

THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

Winter Number

Published by

Cleveland Audubon Society

and

The Kirtland Bird Club

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SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

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

December - Average temperature of 36° was 5.1° above normal. Snowfall totaling 5.3 inches was only about 50% of the usual fall, and more than half occurred on the last three days.

January - Temperatures averaging 31.3° were 2.8° above normal; there were no zero or near-zero readings, Snowfall totaled 2.8 inches against an average of 10.2 inches for January. However, heavy snow fell in Lake, northern Geauga, and eastern Cuyahoga Counties on the 20th and 22nd.

February - Snow covered the ground most of the month, though at no period was there an excessive fall. Average temperature of 29.5° was 0.9° above normal. The lowest reading was 13° on the 15th.

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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

Diving Ducks. The mild weather which prevailed in December and in the first three weeks of January kept Lake Erie free of ice in the Cleveland region. Yet the total number of ducks reported during the first half of the winter was smaller than in other years. Possibly the open water caused them to remain out on the lake beyond sight of land-based observers.

At any rate, in December and the first half of January the Greater and Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, and the Ruddy Duck, which are customarily the most abundant of the diving ducks, were not present in truly large numbers along the Cleveland lakefront. Some 3,200 Scaup on December 5 and December 13 was the high count, while the peak number of Common Goldeneye was about 310 on December 19. The Ruddy Duck, which was exceptionally scarce in the winter of 1958-59, was scarce again this winter. A mere 109 on December 6 was the largest number reported. (This is in contrast to an estimated 3,200 along the Cleveland lakefront on December 8, 1955.) By January 1, about 55 were present. Thereafter the number of Ruddies declined until by January 31, just a few remained; and in all of February just two birds were observed.

First extensive ice cover began to develop on January 21. This of course caused a greater inshore concentration of waterfowl, particularly the Common Goldeneye, of which nearly 1,400 were recorded on January 23 and some 2,600 on February 7 (Klamm). During the last three weeks of February the lake was extensively though not completely ice-covered. In this period the duck population remained fairly constant. Unlike the previous two winters, there was no large influx of Canvasbacks in February, and the 369 birds recorded on February 6 was the high count for the winter.

All three species of Scoters were reported in December, including three Surf Scoters at White City on December 19 (Raynes). A solitary female Surf Scoter occurred in the harbor at Lorain from February 12 to the 20th (Lebold). The one to three King Eiders present on the Cleveland lakefront throughout the winter (See Noteworthy Records section) were evidently a part of an unusual inland influx of this species; for at Buffalo, New York, where it is also rare, "at least fifteen females and immature males are known to have been seen, shot, or found dead in the vicinity of the Niagara River", (*The Prothonotary*, January 1960).

Hawks. Continuing the pattern set in the autumn when there were seven records of occurrence, the Rough-legged Hawk, which is an irregular fall and winter visitor, was recorded at various times this winter in six separate localities. All of the reports were of single birds except for a record of two birds at Lake Rockwell on January 31 (DeSante). These six records of occurrence are the largest number for the past five years. In the winters of 1956-57 and 1958-59 the Rough-legged Hawk was not reported at all.

Gulls. The numbers of Herring and of Ring-billed Gulls at Cleveland and Lorain were not impressively large until the time that ice started to form on the lake about January 21. Two days later the count of gulls skyrocketed from the figures of earlier weeks. Thus on January 23 there were more than 4,000 Herring Gulls and an estimated 10,500 Ring-billed along the Cleveland lakefront (Klamm), while at Lorain there were an estimated 4,000 Ring-

billed Gulls (Lebold). Immediately afterwards the Herring Gull population declined by about 25% and the Ring-billed by 50%. Yet as late as February 7, some 1,500 Herring and more than 4,000 Ring-billed Gulls were still present on the Cleveland lakefront. Thereafter to the end of February the gull population dropped to a total of a few hundred.

Bonaparte's Gulls were surprisingly abundant until mid-January, after which their numbers declined sharply, and they were nearly absent at Cleveland and Lorain subsequent to February 7. With the formation of ice on Lake Erie on January 21, the Great Black-backed Gull made its appearance. Four were seen on January 23 and eight on January 24 (Klamm), and these were the only records for the Cleveland lakefront. One bird was seen, however, at Lorain on December 17 and January 17 (Johnson).

Robins. Not a single Robin was reported in the first three weeks of December, but the Christmas Bird Counts turned up a fair number: Cleveland East Side, nine on December 27; Cleveland West Side 42 on January 3; Cuyahoga Falls, 143 on January 2. During the first half of January only a few small bands were seen, and then beginning about January 15 a major invasion occurred. Thus at Elyria "there was an influx of some importance about the third week of January, with reports of numbers up to 200 in some places" (Johnson). In Bath Township Summit County, a flock of 200 to 300 birds was present from mid-January to mid-February (DeSante). Smaller flocks were observed in other sections of the region, and many of these birds apparently remained at least until the middle of February, though they dispersed somewhat after the first of that month. Yet on February 19 at Waite Hill over 100 Robins "came to feed on crab apples, sumac, and wild roses" (Flanigan). Other observers noted that withered apples on trees and ground were a principal source of food. Although this mid-winter incursion of Robins was quite sizable, it was not of the magnitude of the phenomenal incursion in the winter of 1957-58.

Finches. There were no records of the Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, or the Pine Grosbeak. The Evening Grosbeak appeared in fair numbers, but was reported from only the eastern and southern portions of the region. Largest flocks - about 50 birds each - occurred at feeding stations in Brecksville and Hinckley. The Redpoll was not reported at all in the winter of 1958-59 but this winter it appeared in large flocks, was distributed throughout the region, and was observed in all three months of the season. As many as 75 were seen at Lower Shaker Lake on December 16 (DeSante); 140 at Willoughby about February 27-28 (Mrs. Frank Tyndall *fide* Barbour); and in the vicinity of Elyria on February 28, a flock comprising an estimated 300 birds (Mrs. E. Brekelbaum *fide* Johnson). The Pine Siskin, for which there were no 1958-59 winter records, occurred in small numbers this winter and was observed at five separate localities. A flock of 32 at Lower Shaker Lake on January 1 was the largest number recorded (Gaede and Carrothers).

Exceptionally abundant was the American Goldfinch, though apparently more so in the eastern and southern portions of the region than in the area west of the Cuyahoga River. At feeding stations on the Halle and Sherwin Farms in Waite Hill great numbers - "up to at least 100 at a time" - appeared all winter (Sherwin). The Cleveland East Side Christmas Count recorded 136 on December 27, which is by far the greatest number reported since the Christmas Count of 1942 when 102 were observed. Similarly, the 40 American Goldfinch counted on the Cuyahoga Falls census on January 2

were almost twice as many as had been counted in any of the Christmas censuses in the previous four years.

Strays. The mild weather in December and absence of snow apparently caused hardy individuals of certain species to remain in the region far beyond their customary time - in some cases all winter long. Among these strays and stragglers were the following: an American Bittern on the grounds of Oxford School, Cleveland Heights, December 9 (Perry); a Killdeer at Kent, January 2 (Henderson), and two at Elyria, January 14 (Johnson); a Brown Thrasher which spent the entire winter in Chestnut Hills Cemetery, Cuyahoga Falls (Staiger); a Hermit Thrush at Lower Shaker Lake, December 27 (Henderson) and probably the same bird at Upper Shaker Lake, February 21 (Newman); 11 Eastern Meadowlarks, December 28, on the Elyria Christmas Count; about seven Common Grackles which came regularly to a feeding station in Elyria (Elizabeth Yoder *fide* Johnson); four Savannah Sparrows, December 28, on the Elyria Christmas Count, and one at Waite Hill, December 27 (Flanigan).

Other wintering sparrows included Field, White-crowned, White-throated, and even a Lincoln's Sparrow, which was seen on The Cleveland Public Square, January 16 (DeSante). Apparently this bird was originally a member of the company of a dozen or more White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows which had been encouraged to remain on the Square during the latter part of November and all of December when the many ornamental evergreen trees set up for the holiday season created a favorable habitat for feeding and shelter. Upon the removal of these trees early in January, most, though not all, of these sparrows disappeared.

Spring Migrants. Generally the first of the spring migrants begin to appear soon after the middle of February. This winter, however, this initial movement of birds failed to materialize. Thus there were no reports of migrant Bluebirds, Redwinged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and Brown-headed Cowbirds in the latter half of February, and just one record of a single Killdeer on February 29. Even Crows were not widely observed nor in any great numbers. Song Sparrows, however, began to arrive about February 18; yet by the end of the month they were not truly abundant or widely distributed. And so the season ended on a hibernal rather than a vernal note, as is evidenced by the fact that in the final ten days the temperature averaged five degrees below normal and the average daily temperature was never above freezing.

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Double-crested Cormorant - A single bird observed along The Cleveland lake-front on December 13 is the only record for this winter and is the first winter record since December 1954 (Henderson).

Brant - On January 23, 24, and 25, when extensive ice was forming on Lake Erie, this small goose together with several dozen ducks frequented the open water behind the breakwall and offshore from the Illuminating Company plant at East 72nd Street. (Klamm and Carrothers). This is the first winter record in the history of the region.

Snow Goose - One of the three birds which had lingered at the Sherwin Farm in Waite Hill to the end of November remained there until January 1 (Sherwin). No previous winter record has ever been reported.

Common Eider - A female on Lake Erie at White City on December 6 may have been the same bird that was seen off Rocky River Park on November 29 (Klamm).

King Eider - Apparently at least three birds (females or immatures) wintered along the Cleveland lakefront. Two were first reported at Edgewater Park on December 5 (Owen Davies *fide* Klamm). Then on December 13, three were observed at Edgewater Park, (Klamm), and they remained in that general locality until February 6. Thereafter only a single bird was seen to the end of February.

Bald Eagle - Early on the sunny afternoon of December 3, an adult perched for a time in a tree in a large open field along Bath Road, Summit County, (Reeder).

Peregrine Falcon - At about 5:00 p.m. on December 4, this bird dipped low over the Perry House parking lot in downtown Cleveland and then disappeared over the rooftops of the buildings to the south (Knight). Since this falcon has been seen in that vicinity several times in recent years, it is quite possible it is actually a resident bird.

Turkey - At Hanging Rock Farm, Lake County, on February 3, a single bird flushed from the spring beside the game bantam house and flew into the woods (James Jackson *fide* Bole, Jr.). On February 9, the tracks of four birds were discovered in the pine woods on the Farm, and on February 28, tracks of four birds were noted in the woods back of the chicken yards (Bole, Jr.). It has also been reported that two wild Turkeys were shot in November 1959 in Kirtland Township at a point a few miles west of Hanging Rock Farm. These are the first records of this species in the Cleveland region in this century although there is an unverified report that wild turkeys inhabited the Rocky River Valley, in the vicinity of Mastick Road hill, as late as the summer of 1913.

Common Gallinule - Summit Lake, in Akron, remains open during the winter because of an inflow of warm industrial waste water. Thus it attracts and retains various waterfowl and marsh birds which would not otherwise remain in our region. On December 29, three gallinules were observed there (Emmet Shellenberger *fide* DeSante), and they were reported by other observers until about January 10. After that date only two were seen to the end of February (DeSante). These are the first winter records.

Black Tern - A single individual in summer plumage was observed from February 15 to the 24th in Lorain at the warm water outlet of the Ohio Edison Company generating plant on Lake Erie - several thousand miles north of the winter range of this species. This bird, which was always seen in flight, "would hover at times, in typical tern fashion, then plunge head first into the water, coming up with a fish" (Lebold).

Bewick's Wren - Having been stunned when it flew against a house at Lake Lucerne on January 16, this bird was picked up and identified in hand. Upon being released it paused briefly at a feeding station, but it was not seen again (English). This is the first winter record for the region.

Mockingbird - To have three winter records is quite unusual: (1) two birds appeared at a feeding station in Bath Township, Summit County, in

early January and were still present in the neighborhood at the end of February (Glassner); (2) a single bird was observed near Painesville on February 21 (Skaggs); (3) in a nursery in Bedford, where a Mockingbird wintered in 1957-58 and in 1958-59, a solitary individual was first recorded on October 9, 1959 and was seen irregularly thereafter to January 10 (Luedy).

Oregon Junco - The bird which appeared at a feeding station in Broadview Heights on November 29, 1959 remained throughout the winter (Smith). A second bird - also a feeding station visitor - was first identified in Aurora on January 1; it, too, was present at the end of February (Dunneback).

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE FOOD OF COMMON BIRDS - XI

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During the past year 58 bird stomachs were examined for indication of food habits. Only seven were empty and the rest represented 32 species. In addition, 100 Barn Owl pellets were analyzed and a Red-shouldered Hawk's nest examined for traces of food. Thanks are given to Dr. C.H. Hobbs and Almon Rood for identification of seeds, and to those who contributed specimens for study, especially Laurence Isard, Joseph Beckett, Mr. and Mrs. Budd Lantz, Gale Wiley, Alton Wetmore, Ruth Snyder, and Helen Hughey. Only those species not reported previously or those of special interest are listed here with the food items.

Least Bittern (insect fragments including beetles); *Whistling Swan* (mass of algae); *Wood Duck* (acorns); *Lesser Scaup* (seeds of smartweed); *Red-tailed Hawk* (remains in nest found by Joseph Beckett: Wood Duck, domestic chicken, Redwinged Blackbird, Norway rat, field mice); *Ruffed Grouse* (seeds of grape and wild sarsaparilla, buds of poplar and birch); *Ring-necked Pheasant* (acorns of pin oak, rose hips, seeds of grape); *Common Gallinule* (seeds of smartweed); *Barn Owl* (100 pellets: field mice, short-tailed shrews, white-footed deer mice, Norway rat, house mouse, Canada shrews, star-nosed mole, House Sparrows); *Screech Owl* (caterpillars, fragments of crayfish, a small rodent, and a shrew); *Barred Owl* (caterpillar); *Downy Woodpecker* (seeds of poison ivy and perithecia of fungi); *Hairy Woodpecker* (seeds of poison ivy, a mite a caterpillar, and beetle fragments); *Wood Pewee* (2 seeds of corn cockle?, larva of lacewing, fragments of beetles, bugs, and wasps); *Swainson's Thrush* (fruit of flowering dogwood, caterpillars, insect fragments including Hemiptera); *Gray-cheeked Thrush* (fruits and seeds of dogwood); *Redwinged Blackbird* (spider, caterpillar, insect fragments including weevils, seeds of smartweed); *Tree Sparrow* (seeds of foxtail, fragments of millipede); *State-colored Junco* (seeds of lamb's quarters).