

FIFTY YEARS AGO IN

The KINGBIRD

Bar-tailed Godwit at Moriches, L.I. While accompanying a Vermont friend, Mrs. John McCormick, on an annual shore-birding trip, Mrs. Crispin Cooke and I were birding on an island straddling Moriches Inlet, Suffolk Co., commonly known as Bird Island, on Mon., May 10th, 1971. As we approached the extensive mudflats on the west end in squally rain and wind, we spotted an unusual Godwit feeding near Black-bellied Plovers. About 4" longer in body than they and 2" taller, it was rather a slender bird and not big enough to be a Marbled. It had a rusty chestnut neck and breast, light brown reticulated back, and its rump showed a white arrow up the back above a tail narrowly barred crossways with grey-brown (much like the Dowitcher pattern and not at all like a Hudsonian.) This we saw easily when the bird stretched a wing and tail at close range. Its legs were blue-grey and its face light tan with no eye-line and a bland expression. The bill was long, upturned, and two-toned, pinkish at the base and dark grey at the tip. It fed often in an upward shovelling manner that I have noticed in Marbled Godwits. Though not as brightly colored as the illustration in Peterson's *Birds of Britain and Europe*, (rainy day perhaps?) it was easily identifiable as a Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) in spring plumage. Interestingly enough, though there are five recorded sightings in the northeastern U.S., two in Mass. in 1907 and 1937, two in southern N.J., the last one (though a Nov. bird) was in 1946 in the very same area! (John Bull, *Birds of the New York Area*)

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Ed Note—This godwit was seen again at Bird Island on May 12 by Dennis Puleston. His comments confirm the details given above by Mrs. Conolly. Also, a Bar-tailed Godwit was present at Port Canaveral, Florida from October to at least late February. A Black-tailed Godwit was present at the Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge from June into August. In early August all four of the world's godwits—Marbled, Bar-tailed, Hudsonian and Black-tailed—were observed at that Refuge.

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