

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO IN SUFFOLK COUNTY IN DECEMBER

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Yellow-billed Cuckoo (Coccyzus americanus)
at Moriches Inlet, Suffolk Co.

27 December 1982

Deborah Schmidt

While walking on the western side of Moriches Inlet on an unseasonably warm 27 December, counting birds for the Central Suffolk Christmas Count, we spotted, to our great surprise, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). The bird was perched approximately a foot above the ground in a Russian Olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) in an area of Japanese Black Pines (*Pinus thunbergii*) and was not more than ten feet from us. Its distinguishing field marks, the yellow lower mandible, pure white breast, rufous tinge in the wings and white spots on the underside of the tail, could be seen easily with the naked eye.

According to Bull (1964, p. 268), the latest fall record of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo was collected on 11 November 1950 at Oakdale, L.I. Bull (1974, p. 324) gives later record dates of 13 November (coastal), 16 November (inland), and 25 November 1965, when an injured albino was caught at Alverne, Queens County. Bull (1974) states that sightings of Yellow-billed Cuckoos are "usually rare . . . after mid-October."

The cuckoo did not appear healthy, for as we approached it, it did not fly, but only hopped to the sandy ground. After taking a picture of this rare December straggler, as well as rare beach visitor, we watched it disappear deep into a thicket of Russian Olive. A search for it later in the day was unsuccessful.

Bull, J. 1964. *Birds of the New York Area*. Harper & Row Publishers, New York.

Bull, J. 1974. *Birds of New York State*. Doubleday/Natural History Press, Garden City, New York.

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