

bark. Slowly, however, the birds became used to **his** bark and did not run and hide, although they kept a wary eye open just the same. If **another** dog were to bark, they would dash away for cover immediately. Therefore they can and do learn by association the difference between relative sounds.

As the Grouse grew older, they no longer came to a call which was a low whistle, having apparently attained a certain degree of independence on their own in the larger yard. Their curiosity, however, often prompted them to stalk sedately to you, to see what delicacy you might have brought. Blackberries were considered the peak of delicacies when they were in season. After that it was tough old sweet corn fed on the cob. I suggest that many a farmer with a marginal corn field has blamed some damage to the grain on everything else but the Ruffed Grouse, but I now know that a Grouse is capable of ruining an ear of corn on the stalk as easily as a racoon, squirrel, or Pheasant.

Plump and dainty these three birds have won their way into our hearts, and it will be with reluctance that we will turn them loose in some remote area away from man and **after** the hunting season. The ability of Ruffed Grouse to hide in the wild state has always amazed me. Upon being flushed, they burst out in a flurry of feathers, like some rocket, this being to the complete consternation of my reflexes as a hunter and to the utter resignation of my dog that I was not a very good wing shot. I could never quite fathom the telepathy with which they communicated a potential danger to one another over comparably vast distances and under the most adverse conditions until I elected to undertake the task of raising these orphans. Now I know how it is done, and it is one of nature's own secrets open to me for the first time. Rare is the time you have approached a Ruffed Grouse undetected, and observed the bird before it saw you.

A friend of mine recently came to call, and I was so intent on watching the birds that I did not see nor hear him come. When he saw me down in the yard and started toward me, the birds were in the deep grass chasing grasshoppers and other food. They could not have seen him coming. I don't know how close my visitor was before the three birds scooted to a quick halt and assumed the motionless stance of intimate hiding reserved for real danger. This was accompanied by an almost imperceptible danger alarm which sounded as a drawn-out "took-took". As my visitor continued to approach, the birds' actions indicated they were still communicating, but the sounds were too low for my ear to interpret.

I have enjoyed immensely and gotten considerable knowledge from the raising of these Ruffed Grouse. I would wish others to have such a heart-warming and educational experience in nature's world — Tom Lesperance, Keeseville.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON DECEMBER 1 — MARCH 31

JAMES K. MERITT

The various regional editors were generally agreed that the winter season really did provide winter weather. Snowfall was excessive in all areas of the state except the extreme southeastern part. The storms and blizzards in the Oswego area, particularly early in the winter, made national headlines. Either because of the weather or in spite of it, the season provided generally interesting birding. In this the regional editors were also agreed. The season's birds can be split into four distinct and separate categories: (1) late fall migrants or winter holdovers, (2) regular winter birds, (3) accidentals or strays into the state, and (4) early spring arrivals.

Among the late holdovers of note were a Blackpoll Warbler found dead in Westchester County and a Parula Warbler found in a weakened condition at Endwell in Region 4. Both of these records are remarkable. Yellow-breasted Chats were in Regions 9 and 10. Late Brown Thrashers were found in many areas. Robins put in a good late and mid-winter showing, and

three were even seen in the central Adirondacks in February. There were more Towhee reports than normal.

The Evening Grosbeak flight was in most areas only a moderate one, and the other winter finches, i. e. Pine Grosbeaks, Redpolls, Pine Siskins, and Crossbills, were reported in even lighter numbers. Late in the season, however, Purple Finches were very conspicuous in most areas. The flight of Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Shrikes, and Snow Buntings was generally poor, and there were relatively few Snowy Owl reports. There was the usual smattering of reports of the Oregon Junco. Red-breasted Nuthatches were scarce in most areas, although Region 7 was an exception. One of the winter's rarities was a Hawk Owl seen in the Watertown area. The Barrow's Goldeneye was again observed in Region 8 and this season also brought a report from Region 1. White-winged gulls were scarce throughout the state, but of note among the gull group were a Little Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull on Long Island and a Franklin's Gull in Region 5. There were only three or four reports of the Three-toed Woodpecker.

Among the real strays into the area was a European Redwing seen in December on Long Island. And a Varied Thrush, a visitor from the west, was collected in the Watertown area (I would hope that Watertown would save a few of its ornithological highlights for the Federation meeting). A Bullock's Oriole, another westerner, put in an appearance at a feeder in Region 9.

Early Bluebird reports indicated more observations than last year, but they were not otherwise encouraging. It will probably take several years at least to make up last year's losses. Snow geese were seen late in the period along the central Hudson, and a few were also noted in Region 3.

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

ROBERT F. ANDRLE

The cold and snow of late November continued through December which proved to be the coldest since 1917. On twenty-six days in the month the average temperature was below normal (maximum -17° on Dec 21). Although precipitation was below normal near Buffalo, heavy snowfall was experienced in the plateau area with considerable drifting and poor visibility. Sunshine, however, was plentiful with twelve days of the month having over 75 per cent of the possible. The January average temperature was the same as that in December (22.3°F), but this was only 3.2° below normal compared to 6.7° in December. Total precipitation in January was 6.47 inches, a new all-time record for the month. It was a severe month weather-wise and a thaw during the 21st to the 23rd caused floods which resulted in heavy damage. Wintry conditions continued through February and March with the former averaging about normal in most respects and having no periods of unusual weather. Ice formed early on Lake Erie and accumulated steadily through most of the period. Lake Ontario had one of the widest sections of shore ice that has ever been observed by the writer. The ice bridge at Niagara Falls build up soon after mid-December and remained solid until it showed signs of breaking up in late March. The last month of the period was in marked contrast to the quiet weather of March 1957