

MARYLAND

BIRDLIFE

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THE SEASON

March and April, 1948

Although the first half of March was cold, unseasonably warm weather from the 15th through the 27th, and again on the last 2 days of the month, raised the average daily excess for the month to $5\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ at Baltimore, and caused premature leaf growth. April continued a little warmer ($1\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$) than usual. Wintering birds such as tree and fox sparrows departed ahead of schedule, and from mid-March on, arrivals of birds from the south were generally 3 to 10 days early. Unfortunately for the bird observer, April's warm spells came in the middle of the week, as did the best "waves" of migrants; consequently there was a lag of 3 to 5 days between bird arrival and "first seen" dates from many areas.

Holboell's Grebes. The most unusual event of the period was an unprecedented flight of Holboell's grebes. Although none of this species had been reported for the past 17 years, and the total number of previous Maryland records could be counted on the fingers of both hands, over 35 individuals were recorded from 17 Maryland localities between Mar. 9 and Apr. 8, 1948. The full significance of the flight is not yet known. Possibly it is a result of a gradual increase in abundance which is also causing the bird to extend its breeding range eastward to Lake Ontario. This species was more common than usual off the Long Island and New Jersey coasts last winter, and was even recorded from McClellanville, S.C. Then in early April these birds began to move toward the northwest, coming up Chesapeake Bay, invading small ponds throughout Maryland, in much of Virginia, and even at Greensboro, N.C. The flight then passed into West Virginia, furnishing the first spring records for that state. Since there are so few previous Maryland records for the Holboell's grebe, all reports for the present season are listed in detail: single birds at Patuxent Refuge, Mar. 9 (F.M. Uhler and R.E. Stewart) and Mar. 24 (Uhler); 2 at Perry Pt. on Mar. 13 (J.E. Willoughby, E.G. Davis and others); 1 at Romancoke, Mar. 13 (Jeanne Stivers and others); 1 in Hagerstown municipal park, Mar. 13-21 (Dr. and Mrs. R.S. Stauffer and W.B. Green); 4 at Ocean City on Mar. 14 (Willoughby, Davis et al.), and single birds at the same place on Apr. 3 and 4 (I.R. Barnes, S.H. Low); at Triadelphia Reservoir from Mar. 14 (1, F.R. Bell) through Apr. 8 (1, Low), with maximum of 3 on Mar. 20 (W.M. Davidson) and Apr. 1 (Low); 1 at Greenbelt Pond, Mar. 15-18 (Frances and John Wil-

loughby); 2 at Chalk Pt. on the West River, Mar. 17 (E.J. Besson); 5 at Seneca, Mar. 19-21 (T.W. Donnelly, Barnes); 2 at Turkey Pt. in Anne Arundel Co., Mar. 20 (Uhler, R.H. Imler, et al.); 3 at Cobb Is., Charles Co., Mar. 20 (Stewart and Robbins); 2 at Kent Narrows on Mar. 24 (Donnelly); 2 at Mayo, A.A. Co., Mar. 28 (J.W. Taylor); single birds off Sandy Pt., Mar. 31 and Dominion on Kent Is., Apr. 1 (Stewart and Robbins); 1 at Rock Pt., Apr. 3 (Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Johnson); and 1 at Conowingo on the same date (O.W. Crowder).

Gannets, Cormorants, Herons. Small groups of gannets were seen moving north off Ocean City from Mar. 25 through Apr. 4. Double-crested cormorants started north earlier than usual; Stewart and Robbins saw 4 flying up the Potomac at Morgantown on Mar. 20, and 7 days later these same observers counted 280 from the Calvert Co. shore. Haven Kolb found a very early American egret at Loch Raven on Apr. 10. Other early arrivals of herons were a little blue heron at Willards on Apr. 21, and a snowy egret at Elliott Is. on Mar. 31 (Stewart and Robbins). On Apr. 21 Stewart and Brooke Meanley found eggs in 8 green heron nests at the West Ocean City colony.

Waterfowl. Irving Hampe observed the first northward flight of whistling swans over Halethorpe on Mar. 15. The migration peak occurred 10 days later, the greatest count being of 400 birds in 6 flocks over Patuxent Refuge. Seth Low reported a flock of 75 snow geese over Ocean City on Apr. 3, and as late as Mar. 22 J.M. Abbott saw 1000 Canada geese at Perry Pt. Crowder found the first wood duck at Bird River on Mar. 7, and on the 19th Donnelly noted a concentration of 150 at Seneca; on the 21st Meanley discovered a nest with one egg at College Park. Other waterfowl reports, interesting either because of the number seen or the locality, were 350 brant at Ocean City on Mar. 25 (Donnelly), 3000 redheads at Bengie's Quarter on Mar. 7 (club trip), 2 redheads at Hagerstown on Mar. 20 (Green), a flock of 150 ring-necks at Seneca on Mar. 19 (Donnelly), 1600 canvas-backs at Perry Pt. and 3100 at Carpenter Pt. on Mar. 6 (Barnes) and 3000 at Bird River on the 7th (club trip), and 3350 ruddies near Wicomico on Mar. 20 (Stewart and Robbins).

Vultures and Hawks. Occurrences of the black vulture on the Eastern Shore at other than the regular localities near Wye Mills and Pocomoke City are always of interest; Meanley and Stewart saw 2 of this species near Willards on Apr. 21. The highest count of black vultures came from Carderock, where Miss Stivers found 75 individuals on Mar. 28. Meanley found a red-shouldered hawk nest with one egg at College Park on Mar. 20, and Abbott reported bald eagles on their nests at Gunpowder Bridge and at Northeast on the 26th. Meanley and Stewart observed a very late rough-legged hawk 4 miles east of Wye Mills on Apr. 21. Although ospreys were common (15) in St. Marys Co. on Mar. 20, the first arrivals were not reported from South River until the 21st (Uhler) nor from Loch Raven and Bird River until the 26th.

Shorebirds, Gulls and Terns. Very early individuals of the semipalmated plover and dowitcher were identified at Ocean City on Apr. 1 by Stewart and Robbins. Three days later Low and Barnes found a ruddy turnstone at the same place. Meanley and Stewart

counted 22 willets there on the 21st, another early date. Laughing gulls (8) were found at Solomons as early as Mar. 27 by Stewart and Robbins, but were not recorded at Ocean City until Apr. 4. Crowder reported the Bonaparte's gull as being common at Back River on Mar. 13; 225 were feeding off the Ocean City breakwater Mar. 31-Apr. 1 (Stewart and Robbins), but only 10 remained on the 21st. Five least terns had arrived at Ocean City by Apr. 21 (Meanley and Stewart), and on Apr. 14 Crowder identified a single Caspian tern at Bird River.

Owls, Goatsuckers, Swifts. Donnelly found 4 eggs in a barn owl nest at Blackwater Refuge on Mar. 26, and Meanley reported a barred owl nest with 3 eggs at College Park on Mar. 10. Dr. E. G. Davis saw 4 short-eared owls that had been taken in pole traps near Chesapeake City previous to Mar. 14. The heat wave which swept the state on Mar. 20-22 brought a whip-poor-will to Bowie on the unprecedented date of Mar. 22 (Helen Severance); the next arrival reported was at Patuxent Refuge on Apr. 12. Chimney swifts were common in Cumberland on Apr. 11 (Crowder) and on the following day they were first noted in Westminster and at Patuxent Refuge.

Flycatchers. Kingbirds and crested flycatchers arrived from Apr. 23 to 25 in the Baltimore-Washington area. The only other flycatcher reported was the phoebe, which was found at Perry Pt. on Mar. 6 (Barnes), Chase on the 13th (Crowder), and Lonaconing on the Allegheny Plateau on the 21st (4 singing, L. M. Llewellyn).

Wrens, Mockers, Thrushes. On Apr. 3 a Bewick's wren, apparently the first recorded on the Eastern Shore, was seen north of Ocean City by Seth Low. Early catbirds were found at Foxhall Village on Mar. 29 by Donnelly, and at Carderock on Apr. 4 by Miss Stivers. The brown thrasher was reported at Dickeyville on Mar. 28 and in Baltimore on the 29th (Brackbill); by Apr. 3 this species was well distributed through the eastern part of the State. The first Baltimore robin was noted by Brackbill on Mar. 8; 2 days later he observed the first song and territorial fighting. An appreciable increase occurred on Mar. 15, on which date the first 2 color-banded males returned; on the 17th the first color-banded female arrived. A wood thrush at Arbutus on Apr. 21 (Hampe) was early, although 5 were noted on that same day along the Pocomoke River; general arrival in the Baltimore-Washington area was on the 24th.

Warblers. One of Maryland's rarest nesting birds, the Swainson's warbler, was back on its breeding grounds near Whaleyville on the early date of Apr. 21 (Meanley and Stewart). Migration progress of the prothonotary warbler is well shown by the following reports of its arrival: Apr. 21, 30 estimated along the Pocomoke River (Meanley and Stewart); Apr. 24, 2 at Glen Echo (Shelton); Apr. 25, 8 at Seneca, where none were found on the previous day (R. E. Lawrence). Stewart and Meanley counted 6 worm-eating warblers along the Pocomoke River on Apr. 21; but this species was not reported west of the Bay until May. The yellow-throated warbler was found at 2 places in Calvert Co. on Mar. 27 by Stewart and Robbins, who also counted 18 along the northern Pocomoke on Apr. 1; J. E. Johnson noted the first one near Port Tobacco on the 4th. The Louisiana water-thrush which was first heard on Mar. 27 in Calvert Co., and was common (25) along

the Pocomoke on Apr. 1, was seen at Carderock on the 4th and Halthorpe on the 10th. A number of other warblers such as the Nashville, cerulean, blackburnian, and chestnut-sided, follow a different migration route and move into Maryland from west to east; unfortunately, no arrival dates were received from the western counties, so the progress of these species could not be traced.

Finches and Sparrows. The arrival of towhees was obscured by observations of scattered individuals which had wintered throughout eastern Maryland. Reports of first singing ranged from Mar. 15 at Beltsville to Apr. 14 at Arbutus. Eight Savannah sparrows were counted at Point Lookout on Mar. 20, and on the following day numerous reports were received from Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties. The Henslow's sparrow was first heard at Patuxent Refuge on Apr. 12, and by the 24th both this species and the grasshopper sparrow were widely distributed. R. D. Cole's report of 3 white-crowned sparrows in Towson on Apr. 26 was the only one received in this period; the white-crown is rare on the Eastern Shore, but becomes progressively more common to the west (where more observers are badly needed!).

Chandler S. Robbins

CONOWINGO FIELD TRIP? APRIL 17

Thirteen of our club members joined with five of the York County Bird Club on April 17 for a trip to the glens of Susquehanna. Our leaders were Mr. Rockwell Smith, Rev. Jay Arnold of the York County Club, and Mr. Fred Keer of Darlington. The countryside was beautiful with the light green of the opening leaf buds on the trees and the abundance of many varieties of wild flowers.

We ate our lunch in the sun on the porch of the beautiful old stone home of Mr. & Mrs. Keer. Then under the leadership of Mr. Keer, we observed birds along Deer Creek and the Susquehanna River. He took us to see some Beaver dams on the east side of the Susquehanna below the Conowingo Dam. We found a few Indian arrow heads which had been washed up by the high water.

Sixty species of birds were seen during the trip, including a close view of a horned grebe. The find of the day was a Sprague's pipit, which we studied for twenty minutes at close range.

Margaret E. Haile

WESTERNPORT JUNIORS REPORT. The total count of birds at feeding stations of Hammond Street junior members was 235. We attracted cardinals, starlings, tufted titmice, chickadees, English sparrows, robins, a bluebird, a hawk, a nuthatch, wrens, juncos, ruby-crowned kinglets and song sparrows. At the present time we are building bird houses and will report on them later. During the past month we rented the films "Sharp Eyes", "Tree-top Concert Singers" and "Audubon Nature Center". We enjoyed them very much and learned a lot from them. We always send some representatives to the Bird Club meetings in Cumberland. Last time we had seven people who attended.

Richard Lee Cook (Age 11)

CLUB EVENTS
March - April, 1948

SEMINAR SESSION #7, MARCH 1. First-class instruction on aspects of "Birds and Man" by Chandler Robbins, with a quiz which featured answers in acrostic form. Much valuable data of feeding habits.

DUCK ROUND-UP, GUNPOWDER AREA, MARCH 7. Joint field trip with Audubon Society of District of Columbia, Dr. Barnes leading. Total of 38 species, with ruddy ducks (2000) and redheads (400) leading.

MARCH MONTHLY MEETING: DR. ALERICH. A fine talk on bird nomenclature by a recognized leader in that field. March 12.

JUNIOR FIELD TRIP, GUNPOWDER AREA. Society's first Junior trip, with 38 present, scoured the waterfronts near Chase for ducks, saw many, and had marvelous close-up of woodcock behavior. March 13.

CROWDER AT BAYNESVILLE, MARCH 17. Bird talk, for the Society, to members of the Baynesville School Parent-Teachers Association.

WASHINGTON MUSEUM AND ZOO, MARCH 27. Well planned bus trip to Washington to study National Museum bird exhibits, high spot of which was a behind-the-scenes visit to bird skin collections under guidance of Dr. Herbert Friedmann. Later to the zoo for observation of caged exotic species.

ROGER TORY PETERSON LECTURE, APRIL 2. The annual paid lecture featured a "big name", and Mr. Peterson's presentation of "The Riddle of Migration" was no disappointment. Capacity house at the Art Museum, where the guards counted the audience believing we had exceeded capacity. "Field Guide" owners getting autographs, and others analyzing Mr. Ramsay's live hybrid duck, stayed long afterwards.

TOWSON, APRIL 4 AND HOTTELS, APRIL 11. Two nearby field trips under Eleanor Cooley and Bill Green attracted 20 members each and studied early spring migrants and remaining winter residents.

CROWDER AT CUMBERLAND, APRIL 9-11. The President, on another sortie to Western Maryland, spoke and led field trips at Frostburg, Corriganville and Ellerslie, then led a general Allegany Field Trip at Cumberland.

SEMINAR PARTY, APRIL 12. Serious Seminar students turn jovial with hilarious party making genial fun of previous sessions, awarding certificates featuring mimeographed archaeopteryx, and proving that bird work can be good fun as well as serious accomplishment.

CROWDER AFIELD AGAIN, APRIL 17-24. The President's visits to outlying members included leading a Frederick field trip April 17 and helping organize the Frederick County branch; joining a Hagerstown walk April 18 and discussing organization of the Washington County branch; speaking before the Maryland Biology Teachers' annual meeting at Solomon's, Calvert County, on April 24. Finally, on April 26, he was back in Hagerstown to deliver a talk and take part in the formal organization of the Hagerstown branch.