

# THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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### SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

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

- June - Total rainfall of 5.85 inches was nearly twice the normal amount, though of this total, 2.34 inches fell on the 28th. Temperatures averaged normal, with only three days having readings of 90<sup>o</sup> or above.
- July - Considerable rain fell in the first 11 days, after which the month was quite dry. There were no excessive hot spells, and the average temperature of 72.1<sup>o</sup> was slightly below normal.
- August - Just a trace of rain fell during the first half. For the month as a whole both temperature and precipitation were somewhat below normal. Only on the 2nd and 3rd did the mercury reach or exceed 90<sup>o</sup>.

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## COMMENT ON THE SEASON

As in the summer of 1956, the dump just north of the Cleveland Lakefront Airport was the chief center of interest this summer and provided what were perhaps the most meaningful records. Although the size of the area had been greatly reduced by the expansion of the airport, the slough-like conditions of the remaining portion again were attractive to the migrating plovers and sandpipers.

Even as early as July 4, two Lesser Yellowlegs and two Semipalmated Sandpipers had arrived, and on July 7 the dump was host to 17 Lesser Yellowlegs, 2 Pectoral Sandpipers, 1 Dowitcher, and 3 of the usually rare Stilt Sandpiper. An ever-increasing number and variety of shorebirds appeared in the days and weeks following. The largest flocks were observed on August 3 and 4, when 13 species of shorebirds comprising nearly 300 individuals were busily feeding in the shallow water or along the muddy edges of the so-called pond. In addition to the common plovers, yellowlegs, and "peep" sandpipers seen on those two days, there were 2 Black-bellied Plovers still in summer plumage, 18 Dowitchers, 1 Stilt Sandpiper, and 2 Western Sandpipers.

The continued lack of any appreciable rainfall from about mid-July to the last week in August caused the two ponds at the lakefront dump gradually to disappear; the smaller was dry by the end of July, the larger by mid-August. Consequently, the shorebirds also gradually disappeared, so that by August 21 only a few Killdeer and Spotted Sandpipers, both of which had nested there, still were present. But a fairly heavy rain on August 24 and 25 quickly restored at least one of the ponds, and with its reappearance a new flight of shorebirds stopped to rest and feed. Among the 14 species recorded on the 25th were 8 Black-bellied Plovers, 1 Stilt Sandpiper, and 6 Western Sandpipers.

Despite the number and variety of shorebirds observed this summer, one species, Baird's Sandpiper, was missing from our records. Although not a common migrant in the Cleveland region, this bird has been reported quite regularly each summer; perhaps, however, it was simply overlooked among the many dozens of "peeps" that crowded the small mudflats at the dump.

The appearance of these many shorebirds at the dump for the second successive summer produced numerous changes in our early and late dates of occurrence, as is shown in the tabulation at the end of this discussion. In addition, we are now compelled to reconsider the status of such species as the Dowitcher, Stilt Sandpiper, and Western Sandpiper which have been described heretofore as "rare migrant". It seems quite obvious that these birds were not actually rare in the Cleveland region but, rather, it was suitable habitat that was rare. In the absence of a proper feeding area, these species, and others, were simply birds of passage that in only occasional instances stopped in our region during their spring and fall migration. When the lakefront airport finally encompasses all of the dump, which may happen yet this year, these birds will undoubtedly revert to their former status unless, of course, some other man-made area proves equally as inviting.

During July several hundred Ring-billed Gulls were observed along the Cleveland lakefront, and a few dozen Herring Gulls were present in the last half of that month. The first large flocks were noted on August 3, when about 250 Herring Gulls and some 1,500 Ring-billed were recorded. Their numbers gradually increased until by August 25 there were an estimated 2,100 Herring and 3,700 Ring-billed. The Bonaparte's Gulls, too, steadily increased from a mere 20 first observed on August 3 to an estimated 3,000 on the

## COMMENT ON THE SEASON (Cont'd.)

25th. By the 31st the gulls were considerably less numerous, particularly the Bonaparte's, whose numbers appeared to have decreased by about 75%. Most of the gulls of all three species were in immature plumage.

Unlike the gulls, the Common Tern did not gradually increase during August. In the first three weeks of that month numbers varied from a low of eight on the 17th to a high of 200 on the 10th, but on August 25 some 1,700 were reported. Yet by the 31st only about 300 still remained. The largest number of Black Terns reported in many years - more than 400 - was also present along the lakefront on August 25, and they apparently lingered there because they were equally numerous a week later. A mere two dozen was the greatest number reported in the summer of 1956.

After an absence of several years, the Red-breasted Nuthatch, whose presence in our region is governed by the success of the cone crop in the northern evergreen forests, appeared in some numbers. The first record was of two birds at Villa Angela Academy, on the very shores of Lake Erie, on August 17 (Bartrug). There were nine other records of this species to the end of August but never of more than two birds.

The Carolina Wren, which appears to be growing more common in the Cleveland region, may have been even more abundant this summer. At least it was reported more frequently during all three months of this summer than in the summer of 1956, and the total number of individual birds was considerably greater.

Although we had eight spring records for the Mockingbird, which is an all-time high for the region, there was not a single summer record. This is especially interesting when we remember that there were two records for the summer of 1956, while in 1954 a pair even nested, though unsuccessfully, near Brecksville.

Nighthawks in migration were first recorded on the evening of August 14, when a band of a dozen was observed flying quite high over the southeast side of Cleveland (Maly). In north Akron on August 29, Nighthawks seemed to be present throughout much of the day, and on the 30th a flock of about 40 was seen slowly moving southward (Staiger).

As is customary there were a few records of migrating warblers during the first several weeks of August, but it was not until the final week that there was any appreciable movement of birds reported. During the last seven days of that month, nine species of warblers were observed, exclusive of locally breeding species. These migrants were not abundant, however, generally being observed in ones and twos. The summer failed to produce any reports of large congregations of swallows or blackbirds.

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

### New Latest Spring Date

Shoveler (1) - June 1, lakefront dump (Klamm)

Least Sandpiper (1) - June 1, lakefront dump (Klamm)

Red-backed Sandpiper (1) - June 1, lakefront dump (Klamm)

Semipalmated Sandpiper (1) - June 9, lakefront dump (Klamm)

Gray-cheeked Thrush (2) - June 7, Lakewood (Davies)

## COMMENT ON THE SEASON (Cont'd.)

### New Earliest Fall Date

Black-bellied Plover (2) - August 4, lakefront dump (Newman)

Greater Yellowlegs (3) - July 20, lakefront dump (Davies)

Lesser Yellowlegs (2) - July 4, lakefront dump (Klamm)

Pectoral Sandpiper (2) - July 7, lakefront dump (Klamm)

Dowitcher (1) - July 7, lakefront dump (Klamm)

Orange-crowned Warbler (3) - August 22, Rocky River Reservation (Ackermann)

## NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Bald Eagle - At noontime on July 15, a splendidly plumaged adult bird soared for some minutes above the intersection of Monticello Boulevard and Noble Road in Cleveland Heights. As it gained altitude it gradually sailed off in a southerly direction and was lost to sight (Walters). This is the first record for 1957.

Coot - Although this species may nest in our region in certain marshlands, it is rarely reported during the summer. Yet, oddly enough, one was observed July 4, on Lake Erie just off the lakefront dump in downtown Cleveland (Klamm). A solitary bird was also seen at Lake Rockwell on June 16 (Staiger).

Willet - The only records of this rare transient are of a single bird, probably the same one, at the lakefront dump on July 18 (Davies) and July 20 (Valentine).

Wilson's Phalarope - At the lakefront dump, where in August 1956 this species was first definitely observed in the Cleveland region, a solitary bird, seemingly a male, was present on August 31 (Klamm). Together with a May 1957 record there are now three records of this species in the region - all of them from the dump.

Franklin's Gull - Among a gathering of Ring-billed Gulls resting on the ground at the lakefront dump on July 4 was an immature bird of this species (Klamm). This is the first July record for the region.

Forster's Tern - August 25, which seemed to be the peak date for numbers of gulls and terns along the Cleveland lakefront, produced a record of two of these quite rare migrants (Klamm).

Short-billed Marsh Wren - Between August 17 and the end of that month from one to at least three of these rare summer residents frequented the sedges and patches of cattails adjoining the pond on the lakefront dump. Occasionally these wrens even sang in a halting, fragmentary fashion but more often merely chattered or scolded (Klamm).

Chestnut-sided Warbler - A male was observed near Boston on June 15 (Knight).

Orchard Oriole - At Willoughby Hills an immature male was seen on June 2 and was heard intermittently until about June 18, but no nest was located (Skaggs). A second record is of a singing male at Huntington Metropolitan Park on June 21 (Ackermann).

Summer Tanager - In the same oak woods near Boston where this species nested last summer - the first such report in the region -, a pair was observed on June 2 and a male was seen on June 8 and 15. The birds seemed much more secretive and were less approachable than last year. No nest was found; however, the woods was not visited after mid-June (Knight).

## NOTEWORTHY RECORDS (Cont'd.)

From Neighboring Localities:

Laughing Gull - (1) On May 27 an adult bird in summer plumage, which was first sighted by Jon Ahlquist, was studied for 45 minutes from a distance of not more than 150 feet at Walnut Beach on Lake Erie in the City of Ashtabula. It was in the company of "some 2,000 Ring-billed Gulls and a few Bonaparte's Gulls. Frequently the other gulls appeared to peck at it and disturb it, at which time it would flex its wings to our advantage so that we could observe the under parts and the absence of 'windows' at the ends of the wings. The mantle and wings were a solid gray, which was the point that brought this bird to our attention among the other gulls" (Savage). What was presumably this same bird was seen again on June 9 in the Ashtabula harbor.

(2) For about one half hour on August 14 at Bay Point, Marblehead, an adult bird was carefully observed through binoculars at a distance sometimes as close as 200 feet. The bird was flushed twice, and both while perched and when in flight a constant comparison could be made between it and the accompanying Ring-billed and Bonaparte's Gulls. All of the identifying marks of the Laughing Gull were "readily discernible" (Akers).

The Laughing Gull is not included, even on the hypothetical list, in Borrer's "A Check List of the Birds of Ohio", first published in January 1950. Thus, so far as can be determined these are the first records for this species in Ohio.

### A SECOND AND EARLIER RECORD OF THE YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD

In the last issue of the BIRD CALENDAR (Spring 1957), we published what was thought to be the first record of the Yellow-headed Blackbird in the Cleveland region. This was a bird seen by Dr. Thomas F. Ulrich on May 9, 1957 in an open field just a few miles north of Barberton.

We have now been informed by Robert E. Ball, of Canton, Ohio, that on August 21, 1936 he observed a female or immature Yellow-headed Blackbird on the grounds of the Great Lakes Exposition located on the lakefront in downtown Cleveland. This bird, which was "all brown except for a bright orange throat patch", was seen at very close range and for an extended period of time as it walked rapidly about on the grass bordering one of the roadways. It was not in the company of any other birds.

This second record of the Yellow-headed Blackbird, which must of course be credited as the first record for the Cleveland region, has an interesting history which is worth relating because it demonstrates how every "first" record must be considered presumptive rather than absolute. When, in January 1951, Ball examined a copy of the "Birds of the Cleveland Region", which had been published just seven months previously, he noticed it did not contain a record of the Yellow-headed Blackbird. He thereupon wrote Dr. Arthur B. Williams, who was then editor of the Cleveland BIRD CALENDAR, informing him of his observation of this species within the Cleveland region in August 1936. In his reply Dr. Williams remarked: "I have always thought we would sooner or later list this bird here, but your observation happens to be the first one which I can consider authentic."

## SECOND RECORD OF YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD (Cont'd.)

For some reason - possibly his failing health which limited his activities and not long afterward kept him confined to his home - Dr. Williams did not publish this blackbird record, not did he annotate it in his copy of the "Birds of Cleveland". Thus had it not been for the publication of Dr. Ulrich's seeming first record of the Yellow-headed Blackbird in the Cleveland region, Ball's earlier record would not have come to light.

### FIELD AND NESTING OBSERVATIONS

Bank Swallow - A large colony of Bank Swallows nested this year in a broad stratum of sand at the top of the cliff overlooking Lake Erie on the property of J. W. Maxwell, Mentor-on-the-Lake. According to Maxwell the birds arrived about the second week in May. There were over 200 nesting holes in the sand bank, which was exposed only this spring when the lower portion of the cliff slid down onto the beach. - JOSEPH and MARTHA MADDIX

Cliff Swallow - (1) During this summer I was fortunate to locate a colony of Cliff Swallows which for the past two years have been nesting on the side of a barn on the farm of Richard Smith in Medina County. I succeeded in obtaining the following information concerning the success these birds had in bringing the young to the fledgling stage. In 1955 about six pairs attempted nesting, but only about three pairs were successful in raising their young. Ten or 12 pairs attempted to nest in 1956, which was their best year as they raised about seven broods. The summer of 1957 began favorably for the swallows, with as many as seven nests started; but due to repeated failure of the nests to stick to the side of the barn, not more than three completed nests remained undamaged long enough to allow the young to reach the fledgling stage. The barn is well kept and well painted which might be the reason the nests fail to adhere to the side. - VIC KOPPELBERGER

(2) When on June 15 I visited the farm on Taylor Wells Road in Geauga County where the Cliff Swallows nested last year, I found just one pair of birds feeding two young in the nest. There was no evidence that any other nests had been on the side of the barn. Upon my return on July 6, all of the birds were gone and the nest, too, had disappeared.

It was not until July 6 that I visited the farm on Rock Haven Road, also in Geauga County, which was the site of another nesting colony of Cliff Swallows last summer. Although I found no birds there, I did discover a fully completed nest on each side of the barn; and it looked as if there might have been as many as six other nests which had fallen off. - VERA CARROTHERS

Bewick's Wren - (1) The pair of Bewick's Wrens which I first observed on May 4 in an old apple orchard in Pepper Pike Village remained to nest there. Although I visited the area at least once a week during May, observing the birds on each occasion, I failed to discover the nest until June 9, when both parents were busily engaged in carrying food - small moths and caterpillars - to the nestlings.

The nest was located in a woodpecker's hole in the truncated section of one of the main limbs of a dead and badly decayed apple tree. Since the trunk of the tree leaned to one side, the limb containing the nest hole was almost parallel to the ground, with the entrance to the cavity on the under side. Thus the parent birds had almost to hang upside down when they paused at the entrance before feeding the young.

## FIELD AND NESTING OBSERVATIONS (Cont'd.)

On June 15 I found five young birds in a tangle of branches of a fallen though living apple tree at the east end of the orchard, about 50 feet from the nest site. The fledgling wrens still had yellow edgings at the corners of their mouths, the superciliary line was not as pronounced as in the adults, and their tails were stubby and squared rather than rounded. When they flew, they did so in a fluttery, uncertain manner and went only 15 to 20 feet before dropping in to the cover of a leafy bush or tree. Although I did not actually see the adults carrying food to the young, it seemed certain the fledgling were not feeding on their own; for they kept together at all times, usually well hidden, and were visited by the parent birds who were greatly disturbed by my presence.

Upon my return to the orchard on June 30, I failed to find any of the young birds but did observe the two adults who, however, had left the orchard proper and had moved some 300 feet north into a small jungle of staghorn sumachs and blackberry bushes growing up among a pile of brush and farmyard rubble. They were still in that area as late as July 7. This nesting of the Bewick's Wren is the first definitely reported in Cuyahoga County. - DONALD L. NEWMAN

(2) At Chestnut Hills Cemetery, Cuyahoga Falls, where a pair of Bewick's Wrens nested in a large brush pile this spring, I observed the adults and their four fledglings near the nest site on June 7 and 16. Although I did not see any of these birds again, I did hear the male singing on June 28. - GALE WILEY

Chestnut-sided Warbler - On three occasions in June and July I observed a male Chestnut-sided Warbler in bright summer plumage at Punderson Lake State Park. During each of my periods of observation the bird spent most of its time singing from a large oak tree located along the path about half way between the guest house and the boat livery. Occasionally it would dart from the oak and fly across a section of brushy land into the trees bordering the lake. If this warbler nested at Punderson Lake, its nest was probably located somewhere in this brush-covered area, which it seemed to guard; however, because of the extent and density of the brush I was unable to find a nest. So far as I could learn the bird was present at the lake until mid-July, though I last saw it on July 7. - LEO DEININGER

Canada Warbler - Early in June Mr. B. P. Bole, Jr. told me that, in addition to Magnolia Warblers and Blue-headed Vireos, Canada Warblers were present in Stebbin's Gulch, which always attracts species that are not otherwise regularly found in the Cleveland region. On July 6 Mr. Fred Ackermann, Miss Florence Gray, and I were working our way along the top of the gulch near the lower end of the hemlock area. Something was giving alarm notes ahead of us in a grapevine tangle. To our amazement a female Canada Warbler trailed by a downy young bird came out of the tangle. The young bird was barely able to fly and still had down sticking up on its head. We trailed them through the tangles for a few minutes before they disappeared in the direction of the edge of the gulch proper. As we worked our way up toward the waterfall, we ran across this same family group in the lower branches of hemlocks at the edge of the water.

This appears to be the first definite evidence of the nesting of the Canada Warbler in the Cleveland region. While we were in the gulch we heard singing Magnolia Warblers and Blue-headed Vireos. There seems to be little doubt that these species also were nesting there this summer. - OWEN DAVIES

Wren Assails Chipmunk - The chattering of a House Wren perched in a flowering crab about 25 feet from the magnolia where its young were in the wren house caught my attention on the afternoon of June 25. As I watched, the wren darted to the ground to jab her bill at the back of a chipmunk who sat there innocently munching sunflower seeds that had fallen from the kitchen window feeder. He had been in the crab tree a few seconds before the wren and was so little bothered by the wren's attack that he just moved over to a sheltered spot under the firethorn bush and continued to munch. - MRS. ROBERT V. D. BOOTH

## NOTES FROM SAWDUST TRACT

(The following reports come from Sawdust Tract Biological Survey Area consisting of 275 acres located in Trumbull Township, Ashtabula County. It is the property of Richard and Isabelle Klein. Since the Tract is not more than about ten miles beyond the eastern perimeter of the Cleveland region, the nesting and species occurrence records recounted below not only have great intrinsic interest and value but are particularly important to us because they strongly suggest that the several species mentioned should occur as breeding birds within our region. Indeed, we now have definite evidence that the Canada Warbler is a breeding bird, as is indicated by the report of Owen Davies in this same number of the BIRD CALENDAR. - The Editor)

White-eyed Vireo - In a deep, small side gully at Sawdust Tract I first heard a singing White-eyed Vireo on June 13, 1957. The gully had been lumbered on one side, and that hillside is now a veritable jungle of berry bushes, grapevines, scrubby beeches, and witch hazel bushes. Large hemlocks, maples, and beech trees grow on the opposite bank. Under such conditions searching for a nest was a long, arduous, and often discouraging task, but on June 17 I finally located the nest containing four eggs. It was suspended about three feet from the ground in a witch hazel bush.

The female at the nest was a fine subject photographically, for she was loathe to leave when we approached and was eager to return as soon as we took steps to depart. Since we did not wish to disturb her too often and perhaps cause her to abandon the nest, we did not visit it regularly and for that reason we did not learn how many of the eggs hatched and how many of the young were raised. The pair of birds remained in the nesting area until at least July 7, however, and we saw them feeding two, possibly more, fledglings. When not near their nest, the adults were extremely difficult to observe; their songs or calls were heard but usually coming from a big tangle in which the birds were well hidden.

It is interesting to note that Lawrence E. Hicks in his book "Breeding Birds of Ohio" does not record the White-eyed Vireo as nesting in Ashtabula County, listing it as nesting only in southern Ohio. Much earlier, however, Lynds Jones in his book "Birds of Ohio" (1903) describes the bird as ranging into Cuyahoga and Ashtabula Counties, being fairly common at Jefferson all summer. - ISABELLE KLEIN

Chestnut-sided Warbler - After many hours of painstaking and, at times, painful searching, I succeeded in locating the nest of a Chestnut-sided Warbler at Sawdust Tract on June 8. It was about three feet from the ground in a tangle of beech tree sprouts, blackberry bushes, and other coarse vegetation, and it contained two newly hatched young and one egg. The female who was on the nest sat close but finally flushed. I saw and heard two singing males in the vicinity. Although I was unable to visit the area again, Richard Klein reported he observed the adults feeding three young on June 10 and for the last time on June 16, when the nestlings were almost full grown. - CARL F. HAMANN

Canada Warbler - Two pairs of Canada Warblers established territories in the flood plain forest of Sawdust Tract this summer. The nest of one pair was found on July 1 on the ground of the dry hillside. The rather sparse ground cover around the nest consisted of marginal shield ferns, Christmas ferns, grasses, and clumps of sedges. It was beneath one of the

#### NOTES FROM SAWDUST TRACT (Cont'd.)

sedge clumps that the little nest was placed, containing two Canada Warbler eggs and two Cowbird eggs.

In the week that we watched the nest, the male appeared just once and then he only sang from high above. The female sat extremely close to the nest, not tumbling out until we stepped right up to her. She would seem almost to roll to the foot of the hill and would then sit on a branch and scold. Although she incubated for a considerable time, it seems doubtful that the eggs hatched; for we later found the nest empty but never saw nor heard any young birds. This pair of birds and the other pair were about a quarter mile apart. The male of the second pair sang quite frequently early in the morning.

(In the photograph of the Canada Warbler's nest on the cover of this issue [the photograph appears on the cover of *The Cleveland Audubon Society Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 4, November, 1957], the grasses have been pulled aside by the photographer; normally they would arch over and conceal it.) - ISABELLE KLEIN

Mourning Warbler - From June 13 through the 16th and again on July 1, I saw a male Mourning Warbler in the same small ravine in Sawdust Tract where the White-eyed Vireos nested. He sang regularly in the early morning, perched on a high, dead branch, and he would sing or scold during the day as conditions seemed to warrant. One day as I was crawling through a maze of fallen treetops and blackberry bushes, the Mourning Warbler surprised me by suddenly appearing on a branch directly in front of my face. He then began very softly to sing a lovely rambling, yet liquid, warble - totally unlike his usual song. - ISABELLE KLEIN