



## THE BIRDING COMMUNITY E-BULLETIN

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December 2009

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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. This issue is sponsored by the [Wild Bird Centers of America](#) and the [National Bird-Feeding Society](#). You can access an archive of past E-bulletins in our newsletter [archives](#).

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### RARITY FOCUS

Pink-footed Goose would have held this exalted position in the November issue had a Brown-chested Martin in Massachusetts profiled last month not bumped it out of contention. Fortunately, the goose remained long enough and with enough fanfare to rate profiling in the present issue.

Pink-footed Goose is a vagrant anywhere in North America, normally breeding in Greenland, Iceland, and Svalbard, and traditionally spending the winter in the British Isles and northwestern Europe. It has been reported over two dozen times in eastern Canada and the northeastern U.S., including Newfoundland, Québec, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.

The breeding populations in Greenland and Iceland have increased dramatically over the past two decades, from about 10,000 pairs to over 130,000 pairs. This fact has quite probably contributed to the increased sightings in North America over the past 20 years.

For more information about Pink-footed Goose, check any European bird guide or a National Geographic Guide (pp. 20-21),

On 1 October, Derek Lovitch first spotted a Pink-footed Goose at Thornhurst Farm in North Yarmouth, Maine. Then on 14 October, three Pink-footed Geese were seen at the same location. Through the end of November the birds could usually be found at one of three different locations in the general area of the original discover, pleasing many visiting birders from near and far. For photos of the geese taken by Lloyd Alexander, see:

[http://lloydsjourney.smugmug.com/Avian/Geese/Pink-Footed-Goose/9979979\\_zqDad/1/682139996\\_s5mH3#682139996\\_s5mH3](http://lloydsjourney.smugmug.com/Avian/Geese/Pink-Footed-Goose/9979979_zqDad/1/682139996_s5mH3#682139996_s5mH3)

During this same period, another Pink-footed Goose was found by Ken Feustel on 3 November at Sunken Meadow State Park on Long Island, New York. This goose was eventually joined by another rare waterfowl, a Barnacle Goose. Observations of these geese were usually at the state park or at nearby Kings Park High School, through 28 November.

Observations of these geese were usually at the state park or at nearby Kings Park High School, through 20 November. For photos of these geese taken by S. Mitra, see: <http://picasaweb.google.com/tixbirdz/Various2009#>

## **RESULTS OF "THE BIG SIT!"**

Whether or not you participated in "The Big Sit!" in October, you might wish to peruse the results from this fun event. The 15th annual Big Sit! occurred Sunday, 11 October, and the reports have been trickling in ever since.

The Big Sit! an annual event hosted by BIRD WATCHER'S DIGEST magazine, and was founded by the New Haven (CT) Bird Club. Some have called the event "a tailgate party for birders."

To take part, participants must remain in a circle 17 feet in diameter for up to 24 hours, counting all the bird species seen or heard within that time period. The simplicity of this event makes it both casual and appealing, especially to newcomers to birding.

To check out the Big Sit! circle summaries along with related links and photos, visit: <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/results09/circles.php>

## **IBA NEWS: PUERTO RICAN NIGHTJAR RANGE AND STATUS**

The once presumed extinct Puerto Rican Nightjar (*Caprimulgus noctitherus*) was rediscovered in 1961 in the southwestern part of Puerto Rico. The endemic night-bird was listed as Endangered by the USFWS in 1973. Over the last decade, the bird has been recorded significantly farther east on the island than previously determined. A new study has confirmed that the geographic range of this species may also include appropriate habitats throughout southern parts of the island.

Unfortunately, with the exception of a small dry forest reserve owned by the Puerto Rican Conservation Trust, no protected areas exist within the important portions of the newly found eastern range of the species. IBAs may touch on the nightjar's previously known southwestern range, but none do in the recently discovered eastern portions of its range.

More importantly, portions of the habitat fragments where Puerto Rican Nightjars have recently been discovered are located in municipalities experiencing a "high degree of habitat disturbance."

Clearly, the study asserts, "these sites [in the south-central and southeastern parts of the island] have not [previously] been included as... priority conservation areas."

The findings await further investigation and conservation action.

For a news item on the nightjar situation, see: [http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/11/sopi\\_nightjar.html](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/11/sopi_nightjar.html)

For the full recent report, see: [http://www.avesdepuertorico.org/documentos/prnightjar\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.avesdepuertorico.org/documentos/prnightjar_final_report.pdf)

For more on IBAs in Puerto Rico, see La Sociedad Ornitológica Puertorriqueña Inc. (SOPI): <http://www.avesdepuertorico.org/iba.html>

For additional information about worldwide IBA programs, and those across the U.S., check the National Audubon Society's Important Bird Area program web site at: <http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/>

## **FIVE NEW WHSRN SHOREBIRD SPECIES PLANS**

In cooperation with shorebird experts and in response to the conservation priorities in the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, the offices of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) are developing action-oriented Species Conservation Plans.

Last month, plans for five more high-priority shorebird species were released. They are for American Oystercatcher, American Golden-Plover, Sanderling, Whimbrel, and Wilson's Phalarope. Each of these species has its own story and its own conservation problems. The plans can be found at: <http://www.whsrn.org/news/article/five-new-whsrn-species-conservation-plans-available>

## **NORTH ATLANTIC FISH POPULATION CHANGES: IMPACT ON BIRDS?**

Northwest Atlantic fish populations are shifting as our ocean temperatures warm. Recent findings, published in the journal, MARINE ECOLOGY PROGRESS SERIES, show that about half of 36 fish stocks in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean, many commercially valuable, have been shifting northward over the last four decades.

In a review of annual spring survey data from 1968 to 2007, 10 of the 36 stocks showed significant range expansion, while 12 demonstrated significant range contraction.

During the last 40 years, many familiar fish species have been shifting northward where ocean waters are cooler, or else staying in the same general region but moving into deeper waters than where they traditionally have been found, says lead researcher, Janet Nye. All the fish species seem to be adapting to changing temperatures by finding places where their chances of survival as a population are greatest.

These range shifts have implications that extend beyond the fish themselves, specifically to consumers of fish such as seabirds.

seabirds.

While people will continue to find familiar fish at their local markets in the foreseeable future, fishermen may have to travel much farther to catch some of these familiar species. Eventually, this could cease to be economical.

At the same time, ocean-associated birds (pelagic birds and those closer to shore) will have to adjust accordingly, and the implications may be significant. The further seabirds have to travel to forage or find adequate food for their young, the greater becomes the likelihood that there will be impacts on survivorship. As with most species, anytime there is a major perturbation in a prey base, there are inevitable consequences to predators dependent upon this prey. The uncoupling of ocean food chains due to changes in sea temperature could seriously impact seabird populations in the future. This is just another example of "the need for an ecosystem-based management approach to our fisheries," said co-author Jason Link, a fisheries biologist at the Woods Hole laboratory.

For a summary of some of the non-avian implications of such range shifts in fish species, see:  
[http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/press\\_release/2009/SciSpot/SS0916/](http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/press_release/2009/SciSpot/SS0916/)

### **BOOK NOTES: TREES AND BIRDS**

"The Magnolia Warbler just flew from the left branch of the Red Mulberry and landed in the Osage-orange." When you receive this kind of information from a field companion, it isn't very helpful unless you also have an idea of what a Red Mulberry and an Osage-orange look like! This is only one good reason why readers should consider getting a copy of THE SIBLEY GUIDE TO TREES. David A. Sibley suggests that people can approach the identification of trees much like they approach the identification of birds; either up close, or at a distance. Sibley approaches the identification of trees with the same elegance and eye for identification techniques that he applies to bird identification. In addition, the illustrations in this comprehensive new field guide make the book a treat to behold whether you're interested in plants or not.

No, this is not a "bird book," but it could certainly improve your birding skills!

### **FLAP FIELD GUIDE**

The Toronto-based and well-known Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) has produced a unique new field guide to the "Common Birds of Toronto." It is a guide covering 10 species that regularly fall victim to collisions with buildings, especially in Toronto. Anyone with even the slightest interest in a "lights-out" campaign could use this publication. It's free, it's downloadable, and it's illustrated with Barry Kent McKay's fine artwork. As a word of warning to the queasy: it illustrates dead birds! For the curious, details and a link for download are here:  
<http://www.flap.org/cbot.htm>

### **CANADIAN MIGRATION MONITORING NETWORK MEETS**

In late October, 40 participants gathered in Quebec at the 7th biennial national meeting of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network - Réseau Canadien de surveillance des migrations (CMMN-RCSM). This network of stations and partners has been operating since 1998, and today includes more than 20 independent migration monitoring and research stations.

The CMMN-RCSM functions as an initiative among these individual member stations, plus Bird Studies Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

In addition to participating in special cooperative research projects on migration and stop-over ecology, these stations conduct daily counts of migrants during spring and/or fall migration.

To see details about each of the member research stations, check the Bird Studies Canada website. It is obvious that any one of these sites could be an exciting place to spend a few days - or even weeks or months - in spring or fall, either volunteering or just observing birds on migration:  
<http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cmmn/>

A ten-year report on the CMMN-RCSM (from late 2008) can be found here:  
<http://www.birdscanada.org/download/CMMNReport2008.pdf>

### **TIP OF THE MONTH: IT'S TIME FOR CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS**

This month, as we approach the Holiday Season, we also witness the start of the 110th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The counts begin on Monday, 14 December 2009 and end on Tuesday, 5 January 2010. For particulars, including how to participate, see:  
<http://www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc/>

We encourage you to consider participating in a CBC near you. By so doing you will contribute to the role being played by "citizen scientists" through the collection of long-term winter bird population data, and also have fun by participating in a community birding event.

A new way to participate is through the "CBC for Kids," pioneered by Sonoma Birding in California. The CBC events are shorter, a little more easy-going, and a perfect way to engage youngsters in the joys of birding. If one of these events is not occurring in your area, perhaps you can begin planning one for next year. For details and planning elements, see this description:  
<http://www.birdeducation.org/BENBulletin21.htm>

### **E-BULLETIN SPONSORS**

Astute readers have noticed that our official sponsorship - previously found at the top of the E-bulletin - has been missing for almost a year. Our long-time sponsor, Steiner Binoculars, served the birding community and this bulletin well

...making for almost a year our long time sponsor, Steiner Binoculars, serves the birthing community, and the benefit from for many years. We will always be grateful for Steiner Binocular's critical help to build a solid foundation with the unwavering support of CEO, Sven Harms.

Despite being sponsor-less for most of 2009, we have decided to continue producing the E-bulletin. Given that we now have over 2,300 recipients, and the E-bulletin is cited, reproduced, and forwarded broadly across the birthing and conservation world, to let our e-newsletter languish seems like a mistake.

Obviously the E-bulletin is not a blog, nor is it embellished with photos and illustrations. With sponsorship support this could be a possibility in the future; however, currently we have no plans to fancy-up our E-bulletin. For the moment we are content with simply presenting information in an unembellished fashion.

Astute E-bulletin readers will also see our new connection (visible on the top of the E-bulletin) with the [Wild Bird Centers of America](#) and the [National Bird-Feeding Society](#). While this is an interim contribution, it is one which pleases us mightily and for which we are most grateful.

Should any readers be aware of a business or institution that might be interested in striking up a long-term supportive relationship with the E-bulletin, we would be happy to hear from you. Regardless, we will maintain our connection with the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA), where all of the past E-bulletins are archived. Either of us would welcome any suggestions that you might have.

Thank you in advance for your support and assistance.

### **SHAMELESS SELF-PROMOTION**

Since the Birding Community E-bulletin is in its sixth year of publication and distribution, we have been sharing some supportive remarks from some of our readers. As previously noted, we have included a comment or two each month this year. These were placed at the very end of each E-bulletin. Our very last selection in this self-indulgent series is found below, so some of you will be relieved that this section of the E-bulletin will end with this December issue!

"The monthly Birding Community E-bulletin helps remind us that BIRDS are BIG, and in so many ways. Most of us are a bit out of touch with many of the big, important issues, but the E-bulletin brings them home to us, with the straight stuff and no fluff, and with authority from two people we all trust."

- Donald Kroodsma, former professor (U. Mass) and author of THE SINGING LIFE OF BIRDS

"A large part of my job as editor of BIRDING is keeping current and being aware. The Birding Community E-bulletin cuts through the clutter, and it delivers timely and relevant birding news. It's an indispensable reference for me."

-Ted Floyd, Editor, BIRDING (ABA)

"There aren't many publications that make me say 'wow' after every paragraph. Come to think of it, there's only one - it's the Birding E-bulletin. I can only imagine the painstaking work that the two editors do to craft this gem. Whether you're an expert birder or an amateur (like me) you'll be fascinated, enlightened, and truly entertained by this wonderful service. And you will say 'wow.'"

-Ray Brown, host, "Talkin' Birds" on WATD, WCNX, WNBP, and more

"Receiving the Birding Community E-bulletin is a little like encountering a fast-moving flock of fall warblers-there is a lot of action, it comes at you fast, and leaves you pumped up for the next encounter. The E-bulletin is the briefing I look forward to make sure I'm up to speed on all the latest bird conservation issues."

- Peter Stangel, Director, Science and Evaluation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

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