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# THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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## SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

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

- June - Average monthly temperature of 70° was normal. Precipitation of 1.82 inches was about one and one-quarter inches below normal.
- July - Rainfall, at about weekly intervals, totaled 4.32 inches, which was more than one inch above normal. Temperatures averaged normal, and there were no notable extremes.
- August - Hot and humid from the 12th to the 31st, during which period there were 11 days of 90° readings or above. Scattered showers occurred throughout the month but totaled only 1.85 inches, must [much] below normal .

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

## COMMENT ON THE SEASON

In our regular quarterly letter to our contributors we asked for comments concerning the breeding population of Phoebes, House Wrens, and Eastern Bluebirds in the Cleveland region this summer. These are the so-called disaster species which suffered a high mortality in the southern states late in the winter of 1958 when that portion of the nation experienced many days of freezing and sub-freezing temperatures. The response to our inquiry was not sufficiently numerous or widespread to permit the making of any final judgments except in the case of the House Wren, which appears to have returned to about its normal level of abundance.

An observer in the eastern and in the western portion of our region offered the opinion that the number of Phoebes was still much reduced. Thus in the western portion of the region, at Cascade Park, Elyria, only one pair was present whereas usually three pairs are to be found there. Also, at the YMCA Camp Iss-See-Kes, which is located just beyond our western boundary, only one pair was observed whereas four pairs quite regularly occurred there in summers prior to 1958 (P. Johnson). Similarly, in the vicinity of Willoughby, in the eastern portion of the region, the Phoebe was not commonly seen and no nests were found (Skaggs).

The Eastern Bluebird seems to have made somewhat of a comeback, and in the Elyria area the "situation was much improved over last summer, but not quite up to the density of two or more years ago" (P. Johnson). In the Willoughby area numbers were up slightly although the species was "still scarce" (Skaggs). Yet at nearby Waite Hill there was "no scarcity", and some eight pairs of Bluebirds occupied the nesting houses scattered about the Walter Halle Farm (Sherwin).

As early as July 4, shorebird migration was already under way. On that date three Least Sandpipers were seen at Burke Lakefront Airport (Klamm). At that same place on July 11, there was a various company consisting of 11 Lesser Yellowlegs, 7 Pectoral Sandpipers, 1 Least Sandpiper, and 2 Dowitchers (Klamm).

Between 7:10 and 7:30 p.m. on August 28, 42 Nighthawks, in groups of two and three, passed over Rocky River Reservation headed in a southwesterly direction (Ackermann). No other observer reported this species in migration.

A Black and White Warbler in the Bedford Reservation on July 16 was the first migrant warbler to be recorded (Knight). Then a single male Black and White Warbler was observed in Waite Hill on August 5, and a female or immature on August 13 (Flanigan). General warbler migration apparently began about August 19. From that date through August 22, the following species passed through the Rocky River Reservation but not in any large numbers either individually or collectively: Black and White, Nashville, Yellow, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Cerulean, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, American Redstart (Ackermann). Thereafter to the end of August, warblers filtered through the region, but again no concentrated flights were reported.

## NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

**Little Blue Heron** — Frequently taking flight but always keeping to the treetops, this bird — in all white immature plumage — was observed on August 16 in the swamp along Route 532, north of Cuyahoga Falls. It was reported to have been there several days previously as well (Henderson). The last prior record for the region was from this same swamp in August 1956.

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron** — In the history of the region, by far the greatest number of reports of this rare visitor have come from the Rocky River Reservation in the months of August, September, and October. None were recorded there in 1957 and 1958, however. But this spring the Yellow-crowned Night Heron (the Black-crowned, too) appeared in the reservation and was seen occasionally this summer along the same stretch of river it frequented in other years. The total number of Yellow-crowned present in the river valley is not known, but one immature bird was identified on July 8, which is the first July record for the region, and one on August 22, 29 and 30 (Ackermann). At the Lower Shaker Lake, where this species has been reported only once before in the summer, an immature bird was discovered on August 10, together with an immature Black-crowned Night Heron (Raynes).

**Green-winged Teal** - A male and a female were feeding together in the small west marsh at Burke Lakefront Airport on June 7 and June 14 (Newman). A single bird, seemingly a female, was there on July 4 (Klamm) and on August 2 (Newman). These June records, which are the first for the Cleveland region, suggest the possibility that this species might nest here although no breeding record has ever been reported; however, northern Ohio does lie within the breeding range of this teal.

**King Rail** - The pair discovered on May 26 in the swamp along Route 532, north of Cuyahoga Falls, nested there and raised three young (DeSante). This is the first nesting reported since 1940.

**American Coot** - On July 25 in a quite extensive marsh along Route 224 in the extreme southern portion of Akron, a Coot settled down on what appeared to be a nest, first having rearranged some of the nesting material. This nest site was nearly submerged on August 1, and the bird was gone; but on August 17 an adult Coot was seen in the marsh accompanied by an immature bird (DeSante). This bit of evidence tends to indicate that this species, for which there is no definite nesting record in the region, does occur as a breeding bird.

**Whimbrel** - Rare at any time and never before reported in June, this bird was observed briefly on June 27 as it flew in a southeasterly direction at a height of about 50 feet just over the Detroit Avenue entrance to the Rocky River Reservation (Ackermann).

**Wilson's Phalarope** - At Burke Lakefront Airport, which has been the site of all five previous records of occurrence, a bird (seemingly a female) was present on August 22 until it eventually flew off to the west (Klamm).

**Mockingbird** - In a country garden near Everett, Summit County, a silent Mocker appeared for a brief time at noon on June 4 (DeSante). A second bird was present on July 14 in the apple orchard and about the grounds of a home in Waite Hill (Flanigan). This is but the second July record in the past 42 years.

**Solitary Vireo** — For a period totaling 4 1/2 hours on July 8 and 9, a pair of birds was studied in Tinkers Creek Gorge of the Bedford Reservation. "One of the vireos sang continually and loudly while feeding a young Cowbird almost fully grown. No other fledgling was observed. The vireos confined their activities to the Canada hemlocks, but the juvenile Cowbird they were feeding frequently alighted on the forest floor. Despite the fact that both vireos fed the Cowbird often, at intervals of two to four minutes, the fledgling captured many inchworms itself" (Knight). This report of what was apparently a breeding pair of Solitary Vireos is the first to come from any area outside the Chagrin River watershed (Little Mountain, Stebbin's Gulch, North Chagrin Reservation).

**Wilson's Warbler** — On the exceptionally late date of June 14, two birds appeared on the grounds of a residence in Akron (Staiger).

**Western Meadowlark** — The two birds which were first seen at Burke Lakefront Airport on April 19 and thereafter to the end of May remained through most of the summer. Single individuals were noted there on July 4 and 11, and August 1 and 2, and two birds were recorded on August 8 (Klamm).

**Blue Grosbeak** — In the same locality (Wintergreen Heights) in Painesville where a male was observed on August 9, 1958, both a male and a female were present throughout most of the summer. As it did on its single appearance last year, the male fed among the weeds and grasses growing at the base of a bird feeder located near the house. The bird seemed to particularly favor the seeds of barnyard grass (*Echinochloa crusgalli*). During its frequent feeding visits it did not sing (Steckle). This is the first report of a pair since the summer of 1942.

**Slate-colored Junco** — A bird was heard singing on July 15 in Stebbin's Gulch, where this species has been known to nest (Flanigan).

**White-crowned Sparrow** — Before 8:00 a.m. on June 2, two birds visited briefly the backyard of a home in Lorain. One fed on the ground while the other perched nearby on a fence and sang (Lebold). This is a new latest spring date of occurrence.

**Lincoln's Sparrow** — In Rocky River Reservation one bird was observed on June 5 and one on June 17, which is the latest June date ever reported (Ackermann).

## FIELD NOTES

**Birds at Walnut Beach, Ashtabula** — With every successive season Walnut Beach on Lake Erie at Ashtabula is becoming a more extensive mud flat loaded with silt. As a consequence it is attracting an ever greater number and variety of shorebirds. Among the outstanding observations this summer, either my own or those of other observers, are the following: 1 Piping Plover, July 30 (Jon Ahlquist); 1 Whimbrel, July 6 (Al Newkirk); 2 Knot, August 29 (J. Paul Perkins); 47 Dowitcher, July 18; 7 Stilt Sandpipers, August 8; 1 Western Sandpiper, July 7. On August 8, a Wilson's Phalarope was sighted by Laurel Krieg, and a second bird (a female) was observed from August 13 through the 15th. Also of great interest was the occurrence of a Laughing Gull at Walnut Beach on June 13 (Jon Ahlquist), which is the third report of this species in recent years. — PAUL H. SAVAGE (These reports from Walnut Beach, which is outside the Cleveland Region, give us some idea of what we might see within our region if there were only some suitable habitat along the shore of Lake Erie. - Ed.)

**Nesting Colony of Great Blue Herons.** A colony of Great Blue Herons nested again in the spring of 1959 near the corner of Pettibone and Russell Roads in Solon. According to residents of the vicinity the birds have nested in this locality for a number of years, possibly eight or more. This spring, however, was the first that more than a dozen herons had assembled there. No definite count was made, but it appeared there were between 25 and 35 individuals. Apparently the colony is becoming larger each year.

This spring the herons were first reported by Dwight Baker on March 20, and they began nest building immediately. On April 1, Dwight and I discovered a broken egg beneath one of the nesting trees. The egg was still somewhat fresh. The terrain of the nesting site is undulating, consisting of several hills rising above the swamp lowlands. Beech and sugar maple dominate the crests of these hills. The elevation is approximately 1,050 above sea level. The nests were constructed primarily of sticks placed in the uppermost branches about 40 to 60 feet above the ground. Nests were located in seven trees, all beech. Dwight and I counted 40 nests in all, some of which were of former years while others were not yet completed or had been abandoned. On April 16, Dwight notified me he had rescued a Great Blue Heron from a briar patch from which it was unable to fly. Upon examination we found no bruises, and the bird could walk perfectly well; but the left wing was not functioning properly, though no external injuries were evident. The heron died that night in the garage. Autopsy revealed no evidence as to the cause of death. The stomach was completely empty. Some of the measurements of this male bird are as follows: weight, 4¼ pounds; length (from tip of bill to end of tail), 44½ inches; wingspread, 64½ inches. — DONALD J. PINKAVA

**Colony of Great Blue Herons in Portage County.** A nesting colony of the Great Blue Heron was discovered by Mr. Thomas Post in the spring of 1958 and 1959 in Shalersville Township, Portage County, some five miles north of Ravenna. The writer, accompanied by Mr. Post, visited the site on April 26, 1959. At that time the nests were still under construction. Some of them were little more than a platform of twigs. A total of 54 was counted in four groups. The groups were not far from each other but were spread over a somewhat wider area than in the previous year when the nests numbered approximately 60 according to observations of Mr. Post. The numbers in adjacent trees of each group counted in 1959 were as follows: Group A (6,9,1,1); Group B (5,4,2,4,2,3); Group C (2,7,2); all six of Group D were in one tree. On May 5, nesting was well under way. During a revisit on July 9, nesting was found to be essentially completed. Eggshells and fish carcasses were found on the ground; also, several nests of a former season were found on the ground. Only a few juveniles still remained on the nests. A similar herony was observed by the writer in the spring of 1944 just south of Aurora and some eight miles northwest of the one described in this note. Another one was reported a few miles north of Hudson in 1950 (Cleveland BIRD CALENDAR, 46(3):12. 1950) — RALPH W. DEXTER, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

**Purple Martins in Migration.** To me, it seemed, this was a banner year for Purple Martins. I do not know when, if ever, I have seen larger numbers along the roadside in late July and early August. Of particular interest is my observation of 325 birds on August 10. Most of these were migrating. They were moving from east to west along the edge of Lake Erie. I watched them from a point just west of Beaver Park, Lorain. They were moving high and low, over the water and back from the lake in an almost continuous movement. My

observation time was limited to less than half an hour, at about 10:00 a.m., so I do not know when the movement started or when it ended. Interestingly, this movement seemed to have no effect whatever on the number of Martins present along the roadsides during the next four days. This indicates to me that local birds were not involved in the migration at all. — PERRY F. JOHNSON

**Black Terns Nesting at Lakefront Airport.** The colony of Black Terns which nested in the marshes at Burke Lakefront Airport in the summer of 1958 returned this year. Six birds were seen there on May 10 and 17, but by May 23, the number had increased to 14, which was the same number of birds that comprised

the colony last summer. On June 13, however, I counted 20 adult birds, divided evenly between the east and the west marsh. Thereafter the colony grew progressively smaller until by July 11, only two birds were present. This decline was caused by the drainage and filling of the west marsh in the latter part of June, when the terns were forced to abandon it. Although the east marsh was not affected, the terns there were probably disturbed by the construction activity involved in the extension of the airport runway; presumably for that reason they, too, departed.

Since the marshes at the airport will eventually be obliterated as the expansion and development of the airport continues, it seems advisable to describe them briefly for the record as they appeared in early June 1959. The marsh area borders the north side of the airport and is separated into an eastern and western portion by the Army Nike installation which intervenes. Each marsh is about 90 yards long and from 40 to 50 yards wide, though in earlier years they were considerably larger. Cattails occupy much of the area, but here and there are small patches and narrow channels of open water, which is perhaps two feet deep. One end of the west marsh is much shallower, however, the water being only a few inches deep. There the vegetation of other years is matted down, providing an exposed area about five or six yards square on which the terns may make their rude nests.

During the month of June I spent some time (regrettably not enough) observing the nesting activities of the Black Terns, particularly those at the west marsh. On the evening of June 11, a female (judging by the behavior which ensued) had taken up a position on top a small stake at the edge of the marsh and a male was courting her. With a minnow in his bill he swept back and forth past her at a distance of a few feet or inscribed a kind of figure eight as he coursed low over the marsh and then looped back close to the stake on which his intended mate was standing. From time to time he hovered directly in front of her to present her with the minnow, but I did not see her accept it although on one occasion she seemed to peck at it. At 8:15 p.m. when I left the marsh she was on the stake and the male made four successive courtship approaches, each time coming right up to hover before her. He did

not appear to have any food offering in his bill, however. So far as I could determine only the one male was courting this particular female; at least I saw no combative rivalry between competing males.

By June 13, at least three females occupied definite nesting sites on the dead, matted vegetation. One of these birds, which held very closely to her site, occupied a spot only 10 or 12 feet distant from the stake where the courtship performance had occurred. Her mate sometimes joined her at the nest, standing directly next to her and facing in the same direction. During the afternoon he mounted her several times, and on one such occasion she turned her head and seized his bill in hers momentarily. On June 14, this nest contained one or more eggs. (Since I did not wade into the marshes, my knowledge

was restricted to what I could clearly observe through binoculars.) The female was incubating but was sometimes relieved by her mate for several minutes, when she would fly away to skim over the marsh or the edge of the lake. While incubating, both birds faced into the wind.

On the morning of June 21, three nesting birds were sitting close. One of them was accompanied by its mate, which stood next to the nest. At another nest one bird (presumably the male) brought a small fish to its mate, dropping it directly in front of her. Later this same bird carrying a fish in its bill repeatedly flew down to its mate but failed to release the fish to her.

In the east marsh on June 13, I discovered a nest on a small mound of dead grasses which was in an open water area. It contained two (possibly three) eggs then and again on June 21, which was the last date I visited the lakefront airport. At that time I counted 16 Black Terns — nine in the east marsh and seven in the west marsh. On July 4 and July 11, William and Nancy Klamm observed just two birds there. Thus it is evident neither breeding colony was successful in raising young. — DONALD L. NEWMAN

**Nesting Trees of the Baltimore Oriole.** The editors of the Cleveland BIRD CALENDAR suggested recently that we pay particular attention to the nesting sites of the Baltimore Oriole in order to learn what other trees this bird will utilize now that the American elm, which has always been a favorite of the oriole, is slowly succumbing to the blight. In the Aurora Lake area, at least along the road to the dam, there are practically no elm trees. Yet, as the following records indicate, the orioles have not been discouraged by that situation and they have found other species of trees suitable for nesting sites.

June 10, 1956 — Nest 40 feet up in *wild cherry* tree. June 26, male and female feeding young.

June 26, 1956 — Nest 45 feet up in *wild cherry* tree.

May 27, 1957 — Nest at end of branch 45 feet up in *wild cherry* tree.

May 30, 1957 — Nest at end of branch of *white oak* tree 45 feet up.

May 13, 1958 — Nest at end of branch of *shagbark hickory* 30 feet up.

May 13, 1958 — Nest in *poplar* tree 20 feet up at end of branch.

June 20, 1959 — What appeared to be an abandoned nest was attached to the end of a branch of a poplar tree.

— CARL F. HAMANN

#### AN INVITATION

The Kirtland Bird Club meets at 7:45 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month in the Garden Center, located on East Boulevard at Euclid Avenue. You are cordially invited to attend.