

# Confessions of a Bird Freak

A few Tuesdays ago, I visited Hall's Pond Sanctuary in Brookline, MA to photograph birds for an article. I planned to tastefully disperse the photos throughout a compelling story about local birds, the first of its kind (obviously) and coincidentally, but unimportantly, the first non-school-sanctioned piece of writing I would birth since the age of 10.

Here's how I saw it: I'd first submit this perfectly polished piece, bolstered with glowing reviews from my friends (and the mayor! and the president!) to an enticing job listing for Editor at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Cornell would instantly welcome me with open arms and a nonzero salary. After commending my irrefutably *not* blurry photo of a rare bird — "This is the first Sandhill Crane seen in the city in decades! I love you!" — they would promote me to lead photographer, sending me around the world to photograph birds in breathtaking environments till the end of my days. Fulfilled, I would never yearn for another job, even though National Geographic would call me late at night every few months like a drunk ex and beg me to reconsider their offer.

What actually happened? I chased a single chickadee around the park with my camera, cursing, and cried when it wouldn't sit still.

By the end of the morning my camera held 95 photos, 7 of which I could bear to look at. I created this newsletter as a coping mechanism, opting to email my friends about the birds I befriend (or stalk, same thing) until I achieve my ornithology dreams. I hope that after reading these anecdotes, you will pause and think twice about the wildlife that surrounds you. It's always there if you look closely enough. For those of you who already know me, this is simply one more channel through which I will bombard you with bird information. All my training as a software engineer prepared me to invade your lives using the cutting-edge technology of email. Let's begin!

Hall's Pond Sanctuary, March 21, 2023



Why was this male Northern Cardinal yelling?<sup>1</sup> I don't know. Nevertheless, I understand.





You know spring has arrived in Boston when the Red-Winged Blackbirds return from hell.<sup>2</sup> This male shrieked at me while completely hidden within the reeds, like a coward. I was glad to capture this photo when he emerged, with all of the reeds and none of the bird in focus.



This male Mallard Duck swam peacefully around Hall's Pond with his female mate.<sup>3</sup> I excluded her from this photo out of unfounded spite and jealousy that I will not elaborate



on. I was frustrated at first because his face is covered by a stick in this photo, but I've since decided that this is entirely the duck's fault and not mine, and moved on.



At last, the Black-Capped Chickadee! This little stinker was more cooperative than the one I chased around while crying, unless it's actually the same bird. There's no way for me to know; I don't even know its gender.<sup>4</sup> Maybe it doesn't have one, like me. It danced and pranced through some low branches, pausing briefly every now and then to strike a melodramatic pose.

On this trip, I also photographed a Downy Woodpecker, a Tufted Titmouse, and a fashionable Fox Sparrow — the first Fox Sparrow I'd ever seen! All the photos I did not rage-delete can be viewed in this [Flickr album](#).

## Brain snacks

1. You've probably heard some of the Northern Cardinal's many sounds. If you're lucky like me, these birds occasionally scream you awake in the morning. Males sing to establish territories with other males and to attract female mates. [Hear them sing!](#)
2. Red-Winged Blackbirds in North America migrate to the southern United States during winter. It's only sensible. Check out this [map of Red-Winged Blackbird migration](#).
3. Mallard Ducks are seasonally monogamous. They pair in the fall, and the male leaves the female to incubate the eggs and care for their ducklings on her own while he seeks other mating opportunities. Know someone like this? Impress or insult your friends with more [Mallard Duck facts](#).
4. Genderbending icons that they are, male and female Black-Capped Chickadees appear visually identical to humans and can only be distinguished by their behavior. [How do you do that?](#)

Until next time,

Bird Freak

p.s. I do not have a website yet, so if you know someone who would like to receive these emails, send me their email address. If you would like to unsubscribe, please send me a 500 word essay in MLA format with citations explaining why you hate me. XOXO

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Brookline, MA

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