

# Sightings



“Sightings” appears monthly, alternating between *Winging It* and *Birding*, with the latest news, reports, and rumors from the ABA Area. Sightings are compiled from online discussion groups and RBAs, with valuable contributions from a growing network of informants continent-wide. Readers should note, however, that none of these records has yet been vetted by a records committee. All birders are urged to submit documentation of rare sightings to the appropriate state or provincial committees. For full analysis of these and other bird records, subscribe to *North American Birds*, the richly illustrated journal of ornithological record published by the ABA ([www.aba.org/pubs/nab](http://www.aba.org/pubs/nab)). (Italicized place names denote counties or parishes.)

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## MID-APRIL TO EARLY MAY 2008

Spring finally sprang in North America, and with it inevitably came some real goodies. Exceptional highlights this month include a **Wood Sandpiper** and a **White-winged Tern** (both from DE), and a pair of flycatchers: a **Piratic** in TX and a **Tufted** in AZ. A smattering of Golden-crowned Sparrows and Grace’s Warblers across the plains raised some eyebrows. A Chihuahuan Raven in LA serves as a wake-up call that this migratory species does indeed occur as a vagrant, and that out-of-range raven records in North America should be closely scrutinized. The appearance of an orange-billed *Thalasseus* tern in Texas reminded us there is much to learn about identification within this notorious complex.

**SOUTHEAST:** A flock of 5 Fulvous Whistling-Ducks was discovered in *Fulton*, KY, on 8 May. Both a Black Noddy and a **Red-footed Booby** were found 21 Apr on Florida’s famous Dry Tortugas. Alabama’s second inland record of Northern Gannet (an adult) was present in *Colbert*, 5 May. A Reeve lingered in *Brevard*, FL, 20–23 Apr. Alabama’s first **Inca Dove** was seen in *Baldwin* on 19 Apr. A Townsend’s Solitaire was found on 20 Apr in *Fayette*, TN. A **Yellow-green Vireo** was found near Key West, *Monroe*, FL, 23 Apr. Though not as rare country-wide, a Bell’s Vireo at St. Mark’s NWR, FL, on 26 Apr was nonetheless noteworthy this far east. A MacGillivray’s Warbler spent a couple days in *Pinellas*, FL, 22–23 Apr. A male Shiny Cowbird was found on Al’s Dauphin Island 19 Apr.

**MID-ATANTIC:** A White-faced Ibis was present in *Cumberland*, NJ, 22–24 Apr. Another White-faced Ibis on 19 Apr in *Worcester*, MD, may well have been the same as a bird discovered two weeks prior. A **Wood Sandpiper** discovered in *Sussex*, DE, 5 May represents one of the few records for this species on the Atlantic coast of North America. “Eurasian” Whimbrels were found in *Cape May*, NJ, on 21 Apr and *Atlantic*, NJ, on 8 May. A **White-winged Tern** was first reported in *Kent*, DE, on 27 Apr. NJ’s famous Brigantine NWR played host to a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher on 23 Apr. Very rare in springtime was a Le Conte’s Sparrow in *Anne Arundel*, MD, on 7 May.

**NORTHEAST:** A drake **Common Pochard** was photographed at Saint-Barthélemy, QC, on 2 May. A Fork-tailed Flycatcher was discov-

ered in Boston, MA, on 14 Apr. Lake Charlotte, NS, was home to a “little b” black-billed **magpie** 1–3 May; its species (Black-billed or Eurasian) and provenance (wild or escapee) were unknown as we went to press. A Bohemian Waxwing was discovered in *Washington*, RI, on 12 Apr. A Townsend’s Solitaire lingered through 26 Apr in Cap Brule, NB. Another lingerer, a Hoary Redpoll, hung on through 17 Apr in Douglas, NB.

**SOUTH-CENTRAL:** Masked Ducks continue to be seen on the King Ranch in TX. A dark-morph Short-tailed Hawk surprised birders in *Coryell*, TX, on 12 Apr. The Gulf’s now-famous roving Greater Flamingo pair (one a wild American bird from Mexico, the other a zoo escapee of the Old World subspecies) put in an appearance at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston*, TX, 12 Apr. A Reeve was discovered at Hornsby Bend, *Travis*, TX, 12 Apr. A nearly impossible-to-identify *Thalasseus* tern at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston*, TX, 15 Apr was either TX’s fourth Elegant Tern, TX’s first “Cayenne Tern”, or North America’s first Lesser Crested Tern. TX’s 4<sup>th</sup> **Piratic Flycatcher** spent the weekend in *Nueces* 3–5 May. A Lucifer Hummingbird on 27 Apr in *Hidalgo*, TX, was well out-of-range. *Cameron*, LA, has been a hotbed of rare bird activity; highlights include a Ferruginous Hawk on 26 Apr, at least 2 Black Rails on 27 Apr, a Black-whiskered Vireo on 27 Apr, the state’s first well-documented **Chihuahuan Raven** on 12 Apr, and a **Red-footed Booby** (LA’s second ever and first in 68 years) on 26 Apr. Also in LA, Gray Kingbirds were noted in Grande Isle, *Jefferson* and



Piratic Flycatcher, Pollywog Pond, Corpus Christi, Texas, 4 May '08. © Martin Reid

New Orleans 19 and 22 Apr respectively, and another a Black-whiskered Vireo and a Shiny Cowbird were discovered on Grand Isle 22 Apr.

**NORTH-CENTRAL:** A flock of 11 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks was discovered on a farm pond in *Clay*, IL, 7 May. A **Mottled Duck** first found on 1 May near Point Pelee, ON, provided a first-ever record for the whole of Canada. A Tufted Duck was photographed near Selkirk, MB, on 23 Apr. A White-tailed Kite, Missouri’s first, enthralled St. Louis birders on 3 May. Another wind-blown kite, a Mississippi this time, was seen in *Hennepin*, MN, on 3 May. Black Rails were heard calling in *Stoddard*, MO, 3–6 May. Always big news inland, a Curlew Sandpiper in *Holt* provided MO with its 2nd record, 26–27 Apr. A **Mew Gull** provided Missouri with a possible first state record on 18 Apr in *Clay*, and another was observed off-and-on through 6 Apr near Pierre, SD. A Burrowing Owl was observed on Pelee Is., ON, 25–26 Apr. A pair of Barred



Unidentified orange-billed *Thalasseus* tern, (center) with congeners, Bolivar Flats, TX, 15 April '08. © Benji Schwartz

Owls is on territory in *Lincoln*, SD. A first for Michigan, a male **Violet-green Swallow** was photographed in Marquette on 28 Apr. Nebraska's first **Grace's Warbler** turned up in *Garden* on 4 May. A Prairie Warbler returned for a second summer in *Lincoln*, SD, on 7 May. A male **Scott's Oriole** was photographed in *Emmet*, IA, on 8 Apr. Another wayward oriole, an adult male Bullock's, was photographed during its 25–27 Apr stay in *Walworth*, WI. Lucky homeowners in *Porter*, IN, were graced with a Western Tanager at their feeder 2–4 May, and another was in *Kankakee*, IL, 4 May. A Painted Bunting returned to a *Story*, IA, feeder for a second spring on 7 May. Three Golden-crowned Sparrows were noted in the region: one in *Knox*, NE, 1 May, one in *Ward*, ND, 1–2 May, and another in *Cook*, MN, 28 Apr–3 May.

**SOUTHWEST:** A Brant was observed at Willcox, *Cochise*, AZ, 29 Apr. A cooperative Hudsonian Godwit was photographed in *Weld*, CO, over its early 16–17 Apr stay. A male Ruff provided Colorado with a 3<sup>rd</sup> state record in *Boulder* on 1 May. The 4<sup>th</sup> U.S. record of **Tufted Flycatcher** was discovered near Portal in *Cochise*, AZ, on 5 May and was still being seen as we went to press. The long-staying **Rufous-backed Robin** in *Sierra*, NM, was last noted 12 Apr. *Lea*, NM, hosted a Long-billed Thrasher 25 Apr. On 22 Apr a Lucy's Warbler was observed in



Tufted Flycatcher, Cave Creek Canyon, Arizona. © Chris Benesh

had its first record of Common Black-Hawk on 27 Apr. California's 4<sup>th</sup> Cave Swallow was discovered at the Salton Sea, *Imperial*, CA, on 2 May. A Black-throated Green Warbler provided *Imperial*, CA, with an oddly-timed first county record 19–20 Apr. A Painted Redstart was a first county record for *San Francisco*, CA, 25 Apr. British Columbia has had its share of **Bramblings** this season; another one was in Ucluelet 13–20 Apr. A Common Redpoll on SE Farallon Is., 6 May, was the southernmost record for the species in CA and fits an intriguing pattern of far-southern vagrancy for this species in late spring.

Mesa, CO. Joining the NE bird on the high plains were at least two Grace's Warblers in eastern CO. A Louisiana Waterthrush was well-photographed on 26 Apr in *Boulder*, CO. A female Kentucky Warbler was photographed on 1 May in *Cochise*, AZ. The Flame-colored Tanager continued in *Santa Cruz*, AZ. Another was reported from Miller Canyon, AZ, on 19 Apr. A one-day-wonder female **Yellow Grosbeak** was seen in *Cochise*, AZ, on 5 May.

**WEST COAST and NORTHWEST:** Four or more **Garganey** were reported from Katmai NP, AK on 28 Apr. An adult male **Smew**, first discovered on 21 Mar, was relocated near Mountain View, AB, on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Manx Shearwaters are becoming more and more regular in the northeast Pacific: one was found off Cape Arago, OR, on 19 Apr and another was found near Santa Cruz Is., CA, on 25 Apr. *Kern*, CA,

## Milestones

Birding in southern Ethiopia with friends Peary and B.K. Stafford, **Joe Thompson** of Los Angeles, CA, saw a Stresemann's Bush-Crow for World Bird 7,900 (seen only). Joe's fears that this milestone bird would be Tiny Cisticola proved to be unfounded, as the world's smallest cisticola stayed hidden long enough to become #7,902.

**Fred Niedermeyer** of Palos Verdes, California, saw his 600th ABA bird, a Yellow-legged Gull, at Quidi Vidi Lake in St. John's, Newfoundland, on January 12, 2008. Number 599 was a Bohemian Waxwing, one of thousands there feasting on a bumper crop of dog-berries, the local name for mountain-ash.

**Peggy Page** of Cape Elizabeth, Maine, tallied her 1,800th World Bird, an Elegant Crescent-chest in a dry riverbed near Salinas in southern Ecuador.

She was with a small group of birding friends who call themselves the "B Team." They report that their local guide, Edison Buenano, was excellent and they also highly recommend Ecuador. "...wonderful birds, spectacular countryside, warm, and welcoming people", all the same reasons ABA had a conference there in 2007.

A birder since 2002, **John Voigt**, from Emerald Isle, NC, reached a milestone 400th ABA bird with a Violet-crowned Hummingbird at Paton's yard in Patagonia, AZ. This trip to Arizona netted 57 new ABA birds including a Montezuma Quail on Miller Canyon Road. The last new bird of the trip, ABA bird #406, was a male Flame-

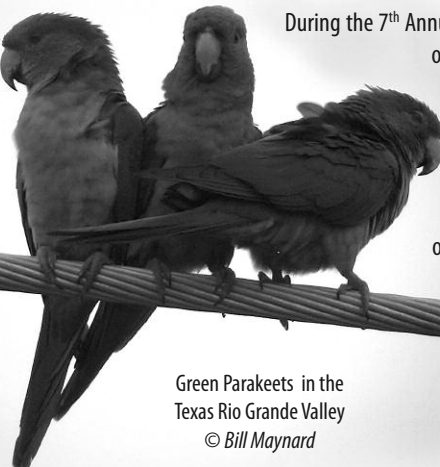
colored Tanager at Madera Kubo.

**Wendy Ealding** from Chesterfield, VA, saw her 1700th World Bird, a Green Parakeet on the University of Texas Brownsville campus on 1 April '08. No fooling.

On a trip to South Africa, current ABA director, **Paul Bristow**, passed the 6000 mark for his World List. It is rumored that he may have been traveling with ABA President/CEO, Dick Payne, and former board member, Mike Ord. Paul splits his time between Haliburton, ON, Canada, and a residence in Mexico. The milestone was a Dwarf Bittern (*Ixobrychus sturmi*), found by one of the above in the Nylsvlei Nature Reserve, one of the spectacular areas visited on this trip.

During the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual High Plains Prairie-Chicken Festival near Milnesand, NM, on 12 April 2008, **Kevin Holladay** of Santa Fe, NM, recorded his 500<sup>th</sup> ABA bird, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Kevin says "I look forward to submitting my 600<sup>th</sup>—hopefully in less time than this one took!"

On 10 February 2008, **Horace Loftin** of Beaufort, North Carolina, saw the amazing Jocotoco Antpitta in Zamora Province, Ecuador, for number 4500 on his World List. Horace said the milestone did not come easy, it was down a muddy steep trail, and his muscles were protesting the entire time, but the reward was worth the effort.



Green Parakeets in the Texas Rio Grande Valley © Bill Maynard