

Twentieth Report of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee

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Yellow-billed Loon, March 20, 2016, Race Point, Provincetown. Photograph by Peter Flood.

The twentieth report of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (hereafter MARC or the committee) covers the evaluation of 63 records involving 34 species or subspecies. Sixty-two records were accepted, an acceptance rate of 97%. All accepted records in this report were accepted unanimously on the first round of voting unless noted otherwise. The 53 records noted with an “eB” were accepted via eBird in accordance with the procedure described in our bylaws for expedited review (Garvey and Iliff 2013).

Two first state records are treated in this report. Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*) and Masked Booby (*Sula dactylatra*), bringing the total Massachusetts list to an impressive 503. Massachusetts and Florida are the only two states east of the Mississippi River with a total avian species list above 500.

The Yellow-billed Loon, found and photographed during one of many long slogs off the bountiful Race Point by the diligent and persistent Steve Arena, thankfully stayed long enough for hundreds of birders to make the long trek for a winter twitch. The Masked Booby, on the other hand, was unchaseable and seen by just one person: the astute captain Joe Huckameyer found and photographed it during a September fishing trip well offshore at Atlantis Canyon. Fortunately, Captain Joe regularly pilots

the Helen H for the BBC pelagic trips and we can all hope that those trips score discoveries of similar magnitude in the future.

Two other records treated in this report cover species that hadn't been seen in the Commonwealth in scores of years. Guillermo Rodriguez, an avid birder visiting from Spain, was checking the Waltham Street Fields on November 13, 2015, when he came upon a Common Ground-Dove (*Columbina passerina*), a species with which he was familiar after having visited other parts of the United States, but one that hadn't been seen in Massachusetts since 1973. He keenly photographed it and alerted the birding community, which proceeded to twitch the bird over the next several weeks. Unfortunately, the state's first photo-documented White-winged Tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) proved to be a one-day wonder and was seen by only a lucky few other birders during its intermittent appearances that day. Peter Flood, another intrepid and patient Race Point birder, found this breeding-plumaged adult on May 8, 2016; it represented the state's second record, the first being a sight record from Plymouth County in 1954!

Other highlights of this report include the state's third Hammond's Flycatcher and its third Smith's Longspur and first for midwinter.

The 2015–16 roster of MARC voting members included Ian Davies, Trevor Lloyd-Evans, Mark Faherty, Jessica Johnson, Blair Nikula, Tim Spahr, Ryan Schain, Scott Sumner, and Jeremiah R. Trimble (chair).

In this truncated report, we present basic statistics for each record of each species or taxon covered: the record number, count of individuals, where and when the bird was seen, and who submitted evidence. We also indicate whether the evidence provided was photographic (ph.), video (v.), audio (au.), or a written submission (†). As always, the committee strongly encourages written submissions even where photographs exist. When known, we try to credit the discoverer with an asterisk (*), especially if he or she has supplied evidence. The statistics in brackets for each species or taxon show the number of individual birds accepted through records in this report, followed by the total number of MARC-accepted individual records for that species, followed by our estimate of total known records, often supplemented with a plus sign (+) when we know there are additional records but are not sure how many. We do not count or use a plus sign for 2015–2016 records that are currently in review. For a subspecies, the statistics refer to the species unless noted otherwise. Species not on the Review List do not receive a count.

Species taxonomy and nomenclature follow the seventh edition of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) *Check-list of North American Birds* (AOU 1998) and supplements (Chesser et al. 2009, Chesser et al. 2010, Chesser et al. 2011, Chesser et al. 2012, Chesser et al. 2013, Chesser et al. 2014, Chesser et al. 2015, Chesser et al. 2016). Subspecies group nomenclature follows taxonomy of *The eBird/Clements Checklist of Birds of the World* (v2016), available at <<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist>> (Clements et al. 2016).

The list of species reviewed by the MARC (the Review List) is available at <www.maavianrecords.com>. Please check out the full Review List and send us any evidence of new or old records you may have—even in this Information Age we can never get enough when it comes to the rarity records that keep our hearts thumping.

ACCEPTED RECORDS

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) [1,8,9]

2016-008: 11 at Lawrence Pond, Sandwich, *Barnstable*, 7/12/2016 [ph. G. Tanguilig*]. eB. This was a record high count for the state, exceeding the count of 9 from Ispwich in 2008 that represented the first accepted state record. Barnstable County has just one prior record from May 2015. All state records have come since 2008.

As with all Massachusetts records, these birds were of the northern subspecies *D. a. fulgens*, which is characterized by its chestnut head and breast (without a gray breastband).

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) [2,10,10]

2015-010: 1 at Turners Falls Power Canal, *Franklin*, 11/25/2015 [ph. J. Smith*]. eB.

2016-001: 1 at various locations near Longmeadow along the Connecticut River, Longmeadow, *Hampden*, 1/16/2016 to 2/23/2016 [ph. S. Motyl, A. Robblee*]. eB.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*) [1,14,14]

2015-018: 1 white morph at Plum Island, Parker River NWR, *Essex*, 11/13/2015 to 11/14/2015 [ph. P. Wood*]. eB.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*) [1,14,16+]

2015-013: 3 at River Road, Agawam, *Hampden*, 12/26/2015 [ph. S. Motyl*]. eB. Presumably the same birds were seen a few miles to the south in Hartford County, Connecticut, on January 3 (e.g., <<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S26648636>>).

Once viewed with a skeptical eye regarding provenance, Barnacle Geese in situations with wild, migrant Canada Geese are now routinely accepted without question. Increases in the breeding populations of all Greenland-breeding geese (including Pink-footed) have been correlated with increased occurrence of vagrants (Pink-footed, Greater White-fronted, and Barnacle) in the Northeast.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) [2,17,19+; males on Review List only since 2010]

2015-019: 1 at Johnson Pond, Groveland, *Essex*, 11/15/2015 to 12/8/2015 [T. and N. Walker*, ph. M. Watson]. eB.

2016-020: 1 at Kenoza Lake, Haverhill, *Essex*, 1/6/2016 to 1/25/2016 [ph. S. Mirick*]. eB.

These two records pertained to adult males and were near to each other without overlapping dates; it is likely that both records pertain to the same bird, and also that this report from eBird (not formally reviewed by the committee), also pertained to the same wandering male Tufted Duck: one on Lake Cochichewick December 18, 2015 (<<http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S26353220>>).

Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*) [1,1,1]

2016-002: 1 juvenile at Race Point, Provincetown, *Barnstable*, 2/27/2016 to 4/17/2016 [† ph. S. Arena*]. Long anticipated in Massachusetts, Yellow-billed Loon had recently been found in Maine (adult on October 26 and 29 in Casco Bay), New York (three records), and Georgia, but otherwise has been fairly scarce on the East Coast despite regular occurrence in the interior of the continent.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) [1,9,11+]

2015-020: 1 at Winthrop Five Sisters, Winthrop, *Suffolk*, 2/7/2015 to 4/16/2015 [C. Jackson*, ph. D. Walters]. eB. This second record for Suffolk County proved elusive initially but was then pinned down in a consistent area where it was widely enjoyed and photographed.



Yellow-nosed Albatross, August 10, 2015, Stellwagon Bank. Photograph by François Grenon.

Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche chlororhynchos*) [1,7,7+]

2015-017: 1 at Southwest Stellwagen Bank, *Barnstable*, 8/10/2015 [ph. † F. Grenon*]. eB. The subspecies of this bird was confirmed as the Atlantic subspecies, *T. c. chlororhynchos*, identifiable by the gray hood; all North American records have represented this form, split as a species by some authorities.

Masked Booby (*Sula dactylatra*) [1,1,1]

2015-023: 1 subadult at West Atlantis Canyon, 9/10/2015 [ph. J. Huckameyer*].

Although Masked Booby is a regular, almost annual visitor to Gulf Stream waters off North Carolina, it is surprisingly scarce as a vagrant north of there. It has been recorded in Virginia and New Jersey (Island Beach SP, August 24, 2001), but this Massachusetts record was apparently the first record north of there. Since this record, there have been two additional records from the mid-Atlantic: New Jersey got its second record at the Avalon Seawatch on October 15, 2015, and Maryland's first was found on a pelagic trip near Baltimore Canyon on August 21, 2016.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) [3,23,28+]

2015-022: 1 at Plum Island, Parker River NWR, *Essex*, 11/16/2015 [ph. S. Sullivan*]. eB.

2015-024: 1 at Pochet Island, Orleans, *Barnstable*, and shortly thereafter at Cotchpincut Road Landing, Chatham, *Barnstable*, 11/15/2015 [ph. B. Lagasse*, ph. P. Trimble]. eB.

2015-021: 2 at Fort Hill, Eastham, *Barnstable*, 12/4/2015 [ph. S. Barnes*, ph. L. Mack*].

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) [2, 8, 22]

2015-026: 1 adult at South Beach, Chatham, *Barnstable*, 8/31/2015 [ph. M. Malin*]. eB.

2015-029: 1 adult at Low Beach, Siasconset, *Nantucket*, 1/1/2015 [ph. V. Laux*]. eB.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) [8,23,22+]

2015-030: 1 adult at Kettle Island, Manchester-by-the-Sea, *Essex*, 5/22/2015 [S. Perkins*, ph. R. Schain]. eB.

2015-031: 1 adult at Clark Pond, Manchester,-by-the-Sea, *Essex*, 5/15/2015 [ph. D. Brewster*]. eB.

2015-032: 1 adult at Route 1A Salt Pans, Rowley, *Essex*, 5/16/2015 to 5/18/2015 [ph. M. McCarthy]. eB.

2015-034: up to 3 adults at Argilla-Northgate-Essex Road Fields Complex, Ipswich, *Essex*, 4/6/2015 to 4/15/2015 [ph. G. Power*]. eB.

2016-009: up to 3 adults at Hamlin Reservation, Ipswich, *Essex*, 4/24/2016 to 4/30/2016 [ph. M. Goetschkes*, S. Grinley*]. eB.

2015-033: 1 adult at Chebacco Woods, South Hamilton, *Essex*, 4/23/2015 [ph. D. Walters*]. eB.

2016-010: 1 adult at Route 1A Salt Pans, Rowley, *Essex*, 5/1/2016 to 5/8/2016 [ph. D. Prima, P. Vale*]. eB.

2016-011: 1 adult at Parker River NWR Salt Pannes, *Essex*, 6/20/2016 to 6/27/2016 [T. Bradford*, ph. J. Nathan]. eB.

The accepted records above are all from a fairly limited area of northeastern Essex county, where *Plegadis* ibis regularly move between the Kettle Island breeding colony and feeding areas in Ipswich, Rowley, and nearby towns. Surely, there is much duplication involved, with the same individuals being seen at different sites, but a minimum of three were present in both years given 2015-034 and 2016-009.

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) [2,13,13+]

2015-035: 1 at Madaket area (Sanford Farm, Clark Cove, etc.), *Nantucket*, 7/1/2015 to 7/3/2015 [S. Fee*, ph. R. Stevenson*]. eB. July records are comparatively few for the Commonwealth, vastly outnumbered by May and June records.

2015-036: 1 or 2 at Truro area (Pilgrim Heights to Prince Valley, *Barnstable*, 4/18/2015 [ph. P. Flood*, B. Nikula*]. eB.

Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio martinicus*) [2,9,56+]

2015-054: 1 juvenile at Westborough WMA, Chauncy Pond, Westborough, *Worcester*, 10/21/2015 to 10/22/2015 [ph. J. Lawson*]. eB. This was the third record for Worcester County.

2015-055: 1 juvenile at Burrage Pond WMA, Hanson, *Plymouth*, 11/8/2015 [ph. E. Vacchino*]. eB.

Bridled Tern (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) [3,12,24]

2015-038: 1 first-summer photographed on the BBC Pelagic at 40.55308,-69.302396, *Nantucket*, 8/22/2015 [ph. N. Bonomo]. eB.

2015-037: 1 second-summer at Smith Point, Nantucket, *Nantucket*, 7/11/2015, and Tuckernuck Island, *Nantucket*, 8/19/2015 [ph. L. Dunn*]. eB.

2016-012: 1 first-summer at Race Point, Provincetown, *Barnstable*, 7/9/2016 [† ph. S. Arena*]. eB.



White-winged Tern, May 8, 2016, Race Point, Provincetown. Photograph by Peter Flood.

White-winged Tern (*Chlidonias leucop-terus*) [1,2,2]

2016-006: 1 adult in alternate plumage at Race Point and Hatches Harbor, Provincetown, *Barnstable*, 5/8/2016 [ph. † S. Arena, ph. P. Flood*]. First *Barnstable* record and first for Massachusetts since 1954, when two spent three days over Musquashicut Pond, *Plymouth*, on the remarkably similar dates of May 25-27 (Veit and Petersen 1993). One of these two birds similarly was in breeding plumage.

Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) [3,13,13+]

2015-039: 1 at Nauset Beach, South End, Orleans, *Barnstable*, 8/16/2015 to 8/19/2015 [ph. D. Hollie*]. eB.

2016-013: 1 at Race Point, Provincetown, *Barnstable*, 6/18/2016 [ph. P. Flood*]. eB.

2015-040: 1 at Nauset Marsh, Eastham, *Barnstable*, 7/10/2015 [ph. K. Schopp*]. eB.

Although both North American *T. s. acuftavidus* and Eurasian *T. s. sandvicensis* have been known to occur in the Bay State, separation of non-juveniles is extremely difficult and the subspecies is considered unestablished for these individuals.

Common Ground-Dove (*Columbina passerina*) [1,2,2]

2015-028: 1 at Waltham St. Fields, Lexington, *Middlesex*, 11/13/2015 to 12/3/2015 [ph. G. Rodriguez*, ph. J. Trimble]. A surprising second state record and first Middlesex record, with the previous record from Monomoy Island in 1973 (Petersen 1995). During this same period there were a couple of other ground-doves well out of range in the Midwest (e.g., Chicago, Illinois, and Marquette, Michigan). The day of this bird's discovery was an epic fallout of Franklin's Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) across the East.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) [2,23,35+]

2016-014: 1 at Lanesville Community Garden/High Street, Lanesville, *Essex*, 5/28/2016 to 5/29/2016 [ph. S. Sullivan*]. eB.

2015-041: 1 at Nauset Heights Road, Orleans, *Barnstable*, 11/13/2015 [ph. N. Villone*]. eB.

Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*) [2,6,7]

2015-026: 1 immature female at Downer Avenue, Boston, *Suffolk*, 11/4/2015 to 11/24/2015 [v. C. Gatham*, v. M. Garvey, ph. M. Iliff]. First record for Suffolk and first away from Cape Cod and the Islands since the first record—a Cohasset specimen from way back in November 1979 that has yet to be formally reviewed by MARC.

2015-027: 1 immature female at Little Shaver Lane, Harwich, *Barnstable*, 11/30/2015 to 12/2/2015 [ph. † S. Finnegan, D. Meyer*, ph. S. Williams]. Second record for Barnstable.

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) [2,33,33+]

2015-042: 1 adult male at Cedarcrest Road, Canton, *Norfolk*, 7/22/2015 to 7/24/2015 [ph. L. Waters]. eB.

2015-043: 1 adult male at Castle Hill Avenue, Great Barrington, *Berkshire*, 10/11/2015 to 10/12/2015 [ph. G. Ward*]. eB.

Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) [1,4,6]

2015-008: 1 at Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, South Wellfleet, *Barnstable*, 5/8/2015 [† J. Keyes*] (second round, 8-1). While submitted as a sight-only record of two birds, eight committee members felt details of the second bird were too scant to accept, but felt comfortable in the detailed description of one bird. One committee member felt the casual description of the putative second bird, as well as the observer's apparent lack of appreciation for the rarity of this species this far north—heck, Georgia just got its first record in 2016—calls the whole record into question. Additional 2015 records from Westport and Lancaster are still to be reviewed.

Hammond's Flycatcher (*Empidonax hammondi*)[1,2,4]

2016-003: 1 at Egypt Lane, Fairhaven, *Bristol*, 1/1/2016 to 1/2/2016 [v. M. Garvey, ph. au. M. Iliff, ph. J. Trimble, ph. D. Zimerlan*]. First Bristol record. Massachusetts's

first record from Wellesley in 1988 has yet to be formally reviewed by MARC, and a fourth record from November 2016 in Medfield is currently under review.



Say's Phoebe, September 9, 2015, Esther Island, Nantucket. Photograph by Lee Dunn.

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) [3,9,10+]

2015-045: 1 at T-Time former golf range, Eastham, *Barnstable*, 10/10/2015 [ph. B. Lagasse*, M. Malin*, K. Yakola*]. eB.

2015-046: 1 at Esther Island, Nantucket, *Nantucket*, 9/7/2015 [ph. L. Dunn*]. eB.

2015-047: 1 at Keith Farm, Chilmark, *Dukes*, 9/8/2015 [ph. K. Magnuson*]. eB.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) [4,22,30]

2015-044: 1 at Squam Farm, Nantucket, *Nantucket*, 11/25/2015 to 11/28/2015 [ph. G. Andrews*]. eB.

2015-057: 2 or 3 at Waring Field/Lanes Farm Way, Rockport, *Essex*, 12/4/2015 to 12/26/2015 [ph. S. Williams*]. eB.

2015-058: 1 at Manomet, *Plymouth*, 12/26/2015 to 1/4/2016 [ph. B. Harrington]. eB.

2015-059: 1 at Danehy Park, Cambridge, *Middlesex*, 12/28/2015 to 1/6/2016 [ph. J. Forbes]. eB.

Although the state has many December records, few have extended to January like the two in 2016 covered here.



Fork-tailed Flycatcher, June 7, 2016, Bear Creek Sanctuary, Saugus. Photograph by Soheil Zende.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savanna*) [1,8,19+]

2016-018: 1 at Bear Creek Sanctuary, Saugus, *Essex*, 6/7/2016 [ph. S. Zende]. eB.

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) [1,11,11+]

2015-050: 1 at Wachusett Reservoir - Gate 36 to 40 (North Dike), Clinton, *Worcester*, 10/1/2015 to 10/6/2015 [ph. J. Lawson*]. eB.

Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) [1,10,10]

2015-053: 1 female at Crane WMA, Falmouth, *Barnstable*, 12/4/2015 to 3/22/2016

[ph. G. Hirth*]. eB.

Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*) [2,20,20+]

2015-048: 1 at Corn Hill, Truro, *Barnstable*, 12/22/2015 to 1/14/2016 [ph. B. Lagasse, M. Malin*]. eB.

2015-049: 1 at Halibut Point, Rockport, *Essex*, 11/12/2015 to 11/22/2015 [ph. T. Bradford*]. eB.

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) [1,15,15+]

2016-018: 1 at 3 Dakota Trail, Rutland, *Worcester*, 1/1/2016 to 1/3/2016 [ph. A. Robblee]. eB.

Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*) [1,3,4]

2015-025: 1 at Bear Creek Sanctuary, Saugus, *Essex*, 12/21/2015 to 1/20/2016 [ph. M. Iliff, ph. S. Zende]. The third for the state and for Essex County came barely a year after the second. Since both previous records are from October, this individual represented Massachusetts's first for midwinter, although one of Maine's two records was also from the winter.



Smith's Longspur, January 20, 2016, Bear Creek Sanctuary, Saugus. Photograph by Oliver Burton.

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) [3,10,10+]

2015-051: 1 at Hellcat Area, Plum Island, *Essex*, 9/19/2015 to 9/26/2015 [E. Lipton*; ph. S. Williams]. eB.

2015-052: 1 at Scusset Beach State Reservation, Sandwich, *Barnstable*, 11/29/2015 to 12/2/2015 [ph. M. Keleher*]. eB.

2016-015: 1 at Rowley, *Essex*, 1/30/2016 to 1/30/2016 [ph. M. Goetschkes]. eB.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) [2,16,16+]

2016-016: 1 adult male at a private feeder, Nantucket, *Nantucket*, 1/29/2016 to 2/19/2016 [ph. G. Andrews, C. Witte*]. eB.

2016-017: 1 female/immature off Old County Road, Wellfleet, *Barnstable*, 1/31/2016 to 2/1/2016 [ph. K. Yakola]. eB.

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon) (*Junco hyemalis* [oreganus Group])

2015-005: 3 at Elm Street, Hatfield, 2/3/2015 to 2/12/2015. (3–6, 2nd round). While interesting, photos of a trio of juncos at a feeder failed to convince a majority of

voters that any were outside the range of variability in Slate-colored Juncos, and the record failed to survive a second-round vote. 🐦

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If you are interested or have questions, please contact John Marsh at jmarsh@jocama.com.

PHOTO ESSAY

MARC Highlights



(Top) Common Ground-Dove,
November 23, 2015, Waltham
Street Fields, Waltham.
Photograph by Ryan Schain.

(Left) Hammond's Flycatcher,
January 1, 2016, Egypt Lane,
Fairhaven. Photograph by
Henry Zimmerlin.



(Top) Mountain Bluebird.
January 2, 2016, Crane
Wildlife Management Area,
Photograph by Tom Murray.

(Right). One of two Ash-
throated Flycatchers,
December 4, 2015, Lane's
Farm Way, Rockport.
Photograph by Sean M.
Williams

