



CLEVELAND REGION

The Cleveland Bird Calendar

Published by

The Cleveland Museum of Natural History

and

The Kirtland Bird Club

THE CLEVELAND REGION

The Circle Has A Radius of 30 Miles Based on Cleveland Public Square

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Beaver Creek | 30 Lake Rockwell |
| 2 North Amherst | 31 White City |
| 3 Lorain | 32 Euclid Creek Reservation |
| 4 Black River | 33 Chagrin River |
| 5 Elyria | 34 Willoughby |
| 6 LaGrange | Waite Hill |
| 7 Avon-on-the-Lake | 35 Sherwin Pond |
| 8 Clague Park | 36 Gildersleeve |
| 9 Clifton Park | 37 North Chagrin Reservation |
| 10 Rocky River | 38 Gates Mills |
| 11 Cleveland Hopkins Airport | 39 South Chagrin Reservation |
| 12 Medina | 40 Aurora Lake |
| 13 Hinckley Reservation | 41 Aurora Sanctuary |
| 14 Edgewater Park | 42 Mantua |
| Perkins Beach | 43 Mentor Headlands |
| 15 Terminal Tower | 44 Mentor Marsh |
| 16 Cleveland Public Square | 45 Black Brook |
| Cuyahoga River | Headlands State Park |
| 17 Brecksville Reservation | 46 Fairport Harbor |
| 18 Akron | 47 Painesville |
| Cuyahoga Falls | 48 Grand River |
| 19 Akron Lakes | 49 Little Mountain |
| 20 Gordon. Park | Holden Arboretum |
| Illuminating Co. plant | 50 Corning Lake |
| 21 Doan Brook | |
| 22 Natural Science Museum | |
| Wade Park | |
| 23 Baldwin Reservoir | 51 Stebbin's Gulch |
| 24 Shaker Lakes | 52 Chardon |
| 25 Lake View Cemetery | 53 Burton |
| 26 Forest Hill Park | 54 Punderson Lake |
| 27 Bedford Reservation | 55 Fern Lake |
| 28 Hudson | 56 LaDue Reservoir |
| 29 Kent | 57 Spencer Wildlife Area |



CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN
PARK SYSTEM



PORTAGE ESCARPMENT
(800-foot Contour Line)

THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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THE WEATHER

- March - The month displayed its lion-and lamb-like days, reaching a high of 80 degrees on the 30th but a low of 19 degrees on the 17th following the blizzard of the 16th. That storm produced 5.3 inches of the total 5.8 inches of snow for the month. Precipitation occurred on 15 days well distributed and totaled 3.11 inches, including snow as water, to give 0.06 inches excess. Temperatures averaged out 8.9 degrees above normal, and sunshine prevailed 48 per cent of the time possible.
- April - Daily temperatures averaging above normal were confined to the period between the 14th and the 22nd during the month, but these days were sufficiently warm to have the month average out 0.8 degrees above normal. Precipitation was measurable on 12 days in all, but most of it came in the first and third weeks. The total was only 2.17 inches, a deficit of 1.32 inches. Sunshine prevailed during 68 per cent of the time possible.
- May - The average temperature of 55.3 degrees for the month was 3.0 degrees cooler than normal and provided a number of frosty mornings. Precipitation totaled 2.94 inches, again leaving a deficit of 0.55 inches. Rainfall accumulated to 0.77 inches during the first seven days, but the greater amount, 1.77 inches, fell in the period from the 14th to the 17th. Sunshine managed to prevail during 61 per cent of the time possible.

COMMENT ON THE SEASON

Although the 1976 spring migration of passerines in the Cleveland region appeared somewhat more prolonged and heavier than usual, the increase was probably more a quirk of the calendar than any population boom. With five full weekends and a Monday holiday in May, birders had a maximum number of days during the major flight period in which to watch and record. The truly outstanding weekend of May 15-16 was a case of birders being able to take advantage of favorable observational conditions at the normal migration peak.

A few species, mainly those which regularly fluctuate widely from year to year, were much more numerous than the average. Because of factors not entirely clear, some others were more scarce. Weather conditions evidently affected the early departure of some waterfowl and the early arrival of Common Nighthawks, Chimney Swifts, and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, among others. Over-all, it was a satisfactory season, the first-ever CBC records of the Louisiana Heron and Clay-colored Sparrow adding a note of excitement.

Heron Colony Successful. Broadly speaking, herons were doing well in the region during the spring. Sightings of Great Blue and Green Herons followed the established pattern and with at least normal frequency. The uncommon and irregular Great Egrets and Black-crowned Night Herons were noted less than usual, but American Bitterns were seen more often. Only record of a Least Bittern was in Mentor Marsh, May 30 (Newhous). Entries of three southern species into the region are recorded in the Noteworthy Records.

The nesting colony of Great Blue Herons near Heath Road in Chesterland was surveyed and found to be thriving. "The colony was mapped before the arrival of the herons, again on April 10 when part of the colony was in incubation, and again on May 23. The first count of empty nests was 111, which then dropped to 96 in April due in part to the use of old materials to build new nests and refurbish old. The heart of the colony was in the same trees as in 1975 with scattered nests nearby.

"In April a total of 21 nests, most of them in the main group, were definitely in use. Another group had a few broken eggshells on the ground but no evidence of young, not likely at this early date in any case. These nests were not subsequently used. In May young were observed in 38 of the nests, with a slightly higher tally likely. An average of three young per nest were visible" (Hoffman).

Fewer Swans, More Geese. The spring migration of Whistling Swans evidently passed outside the Cleveland Region, as only a few stragglers were recorded. Canada Geese, though, were

even more numerous and widespread than they have been, particularly in May; nesting pairs continue to multiply. Snow Geese were reported from three locations (see Noteworthy Records).

Ducks Move Early. Not surprisingly in light of the warmer weather in March and April, ducks tended to migrate sooner than usual. Exact comparisons were not possible, but Mallards appeared to be more common and diffused. Black Ducks were quite scarce after mid-April. Blue-winged Teals and Wood Ducks were normal. With minor exceptions other dabblers were generally early.

Canvasbacks, the scaups, and Common Goldeneyes left for nesting grounds early. Reports of Hooded Mergansers were rather low, terminating April 11. Other diving ducks and mergansers were much as expected in numbers and season.

Hawk Flights Missing. No really significant flight of migrating hawks was reported during the entire spring season. Largest single-day total of Red-tailed Hawks by any contributor was nine on March 20 (Klamm). Highest count on Broadwings was 19 in Waite Hill on April 24 (Flanigan). However, resident and individual migrant specimens were at or above the prevailing levels for all common and uncommon species. The total tally on American Kestrels was good, considering the absence of major flights; evidently the resident population is prospering in the urban and suburban environment.

Coots Abundant, Lingerin. Virginia Rails were widespread and common; additional evidence was gleaned that they are more plentiful than most birders would realize. (See Field Notes.) Mentor Marsh continues to be the chief location for observations of Soras. Reports of Common Gallinules were not notable. American Coots, unlike the ducks, were more persistent in the region and in numbers that could appropriately be termed abundant in relation to the normal. They were at numerous locations from early March to mid-May.

Late-Migrating Shorebirds Scarce. Reports of Killdeers and Spotted Sandpipers, most common of the spring shorebirds, were about as expected. Solitary Sandpipers were unusually common and widely distributed; in fact, the total sightings were almost double the highest spring tally in the previous five years. Reports of Greater Yellowlegs, another rather early migrant, were also higher and extending over a longer span. Conversely, Dunlins and Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers, all late May migrants, were all quite scarce in the spring reports. Other shorebirds showed no deviation from normal.

Bonaparte's Gulls Hasty. Tabulations of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls were lower than in recent spring seasons; the

difference, though, could well be attributed to non-reporting by contributors rather than an actual reduction in numbers. But Bonaparte's Gulls were almost entirely absent after April 18. Normally there is a decline about that time but it is not usually so abrupt. Tern reports were not unusual.

Mourning Doves Increasing? Reports of Mourning Doves have shown an increase since the species was declared a game bird. What is not clear is whether this represents a population increase or simply an increased awareness and concern by birders as a result of the action by the State. Since little of the territory habitually covered by CALENDAR contributors is open to any shooting, though, it well may be that the species is another which is profiting from habitat changes in the Cleveland Region.

Variety Marks Owls. Every resident and migrant species of owl to be found here except the Snowy was reported during the season. None was exactly common, although Short-eared Owls continue to increase in the reports. Populations of Great Horned and Barred Owls are apparently fairly stable and remain localized. (See also Noteworthy Records and Field Notes.)

Most Woodpeckers As Expected. Most species of woodpeckers followed a predictable pattern in the spring tabulations, with the Pileated making a good showing. Red-headed Woodpeckers, however, were somewhat, less common than usual and were noticeably late in arriving. By contrast, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were much above normal in numbers; they started appearing on April 11, also somewhat late, but several lingered into the latter part of May.

Flycatchers Gain. Except for the Eastern Kingbird, which was reported a little less frequently than average, sightings of flycatchers were at or above the usual level. Both the Eastern Phoebe and the Eastern Wood Pewee were much more common despite late starts. All local species of Empidonax flycatchers appeared to be doing very well, with migration proceeding at the expected time. Continuing the trend of 1975, sightings of Olive-sided Flycatchers increased.

Red-breasted Nuthatch Irruption. The more than 169 records of Red-breasted Nuthatches were the heaviest of any spring in several years. The only total even close was the 146 in 1973. About half of all sightings were in the first 10 days of May. Reports of Brown Creepers were about average but with the peak occurring in early April rather than the latter part of the month, as expected.

Wrens Doing Well. House Wrens started arriving in mid-April and continued to be conspicuous to the end of the season;

total reports were above any recent year. Winter Wren sightings were above average. Carolina Wrens dropped back to the 1973 and 1974 level, a little below the outstanding 1975 season. Long-billed Marsh Wrens were again nesting in Mentor Marsh, but physical conditions there made population estimates unreliable. Short-billed Marsh Wrens, sometimes entirely absent from the spring reports, were seen at several locations; a pair were found nesting in O'Neil Woods Metropolitan Park, May 29 (Biscan).

Mimids, Thrushes Plentiful May 15-16. Reports of Gray Catbirds showed an increase; yet almost one-third of all sightings were in the single weekend of May 15-16. Brown Thrashers on the other hand, were about average and well dispersed through the season.

Wood Thrushes were reported from four locations on the weekend of April 16-17, quite early, but they too were predominantly concentrated in the mid-May weekend. Earlier-migrating Hermit Thrushes stuck to the customary time schedule, but numbers were up. Total sightings of Swainson's Thrushes were much above any recent year; still, one-third were in that single May weekend. Veeries showed a similar concentration, although numbers were not above average. Of all the thrushes, only the Eastern Bluebird was noticeably below expected numbers.

Cedar Waxwings Disappear in March. Cedar Waxwings, always difficult to predict or categorize, vanished from the view of contributors from the end of February to April 3. Total for the season was somewhat below recent years. Spring tallies for the past four years have been as follows: 358 in 1976, 518 in 1975, 548 in 1974, and 926 in 1973. What significance, if any should be attached to this is not known at this time.

Vireo Reports Up. Perhaps because of the extra weekend in May, mentioned previously, records of all species of vireos were above normal. The 19 sightings of White-eyed Vireos were the most in any spring since 1971. Records of both Yellow-throated and Solitary Vireos were spread over a longer period than usual, the latter being seen with twice the usual frequency. Although the season total exceeded the average of recent years, Warbling Vireos dropped abruptly in numbers after May 16.

Calendar Aids Warbler-Watchers. Individual contributors were of the opinion that the warbler migration was heavier and more extended than normal. However, a careful comparison with records of previous years led to the conclusion that the apparent increase was mainly due to favorable birding conditions and the increased number of weekend dates, when birders were out during the migration.

Naturally, some species were markedly plentiful, and some others were a bit low. Such fluctuations are to be expected, since waves of individual species move through on different dates. Notably high counts were recorded for the Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, and Canada Warblers. More than 53 per cent of the Bay-breasted and 40 per cent of the Canadas were tallied on that one remarkable weekend of May 15-16. Nashville Warblers were at the lowest level in six years, although not enough down to cause concern.

Meadowlarks Uncommon. Eastern Meadowlarks were comparatively scarce particularly during March, when they are often observed in substantial numbers in migration flights with other members of the blackbird family. All sightings during the season were of individuals or small groups.

Other blackbirds ranged from common to abundant and universal. Rusty Blackbirds showed a greater persistence than usual, especially in and near their favorite migration abode in Mentor Marsh. As many as 11 appeared intermittently at a feeding station in Mentor less than a mile away through March (Hammond), and a flock of nearly 100 was still in the Becker Pond area of the marsh on May 16 (Hoffman).

Good Showing on Northern Finches. Evening Grosbeaks were present in only moderate numbers in March, but they tended to remain until the middle of May, augmented by small groups which appeared erratically from late April on. Common Redpolls had the best spring since 1972, departing as expected by April 10. Flocks of Pine Siskins were seen during the entire season, including a good May migration. There were three reports of Red Crossbills (see Noteworthy Records).

Tabulations of other finches and sparrows were for the most part close to the average of the past several years. The total of 156 Rufous-sided Towhees was at approximately the same level as in 1975 but much below the years preceding; this species may be in a period of decline. Tree Sparrows were even more reduced; the 111 records were less than half the total of more than 225 in 1975. Counts for the years before that were as follows: 270 in 1974, 256 in 1973, 510 in 1972, and 369 in 1971. Field Sparrows were also below expectations.

The only sparrow which showed a significant increase was the White-throated, reported with double the frequency of any of the preceding five years. They were observed extensively from April 15 to May 16 and as late as May 31.

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Double-crested Cormorant - Two sightings some distance apart were both made on May 8. About 11:00 a.m. one landed on the

breakwall directly off the East 9th Street pier (Klamm). About three hours later one was resting on the breakwall at Mentor Headlands State Park (Hoffman, Klamm).

Louisiana Heron - The first sight record for the Cleveland Region of this southern species was made on May 16 about 9:00 a.m. The adult bird was "observed for about 10 minutes by six observers through a 20x spotting scope in good light at 50 yards." Size comparison was made with two Great Egrets standing close to it. The leader of the group was familiar with the species in its customary range (Mahan). Trautman (Annotated List of the Birds of Ohio) reports one record from Ashtabula County, April 22, 1954. CBC records also list one as having been seen in Sandusky Bay marsh, May 30, 1971.

Cattle Egret - An adult with some buffy in the plumage was around a small pond near Smith Road in Waite Hill, April 23 and 24 (Flanigan, Klamm, Sherwin).

Yellow-crowned Night Heron - A well-marked adult was observed in the Shaker Lakes area on April 30 (Leach) and at Horseshoe Lake on the morning of May 2 (Besser). Reportedly, it was seen by several observers during a period of three or four days.

Whistling Swan - On the very late date of May 17 two birds flew west low over Lake Erie past Euclid General Hospital about 1:30 p.m.; indications were that they were immatures, as their necks had a somewhat dusky appearance (Hammond).

Snow Goose - Five blue-phase specimens were with Canada Geese and an assortment of dabbling ducks near the headwaters of the Cuyahoga River in Claridon Township, March 14 (Hammond). A white-phase bird was with Canadas on LaDue Reservoir on April 4 (Hammond). Two, one blue and one white, which had been on Sherwin Pond during the winter remained there into early March (Sherwin). Single specimens were seen on Sherwin Pond on April 13, April 18 and May 1 (Sherwin, et al.).

Gadwall - Two lingered at the Holden Arboretum until the rather late date of May 8 (Bole).

White-winged Scoter - Only report of any of the scoters was of a single White-winged at Fairport Harbor on April 10, a fairly late date (Rickard).

Merlin - An adult male was eating what appeared to be a dragonfly until disturbed from its dead tree perch in Mentor Marsh, April 17 (Hoffman). A female flew low and rapidly over Becker Pond in Mentor Marsh amid a group of swallows, May 1 (Hoffman).

Spotted Sandpiper - One was heard and then seen flying about among rocks along the shore at Lakewood Park on the morning, of March 20, a new earliest spring date of record (Klamm).

Willet - Three specimens were standing together beside Corning Lake, Holden Arboretum, during the evening of May 7; they took to the air once and circled over the lake before settling down again at the same spot (Hammond). One in near-breeding plumage was observed in flight and perched at White City, May 29 (Rickard).

White-rumped Sandpiper - A summer-plumage bird was with Least-and Semipalmated Sandpipers at White City around mid-day, May 31 (Hannikman, et,al.).

Dowitcher - On the markedly early date of April 19 a lone bird was observed for several minutes as it fed along the edge of Forest Hill Park pond (Pesch).

Barn Owl - First seen briefly on March 27 (Klamm), one was studied in detail as it perched in a pine tree in Donald Gray Gardens in downtown Cleveland, March 30 (Hoffman).

Long-eared Owl - At Donald Gray Gardens, March 27, one was discovered by a birding party looking for the Barn Owl that had been glimpsed moments before (Hoffman, Klamm). One was in the vicinity of chicken houses in Kirtland Hills on several occasions from April 10 on (Bole).

Saw-whet Owl - Another owl in Donald Gray Gardens on March 27, one was also seen there on March 28 and April 3 (Klamm) and on April 4 (LePage). Another was found in Kuhlman Woods near East 140th Street on April 3 and 4 (Hannikman).

Common Nighthawk - A single bird was over downtown Painesville on April 14 (Booth). The following day four were seen at Firestone Metropolitan Park (Biscan). Although Williams (Birds of the Cleveland Region, 1950) states that the average earliest spring date is April 4, very few specimens have in fact been reported here in recent years before early May. Average date for arrival at the nesting sites at Kent State University is May 9 (Dexter).

Willow Flycatcher - Identified by the "fitz-bew call, one was seen on the remarkably early date of April 18 by the Spring Bird Walk party at Hinckley Reservation (Wallin, et al.). The only other CBC record earlier than April 29 was on March 30, 1963.

Tree Swallow - On the very early date of March 21, three or more were feeding over a marsh on Bartholomew Road near LaDue Reservoir; the day was chilly and overcast but with a southwest wind of about 20 miles per hour (Hammond).

Mockingbird - Only spring report received from within the Cleveland Region was of one near the entrance to Wildwood Park, May 18(Hammond).

Hermit Thrush - Several individuals lingered beyond the usual departure time in the midpart of May. Latest reports were of one in Waite Hill on May 25 (Flanigan) and another in Stebbins Gulch on May 29 (Bole).

Swainson's Thrush - Evidence of an unusually early movement northward was found in the appearance of one in Waite Hill on April 17 (Flanigan) and of single birds being sighted at four locations--Hinckley, Bedford, and North Chagrin Reservations and Waite Hill--the following day.

Veery - In Leroy Township one was identified, April 17, after a careful study of the color pattern--uniformly tawny back and relative lack. of breast spots (Miller). This is a new earliest date of record.

Loggerhead Shrike - On March 27 a lone bird was actively hunting from and along the fence at the old Nike site at Gordon Park (Klamm).

Prothonotary Warbler - At Lower Shaker Lake a brilliantly-colored male was observed by several members of the Spring Bird Walk group on the notably early date of April 18 (Besser, Peskin); only one other sighting was reported in the entire spring. CBC records list only one other specimen earlier than April 25.

Worm-eating Warbler - One was recorded on the Spring Bird Walk at North Chagrin Reservation, April 18 (fide Wallin).

Blue-winged Warbler - First identified by song and later seen clearly, one was near a residence in Leroy Township from mid-morning to afternoon on April 16 (Miller). This is a new earliest spring date.

Brewster's Warbler - Sightings of this hybrid included one specimen at F. A. Seiberling Nature Center on May 6 and intermittently thereafter (Szabo, et al.) and one at Lower Shaker Lake on May 10 (Greenwalt).

Lawrence's Warbler - What was first assumed by its song to be a Blue-winged was identified as this more rare hybrid of the Golden-winged and Blue-winged--"yellow-bellied with a black throat patch and black patch through the eyes"--when it came into view of the Spring Bird Walk party at Rocky River Reservation, May 2 (Stasko).

Tennessee Warbler - One in the Mastick Picnic Area of Rocky River Reservation on April 25 marked a new earliest spring

date of record and only the second April sighting in CBC records (Klamm).

Black-throated Green Warbler - Another rather early arrival, one was at Lower Shaker Lake, April 14 (Peskin).

Cerulean Warbler - An early-arriving male was in the Shaker Lakes area for several days from April 24 on (Besser). The earliest date of record for this species is April 22.

Yellow-throated Warbler - A song high in some sycamore trees attracted attention to a specimen in Brecksville Reservation on April 24 (Allenson). Subsequently, what was presumed to be the same bird was seen and heard at that location on May 1 (Allenson) and May 10 (Stasko).

Kentucky Warbler - This southern species, rare and accidental in the Cleveland Region, was recorded by three separate Spring Bird Walk groups on the single date of May 16: Lower Shaker Lake (Corbin), Aurora Sanctuary, and Hinckley Reservation (fide Wallin).

Yellow-breasted Chat - A new earliest spring date was recorded with the observation of a specimen in Waite Hill on April 23 (Flanigan).

Rusty Blackbird - Equaling the latest previous spring date, a single bird was identified by plumage and voice in Mentor Marsh, May 23 (Besser, Jim Heflich). Late in the afternoon of May 16 a noisy flock that "must have been nearly 100" were in tall trees near Becker Pond, where they had been roosting during the spring (Hoffman); this is the latest date that so large a number have been sighted here.

Red Crossbill - A male and female were reported by the Spring Bird Walk party at Aurora Sanctuary, April 25. A flock of six males and eight females were watched for an hour as they sat in low trees at South Chagrin Reservation, May 9 (Mahan). A group of eight were near the Wakerobin Trail in Mentor Marsh, May 30 (Barbara Webster, fide Newhous).

Le Conte's Sparrow - One was captured in Eastlake and transported to Waite Hill, where it was photographed, banded, and released, May 1 (Jerry Talkington, Flanigan, Klamm). This is only the fifth CBC record and the first since 1966 of this species, which normally follows a migration route farther west.

Sharp-tailed Sparrow - On May 15 one spent the day on a grassy knoll near the lakefront at Sims Park, Euclid, the first CBC record since 1969 (Corbin). Most previous sightings have been in the fall migration.

Clay-colored Sparrow - A detailed study was made of a single specimen in the shrubbery along a road near Shipman Pond, Mentor Marsh, on May 16. Among field marks noted by two observers who were familiar with the species were the "well-defined brown cheek patch, light crown streak, yellowish bill, and very small size" in relation to a nearby White-crowned Sparrow. The song was also heard and later compared to a recording; a field guide was consulted on the spot (LePage, Newhou). This is the first BIRD CALENDAR record of this species. One was collected in Ottawa County, May 12, 1940 (Trautman, Annotated List of the Birds of Ohio). (It may be noted that, although the two observers were together with several other persons at the time of the sighting, apparently neither was aware that the other would be submitting a report to the CALENDAR. -ED.)

FIELD NOTES

JUNCOS NESTING IN APRIL. [ED. NOTE: An unusually late nesting by Dark-eyed Juncos in Leroy Township, Lake County, which concluded in September, 1975, was reported in CBC 71:4. The following is a report by the same observer from approximately the same location of what must be regarded as an uncommonly early nesting.]

By April 1 the female was building a nest about six feet up the side of an ivy-covered embankment in back of the house. The first egg was laid on April 6 and one on each of the next three days. Three of the four eggs hatched on April 21; the fourth did not hatch.

On April 25 the pair were observed mating, after which the female went directly to the nest. By this date the male had begun to assist with the feeding. The nestlings had their eyes open by April 27; however, the evenings had been very cold, and the female was still brooding. In the space of 15 minutes the female made seven trips to the nest with food and twice removed fecal sacs.

An amateur nature photographer attempted on April 30 to photograph the nest. Setting his camera too close, he caused the nestlings to hop out of the nest, although they were not yet able to fly. One was put back in the nest but refused to remain. The parents, quite agitated, dove at the photographer. One nestling climbed to the top of the bank; the other two were gathered by the female and put in a cavity in the ivy just a few feet from the nest.

On May 2 the two young were still in the makeshift nest. The male was seen often flying to the top of the bank, where it was hoped the third youngster was surviving. The next day the two hopped out of the cavity in the ivy and, fed and encouraged by the parents, scrambled and flut-

tered to the top of the bank. On May 7 the fledglings were flying about and noisily begging food.

On May 13 the female was observed gathering dog hair for the lining of a new nest that evidently was not close to the house. By May 16 three young Dark-eyed Juncos were feeding on the lawn with the parents; clearly, all three make it through. - DOROTHY MILLER

RECORDING REVEALS LARGE RAIL POPULATION. On the morning of May 1 an ornithology class from John Carroll University visited Mentor Marsh in search of rails. An accurate count of birds was not kept. The emphasis in the day's activity was to experiment with tape playback techniques to attract Virginia Rails and Soras. On Becker Trail three attempts were made, commencing at 7:00 a.m., to call the birds in. The results can be summarized thus:

Virginia Rails were attracted by both calls, moved close to the observing group, but never left the protection of marsh vegetation (Typha and Phragmites) except when one ran across an open area. The species definitely did not display as secretive behavior as did, the Soras.

Soras were attracted to and responded to the "whinny" call of their own species. Although they moved close to the observers, few were seen due to their hesitancy to leave dense vegetation. When seen, they were moving quite nonchalantly in contrast to the darting Virginia Rails.

At each tape-playing 15-20 birds were attracted. The literature suggests that the effective distance for attraction of rails to a tape is 60-80 meters. An estimate of the May 1 rail population 60-80 meters either side of Becker Trail would be between 100 and 200 birds. - NEIL BERNSTEIN

[ED. NOTE: A brief report of a somewhat less formal experiment with playbacks of rail calls in the spring of 1975 is to be found in CBC 71: 2. The study was carried out in the same section of Becker Trail and with similar results: Virginia Rails were found to be more responsive and more visible than Soras.]

BARRED OWLS HAVE LARGE BROOD. Each year three of us, all elementary school teachers in Mentor, lead bird walks for groups of the school children in the Headlands School Forest and nearby Becker Trail in Mentor Marsh on six mornings during the first three weeks of May. Each year for several years we have sighted Barred Owls, last year for the first time finding three owlets as well as both parents.

This spring imagine our immense excitement in finding the parents plus not three but four owlets, high in the old

beech trees where it is likely they nest year after year. The owls are marvelously patient with their audience of 20 or so gaping, gasping children and seem totally undisturbed.

Bent (Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey) comments on pairs of Barred Owls known to have nested in the same area for 35 years. Thus, we are looking forward to a continuation of these observations. He also states that two owlets are common, three less common, and four quite rare; five were reported only once, and then some doubt existed as to whether all belonged to one nest. - MARILYN FAIS

BLUE JAYS TRAVEL QUIETLY. Between 8:50 and 10:30 a.m. on May 20, from a vantage point at Perkins Beach overlooking Lake Erie, I tallied the annual passage of Blue Jays from west to east along the lakeline. In the first 10 minutes I recorded 237 birds, including one group of 70, and in the next quarter-hour, 266 birds. Thereafter, the numbers lessened steadily, and after 10:30 only a scattered few appeared. During the 100 minutes of concentrated observation I tallied 1,132 Blue Jays. The number in passage, though, was actually greater, since occasionally the birds moved on such a broad front that my vision could not encompass all.

The weather on the morning of the 20th was mild, with a light southerly breeze until about 10:00, when the wind shifted to the southwest and became quite strong. Sky cover also varied: at first clear, then clouding over in the west and southwest; next, clearing over the lake, only to cloud up again extensively after about 10:00 o'clock. When the sky was clear over the lake, the Jays traveled both along the lake bluff and also out over the water to a distance of several hundred feet. But when heavy clouds hung over the lake, the movement was almost entirely over land. As is typical, the entire passage was utterly silent, even when from time to time a dozen or so birds alighted briefly in the tall treetops. - DONALD L. NEWMAN

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AN INVITATION: The Kirtland Bird Club meets at 7:45 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month except July and August in The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Wade Oval, University Circle. Visitors are always welcome.

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Inquiries and correspondence regarding subscriptions to THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR should be addressed to The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Wade Oval, University Circle, Cleveland, Ohio 44106.