



*This American Oystercatcher has the band Yellow AEC, which can be read in the field through a scope or camera lens.*

## **Coastal Steward's Letter, June 10 - June 16, 2021.**

This week's letter is going to be a bit different. It's time you met some of Tuckernuck's resident American Oystercatchers and learned about each one individually. Some are returning birds that have nested in previous years, and others are joining us here for the first time in 2021. Libby Buck, working with the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, is responsible for banding many of these birds. She aims to band oystercatcher chicks when they are around 22 days old, just before they start to fledge. Shorebird monitors, ornithologists, and casual birdwatchers alike are encouraged to report banded oystercatchers to the American Oystercatcher Working Group at [www.amoywg.org](http://www.amoywg.org). Yellow, the color denoted for Massachusetts, is used on the Oystercatchers that are banded on both Nantucket and Tuckernuck.

### ***The Residents***

**YELLOW AA8** was banded as a chick in 2014 on Bigelow's Point by Edie Ray and Allison Black. It first nested on Tuckernuck just last year, having been absent for the summers of 2019 and 2018. Last year, AA8 was part of a resident "threesome" of birds on Whale Point, along with two unbanded individuals. That nest ended up failing; however, this year it seemed that the trio was intent on re-establishing that territory. One of the birds, presumably the female of the group, was killed by a Snowy Owl earlier this spring, and because of this, the two remaining mates have wandered widely around the island. This past winter, AA8 lived on **Seabrook Island in South Carolina** (a distance of ~813 miles) from January through March. It was last seen there on March 12, and showed up on Tuckernuck twenty-eight days later on April 9.

**YELLOW EA** was banded as an adult in 2012 on Bigelow's Point by Edie Ray. It spends its winters on **Little Horse Island in South Carolina** (a distance of ~834 miles). On Tuckernuck, it is part of a resident "threesome" of birds on Bigelow's Point, along with two unbanded individuals. Their nest usually contains about six eggs, twice the size of a normal oystercatcher clutch. Unfortunately, these eggs have typically proved infertile and have not hatched for several years running. This year, however, four of the eggs hatched and two of the young are still alive and running about.

**YELLOW W8** is probably our oldest oystercatcher. At 11 years old, this old-timer is typically the first oystercatcher on Tuckernuck to lay eggs for the breeding season. W8 was banded as a chick in Aquinnah on Martha's Vineyard in 2010, but has not returned to that island since. Prior to first nesting on Tuckernuck in 2014, W8 explored Smith's Point, Little Neck, Clark's Cove, and Coskata on Nantucket during the summer months. It is believed that W8 spends its winters on **Deweese Island, South Carolina** (a distance of ~783 miles). Another oystercatcher on this list also spends its winters on this tiny barrier island in South Carolina... can you find out which one?

**RED ACN** is one of only a few red-banded birds on the islands. It is the color used in Georgia for oystercatcher banding. ACN was banded as an adult on its winter grounds in coastal Georgia in 2016. It has returned diligently to **Saint Andrews Sound in Camden County** (a distance of ~945 miles) every winter since, arriving there in October and departing in March. During the other half of the year on Tuckernuck, it nests on East Pond near the “cut” and is usually quite successful with raising young there.

### *The Visitors*

**YELLOW CA2** is only three years old but has an impressive history of re-sightings in both Massachusetts and Florida. It is also a comparatively long-distance migrant that regularly spends winters in **Lee County, Florida**, on the Gulf Coast, mainly around Little Estero Island and Lovers Key State Park (a distance of ~1,223 miles). Banded on Muskeget in 2018, CA2 showed up on Tuckernuck last year in early June and then moved on to Coskata for July through October. Last time I saw CA2 was on May 28 of this year, so maybe it has already left Tuckernuck for the bigger island.

**YELLOW CEH** is the young gun of the mix. At just two years old, this bird has already been resighted a number of times. This year, on June 10, it appeared on Tuckernuck for the first time at Whale Point. It was banded as a chick on nearby Eel Point, and its parents are Yellow AA1 and Yellow CEF. Last year, it was seen on **Seabrook Island in Charleston, South Carolina** (a distance of ~813 miles), on April 21.

**YELLOW CAE** was not seen at all in 2020. It showed up on the west end of Tuckernuck on June 11 and turned three years old just a few days before that. CAE was banded as a chick in Polpis Harbor on Nantucket in 2018. Its parents are Yellow F2 and an unbanded mate. In late September of 2019, CAE was observed in **Dare County, North Carolina**, by Brian Van Druten (a distance of ~480 miles). The observation of this bird on June 11 marks just the second re-sight of this individual.

**YELLOW CAC** is a sibling of Yellow CAE. Interestingly, unlike CAE, this bird has never been reported outside of Nantucket County. It was not re-sighted at all in either 2019 or 2020. This year, on April 11, Michael Thureson spotted the bird at Jackson Point, and it was subsequently found the next day at the same location by Peter Sutters. This bird showed up on the east side of Tuckernuck on June 10 but was not found with its sibling initially.

**YELLOW AEF** is now six years old, having been banded on Coatue in July of 2015. Its parents are Yellow 1X and Yellow 0X. AEF is not a new visitor to Tuckernuck. In 2019, this bird jugs ped around quite a bit between Smith’s Point and Whale Point during the month of June. In 2020, AEF spent the latter half of July and the majority of August on Tuckernuck, again mainly at Whale Point. AEF remains unreported on Tuckernuck so far this year, although it has been seen on nearby Smith’s Point. Very little is known about the non-breeding habits of AEF; only one re-sight of this bird exists outside of Nantucket County. Nolan Schillerstrom observed AEF on **Deweese Island, South Carolina**, in February of 2018 (a distance of ~783 miles).

That’s all for now. This has been another fantastic week on Tuckernuck!

Best,

*Skyler Kardell*