

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS, ALABAMA, 1960

THOMAS A. IMHOF, J. L. DORN, S.J., and JULIAN L. DUSI

1. AUBURN (column A, center of circle is center of Auburn; mixed woods 50%, pastures and open fields 30%, water and mud flats 20%).—Dec. 26. Cloudy with intermittent drizzle; temp. 42 degrees to 56 degrees; wind W to SW, 0-10 mph. Ten observers. Total man-hours, 76; total miles driven, 108; total miles walked, 30.

2. BIRMINGHAM (column B, center of circle in New Merkle; oak-pine woods 35%, woods borders 16%, suburbs 15%, lakes and ponds 12%, short-grass areas 11%, hardwoods 6%, tall-grass areas 5%).—Dec. 26; 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Overcast and light drizzle to partly cloudy; temp. 53 degrees to 66 degrees; wind SW, 10-17 mph. Eighteen observers in 7 parties. Total party-hours, 58 (44 on foot, 14 by car); total party-miles, 275 (50 on foot, 225 by car).

3. DAUPHIN ISLAND (column D, center of circle on southern tip of Mon Luis Isle; pine-hardwoods 28%, pine woods 20%, sheltered salt water 16%, mud and shell flats 12%, residential areas 12% salt marsh 5%, fresh marsh 3%, Gulf of Mexico 2%, beaches 2%).—Dec. 30, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Overcast; temp. 45 degrees to 55 degrees; wind NNE, 8-18 mph. Fifteen observers in 6 parties. Total party-hours, 49) 33 on foot, 3 by boats, 13 by car); total party-miles, 318 (38 on foot, 35 by boat, 245 by car).

4. MOBILE (column M, center of circle in downtown Mobile, Providence St. and Old Shell Road; river, bay, ponds 25%, weedy pastures and roadsides 25%, upland deciduous and evergreen woods 25%, marshlands and beaches 25%, cultivated fields, nursery fields and golf courses 10%).—Dec. 31, 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Rain in morning, sun shining by 3 p.m.; temp. 50 degrees to 60 degrees; wind NE, 5-15 mph. Four observers in 2 parties. Total party-hours, 20 (15 on foot, 5 by car); total party-miles, 100 (15 on foot, 85 by car).

SPECIES	A	B	D	M
Common Loon	---	---	32	---
Horned Grebe	---	---	51	2
Pied-billed Grebe	1	34	8	1
White Pelican	---	---	4	100
Brown Pelican	---	---	14	---
Gannet	---	---	7	---
Double-crested Cormorant	---	---	116	3
Great Blue Heron	5	4	38	4
Little Blue Heron	---	---	---	20
Common Egret	---	---	4	100
Snowy Egret	---	---	1	45
Louisiana Heron	---	---	5	13
Black-crowned Night Heron	---	---	1	---
Yellow-crowned Night Heron	---	---	2	---
Least Bittern	---	---	---	1
White Ibis	---	---	15	---
Mallard	20	2	4	340
Black Duck	---	1	30	---
Gadwall	---	---	25	300
Pintail	---	---	8	200
Green-winged Teal	---	---	15	45
American Widgeon	---	---	115	30
Shoveler	---	---	---	1

Christmas Bird Counts, Alabama, 1960 (Continued)

SPECIES	A	B	D	M
Wood Duck	2	---	6	---
Redhead	---	7	---	---
Ring-necked Duck	---	89	15	125
Canvasback	---	48	4	500
Greater Scaup	---	---	62	5
Lesser Scaup	---	7	255	400
Common Goldeneye	---	---	435	---
Bufflehead	---	1	4	15
Ruddy Duck	---	2	---	3
Hooded Merganser	---	---	---	7
Red-breasted Merganser	---	---	385	1
Turkey Vulture	4	---	3	2
Black Vulture	22	---	1	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	---	1	---	---
Cooper's Hawk	---	1	---	---
Red-tailed Hawk	---	3	3	3
Red-shouldered Hawk	2	4	1	1
Broad-winged Hawk	---	1	2	---
Rough-legged Hawk	---	---	1	---
Marsh Hawk	3	---	13	2
Osprey	---	---	1	---
Peregrine Falcon	---	1	---	---
Pigeon Hawk	---	---	---	1
Sparrow Hawk	3	4	30	1
Bobwhite	27	20	---	5
King Rail	---	---	---	1
Clapper Rail	---	---	23	1
Virginia Rail	---	---	1	2
Sora	---	---	1	9
Common Gallinule	---	---	---	4
American Coot	---	911	---	6,000
American Oystercatcher	---	---	4	---
Semipalmated Plover	---	---	33	15
Piping Plover	---	---	69	11
Snowy Plover	---	---	1	---
Killdeer	18	196	39	40
Black-bellied Plover	---	---	74	18
Ruddy Turnstone	---	---	17	---
American Woodcock	3	---	---	---
Common Snipe	8	33	2	135
Willet	---	---	39	---
Greater Yellowlegs	---	---	9	---
Lesser Yellowlegs	---	---	---	15
Least Sandpiper	3	---	5	25
Dunlin	---	---	273	37
Short-billed Dowitcher	---	---	16	---
Semipalmated Sandpiper	---	---	39	28
Western Sandpiper	---	---	216	35
Sanderling	---	---	99	13
Herring Gull	---	4	436	332
Ring-billed Gull	---	---	702	795
Laughing Gull	---	---	28	10
Bonaparte's Gull	---	---	14	1

Christmas Bird Counts, Alabama, 1960 (Continued)

SPECIES	A	B	D	M
Gull-billed Tern	---	---	3	---
Forster's Tern	---	---	72	300
Common Tern	---	---	---	2
Royal Tern	---	---	39	12
Caspian Tern	---	---	111	52
Black Tern	---	---	---	12
Black Skimmer	---	---	2	---
White-winged Dove	---	---	1	---
Mourning Dove	11	335	4	75
Ground Dove	---	---	---	2
Barn Owl	---	---	1	---
Barred Owl	---	1	1	1
Long-eared Owl	---	---	1	---
Belted Kingfisher	6	7	33	15
Yellow-shafted Flicker	12	76	8	25
Pileated Woodpecker	---	25	---	---
Red-bellied Woodpecker	3	68	25	5
Red-headed Woodpecker	---	20	1	1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	7	11	14	2
Hairy Woodpecker	1	7	---	---
Downy Woodpecker	9	34	2	2
Red-cockaded Woodpecker	---	1	---	---
Eastern Phoebe	2	2	4	1
Tree Swallow	---	---	1,512	15
Blue Jay	49	170	198	100
Common Crow	15	98	14	3
Fish Crow	---	---	13	4
Carolina Chickadee	23	161	14	2
Tufted Titmouse	33	94	23	9
White-breasted Nuthatch	---	31	---	---
Red-breasted Nuthatch	---	1	1	---
Brown-headed Nuthatch	22	31	59	1
Brown Creeper	3	8	---	1
House Wren	---	---	5	---
Wren Winter	---	4	10	---
Bewick's Wren	---	3	---	1
Carolina Wren	18	93	28	9
Long-billed Marsh Wren	---	---	25	3
Short-billed Marsh Wren	---	---	36	1
Mockingbird	23	136	62	25
Catbird	---	---	1	1
Brown Thrasher	15	25	20	10
Robin	12	19	3,771	1,200
Wood Thrush	---	---	1	---
Hermit Thrush	7	12	1	1
Eastern Bluebird	12	52	38	2
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	2	---	6	2
Golden-crowned Kinglet	64	67	43	5
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	72	51	71	4
Water Pipit	6	7	78	7
Cedar Waxwing	15	635	230	52
Loggerhead Shrike	8	15	40	8

Christmas Bird Counts, Alabama, 1960 (Continued)

SPECIES	A	B	D	M
Starling	40,000	1,339	53	700
White-eyed Vireo	---	---	---	1
Solitary Vireo	---	---	2	1
Orange-crowned Warbler	---	1	8	5
Parula Warbler	---	---	1	---
Myrtle Warbler	19	10	896	25
Yellow-throated Warbler	---	---	1	---
Pine Warbler	47	26	19	5
Palm Warbler	---	---	3	3
Yellowthroat	---	1	4	1
House Sparrow	10	771	150	200
Eastern Meadowlark	50	377	39	15
Redwinged Blackbird	400,000	592	1,017	500
Orchard Oriole	---	1	---	---
Rusty Blackbird	20,000	235	---	---
Brewer's Blackbird	---	---	---	14
Boat-tailed Grackle	---	---	---	100
Common Grackle	40,000	40	1,565	75
Brown-headed Cowbird	500,000	501	6	15
Cardinal	32	207	94	18
Purple Finch	15	4	---	5
American Goldfinch	22	300	121	10
Rufous-sided Towhee	25	218	119	12
Savannah Sparrow	12	189	5	7
Grasshopper Sparrow	---	1	---	---
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	---	---	10	1
Seaside Sparrow	---	---	20	4
Vesper Sparrow	10	17	1	---
Bachman's Sparrow	1	7	---	---
Slate-colored Junco	130	597	---	---
Chipping Sparrow	9	52	75	---
Field Sparrow	24	296	7	3
White-crowned Sparrow	---	1	1	---
White-throated Sparrow	121	498	245	280
Fox Sparrow	---	3	---	---
Lincoln's Sparrow	---	---	2	---
Swamp Sparrow	24	141	48	5
Song Sparrow	12	221	12	1

TOTAL SPECIES 62 83 130 119

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS 1,001,134 10,420 16,362 13,820

(Dauphin count includes unidentified ducks, 350; Accipiter, 1; and unidentified gulls and terns, 1,000.)

TOTAL SPECIES, ALL FOUR COUNTS:—166.

OBSERVERS: AUBURN—Beth Baker, Maurice Baker, Sue Chambliss, Julian Dusi (compiler), Rosemary Dusi, William Goslin, Dan Speake, Ruth Speake, L. A. Wells, Roberta Wells. BIRMINGHAM—Ruth Brunson, Frederick Carney, Walter Coxe, F. Bozeman Daniel, Emmy Lou Grimley, Malcolm Harden, Daniel Holliman, Thomas Imhof (compiler), Clustie McTyeire, M. F. Prather, Morton Perry, Robert Perry, Margaret Persons, Grace Snead, Idalene Snead, J. Bolling Sullivan, Robert Weston, Louise Weston. DAUPHIN ISLAND—C. Bianco, Fairly Chandler, Blanche Chapman, Blanche Dean, J. L. Dorn, Jane Douglas, Elizabeth Eddy, Cora Evans, Jerry Evans, M. Wilson Gaillard, Henry Haberyan, Joseph Imhof, Thomas Imhof (compiler), Clustie McTyeire, Larry Rosen. MOBILE—Fairly Chandler, J. L. Dorn (compiler), Paul Feldhaus, M. Wilson Gaillard.

Comments on unusual species.—Least Bittern: First winter record for Alabama (Dorn and Gaillard). White Ibis: First definite winter record for Alabama, although we have early December and late February records (Feldhaus, later Dorn). Broad-winged Hawk: We now have at least 7 winter records for the state, including a specimen from Autauga County and a bird netted and banded in Baldwin County in February, 1960. The Birmingham bird (Westons) is the northernmost, and on the Dauphin count, one was seen on the island (Chapman) and one at Bayou La Batre (Imhof). Rough-legged Hawk: A light-phased bird seen well (McTyeire and Rosen) showed all field marks and hovered among Dauphin sand dunes. This is the 6th winter record for Alabama, the second this winter, and the second on the coast. No specimen of this hawk for Alabama is known. Osprey: Seen well (Chapman), 5th winter record for Alabama (one Tennessee Valley, one Orange Beach, one Gulf Shores, and now two for Dauphin Island, all close to nesting sites). Least Sandpiper: Auburn (Dusi) is the 7th inland locality where this species has been recorded in winter in Alabama. Black Tern: First winter record for Alabama and one of a very few for the country (all in the Gulf of Mexico area) is by Dorn and Gaillard, watched closely as small flock moved slowly by in close range. White-winged Dove: Many winter records for the coast but this is the first time it has been recorded on a Christmas Count (Chapman). Long-eared Owl: The only other record south of the Black Belt is a specimen from Little Dauphin Island, November 1, 1958. This bird was flushed several times from dense pines on Dauphin by McTyeire and Rosen and seen well. The species is probably common in winter in the state but is easily overlooked because it remains in dense pines during the day. Red-breasted Nuthatch: The species continues its record of annual occurrence near Birmingham (since 1943) and on the coast (since 1955). Wood Thrush: Seen well at close range by Clustie McTyeire and at least 5 others on Dauphin. This is the first winter record for Alabama. (A Gray-cheeked Thrush seen well in Birmingham the day after the local count is the 4th winter record for this thrush for Alabama, one of them a specimen picked up in Jackson (by W. U. Harris). Bluegray Gnatcatcher: The species winters in the coastal plain up to Marion, Tuscaloosa, and Montgomery, and this Auburn record is the closest to being north of the Fall Line, and there are no other records north of it and outside of the coastal plain. Orchard Oriole: A male, seen well (McTyeire, Persons, and Coxe) is the second winter record for Alabama, both of them for Birmingham. Lincoln's Sparrow: Two birds squeaked up near Coden (Imhof) provided the third wintering locality for the state (others Marion and Livingston).

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REGIONAL WINGBEATS

DECATUR—It was raining when the last column was written and has stopped since only long enough for intermittent freeze-ups. Wheeler reservoir has been ice-locked at regular intervals through late December, January, and early February, but snow and sleet have remained on the ground for no more than a few hours.

Perhaps the biggest news, birdwise, was the shooting of a White-winged Scoter on December 10 in the big backwaters north of Decatur. The bird was killed by James Call, a local duck hunter. David Hulse saw it, persuaded Call to donate it and brought it by the Wheeler Refuge office for corroborating identification. Later, it was sent to the Alabama Conservation Department, mounted by Bob Skinner, and now is a permanent exhibit in the Department's collection. Wheeler Refuge Records show three previous Scoter sightings, one of these a bird shot by a duck hunter and examined by Paul Bryan, but the December 10 specimen was the first, inland or coastal, ever preserved in this State.

As a probable result of the bitter weather in the North, Old Squaws and Goldeneyes have been more common than usual. Old Squaws were present from December 19 through February 5, a full week later than ever noted before. David reports seeing 27 in a single day and several were bagged by local gunners.

An American Bittern that must have been equipped with long-handled underfeathers was seen continuously around a small pond on Wheeler Refuge in the Sunnyside landing locality from December 29 through January 14. It vanished only after the pond was covered by three-inch-thick ice. Despite the cold winter, several Common Egrets remained on the refuge throughout the late fall and winter and until this writing.

The Refuge continued to show an all-time record goose population, with a top count of over 43,000 Canadas, plus the usual complement of Blues and Snows. This was an almost 50 percent increase in Canada Geese, a 90 percent increase in Blue Geese, compared with the 1959-60 season, but with little change in Snow Goose numbers. Ducks lagged along with a low count until the third week of December, when numbers suddenly jumped to 75,000, stabilized for a brief period, then began dropping rapidly in mid-January.

Again refuge employees have been befuddled by off-brand geese that do not tally with any description of any wild goose species found on Earth. They have come to the inescapable conclusion that these have either been released from visiting space ships from the outer planets or are farmyard birds that have heard the call of the wild, doubtless the latter.

The apparent Bald Eagle scarcity has been felt here. Throughout late fall and winter, there were no more than two or three eagles using along the long stretch of river between Decatur and Triana, and during some past winters there have been a dozen or more.

—THOMAS Z. ATKESON, Wheeler Wildlife Refuge, Decatur

HUNTSVILLE (BROWNSBORO)—Our birding has been confined to our five acres and the highway into town this winter. Birds were slow to accept the suet and seed we put out, but clean up everything in sight now, and wait for us to put out more food. Species coming to feed in greater numbers are Juncos and White-throats. Other species are Cardinals, Chickadees, Titmice, Carolina Wrens, Fox Sparrows, Towhees, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Downy Woodpeckers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Goldfinches, and one Myrtle Warbler, which is "king on the mountain." It chases away all birds its size and holds its own against larger ones.