

of New York." Kenneth Parkes (**Birds of New York State and Their Taxonomy**), in summarizing information on distribution acquired since Eaton's book was published, found this statement to be still true, with only a few sight records since those listed by Eaton. A few specimens taken in the state are in museum collections. Parkes states that "observers in the warmer parts of the state should be on the alert for this species." The last preceding record was apparently that of a pair in Dutchess County on May 2, 1960 (**Kingbird**, July, 1960, p. 77). One wonders whether the present record was one of those two birds). — Mrs. Henry Thurston, Claverack.

Ruffed Grouse Eating a Snake: In October, 1959, a Ruffed Grouse was shot at Dry Hill near Watertown. It had eaten a DeKay's snake (*Storeria dekayi*) about nine inches long. The head and part of the body of the snake were in the gizzard of the grouse, and digestion had just started. The tail of the snake was in the crop of the bird. The gizzard was cut open to show the snake inside, and the snake



Gizzard of Ruffed Grouse containing snake.

Photo by Cecil Dake

and gizzard have been preserved in the Science Department of Case Junior High School in Watertown.

While there are other published records of a Grouse having eaten a snake, this seems unusual enough as a food item for this species to be worth recording again. — Frank A. Clinch, 173 Haley Street, Watertown.

An Albany Airport Ceilometer Disaster in 1956: Birds and airports don't always mix. There have been more than just a few cases in which small land birds, migrating at night, have been lured en masse to their destruction by airport ceilometers. The exact cause of such disasters is perhaps still a matter of speculation. Such an occurrence took place at the Albany Airport during the fall migration of 1956, and although an account of this particular episode has been published elsewhere, many readers may not have heretofore been aware of it.

Haze and clouds developed over the area late on the afternoon of September 15, and there was sporadic misty rain which became increasingly heavy as the night wore on. The cloud ceiling was non-existent or very low at best.

The sound of low flying transients over his home in Schenectady attracted Guy Bartlett's attention about 1:30 in the morning. Since migrants had appeared at the Albany Airport in similar weather in the past, he put through a call to the U. S. Weather Bureau there and was informed that birds were indeed present in the ceilometer beam. Guy arrived about an hour later, making one stop en route to pick up some flashlight batteries at an all-night service station.

For the next four hours Guy Bartlett was a witness to the ceilometer phenomenon. He made an estimate of approximately 500 birds, apparently mainly warblers, passing through the ceilometer beam. Very few were over a hundred feet off the ground. There were birds in low flight also near the terminal building, runways, and parking areas. Quite a few small birds were perched on window sills, guard rails, or low bushes. These birds were apparently uninjured but were unwilling to fly. Well over 200 dead birds were counted in the immediate vicinity of the ceilometer. In this area there were, in addition, quite a few injured birds that could be readily picked up. Guy collected many of the dead birds (including a dormant Redstart that later recovered) and placed them on newspapers to dry in the trunk of the automobile. About 6:30, a half hour or so after it had become light, the flight of birds had tapered off entirely, although the chips of injured birds were still to be heard near the ceilometer. A thoroughly weary and rain-soaked observer headed homeward, taking with him some 150 dead birds.

Upon his return Guy called me up at my home in Scotia to tell me of the airport flight. I drove out a bit later in the morning and picked up about 30 additional dead birds. Much to the delight of my children I also picked up three injured birds, a Yellow-throated Vireo, a Red-eyed Vireo, and a Tennessee Warbler. The two vireos died within a day or so, but the Tennessee Warbler survived and prospered and appeared as good as new when finally released.

I collected Guy Bartlett's five cardboard trays of dead birds on my way home from the airport, and a day or two later Dr. Allan Benton of the New York State Teachers College at Albany came over to my home to assist in the identification and tabulation of the dead birds which were then turned over to him for his professional use.

The following summary lists the dead birds collected or live birds handled: Yellow-bellied Flycatcher 2, Swainson's Thrush 15, Gray-cheeked Thrush 1, Yellow-throated Vireo 1, Red-eyed Vireo 17, Black and White Warbler 4, Tennessee Warbler 22, Parula Warbler 1, Magnolia Warbler 34, Cape May Warbler 1, Black-throated Blue Warbler 6, Myrtle Warbler 1, Black-throated Green Warbler 8, Blackburnian Warbler 21, Chestnut-sided Warbler 5, Bay-breasted Warbler 73, Blackpoll Warbler 1, Ovenbird 20, Northern Waterthrush 1, Yellowthroat 21, Wilson's Warbler 4, Canada Warbler 6, Redstart 7, Scarlet Tanager 2, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak 2. There were, in addition, two unidentified empidonax flycatchers and 34 warblers that were too badly mangled or soaked to be identified with certainty. This total includes 313 individuals of at least 25 species.

Guy Bartlett informs me that, to his knowledge, no mass mortalities such as described above have occurred at the Albany Airport since September, 1956.

It is of interest that four years earlier, in 1952, Guy Bartlett had noticed a somewhat similar phenomenon at the Albany Airport. On several dates during the fall migration of that year migrating birds had been "held captive" by the ceilometer, but there were no apparent fatalities on those occasions — James K. Meritt, 68 Westerly Road, Princeton, New Jersey.