

## THE DESTRUCTION OF BIRDS AT LONG POINT LIGHTHOUSE, ONTARIO, ON FOUR NIGHTS IN 1929.

BY W. E. SAUNDERS.

THIS lighthouse appears to be the only one in Ontario at which birds are killed annually in serious numbers, and when Mr. Harrison Lewis undertook a survey of all the lighthouses there were none that approached the deadly character of that at Long Point. The cause for this may lie partly in the fact that the light is one hundred thousand candle power, which is more powerful than is used at any other lighthouse in Ontario. While this may be the prime reason for the present destruction it is also a fact that I have heard of similar destruction of birds at this lighthouse for very many years.

Previous occurrences of this nature have been noticed in the 'Canadian Field Naturalist' during the past five years.

Mr. Lorne Brown, the keeper of the light, telephoned me from the lighthouse on Sunday morning, September 9, 1929, to say that he had picked up over six hundred birds on the previous day, and would I come down to see them. Promptly I consented, and asked how I could reach the light. The reply was that Mr. Brown would meet the fish boat from Port Rowan about nine the next morning. I telephoned Mr. Munroe Landon at Simcoe and arranged that he should go with me. I then drove to Simcoe and found that the fisherman was not going out on Monday morning. Further phoning revealed another man who would take us out, though the rising wind disinclined the boatmen to go.

Seven o'clock the next morning saw us at the end of Turkey Point, embarking for the lighthouse. Long Point is all that its name implies, reaching out east by south from the mainland for twenty-two miles towards Buffalo. At the lighthouse we were told that we were then eighteen miles from Port Dover, the nearest place on the mainland, twenty-two miles from Port Rowan at the base of the Point, and only twenty-eight miles from Erie, Pennsylvania, which appears to be the destination of the thirst-quenching boats from Ontario. I got no hint as to whether the birds followed

the Point from Port Rowan or whether they flew directly south from Port Dover. It seems probable that both courses are adopted, and we found the Sharp-shinned and other Hawks, flying along towards the east tip of the Point, and there, most if not all, of them turned back. What Swallows we saw were all flying west along the Point, but this was only what might have been predicted as the west wind was pretty strong, and those birds have keen prejudices against flying with the wind.

When we arrived at the lighthouse, we found that there had been another but smaller destruction of birds on the preceding night and we gathered up 171 bodies, most of which were fresh and all of them are taken as belonging to the flight of September 9, though it is probable that some few had been overlooked in Mr. Brown's previous search. We found perhaps twenty birds around the lighthouse, in various stages of damage, after having hit the building. Some of these we killed, and others seemed to have a chance of recovery and were let go, though they were more likely to become the food of the numerous Sharp-shinned Hawks or of the Skunks whose tracks were so abundant on the sand.

Mr. Brown has been at the light for several years and had never seen such a slaughter of birds as this present one, though a few birds are frequently killed. Later in the year there are frequent occurrences of Rails. The total list of casualties follows and includes:

Warblers	583	Flycatchers	16
Vireos	137	Sparrows	9
Thrushes	38	Cuckoo	1
Bobolinks	37	Grebe	1
		Tanager	1

It is interesting to note that, while some of the birds were killed in almost the same percentages of the total on the two nights, yet there are others, the variation in whose numbers hint that their migration was either nearly done or else just beginning. Among those whose numbers remained steady during the two nights are both of the most abundant ones, Maryland Yellowthroat and Red-eyed Vireo, also the Ovenbird, Magnolia, Blackpoll, Chestnut-sided and Mourning Warblers. On the other hand the Black-

burnian Warbler fell off from 87 to 12, the Redstart from 23 to 3, the Water-thrush from 36 to 5, the Cape May Warbler from 14 to 1, the Veery from 6 to 1, and the Bobolink from 32 to 5. These figures would indicate that the migration of the birds named was past its crest, and they were mostly gone.

A few species showed a marked increase on the later date; the Canada Warbler whose figures were 11 and 7, the Bay Breast 7 and 7, Wilson's Warbler 7 and 5, the Black-throated Blue, whose numbers rose from three to four, and the Olive-backed Thrush with 16 on the first night and 10 on the second. The whole Fly-catcher migration appeared to be nearly done, as none of the four species were represented in the account of the second day, while Lincoln's Sparrow, did not appear at all on the first night, two were found on the 9th.

A peculiar feature of this disaster was the fact that three Red Bats were picked up on the 9th, and I am not at all certain that another such occurrence is on record.

In addition to the birds killed and listed above, we saw a very sluggish Baltimore Oriole on the 9th, which was perfectly able to fly, and covered a hundred yards in its flight to the next tree, when flushed, but it was so extraordinarily tame that we got beneath it at a distance of only about six feet, and even then we had to shake it out of the tree before it would leave. We thought it almost certain that it was an injured bird that was remaining in that dangerous locality where the Sharpshins were coursing back and forth all day, until it should have recovered sufficiently to undertake the flight across the lake. And for a partially disabled bird, such a passage must seem a real hazard, for how could our Oriole tell that it was not starting on a 200 mile flight instead of one of only thirty miles? However, the birds have to take such chances, and the punishment of error is, in many instances the death penalty.

On the night of September 25, Mr. Brown telephoned me again from the lighthouse stating that he had picked up 350 birds that day and that at the moment of talking the birds were tremendously abundant around the lighthouse. I asked him to box them up in the morning and ship them by express. They arrived at 9 o'clock on the night of the 27th and with the assistance of the president

and four other members of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club, we had them all classified and listed by 1:30 A.M. Unfortunately it rained on the night of the 25th and as the birds were boxed early in the morning while wet they arrived in rather a bedraggled condition, causing us to lay aside about 200 during the first part of the evening to dry, but by the time we were ready to consider them they were nearly dry and our difficulties vanished.

As before, Warblers were the chief sufferers but Thrushes were a good second and averaged more birds per species than did the Warblers, there being 292 Thrushes of only four species. And there was one feature of the Thrush migration which was quite astounding and not paralleled by any previous experience; that is, the predominance of Gray-cheeked Thrushes, there being 150 of them to 140 Olive-backed. Another shy and retiring bird which occurred in rather large numbers was the Connecticut Warbler, of which there were 30.

At the recent meeting of the McIlwraith Ornithological Club the writer was instructed to take up this matter with the Canadian authorities with a view to having some sort of protection for the birds at the Long Point light; either in the form of perches, outside lights illuminating the tower or in some other way.

A complete list of birds killed on the flights above described, follows:

BIRDS KILLED AT LONG POINT LIGHTHOUSE, ONTARIO, 1929.

	Sept. 7	Sept. 9	Sept. 24-29
Pied-billed Grebe . . . . .	1	—	1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker . . . . .	—	—	2
Black-billed Cuckoo . . . . .	1	—	1
Sora . . . . .	—	—	1
Semipalmated Sandpiper . . . . .	—	—	1
Wood Pewee . . . . .	4	2	4
Alder Flycatcher . . . . .	3	—	1
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher . . . . .	—	—	1
Kingbird . . . . .	2	—	—
Phoebe . . . . .	1	—	—
Least Flycatcher . . . . .	4	—	—
Bobolink . . . . .	32	5	1
Rusty Blackbird . . . . .	—	—	1
Savannah Sparrow . . . . .	5	2	83
Grasshopper Sparrow . . . . .	—	—	1

	Sept. 7	Sept. 9	Sept. 24-29
Lincoln's Sparrow	—	2	10
Swamp Sparrow	—	—	3
White-throated Sparrow	—	—	16
White-crowned Sparrow	—	—	17
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	—	—	4
Indigo Bunting	—	—	5
Scarlet Tanager	1	—	14
Yellow-throated Vireo	—	—	1
Blue-headed Vireo	—	—	1
Red-eyed Vireo	109	26	41
Philadelphia Vireo	1	1	5
Cedar Waxwing	—	—	2
Black and White Warbler	5	2	2
Parula Warbler	—	—	8
Nashville Warbler	1	—	9
Tennessee Warbler	13	3	22
Golden-winged Warbler	1	—	—
Yellow Warbler	7	2	—
Cape May Warbler	14	1	14
Black-throated Blue Warbler	3	4	35
Black-throated Green Warbler	1	—	17
Magnolia Warbler	32	6	36
Chestnut-sided Warbler	22	6	9
Bay-breasted Warbler	7	7	31
Black-poll Warbler	31	6	199
Blackburnian Warbler	87	12	4
Palm Warbler	—	—	24
Maryland Yellow-throat	111	29	114
Connecticut Warbler	8	6	35
Mourning Warbler	20	5	12
Northern Water-Thrush	36	5	5
Ovenbird	30	9	107
Wilson's Warbler	2	5	1
Canada Warbler	11	7	3
Redstart	23	3	40
Wood Thrush	—	—	1
Veery	6	1	—
Hermit Thrush	—	—	1
Olive-backed Thrush	18	10	140
Gray-checked Thrush	1	2	150
	654	169	1237

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