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THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

Winter Number

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SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

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

December -Rather cold, the average temperature being 28.4°F., though there were no zero or sub-zero readings. Precipitation while frequent was somewhat below normal. Snowfall was about normal, the maximum depth of four inches remaining on the ground from the 15th to 17th.

January -The month ended with a snowfall of 7.6 inches on the 30th, but otherwise both temperatures and precipitation were near normal and there were no extremely cold days. Freezing rain and sleet were frequent, however.

February -Mild, the temperature averaging 31.3°F. Precipitation, which occurred on all but four days, was about one inch above normal. The ground was snow covered on a total of 15 days, eight of those days being in the first part of the month.

All records, observations, and comments should be sent to Donald L. Newman, 14174 Superior Road, Cleveland 18, Ohio.

COMMENT ON THE SEASON

The multitude of Lesser Scaup Ducks and of Ruddy Ducks which during November had congregated along the lakefront, chiefly west of the mouth of the Cuyahoga River, stayed on in that same area until about the 10th of December, after which their numbers fell off sharply. The greatest number of Lesser Scaup reported was an estimated 10,000 on December 10 (Klamm), and this duck remained the dominant species of wintering waterfowl, some 2,350 being recorded on January 9, between Avon and White City (Akers). The Ruddy Duck maintained its numbers until about December 8, when an estimated 3,200 were reported (Harty), but these birds soon departed and by December 18, only 230 were observed. After that date a scattered few were present, the largest number being a mere 20 on January 15 (Raynes).

By January 10, Lake Erie was largely frozen over, at least in our region, and a commercial airline pilot reported that there was ice from shore to shore. So dense and so extensive was the ice that on January 20, the Coast Guard Cutter Kaw, which had left Cleveland the day previously for Detroit, was compelled to return to the harbor after proceeding only six miles in a grueling two-day battle with ice masses as much as six feet thick. Just prior to the freeze, on January 7, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., 10 to 12 flocks of ducks consisting of 200 to 250 birds each, mostly in long files, flew east along the lakefront between Rocky River and Edgewater Park. Those that came near enough to identify with certainty were male Canvasbacks (Carrothers). There was a bitter north wind that day, ice was drifting in rapidly, and the temperature was falling, so that these birds were apparently moving east to open water.

Once the lake became almost completely frozen over, at least that portion visible from the shore, the relatively small numbers of wintering ducks and gulls were confined to those artificially maintained open water areas at the several Illuminating Company plants at Avon, East 72nd Street, and Eastlake, and the Municipal Light plant at East 49th Street as well as a small patch of open water inside the breakwall and about opposite the mouth of the Cuyahoga River. The records from these areas are insufficient to permit a determination of the numerical composition of the true wintering population, which in the case of the ducks consisted of perhaps five principal species - Lesser Scaup, Greater Scaup, American Goldeneye, Canvasback, and Black Duck - together with a few Bufflehead, Redhead, and Ruddy Ducks. It is clear, however, that as in the winter of 1954-55, both the American and Red-breasted Merganser were notably scarce. For the American Merganser the largest number reported was five on January 9, after which to the end of February there were about half a dozen records of a single bird. The Red-breasted Merganser was not much more abundant, ten on February 3, being the greatest number observed.

There were no reports of the Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, or of any of the three species of Scoters, while for the Oldsquaw there was just one record of a single bird on the lakefront on January 11, as well as a record of a lone bird on Summit Lake, in Akron, on December 11.

Though not as spectacularly abundant as in the winter of 1950-51 when flocks of 800 were not uncommon (see Cleveland BIRD CALENDAR, 47:1,5), the Robin was present in large numbers this winter, in contrast to its scarcity last winter. The

COMMENT ON THE SEASON (Cont'd.)

influx of birds apparently started about December 17, and continued for the next several weeks as is clearly revealed in the following counts from the Sherwin Farm in Waite Hill: December 18 (5), December 27 (30), December 29 (65), January 7 (120). Similarly, in the Shaker Lakes region, which was under observation daily between December 17, and January 2 (Sullivan), the size of the flock, though highly variable, grew from ten on the 17th to 63 on the 31st.

The Robin was not as abundant in the Rocky River Valley and in the western portion of the Cleveland region as it was in the eastern and southern portions, judging from the following figures compiled on the several Christmas bird counts: Cleveland (east), 144; Cleveland (west), 14; Cuyahoga Falls, 138. Just outside our region to the east, the Ashtabula County Christmas Count produced a total of 239 Robins, including a flock of "70 sighted in a hemlock grove feeding on wild grapes, bittersweet, and mountain ash berries" (Savage).

There were many reports of Robins in the locality of Akron, and during the month of January one flock of about 200 birds, near Mogadore, came regularly to an orchard each morning to eat frozen apples (Staiger). Most of the flocks undoubtedly subsisted on fruits and berries of various kinds, but a band of Robins on the Western Reserve University campus, where as many as 75 were observed on January 26, had a much choicer diet. For "although during much of this period [January and February] the ground was generally snow covered, the ground above the steam pipes was rather muddy. Here large numbers of Robins were engaged in pulling out worms" (Davies). These campus birds seemed at dusk "to fly north across Euclid Avenue to some undiscovered roosting place". It is quite possible it was this same flock that was observed in the Fine Arts Garden just north of the Wade Park Pond on January 15, when many of them, in the company of about 25 Cedar Waxwings, were feeding on the fruits of the shrubs and trees planted in that area (Gaede).

In addition to the Robin there were three other species of passerine birds that were apparently more abundant this winter than in the winter of 1954-55. The Carolina Wren, for which there were just three records in December 1954, and none whatever in January and February 1955, was reported in all three months of the present winter and from five separate localities: Rocky River Reservation, where as many as five were seen; Willoughby; Painesville; North Chagrin Reservation; and along the Ohio Canal. Even more impressive was the abundance of Cedar Waxwings, always an erratic and unpredictable species. Not only were there many more records - 51 in January and February of this year as compared with only 18 in the same two months of 1955 - but the flocks were generally larger, consisting of anywhere from 10 to 110 birds. This largest flock of 110 Waxwings was assembled in a tall European planetree in a backyard in Cleveland Heights and was feeding on the seeds of the buttonballs (Tramer).

The third passerine species that was more common this winter than in the previous winter was the Song Sparrow. In the period December 1954 through February 1955, there were 18 records totaling 37 individuals, while for the present period there were 47 records totaling 245 individuals. Many of these individuals were undoubtedly counted more than once in recurring visits to the same areas, so that these figures do not represent a true population count. But even allowing for this duplication, the figures do seem to suggest the relative abundance of this species in the two successive winters. The records also disclose that the Song Sparrow was most numerous in the

COMMENT ON THE SEASON (Cont'd.)

Rocky River Reservation, from which nearly half of the occurrence records came, including a report of 20 birds on January 15 (Davies).

Although the Robins apparently came from the more northern portion of their breeding range, none of the typical far northern birds occurred here in any sizable numbers. The Pine Siskin, which was not reported at all last winter, was observed this winter, particularly at the Shaker Lakes, where on February 11 and 12, a flock of 60 was counted (Gaede). A small band of about 20 Redpolls also wintered in that area but were not reported elsewhere. There was not a single record of the Lapland Longspur, and only one report of the Snow Bunting - a flock of 16 on the lakefront on December 5 (Akers). Our inadequate coverage of open fields and waste areas may account, however, for the lack of records for these two species.

The very first harbingers of spring reported were two Bluebirds on February 11, at Tinker Creek Farm (Ramisch), while on the following day four were observed at the Rocky River Reservation (Dean). Other early arrivals were one Meadowlark on February 25, thirty Redwings on February 18, and two Bronzed Grackles on February 25.

The mass movement of migrating flocks apparently began about February 25 and 26, because on those two days beyond our region to the west - between Beaver Creek and East Harbor - vast numbers of Crows and Redwings together with a lesser number of Meadowlarks, Grackles, and Starlings were on the wing. A flock of Redwings estimated at 5,000 was observed on the afternoon of the 25th as well as many smaller flocks of either Redwings alone or of Redwings and Starlings with an occasional Grackle (Gaede). Early in the day on the 26th bands of from 50 to 200 Redwings and 10 to 30 Crows were encountered, but as the day wore on "larger and larger flocks were noted - Redwings in groups of one or two thousand at a time and, in one case, Crows in a mass of over 5001 Many groups of Redwings contained Grackles to the extent of about 10%. Better than 25,000 Redwings were seen in the course of the day. In no case could any Cowbirds be found" (Klamm). It is interesting to note that on both February 25 and 26, the Crows were moving in a southeasterly direction following the shoreline of Lake Erie, while the Redwings and the other blackbirds were proceeding west and kept somewhat south of the lake shore.

On February 19, two other evidences of the impending change of seasons were observed. In the Rocky River Valley one of a trio of Red-shouldered Hawks "gave a spectacular performance of fancy rolls and dives, the latter maneuver being accomplished by folding the wings and plunging at headlong speed" (Klamm). At Lakewood Park some of the male American Goldeneyes were putting on a courtship display and were uttering the peculiar Nighthawk-like "paaap" that is part of the pre-nuptial performance (Klamm).

For those who are annotating their copy of Birds of Cleveland the following entries should be made:

New earliest spring date

Killdeer (1) - February 12, Shaker Lakes (Klamm)

New latest fall date

Fox Sparrow (1) - December 4, Rocky River Reservation (Davies and Klamm)

SCHOLARSHIPS

Cleveland Audubon Society will offer scholarships again this year to teachers or youth group workers who want summer training in conservation. Mrs. Bruce Maddux, 13108 Griffing Ave., Cleveland 20, will be glad to have suggestions for scholarship nominees.

TRAVELING BIRDERS

Owen Davies found the Spotted-breasted Oriole in Miami just where Roger Tory Peterson in "Wild America" said he would.

The Warner Seelys on the 2 day Audubon trip to the Okeechobee region of Florida listed 75 species, 6 of them new to Warner.

Kay Booth included 20 Black-headed grosbeaks and 5 Blue-winged teal in the 36 species she saw in two days birding on the desert near Tucson, Arizona. A flock of Cedar waxwings and robins near Oakland made her think she was back home that last week of March.

BIRD WALKS

From Harold Wallin's park board leaflet we take this listing of starting places for the 1956 Sunday morning walks. Join one of these groups at 7:30 A.M. any Sunday from April 15 to May 20 for an hour's fun out of doors.

EAST

NORTH CHAGRIN -Meet at Forest Lane entrance SOM Road.

SOUTH CHAGRIN -Meet at Shelter House near Miles Road entrance. Co-sponsored by the Cleveland Natural Science Club, Mr. Ellis Persing and Dr. Vincent Peterson, in charge.

*SHAKER LAKES-Meet at bridge near corner of North Park Blvd. and Coventry Road

*GATES MILLS -First meeting at Historical Museum on Old Mill Road.

*BLACK BROOK -Meet at bridge at east end of Mentor Marsh near Richmond Road. Beach on Headlands

*HOLDEN ARBORETUM - Meet at Equipment shed on Sperry Rd. Members only.

WEST

ROCKY RIVER NORTH - Meet at the ford at the foot of Detroit St. entrance to park.

ROCKY RIVER SOUTH - Meet at parking area near Mastick Picnic grounds.

HUNTINGTON BEACH - Meet at the North Parking Lot. Co-sponsored by the Lake Erie Children's Museums. Mrs. Elberta Flemming in

*ELYRIA -Meet at Washington Boulevard entrance to Ely Woods Park.

SOUTH TOWPATH

-Brecksville-Bedford Parkway. Meet at corner of Canal and Sagamore Roads.

HINCKLEY -Meet at bridge at south end of lake on Medina County Rt. 44, a continuation of Ohio Rt. 94.

*These walks are not in Metropolitan Parks.

BIRD WALKS (Cont'd.)
SOUTH -- Cont'd.
BEDFORD

-Meet at park entrance
off Dunhan Road near
Tinkers Creek Road.

BIRD FESTIVAL

-May 20th at 2:30 at
the Trail-side Museum
in the Brecksville
Reservation.

The leaders of these walks are all amateurs who are donating their time to help you enjoy the returning birds and the Spring Season. For further information call the Museum of Natural History - PR 1-0909 or the Metropolitan Park Office - MA 1-1056.

NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. J. David Lewis, membership secretary, reports on the April 15, status of members of Cleveland Audubon Society: Student 35; Courtesy 38; National only 87; Local 632; Joint 209; total 1001.

These are new members since March 1, 1956:

Carolyn White	Mrs. Stanley Wygonik	Theresa Wygonik
Mr. Virgil May	William Nimberger	Harry Foley
Christine Crone	Mrs. Bernard Lodrick	Lindsay Randolph
Darle Neeper	Anna Lee Block	Alfred Lerch
Lucille Ritzenthaler	Reta Champion	Ivan Reaney
Mrs. Frank Harrison	Mrs. Edith Linabury	Norma Kampp
Frances Robinson	Dave Bergman	Mrs. Cecil Kelley
Mr. & Mrs. J. W. Gillan	Mr. & Mrs. J. M. Mercer	Mina Scott Bain
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Ritchie	Robert Barkos	Dr. David Steel
Miss Frances Simon	Stella Rogazz	Frances Collins
Mr. & Mrs. N. L. Palmer	Viola Stevens	Alma Schultz
Ralph Murbach		

Mrs. Helen McCormack, membership chairman, suggests that each Cleveland Audubon Society member make it a point to invite interested people to join the Society. Most prospective members hesitate to ask to join. If Cleveland Audubon is to grow in size and effectiveness present members must take the initiative in inviting others to join the Society.



FIELD NOTES (Cont'd.)

Short-eared Owls on the Lakefront and Elsewhere. The first of the Short-eared Owls to be reported within our region this winter were two birds sighted by James F. Akers on January 9, as they flew over the dump just north of the Lakefront Airport. From that time on the owls were observed in varying numbers, with William A. Dexter, of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, reporting the largest number: fourteen. By the end of February only a few of these birds were still present.

Some of the men working on the dump asserted that these owls had been there for years. While there was no proof of such long occupancy, there was considerable evidence to show that they had been present for many months, as indicated by the number and the condition of pellets collected from the dump. Perhaps the most frequent and careful observer of the owls was Stephen Harty, who, in addition to collecting many dozens of pellets, discovered on the dump the remains of two Short-eared Owls, one Crow, and one Green Heron, as well as of several small birds. (For an analysis of the feeding habits of these Short-eared Owls, see Dr. Ralph W. Dexter's article in this issue of the CALENDAR.) The owls' manner of flight was described by Allen E. Valentine as "quite remindful of a hunting Marsh Hawk as they veered back and forth barely higher than the tops of the dried grasses".

Although it was not possible subsequently to determine the dates and numbers of occurrence, it does appear that there were several authentic reports of the Short-eared Owl in the westerly suburbs. These reports, which were received by William Scheele, director of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, told of three birds in the cloverleaf area at the intersection of Route 17 and Rocky River Drive, and of two or more birds in grassy fields along Cahoon Road in Bay Village.

The Short-eared Owl is of course uncommon in our region at any season, and in recent years the largest number reported was three seen regularly by James Akers at Cleveland Hopkins Airport from December 17, 1953 to March 21, 1954.

A SUMMARY OF THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Cleveland (East) - December 26, 1955. Members of the Kirtland Bird Club, under the direction of Vera Carrothers and Marjorie Ramsch, studied the area from Gordon Park eastward to the mouth of the Chagrin River, and inland to Shaker Lakes, Gates Mills, North Chagrin Reservation, and Willoughby. Total species observed: 57; total individuals: 5,357. Outstanding record: Saw-whet Owl.

Cleveland (West) - December 26, 1955. A group of observers, directed by Owen Davies, covered that portion of the region from Edgewater Park west to Avon, and from the mouth of Rocky River south to the Brookpark Bridge, as well as suitable habitat in a number of the westerly suburbs. Total species observed: 50; total individuals: 3,775. Outstanding record: Snowy Owl.

Cuyahoga Falls (Southeast) - January 2, 1956. The Cuyahoga Falls Audubon Club, lead by Dr. Ralph W. Dexter, searched an area whose radius centered on the public square of Cuyahoga Falls and which included a sizable proportion of deciduous woods as well as some of the Akron lakes and a part of the flood plain of the Cuyahoga River. Total species observed: 42; total individuals: 4,579. Outstanding record: Eared Grebe, on Summit Lake in Akron.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON FOOD OF COMMON BIRDS - VII

Ralph W. Dexter
Kent State University, Kent, Ohio

Over the past year stomach and pellet analyses were made for 21 species of birds. Twenty-one stomachs and 196 owl pellets were studied. Acknowledgment is made to Stephen Harty who furnished two-thirds of the stomachs and the pellets of the Short-eared Owl, and to Dr. Clinton H. Hobbs, Kent State University, for identification of seeds. The previous report in this series was published in the Cleveland BIRD CALENDAR 51 (2):8-9. 1955.

Horned Grebe - Found dead on shore of Lake Erie near Silver Creek, New York, on November 24, 1955. Contents: mass of herbaceous plant material with some insect fragments.

Black Duck - Found dead at Wingfoot Lake, near Suffield, on August 15, 1955. Contents: organic detritus with some ostracod crustaceans and some unidentified stony seeds.

Blue-winged Teal - Found dead at Wingfoot Lake, near Suffield, on October 8, 1955. Contents: duckweed and seeds of common smartweed (Polygonum hydropiper) and lamb-quarters (?).

Wood Duck - Found dead at Wingfoot Lake, near Suffield, on August 15, 1955. Contents: fruits and seeds of some member of the rose family (?).

Redhead - Found dead at Long Point, Ontario, on November 25, 1955. Contents: 7 amphipod crustaceans (Gammarus fasciatus), several seed shrimps (Ostracoda), 2 water tigers (larvae of dytigid water beetles), plant fibers, and 22 unidentified seeds.

Greater Scaup Duck - Found dead at Gordon Park, Cleveland, on December 24, 1955. Contents: numerous remains of snails.

Lesser Scaup Duck - Frozen in ice at East 72nd Street, on the Cleveland lakefront, in December 1954. Contents: several fish vertebrae.

Sharp-shinned Hawk - Found dead at Aurora on December 20, 1955. Contents: remains of a Bobwhite.

Bobwhite - Found dead in northern Summit County on January 1, 1956. Contents: seeds of Pennsylvania persicaria (Polygonum pennsylvanicum) and hawthorn (?).

Red-backed Sandpiper - Found dead at Nimisila Reservoir south of Akron on November 5, 1954. Contents: insect fragments with seeds of fowl-manna grass (Glyceria striata).

Barn Owl - One hundred eleven pellets collected on May 21, 1955, from a silo on Gilcrest Farm near Hartville. A total of 279 skulls was recovered (2.5 skulls per pellet). Contents: 195 meadow mice (Microtus pennsylvanicus); 35 white-footed deer mice (Peromyscus leucopus); 32 short-tailed shrews (Blarina brevicauda); 6 passerine birds; 5 house mice (Mus musculus); 4 cottontail rabbits (Sylvilagus floridanus); 1 Norway rat (Rattus norvegicus); and 1 hairy-tailed mole (Parascalops breweri).

Screech Owl - (1.) Found dead on highway near Parma on July 6, 1955. Contents: 1 harvest spider; 1 caterpillar; fragments of moths, beetles, and other insects. (2.) Found dead on east side of Pelee Peninsula on November 26, 1955. Contents: 1 prairie whitefooted deer mouse (Peromyscus maniculatus)

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON FOOD OF COMMON BIRDS - VII (Cont'd.)

Great-horned Owl - Found dead at Middlefield on March 18, 1955. Contents: 3 white-footed deer mice (P leucopus); 2 small shrews.

Barred Owl - Trapped at pheasant farm near Middlefield on January 6, 1955. Contents: remains of a small bird.

Short-eared Owl - Eighty-five pellets collected at the Cleveland lakefront dump on February 8 and 10, 1956. Remains of 65 animals (0.8 per pellet) were recovered. Contents: 41 Norway rats (R norvegicus); 11 house mice (M musculus); 2 meadow mice (M pennsylvanicus); 1 passerine bird (English sparrow ?). Note that the ratio is the reverse of that usually found in owls, reflecting the habitat of these individuals living in an unusual situation. Stephen Harty observed that the owls did not eat the stomach or intestines of the rats.

Saw-whet Owl - Found dead near Bay Bridge, Sandusky, on November 27, 1955. Contents: small number of mammal hairs.

Veery - Found dead on Kent State University campus on May 20, 1955. Contents: 1 caterpillar; 2 insect pupae.

Cedar Waxwing - Found dead on Kent State University campus on November 2, 1955. Contents: 3 crab apples.

Black and White Warbler - Found dead in Kent in May 1955. Contents: several small beetles (including ground beetles and weevils) and flies (Diptera) 1 spider; 1 millipede.

Blackburnian Warbler - Found dead in Kent on October 15, 1955. Contents: 18 insect eggs.

Cardinal - (1.) Found dead west of Kent on November 22, 1955. Contents: 1 honey bee; numerous fragments of leaves; kernels of corn; and seeds. (2.) Found dead in Kent in December 1955. Contents: sunflower seeds.