



THE BIRDING COMMUNITY E-BULLETIN

June 2011

This Birding Community E-bulletin is being distributed to active and concerned birders, those dedicated to the joys of birding and the protection of birds and their habitats.

You can access an archive of past E-bulletins on the website of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA):
www.refugeassociation.org/birding/birding5.html

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RARITY FOCUS

On the afternoon of 29 April, John Leon and his son, Evan, encountered and photographed a male Garganey at Fernald Preserve not far from Cincinnati in northwestern Hamilton County, Ohio. The bird, which was not banded, was in the company of several Blue-winged Teal. If accepted by the state records committee, this would be the second record for Ohio, the first having occurred in Northwest Ohio in the spring of 2002.

The Fernald Preserve, operated by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Legacy Management, opened to the public in 2008. Once the site of a uranium foundry, the Fernald property has undergone a \$4.4 billion environmental cleanup and ecological restoration. It features 140 acres of wetland habitat, 400 acres of forests, and 360 acres of grasslands.

Garganey is a waterfowl species that breeds across Eurasia from Great Britain and Sweden to the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Russian Far East. It winters in central Africa, and from the Arabian Peninsula to China and Thailand. For readers unfamiliar with the species, check any European or Asian bird guide to see an illustration. You can also find the species described in the National Geographic guide on pp.36-37, the Kaufman Guide on pp. 23-23, the "big Sibley" on p. 86, Stokes on p. 30, or the new Crossley guide on p. 59.

Garganey was formerly rare in North America, and may be even rarer today. Most historic reports have been from western Alaska, particularly in the Aleutians in spring and fall. California has also had about two dozen reports, mainly during spring or fall. There are additional records, widely scattered throughout North America, especially at coastal sites. However, a decrease in the number of more recent reports, especially from Alaska and California, may reflect significant population declines in Asia. (The population in east Asia declined from an estimated 90,000 birds during the 1970s to 22,000 birds by 2003).

The Fernald Preserve Garganey was observed almost daily through 13 May, often from the easily accessible main

entrance viewing platform, but sometimes at other locations as well. Sometimes the bird also flew to the reclaimed areas closed to the general public. Nonetheless, it entertained many a visiting birder.

To see some photos and a video of this Garganey taken by Allan Claybon, see:
www.flickr.com/photos/nsxbirder/5670674175/in/set-72157626486350219

AN AMAZING ONE-DAY WONDER

On 18 May at about 1:15pm Ian Davies discovered a Eurasian Hobby near his home on Bartlett Pond in the Manomet section of Plymouth, Massachusetts. The bird ranged around the pond and was seen intermittently for almost three hours. Several other fortunate birders were able to rush to Plymouth and also glimpse this Old World falcon before it departed. At 3:55pm the bird was observed in northbound flight along a nearby dune line of the beach in pursuit of swallows, after which it was never again relocated.

There are about 20 previous records for Alaska (mostly from the Aleutians) for this small falcon, as well as a record for Washington State (2001) and one for Newfoundland (2004), but that's about it!

Here are some photos of the Massachusetts bird in flight taken by Ian Davies:
www.flickr.com/photos/uropsalis/5734557261/
and some by Jeremiah Trimble:
www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/sets/72157626638562721/detail/

ANOTHER "RARITY"... OR NOT?

On 8 May Andrew and Tim Davis found a Rufous-collared Sparrow on the way up to Loveland Pass in Georgetown, Colorado, which is west of Denver. . This is a common to abundant species – often near human habitation - practically throughout much of its extensive Neotropical range. The range extends from southern Mexico to southern Chile and Argentina (from sea level to over 11,000 feet), -but it has never been reported before in the U.S.

Photographs were taken, and the bird, unbanded and healthy in appearance, was observed for many days by multiple observers at least through 23 May.

While this is a very common bird where it regularly occurs, it is also a basically sedentary species, so its occurrence so far north of its normal range is most surprising. It is also a common cage-bird in parts of its range. In fact, for \$35 one can obtain one from a dealer in California:
www.birdsexpress.net/rufous-collared-sparrow.html

As a result of these factors, the sparrow's provenance remains questionable. Still, birds have wings. Was this an escaped cage-bird? We'll likely never know for certain.

MIDWAY UPDATE: SHORT-TAILED ALBATROSSES CONTINUE

The rare Short-tailed Albatrosses raising a chick on Midway (Eastern Island) in the Pacific are doing well. The youngster, on this part of Midway Atoll NWR, continues to be tended by both adults. For previous reports and links, see here:
www.refugeassociation.org/birding/maysbc11.html#TOC04

SOUTH ASIAN VULTURES: THE CRISIS CONTINUES

As long ago as 2006 –we reported on the decline of vultures in southern Asia which was linked to the increased use of diclofenac, a drug used on cattle, but toxic to any vulture that feeds on the carcass of any recently treated bovine:
www.refugeassociation.org/birding/octSBC06.html#TOC15

Despite recent regional bans on diclofenac, three species of south Asia's vultures are threatened with possible extinction, suggesting a continued use of the drug for livestock. All three species of vultures – White-rumped, Indian, and Slender-billed – have declined by more than 97 per cent since the early 1990s.

To view the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' (RSPB) recent video about the effort to save the vultures and to meet the people who are working on the program, see here:
<http://vimeo.com/19503113>

CANADA-WIDE LOON SURVEY

The Canadian Lakes Loon Survey (CLLS) 2011 season (May to July) is upon us, and volunteers are still needed from across Canada. Among other things, this survey provides a great opportunity for lake users and cottage owners to support research and conservation activities. Surveyors visit and survey their assigned lake at least three times during the summer (i.e., June, July, and August), record the number of Common Loon pairs on the lake, and track each pair's breeding success.

Anyone who spends time on a Canadian lake and is interested in participating can contact Kathy Jones (volunteer@birdscanada.org). For more details, including a map where surveys are currently taking place, see:
www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/clls/

and

www.google.com/fusiontables/DataSource?snapid=S180410LEyn

NEW CANADIAN MARITIMES SWIFTWATCH PROGRAM TO BE LAUNCHED

Canada is also about to launch another new national survey called "Swiftwatch."

With the cooperation of Environment Canada, the Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute, Nova Scotia Bird Society, Blomidon Naturalists' Society, Pictou County Naturalists' Club, Nature NB, and the Ecology Action Centre, Bird Studies Canada will be piloting a new Maritime-wide Swiftwatch program this summer. Although partners and individuals have been monitoring Chimney Swifts at different scales and locations for several years, this new program will add an overarching framework to the effort, as well as providing consistent and scientific protocols. The goal is to identify, monitor, and ultimately protect Chimney Swift roosts and nesting sites to ensure this species' long-term recovery. To learn more about becoming involved in the Maritime Swiftwatch program, email Ally Manthorne (amanthorne@birdscanada.org).

In past issues of the Birding Community E-bulletin, we have reported on swift-watching, mostly in the U.S., and mostly connected to efforts coordinated by the Driftwood Wildlife Association. For more details, see: www.chimneyswifts.org/

IBA NEWS: 2011 STATE OF THE BIRDS FOCUSES ON PUBLIC LANDS

In early May, a coalition of groups coordinated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released the "2011 State of the Birds Report," a report which finds that public lands and waters provide essential habitat for the survival of hundred United States bird species.

The report was released in at an event led by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and preceded by a bird walk at Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens in Washington DC. The bird walk was attended by students from the Brent Elementary School, a public school in the District.

In the U.S., about 90 percent of the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) represent some federal, state, or municipal land-category, a fact which stresses the importance of public lands to the Important Bird Area program. Some examples include the following:

... 97% of the endangered Kirtland's Warbler's distribution is on public lands.

... 79% of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse's distribution is on public lands.

... More than 75% of the breeding season distribution of Sage Sparrows and Le Conte's Thrashers is on public lands.

... Almost 46% of the distribution of the California Gnatcatcher, a threatened species, is found on Department of Defense lands such as Camp Pendleton.

...An average of 78% of the declining Hawaiian forest birds on Kaua'i exist on public lands owned by the state.

This recent State of the Birds Report comes at a time of extreme budgetary challenges and it underscores the importance of maintaining support for the management of our public lands. The report's findings also highlight the importance of a number of pending policy and spending decisions that the Obama Administration is now considering which could have far-reaching impacts on bird populations on public lands.

To see this complete, downloadable report, check:

www.stateofthebirds.org/State%20of%20the%20Birds%202011.pdf

While IBAs are mentioned only in passing in the report, their congruence with crucial public lands plays an important role in the mix of creative bird conservation measures existing in the U.S. today.

For additional information about worldwide IBA programs, including those across the U.S., check the National Audubon Society's Important Bird Area program web site at:

www.audubon.org/bird/iba/

TIP OF THE MONTH: LEAVE THEM ALONE

Since early summer sees the peak of nesting activity for many bird species across the U.S., it is also the season when baby birds are especially vulnerable. Predation from avian and mammalian predators usually reaches its peak at this season, and juvenile birds and fledglings tend to be particularly vulnerable to collisions with glass windows, moving

automobiles, and the chilling effects of cool, wet weather at this season. Curiously, however, an equally great threat to baby birds often comes from well-meaning people who routinely find baby birds on the ground and at once assume they are either orphans or somehow in trouble, usually when this is not the case at all. Young birds routinely leave their nest before they are able to completely fly. It is during this period that the recently fledged wobbly little flyers are often noticed by unsuspecting and well-meaning people who believe them to be orphans. Such is usually not the case, however! Parent birds will generally tend their young even if they are on the ground after leaving a nest prematurely.

The moral here is simple. In general, it is best to leave baby birds alone if found on the ground. If the nest-site is known, then gently replace the baby in its nest and leave it alone. In most cases, the parent will find it and will care for it. Don't immediately bring a baby bird home and try to feed it, because not only is it against the law to do so for most species, but also it is a labor intensive chore that is far better left to its natural mother.

CONSOLIDATED SITE FOR AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY

Recently, a new website and discussion forum for ornithology was launched. This is a joint effort involving over a dozen ornithological organizations, mostly from the U.S., but also from Canada and Mexico. The website is expected to host discussion forums on a wide range of topics, including current research, permits, animal welfare, research ethics, methods, Q&A on writing papers, presenting talks, preparing posters, teaching, research funding, and many other topics of interest to ornithologists.

Even without registration, visitors to the site will have access to the home page, which includes news, announcements, and job listings. Discussion forums and other content will be reserved for members of the cooperating ornithological associations.

This new effort will not replace individual ornithological society websites, but will consolidate the information that the societies send out and will replace several of the existing listserv functions. You can view the site here:

<http://ornithologyexchange.org/>

BOOK NOTES: ADVANCED KAUFMAN

Two decades have passed since the release of Kenn Kaufman's first FIELD GUIDE TO ADVANCED BIRDING; Kaufman has now produced a second edition with the subtitle, "Understanding What You See and Hear."

In this new iteration, Kenn Kaufman shares with readers not only "An Integrated Approach to Field Identification of Birds", but also a series of chapters ranging from the traditional principles and pitfalls of identification and how birds are built, to aspects of plumage, molt, and feather wear. There is also a useful survey of the techniques and resources available for learning bird identification. Ultimately, however, it is Kaufman's ever-skillful use of digital photography and illustrations, combined with his fluid and easy-to-read text and studded with relevant examples that make this an outstanding resource for birders of all levels. His years of personal experience combined with a keen ability to distill complex information into an understandable format make this a valuable new contribution to field birding. The sections on gull, flycatcher, and sparrow identification alone justify reading this book. We highly recommend this new title from Houghton Mifflin (2011).

LAST MONTH'S NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC BIRD BOOK QUIZ

Last month's question in the National Geographic book quiz was the following: Delaware Bay annually hosts thousands of shorebirds every May as they stop to feed on horseshoe crab eggs on their way to their Arctic breeding grounds. What are the four most predominant shorebird species in these annual late spring stopover concentrations?

The answer: Red Knot, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, and Sanderling.

Three copies of the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC BACKYARD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA by Jonathan Alderfer and Paul Hess were won by Colin Campbell (Claymont, Delaware), Jackie Cooper (Rockville, Maryland), and Pam Myers (Santa Cruz, California), whose names were chosen at random from among all the correct answers.

You can access past E-bulletins on the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) website:

www.refugeassociation.org/birding/birding5.html

If you wish to distribute all or parts of any of the monthly Birding Community E-bulletins, we simply request that you mention the source of any material used. (Include a URL for the E-bulletin archives, if possible.)

If you have any friends or co-workers who want to get onto the monthly E-bulletin mailing list, have them contact either:

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