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CUR STARLING PROJECT---FIRST REPORT

At the meeting of October 11, 1946, I outlined, and our Society formally launched as a cooperative endeavor, a project of determining the extent of the area in downtown Baltimore in which starlings roost in late fall, winter, and early spring. The project not only seemed interesting from the standpoint of simple bird lore; it also seemed worthwhile from a practical standpoint, in that a knowledge of the exact roosting area might well be valuable should the need ever arise for active steps to control these over-numerous birds.

In the latter idea the Society's officers were delighted to discover that they had the support of Dr. David E. Davis, of the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, who was present at that October meeting and warmly endorsed the project, saying that health officials were already eyeing the starling as a potential danger.

It is pleasant to report now, on December 15, that the project also seems to have appealed to our members. For in accordance with a Special Bulletin sent out to the membership asking reports to me by postcard or letter at 4608 Springdale Avenue, Baltimore 7, six observers have already sent in data on roost locations, and the locations reported total fifteen.

Several of the observers, indeed, have sent in not only the location of roosts, but information about the nature of the roosting perches, direction of lines of flight, and height of roosting perch. As the Special Bulletin mentioned, these are very interesting and worthwhile things to know, and although their recording is not our primary object at present, the observations are welcomed and will be included in my summaries of the reports.

Contributors of observations so far are, besides myself: Dr. David E. Davis, Joseph Gentile, Irving E. Hampe, Miss Pearl Heaps, Haven Kolb, and Miss Minnie C. Smith.

Roost locations. The roost locations so far reported, listed from north to south, and observers' comments on them, are:

218 West Lafayette Avenue. (Davis, Dec. 11, 1946; "very large roost.")

Mt. Royal Hotel and adjacent building, Mt. Royal Avenue from St. Paul to Calvert Street. (Davis, Nov. 21, 1946.)

1205-1225 North Broadway. (Davis, Nov. 18, 1946.)

Emanuel Church tower, Cathedral and Read Streets. (Brackbill, winter 1945-46.)

First Presbyterian Church spire, Madison Street and Park Avenue. (Brackbill, Sept. 18, 1946, and on steadily.)

City Hall and adjoining buildings, Holliday and Fayette Streets. (Heaps, about Dec. 4, 1946; Kolb, no date.)

Court House, St. Paul and Fayette Streets. (Hampe, Nov. 10 and 19, 1946; "large numbers" each occasion.)

Union Trust Building, Charles and Fayette Streets. (Hampe, Nov. 6, 1946.)

The Hub, Charles and Fayette Streets. (Smith, Oct. 24 and 31, 1946; Hampe, Nov. 6, 1946.)

Fayette and Hanover Streets, beneath water tank above building on southwest corner. (Brackbill, winter 1945-46.)

Maryland Institute, Baltimore Street and Mallway. (Gentile, 1946.)

405 and 418 East Baltimore Street, motion picture theaters. (Gentile, 1946.)

Butler Brothers, 300 West Baltimore Street. (Brackbill, Oct. 11, 1946, and on steadily, also for some winters past; Gentile, 1946.)

Baltimore and Hanover Streets, beneath water tank above building on southwest corner. (Brackbill, Oct. 30, 1946, also winter 1945-46.)

Perching places. "Roosting on roofs of row houses" at 1205-1225 North Broadway (Davis). On ornaments of First Presbyterian Church spire (Brackbill). "On ledges" of Union Trust Building (Hampe) and Maryland Institute (Gentile). "They settled among the acanthus leaves at the head of the Corinthian columns" of the Hub (Smith). Apparently on struts and girders beneath the water tanks mentioned (Brackbill). At the East Baltimore Street theaters they roost "on ledges, and the wire supports of the neon signs. They spend all night close to these lights. They probably do not get much sleep, for I have heard them chattering around 9 o'clock" (Gentile).

Perching altitudes. At the East Baltimore Street theaters "I have been able to estimate that the lowest perch they will alight on is about 30 feet from the ground" (Gentile). The capitals of the Hub's columns must also be about that height. At Butler Brothers the

birds roost about the cornices of that 12-story building (Brackbill, Gentile). The water tank at Hanover and Baltimore is about two stories above a 5-story building; the tank at Hanover and Fayette is about two stories above a 7-story building (Brackbill).

Lines of flight. The starlings "come from the northeast to the east facade" of the City Hall (Kolb). Departures from Butler Brothers all apparently made northwestward during four observations in February, 1946 (Brackbill). Departures from water tank at Hanover and Fayette made northwestward (three flocks) and northward (two flocks) during two observations in February, 1946 (Brackbill).

Next report date. That, it seems to me, is a very encouraging start for us to have made. I hope that all those who have already contributed will search out additional roosts, and that members who have not yet contributed will be inspired to join in the fun. Let me have your reports either one by one as you make your observations, or in a bunch by February 15, whichever is more convenient.

Hervey Brackbill

THE EUROPEAN WIDGEON IN MARYLAND

On October 27, 1946, a party from the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia consisting of Mr. I. R. Barnes, Mr. J. V. Dennis, Miss L. Wendt, Miss H. Johnston and I, made a brief stop at Perry Point (Cecil County) to see what ducks were in evidence. Our interest was attracted by a flock of 223 baldpates in the cove on the east side of the point; and by checking each bird through a 26X B&L spotting 'scope, we were rewarded by finding one fine male European widgeon in the midst of the group. It was the first bird of this species that any of the party had seen in Maryland, so we took turns watching it through the telescope for upwards of half an hour.

In a summary of North American occurrences of the European widgeon, E. M. Hasbrouck (Auk, 61, 1944, p. 93) mentions twelve records (all specimens) of this species in Maryland and the District of Columbia. Unfortunately several of these are accompanied by insufficient data regarding date and place of capture, so the number of definite Maryland birds is reduced to seven, and only three of these are accompanied by undisputed dates: Susquehanna Flats, March 28, 1911; Cambridge, November 29, 1929; and Nanjemoy Creek, November 3, 1941.

Other recent occurrences reported by members of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club are of two males seen at Perryville on April 5, 1931 (Yoder), and one at the same point on January 24, 1932 (Potter). In view of the similarity between this species and the baldpate it seems likely that in spite of the scarcity of definite records, the European widgeon now visits Maryland every year. By carefully checking each baldpate we see, we have an opportunity to increase greatly our knowledge of the status of this species in Maryland.

Chandler S. Robbins

FOOD HABITS OF A BARN OWL

On October 3, 1946, a barn owl was found on a farm near Pikesville, Baltimore County. When first seen at dusk, it carried a small dead rat into the large barn, where it perched among the rafters. The next morning it was still present but flew outside when disturbed. Underneath its perch were found sixteen regurgitated pellets which contained the skulls of nine brown rats, eleven field mice, two short-tailed shrews and two house sparrows. From this evidence, it is clear that the barn owl is a most valuable member of the farm and should be encouraged to remain.

David E. Davis

CHIMNEY SWIFT MIGRATION IN BALTIMORE

On September 16 and 17, and again on September 24, hundreds of chimney swifts were observed over Druid Lake and Jones Falls Valley. On the 24th, the swifts appeared about 5 o'clock as soon as the skies cleared after a day of rain, many circling below the level of the trees. They extended up Jones Falls Valley as far as I could see. In half an hour, most were gone from the lake region. Last spring, large numbers were observed in this same area as far as Lake Roland.

In this connection it is interesting to note that the mystery of the winter home of these swifts seems now to be solved as a few banded birds have been sent in by Indians from the upper Amazon jungle.

Pearl Heaps

AN AMATEUR'S VACATION

Under the inspiration of the interesting meetings of The Maryland Ornithological Society, I determined to keep a list of the birds observed on my vacation. The month, July, 1946; the locations: near Columbus, George; southeast Alabama, forty miles from Columbus; the Florida coast forty miles below Pensacola; and Birmingham, Alabama. My acquaintances in bird circles are limited, for I am a social climber rather than one accepted in that choice society. I missed, therefore, many birds which should be recorded here. The burning dove, for instance. Everyone assured me it is quite common. I failed to identify two different warblers with yellow as the predominating color. The chewinks, or "jorees" as they are called here, are exceedingly common. I learned three distinct calls. Mockingbirds, catbirds and thrashers, were raising late families; and a young woodpecker looked comical as he strolled up an oak limb with all the aplomb of his mamma. A starling had been seen in south Alabama the year before. I did not run into any robins below Birmingham, but understand there are some in Montgomery. A Canada

goose, wounded a year and a half ago, was swimming contentedly on my brother's pond.

My list consists of 36 species, seen or heard (H).

petrel	red-headed woodpecker	robin
brown pelican	kingbird	wood thrush
turkey vulture	wood pewee	bluebird
osprey	purple martin	migrant shrike
small hawk	barn swallow	starling
bob-white (H)	blue jay	English sparrow
gull	crow	meadowlark
ground dove	tufted titmouse	summer tanager
night hawk	house wren (H)	cardinal
ruby-throated humming- bird	Carolina wren (H)	goldfinch
flicker	mockingbird	towhee
woodpecker	catbird	
	brown thrasher	

Mrs. Frank Stollenwerck

THE SEASON

August 16, 1946 to October 15, 1946

The latter part of August was similar in weather conditions to the first part. Unusually mild weather prevailed, much like that characteristic of October, and gum trees got an early start in changing color. There had been several heavy downpours of rain during the summer and one more occurred early in the period under review, after which there was a long dry spell lasting until the latter part of September. During this time there was a reversal in the temperature relations, with daily means consistently above normal. Migratory movements were observable throughout the period but winter resident land birds began to arrive only after the September rains. A sudden drop in temperature on September 30 produced a really heavy flight of small birds. However, the thermometer recovered and the first half of October was generally warm, so much so that at the end of the period foliage coloration, which had gotten off to such a good start earlier in the season, was much retarded.

The following bird notes on the period are arranged chronologically and the authority for each record is indicated by letters: (B) for Brackbill, (H) for Hampe, and (K) for Kolb. Aug. 18: Govans, good migration of nighthawks going through all day (K). Aug. 19: East Baltimore, first starling in full spotted winter plumage (K). Aug. 25: Arbutus, large flocks of robins in the evening were gone the next morning (H). Aug. 30: Govans red-eyed vireos still feeding young well able to fly (K). Sept. 1: Hillsdale Park, last hummingbird (B); Arbutus, large flocks of chimney swifts (H); Govans, catbirds and house wrens passing through (K). Sept. 2: Arbutus, a wave of song sparrows, many being very dark in coloration (H).

Sept. 8: Dickeyville, first red-bellied woodpecker for the fall (B).
Sept. 10: Howard Park, last yellow-billed cuckoo (B). Sept. 12:
an ovenbird was found alive in the ball room of the Southern Hotel
(H). Sept. 15 to 25: Dickeyville, Nashville warblers (B). Sept.
15: Forest Park, song resumed by mockingbirds (B). Sept. 18: Ar-
butus, a flock of fifty rusty blackbirds (H). Sept. 18 to 25: a
period of great movement among land birds reflected by an abundance
of notes from all observers, none very important singly but adding
up to evidence of considerable migration, especially of warblers.
Sept. 24: Govans, last nighthawks after a month of migratory activi-
ty (K). Sept. 27: Lake Ashburton, two dives of pied-billed grebe
timed by stop watch at 48 and 29 seconds (B). Sept. 30: near Ar-
butus, immense flocks of rusty blackbirds in a cornfield present for
a week (H); Govans, a migratory flight of a blue jay flock observed
in early morning (K). Oct. 2: Hillsdale Park, first junco, first
white throated sparrows, blue jays in flocks up to 30 migrating
southwestward to westward (B). Oct. 6: Arbutus, starlings abundant
all day, flying in late afternoon southwestward toward marshes in-
stead of into city roosts (H). Oct. 13: Arbutus, last wood thrush,
veery, and house wren (H); Hillsdale Park, an immature white-crowned
sparrow (B). Oct. 13 to 15: Sudbrook Park, great activity among
bluebirds inspecting bird boxes (Mrs. Kuch).

Haven Kolb

ABSTRACT OF MEETINGS

October 11, 1946

The feature of our October meeting was a talk by Mr. Brackbill on the starling. The wealth of interesting material which is provided by our most common and familiar birds was forcibly demonstrated in this talk. Mr. Crowder followed with an explanation of our Society's project for a study of starling movements. Mrs. Strack reported that the membership stood at 149. There were 24 members and 10 visitors present.

November 15, 1946

Dr. Richard Tousey of Washington exhibited color motion pictures of birds taken by him through an unusual arrangement using one side of a mounted pair of binoculars. Many excellent and remarkable shots were unrolled, those of evening grosbeaks taken on their incursion of last winter being of particular interest to our members. There were 30 members and 30 visitors present, the largest attendance to date.

NOTES AND NEWS

We welcome to our Society the following new members who have joined us during October 1946:

Mrs. Clayton C. Brown, 2313 Monticello Rd., Baltimore (16)
Mrs. William F. Williams, Box 6833, Towson (4)
Mrs. Ray J. Beasley, 4629 Keswick Rd., Baltimore (16)
Dr. Nicholas Interrante, 506 McCabe Ave., Baltimore (12)
Mrs. Nicholas Interrante, 506 McCabe Ave., Baltimore (12)
Dr. David E. Davis, 615 Wolfe St., Baltimore (5)
Mr. Theodore M. Brannan, 4310 Norfolk Ave., Baltimore (16)
Mrs. Frank Coggins, 323 Braxton Rd., Baltimore (12)
Mr. Compton Crook, 107 Greenridge Court, Towson (4)
Mr. Phillip Lavarello, 3509 Walbrook Ave., Baltimore (16)
Mr. E. John Besson, 1839 Ingleside Terrace, Washington (10)
Miss Eleanor G. Cooley, Berwyn, Md.
Mrs. George E. Odell, York Rd. and Chesapeake Ave., Towson (4)

We believe that Maryland Birdlife has improved steadily throughout its two years existence. As we enter our third volume it is necessary to recall that this publication can grow and increase its usefulness only through the support of our membership. Contributions are still urgently needed. Many favorable comments have been received concerning "At the Feeding Shelf" and "The Season" but both have been far below their potential value because material for them has been obtained from only a few persons. With our expanding membership we may hope for increasing participation in the building of our publication.

Again this winter the National Audubon Society is conducting wildlife tours in the sanctuaries of the South. Bull's Island, South Carolina, several parts of Florida, and the Texas coastal regions are represented on the itineraries for this year. Descriptive folders on these tours, which are of especial interest to all bird lovers, may be obtained from the National Audubon Society at 1000 Fifth Avenue, New York 28.

H. K.