

THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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Editor

Donald L. Newman

Associate Editor

Bertram C. Raynes

CONTRIBUTORS

Fred J. Ackermann
 L. P. Barbour
 Kay F. Booth
 John Brekelbaum
 Joseph E. Bush
 Vera Carrothers
 Mildred Daniels
 John & Georgiana
 Davidson
 Leo Deininger
 Ralph W. Dexter
 Annette B. Flanigan
 Adela Gaede
 Walter M. Halle

Carl F. Hamann
 Eleanore & Margaret
 Hudgeon
 Delos E. Johnson
 Perry F. Johnson
 Faye B. King
 William & Nancy Klamm
 Charles H. Knight
 Howard W. Martin, Jr.
 Clare F. Meier
 Donald L. Newman
 Perry K. Peskin
 Vincent R. Peterson
 Marjorie Ramisch

Bertram & Margaret
 Raynes
 Richard Rickard
 Robert P. Schwab
 Margaret H. Sherwin
 M. B. Skaggs
 Raymond E. Smiley
 Frieda E. Smith
 Sue Storer
 Erica Stux
 James S. Surman, Jr.
 Harold E. Wallin

SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

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

March - Snowfall totaling 1.14 inches was far below the normal fall of 11.2 inches. Yet precipitation, which was well distributed through the month, was slightly above normal, Average temperature of 40° was 3.2° above the normal average.

April - A trace or more of precipitation occurred on 23 days, with the total of 6.61 inches setting a new record for April. Average temperature of 43.4° was the lowest average for the month since 1950, Snow occurred on the 16th, 17th and 18th.

May - On six days the minimum temperature set a new low for the date. Average monthly temperature of 54.3° was 4.8° below normal. Rainfall of 1.3 inches was less than 50% of normal.

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

COMMENT ON THE SEASON

Major Migratory Movements

March 19 - Although the day was cold and overcast, with at times a strong wind from the northeast, a steady flow of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls streamed east along the lakefront at Cleveland for the greater part of the day. When this flight was first noted at 9:45 a.m., the rate of flow was figured conservatively at 50 birds per minute. By mid-afternoon the flow had decreased to perhaps 25 birds per minute, but it rose later on and when observation ceased at 4:30 p.m., the gulls were still moving east (Klamm).

March 26 - Coincident with a prevailing southerly wind, a great influx of Eastern Meadowlarks and of Song Sparrows appeared along the Lake Erie shoreline but was seemingly not noted inland. At Headlands State Park an estimated 300 Song Sparrows and 50 Meadowlarks were reported, as well as some 600 Common Grackles (Booth). In the immediate Cleveland area, Meadowlarks occurred all along the lakefront wherever there was suitable open grassland, such as the lawn of the Easterly Sewage Disposal Plant, while Song Sparrows were concentrated in areas of rank, weedy vegetation, such as at Wildwood Park and the marsh at Burke Lakefront Airport.

April 15-16 - Beginning April 14 and continuing through April 17 the wind was from the south quarter. This apparently triggered a northward movement of sparrows, principally the Savannah, Field and Song Sparrows, as well as the Slate-colored Junco. On the 15th at Burke Lakefront Airport, these birds were so abundant that it was difficult even to estimate their numbers.

April 24 - A wave front advancing out of the Gulf of Mexico brought with it a flight of fringillids on this date. In Forest Hill Park, Cleveland Heights, where a daily early-morning census was taken between April 22 and May 25 this was the peak day for Savannah, White-throated, Chipping, and Field Sparrows and for the Slate-colored Junco. Also appearing at that time was the Whip-poor-will, one of which called briefly from the wooded borders of the Park at 2:30 a.m. (Newman). This species was observed, too, on the 24th in Parma and Lakewood.

May 7 - On the night of May 6, a warm air mass moving out of the Mississippi Valley passed through the Cleveland region. Simultaneously a "fair wave of migrants" arrived (Skaggs). Among them were the Eastern Kingbird, Great Crested Flycatcher, House Wren, Catbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Bobolink, Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting. A scattering of vireos -- Yellow-throated, Solitary, and Red-eyed -. also appeared then, and a limited assortment of warbler, chiefly the Black and White (Black-and-white), Nashville, and Yellow. White-crowned Sparrows, many of them in full song, were abundant in the Rocky River Reservation, while in Forest Hill Park, Cleveland Heights, a flock of a dozen Chipping Sparrows stopped to feed together at the outer edge of the woodland. One

Whip-poor-will was observed in Forest Hill Park on May 7, which was the only May date of occurrence for this species.

May 13-14 -These two days, which were marked by the passage of another warm front, produced the largest migratory movement of the season., bit by no measure was there a great flood of birds. In this movement were cuckoos, Empidonax flycatchers, Swainson's Thrush, vireos in small numbers, a good variety though relatively small numbers of warblers (notably the Tennessee, Magnolia, Chestnut-sided, end Blackburnian), Scarlet Tanager., Rose-breasted Grosbeak., and Indigo Bunting. At Lakewood Park and in Rocky River Reservation, White-crowned Sparrows were abundant on the 13th, which was also the date a total of ten Lincoln's Sparrows were observed there and at Burke Lakefront Airport (Klamm). In Waite Hill on the 13th there was a "big Warbler wave" consisting largely of Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Cerulean, and Magnolia (Sherwin), end on the 14th a "wave of Black-throated Green, Wilson's, and Canada Warblers passed through the woods" (Flanigan).

Hawks. Beginning on April 20 and continuing through April 24., the wind we. from the south quarter, becoming south southwesterly on the 22nd. This circumstance apparently favored the migration of hawks, for it was at this time that a spectacular flight of Broad-winged Hawks occurred. The vanguard was observed on April 22 (a rainy day), when between 9:45 and 11:30 a.m., 12 Red shouldered end 3.2 Broad-winged Hawks, as well as one Cooper's end one Sharp-shinned Hawk, passed over Rocky River Reservation "traveling from southwest to northeast and circling as they went" (Ackermann). On the next day, April 23, which was clear and sunny, the observers at the Huntington Beach Reservation Sunday morning bird walk found the sky full of migrating hawks, but with the exception of ten Cooper's and six Broad-winged, they were at such a height that identification was not possible. In the Rocky River Reservation, however, Broad-winged Hawks were perched everywhere in the trees throughout the valley until about 8:30 am. From then until 9:30 a.m. they took to the air as additional Broad-wings moved in from the southwest and proceeded in a northeasterly direction. With the exception of five Cooper's Hawks, this entire flight consisted of Broad-winged Hawks, of which some 600 were counted that morning.

A much smaller but more varied migration of hawks occurred on May 6, when late in the afternoon 1 Sharp-shinned, 3 Cooper's, 2 Bed-tailed, 14 Red-shouldered, and 39 Broad-winged Hawks were counted at Clague Park. "The movement was from west to east to southeast. Many of the birds dropped into the woods, probably to spend the night" (Klamm).

Snowy Owl. The several Snowy Owls which wintered on the Cleveland lakefront remained there through March 5, at least. Than a solitary bird, identifiable by its attachment to a particular mound of earth which served as lookout and windbreak, lingered at Burke Lakefront Airport until April 23, when it was last recorded (Klamm). This is a new latest date of occurrence. Elsewhere the only Snowy Owl

reported was one bird on the roof a house in Lakewood on April 1 and 2 (Davidson).

Barn Swallow. A massive migration of Barn Swallows moving from west to east along the lakefront occurred on May 6, which was a day marked by intermittent showers in the morning and by a steady, though light, rain in the afternoon. Yet the swallows continued to move despite the rain. This migration was first noted at 3:00 p.m., and sampling count indicated a flow of 3.00 birds per minute at that time. For the next two hours the swallows were observed from various places along the Cleveland lakefront, the flow of birds seeming not to diminish. At about 5:00 p.m., with the sky clearing and the sun breaking through, the swallows began to gain altitude and soon reached a great height. By about 5:30 p.m. the movement had ceased (Klamm).

Blue Jay. Again this spring for a period of several weeks, flights of Blue Jays moved from west to east following the shoreline of Lake Erie. Unfortunately, no single observer or group of observers was able to study this phenomenon daily, and thus it is impossible to determine the true magnitude or the actual duration of this eastward movement. First report of migrating jays came from the Huntington Beach Sunday morning bird walk on April 30, when some 75 birds were seen. A week later, May 7, the walkers reported "flocks" of jays. By the following Sunday, May 14, the migration was observed at both Huntington Beach and at Black Brook, some 35 miles to the east. At Lakewood Park on May 20, about 365 migrating Blue Jays were counted between 9:00 and 11:30 a.m., with 300 of them occurring in the hour between 10:00 and 11:00 a.m. (Klamm). This eastward movement, though seemingly much reduced, was still in progress on May 21.

Brown Creeper. Although the Brown Creeper is a common migrant, it appeared to be exceptionally numerous this spring, particularly in April when there were 46 reports totaling 106 individuals, which greatly exceeds the number of reports and of individuals for April in any of the seven previous years. For example, in April 1956, there were 24 records totaling 59 individuals, and in April 1960, a mere 16 records totaling 37 individuals. Perhaps the Brown Creeper is subject to an occasional population explosion. Certainly the occurrence data for the spring season for the years 1954 through 1961 establish that in that period this species has been most abundant in the month of April. This finding is contrary to the statement in Williams' Birds of the Cleveland Region which indicates that the Brown Creeper is "most abundant in March and October".

Red Crossbill. This species, which seems to have a ten or eleven year cycle of occurrence, was present in fair numbers in November and December 1960, but then was totally unreported in January and February 1961. In the spring months, however, it appeared in considerable numbers and in various localities, At Warrensville Farms, where a flock of about 20 birds was present all during November 1960, four birds were observed on March 25. The flock gradually grew

larger until by May 15, which was the last date of observation, an estimated 25 birds -- about evenly divided between the sexes-- were present. They did most of their feeding in a grove of pine trees (Knight). On March 26, at the Sherwin Farm in Waite Hill, two males and three females stopped for a short time in a group of Canada hemlocks (Sherwin). At Cascade Park, Elyria, 20 birds were feeding on the cones of larch trees and red pines on April 14, and eight birds were seen there on May 10 (P. Johnson). Two other flocks of Red Crossbills are known to have occurred in the Cleveland region, but, unfortunately, confirmation of their occurrence were not reported to the BIRD CALENDAR.

Disaster Species. The status of each of the four so-called disaster species must be examined separately since they do not fit into a single pattern. In the case of the Eastern Phoebe, there was just one record of occurrence in March: a single bird on the 26th. But in April this species was quite commonly reported, especially at mid-month. In May, however, records of occurrence and number of birds reported declined sharply. Thus in April there were 33 records totaling 56 birds, whereas in May there were just 22 records totaling 28 birds. Excessive rain in April and the extraordinary coldness of both April and May undoubtedly were the controlling factors in this decrease, for these conditions greatly reduced the supply of flying insects on which the birds feed. In the Aurora area the Phoebe "continued scarce", and none were found at the "bridges where previously one could count on seeing this species." (Hamann).

The House Wren, in the words of one observer, "appears to have made an excellent comeback from its status as a 'disaster' species" (Knight); and the records from throughout the Cleveland region confirm this conclusion.

For the entire spring there were 32 records of the Hermit Thrush totaling 65 individuals as compared with just 13 records totaling 20 individuals in the spring of 1960, when this species reached an extreme low. Thus the Hermit Thrush appears to be making a slow recovery from the disastrous winter and spring of 1958 when it suffered a high mortality on its wintering range in the southern states. First record of occurrence this spring was April 13, when five birds were observed. This is the same first data of occurrence as in 1960, but it is almost three weeks later than the average first date.

As for the Eastern Bluebird, which is the fourth member of the quartet of "disaster" species, the records indicate it is holding its own. This means merely that the breeding population continues to be extremely small.

Miscellany. It is impossible to say whether the Orange-crowned Warbler was actually more numerous this spring or whether our observers were more skilled in recognizing this often puzzling species. In any event, it was reported a greater number of times, then in any of the prior four years. For example, in the spring at 1958 there

was just one record of one bird, whereas this spring there were seven records totaling ten birds.

The Blackpoll Warbler was clearly more numerous this spring when compared with the records of occurrence for the preceding five years, and its migration period was considerably longer than usual, extending over the last half of May rather than being confined to the final ten days.

New Records

For annotation in The Birds of the Cleveland Region are the following new dates of occurrence:

New Latest Spring Date

Great Black-backed Gull (1) May 21, Cleveland lakefront (Carrothers)

New Earliest Spring Date

Caspian Tern (3) - April 8, Cleveland lakefront (Klamm)

Rough-winged Swallow (3) - April 1, Rocky River Reservation (Ackermann)

Loggerhead Shrike (1) - March 5, Burke Lakefront Airport (Klamm)

Orange-crowned Warbler (1) - April 15, Warrensville (Knight)

Northern Waterthrush (1) - April 13, Rocky River Reservation (Ackermann)

Yellowthroat (1) - April 13, Rocky River Reservation (Ackermann)

Swamp Sparrow (2) - March 11, Burke Lakefront Airport (Klamm)

NEW SPECIES ADDED TO REGIONAL AVIFAUNAL LIST

At Forest Hill Park, East Cleveland, on the morning of April 23 and 24, 1961, Faye B. King observed six Sprague's Pipits feeding on the baseball fields and in the open grassy parkland. Those two mornings she studied them for about three hours altogether, being able at times to approach within 40 or 50 feet of the feeding birds. Both days were sunny and mild.

On April 25, Vera Carrothers stopped for a few minutes in the parking lot adjoining the baseball field and, from her point of vantage in her automobile, watched a solitary Sprague's Pipit "walking around in the rain, pecking at the coarse gravel surfaces of the parking area." The bird came so close to the ear that the diagnostic marks were easily discerned without the aid of binoculars. Finally, on the morning of April 26, Adela Gaede watched four Sprague's Pipits from a distance of only 12 feet as they fed in the grassy parkland. None of the birds was seen in the Park the next day or on any later day.

Although the Sprague's Pipit has never before been reported in the Cleveland region, this is not the first record for the state, as one specimen was collected in southwestern Ohio (Butler County) on November 15, 1958. The occurrence of this species at Forest Hill Park is, however, seemingly the first spring record for the state.

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Red-throated Loon - On May 12 and 13, a bird in winter plumage occupied the small pond which was only recently created at Warrensville Farms (Knight). This is the first spring record since 1948.

Whistling Swan - On the morning of March 14, a flock of 16 birds swam and fed for a while at the Upper Shaker Lake (D. Johnson). This species is not commonly observed in the spring, and this flock is the largest reported this spring,

Surf Scoter -The fourth spring record and the first April record is of a female on Lake Erie at White City, Cleveland, on April 16 and 18 (Klamm and Carrothers).

Bald Eagle -Crying out as it approached, an adult bird flew over South Chagrin Reservation on the morning of May 14 and then alighted in a tall tree where it remained for at least ten minutes (Peterson). This is the only record of occurrence this spring.

Pigeon Hawk -At Lakewood Park on May 7, this bird sat out in the open for some time — first in a tree, next on a low fence. Then it suddenly darted down at a Yellow-shafted Flicker which had been feeding on the ground, but the latter warded off the falcon which quickly disappeared (Klamm). Not since 1952 has this rare migrant been reported in the month of May.

Common Snipe -An exceptionally large number of birds, congregated in a wet, coarse grassy field in Warrensville Heights during the third week of April, with a maximum count of 23 on the 21st (Surman, Jr., and Rickard).

Glaucous Gull -A bird in second-year plumage was among a steady parade of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls passing east along the lakefront at Cleveland on March 19 (Klamm).

Little Gull -A well-marked adult was feeding with a group of Bonaparte's Gulls at the Edgewater Park sewage disposal plant outlet on April 1; and presumably this same bird --again in the company of Bonaparte's Gulls -- was feeding at the easterly sewage disposal plant outlet at White City on April 2 (Klamm). This is just the fourth record of occurrence within the Cleveland region and is the first spring record.

White-eyed Vireo - For a few minutes on the morning of May 7, in the Bedford Reservation, a single bird -- silent all the while -paused in the brushy border of the woods and then moved on into the deep woods (Smiley). On that same morning at Huntington Beach Reservation, two birds fed briefly together in a group of evergreens (Meier). At Lower Shaker Lake a single individual was heard and seen daily from May 5 to 12 (Knight). These three records were the largest number ever reported in one season.

Worm-eating Warbler -Three records this spring is the largest number ever reported; (1) a new earliest date of occurrence is April 25, when one bird was observed in Chestnut Hill Cemetery, Cuyahoga Falls, (Madeline Hjelmquist fide Stux); (2) on April 30, in Sand Run Metropolitan Park, Akron, one bird appeared briefly at the edge of the woods (Stux); (3) following a alight rein on the afternoon of May 18, the trees along the Chagrin River in Waite Hill. teemed with warblers among which was one bird of this species, which interrupted its feeding occasionally to sing during the ten minutes it was under observation (Flanigan).

Prairie Warbler -At the border of a wooded ravine in Forest Hill Park, Cleveland Heights, a single bird -- one of many migrating passerines -- paused on the morning of May 7 to feed in the underbrush for a short while (Newman).

Kentucky Warbler -Two males, “in the company of about half a dozen Palm Warblers” were feeding at Beaver Pond, Cuyahoga Falls, on the morning of April 29, and they were still there on the afternoon of that day (Stux), This is the earliest date of occurrence for this rare migrant.

Western Meadowlark -At Burke Lakefront Airport, where this species has been a summer resident for the previous three years, a singing bird was seen on March 12 and 26, which are the first March dates. of occurrence in the Cleveland region. In April and May from one to three birds were identified. On May 13 and 14, two males were observed contesting over territory (Klamm). Further evidence that the Western Meadowlark is extending it. range and is becoming a regular member of the local avifauna is found in the report of a single male bird at Warrensville Farms from May 15 to the end of that month (Knight).

Summer Tanager -An immature male, which often burst into song, frequented the Great Gorge in the Bedford Reservation on May 12 and 13, but was not found there later despite several intensive searches (Knight).

Blue Grosbeak - Early in the evening of May 9, a male bird flew against the window of a residence in Elyria and was so badly stunned that it was possible to capture and examine it. After about half an hour it had recovered sufficiently to be able to fly to a low bush where it perched for 15 minutes before departing (Brekelbaum), This is the first report of this rare species in the western portion of the Cleveland region.

Harris' Sparrow -This species, which had been reported only three times in spring prior to 1959, has now been reported for three successive springs. The record this year is of a bird which appeared about March 21 at the feeding station of a residence in Russell Township, Geauga County. At that time the bird was in immature plumage, but when it was last seen about mid-May, having been a regular visitor to the feeding station meanwhile, it was in fully adult plumage (Raynes).