



Bird Notes

From Northeast Kingdom Audubon
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For Immediate Release

Pre-Season Specialities

When the Christmas decorations appear on the shelves before Halloween, I am reminded of the exciting winter birding season just ahead. I would not say that migration is over, not yet. While we tend to focus on the peaks of spring and fall migration, the number and diversity of our birds are fluctuating throughout the year. This is what contributes to great birding opportunities, all year long! Whether it is the late migrants or early winter arrivals, these specialities are worth getting out to see.

Waterfowl migration is moving into high gear with grebe and loon movements peaking in November. Go to open water as long as it lasts, and go when you would rather stay in against the weather. These are the places and times of potentially exciting birding.... Really! You may be pleased to find lingering shorebirds, sandpipers and plovers. Scoters, mergansers, teal and other ducks add to the delight of birding this time of year, in addition to viewing the flocks of geese, such the Snow, Canada and the occasional Cackling goose. Note: experts are required to pick the last one mentioned from a flock of 5000! If you are interested in a guided, pre-winter, coastal birding adventure, see our web page (www.nekaudubon.org) for the details on a Maine coast trip, Nov. 19th. And don't forget the beaches, expansive sandy areas and large open fields for the early arrivals of the Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs and Horned Larks. Rumor has it, they have already been seen.

The woods may remain quiet for awhile, save for the roosting ruffed grouse, feasting on high bush cranberries and such. However, late migrant songbirds are still hanging around apparently, so don't be surprised to find a vireo, bluebird or warbler or two. We do pick up these lingerers on the Christmas count list (information coming next month), much to everyone's amazement. If you have the right, natural bird foods around your area and good shelter, some birds may actually tough it out with the rest of us. Be watchful of the early winter arrivals now. We have already seen the Northern Shrike and White-winged Crossbills.

By now the birdfeeding question has come up again. The seed sales are winding down, and the resident chickadees, woodpeckers, and nuthatches are settling in to their smorgasbords. Perhaps if you are concerned about preventing diseases in the birds using your feeders, feed them on the ground, a shelf or table sheltered from snow. They will find it.

Happy Pre-season shopping for those bird specialities!

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NEK Audubon is one of 8 chapters of Audubon Vermont and part of the National Audubon Society. NEK Audubon is a non-profit organization that encourages people's enjoyment of birds, wildlife and natural habitats through field trips, programs and publications. For more information about meetings, field trips and special events visit www.nekaudubon.org. Art work by Robin Rothman.