

# THE CLEVELAND BIRD CALENDAR

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## SUMMARY OF WEATHER CONDITIONS

From U. S. Weather Bureau Reports (Cleveland Hopkins Airport)

- September - Sunny and warm. Precipitation was below normal, with most of it falling on the 1st, 6th, and 25th.
- October - Average temperature of 56.8° was 2.4° above normal. Lowest reading was 36° on the 17th and 23rd. Total rainfall, which was well scattered through the month, was 2.15 inches.
- November - Temperature and precipitation averaged slightly above normal, but almost half of the rainfall occurred on the 23rd. Snowfall totaled about one inch, compared to normal November snowfall of 6.5 inches. The minimum temperature was 24° on the 30th.

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All records, observations, and comments should be sent to Donald L. Newman, 14714 Superior Road, Cleveland 18, Ohio.

## COMMENT ON THE SEASON

Swans and Geese. Migration of Whistling Swans through the Cleveland region was apparently confined to just a few days in early November, at the time that a cold front was moving through the central states. The first flight reported consisted of about 75 birds traveling southeast over Kirtland Hills Village, Lake County, on November 2 (Bole, Jr.). Another flight of approximately 75 birds was seen at Willoughby Hills on November 4. (Skaggs), and on that same date a flock of 130 on Lake Erie off Lakewood Park (Klamm). The final record was on November 5, when 23 birds were counted as they flew east along the Cleveland lakefront (Surman, Jr.).

On the Sherwin Pond in Waite Hill the number of Canada Geese gradually increased from about 150 on September 20 to about 500 on October 29 (Sherwin). Yet there were just three reports of migrating flocks: (i) coincident with the passage of a cold front, a band of seven flying over Clague Park on October 14 (Klamm) and (2) a group of 50 or more over Rocky River Reservation on October 15 (Ackermann); (3) in the period November 5-11, when large flights of geese were heard over Lake County, "with Canadas predominating" (Bole, Jr.).

Diving Ducks. This autumn was a very poor one for diving ducks along the Cleveland lakefront. Mild weather which encouraged boating and fishing may have been accountable in part for the small numbers of ducks observed, but the chief explanation is undoubtedly that the lack of ducks here simply reflected the general decline of population resulting from a succession of disastrous breeding seasons.

Scaup, Common Goldeneye, and Bufflehead were fairly numerous on November 4 and 5, which was the peak period for the Red-breasted Merganser - the only diving duck recorded in truly large numbers. On November 4, some 5,000 of these mergansers occurred off Lakewood Park, and an estimated 3,000 were there on the 5th (Klamm). During November all three species of scoters were observed on the Cleveland lakefront, though never more than one bird of each species.

Again this autumn the Ruddy Duck was tragically scarce. A "raft" of 62 birds seen on November 11 was the largest number reported. By comparison, on November 5, 1955, an estimated 3,000 birds were observed on Lake Erie between Lakewood and Edgewater Parks.

Gulls and Terns Maximum numbers of gulls and terns on the Cleveland lakefront were recorded in the period September 2-4. On the 3rd some 1,300 Black Terns were seen along the lake between White City and Edgewater Park, while on the 4th the following figures were reported for the lakefront between White City and Lakewood Park: 1,700 Herring Gulls, 3,800 Ring-billed Gulls, 5,800 Bonaparte's Gulls, more than 1,500 Common Terns, and 950 Black Terns (Klamm).

Nighthawks and Swifts. The only sizable band of Common Nighthawks reported consisted of about 140 birds which had just taken off from a rooftop in Lakewood and were moving in a southwesterly direction at 6:45 p.m. on September 2 (Klamm). A scattered few birds were observed to about September 17, and there were two records for October including the appearance of three Common Nighthawks in the evening over Lakewood on the unusually late date of October 12 (Baum). Chimney Swifts occurred commonly during September and through October 8. The final record for the autumn was of a "remarkable flight" of 500 or more birds over Kirtland Hills Village on October 16 (Bole, Jr.).

Red-breasted Nuthatch. From mid-September to about October 22, a large influx of Red-breasted Nuthatches occurred. These birds were especially abundant in the period October 3-8. A small number were observed in November. To show how greatly the numbers of this species vary from autumn to autumn, the following are figures for selected autumn quarters (the first figure represents the total number of records, and the figure in parentheses the total number of birds): 1961, 54(161); 1960, 7(4); 1956, 3(7); 1957, 58(126); 1958, none.

Starlings and Blackbirds. A spectacular movement of more than 50,000 birds - Starlings, Redwinged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, a few Brown-headed Cowbirds, and a large number of Rusty Blackbirds - was witnessed on October 22 at Mogadore Reservoir where "at times they were so thick they looked like smoke" (Staiger). Seemingly, some of these birds remained in that area because about 10,000 -Starlings predominating - were seen there on November 24 (DeSante).

In Elyria Township, Lorain County, on November 26, a mixed flock of 2,000 or more Starlings and Brown-headed Cowbirds moved across the fields, blackening the ground and the sky, too, whenever they flew. A portion of the flock was always in the air. Most of the Cowbirds, which comprised about half the flock, were males (P. Johnson).

Evening Grosbeaks. In an abundance probably unequaled in the past ten years, Evening Grosbeaks invaded the Cleveland region in about mid-October. Flocks, both large and small, were reported thereafter from throughout the region. The first report from east of the Cuyahoga River was of 12 birds in Mentor on October 11 (Mrs. G. L. Hutchinson fide Booth). For the area west of the Cuyahoga River, the first report was of six birds feeding in box elder trees in the Rocky River Reservation on October 16 (A. Shrock fide Wallin). Most of the October records came from localities on or only a few miles from Lake Erie, but during November the grosbeaks moved inland and flocks were observed in Solon, Berea, Broadview Heights, and Chardon.

Major Movements of Woodpeckers and Passerines. As is typical in the autumn migration, the flow of small birds through the region in September and most of October was fairly constant though subject of course to great surges. During these two months there were three major periods of migratory movement, each of which will be described below.

September 15-24 - At Waite Hill, where careful daily observations were made, there was a "tremendous flow of birds in the woods" on September 15, after a day of rain and wind and the passage of a cool air mass. Scarlet Tanagers, Wood Thrushes, and Empidonax flycatchers were abundant; House Wrens "were plentiful". Among the warblers, the Bay-breasted was most numerous followed by the Magnolia and Wilson's. On September 18, an "extremely heavy flow of Bay-breasted Warblers" was noted. Then on September 22, "the most sustained all-day migration in my experience" occurred, the Bay-breasted, Magnolia, and Black-throated Green Warblers predominating. Finally, on September 23, the migration slackened although Magnolia and Bay-breasted Warblers continued to pass through in large numbers (Flanigan).

Elsewhere in the region during the September 15-24 period, 15 species of warblers were recorded on September 17 in the Rocky River Reservation where they "went through in numbers" (Ackermann). At Forest Hill Park, Cleveland Heights, on September 17 between 9:00 and 9:30 a.m., many successive bands of vireos and warblers sped through the treetops, scarcely pausing to feed (Newman). The Cape May and the Black-throated Blue Warblers were especially abundant in this period.

October 3-8 - Small birds in phenomenal numbers appeared during these six days, particularly on the 3rd and 14th. Some typical comments of observers were these:

October 3, in Lorain - "more Brown Creepers in migration than in any previous migration I can recall. In one lawn area with 11 medium-sized elm trees . . . I observed over 100 Brown Creepers" (Lebold).

October 4, in Akron - "a red letter day . . . many warblers . . . lots of Myrtles" (Staiger).

October 4, in the Rocky River Valley - "a terrific day . . . birds were everywhere . . . seven species of warblers . . . White-throats and juncos thick", and on October 6, "Myrtle Warblers everywhere" (Ackermann).

October 6, in Waite Hill - "Myrtle Warblers came through field of goldenrod around eleven o'clock in steady stream, . . . I watched them passing for an hour" (Flanigan).

In the period October 3-8, the following species were present in extraordinary abundance: Yellow-shafted Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Golden- and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Myrtle and Palm Warblers., and White-throated Sparrow. A striking index of the abundance of certain of these species, and of others, too, is found in a census taken between 10:00 and 11:00 a.m. on October 4 in downtown Cleveland in the vicinity of the Board of Education Building, City Hall, and County Courthouse. In this area, comprising perhaps three or four acres, 21 species of migrants were observed, among which were six

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers feeding on haws, 40 brown Creepers, 25 Winter Wrens, 10 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 5 Hermit Thrushes, 4 Yellowthroats, and 200 White throated Sparrows (Isard and Kason).

October 20-22 - A cool air flow out of Canada brought with it another migratory wave consisting principally of Brown Creepers, both kinglets, White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows, Tree Sparrows, and Slate-colored Juncos.

Yearly Summary. In the BIRD CALENDAR year now ended, that is, from December 1, 1960 to November 30, 1961, 250 species were reported within the Cleveland region. In the previous year 247 species were reported. There were no records for the Common Egret and the Short-billed Marsh Wren.

New Occurrence Dates. For annotation in "Birds of the Cleveland Region" are the following new latest fall dates of occurrence:

Green Heron (1) - November 25, Lake Rockwell (Wiley and DeSante)

Chestnut-sided Warbler (1) - October 22, Rocky River Reservation  
(Stasko)

Mourning Warbler (1) - October 22, Rocky River Reservation (Stasko)

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (3) - October 29, Warrensville Farms (Knight)

#### NOTEWORTHY RECORDS

Red-throated Loon - One was seen on November 5 at Lake Rockwell (Staiger).

Red-necked Grebe - At Summit Lake in the central portion of Akron, a bird was recorded on November 23, which is the only regional record in the past two years (DeSante).

Blue Goose - A single bird in the company of a Canada Goose, both of which were unusually approachable, remained on the Cleveland lake-front at White City for at least four days: October 22-25 (Carrothers and Schwab).

Peregrine Falcon - For a period of about one week (recorded on October 6; 7, and 14), an immature bird, "with distinctive 'mustaches' in an extensively white head", frequented Lakewood Park (Klamm).

Whimbrel - On the morning of September 30, this rare migrant was feeding in the grassy areas at Burke Lakefront Airport (Klamm).

White-rumped Sandpiper - At Nimisila Reservoir, where a great many shorebirds occurred during September, two White-rumps were observed on September 17 and one on the 20th and 21st (DeSante and Staiger). One bird was also recorded there on October 8 (DeSante).

Stilt Sandpiper - On September 17, 27, and 30, a single bird was sighted at Nimisila Reservoir (DeSante).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper - A solitary individual, unaccompanied by any other shorebirds, was seen at Burke Lakefront Airport on September 17 (Carrothers).

Marbled Godwit - First seen at Nimisila Reservoir on September 4 (Wiley), this large shorebird, "in perfect plumage", remained at least until September 21, when it was last recorded (DeSante). Between these dates it was seen a number of times by several observers. This is the third record of occurrence in the Cleveland region. The only previous record in this century is also from Nimisila Reservoir where two birds were reported for a period of ten days in the autumn of 1955. It is interesting to note that not far outside our region to the east, at Walnut Beach, Ashtabula, two birds occurred on September 16, 1961 (Savage).

Northern Phalarope - On October 7 and 8, a single individual in winter plumage was feeding at the pond in Clague Park in association with Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs (Klamm). It remained through October 14. (Stasko).

Franklin's Gull - An adult bird was studied for some time, both on the beach and in the air, at White City on the Cleveland lakefront on September 3, where it mingled with a large gathering of Bonaparte's Gulls (Klamm). The most recent prior autumn record was in November 1958.

Forster's Tern - At Burke Lakefront Airport one bird was recorded on September 3, 4, 10, and 16 (Klamm). At White City at least two birds (there were probably more) were noted on September 4, and one was there on September 16 and on October 7 (Carrothers).

Saw-whet Owl - A willow tree in the backyard of a residence in Elyria was the resting place of this bird for a considerable time on November 12, affording many members of the Elyria Audubon Society an opportunity to observe it (P. Johnson).

Mockingbird - Late in the morning of September 23, this rare visitor was watched for several minutes as it fidgeted about in a bush at Holden Arboretum (Booth).

Northern Shrike - This winter visitor perched briefly in a leafless oak tree in the Girl Scout Camp area of Rocky River Reservation on November 26 and then flew out of sight (Stasko).

Prairie Warbler - All of the spring records of this rare migrant have come from areas east of Cleveland. Yet, with one exception, all of our autumn records, which are much fewer, have come from west of Cleveland - in the Rocky River Valley. This autumn one bird was recorded in the valley on September 17 and 18, and two birds on September 21 and 27; this last is a new latest occurrence date (Ackermann).

Western Meadowlark - After August 19, 1961, when three birds were identified at Burke Lakefront Airport where this species was present from about mid-March, none was observed until September 24, when a singing bird was found there. On September 30 and on October 7, three birds, identified by song or call note, were observed feeding together. Finally, on October 15, which was the last date of occurrence, four birds were present in two pairs with one bird of each pair singing. Sometimes the four fed together, sometimes as separate pairs (Klamm).

From a Neighboring Locality Walnut Beach, Ashtabula - one Wilson's Phalarope, October 1 (Jon Ahlquist fide Savage); one Parasitic Jaeger September 9 (Joe Grom fide Savage); one Laughing Gull September 29 (Savage).

#### FIELD NOTES

Blackbird Roost in Mentor Village. On the evening of August 26, 1961 and again on September 5, my husband and I spent the hour between eight and nine o'clock, or a little later, at the home of Florence and Percy White located on Mentor Avenue (Route 20) in Mentor Village, where we were astonished to have the noise of passing traffic blotted out by the incessant vocalizations of Starlings and Common Grackles coming to roost in the great maples, hemlocks, and walnut trees around the house. These birds had been roosting there nightly since about August 21, according to the Whites.

From 6:00 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. on September 6, I made a tour of the roosting area. The big trees around the Whites' house and around the motel across the street, as well as the smaller dense-crowned maples on the side street, were alive with Starlings and Common Grackles. Disturbed not at all by passing cars or by a newspaper boy on his bike, the birds became restless and rose from the tops of the trees as I walked below, but they soon returned to settle back or move to adjoining trees to roost.

At 6:45 a.m. I was in front of Whites' when the first great loose mess of birds, swirling like a swarm of mosquitoes, took off for the southeast. For 20 minutes the remaining birds were restless and moved higher in the trees or perched in a line of spruce to the north. Again, at 7:05 a.m. a huge mass departed, this time toward the northwest. As I walked back down Case Avenue, a side street off of Mentor Avenue, I watched the chattering birds there fly out toward the northwest. At 7:20 a.m. another and the final big flight took off from the trees on both sides of Mentor Avenue. By 7:30 a.m. roosting trees in the area were practically bare of birds, and the tremendous din had ceased. Droppings, feathers, and one dead bird remained as evidence of the spectacle., which involved an estimated 10,000 birds. - KAY F. BOOTH

Purple Martins in Migration. At 7:15 p.m. on September 11., when I visited the Sheffield lake Village Park at the intersection of Routes 301, 6, and 2, I noted large numbers of Purple Martins moving from east to west along the Lake Erie shore in a front approximately one-half mile wide centered on the shore. Several counts in the next 30 minutes yielded 150 to 200 birds per minute. The flight continued at this rate until 7:50 p.m. when it ceased abruptly except for a few stragglers in the next ten minutes. I do not know at what time this flight started but during the 35 minutes I watched, approximately 6,000 Purple Martins passed overhead. The weather at the time was fair and warm with substantially clear skies overhead but a heavy overcast in the west. - ROBERT J. MORSE

Hummingbird Bathes in Dew. As I started out on our customary walk through our property in Waite Hill at about 8:00 am. on September 18, I saw that a heavy dew covered every tree and bush and blade of grass. Shortly I heard a squeaking sound repeated again and again. Looking about I discovered a female Ruby-throated Hummingbird taking a bath in the large dewdrops on the leaves of a tulip tree that was about six feet high. She would flatten her body and outspread wings against the leaf and would twist her body and head from side to side. Then she would draw herself up, shake out her feathers, and move to another leaf where she repeated the performance. In each leaf she visited she went through the same motions as those of a bird in a bird bath. After about five minutes of bathing, she flew to a twist of grapevine where she spent another five minutes preening and grooming all her feathers meticulously - fluffing them and ruffling them in the sunlight. Several times during this grooming activity she thrust her long bill into one of the little curled-up tendrils on the grapevine. All the while she continued to utter the squeaking cry. - ANNETTE B. FLANIGAN

Warbler's (?) Depart in Early Evening. During the late afternoon of September 16, I observed loose flocks of warblers in the extensive woods bordering the large parking lot of the new Zayre's Department Store in Warrensville Heights. As darkness fell, huge searchlights were put into operation in the parking lot as part of the celebration of the opening of this new store. Shortly after the searchlights were turned on, I saw in the beams of light a number of small birds, possibly warbler's, as they left the adjacent woods and flew over the parking lot, quickly gaining altitude. In all, I saw about a dozen birds in a period of 11 minutes, but only one or two at any one time; and in the following 15 minutes none at all were observed, - CHARLES H. KNIGHT