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# The Flyover



 **Mass Audubon**  
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By: Zach Adams

## A Moment with Royalty

Undoubtedly there is no surer sign of spring in the Berkshires than snow covered ramps and the wispy breath of a Pine Warbler's song amidst the snowy bows. This past week's northerly winds have been less than conducive for migration, apexing with a strong storm earlier in the week that brought gusts over forty miles per hour. The moderate to high winds from mostly the North sustained into the weekend, gracing the Berkshires with multiple snowy mornings. Looking forward, calmer winds Saturday evening should hopefully bring in a few new arrivals. As of now, Monday (April 20<sup>th</sup>) morning appears to offer similar productivity with strong southern winds met by a sudden redirection before sunrise, hopefully resulting in a busy day of insectivorous excitement. What about the warblers and kinglets that have already arrived, do they have enough food with last week's cold spell? One note of hope arises from the water. Water temperatures do not change as quickly as air temperature and all of those insects that live their beginning stages of their life cycle in water seem to not be wasting any time in the cold. Small mayflies and stoneflies have been out and about during the warmer parts of the day, and there are countless other larvae crawling around the trees and shrubs that we hardly notice.

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## A Week in Birds



Tree Swallow: By Zach Adams

Congruent to the sun, we have experienced brief interludes of arrivals that peaked in an out of the clouds. Thursday's (4/16) relentless wind and bitter snow squalls dropped a few birds down. The first of which, a Common Tern which was first seen on Cheshire Lake, but moved around to a few other lakes throughout the day. Long-tailed Ducks seemed to make a similar appearance that same day showing up on multiple lakes with a total of 5 on Stockbridge Bowl. A few other timely migrants arrived rather under the radar; Barn Swallows, Sora, Vesper Sparrows, and even Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were all reported from various locations around the county.<sup>4</sup>A week of blustery weather has birds seemingly brimming with northward restlessness, and even with unhelpful winds, Friday night into Saturday brought some of the first shorebirds.

Most noticeably of the week were numbers of individuals rather than diversity of species. Throughout the week much larger numbers of tree swallows arrived. Thursday's squall-out of Long-tailed Ducks on Stockbridge Bowl was joined by a very sizeable group of swallows feeding low over the water on almost microscopic insects. Palm Warblers joined the craze and populated most of the county in multiples.<sup>4</sup> Palm Warblers are now adding their notes to the confusing parallels of trills offered by Pine Warblers, Chipping Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos who have been singing for over a week. On a smaller scale, Brown Thrashers have been seen and heard in unusually high numbers as well from central Berkshire County.

Though akin to the Northern Mockingbird and their mimicked repetition of threes, Brown Thrashers seem to sing with an air of tenderness and patience. Their double syllabled mimic lilt gracefully through the hedgerows, and all would appear calm until their nervous, aggressive flight propels them in and out of the shrubs with their striking reddish-brown plumage. Hailing from those same shrubs and seen in grand numbers that reminisce of May, Ruby-crowned Kinglets increased daily with no less than eleven seen from Post Farm Marsh in Lenox Dale.

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## Bird of the Week

### Ruby Crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*)

Memories are the cornerstone of appreciating and studying birds. First encounters with songs like that of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet create a collection of moments that fuel the birding itch and remain permanent in our hearts. Little compares to the first time my ears caught the dynamic lilt of a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in April. Before that point, I had truly listened to the song of very few birds, and this gem-crowned beauty stole my heart. Ruby-crowned Kinglets are little bigger than a golf ball, coming in at just four and a quarter inches from beak to tail.<sup>2</sup> Easily discovered by their characteristic “chidit,”<sup>2</sup>



Ruby-crowned Kinglet: By Zach Adams

they are readily found flitting through, around, above, below, and between shrubs and thicker vegetation seemingly all at once. Their excitability and bouncing flight style often creates difficult viewing or photographing situations. Viewing is often best with just your bare eyes, and at that exact moment when that yellow-green ball pops onto the branch mere inches in front of your face.

Kinglets as a family (*regulidae*) are an extremely small songbird with all six species ranging from 3-4.5 inches. Almost all kinglets are generally coniferous forest breeders and are known for large clutch sizes of up to 11 or 12 eggs reaching close to 80% of the female’s body weight.<sup>3</sup> Being such a small bird, these eggs weigh only about 1/50<sup>th</sup> of an ounce. Similarly astonishing, Ruby-crowned Kinglets consume only about 10 calories a day.<sup>1</sup> Kinglets, being insectivorous, and often seen fly catching, are much shorter migrants than their warbler associates with wintering grounds hardly reaching central to southern Mexico. During winter and migration the Ruby-crowned Kinglets often forgo their breeding preference of spruce-fir communities and can be found in a huge variety of habitats from field edges to beach barriers.<sup>3</sup> Being spruce-fir nesters, there are even records of Ruby-crowned Kinglets in the Berkshires<sup>4</sup>, so be sure to check those spruce stands on a summer exploration of places like Mt. Greylock or October Mountain State Forest. Though seen often extremely commonly in migration, the Ruby-crowned Kinglet is charismatic and highly viewable bird that deserves a revisit every spring to marvel in the romance of their song and dance.

### Works Cited

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4. Team eBird, “explore.” eBird. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 4/8/2020. [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)

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