

A Franklin's Gull in Spring Plumage at Oswego — On March 15, 1959, a day of very strong southerly winds, there were relatively few ducks and gulls at Oswego Harbor, on Lake Ontario. Scanning the gulls for a possible "white-winger" I saw a small black-headed gull circling below the just west of Fort Ontario. The striking wing pattern showed a clear gray mantle, with a white band along the trailing edge which laterally crossed the primary feathers as a white bar, separating the black wing tip from the gray mantle. It was completely unfamiliar to me, and Peterson's "Eastern Field Guide" was consulted. The bird proved to be identical with the drawing of Franklin's Gull shown on Plate #33. At this point the gull was flying 10 to 15 feet over the surface of the water, dropping down to feed at frequent intervals. After about ten minutes it settled on a submerged rock and began a series of bathing maneuvers, for perhaps five minutes. Then it flew in a half circle and alighted on the ice flow just below the Fort, scarcely 100 yards from me. Here it began a prolonged preening of its feathers. During this period of at least twenty minutes it was watched through a 30X Balscope and 10 x 50 binoculars mounted on a tripod, and its plumage could be noted in detail. Close in front of it were two Ring-billed Gulls and behind it were both Herring and Black-backed Gulls. This bird was decidedly smaller than the Ring-billed, and all its markings identified it as a Franklin's Gull in spring ("alternate") plumage. The identification was confirmed by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Farnham and Dr. Walter Spofford, who also enjoyed the opportunity to see this rare visitor.

Although Franklin's Gull is known as a visitor to Lake Ontario, previous records are for the fall and winter months, when the bird is in the winter ("basic") plumage. The KINGBIRD has records of one or more each year, in either the Niagara or Rochester areas. This appears to be the first record of this species for the eastern end of Lake Ontario, and specifically for Region 5 of New York. Examination of published weather maps for the preceding several days suggests that the bird may have been carried from its wintering grounds along the western Gulf Coast up into the Mississippi Valley, then up into the Ontario Basin. The lengthy bathing and preening in the protection of Oswego Harbor further suggest a long journey. — Robert W. Seaman, 10 Onondaga Street, Skaneateles.

Some Golden Eagles in New York — The following occurrences seem worthy of record: on October 2, 1953 a Golden Eagle was shot near Sylvan Beach (Oneida Lake), N. Y., by a hunter who said he shot the bird in self-defense! A photograph of the bird taken at the Oneida barracks of the N. Y. State Police shows the eagle to have been a first year bird with extensive white at the base of the tail and inner primaries.

On April 25, 1953 Dr. and Mrs. Axtell and the writer watched a Golden Eagle fly from a perch on the west side of the Genesee River in Letchworth Park, circle over the gorge, and then perch in a live pine tree above a bluff on the other side. A Red-tailed Hawk harassed the eagle continuously, the latter sometimes rolling over to meet the nearly vertical stoops of the screaming buzzard. After the eagle had perched among the limbs of the pine, the Red-tail continued his assault for several minutes, the eagle turning his head up and crouching at each onslaught. Some time later the eagle flew to another perch and then disappeared through the trees of a small ravine. This bird was immature, showing white at the base of the tail, but little or none on the wings.

On June 1, 1955 Mr. Robert Bauer, Game Technician at the Howland's Island State Game Preserve a few miles north of Montezuma, noticing that the breeding ducks were showing hawk alarm, looked up to see two adult Golden Eagles a few hundred feet above the marsh, engaging in aerial play. The two birds were circling together and approaching each other with lowered feet, occasionally grasping talons in mid-air, in a "courtship" type display, as they slowly made their way northward out of the refuge area. Both were fully adult eagles without showing any white. Since no breeding Golden Eagles are known within one hundred miles of this location, it must be assumed that these were non-breeding birds passing north at the end of the spring migration period. Eagles and large buzzards such as the Red-tail frequently engage in flight displays, and at any time of the year, although usually these are considered to be part of territory occupancy. Other such late spring migrant eagles have been recorded previously, including one at Rochester on May 20, 1951; an immature near Degrasse on May 23, 1953 (Trimm), and one over Pinnacle Hill, Branchport on May 25, 1954.

Besides the two adult birds recorded above, Mr. Bauer recalls seeing a first year Golden Eagle with white at the bases of inner primaries and tail over Howlands Island, but he did not record the date. Only a few miles south, at the Montezuma Refuge, Dr. Fritz Scheider saw a similar bird passing south on November 12, 1950. — Walter R. Spofford, 766 Irving Avenue, Syracuse.

Unusual Song Sparrow Diet — On June 23, 1958 I observed a Song Sparrow in my garden feeding two Cowbird fledglings a rather unusual diet. The bird made quick and frequent trips to the rows of sunflower seeds which were sprouting and unfolding their first seed leaves. These he would nip off, leaving only the stem stubs, and cram them into the throats of his two Cowbird foster children as they sat on the fence nearby. I wonder whether anyone can report a similar observation. — Mrs. Lewis H. Stratton, Route 2, Oxford.

Large Flights of Red Phalaropes on Long Island — On April 28, 1958, at about 9:30 A. M., Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Goldsmith of Center Moriches noted several hundred Red Phalaropes swimming in the water near their fishing station on the north shore of Moriches Bay. Mrs. Goldsmith notified her mother, Mrs. John Lukert of East Moriches, an amateur ornithologist, on whose farm the first Cattle Egret was recorded for New York State. Mrs. Lukert estimated there were from 1,500 to 2,000 Red Phalaropes at about 3:30 P. M. and alerted other bird observers in the area. It was foggy all day with a south wind blowing about 31 miles per hour from 10:00 A. M. to 12:00 noon.

By 5:00 P. M. only about 200 were seen. When I arrived at 5:30 P. M. they had reduced to 50 and two hours later only 12 were left. Some were feeding on shore, or in the water very close to shore, and appearing to be eating the tiny shell, *Gemma gemma*, great quantities of which were floating close to shore.

They may have been feeding on jellyfish further out in the bay, as Mrs. Goldsmith saw the first ones of the year the day before. In the late afternoon, also on April 28, several hundred were seen in or near the boat basin at Shinnecock Inlet by Supervisor Meschutt of Southampton Town.

The next morning Gilbert Raynor of Manorville saw 90 at Westhampton Beach at 11:00 A. M., but none were at Shinnecock Inlet by 12:00 noon. April 29 was a foggy day, with a south wind blowing at 26 miles per hour at 11:00 A. M. At Remsenberg at 1:45 P. M. that day, I saw 50 Red Phalaropes in five minutes in small groups, flying east, close to the north shore of Moriches Bay. I hastily drove eastward about a mile and saw them still flying in the same direction. About 2:15 P. M., at West Bay bridge, Westhampton Beach, I was surprised to find about 2,000 Phalaropes in the water ranging to about one-half mile to the west where, three hours earlier, Saynor had found only 80. Small groups were arriving from the west while others, up to about 20 in a flock, were attempting to fly east but were having great difficulty in getting over the wires.

I drove about three-quarters of a mile east to the next bridge (Rogers) and found about 300 in the water west of the bridge. About three miles further east at Shinnecock Bay a spot check revealed 55 in five minutes, flying east over the ocean close to shore. The visibility was about 1,000 feet. At Shinnecock Inlet I saw 100 at 3:00 P. M. The flight was probably just reaching there, as Raynor had none there three hours earlier.

At 6:00 P. M. there was still about 1,000 at West Bay bridge, and as birds were continually arriving from the west and others leaving by flying east over the bridge, this must have been an entirely new population from those seen at 2:15 P. M. They were leaving at an estimated rate of 600 an hour.

I found nine dead under the wires at West Bay bridge, two dead at Rogers bridge and eight at Ponquogue bridge, the latter near Shinnecock Inlet. One was still alive with one wing entirely sheared off and three, stunned by hitting the wires, were banded and released.

I estimated that I saw 3,728 Phalaropes from 1:45 P. M. to 7:00 P. M. on April 29. On April 30, at 5:30 A. M., there were only 12 at West Bay bridge, eight at Rogers bridge, 40 at Ponquogue bridge and 20 at Shinnecock Inlet. There were 18 in the ocean off Mecox Bay at 7:15 A. M. April 30 began cloudy with a moderate north wind and no fog. At 2:00 P. M., clear, with a light north wind, there were five at West Bay bridge, seven at Rogers bridge, two flying east over the ocean in five minutes, and by 3:00 P. M. six were seen at Shinnecock Inlet.