

Sherwood Island Diary

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2003

9 January

Warm weather last night melted most of the snow and made it feasible to get out to the park without having to slog through a great deal of snow and ice. Until now, the new year has been marked by snow and temperatures in the twenties and thirties. This morning was warm but overcast and very windy. It seemed an unpromising day but better than any of those preceding it in 2003 and I was eager to get started. Wind gusts of up to 30 MPH rendered it difficult to make out sea birds as well as to hear land birds. All things considered, my list of 43 species was quite respectable.

The odd large White-fronted Goose that I remarked on in December with much black and white on the head and neck was foraging amongst a flock of 50 Canada Geese. It may well be a hybrid White-fronted-Canada and is clearly not a pure White-fronted. Other birds that I remarked upon in December and found again today were a male Redhead, this time amongst a flock of 25 Canvasbacks, and a Brown Thrasher, again in the brushy area between the Nature Center and the viewing platform. While these three are unusual birds, their presence in December rendered their sightings not entirely unexpected. Indeed, there were no particular surprises this morning.

13 January

The moment I stepped out of the car at the Mill Beach this morning, I realized that it was flagrant madness to be birding. The wind was howling out of the northwest at 20-30 MPH. The Mill Pond was mostly frozen save for the section adjacent to the Mill Bridge and the northeast corner. The ducks that were present were mainly in the latter area visible from the entry overlook. However, the wind was so bad that it was virtually impossible to use the telescope and even difficult to employ binoculars. I recognized a bad thing when I saw it and cut the outing short by omitting the entire eastern section of the park. There were no unusual findings amongst the 33 species recorded in this abbreviated visit although I did find five common birds that I had missed on my first outing of the year. The bad news is that the weather prediction calls for continued wind and considerably lower temperatures for at least the next five days.

15 January

When I looked out the window this morning, tree branches were immobile and the pond was smooth suggesting there was not much wind. Therefore, I decided to go to the park with particular emphasis on its eastern section, which I omitted the other day, and on the

Sound. When I reached the Mill Beach, my usual first stop, I realized that what might seem a windless day inland, could be quite brisk on the coast. Never-the-less, there was certainly less wind than there had been during my first two outings of this year. It was very cold, however, in the low twenties.

The Mill Pond was frozen save for the two most resistant parts of it, namely adjacent to the Mill Bridge and in the northeast corner. The ducks, or what there was of them, were mainly concentrated in the latter. Included in the assemblage were 20 Gadwall, I think the most I have ever seen in the park. What made them seem even more remarkable was the absence of Baldpate which usually outnumber Gadwall by about 10:1.

I was disappointed by the paucity of birds and shortened my itinerary to omit the western section of the park. I did make a point, however, of carefully scouring the eastern half and examining the Sound. I only found a total of 33 species including three that I hadn't seen during my first two visits. They were a Common Loon; a handsome pair of adult Harriers, male and female; and a Killdeer. The Sound was surprisingly bereft of sea birds.

20 January

This is definitely an old fashioned winter. The temperature has barely reached as high as freezing for the past 10 days and the next five are predicted to be the coldest yet. There have been persistent and heavy northwest winds. AJ Hand has seen the Great-horned Owl that we first found on the Christmas Count several times this month as well as a Rough-legged Hawk so I decided to try and find these birds this morning. Although the temperature probably won't attain freezing today, it is still predicted to be by far the warmest day of the coming week which provided me with another incentive. The Mill Pond was virtually entirely frozen and someone was actually ice skating on it. However, the tidal stream from Burying Hill Beach through the east marsh was still open as was the first sliver of the Mill Pond in the northwest adjacent to where the stream feeds it. There was a fierce and howling wind from the west northwest and the skies ranged from entirely clear to completely overcast with a snow squall.

I had the lowest total species list (29) that I've had for many years missing several common birds that I should surely have found had I not omitted the Mill Beach and Grove Point from my itinerary. I did not find either of the *desiderata* mentioned above but did see five species that I hadn't seen on my three antecedent January visits. They were: a superb adult Snow Goose; a Long-tailed Duck; a Turkey Vulture; a Sharp-shinned Hawk; and two Bonaparte's Gulls swimming adjacent to the Pavilion point.

25 January

This has been a much colder January than in recent years and the temperature has not reached freezing in more than two weeks. On most days, there has been a fierce

northwest wind and the temperature has been in the low teens or even single digits. I went out today because the temperature was supposed to hit the mid twenties and the wind was a bit less than usual. These comforts notwithstanding, I had to stop after two and one-half hours because my feet and fingers were very cold despite two pairs of socks and two pairs of gloves. The Mill Pond and marsh tributaries were entirely frozen save for the small northeast sliver that may be partially spring-fed. There was the beginning of ice formation on the inshore portion of the sound but this extended only a very short distance. There were very few birds and I recorded only 30 species. The single noteworthy finding was a group of 75 Brant feeding amongst the ice near the shoreline. I searched quite hard, but in vain, for owls in the central grove. Long-eared has been found there twice as well as Great-horned. I did find a pellet that I hadn't seen before beneath one of the large cedars where Great-horned occasionally roosts. And I found the feathered remnants of a bird in the part of the grove where the Long-eared is usually found if it is around.

30 January

The cold weather has continued. This morning was a bit less windy than usual but the 10-15 MPH east wind still created very roiled water. All still water was solidly frozen and there was a trace of snow from last night on the ground. I limited the itinerary to the Mill Beach, Mill Pond, Grove Point, the central grove and the airplane field area and spent only two hours so the list total of 28 is misleadingly low. None-the-less, there certainly were not many birds around. I paid particular attention to the grove where I again failed to find any owl, and to the Sound which was remarkably bereft of birds. I have a persistent fantasy that I will see an Alcid this winter but it looks as though "fantasy" may be the operative work. There have been several reports of Razor-billed Auk at various Connecticut coastal locations this winter and I should like very much to add this species to the park list. I added one species, Robin, to the park list for this year.

31 January

Today was the first one with a temperature above freezing in more than two weeks. It was very overcast with a modest southeasterly breeze. I decided to walk the entire length of the east beach in the hope of finding an Alcid or white-winged gull since these have been seen in unprecedented numbers this winter and since it was sufficiently warm and calm that I could hope to see something. Alas, I saw no Alcids nor interesting gulls. I did see approximately 500 Greater Scaup, the most I have seen in many years. Their rafts reminded me of those I used to see in Pelham Bay Park as a child.

2 February

This morning was warm (40°) but much too windy (15-30 MPH) to expect to see much so I omitted the shore line and the entire eastern section of the park. My principal reason for

going was to search for the owls which I failed yet again to see although A. J. hand has been seeing both Long-eared and Great-horned quite regularly. I did have a wonderful look at the male Redhead which was in the now fairly substantial open water area near the sluices.

I was most disheartened to find that the area bordering "Woodcock Woods", the last unspoiled part of the park has been bulldozed to make an access road from the maintenance area. The park is now virtually depleted of brushy areas.

3 February

This morning was clear and quite warm with a rather gentle northwest breeze. The Sound was relatively calm and I spent a great deal of time surveying it without seeing anything of special interest. I also took a brief look at a spruce just north of the tall cedars which seems to be the tree indicated by A. J. Hand in which tells me he has seen the Great-horned Owl, repeatedly, but only in the late afternoon when the sun strikes the owl's plumage at its particular roosting spot. I didn't see the owl but did see a well hidden nest toward the top of the ca. 50 foot tree. Otherwise, I omitted the western section of the park and concentrated on the eastern portion and on the Sound.

6 February

The brief spell of temperatures above freezing has ended and this morning seemed much colder than the reported 25°. All still water including almost all of the Mill Pond was frozen. However, I found the year's first **Red-winged Blackbird**, a male in the Grove Point marsh. Before I saw it, I heard its one-note call, the preferred vocalization on first arrival. I also added Cedar Waxwing and Hairy Woodpecker to the year's list. Eight of the former flew over Grove Point. My total list of species was 37 and I spent only a bit over two hours in the field, omitting most of the western section of the park. I did look, unsuccessfully, for owls in the central grove.

13 February

The weather has been bitterly cold with considerable snow since my last visit. Since the accompanying strong northwest wind makes it difficult to examine the Sound properly, I have stayed away. This morning, A. J. Hand called me and offered to show me a Long-eared Owl that he had found roosting in a spruce. I accepted with pleasure and, as luck would have it, there were actually two owls that gave us a superb look and were clearly not unduly disturbed although both did eye us. A. J. also showed me the tree where the Great-horned Owl has been regularly seen and may be nesting. We failed to see it on this occasion. We also looked unsuccessfully in the two pines amongst the spruces on the hill because an acquaintance of A. J.'s had found a Saw Whet Owl there. A. J. also mentioned that another friend of his had photographed a Short-eared Owl on the most

westerly of the Junipers abutting the east marsh. He sent me the picture which was most impressive. Thus, at least four species of owls have been found in the park in the last month although these two Long-eareds are the only ones I've seen.

The Japanese Green Pheasant was at the feeder near the stone barn when we drove by so it is still alive and well.

15 February

This morning exhibited the same conditions as during my last visit, cold with a northwest wind and three inches of snow on the ground. I examined the Mill Pond and Beach, Grove Point, the central grove and the beach from the Pavilion point to the east end. I recorded 40 species in the two hours afield. These included a light phase Rough-legged Hawk and two Dunlins, both new for the year. The Rough-leg has been seen by various observers of and on for about a month. The two Long-eared Owls were in the same tree as they were two days ago. I failed, yet again, to find the Great-horned. Nor did I see Saw Whet and Short-eared owl both of which have been seen more than once by others in recent days, nor the Lesser Black-backed Gull (*graellsi*) that A. J. found yesterday.

I don't fare well in, nor do I enjoy the cold weather and snow.

19 February

Two days ago, on 17 February, there was a major blizzard with almost two feet of snow and northeast winds up to 40 M. P. H. Today, the temperature rose above freezing for one of the few days this year. Only the major public and park roads were plowed and the only part of the park that I examined closely was the Sound from the Pavilion point. There was a large amount of ice on the Sound, and, even though the water was relatively placid, there were very few birds although I did add a Red-throated Loon to the list for the year. A female cowbird at Grove Point was also new. I went in the afternoon since that is allegedly the best time to see any of the four species of owl that are apparently in the park. I examined the tree where the Great-horned Owl is said to roost from the park road and did not see it, nor did I see the Short-eared that has been flying around and perching in the east parking lot on recent afternoons. I met Stacy Shaw and she pointed out the large white pine where the Saw Whet Owl has been photographed but I didn't make the trek through deep snow to investigate the tree closely. Stacy told me that a Merlin had been seen in the park yesterday.

27 February

Since my last visit, there has been a brief thaw in temperature, a torrential rain that swept away much of the snow, and the return of very cold weather. Various people continue to report owls including five Saw Whets on one day in the park. Larkspurs have also been

seen. This morning I decided to try and find some of these birds and I made a particular effort for the owls. The only one I saw was a single Long-eared in the same tree where it has been consistently roosting. I examined carefully trees that had been reported respectively to hold a Saw Whet and, on several occasions, a Great-horned. No luck. I found a total of 40 species including two, two Fish Crows and 25 White-winged Scoters, that were new for the year. I also heard a Red-winged Blackbird giving its full song. While I managed to touch on every section of the standard itinerary, I couldn't be thorough because of the still formidable amounts of snow.

28 February

Today was a bit warmer than yesterday and I decided to try for the owls again. I was out for only two and one-half hours and timed my itinerary so that I got to the roosting conifers at about three. I examined known roosting trees for the Saw Whet, Great-horned and Long-eared and did flush two of the latter, the first time from a tree slightly removed from the one in which I have seen them up to now. No luck with the other two species although I found some fresh whitewash under a cedar adjacent to the spruce in which the Great-horned has been seen. I had only the single male Red-winged Blackbird and about eight Robins, else little of interest save a Harbor Seal, the first I have seen this year. They are not uncommon but I make little effort to see them and usually don't.

2 March

Last night I got a call from A. J. Hand telling me that he had seen two Saw Whet Owls, at least one of which he was quite certain would remain and be simple to see with the directions he gave me. The other one was in the same large pine in which it had been occasionally seen and which I had inspected several times with negative results. I planned to go out this morning but it poured the entire day until late afternoon. I got out at 5:15 and couldn't find the first spot as indicated by three picnic tables near the stone barn. When I examined the large pine, I quickly found the droppings about which A. J. had told me but the bird was not above them. I did find it, however, in the periphery of the tree about 20 feet up. As I was leaving the park, I saw A. J.'s truck and he showed me the three picnic tables which were on the side of the road opposite that I had imagined. We found the second owl right over the trail of "whitewash" in a small ornamental evergreen yew tree about eight feet up. The park has certainly had its share of Saw Whets this year. Are they more common or just being found by keener observers? A. J. told me that most of them this year had first been found by a birder in his early twenties, apparently a newcomer to the park and interested primarily in owls.

4 March

Although the temperature was around 10° early this morning, it increased quickly and, by the time I got out to the park at 12:45, was quite tolerable. In fact, for the first time in two months, I actually completed my standard itinerary albeit rather superficially. There was still a bit of snow and most of the Mill Pond and much of the Sound was frozen. I found the Saw Whet in the same spot in the white pine where I had seen it the other day but I did not check for the second bird in the yew tree adjacent to the stone barn. In principle, that spot is not open to the public which, according to Tobey, means me. I looked for and failed to find the Great-horned and Long-eared Owls. There was no trace of spring amongst the birds. Even the single Red-winged Blackbird and the five Robins that have been around did not put in appearance. So there were no new birds for the year on today's list of 36 species.

8 March

Eight inches of snow fell on 6 March and the following morning had a record low temperature. It warmed up such that today was pleasant with a slight southwest breeze and temperature in the forties. There was still considerable snow around and after the Mill Pond and Grove Point I kept to the plowed roads in the western section of the park save for a walk out to the point at the pavilion. Conditions were good for examining the Sound and there was a large flock of water fowl at Penfield Reef, much too far to the east for identification. I did, however, add a new bird to my Sherwood Island list. It was a **Purple Sandpiper** that landed, together with 12 Turnstones, on the large Rock just off the end of the Pavilion point. I had a superb look as if foraged and easily noted the bright yellow legs, the yellow base of the bill and the light area around the eye. I can't remember the last time I saw a Purple Sandpiper and it was also new for my Connecticut list although it is not uncommon in the state during winter. I heard a Grackle at Grove Point and thus found three species that were new for the year amongst the 34 that made up today's total.

11 March

There was a strong southwest breeze today and it made me feel much colder than the temperature of 35° might suggest. I went out in the afternoon, as has been my wont of late, and stayed only two hours, omitting the western half of the park. Amongst the 32 species that I found was a Fox Sparrow at Grove Point Road. I was dismayed to see earth-moving equipment there and it appears that much of the thick underbrush is being removed. It seems that southwestern Connecticut is fighting an underbrush war. This will mean even fewer land birds in the park and environs. Furthermore, while this work is going on, there will be substantial noise and human activity where I am accustomed to bird. I certainly hope the work will be finished before May as I should hate to have this fine little spot ruined for migration.

12 March

Today I went back to the park to examine the western section that I omitted yesterday. I found a Woodcock in "Woodcock Woods" and another at Grove Point in the little area of wet woodland into which I had cut myself a trail. This bird surprised me since it was quite close to noisy earth-moving equipment. I was a bit surprised to see a single male Canvasback as they have not been around for some time. Still not many Red-winged Blackbirds (4) but Grackles (10) increasing. Total list was 36 species and I omitted the entire eastern section of the park as well as the Sound which was rather turbulent.

15 March

Today is supposed to be the first of a warm period but it still felt pretty cold in the park this morning. There was a fairly strong southwest breeze, some clouds, and a temperature in the high thirties. There were still some snowy patches and the Mill Pond was about 20% frozen. I stayed out only two hours and skipped the western half of the park. Despite the shortened itinerary, I managed to find 43 species, none new for the year. For the first time, there was a good complement of blackbirds, namely Grackles. There were a few Red-winged but most have yet to arrive. I flushed a Woodcock twice in the little woodland at Grove Point. I have cut myself a nice little trail through there that continues around the southern periphery of the marsh and I hope that the Woodcock is only the first of many dividends.

17 March

This morning was the third day of the warming period and it actually felt like spring with a temperature that rose to 60 and no wind so that the sound was absolutely smooth. It was certainly perfect weather for birds and I spent more than four hours and covered the park as best I could given the restrictions imposed on me by Tobey. Surprisingly, I only found two species that were new for the year. A Ring-necked Pheasant that I heard (could the Japanese Green Pheasant sound identical?) and three Snipe. It was a fine day for long-billed birds as, in addition to the Snipe, I had four Woodcock, two in the far eastern section of the park, the other two in the western section, one in, one near Woodcock Woods.

18 March

I was disappointed this morning but I'm not certain why or what I expected. The warm weather continued from yesterday and I found 41 species despite spending only two and one-half hours and omitting the eastern section of the park. Like yesterday, the tide was exceptionally high, submerging almost totally, the rock off the point where I saw the Purple Sandpiper earlier this month. The east marsh was entirely inundated. I found a

male Green-winged Teal, my first of the year, on the meadow between the west beach and the west marsh. I flushed two Woodcock in the west woods. One of these almost flew into the wall of the rest facility, barely managing to put on the brakes and flutter to the ground against the building. Even though I knew exactly where it was, I could not locate it until I flushed it for the second time. A. J. Hand told me that he heard the birds performing their aerial displays near the viewing deck and Woodcock Woods last evening. Evidently he has permission from Tobey to remain in the park after its formal closing. A. J. thought he heard at least eight birds! While it is conceivable that one pair of Woodcock might breed in the park, I'm presume that most or all of these displaying birds must go elsewhere to breed and that the "nuptial flight" does not necessarily mean locally breeding birds.

22 March

This morning was warm and pleasant. The park was quite water-logged after the strong southeasterly rain that occurred two days ago. I was out for three and one-half hours and covered most of the usual itinerary logging 49 species including single examples of Great Egret and Pectoral Sandpiper, each new for the year. I flushed at least four Woodcock from the eastern section of the park in the brushy area adjacent to the salt marsh. I also found at least three Fox Sparrows, which, like the Woodcock, seem unusually common this year.

23 March

Despite a rather brisk northwest wind and a truncated itinerary omitting the eastern section of the park, this morning was quite "birdy" and I found 48 species. I would have had well over fifty had I covered the whole park. The outstanding bird was a drake Shoveller in the most extreme northwestern part of the Mill Pond which I saw only with the aid of my telescope. I also added to the list of the year four Double-crested Cormorants, an Osprey and a Kingfisher. At least two Fox Sparrows were still around.

24 March

This morning I went to the park with Chris Bosak, a 35 year-old sportswriter for the Norwalk Hour who also writes a Sunday column on birds. The weather was absolutely perfect with just a trace of a southeast breeze. We were out for four and one-quarter hours and my coverage was the most meticulous of this year. We logged a respectable 56 species including three, two Snowy Egrets, a Turkey and two Phoebes, that were new for the year. By far the most interesting and impressive was the fine tom Turkey that we saw carefully picking his way, first near Woodcock Woods, later in the West Woods. We also saw a rather large seal sitting on a rock far out off the easternmost extremity of the park. When I arrived home, Maddy and I watched from the kitchen window as a rather small Red Fox crossed the rocks of the falls and passed down and through our peninsula.

26 March

This was another seemingly perfect morning and there were plenty of birds around although none among the 56 species were new for the year. There were many more gulls than usual including 15 Bonaparte's, and the surface-feeding ducks were virtually all out on the open sound where it was distinctly unusual to find Gadwall, Baldpate and Green-winged Teal. There was no wind so the surface of the sound was perfectly smooth. Unfortunately, there was a bit of a haze so distant birds could not be identified. Two seals were occupying two rocks that jutted off the eastern extremity. Still three Fox Sparrows and this morning one was singing its Orchard Oriole-like song.

28 March

This morning was cool with a rather brisk east wind. It was cloudless but there was a distant haze making it impossible to look for possible Gannets over the distant sound. There were not many birds around and I omitted the eastern section of the park from my itinerary and was out for only about two and one-half hours. Amongst the 42 species that I recorded, one, a group of four Greater Yellowlegs, was a first for the year.

2 April

Since my last visit, the weather has been cool with easterly winds and rain, sleet, and even a few flakes of snow. This morning was overcast with a raw east wind. Virtually the first bird I saw was a Gannet flying far off the Mill Beach, a location from which I had never before recorded this species. This was the high point of a decidedly birdless day during which I amassed a total list of 42 species with Gannet the only new one. There were virtually no Passerines. The surface-feeding ducks were almost all on the Sound, not far from the Pavilion Point. Further out on the Sound, Long-tailed Ducks were much in evidence, the estimate of 125 being my highest count for them this year. Of the ten Horned Grebes, about half were in alternate plumage. I first noticed one in alternate plumage during my last visit.

13 April

This morning was the first sunny one since my last visit 11 days ago. The weather was wet, usually rainy but with one major snowfall, the temperature was in the thirties and the wind was northeasterly during virtually the entire period. Last night, the wind shifted to the northwest, and this morning the temperature began to rise.

There were not many birds about and the 49 species that I tallied did not include any that were new for the year. Most interesting was a flight of about 100 Bonaparte's Gulls

heading eastward. I looked hard for Black-headed Gull without success. About one-third of the birds were in alternate (breeding) plumage. All of the Horned Grebes today and the sole Common Loon were also in alternate plumage whereas, as usual, the Red-throateds remained in basic plumage.

14 April

This morning was the beginning of a southerly flow expected to bring very warm weather for tomorrow and the day after. Today was very similar to yesterday with a total list of 51 including three Blue-winged Teal, two drakes and a hen, a new species for the year. There are still good numbers of Long-tailed duck, mostly in alternate plumage and there were 20 Red-throated Loons, the first indication of a flight this year. Double-crested Cormorants also appeared in some numbers (20) rather than as the few individuals seen heretofore.

15 April

The predicted southwesterly flow was in full swing this morning with strong winds that made the Sound too choppy to see much and made birding, in general, a bit difficult. Yet, as expected there was a nice influx of new species although the day's total of 53 was not exceptional. The new ones included a Rough-winged Swallow, a Bluebird flying over, two Hermit Thrushes, a Towhee that I heard but couldn't see, a Field Sparrow and a Chipping Sparrow. The favorable weather is expected to remain through tomorrow and then to change to a cold northeasterly pattern so I anticipate one more good day in this present pattern.

16 April

Favorable weather continued this morning although its end is predicted for tonight. Yesterday, the temperature inland was over 80 and today it will be almost as high. It was cooler in the park because of a powerful southwesterly sea breeze. I recorded 54 species in an intensive four hour search. Three Gannets were noteworthy, particularly because of the strong westerly component to the wind. Three species, a female Kestrel, a Clapper Rail in the central ditch, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, were new for the year bringing my total to 100. This is quite an early date to have reached that mark but I think the rapid attainment is due to my coverage being more extensive than in the past rather than to an abundance of birds whose numbers seem average, at best.

By far the most interesting observation of the day, however, was an animal rather than a bird. At eight AM, I was standing at the overlook at the turnoff for the park scanning the northeastern corner of the Mill Pond for ducks. The railroad tracks go under the highway at this point and I was astonished to see, almost directly beneath where I was standing, a very large (ca. three feet), dark brown Mustelid loping across the tracks and then heading

north. It resembled a mink save that it was approximately twice as big. Its fur did not have the sleek appearance of an Otter and its mannerisms seemed those of a land mammal. Later in the morning, I met the park ranger, Rick, who told me that the state of Connecticut had embarked, in the not too distant past, on a Fisher restoration program, releasing several of the animals in the central part of the state. Stacy Shaw told me, still later, that a Fisher had been seen quite recently in Trumbell. I am reasonably certain that this animal was, indeed, a **Fisher**. Although Fishers are usually considered wilderness animals, when I researched the animal on the internet, I found that they are not rare in Massachusetts and have been steadily accommodating to, and encroaching upon, populated areas. The experience of seeing a large wild creature that I had heretofore considered a wilderness animal reminded me of when I saw my first Coyote in the park in 1994. Of course, the Fisher, unlike the Coyote, is notoriously secretive.

19 April

The past two days have been characterized by strong cold northeast winds, overcast skies, and occasional drizzling. This morning, the unfavorable winds persisted but the sky cleared. I recorded 51 species including two new ones, a Creeper and two Pine Warblers. There seems to have been a major exodus of surface-feeding ducks.

20 April

This morning was much like yesterday save a bit milder with gentler winds. Again there were not a great many birds. Of the 52 species, one, a singing House Wren at Grove Point, was new for the year.

21 April

This was another mediocre day. Although the winds had shifted to southeasterly, they were cold and strong. I omitted the eastern half of the park and found 46 species of which only a Yellow-rumped Warbler was new for the year. A pair of Thrashers, each carrying nesting material, was also noteworthy since they provided an arrival date, my only previous record this year having been in January.

The park, particularly its willows, is starting to green, and dogwoods are in bloom.

23 April

I can't imagine why I went to the park this morning. The temperature was barely 40°, the skies were completely overcast, and there was a powerful northwest wind. This followed a day of drizzle and northeast winds during which I had the sense to stay home. I suppose I find it difficult to miss two consecutive days in the field at a time when the

migration should be heating up. In any event, I realized my error quickly this morning and limited my visit by omitting the western half of the park. I managed 41 species, none new for the year. The Canada Geese are very aggressive at this time of the year and I was flown at by a male even though he and the hen were walking in an open grassy area clearly not near a nest.

25 April

This morning was, at last, relatively windless, warm and clear although rain is forecast for this evening and tomorrow. I expected some bird with such nice conditions and there were a few although nothing approximating a flight of passerine birds. I found 54 species four of which were new. They were: a Willet whose arrival was precisely on time; at least two Oystercatchers, foraging in the west marsh just west of the West Woods, an odd place for them; I say "at least two" because I saw one on a tidal island a bit later; a Tree Swallow, extremely late for the first record of the year; and three Barn Swallows, a bit later than usual.

I found out why the gander came at me yesterday. Although she was not sitting yesterday, the goose was sitting today and the nest was in an unusually accessible location on the edge of the east marsh directly adjacent to the airplane flying field.

27 April

Yesterday was a "noreaster" with plenty of rain and I thought perhaps something interesting in the way of shore birds might have been blown into the park. The winds shifted to the northwest this morning and there was plenty of standing water. There was little unusual amongst the bird, however. Of the 57 species that I logged, only one, a rather early Common Tern, was new for the year. Also of interest were four Ospreys, one sitting on the platform, the other three circling high above it and vocalizing constantly. What was this? A family reunion with returning fledglings? Also of interest was a fine look I had at a Snipe that was frozen in camouflage. I was able to find it only because I flushed it and saw where it landed.

28 April

Conditions this morning could not have been more promising. Warm, clear and with a gentle southerly breeze after a similar night, and with the Sound glassy smooth. I recorded 60 species, although that figure is a bit of a fudge since I counted, and have been regularly counting, the pheasant I hear in the vicinity of the stone barn, which is almost certainly the Japanese Pheasant that was introduced into the park and hangs around the feeder there for a handout. There were clear indications of a mostly passerine movement including 25 Savannah Sparrows, six Hermit Thrushes, and four new species: a Least Sandpiper in the east marsh; two Yellow Warblers which I heard and saw, one in

the far east section, the other near the viewing platform at the other end of the park; an Ovenbird which I heard and saw in the central, wooded area; and a Meadowlark which I flushed near the air plane field.

29 April

This morning seemed perfect. There was a gentle breeze from the southwest. The temperature was in the sixties. Maples were well advanced in the leafing process as were willows and white birches. Oak trees were the sole laggards. Various fruit and blossoming trees were in full bloom. The wind picked up and brought clouds with it later in the morning, these events presaging a cold front predicted for this evening. The geese remain extremely ornery as the females are still sitting and there are, as yet, no chicks. Yesterday's movement continued and I logged a respectable 65 species including five that were new for the year. The Mill Pond was in one of those periods where it becomes entirely exposed and this enable me to find three Black-bellied Plovers and three Laughing Gulls. I was fortunate to hear a Gnatcatcher at Grove Point, fortunate because a new, very large house is being constructed there and there is enormous noise from the heavy equipment. Grove Point will only be good on weekends during May because of this irritating event. I saw at least two, and possibly three Blue-headed Vireos and at least four Catbirds as well. Although not new for the year list, ten each of Common Terns and Hermit Thrushes merit mention. I did not see either Long-tailed Duck nor Red-breasted Merganser so perhaps these last diving ducks may have finally pulled out although I would not be surprised to see them again a few times before the end of spring.

As I was walking north on the main paved path from the Pavilion parking lot, I heard a song with which I was not familiar. It came from one of the trees bordering the path, some of which are exotic and none of which are ever very birdy save for Starlings. This song bore some resemblance to that of a Titmouse and had quite a wiry quality. Like the song of a Titmouse, it was repeated over and over. At first I had difficulty locating it, however, it flew from the bare, probably exotic tree where it had been, to another tree where it alit at a hole in the trunk. I was astonished to discover that it was a male Bluebird. The song lacked entirely, the warbling soft quality that I associate with that of the Bluebird. Its behavior around the hole was also interesting. Was it exploring for possible nesting sites?

30 April

A cold front pushed through late yesterday ending the period of southwesterly flow. Predictably, the list of species fell from 65 yesterday to 57 today. The only new bird for today was a pair of Glossy Ibises feeding on the exposed mud of the Mill Pond. There was, however, a decided influx of White-throated Sparrows (25) and Towhees (6). I go into May with a list of 119 species, identical to the figures for 1994 and 1995 and one under the record 120 of 1996. However, this is a reflection of the intensity of coverage

rather than the abundance of bird life. I've paid about 33% more visits to the park through 30 April than the most I ever did before.

1 May

May could not have begun more inauspiciously. A cold east wind, intermittent rain, and constant overcast skies were not promising signals and I probably should have stayed home. But I have been looking forward to this May so much, for what seems like such a long time, that I could not resist a visit. My rationale was that perhaps some shore birds might be enticed by the east wind and standing water. However, I rapidly realized that the few birds around were not vocal and were remaining well hidden while I was getting wet. I left after two hours and omitted the western section of the park from my usual itinerary. I found 43 species none of which were new.

I received an email today from Stacy Shaw who told me that she had seen four Killdeer chicks yesterday.

2 May

A gentle southerly breeze, warm temperature, and a clear sky were all indications that this morning would be a good one for birds and it was. I found a respectable 69 species of which eight (a Spotted Sandpiper, a Marsh Wren, a Warbling Vireo, a Black-and-White Warbler, a Yellowthroat, two Redstarts, one a female, three Northern Orioles and a Seaside Sparrow) were new for the year. Included were seven warbler species (the three new ones listed above and a Pine, three Yellow-Rumped, a Yellow, and an Ovenbird) comprising 10 individuals. The passerine/nonpasserine ratio was 38/31 (1.23). These observations establish that **this morning represented the first May wave**. I hope it will not be the only wave day. Also of interest were four Killdeer chicks running around near the Nature Center and two Clapper Rails that I saw. Still no Canada Goose chicks and the males remain loaded with testosterone and ready to fight.

A cold front from the north is expected tonight and will presumably ruin things for the immediate future.

4 May

The northeasterly flow continued this morning which was cool, overcast, and decidedly unpromising. The volume of birds was very low, as, for example, one White-throated Sparrow. The total species list of 56 was also low, however, I did manage to find three that were new for the year, namely an immature Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, a Crested Flycatcher that I heard near the Mill Beach, and a Salt Marsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow in the far east meadow south of the marsh. This area is now quite wet and has some phragmites. I flushed the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron from the far east marsh adjacent

to Burying Hill and was surprised to find an immature at this date. It was a very dark bird with such conspicuous black primaries that it momentarily suggested a Bittern. However, its identity was obvious when it settled back down. I noticed that it was just beginning to develop an adult facial pattern and I do wonder when Night-Herons assume full adult plumage.

5 May

This morning was about as bad as it could be considering the date. It was overcast with a slight easterly breeze. I managed to squeeze out 51 species, none of which were new. A late female Bufflehead in the Mill Pond was the only interesting observation. I did notice a yellow mass with the Osprey on its nesting platform and perhaps a young has hatched. I did not bother going to the far eastern section of the park. The weather sounds unpromising for tomorrow and perhaps the next day.

6 May

I had not intended to go to the park today because it was cool with an easterly breeze and intermittent drizzle after an overnight rain. But this morning I noticed some bird movement at the Prudential Property and also around our house. Therefore, I went to the park at 2:30 and stayed until 4:00, covering rather superficially the western half of the park and the area around the air plane field. There was no movement of passerine birds save for a Wood Thrush that I heard. I also noticed the first two goslings of the year and they looked about two or three days old. I did not enter the list because I was not systematic. I just wanted to be sure that I didn't miss a major flight and I certainly didn't. The only warblers were a single Yellow and a single Yellow-rumped.

7 May

This morning the weather was ideal and there was a minor flight that resulted in a total list of 76 species of which nine were new. These included a Least Tern, a Semipalmated Plover, three Sanderlings, a Great-horned Owl, two Wood Thrushes (since I didn't list yesterday), and single examples of White-eyed Vireo, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Orchard Oriole.

The Great-horned Owl was exciting. I was led to it by a single Crow that was giving its most hysterical alarm cry. When I got to the evergreen in question in the central grove, I found myself standing almost directly under the owl which remained sitting despite clearly being aware of my presence. These birds usually do not allow such close approach but I gather that the crow was more intimidating than I was. After some time the owl eventually flew to a nearby tree and I did not pursue it further.

I had a fine look at the Glossy Ibis in the central drainage ditch and noticed (I could hardly fail to) that it exhibited a beautiful azure forehead and lines above and below the eyes. This is an uncommon nuptial color of the naked facial skin and is rarely shown extending to the forehead. Very striking.

8 May

All last night, there was heavy rain. This morning was cold and overcast with a northeast wind and intermittent rain. I thought that perhaps the east wind associated with new standing water might lure some shore birds to the park so I went specifically to look for them. I limited my itinerary to the eastern half of the park and the West Woods area. Almost the first bird I saw when I walked out on the east beach was a first year **Iceland Gull**, a new park bird for me, number 276. This bird may well have been the same individual that spent much of the winter at Compo Beach but failed to succumb to my entreaties and make itself visible to me from the park. This is a late spring date for Iceland Gull, indeed a day later than the latest departure date given by Baptist and Zeranski. Other new birds for the year amongst the 52 that I found in one hour and 40 minutes were a Lesser Yellowlegs, four singing male Bobolinks and a fine male Scarlet Tanager.

9 May

Overcast skies continued but the wind was from the southwest this morning. There had been more rain last night so there was plenty of standing water. Many trees had robust leaf coverage, however oaks and hickory were still in the early stage of leaf development. There was a nice minor flight today signaled by a surge of 35 White-throated Sparrows. I logged a total of 76 species including seven that were new for the year as follows: three Chimney Swifts; two Veeries; single examples of Nashville, Blackburnian and Magnolia Warblers; two each of Black-throated Blue and Parula Warblers. There was remarkably little warbler song considering that I found 10 species of warbler comprising 22 individuals. There were 45 passerine and 31 nonpasserine birds for a ratio of 1.45.

So far, I have seen only two broods comprising two and four goslings which I think is considerably fewer than I have seen by this date in the past. It will be interesting to know whether this is due to the late spring or to diminished fecundity. There are plenty of adults around.

Today was the second time that I have seen four vociferous, yet unaggressive Ospreys. Could this have been another visit by last year's fledglings?

10 May

Although the weather seemed perfect when I left my house this morning, when I got to the park, I found it enveloped in dense fog which only began to burn off as I was leaving some four hours later. I heard a Northern Waterthrush at Grove Point as the only new bird amongst the 62 species, a misleadingly low number because of the poor visibility. There did seem to be some warblers around, perhaps comparable to yesterday in species and individuals albeit with a different spectrum.

11 May

Yesterday's trend in weather continued this morning which was cool, overcast, and with southeasterly winds. The birds were similar as well. The total list was 67 including only one new one, a White-crowned Sparrow. There were nine species of warbler but most were represented by only a single individual and none were new. I saw two families with goslings, one with two, the other with five. These were in the same place as the same families I saw on 9 May and are probably the same.

There has been a single Red-throated Loon off the Mill Beach for some time now and this morning it was very close and I examined it quite carefully. Not a single red throat feather as yet!

12 May

Although the cool, overcast, southeast weather pattern continued this morning, there was a significant new **major flight**. I found 86 species of which five were new as follows: a Least Flycatcher; a Pewee that I heard; a Swainson's Thrush; a Blackpoll Warbler; and a Lincoln's Sparrow. The ratio of passerine to nonpasserine birds was 54/32 or 1.69. There were 13 warbler species comprising 45 individuals. I found two new families with four goslings each so the total in four families is 15 goslings. There were four Glossy Ibises including the one with the bright blue facial skin and another with some blue.

13 May

A cold front passed through last night and was accompanied by very gusty westerly winds that persisted today to yield a cool, overcast, very windy morning. Yesterday's wave was mostly dissipated and I found only 67 species including two that were new: a Green Heron; and four Willow Flycatchers. A new family group containing 14 goslings put to rest emphatically my wishful hypothesis of a decreased fecundity in geese this year.

14 May

The wind diminished greatly during the night and I thought that the chances were good for a major flight today or tomorrow. It was not to be for today, however, although I did log 76 species which sounds much more respectable than it was. There was only one new species for the year, two Red-eyed Vireos, and there were only eight species of warblers. The volume of birds in the park was light. More new goslings emerged today and it has become clear that the relative dearth that I noticed early was because of the "late spring" rather than an actual diminished rate of reproduction. The Red-throated Loon in basic plumage was still off the Mill Beach this morning.

I think that there is at least one white chick in the Osprey nest although it is difficult to be certain without a telescope at the distance I maintain.

15 May

When I arrived at the park this morning the weather was clear and warm and the winds were calm. Conditions seemed ideal for a major flight. The spectrum and number of birds were just a bit better than yesterday. I found 81 species of which 51 were passerine for a ratio of passerine to nonpasserine of 1.61. Included were 10 warblers comprising just 19 individuals. Only two species were new for the year, a Kingbird in the West Woods and a Wilson's warbler in the eastern section that was once a landfill and where the new Nature Center is scheduled to be built later in the year. The numbers seem barely to characterize a wave day but the low volume of warblers made it seem very much like yesterday and it was an unexciting day. The most interesting observation was a Snipe, my latest spring record for the park.

18 May

The past two days were characterized by overcast skies, relatively low temperatures and powerful northeast winds. This morning was clear and cool with strong easterly winds. A **King Rail** walking conspicuously in the east marsh compensated for what was otherwise the worst mid May day I can remember. Despite covering my entire standard itinerary, I could find only 59 species just 31 of which were passerine including a mere three warblers, Pine, Yellow, and Yellowthroat. I did not see a single land bird that does not breed in the park or its near environs. The list of land birds resembled a day in June.

19 May

This morning there was a variable slight breeze that shifted from northeast to southwest during my visit. The sky was cloudless. The results were considerably better than yesterday and more or less average for the date. I found 71 species of which 43 were

passerines including six warblers. There was a definite, if modest movement of land birds.

I noticed two very recent gosling families indicating that their hatching has, indeed, been later than usual this year. Overall, there still seem to be fewer than in the past. Up to now, I would estimate that I have seen a total of about 40 goslings.

The Red-throated Loon remains at the Mill Beach.

20 May

This morning was perfect. Warm with a few clouds and the slightest southwest breeze. There was a good flight of land birds, a marked contrast to just two days ago when there were no migrating land birds. Today, I found 82 species, 52 passerine for a passerine/nonpasserine ratio of 1.73. There were 12 warbler species comprising 55 individuals. The only new bird for the year was a Tennessee Warbler that I heard but couldn't locate.

The park is now replete with goslings. There were almost 40 in just the area near the two ponds behind the west beach.

21 May

A cold front began to pass through during the night and is expected to intensify later today with a northerly flow. This morning, the breeze was still southerly but the sky was completely overcast and there was intermittent rain and high humidity. I thought perhaps the rain might encourage some shore bird movement into the park but I realized quickly that today's visit was rather foolish and shortened it to less than two hours by omitting the western half of the park. A group of seven Lesser Yellowlegs was the only observation worth mentioning.

23 May

Since my last visit, the weather has been dictated by a northeasterly flow with low temperatures, overcast skies, and intermittent rain. I found nothing of interest today in one and three-quarters hours. I omitted the western section of the park since there were so few birds around. The total list was 45 and there were no observations worthy of note. This stagnated cold front is predicted to remain for several days more so I'm pessimistic about the possibility of any late May flight.

25 May

Overcast weather dictated by an easterly flow continued this morning but at least the wind had shifted from northeast to southeast and there were some birds including two, a Solitary Sandpiper at the pond near the Nature Center and a flock of 100 Dowitchers in the east marsh, that were new for the year. There were also some migrant land birds including six Black-poll Warblers, two Northern Waterthrushes and two Swainson's Thrushes.

I found two nests of Black Ducks, one in the field where I saw the Yellow Rail, surprisingly far removed from the east marsh, the other on the edge of the far east marsh. Each nest contained eight off white eggs and each case I unwittingly flushed the female from the nest by approaching within a few feet.

In the center of the park, I heard a single Crow giving its hysterical Great-horned Owl alarm call. I approached the Crow which was in the periphery of precisely the spruce where the owl had roosted during the winter. The Crow continued to sound the alarm and look into a certain part of the tree but I could see nothing there. The Crow finally flew away and I continued to circle the tree and inspect it from every angle. Finally, I spotted the owl which was superbly camouflaged. In fact, at first all I could see was a large eye that followed me as I moved around. It was quite extraordinary. The owl did not flush, secure in the notion that it could not be seen, at least by me, and it was almost correct. I would not possibly have found this bird had it not been for the signaling Crow.

27 May

Yesterday, there was persistent very heavy rain with winds from the northeast. The rain ended in the evening and northerly winds led to partial clearing. The wind shifted to southerly while I was at the park this morning. There was a great deal of standing water from yesterday's rain.

There were a lot of birds considering that it is already late May. I logged 81 species, I believe the highest total I've ever recorded this late. They comprised 44 passerines and 37 nonpasserines for a ratio of 1.19. Included were 12 warbler species comprising 24 individuals and 10 species of shore bird. There were four species that were new for the year; A Knot in fine alternate plumage feeding with Black-bellied Plovers on the air plane field; a Nighthawk flying over Woodcock woods and settling in a tree; a Hummingbird at Grove Point; and two Canada Warblers, one in the central evergreens, the other in the West Woods.

The Knot was only my second record for this species which is abundant on the south shore of Long Island and certainly not rare in most Connecticut coastal areas. I've never understood why it seems to eschew Sherwood Island. My other record was also of a bird in alternate plumage in May.

The Nighthawk was a surprise. I don't think I've ever had one in the spring and I certainly have not seen one settle horizontally on a bare limb as did this one. I thought I was looking at an illustration out of Fuertes.

Another interesting observation was that of a Clapper Rail, standing in the mud of the island near the Mill Bridge and calling. I don't think I've ever watched one call before. The contrast with the King Rail I saw the other day was striking. This bird was completely dull without even a trace of robin red on the breast and its flank streaking was quite inconspicuous.

28 May

It rained all last night rendering the park even more replete with standing water. The far eastern overgrown meadow looked like the Pantanal save that it was missing the Caimans. The odd sluicing of the dykes was in effect and even though the tide was high there was considerable mud exposed in the Mill Pond and I don't think I've ever seen as many shore birds there. Unfortunately, the exposed portion was far from the Mill Bridge and visibility was very poor in the fog and overcast so I had difficulty making out the birds clearly. The major players were clearly Black-bellied Plovers, Dowitchers and Dunlins. Tomorrow, the timing should be more propitious providing the identical game is played with the sluices. Moreover, good and relatively clear weather is predicted.

I shortened the itinerary this morning by omitting the central portion of the park since there didn't seem to be many land birds about and I had to be home early. I found 62 species including one, Little Blue Heron, that was new for the year. I saw an adult and an immature that was still largely white with just a few blue feathers. I had heretofore imagined that by their first spring, young birds had attained full adult plumage.

I saw two more groups of new goslings this morning, probably hatched within the past three days with their fathers in fiercely protective moods. One came rushing at me and feigned an attack, baring the pink inside of his mouth until I rapidly retreated. I don't remember a previous spring in which young were hatching so far into May. The young Killdeers near the Nature Center, by contrast, look virtually adult.

A male Green-winged Teal in the east marsh was unexpected at this late date.

29 May

Intermittent rain all night was followed by partial clearing and a moderately strong southwest wind this morning. The peculiar drainage of the Mill Pond was in effect again and I managed to get east of the pond in the east marsh near the maintenance facility at 8:00 AM so that I had perfect light to examine the foraging shore birds. There weren't as many as yesterday but I did record 11 species of shore birds including four Red Knots and 15 Semipalmated Sandpipers which were new for the year. It's likely that there were

several White-rumps among them but I couldn't be certain because of the distance. A second bird new for the year was a Black-billed Cuckoo that I heard calling from west of the Mill Beach. The list for today was an extraordinary 74 species, 38 passerine, 36 nonpasserine. The two Little Blue Herons were both adults and I didn't see the young bird with a few blue feathers so there are at least three in the vicinity. I had a particularly fine look at an adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron and noticed for the first time that it, like the young bird, has black primaries visible only in flight. I also examined its bill closely and noticed the very high base. What a splendid bird this is!

I have not seen any Diamond-backed Terrapins this year and I hope this does not indicate deterioration in the state of the east marsh where they have been common in the past.

30 May

This morning, I omitted the eastern section of the park because of time constraints. The weather was perfect and there were birds around although none of the 63 species that I found were new for the year. I did, however, hear one that was probably new, a high pitched song in between that of a Black-and-White and a Blackpoll Warbler. I suspect strongly that the bird was a Bay-breasted, not only from text descriptions, but also from my own very distant memory.

While I was in the east marsh just west of the maintenance facility scrutinizing shore birds on the exposed mud of the Mill Pond, I took advantage of my telescope to examine the nest of the Ospreys closely. Both adults were there and, for the first time, I could see with **certainty**, two small, darkly plumaged young birds. I would be surprised if these birds were more than two weeks old.

2 June

A heavy, constant daylong rainfall yesterday gave the park about as much standing water as I have ever seen. However, the winds shifted from northeast to west and were gusting significantly from that direction this morning. There was nothing of interest amongst the 43 species that I found before leaving. I omitted the western section of the park from my itinerary.

6 June

This morning was beautiful, warm and clear with a gentle southwest breeze. I found 53 species. None were new and only two individuals, a Pewee and a Magnolia Warbler, were migrants. The visit was noteworthy for unrecorded species that should be common particularly including Yellowthroat and Northern Oriole. I hope that my failure to record them reflects their silence rather than absence.

I saw at least 25 Diamond-backed Terrapins in the east marsh today and relieved my anxiety that the health of the marsh was deteriorating. I can't imagine why I hadn't seen them this year until today. They are remarkably wary and slip into the water quietly when the observer is still at a great distance which may be the explanation.

17 June

Late yesterday, I received an email from A. J. Hand that a Marbled Godwit had been seen by Penny Solum at noon in the east parking lot. I went out this morning in search of it and, *mirabile dictu*, I found it immediately, foraging in the mud just north of the Mill Bridge. It was virtually the first bird I saw from the bridge and I returned home without entering the park. I examined only the flats off the Mill Beach and the Mill Pond and was out for just 15 minutes. The bird was a fine adult in alternate plumage.

Last year, a Marbled Godwit, presumably the same individual, showed up in the eastern section of the park in mid June and was present for two or three days. Unfortunately, I didn't learn about it until too late. I didn't imagine that I would have another opportunity to see it. The bird is new for my personal Sherwood Island list, the third species I have added this year. The others were Purple Sandpiper and Iceland Gull.

10 July

This morning was overcast with a fairly forceful and cooling easterly breeze. I spent most of my time trying to restore my trails through various parts of the eastern section of the park which had become almost tropical in its abundance of vegetation. Walking through the thick marsh grass and heavy undergrowth was extremely enervating. The two Osprey fledglings were still on the nesting platform but looked to be almost full grown. Large numbers of Canada Geese (350), mostly almost fully grown birds of the year, were resting on the beach. There were no unexpected birds. The closest was a single Least Tern, unusual after early June.

19 August

Today was an experimental one for me as I wanted to know how much I could get around in view of my increasing fatigue. Since my last visit, I have been found to have hypertension which has been treated and is now under control. However, my stamina is worse than ever. I started at the Mill Beach, went to Grove Point, and then worked the meadow and salt marsh near the air plane field. That short itinerary exhausted me. Perhaps I might have felt better had there been some birds of interest but there weren't.

25 August

Yesterday brought cool northwesterly breezes that were halted by a front last night with some rain from the southwest. It cleared this morning. I have suffered a considerable loss in my ability to walk distances and have begun to dread my visits to the park, particularly the slogging through the marsh that is so difficult for me now, and yet so critical in the early fall. The conditions seemed propitious so I decided to give it a try today. I will probably not be able to cover the entire park any more so I am now indulging in "selective truncation". This morning that meant including the Mill Beach, Grove Point, the west half of the park south of the maintenance facility, and the east section of the park around the airplane field and its associated meadow and marsh.

Birds were moving today. I could sense them flitting through the dense foliage and I could occasionally see them sufficiently well to make an identification. Because of the state funding crisis, Tobey has not been able to hire the manpower required to hack everything down, as is his wont, so I was really pleased with the overgrowth, which is as luxuriant as it has ever been. Of course, it does make walking more difficult.

Two highly unusual finds: a pair of Baird's Sandpipers foraging with a pair of Killdeer on the model airplane field; and a female Pileated Woodpecker on just about the only tree between the Mill Pond and the West Beach. This bird was exceedingly tame. I stood ten feet from it and watched it probe about five feet above the ground. For the first time, I was able to see the tongue and the way it is used, almost as an antenna, to tell the bird where to hack with its beak. A Bank Swallow was the third species that was new for my Sherwood Island year list. Altogether, I had 53 species in my truncated visit of two and one-half hours.

26 August

Yesterday was good so I couldn't stay away today lest it be even better. It wasn't. There was very little action among land birds. I did find one Baird's Sandpiper on the entry oval which had been mowed quite closely making the bird very easy to see. My itinerary was the same as yesterday save that I did not actually beat the marsh around the model airplane field. I was out for two hours and fifteen minutes and I recorded 40 species.

6 September

There were several days of easterly winds with light rain that ended yesterday with a front from the northwest. Everything was cleared out by this morning and there was a substantial breeze out of the northwest. The park was virtually deserted and conditions seemed quite perfect but there were very few birds. I have been limiting my time afield because I become easily fatigued and this morning I spent only two hours and omitted the entire western section of the park. I did add two birds for the year list. I flushed a Sora

from the main drainage ditch just east of the air plane field and I saw two Palm Warblers, always much commoner in the fall than in the spring. I failed to see even a single raptor.

10 September

This morning seemed just perfect, clear with a modest breeze from the north. The park was beautiful and I had it almost entirely to myself. I covered the Mill Beach, Grove Point, the area around the air plane field including the marsh, and the southwesterly section including the viewing platform and the West Woods. Most of the action was on the Mill Pond which was in its drainage mode and made for heron heaven. Included were an adult Little Blue and both adult and immature Yellow-crowned Night. But the most amazing find was diving repeatedly off the Mill Beach, a female Long-tailed duck. The earliest record given by Baptist and Zeranski is 23 September! There seemed to be little or no land bird movement and, for the second straight visit, I failed to see even a single raptor.

11 September

This morning I followed more or less the same itinerary as yesterday. There was an easterly element to the strong breeze. The day was noteworthy for its lack of birds. For example, I didn't record a single shore bird despite a favorable wind and the drained Mill Pond with a huge expanse of mud. I was only out for a bit over two hours but the pathetic total of 32 species was indicative of the day, if not all-inclusive.

24 September

There has not been anything approaching a cold snap yet this year and I doubt there has been much migration although I haven't been out so I can't really say so with much conviction. This morning was quite favorable with a gentle breeze out of the west. I used my new truncated itinerary which consists of the Mill Beach, Grove Point, the area around the air plane field including the marshes north of it and the central drainage ditch and the area around the old nature center including the west woods and the viewing platform. I ran into A. J. Hand and we birded together in the park proper. Most interesting birds: the Yellow-crowned Night Heron was in the same spot visible from the Mill Bridge that I had seen it (the adult) before this fall; we flushed a Sora in the marsh behind the airplane field; four Swainson's Thrushes.

29 September

This morning felt like the first real fall day, cool with a northwest wind and some cloud cover. The weather was certainly promising and there were some birds on my selectively truncated itinerary which will be my standard itinerary for the foreseeable future. The

most satisfying observation was that of a magnificent adult Bald Eagle heading southwest. They usually fly rather low and offer very good looks and this one was no exception. Eight pipits over the airplane field were also new for the year. A White-eyed Vireo, though not new for the year, was a good sighting. More interesting still was a bird that I listed as a Tennessee Warbler but may have been a Philadelphia Vireo. This bird was at Grove Point and was extremely active foraging and flitting both high and low, possessing a warbler-like bill, a prominent eye-stripe, a prominent gray crown, some yellow on the sides and under the tail, and a green back. The guides all emphasize that a Tennessee Warbler has white under tail coverts. Some of them also mention that a Philadelphia Vireo can easily be mistaken for a warbler but it too does not characteristically have yellow under tail coverts. The guides suggest that Orange-crowned can easily be mistaken for Tennessee in the fall but this bird was no Orange-crowned because it had a really gray crown and was clear underneath, albeit with yellow sides and under tail coverts. I don't know what it was but I'm quite certain it was a bit unusual. At my stage, I should certainly be able to identify birds like this at which I get a reasonably good look.

30 September

This morning seemed quite perfect, very much like yesterday. I varied my recent itinerary a bit and skipped the area around the air plane field, substituting instead the northwest section near the stone barn and the far east. I found nothing of interest and the day was something of a disappointment.

2 October

This was another seemingly perfect morning and there were a few birds around. I did the standard truncated itinerary: the Mill Beach; Grove Point; the area around the air plane field including the marsh; the west half including the area from the maintenance facility to the West Woods. I counted 53 species including a Red-breasted Nuthatch that I heard which was new for the year. A more satisfactory identification of an immature Tennessee Warbler, this one with a yellow throat, white under tail coverts and looking much like the Eurasian Wood Warbler, a Phylloscopus. A few other warblers were also around including five Yellowthroats, a Yellow, four black-throated Greens, three Magnolias and eight Palms.

3 October

This morning there was inland frost and the temperature was below 40° even on the shore. There was a mild northwest breeze and the skies were clear. There were some birds around including 8 Black-throated Green Warblers but I failed to find anything of particular interest. I limited myself to the Mill Beach, Grove Point, and the western section of the park and I was only out for two hours and fifteen minutes.

7 October

The weather was ideal this morning and there was a nice flight of land birds including 20 Yellow-rumped Warblers, 20 Yellowthroats, two White-crowned and a Lincoln's Sparrow and two Solitary Vireos. There has been a large immature buteo hanging around the West Woods for several weeks and today I decided it was probably a Red-shouldered as opposed to a Red-tailed Hawk as I had previously supposed it to be. My change of mind came after meeting Penny and Jalna the other day and hearing that they thought it was a Red-shouldered. Both immature buteos have barring on the tail which is why I don't usually try to distinguish one from the other in this plumage. However, I must confess that the barring, while not exactly striking, was a bit more conspicuous than is usually true with Red-tails and the dark bars were far broader than the light ones. Also, the bird did have a great deal of streaking.

9 October

This morning was warm and windless and there were plenty of birds around. I examined the Mill Pond, Grove Point, and most of the western half of the park, omitting the West Woods, however. I found 58 species and full coverage would have yielded close to 70. Nothing remarkable, however.

14 October

This seemed a reasonably promising day with the slightest northeast breeze and some clouds as a prelude to predicted heavy rain. My itinerary was identical to my last visit. There were again plenty of birds, the most interesting being a Creeper and a Winter Wren, the latter new for the year. I was only out for two and one-half hours and I found 51 species.

28 October

Skies cleared today after heavy rains yesterday. The wind was paradoxically mainly from the east. My itinerary included the Mill Pond, Grove Point and the western section of the park. There were plenty of birds and I logged 52 species in two and one-half hours. A single Blue-headed Vireo was the most interesting.

30 October

Yesterday was another one of heavy rain that was cleared out overnight by a west wind that persisted gently this morning. I followed the same itinerary as two days ago and logged 46 species, none of which were unexpected.

4 November

This was a foggy morning with drizzle and a moderately strong northeast breeze. I covered the Mill Beach, Grove Point, the area around the airplane field and most of the west half of the park save the West Woods. I was out for only two hours and found 43 species. The most interesting was the large number (750) of cormorants flying over. I flushed a dark female pheasant, the first in many months, and saw three Dunlins foraging with Greater Yellowlegs on the Mill Pond.

There was a report that a Jackdaw had been seen in the park so I went with the intention of spending more time than usual examining Crows. And for the first time since I've been visiting Sherwood Island I failed to find a single Crow much less a Jackdaw.

8 November

Last night marked the end of a prolonged warm spell and today was cold with a stinging north wind at 15-25 MPH. A noted ornithologist had predicted on the internet that there would be a migration of Cave Swallows associated with the wind shift. Some have migrated through southeastern Connecticut during the past several Novembers so I decided to have a look today. I spent one hour (1:15-2:15 PM) examining the eastern half of the park much of which is now overgrown due to the park budgetary crisis. The only noteworthy find was two Forster's Terns flying southwest over the Sound.