov. 24 to Dec. provided the Pine Tree State's 2nd record (M. Libby, m. ob.). The Sterling, *Worcester*, MA drake returned for its 4th winter Oct. 10 (F. McMenemy, m. ob.) A count of 850 Lesser Scaup Nov. 2 at Nantucket, MA, was impressive (ER).

A well-photographed imm. drake Com. Eider at Charlotte Nov. 11 to Dec. was the 6th for Vermont (†TGM, ph. DH). Nearly two dozen King Eider were all coastal save one at Fryeburg, *Oxford*, ME, Nov. 8 (D. Gilpatrick *fide* KG). Harlequin Ducks occurred in excellent numbers at virtually all of their traditional haunts and even popped up in some unexpected venues. One was early at Bourne, *Barnstable*, MA, Aug. 7 (J. Hallowell). High counts included 40 Oct. 25 at Chilmark, *Dukes*, MA (VL et al.), 66 at Rockport Nov. 29 (SP et al.), and a remarkable five Nov. 13 on Long I. Sound at Guilford, *New Haven*, CT, where they are a rarity (P. Comins). Good Oldsquaw counts included a L. Champlain record 280 at Thompson's Pt. Oct. 25 (TGM) and 97,000 at the traditional Nantucket staging site Nov. 29 (ER). A scoter fallout took place Oct. 24–26, with 630 Blacks in New Hampshire, including 170 on Crystal L., Enfield, *Grafton*, Oct. 26 (PH) and 41 Surf on L. Champlain at Addison and Pantown Oct. 24 (RBL). A Vermont record 250 White-winged Scoters were tallied in W. Addison Nov. 16 (CG, OM). Eighteen of the 24 Barrow's Goldeneye reported were from Maine; others included two Nov. 19 at Chimney Pt., Addison, VT (SWM et al.), and five in e. Massachusetts. The best Com. Merganser counts were 1600 Nov. 18 at L. Umbagog, *Coos*, NH (T. Richards, R. Quinn), and 2500+ on Sabattus Pond, *Androscoggin*, ME, Nov. 27 (PV).

RAPTORS THROUGH CRANES

Bald Eagles are prospering. The 41 counted at Lighthouse Pt. was the best tally there in the last 8 years (RB). A seasonal total of 806 N. Harriers at Lighthouse Pt. was also better than average (RB). One-day high counts were 63 Oct. 2 at Lighthouse Pt. (RB) and 57 Oct. 3 at Newburyport, *Essex*, MA (RH). Peak Broad-winged Hawk flight days included Sep. 13—with good counts from three states including 8975 at Mt. Watatic, *Worcester*, MA (E. Mass. Hawk Watch)—and Sep. 14 at W. Hartland, *Hartford*, CT, where 11,000 were intercepted (P. Carrier). There were hints of a modest Rough-legged Hawk flight, with 55+ reported from Oct. 2 onward, including five to the south at Lighthouse Pt. (RB). Golden Eagles were represented by 16, including three in Connecticut, one in Rhode Island, and the remainder in the Bay State. The 2598 Am. Kestrels counted at Lighthouse Pt. (RB) were an improvement over totals for the last 3 autumns but pale in comparison to counts as recent as the early 1990s. These

little falcons are not shortstopping at feeders (as now seems true of accipiters), so the drop in numbers almost certainly reflects a true decline.

N. Bobwhite are also dwindling: the only part of the region that now reports them with regularity is Cape Cod. The only Yellow Rail reported was found in urban Dorchester, *Suffolk*, MA, Sep. 26 (RD). Two Purple Gallinules included an adult on Nantucket Aug. 7–8 (*fide* ER) and an injured juvenile picked up near Hanover, *Grafton*, NH, Nov. 9 (JMN et al.). The latter bird was cared for at the Vermont Raptor Center and shipped to Florida to complete its recovery. Fifteen of the 24 Com. Moorhens reported were found in Maine and Vermont, which now appear to hold the majority of breeding pairs in New England Am. Coots were less numerous than in recent autumns, though an Aug. 15 nesting confirmation on Monomoy (E. Nielsen) was noteworthy. Sandhill Cranes numbered three, with sightings at Matanuck, *Washington*, RI, Sep. 18–20 and Nov. 13 into Dec., presumably the same bird (MT), at Lighthouse Pt. Oct. 20 (RB, A. Hamback), and Nov. 19 at Sandy Point, *New Haven*, CT (P. Brody).

SHOREBIRDS

Am. Golden-Plovers were widespread and well reported from all states, although no count reached 30. The threatened Piping Plover peaked at 47 at S. Beach Sep. 7 (BN). Am. Oystercatchers continue to increase in s. e. Massachusetts, with a record 178 counted on N. Monomoy Sep. 5 (MS). Six lingered until Nov. 29 at Edgartown, *Dukes*, MA (AK). Five Am. Avocets included four in e. Massachusetts Aug. 9 to Oct. 15 and one at W. Haven, *New Haven*, CT, Aug. 18–19 (JK).

Pending MARC review, a **Spotted Redshank** was plausibly described from S. Beach Aug. 16 (†D. Furbish, S. Katz). This is the 4th Regional report and 3rd for the Bay State. A Willet at Dead Cr. Sep. 16 was a rare find for Vermont (†DH). Also unusual was an injured Spotted Sandpiper unable to depart the deteriorating New England climate at Arlington Res., *Middlesex*, MA, through the end of the season (MR). A Whimbrel at GMNWR Sep. 1 (R. Akell) was unusual for the Sudbury Valley. Flocks of Hudsonian Godwits over the sea are rarely intercepted, so counts of 30 each at Stellwagen Bank Aug. 25 (J. Cameron) and Fippennies Ledge Aug. 31 (SP) were of great interest. There was a single inland report from Dead Cr. Oct. 17–18 (TGM, SWM). Marbled God-

wits numbered 11, rather few, and none were reported n. of Massachusetts.

Selected *Calidris* high counts from S. Beach included 2900 Sanderling Sep. 6 (RH), an impressive 700 White-rumped Sandpipers Sep. 6 (RH), and 8000+ Dunlin Oct. 25 (WE et al.). The season's shorebird highlight was the breeding-plumaged **Red-necked Stint** found at Saquish Head, Duxbury, *Plymouth*, MA, Aug. 21–Sep. 4 (†D. Ludlow). Seen by many, it was the 3rd for the Commonwealth and the 4th for the Region. High inland counts of Least Sandpipers included a Vermont record 380 at Dead Cr. Aug. 9 (TGM) and 150 at GMNWR Sep. 4 (SP). One located Nov. 22 on S. Beach was very tardy (W. Petersen). Forty-four Baird's Sandpipers included three-four in Vermont to Oct. 24, two in w. Massachusetts (*vide* SK), an above-average 10 in Connecticut, and a straggler at S. Monomoy Nov. 29 (W. Harrington). Representing a rarely reported age class was a juv. Curlew Sandpiper at Old Lyme, *New London*, CT, Oct. 8–13 (T. Hendrickson, ph. MSz). Two others were reported without documentation from Maine, with one at Lubec, ME, Sep. 12 retaining some alternate plumage (NF *vide* KG). Only 31 Buff-breasted Sandpipers were reported, including four found in the Connecticut R. Valley of Massachusetts (*vide* SK). Long-billed Dowitchers seemed more numerous and widespread than usual, with 7 juveniles at Dead Cr. Sep. 16–19 († ph. DH et al.), two in coastal New Hampshire, 18 in Maine (*vide* JD), and a maximum of 60 at Plum I., Oct. 16 (W. Drew et al.). Wilson's Phalaropes

were limited to the coast, with one in Maine, six in Massachusetts, and three in Connecticut. Inland Red-necked Phalaropes included four on L. Champlain Aug. 20–Sep. 17 (RBL) and one at Pomfret, *Windham*, CT, Aug. 13 (R. Dixon). Landlocked Red Phalaropes were found Sep. 18 at Butler I., *Grand Isle*, VT (†RBL, DH), Oct. 12 at Exeter, *Rockingham*, NH (†M. Medeiros), and Oct. 16 near Bixby I., *Grand Isle*, VT († ph. RBL, †FP).

JAEGERS THROUGH ALCIDS

An unidentified jaeger was spotted on L. Champlain at S. Hero, *Grand Isle*, Sep. 16 (RBL). Reports lacking documentation of both Great and South Polar skuas were submitted from Maine, with two of the former and one of the latter Sep. 20, a late date for a S. Polar (*vide* JD). The tip of the mid-Nov. Franklin's Gull invasion in the mid-Atlantic states nosed its way into our Region with a single adult at Milford, CT, Nov. 15 (ph. FM). Little Gulls were numerous, at least 30 and perhaps as many as 40 were found, over half of them on L. Champlain, where high counts ranged upwards to seven on three dates from Sep. 13 to Oct. 12 (RBL et al.). Others included two in Maine, nine in e. Massachusetts, and at least two in Rhode Island. Twelve Black-headed Gulls was average for recent years. Two were the 4th and 5th for Vermont, with adults Oct. 23–Nov. 2 at Thompson's Pt. (†TGM, ph. RBL et al.) and another at Shelburne Bay Nov. 1–6 (†TGM, G. Hall et al.). All others were in coastal Massachusetts. Bonaparte's Gulls on n. L. Champlain peaked at 10,000 Sep. 14

(RBL et al.). The lone Mew Gull of the season appeared a short distance inland at Lakeville, *Plymouth*, MA, Nov. 13 (K. Anderson). Over 30 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were reported, mostly in Massachusetts. Sabine's Gulls included five along the Atlantic fringe of Massachusetts Sep. 11 to Oct. 10, and Vermont's 7th and 8th, both juveniles, in St. Albans Bay, *Franklin*, Sep. 24 (†FP, ph. RBL, †DH).

Among "southern" terns were the season's only Gull-billed Tern Sep. 17–24 at Chatham, MA (m. ob.) and a very late Sandwich Tern at Lynn/Nahant, *Essex*, MA, Oct. 19 (†RH). Northerly wandering by Royal Terns was very weak, but Forster's Terns were more in evidence, including 19 in Maine n. to Georgetown, *Sagadahoc* (*vide* JD) and one Sep. 27 in Rye, *Rockingham*, NH (PH et al.). Peak counts of staging terns at S. Beach were 3500 Roseate and 6500 Common Sep. 1 (I. Nisbet) and 400 Black Sep. 16 (BN). An Aug. 30 count of 635 Com. Terns on L. Champlain was also impressive (RBL). A notably late Least Tern was at Tuckernuck Sep. 23 (RV).

Alcids were generally less in evidence than in 1997's storm-tossed late autumn. Only six Dovekies and three Common Murres were reported s. to e. Massachusetts, and no Thick-billed Murres were found. Razorbill remained the most frequently reported alcid, with a count of 75 at Quoddy Head S.P., *Washington*, ME, Sep. 12 (NF) and about 50 in Massachusetts' waters in Oct. and Nov. Atlantic Puffins included 21 from the CAT ferry between Bar Harbor, ME, and Yarmouth, NS, Sep. 19 (WT), an unseasonable four at Rockport Aug. 12 (RH), and three in Nov. in e. Massachusetts. The alcid of the season came across the continent to grace Block I. Sound. Rhode Island's first and the Region's 2nd **Long-billed Murrelet** arrived Nov. 27 and stayed into Dec. at Narragansett, *Washington* (S. Mitra, m. ob.).

OWLS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

The only Snowy Owls of the season were two n. of the CP Line at Fort Kent, ME, in late Nov. (G. Flagg *vide* KG). Judy Walker at Freeport, *Cumberland*, ME, banded 179 N. Saw-whet Owls this season, nearly 20 more than last year (*vide* JD). *Selasphorus* hummingbirds are now annual in small numbers. This autumn there were five, including a banded female Rufous returning for a 3rd autumn in Agawam, *Hampden*, MA, Aug. 17–Nov. 25, when she was returned to the greenhouse in Northampton in which she spent the previous 2 winters (L. Fieldstad),



A juvenile Curlew Sandpiper, a plumage seen very infrequently in North America, photographed at the Old Lyme Boat Club in Connecticut on October 13. Photograph/Mark S. Szantyr

and an ad. male Rufous in Londonderry, *Rockingham*, NH Oct. 30–Nov. 25. It was captured and sent to overwinter with the w. Massachusetts female (†SM, J. Munier, m. ob.). Unidentified rusty hummers were at Leicester, *Worcester*, MA, Oct. 30 (ML et al.), Holyoke, *Hampden*, MA, Oct. 18–24 (*vide* SK), and Guilford, CT, Oct. 17–Nov. 6 (L. Courtney, ph. MSz).

Red-headed Woodpecker reports were almost entirely coastal, with 55 reported from Monhegan to Long I. Sound, an above-average flight. The only nesting pair was reported from Exeter, *Washington*, RI; this species was not confirmed during the Ocean State's Atlas Project (*vide* DE). Red-bellied Woodpeckers in n. New England numbered only six, with one each in Maine and Vermont. The only Three-toed Woodpecker reported was on Bigelow Mt, *Franklin*, ME, Oct. 10 (M. Andrews *vide* KG). A wandering Black-backed Woodpecker turned up in Groton, *Middlesex*, MA, Oct. 28 (K. McNierney *vide* SP).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WRENS

The usually early-departing Olive-sided Flycatcher stayed late, with individuals at Block I. Sep. 28 (R. Bowen et al.) and Maynard, *Middlesex*, MA, Oct. 1 (L. Nachtrab). Two Say's Phoebes appeared in Maine this season, at Scarborough, *Cumberland*, Sep. 7 (P. H. Nielsen) and a week later on Monhegan (B. Boynton *vide* KG). Other w. vagrants included an Ash-throated Flycatcher at the end of the season Nov. 28 into Dec. at Cambridge, MA (m. ob.), and a probable **Cassin's Kingbird** seen and photographed Aug. 19 at Hammonasset Beach S.P., *New Haven*, CT (JK, B. Kleinman, ph.), awaiting review by the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut. Twelve W. Kingbirds was average for the 1990s, although one Oct. 28 in Concord was unusual for New Hampshire and inland (†R. Suomala, C. Johnson). Birders counted 130 E. Kingbirds in 90 minutes at Lighthouse Pt. Aug. 19. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was at Gay Head, Martha's Vineyard, Aug. 4 (A. Fischer). From farther afield, a juv. **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** found Aug. 9 at Plum I. remained until Sep. 13, to the delight of many. The last Regional autumn report of this species was in 1994.

Twenty-eight N. Shrikes were distributed throughout the Region, with first reports Oct. 17 in New Hampshire and Maine and Oct. 18 on Cape Cod. Maine's first **Bell's Vireo** was documented at S. Harpswell, *Cumberland*, Oct. 23 (†PD, T. Wood). A Blue-headed Vireo lingered to Nov. 29 at Gay Head (AK), while a late Yellow-throated



This juvenile Fork-tailed Flycatcher spent almost a month, from August 9 through September 13, at well-birded Plum Island. This plumage is rarely noted in North America. Photograph/Charles Bush

Vireo was at Provincetown, MA, Oct. 13 (J. Sones). A Com. Raven reached Long I. Sound at Lighthouse Pt. in mid-Sep. (J. Zipp, RB). A noteworthy and late count of Tree Swallows was 10,000+ at Charlestown, *Washington*, RI, Oct. 23 (J. St. Jean). Careful scrutiny of swallows at Plum I. Aug. 11 produced an imm. **Violet-green Swallow** (†D. Duxbury, R. Fox) that awaits MARC review. Numbers of N. Rough-winged Swallows in Grand Isle, VT, peaked at 150 on Aug. 6 (DH), and four lingered to Oct. 12 at GMNWR (SP). Maine contributed an amazing 5000+ Bank Swallows Aug. 19 at Benton, *Kennebec* (W. Sumner). Indicative of a mild late autumn, a Cliff Swallow at Rye Nov. 7 tied New Hampshire's late date (†SM), while six Barn Swallows in S. Dartmouth, *Bristol*, MA, Nov. 29 (G. Fernandez) were knocking on the door of winter.

November produced four House Wren reports, the latest at Berlin, *Worcester*, MA, on the 27th (S. Moore et al.). Marsh Wrens also lingered, with 10 Nov. reports from Massachusetts and two at Exeter, NH, Nov. 29 (K., A. & G. Prazar). The only Sedge Wren of the season was seen nigh to midnight Oct. 22, under parking lot lights in Waterford, *New London*, CT (DP).

THRUSHES THROUGH WARBLERS

The first of two N. Wheatears for the season was at Nantucket Aug. 30 (JS), while the second obliged many at Sherwood Island S.P., Westport, *Fairfield*, CT, Sep. 19–22 (C. Barnard, ph. FM, m. ob.). Robins in Litchfield, CT, Nov. 7 were accompanied by the season's only Townsend's Solitaire (BD). Varied

Thrushes appeared late in the season, with two in Annisquam, *Essex*, MA, Nov. 27 into Dec. (NLM, v. o.). The first Am. Pipit was very early Aug. 2 at Hammonasset Beach S.P., CT (R. Scory). Bohemian Waxwings were few and far between, with only three reports.

Systematic half-hour counts of nocturnal migrants in Enfield, NH, detected peak warbler flights Sep. 11 & 20 (PH), while dawn observations at Bluff Pt. produced counts of 1000 warblers Sep. 5, 9, & 25 and 2000 on Sep. 29 (DP). The "budworm" warblers (Tennessee, Bay-breasted, and Cape May) continued the very low numbers of recent autumns. However, the mild weather induced 13 species to linger in e. Massachusetts into Nov., including at least 4 species (Orange-crowned, Nashville, Yellow, and Yellow-throated) in the Boston Public Gardens at month's end. Golden-winged included one banded on Appledore I., ME, Sep. 3 (J. Ficker, *vide* KG) and five other Sep. birds, plus a Brewster's hybrid in e. Massachusetts. Orange-crowned Warblers were found in excellent numbers this season, with 54+ reported from mostly coastal locations. N. Parulas encountered fallout conditions Sep. 22 in Scarborough, ME, when 50 were counted (GC). An Audubon's Warbler was detected in a flock of Myrtles Oct. 16 at Mascoma L., Enfield, *Grafton*, NH (PH). Blackpoll Warblers put on a show in Maine, where one observer termed the fallout of Sep. 21–22 the "biggest fall migration of Blackpolls that I have ever seen" (GC). The seasonal high count in the Bay State came a few days later, with 110 at Barre Falls Sep. 26 (ML). There were only three Cerulean Warblers reported this autumn, at Marblehead Neck W.S., *Essex*, MA, Aug. 16 (JS) and at Tuckernuck Sep. 16 & 22 (RV). Stray warblers from the south and west included Maine's 4th **Black-throated Gray Warbler**, an ad. male in Biddeford, *York*, Sep. 30 (†B. Schram), an ad. male **Townsend's Warbler** at Chilmark, MA, Oct. 4 (†AK), and Yellow-throateds on Monhegan at the end of Sep., in Gloucester Oct. 13 (MF et al.), at Cuttyhunk Oct. 17 (A. Goldman et al.) and in the Boston Public Gardens Nov. 28 and later (v. o.). Prothonotary Warblers were at Plum I. Aug. 22–30 (v. o.), Fryeburg, ME, Sep. 26 (no details), and both Martha's Vineyard (VL) and Gloucester (MF et al.) Oct. 13. A Kentucky Warbler at Tuckernuck Sep. 6 was followed by one later in the month in Bar Harbor, *Hancock*, ME (WT *vide* KG), with another at Boston Harbor Oct. 10 (H. Cross). Two **MacGillivray's Warblers** were reported in Massachusetts,

from S. Peabody, *Essex*, Oct. 5 (†RH) and Northampton Oct. 11 (T. Gagnon *vide* SK), the latter without details. Thirty-nine Connecticut Warblers bested 1997's above-average 36, including a max of three in Worcester, MA, Sep. 12 (ML et al.) and the last at Tuckernuck Oct. 12 (RV). Two of five Hooded Warblers on Tuckernuck were banded Oct. 12; seven others were reported from e. Massachusetts and two from Monhegan and Jonesport, *Washington*, ME.

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

Scarlet Tanagers made a good showing: an impressive 150 were at Bluff Pt. Sep. 29 (DP). An exceptional count for the date was 4–5 at Provincetown Oct. 13 (JS). A W. Tanager at Hadley, *Hampshire*, MA, Oct. 21 was away from the coast, where they are more frequent (H. Allen). Clay-colored Sparrows appeared in excellent numbers. The first of nearly 50 was found Aug. 24; most were on the coast Sep. 20 to Oct. 10. The summering bird at Grand Isle, VT, thought to be either an erythristic Clay-colored or a hybrid with Field Sparrow, paired with a Field Sparrow and was seen carrying food for young Aug. 5 (DH). An average 12 Lark Sparrows were distributed across Connecticut (one), Maine (four), and the Bay State (seven). A few notable high counts of regular migrant sparrows included 200 Chipping at Mashpee, MA, Sep. 25 (MS); 363 Swamp at Bolton Flats, *Worcester*, MA, Oct. 18 (ML et al.); 30 Lincoln's and 1000 White-throated at Turner, *Androscoggin*, ME, Sep. 26 (JD); and 200 White-crowned at Plum I. Oct. 6 (JS et al.). Rare sparrows were the Nutmeg State's 2nd **Golden-crowned Sparrow** at Southbury, *New Haven*, Oct. 24, staying for about a week (BD), and a Harris's that entertained birders at Plum I. Nov. 11–18 (P. Drew, m. ob.).

At least 75 Blue Grosbeaks invaded New England, nearly doubling 1981's autumn record. Maine garnered three–four, Connecticut five, and Rhode Island 12, including four on Block I. Oct. 11 (*vide* MT). Coastal Massachusetts, especially the Cape and Islands, were inundated with 50–55, most in a fallout on Martha's Vineyard in mid-Oct. highlighted by 26 Oct. 16 (VL et al.). Indigo Buntings also participated in the Oct. fallout, with 50 on the Vineyard Oct. 14 (VL et al.). Observers in Mattapoissett, *Plymouth*, MA, were surprised and pleased when a male Painted Bunting appeared at a feeder Oct. 27–Nov. 2 (P. Perkins et al.). An excellent total of 100+ Dickcissels was found by New England birders, including 11+ in Maine and two inland in North-

ampton, MA (*vide* SK). The peak count of 380 Bobolinks came from Plum I. Aug. 13 (RH), many being reported in Oct. to the 26th in e. Massachusetts. Coastal locations cornered the market for Yellow-headed Blackbird, with one in Maine, four in Massachusetts, and one in Connecticut. A Brewer's Blackbird dropped into the wet meadows of Bolton Flats, MA, Oct. 12 (†R. Lockwood). A male Bullock's Oriole brightened a Nov. 17 outing in Sterling, MA (ML et al.).

Contributors who commented all agreed that finches were virtually absent this year after last autumn's good flight. Pine Grosbeaks were represented by single reports from the Granite State and Massachusetts and "mighty few" in Maine. White-winged Crossbills were present in fair-to-good numbers in their usual haunts in New Hampshire and Maine. Individuals also strayed south to Mt. Watatic, MA, Aug. 1 (RH, BN) and a feeder in Kingstown, RI, Sep. 10 (P. Buckley).

EXOTICS

An influx of Monk Parakeets was reported from e. Massachusetts, with birds in Merrimac, *Essex*, Worcester, and S. Dartmouth.

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HUDSON-



**ROBERT O. PAXTON,
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Fall 1998 will be remembered for the electrifying discovery at Jamaica Bay, New York City, of the lower forty-eight's first **Broad-billed Sandpiper**. Lesser wonders included New York's and the Region's first **Anna's Hummingbird**, New Jersey's first **Reddish Egret**, and North America's second **Whiskered Tern**.

Rarities, however high-voltage, should not overshadow the heart of this report: the patient labor our contributors invest in monitoring bird numbers and movements. For example, the Avalon, NJ seawatch logged its 6th year (B. Seng, CS, F. Mears, S. Barnes, J. Tietz, G. Dwyer), while the Hamlin Beach lakewatch scanned L. Ontario migrant traffic for the 5th (W. Symonds et al., G. Albanese). We have data from 9 hawk-watches, regrettably missing some. "Operation Broad-Wing SEPT" (K. Moulton) scrutinized its 5th Broad-winged Hawk passage. Three banding stations reported: Manitou, *Monroe*, NY (D. Bonter, EBr, RMcK, S. Skelly, P. Stanko), *Fire Island*, *Suffolk*, LI (SM), and *Island Beach*, *Ocean*, NJ (G&EM). Meticulous local observation and records-keeping may have less glamor than the pursuit of rarities, but they are the bedrock of understanding bird populations. Sometimes they get rarities too!

The weather was warmer and much drier than normal, approaching drought conditions toward the end (though wet in