

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,

the Black-backed horizontal on the upper side of a limb. The censusers raised their voices in an attempt to arouse the birds without flushing them, whereupon both woodpeckers awoke and immediately began to feed.

A male and a female were still present January 8 on the Comstock elms. On January 10 the two of these diseased elms most favored by the woodpeckers were taken down. After this, a female was seen once more on each of two of the cemetery elms frequented previously by Black-backed. The bird flushed almost immediately upon observation these last two times, the final observation being on January 24.

One is left to surmise to what extent the removal of the "favorite" trees or the concurrent severe cold followed by a two to three feet snowfall caused the disappearance in midwinter of these interesting woodpeckers. — Margaret Rusk, 114 Standard Street, Syracuse 10.

Evening Flights of Migrating Waterbirds on Long Island: The intriguing study of waterbird migration is occasionally depicted at such coastal jumping-off places as Jones Beach, where some forty to fifty miles of ocean separate the southwestern-bound travellers' journey from Long Island to the middle New Jersey coast. Evening is often the jumping-off time. Usually by sundown the flock assembles or has assembled, and toward dusk the birds are on their way.

Three such flocks were observed by this writer, two in the fall of 1960 and a previous departure some years ago which seems worthy of mention. The latter, my first introduction to dusk migration, came rather unexpectedly. It was in the fall, around 1930, and I had trespassed on the south shore of the Jones Beach Sanctuary Pond, then a private shooting preserve of the Guggenheim family. Breaking through the Phragmites, I startled a flock of clamorous Canada Geese which brought swift verbal chastisement from caretaker Carman from Baldwin. After I identified myself as a bird student, however, he offered me a "front row seat" on top of the roof of the hunting lodge (now torn down) at the north edge of the pond, where he pointed skyward. For about five minutes I watched with intense interest some half dozen or more Great Blue Herons swinging in wide circles over the poison ivy and bayberry tracts north of the pond. Ever mounting upward, they, for all their huge size, appeared infinitesimal as they wheeled high over the water. Then, as if released by a single impulse, they cut an abrupt tangent to the circle and, together, flew into the southwest and out of sight over the ocean.

On October 12, 1960, again at dusk and again at Jones Beach, about 25 Black-crowned Night Herons flew over the ocean boulevard and out of sight over the ocean in a southerly direction. Their assembly preparations were not observed. However, they flew in a more compact flock and higher than usual when travelling locally. These birds flew straight out at right angles to the coast, as if intent on putting some miles of ocean under them before veering southwest to the distant New Jersey marshes.

The third flock of the three mentioned above consisted of some 30 Black Skimmers which assembled in Sloop Channel, east of the Meadowbrook causeway bridge and a half mile west of the fishing station at Jones Beach. They were first observed about sundown by Cornelius Ward of Roosevelt, my wife, and myself. The birds were assembled in customary feeding behavior as they skimmed over the surface of the water near a sandbar, their forms distinct against the bright western sky. Some fifteen minutes later as the brightness faded, they were seen flying over the sandbar, gathering in what appear to be an excited assemblage. The flock then veered upward, and in gyrations very similar to flocking sandpipers they zig-zagged and wheeled ever higher until they had gained an altitude of an estimated 400 feet. Then with strong rapid wing beats they headed straight southwest over the ocean, passing Jones Inlet on the way.

Although such departures are inclined to leave an empty feeling in the mind of the observer as one sees birds leave for the year, it is far better that they go on time while the migration urge is strong than to linger perhaps in some confused state until hopes of survival have almost disappeared. After the hurricane of