

# THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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## SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

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

September - Much above normal temperatures prevailed the first ten and last 11 days. In the middle third, temperatures were much below normal. On the 17th and 18th, light frost occurred in most areas away from Lake Erie. Rainfall totaling 3.07 inches was about normal, but most of it fell on the first and last day of the month.

October - Temperatures averaged normal, though it was generally quite cool subsequent to the 10th. The first freeze occurred on the 19th, and the first snowfall on the 27th. Precipitation of 3.57 inches was 1.15 inches above normal.

November - Colder than normal, with new lows recorded on the 17th and 18th. A reading of 10° on the 18th set a new low for so early in the season. Snowfall was confined chiefly to the last week, but was not heavy except in the northern parts of Geauga and Lake Counties.

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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

*Waterfowl.* In the Cleveland region the Common Loon is almost invariably seen on water rather than in flight. Thus we have little information about its migration. Of unusual interest, then, is a report of nine loons in two groups about five minutes apart flying over Cuyahoga County Airport on November 8 headed slightly east of south (Henderson et al).

Coincident with the passage of a cold front from out of the northwest on October 9, the first flights of Canada Geese were reported. On the morning of that day a band of 62 appeared over North Hill, Akron (Staiger), and a flock of 65 over Chardon (Kula). At Chardon on October 18, a flight of 40 Snow Geese was observed (Kula), and on October 19, at the Sherwin Pond in Waite Hill, one adult and two immature Snow Geese and 11 Blue Geese joined the 300 or more Canada Geese that had been feeding there for several weeks. These Snow and Blue Geese were still present on November 28 (Sherwin and Flanigan). Two Whistling Swans on the Upper Shaker Lake on October 31 were the first reported (Brickel), but the first sizable flock consisted of about 100 birds, including many immatures, seen on November 3 at Lake Rockwell (Staiger).

In Lake County on November 13 and 14, "tremendous southbound multiple V's" of White-fronted Geese and of Snow Geese — "thousands of birds" — passed over Hanging Rock Farm and environs (Bole, Jr.). This is the first time either of these species has been reported in such numbers. On November 15 and 17, again in Lake County, there was a southbound passage of "large, sky-covering multiple V's" of Canada Geese, and on November 17 at Corning Lake, Holden Arboretum, some 250 Whistling Swans stopped en route (Bole, Jr.).

*Hawks.* The Rough-legged Hawk, which is always an uncommon late autumn and winter visitor, was recorded singly seven times this autumn from seven separate localities, including an unusually early bird near Twinsburg on September 28 (Hamann). These seven records contrast with the following data showing the total records of occurrence in the autumn of each of the previous five years: 1954, 1; 1955, none; 1956, 2; 1957, 1; 1958, 1.

*Nighthawks and Swifts.* For about one and one-half hours at midafternoon on September 5, a procession of Common Nighthawks streamed across the sky at Peninsula from northeast to southwest. Generally only ten to 15 birds appeared at one time, but once a flock of 50 passed by. In all there were approximately 175 (Knight). At sunset on September 7, more than a hundred Nighthawks were sailing and darting like swallows over the meadow in Rocky River Reservation (Klamm). Near Mogadore on September 8, about 300 Nighthawks were observed in migration (Staiger).

There was a seeming migratory movement or at least an extensive gathering together of Chimney Swifts in the locality of Cleveland on October 13, which was a cool, cloudy day with occasional misty drizzle. At about 2:00 p.m. that day, some 200 Swifts criss-crossed the sky over the Wade Park-University Circle area (DeSante). Between 4:00 and 4:45 p. m. small bands of birds were seen along or near the lakeline at various points between Rocky River and downtown Cleveland. Over the lake just north of Cleveland City Hall, a large flock of Swifts circled at a towering height, while to the east as far as Rockefeller Park other, though smaller, flocks were observed (Newman). After October 13 the Chimney Swift was not reported from the immediate locality of Cleveland, and for the region as a whole the last date of occurrence was October 18.

*Blackbirds.* Early on the morning of October 17, Redwinged Blackbirds in flocks of 50 or more flew in a southwesterly direction over Welcome Airport, Route 8. During 90 minutes of observation an estimated 1,900 birds were seen "more or less evenly spaced in time but bunched somewhat around 8:00 a.m." (Henderson). A field south of Aurora contained "about an acre of male Redwings", possibly as many as 2,000 birds, on November 1. When they arose en masse to maneuver over the field, the flock looked like a gigantic "spinning top whose colors changed with the speed, the scarlet at times predominating over the black" (Carrothers and Gaede). An estimated 1,500 Redwinged Blackbirds and 800 Brown-headed Cowbirds were feeding together in cornfields along Harper Road in Solon on the morning of November 7, while in the same fields, though keeping separate from the others, a thousand or more Common Grackles were also feeding. By midmorning these birds had moved on in a southerly direction, with the Grackles still remaining apart from the rest of the migrants (Knight).

*General Migratory Movements.* "An outstanding migration of warblers equal to any springtime movement occurred on September 12, when 16 species were identified — the Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Bay-breasted and Wilson's Warblers predominating. This wave of warblers was accompanied by large numbers of *Empidonax* flycatchers and White-throated Sparrows as well as by a few Swainson's Thrushes and early-arriving Brown Creepers and Slate-colored Juncos. The concentration appeared to be along the lakefront (Lakewood Park) and not too far inland" (Klamm). The next day, September 13, was also an excellent day for warblers at Lakewood Park, and "the movement seemed to have penetrated inland, particularly the Rocky River Valley." Again the most abundant species were the Magnolia, Bay-breasted, and Wilson's Warblers and the White-throated Sparrow. Four additional species of warblers, including two Connecticuts, made a total of 20 species for the two days (Klamm).

A cool air mass from the northeast moved into northern Ohio on October 14. With it came a vast number of small migrants. At 8:00 a.m. on that day, the Cleveland Public Square was alive with White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows, and a Catbird and a Lincoln's Sparrow were also present. In the planetrees on the Mall, Golden-crowned Kinglets flitted about, while a Flicker and a White-breasted Nuthatch explored the tree trunks. By noontime the Mall and the grounds around the Board of Education Building held an augmented host of migrants, particularly the White-crowned and the White-throated Sparrow. A Winter Wren, a Catbird, and a Hermit Thrush kept in the shelter of the shrubbery, and three Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers rested, just inches apart, on the trunk of a planetree (Newman). In the next seven days there appeared to be a general movement of passerine migrants. One veteran observer in the southeastern portion of Cleveland reported that "from October 16 to 21, more migratory birds found their way into my yard than I have ever seen before" (Gaede). Among these backyard visitors were a Palm and Myrtle Warblers, an *Empidonax* flycatcher, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, and Fox Sparrow. In the Rocky River Valley on the 15th of October, there was an abundance of White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows as well as of Kinglets, especially the Ruby-crowned "which seemed to be everywhere" (Ackermann). A large migration of Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Blackpoll, Bay-breasted, and Nashville Warblers and of Purple Finches — "several hundred birds of each species" — was noted at Hanging Rock Farm in Lake County on October 17 and 18 (Bole, Jr.).

*Yearly Summary.* In the BIRD CALENDAR year now ended, that is, December 1, 1958 to November 30, 1959, 244 species were reported within the Cleveland region. In addition, the hybrid Brewster's Warbler was reported.

This figure of 244 compares with a total of 239 species in the previous year. There were no records of the Short-billed Marsh Wren nor of the Golden-winged Warbler. For the Loggerhead Shrike there was just one record of a single bird, which indicates how rare this species has become in the region.

For annotation in "Birds of the Cleveland Region" are the following records:

New Earliest Fall Date

Winter Wren (1) — September 12, Lakewood Park (Klamm)  
Redpoll (8) — November 8, Mentor Marsh (Martin, Jr.)

New Latest Fall Date

Greater Yellowlegs (1) - November 26, Summit Lake (Henderson) and  
again on November 29 (R. L. Capanna fide  
Henderson)  
Caspian Tern (1) - October 16, Lorain (Johnson)  
Swainson's Thrush (1) - October 30, North Chagrin Reservation  
(Pinkava)  
Tennessee Warbler (4) - October 25, Lower Shaker Lake (DeSante)  
Palm Warbler (1) - October 30, Waite Hill (Flanigan)  
Indigo Bunting (2) - October 29, Elyria (Johnson)

### NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

**Red-throated Loon** - On Lake Erie off Webb Road, Lakewood, on November 28, a single bird dived frequently in the choppy waters which it shared with some 250 Common Goldeneye and several dozen Bufflehead (Henderson and Klamm).

**Red-necked Grebe** - Two birds were discovered on Lake Rockwell on November 8 and were studied carefully as they swam and dived together (Staiger and Wiley).

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron** - In the Rocky River Reservation, from which most of the records of this species have originated, one bird was seen on September 19 (Ackermann).

**Common Eider** - The first November record and only the third record in all for the Cleveland region is of a single female on Lake Erie off Rocky River Park on November 29. It was diving along the jetty with a lone Common Goldeneye (Klamm).

**Peregrine Falcon** - The Herring and Ring-billed Gulls assembled on the waters off Gordon Park on November 21 scattered when this falcon appeared flying easily and low along the shoreline to the east (Klamm). A second, or possibly the same, bird was seen on the hill just west of Perkins Beach on November 22, when it flew right over the hood of the observer's parked car (Carrothers).

**Knot** - On September 13 (Henderson) and on September 15 (Staiger) a solitary individual was recorded at Nimisila Reservoir. This is the first report of this species since the occurrence of a bird at the Baldwin and Wallace Lakes, Berea, on August 31, 1954.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper** - Two birds were observed on September 7 at Nimisila Reservoir (Staiger). Two were present at Burke Lakefront Airport on September 19, and six on September 26. On both occasions they were

accompanied by about two dozen Golden Plovers (Klamm).

**Northern Phalarope** - The same individual (presumably) was found at Lakewood Park on November 1, at Edgewater Park on November 8, and at both Clifton Beach and Rocky River Park on November 14. On this last date the bird flew west past Clifton Beach, then gained altitude to short cut overland upon reaching the river escarpment. At Edgewater Park on the 8th the Phalarope joined with some 14 Sanderlings and four Dunlins as they fed along the edge of the sandy beach (Klamm). These are the first autumn records since 1953.

**Laughing Gull** - At about 1:00 p.m. on November 8, which was a sunny day, a single bird, in adult or sub-adult plumage, flew east past Lakewood Park but paused a moment to circle as it dropped nearly to the surface of the lake (Klamm). This is the first sight record for the Cleveland region; the only other record is of a specimen collected at Fairport Harbor on May 18, 1951.

**Snowy Owl** - On November 27 near Huntsburg, a farmer discovered two owls on the ground together. He promptly shot one, which he later took to a taxidermist in Huntsburg. The other bird made its escape (Harm). Not since March 1957 has the Snowy Owl been reported in the region.

**Long-eared Owl** - At Hanging Rock Farm, Lake County, close by the Holden Arboretum, two birds were found on November 20 atop the cages containing bantam fowl (Bole, Jr.)

**Oregon Junco** - A bird which was so decidedly well marked that it "looked like a tiny Towhee from the front" appeared at a feeding station in Broadview Heights on November 29 (F. Smith).

**Sharp-tailed Sparrow** - First observed on September 15, three birds, with notably conspicuous back stripings, lingered for about one week at Waite Hill, where they fed in a meadow and along the edge of a small pond. They were last seen on September 23 (Flanigan).

#### FIELD NOTES

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Northern Ohio.** At about mid-afternoon on May 3, 1959, which was a warm, sunny day, we (my husband John, daughter Chloe Ann, friend Elizabeth Beezley, and I) watched a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher for ten to 15 minutes as it chased after insects in a meadow along Eastern Road in Summit County. The flycatcher was perched on a wire at one side of the road and would dart out across the road, snap up its insect prey, and then return to its perch on the wire. From our parked car we could observe the bird carefully at a distance of only 25 or 30 feet. On one occasion it flew down in pursuit of an insect and sped past the windshield at a distance of no more than ten or 15 feet. Quite often it uttered a chattering, Kingbird-like call. When we finally drove away, the bird was still there. — KATHERINE MCKAY (This species is the 336th to be recorded in the Cleveland region since the time of the first surveys in 1796. So far as we can determine, no specimen of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher has been taken in Ohio. There are, however, at least three sight records, but none is from the northeastern quarter of the state. — Ed.)

**Blackbird Roost in Elyria.** At about sunset on October 29, I observed an estimated 17,500 Common Grackles (four flocks estimated at 1,000, 10,000, 5,000, and 1,500) moving from west to east across Elyria just south of the business section. Also recorded as part of the same roost-ward movement were 1,000 Starlings. I say "roost-ward" because the general pattern for a period of about two weeks between the 20th of October and the first few days of November was heavy movements of Grackles (with some Starlings

and other blackbirds) across Elyria westward from 7:00 to 7:30 a.m. and eastward between 6:00 and 7:00 p.m. I noted them almost daily in varying numbers at various locations. At the time I did not know where the roost was, having heard of none in Elyria.

Later, however, I learned the location of the roost from Elizabeth Yoder, who first observed the blackbird concentration on September 7, which, of course, was sometime after the roost was established. It was located just south of the New York Central Railroad yard at the eastern city limits, directly east of downtown Elyria. The area is wasteland with a fringe of trees, especially favored by the birds, at the west end. The field to the east is brushy, with medium-sized trees. Miss Yoder reports that four species were present: Starling, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, and Redwinged Blackbird. She believes the Starlings were most abundant, closely followed by the Grackles; the other two species were considerably less numerous. She, and others, particularly Jane Davies who drove by the area each morning, feels that the flock built up to a peak about the middle of October, was still there in good numbers at the end of the month, then faded away during the first week of November.

As to the number of birds, the impression was that there were "a million". Miss Yoder feels, however, that 50,000 would be her estimate. Considering that I saw an estimated 17,500 flying to the roost from only one direction on October 29, her figure seems reasonable. Birds reportedly came in from all directions — more from the southwest than from any other quarter, though about as many came in from the northwest — PERRY F. JOHNSON

**Chickadees Migrating East Along Lake Erie.** From the time of my arrival at Headlands State Park at 8:55 a.m. on October 8 until I left at noontime, Black-capped Chickadees were almost constantly moving east along the shore of Lake Erie. The weather that morning was cloudy, the temperature in the upper fifties. What little wind there was came from the south. By the afternoon, however, the wind had shifted to the northwest, and on the following day a cool air mass crossed the eastern portion of the nation in a broad front from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. Perhaps the Chickadees were keeping just ahead of this cold front.

Although the Chickadees were obviously following the shoreline, they did not fly over the water or even along the broad sandy beach but instead followed the slight ridge at the rear of the beach where a straggling line of Lombardy poplars and cottonwood trees grows. In groups ranging from six to as many as 50 birds, the Chickadees generally kept to the treetops, though some of them occasionally descended to the shrubby young willows and poplars that grow among the taller trees. They often paused to rest and feed for a minute or two and then moved on east, keeping to the narrow line of trees and avoiding extended flight out in the open. The bands of birds, which uttered a steady chorus of "dee-dee-dee" notes, appeared at intervals of from one to several minutes, though quite often one band would almost immediately follow another. Between 10:05 and 10:30 a.m., I counted what appeared to be six separate groups consisting of 149 birds in all. During the entire morning (8:55 to 11:35) I recorded 34 bands of birds and a total of 507 individuals.

Upon my return to Headlands State Park shortly after 12:30 p.m., a slight rain began and soon turned into a heavy but intermittent shower lasting until about 2:00. During that period I made several sorties along the edge of the woods that borders the beach, and, despite the rain, I found large numbers of Chickadees flitting about in the treetops. When the showers ceased, I retraced my steps along the ridgeline of the beach but observed not a single Chickadee. By the time I returned to the woodland edges at about 2:40, all of the birds had moved on. — DONALD L. NEWMAN