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Winter 1976

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# *The Passenger Pigeon*

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**Silver Passenger Pigeon Award (L. to R.)**  
Elmer Strehlow - Norma Schmidt - Earl Schmidt

# Activity Patterns and Food Habits of Southeastern Wisconsin Turkey Vultures

by Richard P. Thiel

Census studies were conducted on a population of Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*) in southeastern Wisconsin from 1972 to 1976. The discovery of a major roosting site in 1974 provided an excellent opportunity to observe activity patterns of the vultures. Formal study extended from 3 June to 7 July, 1972, 6 May to 15 August, 1973; 12 May to 6 October, 1974; and from 19 April to 15 October, 1975. Additional observations were made in April, 1976. Food items were determined from pellets and observations of feeding vultures. The roost is located in western Waukesha County on property owned by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Portions of this paper were presented before the spring, 1976 WSO Convention held at Waukesha.

## Methods

Records were maintained on the date, time (reported as Central Daylight Savings Time), location, and numbers of vultures, throughout the study period. Activity types (soaring, perched, feeding) were added to each entry. Thus data was compiled on the daily activity patterns of vultures.

## Results

The summer roost consisted of two separate sites located within 0.25 miles of each other. A small stream and series of ponds was located within 100 yards of one roost site. Each site contained dead, mature red oaks (*Quercus borealis*) that served as preening and perch trees. The actual roosts were located in mature stands of red oak and shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*) lying in steep-sided depressions (glacial kettles). The canopy in both roosts was dense and the trees in the depressions contained many bare horizontal limbs where vultures could perch.

Three types of activity were noted in vultures while the roost was being observed. The three types were: 1) arousal of birds, 2) onset of daily activity (denoted by departure of vultures from roost), and 3) the arrival of vultures in early evening. Each is discussed separately below.

**Arousal-** Arousal of vultures was only observed once, on 9 July, 1974. The activity greatly resembled the behavior observed after vultures returned to the roost each evening and began to settle down for the night. Three birds flushed out of the roost at 0510 and perched on the preening trees. At 0511 five more vultures left the roost and soared north. Between 0518 and 0521 three more flushed from the roost and joined the perched vultures. At 0541 all of the vultures on the dead tree flushed and flew about the roosting site, resettled on the same tree, and began preening. Observations were terminated at 0630 with three vultures remaining in the tree, and eight sitting in a fallow field 250 yards north of the roost site.

**Onset of Daily Activity-** Low level flight and excessive and laborious flapping was an indicator that Turkey Vultures were dispersing from the roost in the morning. This was determined to be the onset of the daily activity of the bird. Vultures were observed on 30 occasions in what was termed the onset of daily activity. The mean time of daily dispersal from the roost (Figure 1.) increased steadily from April to July, and leveled off in August and September.

**Feeding Periods-** Eight observations were made on vultures while they were feeding. Four additional observations were made on vultures that undoubtedly fed upon carrion just prior to the time of encountering them. Table 1. reveals two major time periods when vultures were observed feeding. The morning period occurs roughly from 0700 to 1030 and an afternoon period extends from 1600 to 1705.

**Evening Arrival-** When Turkey Vultures returned to roost in the early evening they frequently congregated above the roost area and milled about in huge kettles of up to 52 individuals for some time before actually settling down for the night. This type of behavior was termed Normal Pre-Roost Flight (NPRF). On some evenings the birds returned singly, or in a long drawn out column in single file. On these occasions the vultures went immediately to the night roost, appearing 'fatigued'.

Out of 47 observations of NPRF, the earliest arrival at the roost was at 1645 and the latest was at 2110. The mean time of return, by month, increased slightly from April through July, peaking in August (Figure 1.). Table 2. yields data on NPRF observations above or near the roost by time period. There were three peak periods of NPRF; one between 1701-1730, one at 1801-1830, and a less pronounced one at 1901-1930. The greatest number of birds was observed between 1731 and 1930.

The incidence of NPRF peaks in May and gradually diminishes as the summer progresses. NPRF is most prevalent in May through July, accounting for 42 (88%) of the 48 observations for the six month period (Figure 2.).

**Food Habits-** Food habits of the vultures were determined by observations of feeding birds and through analysis of 36 vulture pellets collected at the roost in May, 1975 (Tables 1 and 3). Mammals, principally Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), accounted for 72.7% of the total prey items found in the pellets. Keys for three mammals (opossum, dog and cat) were lacking and undoubtedly comprised the majority of unidentified mammals found. Birds were represented in 19.3% of the total prey items. Unidentified avian remains probably consisted of domestic chickens. Other items found included snake scutes, seeds, and cow manure.

## Discussion

Two roosting sites were used during the summer period (Mid May to Mid September) by resident Turkey Vultures. One was used quite heavily by the vultures. On several occasions both roosts were active simultaneously. At other times only one roost site was occupied. In 1974, vultures' use of

the main site was greatly reduced due to frequent disruptions caused by humans from a nearby campground. In 1975 the main roost was used exclusively after early June. Disturbances were minimal during that summer. Some of the observations of NPRF and Onset of Activity may have been due to disruptions caused by humans, but in the majority of cases there were no such disturbances.

Vultures left the roost daily in search of food. The intervals between their morning departure and evening returns varied from 8.5 to 10.5 hours. The birds were gone from the roost at longer intervals in April through June than in July through September, based on the intervals between mean departure and mean return by month (Figure 1.).

There appears to be two feeding periods, one in the mid morning and one in late afternoon. Car killed animals probably supply this vulture population with the bulk of its food. It is interesting to note that deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) appeared as an insignificant item in the vulture's diet despite contentions that the present Turkey Vulture population in this region of Wisconsin originated from a response to DNR practices of discarding deer carcasses in the Kettle Moraine State Forest-South Unit in the 1950's. DNR still disposes dead deer within the area inhabited by the vultures but the sample of pellets collected in May, when deer kills are high in southern Wisconsin, reveals that this is a relatively untapped food source.

On 16 May, 1975 a survey was run of 5.4 miles of highway to determine the potential food available to the vultures. One Opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), Raccoon, Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*), and Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*); and two pigeons (*Columba sp.*) were seen dead along that stretch of highway. By contrast, several surveys were run over the same stretch of roads in late July and August. Only one Opossum was seen. Despite the decrease in potential food, vultures spent between 8.5-9.0 hours, daily, (difference in monthly means of departures and returns) away from the roost in July through September. This compares with an interval of 9.5-10.5 hours away from the roost in April through June (Figure 1.). The vulture population may respond, by a reduction in numbers, to the lowered food supply in late summer. A certain proportion of the vulture population probably emigrates from the area under these conditions. A reduction in the population would increase an individual's chances of securing food at more regular intervals to the extent that less time would have to be spent searching for it. This explanation would account for the observed decrease in mean daily time spent away from the roost in late summer. Another possibility exists with regards to agricultural practices in the area. Hay mowing may inadvertently bolster the food supply of vultures in late summer by killing large amounts of rodents, pheasants, and other animals. There are generally two hay harvests each summer, one in June and one in August. On 2 July 1973 seven vultures were observed sitting in a freshly mowed hay field and apparently fed on several items scattered about the field. It was presumed they were feeding on Meadow Voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) killed by the mowers. Although none were ever observed feeding in the fields during the August harvests, vultures undoubtedly capitalize on this additional food source in late summer.

Manure was an interesting item found in the diet of Turkey Vultures. Manure was only observed to be utilized by vultures in the spring and fall when vultures were migrating. It is not known whether: these seasonal

occurrences result from the inavailability of manure during the summer; migration places undo strain upon the food supply to the extent that the birds must utilize less favorable food sources; or whether the data collected thus far is insufficient.

### Summary

A southeastern Wisconsin Turkey Vulture population was observed from 1972-76. Birds congregated each night in a roosting area. They were observed at the onset of their daily activity on 30 occasions and the mean daily time of departure of the birds increased steadily from April to July and leveled off in August and September. Two general feeding periods, mid morning and late afternoon, were found. The time of arrival of vultures at the roost each evening increased from April to August. Food habits of the birds were reported from analysis of 36 pellets and observations on feeding vultures.

### Acknowledgements

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**Table 1. Observations on Turkey Vultures while feeding.**

YEAR	TIME	NO. OF VULTURES	FOOD	MILES From Roost
1972	p.m.	17	raccoon <sup>1</sup>	1.0
1973	1015	2	raccoon	3.3
	1600	7	mice <sup>2</sup>	3.3
	1700	5	manure <sup>2</sup>	1.4
1974	0820	12	manure	4.0
	0955	1	skunk	1.0
	1630	3	dog <sup>1</sup>	8.3
1975	0915	1	rabbit	7.6
	1700-05	1	rabbit	4.6
1976	0715	4	(+1 red-tailed hawk)	
			Chicken parts	5.5
	1700	6	chicken parts	5.5
	1700	5	chicken parts	5.5

1. Vultures not actually observed feeding but were soaring about carcass which was later determined to be consumed by vultures.
2. Observed feeding but item(s) couldn't be identified. Food item mentioned is probably the item fed on.

**Table 2. Observations on the time periods of NPRF above or near Roost, 1972-1975**

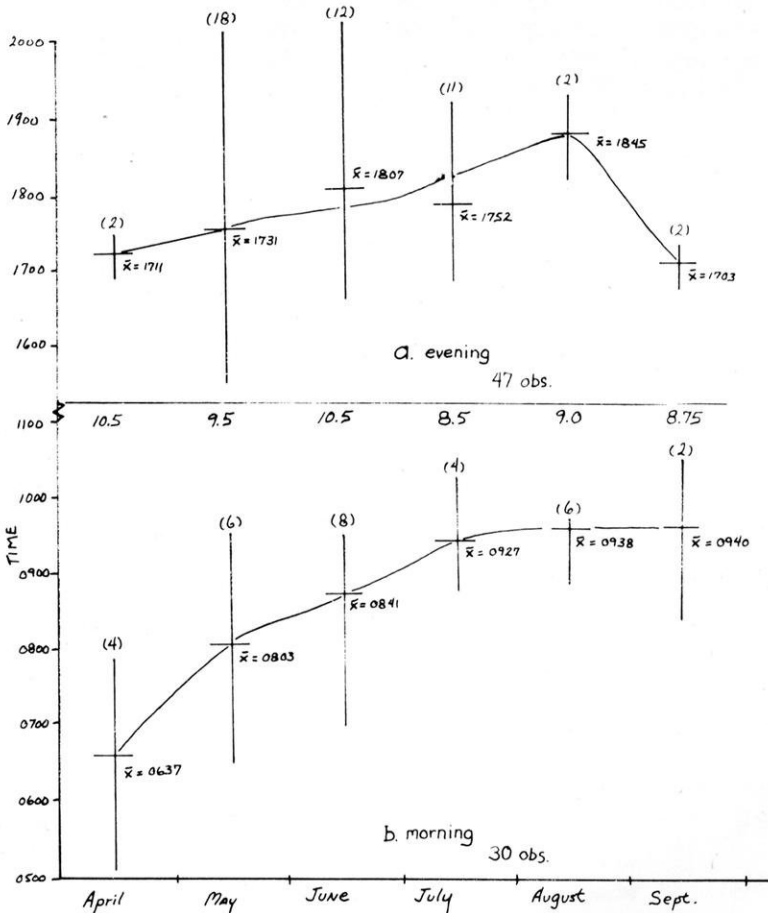
TIME PERIOD	OBSERV.	(F)	NO. BIRD.	(F)	X BIRDS
1631-1700	4	.08	35	.04	16.3
1701-1730	11	.24	179	.23	16.3
1731-1800	6	.13	119	.15	25.7
1801-1830	13	.28	247	.31	21.8
1831-1900	2	.04	19	.02	9.5
1901-1930	7	.15	118	.15	24.3
1931-2000	2	.04	30	.04	15.0
2001-2030	1	.02	18	.02	18.0
TOTAL 8	46	.98	795	.95	

**Table 3. Turkey vulture pellet analysis; collected at KMSF-SU Roost, Wisconsin, May, 1975. 118 Total Items: 30 Non-food (gravel, grass, stone): 88 total food items.**

Prey Item	No. of Pellets	% occurrence of Total Prey Item (88)	% occurrence from Total number of Pellets (36)
Mammals			
Raccoon	27	30.7	75.0
Cottontail	10	11.4	27.8
Striped Skunk	7	8.0	19.4
Gray Squirrel	3	3.4	8.3
Fox Squirrel	1	1.1	2.8
Franklin's Ground Squirrel	1	1.1	2.8
Deer	1	1.1	2.8
Unknown	14	15.9	38.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>†x</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>72.7</b>	<b>-----</b>
Birds			
Pigeon	3	3.4	8.3
Pheasant	1	1.1	2.8
Cardinal	1	1.1	2.8
Unknown	12	13.6	33.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>- - -</b>



Reptiles			
Snake	5	5.7	13.9
Other			
Seed	1	1.1	2.8
Manure	1	1.1	2.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>99.9</b>	



**Figure 1.** The mean and range of observations of a). the time of return to the roost, by month, and b). the time of departure from the roost. Numbers in parenthesis denote the number of observations in the month. The numbers at the top of graph b. denote the mean time vultures spent away from the roost for the respective months and was calculated by subtracting the mean departure from the mean return.

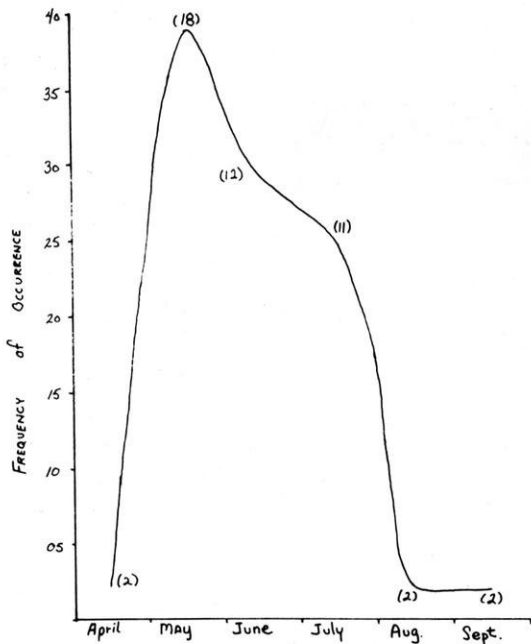


Figure 2. Frequency of NPRF by month.

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# FIELD

# NOTES



By John Bielefeldt

## The Winter Season

December 1, 1975 - March 31, 1976

The winter of 1975-76 was not very wintry. Statewide cold and snow prevailed only from mid-January to early February, and a strong February migration complemented winter finch movements that were truly in motion all season long.

The outstanding record was certainly Wisconsin's second Black-throated Sparrow, far from its desert range in the southwestern United States. A Hawk Owl, another Great Gray Owl, a Townsend's Solitaire, a wintering Sandhill Crane, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak throughout March, and an early December Water Pipit were also enlivening discoveries, but other rarities were scarce by recent standards.

Midwinter wasn't dull however. Every winter finch, including the Hoary Redpoll, showed a fair to excellent flight, and only the Pine Grosbeak stayed in northern counties. Several species' fall moves, in fact, carried right past Wisconsin. Others ebbed as winter went on. Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks (and Red-breasted Nuthatches) were numerous as far as Tennessee and Arkansas. Most hawks and owls, Northern Shrikes, and Bohemian Waxwings also equalled or bettered last year's numbers within Wisconsin. Even the Gray Jay and Boreal Chickadee managed to get to a few strange localities.

After a rather mild December, January was colder than usual all across the state, but February turned extraordinarily warm, averaging 7° to 10°F above normal. Migrant Canada Geese and blackbirds responded with a February 24-29 flight over almost half of Wisconsin. Robins, Killdeers, and meadowlarks reached a dozen lower counties at this time.

March started with five straight days of the worst ice storm in southern Wisconsin's weather history. Ice an inch and more thick covered the ground and every twig in an east-west band two or three counties wide. Bird mortality is unknown although reverse migration did occur. Geese (and some hawks) flowed north again on March 6-7.

The rest of March was warm -- 2° to 6°F above normal in most areas -- and especially wet. Earlier winter months had averaged near-normal amounts of precipitation but the whole state got 1½ to 2 times its typical rain and snow during March. Relatively minor migrations, mostly water-

fowl and blackbirds, entered southern counties on March 9th and 12th. The next move, March 18-20, was easily the biggest of the month. Heavy southern and central migrations and ubiquitous north-central arrivals of geese, ducks, hawks, Killdeers, Robins, and blackbirds coincided with Saturday field trips. Another strong flight March 23-24 began to touch the far north.

Some daily migration was evident the rest of the month. Included were marked early arrivals of Greater *and* Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpipers, and incredibly a dowitcher on March 27-29. In view of this, the warm weather, and the excellent mid-month passage it seems curious that not one Tree Swallow or Eastern Phoebe--sometimes much earlier--could be found before the 25th.

Hilsenhoff has already summarized Christmas count and count period observations (*Pass. Pigeon 38: 4-18*). Only other December records of special interest are added here. Full midwinter and March reports came from 50 observers in 34 counties. Fragmentary notes were also received from 14 additional counties. Major gaps in coverage were six counties south and west of Vernon and Dane, and (except for Langlade, Vilas, Price, Iron, and Burnett) the two entire northern tiers of counties. *All* reports which follow, both regional rarities and exceptional dates, were well documented.

#### Seasonal Summary

**Common Loon:** Arrivals reported only in Washington Co. March 25 (Haselen), four more southeastern counties March 28-31, and St. Croix Co. March 31 (Faanes).

**Red-throated Loon:** Two seen Ozaukee Co. March 20 (Epstein) and March 28 (Tessen).

**Horned Grebe:** Only arrivals March 27 Columbia (Tessen), March 30 Waukesha (Bielefeldt), and March 31 Milwaukee (Epstein) Cos.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** Wintered Dane (2--Hilsenhoff, Tessen), Walworth (1--Carnes, Tessen), and Waukesha (2--Bielefeldt) Cos. Migrants March 12 Waukesha Co. (Bielefeldt) and March 19 Milwaukee (Epstein) and Brown (Trick) Cos., with a well-marked move March 25-28 as far as Wood, Marathon, and St. Croix Cos.

**Great Blue Heron:** One Feb. 1-14 at Petenwell Dam, Juneau-Adams Cos. (Leshner) sole mid-winter report. Arrived March 15 Waukesha Co. (Bielefeldt), then five southeastern reports during and right after the March 18-20 flights. Reached several northwestern counties March 25-29.

**Great Egret:** Thirteen Vernon Co. March 31 (Weber) only report.

**Black-crowned Night Heron:** The Christmas count bird remained Feb. 15 LaCrosse Co. (Leshner).

**Mute Swan:** Two Ashland Co. Feb. 24 (Butterbrodt), one Door Co. Dec. 1-Mar. 14 (Lukes), and one Waukesha Co. Feb. 11-April 5 (Bielefeldt) were all thought to be the same birds reported in preceding seasons, but one Sheboygan Co. March 21-25 (Koopman) and one Milwaukee Co. March 17 (Epstein) were new. Dates unavailable for one in Jefferson Co.

**Whistling Swan:** No post-Christmas reports until three southeastern arrivals March 13-16 beginning in Jefferson Co. (Tessen). Scattered small numbers as far as Brown and LaCrosse Cos. by March 20, east-central movements March 26, and three northwestern arrivals March 28-29. Cleary, Columban, and Bauman estimated 6,900 in Brown Co. March 29.

**Canada Goose:** Wintered in at least six south and south-central counties. Vagrant southeastern flocks Feb. 12-21 and a heavy migration there Feb. 24-27 and 29, some birds reaching Fond du Lac and LaCrosse Cos. Renewed movement March 6-7 was probably the last major passage in the far south. None of these early flights really penetrated the state's northern half, where the first strong numbers came March 19-20.

- Snow Goose:** Two injured "blues" wintered Fond du Lac Co. (Knuth). Very early arrivals Feb. 29 Dane Co. (14--Hilsenhoff), with 10 Rock Co. and 40 Walworth Co. March 6 (Tessen). Subsequent March reports in six other counties mentioned 1-25 birds.
- Greater White-fronted Goose:** March 6 Walworth Co. (3--Tessen), March 22 Dodge Co. (9--Haselen), and March 24 St. Croix Co. (1--Faanes) only.
- Ducks:** Spring arrival dates were clumped on the weekends following duck flights of March 9 and March 12 (small numbers of most species, far south only), March 19 (major move to midstate), and about March 24 (heavy migration, almost statewide). Only migrants outside that pattern plus the less common winterers are noted below.
- Gadwall:** Wintered Milwaukee Co. (Donald) and Dane Co. (260--Hilsenhoff).
- Common Pintail:** Singles wintered Dane (Hilsenhoff), Milwaukee (Tessen), and Brown (Cleary, Columban) Cos., four Waukesha Co. (Bielefeldt).
- Green-winged Teal:** Wintered LaCrosse (2--Leshner) and Dane (6--Hilsenhoff) Cos.
- American Wigeon:** Single winterers Milwaukee (4 observers), Dane (Hilsenhoff), LaCrosse (Leshner), and Winnebago (Tessen) Cos.
- Northern Shoveler:** Dane Co. winterers numbered 66 to 75 (Hilsenhoff, Tessen).
- Wood Duck:** One wintered LaCrosse Co. (Leshner) and two in each of Dane (Hilsenhoff), Milwaukee (4 observers), Waukesha (Bielefeldt), and Winnebago (Tessen) Cos.
- Redhead:** At least two wintered Winnebago Co. (Tessen). Seen Jan. 3 Ozaukee Co. (Bintz), Feb. 12 Walworth Co. (Tessen), Feb. 17 Milwaukee Co. (Basten), Feb. 24 Brown Co. (12--Trick). Up to 45 appeared Milwaukee Co. by March 8-9 (Donald, Epstein).
- Ring-necked Duck:** Singles Jan. 10 in both Waupaca (Tessen) and Waukesha (Bielefeldt) Cos. Arrived Feb. 29 Waukesha Co. (Bintz) but not elsewhere until March 10-13.
- Canvasback:** Wintered Ozaukee and Milwaukee Cos. (Donald *et al.*); seen Jan. 10 Waukesha Co. (6--Bielefeldt) and Feb. 12 Dane Co. (Tessen). Appeared Feb. 24 LaCrosse Co. (Leshner) with 45 on Feb. 29 Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff), elsewhere March 12-14.
- Lesser Scaup:** Wintered Winnebago Co. (Tessen) and farther south. Arrived Feb. 29 Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff) and as far as Barron Co. by March 20 (Faanes).
- Oldsquaw:** One March 6 Walworth Co. (Tessen) only inland report after Christmas.
- Harlequin Duck:** One reported Racine Co. Dec. 3 (Donald) and two Manitowoc Co. on an unspecified March date (Bauman).
- White-winged Scoter:** Wintered Milwaukee Co. (5 observers); seen Kenosha Co. Feb. 9-March 21 (Hoffman, Jim Hamers).
- Ruddy Duck:** Wintered Milwaukee and Ozaukee Cos. (Donald, Basten), Fond du Lac Co. (1--Knuth), and Winnebago Co. (1--Tessen). Also seen Jan. 1 Manitowoc Co. (Woodcock) and Feb. 12 Walworth Co. (Tessen). Arrived Feb. 29 Dane Co. (29--Hilsenhoff) and reached Brown Co. March 10 (Trick). Counts of 42 in both Waukesha and Kenosha Cos. March 12-13 seem high for so early.
- Hooded Merganser:** Wintered Ozaukee, Milwaukee, and Walworth Cos. (Donald, Tessen). One possibly migrant Feb. 29 Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff); two did arrive March 7 Rock Co. (Brakefield) and two north to Portage Co. March 16 (Krings).
- Common Merganser:** Non-wintering birds by Feb. 25 Waukesha Co. (Bielefeldt) and Feb. 28 LaCrosse Co. (200--Leshner).
- Red-breasted Merganser:** Wintered southern Lake Michigan, the probable source of two "arrivals" Waukesha Co. March 12; no migrants reported elsewhere until March 25-27.
- Turkey Vulture:** One arrived very early Milwaukee Co. March 7 (Donald, Tessen). Next March 14 Walworth Co. (Carnes), then March 23-30 in Waukesha, Manitowoc, Sauk, and Wood Cos.
- Hawks:** Although some northward Buteo drift was noticeable in the latter half of February and a strong Red-tail flight came March 6 (at least in the south), the major hawk migration was obviously March 18-21. Arrivals or peaks in Accipiters, Red-tails, Red-shoulders, Rough-legs, Harriers, and/or Kestrels were noted in almost all reporting counties.
- Northern Goshawk:** Not a good flight year. Slightly below last winter on Christmas counts and in subsequent reports from 11 widely scattered counties (versus 15 in 1975).
- Sharp-shinned Hawk:** Midwinter reports from Pierce (Faanes) and Langlade (Pickering) Cos. plus six counties farther south; three more counties in March. See Cooper's Hawk.

- Cooper's Hawk:** Excluding Christmas counts reported Dane Co. Dec. 9 (Ashman), Waukesha Co. Dec. 27 (Aune) and Dec. 31 (Bintz), Ozaukee Co. Jan. 3 (Bintz), Rock Co. Jan. 14 (Brakefield), Brown Co. Jan. 6-17 (Cleary, Columban), Manitowoc Co. Jan. 21-24 (Woodcock) and in March (Jim Steffen), Pepin Co. Feb. 22 (Faanes), and all winter in Pierce Co. (Faanes) and Outagamie Co. (Mrs. Fred Tessen). These are surprisingly many. It is hoped that observers are using all due caution in the notorious problem of identifying Cooper's and Sharp-shins.
- Red-tailed Hawk:** Wintered north to Barron Co. in the west and to Brown Co. in the east but apparently reached a limit around Portage Co. in the central state.
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** Wintered Milwaukee (1--Epstein, Donald), Waukesha (1--Bielefeldt), Manitowoc (at least 2--Woodcock, Jim Steffen), Brown (1--Erdman), Pierce (Faanes), and possibly Wood (Luepke) Counties. Seen Feb. 1 Adams Co. (Leshner) and Feb. 28 Dane Co. (migrant?--Hilsenhoff). Arrivals March 6 Rock Co. (Tessen) and March 20 north to Wood, Chippewa, and Barron Cos. No other reports.
- Broad-winged Hawk:** A very early, detailed report March 6 Walworth Co. (Tessen).
- Rough-legged Hawk:** Surpassed the Red-tail's range in the eastern and central state, wintering north to Door, Langlade, Marathon, and Price Cos., but fell a little short of the Red-tail in the northwest. Very prominent in the March 18-21 hawk migrations.
- Golden Eagle:** Reported three times Dec. 4-Jan.27 plus the Christmas count in Burnett Co. (Evrard, Bernard Klugow), Feb. 22 Pepin Co. (Faanes), and March 14 Polk Co. (Faanes).
- Bald Eagle:** Wintered along the Mississippi and Wisconsin river systems north to Burnett and Vilas Cos., and in Brown Co. (2); seen Jan 16 Manitowoc Co. (Winifred Smith).
- Northern Harrier:** Despite an "above normal" total on Christmas counts, reported wintering only in Waukesha (3 observers) and probably Vernon (Weber) Cos. Seen Feb. 11 Jefferson Co., Feb. 15 Rock Co., Feb. 28 Ozaukee Co., and March 2 Wood Co., but a definite migrant in Waukesha Co. Feb. 21 confuses the status of those birds. Isolated arrivals March 6, March 11 (Brown Co.), and March 14; widespread March 18-21 including Barron and Marathon Cos.
- American Kestrel:** The most widely-reported wintering hawk, north to Barron (Goff), Portage (Krings), and Brown (4 observers) Cos.
- Common Bobwhite:** No midwinter reports. Six Dec. 3 Adams Co. (Eddie Soloway) were not duplicated on Christmas counts.
- Gray Partridge:** Reported southeast of Brown, Dodge, and Dane Cos. only.
- Wild Turkey:** Leshner notes that 30 have been released in Vernon Co.
- Sandhill Crane:** One wintering in Jefferson Co. was thought to be injured in January (Sarah Longley) but flew well by February (Bintz). Arrived Jefferson Co. March 10 (5-- Bielefeldt), Waukesha and Rock Cos. March 14 (Bintz, Brakefield), and Sheboygan Co. March 21 (1--Koopman), with a marked move March 25-27 as far as Burnett and Marathon Cos.
- American Coot:** Apparently wintered at least 11 southern and central counties, with 450 Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff).
- Killdeer:** One seen Jan. 1 Racine Co. (Louise Erickson). A small but well-defined migration Feb. 25-27 between Dane and Milwaukee Cos. with stragglers to Buffalo and Brown Cos. Stray midstate appearances until a March 19-20 flight blanketed all areas north to St. Croix, Marathon, and Door Cos.
- Yellowlegs:** Widespread if not early were **Greater Yellowlegs** on March 25 Rock Co. (Brakefield), March 27 Dane Co. (5--Tessen), and March 28 LaCrosse Co. (4--Leshner), but more surprising were Tessen's total of 10 **Lesser Yellowlegs** on March 27 in Dane, Rock, and Walworth Cos. and two probably Lessers the same day in Waukesha Co. (Bielefeldt).
- American Woodcock:** Arrivals detected March 12-13 in Waukesha (Marlin Johnson), Milwaukee (Basten), and Dane (Hilsenhoff) Cos. A March 18-21 influx brought more birds in the south and arrivals north to Brown (Wierzbicki, Trick) and Marathon (Luepke) Cos.
- Common Snipe:** Despite 25 birds on 11 Christmas counts, reported winterers only in LaCrosse (Leshner) and Waukesha (C.E. Nelson, Bielefeldt) Cos. First spring arrival March 17 Milwaukee Co. (Epstein). Although 10 more observers listed migrants--common in some areas by March 26--only a March 20 Wood Co. report (Follen) lay west of Rock and Brown Cos.

- Dowitcher spp** : An unprecedented bird March 27 Dane Co. (Tessen) was a month ahead of schedule.
- Pectoral Sandpiper**: Four reports probably define a strong early migration in an inconspicuous bird--15 in total Dane and Walworth Cos. March 27 (Tessen), Dane Co. March 28 (Hilsenhoff), and 13 in Waukesha Co. March 29 (Bielefeldt).
- Glaucous Gull**: At least two immatures Jan. 2, March 7, and March 9 (Epstein, Tessen, *et al.*) plus an adult Jan. 30 (Harold Bauers) in Milwaukee Co. One Racine Co. Dec. 14 (Louise Erickson), and two well inland in Jefferson Co. Feb. 29-Mar. 2 (Burbach).
- Iceland Gull**: One Jan. 20 and one March 2 Milwaukee Co., possibly the same individual (Epstein).
- Greater Black-backed Gull**: An adult Dec. 3 Racine Co. (Louise Erickson).
- Herring Gull**: Very few migration data--inland southern vagrants Feb. 25-29, no doubt from Lake Michigan; some movement March 18-19; some northwestern arrivals March 24-29.
- Ring-billed Gull**: Midwinter reports in Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Ozaukee Cos. Sketchy arrival data include Dane Co. March 6 (Hilsenhoff), Vernon Co. March 18-20 (Weber, Leshner), and St. Croix (Faanes) and Burnett (Evrard) Cos. March 26-27.
- Bonaparte's Gull**: Most years report no March migrants, especially away from Lake Michigan, but this spring saw arrivals March 20 Vernon (Weber), March 26 Brown (1--Cleary, Columban), March 27 Walworth (Tessen), March 28 Dane (Hilsenhoff), and March 31 Milwaukee (3--Epstein) Cos.
- Mourning Dove**: Record Christmas counts and the annual increase in midwinter numbers continued south of this year's Jan.-Feb. limits in Door (Lukes), Langlade (Pickering), and Barron (Goff, Faanes) Cos.
- Common Screech Owl**: Post-Christmas reports from Kenosha, Milwaukee, Waukesha, Dane, LaCrosse, Brown, Marathon, Pierce, and St. Croix Cos.
- Snowy Owl**: Midwinter reports in Kenosha, Milwaukee (1), Ozaukee, Washington, Outagamie (1), Oconto-Brown (9), Langlade, Burnett (2), and Douglas (4) Cos. plus late December birds (excluding Christmas counts) in Wood, Juneau (1), and Sheboygan (1) Cos.
- Hawk Owl**: One Jan. 20-21 Door Co. (Nancy Schutz). See "By the Wayside".
- Great Gray Owl**: One Feb. 2 and perhaps later Bayfield Co. (Warren Bielenberg).
- Long-eared Owl**: Wintered Milwaukee (5--four observers) and Waukesha (at least 4--Aune, Jim Southcott) Cos. Seen Dane Co. Jan. 11 (3--Ashman), Fond du Lac Co. Jan. 1 (1--Knuth), and Sheboygan Co. March 21 (Koopman).
- Short-eared Owl**: Wintered Walworth (CARNES), Milwaukee (1--Epstein), Ozaukee (at least 19--Donald, Epstein, *et al.*), and Brown (10--Erdman, Trick) Cos. Seen Feb. 29 LaCrosse Co. (1--Leshner) and March 13 Kenosha Co. (36--Ed Prins).
- Saw-whet Owl**: Seen Milwaukee Co. Jan. 4 (Donald), Waukesha Co. Feb. 3 (Bintz), and Portage Co. March 21 (Kings).
- Belted Kingfisher**: Midwinter reports north to Brown, Portage, and Barron Cos. Midstate arrivals March 20-27.
- Common Flicker**: Midwinter reports to Brown (Cleary, Columban) and Pierce (Faanes) Cos. Arrivals seemed to move inland from a northerly route along the Lake Michigan shore, perhaps because of constant strong southwest winds on March 23-24. "Weekend effects" are minimal in this pattern--March 18-20 in Vernon, Dane, Rock, Walworth, and Kenosha Cos.; March 23-24 in Waukesha, Milwaukee, and Manitowoc Cos.; March 25 in Fond du Lac and Brown Cos.; March 26-27 in Wood and Marathon but not northwestern counties; March 29 in Door Co.
- Pileated Woodpecker**: A record Christmas count total but no midwinter birds more unusual than one slightly out of range in Madison, Dane Co. Feb. 19 (Fred McMillin).
- Red-bellied and Red-headed Woodpeckers**: Unexceptional numbers and range save perhaps one Red-head Jan. 9 Burnett Co. (Evrard).
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**: No midwinter reports. Arrivals March 18 Walworth Co. (Carnes) and March 29 Brown Co. (Cleary, Columban) only.
- Eastern Poebie**: March 25 arrivals Rock (Mahlum), Sauk (Ashman), and Brown (Wierzbicki, Trick) Cos.; seven other counties March 26-28 just as scattered. Apparently hit the whole southern half of the state simultaneously.

- Horned Lark:** Appeared Feb. 9-15 in Barron, Chippewa, Burnett, and Door Cos., all just a short jump beyond those areas where it wintered.
- Tree Swallow:** Arrived Wood Co. March 26 (Luepke) plus seven southern counties March 26-29.
- Gray Jay:** Reports in Price (Hardy) and Vilas (Thomas) Cos. within normal range, and two southward vagrants--Brown Co. in December (Ed Weidner) and the first Pierce Co. record Jan. 2 (Faanes).
- Northern Raven:** Midwinter reports south to Door, Langlade, Wood, and Barron Cos.
- Boreal Chickadee:** Listed Jan. 26-March 31 Price Co. (Hardy, Robbins) and two Jan. 18-Feb. 22 Marathon Co. (Luepke). The Christmas count period bird in Milwaukee Co. was seen Dec. 15-Jan. 4 (Donald).
- Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Seen all winter north of Brown and LaCrosse Cos. but nearly absent below that line after December. National reports clearly suggest that southern Wisconsin's fall migrants kept going.
- Brown Creeper:** Spring arrivals joined winterers over a wide area March 26-31.
- Winter Wren:** One Waukesha Co. Jan. 22 (Bielefeldt) and probably the same bird Feb. 29 (Bintz). Arrivals March 27 in Kenosha (Hoffman), Dane (Hilsenhoff), Manitowoc (Woodcock), and St. Croix (Faanes) Cos., and March 31 Milwaukee Co. (Basten).
- Carolina Wren:** Two wintering Milwaukee Co. (Lorrie Otto *et al.*) and one Dec. 2-5 Vilas Co. (Mrs. Royal Meier) have been listed in earlier seasons. Ashman suspected that one Feb. 16 Dane Co. was a fall repeat. New was one March 26 Waukesha Co. (Bielefeldt).
- Gray Catbird:** One Feb. 21 Jefferson Co. (Burbach).
- Brown Thrasher:** One wintered Waukesha Co. (Aune); one Jan. 7 Milwaukee Co. (Epstein).
- American Robin:** Wintered north to Door, Brown, and Wood Cos. A few true migrants over southeastern counties by Feb. 25, more on March 6. Arrivals north to LaCrosse and Fond du Lac Cos. by March 13-14, but the main move March 18-20 was obvious everywhere as far as Barron and Price Cos. Reached Burnett, Iron, and Vilas Cos. March 24-25.
- Varied Thrush:** Milwaukee's Christmas count bird also seen Jan. 17 (Donald). One November through March Shawano Co. (Tessen).
- Hermit Thrush:** Seen Feb. 22 Milwaukee Co. (Tessen). Arrivals March 31 Kenosha (Hoffman) and Milwaukee (Basten) Cos.
- Eastern Bluebird:** Feb. 24 Vernon Co. (Weber) and seven in February at White Mound Co. Pk. (Sauk Co.? Harold Kruse) might have been early migrants. Later reports from 11 other counties--three in the south March 18-20, Marathon March 21, and Door and St. Croix March 27-28.
- Townsend's Solitaire:** One Brown Co. Jan. 26 into April (Erdman *et al.*) was part of a great Plains invasion which sent several past Wisconsin to eastern Canada.
- Golden-crowned Kinglet:** Reported wintering Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Dane Cos.; seen Jan. 10 LaCrosse Co. (Leshner) and Feb. 14 Marathon Co. (Luepke). A large March 24-31 migration noted by most observers southeast of Door-Brown-Dane Cos. went unreported elsewhere.
- Water Pipit:** One very late migrant Dec. 5 Dane Co. (Ashman); two very early spring birds March 21 Milwaukee Co. (Louise Erickson).
- Bohemian Waxwing:** Rather many reports with no seasonal or regional pattern; numbers well short of a real invasion. Omitting Christmas counts seen only Dec. 25 Ozaukee Co. (8--Harold Bauers), Dec. 31 Pierce Co. (2--Faanes), Jan. 23 Price Co. (Hardy), Jan. 25 Waukesha Co. (2--Safir), Feb. 22-28 Milwaukee Co. (1--Tessen, Donald), February in Outagamie Co. (1--Mrs. Fred Tessen), March 28-29 Brown Co. (2--Cleary, Columban), and late March in far northwestern counties (Bernard Klugow).
- Cedar Waxwing:** Probably wintered north to Brown and Barron Cos. Midwinter invasions often come in February but this year a clearcut Jan. 17-25 movement entered Walworth, Jefferson, Waukesha, Milwaukee, probably Manitowoc, and possibly Brown Cos. Some northbound birds (e.g., Wood Co.) March 19-20.
- Northern Shrike:** A record Christmas count total gave way to midwinter reports from 20 counties statewide. Trick credited Brown Co. increases March 25-29 to migration.
- Yellow-rumped Warbler:** One all winter Outagamie Co. (John Shillinglaw).
- Meadowlark spp?:** Jan.-Feb. reports north to Brown Co. with 40+ wintering Outagamie Co. A few migrants over southernmost counties by Feb. 25.

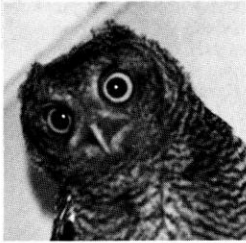


- Eastern Meadowlark:** Midwinter birds identified Ozaukee (Donald) and Waukesha (Bielefeldt) Cos. Probable arrivals singing Feb. 29 in three southeastern counties. Advanced to Fond du Lac and Wood Cos. by March 13-14, to Burnett and Marathon Cos. by March 19-20.
- Western Meadowlark:** Identified Jan. 20 Ozaukee Co. (Donald). Migrants seemed to match the Eastern's pattern very closely except in counties of the far west--Buffalo March 8, Pierce and St. Croix March 14.
- Blackbirds:** Feb. 25-29 migrants in all reporting counties south of Manitowoc (Woodcock), Winnebago (Natzke), Vernon (Weber), and Buffalo (Roskos); filtered north to Oconto and St. Croix Cos. by March 4-6. Searchers found a few Cowbirds and Rusties even among these earliest flocks.  
Big flights March 9 and 12 broke little new ground but spring's major move March 18-20 was heavy as far as Barron and Marathon Cos. Reached Vilas and Price Cos. March 24.
- Rusty Blackbird:** One Jan. 13 Waukesha Co. (Bielefeldt) only midwinter report.
- Brewer's Blackbird:** Two Jan. 1 Fond du Lac Co. (Knuth). Fifty migrants March 6 Walworth Co. (Tessen) but no more reports until March 20-28.
- Common Grackle:** One wintered in far northern Vilas Co. (Thomas).
- Northern Cardinal:** Wintered north to Langlade (Pickering) and Barron (Goff) Cos.; one Dec. 12 Iron Co. (Butterbrodt).
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** One appeared March 2-29 Milwaukee Co. (Donald).
- Evening Grosbeak:** Northern and midstate censuses contributed most of the record total on Christmas counts. Southern numbers apparently peaked by December and slowly declined all winter as birds slid farther south. Nonetheless present all winter statewide in an excellent flight.
- Purple Finch:** Almost every reporter cited poor numbers throughout the season, although a few midwinter birds--very few in the north--were seen statewide. A good fall migration suggests that this species too flew past Wisconsin.
- Pine Grosbeak:** Milwaukee Co. on unspecified dates (Donald) was the only southern report. Other mid and late winter reports, barely beyond Christmas count limits, were Burnett Co. Jan. 9 (7--Evrard), Barron Co. Jan. 11 (Faanes), Iron Co. Feb. 23 (8--Butterbrodt), Price Co. Dec. 21-March 31 (max. 30--Hardy, Robbins), Marathon Co. Dec. 3-March 7 (max. 62--Luepke), Langlade Co. (Pickering), Wood Co. Feb. 29-March 7 (5--Follen, Luepke), Adams Co. Feb. 1 and Clark Co. March 17 (Luepke), and Portage Co. Feb. 28 (12--Krings).
- Hoary Redpoll:** Christmas count birds inadvertently omitted from the published summary were Chippewa Falls 1, Hudson 1, and New Richmond 1. No other December reports but seen Manitowoc Co. Jan. 10 (2--Albrecht), Outagamie Co. Feb. 14 (1--Tessen), Milwaukee Co. Feb. 28 (Donald), Barron Co. Feb. 28 (1--Robbins) and March 20 (1--Faanes), Sheboygan Co. March 21 (1--Koopman), and Ozaukee (Roger Sundell) and Burnett (Wayne Norling) Cos. during February.
- Common Redpoll:** Virtually everywhere on Christmas counts north of Fond du Lac, Portage, and Buffalo Cos. with greatest numbers in a strip from St. Croix to Oconto Cos. December birds few and scattered in the state's southern third, where obvious increases began in mid-January but never matched northern abundance. Lessened numbers and some southern "departures" March 18-28.
- Pine Siskin:** Locally statewide in small numbers on Christmas counts, siskins abandoned the whole northwest half of Wisconsin thereafter. Meager flocks or single birds wintered to Brown, Langlade, and Portage Cos.
- American Goldfinch:** Many comments about low numbers and no midwinter reports north of Langlade and Barron Cos.
- Red Crossbill:** As usual it is hard to see a clear pattern in crossbill sightings but both species were commonest on northern (especially northwestern) Christmas counts, and both gave hints of a light December "migration" through the south, where January reports were lacking. Illinois did get a fall and December flight, mostly Reds.  
Excluding Christmas counts, Red Crossbills were listed Dec. 3-10 Buffalo Co. (6--Roskos), Dec. 8 Waukesha Co. (8--Bielefeldt), Dec. 9 (23--Ashman) and March 19 (Hilsenhoff) in Dane Co., December in Brown Co. (1--Ed Weidner), Jan. 4 onward in Sheboygan Co. (Koopman), Feb. 1 Juneau Co. (2--Tessen), Feb. 20 Milwaukee Co. (Donald), March 27 Chippewa Co. (Robbins), and all winter Langlade (Pickering) and Portage (Krings) Cos.

- White-winged Crossbill:** Christmas count birds accidentally omitted from the published summary were Cedar Lake 10, Dancy 6, Fifield 27, Holcombe 13, Hudson 2, Lakewood 78, Oxbo 10, Waukesha 2, Woodland Dunes NW 1, Woodland Dunes NE 1, and Appleton count period.
- Also reported Dec. 2 and Feb. 14-March 18 Dane Co. (up to 17--Ashman, Hilsenhoff), Dec. 8 Waukesha Co. (1--Bielefeldt), Jan. 21 Door Co. (2--Lukes), Jan. 26 Vilas Co. (4--Thomas), Feb. 1 Brown Co. (1--Cleary, Columban), Feb. 8 Marathon Co. (18--Luepke), Feb. 19 Price Co. (3--Hardy), and March 27 Pierce Co. (12--Faanes).
- Rufous-sided Towhee:** Arrivals only on March 14 (C.E. Nelson) and March 21 (Bintz) Waukesha Co., March 27 Milwaukee Co. (Basten), and March 31 Kenosha Co. (Hoffman).
- Vesper Sparrow:** Arrivals March 26 Vernon (Weber), March 28 Milwaukee (Epstein), and March 30 Waukesha (Bielefeldt) Cos.
- Black-throated Sparrow:** The second bird ever reported from the state spent late February through March at the Waukesha Co. feeder of Gordon Krenn (Donald, Tessen, Safir, *et al.*).
- Northern Junco and American Tree Sparrow:** Midwinter reports north to Door, Langlade, and Barron Cos. Arrivals along that line and northward began March 20-21 and accelerated March 24-31.
- Field Sparrow:** At least one wintered Waukesha Co. where a March 30 singer was possibly the same bird (Bielefeldt). Other reports March 20 Kenosha (Hoffman), March 26 Milwaukee (Epstein) and Dane (Ashman), March 31 Vernon (Weber) Cos.
- White-crowned Sparrow:** One, apparently in early January, Waukesha Co. (Cathryn Steuer).
- White-throated Sparrow:** Wintered Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Dane Cos.; seen Feb. 12 Kenosha Co. (Hoffman), Jan. 15 Outagamie Co. (Tessen), and Jan. 5 Brown Co. (Cleary, Columban). Arrivals March 19 Dane (Hilsenhoff), March 26 Waukesha (Bielefeldt), and March 30 LaCrosse (Lesh) Cos.
- Fox Sparrow:** Vanguard migrants Feb. 28 Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff) and March 6 Waukesha Co. (Aune) plus a few March 14-20 also in the south, but most arrival reports March 24-27 including Door, Marathon, and Chippewa Cos.
- Swamp Sparrow:** At least 7 wintered Waukesha Co. (Aunem, Bielefeldt). One in January Dodge Co. (Nancy Andrich) only other midwinter report, but "arrivals" March 6 Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff), March 15 Milwaukee Co. (Epstein), and three more counties March 20-27.
- Song Sparrow:** Probably few real migrants in the south before March 12. Upstate arrivals March 23 Door Co., March 27 Wood and Marathon Cos., and March 22 Chippewa Co.
- Lapland Longspur:** Midwinter reports Jan. 2-Feb. 1 Rock Co. (max. 25) Brakefield, Jan. 27 Ozaukee Co. (1--Epstein), and Jan. 5 Outagamie Co. Migrants were passing north in Waukesha Co. Feb. 26 (Bielefeldt); birds appeared Feb. 28 Chippewa Co. (Robbins) and Feb. 29 Wood Co. (Follen). Tessen counted 800 Rock Co. March 6.
- Snow Bunting:** A heavy fall influx all across the north-central U.S. gave Wisconsin a record Christmas count total and midwinter records from most reporting counties. Several estimates of 200-700 in late February, probably as returnees followed snow melt northward, but high count was 1375 Brown Co. March 28 (Trick).

### Contributors

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# By the

# Wayside...

Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) sighted at Wisconsin Point. On November 5, 1976, Scott Lounsbury and I observed a Harlequin duck near the lake side base of the rock breakwater at the end of Wisconsin Point, Superior, Wisconsin. The species was observed at approximately 11:00 a.m. during an overcast day which provided adequate light. The species was first observed at distance of approximately 25 meters with both 8 x 40 binoculars and 15-60 zoom Bausch-Lomb spotting scope. The bird drifted out to a distance of about 50 meters and then remained stationary during the 20 minute observation period.

We noted the following plumage characteristics: 1) the facial pattern included a large white oblong spot at the base of the bill which extended upwards toward the forehead and nearly continuous with a white crescent spot extending up the forehead; 2) a circular white spot not quite as large as the spot at the base of the bill was noted behind the eye near the orbital region; 3) an additional elongated patch of white was noted slightly posterior to the orbital spot and dark brownish-black with a faint gray streak near the scapular area; and 5) a short erect pointed tail.

Nineteen Harlequin duck sightings, some obviously the same individuals, were reported from the north shore of Lake Superior this fall. The sightings were made between the Lester and French Rivers and ranged from October 31 to November 28, 1976.

GERALD J. NIEMI, BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT - Lake Superior Basin Studies Center, University of Minnesota - Duluth, Duluth, Minnesota 55812.

## Gyr Falcon in Eau Claire County

While walking my dog near home in the Town of Union, Eau Claire County, on the afternoon of November 27, I saw a large falcon which flew directly overhead within 50 feet. Upon returning home, I immediately checked my field guide and determined that the bird almost certainly had to be a Gray Phase Gyr Falcon. The bird had long pointed wings with a span of at least 3 feet. The wingbeats were quite slow. The bird had a fairly uniform gray coloration except for the tips of the primaries which were dark. The tail was long and narrow.

Terry Valen

## **A Hawk Owl in Door County**

I was driving west along Jackson Harbor Road and saw a dark, owl-like bird . . . Luckily, I had both my binoculars and Peterson's Field Guide with me . . . I was able to get quite near to the phone pole, perhaps 20 feet, before the bird flew to pole across the road. My first impression was that the owl was a Barred Owl. However, the yellow eyes and barred breast and belly feathers just didn't add up. Through binoculars I observed the owl's facial markings--the gray cheeks and black sideburns. I turned the page in the Field Guide AND KNEW AT ONCE IT WAS A HAWK OWL. It fit all the descriptions--medium sized, day-flying, long tail. Behavior was also characteristic--perched in an exposed situation, jerks its tail like a kestrel. Flying from one pole to another it kind of swooped . . . The birds was observed today January 20 at 1:30 p.m. . . . sky gray and overcast. Also January 21.

Nancy Schutz,

Washington Island Nature Center



## **Silver Passenger Pigeon Award to Elmer Strehlow**

If you were to search for our next award recipient, the most likely place to find him would be in the book store giving a helping hand. Every year he contributes many hours at the counter, and can also be relied upon to help with the tedious task of packing and unpacking, when volunteers are often scarce.

He is a long time member of WSO and a regular field reporter. His almost daily trips afield and careful note taking make his records especially valuable. Most of his early field work was in the Green Bay area, and resulted in a regional bird list. More recently he has completed a 20-year compilation of the birds of Whitnall Park, soon to be available in booklet form.

Should you wish to meet him during the week, look for him in Whitnall Park seeking out the newest arrivals with spotting scope, binoculars, and field guides. He is always interested in aiding new birders in whatever way he can. The Whitnall Park Natural history society came into being with his help, interest, and quite perseverance. The nature center at the park has benefited also from his contributions of slides, tapes, records, and books -- A good impetus toward an excellent reference library.

As a fine personality birder, and contributor to the Wisconsin Society For Ornithology, the society presents this merited award to Elmer Strehlow.

May 22, 1976  
Wisconsin Society For Ornithology

# Silver Passenger Pigeon Awards to Norma & Earl Schmidt

**Norma Schmidt** took over and maintained the addressograph operation in 1963 and assumed the duty of membership chairman in 1968 and handled them faithfully until December 1975. Naturally a job of this nature also called for much help from the other half of the family.

**Earl Schmidt** in his own right is one of the faithful few who has participated in every regular work weekend at Honey Creek Natural Area for the past 15 years and many times has gone up and helped on other projects as needed.

Therefore it is with sincere gratitude and appreciation that the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology presents to Norma and Earl Schmidt, The Silver Passenger Pigeon Award for distinguished service to the Society. We are deeply indebted to you. Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, May 22, 1976.

## The Steenbock Award

A Steenbock award of \$100.00 is offered annually to encourage research on Wisconsin birds or to help make available usual opportunities for an individual to otherwise further the purposes of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

The Committee feels that an applicant should be able to state on a single page -- typed -- what he wishes to do. He may add an appendix if additional information seems necessary. Applications are due April 1.

Francis Hammerstrom  
Chairman Steenbock Committee  
Plainfield, WI 54966

## Robbie at 15 Years

by Edna Koenig

To refresh your memory: It was on June 2, 1961, that a bedraggled month old baby Robin with a broken leg was brought to us. I wrote about this Robin at 3 year intervals when he was 3, 6, 9 and 12 years old. At this writing on Oct. 20, 1976 Robbie is almost 15½ years old. My heart aches for this precious bird because in December 1975, we realized that he had become blind in the left eye due to a cataract, which is plainly visible. I can't understand that I didn't notice it sooner but I had been concerned about his crippled feet for many years and still treated them. No Robbie has practically lost the sight of the right eye too. He usually finds his yellow water dish on the floor near the pantry door, his dish of mealworms which stands

on some yellow paper toweling to the right of the refrigerator, and he has a favorite spot to which he hurries for refuge between the radiator and the refrigerator where there is always a soft pad for him to stand on.

At bedtime Robbie longs to be up high to settle down for the night and once in a while he used to manage to fly up on a door but could stay there only a short time for his few remaining claws could't grip the cloth to cling there. Now he rarely tries to fly for he can't see where to land.

Robbie still likes to eat raw ground beef with a few vitamin drops added and when I want to feed him I say, "Robbie, open your mouth," which he does. I then give him little balls of meat from the tip of my finger. Robbie sleeps in the pantry on the floor. Ori the Oriole now 4 years old, was mentioned in the previous article I wrote when Robbie was 12. This bird still sleeps in a box in the pantry to which I carry him every evening while he bites my thumb as he has always done. It's to the pantry too, that Cliffie the Cliff Swallow also mentioned, used to be carried to his night cage. This unusual handicapped bird died in February, 1976 when he was going on eleven years of age.

Four other species were mentioned as residents in the previous article about Robbie. One was the 2 female Bluebirds we had raised but which were finally released, one at 2 years and the other at 4 years of age. The 4 year old attacked Robbie at her nesting time and in his blindness he didn't realize what was happening and was unable to defend himself. For Robbie's sake we had to free the 4 year old Bluebird with the unusual crest on her head, at a sanctuary where there were Bluebird houses. It was a very difficult thing to do.

Another bird mentioned was a grounded Golden Plover which lived with us 1½ years before it died. The third species was 2 Hummingbirds. One lived only a few months but the male was with us 2 years and 4 days. At present we have another Hummer since Sept. 12, 1976 which has wing trouble but seems in good health. It's now active and able to catch the fruit flies which reproduce on pieces of banana in the cage. It also is given the usual syrup of 1 part sugar to 4 parts water to which is added a Hummingbird health food gotten from California. Honey should never be used instead of sugar for it causes a fatal fungus disease of the tongue.

The fourth species mentioned was a young male Nighthawk brought July 18, 1973, which had to be force fed until it was too late to release it that season. In March 1974 it flew to the window wanting to get out but it was much too early. It gradually broke its wing and tail feathers and has been grounded ever since. The feathers of the right wing are weak and break before completely out of the sheath. Fluffy is now over 3 years old. He wants to be on the floor at night so I lift him down before retiring but sometimes he is quicker than I and jumps down. In the morning I lift him to the card table where he spends the day. Fluffy lives on mealworms from California and gray crickets from Baton Rouge both of which must be hand fed. This has been the case with every Nighthawk we've had and not one has ever drunk water. I sometimes dip the crickets into water and each cricket is expected to be served with the antennae and legs removed. In the evening we sit in the music room where Fluffy lives. He often entertains Henry whose chair is near the bird's card table, by making sounds such as, "Beep - Bop" (lower pitch), and a sort of quacking or he just gives calls. The carpeting in this room is covered with plastic because Fluffy sleeps on the floor but he refuses to be fed there. He accepts food only when on

the card table which must be in this room.

At present we have 2 other Nighthawks since Sept. 12 and 29 which live free in the kitchen. Neither one can fly yet, for one had a broken wing and the other must have had a narrow escape for most of its wing and tail feathers were missing.

One hundred twenty one birds were brought to the Bird House since January 1976. Usually about half do not live for many die of internal injuries (such as from dogs, cats and cars) soon after they arrive or must be put to sleep. Among the many birds released were 3 Chimney Swifts, a Wood Duck and 2 Bobolinks, all brought as babies; and 2 newly hatched Woodcocks and a baby Quail did not live.

At present we have 22 birds most of which can't fly at all or not well enough to be released. They are: Robbie 15½ years old, Scarlet Tanager With us 1 year, Purple Martin 1 year old, Horned Lark with us 1 year, Male Cardinal with us 2½ years, Barn Swallow since July 1976, male Northern Oriole 4 years old, male Nighthawk 3 years old, Cedar Waxing 2 years old, male American Goldfinch since April 1976, Hummingbird since Sept. 12, 1976, unknown species which weighed 9 grams when brought as a baby July 24, 1976 (I'm guessing it might be a female Indigo Bunting but I may be very wrong), young Blue Jay since Sept. 10 which I'm keeping for someone, 2 Common Nighthawks since Sept. 12 and 29, 1976, male Golden Crowned Kinglet since Oct. 14, 1976, 4 Cedar Waxings of this season to be released, and a canary and parakeet, both gifts from people who brought patients.

Only the Oriole, Hummer and Blue Jay are in cages. We don't cage a wild bird unless it's necessary. Of course occasionally some need to be in a box when injured but when able are at large in certain rooms.

Last year Robbie was 14 years old and we invited 14 friends on May first which we consider his birthday. When Prof. Gunnar Johansen, the famous pianist and composer from the University came with his wife he handed me a tape recording he had made for Robbie. It was a beautiful version of "Happy Birthday" played on his favorite piano at home which sounded as if birds were singing. He had also composed a short but very special piece just for Robbie. We listened to the tape while all of us were at the table. Robbie, who earlier had been singing louder than the background music, now sat perfectly still, drinking in every note and seemed spellbound. It was thrilling and I was proud of Robbie. He of course had heard much of Gunnar's beautiful music on records and no doubt was later influenced by it.

When the Johansens came to visit us the first summer of Robbie's life, Gunnar always entered the house whistling like a Cardinal. Robbie was impressed by this. In late winter and early spring he began to sing the Cardinal song and has done so ever since. But he also sings a great variety of songs which he composes going up and down the scale at intervals, making him the only Robin Caruso of the bird world. Because of his blindness I'm wondering if he will sing as usual next spring. He has now sung very softly a few times.

The main food of most of the birds is mealworms of which we have bought one million four hundred fifty five thousand since 1966. A large part of these were gotten during the past 5 years when the number of patients increased greatly. For some years we've had a standing order of 5000 a week but during 5 weeks of this past summer received 10,000 a week, making a total of 255,000 so far this year.

I rarely get out of the kitchen before 9:00, 9:30 or 10:00 and it has been much later. Robbie and the 2 Nighthawks are there and the last ones to be fed before the lights are dimmed. I long to go in to Fluffy to feed him and finally to sit down to relax somewhat for there are still letters to write and bird notes to record. But before I leave the kitchen I may realize I haven't fed the mealworms which is important! The worms also need to be sifted to clean them before giving them sliced carrots. And all dead worms should be removed and all tender white ones saved for Barny and Kinglet. All this takes almost another hour. When my tasks of the day are finished the evening paper remains where Henry put it. Much to my regret I haven't time to read anything these days.

We get 1,000 crickets at a time and upon their arrival put the box into the freezer. After about a day they're unpacked, put into containers and kept frozen. Of course they are thawed as we need them to feed to the birds.

The foregoing may give the readers some idea of what life is like and what goes on at the Bird House in Sauk City, Wisconsin.

P.S. We had a sad experience the summer of 1975 which I shall never forget. A baby Barn Swallow was brought to us on June 29 which was raised in a garage in the country near Sauk City. It had repeatedly fallen from the nest but was picked up and returned to it. Finally the man examined the bird and discovered it had been hatched without eyes. We wondered if there ever been other cases of this nature. It's bill too wasn't perfect. We had been noticing bill imperfections on young Robins and Martins. Could this be the result of the pesticides used so widely?

When I touched the swallow he opened his bill and ate several tender white mealworms at a feeding from a tooth pick. Sometimes Barny flew ceiling high and then spiraled to the floor or onto the furniture. Then I brought him back to his perch on the davenport where he was free all day. At night he slept in a box. If Barny landed on curtain up high I used a long stick to which he clung and I brought him down. This dear bird seemed to look and look in all directions as if scanning the sky for insects which he never could find. It was heart-breaking to see.

I spent hours daily trying to feed Barny but after almost a month he was no longer interested in food. If I missed my aim when he opened his bill briefly he became discouraged and tucked his head under his wing. Finally he ate hardly enough to keep him alive and preferred to sleep. Of course he couldn't tell day from night. I felt sad and so terribly sorry for Barny. We couldn't see him starve so did the humane thing which really should have been done weeks earlier.

Now in October 1976 we have another precious Barn Swallow as lovely as a butterfly whose flight is too weak for his release. Perhaps in spring he can be free in this country. I do hope so.

215 Jackson  
Sauk City, WI



# Use of W.S.O. Bird Computer Bank in Wisconsin

by

Michael J. Wisdom

Reliance on computers to organize, store, and analyze large amounts of wildlife data has become increasingly important today, especially in the field of ornithology. Anyone working with large amounts of bird records soon appreciates the advantages of a computer data bank. Wildlife managers and researchers, environmental assessment agencies, and amateur ornithologists all require efficiency in retrieving, reviewing, and analyzing data. Computers have the best capabilities to meet such needs.

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (W.S.O.) realized the potential their Field Notes could have if they were computerized. They funded a project at the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point to write a computer program for processing the Field Notes in 1974. A computer program was developed, and one year of Field Notes were computerized. The results were very encouraging. A cost analysis was conducted and W.S.O. determined that it could computerize the Summer Field Notes in succeeding years once a revised field reporting form was developed and put into use. The revised field reporting form permitted field data to go directly from the field to the computer, bypassing the tedious and time consuming intermediate step of transcribing field notes into computer language.

In 1975, the National Science Foundation funded a Student-Originated-Study at UW-Stevens Point that included computerizing W.S.O. Summer Field Notes from 1960 through 1974. A computer print-out of these data for each year (1960 through 1974) summarizes summer observations by species as shown in Fig. 1<sub>1</sub>. Species data that are stored in the computer and compiled on print-out sheets, include: number of observations, location by County, observer's name, relative abundance (Normality code), nest date, number of eggs, number of young, behavior information (suggestive code), dates first and last seen, and maximum number seen.

New computer facilities, recently installed at UW-Stevens Point, have provided for greater flexibility. A new program is currently being written which will enable one to retrieve information by County(s), by First Seen or Last Seen Dates, and by observer as well as by species, and is expected to be in use by January, 1977. These data are available for use through W.S.O. File-keeper Dr. Ray Anderson, College of Natural Resources, UW-Stevens Point.

W.S.O. standard Field Note Forms should be used by each observer submitting observations to the data bank. The standard form omits the tedious process of coding the observations for keypunching onto computer cards. It is likely that handwritten reports will not be accepted. Requests for standard forms can be made to: Mr. Daryl Tessen, 2 Pioneer Park Place, Elgin, Illinois 60120.

<sup>1</sup>Wisdom, Swanson and Doxtater, 1975. Status Determination of Wisconsin's "Undetermined Status" Wild Vertebrate Species, Ornithology Phase. University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Printing, Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

### Computer Data Use

The National Science Foundation Student-Originated-Study was the first use of W.S.O. computer data. W.S.O. computerized observations were combined with other available computer records (The Breeding Bird Survey from Patuxent Wildlife Center, The North American Nest Records from Cornell University, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (W.D.N.R.) File Cards) in order to provide the W.D.N.R. Endangered Species Committee with additional information for Wisconsin bird species designated as "Status Undetermined". The study combined these computerized sources for 73 species into three books of information which the W.D.N.R. is now using for status determination. Experimental mapping of species relative abundance (based on the number of W.S.O. records) was also completed for 14 species (Fig. 2). The maps indicate the presence of a species in the counties marked, but neither affirm nor deny the possible presence and numbers of such species in unmarked counties where observations were not made.

Additional uses of these records were made by the W.D.N.R. in their surveys of Loons, Turkey Vultures, and other species, and for base data for environmental assessments in several areas of Wisconsin. Several individuals have requested searches of records by species and county. Other potential uses include: monitoring population trends, habitat correlations, determining and detecting changes in species distribution, and providing initial data for use as a key to future research needs.

### Recommendations

Computerized data is only as good as the information stored. The following suggestions are offered to enhance the scientific value of the W.S.O. Field Notes without making "work" out of the recreational enjoyment of birding:

1. Encourage a more intensive and uniform coverage of Wisconsin. The southeastern portion of the state (Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee, and Racine Counties) is censused well at this time. Additional data is needed from all counties in the northern one-half and the southwestern part (LaFayette, Iowa, Grant, Crawford, Richland, and Vernon Counties) of the state.
2. Observers should report **all** species observed on their outings, not just the unusual ones. Records of common species are important.
3. Include a diversity of habitat types when planning local outings, e.g., grasslands, forest, marsh, ponds, and lakes, etc.
4. Emphasize the early summer season (June) for making observations. Although the spring and fall seasons may be more exciting, the early summer season observations document breeding species.
5. Be certain to include observation documentation for those species requiring it. If an unusual sighting is not documented, it may cause considerable confusion in future years; a question may arise concerning the authenticity of the observation when compared to the possibility of computer coding, programming, or printing error.

Convenient access to large amounts of stored data will become increasingly important to wildlife researchers in the future. Use of computerized bird observations is growing quickly on a national basis. Most

prevalent is the Breeding Bird Survey, developed by Chandler Robbins and fellow researchers at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services's Migratory Bird and Habitat Research Laboratory in Laurel, Maryland. The North American Nest Record Card Program, developed at Cornell University, is another valuable source of breeding information. The computerized banding records of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contain vast amounts of migratory and breeding bird data.

These are not the only large-scale computer banks, however. Several state conservation departments either have, or are in the process of developing computerized data systems. The National Wildlife Federation plans to use a Bald Eagle nesting data bank as a basis for identifying and preserving Bald Eagle nesting habitat (letter dated 6 August 1976 from Mr. William S. Clark, Director, Bald Eagle Project, National Wildlife Federation, Washington, D.C.). The National Audubon Society also has a bird data bank, The Colonial Bird Register, developed in collaboration with Cornell University's Laboratory of Ornithology. The Register maintains computerized records of over 70 species of birds that nest in colonies throughout North and Central America and the Caribbean. (The Colonial Bird Register, 1976. Cornell Univ. Press. Ithaca, N.Y. 1 pp. Brochure)

All of these national programs depend heavily on fieldwork conducted by amateur ornithologists, as does the W.S.O. computer program. Thus, one can see the possibilities W.S.O. members have in contributing to their own data bank. Although several other state ornithological societies collect bird observational data, W.S.O. is unique in being the only organization of its kind that has computerized its records. In doing so it has provided a working model for others and has made its data readily available for rapid retrieval and use.

#### **Acknowledgements**

The following are acknowledged for their assistance in the 1975 National Science Foundation Student-Originated-Study: Dr. Raymond K. Anderson, advisor, Mrs. Harold Roberts, Dr. F. N. Hamerstrom, Jr., Dr. Frances Hamerstrom, Mr. Samuel Robbins, Mr. Vincent Heig, Dr. Ruth Hine, Mark Davis, and Dr. Fred Hilpert.

I would like to thank Dr. Raymond Anderson, College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, and Dr. Ruth Hine, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, for reviewing this manuscript.

College of Natural Resources  
University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point  
Stevens Point, WI 54481

## SPECIES NO 1940 GREAT BLUE HERON

SUMMER 1973/JUNE 1 - JULY 31

COUNTY	FIELD SHEET NO.	DOCUMENT TATION	OBSERVERS NAME	NORMALITY CODE	NEST DATE	EGG NO.	YOUNG NO.	SUGGESTIVE CODE	FIRST SEEN	MAXIMUM SEEN	LAST SEEN
BARREN	732511		GOFF						----	----	----
BAYFLD	732502		ROY	02					----	----	----
BROWN	732513		CLEARY	02					----	----	----
BROWN	732512		MIERZBICKI						----	----	----
DANE	732540		DIEBOLD						----	----	----
DODGE	732501		MARCH	03					----	----	----
GRN LA	732526		GREENMAN						0627		----
MARATH	732554		HOFFMANN						0707		----
MARINE	732517		LINDBERG						----		----
ML	732548		DONALD						----		----
OCOWTO	732516		LINTEREUR						0730		----
OCOWTO	732514		WOODCOCK					10	----		----
OUTAGA	732506		BRADFORD	08					----		----
OUTAGA	732528		TESSEN						----		----
OZAUKE	732543		BINTZ	02					----		----
PORT	732524		BAUWGARTNER	02					----		----
PRICE	732508		HARDY						----		----
RACINE	732555		ERICKSON						----		----
ROCK	732552		BRAKEFIELD						----		----
ROCK	732553		MAHLUM						----		----
SAWYER	732526		GREENMAN					0705	----		0706
SHAMAN	732515		HAEMANN						----		----
SHEROY	732518		KOOPMANN						----		----
TAYLOR	732709		EVARD						----	0723	----

Fig. 1 Example of W.S.O. computer print-out sheet.

SPECIES: Golden-crowned Kinglet AOU NO.: 7480 PERIOD: 1954, 1960-1974

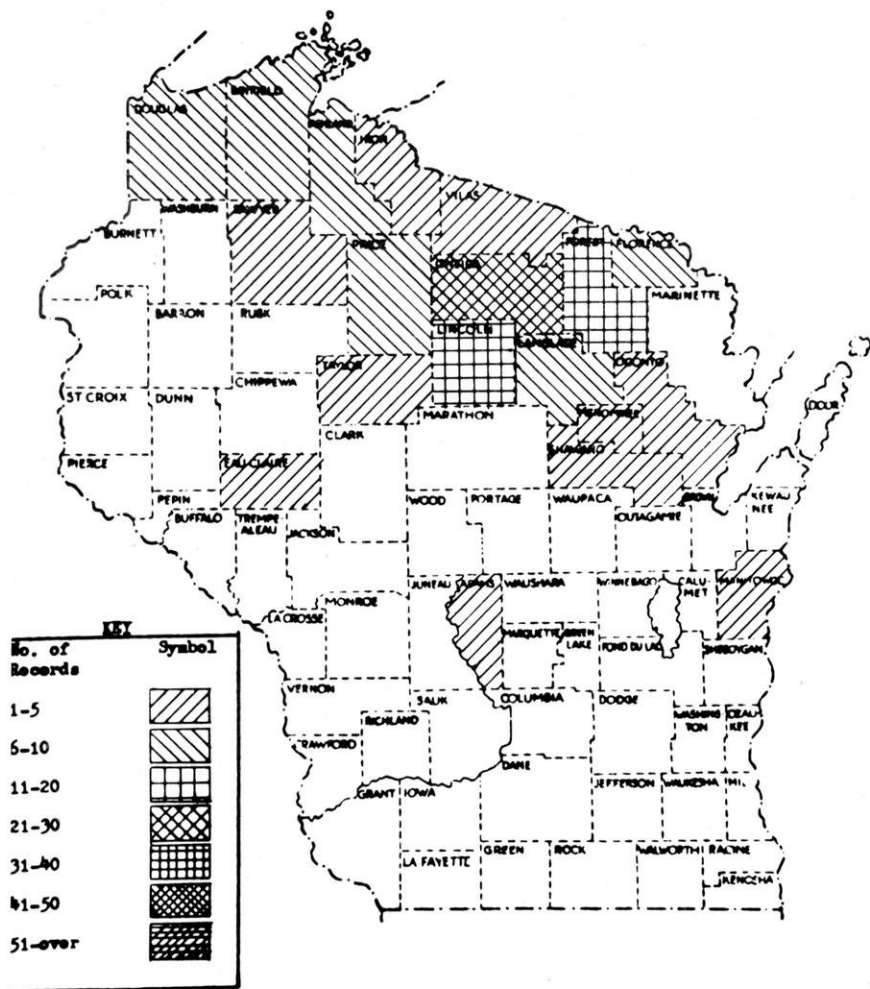


Fig. 2. Distribution and number of reports of individual Golden Crown Kinglets in Wisconsin for 1954 and 1960 through 1974 summer seasons.

# Bald Eagle-Osprey Survey Report

## U.S. Forest Service, Eastern Region

### 1976

This report summarizes the 1976 Bald Eagle and Osprey nesting survey on National Forests in the Lake States. These birds did not nest on any other Forests in the Eastern Region.

In general, breeding populations of Bald Eagles, as determined by number of territories occupied, are holding up well and may even be increasing. In terms of young eagles produced 1976 was second only to last year. There were 187 raised to the fledging stage. Seventyone percent of the pairs that initiated nesting activity successfully reared young. This is the highest rate observed since the beginning of our survey in 1962.

Osprey nesting is more difficult to survey than that of the Eagle because their nests are less permanent and pairs relocate their territories more frequently. The Osprey had its best success since the beginning of the survey with 120 young produced and 60 percent of occupied nests successful. Trend tables for the Osprey by Forest are included in this year's report. Last year's report included Forest trends for the Bald Eagle.

BALD EAGLE NESTING STATUS  
U.S. FOREST SERVICE, EASTERN REGION

FOREST AND STATE	VERIFIED NESTS		NESTS OBSERVED	PAIR TERRITORIES OBSERVED	ACTIVE NESTS	SUCCESSFUL NESTS	YOUNG PRODUCED
	1975	1976					
OTTAWA	67	76	76	44	30	25	39
HLAWATHA	25	19	24	23	7	1	1
HURON-MANISTEE	21	19	21	12	11	6	10
MICHIGAN	113	114	121	79	48	32	50
CHEQUAMEGON	17	21	21	15	13	10	14
NICOLET	30	30	30	20	18	10	16
WISCONSIN	47	51	51	35	31	20	30
SUPERIOR	75	73	73	52	32	26	29
CHIPPEWA	163	176	176	94	67	48	78
MINNESOTA	238	249	249	146	99	74	107
REGION 9 TOTALS	398	414	421	260	178	126	187

OSPREY NESTING STATUS  
U.S. FOREST SERVICE, EASTERN REGION

Year 1976

FOREST AND STATE	VERIFIED NESTS		NESTS OBSERVED	PAIR TERRITORIES OBSERVED	ACTIVE NESTS	SUCCESSFUL NESTS	YOUNG PRODUCED
	1975	1976					
OTTAWA	11	12	12	12	10	5	7
HIAWATHA	17	26	30	23	15	9	16
HURON-MANISTEE	0	0					
MICHIGAN	28	38	42	35	25	14	23
CHEQUAMEGON	3	3	3	3	1	0	0
NICOLET	36	32	32	32	20	11	22
WISCONSIN	39	35	35	35	21	11	22
SUPERIOR	40	38	38	34	21	21	32
CHIPPEWA	131	138	58	50	50	24	43
MINNESOTA	171	176	96	84	71	45	75
REGION 9 TOTALS	238	249	173	154	117	70	120

## Early Migrants From Iron County in 1976

by G.E. Lindsay

Purple Martins departed during the 4th of July weekend.

Tree Swallows seemed to have accompanied them.

Most of the Cliff Swallows that make their homes under the eaves of my cottage started their southern trek about the 10th of July. Two pairs remained to try for more and they were in for trouble. Nest Number 1 collapsed from under the eaves and fell to the ground during one of our infrequent rains. When discovered, 3 young and naked birds were dead. The 4th bird was still alive but expired in about one hour. The parent birds began immediately to reconstruct the nest and in a day or so had eggs in it.

The young and partly feathered young birds in number 2 nest left their nest before they could fly but seemed unhurt when discovered. They perhaps left the nest because it was infested with mites and I have found it just about useless to try to put young Swallows back in the nest for they will either leave again almost at once or the masonry disintegrates while trying to push those little ones back through that little hole in the top end of their mud igloo. It is believed that all of this hatch ended up as food for predators because the parent birds seemed to have accepted their loss and began to prepare for yet another family.

On the 20th of July, I spend several hours checking the time spent by these parent birds to make a foraging trip for food for their nestlings and it was taking them about one minute per trip. Each day after that it was taking a bit longer. On the 26th, it was taking **five and one-half minutes**. Food was in short supply.

On the 28th, the nest of number 1 again collapsed but 3 of the young birds survived, for I saw them being fed on an overhead wire, but one young bird ended up in the stomach of some animal as I found feathers and 2 wings on the lawn.

On the 29th, there were no Swallows to be seen. The following day, the 30th, I checked the old nests and found 2 dead nestlings in one of the nests. Whether they died of starvation or were killed by mites was hard to determine, for mites will leave their host as it cools.

The mite problem increases as the nests are continued to be used and the third family of young birds suffer the most and few of them survive. It would seem very humane to destroy each nest if one could be sure it was being done between hatches, then when the nest is rebuilt it would be made of fresh material and have little or no carryover of mites.

Since swallows feed only on insects caught in the air, it would be interesting to estimate how many miles one parent bird covers in a day to feed its young. They are constantly in the air almost 16 hours a day in the summer. Other birds that feed on insects spend much of their time on a wire or branch, leaving it only to catch something that comes within sight.

I would doubt that any other parent works harder or longer than a Swallow.

Comments would be welcome.

3624 N. 54th Boulevard  
Milwaukee, Wis. 53216

## **Watching the Winter Birds**

**by John Brumer**

Winter is our busy time. End of the year banding schedules, studying our banding records for patterns, Christmas bird count, lectures and bird talks, as clubs enjoy high attendance winter meetings, feeding our cold weather birds. These winter residents almost seem to push the summer birds out. Sort of an organized drive. First come the Tree Sparrows, then the Juncos, Nuthatches, Chickadees, Purple Finches, Evening Grosbeaks, Crossbills, Siskins and the Red Polls. Interlaced with this moving horde are the Northern Shrikes and the Kestrels feeding on the stragglers and the weak flyers. Our little birds seem to follow behind the Owl migration. When the birds come in on their varied schedules they are greeted by our hold overs, Cardinals, Blue Jays, Gold Finches, the persistent House Sparrow, Flickers, Downys, Hairys, a couple of mixed up Grackles and Redwings, Mourning Doves, a lost Robin, a hold over Red Headed Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwings and the ever present Red Bellied Woodpecker.

We have feeders by our picture windows, so I can sit in my rocker and enjoy the birds. Studies and projects are numerous. Who are the early risers? the first at the feeders? the last to feed at night? the busiest,



the hoarders, the loners? These are some projects. We compare this years populations with last years. Arrival dates are interesting and informative. Right now the Evening Grosbeak are already 31 days late. Last year I thought we had 3 Downys. On a warm day I put up a net, in 10 minutes there were 4 Downys in the net all banded. While I was recording the numbers, 5 more Downys hit the net. None of them were banded. So now I knew I had at least 9 Downys. Right after that I took the net down so I never was sure of their number.

Where do all the birds sleep? This will get you out for a winter walk in the moonlight. How many birds can an evergreen hold? Ever watch a House Sparrow dive into a brushpile during the bitter cold? While watching this during a blizzard, we saw a Sharp Shinned Hawk land on the brushpile, This scattered the Sparrows, but the Sharpie sat there facing the storm, immobile, soon the impatient Sparrows returned. One was grabbed by the Hawk in a move so fast we could not follow it. He then dropped the Sparrow in the snow, positioned it just so in his talons and flew off into the swamp to enjoy his meal. Why did the Sparrows come back with the Sharpie sitting there? Was the price of one a cheap forfeit for safety of the flock? Did this one Sparrow purposely fly near the Hawk? Was this an audacious leader or an expandible with a mate? Ever reach a point in studying nature where all you come up with is questions?

Which birds will mix at the feeders? Which ones will not? Which birds like to play in the snow? How many prefer ground feeding? For contrast, the meekness of the large Mourning Dove and the pushy House Sparrow. Are males solicitous of the females at the feeders? Are they feeding in pairs? Can you constantly spot the dominant birds? Who leads the different groups to the feeder, a male or a female? How many birds are different? Missing feathers, strange marking, deformed bill, missing or crooked toes? Do these winter birds fly the same routes around the property as the summer birds visit the same shrubs, the same weeds? Ever see a complete disappearance of birds at the feeder? Get out the Binoc's and find a Hawk or Shrike sitting near by, or perhaps a Short Eared Owl.

I would like to write more, but I've got to get back to studying my winter birds. Winter is a busy time...

*Help Save*

**HABITAT  
FOR WILDLIFE**

*Mary and Charlie Nelson*

# Letters to The Editor

Dear Dr. Kemper:

I am in the process of preparing a detailed history of the Peregrine Falcon (**Falco peregrinus**) in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and in the Apostle Island area of northern Wisconsin. If you have any information (specimens, notes of sightings, nesting data, etc.) on this species, I would appreciate that information. Also, if you know of anyone who might have such information, I would appreciate receiving their addresses so that I can make further inquiries.

Once completed, this history will be used as a basis for possible reintroduction of the peregrine into abandoned eyries in the area under study and will hopefully contribute to the survival of this endangered falcon.

Frank B. Isaacs  
Graduate Student

Dear Dr. Kemper:

I would like to report the sighting of a Buff-breasted Sandpiper along the shoreline of Lake Winnebago in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. On a clear, sunny morning of August 24, 1976, I was birding along Menominee Drive on the shore of Lake Winnebago. There had been a recent hatch of lakeflies so many shore birds were showing up. While watching several Killdeer and Greater Yellowlegs, a small bird about the size of a Spotted Sandpiper flew over the car and landed about thirty feet from the car and five feet from a Killdeer. The bird was about  $\frac{3}{4}$  the size of the Killdeer and had a buffy colored breast and head. Using 7 x 50 binoculars I could clearly see the Yellowish legs although the legs were much lighter than the legs of Greater Yellowlegs. The eyeing and black bill were clearly evident. After consulting "Robbins" and Peterson, I deduced it to be a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. I watched it for about ten minutes until it flew to inaccessible private property.

Unfortunately no one was with me and I'm not a photographer but there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that what I saw was a Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

Anita Carpenter

October 16, 1976

Greetings Dr. Kemper;

Have spent some time recently with the Hammerstroms and had a nice visit. We are wondering about something. Is it possible in one of the next issues or the next issue of the *Passenger Pigeon* to put a comparison picture of the Barred Owl and the Great Gray Owl? We are going to try and under take a five year study of the GGO in Wisconsin and hopefully we will be able to rally up some financial support. I have a family of six, but the work needs to be done and I don't want to try and do this stuff after I get to old to trudge the swamps and swales. We need this work now to go in conjunction with the work of Dr. Nero of Winnipeg and for the benefit of knowledge of birds of Wisconsin.

I think because of the owl similarities a picture of both species should be made available to those in the WSO at least. So many times we have gone off after a Snowy Owl only to find a Redtail facing the road and showing the white underparts. I think you can see the confusion. We would also like to put in an appeal for some funding to help defray our costs. Everything has to come out of my pocket. Any university or whatever that could help would have the publicity for the project.

Please let me know what you think as I think the next *Passenger Pigeon* will come out in not too long of time and it sould definitely be in the issue **before** the winter gets hear and the issue out in the spring would be too late for the winter work that will be required. Thank you and happy birding.

Don Follen Sr.



**Barred Owl**



**Great Gray Owl**

December 3, 1976

Dear Dr. Kemper:

The enclosed materials were sent to me with the request that I forward them to you. I think it might be an unusual enough story to pass on. I have heard of corvids taking young birds from the nest, but the taking of an apparently healthy adult is quite a different situation.

Thank you for your consideration in the past.

Bruce D. Parfitt

Date: 30 October 1976

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Sky: Hazy

Location: 4434 Chowan Ave. So.  
Minneapolis, Minn.

From a third-floor window, the four of us were watching a Robin about 25 feet away and 30 feet from the ground in a bare tree, when a Common Crow flew down and seized the Robin by the head. After a brief struggle by the Robin, the crow released the head and began to pluck feathers from the breast. The crow also ate some of the flesh but although it was holding the Robin down with both feet, it soon lost its grip and the Robin fell to the ground. After thus losing its prey, the crow flew off. This was the first crow we had seen in this neighborhood.



Joan Korb,  
Gail Trowbridge,  
Alice Juckem,  
Barbara Juckem.

October 4, 1976

Dear Sir:

In my search for breeding stock for both "racing" and "utility" pigeons, I have come to realize that I am also in need of information about the pigeon in general and have since purchased books on both subjects. I have also been informed that you may be able to help me locate breeding stock for both racing and utility pigeons and I will also be grateful for any information you could give me on the following:

a. Location of breeding stock of both "racing" and "utility" pigeons for purchasing.

b. Books on all types of pigeons.

c. Suppliers of tags, feed, cages, medicines, remedies and supplies in general.

d. Clubs and associations for both squab ranchers and racing pigeon fanciers.

e. Journals and magazines on the subject of racing pigeons and utility pigeons.

If you are unable to help me in any of the above mentioned, could you list the names and addresses of those persons that would have access to the above.

Again may I thank you for your help in this matter.

P.S. I am also contemplating starting a Racing Pigeon Club in this location. I believe there's none in this part of Alabama.

Harold B. Camara Jr.  
Red Shank, Rt. 2  
Piedmount, AL 36272

Dear Dr. Kemper:

We had a pure Albino Grackle coming to our feeders from October 17th through October 29th, 13 days. This gave me time to set up a blind and get some slides. The normal Grackles paid no particular attention to the albino, certainly showed no antagonism. One other Grackle had a few white feathers at rump, possibly a nest mate? Last April there was also a migrating Grackle with some white in a wing—a possible parent?

The Albino Grackle disappeared October 29th. I hope it is not now in one of those southern roosts where it may be poisoned along with its black friends.

I had the enclosed print made from a slide and wondered if there is enough interest in albinos to publish it in the Passenger Pigeon. I would be interested in hearing if anyone else saw the bird. Its eyes seemed red, its bill and feet looked pinker than picture shows.



Sincerely, yours,

Mary Nelson  
2526 Hwy. ZD  
Dousman, Wisconsin 53118

Greetings Dr. Kemper,

Here is hoping all is going well with you in birding and natural history and to your health.

I am sending along a couple of drawings made up for me by Carol Rudy of a melanistic Red-tailed Hawk observed by Philip Luepke and I. We observed this bird for about five minutes and we thought at first the bird was a dark Rough leg Hawk. after this time we flushed the bird and could easily see it was an adult melanistic Red tail.

Note- If you wish to use these in the correspondence in the pigeon, you may. Please give credit to Mrs. Rudy for the drawings.

Sincerely,  
Don G. Follen, Sr.



## The Scroobious Pip

The Scroobious Pip from the top of a tree  
Saw the distant Jellybole-  
And all the birds in the world came there,  
Flying in crowds all through the air.  
The vulture and eagle, the cock and the hen,  
The ostrich, the turkey the snipe and the wren  
The parrot chattered, the blackbird sung,  
and the owl looked wise but held his tongue,  
And when the peacock began to scream  
The hullabloo was quite extreme.  
And every bird he fluttered the tip  
Of his wing as he stared at the Scroobious Pip.

Author Unknown

# Book Review

**Bird Finding in Illinois**, Elton Fawks (compiler), Paul Lobik, (editor). Published by Illinois Audubon Society, 1017 Burlington Avenue, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515 1975. 98 pp. \$3.95

This book is another publication aimed at enabling the local and visiting birder to find with comparative ease birds characteristic of that state. The organization of the book centers around the division of Illinois into five sections, with a brief article covering notable spots within each section. A general map is provided for each spot with its accompanying article subdivided into a series of categories including directions, description, best points, birds, unusual species, restrictions and hazards (a unique category) and general data.

Several things will strike the reader quickly. First the articles covering each of the birding spots are brief, in many instances too brief. For example, the famous Crab Orchard N.W.R. only covers one page. It would be nice to have additional information included about this as well as other areas. Second, the book is liberally dispensed with bird drawings, many of which will challenge even the expert. In case you fail the first time, additional opportunities are provided as many of these drawings are repeated, frequently. Third, it is discouraging to read about some areas only to find that they have restricted access, in some instances not open to the public at all. Why bother to include such areas? Lastly, this reviewer is disappointed that only 79 outstanding places in the entire state are covered. Certainly there must be many more noteworthy birding spots in Illinois.

Nevertheless, the book is a worthwhile purchase for one's library. It does provide the birder with basic knowledge of premium places to find birds. Hopefully this book will serve as a precursor for a more thorough future edition. After all a state that borders Lake Michigan, the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers has much to offer. Use this edition to find some of its offerings.

Daryl D. Tessen

## Additions and Revisions to Extreme Arrival and Departure

Dates - Vol. 32, No. 3

1. On page 135 - Opposite **Beach-throated Sparrow**, under exceptional dates column insert 2-3/76, Gorgon Krenn
2. On page 99 - opposite **Sandhill Crane**, under winter status column delete "2 Jan dates, 1 Feb. date" and insert "rare".
3. On page 131 - opposite **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, under winter status column delete "3 records" and insert "rare". Under exceptional dates column add "March 2-29, Mary Donald."

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