

# THE CHANGING SEASONS

## Turning the summer lull into productive and systematic searches

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**I**F ONE READS THE CHANGING SEASONS REPORTS OVER THE past few years, one expects that the most sage advice to be given is to change the name of the summer report to "The UNchanging Season." Robertson (AB 34:869) claims that the seasons don't change enough and that "the pedestrian road from twits to twites" is the only way to go in writing this continental survey. Some Regional Editors begin by commenting about yet "another uneventful summer season." The big-time extralimitals are hard to come by. It's too hot to bird most places, and there are all kinds of incessantly annoying creatures out there (mosquitoes, ticks, chiggers, and gnats) so as to make birders interested in venturing afield candidates for the "looney bin."

Fortunately, those bins are overcrowded, underfunded, and understaffed, for we can judge from what follows that the summer lull has lent itself to increasingly sophisticated and more systematic monitoring, censusing and atlasing of one of the most important dimensions of bird biology that birders can assess—namely, breeding distributions and breeding successes. This is not to overlook the facts that many birds in the more southerly latitudes are through breeding long before June 1, or that this also is a good season for shorebird mania. In addition, we still have unanswered questions concerning the migrations and wanderings of shorebirds and passerines that span the period, as the following pages adequately demonstrate.

This is my first attempt at writing a Changing Seasons report. While I was interested in generating something novel, I have come to the post-sophomoric realization that Robertson may be right. In fact, after drafting most of this

report, and comparing notes with previous authors of this section, I found the same general themes. There are really only four things one can do with the actual material: analyze, summarize, reorganize, and vacillate. The first is already too complex for a freshman like myself with an underdeveloped continental memory, nor do I yet have a concept worthy of investing gobs of time to organize for analysis all the material found in these pages (as others might). So what follows is my meager extraction of some common threads and open questions which hopefully span across the individual Regional Reports. While many of the themes share a sameness with that of previous authors, I hope that my comments of wisdom and naive ignorance (some of the inobvious obvious) both provide enlightened insight and some direction. I will let you be the judge.

Although I seldom first read the weather report in the paper as Paul Lehman does (AB 40:1174), the weather still seems like it should be the first twit. Interestingly or uninterestingly enough, much of the continent east of the Rocky Mountains, much of the Pacific Coast and also the Hawaiian Islands, had a hotter and drier season than normal. The Central Southern and Southern Great Plains regions and much of the West were more "normal." Alaska and the northern Rocky Mountains suffered extremes within their regions. Most Regional Editors commented on severe but brief downpours sometime during the season, particularly the downpour causing record floods along the Guadalupe River in central Texas, and the tornados in Edmonton, Alberta. Drier conditions and the timing of downpours, however, did not detract from the success of the

nesting season. Expected exceptions are nesting marsh birds, as in the southeast and the northern prairies. Flooding in the Southern Great Plains in June delayed successful nesting of marsh birds, and the wet extremes dipped waterbird production in the Mountain West. Shorebirding was poor in some inland regions because of the drought.

### The summer movers

Perhaps coincidentally with the weather, a number of north-central Regional Reports (and Arizona) noted earlier and better-than-normal migrations of boreal and northern deciduous forest passerines. Ron Weir commented that the "hot, dry weather over much of Ontario promoted early nesting, early fledging and early flocking." Record numbers of warblers were recorded in the Western Great Lakes during the last week in July, as was a flurry of early "fall" migrant passerines in North Dakota. Passerine migration also seemed more pronounced in Arizona this year during the latter part of July. Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were reported in southern Minnesota on July 25; also on July 19, 24, and 30 in the Northern Great Plains. Swainson's Thrushes made some exceptionally early showings, such as the one detected the night of July 5 over Peterborough, Ontario. Two more "migrant" Swainson's were also noted in Ontario July 25 and 26; and other mid and late July reports included an adult female at Baltimore, two in Chicago, and one each in North Dakota and in California. In North Dakota on July 11, observers noted 30 Tennessee Warblers, ten record-early Nashville Warblers, and a Bay-breasted Warbler. A Bay-breasted Warbler was found at Chicago July 16; Cape May Warblers were there July 26 and at Grand Forks July 24.

Conventional wisdom dubs these as record and near-record early fall dates. Many more such records are interspersed in the pages of the Regional Reports. With warm springs and good dry summer weather, do birds really get nesting over quicker and hurry south? Or, do dry conditions depress insect populations (and perhaps nesting success), causing birds to move south, or just move, earlier? Perhaps, but see below.

Late spring migrant landbirds also regularly appear in the Regional Reports, but the actual status of many of these birds muddles by mid to late June. In some cases, the situation appears clear where a species' normal migration pattern tails out into early June. These records, if plotted on a horizontal time scale, would be expected to show frequencies of the numbers of birds observed per day which fit a more-or-less normal bell-shaped curve for their migratory season. Lehman (AB 40:1177) lists Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Western Wood-Pewees, Alder and Olive-sided flycatchers, and Mourning Warblers, among others, in this late spring migrant category. I, and the authors of the pages that follow, would concur. But the conventional wisdom of early and late migrants may not be applicable in many other cases.

Most extralimital records of eastern wood warblers on the Pacific Coast tail out in mid-June, although some trail into the end of June, and a few surprises are found in July. These are generally considered displaced spring migrants through mid-June and vagrants beyond. But what would the male Blackpoll Warbler found in southern California on July 15 have been considered had it been observed in Maryland? A Canada Warbler in Iowa June 28 was "south of its expected range." Would it have been a migrant if first detected two weeks later? A fat Louisiana Waterthrush in Cameron Parish, Louisiana, July 5 was likely a fall mi-

grant But what of a Blackburnian Warbler in Georgia July 31, or a Tennessee Warbler (molting some primaries) banded at Powdermill, Pennsylvania, June 29!

I am perplexed by those Tennessee Warblers that appear in North Dakota as migrants(?) in early July. George Hall even commented that "as usual the first fall migrant" in the Appalachians was a Tennessee Warbler at Powdermill Here in Oklahoma, we normally don't see them until early September; from my information for New York, they generally arrive in late August. Why are they the first warbler migrants to appear in North Dakota or at Powdermill?

If we look at the records for this season chronologically, Tennessee Warblers were reported from Fort Morgan, Colorado (June 3), Vancouver (June 3-4), Farallon Islands (June 3-5), Fairhaven, California (June 8), Presque Isle, Ontario (June 12), Madison, Wisconsin (June 12), Portland, Oregon (June 17), Powdermill (June 29), Superior, Wisconsin (July 2-4), Grand Forks, North Dakota (30 on July 11), Point Pelee (July 15), and Chicago (2 on July 26). These records indicate a tailing out of spring migration by mid-June with scattered records beyond.

Should we classify all June records as late spring migrants, and July records as early fall migrants? Or are most mid-summer records really (a) vagrants, (b) laggards, (c) first-year wanderers, (d) displaced or (e) migratorially disoriented individuals detected at random times by observers, or even the (f) unsuccessful nesters or (g) unmateds still looking? Could we not have vagrants nearer the breeding grounds than California?

Since many passerines must coordinate their fall migration with a complete pre-basic molt (yes, every feather), it is difficult to imagine that whole populations of passerines can overlap these energetically competing tasks. Most adult neotropical migrants molt, then migrate; many flycatchers may migrate, then molt. Molt for many adult warblers and thrushes occurs in July and August; thus most migration for these species occurs in late August and September Louisiana Waterthrushes and Yellow Warblers may complete molt by the end of June, thus the potential for normally earlier migration in July. Many flycatchers molt later (September to January) after migrating. Although some individuals of boreal species may stagger molt with migration, these should be the exceptions for neotropical migrant passerines, or their movement and dispersal strategies different from the classical fall migration between nesting and wintering grounds. Possibilities listed above, other than early fall migration, may be more appropriate for many mid-summer records of neotropical migrants.

To illustrate this idea more clearly, most summers (until recently), I observed Bell's or White-eyed vireos, which nest locally in central Oklahoma, singing in the residential neighborhoods of Norman some time during June. This is well after their spring arrival here, but well before their fall departure. In my studies of Black-capped Vireos, I note that many unsuccessful or unmated territorial males appear and/or disappear for a day, week or month during the breeding season, mostly in June. Some that I have color-banded reappear within a mile or two, but others are not seen again. Are birds (of these and other species) that appear in June or July in non-breeding situations really migrating in the classical sense, or simply post-season wanderers looking for better luck? Is this post-season wandering simply an adaptive strategy to make a poor situation better by trying to locate a mate and/or better habitat?

My continental memory needs some time and experience to explore these possibilities, but the Tennessee Warblers in North Dakota are near some of their densest breeding areas in southwestern Ontario and southern Manitoba, and could easily fall in the latter categories above. Kibbe and

Boise (AB 37:987) warned atlas workers in New York State that Tennessee Warblers exhibited a high degree of wanderlust appearing well south of their breeding range during mid-July. Perhaps these are really migrants. The possibility that some were misidentified Yellow Warblers also needs to be considered, even for blocks of observations. In what plumages were they? What are these birds really doing? And how about all those early Swainson's Thrushes?

What may be useful in interpreting the status of many of these mid-summer records is the kind of age, sex, molt and plumage class information being requested for shorebirds by previous authors of the Changing Seasons report (Robertson, AB 34:874; Roberson, AB 36:951-952). Unfortunately, many of these classes are less obvious in passerines than in shorebirds, although a recent work—"Identification Guide to North American Passerines" by Pyle, Howell, Yunick and DeSante (1987)—may be useful to the more serious banders and field jocks alike.

### Systematic searches, surveys, and counts

I would agree with Kenn Kaufman (AB 38:992-993) that *American Birds* cannot track all species, common and uncommon, but rather should report the more unusual observations. *American Birds* does accumulate sorted impressions and miscellaneous data that often focus attention on certain species for which distributional patterns are changing. However, part of deciding what is unusual and what is changing is an accumulation of what is "normal," and the summer lull often attracts a healthy amount of this information for some focal species.

In addition, this information is being gathered in an increasingly regular, standardized and detailed manner, particularly on colonial nesting birds and many other water and shorebird species. Thus, the summer season provides an outlet in which many birders can contribute to the knowledge of distribution also useful to the conservation of birds. These quantified searches and counts help to scale the qualitative and too often nebulous comments of "doing well," "doing poorly," "in normal numbers," "on the rise," or "declining" (that we all tend to use) by allowing measurable comparison with the past. They also help assess and interpret other dimensions of bird movements, or at least help us to ask questions a little more specific and directional than: "Gee, I wonder what's going on?" However, all of these types of data should be standardized against effort, whenever possible. A comment such as, "Warbling Vireos are scarce," is much more meaningful when one knows that more than one woodlot on more than one day were searched.

It is important that Regional Editors continue to consider these types of census data important enough to publish. Regional Editors should also recognize that individuals outside of their regions cannot benefit from this information unless it is published. While some may comment on the sameness of reports from one year to the next, this is a compliment to a system of gathering information that develops a consistent base against which to determine and interpret developing patterns, or at least point the finger at problems that need more attention. This becomes very important in the conservation of all those birds we find so enriching to our lives. *American Birds*, for all the perceived flaws and inconsistencies of reporting, has still made a very significant contribution here.

Most commonly, censuses are done for colonial nesting species such as pelicans, cormorants, herons, egrets, ibises, storks, gulls, terns, and skimmers. Most coastal regions re-

port such surveys, and readers can skip among the Regional Reports to look up and compare information for species that interest them. This has been done for some focal species in this account. Other censuses involve waterfowl and gallinaceous birds, particularly in the Prairie Provinces and regions in the Rocky Mountains.

Some special habitats are being searched systematically, particularly when they are discrete relative to their surroundings. For example, censuses of grasslands in some parts of the northeast are being conducted to help detect populations of species considered in some jeopardy there, particularly Upland Sandpipers, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Henslow's Sparrows. Airports appear to be providing important habitat to the continued existence of these species in the Hudson-Delaware Region, and may need to be assessed in other northeastern regions.

Along this vein, George Hall reported that Upland Sandpipers appeared to be "thriving" in the Appalachian Region with four new stations noted this year in Pennsylvania. Grasshopper Sparrows are also apparently in good numbers there (as they were in most regions), and several new locations for Henslow's Sparrows were located on recovered strip mines in Pennsylvania, another habitat important for these local species. Southward expansion of Savannah Sparrows has also been linked with this habitat.

In the Midwest, Henslow's are being detected at a small collection of grassland sites throughout. Some colonies in North Carolina contained "dozens" of singing birds. Useful at these sites in the future are annual counts, and systematic and repeated censusing of sites with potential as few total birds (about 66 Henslow's for the Middlewestern Prairie Region covering about 5½ states) are actually being detected. Forty were at one site. The number and constancy of peripheral satellite groups away from the best sites often may reflect changing population status sooner than the main "colony" groupings where birds of declining species might be found until their last gasp. It is also important for observers to keep records on the number of suitable areas searched, even if no birds were found. Jerome Jackson commented on the need of searching the dwindling and developed Gulf Coastal marshes for Seaside Sparrows.

A number of Regional Reports contained peak counts for shorebirds, which help establish important movements and form a focal point for comparing the beginning and ending tailings of migrations. One day, an entire Changing Seasons report may be dedicated to analyzing such data across several years, but, for now, consider the following array of numbers and dates for Short-billed Dowitchers from the reports ordered chronologically: two plus from June 1-13; seven June 17-18; 5-10 on June 20; 250 on June 21 (Central Southern believed summering); 250 through June (Southern Pacific Coast believed summering); eight June 24; nine June 27; six July 1; 5-10 on July 5-6; 97 on July 10 (Northern Pacific Coast); three July 13; 75 on July 13 (Northern Great Plains); three July 14; one July 18; 552 July 20-21 (Middle Atlantic Coast); five July 24; one July 25. The dates sprinkled from mid-June on, with peak dates on July 10 (West Coast); July 13 (Central), and July 20-21 (East Coast) implicate early migration for this species. Also note some concentrations of apparently summering birds.

As expected—no big news (Roberson 36:949)! But, are the records verifying an assumption, or are assumptions directing identifications? Interestingly, Hugh Kingery reported simply dowitchers in late June (without specifying species) in the Mountain West. Roberson questioned Kingery for listing these as Long-billeds earlier, implying that Kingery was in error. However, Short-billeds are rare in the Southern Great Plains. Mostly juveniles are identified in late August and early September. Late June and July

records for Oklahoma, including numerous collected specimens, are almost entirely Long-billed (no help for Hugh there). Some early Long-billeds were reported from the Pacific Coast June 21 and 30, but were all 75 dowitchers at Grand Forks July 13 Short-billeds?

Observers on the Pacific Coast now also report the first seasonal occurrences for juveniles of a number of species. Several regions commented that shorebirds arrived early this summer by a week or more. Gibson, Tobish, and Isleib provided particularly interesting details from Alaska. Readers have much to glean from these accounts, and may want to read species sections across all regions.

Another form of censusing is standardized counts (as per mile, or per stop) which provide ratios of detections between related species. Consider the detections of Chuck-will's-widows and Whip-poor-wills made by Ben and Lula Coffey in the Central Southern report. These types of counts are simple, yet can provide a quantitative index for future analyses of changes in populations. Much of this is already going on. To those observers and others, enjoy the counts found in the pages of this issue and continue on. Consider what could be done for Golden-winged and Blue-winged warblers, or neotropical migrant species of forest interior versus edge.

Ratios of age and sex classes and their changing patterns can also be enlightening, particularly in the summer season, as they reflect on reproductive success. However, I found little along this vein in the Regional Reports. Perhaps, there is just not enough space for such detail, nor can such distinctions be made regularly enough in most cases. However, a number of regions reported percentages for the nesting successes of species such as Ospreys and Bald Eagles, among others.

### Big-time extralimitals and first nestings

With fewer people afield during the summer months, and fewer birds moving past them, the probabilities of the rarest decline. Many people may not realize that the number of rare birds they observe is a direct statistical function of the number of birds they identify correctly. The rare and rarest events are likely to occur in the same frequencies—the only variable of concern is the frequency of identifiable birds encountered. Thus the summer season has just as much chance of producing a real “score” as any other season, except that birds are busy nesting, and not as many birds move past you. However, note that if you beat these odds regularly, you are probably “hokey.”

While rare-bird finding has limited significance to elucidating significant biological events, it is the most fun for many birders, generates substantial interest, and sharpens birders so that we data maulers can also get more reliable information on the other stuff while we drool. And, the summer season did have its fair share of what I call “zootic birds.”

The best (I fear being judgmental here) was the first United States record for Great Black-Hawk titillatingly hidden in the Arizona report. But there are others. How about Magnificent Hummingbirds in Minnesota and Colorado; Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher in Nevada; Fan-tailed Warbler and Yellow Grosbeak in Arizona; Rufous-backed Robin in New Mexico; *Cuculus* sp. and Gray-tailed Tattler in Alaska; Terek Sandpipers in Alaska and British Columbia, and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in Saskatchewan? Could the first Hudsonian Godwit for Hawaii have been “right-winged?” Most head southeast of their breeding grounds over the Atlantic Ocean in the fall (thus “left-winged” when

looking south—see DeSante's discourse with fall warbler migrants on the Pacific Coast). There were also Rufous-necked Stints in Delaware and California, White-winged Terns in Quebec, New York, and Delaware, a California Gull in Illinois, and five Yellow Rails in Oregon. Could the Sandwich Tern in Michigan have been the same bird present at Duluth last year? A Berylline Hummingbird banded at Ramsey Canyon showed up in Madera Canyon. A suspected Lesser Nighthawk was found dead in Colorado (Colorado's potential second); and a Common Nighthawk observed in Hawaii was the first caprimulgid of any kind for that state! Also worthy of mention in this section are a Black-capped Petrel off New Jersey, King Eider in British Columbia, a Black-legged Kittiwake in South Dakota, Varied Thrush in Ontario, and Black-throated Gray Warbler in the Prairie Provinces.

Among the first state and provincial nesting records, some seemed overdue; for example, the first confirmed nesting record of Henslow's Sparrows for Iowa. Ridgway (1889, *The Ornithology of Illinois*, Vol. 1.) wrote of Henslow's being very common in Illinois during pre-settlement times. Also expected were Western Kingbird in Ontario and Chestnut-sided Warbler in Delaware. Other first nestings, listed phylogenetically, included Clark's Grebe in South Dakota, Brown Pelican in both Maryland and Virginia, Turkey Vulture in Quebec, Mississippi Kite in Virginia, Snowy Plover in Saskatchewan (noted as first successful nesting, first attempted nesting was last year), Black-necked Stilts in Maryland and Saskatchewan, Herring Gull in Wyoming (the first documented), Forster's Tern in South Carolina, Least Terns in District of Columbia (on a building top, no less) and Montana, Monk Parakeet in Quebec, Yellow-rumped Warbler in West Virginia, Black-throated Sparrow in Washington, Henslow's Sparrow in Oklahoma, and House Finch in North Dakota. Some of these are destined to be the first of ensuing range extensions. Of significance here was also the first Atlantic Coast nesting of Roseate Spoonbill in this century, which came from Florida.

### Pushers and probers along the edges

House Finches have been ever so slowly extending their ranges into mid-continent from the west since the early part of this century, but the recent exponential growth of the eastern populations is a phenomenon still worthy of note. This year extensions included observations on the coastal plain of North Carolina, the Bruce Peninsula in Ontario, six new counties in Wisconsin, and a number of locales in Iowa. Their numbers are increasing in the Appalachians, northern and central Illinois, and Memphis, Tennessee, but they are still found very sparingly in the Gulf States. The source of birds observed in eastern Montana is currently being questioned (eastern or western origin?)

Gadwalls seem to be pushing out in all directions. Their numbers were considered high in Ontario. After invading a few decades ago, it has become the most common breeding duck in some New Jersey marshes. Farther to the northeast, it is establishing itself on Madeleine Island, Quebec. To the southwest, it was reported nesting in Texas and several localities in New Mexico. To the west and north, it was found nesting at the mouth of the Columbia River, and Anchorage, Alaska, had its first breeding record.

Other species fingering onto newer turf included Clay-colored Sparrows expanding eastward into Quebec, Willow Flycatchers northward in Quebec and the Prairie Provinces, Yellow-throated Warblers to northwestern Pennsylvania and the Middlewestern Prairie Regions, California

Gull on the northern plains, and Turkey Vultures northward across eastern and central Canada. Expanding southward are species like Tree and Barn swallows, Gray Catbird, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak into the Gulf States, Song Sparrow into Tennessee, Prairie Warblers in Florida, and Golden-crowned Kinglets downslope in the Appalachians. To be determined are the real limits of ranges of secretive species such as the LeConte's Sparrow in eastern Canada, and Yellow Rail in Oregon. In addition, Boreal Owls are being discovered as far south as New Mexico.

Caspian Terns are increasing on the Pacific Coast, and moving northward in Alaska. Black-necked Stilts seemed to be mentioned in most Regional Reports, as were Cooper's Hawks. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers also seemed to be more widespread than their limited Southern Great Plains distribution would imply.

### Endangered and blue-listed species

Bad news from the Florida Region: "The last 'pure' Dusky Seaside Sparrow died on June 16, 1987." Five Dusky X Scott's crosses remain. It took 15 years to go from "common in restricted habitats" to none. Kirtland's Warblers are down 20% from 1986 to 167 pairs.

The reports have always been subjectively mixed on the Black-capped Vireo. It is another species still locally common in restricted habitats. For this season, the reports appeared positive with 35 pairs reported at one locale in Oklahoma, and good reports from the Austin region and Kickapoo State Park, Texas. But this underscores a problem with reporting—namely what is meant by "doing well," or the significance of finding one or two good local pockets? Being personally involved with the vireo, I can say that in two–three years, it will likely be gone from all but that one county in Oklahoma (and I do hope I am wrong), and that its status in north-central Texas is unknown, but probably as dismal. Its status on the Edward's Plateau in south-central Texas is somewhat better than dismal, but still uncertain. To date, these data strongly suggested listing as Endangered, which happened on October 6, 1987. More now can be done for the species, but, in general, the Endangered Species Program has been a seriously underfunded success story.

On the up side for Endangered Species, Bald Eagles are "doing well." What does that really mean? Well, back to five active nests, two successful in the Hudson-Delaware Region with another 12 eagles hatched; in Maryland and Virginia, the best breeding success in modern history with 157 nests producing 227 young (wow!); high eagle counts continued at a roost in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region (but publicity disturbing); 72% of 391 active nests were successful in Florida with a ten-year average of 1.02 birds per nest; a large number of sightings in the Appalachians; the bird slowly improving in Ohio, three pairs nested in Missouri, two in Iowa and a plus in Kentucky; nine young from ten nests in Tennessee; seven of eight nests raised young in Idaho; Yellowstone fledging 13 young—best in recent years. The reports for Snail Kites, Peregrine Falcons, and Brown Pelicans are equally encouraging. The Regional Reports are worth searching for details of these species.

Wood Stork numbers were down south of Lake Okechobee in Florida, but fared well at the two known colonies in South Carolina. More observations in the central South may imply poorer breeding and increased post-season wanderings, as well as better breeding—here plumage and age class information could be useful again.

Only two comments on Red-cockaded Woodpeckers is no news good news, or is my ignorance forgetting that they have finished nesting by now and I should look in the spring report?

Piping Plovers are being well-reported. Although in general, the news is not very good. They continue to become more local, are slipping and/or are being disturbed by human recreational competition along the East Coast. Madeleine Island in Quebec reported numbers stable with earlier censuses, and Long Island's populations looked better. Reports from Virginia's barrier beaches and Assateague Island were good. Those in New Jersey and Delaware, however, were inundated by beach-goers. In addition, only nine pairs were reported from Ontario, and three pairs in western Iowa. Production was poor in Saskatchewan. One pair apparently nested in the Oklahoma Panhandle.

Interior Least Tern numbers reported were down in western Iowa and Kansas. Production was good in Oklahoma and along the lower Mississippi River, and bad along the Gulf Coast. Scattered records included some in New Mexico and six pairs at Colorado's only known breeding site.

American Bitterns continued to receive negative or no comment in the Regional Reports. News of Least Bitterns, however, is good in many regions. Logging of old-growth continues to impact Spotted Owls, and only a few pairs may be left in British Columbia (see AB 41:3:361–367). The downward trend continues for Golden-winged Warblers east of the Hudson River, perhaps losing in competition with Blue-winged, but Golden-winged are doing better in the Appalachians. Bell's Vireos are down in northern Texas, perhaps to very low levels. Swainson's Hawks had a bad year in the Prairie Provinces, but Ferruginous Hawks were up in Saskatchewan. Baird's Sparrows did well in the Northern Great Plains. Roseate Terns fared well in Quebec, and are holding up well on Long Island with 800–1000 on Great Gull Island and 100–125 on Gardiner's Island (up!) The trends for Loggerhead Shrikes, and bluebirds of all species continued to be up in most areas. On the other hand, Wood Thrushes continued a downward trend in the southeast and the Appalachians.

### Cowbirds

An increasingly nagging problem continues with cowbirds, although the perception of the bit by bit impacts is not being well-reported. Brown-headed Cowbirds are expanding southward in Florida. In addition, Bronzed Cowbirds are also appearing in new localities in Louisiana, New Mexico, and southern California. Even another species of cowbird, the Shiny Cowbird, is appearing in Florida (see Smith and Sprunt AB 41:3). When investigated, negative impacts are invariably detected, as in past reports to *American Birds*. This year, Willow Flycatchers, now Endangered in southern California, are being impacted by cowbird nest parasitism. Bronzed Cowbirds are affecting oriole species, also in southern California.

The solutions are unclear. Targeting local breeding populations of cowbirds is more or less effective for protecting these small pockets of Endangered Species such as the Least Bell's and Black-capped vireos. However, this is time intensive, and benefits only a small segment of the total population. More comprehensive assessments of the total problem and real impacts of cowbirds, and potential solutions still need to be made. Contributors to *American Birds* are again in a position to provide valuable information on these cowbird species during all seasons.

## Potpourri

Impressive were 10,000 Lesser Yellowlegs at Clark Lake, Illinois. Even more so were 51,000 American Avocets at Stillwater, Nevada, with about 6300 Black-necked Stilts. And, I would not have minded seeing a meager 116 Black-capped Petrels offshore from North Carolina.

White-winged Crossbills made a good show in Ontario, northern Great Lakes, central Manitoba, and Alaska. One was also observed in North Dakota July 28.

The extent of human interference at a number of heron and waterbird colonies is sobering. Hundreds of nests of Double-crested Cormorants were believed destroyed by humans in Michigan. Some Brown Pelican colonies in Texas were molested by human intruders, possibly irate guide fisherman. And sadly, a cultural and conservation dilemma—egging by Vietnamese refugees—is the most se-

rious threat facing rookery islands on the central coast of Texas.

On the lighter side, Elizabeth Woodford of Burlington, New Jersey, may have answered an age-old question: How many straight "whip-poor-wills" can a Whip-poor-will "whip-poor-will" if a Whip-poor-will could "whip-poor-will" "whip-poor-wills"? The answer is 2078 consecutive "whips!" However, this still leaves unanswered the question of how many widows' wills could a Chuck-will's-widow will if a Chuck-will's-widow could will widows' wills? If the widows are poor, the answer may be easier.

My thanks to Eileen Grzybowski and William Radke for their helpful comments in improving this Changing Seasons report.

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### Abbreviations Frequently Used in Regional Reports

ad: adult, Am.: American, c.: central, C: Celsius, CBC: Christmas Bird Count, Cr.: Creek, Com.: Common, Co.: County, Cos.: Counties, *et al.*: and others, E.: Eastern (bird name), Eur.: European, Eurasian, F: Fahrenheit, *fide*: reported by, F.&W.S.: Fish & Wildlife Service, Ft.: Fort, imm.: immature, I.: Island, Is.: Islands, Isles, Jct.: Junction, juv.: juvenile, L.: Lake, m.ob.: many observers, Mt.: Mountain, Mts.: Mountains, N.F.: National Forest, N.M.: National Monument, N.P.: National Park, N.W.R.: Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, N.: Northern (bird name), Par.: Parish, Pen.: Peninsula, P.P.: Provincial Park, Pt.: Point, not Port, Ref.: Refuge, Res.:

Reservoir, not Reservation, R.: River, S.P.: State Park, sp.: species, spp.: species plural, ssp.: subspecies, Twp.: Township, W.: Western (bird name), W.M.A.: Wildlife Management Area, v.o.: various observers, N,S,W,E,: direction of motion, n., s., w., e.,: direction of location, >: more than, <: fewer than, ±: approximately, or estimated number, ♂: male, ♀: female, ♂: imm. or female, \*: specimen, ph.: photographed, †: documented, ft: feet, mi: miles, m: meters, km: kilometers, date with a + (*e.g.*, Mar. 4 +): recorded beyond that date. Editors may also abbreviate often-cited locations or organizations.

Anyone who wishes to contribute their bird observations to the Regional Reports must have their information and/or photographs to the Regional Editor as soon after the season ends as possible.

Regional Editors are on tight deadlines and unless material is submitted to them in a timely fashion, it will not be included in the Regional Reports.

**Winter Season: December 1–February 28**  
**Spring Season: March 1–May 31**  
**Summer Season: June 1–July 31**  
**Fall Season: August 1–November 30**