BIRDS AND THE WINTER OF 1939–40

THE winter of 1939–40 was characterized by its prolonged cold and snow in the Northeast, heavy ice conditions on the coast, and by two periods of unusual cold in January in the southeastern States, extending to Florida. This seems to have had an effect in causing the presence in some numbers of certain northern birds in the Northeast, while in the South the mortality among some of the wintering species was widespread. In response to the suggestion that some detailed record of these effects would be worth while, the following notes have been sent in.—ED.

BLACK GYRFALCON IN NEW YORK STATE

ON December 23, 1939, a gyrfalcon visited the State Game Farm at Sherburne, Chenango County, New York. It attacked the ducks so repeatedly that it was shot by Mr. Windsor Gow. Fortunately the fresh specimen came into the hands of Miss Esther Mead, an enthusiastic bird student who, after making it into a very presentable skin, gave it to Cornell University. The specimen was not sexed, but its measurements (wing, 403 mm.; tail, 240) indicate that it was a female. It is quite dark in general tone above, and the fuscous median portions of the breast, belly and flag-feathers are strikingly dark, so the bird may be called a Black Gyrfalcon, *Falco rusticolus obsoletus*, at least until the plumages and color phases of this puzzling species are better understood.—GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON, *Department of Zoology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.*

PURPLE SANDPIPER IN SOUTH CAROLINA

THE Charleston jetties constitute one of the few extensive rock exposures in ocean water along the southern coast of the eastern United States. Rising mostly from a depth of ten feet or more at mean low tide, they extend northwest and southeast for two-thirds of their length, diverging toward their landward ends and continuing as submerged jetties to the shores of Sullivan and Morris Islands, respectively. The parallel portions of the jetties are half a mile apart and the length of the exposed south jetty is about two miles. The inner end of this breakwater is a mile from the nearest point of Morris Island, nearly two from Fort Sumter and nearly five from the Battery at Charleston. The seaward ends of both jetties are close to three miles from any land. Short sections of both are flooded at high tide, but the greater part of the extremely jagged lines of rock remains always a few feet above water. On every day of the year the jetties and the adjacent ocean are the haunts of large numbers of birds, and several extraordinary records have been made in their vicinity.

The latest of several opportunities to skirt the jetties at close range came to me on Dec. 29, 1939, when Mr. E. Milby Burton, Director of the Charleston Museum, took Dr. and Mrs. Frank P. Mathews, Mrs. Murphy, our son Amos, and myself around both jetties by launch. The preceding cool weather, the gray day and the stark rocks were all such as to conjure up recollections of the Purple Sandpiper in the mind of a northerner, and it was with the deliberate hope of finding this bird that I scanned every block of stone and minutely inspected each group of shorebirds, particularly the flocks of Turnstones.

We were not kept long waiting, though the tendency of the numerous Limicolae to flush put off for some time the satisfactory view that all six persons in the launch finally enjoyed through binoculars of a Purple Sandpiper (*Arquatella maritima*) standing quietly at a distance of not more than 35 feet. Another example was subsequently seen characteristically backed into a niche, as though braced against a wall, and dipping rapidly into the water every time the swell rose over its feet. The number of Purple Sandpipers counted was certainly three, but probably several more, the uncertainty being due to the restlessness of these birds and their associates of other species.

Records of the Purple Sandpiper south of New England are rare, but it is altogether likely that the shortage of suitable living territory has more to do with this than latitude. Most New Jersey records have been made since the building of artificial rock structures, and the jetty at the mouth of Cape May Harbor has thus far been the southernmost regular station known for the species (Stone, Bird Studies at Old Cape May, 1937: 461). Ridgway (Birds of North and Middle America, part 3: 241, 1919) notes also three casual records from southern Florida; Bent (Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., no. 142: 152, 1927) adds one from Georgia and a sight record from Bermuda. Up to the present these are apparently the only occurrences along the coast south of New Jersey. It will be interesting to learn whether the Charleston station has now become regularly occupied or whether the presence of Purple Sandpipers at the end of 1939 was correlated with the weather of a severe winter season. Snow reached the coast at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, on January 1, 1940.

On the forenoon of December 30, 1939, Mr. Burton and I returned alone to the Charleston jetties, found two Purple Sandpipers, and collected one. The specimen, an adult male, bears the number 39.278.1 in the collection of the Charleston Museum. Its stomach contained approximately eighty fragments of small bivalve mollusks (Mytilidae), one small conch (*Anachis*) and a few fragments of a sponge. The shells were identified by Miss E. B. Richardson, of the Charleston Museum.

On both days the Purple Sandpipers were closely associated with the Turnstones, which were the predominant shorebirds on the jetties, numbering probably three hundred or more. Other species satisfactorily identified were Knot, Sanderling, Least, Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers. Next to the Turnstone, the Sanderling was the most abundant bird, though both this species and the Least Sandpiper looked peculiarly out of place on bare rocks in the swell of the almost open ocean.

With our specimen safely in hand, Mr. Burton and I derived considerable amusement by first divulging only a 'sight record' of Purple Sandpipers to doubting ornithological friends in Charleston. The man who would be more excited than any other over this notable extension of range, however, lies in the little cemetery of Christ Church Parish, north of Mt. Pleasant. As I passed the grave, homeward bound, on New Year's morning, it gave me particular satisfaction that the specimen establishing the record was, in effect, being added to the ornithological collection of Arthur Trezevant Wayne.—ROBERT CUSHMAN MURPHY, *American Museum of Natural History, New York City.*

IVORY GULLS IN THE GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE

UNUSUAL numbers of Ivory Gulls (*Pagophila alba*) occurred on the 'North Shore' and were recognized by the sealers as being something new to them.

Information came from F. W. Osborne of Harrington Harbor. He mentions them as being reported 'quite plentiful' at Whale Head, Mutton Bay and La Labiture. We received a specimen from him killed in December but he writes that none was seen after February 20. We obtained two specimens, one juvenile, the other perfectly and immaculately adult. Mr. Osborne says also that with the Ivorys were a few gulls with "perfectly white body except for a black head and bill. The black cap takes in the bill and the eyes through to the back of the head, and black feet." These are probably Bonaparte's or Sabine's Gulls. I have been unable to get other reports of the Ivorys on the Atlantic coast, from Tufts in Nova Scotia or Allan Moses at Grand Manan. I have a report of an Ivory Gull taken in St. Islet County, Quebec, February 28, and J. L. Baillie informs me that one was seen by a Hubert Richardson at Toronto, January 14. Mr. Baillie is quite confident of the competency of the observer.

There seems to be a dearth of early spring birds, especially Tree Swallows, Bluebirds and Juncos. Although I have not been actively in the field, I have had similar reports from casual observers and have seen none in my garden where there are usually a few at this time of the year. I fear that birds wintering in Florida and adjacent States may have been hard hit this winter.—P. A. TAVERNER, *National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.*

IVORY GULL FROM MOUNT DESERT ISLAND, MAINE

ON February 10, 1940, Wendell Gilley telephoned me from Southwest Harbor, describing a small pure-white gull sitting on an ice-cake near a wharf. I asked him to collect it immediately, because it was quite rare. In less than half an hour I drove from Bar Harbor to Southwest Harbor and there found a beautiful mature specimen of Ivory Gull (*Pagophila alba*). The fisherman who shot the gull for me did an excellent job; there was scarcely a trace of blood on the bird's plumage. The specimen is now mounted and has been added to the collection of Acadia National Park.

This constitutes the first record for Mount Desert Island, and as far as could be determined, the third record for Maine. The first record is from Penobscot Bay, Maine, December, 1894, and this specimen is now in the National Museum, Washington, D. C. A sight record of January 5, 1918, in Portland Harbor, Maine, was made by Messrs. Arthur H. Norton and Walter H. Rich.

It is a coincidence that this far-northern species should be found on Mount Desert Island the same winter that a Mockingbird chose to stay here.—MAURICE SULLIVAN, *Acadia National Park, Bar Harbor, Maine.*

IVORY GULL IN NEW JERSEY

ON February 3, 1940, a dead Ivory Gull (*Pagophila alba*) was retrieved from shifting sand on Island Beach, about three miles south of Seaside Park, New Jersey, by the writer accompanied by William Yoder, Jr., Quintin and Evelyn Kramer, Morris Finkel, and Jack Herre. The specimen was in good condition, though partly disemboweled and buried in the sand and has been skillfully mounted by Frederick Ulmer, Jr., of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. It was shown at meetings of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club and the Miller Ornithological Club, and at present is in the writer's possession. The plumage is pure white, with the shafts of the primaries straw-colored; bill greenish gray at base, becoming pink at the tip; the feet are pure black with the webs rather deeply incised. Its total length was 17.5 inches; wing, 14; bill, 1.37; tarsus, 1.5;

spread of wings, 43. This is the first record for New Jersey and the southernmost for the Atlantic coast.—HERBERT S. CUTLER, *5517 Master St., Philadelphia, Penna.*

MORTALITY AMONG TREE SWALLOWS

ON the morning of January 28, 1940, after ten days of north wind and continued cold, the temperature at Coconut Grove, Florida, fell below the freezing point. There was widespread destruction of cultivated plants, and small fishes in countless numbers lay dead on the tidal flats. The Tree Swallow, *Iridoprocne bicolor,* winters here. It is an abundant species, flitting over the mangroves, along the water-ways, and, less plentifully, over the uplands. As in the preceding days the cold grew more intense, these birds were seen to hover more closely above the water surfaces, and to leeward of the walls of houses. On the morning of January 28, about fifty of them were found, densely packed in the cavity of a Pileated Woodpecker, formed long since in the stub of a palmetto, standing among mangroves a few yards from the margin of the bay. Twenty-eight were already dead or died soon after removal. A few flew away at once; others revived in the sunshine. On a sea-wall near by, about fifty more were resting in the sun, clustered like bees, some on the level top of the wall, others on its rough and sheltered face. Later in the day a half-dozen more were picked up dead on the lawn of the adjacent property.

I had been surprised on the afternoon of the preceding day to see the limp body of a Tree Swallow in the grasp of a Sparrow Hawk that was perched on an electric wire by the roadside; but, as afterward seemed plain, it was primarily a victim of the cold.

On the next succeeding morning (January 29) a minimum temperature of 34° F. was reached, and after sunrise the air grew warmer. That morning the cavity in the palmetto stub held about a dozen swallows, and three of these were dead.

I drove that day across the Tamiami Trail, and I came upon further evidence of disaster to the swallows. The cement roadway in the morning sun was attractive to them, and repeatedly I came upon the bodies of birds that had been run over by passing cars. Even on wing the living birds seemed to have lost their usual agility, and twice, to my regret, my moving car struck birds in the air. The filling stations with their clustered trees seemed to have been places of refuge; I found them thronged in an outhouse on the brink of the canal—one dead, two or three others fluttering to lie widespread upon the ground. At another place the graveled parking area was strewn with the bodies—perhaps fifty of them. The proprietor of one of these establishments spoke of the destruction, and asserted (and I thought scarcely with exaggeration) that with another such night they would all be killed. On the same day I had report of a Whip-poor-will, a Mockingbird, and a Catbird, picked up dead in Coconut Grove.

Returning to the fifty birds crowded in the woodpecker cavity, a few of the dead bodies were opened and their stomachs were found to be empty, as was in any case to be expected; the plumage of many of them was fouled with excrement. The reviving birds voided excrement freely, and the substance was white and opaque and manifestly lime-laden. No doubt there had been considerable shortage of food; no doubt the massing within the cavity had increased the destruction, but the fundamental cause of death was the cold. The catastrophe is recurrent, as has been noted by Howell, in 'Florida Bird Life'; see also Hugh M. Smith, 'Mortality among White-bellied Swallows in Florida,' Auk, 12: 183, 1895; Annie Trum-

bull Slosson, 'A tragic St. Valentine's Day,' Bird-Lore, Feb., 1: 45, 1899.—BAYARD H. CHRISTY, *Sewickley, Pennsylvania.*

DESTRUCTION OF TREE SWALLOWS

THE freezing weather of January 27 and 28, 1940, with temperatures ranging five degrees or more below the freezing point in southern Florida, nearly annihilated the Tree Swallows (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) in this region. Dead and dying swallows were found in large numbers in the Miami suburbs and especially in the Everglades and truck-farming regions, during and after this 'big freeze.' Evidently the birds could not obtain their customary insect food causing them to perish by starvation. At one small gasoline station in the Everglades over five hundred dead and dying swallows were counted. Since then the writer has observed only five live swallows at Cape Sable. It appears that the Tree Swallows in this territory have not learned to find the numerous berries hidden by leaves in the local tropical hammocks. Several Chuck-will's-widows and Whip-poor-wills also were found dead, in an emaciated condition, indicating starvation.—JAY A. WEBER, *10801 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, Florida.*

MORTALITY AMONG MYRTLE WARBLERS NEAR OCALA, FLORIDA

THE abnormally cold weather in January 1940 caused apparent heavy mortality among Myrtle Warblers in some sections of Florida. On January 16, which was nine days prior to the coldest weather, I began an extensive field reconnaissance of white-tailed deer on the Ocala National Forest near the town of Ocala, confining my activities to the so-called Big Scrub or Sand Pine Area of about 200,000 acres. From the first day I was impressed by the unusual abundance of Myrtle Warblers everywhere in this type. They were feeding on the insects that are normally active during the day throughout the winter, for this particular vegetational type is notably deficient in fruits or berries of any sort at this season of the year. So abundant were the birds that they were decidedly more conspicuous than were the larger and more brightly colored indigenous species such as the Florida Jay, Cardinal, Towhee, Mockingbird, and Tufted Titmouse. The actual counting of the individuals along mechanically platted traverse lines in connection with the routine survey of deer abundance had to be abandoned because of the inordinate delay incurred in the primary job due to the almost unceasing counting and tallying that was necessary.

Following a period of weather normal for the season, the temperature declined rapidly on the night of January 25–26 to about 24° F. During the following day sub-freezing weather prevailed, the ground thawing slightly only in a few sunny spots during the early afternoon. The night of January 26–27 was still colder, the temperature declining to about 18° F. The next day no thawing occurred, the temperature declining again to about 24° F. (night of January 27–28). Thereafter the weather gradually became warmer until it attained normalcy in about five days.

The first dead Myrtle Warbler was found on the grounds of the Milldam CCC Camp (Florida F-2) on the morning of January 27. It had died during the previous night, following practically unbroken sub-freezing temperatures during the past thirty to thirty-six hours. At the time the bird was found, the borders of the neighboring lake were completely frozen, and a large number of the warblers were moving about on the ice among the protruding rush stems in search of food.

At about 5.00 p.m. of the same day, a second bird killed itself against my car after it had risen sluggishly from the road shoulder as I approached it at about 30 m.p.h. Ordinarily the bird could have eluded an automobile traveling at such a speed. On the morning of January 28, after sixty hours of sub-freezing weather, approximately fifty dead Myrtle Warblers were gathered from the two acres of ground on which the CCC Camp is located. The next day (Monday) a work crew collected an additional fifteen birds from an abandoned out-building near the Central Tower in the heart of the "Scrub." During the course of the next several days, remains of birds were reported frequently from various sections of the forest.

Reconnaissance activities subsequent to this period and up into February revealed the fact that the numbers of these birds were scarcely 20% of those formerly present. No difference in the numbers of indigenous species already mentioned could be noted, however, and no dead birds of any other species were found. Many of the Myrtle Warblers might have migrated from the scrub during this period, but evidence indicated that a very large number perished.—FREDERICK J. RUFF, *U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Building, Atlanta, Georgia.*

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS FOR NORTHEASTERN NEW YORK, WINTER 1939–40

IN eastern New York and particularly in the Albany region, the past severe and protracted winter season has been characterized by considerable snowfall and high winds which have combined to promote drifting and to render many kinds of food for birds difficult of access. Although heavy snowfall did not occur until about mid-February, with subsequent frequent augmentations, it persistently covered the ground until late March. Later intermittent falls resulted in no amelioration of conditions for birds.

No unusual mortality presumably due to these factors has come to my attention. However, the more than usual prevalence of certain species possibly may have been associated with these extreme weather conditions. Among the forms to which particular notice has been drawn are the Prairie and Northern Horned Larks, Eastern Evening Grosbeak, Canadian Pine Grosbeak, Lapland Longspur and Eastern Snow Bunting. My observations, records and comments thereon can be summarized and condensed into the five following paragraphs.

Usually the Northern Horned Lark (*Otocoris alpestris alpestris*) is considered an irregular and only occasionally common winter visitor in the Albany region. On the other hand its closely related congener the Prairie Horned Lark (*O. alpestris praticola*) is ordinarily much commoner in winter and nests in this territory in summer. On several occasions in March 1940, I had the opportunity of examining at close range flocks of Horned Larks consisting of a few individuals up to larger groups comprising an estimated total of more than two hundred individuals. Many of these flocks were made up of both *alpestris* and *praticola* with the proportion of the former surprisingly large; and toward the close of the month I estimated that some of these feeding groups comprised the two forms in about equal numbers. Under the usually prevailing local conditions *praticola* far outnumbers *alpestris*.

The abundance and frequency of occurrence of the Eastern Evening Grosbeak (*Hesperiphona vespertina vespertina*) during the winter of 1939–40 has been the cause of widespread and frequent comment. Operators of feeding stations as well as amateur and professional observers have noted this abundance. An analysis of the records in my file shows that sixteen observers in seven counties—mostly in eastern New York—reported this strikingly colored bird in flocks of

from three to sixty or more at frequent and persistent intervals between November 12, 1939, and May 13, 1940. While most of the January and February reports came from the territory north of Albany, the March and April reports indicated that the birds had spread southward as the season advanced. From my own observations as well as those of others I am of the opinion that the small groups sometimes reported almost simultaneously in different parts of a city or village were aggregations which had broken from the main flock at intervals, wandered about locally for a time, then rejoined the larger group. On this account probably the real numbers were somewhat lower than the reported numbers.

Another ordinarily rarer and more irregular winter visitor, the Canadian Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator leucura*), has made itself better known to a large number of persons during the past winter and spring. Seldom does it occur so generally or in such numbers over so widespread a territory. My records show that groups of from two to as many as fifty individuals have been noted by myself and eight other observers from St. Lawrence County south and east as far as Mohonk Lake in Ulster County between the inclusive dates of November 16, 1939, and April 3, 1940. It was noted at Grafton, Rensselaer County, every week-end between the inclusive dates December 23, 1939, and March 30, 1940. Small flocks of from six to ten birds were most frequently observed. Some of these flocks with apparent additions and subtractions evidently remained in many localities all winter. February and March were the months of greatest abundance. Strangely enough, all observers noted a marked preponderance of 'gray birds,' females or males in first-winter plumage.

One of the rare winter visitors in the Albany area is the Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus lapponicus*). On three occasions, March 16, 20 and 27, 1940, I discovered, respectively, four, five and two individuals feeding on waste grain in manure distributed in two open snowy fields, about five miles east of Troy, New York. Both sexes were represented and the birds persistently associated at this food supply with great flocks of Horned Larks and lesser numbers of Snow Buntings.

In the territory under consideration the Eastern Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis nivalis*) ordinarily is commoner and less irregularly distributed than either the Evening or the Pine Grosbeak. However, its marked abundance and persistent presence in flocks comprising ten to thirty or more individuals is worthy of note. My latest spring date for the Albany region is March 31, 1940.—DAYTON STONER, *New York State Museum, Albany, New York.*

WINTER BIRD MORTALITY IN WISCONSIN, 1939–40

As administrator of the Wisconsin Conservation Department's winter-feeding operations for gamebirds in this State, I wish to report the following general observations. The winter was not considered severe except for several drifting snowstorms and short periods of sub-zero weather. The first drifting snow was reported to have taken possibly over 25 per cent of the Bob-white population, but as they are now reported increasing in many localities, the loss may not have been so great.

Other upland gamebirds suffered very small losses probably because of extensive artificial feeding and food patches representing well over 200 tons of corn which is used as a primary feed here. However, two Chukar Partridges and three Hungarian Partridges were reported to have been found dead and in good condition with their crops full during sub-zero weather, and their death was attributed to

exposure. This is difficult to explain as other birds of these species were found to have successfully wintered in the same locality.

Although thousands of ducks and probably 10,000 Canada Geese wintered in the State, no material mortality was reported and only a few birds were found dead.

No general loss of any other birds was reported in what was considered an ordinary winter here.—W. E. Scott, *Wisconsin Conservation Dept., Madison, Wisc.*

Effect of Excessive Cold on Birds in Southern Louisiana

The weather during the latter part of 1939 was extremely mild. We had on the Gulf Coast of Louisiana no severe cold, and the normal winter-bird migrations did not come down to the coast until after the first of January. Letters from friends from Canada to central Illinois prior to the first of the year 1940 stated that a variety of ducks and other migratory birds were in the northern territory in unusual numbers for that time of the year.

Prior to January 3, there were comparatively few Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos*), Pintails (*Dafila acuta tzitzihoa*), and Canvas-backs (*Nyroca valisineria*) in the southern section of Louisiana. The Robins and Waxwings had not put in an appearance, and many of the smaller migratory insectivorous birds were here in less than their usual numbers.

On January 3, there was a sudden drop in temperature from 50° F. to 29°. The weather stayed cool until the 8th, when there was another low of 29° F., and 27° F. on the 9th. These low temperatures brought enormous numbers of insectivorous birds and ducks from farther north to the coast. Mallards, Canvas-backs and Pintails arrived in almost unbelievable numbers on January 8 and 9.

Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) had been here since mid-November in vast numbers. On their first arrival, they spread over the fields and open spaces, searching out and eating all manner of grass and weed seed. When the cold days of early January arrived, they had about cleaned up the available seed supply, and began to eat the berries of the various hollies: holly (*Ilex opaca*), yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*), Dahoon holly (*Ilex cassine*), camphors (*Cinnamomum camphora*), hackberry (*Celtis mississippiensis*), blackjack (*Berchemia scandens*), and wax myrtle (both *Myrica cerifera* and *Myrica carolinensis*), and other cultivated and native shrubs. The consequence of their depredations on the normal winter-food supply of our native migratory birds was that by January 15 when the Robins, Waxwings and other berry-eating birds had come south in numbers, there were no berries for them to eat.

Between the 15th and 19th, great numbers of kinglets, both the Ruby-crowned (*Corthylio calendula calendula*) and Golden-crowned (*Regulus satrapa satrapa*), Myrtle Warblers (*Dendroica coronata*), grackles, both Purple Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula quiscula*) and Bronzed Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula aeneus*), Rusty Blackbirds (*Euphagus carolinus*), and other insectivorous birds came to the last timber belt of the lower South in great numbers.

On January 18, a slow rain which froze as it fell started about mid-day. This rain continued as a sleet all night, and well up to mid-day on the 19th, when the temperature had fallen to 14° F. This sleet covered the trees, plants and ground with a heavy coating of ice, causing the whole earth and foliage to be a glare of ice several inches in thickness. This ice continued on the trees and plants from the 19th through the 24th, without change. On the afternoon of the 24th, it began to melt on the foliage and in south and southwestern exposures along the timber; the ground continued frozen, however, for sixteen days, or until February

3. During the middle of the day there would be some thawing of the earth on the south and southwest exposures, but, in general, it was frozen for the full sixteen days.

During the 19th, 20th and 21st, all ponds and shallow lakes froze over. Ducks could be seen by the thousands sitting on the ice. As the marshes were also frozen, they could get no food. The ducks began to leave this section about mid-day on the 22d, and proceeded in small flocks in an almost unbroken stream, headed west. This flight continued through the 23d; practically all ducks left this part of the Gulf Coast. On the 26th and 27th, some of the ponds thawed out, and a fresh supply of ducks, Mallards and Pintails, came in from the east, and stopped in the open water in great numbers. That they were a fresh lot of birds was proved by those taken in my banding traps, which, for about two weeks previous to this time, had yielded practically nothing but banded birds, while those ducks taken in the traps after the 26th were all unbanded.

On the 28th and 29th, the ponds froze again, and the ducks that had recently arrived left, going west, as had the preceding flocks. This migration westward continued until February 2, and was almost continuous all day long. The flocks were small—never more than fifty birds, and as few as ten or fifteen—all flying at about five hundred to seven hundred feet, and all headed the same way, due west, evidently going to the warmer climate in Mexico, where they could find food.

On the nights of the 19th and 20th, Woodcock (*Philohela minor*) came into the extreme southern part of Louisiana in unprecedented numbers. I have been a woodcock hunter for almost sixty years, and have never before seen such enormous numbers of these birds as came into the area extending from the coast to twenty-five miles inland. Woodcock literally swarmed in every bit of cover where they could find some protection from the wind—open woods, briar patches—wherever they could find some cover, they congregated.

They got no protection from man, and were slaughtered by the tens of thousands, with sticks, .22 rifles, and shotguns. They were sold openly in the streets of the towns of southern Louisiana at from fifty cents to a dollar a dozen, but very few were taken by buyers on account of their being so thin. This condition existed until January 28. On January 25, I took a short walk with a friend, following the edges of the timbered section of Avery Island, and in a little less than one hour and a half, only walking along the southern and southwestern coves of the woods, where some of the ice had melted off the ground, we put up 1011 Woodcock, without going over any of the territory twice, and we did not go into the woods, as the birds were all on the edge where the sun was shining. We could see these birds on the ground often ten or more at one time, and by standing still at one point, we counted twenty-one birds vainly trying to feed by probing under the leaves in search of something to eat. As the ground was frozen, their search for food was by pushing their bills under the leaves parallel to the earth. A few days later, when the ground had thawed somewhat, these birds came out in the open in broad daylight, and wherever a piece of soft ground could be found, they could be seen probing in the usual manner up and down in search of worms. I did not see any Woodcock that had starved to death, but caught many of the birds and banded them, and noted that all of them were extremely thin.

Birds which I found in numbers that had perished from starvation were: Killdeer (*Oxyechus vociferus vociferus*), Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Phoebes (*Sayornis phoebe*), and a few Myrtle Warblers (*Dendroica coronata*). Most

of the insectivorous birds took to the marshes and survived reasonably well in the high, thick grasses of the coastal plains. The greatest suffering seemed to be with the tree-dwelling insectivorous birds, which did not seem to adapt themselves to going low into the thick grass. Killdeer actually starved by hundreds, and could be seen in the pastures either too weak to fly or dead, and there seemed to be a greater mortality among the Killdeer and the Phoebes than among any other birds. What became of the Robins and the Cedarbirds, I could not determine. The Starlings stayed, and are still here in vast numbers, as are both the smaller grackles. These birds, being omnivorous, did not seem to suffer as much as did the strictly insectivorous birds. The Starlings and grackles alighted on the sleet-covered ground, pecking through the ice to beds of clover and chickweed, and seemed to find some subsistence in the green material they uncovered in this manner.

The prolonged cold was a very decided scourge to the smaller migratory birds, and the suffering was especially severe, due to the great numbers of Starlings eating the food that our native birds normally would have had.—E. A. McILHENNY, *Avery Island, Louisiana.*