

Cackling Goose in the Cayuga Lake Basin: On Thursday, October 1, 1959, a wild Canada Goose dropped in on the pond at Sapsucker Woods and attempted to join our six captive Canadas, but was kept at a distance by the six. The following day a total of 21 wild geese were on the pond, and by late afternoon they were feeding with the captive waterfowl under the Laboratory windows. It was immediately evident that one goose was far smaller and darker than the others and had a relatively shorter neck. Its bill was particularly noticeable as it was stubby and gave the head quite a different profile from those of the other geese.

This small goose remained with us for two weeks, and it was seen by numerous observers at a distance of a few feet as it grazed under the windows. I have had considerable experience with the Cackling Goose both on its nesting ground in Alaska and its wintering ground in California, and I had no hesitancy in identifying this bird as a perfectly typical example of the small dark race of the Canada Goose, *Branta canadensis minima*, which nests in Alaska and normally winters in the Sacramento Valley. It was certainly far out of its migration path, and we would like to think that word of our Refuge at Sapsucker Woods is really getting around!

The wild geese left the pond each day to feed in neighboring fields. On October 17 the Cackler returned limping; the following day it was missing, and it did not appear again.

Fritz Scheider reports that on November 22 a similar Cackling Goose appeared at Howland's Island Game Management Area where several weeks earlier he had also seen an apparent Richardson's Goose (*B. c. hutchinsii*). These are the first reports of the Cackling Goose in the Finger Lakes region — Arthur A. Allen, Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca.

Dovekie in Saratoga County: Periodically the Schenectady Bird Club schedules field trips to Saratoga Lake, just east of the famed racetrack resort in Saratoga County. Such a trip was conducted last November 15 in distinctly uncomfortable weather conditions. A northwest wind was blowing at 20 to 25 mph, with gusts a bit higher. The temperature was about 34 degrees, and the skies were overcast. The previous day had been unusually mild with temperatures in the fifties brought about by a SSE wind.

The number of species of waterbirds observed was rather disappointing. It was while most of us had our binoculars trained on two White-winged Scoters near Snake Hill along the east shore that one member of the group observed a small chubby black and white bird which had alighted on the water not more than 70 feet away. Great was the joy and astonishment among the seven observers when the bird turned out to be a Dovekie. It remained on the water for not more than a minute, then took off in a south-southeasterly direction and was soon lost behind some trees along the shore. To one who has had the privilege many times in the past of observing Dovekies and other alcids wintering off Cape Ann in Massachusetts, it was with utter amazement that this seabird was found so far from the coast. The puzzle is deepened by the fact that no on-shore storms occurred along the north Atlantic Coast during the previous days, which might have blown the Dovekie inland. A perusal of records proved this to be the first documented observation of the species in this area — Gus Angst, Rosendale Road, Schenectady.

Snow Geese in Rensselaer County: On Sunday, November 8, 1959, Rensselaer County's Tomhannock Reservoir was the scene of a movement of Snow Geese which was unusually large for this area. During that day the Schenectady Bird Club held its annual trip there, and three different groups of observers were at large in the area. The tardiness of one group was rewarded in midmorning with the sighting of at least 57 Snow Geese at a moderate altitude near the southern end of the lake. Then at about noon (just as the first group was describing its success to the second) a second flock of some 400 Snow Geese, arranged in a highly unsymmetrical V with a few additional birds flying inside, was sighted almost overhead. They were so high that their calls could hardly be heard, and without binoculars it was difficult to distinguish single birds in the line. As a very rough estimate, the birds were at an altitude of about a mile or more. Later in the afternoon a third group of observers sighted first a flock of about 250 geese in two unsymmetrical V's, and as these were almost out of sight, a third V of 150 birds, all at about the same height as the large flock of 400.

In all cases the birds were traveling at a constant heading toward or a little southwest of south. Each flock was examined as carefully as circumstances permitted for darker birds, but without positive success. In all, about 850 Snow Geese were seen, but the nature of the trip (much of it by car) makes it possible that the movement of geese through the area was actually heavier — Walter E. Kaskan, 2120 Plaza, Schenectady.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FALL SEASON AUGUST 16 — NOVEMBER 30

JAMES K. MERITT

The summer's dry weather continued until the arrival of the remnants of a tropical storm in late September. The early part of the period was generally warmer than might be expected, again a continuation of a summer trend. November marked a return to more normal conditions.

The fall season is in many respects the most interesting of the year, and certainly this fall was no exception. It was a season marked by diversity — good flights of certain species and poor flights of others. There was at least the usual quota of westerners reported, and there were some noteworthy occurrences among the shorebird group. Overall the flight of small land birds was perhaps average at best, although a few good waves were noted at some localities, these principally in the western and central parts of the state. The almost universal warm and dry weather in September (and attendant lack of weather fronts) seemed to preclude major flights on a state-wide basis. In this respect the migration was very similar to that of last spring.

The Canada Goose Flight was an excellent one throughout, and Blue and Snow Geese were also represented in relatively good numbers. On the other hand, some varieties of ducks, principally divers, were inexplicably scarce. The hawk flight was generally good, and the number of Rough-legged Hawk reports, while not record-breaking by any means, presaged a moderately good winter for these birds.

Thirty-four varieties of shorebirds were reported, and undoubtedly the low water level at certain localities was a factor here. Phalaropes were widely reported; the Northern was seen in six of the ten regions, the Red in three, and the Wilson's in two. A Marbled Godwit was the first Region 2 record since 1950, and the Hudsonian Godwit and Avocet were among the shorebirds seen in Region 5. Purple Sandpipers were noted at several localities in the central and western regions. The variety of gulls observed in the Buffalo-Niagara area could hardly have been exceeded, and a compact flock of some 30,000 Bonaparte's was seen there. Little wonder they were not overly common elsewhere! Dovekies showed up off Long Island, not too unexpected, and individual birds were observed inland in Regions 5 and 8, both quite unexpected. Snowy Owl observations were apparently confined to Regions 5 and 6, with a dead bird being reported from Region 7.

The flights of northern finches and related winter visitors ran the gamut from poor to heavy. There appeared to be a generally good Redpoll invasion, and the rare Hoary Redpoll was observed in Region 2 and 6. Pine Siskins, however, were quite scarce. A few Red Crossbills were seen. Evening Grosbeaks arrived in sufficient numbers to indicate at least a mod-