

# WHERE-ON-EARTH CRAZY-AS-A-COOT BIRD WALKS

February 21, 2023

Incidental Notes.

Hi Everyone,

Even though Feb. 21 was rainy and cold, the common theme seemed to be that spring is around the corner and being sensed by all. Here on BI we are hoping that spring will come soon enough for the few Great Blue Herons that seem to be hanging on through the winter to survive. And, as was reported by many, the Red-winged Blackbirds are making their late winter appearance with their familiar trilling call.

Especially delightful is Laura's list of birds and signs of the coming spring in England.

It is also great fun to read Tim's travel list of birds and human observations as he cruised around the Caribbean.

At the moment of this writing (Feb. 28), Block Island was greeted with a layer of slushy snow. There is an old saying on BI that after the blackbirds return there will be one more snow – the Blackbird Blizzard. I barely consider what we got during last night to be real snow, so here is to hoping (at least I am) for one real snow fall this winter before the true arrival of spring.

No matter where on earth you are, enjoy the birds and the day.

Peace, Kim

- Both lists are an aggregate of observations from the two groups of observers (B.I. and Afar).
- <sup>1</sup>**Dark-eyed Junco** (*Junco hyemalis*) is a species that "includes at least six recognizable populations." (The Sibley Guide to Birds). A junco seen on the east coast is Slate-colored Junco (*Junco hyemalis*). On the west coast, both Slate-colored and Oregon Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) can be found. So, when I am recording Junco sightings on the east coast I will list them as Slate-colored; however west coast Juncos will be recorded as Dark-eyed unless the reporter stipulates Oregon or Slate-colored. What fun it will be if we get reports of one of the other Juncos which are generally seen in limited areas "mid-country".
- A note of caution: when counting at a bird feeder it is the most reliable/conservative to count the number of a species seen at any one time. Care should be taken to not over count by tallying the cumulative number seen.
- [Things in brackets are notes by me - kg] How I quantify: Few=3, Several=5, Many/Numerous=10, Flock = 15+

## Block Island

(30 species)

Canada Goose – 22

American Black Duck – 3

Mallard – 14

Bufflehead – 8

Red-breasted Merganser – 1

Common Loon – 3

Great Blue Heron – 1

Northern Harrier – 1

Black-bellied Plover – 26

Sanderling – 35

Dunlin – 8

Ring-billed Gull – 5  
Herring Gull – 40  
Great Black-backed Gull – 20  
Mourning Dove – 4  
Rock Pigeon – 25  
Downy Woodpecker – 2  
Blue Jay – 3  
American Crow – 10  
Fish Crow – 1  
Black-capped Chickadee – 7  
Carolina Wren – 1  
Song Sparrow – 3  
White-throated Sparrow – 4  
Slate-colored Junco – 3  
Northern Cardinal – 14  
Red-winged Blackbird – 3  
Common Grackle – 1  
House Finch – 3  
House Sparrow – 3

**From Afar:** South Kingston, RI; Seekonk & Rehoboth, MA; Woodbury, CT; Sarasota, FL; Caribbean environs; Sedbergh, England.  
(71 species)

Canada Goose – 12  
Mute Swan – 8  
Mallard – 14  
Blue-winged Teal – 8  
Ring-necked Duck – 5  
Greater Scaup – 15  
Bufflehead – 2  
Pheasant\*\* – 2  
Brown Pelican – 12  
Magnificent Frigatebirds – 10  
Brown Boobies – 7  
White Ibis – 9  
Glossy Ibis – 1  
Black Vulture – 4  
Turkey Vulture – 14  
Osprey – 4  
Bald Eagle – 2  
Cooper's Hawk – 1  
Red-shouldered Hawk – 1  
Sora Rail – 1  
Gray-headed Swamphen – 2  
Killdeer – 1  
Least Sandpiper – 1  
American Woodcock – 4  
Laughing Gull – 100  
Herring Gull – 101

Royal Tern – 8  
Wood Pigeon\* – 2  
Common Ground Dove – 3  
Rock Pigeon – 10  
Mourning Dove – 12  
Nandy (Black-hooded) Parakeets - 4  
Ruby-throated Hummingbirds – 2  
Belted Kingfisher – 1  
Red-bellied Woodpecker – 1  
Downy Woodpecker – 3  
Hairy Woodpecker – 2  
Pileated Woodpecker – 3  
Peregrine Falcon – 1  
Loggerhead Shrike – 1  
Magpie\* – 1  
Blue Jay – 22  
Crow\* species – parliament  
American Crow – 162+  
Fish Crow – 5  
Common Raven – 2  
Black-capped Chickadee – 3  
Tufted Titmouse – 3  
Blue Tit\* – 2  
Coal Tit\* – 2  
White-breasted Nuthatch – 4  
Carolina Wren – 2  
Eastern Bluebird – 2  
Song Thrush\* – 2  
Robin\* – 5  
American Robin – 65  
LBJ/Blackbird\* (a thrush species) – 5  
Northern Mockingbird – 1  
Northern Parula – 11  
Pine Warbler – 30  
Myrtle (Yellow-rumped) Warbler – 11  
Song Sparrow – 5  
White-throated Sparrow – 2  
Slate-colored Junco – 14  
Northern Cardinal – 8  
Painted Bunting – 1  
Red-winged Blackbird – 53  
Common Grackle – 42+  
Boat-tailed Grackle – 20+  
Brown-headed Cowbird – 4  
House Sparrow – 3

\*European species

\*\*British Pheasant is the same genus species as North American Ring-necked Pheasant (introduced in both places from Asia).

**Cathy Joyce & Nigel Grindley** – Hello Kim, here is our bird list for today. On Warden's Pond: Canada Geese 2. In our backyard: Chickadee 4, Northern Cardinal 12 (8m, 4f), Northern Harrier 1, Carolina Wren 1, House Sparrow 1, White-throated Sparrow 2, Song Sparrow 1, Blue Jay 1, Downy Woodpecker 2, American Crow 3. Thanks for an enjoyable Andy's Way walk. Cheers, Cathy & Nigel.

**Crazy-as-a-Coot Bird Walkers** – Andy's Way/Skippers Is., Washington, Rhode Island, US. Feb 21, 2023 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM; Protocol: Traveling 0.5 mile(s); Checklist Comments: Morning walk got rained out. Postponed to 3:30pm. Cloudy, 0/light NNE wind, approx. 40F. Participants: Cathy Joyce, Nigel Grindley, Susan Matheke, Mena Hautau, Cindy Davis & KG. 15species: Canada Goose 6, Mallard 2, American Black Duck 3, Bufflehead 8, Red-breasted Merganser 1, Black-bellied Plover 26, Sanderling 35, Dunlin 8, Ring-billed Gull 5, Herring Gull 35, Great Black-backed Gull 20, Common Loon 3, Great Blue Heron 1, American Crow 7, Song Sparrow 1.

**Dan Kasuba** Hi Kim, I went to Celery Fields/Sarasota Audubon on 2/21/23, 9-11 AM. Sightings included: 1 Sora rail, 1 least sandpiper, 4 black hooded parakeets, 2 bald eagles, 1 loggerhead shrikes, 4 Ospreys, 1 painted bunting, 2 gray headed swamp hens, 2 Eastern bluebirds, 1 killdeer, 6 red-winged blue birds, many[>20each]boat-tailed and common grackles, 11 yellow-rumped and approx 30 pine warblers, 6 White and 1 glossy ibis, > 100 American crows, 14 turkey and 4 black vultures, 4 cardinals, 8 blue winged teals, 1 pileated woodpecker, 12 blue jays, and many rock pigeons. The warblers are passing through, with Northern parulas in abundance ! Cheers and thank you!! Dan

**Darcy Thurrott** – Hi there Kim, I Counted birds in our yard and cemetery. Amazing view of pileated flying away with distinctive black/white wing pattern! Excited about raven pair possibly nesting again in same nest as last yr. Saw one during GBBC with twig in beak headed towards nest area. Even glad to see red wings back in numbers. Hope your Coot walk was fun. Darcy

North Cemetery Woodbury, Connecticut, US (41.553, -73.21) Feb 21, 2023; 2:36 PM; Traveling 2.99 miles; 78 minutes; All birds reported? Yes; Comments: Cloudy raw beginning to rain, 40°.

2 Mourning Dove, 1 Red-shouldered Hawk, 1 Red-bellied Woodpecker, 3 Downy Woodpecker, 2 Pileated Woodpecker -- Saw one flying away, another calling, 0 Northern Flicker, 1 Blue Jay, 60 American Crow -- Mobbing something ; approximate number, 5 Fish Crow, 2 Common Raven -- 1 in area of last year's nest, called and flew away, 2 Black-capped Chickadee, 3 White-breasted Nuthatch, 1 Carolina Wren, 1 Northern Mockingbird -- Eating berries in our holly, 3 American Robin, 1 House Sparrow, 2 Dark-eyed Junco, 1 Song Sparrow, 40 Red-winged Blackbird, 5 Common Grackle, 1 Northern Cardinal.

**Kim Gaffett**– Going-about-my-day. at home: Canada Goose 14, Red-wing blackbird 3, C. Grackle 1, Mourning Dove 4, chickadee 3, N. Cardinal 2, Mallard 12, Blue Jay 2, House Sparrow 2, Song Sp. 1, White-throat Sp. 2, Junco 3, House Finch 3, Fish Crow 1. In town with Judy Gray: 25 pigeon, 5 Herring Gull.

**Lauren Miller-Donnelly** – Hi Kim, Tuesday was a really nice afternoon for some evening birding. Plus, I was signed up to babysit my nephew so I had an hour or two do some birding after work. First I stopped by Seekonk Meadows Park and had the following: Canada Goose 4, Mute Swan 8, Mallard 6, Ring-necked Duck 5, Mourning Dove 2, Cooper's Hawk 1, Belted Kingfisher 1, Blue Jay 1, Carolina Wren 1, American Robin 55, Dark-eyed Junco 4, White-throated Sparrow 1, Song Sparrow 2, Common Grackle 2, Northern Cardinal 1. Then I cruised over to Mason Street Conservation Area in Rehoboth and got: American Woodcock 4. Have a great weekend! Lauren

**Laura Rosenzweig** – Good morning! Sending in my bird report a day late but yesterday nothing was moving, or if it was I couldn't see it as the fog cover was total. But this morning is cool and dry-ish and the birds were singing away. So, what have I seen on my river walk today: a parliament of crows, a pair of song thrushes worthy of starring roles in Sister Act, a couple of chirpy blue tits, two very quiet coal tits, two house sparrows, a fluttering flock of little black jobs, really not sure, about the size of a blackbird but moving too fast to identify, a couple of woodpigeons, a pheasant, a couple of couples of mallards, a sorrowful magpie, a lone gull

(herring? it must have lost the flock because they're usually about in their dozens), and several merry robins chirping loudly in the hedgerows, vying for territory I expect.

I'm waiting for the lapwings and the oystercatchers to return, will keep an eye (and ear) open. And curlews will be appearing soon too but they're up on the moors not down by the river.

At ground level we have snowdrops blooming madly, crocuses beginning to show peeks of yellow and purple flowers in sheltered places under walls and hedges, daffodils pushing up leaves and tightly closed buds, hazel catkins decorating the hedgerows, furry willow buds just beginning to show and lambs popping out all over the place. Happy birding, Laura.

**Tim Mooney** – Hi Kim – We ran into a few birds in the Caribbean last week. We were on a six-night cruise to Grand Cayman, Jamaica and the Bahamas... basically a lap around Cuba. Somewhere between the eastern end of Cuba and the Bahamas, we encountered 7 Brown Boobies, just gliding alongside and occasionally out in front of the ship. I had never seen one and was away from the internet, so I just tried to note the strongest features and looked it up later. They looked like a wrong-colored Northern Gannet, and it turns out they are closely related, both in the Sulidae family. What a striking bird! Shot a little video with my phone and stitched clips together here. Feel free to share. <https://youtu.be/J7WpXrcJyOU>

Wikipedia says "*While these birds are typically silent, bird watchers have reported occasional sounds similar to grunting or quacking.*" Sure enough, around the one minute mark, you can hear those "quacks" as 4 Boobies go after a small fish that pops up out of the ocean. How cool is that? Were any of other 5,000 passengers watching this show??!?!?

Other highlights: Peregrine Falcon – 1 (over the ship in Jamaica), Magnificent Frigatebirds – 10 (scattered throughout the trip. I saw 4 at once in Jamaica, which was incredible. My hot tub mates from Iowa saw one go over the ship at sea and exclaimed "what the hell is that?" And they were stunned that I knew the answer! Welcome to the ocean, friends!), Ruby-throated Hummingbirds – 2 females, on hibiscus flowers in the Bahamas, Brown Pelicans – 12 (scattered in ones and twos) Northern Parula – 1 heard singing in the Bahamas Royal Terns – 8 (catching squid tossed into the air at the end of a "stingray" field trip. The acrobatic terns were the highlight for me that day.) White Ibis – 3 immature birds, scavenging at a restaurant patio by the beach in Jamaica. Laughing Gulls – 100 loafing at the shoreline on the beach. The family next to us left food on their chairs while they went swimming and it disappeared in a wild gull frenzy). Common Ground Doves – 3 in a park-like setting in the Bahamas. (Not sure about this one, but these were some really small doves, so I'm going with it. They weren't mourning or Eurasian collared.) Best, Tim

**Tom Fetherston** – 07 Feb 2023 - Good evening Kim! Here's my list! The next one (from Cairo) will be more exotic 😊 Cheers, Fether.

My third bird list in four days! While many of the same species are on all of them the two for the Backyard Bird Count and today's still have differences. This morning's rain & wind limited activity; the pond was all whitecaps till mid-day. There was a huge flock of gulls riding it out in mid-pond but not much else until things calmed down. The blackbird activity (grackles, cowbirds and red-winged blackbirds) that occurred the previous two birdwatch days was reduced to one visit just after the rain / snow stopped. However, I saw more blue jays at one time than I can remember mobbing the feeders and keeping the squirrels at bay. I had a fleeting glimpse at what may have been a brown creeper, but the imp took off before I got a positive ID. The large flock of scaup I'd seen earlier this weekend had broken up, probably because of the weather but there were still some, much easier to count, hanging out this evening.

Here's the list. Birds seen on or around Worden's Pond are annotated with WP. Estimates noted with an asterisk \* Birds at the feeders were counted as singles unless present simultaneously or different sexes. Canada goose (8) WP, American robin (4), American crow (2), Song sparrow (2), White-throated sparrow, Slate-colored junco (8), Northern cardinal (2), Tufted titmouse (3), Blue jay (8), Hairy woodpecker (2), Herring gull (100\*) WP, Mourning dove (8), White-breasted nuthatch, Mallard (4), Black capped chickadee, Greater scaup (15), Bufflehead (2), Common grackle (15\*), Red-winged blackbird (7\*), Brown-headed cowbird (4). Cheers, Fether