

The Mourning Doves are still in the neighborhood though the corn has been plowed under. The Doves (two pairs at least) have shown signs of nesting activity.  
Claude R. Howard Jr. R. D. #2, Binghamton

**Chestnut-Collared Longspurs Sighted in Columbia County:** On Thursday, February 14th, 1963 Mr. Henry Thurston of Claverack and Mr. Paul Erlenbach of Ghent, New York members of the Alan Devoe Bird Club, were in the field observing Snow Buntings, Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs. They were on the level river plains in the Township of Kinderhook when they saw two Chestnut-collared Longspurs in winter plumage with a flock of Lapland Longspurs. Mr. Thurston had previous field experience with the species and had little doubt of what he saw.

Mrs. Donald Radke, records chairman of the Alan Devoe Bird Club, notified Dr. E. M. Reilly as soon as possible. However, a week passed before he was able to get to the area. February 21st was clear (cloud cover about 1/10th) windy (10-15 mph) and cold (5°-6°F). The snow cover on the open fields was about 10-15 inches deep and crusted. Where the farmers had spread manure on top of the snow large flocks of the winter field birds had gathered. Thurston, Erlenbach and Reilly went to the spot where the rarities were first sighted but saw only two or three Lapland Longspurs with the Horned Larks and Snow Buntings.

Cruising about the large area several large flocks of birds were seen including one flock which we estimated contained a minimum of 100 Lapland Longspurs. Since the New York State Museum did not have good specimens of winter Lapland Longspurs several unsuccessful attempts were made to collect one or two of these. The wind combined with the bright sun on the snow and skittish birds made proper stalking impossible and the cold prevented waiting in "ambush" any length of time.

On one such foray Reilly sighted two Chestnut-collared Longspurs with a flock of Laplands. The reddish brown of the shoulders and the prominent white patches on the tail separated them from the nearby Lapland Longspurs using 7 x 35 coated optic field glasses at a distance of about 70 yards. When flushed the distinctive "black triangle on a white wedge" tail field mark was observed. Reilly was never able to get closer than 50-60 yards to the birds, but twice more had good looks at the species he had never before seen in the field. Thurston and Erlenbach had remained near the car on this occasion. On another trip the following week Reilly failed to locate the birds.

The Chestnut-collared Longspur **Calcarius ornatus** has been collected only three times in New York; all on Long Island: September 14, 1891, February 16, 1889 and April 27, 1923. There is at least one other sight record from the State, but details are lacking. This high prairie species of Longspur which winters south to central eastern Mexico, sometimes finds its way to the Atlantic coast in winter and has been thus recorded from New Brunswick to New Jersey. Its occurrence inland in New York, even although still in the Hudson River Valley is apparently an even rarer event.  
Henry Thurston, Paul Erlenbach, E. M. Reilly, Jr.

**Crow migration observed at Sodus Point, Lake Ontario:** The pallor of a long winter held its frozen grip on Western New York in early March. Migrants were long overdue in the Rochester area, but the Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) ignored the weather, and followed their stringent migrational urge by the calendar.

On February 20, their erratic flights signaled the start of the spring migration. That Wednesday, approximately 250 Crows flew east along Lake Ontario via Sodus Point. From February 20 to May 9 daily counts were made at Sodus Point. The highest estimates occurred on March 9 & 26, and April 19 when roughly 12-14 thousand birds were counted each date. With a few exceptions, such as March 10 and March 25, when a probable 11,000 birds flew per day, and the exceptions listed below, only a couple hundred crows or less were seen per day.

March 2	Approx 6,000	March 18	Approx 1,000
March 16	Approx 8,000	March 24	Approx 1,000
March 17	Approx 5,000	April 4	Approx 2,500

It should also be noted that there were many days when counts numbered zero, especially during the last week of February and the first week of May.

In summation, my total estimate indicates that roughly 92,000 crows passed over Sodus Point from February 20-May 9. Whether this is above or below the annual norm for this species cannot be ascertained as no previous counts were available to me.

The flights of greatest magnitude occurred with the aid of brisk south or southwest winds. If the grand total appears too high for our loyal hawk lookout observers, they should be aware that Sodus Bay is many miles east of this observatory — a span which allows more northward winging crows to strike the lake before turning east towards Sodus Point.

Observations were made by the writer during the early morning hours, and at other hours of the day by Mr. Frederick Harrington, Sr. of Sodus Point. Estimates of totals for each day were derived from a combination and comparison of our notes, taking into account each day the hours of flight (which are dependent upon wind and weather conditions.)

Dwight R. Chamberlain, 60 Knollbrook Rd., Rochester 10

**Lots of Blue Jays:** The abundance of Blue Jays during the winter of 1962-63 was noted by many people. Allan Cruickshank in his summary of the 63rd. Christmas Bird Count (AFN Vol. 17 #2) says: "Many localities — mentioned an unusual number of Blue Jays. In New York the Bronx-Westchester Region listed 995, Elmira 483, Peekskill, 754." After reading this I was led to delve more deeply into the December incidence of this species as shown by the Christmas Bird Count.

Of the 44 counts published (63rd. census) for our state, all reported Blue Jays except the one taken at sea off Long Island. The total for the state is 7298, headed by the 995 Jays seen in the Bronx-Westchester Region. In order to ascertain the prevailing number of Jays in earlier years the previous four counts were tabulated giving an average of 4154. It should be noted that the number of counts for New York state during this period averaged 40.

Many of the larger counts came from the lower Hudson valley. In addition it appeared that most of them were from areas having numerous observers reflecting more complete coverage within the prescribed circle.

John B. Belknap, 92 Clinton Street, Gouverneur

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SPRING SEASON

April 1 - May 31

DAVID B. PEAKALL

A fuller tribute to John Elliott by those who knew him much better than I will be found elsewhere in this journal. The passing of this fine ornithologist and courageous gentleman has left a great gap and personally I shall miss the friendly messages that he wrote on the manuscripts of his regional reports.

The weather this spring alternated spring and winter in a way that was reflected by the monthly weather statistics which average out as near normal. There were severe frosts towards the end of May over much of the state. Most regions noted a rather poor landbird flight (an exception was the Long Island, lower Hudson valley area) and the mid to late May migrants arrived late. Drury and Keith (Ibis 104:449-489, 1962) have recently published an extensive paper on radar studies of bird migration in New England. Radar is a good tool for measuring the volume of migration although it gives little information on the identity of the species involved. One of the interesting facts that emerges is that most of the spring migration (60% or more) occurs on only four or five nights. Thus, considering that in addition the weather has to be suitable to concentrate the migrants and observers have to be present, it is not surprising that notable waves are comparatively rare .