

HARRIS'S SPARROW IN NEW YORK STATE

WINSTON W. BROCKNER

The Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*) is a large sparrow which breeds from Churchill, Manitoba northwest to Great Bear Lake, in an area of stunted spruce at the edge of the tundra (F. C. Lincoln, 1950 *Migration of Birds*, Circular 16, U. S. Dept. Interior, P. 43). This species winters from southeastern Nebraska and northwestern Missouri across eastern Kansas and Oklahoma and through a narrow section of central Texas. Its normal migration route is then almost due south. In the east, migrants are noted with fair regularity to the western shore of Lake Michigan. Further east they are accidental or sporadic in occurrence.

In a review of Audubon Field Notes from 1948 to 1954 six recent sporadic occurrences from the northeast are documented. (Vol. 3, No. 1, 14, Toronto, Ontario Oct. 1 and 3, 1948; Vol. 3, No. 4, 203, Burlington, Vt., Jan. 1948 to May 1949; Vol. 6, No. 1, 9, Glastonbury, Conn., immature, Oct. 10, 1951; Vol. 6, No. 4, 245, Kirkland Lake, Ont., May 23, 1952; Vol. 7, No. 4, 272, St. Thomas, Ontario, Jan. 1, 1953 and Pt. Pelee, Ontario, May 23, 1953.)

A seventh recent record from the northeast appears to constitute the first New York State record (Prothonotary, Vol. 17, No. 12, Dec. 1951). Mrs. Charles W. Avery of Hamburg, Erie Co., first discovered an immature bird at her feeding station on November 8, 1951. Several other observers, including myself, observed the bird there until its departure on Nov. 11.

These records show three birds first appeared in October, one in November, two in January and two in May. The bird at Burlington, Vt., wintered and left again in mid-May. Perhaps our winter feeders in the northeast may lure more birds away from their recently parched southern wintering areas.

Buffalo Ornithological Society, Inc., Buffalo, N. Y.

SANCTUARIES ON INSTITUTION GROUNDS

ERMA J. FISK

Setting up a sanctuary on the grounds of a private institution is so simple that I do not see why every town that boasts a Federation member could not have one on the grounds of a school, church or hospital.

All that is needed, actually, is a shrubby area—on land already owned—a birdbath or pool, a feeder and birdboxes, and the initial interest of one or two individuals. From there the project is almost self-maintaining. It may remain a small one, designed to bring peace, as in a church close or hospital garden. Or it may grow to almost any size with the varying interests and abilities of the participants in various years. The financial outlay is small, the educational values high. They are needed to complement the growth of our urban areas.

My institutional sanctuary is at the Park School in Buffalo. We are fortunately situated on an old farm which in the past few years has been surrounded by housing and industrial expansion. Its grounds offer an excellent informal outdoor laboratory for nature-minded members of the faculty,

and in discussing its future, one day, a teacher sighed—"If only there were some way to make our land a refuge so that we could preserve the treasure that is here, and perhaps even teach the town children to use our grounds, instead of abusing them." "Why not?" asked another member in the room. The fact was as simple as that.

With the backing of the local Audubon and Conservation Societies, the interest of an athletic coach who had studied forestry and two or three other teachers, the formation of a 'Middle School Grounds Committee' and the appearance of three of its 12 year old members at a PTA meeting to explain their project, the loan of a tractor, a sign, the *Park School Wildlife Refuge* was established. The whole school turned out to plant shrubs from the Soil Conservation Service. Bird houses and feeders were built in shop; breeding birds noted and protected; trails marked, censuses taken, and the property opened to Audubon members and qualified groups. The Senior Class gave a farewell gift of trees with the idea of creating an arboretum, and parents were urged to do the same. This spring a second shrub border and pine seedlings from N. Y. State and the U. S. Soil Conservation Service will dress up a bare field—again with the students doing the work.

Such a project generates its own momentum. Its values extend to the whole community. Garden Clubs, youth groups and individuals can contribute to it and enjoy it.

Many churches, schools, hospitals and town parks have a corner which could be transformed with little effort and small financing. As bulldozers crunch their way through our native growth, as thruways and shopping centers and housing developments displace marsh, field and hedgerow, some way must be found to compensate for the loss to wildlife—to bring conservation practices to the notice of the town fathers. Who better to do it than members of the Federation, either individually or as an organization?

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YOUR PRESIDENT SAYS . . .

I hope that each member club has been able to follow the suggestion of the State Book Committee, by taking a breeding bird census in their area, and that they will submit a report to Audubon Field Notes, for inclusion with similar censuses from other localities. By taking part in such a project one can learn at first hand how a breeding bird population of a given acreage can be accurately determined, and thus apply this knowledge to one's own favorite areas in future years.

Time is fast approaching for our annual meeting in Ithaca, August 28-29, and I hope that a great many members may find it possible to attend both the Saturday meeting and banquet, as well as the Sunday field trip. It is always a satisfaction to meet old friends and to make new acquaintances at such a gathering.

HAROLD D. MITCHELL.