



A White-tailed Deer stands by the water's edge overlooking Esther Island and Nantucket.

Coastal Steward's Letter, July 22 - July 28, 2021.

The Buck Moon rose at 9:02 p.m. on Saturday, July 24. With it, both extreme high and low tides were experienced around Tuckernuck. At North Pond, a new channel was formed in the outer arm that now separates part of the North Head spit from the rest of the point. With luck, this gap will continue to widen, and residents on the west end will be able to access their houses by way of North Pond again. This new cut-through has also supplied better shorebird habitat. With more water able to leave the pond during low tide, sandbars have formed and now feed a multitude of migrant plovers, sandpipers, **Whimbrels**, and the like.

The **Black-bellied Whistling Duck**, originally found June 2 by Mark Souza, was seen again this week by separate observers along the northeast shoreline. It is presumably commuting between here and Nantucket. Meanwhile, in the maritime oak forest, at least two **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** have been calling and we hope making the most out of the limited supply of tent caterpillars this year. **Eastern Wood-Pewees** and **Baltimore Orioles** were also heard in the woods this week, although it is not certain at this time if they are breeding. Other songbirds, including **Yellow Warbler** and **House Finches**, have presumably been moving through the area recently.

Shorebird migration is now in full swing, and Tuckernuck continues to attract a large variety of these so-called "wind-birds." **Ruddy Turnstones**, **Stilt Sandpipers**, and **Semipalmated Plovers** have all showed up recently in moderate numbers. The best places to observe shorebirds up-close continue to be North Pond and East Pond; however, Whale Point has attracted a noteworthy diversity of shorebirds. A particularly interesting sighting from this week came from Muskeget, where two observers readily photographed an approachable golden-plover. Later analysis of these photos seemed to support the identification **Pacific Golden-Plover**, which would be a second county record, pending acceptance. For birders, separating Pacific from American Golden-Plovers in the field has always been as a nearly insurmountable task. Unfortunately, even with stellar field notes and optimal viewing conditions, sometimes these tricky identifications can be made only with a camera that has a telephoto lens. A small search party went out to the island in search of the plover the very next day, but the bird was nowhere to be found. Where will it show up next?

Tern numbers have plunged over the last week. The staging aggregations of 600 to 700 individuals on Whale Point have now dispersed onto the shoals north of Tuckernuck and presumably out west towards Muskeget. This is unfortunate since this trend has not allowed me to do as much band reading as I would like at this time of year. There is symbolic fencing still closing off the tip of Whale Point for the protection of these staging **Roseate** and **Common Terns**, beachgoers are asked to use the designated "cut-through" area to loop around to the other side of the point. **Piping Plovers** remain on Whale Point, although none are actively sitting on nests. An estimated thirteen young birds from seven pairs fledged from Whale Point this year, although this information is subject to change with continued surveillance of the area.

This past Sunday, five others and I journeyed to the Triangle Pines from the field station for a rain-check program of “Bioacoustics: Nature is Calling; Let us Listen.” We went out with the hope of recording the three-part chickadee song that **Black-capped Chickadees** sing only on Tuckernuck. After recording the chickadees, we were able to visualize that sound on a computer with the help of a sonogram. For me, that sound is the quintessential sound of Tuckernuck. On the mainland and on Nantucket, the chickadees all sing a monotone “sweetie” song, with the inflection just slightly different between the two populations.

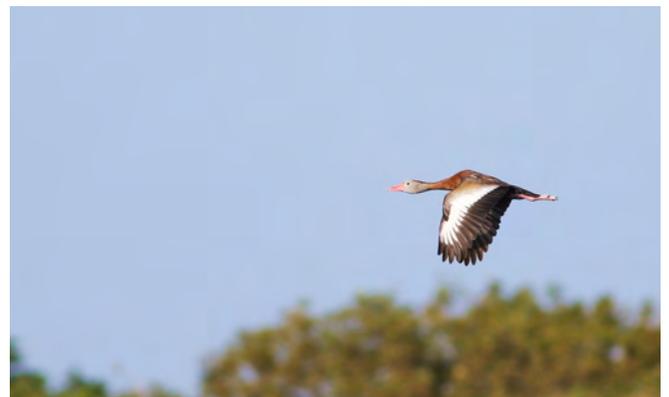
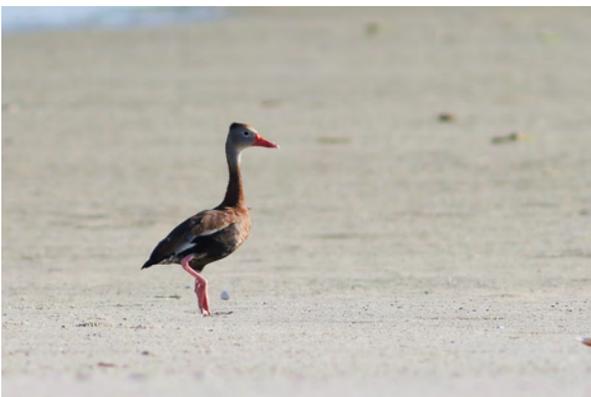
This coming Sunday, we’ll be venturing into the salt marsh for some wet, hot fun!

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

Best,

Skyler Kardell

“Barring love and war, few enterprises are undertaken with such abandon, or by such diverse individuals, or with so paradoxical a mixture of appetite and altruism, as that group of avocations known as outdoor recreation. It is, by common consent, a good thing for people to get back to nature.” —Aldo Leopold



The long-staying Black-bellied Whistling-Duck was seen again on 7/24 and once again on 7/28. It seems to favor the shoals in front of Bam’s Boathouse.



The Buck Moon appeared a striking red color over the weekend, due partly to haziness caused from wildfires out west. A possible Pacific Golden-Plover was seen this week on Muskeget.



Hundreds of terns utilize the shoals around Tuckernuck for staging and loafing during the migration season. These Roseate and Common Terns were joined over the weekend by a basic plumage Forster's Tern, a species that usually shows up in early August.



A Black Tern, transitioning out of its crisp summer plumage, into its unassuming winter plumage reminds us that cool weather is right around the corner. Stilt Sandpipers fly over Muskeget Island.

*****Tuckernuck Island is private property, accessed only by explicit permission by landowner(s).*****