

WHAT'S IT GONNA BE? PREDICTING THE NEXT NEW ADDITIONS TO THE AVIFAUNA OF NEW YORK—A REDUX

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I can state with an incredible degree of confidence that a Kiwi will not show up of its own accord in New York State. On the other end of the spectrum, it seems like only a matter of time before Black-chinned Hummingbird shows up, or more realistically, is detected and documented. The other 9,500 species in the world that haven't occurred in NYS lie between those two extremes, in a vast gulf of varying probabilities, many of which are non-zero. There are so many factors that go into which new species are found, that limiting your selection to only 10 of those is a seemingly futile effort, and one that can't be 100% accurate.

This is essentially an exercise in perspective and perception. It has to do as much with what is going through birders' minds, as it has to do with the factors that actually compel vagrants to show up in New York.

Some lists contained detailed reasoning for some of these species, and the factors that went into various people's thought processes included: birding coverage in specific habitats, ease of identification of species, recent changes in distribution, and the bird lists of surrounding states.

Many of these were explored in greater depth in the 2010 *Kingbird* article about the next 10 species to show up in New York (Gochfeld 2010), as were a few other factors contributing to birds' additions to the NYS checklist, and I won't re-hash them here, but suffice it to say that there are enough factors that go into it so as to make it virtually impossible to predict the next additions with a high degree of confidence. Despite this, we once again are trying our darndest!

Assessment of the 2010 Predictions

Any list of predictions such as this one will eventually beg a reckoning, so five years later, it's time to see how the field did in regards to its predictions from 2010. Sixteen species not previously on the New York State checklist have occurred since 2010 (of these two recent ones, Crested Caracara, and Little Egret, are still awaiting evaluation by the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC), and so are not officially on the NYS checklist). Of those sixteen, ten were correctly predicted by at least one participant in the last go-around, and nine of those ten were voted on by at least three people. On the face of it, this seems like a pretty decent hit rate, but delving in a little deeper shows that the preponderance of people's most confident picks failed to follow through on their apparent promise of imminent detected vagrancy to New York.

Among the top 10 guesses, only three have shown up. Among these were the overwhelming favorite, Little Egret, which was, as of this writing, the latest new species to be reliably reported [but see postscript!-Ed.]. Although Little Egret had not yet been added to state list when this survey was carried out, it was declared ineligible for voting this time around because of its well-documented appearance. The other two, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, and Hermit Warbler, came in at 7th and 8th place, respectively, though the former did have the highest intensity of preference (average rank for lists on which it appears, among species appearing on at least three lists). The Whistling-Duck was an interesting case of a bird that was apparently not on a broad swath of people's radars (eight lists total), but was strongly favored by those who were thinking about it, with an average rank of 8 across these eight lists. Two more examples of this pattern, one of which did end up occurring, were Black-browed Albatross, which equaled Black-bellied Whistling-Duck's average rank of 8 per list, on the four checklists it was included on; and Kirtland's Warbler, which had an average rank of 7.5 across four lists. Kirtland's Warbler has now occurred twice in the interim, as has a bird ranked a few places ahead of it, Common Ground-Dove. This species appeared on six lists, with an average rank of 7 points per list, which translates into the 4th highest preference value). Five more species that were included on at least one list have already occurred: Band-tailed Pigeon (4 lists/4.75 avg.), Fea's Petrel (4/4.5), Neotropic Cormorant (3/6.3), Virginia's Warbler (3/6.3), and Elegant Tern (1/4).

In terms of foresight, Shawn Billerman outpaced all other contributors, with no fewer than six of his ten predicted species having appeared. Honorable mention must also go to Mike Bochnik (five correct predictions), and to Brent Bomkamp, Heydi Lopes, and Sean Sime (four correct predictions each).

Now comes the real fun stuff, the species that apparently came completely out of left field (though not necessarily in hindsight). These were, in order of occurrence, Gray-hooded Gull, Grace's Warbler, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, Willow Ptarmigan, Couch's Kingbird, and Crested Caracara. Of these, hindsight tells us that there was a reasonable precedent for at least three. Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch has several Ontario records and even an old, unconfirmed report from western New York, from 30 January 1923 (Beardslee and Mitchell 1965). It is notable that this species ultimately occurred TWICE in New York, at widely separated locations, in quick succession. Similarly, Willow Ptarmigan has a history of vagrancy to Maine, and southern Quebec and Ontario, and also has at least one possibly correct prior New York record, from Lewis County (very close to where the 2014 record occurred), from 22 May 1876 (Bull 1974). Crested Caracara didn't have as much of a history of vagrancy at the time, but it was at the very beginning of the recent country-wide northward explosion of the species.

The other three (Gray-hooded Gull, Grace's Warbler, and Couch's Kingbird) were firmly in the "MEGA" department, with each having virtually

no records in the eastern United States (and Gray-hooded Gull only having one previous record for the entire ABA area).

Methods

Once again, a suite of birders was asked to submit a list of the next ten new species they thought would be added to the New York State checklist, in order of likelihood. The respondents were drawn from a large geographic swath of New York State and included a few select experts who don't currently live in New York, but have a strong knowledge of the distributions of the species that could show up. A total of 30 people contributed lists: Shawn Billerman, Shane Blodgett, Mike Bochnik, Jeff Bolsinger, P. A. Buckley, Thomas W. Burke, Willie D'Anna, Glen Davis, Joe DiCostanzo, Andrew Farnsworth, Corey Finger, Brendan Fogarty, Doug Futuyma, Doug Gochfeld, Andy Guthrie, Marshall Iliff, Tom Johnson, Dave Klauber, Bob Kurtz, Paul Lehman, Tony Leukering, Heydi Lopes, Jay McGowan, S. S. Mitra, Jim Pawlicki, Tom Reed, Sean Sime, Benjamin Van Doren, Drew Weber, Angus Wilson.

As was done last time, species were ranked by both overall popularity (the number of lists featuring each species) and intensity of preference (the sum of ranks assigned to each species). The product of these two numbers yields an index that closely tracks both popularity and preference; its advantage is that it compensates for situations where the other two measures are strongly at odds with each other, such as when a species is included on many lists but always at low rank, or on just a single list but at very high rank. Thus a species selected by three contributors at low ranks of 2, 1, and 1 would achieve an index of 12 and would not be eclipsed by a species ranked highly at 9 by a single contributor.

The 2015 Top 10

Unlike previous iterations of this exercise (e.g., Gochfeld 2010), which have yielded a consensus #1 prediction in the form of Little Egret, this year the race for the top spot was much closer. Detailed discussion is presented here for the ten most highly ranked species. Full voting data are presented for these, and for the rest of the 25 most highly ranked species, in Table 1. Summary data are also provided for the 41 other species receiving votes in Table 2.

In the accounts below, the first number represents the number of lists featuring the species, out of the total of 30 (#); the second number is the sum of ranks assigned to each species, with 10 being highest and 1 lowest (**sum**); the third number is the average rank for the species on lists that included the species (**preference**); and the fourth number is an **index** computed as the product of # and sum.

1. Black-chinned Hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri* (19, 137, 7.2, 2603).

It's not much of a surprise that a hummingbird is coming in at Number 1 this time around, and Black-chinned makes a lot of sense given its widespread range

in the West, where it acts as the default hummingbird in many places, much like Ruby-throated in the East. Always highly ranked, and 4th place in 2010, the biggest issue with Black-chinned is largely the question “if and when it shows up, will it be recognized as such?” There are records of Black-chinned for several surrounding states, including Massachusetts (3+ records), New Jersey (4), and Pennsylvania (1), as well as West Virginia, Washington D.C., and Virginia. The likeliest way for one of these to be located is for one to show up in October or November at either someone’s personal home hummingbird feeder, or at one of the classic late fall spots, such as Lenoir Preserve in Westchester County, or one of the Botanic Gardens around the New York City-Metropolitan area. Excellent photos and/or capture and banding with measurements would be greatly desired in order to confirm it as this species, rather than the very similar Ruby-throated.

2. Violet-green Swallow *Tachycineta thalassina* (19, 121, 6.4, 2299).

This common swallow of the western United States has been recorded (perhaps surprisingly) very few times east of the Great Plains. Like many or most of the species in the top ten, the lack of records could have a lot to do with under-detection due to its similarity with other species that occur more frequently in the region. In this case, it looks a lot like Tree Swallow. Multiple records from Massachusetts (2+), and New Jersey (3+, all Cape May) indicate that this explanation is plausible in this case. Ontario also has multiple records, and it has also been recorded in eastern Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Florida. Interestingly, the regional records of this species have been from March, April, May, August, September, October, and November. This shows that vigilance at any time of year when swallows occur is of the utmost importance when hoping to detect this species. The large late fall Tree Swallow aggregations at places like Jones Beach State Park and other locations along the Long Island barrier beaches seems like a logical place to look, but this (much like the hummingbirds) could show up ANYWHERE in the state, from Niagara to Montauk. Spring swallow aggregations on insect-rich ponds across the state seem a fine bet too.

3. Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus* (17, 120, 7.1, 2040).

This widespread *Tyrannus* of the tropics and the southwestern USA has multiple subspecies that could show up in the Northeast. There has been an upward trend in the occurrence of Tropical Kingbirds in the Northeast in the last two decades, but there still aren’t THAT many records. Connecticut, Massachusetts (2+), Maine, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Ontario all have records of their own. Most of these sightings are skewed to the Atlantic coast in October or November. Two very interesting exceptions were the late June record from Philadelphia in 2013, and the May 1975 record from Bermuda. Again, identification is an issue here, as proven by the very similar looking Couch’s Kingbird that showed up in Manhattan during winter of 2014-2015, and even the other less similar, but still similar, yellow-bellied kingbirds, Western and Cassin’s. Given the late fall tendency of the records of this species in the Northeast, look for this bird to

Table 1. Predicted additions to the New York State Checklist, ranked by the product of the number of votes received (#) and the sum of the ranks assigned to these votes (Sum).

Species	SBI	SBI	MBo	JBo	PAB	TWB	WDA	GDa	JDC	AFa	CFi	BFo	DFu	DGo	AGu	Mal	TJo	DKI
Black-chinned Humm.		7	9	7	10	9	7	6	9	5			8		9		9	2
Violet-green Swallow	9	10	5	6		4	8				8	2	7				6	
Tropical Kingbird	10		3	9		6	3						10		8	8	8	
Allen's Hummingbird	8		10	8	6		10								10	9	10	
Eur. Golden-Plover	6	8		2		7		7	8			5	9	4		3	3	4
Barolo Shearwater	3	9					4		10	6				10		10	5	8
Snowy Plover	7				8	3	9					8			5		7	
Bermuda Petrel						10		10	2	10				8		7	4	10
Yellow-legged Gull		6	6	3	3		5		4									
Carolina Chickadee				10								10				1		
Prairie Falcon							6	4			10							5
Brown-chested Martin	1	4												1	6	4		
Garganey					9				3	4								
Gray Flycatcher	2			1	5				1				3		7			
Lesser Sand-Plover								1		8				9	4			
Black-browed Albatross						5										6		9
Green Violetear				4	2			2		1	2			3		2		3
Eurasian Tree Sparrow							2	3						6				
Brewer's Sparrow	4																	
Great-tailed Grackle			8									9						
European Storm-Petrel		5						9		9			2					
Zone-tailed Hawk					7						7							
Brown Noddy									5	7		7						
Black-throated Sparrow			7															
Ferruginous Hawk	5			5			1											
conformity in top 10	6	5	5	7	4	6	7	3	5	3	1	4	4	3	4	6	8	4
conformity in top 25	10	7	7	10	8	7	10	8	8	8	4	6	6	7	7	9	8	7

Table 1. Predicted additions to the New York State Checklist--continued.

Species	BKu	PLe	TLe	HLo	JMc	SSM	JPa	TRe	SSi	BVD	DWe	AWi	#	Sum	Pref	Index	Rank
Black-chinned Humm.			9				6	6		8	6	5	19	137	7.2	2603	1
Violet-green Swallow	2	7		6	8	8		10		4	9	2	19	121	6.4	2299	2
Tropical Kingbird				9	9	9	3	9	7	5		4	17	120	7.1	2040	3
Allen's Hummingbird		8		2	10			3		10	10	10	15	124	8.3	1860	4
Eur. Golden-Plover		9		10	2	1	4			3			18	95	5.3	1710	5
Barolo Shearwater		10	8			7			9		2	9	15	110	7.3	1650	6
Snowy Plover	10					6	9	8	8	9			13	97	7.5	1261	7
Bermuda Petrel									10	2	5	7	12	85	7.1	1020	8
Yellow-legged Gull	4			8		10							9	49	5.4	441	9
Carolina Chickadee						5	1	7		6		8	8	48	6.0	384	10
Prairie Falcon			2						6	7		1	8	41	5.1	328	11
Brown-chested Martin		4		7	5	4							9	36	4.0	324	12
Garganey		6	10					4	2				7	38	5.4	266	13
Gray Flycatcher					6		8						8	33	4.1	264	14
Lesser Sand-Plover	9											6	6	37	6.2	222	15
Black-browed Albatross		3	3	3									6	29	4.8	174	16
Green Violetear													8	19	2.4	152	17
Eurasian Tree Sparrow					3		10						5	24	4.8	120	18
Brewer's Sparrow					7		2	5	4				5	22	4.4	110	19
Great-tailed Grackle			7		1								4	25	6.3	100	20
European Storm-Petrel													4	25	6.3	100	21
Zone-tailed Hawk							5						3	19	6.3	57	22
Brown Noddy													3	19	6.3	57	23
Black-throated Sparrow		5	6										3	18	6.0	54	24
Ferruginous Hawk	1												4	12	3.0	48	25
conformity in top 10	3	4	2	5	4	7	5	6	4	8	5	7					
conformity in top 25	5	8	7	7	9	8	9	8	7	9	5	9					

Table 2. More predicted additions to the New York State Checklist.

Species	#	Sum	Pref	Rank	Contributors
Arctic Loon	3	16	5.3	25	BFo, TLe, DWe
Dusky Flycatcher	3	14	4.7	26	PAB, BKu, SSi
Shiny Cowbird	3	11	3.7	27	JDC, AFa, BFo
White Wagtail	3	10	3.3	28	CFi, AGu, PLe
Lucy's Warbler	3	9	3.0	29	AFa, PLe, SSi
Greylag Goose	3	9	3.0	29	PAB, DGo, SSi
Hooded Oriole	3	8	2.7	31	CFi, AGu, TJo
Sprague's Pipit	3	8	2.7	31	MBo, TWB, JMc
Common Swift	2	12	6.0	31	GDa, HLo
Common Redshank	2	12	6.0	31	DFu, BKu
McCown's Longspur	2	12	6.0	31	TWB, DWe
Glaucous-winged Gull	2	11	5.5	36	BFo, MJI
Kelp Gull	2	11	5.5	36	BFo, JPa
Eurasian Kestrel	3	7	2.3	38	CFi, BKu
Red-throated Pipit	2	10	5.0	39	GDa, DGo
Cape Verde Shearwater	2	10	5.0	39	DKI, SSM
Lesser Goldfinch	2	9	4.5	41	DKI, BKu
Vaux's Swift	2	7	3.5	42	CFi, DWe
White-tailed Hawk	2	7	3.5	42	DKI, DWe
Whiskered Tern	2	6	3.0	44	TWB, HLo
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	2	5	2.5	45	MBo, DFu
Mottled Duck	2	5	2.5	45	TLe, TRe
Pacific Wren	1	9	9.0	47	CFi
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher	2	4	2.0	48	DGo, TRe
Common Pochard	1	7	7.0	49	DWe
Bulwer's Petrel	1	6	6.0	50	JDC
Grey Heron	1	5	5.0	51	DFu
Tundra Bean Goose	1	5	5.0	51	BKu
Common Greenshank	1	4	4.0	53	DFu
Common Snipe	1	3	3.0	54	CFi
Brown Skua	1	3	3.0	54	AWi
Variegated Flycatcher	1	2	2.0	56	SBI
Inca Dove	1	2	2.0	56	AGu
Bronzed Cowbird	1	2	2.0	56	SSM
Green Jay	1	1	1.0	59	MBo
Eurasian Hobby	1	1	1.0	59	HLo
Black Swift	1	1	1.0	59	BVD
Squacco Heron	1	1	1.0	59	TJo
Masked Booby	1	1	1.0	59	SBI
Short-tailed Hawk	1	1	1.0	59	TLe

= the number of lists featuring the species; sum = sum of ranks assigned to each species, with 10 being highest and 1 lowest; pref = the average rank for the species on lists that included the species. Species are ranked by an index computed as the product of # and sum. Contributors are named in the Methods section.

show up some time between mid-October and mid-November, somewhere in Region 10, likely on Long Island. Upstaters should check any farms, ponds, or any other open spaces with aggregations of insects in the later fall.

4. Allen's Hummingbird *Selasphorus sasin* (15, 124, 8.3, 1860).

See above for #1, Black-chinned Hummingbird. At least Allen's Hummingbird doesn't have as much of a danger of being identified as a Ruby-throated, so would be flagged as a notable bird by most birders and experienced feeder watchers in the state. However, separation of Allen's from Rufous Hummingbird is typically even more difficult than that of Black-chinned from Ruby-throated. Despite this, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania each have at least five records of this species, and Cape May, NJ has three. The same places mentioned above, where Black-chinned could occur, apply for Allen's, and banding with measurements are especially necessary to confirm this. Short of capture or procurement of a specimen, the only supportive documentation that could help to resolve this identification is good and unambiguous photos of the spread tail.

5. European Golden-Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (18, 95, 5.3, 1710).

This great looking shorebird of Europe has a long history of vagrancy to maritime Canada. It also looks similar enough to American Golden-Plover that it could be passed over in many situations, including at the great distance that many Golden-Plovers in the state are seen, and in more favorable viewing situations by those not thinking about it as a possibility. Since 2008 there are records in Maine, New Jersey, and Delaware. Interestingly, these records are all from the southbound shorebird migration, between mid-July and October. Newfoundland gets the vast bulk of its records, including an influx of over 225 individuals in 2014, in spring, from April and May. With this dichotomy, it seems that there are multiple chances through the year for one of these to occur. Montauk or elsewhere on eastern Long Island seems like the best bet for a spring bird, while a fall bird could show up anywhere where there is good upland shorebird habitat. It's likely even a possibility later in the fall into December, as with Northern Lapwings.

6. Barolo Shearwater *Puffinus baroli* (15, 110, 7.3 1650).

This shearwater is typically seen in eastern Atlantic Ocean waters off of NW Africa. However, it also likely regularly occurs in deep water off the shelf south of New England and Maritime Canada in August, given recent encounters with it in this region, despite fairly limited coverage of these far offshore waters. There are two well documented offshore records for Massachusetts, and at least one (of 4 individuals!) farther to the east off Nova Scotia, all in August, and all since 2007. Other records are a specimen that crashed into the Sable Island lighthouse on September 1, 1896, and a couple of other sight reports in late September 2003. It could be a confusion species with other small dark and white shearwaters such as Manx and Audubon's, but good photos should clinch the

ID. Increased pelagic coverage of appropriate waters off of New York could eventually turn this species up. That said, because of generally poor coverage, we don't have an understanding of just how far west it regularly occurs, so it may be more of a long shot than is thought, or even more likely. In any event, your best bet to see this bird in New York State is likely to get on a pelagic trip in August or September visiting warm waters between the Hudson Canyon and Block Canyon.

7. Snowy Plover *Charadrius nivosus* (13, 97, 7.5, 1261).

The map of occurrence for this southern and western breeding species is a scattershot across the Northeast straddling New York, so it seems like only a matter of time. It has occurred in the region from May into October, with more records close to the NY border in western NY than along the coast. It has occurred just across Lake Ontario, on the coast of Ontario, multiple times (May and June), and has also occurred just over the border on Lake Erie at Presque Isle State Park in Pennsylvania (June and July). It has also occurred along the Connecticut coast in October, and off Cape Cod, in Massachusetts, in June. The best time and place for this species is likely May or June at shorebird habitat right along Lakes Erie and Ontario, but as usual, don't count out the Long Island beaches during either spring, or in the southbound migration.

8. Bermuda Petrel (Cahow) *Pterodroma cahow* (12, 85, 7.1, 1020).

Another pelagic species that we know is out there, Bermuda Petrel is different from Barolo Shearwater in one very notable way: it has a tiny worldwide population. With so few birds in the population as a whole to draw from, you might think that it is ludicrous to predict this species, but its distribution is potentially more favorable than that of Barolo. There is data from geolocators recovered from Cahows on the breeding grounds that indicates that the species regularly gets close to New York waters, and some of the points taken from the devices have placed the species within New York waters (though due to the margin of error on these trackers, we don't know definitively where they were). This species is seen in the Gulf Stream off of Cape Hatteras in late May, and there are also other records scattered throughout the summer. Any late spring or summer month pelagic trip to deep New York waters has the potential to net one of these most wanted birds.

9. Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* (9, 49, 5.4, 441).

It's been a nearly annual winter visitor in Newfoundland for a while now, and there are accepted records as far south as Massachusetts. New York has some really good gull spots, including the gull mecca that is Niagara Falls. While a young bird would be hard to prove, given their similarities with young Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Herring Gulls, good photos of an adult (including spread-wing, given the spectre of hybrid Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gulls) would be the most likely way to add this to the state list. The Long Island coast,

Niagara Falls, and interior NYS garbage dumps and other large gull aggregation spots all hold potential for this species, and so you can look for this in the winter no matter where you are in the state!

10. Carolina Chickadee *Poecile carolinensis* (8, 48, 6.0, 384).

Definitely the bird whose native range is most proximal to New York State, Carolina Chickadee occurs within sight of New York's *Kingbird* Region 10. The issue with this species is two-fold: difficulty of identification, and lack of strong dispersal and migration. Staten Island is the place to look (and listen!) for these, and any time of year seems perfectly plausible, so you can even get out there and look right now!

Changes in Perception from 2010

There were nine species that jumped up at least 20 places between the 2010 voting and the 2015 voting. There were also a slew of species appearing on lists this time around that were completely passed over in 2010, including two species in the new top 20.

The most noticeable jumps within the new top 10 were made by two seabirds, Barolo Shearwater, and Bermuda Petrel (Cahow). Barolo Shearwater jumped from 33rd place in 2010, to 6th place in 2015, while Cahow made the jump from 49th to 8th. This reflects both a recent improvement of our understanding of the distribution of these two species in the northwestern Atlantic, as well as better birding coverage of apparently appropriate sections of New York waters (there still aren't many trips, but there is certainly more coverage now than there had been). Garganey and Prairie Falcon also made a Barolo-like jump, going from tied for 38th place to 13th, and 11th places, respectively. The explanation for the Garganey jump could perhaps have been a result of birders' changing perceptions about the provenance of apparently vagrant waterfowl, though awareness of several recent records from the region could be a strong contributing factor as well [see postscript!].

Because 16 birds showed up in the interim, and 10 were species that were on people's lists, a built-in jump was already expected for most species, which explains why there were relatively few dramatic decreases. Variegated Flycatcher and Green Violetear were two species that took noticeable falls, though Green Violetear is an interesting case on its own, since it still appeared on over a quarter of lists (11th place), but was ranked fairly low on most of those lists, making its composite score fairly low.

Aside from the big jumps of Barolo Shearwater and Bermuda Petrel, most of the top 10 was actually remarkably similar. Of the seven eligible species remaining from the 2010 top 10 (three species occurred in the interim and were no longer eligible for voting), six remained in the top 10 this time around: Black-chinned Hummingbird (4th to 1st), Violet-green Swallow (10th to 2nd), Tropical Kingbird (steady at 3rd), Allen's Hummingbird (2nd to 4th), European Golden-Plover (9th to 5th), and Yellow-legged Gull (6th to 9th). Only the

aforementioned Violetear dropped out, and the only new additions were the two tubenoses just mentioned, plus Snowy Plover (moving from 17th to 7th) and Carolina Chickadee (moving from 14th to 10th).

The two most notable species that were completely ignored on lists from 2010, but had a fairly strong backing this time around were Eurasian Tree Sparrow (18th), and Zone-tailed Hawk (22nd). Both of these species have occurred as vagrants (or at least as potential wild vagrants) close to New York multiple times over the past few years. Eurasian Tree Sparrow was seen almost within sight of New York, just across the Niagara River, as well as in Cape May, New Jersey, while Zone-tailed Hawk has now been recorded in Massachusetts multiple times, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Nova Scotia, and twice in Cape May, just in 2014 and 2015. In 2015, the bird that was seen in Connecticut and Cape May assuredly passed through New York, going undetected. Prior to these recent records, neither species had much of a history of documented vagrancy to the immediate area, though the Tree Sparrow has been expanding its range and population in the Midwest fairly steadily over the past decade or more.

Postscript

During the time that this article has been in preparation, but following the closure of voting, two predicted species have already occurred in New York, and are pending review: Garganey (ranked 13) and Bronzed Cowbird (ranked 56). Remarkably, the rate at which new species are being found in New York does not appear to be diminishing. Furthermore, although there are clearly random factors at play in influencing exactly which species appear where and in what order, there are also orderly processes, amenable to analysis, that will continue to fascinate us. As suggested above, there are innumerable combinations of site and season to explore—and not all of these are exotic or intensely birded. Four of the least expected recent additions have been in the dense urbanity of Brooklyn and Manhattan—and in summer and winter no less. That kind of track record proves that where the eyes are out searching, the birds will be found. Wherever you are, whenever you read these words, the next first record could well be within your grasp.

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