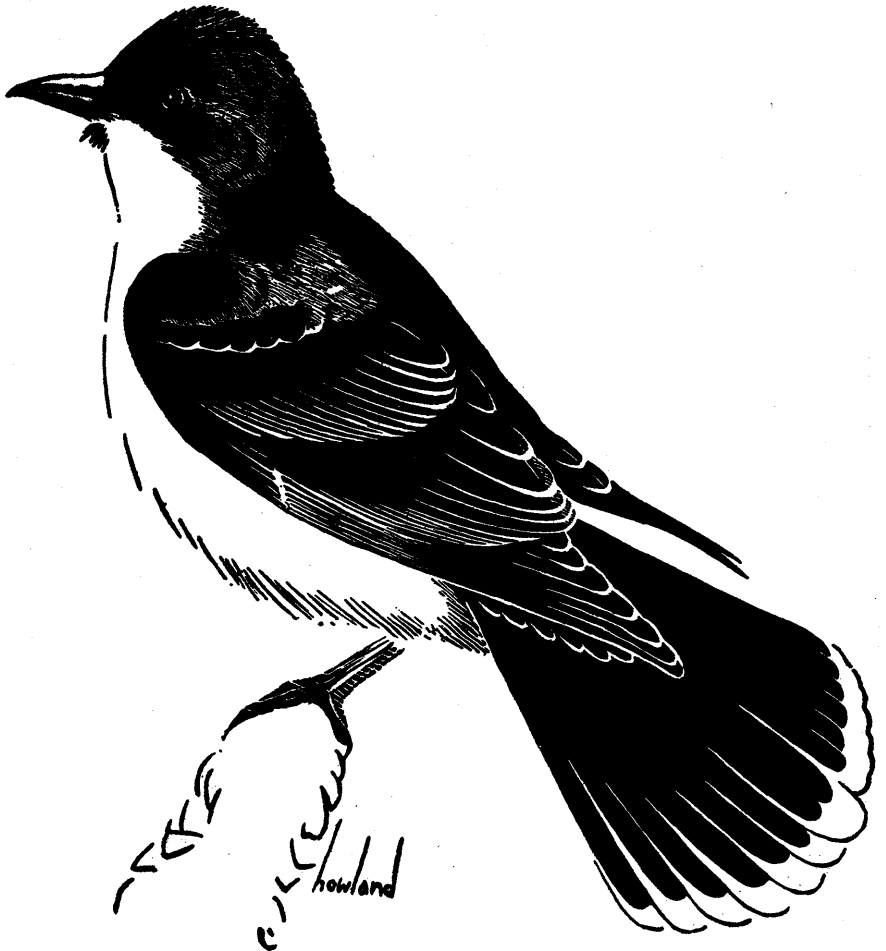


# The KINGBIRD



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FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC.



# The KINGBIRD

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**GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*)**

## OWLS OF NEW YORK STATE

DAVID C. GORDON

Owls are among the least known and understood birds in our state. They have long been the victims of human persecution due to superstition, fear and ignorance. Most of the larger owls are readily shot whenever seen by a man or boy with a gun. Today, these chiefly nocturnal birds of prey are all protected by New York State law, but it will take education of the public before legal protection will achieve the desired effect.

The owls belong to the order Strigiformes which consists of two families — Tytonidae, the barn owls; and Strigidae, the typical owls. Both are world-wide in distribution. There are over 50 distinct species and over 200 described varieties. Of the 18 species in the United States and Canada, 11 have been recorded in New York State. These are the Barn, Screech, Great Horned, Snowy, Hawk-owl, Barred, Great Gray, Long-eared, Short-eared, Boreal and Saw-whet.

Owls are clearly differentiated from other birds by their flat faces called facial discs with both eyes in the front of their head. Their soft lax plumage permits soundless flight. In addition to hooked bills they have taloned feet. Most birds with four toes have three in front and one behind. However, an owl can reverse each of the outer front toes to have two in front and two behind for a better grip on its prey.

Both the eyes and ear openings are extremely large for the size of the bird, permitting extraordinary senses of sight, and hearing in the high frequency range. Like most birds, they apparently have a poor sense of smell. Unaccountably, the ear cavities are either asymmetrical or symmetrical by species. That is, the ear openings are not at the same level on both sides of the head in many of the species.

An owl can twist its head around to a 270 degree angle if need be without moving the rest of the body and then quickly snap it back around the other way to pick up at the same point so fast that it looks as if it were twisting completely around. This is because the eyeballs in the sockets have no movement of their own and an owl must start straight ahead.

Contrary to popular belief, in spite of excellent night vision, all owls do not hunt by night. Three New York owls: the Snowy, the Hawk-owl and the Short-eared owl are daytime hunters. The first two are normally found in the far north where there is a "midnight sun" for six months each year. The Barred and Great Horned owls also see well in daylight as you would know if you have ever discovered them. However, most owls are active only after dark. When discovered in the daytime by other birds, especially crows, owls are often mobbed and noisily persecuted.

There are more rods than cones in the retina of the eye which is an aid to night vision. They also have a conspicuous third eyelid or nictitating membrane. The Barred and the Barn Owls alone of all our species have brown eyes. All the rest have yellow ones.

The sexes are similar in outward appearance except that the female may be slightly larger. The Great Horned is our largest bodied owl, although the Great Gray and Snowy may have greater wingspreads and the thicker covering of feathers gives them a larger appearance.

Of our 11 owls, only seven are known to nest in New York State. Most owls are considered mainly resident in the region where they breed. However, a few are partially or irregularly migratory.

The Snowy Owl has become an irregular winter visitor in this state due to the supposed scarcity of its natural food, lemmings and snowshoe rabbits, on the Arctic tundra. Some years there are large scale invasions and in others they are completely absent. The appearances of the Snowy Owl are correlated with the cyclic fluctuation of its prey species. They are usually seen from November to February, but have been seen as late as the middle of May.

The Great Gray and Hawk-owls are very rare winter visitors to the northern part of the state. They, too, move south of their normal range during food shortages. I know of no recent reliable records of the Great Gray, but one Hawk-owl was seen by several people in the neighborhood of Three Mile Bay, Jefferson County, from December 11, 1958 to January 1, 1959.

The Boreal or Richardson's owl and the two previously mentioned species are the rarest in the state. The Boreal is also a northern visitor from Canada. The most recent record available is of one that flew in an open car window and was killed the night of March 9, 1958 near Ogdensburg, St. Lawrence County.

The Short-eared Owl is regularly migratory in the fall and spring and those from farther north spend the winter regularly in this state. Up to 25 or more have been seen where there are suitable meadows and marshes and the populations of meadow mice, their favorite food, are high. The Short-eared Owl once nested more commonly throughout the state in open and marshy situations than now. Recent nesting records are desirable. Today it is more often seen from November to April especially in central New York and along the Lake Ontario shore. This owl has a spectacular aerial courtship display. The male climbs high in the sky where it gives its call, then claps its wings together beneath its body making audible sounds while diving toward the ground. This is then repeated.

The Barn and Long-eared owls seem to have an irregular dispersal southward in the fall, while the Saw-whet and Barred owls desert the northern parts of their breeding ranges during hard winters.

There is no true migration of the Great Horned and Screech owls in New York, although there is considerable shifting of territory within the breeding range to adjust to local conditions.

Unlike most birds, both right and left ovaries and oviducts are functional in owls. Owl eggs are always white and the nestling young are downy white. The Barn owl is the exception to the rule that owls nest only once a year, because they may nest twice a year and have been known to nest in every month of the year. The Great Horned Owl may lay a new clutch if the first nesting attempt fails. This owl and the Barred owl usually nest in the late winter and early spring (February to April). Most other owls nest in the spring.

The start of incubation may not wait until the full clutch is laid and this often results in young of different sizes because of different hatching dates.

Originally most owls probably nested in hollow trees and old woodpecker holes although three, the Great Horned, Barred and Long-eared, prefer to use old crow and hawk nests especially those of the Red-tailed and Red-shouldered hawks. Other nesting sites for owls are in squirrel leaf nests, in cases, and on rock ledges. Rarely does any owl build a nest of its own. The exceptions to the rules for the others are the Snowy and the Short-eared which build simple nests on the ground.

The Barn owl depends on man to provide nesting sites such as barns, abandoned buildings and church belfries or any other dark and sheltered place. This owl does not build a nest but lays the 5 to 11 eggs among the debris of accumulated pellets which are broken up by the female. The Barn owl is an uncommon nesting bird with scattered records from Long Island north as far as Syracuse and in the Buffalo area. However, this bird may be slowly extending its range north. One was seen briefly in Dexter, Jefferson County, on May 25, 1958. Where the Barn Owl is not well known, reports of Barn Owls often refer to the Screech Owl which is sometimes called a "Barn Owl".

The Screech Owl is a locally common resident throughout the state except that it is apparently rare or absent in the Adirondacks. It is fond of nesting in cavities of old apple trees and similar places if near water. However, it is the commonest owl in cities and may be persuaded to occupy nest boxes.

The Eastern Screech Owl differs from those in the far west by appearing in two colors, red and gray. This is called dichromatism and has no relationship to sex, age or season. There are also intergradations of a brownish color. In New York the gray phase is much more common than the red although both may occur in the same litter.

The Great Horned Owl is common, at least locally, throughout the state. The Barred owl is also found in all parts of the state wherever extensive woodlands exist. The Great Horned prefers drier, higher and less dense deciduous woods while the Barred Owl inhabits lower, swampy coniferous forests although both may be found in the same wooded areas.

Most owl records are winter records, but this may be because the observers can see them better, or else are out looking for them more in winter, rather than an indication of what months they occur in a territory. The most abundant owl species in the United States is the Horned Owl based on Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts in 1956 and 1957. The Screech and Barred Owls are the next most common although approximately twice as many Horned owls are seen.

The Barred Owl is solitary except during the breeding season. Most owl family groups keep together for varying periods into the early summer. Only the Short-eared and Long-eared species congregate in large numbers in the winter. The usual number of young is two each for Great Horned and Barred, four or five for the Screech and Long-eared, five or six for the Saw-whet and Short-eared and the most prolific, 5 to 11 for the Barn Owl.

There are few data concerning relative numbers of owls in a given area. In a wild 36 square mile area of Michigan the year-round population of Great Horned owls over three years ranged from 11 to 19, or one to every

two or three square miles. In this same area and period there were from 1 to 7 Long-eared owls and 14 to 70 Screech owls\*.

The Long-eared owl is seldom seen although its range includes the woodlands of the entire state. In winter it becomes gregarious and collects together in groups of a few to a couple of dozen in dense stands of pines, cedars or other evergreens. It will puff out its feathers, raise wings and tail and swell to a much greater size to intimidate an intruder at its nest. It has also been known to do the broken-wing act usually associated with ground-nesting birds.

Our smallest nesting owl, the Saw-whet, is the least known but is probably far more common than is supposed. It is found rarely, but in every corner of the state. Its small size, (7-8½"), nocturnal and retiring habits may account for its supposed rarity, but once it is located it appears quite tame and may easily be picked up.

Owls cannot chew food so the animals they eat are swallowed whole or by pieces. Later, after digestion takes place in the stomach, the undigestible bones, hair and feathers are rolled into balls and these pellets are regurgitated. The finding and examination of owl pellets makes analysis of food habits quite easy. Owls that roost in the woods often do most of their hunting after dark over open fields.

A list of all foods eaten by the Great Horned Owl is lengthy. It has been studied more thoroughly than almost any other feathered raptor. The greatest percentage of its food is mammal — about 80 to 95%, 5 to 15% is birds and from one to five percent is composed of insects, amphibians and miscellaneous. The cottontail rabbit and both meadow and white footed mice are its most important foods. In addition to eating other rodents and insectivores, this owl is noted for its ability to dispatch full grown skunks, porcupines and house cats. Curiously, this owl often beheads its victims and leaves the bodies unconsumed.

An interesting sidelight is that larger owls prey on smaller owls. Forbush, a famous ornithologist, said the Great Horned "kills weaker owls from the Barred owl down". The Screech owl is a well-known victim of the Horned Owl.

While arousing the anger of sportsmen and farmers because an occasional gamebird, wild duck or poultry is taken, the entire species should not be condemned, because its overall effect is beneficial. Enormous quantities of rodents are destroyed and the predator-prey relationship is a natural check and balance of the environment that has evolved as animal life has evolved to eliminate the surplus, the weak and the least fit. Studies have shown that the Horned Owl takes for food those creatures that are most available.

The other owls, ranging in size from the Barred to the Saw-whet, may kill birds but they too live almost exclusively on small animals with meadow mouse at the top of the menu.

The Great Horned and Barred owls are great vocalizers and, in the woods, their calls may be confused. Both can engage in eerie screams, but the usual hoots of the Horned Owl are in a series of five while the Barred Owl or eight-hooter says in couplets — "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you-all?"

\*Craighead, Frank C., Jr. and John J. Craighead. 1950. "The Ecology of Raptor Predation". Trans. 15th N. Am. Wildlife Conf. pp. 209-223.

The Screech Owl doesn't screech. Its most usual call is a tremulous, mournful whinny running down the scale. The Long-eared has several notes including low "hoo-hoos" and a cat-like whine. The Short-eared has an explosive "kee-yow". The Saw-whet has a monotonous whistled note "too, too, too" like the rasping of a file over a saw. The Barn Owl makes more of a hiss for a sound. Owls are known for their "bill-clicking", the sound they make snapping the mandibles when disturbed. In addition, on getting too close to some, such as Great Horned Owls, they will hiss.

Much remains to be known about the biology and population dynamics of owls, but amateurs can contribute to our knowledge. Present information about their life histories suggests that owls play an important part in the scheme of nature and they are economically beneficial. From an esthetic point of view, I, for one, would rate the extinction of one single species of owl at the hands of man as a great loss.

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ALLEN H. BENTON

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Albany, N. Y.

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The compiler feels, as he has said previously, that more coverage of local lists and bird club publications would be desirable. No doubt many significant contributions are omitted by oversight. If individual authors would take it upon themselves to send copies of papers or citations of such papers to the author, coverage would be greatly improved.

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## 1960 Federation Waterfowl Count

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# THE SPECIES CONCEPT IN ORNITHOLOGY

GERALD R. RISING

## PART I

The choice of this topic was dictated by selfish motives. For some time questions about species have bothered me. Occasionally, too, others have posed such questions which I have been unable to answer — and in some unfortunate cases have answered anyway. It has been gratifying to me that my rather restricted research on this topic has given me the answers I have sought. It has in fact destroyed some of the illusions I had about species and species formation in the past, ideas which I thought I was taking from my less formal reading on this topic.

At the outset it is appropriate that I point out that I accept the basic ideas of evolution as fact, not hypothesis. Until recently I thought that this was something virtually every person with a smattering of experience or training in biology accepted. That I have now encountered even biology teachers who either dispute this or are unwilling to accept it as more than hazy theory leads me to make this statement so that my comments will be taken in the light of this acceptance.

The central question here is, of course, what constitutes a species? Interestingly enough the answer to this question would have called for not a paper but a debate before 1940. Since then, however, ornithologists have been drawn together under the leadership of Ernst Mayr and have reached fair agreement on a basic species definition. Because this definition has evolved from differing original concepts, we will best consider it in its appropriate historical perspective.

The basic difficulties in the species concept arise in the virtually opposite approaches to the problem of two of the greatest biologists of all time, Linnaeus and Darwin. Linnaeus systematized the study of natural history with his classification of the plant and animal kingdoms. Inherent in his classification is his own belief, later modified, in the "reality, objectivity, and constancy of species." Contrast this with Darwin's idea of the fluidity of evolution. On the one extreme we have separate discontinuous groups called species, each created at Genesis. Morphological (size, shape, color) differences mean delegation to a different species category. On the other extreme we have the Darwinian view of continuous integration from one species to the next. This view, carried to its logical conclusion, would throw out the entire species classification. This idea of intergrading populations was expanded by students of Mendelian heredity right down to about 1910, the species falling into almost complete disrepute in the biology laboratory.

That their theories have been modified should not detract from our respect for the stature of these two great scientists. Careful examination of their writings shows them to be much more modern in their views — and usually more moderate also — than their followers. Linnean classification spelled the end to the older biological concept of one species giving direct rise to another species, and to the philosophical idea that only individuals exist. It also provided a framework for experimentation and recording of

local data for comparison with data from other regions. Without this wonderful tool we would have very few modern advances in biological science, perhaps even fewer bird watchers. Darwin, fine field naturalist that he was, noticed the discontinuities that appear in nature — the lack of intermediates between species — and gave serious consideration to this problem. In this respect he is the first of a long line of natural historians who saved the important species concept and who in modern times have made it central to biological studies.

During the first three or four decades of the present century every scientific discipline had its own definition of the species, several being in direct contradiction. Species definitions were as varied as the description by the three blind men of the elephant: one describing it as a massive column, the second as a rope, and the third as a giant snake, the men having approached the beast from different directions. That a single rather well accepted definition should evolve from this situation is at once a severe criticism of the many definitions offered by paleontologist, biologist, cytologist, geneticist and others,, and at the same time a commendation of the unifying leadership much of which came from the field of ornithology.

Let us examine now Mayr's 1940 definition of species: "groups of *actually or potentially interbreeding natural* populations which are *reproductively isolated* from other groups." Within this fifteen word definition are most of the answers — and most of the problems too. The concept is virtually completed by Charles Sibley's statement that "species are gradually formed from pre-existing species by the accumulation of differences in *isolated populations* through the fixation of micromutations."

**REPRODUCTIVELY ISOLATED.** The basic test of a species unit is a biological test. It is not a matter of comparison of plumage in birds or skin color in humans. Within this test is the difference between what is called the "old systematics" and the "new systematics." It is certainly true that morphological differences, external and internal, usually go hand in hand with reproductive isolation. And thank goodness! As a matter of fact it is necessary that the first classification be concerned with external characters, that only after the original delineation is established can the biological test be applied. Most families are not at the stage of the ornithological families. For example, of the forty-four species of fruit flies known in Texas in 1942, only seven were known in 1921. More species are discovered every day. Birds on the other hand are virtually finished by the standards of the old systematics and are almost uniquely ready for the more mature approach of the new.

This modern concept of the species has meant that the number of bird species has been cut from about 20,000 to about 8,500. Mayr estimates that less than two per cent (170) are still to be found. Thus it is changes from the old morphological classification to the new biological classification which is the basis for most of the revisions in nomenclature as in the A. O. U. check list.

**ACTUALLY OR POTENTIALLY INTERBREEDING NATURALLY.** Here we have two cases: sympatric (occurring together in nature) and allopatric (ranges not overlapping) species. Few problems arise in the case of sympatric species. In the case of the warbler genus *Vermivora*,

nine species with thirty-six ( $n(n-1)/2$ ) species gaps, only two (Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers) are open to question on the basis of reproductive isolation. This is six per cent. In the *Dendroica* genus, twenty-three species and 253 gaps, again only two (0.5%) are questionable so there is little difficulty.

Allopatric species (species geographically separated) are a matter of judgment. Whether these birds would pair and product non-sterile offspring if brought together is a matter of question. It is not enough to place the birds in a cage. Even intergeneric matings have been produced in this way. Such an approach does not answer the question, and we can go back to what Darwin said in 1859: "In determining whether a form should be ranked as a species or a variety, the opinion of naturalists having sound judgment and wide experience seems the only guide to follow." The competent naturalist must decide if the two groups are potential breeders. Mistakes can be and are made.

DIFFERENCES ACCUMULATED IN ISOLATED POPULATIONS. Here is the really interesting and indeed unsuspected aspect of the species. At some time in the history of the group it must have been separated from other birds of the same lineage. We can see this process as it takes place by means of a series of diagrams:

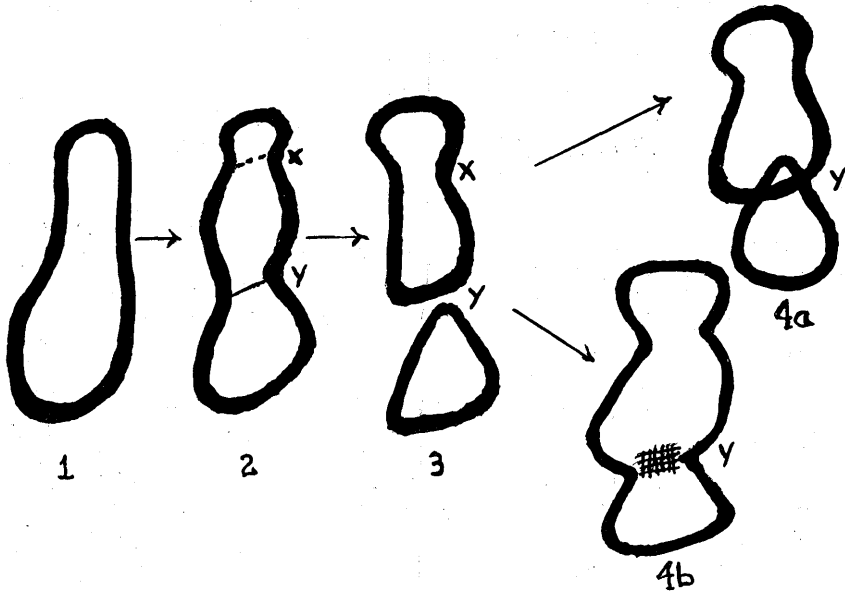


Figure 1

Here is the history of species formation. At 1 (in time) a species is uniformly distributed. By 2 some factors have tended to separate the original population into three groups, the division at x brief or incomplete leading only to the possible development of a racial difference, the division at y leading in 3 to complete separation. 3 is the case of allopatric popula-

tions. The secondary contact in 4a and 4b at  $y$  produces sympatric (species geographically overlapping) populations. In 4a the case is clear-cut. The separation has been long enough to make the process of speciation complete. In 4b there is hybridization at  $y$ , showing that the process is incomplete.

In this last case no hard and fast rule can be made. It is entirely a matter of the degree of hybridization whether the two populations are considered subspecies or species. An example of how complex this problem can become is the case of Mexican towhees studied by Charles Sibley. His speculative history of the situation as it evolved is that a southern part of the original species became isolated and tended to distribute itself in relict populations at higher altitudes. After some time the northern population invaded the southern area making three zones of contact with the southern populations. In the southernmost zone of contact, Oaxaca, there is no hybridization. At Mount Orizaba there is a slight hybridization and at Cerra Viejo, the northernmost point of contact, there is complete hybridization. In the last two areas the separation was not long enough to complete the speciation process. (In time here is included mutation rate and degree of selection pressure.) Here is a tough decision.

In summary then the species is based on biological distinctiveness rather than morphological differences so it is a biological rather than a morphological problem. The species is made up of populations rather than individuals, but it is defined by isolation from other populations rather than by relations among its own populations.

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## THE REGINA, CANADA MEETING

LILLIAN C. STONER

The Regina, Canada, meeting of The American Ornithologists' Union August 25-30, 1959 at Saskatchewan Natural History Museum was well attended by people coming from widely scattered localities. In fact the registration of 389 was the next to the largest attendance in the history of this organization.

The distinction of coming the greatest distance goes to M. A. Badshah, of the Madras Forest Service, South India, and to J. B. Alvarez of the Philippines. Other ornithologists came from California, Louisiana, Texas, Florida, Eastern and intervening states as well as many provinces in Canada. Included in this were 12 members of our Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc.; namely six from Buffalo, two each from Albany and Ithaca, and one each from New York City and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Papers were presented by the following four Federation members during the three day paper sessions.

Harold D. Mitchell of Buffalo Ornithological Society, Buffalo, used motion pictures and slides to illustrate his paper entitled "A Nesting Involving Prothonotary and Yellow Warblers".

Ralph S. Palmer, New York State Museum, Albany, spoke on "Reproductive Pattern of the Loons".

Kenneth C. Parkes, Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania pre-

sented with slides a paper by him and Philip S. Humphrey, Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, titled "Apparent Departures from Typical Sequences of Plumage and Molts".

Motion pictures of "Birds of Southeastern Australia" were given by Lawrence I. Grinnell, Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca.

Much could be written of all the papers, field trips (where new and different birds were seen) and extra meetings, but the writer will mention only one of the latter here, namely the evening devoted to "Opening of Canadian Bird Art and Bird Photo Exhibition" at Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery. Many of the exhibitors were in attendance at the reception which followed the short talk about the pictures. Especial tribute was paid to past noted Canadian Artists such as Allan Brooks and others. The exhibit consisted of paintings mainly oil and watercolor of 19 Canadians and those who had worked in Canada. The pictures were loaned by the artists or by private collectors. About 30 of these were listed for sale with price ranging from \$40.00 to \$750.00. The majority of the pictures both here and at the special A.O.U. British Art Exhibit at the Public Library showed "Birds of Prey and Game Birds" predominating.

The local committee of which Dr. Robert W. Nero, Assistant Director of Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, was chairman, not only gave us much needed information but provided also for our comfort and enjoyment in every possible way.

Each registrant at this meeting received maps, leaflets and the larger publications. In this latter group, the one, 132 pages, was the September 1959 number of "The Blue Jay" which is the quarterly journal of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society of Regina, Saskatchewan. The other gift was the 205 page book "THE BIRDS OF THE SASKATCHEWAN RIVER CARLTON TO CUMBERLAND" by S. Stuart Houston and Maurice G. Street. Dr. Nero in the foreword of this book said that at the 1958 A. O. U. meeting, President Ernst Mayr spoke of the contributions amateurs can make and are making to Ornithology; so appropriately, as an example, this August 1959 publication is presented to this session. Dr. C. Stuart Houston, who is a practising medical doctor has not only co-authored this book but he has contributed much to scientific bird-work on other avian subjects.

All visitors enjoyed both the exterior and interior of this new (as it has been opened only four years) Museum in Regina, Canada. Across the front of the building near the roof there is a sculptured frieze which shows in relief some 325 Saskatchewan birds and animals. Then within the building, the many habitat groups and other exhibits, and the large auditorium make this a popular and educational center. The area adjoining the Museum is a beautiful park with many trees and a lake. Here some of the bird observers saw quite a few early fall migrant warblers on last day of the meeting.

The newly elected President of The American Ornithologists' Union is Dr. George H. Lowery, Jr. of Museum of Zoology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It was announced that the next A. O. U. meeting will be held the last week in August, 1960 at Ann Arbor, Michigan.

399 State Street, Albany 10.



# WAYS OF THE "SEA GULLS"

JOHN J. ELLIOTT

## PART I

The following deals principally with the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*), the Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) coming in for comparative data and minor discussion. All my life, around Long Island, I have heard the term "sea gulls" applied by the inexperienced, principally to these two common species (although the Ring-billed Gull would probably come into this category), hence the above title. Inasmuch as this is written from material gathered about these two species here on Long Island near the sea, the term seems further appropriate.

### *Acknowledgments*

This paper is composed largely of an accumulation of original material, long held in the note books of this writer and others. Some had planned to use them as short field notes, but kindly forwarded their material for this cumulative effort.

Twenty years of the increase of breeding Herring Gulls on Gardiners and Cartwright Island was the principal subject in a paper read by this writer at the convention of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs at Schenectady in 1957. LeRoy Wilcox of Speonk, provided this material to me in correspondence giving the results of his numerous field trips to both islands and portions of the Shinnecock Bay area. Also, this writer is principally indebted to Neil Smith of the Brooklyn Bird Club for sending in Kings county population counts to be used in part 2 of this paper.

John Mayer of South Ozone Park sent me Jamaica Bay breeding records; Irwin Alperin of Babylon described feeding behavior and status. Roy Latham, of Orient, has had many experiences in the field which has enabled him to write interestingly on feeding behavior of the Herring Gull on the north fluke of Long Island near Orient. For the deliterious effects of the Herring Gull on other nesting species, the writer again refers to Wilcox.

### *History*

The Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) on Long Island has steadily increased for the past 40 years or more since the federal plumage laws went into effect, ending the feather craze and the decorating of women's hats with our native birds. The feather industry on the South Shore of Long Island was highly commercialized and the numerous gunners killed thousands of gulls, terns, shore and water birds and brought them to South Shore skinning and packing sheds from which they were later shipped to the millinery trade in New York city. According to the late Nelson Verity of Seaford, L. I., who feather-hunted on the western bays extensively in the 1880s and 1890s, dark and immature Herring Gulls brought 20 cents each and the light adults 40 cents each (Elliott, 1945).

With protection, this species increased enormously and extended its breeding range southward until the Fish and Wildlife Service, recognizing its overwhelming population, set up control measures by spraying the eggs. This was for the purpose of retaining the gulls on the un-hatching eggs until nesting season was well progressed or over. Egg-spraying apparently did not produce the desired results and the project was abandoned.

After plumage collecting ended and for about two decades afterward, the gull increase was gradual and any breeding taking place was to the north of Long Island and the coast of New York State. Frank M. Chapman (1934) categorized it as an abundant winter visitant decreasing markedly in summer. A. D. Cruickshank, (1942), mentioning the beginning of breeding on Long Island, predicted a far greater abundance, but, nevertheless stated that "in April the Herring Gulls rapidly thin out . . . after May relatively few birds, the majority immatures, remained to pass the summer."

During recent years, in areas at Short Beach and around our inlets and favored feeding areas even where not breeding, up to 1,000 immatures may summer cluttering the shell-banks, beaches and tidal areas. These fly up in flocks and drift ahead of the observer and seem to be increasing in numbers each year. Coincidental with the Herring Gull's nesting increase are the far fewer numbers but obvious increase in breeding Great Black-backed Gulls.

### *Breeding*

The first record that I can find for nesting Herring Gulls on Long Island came in a letter from Roy Latham of Orient which tells of three pairs breeding at Orient in 1931 in what is now the Orient State Park and that three to five pairs nested there the following five seasons, but none since. A pair of Great Black-backed Gulls also nested in Orient in 1958. Latham's 1931 records advance by two years the published statements of several writers on Long Island's ornithology that the first breeding record for our region was the finding of a small colony on Fisher's Island, L. I., in 1933.

The next nesting found was on Cartwright Island near the eastern end of Long Island; later large colonies of Herring Gulls invaded Gardiners Island. Cartwright Island is a low sandy tract one-half mile south of Gardiners Island whose sandy north and south sides provide excellent seabird nesting terrain. John Helmuth found a set of eggs and about a dozen pairs of adult Herring Gulls there for the first time in the summer of 1936. The year 1937 produced an estimated 30-40 pairs according to Roy Wilcox of Speonk. In a general census on July 11, 1938, Wilcox found, on Cartwright Island, 92 adult Herring Gulls, 18 Osprey nests, 200 Roseate and 1,000 Common Terns. On July 13, 1939, he counted 250 adult Herring Gulls, 24 Osprey nests, 100 Roseate Terns and 1,000 Common Terns. On July 10, 1942, only six years after its first nesting, the preponderance of 500 Herring Gulls on Cartwright Island apparently unbalanced the proportion of other species and Wilcox found a total of only 14 Osprey nests and 200 terns breeding. On that day he also reported the southernmost breeding record of the Great Black-backed gull with the capture and banding of a juvenile. This species has been regularly reported as breeding since, but the increase has been very small compared to that of the Herring Gull. A span of nine years from 1942 to 1951 reveals a jump from 500 to 1,500 nesting Herring Gulls on Cartwright Island.

In 1951, greatly reduced terns numbered only 100 and there were only three Black Skimmers and one pair of Ospreys noted that year. With this we find a decline from 20 Osprey nests to one in 10 years on Carewright Island.

Meanwhile, on Gardiners Island Wilcox found 750 adult Herring Gulls on the north side in 1951 and an estimated 3,000 on the south side. In the

whole large area there were only 200 Common Terns and six Black Skimmers. On Cartwright Island, July 18, 1953 there were 2,000 Herring Gulls, an increase to three Ospreys nests and no terns or skimmers. On the same date, with 4,000 Herring Gulls on the northern end of Gardiners Island, no Ospreys, terns or skimmers remained, but a lesser number of Herring Gulls on the south end, permitted a population of 100 Common Terns and two Black Skimmers to be found. In 1954, Cartwright had an estimated population of 3,000 Herring Gulls, and 15 young of the Great Black-backed Gull were noted. Wilcox visited the islands on July 22, 1955 and estimated roughly 10,000 Herring Gulls on both islands; this against only a dozen pairs just 19 years previously!

In 1955 no terns were found on either Cartwright or Gardiners Island for the first time, and only two Osprey's nests on the southern three miles of Gardiners Island were located where up to 25 had been counted before the Herring Gull invasion.

Increases in the number of Herring Gulls in 1956 and 1957 were noticed on Gardiners Island. Numbers on Cartwright Island (probably around saturation point) were about the same as in 1955 and 20 Great Black-backed Gulls were seen. A maximum of 70 Great Black-backed Gulls on Gardiners Island was reported by Wilcox in 1957. In 1958 Cartwright Island showed a falling off to about 1,000 Herring Gulls and had 10 Great Black-backed Gulls, but an increase of several thousand Herring Gulls on Gardiners gave 1958 a maximum total for both islands up to that time. Also the 10 Great Black-backed Gulls on Cartwright and 95 others on Gardiners in 1958 made this species' total for the two islands over 100 for the first time.

Meanwhile breeding Herring Gulls had spread to the south shore of Eastern Long Island by about 1952 and in 1955 Wilcox reported 300 and one pair of Great Black-backed Gulls on one island in Shinnecock Bay, and 300 Herring Gulls, one pair of Great Black-backed Gulls and 40 Black Skimmers on another island. No terns were nesting on the two islands although they did up to three years previously, when the gulls took over.

Westward, 11 Herring Gull nests were found by Wilcox on Fire Island near Fire Island Inlet in 1940, but this colony was deserted later. In the middle 1950s nesting occurred at Captree (eastern extremity of Jones Beach) where a colony of some 200 adults were present and about 100 young banded in 1955. This built up to an estimated 600-700 adults in 1958 and according to Alan Penberthy of Babylon, he, with several others including Emanuel Levine, banded 399 young in 1958. At the time of this writing (May, 1959) an estimated 1,500 adults are heavily sprinkled over the nesting terrain. Three young Great Black-backed Gulls were also banded in 1958 at Captree, for the first record of this species nesting away from the Eastern Long Island colonies mentioned above and presumably the most southerly breeding record of this species on the Atlantic seaboard.

Further westward on Jamaica Bay a rapid growth, then diminishment, was reflected by the following figures sent in by John H. Mayer of South Ozone Park about 10 years ago. In 1950 six pairs of Herring Gulls were suspected of breeding, and 10 pairs as nesting in 1951. In 1952 some 60 pairs were reported by Mayer who, with Herman Goebels of Brooklyn, landed from a small boat on an island and found many abandoned nests but

no young. In 1953 some 300 pairs successfully bred and 93 young were banded; also 10 pairs were suspected of breeding that year on a sandy fill at the head of Jamaica Bay. This whole area is subjected to many changes, however, and the Herring Gull breeding areas have been disturbed by fill operations so that extremely few records have come in during the past few years.

### *Feeding Behavior on Farm Lands*

Roy Latham contributes the following observations principally from his farm at Orient: "Food and feeding habits of Herring Gulls stem back 65 years, in my observations, to about 1890, when local fishermen set the big pound-nets for bunkers, which were spread on the land for fertilizer. These drew huge flocks of gulls to the farm lands after the fish. Fertilizing the farms of Eastern Long Island with menhaden (bunkers) originated long prior to that date. Back in the 1870s and 1880s the farmers formed purse-seine companies and drew millions of bunkers to the beaches to be carted and spread on the farms. The gulls came in great numbers and the farmers made every effort to plow the fish under before the gulls took too large a share. The farmers considered each fish worth a penny in fishscrap fertilizer. Various methods failed to deter the gulls more than temporarily from their natural scavenging habit. Their actions then, with fish deposited on the field, could be compared to flocks of gulls associated with dumping places today.

"Spreading fish on the land for fertilizer continued decreasingly by later trap-fishers until around 1917, when it was discontinued by law for sanitary reasons. As a boy I plowed all day and sometimes well into moonlight evenings to conserve scrap fish from gulls. When the plowman was on one end of a field the gulls swooped in on the opposite end. A flock of 100 to 200 gulls in a few minutes took that many fish. Often a man was kept on each end of the field to scare the birds off. Among the Herring Gulls came occasionally an Iceland, Ring-bill and Great Black-backed Gull. The last kept on the outer fringe of the flock and when perched on the ground stood and stared and did not carry away fish like its smaller associates.

"When a sharpj loaded with fish was beached, Herring Gulls came hovering and screaming close at hand and would even venture down and grab a fish from the boat. A man had to remain in the boat on guard while a wagon-load of fish by team was carted up the Sound bluff driveway to be sorted for market or spread on the land.

"Fertilizing crops with fish, of course, originated with the Indians before the early settlers employed that cheap and plentiful supply of "manure". But the Indians deposited the fish around the hills of corn and covered them with soil and there was no problem with gulls around plantings of the aborigines.

"The gulls still come to the plowed land in flocks numbering several hundred birds, the largest flock in spring of 1959 being about 600 individuals, the usual number being 300 to 400 birds, but several flocks of this size are scattered over various farms. Today they come to the farms not for fish, but angleworms and follow a tractor-pulled plow hour after hour. Their capacity for earthworms seems endless. A certain Herring Gull kept

under surveillance for two hours indicated that one gull will devour 800 to 1,000 earth worms per day freshly plowed out and in addition consume all wireworms, which are the larvae of ground and snap beetles, seen. The gulls are very sociable while the tractor is in motion and move just enough to prevent getting run over by the wheels or from being plowed under. The gulls of late years also come to the planted plowed land all summer to search for worms and other worthwhile insects that might be washed out. At such times they resort to rain water puddles and drink fresh water."

*To be continued.*

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## FEDERATION MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Since publication of the 1959 membership list twenty-three individuals and one club have joined the Federation.

As chairman of the Membership Committee, it is my pleasure to express our cordial welcome to these new members. It is the hope of the Federation that their association with us will be mutually enjoyable and beneficial in every respect.

The new members are:

Allen, Dr. Arthur A., Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell U., Ithaca, N. Y.  
Axtell, Mrs. Harold H., 405 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo 22, N. Y.  
Bejian, Mrs. Henry L., 932 Meadow Lane, Schenectady 9, N. Y.  
Below, Mrs. T. H., 59 Coles Ave., Amityville, N. Y.  
Blake, Joseph A., Jr., 140 Ten Eyck St., Watertown, N. Y.  
Blake, Mrs. Joseph A., Jr., 140 Ten Eyck St., Watertown, N. Y.  
Bottleman, Mrs. John, R. D. 2, Northwood, Iowa.  
Brundage, Edward F., Etna, N. Y.  
Dye, Mrs. John, 7 Carol Terrace, Cornwall-on-Hudson, N. Y.  
Eddy, Mrs. Gilbert M., 2201 Stone Ridge Road, Schenectady 9, N. Y.  
Felle, Mrs. Henry, 650 Fitch St., R. D. 1, Oneida, N. Y.  
Frick, Mrs. George, Eight Note Road, R. D. 3, Fulton, N. Y.  
Gifford, F P., Aurora-on-Cayuga, N. Y.  
Houghton, Gertrude H., 605 Washington St., Watertown, N. Y.  
Hutchinson, Mrs. George, 618 Union Street, Clayton, N. Y.  
Isleib, Peter M., R. D. 2, Marlborough, Conn.  
Kingsbury, Dr. Marguerite, P. O. Box 226, Sunmount, N. Y.  
Lobdell, Miss Audrey, 753 James St., Apt. 426, Syracuse 3, N. Y.  
McFadden, Alice, 245 Stone Street, Watertown, N. Y.  
Pearsall, Miss Linda Jane, Baker Hill Road, R. D. 2, Freeville, N. Y.  
Perron, Mrs. Bernadette, P. O. Box 127, Sunmount, N. Y.  
Sharp, Mrs. Elmer, 135 Fishers Road, Fishers, N. Y.  
Shoumatoff, Nicholas, Old Post Road, Bedford, N. Y.  
Dutchess County Bird Club, P. O. Box 1414, Arlington Branch, Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

It is with deep regret that we announce the withdrawal from our membership of the Bedford Audubon Society. We sincerely hope that this fine organization reaffiliate with us sometime in the near future.

ALBERT W. FUDGE,  
*Chairman Membership Committee.*

The Membership List of the Federation of the New York State Bird Clubs, Inc., is planned for the May, 1960, issue of *The Kingbird*. If a correction is needed in the name and/or address of a member it should be brought to the attention of the treasurer and chairman.

The Federation solicits the aid of all members in increasing the membership. Only through concentrated effort by each one can growth be attained. Let EACH MEMBER GET A MEMBER and then send his name to the chairman.

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## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

JUNE 1 — AUGUST 15

JAMES K. MERITT

In most sections of the state the summer was dry and hot, and generally low water levels resulted. Breeding conditions were good for practically all species, and waterfowl had marked success in such areas as the Montezuma Refuge and Jamaica Bay Sanctuary. In a year when some help was really needed, the elements cooperated.

For many varieties of small land birds the summer of 1959 was, in the words of a downtrodden football coach, a "rebuilding" year. Such birds as the Phoebe, Tree Swallow, House Wren, Bluebird and the various thrushes were generally still scarce, but in most areas not to the degree encountered the previous year. Especially encouraging was the report of over 100 Bluebirds (adults and young) banded in the Ithaca area. Breeding warblers appeared to be present in only moderate numbers at best, and there was a definite scarcity noted on Long Island. Blackbirds, on the other hand, appeared to be thriving. The northward incursion of white herons was light, but of note among this group were three Little Blues in Region 8.

In recent years the Glossy Ibis has been appearing much more regularly and frequently in New Jersey, and it is logical to expect that such will also be the case in New York State. Eleven of these birds were seen on Long Island, and the species was also observed in Region 3. Breeding King Rails were found in Regions 1 and 5, and the King Rail was also noted in Region 4. Long Island produced a record of the elusive Yellow Rail.

The Wilson's Phalarope appeared in Regions 2 and 10, and a Northern Phalarope was reported in Region 6. A Curlew Sandpiper was also noted in Region 10, and the Golden Plover was among the shorebirds observed at Montezuma. The Franklin's Gull and Little Gull were seen in Region 2.

The sporadic Red-headed Woodpecker was observed in relatively good numbers in Regions 2, 6, and 8, and Region 3 again produced a record of a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers.

The Prothonotary Warbler and Yellow-throated Warbler continued to be present in Regions 3 and 5 respectively, and a Lawrence's Warbler was found nest-building in Region 8. There were the usual scattered reports of the Orchard Oriole. Even during this hot summer period our "winter finches" were not completely unrepresented — a Red Crossbill in Region 5 was one of the highlights.

The Western Meadowlark has now apparently become quite regular in

the western part of the state. It was seen in Region 2. Ithaca's Clay-colored Sparrow, first reported in the spring, continued to be present. The appearance of a Lark Bunting on Long Island created some excitement there, and this bird was seen by numerous observers.

## REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

ROBERT F. ANDRLE

The weather during June was typical for the month with average temperature and precipitation deviating little from normal. Several local convective storms were the only disturbances during a generally fair and pleasant month. July continued this trend with an average temperature 2.2°F above normal and sunshine exceeding its own monthly mean by eleven percent. Precipitation was somewhat below normal and was scattered so that some sections suffered from drought. The several spectacular thunderstorms did not do much to alleviate the dryness especially in the northern part of the region. The temperature during the first week in August averaged slightly above normal and some very warm days occurred at the end of the period. No high winds or widespread severe weather was experienced through June, July and the first half of August, the fairly numerous local thunderstorms being the only interruptions in a warm and sunny summer. Water levels in ponds and streams dropped considerably and Lake Erie's level remained low for the third successive summer. Apparently breeding conditions were good for Ring-necked Pheasants and some of the ground nesting passerines. The low water in swamps and marshes attracted herons and shorebirds, especially at localities such as Oak Orchard Swamp and various inland ponds.

**Loons — Ducks:** A Common Loon was on the Niagara River at the Falls on Jun 14 (Brockner). The report of four Common Egrets at Oak Orchard Swamp on Jul 14 (Anderson rep Andrle) was the only one for this species during the period. This seems unusual as apparently there was a good influx of egrets in the northeast indicated by reports from several localities. Ducks appeared to have had a good breeding season in many parts of the region. A Green-winged Teal was seen near Varysburg on Aug 1 (Rosche, Krayna, Rubach). An observation of four American Widgeon at Oak Orchard on Jun 21 (Brockners) was of interest. On Jul 15 a Pintail, an uncommon nester in the region, was seen at Oak Orchard (Andrle). Hooded Mergansers were noted in a number of places, probably indicating a fairly good breeding season. From one to four individuals were reported from Ashford Hollow, Warsaw (Jun 21, 27; Rosche et al), Varysburg (Jul 19, 22; Rosche et al), and Langford (Jul 20; Bourne, Avery). On Aug 8 Rosche counted 73 Wood Ducks in Wyoming County.

**Hawks — Owls:** Birds of prey seemed to be generally in below normal numbers, especially Marsh Hawks. A Broad-winged Hawk was seen Jul 27 near Colden (Rosche et al), and Eaton observed a nest near Olean in June. This species nests regularly in scattered localities through the Allegheny Plateau. Individual Bald Eagles were noted on Jun 8 over East Eden Pond (Bourne), and on Jul 15 an adult was at Oak Orchard Swamp (Anderson rep Andrle). A King Rail with five young out of the nest was found in a small pond just south of Langford on Jul 19 (Bourne) and was seen by many observers until the first week in August. Some species of shorebirds remained later in June than normal and at the end of the month it was not possible to be sure whether they were stragglers from the spring migration or southward bound migrants. A Common Snipe was seen near Pike on Jun 27 (Rosche), and a maximum of five was noted in the Warsaw-Varysburg area through August by the same observer. This species is not often located in June during the breeding season in the region. The last migrant Least Sandpipers (6) were observed near Wethersfield on Jun 3 (Rosche). The lowered water level of Delaware

Park Lake in Buffalo in late July and August and the creation of mud areas brought shorebirds including Spotted, Solitary, Least, Semipalmated, and Pectoral Sandpipers and Lesser Yellowlegs. On Jul 11, on the south shore of Lake Erie at Sturgeon Point Bourne found two Whimbrels, the first fall migrants of this species reported for the region. A maximum of 16 Solitary Sandpipers was noted by Rosche and Blowers on Aug 8 in western Wyoming County. A greater Yellowlegs at the pond near Landford on Jul 20 (Bourne, Avery) marked the first appearance of this species returning south. A maximum of 10 were counted on Aug 1 in western Wyoming County (Rosche, Krayna, Rubach). On Aug 8 a total of 34 Lesser Yellowlegs was the greatest number for this species in the same area. A Stilt Sandpiper was observed near Warsaw on Aug 1 (Rosche, Krayna, Rubach). Although this species occurs regularly in the summer and fall on the north shore of Lake Erie (Canada), it is seldom seen inland in western New York. The Barn Owls apparently were successful in raising young in North Tonawanda as four birds were seen on Jun 23 (Rosche et al) and Jul 9 (Bourne). Of interest was a Long-eared Owl found at Hamburg Jul 8 (Bourne).

**Goatsuckers — Shrikes:** Common Nighthawks appeared to be in normal numbers within the city of Buffalo, and a female with two young was successfully photographed on the roof of the Buffalo Museum of Science in July. The bird roost at Jamestown contained 10,000 Purple Martins and 1000 Barn Swallows on Aug 10 (Beal). A Tufted Titmouse was seen on Aug 12 at Jamestown (Beal) and two remained all month at Lakewood in Chautauqua County (Babath rep. Beal). A Carolina Wren stayed through the month of August at Hamburg (Avery). Three Swainson's Thrushes, an uncommon breeder in the region, were reported from Allegheny State Park on Jul 3 (Parker, Lenna, Knot). Bluebirds were apparently still low in numbers in the region. A pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets, the male singing repeatedly, was found at McCarty Hill near Ellicottville on Jun 27 (Andrle et al). An intensive search failed to discover the nest.

**Vireos — Warblers:** No warbler migration was noted up to the end of the period. A parula Warbler, probably a late migrant, was seen on Hickox Road in Hamburg on June 9 (Bourne). Not worthy was the observation of a Northern Waterthrush on Jun 9 in a wooded swamp near Sinclairville (Rew, Rathbun). This species is known to breed in only a few localities in the region. A thorough search in the reforested area at McCarty Hill near Ellicottville on Jun 27 failed to locate either Myrtle or Bay-breasted Warblers which had been seen the previous year.

**Blackbirds — Sparrows:** On Aug 12 Bourne saw 26 Bobolinks in fall plumage in the vicinity of the pond near Langford. An Orchard Oriole was seen on Jul 11 in North Evans (Bourne). There have been several records of this species south of Buffalo recently. It is hoped that this indicates an increase in their numbers in western New York. Cardinals continued to be conspicuously present in many sections of the region and are now found regularly at a number of locations within Buffalo. Chipping Sparrows appear to have decreased considerably over the past decade or more in many urban localities in the Niagara Frontier. A singing White-throated Sparrow was located in a swamp near Sinclairville in the Allegheny Plateau on Jun 5.

*Buffalo Museum of Science, Buffalo 11*

## REGION 2 — GENESEE

HOWARD S. MILLER

The weather for the period averaged much hotter and much drier than normal. The temperature reached 90° or above on twelve days; this mark was reached just once last year during the entire summer. The rainfall from June 1 to August 15 was only about 40% of normal, resulting in drought conditions during the last month of the period. The water level remained above last year's very low mark, however, although it dropped rather rapidly during the last several weeks of the period.

Birdwise, the period was marked by late lingering shorebirds of the spring migration, a rather early start of the fall shorebird flight, the rather



small numbers of most herons, and few rarities. Two Franklin's Gulls in mid-June and a Little Gull the latter part of July were probably the most outstanding. Bluebirds seem to have made a fair comeback from their low of a year ago, and the Carolina Wren is struggling to regain territory lost a year ago.

**Loons — Ducks:** A Common Loon was seen on Jun 8 at Manitou (Listman), and a Double-crested Cormorant was noted there June 14 by the same observer. Great Blue Herons appeared scarce until August, when they appeared in numbers, the largest count being 27 on August 11 along the west lakeshore (Schmanke and Dougherty). The same observers reported a Common Egret on Aug 11 at Long Pond. This was the only report for the period for this species which has not invaded this region in numbers for some years. A Least Bittern was observed at Braddock's Bay Jul 25 and at Long Pond Aug 1 (R. Simons). Black Ducks were reported but once during June, which was probably due more to scant observation than to that degree of scarcity of the species. A Gadwall was reported Jul 23 at Braddock's (Listman), and a Pintail was seen in the same place Aug 8 (Listman, Lloyd). A Green-winged Teal was noted at Braddock's on Jul 11 (Starling et al), and two were seen there on Jul 23 (Listman). Single American Widgeons were observed on Jun 23 at Cranberry Pond and on Jul 23 at Braddock's (Listman). Small numbers of Redheads and Canvasbacks were reported but as some are known to be banded and clipped it probably is best not to regard any of them as being positively wild birds. Three Lesser Scaup were seen Jun 14 at Braddock's, and a single bird was there on Jul 19 (Listman). A Common Goldeneye was seen in flight Jul 19 at Braddock's and a Hooded Merganser and three Red-breasted Mergansers were present there Jun 14 (Listman). One Red-breasted was seen in the same place Jul 4 (Starling and Miller), and one was at Long Pond Aug 1 (R. Simons).

**Hawks — Owls:** A count of 28 Turkey Vultures was made Jul 9 at Bergen Swamp (Corcoran et al). A Sharp-shinned Hawk was reported Jun 27 at Powder Mill Park (O'Hara), and an immature Broad-winged Hawk was seen Jul 5 west of Braddock's (Listman). The Marsh Hawk was reported but once in June (near Avon — Haller) and was unreported during July. Two were seen along the west lakeshore Aug 8 (Starling). Two Soras were observed Jul 4 at Buck Pond (Starling, Miller). A Semipalmated Plover was seen Jun 16 at Manitou by Listman who also saw the first bird reported for the fall migration — on Jul 17 at the same locality. Eight were observed Aug 11 along the west lakeshore (Starling). A Black-bellied Plover was at Manitou Jun 3 (Brummer, Starling), and six were seen at Shore Acres Aug 11 (Dougherty, Schmanke). Two Ruddy Turnstones were at Manitou Jun 20 (Listman), and 13 Common Snipe were seen Jul 4 at the west lakeshore (Starling, Miller). A single Whimbrel was observed Jul 31 on the east side of Braddock's Bay (McCarthy), and on Aug 8 an unprecedented flock of 26 birds was carefully observed as they flew along the lakeshore just north of Braddock's Bay (Listman, Whites). This is the largest number observed in this area in years. A single Upland Plover was noted Aug 1 at Ling Road (Listman et al), and two Solitary Sandpiper were there on Jul 4 (Starling, Miller). Two Greater Yellowlegs were seen Aug 1 at Shore Acres (Listman, Kernitzer). The first Lesser Yellowlegs of the fall migration was seen Jul 4 at Ling Road (Starling, Miller), and 50 were observed Aug 1 along the west lakeshore (Listman, Kernitzer). One Pectoral Sandpiper was seen Jul 11 at Ling Road, and ten were noted along the west lakeshore Jul 18. Ten Least Sandpipers were seen Jul 4 at Ling Road and Braddock's (Starling, Miller), and 30 were seen Jul 19 at Manitou (Listman).

Five Short-billed Dowitchers were along the west lakeshore on Jul 11 (Starling, Miller), and 35 were seen Jul 19 at Manitou (Listman). Four Stilt Sandpipers were observed Jul 18 at Ling Road and Manitou (Starling, Miller), and a high count of 45 was made Aug 8 from Ling Road to Shore Acres (Listman et al). Three Western Sandpipers were noted at Manitou on Jun 15, and the species was there the following day (Listman). There were several reports of Semipalmated Sandpipers. A Sanderling was seen Jul 17 at Manitou (Listman), and two were seen there the next day (Starling, Miller). A very early Wilson's Phalarope showed up at Manitou on Jul 11 (Listman et al).

Three immature Great Black-backed Gulls were seen Jun 20 at Manitou, and

two were present there on Jul 19 (Listman). Some 100 Herring, 2000 Ring-billed, and 100 Bonaparte's Gulls were also there on the latter date. A Franklin's Gull was carefully observed at Manitou Jun 14 after a northeast storm (Schaffer, Listman). The last observer recorded two birds of this species there on Jun 20. An immature Little Gull was seen at Manitou on Jul 19 (Listman). A very early Forster's Tern was observed Jun 14 at Manitou (Schaffner, Listman), and another was there on Aug 7. A Caspian Tern was seen Jul 11 at Manitou, and two were there on Jul 25 (O'Hara et al). Three Yellow-billed and two Black-billed Cuckoos were recorded Jun 6 in the Powder Mills Park area (G.O.S. hike).

**Goatsuckers — Shrikes:** The Pileated Woodpecker was reported from Avon (Haller) and from the Webster area Jul 8 (McNeth, Sunderlin). Five Red-headed Woodpeckers were seen Jun 20 near Avon (G.O.S. hike). Three were noted Jul 4 at Ling Road (Starling), and one was occasionally seen at Webster Park in Rochester (Miller). Some 1000 Bank Swallows were seen Jul 11 east of Irondequoit Bay (Starling, Miller). A Carolina Wren was observed on Jul 27 and 28 near Webster (Kemnitzer), and two birds appeared near Forest Lawn on Aug 11 (McNeth, Sunderlin). A Short-billed Marsh Wren was reported Jun 25 near Long Pond (Listman). Scattered pairs of Bluebirds were reported in the area, and several pairs nested successfully. Four pairs of nesting birds were reported in the Webster area, (McNeth, Sunderlin).

**Vireos — Sparrows:** Two Black and White Warblers were seen Jul 16 in Mendon Ponds Park (Starling). Ten Golden-winged Warblers were noted in the Fisher's area Jun 6 (G.O.S. hike). A Blue-winged Warbler was seen there on Jun 6 and 27, and two Blue-wings were seen near Avon (Haller). A singing Brewster's Warbler was recorded at BANC station June 6, two were seen near Avon (Haller), and one was noted in Letchworth Park (Haller). A Northern Waterthrush was seen Aug 8 at Manitou (Listman). Two Louisiana Waterthrushes were seen near Avon Jun 20 (G.O.S. hike), and one bird was observed Aug 6 near Hemlock Lake (Listman). Two Yellow-breasted Chats were seen near LeRoy Jun 20 (G.O.S. hike), and two were seen in the same area on Jul 9 (Corcoran et al). Five Canada Warblers were seen Jun 6 near Fisher's (G.O.S. hike). This area was well populated by Golden-wings plus a few Blue-winged Warblers, which pointed up a puzzling ecological situation.

A Western Meadowlark was seen and heard in Webster Jul 11 (Starling, Miller); this bird had been in the area since late April. A very late White-crowned Sparrow was observed at Manitou Jun 13 (Listman), and an even later record was of a bird seen Jun 15 in Webster (Kemnitzer).

54 Luella Street, Rochester 9

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## REGION 3 — FINGER LAKES

SALLY F. HOYT

This summer contrasted remarkably with last. While June's temperatures were near normal, July and early August had above normal readings — 13 of the 76 days had above 90 degree temperature. On the other hand early August produced some unusual minimum readings; temperatures were in the mid-thirties on the 2nd and 3rd at Etna. The whole period was very dry. Following a few light rains in June, there was a general rain on July 6 and then almost none until early August. Small local areas got drenching downpours, which tended to run off the surface, but general rains just did not occur.

The dry conditions probably favored the ground-nesters. Insect-eaters may have suffered (while humans rejoiced) at the decrease in some forms of insect life.

Highlights were the increase in duck broods this year, a small upsurge in the Bluebird population around Ithaca, and continuing scarcity of Phoebes, Tree Swallows, Veeries, and some of the warblers.

**Loons — Ducks:** Pied-billed Grebes had considerable nesting success at Montezuma, and Great Blue Herons were in usual numbers there. Common Egrets increased this year; there was a high count of 62 at the Refuge, according to Manager Morse. No other egrets were seen. While Black-crowned Night Herons were in normal numbers at Montezuma, they were hard to find around Ithaca. K. Thorpe saw one immature at the Hog Hole (southwest corner of Cayuga Lake) on Aug 11. Reports from Elmira indicate that these birds have been permanently banished from their old roost in the city, but their new location has not been found. Both American and Least Bitterns nested at Montezuma. A pair of Least Bitterns was seen fairly regularly at a marsh just northwest of the county airport at Ithaca, but no nest was found. A Glossy Ibis was again seen at Montezuma on Jun 17 (W. Brockner).

Partly because of favorable weather conditions and partly because of the closing of the dikes to visitors during the nesting season, Manager Morse reported an encouraging increase in waterfowl broods this summer. The number jumped from 18 last year to 77 this year. Blue-winged Teal showed the greatest increase: from two broods last year to 26 this year. The following is the brood count: Blue-winged Teal 26; Mallard 22; Black Duck 7; Wood Duck 6; Redhead 4; Ruddy Duck 4; Gadwall 3; Pintail 2; American Widgeon 2; and Shoveler 1. Thus twice as many species nested as last year, and the American Widgeon is a new refuge breeding record. Refuge personnel suspect that the Green-winged Teal also bred. Blue-winged Teal were reported to have marked success in nesting in regional conservation ponds (Hewitt).

The first brood of Wood Ducks appeared at the Sapsucker Woods feeding area in mid-June. Three other broods followed, the last being a group of five very small ducklings in mid-July. At least three Mallard broods were raised also.

Nine Canvasbacks and two Redheads were seen at the north end of Seneca Lake on Jun 22, undoubtedly cripples (W. Brockner).

**Hawks — Owls:** An immature Goshawk, unusual in the region, was shot at Phelps on Aug 11 as it was preying on chickens. Red-tailed Hawks seemed scarce at the north end of Cayuga Basin (J. Walker). Mrs. Carter reported that the species had success in nesting in the 12-mile Creek Valley near Avoca, where in a ten mile stretch she counted six immature birds plus several adults. The Montezuma Bald Eagles had a third nesting failure in three years. An immature bird (non-resident) was seen over the refuge the end of July. On Aug 2 an adult Bald Eagle was observed over Pinnacle Hill, a half mile east of Branchport, by Kirk Burtch, the first there since April 1957 (fide Guthrie). An Osprey was seen regularly from Jun 1 to mid-July over Keuka Lake, three miles south of Branchport, by Miss Ida Cook — an unusual summer report. Sparrow Hawks were in slightly improved numbers around Geneva this year (Walker), but they were scarce at Avoca where only one could be located in a three-hour search (Carter).

Paul Kelsey reported that the Conservation Department considered nesting conditions excellent for Ruffed Grouse this year and that the Department was accordingly puzzled at the poor nesting success. These birds are usually seen regularly in Sapsucker Woods, but Art Lane reported the first one at his feeding area on Aug 8, after a lengthy absence. Pheasants, on the other hand, had nesting success everywhere. Rails again were not seen around Keuka, but Virginias and Soras were present at Montezuma. The former were noted with young on several occasions (Morse). Common Gallinules and Coots again had a very successful season, and Coots were noted breeding at Spencer Marsh this year for the first time (O Hewitt).

Killdeer were abundant everywhere. Two Golden Plover were seen at Montezuma on the exceptionally early date of Jul 17 (fide Scheider). The four Common Snipe noted there on Aug 11 by Loren Ward were probably transients. Upland Plover seem to have had a slight decline in our region. Walker found none around the Geneva area, and Kelsey reported fewer at the Dryden station, where last year he had noted a decided increase over the previous year.

It was a "short summer" at Sapsucker Woods. Thirteen northward bound White-rumped Sandpipers (a first spring record for the region) appeared briefly on Jun 9 (A.A.A.), and an early southward bound Solitary turned up on Jul 1. The lowering of the pond there attracted shorebirds at the same time that it discouraged ducks. The Greater Yellowlegs appeared Aug 15, the Lesser on Jul 30, Pectoral Sandpiper on Jul 25, Least Sandpiper on Jul 30, and Semipalmated Sandpiper on

Jul 25. Pectorals were also seen at Mitchellville on Jul 17 (Carter). At Montezuma Refuge Morse reported only the two Yellowlegs and Dowitchers (in addition to the resident Spotted Sandpipers) before the end of the reporting period. Three Caspian Terns were spotted at the south end of Cayuga on Aug 10 (P. P. Kellogg). A Black Tern was seen frequently over the marsh opposite the northwest corner of the county airport at Ithaca, but there was no evidence of nesting (N. Case).

Cuckoos, though present, were not too conspicuous, although a Black-bill was quite noisy at Etna in mid-July and both species seemed quite vocal in August. There were only two Barn Owl reports. One was in the Wellington barn at Geneva (Ward), and on Jul 2 the species was noted at Spencer (Hewitt).

**Goatsuckers — Shrikes:** On Jul 8 a whip-poor-will was heard along Deputron Road, about a mile off Coddington Road southeast of Ithaca (fide Scott), a most unusual report. Hummingbirds continued scarce. Yellow-shafted Flickers seemed to have a good season. The Red-bellied Woodpeckers at Montezuma deserted the area where they used to be found and were located instead at the far northwestern storage pool area. Only one Red-headed Woodpecker was noted around Forest Home in Ithaca during the summer, but there were two pairs at Mile Point near Geneva, and Mrs. Bardeen noted one near Wells College in June. There were two reports of breeding Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, on Star Stanton Hill south of Dryden (Kelsey), and a pair seen feeding young at elevation 1500' in 12-Mile Creek Valley (Carter). An immature, probably a wanderer, was seen in Sapsucker Woods on Aug 11 by Mrs. Whitaker. Hairy Woodpeckers were much more obvious at the feeders at Sapsucker Woods this year than Downies, a reversal.

Kingbirds were migrating conspicuously from Aug 10 on. It appeared as though Phoebes have not yet staged a comeback; they were reported as scarce everywhere. An Olive-sided Flycatcher, probably an early migrant or wanderer, was heard at Marcham's Woods near West Dryden on Aug 9 (P. Kelsey). Tree Swallows, while occupying every box at Sapsucker Woods, raised few young and departed early and abruptly the first week in August. Other swallows appeared in normal numbers. The Purple Martin colony at Stewart Park, Ithaca, decreased considerably, but the new ones on Warren Road and at Sapsucker Woods increased. An albino Barn Swallow was noted at the McIntyre home on Danby Road, south of Ithaca, on Jul 21.

At least two pairs of Tufted Titmice nested at Stewart Park (M. Ficken). Brown Creepers were found nesting in Texas Hollow north of Odessa (A. Fudge), at Summit Marsh south of Ithaca, and young were seen on Jul 6 in Sapsucker Woods (D. Allen). House Wrens were still low in numbers, but those present seemed to raise two broods successfully. Long-billed Marsh Wrens were up in numbers at Montezuma, and two different groups of Short-bills were found there in early August by Scheider. While two Mockingbirds were present all summer at the Larzelere home a mile north of Branchport and one bird was singing, no nest was found. Robins had a good season. Walker estimated two immatures to one adult in the Waterloo area, and he noted as many as 100 daily at the cemetery from mid-July on. Hermit Thrushes and Veeries were still scarce everywhere. Hartshorne's studies of the Bluebird around Ithaca bore out his earlier belief that there were more this year than last, and he banded over 100 young and adults. Elsewhere in the region the picture was blacker. At Avoca only two pairs were seen all summer (Carter). None were noted around Waterloo, and there only two at Geneva (Walker). Cedar Waxwings seemed to start nesting early. Several nests were noted the end of the third week in June, and young were seen everywhere by early August. Loggerhead Shrikes were unreported.

**Vireos — Warblers:** The absence of the song of the Yellow-throated Vireo around Ithaca (and at Etna) was conspicuous, and Guthrie noted that those present around Keuka earlier were gone by Aug 1. Red-eyed Vireos were likewise scarce as breeders, in comparison with three or four years ago, and the same holds true of the Warbling. Walker, too, noted all vireos scarce around Geneva.

The Pronthonatory Warbler was again at Montezuma, the one place in the region where we can depend on finding it. The region's usual nesters seemed scarcer this year than last: Yellow, Chestnut-sided, the waterthrushes, and Redstarts particularly. The Pine Warbler was absent as a breeder in the region — we no longer find them at Taughannock Falls Gorge. Another Brewster's Warbler was located, by Paul Kelsey, surprisingly enough on Connecticut Hill, near a singing Blue-winged Warbler. The Prairie Warblers located there and reported in the last issue were still present in early June, but not checked later. There were very few reports of

Yellow-breasted Chats. Guthrie noted that in the Keuka area he could find only one where 7-9 used to be, and suggests that change of cover in the area is responsible.

**Blackbirds — Sparrows:** Bobolinks were spotty — noted as normal or above normal in some areas, considerably below normal in others. Meadowlarks were very abundant everywhere, as were Redwings. This writer feels that the less said about the tremendous increase in Grackles the better! Only Bob Ficken, doing graduate research on their behavior, was happy about it. Elsewhere observers bemoaned the way they took over feeding stations, heckled smaller nesting species, and at Sapsucker Woods they were several times seen chasing smaller birds and knocking them to the water or ground — even a Spotted Sandpiper on one occasion (Hoyt). Cardinals increased around Geneva and Waterloo. Rose-breasted Grosbeak families were certainly not conspicuous in early August, as they are some years. Indigo Buntings were more plentiful at Watkins Glen and around Geneva in normal numbers in the Ithaca area. There were scattered reports of resident Purple Finches, including a "first" in the 12-Mile Creek Valley, where one was noted singing on Jun 24 (Carter). The bird has not been known there before in summer. Goldfinches seemed unusually abundant. Rufous-sided Towhees were in lower numbers around Waterloo (Walker), and field-nesting sparrows continued scarce throughout the region, except for Field Sparrows which had picked up in numbers this year at Geneva. Fudge reports Juncos nesting near Elmira. The Clay-colored Sparrow was still singing in the same vacant lot in Ithaca the end of July.

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## REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

LESLIE E. BEMONT

The weather for the whole period has averaged warm and dry. The dryness was especially pronounced from June 28 to July 29, but serious drought conditions were averted by a fairly heavy rain July 30. There were eleven days when the temperature in Binghamton reached 90 degrees or higher in contrast to only one such day last year. There is considerable doubt about what effect, if any, the weather had on the bird population but it is perhaps reasonable to blame the warm weather for one of the worst cases of "summer doldrums" to affect the bird watchers of the region in the last few years.

Northern species were again fairly well represented in the reports from Chenango County but not quite as well as last year. Instead the Oneonta — Cooperstown and Deposit areas produced their own northern records, the former Red breasted Nuthatch and Sapsuckers and the latter Loon and White-throated Sparrows. Those species that showed the sharpest population losses last year showed only a moderate recovery. New Yellow-breasted Chats have joined the list of species at a low ebb for reasons that are not apparent on a local basis. The beginning of fall migration was signalled by a few shorebird records and an Olive-sided Flycatcher, but perhaps the most interesting and significant report was that of a King Rail near Sherburne.

**Loons — Ducks:** An immature Common Loon spent most of July on Oquaga Lake, near Deposit, and became quite sophisticated about motor boats, water skiers, etc. (S. Wilson). There have been more than the usual number of summer records of the Great Blue Heron and from several widely separated parts of the region. At two localities, Oxford (A. Stratton) and Sherburne (R. & S. White), they were seen repeatedly but only one at a time and no breeding record. A Common Egret was at Boland's Marsh, north of Binghamton, Jun 28 (R. & M. Sheffield), and there was an undated record of five or six feeding along the Susquehanna River at Owego (M. White). Green Herons seemed low in numbers and there were no Black-crowned Night Herons reported at all. Two broods of Mallards were produced on a small marsh at Endwell that is dissected by two busy highways and a railroad and is

sprinkled with large illuminated billboards (L. Bemont). Successful Wood Duck nestings were reported at Deposit, Sherburne and Vestal.

**Hawks — Owls:** Nine Turkey Vultures were seen in one flock at Hancock Jul 31 (S. Wilson). Accipiters and buteos were all scarce and Marsh Hawks, incredibly, were unreported during the period. At least one pair of the Bobwhites released by the Broome County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs was able to raise a brood of young near Choconut Center, north of Johnson City (R. & S. Sheffield). Ring-necked Pheasants seemed more common than they have in several years around Binghamton. A King Rail was seen in a marsh near Sherburne Jul 24 (S. White). The same marsh produces a Virginia Rail record "nearly every" visit. An adult Common Gallinule and two immatures were seen at Sherburne Jul 24 (R. & S. White), and on the same day an adult and four or five immatures were at Vestal (N. & E. Washburn). A Semipalmated Plover was at Norwich Aug 2 (R. & S. White). Killdeer continued to be less common than normal. Woodcock were reported more frequently than in the past but it was due, primarily, to better coverage. Common Snipe were reported regularly from Sherburne during June and July (R. & S. White). A Solitary Sandpiper was at Sherburne during Jul 25 (R. & S. White), another was at the South Otselic Fish Hatchery Jul 26 (Whites), and still another was at Whitney Point Aug 9 (R. & M. Sheffield). A Greater Yellowlegs was at the South Otselic Fish Hatchery Jul 26 (Whites) and a Lesser Yellowlegs was at Whitney Point Aug 2 (Sheffields). Three Pectoral Sandpipers were at the South Otselic Fish Hatchery Jul 19 (Whites), and three Baird's Sandpipers were at Sherburne Jul 24 (Whites). Yellow-billed Cuckoos have been very scarce, but Black-billed Cuckoos were decidedly common around Binghamton. A Screech Owl near Choconut Center Jul 29 (Sheffields) was our first 1959 record. A Barred Owl was heard at Oxford Aug 12 (A. Stratton).

**Goatsuckers — Shrikes:** A Red-headed Woodpecker was at Newark Valley Jul 12 (L. Dean). Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers reportedly had considerable success in nesting at Oneonta (J. New). At Endwell a female Hairy Woodpecker with one young of her own was seen feeding young Downey Woodpeckers with suet a number of times (F. Linaberry). Phoeebes have made some recovery from their low of last year but are still far from normal. Traill's Flycatchers seem to be increasing every year and this year produced one of the biggest increases so far. Least Flycatchers were rather scarce. There were no summer records of Olive-sided Flycatchers at Norwich this year but a fall migrant was near Choconut Center Aug 10 and 11 (Sheffields). Another colony of Cliff Swallows was discovered at Union Valley, in Cortland Count, Aug 1. There were at least 80 birds there on that date (Whites). At Homer a previously unreported colony of Purple Martins was found, making a total of three active colonies known in that locality (J. Gustafson). A Red-breasted Nuthatch was seen at Cooperstown Jun 26 (S. White), and one was at Norwich Jul 11 (Whites) at the same place as last year but there is still no definite breeding record. House Wrens have still not completely recovered from last year's low. A Carolina Wren was at Deposit Jul 30 (S. Wilson). Short-billed Marsh Wrens are now known to occur in three spots around Sherburne (Whites). Another new station was discovered at Whitney Point Aug 9 (R. & M. Sheffield, L. Bemont). Hermit Thrushes seemed a little more common than last year at both Binghamton (Triple Cities Naturalists' Club) and Oneonta (J. New). Near Choconut Center Bluebirds have bounced back from last year's low amazingly well (Sheffields) and at Oneonta "at least a few — were fledged this year" (J. New). At Homer after their first brood failed a pair successfully fledged a second. These are the first reported nestings in that area in several years (J. Gustafson).

**Vireos — Warblers:** Black and White Warblers didn't show much improvement over last year's low. Golden-winged Warblers continued to be fairly common and Blue-winged Warblers rather scarce in the Binghamton area. There was still only one known breeding pair in the area of the latter species. A Myrtle Warbler was at Norwich Jul 11 (Whites). Yellow-breasted Chats have been much less common than usual all summer.

**Blackbirds — Sparrows:** A male Scarlet Tanager that had just started moulting was seen feeding a young one Aug 15 near Binghamton (Sheffields, Fisk). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks appear to have been less common than usual. A Pine Siskin was still at Deposit Jun 1 (S. Wilson). Slate-colored Juncoes were again found at Norwich (Whites) and White-throated Sparrows were found at Pharsalia (Whites), Deposit (S. Wilson) and Oxford (A. Stratton).

710 University Ave., Endwell

## REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

FRITZ SCHEIDER

The summer period was uniformly hot and dry, the latter condition adding to the moderate spring precipitation deficit and the former accelerating water loss from already low marshes and ponds.

Explorations of local areas for breeding birds continued apace. Trips were taken to the Tug Hill Plateau June 7 and July 3 and 5 to Quaker Hill (elev. 1800 ft.) near Hamilton June 14 and July 5 to Rome Sand Plains June 21, and to Highland Forest July 19. Abundant distributional data accrued from these trips, particularly on breeding warblers.

Features of this summer included very late spring migrants such as Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers at Sandy Pond June 15 and single Black-pollled Warbler and Ruby-crowned Kinglet and two Pine Siskins still present in the Tug Hill country June 7. Of equal migratory interest were very early southbound Bobolinks, Kingbirds, and Yellow Warblers, and enormous swallow flights. Migrant shorebirds arrived on time and in better than usual numbers.

Over three-quarters of the regional observers indicated that Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Phoebes, Hermit Thrushes, and House Wrens were regrettably low, the last perhaps at an all-time low; a small but encouraging increase in Bluebirds was apparent. About half of the birders noted decreases in Tree Swallow, Savannah Sparrow, Veery, and Warbling Vireo.

Rarities for the period include Red Crossbill, Yellow-throated Warbler, and a breeding King Rail.

**Loons — Ducks:** Great Blue Heron: wandering immatures appeared near Skaneateles Jun 19 and groups of eight to ten were noted at Onondaga Lake in early August. Common Egret: numerous scattered reports around Port Byron and Weedsport; one on Jul 11 at Three Rivers Game Management Area (TRGMA) and up to eight at Shackleton Point, Oneida Lake. Green Heron:: late July counts of 12-15 per small marsh with a three: two immature: adult ratio indicate a good nesting season. Least Bittern: one to four/day seen at the Sandy Pond marshes thru late July; they may be either more common this year and/or more conspicuous because of the early low water level there.

Breeding ducks — Mallard, Black Duck, and Blue-winged Teal enjoyed an excellent season with the last achieving a record count on the local brood censuses but some of the late Blue-winged Teal broods, especially those in smaller marshes, were stranded without water by late July and were forced to move to adjacent available ponds. Gadwall, Pintail, and Shoveler: two, 14, and four nestings respectively observed at Howland's Island Game Management Area (HIGMA) this summer; a male Gadwall was seen intermittently thru the summer at Sandy Pond (e.g. in eclipse plumage Jun 11) and may have been the drake of the pair present in late May on Mexico Bay. Green-winged Teal: broods of four, Jul 7, and nine, Jul 11, noted at Steven's Pond near Phoenix, the second consecutive year they have bred there; three drakes and two ducks of this species also summered there. Wood Duck: brood counts approximately as good as last year; first flocking noted is an evening flight of 65, Aug 11, at Steven's Pond.

Summering ducks — American Widgeon: single males at Steven's Pond and HIGMA stayed until Jul 7 and Jul 19 respectively. Summering diving ducks were very scarce on Lake Ontario and the honor of this group was maintained only by individual Lesser Scaup at HIGMA Jun 15 and Sandy Pond Aug 8. Redheads at Beaver Lake, HIGMA, and TRGMA are presumed to be locally released stock.

Migrant ducks — Pintail and Green-winged Teal: first arrivals were 16 and one respectively at Sandy Pond Jul 26. Hooded Merganser: two immatures capable

of strong sustained flight, Jul 26, on a small wildlife marsh north of Mexico could be local products but were more likely very early migrants along with the above dabblers.

**Hawks — Owls:** Sharp-shinned Hawk: a male carrying prey at Gully Road near Skaneateles Jun 28 and food-calling young there Jul 27 (Spofford) suggest a breeding of this locally very scarce accipiter. Broad-winged Hawk: two noted Jun 7 in the Tug Hill country and one Jun 14 over Quaker Hill, Hamilton (Whites) suggest local breeders. No Marsh Hawks bred at Sandy Pond this summer.

Ruffed Grouse: very scarce in the Tug Hill Plateau this season and a brood of five Jul 5 at Quaker Hill, Hamilton, was the only brood recorded.

There was a frank profusion of rail records, especially Virginia Rail, this season, probably due to the early and unusually rapid drying-up of local marshes, a condition which permitted food concentration for the rails and ease of observation for birders. King Rail: an adult with seven downy young seen at the King (no relation) Marsh, North Syracuse Jul 25 (Rusk) to Aug 6 (numerous observers) is a first recent local breeding record; the late date suggests a re-nesting or a second brood as fully fledged Sora and Virginia Rails were noted two weeks earlier near Cicero. Virginia Rail: four seen and heard at three grassy beaver meadows Jul 3 at Tug Hill Plateau were the first observed there. American Coot: adults with downy young Jul 11 at Sandy Pond is proof of previously only suspected breeding there.

Upland Plover: of interest are reports of a single bird in mid-June near Pompey (Propst) and of two adults and a young bird Jul 19 near Fabius as they had been unreported from the hill country for the past five years.

Migrant shorebirds arrived early and in good numbers this summer. Water levels at Lake Ontario, Oneida Lake, Onondaga Lake, and Delta Lake were low, producing excellent mud flats early in the season. Unfortunately the better areas at Oneida Lake (Sylvan and Verona Beaches) and along Lake Ontario (Sandy Pond) were plagued with a wealth of people relief from the heat with consequent lower counts of shorebirds, gulls, and terns. For any shorebird, even such a placid one as a Semipalmated Plover, to seek food and rest amongst the people, dogs, airplanes, and beer cans of a Sandy Pond July Sunday afternoon would approach sheer avian heroism or stupidity. Fortunately for birders smelly Onondaga Lake and more remote beaches along Lake Ontario were available. Counts of Pectoral and Spotted Sandpipers were high thru July, and a marked rise in almost all species occurred in the first two weeks of August. The tabulation below gives arrival dates and maxima (to Aug 15) of the migrant shorebirds. Semipalmated Plover: Jul 11 (early); max. 108, Aug 15. Black-bellied Plover: Aug 8; max. 14, Aug 15. Ruddy Turnstone: Jul 31; max. 22, Aug 15. Common Snipe: Jul 7; 12 on Jul 26 and Aug 8, 20 on Aug 15. Solitary Sandpiper: Jul 7; max. 12, Jul 26. Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs: Jul 18 and 9 respectively; max. six and 46 respectively. Pectoral Sandpiper: Jul 13; max 25, Jul 26. Least Sandpiper: Jul 10; max. 99. Dowitcher: Jul 11; max four (very scarce). Semipalmated Sandpiper: Jul 11; max. 450, Aug 15. Sanderling: Jul 26 (late); max. 16 (low). Knot and Baird's Sandpiper: one each, Aug 8, Sandy Pond Inlet were the only reports to end of the period. Stilt Sandpiper: first noted Jul 27; between then and Aug 15, 31 (exceptionally high) noted in nine observations, mostly along Onondaga Lake.

Great Black-backed Gull: an immature Aug 15 at Sandy Pond Inlet is, either an early fall migrant or a tardy summer bird as most of these birds, including immatures, leave by Jul 10. Forster's Tern: a winter plumaged bird seen Jul 26, Sandy Pond Inlet, was rather early. Common Tern: only five young at Sandy Pond in early July; the colony there is essentially gone; the Oneida Lake colonies appeared to have had as good a season as last year. Caspian Tern: up to ten in first two weeks of August along Onondaga Lake, a place where one is unusual. Black Tern: two colonies of three and six pairs respectively northwest of North Syracuse.

Barred Owl: four vigorously hooting birds Jul 3 Tug Hill Plateau are the first reported, though not unexpectedly, there.

**Goatsuckers— Shrikes:** Ruby-throated Hummingbird: very scarce throughout the summer; some almost daily observers went over a month without seeing one. Red-headed Woodpecker: two pair each located at Oneida, Utica, Skaneateles, and Texas; one noted Jul 4 at Highmarket (Ackley, Carter, Rusk) was a new addition to the growing Tug Hill Plateau score. Sapsucker: a pair with three young noted



at Tully thru July (Estoff, Propst); a count of 30 plus seen in six hours in the Tug Hill Plateau Jul 3 belies an earlier statement of "general scarcity" of woodpeckers there made two years ago by this editor.

**Kingbird:** marked increase noted by most observers this summer; estimates of increase ran up to two times the customary counts; flights of 25 and 65 Aug 8 and 5 respectively noted along the Sandy Pond dunes. **Phoebe:** easily as scarce as the Kingbird was common; not one seen or heard about the camps and bridges of the Tug Hill country where two years ago they were regularly noted. **Least Flycatcher:** numbers appeared low for the third straight year, most obvious at Camillus, Shackleton Point on Oneida Lake, and Oneida, places where spraying is not done. **Yellow-bellied and Olive-sided Flycatchers:** maxima of two and five respectively noted in the Tug Hill area; their presence there Jul 3 almost certainly indicated local breeding.

All swallows appeared to have a markedly successful breeding season with noteworthy rises in Barn and Bank Swallows and Purple Martins. **Tree Swallow:** almost 500 banded at Shackleton Point this season. **Bank and Barn Swallow:** great flights noted at Sandy Pond Inlet on Aug 2 (2000 plus and 6000 plus respectively) and again on Aug 8 (10,000 plus and 20,000 plus respectively); a swallow roost at Clay Swamp Aug 3 was estimated to contain 18,000 Barn and 3,000 Bank Swallows, certainly the largest local roost known. **Rough-winged Swallow:** 35/hour noted migrating Jul 26 at Sandy Pond Inlet when the local Barn, Tree, and Bank Swallows, though flocking, were not migrating. **Cliff Swallow:** Mrs. Aspinwall located six colonies of this species, the largest with 32 nests, on barns north of Delta Lake; she considered it a productive year for them and a count of 80 Jul 29 (Brockner) in that area supports that view; a small colony was located at Highmarket in the Tug Hill country Jul 4 (Ackley et al).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** last migrant noted Jun 5 (very late) at Syracuse; also found at Seven Mile Creek and Michigan Mills in the Tug Hill country where it probably breeds; Mrs. Aspinwall also noted one in mid-July in the Rome Sand Plains and questions whether it might breed there. **Winter Wren:** a count of 18, Jul 3, in the Tug Hill area is well above previous tallies (less than ten per day) there. **Carolina Wren:** a pair Jul 18 at Camillus Valley are almost certainly breeding birds. **Short-billed Marsh Wren:** singing birds located at four different areas between Syracuse, Bridgeport, and Brewerton, a distinctive change from last year's total absence of same. **Robin:** flocks of 80-100 noted in the first week of August (early) at Syracuse and Baldwinsville. **Hermit Thrush:** a count of six, Jun 21, Rome Sand Plains is in striking contrast to 40 plus there three years ago; they were similarly reduced in the Tug Hill country where the Hermit: Swainson's: Veery ratio was 12:35:40 as against previous equal proportions.

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** one, Aug 8, migrating with a small group of Yellow Warblers along the Sandy Pond dunes might indicate a breeding station to the north of that place. **Loggerhead Shrike:** a pair with young located Jul 26 near Sandy Pond; also single birds noted near Altmar and on the Sandy Pond flats, the latter a strange place for a shrike.

**Vireos — Warblers:** Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos: the suspected increase noted in the spring report was not sustained and both were quite scarce, even at such favored sectors as Camillus, HIGMA, and Oneida. **Solitary (Blue-headed) Vireo:** maximum of six noted Jun 7 in the Tug Hill Plateau region; one also noted Jul 5 in dry deciduous woods and conifer plantations at Quaker Hill near Hamilton.

For convenience, warblers will be discussed in three parts — Tug Hill warblers; other breeding warblers; and strays and migrants.

The Tug Hill Plateau area produced its expected bonanza of breeding warblers. Counts of singing males over eight miles of logging road Jun 7 showed 20 Black and White, four Nashville (strictly confined to bogs), two Parula, 40 Magnolia, 73 Black-throated Blue, 15 Myrtle, 49 Black-throated Green, 58 Black-burnian, 98 Chestnut-sided, 41 Ovenbird, 15 Northern Waterthrush, 32 Mourning, 48 Yellowthroat, 23 Canada, and 82 Redstart (Paquette, Wayland-Smith, Jones, Scheider); the counts of Black-throated Green and Northern Waterthrush seemed somewhat lower, that of Mourning distinctly higher. Similar counts over lesser distances in early July showed approximately the same numbers but both Mourning and Black-throated Blue Warblers seemed to be in greater abundance, e.g., six female Mourning

Warblers carrying food out of a total of 30 of this species seen. Two broods of Myrtle Warblers were noted there on Jul 3. Of interest is the complete absence of both Nashville and Parula Warblers from the Michigan Mills area Jul 5, a more deciduous, less boggy section of the Tug Hill country (Ackley et al).

Other breeding warblers — Prothonotary Warbler: summer reports indicate two successful nestings at Short Point Bay, Oneida Lake (Evans, Rusk). Golden-winged Warbler: one new site located near Skaneateles; very early song cessation was the rule with this species, and low counts at Camillus and HIGMA are more likely due to that than to an actual population decrease; no Brewster's or Blue-winged Warblers were reported during the summer. Cerulean Warbler: successful broods noted at Camillus and HIGMA Jul 18. Pine Warbler: one, Jun 21, in the Rome Sand Plains and a pair with four young at Selkirk Shores State Park were the only summer records; the conifer plantations at Quaker Hill and Highland Forest will probably not see this species for at least another 25 to 30 years. On Jul 19 the mixed spruce-fir plantations at Highland Forest held Nashville, Magnolia, and Black-throated Green Warblers in the ratios of 15 to 25 to 35, the Nashvilles were found about the perimeters of the plantations along with Chestnut-sided Warblers and Yellow-throats; the Magnolia Warblers were in the young bushy spruces and the Black-throated Green in the oldest (25 plus years) pines and spruces. In the Quaker Hill area near Hamilton, Magnolia and Black-throated Green Warblers were almost conifer plantation equals — 30 vs. 35. Myrtle Warbler: two singing males found Jun 14 in the Quaker Hill area (Whites); also found Jul 19 at Highland Forest but none recorded from the Rome Sand Plains where they were previously regularly noted. Black-throated Green Warbler: now breeding in a White Pine — Red Pine plantation (25 plus years old) at TRGMA, a site previously known to be unoccupied; it will be interesting to see what other species utilize this rather isolated plantation as the trees grow taller. Yellow-throat: rare as agreement is, almost all observers commented on increased or better than average numbers of this brush warbler. Hooded Warbler: three singing males in a brushy maple woods near Marcellus (Spofford) is either old occupancy discovered or spread from proximate nestings (two-five miles); a male seen regularly bathing at a woodland spring near Oneida thru June and July (Thurber) might indicate a nearby breeding pair. Redstart: the decreased numbers noted at Camillus, Highland Forest, and Rome were probably local changes only as the usual numbers were seen at Oneida and around Pulaski.

Strays and migrants — Yellow-throated Warbler: the singing male found at Selkirk Shores State Park on May 31 was present and persistently singing to Jun 15 (Seaman et al). Arrival dates for fall warblers are Tennessee — Aug 15, Yellow-Jul 11, Black-throated Green — Aug 15, Ovenbird and Northern Waterthrush — Aug 8. Late July and early August counts of migrant Yellow Warblers went to the 100 plus mark in an hour or less along the Sandy Pond dunes.

**Blackbirds — Sparrows:** Bobolink: excellent numbers along the Lake Ontario Plain, slightly scarcer east of Oneida Lake and south of Syracuse; first migrants noted Jul 11 (early) on the Sandy Pond dunes. Redwing, Grackle, and Cowbird: reports indicate an outrageously successful nesting season for these three species, all of which have reached the nuisance level; impressive roosts counts (30,000 plus) noted by late June and 80,000 plus estimated Aug 3 at the Clay Swamp roost.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: noted in numbers, i.e. over ten per day, only in the Tug Hill sector and around Camillus. Indigo Bunting: appeared to enjoy an excellent nesting season, particularly in the Rome Sand Plains, Highland Forest, and around Pulaski. Red Crossbill: a single male picking up grit from the roadside Jul 19, Selkirk shores State Park (Evans), is certainly a most abnormal date and place.

Counts on Tug Hill fringillids included 24 Purple Finch Jun 9 (average), 250 White-throated Sparrows Jul 3 (high), and 12 Slate-colored Junco Jul 3 (quite low); in this regard, it is of interest to note 12 Junco at Quaker Hill Jul 5 and ten at Highland Forest Jul 19 but no White-throated Sparrows in either locality.

The current dry season seemed only to insure nesting success of the local sparrows. Aside from some Cowbird parasitism amongst Song and Chipping Sparrows, the local Swamp, Song, Savannah, Chipping, and Field Sparrows appeared to have an abundance of bob-tailed, food-begging young; most pleasant were the opportunities to study changing plumages of juvenile and immature sparrows in TRGMA where the young of eight species of sparrows were located within 200 yards of each

other. Henslow's Sparrow alone appeared to be slightly decreased but this, if true (assessing the actual population of this secretive species would be a summer-long job), would be because of previous seasonal factors and could be explained by the early cessation of song secondary to the protracted hot, dry weather, making it difficult to locate breeding sites.

Corrigenda: Vol IX, #2, page 91 should read — Golden crowned Kinglet: arrival date Apr 1, maxima 70/hour Apr 10; departure date May 6. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arrival date Apr 4 (early) maxima 60/#hour Apr 18; departure date May 17.

151 *Seventh North Street, Syracuse 8*

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## REGION 6 — ST. LAWRENCE

FRANK A. CLINCH

The summer of 1959 was a little warmer than the average, and the rainfall in most places was more than is usual at this season. In general the results of the nesting season seemed to be good, but there is little of the unusual to report.

**Loons — Ducks:** No Common Egrets were reported this summer. An adult Gadwall was seen at the Wilson Hill Game Management Area in St. Lawrence County Jul 20. At this place there were one brood of Pintails and four broods of Shovelers (Wilson). These are new breeding records for this region. Green-winged Teal were also found to be nesting. Redheads were at Perch River Game Management Area in early June, but then they were not seen for some time. However, they did appear again in August. The results of the breeding season for ducks seem to be fairly good to good.

**Hawks — Owls:** A Golden Eagle was seen in St. Lawrence County in early June (Allen). Among the birds reported by Fritz Scheider at El Dorado Beach on Aug 2, 8, and 15 are: Killdeer, Ruddy Turnstone, Common Snipe, Spotted Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dowitcher (one), Least Sandpiper and Sanderlings. He also saw one Western Sandpiper Aug 2, and on Aug 15 12 Black-bellied Plovers and a Northern Phalarope. Some observers saw about the usual number of Upland Plovers, while others think there was a slight increase. The cuckoos were seen more often this summer. Most of them were Black-billed.

**Woodpeckers — Sparrows:** Young Red-headed Woodpeckers were seen at two nests, one early and the other late and several miles away. Around Watertown there were good numbers of Bank Swallows and many seemed to have raised young. Little damage was done to their nests by water or man removing the sand. At one place there were the usual numbers of Barn Swallows, but they raised fewer young. There were few Bluebirds.

173 *Haley St., Watertown*

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## SECTION 7 — ADIRONDACK - CHAMPLAIN

THOMAS LESPERANCE

I am very glad to be back in the North Country again after my visit to Florida, and I want to thank Miss Agnes Amstutz for the very capable job she did as regional editor during my absence.

The almost yearly complaint of summer drought and hot humid days would hold especially true for this season, and the water level of Lake Champlain has been definitely affected. For the second year in a row nesting birds seemed to be relatively scarce in the Keeseville area, but such was not the case in the Tupper Lake region.

**Loons — Owls:** A large colony of Great Blue Herons was noted along a portion of the western edge of Valcour Island in Lake Champlain, and a Common Egret was noted at the mouth of the Ausable River. The American Bittern and Green Heron seemed to be in usual numbers. The Blue-winged Teal enjoyed nesting success at

Wichman's Marsh, Port Kent. Black Ducks appeared to be down in numbers along Lake Champlain, but on inland ponds and lakes they were normal or above normal in numbers. Large concentrations of mergansers were noted in the Tupper Lake area as early as Jun 20 (Amstutz). Also noted there were a female and eight young Spruce Grouse on Jun 19. There appeared to be no change in the breeding population of Ring-billed and Herring Gulls. Five Black Terns were at Tupper Lake late in the period, an apparent first record for that locality.

**Goatsuckers — Sparrows:** Kingbirds seemed to predominate among the fly-catcher group, but the Yellow-bellied (one), and Olive-sided were reported from Tupper Lake. Rough-winged Swallows were about equal to last year's numbers. I was suprised that I noted no Cliff Swallows in the Keeseville area this summer; I had previously reported that this species seemed to be becoming scarcer locally. One male and two female Purple Martins occupied a local nesting house and both females reared young, and indication of polygamy among our feathered friends.

I noted Bluebirds in encouraging numbers this summer. As soon as this numbers increase became apparent, nesting boxes were put out for these birds and they were quickly taken over. I banded more Bluebirds this summer than during the previous ten. Catbirds, Wood Thrushes, Swainson's Thrushes, Gray-cheeked Thrushes, and Hermit Thrushes were all represented locally but certainly not to the degree of previous years.

The nesting site of the Mourning Warbler was found near Tupper Lake on Jun 9 (Amstutz). I have seen this bird near Keeseville the last several years but was not successful in locating a nest. Two Wilson's Warblers were also reported from Tupper Lake, and the locally rare Prairie Warbler has been seen near Keeseville. Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins were observed in numbers in the Tupper Lake area (Amstutz) early in the period.

#### Keeseville

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## REGION 8 — MOHAWK - HUDSON

JAMES K. MERITT

The big news this summer was the weather. It was a real scorcher and there was little rainfall to bring temporary relief. In brief, it was miserable.

I am certain that I am not the only regional editor to have difficulty in collecting summer records. After the spring migration is over, all but the most enthusiastic observers put away their binoculars until the fall. And the weather this summer was certainly no inspiration to get out. Be that as it may, the period did not pass without a few records and observations of interest. Not unexpectedly, these involved "southern" birds for the most part.

Coverage of the entire region continues to be far from adequate. I would much appreciate reports from such areas as the northern Catskills, Fulton County, and the Lake George vicinity.

**Loons — Ducks:** Two Common Egrets seen at Vischer Ponds on Jun 21 were the first reported locally this year (Schenectady Bird Club). The appearance of these birds this year was early; they normally do not arrive until early to mid July. This early appearance did not indicate a heavy incursion, as the period's high count for this species was the 11 at Vischer Ponds on Jul 19 (Hallenbeck). Common Egrets were at Stockport Station, along the lower Hudson, beginning the week of Jul 13 (Alan Devoe Bird Club), and three were noted at a farm pond at Lebanon Springs on Aug 5 (Radke). Black-crowned Night Herons seemed definitely scarce in relation to previous summers, but Green Herons were about normal. The chief attraction among the heron family this summer was the three immature Little Blue Herons first seen at Crescent Reservoir on Jul 19 (Hallenbeck). The birds were still present at the end of the period. This species is by no means seen in this area each year, and when the species does occur usually only one individual is represented. Least Bitterns were unreported this summer.

Five American Widgeon were at Crescent Reservoir on Aug 13 (Eddy, Hallenbeck).

These were the first southbound transients in this group, and their appearance was early. Reports of other ducks were confined to the common summer resident species (including the Redhead, which has been released in several local areas by the state conservation department). During July there were at least three successful Wood Duck nestings at Tuttle's Marsh, Columbia County; 23 young were counted trailing three adult birds.

**Hawks — Owls:** As usual Turkey Vulture reports were confined largely to the southern part of the region, and they became increasingly common there late in the period (ADBC). However, a Turkey Vulture was seen just west of Albany on Jun 21, and two were noted at Hadley, in the Adirondack foothills, on Jul 29 (Stone). A group of eight was observed at Gallupville on Aug 10 (Zimmer). A Sharp-shinned Hawk was in the Scotia area on Jul 23 (Hallenbeck), and another was at New Concord on Aug 13 (Radke). Other hawk reports were not out of the ordinary.

The Bobwhite was commonly reported in Columbia County (ADBC), and the species was reported in July in the New Salem area (Johnston, Linch). Another was heard in Scotia on Jul 29 (Meritt). At the beginning of June there were ten young (and one unhatched egg) in a Ruffed Grouse's nest at the Alan Devoe Bird Club's Columbia County sanctuary. A lone Coot seen near Scotia on Aug 1 marks the period's only report (Hallenbeck). Common Gallinules seemed to be quite regularly reported, and a Virginia Rail was noted on Jun 28 (Hallenbeck).

Five Upland Plovers were seen near Meadowdale on Jun 21, and it seems probable that the birds were on their breeding grounds. The five may well represent a family (Stone). Six Woodcock were flushed at New Concord on Jun 26 (Radke), and one of these birds was seen in Niskayuna on Jul 17 (Eddy). A Greater Yellowlegs was seen at Castleton on the unusual date of Jun 21 (Stone), and one of these birds was seen near Rexford on Aug 13 (Eddy, Hallenbeck). Solitary Sandpipers were seen at Canaan after Jul 15 (Gokay), and others were reported along the Mohawk near Schenectady the following week. A Lesser Yellowlegs and several Least Sandpipers were seen near Mohawk View on Jul 22 (Hallenbeck), and the latter birds were still present on Jul 26 (SBC).

Black-billed Cuckoos were rather commonly reported, especially in the southern part of the area, and the Yellow-billed was generally noted to a somewhat lesser degree. The Screech and Great Horned Owls were the only two members of that group to be recorded.

**Goatsuckers — Shrikes:** Pileated Woodpeckers were reported in average numbers at best. The Red-headed Woodpecker first seen in Scotia on May 19 continued to be present there until at least Jul 19 (Hallenbeck). Another Red-headed Woodpecker was observed in Niskayuna on Jun 23 (Kaskan), and still another was noted at Amsterdam on Jun 26 and 27 (Fitzgerald). The pair previously reported near Gallupville was still present, at least during the beginning of the period, and all indications pointed to breeding. This is an unprecedented number of reports for this species in this region.

A probable Acadian Flycatcher was noted in the Albany area on Jun 3 and for several days thereafter, but identification could not be confirmed. There were two June reports of the Olive-sided Flycatcher. One was at Red Rock on Jun 16 (Smilow), and another was noted near Meadowdale on Jun 21 (Stone). Phoebes were reported in encouraging numbers.

Brown Creepers stayed at Ghent throughout July (Erlenbach), and the in-and-out Caroline Wren was noted at Scotia on Jul 15 (Hallenbeck). A pair of Mockingbirds nested at Chatham Center in July (Ramsdell); to my knowledge this constitutes the first such nesting report for this region. As of Jul 16 there were two young in the nest. The Mockingbird was also reported at Ghent on Jul 28 and 29 (Erlenbach). These records are additional evidence of the northward push of this species which has become so evident in recent years in central and northern New Jersey. Bluebird numbers were still not up to normal levels by any means.

**Vireos — Warblers:** Both the Cerulean and Worm-eating Warblers were reported along the Indian Ladder trail at Thacher park on Jun 21 (Stone), and the Cerulean Warbler was also noted at Gallupville on Jul 7 (Eddy, Mabb). The Golden-winged Warbler was reported through Aug 4 at Nassau (Turner), and the Blue-winged, one of the rarer summer warbler residents locally, was seen quite regularly there (Shineman, Turner). Those two hybrids, the Brewster's and the Lawrence's, continued to be spotted at Nassau throughout most of July. On the

occasion the Lawrence's was seen feeding a Cowbird, while both a Blue-wing and a Golden-wing were seen feeding another Cowbird. The two nests that were constructed by the Lawrence's and Brewster's Warblers were subsequently collected and presented to the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell. Blackburnian adults were feeding young at Red Rock on Aug 1 and 3 (Smilow), and a Bay-breasted Warbler was at Nassau on Aug 1 and 7 (Turner). A Nashville Warbler was seen in Niskayuna on Aug 13 (Eddy); this particular bird was so excited about getting somewhere quickly that it hit a window. It was stunned and picked up, but it quickly recovered.

**Blackbirds — Sparrows:** Another southerner which nested locally this summer was the Orchard Oriole. This species was found breeding at Delmar, and as of Jul 26 there were still young in the nest (fide Ralph Palmer). Purple Finches were reported nesting in July at several Columbia County localities. The Pine Siskin was in Amsterdam at least until Jun 15, which is late date for that erratic bird (Fitzgerald). There were quite a few reports of nesting Cardinals from various areas. Not unexpectedly, these reports are becoming more frequent each year. Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows were noted in the Meadowdale area on Jun 21 (Stone), and there were other reports.

16 Ellen Lane, Scotia 2

## REGION 9 — DELAWARE - HUDSON

FRED N. HOUGH

For the lower Hudson Valley it was a summer of frequent showers and warm and humid weather. Birding, of course, was at a minimum during this vacation season, but nevertheless field observations were sufficient to give us at least a fair picture of the nesting status of our local birds.

Downstate, particularly in Rockland and Westchester Counties, many "old time" birders are witnessing a shifting and changing of nesting populations due to the development of human communities which has been rapidly changing the face of the countryside since World War II. This means a destruction or displacement of nesting sites, a shifting of nesting species, and a change in the birdwatcher's expectations. In the upper counties this condition is not as pronounced as in the more populated districts of the region. The Bluebird, for instance, has been forced to move on in many areas formerly occupied, its nesting site destroyed by large scale development and land alteration. It is one bird that would respond to nesting boxes placed in fairly open areas of available countryside. This would be a worthwhile project for bird groups. All in all, if we can see amidst the progress of human affairs, it would appear that the nesting season was about normal with the usual ups and downs of certain species.

In pursuit of their Catskill Mountain bird studies Fred Hough and Dan Smiley added another trip on June 13 and 14, this time to Peekamoose Mountain (3843') in Ulster County. Wind, rain and cold (trace of snow) limited the planned scope of activity on this trip, but the prime objective of working out the status of Bicknell's Thrush was, however, accomplished. Peekamoose is topped with a predominant stand of balsam, not an extensive tract, but none the less large enough to form the necessary prerequisite of habitat attracting Bicknell's Thrush. Several birds were noted and one was heard singing at 31 degrees on the 14th in an icy wind whipping violently through the trees over the top. The establishment of Bicknell's on this mountain may well represent the southern extent of its known breeding range.

A Hummingbird was also seen atop Peekamoose, visiting the blossoms of the common Azalea, and it seemed quite out of place.

**Loons — Ducks:** About mid-July Martha Earl began noticing the Common Egrets about central Orange County. This egret is a regular summer visitant to many parts of our region, usually appearing in July. Two pair of Canada Geese were again found nesting at Swift Pond, near Dover Plains, Dutchess County. They are considered wild birds (Dutchess County Bird Club). Several Wood Ducks brought off their broods in the Tri-Loba Hill Sanctuary area in Westchester during the early part of the season and were seen by Stanley Grierson.

**Hawks — Owls:** Through regular observation Dan Smiley reports an upswing in the local Grouse population cycle about the Mohonk Lake property in Ulster County. Apparently the Upland Plover sparingly nests about suitable sites in the Hudson Valley, probably each year. A few years ago a nesting record was made in Ulster Co., and this summer a pair with young were found near Standfordville in Dutchess County (DCBC), making a first known record. The Solitary Sandpiper was found all season about a swamp near Millbrook, Dutchess Co. (DCBC). In Dutchess and Ulster Counties the cuckoos were reported as being more numerous this year.

**Goatsuckers — Shrikes:** In the upper parts of our region the Phoebe seems to have nested in near normal numbers. Swallows also appeared to be normal for the period. In New Paltz, Ulster Co., a pair of Purple Martins used a single apartment box in which to nest (Robert Pyle). The Tufted Titmouse continued to show signs of increase. Two Brown Creeper nesting sites were found in Dutchess Co. this year, one in Bog Hollow, near Dover Plains and the other in Shunpike, Town of Washington (DCBC). In Kingston, Ulster Co., Mr. Raymond Van Valkenburgh had a Carolina Wren nesting in an ornament on his porch. In the early part of the summer a Mockingbird was seen (F. Hough) in Staatsburg, Dutchess Co., and was reported to have stayed there most of the season. Several successful nesting reports on the Bluebird came from Dutchess Co (DCBC), and a few from Ulster County. Elsewhere there was little comment other than a noted scarcity of the bird.

**Vireos — Warblers:** Observers in Dutchess Co. have failed to turn up any nesting White-eyed Vireos in that area for the past several years. Both Lawrence's and Brewster's hybrids were seen in Dutchess this season (DCBC). Henry and Ilse Dunbar established records that strongly indicate nesting of the Cerulean Warbler in the Black Creek area near "Slabsides" in Ulster County. At least two were seen during June and up to early July. On Aug 4 a male Blackburnian Warbler was noted feeding young near Moores Mills in Dutchess Co. and may well have nested nearby. No previous nesting records have been made for the country (DCBC). On Aug 13 a Northern Waterthrush took to visiting the feeder of Miss Betty Odell at her home in Katonah, Westchester County. It was watched closely for several days.

**Blackbirds — Sparrows:** The Cardinal continues to be well established in all areas suitable for it. It has been an off season for the Henslow's Sparrow. The Chipping Sparrow sometimes puts its nest close to the ground. One at Kripplebush, Ulster Co., chose a field site, putting the nest in a small cedar one foot from the ground. At Lomontville, Ulster Co., Henry Dunbar saw a nest five feet from the ground in a pear tree.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Dutchess County Bird Club into the fold of reporting counties for Region 9, thus making our Hudson Valley coverage more widespread and complete. An active club in a great area should indeed bring forth many worthwhile and interesting records.

*Accord 1*

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## REGION 10 — MARINE

JOHN J. ELLIOTT

Breeding results varied on the Long Island nesting grounds, with tremendous success noted in the Jamaica Bay Sanctuary. No violent storms came during early summer to destroy gull or tern colonies, and the lack of extremely high tides aided such birds as rails, Black Ducks, and marsh-breeding sparrows. Rainfall, though, was plentiful, and this offered a good cover crop. Whereas the numerous breeding species of water birds were

successful at Jamaica Bay under the skillful protection of Caretaker Johnson, the same was not true at Jones Beach. Nesting Black Ducks and Gadwalls have been declining in numbers there in recent years, perhaps because of predators. A summer investigation by a group of observers might disclose some interesting facts in this connection.

The continual search for beach grass (*Ammophila*) to vegetate large tracts of the new ocean parkway at Gilgo and Oak Beach has opened up some areas in the dunes and provided desirable open stretches for the benefit of breeding Common Terns and skimmers. An excellent colony was to be found at Loop Causeway, and another was at Oak Beach. The Captree Herring Gull colony continued to increase in numbers.

Dennis Puleston of Brookhaven reported breeding birds to have been greatly reduced in numbers on central and eastern Long Island. This applied especially to the warblers and other insectivores. The Prairie Warbler was almost completely missing. Roy Latham's report from Orient was about equally as discouraging. Around Greenport there are usually four or more pairs of Redstarts nesting, but none could be located this summer nor could any Black and White Warblers be found. A few Prairie Warblers were scattered along the North Fork. Remarkable among the warbler group was a singing male Kentucky in a swampy spot at Mattituck early in June and another in Greenport about the same time.

**Loons — Ducks:** Over a dozen young of the Pied-billed Grebe were found at Jamaica Bay (Johnson). A Cory's Shearwater was seen at Moriches Jul 25 (D. Guthrie). Three pairs of Common Egrets and four pairs of Snowy Egrets bred at Jamaica Bay (Johnson). Of a total of 84 nests in a colony on Ocean Boulevard south of Jones Beach Sanctuary Pond in late June, 72 were empty (presumably from previous occupancy by Black-crowned Night Herons), some half dozen were still occupied by Black-crowns, and the rest contained 23 young of both Snowy and Common Egrets, the latter slightly more numerous (Elliott). On the edges of this colony were several Green Heron nests. The above mentioned colony was at a new location; the large bushy backstretches of Tobay, north of the pond once yielding a crop of several hundred young herons and egrets, were this year largely unoccupied.

There was no report this year of the Wood Ibis which turned up so spectacularly last year, but the Glossy Ibis appeared in greatest abundance ever with a maximum of 11 on Jul 12 at Loop Causeway, South Freeport (E. Levine, A. Penberthy). At Jamaica Bay four or five were present daily for several weeks, and at Moriches Bay one was seen on Aug 12.

Among the more unusual species of nesting ducks at Jamaica Bay were the Blue-winged Teal (at least one brood seen), the Shoveler (a brood of 11 seen at about ten days old), and the Ruddy Duck (Johnson). Over 50 young of the latter were seen. Caretaker Johnson also mentioned seeing two young of the Canada Goose, a feral bird in this region. Seen at Jones Beach on Jun 29 were three pairs of Blue-winged Teal, six Shovelers (four of them males), and a good population of Gadwall. Forty adult Gadwalls and four broods with six or eight young in each were present there on Jul 5 (D. Guthrie).

**Hawks — Owls:** With several nesting records of Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks came more abundant reports of Broad-wings, especially from the north shore of central Long Island. Spectacular news of the shooting of an "immature Golden Eagle" which had been "threatening" the young swans and ducks on a north shore estate at Lloyd Harbor on Jul 27 was relegated more or less to the commonplace when the bird was correctly identified, after newspaper publicity, as a Bald Eagle by Eugene Mudge of Northport.

A Yellow Rail was reported at Jamaica Bay on Jun 5, and the bird was flushed again by men mowing reeds on Jun 7 (Johnson). At least three broods of Common Gallinules were seen, and the population of young Coot was estimated at 50.



Latham reported an early flight of Woodcock in early July at Greenport. This continued throughout the month, and he noted some nesting there also. The Whimbrel was observed at Jamaica Bay on Jul 12 (Peter Post), and the first Willet appeared there on Jul 4 (Bull). In early July 175 Dowitchers put in an appearance, also at Jamaica Bay. One adult and one young Upland Plover were noted near Roosevelt Field on Jun 20 (Guthrie). On Meadow Island, off Loop Causeway, a Curlew Sandpiper was observed Aug 8, and seven Stilt Sandpipers were there the following day (Levine, Ward). A lone Wilson's Phalarope was at Jamaica Bay on Jul 18 (I. Alperia, Levine). There were no jaeger or rare gull reports.

The Herring Gull colony at Captree continued to increase with an estimated 800 adults and 600 young, of which 277 were banded by A. Penberthy and E. Levine. A total of 711 Common Terns were banded at Loop Causeway and Jones Beach by the same observers. In this Loop Causeway area it was estimated that there were 900 breeding pairs and 1500 young, but at Jones Beach a decline in the colony size was noted. Twenty-eight Black Skimmers were also banded on the Loop Causeway, and a fair-sized flock of young skimmers had moved into the Jamaica Bay area by the end of the period. An increase of cuckoos on Long Island over last year was noted.

**Goatsuckers — Shrikes:** An Acadian Flycatcher was found in swampy woods at Greenport on Jul 18 and 25 (Latham), and one was calling constantly at Yaphank on Jun 7 (Puleston). The latter observer also reported a Traill's Flycatcher calling consistently at Moriches on Jun 22. A probable spring-migrating Olive-sided Flycatcher was seen at the Davis Wildlife Refuge, Staten Island, on Jun 4 (Mrs. M. Weingartner). A Cliff Swallow was reported at Jamaica Bay Aug 11; 20 pairs of Bank Swallows were found at Northport in mid-June (Mudge). Mockingbirds nested at Jamaica Bay Sanctuary and raised two broods of three young each (Johnson). Nesting Hermit Thrushes continued to be rare with only one-third of the numbers of ten years ago in the Riverhead area (Latham). None could be found at Coram or Selden where they were fairly common up to a few years ago (Elliot). Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatches, and House Wrens continued to be comparatively scarce, and there were no breeding records of the Short-billed Marsh Wren. The Wood Thrush was scarce on eastern Long Island, an dvery few records of the Bluebird were turned in.

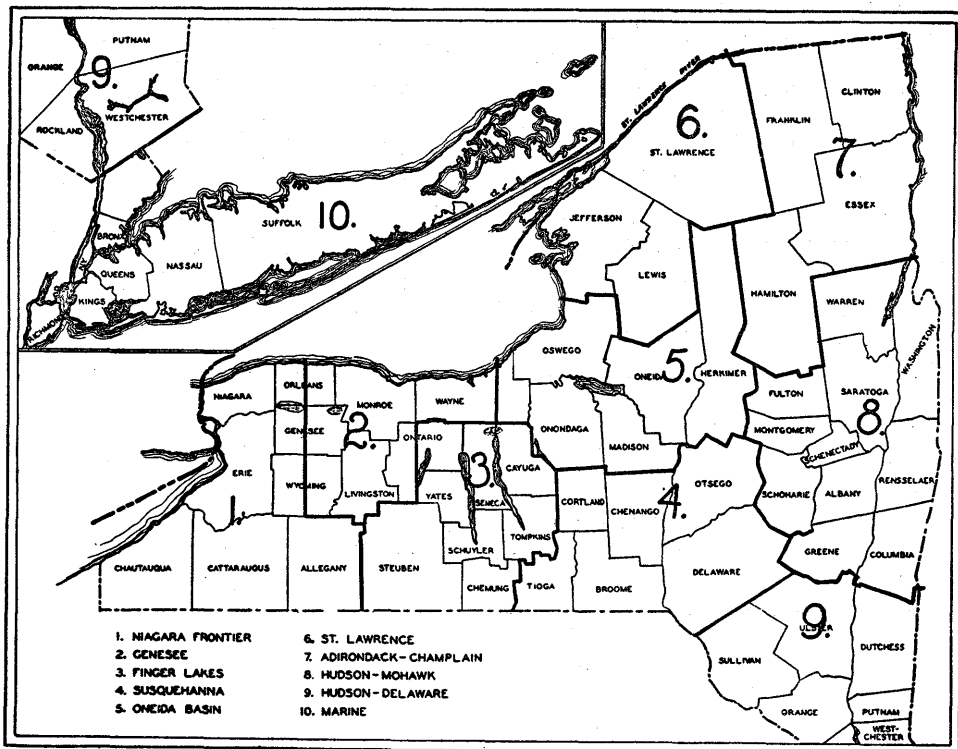
**Vireos — Sparrows:** Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos were practically absent from their old haunts in the Oyster Bay - Syosset area. Black and White Warblers, Prairie Warblers, and American Redstarts were down in numbers. Four or more pairs of Redstarts nested at Greenport a few years ago and two or three pairs of Black and White Warblers were formerly found there, but no breeding birds of either species could be located there this summer (Latham). A late Blackburnian passed through West Hills on Jun 13 (Elliott, Ward). Yellow Warblers appeared fairly plentiful. There was a late Parula Warbler in song at Brookhaven on Jun 18 (Puleston). Encouraging was the report of Yellow-breasted Chats in Northport in mid-June with six "singing" in a tract of about 200 acres (Mudge). The first report of the returning Northern Waterthrush was at Far Rockaway on Jul 29 (Bull).

Four Bobolinks were found on nesting grounds at Babylon on Jun 20 (Baldwin Bird Club), and an Orchard Oriole was singing at Brookhaven that same day (Puleston) — the only record in summer this year. Two young Cardinals were found at Freeport in early summer (Alperin); a Rose-breasted Grosbeak Juvenile was observed in very early August at Massapequa, although the species has not been known to breed in that area. Several Indigo Buntings summered at West Hills.

The House Finch continued to be plentiful, but no European Goldfinches were reported. Grasshopper Sparrows continued to be scarce in Nassau County, but a pair was at Garden City on Jun 20 and one was reported at Hicksville about the same time (Guthrie, Mayer, Rose). Two pairs of Vesper Sparrows, one individual carrying food, were noted at Calverton on Jun 3 (Puleston). A Lark Bunting was reported at Jamaica Bay Jun 6 and seen by numerous observers. A pair of Chipping Sparrows nested at Orient in a low privet hedge, and the nest was completely made up of fine rootlets. There was no hair which was almost a necessity in the nest lining of this bird years ago when horses were in more general use.

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