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*The*

Winter, 1983  
Volume 45, No. 4

# *Passenger Pigeon*



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# Use of a Bluebird Nest Box Trail by Tree Swallows in Central Wisconsin

By Harvey H. Halvorsen and Bruce R. Bacon

## INTRODUCTION

This study was initiated in 1978 as an attempt to attract a breeding population of Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) to the Buena Vista Marsh, Portage County, Wisconsin. A lack of suitable nest sites in selected portions of the Marsh appears to be a limiting factor affecting local distribution and abundance of bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds.

The following observations indicated that breeding bluebirds may be attracted to artificial nest cavities (ANC) selectively placed in the interior of the Marsh. Eastern Bluebirds were observed migrating through the Marsh in September or October of 1976, 1977 and 1978. Four flocks ranging in size from 4 to 15 individuals were observed feeding on insects along County Highway F, where they used an adjacent power transmission line as a hawking perch. A pair of bluebirds were observed, in August 1979, on the northern periphery of the Marsh feeding 2 fledgling bluebirds. This pair was located about 6 miles north of our study area.

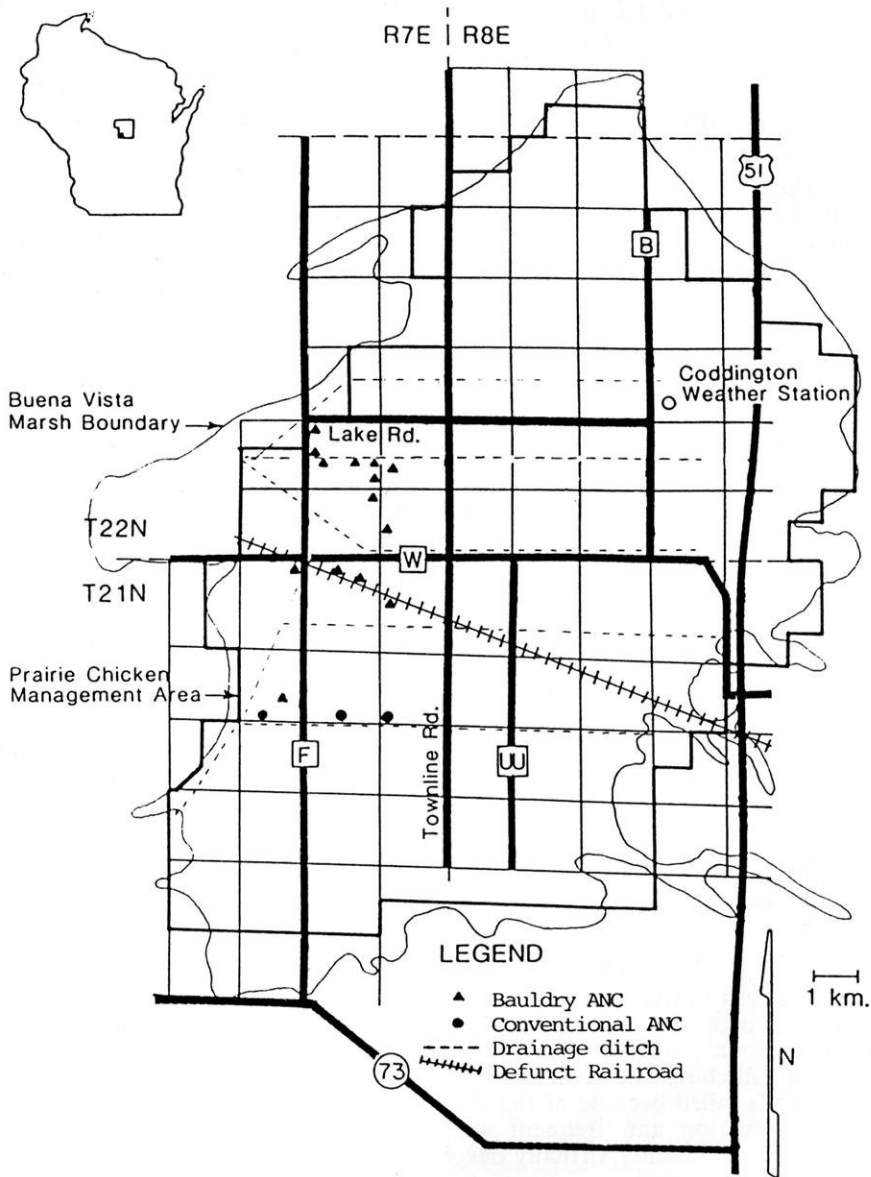
During the first three years following establishment of our bluebird trail (1978-1980), no bluebirds used the ANC's; however, Tree Swallows (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) did. This report presents reproductive data on Tree Swallows and other cavity nesting birds that used the ANC's as well as our views on why bluebirds did not use our trail.

We would like to thank the Portage County Preservation Projects, Inc. (PCPP) for donating 14 ANC's used in this study. The Buena Vista Marsh bluebird trail was established as a satellite of their larger trail located near Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Bruce Gruthoff, former Area Wildlife Manager, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, is thanked for his cooperation in allowing us to establish the trail on Prairie Chicken management-administered lands within the Buena Vista Marsh. Bill Oelklaus is thanked for his constructive review of this paper.

## STUDY AREA

The Buena Vista Marsh is a lowland of about 22,258 ha located in southwestern Portage County (Figure 1). The Marsh has been subjected to drastic changes in its plant species composition and structural diversity as a result of man's agro-economic enterprises (Zedler 1966, 1968). After tree removal, ditching and drainage in the early 1900's, attempts to farm the muck soils failed because of the short growing season. Grazing, bluegrass seed production and frequent wildfires followed, which resulted in a vegetative community virtually devoid of large trees capable of providing natural nest cavities.

Present major land use practices are devoted to agribusiness (row crops, cattle grazing) and Prairie Chicken management. Past and current land uses, resident wildlife, and detailed descriptions of the vegetation in the marsh are available in Hamerstrom and Hamerstrom (1973), Westemeier (1971), Prellwitz (1976), Butler (1978) and Halvorsen (1981).



**Figure 1.** Location of ANC's in the Buena Vista Marsh, Portage County, Wisconsin.

## METHODS

Fourteen ANC's were installed (Figure 1) in early April 1978. Three additional previously established ANC's were included in this study so that 17 ANC's were monitored in 1978. Sixteen ANC's were monitored during 1979 after one ANC was destroyed by a marsh fire in April 1979. During 1980 only 12 ANC's were monitored.

The 14 ANC's donated by PCPP included a 3 inch hole in the roof covered by 1/4 inch mesh hardware cloth. This design, often referred to as the Bauldry design is for discouraging House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) use. Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) were restricted by the 1½ inch entrance diameter. Mammalian predators were precluded by lengthening the entrance tunnel 1 inch with the addition of a predator guard. These ANC's were 14 inches deep with one side hinged to facilitate nest inspection and cleaning after the nest season. The three previously established ANC's were of conventional design (i.e., solid roof, no predator guard, 6-8 inches deep).

Fourteen ANC's were mounted on wood fence posts, 2 on trees and 1 on a steel fence post. Ten ANC's were located in old fields, 3 in grazed pastures, 1 in a farm yard, 2 adjacent to a drainage ditch, and 1 in an oak (*Quercus ellipsoidalis*) knoll. All ANC's were mounted an average 6 feet above ground, with the cavity opening facing southeast. Hardin and Evans (1977) recommended mounting nest boxes for cavity nesting passerines at a minimum height of 5 feet. ANC's were inspected at least twice during the reproductive season, once during incubation and again before the young fledged.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Competition for ANC's

Over the three breeding seasons, although no bluebirds used the ANC's, there were 42 Tree Swallow nests, 1 Black-capped Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*) nest, 1 House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) nest, 2 House Sparrow nests and 1 Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) nest.

On 1 June 1978, a Black-capped Chickadee laid one egg in a moss-lined ANC located at the junction of County Highway F and Lake Road. When inspected 3 days later, the nest was deserted and the single egg crushed. The cause of desertion was undetermined. This highway junction was intersected by a drainage ditch that was cleared of brush and rechannelized in the winter by 1978-1979. The debrushing and dredging activities greatly "opened" the area and subsequently, in 1979 and 1980, Tree Swallows nested in this ANC producing 7 and 5 young each year respectively.

On 4 June 1978, a conventional ANC was inspected that contained 5 Tree Swallow eggs. This ANC was inspected again on 15 June at which time 5 newly hatched but dead Tree Swallows were found on the ground at the base of the ANC fence post. Adult Tree Sparrow feathers lay strewn over the ground and the entrance to the ANC was extensively scratched, probably by a raccoon (*Procyon lotor*). An inspection inside the ANC revealed a completed House Wren's nest with a 4 egg clutch. Three days later, 4 newly-hatched House Wrens occupied the ANC. These observations led us to the following conclusions: (1) shortly after our 4 June visit, the attendant adult was killed by a predator, (2) a pair of House Wrens evicted the young swallows then built a nest, laid 4 eggs, and hatched young, all within 14 days of our last visit. Fledgling success of the wrens was not determined.

Another ANC containing an active Tree Swallow nest was similarly raided by a mammalian predator; however, this ANC was of the Bauldry design and no injury to the adults and nestlings resulted. This box later fledged 6 Tree Swallows, but was not used the following year for nesting.

Competition for ANC's between House Wrens and swallows was minimized by the open, unwooded environment where most of the ANC's were located. The only other recorded incident between these two species occurred in 1980, when a House Wren punctured 6 Tree Swallow eggs in one clutch. This ANC was located on the edge of an Aspen (*Populus tremoloides*) woodlot, from which 5 Tree Swallow young had previously fledged in 1978 and 1979. Although the 1980 clutch was destroyed in late May and possibly early enough for the swallow pair to renest, they abandoned the ANC for the remainder of the nesting season.

Both House Sparrow nests encountered during this study were found in the Bauldry designed ANC mounted in the farm yard in 1979 and 1980. On 5 May 1980, this ANC was being actively inspected by both a pair of House Sparrows and Tree Swallows as a potential nest site. On May 25th, the ANC was checked to determine species use and nest status. This ANC contained a completed, feather-lined nest with 2 Tree Swallow eggs constructed on top of a House Sparrow's nest with 6 eggs. The fate of the former residents was not determined. The House Sparrow's nest was removed and the swallow's nest replaced intact. This nest subsequently fledged 5 Tree Swallows.

In 1979, a Red Squirrel enlarged the cavity entrance to a Bauldry designed ANC without a predator guard. The squirrel's nest was removed and the predator guard reattached on May 31st; however, the box was not used by Tree Swallows until the 1980 reproductive season.

### NEST SUCCESS

A total of 42 nesting attempts by Tree Swallows occurred over the 3 year study. Of these, 39 (92.9%) successfully fledged at least 1 young (Table 1). Annual variation in the number of successful nests ranged from 84.6% (1980) to 100% (1979). Clutch size averaged 5.64 (N=42). This average is within the range reported by Godfrey (1966) and Harrison (1975) and is similar to the 5.60 average (N=14) reported by Bacon (unpublished data) in 1981 for Tree Swallows nesting in ANC's at the Mead Wildlife Area, 16 miles northwest of Buena Vista Marsh.

Average clutch size was largest in 1978 and declined each year. Similarly, the range of clutch sizes was greatest in 1978 and smallest in 1980. These declines remain unexplained, but may have been affected by several factors, such as natural variation in clutch sizes or Tree Swallow body condition prior to egg laying. Factors potentially affecting pre-egg laying body condition may include weather, insect availability, and the presence of pesticides at the wintering grounds and/or Buena Vista Marsh. These parameters were not measured during this study.

While 47.6% of Tree Swallow clutches contained 6 eggs, clutches of 4, 5 and 7 eggs were also common (Table 2). The largest clutch contained 8 eggs and subsequently fledged 8 young. Clutches containing 4 eggs (N=4) had 100% fledgling success. Generally, the mean number of Tree Swallow fledglings per nest decreased with increasing clutch sizes (Table 2).

Table 1. Yearly variation in nesting parameters of a population of Tree Swallows using ANC's in central Wisconsin.

Year	Nests			Eggs Laid				Young Fledged			
	#	#	%	Total #	Clutch Size			Total #	Per Nest		
	Attempted	Successful <sup>a</sup>	Successful	Eggs	Range	$\bar{x}$	SD	Young	Range	$\bar{x}$	SD
1978	15	14	93.3	87	3-8	5.80	1.11	77	2-8	5.50	1.50
1979	14	14	100	80	4-7	5.71	0.96	71	4-7	5.07	0.96
1980	13	11	84.6	70	4-6	5.38	0.74	52	3-6	4.73	0.86
Total or Average	42	39	92.9	237	3-8	5.64	0.97	200	2-8	5.10	1.20

a. Nests resulting in at least one young fledged.



Overall, 93% (N = 29) of the Tree Swallow nests confirmed by observation or calculation were started between 17 to 31 May. Of these, 34.5% were started between 17-21 May, 37.9% between 22-26 May, and 27.6% between 27-31 May. Three clutches were initiated in June; one on 3 June 1978, and 2 in 1980. The clutches laid in June 1980 were initiated between 17-24 June immediately after young Tree Swallows, previously occupying an ANC, had fledged. Tree Swallows reportedly produce 1 brood annually, (Harrison 1975). Therefore, these later nesting dates may indicate a lack of available ANC's for returning breeding swallows.

The average number (N = 39) of Tree Swallows that fledged from each ANC during this study was 5.10 (Table 1), compared to Bacon's average (N = 14) of 5.21. Young generally fledged during a 2 week time span from 15 through 30 June. Young produced in late June clutches fledged during the 3rd and 4th week in July.

As found with the clutch size data, the average number and range of Tree Swallows that fledged from each ANC was greatest in 1978 and least in 1980. Factors which affected the number of young produced during this study are summarized in Table 3.

One egg was crushed by improper handling of the adult while it was on the nest. Infertile or addled eggs (fertility of unhatched eggs was not determined) accounted for the greatest loss in production of young (Table 3.) Overall egg hatch averaged 94.5%; however, all eggs laid in 1978 hatched, while unhatched eggs were found in ANC's during both 1979 and 1980. Mortality of one brood of 5 young and an adult was attributed to a raccoon in 1978. Another clutch of 6 eggs was punctured by a House Wren in 1980. Upon occasion, dead young were found in the ANC's. In 1980, however, one brood of 5 young were killed when their ANC fell to the ground. The fence post to which this ANC was attached had rotted and presumably was blown over by winds.

*Table 2. Comparison of Tree Swallow clutch size to average number of fledglings from ANC's in central Wisconsin, 1978-1980.*

Clutch Size	N	%	$\bar{x}$ No. Fledged (N)	%
8	1	2.4	8.0 (1)	100
7	5	11.9	6.2 (5)	88.6
6	20	47.6	5.3 (18)	88.3
5	11	26.2	4.7 (10)	94.0
4	4	9.5	4.0 (4)	100
3	1	2.4	2.0 (1)	66.7
Total or Average	42	100	5.03 (39)	89.6

### NO BLUEBIRDS. . . BUT TREE SWALLOWS

After 3 years of anticipating the appearance of the first pair of bluebirds at one of the ANC's, it became apparent that the particular area chosen for the bluebird nest box trail did not provide suitable bluebird nesting and/or foraging habitat. A combination of low tree density, limited natural nest site, limited perches, and the lack of shortgrass or sparse vegetative communities (i.e., grazed pastures) to facilitate foraging, were probably factors. These factors have been identified as important requisites for optimal bluebird habitat (Zeleny 1976). Furthermore, bluebird feeding habits described by Pinkowski (1975), indicate that "bluebirds rarely feed by dropping onto the ground in areas having tall, dense vegetation, probably because doing so would often require them to relocate prey from close range and not from a conspicuous and elevated site." We believe that bluebirds did not use this nest box trail because the majority of the ANC's were located in areas with tall, rank herbaceous vegetation (old fields).

*Table 3. Factors affecting production of Tree Swallows using ANC's in Central Wisconsin.*

Year	Eggs Crushed	Added or Infertile Eggs	Young Dead	Egg or Young Predated
----- N -----				
1978	0	0 (0) <sup>a</sup>	5 <sup>b</sup>	5
1979	1	8 <sup>c</sup> (10)	0	0
1980	0	5 <sup>d</sup> (7.1)	7 <sup>e</sup>	6
Total	1	13 (5.5)	12	11

- a. Percent of all eggs laid that did not hatch.
- b. Two dead young found in each of 2 separate ANC's, 1 young disappeared.
- c. Two ANC's contained 2 unhatched eggs each, 4 ANC's contained 1 egg each.
- d. One ANC contained 2 unhatched eggs, 3 ANC's contained 1 egg each.
- e. Includes one ANC that fell to the ground killing 5 nestlings.

The open space associated with these old fields, in conjunction with the water-filled drainage ditches, provided ample foraging habitat for Tree Sparrows. Godfrey (1966) reported that Tree Sparrows forage in the air, usually over water or moist ground, and that during the nesting season, availability of suitable nesting places, with good forage, regulated the number of breeding pairs. Similarly, Hardin and Evans (1977) reported that factors limiting Tree Swallow nesting density are the amount of open area for nesting boxes and adequate feeding areas such as meadows, marshes, or water.

The results of this study have demonstrated that in central Wisconsin, the Buena Vista Marsh provides adequate foraging habitat for Tree Swallows; however, the lack of natural nest sites probably limits the local abundance of this species.

When nesting trees are scarce, Gary and Morris (1980) recommended that nest boxes can supplement or substitute for natural nest cavities. Studies by Hamerstrom et. al, (1973) with American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) on Buena Vista Marsh, and Zeleny (1976) with Eastern Bluebirds have demonstrated increases in local breeding populations when suitable nest boxes were provided. These localized increases clearly indicated that nesting habitat was the major limiting factor for these species on the sites studied. However, this apparent population increase may be the direct result of provision of new nest site, creating a localized shift in the population rather than an increase in the overall population.

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# Species-Area Relations of Cattail Marsh Avifauna

by Robin W. Tyser

One can visualize isolated, disjunct habitats as being rather "island-like" to their animal inhabitants. Howe and Jones (1977), Robbins (1979), Whitcomb et al. (1981), Ambuel and Temple (1983) and others have viewed patches of deciduous forests in this manner and have showed several distinctive relationships between the sizes of forest "islands" and the kinds and numbers of their avian residents. During a survey of wetland birds in the LaCrosse area (Tyser, 1982) I became interested in bird communities of differently sized wetland habitat islands. In particular I decided to focus on cattail marshes and how total species number and the presence of specific species was correlated with marsh size. To my knowledge, species-area studies of wetland habitats in general have received little attention.

## METHODS

I visited nine marsh study sites within 65 kilometers of LaCrosse, WI between 27 May - 11 June 1981. Each site was located within the Mississippi River flood plain, and six of the marshes (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5 and T6) were located in the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge near Trempealeau, WI. Each site consisted of "marsh" (= persistent emergent) vegetation dominated by cattails (primarily *Typha latifolia*) interspersed with other wetland vegetation such as *Scirpus*, *Sparganium*, *Alnus*. Marsh vegetation at each site was bordered by both open water and upland vegetation and in one case (the BP marsh) also by a highway atop a prominent elevated roadbed. I used aerial photographs to measure surface coverage of marsh vegetation. By early June the largest marsh (T5) was loosely interconnected by emergent vegetation to several smaller patches of adjacent cattails. I decided to include these patches as part of the main marsh if they were separated by less than 20 meters from the main body of cattails.

I visited each marsh once during each of three 3-4 day periods (May 27-29, June 1-4, June 8-11) on foot or by canoe between 0.5 hr preceding to 4.0 hr following sunrise. Nest locations and hence the breeding status of birds observed in marshes were not determined because of unstable "floating", essentially impassable, substrates in some of the marsh study sites. Within each site, I recorded all observations (visual and auditory) of species detected within marsh vegetation. I supplemented visual observations by attempting to elicit vocal responses of rails: Virginia (*Rallus limicola*), King (*R. elegans*), Black (*Laterallus jamaicensis*), and Sora (*Porzana carolina*) to playbacks of tape records broadcast at about 15 minute intervals. Recordings were taken from the Peterson records of western and eastern bird songs (Houghton Mifflin Co.). I did not consider individuals observed only in non-herbaceous vegetation (shrubs, trees), egrets and herons wading in open water adjacent to marsh vegetation, and aerial foragers (swallows and swifts).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Individual Red-wings (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) and all Song Sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*) observed occupied territories along marsh edges which extended into non-marsh vegetation. With the exceptions of these two species, marsh vegetation borders appeared to represent functional habitat

**Table 1. Species detected in 9 marsh study sites. In an attempt to eliminate irregular visitors and transients, only species observed during at least two of the three surveys for each site are listed.<sup>a</sup> Species are listed by increasing ubiquity and, in instances of equal occurrence, by decreasing marsh size.**

	STUDY SITES								
	PL (0.06) <sup>b</sup>	T6 (0.06)	T3 (0.08)	T2 (0.10)	T1 (0.59)	DA (1.39)	T4 (4.08)	BP (11.52)	T5 (49.94)
American Bittern ( <i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i> )									X
Common Moorhen ( <i>Gallinula chloropus</i> )									X
Common Grackle ( <i>Quiscalus quiscula</i> )								X	
Least Bittern ( <i>Ixobrychus exilis</i> )								X	X
Black Tern ( <i>Chlidonias niger</i> )								X	X
Marsh Wren ( <i>Cistothorus palustris</i> )								X	X
Song Sparrow ( <i>Melospiza melodia</i> )							X		X
Swamp Sparrow ( <i>Melospiza georgiana</i> )							X	X	X
Common Yellowthroat ( <i>Geothlypis trichas</i> )							X	X	X
Mallard ( <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> )						X		X	X
Sora ( <i>Porzana carolina</i> )						X		X	X
American Coot ( <i>Fulca americana</i> )								X	X
Blue-winged Teal ( <i>Anas discors</i> )						X	X	X	X
Virginia Rail ( <i>Rallus limicola</i> )						X	X	X	X
Green-backed Heron ( <i>Butorides striatus</i> )					X	X	X	X	X
Wood Duck ( <i>Aix sponsa</i> )		X			X		X	X	X
Yellow-headed Blackbird ( <i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i> )		X				X		X	X
Red-winged Blackbird ( <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i> )	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

<sup>a</sup>Species observed only one of three visits to a marsh: Least Bittern--Marsh T1; Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*).

--Marsh T4; American Coot--Marshes T1, T6; Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*)--Marsh BP; Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*

--Marsh DA; Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*)--Marsh T4; Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*)--Marsh T1;

Yellow-headed Blackbird--Marsh T4; Common Grackle--Marsh T5.

<sup>b</sup>Marsh area (ha)

discontinuities for most of the species observed (Table 1). I observed four other species: Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*), Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*), Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) during only a single census; they appeared to be infrequent visitors from adjacent habitats. Other species: Anatids, American Coot (*Fulica americana*), Green-backed Heron (*Butorides striatus*) were routinely seen entering and leaving marsh vegetation. These relatively mobile species and Red-winged Blackbirds comprised the majority of species observed in all but the two largest marshes.

Interestingly, I did not find any species that were restricted to small marshes, while nine species were observed only in the three largest marshes (Table 1). It is possible that those species detected only in the larger marshes were "area-sensitive" in that they preferred relatively large cattail marshes. They may not inhabit small marshes for a variety of reasons, for example lack of minimum territorial requirements (Rusterholz and Howe, 1979), lack of critical microhabitats, or interspecific competition (Ambuel and Temple, 1983).

It may be incorrect to conclude that each of these nine species is limited to large marshes, however. Consider this example. Assume only one pair of a given species inhabited a large marsh of 100 hectares, and that this species was not detected in any of five smaller (e.g. 1 hectare) marshes surveyed. In this case it would be premature to conclude that this species is restricted to large marshes. If this species was area-insensitive a single pair should occur in only 1% of these small marshes, and surveying only five small marshes would obviously be an insufficient sample size. Thus, the probability that an area-insensitive species (one whose average density in multiple "small" marshes is similar to its density in a single "large" marsh) would be observed in small marshes likely declines as it becomes rarer and as the number of small marshes surveyed declines.

As a result of this sampling bias, uncommon species observed only in large marshes should not be assumed to be limited to such marshes. This line of reasoning may be especially pertinent to American Bitterns (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) and Moorhens (*Gallinula chloropus*) which were detected only in the largest study site. They were also the two least frequently sighted species -- just three individuals of each species were observed during the study. Other species observed in the largest marshes, especially Marsh Wrens (*Cistothorus pallustris*), Swamp Sparrows (*Melospiza georgiana*), and Yellowthroats (*Geothlypis trichas*), were relatively abundant and more likely exhibited true area-sensitive distribution patterns.

The seemingly high species richness in T6, a very small cattail island, may be attributed to its relative closeness (about 600 meters) to the largest marsh studied, T5. However, species numbers in the other Trempealeau marshes did not appear significantly high compared to the non-refuge marshes (Table 1). Furthermore, the most isolated marsh study site (DA -- more than 5000 meters from nearest known marsh) did not have a notably fewer species; indeed, it was inhabited by two sedentary species: Sora, Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) not regularly observed in a larger marsh in the Trempealeau Refuge (Table 1).

Other studies investigating relationships between habitat island area and species number frequently employ a species-area equation  $S = CA^Z$  ( $S$  = species number,  $A$  = marsh area in hectares,  $C$  and  $Z$  are statistically fitted

constants). S and A are expressed in logarithms so that linear regression is used to determine C and  $z$ . In this study, regression of  $\ln(S)$  on  $\ln(A)$  for species observed during at least two of the three surveys conducted for each marsh resulted in a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.930$  with  $z = 0.424$  and  $C = 1.442$ . I obtained similar values with S measured in terms of total species observed for each marsh ( $r = 0.896$ ,  $z = 0.432$ , and  $C = 1.624$ ). What is interesting about all of this is that Martin (1981) concluded that relatively high  $z$  values such as these also characterize bird communities in small tree-dominated habitat islands. This raises the interesting possibility that the rate at which bird species increases with habitat area may be similar in distinctly different habitat types. Whether this similarity reflects underlying biological patterns or some sort of statistical "artifact" remains to be determined (e.g. see Conner et al, 1983).

The results of this study suggest that larger cattail marshes typically contain more species than do smaller marshes. Also, all species --excepting several species which were irregular marsh visitors -- sighted in the eight smallest marshes were also detected in the largest marsh (Table 1). However, the range of marsh sizes investigated does not permit an adequate test of the hypothesis that a single large marsh, (say 25 hectares) contains more species than multiple smaller marshes with a comparable cumulative area (Simberloff and Abele, 1976). This hypothesis, patterns non-breeding season cattail avifauna, and statistical analyses of area sensitivity of individual species remain as interesting topics to be investigated in the future.

I thank Bob Howe, Tom Martin, and Howard Young for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. I am also grateful to Bob Drieslein and the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge Staff for their assistance during the study. Research support was provided by UW-LaCrosse.

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# Goshawk and Red Fox Predate Wood Ducks in Trap

By Bruce R. Bacon

In August 1982, Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*) were trapped, banded, and released on the Mead Wildlife Area (MWA) in Central Wisconsin as part of a production and survival study of this species. The study was sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point. Floating bait traps (Grice and Rogers 1965) and stationary swim-in traps (Hunt and Dahlka 1953) with full height funnel entrances (Addy 1965) and a cannon net (Dill and Thornsberry 1950), all baited with shelled and cob corn, were used to capture ducks.

Three swim-in traps were placed along the edges of flowages in areas of Wood Duck activity. One-half of each trap was on dry land where corn was placed. As summer progressed, water levels on most MWA flowages dropped due to little rainfall and the South Rice Lake swim-in trap was entirely out of water by mid-August.

On August 20th I arrived at the South Rice Lake trap approximately one hour after sunset. Inside the trap were a Red Fox (*Vulpes fulva*), immature Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), and 20 Wood Ducks. Unfortunately, 14 of the ducks were dead and another 6 injured. The fox and Goshawk made threatening movements at each other, but apparently had not fought. Neither showed evidence of injury. I entered the trap and captured the Goshawk, banded it, and released it.

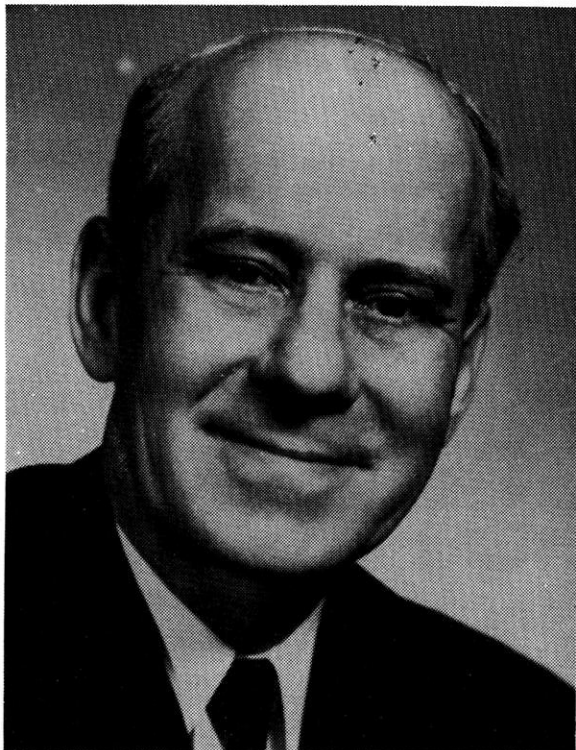
During the A.M. check on 22 August, I found the same Goshawk in the same trap without any ducks. For the remainder of the trapping season this trap caught few ducks although many Wood Ducks had been caught in it previously. It may be that the Goshawk was present in the area and kept the ducks away.

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### **In Memoriam: Walter E. Scott**

It had to happen eventually. For Walter E. Scott, who had many times written appreciative comments about deceased WSO members, someone else would need to pen words to describe his life and influence. Walter's death occurred in Madison on June 25, 1983, after an illness of several years.

Most of Walter's life was lived in Wisconsin -- a state he dearly loved, and for which he labored. He was born in Milwaukee in 1911, began employment with the Wisconsin Conservation Department in Madison in 1936, and made his home in Madison ever since his marriage to Gertrude Cox in 1941. His only lengthy absences from Wisconsin were for college education (B.A., Kalamazoo College, 1933), and for service with the U.S. Army (Pacific Theater, 1942-44). Ever the scholar whose search for knowledge never ceased, Walter earned additional degrees from Kalamazoo College (M.A., 1955) and from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (M.S., 1965).

His career with the Wisconsin Conservation Department and its successor Department of Natural Resources spanned forty years until his retirement in 1975. Starting as a conservation warden, he later headed the Department of Research, and served eventually as an administrative assistant to the director. This work kept him in contact with all phases of conservation work. Perhaps there was no other person of this generation who knew the

scope of Wisconsin conservation thought and activity more thoroughly than Scott. His areas of competence were broad -- water, air plants, mammals, birds, ect. His expertise was historical. He researched the past, publishing "Conservation's First Century in Wisconsin" (1967). He research the present, publishing such articles as "The Management of Predacious and Fish-eating Birds in Wisconsin" (1955), "The Wildlife Resource of Wisconsin" (1965), "Problems and Problem Areas of Pesticide Use" (1968), and "Protecting Non-game Birds in Wisconsin (1977). His mind was ever on the future as he promoted and helped implement the state's ORAP program, and supported private groups promoting land preservation. For several years after its inception, he acted as secretary of the liaison committee of the Natural Resources Committee of State Agencies.

WSO has special reason to pay tribute to Walter Scott. He was one of the leading founders in 1939. He promoted the formation of the organization, helped prepare its first constitution, and served as the first editor of "The Passenger Pigeon (1939-43). The magazine began as a monthly mimeographed publication; and although it operated on a "shoestring", Scott nursed it into the printing stage and extended it into a widely respected quarterly journal. Long after the editorship passed on to other hands, Walter continued to furnish many articles.

The idea for the WSO Supply Department originated with him. He took a major part in gathering historical material for the first edition of "Wisconsin Birds -- Checklist With Migration Charts", and steered its publication (1942). The format of this pamphlet was subsequently copied by other states and regions. He will be remembered as one who promoted the erection of the monument to the Passenger Pigeon which now stands in Wyalusing Park, and edited the companion booklet "Silent Wings".

How many persons became WSO members through Walter's influence and invitation? No one will ever know. In 1946 he expanded the current "library committee" into a broader "education committee". This helped build up the ornithological offerings of various state libraries, and established a pattern of statewide field trips that is still expanding. He served as WSO vice-president (1946-47) and president (1949-50). It was a grateful Society that awarded him one of the first "Silver Passenger Pigeon Awards" in 1964.

He served as the Society's custodian from 1959 until his death. His concern for the historical led to his collection of many hundreds of books, pamphlets and other documents that lined the walls of his Hickory Hill home (officially designated a "historic landmark"), upstairs and down. These he used for the various histories he was asked to prepare: on conservation law enforcement, on the activities of WSO, and on the activities of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters--another organization that was dear to his heart. One more major historical effort still awaits publication: the huge bibliography prepared by Walter and Trudi for Sam Robbins' forthcoming publication on Wisconsin birds.

Just as these accumulated documents do not disintegrate, but live on through their preservation in various state historical and university libraries, so the wholesome love and zest for God's great earth that was part and parcel of Walter Scott's life will not perish. Spirit is undying, contagious. It lives on in the persons who knew and loved Walter. They are many.

--Sam Robbins

# FIELD NOTES

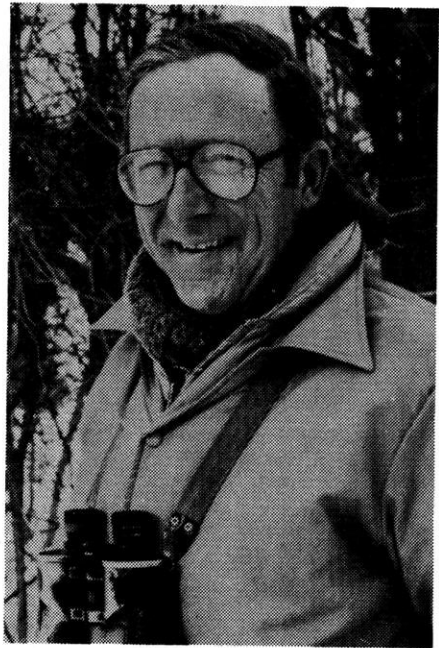


By **Kenneth I. Lange**

December 1, 1982 to February 28, 1983

## The Winter Season

*Our winter season editor, Mr. K. Lange was born and raised in Milwaukee, graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1956 (B.S.) and the University of Arizona in 1958 (M.S.). A research and writing assignment in Washington, D.C., on mammals of the world for four years, then overseas in Madagascar for one year for the Smithsonian Institution, and then a vagabond for a number of months. Working in the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History, Division of Mammals, when he accepted the job as Naturalist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources at Devil's Lake State Park in January 1966. He has served here since that time. He is the co-author of **Breeding Birds of the Baraboo Hills, Wisconsin: Their History, Distribution, and Ecology, 1982, 196 pages.***



I'm looking at a number of newspaper and magazine articles relating to this winter's weather. Beginning in June 1982, the titles read as follows: "Eruption could alter climate," "Cloud may cause early frost," "Red sky at night," "Get ready for another long, cold winter," "Less sulfur dioxide from El Chichon," "El Nino in progress," "Praise the nino for winter's heat," and "Pacific Ocean warming trend may be heading for Atlantic." Confusing? Take heart, it was a changing situation.

The real life scenario went something like this. In March and April 1982, El Chichon, a Mexican volcano, belched a monster cloud of ash and gas, causing certain scientists to predict that the climate would cool worldwide. One climatologist was more conservative: "This is a natural test of how the climate system works." And how does it work? In enormously complex and interrelated ways that we are only beginning to unravel.

But back to the scenario. Although in October one meteorologist was still predicting another cold winter, it was known by December that El Chichon's sulfur dioxide content, although considerable, was less than thought initially. And then a strange thing happened. It did not get cold, in fact the 1982-83 winter was one of the warmest on record. What happened? A massive climatic upheaval called an El Nino, if current thinking is correct.

While no one knows exactly what causes El Ninos, one of the first signs is a decrease in the trade winds. These typically blow westward across the equatorial Pacific and pile up warm water in the Orient. When the trade winds slow, or as happened last summer, stop, winds from the west increase and slosh the warm water from the Orient thousands of miles toward the South American coast. The layer of warm water prevents the upwelling of cold, nutrient-rich water along the western coast of South America, and warms the equatorial current to stimulate changes in wind systems. The name, "El Nino," Spanish for "the Child", refers to the usual Christmas timing of the major events.

This El Nino, however, apparently began last June and may be the most severe in a century: the warming trend covers about a third of the Pacific, and now there is speculation that it is appearing in the North Atlantic. Such dramatic changes might be related to geological events, for example the eruption of El Chichon, but as one researcher put it, "When two spectacular events occur, it's easy to connect things up." Whatever the causes, the El Nino cycle, once it begins, usually lasts from 18 to 24 months. Thus the Midwest could be the beneficiary of another mild winter.

So how was it in Wisconsin this winter? Historical records indicate that it was one of the mildest winters ever. Lake Mendota in Madison opened on 8 March after being ice-covered for merely 55 days - a record. Madison's average temperature for the 90 day period was 27.2 degrees F., a remarkable 6.8 degrees above normal. Mild periods occurred at intervals throughout the season, although it sometimes was a mixed bag. On Christmas Day, for example, Madisonians wind surfed, golfed, and played tennis, as the temperature climbed into the 50's, but by dusk the wind was out of the northwest and the sky looked like snow, reflecting the storm that dumped from 1-6 inches in northern Wisconsin that day.

After a sometimes stormy but generally mild January, the period concluded with spring-like weather in the latter half of February. In southern Wisconsin, for example Lake Delton, maple sap was running by the end of the month.

Southern Wisconsin experienced only one major storm, a snowfall of up to 14 inches on 2-3 February. As usual, the heaviest snow cover was in the northwestern part of the state, with maximum depths of approximately 24-30 inches in Sawyer, Barron, Washburn, and Douglas Counties.

A given area typically had below average snow cover, so even with normal temperatures a deeper than average frost penetration should have occurred. However, because of the relatively mild temperatures, the average frost depth, 7.5 inches, was less (-3.6 inches) over all survey periods than the average since 1962, when the Statistical Reporting Service began compiling this information.

So how was it for birds? The general impression was negative. Various contributors referred to the season as "extremely slow," "dull," "very dismal," and the "most boring in recent memory." One contributor called it the "worst season ever" and even questioned the value of her report and the time required to do it. Yet the Christmas Counts produced 134 species statewide, second only to the 141 species found in 1974, and most species were present in above normal numbers. Also, as we'll see, there were a number of interesting happenings.

The discrepancy arose in part from the lack of snow cover: birds were dispersed and not concentrated at feeders and roadsides. Birds apparently were here, but one had to work hard to find them. A poor winter finch invasion also contributed to the general impression that it was a dull season.

Yet it was hardly a boring season for Allen Shea, who had the interesting experience of seeing two different warblers, a Northern Waterthrush and a Common Yellow-throat, on two successive days in January! Altogether, 4 species of warblers were found in Wisconsin during January-February, very likely an all-time record. Two of these species, the waterthrush and Yellow-rumped Warbler, apparently overwintered.

A number of other records also reflected the mild weather. An Eastern Phoebe on a Manitowoc County Christmas Count was new to Wisconsin Christmas Counts, and a Water Pipit on the Milwaukee Christmas Count was only the second Christmas Count record for Wisconsin. The Northern Oriole is noted rarely after September; this winter there were two records, a male on the Trempealeau Christmas Count, only the 5th Christmas Count record for Wisconsin, and one in Madison 29 December. Three Rose-breasted Grosbeaks on the Newburg Christmas Count were unexpected, but even more exciting was a male at a feeder in Marshfield that apparently overwintered (See **By the Wayside**). The Golden-crowned Kinglet was found in record numbers on the Christmas Counts and overwintered in high numbers. A Least Bittern was brought to Kim Mello, wildlife biologist at Fort McCoy, in mid-December; it died several days later. This species previously had been known in Wisconsin only from April into October. Whistling Swans were in above normal numbers along the Mississippi River in Buffalo and LaCrosse Counties. Finally, Daryl Tessen had the unusual experience of seeing five species of gulls in late January in Wisconsin; all were in the same area along the Milwaukee lakefront.

The Red-bellied Woodpecker definitely bears watching. Last winter on the Christmas Counts this species had a 29% increase above the 1976-1980 average, but the northern range limit remained the same: Burnett, Rusk, Taylor, Shawano, Marinette and Door Counties. This winter the Red-bellied Woodpecker was in record numbers statewide on the Christmas Counts (639 birds for a 42% increase above the 1977-1981 average), and

there were some interesting northern records. A female was present throughout the period at a feeder in Port Wing, excavating holes in several trees in the area. It was also present in the Ashland area throughout the period. There have been two range studies of this woodpecker in Wisconsin, the first by Arnold J. Peterson in 1950 (**Passenger Pigeon**, Volume 13, pages 51-54, 1951) and the second by Fred and Fran Hamerstrom in 1963 (**Passenger Pigeon**, Volume 25, pages 131-136, 1963). Peterson demonstrated that the Red-bellied Woodpecker in Wisconsin had penetrated northward to the tension zone, and thought that its breeding range probably was limited by the distribution of southern hardwoods. The breeding records submitted to the Hamerstroms tended to corroborate this conclusion, suggesting that little further range expansion could be expected in Wisconsin. But this bird in the 1981-82 winter appeared farther north than usual in Ontario and Manitoba, and Michigan, Minnesota, and South Dakota (**American Birds**, Volume 36, page 267, 1982), and now it seems to be doing so in Wisconsin as well. Here is a call for another range study, with emphasis on breeding records.

The relatively poor winter finch invasion undoubtedly reflected an abundant cone and fruit crop in northern areas. Ron Weir, in **Seasons**, the quarterly magazine of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, reported a heavy and widespread crop, at least in Ontario. The Red-breasted Nuthatch, however, was in normal to above normal numbers.

Birds of prey generally were disappointing. The Northern Goshawk gave early signs of a heavy invasion, but later it was near normal numbers or absent in most areas. The Rough-legged Hawk was low on the Christmas Counts and scarce in many areas for the remainder of the season. The Kestrel was the most widespread and common raptor. Snowy Owl numbers were down from the last few winters. The Northern Shrike was in relatively low numbers on the Christmas Counts with a slight increase during the remainder of the period.

This fall and winter were memorable to a number of bird watchers because of the Black-throated Sparrow. One appeared in the Hortonville area (see 1982 Autumn Season) and another in the Fifield area (see **By the Wayside**). These were respectively Wisconsin's 4th and 5th documented records of this sparrow, a southwestern species.

Spring migration started early, especially in southern Wisconsin. A two-day period, 19-20 February, saw the arrival of Pied-billed Grebe, Canada Goose, certain raptors, Sandhill Crane (a record arrival), American Robin, Red-winged Blackbird (males were numerous and singing on territories by the 25th in Dane County), Rusty Blackbird, Common Grackle, and Brown-headed Cowbird. Other interesting movements included a variety of ducks that appeared in southern Wisconsin in February, especially during the last 10 days of the month, 5 species of northbound raptors noted at Norwalk on 27-28 February, American Coots returning by the last week of February, Killdeer present in Polk County on 11 February, the usual February Horned Lark movement, an Eastern Bluebird in Sauk County on 22 February, Eastern Meadowlarks in southern Wisconsin by the last week of February, and last a number of February records for the Swamp Sparrow and Song Sparrow. However little migratory movement was noted in central and northern Wisconsin.

A total of 68 people reported birds from a total of 53 counties. These counties had coverage (number of contributors in parentheses): Adams (3), Ashland (1), Barron (2), Bayfield (2), Brown (3), Buffalo (2), Burnett (3), Calumet (1), Chippewa (1), Clark (2), Columbia (4), Dane (14), Dodge (5), Douglas (3), Dunn (1), Eau Claire (3), Fond du Lac (1), Forest (2), Iron (1), Jackson (3), Jefferson (1), Juneau (3), Kenosha (3), LaCrosse (2), Manitowoc (1), Marathon (2), Milwaukee (11), Monroe (1), Oneida (2), Outagamie (1), Ozaukee (8), Polk (2), Portage (5), Price (5), Racine (1), Richland (1), Rock (4), St. Croix (1), Sauk (4), Sawyer (1), Shawano (2), Sheboygan (1), Taylor (1), Vernon (1), Vilas (3), Walworth (2), Washburn (1), Washington (2), Waukesha (3), Waupaca (1), Waushara (1), Winnebago (3), and Wood (3). Coverage was nonexistent from the northeastern and southwestern regions.

Abbreviations used in the species accounts: BOP - beginning of period, EOP - end of period, t.p. - throughout the period, and m. obs. - many observers.

### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

**Common Loon:** Latest dates are single birds on the Wausau and Baraboo Christmas counts.

**Horned Grebe:** One in Jefferson Co., 2 Dec. (Hale).

**Pied-billed Grebe:** Latest dates are single birds on the New Richmond and LaCrosse Christmas Counts. Migrant in Rock Co., 19 Feb. (NHBC), Dane Co., 20 Feb. (Thiessen), and Milwaukee Co., 26 Feb. (Cowart).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** BOP, one in Milwaukee Co. (Idzikowski), and one during the count period for the Green Bay Christmas Count.

**Great Blue Heron:** Single birds on the LaCrosse and Plymouth Christmas Counts, also two on the Milwaukee Christmas Count. One in Milwaukee Co., 20 Feb. (Idzikowski). According to **American Birds** (Vol. 37, No. 3, p. 303, 1983), this species overwintered in two Wisconsin counties.

**Black-crowned Night Heron:** One on the Madison Christmas Count.

**Least Bittern:** One was brought to Kim Mello, wildlife biologist at Fort McCoy, in mid-December; the bird died several days later (Epstein). Previously this species had been known in Wisconsin only from April into October.

**American Bittern:** One post-Dec. record, a bird that remained until at least 11 Jan. in Ozaukee County's Cedarburg Bog (C.M. Weise, via Idzikowski).

**Mute Swan:** T.p., Douglas Co. and the Ashland area. Also at Oconomowoc and Lake Geneva.

**Tundra (Whistling) Swan:** LaCrosse Co., t.p., above normal numbers (Wilson). About 1000 at Buffalo City, Buffalo Co., 2 Jan. with 50 still there on 8 Jan. (Newsletter, Hiawatha Valley Audubon Society). Dane Co., one t.p (m.obs.), and Jefferson Co., two on Rock Lake, with 51 Canadas, 18 Jan. (Hale).

**Canada Goose:** Hale reported this species migrating south in Jefferson Co. until 6 Feb., and north-bound migrants were first noted in southern Wisconsin on the 19th-20th, with another big influx, 26-27 Feb. (m.obs.). Overwintered in the following counties: Milwaukee, 500+ (Idzikowski), Dane (Hilsenhoff, Thiessen), Columbia (Lange), Winnebago (Ziebell), Monroe (Epstein), St. Croix (Evrard), and Shawano, 1 (Peterson).

**Snow Goose:** After December, noted only in Winnebago Co. (one t.p. - Ziebell) and Ozaukee Co. (one on 21 Feb. - Jeffrey Baughman).

**Mallard:** T.p., Kenosha Co. to the Ashland area. Highest numbers (400+) in Milwaukee, Dane, and (2500+) Winnebago Cos.

**American Black Duck:** T.p. in scattered localities throughout Wisconsin. The maximum number was 80 in Milwaukee Co., (m.obs.) and 200+ in Winnebago Co. Idzikowski reported that Black-Mallard hybrids are increasing each year in Milwaukee Co.

- Gadwall:** T.p. in Milwaukee Co., maximum 9 (m.obs.), and Dane Co., maximum 850, 26 Feb. (Shea). The Dane Co. total must include migrants.
- Northern Pintail:** T.p. in Milwaukee Co., maximum 4 (m.obs.). Dane Co., one until 1 Jan. (Thiessen), then (migrants?) two from 20 Feb. - EOP (Shea, Thiessen). Manitowoc Co., one on 16 Jan. (Sontag). One in Rock Co., 19 Feb. (NHBC); probably a migrant.
- Green-winged Teal:** Single birds in Dane Co., 19 Feb. (Thiessen) and Buffalo Co., 23 Feb. (Polk); probably migrants.
- Blue-winged Teal:** One on the Newburg Christmas Count.
- American Wigeon:** T.p. in Milwaukee Co., maximum 7 (Idzikowski), and Dane Co., maximum 18, 20 Feb. (Thiessen). The Dane Co. total probably includes migrants. Also Walworth Co., 13 Feb., 5 (Tessen). Winnebago Co., 20 Feb.-EOP, 1 (Ziebell), and Shawano Co., 4 Dec. 13 - Feb., 1 (Peterson); some of these birds probably were migrants.
- Northern Shoveler:** T.p. in Dane Co. (Shea).
- Wood Duck:** 13 birds on 8 Christmas Counts, mainly in the southern half of Wisconsin. T.p. in Milwaukee Co., maximum 3 (Idzikowski) and Brown Co. (Cleary and Brother Columban). One in Kenosha Co., 19 Feb. (Bishop); probably a migrant.
- Redhead:** Milwaukee Co., 26 Feb.-EOP (m.obs.), Dane Co., 20 Feb.-EOP (Thiessen), and Winnebago Co., 27 Feb. (Tessen), a total of 25 birds, most likely migrants.
- Ring-necked Duck:** 15 birds on 10 Christmas Counts, southern and central Wisconsin. Milwaukee Co., t.p., 2 (m.obs.) and Ozaukee Co., 25 Jan. (Woodmansee). Dane Co., 20 Feb.-EOP, maximum 6, 28 Feb. (Shea); probably migrants.
- Canvasback:** 35 birds on 4 Christmas Counts: LaCrosse, Cornelia, Madison, and Racine. Apparently t.p. in Milwaukee Co. For Dane Co., after Dec., 23 Feb.-EOP, maximum 6, 25 Feb. (Thiessen); probably migrants.
- Greater Scaup:** Found on 7 Christmas Counts in eastern Wisconsin from Racine to Ephraim. Milwaukee Co., t.p., BOP - 7000+, EOP - 5000+ (Idzikowski). Winnebago Co., t.p. (Ziebell).
- Lesser Scaup:** Found on 11 Christmas Counts, mainly in the southern half of Wisconsin. T.p. in Kenosha Co. (Bishop), Milwaukee Co. (Idzikowski), Dane Co. (Shea), and Winnebago Co. (Ziebell). Butterbrodt in Iron Co. saw Lesser Scaup on 20 Feb., and Shea in Dane Co. found a maximum of 16 on 28 Feb., probably migrants.
- Common Goldeneye:** T.p. in Lake Michigan from Kenosha to Brown Cos. (m.obs.), Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff), Sauk Co. (Lange), Winnebago Co. (Ziebell), Marathon Co. (Javorek), Eau Claire, Chippewa and Dunn Cos. (Polk), St. Croix Co. (Evrard), and the Ashland area (Verch). High counts were approximately 700 in Milwaukee Co. (Idzikowski) and 500 in Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff). Migrants appearing in February.
- Bufflehead:** Found on 10 Christmas Counts, mainly in the southern half of Wisconsin. T.p. in Milwaukee Co. (Bontly), maximum 80 (Idzikowski), and Dane Co., maximum 6, 12 Dec. (Shea).
- Oldsquaw:** T.p. in Kenosha Co., (Bishop), Milwaukee Co., maximum 3000+ (Idzikowski), and Manitowoc Co., maximum 50, 7 Jan. (Sontag).
- White-winged Scoter:** Ashland area, BOP-18 Dec., 2 (Verch), and the Ephraim Christmas Count, 6.
- Ruddy Duck:** 14 birds on 4 Christmas Counts: Appleton, Oskosh, Milwaukee, and Lake Geneva. Winnebago Co., t.p., maximum 4, 24 Feb. (Ziebell). Milwaukee Co., BOP-15 Feb., maximum 12 (Idzikowski).
- Hooded Merganser:** 8 birds on the Newburg, Poynette, and Madison Christmas Counts. After Dec., 5 in Dane Co., 2 Jan. (Smith), one in Ozaukee Co., 7 Feb. (Peterson), and Kenosha Co., 28 Feb. (Mueller).
- Common Merganser:** T.p. in Lake Michigan northward to Brown Co. (Cleary and Brother Columban), Winnebago Co. (Ziebell), Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff), Sauk Co. (Lange), and Eau Claire, Chippewa and Dune Cos. (Polk). Maximum counts (more than 100) in Dane Co. (650+, 1 Jan. - Thiessen) and Manitowoc Co. (100+, 28 Feb. - Sontag). Migrants by the last week of Feb. in southern Wisconsin.



- Red-breasted Merganser:** 103 birds on 9 Christmas Counts, mainly in the southern half of Wisconsin. T.p. in Milwaukee Co. (Bontly). Ozaukee Co., 7 Feb., 1 (Peterson), and Manitowoc Co., BOP-25 Jan., 2 (Sontag).
- Turkey Vulture:** One during the count period for the Plymouth Christmas Count.
- Northern Goshawk:** Record numbers last fall, and 45 on 33 Christmas Counts throughout the State, but generally uncommon after Dec. What happened? Some birds undoubtedly moved through, others remained but went unnoticed, and others died for various reasons. North-bound birds were observed at Norwalk, Monroe Co., 27-28 Feb. (Epstein).
- Sharp-shinned Hawk:** 26 birds on 16 Christmas Counts, throughout Wisconsin except for the south-central and southeastern parts of the state. Jan. and Feb. records from 14 counties. Some of the Feb. birds must have been migrants.
- Cooper's Hawk:** 15 birds on 13 Christmas Counts in the southern half of Wisconsin plus Pestigo. Jan. and Feb. records for 5 counties. Migrants in Sauk Co., 18 and 20 Feb. (Lange) and Jefferson Co., 27 Feb. (Smith).
- Red-tailed Hawk:** 829 birds on the Christmas Counts, considerably above the average of the last 5 years. Northward to the following counties: Brown (Cleary and Brother Columban), Shawano 1 (Peterson), Taylor, 23 Dec. (Robbins), and Burnett, BOP-18 Feb., 1 (Hoeffler). North-bound birds at Norwalk, Monroe Co., 27-28 Feb. (Epstein).
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** One on the Poynette Christmas Count and 4 on the Milwaukee Christmas Count. Also Milwaukee Co., 20 Feb. (Tessen) and Ozaukee Co., 28 Feb. (Woodmansee); migrants? Rock Co., t.p. (Ellis).
- Rough-legged Hawk:** Throughout the state by BOP. 142 birds on the Christmas Counts, a big decrease below the average of the last 5 years. For Jan. and Feb., contributors generally reported low numbers except Lange in Sauk Co. who found normal numbers. The usual Feb. migration through the state, the highest count being 18 on 26 Feb. in Portage Co. (Tessen).
- Golden Eagle:** After the Christmas Counts, found in 3 counties: Monroe, 10 Dec.-13 Feb., maximum 2, an adult and an immature (Epstein), Juneau, an adult, 7 Feb. (Follen) and an immature, 19 Feb. (Tessen), and Burnett, 17-18 Jan., 2 (Hoeffler).
- Bald Eagle:** 271 birds on the Christmas Counts, a big increase above the average of the last 5 years. T.p. in the following localities: Dane Co. (Shea), Sauk Co. (Lange), Monroe Co. (Epstein), LaCrosse Co. (Leshner), Eau Claire, Chippewa and Dunn Cos. (Polk), Polk Co. (Hudick), Burnett Co. (Hoeffler), Ashland Area (Verch), and Marathon Co. (Javorek). Lange noted an increase in Sauk Co., 4-12 Feb., then gradually declining numbers. North-bound birds were reported in the last week of Feb. in Dane and Monroe Cos., and along the Mississippi River (m.obs.).
- Northern Harrier:** 37 birds on the Christmas Counts, approximately the average of the last 5 years. Jan. records for three counties (Ozaukee, Dodge, Portage). Migrants from 19 Feb.-EOP, northward to Jackson and Portage Cos. (Luepkas, Tessen).
- Osprey:** One on the Kettle Moraine Christmas Count.
- Gyrfalcon:** Two in Portage Co., 19-23 Feb. Robert Denkhaus and Mike Van Stappen reported the birds, and both supplied documentation. See **By the Wayside** for Van Stappen's documentation. Also one on the Fremont Christmas Count (Tessen), documented with the Christmas Count report.
- Merlin:** One on the Poynette Christmas Count, and one during the count period for the Stevens Point Christmas Count.
- American Kestrel:** 490 birds on the Christmas Counts, a big increase above the average of the last 5 years, T.p. to Brown Co. (Cleary, Brother Columban), Marathon Co., maximum 2 (Luepkas), and St. Croix Co., 1 (Evrard). A few migrants in southern Wisconsin, 19 Feb., and a migrant in Polk Co., 23 Feb. (Hudick).
- Spruce Grouse:** One during the count period for the Minocqua Christmas Count.
- Ruffed Grouse:** 378 birds on the Christmas Counts, a figure that probably indicates an actual population decline.
- Greater Prairie-Chicken:** Portage and Marathon Cos. The high number was 80 in Portage Co., 23 Feb. (Luepkas).

- Sharp-tailed Grouse:** Jackson Co., 1 (Harmer), Iron Co. (Butterbrodt), and Burnett Co., t.p., maximum 12, 26 Feb. (Hoeffler).
- Common Bobwhite:** On the Christmas Counts, northward to approximately LaCrosse, Black River Falls, and Oshkosh. T.p. in Richland Co., maximum 25, 12 Jan. (Duerksen).
- Ring-necked Pheasant:** Northward to the following counties: Barron (Humphrey), Polk, t.p. (Hudick), Burnett, t.p. (Hoeffler), Price, 28 Jan. (Hardy), and Brown, t.p., maximum 40, 18 Feb. (Cleary, Brother Columban).
- Gray Partridge:** Reported from eastern and south-central Wisconsin, and Portage (Luepkes) and St. Croix (Evrard) Cos.
- Wild Turkey:** During the count period for the Richland Center and Reedsburg Christmas Counts, and Juneau Co., Jan. and Feb.
- Sandhill Crane:** One in Shawano County, 19 Feb., a record arrival (Goers). Ziebell found one in Winnebago Co., 26 Feb.
- Virginia Rail:** 12 Feb., Dane Co., one in the same area in the UW Arboretum where the Northern Waterthrush was found (Hoffman); did it overwinter?
- American Coot:** T.p. in Milwaukee Co., maximum 15, 9 Dec. (Frank), Dane Co., maximum 250, 26 Feb. (Hilsenhoff, Shea), and Winnebago Co., 1 (Ziebell). 10 in Walworth Co., 13 Feb. (Tessen).
- Killdeer:** The first report was 11 Feb. in Polk Co. (Ellis), then 19 Feb. in Dane Co. (Thiessen) and 20 Feb. in Milwaukee Co. (Hoffman, Tessen) and Sauk Co. (Lange). Farther north, noted in Manitowoc Co., 24 Feb. (Sontag), and Dodge Co. (HNWR) and Monroe Co. (Epstein), 28 Feb.
- Sanderling:** Milwaukee Co., BOP (Idzikowski).
- Common Snipe:** 17 birds on 6 Christmas Counts in southern Wisconsin. One post-Dec. record, a bird in Manitowoc Co., 7 Feb. (Sontag).
- Glaucous Gull:** 5 Dec., at Wisconsin Point, Douglas Co., Tessen, Frank, Mary Donald and Lisa Decker saw a 2nd year immature and an adult. 4 birds on 4 Christmas Counts: Bayfield, Ashland, Sauk City, and Milwaukee. 9 Jan., an adult and a 2nd year immature in Sauk Co. along the Wisconsin River below the Prairie du Sac dam. Single birds noted in Milwaukee Co. until 12 Feb. (m.obs.)
- Herring Gull:** T.p. in Milwaukee Co. (Diehl), Manitowoc Co. (Sontag), Brown Co. (Cleary, Brother Columban), Winnebago Co. (Schultz), Dane Co. (Cederstrom, Smith), Ashland Area (Verch), and Bayfield Co. (Erickson). Maximum numbers after December: Dane Co., 200, 9 Jan. (Thiessen), and Manitowoc co., 400, 2 Jan. (Sontag).
- Ring-billed Gull:** T.p. in Milwaukee Co., where "high numbers" overwintered (Idzikowski), Manitowoc Co., maximum 30, 9 Jan. (Sontag), Winnebago Co., maximum 150, 3 Dec. (Ziebell), and Dane Co., maximum 100, 4 Dec. (Smith).
- Bonaparte's Gull:** T.p. in Milwaukee Co., where 11 overwintered (Idzikowski), 1 Jan.-EOP in Ozaukee Co. (Jeffrey Baughman), and 7 Jan. in the Ashland area (Verch). High counts of 84 on 28 Feb. in Milwaukee Co. (Diehl) and 120 on 20 Feb. in Ozaukee Co. (Hoffman) must include migrants.
- Little Gull:** One on the Milwaukee Christmas Count and (same bird?) one in Milwaukee Co., 30 Jan. (Tessen).
- Mourning Dove:** Numbers were down slightly on the Christmas Counts from the average of the last 5 years. Wintered northward to Brown Co. (Cleary, Brother Columban), Marathon Co. (Javorek, Leupkes), and the Ashland area (Verch).
- Eastern Screech-Owl:** 59 birds on the Christmas Counts, about the average for the last 5 years. Northernmost reports from Barron Co. (Humphrey), Waupaca Co., 20 Dec., 1 (Tessen), and Brown Co., t.p. (Cleary, Brother Columban).
- Snowy Owl:** Only 3 birds in 3 areas on the Christmas Counts. After Dec., reported in 9 counties.
- Long-eared Owl:** 11 birds on 9 Christmas Counts in southern Wisconsin. After Dec., reported in Milwaukee Co., 22 Feb., 1 (Idzikowski), Sauk Co., 27 Dec.-15 Jan., 1 (Lange), and Monroe Co., 9 Jan., 1 dead on road (Epstein).

- Short-eared Owl:** 1 on the Fort Atkinson Christmas Count, and one in Kenosha Co., 14 Jan. (Idzikowski) and 23 Jan. (Mueller). Unusually scarce this winter.
- Northern Saw-whet Owl:** Noted in Dec. in Milwaukee, Manitowoc, and Taylor Cos. also in Dane Co., 22 Feb., 1 (Dennis Lenzendorf via Lange), and Barron Co. (Humphrey).
- Belted Kingfisher:** 65 birds on the Christmas Counts, about average for the last 5 years. T.p. in Rock Co. (Ellis), Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff), Richland Co., 1 (Duerksen), Monroe Co. (Epstein), and Shawano Co., 1 (Peterson). Single birds in Ozaukee Co., 21 Feb. (Jeffrey Baughman), Waukesha Co., 27 Feb. (Tessen), and Sauk Co., 20 Feb. (Bontly).
- Northern Flicker:** Numbers on the Christmas Counts were about average for the last 5 years. Northernmost reports after 1 Jan. were from Brown Co., 21 Feb.-EOP, 1 (Cleary, Brother Columban), and Waupaca Co., 29 Jan., 1 (Tessen).
- Pileated Woodpecker:** Increased on the Christmas Counts for the 5th consecutive year. The Pileated Woodpecker at UW-Milwaukee Field Station in Ozaukee Co. attracted a mate and they had several young in 1982; these birds represent the most southeasterly distribution of this species in Wisconsin (Idzikowski).
- Red-bellied Woodpecker:** A bird to watch. See the discussion of this species in the introductory comments.
- Red-headed Woodpecker:** Relatively low numbers on the Christmas Counts, except in western Wisconsin. After 10 Jan., reported in 10 counties: Rock, Milwaukee, Winnebago, Brown, and western and (Barron and Burnett) northwestern Wisconsin.
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** 4 birds on 3 Christmas Counts in southeastern Wisconsin. After 1 Jan., reported in Sheboygan Co., 20 Feb.-EOP, 2 (Kuhns), and Sauk Co., one at a feeder in Sauk City and one at a feeder in Prairie du Sac until approximately 15 Jan. (Karl Legler via Lange).
- Black-backed (Black-backed Three-toed) Woodpecker:** A total of 8 birds, located across northern Wisconsin from west to east as follows: a male and a female in a tamarack bog in Burnett Co. in Jan. and Feb., along with a Northern Three-toed Woodpecker (Fuller); lone birds in 3 conifer swamps in Vilas Co.: a female on 16 Dec., a female on 4 Jan., and a male on 26 Feb. (Jim Baughman); one in Forest Co., 14 Dec. (Reardon); one on the Fremont Christmas Count, 20 Dec. (Tessen); Woodland Dunes NW Christmas Count, 27 Dec. (Brouchoud).
- Three-toed (Northern Three-toed) Woodpecker:** Pepper Fuller found a male in a tamarack bog in Burnett Co. during Jan. and Feb., along with a male and a female Black-backed (Three-toed) Woodpecker. See **By the Wayside** for her documentation.
- Eastern Phoebe:** One on a Manitowoc Co. Christmas Count was a first for Wisconsin Christmas Counts. See **By the Wayside**.
- Horned Lark:** Numbers were down considerably on the Christmas Counts from the average of the last 5 years. T.p. in southern and western Wisconsin from Rock Co. (Ellis) to Eau Claire and Dunn Cos. (Polk). Migrants appeared in southern Wisconsin mainly in late Jan.-early Feb., with generally somewhat later dates for northern Wisconsin.
- Gray Jay:** Noted in the following localities (including Christmas Counts): Douglas Co. (Tessen, Frank, Donald, Decker), Ashland Area (Verch), Sawyer Co. (Polk), Price Co. (Hardy, Robbins), Taylor Co. (a Christmas Count), Oneida Co. (Peterson, Reardon), Vilas Co. (Jim Baughman, Reardon), and Forest Co. (Peterson, Reardon).
- Blue Jay:** Numbers on the Christmas Counts were about average for the last 5 years. Some observers, e.g. Smith for Dane Co. and Lange for Sauk Co., reported relatively low numbers, whereas Tessen on 19 Feb. found 150 in Juneau Co. and 50 in Jackson Co.
- Common Raven:** Numbers were down again on the Christmas Counts from the average of the last 5 years. Southernmost reports from the following counties: Monroe, 13 Jan.-19 Feb. (Epstein), Wood, 24 Jan. (Robbins), Portage, 15 Jan. (Luepkes).
- American Crow:** Idzikowski estimated 12,000, BOP, in Milwaukee Co., and Smith estimated a maximum of 1000+ in Madison, Dane Co., 28 Feb.
- Black-capped Chickadee:** Numbers on the Christmas Counts were again high.
- Boreal Chickadee:** Noted in the following counties (including Christmas Counts): Bayfield (Erickson), Price (Hardy), Vilas (Jim Baughman), Forest (Reardon).

- Tufted Titmouse:** 92 birds on the Christmas Counts, a big increase above the average of the last 5 years. T.p. in the following counties: Dane (Ashman, Hilsenhoff), Sauk (Lange), Richland, maximum 2 (Duerksen), Eau Claire, Chippewa and Dunn (Polk).
- White-breasted Nuthatch:** 3235 birds on the Christmas Counts, another big increase above the average of the last 5 years.
- Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Approximately 700 birds on the Christmas Counts, a big increase above the average of the last 5 years. T.p. from Milwaukee Co. (Diehl) to Bayfield Co. (Erickson); well distributed throughout the state.
- Brown Creeper:** 235 birds on the Christmas Counts, an average number for the last 5 years. Northernmost reports from Bayfield Co., BOP-6 Feb. (Erickson), Ashland area, t.p. (Verch), and Vilas Co., 15 Dec.-16 Feb. (Jim Baughman).
- Winter Wren:** 7 birds on 5 Christmas Counts in southern and eastern Wisconsin. One t.p. in Manitowoc Co. (Sontag), and one in Sauk Co., 21 Jan. (Lange).
- Gray Catbird:** Single birds on the Madison and Newburg Christmas Counts and one during the count period in Door Co. Gustafson found on in Milwaukee Co., 1 Feb.
- Brown Thrasher:** 5 birds on 4 Christmas Counts in southern Wisconsin, plus one during the count period in Door Co. One in Brown Co., 19 Feb.-EOP (Cleary and Brother Columban), and one in Price Co., 28 Jan.-6 Feb. (Hardy).
- American Robin:** 128 birds on the Christmas Counts, a big drop (shortage of berries?) below the average of the past 5 years. Northward to Brown Co., t.p. (Cleary and Brother Columban), Shawano Co., 5 Jan.-20 Feb. (Peterson), Marathon Co., t.p. (Javorek), Polk Co., 11 Jan.-EOP (Hudick), and the Ashland area, t.p. (Verch). Migrants on 19-20 Feb. in southern Wisconsin (m.obs.), and 28 Feb. in Bayfield Co. (Erickson).
- Varied Thrush:** Three reports: one at a feeder in Waubeno, Forest Co., 31 Jan. (well described, with behavior notes, by Peterson); one seen three times in a yard in Eau Claire Co., late Jan. to late Feb. (Holly Meier via Polk); and two at a feeder off St. Hwy. 188 in Columbia Co. (one of these birds was seen on 19 Feb. by Tessen).
- Hermit Thrush:** Manitowoc Co., one on a Christmas Count, 19 Dec., and Milwaukee Co., 4 birds in as many areas in Dec., with one apparently overwintering (Cowart, Frank).
- Eastern Bluebird:** One record for early winter: two in Ozaukee Co., 22 Dec. (Idzikowski). A migrant in Sauk Co., 22 Feb. (Jane Appleyard via Lange), and single birds in Richland Co. (Duerksen), and Monroe Co. (Epstein), 28 Feb. Rock Co., "late Feb." (Mahlum).
- Golden-crowned Kinglet:** Record numbers (402 birds) in the Christmas Counts. Overwintered in high numbers. T.p. in Milwaukee Co. (m.obs.), Winnebago Co., maximum 4, no other Feb. records in the last 5 years (Schultz), Manitowoc Co., maximum 6, 14 Jan. (Sontag), Dane Co. (Ashman), Sauk Co., a number of areas (Lange), Monroe Co., several areas (Epstein), and Taylor Co. (Robbins).
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Two on the Milwaukee Christmas Count.
- Water Pipit:** One on the Milwaukee Christmas Count, only the second Christmas Count record for Wisconsin.
- Bohemian Waxwing:** Ashland area, t.p., normal numbers (Verch), otherwise only 1-2 birds in 5 counties in Dec. and Jan. (m.obs.)
- Cedar Waxwing:** A big decrease on the Christmas Counts below the average of the past 5 years (shortage of berries?). T.p. in Milwaukee Co. (m.obs.), Brown Co. (Cleary and Brother Columban), Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff), Eau Claire, Chippewa and Dunn Cos. (Polk), and Polk Co. (Hudick). Increase in some areas in late Feb. and early March.
- Northern Shrike:** Numbers on the Christmas Counts were down somewhat from the 1977-1981 average. Most contributors reported normal numbers; only Lange for Sauk Co. reported above normal numbers. After Dec., reports for 27 counties throughout the state.
- Loggerhead Shrike:** One on the Stevens Point Christmas Count.
- European Starling:** Idzikowski estimated Milwaukee County's population at 125,000+.
- Yellow-rumped Warbler:** One on the Oshkosh Christmas Count and one on the Madison Christmas Count. In Sauk Co., a group of 4 at the base of Lodde's Mill Bluff in a poison-ivy thicket, eating the berries, 4 Feb. (Lange); may have overwintered.

- Ovenbird:** Wisconsin's first January record of this species was a bird that frequented the feeder of Paul D. Blanchard in Eau Claire from 23 Nov. 1982-14 Jan. 1983; see **By the Wayside**.
- Northern Waterthrush:** Wisconsin's first Northern Waterthrush in winter was a bird found on 29 Jan. and 6 Feb. in a streamside habitat in Madison, Dane Co., by Hilsenhoff. See **By the Wayside**. Subsequently documented also by Shea, a 29 Jan. sighting, Hoffman, a 12 Feb. sighting, and Smith, 19 and 25 Feb. sightings.
- Common Yellowthroat:** Shea found one, in "immature or female plumage", on 30 Jan. in the small wetland near the north shore of the UW Picnic Point Conservancy Area in Madison, Dane Co.
- Meadowlarks:** Both species were in Milwaukee Co., BOP (Idzikowski), with the Eastern also being noted in Dane Co., 23 Jan. (Shea), and Richland Co., 8 Feb. (Duerksen). Epstein reported a meadowlark species in Monroe Co., 11 Feb. One in Columbia Co., 20 Feb. (Lange); migrant? Later birds. e.g. 25 Feb. in Dane Co. (Cederstrom), 27 Feb. in Walworth Co. (Tessen), and 28 Feb. in Milwaukee Co. (Bontly, Woodmansee) and Ozaukee Co. (Coward) surely were migrants.
- Red-winged Blackbird:** A huge increase above the average of the last 5 years on the Christmas Counts (15,650 birds), but this is misleading since the total includes a roost of 13,150 at LaCrosse. T.p. in Dane Co. (m.obs.) and Milwaukee Co. Migrants on 19-20 Feb. in the southern counties and Brown Co. In Dane Co., Shea found a maximum of 750 on 23 Feb., and Smith noted numerous males singing on territories by 25 Feb. Songag reported Redwings in Manitowoc Co., 26 Feb., and Peterson in Shawano Co., 27 Feb.
- Northern Oriole:** Noted rarely after September. One on the Trempealeau Christmas Count, 26 Dec., and (Postupalsky) one in Madison, Dane Co., 29 Dec.
- Rusty Blackbird:** 40 birds on 5 Christmas Counts in southern Wisconsin. T.p. in Dane Co. Dodge Co., 30 Jan., 1 (Jeffrey Baughman). Tessen found 8 in Walworth Co., 20 Feb., Hudick reported on in Polk Co., 27 Feb., and Cowart saw this species in Ozaukee Co., 28 Feb.; all migrants.
- Brewer's Blackbird:** 8 birds on 7 Christmas Counts in northwestern and southern Wisconsin. After Dec., reported from Dodge Co., 30 Jan., 6 (Jeffrey Baughman), Price Co., one at a feeder until 3 Feb. (Hardy), and Rock Co., 19 Feb., 3 (NHBC).
- Common Grackle:** Increased somewhat above the average of the past 5 years on the Christmas Counts. T.p. in the following localities: Dane Co., maximum 29 (Thiessen), Winnebago Co. (Ziebell), Taylor Co. (Robbins), Eau Claire, Chippewa and Dunn Cos. (Polk), and the Ashland Area (Verch). Migrants on 19 Feb. in Rock Co. (Ellis, NHBC), and 20 Feb. in Walworth Co., 100+ (Tessen), and Columbia Co. (Lange). Noted on 28 Feb. in Manitowoc Co. (Sontag) and Dodge Co. (HNWR).
- Brown-headed Cowbird:** 118 birds on the Christmas Counts, a big decrease below the average of the last 5 years. The only northern record after Dec. was a male in Marathon Co., 8 Jan. (Luepkes). Throughout Jan. and Feb. in Rock Co. (Ellis) and Dane Co. (Smith). A count of 120 on 19 Feb. in Rock Co. (NHBC) probably included migrants. Migrants also in Dane Co., 19 Feb., 20 (Thiessen), and Walworth Co., 20 Feb., 5 (Tessen).
- Northern Cardinal:** Increased considerably on the Christmas Counts above the average of the last 5 years. Northernmost reports from Brown Co., t.p. (Cleary and Brother Columban), Shawano Co., t.p. (Peterson), Marathon Co., t.p., maximum 2 (Luepkes), Taylor Co., t.p. (Robbins), Barron Co., higher numbers than in previous winters - a dozen or more at the Lee Haight feeders, and the Ashland area, BOP-20 Dec., above normal numbers (Verch).
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Three on the Newburg Christmas Count, and (Follen) a male at a feeder in Marshfield, Wood Co., that apparently overwintered (see **By the Wayside**).
- Evening Grosbeak:** 2263 birds on the Christmas Counts, a big decrease. For the season, it was below normal numbers statewide. Southernmost reports from Monroe Co., 30 Jan.-25 Feb., maximum 9, 5 Feb. (Epstein), Portage Co., 15 Jan., 4 (Luepkes), and Brown Co., 20 Dec.-EOP, maximum 20 (Cleary and Brother Columban).
- Purple Finch:** 1314 birds on the Christmas Counts, about average for the past 5 years. Throughout the state, with relative abundance estimates varying from below normal to above normal (no geographic pattern discernible).

- Pine Grosbeak:** Before the Christmas Counts, reported only from the Ashland Area, where Verch found it t.p. in below normal numbers, and Iron Co., BOP (Butterbrodt). Only two birds on the Christmas Counts, one at Bayfield and one in the Kettle Moraine, the lowest number in at least 25 years. No other reports.
- Common Redpoll:** 267 birds on the Christmas Counts, a big decrease below the average of the past 5 years. Southernmost reports: the Poynette, Madison, Beloit, and Racine Christmas Counts. No reports after the counts.
- Pine Siskin:** 169 birds on the Christmas Counts, a big decrease below the average of the past 5 years. After the counts, found only in 7 scattered counties.
- American Goldfinch:** Record numbers on the Christmas Counts (9733 birds). Found throughout the state but were spotty. Relative abundance estimates varied from below normal to above normal.
- Red Crossbill:** 23 birds on 4 Christmas Counts scattered throughout the state. T.p. only in the Ashland area, normal numbers (Verch), and Vilas Co. (Jim Baughman). Several in Buffalo Co., 16 Feb. (Polk).
- White-winged Crossbill:** Found on the Bayfield Christmas Count, 2, the Ephraim Christmas Count, 28, and during the count period for the Milwaukee area. T.p. only in the Ashland area, normal numbers (Verch). Reported in Jan.-Feb. also from Manitowoc Co. (Sontag), Marathon Co. (Luepkas), and Taylor Co. (Robbins).
- Rufous-sided Towhee:** Found on the Wausau, Green Bay, and Clyde (Iowa Co.) Christmas Counts. One post-Dec. record, 2 in Brown Co., 8-30 Jan. (Cleary and Brother Columban).
- Black-throated Sparrow:** Wisconsin's 4th documented Black-throated Sparrow was a bird that spent 2½ months, from mid-Nov. 1982-5 Feb. 1983 at the Mary Jurack feeder near Hortonville. The 5th documented record was when another individual came to several feeders near Fifield between 30 Nov. 1982-late Jan. 1983. See **By the Wayside**. Both birds were photographed and seen by many observers. Previous state records were in 1960, 1976, and 1980.
- Dark-eyed (Northern) Junco:** Numbers on the Christmas Counts were about average for the past 5 years.
- Tree Sparrow:** A big increase on the Christmas Counts from the average of the last 5 years.
- Chipping Sparrow:** One visited Smith's feeder in Madison, Dane Co., 17-18 and 31 Dec.
- Field Sparrow:** 10 birds on 6 Christmas Counts in southern Wisconsin. After the counts, 4 reports: Washington Co., 2 Jan. (Jeffrey Baughman), Rock Co., 22 Jan.-EOP, maximum 4, 22 Jan. (Ellis), LaCrosse Co., at a feeder, 15 Feb. (Leshner), and Shawano Co., 8-17 Feb., maximum 3, 9 Feb. (Peterson).
- Harris' Sparrow:** One on the Sauk City Christmas Count.
- White-crowned Sparrow:** On 3 Christmas Counts: Madison, Beloit, Waukesha. After the counts, one in Burnett Co., 2 Jan. (Fuller), and one in Rock Co., 5 Feb. (Mahlum).
- White-throated Sparrow:** 42 birds on 10 Christmas Counts in southern and eastern Wisconsin. Apparently several overwintered in Milwaukee Co. (m.obs.), and three overwintered in Manitowoc Co. (Sontag). In Dane Co. through 29 Jan. (Robbins). One in Rock Co., 19 Feb. (NHBC).
- Fox Sparrow:** 4 birds on 4 Christmas Counts in southern Wisconsin, and one on the Rhinelander count. After the counts, reported only from Shawano Co., one on 9 Feb. (Peterson).
- Swamp Sparrow:** 25 birds on 9 Christmas Counts in southern Wisconsin. T.p. in Dane Co., maximum 5, 5 Feb. (Shea). Noted in the following counties in Feb.: Rock, the 19th, 4 (NHBC), Walworth, 13th, 1 (Tessen), Ozaukee, 21st-EOP, 1 (Jeffrey Baughman), Manitowoc, 5th-13th, 2 (Sontag).
- Song Sparrow:** 145 birds on the Christmas Counts, about average for the past 5 years. T.p. in Rock Co. (Ellis), Kenosha Co. (Bishop), Milwaukee Co., maximum 4, 22 Dec. (Diehl), Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff, Thiessen), Manitowoc Co. (Sontag), and Brown Co. (Cleary and Brother Columban). Feb. records for 4 other southern counties, plus (Ellis) a maximum of 15 on 19 Feb. in Rock Co.

**Lapland Longspur:** Found on 4 Christmas Counts in east-central Wisconsin plus the Beetown count in the southwestern corner of the state. After the counts, reported from the following counties: Outagamie, Dodge, Columbia, Sauk, Dane, Monroe. Peak days were 4 Feb. in Sauk Co., 200+ (Lange), 5 Feb. in Dane Co., 350 (Shea), and 11 Feb. in Monroe Co., 100 (Epstein).

**Snow Bunting:** 1485 birds on the Christmas Counts, a big decrease from the average of the last 5 years. After the counts, reports from 12 scattered counties. T.p. in the following counties: Manitowoc (Sontag), Brown (Cleary and Brother Columban), Taylor (Robbins), St. Croix (Evrard), and Burnett (Hoefler). Flocks of 100 and more were noted on 4 Dec. in Winnebago Co. (Ziebell), 22 Jan. in Monroe Co. (Epstein), 27 Jan. in St. Croix Co. (Evrard), 28 Jan. in Marathon Co. (Luepkes), 29 Jan. in Dodge Co. (Jeffrey Baughman), and 30 Jan. in Outagamie Co. (Tessen) and Brown Co. (Cleary and Brother Columban).

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*Save the  
Wetlands  
for the  
Cranes*

**Mary and  
Charlie Nelson**



# **By the Wayside . . .**



## **Eastern Phoebe**

**January 2, 1983 - Woodland Dunes NE Christmas Bird Count.**

While observing woodpeckers along a riparian hardwood in good sunlight at about 0900, I heard a high pitched chipping call not unlike that made by some warbler species. I began "pishing" to draw the bird out into view. The bird flew past me landing in a willow along an open flowing river. The bird was a solid olive drab on the back with no wing bars or other markings and lighter below. The bird constantly bobbed its tail. The bird continued to make the chipping call which was unfamiliar to me in my usual experience with phoebes. After sitting in the willow for a minute or so the bird flew under a bridge about fifty feet away. It did this several times during the fifteen minutes I observed it. It remained under the bridge each time for a few seconds before returning to the willows. The closest I was able to approach the bird was about 40-50 feet. I used 7X35 Bushnells. This bridge is known to have breeding phoebes most every year.

Jim and Amy Steffen

## **Buena Vista Marsh Gyrfalcons**

After spending the better part of our day (Feb. 19, 1983) birding around Petenwell Flowage, Necedah National Wildlife Refuge and Buena Vista Marsh, my friend Rob Denkhous and I decided to put away our glasses and head for home. On Taft Road, just north of Highway "W", a large raptor perched on top of a utility pole caught our attention just as we were passing by, and I stopped the car quite abruptly for another look. Craning our necks, we both peered back and up through the car windows at what we first thought to be a goshawk. We were very near to the bird and it quickly became quite clear to both of us that this was no goshawk we were viewing. Out came the field glasses from the cases. This large bird (well over 20 inches), had a gray back with some white feathers in the middle, a white breast and abdomen with some dark streaking, prominent malar stripes (the head was a lighter gray), retrices that narrowed to the end, and long pointed wings that crossed above, and were shorter than the tail feathers. It also had large yellowish feet and a yellow cere. The distinctive markings of this bird quickly brought us to the realization that we were viewing none other than the fabled Gyrfalcon, this one in the gray phase. Needless to say, we were elated with our good luck!



The falcon flew north several minutes later, flapping its wings stiffly four or five times and then gliding for a second or two, and came to perch again on another utility pole about a half-mile up the road. We approached cautiously and observed it for several more minutes until it departed, flying at a good speed to the northwest, though it seemed to put little effort into the flight. I watched the falcon in a 60X spotting scope until it disappeared from view, still flying and far to the northwest.

We immediately proceeded to drive north, still on Taft Road, rejoicing in our good fortune. About another half-mile up the road our luck doubled as we came upon another Gryfalcon perched on another utility pole. This bird was noticeably smaller, though all of its markings were identical to those on the first falcon. We felt that this was a different bird than the first because of the obvious size difference and because we had just watched the first Gryfalcon disappear from sight, still flying away from us to the northwest, only a few minutes before.

The second Gryfalcon, a male we think, remained perched only a short while and then flew north in an irrigation ditch that paralleled Taft Rd. We followed in the car and observed it fly up from the ditch to perch on another pole. While we approached closer it flew once again, this time along a ditch and utility poles that extended out into agricultural fields. This falcon landed on top of the last pole, about 300 yards from the road, and we approached on foot with spotting scope, camera and field glasses for what we felt would probably be our last look. We were a little concerned that we might be harassing the bird, though it seemed to give us little notice, able to depart from where we stood earthbound with as much ease as the winds that cross the prairies. When we were within two utility poles of the falcon, I remained behind with a spotting scope to watch as Rob approached closer to take some photographs. When he was about 100 feet away, the bird again departed, flying far to the southwest with the same shallow, deceptively easy wingbeat we had observed in the first falcon. This was the last we have seen of these wonderful creatures, and so ended a particularly rewarding day.

Mike Van Stappen  
Stevens Point, WI

### **Both Three-toed Woodpeckers in Burnett County**

There is a glacial pothole into which spruces and tamaracks have intruded about 150 yards. Two years ago, beavers built an 8-10 inch high dam at the outlet, eventually killing about one-third of the trees.

I was snowshoeing around the edge of this pond on Jan. 8, 1983. I heard and then saw a male Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker. He was about 30 feet up in a dead tamarack in plain sight. I saw his black back and yellow cap. He was about the size of a Harry Woodpecker. He had a white stripe from bill to shoulder. His sides were heavily striped. He moved around the tree a lot so I could see all sides. I watched him for about 10 minutes from 100 ft. then from 25 ft.

As I went around the pond, I noticed a good number of trees had big bare patches, and bark pieces were all around under them. The trees were from 6 to 50 feet tall, but most were about 30 feet. I heard another woodpecker, which turned out to be a Northern Three-toed Woodpecker! I watched it from 30 feet away and 25 feet up. Then at eye level. I saw he was about the same size as the previous one, but with back striping as well as side striping. He also was a male with a yellow cap. He was not afraid of me and I watched him for 15 minutes. I had 8X40 Trinovid binoculars. References were Robbins, **Birds of North America**, Peterson, **Field Guide to the Birds**, and Livingston-Landsdowne **Birds of the Northern Forest**. The Black-backed was also seen March 8, 1982 and the Northern was seen August 7, 1982.

Mrs. Andrew (Pepper) Fuller  
Wayzata, MN

### **A Winter Ovenbird in Eau Claire**

On Nov. 23, 1982, two days before Thanksgiving, I arrived home from work late in the afternoon and made my usual feeder check. All but one of about two dozen sparrows flew from my ground feeding area where I had spread fine scratch corn earlier in the day. The remaining "sparrow" walked gingerly while feeding on the fine corn particles, unconcerned by my presence 20 feet away. It was late in the day and the light was dim so I hurried back to my car for binoculars. Could this be an Ovenbird waking across a light one-inch dusting of snow? Much to my amazement, a very cooperative Ovenbird allowed me to observe and approach within fifteen feet.

For approximately the next nine weeks this bird was a regular visitor at my feeding area, often spending the entire day either sitting in the white pine above my feeder or walking about in the snow feeding on sunflower seeds or fine scratch. On many occasions I observed this bird walking up the stairs, across the upper walkway and down into the stairwells of the 10-plex where I reside; apparently out of curiosity.

On Dec. 27, Minneapolis received 17 inches of snow and Eau Claire a driving, freezing rainstorm. The heavy rain fell for about 5 hours, turning to sleet and then to snow. I arose early the next day to shovel the feeder areas but not having much hope of seeing an Ovenbird. All the regular birds were feeding by 8:00 but no Ovenbird. My spirits soared when a short time later the Ovenbird flew to his usual perch in the white pine. I felt that if this bird could survive this storm, he could surely make it through the winter. However, my last observations were made Jan. 14. The weather was not unusually cold at this time, but this friendly bird could very easily have fallen prey to a predator. I really felt confident that the Ovenbird could make it through the winter and I was saddened by its disappearance.

As all birders will understand when I look at my movies of an Ovenbird feeding on fine scratch in a snowstorm, I will recall warm memories of the winter of 1982-83.

Paul D. Blanchard  
Eau Claire, WI

### **Wintering Northern Waterthrush in Madison**

On Jan. 29, 1983, I was walking along a stream leading to Lake Wingra in Madison, Dane Co. when a small bird flew from along the water into a small shrub that grew out of the stream bank. It perched facing me at a slight angle and constantly bobbed the head and tail in typical waterthrush fashion. It remained in the same perch for about a minute allowing me ample time to note the dark brown back, tail and top of head, and the white, heavily streaked under parts. There was a distinct but dusky-white eye stripe and the throat was heavily streaked, especially along the edges. I knew immediately that I was looking at a Northern Waterthrush, but could hardly believe it because of the date. I walked down to the lake and again flushed the bird on my return.

I again saw the bird Feb. 6 in the same place, but for a much shorter time, but got a good enough look to identify it as a Northern Waterthrush. Serge Postupolsky saw it bobbing its tail and Steve Thiessen heard it when it flew overhead, but neither had a good view. Al Shea told me he saw it well on the same afternoon I first saw the bird (Jan. 29).

William Hilsenhoff  
Madison, WI

### **A Winter Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Marshfield**

On January 28th, 1983, I talked with a partner bird enthusiast who told me about this strange bird that he thought was a House Sparrow as it was most often seen in their company. I began to ask questions about color etc., and then began to wonder if we might be on to a Varied Thrush. But when Karl Baltus told me about the black and white and the big rose patch on the breast it was obvious what he was talking about. Karl gave me his address and I took every opportunity each day to pass and watch the feeder area. Not until February 11 did I get to see the bird and Karl took me into the house which is about twenty-five feet from the yard feeder. There in the bush sat a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The bird is obviously under moult and the black and white wings are prominent along with the rose triangle down the breast. On the head and neck, however, the appearance is that of a female, characteristic brown with a streak through the eye. Another unforeseen item by me personally, prior to this, is that there is a rose wash in the white patch at the dorsal base of the tail. I am enclosing a colored photo taken on Feb. 15, 1983, by Karl Baltus. The locality is Marshfield, Wood Co.

Donald G. Follen  
Arpin, WI

# Letters to the Editor

Dear Dr. Kemper:

There are two reasons for writing to you. The first reason is to express appreciation for the article about and by Dr. Helen Taussig. Your preface was just as fascinating as her article. Maybe some day I will do some small research project on bird anatomy or disease. An example like Dr. Taussig stimulates one to think about it.

The second reason for writing is to submit the following observation. Last October, I was visiting my mother in Delavan. We were watching several species of birds come to the feeder. A Blue Jay came from under some shrubs out onto the lawn. It was hopping about with what later proved to be an acorn in its beak. After finding an appropriate location, the bird dropped the acorn and proceeded to peck a hole in the ground. When the size of the hole satisfied the Blue Jay, it dropped the acorn into the hole and tamped it down with its beak!! I though this was rather unusual, but the act was not over.... the bird hopped around the lawn as though it was looking for something. It was!! The jay found a piece of bark about an inch and one-half long and placed it over the spot where the acorn was buried!??

About two weeks later, at home in Oconomowoc, I again observed a Blue Jay burying its food. This time the bird was taking sunflower seeds from the feeder and poking them into the lawn! It is now January and I have not seen any Blue Jays pecking through the snow looking for the hidden seeds!!

One further observation I have made, but need an answer for... Blue Jays come to the feeder, gulp down as many as eighteen whole sunflower seeds and fly off into the pine trees. So far, I have been able to keep track of them when they leave. Several questions come to mind -- What happens to those unhusked seeds? -- Does the jay regurgitate the seeds and hide them in some unseen cranny for later use? -- Or is the bird able to digest the sunflower seed with the husk on, why do they work so hard to open some of the seeds individually?? These observations should provide food for thought if someone is willing to digest them.

Sincerely,  
Lawrence Davis, D.V.M.  
3031 N. Summit Center Drive  
Oconomowoc, WI 53066

Dear Charles:

My Summer 1983 issue of the Passenger Pigeon arrived today, and I was pleasantly surprised to read the accounts of the Baird's Sparrow in Manitowoc County in June 1982. I can imagine the excitement in everyone's bones when word of this true North Dakota "trash bird" went out over the Rare Bird Alert.

There were two things in the descriptions of this bird that I would like to comment on. First, both Sam and Bernie mentioned the light streaking on the bird's upper breast. The field guides all show that as a reliable characteristic, but it is not always so. I have been watching a group of

Baird's Sparrows that nest about 60 miles west of here for the past five summers. **None** of them have streaking on the upper breast. All the other characteristics are there except the streaks. So, I would suggest that any sparrows seen in future years that are suspected of being Baird's should not be ruled out if they don't possess streaks on the breast.

Second, Sam mentioned that none of the song's coming from this bird sounded like Peterson's record. I have found some variation in Baird's Sparrow song when listening to them in either of the Dakota's or in east-central Montana. Regardless of the variation being heard, the inflections in the trilling at the conclusion of the song appear to hold true wherever the bird is found. Also, Bernie mentioned that the bird was in a wet overgrown field. That fits Baird's Sparrow perfectly. They seem to prefer lightly grazed native prairie over all other kinds. I have noticed that during drought years, there are virtually no Baird's in upland native prairie, but sizeable numbers in low prairie, or in sedge-dominated wet meadows.

Hope all is well in my home state.

Sincerely yours,  
Craig A. Faanes  
Ornithologist  
United States Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center  
Jamestown, North Dakota 58401

Dear Dr. Kemper:

I would like to report that two Oregon Juncos were seen by Patricia Jenson, Cushing, Wis., Polk County, at her bird feeder during the Christmas Bird Count.

The reddish-brown back and yellowish or rusty sides make them stand out among the slate-colored juncos. The Oregon Junco is rarely seen in our area. I couldn't find any record of them in Craig Faanes' book on Birds of the St. Croix River Valley.

Sincerely,  
Howard Jorgenson  
Director of Bird Count in Polk Co.  
817 S. 7th Street  
Luck, Wisconsin 54853

Dear Dr. Kemper:

Please run the following notice in the Passenger Pigeon, if possible. Mr. Brown has helped me as far as he can, but I am still looking for a few issues of the Pigeon to complete my set.

I would like to complete my set of the **Passenger Pigeon** and will buy or trade for volumes: 1-5 (1939-1943) all issues; 6 (1944) no. 1,3; 7 (1945) no. 4; 8 (1946) no. 3; 9 (1947) no. 4; 14 (1952) no. 4.

Thanks much.

Sincerely,  
Michael Mossman  
530 Evergreen Ave.  
Madison, WI 53704  
(608) 244-1540

## CORRECTION

(Mary Jurack's name was inadvertently omitted from this article in the Fall By The Wayside.)

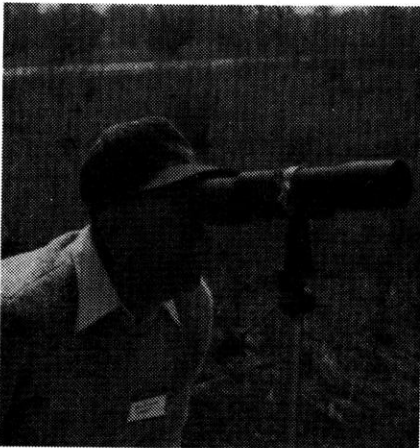
### Black-throated Sparrow

I saw this bird for the first time between 8:00 and 9:00 the morning of November 21, 1982. I could not find it in Peterson's Field Guide. My husband Paul and a weekend guest watched it also. None of us had ever seen it before. On November 24th, I called Jim Anderson of Mosquito Hill Nature Center. From my description, he guessed what it might be and came to the house to identify it in person. He returned on November 26th with Daryl Tessen, Mark Peterson, and Art Schoff. All saw the bird very clearly.

The bird has been seen at the feeder or in the yard every day since November 21st. It eats cracked corn, flies to standing weeds and pecks at something it finds in the grass away from the feeder. It is often seen with juncos. The bird is not especially timid and we are able to watch it easily.

Mary Jurack

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## OMISSION

The following species were inadvertently omitted from the Seasonal Summary section of the Autumn Field Notes, Autumn, 1983, Vol. 45, No. 3

**Black-Bellied Plover:** Reported at the beginning of the period in Manitowoc County by Sontag on August 16 in Manitowoc County, and 20 were seen by the Refuge staff in Horicon National Wildlife Refuge on September 1. The last one was reported by Freeze in Milwaukee County on October 31.

**Ruddy Turnstone:** Reported at the beginning of the period in Manitowoc and Milwaukee counties. 21 were seen by Sontag in Manitowoc County on September 12. Last reports came on October 11 from Manitowoc County (Sontag), and Milwaukee County (Gustafson and Woodmansee).

**American Woodcock:** Reported at the beginning of the period in Ashland, Barron, Iron, Marathon, Marinette, and Price Counties. 100 were seen on September 30 in Horicon National Wildlife Refuge by the Refuge staff. Last seen in Winnebago County by Ziebell on November 7.

**Common Snipe:** Reported at the beginning of the period in Barron, Bayfield, Marathon, Marinette, and Price Counties. 150 were seen on September 30 in Horicon National Wildlife Refuge by the Refuge staff, and 75 were seen by Robbins in Taylor County on October 11. Last reported by Robbins in Taylor County on November 17.

**Whimbrel:** Sontag saw 3 in Manitowoc County on August 30, Verch saw 2 in Ashland County on September 1, and Gustafson saw one in Milwaukee County on September 21.

**Upland Sandpiper:** Reported at the beginning of the period in Brown, Eau Claire, and Winnebago Counties. Also seen during the period in Manitowoc County. The last one was seen on October 15 in Wood County by Follen.

**Spotted Sandpiper:** Highest numbers included 22 on August 6 in Dane County (Thiessen), 28 on August 25 in Manitowoc County (Sontag), 50 in the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge on September 1 (Refuge staff), and 50 on September 3 in Winnebago County (Ziebell). It was last reported in Manitowoc County by Sontag on November 4.

**Solitary Sandpiper:** Peak concentrations were 28 on August 6 in Dane County (Thiessen), 20 on August 20 in Marathon County (Luepkes), and 30 on September 1 in Horicon National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge staff). The last one was reported in Brown County by Wierzbicki on October 12.

**Willet:** One was heard flying over Milwaukee by Woodmansee on October 19.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** Highest numbers included 400 in Horicon National Wildlife Refuge on August 30 (Refuge staff), and 33 on October 30 in Milwaukee County (Tessen). Last reported by Sontag in Manitowoc County on November 21.

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** 100 were seen on August 23 in Dodge County by Tessen, (Aug. 30) in the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge staff), and 43 on September 16 in Columbia County (Ashman) for the highest concentrations. One was seen in Douglas County by Johnson on November 7.

### A Guide to the Birds of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore

Written and illustrated by Robin Maercklein, which is essentially a checklist, brochure is available on request from:

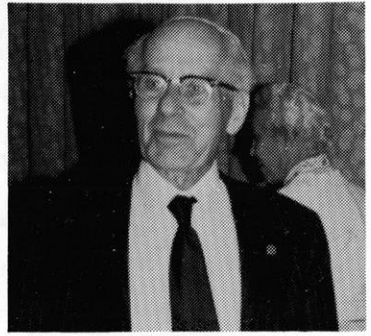
The Apostle Island National Lakeshore Office

P.O. Box 729

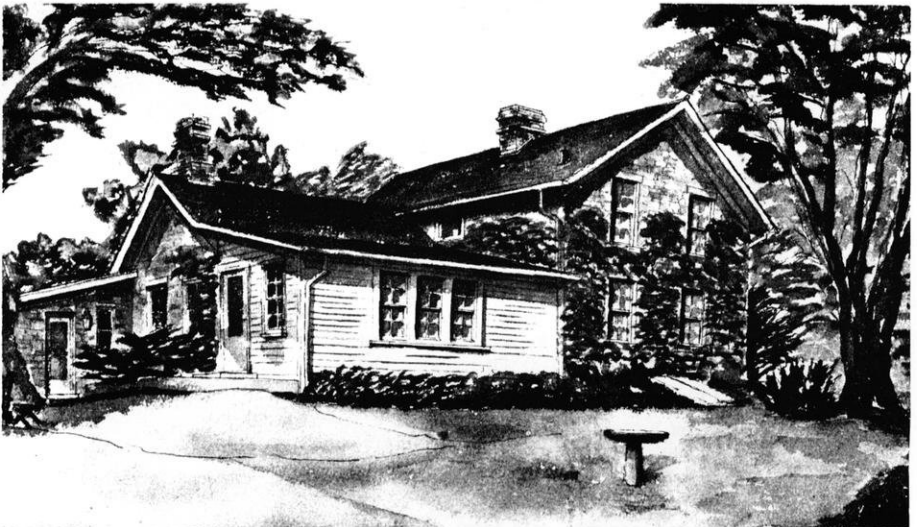
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Bayfield, WI 54814

**This issue  
is dedicated to  
Walter Scott  
1911-1983**



*Walter E. Scott and WSO presentations, June 3, 1982*



*Hickory Hill — Walter Scott's home in Madison*



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