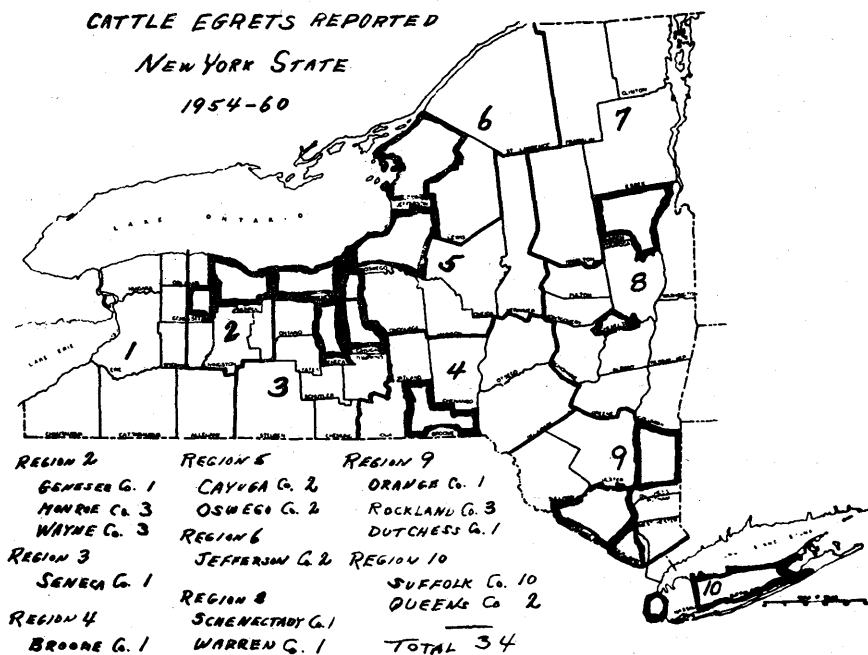


FIELD NOTES

The Cattle Egret in New York State: Living up to expectations, the Cattle Egret appeared in New York State in more places and in larger numbers during 1960 than in any previous year. As shown in the table below, the number of birds reported in 1960 is more than double the combined totals of all earlier records. Since reaching North America the Cattle Egret has aroused wide interest and has been the subject of numerous articles. Hence it is unnecessary to dwell on the arrival and subsequent success of this species in the New World. Suffice it to say that from Florida the breeding range has extended westward along the gulf states and north up the Atlantic coast as far as southern New Jersey.



The Cattle Egret is a great wanderer and has been seen in our state in all but the coldest months of the year. There are more records in the spring than in other seasons. Until 1960 single birds only were reported, but during the past year there were several instances in which two or three birds were seen together. An examination of the map will show that the Cattle Egret has now been reported from fifteen counties and from all regions except Regions 1 and 7.

Summaries of this type yield information as to geographical distribution and, in addition, give an indication as to abundance. As observations multiply, there will, of course, be instances in which a bird is reported more than once. The Cattle Egret will, no doubt, continue to be a regular visitor to the state, particularly in the spring. To date the portions of the state which have been favored are Long Island, the Hudson Valley, and the counties bordering Lake Ontario.

The following table gives the annual totals for New York State:

1954	-	1	1958	-	3
1955	-	0	1959	-	4
1956	-	1	1960	-	24
1957	-	1			

Further occurrences should be brought to the attention of the respective regional reporter. — John B. Belknap, 92 Clinton Street, Gouverneur.

Observations of the Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker at Syracuse: On November 3, 1960, at 8:30 a. m., while checking Oakwood Cemetery for lingering fall migrants, my attention was attracted by a repeated sound, rather like the dripping of water onto stone. The source of the sound proved to be an adult female Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker in a nearby grove of Scotch pine and white cedar. The bird seemed rather restless, moving from trunk to trunk about ten feet from the ground and thus not permitting the close observation often possible with this species. As I followed it up a driveway toward the Syracuse University campus, the bird flushed repeatedly from one conifer to another before becoming lost from view.

The "nervous" movements of the bird during this first observation subsequently proved to be typical. Owing to the fact that local birdwatchers, notified of the Black-backed's presence, had a variety of hours available to search for it, there were six further observations, of what was probably the same individual, during the following eight days and at various times of day. On the next four sightings the woodpecker was on a dead elm with a great deal of fresh woodpecker work on it, about 300 yards from the first location, both around 8:00 a. m. and in late afternoon, sometimes "flaking" and sometimes resting on a limb about 30 feet from the ground. The bird was found on two other cemetery elms, which also bore evidence of Dutch elm disease and woodpecker work, during this first round of observations which ended on November 11.

On the latter date the bird flushed toward Comstock Avenue, which bounds the cemetery on the east. This led to the discovery of the row of diseased elms, extensively enjoyed by Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, which lined this street and, after several unsuccessful searches there for the Black-backed, to the eventual finding of a male Black-backed there on November 25.

During December sightings of Black-backeds, usually with Hairies and Downies working the same elms, increased in the vicinity of Comstock Avenue (a high count of three male and two female Black-backeds was made December 3). This provided more opportunity to study their behavior. On one occasion a female flushed from the elms to an oak on which she worked for a half hour. On another occasion both a male and a female were observed working on a locust tree about 3/8 mile diagonally across the cemetery from the Comstock elms (H. and C. Ives); it is quite possible that this pair was of the group seen around Comstock. The times from 7:00 - 8:30 a. m. and around 4:00 p. m. were normally the best in December for finding these woodpeckers, usually moving from branch to branch in the upper parts of the elms as they worked. The "pwick" note, which first revealed the bird to me (November 3), was frequently heard as they fed. There was sometimes a nasal and raucous "aegh-aegh-aegh-aegh" call given as the bird flushed. Since I had many more observations of a female than of a male, I hadn't the opportunity to hear any vocalization of the latter.

Several observers commented on the apparent restlessness of this group of Black-backeds, in contrast with the usually described behavior of the species. These birds often moved rapidly from limb to limb, feeding as they went, and if they were present, they were easily spotted.

On the Syracuse Christmas Count (December 26) one male and two females were seen in the cemetery vicinity (E. Estoff and J. Propst). An interesting observation was made of one of these birds. It and a Hairy were apparently asleep (with eyes closed), i.e., roosting, right on the food trees, at 8:00 a. m. of a clear day,