

The Changing Seasons

Autumn 1980, "normal" fall season, with just enough spice to make it interesting and fun

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THE AUTUMN MIGRATION in North America is a many-faceted splendor and every birder is able to select the particular aspect that most interests him. Some spend hours, often in the baking sun, scanning beaches and mudflats for shorebirds. Others perch on some rocky hilltop or outcrop, or possibly in a fire-tower, craning their necks counting high-flying raptors. Still others risk *mal de mer* in pitching small craft in search of pelagic wanderers. Still others will be found on the windswept shores of some icy pond marvelling as the fall waterfowl flights descend. At the other extreme on the comfort index are those "hardy" souls lounging in hammocks, tall cool glass in hand, watching hordes of Common Nighthawks passing over their backyards. Perhaps for most of us, autumn brings something of all these pleasures, but to me the fall migration for many years has meant days spent in a spruce-clad mountain pass watching countless warblers cross the mountain. But in all of these endeavors as well as others, there lies the constant, exciting prospect of a new or rare bird, possibly even a new state record. As they say, "You pays your money and you takes your choice" but whatever those choices are, one thing is certain: autumn migration is a "fun time" for the birder.

Fall migration is truly one of the great spectacles of nature. It is true that in spring migration many of the birds are prettier, they sing more, and often are easier to see. But spring migration, which is often the original lure that sparks the interest in birdwatching, lasts a very short time. The fall spectacle stretches out over something longer than five months, and even though it often involves hard work, it is almost always fun.

Consider for a moment the magnitude of this moment. How many birds fly south each fall? One can only make crude guesses. Some years ago the late Reg Moreau (R.E. Moreau, *The Palearctic-African Bird Migration Systems*, 1967) "guesstimated" that some 4-5 billion birds fly from Europe and western Asia to winter in Africa. (Incidentally, people interested in a stimulating discussion of migration should read Moreau's book.) This guess may be reasonable for this side of the Atlantic also, but Chandler Robbins and I have guesstimated that the number in North America may be something like 20 billion. Any reader is certainly free to make his or her own stab at a suitable number. In any event it is an awful lot of birds.

In the Regional accounts that follow, the reader will be treated to a discussion of the various facets of this spectacle for the fall of 1980. All in all this season seemed to be typical from most standpoints. In these accounts the Regional Editors mentioned a total of 571 species, as well as 7 additional forms that were formerly classified as full species (e.g., "Oregon" Junco) and 13 additional species from Hawaii. Oddly enough this long list does not include a number of common species such as Spotted Sandpiper and Red-winged Blackbird. With such a long list there is obviously much that a poor Changing Seasons compiler can talk about, if he can sort out some kind of rhyme or reason. At this moment I am struck with the essential truth of Bill Robertson's remark in the last Changing Season's column about the seasons not changing enough. Surely, this fall, different as it may be in detail, was much like any other fall season, but let us see if we can glean some points of

interest from these data (I hesitate to say "items of wisdom"). However, before doing so let me quote from Peter Vickery, "... generalities about the fall migration can share a certain kinship to walking out on increasingly thinner and thinner ice."

The industrious Regional Editors contributed 342 manuscript pages of material, which breaks down into 229 pages on the non-passerines and 123 pages on the passerines. Why this great disparity, considering that there are more passerine species than non-passerine? I think the answer is fairly obvious. It is easy to sum up many passerine species in a few generalities, but the non-passerines are more given to wandering. The rare and unusual species that are highlighted in "S.A.s" are usually non-passerines.

It would not be a normal season without a few oddities to comment on. Certainly one of the most exotic sights reported must have been the flock of eight parrots of four species witnessed in Florida. Consider also the influx of American Golden and Black-bellied plovers onto the lawns and streets of Marathon, Ontario, while in Hawaii color-banding showed that individual American Golden Plovers return to the same lawns each year. But the most striking report of this sort was the Virginia Rail strolling down Madison Avenue at 35th Street during a Manhattan rush hour. Then there was the very late Whip-poor-will captured in Pennsylvania, fed on hamburger, and then sent to Florida by commercial airliner. A similar project for a Purple Gallinule in Ontario ran afoul of Canadian laws on exporting birds.

THE WEATHER AND THE MIGRATION

THE EARLY PART of the season was simply a continuation of the hot dry weather prevalent in July. Throughout the southern part of the United States temperatures soared to record heights and rainfall deficiencies mounted. This drought extended northward on the East Coast, but there was local flash flooding in parts of the Appalachians. The upper Midwest and Great Plains areas were dry but not so hot, while the West Coast was quite dry. During this early period there were few if any strong weather systems passing through, but the passerine migration started in mid-August, and in some places good numbers were seen.

Things began to change in late September when the rains came to most places, although the weather remained mild. The migration proceeded without any unusual weather disturbances, but most Regions felt that "mediocre" best described the migration. In the Western Great Lakes Region observers complained of continual bad weather.

October and November presented a more normal weather picture, although temperatures remained on the mild side. There were now some good frontal systems that produced a few heavy flights. At Cape May, New Jersey very heavy flights noted on October 20 and November 1-2 correlated nicely with strong weather systems. The November 1-2 system also caused a heavy flight on the north Florida coast although the front itself had not reached that area. On October 11 a strong flight of small birds flying north was noted on the north Florida coast and this preceded the very strong cold front which moved across Alabama and Mississippi.

The mild late season, of course, triggered a veritable avalanche of record late dates for many passerine migrants. The interested reader will find these in every account. The weather remained mild through the end of the period with few sub-freezing temperatures and practically no snow, although on the last day of the period the thermometer did plunge to -30°F in the Northwest Canada Region.

The early dry weather had a profound, although variable, effect on waterbirds and it was suggested that this dry weather caused deficient food supplies, forcing many birds into areas where they normally do not occur.

So except for hurricane *Allen* it is difficult to single out anything dramatic about the weather patterns of 1980, and while most of the Regional Editors felt the migration was uneventful, in aggregate, a multitude of little events added up finally to an interesting fall season.

HURRICANE ALLEN

THIS YEAR ONLY one tropical disturbance, hurricane *Allen*, came ashore on the North American continent, but it was the most intense hurricane to sweep across the Caribbean in this century. Most of the hurricanes that have created ornithological news have passed up the Atlantic Coast or have moved inland on a south-to-north route affecting several of our Regions. *Allen*, however, came ashore between Corpus Christi and Brownsville, and swept inland through the South Texas Region, and produced a few disturbances in the Southern Great Plains Region with at least one echo in the Southwest Region. In the present report from the South Texas Region, Fred Webster gives us a detailed account of this storm and its effects. He carefully chronicles the extent of the storm, and lists the stray coastal and pelagic birds that were blown inland, which included several boobies, frigatebirds, as well as several herons, Sooty and Bridled terns. Numerous dead birds were recovered on the beaches or elsewhere including Cory's, Manx, and Audubon's shearwaters, and Brown Booby.

One can expect these effects in the coastal areas, but some of the most interesting results of *Allen* came from far inland, and the reader should pay careful attention to Frances Williams' account from the Southern Great Plains Region where many storm-blown strays to interior Texas, and Oklahoma are reported. These strays included Anhingas as far north as the Oklahoma-Texas border, many Laughing Gulls and at least five Black Skimmers well inland. Roseate Spoonbills were found as far west as Balmorhea Lake in the Trans-Pecos, as well as three other inland locations, but the real prizes for that region were three Sooty Terns picked up in Brewster and Jeff Davis counties in the Trans-Pecos. The most remarkable stray resulting from *Allen* was undoubtedly the White-tailed Tropicbird found moribund at Scottsdale, Arizona.

Although *Allen* occurred in early August, stray waterbirds were seen inland in the Southwest through much of the rest of the fall. In the case of many of the herons involved it is problematical whether *Allen* was indeed responsible.

RAPTORS

THE FALL RAPTOR migration was not as heavy as the great flight of 1979, but in the Northeast numbers were still good. In the upper Midwest the flight was disappointing. Fall hawk watching has begun to catch on in the western states and this year some interesting summaries came from the Northern Rocky Mountains-Intermountain and the Mountain West regions, as well as the more usual ones from the Ontario, Hudson-Delaware, Middle-Atlantic Coast and Appalachian regions. We still lack information about just what happens to all these birds after they leave the Appalachian ridges, and the Great Lakes coastlines. The Southern Atlantic Coast and Central Southern regions had mediocre flights, but some very interesting concentrations were reported from the Southern Great Plains and especially from the South Texas regions.

There was a moderate Goshawk flight reported in the East, and this species was reported as far south as eastern Kentucky. There were enough early reports of this species to suggest that it is now breeding much farther south than we had previously thought. Both Cooper's and Sharp-shinned hawks seemed to be doing well (in contrast to recent years), and at Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania, the total count of Sharpies was the highest since 1939. At Cape May the season's count of Sharp-shinneds was 52,000. Usually the large numbers of raptors reported result from high Broad-winged Hawk counts, but from the Northeast through the Appalachians and west to Lakes Superior and Michigan the observed flight of this species was subnormal, although there was general agreement that it peaked about September 18-25. Eastern observers who saw few Broad-wingeds this year will want to read, with envy, the account from the South Texas Region where such fabulous reports as 12,000 seen over Houston in a ten-minute period, and 23,000 in six hours near Corpus Christi, were climaxed by the sight of 62,000 "bedding down" just west of

Corpus Christi. There was also a heavy *Accipiter* flight along this coast. Oddly enough these large concentrations in the far South came at about the same time the easterners were observing their largest numbers. Finally what are we to think of the lone Broad-winged in Pend Oreille County, Washington (first state record), the one at Calgary, Alberta and the seven seen migrating down Point Loma near San Diego, California?

No great concentrations of Swainson's Hawks were reported from the West but this species was widely seen well east of its usual range with reports from Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and east to Ontario, New Jersey, and South Carolina as well as south to Florida where it has wintered in recent years.

Golden Eagles were reported in modest numbers from most hawk watching stations with a high count of 30 in one day at Mt. Bridger in western Montana. While well below last year's high counts Peregrines were still rather widely and commonly reported.

Rough-legged Hawks experienced a modest incursion into the Northeast but were not common elsewhere. Turkey Vultures were rather commonly reported in the north, but were felt to be declining in the Southern Great Plains. A Black Vulture was seen in Wisconsin.

Some of the more unusual records were Gyrfalcons in the Prairie Provinces, Minnesota, Wyoming, and British Columbia, Swallow-tailed Kites at Key West and in Arizona, Gray Hawk in New Mexico, Aplomado Falcon in Hudspeth County, Texas, and Hook-billed Kites in the Rio Grande Valley.

LARIDS AND KIN

IN HIS ACCOUNT of the Summer Season 1980, Dr. Robertson remarked that man has made the world a good place for gulls. The truth of this statement was never more evident than it was this fall, as gulls of all sorts turned up everywhere. The reader is encouraged to read the gull section of *every* Regional Report since they all contain something of interest. The Lesser Black-backed Gull on this side of the Atlantic is beginning to burgeon, with reports from Nova Scotia south to Virginia and also a few on the Great Lakes. Two species often thought to be mostly pelagic, Sabine's Gull and Black-legged Kittiwake keep turning up more and more in the

interior West and Great Plains, with Sabine's reported from eight non-coastal regions and the kittiwake from nine. Glaucous Gulls turned up in inland Pennsylvania and the Southern Great Plains as well as the Great Lakes and the coastal areas, including the Texas Gulf Coast. Black-headed Gulls were unusually numerous on the East Coast, were in "unprecedented numbers" in Québec and one was seen at Victoria, British Columbia. Thayer's Gulls are now being reported regularly from the Great Lakes, and this year were found at other midwestern localities, as well as in Arizona, and on the northwest coast. Observers may have not been fully aware of or familiar with this form, only recently classified as a full species, and the remarks of Clive Goodwin in the Ontario Region report about this species (and the Long-billed Dowitcher) are pertinent.

Of special interest to observers wondering about "white-winged" gulls are the cautionary remarks of the Athertons in the Florida Region report about the incidence of albinism in common species, as well as their comments about abnormally colored soft-parts.

Other gull items of interest include the massive gull movement on the Oregon Coast in late October - early November which involved some 25,000 gulls of seven species. Mew Gulls, of which 7000 were seen in the Oregon concentration, appeared at Nantucket Island and Cape May on the East Coast where they are rare. An Iceland Gull was reported at Regina, Saskatchewan and a possible Ivory Gull in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region.

The tern branch of the Larid family does not show up so spectacularly most of the time, except for the hurricane-wafted Sooties and the occasional Bridled Tern seen by the pelagic bird chasers. In the Southern Atlantic Coast Regional report Harry LeGrand comments on the paucity of Sooty Terns during offshore trips from the Carolinas and postulates that some of last year's hurricanes (*David* or *Frederic*) may have caused heavy mortality to the species while at sea.

Jaegers are not strictly Larids and the amazing number of records for all three species deserve comment. All three turned up in the most unlikely places. Besides the large numbers counted from pelagic trips in the Atlantic, and on trips to the Great Lakes, many of the inland

regions had good numbers of all three species. Land-locked Arizona turned in records for all three, including the rarer Long-tailed, and Utah and Montana, well known for pelagic records, and visitations of jaegers. Pacific coast records were fewer than usual, however.

Finally, we must note the Common Puffin on Lake Erie, perhaps the first Great Lakes record for this species.

WARBLERS

IN THE SPRING many observers in the East and Midwest judge the success or failure of the migration by the extent of the warbler movement. But in the fall this is usually of lesser importance. Maybe it is the fact that looking for warblers in the dense vegetation of late summer is hard and hot work, or maybe it is because we have been brainwashed to think that identification of fall warblers is difficult—"confusing" is the word used, I believe, but for whatever reason, the warbler migration is not covered extensively in the East except by banders, particularly at the big banding stations.

This year rather few large concentrations were reported, and the migration was considered only moderate. However, warbler aficionados should consult accounts from the Central Southern and South Texas regions for the descriptions of several really heavy flights. The report from the Central Southern Region was especially interesting in that roughly 20,000 birds per hour, mostly Yellow-rumped Warblers were moving north along the coast. A similar event occurred in late November at Key Largo, Florida when 10,000 Yellow-rumped were seen flying north. Another great movement was reported from Cape May on October 20.

The major banding stations on the Atlantic coast and along the Great Lakes reported a decrease in the numbers of the spruce budworm avian specialists which have been so abundant in recent years, leading to speculations that perhaps there is a lull in the infestation of the boreal forest. However, some other stations reported excellent numbers of these birds, particularly Cape May and Bay-breasted warblers. This emphasizes that extreme caution must be used in inferring overall populations from migration data obtained at banding stations or any other concentration points.

But if easterners sometime do not specialize in seeking warblers in the fall the finding of eastern warbler species in the far west seems to be the name of the game. Sixteen eastern species were reported from the Southwest Region, 17 appeared in the Middle Pacific Coast Region, and 25 in the Southern Pacific Coast Region. The latter had a total of 38 warbler species for the season. No eastern locality could match that. Outstanding among these wanderers were the Black-throated Green and Black-throated Blue warblers, which were not only unusually abundant on the Pacific Coast but also in the Northern Great Plains area.

The reverse trend is never very apparent, and a few "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped and a lone Black-throated Gray Warbler in upstate New York were the only signs of western parulids coming east. There was also a modest occurrence of some southern species, Kentucky and Hooded warblers and Louisiana Waterthrush occurring north of their usual range.

To some of us warbler fanciers the most interesting facet of the fall warbler migration is the movement of the Blackpoll Warbler, so abundant where it occurs, but missing from so many places. We argue about how this dominantly NW to SE movement actually occurs, but what can we say about the few birds seen in Louisiana and in the Texas Panhandle, not to mention the single bird in Oregon, the seven in Arizona-New Mexico, the 40 in the Southern Pacific Coast Region and the amazing 72 reported from the Middle Pacific Coast? None of our theories allows them to be there, but then compared with the several million Blackpolls that go to South America each fall are these any more than scatterings of faulty navigators?

NORTHERN INVADERS

THERE WERE EARLY signs that this might be the first "northern finch" winter in several years in the Northeast and Midwest, and in some respects this did develop although only in modest proportions. The outstanding invader was the Pine Siskin which was reported in numbers along the eastern seaboard, with lesser totals inland. It was also abundant in the upper Midwest. A few siskins were seen as far south as Padre

Island, Texas, and south Florida. Along with the siskins in some places came large numbers of American Goldfinches. Evening Grosbeaks came south in the East, but while they were widespread no one reported any large numbers. Redpolls made a good showing after being absent for a few years, but the invasion which went as far south as southern Illinois was not as intense as those of a few years ago. There were scattered influxes of both crossbill species, and the White-winged came south in the Rocky Mountain and Cascade Mountain areas where it is normally rare.

The outstanding northern invader was not a finch, but rather the Red-breasted Nuthatch which moved south in unusually high numbers, reaching the Gulf Coast in central Florida and Texas, with an unprecedented number in the Chisos Mountains of the Texas Big Bend country. This influx did not extend to the Far West, however. Along with the nuthatches were excellent numbers of Brown Creepers, which also reached south Texas. There was good influx of Black-capped Chickadees south as far as Maryland. This movement was strongest in New England, but even there did not reach the high numbers of the great influxes in the early 1970s. Oddly enough there was also a movement of Mountain Chickadees out of the Rockies onto the plains of eastern Colorado and Wyoming and there were reports from coastal California. There were rather few reports, however, of Boreal Chickadees which sometimes comes south in numbers with the Black-capped.

Bohemian Waxwings were reported in high numbers at Edmonton, Alberta, but it was remarked that there was no food supply there for them. This may have accounted for the southward movement noted in the Northwest, where, for example, flocks of 1000 were seen in Bozeman, Montana. There was only a scattering of reports from the East.

A major Snowy Owl incursion occurred in the Upper Great Lakes and Middlewestern Prairie regions, while to the east there were a few Snowies, but no major movement. Great Gray Owls also moved into the Western Great Lakes and Ontario regions. Gray Jays moved southward in Minnesota but this movement was not noticeable elsewhere. Both species of three-toed woodpecker turned up south of their normal limits in the Northeastern Maritime Region, the

Niagara-Champlain and the Western Great Lakes regions.

PELAGICS

A GROWING BIRDING sport in recent years has been the offshore trip in search of pelagic species. On both coasts these excursions have been pushing farther and farther offshore. Indeed the question is now raised as to whether a bird seen a hundred or so miles from land can be legitimately (or meaningfully) counted on a state list, or if so what state list? In any event our understanding of the movements of shearwaters and storm-petrels is being increased by this activity. This year the results off the Pacific Coast were not especially memorable, although one should note the large numbers of storm-petrels seen in Monterey Bay. The most impressive numbers came from trips from Cape May, New Jersey and Ocean City, Maryland. Of particular interest are the good numbers of Cory's, Manx and Audubon's shearwaters. Some of the more unusual species were Black-capped Petrel off Maryland, North Carolina, and Florida, South Trinidad Petrel off North Carolina, White-faced Storm-Petrel off Cape May and Virginia, and Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel off Cape May and off Monterey.

SHOREBIRDS

THE SHOREBIRD MIGRATION is usually one of the highlights of the fall, and this year was no exception. The widespread drought was both favorable and unfavorable for shorebirding. In some places the ponds were completely dried up and the birds never appeared but elsewhere low water levels concentrated the birds. In the Middlewestern Prairie Region the opposite occurred when late summer rains inundated many shorebird sites. Generally the season was a good one.

Perhaps the outstanding species was Buff-breasted Sandpiper, often considered one of the rarer species. It was found throughout the eastern regions, even those inland, in some places in exceptional numbers, especially from Virginia and Wisconsin. Westward the numbers were lower, and on the Pacific Coast there were only a few records. Another shorebird that occurred in unusual numbers was Red Knot throughout the eastern coastal regions, the Great

Lakes, and North Dakota, and it even turned up in Hawaii. Both Northern and Red phalaropes were much more common than usual, with the Red Phalarope turning up in inland locations in Minnesota, Michigan, North Dakota, Colorado, and eastern Washington. Mountain Plovers were unusually common in the Pacific Coast regions.

There were a number of noteworthy rarities. A Red-necked Stint was found in southern California, a Bar-tailed Godwit provided the second state record for Maine. The reader will be intrigued by the report from the Ontario Region of a *Calidris* sandpiper which matched none of the possible species. But the two best records of the year came from the opposite coasts and were both plovers. Ringed Plovers were found in Newfoundland in August (also see p. 000), and best of all a Mongolian Plover was seen at Moss Landing, California on several days in September. This represented the first California record.

“THE GOODIES”

THE FUN AND EXCITEMENT of any migration season comes from the sightings of the out-of-season or out-of-range rarities, particularly those that the Regional Editors have chosen to either boldface or make the subject of an “S.A.”. The fall of 1980 was probably about average in this respect. I counted approximately 300 reports which I judged to be “goodies.” Every region had its share of excitement, and as the reader progresses through the Regional accounts he can vicariously share some of this.

Some of these records refer to birds with long-standing proclivities to wander, particularly in the fall. These tend to lose their “excitement potential” as the number of records increases. Thus, the Western Kingbird is now so regular on the East Coast that comment is made only when it is in lower-than-normal numbers, as it seemed to be this year. Another of these regulars is Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, which this year reached Saskatchewan, Wisconsin, Ontario, and Québec as well as places nearer its normal range. Many of the birds normally found just west of the 100th meridian often move eastward. In this category, also may be included some of the pelagics mentioned earlier, since we are perhaps only beginning to understand the seasonal distribution of many of these species.

In another category are the species that only occasionally wander from their normal climes, and these are the ones that the avid birder enjoys so much. Warbler students should study the far western reports carefully to keep track of these birds. As has been discussed before, more eastern birds turn up west than vice versa. Last year Paul DeBenedictis (*AB* 34:133-138, 1980) presented some cogent arguments as to why this should be so. I can add little to his argument. Other than warblers, however, it would appear that more western species come east than vice versa. This may have something to do with the distribution of bird watchers in the east, or it may be in part owing to the prevailing westerly winds in the fall, but in any event the list is long.

Are all these wanderers simply birds whose navigational systems are faulty or are there other factors at work here? It is popularly held that most of these strays are birds of the year. However, the Summer Tanager which appeared in northern Minnesota must have been an older bird since it was reported as a male which would not be distinguishable in a bird of the year. The remarkable record of the infamous Skylark in California which has now returned for the third year (presumably the same bird) adds fuel to this argument, and the Middle Pacific Coast Regional Editors wonder where this bird is spending the breeding season.

The Rufous Hummingbird is another species that has been making news in recent years. A strictly western breeder, it has been regular in fall in Louisiana for some time, but this year it was found in Maine, New York (first state record), Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana and Illinois. Several other hummingbirds are also wandering. Outstanding was the Lucifer in Arizona, the Buff-bellied in Louisiana (second record), a Broad-billed and a Calliope in South Texas.

Space here will not permit the detailing of all the many remarkable records reported for the fall, and the reader is invited to plunge wholeheartedly into the Regional accounts, but a few records undoubtedly should be mentioned.

Some of the more interesting reports include a Yellow-billed Loon in Minnesota, Band-tailed Pigeon in New Jersey, Western Wood Pewee in Massachusetts and Maryland, Mountain Plover in Georgia, Groove-billed Ani in Ohio, Black Vultures in Wisconsin, and Heermann's Gull on Lake Erie again. Flycatchers seem to be especially likely to wander and in addition to the above-mentioned pewee, there was a Say's Phoebe in Québec, and a probable Acadian Flycatcher in California. South Florida turned up a Wied's Crested Flycatcher, as well as another unidentified western *Myiarchus* and as if turnabout is fair play, northern Arizona had a Great Crested Flycatcher, as did California. An Ash-throated Flycatcher was seen in



Yellow-billed Loon, Two Harbors, Minn., Nov. 27, 1980. Photo/Lloyd Paynter.

Massachusetts but the most exciting flycatcher records in the Northeastern Maritime Region were reports of two different Fork-tailed Flycatchers.

For all the great number of rarities only a dozen or so really stand out. Perhaps the record of the year was the Dusky Warbler (*Phylloscopus fuscatus*) on Southeast Farallon Island, for the fourth North American record, the other three all being from islands closer to Asia than to mainland North America. Another North American first was a Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) photographed in Newfoundland in June (but reported this period), there is one other record from near the JFK airport, in New York City, which may have been an escape. A Spotted Redshank near Vancouver, British Columbia belongs on this list. Besides the petrels mentioned in the pelagic section, a White-tailed Tropicbird off the Virginia capes should be mentioned, as well as the Gannet on Lake Ontario, and the Lake Erie puffin mentioned earlier.

Stray waterfowl are always subject to doubts about their provenance, but we might mention without comment a Chloe Wigeon in Québec, a Bar-tailed Goose in Indiana, a Barnacle Goose in South Carolina, a Bahama Pintail in New Jersey, and (more worthy) a Tufted Duck in California. In connection with the last record Robert Paxton adds some pertinent comments on the occurrence of fresh plumage in relation to the wild-escape question. Ruddy Shelducks have now been in Québec for three years, and so may indeed be wild. Another bird whose source is unknown was the American Flamingo in Maryland.

A Blue-hooded Parakeet in Florida was probably also an escape but it may yet be added to the list of parrots established there. The Nanday Conure is apparently established and breeding in Westchester County, New York. A Cuban Emerald in Florida was also noteworthy.

HERE AND THERE IN THE CHECKLIST

IN AS MUCH SPACE as remains I will comment on a few other species or groups of species that have not been mentioned earlier.

Arctic Loons turned up in a number of places east of the usual range. The Great Cormorant populations seem to be doing well, with unusual numbers

seen along the Atlantic seaboard as far south as Virginia; a few were seen at various locations in Florida. Magnificent Frigatebirds were reported from South Carolina and, amazingly, Nova Scotia.

As indicated in the reports from the latter part of the breeding season in the East it was the best late-summer in many years for the numbers of white herons moving north. Along with the herons came many White Ibises and a few *Plegadis* ibis.

It is very difficult to assess waterfowl populations on the basis of the reports submitted. Some Regions mention some very large numbers but without comparative data these numbers mean little. Reports from the Appalachian, Prairie Provinces, and Southern Great Plains regions all indicated lower-than-normal numbers, but in the Middlewestern Prairie Region it was suggested that the mild fall had delayed migration until after the end of the period. In the Middle Pacific Coast Region numbers were stated to be down by 40%, but in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region Mallards, at least, were up by 35%. Snow Geese were reported in large numbers in Québec, and in the Middle Atlantic Coast Regions, but at a refuge in Nebraska the 100,000 Snow Geese reported were down from 160,000 last year. A truly alarming note of decline came from the Delaware River, a traditional wintering ground of the Ruddy Duck, where only 250 birds were counted where 40-50,000 once occurred. Among the waterfowl reports the widespread inland occurrence of all three scoters, but particularly Black Scoter, attracted attention. White-fronted Geese were widely reported in the East, King Eiders were reported from Oregon, California and Pennsylvania, while a Cinnamon Teal in Nova Scotia and a Masked Duck in Texas were noteworthy.

A population of Montezuma Quail was discovered near Alpine, Texas; read Frances Williams' comments on the attempt to restore this species to Big Bend National Park. Those bird students interested in the status of the Whooping Crane will find an excellent opportunity to trace the fall flight of this magnificent species by perusing the regional reports from the Prairie Provinces south through the two Great Plains regions to the wintering grounds in south Texas, and from the new breeding grounds in

the Northern Rocky Mountain-Intermountain Region to the wintering grounds in the Southwest Region. There was an unusually large number of reports of those usually elusive rails, the Yellow and the Black.

Flammulated Owls were reported from Colorado Springs, Midland, Lubbock, and Port Aransas, Texas, eastern Oregon, and Washington. A Burrowing Owl was on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts in September. Eastern observers are used to large concentrations of Chimney Swifts, but the flock of 1500-2000 Vaux's Swift roosting in a chimney in eastern Washington is of interest.

Several regions reported rather-late to very-late *Empidonax* flycatchers usually identified as local species. I would emphasize the remarks made by Robert Paxton that late *Empidonax* individuals are just as likely to be western forms in the east or the converse as to be the in-range forms. Blue Jays keep expanding in the West and in some places have now crossed the first ranges of the Rockies.

A Short-billed Marsh Wren in California provided a first state record, while the Rock Wren in Nova Scotia established a first provincial record, and second Regional record. A Bewick's Wren appeared on Farallon Island, but otherwise there was only one other report of this once common, and now vanishing species. Wheatears appeared in Québec, Ontario, Michigan, and Maryland, while several Townsend's Solitaires were found in the Midwest and the East. It was not a major outbreak year for Varied Thrushes, but a number of them did appear as far east as New Jersey. This bird of now almost-annual occurrence appears to be an example of a major change in migration behavior in the species, since up until 20-30 years ago it was seldom reported out of its range.

The Philadelphia Vireo is normally a retiring species often overlooked in the fall migration, but this year it was noted widely as being especially numerous and unusual numbers penetrated as far west as the Pacific Coast. The House Finch continues its late autumn wandering which usually presages expansion of breeding range and was reported from Québec, and Minnesota in the north and Missouri and coastal North Carolina in the south. Bachman's Sparrow has in the last 20 years almost vanished from most of its northern range,

and this year there were three reports—a bird seen on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel island for the first Virginia record since 1968, one banded on Jekyll Island, Georgia, and one in Cameron Parish, Louisiana. There were numerous records of Clay-colored and Le Conte's sparrows in the East and Southeast, as well as a sprinkling of several eastern sparrow species on the West Coast. A Black-throated Sparrow was in Minnesota. Smith's Longspurs were more widely reported than usual.

CONCLUSION

WE HAVE NOW SCANNED some of the things that happened in this fall migration of 1980. What can we conclude? Was it a great migration, a good one, or a pediculous one? I suppose it all depends on your point of view. In the overall it was an interesting season, but then such can be said for every fall season.

It seems to have been obligatory for the Changing Seasons writers to politely

take the Regional Editors to task for failing to report trends for common species. As a long-time R.E. myself, I will refrain from such comment. Regional Editors can report only what their contributors report to them. Furthermore the vagaries of migration routes being what they are, how is one to judge the real status of any species from migration reports? I prefer to look long and enjoyably at the kaleidoscopic spectacle of fall migration, and not to worry too much about what it tells us about population trends.

We have seen then how these millions, or is it billions, of birds went south this autumn 1980. Hurricane *Allen* came a little early to influence the migration of small passerines although it nearly bisected the migration route across the Caribbean. But what other hazards do our birds face on this annual trip? Unlike the migrants to Africa they do not face an inhospitable landfall, nor do they face an assembly of predators such as the thousands of bird catchers in all circum-Mediterranean lands except Israel, or the Eleanora's Falcon which feeds its nestling young on southbound

migrants crossing the sea. Perhaps what they face more than anything else is a declining and a deteriorating winter habitat in tropical America. This aspect is just beginning to be explored, and I heartily recommend to all serious students of our migrants the recent publication, "*Migrant Birds in the Neotropics. Ecology, Behavior, Distribution and Conservation*," A. Keast and E.S. Morton (eds.), Smithsonian Institution, 1980, which was reviewed in the November, 1980, issue of *AB*.

And now a final word to the readers. Regional Editors sometimes get irate letters from contributors wondering why their prize records were omitted from the Regional Reports. This Changing Season Editor might be open to that sort of criticism from the various Regional Editors. Summarizing all this mass of data is essentially an impossible task, but there is one saving feature. It is all there in the 26 Regional Reports. **Read 'em!**

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Saw-whet Owl, Michigan City, Ind., Oct. 4, 1980. Photo/Peter Grube.