

THE SEASON, Spring

(March, April, May, 1972)

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The long-term trend of cooler, drier weather continues with later emergence of foliage and later migration. Temperatures were much closer to normal and many migrants arrived early, especially in March and early April. After Apr. 28 the whole migration seemed late and May was noted for many lingering species both transient and wintering. The last half of May, especially coastally was very dry. The mildness of the winter is amply shown by the number of half-hardy birds much in evidence this spring. For instance, the female Orange-crowned Warbler which wintered at Decatur, north of its usual Alabama limits, was seen daily thru about Apr. 4 (photo CRG). This higher survival also includes many western birds detected on return flight mostly on the coast.

Cold fronts passed through the state on Mar. 5,17,20,24,30; Apr. 4,8,16,22,24; May 4,8,13,20,31. A few weakened near the coast, but most passed beyond it. Good birding on Dauphin Island on Apr. 5,9,16,22,23 and May 4,8 (T, G); often on a weekend and often the day after cold-front passage. Many local birders cease looking for migrants after May 1, but this year because of the many May fronts, migrants could be found in many parts of the state even in late May.

Usually cold fronts precipitate birds right away, and this is especially true inland even though migrants may not be discovered until next day. Thus an inland sample of migrants usually contains only those near the station when the front passed. On the coast, migrants that meet the front over water must continue until they reach land. In isolated patches of woods this continued arrival is easily noted. Thus on the coast, number of migrants are much greater because they include many birds that were south of the station when the front passed.

The period from March to Apr. 17 was noted for early arrivals and the period after Apr. 28 for late lingerers. The 8th Annual Birmingham Spring Count on cold-front Apr. 22 in between these two periods listed a record 141 species, but the only new extreme was the Willet.

At Fort Morgan on Apr. 25-27, 174 birds of 33 species were banded in 330 net-hours in a 12-25 mph wind, mostly NE (I,F). On the 26th, p.m. the wind shifted to SE, many birds disappeared, and the catch dropped sharply. The top ten species in descending order were Catbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Wood Thrush, Veery, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Swainson's Thrush, Summer and Scarlet Tanagers, Indigo Bunting and Ovenbird, total 127 or 73%. Virtually all migrants showed only a thin rim of fat where a heavy deposit probably had been, and weighed 10-50% below normal. For instance 15 Wood Thrushes averaged 40.0 gms., a 15% reduction.

The following comment sums up well our experience in the Tennessee Valley of Alabama in the last 20 years: "All wading birds seem to get scarcer here each year and we feel certain now this is due to the fact that Wheeler Reservoir fish are heavily contaminated with pesticides, heavy metals and everything else in the book. ...we have not seen a Green, Little Blue, Black-crowned, Snowy or Cattle Egret this entire spring or early summer." (TZA, manager Wheeler NW Refuge).

GREBES, PELICANLIKE BIRDS—With fall Western Grebes from Arkansas and Louisiana, 2 were seen in Perdido Bay on May 15 (B&RB,BCI) 2nd state record. Adult

Pied-billed Grebes in 2 ponds near Fairhope on June 10 (C,WASP) may indicate local breeding. Earliest migrating White Pelicans were 40 on Mar. 8 on Dauphin (T). Most Brown Pelicans were at Ft. Morgan, 55 on Apr. 25-27 (I,P) & 60 on June 6 (C); about 1/3 ad., breeding status? Inland Double-crested Cormorants were at L. Oliver, 2 on Apr. 28 & 5 on May 13 (LAW). The earliest Magnificent Frigate-bird was on Dauphin on Apr. 22 (NOBC).

HERON, IBIS, WATERFOWL--Nesting Great Blue Herons near Alabama Point on May 30 totaled 30 (JEK). No Glossy Ibises were reported from Mobile Co., but a dark ibis was seen near Mobile on May 5 (HMS). Excellent photos were obtained of the 4 Whistling Swans which wintered at Wheeler NWR (A). A female Blue-winged Teal with 10 young were seen at Brown's Ferry on May 23 (DHa); a pair at Corte Pont near Fairhope on June 10 (C) may also breed locally. A male Am. Widgeon was still at East L., B'ham on June 11 (JMI,I). Two male Ring-necked Ducks same time and place are the 9th successive summering. Locally high duck numbers are the 20 Am. Goldeneye on L. Oliver on Mar. 24 (LAW) and 120 Red-breasted Mergansers at Wheeler NWR on Mar. 25 (B).

HAWKS, TURKEY, GALLINULE--Kites continue to supply the most encouraging news of this whole family; a max of 18 Mississippi near Fairhope on May 19 (C). No Bald Eagles reported; and very few inland Ospreys mostly Wheeler (A). No Peregrines reported; the lone Pigeon Hawk was on Dauphin on Mar. 19 (D,BLJD). A Turkey hen with 2 poults was seen in the Bankhead Forest on May 27 (K,RDK). A Purple Gallinule was seen near Phenix City on May 4 (T&HM).

SHOREBIRD, GULL--Killdeer had 3 young, 1 or 2 days old on Apr. 10 in B'ham (I,P) and Am. Woodcock 2-3 full-grown young on Apr. 16 in Bankhead Forest (I). A Curlew Sandpiper with Dunlins on Dauphin Island on Apr. 28 (JRB,JFH) was in 75% summer plumage and is the 2nd for the state. On June 3 at Marion, 155 Semipalmated Sandpipers were still present (R). Pairs of Laughing Gulls, each time an adult and a second-winter-plumaged bird were seen flying up the Chattahoochee R. at L. Oliver on May 1,6,15 (LAW).

CUCKOO, GOATSUCKER, FLYCATCHER--Yellow-billed Cuckoos peaked on Dauphin on May 8,24,27--hundreds (T,G). An unprecedented 140 Whip-poor-wills were counted in the Bankhead Forest before dawn on full-moon May 27 (B,BAS). The only April Vermilion Flycatchers for Alabama were seen on Dauphin on the 10th (AGT) & 29th (AOS).

NUTHATCHES, WREN, CATBIRD--The Red-breasted Nuthatch was on Dauphin on Mar. 19 (MBC) and Apr. 22 (NOBC), further proof that the species reaches the coast, even in off years. Belated information shows that the Brown-headed Nuthatch, regularly listed on but 13 of Alabama's 42 Breeding Survey Routes, was listed in 1971 on 24 routes, 5 for the first time. In most winters many half-hardy birds are noted once or twice and disappear. This past one was remarkable for the number of birds that remained throughout the season. Such a bird was the House Wren in B'ham who eluded nets all winter, began to sing in mid-March, and was last seen on Apr. 10 (I). The Catbird, successfully wintering in much of the Coastal Plain, was abundant on Dauphin on Apr. 21, 23 (T,MBC) and was top bird, 28 of 174 banded at Fort Morgan Apr. 25-27 (I,P,MLM).

THRUSHES--Wood Thrush was dominant on Dauphin on Apr. 26 & May 4 (T,G); number 3 bird, 15 banded at Ft. Morgan Apr. 25-27 (I,P,MLM). The Veery vied with Swainson's as commonest migrant thrush. Four indicator lists show the following totals in Swainson's-Gray-cheek-Veery order: B'ham Spring Count, Apr. 22, 7,2,2; Ft. Morgan, banded Apr. 25-27, 9,4,12; Phenix City, May 3-6,

7,1,9; Dauphin I., banded (MEM) Apr. 24-May 13, 4,1,4; total, 27,8,27. Swainson's Thrush was dominant on Dauphin on May 4,8 (T,G); Veery on Apr. 26, May 4 & 8 (T,G).

GNATCATCHER, PIPIT, VIREOS--The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher continued commoner than usual; Dauphin peaks on Mar. 16 & 30 (T); Birmingham, 155 on Apr. 22 (BAS). On the Black Belt near Marion, a Spargue's Pipit was seen on Mar. 18 (K,W). On Dauphin 42 White-eyed Vireos were banded on Apr. 5 (MEM). The 6th Black-whiskered Vireo for Alabama was seen at Ft. Morgan on Apr. 26 (P,I) when the wind was SE. Hundreds of Red-eyed Vireos were on Dauphin on Apr. 16 (T); many there on May 15 & 23 (T); number 2 bird with 24 banded of 174 at Ft. Morgan Apr. 25-27 (I,P,MLM); 189 or 1.38 birds per party hour in B'ham on Apr. 22 (BAS); 138 or 3.29 b/ph in Bankhead Forest on May 27 (BAS).

WARBLERS--The peak of the Prothonotary Warbler movement was noted on Dauphin on Apr. 1 & 9 (T,AGT,LPA). On Apr. 5 on Dauphin, 3 Swainson's Warblers were banded (MEM); on Apr. 11, 2 on Lower Shades Cr. (I,W); Apr. 12, 1 in B'ham (P); Apr. 15, 5 singing in Shelby Co. (BAS); Apr. 22, 10 by 4 parties in B'ham (BAS); Apr. 23, 2 at Perry L. (B,K); May 27, 1 in Bankhead Forest on Thompson Cr. (I). Also on May 27 in Bankhead, 20 Worm-eating Warblers were counted (BAS). On Apr. 22 in B'ham Blue-wings 36 were listed (BAS). The Cape May Warbler moving westward on the strong easterlies which develop on the northern coast from mid-Gulf lows, produced a high of 20 on Dauphin on Apr. 29 (AOS). Hundreds of Black-throated Greens were on Dauphin on Apr. 16 (T). The Bay-breasted peaked there on May 8 (T). The Palm Warbler was commonest warbler in Jacksonville Apr. 9-27 (WJC); peaked at 214 on Apr. 22 in B'ham (BAS); 1 banded that day weighing 8.4 gms. repeated on the late date of May 14 at 10.4 gms., a 23 day stayover which is very long for a spring migrant. Eight Ovenbirds were banded on Dauphin on Apr. 5 (MEM) and 6 banded at Ft. Morgan Apr. 25-27 (I,P,MLM). A Mourning Warbler at Magnolia Springs on Apr. 10 (C) is by 19 days earliest ever Alabama and the only spring record for the Coastal Plain. On Apr. 5 on Dauphin 15 Hooded Warblers were banded (MEM).

ORIOLES, TANAGERS--Many Orchard Orioles were on Dauphin on Mar. 29 (T). On Apr. 22 in B'ham, 19 Baltimore Orioles were counted (BAS); this species appears to be increasing in Alabama at all seasons. A male Western Tanager was at Ft. Morgan on cold-front Apr. 22 (photo-C). Many Scarlet Tanagers were on Dauphin on Apr. 9 and hundreds on Apr. 16 (T,LPA); at Ft. Morgan Apr. 25-27, 7 Scarlets and 9 Summers were banded (I,P,MLM).

GROSBEAKS, BUNTINGS--Peak numbers of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks on Dauphin were on Apr. 16-hundreds, 23; May 4,8,23 (T,G); 10 banded at Ft. Morgan Apr. 25-27 (I,P,MLM). On Mar. 19 Black-headed Grosbeaks were on Dauphin (D) and B'ham (I,P); probably the same female in B'ham on Apr. 8 feeding on sweetgum buds with Cardinals and White-throats (I). Indigo Buntings peaked on Dauphin on Apr. 5 & 23 (T). On cold-front Apr. 9, 27 Painted Buntings were on Dauphin (T). This mystery bird is virtually unknown as a breeder east of the Mississippi R. Valley except on the Atlantic coast and a few scattered birds on the Gulf coast. Although most of the Atlantic coast birds are thought to winter in Florida and the Bahamas, it was thought that some migrate through S. Alabama to winter in Yucantan and Cuba. At Ft. Morgan, 3 of the 4 Painted Buntings were banded on Apr. 27 after wind shifted to SE. This indicates that some of them migrate to the NW, so perhaps we have Mississippi Valley birds.

Table 1. Spring arrivals. Credit listed for record dates. Location codes: AP-Alabama Point, B-Birmingham, BC-Baldwin Co., DI-Dauphin Island, EU-Eufaula NW Refuge, FM-Fort Morgan, LC-Lee Co., LF-Lakeland Farms, Perry Co., LO-Lake Oliver, LP-Lake Purdy, Shelby Co., Mg-Montgomery, MH-Marion N. Fish Hatchery, Perry Co., Mo-Mobile, PC-Phenix City, SC-Shelby Co., WC-Winston Co. A: Additional codes: e-earliest for Region, E-earliest for Alabama.

Species	Gulf Coast	Pied-UCP-LCF	Mtn.Reg.-Tenn.V.
Green Heron	Mar. 18 DI	- - - -	Mar. 28 B
Little Blue H.	- - - -	Mar. 11 LF	- - - -
Cattle Egret	Apr. 14 DI	Mar. 11 EU Mar. 18 MH	Apr. 12 B
Blk.-cr. N. Heron	Apr. 1 DI	- - - -	- - - -
Yel.-cr. N. Heron	Mar. 17 DI	- - - -	Mar. 20 B(B&GC) e
Wood Ibis	Apr. 16 Mo	- - - -	- - - -
Swallow-t. Kite	Mar. 19 DI	May 30 Clarke Co.	- - - -
Broad-wg. Hawk	Mar. 31 DI	- - - -	Mar. 14 B(W) e
Spotted Sandpiper	winters	Mar. 18 MH	Apr. 22 B
Willet	- - - -	- - - -	Apr. 22 B(G&BC) e
Stilt Sandpiper	Mar. 19 AP	- - - -	- - - -
Common Tern	- - - -	Mar. 27 LO(LAW) e	- - - -
Yellow-b. Cuckoo	Apr. 4 DI	- - - -	Apr. 22 B
Blk.-b. Cuckoo	Apr. 2 DI (T) E	- - - -	Apr. 19 B(P) e
Chuck-w-widow	Mar. 5 DI (W) E	- - - -	Apr. 7 B
Chimney Swift	Apr. 1 DI	- - - -	Mar. 24 B
R.-thr. Hummingbird	Mar. 15 Mo	- - - -	Apr. 2 B
Ea. Kingbird	Mar. 27 DI	Mar. 26 PC	Apr. 10 B
Gt. Crested Flyc.	Mar. 25 DI	- - - -	Apr. 11 SC
Tree Swallow	winters	Mar. 21 LC(AS) e	Mar. 11 B(JRB) e
Bank Swallow	- - - -	- - - -	Apr. 8 B
Barn Swallow	Mar. 19 DI	- - - -	Mar. 26 LF
Short-b. M. Wren	- - - -	May 14 PC	- - - -
Wood Thrush	Mar. 26 DI	- - - -	Apr. 3 B
Swainson Thrush	Mar. 31 DI	- - - -	Apr. 22 B
Gray-ck. Thrush	Apr. 9 DI	- - - -	Apr. 22 B
Veery	Apr. 9 DI	- - - -	Apr. 22 B
Catbird	Mar. 17 DI	- - - -	Apr. 15 B
Yellow-thr. Vireo	Mar. 18 DI	- - - -	Apr. 3 B
Red-eyed Vireo	Mar. 29 DI	- - - -	Apr. 11 SC
Blk.and-Wh. Wa.	Mar. 16 DI	- - - -	Mar. 21 B
Prothonotary Wa.	Mar. 18 DI	Mar. 26 PC	Apr. 15 SC
Worm-eating Wa.	Mar. 30 DI	- - - -	Apr. 9 B
Golden-winged Wa.	- - - -	- - - -	Apr. 13 B
Blue-winged Wa.	Mar. 30 Mo(G) E	- - - -	Apr. 6 B
Tennessee Wa.	Apr. 9 DI	- - - -	Apr. 16 B
Parula Wa.	Mar. 16 DI	- - - -	Apr. 6 B
Yellow Wa.	Apr. 16 DI	- - - -	Apr. 12 B
Magnolia Wa.	Apr. 16 DI	- - - -	Apr. 22 B
Cape May Wa.	Apr. 22 DI	- - - -	Apr. 22 B
Blk.-thr. Blue Wa.	Apr. 28 DI	- - - -	- - - -
Blk.-thr. Green Wa.	Mar. 25 DI	- - - -	Apr. 3 B
Cerulean Wa.	Apr. 10 DI	- - - -	Apr. 17 B
Blackburnian Wa.	Apr. 9 DI	- - - -	Apr. 22 B
Chestnut-sided Wa.	- - - -	- - - -	Apr. 20 B
Bay-breasted Wa.	Apr. 16 DI	- - - -	- - - -
Blackpoll Wa.	Apr. 25 FM	- - - -	Apr. 18 B
Prairie Wa.	Apr. 21 DI	- - - -	Apr. 11 SC
Ovenbird	Mar. 31 DI	- - - -	- - - -
Northern Waterthrush	Apr. 9 DI	- - - -	- - - -
Louisiana Waterthrush	Mar. 19 DI	- - - -	Mar. 19 B
Kentucky Wa.	Mar. 30 DI	- - - -	Apr. 15 SC
Yellow-br. Chat	- - - -	- - - -	Apr. 15 SC
Hooded Wa.	Mar. 29 DI	- - - -	Apr. 3 B

Species	Gulf Coast	Pied-UCP-LCP	Mtn.Reg.-Tenn. V.
Canada Wa.	- - - -	- - - -	Apr. 21 B
Am. Redstart	Apr. 5 DI	- - - -	Apr. 11 SC
Bobolink	Apr. 17 DI	- - - -	- - - -
Orchard Oriole	Mar. 28 DI	- - - -	Apr. 11 B
Baltimore Oriole	Apr. 16 DI	- - - -	Apr. 16 WC
Scarlet Tanager	Apr. 5 DI	- - - -	Apr. 13 B
Summer Tanager	Mar. 29 DI	- - - -	Apr. 11 SC
Rose-br. Grosbeak	Apr. 5 DI	- - - -	Apr. 19 B
Blue Grosbeak	Mar. 31 DI	Apr. 8 Mg	Apr. 13 B
Indigo Bunting	Mar. 29 DI	- - - -	Apr. 15 SC
Painted Bunting	Mar. 29 DI	- - - -	- - - -
Dickcissel	Apr. 11 BC	Apr. 23 LF	- - - -

Table 2. Spring departures. Credit listed for record dates. Location codes same as table 1. Additional codes: b-banded, l-latest for Region, L-Latest for Alabama.

Species	Gulf Coast	Pied-UCI-LCP	Mtn.Reg.-Tenn. V.
Common Loon	May 27 DI	May 13 LO	June 4 SC(K) L
Horned Grebe	May 22 DI(T) L	- - - -	- - - -
Eared Grebe	Apr. 29 DI(D)L	- - - -	- - - -
Pectoral Sandpiper	- - - -	- - - -	May 25 B(R) 1
Marbled Godwit	Apr. 30 Mo(K,AOS)	- - - -	- - - -
	L		
Parasitic Jaeger	Apr. 29 DI(MWG) L	- - - -	- - - -
Forster's Tern	- - - -	- - - -	May 13 B(I) 1
White-winged Dove	Apr. 30 DI(K,AOS)	- - - -	- - - -
	L		
Yellow-bel. Sapsucker	- - - -	May 14 PC(JMi) 1	- - - -
Short-b. M. Wren	- - - -	May 14 PC(JMi)	- - - -
Robin	Apr. 25 FM	- - - -	- - - -
	Apr. 29 DI(T) 1		
Swainson's Thrush	May 24 DI(T) 1	May 14 PC	May 27 BF
Philadelphia Vireo	- - - -	- - - -	May 27 BF(K) L
Tennessee Wa.	- - - -	- - - -	May 27 BF(B) L
Orange-cr. Wa.	- - - -	- - - -	Apr. 12 B
Magnolia Wa.	May 20 DI	- - - -	May 27 BF(CG) 1
Chestnut-sided Wa.	- - - -	- - - -	June 4 BF(B) L
Palm Warbler	- - - -	- - - -	May 14 B
Evening Grosbeak	- - - -	- - - -	May 6 B
Pine Siskin	- - - -	- - - -	Apr. 26 B
White-cr. Sparrow	May 25 DI(T) L	- - - -	- - - -
White-thr. Sparrow	May 17 Mo	- - - -	May 22 B
Lincoln's Sparrow	- - - -	- - - -	May 22 B b(I) 1
Swamp Sparrow	May 7 Mo(HMS) 1	- - - -	May 3 B
Song Sparrow	- - - -	- - - -	Apr. 22 B

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