

DECEMBER-JANUARY-FEBRUARY
1940-41

BIRD CALENDAR

of the

Cleveland Bird Club

37th Year

No. 1



Founded by Francis H. Herrick in 1905 for the
recording Of Bird Activities

ARTHUR B. WILLIAMS

Edited by John W. Aldrich, The Cleveland Museum
of Natural History

April - 1941
CLEVELAND, OHIO



EDITORIAL

We record with mingled emotions, the fact that our good friend and fellow-worker, Dr. John W. Aldrich, on February last resigned his position as Curator of Ornithology at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, to become ornithologist for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Department of the Interior at Washington.

While we feel keenly the loss of Dr. Aldrich's presence in Cleveland, we cannot but congratulate him heartily on his greatly enlarged opportunities in his new field of work and wish him abundant success therein.

Incidentally, the Bird Calendar loses an editor who has done much to maintain the high standards set by Dr. S. C. Kendeigh, his predecessor, now of the University of Illinois, to make the Calendar a record of real scientific worth, yet representative of the interests and point of view of the amateur.

The present editor, in taking over the job in the wake of two such distinguished ornithologists, feels his small craft rocking giddily in the wash, and only hopes that he will not ship so much water as to divert him from his efforts to follow the course set by the big boats ahead.

Arthur B. Williams

Contributors to this issue of the Calendar are:

| | | |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| H. W. Baker | L. E. Ives | Donald L. Newman |
| Al Bohn | Frank D. Johnson | Gladys E. Olson |
| P. Bole, Jr. | Malcolm Jollie | Thomas Sandera |
| Belle L. Clisby | Raymond W. Hill | Margaret Sherwin |
| Joseph Corbe | Charles H. Knight | Marion Skaggs |
| Edith Dobbins | Rudolf J. Kula | Merit B. Skaggs |
| C. T. Downer | J. O. McQuown | M. R. Walters |
| Arthur B. Fuller | Margarette E. Morse | Arthur B. Williams |
| W. Earl Godfrey | | |

Although the number of field trips taken by different observers was relatively small, there were an unusual number of interesting records. Edith Dobbins registered the greatest number of trips (14), Donald Newman coming second (12). The greatest number of species reported on any one list was 34 (Mr. and Mrs. Skaggs).

COOPERATING CLUBS

The Editor wishes to call attention here to two organizations in the field of ornithology in Cleveland, linked to the Cleveland Bird Club through membership in the various groups, which have contributed much to the preparation of this and other issues of the Bird Calendar, and from which much additional help may be expected in the future.

One of these is the Herrick Ornithological Society, composed of students at Western Reserve University who are interested in associating themselves together for bird study in the field. It was this club that last year undertook the very successful survey of waterfowl wintering along the Lake Erie shore. This study was reported in the December-January-February issue of the Calendar a year ago. It has been repeated this year, and is reported in this issue of the Calendar.

The other is the Kirtland Bird Club, organized last fall under the auspices of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History as an association of amateurs engaged in research work in ornithology. This club is a part of a larger group that will eventually bring together under one common "Kirtland Society" head, many groups of amateurs interested in scientific research in various fields - such as trees, wildflowers, ferns, fungi, geology, fish, reptiles, or other natural history interests.

Last December the Kirtland Bird Club furnished the leadership for what is generally acknowledged to be the best Christmas Bird Census yet made in Cleveland and vicinity (see page 4) and its members have contributed much practical help in the preparation of this issue of the Calendar, thereby lightening considerably the burden on the editorial shoulders. It is to this club also that we shall look for most of the organized work that will go into the making of the breeding bird population studies this summer.

SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

(Taken from Cleveland Weather Bureau Reports)

| Month | Mean temp. | Normal temp. | Total precip. | Normal precip. | % of Possible sunshine | Normal sunshine | *Relative humidity |
|------------------------|------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Dec. | 36.7° | 31.2° | 4.07in. | 2.44in. | 18% | 24% | 79.75% |
| Jan. | 29.6° | 26.5° | 1.85in. | 2.51in. | 12% | 30% | 81.75% |
| Feb. | 26.6° | 27.4° | 1.35in. | 2.51in. | 36% | 36% | 75.25% |
| Departure from normal: | | | | | | | |
| | +7.8° | | +0.81in. | | -24.0% | | |

* Based on the average of four (4) daily readings, taken at 1:20 a.m., 7:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

The past winter was a mild one - warmer than usual by 7.80° - which is considerable. This condition was especially noticeable in December, in which month 17 days showed a minimum temperature of 32° or higher. Such cold spells as occurred were not of great duration and there were none of the sudden freeze-ups that frequently spell disaster for birds in winter. Relative humidity was about normal, with more than our usual amount of cloudiness, cutting appreciably into the possible number of sunshine hours for the season.

WINTER BIRD POPULATION STUDIES

1. Grassland Habitat - 40 acres
 Location: Sulgrave Rd. Shaker Heights
 Censused by, Charles H. Knight
 Coverage: December 18, 19; January 1,5. TOTAL TIME - 7 hours
 Winter resident bird population, 1 individual (3 per 100 acres) Sparrow Hawk-1.
 Migrants and Wanderers: Horned Lark, 1 (January 5), Tree 12 (December 29), 9 (January 1).

2. Country Estate - 23 acres - Landscaped grounds, ponds, lowlands, wooded hillside.
 Location: Waite Hill; Willoughby
 Censused by: Margaret Sherwin
 Coverage: January 6, 7, 11, 14, 26, 28, 31. TOTAL TIME 12 hours.
 Winter resident bird populations: Black Duck-15, Mallard-12, American Coot-1, Pileated Woodpecker-1, Downy Woodpecker-6, Blue Jay-2, Black-capped Chickadee-6, Tufted Titmouse-5, White-breasted Nuthatch-5, Golden-crowned Kinglet-6, English Sparrow-8, Cardinal-5, Slate-colored Junco-23, Tree Sparrow-125, Song Sparrow-9. Total: 229 individuals (10 per acre or 1,000 per 100 acres).
 Other species noted once only Bald Eagle-1, Brown Creeper-1, Goldfinch-1.

3. Open water along Lake Erie shore - Rocky River to East 79th Street.
 Censused by: Herrick Ornithological Society
 Coverage, Sunday mornings December 22, 1940 to February 23, 1941:

| Wintering Species | 1940 | | 1941 | | | | | | | Total |
|------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|------|-----|-----|------|------|--------|
| | 12/22 | 12/29 | 1/5 | 1/15 | 1/26 | 2/2 | 2/9 | 2/16 | 2/23 | |
| Lesser Scaup | 4263 | 1517 | 877 | 1320 | 1018 | 135 | 61 | 26 | 10 | 9,227 |
| American Golden-eye | 40 | 10 | 23 | 36 | 1 | | 39 | 15 | | 164 |
| American Merganser | 6 | | 607 | 315 | 241 | 58 | 28 | 27 | 20 | 1,302 |
| Red-breasted Merganser | 6 | 3 | 14 | 123 | 123 | 23 | 20 | 10 | 11 | 333 |
| Totals | 4315 | 1530 | 1521 | 1794 | 1383 | 216 | 148 | 78 | 41 | 11,026 |
| Migrant Species | | | | | | | | | | |
| Black Duck | 361 | 103 | | | | | | | | 464 |
| Mallard | 4 | | | | | | | | | 4 |
| Ruddy Duck | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Bufflehead | 2 | 2 | | | | | 1 | | | 5 |
| Pintail | 2 | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Horned Grebe | 4 | 2 | | | | | | | | 6 |
| Totals | 373 | 107 | | | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 484 |
| Grand Total | 4688 | 1637 | 1521 | 1794 | 1383 | 216 | 150 | 79 | 42 | 11,510 |

Unfortunately these records are somewhat fragmentary as compared with those of last year, so that comparisons between the two cannot be very satisfactorily made.

The migratory species, (as represented by the Black Duck) were practically gone by December 24, 1939 but in 1940 they lingered for about a week longer, influenced perhaps by the relatively mild temperatures that prevailed until January 3rd. The beginning of the freeze-up of the lake at that time seems to mark definitely the end of the migration period. At the same time the number of wintering birds is considerably cut down. This is in strong contrast to the record of last year which indicated a peak of numbers (4653 birds) on January 7, 1940 coinciding with the freezing of the lake then. This year, on the contrary, there seems to have been a gradual but steady diminishing of numbers from December 22 on, without any such sudden concentration as was reported a year ago.

There seems to have been another factor at work to definitely reduce numbers between January 26 and February 2, 1941. This reduction cannot be attributed to any radical temperature change, since the Cleveland Weather Bureau reports indicate an average minimum through January of 24.60°, and from February 1 to 16, of 25.1°. There was then a break to an average minimum of 16.4° for the remainder of February. Perhaps the reduction in numbers that occurred between January 26 and February 2 may be accounted for by the progressive freezing of the lake until, in the area under study, the only open places were at East 78th Street and East 49th Street, where warm water is pumped into the lake. These would support only a relatively limited duck population.

Ed.

1940 Christmas Bird Census - Taken December 22.

This was in many ways one of the most successful and impressive Christmas censuses ever made for the Cleveland region. It was planned and organized by Merit B. Skaggs, and conducted by thirteen group leaders as follows: B. P. Bole, Jr., Frank W. Braund, Vera Carrothers, Joe Corbe, H. C. Dobbins, Arthur B. Fuller, Isabelle Hellwig, Richard Klein, Ruth Newcomer, Margaret Sherwin, C. M. Shipman, M. B. Skaggs, and Arthur B. Williams.

These groups covered practically every type of bird habitat within the prescribed limits for the study. They reported 52 species, represented by 3,055 individual birds observed.

Unusual records were: Great Blue Heron, Ruddy Duck, Coot, Kingfisher, Flicker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Crow, Bluebird, Myrtle Warbler, Cowbird, Pine Siskin, White-throated Sparrow.

SPECIES OCCURRENCE

- Horned Grebe - Dec. 22 (6), 29 (2).
Great Blue Heron - Dec. 21(1), 22(2).
American Bittern - Jan. 6(1), 17(1), (both caught in muskrat traps, Northfield)
*Whistling Swan - Dec. 1 to 3 (7 at Holden Arboretum), Jan. 11(21).
*Blue Goose - Dec. 8 (1 seen by Malcolm Jollie and others, circling low about Clague Road Pond which was frozen and being used by skaters).
Mallard - (many winter records)
Black Duck - (many winter records - in greater numbers than mallards)
*Baldpate - Dec. 5 (15).
Pintail - Dec. 22(2).
Lesser Scaup - (many winter records)
American Golden-eye - (many winter records)
Bufflehead - Feb. 2(1), 9(1).
Old Squaw - Dec. 8(1).
Ruddy Duck - Dec. 15(1), 22(1), Jan.1(1), Feb.9(1), 16(1), 23(1).
*Hooded Merganser - Dec. 5(1), 18(1), 22(4).
American Merganser - (many winter records)
Red-breasted Merganser - (many winter records)
*Turkey Vulture - Feb. 10(1), 27(1) - both birds seen by H. W. Baker over Brookpark Road.
Sharp-shinned Hawk - Jan. 19(1), 25(1), 26(1), Feb. 4(1), 16(1), 21(1).
Cooper-Hawk - Dec. 11(1), 24(1), Jan.1(1), 6(1), 25(1), Feb.2(1), 12(1), 16(1), 18(1).
Red-tailed Hawk - Dec. 22(6), Jan. 12(1), 14(1), 26(1), Feb. 28(4).
Red-shouldered Hawk - Dec. 21(1), 22(3), Feb. 12(1).
Rough-legged Hawk - Dec. 22(1), Jan.1(1), 16(1), Feb.27(1).
Bald Eagle - Jan. 2(1).
Marsh Hawk - Dec. 15(1), 22(1), Jan.1(2), 14(1), Feb.1(2), 21(2), 23(1).
Sparrow Hawk - Dec. 22(6), Jan.1(2), 11(1), 12(1), 16(1), 19(1), Feb. 1(3), 7(1).
Ruffed Grouse - Dec.17(1), 22(2), Jan.19(4), Feb.16(1), 22(3).
Bob-white - (many winter records)
Ring-necked Pheasant - (many winter records)
Coot - Dec. 22(2), 24(1).
Herring Gull - (many winter records)
Ring-billed Gull - (many winter records)
Bonaparte's Gull - (many winter records)
Mourning Dove - Jan. 5 (24 in one flock, seen by Raymond Hill on Reynolds Road near Willoughby) (7), 31(1), Feb.4(5), 1 present at Skaggs' feeding station from Jan. 5 to end of February.
Barn Owl - Feb. 9(1), 16(1).
Horned Owl - Dec. 15(2),22(1), Jan.1(1),2(2), 3(2), Feb.23 (1-nest, 2 eggs - Jollie), 25 to 27 (eggs hatched-Jollie).
*Snowy Owl - Dec. 15(3), one seen at Richmond Beach by M. B. Skaggs and F. A. Simpson.
*Hawk Owl - Dec. 5(1), 24(1), 25(1), Jan.1(2), 6(2) - seen by B. P. Bole,Jr. and Harry Phillips at Holden Arboretum, and Rudolf Kula and Thomas Sanders at Northfield.

*Unusual records

Barred Owl - Dec. 22(1), Feb.1(2), 9(2), 16(2), 23(1).

Short-eared Owl - Dec.8(1).

Belted Kingfisher - Dec.22(2), 24(1), Jan.31(1), Feb.1(2), 4(1).

*Flicker - Dec. 14(1), 17(1), 21(2), 22(3), Jan. 1(1), 5(2), 6(2),
8(1),26(1), Feb.16(1).

Pileated Woodpecker - Dec. 5(1), 11(2), 14(1), 15(1), 17(1), 22(8), 26(1),
Feb. 1(1), 2(1), 23(1).

Red-bellied Woodpecker - Dec. 5(1), 11(2), 14(1), 15(1), 17(1), 22(8), 26(1),
Feb.1(1), 2(1), 23(2).

*Red-headed Woodpecker - Dec. 22 (8 seen in pin oak woods by F. W. Braund)

Hairy Woodpecker - (many winter records)

Downy Woodpecker - (many winter records)

Horned Lark - Dec. 22(5),Feb. 2(1), 4(6), 9(4), 17(1), 22(40), 23(51), Mrs.
Sherwin says " a few seen regularly in pastures from January on."

Blue Jay - (many winter records)

Crow - Dec. 22(5), 25(2) Jan. 1(5), 3(2), 11(2), 12(2), 15(3), 19(3), 23(2),
25(1), 26(2), Feb. 1(6), 2(1), 4(2), 13(5), 15(3), 21(5), 22(7), 23(3), 25(1),
26(2), 27(2).

Black-capped Chickadee - (many winter records)

Tufted Titmouse - (many winter records)

White-breasted Nuthatch - (many winter records)

Red-breasted Nuthatch - Dec. 22(24), Jan. 1(2), Feb. 23(9).

*Brown Creeper - Dec. 11(1), 22(3), Jan. 1(1), 18(2), 23(1), 26(1), Feb.4(1), 16(1),
21(1).

Robin - Dec. 5(1), Feb. 22(1).

Golden-crowned Kinglet - Dec. 1(4), 5(1), 22(6), Jan. 1(3), Feb. 1(4), 26(6).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet - Jan. 11(4).

Cedar Waxwing - Dec. 17(5), Jan. 12(5).

Starling - (many winter records)

*Myrtle Warbler - Dec. 22(5), Dec. 27 to Jan. 7 (1 seen by Frank D. Johnson at Parma
regularly at feeding station attracted by suet. Mr. Johnson got motion pictures of
the bird eating suet Jan. 7).

*Palm Warbler - Jan. 4 (one seen by L. E. Ives at Olmsted Falls feeding, on suet).

English Sparrow - (many winter records)

*Cowbird - Dec. 22(1).

Cardinal - (many winter records)

Purple Finch - Dec. 16(3), 17(12), 21(16), 24(3), Jan. 1(6), 4(12),21(15),22(2).

Redpoll - Feb. 22 (1 noted almost daily from Feb. 4 to 25 at feeding station
at Acadia Farm, Northfield, Ohio, by W. Earl Godfrey.

Pine Siskin - Dec. 22(2).

Goldfinch - (many winter records)

*Red Crossbill - Dec. 25 (40 seen by B. P. Bole, Jr. at Holden Arboretum)

*White-winged Crossbill - On Feb. 16 a flock of about 30 were seen by Margarett Morse
and M. B. Walters on the North Chagrin Nature Trail. On Feb. 23 a flock of about 100
were seen at North Chagrin by M.B. Walters, and on the same day a flock of about 60,
near Willoughby by Raymond Hill and others. On the same day Donald Newman reported 3
seen at North Chagrin.

Red-eyed Towhee - Dec. 21(1), Jan. 6(1).

Slate-colored Junco - (many winter records)

Tree Sparrow - (many winter records)

*White-throated Sparrow - 1 bird present at Mrs. Sherwin's feeding station regularly till Dec. 24.

Song Sparrow - (many winter records)

Snow Bunting - Dec. 5(7), 8(20 on Lake Erie shore reported by Donald Newman), Feb. 4 (150-flock, seen by Margaret Sherwin at Lost Nation Road Airport, where it is reported the birds have been present continuously from about the 1st of January), Feb. 8(20 seen flying over South Euclid by Mr. and Mrs. Skaggs).

*Unusual records

Comment:

As the Editor scans this interesting list, several things occur to him which seem worthy of mention.

1. The lateness of many of the records. The Great Blue Herons seen by Edith Dobbins in Rocky River Valley Dec. 21 and by Dick Klein in the Cuyahoga Valley Dec. 22; the American Bitterns caught in muskrat traps near Northfield Jan. 6 and 17; the 8 Red-headed Woodpeckers seen by Frank Braund feeding on pin oak acorns Dec. 22; the Myrtle Warbler and the Palm Warbler dining on suet at Parma and Olmsted Falls Jan. 4 and 7 (Frank Johnson says that when he was observing his Myrtle Warbler on Jan. 5 the thermometer stood at 12°, and it was "a cold snowy day"); the Cowbird reported by Merit Skaggs on Dec. 22; and Mrs. Sherwin's White-throated Sparrow that just couldn't bear to leave the hospitality of her feeding station till Dec. 24.

Probably the mildness of the weather (in general) and the attractiveness of the food supply were factors contributing to the tardy departure of these birds,

2. Winter Kingfishers, winter Flickers, winter Brown Creepers, winter Crows, winter Song Sparrows - and doubtless correlated with these in some way - winter Hawks. Again we invoke weather and food supply as a partial explanation, but long to understand more fully the forces that control the actions of these favorite objects of our study.

3. The value of winter feeding stations, closely observed, as a method of obtaining data on the occurrence of birds. Without the feeding stations we would not have had the date records for Mourning Dove, Myrtle Warbler, Palm Warbler, Redpoll, and White-throated Sparrow.

4. And of course the rarities. These always stir the imagination. The Blue Goose and the Snowy Owl stand as records more or less of individual birds. But the White-winged Crossbills furnished a thrill for many observers and they were here in numbers. All who saw them agree that the birds were feeding on hemlock seeds.

And there must have been a flight of that rare visitor here - the Hawk Owl. This is a northern owl of medium size, distinguished by its dark markings and unusually long, graduated tail. It is much to the credit of our observers that we are able to publish five December and January records of the occurrence of this species here.

FIELD NOTESEarliest nesting record for Cleveland?

On February 19, 1941 Mr. and Mrs. Richard N. Statham brought in to the Museum of Natural History a fledgeling dove (pigeon) that had been seen to fall from the cornice of the Cleveland Trust Company building to the sidewalk at the corner of Euclid Avenue and East 9th Street.

The bird was well feathered, but not completely so, many of the feathers showing tufts of natal down still adhering to their tips. The feathers of the wings and tail were about half grown. While incapable of flight, the bird was able, by fluttering, to so break the force of its fall as to escape serious injury. It was apparently about three weeks from the egg. Doubtless it had slipped and fallen from its lofty stone ledge because of the ice which had accumulated there during the very wintry weather of late February.

If the estimate of the bird's age is approximately correct, then the date of hatching was about February 1st, and the date when the egg was laid and incubation begun, about January 15th. Is there any earlier nesting record for any wild bird in the vicinity of Cleveland?

One might argue that these doves are not strictly "wild" birds. Yet the conditions of their existence about the large buildings of downtown Cleveland are no different than those of the English sparrows, starlings, or occasional sparrow hawks that inhabit the same locations.

Forbush, in his Birds of Massachusetts, says: "The Domestic Dove or Pigeon is usually bred in captivity, but numerous individuals have escaped from their owners, and their offspring are virtually wild birds". He gives as breeding dates: "Every month in the year, except January, in different parts of New England, but most commonly from March to June and from August to November".

So this exceptionally early breeding record for the Dove in its wild state at Cleveland seems worthy of special notice... Arthur B. Williams.

A "City" Ruffed Grouse.

I was indeed surprised when, on January 19, I discovered a cock Ruffed Grouse in the Lake View Cemetery woods. While I watched, it picked at the snow-covered matting of leaves, then paused, partly spread its tail, and silently walked to the far side of the tangle and out of my sight. For such a wild and wary bird to live in a small woods in the heart of an urban area is, I believe, quite unusual.- Donald L. Newman.

White-Crowned Sparrows - Fall of 1940

In the last issue of the "Bird Calendar", Dr. Aldrich commented on the total lack of records for several birds, including the White-Crowned Sparrow - Zonotrichia leucophrys, for the 1940 fall migration season. If they were not on my list sent the editor, there was an error of omission on my part.

White-Crowned Sparrows were quite common in our neighborhood from October 3rd to 20th. During the period I banded 45 individuals, including immatures, which would indicate a fairly successful season. Most of the young birds were seen in the latter part of the above mentioned period. -Merit B. Skaggs.

Snowy Owl at Richmond Beach.

On December 15, 1940, Mr. F. A. Simpson and I hiked along the Lake Erie shore at Richmond beach near Fairport in Lake County, Ohio. The wind was strong, from the north. Suddenly we saw a large white bird fly at right angles to our course, over the nearby sand dunes. We noticed it had broad, rounded wings and suspected it might be a Snowy Owl - *Nyctea nyctea*. Hurriedly going to our car we told Mrs. Skaggs of our discovery and taking our telescope, the three of us circled to where the bird was last seen. Looking about, we soon saw a patch of white that looked different from the small areas of old snow and sure enough - there on a small mound of sand sat a Snowy Owl. We used our field glasses and telescope from a distance of about 70 yards, and noted the immaculate plumage. When flushed, the bird flew again to the beach and was last seen on the beach a short distance from the pounding waves. This was the first bird of this species for all three of us.- Merit B. Skaggs.

A Problem in Field Identification.

What would you say if, on one of your field trips, you were confronted by a large, alert-looking bird, evidently a hawk, perched on the dead top of a good-sized tree overlooking an open meadow, and you were able to make out the following characteristics?

As the bird faces you, the general impression given is that of an all-white bird with a few dark markings on crown, neck and wings. There are a few dark bars on the sides and belly. The tail below is pure white.

As he turns about you note that his back is mottled black and white, the head quite dark behind, the wings largely white, but the primaries black. The ample tail, when viewed from this angle, shows reddish outer tail-feathers, then white feathers mottled with black. The central tail feather is dark red with white tip and the suggestion of a dark band above the white tip. As the bird flies he may look something like a snowy owl, but he is not an owl.

This bird was brought in to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History recently, having been found dead. He is now mounted and is a superb looking specimen.

What do you say he is?

Send in your answer to the Editor of the Calendar and We'll publish your name in the next issue if you get him right. If you would like to see the bird at close quarters, call at the Museum and look him over.

EXCHANGES

The Calendar is regularly exchanged with a number of other organizations that publish comparable notes on local ornithology. Copies of these exchanges are displayed monthly in the Cleveland Museum of Natural History Library, where they may be looked over by any member of the Cleveland Bird Club.

In addition to these exchanges, the Calendar goes to a number of scientific institutions and libraries.