

# Maryland's Next 10 Bird Species

by Matt Hafner and Bill Hubick

As the 10-year anniversary of *Maryland's Next 10* approaches, now is the perfect time for an update. When better than during such an exceptional year for Maryland rarities? The original was written by Marshall Iliff in 2001 based on the votes of a 15-person panel, and it has long been among the most popular and most discussed reads in Maryland birding.

Since 2001, Maryland's hard-working birders have tracked down *seven* out of *ten* of the *Next 10* species. These were Eurasian Collared-Dove (#1), Cave Swallow (#2), Say's Phoebe (#4), Townsend's Warbler (#5), Western Meadowlark (#6), Reddish Egret (#8), and Allen's Hummingbird (#9; pending review). From the "Runner's Up" category, we added Northern Lapwing (#12) and Calliope Hummingbird (#15). One species from the "Long Shots" category was also added, Neotropic Cormorant. Additional surprises since 2001 have included Tropical Kingbird, Anna's Hummingbird, Inca Dove, and Cape Verde Shearwater. The state list currently stands at 435 species with potential state records still in review. While the list of "easy" species has been significantly shortened, we had no trouble creating a list of the top candidates.

For the 2009 update, we made a number of changes to polling and analysis. We invited a larger panel of voters, extending the invitation to a cross-section of top Maryland listers, the MD/DC Records Committee, productive field birders, and ornithologists. We processed a total of 39 lists. We asked each participant to rank their votes from one to ten, where #1 is the participant's top vote. We found that the ranking significantly enriched the data, allowing numerous additional views and nearly eliminating ties. Clear winners quickly emerged within the highest ranks, while many additional options found their way to the comprehensive list. We agreed that long shot votes are some of the most fun, and we considered everyone entitled to a vote or two based on personal voodoo. Gene Scarpulla proved the power of long shots with his single vote for Neotropic Cormorant in 2001, which was at the time unrecorded in the East. As of this writing, Maryland has the only East Coast records—not just one, but a mind-blowing *three* records! Of course, several new state records since 2001 weren't even mentioned on the original *Next 10*! As new state records arrive, we will post periodic updates on how the *Next 10* list, as well as individual participants' lists, are comparing to the ground truth.

## Maryland's Next Ten circa 2001

1. ~~Eurasian Collared Dove~~
2. ~~Cave Swallow~~
3. Little Egret
4. ~~Say's Phoebe~~
5. ~~Townsend's Warbler~~
6. ~~Western Meadowlark~~
7. Shiny Cowbird
8. ~~Reddish Egret~~
9. ~~Allen's Hummingbird~~
10. Kirtland's Warbler



**Despite George Jett's repeated protests to the contrary, Cave Swallow has been firmly added to the state list.**

To ensure consistency in voting, the following species were excluded from consideration:

**Barnacle Goose**—Accepted as Questionable Origin. Might be re-evaluated in the future.

**Southern Lapwing**—Accepted as Questionable Origin. Might be re-evaluated in the future.

**Black Guillemot**—Guillemot sp. is on the state list. We didn't consider this eventual upgrade.

**Allen's Hummingbird**—It is the authors' opinion that a well-documented individual from late 2008 will be accepted.

**Western Wood-Pewee**—Two specimens identified as this species have long been considered valid and might eventually be reviewed and accepted.

As Marshall Iliff described in the original *Next 10*, detectability remains a critical factor in voting for—and of course, finding—our next species. Due to the cruel laws of space and time (and jobs), the vast majority of rarities that visit Maryland certainly sneak by undetected. Undoubtedly, many of the top votes on this list have already occurred, some of them probably annually. Some have even been reported, though not documented sufficiently for inclusion on the state list. However, there have been many changes in birding since 2001 that are relevant to the subject of detectability. We now have more birders, more feeders, vastly superior communication tools, and a more widespread familiarity with East Coast vagrancy. Perhaps most importantly, the number of birders who carry digital cameras has increased exponentially. The value of this new wealth of documentation can hardly be over-stated, and it will certainly play a role in future state firsts. Illustrating all of these points, Lynn Davidson joked that we might speed up the process of locating Maryland's first Golden-crowned Sparrow by placing "Have you seen me?" posters in Wild Bird Centers this winter.

If Kirtland's Warbler and Sprague's Pipit occupy one end of the detectability spectrum, then vagrant hummingbirds top the list on the other. John Hubbell commented in the wake of the June 2009 Violet-crowned Hummingbird sighting in Virginia that one could probably enjoy a decent success rate by simply listing 10 hummingbirds.

Our understanding of hummingbird vagrancy has come a long way since 2001. In the original *Next 10*, hummingbirds accounted for only 10 of the 150 votes: five for Allen's, four for Black-chinned, and one for Broad-tailed. In this update, many people had two hummingbird species on their lists. It's a difficult approach to refute. East of the Mississippi, there are now records of 12 species of hummingbirds that have not been documented in Maryland: Black-chinned, Broad-billed, Broad-tailed, Buff-bellied, Blue-throated, Magnificent, Costa's, White-eared, Green Violetear, Green-breasted Mango, Violet-crowned, and the Florida-only Bahama Woodstar.



**Black-chinned Hummingbird in D.C.,  
22 Nov 2003. Photo by Dave Czaplak.**

Two other categories of birds hold major potential for new state records: pelagic species and austral migrants. Interestingly, although both of these groups contain many contenders, few species could compete among the Top 10 or Top 20 species. We joked that "Random Pelagic Species" and "Random Austral Migrant" would be wise votes if they were permitted.

With no further ado, here is the official "Maryland's Next 10 Bird Species." We hope you'll enjoy the list, as well as the analysis that follows. For each high-ranking species (and most others), we provide details on patterns of vagrancy, East Coast records, and predictions on when and where to find the species in Maryland. We will make most of the raw data available as an appendix to this document. Following the analysis are two excellent supplements, "Maryland's Next 10 *Nesting* Bird Species" by Walter Ellison and "Hart-Miller Island's Next 10 Bird Species" by Gene Scarpulla.

<b>The Top Ten</b>			
#	Species (# of 1 <sup>st</sup> place votes)	# of Lists	Points
<b>1</b>	<b>Black-chinned Hummingbird (14)</b>	30	243
<b>2</b>	<b>Little Egret (7)</b>	29	204
<b>3</b>	<b>Bell's Vireo (4)</b>	25	151
<b>4</b>	<b>MacGillivray's Warbler (1)</b>	19	113
<b>5</b>	<b>White-tailed Tropicbird (1)</b>	18	106
<b>6</b>	<b>Brown Booby (1)</b>	17	99
<b>7</b>	<b>Sharp-tailed Sandpiper</b>	17	94
<b>8</b>	<b>Golden-crowned Sparrow</b>	16	60
<b>9</b>	<b>Slaty-backed Gull (3)</b>	15	110
<b>10</b>	<b>White-winged Tern (1)</b>	14	75
<b>The Runners Up</b>			
11	Kirtland's Warbler	14	68
12	Pink-footed Goose	14	63
13	Long-billed Murrelet	13	52
14	Yellow-billed Loon (2)	12	73
15	Green Violetear	11	58
<b>The Honorable Mentions</b>			
16	Violet-green Swallow	10	44
17	White-tailed Kite	8	38
18	European Storm-Petrel (1)	7	41
19	Herald Petrel (1)	7	36
20	Bar-tailed Godwit	7	29
21	Clark's Grebe (1)	6	49
22	Boreal Owl	6	23
23	Shiny Cowbird	5	25
24	Pacific Golden-Plover	5	22
25	Black-tailed Godwit	4	25
26	Garganey	4	23
27	Broad-tailed Hummingbird	4	20
28	Snowy Plover	4	19
29	Great-tailed Grackle	4	18
30	Spotted Redshank	4	17

31	Red-billed Tropicbird	4	13
<b>The Long Shots</b>			
32	Sprague's Pipit	3	11
33	Brown-chested Martin	3	10
34	Brown Noddy (1)	2	16
35	Ivory Gull (1)	2	16
36	"Western" Flycatcher	2	13
37	Brambling (1)	2	11
38	Ferruginous Hawk	2	10
39	Mottled Duck	2	7
40	Hermit Warbler	2	6
41	Lewis's Woodpecker	2	5
42	Masked Booby	2	5
43	Black-throated Sparrow	2	4
44	Broad-billed Hummingbird	2	3
45	Mountain Plover	1	9
46	Western Bluebird	1	9
47	Redwing	1	8
48	Lesser Sand-Plover	1	6
49	West Indian Whistling-Duck	1	6
50	Black-billed Magpie	1	5
51	Eurasian Woodcock	1	5
52	Band-tailed Pigeon	1	4
53	Red-throated Pipit	1	4
54	Elegant Tern	1	3
55	Brown-crested Flycatcher	1	2
56	Gray Flycatcher	1	2
57	Great Gray Owl	1	2
58	Lesser Goldfinch	1	2
59	Cassin's Kingbird	1	1
60	Dusky Flycatcher	1	1
61	Lesser Nighthawk	1	1
62	Scott's Oriole	1	1
63	Western Gull	1	1

## The Top Ten

- 1. Black-chinned Hummingbird** [Jim Stasz's yard, November]. The recent increase in vagrant hummingbirds has not gone unnoticed among Maryland birders! This species had by far the most first-place votes, and over half the voters placed it in the Top 3. D.C. and West Virginia have one record each, Virginia has four, Massachusetts has four, New Jersey has four, and they have become annual throughout the Southeast. On the East Coast, Black-chinned Hummingbirds have arrived almost exclusively in November and December, and

some of the more southerly birds have successfully wintered. Maryland has done well with banding late-season hummingbirds, so one will surely be documented in the near future. Based on sheer numbers, this one will likely be found in central Maryland (where the people are), but our pick is Jim Stasz's yard. Why? Can you name another yard in Maryland with a better track record for vagrant hummingbirds? Two Rufous, two Calliope, and counting! (30/39 lists, 243 points, 14 first-place votes)

2. **Little Egret** [Assateague Island Causeway, June]. Little Egret remains a clear favorite among Maryland's birders. It is the highest ranked species that has not yet been found from the original *Next 10*, and Maryland birders recall records from Delaware (Bombay Hook, Little Creek WMA) and Virginia (Chincoteague). There are additional records from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and they are annual in Atlantic Canada. Little Egret is now on many Maryland birders' radar and is actively sought amidst gatherings of waders. Naysayers point out that several birds (Bombay Hook, Atlantic Canada, etc.) may represent returning individuals, so actual vagrancy events may be rarer than they appear. Records are concentrated from mid-April to early July, with just a few records after that when the species loses its distinctive breeding plumage and soft part colors become harder to assess among abundant juvenile Snowy Egrets and Little Blue Herons. (29/39 lists, 204 points, 7 first-place votes)
3. **Bell's Vireo** [Rarity Roundup, November]. The impressive number of East Coast records of this species makes Bell's Vireo another clear choice for the *Next 10*. There are records from 13 East Coast states from Maine to Florida, and many states have three or more records—New Jersey has six. Massachusetts has had its first three records in as many years, Rhode Island had its first in Nov/Dec 2007, and North Carolina has had three in the last five years as well. They are annual in Florida in winter. This species earned its place as a solid #3 despite many voters' concerns about detectability and difficulty of ID. Records from the East Coast range from early to mid-September to Christmas Bird Count season; few have been detected later in the winter than early January. A report of a banded bird on Assateague on 8 Sep 1956 (Riesz, R.P. 1960. Autumn record for Bell's Vireo in Maryland [Maryland Birdlife 16:27]) was possibly correct, but not accepted by the MD/DCRC. (25/39 lists, 151 points, 4 first-place votes)
4. **MacGillivray's Warbler** [Vessey Orchard, December]. This species' well-established pattern of vagrancy to the East Coast also prevailed over some voters' concern about detectability. There are records from Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Did we mention that Massachusetts has had *twelve*? September records are known, but the vast majority of East Coast records are from October and November, with a few wintering birds and just a single spring record from New York. Although a notorious skulker, any observation of a possible Mourning Warbler after mid-October should receive immediate attention. Maryland has a report of a MacGillivray's banded on Kent Island on 6 Oct 1964, and an Ocean City CBC report of an *Oporornis* sp. on 28 Dec 1979 (American Birds 34:445) that was believed to be either a Mourning or MacGillivray's, but unfortunately was not photographed (19/39 lists, 113 points, 1 first-place vote)

5. **White-tailed Tropicbird** [Little Seneca Lake, September]. This overdue addition to the state list is just a matter of time. Rare but regular in the Gulf Stream off Cape Hatteras, there are records from most East Coast states south to Florida, including Virginia (3), Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Maine. It is likely to be found at your favorite reservoir in the wake of a storm event or documented on a well-timed pelagic or sea watch, probably from July to September. Marshall Iliff noted that anecdotal reports from fishing boat captains suggest this species has already occurred within the state. (18/39 lists, 106 points, 1 first-place vote)
6. **Brown Booby** [OSV Zone, Assateague Island, July]. If this bird comes as a surprise to you, it shouldn't. Virginia and New Jersey have seven records each, three of which were in the last five years. It is nearly annual in North Carolina, with additional records in New York, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts (4). Aside from the outrageous record of an adult in the Virginia mountains in fall 2008, all of the records have been coastal, with many birds seen feeding close to shore or loafing on sandbars and pilings. This could be the great reward of a summer trip to the coast, as it is most likely from late May to October. (17/39 lists, 99 points, 1 first-place vote)
7. **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** [Horsehead, September]. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper received nearly three times the votes of the next most popular shorebird, Bar-tailed Godwit. There are two accepted records each for Delaware and New Jersey, as well as four records for Virginia. As noted by Iliff in 2001, a record from the Hunting Creek mudflats, Fairfax, Virginia (14-23 Sep 1983) probably flew over Maryland waters of the Potomac River. As summarized by Iliff, most of the 15+ records from the East Coast have been juveniles concentrated between mid-September and mid-October. Other records from May to August show that this species should be considered at all times during migration. Delaware's two records were adults found at Bombay Hook on 8 Aug 1993 and 5-6 August 2002. (17/39 lists, 94 points)
8. **Golden-crowned Sparrow** [A feeder in Howard Co., December]. Now recorded at least eight times in New Jersey and two out of the last four Aprils in Massachusetts, this attractive West Coast species has gotten Maryland birders' attention. Records of East Coast vagrants are primarily of wintering birds from Atlantic Canada to Florida (October to April) and northbound birds in April. Look for this species amidst wintering White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows, around fields, feeders, and wooded edges. Listen for its plaintive song among White-throated choruses in April. (16/39 lists, 60 points)
9. **Slaty-backed Gull** [Salisbury Landfill, January]. Most voters who selected Slaty-backed Gull ranked it highly, so this species would rank much higher (#5) if points were weighted over total votes. Perhaps some voters did not realize that Maryland's possible Slaty-backed Gulls have not been accepted. Others might have been discouraged by the identification challenges. However, with the major increase in records in the Northeast (and the exponential increase in ready megapixels), Maryland is due its first uncontested Slaty-backed Gull record. Consider this: As of 2001, just one East Coast state had a record (New York), but since 2005 it has been found in New Hampshire (3), Massachusetts (4), and Pennsylvania (1), along with more records from New York, Atlantic Canada, and throughout

the continent's interior. Although some of Maryland's most historically productive gull spots have reduced access and/or productivity, most gull lovers are optimistic. Strong votes for locations include Salisbury Landfill, Skimmer Island, Schoolhouse Pond, and Conowingo Dam. The widely-twitched adult at Conowingo Dam in February 1999 was subtly inconsistent in a few features (width of white trailing edge, precise wing pattern, mantle shade) and considered Not Accepted by the MD/DCRC. Several other reports were not sufficiently documented. (15/39 lists, 110 points, 3 first-place votes)

10. **White-winged Tern** [Fox Hill Level, Assateague Island, August]. While this species was regular in the 1970s and 1980s, it has declined markedly and there are just two records from adjacent states since 1995. It seems very possible that only a few birds were responsible for the majority of the records, and that they have since perished. We can hope the 2008 Delaware record marks a return to patterns of old. Fortunately for Maryland, the Mid-Atlantic region seems to be the epicenter of this mega-rarity's forays to North America. With at least seven records for coastal Delaware and five or more in Virginia (Chincoteague), a well-documented visit to Maryland seems inevitable. The question is how many times landfall will be made before the species is detected and documented. Iliff (2001) references a well-documented report from Point Lookout SP in 1994 that was not ultimately deemed unequivocal. The optimistic among us should carefully rule out this species whenever we encounter Black Terns in Maryland, especially along the coast. Check underwings for black axillars and be prepared for non-breeding plumages, as this is how the latest Delaware and Virginia birds were found. (14/39 lists, 75 points, 1 first-place vote)

## The Runners Up

11. **Kirtland's Warbler** [Violette's Lock, May]. Slipping from #10 in 2001 to #11 this time around is likely due to the lack of recent "vagrant" records and the increase in records for many other species. While many states surrounding Maryland have records - Virginia (4), West Virginia (5), and several in Pennsylvania - none is more recent than 1998. Given the species' increasing population, this is a bit surprising, and more sightings of migrants away from Lake Erie should be expected. Maine recorded a remarkable singing bird in the Kennebunk Plains in June 2008, so prospecting breeders could occur in appropriate habitat as well. Western Maryland might be the most likely place to turn one up, but there are more observers in spring along the C&O Canal in Montgomery. Keep your eyes peeled in mid-May and September. (14/39 lists, 68 points)
12. **Pink-footed Goose** [Great Oak Pond, November]. Formerly a mega-rarity known only from Atlantic Canada, the last 10 years have produced multiple records in Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Newfoundland, as well as a pair in Rhode Island. The exact number of birds involved is unknown, but there is no denying that multiple Pink-footed Geese are arriving in the Northeast each winter. While they are doing so, Maryland birders should continue carefully scanning both Snow and Canada Goose flocks on the Eastern Shore from November to March. (14/39 lists, 63 points)

13. **Long-billed Murrelet** [Rocky Gap, November]. East Coast records of Long-billed Murrelet are split between the Atlantic coast and inland bodies of water. Records from nearby states include Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, North Carolina (2), South Carolina, and Florida (3), many of these within the last 10 years. There is a distinct peak of reports in November and December, but records span October through March. Massachusetts has an anomalous early September record. Anyone observing an inland alcid should carefully consider Long-billed and Ancient Murrelet (records from PA, NY, and MA), which may be more likely than typical Atlantic alcids. (13/39 lists, 52 points)
14. **Yellow-billed Loon** [Loch Raven Reservoir, April]. The recent record of an alternate-plumaged bird on the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania in May 2007 was obviously fresh in the minds of several voters. That's not the only record either, with three from New York (two upstate, one coastal), three from Tennessee, and another in Georgia, all in the last 12 years. Save for the coastal New York record, all the records are from inland locales, but that is likely due to ease of observation on inland water bodies. The Chesapeake Bay actually works against us here and has probably hidden a Yellow-billed Loon or two a few hundred yards offshore or tucked away in a seldom-scanned cove. Maryland already has three reports of Yellow-billed Loon, but none has had the detail to be conclusively verified. Look for this species from November to March, and be ready for one in April or May, too! Careful study and thorough documentation are a must! (12/39 lists, 73 points, 2 first-place votes)
15. **Green Violetear** [JB Churchill's yard, August]. This one registered on everyone's radar when it appeared in Terra Alta, West Virginia, less than 1/2 mile from the Maryland line in the summer of 2003. In a departure from most other vagrant hummingbirds, Green Violetears tend to show up in the summer (June to October) and at areas with a bit of elevation. There are very few records from the Gulf Coast, which is usually at the forefront of hummingbird vagrancy, and a cluster of records in the Appalachian Mountains. In addition to the West Virginia record, Green Violetears have shown up in New Jersey (coastally—an exception to the “elevation” theory), North Carolina (3), South Carolina, Georgia, Maine, Ontario, and several places in the Midwest. Watch for the dominant large green hummingbird at your feeder this summer! (11/39 lists, 58 points)

### **Honorable Mentions (4-10 votes)**

16. **Violet-green Swallow** - After the wave of Cave Swallow records, Violet-green Swallow is an intuitive choice, with records from Pennsylvania, New Jersey (3), Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Nova Scotia, and Ohio. However, there has yet to be a record this century, even in well-covered Cape May, which had two records in the 1990s. The records are scattered from May to November, unlike the cluster of late fall Cave Swallow reports, which suggests a different temporal pattern to their vagrancy. Violet-greens could easily be getting lost in the massive fall flocks of Tree Swallows, so the lack of recent reports may not be too surprising. (10/39 lists, 44 points)



17. **White-tailed Kite** - Slipping a little from the 2001 vote, this spring/summer rarity is still on the minds of several Maryland birders. As noted by Iliff in the original *Next 10*, Maryland has a report that barely missed acceptance. Records are scattered up and down the coast from South Carolina to Massachusetts. Almost all of the records are from April to June, but the two most recent, both in South Carolina, were October 2006 and December 2007 to January 2008. Other records from the last 10 years include a summering bird in West Virginia in 2001 and one from April 2004 in Virginia (Tidewater). Given the numerous spring records, it is not surprising that Lynn Davidson and Matt Grey, both Fort Smallwood regulars, ranked this species #2! (8/39 lists, 38 points)
18. **European Storm-Petrel** - Marylanders are often envious of the pelagic trip reports from North Carolina, with the Gulf Stream reachable in just a few hours. While European Storm-Petrel records are less numerous regionally than many of the *Pterodroma* petrels, they may be more likely to appear outside of the Gulf Stream, and the recent boost in records should not be ignored. North Carolina records have so far been from May and June, but the lone Nova Scotia record is from August. Plenty of Maryland pelagic trips give great opportunities for storm-petrel study and, thus far, have produced several records of Leach's, Band-rumped, and White-faced Storm-Petrels. It is worth noting that North Carolina also has recent records of Swinhoe's and Black-bellied Storm-Petrels. (7/39 lists, 41 points)
19. **Herald Petrel** - A rare but very regular visitor to the Gulf Stream waters off North Carolina, with few records elsewhere. However, two of the "elsewhere" records were in Virginia during hurricanes and another was in upstate New York! Because it is simply impractical for Maryland pelagic trips to hit the Gulf Stream (200 or more miles offshore), a hurricane-blown vagrant is probably our best shot, similar to White-tailed Tropicbird. So get to your favorite storm-watching vantage point when the time comes (but safety first)! (7/39 lists, 36 points, 1 first-place vote)
20. **Bar-tailed Godwit** - This species has more East Coast records (40+) than any species outside of the Top 10 and more than several species in the Top 10! Maybe if it weren't so difficult to find Marbled and Hudsonian Godwits in Maryland, Bar-tailed would have made more lists. The good news is that because we see so few godwits, each is one is thoroughly scrutinized. Right? Bar-taileds can show up at almost any time when migrant shorebirds are present—having even wintered in Massachusetts—but have peaks in May and August. In addition to the 20+ Massachusetts records, other East Coast states with records are New Jersey (11), New York (6), Virginia (2; one in winter), Connecticut, Maine, North Carolina (6), and Florida. (7/39 lists, 29 points)
21. **Clark's Grebe** - This bird may well have occurred in Maryland already. The problem is that several Maryland records of *Aechmophorus* grebes were not identified to species, including an intriguing bird off Assateague in November 1999. Virginia had presumably the same Clark's return near Fort Story for 7 years in a row, and the same bird may have been seen nearby in North Carolina. There is also a recent Clark's record from Maine, but these comprise all the confirmed records in the East. (6/39 lists, 49 points, 1 first-place vote)

22. **Boreal Owl** - A southward irruption of this species will someday reach Maryland. We expect that we will see the reports of large numbers at northern banding stations well in advance and then one of our saw-whet banding stations will hit the jackpot. The more southerly Eastern U.S. records are from Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. Movements outside of the breeding range tend to occur between late October and early April. (6/39 lists, 23 points)
23. **Shiny Cowbird** - What a change Shiny Cowbird has undergone since 2001! In the original *Next 10*, 60% of voters had a space for it on their lists. This round, it was only 13%. Its expansion pattern was similar to that of Eurasian Collared-Dove, but the records slowed considerably in the new millennium. Outside of its southern Florida stronghold, it still moves up the Gulf Coast with regularity and remains almost annual on the Outer Banks. Despite records from Maine and Nova Scotia during the 1990s, the last East Coast record north of the Carolinas was a Massachusetts sight record in October 2002. Given their current pattern, coastal areas may be the key to finding one in Maryland. Marshall Iliff and several others are keeping hope alive for this one, and recommend checking the August cowbird flock at Hurlock! (5/39 lists, 25 points)
24. **Pacific Golden-Plover** - This is an easy species to add to your U.S. list, presuming you take a winter vacation to Hawaii. A good bird even on the West Coast, Pacific Golden-Plover remains a mega-rarity in the East. (Though, surprisingly, it is an almost regular vagrant in Western Europe.) Vagrant records in our area, all adult birds, have been found in Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine, and Newfoundland, spanning both spring and fall migration. The subtlety of this ID ensures your discovery will be remembered in song and legend. (5/39 lists, 22 points)
25. **Black-tailed Godwit** - There are about 15 records of this rare European vagrant on the U.S. East Coast. These records are well-dispersed, including Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts (5), Vermont, North Carolina (3), and Florida. Some recent sightings were April 2007 (Vermont), July 2006 (Massachusetts), and July 2007 (Massachusetts). As mentioned with Bar-tailed, Maryland sees few godwits, so hopefully each individual is carefully studied. Every sighting of a Hudsonian Godwit should involve actively ruling out this species. White underwings seal the deal. (4/39 lists, 25 points)
26. **Garganey** - This rare vagrant to North America has been recorded on the East Coast in Delaware, Virginia (3), New Jersey (2), Massachusetts (2), Vermont, Maine, and North Carolina. Marshall Iliff noted a published, but undocumented, report from Maryland (3-6 May 1978, Maryland Birdlife 33:122) that was dismissed as an escapee. He summarized detection nicely: "Almost all birds detected in the U.S.A. have been adult males in alternate plumage, but observers should note that Garganey have distinctive wing patterns and even a female should be recognizable. Almost all East Coast records have been with Blue-winged Teal in spring, primarily during their migration period 25 Mar-25 May." Alas, records of this species have dropped off markedly since the 1980s and early 1990s. (4/39 lists, 23 points)

27. **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** - As discussed above, it is easy to defend votes for vagrant hummingbirds. It seems intuitive that if we can get a vagrant Allen's from its restricted Pacific coast range, the sweep of *Selasphorus* hummingbirds is just a matter of time. Some might argue that East Coast records of this species are fewer than for other rare hummingbirds, but this species has been recorded in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and – most intriguingly – Rehoboth Beach, Delaware (banded 22 Mar 1998). (4/39 lists, 20 points)
28. **Snowy Plover** - This attractive shorebird has a solid history of vagrancy to the East Coast and even breeds in Florida. It has been recorded north to North Carolina (3), Virginia (4 consecutive years), Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. The Snowy Plover from Virginia visited Cedar Island in June of each year from 1995 to 1998. According to the "Gold Book," the bird "performed courtship displays for Piping Plovers, made a nest scrape on several occasions, and was observed brooding Piping Plover chicks in 1998, but actual breeding was not confirmed." Here is yet another reason to invest as much time as possible on Assateague, especially on the OSV zone. The summer doldrums are a myth! (4/39 lists, 19 points)
29. **Great-tailed Grackle** - The impressive range expansion of this species appealed to several voters. Although they now occur regularly east to Illinois and Wisconsin, and have been recorded in Ohio and southern Ontario, we did not locate any new East Coast records since the female in Nova Scotia referenced by Iliff in 2001. As Iliff pointed out in the original *Next 10*, any Boat-tailed type grackle noted away from the immediate coast or the Bay should be thoroughly documented. (4/39 lists, 18 points)
30. **Spotted Redshank** - This striking vagrant shorebird has left an impression on East Coast birders despite the paucity of recent records. East Coast records include New Jersey (3), New York (2), Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts (2), and North Carolina. Most records are from July and August, but the North Carolina record was in May, and one individual wintered in New York for two years in a row. (4/39 lists, 17 points)
31. **Red-billed Tropicbird** - This species might have scored higher if it weren't somewhat overshadowed by White-tailed Tropicbird. It is a possibility on late summer pelagic trips or simply seen flying by the coast. Many records are of long-staying individuals in the summer, including an adult that has been consistently present for at least the past three years at Matinicus Rock in Maine. Virginia's first record was observed flying by the coast this spring. Other records are from New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts, including several beached birds found in distress. It is very rare but annual off North Carolina and south to Florida. (4/39 lists, 13 points)

## The Long Shots (3 or fewer votes)

32. **Sprague's Pipit** - The quintessential detection challenge. This secretive Great Plains species is a specialist of short grass, where it is very notoriously difficult to detect. As noted by Iliff in 2001, it should be expected singly (not in American Pipit flocks) in fall, early winter, or spring. Airports provide ideal habitat, but pose obvious access issues. Learning the distinctive flight call could supplement hard work and luck. There are records from Virginia (3), Massachusetts (2), and from North Carolina (2+) to Florida. The June 2009 record from 40 miles offshore of North Carolina is mind-blowing. For a prediction, how about Kyle Rambo on Patuxent River NAS? (3/39 lists, 11 points)
33. **Brown-chested Martin** - There are five North American records: Cape May, New Jersey (6-15 Nov 1997), Connecticut (1 Jul 2006), Massachusetts (12 Jun 1983), Arizona (3 Feb 2006), and Florida (24 Oct 1991). Remember that Purple Martins are scarce in Maryland by October. By November, Brown-chested and rarer species are more expected. This is one of the gems that awaits discovery amidst the hordes of late fall swallows along the coast. Note, however, that two of three Northeastern records are from June and July. The North American records pertain to the more southerly, austral migrant subspecies. Documentation is critical and should be collected exhaustively. (3/39 lists, 10 points)
34. **Brown Noddy** - In our region, there are three records from Virginia, all from Tropical Storm Ernesto in 2006, as well as from New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts (2). As with the recent Virginia records, most East Coast records are associated with tropical storms. (2/39 lists, 16 points, 1 first-place vote)
35. **Ivory Gull** - Two Massachusetts records in the winter of 2008-2009 left many Marylanders rubbing their hands together greedily. Can we arrange for large sea mammal carcasses to be left on the south jetty this winter? New Jersey has four records, and it has been recorded in all states from New York to Maine (except Connecticut). Uncertain future weather patterns might be interpreted as supportive of this vote. Of all the species listed in this article, this is probably the only one that has occurred and been documented in Maryland with 99.9% certainty. A specimen of a first-winter bird in the Smithsonian is unequivocally an Ivory Gull and represents the most southerly East Coast record (only Tennessee and southern California records are more southerly). Unfortunately, the location information reads simply "Potomac River." While Maryland claims the Potomac up to the high tide mark, the only exception is the small stretch of river in D.C. Without more specimen data, we will never know for certain where this bird was collected. Unfortunately, with population declines of 90% or more and more challenges ahead, the future is quite uncertain for this fantastic creature. (2/39 lists, 16 points, 1 first-place vote)
36. **"Western" Flycatcher** - Although a notoriously difficult ID, it is now well-known that all late fall and winter *Empidonax* flycatchers should be documented as thoroughly as possible. There are records from Pennsylvania (2, accepted as Pacific-slope), Virginia (1, probable Pacific-slope), North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, and Massachusetts. Exceptional

documentation, including voice recordings, is required to confirm the identification to Pacific-slope or Cordilleran. (2/39 lists, 13 points)

37. **Brambling** - The number and widespread nature of historical East Coast records is surprising. Tending to show up at bird feeders in winter, it has made small irruptions into North America, such as the winter of 1983/1984. In the East, it has been recorded in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, New Jersey (2), New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. (2/39 lists, 11 points, 1 first-place vote)
38. **Ferruginous Hawk** - While Virginia is the only East Coast state north of Florida with accepted records, it does have two of them. A report of an immature from Town Hill, Allegany Co., Maryland (31 Mar 1996) included a photograph, but apparently it was not found to be diagnostic. It's intriguing that Jim Brighton was one of the two people who voted for this vagrant raptor, as he might be Maryland's least patient hawk watcher.
39. **Mottled Duck** - Be thorough, persistent, prepared, and trigger-happy with your camera. Virginia has several reports, but none conclusively documented, and North Carolina has three records. Of note, Midwestern states such as Tennessee and Arkansas have seen an increase in records over the last few years. Ontario recorded Canada's first at Point Pelee last summer. This species could be nominated as most likely "stealth vagrant," as few of us scrutinize distant eclipse-plumaged Mallards in mid-summer. This one may occur far more regularly than we realize. (2/39 lists, 7 points)
40. **Hermit Warbler** - With at least three records from Massachusetts and others from Connecticut and Nova Scotia, this is a worthy long shot vote for November and the CBC season. Observers should be aware that a hybrid Townsend's x Hermit was found in coastal New York in late November 2002. Ruling out hybrid identification can be extremely difficult and would require exceptional documentation. (2/39 lists, 6 points)
41. **Lewis's Woodpecker** - This attractive species is an understandable favorite long shot. Virginia's 1988 record was so close to Maryland that it was in the Sugarloaf CBC circle. Other records come from Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Vermont. Have your camera ready at the Washington Monument or Town Hill hawk watch. This species flies directly, like a Red-headed Woodpecker, and at a distance may look quite dark, even crow-like. (2/39 lists, 5 points)
42. **Masked Booby** - More pelagic than Brown Booby, Masked Booby is rare from shore even in Florida. New Jersey has one late August coastal record and they are rare, but regular, visitors on Gulf Stream pelagic trips in North Carolina. (2/39 lists, 5 points)
43. **Black-throated Sparrow** - Many Maryland birders will be surprised to read that there are at least three records from Virginia and another three from New Jersey. This iconic species of the arid Southwest has been recorded as far north as Maine and as far south as Florida, and it has spent full winters at bird feeders. Most records are from before 1980, but the cause for this drop-off in records is unclear. (2/39 lists, 4 points)

44. **Broad-billed Hummingbird** - There are multiple records in the Southeast through the Carolinas and other records in Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ontario, and Atlantic Canada. This species is one of many hummingbirds that are more likely to visit Maryland than a Violet-crowned Hummingbird was to visit Virginia. Note that Broad-billeds have occurred primarily from July to October (earlier than most other vagrant hummingbirds). Maintaining your hummingbird feeders year-round might be the best investment you can make toward increasing the state list! (2/39 lists, 3 points)
45. **Mountain Plover** - Bob Ringler liked this Great Plains specialty, which has been recorded in Virginia, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida from October to December. Feeling optimistic? Here's a fine reason to hike the north end of Assateague in October. (1/39 lists, 9 points)
46. **Western Bluebird** - This long shot pick by Jim Green doesn't have any records in our area, but neither did Neotropic Cormorant back in 2001! Go Jim! (1/39 lists, 9 points)
47. **Redwing** - Danny Poet cast a vote for this Eurasian vagrant, which has been recorded in Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island, and Nova Scotia. Like Fieldfare, this species might be found - with the right combination of persistence and luck - among winter American Robin flocks. (1/39 lists, 8 points)
48. **Lesser Sand-Plover** - Chosen by Carol Broderick, this regular vagrant to the West Coast has appeared in New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Florida on the East Coast, as well as Ontario and Louisiana. It is most likely to appear at coastal shorebird areas during fall migration. (1/39 lists, 6 points)
49. **West Indian Whistling-Duck** - Harry Armistead's list drew heavily upon birds seen in Virginia, but not Maryland, and this bird is no exception. As with seemingly all waterfowl, origin questions arise, but a West Indian Whistling-Duck turning up in the middle of the Great Dismal Swamp in April 2003? Not sure what to make of that, but natural vagrancy sure seems like a reasonable possibility given records from Bermuda. With all the records of Black-bellied Whistling-Duck from Jug Bay, Danny Bystrak should keep an eye out for these when sitting on his bucket. (1/39 lists, 6 points)
50. **Black-billed Magpie** - Maryland actually has seven reports of this species between 1931 and 1963. Most of these lack documentation to review, but a late 1947 report has reviewable documentation. Although this species wanders a bit beyond its range, vagrant records to the East Coast tend to be treated as questionable. Other states with records include Virginia (4), New Jersey, New York, and Massachusetts. This vote was submitted by Danny Poet. Danny, we'll gladly chase this one regardless of origin debates. (1/39 lists, 5 points)

51. **Eurasian Woodcock** - This was Phil Davis's pick, and he predicted it would be found by Stan Arnold at Deal Island (Are you ready, Stan?). Near Maryland, there are old records from Virginia, Ohio, and New Jersey (2), mostly specimens, so maybe this one is being overlooked. The last accepted record we could find was Goshen, New Jersey in 1956. (1/39 lists, 5 points)
52. **Band-tailed Pigeon** - Chosen by Dave Powell, this high-altitude columbid tends to wander east with some regularity. East Coast records include Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New Jersey (2), North Carolina (2), South Carolina, and Florida. The most recent bird turned up in a Cape May yard next door to the home of Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis in January 2007! (1/39 lists, 4 points)
53. **Red-throated Pipit** - Increased awareness of this West Coast vagrant might someday pay off on the East Coast, probably in October or November. Unlike Sprague's Pipit, this one is to be expected with flocks of American Pipits. It won't hurt to commit this flight call to memory. A vote by Danny Poet. (1/39 lists, 4 points)
54. **Elegant Tern** - The entire population of this attractive tern nests in southern California and Baja California, Mexico. It is a rare vagrant to the East Coast, but more focused attention might lead to additional records. East Coast records come from Virginia (3, all from Chincoteague: Jun 1985, Sep 2001, Aug 2004), Massachusetts (Aug 2002), and Florida (3+), where it has bred with a Sandwich Tern. Others have, amazingly, reached Western Europe. (As has Aleutian Tern, by the way.) Rob Hilton cast this only vote for a tern other than White-winged, which is a favorite single-vote species of the authors. (1/39 lists, 3 points)
55. **Brown-crested Flycatcher** - This species, a vote by Dave Mozurkewich, has been found annually in Florida for many years, but oddly not any farther north along the coast. Although Ash-throated has a well-established pattern of vagrancy to our region, each individual *Myiarchus* found in late fall and winter in Maryland should be carefully scrutinized to rule out species such as Brown-crested and Dusky-capped. (1/39 lists, 2 points)
56. **Gray Flycatcher** - With *Empidonax* flycatchers, there is always the challenge of identification in addition to detection. This one tends to sit out in the open and wag its tail, making it much more likely to be detected and identified correctly. On the East Coast, there are records for Delaware, North Carolina, and Massachusetts (2). Chosen by Marshall Iliff. (1/39 lists, 2 points)
57. **Great Gray Owl** - This impressive boreal species made it onto Jim Green's list. Great Grays irrupt south in response to crashes in their rodent prey, and on the East Coast they have wandered as far south as Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Long Island, New York. (1/39 lists, 2 points)

58. **Lesser Goldfinch** - Although this one isn't traditionally on the East Coast radar, don't forget the two recent East Coast records: Wilmington, Delaware in August 2008 and North Carolina in March 2009. These joined an existing record from North Carolina and another from Maine. Hans Holbrook chose this as one of his favorite long shots, and he predicts it will visit a feeder in Carroll County. (1/39 lists, 2 points)
59. **Cassin's Kingbird** - Mark Hoffman's long shot has been recorded three times in Massachusetts (Nov 2002, Oct 1962, Oct 1965), once in New York (Oct 2007), and has been found annually in Florida (late fall/winter) in recent years. If you find a Western-type *Tyrannus* in Maryland and don't see white outer edges to its tail feathers, it's time to get excited about your options. (1/39 lists, 1 point)
60. **Dusky Flycatcher** - This pick by Jim Stasz was a recent addition to the "seen within 5 miles of Maryland" list thanks to a well-documented Rock Creek find by Barry Cooper and Gail Mackiernan. There are several records of Dusky Flycatcher in the East, but as with all empids, documentation can be an issue. In addition to the D.C. record, there was a long-staying (and banded!) bird found in Delaware in the winter of 2001-2002. (1/39 lists, 1 point)
61. **Lesser Nighthawk** - This was a fun long shot vote by Steve Collins. There are three East Coast records north of Florida, where it is a casual winter visitor. There are single records from North Carolina, West Virginia, and New Jersey. The latter report, from Cape May in November 2007, was well-documented and widely discussed. As with martins, any November nighthawk record should be documented as thoroughly as possible. In what he accurately labeled as a "mind-boggling coincidence," Danny Bystrak has observed a southbound nighthawk over Jug Bay on 11 November in both 2002 and 2007. A report from Plum Point, Calvert County on 3 Dec 1974 may have been a correctly identified Lesser Nighthawk, but was not accepted by the MD/DCRC. (1/39 lists, 1 point)
62. **Scott's Oriole** - Chosen by Rob Hilton, Scott's Oriole has recently announced its presence in the East with long-staying winter vagrants in Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and New York, all since 2007. There is also a Georgia record from 2002 and several Midwest occurrences. Most have been feeder birds, but the New York bird and others were seen feeding at sapsucker wells! The New York bird was initially identified as an Orchard Oriole, which would be rarer than a Scott's Oriole in December in our region. Streak-backed and Audubon's Orioles should be kept in mind as potential vagrants, as well, as they have recently occurred in Wisconsin and Indiana, respectively. (1/39 lists, 1 point)
63. **Western Gull** - Although extremely rare inland from the Pacific coast, a first East Coast record was recently accepted from a Freeport, New York pelagic trip (2/11/2006). Eliminating hybrids and confirming this identification will require thorough documentation. (1/39 lists, 1 point)



# Maryland's Next 10 Nesting Bird Species

by Walter Ellison, Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas Coordinator

1. **Wilson's Snipe** – Probably already nesting in Casselman River drainage. Look for fledglings from late May to early July.
2. **Eurasian Collared-Dove** – Best bet is South Point population. Fledglings would be easiest to find, but nests can't be all that well-hidden.
3. **Merlin** – They're in Pennsylvania. Best bet is Garrett or Allegany County, but could nest east to Blue Ridge. Tall conifers in city parks and college campuses are favored nesting areas in New England.
4. **White Ibis** – Could eventually colonize lower Eastern Shore rookeries.
5. **Clay-colored Sparrow** – Nesting regularly in small numbers in upstate NY and N. New England. Prefer Christmas tree farms and shrubby dry meadows (gray birch-aspen).
6. **Sandhill Crane** – Now nesting in upstate NY, Ohio, MA, VT, and ME.
7. **Trumpeter Swan** – \*If\* we want 'em...
8. **Northern Pintail** – Most likely of winter holdover waterfowl to nest with no record as yet. Nests in upstate NY and N. New England.
9. **Western Meadowlark** – Nested in PA back in 1980s.
10. **Swallow-tailed Kite** – I'm taking a flyer on Global Climate Change here. Mississippi Kites are nesting in New England...



Wilson's Snipe at Finzel Swamp, 27 Apr 2009. Photo by Mikey Lutmerding.

Note from Bill/Matt: Be sure to also read Rick Blom's companion article to the original *Next 10*, "Potential Findings of the Upcoming Breeding Bird Atlas," which is available on the MOS web site. It is extremely interesting to read Rick's expert opinions just before the start of the 2002-2006 Breeding Bird Atlas. Among his observations were correct predictions of nesting Common Merganser and Mississippi Kite.

# The Next 10 Bird Species on Hart-Miller Island

by Gene Scarpulla

Since 1977, 286 species of birds have been observed on or around Hart-Miller Island. This monitoring effort was undertaken by members of the Maryland Ornithological Society and was made possible through the cooperation of the Maryland Port Administration, the Maryland Environmental Service, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Rick Blom and I did a prognostication exercise in the mid-1990s, speculating what would be the next bird species to occur on Hart-Miller Island. Many of those species have since occurred (Cackling Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Brown Pelican, Northern Goshawk, Black-headed Gull, Eastern Screech-Owl, and Sedge Wren). Two of our picks back then were Tufted Duck and Red-necked Stint, which still remain to be observed. And of course, Hart-Miller has brought us some surprises as well – Roseate Tern, Arctic Tern, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Cave Swallow, and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

Here are my picks for the next 10 bird species to be seen on Hart-Miller Island. The list is unranked in taxonomic order.

## **Tufted Duck**

It is just a matter of time before someone picks out the Tufted Duck that is hidden in the flock of 50,000 or so scaup that amass offshore of Hart-Miller Island every year in late winter and early spring.

## **Northern Gannet**

This species undoubtedly has flown past Hart-Miller. The catch is that there has to be someone on the island when a gannet happens to fly by.

## **White-faced Ibis**

In recent years, sightings of Glossy Ibis have become more common on Hart-Miller. One of these years a White-faced will be in with them.

## **Sandhill Crane**

Sandhill Crane sightings in Maryland appear to be increasing in frequency. Again, it's just a matter of time.

## **Long-billed Curlew**

Although I think that "European" Whimbrel is more likely to be the next shorebird seen on Hart-Miller, it is currently considered a sub-species, and therefore ineligible. I thought about dropping back to my prediction from the mid-1990s, Red-necked Stint. But after discussing this with Marcia Watson, Long-billed Curlew seems to be a much more likely choice than the stint.

**Sooty Tern**

I am 100% certain that this species has already occurred at Hart-Miller Island during Hurricane Fran in 1996. Unfortunately, I chose not to go to Hart-Miller on the day of the hurricane, but instead decided to go the next day. On the day of the hurricane, Rick Blom and I stationed ourselves at North Point State Park. Rick arrived before me and observed a Parasitic Jaeger flying by. We both observed at least 14 Sooty Terns on the beach and in flight. The flying birds were being blown towards the Craighill Rear Range Light, which was barely visible from our location. Pleasure Island and Hart-Miller Island were just beyond the Light, but not visible. The Sootys were most likely blown to Pleasure Island and to Hart-Miller Island as well. I have always been tempted to add this species to the island list, but so far I have resisted temptation.

**Parasitic Jaeger**

This species may have also occurred on the Island during Hurricane Fran in 1996. (See above.)

**Eurasian Collared-Dove**

This is another species that is just a matter of time.

**Northern Saw-whet Owl**

I have checked the conifers on Hart-Miller every winter since 1996. One year this persistence will pay off.

**Northern Wheatear**

I fully expected that this species would have been seen on Hart-Miller by now. Patience is a virtue.

Any new bird species observed on the island is always dedicated to Rick Blom, who got me started doing bird surveys on Hart-Miller. Whenever a new species occurs, I always think of Rick and say "This bird's for you."

## Acknowledgements

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Thanks to eBird and to East Coast records committees for making historical data available for analyses like this one.

Of course, thank you to the contributors who cast their votes and made predictions: Harry Armistead, Stan Arnold, Zach Baer, Marcia Balestri, Tyler Bell, Gwen Brewer, Jim Brighton, Carol Broderick, Mike Burchett, J.B. Churchill, Steve Collins, Barry Cooper, Lynn Davidson, Phil Davis, Paul DeAnna, Sam Dyke, Walter Ellison, Tom Feild, Jim Green, Matt Grey, Ron Gutberlet, Joe Hanfman, Rob Hilton, Mark Hoffman, Hans Holbrook, John Hubbell, Marshall Iliff, George Jett, Ray Kiddy, Mikey Lutmerding, Gail Mackiernan, Joel Martin, Dave Mozurkewich, Paul O'Brien, Paul Pisano, Danny Poet, Dave Powell, Bob Ringler, Dan Small, Jim Stasz, and Mike Walsh. Thanks to Walter Ellison and Gene Scarpulla for their excellent supplements.

**Most importantly, thanks to everyone who invests time in the field searching for the next exciting find!**



**North end of Assateague Island, a great site for a *Next 10* species.**