

# THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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## SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

From U. S. Weather Bureau Reports (Cleveland Hopkins Airport)

- June – Average monthly temperature of 65.8° was 3.6° below normal. Precipitation of 3.01 inches was about normal.
- July – The coldest July on record, with an average temperature of 67.6°, a departure from normal of 6.1°. Record minimum temperatures were recorded on nine days. Rainfall totaling 3.33 inches was 0.29 inches above normal.
- August – Infrequent periods of heavy rain helped produce total precipitation of 6.95 inches, 4.31 inches above normal. Five days had rainfall of over one inch. Temperatures averaging 69.8° were 2.1° below normal. There were no 90° or above readings this month or in the two preceding months.

All records, observations, and comments should be sent to Donald L. Newman, 14174 Superior Road, Cleveland 18, Ohio.

## A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

With this issue of The Cleveland BIRD CALENDAR, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History is resuming sponsorship together with the Kirtland Bird Club. We are pleased to be associated with the Museum once again, and we believe that this cooperative endeavor will be mutually beneficial. We, of course, are grateful to the Cleveland Audubon Society for its support of the BIRD CALENDAR during the past five and one-half years, throughout which we have experienced a most pleasant relationship with the Society.

--The Editors

## COMMENT ON THE SEASON

*Egrets.* The Common Egret was reported more often and in larger numbers this summer than in any of the six previous summers. Indeed, in the summer of 1959 there were no reports at all. This summer a flock of eleven spent the day of July 28 at the Sherwin Pond in Waite Hill (Sherwin). By early August a dozen birds had gathered at Wingfoot Lake in Akron.

*Shorebirds.* Two Solitary, 1 Pectoral, and 3 Least Sandpipers at Clague Pond on July 9 were the first migrating shorebirds reported. Thereafter at Clague Pond, Burke Lakefront Airport, and White City the number of birds and the variety of species increased as the summer waned. Killdeer and Least Sandpipers were particularly abundant at the Airport on August 13 and 14 and on August 21, when the Semipalmated Sandpiper was also abundant. A sizable migratory movement was in progress on August 28, for on that date at the Lakefront Airport and at White City 13 species of shorebirds were observed--among them 17 Baird's Sandpipers, which have rarely been reported in such numbers, and six Short-billed Dowitchers (Klamm).

*Gulls and Terns.* "Return of Bonaparte's Gulls in sizable numbers was noted on July 20 at Edgewater boat basin, with about 50 birds increasing to several hundred in a few days" (Klamm). The Ring-billed Gull, some of which always occur on Lake Erie throughout the summer, was first recorded in numbers on July 24 at Burke Lakefront Airport where some 1,800 were observed. About 200 Herring Gulls, the least common of the summer gulls, were also present. The largest number of Ring-billed Gulls on the Cleveland lakefront--more than 5,000--was recorded on August 14, which was also the peak day for the Bonaparte's Gull.

Between 3:00 and 4:00 p. m. on August 21, a steady flow of Common Terns totaling at least 1,500 birds, as well as 100 or more Black Terns, moved east past Lakewood Park (Klamm). During August the Caspian Tern was recorded frequently and appeared to be more numerous than in the previous six years. A total of 25 birds was seen at Lakewood Park and White City on August 27.

*Nighthawks.* On the evening of August 17, in a period of 20 to 25 minutes at least 150 Nighthawks passed over Lakewood headed in an easterly to northeasterly direction (Klamm). On August 25, groups of five to eight birds were in flight over Rocky River Reservation (Mike Stasko *fide* Ackermann), and on the 26th between 35 and 40 birds were "floating lazily to the south" over Akron (Staiger).

*Purple Martins.* In our regular quarterly letter to contributors we asked for comment concerning the effect, if any, the cool, wet summer had upon the nesting success of the Purple Martin. There was not a sufficient response to permit a general conclusion to be drawn, but three observers in three separate localities indicated that the Martins appeared to have done well. In the vicinity of Elyria, where careful counts were made of nesting colonies and of roadside birds, the "records would indicate phenomenal success" (Johnson). Yet the weather apparently was harmful to some Martin colonies as is shown by a report from Aurora where five dead adult birds were found under a nesting house in June "after a spell of cool, wet weather" (Dunneback).

Migration of Purple Martins was observed on the evening of August 9, over north Akron, where in a period of 20 minutes over 200 birds were counted as they flew steadily southward. "Some of them were very high, others a little lower, but none were circling around as they usually do when feeding" (Staiger). Between 10:00 a. m. and about 1:00 p.m. on August 21, Martins "poured west continuously" along the Cleveland lakefront, more than 1,100 birds being observed in that time (Klamm).

*Bluebirds.* Within the Cleveland region, as in many other regions, the Eastern Bluebird must still be classed as a "disaster species." One veteran observer writes that he saw "less than six birds all summer and this with over 1,000 miles of driving in Ohio" (Skaggs). In Summit County the Bluebird was "extremely scarce" (DeSante). A successful nesting occurred in Waite Hill, Lake County, where an adult and two young were seen on June 7 (Flanigan), but another nesting in Waite Hill ended in failure when five young Bluebirds in a nesting box became the victims of an unknown predator (Sherwin).

*Warblers and Other Passerines in Migration.* A Black and White Warbler in the Rocky River Reservation on July 23 was the first migrant warbler reported (Klamm). Not until August 17, however, was any considerable number recorded. On that date at White City, 7 Magnolia, 1 Black-throated Green, 5 Blackburnian, and 3 Bay-breasted Warblers were observed (Knight). During the last week of August, warblers and *Empidonax* flycatchers were moving through the region. At noontime on August 30, warblers were flitting about high in the plane trees on the Mall in downtown Cleveland, and at 7:45 on the morning of the following day the crisp notes of small passerines sounded in the sky over Cleveland Heights (Newman).

*New Records.* For annotation in *Birds of the Cleveland Region* are the following new records of occurrence:

*New Latest Spring Date*

Semipalmated Plover (1)-June 5, White City (Newman)  
Dunlin (1)-June 5, White City (Newman)

*New Earliest Fall Date*

American Widgeon (1)-August 25, Nimisila Reservoir (DeSante)  
Black-bellied Plover (2)-July 31, Burke Lakefront Airport:  
(Klamm)  
Parula Warbler (1)-August 9, Painesville (Booth)  
Lincoln's Sparrow (2)-August 13 and 14, Clague Park (Klamm)

## NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

**Common Loon** - One bird was seen at Mogadore Dam on June 10 (Staiger), and it was probably this same bird which was sighted at Nimisila Reservoir on July 24 and August 18 (DeSante). There is only one previous summer record for this species.

**Gannet** - On August 30, at about 7:20 p.m., four birds-their "loud, harsh, hoarse voices" announcing their coming-appeared over Lorain several blocks south of the Lake Erie shoreline. They came out of the northwest flying rather low but then headed northeast. Their "snow white bodies and the orange-yellow wash on the head and neck" indicated they were adults (Lebold). Only once before has the Gannet been reported from the Cleveland region during the summer, and it has not been recorded at any time since the winter of 1949-50.

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron** - In Rocky River Reservation, which is the only locale where this species is quite regularly recorded each summer, an immature bird was observed on July 31, and on three dates in the latter half of August. Then two immatures were seen there on August 28 (Ackermann).

**Canvasback** - A solitary male summered on the pond at Furnace Run Metropolitan Park, where a park employee first saw him sometime in June. The bird was still there at the end of August (Henderson). This is the first summer record for the region.

**Osprey** - For a considerable time on the afternoon of July 9, two birds circled over the meadow area in Rocky River Reservation (Klamm). A July record is rare indeed, and two birds at once are doubly rare. A total of three records for August is also noteworthy since it is seemingly the largest number ever reported for that month. A single bird was observed each time: on Lake Erie near Lorain on the 12th, when this Osprey "was moving in purposeful flight from east to west just offshore" (Johnson); at Nimisila Reservoir on the 18th (DeSante); at Rocky River Reservation on the 26th (Knight).

**Peregrine Falcon** - Headed directly northeast and flying rather slowly, this falcon appeared over the Northfield Race Track at about 8:15 p. m. on July 12 (DeSante). This is the first summer record since July, 1951.

**Pigeon Hawk** - Until it was frightened off by the approaching observer, a male bird occupied a dead tree overlooking a pile of brush in the Rocky River Reservation on the morning of July 29 (Ackermann). Only once before in the past ten years has this species been reported in the Cleveland region during the summer.

**Whimbrel** - Two birds flushed from the dirt road at Burke Lakefront Airport on the morning of July 31, "circled to a tremendous height, and vanished to the northeast"-the cry of one of them drifting back long after they were out of sight (Klamm).

**Willet** - At White City on the afternoon of August 27, one bird foraged along the narrow border of the closed lagoon, where many "peep" sandpipers and Semipalmated Plovers were also feeding (Klamm and Newman).

**Knot** - On August 28 at Fairport Harbor, this rare migrant worked its way along the breakwall, in the company of two Sanderlings, and stopped often to feed in the algae at the waterline (Bush). This is the first summer record since August 31, 1954.

**Stilt Sandpiper** - One was seen at White City on August 12 (Carrothers), and two occurred at Nimisila Reservoir at the end of August (DeSante).

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper** - On August 12 and 13, which are the earliest dates ever reported (Carrothers), and again on August 21 and 28 (Klamm), two birds (the same two?) were feeding along the runways at Burke Lakefront Airport. At White City a single bird was present on August 27 and 29 (Newman and Carrothers). These are the first summer records since August 1945.

**Avocet** - At about 9:30 a. m. on August 7, four Avocets flew east low over the water just a few yards beyond the north roadway at Burke Lakefront Airport. Within less than a minute they were out of sight (Carrothers). [This species has never before been reported from the Cleveland region, but it has been observed in the Sandusky Marshes some 50 miles to the west. Consequently, although this particular record is given full credence, the addition of the Avocet to the list of birds occurring within the Cleveland region should be delayed until additional records involving more extended observation are obtained. --The Editors]

**Long-eared Owl** - Frequently during the summer a bird called at night from the woods along Woodstock Road in Gates Mills. Although a pair was probably present, the only sight record was of a single bird on July 3 (Tramer).

**Loggerhead Shrike** - A single bird observed west of Elyria on July 24 constitutes the only record of this species, which has become exceedingly rare in the Cleveland region (Johnson).

**Magnolia Warbler** - In the Bedford Reservation, where this warbler has never before been reported as a summer resident, two or three pairs were present during June in adjoining territories in a wooded ravine. The males sang regularly and sometimes engaged in brief chases at the territorial boundaries. No nesting activities were noted, nor were any young birds seen, at least to July 3, after which the area was not visited (Knight).

**Chestnut-sided Warbler** - In a brush-grown clearing in a deep woods along Woodstock Road, Gates Mills, a singing male was seen on June 7 and 14 (Tramer). A bird was also observed in Chapin State Forest on June 12 (Booth). These two records strongly suggest the possibility these were breeding birds, particularly since the habitat was typical of this species.

**Kentucky Warbler** - A well-marked singing male was first observed in Bedford Reservation on June 11 (Henderson), and it was seen or heard by some half dozen observers thereafter, the last date being August 26 (Knight). The bird was usually seen in a deciduous portion of the woods near a narrow stream at the bottom of a ravine. Early

in July one observer "watched the nervous male for about half an hour when he had a worm or insect in his bill" (DeSante). While these observations tend to indicate that the Kentucky Warbler nested in the Bedford Reservation, the evidence is certainly not conclusive. There is no nesting record for this species in the Cleveland region during the present century; but Dr. J. P. Kirtland, writing in 1874, states it nested in the vicinity of Cleveland prior to 1852.

**Yellow-headed Blackbird** - The single male which was first observed at Burke Lakefront Airport on May 22 remained throughout June and was last seen there on July 3 (Klamm). Although he was unmated, he apparently established a territory in the cattail marsh east of the Nike site. Particularly in the first part of June, he often perched in the open and sang at length, despite the harassment of the nesting Redwinged Blackbirds. Never before has this species been reported as a summer resident in the Cleveland region.

**Lark Sparrow** - For fully five minutes on the morning of August 28, this accidental migrant perched in the open atop a small willow tree in the east marsh at Burke Lakefront Airport (Klamm). This is just the eighth record of occurrence and the first record since May 1950.

#### NESTING OBSERVATIONS

**Blue-winged Teal** - On June 18 in a swampy area on Route 532 north of Cuyahoga Falls, we observed a family of Blue-winged Teal consisting of the male and female and 12 or 13 young. At our approach the male took off, but the female remained and quickly warned the ducklings to hide. At a quiet cluck from her they all disappeared like magic. Only then did she hide, too. -- JEAN A. STAIGER

**Wood Duck** - At Sunset Pond in North Chagrin Reservation, nine pairs of Wood Ducks nested this summer and raised 68 young, which is the largest population ever recorded there. In addition, this small patch of water contained three broods of Mallards consisting of five, eight, and twelve birds. -- VERA CARROTHERS

**Black Tern** - For the third successive summer, Black Terns nested in the marsh at Burke Lakefront Airport. In the two previous summers the colony comprised seven pairs, but this summer "only three pairs persisted throughout the whole season, and it is doubtful that more than two pairs were successful in bringing off young" (Klamm). The reduction in numbers was caused by the continued filling of the large west marsh, which the terns entirely abandoned, leaving just the small and less suitable east marsh for nesting purposes. On June 26, a pair of terns was regularly carrying minnows into the marsh, while a second pair visited the area much less often, which seemed to indicate that their nesting activities were about over. On July 10, one pair was still present and was bringing minnows into the marsh.

**Bank Swallow** - An estimated 300 Bank Swallows occupied the face of the cliff overlooking Lake Erie at Gordon Park this summer. Although I counted some 250 nesting holes, not all were occupied and many were undoubtedly excavated in previous years; for the mid-portion of the cliff consists of a hard yellow clay which does not seem to suffer greatly from erosion. The uppermost three feet of the cliff is composed of quite sandy soil in which only a small number of nesting holes were

dug. On June 5, a few of the Bank Swallows were feeding young which were then old enough to come to the nest opening.--DONALD L. NEWMAN

**Cliff Swallow** - Again this year a small colony of Cliff Swallows nested on the side of a barn on Rockhaven Road, in Chesterland, and again as in previous years they seemed to have little success in raising young to the fledgling stage. On June 23 there were nine nests on the barn and 15 adult birds present. By July 7, only three nests remained, of which two were occupied; five adults were observed. Finally, on July 13 just two swallows were seen and none at all thereafter.--VERA CARROTHERS

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** - About the only experience I have had with the nesting of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher has been with birds nesting in very high trees or with nests which were present one day and gone without a trace the next day. Thus I was especially pleased to be able to observe almost the entire sequence of nesting of a pair of gnatcatchers which this year occupied a territory in North Chagrin Reservation near River and Rogers Roads. The following are the highlights of my observations:

April 30 - birds very noisy; utter quick, musical chirpings  
May 15 - building nest about 15 feet up in a thornapple tree  
May 19 - still building  
May 27 - incubating  
June 4 - still incubating  
June 11 - feeding young in nest June 17 - young out of nest  
June 18 - adults feeding young in vicinity of the nest  
June 30 - family still in general nesting area; very noisy  
--VERA CARROTHERS

**Solitary Vireo** - On June 22, Don Steinbrink, trailside naturalist at North Chagrin Reservation, discovered the nest of a Solitary Vireo near the Trailside Museum. The nest was situated eight feet up in a Canada hemlock tree which grows near the east end of the narrow foot bridge immediately below the Museum. By June 26 the nest had been abandoned, at which time it contained two vireo eggs and one Brown-headed Cowbird egg. On July 17, I observed one Solitary Vireo along the bridle path below the Museum. It should be noted that in 1958 a pair of Solitary Vireos had three unsuccessful nestings in North Chagrin Reservation at locations not far distant from the Trailside Museum.--VERA CARROTHERS [Apparently the Solitary Vireo has become a breeding species in North Chagrin Reservation only recently because it was not recorded there in the years from 1932 to 1950 during which Dr. Arthur B. Williams made a breeding census of the particular area (now known as the Williams Memorial Forest) where these nesting birds have been observed. Nor was this species recorded by the several observers who carried on the breeding census through the summer of 1956.--Ed.]

**Canada Warbler** - Two, and possibly three, pairs of Canada Warblers were present in a deep, hemlock-bordered ravine in Bedford Reservation during June and July. The males sang regularly, and on at least one occasion a male and female were seen together (Henderson). In late

June a male was observed feeding a fledgling (Knight). This is the first report of this species breeding in the Bedford Reservation.

**Western Meadowlark** - At Burke Lakefront Airport on July 3, a pair of Western Meadowlarks was feeding a fledgling "in the grass section about midway of the Nike site. The wary fledgling flew twice, but on the second landing was caught by the wind and was flipped over in several cartwheels and landed quite hard on its back. It recovered quickly, and moved on the ground to the shelter of taller grass . . . . Both parents were easily observed, and male and female could be distinguished by plumage, the female having a very pale yellow breast with a poorly-defined black V in contrast to the male. The birds were watched for over an hour but could not be observed in the actual process of feeding other young or the known young. Their operations were extremely cagey, and although the adults went to the area of the known young several times, they sometimes left the area still carrying the food they had brought" (Klamm).

Neither the adult Western Meadowlarks nor the young bird was observed at the Lakefront Airport a week later, on July 10, but on July 17 the male was heard singing occasionally. After that date these meadowlarks were not reported from the airport for the rest of the summer.

The Western Meadowlark is presumed to have nested in the Cleveland region before, notably in a field at Bath in 1945 and 1946. This report from the Lakefront Airport (where a pair was also present in the summer of 1959 and perhaps in the summer of 1958) provides the first definite proof of a breeding pair in the region.

#### FIELD NOTES

**Nesting of Great Blue Herons.** [The following account is based upon a study conducted during the spring of 1960 by Lee Arthurs, a student at Solon High School, who was assisted by a fellow student, Dwight Baker. We are grateful to Donald J. Pinkava, biology teacher at Solon High School, for providing us with this material—Ed.]

Again this year-possibly the ninth in succession-a colony of Great Blue Herons occupied a portion of hilltop beech-maple woods overlooking a swampy lowland in Solon. Seventeen birds arrived there on March 27, seven or eight of them appearing to be older adults according to Baker. In 1959 the arrival date was March 30. By April 1, the colony had increased to some 25 or 26 herons, but later the full colony consisted of from 35 to 45 birds, as compared with 25 to 35 birds in 1959.

The nests, all of which were located in beech trees just as they were last year, were constructed chiefly of twigs about two feet long and about one-quarter inch in diameter. Smaller twigs were used for inner lining. The number of nests per tree ranged from three to as many as 16. Territorial behavior-that is, defense of territory--was notably weak. On April 16, unhatched eggs were found on the ground.

From an observation platform constructed in one of the nest trees, Arthurs was able to study and photograph the activity at three nests, all of which contained eggs at the time his study began. Some, but not all, of these eggs hatched in the period from May 10 to May 15.



Upon hatching, the young were covered with fluffy “hair” and had a white crest on top of the head. The wings were bare and also the abdomen. The features of the bird were plainly visible but were not well developed. On the second day a noticeable change in size had occurred. This was not actually due to growth but to the stretching out of the young bird itself. The hair feathering became more prominent by the third day and fully covered the young on the fourth day. This feathering was gray except for the white crest on the head.

By the tenth day the young had grown considerably, attaining a standing height of at least ten inches. At this time the feather tracts began to show through the hair feathers. The birds at this point became quite unsanitary and ugly looking while they were transforming to the juvenile stage. By the fourteenth day the young were well covered with feathers in the first phase of development. The legs had become strong enough to stand on and the wings began to develop. Gradually the feathers continued growing, giving the young the same (basic) color pattern as the adults. By the nineteenth day they had acquired the same appearance as the adults, only they were smaller—about 22 inches standing height. The beak was then about three inches long, but the claws were almost as large as in the adult. The young were not studied after the nineteenth day from hatching.

**Evening Chorus of Whip-poor-wills.** Quite regularly this summer I visited an area of land adjoining Sand Run Metropolitan Park in north-west Akron and studied the 51 species of birds I found there. The area, which lies just beyond a new housing allotment, consists of a large hill of about six acres covered with closely cut grass and devoid of trees and bushes. Surrounding the hill are deep gullies heavily wooded with beech and maple trees, thus making the grassy hill somewhat of an open plateau. It was amazing how many species of birds and how many individual birds could be heard singing all around the edges.

Most interesting of all the birds were the Whip-poor-wills, of which there were four singing males. They would begin to call from locations within the woods 60 to 100 feet back from the edge, and at widely-spaced distances from one another. The four would start their calling at different times but they had a regular sequence of starting. During June the average starting times were as follows: first bird, 9:31 p.m. EDT; second bird, 9:37 p.m.; third bird, 9:41 p.m.; fourth bird, 9:42 p.m. The peak of calling was reached at about 9:55 p. m. when the birds had moved up to the very edge of the woods.

Their singing sites ranged from ground level to about 30 feet up. At around 10:00 p. m., two of the Whip-poor-wills were accustomed to sit on some posts that lined the edge of the parking lot where the road through the allotment came to a dead-end. There they could be studied at a range of 30 feet with the aid of a flashlight. At about 10:06 p. m., these two birds would stop calling, and the other two at about 10:15 and 10:25 p. m. This particular bird that was last to cease singing was also the first to start singing in the evening.

On the evening of July 13, three Whip-poor-wills were calling; on July 22, two birds were heard; and on July 27, one called just briefly. This was the last I heard or saw any of them.

The singing or calling of these four Whip-poor-wills varied greatly in pitch, speed, tempo, and quality, as well as in spacing and number of successive calls. Thus they could easily be separated by voice characteristics. In the singing of all four birds, the initial "chuck" note was heard. The greatest number of successive calls without a break was 114. — DAVE DESANTE

**Nesting Bald Eagle?** For the first time since 1952 a Bald Eagle was present during the summer period at Camp Iss-See-Kes, which is located just a few miles beyond the western boundary of the Cleveland region. It was seen at camp three times. Russell Gleason, along with a number of YMCA campers, saw it first when it flew over the athletic field at mid-morning on June 29. I saw it myself about 1:00 p.m. on July 22. It was flying up the valley of the Vermilion River, perhaps 50 feet higher than the camp site. A final observation was made about July 30 when the bird again flew over the athletic field, quite low, in the early evening.

This eagle, or another, was sighted a number of times in the late spring in the vicinity of Vermilion-on-the-Lake. Observers in that area, and in Vermilion, presume that the eagle nested there. Upon talking with the County Game Protector, I learned he shared this belief, but so far as I could ascertain, no actual nest site was known. The game protector seemed to think it was somewhere in the vicinity of Cooper's Hollow, about half way between Vermilion and Camp Iss-See-Kes. However, my own observations do not bear this out. — PERRY F. JOHNSON [Any record of the Bald Eagle is worthy of note, and a record of a summering bird is of exceptional interest; for it has been at least 25 years since there has been a report of a nesting eagle within or close to the Cleveland region.-Ed.]