

breeding areas. Individuals that breed in eastern North America travel to the Greater Antilles and northern South America; those that breed in central and western North America migrate to Mexico and Central America. Calculations based on fat load suggest that, unlike Blackpoll Warbler, this species is not suited to long-distance flights over the western Atlantic Ocean (Morris *et al* 1996; Sherry and Holmes 1997). This physiological restriction may be the main reason for its rarity here.

This endearing *Paruline* put in five of its eight appearances between 1982 and 1985, during which period its true rarity status rather diminished for a generation of active birdwatchers. The Lincolnshire bird of 1982 coincided with the discovery of a Green Heron *Butorides virescens* and Great White Egret *Ardea alba* in nearby East Yorkshire, providing many observers with a superb haul of rarities for the day.

The pending record from Ireland in 2008 was the first for over two decades in the Western Palearctic. The species' highly desired status has been restored.

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*

(Linnaeus, 1766). Breeds eastern North America from southeast British Columbia east to Newfoundland and south throughout central and eastern USA to northern Alabama and South Carolina. Winters from Florida and northern Mexico south to Panama and West Indies.

Polytypic, three subspecies. All records have been considered to be nominate *aurocapilla* (Linnaeus, 1766); *furvior* Batchelder, 1918, of Newfoundland, which winters in Cuba, Bahamas and eastern Central America, is a future possibility. Compared with *aurocapilla* it has, on average, darker green and less olive upperparts, a wider lateral crown-stripe, paler more brownish-orange or amber-brown central crown-stripe and more heavily streaked underparts (BWP; Curson *et al* 1994).

Very rare autumn vagrant from North America.

Status: Six records, including an exceptional inland bird in Herefordshire.

1973 Shetland: Out Skerries trapped 7th-8th October

1977 Co. Mayo: Lough Carra Forest found dead 8th December

1985 Devon: Spriddlestone, Wembury freshly dead 22nd October, probably 1st-winter

1990 Co. Cork: Dursay Island 1st-winter 24th-25th September

2001 Herefordshire: Dymock 20th December to 16th February 2002

2004 Scilly: St. Mary's 1st-winter 25th-28th October, when taken into care moribund

Discussion: A wing found on the tide line at Formby Point, Lancashire, on 4th January 1969 is no longer considered acceptable evidence for a first record, because it could not be ascertained that the bird died in British waters. Elsewhere in the Western Palearctic, one was found in Norway on 25th October 2003 and there have been three on the Azores (1st November-25th

December 2005, two on 21st October 2008 with one present to 18th November). It has also occurred as a vagrant to Greenland.

Ovenbird is a medium- to long-distance migrant, with ringing and tower kill data suggesting that most follow Atlantic coastal and Mississippi flyways during migration. Analysis of ringing recoveries indicates that Ovenbirds breeding east of the Appalachian Mountains follow the Atlantic flyway to Caribbean island wintering grounds and birds breeding west of the Appalachians follow the Mississippi flyway south to wintering grounds in Middle America (Van Horn and Donovan 1994). Ovenbird is the most numerous warbler in many northern hardwood forests in North America. It has shown relatively little overall population change since the 1960s (Sauer *et al* 2008).

The fact that several of the British birds have been found dead or in poor condition implies that this species is ill equipped for making the lengthy non-stop transatlantic crossing. This made the wintering bird that penetrated Herefordshire all the more amazing; its extended stay was exceptional and its occurrence stood out following an otherwise poor autumn for Nearctic passerines in Britain and Ireland. Understandably, the garden owners who found this bird wanted to retain their privacy in the face of what would have been a deluge of observers.

Lister frustration at missing out on the Hertfordshire bird was short-lived, being quickly removed by the bird on Scilly in 2004. This individual proved to be hugely popular, with large numbers of fans travelling to the islands until it was taken into care in a weakened state and sadly died.

Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis*



(J.F. Gmelin, 1789). Breeds from west and north-central Alaska eastwards across Canada to the Atlantic coast and in north-western and north-eastern USA. Winters Mexico south through Central America to Colombia and Venezuela to northern Brazil, northern Ecuador and northeast Peru. Also winters in Bermuda and in the Caribbean in the Bahamas, Greater and Lesser Antilles, and the Netherland Antilles to Tobago and Trinidad.

Monotypic. Formerly considered to comprise three subspecies based on size and colour of upper and underparts (for example, AOU 1957; Godfrey 1986; BWP; Eaton 1995) but Molina *et al* (2000) found these differences to be clinal and recommended that the species be considered as monotypic.

Status: Eight records, one photographed in Ireland in 2008 still to be assessed*