

West-bound hawk migration was very poor this fall. Instead of flights of hundreds of birds that we usually see, there were only two very small flights -- 19 birds on September 25 and 10 birds on October 5 -- all of them Red-shouldered Hawks. They were seen here before noon on both days and undoubtedly crossed southern Alabama on the same days. There has been a notable flight of Western Kingbirds -- 10 birds yesterday, November 5, and 12 birds today, November 6. They certainly came to us after having crossed southern Alabama, and therefore may be of interest to you.

Francis M. Weston  
2006 E. Jordon St.  
Pensacola, Fla.

Editor's Note: To better trace flights of migrants which come down Alabama's great river system, cooperation was requested of our fine birders in Pensacola and the Mississippi coast. Large flights of geese and ducks reach our Gulf coast and finding little food and safety move either eastward to St. Marks Refuge or westward to Louisiana. Our neighbors can assist by checking these coastal movements.

likewise, these observers can alert us of western migrants, as was the case of a flight of Western Kingbirds. On October 30, Western Kingbirds were seen near Pascagoula. On November 1 eight W. Kingbirds were checked in one area on Dauphin Is. and on November 5th, ten Western Kings - presumably the same group - were reported in Pensacola, Fla. Thank you good neighbors!)

\* \* \* \* \*

1963 A.O.S. dues are due January 1st. Dues paid by new members joining at, or since, our October Fall meeting will be considered as 1963 dues.

\* \* \* \* \*

Did you secure a new A.O.S. member last year?

\* \* \* \* \*

### OBSERVATIONS OF A BLACKBIRD ROOST

Of special interest was a blackbird roost, in an area of bamboo study plots, with an estimated 800,000 individuals. The composition of the group using this roosting area was made by carefully observing the smaller groups of birds as they came into the roosting area, determining the composition of these groups and then arriving at a total by counting the number of groups that came in to roost. It was a carefully made estimation, not just a guess.

On January 25 through 29, two Fish and Wildlife Service biologists, Robert T. Mitchell and Don Frankhauser, who are part of the group of biologists currently studying the blackbird depredation problem, set up their trap-net in the roost area and trapped and banded a portion of the roosting population. Over the several day period, more than nine thousand birds were captured and of these 4,108 were banded. Of those caught: 6,505 were Starlings, 152 Redwinged Blackbirds, 1,650 Brown-headed Cowbirds, 733 Grackles and 408 Rusty Blackbirds. Starlings and cowbirds are apparently most greatly attracted by the lights in the night-operated trap-net and the capture figures bear this out. Thus even though a pretrapping estimate indicated a large number of Redwinged Blackbirds present, only 152 were captured.

From the numbers captured, banded, and recaptured, an index to the total population was computed. This indicated that the population contained 252,119 Starlings, 3,672 Redwinged Blackbirds, 613,608 B.-h. Cowbirds, 104,600 Common Grackles and 20,210 Rusty Blackbirds: a total of 974,209 individuals.

The difference between the estimates and those from the trapping and banding figures shows considerable variation for the Starling, Cowbird, and Redwinged Blackbird populations. These may be explained by several factors. The difference in time, while not great, is enough for a small flock composition variation. The placement of the trap-net might have been such that it was centered nearer the areas occupied by Starlings and Cowbirds and was away from the other bird concentrations. This would have increased the probability of catching many Starlings and Cowbirds as was done and make more difficult the capture of Redwinged Blackbirds. Finally, the light attraction factor is an important

consideration. It alone could account for the apparent increases in the Starling and Cowbird populations and the decrease in the Redwinged Blackbird populations.

It is hoped that repeated experimentation in 1962-63 will shed additional light on the problem.

Julian L. Dusi  
560 Sherwood Drive  
Auburn, Alabama

\* \* \* \* \*

We extend our sincere thanks to our out-of-state friends who attended the Fall A.O.S. meeting on Dauphin Island. We were honored in having excellent birders from Louisiana, Mississippi, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia and Florida. Let's return their visit whenever possible.

\* \* \* \* \*

We all see unusual birds or bird behavior worth passing on. Send it to BIRDLIFE editor.

\* \* \* \* \*

Interesting facts about our members should be sent to NEWSLETTER editor, Mr. James Robinson, Rt. 1, Box 91, Brownsboro, Alabama.

THE BANDERS CORNER

1961 Banding Report

During the year 1961, I banded 1109 birds of 70 species. Of these, 518 were banded at Cornell University; the remainder at my home in Birmingham, Alabama. By far the great majority of birds were captured with mist nets, but traps were also used at various times. At the time of their capture, all birds were banded, measured, weighed, and checked for the deposition of fat. In addition the presence or absence of molt, parasites, etc., was also noted.

Those species captured in greatest numbers were: Wood- Thrush, 109; Common Grackle, 108; Slate-colored Junco, 100; and Song Sparrow, 122.

The only unusual capture was that of a Broad-winged Hawk, which apparently tried to take a captured Hooded Warbler from the net. For the third successive year, all four species of Empidonax were banded in Birmingham during the first half of September.

Of those birds which I had previously banded, 524 were recaptured during the year. Of these, 121 were classified as returns (90 days since their previous capture). These are listed below by species and by the number of years since their initial banding.

Red-bellied Woodpecker 1 (1 yr.); Downy Woodpecker 1 (1 yr.), 1 (3 yr.); Blue Jay 2 (1 yr.), 1 (2 yr.); Black-capped Chickadee 1 (1 yr.); Carolina Chickadee 5 (1 yr.); 1 (2 yr.), 1 (3 yr.); Tufted Titmouse 13 (1 yr.), 2 (2 yr.), 2 (3 yr.), 2 (4 yr.); White-breasted Nuthatch 4 (1 yr.), 1 (2 yr.); Brown-headed Nuthatch 1 (2 yr.), 1 (7 yr.); Carolina Wren 1 (2 yr.), 1 (5 yr.); Mockingbird 1 (1 yr.); Wood Thrush 2 (1 yr.), 1 (2 yr.); White-eyed Vireo 2 (2 yr.); Kentucky Warbler 1 (1 yr.), 1 (2 yr.); Yellow-breasted Chat 1 (1 yr.), 2 (3 yr.); Hooded Warbler 1 (1 yr.), 1 (2 yr.); Common Grackle 4 (1 yr.), 9 (2 yr.); Cowbird 5 (1 yr.), 2 (2 yr.); Summer Tanager 1 (1 yr.); Cardinal 15 (1 yr.), 3 (2 yr.), 3 (3 yr.); Purple Finch 4 (2 yr.), 1 (4 yr.); Rufous-sided Towhee 2 (1 yr.), 1 (2 yr.); Chipping Sparrow 1 (1 yr.); Field Sparrow 7 (1 yr.), 2 (2 yr.); White-throated Sparrow 3 (1 yr.), 2 (3 yr.); Song Sparrow 1 (2 yr.).