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The Passenger Pigeon



Winter, 1987 — Volume 49, No. 4



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Volume 49, No. 4

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Cover: Male Peregrine Falcon photographed at the Juneau Park Lagoon area near downtown. This area served an important function providing an open area for early flying and later as an important hunting site. Photo by G.A. Septon, Milwaukee Public Museum.

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Wisconsin's Peregrine Falcon Recovery Program The First Year

By Greg Septon, Milwaukee Public Museum

For the first time in over two decades, the sounds of young Peregrines were once again heard across Wisconsin's skies. 1987 marked the beginning of a major effort in Wisconsin to reintroduce Peregrines into their former locales. As part of this program, Milwaukee was chosen as the first release site. This urban setting was chosen because of the relative safety which could be afforded the young falcons, its local prey base and its location along Lake Michigan's western shore; a major migratory route.

Another site was also set up on Sauk County near the small town of Muscoda. Unfortunately, this site was shut down one day before the first scheduled release due to the potentially severe Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) threat. At our only two natural Peregrine eyries along the Mississippi River, all of the young and one of the adult females were killed this spring by Great Horned Owls. Great Horned Owls are quite prolific, very adaptable and have no natural enemies. That coupled by the fact that we have provided them with an ideal habitat and afforded them complete protection have contributed to their high populations. In future releases, even more concentrated Great Horned Owl control will be necessary if Peregrines are to get a foothold in the state.

Since the Muscoda site was inoperable this year, the falcons scheduled for release there were transferred to Milwaukee and released. We released a total of fourteen falcons. Of these, ten survived and have now migrated.

Since this first release effort is historically important, I have submitted the following Milwaukee project report. The report was prepared by Lead Hack Site Attendant, Jeff Moline and myself and explains the project in a more complete and detailed manner.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The tallest building in Milwaukee is the First Wisconsin Center (Center). This prominent skyscraper is a distinctive landmark on the city skyline. A six foot ledge on the Center's deck -- the top floor -- was a great spot for the falcons and their hack box. Attached to the west ledge of the deck, the hack box faced west and was positioned two feet back from the edge of a forty-one story drop. The elevation of the hack box was five hundred eighty-four feet. Since the observation deck windows are six feet back from the edge of the building, the deck ledge, the roof above, and the large diagonals of the superstructure contributed to give the box a less exposed and less precarious position. To ensure that no one would be on the observation deck during the critical weeks just following the release when the falcons were making their first flights, the Center installed wood panels to conceal the hack box and closed off the observation deck.

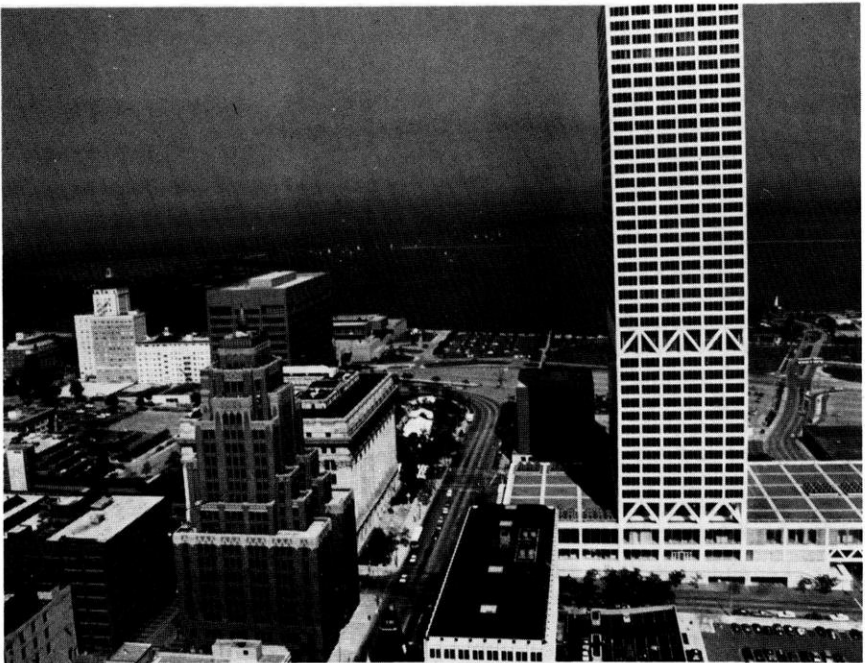
Johnson Controls mounted a video-camera on the north side of the hack box which was aimed through a plexiglass window in the box wall. This offered a view of the interior of the hack box to people watching a closed circuit T.V. monitor in the Center's lobby. The public, employees, and attendants all appreciated the T.V. Accompanying the monitor is a display detailing the falcons, the logistics, and the contributors for the project.

Apparent from the attached Milwaukee map is the proximity of the First Wisconsin Center to Lake Michigan and the waterfront. North along the lakefront is Juneau Park (Park): a large, open grassy area with a long, tree-lined lagoon. A wooded hillside between Prospect Avenue and Lincoln Memorial Drive is also included

as part of the park. South of the First Wisconsin Center are the piers, railyards, and grain elevators of the harbor. To the west of the center is the main concentration of tall buildings downtown.

The First Wisconsin Center rises two hundred feet above the next tallest building, the 411 Building (411). We made nearly all our field observations from the roof of 411; its location is ideal. From 411 we could see the hawk box from only three blocks away, get a central perspective on the buildings downtown, and still have an unobstructed view of the city at large.

Besides the 411 Building, a number of other downtown buildings are over three hundred feet tall, including the Wisconsin Bell Telephone Co. (Phone Co.) and the Regency Tower. Several other buildings, like the Wisconsin Natural Gas Company (Gas Co.) and the Cudahy Tower Apartments, are between two hundred and three hundred feet tall. Finally, there are many buildings in the downtown area between one hundred and two hundred feet high such as the Northwestern Mutual Life south building (NML). Smaller buildings and numerous parking lots round out the cityscape.



A view of the downtown area from the thirtieth floor roof of the 411 building. Shown are the buildings most often used by the young falcons; the First Wisconsin building, the Gas Company, Northwestern Mutual complex, and the Cudahy Tower.



Figure 1: Milwaukee Downtown Metro Area

PROJECT SUMMARY

Release Narratives

On the morning of 16 July, Greg Septon picked up the five Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) chicks at Milwaukee's General Mitchell Field and brought them to the First Wisconsin Center. After a news conference, the chicks were banded and placed in the hack box.

From the start, Bogey (Y28Y) developed more quickly than the others. His well-being dominated our concern for the falcons. On 21 July, Bogey began jumping into the plexiglass window while the other four chicks were just beginning to find their balance well enough to stand on the large rocks in the hack box. Five days later Bogey flew from a rock straight into the window of the box. Bogey became our primary consideration for determining the date of release. We were concerned not only for his safety, but for that of the other birds around him in the box as well. Meanwhile, Conan (Y27Y) and one of the females grew increasingly active and did some vigorous flapping. The other two females had yet to impress us with their maturity but we planned on them spending some time on the ledge before flying. Bogey needed to be let out.

HISTORY AND DETAILS OF YOUNG

Name	Sex	Band	USFWS Band	Breeder	Hatch Date
Bogey	M	Y28Y	816-21931	Oar	16 June
Conan	M	Y27Y	816-21930	Oar	17 June
Bitch	F	P25P	877-42536	Oliphant	17 June
Gizmo	F	P28P	877-42537	Oliphant	18 June
(unnamed)	F	P24P	877-42535	Oar	18 June
Zoar	F	P32P	877-42514	Graham	16 June
Floyd	M	Y34Y	816-21937	Oar	20 June
Muskie	M	Y33Y	816-21936	Oliphant	22 June
Looker	F	P34P	877-42543	Oliphant	24 June
Dutchess	F	P33P	877-42542	Oliphant	20 June
Britantine	F	P37P	877-42546	Graham	21 June
Swoosh	F	P35P	877-42544	Oliphant	23 June
Slicer	M	Y36Y	816-21938	Oliphant	24 June
Mermaiden	F	P36P	877-42545	Oliphant	28 June

Release Data

Name	Placed in Hack Box	Released	Last Observed		Print Marks
Group I	16 July	27 July	Date	Age/Days	Orange Spots
Bogey	30 days old	41 days old	28 Sept.	104	Dbl. Right Wing
Conan	29 days old	40 days old	Died 4 Aug.	48	Dbl. Left Wing
Bitch	29 days old	40 days old	18 Sept.	93	Sgl. Right Wing
Gizmo	28 days old	39 days old	23 Sept.	97	Sgl. Back
(Unnamed)	28 days old	39 days old	Died 28 July	40	Sgl. Left Wing
Group II	4 Aug.	6 Aug.			Pink Markings
Zoar	48 days old	50 days old	1 Sept.	76	Dbl. Left Wing
Floyd	45 days old	47 days old	24 Sept.	96	Bar Right Wing
Muskie	43 days old	45 days old	23 Sept.	93	Bar Left Wing
Looker	41 days old	43 days old	21 Sept.	89	Dbl. Right Wing
Group III	9 Aug.	12 Aug.			Green Spots
Dutchess	50 days old	53 days old	9 Sept.	91	Sgl. Left Wing
Brigantine	49 days old	52 days old	Died 15 Aug.	55	Dbl. Right Wing
Swoosh	47 days old	50 days old	19 Sept.	88	Sgl. Right Wing
Slicer	46 days old	49 days old	Injured 19 Aug.		Dbl. Left Wing
Mermaiden	42 days old	45 days old	28 Sept.	92	Sgl. Back

First Release

On the morning of 27 July we removed the falcons from the hack box and color marked them with fluorescent orange spray paint. We placed the falcons in the hide, removed the front and released them at 11:15 a.m.

Not to our surprise, Bogey was the first to leave. His first flight was successful and he landed on the roof of the 411 Building. The next morning much to our dismay we saw a person working between the panels and the windows near the hack box. At the same time, we heard several of the falcons "kakking" loudly reacting to his presence. That morning, window washers found the un-named female (P24P) dead on the south roof of the bank lobby. Because we did not see the falcon fall, we cannot be sure that the presence of this individual scared her off the ledge and caused her subsequent death.

In the days following the release, Conan and Bitch (P25P) took first flights that eventually ended up on the street. In each case, they were retrieved and returned to the hack box.

By the end of the fifth day (1 August) we hadn't seen any of the falcons return to the hack box. At this point we installed a second hack board on the southwest corner of the NML roof top. This was highly visible from all nearby buildings and Bogey and Bitch soon found and utilized it. The same day Gizmo returned to the hack box on the First Wisconsin to feed. The only bird we never saw feeding was Conan.

Once these birds became accustomed to the locations of the two food boards, they took short, perch-to-perch flights downtown landing primarily on the nearby NML building and the multi-ledged Gas Co. building.

Second Release

At 10 p.m. on 3 August we received word that the Muscoda release site in Sauk County, Wisconsin was being shut down due to a potentially severe Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) threat. The decision was then made to release the Muscoda falcons in Milwaukee. They were color marked with fluorescent pink spray paint and placed in the hack box at 7 am. These birds were scheduled to be released in Muscoda the same day they were transferred here; however, we kept them in the hack box for two days to allow them to recover from their trip and to view their new surroundings. At 9:30 on the morning of 6 August, this group was released with no subsequent problems thereafter.

With the birds from our first release already established downtown, it wasn't long before our newly released falcons interacted with them and soon found the hack boards and favored perches. Although both groups were compatible in their interactions, the falcons from the first release had more flying experience and performed most of their aerial maneuvers by themselves.

One additional observation was that the falcons from the first release began ranging north in the vicinity of the Cudahy and Regency Towers shortly after release of the second group.

Third Release

On 9 August the remaining five birds from the Muscoda site were transferred to Milwaukee, color marked with green fluorescent spray paint and placed in the hack box. On 12 August at 9:30 am we released this third and final group. Four of the falcons flew the next day and at least three found the hack box within two days. On 15 August we retrieved Slicer (Y36Y) from the sidewalk below the Gas Co. building and returned him to the ledge near the hack box. Later the same day Brigantine (P37P) was run over and killed by a car.

In mid-August the birds from the first release flew downtown primarily to feed on the hack boards. They spent much of the time out of our sight. Then, on August 23rd, Annie noticed several falcons in the dead willow trees near Juneau Park Lagoon. For the next three weeks most of the falcons from all three groups spent time in the park. Typical behavior in the park during this period included the falcons flying low over the grass chasing each other and insects, landing on the ground, chasing squirrels and pet dogs. We also saw them harassing Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) and Mallard Ducks (*Anas platyrhynchos*) over the lagoon. All the while the falcons appeared unconcerned about human activity going on around them.

By September we began to think of each falcon as being in one of two separate sets of birds based on the disparity of their ages and differences in their flying ability. The birds of the first release (Bogey, Bitch, Gizmo) and the older birds of the second group, Zoar (P32P) and Floyd (Y34Y) comprised the set that had become confident and independent in flight. Meanwhile, the second set, comprised of the younger birds from the second release, Muskie (Y33Y) and Looker (P34P) and the remaining three falcons of the third group, Duchess (P33P), Mermaid (P36P) and Swoosh (P35P), flew around independently too, but they remained in the same general area and were never too far from each other.

Hunting Behavior

All of the falcons eventually spent less time in aerial chases and dog-fights and more time pursuing prey, i.e., Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*), Rock Doves (*Columba livia*), Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) and Common Nighthawks (*Chordeiles minor*). Typical hunting behavior we observed involved the falcons closely tail chasing their prey and making short stoops at it when opportunities arose. Although we did not see any of the falcons actually making a kill we began to see evidence of successful hunting in late August. On 27 August we spotted Muskie (Y33Y) eating a small bird on the Gas Co. building which we tentatively identified as a Chimney Swift. The next day we observed Zoar (P32P) feeding on a Common Nighthawk. Even though the falcons became increasingly proficient at hunting they regularly used the hack board until Mid September.

On 8 September we began to find the heads, feet and other uneaten portions of Yellow-billed Cuckoos (*Coccyzus americanus*) on the roof tops and ledges of downtown buildings. The next week we found uneaten, dead Cuckoos on a number of buildings including the NML, 411, and Gas. Co. On 13 September we discovered thirteen dead Cuckoos on the Phone Co. building. Additionally, we estimate that during the preceding week we found the remains of approximately forty Cuckoos.

Since again, we didn't witness any actual kills during our daily downtown dawn to dark observations, we assume the falcons hunted at night taking advantage of the city lights. Often when leaving the 411 Building at dark, we would see falcons flying in the city. Furthermore, before leaving the 411 Building each night we inspected the building ledges and upon our arrival the following mornings, found caches of fresh killed birds. The falcons fed upon these freshly killed birds (mostly Cuckoos) the next day and for days afterwards always preferring the Cuckoos over the quail at the hack board. Additionally, on the roof of the 411 Building, we found the remains of a Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*).

By this time the falcons' aerial displays reflected their sharpened hunting skills. Although the falcons were spending less time downtown, on windy and gusty days they soared around the buildings and engaged in some intense dogfights. They used the wind currents and up drafts rising off the buildings to coordinate their quick moves, sharp directional changes, and footing-in-air maneuvers. The falcons

became fast and covered long distances rapidly as they ranged out further from downtown. In addition to prey already mentioned the falcons pursued Kingfishers (*Ceryle alcyon*) and Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*).

On 16 September the summer-like weather changed and became foggy, overcast, and rainy for a week. Few new kills appeared during this time leading us to believe the Cuckoo migration had passed or that the weather change had halted their southerly movements. The falcons that returned downtown during these days resumed feeding on the hack boards. Once the weather cleared most of the falcons stopped relying upon the hack boards and stopped returning to the downtown area on a regular, daily basis. Although we did not find as many dead birds on the roofs downtown (or or two new ones a day) we noticed a marked increase in the variety of prey taken: Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), Sora Rail (*Porzana carolina*), and on 28 September, An American Coot (*Fulica americana*). During this latter part of September we generally only saw one or two falcons daily from our observation point on the 411 Building, and these were seen only briefly. Dependence upon and use of the hack board trailed off substantially and by the end of September the falcons were on their own.

Casualties

On 28 July Annie recovered the unnamed falcon's body on the south roof of the First Wisconsin Center lobby. This was thirty-nine floors directly below the observation deck ledge where she had been the day before. She was too young to fly and we presume the fall killed her, but why she left the ledge is unclear. There was an unauthorized person on the observation floor seen near the hack box that morning and perhaps she was scared off by him. She was 40 days old.

On 4 August Conan (Y27Y) crashed into a window at the Marine Bank Building (100 block East Wisconsin Avenue) and died. He hit the ground level window about four and a half feet above the sidewalk. His collision left a visible imprint on the window which indicated the position of his wings, head, and feet. From the imprint we presumed he was flying around a pillar and hit hard into the plate glass before he realized it was there. A potted tree inside the window probably contributed to his confusion. Although he knew about the locations of both hack boards we never saw him feeding on them. On 3 August he attacked a bird and drove it into the street but because of traffic he could not pursue it any further. Conan's flying and hunting behavior developed rapidly just days after the release. He began chasing birds and insects right away and also ranged out further than any of the other falcons had at that time. Perhaps he was in hot pursuit of prey when he hit the window. He was 48 days old.

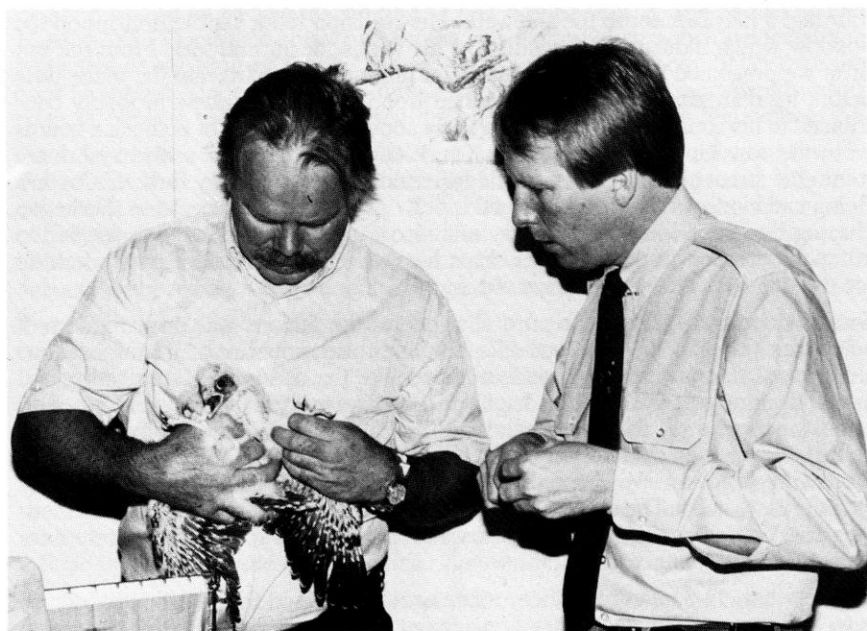
On 15 August, we received reports that one of the falcons was on the sidewalk below the Gas Co. We retrieved Slicer without any trouble and examined him. He seemed fine -- just dazed and confused like the other birds that had ended up on the ground. We put him back on the observation deck ledge along with some fresh quail. A day passed and still he hadn't left. We began to wonder if he hadn't sustained an injury. The next day we noticed that he couldn't hold his right wing properly. We decided at that time to capture him but the opportunity didn't present itself. The next day he flew to the Pfister Hotel in a gradually descending line drive flight. An attempt to capture him on this roof would surely have been futile and dangerous.

The next day, 19 September, Slicer made another labored flight to the Gas Company building and situated himself on a ledge that gave us our best chance to capture him. Shortly thereafter we captured him and sent him by air to the Raptor Research and Rehabilitation Program (RRRP) within two hours after capture. After being examined and X-rayed it was found that Slicer had a fracture of the right

coracoid. The injury rendered him incapable of sustained flight and therefore unreleasable. He will eventually go into a captive breeding project but for now will be used for educational purposes in Milwaukee.

On 15 August, Brigantine had not yet flown, although the release of her group had taken place three days earlier. When we returned Slicer to the observation deck ledge we had to put additional quail on the hack board. In order to do this, we were forced to flush Brigantine from the ledge. She flew and landed on the First Wisconsin Center's roof -- she looked good. Four hours later, we received a report that one of the falcons was run over by a car at the intersection of Michigan and Cass Streets. We found Brigantine's body at the intersection of Michigan and Van Buren Streets, just below the First Wisconsin Center lobby level. From reports, she hit some windows and landed in the busy street. She was 55 days old.

On 30 August Gizmo became entangled in some fishing line at the McKinley Marina. According to reports she had a fishing lure stuck in her head and was flapping against some rocks unable to get free. We were grateful for the anonymous person who caught her and moved her to safety. When we retrieved her there were no signs of any visible injury to the head. Her wings appeared bruised and we decided to have her examined at the RRRP. She was sent by air that afternoon, examined and returned to Milwaukee on 11 September. We released her within sight of the hack board on the NML roof. When her box was opened she bolted out and flew to the adjacent new NML building. At this time two of our falcons flew in and interacted aerially with her. Afterwards she returned to the hack board, fed, bathed and took a long flight high and to the north. After ten minutes she returned to the hack board and again fed. We were encouraged by her long flight and the fact that she knew she was home.



Jack Oar, falcon breeder from Illinois and Greg Septon, Milwaukee project coordinator, band one of the falcon chicks at the press conference.



Left to right, Peregrine Patrol Volunteers Penny Gonzales, Thor Templin and Richard Wagner (Penny's father) keep a watchful eye skywards on the morning of the second release.



"Bogey", (Y28Y), after being color marked prior to release.

Visiting Falcons
(Peregrines observed in Milwaukee from other release sites)

Date Seen

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 9, 10 August | Year-old female with very faint green spots on left wing. Possibly "No Spot" from the 1986 Chicago release. |
| 14, 15 August | Immature male red metal leg band with T/2 on right leg. Left leg had a band with a metal tag dangling from it. |
| 16, 19, 20, 22 August | Immature male with orange spot on left wing and a more faded orange spot on right wing. Black band on left leg. Possibly 1987 Chicago-released falcon. |
| 15, 24, 28 September | Immature with large but diffuse orange spot on left wing. Possible 1987 Chicago-released falcon. |

Commentary

The Peregrine Falcon release program in Milwaukee was a success. Ten of the fourteen falcons released here have survived to become self-sufficient and wild peregrines. Although we had more casualties than expected, we are confident that with this season's experience the factors contributing to those problems can be corrected for next year's release. We drew several main conclusions from the events and issues we had to address during the project. We found that the placement of the hack box on the observation deck of the Center was critical to the success of the project. Even so, from this season's experience, we learned specific requirements of the site itself. Because nearly all the falcons (including individuals from each release) had some difficulty locating and returning to the hack box, we attached two branch perches to the box. These extended over the ledge and were more visible to falcons circling below or perched to the west of the Center. Eventually a few falcons would find the box and their activity was something from other falcons used to home in on the location of the site. Nevertheless, we added a second hack board to a more visible spot -- the roof of the lower NML building. The falcons found this centrally located hack board with no trouble and, in the end, all the falcons relied on this hack board instead of the one on the First Wisconsin Center. Due to the unique design of the Center, and to avoid problems we encountered during the releases, we feel that for future releases, the NML board should be in operation the day of the release and thereafter.

We also found that at the First Wisconsin Center hack site the falcons fared better when released between 44 and 50 days of age. The second group of falcons released fit into this age category. They grew accustomed to their surroundings and took confident flights within days after their release. Aware of the downtown environment, these falcons flew strong enough to stay off the ground and streets on their first flights and for the duration of our observations.

Furthermore, the falcons from this second release were old enough that had they been frightened off the ledge or otherwise departed shortly after release, they would have been more able to recover and fly to safety. Yet this older group didn't bolt from the box never to return, a situation which is always a concern when releasing older eyasses.

In an urban setting falcons cannot afford to make a first flight that ends up on the street; we took this fact into consideration for our second and third releases.

Circumstances required that we release three separate groups of falcons over a period of two weeks. We were unsure of how the falcons would react to this schedule

but in the end were pleased by this release pattern since it created an atmosphere of falcon activity that helped each new group find the hack boards and favorite perches. The activity of the older more experienced falcons only helped younger ones develop that much faster.

Milwaukee can be proud of the success if its first Peregrine release. The falcons have adapted to and feel comfortable with the city environment and we feel there are several factors which contributed to this. The proximity of the downtown area to the natural environs of Juneau Park contributed to the fact that many of the falcons still remained in the area until near the end of September.

These falcons were observed in the park on a regular basis. We observed them roosting, playing, harassing birds and chasing prey. The area is favored by a variety of bird species and this may have been one of the main attractions for the falcons. With a varied prey base the falcons had substantial hunting opportunities. As the summer progressed even more bird species appeared in the area. The western shore of Lake Michigan is a major migration route and as such, is quite active between August and October.

Juneau Park with its hillsides and willow lined lagoon, is an important rest stop for migrating birds during this time.

In addition to the value and location of Juneau Park, the tall buildings in the city served as high vantage points and the falcons regularly brought their prey to these urban sites to eat. The city does have unique hazards for falcons but in Milwaukee the urban environment has a touch of "the wild" and this will prove invaluable for establishing Peregrines here.

Acknowledgements

We would especially like to thank First Wisconsin Bank, Milwaukee for use of their buildings and for their financial support of our five-year Peregrine Recovery Program. Dick Griffith who oversaw arrangements at the bank should also be commended for his untiring efforts. Thanks also goes to Drs. Pat Redig and Harrison B. Tordoff for their expertise and assistance; Mr. Fred Ott for his help in making preliminary arrangements in the city, Johnson Controls for donation of the remote video monitoring system and the Winmar Corporation for use of their building as an observation point.

Also, we would like to thank the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Milwaukee Public Museum, Bruce Herrow and the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co., and the Marc Plaza Hotel and its very helpful staff for complimentary lodging for our hack site attendants.

A complete list of organizations and individuals who helped make our first release a success follows: Wisconsin DNR/Bureau of Endangered Resources, Milwaukee Public Museum, The Nature Conservancy, First Wisconsin Bank, Milwaukee, Citizens Natural Resources Association, Marcus Corporation, Wisconsin Falconers Association, Johnson Controls, Fond du Lac County Audubon Society, Winmar Corporation, General Federation of Women's Clubs -- Wisconsin, Wisconsin Natural Gas Company, Milwaukee County Zoological Society, Steinman Lumber Company, Quarles & Brady Attys., Wildlife ARC, Penelope Gonzales, Heinemann's Restaurant, Milwaukee Sentinel, Mike Langer, Milwaukee Journal, Channel 12 News, Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company, Peregrine Patrol Volunteers.

Finally, we would like to thank those persons who have by one reason or another remained anonymous but who have helped in many and various ways.

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A Birder's Nightmare Has Turned Into A Birder's Dream - The Peregrine Falcon

By Thor H. Templin, Age Nine

(My name is Thor H. Templin. I presently live in Milwaukee, WI. I am a student of 82nd Street School and in the 4th Grade. I am the youngest child to win a chess trophy in the City of Milwaukee at the age of 5. I speak, read and write two languages -- German and English. I am learning a third language called Runic, an ancient Teutonic written language. My interest in birds started at the age of 4 or 5. I read everything I can about the subject. I plan to be an Ornithologist with a Ph. D. I am a member of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology.)

Thor H. Templin (age 9)

Decades into the future -

I am walking with two of my grandchildren in downtown Milwaukee. One says, "Look a robin". The other says, "Grandpa, a flock of pigeons". Then they both exclaim, "A Peregrine Falcon". I reply, "Common birds now but there was time when....".

The Peregrine Falcons suffered because of the wide use of DDT (an insecticide). Small birds eat insects and the Peregrine Falcon ate them, all affected by DDT. This made the Peregrine Falcon eggs thinner than normal with improper moisture or gas exchange through the shell. The result -- a lower Peregrine Falcon population: down in the rockies and zero growth east of the Mississippi River. The Peregrine Falcon was eventually granted endangered species status.

Today because of scientific research the Peregrine Falcon now has come back. Yes, they exist in the wild, but they are also being released in urban areas, where predators do not exist and food is plentiful. Wisconsin has one such site -- Milwaukee. This was year one of a five year Milwaukee Peregrine Falcon release. I was there.

Notes

July 16, 1987: Peregrine Falcons delivered to Milwaukee site.

July 27: release date, First Wisconsin Center, Hacking Site, 600 feet above the ground, five Peregrine Falcons (3 females and 2 males) \$2,000.00 per bird, smaller than a Barn Swallow -- about the size of a Crow, I receive a touor, hear male and female calls, birds marked, eat Quail, I am now at the top of another building watching the Hacking Site, door of Hacking Site opened, a female comes out first, eventually several come out on the ledge but no bird flies today although some flap their wings.

July 28: all birds are flying that is learning to fly, 8:00 a.m. P24P died, hit a window while flying, broken wings and chest bones.

July 29: observed the birds.

July 30: observed the birds.

July 31: observed the birds.

August 1: observed the birds.

August 2: observed the birds.

August 3: observed the birds, including a Peregrine Falcon chasing another bird.

August 4: observed the birds, Y27Y died.

August 5: observed the birds, while flying two females grabe each other's claws and then let go, a spectacular air show!

August 6: observed the birds.

August 7: observed the birds.

August 8: observed the birds.

August 9: observed the birds, four new Peregrine Falcons are added to the Milwaukee Project, released later in the day.

August 10: observed the birds.

August 11: observed the birds.

August 12: observed the birds, third group, five different Peregrine Falcoms are released, I witness a "Duck Hawk;; (PF) attack a Pigeon in flight, Falcons flying all over Downtown Milwaukee.

August 13: observed the birds, upper shoulder of Y36Y broken.

August 14: observed the birds.

August 15: observed the birds, P37P was hit by a car and died.

Three new Peregrine Falcons spotted -- one from Chicago, one from Grand Rapids or St. Louis, and one from Chicago or Minneapolis.

Some Peregrine Falcons will migrate and some will not.

August 18: Mr. Greg Septon and the hack site attendants are invited to my house for supper. Greg identifies every feather in my collection (I'm impressed!)

Group	Name	Project Band	Federal Number	Hatch
1	Bogey	Y28Y	816-21931	6/16
1	The Bitch	P25P	877-42536	6/17
1	Gizmo	P28P	877-42537	6/18
1	Conan* ¹	Y27Y	816-21930	6/17
1	unnamed female* ¹	P24P	877-42535	6/18
2	Zoar	P32P	877-42541	6/17
2	Duchess	P33P	877-42542	6/21
2	Muskie	Y33Y	816-21936	6/24
2	Floydy	Y34Y	816-21937	6/20
3	Looker	P34P	877-42543	6/24
3	Slicer	Y36Y	816-21938	6/24
3	Swoosh	P35P	877-42544	6/23
3	Mermaiden	P36P	877-42545	6/28* ²
3	Brigatine* ¹	P37P	877-42546	6/22* ²

(Y indicates male, P female)

*¹ died

*² date unsure

Note: Some of the birds were bred in Canada, the majority America.

Thank You.

My good friend, Mr. Greg Septon, the head of the Milwaukee Peregrine Falcon Project. Miss Anne Wendt and Mr. Jeff Moline, hack site attendants. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Milwaukee Public Museum. First Wisconsin Corporation.

Note: I won second place, ages five to eight, in the Young Artists Peregrine Art Contest for one of my drawings.

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Some White Red-tails in Wisconsin

By Don Follen Sr., Ken and Janice Luepke and Christian Cold

"Although very uncommon, albinistic individuals are regularly reported throughout the range of the Red-tailed Hawk... The degree of albinism varies from a few white feathers or patches to completely white birds." (Lish and Voelker 1986).

Due to the frequency of observing albinistic or partially albinistic Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) in Wisconsin we felt that the phenomena significant enough to warrant a report of our observations of these birds in Wisconsin. (This is true since these observations have occurred over a short period of time and most of these observations taking place within a small area. Observations of such unusual plumaged birds prompt the birder a chance to look for individuals other than the 'normal' in populations of birds -- even among predatory species.)

There are different degrees of albinism. It may be complete or incomplete. A white bird could be referred to as albinistic (which means the absence of pigment in the skin, hair, feathers and eyes) or leucistic (meaning an incomplete form of albinism) or piebald (which refers to patches, blotches or irregular patterns of black and white or other colors). In this article we have referred to all individuals we have encountered as "white" Red-tails.

A review of the **Passenger Pigeon** indices revealed but one report referring to albinism occurring in Red-tailed Hawks. This report is quoted in entirety from **Passenger Pigeon** 2:94. "W.R. Spellum of Viroqua lists the following partial albinos which were brought to him: 3 Robins, 2 English Sparrows, Horned Lark, Red-tailed Hawk, 2 Crows and a Barn Owl". This does not infer that some of the many entries under Red-tailed Hawk could not have had indications of one of the white characteristics nor does it infer that all issues of the **Badger Birder** have been scrutinized or that we know of all white Red-tailed Hawks in Wisconsin past or present. Rather this paper is intended to show that there is indeed a larger proportion of white (whole or in part) Red-tailed Hawks in Wisconsin than previously known.

Following is a chronology of the white Red-tails we are familiar with. October 21, 1977: Informed of white Red-tailed Hawk in SW Marathon County (T.27N.-R.3E. Sec. 34). The senior author observed an all-white bird on October 22. This bird had probably been observed in this area since mid-summer, 1973 (K. & J.

Luepke). We captured, banded and photographed this bird on April 8, 1979 (Fig. 1). It was an adult female and has been in this area now for probably fourteen years (1973-1987). This bird seemed timid but very vocal, disappearing into wooded areas when approached. During some winters she has been seen in other winters she has not been located. In breeding season she has been found in the area with hawks of typical plumage and was once observed on a nest by K. Luepke (mid May, 1978). We do not know if she has bred. We have never seen more than one white individual at a time nor have we, in fourteen years, seen any young Red-tails with white coloration. This bird was still present in the area on November 11, 1987.

December 29, 1982: The day of the Willard Christmas Bird Count. About five miles SSE of Willard in Clark County (T.25N.-R.3W. Sec. 12) at 1330 hours the senior author and the Luepkes observed along Co. Trk. G. a nearly all white-Red-tail.

May 20, 1985: Bruce Bacon (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources) Wildlife Research Technician at Baldwin, Wisconsin observed an adult white Red-tailed Hawk, sex unknown.

May 16, 1986: John Becker of Junction City, Portage County (T.25N.-R.6E. Sec. 32) reported a "white hawk" behind his house in a tree. For the rest of 1986 I attempted to trap this bird without success. The bird was observed last in mid November and on May 16, 1987 the bird reappeared. To date this bird has not been trapped and was last observed October 27, 1987.

September 13, 1986: The Chequamegon Bird Club (Medford) was enroute to Manitowoc for a field trip. Several of the members observed a "white" Red-tail. As described -- "...all white underparts, tail and back all white to midback near shoulders; head normal or slightly white. This bird was observed east of Plainfield along State Highway 73 in Waushara County (T.20N.-R.10E. Sec. 31 estimate).

September 24, 1986: Christian Cold observed and trapped a white Red-tailed Hawk (Fig. 2) about eight miles northwest of Stevens Point (T.25N.-R.7E. Sec. 32). This was a remarkable bird. We believed it was a male because of its small size. It was uniquely marked white with black and a red tail.

In 1987 we found the first evidence of "possible" breeding by a white Red-tail when Bruce Bacon reported that the white Polk County Red-tail was paired with one of normal coloration. "On 8/3/87 we saw the white Red-tail and an adult typical Red-tail flying ... with two young of the year. The youngsters were begging food. We observed this same behavior 8/4 and 8/5. I'm positive the 2 young were offspring of the white Red-tail and the typical Red-tail. One young was 'normal', but the other was much lighter colored -- but not white. From over a quarter mile away you could tell the two young apart with naked eye, because the one was so much lighter. The light youngster had a 2-tone tail, light-white and top of wings and back were very 'light colored'. The adult bird had not been observed during fall of 1985, or 1986 after September 1. Thus far in 1987 the white bird has been observed through mid October. Bruce has commented several times of the 'spookiness' of this bird". This bird is being observed in Polk County, about ten miles SW of Amery (T.32N.-R.17W. Sec. 27).

Gross in **Bird-Banding** 36:67-71, 1965 states that mass plumage aberrations occur in isolated populations and uses Redwinged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) near Madison, Wisconsin as an example (pers. comm. J.V. Dennis). This may well be true of our Red-tailed Hawks.

We invite future observations. Please report any sightings to the authors.



Figure 1. Ken Leupke, Adult Female White Red-tailed Hawk, Don Follen, Sr. (Courtesy of Marshfield News Herald, April 8, 1979)



Figure 2. White Red-tail, Don Follen, Sr., Christian Cold. Bob Baldwin Photographer.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bruce Bacon for willingly sharing his information with us, John and Susan Becker for reporting and keeping track of the Junction City bird and helping avoid some landowner problems and thanks to all the others that have helped with this field work.

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*Save the
Wetlands
for the
Cranes*

**Mary and
Charlie Nelson**



House Finches invade LaCrosse

By James L. Howitz and Lynn A. Bartsch

In spring 1987 at least three pairs of House Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus*), nested in LaCrosse, on the campus of the University of Wisconsin - LaCrosse.

On 23 April 1987, as Howitz was walking to the science building at the University of Wisconsin - LaCrosse, he noticed two *Carpodacus* finches copulating near the north end of the building. The female flew into a nest 5 m up in one of a group of 9 spruce trees. At 1000 she was covering 3 eggs, and at 1130 she was on 4 eggs. Howitz had been hearing House Finches on campus occasionally during the previous three weeks, but the only *Carpodacus* finches unambiguously identified were the expected Purple Finches (*P. purpureus*). The presence of House Finches in LaCrosse took Howitz and other observers by surprise because of the absence of House Finch records in western Wisconsin, let alone nesting records, and the recency of House Finches anywhere in Wisconsin (Passenger Pigeon 47:63-66, 1985; 48:177-178, 1986; 49:50-52, 1987). Howitz also found two more nests that day in a group of 4 spruce trees 160 m from the first nest. The second nest found had a clutch of 4 eggs being incubated by the female, and the third nest held an incomplete clutch of one egg. At least 3 males and 3 females were present in the vicinity.

The second nest found hatched around 28 April and by 7 May had a large dam of feces beside the nest, characteristic of cardueline finch nests. The young in this nest fledged, perhaps prematurely, about 12 May, and on 26 May a male was feeding 2 fledglings in the nest tree. The other two nests were destroyed by predators by 13 May.



Photo 1. House Finch nest and four eggs, UW-LaCrosse, 4-25-87. Photo by F.Z. Leshner.



Photo 2. House Finch nest site, UW-LaCrosse, 4-25-87. Photo by F.Z. Leshner.

A fourth nest, possibly a replacement, was constructed in a spruce 10 m from the first nest, with the first egg laid on 13 May. The nestlings apparently fledged prematurely on 8 June, as Bartsch found one on the ground 30 m from the nest. House Finch activity in LaCrosse ended in June, and no additional sightings have occurred in the summer or fall. Searches were made in surrounding areas of similar habitat during spring and summer, but no House Finches were found. These are the first records of successful House Finch nesting in western Wisconsin and one of the first House Finch nesting records in the state.

Why this group of House Finches chose to nest where they did is unclear. The birds fed on hackberry fruits near the nests, but did nearly all of their foraging far from the nests. Coincidentally, Pine Siskins (*Carduelis pinus*), nested 1.5 m from the ground in a spruce in the same group of spruces as the first and fourth House Finch nests, and successfully fledged 3 young on 15 May. Siskins nesting in this part of the state is also somewhat surprising.

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FIELD

NOTES



The Winter Season

December 1, 1986 - February 28, 1987

by Kenneth I. Lange

A mild winter can make us apprehensive. We tend to look northward and wonder when the icy blasts and heavy snows will arrive. But this winter remained mild, with temperatures from 6 - 10 degrees F. above normal and approximately half the usual precipitation.

The period began with little, if any, snow cover for the entire state, but later on 1 December and into the 2nd a storm brought rain and snow over Wisconsin. Light snowfalls continued over most of the state into the second week, and the first intense cold weather arrived later in the second week. Mild weather then prevailed for the remainder of December, melting most of the shallow snow cover. This weather continued into January, with a period of intense cold towards the end of the month; snowfall was relatively light. February was also relatively dry, with above normal temperatures. The period ended with a rain and snow storm.

This winter had the lowest average snow depths in 25 years. Light snow cover is normally accompanied by deep frost penetration, but this winter was exceptional because of the above normal temperatures.

El Ninos have been discussed previously in this publication (1983, Volume 45, Number 4, pages 132-135). The mild winter apparently was the result of another El Nino, a relatively minor one (*Science News*, 24 January 1987, Volume 131, page 55).

Did the mild and open winter cause some birds to linger? The following are suspect: Bald Eagles overwintering in certain northern counties, a Bonaparte's Gull in Manitowoc County, Herring Gulls in northwestern Wisconsin, a Carolina Wren in Racine County, Ruby-crowned Kinglets in several localities, Wisconsin's second Curve-billed Thrasher, the state's first documented Indigo Bunting for the period, and two warblers, a Yellow-rumped throughout the period in Shawano County and a Common Yellowthroat on 20 February in Waukesha County.

Despite the comments of several contributors, there was no hard evidence that winter songbirds were down in numbers; rather they appeared to be dispersed, with feeder activity much reduced.

Certain winter finches and the Red-breasted Nuthatch irrupted from Ontario, where for the second successive year berry and seed crops were poor and the autumn

wet (**American Birds**, 1987, Volume 41, Number 1, page 80). In Wisconsin these species generally were in normal numbers for the period. Hardy reported numerous Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak in the Park Falls area, Price County, despite a scarcity of cones; they were coming to feeders.

After their high numbers last winter, it was surprising to again find the Northern Shrike in 35 counties throughout the state. Blackbirds apparently overwintered in good numbers, at least in certain southern counties.

Townsend's Solitaires were found in Buffalo and Sauk Counties, Varied Thrushes in Price, Taylor, and Jackson Counties, and House Finches in 4 southern counties.

The Northern Harrier overwintered in several southeastern counties, including Jefferson County where Hale reported a female visiting a feeder at the edge of Lake Mills to prey on birds, sometimes secreting itself in yew shrubbery just 5 feet from the back door of a residence. All three Accipiters were in normal numbers. The Rough-legged Hawk arrived early in the United States and penetrated far south by the beginning of the period, but was relatively uncommon (**American Birds**, 1987, Volume 41, Number 1, page 44); for the period in Wisconsin its numbers were normal to below normal. The Golden Eagle again was found in 4 west-central and western counties in January and February. Snowy Owl reports were up from last year.

Wisconsin's first documented Thayer's Gull was a bird in March 1974 in Milwaukee County, and the second was found a year later in Douglas County. Now this species is being noted regularly along Lake Michigan whenever a sizeable number of gulls (75+) is found. As DeBoer expressed it, "We are getting used to seeing them in all plumages."

Fall migration was reported for the Tundra Swan, 9 December, the Canada Goose, 7-12 December and (Hale for Jefferson County) 30 January, and certain raptors.

Spring migration was noted in the following species: Pied-billed Grebe, 27 February, Dane County; Great Blue Heron, end of the period, Dodge County; Canada Goose, southern Wisconsin in February, beginning on the 11th; certain ducks; Turkey Vulture, 8 February, Sauk County; Bald Eagle, February; Northern Harrier, 10-27 February, scattered localities throughout Wisconsin; Sharp-shinned Hawk, beginning on 20 February, west-central and central Wisconsin; Cooper's Hawk, 19 February - end of the period, southern and central Wisconsin; Northern Goshawk, 21-27 February, southern and northeastern Wisconsin; Red-shouldered Hawk?; Red-tailed Hawk, throughout February, with probable migrants in the northern part of the state by 9 and 21 February; Rough-legged Hawk, February, throughout Wisconsin; American Kestrel, February, mainly the 7th and 8th, throughout Wisconsin; Sandhill Crane, 21 February, Walworth County, and 28 February, Dane County; Killdeer, 20 February, Washington County; Herring Gull, 21-22 February, southern Wisconsin; Belted Kingfisher, February, southern Wisconsin; Horned Lark, January and into February, throughout Wisconsin; American Robin, 18 February, perhaps earlier - end of the period, northwards to Dunn, Dane, Columbia, and Brown Counties; Cedar Waxwing, February, eastern and southern Wisconsin; Song Sparrow?; Red-winged Blackbird, 21 February in southern Wisconsin, 22 February in Trempealeau County, and 23 February in Langlade County; Yellow-headed Blackbird, one in Dodge County on 21 February; Rusty Blackbird, 21 February, southern and western Wisconsin; Common Grackle, mainly 18-21 February, southern and western Wisconsin; and Brown-headed Cowbird?

A total of 67 people contributed records for the following 58 counties (the number of contributors for a given county follows the county name): Adams - 3, Ashland - 3, Barron - 1, Bayfield - 3, Brown - 1, Buffalo - 3, Burnett - 1, Calumet - 3,

Chippewa - 1, Clark - 6; Columbia - 2, Crawford - 2, Dane - 9, Dodge - 3, Door - 2, Douglas - 5, Dunn - 2, Eau Claire - 1, Fond du Lac - 1, Forest - 5, Grant - 1, Green Lake - 1, Iron - 1, Jackson - 3, Jefferson - 2, Juneau - 4, Kenosha - 5, LaCrosse - 1, Langlade - 3, Manitowoc - 5, Marathon - 2, Marinette - 1, Marquette - 1, Menominee - 1, Milwaukee - 12, Monroe - 1, Oneida - 4, Outagamie - 1, Ozaukee - 4, Pepin - 1, Polk - 1, Portage - 1, Price - 2, Racine - 8, Rock - 1, Sauk - 4, Sawyer - 1, Shawano - 2, Sheboygan - 3, Taylor - 5, Trempealeau - 1, Vilas - 2, Walworth - 3, Washington - 2, Waukesha - 3, Waupaca - 2, Winnebago - 3, and Wood - 2. Coverage was lacking in 14 counties scattered throughout the state.

Abbreviations used in the species accounts: BOP - beginning of period, EOP - end of period, TTP throughout the period, m. obs. - many observers, and CBC - Christmas Bird Count(s).

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Red-throated Loon: One in Manitowoc Co., 7 Jan. - EOP (m. obs.).

Common Loon: The latest records were 5 on the Green Lake and Lake Geneva CBC.

Pied-billed Grebe: One on the New Richmond CBC, and one on the Madison CBC. Coward found this species in Dane Co., 27 Feb.

Horned Grebe: Dane Co., through 7 Dec., 4 (Ashman), and Racine Co., BOP (DeBoer).

Double-crested Cormorant: 5 on the Green Bay CBC and one on the Hudson CBC.

American Bittern: This species occasionally overwinters in Horicon Marsh (*Passenger Pigeon*, 1985, Volume 47, page 57), and one was reported in the marsh this winter (6 Feb.) by Horicon National Wildlife Refuge personnel.

Great Blue Heron: An especially high number, 24, on the CBC. Later records: 7 Jan., Waukesha Co. (Cederstrom), 7 Feb., Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff), and EOP in Dodge Co., 1 (Horicon National Wildlife Refuge personnel).

Black-crowned Night Heron: One in Ozaukee Co., 20 Dec. (Eley).

Tundra Swan: Migrants on 9 Dec. in the following counties: Trempealeau (Hunter), Sauk (Lange), and Jefferson (Hale). A total of 4 on the Nelson and Cookville CBC. Later records: 2 in Dane Co., 31 Jan.-EOP (m. obs.), and 1 in Buffalo Co., 1 Feb. (Polk).

Mute Swan: Including the CBC, records for the following counties: Douglas, Bayfield, Ashland, Portage, Green Lake, Waukesha, and Racine.

Snow Goose: A total of 3 on the Stevens Point and Woodland Dunes SW CBC, and 1 in Dane Co., 1 Feb.-EOP (m. obs.).

Canada Goose: Fall migrants in Jefferson Co., 7-12 Dec. and 30 Jan. (Hale; Cederstrom). 72,000+ on the CBC, exceeded only by the 201,108 of 1984. TTP in approximately a dozen southern counties, plus Trempealeau Co. (Hunter) and Burnett Co. (Hoeffler). Spring migrants on 13 Feb. in Sauk Co. (Lange), and 21-27 Feb. in 6 southern and central counties.

Wood Duck: A total of 12 on 7 CBC. Later records: Ozaukee Co., TTP (Baughman), Sauk Co., 25 Jan. (Lange), and Dane Co., 1 Jan. (Tessen).

Green-winged Teal: One overwintered in Milwaukee Co. (m. obs.), and Shea found one in Dane Co., 22 Feb.

American Black Duck: TTP in 10 counties scattered throughout the state. In Winnebago Co. (Ziebell), the maximum number was noted on 24 Feb.

Mallard: TTP in approximately 18 counties scattered throughout the state.

Northern Pintail: Milwaukee Co., one TTP (m. obs.), and Racine Co., TTP (DeBoer). One in Dane Co., 22 Feb.-EOP (Thiessen), most likely a migrant.

Northern Shoveler: Plymouth and Madison CBC. Noted in Dane Co., TTP (m. obs.), maximum 68, 1 Jan. (Thiessen). Baughman found one in Racine Co., 17 Jan., and Cowart noted this species in Milwaukee Co., 27 Feb.

Gadwall: On 6 CBC. TTP in Milwaukee, Dane, and Columbia Cos. Baughman reported one in Ozaukee Co., EOP, and Polk found approximately 35 in Buffalo Co., 26 Feb.

American Wigeon: Madison, Newburg, and Racine CBC. TTP in Racine, Ozaukee, and Dane Cos.

- Canvasback:** TTP in Racine Co. (DeBoer). Migrants on 21 Feb. in Crawford Co. (200; Leshner) and 26 Feb. in Buffalo Co. (30+; Polk).
- Redhead:** After the CBC, only in Dane Co., 31 Jan.-1 Feb. (Hilsenhoff; Tessen).
- Ring-necked Duck:** After the CBC, only in Ozaukee Co., 17 Jan., 2 (Baughman).
- Greater Scaup:** TTP in the following counties: Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, and Door (m. obs.).
- Lesser Scaup:** TTP in the following counties: Ozaukee, Sheboygan, and Dane. Polk found 30+ in Buffalo Co., 26 Feb.
- Oldsquaw:** TTP in Lake Michigan, Kenosha to Door Cos. (m. obs.).
- Surf Scoter:** One on the Newburg CBC.
- White-winged Scoter:** Sturgeon Bay, Woodland Dunes NE, Newburg, and (200 birds) Milwaukee CBC.
- Common Goldeneye:** TTP in Lake Michigan - Racine to Door and Marinette Cos., also TTP in Winnebago, Dane, Columbia, Sauk, Portage, and (?) Wood Cos., the Eau Claire area, and Polk and Bayfield Cos. Probable migrants on 21 Feb. in Crawford Co. (Leshner); Ziebell noted a maximum in Winnebago Co. on 24 Feb.
- Bufflehead:** TTP in Lake Michigan - Racine to Door Cos. Parsons found this species in Walworth Co., 24 Jan., and Ziebell noted it in Winnebago Co., BOP-24 Feb., maximum 3.
- Hooded Merganser:** After the CBC, noted in January in the following counties: Milwaukee, Dane, and Eau Claire. One TTP in Manitowoc Co. (Sontag; Steffen).
- Common Merganser:** TTP in Lake Michigan - Racine to Door Cos., also TTP in Winnebago, Dane, Columbia, Sauk, and Portage Cos., the Eau Claire area, and Douglas Co. Migrants on 21 Feb. in Crawford Co. (Leshner) and 22 Feb. in Manitowoc Co. (Sontag).
- Red-breasted Merganser:** TTP in Lake Michigan - Racine to Door Cos. Sontag noted an increase in Manitowoc Co. on 20 Feb.
- Ruddy Duck:** TTP in Milwaukee Co. (Baughman), and apparently Winnebago Co. (Ziebell). Two in Walworth Co., 18 Jan.-12 Feb. (Parsons; Tessen).
- Bald Eagle:** TTP in approximately 20 counties, including such northern counties as Douglas, Bayfield, and Iron, undoubtedly a reflection of the mild winter. Migrants in February.
- Northern Harrier:** TTP in Kenosha, Racine, and Jefferson Cos. See the introduction for comments on the behavior of the Jefferson Co. bird. Haseleu found this species in Washington Co., 20 Jan. Probable migrants on 10 Feb. in Barron Co. (Goff), 11 Feb. in Walworth Co. (Parsons), 19 Feb. in Sauk Co. (Hilsenhoff), and 24 Feb. in Clark Co. (L.F. Risch).
- Sharp-shinned Hawk:** January and February records for 11 counties, mainly in southern and eastern Wisconsin (m. obs.), but also Langlade Co., TTP (Pickering), and Shawano Co., 8 Jan. (Peterson). Possible migrants on 27 Feb., Portage Co. (Semo), and 28 Feb., Monroe Co. (Epstein).
- Cooper's Hawk:** January and February records for 6 counties: Crawford, Dane, Sauk, Juneau, Clark, and Shawano (m. obs.). Possible migrants on 19 Feb. in Sauk Co. (Hilsenhoff) and Portage Co. (Semo), 21 Feb., Monroe Co. (Epstein), 22 Feb., Milwaukee Co. (Baughman), and 28 Feb., Dane Co. (Sutton).
- Northern Goshawk:** January and February records for Dodge, Outagamie, Door, Langlade, and Monroe Cos. (m. obs.), and the Eau Claire area (Polk). Birds, most likely migrants, in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, and Dane Cos., 21-27 Feb. (m. obs.).
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** After the CBC: Columbia Co., 17 Jan., 1 (Lange), Dane Co., 10 Jan.-11 Feb., 1 (Shea; Thiessen), and Portage Co., 7 Feb.-EOP, migrant? (Semo).
- Red-tailed Hawk:** North to Polk Co., TTP (Hudick), Barron Co., TTP (Goff), Douglas Co., BOP-17 Jan. (Johnson; Shea), Wood Co., TTP (Ziebell), Portage Co., TTP (Semo), and Shawano Co., 3 Jan. (Peterson). Birds, most likely migrants, in Brown Co., 31 Jan.-EOP (Wierzbicki), Langlade Co., 9 Feb.-EOP (Pickering), Burnett Co., 21 Feb.-EOP (Hoefler), and Taylor Co., 27 Feb. (N. Risch).
- Rough-legged Hawk:** Normal to below normal numbers. Spring migration underway by the first week of February.
- Golden Eagle:** After the CBC, noted in 4 west-central and western counties: Juneau, 1 Feb., 2 in courtship flight (Baughman), and an immature (Tessen), Monroe, at least 2 TTP (Epstein), Trempealeau, an immature, 22 Feb. (Hunter), and Buffalo, 3 subadults, 26 Jan. (Polk).
- American Kestrel:** North to the following counties: Polk, TTP (Hudick), Barron, TTP (Goff), Wood, TTP (Ziebell), Portage, TTP (Semo), Shawano, 3 Jan. (Peterson), and Brown, TTP (Wierzbicki). Possible migrants on 7 Feb. in Kenosha and Racine Cos., and Door Co., and 8 Feb. in Burnett Co. Johnson noted this species in Douglas Co., 3-8 Feb.

Merlin: One on the Arcadia CBC and one on the Oshkosh CBC. Also one on the Waukesha CBC and (Bielefeldt) one at the same spot, 6 Feb.

Gray Partridge: On 10 CBC, mainly in eastern Wisconsin.

Ring-necked Pheasant: North to Douglas Co., TTP (Johnson), Price Co., TTP (Hardy), and Marinette Co., TTP (Lindberg).

Spruce Grouse: Oneida Co. (Coward; Peterson).

Greater Prairie Chicken: Burnett Co. (Hoeffer) and Portage Co. (Semo).

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Burnett Co. (Hoeffer).

Northern Bobwhite: Including the CBC, reported from the following counties: Kenosha, Milwaukee, Sheboygan, Columbia, Richland, Monroe, Crawford, and Jackson (m. obs.).

Virginia Rail: One on the Madison CBC, and (Polk) three in a Chippewa Co. marsh kept open by warm industrial water, 16 Jan.

American Coot: TTP in the following counties: Milwaukee (m. obs.), Walworth (Parsons), Dane (m. obs.), and Winnebago, 1 (Ziebell).

Sandhill Crane: One on the Stevens Point CBC. Single birds in Walworth Co., 21 Feb. (Parsons), and Dane Co., 28 Feb. (Sutton), were most likely migrants.

Killdeer: A migrant in Washington Co., 20 Feb. (Baughman), also 26 Feb. in Milwaukee Co. (Zehner) and Monroe Co. (Epstein).

Common Snipe: After the CBC: Sheboygan Co., through 10 Jan., 2 (Baughman), Monroe Co., through 25 Jan. (Epstein), and Crawford Co., through 26 Jan (Merz).

Bonaparte's Gull: On 18 Jan. in Manitowoc Co., Sontag found one, the first he has noted here in winter in the past 20 years. Baughman found one in Milwaukee Co., 11 Jan., and DeBoer found one in Racine Co., 21 Jan.

Ring-billed Gull: TTP in 5 southern and eastern counties: Walworth, Racine, Milwaukee, Manitowoc, and Winnebago (m. obs.). Mueller noted this species in Kenosha Co., 21 Feb. (migrants?).

Herring Gull: TTP along Lake Michigan-Racine to Door and Marinette Cos., also Winnebago Co. and (Bayfield and Douglas Cos.) northwestern Wisconsin (m. obs.). Birds, most likely migrants, on 21 Feb. in Kenosha Co. (Mueller) and Crawford Co. (Leshner), and 22 Feb. in Dane Co. (Sheas).

Thayer's Gull: Lake Michigan, Kenosha to Manitowoc Cos. (m. obs.). See **By the Wayside** and the introduction.

Glaucous Gull: After the CBC: Racine Co., through 7 Feb. (DeBoer), Manitowoc Co., TTP, maximum 3 (Sontag); and Douglas Co., TTP, maximum 15 (Johnson).

Great Black-backed Gull: Racine Co., 6-31 Dec., 1 (DeBoer), Milwaukee Co., 17 Jan., 1 (Frank), and Douglas Co., 10 Jan. 1 (Johnson). See **By the Wayside**.

Mourning Dove: Most contributors reported normal numbers. North to: Polk Co., TTP (Hudick), Barron Co., TTP (Goff), Taylor Co., TTP (N. Risch), Vilas Co., 12 Jan. (Reardon), Brown Co., TTP (Wierzbicki), and Door Co., TTP (Lukes).

Eastern Screech Owl: 7 counties in the southern part of the state, plus Taylor Co. (N. Risch), Langlade Co. (Pickering), and Forest Co., 28 Jan. (Swengel).

Snowy Owl: 15 counties throughout the state. Still here at the EOP in Manitowoc Co. (Sontag), Winnebago Co. (Ziebell), Portage Co. (Semo), and Douglas Co. (Johnson).

Great Gray Owl: One in Marathon Co., 18 Dec. (Lepplars). See **By the Wayside**.

Long-eared Owl: After the CBC: Milwaukee Co., 24 Jan.-7 Feb., maximum 5, 7 Feb. (Mueller).

Short-eared Owl: After the CBC: Kenosha Co., TTP (Coward), maximum 12, 7 Feb. (Mueller), Columbia Co., 5-20 Feb. (Coward; Hilsenhoff), Sauk Co., 16 Feb. (Swengel), and Portage Co., 11 Feb. (Semo).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: After the CBC: 7 Feb., a dead bird in Dane Co. (Thiessen), 10 Feb., Sauk Co. (Swengel), and 28 Feb., Milwaukee Co., 1 (Diehl).

Belted Kingfisher: TTP in Trempealeau Co. (Hunter) and Polk Co. at the Osceola Trout Hatchery (Hudick). January records for Racine, Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Juneau Cos. (m. obs.), and February records (at least some must have been migrants) for Dane, Jefferson, Monroe, Jackson, and Eau Claire Cos. (m. obs.).

Red-headed Woodpecker: Only 56 on 28 CBC, the lowest total since 1967. After the CBC, noted in 4 counties: Sauk, 23 Feb.-EOP (Swengel), Shawano, 17 Jan. (Pickering), Price, through 31 Jan. (Hardy), and Bayfield, 25 Feb. (Swengel).

- Red-bellied Woodpecker:** North to Polk, Barron, Taylor, Langlade, Brown, and Door Cos. (m. obs.).
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** After the CBC, one record: Burnett Co., 21 Jan., 1 (Hoefer).
- Black-backed Woodpecker:** Oneida Co., 2 Jan., 1 (Tessen), Price/Ashland Co. line, 13 Feb., 1 (Baughman), and Douglas Co., 14 Feb., a female (m. obs.).
- Northern Flicker:** After the CBC, reported in 5 southern and eastern counties (m. obs.), plus Clark Co., TTP (L.F. Risch), and Portage Co., 20 Feb. (Semo).
- Horned Lark:** TTP in Racine (DeBoer) and Dane (Ashman) Cos. Maximum numbers in the state from 25 Jan.-EOP, when this species was noted northward to Burnett, Taylor, Langlade, and Door Cos. (m. obs.).
- Gray Jay:** Including the CBC, reported from the following counties: Douglas, Ashland, Iron, Vilas, Forest, Oneida, Price, Taylor, Langlade, and Portage.
- Common Raven:** South to the following counties: Polk, Eau Claire, Monroe, Wood, Portage, Shawano, and Door (m. obs.).
- Boreal Chickadee:** Including the CBC, reported from the following counties: Sawyer, Price, Oneida, Forest, and Langlade.
- Tufted Titmouse:** Eau Claire area (Polk), Jackson Co. (T. Risch), Crawford Co. (Merz), Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff), and Walworth Co. (Tessen).
- Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Throughout the state; generally in normal numbers.
- Brown Creeper:** Northernmost records from Polk, Price, Shawano, and Manitowoc Cos. (m. obs.). Generally in normal numbers.
- Carolina Wren:** One at a feeder in Racine Co., 24 Dec.-14 Feb. (m. obs.).
- Winter Wren:** After the CBC, one in Walworth Co., 6 Feb. (Cownt), and one in a tamarack swamp in Waukesha Co., 20 Feb. (Bielefeldt).
- Golden-Crowned Kinglet:** After the CBC, reported from 9 southern and central counties, plus (Sheas) Douglas Co., 19 Jan., but only one contributor (Sontag in Manitowoc Co.) found this species TTP.
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Madison, Appleton, and Fond du Lac CBC, with one still in Fond du Lac Co., 4 Jan. (Baughman).
- Eastern Bluebird:** One on the Hales Corners CBC.
- Townsend's Solitaire:** One in Buffalo Co., 3 Jan.-26 Feb. (m. obs.). This species was first noted in Devil's Lake State Park, Sauk Co., 8 winters ago, in Feb. 1980. Since this initial record, Townsend's Solitaire has been found in the park in 5 other winters and possibly has been in the park every winter; this winter one was seen in the park on 13 Dec., eating red cedar berries, and on 7 Feb., eating buckthorn berries (Lange).
- Hermit Thrush:** After the CBC, found only in Milwaukee Co., 12 Feb., 1 (Frank).
- American Robin:** After the CBC, found in 7 counties throughout the state, but only 1-2 birds at each locality (m. obs.). Migration underway by at least 18-19 Feb., e.g. Sheboygan Co. (Brassers) and Milwaukee Co. (Zehner), and possibly by 11 Feb., e.g. Walworth Co. (Parsons) and Trempealeau Co. (Hunter). Wierzbicki noted this species in Brown Co., 24 Feb., and Raile found it in Dunn Co., 27 Feb.
- Varied Thrush:** Including the CBC, a total of 5 birds in the following counties: Price, Taylor, Jackson, and Manitowoc (m. obs.).
- Gray Catbird:** One on the Milwaukee CBC and one on the Trempealeau CBC.
- Brown Thrasher:** 6 on as many CBC.
- Curve-billed Thrasher:** Wisconsin's first documented Curve-billed Thrasher was a bird that overwintered in Buffalo Co. for 4 successive winters, from 1971-72 through 1974-75. This winter one frequented a feeder near Spencer, Clark Co., 26 Nov.-10 Feb. (m. obs.). See **Passenger Pigeon**, 1987, Volume 49, Number 1, pages 18-19.
- Bohemian Waxwing:** High numbers in northern Wisconsin on the CBC. After the CBC, maximum numbers were 130 in Shawano Co., 5 Feb. (Peterson), 101 in Taylor Co., 25 Feb. (Swengel), 60 in Polk Co., 21 Jan. (Hudick), 50 in Wood Co., 2 Jan. (Ziebell), and 50 in Douglas Co., 19 Jan. (Johnson). Southernmost records were from Polk, Jackson, Wood, Shawano, and Door Cos. (m. obs.).
- Cedar Waxwing:** After early January, this species was not reported again until early February, e.g. 5 Feb. in Manitowoc Co. (Sontag); migrants were also noted later in February in Winnebago (Ziebell), Sauk (Swengel), and Milwaukee (Bontly) Cos.

- Northern Shrike:** Numbers on the CBC were less than last year's record total, but this species was numerous on the counts and found on a record number. Reported in 35 counties throughout the state. Still in southern Wisconsin, e.g. Dane, Columbia and Sauk Cos., EOP.
- Loggerhead Shrike:** One on the Plymouth CBC.
- Yellow-rumped Warbler:** One on the Waukesha CBC, and (Peterson) one TTP in Shawano Co. along the Wolf River in Shawano.
- Common Yellowthroat:** One on the Fort Atkinson CBC, and (Bielefeldt) one in a Waukesha Co. marsh, 20 Feb.
- Northern Cardinal:** North to the following counties, where TTP and generally in normal numbers: Barron, Taylor, Clark, Langlade, Brown, and Door.
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** An undocumented bird at a feeder in Chippewa Falls, Chippewa Co., late Nov. - approximately 1 Feb. (via Polk).
- Indigo Bunting:** Wisconsin's first documented Indigo Bunting was one at a feeder near Stockbridge, Calumet Co., 20 Dec.-EOP; it was documented independently by Rudy, Settle, and Tessen. See **By the Wayside**. This bird proved to be a male, as it started turning blue in early March (Tessen).
- Rufous-sided Towhee:** One on the Hales Corners CBC.
- American Tree Sparrow:** The largest flock reported was one of approximately 200 birds in Sauk Co., 4 Jan. (Lange). Also noteworthy: a flock of 60 in Polk Co., 14 Jan. (Hudick), and one of 50 in Dane Co., 1 Jan. (Thiessen).
- Field Sparrow:** Two on the Horicon CBC, one on the Sauk City CBC, and (Parsons) one in Walworth Co., BOP-10 Jan.
- Vesper Sparrow:** One on the Poynette CBC.
- Fox Sparrow:** Six on the Newburg CBC.
- Song Sparrow:** TTP in Racine Co. (DeBoer), Walworth Co. (Parsons; Tessen), and Dane Co. (Ashman; Thiessen).
- Swamp Sparrow:** TTP in Ozaukee Co., 3 (Baughman), and Columbia Co., maximum 4 (Shea).
- White-throated Sparrow:** TTP in Milwaukee Co. (Coward), Dane Co. (Hilsen hoff), and Sauk Co., one at a feeder in Baraboo (Swengel). Hudick found one in Polk Co., 23 Feb.
- White-crowned Sparrow:** TTP in Racine Co. (DeBoer).
- Harris' Sparrow:** Two on the Nelson CBC, and (via Polk) one at a feeder in Dunn Co. this winter.
- Lapland Longspur:** After the CBC, reported in 4 counties: Manitowoc (Baughman), Winnebago (Ziebell), Jackson (T. Risch), and Clark (L.F. Risch).
- Snow Bunting:** Throughout the state: reported from 23 counties. After the CBC, the largest flocks (more than 100) were found in Clark, Price, and Shawano Cos. (L.F. Risch; Hardy; Pickering). Still in Clark, Portage, and Marinette Cos., EOP (L.F. Risch; Semo; Lindberg).
- Red-winged Blackbird:** TTP in Walworth Co. (Parsons) and (?) Dane Co. (Thiessen). Migrants on 21 Feb. in Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee, Dodge, and Iowa Cos. (m. obs.), plus single birds on 22 Feb. in Trempealeau Co. (Hunter) and 23 Feb. in Langlade Co. (Pickering).
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Baughman noted on in Dodge Co., 21 Feb.-EOP.
- Rusty Blackbird:** After the CBC, this species was found in Dane Co., 21 Feb. (Hilsen hoff), and Walworth Co., 28 Feb. (Tessen). Epstein found this species in Monroe Co., 14 Dec. and 21 Feb.; overwintering uncertain.
- Brewer's Blackbird:** No records after 1 Jan.
- Common Grackle:** TTP in Winnebago and Wood Cos. (Ziebell), and Polk Co. (Hudick). Birds, most likely migrants, in Jefferson Co., 13 Feb. (Hale), 18 Feb., Trempealeau Co. (Hunter), 19 Feb., Milwaukee Co. (Frank), and 20-21 Feb. in Waukesha, Dodge, and Dane Cos. (Cederstrom; Baughman; Hilsen hoff).
- Brown-headed Cowbird:** After the CBC, reported in Racine Co., 12 Feb., 4 (Tessen), Walworth Co., 31 Jan. (Parsons), Jefferson Co., 26 Jan. (Hale), and Dane Co., 1-20 Feb., maximum 7, 1 Feb. (Hilsen hoff; Tessen).
- Pine Grosbeak:** Reported from 8 northern counties, and (Hanbury) Milwaukee Co., 11 Feb. The maximum flock size was 18 in Price Co., 12 Jan. (Hardy).
- Purple Finch:** Generally normal numbers for the period.

House Finch: The first winter reports for this recent addition to Wisconsin's avifauna: two at a feeder in Walworth Co. (Parsons), TTP in Racine Co. (DeBoer), at least 6, males and females, TTP at feeders in Milwaukee Co. (Coward; Tessen), a female at a feeder in Dane Co., 30 Nov.-24 Dec. (Hilsenhoff), and one at the International Crane Foundation in Sauk Co., 8 Dec. (Swengel). See **By the Wayside**, also **Passenger Pigeon**, 1985, Volume 47, Number 2, pages 63-65.

Red Crossbill: After the CBC, reported from 4 northern counties - Douglas, Vilas, Oneida and Forest, and 4 central counties - Portage, Wood, Monroe and Jackson. Maximum flock sizes were 15-16.

White-winged Crossbill: After the CBC, reported from Iron Co., 21 Feb.-EOP (Butterbrodt), and Douglas Co., 13 Feb., 3 (Johnson).

Common Redpoll: A pronounced invasion into northern and central Wisconsin by the end of December, but generally absent from southern Wisconsin for the period. Reported from 28 counties. After the CBC, flocks of 100+ were noted in Taylor, Price, Polk, and Bayfield Cos. (m. obs.). Hoary Redpoll records are included herein.

Pine Siskin: Throughout the state, with population estimates varying from above to below normal.

American Goldfinch: Generally normal numbers. North to the following counties: Douglas, 10 Jan. (Johnson), Bayfield, 24 Feb. (Swengel), Iron, TTP (Butterbrodt), Vilas, 7 Dec. (Reardon), Langlade, TTP (Pickering), Brown, TTP (Pickering), and Door, TTP (Lukes).

Evening Grosbeak: Reported from 26 counties throughout the state, except for the southwestern corner, but generally below normal numbers. After the CBC, a flock of 100+ was reported from only one county, Price on 11 Jan. (Hardy).

CONTRIBUTORS

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**FIND THIS
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By the Wayside...



Great Black-backed Gull

Mary Gabrys and I were birding Wisconsin Point, Douglas County, Wisconsin, on 10 January 1987, hoping one of Duluth's Iceland Gulls or the Great Black-backed Gull that hadn't been seen since the Duluth Christmas Count had flown over to Wisconsin. We had found a couple hundred gulls on the lake (still clear of ice) but they were too far out to identify so we tried the landfill. We had walked about half way in when a front end loader put up all the gulls at once - between 200 and 250 birds. Both of us scanned the flock for anything that wasn't Herring or Glaucous Gull. Mary said "Black-backed" and pointed to the gulls at the far end. I was instantly able to pick out the Black-backed in the circling flock of gulls. By this time they were over the Dutchman's Creek road and headed to the lake, but even at that distance the gull was unmistakable. It was larger and heavier built than the Herring Gulls with an uniformly black back and upper wing surface and a slower wing beat. Underparts and head and tail were white. The sky was overcast making true color easy to see. None of the Herring Gulls looked that dark at any angle as they sometimes can in bright sunlight. This is probably the same Black-backed Gull that had been in Duluth earlier in the winter.

Robbye J. Johnson

(Winter Editor's Note: James C. Frank also documented a Great Black-backed Gull, a bird in Milwaukee County, 17 January 1987.)

Great Black-backed Gull

On December 6, 1986, I checked the harbor off the Racine Yacht Club, Racine County, Wisconsin, and quickly picked out a 2nd year Great Black-backed Gull amongst the several dozen Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. Its much larger size and sizeable black patch on the back identified this bird as a Great Black-backed. I was able to get photos of this bird. This bird was seen once the following week. Karl Legler came down on Dec. 13 and we found a first year Great Black-backed Gull. Its large size, massive black bill, very contrasty black and white on the back, mostly white head and chest and black terminal band were noted. On count day 12-27 I picked out a much darker 1st year bird, very similar to the one appearing at Juneau Park Lagoon, Milwaukee Co., in late Dec. 1984. This bird was seen by myself on count day and by myself and Dennis Gustafson on 12-31-86.

Gerald A. DeBoer

Thayer's Gull

I seem to be the last person to see a Thayer's Gull in Manitowoc. On 19 January 1987, a lone adult in winter plumage flew into the containment area on the Manitowoc Lakefront and landed on an ice flow with a group of Herring Gulls. At a distance of 150 feet, using 7 x 50 glasses, size and shape comparisons were easily made. The bird originally attracted my attention as it flew into the area by its primaries -- light below and dark above, and large mirror in the first 2 to 3 primaries, its well developed hood and dark iris. The darker pink legs became evident as the bird landed, as did the enlarged tertial crescents. The mantle of this individual was darker, but it was not the obvious distinction that would quickly isolate the bird. The white tail was unmarked.

While standing on the ice, details of the head topography revealed a sloping forehead and round head in profile. The enlargement of the terminal portion of the upper mandible characteristic of Herring Gulls was not evident giving the bill a slimmer/finer appearance. A red subterminal spot was present on the lower mandible. The rest of the upper and lower mandible was yellow. The tawny hood was complete except for the forehead, lores, chin, and throat. The color of the fleshy orbital ring could not be determined but the iris was dark (brown?).

The bird was about the size of the Herring Gulls in the immediate area. Since it spend much of its time preening, a characteristic standing posture was not noted.

A second Thayer's Gull was found in the Two Rivers harbor area, Manitowoc Co., Wisconsin, a week later. The bird, also an adult in winter plumage, seemed less typical. This bird was photographed extensively.

(Winter Editor's Note: *The author also submitted detailed drawings of the first bird.)*

Charles Sontag

Thayer's Gull

Scanning the piers of South Shore Park, Milwaukee Harbor, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, on 17 January 1987, I noted a large gull that had the characteristics I was looking for. It had a dark hood of brown streaks (actually smudges is a better description). The eye appeared dark in color and the back was darker gray than the adjacent Herring Gulls. As it raised its wings, the ventral primary tips showed a light gray color and large white spots instead of black primary tips and small white spots. It quickly moved behind one of the pilings on the pier.

A while later the bird was in the water feeding on bread with the ducks. The heavy smudging of brown on the head and neck was noted again. Some Herrings seemed to have as much of a hood, but they differed in two respects: the smudging on the Thayer's was heavier and darker, and there was a sharp contrast, almost an edge, to the hood across the ventral neck/upper chest. It was almost uniformly brown, rather than streaked at this area. The Herring Gulls were more sparsely streaked in this area. The dark eye, darker gray back, black upper primaries and white breast were also noted. As the wings infrequently were spread, the gray ventral primary tips and large white spots were again noted. It appeared slightly less bulky and slightly smaller in head size than the Herring Gulls. The bill was yellow with a red distal ventral spot. The bill seemed narrower than the Herring Gull's, especially in lacking the widening at the tip.

James C. Frank

Great Gray Owl

My husband and I were on our way to Marshfield, Wisconsin, on 18 December 1986, and we had just turned south onto Co. Hwy. S from Co. Hwy. C in Marathon County, heading into the Mead Wildlife Area. Near the road, about 50 or so feet into the woods on our left, I spotted a large owl and stopped the car at once. The owl was perched upright, facing us directly, at the top of a snag, a dead tree with but one or two short branches remaining near the top. I had a perfect view of the owl's front.

It resembled the Barred Owl but I knew at once it was not this species because it was much too large. It was as large or larger than a Great Horned Owl.

The day was cloudy but there was excellent visibility with no glare or intervening trees or branches to mar the sighting.

The head was round in shape, with an encircling series of stripes of dark gray and lighter grayish-white. The eyes were deepset but I could not distinguish their color at that distance.

There were no ear tufts. The bill was prominent and hooked but I could not see its color. Under the bill there was a definite whitish area. The coloring below was different from a Barred Owl's in that the stripes did not encircle the head. Instead, they were vertical gray and grayish-white. Further down, the stripes became wider and less definite.

The owl did not move for almost five minutes. I had glanced at the car clock and it was 10 a.m. at first sighting. After that length of time, during which we sat perfectly still, observing it, I moved a little and the owl, which had been watching us all the time, lifted its wings and soared -- almost floated -- away from us into deep woods, and we could no longer see it.

Because it was always facing us, I could not distinguish the markings on the back or the legs.

I did not have glasses with me but jotted down notes before leaving. I have visited the area several times since but have not seen the owl again.

After a second-hand experience several years ago when a Great Gray Owl almost attacked my daughter and her husband as they fished from a boat on Snipe Lake, I have been particularly interested in this owl and have read everything I have found about it. Because, from experience, I believe I can eliminate the Barred Owl and the Great Horned Owl, I am positive this was a Great Gray sighting.

Edith M. (Mrs. Glenn C.) Leppla

Indigo Bunting

Just before noon on our annual Christmas Bird Count, we stopped at the Denton Cooke home on Sunset Beach Road on the east shore of Lake Winnebago, south of Stockbridge, Calumet County, Wisconsin. We parked about 60 feet north of the house on the public lake access road so that we could count the birds at the feeder on the north side of the Cooke house. It was a clear, mild, spring-like, sunny day, with excellent visibility, even though the feeder was on the shady side of the house. There were several Juncos and House Sparrows feeding on the spilled seeds below the feeder, and as I proceeded to identify and count them, my eye was attracted to one bird that was different from the rest. It was about the size of the nearby Juncos, and a bit slimmer -- less chunky than the House Sparrows. It was a different, warmer brown than the dull, grey-brown of the House Sparrow as well. It was sitting on top of a pile of milo, feeding intently, and had

its tail pointed toward me, so I could not see any distinguishing field marks with my binoculars (7 x 35).

I pointed the bird out by my husband, Martin, and Paula Settle and we watched the bird closely for several minutes hoping it would turn around. We noticed that the tail appeared to be a bluish-gray color and the rest of the bird a warm, medium-brown color. Realizing that this was a strange color combination indeed for a winter bird, I trained my 30x spotting scope on the bird and continued to wait for it to turn around. It did indeed have a blue tail and primaries, and at last when it did turn around I saw that it was all brown -- very pale on the breast and belly, and darker brown on the back, wings, and crown. The face was a warm soft brown with a blush of peach overtone about the cheeks and lores, and all the colors blended gradually into each other. There were no distinctive face markings of any kind, and no stripes on the back or breast. The only mark was a single, indistinct, blurred, light buffy-brown wing bar that blended softly into the darker wing color. The bill was light greyish-brown, neither darker nor lighter than the general color of the bird; the same was true of the legs. I knew that if it were summer I would not hesitate to say that I was looking at an Indigo Bunting female or immature male, but I knew that this would be preposterous on December 20th, so I tried to think of other possibilities; I could not think of any. We consulted our Peterson and Robbins et. al. bird guides looking for other possibilities, but Paula and I agreed that it must really be an Indigo Bunting. The only other possibility was Lazuli Bunting, which was even more unlikely than Indigo Bunting, and besides, the wing bar of our bird was blurred and buffy -- not sharp-edged and white. I have banded many Indigo Buntings in the fall and they do frequently have a soft-edged, indistinct, light brown, wing bar; also their tails are often the same shade of greyish-blue I was seeing here.

We continued watching the bird for about 10 more minutes. It continued to feed quietly, and we observed no other behavior or interactions with the other species.

We were not able to get any closer to the feeder without flushing the birds. After the birds were gone, we went to the house to tell the Cookes what we were doing in their yard, and were informed that they had noticed a new bird at the feeder that morning at about 8:00 a.m., had looked it up in their bird guide and had identified it as an Indigo Bunting; they did not realize that it was unusual.

I did a sketch of the bird while watching it, and another later, in color as I remembered the colors. I did not see the bird again on the two occasions when I returned with my camera, but Paula Settle saw it again, and Daryl Tessen also observed it. The Cookes reported that the bird returned to the feeder regularly.

Carol Rudy

Indigo Bunting

20 and 26 December 1986. The Denton Cooke home on Sunset Beach Road on the east shore of Lake Winnebago, south of Stockbridge, Calumet County, Wisconsin. We parked the car on the end of Sunset Beach Road. The feeders were in the yard immediately to the left, attached to the deck of the home, with one platform feeder out in the yard between the house and car. Beneath the feeders was a large pile of Milo -- on this pile we first spotted the bird which was sitting with its back to us, contentedly feeding on the Milo. It remained in that position for some minutes. The bird seemed an overall mid brown or a tan/sand hue. The only variant in this coloring was a decidedly slate blue on the tail, most pronounced on the outer portions. The bird then turned to present its left profile. The breast was unstreaked. It had a light conical beak of a shade I would have to describe

as a taupe, on the beige side. Although light, it was not a bright color. The eye appeared dark with no discernible ring or cheek markings. In the area of the upper wing was a lighter coloring, a shade lighter perhaps -- I wouldn't call it exactly a wing bar if a bar must be a distinct line or stripe. More a gradual, linear shading about 1 point in value lighter than the overall bird. The wing tips, folded back over the upper tail, seemed to share the same slate blue coloring as the tail. There was a blush of color, a tinge of rosy salmon or peach, extending from the forehead and around the back of the skull including the cheeks. It was a very subtle shading, as if a light wash had been applied with an airbrush. If I had to describe the color impressions in a single word, I would use subtle. The lightness on the bar was very subtly different from the wing color. The peachiness on the head and cheek were very subtly different from the light brown of the back of the neck. The only *distinct* color difference was the blue of the tail and wing tips. This was a very different color, yet not jarring, about the same intensity of color although a very different hue.

Paula H. Settle

(Winter Editor's Note: *This bird was also documented by Daryl Tessen, and Tessen reported that it started turning blue in early March -- a male Indigo Bunting.*)

House Finch

At 12:45 p.m. on 8 December 1986, I noticed an atypical finch on the bird feeder at the International Crane Foundation, near Baraboo, Sauk County, Wisconsin. The feeder is 10 feet from my desk, so I had a good view of the birds. Many Purple Finches were coming to the feeder, but this one was different. Here is my field book description.

"Same size and shape as Purple Finch, but with *squared* tail tip; red area on head confined to crown and lower cheeks; ear patch brown and no red on nape; upper breast red, lower breast, belly, and sides dirty buff with heavy light brown streaking throughout; wings brown and unmarked; back brown, small red patch on rump; also, breast was a washed out strawberry color, not as intense as wine color of male Purple Finches."

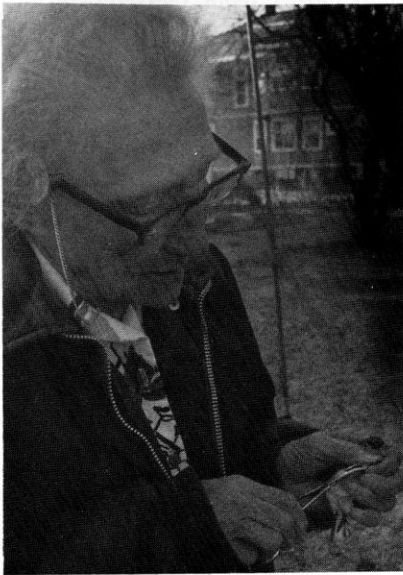
I gathered together several people to show them the House Finch; five people saw the bird. It stayed until 1:10 p.m., then left. It was eating black sunflowers on a 6 foot high hopper feeder, and behaved like a Purple Finch.

The squarish tail tip was in marked contrast to the notched tip that Purple Finches have. I can always see the notched tail on Purple Finches at the feeder when they stay for several minutes. Also, the dirty undersides with heavy streaking, and the restricted area of red on the crown, lower cheek, upper breast, and rump, set this bird apart from male Purple Finches, which have a lighter belly color (nearly white) with occasional light streaking.

Several female Purple Finches and one male Purple Finch were available for comparison to the House Finch. After I wrote my description, I got my **Birds of North America** out of my car to confirm the identification.

Scott R. Swengel

(Winter Editor's Note: *Bill Cowart also documented a House Finch, one in Milwaukee on 5 Dec. 1986.*)



**IN MEMORIAM
MELVA
THORNGATE
MAXSON
1895-1986**

Melva Maxson of Milton, a charter member of WSO and longtime Wisconsin bird bander, died on October 31, 1986 in Janesville.

Melva Rachel Thorngate was born on January 9, 1895, in North Loup, NE, the second in a family of six children growing up in this small Nebraska town. Melva came to Wisconsin to attend school at Milton College and there she met her future husband, Rolland H. Maxson. They were married in 1919 and made their permanent home in the village of Milton. Eventually, the Maxsons, with their three sons, spent the

late spring, summer and fall seasons at their cottage in the woods, situated on the west side of Clear Lake, three miles from Milton. It was here that Melva and her husband pursued their separate but related outdoor interests: Rolland in trees and Melva in birds and wildflowers.

In 1931, Mr. Maxson began an on-going project of reforesting the 51 acre oak wood lot, adjoining the family farm, that had been cut over and pastured for many years. He procured pine seedlings from the State's nurseries, and initially set out 18,000 young trees in the cut-over areas of the woods.

The woods, adjacent to cultivated fields and a small lake, provided a unique wildlife laboratory for observation and study as well as for enjoyment. In fact, the Maxson Woods became a sanctuary not only for birds and animals, flowers and trees, but also for family, friends and nature-lovers in general.

Melva obtained her first federal banding permit in 1937 and thereby began an all-consuming hobby of bird banding. She pursued this activity steadily for well over 40 years, keeping careful records and faithfully submitting the required annual reports. She was a diligent and enthusiastic bander. She used wire traps to lure the birds to her hand until nylon nets replaced the traps. She fed the birds twelve months of the year, at the woods as well as in her back yard in town.

Melva was very adept in handling her feathered friends. She could hold three or four small birds in one hand while she prepared to band them with the

other. To Melva, a "bird in the hand" was worth much more than the proverbial "two in the bush" for she not only banded them, blessed them and sent them on their way, but she used every opportunity of close observation to learn identifying characteristics not easily apparent in a bird "on the wing." She recognized their songs and calls, learned their flight habits, and loved every one of them -- all, that is except the starlings.

In 1972, after 35 years, Melva had banded a total of 40,000 birds among which were 156 species. It should be emphasized that nearly all of these were song birds. There were also opportunities from time to time for her to add uncommon specimens to her list, notably, the nest of barn owls that a boy in Busseyville told her about and helped her to band. Melva was often called upon by young birdwatchers for advice and help in identification. Commonly, these were young people from the Milton and Janesville area who had made her acquaintance while they were in grade school. For a number of summers, school children in groups of 100-250 were transported by bus to the Maxson Woods for field trips. Here Mrs. Maxson shared some of her bird lore with them, answered their questions and demonstrated how she handled the birds and banded them. The children were enthusiastic listeners.

In 1979, at age 84, Melva admitted to "slowing up" from her former constant pace, but even so, she was proud to announce at that time a total of 52,825 birds banded over a period of 42 years. Her largest total for any one day was 121. That might very well have been during the warbler migration. Melva's husband used to say with wry good humor that during the warbler season, he might just as well fend for himself for Melva was not about to miss or risk losing a single small bird if she could help it. Even so, during her busiest birding seasons, Melva fulfilled her role as housewife, mother and home-maker. The Maxsons played host to numerous friends, relatives, clubs, students and out-of-town visitors who came to enjoy their woods and to partake of their hospitality.

In addition to birds, Mel also had an avid interest in Wisconsin wildflowers. She once listed 132 varieties of wildflowers that she had identified in the Maxson Woods, most of them native to the area although she had also propagated a few exotic species. Predominant among the native flowers was a profusion of trillium and 14 different varieties of violets.

Melva was friend to all the wildlife in the woods, deer, coons, foxes, squirrels. Indeed,

"All things bright and beautiful
"All creatures great and small..."

But especially the birds and flowers -- she loved them all.

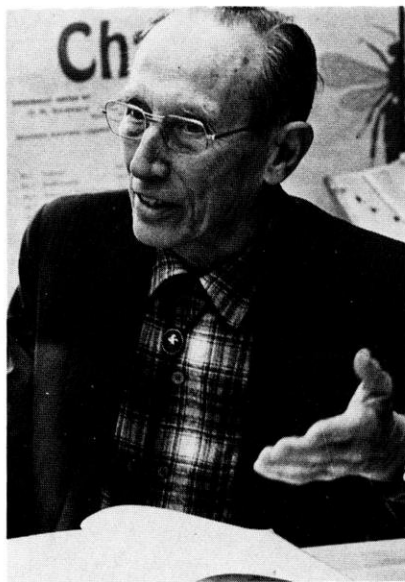
A memorial fund honoring Melva Thorngate Maxson has been established at Madison Audubon Society's Goose Pond Sanctuary.

Submitted by
Alice A. Thorngate
Madison, WI
(A sister of Melva's)

IN MEMORIAM CARL WELTY (1901-1986)

Carl Welty taught at Beloit College 1934-1966 and became professor emeritus in 1967. His tremendous book "The Life of Birds" resides in my library and belongs in every "birder's" and ornithologist's library.

He was a member of the Ned Hollister Bird Club, and was given the well deserved prestigious distinction of honorary life membership in the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology. He served as both vice president and president of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters. He was a member of the American Ornithologist's Union, the Wilson Ornithological Society, the Inland Bird Banding Association and the Rotary Club.



Mrs. Welty provided me with this copy of a very touching eulogy, delivered by a close friend and fellow Rotarian, Fred Mathews.

"Carl Welty has for years been a great inspiration to me - a kind of role model, someone I wanted to emulate because he had so many fine qualities. As I got to know him better over the years, my respect, admiration, and love for the man grew and grew.

A modest, self effacing man, he could be assertive without being aggressive. He was a gentle man, a peaceful man, yet he had plenty of courage, and he was a fighter for good causes and for his convictions. He had physical courage, too.

Endowed with a lot of positive mental attitudes, he complained very little about things and people. He always looked for the good in every person. He had a fine sense of humor that came out in stories and anecdotes. He

loved music and sang in his church choir for years. He was considerate, full of compassion, patient and forgiving. He had a knack of making people feel comfortable and welcome in his presence. Childless, he was a surrogate father to many of his students, and many became lifelong friends. While he was a literary and scholarly man, he certainly did not live in an ivory tower. He was pragmatic and down to earth. He was a world renowned ornithologist, and his textbook entitled **The Life of Birds** is so well written that any layman can pick it up, read it and enjoy it.

Carl was head of the biology department of Beloit College for many years, and was an outstanding teacher who practiced what he taught and always seemed to be involved in a research project or student project of some sort.

But there is another side of Carl Welty that I found to be fascinating, and reveals him as the complete man he was. He was a "hands on" man. He could dream and plan and then build physical projects like his lovely home and his beautiful bird-refuge estate. He once took a lawn tractor apart and repaired the valves. In his last year he was up on a two-story high roof fixing the flashing around the chimney. I have seen him painting the upstairs windows from a 20 foot ladder. Two years ago he climbed a wiggly 25 foot ladder, propped against a tree, and installed a yard light.

Many years ago he built, with very little help, a large limestone wall 200 x 5 x 2 feet, and many of the stones weighed over 400 pounds. He did it without machines. But what really impressed me happened about two years ago when a windstorm blew over a large oak tree in the valley below his home. He cut it up with a chainsaw, then split every piece by hand with a sledge and wedge, then hauled them all up to the house with his tractor and cart, producing a pile of wood -- a full 2½ cords. Amazingly, at the time he was 83 years old, and weighed only 120 pounds. Here was a man not afraid of hard work.

On May 29, the day he died, the day before his 85th birthday, I visited him at the hospital in the morning. His doctors were conferring in the hall, and they filled me in with a very grim report indeed. I asked if I could see him and they said yes. When I stepped into his room, he recognized me and raised his hand for a handshake. I took it and he gripped it with surprising strength and held on to it tightly. Then with effort he said, "I think my time has come." I said "No, no Carl; you're tough; you'll come out O.K." Then slowly he smiled his wonderful smile, saying nothing. But he was right! His time did come that afternoon.

Citation — W.S.O. Silver Pigeon

The Society makes this award for long and distinguished service to the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

For over twelve years the recipient has participated in our Society field trips, camp-outs, work weekends, etc. She is acknowledged as the unofficial greeter and hostess in making all visitors feel welcome at our Honey Creek Nature Center.

Over the same period she has helped dismantle and load up the W.S.O. bookstore after conventions and has assisted in folding and mailing the monthly **Badger Birder**.

Through all these years, countless hours have been contributed to the time-consuming job of maintaining the Nature Center facilities and grounds for the benefit and enjoyment of all. The beauty and comfort of Honey Creek is due, in large part, to these efforts.

Therefore, it is with great pleasure that the W.S.O. awards The Silver Passenger Pigeon to Jeannette (JJ) Peartree as an indication of our gratitude for her outstanding services.



Jeannette (JJ) Peartree, recipient of The Silver Passenger Pigeon Award.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Dr. Kemper:

In the Summer Issue of **Passenger Pigeon** is a picture of swans and cygnets (p. 116). There is no indication of the species of swan -- at least, I could not find any. I have been interested in the program being carried out in Waukesha County in which trumpeter eggs were put in Mute Swan nests. I am curious as to whether any of these eggs hatched and were raised by Mute Swans. I have seen the Mute Swans in the Phantom Lake area, but have seen no cygnets. So I was curious about the identity of the swans in this picture.

I would appreciate hearing from you if you know the species of the swans.

Thank You.

Marion Campbell
8855 N. Pt. Washington Road, Apt. 313
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53217

(Editor's Note: This is a photograph of Mute Swans nesting near Gordon, Wisconsin. It was taken by Don Vincent, Route 1, Gordon, Wisconsin 54838.)

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