



Purple Gallinule – Sea Cliff, Nassau County
13 June 1980 *Barbara Spencer*

PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES 42. PURPLE GALLINULE

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The Purple Gallinule (*Porphyryula martinica*) pictured was found early on the morning of 13 June 1980 on a small pond in Sea Cliff, Nassau County. The discovery seemed a bonus for pursuing New York State Breeding Bird Atlas work. Having heard an Orchard Oriole the previous morning, and wishing visual confirmation, the observer was in the field early the next morning. The gallinule was first seen in silhouette against the rising sun through mist over the pond. The only positive field mark visible was the clear white under-tail coverts. Gradually the leg color, bill and frontal shield markings materialized, and it became clear that the gallinule definitely lacked the white line on the flanks that distinguishes the Common Gallinule (*Gallinula chloropus*). With increasing light, the medley of bright plumage colors became evident. The gallinule remained at the pond over the week end, where it was appreciated by a number of observers.

A more or less regular spring, summer and fall vagrant in the northeastern states, Purple Gallinules breed from South Carolina and Tennessee south along the coast, and in the Gulf States westward to Texas. Their range continues south through Mexico and the West Indies to Peru and northern Argentina. They winter from central Florida and southern Texas south. Bull (1974) classified the Purple Gallinule as very rare in New York State. He listed (1964, 1974, 1976) twenty-five occurrences in the state through 1975, with dates ranging from 4 April through 18 November (both specimens). Five additional records were gleaned from reports in *The Kingbird*.

Of the thirty records located, only five occurred north of Long Island, and only three involved immature birds. The majority of the dated records occurred in the spring, five in April, five in May, and four in June, and appear to involve individuals overshooting their breeding grounds during migration, since Purple Gallinules appear on their breeding grounds in South Carolina during April. One record occurred in July, one in September, one in November and two in October. The September and October records involved immatures. At least seven of the birds were caught by hand and were noted to be exhausted or emaciated. Four of these died, while three were released in suitable habitat.

While the November record seems late, it is interesting to note that north of our area, on 27 December 1978, four Purple Gallinules, two of which were immatures, inexplicably appeared in Maine, walking down a snow-covered road. A month later, on 22 January 1979, two adult birds appeared, again in Maine, and an adult was found in Massachusetts on 25 January (*American Birds* 1979, vol. 33, no. 1, p. 3).

Records of the Purple Gallinule in New York State through 1980:

1. Specimen, Great South Bay, date unknown. AMNH.
 2. Specimen, Great South Bay, date unknown. AMNH.
 3. Specimen, Middle Island, Suffolk Co., 1879. (*vide* Helm).
 4. Specimen, South Shore
 5. Specimen, South Shore
 6. Specimen, South Shore
 7. Specimen, Central Park
 8. Specimen, Peekskill
- } Published by Cruickshank (1942)
} Dates 1928-1939
9. Specimen, Montezuma Marshes, 1 October 1931 (immature). (Parker).
 10. Specimen, Shinnecock Bay, 18 June 1948, badly decomposed. (Wilcox).
 11. Specimen, Easthampton, 20 April 1951 (Lester).
 12. Specimen, Westhampton, 19 April 1956, found alive, died.
 13. Sighting, Jamaica Bay, 14-16 May 1958.
 14. Sighting, Hewlett, 17 May-4 June 1960 (Sloss, *et al.*).
 15. Specimen, Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, 9 April 1962, to zoo, exhausted. (Rifkin).
 16. Sighting, Manhasset, 5 May 1962, captured alive, released Jamaica Bay.
 17. Sighting, Beaver Meadow Refuge, Wyoming Co., 27 April to 9 June 1963 (Busselle *et al.*).
 18. Specimen, Westhampton, 23 September 1965 (immature) (Maxwell).
 19. Specimen, Orient, 15 June 1967, found dead. (Latham).
 20. Specimen, Montauk, 18 November 1967, found dead. (Hemmerick).
 21. Not specified by Bull.
 22. Not specified by Bull.
 23. Sighting, Binghamton, Broome Co., 16 May 1970, captured alive, released 6 June. (Marsi).

24. Specimen, Scottsville, Monroe Co., 4 October 1970, caught alive (immature). (Brown).
25. Sighting, Quogue, 18-23 May, 1974. (Conolly *et al.*). *Kingbird* XXIV: 3.
26. Specimen, Wading River, 4 April 1975, caught alive, died 7 April. (*fide* Dove).
27. Sighting, Brookhaven, 14-18 May, (Raynor, Puleston). *Kingbird* XXV: 3.
28. Sighting, Mamaroneck, Westchester Co., 16-21 July 1975. *Kingbird* XXV: 4.
29. Sighting, Kew Gardens, 11 May 1978, photos, caught alive, released Jamaica Bay. (Davis, *et al.*). *Kingbird* XXIX: 3.
30. Sighting, Sea Cliff, 13-18 June 1980, photos. (Spencer). *Kingbird* XXXI: 4.

REFERENCES

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