

imitations of their call. Caribbean Doves are heard regularly at Lyford Cay, New Providence (AW), into early March. At the National Park at Abaco, 20 Cuban Parrots were noted in pairs May 26 (WB). Two Yellow-billed Cuckoos were noted at the Treasure Cay dump, Abaco (WB), May 3 as passage migrants. Good numbers of West Indian Woodpeckers were recorded by Bracey at Abaco, especially in the National Park May 27, where 20 were noted including young birds accompanied by parents. La

**SA** A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** was noted at Abaco May 26 (WB) for a very rare, late-spring occurrence. This record extends the spring passage by almost 2 weeks. Gray-cheekeds should be carefully documented, as well as Bicknell's Thrush. Wetmore and Swales (1931) reported that the majority of *Hylochichla* (now *Catharus*) specimens were Bicknell's Thrush, not Gray-cheeked. The etymology is circuitous, but material indicates the smaller of the two (*bicknelli*) passes through the Bahamas and Hispaniola more frequently than the larger (*minimus*). The migration and stopover routes of Bicknell's Thrush have been described (Bond 1956; Chapman 1966 and earlier; and Ouellet 1993) as e. United States through the Bahamas to Haiti (Hispaniola) and the Greater Antilles, where they are reported to overwinter. Two specimens netted at Mayaguana proved to be Gray-cheeked (Buden 1987), while a specimen taken at Cay Sal in the w. Bahamas (Bond 1956) was attributed to Bicknell's. The latter, formerly recognized as a Gray-cheeked subspecies, may be expected in the n.e. Caribbean. Buden (1987) suggests this thrush may occasionally winter in the s. Bahamas and Turks and Caicos. Given a new understanding of this group's systematics and subsequent migration, it seems plausible to speculate that many sight records of Gray-cheeked may in fact be Bicknell's, without specimens to establish Gray-cheeked as predominant. Photographs are desirable when definitive identification is made in the Bahamas and Greater Antilles.

It seems the more we know about isolated populations of birds both continental and insular, the less we know. The more we split subspecies, the more endangered these delicate creatures suddenly become. The politics of endangerment, indeed, becomes local.

Sagra's Flycatchers numbered 10 at the National Park May 26. Cuban Pewees were also seen there. A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was seen Mar. 3 (PM) at Hatchett Bay, Eleuthera, for a rare occurrence in the c. Bahamas and perhaps the first spring record for the Region. Two Tree Swallows were noted May 26 at Marsh Harbour, Abaco (WB).

A Water Pipit first seen in November remained at Diamond Farm, New Providence, to at least Mar. 3 (PD, AW), a very unusual extended occurrence. Two Bahama Yellowthroats were seen at the National Park, Abaco, May 27 (WB), but no Bahamian race Yellow-throated Warblers were seen by Bracey on Abaco after late April. Olive-capped Warbler, an endemic to the Region, numbered eight in the National Park May 27 (WB). A late Vesper Sparrow was seen Apr. 1 at Ferry Pt. Park, BE.

#### ADDENDUM

Received too late to be included in the winter report are some additions to the Bahamas occurrences. An ad. Snow Goose was seen at Lyford Cay, New Providence, Dec. 12 (AB, AW); an immature was at Wilson's Pond, New Providence, Dec. 20 (PD); and one visited at Sugarland Farm, Abaco (PM), Feb. 20. A "Caribbean" type Am. Coot was seen at Adelaide, New Providence, Feb. 23 (AW). A Piping Plover was noted at Brown's Pt., New Providence (AW). A White Ibis was noted at Diamond Farm, New Providence, Feb. 23 and Rainbow Farm Feb. 27 (AB, AW). Forster's Tern's were noted at Harrold and Wilson's Ponds, New Providence (PD). Two Savannah Sparrows were noted along Golden Isles Rd, New Providence, Feb. 27 (AB, AW). An imm. or female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** remained at Rainbow farm, New Providence, from mid-December to mid-February (PD). Shiny Cowbirds are spreading through the c. Bahamas and appear to be resident at Rainbow Farms, where as many as six were noted by Bainton, Dean, and White.

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# Profile

## George Hall

VICTORIA IRWIN

*The Regional Editors provide the heart and soul of Field Notes magazine. Their work each season, sifting through hundreds of bird sightings and records, is distilled into the reports that make up the bulk of this publication. The regions they cover vary—some are geographically huge, some small, some with a plethora of birders, some with only a handful. But the snapshot of bird life that these editors give us provides an important picture of population trends, rarities, migration patterns, effects of weather or habitat changes, as well as the simple delight of knowing what was where and when.*

*The job of Regional Editor is clearly a labor of love. Our editors come from a variety of backgrounds—while some work in the field as wildlife biologists, ornithologists, or birding guides, our family includes university professors, a retired law enforcement official, doctors, small business owners, and students. Their time and effort is donated and most often sandwiched in between work, family time, and other obligations.*

*The Field Notes editors thought that profiles of our Regional Editors would give readers a sense of who these volunteers are, what motivates them, and why these front-line volunteers see the Regional Reports as an important resource and archive for birders. Our first profile is of George Hall of West Virginia, editor of the Appalachian Region.*

**G**eorge Hall will capture a spot as one of the longest contributing Regional Editors for *Field Notes* when he hits 40 years with the fall season report this year. His career here has spanned great changes in both birders and birding, which has given a particular flavor to the expertise he brings to *Field Notes*.

"We didn't go places, we stayed home," Hall says of the birders of his generation. The mobility of today's birding community has been perhaps one of the biggest changes he has seen in more than a half a century of birding. With the advent of jet planes and lower fares, even young birders can span the continent—or the globe—in search of birds.

But it is exactly his rootedness that has made Hall a gem in the eyes of many col-



leagues. Larry Schwab, a friend and fellow West Virginia birder, says that Hall represents a type of naturalist that is the model of thoroughness and accuracy.

"Like many rural people, [these naturalists] were rooted to the land of their birth. They picked their spot, made notes, studied. George stuck with birds," says Schwab. "His legacy is his enormous contribution to understanding the distribution and population status of birds in West Virginia and the Appalachian region."

"No one knows the birds of Appalachia like George does," adds Lee Jay Graffius, president of the Brooks Bird Club of Wheeling, West Virginia. "I know in the Brooks Bird Club he's looked to as the scientific expert; he'll always give you straightforward answers. He's been a great mentor to me. His knowledge is so deep."

Hall was born in 1920 in Parkersburg, WV, and graduated from high school in Aliquippa, PA. He became interested in birds and natural history as a Boy Scout, but he pursued chemistry as both an undergraduate at West Virginia University and a graduate student at Ohio State University, where he received his PhD. in 1945.

He continued as a casual birder while in school, but it wasn't until he read Joseph Hickey's *A Guide to Bird Watching* in 1943 that he began to see birding as a more serious pursuit. Still, graduate studies left little time for work with birds.

But when Hall went to the University of Wisconsin in Madison to teach, he met Hickey, John Emlen, and Aldo Leopold. They encouraged him to apply his scientific

work habits to his birding hobby. In 1950 he returned to West Virginia University in Morgantown, where he spent the rest of his professional career, retiring as a professor of chemistry and forestry in 1986. He remains affiliated with the university as a professor emeritus.

While there he fell in with Maurice Brooks, a fellow professor, who taught him the fundamentals of the ecology of the Appalachians. He likes to say he did his "post-doctoral" work of his informal ornithological training under Brooks.

Though Hall never had a formal course in biology, his accomplishments as a birder are impressive. He has been actively involved in the Brooks Bird Club, serving as president, and several years as editor of the Club publication, *The Redstart*. He was president of the Wilson Ornithological Society from 1979 to 1981, after serving as vice-president, and was editor of *The Wilson Bulletin* from 1964 to 1973. He has also been active in the American Ornithologists' Union, and other ornithological organizations.

His interest in the distribution and ecology of birds in West Virginia led to his 1983 book *West Virginia Birds*, and the *West Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas*, coauthored with A.B. Buckelew Jr. in 1994.

In 1958, he cofounded, with Ralph Bell, the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory, a major banding station for fall migrants in the Region. And Hall still participates in the operation each fall. He also continues his long-term research on bird population in the Appalachian coniferous forests.

"He bridges the bird watchers and the scientific community," says Schwab. "He sees the value of getting people involved in not just looking at birds, but in contributing to the scientific literature."

Hall became involved in *Field Notes* through Brooks, and succeeded him when he retired. Susan Roney Drennan, former editor of *Field Notes* and its predecessor *American Birds*, calls Hall remarkable: "His goal seems always to have been to excel in the areas of thorough and accurate reporting," she says. "Over the past 40 years, his achievements have been among the best. One of his quiet talents has been his ability to convert many followers to his own happy and consuming interest—birds. To so many that I've talked to in West Virginia, he has been a good friend and partner in discovery."

Drennan points out that authors' relationships with those who edit their work can become complex, and Hall as a Regional Editor was no exception. Over the years, she relates, he exchanged many letters and telephone calls with her.

"We didn't always see eye to eye, but I look back on our years together as a long, friendly association, cemented by respect and good cheer. . . . We didn't feud; we got on with the work of getting the publication out."

To what does Hall owe his longevity?

"It's something I've enjoyed, and I simply did it," says Hall. "The only time I came close to resigning was about 35 years ago, when I became editor of the *Wilson Bulletin*." But he found he was able to manage doing both.

"The reports and summaries in *Field Notes* paint a huge picture of the changing bird world—and it is changing," says Hall. "If someone went back and looked at the first 10 volumes, reading all the reports, I expect they would learn a lot."

Though he admits his focus is different than some other regional reports—"I'm more interested in trends than the rarities," says Hall—he likes the fact that the regional editors are an "idiosyncratic group," borrowing a description from former editor Robert Arbib. "Every report is somewhat different in its analysis and content."

Drennan points out that Hall has always been a "genuine defender and promoter of *American Birds* and *Field Notes*. . . . What a pioneering and valuable contribution he has made to field ornithology. His reports have served as benchmarks against which the efforts of later Regional Editors have been measured."

