

# FEATHERS

Published by the Schenectady Bird Club

JANUARY, 1940

VOL. 2, NO. 1

## FIRST CHRISTMAS CENSUS OF THE SCHENECTADY BIRD CLUB

Strong Wind Did Much to Reduce Total Count, But 26 Species Were Found - No  
Owls, But Plenty of Hawks - Pine Siskin Appears for First Time on Local  
Census Records - Only Half Dozen Species on All Lists, with  
English Sparrow Not Included - Crows Spring Surprise

By B. D. Miller, Chairman, Christmas Census Committee

SCHENECTADY, N.Y. (Mohawk River from Lock 8 to Mohawk View, Collins Lake, Woestina Sanctuary and lower Rotterdam Hills, Central Park, Vale and Parkwood Cemeteries, Meadowdale, Indian Ladder, and intervening territory). -- Dec. 23; 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Clear in morning, mostly cloudy in afternoon; no snow on ground; minimum of open water; objectionably strong west wind; temp. 20° at start, 28° at noon, 18° at return. Observers in groups as follows: Party I, 2 observers, 4 hours, 4 miles afoot; Party II, 2 observers, 5 hours, 5 miles; Party III, 5 observers, 2 hours, 2 miles; Party IV, 5 observers, 5 hours, 2 miles; Party V, 5 observers, 5 hours, 4 miles; Party VI, 3 observers, 8 hours, 8 miles; Party VII, 2 observers, 5 hours, 8 miles. Total miles afoot, 33; total hours afoot, 34; plus 86 miles in automobiles incidental to walks. Black Duck, 1; American Merganser, 6; Goshawk, 1; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 2; Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Rough-legged Hawk, 1; Marsh Hawk, 1; Sparrow Hawk, 5; Ruffed Grouse, 4; Ring-necked Pheasant, 12; Herring Gull, 15; Hairy Woodpecker, 7; Downy Woodpecker, 24; Blue Jay, 14; Crow, 2582 (est. 2500 feeding in group along river, plus 82 counted in other sections); Black-capped Chickadee, 108; White-breasted Nuthatch, 21; Starling, 314; English Sparrow, 145; Red-wing, 1; Purple Finch, 2; Pine Siskin 15; Goldfinch, 63; Slate-colored Junco, 1; Tree Sparrow, 118; Song Sparrow, 5. Total, 26 species; 3489 (est.) individuals. American Golden-eye, Screech Owl, Great Horned Owl, Brown Creeper, and Winter Wren also recorded within the territory during Census Week. -- H. V. D. Allen, George H. Bainbridge, Guy Bartlett, Edna Becker, Frank and John W. Freese, Esly Hallenbeck, Alice Holmes, P. Schuyler Miller, Mr. and Mrs. Chester N. Moore, Stephanie Podrazik, Daniel A. Ruddy, Sr. and Jr., Vincent J. Schaefer, Benton R. Seguin, Rudolph H. Stone, Robert W. Underwood, Nelle VanVorst, and B. D. Miller, Census Chairman, Schenectady Bird Club.

Above, exactly in the form required in each year of the previous decade, as for publication in the Christmas Census summarized in last month's FEATHERS. of Bird-Lore, is the Schenectady Bird Club's report of its first Christmas Census. With the Bird-Lore reporting so the club has yet to observe its first birthday; actually such counts were made Locally, however, there is much more of



Schenectady Bird Club  
Annual Membership -  
Active, \$2; Assoc., \$1

Barrington S. Havens, Editor, 63 No. Brandywine Avenue

and so the survey was made by six groups who co-operated with enthusiasm that makes this undertaking a comparatively simple affair.

a story to be told.

Severe winter weather again greeted the Christmas Census makers this year. Saturday, December 23, the day set for the event, dawned with a temperature of from 15 to 20 degrees above zero. Quite a heavy cloud bank lay on the eastern horizon at sunrise, and throughout the day occasional white clouds raced across the sky before a strong westerly wind that reached almost gale velocities before midday.

Rapid streams were open, including the deep swift waters of the Mohawk below the dams. Local ponds and lakes, including the Watervliet Reservoir, were completely frozen over. In some of the woods, especially on the eastern slopes, there was enough snow to cover the ground, but practically none was found in open fields.

The combination of low temperatures and high wind resulted in the day being about the most severe in the winter to date. But it requires more than severe weather to keep bird students indoors,

Although the late fall and early winter were generally mild and "open," there is a suspicion in the minds of some that our feathered friends had advance warning of the cold wave due here December 22. At least several species frequently seen before that date could not be found by any of our observers. Every group, except the one witnessing the flight of crows, reported their birds "few and far between." Even the English sparrow and starlings were less numerous than usual. High winds probably partly explain this.

The outstanding find was 15 pine siskins, discovered in the Watervliet Reservoir section, not reported in any of the previous censuses and becoming No. 60 on the composite list. Other high lights were the absence of owls and the large variety of hawks. Crows were rare in all areas except just west of the city.

Explaining the references to seven groups, as shown in the summary at the beginning and in the detailed summary elsewhere in this issue, the observers were divided as follows:

Party	Total	I	II&III	IV	V	VI	VII
Number of Species	26	12	20	14	11	12	12
No. of Individuals	3469	126	228	2615	144	211	153
Black Duck	1	1					
American Merganser	6	2*	6				
Goshawk	1		1				
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2		2				
Red-tailed Hawk	1					1	
Rough-legged Hawk	1				1		
Marsh Hawk	1		1				
Sparrow Hawk	5		1		2		2
Ruffed Grouse	4		2	2			
Ring-necked Pheasant	12	7		2			3
Herring Gull	15	5*	10	5	1*		
Hairy Woodpecker	7	1	3	1		1	1
Downy Woodpecker	24	2	8	3	1	7	3
Bluejay	14		4	7		3	
Crow	2582	9	21	2500	12	8	32
Black-capped Chickadee	108	11	37	16	4	27	13
White-breasted Nuthatch	21	2	8	3	3	3	2
Starling	314	30	82	14	65	61	62
English Sparrow	145		16	17	50	37	25
Red-wing	1		1				
Purple Finch	2						2
Pine Siskin	15					15	
Goldfinch	63	1	6	24	2	28	2
Slate-colored Junco	1			1			
Tree Sparrow	118	55	17	20		20	6
Song Sparrow	5	1	1		3		

(\* ) Included in total count of another Party

Party I - Saratoga side of river within map in December FEATHERS; 4 hours in morning, 4 miles afoot, 10 miles by automobile; Messrs. Stone and Allen.

Party II - Niskayuna side of river, and Lisha Kill woods; five hours in morning, 5 miles afoot, 7 miles by automobile; Messrs. P. S. Miller and Bartlett.

Party III - Territory a continuation of Party II; two hours in afternoon, 2 miles afoot, 4 miles by automobile; Messrs. P. S. Miller, Allen, Bartlett, Stone, and Underwood.

Party IV - Woestina Sanctuary, Lock 8, Campbell Road, and adjacent territory; 5 hours, 2 miles afoot, 15 miles by automobile; Messrs. Freese (2), Ruddy (2), Schaeffer.

Party V - Collins Lake, Vale and Parkwood Cemeteries, Central Park; 5 hours, 4 miles afoot, 10 miles by automobile; Misses VanVorst, Holmes, Becker, Podrazik, and Mrs. Moore.

Party VI - Watervliet Reservoir and Carman sections; 8 hours, 8 miles afoot, 20 miles by automobile; Messrs. Moore, Bainbridge, and Hallenbeck.

Party VII - Meadowdale and Indian Ladder sections; 5 hours, 8 miles afoot, 20 miles by automobile; Messrs. Seguin and E. D. Miller.

In studying the information in the table it should not be assumed by the reader that there is competition between the different groups. Totals, whether of species or individuals, mean nothing in comparing one group with another. Each year it is emphasized that one section offers possibilities not to be expected in others. Not competition but co-operation is the spirit of the census.

In conclusion, your chairman is anxious to thank all those who so willingly and enthusiastically took part in the census, a project it is hoped the Schenectady Bird Club will have as an annual affair.

THERE'S A GOOD reason why the wings of a flying hummingbird cannot be seen or photographed with the usual camera. The wing-beat is about 50 per second.

THE DUCK HAWK is probably the fastest bird we have. A speed of 180 miles an hour is credited to it.

## A LITTLE KNOWN TRANSIENT

By Joseph Janke

(Author's Note: It is the immediate wish of the writer that it be known that this article could not have been written without the splendid scientific and technical approbation so generously contributed by Professor Samuel A. Eliot, Jr., of Northampton, Mass.)

THE SHARP-TAILED SPARROW, *Amospiza caudata*, has developed at least four recognizable geographic races. (A possible fifth has been described from North Carolina.) The longest-known one, *A. c. caudata*, lives in the salt marshes of the Atlantic Coast, northward to Maine. It is a brown bird with blackish breast-streaks and a deep buff triangle around its ear-patch. From Maine eastward and northward the Acadian Sparrow, *A. c. subvirgata*, breeds in both salt and fresh marshes. It is a gray bird with blurred breast streaks and a cream-colored cheek triangle. Far removed from these habitats, from Minnesota northwestward to Great Slave Lake, nests a fresh-water race long known as Nelson's Sparrow, *A. c. nelsoni*; but its scientific name will probably be changed to *A. c. becki*, a name bestowed in 1891 on an accidental straggler to California. This is a dark ruddy bird with conspicuous white lines on the back, faint dusky streaks on tawny clay-colored breast and flanks, and burnt-orange cheek-triangle. Recently described (in THE AUK, 1938, P.117) is a fourth race that breeds at James Bay and might be called in English the Northern Sharp-tail; and to this race, it now appears, the scientific name *nelsoni* rightly belongs. It is paler than the Western Sharp-tail, its grayer back makes the white stripes less conspicuous, its flanks and breast are a warm buff with fine brown streaks very like Lincoln's Sparrow's and the color of its cheek-triangle varies so, resembling now one and now another of the other sub-species, that this breast-streaking seems the surest identification mark.

In our region, this Northern race is the likeliest to occur. The Atlantic or "typical", Sharp-tail is extremely unlikely (though a hurricane might, I suppose, blow one up from the coast, and one is said to have been seen at Holyoke Mass., on November 5, 1936), and the Acadian is scarcely less so, as it is not known to breed, either on the Maine Coast or on the lower St. Lawrence, any farther west than well to the east of Maine's westward boundary. The Western race migrates southeastward to the Atlantic and has been definitely recorded (The AUK, 1, oc. cit.) at least as far east as Presque Isle, Penna., but the parallel course of the Northern Sharp-tail takes it directly across New York and Western New England. In those regions a great many Sharp-tails have been

collected or seen, but until the Northern race was described they were all identified as either Acadian or "Nelson's" or, very often, as indeterminate intermediates between those two. Pertinent references are to The AUK 1885, p. 306, 1889, p. 204, 1890, p. 56, 1891, p. 115, 1907, p. 80, 1920, p. 307 and 1922, p. 276. The last two record birds at Branchport, N.Y., in 1919 when they were termed Acadian, and 1921 when they were deemed "Nelson's". Most fresh water observers tended to call all warmly buff Sharp-tails "Nelson's", as in the case of a Vermont specimen (The AUK, 1917, p. 341) which in fact is scarcely distinguishable from one taken at Longmeadow, Mass., and recorded in The AUK, 1909, p. 84 as Acadian. From Reading, Penna., "Nelson's" was likewise recorded in The AUK, 1932, p. 235, while from Richmond, Ohio, farther west, an "Acadian" was reported to The AUK, 1936, p. 99. Presumably this was a Northern bird, obviously paler and grayer than the Westerns normal in Ohio. Birds seen at South Windsor, Conn., on August 18, 1917 and below Albany, N.Y., not at Lake Cossayuna, as the writer mistakenly recorded it in The AUK, 1938, p. 547, on August 28, 1930 (both dates are very much earlier than the usual arrival-time of these migrants) were called Nelson's, and the former, at least, was very deeply, strongly colored. Birds at Northampton, Mass., in the last two weeks of Sept., 1932 seemed to bridge the whole gamut between darkly, richly colored Western Sharp-tails and washed-out palely neutral Acadians. There is always a possibility that these extreme races will occur, but it seems indubitable that our regular visitors are the intermediate Northern Sharp-tails.

On October 14, 1937, for instance, I studied two sparrows on the bank of Mohawk River about eight miles below Schenectady, and noted the cinnamon-buff of breast, sides and cheek-triangle, and the white stripes on the mostly gray, not dark brown, back. I recorded them as "Nelson's" in The AUK, 1938, p. 546, and presently received numerous letters about them. One in particular from Professor Samuel A. Eliot, Jr., of Northampton, Mass., a noted ornithologist and writer. Professor Eliot called my attention to the description of the Northern subspecies in The AUK of six months before. It was there named A.c. Altera, but Professor Eliot has since written me that the "type specimen" of A.c. nelsoni, collected in Chicago in 1874, properly belongs to the Northern, not the Western subspecies, which necessitates the substitution of nelsoni for altera, and the resurrection of becki for the Western race. In English, "Nelson's" is thus rendered ambiguous and should be dropped in favor of Western or Northern.

Naturally, intergrades between these two races and between Northern and Acadian, will continue to puzzle both field-observers and museum-men. For amateur bird-students in eastern New York, at any distance from salt water, the safest procedure is to assume a James Bay origin for all Sharp-tailed sparrows seen,

and call them Northern.

On October 4, 1939, I again found sharp-tails at the same spot as on October 14, 1937. On October 5, I took H.V. D. Allen to see them and we studied a bird whose back was almost wholly gray, the white lines thin and indefinite. On October 7, I took Chester Moore, and we had excellent views of a bird whose back was olive brown, with very conspicuous white lines, and whose streaks below were dusky and indistinct. I regret that these other members of the Schenectady Bird Club were not able to compare these two birds, which certainly looked sufficiently different to be assigned different breeding-grounds and different subspecific names.

Professor Eliot writes me that on October 5, when the gray bird was here, a very "burnt-orange" one was in Hadley, Mass., and that on October 8, he saw at Northampton, one with olive-gray back and distinct brown breast-streaks. He recommends that extremes in coloration be collected whenever possible, and their skins forwarded to W. E. Clyde Todd of the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Penna., the discoverer and describer of the Northern race. I hope to be able to do this in the fall of 1940. The birds are most numerous in the first three weeks of October, but can sometimes be found in September and exceptionally even in August. Spring migrants are far more rarely recorded; east of us, we know of only two-- a doubtful (too early May 13, 1923, at East Westmoreland, N.H. and May 25, 1932, in Stockbridge, Mass.-- and on our west, where spring transients from wintering-grounds in Georgia or Florida should be more probable, we have noted only Reading, Penna., June 8, 1930 Branchport, N.Y., June 3, 1913; and Toronto, Ont., June 10, 1895, June 12, 1905, and May 29 - June 4, 1937. These dates show that-- as might be deduced from the late lingering of winter at James Bay-- the Northern Sharp-tail goes north very late and should be looked for in our region between May 25 and June 12.

## CARRY YOUR BIRD, SIR?

LATEST EXAMPLE of mistaken bird identity (see page 19, September issue) is the brown creeper. A recent news item by the United Press tells of a man who found one in the street in poor health and sent it by airplane from Detroit to Washington in order that it might have the benefit of a warmer climate.

But the Bureau of Biological Survey sent the bird back, also by airplane, with an explanation. According to the story, the bird survived satisfactorily.

# FEATHERS

Published by the Schenectady Bird Club

FEBRUARY, 1940

VOL. 2, NO. 2

## NEWS AND NOTES IN BRIEF

**TRINOMIALS** - A common faux-pus of ultra-enthusiastic observers is to jot down a trinomial in quoting the scientific name of a bird in reporting on some field observation. In many cases this is done under the impression that it is all very thorough and scientific. Students who are thus guilty come in for a very apt rapping in the December WILSON BULLETIN.

Suppose we are engaged in a field study of scaup ducks. It is very important biologically that we know whether our ducks are of the lesser or greater species, for habits may differ between species. But suppose our study concerns song sparrows. What difference does it make what subspecies our particular birds belong to? A song sparrow is a song sparrow and its habits are those of the species from Florida to Unalaska. One does not entitle his study "The Food of the Eastern Song Sparrow," but "The Food of the Song Sparrow at Schenectady," for the eastern song sparrow may have an entirely different diet at Lake Placid or Buffalo because of local conditions. Do you see how misleading the former entitling is? The Unalaskan song sparrow may built its nest of mosses and the Florida song sparrow may use grasses but that is not a subspecific habit. It is merely a case of opportunity.

Subspecific identifications are all too often based on books. The AOU check-list states that such and such a subspecies occupies such and such a range. The observers assumed, therefore, that every bird of a certain species must belong to that subspecies. While this usually turns out to be the case it is done with no justification. How can one be certain that a bird under field observation belongs to a certain race? How does one know that that particular bird might not prove to be a member of another race in transit or out of its normal range upon collection? Unless we collect specimens and make comparisons we have no basis for identifying to subspecies. Field observation is served perfectly well by the binomial. In fact, the only reason for stating scientific names in a report on field observations is for the benefit of

distant workers to whom the common name may mean nothing or may be a source of confusion.

-- L. J. U.

**TIMID FEEDER** - One of the very few Brown Creepers apparently here this winter is a regular visitor to a feeder. Both peanut butter and suet are taken. The Creeper is reported as the most timid of the various species regularly seen there, even to the extent of being flushed into flight by alighting Chickadees.

**PITTSFIELD** - Among 1939 records to which Pittsfield, Mass., points with pride were a pair of Yellow-headed Blackbirds on September 13, and, at other times, a wintering Mockingbird, their first Orange-crowned Warbler, and a Turkey Vulture.

**EAGLES** - In January and early February one reads in the New York City papers of bald eagles being seen along the Hudson River, from Dyckman Street up to Newburgh. In late February and early March local bird observers have for years journeyed over to the Hudson above Waterford to see at least one full-plumaged bald eagle. It seems probable the one seen locally was along the lower Hudson earlier.

One theory is that the eagle above Waterford is a summer resident in the Alps in back of Troy or along the Tomhannock Reservoir, and that it is regularly seen along the Hudson in late February and early March because the reservoir is not yet open. In that case it is probably a Southern Bald Eagle. Another theory is that the bird is on its way to the far north, and in that case it probably would be a Northern Bald Eagle. However, as L. J. U. (see "Trinomial" in this section) points out, the



Schenectady Bird Club  
Annual Membership -  
Active, \$2; Assoc., \$1

Burlington S. Havens, Editor, 63 No. Brandywine Avenue

safest is to call the bird simply a Beld Eagle.

.....

**WINTERING SORA** - A female adult Sora was found dead in Richmond, near Pittsfield, December 29. It had a broken skull and leg, and had been dead but a short time.

.....

**SPRING?** - Quoting our contemporary, *The Gazette*, of January 31:

"UNCOMMON BIRD SEEN  
BY SCOTIA RESIDENT

"Can spring be far behind? The answer is no, since Miss .... observed an evening grosbeak in a tree in the garden of her home, ....., yesterday morning. These birds are uncommon enough to be noteworthy in any season and Miss ....., knowing that they most frequently travel in groups, wonders if others have been seen in this vicinity recently.

"She states that there can be no doubt of the bird's identity and looks to the early arrival of other varieties from the South."

Maybe next we'll have Robins as signs of approaching winter.

.....

**MOORE SONG SPARROWS** - Most observers look for wintering Song Sparrows in the cat-tails along Collins Lake, the river, Watervliet Reservoir, and similar sites. Nelle VanVorst reports their presence in the swamp in Vale Cemetery.

.....

**BLACKCOCK** - Maybe the time is coming when another foreign bird is to be added to the list of New York State birds. Six Blackcock, the lusty, five-pound grouse of the Scandinavian woodlands, are now quartered at the Delmar Wildlife Research Center. The Conservation Department hopes to establish the bird on New York areas not suited to pheasants or ruffed grouse, "in areas of altitude above 1,200 feet where pheasants do not thrive and where the land is too open for grouse" in the words of Gardner Bump, superintendent of the Bureau of Game.

.....

**CHRISTMAS COUNTS** - Bird-Lore has not yet published its 1939 Christmas Census reports. Among those known about, however, are one at Pittsfield of 66 individuals of 9 species, and another from there of 24 individuals of 8 species, with a total of 13 species for both. . . . At Northampton, Mass., a party of 20 or more in small groups had

a list of 3673 individuals of 40 kinds; included were Savannah, Vesper, Field, White-throated, Fox, Swamp, and 29 Song Sparrows. . . . At Buffalo 39 observers in 13 groups found 18,732 individuals of 56 kinds; ducks and gulls presented high counts, and there were records of the Double-crested Cormorant, 17 kinds of ducks, 5 kinds of hawks, the Glaucous, Great Black-backed, Herring, Ring-billed, Bonaparte's, and Little Gulls, and a Robin, a Hermit Thrush, three Cardinals, and four Lapland Longspurs.

.....

**ACADIAN CHICKADEE** - Mrs. Arthur Swift of McCormack's Corners reports the first local record of this species in recent years. She says: "On the 17th of January at about 4 p.m. I was watching birds feeding in a large glass-enclosed feeding station located about 25 feet from our kitchen windows. To my amazement I observed a Hudsonian chickadee contentedly feeding with four black-capped chickadees and a downy woodpecker. It remained in the feeder quite some time and then flew on a low branch of a nearby apple tree so that I had ample time to compare it with the illustration in the Reed bird guide."

According to our Records Committee, the last reported records of this species were in 1904-1905. Although Mrs. Swift speaks of the bird by the name it is given in Reed, the more likely subspecies to be found here is the Acadian rather than Hudsonian chickadee.

.....

**ALL IN FAVOR?** - Are you in favor of a collection of short items such as these being made a regular monthly feature? If so, please say so; if not, do likewise. And, if you are in favor, remember that the back of a penny postcard addressed to the Editor is large enough to hold a lot of information; if you have interesting records but do not report them, they can hardly be published.

.....

**GREBE, HERON, HOODEDS** - The open water of the Hudson from Waterford to Stillwater always offers interesting winter possibilities (including the Barrow's Golden-eye last February). Some interesting records were added on one trip this year. Henry V. D. Allen reports:

"Rudolph Stone and I drove up the west side of the Hudson from Waterford to Stillwater on January 15. The first ducks seen were just above Lock 1, half a dozen Blacks and two dozen American Mergansers. At the trolley crossing we got a pair of Mallards and at the bend above the coal wharf 25 American Golden-eyes. At a point close to the bank we saw a bird slightly smaller than a female American Merganser which was within a few feet of it. This bird was diving constantly. Its color was dark except for what appeared to be two white spots on the back, one on each side of the base of the tail. We suspected Holboell's Grebe, but could not get near enough to prove it.

"A little further up and remaining

behind when we flushed the Golden-eyes were a pair of Hooded Mergansers. The white patch on the drake's head showed up very clearly. Almost at the same time we flushed a Great Blue Heron which flew across the river to the east and over the meadows on the east side.

"The river at Stillwater was frozen above and below the bridge, but below the dam there was a flock of 40 American Golden-eyes, including a half dozen drakes, and about two dozen Blacks.

"According to the records for winter, Holboell's Grebe has been seen in February, but not since 1934; the Hooded Merganser was seen in 1934 at Waterford in February; and there has been no winter record of the Great Blue Heron since December, 1935."

.....

G-E OWL - He didn't catch it himself, but Roy Steele had a Screech Owl for liberation this month. Somehow or other it had found its way into one of the upper floors of one of the G-E factory buildings. A gray one, it was captured with ease.

Which, in your experience is the more common color phase of Schenectady's Screech Owl? First checking indicates that the gray predominates locally, and that the red one is a rarity. If you have some observations about the subject, please give them to the Editor.

.....

ANOTHER - Roy Steele was neither the first nor last to find an owl within the G-E plant. A few years ago a barred owl posed for its photograph outside one of the buildings. On February 2 Al Getz found another gray Screech Owl in one of the factory buildings. This one apparently had been an unwilling guest there for some time; its feet, bill and tail were bettered, and it was far from active when discovered. It, too, was liberated.

.....

BIRD CLASSES - Classes in bird study are now being held, about every two weeks, in the Nott Terrace High School. Because meetings are usually scheduled from one class to the next and because of the infrequent appearance of FEATHERS as compared to the meetings, it is difficult to give a schedule here, but notices have been distributed by the secretary and announcements are regularly made at the classes of the coming schedule. Suitable field trips are coordinated with the indoor meetings. Any questions should be taken up with Miss Alice Holmes (or her successor, if any), chairman of the Program Committee.

## SOME VIRGINIA BIRDS

By Edna Becker

HOLLINS COLLEGE is situated at the lower end of the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia at approximately 1000 feet elevation. It is ideally located as far as bird study is concerned, being six miles out of Roanoke and having open fields and woods near at hand. A good-sized creek runs through the campus, and along it can be found many birds at almost any season.

Since Hollins is much farther south than Schenectady (about 600 miles), we naturally have with us all winter several species not often found to spend the winter where you are. For example, goldfinches, robins, and bluebirds are not uncommon. Song sparrows are very common, as are also white-throated and white-crowned sparrows. Field and fox sparrows winter here, also, but are less common than the aforementioned. The hermit thrush and both species of kinglet winter here. Killdeer and meadowlarks stay with us all the year, and both are found in great abundance. Myrtle warblers sometimes remain here for the winter, and the tufted titmouse is another permanent resident. Migrant shrikes may also be seen at any season of the year.

Outstanding among our permanent residents are the cardinal and the mockingbird. I rarely go for a walk that I do not thrill once again to the beauty of the male cardinal as he sits on a branch. The loud "tzip! tzip!" of the birds adds to their conspicuousness, as does also their habit of rustling the dry leaves in the thickets which they frequent in flocks.

The mockingbird is more solitary -- rarely have I seen more than two birds together -- but it is equally as pleasing to have around as the cardinal. While not brilliant in color, the large white wing and tail patches, that are not seen until the bird takes flight, offer enough contrast to the gray background so that one cannot help but notice the bird in his graceful flight, or as he mounts to the top of a telegraph pole and perches on a wire, or -- as one bird does regularly -- mounts to the tip of the house roof and sings for many minutes at a time.

The Carolina wren is another delightful permanent resident. Its song is loud, unmistakable, and always enjoyable.

THE STARLING is credited with a top speed of about 50 miles an hour; the robin, with only 36.

Pleasing in a different way is another of our permanent residents not commonly found at Schenectady. I still marvel at the flight of the turkey vulture soaring effortlessly high or low. Like the cardinal and mockingbird, the buzzard is always to be seen. The black vulture is found here, too, but less commonly than the turkey vulture.

Crows, of course, are permanent residents here, and we also have an occasional fish crow. The raven nests in the mountains nearby, I am told, but I have never had the good fortune to see one. Duck hawks frequent similar regions, but I have not seen any here. Besides the common hairy and downy woodpeckers we have the red-headed species with us most of the time. I have seen just one pileated woodpecker here. The zebra-like red-bellied woodpecker is found a few miles away, although I have never seen any on or near the campus.

Among our common summer residents are the yellow-breasted chat, blue-gray gnatcatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, indigo bunting, mourning dove, and prairie and pine warblers. Rose-breasted grosbeaks nest here, but I have seen them only during migration. I observed two flocks this fall -- the first consisting of just females and immature birds, and the second, a week later, having several mature males in it. The purple finch is a regular spring and fall migrant, spending several weeks here each time.

## COWBIRD STATISTICS

DR. HERBERT FRIEDMANN and others have listed over 200 species of birds parasitized by cowbirds -- but the territory involved is not confined to the eastern United States, of course. As far as our knowledge goes, no serious attempt has been made locally to make up a list of birds imposed upon by the cowbird.

Accordingly, in order to get such a list started, we have made the compilation which follows, covering those species so parasitized within the knowledge of some few of us: phoebe, red-eyed vireo, warbling vireo, black and white warbler, yellow warbler, chestnut-sided warbler, northern yellow-throat, Canada warbler, redstart, goldfinch, savannah sparrow, chipping sparrow, and song sparrow.

We urge our readers to furnish additions to this list. The information should include the name of the species, the date (approximate if necessary), the location of the observation, and the evidence of parasitism -- in other words, whether a cowbird egg was found in the nest, a young cowbird was found in the nest, or an adult bird was found feeding a young cowbird. Needless to say, the records in which we are interested are for the territory covered by the Schenectady Bird Club, unless the case is an extraordinary one.

## IN "THE AUK"

THE OCTOBER issue of THE AUK, published by the American Ornithologists' Union, contains three items of particular local interest. One of the feature articles is by Leonard J. Uttal of Albany, a member of our local club.

Reporting from the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University, he describes four subspecies of the Spruce Grouse, including a well-marked form inhabiting the Gaspé Peninsula, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, not previously described. *Canachites canadensis torridus* is the name assigned to the new subspecies, in which the females exhibit extreme brownness. In the General Notes is an item by Dr. Dayton Stoner of the State Museum at Albany, concerning a Sparrow Hawk feeding on a big brown bat. The third item summarizes records of recent years for the American Egret in the Crescent Lake section of the Mohawk

A SCIENTIFIC STUDY of the wild turkey in Missouri, to serve as the basis for an attempt to perpetuate the fast-dwindling flocks of that species, has been undertaken by the U.S. Biological Survey in co-operation with the Forest Service at a 13,000-acre federal game refuge in Oregon County, Missouri. The survey itemizes bird habits, including mating and breeding proclivities, and will attempt to determine the potential range of wild turkeys under restrictions imposed by future land uses. It is also desired to learn the maximum size of a flock which will remain together.

THERE ARE approximately 1200 species and sub-species of birds in the United States and Canada.

# FEATHERS

Published by the Schenectady Bird Club

MARCH - APRIL, 1940

VOL. 2, NO. 3 - 4

## NEWS AND NOTES IN BRIEF

RAIL, NOT SORA - It was a female Virginia Rail, not a sora, which was caught in a trap in Richmond, Mass., on December 9. This was incorrectly reported on page 6 of February FEATHERS.

WINTER PIGEON HAWK - While walking near Lincoln Park in Albany on January 13, 1940, I was surprised to record a male pigeon hawk. On January 17, in the same general vicinity, I made another record of the same species and sex, probably the same bird.

Regularly the pigeon hawk winters from the Gulf States south. Winter records of the species in the north, however, are very scarce. Occasionally it winters (usually near the coast) as far north as Massachusetts. There are perhaps a half dozen records, mostly sight, for Long Island and lower New York. In upstate New York Easton saw one in January, 1906, in Canandaigua, and Dr. Sutton of Cornell reports he once saw the species at Ellis Hollow, Tomkins County, during a snow flurry, but makes no mention of date. William H. Carr reports two records for the Palisades Park region on January 12, 1936, and February 18, 1939, but these are hardly upstate records. There are apparently no previous records for the Schenectady region.

Hopeful tyros sometimes mislabel sparrow hawks as the much rarer pigeon hawk. Allsparrow hawks are predominantly reddish; male pigeon hawks never are. Immature birds and females are brownish, never red. The sparrow hawk's tail is unbanded; that of the pigeon hawk is crossed by four broad bands. The pigeon hawk is the huskier in build but only slightly the greater in length. It is quite dove-like in aspect, hence its name. It has a swift, direct flight which cuts the air sharply, while the sparrow hawk has a more irregular flight interspersed with sailing, dorting, hov-

## DUES ARE DUE\*

DUES FOR the fiscal club year from March 1, 1940 to March 1, 1941 are now due and payable to the club treasurer, C.N. Moore, 801 Bedford Rd., Schenectady.

...ring, and other eccentricities connected with its habit of reconnoitering over open areas for prey. The sparrow hawk has the more nervous perching habits. It frequently shifts its position, opens and closes its tail, bows, and otherwise delights itself. The pigeon hawk sits quietly, more watchfully, and is more typically falconine.

The pigeon hawk is a transient hereabouts, to be looked for from the middle of April through the middle of May and from the middle of October through the middle of November. It is at all times uncommon, but less so in spring than in fall. There are a few summer records, probably of post-breeding-season wanderers, although Guy Bartlett tells me adults were seen one year with what were apparently juveniles. The species does not breed in the state. Uncommon though it is in this region, it is more so farther west in the state. It is commoner but still noteworthy in the coastal region. -- L.J.

LOCAL DISTRIBUTION - There is still plenty of room for investigation in this "overworked" field hereabouts. As far as birds go, there are many species about whose status in this area we are very uncertain. The local distribution of several species is far from being completely known. Definite nesting data are lacking for a surprisingly large number of species. Environmental preferences of some important species have



Schenectady Bird Club  
Annual Membership -  
Active, \$2; Assoc., \$1

Bentington S. Havens, Editor, 63 No. Beadywine Avenue

MONTEZUMA - Old records show that Montezuma Swamp, in Cayuga County, was a particularly good place for birds. The advance of civilization, however, made a decided change, and more recently the marshes and swamps there have been of less interest to birds.

hardly been touched upon. For example, the two spruce-swamp investigations last summer definitely changed the status of several species.

A large area -- the most charming whereabouts from the viewpoint of the wild-life enthusiast -- is, in a manner of speaking, almost virgin territory for the bird student and also probably for specialists in other wildlife fields. It embraces Berne, Rensselaerville, most of Westerlo, and western Coeymans townships. In this region only the immediate area around Rensselaerville Village has been under any surveillance at all. Only a very few especially zealous observers are at work there. Good, authentic information about the birds there is scarce and hard to obtain. It is the wildest and most boreal area at all near at hand. It may hold the answer to many of our unsolved distributional problems in this region and deserves greater surveillance than it has received up to the present. -- L.J.U.

BERNE SWAMP - During our stay at the South Berne spruce swamp June 28, 29, and 30, 1938, we kept tabs on the temperature. We compared records obtained there at 1800 feet or more with the official data taken at the Albany airport at 300 feet. We found that the maxima during the day approximated but that the minima at the swamp averaged nine or ten degrees below those at the airport. This is good evidence of the boreal influences at the swamp.

Facilities for week-end or otherwise prolonged study at the swamp are ideal. A quarter mile from the site there is a practically non-leaking abandoned barn, although ironically the farm homestead is in an advanced state of destruction. Good drinking water may be obtained at a nearby farm.

Our party arrived on the area late on a rainy night. Though we were equipped with tents, we envisioned spending a most miserable night. But there was this barn, as dry as one's parlor. We spread our bedding on the floor over newspapers and turned in. I can not remember ever having a better night's sleep. The next morning we found hay and made "permanent" beds. Camping out was never more enjoyable. -- L.J.

Now there is to be a change. Next year a federal migratory bird refuge will be completed there. Seven miles of dikes are being built by OGC workers around two large nesting and feeding ponds. Wild celery, buckwheat, winter wheat, and corn will be raised on the Preserve for feeding the birds, and a 2-acre demonstration pond, with wildfowl on display, will be built along the Seneca Falls -- Auburn road. The refuge will include about 8000 acres.

CROW LEAFLET - "The Crow In Its Relation To Agriculture," a 1939 revision of a previous publication, has been announced as Farmers' Bulletin No. 1102 of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. It is available, at 5 cents a copy, from the Superintendent of Documents. The 22-page illustrated booklet gives information on nesting habits, winter roosts and migration, food habits, crows as food, protection of crops, and poultry.

GROSBEAK INVASION - Grosbeaks, both pine and evening, have been unusually common in this territory this winter, as evidenced by the many reports received from those who have seen them. Many who either had never seen the species before or whose experience with it was meager were given splendid opportunities for leisurely study. Comparatively large flocks of the evening grosbeak were observed by scattered enthusiasts. Among those reporting them -- and but a few of the many reports are at hand -- are Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Swift of McCormack's Corners, Roy Steele, Esley Hallenbeck, etc.

LATE MIGRANTS - Judging from all reports, the earliest spring migrants were late this year. Grackles, killdeer and redwings, ordinarily found early in March, had not been reported by the middle of the month except for one flock of redwings in Niskayuna. At about that time the usual newspaper reports of early robins began to appear.

DIVING BLACKS - It is generally believed that black ducks must feed in shallow water, or on land, and that they starve if only deep water is open to them. Recent experiments at Cornell University contradict this idea.

Harry Leon Kutz found that both mallards and blacks would feed on corn

in water five or seven feet deep, and that the blacks, with difficulty and with much effort, could reach the corn in ten feet of water. He will be reporting his findings in the Journal of Wildlife Management.

The fact remains, however, that most black ducks will prefer to feed in water where it is simply necessary for them to "tip-up" to reach bottom, or else ashore.

**NEW WARBLER** -- "Time," February 26, page 48, pictured and described a new warbler, *Dendroica potomac*, of which a pair had been collected by K.W. Haller in the West Virginia eastern panhandle, 100 miles or so from Washington.

Previous to this announcement details of the new bird were published in "The Prothonotary" of the Buffalo Ornithological Society, based on an article in the January issue of "The Cardinal." Sutton's Warbler has been proposed as the English name of the bird, in honor of Dr. Sutton of Cornell and Bethany, W. Va.

The new warbler is described as having a broad yellow throat and breast somewhat like the yellow-throated warbler, in appearance somewhat suggesting both that and the parula warbler, and a song like that of the parula warbler. Mr. Haller collected specimens. The possibility that the bird may be a hybrid between the yellow-throated and parula warblers is discussed in "The Cardinal."

**WINTER EAGLE** -- H.V.D. Allen reports the presence once again of a bald eagle along the Hudson River north of Waterford, found March 16. Although nature birds have been seen in that section in previous winters, the individual seen by Mr. Allen is reported as an immature bird. Mr. Allen also reports the continued presence of a pair of hooded mergansers in the same locality.

**BARRED OWL** - This species of owl, once more or less plentiful in this region, has been found with less and less frequency in recent years. There are some who claim its relative scarcity is the result of the corresponding increase in numbers of the larger, more harmful great horned owl.

For this reason a record, made on March 22 in Central Park, Schenectady, by Joseph Overstreet, is of interest. Mr. Overstreet reports that he found the bird in the usual fashion of following up a crow disturbance.

## OUR TWO KINDS OF RUFFED GROUSE

By Leonard J. Utter

In the east it is rare that more than one subspecies of a bird occurs as a breeding resident in such a limited area as is encompassed by the Schenectady region. When such a phenomenon occurs it is usually due to a substantial divergence of altitudes within the area.

Here in the Schenectady region the divergence of altitudes is great enough so that at least one bird, the Ruffed Grouse, is represented by two subspecies. In the Helderbergs, and probably the higher portions of Saratoga and Montgomery Counties, the Canada Ruffed Grouse, *Bonasa umbellus togata*, is the commoner bird. Throughout the lowlands the Eastern Ruffed Grouse, *Bonasa u. umbellus*, is the representative race. By no means, however, are the ranges of these two races clean-cut. It is not unusual to encounter good examples of the Canada within the range of the Eastern, and vice versa, and there are all stages in between. This may be attributed to inbreeding. This condition of one form in the highlands and another in the lowlands is general throughout New York State and the east, and has been checked by the examination of many study skins.

I find that many observers are under the impression that all our local Ruffed Grouse must belong to the Eastern race on account of the statements in the AOU check-list. It is customary to attribute the presence of those grayish individuals we see so often to the well-known dichromatism of this species. (When a bird occurs in either of two color phases it exhibits dichromatism. The screech owl is another example since some are gray, others reddish.) While it is true that among the red Eastern race there are a few grayish individuals, rarely are these birds ever as gray as the dark gray Canada race. Conversely, the few red phase individuals of Canada are nowhere near as red as the red Eastern race ("red", of course, being used in a comparative sense). Most of the birds I have seen in the lowlands have been reddish while most of the

birds I have seen in the Helderbergs have been grayish. Sometimes, when you can get a good look at a roosting or grounded highland grouse through your glass you may note that it is usually very heavily barred on the underparts, that there is much black in the plumage, that the tail is almost iron-gray with much black mottling and speckling, and that the light areas of the face and throat are dirty white in color. On the other hand lowland birds are considerably less barred below, brown replaces the black in the plumage to a great extent, the tail usually has some red or brown in it, and the light areas of the face and throat are buff colored. Of course many other differences between these two subspecies show up in the hand. For ex-

ample, the feathers of the pedal tract cover about two-thirds of the tarsus, or shank of the leg, in the Canada, whereas they cover only about one-half of the tarsus in the Eastern. The toe pectinations of the former average longer than those of the latter.

It is extremely rare that subspecific differences can be noted in the field. Under optimum field conditions I think it could be done with Ruffed Grouse with about as much certainty as distinguishing between Yellow and Western Palm Warblers, and you know how difficult that is.

### SUBSPECIES AGAIN

By Samuel A. Eliot, Jr.

I SHOULD LIKE to endorse every word of Mr. Uttal's contribution to FEATHERS for February (and also Mr. Van Tyne's editorial in the December "Wilson Bulletin, to which Mr. Uttal refers). At the same time, however, I should like to point out that field observers are inevitably interested in subspecific distinctions and often quite capable of making them.

A trinomial (subspecific designation) is superfluous when only one form of a species is known to occur (other than accidentally) in a region and is impossible when a region is in the transition area where two breeding subspecies intergrade; e.g., Eastern and Canadian Ruffed Grouse in Western Massachusetts or Maryland and Northern Yellowthroats in Central New Jersey.

But it seems to me only sensible to make use of trinomials when two or more subspecies regularly occur in a region and can be distinguished out of the hand (even if only once in 50 times that the species is seen and binomially recorded) or when, as in a recent list of birds breeding in Ontario, the two races of Palm Warbler, breeding at the western and eastern edges of the province, hundreds of miles apart, are confusingly treated as the same bird.

We in Massachusetts regularly look for and list separately two forms of black duck, willet, dowitcher, horned lark, gray-cheeked thrush, and palm warbler, together with three of the sharp-tailed sparrow. Some of us believe we can distinguish two forms of bald eagle, veery, grackle, redpoll, red crossbill,

and savannah sparrow. Where size alone is the criterion, we are normally content with a mere binomial, as with snow geese or pine grosbeaks or with transient gray-cheeked thrushes or bald eagles. The difference between American and northern eiders is too minute for subspecific field identification, and that between yellow-throated and soyamore warblers is known to so few Massachusetts observers that almost all the sight records in our state are binomial only.

But, as an observer's skill and experience grow and he becomes able to distinguish the two species of yellow-legs, shrike, scap, or murre and able to identify the four similar Empidonax or Sternae -- and even female eiders, golden-eyes, or widgeons -- he becomes, by the same measure, able to distinguish subspecies and of course enjoys exercising this power and looking for finer and finer points.

A subspecific identification, exactly like a difficult specific identification, is made acceptable by the expertness of the observer and his description of all the attendant circumstances, considered with the relative "identifiability" of the form and its known status in the region.

For instance, on page 2 of FEATHERS for February, it is correctly said that the Acadian Chickadee is more likely to occur near Schenectady than the Hudsonian; yet either race might occur, and a cautious recorder would assuredly list this bird of last January 17 as neither, but rather (binomially) a brown-capped chickadee.

As to Mr. Janiec's article on shepp-tailed sparrows, which may have evoked Mr. Uttal's warning, it was doubtless a formidable introduction to subspecific complexities for some of the less advanced bird students who read it, and the binomial is quite sufficient for any sharp tails seen in upstate New York. But collecting and comparing will almost certainly show that neither the Acadian form nor the far-western form occurs there (save accidentally) and that "northern" sharp tail is therefore a clearer, better designation than plain "sharp tail."

(Editor's Note: Mr. Uttal's article was written before the article by Mr. Janiec was published.)

# FEATHERS

Published by the Schenectady Bird Club

MAY, 1940

VOL. 2, NO. 5

## BIRDING IN FLORIDA

By Dorothy Caldwell

(Editor's Note: Miss Caldwell spoke at the April meeting of S B C about her trip during March to Florida. Her talk is being published complete in this and the following FEATHERS.)

\*\*\*

Doubtless many of you at about this time of the year have wished to hasten the springtime by slipping away from our northland country during the weeks when Winter is officially nearing its close but when Spring is coming so reluctantly -- the nameless season, one writer calls it, neither winter nor spring. For years I have wanted to take a part of my vacation in March and go south at least a little ways. This year the Florida field trips offered by the National Association of Audubon Societies under Mr. Sprunt's leadership and the fact

that my bird-banding friend, Mrs. Beale, was visiting Florida this year made me especially eager to go this season. I left Mount McGregor in storn early in March and the next morning woke to green lawns, peach and plum trees in bloom in Jacksonville, great blue herons - or rather, Ward's heron as the Florida subspecies is called - and American egrets beside a marshy pond near St. Augustine and everywhere along the railroad tracks the fragrant yellow jasmine gloriously in blossom.

Florida, I found as I did some preliminary reading, and as some of you already know, is a veritable winter paradise for the bird watcher, as the English call us. Howell says, "Comprising as it does, a long narrow peninsula projecting southward into the tropics and ... (Continued, Page 17)..."

## TO THE HERONRY

On the Schenectady section of the U. S. Topographic Map locate the point that is 7/8 inch in from the right edge and 3-3/4 inches above the bottom edge.

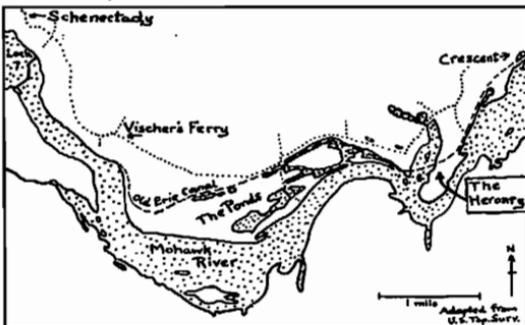
That point is the site of the nests of the Black-crowned Night Herons, where they nest by the scores in dead trees in a swamp and in dying trees along the edge. The nesting season is now at its height, and the heronry is well worth a visit. An admonition - wear old clothes and be prepared for wet feet.

Briefly, the heronry is reached by driving to Vischer's Ferry (at the right-angle turn in the main road past the Edison Golf Club continue ahead on the dirt road instead of making the turn). At Vischer's Ferry follow the road paralleling the river. Nearly two miles beyond the Vischer's Ferry corners is a break in the road. The one to the right goes down to "The Ponds," another section well worth a visit. Continuing parallel with the river for approximately two miles more, one drives right along the edge of a bay of the river and starts to climb. Up this hill the main road goes

to the left; the heron-seeker swings to the right. At the bottom of the rather steep hill is the abandoned Erie Canal.

Park where convenient, cross the old canal and continue along the edge of the canal to the right, or in the direction of Schenectady. Follow the trail into the woods just before reaching the bay; and the herons will be to the left, easily heard, and easily seen.

Mosquitoes are also easily heard, and easily felt. But so are they in plenty of other favorite birding places.





FEATHERS is published monthly by and for the Schenectady Bird Club, and goes to members. Contributions and suggestions for improvements are desired. Annual Membership - Active, \$2; Associate, \$1; Junior, 50¢.

Barrington S. Havens, Editor, 63 No. Brandywine Avenue.

### DATES TO BEAR IN MIND

May 27 - Monthly meeting of club; picnic at Central Park. Topic - "Bird Songs," with demonstrations by them and explanations by B. S. Havens. See following item for details.

May 30 - All-day field trip. Leader and place to be determined at picnic meeting of May 27.

June 8 and 9 - Week-end trip to Long Trail Lodge, Vermont, with Sasassafras Bird Club, Amsterdam. Consult Mrs. W. H. Norris, Jr., 4-6847.

June 24 - Monthly S B C meeting. Details in next issue.

July 29 - S B C meeting.

### FIRST OUTDOOR MEETING

Because May is the month best loved by the bird student, plans have been made for an outdoor meeting of the S B C on Monday, May 27, at 6 o'clock. Not only will there be an opportunity to become a little better acquainted with a warbler or two, or perhaps a flycatcher, and to enjoy a club program, but we shall have supper together. The menu is certainly bound to please all, since each will take whatever he wants, hot or cold, little or much.

Come along, then, with your picnic supper to the Central Park picnic grounds. If you cannot come for supper, plan to be present at 7:30 o'clock for the program.

Barrington S. Havens will act as leader of a discussion of bird songs, including the value of knowing the songs in identifying birds, types of bird songs, and methods of recording.

In case of rain the club will meet as usual at the Schenectady Museum at 8 o'clock for the program.

-- Alice Holmes, Program Committee.

### OFFICERS ELECTED

Schenectady Bird Club directors for 1940 include: George H. Bainbridge, records; Guy Bartlett, field activities and chairman; Frank Freese, junior activities; Barrington S. Havens, publications; Alice Holmes, program; Chester N. Moore, treasurer; W. Roy Steele, conservation; and Nelle VanVorst, secretary.

### AMONG LOCAL AUTHORS

The Arbor Day and Bird Day number of the Bulletin to the Schools, published by the University of the State of New York (March, 1940), contains three articles of particular local interest: "A Community Bird Sanctuary" by Walter Elwood, Supervisor of Nature Education, Amsterdam; "Autumn Shore Birds in the Albany Region" by Dr. Dayton Stoner, State Zoologist, New York State Museum, Albany; and "The Albany Prairie Warbler Colony" by Edgar Bedell, Schenectady.

Mr. Elwood presents the story of the 75-acre refuge of the Sasassafras Bird Club, within the northwest corner of the city of Amsterdam. More than 50 species have nested within the sanctuary, including the Tree and Rough-winged Swallows, Crested Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, Canada, and Nashville Warblers, Louisiana Water-thrush, and Red-shouldered Hawk. The story of the way in which the sanctuary has been built up to its importance of today is well told.

Mr. Bedell tells in greater detail the story of the Prairie Warbler colony which he described in FEATHERS, July, 1939. By June 1 of last year the haunts of 40 of the males had been plotted by him on a topographic map. Several Schenectadians were introduced to this species by Mr. Bedell.

Dr. Stoner presents some of his records of shore birds for 1936 through 1939 at Lock 7, Watervliet Reservoir, the Hudson River below Albany to Stuyvesant, Tomhannock Reservoir, and Saratoga Lake. Among records of particular interest are:

Semipalmated Plover occurring often on the face of the dam at Lock 7 - a species additional to those listed in FEATHERS, September, 1939.

Semipalmated Plover, two along Hudson River 18 miles below Albany October 28, 1937.

Killdeer, November 11, 1937, and November 20, 1938, at Saratoga Lake.

Black-bellied Plover, eleven on October 8 and one on October 12, 1937, at Stuyvesant; one on November 11, 1937, at Saratoga Lake; and two on August 9, 1939, at Watervliet Reservoir.

Wilson's Snipe, one on November 11, 1937, at Saratoga Lake. (Shown by Eaton to December 5 maximum in Albany County, but no recent records of such lateness.)

Pectoral Sandpiper, two at Saratoga Lake November 14, 1937.

White-rumped Sandpiper, 17 on October 12, 1936, at Tomhannock Reservoir; two on October 3, 1937, near top of dam at Lock 7.

Eastern Dowitcher, one at Watervliet Reservoir on August 25 and 30, 1939.

Northern Phalarope, one at Watervliet Reservoir August 11, 1939.

## WHY BIRDS ?

By George H. Bainbridge

In this mad whirligig called life, relatively few have either the time or the inclination to reflect upon the orderly processes of nature by which the precarious existence of mankind is maintained. Certainly it is only human to take much for granted, especially the commonplace, without thought of change of the effect of such change on human existence. So it is with the birds, noticed perhaps in the spring when they return and life in these latitudes is starting afresh, but otherwise more or less nonchalantly dismissed as just another manifestation of nature. But what a lot this avian manifestation means to mankind even to the very maintenance of human existence!

Thus in the domesticated birds, such as chickens, geese, ducks, turkeys, and others, there is an invaluable food supply. Moreover, the 'kill', both legitimate and otherwise, of wild game birds, such as the edible ducks, geese, pheasants, grouse, wild turkey, and others is used for food purposes. Of course, the legitimate kill of the true sportsmen affords in addition certain recreational benefits. The illegitimate kill is largely on a commercial basis. Something is being done, but much remains to be done, by conservation-minded organizations and the authorities to stop the vicious practices of the commercial killer. Unless overshooting is stopped, one after another of the edible game birds will be added to the list of extinct food species which now includes the Passenger Pigeon, the Heath Hen, the Eskimo Curlew, and others. And so does man destroy the gifts of beneficent Nature and thereby weaken his own chances of survival.

Besides the food value of certain domestic and wild birds, some species of both, ducks and geese in particular, are of considerable economic importance from the standpoint of their down and feathers, which are used in down-filled comforters, pillows, etc. In fact, these uses helped to cause the extinction of the Great Auk and nearly wiped out the Eider Duck. In the case of this duck, as with the Great Auk, the parent birds were literally killed on the nesting grounds with the result that both young and old were wiped out at one fell blow. Thanks to an awakened public opinion, this has been practically stopped. However, the Canadian government now, under careful supervision and regulation, permits at the end of the breeding season recovery from the abandoned nests of the Eider Duck of the down which the female birds pluck from their breasts to line the nests. It is, of course, necessary to choose and clean this nesting down carefully, and the government is schooling the down-gatherers to obtain the best quality. If, as now appears, the procedure can be developed to insure a satisfactory product, those who live near the breeding grounds

of these birds, where even to eke out an existence is usually a stern reality, will have some additional income.

Because of the use of their feathers for millinery and other dress purposes many other species such as the egrets as well as other herons and also gulls, grebes and terns owe their existence today only to the strenuous efforts which were and are being exerted to save them from extinction.

Wherever there is life, these must eventually be death. So in the animal world, apart from that which suitably disposes of its dead, nature has wisely provided for the quick disposal of decaying animal matter in order to maintain sanitary conditions, especially in hot climates. Here again the avian population comes to the front for nature has wisely provided scavengers or carrion eaters, such as the buzzards, gulls, crows, bald eagle, caracara, and California condor. The condor and one species of caracara are now practically extinct in consequence of the persecution of man. In some states, particularly the southern, the fact that the vultures are protected not only by law (in 22 states) but also by the far more effective force of public opinion is indicative of the economic value of these birds.

To the grower of crops there are many pests but perhaps none more damaging than rodents, such as rats, mice, gophers, and other small animals which destroy both growing and harvested crops. Again the avian population comes to the rescue with many hawks and owls gifted by nature with special appetites for these destructive animals. Inasmuch as some species of mice eat the bark of trees, which they girdle apparently regardless of size, the orchardist is, in particular, deeply indebted to the mouse-eating species of birds, such as the hawks and owls. Yet, to far too many farmers and hunters every hawk is a chicken hawk and to see one is to try to kill it. This, despite the fact that extensive analyses of hawk diets show that the more common hawks eat very little poultry. Only five species of hawks and three species of owls remain unprotected in New York State.

To anyone who has tried to grow things, either for pleasure or a livelihood, the constant fight against weeds and insects is all too intense. There just seems to be no end of weeds to smother the crop, and for every species of plant there are one or more kinds of insects to destroy it or its fruit.

Seeds from weeds growing on uncultivated or poorly cultivated areas are spread by the wind and other natural agencies to adjacent cultivated areas. Thus, even with intensive cultivation,

if it were not for the seed-eaters among the birds, such as the sparrow family in particular, efforts to grow food would have to be so much more intense as greatly to increase the cost and even to discourage further attempts. In fact, it is readily conceivable that without the seed-eating birds it would be economically impossible to raise crops in many places.

While humanity is greatly indebted to the seed-eating birds, it is probably more indebted to the insect-eating birds. So much so, in fact, that it is highly unlikely that mankind could survive without these insect-eating birds. Among the birds there are many whose principal diet is insects, for example the flycatchers, swallows, woodpeckers, warblers, etc. But it is particularly fortuitous that the period during which the insects come into being and are most destructive to new growth and especially fruits is coincident with the breeding season of the birds since at this time practically all land birds feed their young on insects. Without the birds the orchardist would have to coat growing fruit with even more poison than is used today. Besides greatly increasing the work and the cost, this would involve further expensive handling to render the sprayed fruit edible. In fact, it is quite likely that fruit growing would become economically impossible. Moreover, most trees are subject to insect pests which tend to destroy the tree itself. But again Nature has provided us with woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, brown creeper, black and white warbler, etc., to maintain a balance so that we may have trees without which nothing, as the traveler of the desert only too well learns. Also mosquitoes are annoying, to say the least, but they would be much more so if it were not for the diet of certain birds, such as the nighthawks, etc.

Besides the economic value of birds they present certain esthetic and interest values covering a wide range. The artist can find a riot of color and moods to portray, the photographer infinite intriguing though often patience-trying shots, the music lover songs that have yet to be written and calls that run the gamut of bird emotions, fear, warning, happiness, hunger, scolding, pugnacity, etc. Even the invalid and shut-in can enjoy the songs and actions of birds and by feeding them obtain even more joy from the closer association thus afforded.

Thus in the balance of an all-provident Nature, birds:

1. Furnish food
2. Provide bedding material
3. Act as scavengers
4. Reduce weeds
5. Minimize harmful insects
6. Destroy harmful rodents
7. Present esthetic and human interest values.

There may be other worthwhile features, but these suffice to indicate the important part birds play in the drama of life for the benefit of mankind.

## DESPITE MID-APRIL SNOWS

By John Engle, Mount McGregor

Saturday, April 13th, was a day for birding that a few of us will long remember. We had planned to introduce the Secretary of S B C to our River Road, but we had had nearly 8 inches of fresh snow at Mount McGregor during the night and the weather Saturday was so dubious that we considered the trip definitely off, automatically cancelled as it were. Fortunately for us, Miss Nelle VanVorst did not see things that way. She appeared blithely at Mount McGregor at noon with tales of kinglets and sapsuckers in Schenectady and a wealth of migrants at the foot of the mountain.

In my many Aprils at Mount McGregor I have never seen such a sight as the lower half of the mountain road presented that day. Hordes of small birds, long overdue in this region, had apparently surged north in an irresistible wave of migration. They had found the whole countryside heavily blanketed with fresh snow and had settled in the only places where they could find bare ground available for feeding - the roads and roadsides. There must have been hundreds of them along that mile of mountain road.

As we drove down, the first birds we saw were hermit thrushes, then robins everywhere, fox sparrows busily scratching for food, myriads of juncos, tree sparrows, song sparrows, and even vesper sparrows. They hardly flew as the car approached, being too hungry or too busy to be disturbed easily. If a little band did fly up, it settled right down again a few feet farther on.

Conditions were similar on the main highway but we did not see so many species nor nearly so great a concentration of individuals as we drove to Glens Falls. One roadside clump of birches was providing food for a busy flock of goldfinches and pine siskins. In Glens Falls we saw and heard a flock of evening grosbeaks, welcome guests each winter in a beautiful garden there.

The River Road is a little-used county road from South Glens Falls to Schenectady and for about ten miles of its length it follows closely the west bank of the Hudson River. It is an interesting and a beautiful drive at any season but never have I seen it stage such a spectacle as it did for us that afternoon. The narrow edges of bare ground along the road simply teemed with small birds as had the mountain road, mostly the same species except that we did not see hermit thrushes and we did see savannah sparrows and sizeable flocks of blackbirds - redwings and rusty blackbirds, bronzed grackles, and cowbirds.

For the first few miles we saw no waterfowl but finally in a little sheltered cove we saw ducks and soon a flash of light on the shining white crown of one of the males helped us identify a little group of baldpates. As we went on, almost every little bay and curve

offered its treasures. The birds were very near shore, we had the road to ourselves, and using the car as a blind, we were able to approach closely and to study them carefully. We had fine views again and again of blue-winged teal, ring-necked duck, lesser scaup, American golden-eye, red-breasted mergansers, Holboell's and horned grebes, resplendent in nuptial plumage, a group of wood duck, and a lone pied-billed grebe.

Near Schuylerville we saw flocks of prairie horned larks whirling in the drifting snow, and a small flock of tree swallows. We saw red-shouldered, marsh, and sparrow hawks, mourning doves, bluebirds, and meadowlarks.

Most of the birds were seen within a rough quarter circle extending about a dozen miles north of Mount McGregor and a dozen miles southeast.

## BIRDING IN FLORIDA

... (Continued from P. 13)...  
 provided with myriad lakes, ponds, marshes, tidal lagoons, it is an attractive lane of migration for many birds and furnishes an ideal home at all seasons for immense numbers of waterfowl, shore birds and swamp-loving species. . . . Nowhere else in North America may be found such populous rookeries of pelicans, water-turkeys, egrets, herons, and ibises. There have been recorded for the state 134 permanent residents and 31 summer residents, making 165 breeding species and subspecies. Add to this 136 winter residents, 69 regular transients, and 50 accidental or casual visitors, giving a winter population of 270 varieties, with 435 species and subspecies reported for the state during the year. Howell divides the state into ten natural physiographic divisions, each with its characteristic flora and fauna: the flat woods, the high pinelands, hammocks, sand scrub, swamps, everglades, salt marshes, sea beaches, prairies, and the keys. In his "Florida Bird Life" and in Mr. Longstreet's fine article in a recent Bird-Lore these physiographic divisions are fully discussed and the birds one may hope to find in each are carefully listed. Naturally I was interested to see which of the 435 it would be my privilege to see in my brief visit of ten days or so.

Daytona Beach was my first stop and for a few days I made my home two miles north of Seabreeze, Seabreeze being the ocean-beach part of Daytona. It was not necessary to even leave the house for treats for hungry northern eyes and ears. Thanks to my friend's fine bird bath and several feeding stations on her lawn, birds from the sand scrub were always within sight or sound from dawn until dark - cardinals, Florida jays (quite different from our northern blue jay - a crestless bird with solid blue wings and tail and a gray back, not unlike the California jay), mockingbirds, ground doves (such dainty little creatures with wings flashing a beautiful rufous red in flight) and always myrtle and palm warblers. My first morning I was awakened by the welcome call of the towhee.

The beach lay directly in front of the house, and many happy hours were spent sitting there watching the surf or strolling up and down the sands, and always, before I started in any other direction, my feet just naturally turned toward the beach for at least a few moments. There were always birds to be seen - gulls feeding on the beach or in graceful flight, mostly ring-billed gulls with many laughing gulls and occasionally in flight the dainty Bonaparte gull, common terns in flight and royal terns feeding on the beach with the gulls (the royal tern is almost as large as a gull with a conspicuous black cap), brom pelicans, cormorants, sanderlings, and occasionally far out at sea gannets flying by. Torrey says of the brown pelican "They were always flying up or down the beach, and, unless turned from their course by the presence of some suspicious object, they kept straight on just above the breakers, rising and falling with the waves; now appearing above them, and now out of sight in the trough of the sea. Sometimes a single bird passed, but commonly they were in small flocks - and whatever their number, always in Indian file. Evidently some dreadful thing would happen if two pelicans should ever travel abreast. It was partly this unusual order of march, I suspect, which gave such an air of preternatural gravity to their movements. Indeed their solemnity was so great that I came at last to find it almost ridiculous." Almost as though they were trying by their dignity to live down the ridiculous limerick that has immortalized them.

By far the most abundant bird on the beach was the sanderling. They were always to be seen "bunzy as ants, running in a body down the beach after a receding wave, and the next moment scampering back again with all speed before an incoming one. They tolerated no near approach but were at once on the wing for a long flight up or down the coast, looking like a flock of snow-white birds as they turned their underparts to the sun in rising above the breakers. Their manner of feeding, with the head pitched forward, and a quick, eager movement, as if they had eaten nothing for days, and were fearful that their present bit of good fortune would not last, is strongly characteristic, so that they can be recognized a long way off." Again I am quoting from Bradford Torrey's "Florida Sketchbook."

My second day at Seabreeze I went to the beach for a moment and a little to the north and fairly close inshore was a huge flock of gannets feeding, the air filled with their tumultuous flight and their spectacular plunges. Many of you have seen them at Bonaventure Island in the Gaspé or from boats off shore and know what large handsome birds they are with their long pointed white wings with broad black tips and how striking they are in flight. I had watched a flock from one of the Cape Cod beaches last October and counted it an especial privilege - and here I was watching them again from shore in Florida just five months later. They seldom come near shore unless the fishing is best there

and never alight on land, outside their ganneries, unless injured.

After watching the gannets a while, I started to cross the little peninsula to the Halifax River but the sand scrub was so full of bird song that I had to stop to investigate. All the birds of the lawn were there, and in addition, fish crows, southern flickers, my first red-bellied woodpecker (I like the local name of zebra woodpecker better, his back is beautifully marked with black and white in fine stripes and he has a beautiful red head, but I did not see his red belly at all until I picked up a dead bird in the road one day), house wrens, catbirds, brown thrashers, Florida blue jays (a subspecies of our northern blue jay and much less common than the Florida or scrub jay I have previously described), Florida grackles and then, I heard a song that was entirely new to me. The singer seemed to be a Carolina wren but he seemed so much ruddier than the one Carolina wren of my acquaintance - and it was the Florida wren, a subspecies of the Carolina. In fact, while most of the shore birds and many of the land birds were species that would be coming north to us later, many of the smaller birds were not only southern subspecies, as the southern flicker and the southern pine warbler, but many were Florida subspecies, as the Florida grackle, Florida redwing, and even a Florida duck. There was little in bloom at that season in the scrub - occasional spider lilies, violets, Houstonia, and a blueberry-like shrub, but I found the scrub so fascinating that the morning was gone before I realized it - and I had gone only one block from the house!

That afternoon my friend took me for a drive down the beach. Many of you know how beautiful the Florida beaches are - fine, firm, hard sand for many miles - I believe the strip near Seabreeze extends for about 30 miles north and south - and automobiles, especially at low tide use it regularly as a thoroughfare. You doubtless know also that an automobile makes an excellent blind. Imagine driving on a firm, hard beach and stopping close to each group of sandpipers that you wished to study a bit. The beach birds are mostly sanderlings but we also saw many ruddy turnstones, semipalmated or ring-neck plovers, and least sandpipers, once a loon stranded on the beach, once a water-turkey flying by, my first sight of him, and also my first herring gulls in Florida. The herring gull is abundant on the northern coast of Florida but farther south is largely replaced by the smaller ring-billed gull. At the inlet, after about 15 miles of beach driving, we saw black skimmers far out on a sand bar, and walking on the dunes near the inlet I saw my first Louisiana heron, my first little blue, and my first snowy egret. The drive home along the Halifax River side gave us more herons and egrets, belted kingfishers, robins, and Florida redwings. Even the song of the Florida redwing is different from ours - instead of the familiar Kon-ker-ee, he puts an extra syllable on the end - Kon-ker-ee-ah, as though even the redwings must adopt a bit of the characteristic southern drawl.

My third day was cold with a high wind. Those of you who have been south know how noisy such a wind can be with the leaves of palm and palmetto lashing all day and being torn to ribbons that they may lash the more furiously. The birds were very quiet and few were to be seen except the usual beach birds. My only new bird that day was the logger-head shrike. I was to see many of them later but I was told that their food is largely grasshoppers, insects, and mice and that they seldom bother small birds so I was quite reconciled to their abundance.

Fortunately the wind died in the night for my friend had invited me to go out on a Halifax River Bird Club field trip the next day. We drove north along the Halifax River, past the Rockefeller estate, crossed some flat marshy country resembling the Everglades (My notion of the Everglades was of impenetrable cypress swamps and was quite wrong), and headed for a beautiful grove of cypress and live oak. Bald eagles, osprey, red-shouldered and red-tailed hawks, turkey vultures, yellowlegs, and pied-billed grebes were the additions to my Florida list as we drove along with frequent pauses to see what we could see or hear. The visit to the cypress grove was one of the high spots of the day and of all my Florida days. Towhees were calling everywhere, we were overjoyed occasionally to hear the song of the white-throated sparrow, hermit thrushes were numerous but quiet of course, tufted titmice were busily calling and flitting about, and ruby-crowned kinglets and pine warblers were there to be seen - and the jasmine was in bloom everywhere.

Our next stop was beside a fine cypress pond. As the cars were slowing down a group of about a dozen snowy egrets poured out of a little cove, flew about, settled on the far side of the pond momentarily and then flew off, leaving the pond to a Louisiana heron and a company of little blues, both adult blue and young whites, and a company of yellowlegs feeding daintily but very quietly for yellowlegs. The Louisiana heron "is about the same size as the little blue heron, but (Torrey again) with an air of daintiness and lightness that is quite its own and quite indescribable." It seems to well merit its local name of "Lady of the Waters."

That afternoon gave me my first really satisfactory glimpse of the black skimmers. There was usually a congregation of them on a sand bar near one of the Halifax River bridges but traffic is busy on the bridge and one does not stop for birding, and I did so want to see the incredible creatures close at hand, to see them in flight and to study them with binoculars. They are a bit smaller and more slender than the herring gull, boldly patterned in black and white, with bright orange bills and legs, and with the lower mandible about one-third longer than the upper, giving them a most curious appearance.

\* \* \*

(Miss Caldwell will describe her trip to Okeechobee in the next issue.)

THE SEASON - Winter, 1939-1940

Perhaps most of you wonder, with winter really past, why bring the subject up now when everybody is looking forward to summer. At any rate the fuel bill is a good indication that it was a cold winter. Truly enough December was very dry and erratic with its ups and downs of temperature, but January and February showed the mercury how to get well below freezing and stay there although there were no extremely low temperatures. March was not far behind, and a small-sized blizzard on April 12 had even the birds worried. Heavy snowfall through January, February and March made feeding difficult, especially for the ground birds, and feeding stations were well patronized by hungry birds dependent on snow-removal equipment.

The unusually steady cold and the heavy snowfall undoubtedly helped to cause many of the surprises which the bird enthusiasts experienced. But this is what serves to whet the interest. The previous winter it was the Mockingbird and numerous flocks of Purple Finches and Redpolls, the latter remaining until it appeared they might become summer residents instead of winter visitors. This winter Purple Finches and Redpolls were few and far between and, of course, there was no Mockingbird. Brown Creepers were also scarce; it was not even reported on the Club's Christmas Census.

One might think the birds intuitively sensed a real winter in the offing. The Pine Grosbeak, an irregular rare winter visitor, made an early appearance in this section, with a flock of five at Indian Ladder as early as November 26. Subsequently they appeared throughout this section and to the north in unusually large flocks, feeding on the dried samaras of the ash trees. Late in January the Evening Grosbeak, also a rare winter visitor, began to appear, and continued to show up in large numbers to eat the dried samaras of the box elder. In fact, at least one pair were still enjoying sunflower seeds at Scotia feeding stations in mid-May, as the box elders had long since been stripped of their winged seeds.

The Cedar Waxwing, an occasional winter resident, was represented by one flock of about six along the lower Lisha Kill and a much larger flock along Gordon Road.

Although no Robin was recorded on the Christmas Census as in some years, yet one at least failed to take a Florida vacation this year. This one was reported by Mrs. H. G. Reist in her yard January 7. About ten days later a Robin, possibly the same bird, was reported by Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Mitchell of Becker Street who played good Samaritans to this cold and hungry bird. Even the Robins around for the April 12 storm were clearly disappointed to find a five-inch snow-frothing over their worm-hunting grounds. They certainly envied the seed-eaters at the feeding stations where they looked the fare over without pecking.

A Rough-legged Hawk, among the A-1 mousers, late last fall decided that it was time to clear the mice from the garden plots on Hog Island. Evidently the job was to his liking as he remained until the snow was heavy on the territory.

The past Christmas Census included for the first time the Pine Siskin, the outstanding find of the census.

Because of the tight and sustained freeze-over of streams and lakes in the vicinity the water-birds did not include anything particularly unusual for the winter season, although a pair of Hooded Mergansers and a Great Blue Heron were reported along the Hudson River January 15 by Messrs. Allen and Stone.

-- G. H. B.

DUES OVERDUE

Treasurer Chester N. Moore has a number of attractive 1940 membership cards he has not yet been able to deliver. The delay on his part is because of delay by the members in paying their dues. Further issues of FEATHERS will be sent only to those whose dues are paid. Plan on seeing him at the picnic meeting May 27 or, better, mail dues to him at 801 Bedford Road, before then.

NEWS AND NOTES IN BRIEF

\*\* BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION -- Only with the cooperation of all Schenectady Bird Club members can this column of news and notes be kept complete and interesting. Jot down your observations briefly on a card, and mail them to the Editor.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* DUNKER -- Human beings have no monopoly on the art of dunking. We observed a grackle a couple of weeks ago come to the bird-bath with a piece of bread in his bill. He perched on the edge of the bath, dunked the bread, ate a bit, then dunked it again. He seemed to enjoy this way of eating his meal.

-- Ealy Hallenbeck.

\*\* THE YEAR'S LIST -- In order to have the yearly record as complete as possible, it is requested that all those having "bird finds" report observers' names, species of bird, date, location, number, and any interesting facts in regard to feeding, nesting, song, etc., to G. H. Bainbridge, 32 Washington Road, Scotia, either by postal card or telephone 6-5349.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* RED-HEADED -- An unusual guest, a red-headed woodpecker, visited the city May 7. As some of our club members were walking through Vale Cemetery on their way to business, a brilliant spot of color focused their attention. The at-

tractive black-and-white bird with its gorgeous red head was feeding, quite undisturbed by passers by, on the grassy plot near the Nott Terrace gate. As his observers drew nearer, he flew to a low branch of a maple tree and then to the trunk of an elm, still keeping within close range. He spent that day feeding in that small area, and was again seen May 10 in the same place.- N.G.VanVorst.

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* PARK PRAIRIE - Among the many warblers in Central Park on Sunday, May 12, there was a male Prairie Warbler, a bird now established as a summer resident in the Pine Bush section but one that has been seen but seldom elsewhere in this vicinity. The bird was observed at close range for several minutes, and the different field marks established. In 1932 there were records of several Prairie Warblers in Central Park. -C.N.Moore

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* ALL ABOUT THE GROSBEAKS -- There certainly was no scarcity of grosbeaks, both pines and evenings, during the past winter. It had been planned to survey all of the reports of the birds in an article in this issue of FEATHERS. However, the story could not be told completely, since in early May the evening grosbeaks were still reporting at feeding stations laden with sunflower seeds.

If you have observations on these birds to contribute, send them to the record committee. The summary of the records will be published next month.

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* AFTER THE SNOW -- The unexpected snow on Friday, April 12, caused misery for some of the birds here on the two following days. Robins were to be seen feeding on sumacs, rotted apples still clinging to trees; and they visited feeding stations where they had not been seen previously. Bluebirds, Phoebes, Hermit Thrushes, and several other species were similarly hard-pressed for food. Whether the few Tree Swallows seen over the river were able to find insects is open to question, so strong was the wind and so low the temperature.

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* 316 SPECIES -- The Massachusetts Audubon Society shows records of 316 species identified in that state during 1939. Ludlow Griscom had 277 species on his list.

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* ATTRACTING BIRDS, Conservation Bulletin No. 1 of the Biological Survey Bureau, Interior Department, has just been announced. This 15-page, illustrated bulletin is not only an outline of the elements of attracting birds but it also refers the reader to more complete information on certain phases of the subject in earlier publications of the Biological Survey. It is available from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., at 5 cents a copy.

\*\* AT HOBBY SHOW -- Malcolm Rix, S B C member, had one of the feature attractions at the National Hobby Show in New York City last month. The collection of his replicas in wood of the Passenger Pigeon, Labrador Duck, and other species - which featured one of the S B C meetings last winter - attracted much attention at the show. In fact, on a day when Mr. Rix visited the show he was worried when he noticed the male Passenger Pigeon was missing from the collection. The absence was easily explained, however; it was being shown in the front window. Also exhibited by Mr. Rix were his replicas of butterflies and his collection of New York State species.

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* SPRING SHORE-BIRDS -- Schenectady, in common with many other sections, is more blessed with shore-birds in the fall than in the spring. In late summer there are plenty of mud flats in evidence locally, and the shore-birds know of them. In the spring such flats are far from common, for the streams are high and the ponds, lakes and reservoirs full. This spring, however, the Watervliet Reservoir level was lower than usual, there were mud flats, and more than usual shore-bird records.

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* ALBERT R. BRAND -- Known to some of S B C members, and known of by the other members because of his pioneer work in recording bird songs was Albert R. Brand, research associate in ornithology at Cornell University, who died there in March after a long illness.

He had on occasions visited Schenectady, having talked over WGY, and on another visit with Professor Arthur A. Allen come here to make Upland Plover studies.

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* COURSES AT CORNELL -- Elementary and advance courses in the study of birds will be given this summer at Cornell University under the directions of Prof. A. A. Allen, Dr. Paul Kellogg, and Dr. Elsa G. Allen. Information concerning the courses is available from the Director of the Summer Session, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* VACATION POSSIBILITIES -- If you are looking for a place for a vacation, why not contact the National Association of Audubon Societies, 1006 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y., for information concerning its camp in Maine, and the trips to Cobb Island, Va., during June and July?

There is an interesting sanctuary at Sharon, Mass., a short distance out of Boston, called the Moosehill Bird Sanctuary, W. A. Taylor in charge.

When in the vicinity of Lenox, Mass., plan to spend some time at the Pleasant Valley Bird Sanctuary and Museum.

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* AND IN CONCLUSION -- What have you to contribute to this column in next month's issue? A post-card addressed to the Editor will do the trick.

# FEATHERS

Published by the Schenectady Bird Club

JUNE, 1940

VOL. 2, NO. 6

## THE GROSBEAKS INVADE SCHENECTADY

Winter of 1939-1940 Brought Far More Than Usual of Both Pines and Evenings, with Pines Arriving Unusually Early and Evenings Far Outstaying Usual Departure Date -- Sunflower Seeds Aplenty Consumed at Feeding Stations

By George H. Bainbridge

OUT OF THE NORTH they came, the pine and evening grosbeaks during the past fall and winter, in numbers greater and tarried longer than previous records note. Bird banding data appear to show that the evening grosbeak comes in from the west, but this bird must fly south from Canada, where it breeds in Alberta even to the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. (As a matter of fact one dead evening grosbeak was found in Scotia this winter with an identifying leg band which, according to the records of the U.S. Biological Survey, was placed on the bird at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, in April, 1937.) The pine grosbeak, however, breeds in eastern Canada to the northern limits of the coniferous forests.

In plumage the male evening grosbeak resembles the summer plumage of the male goldfinch. The female evening grosbeak has less of the yellow and, generally speaking, runs to more sombre grays. The white in the evening grosbeak appears in the form of lengthwise wing patches and not in bars as in the goldfinch. The evening grosbeak is about the size of a starling and has a large, stubby, "nautoraker" type of bill which was very yellowish in the winter, although it seemed to grow whiter in the males and gray in the females as spring advanced. The tail is short, comparatively wide, and slightly notched.

In plumage the male pine grosbeak so closely resembles the male purple finch that the latter has often been mistaken for the pine grosbeak. Since the pine grosbeak is about robin size, whereas the purple finch is about English sparrow size, there should be little difficulty in identification. More-

over, observance of their feeding habits is helpful, since the pine grosbeak is an eater of large seeds, and the purple finch, of small seeds. The male pine grosbeak is a darker rose color than the purple finch. The female pine grosbeak has a dash of yellow on the head, neck, and rump. The female purple finch has only white and brown. Both the male and the female pine grosbeak have two white wing bars. The female purple finch has no wing bars, although the male has them.

### Economic Status

The economic status of each of these grosbeaks is just about neutral, since, as they are finches, seeds are their principal food (but not weed seeds in this case). They may help in the distribution of seeds of valuable trees, and even if they eat a few buds from evergreens and shade trees, no real damage results. While in this section the pine grosbeak feeds principally on the seeds of ash trees, and the evening grosbeak, on the seeds of maple trees, particularly the box elder.

This winter both species appeared in unusually large flocks widely distributed throughout this section. Pine grosbeaks were seen in flocks as follows: Indian Ladder, 5 on November 26, 1939, an early date for this section; Featherstonauch Lake, about 100 on January 11, 1940; near Duanesburg, about 50 on February 17; in Scotia, about 25 on February 21; along Middle Line Road, south of Amsterdam-Ballston highway, about 100 April 6; about 20 near the mouth of the Lisha Kill; a small flock in the Country Club Drive section; through the winter along the state high-



FEATHERS is published monthly by and for the Schenectady Bird Club, and goes to members. Contributions and suggestions for improvements are desired. Annual Membership - Active, \$2; Associate, \$1; Junior, 50 c.

Berrington S. Havens, Editor, 63 No. Brandywine Avenue.

way between Snratoga and Wilton; at Lit. McGregor; and generally along Adirondack roads. The last reported in the immediate vicinity was a single bird in song on Swan Street, Schenectady, April 8.

The evening grosbeak was reported as follows: In Scotia, a single bird on January 30, 1940; Glens Falls; a flock of about 80 at Pittsfield; Ballston Spa; Albany; a flock at the mouth of the Alplaus Creek; Bedford Road; upper end of Eastern Parkway; St. David's Lane; Grand Boulevard section; and a flock in Scotia which grew until it numbered about 40 or 50.

The Scotia flock last mentioned soon exhausted the supply of box elder seeds. Local bird enthusiasts then came to the rescue with sunflower seeds, and at least one seed store in Schenectady did an unusually thriving business in this line. As a matter of fact this flock was consuming about two pounds of sunflower seeds a week at each of two feeding stations. Whenever the seed supply at a feeder was exhausted, the evening grosbeaks flew to a nearby tree and literally yelled for more. In fact they seemed after a while to recognize the seed container, as the yelling ceased when it came into sight.

At the feeding stations they were very greedy and pugnacious. In fact it might be said their lack of manners at the feeding stations is exceeded only by their prodigious appetites, and, when they desisted from quarreling, there could be heard a regular gunfire crackling of seed shells. (Missy Hallenbeck reported one female as gormandizing at his feeder and then leaning over to a trickling icicle to wash her throat clear so that she could continue to cram more seeds down. These alternative operations of cramming and drinking lasted until it seemed as though the bird's crop should burst.)

#### Feeding Habits

The technique of eating sunflower seeds varies widely with the species of bird. The evening grosbeak perches on the feeder, picks up a seed, cracks the shell, rolls the seed around a bit in

his bill to extract the kernel, and drops the shell. The black-capped chickadee comes to the feeder, takes one seed, flies away to a convenient small twig, holds the seed on the twig with his feet, tears the shell off with his bill, takes out the kernel, and drops the shell. The white-breasted nuthatch comes to the feeder, takes one seed, flies to a tree with rough bark, jams the seed into a bark crevice, hammers away at the shell with his bill until the shell is opened, eats the kernel, and, of course, much of the shell remains in the tree. Other birds like sunflower seeds too, but either they don't know how to open them or they lack the proper equipment. Thus the tree and song sparrows came to the feeder, and the ground beneath, to glean small seed particles either dropped or remaining in the shell. On the day following the mid-April blizzard even the robin essayed the feeder, but sunflower seed was impossible for his eating mechanism, so, like the English sparrow, he gave up with a resigned and disappointed look to watch the grosbeaks storing away sizeable meals.

At any rate these evening grosbeaks furnished many lively and interesting moments, some of which were used to advantage by different observers in taking both movie and still pictures.

The flock gradually diminished until but one male and one female appeared for several days ending on May 13. It looked as though this pair might possibly stay and breed. However, on May 14 the male alone remained, calling, calling, calling, but to no avail. This is the last report of the evening grosbeak locally for this section. This day is about one month later, by the way, than heretofore locally reported.

#### Grosbeak Notes

The call of the evening grosbeak is well defined by Peterson as a ringing, glorified chirp of the house sparrow. There is nothing intriguing about it, and it can become deadly monotonous. There is also a rasping, pugnacious squeak, which is commonly heard at the feeding station.

The pine grosbeak, on the other hand, seems to be more silent and refined, with a high-pitched whistle note uttered while feeding and when taking off. Little seems to be published about the songs of these birds, and since they are seldom in song while here, there is little opportunity locally for firsthand knowledge of the subject. However, some members of the Schenectady Bird Club have heard the pine grosbeak singing locally. Since this song was not

delivered in the breeding season, it probably was lacking both in vigor and quality. The song is reported as being similar to that of the purple finch except possibly louder and of better quality. In Chapman's "Birds of Eastern North America" the song of the evening grosbeak is styled "a wandering, jerky warble, beginning low, suddenly increasing in power, and as suddenly ceasing, as though the singer were out of breath."

When Eaton prepared his state book on birds, the (pre-1908) records of the evening grosbeak were so rare he itemized them. There was a considerable eastern flight in 1916 and another in 1922 (flock of 30 at Utica). S.R. Ingersoll also reported them at Ballston Spa from March 2 until April 28, 1916 and on

different occasions since then. Edgar Bedell reported them in "Bird-Lore" at Waterford April 8, 1922.

As time has gone on, the records have become more frequent, and Massachusetts now considers the eastern evening grosbeak a regular winter visitor. Both evening and pine grosbeaks were found at Rensselaer in the Christmas census of 1929. E.A. MacAvoy of Rensselaer also had a record of the evening grosbeak on April 13, 1922. They have been recorded quite frequently in recent years but never in such quantities or for so long a stay as the 1939-40 winter and spring records show for this section. It remains to be seen what future years may bring, particularly as winter flights of these grosbeaks may be influenced by weather conditions.

## IDENTIFYING BIRDS BY THEIR SONGS

By Bennington S. Havens

Merely for purposes of record -- for every bird student knows this without being told -- we should make some attempt to list the principal reasons for studying bird song. Here are three, in the order of their importance to the student:

1. A knowledge of bird songs or notes is an almost invaluable aid to the identification of the various species.

2. Bird songs are worth knowing in their own right, because of the beauty of many and the interest in all.

3. As one progresses in the knowledge of bird notes, one finds one's hearing becoming more sharp and discriminatory.

### Methods of Song Study

Learning bird songs is not an easy job. One has to listen again and again, checking up on the same song over and over, making notes if possible, and always striving to fix the notes in the memory. But there are some things which can help us; let us use them as much as possible. Probably the most important is the taking of notes.

There are various methods of keeping records of bird songs. Probably the simplest is to write down in your own words a description of the song which you will understand at some later date, when you have forgotten what you heard. This method serves satisfactorily in the case of a bird like the Northern Yellowthroat, for example, whose song can be rendered readily into English words --

"witchety witchety witchety witch" or "sweet singer, sweet singer, sweet singer, sweet." But it doesn't help much in the case of a species like the warbling vireo. Nevertheless, many will find it the most generally useful method to follow -- especially those who feel their knowledge and understanding of music is insufficient for use of the Saunders method to be mentioned below. For the benefit of these it is suggested that an attempt be made, first, to write in English words what the song sounds like and then to make notes of other peculiarities and circumstances such as those given in the following.

Another type of bird song notation is an attempt to make a musical score of the notes in question. F. Schmyler Matthews has done this with, I believe, unfortunate results. He has his song sparrows singing extracts from Italian opera, and too many times one is forced to the conclusion that his zeal for musical notation outstripped his scientific attention to the notes uttered by the bird. For, as Saunders has pointed out, an outstanding and insurmountable difficulty of such musical renderings is the fact that birds do not observe the musical scale as we know it; they "sing in the cracks," so to speak.

As a result Saunders was led to invent a special scale and method of noting down bird songs. To those who can use it, it should be invaluable. But, whatever method is used, some method should be used and used faithfully if any degree of success is to be attained.

Important in studying bird songs

and recording what is heard is a check list, mental or otherwise, of things to observe -- things which, by their presence, absence, or variation, will help in the distinction of one song or singer from another. A few of these are given below:

1. The habitat of the singer; that is, whether in wood, meadow, thicket, swamp, or elsewhere.

2. The actual location of the singer -- in a tree (and where in the tree), on the ground, in a bush, in flight, or otherwise.

3. The quality of the notes uttered by the singer, whether sweet, nasal, insect-like, squeaky, or otherwise.

4. Pitch, specific if possible; otherwise, some general idea of whether high, medium, or low.

5. Form of song -- whether a series of repeated notes, a repeated phrase, or a succession of varied phrases -- or a still different type.

6. Repetition: does the bird repeat a single note or phrase?

7. Variation: for any given species a number of variations in song will be found. Some, like the black-throated green warbler, have two forms of song which each bird sings regularly. In many cases two birds of the same species may render the same song differently, as in the case of the song sparrow. And the same bird not infrequently will sing his song differently from time to time.

8. Speed: some birds are fast singers; others are slow.

9. Intensity: some sing loudly; others, softly. Some, like the ovenbird, vary the intensity.

10. Fine distinctions: these are the most difficult part of song study, but, when mastered, they are almost invaluable in identification.

11. Season: Last but not least the time of year must be taken into consideration.

#### Types of Bird Song

For the convenience of those who wish to make a start in song study, some attempt has been made, in the following, to classify songs in groups. Other and probably better classifications could be made, but these will serve at least as a starting point.

The list of birds covered in the

classifications is, of course, incomplete. Generally speaking, it is limited by a corresponding incompleteness in the author's observations.

There is naturally considerable duplication; that is, the same bird will be found under two or more groupings. This is inevitable if we are to consider the various types of notes which many birds utter and the various yardsticks by which any given utterance may be measured.

Finally, it must be remembered that the term "song" is used throughout this discussion indiscriminately. It is merely employed as a convenient label by means of which to describe all kinds of bird utterance, and it has no significance with regard to songs as distinguished from call, alarm, flight, and other notes.

1. High-pitched, shrill, varied whistles: most warblers (except as noted otherwise below), indigo bunting, brown creeper, both kinglets, meadow-lark, prairie horned lark.

2. Varied whistles not as high-pitched as Class 1: white-throated sparrow, white-crowned sparrow, towhee, vesper sparrow, field sparrow, fox sparrow, song sparrow, olive-sided flycatcher, sparrow hawk.

3. Simple whistles, not as varied as Classes 1 & 2: wood pewee, chickadee, cedar waxwing, goldfinch, purple finch, broad-winged hawk.

4. Songs made up of phrases of various types: robin, wood thrush, hermit thrush, red-eyed vireo, blue-headed vireo, yellow-throated vireo, scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak, both orioles, mockingbird, catbird, brown thrasher, migrant shrike.

5. Songs thrush-like in quality: robin, bluebird, wood thrush, hermit thrush, both orioles, rose-breasted grosbeak, fox sparrow, purple finch, whippoorwill, bluejay, migrant shrike, bob white.

6. Robin-like songs: robin, red-eyed vireo, scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak.

7. Varied songs of considerable virtuosity: mockingbird, brown thrasher, catbird, yellow-breasted chat, winter wren, bobolink.

8. Insect-like songs: prairie warbler, Henslow's sparrow, savannah sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, chipping sparrow, junco, redpoll, snow bunting.

9. Nasal songs: scarlet tanager,

redwing, yellow-throated vireo, night-hawk, woodcock, crested flycatcher, phoebe, alder flycatcher, chickadee, both nuthatches, veery\*\*, olive-backed thrush, black-throated green warbler, black-throated blue warbler, golden-winged warbler, saw-whet owl.

10. Whiney songs: herring gull, bluejay, yellow-bellied sapsucker, cat-bird, hermit thrush, red-eyed vireo.

11. Squeaky songs: hummingbird, cowbird, rusty blackbird, grackle, starling, long-billed marsh wren.

12. Clicking songs: king rail, least flycatcher.

13. Tinkling songs: bobolink, tree sparrow.

14. Poultry-like notes: ring-necked pheasant, Florida gallinule, black-crowned night heron.

15. Mournful or eerie songs: upland plover, screech owl, barred owl, great horned owl, loon, mourning dove, both cuckoos.

16. Chirperings: chimney swift, junco, woodcock.

17. Rattles: kingfisher, meadow-lark, cowbird, Baltimore oriole, yellow-billed cuckoo, wood thrush, kingbird, northern yellowthroat, yellow-breasted chat, crow.

18. Warblings: house wren, short-billed marsh wren, winter wren, warbling vireo, purple finch, goldfinch, Lincoln sparrow, myrtle warbler.

19. Trills: screech owl, chipping sparrow, junco, worm-eating warbler, pine warbler, swamp sparrow.

20. Loud cries or screams: crested flycatcher, bluejay, crow, killdeer, bald eagle, red-shouldered hawk, red-tailed hawk, cardinal, ring-necked pheasant.

21. Songs distinguished by low pitch: pied-billed grebe, mourning dove, upland plover, bittern, both cuckoos, screech owl, barred owl, great horned owl, snow bunting, Cooper hawk, yellow-breasted chat, ruffed grouse, bobwhite, mourning warbler, black-crowned night heron, bat, tree frog, red-headed woodpecker.

22. Songs of varying intensity: ovenbird, blackpoll warbler.

23. Songs with noticeable repetition of single note: downy woodpecker,

hairy woodpecker, flicker, pileated woodpecker, red-headed woodpecker, both nuthatches, Florida gallinule, Cooper hawk, duck hawk, crested flycatcher, Baltimore oriole, ducks, sandpipers, rails, and many listed under Trills, Rattles, etc. above.

In further explanation of some of the above which may seem odd to many, it must be remembered that a given bird has many notes. Thus, when the wood thrush is listed under Rattles, it is because of one of its notes other than its true song.

In conclusion, one fact should be emphasized for the benefit of those who want to learn bird song: don't try to learn too many songs at once.

\* By "thrush-like" is meant the quality of voice in which the wood thrush and robin sing. Some thrushes, like the olive-backed and veery, do not have this quality.

\*\* The veery, although included under "nasal" songs, actually sings in a voice difficult to classify. Some have said it sounds like whistling down a drain-pipe.

## WOLF HOLLOW PICNIC

THE ENTHUSIASM shown at the May outdoor meeting was such that S.B.C. voted to have a similar gathering in June. This time the members decided on Wolf Hollow, out the Amsterdam Road, as the place for meeting with their picnic suppers. The meeting will be on Monday, June 24, at 6:30 o'clock. Those who have been on bird trips in the Hollow know the possibilities of the section; those who have not will find plenty of interest. In case of rain the meeting will be at 8 o'clock in the Museum. Those desiring transportation should get in touch with Mrs. C.N. Moore, 4-2763.

The May meeting of S.B.C. was a picnic in Central Park. After supper at the picnic grounds the members assembled on a rise of ground near the border line of the park and Parkview Cemetery for the program, which took the form of a discussion of bird songs by Barrington S. Havens. The talk, both interesting and instructive, was accompanied by native songsters -- veery, wood thrush, field sparrow, horned lark, and others, and the brown thrasher in particular. At the close of the planned program a number of the members took their cars to the Balltown Road and were rewarded by hearing the call of the woodcock.

-- Alice Holmes

## BIRDING IN FLORIDA-II

By Dorothy Caldwell

Early Sunday morning, March 10, I started on the long bus trip from Daytona Beach to Okeechobee City with my first glimpse of central Florida with its huge citrus groves. I did not see Florida at its best. The season was apparently backward even in the South, and the damaging frosts early in the season had taken serious toll of the plant life, not only of the fruit crops but many trees, flowering shrubs and flowering plants had been winter killed. The azaleas had fortunately escaped the freezes and were gloriously in bloom in the various city parks and about homes. Tree swallows were overhead, and blue-birds sitting on the telephone wires. I had a brief glimpse of the famous Bok Tower and added the red-headed woodpecker to my list as we sped along. In the afternoon we entered the prairie country and I had my first glimpse of the great level stretches of partly grassy, partly marshy land with occasional hammocks of palm trees and live oaks, and with roadside pools thronged with herons and egrets of various sorts.

Alexander Sprunt was speaking at the little Methodist Church at Okeechobee City that night so we went to the service. Probably many of you heard him speak here in January and saw his beautiful pictures of some of the glories of Florida bird life. I wish you might have heard his fine talk in that little church and the way he gave the people of that small community an opportunity to appreciate some of the beauties of the bird world all about them and the way he drove home conservation principles to the young folk in the audience and made his whole illustrated talk an integral part of a simple but thoroughly fine and sincere church service.

Monday morning bright and early the Audubon Camp station wagon was in front of the hotel, and soon after breakfast five of us were on our way with Mr. Sprunt at the wheel for the Lake Okeechobee region. Our lunches were stowed in the back of the wagon, we were each armed with binoculars and Peterson's Field Guide, and Howell's Florida Bird Life was in a handy rack overhead for quick consultation. I wish I could share with you all the joys and the thrills of those three days of field trips. We traveled some 50 or 60 miles each day, traveling slowly and stopping for birds frequently. For me the first thrill of the trip was a little flock of Florida quail, darker than our northern quail, and the second thrill was a painted bunting right beside the road. I

had played with Florida bird lists a bit before starting south, and the painted bunting was one of the smaller birds I would have asked to see had I been given my choice of smaller birds but I did not dream that we would see it, especially so early in the season. The bird's description sounds almost gaudy (head and nape dark violet-blue; fore-back yellowish green; rump dragon's blood red; underparts scarlet) and no picture that I have seen begins to do justice to the glowing vivid beauty of the living bird, a "beauty of beauties" he has been called.

After that the thrills came so thick and fast that it is possible barely to emmerate some of them. Of all the birds on the tantalizing list mentioned in the November Bird-Lore as a lure for the trip, Mr. Sprunt showed us all but two that first day out, and many many birds not listed. We saw great flocks of wood ibis (great white birds about the size of a great blue heron), of white ibis (almost as large and as beautiful), and of glossy ibis (like the white in size but a glowing bronzy chestnut), in flight and feeding close at hand again and again that wonderful day. Sometimes the flocks of white ibis were at such a distance that they looked like great puffs of white cloud that appeared and disappeared as they veered in flight. Even Peterson in his Field Guide grows a bit lyrical when he describes these birds -- "Few sights in the bird world are as impressive as a large flock of these white birds drifting about in a great circle high in the air over some southern marsh." Ward's herons, Louisiana herons, little blue herons, both blue and white, American egrets and snowy egrets in nuptial plumage, the latter with beautifully recurved plumes, were in almost every pool we passed, sometimes dozens at a time, so that the day's total of them alone must have been many hundred. Just imagine the joy of seeing so abundantly such strikingly beautiful birds.

We saw funny little Florida burrowing owls sitting or rather standing on stiff little stilt-like legs outside their burrows, great topaz eyes regarding us solemnly. Now and then we saw an Audubon's caracara, a species of large hawk found only in the United States in Florida and southern Texas; we saw occasional water-turkeys streaming by with their long snaky necks; turkey and black vultures were everywhere as were bald eagles, Florida crows, and fish crows, loggerhead shrikes, myrtle warblers and

palm warblers, boat-tailed grackles and Florida grackles, mockingbirds, cardinals, tree swallows, and southern meadowlarks.

The everglade kite is perhaps one of the rarest of Florida birds. Dependent upon a certain species of snail for food, its numbers have decreased to about fifty in Florida (and that means about fifty in the whole United States), and Mr. Sprunt actually showed us four of these rare birds.

The marshy pools along the roads teemed with waterfowl; ring-necked duck, Florida duck, blue-winged teal, yellowlegs, both the greater and the lesser, a flock of dowitchers, occasionally bitterns, killdeer, once a pair of black-necked stilts wading about with their curious knee action, green herons, an immature yellow-crowned night heron, and as we crossed the Kissimmee River bridge on our return, a pair of limpkins crowned the day's achievements. We heard them call only once but we saw them beautifully and another bird had

ceased to be just a name and had become a real bird to me.

We tried to hear limpkins -- really hear them -- and according to most accounts if we had heard them we would have been willing to dispense with the pleasure very quickly once the novelty had worn off -- but although they were reported as being in full voice in various places that week, we never quite caught up with them. (The limpkin is also called "Crying Bird" and "Nigger Boy" and the note is described as a loud mournful wail suggesting the crying of a child, and is repeated indefinitely, especially at night.) We went out that first night, back to the river bridge and to another place well recommended. We saw Florida barred owls and heard spring peepers, but we did not hear any limpkins. We went out early one morning, hours before the scheduled trip and were well rewarded for our efforts - but still heard no limpkins.

(The third, and concluding, part of Miss Caldwell's article will be published in the July issue.)

## NEWS AND NOTES IN BRIEF

\*\* CITY DOVES -- A mourning dove in any of the less populous sections of the city is not news; but, when one alighted a few days ago in a tree on the first block of Waverly Place, it added another species to those observed from my yard. Even this becomes incidental, for the bird seen is one of a pair now (at the end of May) nesting in a maple, between sidewalk and curb, in front of the second house from Union Street on Waverly Place.

The bird first observed furnished a good illustration of conditions sometimes tending to confuse casual observers. Sitting high among small branches and facing the setting sun, it appeared considerably larger than a dove, while the feathers of its breast so reflected the sun's rays as to seem decidedly red. A tendency to jump at conclusions here would have added another record (?) for the extinct passenger pigeon. -- M.W.Rix

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* ALL SUMMER? -- On June 2 a pair of orchard orioles was observed, in an orchard, in Guilderland Center.

-- Alice Holmes

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* BY-LAWS -- Copies of the S B C constitution and by-laws are available to members upon request. Miss VanVorst has the supply.

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* A BIRD-HUNTER'S THRILL -- Golfers in the S B C will understand the necessity of the "follow through" in order to experience the thrill of a good shot. So after our interesting May meeting,

when Barry Havens demonstrated the song of the woodcock, I decided to "follow through" and try to locate the woodcock nest.

After a half-hour search the following afternoon the nest was found at the base of a small pine tree about 150 yards from the point of observation the night before. But it contained only broken shells, with every indication that the young had departed quite recently.

The feeling of disappointment was shortly changed to a real thrill as some distance from the nest I flushed two birds and saw one plainly, evidently the female, fly to safety with a young bird clasped between her thighs. Incidentally, the male flew empty-handed.

-- J.M.Hollister

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* PRAIRIES -- It was no surprise when the Memorial Day trip of the S B C into the Karner's scrub showed prairie warblers in increased numbers this summer.

A doe that faced the camera in the middle of Vly Road was a high-light for those in one of the eight or so cars on the return trip to the city.

\* \* \* \* \*

\*\* UPLAND PLOVER -- Favorite spots for those wishing to record the upland plover each year, or to hear its flight song are South Schenectady and the Sacandaga Road. If a spring record of the song is any indication, it may be that a new breeding place has been uncovered. One observer heard the flight song May 25 on the top of the Gordon Road hill. The spot may bear watching to see if the birds stay there.

\*\* BLUE JAYS -- Those bird lovers who have a sneaking fondness for the blue jay in spite of his reputation as a marauder will be cheered to hear that, in an article "Blue Jay: Brigand or Benefactor?" by Dr. Arnold Gesell in the June issue of Scientific Monthly, a good word is said for this species.

After quoting other authorities to show that blue jays play an important part in spreading acorns and thus helping oak reforestation, he quotes Forbush as follows: "Despite his cannibalistic fondness for eggs and nestlings, does he not also eat injurious creatures such as the hairy caterpillar, gypsy moth, brown tail, tent and sphinx moths, fruit-feeding beetles, and grasshoppers?"

Among other qualifications mentioned as in the blue jay's favor are his interesting personality, wisdom, beauty, devotion to his family, and abilities as a vocalist.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* ANOTHER RED-HEAD -- Last month it was a report by Nelle VanVorst of an urban red-headed woodpecker, in Vale Cemetery in early May. Since then there has been another urban record of this locally comparatively-rare species - along a street of Scotia in mid-May by Ealy Halenbeck.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* MAY CROSSBILLS -- The American or red crossbills are generally thought of in this section as winter visitors, and very erratic and irregular ones at that. It is interesting to note, however, that local records feature May. A few years ago, during a "Century Count" when more than 100 species were recorded in one day, the crossbill was the most unexpected bird on the list. Which brings up the fact that on his trip to Lake George May 19 George Bainbridge saw two pairs of the birds, typically feeding on the seeds of pines.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* SUMMER FEEDERS -- There are plenty who feed the birds in the winter, but few who carry on through the summer. Of course the birds really do not need the attention then, but it is interesting to watch the woodpeckers in particular when they bring their young to the suet and teach them how to feed at a station.

There's another interesting possibility, and that is in feeding hummingbirds via syrup-laden artificial flowers. Incidentally, there are some hummingbird feeders in this country who reckon the sugar consumed in terms of hundreds of pounds.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* HOW TO ATTRACT WHITE-CROWNS -- It's an easy matter to attract white-crowned sparrows. And, having attracted them, it becomes easy to learn how to distinguish between these and the much earlier and far more common white-throats. It is only necessary, according to experience born out by four or five successive years, to plow up and sow to grass a new plot of ground in mid-May. The seed will be on and in the ground but a very few days before the white-crowns arrive,

and that newly planted lawn is where they will be seen.

One record for this year -- \$5 in grass seed planted May 11; a dozen of the white-crowns at work May 13; nearly two dozen of them there by May 20. But, to correct the impression that the birds ate only lawn seed, the lawn in question came through with a normally heavy growth of grass.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* WINTER EGRET -- Schenectady thought it had established a record of one kind or another when Nelle VanVorst found an American egret at Watervliet Reservoir on November 14, 1937, before snow but after small ponds were already ice-skinned.

But it remained for the Cleveland Bird Club to establish a real record. Theirs is for January 14, in Chio near the Pennsylvania border.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* 59 AT BIG-NOSE -- Twenty members of the S B C accompanied the Mohawk Valley Hiking Club on their annual spring trip to Big Nose on Sunday, May 18, and spent a very enjoyable day in studying the abundant bird population of a deep, wooded ravine in the Mohawk Valley a few miles west of Fonda. A total of 59 species of birds was recorded, including 15 varieties of warblers, 5 of thrushes, and 4 of the vireos, in addition to many individual specimens of the rose-breasted grosbeaks and scarlet tanagers.

-- C.N. Moore.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* CRESCENT PARK -- The old story of neglecting the possibilities in one's own backyard may apply in the case of Crescent Park in Schenectady -- practically in the heart of the city. One observer recently made his first season's record of the scarlet tanager at that spot, after listening and watching for the species in various other places generally considered more likely to produce the bird.

There are those who recall that a number of other species have been seen or heard in Crescent Park during the summer months, such as vireos, and it may be that a check from time to time will produce an interesting record of the species to be found in that comparatively small and strictly urban area.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* AT THE FAIR -- Last month it was a case of reporting that Malcolm Rix's models of birds had been a feature at the Hobby Show in New York City. They had hardly returned to Schenectady from there before their presence in New York City was again requested, this time as part of the Schenectady County exhibit at the World's Fair. They're there now.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* WE REPEAT -- "Only with the cooperation of all S B C members can this column of news and notes be complete and interesting. Jot down your observations briefly on a card, and mail them to the Editor."

# FEATHERS

Published by the Schenectady Bird Club

JULY, 1940

VOL. 2, NO. 7

## NOTES ABOUT THE SONGS OF SOME OF THE THRUSHES

Record Books over Period of Many Years Reveal Variety of Musical Renditions Here and Elsewhere

By H. V. D. Allen

I should like to submit the following thrush songs for the comments of the S B C members. All of the songs shown had the customary thrush quality, except for the final high notes of what I have designated as the gray-cheeked songs. I have employed the same characters to designate the songs that I used when I first heard them. Whether musical notes or curved lines, or combinations of consonants and vowels, have been used, I think it will be evident that three of the songs are from the same species.

May 12, 1912. I heard the song of what I assumed at the time was the gray-cheeked at a point four miles north of the Hoosac Tunnel on the upper Deerfield River.

♫ ♪ ♫ — ♫ ♫ ♫

whé a whé a -- sisisis

May 2, 1916. I heard a similar song of a thrush in an apple tree thirty feet west of Bedford Road. It was a very pale bird according to my records, with no streaks visible from the side, light olive above and almost white below.

whé a whé a whé a -- sisisis

It was hardly audible at 30 feet, and I should have recorded it as a veery if it had not been for the character of the song, which so closely resembled the bird heard four years before on the Deerfield.

May 18, 1928. I heard another gray-cheeked, if I may call it that, in the high trees near the caddy house at the Mohawk Golf Club. I wrote it down

at the time as

~~~~~

The song may have seemed more slurred than those in the two previous cases.

June 17, 1938. On Jacob's Ladder road, driving up out of the valley at Chester, perhaps half way up to the summit, I heard

whé a whé a

My ears were not as sharp as in 1912 or 1916 and I may have missed a good deal of this song, especially any preliminary or final notes, but the notes were at the same pitch and I heard the song only once. It did not seem to me at the time that it could be either the veery or the hermit, both of whose songs I have heard over and over for years. For comparison, I give my method of writing the typical hermit song:

## DATES TO BEAR IN MIND

July 27 (Sat.) - Regular monthly meeting, with breakfast at 7 a.m. and a hike at 8 a.m., at sanctuary of H. G. Reist, St. David Lane. Details elsewhere in this issue.

August 26 (Mon.) - Picnic meeting; details yet to be arranged.

September 15 (Sun.) - Trip to Mount Tom, Massachusetts.

September 30 (Mon.) - Regular meeting.

October 12 (Sat.) - Trip to Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania.

October 28 (Mon.) - Regular meeting.



The veery song might be shown:

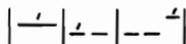


The olive-backed thrush has a song which I find hard to write, but perhaps this would indicate it:

I am not the ve-e-ry ve-e-ry ve-e-ry see

At any rate it is more or less of a warble, and ends in a very high, emphasized note. It does not have the half circles of the veery, hermit, or gray-checked (?).

June 12, 1921. I heard what I believe to be Bicknell's thrush just below the summit of Equinox Mountain, in company with R. R. Lewis and others:



At the same time we got the call note "fee-a."

We had previously heard the wood and the veery at the foot of the mountain, and six olive-backed thrushes half way up with their characteristic song ending in the high, emphasized note and their call note "whit."

I have checked my original notes with A. A. Saunders' "A Guide to Bird Songs" and believe I have the correct songs assigned to the gray-checked and Bicknell's rather than to reverse them

as of course might be done. On the other hand it seems to be the general opinion that the gray-checked does not sing during migration and does not breed south of Mt. Mansfield and the Laurentians in Canada. The bird on Equinox was evidently settled and not migrant, and I have put him down as a Bicknell's. The birds on the Deerfield, on Bedford Road, and at the golf club were evidently on migration. Would it be unreasonable over a period of sixteen years to hear three gray-checked on migration, but not far from their breeding grounds?

## BIRDING IN FLORIDA - III

By Dorothy Caldwell

Our second day out from Okeechobee City was at a roadside ditch near some pine woods (and Florida pine woods are very different in appearance from our northern stands of white pine). The Florida yellowthroat was there in just the right sort of a place, brown-headed nuthatches, or rather, the gray-headed subspecies, were feeding in the leafy ends of the pine branches, a flock of glossy ibis flew over and were soon followed by a flock of white ibis. We heard the Florida wren and the Florida pine warbler. The cypress trees farther along were just starting to blossom and on the ground was the loveliest creeping blackberry I have ever seen, its flowers like exquisite bramble roses. In fact,

it was so beautiful, and I was so eager to see Cherokee roses, that I wondered for a moment if they could be the famous Cherokee roses!

Our first stop out of Okeechobee City was at a roadside ditch near some pine woods (and Florida pine woods are very different in appearance from our northern stands of white pine). The Florida yellowthroat was there in just the right sort of a place, brown-headed nuthatches, or rather, the gray-headed subspecies, were feeding in the leafy ends of the pine branches, a flock of glossy ibis flew over and were soon followed by a flock of white ibis. We heard the Florida wren and the Florida pine warbler. The cypress trees farther along were just starting to blossom and on the ground was the loveliest creeping blackberry I have ever seen, its flowers like exquisite bramble roses. In fact,

Soon we left the hard road and were jogging across the prairie, stopping occasionally not for birds this time as often as for some of the beautiful prairie wild flowers, the butterworts, yellow and purple, calopogons, St. Peter's wort, a dainty lobelia, yellow star grass and the pawpaw, locally called deer's tongue. We stopped at Taylor Hammock, a beautiful grove of live oaks hung with Spanish moss, palmettos, and other unidentified trees and shrubs, famous as the place where the last Carolina paroquets were seen. A great flock of white ibis flew low over the tree tops, sounding like a gentle wind rustling the leaves. A few moments later the towhees began to call, the blue-gray gnatcatchers to whine, and we realized that the tree tops were full of warblers, mostly parula warblers and black and whites and occasionally a beautiful stranger to me, the yellow-throated

# FEATHERS

Published by the Schenectady Bird Club

FEATHERS is published monthly by and for the Schenectady Bird Club, and goes to members. Contributions and suggestions for improvements are desired. Annual Membership - Active, \$2; Associate, \$1; Junior, 50 c.

Berlington S. Havens, Editor, 63 No. Brandywine Avenue.

warbler. Bradford Torrey says "This is one of the most exquisite birds ever made; of quiet modest colors, bluish black and white, with a single bright jewel to set them off -- a gorget of brilliant yellow. -- If there ~~is~~ a more gorgeous bird in the United States I should like to see him." Cardinals, brown thrashers, and vireos were all about us and all too soon we were called back to the car, to travel across more open prairie.

Earlier in the season we might have heard and seen cranes feeding in great flocks of a hundred or two (and it is even possible to see their strange dancing) but they had already paired off for nesting and were no longer traveling in flocks. Even individuals were less in evidence than they had been a bit earlier. We were all watching carefully all the while but it was Mr. Sprunt who saw the first pair in flight and at some distance but we had an excellent opportunity to watch the great birds out of view with our binoculars. We really needed the long, almost monotonous drives across the prairie to give us a conception of the immensity of the hundreds of square miles of the prairie region. We were surprised also at the great herds of cattle and the picturesque cowboys on horseback until we learned that Florida is the third largest cattle state in the United States. We were soon crossing the great Rawlerson Slough which follows the Kissimmee River for miles, and our next stop was at Bassinger where we had our best views of the white-eyed towhees and saw purple martins nesting.

Our lunch spot that day was on the shore of the Kissimmee River, where we had flocks of coots, Florida gallinules, ring-necked duck, blue-winged teal, and one pair of canvasbacks in full view as we ate our sandwiches. After lunch we scattered a bit and found cardinals, thrashers, gnatcatchers, vireos and another host of warblers. Mr. Sprunt suddenly called us to see a pair of Florida pileated woodpeckers at work nearby -- a glorious sight with the sunlight full on their flaming crests.

Again we reluctantly returned to

the car and back to the prairie hunting more cranes. We soon left the dirt road and struck across a dim cart path that only a man like Mr. Sprunt or Warden Chanler could have even seen. After a little the car stopped and we followed Mr. Sprunt as quietly as possible toward a crane's nesting site. As we approached stealthily the great mother bird finally flew off but without giving her characteristic call. (I will just have to go back to Florida some time to hear limpkins and cranes though I was thrilled enough to even see them this time.) We watched her out of sight and then went nearer to the nest. The nest was a mass of weeds piled up on a little islet in the midst of a great marsh. Some of our party waded out, in water over their knees, and photographed the nest with its two great blue eggs. The nest was three or four feet in diameter and a foot or so high. In the meantime the non-waders enjoyed a pair of burrowing owls guarding their nest burrow.

The third day Mr. Sprunt succumbed to the cold he had been fighting all the week and, while we missed his companionship, we were privileged to have as our guide for the day the famous warden, Marvin Chanler, who has done such fine work in that region. The high spot of that day's birding was a visit to a night heron rookery where hundreds of yellow-crowned night herons and a few black-crowned were much in evidence. The return trip lay through a Seminole Indian reservation and we had an opportunity to visit their school and to photograph some of the children. Pigeon hawks as we crossed a bit of the prairie on our way back to the hotel were the last addition to our Okeechobee bird lists. As a group we had listed nearly a hundred birds, some of which could have been seen only in this country in the prairie region of Florida, and we had all been given a wide vision of the Florida prairie region and of the variety and abundance of its bird life.

My personal list for the Okeechobee trips was 92 species and subspecies, and with my Daytona Beach birds a total of 117 for my Florida vacation, a modest showing for Florida as far as numbers go, but a very satisfactory list from the standpoint of the renewal of old acquaintances and of the making of new bird friends and additions to my life list.

## THE SEASON - Spring, 1940

This summary of the season is based on spring as defined by the calendar and

not as the climate actually experienced. In truth, it was a cold, wet, backward spring with a 5-inch snowfall of blizzard characteristics on April 12-13. Among the birds, such weather naturally discouraged early arrivals and encouraged late departures. There are no advances in arrival dates.

The coot was reported at Watervliet Reservoir April 14 -- same as the record date of 1934. The tree swallow was reported on April 7 along the Hudson, equalling the date of April 7, 1929. The olive-backed thrush was reported May 5 - within 2 days of the record date of May 3, 1936. The departure date locally of the evening grosbeak was advanced from April 13 (1922) to a late date of April 28 in Troy (Ham) and to May 14 in Scotia.

Due to the paucity of reports received by the records director there may be additions and changes to the above. Please send in promptly any records you have not reported.

Among the highlights of the season are the possibilities of such locations as Round Lake and Saratoga Lake -- particularly for water birds. The common loon was present at Saratoga Lake in unusually large numbers for this section, and a bald eagle was seen at Round Lake.

Brown creepers have been scarce even as far back as the Christmas census, but a flock of this species was reported in Vale Cemetery on April 11. Also in the same place on May 7 the red-headed woodpecker was found.

One of our club members, who has long (although jokingly) maintained that there is no such thing as a pileated woodpecker, finally was rewarded by the sight of one at the Watervliet Reservoir on April 14.

Several have reported fewer robins than usual this spring. Whether or not this is due to the severe cold experienced in the south this past winter and the loss of this species as reported in southern newspapers is not known. On the other hand, several reports as to a material increase in wood thrushes have been received. Certainly they are more numerous in some locations, particularly in urban sections. A report of your experience with these two species this year will be appreciated by the records director.

The purple martin is again reported as breeding at Saratoga. There may still be hope that this species will come back this way again to lend the farmer and orchardist its valuable aid

in disposing of insects. Orchard orioles were reported at Guilderland Center on June 2.

Prairie warblers were reported this year at Central Park and the Pine Barrens near Karner. In fact, several members of the club visited the Pine Barrens on Decoration Day purposely to see this species and were well rewarded for so doing. As a musical proposition the song of this bird, like those of most warblers, doesn't rate very high in quality even though it may in pitch.

Rose-breasted grosbeaks and tanagers have been reported in the vicinity of Dean Street, and it is possible they may be breeding there.

Several members of the club have had excellent demonstrations of protective coloration as it pertains to the whippoorwill and nighthawk. The whippoorwill could be seen in Central Park only when it coursed a bit off the ground. The instant it landed it was practically invisible. Likewise with the nighthawk -- motion is almost necessary to detect the presence of the bird. Thus does Nature try to protect her own.

-- G. H. Bainbridge.

### SATURDAY'S BREAKFAST HIKE

The July meeting of S B C will be on Saturday morning, July 27. We shall assemble at the H. G. Reist Sanctuary, off St. David Lane. Those who wish to have breakfast out-of-doors are to be present at 7 o'clock. Those interested only in the field trip need not arrive until 8 o'clock.

Those driving should go in St. David Lane at Stop 8 on the Troy Road, and proceed in for 3/4 mile. To the right is the driveway into the sanctuary, and it will be marked at the entrance. For those making the trip by bus there will be pick-up service at Stop 10. Take the Upper Union - Stop 10 (Rosendale) bus to the end of the line or the Troy bus to Stop 10 (Morgan Avenue), where members will be met by automobiles.

Coffee will be provided at the breakfast, and a fire will be available for those taking food requiring cooking. Inclement weather --- cancelled meeting.

-- Alice Holmes

## THE LONG TRAIL TRIP

Ten members of S B C and eight of the Sassafras Bird Club of Amsterdam met at Long Trail Lodge, on Mendon Mountain near Rutland, Vt., on June 8 and 9. Under the guidance of Maurice Broun, the resident naturalist, there was an outing and field trip. We arrived about noon, registered at the Lodge, and were assigned rooms in the new Annex, which was very attractive and most comfortable.

We met Mr. Broun working in his bog garden. The plants in this garden are all native to Vermont. Mr. Broun arranged to lead a group at 4 o'clock to the alder swamp near the Lodge. This trip did not produce many varieties of birds but did afford the opportunity of hearing four kinds of thrushes -- hermit, veery, olive-backed, and wood -- singing at the same time, and of hearing the songs of the least and alder flycatchers. An olive-sided and crested were also seen and heard. An osprey circling overhead gave an unusual record for the

locality. At 8 o'clock we gathered in the Annex Recreation Hall, and Mr. Broun showed his beautiful and unusual movies of Florida wild life. After the pictures we went out to hear the barred owl.

At 6:30 Sunday morning only a few hardy souls were ready for the morning walk in the drizzle, but they were rewarded by finding the mourning warbler, a summer resident, near the Lodge and also two pine siskins, not before recorded in that vicinity. The winter wren was heard singing high up the cliffs nearby.

After breakfast we followed Mr. Broun to Pico Pond. We had an interesting walk around the pond, and on our way back saw the Bicknell's thrush and scarlet tanager. We took a dirt road up and over the hills, where we had a beautiful view of the mountains. Then we drove to see a very large colony of cliff swallows. This was a real treat; we counted about 109 mud nests stuck up under the eaves of the barn.

--Esly Hallenbeck and C. N. Moore.

## NEWS AND NOTES IN BRIEF

**\*\* MAD ... GLAD** -- First you're mad at them, and then you're glad to have them around. Take, for instance, the catbird. You're mad at him when you find him, along with the robins and waxwings, at hard work in your cherry tree, with not insects but fruit as the piece de resistance. Maybe the cherries were not particularly good anyhow, but still you hated to see them disappear so rapidly. Then came the day when catbird, waxwing and robin finished their work. Came also practically simultaneously the appearance of the cocoons of the tent caterpillar moths, under window casings, along the edges of the clapboards of the house or in the crevices between the foundation stones, and everywhere else such cocoons could be fastened.

And then you became glad the catbird was around. You'd see him walking around close to the house, examining the crevices. All at once he'd hop up, flutter a bit close to the house, and then drop to the hard ground. In his bill would be a cocoon. Mostly you'd see him feed by crushing the cocoon in his bill, usually after pounding it on the ground a few times. He wouldn't swallow the cocoon, but force the juices through the filmy cocoon.

And then you were glad to swap off a couple quarts of cherries for a couple quarts of the insects.

\*\*\*\*\*

**\*\* PROTECTION FOR THE EAGLE** -- Our national bird, the bald eagle, has been given US protection. Except in Alaska, a law recently passed by congress and approved by the president imposes fines up to \$500 for taking, possessing, or dealing in these birds.

\*\*\*\*\*

**\*\* CO-OPERATIVE** -- The N. Y. Conservation Department is authority for the report that a blue-winged teal and a hen pheasant shared time on a pheasant nest in the Alabama Swamp, Genesee County, this season.

\*\*\*\*\*

**\*\* ORPHANS?** -- One of the members of S B C was recently advised that a family of ducks was appearing for daily rations on the Mohawk close to the city. Investigation in mid-June disclosed 11 ducklings about robin size and as yet unable to fly. When found, the parent bird was not with them, and questioning in the neighborhood disclosed that the parent bird had not been with them for several days. It appears that residents along the river in the vicinity feed the ducklings, who first came with the parent bird regularly morning and evening. The

ducklings still know when and where to go for meals.

When discovered from a rowboat well off shore the ducklings were squatted in a group and were almost indistinguishable from the mud of the shore. Nearer approach in the boat caused them to start wandering along the shore, but enticements in the shape of liberal handfuls of broken rye bread, which they seem to prefer to white bread according to reports, soon calmed their fears, and it was possible to get within 8 to 10 feet of them with the boat. Some of the pieces of rye bread were too hard to eat, but as they became water-soaked they disappeared along with the softer pieces. Finally, after the ducklings had gorged themselves, and their crops projected like billiard balls, they took to the water en masse and, when last seen, were paddling fast toward the other shore.

The original information about the ducks was that they are mallards. The ducklings were not sufficiently feathered, however, for checking this point.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* IN THE AUK -- "Birds and the Winter of 1939-1940" are summarized in a composite article in the July issue of the Auk. Reporting for this section, Dr. Dayton Stoner of the N. Y. State Museum comments on a half dozen species. Concerning the horned larks, he found the northern approaching the prairie in commonness during March. His dates for the evening grosbeaks were from November 12 to May 13, duplicating the Scotia date. For the pine grosbeak his dates were from November 16 to April 3; however, the county was not indicated so the early date may have been for St. Lawrence county or to the north of here. Local pine grosbeak records were November 26 to April 8. On three occasions in March he recorded Lapland longspurs east of Troy. He recorded the snow bunting as unusually common, and present locally through March 31.

In the same compilation is a report from Cornell of a black gyrfalcon shot at the state game farm at Sherburne.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* YELLOW-CROWNED -- A late-June trip to the Heronry (FEATHERS, May, 1940, page 13) produced a decidedly unexpected record. J. M. Hollister went in. All around him were black-crowned night herons, in full and in immature plumages. Overhead in the nests were both young and eggs. He was able to watch many of the birds at close range.

One bird in particular attracted his attention when it came down from the branches and alighted at the edge of one of the pools in the heronry. It had an especially prominent plume back from the crown; its underparts were decidedly darker than those of the adult black-crowns; and its head markings were reversed -- it had a light crown and dark cheeks. It was a yellow-crowned night heron.

The yellow-crowned night heron is among the rarer of the herons to straggle northward, and New York State records of the bird are few. There are apparently no previous records of it in this vicinity.

\*\* BIRDS OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA is being published by the University of Pittsburgh Press. It is by W. E. Clyde Todd, Curator of Ornithology, Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, with 22 plates in color illustrating 118 species, from original drawings by George Miksch Sutton. 730 pages, folding map of location and altitude, life-zone map, distribution maps of 39 species, accounts of more than 300 species and subspecies, \$5.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* PROTECTED SWALLOWS -- Bank swallows at a large excavation in the vicinity of Mohawk View have been shown real consideration by the men removing sand and gravel from the bank, J. M. Hollister reports. The nesting holes of the swallows occupy two large sections of the bank, and while the nesting season is in progress the workmen are at work on a different section.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* URBAN SUMMERER -- Apropos of the article by Mr. Allen concerning his records of the songs of thrushes, it is interesting to note that in the Bird Day number of the N. Y. Bulletin to the Schools in 1929, E. A. MacAvoy of Rensselaer had an article about an olive-backed thrush that sang regularly early in the morning from June 1 to July 3, 1921, in that city.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* RED-THROATED -- The red-throated loon is a summer resident locally, it is indicated by mid-June reports. Following a report by Game Protector Chester Griffith that he had seen one of the birds on Duane Lake, four S B C members went there and saw a pair of the birds on the lake. Questioning people who camp at the lake disclosed that the red-throated loons were also there in 1938 and 1939. One of the people described the calls of the red-throated as similar to those of the common loon.

Incidentally, Duane Lake is one of the few local sections where the great blue heron has been a recent breeder.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* LOONY SEASON -- Speaking of loons, an unusually large number of common loons was observed on Saratoga Lake by S B C members this spring. The lake is apparently a stop-over, and the birds stayed longer than usual this year to await the clearing of lakes farther north in their breeding territory.

To one who has seen the life of these birds, particularly on the Canadian lakes, there is cause for wonderment whence comes the saying "As crazy as a loon." Truly enough they have some weird calls, but they are interesting and entertaining, particularly when they answer from lake to lake and their calls are echoed from the hills. One call in particular is not lacking in musical quality. The antics of the young playing in the water are particularly amusing. Moreover, attempts to approach the older birds soon convinces one of the loon's ability to dive and play a "Guess where I am" game, with the odds all in the loon's favor.

**\*\* LOCAL QUAIL** -- Records of the bob-white and Hungarian partridge unfortunately are becoming more rare locally; and indications are that neither species will become established here. There are still reports of both species, however. The birds so frequently reported in the Charlton-Swaggertown area are Hungarian partridges, according to Game Protector Chester Griffith; the bob-white seems to be still in the general vicinity of Duane Lake, he reports. At Guilderland Center in mid-June bob-whites were also being seen.

\*\*\*\*\*

**\*\* NOT IN THE BOOKS** -- One thing I cannot seem to find in the books is that the nighthawk always seems to precede each "pse-en" (its call-note) with an acceleration of wing-beats and a sharp rise in flight. -- Leonard J. Utal

\*\*\*\*\*

**\*\* RAINY DAYS** -- Are you a fair-weather birder? Don't let rainy days keep you home when the week-end rolls around and your well-planned trip seems to have been spoiled. Much can be accomplished during the good season just by driving to the good hunting grounds and sitting in the car with eyes and ears sharply tuned. Try it some time and you'll be surprised at the things you'll pick up.

\*\*\*\*\*

**\*\* SUMMER SNIPER** -- In last year's report of the summer birds of the Connaulus Vlaie (FEATHERS, 1939, p.21) the record of the Wilson's snipe and nest was carried with a question mark. Observations since then have removed the question of the bird's identity.

\*\*\*\*\*

**\*\* HELDERBERG FALCONS** -- The duck hawks, which over a period of many years have been seen along the Helderberg escarpment, are again there, after a matter of two or three years in which they went unrecorded. A pair was there in May, indicating that again they have bred there.

\*\*\*\*\*

**\*\* FLUKED, NOT STARVED** -- Winter mortality of wild ducks, usually attributed to starvation, is more likely because of a newly discovered blood fluke parasite, it is indicated by the N. Y. Conservation Department. The parasite was found in 35 per cent of the 45 wild ducks found dead and examined this year. Both river and sea ducks were included in the count.

The findings of N. Y. State's pathological work substantiate the conclusions of the U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey that a wild duck seldom, if ever, dies of starvation alone. As both the national and state agencies report, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the only wild waterfowl which die indirectly of starvation are those weakened by disease, parasites or mechanical injury and are thus unable to withstand severe conditions which prevail periodically in northern waterfowl wintering areas.

**\*\* TRINOMIALS** -- My note on Trinomials in FEATHERS for February seemed to have evoked some discussion. I would like to make some further remarks on subspeciation if the readers of FEATHERS will indulge yet another discourse on this subject.

Mr. Elliot is right when he says that field observers are interested in subspecific distinctions (March-April FEATHERS), although I think it would have been better if he had said that they are sometimes rather than often capable of making them. Optimum field conditions are necessary to make such distinctions, and the birds must be hypertypical (if I may be permitted to use that ambiguity for emphasis) of their subspecies. It is rare that subspecific characters are so pronounced and conspicuous that field identification is justified.

Incidentally, I cannot agree with Mr. Elliot that it is always impossible to make distinctions in a region of intergradation between two subspecies. In a region of intergradation some of the individuals of certain species must be expected to show characters typical of either one race or the other with little apparent mixing. That is simple Mendelian dominance. In the case of the ruffed grouse, which Mr. Elliot mentions in his article, a bird I have studied much taxonomically, I have seen many skins from regions of intergradation which could easily be named, and on some few occasions it has seemed that I could distinguish the Canada ruffed grouse from the Eastern subspecies in the field. (See "Our Two Kinds of Ruffed Grouse," p.11, February FEATHERS).

Whatever has been hitherto said, it remains that the field identification is not scientifically acceptable because of:

1. The Character of Subspecies - Least stable classification group. Subspecies are species in the making. They are so actively undergoing evolution that the individuals of a subspecies are more or less divergent from the type. (Two present-day species which only yesterday, geologically speaking, were subspecies are the Franklin's grouse of the northwest, a former subspecies of the spruce grouse, and the seaside sparrow of southern Florida, a former subspecies of the typical seaside sparrow.) The characters of most valid subspecies are too minute to be seen in the field. Occasionally characters are found to be non-existent and the subspecies become rejected.

2. Range Discrepancies - Transients and accidentals do not allow the observer to assume a bird must belong to a certain subspecies just because the observation is made within the known range of that subspecies.

3. Instability of Field Conditions - Light, shade, and reflections from surroundings alter a bird's natural colors in innumerable ways. This Thayerism makes subspecific distinctions based on minute color differences unsafe. (In the museum, specialists often make their comparisons on a large white paper to avoid discrepancies caused by reflections from a colored table top).

Birds are more or less dirty. Their natural color may be thus altered. Dr. Suttom of Cornell is at present attempting to determine the status of the sharp-tailed sparrow at Ithaca, which should be the same bird occurring hereabouts. Conclusions he had previously reached had to be changed after the specimens were washed. At present he is gathering comparative material. I think we should wait for the

results of Dr. Sutton's study of specimens in the hand before we make any conclusions about our sharp-tails based on field observations. In this case a bird in the hand is worth any number in the field.

I refer the reader to Dr. George M. Sutton's and Thomas D. Burling's paper on the "Birds of Las Vigas, Veracruz" in the April, 1940 AUK, p.234. The authors list trinomials only when specimens have been taken. Several of the species the authors saw are subspecifically divided (House finch, Wilson's warbler, house wren, blue-gray gnatcatcher, etc.) but they are listed only binomially. That is because no specimens were taken and they could be satisfactorily recognized to the species in the field. That is the way scientific avifaunal lists are prepared.

Exercising your talent to discern subspecies in the field is fun - but remember you have a good chance of being wrong, and if you are listing birds for the benefit of others omit the subspecies unless they are backed up by specimens. -- Leonard J. Uttal

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* BREWSTER'S WARBLER -- Four members of S B C drove over to the Barkhires and the Pleasant Valley Bird and Flower Sanctuary Saturday, June 8th. The golden-winged and Brewster's warblers were located with the assistance of Dr. G. J. Wallace, warden in charge, and were the high lights of a very interesting day. This sanctuary is in ideal terrain for bird life and contains approximately 400 acres of open fields, beaver swamps, woods, and mountain slopes. Trails criss-cross the area and are kept clear so that travel is easy. The season's list recorded by Dr. Wallace contains about 115 species. It is recommended that members of S B C become acquainted with this very beautiful spot. Take your lunch or make advance reservation at the Tea Room there. -- W.R.Steele

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* RARE IN SUMMER -- Occasionally red-breasted nuthatches winter at Mount McGregor. During the past winter six were regular visitors at my feeding station and all were banded. By May 4 all had disappeared. I assumed they had gone farther north to nest but on May 14 one of the banded females returned for food and on May 15 she was accompanied by a banded male. The two appear daily for food (up to June 3) and possibly they are nesting nearby. The male is often seen feeding the female.

-- Dorothy Caldwell

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* SILENT MOVIES -- "Don't Scare the Birds" is the title of an article by E. Kenneth Karcher jr. of Albany in the May issue of Movie Makers. He describes and illustrates the equipment he uses when obtaining motion pictures of nesting birds. The equipment effectively silences the camera mechanism, the noise of which would make some of his pictures otherwise impossible to obtain.

\*\* SUMMER DUCKS -- It is not generally realized the extent to which ducks breed in the vicinity of Schenectady. This year's records include at least four species: Black, mallard, blue-winged teal, and wood duck. And indications are that still another species may be at least summering, if not breeding, locally. Game Protector Chester Griffith is one who has seen broods of these birds locally this year.

The blacks are the most common and widespread as local breeders; they are in various sections. Blue-winged teal are apparently in more than one section, including one pond for the fourth successive year. One of this year's wood duck broods is at water that is hardly more than a puddle, and almost in sight from a road.

For obvious reasons, considering the molestation so frequently the fate of nesting ducks, the locations of these broods are not being spotted on a map.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* A BLACK TERN -- A black tern was observed for some time Sunday morning, June 16, flying over the Mohawk River at the Niskayuna (Crescent) pool. This rather rare visitor to this neighborhood has been recorded at various times during the spring and summer months by different observers. -- C.N.Moore

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* MERTON, THE JAY -- In mid-June a squirrel who is a daily visitor came into the garden and after eating his fill of nuts, began to bury them. Suddenly "Merton" the blue jay (Merton is my name for him) appeared and, sitting in the maple tree, watched every move the squirrel made. The squirrel did not seem to notice him, but the blue jay did not "miss a trick." When the squirrel went away the blue jay followed, still observing where he buried the nuts. I have an idea he could locate and unearth every one of them.

This jay has come to the garden quite frequently, even on the coldest days last winter, but is always alone.

-- Anna Dickerman

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* HOW TO FEED -- A grackle came to the garden recently, accompanied by a young one. The older bird nipped pieces out of the center of a slice of white bread, and laid them on the ground. The young bird then ate them, but the older bird flew away as soon as she had prepared the meal. This was evidently a lesson, as the young bird observed the performance intently and quietly.-- A.D.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* ENSNARED -- A pigeon in the garden ate all the soft part of a slice of bread, leaving a rim of crust to the last. She stepped on it in such a way that it flew up and hung around her neck like a collar. She was surprised and perhaps perplexed, and could not get it off. She finally flew away and probably rubbed it off on branches as she came back without it later in the day.-- A.D.



## ALBANY'S SCREECH OWL CONVENTION

Leonard J. Uttel

Albany's Lincoln Park is no longer the summer headquarters of the Brotherhood of Capitol District Screech Owls. And no wonder — their favorite refreshment stand only three blocks away, the Slingerlands Street Dump, has been tidied up.

Several years ago indiscriminate dumping was not forbidden there, and naturally the place was highly infested with well-fed rats, mice, and other vermin. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that there used to be annual gatherings of screech owls. These gatherings, or Screech Owl Conventions, took place every summer from July through September. Perhaps it was a case of all the screech owl parents thereabouts bringing their youngsters to a place of easily attainable food. At any rate I never saw but a very few owls in the neighborhood outside these months.

The reactions of the bench-warmers of the park, the small boys, and most of the people of the neighborhood to these owl conventions was, sad to tell, just typical of the general attitude towards certain forms of harmless wild life fostered by ignorance and prejudice. The boys took quite a toll of the birds with their alingshots. They were easy enough prey at dusk, as they roosted on clothes poles, park benches, or open trees prior to the nightly foray at the dump. With several birds in the air at once flying over a certain area, it is perhaps conceivable that one might accidentally knock the hat off a bench-warmer. I've never seen it happen, and the whole idea always seemed rather far-fetched to me. Yet the caretaker of the park playground encouraged the boys to kill the owls on this very basis; that the owls made a nuisance of themselves by knocking off people's hats and otherwise frightening people.

I told this man that this seemed to be a rather mild offense, certainly not meriting capital punishment. He then pulled his ace out of his sleeve and told me of the destructiveness of these birds to game and small birds. I answered that they are not so bad in this respect and that, although there were plenty of birds in the park, he could hardly worry about game there. He was

..... Cont'd. p. 39

### "HAWK FEVER" ATTACKS NINE S B C MEMBERS

Dorothy Rowley

"The day is right! the wind is right! but where are the hawks?" That was the cry of the nine S B C members on top of the tower at Gost's Peak on Mt. Tom, Mass., Sunday, September 15 at 8 a.m., having all left home Saturday afternoon and stayed overnight nearby to be on hand for the first hawk on Sunday.

A heavy fog covered the valley, drifting on and off the Holyoke Range so that it looked snow-covered. After about an hour the fog burned off and we watched the horizon intently for the countless hawks that were supposed to appear. One soared lazily past, far off in the distance, and then for a long time, no more. However, when we left at 12:30 p. m. we could list thirteen — Sharp-shins, 4; broad-wings, 4; osprey, 2; Cooper's, 1; marsh, 1; and duck (resident), 1. Due to the strategy of some boys who had set up a stuffed owl on one of the corners of the tower, we had excellent views of the duck hawk who flew in very close to us, attracted by the decoy.

While thirteen was disappointing to those who expected to see hundreds, it was enough to give us "hawk fever" and the determination to try our luck again. The experts in that region say there will be great numbers going through until the middle of October and there is no determining the ideal day, so get up early some Sunday and take a chance!

.....

(Mt. Tom is a state reservation between Holyoke and Northampton, along the Connecticut River. The visit can easily be made as a one-day trip, if desired.)

## SOME SUMMER BIRDS OF NANTUCKET

H. V. D. Allen

(Mr. Allen for several years has kept detailed records concerning the summer birds of Nantucket Island, Mass.; and has supplied his records to that state.)

.....

Nantucket is a pile of sand and gravel about 25 miles south of the Cape Cod shore of Massachusetts. It is 14 miles east and west, and four miles north and south. At the northeast corner is a strip of sand, Great Point, running north and almost meeting a similar point, Monomoy, running south from the southeastern corner of Cape Cod. At the southwest corner Smith's Point stretches west some two miles. The northern side of the island is a 10- to 20-foot sand cliff. The south shore on the open ocean is generally low and flat. East and west on the north is a terminal moraine of gravel interrupted in the middle by Nantucket Harbor.

On the south shore there are a number of shallow north-and-south valleys, the remains of rivers which once flowed out from under the ice of the glacier which covered all this part of New England. Most of these valleys are dry, three are large ponds, and two are cat-tail marshes with more or less water depending on the rainfall.

Nantucket is a little out of the flyway for shore birds. There are more on Cape Cod and on Martha's Vineyard Island to the west of Nantucket. There are no very large numbers of shore birds on Nantucket, at least when I have been able to observe them in July, August and early September, but every now and then some new bird appears, evidently blown in by high winds with which the island is familiar. This adds an element of excitement to bird hunting. You never know what you are going to see towards the end of August when the migration season gets going.

This past summer was no exception, though the birds did not show up in the usual numbers, due to lack of rain during August. Then at the end of the month, with high east and northeast winds and rain, the birds appeared perhaps 30 times as numerous as before on the edges of the brackish ponds on the south shore. At several of the best bird localities it is possible to drive down to within 50 feet of the flocks, and this gives a splendid view of the bird plumages and a chance to study new

varieties comfortably and calmly. It was here that several years ago I saw my first willet and later the buff-breasted sandpiper. Then, after a high northeast wind, I got my northern phalarope. These birds are miniature ducks feeding on the surface of the water as they swim about among the wading semipalmated sandpipers, but the real thrill is to see this bird sit down on a bit of dry sand. This is something quite special and different from the usual sight of a thousand birds out in the open ocean.

This year Nantucket's special exhibit was a small sandpiper very similar to the semipalmated, with a similar black bill, black legs and gray body. I had eleven views in July, August and September of what I think was the same individual. He was rarely in the same place twice. I saw him several times on the harbor flats at low tide, and at four other points on the island. He seemed to feed of dry sand more than did the semipale, and even dug holes and explored holes dug by ruddy turnstones. When flushed the other birds would circle and come back but this bird flew off by himself and did not return. This difference in feeding habits would mark him as a different bird even if it had not been for the warm gray or brownish coloring on his head and neck which enabled him to be picked out of a large flock. I am not sure, but I thought I could detect a lighter coloring on the throat. A process of elimination seemed to indicate an immature Baird's sandpiper. I have reported the bird to the Boston Natural History Museum but up to the present time have not had their comments.

This year was marked by the coming of a number of knots, about a dozen. Previously I had not been able to record more than a single pair. There have been large numbers of black-bellied plovers; I counted 61 out on the harbor flats one day. There were fewer Hudsonian curlews -- only about half as many as usual -- and fewer roseate, common and black terns. I believe I saw one Arctic tern. Only one golden plover showed up before I left on September 6. Generally you can find a flock of a dozen. We were honored this summer with four appearances of parasitic jaegers.

Nantucket is the home of perhaps six short-eared owls and two dozen marsh hawks, and for several years mocking-birds have been resident throughout the year.



Schenectady Bird Club  
Annual Membership -  
Active, \$2, Assoc., \$1

Guy Bartlett, Editor, R. D. 1, Rosendale Road

## OUR NEXT MEETING

The 1940-1941 series of S B C meetings will be inaugurated Monday, September 30, at 8 p.m. in the Schenectady Museum. At the time of going to press with this issue, however, the program committee was not ready to announce the speaker and topic. So keep the date open, and details of the meeting will be supplied shortly in a special notice.

. . . . .

## FAMOUS HAWK MOUNTAIN, PA. SELECTED FOR OCTOBER TRIP

Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania, is internationally famous for the spectacular flights of birds of prey that can be witnessed from its top. It is a sanctuary, and visitors are welcomed.

Several S B C members are planning on being there on Columbus Day, Saturday, October 12, driving at least part way to the scene Friday night and returning on Sunday.

Those interested in the trip may obtain further details from the secretary.

. . . . .

## SCREECH OWL CONVENTION

. . . Cont'd from p. 37  
an obstinate fellow, however, and I do not think I won him over.

A few people of the neighborhood, however, became quite attached to the owls. Many were surprised to learn that owls do not necessarily say "Who" all the time, but that the screech owl can well take its place among avian musicans.

A few years ago the city fathers decided to regulate dumping at the Slingerlands Street Dump. Incinerators were installed, and a good measure of cleanliness resulted. The screech owls never again convened in Lincoln Park after that, undoubtedly because there was a great decrease in rats and mice. While it is pleasant to look out from one's back porch and not see a sleek rat run across the yard, I do miss sitting in on the screech owl convention.

## DATES TO BEAR IN MIND

September 29 (Sun.) - Invitation to attend dedication of Sassafras Bird Club Woodland Theater, Amsterdam.

September 30 (Mon.) - Regular meeting, 8 p.m., Schenectady Museum.

October 12 (Sat.) - Trip to Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania. Details elsewhere in this issue.

October 28 (Mon.) - Regular meeting, 8 p.m.

. . . . .

## IDENTIFYING BIRDS

There comes a time in the career of every bird enthusiast when the realization hits him that he knows his birds pretty well and has gotten to the point where he needs something else to learn. This is just the right moment for him to think of specializing. If we are merely content to sit back after having learned the birds and enjoy their looks or songs we are missing most of the fun of the hobby. In specializing, however, we are starting in all over again, repeating the thrills we had when we first began, and intensifying the enjoyment we get out of bird study.

The opportunities open to those who wish to specialize are almost endless. At least one of our members is already specializing in the study of bird songs and other notes. Someone might easily devote himself to the study of nests and eggs; another might take up the subject of cowbird parasitism in this locality; groups of birds like sandpipers, ducks, rails, etc., afford great possibilities. Bird photography, both in black and white and in color, both with movie and still cameras, offers unlimited possibilities. The study, season after season, of the birds of a particular local environment (such as the Bird-Lore breeding-bird census) is particularly enlightening. Then, too, there is the field of bird-banding. And, recognized by authorities as one of the most fertile fields is the concentrated study of a single species, such as done by Margaret Morse Nice with the song sparrow.

Advantages of specializing, other than the joy of discovering new things and the pardonable pride in knowing a little more about the subject than others, include one very obvious one from the standpoint of the Club; the help of a specialist is often invaluable in work in the field. The more persons we have who are specializing, the more expert assistance we can call upon when knotty questions come up.

-- B.S.H.

## NEWS AND NOTES IN BRIEF

HUMMERS . . . . .

A hummingbird nested at 856 Union Street, opposite Gillespie, this summer. The nest was on a long, slim branch of a large maple tree about 10 feet from the tree trunk and about 10 feet from the ground. The branch drooped from the tree and at the point of the nest was 5/8-inch diameter, and at an angle of about 45 degrees. The outside diameter of the nest was 1-3/4 inches. The slightest breeze caused the branch to sway, making it necessary for me to weight the end of the branch before I could get a picture.

One interesting feature was watching the young preen and exercise their wings preparatory for flight. One left the nest on July 21 while I was watching. It flew almost straight up for 8 or 10 feet and then at a right angle to alight on a branch. The mother bird was not in view at the time. The second bird left the nest July 22. The birds were hatched about July 1.

— J. M. Hollister

. . . . .

CLOUDS OF NIGHTRAWKS . . . . .

There's something magic about the last few days of August and the first few ones of September, so far as records of nighthawks are concerned. Each year the story is the same — they are to be seen in large flocks over the city, and usually in low, silent, daylight flight.

One of this year's largest flocks seems to have been the one in the Brandwine-Union section on September 1. Frank Harrison estimated the flock at about 400; and others closely approximated his figures.

. . . . .

HUNTING REGULATIONS . . . . .

There is general interest in knowing the N. Y. hunting regulations, especially as to how many laws are being broken by the hunter in an outboard motor boat who is trying to pick off a grebe with a rifle shortly after sunset, or by the one taking pot shots at the gull or killdeer because there are no ducks in sight.

The duck-hunting season in New York State this fall will be considerably longer than in previous years. The season on wild ducks and geese, snipe, and oot, rails and gallinules opens October 16 and continues through December 14.

Woodcock suffered greatly in last winter's southern storms, and their season has been cut in half to 15 days, from October 1 to 15 north of the main New York Central tracks, and from October 15 through October 29 south of the line. There is no open season on snow geese, brant, wood duck, or swans. Hunting is from sunrise to 4 p. m., and until sunset for rails, gallinules, woodcock, and snipe. Ten ducks may be taken daily, with not more than three in all of canvasback, redhead, bufflehead, and ruddy. Three geese may be taken in one day. Other daily bag limits are: Rails and gallinules, 15 in aggregate; scra, 15; oot, 25; snipe, 15; woodcock, 4.

Shotgun (maximum #10 gauge) and shoulder-fired, or bow and arrow are the only arms permitted. Repeating shotguns cannot be used unless correctly plugged; and sinkboxes (batteries), power and sail boats, and automobiles and aircraft are banned in hunting or driving waterfowl and oot. Baiting is prohibited. Not only the state hunting license but also a Federal duck-hunting stamp is required.

. . . . .

UPSTATE MARTINS . . . . .

It is hard to understand why purple martins are so rare in this vicinity but so definitely present in nearby country. Martins are well established in several communities around Oneida Lake and the Finger Lakes, and throughout the Mohawk Valley. There has been a fine colony of martins and tree swallows in South Glen Falls, and a martin colony as near as Saratoga Springs. I observed one colony in Utica with great interest a couple of weeks ago. At the corner of Genesee Street and Baggs Square, which would correspond with State and Broadway in Albany, or State and Erie Boulevard in Schenectady, there was a fine group of these birds cavorting about the main square of a large city. They would swoop from telephone wires gymnastically after insects. Their fine full notes sounded pleasantly above the roar of urban traffic. I always enjoy listening to martins. While their notes hardly comprise what we would call song, nevertheless the quality of them and the manner in which they are uttered rank these birds above the average avian vocalists. The martin's note is somewhat oriole-like in tone, or a bit like that of the cardinal. In fact, if you break up the cardinal's song into irregular sections

you have something that sounds like a martin. The real beauty of the martin's voice is that it is given in chorus, and you have these silver notes striking your ears continuously. Feasibly, these city martins might have nested in some intricate cornice of some building.

— Leonard J. Uttal

.....

MARTINS' TROUBLES .....

One reason advanced for the disappearance of martins from many sections - and their diminishing numbers has been noticeable for decades - has been the struggle with English sparrows, and now starlings, for nesting sites. At Saratoga, for instance, the martins were finally driven from the large house in the park where they had nested for years - driven out by the sparrows which had claimed the house before the return of the martins.

.....

NEW GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS .....

Another in the very worthwhile series of books by Arthur C. Bent on the life histories of North American birds has been announced. The 13th in the series, the new volume includes the cuckoos, goatsuckers, hummingbirds, and their allies. It has been issued as U. S. National Museum Bulletin 176, has 506 pages and plates, and lists at 75¢. It should be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

Also newly announced, and available from the same source is Technical Bulletin 711 of the Agriculture Department, entitled "Economic Status of the English Sparrow in the United States." Of 66 pages with plates, it covers the range and adaptability, food habits, competition with native birds, and factors controlling abundance. It is priced at 15¢.

.....

TIME FOR FEEDERS .....

It is none too early to put out your feeding station. Of course the birds are not really in need of such service yet, but they're always glad to respond to the invitation to feed at ease. And, too, an early start with the feeder will mean a larger winter attendance. More than one bird has tarried in a particular neighborhood because of a favorite feeding station. Nail a chunk of smet against a tree trunk, and spread sunflower seeds, nut meats, and bread crumbs on a tray nailed to the tree. Or,

if you prefer, build a feeding shelf on the window sill. There are plenty of ways of doing it. The main idea is to provide food, preferably sheltered from the winds and snows that are ahead.

Keep a record of your visitors. Such a record offers much of interest, particularly when the time of day and the weather are recorded. It is often found that particular birds show up at different feeding stations at regular intervals.

.....

McGREGOR WARBLERS .....

A small warbler wave was reported from Mount McGregor for August 4. Together with many chickadees, several blue-headed vireos and a family of red-breasted nuthatches there were also seen (and in many cases heard also) the following warblers; several black and white, one magnolia, many black-throated blue, several black-throated green, several Blackburnian, several chestnut-sided, and many Canada warblers. The earliest previous record for a gathering of warblers at Mount McGregor was August 9, 1936, when fewer individuals as well as fewer species were seen.

The songs of four species of thrushes were also heard, with the first August records for some of these birds at Mount McGregor. Although the hermit thrush sings in this locality into early August (August 10, 1934, August 12, 1935, August 9, 1936, August 14, 1938, August 10, 1939) the other resident thrushes are seldom heard after mid-July, the last records being July 19, 1939, for the wood thrush, July 24, 1937, for the olive-backed, and July 23, 1934, for the veery. The songs of the wood thrush and veery were each heard only once on August 4, but several olive-backs were heard repeatedly for a period of at least half an hour, as well as various hermit thrushes throughout the morning.

-- Dorothy Caldwell

.....

LEAD POISONING .....

Lead poisoning long has been recognized as an important factor limiting the abundance of ducks. But whether the effect of sub-lethal doses of lead produces sterility in the birds and thus is of far greater importance still remains a matter of conjecture. The N. Y. State Conservation Department has launched a research project designed to find out. The findings, if they substantiate what scientists suspect, will do much to provide impetus for the general usage of

## FEATHERS

some variety of shot which will be rendered harmless before feeding birds have a chance to sieve it accidentally out of the mud.

A single pellet of No. 5 shot, taken into the gizzard, is fatal to mallards under some conditions. Research indicates lead poisoning among waterfowl, particularly the lesser scaup, is far more serious than generally recognized.

Breeding mallards at the N. Y. State Wildlife Research Center have been used experimentally to determine the amounts of lead which may be fed in order to produce a chronic poisoning, rather than death, and thus assure that the ducks will survive to the breeding season.

Incidentally, there are indications that the addition of magnesium to the lead used in shot does not spoil the shot as such but does cause the pellets to disintegrate rapidly when dropped into water. And plenty of lead pellets fall into the mud each hunting season, ready to be picked up by feeding ducks.

.....

## NEARBY VULTURES

On Saturday afternoon, September 15, at Central Bridge, Schoharie County, I saw one, or possibly two, turkey vultures. I had glasses on one for several minutes, with Peterson handy, as it was low over the field where we were digging archeologically. While following it the field of the glasses was intercepted by a second bird, much farther off, but I stuck to No. 1. I have no doubt at all of the identification; the only other thing it could possibly have been is an immature eagle, and the tail was all wrong for that. Vultures, by the way, have been quite common at Bear Mountain for the past several years, and it may be that they are working north with the possums.

-- Schnyler Miller

.....

From Pittsfield comes the report that as many as four vultures have been seen in one day and that they have not been rarities at Mount Everett Reservation this summer. A mockingbird, and a pair of orchard orioles are other records in that vicinity.

.....

## PTARMIGAN

A successful hatching of willow ptarmigan has been reported from the N. Y. Conservation Department's wildlife research center at Delmar. Eight of the birds were imported from Norway a few months ago.

## INVITATION TO AMSTERDAM

The Sassafras Bird Club of Amsterdam has extended an invitation to S B C members to attend the dedication of its new Woodland Theater and Trailside Museum in the bird sanctuary at Amsterdam at 2:30 o'clock Sunday afternoon, September 29. The program will include the high school band, a nature play, and two distinguished out-of-town speakers. Those attending should take cushions, in case the sod covering the tier of seats is more or less damp. The Woodland Theater is designed to seat 1500 people.

.....

## HERE AND THERE

Among ex-territorial records of unusual interest in recent months;

Bachman's sparrow - One at Rochester May 8 to 12, probably the first record of the species in western New York.

Burrowing owl - In a field near Hamilton, Ont., June 2; in prime condition and alert, and without signs of having been in captivity.

Kentucky warbler - Two singing males June 11 between Middleport and Medina; believed to be breeding birds.

Ducks - Two gadwall, two pintail, one shoveller, and four baldpates, all males, June 11 near Buffalo. Nest of shoveller found, others thought to be breeding.

185 species found by the Buffalo Ornithological Society on its annual spring census, May 19, from whom the above records were obtained.

Records in the vicinity of Pittsfield, Mass., during May included not only the Brewster's warbler, elsewhere referred to, but also a roseate tern on May 26; an orange-crowned warbler May 21 at Lenox; a red crossbill in Pittsfield May 18; and a pine grosbeak May 19 in Williamstown.

.....

## BARN OWL AT THE CAPITOL

Sometime during the third week of July a barn owl visited the inner court of the state capitol at Albany, much to the delight of newspapermen. They had it that the hitherto unremediable pigeon nuisance there was solved by the appearance of this bird. As a matter of fact, the poor owl, Dr. Stoner of the state museum told me, was turned over to the Humane Society in an unhealthy condition, hardly a potential danger to the pigeons. It died with the Society and was given to the Museum, where it was learned that the bird was emaciated and

suffering from an injured esophagus, as if some well-meaning person had tried to forcefully feed it. Thus the pigeon nuisance at the capitol remains unsolved

Barn owls seem to be getting commoner around the city. Dr. Stoner says he sees them not infrequently around Albany. One was captured recently and held at the Delmar game farm. Probably there are many more barn owls nesting in downtown buildings than is generally realized. Certainly this would not be regretted.

-- Leonard J. Uttal

.....

SUMMER SUMMARY .....

The chairman of the records committee, George H. Bainbridge, will have the summer summary as one of the features of the October issue of FEATHERS. If you have some interesting items not already reported, please submit them promptly so they can be included.

.....

LONG-BILLED -- PRAIRIE .....

It looks as though, to be strictly correct, we should refer to our common marsh wren as the prairie marsh wren instead of as the long-billed marsh wren.

The fourth edition of the A O U Check-list of North American Birds shows the long-billed marsh wren (*Telmatoedtes palustris palustris*) as breeding along the Atlantic Slope from Rhode Island to the Potomac Valley and Virginia Coast.

The prairie marsh wren (T. p. dissectus) is shown as breeding in the Great Plains and Prairie district of the central Mississippi Valley east to Ontario, New York, and New England.

.....

PSEUDO-HUMMERS .....

Have you ever had someone insist that there must be different kinds of hummingbirds in Schenectady gardens, or at least that the young must be able to fly when they are really tiny? More than one person have reported such hummingbirds, have pretty well described their motionless flight on invisible wings in front of flowers, and have seen the tongue extended into the flower. But their descriptions fall down on size and colors. They insist that the hummingbirds are hardly if any larger than bumblebees.

The answer to the problem is that these people have been seeing clear-wing or hummingbird moths, a variety of the sphinx moth. The reports are usually to be heard in late summer.

EGRETS, AS USUAL .....

As usual, American egrets were to be seen along the Crescent pool of the river this summer, but in fewer places and in smaller numbers. They also arrived considerably later than expected. In early September, however, they were more common.

One was seen at Galway Lake early in the summer.

Stockport had its usual large number of the birds in late summer.

.....

SANCTUARY AT STEPHENTOWN .....

A 700-acre wooded area north of Stephentown in Rensselaer County has been leased for five years by the New York State Nature Association as its first wild life sanctuary. The posting signs warn off hunters and trappers, but welcome those who wish "to observe, study, photograph and sketch" the abundant bird and animal life there. Among the attractions are beaver ponds.

.....

VIRGINIA .....

Three S B C members in July visited a federal sanctuary in Delaware and made the Audubon's Cobb Island trip in Virginia with Alexander Sprunt. They will report on their trip in the October issue of FEATHERS.

.....

PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBIT .....

The second annual exhibition of photographs of wild life, under the auspices of the New York State Nature Association, will be held at the Albany Institute of History and Art, 125 Washington Avenue, Albany, October 30 to November 10. Prizes of \$20, \$10, and \$5 will be awarded the winning pictures. Information concerning entries is available from Miss Alice Morgan Wright, 393 State Street, Albany.

.....

KNOW YOUR POISONS .....

Our recent references to poison sumacs have interested a number of members, and we accordingly believe they will be further interested in a leaflet on the subject we have just learned about. It is entitled "Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, and Poison Sumac," by P. L. Ridker, and is Circular No. 42 of the Wild Flower Preservation Society; price ten cents. Copies may be obtained by addressing the

## FEATHERS

national headquarters of the society at 3740 Owen Street, Washington, D.C.

Also available is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1166, "Poison Ivy and Poison Sumac and Their Eradication," available from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., at five cents a copy.

.....

### UTICA'S MARTINS .....

Mr. Uttal's note about martins at Utica (p. 40) makes appropriate some old notes on that colony. In 1886 Dr. William Ralph and Egbert Bagg listed the martin as a not uncommon breeding summer resident in Oneida County. Early this century the county story was different; the martins were still common at Oneida Lake but in Utica had practically disappeared. As now recalled by Malcolm Rix, Mr. Bagg told him he knew of only one urban colony. These were nesting atop the columns of the Utica Savings Bank, then at the "Busy Corner," Genesee and Bleeker Streets, several blocks from Bagg's Square referred to by Mr. Uttal. The nests were in the crevices of the leaves which regularly adorn the capitals of Corinthian columns.

In the period around 1915 the martins were still at the Busy Corner, but they had a new nesting site and the pairs were fewer. Each summer a group of us would visit a friendly sign-painter in a top, rear room of the Devereaux Block, at Genesee, Bleeker and Seneca streets. The building backed up against the still-in-use old Erie Canal. Bricks had fallen out of the rear wall below the overhang of the roof, and in these crevices the birds were nesting. By pulling down the upper window and standing on it (with someone within to hold your legs and one arm) it was possible to look into some of the nests. Yes, the parent birds would fly close. But in spite of repeated peeks year after year the birds did not abandon the site, probably because the sign painter would not let anyone molest the birds during the period of incubation. Not until he could hear the young birds could one climb out his window.

They filled the canal and made it into a boulevard, and the Devereaux Block was fixed up, and given a front on the new street. Thereupon the martins lost their nesting site. Thereafter the birds nested in crevices in the Saturday Evening Globe building near Bagg's Square. After 1922 the writer's Utica records stop, but Mr. Uttal indicates continuation of the colony, perhaps even with the same nesting site. -- G.B.

### CHICK-A-DEE-DEE .....

A long time ago, in a clump of small trees  
Was a little bird college conferring degrees;  
And on one little fellow, so learned was he,  
And so pious withal, they conferred a D. D.

The name of the birdie thus honored was Chick  
His body was small but his intellect quick  
I never have learned what the reason could be  
But the other birds laughed and said "Chicki a D. D.!"

But Chick didn't know they were laughing and he  
Was the happiest bird to be found in the tree;  
And oft to himself -- not to others -- in glee  
He'd chuckle and say "I'm Chick, a D. D.!"

What Chick! a D. D.? Little Chick a D. D.?  
O, yes, and a very good preacher is he,  
For many a sermon of profit to me  
Have I heard in the amroh of the Chick-a-dee-dee.

.....

(Written by the late Rev. Henry Crocker, Chester, Vt., and printed by permission of his son. Copied from the library of Eagle Camp, So. Hero, Vt.)

.....

### DIFFERENT .....

The Bulletin of New England Bird Life reports a delayed May migration, with noticeable absence of "waves." In decided contrast, the report for western New York State showed a tremendous wave of warblers passing through in mid-May.

.....

### NIGHT NOTES .....

Have you ever listened to the multitude of birds in flight overhead at night during the cold autumn migration? You can hear plenty of the call notes of the birds, but it is not likely you will identify all you hear. A high-pitched, penetrating although apparently weak, whistled note is the most common one.

# FEATHERS

Published by the Schenectady Bird Club

OCT. 1940

VOL. 2, NO. 10

## AUDUBON'S PLATES WILL BE DISPLAYED AT UNION

Complete Collection of Most Valuable Bird Portraits to be Shown at  
October Meeting -- H. L. Webb to Narrate History of  
College's Rare Volumes

There is no work on the birds of America more famous than that of Audubon, the original edition of which, "The Birds of America," was published by him in London during the years 1827-1838. In all, 435 plates were issued, on double elephant folio paper, 39½ by 26½ inches before trimming. They were aquatint engravings — hand-colored impressions from copperplates. The plates were generally bound in four volumes, with 100 plates in each of the first three.

It is believed that complete bound sets totalled less than 200, but there were additional prints and unbound sets. Subscriptions for the work cost \$1,000. Today the sets are collector's items, worth several thousand dollars. Many of the sets have been broken up and the individual plates auctioned by dealers. How many sets are still in existence is not definitely known, but they are not many.

One of the complete sets is in Schenectady — in the Union College Library. It was purchased by Union's famous Dr. Eliphalet Nott.

Schenectady Bird Club members will have an opportunity to examine these rare books at their October meeting. The Union College Library is officially closed Saturday nights; through the kindness of the Union librarian, Helmer L. Webb, the volumes will be displayed Saturday, October 26, at 8 p.m. in the Union College Library.

The volumes are seldom on view, the nature of the printing and the age of the books being such that a minimum of handling is demanded.

During the evening Mr. Webb and an assistant will turn through two of the volumes, and all will have an opportunity to scrutinize the plates. Mr. Webb will also relate the history of the Union College volumes.

In connection with this meeting are three conditions which must be kept in mind;

The meeting must begin at 8 o'clock sharp.

Only members of the Schenectady Bird Club can be admitted.

Under no conditions shall visitors touch any of the books, whether open or closed.

It hardly seems necessary to emphasize the rare opportunity offered by this meeting.

### DATES TO BEAR IN MIND

October 26 (Sat.) -- Regular meeting, 8 p. m., Union College Library. Mr. H. L. Webb, College Librarian, will exhibit the college's set of Audubon bird plates and relate the history of the volumes. By request of the college, the meeting is restricted to S B C members only.

November 25 (Mon.) -- Regular meeting, 8 p. m.

December 21 or 22 (Sat., Sun.) will probably be the date for the annual Bird-Lore Christmas Census.

## WHEELS ROLLING SOUTHWARD



Federal Game Refuge in Delaware and an Audubon Sanctuary off the Virginia Coast Contribute Much of Interest-- Trip Made by Four SBC Members

The May meeting of the SBC -- members seated on a grassy slope in Central Park -- an announcement concerning Cobb Island -- this was all that was needed to start the wheels rolling southward.

What is an introduction to a change in bird-life scene? How does the bird lover know he is heading south? Doylestown in southern Pennsylvania -- a red surprise, a flash of color across the road -- a cry from the car -- "A cardinal!"

Rolling on to Wilmington. Huge black wings wheel and bank high in the sky. Glasses focused; Peterson in hand. A turkey vulture has sailed into the scene and from then on seems always hanging there, ubiquitous, menacing! A hold-over in Smyrna, Del., to contact the Bombay Hook Wildlife Refuge. Here in this little town brown thrashers hop about lawns, frequent low bushes, and seem on the whole as numerous and friendly as robins in the North.

About eight miles from Smyrna is the Bombay Hook Refuge, a tract of 13,709 acres of salt marsh, wooded swamp, and upland, important both as a protected feeding and resting area during migration periods, and as a nesting area for migratory waterfowl. This as a federal project puts its emphasis on the preservation of the game species, while the Audubon Association stresses the protection of the non-game species. Some of the important types nesting in the refuge this season were black ducks, blue-winged teal, clapper rail, and the common tern. One of the summer residents, the Florida gallinule, glided over the water into the reedy grass with two fuzzy black babies in its wake. Winged by overhead were the marsh hawk, bald eagle, osprey, turkey vulture, black-crowned night heron, and Ameri-

can bittern, which also nest at Bombay Hook. While many birds common to the Schenectady area were nesting there, many unfamiliar ones were to be found, including the orchard oriole in brilliant plumage, the haughty purple grackle, and the shy bob-white.

To further the work of the Refuge, a construction program is under way which includes the installation of water-control structures such as dams, dykes, and smaller impounding features, creating large fresh and also brackish water areas; the construction of headquarters buildings, a lookout tower, a boathouse, and service trails which facilitate patrol, maintenance, and fire prevention; the planting of desirable natural food plants, both upland and aquatic; and the planting of shrubs, trees, and other plants to improve the range and habitat for all forms of upland game and small birds.

A unique feature of construction is a 3300-foot boardwalk over the salt marshes which stretch out on either side as far as the eye can see. From this unusual vantage point may be had intimate views of the short-tailed marsh wren, tip-tilting his tail so sharply over his back as almost to over-topple himself; the rattling long-billed marsh wren; the eastern lark sparrow so appropriately named, singing joyously from his high perch; and the sharp-tailed sparrow peculiar to salt marshes.

(This article was jointly prepared by four SBC members who in July spent a week in an automobile trip to Delaware and Virginia.)

Visitors are welcome at this federal refuge at any time, and the Refuge Manager, John F. Herholdt, will be

# FEATHERS

Published by the Schenectady Bird Club

## SCHENECTADY BIRD CLUB

Annual Membership: Active, \$2; Assoc., \$1

Guy Bartlett, Editor, R. D. 1, Rosendale Road

found a genial host, enthusiastic and well-informed.

Again wheels roll on -- this time to the eastern shore of Virginia.

Dusk -- a salt marsh -- a nest set flat upon a tall dead tree -- a gray and white figure against the sky -- hunched shoulders -- the vigilant osprey. Turkey vultures going to roost; grotesque, repulsive, with naked red heads and necks.

On through an avenue of tall, silent, dark trees to Chesapeake Bay, bathed in a wonder of sunset colors.

By 9 o'clock in the morning a sturdy Audubon launch shoves off from Oyster, Va., with Warden Milton Doughty as skipper; and spare, brown, kindly Alexander Sprunt, Jr., remembered by the S B C for his vivid presentation of the work of Audubon's southern sanctuaries, as guide. As the boat moves out into the calm bay, eyes search eagerly for birds to find instead of machines which men call civilization. A coast-guard cutter flashes by; a practice bombing plane strikes with deadly accuracy at the target on the horizon; puffs of white smoke mushroom up from the still water.

Now close at hand lies Cobb Island, lazily sunning itself. Here is a different world, a world of whirring wings. The oyster catcher, a study in black and white. The handsome, black-headed laughing gull. Terns of six varieties -- the black tern, changing even in July to winter plumage; the royal, the largest of them all; the Forster's and the common, distinguished from one another by their calls; the gull-billed, crying incessantly "katydid"; and the smallest of them all, the least. The willet, sometimes a quiet, nondescript bird; at other times an arresting beautiful bird

with wings poised in a black and white pattern, yip-yipping his way over the island. Black skimmers cup the water along the shore line with their elongated lower mandibles, flashing red, tipped with black. Black skimmers, graceful in an arc of flight, awkward at rest on the sandy beach. A profusion of plovers, semipalmated, Wilson's, and black-bellied; the clapper rail which could win the hundred-yard dash in a bird Olympic; the dowitcher, feeding with phlegmatic interest.

"Watch your step" is the slogan of the islands. There, right by a big, heavy footprint, lie two little, blinking, black-eyed, common tern chicks. A slight hollow in the sand without so much as a hair for lining is the cradle. Nearby under a weed a few inches in height a solicitous parent has carried its babies to shade. So it is over the entire islands -- Watch your step. The sand-colored chicks and the sand-colored, speckled eggs of terns, oyster catchers, and black skimmers blend so completely with the sand spit that it is well nigh impossible to avoid stepping on a nest. Leaving the white oyster-shell beach, the dazzling light and shimmering heat which is so exhausting, the tenderfoot looks out over a growth of marsh grass and low bushes. Contrary to their usual breeding habits, the green herons have chosen these low bushes for nesting sites.

A few minutes' sail in the shade of the canopied boat brings into view the home of the Forster's tern and laughing gull -- an island called Rappeslum Lump. A single-file trail through the marsh grass winds its way to nests built flatly on the sedge well above the menace of the tides. Scourrying baby Forster's terns and laughing gulls catch sight of feet struggling through oozy black mud topped by high-water slacks. Admonitions to keep the feet tracking carefully so that nary a one of Mr. Doughty's precious charges is endangered.

Turning from the nesting sites of these wild, free creatures, the visitors, relaxed, appreciative, content, sail back to the mainland and civilization. Although conscious of such pictures as the black skimmer skimming at the edge of an island or a little black boy delving in the mud for

## FEATHERS

crabs, the bird students are more aware of the service of Mr. Loughy in patrolling the islands under the Audubon supervision, to prevent hunters from both stealing eggs and shooting birds.

In this area the work of the National Association of Audubon Societies is limited to the conservation of water birds, but included in the trip is a delightful morning of birding on the mainland of Tidewater Virginia. To carry out this part of the program, Mr. Sprunt leads the way over the roads to a thicket of many unfamiliar shrubs and trees. For welcome the unusually rare and beautiful blue grosbeak is calling to his more quietly plumaged mate. The Carolina wren, bubbling over with gaiety; and the yellow-breasted chat, pouring forth its strange medley of notes, play their parts in the morning opera. Even above this chorus of call and song the worry-worry note of the elegant cardinal is distinctive. While it has seemed that nothing could exceed the gorgeous color of this bird,

first place is conceded to the exquisite summer tanager when he appears. One tree is the scene of domestic activity. A kingbird is noisy at its task of caring for its brood, and the orchard oriole is feeding its young in a semi-suspended nest. High above in the blue of the sky dark wings beat -- the turkey vulture still watches. A host of small songbirds such as the prairie warbler, the blue-gray gnatcatcher, the yellow-throated warbler, and indigo bunting also nest in this section. It is interesting to note that the number of species of sparrows has gradually declined until in this section only the Atlantic song sparrow, the chipping sparrow, and the field sparrow are nesting.

Three good days of birding ended. Farewell to sunny Cobb Island and its strong, sure wings. Farewell to the birds of the delicate mimosa, liquid amber, and sweet gum trees. Farewell to Alexander Sprunt, the tireless spirit of conservation.

And wheels roll northward.

## THE SEASON - SUMMER, 1940

Generally speaking it was, locally at least, a damp summer, with the last week of June and the last week of August quite cold, local frosts occurring on August 24. The second and third weeks of July were hot and humid.

Locally there is not much of unusual to report. However, the yellow-crowned night heron was reported (Hollister) at the heronry. Among other records of interest are the red-throated loon at Duane Lake in June; bob-white at Guilderland and Duane Lake; Hungarian partridge in Charlton-Swaggertown section; black tern June 16 (Moore) Crescent pool; young ducks (probably mallards) in Mohawk River near mouth of Alplams Creek; and in local waters breeding black ducks, mallards, blue-winged teal, wood duck.

Many interesting trips were made by various members of the Club, either individually or in groups. Thus the Long Trail Lodge trip, held jointly with the Sassafras Bird Club, proved very enjoyable, interesting, and educational, particularly under the guidance of Mr. Brown. The report of this trip is given in the July issue of FEATHERS. Also in that issue is a

report of a trip to the Pleasant Valley Bird and Wild Flower Sanctuary, Lenox, Mass., including, among the finds, Brewster's warbler and the golden-winged warbler.

In the August-September issue Mr. Allen presented an interesting report on summer birds of Nantucket, and Miss Rowley reported on the hawks seen at Mt. Tom, Mass., on a recent trip of nine S B C members. In the present issue is the story of a trip under the guidance of the Audubon Society to the Cobb Island Sanctuary, Va. This is undoubtedly a well worthwhile trip when the breaks in the weather (cool) come as well as they did this year. From Mt. McGregor come reports of a red-breasted nuthatch summering there and probably breeding, and also a warbler wave earlier by five days than previous records show. Other interesting August bird items will also be found in the report by Miss Caldwell (page 41).

Turkey vultures, or at least one for certain, was reported by P.S. Miller at Central Bridge September 15. These were undoubtedly stragglers.

-- George H. Beinbridge

## THE STARLING -- WHAT OF ITS FUTURE?

Leonard J. Uttal

Today, fifty years after it was released at New York, the starling is already beginning to occupy the Rocky Mountain states. It is continually extending its North American range and rapidly increasing in numbers from year to year. In many places it is more abundant than the house sparrow. Although it seems to be very deleterious to some of our native birds and is the cause of some anxiety among bird lovers, yet there may not be so much reason for worrying if the starling follows the course of the house sparrow.

Fifty years after the house sparrow had been in North America it was like the starling today -- rapidly multiplying and extending its range. It seemed to be driving out many native birds, and bird students were really worried about it. The bird continued to increase during the first two decades of the present century, and then during the twenties it began to decrease. In a few years the sparrow's numbers dropped to a norm which the species has pretty much maintained until today.

Much of the bird lover's worries never materialized. Aside from driving the bluebirds out of the towns, the house sparrow has not affected the native birds very adversely. It is now very much a part of our fauna, maintaining its numbers at a certain norm as does any of our native successful species.

The declension of the house sparrow coincided more or less with the replacement of the horse by the automobile. Most students have assumed the obvious and have directly attributed the decline of the sparrow to the retirement of the horse. But this seems

strange for a bird as resourceful and robust as the sparrow. There are plenty of other food sources for so adaptable a bird. We must consider another factor.

There is a theory that, whenever a species is successfully introduced into a new land, it increases rapidly while occupying the land and then decreases until it reaches a certain norm which the species maintains from then on. In other words, after natural factors of elimination have had time to adapt themselves to the introduced species, they keep it down to a certain level. This is true also of any native species. It seems to have happened to the house sparrow in America, Australia, and New Zealand; the European goldfinch in the Bahamas; the skylark and song thrush in Australia; and to other classes of animals and plants. There also seem to be many examples of exceptions to this theory, such as rats and rabbits in Australia, and weeds which have yet to enter a period of decrease.

Anyway, if the starling follows the house sparrow, it will keep on multiplying for a while and then decrease until it reaches a norm when it finds its niche in our fauna. In the end it will probably not do much harm to the native birds.

## WHAT WINTER OFFERS

Barrington S. Havens

With the fall season here and winter not far away, the old-timers in bird study are beginning to look forward to another season with the annual question: what unusual things can we expect this winter? A great many bird students, confining their activities to the spring migration period and the summer when nesting is in progress, miss some of the best thrills to be

provided by birds.

For winter is the season which can well repay the amateur ornithologist. Far from being a time when all the birds have left for the south, it not only brings us certain birds characteristic of that season and none other -- in addition to the normal residents found the year around -- but

## FEATHERS

also provides opportunities for study equaled by no other time of the year.

What birds can we find in winter? First of all, as has been said, there are the resident birds, like the grouse, sparrow hawk, screech owl, pileated woodpecker, blue jay, white-breasted nuthatch, chickadee, etc. In addition to these, many summer residents often remain to spend the winter with us in small quantities, including some ducks, marsh hawk, mourning dove, kingfisher, robin, meadowlark, cowbird, goldfinch, and song sparrow. Still another group includes those like the mergansers, gulls, goshawk, snowy owl, red-breasted nuthatch, winter wren, golden-crowned kinglet, Bohemian waxwing, shrike, rusty blackbird, evening and pine grosbeaks, redpoll, siskin, crossbills, junco, and snow bunting -- birds which we may see during migration or which visit us in winter only as a retreat from other regions where they normally stay.

Why should we study these birds in the winter? First of all, winter is the only time when we can see some of them at all - unless we want to travel far to the north to reach their summer breeding grounds. Secondly, the winter season, with the trees bare of leaves and general scarcity of birds making observation easy with little to distract the attention, is an excellent one to study appearance and habits. Thirdly, there is the great thrill of finding the unexpected. For in winter, with a few exceptions, we never know what we'll be able to add to our list when we set out on a trip. We may turn up a flock of redpolls, grosbeaks, or Bohemian waxwings, or we may get a good look at a goshawk or rough-legged hawk for the first time in several years. So get out this winter and see what you can find. And don't let a snowy day discourage you. Some of the best records have been turned in after a trip made during a snowfall.

## BIRDS AND AUTOMOBILES

B. D. Miller

Several years ago I read some articles and reports dealing with the destruction of animal life by automobiles on our highways. Practically all members of the animal kingdom, besides man, are the unfortunate and innocent victims.

Some careful surveys were made over many miles of roadways in Iowa and neighboring states. Lists were compiled of the remains found. Birds of many species were always found in the tabulations, and red-headed woodpeckers practically always represented the greatest number. These investigators attributed this fact to three causes: their being common, feeding along the highways, and being slower than most birds in getting on the wing.

On the roadways in this locality I have found sparrows, robins, flickers, goldfinches, pheasants, etc. I have not kept records or made any careful surveys and therefore am unable to guess if one class of birds is killed at a higher rate than others. In the city I have been surprised, however, at the number of English sparrows killed in the streets -- so many, in fact, I have wondered if the automobile has not been a factor in reducing their number.

In the early days of the "bensine buggy" and "horseless carriage" -- long before their speed was an element of destruction -- I remember an artist's portrayal of a convention of English sparrows; a parliamentary body assembled hurriedly to discuss world events as affecting them; to weigh their relative potency; and to plan how best they might be met. Even at that remote date one of these wise sparrows saw "the handwriting on the wall" by predicting that the machine now known as an automobile was to bring about the destruction of their powerful race. His lugubrious prophecy was not that his race was to meet violent death; but a slow, agonizing end by starvation.

How much of a factor is the automobile in checking the English sparrow? Can it be considered a serious agent of destruction to any of our birds?

Whenever I find a dead bird or fur-bearing animal on the highways I am reminded of this phase of conservation. Do you think birds are learning how to protect themselves better from automobile attacks? I believe the domestic fowl has. I would like to hear what other observers have to say on this subject.

## NEWS AND NOTES IN BRIEF

## From Maine ....



A trip to Mt. Desert Island, Me., the last week in June was fruitful of many gulls -- all herring gulls, a bald eagle, the black guillemot, and a small, barren, rocky island dotted with cormorants. What economic factor the cormorants play in the balance of nature is not obvious to the writer. It was interesting to watch the gulls literally swarm around the lobster boats to seize the old bait (dead fish) as it was discarded from the lobster pots and replaced by fresh bait. At times the boat would be almost screened from view by the great number of gulls in the air and on the water.

A trip to Mt. Katahdin, Me., the last week of August yielded little of interest in birds except six bald eagles, four in one group and two in another, along the Penobscot River north of Bangor. It was very cold at the base of the mountain (South Basin, elevation 2900 ft), and birds were few and far between. Not a white-throat was heard. -- G. H. Bainbridge.

## .... to California



A survey of trips made by members of the SBC this year certainly would include plenty of territory.

From Maine to Florida, not to mention Canada, and from islands out in the Atlantic across to the Pacific Coast the trips have extended, with numerous sanctuaries included.

Right now H. V. D. Allen is adding plenty of new species and subspecies to his life list. Recently back from Nantucket, out in the Atlantic, he is now in California.

## Lions Speaker ....

At the luncheon of the Schenectady Lions Club on September 25 the speaker was Barrington S. Havens, SBC field activities chairman. His topic was "Why Birds Migrate."

## Ospreys Galore ....

Seldom, in this vicinity, are ospreys seen more than one or two at a time. September 19 was unusual at Watervliet Reservoir for there were five ospreys in and over the trees along the edge of the water, close to each other. On the following day three were seen together there.

-- Nellie VanVorst

## Hawks Aplenty ....

The Columbus Day trip of several SBC members to Hawk Mountain, Pa., makes of particular interest the 1939 report of the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association. It shows 22,704 individuals of 15 species seen there that season. Sharp-shins were most common, with 37% of the total; the red-tailed next with 28%; and the broad-winged third with 25%. Golden eagles outnumbered the balds.

## Hermits of the Lowland ....

For some reason there are many bird students who have the idea that the hermit thrush is a bird either of high altitudes or comparatively northern habitat. This was thoroughly exploded by at least one member of the Club who spent his vacation on Cape Cod. At what is practically sea level, he found the hermit thrush comparatively abundant.

## Bigger and Better ....

There's one thing certain, and that is that the success of our Club depends entirely on the activity of our membership. The larger the membership, the stronger the club. And the larger the membership, the more money in the treasury for different activities. And on the amount of money in the treasury also depends the job we can do with FEATHERS. Have you tried to interest others in SBC membership? The secretary will be glad to supply you with membership blanks.

## FEATHERS

### Fall Songs ....

Few are the birds that sing during their fall migrations, but the blue-headed vireo is one of these. Although it does not favor us with the rich, full song of summer, we not uncommonly hear enough of its singing to identify the singer and to distinguish it from the red-eyed vireo, whose song is so similar.

Although the great majority of the species do not sing during the southward migration, yet many of them utter characteristic notes which help us in our field identification. On a recent morning early in October the following were identified by notes alone during a 15-minute visit to Vale Cemetery: downy woodpecker, crow, white-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper, robin, golden-crowned kinglet, starling, blue-headed vireo, redbird, rose-breasted grosbeak, goldfinch, and junco. There are many more with distinctive utterances which can be identified in the fall.

— B. S. Havens.

### Out of the West ....

In the last issue there was a report that a burrowing owl had been found in a field near Hamilton, Ontario, June 2, in prime condition and without signs of having been in captivity.

Since then, it is reported in The Prothonotary of the Buffalo Ornithological Society, W. E. Saunders of London, Ont., has found burrowing owls both common and apparently breeding at Point Pelle, Ont.

There is a Florida burrowing owl, but this is not a case of a bird extending its range to the north. Instead, the burrowing owls in Ontario have spread east, for the western burrowing owl regularly extends east to Minnesota and western Iowa, and north to Manitoba, and is migratory in its northern range. It has been accidental in Indiana, New York and Massachusetts.

### Slow Flight ....

The woodcock is slow on the wing. Its top speed is probably about 13 miles an hour. The ruffed grouse attains 22, and the pheasant, 60.

### Yellow-crowned ....

In view of this summer's record by J. M. Hollister of the yellow-crowned night heron at Schenectady's heronry, it is interesting to note that in the current issue of The Auk the yellow-crowned is reported nesting in 1939 in Salem County, N. J. Previously there have been several breeding records for Cape May County, N. J., in colonies of black-crowns.

### New Publication ....

"Food Habits of a Group of Shorebirds: Woodcock, Snipe, Knot, and Dowitcher" has been issued as Wildlife Research Bulletin No. 1 by the Biological Survey Bureau, Interior Department. In 37 pages with plates, the bulletin presents a detailed report of the food habits, as determined from stomach examinations, of five North American shorebirds of four species -- the American woodcock, Wilson's snipe, the American knot, and the eastern and long-billed dowitchers -- and brief notes on two Old World species -- the European woodcock and great snipe -- stragglers in North America.

The publication is available from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., at 25 cents a copy.

### For Your Library ....

As new publications about birds are issued by the government, notices about them are being published in this column. However, there are many more such publications in stock at Washington. To print the list in FEATHERS would require considerable space, but Price List 39, listing those publications about birds and animals, can be obtained without charge from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington.

### And in Conclusion ....

"Only with the cooperation of all S B C members can this column of news and notes be complete and interesting. Jot down your observations briefly on a card, and mail them to the editor."

# FEATHERS

Published by the Schenectady Bird Club

NOVEMBER, 1940

VOL. 2, NO. 11

## ROGER TORY PETERSON, NOTED ARTIST AND WRITER, HERE

"Attracting Birds to Home and Garden" Subject of November 27 Meeting in  
Nott Terrace High School Auditorium -- Tickets Available

There is probably no bird artist and writer alive today whose works are better known than are those of Roger Tory Peterson. He frequently has had colored sections on birds in *Life*, a magazine with a circulation in the millions, and his "Field Guide to the Birds" is a new kind of bird book which instantly sprang into great popularity and today has gone through a half-dozen printings.

At the November meeting of the Schenectady Bird Club, Mr. Peterson will be the speaker. His topic will be "Attracting Birds to Home and Garden," and he will use both slides and motion pictures in connection with his talk. The meeting will be held Wednesday night, November 27, at 8 o'clock in the Nott Terrace High School Auditorium. Admission will be by ticket only. Tickets are being supplied to S B C members without charge; additional tickets (30 cents) may be purchased at the door or, better yet, in advance from the committee.

Mr. Peterson is an outstanding young ornithologist who confesses that he might easily have become the most notoriously bad boy in his home community of Jamestown, N. Y., had it not been for the fact that at the age of eleven an opportunity was presented to him to become a member of the Junior Audubon Club.

Mr. Peterson is best known for his "Field Guide to the Birds," to be seen in the pocket of most field workers. For the past four years Mr. Peterson has been working on a similar field-guide to the birds of the western states.

Mr. Peterson's five years of training in the Art Students' League and the National Academy of Design in New York City, together with his teaching experience in summer camps and his instructorship in natural sciences and art at Rivers' School of Brookline, Mass., admirably equip him to assist in the Audubon educational work.

At the present time Mr. Peterson is

in charge of the creative aspect of this work, writing and illustrating the pamphlets used for the development of nature appreciation and of wildlife conservation.

In addition to this creative work in the educational field, Mr. Peterson has illustrated a number of books on birds; and also the originals for some of the widely used wildlife stamps.

Mr. Peterson is the youngest full member of the American Ornithologists Union. Election to that class indicates special distinction and achievement in the field of ornithology.

Information concerning tickets may be obtained from: Mrs. Ealy Hallenbeck, 14 Washington Road, Scotia, telephone 6-8579; Miss I. M. Heacock, Mohawk National Bank, telephone 4-9161; or Miss Nelle VanVorst.

Mr. Peterson will be the guest of S B C at dinner before the lecture. Those desiring to attend the dinner should telephone Mrs. C. N. Moore.

## SCHENECTADY'S FIRST INSPECTION OF HAWK MOUNTAIN

Alice Moore

The weatherman smiled on the members of S B C who made the trip to Hawk Mt., Dreherstown, Penn., and gave us three perfect fall days. The early-morning haze soon burned off, leaving brilliant sunshine and warm air. The drivers of both cars overshoot the mark -- missing the turn to Dreherstown from the main route. Hawk Mountain and the Sanctuary are not well-marked. However, 134 visitors found their way to the look-out Saturday, October 11, making a grand total of 1994 visitors up to that time for this season.

The cars are parked single-file on a very good mountain road near the summit, while bird enthusiasts armed with binoculars and lunches make their way upward to the look-out. The mountain has been burned over, and stave skeletons of large trees are still standing. The scrubby second-growth is uninteresting for the most part. Chestnut saplings are trying valiantly to make a come-back, and sassafras with its three different leaves is common.

Just as you are beginning to puff with the climb a welcome change occurs. You are in the "Hall of the Mt. King." This is a cool glade with a few larger trees, interesting rock formations, and evidence of industrial activity at an earlier time. Sand was carted from this site to Dreherstown first over the stony road you have just climbed and later by a more elaborate system of cable cars. The sand was used for building purposes and glassware. At the height of its prosperity the Pennsylvania Co. had a 3-story building housing offices, rock-crushing machinery, and blacksmith shop near the railroad tracks at the foot of the mountain.

The path becomes much steeper as you leave the "Hall," and soon you are at the look-out. This is a rocky escarpment or promontory -- bare of trees, overlooking the ridge to the



east and commanding a view for miles of the valley to the south and north. The ridge, now known as Kittatinny Ridge from the Indian "endless", is composed of Silurian sandstone, once at the bottom of the sea which covered most of eastern Pennsylvania. During the "Appalachian Revolution" the ridge was formed. The rocks are now known as Tuscarora Sandstone. Hawk Mountain is but a spur of the ridge. At the point of the look-out there is a deep break in the ridge. On the western side of the break the rocks are rugged and bare while to the east the contour is softly rolling. As you sit on these grey crags the hawks often appear on the southern side of the ridge as you face east.

While we sat watching the hawks on Saturday, most of them were flying low; that is, nearly on a level with our eyes or below us. Many turned north at the break in the ridge and continued their flight past us on the northern side of Hawk Mt. Thus we were afforded a long view of the approaching birds and the characteristic flight, size and colors of the various hawks could be studied leisurely. There were seldom more than two or three birds in view at any one time, and sharp-shins were in the majority. Looking down on them from our vantage point, they appeared a beautiful grey-blue. Toward the end of the afternoon a few birds alighted. The sharp-shin feeds 90% on small birds, as Chester Moore proved Sunday morning when he called us to see one flying low with a smaller bird in its talons. Hawks use wind currents to aid them in their flight. This is especially true during migration. We were fortunate to see so many on a day so nearly calm.

The "Natural History Magazine" for October has a timely article, "Hawks Aloft" by Richard H. Pough. He explains the use hawks make of air currents. One paragraph helps us to understand why hawks like Hawk Mountain:



# FEATHERS

## SCHENECTADY BIRD CLUB

Annual Membership: Active, \$2; Assoc., \$1

Guy Bartlett, Editor, R. D. 1, Rosendale Road

"Updrafts due to deflection occur whenever a wind blows across hilly country. Air striking an obstruction, such as a hill or cliff, must rise to pass over it. Like thermals, these rising air currents are much used by hawks. As the birds use only the lift which the force of the wind creates, they do not have to, and in fact seldom do, travel in the same direction as the wind. In many regions hawks migrate long distances along ridges where a prevailing wind provides a continuous updraft. In a single day hundreds and even thousands of hawks have been recorded gliding south above such ridges."

The Bainbridges and the Moores camped out at a pleasant site near Schaumbok's, where Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Broun live. Darkness fell early but the weather was mild and the moon was nearly full. We were cozily gathered about a campfire with the Broun's dogs, Duke and Duchess, when Mr. Broun invited us to inspect Schaumbok's. The house is beautifully proportioned, of heavy masonry, whitewashed. Mr. and Mrs. Broun have furnished it most attractively. Moonlight flooded the white house, the valley, and the ridge rising high above us. They told tall tales of the days when Schaumbok's was an inn and the traveling salesmen were put to death for their money as they journeyed from one side of the mountain to the other. A rat in the cellar was supposed to perform at this juncture to lend realism to the narrative, but it didn't. Mr. Broun admitted that neither he nor the dogs had found any bones that could be called human according to any anatomy he'd ever studied.

The weird tales did not interfere with our sleeping to the accompaniment of the katydids' chorus. The katydids sing all day long and all night long at Hawk Mt. in October. We were wakened by the bright light of the sun-

rise at 6 o'clock. All the sky was filled with small cirrus clouds, and each and every one was tinted. Without leaving our sleeping bags we had an enchanting view down the valley.

The flight of hawks Sunday morning was dull, and the eagles Mr. Broun promised us came after we had left. We hope to see them another year.

By way of record, Mr. Broun's report reads:

Saturday, Oct. 12. Bright light; northwest wind all morning, calm and faint sphyrs during afternoon. 55° at 8 a. m., 70° noon. Beautiful day; color almost at its best. Really astounding movement of hawks considering mildness of weather and lack of wind. Very fortunate as many of our visitors hailed from such distant points as Schenectady and Pittsburgh. One rusty blackbird in a. m., season's first; 35 waxwings, few jays and kinglets.

22 turkey vultures; 178 sharp-shins; 4 Cooper's; 8 red-tails; 4 red-shoulders; 8 marsh; 1 osprey; 1 duck; 1 pigeon. 227 total. Most of the birds were flying low. 134 visitors; 1994 visitors to date.

Sunday, Oct. 13. 128 sharp-shins; 8 Cooper's; 8 red-tails; 2 golden eagles; 2 marsh; 3 duck; 1 pigeon. 152 total.

## DATES TO BEAR IN MIND

November 27, Wednesday - Regular monthly meeting, 8 p. m. in Nott Terrace High School Auditorium. Roger T. Peterson, National Audubon Society, will speak on "Attracting Birds to Home and Garden," with slides and motion pictures. Admission free to SBC members; tickets on sale, 30 cents.

December 16, Monday - Regular meeting, 8 p. m., Schenectady Museum, to be devoted to preparations for annual Bird-Lore Christmas Census; Field Activity Chairman B.S. Havens in charge.

## We Apologize

Last month we blithely ran an item to the effect that burrowing owls were nesting in Ontario, near Buffalo. The report was in error.

## NEWS AND NOTES IN BRIEF

## Do Your Part...

The November meeting, with Roger T. Peterson as the speaker, is a particularly important one. Upon its success or lack of success, so far as attendance is concerned, depends the verdict as to whether or not S B C will endeavor to bring other noted bird authorities to Schenectady. It can be assumed, of course, that the S B C membership is interested in such speakers; but unless there is an additional demand for tickets there will be difficulty in meeting the program committee's budget.

S B C members are receiving tickets without cost for the meeting. Calling the attention of others to the meeting will add to the demand for tickets. Let's make the meeting a success, so there can be more like it! The committee will gladly supply tickets.

## Now is the Time....

This is just a reminder that now is the time to install and fill bird-feeding stations for the coming winter season. Nail a piece of suet to a tree or inclose it in a wire basket; fasten a simple shelf to a window sill, tree, or post; or construct or buy one of the more elaborate glass-enclosed or metal devices such as are advertised for the purpose in the various magazines. The pleasure derived from the opportunity of close study of the many birds which remain with us throughout the winter will amply repay the effort and expense of installing and maintaining them, in addition to providing food for the birds at a time when it is most needed. -- C.N.M.

## Brown-capped ....

Last year in early October three members of S B C reported the rather unusual sight of pheasants in the snow at an elevation of about 4000 feet, on Cascade Mountain in the Adirondacks.

The same observers returned recently from a similar mountain trip in the

high-peak region near Keene Valley and have the following interesting items of bird life to report:

At Sharps Bridge camp-site north of Schroon Lake they were awakened in the middle of the night by the loud hooting of a horned owl in the trees near their tent. In the morning, with a temperature of 23 degrees, they were surprised to see a flock of robins feeding on the ground in a pine grove. Kinglets, chickadees, and red-breasted nuthatches were feeding in the trees, and a blue-headed vireo sang for some time in the tree tops. As they ascended the mountain, black-capped chickadees and juncos were encountered at the lower levels; grouse and a woodcock were flushed at quite high levels; and above 4000 feet flocks of brown-capped (Canadian) chickadees were feeding and singing among the balsams.

These little birds were just as friendly as their black-capped cousins, but their song was not quite so pleasant, being shorter and somewhat more nasal. -- C. N. Moore, Oct. 7

## Amsterdam's Theater....

Four S B C members were part of a large audience gathered in the naturally beautiful setting of the Sassafras Bird Sanctuary in Amsterdam Sunday afternoon, September 29, for dedication ceremonies of the Woodland Theater and the Trailside Museum.

A natural slope has been changed only enough to provide terraced seats to transform it into a woodland theater which will seat approximately 1200 people. The stage is surrounded by beautiful evergreen and deciduous trees.

Carl W. Buckheiser, assistant director of the National Audubon Society and director of the Audubon Nature Camp in Maine, was the principal speaker. Mrs. S. G. Voorhes wrote the dedicatory address which was read by Miss Yvonne Radford.

A play, "Don't You Remember?" written by Walter Elwood and based on conservation was presented by a group of Junior High School students. Music was furnished by the Junior High School band. -- Ely Hallenbeck

# FEATHERS

Published by the Schenectady Bird Club

DECEMBER, 1940

VOL. 2, NO. 12

## WITHIN THE G-E GATES

Surprising Indeed Has Been the Wide Variety of Birds Found In and Around the Offices and Factories of Schenectady's Large Industrial Plant

Three thousand and more loaves of bread brought over a span of years to a window feeding station, proves that the bird population within the G-E gates is surprisingly large. A member of the S B C was the Lady Bountiful in this instance and was finally asked to desist, because crumbs falling from the sill attracted rats and mice even in daylight, to the terror of girl employees.

The location of General Electric with river and flats on one side, hills and woods on another, and rich farming land at the rear, has much to do with the number and variety of the bird species. English sparrows are greatly in the majority, seconded by starlings. Some years ago, starlings roosted regularly between the courses of brick on Building 5, which houses the famous Research Laboratory. Their twitterings at dusk attracted the attention of all the home-going workers. The flocks became so large and noisy that it was necessary to drive them to other haunts. This was accomplished without harm to the birds, by shooting Roman candles after they became settled for the night. A tree in the garden at the G-E loop is so crowded with sparrows on winter evenings that they fight for an available space to roost.

Birds often enter the buildings through skylights or open windows, and an entire office force will endeavor to get them safely out. A screech owl was recently picked up in emaciated condition through failure to find an exit, and subsequent lack of food. A

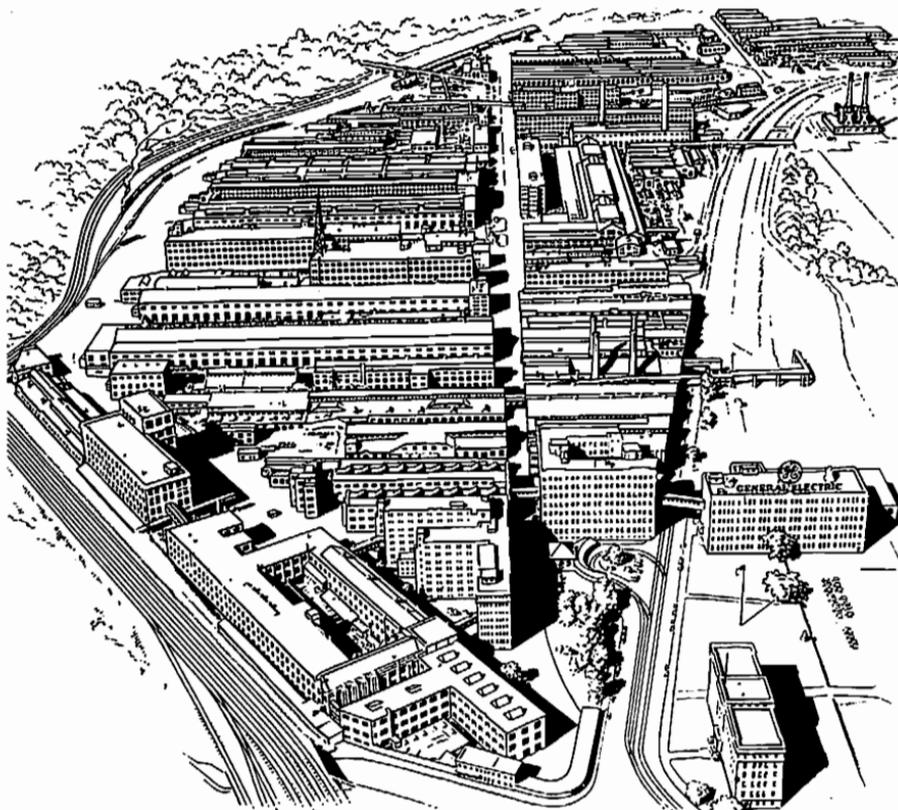
brown creeper was trapped in the studio of Walter Greene, well-known artist, and a northern yellowthroat was found in the Publicity Department during the past spring. An immature goldfinch was found in a factory office and rescued.

One of the most unexpected of recent records was that of this fall, when a cock pheasant was seen on one of the flat factory roofs -- just after hunting season opened.

A brown creeper was seen climbing and reascending a rusty metal flagpole on Building 8, as if to try his prowess on metal instead of wood.

Sparrows are known to have been chased by pigeon hawks around Buildings 2, 5, and 37. Sparrow hawks nest in hollow trees at the lower end of the plant. Kingfishers are sometimes seen along the abandoned, picturesque Erie canal. Killdeer, song sparrows and many others have been observed in the section adjoining the parking field. Barn swallows skirt the edge of the plant, and chimney swifts fly over the buildings, fearlessly.

During migrations, birds are occasionally injured or killed when they crash against tall structures, and even the comparatively low bridges connecting the buildings take a toll of feathered life. A Nashville warbler met death when he struck against the bridge between Buildings 4 and 6, a parula warbler and several black and white warblers, among other species, have struck the radio towers.



**Hardly a likely looking place for birds, but there have been records of plenty of them within the gates of the G-E at Schenectady**

From office windows, particularly in late fall, winter, and in early spring, herring gulls, rough-legged and red-tailed hawks are frequently recognized over the river and flats.

Photographs are taken when possible of interesting birds within the gates. A barred owl faced the camera from a tree near Building 23. It is believed that he may have flown over from his dwelling place on one of the river islands near the Gateway Bridge, where he or his kin has been seen. An American bittern strayed into one of the buildings and was photographed.

Nighthawks nested and bred atop Building 5 this year. Redwings and grackles are seen by G-E motorists who use the less-frequented roadway to the Campbell Avenue section, at the first left turn to the west of the plant.

Robins are cheery and welcome visitors and are often seen in the spring, searching for worms in the grassy area between Buildings 36 and 37. A few pairs remain to nest.

Waterbirds are not uncommon. Ducks and grebes have been seen on the outlet streams back of the parking field, although they usually prefer the wider expanse of the river. Sandpipers tarry awhile on the river flats, between their long flights on fall migrations. Egrets have been seen in flight directly over the works.

Regularly on winter afternoons at 3 o'clock thousands of crows fly southward from their feeding areas along the river, to the great roost at Carman. Eagles have more than once been observed, flying along the sky-lane of the crows.

## URBAN SPARROWS AND STARLINGS

Barrington S. Havens

There has been considerable speculation from time to time about the relative abundance of English sparrows and starlings. In rural areas, away from the habitations of man, the English sparrow generally offers no competition to the starling, but it is a different story in the city.

For the past two or three years the writer has undertaken to count both species on his way to work between 7 and 8 o'clock in the morning. The counts were made in the fall and winter months and were not made on every consecutive morning, but the findings should, nevertheless, be of interest. The route was from Brandywine Avenue, down State Street, over Veeder Avenue, down Millard Street, and via Edison Avenue to the General Electric plant.

The results of the count during the fall and winter of 1939-40, during which time a more or less accurate record was kept, show the number of English sparrows observed varied from 26 to 180 and averaged 107 for fifty mornings. Starlings, on the other hand, ranged from none to 77 and averaged 37 birds. The relationship of the number of starlings to that of English sparrows, derived from the averages, is thus 35 per cent. The range of percentages from day to day was from zero to 90 per cent.

A complete picture of the counts during this period may be obtained from the accompanying graph. The upper line shows the number of English

sparrows on each of the 50 days; the lower line the number of starlings. One of the most noticeable things about these is the great fluctuation of actual numbers of birds and relative abundance. Extremes and variations in weather conditions generally were responsible for the fluctuations in numbers, especially of the English sparrows, although the number of starlings was occasionally boosted by the observation of large flocks of this species, usually in flight. This, of course, would also influence the percentage figures.

As a matter of fact, records of weather conditions were not kept as religiously over the entire period as were the count records. Such records might be interesting -- and that might be a project for somebody else.

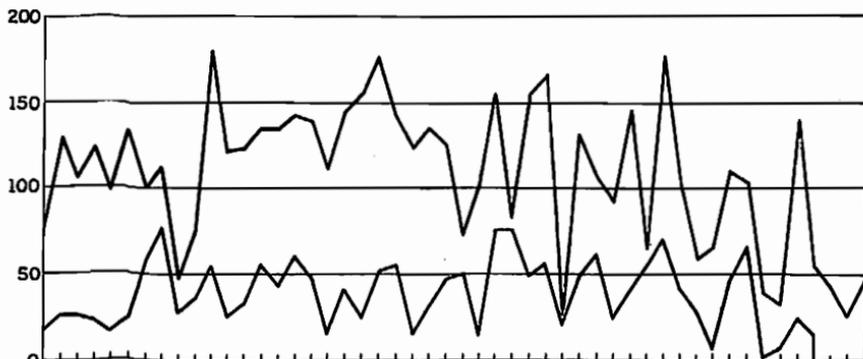
## DATES TO BEAR IN MIND

Please note that a new meeting place is being listed for future S B C meetings -- at Mt. Pleasant High School.

December 16, Monday - Regular monthly meeting, Mt. Pleasant High School, Room 311, 8 p.m. To arrange plans for annual Christmas Census.

January 27, Monday - Regular monthly meeting. Speaker to be announced later.

February 24, Monday - Annual meeting; election of officers.



## PLANS FOR CHRISTMAS CENSUS



So successful and interesting was the Christmas Bird-Lore census conducted by S B C last year, the club members are looking forward with interest toward the one of this year. It is scheduled for Sunday, December 22, or, in case of unfavorable weather, on the 28th or 29th.

The regular S B C meeting for December will be held on Monday, December 16, in Room 311, Mt. Pleasant High School, and will be given over entirely to arrangements for the Christmas census. Esly Hallenbeck has been named chairman of the committee in charge of the census with all participants as members of the committee.

As usual, the census-takers will divide into groups, each group covering a specific territory and reporting to Mr. Hallenbeck at the close of the day. The territory is so mapped out that there is opportunity for all to participate, in easily accessible localities, on long and stiff hikes, for short times, or all-day journeys.

At the pre-census meeting the matter of who shall cover what territories will be decided, and other details arranged. If you just can't be at the meeting but expect to take part in the census, it is suggested that you arrange for someone to speak for you at the meeting.

# FEATHERS

SCHENECTADY BIRD CLUB

Annual Membership: Active, \$2; Assoc., \$1

Guy Bartlett, Editor, R. D. 1, Rosendale Road

## MERTON AT BREAKFAST

Anna Dickerman

"Merton" the blue jay and his mate are regular morning visitors, and we breakfast at the same time if not at the same table. Perched on a bough of the maple tree in the yard, they preen themselves while waiting for me to appear with their fare of peanuts.

My old white cat likes to sit on the railing of the back porch. It is so narrow that it seemed it must be uncomfortable for him to balance on it, so for his convenience we nailed a good-sized block of wood atop the railing, against a post; and it is his parking place all summer long. But now he prefers the warmth of the house and the block serves a wholly different purpose. It accommodates a huge white earthenware soup plate bought at the 5-and-10 for the sole use of birds and squirrels. It is too heavy to be overturned or blown off by the wind, and it holds a pound of peanuts. This is the setting for a daily back-yard comedy, for the jays try to dislodge the squirrel while he is feeding, by flying and flapping their wings so close to his head he has to dodge.

The jays look for a particular shape of peanut and sometimes pick up and put down again as many as five or six nuts before they find one that is satisfactory. This was mystifying until we discovered that these nuts are swallowed whole and that they must be small and straight. Fearing that the birds will choke to death, I stand at the kitchen window, imploring them not to eat that way, and it is a breath-holding performance to watch until the nut gets safely down the jay's throat.

When the small peanuts are gone the jays take the crooked ones to a wide bough and, holding the nut firmly with one foot, they strike vigorously ten or twelve times with their strong

bills. This splits the shell and they devour the contents with gusto.

I have been tempted to crack the nuts for them, but after all they have nothing else to do, and perhaps it is expected of them, as of man, that they should work for their living.

The other day both jays alighted on

the rim of the dish at the same moment. Each selected a peanut, and each, holding it in his bill with perhaps half of the nut projecting, touched that of the other, just as folks do when they drink a health and clink glasses. Was it a gallant gesture, a game they play, a means of communication, or were they saying in bird fashion, "Here's to you!"?

## NEWS AND NOTES IN BRIEF

### Back to Syracuse....

Schenectady holds no attraction for blackbirds claiming Syracuse as their home. At least that is indicated by a red-wing captured and banded there and brought to Schenectady in a covered container -- it set a speed record when, in returning to its home, it covered the 114 miles in 12 days. Of seven birds released at Schenectady, three returned. The study has been reported by Dr. Reginald D. Manwell of the Department of Zoology, Syracuse University; and a paper describing the results of the experiments in detail will appear in the *Ank*.

Some of the birds returned a number of times after being released at points of varying distances and directions from Syracuse. This was true despite the fact that in most cases liberation was near bodies of water or swampy areas which might have been expected to appeal to such birds as red-wings. Liberation was at night in many cases.

Of 133 red-wings released by Dr. Manwell within a 210-mile radius of Syracuse, 47 were recaptured there. Similar experiences conducted with song sparrows several years ago by Dr. Manwell showed a similar homing instinct, although the sparrows did not return from points more than 35 miles away.

### New Officers....

At a recent meeting of the S B C directors there was a realignment of activities of members of the board to include: George H. Bainbridge, chairman; Guy Bartlett, publications; Barrington S. Havens, field activities.

### A Call for Records....

The summary of local records for the autumn months is scheduled for publication in January. Those having interesting records should supply them at once to the chairman of the records committee, George H. Bainbridge.

### Threatened Species....

A few days before duck-hunting season opened in mid-October there were six or eight canvasbacks on the wide waters at Crescent. They were gone a few days later, but it is not known if they were bagged or soared off.

The canvasback is today one of the rarer ducks. In this connection it is interesting to note the report of the Buffalo Ornithological Society, published in *The Prothonotary*, for its duck census on October 20. Included were 2 species of swan, 1 of geese, and 19 of ducks, with a total count of 3,374. They tabulated these records for the four ducks whose daily bag is limited to three:

|            | 1936 | 1937 | 1938 | 1939 | 1940 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Redhead    | 209  | 2    | 105  | 68   | ..   |
| Canvasback | 612  | ..   | 40   | 2    | ..   |
| Bufflehead | 158  | 5    | ..   | 6    | 6    |
| Ruddy duck | 17   | ..   | 1    | 13   | 1    |

The figures certainly do not indicate any recovery on the part of these threatened species. Why should not these birds be removed from the list of game birds, at least for several years?

### Winter Feeding....

The National Audubon Society issues the following publications dealing

with the subject of winter feeding of the birds; "Winter Birds as Guests" (Circ. No. 15); "Attract the Birds," (Catalogue of feeding devices); and "Bird Study for Schools, Part III, Winter Feeding," by Roger T. Peterson. If you are interested in obtaining copies of any of these publications, the S B C secretary will be glad to order them for you.

### Not to Mention Deer....

The article "Within the G-E Gates", page 57, was prepared by one of many S B C members who have recorded unexpected birds within the G-E plant; and is based on the records of various observers. Incidentally, even deer have been known to enter the plant.

## A DAY WITH THE BROOKLINE BIRD CLUB

Dorothy Caldwell

During the Armistice Day week end, one member of S B C was privileged to join the Brookline Bird Club on an all-day trip to the Ipswich dunes, the region so delightfully described by Dr. Charles W. Townsend in his books. The day was mild and sunny, and as we walked from the outskirts of Ipswich to the dunes, past fine estates and through gently rolling open country, we saw and heard juncos, golden-crowned kinglets, chickadees, robins, and flickers. The undergrowth was alive with myrtle warblers, and a fragment of the poignant song of the white-throated sparrow was heard. A prairie horned lark was busy in the road, and one ruby-crowned kinglet was seen. We made a slight detour to visit the former home of Dr. Townsend and to enjoy the beautiful view from his terraces across the salt marshes, and dunes, with the blue of the sea and Cape Ann and Gloucester in the distance. Marshes gay with winterberries teemed with myrtle warblers and tree sparrows, plus an occasional song and savannah sparrow.

We ate our lunch in the dunes and watched the lazy harbor seals sunning on a sand bar which they shared with herring and black-backed gulls. One red-throated loon was seen, and myriads of red-breasted mergansers. Far out to sea were great rafts of ducks, too far out for us to identify them. After lunch we walked down the beach, seeing many more red-breasted mergansers plus occasional common loons and horned grebes in winter plumage, and once a line of double-crested cormorants, and, again, a small flock of white-winged scoters. Later we tramped the dunes, vainly hopeful of a wintering Ipswich sparrow or a Lapland long-

spur. The dunes, always fascinating, were beautiful that day with their soft contours, their ripple marks, vegetation and soft shadows. Characteristic tracks in the sand showed plainly that the longspurs had been there that day, but the only birds we saw were small flocks of horned larks, calling as they flew, and flocks of snow buntings with the sun glinting beautifully through their wings as they wheeled about us.

The salt marshes gave us yellowlegs, a few black ducks, and myrtle warblers everywhere. Bayberries were abundant, also the berries of poison ivy and poison sumach, and the myrtle warblers should find food for some months to come.

About thirty birds were listed for a delightful day's trip, a trip memorable more for the charm of an autumn day at the shore and for the goodly companionship of other bird students than for the varieties or numbers of birds seen.

The Brookline Bird Club is an old and very active organization, with a sizeable membership, and it sponsors many interesting field trips which are open to visitors in Boston. Their plans for the Armistice Day week end included a three-day trip to Chatham and Cape Cod, and a one-day trip to Gloucester on Armistice Day. Members on the Ipswich trip told of interesting courses in bird study being given at the museum of the Boston Society of Natural History, the current course being on ducks and the course just completed being on the identification of warblers in their winter plumage.

## VOLUME ONE - 1939

**June** - Chips, by Halsey W. Kline (Woodpecker Nest), 1; A New Visitor, by B. D. Miller, (Mockingbird, with photograph), 2; Was It a Vulture?, 3; 1938 in Review, 3.

**July** - The Egrets are Due, by Guy Bartlett, 5; An Early Morning Bird Count, 6; A Prairie Warbler Colony, by Edgar Bedell, 7; The Season - Winter and Spring, 7.

**August** - Bird-life in a Spruce Swamp, by C. N. Moore (Berne, with map), 9; Birds You Will Never See, by Alice Holmes (Extinct Species), 10; Notes from Cornell, by Edna Becker, 11; Shadows of Death, by Guy Bartlett (Marsh Wren vs. Least Bittern), 12; A Dazed Woodcock, by C. N. Moore, 12; An Oriole Episode, 12.

**September** - Dam Cleverness, by Guy Bartlett (Shorebirds on Lock 7, with illus.), 13; More Shadows of Death (Gallinule vs. Rail), 14; Miskholm - An Island Whose Birds Are Counted (Breeding census, with 3 maps), 15; Mistaken Identities, 19; A Quick Look at "Inconspicuous" Sparrows, 20.

**October** - The Birds of Consalus Vlaie, by Nelle VanVorst and George H. Bainbridge (with map), 21; Photographing Florida's Birds, by J. M. Hollister, 23; The Season - Summer, 24.

**November** - Bird Haven Deluxe, by Edna Becker (Cape Cod), 26; How It Looks (Poison Sumac, illustrated), 27; Refugees, by George H. Bainbridge (Pheasants on Mountain), 27; Bird vs. Human Hearing, 28.

**December** - Birds and Their Role in Man's Struggle to Check Vermin, by Alexander Sprunt, jr., 29; Cape Cod in October, by Dorothy Caldwell, 30;

Schenectady's Ten-year Record of Christmas Censuses, by Guy Bartlett (with map and table), 31; Birds at Home, by George and Ann Bainbridge, 35; The Season - Autumn, 36.

## HIGH-LIGHTS OF VOLUME ONE

**Localities:** Cape Cod, 26, 30; Central Park, 3; Consalus Vlaie, 21; Karners 7; Lock Seven, 13; Miskholm, 5, 12, 14, 15; South Berne, 9.

**Summaries:** 1938, 3; Winter, 7; Spring, 8; Summer, 24; Autumn, 36; Christmas Census, 31.

**Species:** Cormorant, 27; Egret, 5; Little Blue Heron, 5; Black-crowned Night Heron, 14; Least Bittern, 12; Redhead, 8; Barrow's Golden-eye, 7; Vulture, 3; Marsh Hawk, 23; Virginia Rail, 14; Gallinule, 14; Killdeer, 13; Woodcock, 12, 19; Spotted Sandpiper, 13; Pectoral Sandpiper, 13; Least Sandpiper, 13; Semipalmated Sandpiper, 13; Herring Gull, 13; Hairy Woodpecker, 13; Downy Woodpecker, 13; Marsh Wren, 12; Mockingbird, 2; Prairie Warbler, 7; Baltimore Oriole, 12.

**Authors:** Ann Bainbridge, 35; George H. Bainbridge, 21, 27, 35; Guy Bartlett, 5, 12, 13, 14, 31; Edna Becker, 11, 26; Edgar Bedell, 7; Dorothy Caldwell, 30; J. M. Hollister, 23; Alice Holmes, 10; Halsey W. Kline, 1; B. D. Miller, 2; Chester N. Moore, 9, 12; Alexander Sprunt, jr., 29; Nelle G. VanVorst, 21.

**Illustrations:** Mockingbird, 2; Berne Swamp, 9; Lock 7 Birds, 13; Miskholm, 15, 16, 17; Consalus Vlaie, 21; Poison Sumac, 27; Christmas Census Territory, 31.

## VOLUME TWO - 1940

**January** - First Christmas Census of the S B C, by B. D. Miller, 1; A Little-known Transient, by Joseph Janiec (Sharp-tailed Sparrow), 3.

**February** - Some Virginia Birds, by Edna Becker, 7; Cowbird Statistics, 8.

**March & April** - Our Two Kinds of

Ruffed Grouse, by Leonard J. Uttal, 11; Subspecies Again, by Samuel A. Elliot, jr., 12.

**May** - Birding in Florida, I, by Dorothy Caldwell, 13; To the Heronry (with map), 13; Why Birds?, by George H. Bainbridge, 15; Despite Mid-April Snows, by John Engle, 16; The Season -

Winter, 1939-1940, 19.

**June** - The Grosbeaks Invade Schenectady, by George H. Bainbridge (with photographs), 21; Identifying Birds by Their Songs, by Barrington S. Havens, 23; Birding in Florida, II, 26.

**July** - Notes about the Songs of Some of the Thrushes, by H. V. D. Allen (with diags.), 29; Birding in Florida, III, 30; The Season - Spring, 31; The Long Trail Trip, by Ealy Hallenbeck and Chester N. Moore, 33.

**August-September** - Albany's Screech Owl Convention, by Leonard J. Uttal, 37; "Hawk Fever" Attacks Nine S B C Members, by Dorothy Rowley (Mt. Tom trip), 37; Some Summer Birds of Nantucket, by H. V. D. Allen, 38.

**October** - Wheels Rolling Southward (Cobb Island, Bombay Hook, with map), 46; The Season - Summer, 48; The Starling - What of Its Future?, by Leonard J. Uttal, 49; What Winter Offers, by Barrington S. Havens, 49; Birds and Automobiles, by B. D. Miller, 50.

**November** - Schenectady's First Inspection of Hawk Mountain, by Alice Moore (with map), 54.

**December** - Within the G-E Gates (with illus.), 57; Urban Sparrows and Starlings, by Barrington S. Havens (with chart), 59; Merton at Breakfast, by Anna Dickerman (Bluejay at Feeder), 60; With the Brookline Club, by Dorothy Caldwell, 62.

#### HIGH-LIGHTS OF VOLUME TWO

**Localities:** Berne, 10; California, 51; Delaware, 46; Florida, 13, 26, 30; General Electric, 57; Hawk Mountain, 39, 54; Heronry, 13, 34; Ipswich Dunes, 62; Maine, 51; Mt. McGregor, 17, 36; Mt. Tom, 37; Nantucket, 38; Virginia, 7, 46.

**Summaries:** Winter, 19; Spring, 31; Summer, 48; Christmas Census, 1.

**Species:** Common and Red-throated Loon, 34; Holboell's Grebe, 6; Great Blue Heron, 7; Egret, 28, 43; Yellow-crowned Night Heron, 34; Mallard, 33, 36; Common Black Duck, 10, 36; Blue-winged Teal, 36; Wood Duck, 36;

Hedhead, 61; Canvas-back, 61; Buffalo-head, 61; Ruddy Duck, 61; Hooded Merganser, 7; Turkey Vulture, 42; Bald Eagle, 5, 11, 32; Osprey, 51; Duck Hawk, 35; Pigeon Hawk, 9; Ruffed Grouse, 11; European Partridge, 35; Bob-white, 35; Virginia Rail, 9; Sora, 6, 9; Coot, 32; Semipalmated Plover, 14; Killdeer, 14; Black-bellied Plover, 14; Woodcock, 27; Snipe, 14, 35; Upland Plover, 27; Pectoral Sandpiper, 14; White-rumped Sandpiper, 14; Dowitcher, 14; Northern Phalarope, 14; Black Tern, 36; Mourning Dove, 27; Barn Owl, 42; Screech Owl, 7, 37; Barred Owl, 11; Nighthawk, 35, 40; Hummingbird, 28, 40, 43; Red-headed Woodpecker, 19, 28; Tree Swallow, 32; Bank Swallow, 34; Purple Martin, 32, 40, 41, 44; Blue Jay, 36, 60; Brown-capped Chickadee, 6, 56; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 36; Brown Creeper, 5; Long-billed Marsh Wren, 43; Catbird, 33; Robin, 32; Wood Thrush, 29; Hermit Thrush, 29, 51; Olive-backed Thrush, 29, 34; Gray-cheeked Thrush, 29; Bicknell's Thrush, 29; Veery, 29; Starling, 49, 59; Prairie Warbler, 14, 20, 27; English Sparrow, 49, 50, 59; Red-wing, 61; Orchard Oriole, 27; Grackle, 19, 36; Cowbird, 8; Evening Grosbeak, 6, 10, 20, and 21; Pine Grosbeak, 10, 20, 21; Red Crossbill, 28; Sharp-tailed Sparrow, 3, 12; White-crowned Sparrow, 28; Song Sparrow, 6; Longspur, 34.

**Authors:** H. V. D. Allen, 6, 29, 38; George H. Bainbridge, 15, 19, 21, 31, 48, 51; Guy Bartlett, 44; Sana Becker, 7; Dorothy Caldwell, 13, 26, 30, 36, 41, 62; Anna Dickerman, 36, 60; Samuel A. Eliot, jr., 12; John Engle, 16; Ealy Hallenbeck, 19, 33, 56; Barrington S. Havens, 23, 39, 49, 52, 59; J. M. Hollister, 27, 40; Alice Holmes, 25, 27, 32; Joseph Janec, 3; B. D. Miller, 1, 50; P. Schuyler Miller, 42; Alice Moore, 54; Chester N. Moore, 20, 28, 33, 36, 56; Malcolm W. Rix, 27; Dorothy Rowley, 37; W. R. Steele, 36; Leonard J. Uttal, 5, 9, 10, 11, 35, 37, 41, 43, 49; Nelle VanVorst, 19, 51.

**Illustrations:** Crescent Heronry, 13; Evening Grosbeaks, 22A; Virginia-Delaware, 46; Madns, 51; California, 51; Hawk Mountain, 54; General Electric, 58; Christmas Census Map, 60.