

## THE GREAT GROSBKAK YEAR.

BY J. K. JENSEN.

THE winter of 1922-23 will go down in the annals of New Mexico as the year of many Grosbeaks, and in saying this I refer to the Western Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus montanus*).

Grosbeaks may be seen occasionally every year; as a rule only for a few days during spring or fall, and only few in number. During the winter mentioned above great flocks were in evidence from October 30, 1922 until May 1, 1923, and from then until June 1 a few birds were occasionally encountered.

At the United States Indian School, where most of my observations were made, we had flocks almost continually of from fifty to three hundred birds. In Santa Fé proper there were several flocks of from one hundred to five hundred, while smaller flocks of from four to a dozen birds could be seen at any time in almost every shade tree. In the towns and cities near Santa Fé similar flocks could be seen; in Tesuque, Pojaque and Nambe to the north, and in Domingo, Bernalillo and Albuquerque to the south, and even as far away as Silver City, so it is reasonable to assume that the same condition prevailed all over the State.

The first birds arrived October 30, 1922. My few notes on the appearance of the Grosbeak follow:

*October 30, 1922.*—Today a flock of Western Evening Grosbeaks arrived at the Indian School campus. There must be between two hundred and three hundred birds, or more than I have ever seen together. The Grosbeaks are also numerous in the "Willows" along the Santa Fé River and in the city.

*November 3, 1922.*—Today I counted eighty-seven Grosbeaks in a small box elder on the campus.

*November 12, 1922.*—November 10th all the birds seemed to have disappeared, but today some are back, and flocks of four to fifty birds are continually to be seen.

*December 3, 1922.*—Between November 12 and December 3 the Grosbeaks have been very numerous at the campus in flocks

of from ten to three hundred birds. I succeeded, with the help of a pullstring trap, in catching and banding seven birds. The birds are very tame and several times when the trap was sprung and a bird was caught, both the bird in the trap and those outside would continue feeding as if nothing had happened. Often I can walk to within ten feet of the feeding flock, and usually when I go to reset the trap the birds will fly to the trees and watch from a distance of only a few feet.

Four birds I kept in a cage for a few days, awaiting a shipment of bands, would flutter some when I came close to the cage, but as soon as they were left in peace they would eat and drink and call to each other just as the free birds did.

*December 29, 1922.*—Not a day has passed but what flocks of Grosbeaks have been here; sometimes only four to twelve, but as a rule a large number, at times exceeding three hundred birds. They usually spend their time in or under the box elder trees, which had a large amount of seeds this year.

*January 10, 1923.*—The Grosbeaks are still here in large numbers. During the last week a flock of from fifty to fifty-five birds have been feeding on my lawn.

*January 17, 1923.*—The Grosbeaks are still here.

*February 2, 1923.*—The Grosbeaks are still here in large numbers.

*March 17, 1923.*—The Grosbeaks are still here in numbers. They are now feeding more often on the ground under the box elder trees than in the trees, probably because most of the seeds have fallen.

*March 18, 1923.*—The Grosbeaks are still here.

*April 15, 1923.*—A few Grosbeaks still remain. The birds now feed on the swelling buds of the trees. They seem to prefer maple buds.

*May 16, 1923.*—Only a few birds now remain. They are now only seen in twos and threes, and stop only for a short time.—My notes end here.

The birds were all gone by June 1, which is natural, as the breeding season appears to commence during the first week of June. During May I did not succeed in trapping any birds, because their food now kept them in the treetops, and they were never seen on the ground.

In all I banded thirty-two birds, and so far as I know, only three of these repeated, but they may have strength enough in the bill to pull off a soft aluminum band. The three birds recaptured had the bands so battered and bent that I had to remove them in order to straighten them and then replace.

The birds, while docile in the trap, became furious, when I tried to take them from the gathering cage. They would utter a very wild and fierce scream and bite and claw. Quite frequently a bird would drop on its back in the gathering cage and use both bill and feet in defense, and they are really no mean antagonists; on many occasions their bites have drawn blood from my fingers and hands.

After the bands were placed the birds seemed to become quiet and almost sluggish, and often one would lay for several minutes on my open palm before it realized it was free to leave. Then generally it would fly to a nearby tree and call to the flock from which it was taken.

The birds fed mainly on the seeds of the box elder. As long as plenty of food remained on the trees they would sit as close as apples on a tree, and with a Parrot-like motion reach for the seeds which were shelled and eaten, the shells being dropped. During the latter part of the winter they were seen more often feeding on the ground under the trees. The seeds of the black locust seemed also to tempt them, and along in the spring the buds of the trees served as a menu. The few birds I occasionally was forced to hold in captivity for a few days would eat wheat, although it did not seem to appeal to them much.

On the ground they would feed in compact flocks, and I have had as many as four at a time in a small pullstring trap. I always set the trap where I saw a flock feeding. The birds would fly to the trees while I set the trap, and as soon as I left, they would alight in the same place.

In the flocks were many beautifully colored males, there being something like one old male to every three birds. The greater number, however, were females and young.

Why the birds should be here in such large numbers as never before in the memory of the oldest inhabitants here is something I'm not prepared to explain. The most plausible thing might

possibly be scarcity of their natural food supply in the mountains, probably caused by the extended drought of the summer of 1922.

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FURTHER NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS ON THE BIRDS  
OF HATLEY, STANSTEAD COUNTY, QUEBEC,  
1919-1923.

BY HENRY MOUSLEY.

IN my last paper in 'The Auk,' Vol. XXXVIII, 1921, No. 1, pp. 51-59, I find the latest date recorded was October 31, 1919, when flocks of Tree Sparrows which arrived on September 26 were still about. Since then the following twelve species, Mourning Warbler, Horned Grebe, White-winged Scoter, Surf Scoter, Scaup Duck, Bohemian Waxwing, Starling, Rough-legged Hawk, Double-crested Cormorant, Mallard, Bufflehead, and Palm Warbler, have been added to my list, bringing the total up to 187 species to date. These will be dealt with hereafter in an annotated list as before. Continuing from where I left off in October, 1919, I propose to record just a few of the most interesting events under the heading of each month, as follows, viz.:

*November, 1919.*—On the 5th, the first flock of Redpolls appeared, followed on the 9th by Snow Buntings. On the 16th, a Goldfinch was seen, and the following day a Northern Shrike, the only one recorded for the winter. Mr. Greer saw what he took to be a flock of Herring Gulls on the St. Francis River at Sherbrooke on the 21st, and five days later, large flocks of Canada Geese and Snow Buntings were seen at Hatley.

*December.*—A Robin was seen by Mr. Greer's brother on the 4th, at North Hatley, and Pine Grosbeaks by Mr. Greer and myself on the 14th and 15th. The former also saw a Song Sparrow round his barn on the 21st, which was kept under observation until the 27th, when it disappeared, and was not seen again. Three more Robins were recorded on the 23rd, quite close to my house, and Mr. Harrison F. Lewis wrote me that he had seen