

## REGIONAL WINGBEATS

DECATUR--In sharp contrast with over-wet conditions during the earlier parts of the year, Tennessee Valley weather from late August to early November was exceptionally dry. Due to the break in the lock wall at Wheeler Dam, water levels were low, and rank tangles of mixed vegetation matured on the mudflats. Much of this was worthless cocklebur and balloonvine, but much of it was wild millet, smartweed and other plants that produced seeds of considerable waterfowl food value. Beginning in early October, water levels began slowly creeping upward, flooding the lower flats and making a wealth of natural duck food available.

Bird notes for the period have been skimpy. David Hulse picked up three interesting early duck records. These include several Green-winged Teal, positively not blue wings, seen on September 1 and 2; Pintailed Ducks were sighted on September 2, and American Widgeon on September 10. Despite a serious continental waterfowl shortage, local duck numbers are now double those present at this time last fall. The first flock of Canada Geese slanted down for a landing on September 19, nine days earlier than the first arrivals last year, and Canada numbers now equal those of this time last fall. However, only about 400 Blue Geese and a handful of Snow Geese are using Wheeler Refuge, half the number present last November.

Losses among doves to Trichomoniasis continued through October, but local dove concentrations seemed on a par with those of last fall. As for the new Iranian Pheasants stocked by the State on the nearby Swan Creek Public Hunting Area, four broods were reported during the summer by local residents. Conservation Department employees believe that these reports were sufficiently spaced in time and distance to indicate four different broods, not duplications. Eagles continue scarce, but one dead immature Bald Eagle was found on Wheeler Refuge in late October. Four other immatures, all very much alive, were seen by Wheeler Manager Charles Parker in early November.

--THOMAS Z. ATKESON

HUNTSVILLE (BROWNSBORO)--Little of interest can be said about the Fall migration. Our observations this year were made almost entirely on our property, so we have missed many birds. In past years we have tried to cover much of Madison

Summer residents appeared to leave in two waves, from September 18-29, and from October 11-15. Migrants and winter residents also moved in in waves, arriving on September 10, 18, 26, and from October 11-15. As yet, we have not correlated these movements with weather conditions. Most migrants seem to have passed over us, as birds seen in large numbers in past years were either not seen at all, or in small numbers.

We have been overrun by Blue Jays and have large flocks of Purple Finches and several flocks of Cedar Waxwings, neither of which were seen at this spot last year. Woodpeckers are everywhere. Natural food must be the main attraction, as few of these birds have come to the feeders. Some have fed on grain and seed we have scattered on the ground. Oaks, dogwoods, tulip poplars, and sumacs are laden with seed still, despite the large numbers of birds feeding on them.

Myrtle Warblers have been more common than usual, but we have noted only one Red-breasted Nuthatch (the first we've seen in the Huntsville area), though Harriett Wright reports many in Birmingham. The flock of Starlings which feed on our tulip poplars are the first we have seen on our property. Our reports of a Saw-whet Owl and a White-winged Junco may be found elsewhere. We have been most excited over netting two such unexpected birds within a week's time.

--JIM and MARGARET ROBINSON

BIRMINGHAM--Following the above normal precipitation for Birmingham during the first half of the year, August, September and October fell well below normal, with October being the driest for the state since 1900. Temperatures in September and October were slightly above normal: 1.6 and 0.5 degrees respectively. November 9 marked the first freeze of winter.

Lake Purdy remained full of water, leaving no mud flats to lure migrating water birds. Migration moved at a trickling pace, with no spectacular waves noted. With few exceptions, species appeared on average time schedule. Unless otherwise noted, observations were made at the writer's address. Scarlet Tanagers were seen from September 13 through October 26. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were more common this fall, first noticed September 26 and last seen October 11. The Swainson's Thrush was also observed in larger numbers

A possible early date on a Ruby-crowned Kinglet was September 16. A long Purple Finch seen October 30 was just a scout for the numbers seen since. This portends to be another Purple Finch year. Five Cedar Waxwings arrived October 6. Since November 10, the flock numbers a hundred or more, and the dogwood berries are diminishing. Myrtle Warblers appear to be numerous, with 6-8 being seen at a time.

Tom Imhof reported a Red-breasted Nuthatch September 26 at Fairfield. All indications are that this will also be a Red-breasted Nuthatch year. Ten were seen on Dauphin Island October 28-29, and Dr. Calvert at Jacksonville, Alabama reports one there on October 15. He also notes that Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are common this fall. Chan Robbins of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Maryland, has alerted Tom Imhof that Evening Grosbeaks are coming down from the north and we should be on the lookout in Alabama this winter. At Roberts' Field, Tom observed a Peregrine Falcon on September 27, and a Bobolink on October 4. At the same place on November 6-7, five Short-billed Marsh Wrens were suspected of making this a winter residence. On November 7 also, Tom flushed a Marsh Hawk that was feeding on a Meadow Lark. Tom noted a decrease in the number of Savannah Sparrows at Roberts' Field, possibly due to excessive mowing operations.

A Ruby-throated Hummingbird seen by Blanche Chapman at Chap-O-Lee on November 5 tops the November 2, 1954 record. A Tennessee Warbler observed by the writer November 18, though late, does not break a November 22, 1949 record noted in 1954 Alabama Birdlife. This winter may prove interesting and noteworthy for increase or decrease of certain species wintering in this area.

In Goodwater on October 21, Blanche Dean observed an immature Yellow-bellied Sapsucker following an adult male and a female sapsucker, begging food. The female finally fed the young one, pecked him, and the immature flew away.

--HARRIETT WRIGHT

MONTGOMERY--Bird activity has been light during the latter part of the summer and early fall. It appears that the normal early fall migration of most species of birds may have passed through unnoticed. Warblers and other small migratory are rarely seen, but birds can frequently be heard flying overhead at night.

Bob Skinner reports that normally the Buteo hawks have arrived here by October 1, and established their winter territories. However, none have been observed in their usual places in territory as of November 1, and few have been seen. Skinner reports that he saw a Peregrine Falcon on October 1, chasing a pigeon. This is the first Peregrine he has seen in Montgomery County. The first Marsh Hawk was observed on September 1, which is the usual time of arrival. As with the other hawks, few have been noted since.

The last band recovery that I received of a Gadwall Duck is of interest. This female bird was banded on December 9, 1944 at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, near Decatur, Ala. It was found dead by an unknown trapper on December 1960, in the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife Refuge, in Buffalo Co., Wisconsin. This bird was known to have lived at least 16 years.

--JIM KEELER

AUBURN--Fall migration in the Auburn area has been so affected by the drought that we have seen very few birds. Even the common residents seldom come to our feeders. White-throated Sparrows were first recorded on October 3, which was right on schedule. We now see quite a few of them in the field.

The Auburn area concentration this year has been on the development of the Chattahoochee Valley Natural History Club. The club now has 55 members, taken from an area in eastern Alabama and western Georgia that would equal about one-fifth of the area of Alabama.

Activities of the club during the past year have included bimonthly evening meetings, Christmas bird counts at Columbus and Pine Mountain, Georgia and Auburn, Alabama, and several field trips. On October 13-15, the group acted as host to the Georgia Ornithological Society, joining in their fall meeting at the Ida Cason Calloway Gardens. An attendance of over 60 people and an interesting program made the meeting a great success, even though the drought adversely affected the field trips.

During the coming year, this group should increase in size and stature. It should be an aid to the A. O. S. in

GULF COAST--Our report this time will be about bird people instead of the feathered species. We want you to meet these new A. O. S. members of the Mobile Chapter. A thumbnail sketch is attempted so you may know the following:

Harry and Kathleen Johnstone, Jr.--Harry is an architect. One of his current jobs is drafting plans for the new marine laboratory near Shell Mound on Dauphin Island. Maybe he will recommend a beautiful garden where humming birds can refuel for cross gulf flights. His better half, "The Snail Lady" is an author and lecturer. Kathleen's book on seashells is tops in the field. She is also quite an expert on birds and their needs.

Cooper and Buzzie Van Antwerp--Cooper is the other leading architect in this area. His appreciation for beauty led him to Buzzie and to the altar. (We suggest that these two architects from Mobile might design a bird memorial, perhaps a huge brick chimney on Mobile's causeway for the tens of thousands of Chimney Swifts that pause here looking for open flues, but finding none, move on.)

William and Clara Caffey--Will is an attorney with a photographic memory. That helps in birding. Clara is not a lawyer, yet she wins any argument when they spot a doubtful bird. Incidentally, their son is State Senator, William G. Caffey, Jr. The entire family will be most helpful in our programs.

Harry and Elizabeth Toenes--We're sorry these two avid birders could not be with us on Dauphin, but previous plans for a bird jaunt through Florida prevented. Harry is an insurance executive. His jolly wife "Lib" ad-libs on any and all subjects. Call on Lib when you want something done right, and right now.

Julius Marx--Julius is a real estate promoter par excellence and was one of the big guns in the Dauphin Island developments. He is most enthusiastic about making the island a Bird Paradise. That means it will be done.

William Zieback--Bill is a newspaper man with a yen for the "Out-0-Doors", which is the title of his interesting Sunday column. You can always count on him for aid to a sound wildlife program.

Charles and Fanny Gamble--Both are keenly interested in birds. Their next door neighbor, Palmar Gaillard, has one main topic of conversation now--raising and hunting turkeys. We signed him up in A. O. S. and now all three participate in talk of all birds. This bodes good news for bird life in the area.

Miss Mary Gaillard--Her yard is a birds' smorgasbord, serving some type of natural food all year. Figs, Cherry-laurel, Holly and Cedar berries are her specialties.

By more than a happy coincidence, each of these new members has some special qualification or connection for real accomplishments in the field of bird conservation. If our local group functions as we should, we can make this area the most colorful, exciting bird habitat in America. I believe these new members, with your cooperation, will really get results.

--WILSON GAILLARD

(Ed. note--This is a bit of departure from our normal policy of limiting our copy to bird news, but we think that all members will be interested to know more about the two groups as reported by Drs. Dusi and Gaillard. Word has reached us that the Mobile group has taken as a project the planting of berry producing shrubs along Bienville Boulevard and other places on Dauphin Island, in line with the need that has been pointed out to us -- that of producing more food for the many migrants that regularly touch there going and coming on their long transgulf flights.)

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#### NOTES ON BIRD LIST, DAUPHIN MEETING

The tally of birds seen during the A. O. S. fall meeting at Dauphin Island resulted in a total of 98 species, as recorded in the secretary's report. Additional field work after the tally was made resulted in the addition of the Black-billed Cuckoo, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Eastern Meadowlark. This would raise the total to 101 species. This was a poor list for Dauphin Island, but the exceedingly dry land conditions and lack of waterfowl were too much to combat. However, knowing that we can tally about a third as many more in a good year will lure us to Dauphin for many future meetings.

--JULIAN DUSI