



# **The passenger pigeon. Volume 46, No. 4**

## **Winter 1984**

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# The Passenger Pigeon



Winter, 1984 — Volume 46, No. 4



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## Five Years with the Records Committee

By Sam Robbins

Field identification has been going through a period of growing pains. Within the memory of many of us are the days when there was no telephoto lens photography, no bird song recording, no portable spotting scope. One's binoculars might have been 4X "opera glasses". If one's first bird-watching adventures pre-dated 1934, one used Chester Reed's **Field Guide** or Frank Chapman's **Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America**. Roger Tory Peterson's **Field Guide to the Birds**, first published in 1934, was to prove revolutionary.

In the 1930's, growing up in New England, I dutifully submitted to the Massachusetts Audubon Society each year my annual list: date and place of first sighting, checking "seen" and "heard" in the columns provided. Rarely were my records doubted, but it was clear from subsequent editorial comments that a species "heard" but not "seen" was looked upon as a second-class citizen. It was also clear that when a great rarity was reported, it was treated suspiciously unless the bird was subsequently collected. The only really positive "accepted" record of a rarity was the one "with feathers attached".

The Peterson field guide did wonders to broaden the competence of the field observer. Differences between spring and fall plumages were depicted. Observers could tell which species were most likely to be confused with a bird in question, and could learn which plumage characteristics were most diagnostic.

Optics also improved vastly. Binoculars with coated lenses, higher magnification and broader field made it possible to see in detail features of a bird that could previously be only surmised. The spotting scope, once the prized possession of a few especially dedicated (and wealthy) birders, came into widespread use. Under favorable conditions one could look at a bird 150 yards away and see detail that the naked eye could scarcely detect 10 yards away.

Observers of rarities felt so sure of their identifications under these more favorable conditions that they questioned the need of further collecting of specimens. There were some trusting souls ready to accept any report from any sincere birder. Most people, however, recognized that honest errors were possible for everyone -- neophyte or expert -- and insisted on something more objective. Written documentation was encouraged. And there were some who felt that the specimen was still needed -- regardless of the sight observation and written explanation.

Enter the camera. The telephoto lens has transformed a tiny speck on film to a clearly marked individual, sometimes rivaling in clarity a painting in a field guide. Should not film evidence be accepted as a valid substitute for a collected specimen in validating the presence of a rarity? Sometimes yes, sometimes no. A close-up of as distinctive a bird as a White Pelican is one thing; a distant view of an immature jaeger is something else.

If photographic and written evidence are to be seriously considered for validating the presence of rarities, clearly there must be some authority to determine what is acceptable or unacceptable. When WSO evolved in the 1940s as the major collection agency for Wisconsin field notes, it fell to the associate editor of **The Passenger Pigeon** to act in the capacity of "authority". I found myself cast in that role for much of the time between 1946 and

1968. I felt uncomfortable. I felt like a dictator. I wrote many a letter to observers, double-checking an unusual date. More often than not, the odd date turned out to be a typographical error, and the correction was easily made. I wrote many letters to observers of rarities, seeking corroborative or clarifying information. On those occasions when the documentation seemed inadequate, I wrote the observer in detail to indicate why I was rejecting the record. I remember only one angry reply to such a letter. Most observers wrote graciously, expressing gratitude for the added knowledge that would make them better observers.

Still I felt like judge and jury rolled into one. Decisions about the definitiveness of photographs and written evidence ought to be made through the collective wisdom of several people of considerable experience -- not just one.

Early in the 1970s four widely experienced ornithologists joined me in evaluating Wisconsin's rarest records for **Wisconsin Birdlife** (now in press), and made a solid much-needed contribution to this volume. This group subsequently was appointed by the WSO board of directors as the first WSO Records Committee. As my five-year term on this committee has now expired, a few personal reflections on the experiences of this period may be worth sharing.

#### Standards of Acceptance

The standards arrived at for the acceptance of a record as "valid" or "hypothetical" (*Pass. Pigeon* 41:151-153) seem sound. A photograph purported to be of a given species is not enough. We have examined photographs with a magnifying glass, or projected slides on a large screen, trying to determine if all necessary field marks were visible. So it was that committee members could validate such accidentals as the Chestnut-collared Longspur and Hermit Warbler, even though the photos could not be reproduced adequately in **The Passenger Pigeon**. Similarly we found it necessary to vote against full acceptance of a probable White-faced Ibis, because we could not determine with certainty the color of legs, bill, and the shape of a light area in back of the bill.

Written documentation cannot be partial or superficial, describing only one or two marks thought to be critical for the identification of the species in question. The write-up should describe the entire bird. The newer field guides are helping us understand that subtle differences in shape or "aspect", caused by varying length of legs, wing tips, tail tips, neck and bill are sometimes more critical than coloration for identification within certain families -- notably gulls and terns. Head shape can vary from "flat" to "rounded" to "crested". Such fine points must seem formidable to the beginner, but can be mastered with experience.

The standards of acceptance are similar now to those in use in the 1946-1968 era. They were not spelled out as specifically in earlier years, but the aim was the same. Written or photographic evidence should be so thorough that a critic many years from now could re-examine the evidence and conclude that the evidence (1) fits the species adequately, and (2) fits no other species in any known plumage.

In discussing standards of acceptance for the book I was preparing, I decided rather arbitrarily on a committee of five. These in turn reached a consensus opinion that a record should have at least 75% support to be accepted. Two dissenting opinions led to rejection of a record. When the Book Com-

mittee became the WSO Records Committee, the same voting standards were adopted. I hope these standards will remain firm.

### **Obvious Misidentifications Are Few**

Of the 300+ write-ups of rarities the committee has evaluated since 1979, less than 10% were rejected because of probable misidentification. This speaks well for Wisconsin observers as a whole. They are honest. They are conscientious. They take pains to observe carefully as much detail as they can. They take the time to write down their observations. At times --even with very limited artistic talent -- they include rough sketches of a rarity. At times they have taken multiple snapshots of a bird, realizing that features can be seen in one pose that are missing in another.

Records Committee members also have done their homework. Some carried on extensive correspondence with experts from the Southwest, before concluding that Waukesha County's 1981-82 Gray-breasted (Mexican) Jay may well have been an escape. Others conferred with waterfowl experts before deciding to treat Barnacle Goose observations as probable escaped birds. Trips were made to examine owl specimens when neither photograph nor complete documentation was available. When a committee member lacked access to a particular book or magazine article, he took pains to obtain the needed resource.

### **Conditions of Observation Are Important**

A much larger number of rejections have come from what committee members felt were imperfect conditions of observation. Typical is an experience on a Christmas Bird Count last winter when I saw a large hawk flapping steadily away from me. Goshawk? Gyrfalcon? The wings looked pointed as the bird quickly disappeared over a grove of aspen. The observation lasted less than a minute, but my partner and I felt strongly we had observed a Gyrfalcon in gray plumage. Do we write it up and submit it? Our enthusiasm was tempered by the frank admission that we had not seen all features of wing, tail and face. Observation time was short, and the angle of observation precluded the viewing of some key features. It was our great good fortune that the hawk reappeared, perched in a tree for several minutes, then flew off and gave us a different and better angle of observation. Our suspicions of a Gyrfalcon changed to convictions, and the proper documentation followed.

Too often the conditions of observation have been imperfectly written (distance not given, confusion over which features were seen perched or in flight, etc.). This raises doubts in the minds of the present committee members, as it would certainly trouble a critical re-evaluator years hence. When I have evaluated a record, I have tried to put myself in the position of the observer -- how far away from the bird, conditions of light and wind, length of observation time -- and asked myself if I could be sure of all plumage characteristics that are included in the documentation. Other committee members undoubtedly proceed similarly, drawing on their own experience. We have all wished at times that more observers could describe more carefully the conditions surrounding their observation.

Estimating distance between observer and bird is important. Presumably most observers are reasonably accurate in judging distances up to 50 feet in backyard birding. But in distances of 200 yards or more, the margin of error may be great. Some observers make no attempt to estimate distance. Perhaps it is helpful to remember that in open country utility poles are spaced at 16-20 per mile. This means that the distance between one pole and the next is usually 90-110 yards.

### Descriptions of Voice

On those occasions when a rarity has been heard as well as seen, the observer is faced with the challenge of describing the song or call. It is helpful when the observer indicates that a song is unlike any other song of his or her acquaintance. But attempts to describe the song itself have often been inadequate. How I have wished people would try to "diagram" a song after the fashion of the sonograms in **Birds of North America!** How many syllables make up the song? Is each syllable on a single pitch, or does it slur up or down from one pitch to another? Are the notes a clear tone (represented by a thin line) or of a buzzy quality (represented by a thick line)? Are the notes distinctly separate, or do they follow one another in rapid succession? With a little practice, the art of diagramming a bird song can be mastered. The "chick-a-dee-dee-dee" call would be rendered "— — —". The Cardinal whistle would be "/ / — — —". To a committee member a diagram is far more valuable than a "pleased-to-meet-you" phrasing.

The description of a call note is more difficult, and probably this skill has not developed to the level needed to help confirm a rarity. But if observers are familiar with such sounds as the simple "pip" of the Purple Finch, the authoritative "kink" of the Harry Woodpecker, and the harsh "chup" of the House Sparrow, they may notice that a given call note is similar to that of a better known species.

### Freshness of Documentation

Lurking in the minds of committee members, and other critical evaluators, is the question: How much of the documentation describes what was actually seen on the spot, and how much evolved after field guides were consulted? To raise the question is not to impugn the sincerity of the observer's motives. The most experienced observers can testify that after field guides have been consulted, an element of honest confusion can creep in, mixing up what was actually observed with what the field guide suggests one should have seen.

The alert observer is never without paper and pencil. When a rarity is encountered, notes are taken on the spot, before field guides are consulted. Careful, thorough observation is of paramount importance, closely followed by a listing of the features noted. This is true whether the observer is viewing alone or is with other observers. If the bird remains in view long enough, and field guides can be consulted, the guides may suggest additional plumage characteristics that should be detected. Fine. The results of subsequent observation should be added.

But do not let these notes lie idle for days and weeks, while the vividness of the observation dims. We kid ourselves when we assert after a month's time: "I can remember it clearly, as if it were yesterday." No way! Committee members ask for fresh documentation because they know from personal experience that "stale" writing loses something of the sharp etching of verbal pictures.

Along with colleagues on the Records Committee, I have wondered why only one documentation appears after twenty or more birders have shared in the observation of a rarity on a WSO field trip. At times even one documentary account has not been forthcoming. Is there confusion over which "George" will do it?

The write-up could be a group effort. As one of eight observers stalking the Manitowoc County Baird's Sparrow in June 1982, I volunteered to take

notes. As I called out the field markings I was writing down, the other observers contributed markings and behavior patterns they were noticing. Eventually the notes were agreed upon by all observers.

Equally valuable are multiple write-ups of the same observation. When a rarity is spotted on a group excursion, let there evolve a clear agreement about who will prepare the documentation.

#### **Persistently Difficult Identifications**

In the past five years the committee has considered write-ups or eleven suspected Arctic Terns, seven of Laughing Gulls, and seven of Thayer's Gulls. These are among the most difficult identifications to make. No Wisconsin specimens are known. There are persistent unanswered questions about the status of these three species in our state. Each committee member has spent many hours poring over Peterson, Robbins, the National Geographic field guide, the Audubon Society Master Guide, Godfrey, Grant, Harrison, Gosselin and David, Lehman, etc., comparing the documentation at hand.

It must be borne in mind that some gulls go through as many as seven molts before attaining adult breeding plumage. Feather wear, albinism and hybridization offer further possibilities of complications. It is good to know that committee members are planning articles on each of these three species for future publication in *The Passenger Pigeon*. Observers need to take seriously a comment about Thayer's Gulls by Peter Harrison (Seabirds, p. 339): "Separation of (Thayer's) from Herring and Kumlien's must be considered very difficult at all ages, and should be based on a combination of certain characters, as there is no one clinching characteristic."

This "combination of certain characters" is needed for the Laughing Gull and Arctic Tern as well. It takes a lengthy observation of a bird at close range - both perched and flying -- to appraise all the necessary features. Many gulls and terns are destined to remain unidentified because the conditions of observation are not sufficiently favorable.

#### **Finally**

"Growing pains" in the field identification! Having grown from the age of the collected specimen to that of the Peterson-inspired sight observation based on one or two distinctive field marks, let us now move to the sight observation of the total bird -- nuances of body shape and complete plumage -- and its sounds and activity. May the skill in recording observations in photographs and word pictures grow!

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## Status and Identification of Laughing Gulls in Wisconsin

By W.S.O. Records Committee

The status of the Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla Linnaeus*) in Wisconsin has been in confusion for many years. In Cook's **Birds of Michigan** (1893), Ludwig Kumlien was quoted as rating this gull "fairly common" in Wisconsin, but Kumlien and Hollister (1903) later disavowed such a statement as an "absurdity" and added that "very few have had the opportunity for observing the gulls on Lake Michigan that we have had, and we have never seen a specimen of *Larus atricilla* here."

However, Kumlien and Hollister did say that a single specimen had been collected at Lake Koshkonong in July 1860 by Thure Kumlien. On the basis of this record the Laughing Gull was listed as "accidental" in the first edition of the checklist of Wisconsin birds (Barger et al. 1942), but Schorger (Kumlien et al. 1951) was unable to find a specimen for the state. The Laughing Gull was confined to the hypothetical list in the second and third editions of the Wisconsin checklist (Barger et al. 1950, 1960) and in Gromme (1963).

Meanwhile, sight records had been reported in 1947 (2), 1948, 1953, 1956, and 1960. Between 1962 and 1966, one or more birds were listed annually from Racine. Several others were suspected in the Green Bay area during those same years. Beginning in 1970, one or more observations were reported every year at various places on Lake Michigan. Even though there was no state specimen, and no known photograph, the frequency of sight records led Barger et al. (1975) to give the Laughing Gull full rather than hypothetical status in the fourth edition of the Wisconsin checklist. Annual reports continued into the 1980s.

However, Soulen (1975) had urged "extreme caution" in identifications because four birds at Madison in June 1964, including one fully hooded individual, had Laughing-like wing patterns but proved to be Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan* Wagler) when one was collected.

In the summer of 1982 Erik A.T. Blom wrote WSO's associate editor and convincingly demonstrated that a gull identified as Laughing at Manitowoc on 19 June 1980 (**Passenger Pigeon** 43:63, 1981) was almost certainly a one-year-old Franklin's that lacked the white "bar" separating black primaries from dark gray wings and mantle. The absence of this white bar is in fact characteristic of one-year-old Franklin's, which may show nearly all other features of adults and be easily confused with Laughing Gulls in hooded sub-adult (two-year-old) or adult (three-year-old and older) plumages, as Soulen had warned. Several of the newer guides to special groups of birds (Roberson 1980, Grant 1982, Harrison 1983) do describe this dark-winged plumage of the Franklin's. It is unfortunate that the most popular field guides have not dealt adequately with such yearling birds.

Blom's letter and similar informal comments from observers in other states prompted the WSO Records Committee to re-examine all documentary evidence of the occurrence of Laughing Gulls in Wisconsin. Descriptions of 12 sightings, 1948-1980, were reviewed. Details were scant or entirely lacking for another 28 reports. In August 1982, the Committee concluded that no written description supplied the details necessary to separate conclusively a Laughing from a one-year-old Franklin's.

Just when it seemed that the Laughing Gull would once again return to Wisconsin's hypothetical list, Sam Robbins learned of photographs of a bird at Green Bay circa 3 August 1965 by Tom Erdman, another at Racine circa 20 May 1966 by Ed Prins, and a third at Milwaukee 10 March - 4 April 1979 by John Idzikowski. On the basis of these three identifiable photos, Robbins includes the Laughing Gull as a valid record species in his forthcoming text on Wisconsin birds. In 1984 the Records Committee accepted additional records of a bird at Manitowoc 15-22 May and 20 June-2 July by Charles Sontag and other observers.

Although some -- perhaps many -- of the 40+ earlier sight records were probably correctly identified Laughings, there is now no way to know which individuals might have been misidentified one-year old Franklin's. Further observations of Laughing Gulls -- and further chances for confusion with Franklin's Gulls -- are likely to occur in Wisconsin, especially along the Lake Michigan shore. A lengthy review of the respective colors, patterns, and proportions of each species is not possible here, but the Records Committee recommends that the following points be checked and described for all birds believed to be hooded adult Laughing Gulls.

1. Body length vs all nearby gull species in terms of proportion (e.g., 1-1/4 times as long) rather than merely "larger" or "longer".
2. Bill length, also in proportion to other nearby gulls.
3. Bill shape, especially depth and culmen curvature.
4. Leg length, again in proportional terms.
5. Bill and leg colors.
6. Tail colors and patterns -- central vs outer tail feathers, and, if present, remnants of a tail band.
7. Upperwing patterns -- presence of carpal or secondary bars, and extent of white tips on outer vs. inner primaries.
8. Width and extent of eye crescents, especially at rear of eye.
9. Body profile and wing length ("silhouette") vs. other gulls at rest and in flight.

Harrison (1983) and Grant (1982) give complete descriptions of field characteristics of adult and sub-adult plumages of Laughing and Franklin's gulls.

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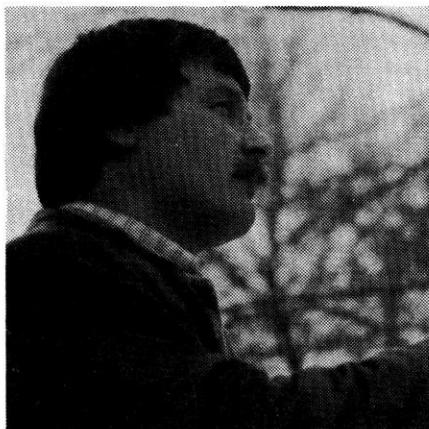
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## **Color Marked Sandhill Cranes in Wisconsin**

**By Don G. Follen, Sr.**

On the onset of the annual statewide Sandhill Crane Count in Wisconsin I became involved as a field observer and counter. This was due to my long term interest in these large marsh and prairie birds. As a coordinator-helper for Wood County in 1984, I became aware of some color coded Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*). These birds were in south central Wood County and were reported by brothers John and Mike Villars, both superintendents of adjoining cranberry marshes, at our precount meeting the night of April 4, 1984. I had read the accounts of Bent (1926) on Sandhill Crane distribution and Walkinshaw (1960) of the probable likelihood of Wisconsin birds wintering in Florida. Williams and Phillips (1972) alluded to the same with color marking techniques and banding verifying the same. Three color marked and banded cranes were observed in Wisconsin during 1968, 69 and 1970 in the southeasterly central part of the state. Since I was unaware of any further active crane research I felt a need for further investigation of the origin of the local color marked birds.

First contact with DNR nongame species personnel revealed no information as to the possible origin of the color marking. A call to the International Crane Foundation revealed only the information that they must be getting marked in Florida, Minnesota or at Jasper Pulaski National Wildlife Refuge in NW Indiana. Contacts with Minnesota and Indiana revealed no crane investigations at that time, but the latter suggested I contact Mr. Stephen Nesbitt at the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Division at Gainsville, Florida on the subject.

A rapid response from Mr. Nesbitt informed us that because of the locations of the mentioned color bands, more than likely we were observing Florida wintering cranes on Wisconsin breeding grounds. This would corroborate the suspicions of Bent and Walkinshaw and enhance the work already done by Williams and Phillips (Op. Cit.) and Nesbitt and Williams (1979).

Mr. Nesbitt also indicated the importance to the decoding of the proper sequence of all bands on banded and color marked birds. This tells the identity of the birds even at a distance. We observed these birds for most of the summer. One coded pair mated and produced one young. Two other marked cranes had paired with unmarked birds resulting in a mixed pair with one young and the other pair not seen with any young.

Regardless of how John and Mike Villars or myself viewed and described the birds we never did come up with a compatible combination as recorded by Nesbitt et al in Florida. By late summer we could no longer keep track of the birds due to other obligations.

During the migration of Sandhill Cranes from Florida to Wisconsin and vice versa many observations are made along the way with the majority from Jasper-Pulaski NWR in Indiana. Figure 1 shows the route generally taken as is presently known for Wisconsin breeding cranes wintering in Florida. Present evidence indicates that cranes summering in N. Michigan, N. Wisconsin, Minnesota and Manitoba, winter mainly in south central Florida, while cranes from central Michigan and central Wisconsin winter mainly in north and central Florida.

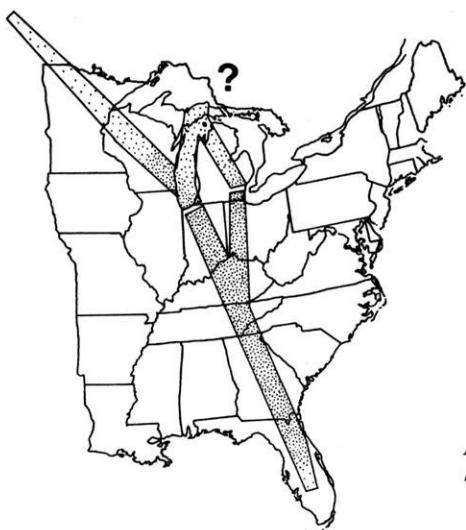


Figure 1: Greater Sandhill Crane migration routes to and from wintering grounds in Florida.

Please report any color marked Sandhill Cranes observed in Wisconsin to Mr. Scott Swengel, International Crane Foundation, Route 1, Box 230C, Baraboo, WI 53913 (telephone 608-356-9462).

Enclosed is a copy of a field reporting form for Sandhill Cranes designed by Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, which is self-explanatory. See Figure 2 and Figure 3.

Color-marked Sandhill Crane Field Report Form

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Day \_\_\_\_\_ Approximate Number of Birds in Flock \_\_\_\_\_

Y - yellow : W - white : B - blue : G - green : R - red : A or AL - USFWS aluminum :  
X - no band that position : OV - oversized aluminum occasionally used in the past  
to distinguish a bird of the year (approx. 2", about twice the height of normal  
aluminum band) : <sup>R</sup>/OV or <sup>R</sup>/AL - Red or other colored band on top of aluminum band,  
recently used to distinguish bird of the year : additional information should include  
paired with another bird, give marking if marked; does bird have a chick?, etc.

S A M P L E

L R

L R

L R

R	X
AL	d

paired with

R	R
AL	X

with

X	X
X	X

chick

(RED above ankle [knee] left leg, NOTHING high on the right  
leg, ALUMINUM just above the foot right leg, RED low left leg,  
male; paired with a RED, RED, BLANK, ALUMINUM, female with an  
unmarked chick.)

L R

L R

L R

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

Figure 2: Color-marked Sandhill Crane Field Report Form.



Figure 3

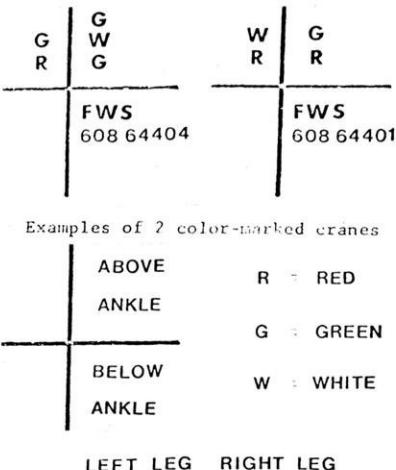


Figure 4: Michigan marking scheme for Sandhill Cranes.

Since I started investigating color marked cranes, new studies have begun in Michigan by the Ohio Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit. They have banded and color marked a number of cranes at Seney N.W.R. in Upper Michigan. (See Figure 4) These cranes have three to six bands on them. Very close scrutiny of the color arrangements is necessary for interpretation. Our observations can help them a lot. Their work is part of an effort to establish a cross-fostered population of Whooping Cranes in the U.P. of Michigan. They marked 69 cranes with red, white and green leg bands, each 3/4 inch high. There are from one to three bands on each leg and each crane carries all three colors. All color bands are placed above the ankle. The lowermost band on the left leg is always a red band. An aluminum Fish and Wildlife Service band was placed above the right foot (or below the right ankle) of all birds. The configuration for the Ohio/Michigan banded birds is such:

Information needed: date of sighting, color and position of the bands on each leg, specific location of the bird when sighted and whether the bird was observed on the ground or in flight.

Also the University of Minnesota has started a project with color-marked Greater Sandhill Cranes. These birds have one band - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - with a 2-inch by 6-inch green tag with white letters. The tags have a combination of one letter followed by two numbers. (See Fig. 5). In addition, some of the birds have been radio equipped.

Cranes summering in E. Central Minnesota are known to winter in Georgia and Florida but the possibility remains that the N. Western Minnesota cranes join Manitoba cranes and migrate to Texas. Again, we find a chance for WSO birders to contribute significantly to all three of these migratory studies.

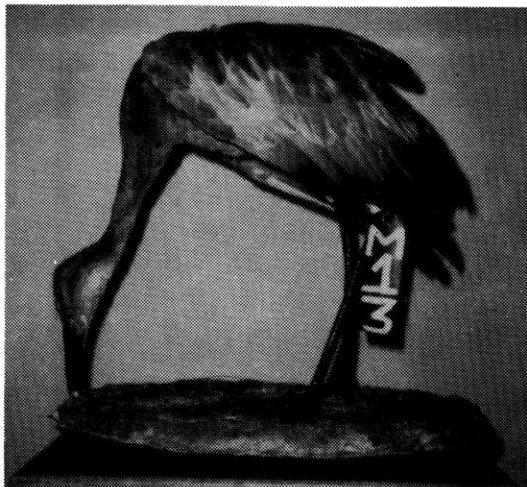


Figure 5: University of Minnesota color-marked Greater Sandhill Crane.

So far the following records have been obtained from color-marked cranes in Wisconsin.

1. 

Y	
A	

 658-70989 Adult Male  
Trapped on Paynes Prairie, Florida: 1-22-81  
Seen Jasper Pulaski, Indiana: 10-29-81  
Died 1-5-83 in Shields TWS, Wisconsin
2. 

W	A
Y	Y

 658-70895 Adult Male  
Trapped on Paynes Prairie: 2-18-82  
Died 10-23-82 5 miles E. of Adams, Wisconsin
3. 

G	A
X	Y

 599-26246 Adult  
Trapped Navarino Co., Wisconsin, L. Nauman  
Seen many times in Florida & Jasper Pulaski, Indiana
4. 658-26843 Captured as a juvenile 7-16-80 at Crex Meadows,  
7 miles N. NE of Grantsburg, Burnett Co., Wisconsin  
Seen in Florida: 1-25-84
5. 

A	G
R	Y

 599-26267 Trapped 8-18-77 near Germania, Comstock,  
Wisconsin by L. Nauman. Seen subsequently in Florida
6. 

W	X
R	OV

 518-54521 Born 1978  
Trapped on Paynes Prairie: 1-1-79  
Died Fox River, Wisconsin: 3-?-83
7. 

Y	R/A
Y	

 518-54594 Shot August 1984 Omro, Winnebago Co.,  
Wisconsin. Originally trapped as juvenile 3/82 in Florida - 3 SE Gainsville

8. Bird retrapped banded, Wisconsin 7-83, rahab. & released. Tom Bintz. Recap - Jan. 16, 1985, Paynes Prairie, Fla. via Anne Wenner
9. 598-64272. Our main bird at Cranberry Marsh. Banded Paynes Prairie, Alachua Co., Florida on 2-8-81 as an adult. Has been observed seven times since banding.

These records were received from Anne Shapiro Wenner, a biologist at the Wildlife Research Laboratory in Gainesville, Florida.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Mrs. Ellen Allen, 1984 Wood County Crane County coordinator for bringing the marked crane situation to my attention. John and Mike Villars and their respective employers for their observation. Steven Nesbitt and Anne Wenner of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission for their records, reports and encouragement. Tom Ziebell and Kay Rill for their records and observations of color marked cranes.

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## Great Gray Owl Observed Preying on Grasshoppers

By Don G. Follen, Sr.

The primary prey of the Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*), both in North America and Eurasia, are small mammals, chiefly voles, mice, and shrews (Bent 1938; Hoglund and Lansgren 1968; Mikkola 1970, 1981, 1983; Nero 1980). In an extensive search of the literature, Nero (pers. comm., 1984) was able to find only one reference to an insect (a beetle) as a prey item for this species (Mikkola 1981), and that may have been ingested accidentally. Nero (1980) reported a second-hand observation of a Great Gray Owl which "pounced on a dragonfly fluttering about on the roadway beneath a bright light." Of greater interest to me is Nero's discovery of the remains of a grasshopper in the otherwise empty stomach of a dead and emaciated juvenile Great Gray found near Broadlands, Manitoba, on October 8, 1979 (pers. comm., 1984). In summer 1979, I briefly mentioned seeing a Great Gray actively preying on grasshoppers (Follen 1980). In view of the lack of observations of this species preying on insects, I would like to provide further details of this case.

On August 25, 1979, my wife Mary and I observed a Great Gray Owl near Hiles in Forest County, Wisconsin, actively hunting and feeding on grasshoppers. This area consists of open farmland interspersed with forests. The owl was near a grassy meadow on the edge of a beaver pond and not far from a large tamarack-spruce bog. As we watched from our vehicle, the owl flew out over the field, dove straight down, appeared to grasp something, and flew back to a post or branch. Upon alighting, it appeared to begin



*Great Gray Owl at Medford. The owl is on the left.  
The author is on the right.*

eating something. Our first observation was at 6:35 p.m., and we watched the bird continually until almost total darkness.

At 5:30 a.m. on August 26 we again found the owl on the edge of the field. We set out five Bal-chatri type traps baited with live laboratory mice within 150 feet of the sitting bird. Not once did the owl approach any of the traps. The owl perched on a five-foot post near the center of the field and looked intently over the field. The bird would fly out over the field at a height of 10 to 15 feet, tip forward, and dive straight to the ground with feet thrust forward. At times, the owl moved about actively on the ground as though the prey was difficult to capture. Sometimes the bird ate on the ground, but most often it flew back to a perch before eating the prey. Even though we were less than 50 yards from the bird, we could not identify what the owl was eating.

Because of the prey size it was also nearly impossible to tell how many times the bird was successful at capture, even though we had Bushnell 8 x 35 binoculars and a Balscope Zoom 60 spotting scope. After watching the owl for hours and attempting unsuccessfully to capture it with a large dip net, we lost sight of the bird for the rest of the day.

At 6:00 a.m. on August 27, we discovered the bird sitting along highway 32 on a state highway sign. After watching the owl make sorties over the field both north and south of the highway, we finally had the opportunity to see the prey it was hunting. At approximately 7:00 a.m. the bird hit something on the road and jumped about as though chasing, just as it had done in the fields. We were sitting only 50 feet away, watching intently. In five minutes the bird went from the pole or sign onto the highway at least three times. We could then clearly see that the bird was taking grasshoppers. I used my 8 mm movie camera to record the bird taking grasshoppers off the highway.

On September 9, I was again in the area with Edward Dupee. We observed the owl hunting again in the field north of Highway 32. On September 16, Jim Scheunemann and I attempted unsuccessfully to capture the bird. At that time the owl was seen, for the first time, with a large vole (*Microtus sp.*).

On a trip to the area on October 1, I heard of a Barred Owl (*Strix varia*), being killed on the highway, but I could not track down the location of the carcass. The Great Gray Owl was not observed in this area again by nearby resident observers that lived right there. It is my suspicion that the so-called Barred Owl roadkill was this Great Gray Owl.

I am grateful to Robert W. Nero for encouragement and assistance in preparing this article.

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## Sex and Age Characteristics of American Tree Sparrow

By A. Marguerite Baumgartner

In recent years a number of banders have asked me to reprint or rewrite my Tree Sparrow sex-age characteristics, originally published in *Bird Banding* (1936) and in the *Bent Life Histories* (1968). With some editorial nudging I submit the following.

These studies were based on 129 specimens which we collected methodically during two winters at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. Of many characteristics scrutinized (plumage coloration, leg and eye color, various measurements) most proved to be variable; a few were diagnostic. Birds

were measured, color patterns noted, and a tentative sex-age designation assigned. Birds were then dissected, gonads and ossification of skull recorded (discernible until March), and positive designation established.

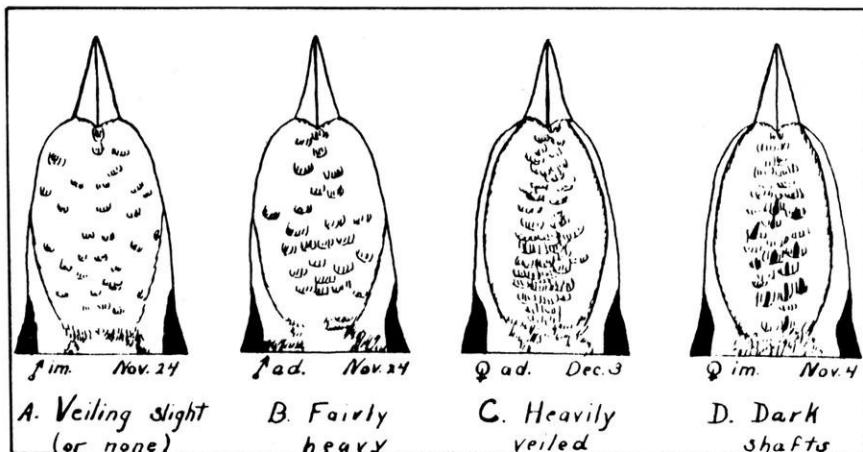
Results of this practical test were as follows:

Male adult: 36 birds, tentative identification 100% correct

Female immature: 31 birds, tentative identification 100% correct

Male immature: 43 birds, tentative identification 5 incorrect.

Female adult: 19 birds, tentative identification 7 incorrect.



*Degrees of Veiling on Crown of Tree Sparrow*

There was a 9.3% error due to overlapping measurements in these last two groups.

There was no U - U (unknown) designation.

With a U - U option for birds that cannot be positively sexed or aged by the combination of measurements and crown pattern, it should be quite possible to classify Tree Sparrows with more than the required 95% accuracy.

My personal files contain hundreds of Tree Sparrow records over the years that fit very compatibly into the geographical sex ratio we established through museum specimens in 1935. In the southern part of their range (Oklahoma), winter females outnumber males by a wide margin. Of a total of 430 Oklahoma banding records between 1948 and 1965 (some years 0, one year almost 200), there were 301 females, 129 male or unknown designation. Females comprised 70%, males and unknowns the remaining 30%.

Since 1975, when we returned to Oklahoma, I have been using the proposed formula, based on the same criteria as the original publications. With conscientious attention to the designation U, my results read as follows:

60 Males (age U)	27% of total
28 U - U	12 + %
48 Females (age U)	21 + %
89 Females (definitely HY-SY)	40- %
225	100%

With care, other banders can also expect to sex (and sometimes age) Tree Sparrows with assurance by noting the following wing - tail measurements, the width and pattern of veiling of the crown:

The H - B Formula

(Heydweiller-Baumgartner)

	ad M	u M	U U	U F	im. F
wing	81-80mm	79-77mm	76-75mm	74-72mm	71-70
tail	76-73	72-71	70-68	70-67	66-65
veiling of crown	sparse, scattered flecks				heaviest centrally, feathers at rear with dark shafts

ad. = AHY fall, ASY Jan. 1 - spring

im. = HY fall, SY Jan. 1 - spring

U = unknown age or sex fall, AHY Jan. 1 - spring

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*Save the  
Wetlands  
for the  
Cranes*

**Mary and  
Charlie Nelson**



## Chipping Sparrow Hanged by Human Hair in its Nest Lining

By Margaret Clark Brittingham

On 18 August 1984 near Baraboo, Sauk Co., Wisconsin, we found a Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) nest with the carcass of a dead Chipping Sparrow hanging below it. The nest was on top of a 2.5 m steel fence and was concealed by the grape vines (*Vitis sp.*) which covered the fence. The partially decomposed adult was hanging approximately 8 cm below the nest. A 34 cm strand of human hair ran between the nest and the neck of the adult. It was wrapped around the neck between the second and third cervical vertebrae (Fig. 1). The neck was broken which apparently was the cause of death. The adult probably became entangled while at the nest and was hanged by the hair as it flew from the nest. The nest was intact and empty except for some small blue egg shell fragments which suggest that the nesting attempt had failed.

The nest was lined almost entirely with human hair. The fence, on which the nest was built, surrounded a swimming pool. Visitors to the pool apparently provided an ample supply of hair for the nest lining. Chipping Sparrows commonly line their nests with horse hair; when this is not available, human and other animal hair are used (Harrison 1975). This habit is so prevalent that a nickname for the Chipping Sparrow is the "hair sparrow" or "hair bird" (Terres 1980).

The use of hair, string, and other fibrous material in nest linings sometimes results in strangulation or entanglement of adults or nestlings. A Chipping

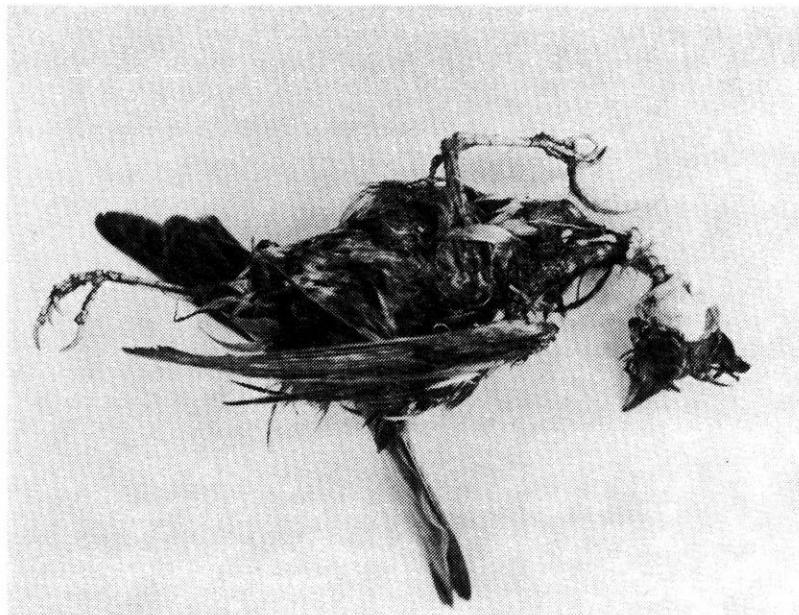


Figure 1. Carcass of an adult Chipping Sparrow with human hair wrapped around its neck.

Sparrow, in Quebec, was found strangled by human hair used in its nest lining (Fillmore and Titman 1977). Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) frequently incorporate horse hair into their nests, and both adults and nestlings have been strangled or entangled by it (Hendricks and Martin 1972, Knight and Ryan 1980). Other species which have been strangled or entangled by their nests linings include the Robin (*Turdus migratorius*), the Oriole (*Icterus sp.*), the Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) and the Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) (Forman et all. 1978, Terres 1980). Although strangulation, hanging, and entanglement by contents of the nest lining are uncommon events, they are an occasional and rarely considered cause of mortality associated with the nesting season.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Phyllis Young for discovering this nest and showing it to me, and I thank Stanley Temple for reviewing this manuscript.

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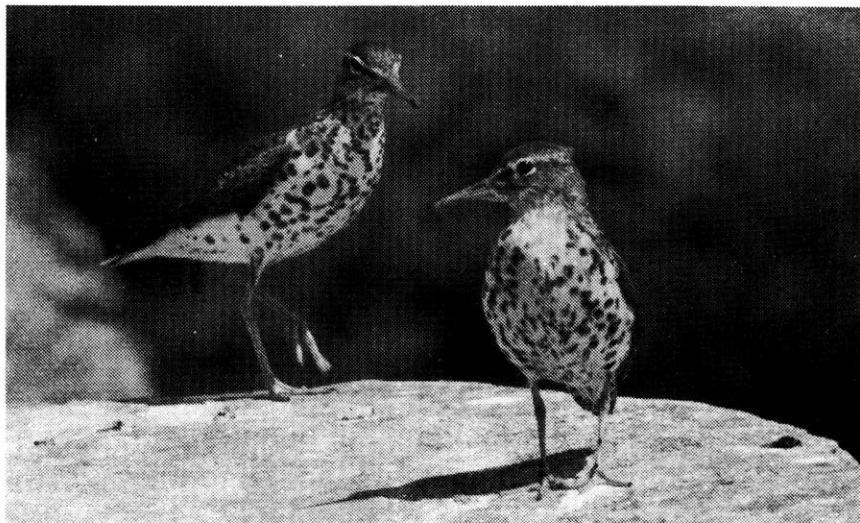
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*Spotted Sandpipers photo by Roy Lukes*

## Clarence Jung, 1899-1984

Clarence S. Jung, a retired businessman who had made ornithology his lifelong hobby, died Sunday, October 21, 1984 after a long illness. He was 85.

Jung spent many of his retirement years as a volunteer research assistant at the Milwaukee Public Museum, where his interest in birds had begun many years before.

It was at a museum science club that Jung joined as a boy that he began his study of ornithology. He later helped organize the Wisconsin Ornithological Society and served as its president from 1945 to 1947. He also served on the society's board.

He was also active in the prestigious American Ornithological Union, and wrote articles on birds and on migration of hawks for museum and scientific publications. One article for *Lore*, the museum's publication, related the effects of weather patterns on hawk migration.

Mr. Jung also was active in establishing a monument for Passenger Pigeons at Wyalusing State Park near Prairie du Chien.

Before his retirement, Mr. Jung operated Orchard Fair, an outdoor furniture and gift store, with his wife, Matilda for about 10 years. Prior to that he owned the National Wood Products Co., which manufactured card tables and other wood products, including army cots during World War II.

He was the recipient of the Silver Passenger Pigeon with the following inscription:

*The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, Inc.*

*recognizes charter member:*

**CLARENCE S. JUNG**

*for his vision and devotion to the ideals of the Society from its beginning.*

*The Society takes special note of some of Clarence Jung's contributions:*

*In 1939-40 - member of the Board*

*1945-47 - President of WSO*

*Auctioneer of bird paintings at early WSO conventions (1940's)*

*1960-62 - Chairman of its education committee*

# **FIELD NOTES**



By Kenneth I. Lange

## **The Winter Season**

**December 1, 1983 to February 29, 1984**

Here I go again, summing up the past, which is certainly easier than forecasting the future, for example, predicting the weather. As Hal Borland expressed it, that can be wishful thinking; the geese, he remarked, do it much more easily. I had mentioned in last winter's report that the Midwest might have another mild winter. It didn't. I'll stick to reporting the past.

December 1983 was cold. How cold? The National Weather Service has four stations in Wisconsin: Madison (the records go back to 1871), Milwaukee (also to 1871), LaCrosse (to 1872), and Green Bay (they only keep records for the previous 5 years; earlier records are at the local radio station). For Madison (an average temperature of 10.8 degrees F.) and Milwaukee (an average temperature of 14.4), it was the third coldest December on record, and for LaCrosse (an average temperature of 6.4) it was the coldest. These figures become more meaningful when one considers the average temperature for December for these cities for the entire span of years: Madison - 22.2; Milwaukee - 25.1; and LaCrosse -21.4. Green Bay, with an average temperature in December 1983 of 10.6 degrees F., was 10.2 degrees F. below normal for one of the coldest Decembers in that city. Nationwide December 1983 went into the record books as the coldest December ever and the seventh coldest month.

In 1983 the jet stream was out of its normal position and weather conditions were unusual. The West Coast experienced an especially cold spring, and in the summer a severe heat wave wilted the Southeast and the Midwest, where in the Corn Belt the result was comparable to the weather conditions of the dust bowl of 50 years ago. Then in December, when the effects of El Nino and El Chichon (remember them from last winter?) were fading, the U.S. experienced the record cold mentioned previously, while in western Europe spring flowers bloomed unseasonably at Christmastime.

Were these unusual climatic patterns the result of El Nino or El Chichon? The interpretation of cause and effect can only be tentative, since these two events occurred at the same time. For more information on El Nino and El Chichon, see the following: *Science News*, 5 November 1983, Volume 124, pages 298-301; *Science*, 16 December 1983, Volume 222, pages 1189-1210; and *Natural History*, April 1984, Volume 93, pages 98-101.

December 1983 was also a month with a record snow cover nationwide -75%, and a month in which Wisconsin had a record average snow depth, 14.3 inches, for the 23 year period that this information has been compiled. Deep snow means less movement by such birds as grouse and partridge (and less foot travel by bird watchers). As might be expected, the frost depth of only 1.9 inches for December 1983 was also a record for Wisconsin.

This winter was also noteworthy in that all the heavy snows fell in December and early January; there were no significant snowfalls in the last 8 weeks of the period. Several storms tracked to the south of Wisconsin during this time, notably the storm of 26-28 February which included heavy snows and strong winds.

January, at least in southern Wisconsin, began and ended with a thaw, with a bitter cold period in between.

February roared in with another severe cold spell, which lasted several days. But then warm air began flowing into Wisconsin and by 22 February the snow line had retreated to the central part of the state. Montreal, in Iron County, had a high temperature of 56 degrees on the 23rd, when maple sap was running (Butterbrodt). Above normal temperatures continued into the last week of the month, when temperatures returned to normal. These relatively high temperatures caused the snow cover to fall far below the average for late February.

Except for the weather, it was a generally quiet season, according to most contributors. But every season has its highlights and surprises.

Especially noteworthy were the December Red-necked Grebes, the first January record for the Orange-crowned Warbler and a February Greater White-fronted Goose. Tundra (Whistling) Swan and Canada Goose were migrating in early winter, and on 6 December Epstein noticed a southern movement of four species of raptors (Bald Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk and Goshawk) in the Norwalk area, Monroe County. It was another good winter for the Northern Goshawk. The Kestrel and Red-tailed Hawk were generally in normal numbers, whereas the Rough-legged Hawk was in below normal numbers. The Bald Eagle was in high numbers with 469 birds (a record) on the Christmas Bird Counts. The Snowy Owl was in low numbers.

Contributors generally reported the Mourning Dove in above normal numbers, which seems surprising in such a cold winter (Javorek found one frozen to death in Marathon County). Bohemian Waxwings invaded northern Wisconsin, while the American Robin overwintered in high numbers over much of the state. Sparrows, notably White-throated, White-crowned and Song, were relatively numerous, while Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, and Northern Shrike were generally in below normal numbers.

Evening Grosbeaks were relatively numerous over the northern 3/4 of the state and Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches were mostly in normal or above normal numbers, but otherwise the "winter finches" were poorly represented except in certain far northern areas. Robbins reported a "slight but noticeable population gain" of the Cardinal in Taylor County and Verch noted above normal numbers of this species in the Ashland Area.

The spring migration commenced during February for some 30 species, including Snow and Canada Geese, several puddle and diving ducks, Turkey Vulture, several hawks and the Bald Eagle, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, American Woodcock, Herring Gull (and Ring-billed Gull?), Mourning

Dove, Belted Kingfisher?, Horned Lark, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Rusty Blackbird, Common Grackle, and Brown-headed Cowbird. Refer to the species accounts for the details.

A total of 84 people observed birds in a total of 57 counties. These counties had coverage (number of observers in parentheses): Adams (1), Ashland (2), Barron (2), Bayfield (2), Brown (4), Buffalo (1), Burnett (2), Chippewa (1), Clark (6), Columbia (6), Dane (11), Dodge (2), Door (2), Douglas (2), Eau Claire (1), Fond du Lac (1), Forest (3), Green Lake (2), Iowa (2), Iron (1), Jackson (2), Jefferson (3), Juneau (4), Kenosha (4), LaCrosse (3), Langlade (1), Lincoln (1), Manitowoc (1), Marathon (4), Marinette (1), Menominee (1), Milwaukee (20), Monroe (2), Oneida (4), Outagamie (6), Ozaukee (15), Pepin (2), Polk (4), Portage (5), Price (5), Racine (7), Rock (3), St. Croix (1), Sauk (5), Shawano (1), Sheboygan (6), Taylor (1), Trempealeau (3), Vernon (1), Vilas (2), Walworth (1), Washington (4), Waukesha (5), Waupaca (3), Waushara (2), Winnebago (2), and Wood (2). As in previous winters there was relatively little or no coverage in the northeastern, southwestern, and west-central parts of 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 ACCOUNT (Arranged after the new AOU check-list)

**Common Loon:** Only one record, BOP in Dane Co. (Thiessen).

**Pied-billed Grebe:** Three in as many areas on the CBC, and (m. obs.) one TTP in the Port Washington harbor, Ozaukee Co.

**Horned Grebe:** Milwaukee Co., one on 10 Dec. (Tessen), Dane Co., one on the Madison CBC, and Ozaukee Co., two in Lake Michigan, 22 Feb. (Epstein).

**Red-necked Grebe:** One in Milwaukee Co., 10 Dec. (Tessen). An even later record was the bird brought to the Dane County Humane Society, 22 Dec., by a person who found it along Dane Co. Hwy. MM, near Oregon. This information was relayed to Allen Shea, who suspected that the grounding occurred because of the foggy weather in the area on 21-22 Dec. On Shea's suggestion, the bird when healthier on 24 Dec. was released in a suitable location, but it was not seen again after this date.

**Double-crested Cormorant:** Since the winter of 1980-81, one has been found each winter in the Bayside Power Plant area of Green Bay, Brown Co., and in at least 3 of these winters, including this one, it remained throughout the period (Cleary and Brother Columban). Presumably this is the same bird, which apparently is healthy.

**Great Blue Heron:** After Dec., just one record, a bird TTP in Polk Co. at the Osceola Fish Hatchery (via Hudick).

**Tundra (Whistling) Swan:** A total of 11 on 5 CBC in southern Wisconsin, with (Hunter) one remaining in Trempealeau Co. until 9 Jan.

**Mute Swan:** Post-Dec. records for Douglas and Bayfield Cos., the Ashland area, and Walworth Co.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** Tessen found one in Columbia Co. on 25 Feb.

**Snow Goose:** Noted in 5 scattered areas in Dec. No additional records until 13 Feb., when one was seen flying with 70 Canadas in Jefferson Co. (Broerman and John Schaffer), and 25 Feb. when five were noted in Columbia Co. (Tessen).

**Canada Goose:** TTP in the following counties: Milwaukee and Ozaukee (Bontly), Brown (Cleary and Brother Columban), Barron (Goff) and St. Croix (Evrard). First migrants at Horicon Marsh, Dodge Co., on 12 Feb., the earliest since 1952 when they were spotted on 10 Feb. (Dottie Thompson, *Wisconsin State Journal*, 1 March 1984). Moving northward over the Milwaukee and Waukesha area in the hundreds, 13-24 Feb., especially the 23rd-24th (Broerman). Northernmost reports for migrants: Door Co., 75 on 22 Feb. (Lukes') and Burnett Co., 4 on 22 Feb. (Hoefler).

**Wood Duck:** After Dec., noted in Milwaukee Co. TTP, 2 (m. obs.); Dane Co., 2 Jan. (Peterson); and Columbia Co., 25 Feb., 2 (Tessen).

**Green-winged Teal:** After Dec., only in Milwaukee Co., apparently TTP, 1 (m. obs.).

**American Black Duck:** TTP in scattered localities throughout Wisconsin. The maximum number was 100 in Milwaukee Co. (Diehl). Migrants on 24 Feb. in Winnebago Co. (C. Schultz) and 25 Feb. in Columbia Co. (Lange).

**Mallard:** TTP. Kenosha Co. to Bayfield Co. Maximum 1800 in Milwaukee Co. (Frank). Migrants in several localities in southern Wisconsin in the latter half of Feb., with (Hoefer) two in Burnett Co. on 22 Feb.

**Northern Pintail:** After Dec., noted in southeastern Wisconsin (m. obs.) and (Roy) Bayfield Co., 16 Jan., 2. Migrants in Dodge Co., 19 Feb. (J.L. Baughman), and the Ashland area, 21 Feb. (Verch).

**Blue-winged Teal:** A female in Ozaukee Co., 10 Dec. (Tessen), and one on the Poynette CBC.

**Northern Shoveler:** Dane Co., TTP, maximum 69 on the Madison CBC.

**Gadwall:** After Dec., noted TTP (m. obs.) in the following counties: Milwaukee (maximum 2), Ozaukee (maximum 3), and Dane (maximum 383 on the Madison CBC).

**American Wigeon:** Apparently TTP in Milwaukee and Dane Cos. (m. obs.). Migrants in Columbia Co. on 25 Feb. (Lange).

**Canvasback:** Post-Dec. records: Milwaukee Co., 7 Jan., 4 (Tessen) and 29 Jan., a male (Broerman), and Walworth Co., 14 Jan., 2 (Tessen).

**Redhead:** Post-Dec. records: Walworth Co., 14 Jan., 3 (Tessen), Ozaukee Co., a female, 4 Feb. - EOP (m. obs.), Dane Co., 18 Feb. - EOP (m. obs.), and Columbia Co., 25 Feb., 4 (Tessen).

**Ring-necked Duck:** Post-Dec. records: Dane Co., 18-25 Feb., 2 (Hilsenhoff; Thiessen), and Columbia Co., 25 Feb., 1 (Tessen).

**Greater Scaup:** TTP in the following counties: Milwaukee (m. obs.), Ozaukee (m. obs.), and Door (Lukes').

**Lesser Scaup:** After Dec., reported in 7 counties and (15 Feb. - EOP, Verch) in the Ashland area.

**Harlequin Duck:** An adult male in the Port Washington area, Ozaukee Co., 14-27 Feb. (m. obs.).

**Oldsquaw:** TTP in Lake Michigan from Kenosha to Manitowoc Cos., and four in Dane Co., 13 Dec. (Freese).

**Surf Scoter:** Ashland area, BOP - 17 Dec. (Verch), and Ozaukee Co., 2 Jan., 1 (Gustafson).

**White-winged Scoter:** Milwaukee CBC, 4; Ozaukee Co., 10 Dec., 2 (Tessen) and 22 Jan. (Woodmansee); and Door Co., 8 Jan., 1 (Lukes').

**Common Goldeneye:** TTP in the following counties: Milwaukee (m. obs.), Door (Lukes'), Marinette (Lindberg), Dane (Hilsenhoff; Thiessen), Sauk (Lange), Chippewa and Eau Claire (Polk), St. Croix (Evrard), Polk (?) (Hudick), Bayfield (Roy), and the Ashland area (Verch). The high count was 350 on 18 Feb. in Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff). Migrants in Feb.

**Bufflehead:** TTP in Milwaukee Co. (m. obs.), probably Ozaukee Co. (m. obs.), and Manitowoc Co. (Sontag). Migrants in Feb.

**Hooded Merganser:** After Dec., found in Ozaukee Co., TTP, maximum 2 (m. obs.), and Brown Co., 26 Jan., a female (Baumann).

**Common Merganser:** TTP in Lake Michigan, northward to Door Co. (Lukes'), and also Dane Co. (m. obs.), Sauk Co. (Lange), and St. Croix Co. (Evrard). The high count was 280 on 20 Feb. in Dane Co. (Thiessen). Migrants in Feb.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** TTP in Milwaukee Co. (m. obs.) and Door Co. (Lukes'), with records after Dec. also for Ozaukee Co. (Butterbrodt, Hanbury), Manitowoc Co. (Sontag), and Outagamie Co. (Van Stappen). Probably some migration in Feb.

**Ruddy Duck:** Noted in all 3 months in Ozaukee Co., but overwintering uncertain (J.L. Baughman; Tessen). One other post-Dec. record, a bird in Manitowoc Co. (migrant?), 19 Feb. (Sontag).

**Turkey Vulture:** 24 Feb., a migrant in Monroe Co. (Epstein).

**Osprey:** One on the Shiocton CBC.

**Bald Eagle:** A record number (469) on the CBC, with a record number also (a total of 312 birds) on Eagle Valley Environmentalists' two annual Christmas Counts in Grant Co. (**Up from the Valley**, Vol. 6, No. 1, Jan.-Feb. 1984). TTP in the following counties: Dane and Sauk (Lange), Chippewa and Eau Claire (Polk), St. Croix (Evrard), Polk (Hudick), Barron (Goff), Burnett (Hoefer), and the Ashland area (Verch). Migrants along the Mississippi River and inland localities, 19 Feb. - EOP (m. obs.).

**Northern Harrier:** Two post-Dec. records, before spring migration: one in Waushara Co., 13 Jan. (Van Stappen) and an adult male in Sauk Co., 2 Jan. (Lange). Migrants from 11 Feb. - EOP, mainly 19-25 Feb., mostly in southern Wisconsin but north (Hoefer) to Burnett Co.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** Jan. and Feb. records northward to St. Croix, Taylor, Marathon, and Door Cos. Only one contributor (Robbins) supplied documentation.

**Cooper's Hawk:** Jan. and Feb. records for southern and central Wisconsin, with birds believed to be migrants reported for 19 Feb. - EOP in Jefferson, Outagamie, Monroe, and LaCrosse Cos. Only one contributor (Hale) supplied documentation.

**Northern Goshawk:** High numbers for the second successive winter. Latest dates for the southernmost counties (for example, Sauk and Dane) were 18-25 Feb.; still present at EOP in central and northern counties. Only one contributor (Mueller) supplied documentation.

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** Eight on as many CBC. Post-Dec. records, arranged chronologically: 29 Jan., an adult near Mazomanie in Dane Co. (Shea), 1 Feb., one, probably an adult, in the University of Wisconsin Arboretum, Dane Co. (Freese), 12 Feb., one in Milwaukee Co. (Schaffer), 18 Feb., one in Green Lake Co. (T. Schultz), and 23 Feb., one in Dane Co. (Cederstrom).

**Red-tailed Hawk:** Numbers on the CBC were lower than usual. Northward to the following counties: Brown, TTP (Cleary and Brother Columban); Marinette, 7 Jan. (Lindberg); Shawano, 2 Dec. - 23 Feb. (Peterson); Marathon, TTP (Luepkes); and Douglas, 6 Feb. (Johnson).

**Rough-legged Hawk:** Numbers on the CBC were lower than usual. At least 11 overwintered on the White River Marsh in Green Lake Co. (T. Schultz). Migrants in Feb., mainly from the 20th - EOP.

**Golden Eagle:** After Dec., noted in Monroe Co., at least two adults and an immature, possibly feeding on cattle and deer carcasses, latest date, 15 Feb. (Epstein), and (see **By the Wayside**) an adult in Devil's Lake State Park, Sauk Co., 22 Feb. (Swengel).

**American Kestrel:** Northward to the following counties: Door, 28 Dec., 1 (Lukes'); Marinette (Lindberg); Shawano, 7 Dec. - 13 Jan., 2 (Peterson); Marathon (Luepkes); Clark, 21 Jan. - EOP (Robbins); Chippewa (Polk); Barron, TTP (Goff). Probable migrants, 11-19 Feb., in three southern counties: Columbia (Mueller), Sauk (Lange), and Winnebago (C. Schultz).

**Merlin:** J.L. Baughman noted one in Fond du Lac Co., 7 Jan.

**Gyrfalcon:** One in Taylor Co., 27 Dec., on a CBC (Robbins), and a dark phase bird chasing pigeons in the Duluth-Superior area, 7-9 and 16 Jan. (Johnson).

**Gray Partridge:** Reported in eastern and southern Wisconsin from Washington to Door and Marinette Cos., also St. Croix Co. (Evrard). Tessen found 150-250 in the Appleton area, Outagamie Co., the highest numbers in 15+ years.

**Ring-necked Pheasant:** Northward to the following counties: Brown, TTP, maximum 35, 1 Feb. (Cleary and Brother Columban); Marathon, BOP - 6 Jan., 1 (Luepkes); Barron, TTP (Goff); Polk, 13 Dec., several (Hudick); and Douglas, 7 Jan. - EOP (Johnson).

**Spruce Grouse:** Seen in Forest and Oneida Cos.

**Ruffed Grouse:** Numbers were considerably below the average for the last 5 years on the CBC, at least in part because of a population decline.

**Greater Prairie Chicken:** Found on the Spencer and Arpin CBC; Taylor Co., 28 Jan. (Robbins); and Marathon Co., TTP, maximum 23, 26 Feb. (Luepkes).

**Sharp-tailed Grouse:** Four were found on a CBC in Chippewa Co., 28 Dec., some 9 miles from the Sharp-tailed Grouse Management Area in Taylor Co. Also on the Holcombe CBC, and (Kooiker) records for Burnett Co., including one that was caught and eaten by a Goshawk.

**Wild Turkey:** Found on 5 CBC in southern Wisconsin, a total of 65 birds. After the CBC, noted in Juneau, Monroe, Trempealeau, and Buffalo Cos.

**Northern Bobwhite:** 160 birds on the CBC, the highest total since 1965. After the CBC, noted TTP in the following counties: Green Lake (T. Schultz), Trempealeau (Wilda), and Eau Claire and Chippewa (Polk).

**Virginia Rail:** One on the Waukesha CBC, three on the Madison CBC, including one in the University of Wisconsin Arboretum which was last seen on 28 Jan. (Hilsenhoff), one on the Poynette CBC, and one nearly frozen in an Appleton parking lot, 18 Dec. (The Post-Crescent, 20 Dec. 1983).

**Sora:** One on the Madison CBC could not be found again (Hilsenhoff).

**American Coot:** After Dec., noted in the following counties: Walworth, 14 Jan., 15 (Tessen); Ozaukee, 15-25 Feb., 1 (m. obs.); Dane, TTP (m. obs.); and Barron, one in Rice Lake below the dam, 17 Feb. (Goff).

**Sandhill Crane:** 19 Feb., 15 in Rock Co., tying the record arrival date set just last year (Ned Hollister Bird Club). Other Feb. arrivals: the 22nd in Jefferson Co. (Schaeffer) and the 24th in Sauk Co. (Lange).

**Killdeer:** No records after the CBC except for a migrant in Sauk Co., 23 Feb. (Harold Kruse via Lange).

**Dunlin:** 10 Dec., one in Milwaukee Co. (Tessen).

**Common Snipe:** Reported in one county after December, Manitowoc, 12-31 Jan., 1 (Sontag).

**American Woodcock:** One bird on the Waukesha CBC, then (Sundell) one in Mequon, Ozaukee Co., 26 Feb. Most likely a migrant, rather than a wintering bird.

**Bonaparte's Gull:** A record number (2179) on the CBC, all in southeastern Wisconsin. No later records.

**Ring-billed Gull:** More numerous than usual on the CBC (a total of 1765 birds). Later records: Milwaukee Co., TTP (Diehl), Ozaukee Co., until 6 Jan. (Hanbury), then EOP (Tessen), Manitowoc Co., until 7 Jan. (Sontag), and ? Dane Co., 20 Feb.

**Herring Gull:** Numbers on the CBC were well below the average of the last 5 years. TTP in the following counties: Milwaukee (Diehl), Ozaukee ? (Woodmansee; Tessen), Manitowoc (Sontag), Brown (Cleary and Brother Columban), Door (Lukes'), Marinette (Lindberg), and Bayfield (Roy). Migrants in Winnebago Co., 22-23 Feb. (C. Schultz).

**Glaucous Gull:** One on the Madison CBC; two, an adult and a second year bird, in Milwaukee Co., 4-20 Feb. (Tessen; Hanbury); one in Ozaukee Co., 21 Jan. (J.L. Baughman) and 27 Feb. (Gustafson); and an adult in the Sheboygan Harbor, Sheboygan Co., 7 Jan. (Tessen).

**Great Black-backed Gull:** 19 Feb., a first year bird in Milwaukee Co. (Tessen). See *By the Wayside*.

**Mourning Dove:** Northward to the following counties: Door, TTP (Lukes'), Marinette (Lindberg), Lincoln, 6 Dec. (Robbins), Price, BOP - 8 Feb. (Hardy), Ashland Area, TTP (Verch), Barron, TTP (Goff), Burnett, 2 Feb. - EOP (Kooiker), and Douglas, TTP, maximum 5 (Johnson).

**Barn Owl:** An adult in good condition in a barn in Clark Co., apparently feeding on pigeons, 1 Dec. (Follen). On 10 Dec. Lesher saw it at another farm in Clark Co., and it was reported dead in Clark Co. in late December apparently having starved to death (Polk).

**Eastern Screech Owl:** 55 birds on the CBC, about average for the last 5 years. TTP in the following counties: Dane (Thiessen), Green Lake (T. Schultz), and Brown (Cleary and Brother Columban; Wierzbicki).

**Snowy Owl:** Three birds on the CBC, the lowest number since 1972. TTP in the Ashland area (Verch), with Jan. and/or Feb. records from 6 scattered counties.

**Great Gray Owl:** Only one Wisconsin report, a bird at Interstate State Park, Polk Co., in Dec. and Jan., which was photographed by Mike Ubbelohde on 27 Dec. (via Follen and Hudick).

**Long-eared Owl:** None on the CBC for the first time since 1946. Only one early winter record, a bird in Milwaukee Co., 3 Dec. (Mueller), and only one late winter record, a bird in Jefferson Co., 22 Feb. (Broerman).

**Short-eared Owl:** Three post-Dec. records: 1 Jan., one in Milwaukee Co. (Hanbury), 4 Jan., Kenosha Co. (Broerman), and 22 Feb., one in Jefferson Co. (Broerman).

**Boreal Owl:** 5 Dec., one in Washburn Co. (Kooiker), 9 Dec., one in Pierce Co. (Dempsey), Tom Bokelman - Wis. DNR Conservation Warden, and Jim Fitzpatrick - Director of Carpenter's Nature center in Hastings, Minn., where it was eventually released), and 23 Jan., one found dead, apparently from a collision, in Vilas Co. (Reardon).

**Saw-whet Owl:** LaCrosse Co., one, 29 Dec. (Ruhser), and Price Co., a dead bird in Jan. and two live birds in Feb., 19th-26th (Hardy). See **By the Wayside** for Ruhser's account.

**Belted Kingfisher:** After Dec., found in 10 scattered counties, northward to Door Co., 13 Jan., 1 (Lukes'), Marathon Co., TTP (Javorek), and Polk Co., TTP at the Osceola Fish Hatchery (via Hudick). Possible migrants in Dane Co. on 18 Feb. (Broerman) and EOP (Thiessen).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Numbers were well above normal on the CBC (a good acorn crop this winter). After Dec., reported in 18 counties throughout Wisconsin except for the extreme north.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** Record numbers for the 4th consecutive year on the CBC. Northward to the following counties: Door, TTP (Lukes'), Marinette, TTP, maximum 2 (Lindberg), Marathon, BOP - 6 Jan., 2 (Luepkes), Price, 20 Dec., 1 (Hardy), Barron, TTP (Goff), Polk, TTP, maximum 3, normal numbers (Hudick), and the Ashland area, TTP, normal numbers (Verch).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** 19 on the CBC, the highest number since 1971; 9 areas in southern Wisconsin. Only one post-Dec. record, a bird in Dane Co. until 27 Jan. (Freese).

**Black-backed (Black-backed Three-toed) Woodpecker:** Three records, all in Forest Co. (Peterson; Reardon; Tessen).

**Northern Flicker:** Record numbers on the CBC. Northernmost reports after Dec. were from Brown Co., TTP, 3 (Cleary and Brother Columban), Waupaca Co., 27 Dec. - EOP (Tessen), Marathon Co., BOP - 26 Jan., 1 (Luepkes), and the Ashland area, 17 Feb. - EOP (Verch).

**Pileated Woodpecker:** After increasing on the CBC for the past 5 years, the Pileated Woodpecker on this winter's CBC declined in numbers; did the heavy snow cover restrict our coverage of its essentially forest interior habitat?

**Horned Lark:** More numerous than usual on the CBC. TTP in the following counties: Dane (m. obs.), Green Lake (T. Schultz), Marathon (Javorek), Monroe (Epstein), Eau Claire and Chippewa (Polk), and Barron (Goff). The usual Jan.-Feb. migration, with most contributors reporting peak numbers for Feb.

**Gray Jay:** Found in Sawyer, Price, Langlade, Oneida, Vilas and Forest Cos.

**American Crow:** Numbers were down on the CBC.

**Common Raven:** Numbers were down on the CBC. Southernmost reports from Monroe (Epstein) and Juneau (Luepkes) Cos.

**Boreal Chickadee:** Seen in Forest, Vilas, and Oneida Cos.

**Tufted Titmouse:** TTP in Green Lake Co. (T. Schultz), and Eau Claire and Chippewa Cos. (Polk).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Normal or near normal numbers. Well distributed throughout the state.

**Brown Creeper:** Below normal numbers on the CBC. TTP in the following counties: Jefferson (Hale), Dane (Ashman), Sauk (Lange), Marathon (Javorek), Eau Claire and Chippewa (Polk), Price (Hardy), and the Ashland area (Verch).

**Winter Wren:** One record after Dec., a maximum of 2 birds TTP in Manitowoc Co. (Sontag).

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** Below normal numbers on the CBC. In contrast with last winter, only two records after the counts: 14 Jan., Forest Co. (Peterson), and 18 Jan., 8+, Oneida Co. (Van Stappen).

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** One on the Arpin CBC.

**Eastern Bluebird:** 12 on the CBC; 4 areas in southern Wisconsin. After Dec., single birds in Green Lake Co., 15 Feb. (T. Schultz), and Monroe Co., 24 Feb. (Epstein), probable migrants.

**Townsend's Solitaire:** One in Devil's Lake State Park, Sauk Co., 9 Dec. (Lange), and one in Racine Co., 17 and 19 Dec. (Reid).

**Hermit Thrush:** A record number, 7, on the CBC, in 5 areas. One later record, a bird in Milwaukee Co., 29 Feb. (Zehner).

**American Robin:** A record number, 762, on the CBC. TTP in southeastern Wisconsin (m. obs.), Green Lake Co. (T. Schultz), Door Co. (Lukes'), Dane Co. (Freese), Sauk Co. (Lange), Eau Claire Co. ? (Polk), and the Ashland area, normal numbers (Verch). Schultz noted Robins eating bittersweet berries in two localities with running water, and Lange found this species eating buckthorn berries in the Wisconsin River Bottoms. Migrants in southern Wisconsin, 17-26 Feb. (m. obs.).

**Varied Thrush:** 7 records: One in the Madison area in Dec. (**Passenger Pigeon**, 1984, Vol. 46, p. 15), a window-killed individual from the Camp McCoy area, Monroe Co., no date (Lesher), one at a feeder in Shawano Co., 10 Dec. - 15 Jan. (Peterson), one in Marshfield, Wood Co., 8 Dec. (Follen), one at a feeder in Price Co., 23 Nov. and daily through 12 Jan. (Kazan), one in Polk Co. in late Jan. and early Feb. (Jorgeson), and one on the Bayfield CBC.

**Gray Catbird:** One at Peterson's feeder in Caroline, Shawano Co., 1-5 Dec.

**Northern Mockingbird:** The first winter sighting since the winter of 1979-80 was one that fed on berries in a yard in Medford, Taylor Co., BOP-21 Dec. Reported by Robbins, who believed that it most likely succumbed to the cold weather.

**Brown Thrasher:** After the CBC (9 birds on 6 counts in southern Wisconsin), the following reports: Milwaukee Co., 29 Dec., a sick or injured bird (Diehl), also one at a feeder until at least mid-Jan. (Green), Ozaukee Co., one near Cedarburg at a feeder from approximately 15 Dec. - 20 Jan. (Sundell), and one at Picnic Point, Madison, Dane Co., until 5 Feb. (Ashman; Thiessen).

**Water Pipit:** One along a spring run by Ottawa Lake near Eagle, Waukesha Co., 7 Dec. (Bielefeldt). See **By The Wayside**.

**Bohemian Waxwing:** Substantial numbers in northern Wisconsin. Southernmost reports from Ozaukee Co., 2 Jan., 1 (Gustafson), Green Lake Co., 15 Jan., 36 (J.L. Baughman), and Dane Co., 18 Dec. - 4 Jan., maximum 30 (m. obs.), also 18 Feb., 1 (Mueller). Maximum counts were 400+ in the Ashland area, 15 Jan. (Verch), 90 in Taylor Co., 12 Jan. (Robbins), and 80 in Door Co., no date (Lukes').

**Cedar Waxwing:** Numbers on the CBC were "somewhat higher" than usual. Verch reported this species in the Ashland area, BOP-4 Jan., otherwise not in the extreme north. High counts were 250 in Shawano Co., 24 Feb. (Peterson), and 150 in Dane Co., 18 Feb. (Thiessen); these and other Feb. maxima probably included migrants.

**Northern Shrike:** Relatively low numbers on the CBC. After Dec., reports from 26 counties scattered throughout the state.

**Orange-crowned Warbler:** One on a Woodland Dunes CBC, 1 Jan., was a first for the CBC and apparently Wisconsin's first Jan. record for this species.

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** One on 23 Dec. at the base of Lodde's Mill Bluff in Sauk Co., the same place where a group of four was found last winter (Lange), and two on the Waukesha CBC.

**Common Yellowthroat:** One on the Madison CBC.

**Northern Cardinal:** Numbers on the CBC were well above the average of the last 5 years. Northward to the following counties: Door, Marinette, Shawano, Marathon, Price, until 16 Jan., 1 (Hardy), Burnett, 17-28 Jan., 1 (Hoefer), and the Ashland area, BOP-22 Feb. (Verch).

**Rufous-sided Towhee:** A total of 6 on 5 CBC, and one in Dec., dates uncertain, at a feeder near Devil's Lake State Park, Sauk Co. (via Lange).

**American Tree Sparrow:** Teseen found a flock of 300+ in Kenosha Co., 7 Jan.

**Chipping Sparrow:** Single birds on the Ephraim and Oconomowoc CBC.

**Field Sparrow:** A total of 7 on 4 CBC, and one TTP at a feeder in Green Lake Co. (T. Schultz).

**Vesper Sparrow:** One on the Poynette CBC.

**Fox Sparrow:** A total of 8 on 5 CBC in southern Wisconsin, and one at a feeder in Lake Mills, Jefferson Co., in Jan. until at least the 12th (Hale).

**Song Sparrow:** Numbers on the CBC were above normal. TTP in Kenosha Co. (Bishop) and Dane Co. (m. obs.). Migrants in Feb. in four southern counties and Brown Co.

**Swamp Sparrow:** One record after Dec., a bird in Manitowoc Co., 23 Feb. - EOP (Sontag).

**White-throated Sparrow:** The total on the CBC was unusually high - 108 birds. Some overwintered by feeders, for example in Sauk and Green Lake Cos., while others, for example in the University of Wisconsin Arboretum in Madison, Dane Co., did so away from feeders. On 5 Jan., Cederstrom found 20 in the Arboretum, removed from feeders; subsequent visits produced White-throats although in lower numbers. Definitely TTP at the Duck Pond in the Arboretum. Northernmost reports: Brown Co., 29 Jan. (Baumann); Door Co., 17 Dec. (Lukes'); Bayfield Co., 4 Feb.-EOP, 1 (Roy); and the Ashland area, TTP, above normal numbers (Verch).

**White-crowned Sparrow:** 11 on 5 CBC in southern Wisconsin. Later records: up to 13 at a feeder in Rock Co. in Feb. (Ned Hollister Bird Club; Ruth McCartney, personal communication), maximum of 4 in Kenosha Co., 4 Jan.-4 Feb. (Gustafson; Broerman and John Schaeffer), and an apparently healthy bird TTP at a feeder in Brown Co. (Cleary and Brother Columban).

**Lapland Longspur:** The largest group reported was a flock of 50 in Sauk Co., 23-26 Dec. (Lange). After Dec., reported in Dodge, Dane, Columbia, Ozaukee and Racine Cos.

**Snow Bunting:** Flocks of 100 or more were recorded (mainly for Jan.) from the following counties; Ozaukee, Columbia, Dane, Fond du Lac, Door, Shawano, Portage, Marathon, Monroe and Polk. Well represented throughout the state.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** Relatively low numbers on the CBC. TTP in Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff), Brown Co. (Cleary and Brother Columban), and the Ashland area (Verch). Migrants in Feb., beginning on the 15th in Milwaukee and Green Lake Cos., and the 22nd-27th in other counties in the southern half of Wisconsin. Broerman reported them on territories in Waukesha Co. by the 20th.

**Meadowlarks:** Two records for both the Eastern Meadowlark and the Western Meadowlark in Dec., and (Eastern Meadowlark) one on 25 Feb. in Sheboygan Co. (J.L. Baughman).

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** One on the Horicon CBC.

**Rusty Blackbird:** A total of 29 on 10 CBC scattered throughout Wisconsin. Migrants from 17-19 Feb. in Ozaukee Co. (Sundell), Dodge Co. (J.L. Baughman), and Dane Co., maximum 200, 18 Feb. (Hilsenhoff).

**Common Grackle:** Relatively low numbers on the CBC. TTP in the following counties: Milwaukee (John Schaeffer), Dane (Hilsenhoff), Monroe (Epstein), Shawano (Peterson), Taylor (Robbins), Price (Hardy), and the Ashland area (Verch). Migrants in southern Wisconsin, 11 Feb.-EOP, mainly 22-24 Feb. The maximum number reported was 200, 18 Feb. in Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff).

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** Relatively low numbers on the CBC. TTP in Dane Co. (Hilsenhoff). Migrants in Washington, Dodge, Green Lake, and Dane Cos., 18-28 Feb.

**Pine Grosbeak:** Numbers on the CBC were well below the average for the last 5 years. Scattered reports for northern Wisconsin, with maximum counts of 7-10 birds. After Dec., the southernmost locality was Green Lake Co., 10 Jan., 6 (T. Schultz).

**Purple Finch:** Numbers on the CBC were up somewhat from the average for the last 5 years. Throughout the state, with maximum counts of 10-14 birds.

**Red Crossbill:** A total of 37 on 5 CBC in northern and eastern Wisconsin. After the Counts, only in Forest, Vilas, and Burnett Cos., and the Ashland area.

**White-winged Crossbill:** A total of 12 on 5 CBC in northern and eastern Wisconsin. After the Counts, only in Taylor and Price Cos.

**Common Redpoll:** Numbers on the CBC were well below the average for the last 5 years. Scattered reports for northern and central Wisconsin, south to Dane, Green Lake, Ozaukee, and Milwaukee Cos. Latest date for southern Wisconsin (Dane Co.) was 5 Feb.

**Hoary Redpoll:** One at Johnson's feeders in Superior, Douglas Co., 10 Jan.-12 Feb.

**Pine Siskin:** Numbers on the CBC were up somewhat from the average for the last 5 years. Throughout the state, with maximum counts (approximately 40-60 birds) typically in Feb.

**American Goldfinch:** Well represented: TTP in 20 counties throughout the state.

**Evening Grosbeak:** Relatively numerous over the northern 3/4 of the state; scattered reports for southern Wisconsin, for example, Sauk, Green Lake, Ozaukee and Milwaukee Cos.

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## By the Wayside...



### Golden Eagle in Sauk County

I was walking in Devil's Lake State Park along the bottom of the west bluff on the Tumbled Rocks Trail near the south end of Devil's Lake, 22 February, 1984, when a large bird popped into view in front of the bluff. It dropped out of sight and I stood and waited for another look. About 30 seconds later it came soaring into view and although this observation lasted for only 5 seconds, it was long enough for me to realize that this was a dark eagle. The features that immediately marked this bird as an eagle were the uniform width of the wings throughout nearly the entire length, the large number of secondaries that go with a longer wing. The bird popped into view 4 more times and I got good looks at it each time. It was Bald Eagle sized, had a golden head, dark brown underside with no mottling, and a dark, faintly barred tail. The wings were broad and rounded and were held level as the bird soared in circles above, and back of, the bluff face. It flew like a Red-tailed Hawk but with fewer wingbeats, and the wings were strikingly long. The lighting was perfect so I saw the golden head 4 different times. After about 3 minutes the bird flew out of view over the bluff. It had not changed its altitude noticeably during the observation. The distance was about 120 meters, much of it vertical.

Scott R. Swengel  
Baraboo, Wis.

## **Great Black-backed Gull in Milwaukee**

On 19 February 1984, after birding at Port Washington, I stopped in Milwaukee to see if any unusual gulls could be located. The weather was excellent for this purpose - windy, stormy, etc. At the Pieces of Eight area the adult Glaucous Gull I had seen almost a month prior was again observed. Moving up to the McKinley harbor - Juneau Park viewing area I found a large number of gulls sitting on the ice in the harbor. Predominately they were Ring-billeds with a fair number of Herrings interspersed. While scanning them a second year Glaucous flew into view. Its large size, all white body, and two tone large bill were noted. As it circled over the farther group of gulls, I picked up in the scope an equally large gull - an immature Great Black-backed. It was a first year bird as it had a whitish head and tail except for the tail band; large dark bill, "checkered" brown wings and back (not uniform dark as the immature Herring) and pink legs. After harassing the Herrings and Ring-billeds it briefly landed on the ice. Something then startled all the gulls, with many flying out over the lake. The Great Black-backed was not relocated, nor the 2nd year Glaucous in the ensuing minutes.

Daryl Tessen  
Elgin, Ill.

## **Saw-whet Owl in LaCrosse County**

It was dark when I went out for chores at about 6:10 a.m., 29 Dec. 1983, and when I walked into the barn, a pole-building open on the south side, I switched on the lights. Coming around the corner of the stack of hay bales, I noticed a small owl fluttering down the wall of the barn trying to catch hold to perch. I continued to walk toward the owl and got to about 20 ft. It finally found a perch on one of the horizontal boards, about 6 ft. above ground, and stayed there for about half a minute while I made the following observations: size estimate, 6-8 inches, no ear tufts; reddish streaks on breast and sides; brownish back color; and white "eyebrows." The owl then flew into the trusses and perched again briefly, then, apparently after it had adjusted its eyes, flew straight out of the barn headed south. We have a plantation of several acres of red pines, white pines and white spruces on a large hill 1/4 mile south of our barn. The trees are 15-20 ft. in height. There are mice in the bales of hay and straw in the barn and 10 head of beef cattle have use of part of the barn.

Jean Ruhser  
Holmen, Wis.

## **Water Pipit in Wisconsin in December**

Soon after finding a snipe in a shallow gravelly spring run by Ottawa Lake, near Eagle, Waukesha Co., on 7 December 1983, I chased up a sparrow-sized bird from the same habitat. Circling to get the sun at my back, I stalked the bird repeatedly as it walked - not hopped - and picked constantly at some apparent food source on the watercress mats common in this stream. It allowed very close approaches and flew up to perch briefly in low (3-6') branches before returning to the stream only when I moved too quickly or got too close on 4 occasions. It was quickly identified as a pipit; all the following marks and behaviors were noted and re-noted at distances down to 12'. Although no references were consulted until I got home an hour

later, I was aware at the time of the observation of the key importance of leg color and back and crown streaks, among other marks, in identification of pipits. Forehead, crown and nape: dark dull chocolate-brown, unstreaked. Back: same brown ground color, a few broad black streaks distinctly but not at all prominently present at close range, no pale streaks. Tail: approximately same brown as back and crown but rather narrow white outer tail feathers (not just tail corners and not broadening at tip of tail), hard to see when aground but more obvious when in flight and when agitated by my presence, including its brief perches on low branches. Wings: brown, two tan or tannish-white wing bars obvious but not extremely prominent. Bill: thin and pointed, almost warbler-like rather than short, conical, or sparrow-like, mainly dark but basally (at least on lower mandible) of a lighter horn or somewhat brownish-yellow color. Head: forehead and crown as above, broad buffy-white - perhaps slightly pinkish-buff rather than yellowish-buff - strip above eye, extending behind eye in fairly broad (not pointed narrow) line; chin and throat dirty-white or tannish-white (little or no buffy tone) and unstreaked or very lightly streaked. Breast: heavy prominent dark brown streaks, especially on upper breast where they nearly coalesced into a ragged band. Ground color of underparts buffy-to-tannish white, noticeably brighter (a bit buffy-yellowish) on the breast, dirtier without yellow tone on belly and flanks, not nearly so brightly buffy-ochre as spring birds anywhere below. Flanks: less prominently and darkly streaked than breast; breast streaks fading or blurring to indistinction on mostly unstreaked belly. Legs: dark but not, at close range, black - brown or perhaps dark reddish-black; **not** yellow or pale. Behavior: wagged tail up and down almost constantly on ground and on perches; walked not hopped; flights too brief and too low to show the characteristic dips of a Water Pipit. Size: as noted above, about that of a sparrow (song or swamp, not the smaller species) or one of the larger warblers. Illustrations of the "winter" bird in the new Peterson guide and especially of the "non-breeding" bird in **American Birds**, 1981, Vol. 25, page 778, match this individual well. The "winter" bird in the new edition of Robbins et. al. is poor or perhaps misleading for the eastern US; it seems to show a much paler extreme, perhaps the Rocky Mountain race. Habitat was unusual in terms of the amount of adjoining woody cover but all typical habitat was snow covered. Also, I have in the past seen pipits perch briefly on fences and saplings amid open fields.

John Bielefeldt  
Dousman, Wis.

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF W.S.O. GRANTS

Funds are short for environmental problems and education in these days. Many graduate students need help. But so do other people with good ideas; they also need money for independent projects.

Ornithology has never been limited to professionals. Let's keep it that way! W.S.O. wants to encourage both -- so offers two kinds of grants.

### GRANTS AVAILABLE

#### **The Steenbock Award** (not for graduate programs)

A \$200 award is offered annually in May. Even beginners (of any age) may apply. Graduate students and professionals in ornithology, etc., may not apply except for "personal projects" that have not been authorized by their supervisors. Nobody needs to recommend you (The Committee will follow up if need be.)

#### **The W.S.O. Scholarship**

A \$200 to \$400 scholarship will be awarded in May. **Anyone may apply.** The scholarship might be awarded to further an officially recognized project. Give names and addresses of two references if applying for an officially recognized project, such as a graduate or D.N.R. program.

#### **The Rules**

To apply, give your name, address, phone number, and occupation. Type, on a single sheet, what you want to do and how you want to do it.

Write by April 1, 1985 to:  
Ms. Frances Hamerstrom  
Chmm. Scholarship Comm.  
Route 1, Box 448  
Plainfield, WI 54996

## WSO Awards

*(There was a mix-up in the article published in the summer 1984 issue of the Passenger Pigeon, WSO Awards. Hopefully this will clarify and restate what the awards currently are. Note especially the Life Membership Award has been changed to the Golden Passenger Pigeon Award.)*

### Silver Passenger Pigeon Award

This award was started in 1964, the year of the Silver Anniversary of the Society. It is presented to members of the Society for **distinguished service** to the Society. They are selected by majority vote of the officers and board of directors from names submitted to it. The names of persons selected to receive this award are kept secret until the annual banquet when they receive their plaques and citations.

Excellence in ornithology is **not** a pre-requisite, rather length of service and accomplishment is being recognized. The award does not have to be presented each year; nor does the award have to be limited to one person.

The award consists of a "silver" Passenger Pigeon plaque and a framed certificate detailing services rendered, and expressing the thanks of the W.S.O.

### WSO — Certificate of Appreciation

The award was established in 1981 to give further recognition to members who have continued to provide exceptional service to the W.S.O. after having been awarded a Silver Passenger Pigeon. It consists of a framed certificate, detailing services performed, and expressing the gratitude of the society.

### Golden Passenger Pigeon Award

This award is presented specifically to individuals who have **made outstanding contributions to the field of ornithology**. The award consists of a "golden Passenger Pigeon" plaque of the same format as in the Silver Passenger Pigeon Award, and a free life membership in the Wisconsin Society For Ornithology, plus a framed certificate detailing services performed and expressing the thanks of the WSO.

The award is made by majority vote of the board from names submitted to it, and is presented at the annual banquet. No more than one honorary life membership may be awarded at a banquet. The award is limited to **15 living members** or 1.5% of the membership, whichever is less.

## Lead poisoning taking high toll on birds

By United Press International - December 4, 1984

CHEYENNE, Wyo. — State Game and Fish Department biologists say lead poisoning, resulting from the use of lead shot, each year kills as many as 3 million waterfowl across the country.

Leonard Serdiuk, the department's migratory bird supervisor, said lead poisoning deaths have been documented in ducks, geese, ring-necked pheasants, scaled quail, bob white quail, morning doves and eagles.

Serdiuk said two bald eagles in Wyoming, one in Lincoln County and one in Teton County, have died recently as a result of lead poisoning.

He said 650 eagles that died in the country from 1967 to 1982 were examined. Lead poisoning was found the cause of death of about 7 percent of the birds.

Birds that ingest the lead pellets suffer liver, kidney and muscle damage and eventually can't assimilate food.

Because predators devour many birds killed by lead poisoning, biologists can find and document only a small fraction of the birds killed by ingesting the pellets.

Serdiuk also said he believes the stress caused by lead poisoning makes the birds more vulnerable to diseases.

"The problem is well documented," he said. "We are losing significant numbers of waterfowl, eagles and other wildlife each year, and one of the more important causes is lead poisoning."

The Game and Fish Commission has proposed a regulation banning use of lead shot for hunting, migratory waterfowl, small and upland game beginning with the 1986-87 hunting season.

The proposal will be considered at a public meeting in June and the department is soliciting public comments until then.



*Ovenbird on Nest (In Oven!) photo by Roy Lukes*

## **Guidelines for Contributors to THE PASSENGER PIGEON**

1. Manuscripts that deal with information on birds in the State of Wisconsin, with ornithological topics of interest to WSO members, or with activities of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology will be considered for publication in **The Passenger Pigeon**.
2. All manuscripts submitted for possible publication should be typewritten, double-spaced, and on only one side of page-numbered 8-1/2 x 11 inch paper. A cover page should contain the full title of the manuscript, the author's name, address and telephone number.
3. Authors should submit three copies of their manuscript to the Editor of **The Passenger Pigeon** and retain the original copy. All correspondence should be directed to the Editor.
4. In manuscripts of a technical nature, both scientific and common names of birds mentioned in the manuscript should follow the **A.O.U Checklist of North American Birds** (6th Edition). The scientific names of plants and animals should be given the first time they are mentioned in the text.
5. Tables must be typed double-spaced and on separate pages. Number Tables consecutively and provide a short title at the top of each Table. Consult recent issues of **The Passenger Pigeon** for style.
6. Illustrations should be submitted as photographs or good quality drawings. Keep in mind that illustrations must be legible after they have been reduced to fit on a page in the journal. Provide a short legend for each illustration.
7. Use articles in recent issues of **The Passenger Pigeon** as a general guide to style.
8. Authors will be notified by the Editor upon receipt of their manuscript. After the manuscript has been reviewed and edited, the author will be notified of its acceptance or rejection for publication. This usually takes 30 to 60 days from the time of submission. If a manuscript is returned for revision, the author should carefully follow all the comments and instructions before returning the manuscript to the Editor. Prior to actual publication, authors will be sent a galley-proof which should be proofread and returned promptly to the Editor. Only corrections of printer's errors can be made on galley-proofs, no other changes are possible.

### **Learning From The Land**

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