

(Published in The Cleveland Audubon Society Bulletin,
Volume 2, Number 10, November 1956, pp. 6-15)
Vol. 52, No. 3 June, July, August 1956

THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

Summer Number

Published By
Cleveland Audubon Society
and
The Kirtland Bird Club

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SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

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

- June - Abnormally cool during the first week, then a hot spell from the 11th through the 15th, after which temperatures averaged about normal. Excessive rainfall on the 23rd and 24th helped produce total precipitation of 4.14 inches, which was well above normal for the month.
- July - Cool, wet, and cloudy. The 51° reading on the 30th set a new low for that date. Rainfall averaged above normal every day after the 8th, with rains in excess of 3 inches in some localities on the 20th and 26th.
- August - Temperatures averaged about normal. Rain fell on 17 days, with excessive amounts on 4 days. Severe thunderstorms accompanied by high winds damaged trees and buildings on the 5th, 11th, 18th, and 27th.

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

COMMENT ON THE SEASON

The chief center of interest this summer was the city dump just north of the Lakefront Airport where beginning about the last week in July a truly spectacular number and variety of shorebirds stopped to feed and often lingered for several days or more. On this filled land, strewn in places with a mad assortment of rubbish and rubble, there were stretches of muddy, water-soaked earth covered with short, coarse vegetation; it was in such places the sandpipers and plovers gathered. There were also depressions and hollows in which water collected to such a depth that these tiny lakes attracted some of the dabbling ducks, such as the Pintail, the Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, and even a lone Shoveller. At the outer margin of the fill was a narrow shelf of hard, pebbly ground that formed a kind of shoreline.

Within this man-made area in the very heart of the city a total of 20 species of plovers and sandpipers was observed to the end of August. Some idea of the abundance of these shorebirds may be gained from the following figures taken from a compilation of records of birds at the dump prepared by one of the many observers (Harty) who spent countless hours there. For the month of August the high count showed 13 Wilson's Snipe on the 21st; 90 Lesser Yellow-legs on the 11th; 110 Pectoral Sandpipers on the 11th; 20 Dowitchers on the 26th and 27th; and 200 Semi-palmated Sandpipers on the 12th. In addition there were such uncommon species as the Western and the Baird's Sandpiper as well as several rarer species which are discussed under the heading Noteworthy Records.

The dump was attractive not only to the shorebirds but to the heron family, too; and the Great Blue, the Green, and the Black-crowned Night Heron were present quite regularly, with as many as 10 Great Blues on August 18, and 20 Night Herons on the 25th. Even the American Egret made a brief appearance when two birds were seen on the 18th. Finally, to round out the picture, a Sora Rail was present on two days late in August, and on two evenings during that month a Barn Owl, possibly one of those that inhabit the Stadium, searched the dump on muted wings.

Probably because our observers spent so much time at the city dump to the exclusion of other areas, the mid- and late-summer records for many of the passerine species are quite meager; and we have scarcely any reports of migrating thrushes, vireos, and warblers, which usually appear in the latter part of August.

In the case of the Nighthawk there was the customary slow and uneven filter of birds in small numbers beginning about August 15, and not until the 26th was there a report of a mass movement. On that date between 6:10 and 6:20 p.m., a large concentration was feeding at a low altitude over Cleveland-Hopkins Airport, but they moved in such a haphazard and confusing pattern that it was impossible to make even a rough count; however, there were at least 300 birds, all of which disappeared completely after the ten-minute feeding pause (Akers). Just about one hour later another large flight of Nighthawks was observed over the North Olmsted gate to the Ohio Turnpike and all along Route 10 to Columbia Road, a distance of several miles (Valentine). Several bands of 10 to 12 birds were also noted that evening on the east side of Cleveland (Beachwood Village and Cleveland Heights) as they flew east or southeast in a steady, direct fashion with very few sudden sallies after insects (Newman). Early in the evening of August 29, an estimated

COMMENT ON THE SEASON (Cont'd.)

150 Nighthawks, headed south in groups of 15 to 20, passed over the baseball field in the North Rocky River Reservation for a period of about five minutes (Ackermann).

The Purple Martin was observed in large concentrations in several localities throughout our region beginning as early as August 3, when an estimated 400 were seen in Grafton (Knight). There were reports of three congregations in Lakewood, each consisting of several hundred birds, while in the eastern suburb of Euclid on the evening of the 17th possibly as many as 5,000 Martins were assembled in the trees along South Lake Shore Boulevard for a distance of two blocks (Raynes). In Elmwood Park, Rocky River, on the 26th an estimated 650 Martins lined the telephone wires; among this noisy throng only a dozen adult males were counted (Morton).

During the first week of June eight species of non-breeding warblers were observed, always just single individuals, which seems to suggest that there was an unusual number of stragglers at the close of the spring migration. As is shown below, both the latecomers and the early birds caused many changes in our species occurrence records. For those who are annotating their copy of Birds of Cleveland the following changes should be made:

New Latest Spring Date

Tennessee Warbler (1) - June 1, North Chagrin Reservation (Carrothers)
Black-throated Blue Warbler (1) - June 6, Lakewood (Davies)
Connecticut Warbler (1) - June 5, Lakewood (Davies)
Wilson's Warbler (1) - June 5, North Chagrin Reservation (Carrothers)

New Earliest Fall Date

Pintail (2) - August 3, lakefront dump (Harty)
Shoveller (1) - August 19, lakefront dump (Raynes)
Lesser Scaup Duck (1) - July 26, Rocky River Reservation (Ackermann)
Ruddy Duck (1) - July 29, Shaker Lakes (Deininger)
Ruddy Turnstone (1) - July 26, lakefront dump (Harty)
Blackburnian Warbler (1) - July 23, Brecksville (Knight)

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Snowy Egret - Observed for three successive days at Baldwin Lake by several contributors beginning on August 12, this bird in immature plumage fished with the characteristic foot movement and dashed about in the shallow water in its usual helter-skelter fashion (Akers). A second immature was seen on August 19, in the Rocky River Valley (Henderson et al). These are the first summer or autumn records since August 1949.

Canada Goose - At about ten o'clock on the sunny morning of August 12, a flock in V formation was seen flying high above the north of Akron. They were going directly west "but suddenly broke formation, milled around several times, then reformed and headed south. As they came down lower and passed to the west of us, the sun shone on the white

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS (Cont'd.)

patch on their necks and we counted 28 Canada Geese" (Staiger). If these birds were actually migrants, which is an entirely reasonable assumption, they were at least ten weeks ahead of schedule.

Osprey - Three June records suggest that this species may be breeding in our region. On the 9th one was seen perched in one of the many dead trees standing in the water at Aurora Lake, and again on the 30th what was presumably the same bird was sailing above the lake with two Kingbirds in pursuit (Storer). On the 10th a bird appeared briefly over Highland Cemetery (Knight), and on the 23rd at Holden Arboretum an Osprey, harassed by a Kingbird, was flying at a considerable height in a southwesterly direction (Klamm).

Hudsonian Curlew - Three of this rare visitor, the largest number reported in the last decade, were present on August 21, at the lakefront dump in the general company of dozens of Lesser Yellow-legs and Pectoral and Semipalmated Sandpipers (Davies).

Western Willet - The first report of this species in our region since August 1953 was of a solitary individual, presumably the same one, at the lakefront dump from August 29 through the 31st (Harty et al).

Stilt Sandpiper - Belying its status as a rare migrant, this species, for which there had been only six previous regional records, was first observed at the lakefront dump on August 21 (two birds) and was reported regularly thereafter in twos and threes through the 31st, when one bird was still present (Klamm et al). The high count was of four birds on the 26th.

Wilson's Phalarope - Early in the evening of August 11, a single individual was discovered on the lakefront dump in association with several hundred Lesser Yellow-legs and Pectoral and Semipalmated Sandpipers. At 11:00 a.m. on the following day two Phalaropes, apparently male and female, were present for a short time but were frightened away by a helicopter at the nearby airport. Although the dump was visited daily by several observers, none was seen again until August 19, when one bird appeared (or reappeared?). Then one was reported on the 22nd and 23rd and on the 25th and 26th, after which there were no further reports (Klamm et al).

Although this Phalarope is included in the Birds of the Cleveland Region (1950), the sole basis for its inclusion is a general reference to this species contained in Wheaton 's Report on the Birds of Ohio (1882) Thus these August 1956 records are the first for the Cleveland region in the twentieth century and are the only definite records in the entire history of the region.

Franklin's Gull - Not only was the lakefront dump attractive to shorebirds, but even this rare visitor was observed there on August 26 (Davies), which is the first August record for this species in our region.

Mockingbird - There were two June records, the first since 1954 when a pair nested in Brecksville. On the 17th one was perched on a telephone wire along Route 84 near Mentor (Downer), and on the 23rd one was feeding in the grass and shrubbery at the

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS (Cont'd.)

Holden Arboretum (Klamm).

Magnolia Warbler - A singing bird was seen on June 29, in the hemlocks along the ravine southwest of the Trailside Museum in the North Chagrin Reservation, where one was seen and heard in June 1955; but it could not be found there again on July 1, though a careful search was made (Storer and Carrothers).

Canada Warbler - Two singing males were reported during the month of June: one on the 9th deep in the woods at Aurora Lake (Gaede) and one on the 24th in the North Chagrin Reservation (Carrothers). This second bird was neither seen nor heard on earlier and later visits to that area.

FIELD NOTES

Starlings Join Flight of Sandpipers. During the months of July and August we had a good opportunity to study closely the habits of the shorebirds as well as of the other birds which frequented the dump north of the Lakefront Airport. We were particularly fascinated by one facet of bird behavior involving the Starling.

Repeatedly we observed the startled flight of a group of perhaps 25 Semipalmated Sandpipers as they rose from the marshy land on the dump. These were fright flights occasioned by the helicopter rising or by other disturbances. The birds rose and swept around their feeding ground, usually in a clockwise direction. Almost invariably two or three Starlings arose with the "peeps" and, without any apparent effort, all of the sudden turnings, all of the glides, swoops, and abrupt changes of flight were followed by the Starlings as though they were of the same species. Along with the other birds in the flock, the Starlings seemed perfectly capable of varying their position within the flock; but it was impossible to tell whether they ever assumed the lead role in the flight.

When, however, the flight of sandpipers took the Starlings out over the edge of the lake, the Starlings always broke away from the group as soon as they found themselves over the water and returned to land. Of course, the sandpipers would continue on and sweep out over the lake, finally to return to their feeding ground. We observed this perfectly coordinated flight pattern control for extended periods of time. - BERTRAM & MARGARET RAYNES

Lincoln's Sparrow Sings at Midnight. While changing buses on the Cleveland Public Square at 12:30 a.m. on May 25, 1956, I heard a strangely familiar finch song being repeated from the tiny park-like planting on the northwest corner of the Square. It was a mild, balmy night with a slight north breeze, and migrants had filtered down to rest and await the lifting of a slight fog. I hastened over and peering into a small elm I distinguished in the bright glow of the lamps a Lincoln's Sparrow perched 12 feet up and singing as if the sun were just rising. The effect of the melodious voice above the mid-night hum of traffic and in such surroundings was indeed bizarre. I waited for a half hour listening to the performance which was given several times a minute. His efforts spurred to song two White-crowned Sparrows resting in the same tree, adding new notes to the somewhat weird concert.

Actually there was another Lincoln's Sparrow hopping about in the thin line of shrubbery bordering the sidewalk. At the same time an Ovenbird moved in and out of the hedgerow on foot, approaching me without fear while picking up tiny bits of mash spread for the House Sparrows. So far as I could discern, the only other birds in the parklet at the moment were a female White-throated Sparrow and two additional White-crowns, all on day-time alert and waiting to fly across to Canada. - JAMES BRUCE

NESTING OBSERVATIONS

Florida Gallinule - On July 3, at the edge of a small pond in Aurora Marshlands, I flushed two adult Florida Gallinules which were followed into some cattails by one young bird about the size of a domestic chick but black with a reddish bill. Adults with young have previously been seen in Aurora Township, but this is further evidence that this species breeds there. - CARL F. HAMANN

Cliff Swallow - There were two known colonies of Cliff Swallows, both of them discoveries of George King, in the far eastern portion of the Cleveland region this summer. One, consisting of a total of ten nests placed on the east and west sides of a barn, was located on Rockhaven Road south of Mayfield Road, in Geauga County. Apparently only one brood was raised because all of the birds had disappeared by July 3.

The second colony, also in Geauga County, was located on Taylorwells Road, and all of the nests were placed on the east side of a barn facing the road. In this colony, which seemingly consisted of both the adults and the young from a first nesting, a second nesting was already under way when I began my visits to the site on July 3. At that time the adults and young were going in and out of four nests, no two of which were alike. One, saucer-shaped, seemed to be in the process of construction. On July 5, the saucer-like nest was finished and another nest which had not even been started on the 3rd was also finished, or so I thought. But on the 6th and 7th more material was added to these two nests, and seemingly the other three nests had also been built up more. One had a new globe-shaped addition on top with a second opening.

An attempt was made to count the swallows on the 14th and again on the 16th; however, their unceasing activity made even a reasonably accurate count impossible. When I returned to the site on July 23, all of the birds were gone. A woman resident of the farm explained that boys had been shooting at them and that the swallows had left four or five days before. Most of the nests had also disappeared. - VERA CARROTHERS

Brown Creeper - At Aurora Marshlands on May 29, I noticed a Brown Creeper which had food in its bill and was engaged in collecting more. Then I saw a second Creeper similarly engaged. Upon following them I saw them disappear inside a dead elm tree about two feet in diameter and covered with loose bark which stood in three feet of water about 15 feet out in the swamp. Since the birds were going into the far side of the tree where I could not see them, I hurried home and returned shortly equipped with a pair of hip boots.

Wading out into the water and partially concealing myself behind another dead tree, I was able to watch both birds approach the nest tree cautiously and by easy stages and then disappear into a one-inch fissure between the woody part of the tree and the loose bark. The nest, located five feet above the water level, was too high to look into, so I was unable to observe the young birds. On May 30, and on June 2, both parents were observed carrying food to the young in the nest, but on June 11, when the nest was next visited, none of the Creepers was seen in the vicinity.

On June 19, I returned to the nest tree and cautiously removed a section of the loose bark at the point where the adult Creepers had entered, and there I found the accumulation of nesting materials. The base of the nest was composed of pieces of bark

NESTING OBSERVATIONS (Cont'd.)

and twigs while the bed or inner lining consisted largely of grayish plant fibres and pieces of silky cocoon. The Creepers were not present on that date; however, on June 22, I saw two of them in the locality of the nest tree. They were feeding separately and I was unable to determine whether they were the young or the adults. - CARL F. HAMANN

(This is only the second record of the nesting of the Brown Creeper in the Cleveland region. The first record, which came from the same general area as this present report, was also the discovery of Carl F. Hamann, who on May 4, 1947 observed an adult carrying nesting material into the space behind a loose piece of bark on an elm tree. Although three eggs were laid, they failed to hatch because the nest was destroyed by an unknown predator. - Ed.)

Carolina Wren - Two nestings of the Carolina Wren occurred this summer in the vicinity of my home which is located in a wooded area in the Village of Westlake. One nest was built in my garage, the second in a neighbor's garage. The following is a brief account of the first of these nestings.

On May 22 and 23, I observed a Wren in my garage and on the 24th discovered its nest of twigs and dry grasses in a half empty six-bottle cardboard Coca-Cola carton located on the top shelf of an old bookcase. No eggs had been laid. On May 30, I found a second nest in my garage on the top shelf of a second bookcase, but it was never used. There were three eggs in the first nest on June 1, and incubation lasted from that date through the 17th. During that period the male sang from the top of the garage roof each morning and evening.

On the morning of June 18, all three eggs hatched. Thereafter both parents took part in the feeding of the young, and I noticed that spiders were a common item in their diet. By June 30, the nestlings had acquired a well developed white superciliary line. Two days later all three young left the nest, but the family group was seen together in a brush-pile near the garage as late as July 8. - ALLEN E. VALENTINE

Yellow-breasted Chat - At the edge of the waterworks woods in Aurora on June 26, I heard a male Yellow-breasted Chat singing and another bird uttering similar notes as if in alarm. A prolonged search revealed a nest in a dense hawthorn thicket. It was approximately two feet from the ground and held four eggs, three of which were alike (white with brown spots mainly on the larger end) and the other apparently that of a Cowbird. On June 28, the nest held two naked young and two unhatched eggs, one of which was the Cowbird egg, while on July 3, there were three young and one unhatched egg, that of the Chat. At that time the male sang for a while nearby, but no adult birds were seen. Indeed, only the slight movements of the tops of the surrounding shrubbery gave evidence that the parent birds were going to and from the nest. On July 9, the nest was empty except for the one infertile egg. - CARL F. HAMANN

Summer Tanager - In an oak woods on the edge of the Cuyahoga River Valley near Boston on July 1, I found the nest of a Summer Tanager located at a height of 60 feet on a horizontal limb of a white oak. During the first week of July both the adults were very conspicuous, the male singing in exposed positions. He was last heard singing on July 14.

NESTING OBSERVATIONS (Cont'd.)

The song period ended abruptly, for prior to that date he was in song most of the day.

As the time neared for the young to leave the nest, the adults became very secretive in their habits. The first young bird was seen out of the nest on July 19, and three young were observed on July 31. One juvenile was still being fed by the male on August 13. Although the adults were almost constantly together during July, in August they became quarrelsome, seemed to resent each other's presence, and were extremely difficult to find. The male was observed, however, as late as August 31, when he was apparently molting and presented a rather bedraggled appearance.

A nearby resident of the area who maintains a feeding station in his yard about 500 feet from the woods reported that the male Summer Tanager, seemingly with an injured leg, first appeared at the feeder on about May 20, while the female did not appear until early in June. - CHARLES H. KNIGHT

(This is a most significant nesting report because it is the first record of the breeding of this southern tanager within the Cleveland region, where it has hitherto been classed as a rare and accidental migrant. - Ed.)

A BLACKBIRD ROOST IN OBERLIN by Neil Henderson

During a two-week period beginning August 19, 1956, observations were made of a "blackbird" roosting area in a neglected park about one half mile southeast of the intersection of Main and College Streets in the City of Oberlin.

On August 24, from a car parked 250 yards southeast and on a slight elevation, a count was made of birds entering the roost area. From this position it was possible to scan approximately the southeastern half of the circle of arriving birds. Although this sector may have been the more traveled half of the circle (it contained Plum Creek and was the more rural sector, in the lee of the town proper), flocks had on other evenings been seen arriving radially from every direction around the roost. The birds were first counted individually, then by estimated tens, mostly by estimated hundreds, and occasionally by estimated five hundreds, according to their rate of arrival. Tallies were written down when convenient, and the time was recorded every five or ten minutes. Sixty-five tallies were made over a period of 75 minutes, and the grand total of birds recorded was 34,900. The error in counting may have been a few thousand, probably not more than 5,000. Allowing for this margin of error and allowing, too, for the fact that only half of the circle of arriving birds could be seen, a conservative estimate of the roost's total population on August 24, was 50,000 birds.

Starlings were the most numerous by far, they flew the fastest, and their greatest masses arrived earliest. They came more or less evenly from all the visible directions. Grackles numbered 5,000 to 10,000, came in their largest numbers later than the Starlings, and favored the southwest and the south. Robins totaled about 500, straggled

A BLACKBIRD ROOST (Cont'd.)

in last (even after dusk), and favored the east and southeast. The Robins also flew lower and less tightly bunched, often landed at least temporarily outside the roost area, and made a few reverse flights. A few Cowbirds were recognized. Redwings were suspected but never surely identified. Bobolinks may have been heard.

The overwhelming majority of birds came in flocks, so that even near the time of peak traffic there were moments of almost clear sky. Flocks rarely made any circling or hovering movements visible above treetop level. They usually flew in above the trees, then dropped into the roost area without delay. Only two small groups of the roosting species were observed to fly away from the target, and at least one of these groups was a band of Robins.

From a residential area on Plum Creek at the eastern boundary of Oberlin and one half mile east of the roost, the procession was visible nightly. Here a casual estimate was of about 4,000 birds seen flying toward the roost on August 23. A number of interesting features was noted in this nightly procession. It began as much as an hour early on a dark or stormy night. It persisted against a driving rainstorm on August 23, when opposing winds at times exceeded 30 miles an hour. Only the peak of the storm checked the movement for about five minutes. The birds flew abnormally low during this storm, most of them below 50 feet. Some bands of Starlings actually hedge-hopped.

Robins were often desultory travelers, many of them dropping into the neighborhood trees. A few of these birds were then seen to take off again after a few minutes. Their main flow was clearly toward the roost, but I could not tell what proportion of them arrived there. Grackle habits changed during the two-week period. They apparently increased in numbers, and they took more and more to pausing in the neighborhood trees, like the Robins but in much larger, noisier, and more coherent flocks.

Observations of the perched birds made on other evenings were superficial because practically all of the scores of roost trees were leafy. Nevertheless, it was obvious that birds of a feather flocked together although Starlings were excluded from no group. Even among the Starlings there were groupings: there were bands of identically plumaged immatures, and other bands of adults. About 50 Cowbirds occupied a couple of leafless trees in the northwest corner of the park. Perched Robins were not seen, but their voices were heard in an eastern sector. In the clamorous uproar from the central area there could be no distinguishing of voices.

It is interesting that 50,000 birds should have converged so desperately on this small group of trees in the park each night, presumably for a number of weeks. In the daytime they must have dispersed over a wide area because then the roost was completely deserted; and Oberlin itself had possibly fewer than 500 Starlings.

A BANDING STUDY OF
THE EASTERN MOURNING DOVE
by
Vic Koppelberger

From April through August 1956, I carried on a banding study of the Eastern Mourning Dove within a ten-mile radius of the City of Medina. This area lies almost entirely within Medina County except for a scattered few nests located just across the county line in Cuyahoga, Lorain, and Wayne Counties.

Of the 89 nests included in my study during this five-month period, the high percentage of failures in early nestings was due to adverse weather conditions - below average temperatures, excessive rainfall, and frequent windstorms - which had a far greater effect upon nesting success than did any predator. Of 12 nests in April, eight were unsuccessful, or 75%. In May, the biggest nesting month, out of 37 nests studied, 15 were unsuccessful, or 41%. In June, with the heavy foliage making nests harder to locate, a total of 19 was observed, of which eight were unsuccessful, or 42%. July, which showed a definite decrease in nesting mortality, produced a total of 16 nests, with five unsuccessful, or 31%. Finally, in August, when the nesting attempts tapered off, out of five nests located, one was unsuccessful, or 20%.

Thus out of the grand total of 89 nests observed, 37 were unsuccessful, or 41%. Thirty-three of these nests failed because of adverse weather conditions, four due to unknown causes. The adult doves did not return to the nests that were unsuccessful; rather they built a new nest, sometimes in the same vicinity. However, they sometimes used the successful nests as much as three times in the same season. Out of a possible 178 young (100%), there were 83 young doves raised. Seventy-seven of these were banded, six of them leaving the nest before they were banded.

There were indications that the doves nesting in the area under study do not return to the same sites year after year. As an example, I cite Medina County Road 69, which was heavily nested last year. Yet this year there were no nests on that road. There had been no change in the road itself, no removal of roadside trees, and no increased building activity. The doves remained strangely absent with the same food, water, and cover available, while, in contrast, the Bobwhite showed a definite increase in the same area. I have also observed that roadside nesting has unquestionably been harmed by the practice of roadside spraying to kill bushes, trees, and weeds. The birds do not return to even the undamaged half of the tree or shrub.

The following are additional data compiled from my study:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Lowest nest, 3 feet | 10 nests contained 1 egg |
| Highest nest, 15 feet | 75 nests contained 2 eggs |
| Shortest nesting tree, 8 feet | 4 nests in arbor vitae trees |
| Tallest nesting tree, 40 feet | 42 nests in pine trees |
| Nests found on the roadside, 66 | 29 nests in osage orange hedge |
| Nests found elsewhere, 23 | |