

Mid-May to mid-July

Southeast

It was a good-news-bad-news kind of spring for birders on the southeast coast this year. The good news was really, really good. Five consecutive pelagic trips off North Carolina in late May and early June discovered at least two **European Storm-Petrels**, a species currently represented on the ABA list by only a single previous record; beautifully photographed, this spring's birds followed a "probable" photographed in the same area at precisely the same time almost two years earlier. Other June pelagic trips off both Carolinas produced Brown Booby, Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, and Fea's, Bermuda, and Herald Petrels.

And the bad news. Between June 9 and the beginning of July, coastal observers from Assateague to south Florida reported finding unusual numbers of dead and dying seabirds. More than two thirds of the birds were Greater Shearwaters, but the casualties included other tubenoses, Northern Gannets, a Brown Booby, and various gulls and terns as well. At press time, it was still uncertain whether all of this morbidity and mortality was related, and if so what its cause or causes were; what is already apparent, though, is the usefulness of the internet in quickly alerting birders to the possibility that their apparently isolated observations may in fact be part of a larger picture.

Just as puzzling as the seabird die-off was the appearance June 1 on Siesta Key, Florida, of a male **Varied Bunting**; obviously confused about the difference between "stunning" and "stunned," this bird flew into a window and died, becoming Florida's first specimen and, pending resolution of the important questions about its origin, the state's first record. Every bit as unexpected was a Burrowing Owl that lingered "a couple of weeks" in May in Asheville, North Carolina; there appear to be only two previous state records for this species. Still holding on in Florida's Everglades, two male Shiny Cowbirds were found in a mixed icterid flock at the Flamingo Visitor Center.

For us northerners, herons are perhaps *the* quintessential Florida birds; but it is worth recalling that they are not uniformly distributed across that large and varied state. As common as the Reddish Egret is at some Florida locations, an individual found in Gainesville in early June was said to be the first recorded in nearly a century for Alachua County. A flock of 17 White Ibis over Pike County, Kentucky, in late May had gone even farther astray.

Northeast

Seawatching was a profitable pursuit farther north on the Atlantic coast, too—even, in some cases, for observers far from the sea. Persistent northeast winds in late May drove thousands of Red and Red-necked Phalaropes onshore along the Massachusetts and New Hampshire coasts, with significant numbers reported inland as well. The flight also produced Long-tailed Jaegers and a Sabine's Gull, along with an impressive number of Leach's Storm-Petrels, a species only infrequently seen from land in Massachusetts. The same winds also drove Arctic Terns far from the deep water they prefer, with birds appearing as far inland as Northampton, Massachusetts, New Jersey's Spruce Run Reservoir, and Bucks County, Pennsylvania. An unidentified murre in Vermont June 19 may well have been part of the same phenomenon. A Bridled Tern was seen at Massachusetts's aptly named Bird Island in mid-June.

By far the most exciting of the storm-driven strays were at least two albatrosses observed in Massachusetts. An (**Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross**) first photographed May 29 at Tucker-nuck Island, off Nantucket, was sighted again two days later off South Monomoy Island; a week later, one or two albatrosses tentatively identified as Black-browed were observed in Buzzards Bay.

The pelagic wanderers competed for birders' attention with a respectable number of western species. The Nantucket California Gull from last winter was still present at the end of June. A White-winged Dove provided a first record of this rapidly expanding species for Chautauqua County, New York; a Bohemian Waxwing in Amherst, New York, May 15 was the latest ever for that state. A **Say's Phoebe** at New York's Jones Beach—rare even as a fall vagrant—was downright startling in mid-June; a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was seen repeatedly in May on Rhode Island's Block Island. Somewhat less surprising, given the species' spread in recent years, but still noteworthy were territorial Clay-colored Sparrows found on Martha's Vineyard and in Freeport, Maine. Maine was also the site of a possibly breeding pair of Wilson's Phalaropes; but the best bird of the season in Maine was a "Solitary" Vireo on Matinicus Rock, photographed and identified as a **Plumbeous Vireo**, a first state record if accepted and only the second recorded in New England.

A Northern Wheatear in Nova Scotia in May was one of a number of typically "Old World" birds found on the east coast this spring. A male Ruff was photographed at Jamaica Bay May 17, while Curlew Sandpipers were reported in New Jersey and



European Storm-Petrel, off North Carolina, May 2005. Photo © John Boyd.

Delaware in numbers almost recalling the 1980s. A drake Garganey spent most of June at Brigantine NWR in New Jersey, and an adult Little Egret was found at Lingan Bay, Nova Scotia in late May. A dark-morph **Western Reef-Heron** lingered in Newfoundland through at least July 12.

For many northeastern birders, the most notable phenomenon of the spring was the unusual incursion of southern species. Prothonotary Warblers made an impressive showing as far north as northern Vermont; one in Rhode Island was said to be only the fourth record for that state. Long Island observers found unusually high numbers of Yellow-throated and Hooded Warblers and Summer Tanagers; a Swainson's Warbler provided a first record for Suffolk County. A male Painted Bunting—a species that is increasingly regular as a northward stray—spent a week mid-May in Saco, Maine. Swallow-tailed Kites, expected but no less exciting in the region in late spring, appeared in New Jersey, Rhode Island, and western Massachusetts in May. An Anhinga spotted over Portsmouth, New Hampshire, May 17 may finally promote that southern species off the state's "hypothetical" list. A Whooping Crane from the Florida-wintering population spent most of June in Vermont.

Wilson's Plover strayed north and stayed this spring, with individuals on Cape Cod and Nantucket and in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, in May and June. Even Nova Scotia had its share of southern wanderers, with a Chuck-will's-widow singing throughout June (and a possible female seen once nearby); a Black Vulture was seen regularly there through the middle of the month. But the prize for the farthest-flung landbird went to a Fork-tailed Flycatcher, seen on Nantucket for two days in mid-May.

Midwest

Even rarer inland than on the Atlantic coast, another **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** visited the Chicago area May 16. The next day saw an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** in the same area, another species that while regular in the northeast, is vanishingly rare in the mid-continent. The weird-tyrannid parade extended into Michigan, where a frustratingly silent **Tropical/Couch's Kingbird** was discovered in Ann Arbor May 13. Iowa's fifth-ever **Vermilion Flycatcher** was a great deal more accommodating: a bright male, this bird arrived in Guthrie County on May 15, and was still present as late as July 6.

Other classic southwestern species reported in the region included White-winged Doves in Nebraska, Iowa, and Michigan; it may not be long until this species is as commonplace as the once-novel Eurasian Collared-Dove, which continues its spread into the Great Lakes states. A Snowy Plover appeared in North Dakota for the third year running. And a feeder in South Dakota's Black Hills is reported to have hosted a **Magnificent Hummingbird** for two days in mid-June.

From the southeast, Swallow-tailed Kites were reported in Missouri in mid-June. A Chuck-will's-widow sang in Berrien County, Michigan, through the first day of summer; the species is only accidental in the state. A White-eyed Vireo in Sioux County, Nebraska, was, surprisingly, at least the third record for the Nebraska panhandle. A territorial male Prairie Warbler was found in Dakota County, Minnesota, in June. The apparent modest recovery of Henslow's Sparrow in the Midwest continues apace; birds were reported as far north and west as the Dakotas, with more than 100 individuals being seen and heard daily at a single site in Illinois!

The bird of the season in Kansas, and far ahead in the race for bird of the year, was an outlandish **American Three-toed Woodpecker** found July 3 in Morton County and viewed and photographed by many in the days that followed. If accepted, this will be the first record for the state.

Texas

A Green Violet-ear was found in Austin in early June, while a **White-eared Hummingbird** at Big Bend the end of the month will, pending acceptance, provide about the fifteenth state record. Even rarer was an **Olive Warbler** found May 28 in the Davis Mountains; there are only about five previous Texas records. A **Greater Pewee** identified the week before will be about the twelfth for the state, if accepted.

In southern Texas, Brown Noddies were reported in late June from South Padre Island and Boca Chica. The **Gray-crowned Yellowthroat** continued through at least the end of June at Sabal Palm, with Yellow-green Vireos reported from there and from Port Aransas. A **Rufous-capped Warbler** was discovered June 30 in Travis County.

Southwest

Colorado birders experienced what can only be described as a dazzling spring. A potential first-state-record **Black-chinned Sparrow** was discovered May 24, followed in mid-June by a **White-eared Hummingbird** in Durango. Wandering Brown Pelicans ventured to northeast Colorado reservoirs in late May and June, while a **Black Vulture** in Bent County in July will, if accepted, furnish only the second record for the state. A Vermilion Flycatcher was found near Colorado Springs in early July; another southerner, a Lesser Nighthawk, was found in Laramie County in mid-June. For sheer shock-value, no bird could compete this season with the **Tropical Parula** discovered June 20 in Fort Collins and present through July 4; if accepted, this will be not only a first state record but the northernmost ever for the species.

New Mexico observers found some equally impressive birds this season (see "Birding Landscapes" in this issue of *Winging It*). An **Arctic Tern** was reported from Sumner Lake in early May; scarcely less out of place was an **Elegant Trogon** in

Roosevelt County (that's east!) in mid-June.

Arizona, too, turned up a few rarities this spring. Rose-throated Becards were seen or heard several times at their traditional Patagonia site in May and again in July. An **Aztec Thrush** reported from the Chiricahuas June 30 would be the earliest on record; the same range produced Short-tailed Hawks in May and June, while one seen in mid-June in the Pinal Mountains was probably the northernmost representative of its species anywhere.

Birders at Willcox's "Lake Cochise" discovered an extremely rare Red-necked Grebe May 19, while an astounding **Black Turnstone** photographed there in early June will furnish a first state record. Farther west, a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at the Salton Sea May 19 was apparently the first for the Salton Sink.

But the bird that caused the most stir in May and June was the ABA area's ninth **Slate-throated Redstart**, a tremendously cooperative individual discovered in Carr Canyon May 26 and found dead June 5; now a study skin at the University of Arizona, the bird is thought to have been the victim of a clumsy accipiter.

West Coast

Last confirmed as a breeder in the San Joaquin Valley 85 years ago, a breeding pair of (Least) Bell's Vireos was confirmed on the San Joaquin NWR in June. Suggestive was the return of Yellow Rail for the fourth year running to the same Modoc County site.

Probably *not* breeding, but notable summer birds all the same, were a Yellow-throated Vireo in June in Santa Cruz County, a Winter Wren in the San Gabriels, and a Prairie Warbler at Mono Lake. A male Scarlet Tanager was a one-day visitant to Orange County, and a Golden-winged Warbler was noted in San Benito in late May. Birders in San Mateo County discovered a singing male Northern Parula, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and a female Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in late May and June. Among the season's rarest eastern vagrants was a **Gray-cheeked Thrush** in Kern County on June 12.

Strays from the southeast included California's first summering Greater Pewee, in the Laguna Mountains. Red-faced Warblers were photographed in the San Bernadinos in late May; a Common Black-Hawk in Sonoma County persisted through at least May 30.

A Brown Booby was seen near the Piedras Blancas lighthouse in June; a Gull-billed Tern sighted May 19 will, if accepted, provide a first record for Los Angeles County.

Northwest

Idaho's warbler list this spring recalled a good day much farther east, with reports of Ovenbird and Magnolia, Blackpoll, Chestnut-sided, and the state's first-ever spring Blackburnian Warblers in May and early June. A Yellow-throated Vireo at Camas NWR was only the third for the state, as was a male

Baltimore Oriole in mid-June. And the **Glossy Ibis** photographed June 11 at Camas will be the state's first, as will be a **Least Bittern** discovered there June 17 (both pending acceptance).

Also notable were up to three Black-and-white Warblers at different sites in Oregon in early July. Western Oregon experienced a major movement of Red Crossbills in late May, with single-day counts of as many as 2000 birds. A Least Tern was at Brandon Beach State Park in late June, followed by a Chestnut-collared Longspur in Portland a few days later. An adult **Crested Caracara** found in late April in Coos County will be a second state record if accepted; the same county produced a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher May 14. A Garganey was discovered May 19 and a Hudsonian Godwit May 28 in Canby.

Montana birders found the state's first **Hermit Warbler** May 15 in Bozeman; a Lesser Goldfinch appeared in Billings in early July. This summer has also seen the revision of the status of Gray Flycatcher in Montana; with only two documented records before 2005, birds have now been found in several localities with suitable breeding habitat.

The spring movement of Sabine's Gulls through the Calgary area was spectacular; more than 90 individuals were seen on a single late-May day at High River, where a Glaucous-winged Gull had been identified mid-month. A **Dickcissel** at an Alberta feeder in early June will, if accepted, provide only the fifth record for the province; another was discovered in Sorrento, British Columbia, in mid-June, and continued through mid-July.

A Brown Thrasher in British Columbia's West Kootenays was only about the seventeenth recorded in the province. A Clay-colored Sparrow found in mid-June will, if accepted, be only the second or third record for Victoria. Near Vancouver, a male Baltimore Oriole lingered at the Grant Narrows for nearly two weeks in June; it was joined one day by a Loggerhead Shrike. A pair of **Common Eider** was found June 12 in Point Roberts, while the fall vanguard of migrant shorebirds included a **Red-necked Stint** at the Iona Island sewage ponds in early July.

In Alaska, an American Avocet near Juneau will furnish only the fifth record for that state. A Lesser Sand-Plover was noted several times in the Nome area in early June. A **Violet-green Swallow** at Gambell June 1 was said to be the first ever for the entire Bering Sea region.

Consistent observation on St. Paul Island produced many noteworthy records, including Hawfinch, Common Cuckoo, Arctic Warbler, **Dark-sided Flycatcher**, and as many as six Gray-streaked Flycatchers in mid-June. Snow Goose and Greater Yellowlegs, both casual in the Pribilofs, were on St. Paul mid-month; a Canvasback found in May was only the second ever recorded on the island. A flock of 5000 Crested Auklets passed St. Paul May 20. Just as the summer's first Rock Sandpipers were hatching, a Common Snipe arrived on the island—the first of the fall.