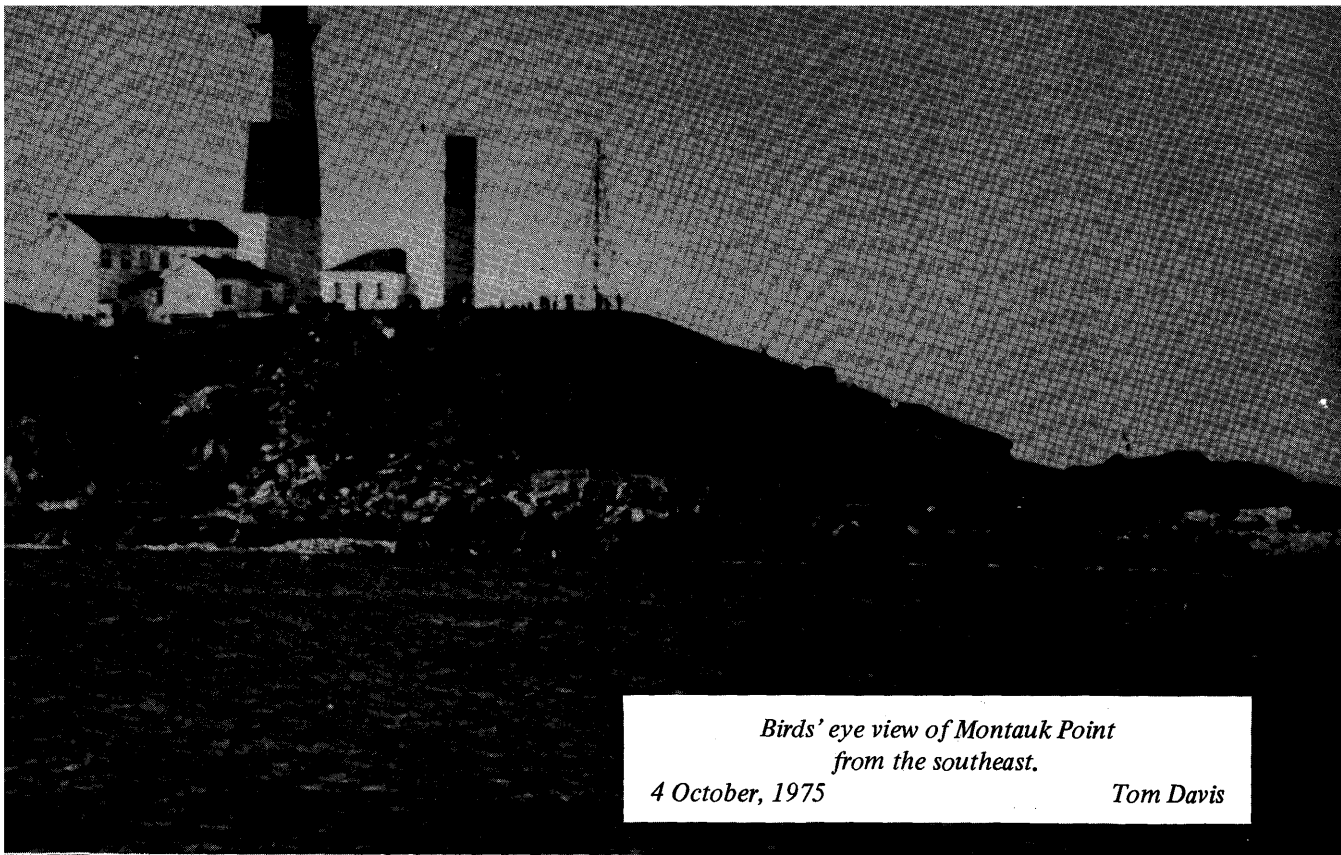




*Birds' eye view of Montauk Point
from the southeast.*

4 October, 1975

Tom Davis

PELAGIC BIRDING TRIPS TO COX'S LEDGE FROM MONTAUK POINT, LONG ISLAND

THOMAS H. DAVIS

Cox's Ledge is a famous warm weather cod-fishing area lying about 40 miles east of Montauk Point, Long Island, or 25 miles ESE of Block Island, Rhode Island (coordinates $41^{\circ} 05' N$, $71^{\circ} 10' W$). A. R. Wickers' article "Cod at Cox's" (*Salt Water Sportsman*, 33 (8): 42-47, 1972) describes the Ledge as "a piece of rough bottom about 5 miles wide and 10 miles long with a water depth of 85 to 140 feet. Crabs, lobsters, baitfish, and myriad other sea organisms attract the Cod . . . several Montauk party boats (*i.e.*, open public boats) fish the Ledge, beginning in late May, continuing through October."

Birders Ben and Joanne Trimble first visited Cox's Ledge in the summer of 1966, noting a rewarding number and variety of sea birds, plus surprises such as summering Gannets and a large unidentified alcid. Trips in 1967 and 1968 produced two rarities, Skua and Long-tailed Jaeger. In 1972 birding trips to Cox's received a big boost when Captain Paul Forsberg began offering birders a discount rate aboard his 104-foot *Viking Star*. In 1974, at the suggestion of Gordon Meade, the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs began sponsoring chartered pelagic trips to Cox's aboard the *Star's* sister ship, the *Viking Starlite*.

Table 1. A Chronological Listing of Cox's Ledge Trips
Included in Compiling This Paper

1966: July 2; August 1, 13.
1967: June 11.
1968: September 1.
1969: September 6.
1970: August 30.
1971: September 11.
1972: August 19; September 23.
1973: May 26; July 20; August 25; September 2, 16, 22; October 6.
1974: May 26; June 15; September 14, 28; October 26.
1975: June 7, 21; August 26; September 6, 20, 28; October 4.
1976: May 22, 31; June 12; July 16; August 14; September 11, 25;
October 23.
1977: May 7; June 4; August 13; September 5, 24; October 8.

To date, 112 species of birds have been recorded on 43 trips to Cox's Ledge from Montauk Point. These species include loons, shearwaters, storm-petrels, Gannets, cormorants, herons, waterfowl, hawks, shorebirds, jaegers, gulls, terns, alcids, doves, swifts, kingfishers, swallows, and a wide variety of passerines. Many of these birds occur regularly as seasonal visitors or migrants, while many others, especially passerines, are wind-drifted migrants. Drifted migrants are much more prevalent in the fall when most nocturnal movement takes place with offshore NW winds. Suffice it to say that any nocturnal migrant occurring at Montauk Point might also eventually be recorded at Cox's Ledge. Land birds sometimes alight on the boat (even on the tips of fishing rods!), but usually fly along side, or around the boat for a while before departing to the NNW. During the summer months, shorebirds are often seen, singly or in small flocks, flying low over the water from the general direction of Cape Cod toward Long Island. In late September-early October, numbers of raptors, especially falcons, are noted along this same flight line.

Excepting the pelagic species listed in Table 3, no birds seen within 2-3 miles of Montauk Point are included in this compilation. To do so would introduce an inshore bias, inflating numbers of loons, waterfowl, gulls, and terns. Some birds that occur rather commonly in this zone (*i.e.*, Ring-billed Gull and Roseate Tern) are rather rare farther offshore. The number of species identified at sea averages about 15 per trip, slightly higher in the fall, with a maximum of 35 on September 23, 1972.

Many sea birds, including Northern Fulmar, shearwaters, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Gannet, jaegers, gulls, and terns are attracted to the presence of sport-fishing boats at Cox's Ledge. Gulls are "professional" boat-followers, seeking cleaned fish scraps, discarded trash fish, pieces of bait—literally anything edible. The gulls' presence seems to attract the other sea birds, especially Northern Fulmar, Greater Shearwater, and jaegers. The better the fishing, the more boats present, the more gulls will be present, and the higher the likelihood that other sea birds will be attracted. During the past five years, fishing quality has been declining at Cox's Ledge and there has been a decline in the number of boats visiting the Ledge and in daily counts of gulls.

A sharp temperature differential at Cape Cod, caused by upwelling water between June and September, separates the Gulf of Maine from the Mid-Atlantic Bight. Cox's Ledge is under the influence of the

colder waters of the Gulf of Maine, while the waters from Montauk Point to south of Block Island are Mid-Atlantic. In birds, this contrast is most evident in comparing numbers of Greater and Cory's Shearwaters at and away from the Ledge. Also, to the north of the barrier during the summer period, the water temperature is relatively constant, while the Mid-Atlantic Bight waters are variable. Year-to-year variations in water temperature at Cox's Ledge may be responsible for fluctuations in numbers of Greater and Cory's Shearwaters. None of the species listed on Table 3 breed south of Cox's Ledge along the U.S. coast while 11 species are found breeding to the north. Nine of the northern species breed north of the Canadian border while Manx Shearwater and Leach's Storm-Petrel breed south to the vicinity of Cape Cod (as does the Arctic Tern, as yet unrecorded on these trips). Six others are migrants from southern waters; of these the Cory's and Audubon's Shearwaters range only accidentally north of Cape Cod.

THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

A description of the marine environment is essential to understanding the distribution of birds from Montauk Point to Cox's Ledge and the conditions in which they are observed. This description has been abstracted from Volume I of the *Final Environmental Statement for the Proposed 1977 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Lease Sale Offshore the North Atlantic States OCS Sale No. 42*, prepared by the Bureau of Land Management for the U.S. Department of the Interior.

- I. Marine Geology: Cox's Ledge lies on the continental shelf, the natural seaward extension of the coastal plain. During the Pleistocene era most of the continental shelf south of Long Island and Cape Cod was exposed land beyond the glacial limit. With the retreat of the Laurentide ice sheet, beginning about 15,000 years ago, terminal moraines were deposited along a line stretching across Long Island and Georges Bank. Cox's Ledge lies along the outwash zone of this glacial front. The "rough bottom" at Cox's cited above includes boulders "as big as a house" (verb. comm., Paul Forsberg). Most of the bottom between Montauk Point and Cox's is sandy, with some deposits of gravel. The water depth at Cox's is 18-19 fathoms, 4 fathoms at Great Eastern Rock 2 miles east of Montauk Point, and the greatest depth in between is 31 fathoms (C & GS chart 1108, Approaches to NY).

II. Meteorology:

A. Temperature: averages low 30's (F.) in midwinter to high 60's in midsummer.

B. Precipitation: average annual precipitation is 40 inches with a frequency percentage per month as follows:

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
12	12.7	10.2	9.8	6.7	4.8	5.5	6.4	7.2	7.0	9.3	12.7

C. Surface Winds: Surface winds generally come from a prevailing westerly direction throughout the year. There is an overall shift to the NW in winter and to the SW during summer. Offshore wind conditions for the months this paper includes are:

	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
Mean speed (knots) and direction	10.8SW	10.1SW	9.4SW	10.3SW	11.6SW	13.7W
Wind > 34 knots	.6%	.2%	.1%	.3%	1.3%	2.5%
Wind > 41 knots	.2%	.1%		.1%	.5%	.5%

D. Sky Cover and Visibility: Data for the months this paper includes is as follows—sky cover is given in eighths, sky overcast or obscured and visibility are given in percent frequency:

	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
Sky Cover	4.6	4.2	4.5	4.3	4.0	3.9
Sky overcast or obscured	34.2	25.5	30.9	28.8	27.9	26.1
Visibility < 2 nautical miles	12.3	8.1	7.8	4.4	3.2	2.7
Visibility < .5 nautical miles	9.2	5.1	4.0	1.8	1.8	1.8

Reduced visibility due to advection sea fog is more often encountered during the warmer months when the winds are from the S or SW, especially with light to moderate winds. This type of fog forms when warm humid air is cooled in passing over the cold ocean.

III. Physical Oceanography:

A. Water Temperature:

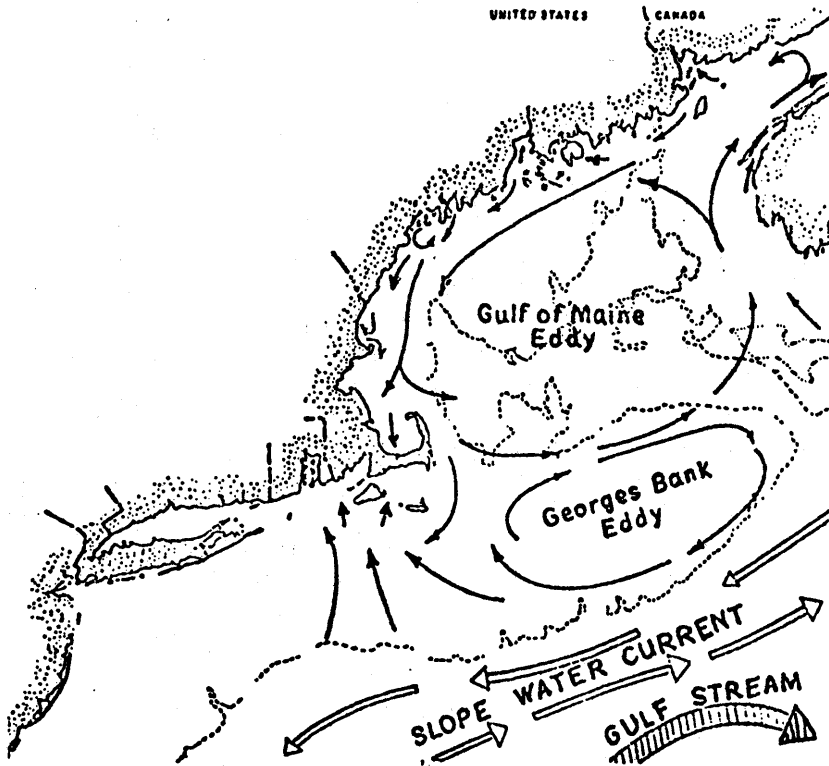
1. Seasonal variation in the vicinity of Cox's Ledge is as follows:

	Feb.	May	Aug.	Nov.
Surface	4° C	10° C	20° C	12° C
Bottom	4° C	6° C	10° C	12° C

2. Seasonal variation in the vicinity of Montauk is as follows:

	Feb.	May	Aug.	Nov.
Surface	3° C	10° C	21° C	12° C
Bottom	3° C	7° C	14° C	13° C

*Figure 1.
Surface Currents Within Slope and Coastal Water Masses*



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1973

The Georges Bank Eddy is a seasonally dependent phenomenon. The eddy develops over the Bank during the spring. By summer, the flow at the eastern edge is southerly and offshore. By autumn, the flow over the western edge becomes westerly and southerly. In winter, the entire drift over the Bank is, in general, southerly.

B. Gulf Stream: The Gulf Stream flows north parallel to the Continental Margin. The mean position of the inner margin of the Gulf Stream lies about 150 miles south of Cox's Ledge. There is some fluctuation in direction, with some meandering north of its axis, especially in late summer. Eddies may occasionally break off from the main body of the Gulf Stream and impinge on the slope water (see Audubon's Shearwater account below).

C. Surface Circulation: see Figure 1

D. Bottom Circulation: Along the shelf of southern New England there is consistent residual bottom drift shoreward from the inner two-thirds of the shelf area, particularly toward the mouths of estuaries. Beyond this region the bottom water moves seaward. The near bottom velocities are considerably less than velocities on the surface, .1-1.3 kilometers per day vs. up to 9 or more kilometers per day.

E. Sea and Swell: Winds blowing over the water surface generate waves. In general, the higher the wind velocity, the longer the fetch over which it blows, and the longer it blows, the higher and longer will be the average waves that result. The New England landmass prevents NW waves from being generated along the inner shelf by limiting the fetch, while easterly winds may generate waves that gradually increase in size as they move landward. Table 2 presents seasonal and month-by-month estimates of the percentage of time that seas of selected height categories can be expected in the vicinity of Cox's Ledge. Sea heights less than indicated can be expected the remainder of the time.

Table 2. Inshore Wave Heights

	WINTER			SPRING			SUMMER			AUTUMN		
	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APR.	MAY	JUN.	JUL.	AUG.	SEP.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.
≥ 5 feet	20-30	20-30	10-20	10-20	<10	<10	<10	<10	<20	<30	30	30
≥ 8 feet	<20	10	10	5	<5	2	2	<5	5	10	<20	20
≥ 12 feet	5	5	5	2-5	1	1	<1	1	2	2	5	5
≥ 20 feet	<2	2	<2	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	2	2

F. Nutrients: Nitrates and phosphates along with dissolved oxygen and other nutrients are the elements needed to support phytoplankton which is the primary producer of the marine environment. Nutrients are transported to the ocean by rivers, surface run-off, and air transport. Certain seasonal variations and concentration levels of these nutrients are dependent on the mixing or non-mixing of the different water masses. During the winter months the differentiation between surface and bottom waters disappears as the thermocline breaks down. Nutrients and oxygen mix and deficient areas are replenished. In the spring and summer, as the phytoplankton blooms and the segregation begins again, the bottom waters experience an increase in nutrient concentrations and a decrease in oxygen concentrations; the reverse occurs in the surface waters.

IV. Biological Communities:

A. Phytoplankton: Phytoplankton is the base of the food chain and any change in abundance or community structure will invariably affect subsequent portions of the chain. The major types of phytoplankton in the North Atlantic area are the diatoms, dinoflagellates, coccolithophorids, silicoflagellates, euglenoids, blue-green algae, and microflagellates. In the marine environment the phytoplankton derives its nutrients mainly from nitrogen and its movement is regulated by currents. Phytoplankton production takes place in a relatively shallow surface band which will vary in depth according to the intensity of solar radiation, turbidity, latitude, and season.

B. Zooplankton: Zooplankton represents the animal component of the plankton, including every phylum in the Animal Kingdom. Many species of zooplankton can swim or change position vertically in the water column but are not able to move horizontally against the tide and currents.

C. Benthos:

1. Flora: The benthic flora of the New England coast exhibits a well-defined geographical distribution. Nantucket Island-Cape Cod forms a distinctive geographical boundary between northern species of algae with subarctic tendencies and a southern boreal flora adapted to warmer waters.

The boundary is not sharp; south of Cape Cod there are several areas in which the algae are more characteristic of more northern waters such as Montauk Point where a year-round development of kelp occurs.

2. Fauna: The benthic fauna, including jellyfish, clams, mussels, shrimps, crabs, and lobsters, is also separated into two distinctive temperature or climatic zones at Cape Cod. From the Cape northward, the region is boreal, while southward, the region is warm-temperate. On the gravel and sandy-gravel bottom of Georges Bank, similar to the bottom at Cox's Ledge, is found the greatest faunal weight. The high biomass is due largely to the occurrence of dense beds of Northern Horse Mussel (*Modiolus modiolus*).
3. Fish: Fish are also divided into northern and southern populations at Cape Cod. Summer catches of Atlantic Cod, Haddock, and Pollack at Cox's Ledge imply an affinity with colder northern waters.
4. Marine Mammals:
 - a. Cetaceans: Up to 20 species of whales and dolphins occur more or less regularly in the North Atlantic off Long Island. Nearly all these animals occur only as migrants, principally along the outer continental shelf south of Cox's Ledge. It is therefore not surprising that only two species have been identified on trips to Cox's from Montauk Point. Finback whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*) were reported Aug. 25, 1973 and May 7, 1977, and a school of 3 or 4 Common Dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) was noted May 7, 1977.
 - b. Sea Turtles: There are 5 species of sea turtles known to be summer residents of New England waters. Of these, only the Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) has been noted—one observed swimming on the surface 6 miles south of Montauk Point Sept. 25, 1976, and a carcass floating several miles south of Block Island Sept. 28, 1974 (see Northern Fulmar account below).

Table 3. Pelagic Birds Noted on Cox's Ledge Trips from Montauk Point, New York

	May 1-15	16-31	June 1-15	16-30	July 1-15	16-31	Aug. 1-15	16-31	Sept. 1-15	16-30	Oct. 1-15	16-31
No. trips in period	1	4	5	1	1	2	4	4	8	8	3	2
N. Fulmar		2-3.5								3-20	1-2	1-1
Shearwater, Sooty	1-1	4-19.8	5-25.6	1-3	1-1	1-30	3-1.3	1-2				
Greater		2-2.5	5-20.2	1-21	1-6	2-112.5	4-46	4-28.8	6-54.2	8-72.8	3-18.3	2-167.5
Cory's			1-1	1-83	1-14	2-77.5	4-57.5	4-34	6-55.2	7-18.9	2-26	2-10.5
Manx		2-1	3-2		1-1		1-1	1-1	1-1	4-1.8		
Audubon's							1-1					
Storm-Petrel, Leach's								1-2	1-1			
Wilson's		4-70.5	5-67.4	1-25	1-60	2-245	4-77.5	4-244.5	8-72.5	6-25.8		
Gannet	1-56	4-8.5	3-2.7		1-1		1-1		1-1	2-5	2-3	2-31.5
Phalarope, Red		2-26.5						1-2	3-5.7	2-3	1-12	1-12
Northern		3-29	2-5.5				1-1	2-2.5	4-14.8	3-2.7	1-22	1-6
Unidentified	1-11		1-1						3-8	1-4	1-8	1-11
Skua sp.		1-1	3-1.3	1-1		1-1				1-1		1-1
Jaeger, Pomarine		1-1	3-2.3	1-2				3-1.7	7-5.4	7-12.6	3-6.3	2-5
Parasitic		1-1	3-2.3				1-5	1-2	6-3	4-5.8	2-1.5	
Long-tailed									1-1			
Unidentified		1-3					1-1	1-1	5-3.4	3-1.7	1-1	2-1.5
Sabine's Gull									1-1	2-1		
Black-legged Kittiwake		1-1						1-1	1-1	4-1.3	1-3	2-15.5

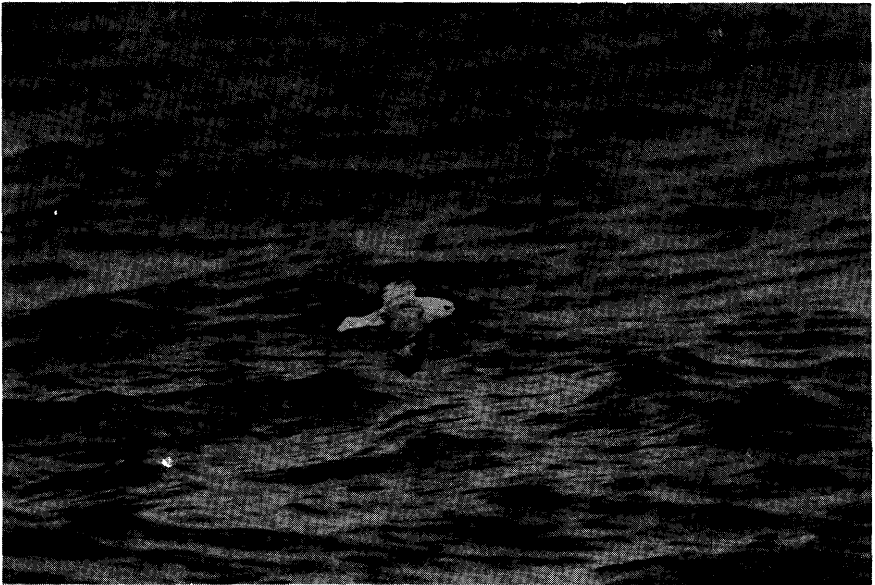
Legend: Number of trips noted in period → A-B ← Average number noted per trip.
 Example: "Sooty Shearwater 4-19.8" means that Sooty Shearwaters were noted on four trips, with an average of 19.8 birds per trip.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Common Loon: 18 reports. In spring to June 12, max 43 on May 7. In fall Aug. 19 on, max. 30 on Oct. 26. Earliest fall arrivals may represent disrupted breeders.

Red-throated Loon: 4 spring reports to June 11, max. 21 on May 7.

Northern Fulmar: increasing in frequency and abundance since first reported Sept. 16, 1973; max. 59 Sept. 24, 1977 during an easterly storm. By choice or chance, the only two dark-phased birds ever seen were both feeding on carcasses—the first Sept. 28, 1974 on a Leatherback Turtle, and one Oct. 8, 1977 on a Great Black-backed Gull, the gull having died from entanglement with a fishing lure. Fulmars are quite fearless in approaching boats. Capt. Forsberg fishes for tilefish at the edge of the Continental Shelf during midwinter; fulmars are common here at this season, and bold enough to steal bait from the hooks of the set line as it is being paid out! To keep away the fulmars, he assigns a man to bang garbage can covers together to frighten them!



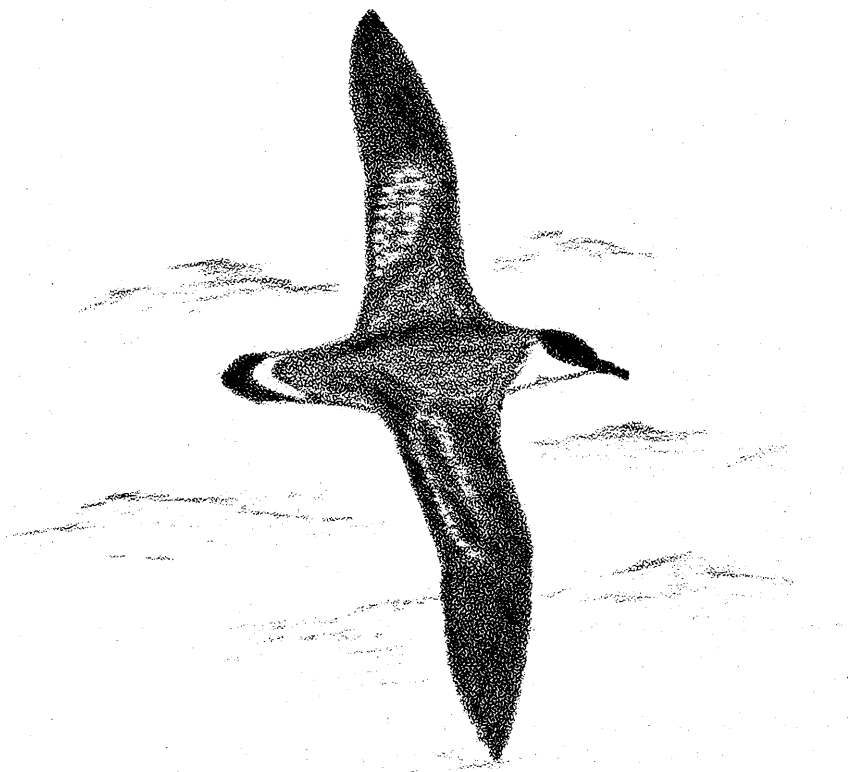
1975

"Double light" Northern Fulmar

Bill Wilson

Sooty Shearwater: an inshore species, seen principally near Montauk Point.

Greater Shearwater: prefers the colder waters of Cox's Ledge. Will approach boat closely if chum, bait, or fish parts are proffered. Lands on water with wings held slightly out from body, then surface dives, wings open, for as long as 10-15 seconds.



Greater Shearwater

1977

Luanne Clark

Cory's Shearwater: prefers warmer waters from Great Eastern Rock (ca. 3 miles east of Montauk Pt.) to several miles SE of Block Island. Does not approach boats closely. In recent years (since 1970) fall flights declining in abundance, but showing a greater tendency to appear before mid-June.

Manx Shearwater: increasing in frequency since 1973, the year found breeding in North America for the first time at nearby Penikese I.,

Mass. Rarely approaches boats. An inshore species, seen principally from near Montauk Point (especially at Great Eastern Rock) to SE of Block I. Feeds by low-angle plunge dives into wave swells. Peter Alden's photograph of a Manx at Cox's Ledge, published in John Bull's *Birds of New York State* (1974. Doubleday/Natural History Press. Garden City, NY.) is unquestionably this species, despite Bull's skeptical remarks concerning the appearance of the undertail coverts in the photo, which are in shadow.

Audubon's Shearwater: one thoroughly described Aug. 13, 1977 during an incursion of Gulf Stream water—5 species of shearwaters were observed this day!

Leach's Storm-Petrel: 2 reports, Sept. 11, 1971 and two Aug. 25, 1973.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel: numbers fluctuate from year to year. A leucistic individual similar to that figured by Joanne Trimble in *The Auk* (85: 130, 1968) was seen at Cox's Ledge Aug. 19, 1972, among over 500 Wilson's that day.

Gannet: regular from early Oct. through the first week of June, may occasionally summer.

Double-crested Cormorant: 12 reports. In spring to June 4, in fall Aug. 13 on. Max. counts 58 Sept. 25 and 22 Oct. 6.

Great Blue Heron: 4 reports—May 7, Sept. 25 (2), Oct. 8 (5), and Oct. 26. All of the fall birds were headed either west toward Long Island or WSW, a course that would take them over water to central New Jersey. Interestingly, birds seen late in the day favored the WSW orientation.

Snowy Egret: one May 22, 1976, flying west from SW of Block I. toward Montauk Point.

Green Heron: one May 26, 1974 at the Ledge.

Canada Goose: 3 fall reports—Oct. 4 (57), Oct. 6 (73), and Oct. 26 (76), all birds headed west toward Long Island.

Black Duck: five Oct. 6, 1973.

Gadwall: two Sept. 22, 1973.

Green-winged Teal: 5 fall reports, Sept. 22-Oct. 6, max. 5 on Sept. 25.

Blue-winged Teal: 11 birds Oct. 8, 1977.

Oldsquaw: three Oct. 26, 1974.

White-winged Scoter: two May 7, 1977, and 5 fall reports Sept. 22 on, max. 20 on Oct. 4. Usually the most abundant wintering scoter at Montauk Point.

Surf Scoter: 4 fall reports, Oct. 4 on, max. 80 on Oct. 4. Many waterfowl, especially scoters, are reported "unidentified."

Black Scoter: 12 May 7, 1977, and 6 fall reports, Sept. 23 on, max. 45 on Oct. 6.

Red-breasted Merganser: two fall reports—Oct. 23 and Oct. 26.

Marsh Hawk: two Oct. 4, 1975.

Osprey: 3 fall reports—Sept. 20, Sept. 28, and Oct. 4 (5).

Peregrine Falcon: 2 fall reports—Sept. 28 and Oct. 6. In both instances seen south of Block I. headed toward Montauk Pt., one of these birds was flying about 150 feet above the water, flapping constantly.

Merlin: 5 fall reports, Sept. 23-Oct. 4, max. 4 on Sept. 28. Will chase after wind-drifted passerines, one seen at the Ledge Sept. 23, 1972, had a small bird clutched in its talons.

American Kestrel: two Sept. 28, 1974.

Semipalmated Plover: 2 fall reports—Aug. 30 and Sept. 14 (2).

Killdeer: one Oct. 6, 1973.

Black-bellied Plover: 4 reports—May 26 (4), Aug. 14 (2), Sept. 2 (4), and Sept. 16 (2).

Ruddy Turnstone: 4 reports—May 26 (2), Aug. 14 (5), Sept. 16 and Sept. 20.

Whimbrel: one Aug. 19, 1972.

Greater Yellowlegs: one Sept. 11, 1972. Seen about 1 hour after sunrise in dense fog south of Block I. flying west.

Least Sandpiper: 2 reports—Aug. 14 (2) and Sept. 11.

Short-billed Dowitcher: one Aug. 14, 1976.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: two Sept. 23, 1972. Several sightings of unidentified "peep sp." may pertain to this species, but 2 birds seen and dimly heard Sept. 5, 1977 were possibly Baird's.

Sanderling: 5 fall reports, Aug. 19-Oct. 6, max. 10 on Aug. 26. See ID remarks under Red Phalarope.

Red Phalarope: in the fall beware of confusion with Sanderlings, which are infrequently seen singly or in small flocks flying low over the water. The Sanderling's head pattern is strikingly different, and it does not settle on the water.

Northern Phalarope: Most phalaropes are seen at the boat's approach, flying away at right angles. It may sometimes be difficult to get one's glasses on the low-flying birds, leaving one with little more than a total of "unidentified phalaropes." If you see the phalaropes settle, a *slow* approach with a final turn to the sun will

usually provide the best views for the most people.

Skua sp.: has been noted throughout the reporting period, but especially during June. All observations have been at the Ledge; sometimes seen harassing Herring Gulls (Pomarine Jaegers also pirate the larger Herring Gull). Four of the skuas observed by the author conform to Deviller's description of South Polar Skua (*Catharacta maccormicki*) (see *The Auk* 94: 417-429, 1977), certainly none exhibited the rufous coloration of Great Skua (*C. skua skua*).



Subadult dark morph Pomarine Jaeger

Note the extensive, prominent white flash in the primaries.

1975

Bill Wilson

Pomarine Jaeger: an offshore species, seen principally at the Ledge where it outnumbers Parasitic by a wide margin. May occasionally summer. Dark-phased birds are in the minority but percentagewise occur much more frequently than in Parasitic. Young dark-phased birds, still lacking extended rectrices, may exhibit excessive white in the primaries making them resemble skua at a distance.

Parasitic Jaeger: mostly seen from Montauk Pt. to south of Block I,

especially harassing Laughing Gulls and terns near Montauk Pt. May occasionally summer.

Long-tailed Jaeger: an adult was closely observed Sept. 1, 1968. Rhode Island birders have seen Long-tails 5 or 6 times in the first half of June.

Iceland Gull: 2 reports—1st and 2nd year birds on May 7, 1977, and a 1st year bird Oct. 26, 1974.

Great Black-backed Gull: noted every trip but one (Aug. 14, 1976). Average 15 per trip overall, slightly lower during July and August. Living up to its Latin name *marinus*, the Black-back is outnumbered by Herrings only 7.2 to 1, a much lower ratio than ashore.

Herring Gull: noted every trip. Average 107 per trip overall, slightly lower during July and August. Some trips' gull totals are inflated by numbers of birds following trawlers. Gulls will endeavor to drive exhausted passerines into the sea, and snatch them from the surface. On one occasion a House Wren flying near the boat turned into the wind, nearly stalling, whereupon an alert Herring Gull swooped down and "inhaled" the hapless bird!

Ring-billed Gull: 4 fall reports, Sept. 11-Oct. 8, max 3 (2x). Although common inshore, decidedly rare beyond 2 miles of land, most likely to occur during fall migration.

Laughing Gull: 14 reports. In spring to June 12, only singles noted. In fall Aug. 13 on, max. 14 on Sept. 25.

Bonaparte's Gull: a sub-adult May 26, 1974.

Black-legged Kittiwake: earliest immature was Aug. 25, 1973, otherwise irregular before mid-October.

Sabine's Gull: 3 reports—winter adult Sept. 28, 1975, and immatures Sept. 11 and 25, 1976. The Sept. 11th bird was noted south of Block I. migrating with 2 Common Terns, and the Sept. 25th bird appeared with Herring Gulls in the boat's chum slick 6 miles south of Montauk Pt.

Common Tern: reported 39 of the 43 trips, May 7-Oct. 8. Migrant flocks noted in spring and fall, max. 84 on Sept. 11, only scattered individuals during mid-summer.

Roseate Tern: 5 birds May 7, 1977, 2 of them resting on a piece of flotsam south of Block I.

Least Tern: May 7, 1977 and three Sept. 28, 1976.

Royal Tern: a pair was seen at the Ledge June 12, 1976.

Black Tern: 3 fall reports, Aug. 14-26, max. 20 Aug. 26.

Alcid Sp.: a large alcid, possibly a Thick-billed Murre, was observed

in flight at the Ledge July 2, 1966.

Mourning Dove: 4 fall reports, Sept. 23-Oct. 6.

Chimney Swift: three May 7, 1977.

Belted Kingfisher: one Sept. 6, 1969.

Common Flicker: 7 fall reports, Aug. 13-Oct. 6. Max. 100+ Sept. 28, 1975: "at one point 17 flickers counted aboard ship—so exhausted they could easily be picked up . . . winds strong this day, 15-20 mph from the NW," otherwise only 1 or 2 per trip.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: one Aug. 25, 1973. Unidentified empidonaces reported May 26 and Sept. 28.

Eastern Wood Pewee: one May 26, 1974.

Tree Swallow: 7 reports—June 7, and Aug. 13-Oct. 6, max. 6 Sept. 28. Unidentified swallows reported May 7 and Aug. 13.

Barn Swallow: 6 spring reports, May 7-June 12, max. 10 May 26; 4 fall reports, Aug. 13-Sept. 28, max. 18 Sept. 28.

Blue Jay: one June 7, 1975.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 2 fall reports, Sept. 23, 1972 and Oct. 4, 1975. The former bird perched on the boat's radio mast!

Brown Creeper: one Aug. 13, 1966.

House Wren: one Sept. 25, 1976—see Herring Gull account.

Winter Wren: one Sept. 28, 1975.

Brown Thrasher: 2 fall reports, Sept. 23 and 28.

American Robin: 27 Sept. 28, 1975.

Wood Thrush: one Sept. 28, 1975.

Swainson's Thrush: one Sept. 28, 1975.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: one Oct. 6, 1973.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 2 fall reports, Sept. 23 and Oct. 4.

Cedar Waxwing: 2 fall reports, Sept. 16 and 25.

Red-eyed Vireo: one Sept. 28, 1975.

Philadelphia Vireo: one Sept. 23, 1972.

Black-and-white Warbler: one Sept. 28, 1975.

Nashville Warbler: one Sept. 28, 1975.

Northern Parula: one Sept. 28, 1975.

Yellow Warbler: singles May 26, 1974 and Aug. 30, 1970.

Magnolia Warbler: singles May 26, 1974 and Sept. 11, 1971.

Cape May Warbler: 5 fall reports, Sept. 2-Oct. 4.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: two Sept. 25, 1976.

Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler: 5 fall reports, Sept. 23-Oct. 26, max. 14 Sept. 28 and 9 Oct. 8.

Black-throated Green Warbler: one Sept. 28, 1975.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: one Aug. 30, 1970.
Bay-breasted Warbler: one Sept. 20, 1975.
Blackpoll Warbler: May 31, and 4 fall reports, Sept. 11-Oct. 8
Palm Warbler: 5 fall reports, Sept. 11-Oct. 8.
Northern Waterthrush: 2 fall reports, Aug. 26 and Sept. 11.
Common Yellowthroat: 5 fall reports, Aug. 30-Sept. 23.
American Redstart: 4 fall reports, Aug. 26-Sept. 30, max. 4 Aug. 30.
 Most parulids fly past the boat calling, at least 43 "unidentified warblers" were noted on 13 of the trips reported.
Bobolink: 3 fall reports, Sept. 5-16.



Eastern Meadowlark at Cox's Ledge—see text.

6 October, 1973

Tom Davis

Eastern Meadowlark: 2 fall reports, Oct. 6 and 23. In a report on the Oct. 6, 1973 trip (*Linnaean News-Letter*, vol. 27, no. 6, Nov. 1973) I cited incidents occurring to 2 of the 3 meadowlarks noted that day: "While watching one of the meadowlarks circle the boat, a Herring Gull suddenly gave chase to the bird. In its frantic desire to escape being eaten, the meadowlark flew headlong at our boat, crashed into the side, and sank without a trace. Another meadowlark fell exhausted into the sea some distance from our boat and lay there with wings and tail spread open for buoyancy.

A gull swooped down, trying to pluck it off the water but only succeeded in lifting it off the surface. The bedraggled bird flew directly to the boat, was captured and later released at Montauk.”
Red-winged Blackbird: 2 spring (May 7 and 26), and 3 fall reports, Aug. 13-Oct. 23.

Northern (Baltimore) Oriole: 6 fall reports, Aug. 26-Sept. 23.

Rusty Blackbird: one Oct. 6, 1973.

Brown-headed Cowbird: one Aug. 30, 1970.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: one Sept. 28, 1975.

Purple Finch: one Sept. 23, 1972.

Pine Siskin: 17 Oct. 6, 1973. This report preceded one of the largest siskin invasions ever recorded locally.

American Goldfinch: one Oct. 6, 1973.

Savannah Sparrow: 2 fall reports, Sept. 23-Oct. 8.

Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco: 2 fall reports, Sept. 23-Oct. 6.

Chipping Sparrow: 3 fall reports, Sept. 23-Oct. 8.

White-throated Sparrow: 2 fall reports, Sept. 23-Oct. 6.

Song Sparrow: 4 fall reports, Aug. 25-Oct. 23.

—In addition, 8 trip reports cite a total of 44 unidentified passerines, blackbirds, fringillids, and sparrows.

Cox's Ledge trips undertaken from Point Judith, Rhode Island, add the following notable records:

Yellow-nosed Albatross: a sub-adult was seen at the Ledge Aug. 21, 1976.

Franklin's Gull: 2 adults were photographed at the Ledge May 27, 1977.

Sabine's Gull: one spring report, June 17, 1976.

Sooty Tern: an adult at the Ledge Aug. 11, 1976, the day following the passage of Hurricane Belle.

Alcids: a breeding-plumaged **Black Guillemot** was observed at the Ledge Feb. 26 and Mar. 12, 1977. On the latter date **Common Murre**, 3 **Thick-billed Murres**, and **Common Puffin** were also seen.

A max. of 13 **Razorbills** was noted March 6, 1977.

Say's Phoebe: one Sept. 30, 1977.

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*My special thanks to Luanne Clark who sketched the Greater Shearwater expressly for this article, and to Bill Wilson for the use of his excellent photographs.

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