

FIELD NOTES

Winter Record of Grasshopper Sparrow in Columbia County — January 16, 1958, began to show our area a few patches of blue sky after two days of a howling blizzard that dumped nearly two feet of snow over our countryside.

Just before noon that day my office intercom rang, and an employee told me that she had found a "young" bird blowing around in the snow outside and wondered as to identification. I hurried to her apartment and found this "young" bird, much the worse for wear, on her window sill. It was nearly dead from hunger and exposure, and I hurried it to my home to care for it. However, the bird lived only a few hours.

I had never handled a Grasshopper Sparrow before and did not want to be responsible for its identification under these strange circumstances and at this time of year. I took the bird to the Alan Devoe Bird Club, and in turn it was passed on to Dr. E. M. Reilly, Jr., of the New York State Museum at Albany. Dr. Reilly definitely identified the bird as a Grasshopper Sparrow and informed me that it was probably a "first" for New York State in midwinter. The bird was a female and now bears NYSM number 18312.

The identification is clear, and the story of this bird ends, but how I would like to be able to piece together the events that led to its deposit at our doorstep during this vicious storm. Where was it when those high winds overtook it? In what directions did these winds blow? Was it late in going south or was it blown back from that direction? And to add to the mystery the lady who phoned me stated that there was a second bird like it outside in the snowstorm. Were there two Grasshopper Sparrows there that day? If so, where did the second one go? These are just some of the unanswered questions that make bird study so interesting. Howard A. Munson, Livingston

Red-tailed Hawks Attack Incubating Great Horned Owl — In the late winter of 1957 a Red-tailed Hawk's nest was discovered in a small woodlot along Louck's Road, close to the Syracuse city limits. Incubation was underway March 11, and the two young left the nest in late May. There was no other nesting site in the small woods, and no other nearby woodlot.

On visiting this nest on Feb. 21, 1958, just after the great blizzards, I was somewhat surprised to see a Horned Owl on the nest surrounded by snow. Instead of sitting flat on the nest, she was sitting rather high and kept her head turning first to one side and then to the other. Almost immediately the explanation was apparent, as a pair of Redtails appeared circling close above the woods. At once the larger one stooped close over the sitting owl, which ducked and turned to face the buzzard at each of several succeeding stoops. During the next twenty minutes the owl was attacked nearly two dozen times, the male Red-tail occasionally taking part, but neither coming closer than a minimum of five feet from the owl.

Although it is well known that buzzard nests (both Red-tail and Red-shoulder) are frequently taken over by owls, who never construct their own nests, this is the first time that I have had opportunity to see that the take-over was accompanied by strife. It may be that the woodlot is too small for an alternate nesting site and that the Red-tails were more upset about losing this nest than is the case in larger woods where several alternate nesting sites are usually available. — Walter R. Spofford, 766 Irving Avenue, Syracuse.

Hawk Flights at Jones Beach, Long Island — Two productive mornings were spent by the writer at Jones Beach in the fall of 1956. Observations were made north of Parking Field No. 1, west of Jones Beach Tower, on both occasions.

On October 7, 1956, with westerly winds at approximately eight miles an hour, I observed from 9:30 to 11:30 A. M. the following species: 16 Sharp-shinned, one Cooper's, six Marsh, 12 Ospreys, two Pigeon Hawks, and 13 Sparrow Hawks. On this day the wind switched from westerly to southerly, and with the change the birds began to veer directly to the west. They had been going in a southwesterly direction previously.

On October 10, 1956, in the same area, with the winds moderate to brisk in a west to northwesterly direction, I observed from 9:00 A. M. to 12:00 noon the following species: 25 Sharp-shinned, one Cooper's, one Red-tailed, eight Marsh, one Peregrine Falcon, three Pigeon Hawks, and an estimated 60 Sparrow Hawks (Ospreys drifted through in various directions but were not counted).

Most of the birds, except the Marsh Hawks and Ospreys, were first sighted in the area of the tower high in the air (at least as high as the tower), with the Sharp-shinned tending to flock in groups of three to five birds. It was interesting to see that in almost every case they would come down into the area where I was standing and dash through and around the pitch pines. From there they usually would swing across the road and over the police barracks to the northwest. Pigeon Hawks in almost every case would do this. Ospreys and Marsh Hawks would appear from anywhere, with Ospreys frequently coming in from the ocean.

From the number of bird remains to be found in this region during the fall it appears that a considerable number of hawks pass through. Although I managed to get out to this same area for a short while in the fall of 1957, I did not see any such flights as I did in 1956. However, I found the remains of number of birds — Flickers, a Cuckoo, Myrtle Warblers, Redstarts, Thrushes, a Sapsucker, etc., and other unidentifiable ones.

The reason the observations as shown above ended around 11:00 A. M. or 12:00 noon was because of the fact that the flights died off at those times insofar as quantity was concerned. — Cornelius J. Ward, 71 East Centennial Ave., Roosevelt, Long Island.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SPRING MIGRATION:

APRIL - MAY, 1958

JAMES K. MERITT

The spring migration of 1958 might be described as paradoxical. It started rather slowly and never did quite catch up to its expected timetable. A good many species, most notably the Phoebe and Bluebird, were not only late in arriving but were unexpectedly scarce thereafter. As Sally Hoyt has pointed out, those species that normally winter in the middle Atlantic and southern states suffered population losses from moderate to perhaps heavy, such losses being attributable to the late winter cold waves and storms that plagued those regions. The May migration continued to be generally poor. Most areas reported few, if any, spectacular warbler waves, and it was the general consensus that numbers were low.

Yet in spite of these factors good flights of certain species were observed. Blue Jay flights were noted in Region 1, 2, 4, and 9. A flight of over 600 Baltimore Orioles was observed in Region 2. Although the White-crowned Sparrow migration was described as poor in Region 1, it was good in Regions 3, 7, and 8. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Scarlet Tanagers, two species that would not have been affected by the late winter storms in the South, were apparently present in good numbers. Throughout the Hudson Valley the May flight of Canada Geese exceeded that of April, and Canada Geese were still present in the Buffalo area at the end of the period. A phenomenal concentration of Red-necked Grebes appeared in Region 2, and large numbers of Phalaropes were reported from Region 10.

Although warblers were generally reported in low numbers, the variety of warblers observed could hardly have been exceeded. Consider the following: Kentucky Warbler (Regions 1 and 10), Yellow-throated Warbler (Regions 2 and 9), Hooded Warbler (Region 3), Prothonotary Warbler (Regions 3, 9, and 10), Brewster's Warbler (Regions 2, 3, 4, and 10), Lawrence's Warbler (Region 3), and Connecticut Warbler (Region 2).

Other outstanding individual records include a Western Grebe in Region 1, an Eared Grebe in Region 2, Glossy Ibis in Region 2, 3, 6, and 10, a Cattle Egret in Region 9, and a White-fronted Goose in Region 3.

The Carolina Wren has in recent years been establishing itself in many