

FIELD NOTES

The White-headed Eagle Survey — Although considerable information about nesting locations and the breeding status of eagles in New York has been gathered in the last few years, there is considerable confusion about the significance of summer records. Summer eagles consist of two separate but not easily separable populations: the potential breeders, and the summer visitors. The breeding population is a small group presently known only from parts of the Adirondacks and the St. Lawrence - Lake Ontario Basin. The other and perhaps larger group is the Florida population which comes north after breeding, along with their young of the year, to spend the summer on our lakes and waterways. Since these two populations are regularly confused in the field, the survey at present is unable to come to any real appreciation of the size of either group.

Using the fact that the breeding population is on location by March and stays throughout April, May and June, whereas the Florida group does not arrive until late May or June, it is hoped that more systematic recording of the coming, the stay and the departure of eagles will allow further insight into their relationships than we now have. Of course, in many cases the date will reflect not the time of the eagle's appearance but the arrival of the observer! In spite of this and other such misleading factors, we hope that some significant information will turn up.

Other things to keep in mind are the late August or September departure of the Florida birds for the south to breed in November, while the New York breeders may stay on into late fall or winter. A third population of birds that have bred north of the St. Lawrence comes down in winter to keep below the freeze-up line. During late February and early spring these birds are passing north again, where they may be confused with resident birds, except that they do not stay long in one place. With three separate categories of eagles to keep account of, it is difficult to classify any particular bird unless known to be nesting.

The White-headed Eagle Survey Committee would welcome the aid of bird watchers generally in gathering information on eagles in New York and surrounding areas. When sufficient records are assembled it may be possible to construct a fair picture of our own breeding population, and of the comings and goings, the size and age categories of summer and winter visitant groups. Similar studies of the status of the eagle are underway in Maryland, Virginia, Ohio, and just recently New Jersey. It is hoped that the information gathered may be of assistance in the coming three-year, continent-wide survey of the eagle by the National Audubon Society under the direction of Dr. Harold S. Peters.

Information about eagles, and particularly concerning present and past nesting sites, may be sent to your regional KINGBIRD editor, to such other members of the committee as Mr. Robert Andele, 59 Blantyne Road, Buffalo; Mr. Greenleaf Chase, Ambersand Bay Road, Saranac Lake; Mr. John Wilson, Rt. 37, Watertown; Mr. Jayson Walker, 89 Church St., Waterloo, N. Y. or to the writer — Walter R. Spofford, 766 Irving Avenue, Syracuse.

Varied Thrush in Jefferson County — During the first week of December 1958 a "strange bird" was seen on the grounds of the Jefferson County Hospital, 1240 Cofeen St., Watertown. It stayed in a protected corner planted with ornamental yews and could readily be observed from inside the hospital. On December 8 Dr. S. S. Montague, the hospital director, informed me of its presence, and, after it had been identified as a Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius meruloides*), arrangements were made to collect the bird. This was done the following day and a study skin was prepared by John Kelly of the Watertown High School faculty. The specimen has been presented to the New York State Museum in Albany where it is catalogued as No. 18665.

The Varied Thrush is a bird of the far west and is of accidental occurrence in the east, most of the vagrants appearing in November or December. Insofar as I have been able to determine, there are only three previous specimen from our state. These were all taken on Long Island over fifty years ago (Eaton, *Birds of New York*, 1914 p. 534). There is an additional Staten Island record in 1936 which is authenticated by a photograph (Auk, V.54 p. 394). — John B. Belknap, 92 Clinton Street, Gouverneur.