



*Black Brant (background bird) – Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
May 22, 1976
–J. Costa*

PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES

25. BLACK BRANT

JOSEPH COSTA and THOMAS H. DAVIS

The Black Brant (*Branta nigricans*) breeds from northeastern Siberia east to at least Melville Island in the Canadian Arctic. In winter, it is found along the Pacific coast from Alaska to Baja California, and casually to eastern North America (J. Bull, 1974. *Birds of New York State*. Doubleday/Natural History Press. Garden City, N.Y.). The taxonomic status of this form has long been a subject of controversy, and it is often considered conspecific with the Brant (*Branta bernicla*) of the eastern Canadian Arctic and Atlantic coast (J. Delacour and J. T. Zimmer, 1952. *Auk*, 69: 84).

John Bull (*loc. cit.*) cites six occurrences of *nigricans* for New York State. Five of these birds were reported from Long Island (date span Oct. 25-March 31), and one was observed near Niagara Falls, November 13, 1949.

Two additional occurrences of Black Brant have recently been reported, both at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens Co. This area is a major stopover point for large numbers of migrating Brant, with peak numbers recorded during October and May. These recent occurrences are: 1) October 5-November 29, 1974 (T. H. Davis, 1975, *The Kingbird*, 25: 27); 2) May 22-25, 1976 (Max and Nellie Larson, James Ash, Thomas W. Burke, *et al.*; photographed by Joseph Costa). This bird was first spotted by Nellie Larson, whose attention was attracted by the wider white collar, not the black underparts. The Black Brant was only observed grazing with 1-2 dozen Brant on the lawn bordering the West Pond. The period May 22-25 marked the exodus of all but a small number of the thousands of Brant inhabiting Jamaica Bay since early May. One Brant remained through the summer, but alas!—the “wrong” one!

*Joseph Costa, 9446-85 Road, Apt. 4E, Woodhaven, New York 11421
and Thomas H. Davis, 9446-85 Road, Apt. 2H, Woodhaven, New York 11421.*