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EVENING GROSBEAKS IN NORTHEAST TENNESSEE

By FRED W. and MARY FERN BEHREND

(FOREWORD.—*It is with especial satisfaction that we are able to record for the first time in Tennessee the Eastern Evening Grosbeak (*Hesperiphona v. vespertina*) and that the initial record was followed up with later observations which throw further light upon its habits and habitats. With the exception of one or two North Carolina records, this is the farthest south this northerly ranging species is known to have occurred on its occasional winter invasions into the United States. Of the localities mentioned, Elizabethton is in Carter County, 18 miles south of the Va.-Tenn. line; from that town, Milligan College and Johnson City are 6 and 10 miles further westward, respectively. The first observation was made by Mrs. Behrend who sent in the notes given below. This was followed later by further observations chronicled by Mr. Behrend.—ED.*)



EVENING GROSBEAK

From a drawing by

ALLAN BROOKS.

Taken from Ralph Hoffman's
"Birds of the Pacific States"
Courtesy, Houghton Mifflin Co.

(By Mary Fern Behrend)—At 10 A.M. on Nov. 22, 1945, while engaged with work in the kitchen of our home at Milligan College, Tenn., I glanced out of the window to see what birds were about the yard, when I noticed several birds of a kind I had never seen before. They were about thirty-five feet away and were feeding on the dry seedlets of an ash tree. After watching them for a few moments from the window and seeing how deliberate they were, I determined to identify them. Picking up the binoculars I went out into the yard and, approaching cautiously, found that they were not disturbed in any way by my close approach and they continued to feed on the seedlets.

There were four of them in all and picking out the more brightly colored male, I began to analyze his characteristics. The beak I knew at first glance was definitely that of a Grosbeak. He was stockily built, bright yellow with black on head which outlined a prominent yellow line above the

eye, black wing with large, solid white patches next to the back and a short tail that was black. The bird glistened in the bright, sunny, frosty atmosphere.

After getting all markings definitely in mind, I ran back into the house, picked up the volume of Fuertes color plates of Massachusetts birds and, keeping an eye on my guests, I turned to the section on Grosbeaks. There, with the illustration before me and the birds in view nearby, I learned the name of my discovery—the Eastern Evening Grosbeak. For about an hour the foursome were seen on the premises, feeding from tree to tree. After that, duties called me away and I had no further time to watch.

(By Fred W. Behrend)—The Grosbeaks were not seen again about our home, but on Dec. 31 four, and possibly the same, birds were seen at the home of Prof. Sam Jack Hyder, one of our T.O.S. members, on the Milligan College grounds some four hundred yards from our place. They were identified by means of our color plates which we had loaned to Prof. Hyder. He stated that the birds were observed from a window of their porch and that they remained for three or four hours, feeding upon the ground and in the maple trees, apparently upon the seeds.

The next record for the area is that of Mr. Bruce P. Tyler, of Johnson City, who, on Jan. 6, observed four of the birds at his home in the suburbs. His more detailed account will be found in the Round Table section of this issue.

On Jan. 13, Dr. Lee Roy Herndon, who had been keeping a lookout for the birds at Elizabethton, was called by Mrs. Hugo Doob, member of the Elizabethton Chapter of T.O.S., to say that she had found a flock of eight near Riverside Drive. This was about noon and he went at once to view them himself, furnishing later the following information. "Upon arrival, I located the Grosbeaks near where they had been reported, but instead of eight there were between fifteen and twenty. I may not have seen all of them as some were on the ground, some in shrubbery and others in large maple trees. I did not disturb them as I wanted other members of our group to see them. In about an hour I returned to the same vicinity with other members, but no trace of the birds could then be found nor could they be found on a subsequent visit later in the day. They were not seen again for more than two weeks although we were on the lookout for them."

Not having as yet had the good fortune to view the rare visitors and being therefore especially on the alert for their reappearance, I was rewarded on Jan. 31 by finding a flock of amazing size, while driving into Elizabethton during the lunch hour from my place of work at the outskirts of the town. From a street in the back of the First Baptist Church, just one block from one of the main thoroughfares of the town and only about three blocks from the business section, my roving eye caught a glimpse of some birds whose colors attracted by attention. They were sitting on bench and table near the picnic fireplace on the church lawn. I hurriedly parked the car and walked back the short distance past a hedge partially screening off the place where I had seen the birds. From my observation point on the sidewalk, some seventy-five feet away, I had a good view of about ten of the birds of whose identity there could be no doubt. The more or less bright yellow of the body, the white on the black wing and the light color of the stout bill were prominent enough to recognize the birds, without

the benefit of binoculars, as Evening Grosbeaks. Without delay I went to the home of Reverend Floyd V. Starke which is adjacent to the church yard to telephone Dr. Herndon and inform him of my discovery. Mrs. Herndon answered and said she would come immediately to see the birds. In conversation with Reverend Starke, I learned in the meantime that the Grosbeaks had been in the vicinity of their home for some time and that from the kitchen window Mrs. Starke had fed them almost daily with scraps of food. Upon arriving back at the birds' resting place, I saw them take to flight and disappear. After about three to five minutes and just as Mrs. Herndon was approaching in her car, one group of a dozen or so of the Grosbeaks came into sight from across the low flat roof of the church annex and in very quick succession some three flocks of similar size followed. Their flight caused a distinct whirl in the air. The majority of them alit in a large maple tree at the edge of the church yard while a smaller number perched on the edge of the roof of the church annex. As Mrs. Herndon and I walked down the lawn, still more came in. A superficial count revealed about fifty in the large maple tree in front of us. It was apparent that the males were greatly outnumbered. The duller color of the female is an easily distinguishing mark as is the white tail band that is distinctly in evidence while the bird is in flight. Upon our approach they winged away, part of them flying into large maple trees across the street, part of them staying closer, scattering on the ground behind a hedge in a neighboring garden and in two small nearby trees in that same garden. Still others settled down on the roof of a chicken house. They milled around in such numbers that it was difficult to count them, but we undertook to do so as accurately as possible. With the aid of binoculars Mrs. Herndon counted some fifty-four birds in the large maple trees across the street, while my own count of the two groups in the small nearby trees numbered eighteen. This made a total of some eighty birds, and we were satisfied that this was a conservative minimum figure. We watched for about ten minutes and then departed to resume our respective duties. Practically all the time we were watching the birds gave a somewhat chirping sound of which we made mental note in order to more readily locate them in future. Further inquiry of Mrs. Starke later in the day revealed that the Grosbeaks had been in the vicinity of their home for the past two to three weeks and that individuals, having become used to being supplied with food, appeared regularly in mid-morning at the kitchen window sill, after the manner of Cardinals, and that one of the Grosbeaks made his presence known by pecking on the window pane. In looking over the surroundings, I found that there is an unusually large mimosa tree in the front yard of the parsonage, which tree is still bearing a good many seed pods, making me wonder if these birds were not feeding on the seeds of this tree. In the church yard proper there are six small trees, two of them still bearing seed pods. Furthermore, there is a fairly large poplar tree at the edge of the church yard, and the whole neighborhood abounds with maple trees of considerable size.

We are in hopes that our visitors from the far Northwest will remain with us for some weeks longer and that meanwhile we may learn still more of their habits and how they adapt themselves to an environment so different from their native home.

MILLIGAN COLLEGE, CARTER COUNTY, TENN. Jan. 31, 1946.

PEREGRINE FALCONS IN A WEST TENNESSEE SWAMP

By WALTER R. SPOFFORD

Since very little is known about the nesting of the Peregrine Falcon* in hollow trees along the Mississippi river, the writer has been making an annual trip each spring to the nest found in northwestern Tennessee in 1942. (MIGRANT, 14:25-27, 15:66-67) and the following is an account of the trip of April 15 to 19, 1945, with Dr. Chas. F. Pickering. The falcons raised two young in the broken-off top of a dead cypress in 1942, and four young in 1943 in a hollow limb of a live cypress half a mile away. In the latter site they raised three young in 1944 but in the spring of 1945, no young were raised although the falcons were in residence. Since the behavior of the birds about the nest site during 1945 was of considerable interest, it seems worth while to report the observations in some detail, as set forth below.

Upon our arrival at the 1944 nest tree, at 4:30 p.m. on April 15, no alarm or defense note greeted us and no evidence of the birds was seen for the first fifteen minutes. At 4:45, a small pale falcon left the nest and flew off to an unseen perch, without any sound. Five minutes later she (later events indicated that this bird was a female) returned to a perch near the eyrie, where she preened her plumage and watched out over the swamp. At 4:55 she called (several short wails) and the male came in with prey. The female flew over close to him but he retained the prey, carried it into the eyrie, then walked out on a limb. Several minutes later he dropped off the limb, close over my head, without (apparently) seeing me, and flew north. The female close-by wailed several times and then was heard no more at that position. At 5:03 several short wails were heard from an unseen perch to the north, and similar wails were heard from this source at intervals 11 times, terminating at 5:48 when a Peregrine (male?) returned to the eyrie. Immediately he displayed with bowed head and spread tail, giving a lengthy series of variations of the "eee-chup!" note. At 5:50 all was quiet, and after two minutes we clapped our hands loudly, without effect. A minute later the female returned from the west to a perch near the eyrie, and at 6:00 she called "kleb-chip" several times. At 6:10 several short wails came from an unseen perch to the north. At 6:15 the female was still on the perch, preening, and observation was discontinued. It is probable that the male had left the nest at approximately the time of the hand-clapping, but this was unobserved.

The male bird appeared to be the same as of previous seasons: a largish, richly pigmented one, black and white below (salmon coloration on breast not observed), tail appearing black and feet and cere bright yellow. Whereas the female of previous years had been of good size, a well-marked dark bird, the present female was obviously different. Decidedly small, with pale, faded markings, a gray instead of a black head, tail gray with narrow bars, feet pale yellow, and no yellow in cere, this falcon was in striking contrast to that of previous years.

Several things are of interest in the account above. The lack of eyrie defense indicated that the nest was probably empty, as did the absence of

* *Falco peregrinus anatum* (Duck Hawk), of the A. O. U. Checklist.

food-calls when the male brought prey. The male was obviously engaged in courtship, bringing prey into the eyrie, but he failed to complete the food-pass to the female although she flew to him. His display at the nest was similar to the familiar "ledging" of cliff-nesting falcons early in the season when the male takes the initiative and makes "scrapes" on various ledges, giving the "eee-chup" note. Such late season behavior of the male is common in non-breeding pairs, but whereas in such cases, the female fails to respond, in the present case the female did respond but the male appeared to ignore her.

On April 17 we again visited the nest, and at 9:30 A.M. there was no trace of the birds. At ten, I climbed to the nest and found only a well-made scrape such as the female makes to lay her eggs, and earlier, the male makes as part of courtship. Ten minutes later while still at the nest, a very blue Peregrine suddenly flew in to alight close to my feet on a big limb at the nest entrance, but suddenly reversed with a perceptible rushing sound and flew out again, giving the "kack!-kack!" alarm note. Immediately there were two birds circling around, both frequently giving the familiar battle-cry, but by no means with the frequency and vigor used when the nest has young. Suddenly a third Peregrine flew out of a nearby tree and alighted in another, and then flew off. This bird was large, and dark, with distinctly brown wings and tail. During descent from the eyrie the alarm note was heard several times, and then all was quiet. At 11:00 a "kleb-chip" was heard twice, followed by a few short wails, and a short time later observation was discontinued.

At 9:15 A.M. of Apr. 19, the eyrie was quiet, until about fifteen minutes had passed when the male came in to the nest with a Mourning Dove, closely followed by a large female falcon in well-worn immature plumage. The male "eee-chupped" as he alighted on a food perch close to the nest, and the immature female on a perch a few yards away. The small adult female came in to a limb close to the male and meantime the immature bird had disappeared, and was not seen again. The male now began to deplume and eat the dove without offering it to the small adult female, and the latter preened her plumage while the male fed. Soon the female flew off east, and the male dropped close above me, circled up and went into the nest, at about 9:50. At 10:15 the adult female was in the next tree, preening, and a few minutes later a female called from a perch west of the nest, at which the male left and flew rapidly in that direction. Ten minutes later the adult female flew into the nest, then walked out on a limb, sat and preened. She flew off when I shouted, and then returned to the neighboring tree, while the male was now seen flying in circles overhead. No further observations were made. At this date, had nesting occurred, there should have been young nearly ready to leave the nest, so it was regarded now as being too late for them to commence.

The following is considered to be a plausible hypothesis of the situation. The original female having disappeared, the male's display over the territory attracted two females, one of these adult, but small, of light pigmentation, and very possibly a very old falcon. This bird, although attracted to the display of the male, brought no response from him. The other female, immature, was attracted by the male, and obviously his display was directed at her. Her response, however was insufficient to bring about mating and

breeding, so a triangle situation developed. Surprisingly, neither of the females seemed to resent the other, as has been seen to occur at other eyries when a second female appeared, but perhaps actual nesting by one is necessary before it will defend against the intrusion of another female. At all events, we await a trip to the eyrie in 1946 with the greatest of interest, and it is hoped that breeding will be resumed. Perhaps it will be possible to identify the female of the new pair, if a survivor of the 1945 triangle.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY, NASHVILLE, TENN. December, 1945.

ANNUAL MIDWINTER BIRD CENSUS

By T. O. S. MEMBERS

The 17th midwinter bird count to be presented by THE MIGRANT is given below and yields further information on the relative abundance of Tennessee's winter birdlife. We formerly called this the "Christmas Census" but for one reason or another the listing dates could not be held close enough to that holiday to warrant continuance of that designation. In spite of inclement weather, our various listing groups look forward to the occasion with keen pleasure and loyally turn out to do their part. The series of lists thus produced are of lasting scientific value and afford source material for further study and reference. Somewhat improved conditions over last year raised the State total to 96 species and this compares with 89, 99, 108 and 94 in the years immediately preceding. We include only full species, thus omitting a number of subspecies known to be present. While we list only "Chickadees", the Appalachian (southern Black-capped) was found in the Great Smoky mountains. Rain and poor visibility interfered with the Memphis, Nashville, Great Smokies and Elizabethton lists, reducing particularly the number of individual birds recorded. A description of two immense birds roosts that prevailed in and near Nashville, will be found in the Round Table section.—ED.

NOTES ON THE CENSUS

Memphis.—In the late afternoon, about 50,000 of the various "black-birds" were observed at a roost in Elmwood cemetery. The Brewer's Black-birds, identified by Robert Tucker, were the first mid-winter record. The Gulls were seen on the Miss. river. Among the "missed" species were Red-headed Woodpeckers and Leconte's Sparrows, both found regularly to date.—Nashville.—Most of the ducks were found on Radnor lake. The Bob-whites were flushed at 5 locations and of the 121 Doves recorded, 120 were in one flock. Sapsuckers and Brown Creepers were more common than usual. Of the Robins, 300,000 were at a roost described in the Round Table of this issue. A Red-breasted Nuthatch was recorded on Dec. 9. Because of rain, the following usually found species were missed; Black and Turkey Vultures, Screech Owl and Savannah Sparrow.—Great Smokies.—Both Appalachian and Carolina Chickadees were noted as well as both Slate-colored and Carolina Juncos. Tracks of Ravens were seen in the snow on day count was made and one or two birds were seen on several days during Dec. Seen in the area on Dec. 27, was a Great Blue Heron and on Dec. 29, a Fox Sparrow.—Clarksville.—(Dec. 16 list). The Pipits were in river bottoms. Of the Cardinals, 28 were counted in one flock, near

	Memphis Dec. 30	Nashville Dec. 23	Great Smokies Dec. 30	Clarksville Dec. 16	Clarksville Jan. 6	Henderson Dec. 31	Elizabethton Dec. 23	Murfreesboro Dec. 23	Greenville Dec. 26
Number of species -----	73	68	56	52	46	51	40	38	34
Number of individuals -----	19883	314975	1442	1040	6565	970	1412	328	925
Number of observers -----	26	20	27	2	5	2	8	2	2
Horned Grebe -----	---	---	---	---	1	---	---	---	---
Pied-billed Grebe -----	1	1	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Double-crested Cormorant -----	10	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Great Blue Heron -----	16	1	---	2	---	---	---	---	---
Canada Goose -----	16	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Common Mallard -----	6	150	---	8	---	35	---	---	---
Black Duck -----	---	5	4	---	---	---	---	---	---
Gadwall -----	---	5	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Wood Duck -----	1	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Ring-necked Duck -----	31	7	---	---	16	25	---	---	---
Canvasback -----	---	2	---	13	---	---	---	---	---
Lesser Scaup -----	41	10	---	---	17	---	---	---	---
American Goldeneye -----	---	1	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Bufflehead -----	---	4	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Ruddy Duck -----	---	2	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Red-breasted Merganser -----	---	---	---	1	---	---	---	---	---
Turkey Vulture -----	30	---	30	3	13	3	---	---	5
Black Vulture -----	11	---	5	4	4	---	---	---	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk -----	1	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Cooper's Hawk -----	2	---	1	1	---	---	---	2	---
Red-tailed Hawk -----	13	9	1	2	2	---	---	---	---
Red-shouldered Hawk -----	15	2	---	1	---	4	---	---	---
Marsh Hawk -----	9	5	---	1	---	1	---	2	---
Duck Hawk -----	---	---	1	---	---	---	---	---	---
Sparrow Hawk -----	22	12	3	1	---	---	6	5	1
Ruffed Grouse -----	---	---	6	---	---	---	---	---	---
Bob-white -----	95	31	12	15	---	---	---	2	---
Wild Turkey -----	---	---	2	---	---	---	2	---	---
Coot -----	1	5	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Killdeer -----	27	11	10	---	---	4	3	8	---
Wilson's Snipe -----	---	1	1	---	---	1	---	---	---
Herring Gull -----	2	7	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Ring-billed Gull -----	48	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Mourning Dove -----	78	121	110	14	20	---	91	5	147
Barn Owl -----	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	1	---
Screech Owl -----	---	1	---	---	---	---	2	2	---
Great Horned Owl -----	---	---	---	---	1	---	---	---	---
Barred Owl -----	1	3	---	1	1	4	---	1	---
Belted Kingfisher -----	3	6	1	1	1	1	1	---	---
Flicker -----	74	29	5	6	5	10	4	1	4
Pileated Woodpecker -----	---	12	5	2	3	2	2	1	2
Red-bellied Woodpecker -----	35	20	---	6	6	6	---	1	1
Red-headed Woodpecker -----	---	1	---	---	6	2	---	---	---
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker -----	9	21	---	4	4	1	4	---	---
Hairy Woodpecker -----	16	9	6	3	---	2	4	---	---
Downy Woodpecker -----	56	43	10	11	7	5	29	2	3
Phoebe -----	1	2	2	1	---	---	1	---	---
Blue Jay -----	176	42	---	10	15	14	40	3	6
Horned Lark -----	11	315	---	2	15	---	21	103	18
Crow -----	118	74	150	35	28	10	204	200000	500
Fish Crow -----	11	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Chickadee -----	166	90	98	13	8	16	41	8	5
Tufted Titmouse -----	29	41	22	11	8	8	49	2	7
White-breasted Nuthatch -----	6	2	3	---	7	---	---	1	2
Red-breasted Nuthatch -----	---	---	13	---	---	---	---	---	---
Brown Creeper -----	15	17	9	---	1	1	---	---	---
Winter Wren -----	10	4	9	8	1	2	2	1	---
Bewick's Wren -----	11	1	---	2	---	3	---	2	7
Carolina Wren -----	88	53	8	14	9	8	39	5	7
Mockingbird -----	177	82	6	4	7	3	28	2	5
Brown Thrasher -----	18	---	2	---	---	9	---	---	---
Robin -----	2342	310000	97	415	19	86	1	21	20
Hermit Thrush -----	8	11	19	---	1	3	5	---	---
Bluebird -----	73	98	25	16	29	22	37	3	11
Golden-crowned Kinglet -----	89	1	45	---	---	4	9	---	2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet -----	9	---	8	---	---	1	3	---	---

	Memphis Dec. 30	Nashville Dec. 23	Great Smokies Dec. 30	Clarksville Dec. 16	Clarksville Jan. 6	Henderson Dec. 31	Elizabethton Dec. 23	Murfreesboro Dec. 23	Greenville Dec. 26
American Pipit	---	---	---	25	---	---	---	---	---
Cedar Waxwing	29	29	1	29	12	15	16	---	1
Migrant Shrike	36	3	---	---	---	4	1	---	1
Starling	6720	1775	33	11	6100	7	108	---	105
Myrtle Warbler	222	23	3	2	5	1	58	28	4
Palm Warbler	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	1	---
English Sparrow	200	330	72	19	45	40	65	---	4
Meadowlark	255	112	22	1	9	2	---	6	7
Redwing Blackbird	3445	---	6	---	---	1	---	---	---
Rusty Blackbird	150	67	---	18	1	165	---	---	---
Brewer's Blackbird	25	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Bronzed Grackle	2534	15	---	---	---	4	---	2	---
Cowbird	87	227	60	---	---	---	---	---	---
Cardinal	301	217	49	89	29	25	76	12	7
Purple Finch	35	46	25	3	5	2	8	6	15
Pine Siskin	---	3	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Goldfinch	218	67	54	33	9	45	116	12	11
Red Crossbill	---	---	9	---	---	---	---	---	---
Red-eyed Towhee	14	91	14	19	7	---	4	2	2
Savannah Sparrow	7	---	---	3	---	---	---	---	---
Vesper Sparrow	---	---	1	---	---	---	---	---	---
Juncos, Slate-colored	864	218	170	54	45	125	112	17	1
Tree Sparrow	7	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Chipping Sparrow	1	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Field Sparrow	45	---	81	15	2	36	83	31	2
White-crowned Sparrow	47	25	---	6	2	9	43	3	8
White-throated Sparrow	582	85	53	66	18	64	47	19	5
Fox Sparrow	40	5	---	5	2	10	2	---	---
Swamp Sparrow	30	9	1	3	5	5	---	---	---
Song Sparrow	111	76	32	8	5	14	46	5	3

sundown. (Jan. 6 list). 5 of the 6 Red-headed Woodpeckers and the 7 White-breasted Nuthatches were found at the Dunbar Cave grove.—Elizabethton.—Had this list been made on Dec. 31 instead of the 23rd, it would have included the first Tennessee census record of the Evening Grosbeak.—Murfreesboro.—The Barn Owl was resident in a hollow oak tree on grounds of Prof. Davis who also reports that the Crows were at a roost in a cedar woods and may have been considerably underestimated.—Greenville.—Seen near the date of census were, on Dec. 24, Canada Goose, 18; Dec. 25, Bob-white, 3; Dec. 27, Bewick's Wren 1; and Dec. 28, Phoebe 1.

LOCALITIES, WEATHER AND PERSONNEL

Memphis.—Dec. 30. Same areas as covered in previous years with exception of no party in boat on Miss. river. City suburbs 10%; open pasturelands 15%; deciduous woodlots 40%; bottom lands, 35%. Dawn to dusk. Heavy low-hanging clouds. Fog in a.m., poor visibility. Temp. 45. S-west wind in p.m. Water standing in open fields and bottom lands. Seven parties including 26 observers. Total party-hours 56 (48 on foot, 8 in car); total party-miles 138 (58 on foot, 80 by car). Mrs. Floy Barefield, Mrs. Ben B. Coffey, Jr., (compiler), Mrs. Irene R. Daniel, Capt. Anna Davant, Lincoln Emery, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. L. G. Guth, Mrs. Ruth Harrison, Pauline James, David Johnston, John Jolly, Luther F. Keeton, Lawrence C. Kent, Joe Mount, Dr. Clarence E. Moore, Kenneth Moore, Patricia Moore, Lt. Henry Parker, Herbert Shapiro, Alice Smith, Mrs. M. L. Torti, Maurice Torti, Jr., Robert Tucker, Rose Wooldridge and Allen Zeigler.—Nashville.—Dec. 23. Radnor lake Overton Hills forest, Hobb's to Tyne roads, Warner Parks, Hillwood, Bellemeade, Cumberland river bottoms of Bell's bend and above Shelby park,

and Mill creek. 25% open fields, 20% dense woods, 30% wooded pastures, and 30% thickets and old-fields. 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Cloudy in a.m. with visibility not good; light rain continuously after 1 p.m. greatly curtailed listing. Temp. range, 31 to 33 degrees F. North wind, light. Ground freezing but now bare after a week snow covered. 20 observers in 9 parties. Total party-hours 110. 26 miles on foot, 40 by car. B. H. Abernathy, John B. Calhoun, Wm. Crouch, Jane Farrar, Albert F. Ganier (compiler), Bob Hickerson, Helen M. Howell, Phillip Humphries, Lane, Mrs. Amelia R. Laskey, G. R. Mayfield, Donald Maynard, James Robins, Edw. Schreiber, Robert Sollmann, Walter R. Spofford, Luttrell Thomas, H. S. Vaughn, W. M. Walker and G. B. Woodring.—Great Smoky Mtns. National Park, Tenn., Dec. 30 (same area as in past 8 years), circle of 7½ miles radius centering on Bull Head of Mt. LeConte including a section of the Tenn.—N. Carolina divide from Indian Gap to Mt. Kephart; towns of Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge. Spruce-fir forest, 30%, Deciduous forest 15%, orchard 15%, open farm land and field borders 20%, old-fields 5%, towns and suburbs 10%. 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Overcast and becoming threatening in a.m., light rain developing in early p.m. and continuing to night. Temp. range 38-50 degrees. Light wind. Ground bare up to alt. 3500 ft.; snow covered at higher altitudes with snow blanket of 13 inches at 5000 ft. Altitude range 1200 to 6100 feet. 27 observers in 7 parties. Total party-hours, 39; total miles 130 (85 by car, 45 on foot). Fred W. Behrend, Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Broome, Warren Burgus, Mary Ruth Chiles, Brockway Crouch, Thos. W. Finucane, Robt. Garber, Ralph Garrett, Harry Henry, Dr. Lee Roy Herndon, Elizabeth Johnson, Wm. M. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Leonard, Henri Levy, Charlton Mabry, James R. Mattocks, Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Odell, Jr., W. F. Pearson, Herbert Pomerance, Arthur Stupka, Roy A. Wedekin, Dr. Dorothy E. Williams and Wm. Yambert.—Clarks-ville.—Dec. 16. Clarksville to Marks Slough and Lock B, in Cumberland river bottoms, different routes used for coming and going. Weather clear; wind light, N-W; 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.; 10 miles on foot. Alfred and Edward Clebsch.—Jan. 6. Dunbar cave, Idaho Springs marsh, thence to Red river, Norman Young farm and sheep farm. Mostly on foot. Weather clear; light south wind; 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dr. C. F. Pickering, H. C. Phillips, Russell Cook, Edward Clebsch and Alfred Clebsch (compiler).—Henderson.—Dec. 31. Henderson to Lakes LaJoie and Placid in Chickasaw State Park, Forked Deer river bottom and Highway 100 to RR 2 miles south of Henderson, Logan's lake. Weather cloudy, rather heavy in a.m., somewhat lighter in p.m. Cold N-W wind; temp 34. 56 miles by car and 7 on foot. William Malone and Robert L. Witt (compiler).—Elizabethton.—Dec. 23. Watauga and Doe rivers, Buffalo and Gap creeks, Holston and Lynn mountains. 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Dense fog along streams until 10 a.m.; overcast all day; calm; temp. range 17-40 degrees. Ground covered with about 1 inch of snow except south hillsides bare. 8 observers, 6 parties Total hours afield, 35; total miles, 32 (on foot). Mr. and Mrs. Fred Behrend, J. C. Browning, Dr. and Mrs. Lee R. Herndon, Prof. Sam Jack Hyder, Nelta Hyder, and W. F. Pearson.—Murfreesboro.—Dec. 23, 25 and 26 (several hours each day). Suburbs of the town and a short distance into the country. Cloudy and rainy; wind light. Henry O. Todd and George Davis (compiler).—Greeneville.—Dec. 26. Area along Roaring Fork and Bays Mountain. Wooded 65%, pasture land 35%. Weather fair; temp. range 35-44; wind W., 30 m.p.h. Hours, 6; miles, 4. Ruth Reed Nevius and Richard Nevius.

THE ROUND TABLE

A REMARKABLE ROBIN ROOST AT NASHVILLE.—During the present winter an immense concentration of Robins have remained in the vicinity of Nashville and each night have occupied a roost in the western portion of the city. Almost unfailingly these birds leave early in November and are rarely seen until a few begin to straggle back in late December. Normally, vast numbers are with us in February and March. In spite of the fact that the past winter has been unusually cold, the Robins have been able to subsist without difficulty upon an abundant crop of hackberries. However, during many winters the hackberry trees are abundantly laden without Robins remaining to partake of them. The roost described below has been of particular interest because of the fact that other species of gregarious birds have been present only in relatively small numbers.

The area occupied lies 3 miles southwest of City Hall Square, at the end of old Clifton Road and a few blocks north of Charlotte Ave. It occupies a basin shaped cove, a half mile across, the rocky sloping sides of which are densely covered with a thicket of haw, crab apple and stunted scrubby growths of hackberry and mock orange. Only a few trails cross the area in spite of the fact that the city extends on beyond and it's disuse made it an ideal roosting place. Late in November the writer noted large flocks of Robins flying westward, in the direction of the roost, and on Dec. 10, definitely located it in the above mentioned spot. This roost was occupied during the winter of 1943-44, chiefly by Starlings, and was described in *THE MIGRANT* 1944, 15:9. Local residents state that the roost had been "building up" since summer, doubtless augmented steadily by migrants from the North. For our Christmas census list, taken Dec. 23, the writer and others visited the place and for twenty minutes watched almost continuous flocks coming in from every direction. Our estimate was 300,000 Robins, 200 Starlings and 25 Cowbirds. A visit a week later showed the roost on the increase and it reached it's peak by mid-January. On the 19th, we estimated between eight and ten hundred thousand birds present. Of these, all were Robins except approximately 35,000 Starlings and 1200 Cowbirds. On Jan. 26, another visit was made and the Robins had dwindled to a tenth of their peak while the Starlings and Cowbirds remained the same. A few Grackles and Rusty Blackbirds were seen and heard at dusk.—G. R. MAYFIELD, Nashville, Tenn.

IMMENSE BIRD ROOST NEAR MARTHA, TENN.—During the month of January, 1946, I had the opportunity to make observations at an immense bird roost consisting of Starlings, Bronzed Grackles, Robins, Cowbirds and much smaller numbers of Redwings and Rusty Blackbirds. It's location is 21 miles northeast of Nashville, a half mile south of the Lebanon pike and just west of the little village of Martha. At this place, there is an extensive woodland of young cedar trees and in these the birds find protection amid the evergreen foliage. I was first told of the place by Mr. Joe Estes who accompanied me there with his son, on Jan. 14 in the late afternoon. Following this, other visits were made to the roost on Jan. 19, 26, 27 and 30, by groups of from two to five, composed of Bill Crouch, J. R. Forbes, A. F. Ganier, Don Maynard, J. D. Smith, W. R. Spofford, Robt. Sollmann,

Luttrell Thomas and the writer. The following notes summarize the observations.

The first birds to arrive were the Robins and these came in from all directions in dispersed flocks. They first alighted among the upper branches of the deciduous trees that grew among the cedars and then noisily dropped into the green foliage. Shortly after, immense flocks of Starlings and Grackles came in and congregated among the upper branches of a large grove of deciduous trees near our observation point at the west end of the roost. So numerous were they that they covered the upper branches of dozens of trees like so many leaves and in one large, spreading elm, the limbs bent down almost to the point of breaking. Vocally, they were noisy indeed and the sound of their wings when they finally took sudden departure for the cedars made a buzzing roar. The Cowbirds came in chiefly in very compact flocks and were readily identified by their rapid wingbeat and small size. Most of the flocks however were a mixture of Starlings, Grackles, Cowbirds, Rusty Blackbirds and Redwings. The last mentioned gave their distinctive notes. After all had settled among the cedars and darkness approached, there continued a din of various bird notes from the several species. Hawks were active about the place in late afternoon, those identified being several each of the Red-tailed and the Cooper's, and Mr. Smith observed one Goshawk in the light grey plumage of an adult bird. These hawks probably catch an incoming bird at dusk and clean up any injured or sick birds the following day. A local resident told the writer that this area was a new roosting place and that a roost existed the previous year in a similar place several miles away. While the numbers seemed to fluctuate to some extent, the number present under good conditions, according to estimates made by Mr. Ganier, was not less than a million birds and possibly 25 percent above that figure. Of these, approximately 65 percent were Starlings, the balance being about equally divided between Bronzed Grackles, Robins and Cowbirds, together with at least a few hundred each of Rusty Blackbirds and Redwings. Specimens of each of the species mentioned were collected to be mounted for the Nashville Children's Museum.—EDWIN D. SCHREIBER, Nashville, Tenn.

FURTHER NOTES ON THE MARTHA BIRD ROOST.—During the course of visits to the roost on January 19, 26 and 30, the writer made the following additional observations. The area occupied consisted of approximately 55 acres of an old abandoned farm, covered, in most places thickly, with a growth of red cedars from 10 to 18 feet high. The birds occupied all portions of this area, even the cedars which stood by themselves outside of the thickets. Walking thru the place at night they could be seen overhead, motionless or fluttering away, depending upon visibility. They occupied the upper branches and very few were within reach. The ground beneath the trees was covered with as much as an inch of excrement and broken green leaves of the cedars and this condition existed thruout. The Grackles and Starlings usually overshot the roost on coming in and settled in the tops of deciduous trees some distance away. As darkness approached, they moved enmasse toward the cedars and after milling about, in reconnaissance for about five minutes, gradually settled noisily in the cedars. While thus milling about, the air in all directions was literally filled with birds and the sight was highly spectacular. The Robins indulged but little

in such preliminaries, repairing almost directly to the cedars upon their arrival. On one evening when a snow storm was in progress and on another when a steady light rain was falling, the number of birds present was greatly decreased, due presumably to birds from a great distance (perhaps 20 miles) being unable to reach the roost before dark. The concentration was of further interest in that it represents one of the very few times when Grackles have remained to winter in the Nashville area. Of about 25 of these birds which were shot and examined, all were Bronzed Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula aeneus*), no Purples being found. Of many fall and winter roosts that have been seen by the writer, this was somewhat the largest.—ALBERT F. GANIER, Nashville, Tenn.

EVENING GROSBEAKS AT JOHNSON CITY.—Four birds of this species (*Hesperiphona v. vespertina*) appeared at Johnson City, on January 6, 1946, and are the first we have ever recorded here. They were observed at my home in the suburbs at about noon and were feeding in the treetops at that time. They lingered long in the branches of the trees, stretching their wings and enjoying a sun-bath. I have four large *liriodendrons*, the seed of which are a favorite food for the neighborhood Cardinals and these may likewise have been the drawing card for the Evening Grosbeaks.—BRUCE T. TYLER and ROBERT B. LYLE, Johnson City, Tenn.

NOVEMBER NOTES FROM REELFOOT LAKE.—The writer spent from Nov. 13 to 18, 1945, at Reelfoot, continuing observations that were described in THE MIGRANT for Dec. 1942 and under the same arrangements, by which he was permitted to row about the refuge areas without a gun. The ducks quickly perceived that "shooting" with a movie camera was an innocuous form of sport and readily swam or flew about within easy gun range, as though they realized that in their havens they were to be free from molestation. The gunners complained as usual about the havens, unwilling to agree with the Federal wardens that lack of such refuges would result in most of the birds leaving the lake entirely. The majority of the gunners however had good sport and among the ducks brought in was one which was strange to all of us. Examination of the color plates in a copy of Kortright's "Ducks . . . of North America" which I had brought along, revealed this stranger to be an American Scoter (*Oidemia americana*) in juvenile plumage. I understand that this is the first State record of this species which is quite rare inland. Our lodge-keeper, who had had long experience with ducks, called it a "sea coot" and said they (probably meaning any of the 3 species of Scoters) were occasionally shot on the Lake.

Of the many species of ducks seen, Mallards seemed to be the most abundant and Shovellers were also quite numerous. No geese of any species were seen but these birds prefer the nearby Mississippi river. Of the numerous herons, that might have been found earlier, only the Great Blues were to be seen and there were very few of them. Tree Swallows, which have been an interesting feature of former trips, were not observed during the week. The nest of the Bald Eagle, in which Dr. W. R. Spofford took pictures of the young last spring, had been nearly demolished by a summer storm but the birds were near and were probably about ready to begin reconstruction of their big nest.—CHAS. F. PICKERING, Clarksville, Tenn.

BALD EAGLE NOTES FROM REELFOOT LAKE.—On April 17, 1945, Dr. Charles F. Pickering and the writer visited the Bald Eagle's nest on the eastern border in Blue Basin. The nest is in the top of a live cypress tree and is about 90 feet above the water. It held 3 large young on May 1, 1944, but none could be seen as we rowed close to the nest nearly a year later. However, an old eagle flew around in evident concern, calling frequently. We found 2 large well-feathered young in the nest which soon submitted to Biological Survey bands provided by Mrs. Laskey. Several photographs were made upon the large flat-topped eyrie, although it was difficult to get far enough away from them to include both birds. Of considerable interest were the food remains in the nest, for besides a few Coot feathers, the conspicuous feature was a large number of small turtle shells, mostly those of the musk turtle and from 3 to 4 inches in length. The shells were unbroken, but the soft parts had been expertly removed. Mr. Ganier states that numbers of such turtles are caught in the fisherman's nets and drown and on being thrown out, float about until they are picked up by the eagles. While up in the nest, a strange croak or "whoosk!" was heard, and we looked up to see a Wood Ibis circling over us. This was a new bird for me, although it comes to the lake in numbers in the early fall.—WALTER R. SPOFFORD, Nashville, Tenn.

NOTE:—The Wood Ibis has not been recorded as nesting so far north as Tennessee and it is likely that this bird had overshot it's breeding ground on it's northbound migration.—ED.

NOTES ON MOURNING DOVE NESTS: During the 1945 season, 10 nests of Mourning Doves were observed. Seven young matured (35 per cent of the number of eggs laid), 4 of them from the 6 nests at my home, and 3 from the 4 nests located in different areas.

Nests were placed from 3½ to 20 feet from the ground, in forks or on horizontal limbs of elm, silver maple (2), mulberry, Colorado blue spruce, and native cedar (3). One was located in the tin gutter at eaves of a one-story dwelling but, after several days of incubation, was washed out in a heavy rainstorm.* In one instance, a Wood Thrush nest was used as a foundation. The earliest nest, started March 18, was built upon the remnants of one used by Doves in two previous years. It was about 17 feet up, in a tall, slender cedar. Although this March nest was unsuccessful, it was re-occupied later, 2 young leaving on June 7 and 2 on Sept. 7.

The earliest fledging date was April 27 when 2 young made long flights of more than 200 feet from the blue spruce nest, 5½ feet up in this shrubby ornamental on a lawn.

Each year, some late Dove nests are found about Nashville during September but it is unusual to have young hatch as late as the 20th. About the last of August, a pair brought two fledglings to a mulberry tree at the front of a vacant lot (100 by 125 ft.) in a closely built residence section of the city. There the young were fed for a few days and the new nest was built 12 feet up in a fork above a well-traveled public walk. When observed on Sept. 16, the 2 eggs were being incubated but on the 18th, both adults disappeared. Neither bird was seen during a careful watch all day. The following morning, the cold eggs were brought indoors. One was sterile, but at 3 P.M., the other was pipped. On Sept. 20, at

8:30 A. M., the tiny orphan hatched; it was an attractive and appealing little creature, weighing 5.6 grams. It was kept warm with soft wool and silk wrappings and an electric heating pad. It was fed homogenized milk, slightly heated, with pulverized cereals, and responded well by taking the liquid from a spoon when offered every two hours. A very soft "peep", barely audible, seemed to be a food note. It lived exactly 48 hours. My improvised "incubator" and feeding formula did not compensate for the loss of parental brooding and "pigeon milk" feedings.—AMELIA R. LASKEY, Nashville.

*Note.—The nesting of a dove in a gutter does not indicate that these birds have any degree of good judgement. In an earlier issue of the THE MIGRANT (1936, June, 7:33) Mrs. Eagle wrote of one which built in her gutter and three successive nests were washed out by rains. Their fourth attempt was accompanied by a spell of dry weather and the brood was successfully fledged.—ED.

BROWN THRASHERS WINTERING NEAR KNOXVILLE.—Since this species (*Toxostoma r. rufum*) is not generally regarded as a regular winter resident in East Tennessee, the following local records have been compiled to help determine its status at that season. They have been gleaned from THE MIGRANT, the records of the Knoxville T. O. S. chapter, and from the writer's notes. They cover the period from October 1934 to March 1945.

1935-36; George Foster reported (MIGRANT, 7:24) the Thrasher to be wintering in Fountain City and made the comment that it was the first occurrence there in several years.—1938; Brockway Crouch observed one frequently from January 10 through the month of February at his home on Brooks Road.—1940; In January, Frelan Goddard found a Thrasher regularly in his neighborhood on Highland Drive, Fountain City. The bird disappeared the last of the month but this one or another appeared throughout February at Bill Yambert's feeding station on Templeton Avenue, also in Fountain City. The two locations are more than a mile apart.—1944; Mrs. Walker located a Thrasher on January 25 in a vacant lot at Gilbert Lane and East Peachtree Street where the bird remained for a few days and was seen no more that season.—1944-45; At the same location mentioned above, a lone Thrasher was observed on December 13, January 17 and January 27. Although Mrs. Walker and the writer ran two feeding stations within 500 feet of the lot, and ideal Thrasher habitat extended to within 75 to 100 feet of our feeding stations, we never observed the Thrasher around the house until March 17 when a pair of them arrived. We considered these birds as migrants for they nested in the thicket near the garage.

The Knoxville localities, in which the Brown Thrashers were discovered, are situated in the southeastern, eastern and northern suburbs of the city. This would indicate they have not confined themselves to a special area and in all probability are more common in winter than our present records indicate.—W. M. WALKER, Park Circle, Nashville 5, Tenn.

THE MIGRANT

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*The simple truth about birds is interesting enough;
it is not necessary to go beyond it.*

NOTES, HERE AND THERE

T. O. S. MEETINGS.—The Nashville Chapter meets the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month, at 7:30 p.m., at Peabody College, in the west parlor of the Social-Religious Bldg.—The Memphis Chapter meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month, at 8 p.m. in the Memphis (Pink Palace) Museum of Natural History.—The Elizabethton Chapter meets the 1st and 3rd Friday of each month, at the homes of its members and week-end field trips are scheduled in between.—Meeting schedules of other chapters have not come to hand. Each chapter will hold a Spring Field Day, late in April or in early May at some attractive place within motoring distance.

December was characterized by steady cold weather and the mean temperature at Nashville was 34.4 degrees, which compares with a normal of 41.0. It was the third coldest December in 75 years. November and January temperatures were close to normal, being 41.2 and 39.6 respectively.

The members of our Elizabethton Chapter did an outstanding job in following up and reporting their Evening Grosbeak finds, especially during January. We hope to give their final report in the March issue.

The origin of the name of the Evening Grosbeak is somewhat obscure and there is but little clue or comment in the literature. From Coues "Key to North American Birds," we learn that the name came from the fancied resemblance of its yellowish colors to the yellow and gold of an evening sky at sunset. It was first described by W. Cooper in 1825.

Captain Ben B. Coffey, of Memphis, after three years service in the army air corps and for the last year stationed in India, has returned and is now picking up the threads of civilian life at his former home. There's much unfinished bird business on hand, reports Ben.

Dues for 1946 are payable as of Jan. 1st; your attention to this will save our Treasurer the time and expense of billing you. At this time also, we suggest that you nominate interested friends for T. O. S. membership.

This issue of THE MIGRANT goes to press as of Jan. 31, 1946, having been held over for inclusion of the mid-winter census lists and other particularly interesting happenings in the bird world during January.

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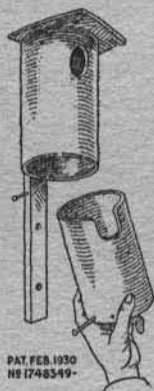
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