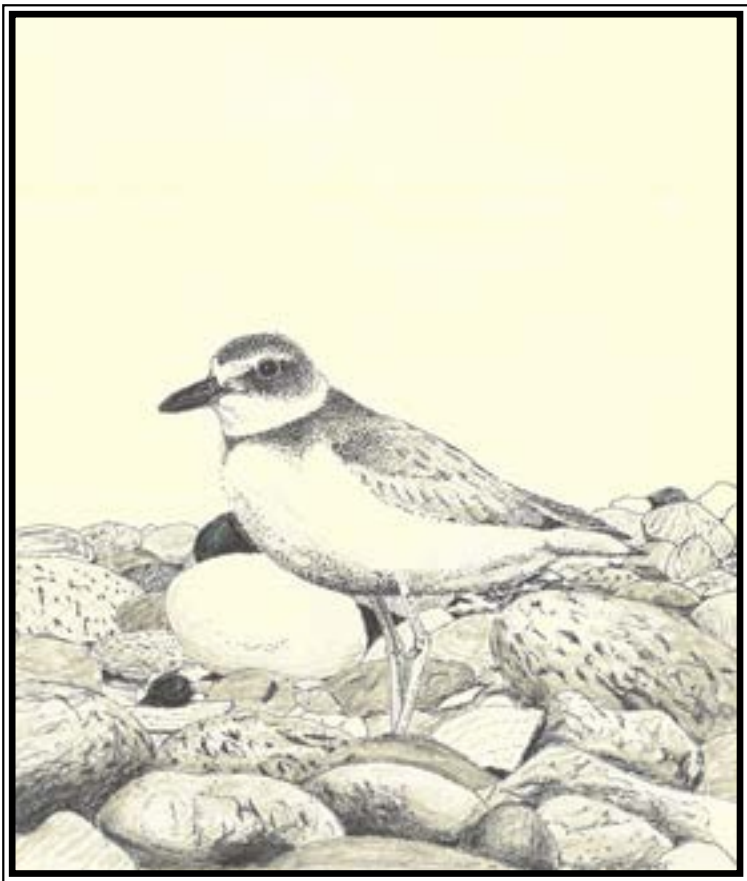


THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

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ON THE COVER

Wilson's Plover

Four first state records weren't the only highlights for 2018. Andrew Dasinger captured the essence of a Wilson's Plover that on 29 April allowed many birders to add the species to their own state lists.

THE MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT AWARD

2018: To Ted Gilman

Patrick Comins presented the following at the 34th annual meeting of the Connecticut Ornithological Association at Middlesex Community College on March 24, 2018.

As many of you would probably be aware, it is very difficult to become a great birder from books alone, or a great naturalist either. Most of us have had the good fortune of having a mentor who took us under their wing as we started to get interested in birds and nature. This year's recipient is a mentor to so many! You may have noticed that Greenwich area has had more than its fair share of great birders that have come into the birding community. There is a reason for that. In the course of my work I meet a lot of naturalists and earth scientists from all over the country. When they learn I'm from Connecticut, a common question to me is, "Do you know Ted Gilman?"

Ted Gilman has served as an Environmental Education Specialist and Naturalist at the Audubon Center in Greenwich since 1977. A lifelong birder and student of natural history, Ted began his bird watching and nature study career as a boy in Montclair, New Jersey. His family, school teachers, scout leaders, and local birders all supported his interests. He received his bachelor's degree in biology from Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana and then pursued graduate work in science and environmental education at Cornell University.

Ted first worked for Audubon at the Audubon Camp in Maine as a summer Bird Life Instructor (1974-76), and he has returned there many times since then to teach in the Ornithology, Family Camp, and Educator Sharing programs. From 1977 to 2000, Ted served as the director and then as an instructor in the Audubon Ecology Workshop summer camp for teachers at the Audubon Center In Greenwich. Ted also has led National Audubon Society ecology workshops to Trinidad & Tobago and to Kenya. Ted's work at the Audu-

bon Center has included leading school groups, bird walks, and public natural history programs, training volunteers and coordinating our Teacher Naturalist program, nature photography, bird banding, and outreach to Audubon chapters, garden clubs, and other groups. He has led workshops for New York City teachers and answered a wide array of questions about natural history from students, home-owners, teachers, and the press. Ted also oversees all the citizen science initiatives that are coordinated by Audubon Greenwich, with support from numerous volunteers, including the Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch, the Greenwich-Stamford Christmas Bird Count, the Great Backyard Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and the Greenwich-Stamford Summer Bird Count.

In the 1980s, Ted traveled to northern China twice as an education volunteer with the International Crane Foundation, sharing with students and teachers at the Zhalong Crane Refuge his experience in natural history education as well as information about Audubon's conservation work with cranes in North America. These trips received support from many Audubon members. In more recent years, Ted has traveled to Costa Rica and to El Salvador with his partner Margaret Lechner, sharing natural history and interpretation knowledge with guides and conservation groups in those countries. He enjoys sharing his love of the natural world with people of all ages.

Ted Gilman is the recipient of the 1996 George Barr Award, presented by the New York Elementary School Science Association (ESSA) and the 1997 Melville Award from the City Gardens Club of New York in recognition of his work in environmental education. In 2014, Ted received the Tamar Chotzen Educator of the Year Award from the National Audubon Society. He will be receiving the Katie O'Brien Lifetime Achievement Award at Audubon Connecticut's Environmental Leadership Award dinner in April.

Now it is a true honor for me to introduce Ted Gilman as the 2018 recipient of the Mabel Osgood Wright Award!

TWENTY-FOURTH REPORT OF THE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE OF CONNECTICUT

By Greg Hanisek and Jay Kaplan

This is the Twenty-fourth Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut (ARCC). The Connecticut Ornithological Association (COA) checklist for Connecticut birds has been reprinted. The checklist is a useful tool in the field.

In the last report (see the Twenty-third Report of the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, Vol. 37 No. 2), Gray Flycatcher and Mexican Violetear were added to the State List. Both species were photographed by single observers. Happily, in 2018, three of the four new species to the list were seen by many observers. The species are, in chronological order, Black-backed Oriole, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Little Egret and Roseate Spoonbill. The Black-backed Oriole represents a most interesting addition. This Mexican oriole is generally considered non-migratory. However, an individual of this species appeared at a southeast Pennsylvania feeder the previous winter and was seen by hundreds of birders. Among these observers was one of the two individuals who found and carefully described this bird in Fairfield County in May 2018.

The well-photographed Black-bellied Whistling Duck appeared near the Essex Boat Docks in August and remained for two days in mid-week, allowing those who could respond quickly an opportunity to see this state first. Alas, it was gone by the weekend to the disappointment of many. The Little Egret was first found in neighboring Westerly, Rhode Island. Careful avian detective work by Connecticut birders determined that the bird roosted in the evening with a group of Snowy Egrets on a jetty in Stonington, necessitating a boat trip to see it. The final addition was a Roseate Spoonbill that settled into the Stratford-Milford area for several weeks in September-October. This bird was evidently the same individual found in Maine and New Jersey earlier in the year.

This year, the committee voted on 29 records, somewhat fewer than in recent years. The lack of significant hurricanes may have contributed to this decrease in records, although an unprecedented appearance by shearwaters in Long Island Sound in late summer accounted for several reports.

In this digital age, the committee recognizes that a bird can often be readily identified through a photograph. Although the committee first and foremost strives to build a historical record for listed species, members also ask for reports that provide a detailed description for Review List birds. Such descriptions can provide behavioral and other valuable details that are not apparent from a photograph.

Each year, the committee evaluates the review species list. This year, White-faced Ibis has been removed from the Review List as the species now occurs annually. The committee also discussed the potential addition of Pine Grosbeak to the Review List because this “winter finch” has now been seen during only three winters in Connecticut in this century.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Members, in addition to the authors, who voted on records in this report include Nick Bonomo, Frank Gallo, Tina Green, Julian Hough, Frank Mantlik, Dave Provencher, Phil Rusch, Dave Tripp and Glenn Williams.

STATE LIST AND REVIEW LIST

The committee depends on observers to submit their reports of species on the Review List (they are species marked with an asterisk on the COA Checklist plus any species new to the state). The most recent State List and Review List can be viewed on the COA Website at www.ctbirding.org. Submit written reports along with documentary material to Jay Kaplan, ARCC chairman (address below).

FORMAT

This report continues the format of previous reports. In the case of accepted records, only observers who submitted



Frank Mantlik photo
The state's first Black-bellied Whistling-Duck performed for many observers in mid-August after its presence in Essex became widely known.

reports are listed, with the original finder listed first followed by an asterisk. Photos are acknowledged with ‡. Hyphenated numbers (e.g. 02-01) preceding the observers are the ARCC file numbers. For reopened files, an “R” follows the numbers. The species are listed in order according to the American Ornithological Society (AOS) Checklist. Multiple records of a particular species are listed chronologically. Months of the year are shortened to their first three letters.

ACCEPTED RECORDS

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) The long-awaited first state record was discovered on 11 Aug 2018 near the Essex waterfront (18-22 Bill Meyers,* Frank Gallo‡, Frank Mantlik‡). It was seen through at least 15 Aug, and a home owner in the area said it had been present for about a week before reported by Meyers. The discovery was highly anticipated because one had been seen flying southwest from Gooseberry Neck, Bristol County, MA, on

29 July. This was part of a flurry of records in the Northeast, including

Two showed up in PN de la Pte-aux-Prairies--Secteur des Marais, Montréal County, Quebec, Sun Jul 15, 2018. Still being seen as of Aug 14, at least. The area is due north of VT birds. Same 2?

Two in Shoreham Depot, VT for most of June 2018 (5th-27th).

Ten at 1499 Perrineville Road, Monroe Township, New Jersey, US (40.301, -74.439), (to the south of Lenape Park) from June 29 – July 7, 2018

One to two in Nissequoque River SP, Suffolk County, on Long Island, NY from June 23-July 14, 2018

One in Lenape Park Union, NJ on June 15, 2018. Not far from Calvert Vaux Park (Dreier-Offerman Park) Kings County, Long Island, NY where one was seen on May 16, 2018

“**BLACK**” **BRANT** (*Branta bernicla nigricans*) This western subspecies was seen on 24 Nov 2018 flying by Stratford Point in a small flock of “Atlantic” Brant (18-17 Stefan Martin*†). It was a fifth state record.

ROSS’S GOOSE (*Chen rossii*) One was found 12 Feb 2018 at Valentine’s Meadow on the University of Connecticut campus in Storrs. It was relocated the next day at Stearns Farm on Mansfield City Road, Mansfield Center, and was present to at least 22 Feb (18-08 Phil Rusch*). This was one of a record six Ross’s Geese reported in winter 2017-18, equaling the total number of previous records dating to 2003.

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*) An adult female was found 15 Dec 2018 at Captain’s Cove in Bridgeport. (18-19 Richard Chmielecki,* James Leone†, Frank Mantlik†). This is believed to be the same individual wintering at this location since 2014-15. It was present to at least March 2019, ranging as far west as Jennings Beach in Fairfield and as far east as Seaside Park in Bridgeport.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) One was present 23 Nov. through 1 Dec 2018 in and near a yard with feeders in East Haven (18-26 Andrew Main,* Frank Mantlik†, Greg Hanisek). A White-winged Dove was present in the same yard throughout November 2015.

BLACK RAIL (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) One was heard in Old Saybrook on the night of 27 May 2017, briefly but clearly by two experienced observers who checked what they heard immediately with online audio files (Glenn Williams,* Phil Rusch*).

WILSON’S PLOVER (*Charadrius wilsonia*) The first since May 2007 was found on 29 April 2018 at Milford Point and seen by many through the following day (18-24 Chandler Wiegand*, Greg Hanisek). It appeared to be a one-year-old bird, retaining some juvenile plumage.

DOVEKIE (*Alle alle*) One was seen flying by and landing briefly on the water off the Enders Island Sea Chapel in Mystic on 21 Dec 2018 (18-23 Phil Rusch*). Another was seen on the same day flying past, as close as 30 feet, and landing briefly, off Stonington Point in Stonington (18-29 Nick Bonomo†*, Dave Provencher*).

COMMON MURRE (*Uria aalge*) One was seen 22 Dec 2018 from the New London-Orient, NY, ferry (18-31 Dave Provencher*). Seen shortly after the ferry cleared the mouth of the Thames River, there was no question about it being in Connecticut waters. One was seen in the Thames River, close to the mouth, on the same ferry route on 13 Jan 2019 (18-21 Nick Bonomo†*).

THICK-BILLED MURRE (*Uria lomvia*) One was present 16 Feb 2018 at Stonington Point (18-10 John Oshlick†*). Although this species is rare and very seldom seen from shore, this was the second found at this location in February 2018. Plumage differences showed this one was a first-winter bird. One found of 4 Feb (see the 23rd ARCC Report) was a basic-plumaged adult.



Dave Provencher photo
 This very cooperative Mew (Kamchatka) Gull spent at least 14 days at Cove Island Park in Stamford, starting on 8 Jan 2019.

MEW (KAMCHATKA) GULL (*Larus canus kamtschatschensis*) One was discovered on 8 Jan 2019 at Cove Island Park in Stamford and was seen by many observers through at least 21 Jan. (8-28 Patrick Dugan*, Alex Lin-Moore, Frank Mantlik‡, Dave Provencher‡). Previous state records in 2015 and 2017 involved a single individual based on wing pattern. Bonomo, who documented the previous records, cited reasons why this was a different bird: "First, its primary pattern is quite different. Most obvious are the large white mirror on p9 and thick black band on p5, versus no p9 mirror at all and a very thin band on p5. Obvious black markings on the primary coverts of the Stamford bird indicate that it is not quite a full adult. Structurally, the bill of the Stamford bird appears both thicker and longer."

SANDWICH TERN (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) An adult beginning to molt into basic plumage was found on 18 Aug 2018 at Sandy Point in West Haven, roosting on an exposed bar with a large flock of mostly Common Terns (18-25 Greg

Hanisek‡*, Frank Mantlik‡). It was seen by multiple observers that day but not thereafter. It is the eighth documented state record, all from either Stratford, Milford or West Haven.

CORY'S SHEARWATER (*Calonectris diomedea*) One was unusually deep into Long Island Sound when it flew offshore of Stratford Point in Stratford on 29 Aug 2017 (17-44 Stefan Martin‡*). The discovery of five on 24 July 2018 on the New London-Orient NY ferry route signaled an unprecedented flight of shearwaters into state waters (18-35 Dan Burton‡*, Glenn Williams). Sightings, almost all from the ferry route, continued through at least 15 Aug with a few off Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison at the end of that period. Single-trip numbers were all in single digits except for a remarkable 25 on 25 July.

SOOTY SHEARWATER (*Ardenna grisea*) One was seen on 25 July 2018 on the New London-Orient NY ferry route (18-33 Nick Bonomo‡* Frank Mantlik‡ Glenn Williams, Alex Lin-Moore‡, Dan Rottino). The high count was four on a different ferry trip on 25 Jul. Other observations came on 27 Jul (1), 31 Jul (2) and 7 Aug (1). There was one previous accepted record on 8 Jul 2004 off Guilford.

GREAT SHEARWATER (*Ardenna gravis*) One on 24 July 2018 and the next day on the New London-Orient NY ferry route was part of the historic shearwater invasion into eastern Long Island Sound (18-34 Dan Burton‡*, Frank Mantlik‡, Glenn Williams, Frank Gallo‡, Dan Rottino). Reports continued through 16 Aug, with multiple reports in August from Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison as well as the ferry route. Numbers on most trip reports were in single digits, but 12 were on a ferry trip on 25 Jul (Severin Uebbing et al.).

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) The state's first was found on 8 Aug 2018 to be roosting on a breakwater off Stonington Point after being present for several days in nearby Rhode Island (18-27 Nick Bonomo‡*, Dave Provencher‡*, Phil Rusch*, Frank Mantlik‡, Frank Gallo‡). It was seen through at



Frank Mantlik photo

This Great Shearwater, seen on a 25 Jul 2018 ferry trip from New London to Orient, N.Y., was part of the largest shearwater incursion ever recorded in Connecticut.

least 7 Sep. A separate article on this discovery appears elsewhere in this issue.

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) One was found on 16 April 2018 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison (18-15 Micky Komara†*, Greg Hanisek). Single birds, most likely this individual, were subsequently seen through 29 Jun at Hammonasset and the nearby Indian River marshes in Clinton. One was found on 12 May only at Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme (18-16 Scott Knecht†*).

ROSEATE SPOONBILL (*Platalea ajaja*) The state's first was a

first-year bird found on 15 Sep 2018 at Raven Pond in Stratford. It remained in the Stratford-Milford area through at least 5 Oct (18-30 Paul Raccuia†*, Frank Mantlik†). Diagnostic photos proved that the same individual had appeared earlier in Maine and New Jersey. A separate article on this discovery appears elsewhere in this issue.

SEDGE WREN (*Cistothorus platensis*) A pair was seen carrying food at Bafflin Sanctuary in Pomfret. They were present 28 Jun to 30 Aug 2018 (18-12 Andy Rzeznikiewicz, Dan Rottino*, Aaron Bourque*). One was present 29 Jul to 2 Aug 2018 at Southbury Training School Farm in Southbury (18-13 Russ Naylor*, Chris Wood†).

VARIED THRUSH (*Ixoreus naevius*) One was present 19-24 Mar 2018 at Great Pond State Forest in Simsbury (18-11 Doug Beach*, Dan Rottino, Jory Teltser†). It was the eighth documented record. See the related article elsewhere in this issue.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING (*Bombycilla garrulus*) One was found with a small group of Cedar Waxwings on 8 Apr 2018 at Holcomb Farm in Granby (18-09 John Weeks*, Chris Chini*). A Solitary bird was found on 2 Jan 2019 at Trout Brook Valley Preserve in Easton (18-18 Brendan Murtha†*).

BLACK-BACKED ORIOLE (*Icterus abeillei*) Two observers saw this Mexican species briefly on 14 May 2017 at Shippan Point, Stamford, and were able to provide a description sufficient to establish the species' identity (17-43 Patrick Dugan*, Al Collins*). More problematic was its origin, because at the time there were no accepted records for the U.S.A./A.B.A. area. The research needed to establish such a bird's provenance can be daunting and time-consuming, but this individual's brief but well-documented tour of northeastern North America left ARCC with minimal heavy lifting. Feather analysis of photos from Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, by plumage expert Peter Pyle, determined that one individual was involved. Although the Connecticut bird was not photographed, the committee believed circumstances proved this was the same individual. It first appeared at a feeder in Sink-

ing Spring PA, staying 26 Jan-10 Apr 2017, attracting observers from all over North America. The bird then made a brief appearance in Sutton MA on 7-8 May before its appearance in Stamford. Massachusetts Avian Records Committee acted first and did not accept wild origin. However, the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee, after soliciting opinions from an array of outside experts, accepted the record. Then the American Birding Association's Checklist Committee also accepted based on the work done by state committees and its own research. ARCC was able to obtain all of this work and found the case for acceptance strong.

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

TRUMPETER SWAN (*Cygnus buccinator*) Two were reported in flight on 25 Jan 2019 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison. Although conditions were good, the time of observation was very brief. Given the similarity with Tundra Swan, with detailed study of the bill the best way to verify an identification, the committee took a conservative approach.

GREAT SKUA (*Catharacta skua*) One was reported on 31 Jan 2019, flying as close as 100 feet at Ocean Beach Park in Waterford. A combination of extreme rarity and a duration of observation estimated as 30 seconds were primary factors in the committee's decision. There are no documented state records.

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Greg Hanisek, 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708

Jay Kaplan, 71 Gracey Road, Canton, CT 06019

A Connecticut First Record

LITTLE EGRET

By Nick Bonomo

On Saturday, Aug 4, 2018 Barbara Gearhart found a Little Egret, *Egretta garzetta*, at Napatree Point, Rhode Island. This was tantalizingly close to Connecticut, which had no prior records of the species. Further tormenting CT birders, early each morning the egret was spotted at Napatree and seemed to fly towards Barn Island in Stonington, CT. Yet exhaustive searches of Barn's large marsh system by many birders failed to find the bird. It was presumed to be feeding somewhere in CT, but could not be found.

After a long evening walk at Barn Island on Monday the 6th, Allison Black and I stopped by Stonington Point to scan the water for egrets traveling to roost. We were surprised to find 100+ egrets roosting with several hundred cormorants on the east breakwater off Stonington Point. The birds were too far and the light too low to have any chance at picking out the Little Egret, if it was even there. But we were intrigued, as that breakwater is just over the state line into Connecticut.

On Tuesday the 7th, the bird's main daytime feeding grounds were finally revealed. It was again observed first

thing at Napatree, and again flew north towards CT...but this time Matt Schenck watched it turn southeast towards Misquamicut, RI. It was relocated later that morning by Tom Seiter feeding along Atlantic Avenue in Misquamicut. This location is six miles east of Napatree, thus six miles farther from Connecticut.

Meanwhile, a few friends and I had been talking strategy. We wanted to get out to that breakwater at dusk to see if the vagrant egret was using that roost. We thought it was likely that it would be out there, but getting to the breakwater and actually finding the bird in falling light would not be easy. The fact that the egret was found feeding well into Rhode Island only increased our resolve to get out there, since we thought it might be our only hope to score the bird for Connecticut.

Phil Rusch was able to secure a boat charter out of Avondale, RI for the evening of August 8th. Phil, Dave Provencher, Allison Black and I filled the charter. Each of us had already put effort into finding this bird in CT, and we were eager to try a new angle.

We left the dock by 6:30 pm and were pulling up to the east breakwater off Stonington at 6:45. The first egret arrived around 7pm. A handful more trickled in, followed by a flock of 20...all Snowies. At 7:14 pm I noticed a distant lone egret perched further down the rocks that looked somewhat large-billed and did not have obviously yellow lores; we asked the captain to slowly move towards it. The closer we got, the more suspicious it looked. Sure enough, it was the Little Egret.

We were very stoked that our efforts had paid off. And very grateful that the bird didn't wait until dark to come to roost! It just happened to work out beautifully. The Little Egret eventually moved further down the breakwater to join the main throng of Snowies, and we headed back to dock a very happy group!

Subsequent charters were able to find the bird with a high



Dave Provencher photo
The state's first Little Egret, shown here on Aug. 8 in Stonington, shows the long head plume and dark lores that help separate it from Snowy Egret.

rate of success. It was never found anywhere else in CT, and it remained faithful to this roosting and feeding schedule for several weeks. The latest Connecticut report came on September 7th, while the last Rhode Island sighting came on September 5th from its favored Atlantic Avenue feeding site.

Birders will be on the lookout for its return in 2019, and many interesting questions remain. Did it breed locally, undetected for months? If so, with which species did it mate? Could there be hybrids floating around somewhere? Did the bird originate from the Old World, or from the recently-established colonies in the eastern Caribbean? Though some of these questions are unanswerable, perhaps a return in spring of 2019 would spark a search of local egret breeding colonies. Only time will tell.

A Connecticut First Record

ROSEATE SPOONBILL

By Frank Mantlik

The spring, summer and fall of 2018 saw a widespread pattern of vagrancy of Roseate Spoonbills to places well north of their normal range, that being Florida, the Gulf coast, and from Mexico to South America. Most involved immature birds. Individuals appeared in Ohio (several), Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota (1st for state), Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and even in Maine (1st) and Quebec (1st for province). On Sept. 3, 2018, I posted to CTBirds list-serve this fact and issued a challenge to CT birders to find one in Connecticut.

On the morning of Sept. 17, 2018, Carol Kratzman (naturalist/educator at CT Audubon's Milford Coastal Center) forwarded me an email from Paul Raccuia, who reported seeing a Roseate Spoonbill among the evening roost of egrets at Raven Pond Park in Stratford, on Sat., 9/15. He attached a blurry record photo, which certainly proved a correct identification. This would be a first CT record! (My wife and I have been enjoying the evening roost of Great Egrets at Raven Pond - a mere mile from our home - for several years, and we had even checked briefly on the roost on the 15th!).

Although out of state at the time, I quickly posted the news to CTBirds. Maine birder Turk Duddy replied, "possibly the Maine Spoonbill. It hasn't been seen since the 9th." By early afternoon John Oshlick and others had spotted the Roseate Spoonbill in the tidal salt marsh grasses along the nearby Housatonic River. Many lucky birders got to see it there. That evening, longtime friend and Maine birder Louis Bevier wrote: "This (CT) bird is similar in age and plumage to the Maine sighting. If close enough, look for a small hole on the right side of the maxilla at the base of the "spoon" as seen in one of my photos of the Maine bird: <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/112935211>. Congratulations to Connecticut!"



Frank Mantlik photo
The hole visible in the top of the bill shows that this Roseate Spoonbill, shown here on Sept. 23, 2018, at Raven Pond in Stratford, had wandered widely around the Northeast.

The next day this rare visitor was seen early morning from the Milford side of the river. But it wasn't until late afternoon that Jory Teltser and I simultaneously and independently re-found the Spoonbill among an egret roost in trees near Milford Point. I called and summoned the waiting crowd of birders at the Raven Pond area to join me at Sniffen's Lane. Despite distant scope views, all were delighted to add Roseate Spoonbill to their state life list.

On subsequent days, the Spoonbill took up a pattern of feeding and roosting in the salt marshes and sandbars of Milford Point, at the mouth of the Housatonic River. Many obtained photos. On Sept. 19, Louis Bevier again wrote: "Julie Hart's photos this morning show a small hole in the bill that matches the Maine bird's. The age and plumage are also a good match, and I had noticed that some of the earlier flight shots showed a similar pattern of dusky at the tips of the primaries. Plumage patterns would be expected to be similar on similarly aged birds, but the intensity of pink and pattern in the



Frank Mantlik photo

Connecticut's first Roseate Spoonbill was a juvenile/first basic plumage bird based on the intensity of color and pattern of primary flight feathers.

primaries plus the hole in the bill certainly confirm that the same bird is involved in Maine and Connecticut.

Here is one of Julie's photos that shows the hole (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/115454741>) and mine, again, for comparison (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/112935211>)."

That evening, Louis wrote, "It appears that the same Roseate Spoonbill was in New Jersey/New York in July, Maine in August-early September, and now Connecticut in mid-September. Doug Hitchcox found a photograph of the same

age/plumage (juvenile/first-basic) bird with the same hole in its bill at Wallkill NWR in late July (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/108477071> <<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/108477071>>). At least some of the other New Jersey and Pennsylvania sightings show birds lacking the hole in the bill. It looks like an old wound and not one acquired recently. Clearly there were multiple spoonbills dispersing far north this year. I have not spent much time looking for other matches for this bird. One in southeast Quebec was not photographed well enough to determine. That was in early August but only 90 miles NW of the Maine location. The Wallkill bird was last seen 5 August, as far as I know, and the bird in Quebec was seen 7 August, meaning the bird would have to have covered a distance of 375 miles in 2 days."

This CT bird eventually changed its pattern again, roosting with another flock of egrets at Stratford Marina, and sometimes again back at Raven Pond. It would linger in the area through Oct. 5, where I found it for the last time while leading a bird walk at the Milford Point sandbar. Its stay lasted three full weeks, to the delight of hundreds of birders and other interested people. I obtained good photos of the Roseate Spoonbill, including Sept. 23 at Raven Pond (<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S48705188>), and Oct. 1 at Stratford Marina (<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S48875673>). This rare bird record of Roseate Spoonbill was officially accepted to the CT state bird list by the Avian Records Committee of CT at its meeting on March 3, 2019.

An article Oct. 12 in National Geographic by Lori Cuthbert, with photos by Leslie Roy (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2018/10/roseate-spoonbill-bird-florida-warming-photos-news/>) examined possible reasons for the 2018 wide pattern of vagrancy. In the article, Jerry Lorenz, a state research director for Audubon Florida, theorized that these birds are perhaps reacting to deeper waters in the Southeast, and to warming climate in northern states. If this proves true, we can expect additional sightings in the future.

In Depth Review: Great Pond State Forest Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius meruloides*) of 2018

An Analysis of the Individual and Species in CT

Jory G. Teltser

****Extremely Rare; 9th documented state record (although Zeranski and Baptist list 16 historical records not officially reviewed by the Avian Records Committee of CT). Great Pond State Forest 19-24 March 2018: What follows is a detailed report of this individual (age, sex, behavior, etc.) and on Varied Thrush as a species (vagran- cy status, habitat, etc.).*

Identification: Aging

During observation on 24 March 2018, the author was able to obtain a useable audio recording (available in an eBird check- list), as well as two photos; one of the front half of the bird in profile, and one of the bird's tail in flight.

Similarly to the pattern of most passerines, it appears that the bird's rectrices have been replaced from r1-r6 - from the center of the tail outwards to the outer tail feathers. This individual showed no signs of brown tones in the upper parts, or the tail, indicating that this is an adult-type bird (or rather, not a young bird). Going one step further, the angled, pointed outer rectrices indicate a "younger" bird, specifically an After-Hatch-Year or After-Second-Year bird (Pyle). With a lack of any brown tones to the bird's tail, the age of this bird is most likely an ASY male Varied Thrush.

Identification: Subspecies

Two subspecies of Varied Thrush have been described, based in large part on the back coloration of females. The nominate form, *I. n. naevius*, breeds from southeastern Alaska, down the western slope of the Coast and Cascade Ranges through



This spread tail photo of the Great Pond Varied Thrush, taken by Jory Teltser and graphically enhanced by Julian Hough, shows squared corners on the outer tail feathers. This indicates that the bird is a younger adult. The sex of this bird was determined by its prominent breast band and bright blue and orange colors.

British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon to northwestern California. This population is a year-round resident through much of the breeding range, in addition to central coastal California (rarely farther south).

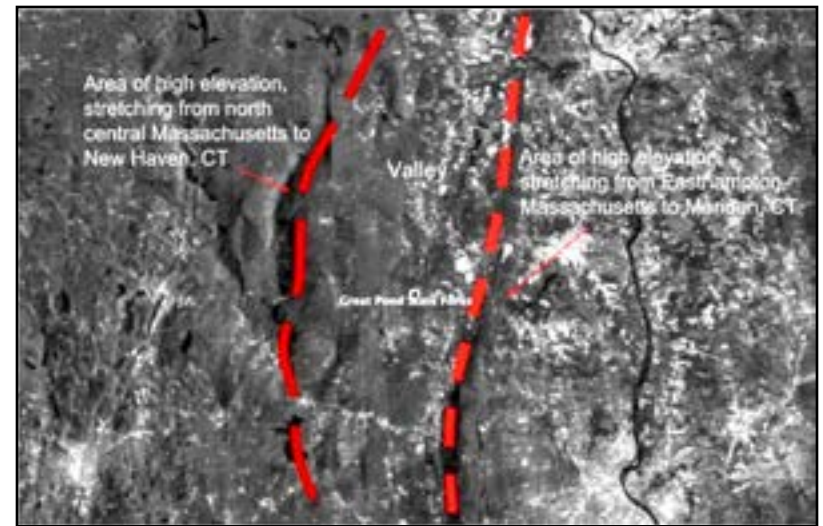
A second subspecies, *I. n. meruloides*, breeds from northern Alaska, south through central and southeastern British Columbia, southwestern Alberta, eastern Washington, north- eastern Oregon, northern Idaho and northwestern Montana. The winter range of this subspecies is less understood and not well defined, but appears in most years to be concentrat- ed in the northern Great Basin region with cyclic invasions farther south. Nearly all extralimital Varied Thrushes identi-



Jim Zipp photo
This Varied Thrush visited a feeder in Hamden in January-February 2003.

fied to subspecies have been of this race (Wells et al.).

Population changes in the northern interior subspecies (*I. n. meruloides*) are poorly known in contrast with those in the coastal subspecies (*I. n. naevius*). It is difficult to define the "normal" winter range of this race (Wells et al.). It has been suggested that the two subspecies undergo a "leapfrog"



migration pattern, with the northern breeding *I. n. meruloides* wintering farther south than *naevius* (George). Considering the research done by the above authors, it is fair to assume that this bird is of the northern interior subspecies, *meruloides*.

Irruptions and Vagrancy

Periodic irruptions of this species to southern California are correlated with increased occurrence of extralimital individuals in eastern and southwestern North America. These irruptions do not occur in years of consistently high or low abundance within the normal range, and presumably involve only individuals of the northern interior subspecies (*I. n. meruloides*).

The number of vagrant Varied Thrushes from eastern North America reported in Audubon Field Notes winter season reports (in a study from 1969-1970 through 1994-95) was not correlated with abundance in the normal wintering and breeding areas. But it was correlated with the number of Varied Thrushes tallied on southern California Christmas

Bird Counts. These results suggest that patterns of vagrancy in Varied Thrushes are largely independent of population changes within the normal wintering area (Wells et al).

Vagrancy: Location

The sightings of vagrant Varied Thrushes seem to coincide, to some extent, with the location of river valleys. Birds following the Connecticut River Valley south could explain the occurrence of sightings in Amherst, MA (1948-49 in Keith), and Wapping (South Windsor), CT (1964 in Keith). Though birds that appeared at Hubbardston, MA (1963 in Keith), and Riverton, CT (1964-65 in Keith), did not occur along major river valleys, the latter location is situated on a tributary of the Connecticut River at some distance from the main valley (Keith).

Extralimital observations have been concentrated in two areas; Great Lakes/upper Midwest and the coast of eastern North America, from Maine to New York. Distribution and timing of these observations is consistent with movement of this species in an east-southeast direction from breeding areas in northern Alaska and northwestern Alberta. Vagrant birds occurring on the Atlantic Coast are thought to migrate down from the Pacific, flying north of the Great Lakes and reaching major river valleys. River courses are favored migration paths for many species, particularly major rivers such as the Mississippi, Merrimack and Hudson. In the winter months, when Varied Thrushes are apt to occur, or rather, are found far from their normal range, river courses especially provide shelter because they are depressed below the general level of the surrounding terrain. Food and water tend to be more abundant along river courses in the winter than in the neighboring countryside (Keith).

Based on Keith's research, it is feasible to hypothesize that the Great Pond Varied Thrush was moving south between two, for the sake of argument, "mountain ranges" (what people in Connecticut call mountains at least) in the late fall/early winter of 2017. When the bird found itself at Great



*Franklin Nejame photo
This Varied Thrush, seen in March 2018 at Great Pond State Forest in Simsbury, is the most recent one to visit Connecticut.*

Pond, it may have decided to stay because of shelter and abundant food. Another hypothesis is that this bird was actually making its way north, perhaps having spent the winter along the coast of Connecticut. March is around the time that Varied Thrushes begin to migrate, so it is not impossible to believe that this bird was starting to make its way back to its breeding grounds.

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CONNECTICUT FIELD NOTES

Fall Season: Aug. 1 through Nov. 30, 2018

By Greg Hanisek and Frank Mantlik

It was an exciting and bird-filled season, starting with three of the four new species added to the state list in 2018 – Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Little Egret and Roseate Spoonbill. Lighthouse Point Hawk Watch in New Haven had its best seasonal total in several years (see full hawk migration report in the July 2019 issue of *The Connecticut Warbler*); and there were noteworthy passages of passerines, with an especially widespread fallout on the morning of Oct. 13 at places such as Bluff Point State Park in Groton, Allen's Meadow in Wilton and Trout Brook Valley in Easton.

Some high counts at Bluff Point that day included 11 cuckoos (a mix of Yellow-billed and Black-billed); 225 Northern Flickers and 100+ Blue-headed Vireos. The previous day's cold front winds brought one of those major finch flights to Lighthouse Point that are hard to quantify. Steve Mayo did his best as follows: "The day-long finch flight was remarkable. There were perhaps 400-600+ finches every hour for the first 5 hours, followed by 100-200 for the next 4 hours. There were small numbers even in the 10th hour! Composition was approximately 75% Purple Finch and 25% Am Goldfinch." Feel free to do the math! Another

interesting flurry of activity (or retreat) occurred Nov. 4, which produced the year's last records for the following species: Warbling Vireo at Konold's Pond in Woodbridge (Ct, MV), Red-eyed Vireo in Berlin (EM), American Redstart in Easton (JN) and Bay-breasted Warbler in Madison (JHr).

The state's long-awaited first **Black-bellied Whistling Duck** was found on Aug. 11 in the waterfront area of Essex. It was present and enjoyed by many observers through Aug. 15 (WM, m.ob.). A flock of 587 Snow Geese passed over a yard in Windsor Locks on Oct. 16 (JW). A flight of 1000 was

logged at Quaker Ridge in Greenwich on Nov. 22 (RM). Single Greater White-fronted Geese were reported from five locations (RR et al.). A Brant was inland in New Britain on Oct. 17 (DSp) and a flock of 70 flew over South Windsor on Oct. 13 (PDe). A **"Black" Brant** flew by Stratford Point on Nov. 24 (SMa). A lingering Lesser Scaup was near Birdseye boat ramp in Stratford on Aug. 2 (TGr). A male **King Eider** found on Nov. 18 at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford (DMa) was apparently the same one seen through the winter season, primarily at

Ocean Beach Park in New London (m.ob.). Common Eiders have become numerous off New London County but are increasingly scarce progressing westward. One was as far west as it could get Nov. 26 in Greenwich (MF). A **Harlequin Duck** was found Nov. 30 at Penfield Reef in Fairfield (JP). An excellent inland fallout of Black Scoters on Oct. 21 brought 27 to Coventry Lake (DMt) and 10 to Bantam Lake in Litchfield (MD). Six were at Twin Lakes in Salisbury on Nov. 10 (ZA et al.). A Horned Grebe lingered to at least Aug. 5 at Penfield Reef



Frank Mantlik photo

This White-winged Dove, photographed Nov. 26 in East Haven, may be the same one that visited the same feeder in 2015.

(JP).

A **White-winged Dove** visited a feeder in East Haven Nov. 23 – Dec. 1 (AM et al.). Possibly the same one visited the same feeder in November 2015. A major flight of Yellow-billed Cuckoos included more than 30 reports in October, with a final one on Nov. 4 at Hammonasset Beach State Park (hereafter HBSP) in Madison (JCr, JF). The latest Black-billed Cuckoo was Nov. 3 at Quaker Ridge in Greenwich (BO). The first notable movement of Common Nighthawks was 20 to 30 on Aug. 14 in Barkhamsted (FZ). About 100 were over Bloomfield on Aug. 24 (BKu). A major flight of 350 was at Bedford Middle School in Westport on Sept. 11 (JT), with "hundreds" reported the next day in the Riverside section of Greenwich (SK). An unusually large late count of nine was reported on Oct. 9 in Darien (PL). A **Rufous Hummingbird** was present Oct. 19-Nov. 7 at a private residence in Westport (TGr, JT et al.). A Selasphorus hummingbird was seen Aug. 21 only at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport (TGr).

A pair of **Sandhill Cranes**, accompanied by one juvenile, appeared in Norfolk in mid-August, but there was no evidence that breeding had occurred in Connecticut (GHa et al.). Scattered migrants were seen later in the season, but in the second week of November a major movement took place. The largest flock was 40 over a yard in Willington on Nov. 12 (JCa), presumably the same birds reported as a flock of 40+ the same day in Eastford (fide DT). Those were followed by 30 over Quaker Ridge in Greenwich on Nov. 14 (KM). Additional reports came from Quaker Ridge on Nov. 15, when 15 birds were counted (TGi), and from Barn Island in Stonington on Nov. 21, when seven were reported (LS).

The high count of four American Golden-Plovers was made at Sandy Point in West Haven on Aug. 19 (CLo et al.). An Upland Sandpiper was identified by nocturnal flight call Aug. 24 in Wallingford (NBo), and a migrant was seen at Pleasure Beach in Bridgeport on Sept. 23 (JT). A fly-by flock of 20 Hudsonian Godwits in the rain on Sept. 18 at

Stratford Point presaged a major presence in the state (SMA). Two arrived Oct. 18 at HBSP (JF et al.), followed by up to nine the next day, and one remained there through Oct. 22, when three were reported (JMo). Then two showed up Oct. 24 at Sherwood Island and remained to Nov. 9 (TGr, m.ob.). One was at Cove Island Park in Stamford Oct. 27-28 (PDu et al.). Single Marbled Godwits were present Aug. 9 at HBSP (HW) and at Sandy Point in West Haven (JHa). One flew by Stratford Point the next day (SMA), and two were at Sandy Point on Aug. 14 (JOs, SZ). The last report was Aug. 25 at Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme (NW).

The seasonal shorebird highlight was a juvenile **Ruff** seen on Sept. 7 only at HBSP (WB, CH, SZ). Most state records are from spring and early summer. Five Purple Sandpipers appeared at Milford Point on Oct. 14 (FG), and a state record gathering of 120 was carefully counted Nov. 25 at HBSP (TD). The season's first Baird's Sandpiper was at Sandy Point on Aug. 25 (JR). A widespread arrival on Aug. 28 brought Buff-breasted Sandpipers to

Milford Point (MW), HBSP (AV) and Sandy Point (SMA). A Long-billed Dowitcher found Aug. 9 at HBSP remained through at least Aug. 18 (MK). Another was at Stratford Marina on Aug. 31 (FM). A Spotted Sandpiper was very late on Nov. 24 at Stonington Point (DPr), and a Solitary Sandpiper lingered to Nov. 7 in South Windsor (DF). A **Wilson's Phalarope** was a good find Aug. 10-12 at HBSP (RS).

An unusually robust presence of Parasitic Jaegers in Long Island Sound in the first half of the season included up to five off HBSP on Aug. 14 (TA et al.) and three off Stratford Point on Aug. 17 (SMA). Three Razorbills at HBSP on Nov. 26 were the earliest reported (TGr). The only inland Bonaparte's Gull was a single Nov. 17 at Bantam Lake in Litchfield (GHa). A **Black-headed Gull** was found Nov. 25 in Stonington (BDw), and a juvenile first reported Nov. 28 at Greenwich Point remained through the winter season (RM, m.ob.) The latest Least Tern was Sept. 12 at Eastern Point in Groton (DPe). A late Common Tern was at Stratford Point on Oct. 14 (SMA).



Bruce Finnan photo
Western Sandpipers, like this one Aug. 26 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison, are always sought after additions to the fall shorebird migration.

An exceptional count of six Caspian Terns was at Milford Point on Aug. 29 (RS), and two were in Stratford on Sept. 7 (FM). Black Terns were widespread in August, with a high count of four off HBSP on Aug. 14 (MR). An adult **Sandwich Tern**, the first since 2012, was at Sandy Point in West Haven on Aug. 18 (GHa, m.ob.). An excellent count of 16 Black Skimmers was recorded at Little Narragansett Bay in Stonington on Sept. 29 (SW) and apparently the same group of 16 was still there on Oct. 16 (RNe). The last two were reported on Nov. 9 (DPr). After a

record flight of shearwaters in July in eastern Long Island Sound, a **Cory's Shearwater** and a **Great Shearwater** were off HBSP on Aug. 12 (FG et al.). The first significant flight of Northern Gannets was 14 on Oct. 27 at Eastern Point in Groton (PRu, DPr).

A boat trip to a breakwater off Stonington produced a first state record **Little Egret** on Aug. 8, following observations for several days in nearby Rhode Island (NBo, DPr, PRu, AB). See related article elsewhere in this issue. An impressive assemblage of Little Blue Herons Aug. 31

at Plum Bank Marsh in Old Saybrook included 14 adults and nine juveniles (JOg). A November passage of Cattle Egrets is no longer surprising. This season one was at Sherwood Island on Nov 2 (TGr), three were flybys Nov. 4 at Bluff Point (DPr) and three flew by Lighthouse Point on Nov. 10 (SMo et al.). A Green Heron was late Nov. 1 at Silver Sands (JOs). A Black-crowned Night-Heron was unexpected Sept. 7 at Bishop's Pond in Meriden. An immature Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was late Nov. 24 in Stratford (AK). The state's first **Rose-**

ate Spoonbill was found in an egret roost at Raven Pond in Stratford on Sept. 15 (PRa). It was present through at least Oct. 5 in Stratford and Milford (m.ob.). See related article elsewhere in this issue.

The largest Black Vulture roost was 70 on Nov. 21 in Danbury (DSm). The latest Osprey report came from Woodbury on Nov. 21 (CW). Two **Mississippi Kites** passing over Trout Brook Valley in Easton on Sept. 23 were an unusual fall occurrence (JN). The observer suggested the possibility these were the pair that nested not far away

in eastern Fairfield County. A major Broad-winged Hawk flight toward the late end of the season brought 2048 to Chestnut Hill in Litchfield (DB) and 5907 to Quaker Ridge in Greenwich (BO) on Sept.22. An unusually late flight of 850 Broad-wingeds was at Quaker Ridge on Sept. 29 (BO). **Barn Owl** was seen at dawn on Oct. 14 at Milford Point (FM, PDu). The first Red-headed Woodpeckers of the season were both single migrants on Sept. 29, at Lighthouse Point in New Haven (SMo) and along the Saugatuck River in Westport (JT). Woodpeckers aren't known for significant migratory flights, but movements can be detected at places such as Bluff Point in Groton, where 27 Red-bellied Woodpeckers and eight Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were logged on Sept. 30 (CEI et al.). The latter were among about 10 for the season. An impressive total of 482 American Kestrels was the highlight of a 1099 raptor day on Oct. 12 at Lighthouse Point in New Haven (fide SMo).

After a two-year absence, two **Western Kingbirds** made an appearance – a

juvenile Sept. 9 at Bafflin Sanctuary in Pomfret (NBa) and a flyby at Bluff Point in Groton on Sept. 29 (GW, DPr, AV). See photo in the Photo Challenge article in this issue. Noteworthy flights of Eastern Kingbirds at Sherwood Island included 167 on Aug. 16 and 284 on Aug. 17 (TGr). These were dwarfed by a record 675 on Aug. 28 at Lighthouse Point (GHa et al.). The season's first Olive-sided Flycatcher was early at Fresh Meadows Preserve in Cheshire on Aug. 5 (CU). The first Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was at Smith-Richardson Preserve in Westport on Aug. 23 (JT). The season ended with a record late one photographed Oct. 28 at Silver Sands State Park in Milford (JR), almost a month after this season's second-latest record on Sept. 30 at Smith-Richardson (JT). The season's first Northern Shrike was at Windham Airport on Nov. 4 (PRu). A Philadelphia Vireo was late Nov. 3 in Eagleville (CEI). A group of six Horned Larks were early Sept. 27 in Bethlehem (BDe).

The now regular late appearances by Northern Rough-winged Swallows included 25 in Enfield on Oct. 28



Nancy Barrett photo

This juvenile Western Kingbird eluded observers other than the photographer on Sept. 9 at Bafflin Sanctuary in Pomfret.



William Batsford photo

This juvenile Curlew Sandpiper made a brief appearance Sept. 7 at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison.

(PDe). A strong cold front on Oct. 21 generated an early flight of **Cave Swallows**: four at Lighthouse Point (AL et al.), two at Sherwood Island (TGr) and singles at HBSP (FG) and Milford Point (SS). The next day three were at Penfield Reef in Fairfield (JP). In a more typical time frame, Nov. 4 produced two at HBSP (DR) and one in Waterford (DPr). The latest Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was at Stratford Point on Nov. 12 (GHo). Ruby-crowned Kinglets were early arrivals Aug. 21 at Quaker Ridge in

Greenwich (PO) and at Smith Richardson Preserve in Westport (JT). A Gray-cheeked Thrush was early Aug. 23 at Smith-Richardson (JT). A nice flight of Evening Grosbeaks included 12 at Lighthouse Point on Oct. 22 (GHa et al.), 11 in Barkhamsted on Nov. 20 (FZ), and on Nov. 30 flocks of 12 in East Granby (BKl) and 10 in Hamden (JZ). The first of a few scattered Common Redpolls was at Bluff Point on Oct. 24 (DPr). Four **Red Crossbills** were at Hoydens Hill in Fairfield on Nov. 18 (AK), the largest

total amid scattered reports. Two **White-winged Crossbills** were in Canton on Oct. 6 (PCi), another was in Avon Oct. 31 (DL) and two were at Sherwood Island on Nov. 11 (TGr). An out-of-season Pine Siskin visited a Clinton yard Aug. 5 (RB).

The season's first **Clay-colored Sparrow** was found Aug. 26 at Rocky Hill Meadows (BA), with another on Aug. 29 in Stamford (PDU). The seasonal total was c. 25 with singles at five locations on Oct. 14 (CC). A good flight of Vesper Sparrows included counts at Allen's Meadow in Wilton of eight on Oct. 16 (JB) and nine on Oct. 18 (JB). A **Lark Sparrow** was an excellent find Aug. 25 at Lower Smith Richardson in Westport (JT, SMA). A different bird was at the same location on Sept. 4 (SMA), and one was at Sherwood Island on Sept. 14-26 (TGr). The latest report came from Stratford Point from Oct. 8-Nov. 1 (SMA). Five reports of single Grasshopper Sparrows were all in October (FM et al.). A **LeConte's Sparrow** was seen briefly Oct. 25 at Cove Island Sanctuary in Stamford, where one was found Oct. 21 the

previous year (PDU). Early Fox Sparrows appeared in Greenwich (AC) and New Milford (ADi), both on Oct. 14. A Lincoln's Sparrow was early Aug. 23 in Southbury (CW). Quaker Ridge noted its first White-throated Sparrow of the season on Sept. 19 (BO); a good flight of 300 was at Bluff Point on Oct. 5 (DPr). At Trout Brook Valley on Oct. 28 a flight of c. 1000 sparrows of 11 species included 30 White-crowned Sparrows (JN, RK). There also were 30 the same day at Silver Sands (GHa et al.). A Dark-eyed Junco was early on Sept. 5 in Preston (DPr). A Yellow-breasted Chat was at Pine Creek in Fairfield on Sept. 7 (JP), with two more on Sept. 9 in a good passerine flight at Sherwood Island (TGr). Singles were at Stratford Point on Sept. 18 (SMA), Bluff Point on Sept. 29 (CEL) and Lighthouse Point on Oct. 7 (SMo). Late Bobolinks were found Nov. 1 at Silver Sands (JOs) and Nov. 5 at CT Land Trust in Hamden (JK). Baltimore Oriole movements, not easily detected, produced counts at Sherwood Island of 14 on Aug. 15 and 18 on Aug. 16 (TGr).

Late Ovenbirds were found

Oct. 16 at Russian Beach in Stratford (FM), Oct. 19 at Smith-Richardson in Westport (JOs) and Oct. 21 in North Guilford (CK). The season's only Golden-winged Warbler was found Sept. 23 in Fairfield (AK). A late Tennessee Warbler visited Quaker Ridge in Greenwich on Nov. 21 (BO). Orange-crowned Warblers were found Sept. 29 in Columbia (MC) and Sept. 30 at Trout Brook Valley in Easton (JN), both at the early end of expected arrival for this species. A nice late movement of Magnolia Warblers produced more than a dozen reports in the second half of October, with three singles on Nov. 4 at Lighthouse Point (PDn), Nov. 9 in Milford (SS) and Nov. 10 at Aspetuck Reservoir in Easton (JN). The latest date for Yellow Warbler was Oct 19, when singles were seen at Silver Sands (FM, et al.), Stratford (CLo, GL) and HBSP (RG). A late Wilson's Warbler was in New Haven on Oct. 25 (CH). Warbler migration documented at Bluff Point in Groton included a flight of fewer than 100 warblers on Aug. 23 that consisted of 10 species (DPr, GW); 180 birds of eight

species on Sept. 9 (GW, PRu); 100 birds of nine species on Sept. 20 (CEl, PDe); a significant flight of 850 warblers of 19 species on Sept. 23, dominated by early-season species such as American Redstarts and Northern Parulas (CEl et al.); another noteworthy flight of 1400 warblers of 11 species on Sept. 27 (DPr et al.); 850 birds of 13 species on Sept. 29 (DPr et al.); 600 warblers of 14 species on Sept. 30 (CEl et al.); and 450 warblers of 15 species, mostly Black-poll Warblers with Yellow-rumped Warblers increasing, on Oct. 5 (DPr).

A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was late Nov. 24-25 in a Greenwich yard (AC). Five **Blue Grosbeaks** for the season were at Sherwood Island on Sept. 26 (TGr), Osbornedale Community Garden in Derby on Sept. 30 (PDn) and Stratford Point on Sept. 1 (SMa), with singles on Oct. 3 at Bauer Farm in Madison (JOs) and Kellogg Environmental Center in Derby (BB). Three Indigo Buntings was a good late total Oct. 19 at Smith-Richardson Preserve in Westport (PCo). Two Dickcissels were the season's first flyovers Aug. 6 at Sherwood Island (TG), and two

were at Smith-Richardson on Aug. 23 (JT), with many more to follow at various locations throughout the season.

Observers – Zach Adams, Tim Antanaitis, Mark Aronson, Bill Asteriades, Dave Babington, Rob Ballinger, Bill Banks, Nancy Barrett (NBa), William Batsford, Joe Bear, Allison Black, Nick Bonomo (NBo), Joseph Cala (JCa), Jim Carr (JCr), Paul Cianfaglione (PCi), Carolyn Cimino, Patrick Comins (PCo), Jerry Connolly (JCo), Annette Cunniffe, Michael Curtis, Andrew Dasinger (ADa), Peter DeGennaro (PDn), Paul Desjardins (PDe), Buzz Devine (BDe), Bob Dewire (BDw), Angela Dimmitt (ADi), Robert Dixon, Mike Doyle, Turk Duddy, Patrick Dugan (PDU), Cynthia Ehlinger (CEh), Chris Elphick (CEl), Jack Faller, Morris Finkelstein, David Funke, Frank Gallo, Ted Gilman (TGi), Tina Green (TGr), Robert Guenther, Greg Hanisek (GHa), Jan Hansen (JHa), Julie Hart (JHr), Gary Hodge (GHO), Julian Hough (JHo), Christine Howe, Denise Jernigan, Aidan Kiley, Sibylle Kinley,

Rachel Keneally, John Klaess, Brian Kleinman (BKl), Cindy Kobak, Micky Komara, Brian Kulvete (BKu), Dave Lawton, Carol Lemmon (CLe), Gary Lemmon, Alex Lin-Moore, Chris Loscalzo (CLo), Preston Lust, Ryan MacLean, John Marshall (JMa), Andrew Main, Dennis Main, Frank Mantlik, Stefan Martin (SMa), David Mathieu (DMt), Steve Mayo (SMo), Kevin McGrath, Will Meyers, Judy Moore (JMo), Sean Murtha (SMu), Eric Myskowski, Jeremy Nance, Russ Naylor (RNa), Rick Newton (RNe), Anders Ogren John Ogren (JOg), Pablo Ojeda-Garcia, John Oshlick (JOs), Brian O'Toole, Dylan Pedro (DPe), Dave Provencher (DPr), James Purcell, Paul Raccuia (PRa), Robert Reginio, Jason Rieger, Mike Resch, Dan Rotino, Phil Rusch (PRu), Russ Smiley, Donna Rose Smith (DSm), David Spector (DSp), Steve Spector, Lynn Stone, Jory Teltser, Dave Tripp, Chris Unsworth, Marianne Vahey, Anthony Vicciarelli, Mike Warner, Nicole Werth, Hugh Whelan, Glenn Williams, Stu Winkquist, Joe Wojtanowski, Chris Wood, Sara Zagorski, Jim Zipp, Fran Zygmunt.

PHOTO CHALLENGE

By Julian Hough

October at Bluff Point. As birds stream out of the woods at the famous "Hot Corner," a medium-sized bird appears overhead, and the obvious yellow-suffused underparts prompt someone to call out "Great Crested Fly." Cameras click and images are captured and the bird is forgotten as quickly as it appeared.

Glancing at the back of the camera, several good images were captured – the beauty of "after the event" digital photography - often enlightening and humbling at the same time.

Identifying birds in flight, especially warblers and other smaller species, is a challenging and tough pastime. It's frustrating and also rewarding, testing the limits of an observer's ability. It is not for the faint of heart.

Even the most experienced and skilled observers make mistakes – hardly surprising given the speed of the bird, lighting, distance and brevity of views. Many of these identifications would hardly be incorrect under normal conditions



– sometimes even the best birders have to shelve their egos when faced with nature's brutal conditions.

But occasionally birds get by, and reviewing images can be helpful when the bird is long gone - but it can also reveal some surprises. Do you agree they got it right? Let's take a closer look.

The yellow underparts and gray throat suggest Great Crested, but something seems off – the tail looks short and the proportions of the head and bill seem small compared to the size of the bird. The overall color pattern and small bill fit better for a "yellow-bellied" kingbird – Western, Cassin's, Tropical or Couch's. All have been recorded as vagrants in fall, with Western being an annual visitor to Connecticut, and Tropical has occurred in the state, at Lighthouse Point in November 1990. Although probability has proven that Western is the most likely, the rare species are all possible. So it make sense to rule them out rather than assume any such kingbird is a Western.

Tropical and Couch's have quite long bills and disproportionately longer tails that appear quite notched. They also lack obvious white outer webs to the outermost tail feathers (the obvious, tell-tale sign of Western). This does not seem to be the case here, so Western seems to fit with what we can see. But can we rule out Cassin's? The darker gray head and throat of Cassin's is marked and contrasts with the white malar area. The tail usually has pale terminal tips, lacking the white outer webs of Western.

However note that some Cassin's and Tropicals can show pale outerwebs to the tail, but these are typically not as prominent as shown by many Westerns, which usually contrast with a blackish tail that appears darker than the upperparts. The contrast in the head doesn't seem very pro-Cassin's, and due to the nature of the image and lighting, we can't make out those tell-tale white tail edgings, but we assume they are there based on all the other features slotting into place.

So, with nothing to suggest any of the rarer species and basic

plumage and bill and tail ratios, we feel confident the bird is indeed a Western Kingbird, the expected species in fall.

Looking closely at the wing point, the narrow, emarginated tip to the outermost primary also supports the identification as Western - the outer three primaries are roughly the same length while Tropical and Couch's have an outermost primary that is shorter. The shape of this outermost primary can aid in ageing and sexing the bird as well. The emargination is longest in adult males and basically non-existent in HY (hatch-year) females. The small emargination visible in our photo thus fits in well with the pattern and shape of a HY male.

This amazing, and very instructional "accidental" flight shot of a Western Kingbird was taken by Dave Provencher, at Bluff Point on Sept. 29, 2018.



Photo Challenge No. 105

THE CONNECTICUT WARBLER

Editor

Greg Hanisek - 175 Circuit Ave., Waterbury, CT 06708
(203) 754-4401 email: ctgregh@gmail.com

Departments

Feature Articles

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Illustrations and photographs are needed and welcome. Line art of Connecticut and regional birds should be submitted as good quality prints or in original form. All submitted materials will be returned. We can use good quality photographs of birds unaccompanied by an article but with caption including species, date, locality, and other pertinent information.

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