TASIL News November 1994



Take a Second Look 42 Baker Avenue Lexington, MA 02173

Next TASL Harbor Census: November 20

In 1995: January 15, February 12, March 19 for more information, call (617) 863-2392 or (617) 268-7571

Gone Gunning

Jounded, the Red-breasted Merganser "uses all manner of stratagems to escape from the gunner," writes Edward Howe Forbush. "It dives...conceals itself in submerged water-plants, swims away with only the bill above water...clings with its bill to some object on the bottom."

Support Waterfowl Conservation

Buy the "Duck Stamp"

Gunners and hunters must buy this

stamp before they can go shooting.

Birders should too. The income raised

goes toward the purchase and preser-

vation of wildlife habitat throughout

Gunners helped Forbush create his threevolume classic, Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States, first published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1925. Numbered among his more than 400 correspondents, they contributed

their knowledge of waterfowl behavior to his species accounts. He continues his account of the Red-breasted Merganser Mergus serrator citing two of their reports.

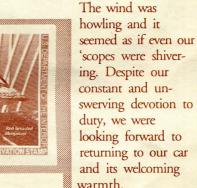
- 1. "Mr. Stanley C. Jewett asserts that in May, 1915, at Netarts Bay, Oregon, a wounded bird of this species dived to a submerged root in about three feet of water and died while clinging there. Several hours later when the tide had ebbed, the dead bird was found on the bare flat with its bill still fastened to the object it had seized."
- 2. "Mr. Alan Keniston, Superintendent of the State Reservation for the Heath Hen on Marthas Vineyard, tells me that 'twenty years ago,' while hunting the Red-breasted Merganser in a flat-bottomed boat, fourteen feet long, one of this species was shot which went to the bottom

Continued on page 4

REMINISCING

The Ticket

ack in January of 1993, the intrepid Nahant team of TASLers (Bob Stymeist, Toby and Mike Gooley) battled our way up the cold and exposed slope of East Point, Nahant, the northeastern boundary of TASL territory.



After about 20 minutes, we walked as swiftly as our many layers of thick clothing allowed back



the continent. This stamp is also used as a "Refuge Entrance Pass" at National Wildlife Refuges in the United States. It is available at the entrance to many refuges and at major post offices.

> to the parking lot. There we found, to our surprise, a parking ticket on the windshield, complete with a \$20 fine for parking without a Nahant Resident Sticker. Here we were, freezing our toes off for the advancement of science, and this was our reward? We were incensed, but accepted our fate and decided we'd tell Soheil to pay it.

Upon learning that TASL was so underfunded as to be unfunded, we chose another course of action. I composed a polite but serious letter to the Nahant Parking Clerk explaining the nature of our project and its benefit to coastal towns like Nahant. I also pointed out that in all the years we volunteers have been crazy enough to stand on exposed cliffs in howling winter gales, we had never been ticketed before. I didn't expect much, but-in the words of my father and

Continued on page 4

Summary of 1994 Boston Harbor Summer/Fall Censuses

21 August

Species	Nalsant Bay	Route IA	Pines River	Belle Isle	Smake Is	Islands	Squantum	
	Lynn Harbar		Marsh	Owir	Logan			
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT		101	8			THE REAL PROPERTY.		
GREAT BLUE HERON		5		1	- 311		5	
GREAT EGRET		1	The Park of the Pa	- 3	in the same	100		
SNOWY EGRET	CONT.	3	11	24	13	4	8	
GREEN HERON				2	3		3	
BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON		1000	S	3	12023	2	1	
BRANT	and the same			-		2		
GREEN-WINGED TEAL	-	_		4	-		-	
SCAUP (SP)					1	2		
OSPREY			1	1			2	
NORTHERN HARRIER			1	1	12000		100	
BROAD-WINGED HAWK			100	- 1			1	
RED-TAILED HAWK				7010	100	11	1	
AMERICAN KESTREL			1	. 1	5	1 37	1	
PEREGRINE	Terroritoring	Section 1971	1	F-10000000	1	1	-	
RING-NECKED PHAESANT		2000	2		10000	4年9年次		
BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER	53	90	459	60	260	143	59	
SEMIPALMATED PLOVER	147	275	170	43	192	213	277	
	19/	273	170	43	192	213	211	
KILLDEER		2000	115	THE PERSON NAMED IN			0.000	
AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER	THE RESERVE		-		2	6	100	
GREATER YELLOWLEGS	1	8	27	147	29	1	75	
LESSER YELLOWLEGS		9	45	13	11	1	28	
YELLOWLEGS (SP)							25	
SPOTTED SANDPIPER					3	3	1	
UPLAND SANDPIPER					5			
WHIMBREL					1	- 5		
HUDSONIAN GODWIT	2			7	3			
RUDDY TURNSTONE	2				59	-79	- 1	
RED KNOT	1000	1720000			19		ALE BEE	
SANDERLING	841	Section 1		10000	1	7		
SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER	2144	357	132	234	310	182+	790	
WESTERN SANDPIPER	12000		1	10000000	100000	1	-	
LEAST SANDPIPER	1	1		1	38	11	28	
WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER	4	2000		2	2	9	8	
PECTORAL SANDPIPER	-	2723	The same of		- 1	1000000	1	
PEEP (SP.)	TO DESCRIPTION OF THE PERSON O	-	21		3 4	-	40000	
BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER			21		4			
SHORT-BILLED DOWTTCHER	45	5	63	155	13	6	13	
LONG-BILLED DOWTTCHER	1 4,	,	03	133	15	.0	1.0	
LAUGHING GULL	27			1	-11	5	26	
BONAPARTE'S GULL	258				52	3	20	
		9			90	-3	28	
COMMON TERN	3	. 9			2	26	20	
LEAST TERN			1	1		26	10000	
BLACK TERN	0 15	1000		200	2	2000		
BELTED KINGFISHER	1	5-3-1		1	1	-		
HORNED LARK		Company	- Inches		65	1970	27 10 10	
BLUE-WINGED WARBLER		35-1	Second Second	1000	13500	1		
BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER		100	127	17.75	F 1000	1		
SCARLET TANAGER	ALC: N			70.00		1		
The second second second	100000	100000				Secretary 1	menni	
TIME	7-11.15	7.7:30	130-10-30	10:20 AM	8:30 AM	11:30 AM	10:15 AM	
	AM	AM	AM	1:20 PM	1:30 PM	4:15 PM	5:20 PM	
TIDE	LOUHI	LO	MID/HI	HI	LO/HI	HIIIO	HIILO	

18 September

Species	Nahant Bay Lynn Harbor	Pines River Marsh	Winshrap Beach	Relle Ide Oasis	Snake Is Lugan	Islands	Squantum
COMMON LOON	. 3		IS NOT	1000	E SE	100	0.000
PIED-BILLED GREBE			F-19		3	- 1	1000
GREAT CORMORANT			THE REAL PROPERTY.	1000	to make the	3	
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT	5		100	Edilli.	85	475	
AMERICAN BITTERN	1000			- 1			and the same of
GREAT BLUE HERON GREAT EGRET		Sulsi			20	1	2
SNOWY EGRET				7	14	- 3	5
GREEN HERON		247				1	
BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON					- 1		
CANADA GOOSE GREEN-WINGED TEAL						- 1	
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK	33			31 15	150	4	
MALIARD	13	100000	Married Co.	-	150	1	Section 1
BLUE-WINGED TEAL	21		1000	200		V-0-10-0	
NORTHERN SHOVELER	10			2	E 100		5.00
SURF SCOTER WHITE-WINGED SCOTER	50 180		5	237			
OSPREY	180		,			THE REAL PROPERTY.	1
NORTHERN HARRIER				1			-
RED-TAILED HAWK		-				1	-
AMERICAN KESTREL PEREGRINE					1		
BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER	6		300	1	16	- 9	
AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER			1	1	32	- 3	
SEMIPALMATED PLOVER	70		22		65	25	
KILLDEER	-				4	10	3
GREATER YELLOWLEGS LESSER YELLOWLEGS		3	Section 1	163	5		80 14
WILLET					1		1.
SPOTTED SANDPIPER	SECTION .			Land St		1	
WHIMBREL		- 1	100				
RUDDY TURNSTONE RED KNOT			19		14		
SANDERLING	540		SECTION.	V	3 2		
SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER	2601		40		90	14	37
WESTERN SANDPIPER	2		-		1		
LEAST SANDPIPER WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER	6		20	6	20	9	
BAIRD'S SANDPIPER	. 0		1		- 2		
PECTORAL SANDPIPER			2				
PEEP (SP)	District.		25	1 1 1 3 3	Total Labor	I BYSE	To Black
BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER	10		1	2	20	1000	3
SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER	MARINE		12	20	4		200
DOWTTCHER (SP)	- 3				(400) 054		THE R.
LAUGHING GULL	8		127		6	90	18
BONAPARTE'S GULL	16		906		- 1	8	
COMMON TERN LEAST TERN				-		3	
BELTED KINGFISHER				-	1		100
HORNED LARK					23		
AMERICAN PIPIT	-		-		2		
BLACKPOLL WARBLER SAVANNAH SPARROW					1		
SHARP-TAILED SPARROW			HATTER STREET	Taken I	28 2		-
SONG SPARROW	100		The same of the sa	E.L.	15	LE ST	Carried St.
TIME	7AM	1:15 PM	9-11:30	9:30-10:45	7:30 AM	10:30 AM	845 AM
TIDE	4 PM MIDILO	MID	AM MID/HI	AM HI	12:30 PM	3:30 PM	3 PM
HDE	MIDILO	MID	MICKHI	HI	MID/HI	HI/LO .	MD/HI/LO

16 October

	Nahant Bay Lynn Beach	Pina River Mersh	Simpsun's Boatyard	Winzhrop Beach	Belle Isle Oasis	Snake Is.	Ligan* 10/23/94
RED-THROATED LOON	2		- 4				
HORNED GREBE	1		1		A STATE OF THE PARTY OF THE PAR		
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT	61		-10	75	The same of the	1000	185
GREAT BLUE HERON					1	9	14
SNOWY EGRET					5	4	
BRANT	- 11				302.0	1000	30
GREEN-WINGED TEAL					20	1	I CO
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK	119	-		15	30	90	169
MALLARD	1	177.50			2	-	1
BLUE-WINGED TEAL					4		
NORTHERN SHOVELER					2		
GREATER SCAUP				1	-	- 4	
BUFFLEHEAD						6	
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER	12			263			
BLACK SCOTER	2	THE PERSON	TOTAL ST		STATE OF THE PERSON NAMED IN	The same of	All a second
SURF SCOTER	76		2000				- "
WHITE-WINGED SCOTER	1095		600			THE STATE OF	3
NORTHERN HARRIER		1	100				
AMERICAN KESTREL					10000		1
PEREGRINE					1200	N 75-2	2
BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER		24	15	250			19
AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER		2	100	10000	5	-	- 10
SEMIPALMATED PLOVER	12	3		1	- 1		
KILLDEER				-		2	
GREATER YELLOWLEGS		31			166	7	
LESSER YELLOWLEGS		8			8	11.5	
SPOTTED SANDPIPER		- 00				1	
RUDDY TURNSTONE		1000	1	30			
SANDERLING	75	ALC: UNKNOWN	1	70	THE R. P. LEWIS CO., LANSING	Minimum Co.	225.025
WESTERN SANDPIPER					3		-
PECTORAL SANDPIPER					- T	1	1
PEEP (SP.)		3	80	5			
DUNLIN		8		250	3	-	1
LONG-BILLED DOWTTCHER			1000		3		-1-00
LAUGHING GULL		-		46			
COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL			-		- 1		
BONAPARTE'S GULL	432			120	6.5	25	
SHORT-EARED OWL							1
HORNED LARK							8
AMERICAN PIPIT							103
SAVANNAH SPARROW							5
SEASIDE SPARROW							1
SONG SPARROW		1000000	100		THE REAL PROPERTY.		6
SWAMP SPARROW		S STEEL	- 1		10000		3
LAPLAND LONGSPUR		10000	- 100				1
SNOW BUNTING			1000		1000	LORO.	E-1
TIME	2-3:30	7:45-8:30	0:45-11:15	10 AM	1:45-10:20	8-9:40	NOON
	PM	AM	AM	1 PM	AM	AM	2:30 PM
TIDE	LO	MID/HI	HI	HIMID	HI	HI	HI



Participants:

David Oliver, Dennis Oliver, Linda Pivacek, John Quigley, Marj Rines, Nahant Bay/Lynn Harbor (includes Lynn Beach and Point of Pines, Revere).

Fay & Peter Vale, Saugus (includes Route 1A and Pines River Marsh/Route 107).

Jim Barton, Susan Davidson, Louise Levy, Susan Pacsoza, Michele Parham, Mary Sprague, Belle Isle/Oasis/Winthrop Beach. Marj Rines, Bob Stymeist, Winthrop Beach, Simpson's Boatyard. Scott Bickerton, Fred Bouchard, Bob Bowker, Louise Cali, Vinnie Cardillo, Paula Chasan, Chris Ellison, Maury Hall, Joan Labby, James Palladino, Soheil Zendeh, Snake Island/Logan Airport.

Ed Crowley, Kristen Hansen, Bob Kelley, Dave Lange, Marcia Libman, John Nove, Bob Petersen, Polly Stevens, Bob Stymeist, Harbor Islands.

Fred Bouchard, Tom Cameron, Paul Fitzgerald, Squantum.

Weather:

August 21: Cloudy; SW to SE wind 15-25 mph; 20-25C. September 18: Rain early, then clear; light NE wind; 8-18C. October 16: Clear; N wind 10 mph; 15C.

Special thanks to:

Mr. Don Frazier of MDC for making access to the Harbor Islands

Mr. Joseph Lawless of MassPort Security for facilitating access to

John Quigley for providing tickets to the Harbor Islands.

Notes:

 According to John Quigley, who spends an enormous amount of time birding at Lynn Beach, large flocks of shorebirds and gulls feed there when red algae is washed up on shore. This does not occur during stormy weather, as the turbulent water takes the algae back out. As a result, shorebird and gull counts at the beach are low during and immediately after bouts of bad

2. This Buff-breasted Sandpiper was a lifer for Louise Levy, who found it first at Winthrop Beach.

3. Three parties covered Winthrop Beach, each separated from the next by about one hour. The table shows the highest count for each species.

4. Scoters moved in at a rapid clip in the interim between the September and October counts. Here are some estimates for Nahant Bay: September 25: 1100 scoters; October 2: over 3600 scoters. These tallies were made from a high vantage point, making them more accurate than the counts from Lynn

Gunning (continued from page 1)

in three feet of water. The water was clear and the bottom pure sand. The boat passed completely over the bird which was seen lying motionless, flat on the bottom, with neck outstretched. It stayed there until the boat had passed over when it 'bobbed up like a cork,' alive."

People could hunt safely all along our seacoasts in Jewett's and Keniston's time. No longer, and maybe that's why we don't hear stories like theirs anymore. Scarcely anybody's left to tell them.

Or maybe people who could still tell them don't think anybody's listening. Or maybe we haven't been talking and listening to the right people.

Would we believe them?

Did Forbush, our long-time State Ornithologist? In his Red-breasted Mergeranser species account, he hedges, stating that his first correspondent asserts while his second tells me... But elsewhere in Birds of Massachusetts he declares flatly that many species of waterfowl "desperately seek refuge from gunners" by clinging to objects beneath the surface. He cites private correspondence. He cites published sources.

I'd like to see for myself, but I wouldn't.

nearly circumpolar species, the Red-breasted Merganser Mergus serrator nests in North America from Labrador in the east across Canada into Alaska on the west. Using its long, thin, red serrated bill to catch and hold fish, it winters along the Pacific coast of North America from southern Alaska to Baja California, along the Sonoran shore of the Sea of Cortes in Mexico, along the Atlantic coast of North America from Nova Scotia to Florida and along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico from Florida to the Rio Grande.

On November 22, 1992, from Kelly's Landing in South Boston, I counted 2,200 Red-breasted Mergansers stretched out in a long thin line across the harbor to the south, most with red heads, appearing to be females. But young males also have reddish heads early in winter. Not until January or February do they acquire their adult dark green heads and crests.

J. Barton, Cambridge



Woodcut by
Julie Roberts

Ticket (continued from page 1)

probably every other father in the Western Hemisphere-"You never know until you try."

Instead of receiving the expected "Thank you for your letter but pay up" response, I received a lovely note from Pam Motley, the Parking Clerk. She said, in part:

I have canceled the ticket so you need not worry about it any longer. I have been a "birder" since I was very young, and used to help my grandparents with the Christmas Census in Worcester, where I grew up. My grandfather, Philip Heywood, was a director of Massachusetts Audubon Society for many years. I also helped him with bird-banding. I believe that your census is very significant.

She enclosed two 1993 Nahant Resident stickers so TASLers could continue our work without fear of parking tickets. [Ms. Motley provided us with similar stickers for 1994, upon request. -ed]

I've had plenty of memorable moments in five years of TASL counts; most of then have had to do with birds and miserable weather. I'd have to say this pleasant encounter ranks right up near the top for a TASL experience.

Toby Gooley

[Toby and Mike Gooley's baby, Dana Beth, was born in February 1993. They moved to Marlborough in the past year and have been granted a sabbatical from TASL counts.]

What is TASL?

Take a Second Look (TASL) was started in the winter of 1980 by a local group of environmentally concerned birdwatchers; our primary focus has been to survey and census the bird population of Boston Harbor throughout the year, although the winter water bird censuses have been our major activity. A summer/fall series of "shorebird censuses" were initiated in1993 and continued this year. Summaries of those censues can be found in the center of this publication.

The 1994-95 winter TASL Harbor Census dates are listed on page 1; please mark them in your calendars. These dates are chosen to coincide with high or incoming tide during the morning. We will start each census at 8:30 AM and go until early afternoon. We are now censusing in nine separate parties: this means we really need at least 16 volunteers per census date. Unfortunately we have been losing more volunteers than gaining. Can you drag along a friend or two and break them in?

Please remember: this is an excellent opportunity to learn—and teach—about the common water birds of the Harbor. You do not have to be an expert to participate. Each area will be led by at least one competent birder. That person will need help with navigation, driving and record-keeping. So make yourselves useful and learn something in the process.

Due to our new, enlarged census schedule, we have need of additional administrative assistance. There are a number of small jobs, *e.g.*, compiling and editing tally sheets or improving our mailing list, that should be shared among volunteers. Also, if you would like to write for or illustrate this publication, we need you. For more information call Maury Hall (268-7571) or Soheil Zendeh (863-2392H, 923-0941W).

Please mail census results to Maury Hall, 849 East 3rd St. #2, South Boston, MA 02127.

TASL (Take Second Look) is organized and staffed entirely by volunteers. TASL data is compiled by Maury Hall. This newsletter is produced by Soheil Zendeh.