

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

January 6, 2026

Incidental Notes

Hi Everyone,

A wonderful set of bird observations to start off 2026. And, how nice to have reports from afar – Michigan and Florida species definitely help to expand the species list. Of note are species in Florida that will be back in New England in several months, and some that we never see, such as Brown-headed Nuthatch and Carolina Chickadee. Valarie’s Michigan report contains large numbers of species that we do see here on BI, but also a large number of a species that we rarely see – i.e. 9 American Tree Sparrow.

And, the Block Island list is respectable for early winter. Heather’s Harlequin Ducks are pretty uncommon (they may be more prevalent than we know, but they love rough water, and thus are hard to detect even if/when present). Added to the harlequins a Surf Scoter, and Cathy & Nigel’s Horned Grebe meant we had more sea ducks than usual. A lot of time was spent searching and identifying a Black Vulture, which in the end turned out to be a (likely young) Turkey Vulture.

Remember, 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).
- 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. Observations in Gray are deemed to be a double observation and are therefore not counted in the list. 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

(45 species)

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Canada Goose – 120+ | Red-breasted Merganser – 33 | American Kestrel – 1 |
| Mute Swan – 4 | Ring-necked Pheasant – 7 | Blue Jay – 9 |
| Tundra Swan – 2 | Wild Turkey (feral) – 4 | American Crow – 40+ |
| Gadwall – 3 | Common Loon – 2 | Common Raven – 2 |
| American Wigeon – 6 | Horned Grebe – 3 | Black-backed Chickadee – 6 |
| Mallard – 16+ | Turkey Vulture – 1 | Carolina Wren – 4 |
| Amer. Black Duck – 7 | Bald Eagle – 1 | E. Starling – 50+ |
| Lesser Scaup – 1 | Marsh Hawk (aka Northern Harrier) – 7 | American Robin – 4 |
| Common Eider – 16 | American Herring Gull – 102+ | Eastern Towhee – 1 |
| Harlequin Duck – 2 | Great Black-back'd Gull – 50+ | Song Sparrow – 8 |
| Surf Scoter – 5 | Rock Dove – 8+ | White-throated Sparrow – 20 |
| Black Scoter – 3 | Mourning Dove – 56 | ¹ Slate-colored Junco – 2 |
| Bufflehead – 26+ | Belted Kingfisher – 1 | Northern Cardinal – 17 |
| Common Goldeneye – 6 | Red-bellied Woodpecker – 1 | Red-winged Blackbird – 10 |
| Hooded Merganser – 7 | Northern Flicker – 5 | House Finch – 22 |

From Afar

South Kingstown, RI; Woodbury, CT; Pittsfield & Westport, MA; Jamesport, NY;
Escanaba, MI; Delray Beach & Alligator Pt., FL
(55 species)

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Canada Goose – 760+ | Belted Kingfisher – 1 | Amer. Robin – 22+ |
| Mallard – 11 | Red-bellied Woodpecker – 8 | Northern Mockingbird – 3 |
| Greater Scaup – 200 | Downy Woodpecker – 8 | Palm Warblers – 3 |
| Brown Pelican – 15 | Hairy Woodpecker – 1 | Eastern Towhee – 2 |
| American White Pelican – 1 | Northern Flicker – 2 | American Tree Sparrow – 9 |
| Anhinga – 1 | American Kestrel – 1 | Fox Sparrow – 1 |
| Double-crested Cormorant – 400 | Peregrine Falcon – 1 | Song Sparrow – 6 |
| Great Blue Heron – 2 | Blue Jay – 20 | Swamp Sparrow – 1 |
| Snowy Egret – 1 | American Crow – 10 | White-throated Sparrow – 16 |
| Cattle Egret – 4 | Fish Crow – 10 | Dark-eyed ¹ Junco – 30 |
| Bald Eagle – 10 | Common Raven – 11 | Northern Cardinal – 10 |
| Piping Plover – 1 | Carolina Chickadee – 1 | Red-winged Blackbird – 26 |
| Willet – 4 | Black-capped Chickadee – 23 | Common Grackle – 30 |
| Ruddy Turnstone – 6 | Tufted Titmouse – 5 | Brown-headed Cowbird – 38 |
| Sanderling – 10 | Brown-headed Nuthatch – 1 | House Finch – 40 |
| Amer. Herring Gull – 700+ | White-breasted Nuthatch – 2 | American Goldfinch – 17 |
| Rock Pigeon – 100 | Carolina Wren – 10 | House Sparrow – 23 |
| Mourning Dove – 125 | European Starling – 508+ | |
| Ground Dove – 3 | Eastern Bluebird – 19 | |

Also seen: an otter, plenty of dolphins,

Cathy Joyce & Nigel Grindley – Hi Kim. Here's our bird list for the rest of today, compiled from observations at home plus, Cooneymus Swamp and Beach, and the GSP (at the BI Club). Canada Goose 100+, Mute Swan 4, Gadwall 10, Mallard 6, Common Goldeneye 4, Bufflehead 26, Common Eider 8, Hooded Merganser 4, Feral Turkey 4, Ring-necked Pheasant 2, Common Loon 1, Horned Grebe 3, Northern Harrier 1, American Kestrel 1, American Herring Gull 2, Mourning Dove 24, Red-bellied Woodpecker 1, Blue Jay 5, American Crow 40+, Black-capped Chickadee 4, Carolina Wren 1, Eastern Towhee 1, Song Sparrow 3, White-throated Sparrow 9 Northern Cardinal 9, House Finch 16. Thanks for a most enjoyable walk and breakfast! Cathy & Nigel.

Crazy-as-a-Coot bird walkers – Hodge Preserve (Corn Neck to Middle Pond), Washington, Rhode Island, US
Jan 6, 2026 8:00 AM - 9:15 AM. Protocol: Traveling 0.75 mile(s). Checklist Comments: Mostly sunny and 36F,

light NE wind to start. At Hodge Preserve walked from Corn Neck to Middle Pond and overlooking Breed Land and Sachem Pond. Participants: Anne Salinas, Amy Keeler, Susan Matheke, Heather Hatfield, Nancy Miles, Chuck McMellon, Nigel Grindley, Cathy Joyce, Judy Gray, Margaret Haight, John Formica, Socha Cohen, Sadie Flateman, Sam Stockman, Vashti Brotherhood, Susan MacDougall, Lynn Fletcher, Bayard duPont, and Kim G. 17 species: Canada Goose 6, Tundra

Swan 2. Tundra swans are regular winter visitors at this location. These 2 have been present for at least 3 weeks. Gadwall 3, American Wigeon 6, Mallard 8, American Black Duck 7, Hooded Merganser 3, Red-breasted Merganser 30, Ring-necked Pheasant 2, American Herring Gull 100, Great Black-backed Gull 50, Northern Harrier 2, Bald Eagle 1, Northern Flicker 5, Blue Jay 2, Carolina Wren 2, Song Spar. 2.

Turkey Vulture at Tinker's Lane, BI, RI – a face only a mother could love.



Dan Kasuba – Hi Kim, Due to the very cold wintery conditions, I did my birdwatching off and on all day 12/30/25 from my house and yard. It was very quiet all day until a couple of hrs before sunset. The most amazing sight was group of 6 bluebirds packed tightly together on the branch of a deciduous tree, where they spent the night! Dalton MA- 6 bluebirds, 2 chickadees, 4 juncos, 2 bluejays, 2 tufted titmice. Thanks and Happy New Year to everyone! [This is a great set of observations, but it's a week early/off schedule, so I have not included the numbers in the From Afar list above. Dec. 30 was the 5th Tuesday, which throws off the general every-other-week pattern. -kg]

1/9/25 ... I [DK] was at Canoe Meadows again today and saw a mixed flock of cedar wax wings, approximately 30 and robins, perhaps 20. It seems a bit early? [This 1/9 observation is in the From Afar list above. I am assuming no Bohemian Waxwings in the group, but they would be possible in a mixed group this time of year. It is reported to be a good year for Bohemians. Robins have a very fickle coming-and-going, weather-dependent winter migration pattern. And, any robins seen now are not likely spring returns, rather Canadian Maritime/northern robins enjoying the warmer climes (comparatively) of New England. -kg]

Darcy Thurrott – Hi Kim, It was a milder day today [1/6/26] & little wind, but I didn't get out to walk at all unfortunately. Piper did hear a brilliant Carolina trilling away this morning around our house & another one answered! That's it for the birds sadly. Healthiness to you this new year! Darcy.

[Upon reflection...] Hi Kim, Piper reminded me that I had seen 4 bluebirds, 2 mo dos, 3 juncos, 1 starling & a white throat that day looking out our window. We have a heated birdbath on our deck table, which we call "the spa" to which birds gather! Sorry not to recall that! Plus feeders in our apple tree offering mealworms for bluebirds & suet & seed. Happy rainy gray day...Peace to you, Darcy. [We are always happy to get an inside-looking-out bird report! -kg]

Ellen Davis – Hi Kim, Happy New Year! It's fun that you are having a real winter this year, snow too! I love the picture of the bird count group - so bundled up! Here's my bird count from Tuesday, Jan 6th taken while I was out and about. Weather was sunny, light wind, temps around 72.

Brown pelicans – 14, White pelican – 1, European starlings - ~200, Peregrine Falcon – 1 (I've seen them this time of year before, such a distinctive flight pattern), Cattle egret – 4, Snowy egret – 1, Fish crow – 6. That's about it for now. Hope you are all doing well. Ellen

Heather Hatfield – Dec. 16, Partly cloudy, 38F. Old Town Rd. feeders: Red-winged Blackbird 3, Song Sp. 2, White-throated Sparrow 11, Cardinal 8, Mourning Dove 23, BC Chickadee 2, House Finch 6. Dorries Cove: **Harlequin Duck** 2, C. Eider 8, C. Goldeneye 2, L. Scaup 1, C. Loon 1, Surf Scoter 5, Black Scoter 3, RB Merganser. Tinker's Lane (off Corn Neck Rd.): Turkey Vulture 1.



Harlequin Ducks (Internet photo)



Surf Scoters (Internet photo)

Kim Gaffett – Going about my day – At Nancy Greenaway's driveway and along Corn Neck Rd: Marsh Hawk, Song Sp 1, Junco 2, Turkey Vulture 1, Red-wing Blk.brd 7, Mourning Dove 3, Mallard 2, C. Raven 2, Carolina Wren 1, Pigeon 8+, and Kingfisher at Beach Ave. bridge.

Lauren Miller-Donnelly – Hi Kim. The Bluebirds have started popping up in our yard this past week or so. It may be the special seed I bought that has insect larva in it! I also have a heated bird bath which has been super popular during the cold stretch. Here is my list from Tuesday the 6th this is only from my feeders. Mourning Dove 4, Downy Woodpecker 1, Blue Jay 5, Black-capped Chickadee 1, Carolina Wren 1, European Starling 1, Eastern Bluebird 5, House Sparrow 1, House Finch 13, Dark-eyed Junco 6, Song Sparrow 1, Northern Cardinal 1. Have a great weekend! Lauren

Lynne Normandia – Hi Kim. We're snowbirding in Northern Florida on Alligator Point.

Here's what I saw yesterday for Where on Earth - Backyard lagoon: Red-winged blackbirds 21, common grackles 30, **brown-headed nuthatch 1**, house finch 6, palm warblers 3, **anhinga 1**, cowbirds 6, 5 mourning and 3 ground doves, **Carolina** chickadee 1, eastern towhee 2, mockingbirds 2, great blue heron 2, belted kingfisher 1, ubiquitous E. bluebird [est.6] - and an otter. Forgot to add our kestrel.

Gulf beach: sanderlings 10, willet 4, **brown pelicans 1**, **piping plover 1**, ruddy turnstones 6, greater scaup 200, double-cr. cormorant 400. And of course, plenty of dolphins; no bear today. Warmly, Lynne.



A common visitor [barred owl]

Maggie & Mary Komosinski – Hi Kim, It's always fun to count our local birds, whether or not we see large numbers of individuals or species! Here's the list of our Jan. 6 2026 sightings in our Jamesport NY environs. Still no Wild Turkey, and the owls were silent! I had an A. Tree Sparrow the day before at my feeders. Mary Komosinski and Maggie Komosinski. Canada Goose 260+, Mourning Dove 52, Red-bellied Woodpecker 4, Downy Woodpecker 3, N. Flicker 2, Blue Jay 7, B.C. Chickadee 2, Tufted Titmouse 1, White-breasted Nuthatch 1, Carolina Wren 5, American Robin 2, Northern Mockingbird 1, Red-winged Blackbird 5, European Starling 2, Cowbird 2, Song Sparrow 2, White-throated Sparrow 5, House Finch 14, A. Goldfinch 4, House Sparrow 9, Slate-colored Junco 4, Northern Cardinal 4.

Susan Matheke – At our house near Dories Cove Rd.: 20 + Starlings on our Winter Berry bushes, 1 male pheasant, Della's friend, 2 blue jays, 1 Northern Harrier. At Ball Farm and riding North: 2 Northern Harrier, 30+ Starlings on the wire, 14 Canada Geese, 6 Mourning doves, 2 male pheasants, 4 American Robins.

Tom Fetherston – January 6, 2026. Good evening Kim – A nice birding day, much warmer than it's been recently. The pond is still frozen all the way across, limiting the number of species found there but there were large numbers of gulls and geese as well as an unusual sighting I'll cover shortly. I made one trip to town and ran with Vesper on the road at noon, other than that I was around the yard. Notes for this week:

- I went to the dock to scan the pond early this morning. There was a huge flock of gulls sitting out on the ice, many long skeins of geese traveling overhead, and about 150 yds north of the dock an adult and juvenile bald eagle standing on the ice. The juvenile was all dark so first year. I noted two other large dark birds further out on the ice, too far away to identify. While sweeping east I spotted another eagle standing nearby. This one had more white, so second or third year? I looked back at the two unidentified birds, and they obligingly took off and flew south obliquely in my direction. Both first-year eagles! They continued towards the southwest corner of the pond, and another eagle (second or third year) jumped up and joined them. I couldn't believe what I was seeing, SIX bald eagles on the pond together. The most I'd seen at one time previously was five, and they were feeding on a deer carcass out on the ice several years ago. I couldn't see anything like that today, can't imagine what would bring that many together without a large food source.
- There were more starling / bluebird battles at the bluebird feeder. It was an even match, four starlings vs four bluebirds and it seemed to seesaw back and forth. Interestingly the bluebirds also came to the

suet log feeder and bumped a pair of downy woodpeckers while they fluttered about pecking at the chow in the holes.

Here's the list. Birds seen around Wordens Pond will be noted with WP. Estimates are noted with an asterisk (*) Birds in the field or at the feeders were counted as singles unless present simultaneously or different sexes. Herring gull (200*) WP, Bald eagle (**6!!!**) WP, American crow (4) WP, Canada goose (500*) WP, Mallard (WP), Common raven, White-throated sparrow (10), Fox sparrow, Song sparrow (3), Swamp sparrow, Dark-eyed junco (2), Eastern bluebird (4), Northern cardinal (4), Tufted titmouse (4), Blue jay (4), White-breasted nuthatch, Carolina wren (2), American goldfinch, House finch (2), Mourning dove (2), European starling (4), Brown-headed cowbird (30*), Downy woodpecker (2), Red-bellied woodpecker. Cheers, Fether

Valerie Heemstra – Here's my January 6, 2026 list from Escanaba, MI (in the Upper Peninsula) (28 degrees F today while birding, several days after a blizzard that left more than a foot of snow on the ground, and blew into several foot tall drifts, plus another 6 inches of snow night before last). Very few birds here at this time of year, and nothing too exciting today (was hoping for a boreal species or two).

One of my stops was the city dump, which is where hundreds of gulls, starlings, and sometimes as many as 15 Bald Eagles hang out. Also a great spot for ravens and crows. Today, because of our blizzard a few days ago and more snow since then, I couldn't get down to the best viewing site for the eagles, which is why the count for there is lower than usual.)

10 Mallard, 100 Rock Pigeon, 60 Mourning Dove, 500 American Herring Gull, 4 Bald Eagle, 2 Downy Woodpecker, 1 Hairy Woodpecker, 3 Red-bellied Woodpecker, 10 Northern Raven, 10 American Crow, 4 Blue Jay, 20 Black-capped Chickadee, 300 European Starling, 13 House Sparrow, 5 House Finch, 12 American Goldfinch, 9 American Tree Sparrow, 15 Dark-eyed Junco, 1 Northern Cardinal.

- ¹**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".
- ²Q. What is a **Myrtle Warbler**? A. Yellow-rumped Warbler (YRWA), *Setophaga coronata*. The species YRWA is comprised of two subspecies, once considered separate species. The eastern population/subspecies was known as Myrtle Warbler (*coronata*), and the western population/subspecies known as Audubon's Warbler (*auduboni*). These two regional populations have been "lumped" to form Yellow-rumped Warbler.