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SUMMER APPEARANCES OF ADULT AND JUVENAL EVENING GROSBEAKS*

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Although the initial observation of the Eastern Evening Grosbeak was made at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan in 1823, it was nearly a hundred years later before a breeding record was established. A number of summer records were made in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin into the 1930's but the number of summer reports from these areas seems to have declined in favor of the more eastern region embracing New York, New England and the Maritime Provinces, Fig. 1, where there has been an increasing number of summer reports during the last ten years. These records do not include those made in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

Probably the first observation of young Evening Grosbeaks in the United States came from Beebe (1918) who saw adults and young in 1911 near Newberry, Michigan. M. J. Magee (1921) at Sault Ste. Marie observed "three males, two females and one young in immature plumage and hardly able to fly" at his station on August 25, 1921; and immatures continued to appear at his station in eight of the following 12 summers (1934). In 1933 Magee (1934, p. 387) between July 7 and October 8 banded 26 "young of the year—13 males and 13 females and the first to come in were still being fed now and then by the older birds." Magee (1921) states that on September 4, 1921, his assistant Dr. Christofferson saw 20 grosbeaks, "including a number of young birds" near Minising Junction, Michigan; while they (1924) saw six adults and four young at Minising, Alger County, Michigan on August 19, 1923. At Whitefish Point, Michigan, on July 28, 1922, Ligon (1923) observed five nests, "four in white pines and one in a Norway pine." Three of the nests were located high up and well out toward the ends of frail limbs. It was evident that the young were out of most of the nests. One young was located on the ground, in rank weeds underneath one of the nests and a second of the same size was seen on climbing to the nest 25 feet up in a white pine.

Two adults and two young were reported by Cahn (1920, p. 116) feeding together at Lake Minnewanka, Minnesota July 18 to August 22, 1919. Roberts (1932, 2: 352) mentions the appearance of young Eastern Evening Grosbeaks near Cascade Lookout and near Cramer, Minnesota.

In Vilas County, Wisconsin, on July 20, 1927, four adults and seven young which "appeared to be quite unable to make a sustained flight" were observed by Klotz (1928) on the ground of Bent's Resort near the shore of Mamie Lake. Jung (1923) states that "on July 21, 1918

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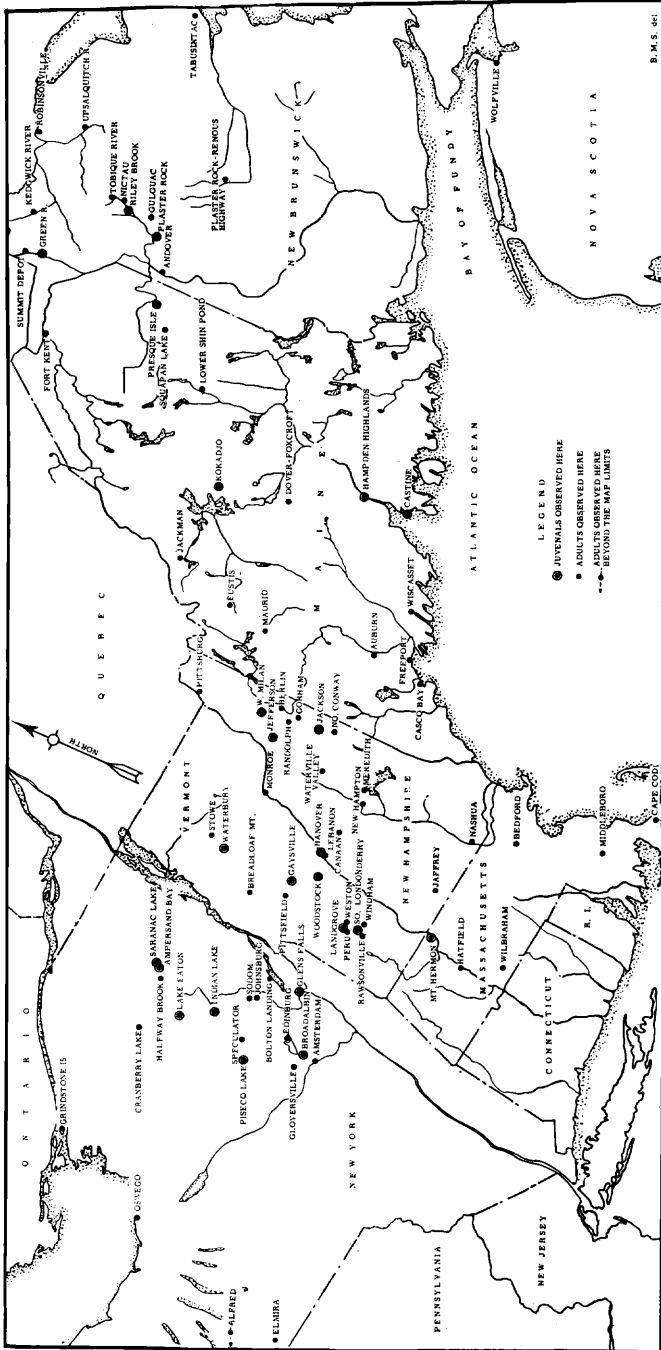


Fig. 1: Map of Northeastern United States and part of the Maritime Provinces showing all summer observations to date of adult and juvenile Evening Grosbeaks.

and for two days thereafter I found eight Evening Grosbeaks feeding in a field of poplar and jackpine woods, on the southeast shore of Lake Kawaga, near Minoqua, Wisconsin. . . . The birds were, with the exception of one, dully colored. Their movements were slow and clownish. . . . Actual breeding records in this state are not known as far as I can determine."

Probably the first record for the Evening Grosbeak in New York State is that referred to by Coues (1879) in which he states that "Dr. Brewer asserts that the Rev. Dr. Cutting of Brooklyn saw one in the winter of 1875, at Elizabethtown, Essex County, New York." It appears that the first definite report of young Evening Grosbeaks observed in the state came from Miss Ruth Hagan at Saranac Lake in 1947 (Shaub, p. 517). Young grosbeaks have been reported from this region by a number of observers every succeeding summer. Between June 25 and August 14, 1952 (Shaub & Shaub, 1953) 54 adults, of which 31 were males and 23 were females, were banded. In addition 11 juvenals were banded, 6 males and 5 females. All of the banding was done at the home of Greenleaf Chase in Saranac Lake. At Glens Falls between July 15 and the middle of September 1952 a male and female juvenal grosbeak visited the feeders of G. P. Sauter daily, (*E. G. Surv. News*, 3: 10, 1953).

Mr. Chase* at his present residence at Ampersand Bay, Saranac Lake, estimated a larger breeding population for 1953 than for any previous year and he observed the first courting the week of May 4th. The birds arrived at about 5:30 A.M. and remained all day until 5 P.M. with much loafing mainly in hemlocks. The week of May 11 there was heavy courting by males with fluttering and strutting, the birds remaining until 7 P.M. The males followed closely the females with wings spread, breast almost to the ground, and beak held high in near vertical position. May 15th to 17th the females were coaxing to be fed and the males finally responded. Loafing continued in the hemlocks.

On May 17th Mr. Chase observed on the northeast spur of Shingle Bay Mt. near Ampersand Bay at least two pairs feeding intensively on hard maple blossoms and fruit embryos and he believed a roosting and nesting area existed on the upper slope of the mountain. May 19th he finally spotted a nest in this area in the top of a hard maple more than 50 feet above the ground and he observed a pair for 1½ hours working on maple blossoms. Later in the afternoon the nest was visited again and a male noted near the nest tree. He answered the call notes of birds flying over. Two other pairs stopped to visit but left after several minutes. The female finally showed up at 6:30 P.M. Other nesting territories were evident left and right at the approximate end of the audible range. On May 22nd Mr. Chase scouted the territory west of that in which the nest had been observed and he finally spotted another nest high in a hard maple. The male Evening Grosbeak shyly departed after Mr. Chase approached the area but after a half hour the female appeared and went directly to the nest, settling down, indicating that a clutch was started. The foliage was a detriment to further scouting but it was believed that at least six other pairs were

*Personal Communication.

in the vicinity. The nesting area is on a northwest exposure on approximately the 1800' contour and the nests observed were approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile apart. It is in a mature stand of beech, birch, maple with maples dominant and then heavily laden with blossoms. Possibly the selection of the nesting area was dependent on the food situation. The nests were well formed in crotches and comparable in bulk to a robin's but they were inaccessible. The birds were clannish in that two pairs frequently were together at the nest site of one pair. The active periods of nest building, the noise in general and the visiting of pairs were between 4:45 A.M. and 6:30 A.M. and in the evening from 6:30 P.M. to 8:30 P.M. During these periods, especially during nest construction and in the pre-incubation period, there were frequent sorties by 2-4 birds coming and going in the nesting area.

Later a third nest was located in Mr. Chase's yard but he considered it rather atypical because of the feeding station. It was in a mature red spruce on the southwest side of a lateral branch rather than fastigate branching as were the others. On May 20 the female secured hemlock twigs from nearby trees between 7 and 8 P.M. and carried them to the nest in about five minute intervals, the male following the female closely. May 22nd at 8 P.M. a second pair came and visited but all left the area and the local pair was not seen or heard until 8:45 P.M. when the male call note was heard near the nest. Further nest building was observed 5-6 A.M. on May 24th and the nest was believed completed by the 26th. However, nesting was not successful here and the nest was either destroyed by crows or by wind in a storm early in June.

The breeding population of this region must have been of considerable size as ten males were seen at the feeding station on May 29th. Young were seen in the yard on June 22nd and the peak of activity was around June 29th tapering off sharply the week of July 6th.

Another 1953 breeding record for New York state was established at Lake Eaton near Long Lake in the Adirondacks. (Scott). In May 1949 Miss Betty Barnes of Schenectady, N. Y. (*Feathers*, 15: 69, 1953) rescued a male Evening Grosbeak that was unable to fly. The summer of 1953 she took the bird, Pete, camping at Lake Eaton. Evening Grosbeaks were attracted to the caged bird several times between July 11 and July 17 and on July 15 were accompanied by several immatures.

At Indian Lake in the central Adirondacks Mrs. Lindsay McPhail* made the following observations, "The first Evening Grosbeak we saw was an adult male, about the first or second week in June of 1953. He stayed only a few seconds the first day, but came back the second day with his mate or female Evening Grosbeak. Then, within a few days we noticed two sets of parent birds, either all at the same time or one or two at a time, along with 3 or 4 chicks. The parent birds fed the chicks, and when the chicks came by themselves, they fed themselves. Both parents fed the chicks. The greatest number we noticed at any one time was 14 . . . the two sets of parents and the rest chicks of both sexes, with more females than males, I believe. The nests were not near the cottage as the birds seemed to fly in from a distance."

*Personal Communication.

At Piseco Lake in the southern Adirondacks Mr. Robert Christie* reported that this was the first summer to his knowledge that the Evening Grosbeak had remained after June 2nd. A pair visited his feeder daily and the last week of June two pairs of parents brought their young to the station. Young Evening Grosbeaks were also seen at Point Comfort State Park on Piseco Lake July 19th by W. J. W. Wilkinson* and at Higgins Bay in mid-July on the same lake by Malcolm S. McIlroy*. The most southerly breeding record for New York came from Mrs. Cecil Finch* at Broadalbin, about 11 miles north of Amsterdam. On July 15th she observed an adult female feeding a young male and on the 22nd a young male feeding alone.

In New England the record of young birds began July 12-14, 1926 (Marble, 1926) when two adults and four young were observed by E. K. Wright and Richard M. Marble at Woodstock, Vermont. Twenty-seven years elapsed before nesting was again established in this state. In the summer of 1953 at Waterbury three juvenals were brought by a male to the feeder of Mrs. H. L. Myers* on June 29th; at Landgrove Mrs. E. D. Brooks* observed an adult with one or two young a number of times at her feeding station in late June and early July; and T. S. Fillebrown* observed an adult and an immature at Gaysville on July 15th. Probably the largest breeding population in Vermont this summer was located near Glebe Mt. in South Londonderry, and the activities of at least 5 pairs and over 12 young were recorded daily by Mrs. James R. Downs*. Courting was first noted May 5th and observed off and on until August 4th. On June 27th a young male and young female were first brought to the yard and fed by an adult male. On June 30 a young male hopped to the ground beside the farm pond. When he approached the edge of the water a frog jumped at him and dragged him into the water. The bird was rescued but he was dead with a broken neck. Similar captures of other birds have been reported in the literature, yet I believe this to be first such fatality to an immature Evening Grosbeak to be recorded. By August 7th the birds did not visit the feeders as often as previously and by the 14th there was a further decline in numbers. August 24-29 only immatures visited the feeders and on the 29th one adult female (the last adult for the season) was observed.

About 1915 (Baillie, p. 17) there was a reported nesting of the Evening Grosbeak near Hanover, N. H. A later and better substantiated report of breeding in this state comes from Jefferson where 6 adults and one young were observed in August, 1952 by Donald Lennox (E. G. Surv. News 3: 3, 1952). Two breeding records were established in this state in 1953: July 24 near West Milan Frederick C. Schmid* observed an adult male and two immatures feeding in the gravel of a newly constructed road. They were observed at about 15 feet and their actions and horn-colored bills left no doubt as to their immaturity. On August 20, two to three immatures were seen by Mrs. J. A. Doucette* at Jackson.

Massachusetts has had only one breeding record. At Mt. Hermon

*Personal Communication.

Harry C. Holton saw an adult male, "molting a little," on July 28, 1938 and the next day a very young bird more buff or brownish than the female, (Bagg & Eliot, p. 788).

The first young for the state of Maine was an immature bird with an adult male which came to the feeder of G. D. Chamberlain at Presque Isle for several days commencing August 4, 1946, (Palmer, p. 526). Mrs. Harry G. Whitney reported Evening Grosbeaks throughout the summer of 1946 and a female feeding young at Hampden Highlands, near Bangor, (Palmer, p. 526). That same year an adult and four young were seen at Castine, (Palmer, p. 526). In 1950 courting and young were observed at Big Lyford Pond, Kokadjo by Mrs. Ivan Sherman, (E. G. Surv. News, **1**: 13, 1951), and on July 27, 1952 at the same locality a pair and three young were observed, (E. G. Surv. News, **3**: 3, 1952). A fairly large population was recorded by Mrs. Sherman* in the Kokadjo area at Big and Little Lyford Ponds in 1953, yet no juvenals were seen there during that summer.

Although New Brunswick summer observations of adults date back at least to 1940 at Tabusintac, (Squires, p. 121), it was not until 1948 that a breeding record was established at Plaster Rock. On July 29th of that year Miss Patience Barker, (Squires, p. 121), observed adults and young and this record was repeated in the summers of 1949, 1950 and 1951, (Packard, p. 46). On July 17, 1953 adults and one young were seen by James Bond, (Nature News, **4**(4): 2, 1953), at Riley Brook thus establishing the first breeding record for this locality. On the Green River Watershed in northwestern New Brunswick D. S. MacDougall* observed a family of 6 or 7 Evening Grosbeaks on August 8, 1953 feeding on pin cherries. He writes, "The young were pale in color and were not very active, and were catered to by the adult present. Again in the evening I saw a flock, which must have been composed of several families, feeding on a different patch of pin cherries. This flock was made up almost entirely of birds in adult plumage, but there were a few young present."

The above records are only those where immatures were noted and a breeding area definitely established. However, adult Evening Grosbeaks have been noted in New York, New England and the Maritime Provinces over a period of years in the summer months and their presence may possibly indicate a breeding population. These localities include the following:

NEW YORK — Grindstone Island in the St. Lawrence River 1939, (Baillie, p. 24); Cranberry Lake 1945, (Barick, p. 444); Elmira 1951, (E. G. Surv. News, **2**: 2, 1951); Alfred and Oswego 1952, (E. G. Surv. News, **3**: 3, 1952); and during the summer of 1953 Amsterdam, Gloversville and Edinburg, (Mrs. Gerald Fitzgerald)*, Speculator, (Mrs. J. S. Y. Hoyt)*, Sodom and Johnsbury, (Rev. W. H. Hudnut)*, Bolton Landing, (Mrs. Mildred Barber)*, Meachan Lake, 20 miles north of Saranac Lake, not located on map, (Harold L. Sisson)* and Halfway Brook, on the road between Saranac Lake and Tupper Lake, (Greenleaf Chase)*.

*Personal Communication.

VERMONT — in 1953 at Peru, Windham, Weston, Rawsonville and Breadloaf Mt., (Mrs. James R. Downs) *, Pittsfield, (Mr. W. Spofford) *, Stowe, (Mrs. L. A. Hevey) *.

NEW HAMPSHIRE — Nashua 1916, (Baillie, p. 17), Jaffrey 1923, (Baillie, p. 20); in 1951 at New Hampton, Meredith, Randolph and Berlin, (E. G. Surv. News, **2**: 2, 1951); in 1952 at Monroe, Pittsburg and Berlin, (E. G. Surv. News, **3**: 3, 1952); in 1953 at North Conway, (Mrs. M. E. Foster) *, Pittsburg, (Mrs. Myrtle Dore) *, Lebanon, (Mrs. L. B. Johnston) *, Waterville Valley, (Miss Sarah J. Woodward) *, Berlin, (Mrs. E. P. Cook) *, Canaan, (Mrs. Alice McAlister) *, Gorham, (Mrs. M. B. Leggett) *, Jefferson, (Donald Lennox) *.

MASSACHUSETTS — Cape Cod 1923, (Baillie, p. 20); Bedford 1946, (Griscom, p. 307); in 1950 at Middleboro and Wilbraham, (E. G. Surv. News, **1**: 17, 1951); in 1952 at West Hatfield, (Miss Clementine Jandzinski) *. No reports of summer birds in 1953 in this state have been received.

MAINE — Presque Isle 1945, (Palmer, p. 526); Auburn 1945, (A. O. Gross, Bird Notes, *Me. Aud. Soc. Bull.*, **1**: 98, 1945); Squapan Lake 1946, (Palmer, p. 526); Freeport 1947, (Eva MacMillan, in Miscellaneous Bird Notes, *Me. Aud. Soc. Bull.*, **4**: 9, 1948); Wiscasset 1947, (A. O. Gross, Evening Grosbeaks, *Me. Aud. Soc. Bull.*, **3**: 28, 1947); Lower Shin Pond 1949, (C. Chandler Ross and James Bond, Some 1949 Records, *Me. Aud. Soc. Bull.*, **6**: 10, 1950); Fort Kent Region 1949, (Ludlow Griscom, Northeastern Maritime Region, *Aud. Field Notes*, **3**: 229, 1949); Fort Kent Region 1950, (Hensley & Cope, p. 491); in 1951 at Kokadjo, Casco Bay and Presque Isle, (E. G. Surv. News, **2**: 2, 1951); Madrid and Dover-Foxcroft 1951, (Packard, p. 43); Jackman 1952, (E. G. Surv. News, **3**: 3, 1952); Eustis 1953), (Mrs. W. J. Therrien) *.

NOVA SCOTIA — Wolfville 1944, 1951 and 1953, (Robie W. Tufts) *.

NEW BRUNSWICK — Tobique River 1946, (Ross, p. 318); Riley Brook 1947, (James Bond, Summer Residents of Mt. Desert, *Me. Aud. Soc. Bull.*, **5**: 7, 1948); Summit Depot 1951 and 1952, (E. G. Surv. News, **3**: 2, 1952); in 1952 Plaster Rock-Renous Highway, Andover, Gulgucac, Nictau, Kedgewick River and Upsalquitch River, (E. G. Surv. News, **3**: 2, 1952); in 1953 Plaster Rock Region, (R. Dudley Ross) *: Victoria and Restigouche Counties, Nictau and Robinsonville, (Nature News, **4**(4): 2, 1953).

CONCLUSION

1. The breeding populations of New York, New England and the Maritime Provinces have shown a marked increase since 1945.

2. Of the total of 43 areas where the Evening Grosbeak was reported during the summer of 1953 in the area under consideration 13 records were of immature birds. Prior to 1953 the total of all breeding localities in New York, New England and the Maritime Provinces was only 11 (one of these being the doubtful report at Hanover, N. H.). It is very likely that the reports involving only mature birds in many cases represent breeding areas and the young were not noted in the tabulation of birds or were overlooked.

*Personal Communication.

3. Of the reports of summer birds for 1953, 10 came from areas previously reporting Evening Grosbeaks between June 1st and September 1st and 33 came from new regions. This may indicate a more widespread distribution of the areas chosen by breeding grosbeaks, and in some instances an extension of the breeding range to the south. Isolated reports of immatures have come in the past from points considerably to the south of the main breeding area but these may be considered as isolated cases and not indications of the southern demarcations of the breeding area.

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NOTES ON BEHAVIOR AND MOLT OF A CAPTIVE EVENING GROSBEEK

BY SALLY FORESMAN HOYT

On December 29, 1951, a flock of Evening Grosbeaks was feeding along a road a few hundred yards from my home in Etna, N. Y. While most cars slowed down and avoided the flock, one car went through at a high rate of speed, killing two birds and injuring another. The injured bird could flutter, but two of us succeeded in catching him in the deep snow. Refusing all food at first, he finally took red raspberries which I had in the home freezer, then blackberries and finally sunflower seeds. After that he refused most fruit and for a year ate almost nothing except sunflower seeds. Then he accepted apple, but not in quantity, and he never again ate berries. I fully expected to release him if he recovered the use of his wing, which was broken close to the body, but it healed in a stiffened condition and he could never fly. I had him for 15 months, and he died quite suddenly the night of March 27, 1953.

In all that time, he never became tame nor overcame his apparent fear of me. Often when I opened the door of the cage, he became panicky and would fall on his back, unable to right himself because of the stiffened wing.

As is the case with the wild birds, he drank quantities of water, and if the cup became empty, I was soon aware of it because of his increased restlessness and calling. As soon as I filled the cup, he drank.

Throughout the first few months I had him, he called frequently and he seemed to be aware of the flock feeding in the yard. The second winter he called less frequently. There were no wild Grosbeaks in Etna that winter, but I do not know that his silence was related to this fact.

His plumage was normal, except for cage wear of the tail feathers and of the primaries on the broken wing, which dragged. By July 29, 1952, I noted that half of the primaries had molted. By the last week in August, he was replacing the contour feathers and also some of the wing coverts. The molt of the primaries seemed to have slowed up, for on September 5 the three outer primaries on each wing had not yet been replaced. Molt of the secondaries started the 2nd week in October. On October 29, all the new primaries were full grown except the first, which did not drop until November 1st, when the tail molt was likewise almost complete.