



A White-winged Dove continues into this week, originally found by Zoë and William L'Écuyer on 7/13.

Coastal Steward's Letter, July 15 - July 22, 2020.

Shorebird migration was in full-swing this week, with the arrival of several species of plover, sandpiper, and curlew to our shores. Beginning in early July and lasting throughout Indian Summer, the visiting observer need not fear about missing out, as these next few months hold enormous potential for studying such transient high-arctic breeders. Twenty members of these *Charadriiformes*, notably **Stilt Sandpiper**, **Pectoral Sandpiper**, and **Western Sandpiper** all made landfall on our outer sands in the last week.

The latter species is a somewhat rare but regular visitor to this archipelago, and a bird found on Muskeget Island on July 18 marks just one of maybe a few handfuls of birds recorded so far this season along the south shore of New England. With a restricted breeding range solely within the far Western reaches of the Alaskan Peninsula, it is surprising to learn that this small, unassuming, rufous-toned sandpiper actually numbers among the most numerous shorebirds in the entire Western Hemisphere - with a global population of some 3.5 million individuals.

The fact that this individual was an after hatch-year bird (meaning it is at least 10 months old) comes as somewhat of a surprise. The majority of birds we see here on Tuckernuck and Nantucket are juveniles making their first trip south - and those we encounter usually as the season matures. Western Sandpiper may winter as far north as New Jersey during the colder months, although this is an exception rather than a rule in such a long-distance family of shorebird.

The south end of The Slough has continued to draw unusual bird species that take shelter in the dense reedbed it provides. Later in the week, an adult Stilt Sandpiper - still wearing its handsome breeding plumage - was a profound highlight in the assembling of this week's report. Observing bird species in The Slough often warrants a second look. Maybe even a third, or a fourth. This is because at first glance, it is easy to see nothing among the muddy sticks and clumps that make up the ground layer for this brackish outwash pond. Upon closer inspection, however, the birds gradually start to materialize, and pretty soon one begins to pick out **Least Sandpiper**, **Semipalmated Sandpiper**, and eclipse-plumage **Green-winged Teal** from the brown.

I made a new high count yesterday for **Roseate Tern** on Tuckernuck this season, after I completed a tern census of birds staging, or loafing, mainly at known sites out on Whale and Bigelow's Point. This total, just shy of 800 individuals, was comprised perhaps 30-40% of freshly-hatched juvenile birds, likely from colonies within Buzzard's Bay. Over the course of the last three days, I have been carefully studying these flocks to gather band information, specifically of the now widely-used plastic field readable (PFR) variety, and have positively recorded at least 58 individuals and their corresponding codes. If you can safely and confidently read a band number for any shorebird or seabird, make sure to report them to www.bandedbirds.org.

Several species of the order *Lepidoptera*, including both moths and butterflies, have started flying into yards and gardens across the island. A **Magdalen Underwing** flew lethargically about in broad daylight yesterday on Bigelow's Point, and all-over it seems, tiger and dagger moths can be found in some

abundance. A privet bush on the East half of the island has yielded remarkable diversity in butterflies, and several species of skipper, along with **American Lady** and **Monarch** have been encountered there. Along the dirt paths that criss-cross the island, now is the time to see **Common Wood-Nymphs**, and perhaps an **Eastern Tailed-Blue**, **Red Admiral**, or **American Copper** will cross your way as well. If you walk out by way of Heath House or Humane House, certainly you may see a **Pearl Crescent** or two.

In brief, some of the other highlights for this week have included a **Northern Mockingbird** on the East part of the island, and at least two **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** over by the airfield. Both species, which have their own strongholds on Cape Cod and throughout Massachusetts, are uncommon at best on Tuckernuck this time of year, with the latter species chiefly encountered in the springtime. A fresh juvenile **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was flushed from the marsh on Muskeget Island. **Killdeer**, **Black Tern**, **Manx Shearwater**, and **Red-eyed Vireo** were just frosting added to the cake.

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

Best,

Skyler Kardell

"Not so long ago, theologians and preachers were our prime ministers of apocalypse; biologists and science writers have now supplanted them a hundredfold, often to equally negligible effect among the populace at large." - John Eastman



Two animals, both of which were not in existence a few weeks ago. A baby Meadow Vole, and a juvenile Roseate Tern - perhaps from one of the colonies in Buzzard's Bay.



A Saltmarsh Sparrow peering at us from the Spartina grass in North Pond, and an adult Western Sandpiper on Muskeget Island.



A juvenile Northern Harrier from a nest on Bigelow's Point, and a Red Admiral coming to rest on a dirt path.



Two Broad-necked Root Borer beetles engaged in copulation, a noisy occurrence in the scrub oak undergrowth, and a Wood Lily blooming from within the Chapel House yard.