

THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

Autumn Number

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SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

From U. S. Weather Bureau Reports (Cleveland Hopkins Airport)

- September - The weather was rather cool except for a five-day period at the middle of the month when the temperature approached or soared into the nineties, with new highs of 95, 94, and 93 degrees on the 17th, 18th, and 19th, respectively. Rainfall of 1.61 inches was only about 50% of normal, while the amount of sunshine was adequate.
- October - Temperatures were normal, with the first light frost on the 22nd and the first trace of snow on the night of the 24th. Total precipitation of 5.88 inches was almost 3.50 inches above normal.
- November - Cloudy and cold, the minimum of 8 degrees on the 28th setting a new low record for that date. The amounts of rainfall and snowfall were both slightly above normal, the first appreciable snow occurring on the 19th when some three inches covered the ground.

COMMENT ON THE SEASON

Outstanding among the host of southbound birds which passed through our region during the autumn was the spectacular flight of Canada Geese and of Whistling Swans during the night and throughout much of the day of November 5. The Swans, in particular, occurred in unprecedented numbers. There were some 300 on Lake Erie off Mentor Headlands (Booth), an estimated 1,000 at White City (Harty), and a flock of 500 or more on the ponds of the Sherwin Farm in Waite Hill. Outside our region to the east, from seven to nine thousand Swans spent the entire day and night of the 5th at Pymatuning Lake according to the account of the warden there (Hill), while from the Sandusky Bay area to the west we had a report of a tremendous flock numbering as many as 12,000 birds. The Swans did not linger in our immediate region, however, and the last record for the season is of a mere nine at the Sherwin Farm on November 16.

At the very time that the Canada Geese and Whistling Swans were appearing over Cleveland, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service agent in Minneapolis announced that "one of the greatest migrations of waterfowl in years" was pouring through the Mississippi Flyway. Undoubtedly a considerable portion of this vast legion of migrants spilled over into the lower Great Lakes as is evidenced by the sudden concentrations of certain species along the lakefront. Thus on November 5, between Lakewood Park and Edgewater Park but chiefly at the latter, there were some 350 Horned Grebes, 10,000 Lesser Scaup Ducks, and an estimated 3,000 Ruddy Ducks (Davies). This is the greatest number of Ruddies of which we have any record, and they stayed on in large numbers throughout November, more than 900 being reported on the 27th. The Lesser Scaup increased in numbers until by November 26 and 27, there were an estimated 20,000 between Clifton Beach and Edgewater Park (Klamm).

The Redhead was briefly abundant, a flock of 750 occupying the waters off the Perkins Beach-Edgewater Park area on November 19 (Klamm). Both the American and the Red-breasted Merganser, which sometimes constitute about 25% of the general wintering waterfowl population, were remarkably scarce during November when they usually begin to appear in some numbers. For the American Merganser we have just two records totaling only three individuals.

It is particularly interesting to note that all of the sizable congregations of waterfowl occurred on the lake west of the mouth of the Cuyahoga River; at least we had no reports of large numbers of ducks from such areas as White City, Eastlake, or Fairport. Gulls, too, were apparently most abundant on the west side of Cleveland, and on November 20, at Edgewater Park there was a multitude of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls estimated at 20,000 together with some 2,000 Bonaparte's Gulls (Davies).

The relative scantiness of our records and their tendency to be confined to weekends make it unwise to attempt to draw any positive conclusions concerning the peak migration periods of any given species of land bird. It does appear, however, that there was a considerable movement of Nighthawks from September 16 through 18. Kinglets,

COMMENT ON THE SEASON (Cont'd.)

both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned, were much less abundant in the Rocky River Valley this autumn than in the autumn of 1954 (Valentine), but they were quite abundant in metropolitan Cleveland on October 19, 20, and 21. On the 20th, in particular, at about 8:00 a.m., Golden-crowns were flitting through the trees along Euclid Avenue near Adelbert College, while throughout the day in downtown Cleveland both species tarried in such tiny green oases as Eastman Park and the grounds of St. John's Cathedral.

Analysis of the warbler records discloses a sizable movement over the Labor Day week-end, when 21 species were reported on September 4, and again on September 18, when 20 species were reported, among them large numbers of Black-throated Green and Bay-breasted Warblers and Redstarts. So numerous were warblers about Buttonbush Bog at the Holden Arboretum on the morning of the 18th "that an accurate count was out of the question" (Valentine). A wave of Myrtle Warblers flowed through the Rocky River Valley on October 8 and 9, more than 200 being reported on the 8th (Klamm). The Western Palm Warbler, which is usually a common migrant in late September and the first several weeks of October, was notably scarce this autumn. The largest number reported was 20 on October 9, at Black Brook (Smith), with no other observer reporting more than three individuals on any one date; nor do we have any record for this species subsequent to October 10.

There were many September records for the Gray-cheeked Thrush - far more than usual - but even more exceptional was the number of reports of the Lincoln's Sparrow, a species which so often escapes or is overlooked by even veteran observers. This autumn, however, there were 14 September and October records totaling 25 individual birds, as compared with a total of only five individuals in the autumn of 1954.

Among large flocks of birds reported were the following: 1,000 Redwings on October 23, in Rocky River Metropolitan Park (Davies); 500 Bronzed Grackles on October 2, in the same area (Klamm); 1,000 Cowbirds on October 15, in a corn field near Beaver Creek (Davies).

To round out the picture of the autumn season we must list these species for which we had no records whatever: American Egret, Cerulean Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow. In addition, we had just one record each for the Tree and Bank Swallows and only two records for the Rough-wing.

For those who are annotating their copy of Birds of Cleveland, the following are new early and late dates of occurrence:

New Earliest Fall Date

Canada Goose (50) - September 21, Lakewood (Davies)
Tree Sparrow (2) - September 25, Grand River (Booth)

COMMENT ON THE SEASON (Cont'd.)

New Latest Fall Date

Yellow-billed Cuckoo (2) - October 30, Rocky River Reservation (Davies)
Nighthawk (1) - October 15, Streetsboro (Knight)
Kingbird (1) - October 9, Black Brook (Smith)
Rough-winged Swallow (1) - September 26 (Akers)
Bank Swallow (1) - November 12, Perkins Beach (Harty)
Tennessee Warbler (1) - October 12, Orange Village (Davies)
Nashville Warbler (1) - October 30, Rocky River Reservation (Davies)
Magnolia Warbler (1) - November 5, Gordon Park (Harty)
Grinnell's Waterthrush (1) - October 23, Shaker Lakes (Deininger)

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Double-crested Cormorant - A solitary bird on October 9, at Black Brook (Smith) and two birds flying together in the same locality on the morning of October 12 (Newman), constitute our only records of the "Shag" for this season.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron - Hitherto considered decidedly rare in our region, this species has now appeared in the Rocky River Reservation for three consecutive years although this autumn we had only one record of two immature birds on September 3 (Valentine), whereas in previous seasons we had a half dozen dates of occurrence extending into October. We did have one additional record, however, also of an immature bird, which was first reported from the Lower Shaker Lake on September 16 (Knight), after which it was present daily through September 24 (Sullivan). This particular individual was not at all wary and was easily approached.

Blue Goose - A flock of about 100 on the lakefront off East 72nd Street on November 16 (Harty), is the largest number reported in the Cleveland region in many years, nearly all of our records consisting of stray individuals or of a mere two or three birds.

Surf Scoter - Out of a trio observed off the breakwall at Fairport on November 2 (Smith), two were shot by a hunter. A second record of this uncommon visitor is that of a lone bird at Rocky River on November 24 and 26 (Carrothers).

Goshawk - On the afternoon of November 20, this imposing Accipiter was seen as it alternately flapped and sailed quite low over the brushy fields near the intersection of Fairmount Boulevard and Brainard Road, in Pepper Pike Village. The whitish eye stripe was readily apparent (King). Again on the afternoon of the 27th, what was presumably this same bird flew along the far edge of the field at about treetop level and with set wings glided into a small patch of dense woodland where it was immediately lost to sight (Newman). Our last previous record for this species is December 2, 1952, in Painesville .

Bald Eagle - Until it flew off seemingly in order to escape the noisy heckling of a Crow, this immature Eagle had perched near the top of a tree in a wooded area in the Rocky River Reservation on October 9 (Klamm).

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS (Cont'd)

Hudsonian Curlew - This rare visitor was noted feeding and flying along the beach at the mouth of the Grand River on September 6, 9, and 18 (Smith and Harty). Our last previous record was also of a single bird at Fairport on July 10, 1952.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper - One on September 9, at Painesville Beach (Harty) and one on September 11, at White City (Newman) make a total of six of this rare migrant to be reported within the Cleveland region dating as far back as 1839, when two specimens were collected by Dr. Jared P. Kirtland.

Marbled Godwit - Two birds - the rarest of the rare in our region - were first seen on September 22, at Nimisila Lake by several observers who were puzzled as to their identity. On September 24, however, they were positively identified by Alexander Karlo and by Mr. and Mrs. George Wiley. Thereafter the two Godwits were seen almost daily by a number of observers who last reported them on October 2. Not only is this the first sight record for this species, it is also just the second record of occurrence in the last 115 years, Dr. Kirtland having been presented with two birds shot at Fairport in the summer of 1840.

Franklin's Gull - The first record since November 20, 1948, when two were seen, is that of a solitary individual among a group of Bonaparte's Gulls at the ore docks east of Edgewater Park, also on November 20. This bird, which still had considerable black on the head, joined in the activities of the other gulls - sometimes flying and sometimes resting on the water (Davies).

Mourning Dove - Having found a plentiful supply of food in a cornfield and in the grain thrown out for the waterfowl at the Sherwin Farm in Waite Hill, a flock of Doves consisting originally of 35 to 50 birds kept adding new members until a peak of 120 was reached on November 20, which is the largest number reported in many years.

Black-billed Cuckoo - At North Chagrin Reservation on September 7, a young bird of this species was scolding near a nest which resembled the casually constructed nest of a cuckoo. This record indicates an unusually late nesting (Carrothers).

Snowy Owl - Harassed by an angry band of Blue Jays, this winter wanderer glided swiftly along the course of the Chagrin River not far from Hach Sanctuary on October 22, when it was observed briefly by Louis Gaeta before it disappeared beyond a dense stand of trees. This is a new earliest fall date.

Wood Thrush - A lone bird spent several days late in November in the neighborhood of a house near River Road, Willoughby Hills, where on the 30th, which was the last date it was seen, it found shelter in an open garage during a heavy flurry of snow (Sherwin).

Northern Shrike - There were two reports of this occasional visitor: one on November 25, in Mayfield Heights (Tramer) and one on November 27, in Pepper Pike Village (Newman).

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS (Cont'd.)

Migrant Shrike - A beautiful specimen in its new fall feathers, this Shrike was observed at the Holden Arboretum on October 23, which is a new latest fall date of occurrence (King).

Golden-winged Warbler - An addition to the very few records we have of this species in the fall is that of a handsomely plumaged male in the Shaker Lakes region on September 19 (Sullivan).

Hooded Warbler - Two unusually late singing dates for this species are of a bird which was warbling loudly at North Chagrin Reservation on September 8, and the same or another bird which was singing there on September 24 (Carrothers).

Wilson's Warbler - At mid-afternoon on September 5, in a clearing in Rocky River Reservation where large piles of brush had been dumped, there was the greatest concentration of birds of this species ever reported from our region, and possibly from any other region. For there were some 250 or more of these "black caps" fidgeting about in the loose brush or darting out to snap up small flying insects. Although there was a considerable movement of other warblers through the river valley that day, only the Wilson's Warbler was congregated at that particular spot (Klamm).

Redstart - On the exceptionally late date of November 19, in the midst of a heavy snow-fall Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Watson watched a female or an immature male flitting about and fanning its tail in the doubtful shelter of a clump of barberry bushes at the Lower Shaker Lake.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak - A fully adult male was caroling with springtime fervor in a small wooded ravine in Cleveland Heights on October 22, which is a new latest fall date of occurrence for this species (Tramer).

Evening Grosbeak - A group of seven reported by Walter Smith from the YMCA camp, River Road, North Chagrin, was our only record for this autumn.

FIELD NOTES

A Golden Eagle! Early in the afternoon of October 12, at Lander Road and Shaker Boulevard, Pepper Pike Village, I discovered a Golden Eagle in flight at an altitude of about 100 feet and at a distance of only about 200 feet, so that in the bright sunshine of the warm autumn day the identifying characteristics of this species were quite evident. The Eagle, which was proceeding in a southerly direction against a steady 15 mile an hour south wind, was alternately gliding and then circling upward on the ascending thermals to gain altitude for another glide which would carry it ever further south. In this manner the bird gradually moved on until after about five minutes it was just a black dot in the far-reaching blue sky. (Our last previous record for this species, which has been reported in our region only a few times, is May 28, 1940, at the Holden Arboretum. -Ed.)

DAVID SWETLAND

FIELD NOTES (Cont'd.)

Chimney Swifts Bed Down for the Night. As I was walking along Detroit Avenue at about 7:45 p.m. on September 15, I saw a number of Chimney Swifts circling low overhead. When I neared the Lakewood Little Theatre, more Swifts appeared and in the next 15 minutes hundreds of them were swarming around a large chimney, or perhaps it is an air duct. A few of the birds entered from time to time, but most of them kept moving around the spot in great confusion and seemed to be waiting for the exact moment to plunge into the opening. Then just as darkness descended, the Swifts poured down by the dozens until the last one had disappeared. I could not help wondering how that chimney could accommodate such a large flock, which I conservatively estimated at 300 birds.

FRED J. ACKERMANN

Hermit Thrush Eats Forbidden Fruit. On October 31, I observed a Hermit Thrush eating an apple on the ground in the shelter of a small grove of apple trees densely overgrown with wild grapevine. The bird would rip off and eat the skin and then would poke into the soft pulp. Almost a third of one apple was eaten while I watched, and a second apple which was partly eaten bore the bill marks of what was presumably this same bird.

ROBERT MALY

Singing of the Lincoln's Sparrow. There is a pocket-handkerchief marsh just over the fence of Timber Creek Farm at Bass Lake, Chardon. Young willows - then almost bare of leaf on October 9 - together with alders, cattail, and waist-high grasses make a jungle with a narrow opening where a tiny stream meanders through. Hearing a strange song there, I decided to move through the shielding undergrowth to discover the identity of the singer.

The bird flitted about, hidden by the alders and grasses, but could be seen easily when he perched on a willow twig now and then. Resembling a Song Sparrow at first glance, he showed the heavy stripes on the head and the finely streaked breast with a buffy band that marked him as a Lincoln's Sparrow.

The song was somewhat like that of a Purple Finch but was not so sweet in tone and seemed much more emphatic. A second Sparrow moved about in the undergrowth, and in all I heard the song seven or eight times but could not determine whether both birds were singing. If I had not seen the one bird's throat moving and his bill open, I should have been certain that the bird and the song did not belong together. It was reassuring to read Peterson and find that he, too, compared the song to that of the Purple Finch.

MARJORIE RAMISCH

Late Nesting of the Barn Owl in Northeastern Ohio. For many years Barn Owls have nested in an unused silo on the Gilcrest Farm near Hartville, Ohio. During that time from four to seven eggs have been laid and hatched each year on the floor of the empty silo.

FIELD NOTES (Cont'd.)

In mid-November 1955, members of the Gilcrest and Gamble families discovered a second brood of nestling Barn Owls for that year occupying the same site. There were five nestlings of varying sizes as usual. During a period of snow and freezing temperature (20 F) at the end of November and first of December, three of the nestlings were killed. Two of them were decapitated, but the carcasses were not eaten. Either the larger nestlings or the parent birds killed them at a time when procuring food was difficult. This cannibalistic act may have been the result of either competition for food or conservation of food to permit a few nestlings to survive rather than all starving to death at a time of food shortage. The survivors were banded on December 4, with number 515-23560 and number 515-23561.

This was the second time that a second clutch was known to be produced in this silo during the same year. In 1952 the first clutch of eggs was laid in the spring on a platform near the top of the silo. This was destroyed and a second one was deposited in June on the floor of the silo where the Barn Owls have nested ever since. Not until 1955 was a brood found in the late fall. Williams, in his *Birds of the Cleveland Region* (1950, p. 78), lists one other record of the Barn Owl nesting in the late fall season.

RALPH W. DEXTER
Department of Biology
Kent State University

GAMBEL'S SPARROW IN THE CLEVELAND REGION

by
Merit B. Skaggs

Bird banders have an unusual opportunity to add to the distribution data on certain hard to identify birds. For example, the Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow (Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii) is next to impossible to identify in the field as it appears so much like the Eastern White-crowned Sparrow (Zonotrichia leucophrys leucophrys). The short black stripe from eye to bill is the mark an Eastern White-crowned Sparrow must have but a Gambel's must lack. In the bander's hand, identification is easy and sure.

In addition to the three records published in Birds of Cleveland (1950), the writer has several additional items relating to Gambel's Sparrow.

On October 10, 1953, an adult bird was trapped near Willoughby and banded with No. 21-154685. The lack of the black eye-stripe was immediately noticed while the bird was still in the trap.

On October 17, 1954, I banded an immature bird that did not appear to have the dark eye-to-bill stripe of the Eastern White-crowned Sparrow. Since it was in immature plumage, the head stripes were brownish instead of black as in the adult plumage. This tends to make identification a little difficult. The bird was banded with No. 21-154792 and reported as "probably Gambel's Sparrow". Later, Dr. H. C. Oberholser informed me

GAMBEL'S SPARROW IN THE CLEVELAND REGION (Cont'd.)

that Gambel's Sparrow can be identified in immature plumage.

During the 1955 fall migration period, I examined with special care all immature White-crowned Sparrows trapped. On October 29, a bird was trapped that had no evidence of the dark eye stripe. I am, therefore, reporting this bird (band No. 23-157151) as an immature Gambel's Sparrow. The bird was retrapped November 2.

Some idea of the frequency of the Gambel's Sparrow in our area may be judged from my finding five out of 615 White-crowned Sparrows banded over a period of about 12 years. This would be .81% or one in 123. In addition, two birds were identified in adult plumage as intermediates between Gambel's and the Eastern White-crowned Sparrow. The writer agrees that it would be very difficult to detect the difference in the field except under the most favorable conditions such as good light and short range.

(It should be noted that the only records in our region for the Gambel's Sparrow, which is the western race of the Eastern White-crowned Sparrow, are the six records resulting from the patient and persistent banding activities of Merit B. Skaggs at his former home in South Euclid and more recently at his present home near Willoughby. - Ed.)

BIRDS IN THE BACKYARD

by

Jean A. Staiger

From January through November, 1955 my backyard bird watching has produced a record of 61 species, which would seem to prove again that the size of an area is not as important as is the hospitality it affords in the form of food, water, and shelter.

Our lot, which is 60 feet wide and contains about one quarter acre, is located about one and one-half blocks from Main Street and one mile from the principal crossroad, Main and Market Streets, in the City of Akron. The neighborhood is well built up, and there is little vacant land. The lot is surrounded by a fence and shrubbery, including privet, bush honeysuckle, high bush cranberry, dogwood, barberry, beauty-bush, mountain ash, and honeysuckle and matrimony vine. A grapevine has run up into a tree over the compost corner, where a pokeberry grows in lush profusion. A few young mulberry trees occupy a small, weedy vacant lot just back of our fence.

Although we have a small pool and a bird bath, during September and October I set up a sprinkler which permitted a slow but steady drip into two shallow pans. Most of my observations have been made from my kitchen window during meal-time, but in the early fall I set up a 20x telescope in an upstairs window, focusing it on the sprinkler. Taking my lunch up there, I often sat with a sandwich in one hand and one eye glued to the scope, obtaining exciting picture-book closeups of the birds that came to bathe and drink. In the three autumn months, I recorded 50 species actually on our lot or in the air overhead, ranging from the Sparrow Hawk to the Song Sparrow and including the following 16 species of warblers: Tennessee, Nashville, Yellow, Magnolia, Cape May,

BIRDS IN THE BACKYARD (Cont'd.)

Myrtle, Black-throated Green, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Pine, Palm, Grinnell's Water-thrush, Connecticut, Hooded, Wilson's, and Redstart. Most frequent visitor among the warblers was the Cape May, which was observed on all but six days during September.

Among the other autumn migrants were such uncommon backyard birds as the Redheaded Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Blue-headed Vireo. In addition, we have as permanent residents a pair of Screech Owls which for the last three years have raised young in a nesting box located on an adjoining lot.

Ornithology (Gr. ornithos, of a bird; logos, a discourse) is the Science of Birds. Ornithology consists in the rational arrangement and exposition of all that is known of birds, and the logical inference of much that is not known. Ornithology treats of the physical structure, physiological processes, and mental attributes of birds; of their habits and manners; of their geographic distribution and geological succession; of their probable ancestry; of their every relation to one another and to all other animals, including man, - in short, of their significance in Nature and Supernature.

- From: Key to North American Birds, Fourth Edition,
by Elliot Coues. Published in 1896.

CENSUS OF SHOREBIRDS AND OTHER WATERFOWL ON BALDWIN AND WALLACE LAKES,

BEREA, OHIO By: JAMES F. AKERS

1955	JULY					AUGUST					SEPTEMBER										OCTOBER					
	15	17	18	19	20	6	7	8	28	29	2	3	4	5	7	9	10	15	20	21	22	23	28	4	12	19
GREAT BLUE HERON		1	1	4	1				1	1					1	1	1			2	4	2	2	1		
GREEN HERON	1	4	2		3				1											2	1	1				
MALLARD																								1		
BALDPATE																								1		4
BLUE-WINGED TEAL									1	1																
WOOD DUCK		2	1										2													2
SEMI-PALMATED PLOVER					1	2				1	1															
KILLDEER	3	4	3	3	4				4	106	25	95	45	35	25	86		52		12	8	15	35	15		
GOLDEN PLOVER																			1							
SPOTTED SANDPIPER		1			1	1					1															
SOLITARY SANDPIPER				1	1																					
GREATER YELLOWLEGS											1	1						2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
LESSER YELLOWLEGS					1																					1
PECTORAL SANDPIPER					2					3	2	6	6									2		2		
LEAST SANDPIPER	2				3					1	1															
SEMI-PALMATED SANDPIPER						2			3	3	1	1	1													
WESTERN SANDPIPER										2																

REMARKS: During July, Baldwin Lake level slowly lowered exposing mud favorable to shorebirds. On August 8, Baldwin Lake was again normal with no mud exposed. By September 15, Wallace Lake level began to fall and towards the end of the month both lake bottoms were almost entirely exposed.