

THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

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

- June - Average temperature of 64.4° was the lowest for this month since 1928. Precipitation of 4.67 inches was considerably above normal and was distributed throughout the month.
- July - Sunshine hours of only 45% of the maximum possible hours set an all-time low record for the month. Rain occurring on 19 days totaled 4.82 inches, which was 1.78 inches above normal.
- August - Temperature averaged 1.5° below normal, with a low of 47° on the 26th and no readings of 90° or above. Rainfall of 3.98 inches was 1.34 inches above normal.

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COMMENT ON THE SEASON

The abnormally cold weather which prevailed during the winter of 1957-58 in the southern states, where snow and sub-freezing temperatures were common occurrences, undoubtedly caused a high mortality among certain of our small passerine species which feed largely or entirely upon insects and spiders. This mortality was clearly reflected in the greatly reduced numbers of Phoebes, Bluebirds, and House Wrens comprising the breeding population in the Cleveland region this summer. Possibly the best measure of the scarcity of the House Wren is contained in a continuing study of the breeding bird population at the Cuyahoga County Airport, Richmond Heights. During the summers of 1956 and 1957 at least two and probably three pairs of wrens established territories there, but this summer not a single wren was seen (Henderson).

Observers throughout our region remarked about the absence of the three species mentioned above or the reduction in their numbers. Typical comments are these:

- North Akron - "This is the first year I can remember in which no wrens nested in either our or our neighbor's boxes. In fact, I have not heard a wren in our neighborhood this year" (Staiger).
- Aurora - "This year our Bluebirds didn't return. We have a pair which usually arrive about March 15, and several pairs which arrive a week or so later. This year none of them came back - we haven't had even one around here all summer" (Dunneback).
- Willoughby Hills - "We had no nesting pairs of Bluebirds this year, and I saw very few along the roads of Ohio during the summer" (Skaggs).
- Broadview Heights - "No Phoebes for the first time since 1949" (Smith).
- Elyria - "I was concerned about a scarcity of Bluebirds this year. Up until August I located only one place where I could find the species. Usually there are at least four places where I can reasonably be sure of seeing this species" (Johnson).

Cool, cloudy weather which prevailed during most of the summer and the excess of rain unquestionably had an adverse effect upon the nesting success of many species. One observer in Aurora reported that he observed few young Robins, no Yellow Warbler young, and no young House Wrens on his own property, where these species commonly nest each year (Hamann). Other observers reported seeing Catbirds, Robins, and Cardinals still feeding young at the end of August. This would seem to indicate that earlier nestings had failed and that these birds had persisted in re-nesting.

From April 1 to July 6, 1958, Robert Maly, aided at times by his wife, devoted approximately 165 hours to a study of the breeding bird population of the Arthur B. Williams Forest in the North Chagrin Reservation. It was in this 65-acre tract of beech-maple climax community that Dr. Williams pioneered in his method of censusing the breeding birds in a given area by carefully indicating on a series of maps each singing male heard on repeated trips to the area. Limitations of space prevent the publication of Maly's report in the BIRD CALENDAR, but his primary conclusion is that the numbers of birds have remained fairly constant in spite of changes in the forest. The principal changes are these: (1) a

great increase in public use, (2) the death of some large trees, particularly elm frees, (3) extensive growth of wild grapevines.

Maly's study revealed that the Ovenbird, which nests on the ground, is the one species in the Reservation which has been most seriously affected by changing conditions brought about by increased public use. This summer just five singing males were recorded as compared to an average of 17.9 males in Dr. Williams' study covering the period 1932 through 1947. The Black-throated Green Warbler was also less numerous, though the reason was not apparent unless it may lie in the ever-so-gradual dying off of the Canada hemlocks in which this species is accustomed to nest. In contrast, the Cerulean Warbler, which nests in the tops of deciduous trees, apparently has become more abundant. Six singing males were recorded as against an average of 1.9 males in the period 1932-47. This decrease in the population of Ovenbirds and increase of Cerulean Warblers was similarly reflected in breeding bird studies made in the Arthur B. Williams Forest in 1955 by Margaret Perner and in 1956 and 1957 by Howard W. Martin, Jr.

Fall migration began with the appearance of shorebirds at the Lakefront Airport shortly after July 4. Herring and Ring-billed Gulls - about 150 in all were first recorded in numbers on July 11, also at the Airport (Davies). The size of the flock gradually increased until by August 2, several thousand were present - on the breakwall offshore, on the water, or on the road and filled land just north of the Airport. They seemed to remain concentrated in that area, and during August the population was quite stable, with the Ring-billed Gull always the more numerous. The Bonaparte's Gull, which was first observed on July 26, occurred almost entirely off Edgewater Park and apart from the other two species. Only 18 birds were seen on that first date, but the number slowly grew and by August 30, the flock consisted of an estimated 600 birds (Klamm).

Warblers in migration were first recorded on August 16 at Lakewood Park, where a mixed company was feeding in the treetops. Among them were 3 Black and White, 2 Blackburnian, and 4 Bay-breasted Warblers. At least six Empidonax flycatchers were also present (Klamm). An even larger migratory movement occurred on August 23, when at Lakewood Park and Perkins Beach several small flycatchers, one Solitary Vireo, and eleven species of warblers were observed, including a total of 12 Cape May Warblers, which are rarely recorded in such numbers at such an early date (Klamm).

The summer season produced an exceptional number of new early dates of occurrence. For those who are annotating their copy of "Birds of the Cleveland Region", these new dates are as follows:

Green-winged Teal (1) - July 30, Lakefront Airport (Carrothers)
Greater Yellowlegs (2) - July 12, Lakefront Airport (Henderson)
Semipalmated Sandpiper (1) - July 12, Lakefront Airport (Henderson)
Nashville Warbler (1) - August 1, Shaker Lakes (Hyde)
Palm Warbler (2) - August 23, Lakewood Park (Klamm)

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Ruddy Duck - At Lake Mogadore on July 16, three birds were seen together on the water. One was much more ruddily plumaged than the other two, which were quite gray, but all three had the white face patch (Staiger). This record is two weeks earlier than the previous earliest fall date and is some ten weeks ahead of the time this species normally begins to appear in the region.

Osprey - For some 10 or 12 minutes at about mid-morning on July 24, a single bird, repeatedly harassed by an angry band of Redwinged Blackbirds, soared fairly low over Aurora Lake and eventually drifted out of sight (Hamann).

Pigeon Hawk - Seemingly the only summer record in the past 30 years is a report of a bird which flew over a small swamp near Akron on June 17, and then disappeared out over an adjoining field (DeSante).

Whimbrel - This rare visitor had considerable success in capturing insects on the sunny afternoon of August 23, when for several hours it rambled over the stretches of coarse grass bordering the runways at the Lakefront Airport (Newman).

Willet - A flock of seven flew low over the Lakefront Airport at mid-afternoon on July 6 (Carrothers and Henderson), and a single bird - perhaps from this same flock - was seen there on the morning of that day (Newman). This is the earliest occurrence on record except for Dr. Jared Kirtland's report of a flock of more than 20 at the mouth of the Cuyahoga River on July 3, 1838. It is also one of the few times in the present century that more than two or three birds have been observed together.

Northern Phalarope - Sharing the company of several dozen Mallards and one Solitary Sandpiper at little Clague Park Pond on the afternoon of August 24, a single phalarope darted about on the surface and took frequent short flights low over the water. The bird, which was apparently a female, was still well colored, and the bright ochre streaks along the back were very prominent though the under sides were now all white (Klamm). This is just the second August record for the region.

Franklin's Gull - Although this gull has been regarded as a quite uncommon fall and winter visitor, it is now evident it also occurs in the region during the summer; for there were three records in July from the Cleveland lakefront, including a report of three birds on the 16th (Henderson).

Mockingbird - To be added to the seven June records of this species in the history of the region is the report of a bird on Wilder Road, Chardon, on June 12. Leaving a tree where it had been perched, it flew down into a pasture and "hawked" about, prominently displaying its showy white wing and tail patches (Kula). In Gates Mills on August 27 a Mockingbird was also observed (Downer).

Swainson's Thrush - On the afternoon of July 3 in Washington Park at the southerly edge of Cleveland, this northern-nesting thrush was seen and heard singing several times. It was seen again the next day but it was not singing (Maly). This is the first July occurrence on record.

Chestnut-sided Warbler - A singing male was observed on July 27 in the brushy area near the guest house at Punderson Lake, where a male in song was seen on a number of occasions in the summer of 1957 (Deininger).

Canada Warbler - On June 29 in a portion of beech woods on the southern rim of Stebbins Gulch, a female was seen carrying food but no nest or fledgling birds were discovered (Sturm). A successful nesting was observed, however, in the same general area but on the opposite rim of the Gulch in a grove of hemlocks overgrown with grapevines. Three young were raised (Bole, Jr.).

Western Meadowlark - Following its discovery at the Lakefront Airport on the evening of July 6 (Klamm), a number of observers saw and heard this bird on at least half a dozen occasions to August 3, when it was last reported. It fre-

quented the broad grassy strips which separate the asphalt runways, sharing the area with several Eastern Meadowlarks. This is only the fifth record for the region and is the first since a pair was seen at Bath on May 12, 1946.

Brewer's Blackbird - Among a flock of blackbirds feeding along the edge of an old orchard in Akron on August 23 were three birds of this principally western species. In the same spot on August 25 a female was identified after careful study at close range (DeSante). These are the second records of occurrence in the Cleveland region. The first occurrence reported was of a bird in a plowed field near Berea on April 28, 1957.

Summer Tanager - The bird which visited a feeding station at a residence on Boston Mills Road, Summit County, during the month of May apparently remained in the vicinity, for on June 7 and 8 one was heard in the nearby oak woods (Knight). This is the same woods where a pair occurred in the summer of 1957 and from which the first nesting record for the region was reported in 1956. (See also the Nesting Observations section of this issue for Knight's account of a pair in Perkins Woods, Akron)

Blue Grosbeak - In Painesville at mid-afternoon on August 9 a male was observed from an open porch at a distance of about seven feet as it fed in a patch of oat and wheat stalks which had grown wild from seeds dropped from an adjoining bird feeder. Occasionally he descended to the ground to feed but for the most part kept to the top of the stalks. He remained for half an hour or more, quietly feeding all the while. Finally the grosbeak flew a few yards south to the edge of the woods and quickly disappeared inside (Steckle). This is the first record for the region since a pair was observed near Novelty on July 12, 1942.

Slate-colored Junco - For a few minutes on August 7 a bird in fully adult plumage paused at the back porch feeding tray of a residence in a wooded portion of Pepper Pike Village (Raynes).

NESTING OBSERVATIONS

Black Tern - [We are indebted to Vera Carrothers for her field notes and to William Klamm for his notes and an interpretative sketch map from which the following account was written. - Ed.]

The continued expansion of the Lakefront Airport in downtown Cleveland has gradually reduced the size of the marshy dump area lying immediately north of the airport and just west of the Nike site. This summer all that remained was a roughly rectangular tract measuring about 600 feet long and 300 feet wide. The center of the marsh, as well as portions along the margins, contained a luxuriant growth of tall reeds, sedges, and other flora typical of that habitat. The excess of rain raised the water level, which was 2¹/₂ to 3 feet deep in places.

In the marsh on July 6, Vera Carrothers, Neil Henderson, and Donald L. Newman discovered a nesting colony of 14 Black Terns. They first observed adult birds carrying food to three young, no more than a few days old, which were out of the nest and were concealed in the vegetation. These precocious young, clad in a dense covering of mixed gray, golden brown, and black down feathers, were well able to swim, though they did so only when disturbed by the observers. On that same day Neil Henderson found the first nest, which con-

tained three eggs and consisted of dead stalks assembled in a loose, shallow pile on a small mass of compacted vegetation in the muck at the north side of the marsh where the water was only a few inches deep. On the morning of July 13, after three successive days of rainfall totaling about 1.5 inches, the three eggs in the nest were one-third to one-half under water. By the afternoon, however, the nest had been built up, the water had receded, and the eggs were again being incubated. One of these eggs later disappeared but the other two hatched about July 22.

Between July 6 and 12 a second nest, containing two eggs, was found on a floating board entangled in the marsh vegetation about 100 feet west of the first nest. A third nest, also with two eggs, was located by William Klamm in the dense vegetation in the center of the marsh, but no further observations were made of it because it was so difficult of access. The eggs in nest No. 2 also hatched about July 22. Both of the pairs of young which had been hatched in nests No. 1 and No. 2 remained close to the nest sites in the days that followed and were fed there by the adults, which brought minnows and tiny fish caught in Lake Erie. This feeding continued at least through August 3. On August 2 several immature terns were sitting on the fence just north of the marsh. By August 10 all of the Black Terns had left the marsh.

During the period of incubation of eggs in the three known nests, it was evident that three areas in the western portion of the marsh contained young birds. For adults were observed bringing food into those areas regularly. One particular spot was zealously guarded by a male tern, and downy young were seen there. Thus it seems there were not less than six nesting pairs.

This nesting colony of Black Terns is the first to be reported in the Cleveland region in the present century. Undoubtedly this species nested in the marshes at the mouth of the Cuyahoga River at the time of the first surveys in 1796, but the gradual encroachment of commerce and industries destroyed the marshes and deprived the terns of the habitat they require.

Cliff Swallow - Again this summer, as in the two previous years, a colony of Cliff Swallows nested on the sides of a barn located just off Rockhaven Road in Geauga County. When Faye King and I first visited the farm on June 13, the swallows were busily engaged in nest building and we saw nests in all stages of construction. Five nests were on one side of the barn, four on the other.

By the time of our next visit to the barn on June 20, the nests were much more complete although construction was still going on. There were then six nests on the west side of the barn and 11 on the east side. Ten days later the swallows seemed to be incubating in nearly all the nests, which numbered five on the west side and 13 on the east side, including a double nest both of whose chambers were occupied. On July 12 it appeared that some of the nests contained young, judging by the activity of the adults. At that time one nest had disappeared from each side of the barn. On my final visit on July 22, I found the three nests remaining on the west side of the barn were deserted. Of the 11 nests still on the east side, four or five were seemingly occupied by incubating birds, and I could discern no evidence of adults carrying food to nestlings; nor did I see any fledgling birds in the vicinity.

Much later, on August 16, Adela Gaede and I observed seven young Cliff Swallows, as well as two young Barn Swallows, perched on the wires along Pekin Road, about four miles west of the Rockhaven Road nesting site. An adult Cliff Swallow fed one of the young birds a number of times. - VERA CARROTHERS

Carolina Wren - The garage on our property in Bedford was the site of two successful nestings of the Carolina Wren this summer. Apparently they were the same pair to judge from their habits and the singing characteristics of the male. The following is a brief chronology of the highlights of the first of these nestings.

- June 4 - In a small offset inside the garage where boxes, tools, etc. are stored we found the nest in an orange crate about three-quarters filled with excelsior. The nest contained five eggs.
- June 6 - Six eggs.
- June 10 - Some of the eggs had hatched.
- June 17 - By now the nestlings had grown large enough so that we could see their bills sticking up above the nest, and we were able to count five young.
- June 19 - The nestlings hopped around inside the crate but hurried into the nest and remained perfectly still when we came close to peer in at them. Both the male, which was singing, and the female were present at the same time, but they were shy about feeding while we were watching.
- June 20 - At night the young occupied the nest, while the adults perched inside the garage. Closing of the garage doors at night made no difference to the adults because even when the doors were open they entered and left by way of a hole in the wall about 1 x 2 inches in diameter located near the ground where a water pipe formerly extended.
- June 22 - Both adults and all five young were flying and hopping around inside the garage in the afternoon, but at night the young returned to the nest.
- June 23 - They all left the garage about noon; however, their calls and song were heard the next day, after which this particular family was not observed again. - MILDRED LUEDY

Solitary Vireo - In the course of a study of the breeding bird population in the Arthur B. Williams Forest in the North Chagrin Reservation, I discovered on May 11 a nesting pair of Solitary Vireos along the top of one of the spurs or ridges in the eastern portion of the Reservation. The nest, which was under construction, was located about 20 feet from the ground in a forked branch of a young beech tree. Both birds brought nesting material to the site, and I watched one of them fabricate the basketlike structure from strands of inner bark (grapevine?). Taking a strand in its bill, the bird wrapped it about the smaller of the forked twigs. It then shredded the strand, pulled it to the larger twig, and secured it by wrapping it about the larger twig. On May 12 the basket effect was complete, and a piece of cleansing tissue had been attached to the larger twig, but by May 14 the tissue had been shredded and spread between the strands of fiber forming the basket framework. On May 16 this nest was destroyed.

Two weeks later, however, on May 31, I found a second nest on the opposite ridge and about 400 feet from the original nest site. This nest was just six feet from the ground in a beech sapling. Both birds took part in incubation, and I observed them change places on the nest. They were last seen at the nest on June 5. Four days later the nest appeared to be abandoned, and it was removed for study. It contained four eggs having a ground color of white with reddish-brown flecks about the ends. Two were cracked.

On June 7, I again saw and heard the Solitary Vireo, this time about 500 feet due east of the Trailside Museum, but not until June 17 did I find the nest. This third nest was located about ten feet from the ground in a Canada hemlock sapling. Again the birds were incubating. Through the observations of my wife

we learned that the female brooded about 75% of the time and the male about 25%. While the female was on the nest, the male would occasionally sing nearby and almost always sang just before relieving her on the nest. The female did not sing or make any sounds on the nest or while foraging for food. On July 2 the behavior of the parents indicated that the eggs were hatching. During the succeeding days the nest went unguarded for long periods as both parents were away simultaneously. Feeding was observed on July 6 and 12, and nest sanitation by removal of fecal sacs on July 9. Both adult birds were last seen on July 12, but the fate of the young is not known although the nest was kept under observation until July 19.

[This is the first breeding record for the Solitary Vireo in the North Chagrin Reservation, and it is also the first detailed nesting account of this species within the Cleveland region. - Ed.] - ROBERT MALY

Orchard Oriole - From June 17 to August 4, I observed several pairs of Orchard Orioles at or in the vicinity of Mogadore Reservoir. The males sang infrequently during this period although residents in the area reported that their song was often heard throughout the day in May and early June. Six males were noted. Three were in the typical adult plumage, two were immatures, while the chestnut coloring of the other bird was extensively washed with buff.

One pair frequented an orchard and shade trees along Route 43. Both the female and male carried nesting material consisting of long grasses into the crown of a huge wild cherry tree on June 17 and again on June 19. Although the female paid scant attention to persons in the orchard, the male was extremely vociferous and scolded constantly. At that time I first became aware that other Orchard Orioles were present, for the scolding of the male regularly attracted three other pairs. Two pairs emerged from a mixed grove of evergreens south of the orchard, and a female and an immature male often appeared from an orchard on the opposite side of Route 43. They never joined the resident male in calling, but merely flew silently from treetop to treetop, peering about curiously all the while. Neighboring females usually remained in the orchard only five or ten minutes, but males often remained a half hour before returning in the direction from which they came. During this time two or three Orchard Orioles frequently settled on the same branch with the resident male; however, at no time did this bird seem to resent their presence.

The birds were first noted carrying food into the wild cherry on July 7. The male, particularly, became belligerent at that time and repeatedly dove at my head. Only the female was observed carrying the fecal sacs from the nest. This family was last seen in the orchard on July 23, when three bob-tailed fledglings trailed their parents about, crying in typical oriole fashion.

On July 25 and again on August 4, fledglings were observed being fed by a pair of Orchard Orioles in a grove of evergreens along the north shore of Mogadore Reservoir. The male appeared to confine his efforts to feeding one particular fledgling, whereas the female fed all four in turn. - CHARLES H. KNIGHT

Summer Tanager - In the woods in Perkins Park, Akron, on June 7, I discovered a pair of Summer Tanagers at their nest 12 feet up in a sugar maple. This was the same pair which Dave DeSante and Gale Wiley first observed in the Park on May 27 and 28. The female seemed to be unusually dull, being the only female Summer Tanager I have ever seen that completely lacked yellowish underparts. The male was in immature plumage. He frequently fed his drab-colored mate both when she was on and off the nest, and he closely followed her whenever she left the nest. Both birds were very noisy, and the male sang his "whisper" song throughout the day. He was last heard calling and singing on June 30.

I first heard the voices of the nestlings on June 21. In a three-hour period on that day, the male brought food to the nest 11 times and the female 9 times. The male seldom fed the young directly but passed the food to his mate. The nest was deserted when observed on June 28.

On the afternoon of June 30, I saw the female about 200 yards from her first nest, flying from free to tree as if investigating possible nesting sites. She flew about in this manner for 40 minutes. At that time the male was about 100 yards away. The female began building her second nest on July 1 about 25 feet up in a white oak. Nest building continued on the mornings of July 2, 3, and 4. Incubation had begun on July 8. I observed her feeding nestlings from July 21 to 26. In a three-hour period on the 26th she brought food to her young 23 times. She was a close guardian of the nest and frequently attacked Common Grackles, Blue Jays, and House Sparrows that approached the nest. Despite her vigilance the several young apparently met an untimely end, for the nest was deserted on July 26.

The conduct of the male during this second nesting was completely different from his conduct during the first nesting. He was no longer attentive to his mate and appeared to have deserted her, for I never observed him within the immediate nesting area. On July 5, 11, and 19, I saw him in groves of trees from 100 to 300 yards distant from the nest site, but on each occasion he was completely silent and solitary. - CHARLES H. KNIGHT

FIELD NOTES

Nighthawks in Migration. Just at dinnertime on the evening of August 28, I noticed through the window some Nighthawks flying about in the vicinity of our home in north Akron. There had been a flight of flying ants and the air was full of the large females and the tiny males. I thought these insects were attracting the Nighthawks. But when I got up and looked outdoors I saw that the air was simply filled with these birds. They were everywhere, circling around but gradually working southward. Some were flying low, others quite high. I estimated more than a thousand birds, which my husband thought was too conservative a figure. We watched from 6:45 to 7:25 p.m., when they all disappeared to the south. The following evening, August 29, we watched another flight of Nighthawks from about 7:00 to 7:30. Most of these were flying so high we would not have been able to identify them without our glasses. A few, however, were flying low and were feeding, but the rest kept a steady southerly course. We thought there were about 500 birds in this flock. - JEAN A. STAIGER

Hummer Meets With an Odd Accident. At about 3:00 p.m. on July 16, I discovered a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird clinging to our porch screen. Its bill was pushed so far through the mesh that its head actually touched the screen. Its feet clung to the screen and its tail acted as a prop, woodpecker fashion. The bird was apparently dead but since I could not be sure I did not remove it. Instead I gently pushed the bill back through the screen to make it possible for the bird to fly off if it recovered. A few minutes later I got up to look more closely at the brilliant throat feathers and saw a long cream-colored thread, which was the bird's tongue, shoot back and forth through the screen mesh. The hummingbird then turned its head a few times in both sidewise directions and suddenly flew away - apparently in full strength. It is interesting to note that there were no insects on the screen at the time nor any flowers nearby to attract the bird to the porch. - KAY F. BOOTH