

# THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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## SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

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

- March - Temperatures and precipitation averaged below normal. Several inches of snow fell on the 5th, 6th, and 31st. A brief warm spell lasted from the 28th to the 30th.
- April - Cool for the first 20 days, with light snow on the 13th and 15th. Then warming quickly, producing a heat wave for the final six days, Precipitation of 1.78 inches was 0.95 inches below normal and was well scattered through the month.
- May - Warmest May since 1944, temperatures averaging 65°. Seven new highs were set in the period from the 14th to the 23rd. Total rainfall of 1.91 inches was 1.61 inches below normal; nearly 60% fell during the last five days.

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## COMMENT ON THE SEASON

Rarities. Perhaps the outstanding feature of the spring season was the exceptionally large number of rare species reported. Among them were two species - Purple Gallinule and Le Conte's Sparrow - which had never before been recorded. With the addition of these two, a total of 338 species and subspecies has been recorded in the Cleveland region since the time of the first surveys in 1796.

Yet the mere number of rarities is not necessarily significant because their being recorded here might simply be the result of better coverage of the region, which, in part, seems to be the case. What is important, however, is the recurring identity of certain of the rare species, for their occurrence seems to indicate a change in the composition of the avifauna of the region.

The Western Meadowlark is one example of a species which appears to have become a limited but regular member of the avian community. Prior to 1958 this meadowlark had been recorded only four times, the most recent date being May 1946. Beginning with the summer of 1958, this species has been recorded each year to date. This spring there were three records from three widely-separated localities, which is the largest number ever reported.

A second species whose status is changing is the Yellow-headed Blackbird, which was first recorded in the region in August 1936. Almost twenty-one years later, in May 1957, a second bird was reported. Then from May 22 to July 3, 1960, an adult male was observed at Burke Lakefront Airport, where this or another male occurred for a few days in June 1961. This spring the Yellow-headed Blackbird was recorded in two localities, and one of the two birds seen was a female.

Still another species which seems to be extending its range is the Blue Grosbeak. For fifteen years subsequent to July 1942, when a pair was observed near Novelty, there were no reports of this species. Then a male was observed in Painesville in August 1958, and a pair was observed there regularly during the summer of 1959. This grosbeak was not recorded in 1960, but a male was seen in Elyria in May 1961. This spring two birds were seen. Of these five recent records, four are of occurrences in Lake County.

A species not yet known to have invaded the Cleveland region but almost certain to appear here soon is the Cattle Egret, which was observed this spring in a locality only about seven miles outside the eastern boundary of the Cleveland region. This record of the Cattle Egret as well as the occurrence of the other rare species discussed above will be found in the Noteworthy Records section in this issue.

Gulls and Terns. During the first week of March the number of Herring and of Ring-billed Gulls increased noticeably at Cleveland, where a quite steady stream of birds flew east along the lakefront

on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th. About 5,500 of these gulls, rather evenly divided between the two species, were recorded on March 4, some resting on the ice and others in transit (Klamm). At Mentor Beach Park on March 4, "an estimated 500 Ring-billed Gulls were seen headed northeast flying into the wind shortly before noon" (Hammond). At Lorain, too, there seemed to be an influx during this period, and some 2,000 Ring-bills were observed there on March 7 (Johnson). Numbers declined progressively thereafter, so that by March 31, only about 300 gulls were recorded along the Cleveland Lakefront between White City and Clifton Beach. Bonaparte's Gull, which had not been recorded since January 20, was first observed on March 24 at Cleveland, where 23 birds were counted (Klamm).

In the last 20 days of April, which was the only period of its occurrence, the Caspian Tern was not reported in any large number except for a notable record of 65 birds at Lorain on April 24 (Johnson). No flights of the Common or the Black Tern were observed.

Blue Jays. The easterly movement of Blue Jays along the lakeshore, which is now known to be a regular springtime occurrence, was first noted on April 28, when, between 9:00 a.m. and 12:15 p.m., 1,105 birds were logged by two observers stationed at Perkins Beach overlooking Lake Erie (Klamm). About 80% of this total was counted in the first hour. This movement continued on April 29, and on the morning of May 1, it was evident over downtown Cleveland where a small band of jays was seen flying almost due east at a height of about 300 feet (Newman). At Perkins Beach on May 5, between nine o'clock and noon, 4,170 birds were recorded, "with most flights at high elevations estimated to be from 300 to 1,000 feet" (Klamm). From atop the Terminal Tower on the morning of that same day, "many, many hundreds of Blue Jays were seen migrating along Lake Erie" (Raynes). Some few of these birds occasionally drifted south of the lake shore, for a band of 23 was seen at about noon on the 5th as they slipped silently through the treetops along the ridgeline in Lakeview Cemetery, East Cleveland, but still heading east (Newman). Between 7:30 and 9:00 a.m. on May 12, "over 1,000 Blue Jays were observed traveling east along Lake Erie at Lakewood Park" (Ackermann), while at Perkins Beach on that same date 1,184 birds were logged between 10:00 and 11:00 a.m. (Klamm). By May 19, this eastward movement was almost ended, and fewer than 100 birds were seen in flight past Lakewood Park on the morning of that day.

Chickadees and Nuthatches. The Lake Erie shoreline was also the pathway for easterly flights of Black-capped Chickadees and White-breasted Nuthatches, which were first observed in migration at Perkins Beach on April 21, when 175 of the former and 32 of the latter were recorded (Klamm). Counts for other dates at the same vantage point and by the same observers are as follows: April 22 - 181 Chickadees, 9 Nuthatches; April 28 - 67 Chickadees, a few Nut-hatches; April 29 - 88 Chickadees, 2 Nuthatches; May 5 - 15 Chickadees. After this last date no flights were observed.

Evening and Pine Grosbeaks. Although the Evening Grosbeak was observed in many localities from about mid-October 1961 to the end of January 1962, it was seen much less often in February. During March and April it continued to be uncommon. Just at the end of April, however, there was a quickly accelerating reappearance of this species, which was recorded in 11 localities during the first half of May. Most flocks consisted of fewer than a dozen birds. A group of 50 in Rocky River Reservation on May 6 was the largest number reported (Sauer and Stasko). From May 11 to the 14th in Geauga County a band of as many as 20 birds fed on the seeds and blossoms of elm trees, all the while "maintaining a constant stream of chatter or, when excited, a rather shrill prolonged call" (Scheele). A single Evening Grosbeak at Holden Arboretum on May 20 was the final record of occurrence (Bole, Jr.)

The Pine Grosbeak, whose incursion in the winter of 1961-62 was the largest ever recorded, continued to be abundant until about mid-March. It was reported from ten localities, of which all but two are east of the Cuyahoga River. This is the same pattern of occurrence as during the winter, which indicates that the birds did very little wandering. An estimated 100 to 150 birds at Akron in early March (Glassner) and 81 birds at Iradale on March 3 (DeSante) were the two largest flocks reported. The final record of occurrence was at Akron on March 29 (Glassner).

Migration in General. As early as March 11, passerine birds were migrating eastward along the Lake Erie shoreline at Cleveland. Starlings and Red-winged Blackbirds predominated. Other migrants included Brown-headed Cowbirds, Common Grackles, Robins, and Crows in "decreasing order of abundance", as well as a scattering of Killdeer, Mourning Doves, Meadow-larks, and Eastern Bluebirds (Klamm). A passage of Icterids - Redwings, Grackles, Meadowlarks, Cowbirds - also occurred along the lakeshore on March 24-25. At Mentor Beach on March 24, in about one hour 68 Meadow-larks were counted "flying northeast above the beach and parallel to the shoreline" (Hammond).

Although some three and one-half inches of snow fell on March 31, the first general influx of migrants occurred at the end of that month during several days of prevailing southerly winds which preceded the abrupt return to winter weather. At that time Eastern Phoebes and Rufous-sided Towhees appeared, Robins became much more abundant, and a fair number of Savannah, Field, and Fox Sparrows returned.

Warm fronts moving in from the lower Mississippi River valley at almost regular intervals of a few days from April 22 to May 6, brought successive waves of migrants into the region. On April 22 and 23, Brown Creepers, Golden and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Myrtle Warblers were abundant. Sparrows - Chipping, Field, and White-throated and Slate-colored Juncos appeared in numbers on April 25. Then a small movement of hawks, chiefly Buteos, passed through the region on April 27, 28, and 29. Among them were 53 Broad-winged Hawks which settled in the trees in Rocky River Reservation late

in the afternoon of the 29th (Klamm). April 28-29 was also the time for a truly sizable influx of House Wrens; Wood and Swainson's Thrushes; Yellow, Myrtle, and Palm Warblers; Purple Finches; and White-throated Sparrows.

In May the peak period for the passerine migrants was from the 12th to the 15th, though the greatest number of birds undoubtedly appeared on the 13th when a warm front moved through the region. This date was also the time of arrival for the Common Nighthawk. Although a large variety of birds was recorded in this period (30 species of warblers, for example), the total number of birds involved did not seem as large as in peak periods in other years. One explanation may be that the advanced state of the foliage which was about two weeks ahead of normal development, prevented many birds from being seen and, of course, made others difficult to identify. Yet among the warblers, the Black and White, Nashville, and Myrtle were abundant. So, too, was the Swainson's Thrush, of which there were many reports of singing birds, The White-crowned Sparrow was exceptionally numerous on May 12 and 13, then almost completely disappeared immediately thereafter,

By the week end of May 19-20, migration was largely ended, though a good variety but only small numbers of warblers were still passing through. Even that normally late migrant the Blackpoll Warbler was not widely reported.

New Dates. For annotation in "Birds of the Cleveland Region" are the following new late and early dates of occurrence:

New Latest Spring Date - Common Merganser: (2) - May 25, Rocky River Reservation (Ackermann)

New Earliest Spring Date

Tennessee Warbler (1) - April 28, Firestone Park, Akron (Ulrich)  
 Cerulean Warbler (1) - April 22, Spencer Wildlife Area (Morse)  
 Lincoln's Sparrow (1) - March 25, Aurora Pond (Henderson)  
 Swamp Sparrow (6) - March 3, Rocky River Reservation (Davidson)

NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Red-necked Grebe - A single bird, in the company of several hundred diving ducks, was recorded at Edgewater Park on March 17 (Klamm); and one was observed at Mentor Headlands beach on April 7, together with a flock of Red-breasted Mergansers (Harm).

Barrow's Goldeneye - The first sight record in the history of the region is of an immature male on Corning Lake of the Holden Arboretum on March 24 (Skaggs). The bird was studied for about 30 minutes in good light, and "a distinct crescent-shaped white spot between the eye and the bill" was noticed. All three previous records are based upon specimens, of which two were shot by hunters in December 1923 and one was captured at Lorain in April 1892.

Goshawk - Among a group of eight hawks which were moving west over Painesville on the morning of April 27 was one bird of this species (Booth). This is the first spring record for the region and is the only record since February 1956.

Golden Eagle - An immature bird, heading west, was seen briefly as it sailed across the Chagrin River Valley at Gates Mills on April 27 (Tramer). There have been just three previous spring records.

Bald Eagle - Three spring records are the largest number reported in the past eleven years: (1) one bird over Painesville on April 27 (Booth); (2) one moving east along the shoreline at Lakewood Park on April 29 (Klamm); (3) one, in adult plumage, perched for some time in a treetop on the east branch of the Chagrin River on May 6 (Mr. and Mrs. Louis Lipp fide Scheele and Swetland).

Peregrine Falcon - From the observatory atop the Terminal Tower, one bird was seen on March 18 (Henderson).

Pigeon Hawk - (1) On March 23, one bird was observed in North Ridgeville in the same area where one had been recorded on February 26, 1962 (Johnson); (2) in the open valley of the Rocky River Reservation a single bird was noted in flight and while perched on April 28 and 29 (Stasko).

Purple Gallinule - Following its discovery at the marshy end of a small pond in Waite Hill early on the morning of May 16, this bird was studied daily thereafter to the end of the month. Sometimes it fed with a Common Gallinule, and it was so unconcerned at being watched while feeding that many observers had an opportunity to study it (Flanigan). This is the first record of this southern species in the history of the Cleveland region.

Baird's Sandpiper - A solitary individual, though in association with three Spotted Sandpipers, was feeding along the shore of the lake in Spencer Wildlife Area on the morning of May 10 (Morse). There is only one other verifiable spring record in the history of the region.

Glaucous Gull - At the municipal pier in Lorain on March 10, a bird in second-year plumage was watched for some time as it stood on the ice and then as it circled over the open water at the warm water outlet of the electric power company (Lebold).

Iceland Gull - On March 9 and 10, at the warm water outlet of the East 77th Street plant of the Illuminating Company, a single bird, seemingly in first winter plumage, was identified among a great host of Ring-billed Gulls gathered there (Welker).

Saw-whet Owl - An "obviously sick bird" was found on the lawn of a residence in Painesville on March 28 (Booth).

Bewick's Wren - For barely a minute on the morning of May 18, a single bird paused and fidgeted at the edge of a small woodland in Pepper Pike Village and then disappeared (Raynes). This is the first spring record since 1957.

Bohemian Waxwing - At Holden Arboretum on March 3, a single bird was discovered among a group of Cedar Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks feeding in a stand of fruit-bearing trees (Raynes). In the same general area on March 18, three birds were seen (Boyle Jr.) The last previous report of this species in the region was in the spring of 1944.

White-eyed Vireo - Five records probably constitute an all-time high for the spring. One bird was heard on April 29 in Goodyear Heights Metropolitan Park (Stux), and one was seen that day in Rocky River Reservation (Klamm). On May 1, one was heard and seen in Chestnut Hill Cemetery, Cuyahoga Falls (Madeline Hjelmquist fide Stux), and one was found dead in Lakewood (Stasko). Still another bird, which "seemed attached to a particular hawthorn clump", was seen and heard on May 6, 10, 15, and 19, in Spencer Wildlife Area but was not found thereafter (Morse).

Yellow-throated Warbler - Not reported in the Cleveland region since the spring of 1957, a singing male was observed in Spencer Wildlife Area on April 28 (Morse).

Prairie Warbler - The Sunday morning bird walkers at Ely Woods Park in Elyria saw and heard one bird on April 29 (Johnson).

Kentucky Warbler - There were three May records: one bird in Elyria on the 3rd (Johnson); one which was stunned but soon recovered after it had flown against a window at Nela Park, East Cleveland, on the 11th (Cridland); and one seen bathing in the creek at the Lower Shaker Lake on the 13th (Daniels).

Western Meadowlark - The season produced three records, each of a single bird; at Highland Golf Course, Warrensville Heights, from March 17 to the 28th (Knight); on April 25, at Burke Lakefront Airport, where this species has been recorded each year since 1958 (Carrothers); and on April 30, in Geauga County near the intersection of Routes 322 and 44 (Tramer).

Yellow-headed Blackbird - (1) At about 6:00 p.m. on April 26, a female accompanied by a male Red-winged Blackbird appeared at a residence in Willoughby where it remained for some 25 minutes and then flew off to the east (Pallister). This is the first April record. (2) On the morning of May 10, a male was photographed when it stopped briefly at Sunset Pond in North Chagrin Reservation (Brickel).

Summer Tanager - A female was sighted in the company of a band of Cedar Waxwings at the Lower Shaker Lake on May 21 (B. Raynes).

Blue Grosbeak - (1) From March 3 to about April 4, an immature male was a regular visitor to a backyard feeding station in Mentor, where it was seen and even photographed by a number of observers (Hood and Booth). This is the first March record for the Cleveland region. (2) A fully adult male was observed for no more than one minute on the morning of April 23, as it fed on the waste seeds underneath a bird feeding tray at a residence in Willoughby (Day).

Red Crossbill - One bird occurred at a feeding station in Brecksville on April 29 (Dexter); and another feeding station visitor was recorded in Russell on May 1 (Mr. and Mrs. Edward Mayer fide Raynes).

Le Conte's Sparrow - For about 15 minutes on the sunny morning of April 29, a solitary bird was studied by four observers as it fed in the grass along the edge of a road in Rocky River Reservation (Sauer and Stasko), This is the first record in the history of the Cleveland region.

Lark Sparrow - In a weedy field near Lorain on May 1, a single bird was watched by four observers at a distance of about six feet while "it sat for several minutes at the top of a goldenrod stalk" (Lebold).

Oregon Junco - A female was identified among a large flock of Slate-colored Juncos at a feeding station in Hambden on April 15 (Harm). Another female or immature occurred at a feeding station in Akron on April 15 and for several days thereafter (Glassner).

Harris' Sparrow - On April 7, in the Beaver Creek area west of Lorain, an adult bird was studied by four observers while it, in the company of two White-crowned Sparrows, "Scratched in the gravel for seeds" at the side of the road (Lebold).

Lapland Longspur - An estimated 300 birds, one of the largest flocks ever reported in the Cleveland region, was seen in open farmland along Fowl Road southwest of Elyria on March 29, "Many of the long-spurs clearly showed black throat markings, indicating that they were coming into summer plumage" (Johnson).

Snow Bunting - A flock estimated at 1,000 birds was feeding on farm-land southwest of Elyria on March 7 (Johnson).

From a Neighboring Locality:

Cattle Egret - In a pasture on a dairy farm located three miles east of North Madison and just south of Route 20, a single bird was discovered late in the afternoon of April 28. It "fed avidly in close association with 20 head of cattle, snapping up insects both on its own and those apparently stirred up by movements of the cattle". Then it flew to a nearby tree where it spent five minutes preening, after which the egret departed heading northwest (Greene).



Courting of Red-breasted Mergansers. From 7:45 to 8:30 on the sunny morning of April 8, I watched the courting of five Red-breasted Mergansers on Lake Erie at Fairport. Three males and two females made up the group. One female was definitely the "popular gal"; the other tagged along a short distance from the compact group, which generally consisted of the favored female and two males. Occasionally they were joined by the third male.

The two active males made frequent rushes at and past the female -- their necks at a 45 degree angle to the water, red bills rapidly opening and shutting, crests up, and part of the time emitting a harsh hiss as they passed her. She held the same position but paid her attentions and gave responsive notes to but one of the males. He was ever on the go -- circling and rushing over the water at terrific speed as he interposed himself between the rival and the female. Occasionally he would draw to one side, raise his body out of the water, spread his wings, and stretch his neck before going back to the female. She did the same once or twice. Once, in passing, these two stroked each other's necks with closed bills. One time, too, the neglected male gave a hard thrust of his bill at the neck of the favorite who then ducked under water and came up shaking vigorously.

There were other mergansers scattered about in the area, and a constant stream of them passed overhead toward the west. Eventually another male came in, braked, and dropped into the water close to the more active four. There was a brief interlude of quick movement, the female rushing one time through the line of males to be alone for a few seconds. Then with one accord the four males and the favored female rose and flew west, circled, rose higher and disappeared to the east. - KAY F. BOOTH

Fox a Predator on the Bank Swallow? On May 26, at about 7:45 a.m., Vera Carrothers, my niece Vicki, and I were watching the Bank Swallow nesting holes located on the west side of the Chagrin River in Hach Sanctuary. The bank is about 175 feet high, and the holes were about 35 feet from the top. As I scanned the bank, I was surprised to discover a tawny-colored fox at the entrance to one of the holes. The fox -- moving along the bank as sure-footed as a mountain goat -- seemed to be investigating various holes, of which several were considerably larger than the others. The fox could have been collecting eggs for his breakfast, but I could not determine whether he found any. A few swallows were buzzing around him and he appeared interested in them, though they were too swift for him to grab. It was raining steadily, so we left for the car while he was still at the holes.

On May 30, we returned and counted at least one dozen holes which were larger than the rest. There was no sign of the marauder. At first it looked as though the swallows had abandoned the site, but after a while a few birds flew to the bank. As for the earlier

visit of the fox, my guess would be that he came from the woods and went down to the nest holes. I do not see how he could have climbed the bank from the bottom since it rises almost straight up from the river bed. - SUSAN STORER

Gluttonous Grosbeak. Near Fowlers Mill on December 28, 1961, I picked up a male Evening Grosbeak which was unable to fly and had been squatting in the middle of the road. Upon examining the bird, I found nothing externally wrong until I reached the neck. The entire jugulum including the sides was greatly enlarged, and the thin skin of the apteria was stretched so tight as to make it transparent to a high degree, disclosing an immense crop full of seed.

When I got the bird home, I thoroughly examined the external anatomy. The pterygiae were in good shape. I gently stretched the tarsi, wings, and rectrices. The movement of the eyes and the other responses were normal in every respect. The only abnormality was the huge distended crop containing assorted "feeder" seed. In bulk the crop was easily the same size as the bird's head and neck together. Twenty-four hours later the grosbeak was completely normal, and as a result it gained its freedom. Originally, I had suspected the bird had been struck by an automobile. I concluded, however, that this was not the case but that (to modify an old saying) "his eyes were bigger than his crop". - RAY HARM

Birds and Insecticides. For the first time since the spring of 1958, a pair of Eastern Bluebirds nested this year in a box in an open area at the rear of our lot in Mayfield Heights. The young were due out of the nest on May 31 or June 1. On May 28 and 29, our neighbor applied insecticide for Japanese beetle grubs, in both dry and liquid form, to about one and one-quarter acres, including the Bluebirds' main feeding area. The male was last seen late in the afternoon of May 29, and the female was last seen early in the evening of May 30. The young were unattended all morning on the 31st, and at about 1:00 p.m. they (five of them) came out of the nest voluntarily. They floundered about on the ground all afternoon until at 5:30 p.m. I was able to capture four of them; the fifth bird could not be found. We took them to the Brookside Zoo where Mr. Ronald Ruether, the curator, offered to try to raise them.

Since May 31, to the date of writing (June 13), there has been no sign of any Bluebirds in the immediate neighborhood, which consists of about 14 acres. Also missing since then are a pair each of Brown Thrashers, Catbirds, Cardinals, and Robins. The latter three were nesting. - ETHEL STALEY