

# THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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## SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

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

- September - Cloudy, with sunshine hours totaling just 44% of the possible hours. Temperatures averaged near normal, but precipitation of 1.84 inches was much below normal.
- October - Average temperature of 51° was slightly below normal. A scant one inch of rain represented a -1.40 inch departure from normal.
- November - New low temperatures of 24° were recorded on the 7th and 8th; otherwise temperatures averaged about normal. Precipitation was about one-half inch below normal. First appreciable snow fell on the 30th.

All records, observations, and comments should be sent to Donald L. Newman, 14174 Superior Road, Cleveland 16, Ohio.

## COMMENT ON THE SEASON

Waterfowl. Passage of migratory waterfowl through the Cleveland region was first noted on October 22 and 23, when a cold air mass had moved out of Canada and was advancing down over the Great Lakes. Apparently keeping just ahead of this cold front, a noisy flock of Canada Geese passed over Cleveland Heights in the early morning hours of October 22 (Newman), and a flight of Whistling Swans was heard over Waite Hill on the night of October 23 (Sherwin). On the afternoon of October 2, with a raging northwest wind whipping Lake Erie into a fury, eight Blue Geese flew west past White City (Carrothers).

With the coming of a second cold front out of Canada on November 5, geese and swans again appeared. Flocks of Canada Geese were heard as they flew over Cleveland Heights on the night of November 5 and 6. A flock of 115 Whistling Swans appeared at the Sherwin Farm in Waite Hill on November 5 (Sherwin). These flights may have continued during the next five days, for on November 10, Whistling Swans were heard over Cuyahoga Falls (Henderson) and an estimated 150 birds were observed at Pepper Pike Village (Sherwin). According to a report of the Ohio Division of Wildlife, exceptional numbers of Blue Geese and of Snow Geese appeared in the western lake Erie marshes end in the Findlay and Grand Lake St Marys area in the first part of November. Even in the Cleveland region, where both species are rarely observed, a flock of 18 Blue Geese was reported from Sugar Ridge, just east of Elyria, on November 5 (Eliza-beth Yoder vide Johnson).

On October 29, both the Common and the Red-breasted Merganser occurred in considerable abundance along the Cleveland lakefront, almost all of the birds being females or immatures. This was the only date the Common Merganser was reported in numbers. Peak date for the Red-breasted Merganser was November 5, when an estimated 4,000 were observed on the lake between Perkins Beach and Rocky River Park (Klamm). Thereafter their numbers declined until by the end of November only a few dozen were present. The other species of diving ducks, even including the Scaup, occurred in only modest numbers on the lakefront at Cleveland during November. In part this scarcity may have been attributable to the ever-increasing small boat activity which disturbs the ducks and undoubtedly discourages them from occupying the near-shore waters.

Gulls and Terns. Wave after wave of Ring-billed and Bonaparte's Gulls and of Common and Black Terns flowed west along the Cleveland lakefront on September 11. Caspian Terns were also a part of this movement, On September 5, however, Common Terns were moving east closely following the lake line, and in a twenty-minute period at mid-morning some 510 were counted as they streamed past White City (Newman). At Headlands State Park on September 10, a multitude of Ring-billed Gulls and of Common Terns -- an estimated 5,000 of each -- was assembled on the beach (Booth).

During November the population of Herring, Ring-billed, and Bonaparte's Gulls on the Cleveland lakefront seemed to be normal. A notable addition to this population was the Common Tern, of which as many as 14 were seen on November 6, and nine on November 13. Even as late as November 26, one bird was still present (Klamm).

Swallows. Small flights of Barn Swallows moved east along the line of the lake shore on the morning of September 18 (Klamm). Late in the afternoon of September 17, a large transient flock of Purple Martins, and of Chimney Swifts, too, coursed over a meadow in Waite Hill (Flanigan). On September 22, also in the late afternoon, a migrant flock of 35 Martins -- an uncommonly large number for so late in autumn -- was feeding over a field in Warrensville Heights (Knight).

Thrushes. During October the Robin was not observed as frequently or in its large numbers as in that same month in previous years. In November this species was singularly scarce, for there were just four records totaling a mere 22 birds; end of this total, a record of 15 Robins on November 6 accounted for nearly 75 per cent. By comparison, the month of November in other years produced such figures as these: 1955 - 16 records totaling 93 birds; 1957 - 18 records totaling 78 birds; 1959 - 20 records totaling 103 birds.

Although the Hermit Thrush was reported in "good numbers" at Clague Park and in the Rocky River Reservation on October 9 (Klamm), for the Cleveland region as a whole this species was decidedly uncommon during the autumn. There were just 16 records of occurrence this autumn as compared with 35 records in the autumn of 1957 and 32 records in the autumn of 1955. Swainson's Thrush was recorded frequently and in abundance during September, especially after about the tenth of the month.

The Eastern Bluebird was reported from only a few localities and in small numbers except for a dozen birds at Waite Hill on October 7 (Sherwin), and a wandering flock of 12 birds on October 15, 18 on October 22, and 10 birds on November 13, which frequented fields and orchards in Solon (Knight).

Cedar Waxwings. Three exceptionally large flocks of Cedar Waxwings were observed this autumn: an estimated 100 birds feeding on wild cherries at the Lower Shaker Lake on September 12 (Storer); about 150 birds at Holden Arboretum on November 20 (Bush); and on November 27 at Lake Rockwell a flock of more than 200 which was feeding on winter berries (Staiger).

Common Grackles. In a residential section of Willoughby on September 30, a flock comprising an estimated 1,000 Common Grackles settled in a group of trees for about one hour and then moved on (Barbour). A large movement of Grackles passed through Waite Hill on October 9 and 10 (Flanigan), and at Waite Hill on October 26, "great flocks were everywhere" (Sherwin).

Fringillids. A good variety of the northern finches was observed, the most notable being two flocks of Red Crossbills (see Noteworthy Records section). With the exception of the Pine Siskin, the number of birds recorded was quite small, however, Four Evening Grosbeaks on October 30 in Northampton Township, Summit County, was the only record for this species (Henderson). The Common Redpoll was reported just once: a mere two birds at Shaker Lakes on November 25 (Peskin). The Pine Siskin was observed in five separate localities, the largest flock consisting of approximately 60 birds at North Chagrin Reservation on November 20 and 24 (Newman). A flock of 30 Lapland Longspurs at Cuyahoga County Airport on November 12 was the largest reported (Henderson). First record of the Snow Bunting was of 16 birds at White City on October 27 (Carrothers), after which this species occurred regularly throughout November along the Cleveland lakefront and elsewhere, too.

General Migratory Movements. As is customary, there was a fairly steady movement of the small passerines through the region during September, with the peak of the movement occurring at about mid-month. On September 17, a large flock of warblers moved quickly through the trees bordering the beach at Headlands State Park (Booth). On the 17th and 18th a "big migration of vireos, thrushes, and warblers" was observed at Waite Hill, and on September 19, Catbirds and Brown Thrashers appeared in abundance (Sherwin).

A daily observer in the Waite Hill area reported the "heaviest warbler concentration ever seen" there on the morning of September 4, when 11 species were identified -- the Magnolia, Black-throated Green, and Wilson's being the most numerous (Flanigan). This observer also recorded a large migratory wave on September 8, among which the principal species were the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Bay-breasted Warbler. On the following day at Waite Hill, Catbirds, Swainson's Thrushes, Red-eyed Vireos, and Tennessee Warblers comprised the bulk of migrants pausing to feed in a low, swampy spot.

In downtown Cleveland, which provides a good index of the migratory movements of the small passerines, the Mall and the grounds surrounding the Board of Education were alive with thrushes, warblers, and White-throated Sparrows at noon on September 27. The next day White-throated Sparrows were even more abundant (Newman).

Yearly Summary. In the BIRD CALENDAR year now ended, that is, from December 1, 1959 to November 30, 1960, 247 species were reported within the Cleveland region. In the previous year 244 species were reported.

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

New Earliest Fall Date

Bufflehead (1) - September 4, Clague Pond (Klamm)  
Winter Wren (1) - September 9, Waite Hill (Flanigan)

New Latest Fall Date

Common Egret (1) - November 6, Lake Rockwell (Staiger)  
 Olive-sided Flycatcher (1) - October 9, Clague Park (Klamm)  
 Tree Swallow (1) - October 30, Burke Lakefront Airport (Klamm)  
 Barn Swallow (1) - October 7, Waite Hill (Flanigan)  
 Long-billed Marsh Wren (2) - November 20, Burke Lakefront  
 Airport (Klamm)

## NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Red-Throated Loon - On November 13, at Lake Rockwell, where a number of Common Loons were also present, a single bird in winter plumage was the subject of careful study by members of the Cuyahoga Falls Audubon Club (Staiger).

Surf Scoter - Usually only an isolated individual is seen during the fall and winter, but on November 6, seven birds were feeding together on Lake Erie off Perkins Beach (Klamm).

Hooded Merganser - Throughout the month of November large numbers of this merganser occurred on Lake Rockwell, and on November 27, not less than 100 birds were observed in two separate groups of about 50 each. The males seemed to predominate (Staiger).

Peregrine Falcon - During much of the morning of October 2, this falcon worked back and forth over Burke Lakefront Airport in a quite definite pattern of flight. The flock of Rock Doves which commonly feed at the airport was the target of several attacks, and eventually one dove was taken (Klamm).

King Rail - A single bird in a marsh near Lake Rockwell on October 23 constitutes the only record for the entire year, and this record is a new latest fall, date of occurrence (Staiger),

Golden Plover - Three exceptionally large flocks were sighted: a group of 43 feeding in a ploughed field near Amherst on September 25 (Robert Morse vide Johnson); 33 birds at Burke Lakefront Airport on October 2 (Klamm); and on the late date of October 23 a "grounded flock" of 25 at Akron-Canton Airport (Henderson).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper - Seven birds at Burke Lakefront Airport on September 1, is the largest number ever reported in the Cleveland region (Carrothers).

Northern Phalarope - At Lakewood Park on the morning of September 10, this phalarope, in association with a few Bonaparte's Gulls, was feeding along the breakwall (Klamm).

Long-tailed Jaeger - At 9:00 am. on September 13, this bird was found alive by Gus Bartel at his residence on Russell Avenue in Parma. Bartel writes that the Jaeger was "sitting on the lawn catching flies that were near him. It appeared that it had been there for some time because the grass was flattened in about an

18-inch circle. When I got close to it, it stood up and stretched its wings. It tried to fly but didn't get very far off the ground. It allowed me to pick it up without seeming to be frightened or inclined to resist. It didn't make a sound of any kind."

Since the bird was incapable of flight, it was turned over to the Cleveland Zoo where it remained until September 17, when it died. Later, after it had been prepared as a study skin, it was examined by Dr. Harry C. Oberholser who identified it as an immature Long-tailed Jaeger. This is seemingly just the third record for the state and is the first for the Cleveland region. One of the two previous records of occurrence in Ohio is of an immature bird, also found alive but injured, a few miles east of Ashtabula on October 20, 1956.

It is interesting to note that a thunderstorm and heavy rain occurred on the night of September 12 and in the early morning hours of September 13. This storm was linked with Hurricane Donna which swept up the Atlantic Coast at that time and which conceivably may have carried this oceanic migrant far off its normal courses causing it to become so disoriented that it flew inland and was finally compelled to land on a lawn in Parma.

Forster's Tern - There were three records of this species which had been unreported in the past two years: (1) a bird at White City on September 14 (Newman); (2) four at White City on September 24 (DeSante); (3) one bird at Lake Rockwell on November 6, which is the first inland record for the region and is also the latest fall date of occurrence (Henderson).

Snowy Owl - At White City on the morning of November 13, this owl was feeding on a Norway rat, and there was evidence, in the form of feathers and one pink foot, that it had previously eaten a Bonaparte's Gull (Newman). The owl was present the following day but was not seen thereafter. Although this was the only record of the Snowy Owl in the Cleveland region, in Ashtabula County to the east there were three November records, including a female first sighted at Walnut Beach on November 11# and still there at the end of the month (Savage).

Short-eared Owl - During November one bird was observed at Burke Lakefront Airport on the 13th; then three on the 20th and 24th; and two on the 26th (Klamm). This is the one locality where this species has occurred quite regularly each autumn and winter in the past five years.

Short-billed Marsh Wren - The only record for the entire year is of a single bird closely observed for ten minutes on October 15 as it scampered and dodged mouse-like through grasses along the edge of a wet meadow in Solon" (Knight).

Kentucky Warbler - The male which remained in the Bedford Reservation throughout the summer was last observed there on September 3 (Knight). In addition, there were two records of transient birds:

at Waite Hill on the morning of September 2, when the bird sang for a brief time (Flanigan); and in the Rocky River Reservation on September 27 (Ackermann).

Western Meadowlark - After about mid-July 1960, there were no reports for the rest of the summer of the pair of Western Meadowlarks which had evidently nested at Burke Lakefront Airport and had fledged at least one young. But on September 24, two birds, one of which sang momentarily, were seen there (Newman), and on September 25, a single singing bird was recorded (Klamm).

Brewer's Blackbird - At about noon on October 11, a flock conservatively estimated at 300 birds swarmed onto the lawn of a residence in Rocky River, covering "every inch it seemed" of the back and the side yards. The flock remained for at least 15 minutes, all the while feeding in the lawn and affording the observer a perfect opportunity to study them in bright sunlight at close range (Ackermann). This truly extraordinary occurrence is the first autumn record for this species, which has been reported in the Cleveland region only three times before. The largest number observed previously was a mere three birds in Akron on August 23, 1958.

Red Crossbill - A flock of from 18 to 20 birds occurred regularly during November, from the 5th to the 27th, at Warrensville Farms, where they fed in the plantings of evergreens. There were four adult males, from five to seven immature males, and the rest females (Knight). Another flock occurred in the North Chagrin Reservation on November 27, when an estimated 12 to 20 birds, of both sexes, were twice observed briefly -- on one occasion as they fed in the top of a tulip tree (Bush and Raynes). These are the first autumn records since October 1941.

#### FIELD NOTES

Surprise Landing. October 20, 1960 was a dark, rainy day, and to a small bird, flying southward after passing over Lake Erie, the General Electric Company's black-topped parking lot in Richmond Heights looked like a pond. The landing must have been a little rough. Soon a fellow employee picked the bird up, carried it inside the building to my desk, and asked, "What kind of a duck is this?" It was a Horned Grebe in winter plumage.

I banded the bird and released it on a small park pond where it seemingly was in good condition after its unhappy experience. Two days later it was gone, and I assume it had migrated southward.

Similar occurrences are not unusual and are reported every year. The legs on a grebe are located so far back on the body that once a bird lands on ground it is unable to take off again but flops about in a helpless condition. When in water, grebes have to "skitter" across the surface before they can be air borne.

Strangely enough, another Horned Grebe was found in a near-frozen condition in a snowdrift at Nela Park, East Cleveland, on

December 12, 1960. It was released in water and appeared to be able to take care of itself. - M. B. SKAGGS

Blackbirds Roost Again in Elyria. On two occasions this autumn I visited the blackbird roost located in a brushy, tree-fringed wasteland at the eastern boundary of the City of Elyria, where the birds also roosted in the autumn of 1959 (one observer estimating a population of 50,000 at that time). On October 16, large numbers kept milling around, coming and going constantly almost until darkness. Hence accurate estimates were all but impossible. One could not tell whether different birds were largely involved, or if the flocks were made up of the same birds coming and going. I did attempt an estimate, however, putting the numbers at 10,000 Common Grackles, 10,000 Starlings, and 5,000 mixed Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds.

Observers agreed that the concentration was not as great as last year and that the flock was much more unstable. There appeared to be considerable movement of these birds to some undetermined location to the southwest of town, as well as to this roost in Elyria. Many flocks seemed to stop for a while, then move on somewhere else. -PERRY F. JOHNSON

Cooper's Hawk Harries Crows. At Kent State University Airport on September 27, 1959, I observed what might be described as a sportive combat between a Cooper's Hawk and several Crows. This combat was not accompanied by any outcry on the part of the participants, and only one Crow was involved at a time. When the Crow was at a greater altitude than the hawk, the latter pursued laboriously, being apparently the poorer climber. Periodically the hawk reached the same level as the Crow and then the pursuit became very fast, both losing altitude rapidly and usually disappearing below tree level. Each time they reappeared, the Crow was leading a slow climb. Once the Crow chased the hawk, but the usual roles were soon resumed. Neither touched the other so far as I could tell. The last round ended with the Crow joining his perched companions, and the hawk out of sight. The nearby onlooking Crows had neither participated nor summoned other Crows, though there were at least three more a half mile distant. - NEIL HENDERSON

Gulls Feed in Plowed Fields. A flock consisting of perhaps 400 Ring-billed Gulls persistently followed a tractor plowing a field in Waite Hill on November 7. The birds hovered in a cloud low over the tractor, almost touching the farmer who was driving. They were feeding on worms and other animal life as the earth was turned over. They were there all day and stayed until the field was plowed up. On the succeeding five days these gulls (or others) fed in various plowed fields in the vicinity. - MARGARET H. SHERWIN