

But there too, thankfully, are canoes to be paddled and trails to be walked, and birds to be sought and seen and wonders to behold, such as three common (so beautiful) terns resting on a stump jutting from the waters of Smith Lake, oblivious of the softly gliding canoe and its occupants. . . . or your own special thrill in your own yard!

See you in Birmingham November 21,

For a Better Land

Walter F. Coxe

BELL'S VIREO IN ALABAMA

Thomas A. Imhof

Bell's Vireo (Vireo bellii Audubon) is known to breed east to Madison, Wisc., Joliet (suburban Chicago) and Mt. Carmel (Wabash valley) Ill., Memphis, Tenn., El Dorado and Stuttgart, Ark., Shreveport, La., and Houston, Tex. Thus Alabama is at least 250 miles east and 500 miles south of the breeding range. The species is known here as a casual spring and fall transient.

Spring records are: 26 April (1965, Dauphin Island, Edith Halberg); 28 April (1937, Irondale, Birmingham, H. M. Stevenson); and 28 April (1961, a pair, male singing, Brownsboro, J. C. and Margaret Robinson). Fall records are: 19 to 31 August (1932, Elmwood Cemetery, Birmingham, H. M. Stevenson and H. E. Wheeler); 30 August (1969, one bird, banded and photographed in color, Thomas Creek, Birmingham, T. A. Imhof, Helen Kittinger, and others); and 2 September (1959, Dauphin Island, O. B. Miles); and 15 October (1969 Dauphin Island, banded, Margaret E. Miller).

The 2 x 2 Kodachrome transparency of the August 1969 bird is recognizable and is considered by this writer sufficient material evidence of the occurrence of the species in Alabama. It is now in the slide collection of the Alabama Ornithological Society. The bird, an immature (skull ossification incomplete) had no fat and was not moulting. The following measurements in millimeters were taken: wing 51, wing tip (tip of longest primary to tip of nearest secondary) 6, exposed culmen 11, tarsus, 17, tail, 41, weight 8.2 grams at 10:37 hours. Both 1969 birds were separated from the White-eyed Vireo by the dark eye and white instead of yellow spectacles; further, both measurements verify that Bell's Vireo is a much smaller bird.

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THE SEASON SPRING 1969

Compiler and Editor—Thomas A. Imhof

For more than two years now, most of Alabama has had colder weather than usual. Although last summer and fall were very dry, December 1968 started a wetter than usual trend. This spring continued wet and cold, particularly inland where Birmingham had its wettest May ever—11.10 inches (7.68 in excess). March here had a 7.9⁰ deficiency. This cool, rainy weather meant that development of vegetation was about 2 weeks late and many times the birds had poor flying conditions. As a result, many trans-Gulf migrants were recorded almost daily from 5 April to 21 May around Birmingham and included some species rarely noted here in spring. Little specific weather data are available from other parts of the state. In general though, temperatures were cool throughout and the coast had several stormy periods, rains were heavier 100 or more miles inland.

Little comment was made about the weather on the coast except that certain rarities and concentrations of migrants followed storms (MAG). Tuck Hayward was disappointed in warbler numbers but amazed at the numbers of Hoodeds, e.g. 75 of 148 he banded on Dauphin Island on 4 April. Totals banded by Tuck Hayward and Margaret Miller on Dauphin Island this spring were: March 21st, 15; 26th, 38; April 5th, 70; 6th, 70; 7th, 37; 11th & 12th (with MLB and TAI), over 100; 17th, 70; and 23rd, 70.

The 5th annual spring count at Birmingham, although scheduled a little early on 19 April, produced 134 species and 89 birds per party-hour, average in both respects. The species list included 5 species of ducks, 9 of hawks, 11 shorebirds, 22 warblers, and 17 finches, but only 5 flycatchers, 2 wrens, 4 thrushes, and 3 vireos. Evening Grosbeak was seen by 7 of 12 parties, and Pine Siskin by 5.

The reader must always remember that what we record here is but a small fraction of what is going on, for much of bird migration is beyond our ken. Thus often, when bad weather forces a migrant to alight and we record him as an early or late bird, the species may really occur annually there on that date, but we are just beginning to find it out.

Pelicanlike Birds—On 29 May, 57 White Pelicans were still present in Mobile (REH & LRT). Brown Pelicans were down again from the 50 of last spring and noted only 3 times: Dauphin Island, 3 on 6 April (LPA & LRT) and 2 on 12-13 April (AOS);

at Fort Morgan, 7 on 13 May (REH). Perhaps the bird highlight of the spring meeting on Dauphin was the flock of 7 Brown Boobies, adults and immatures on 11, 12, 13, and 14 April (RWS, JMI, and many others), with nearby Gannets of various ages for comparison. Last year Brown Boobies were seen within 100 miles of Dauphin on May 5 and June 18, but the above is only the 2nd Alabama record. An adult Double-crested Cormorant on 21 May at Lake Oliver is the first Chattahoochee Valley record since 1959 (LAW) and, as far as known, the first in inland Alabama since 1961—another large fish-eater in trouble! A Magnificent Frigatebird on Dauphin on 13 April during gale-force winds (MLB & RJK) is, excepting a February record, the earliest for the state by one day.

Hérons, Ibis—Green Heron was first noted on Dauphin on 16 March (LMcK & LRT) and in Birmingham on 29 March (TAI). Cattle Egrets were first reported from Foley 26 March (PFC); Birmingham 12 April (RRH, CL, LFF); and Scottsboro 15 April, 4 birds (BGW). The Reddish Egret, becoming rarer recently with increased use of beaches, was noted on Dauphin on 26 March (LRT). The first Yellow-crowned Night Heron noted in Birmingham was on 30 March (AKB). Two Glossy Ibises were near Wheeler Refuge 23 to 25 April (RMB, HHG, GCB); this is the first record for the Tennessee Valley and only the second north of the Fall Line.

Waterfowl—Two Whistling Swans were seen near Wheeler Refuge on 16 and 17 March (WW & RB). This is the fifth record since 26 Dec. 64; this bird is averaging out at about one record per year. An apparently wild Mute Swan had been present for about 4 weeks (Henderson's) near the new Miller's Ferry Lock and Dam when confirmed on 11 June (RWS). White-fronted Geese were seen twice in the state this spring: at Wheeler Refuge, 5 birds on 28 March (HHG, RMB, & EW), 6th Tennessee Valley record; at Eufaula Refuge one bird 16-29 March (DFH), 13th state record and latest spring record. Only 2 records are prior to 1960, so this means 11 records in 9 years. Duck news this spring is mainly confined to 2 dates, the first, March 24 at Lake Oliver in the Chattahoochee Valley just above Phenix City, the apparent peak of the spring flight there (LAW). High counts for the season there on 24 March were: Pintail, 2; Gadwall, 2; Am. Widgeon, 35; Shoveler, 12; Ring-necked Duck, 100; Com. Goldeneye, 10; Ruddy Duck, 10; while Lesser Scaup peaked at 200 on the 31st and Bufflehead at 40 on the 23rd (LAW). The second date was 29 May at Chickasaw with the following late records (REH & LRT): Gadwall, 3, tie for the latest for state; Shoveler, latest for the Coastal Plain by 14 days; Ruddy Duck, latest for the state by 4 days. A Shoveler near Birmingham on 19 April (RRR & EGR) is latest for the Mountain

Region. New for Alabama is an immature male HARLEQUIN DUCK, shot on Bon Secour Bay, 29 Jan. 1968 (GM) and now in the Dept. Cons. collection where identification confirmed (RWS). Recent records from Panama City and Pensacola help to confirm this record.

Hawks—Kites, like the Cattle Egret, in spite of the large number of insects they consume, appear undiminished in numbers. Possibly two features prevent them from receiving too much pesticide; being near the beginning of the food chain so that little or no bioconcentration takes place, and eating only live, vigorous prey. Swallow-tailed Kites were noted on Dauphin Is. on 4 April (REH) and Claiborne Bridge, 14 miles west of Monroeville on 2 May (VDH). Mississippi Kites were in their usual places; one at Spring Hill on 27 April (MAG) is near early for the coast, yet strangely inland arrival dates are in late March. On windy 20 March, a krideri Red-tailed Hawk migrated through Birmingham to the northeast (TAI). A frequent complaint these days is the absence or near absence of many hawks, notably Osprey, falcons, accipiters. The Golden Eagle is still regular in winter in small numbers particularly in the Coastal Plain. Two captured in March in Clarke County were banded and released 3 May in De Soto Pk. (RWS). Ospreys were reported from Dauphin Is. on 23 April (LRT); Fort Morgan on 13 May (REH); and from Birmingham on 29 & 30 March (HHW et al.); 8 April (MLB); and 8 on 19 April (RRR & BC); and at Wheeler Refuge on 9 and 21 through 25 April (fide TZA). A Pigeon Hawk was spotted on Dauphin on 24 April (REH & LRT).

Crane—Of the flock of 20-25 reported wintering as usual in southern Baldwin County (PFC), 13 Sandhill Cranes were still present near Wolf's Bay on 8 March (CLK & many from Pensacola).

Shorebirds—In Birmingham, a Semipalmated Plover on 19 April is by 8 days the earliest for the Mountain Region (TAI & JMI). An Am. Golden Plover there on 28 & 29 March is the 3rd spring record for the Mountain Region (TAI & JMI). After heavy rains on 17 May, two Ruddy Turnstones at Marion Fish Hatchery (MLB & AKB) make the second inland spring occurrence in the state. Unrecorded for 8 years, the Long-billed Curlew was noted 3 times on the coast this spring: Bayou La Batre, 2 on 13 April (LMB et al.); Gulf Shores, 2 on 16 April (PFC); and Dauphin Island, 1 on 26 April (DTR). White-rumped Sandpipers were fairly early; first noted 13 May at Fort Morgan (REH) and at Marion Fish Hatchery, 17 on rainy 17 May (AKB & MLB). Three Baird's Sandpipers, the first in spring in Alabama and the first inland, appeared at Birmingham on a cold-front day 19 April (TAI & JMI). Two of them remained until 22 April (AKB, JRB et al.). Two Least Sandpipers in Birmingham on 18 May are the latest for the Mountain Region. (TAI & JMI). The latest Dunlins for the state—by 3 days—were in Mobile on 29 May (LRT).

At Marion on 18 May following torrential rains, a flock of 32 Stilt Sandpipers (JNC, AKB et. al.) are the first inland in spring. A Marbled Godwit was at Gulf Shores on 16 April (PFC). Am. Avocets were reported on 24 March, 3 on Dauphin Is. (WTS) and 3 at Gulf Shores (PFC); and on 16 April, 4 more at Gulf Shores (PFC), latest for the Coastal Plain. A Northern Phalarope was also at Marion on rainy 17 May (AKB & MLB); this is the 5th record for the state-4 of them are inland—and first in spring!

Gulls, Terns—At Weiss Lake on 31 May with no associated bad weather, a 2nd-year Ring-billed Gull (TAI & JRB) is but the 2nd summer record between the Tennessee Valley and the Gulf Coast. Five Bonaparte's Gulls were at Lake Oliver (near Phenix City) on 15 April (LAW). Another first inland record on rainy 17 May at Marion was that of two Gull-billed Terns well seen (MLB & AKB). At Gulf Shores on 16 April after a 4-day storm, 6 Roseate Terns appeared courting in full breeding plumage with rosy breasts (PFC), the first recorded in Alabama in 8 years!

Cuckoos, Goatsuckers—Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos were more numerous Yellow-billed first noted: Dauphin, 10 April (REH & LRT); Birmingham, 19 April (RDB); Black-billed first noted on Dauphin 29 April (LRT) with 9 seen on 9 May (REH et al) Chuck-wills-widows were first heard at Lake Oliver on 31 March (LAW) and in Birmingham on 8 April (HHW). Two Whip-poor-wills in Birmingham on 19 April (MLB) make one of the few migrant records here.

Swift, Humingbird—Chimney Swifts were first reported from Birmingham on 30 March, 4 at East Lake (AKB) and from Scottsboro on 1 April (BGW). The Ruby-throated Hummingbird was recorded on Dauphin on 18 March (MB & GLB); Birmingham on 25 March (HHW); and Decatur on 6 April (Mrs. JW), earliest for the Tennessee Valley except for one bird found frozen in the snow on 23 March 1968 at Gurley (MLR).

Red-cockaded Woodpecker—Possibly significant to this species, newly placed on the threatened list, is the fact that, with quite a few people who know when and where to find it around Birmingham, it was still missed on our spring count on 19 April.

Flycatchers—A very early Eastern Kingbird was in Birmingham on 27 March (HHK, RJK, RDK). A Gray Kingbird on Dauphin Island on 11 April, seen and photographed in color (RRR, EGR & HHW) is by one day the earliest ever for Alabama. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were reported from Dauphin on 1, 7, 11 & 12 April (REH, EBM, TAI and many); and once inland for the 4th time in spring, on 18 May at Birmingham

(TAI & JMI). An Acadian Flycatcher banded on Dauphin Is. on 26 March (MEM) is not only the earliest ever for Alabama but possibly also for the U.S.A.; the earliest for the Mountain Region was seen and heard on 16 April near Bamford, Shelby Co. (TAI & HHK). Before 1969 the Trail's Flycatcher was recorded only 4 times in spring (10, 18, & 22 May and 5 June); this year 6 were noted in Birmingham alone, all associated with severe storm fronts. On 11 May, 3 were banded (MLB et. al.) and one wee-bee-o seen and heard (AKB, RJK, et. al.); on 19 May, 2 wee-bee-o's were seen and heard (TAI). Also on 11 May in Birmingham was an Olive-sided Flycatcher (RDK et.al.)

Swallow, Jay, Nuthatch—The Barn Swallow was noted early in the Mountain Region, on 25 March at Oak Mt. Lake (HHK), and was recorded in even larger numbers than before throughout North Alabama. The continued spread of the species will be elaborated in the summer report, one instance will suffice here: on 17 May at the Gainesville meeting of the Birmingham Audubon Society 5 nests and 9 adults were located under a bridge near the mouth of the Noxubee R. (AKB and many). Evidence of the return flight of Blue Jays was noted as follows: 16 April, Genery 42 birds passed northeastward along Shades Mt. in 5 minutes (TAI); on 3 May on the Maytown Breeding Survey Route, 20 additional jays crossed the 25-mile route from south to north (TAI & JRB); on 6 May at Mt. Weogufka, Coosa Co., a loose flock of 75 moved northeastward along the ridge (WFC et. al.) Red-breasted Nuthatches were well distributed in small numbers all the way to the coast and departed normally.

Thrushes—Robin on Dauphin Is. on 4 May (LMcK) may mean another breeding attempt there. Wood Thrush was first noted at Magnolia Springs on 15 March (PFC); Dauphin Is. on 18 March (MB & GLB); and in 3 places around Birmingham on 5 April (PAR, JNC, HHK, NGB). The last Birmingham Hermit Thrush was recorded on 7 April (JNC). Swainson's Thrush was on Dauphin on 18 March (MB & GLB), at Birmingham on 20 April (TAI) and Scottsboro on 20 April (BGW). Gray-cheeked Thrush was also on Dauphin on 18 March (MB & GLB). An early Veery was in Birmingham on 19 April (JRB). The Eastern Bluebird still fails to show improvement in its numbers.

Warblers through Vermivora—The first Prothonotary was seen on Dauphin on 18 March (MB & GLB) and in Birmingham on 31 March (RSM). Swainson's Warbler (or is Swainson's Waterthrush more correct?) was particularly common this spring. Between 1 and 14 April at least 6 were banded on Dauphin (REH, MEM, MLB). At least 7 birds were in the Birmingham area 16 April to 7 June: Shades Creek 5 miles above

its mouth on the Shelby-Bibb County line, 16 and 22 April (TAI, HHK); 3 miles southwest of Bamford, Shelby Co., 7 May (TAI & HHW); Trigger Creek, Shelby Co., 2 miles south of Genery, 16 April (TAI & HHK); Shades Creek, vicinity of Samford U., 26 April through 10 May 2 birds (RJK, RDK, AKB); one mile south of town of Short Creek, Jefferson Co., 3 May (TAI & JRB); one mile north of Copeland Ferry Bridge, Walker Co., 7 June (TAI & IFS). The Worm-eating Warbler was also reasonably common this spring with the earliest one being banded on Dauphin on 26 March (MEM). The first Golden-wing was noted on Dauphin on 14 April (SCH, LMCK, LRT) and in Birmingham on 19 April (RDB). Blue-wings were first seen near Birmingham on 5 April (TAI et. al.) and on Dauphin on 6 April (LPA & LRT). The Tennessee Warbler peak was shown by the 18 birds banded in Birmingham on 25, 26, & 27 April (MLB et. al.) Three Orange-crowned Warblers were banded there on 26 April, and another a female banded there on 11 May (MLB, AKB, RJK, RDK) is the latest for the state by 3 days. A Nashville Warbler on Dauphin on 4 May (LMCK) is the latest for the Coastal Plain of Alabama by 2 days.

Warblers, Dendroica through Wilsonia—A Yellow Warbler on 20 March on Dauphin is 10 days earlier than prior records (LRT); the species was first noted in Birmingham on 5 April (AKB). Black-throated Blue Warblers were recorded on Dauphin Is. on 29 April (LRT) and 3 May (M.B.C.) An early Chestnut-sided Warbler was in Birmingham on 15 April (HHK). The Northern Waterthrush was reported first from Dauphin on 18 March (MB & GLB) from Birmingham on 12 April (WFC), and last from Birmingham on 21 May (TAI). A female Connecticut Warbler was banded and photographed in Birmingham on 9 May (MLB, HHK, et. al.), third and earliest local spring record. Next day a male Mourning Warbler was banded in Birmingham (TAI) and on 15 May another male, this one singing, was at the same place (TAI); 3rd and 4th local spring records. The 12 Canada Warblers banded in Birmingham on 11 May (MLB et. al.) indicate a peak.

Blackbirds, Tanager—A small flock of Bobolinks on the shoulder of I-65 near Evergreen on 11 April is 4 days earlier than prior state records (RWS). The first Orchard Orioles were seen in Alabama on 24 March, Magnolia Springs (PFC) and Dauphin Is. (JLD & LRT); first in Birmingham on 5 April (HHW). A Baltimore Oriole in Dothan about 8 March (MLH) had probably wintered locally. Three late Rusty Blackbirds were near Birmingham on 19 April (RDB & AKB). The vanguard Summer Tanagers must have flown with the Orchard Orioles for they were also seen first on Dauphin on 24 March (JLD & LRT) and first near Birmingham also on 5 April (TAI et. al.)

Finches—The first reported Rose-breasted Grosbeak from Dauphin was on 4 April (REH), 1 day later than the earliest ever for the state; the first in Birmingham, on 15 April (HHW) did tie the earliest for that region. This year's earliest Indigo Bunting was on Dauphin on 23 March (LPA & LRT); in Birmingham it was on 14 April in 2 places (HHK, TAI). The first Painted Bunting for Dauphin was one banded on 5 April (MEM & REH) A Dickcissel at Pinson on 12 April (RRH) is 7 days earlier than prior local records. The sunflower-seed-eating Evening Grosbeak certainly takes full advantage of man's feeders, and the results are nothing short of spectacular. The unprecedented invasion took the birds as close to the Gulf as a land bird can get, and as far down the Florida peninsula as Gainesville. It appears that no wild creature these days maintains or increases its numbers without man's implicit approval. As a daily routine, the birds spend their mornings exhausting the local supply of sunflower seeds, remaining quite late in severe weather. Afternoons are spent out in the woods apparently feeding on natural foods. Roosting habits are little known. The 40 to 50 birds present in Dothan from mid-December were last seen (15 birds) on 28 April (MLH). For the entire state, the last bird was seen on 12 May in Birmingham (NGB). Most Alabama recoveries are of birds banded in the Northeast, but one captured this winter in Birmingham (MLB) was banded in May 1966 in Hibbing, Minn. (Rev. FVS). Purple Finches, common on the coast this winter, were last seen at Magnolia Springs on 3 April (PFC) and Mobile on 15 April (SCH); in Montgomery about 100 were present daily in March (RWS); and the last one was noted in Birmingham on 21 April (HHW). Pine Siskins were abundant on the coast with several hundred in at least 2 places in Mobile (SCH, MAG, TF); at least 60 still in Foley on 4 April (PFC); and last seen in Mobile on 25 May (TF). This is 2 weeks later than any prior record, and only in the Mountain Region had it been recorded in May. A slow but persistent decrease in the Bachman's Sparrow in Alabama—and probably throughout the southeastern U.S.—is possibly attributable to two causes: many real estate developers favor dry ridges, and most paper-mill foresters wage an all-out war on scrub oaks in their pinelands. A late Slate-colored Junco was seen in Birmingham on 19 April (MLB). Although most wintering sparrows had normal departures, e.g. Last Fox Sparrow for Birmingham was on 29 March (AKB) and last Whitethroats (2) on 15 May (MLB), two species were later than usual. White-crowned Sparrows were seen at Holtville (near Montgomery) on 16 May (RWL) and on Dauphin Island on 17 May (LRT)—latest ever is 18 May. A Swamp Sparrow netted in Birmingham on 15 May (MLB) is 2 days later than any prior state record.

Please send reports to the compiler on the following schedule:

Fall Season (September-October-November) deadline for copy is 10 December

Winter Season (December-January-February) deadline for copy is 10 March

Spring Season (March-April-May) deadline for copy is 10 June

Summer Season (June-July-August) deadline for copy is 10 September

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THE SEASON SUMMER 1969

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This is the most important season of the year, the time of reproduction, of making up for the losses of the other three seasons. Nesting season success usually is difficult to assess in the short time required to make this report unless one has the sophisticated equipment (planes, helicopters, personnel, computers) that we now can afford to expend only on birds of special importance such as game and threatened species. In another year the Breeding Bird Survey should be able to provide us with timely information with the aid of computers, provided of course that the observers themselves report promptly and follow the rules. Even though it measures the breeding stock rather than the young produced the Breeding Bird Survey is a tremendous step forward in measuring our bird populations.

In general, temperatures were a bit below normal, a trend now of long duration. Precipitation was very erratic. For instance in Birmingham a record-breaking wet May was followed by 3 dry months, and little precipitation was received from Camille, so that by 1 Sept the area was very dry but showed an annual excess of about 3 inches. Mobile also had variable rainfall—a very wet July brought its deficiency close to normal only to fall behind by more than 5 inches by mid-August. Camille brought the rainfall to an excess.

Present-day hurricanes are difficult to compare with those of more than a decade ago. They are more accurately measured than in the past, property values are rising rapidly, and adequate warning usually saves all but a few lives. Camille, reported as the most powerful in history certainly is the most powerful of recent times—since hurricanes have been named. The death toll and the number of cities and towns wiped out and flooded attest its power; but a real sign of its power is that it travelled over 1000 miles inland and 3 days later emerged near Norfolk still a hurricane!

Most of Alabama was 150 to 350 miles east of the eye as it roared towards Memphis, and little rain resulted, but a few birds, notably gulls, terns, and shorebirds appeared inland the week of 17 Aug. (See below). At Mobile which barely missed the full brunt of the storm, Fr. Dorn on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay noted thousands of terns and Laughing Gulls over the Bay. Mostly, travel was restricted and people were occupied with the necessities of life and few bird observations were reported