

INSTANCES OF THE SPRING MIGRATION OF THE BLUE JAY

BY HARRISON F. LEWIS

RECENT papers by Broun (1941) and Gill (1941) have described observations of the southward flight of Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) in autumn. Gill, in the paper cited, has also presented evidence, derived from the records of banded birds, of a northward migration of this species in spring. Accounts of observations of Blue Jays in actual spring migration flight are not, however, included in these papers and appear to be uncommon in the literature, though Barrows (1912) and Eaton (1914), in their treatment of the Blue Jay's life history, make general statements about the spring migration that appear to be based on a number of individual observations. Under the circumstances, it appears desirable to place the following notes on record.

At 6.30 A.M. on May 11, 1937, just as I arrived at the southern tip of Fishing Point, which is the southernmost and southward-projecting point of Pelee Island, Ontario, in western Lake Erie, I heard a whistling sound caused by the passage of rapidly swooping birds through the air above me. On looking up, I saw about 25 Blue Jays, in two adjacent loose groups, hurtling down from a height without a cry. They disappeared into the woods on the point about half a mile north of my position. Apparently they had come from the islands or mainland south of Pelee Island. When I first saw them, they were at a height of 60 to 75 feet, but were descending rapidly.

When walking south through the woods on the point, prior to 6.30 A.M., I had not heard or seen any Blue Jays, but when walking north through the same woods, between 7.00 and 7.30 A.M., I heard two cry out. About 8.00 A.M., when I was in open farming country, about half a mile northeast of the wooded base of Fishing Point, a flock of about 26 silent Blue Jays, flying at a height of about 40 feet, overtook and passed me, heading northeast across Pelee Island. I think that it is probable that they were the same birds whose arrival on Fishing Point I had seen an hour and a half earlier.

The morning on which the observations above described were made was fine, calm, and sunny. The sky overhead was clear, but near the water there was sufficient mist to prevent my seeing Middle Island, about two miles distant. On Pelee Island at 7.00 A.M. the temperature was 50° F. and the barometric pressure 30.31 inches.

On the morning of May 8, 1941, I took my station at 5.01 A.M. at the rounded, partly wooded northeast point of Pelee Island, opposite Point Pelee, Ontario, to observe and record migration phenomena. The morning was clear and cool, with a brisk wind

from the west-southwest. At 6.09 A.M. a flock of about 55 Blue Jays (as nearly as I could count) rose into the air from a position 200 to 300 yards inland (on Pelee Island) from where I was observing. At a height of about 100 feet they hovered, heading into the wind (west-southwest) for a minute or two, during which time they drifted nearly sidewise until they were almost above me. Presumably their object was to go to the north shore of Lake Erie, which was in plain sight, even to me, seated on the ground. The nearest part of the north shore of the lake was the outer end of Point Pelee, about eight miles distant to the northeast, so that the wind was nearly fair for such a crossing. At the termination of a minute or two of hovering, as described above, the Blue Jays, however, descended again on Pelee Island at approximately the place from which they had risen.

At 7.32 A.M. this flock of Blue Jays repeated their previous performance, rising, hovering, and descending again where they had risen. Three minutes later, at 7.35 A.M., they rose into the air for the third time, the flock having increased to a total of about 75 birds, and, on reaching a height of about 100 feet, they left Pelee Island and flew directly northward, in which direction land was visible and about fourteen miles distant.

My continuous observation of migration ceased that day at 8.15 A.M., but at 8.55 A.M. I chanced to see another flock of Blue Jays, about 55 in number, fly northward from the northeast point of Pelee Island.

LITERATURE CITED

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Department of Mines and Resources, Ottawa, Ontario.