

THE AMERICAN OYSTER-CATCHER IN NEW YORK

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In the early 1800's the American Oyster-catcher (*Haematopus palliatus*) bred along the Atlantic coast much farther north than at present. Audubon found several breeding in Labrador during July (Audubon, 1835: 181). Baird, Brewer, and Ridgeway (1884: 113) write: "it was then [1837] no uncommon thing to see specimens of this bird in the Boston market," and Wilson (1832: 36) found the Oyster-catcher frequenting "the sandy sea-beaches of New Jersey."

By 1884 Baird, Brewer, and Ridgeway (p. 113) again referring to the occurrence of this species in the Boston market state: "... this seldom or never occurs now, and the bird for many years, so far as is known, has been a stranger to Massachusetts."

Giraud (1844: 222) writes of the Oyster-catcher on Long Island: "With us the Oyster-catcher is a rather scarce bird although during summer a few are found on almost every beach along the whole extent of sea coast."

In New Jersey, by 1857 and 1869 Beesley and Turnbull, respectively, regarded Oyster-catchers as rare summer residents" (*vide* Stone, 1937: 367). In 1937 Stone regarded them as "accidental" and he lists only eleven occurring between 1880 and 1937 (p. 367).

The Oyster-catcher is now returning to the Northeastern United States. This species started to reappear regularly in New Jersey, in the early 1940's (Fables, 1955: 31). The first definite breeding in New Jersey, in this century, occurred in 1947 (Kramer, 1948: 460), and the species now breeds in Ocean, Atlantic, and Cape May counties. At least eleven nests were located in 1954 (Fables, 1955: 31).

Oyster-catchers have since been discovered breeding in New York. The purpose of this paper is to document as fully as possible the occurrence of the Oyster-catcher in New York, especially their re-entry which is now going on.

Appended (table I) is a list of all specimen and sight records, known to me, since the time of Giraud, to and including 1960.

To date, there are two breeding records, for New York, in this century. On June 13, 1957 LeRoy Wilcox found a nest, with three eggs, on Gardiner's Island. The eggs were found to be addled and are now in the possession of Mr. Wilcox.

The second nest found on July 1, 1960, by Gilbert Raynor and Dennis Puleston, at Moriches, also contained three eggs. The young banded on July 8, by Wilcox, were later killed by Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*).

When the records are broken down into occurrences per month (table II), with the exception of one March record, we see there are records from May through November.

TABLE I
Records of the Oyster-catcher in New York

Year	Day	Location	No.	Authority & Remarks
1858	July 31	"Long Island"	1	Lawrence coll. Specimen in Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.
—	—	"South Side Meadows, Flatlands"	1	Dutcher, Auk , 10: 272. Specimen in Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.
1877	May 28	New York Harbor	1	Lawrence coll. N. O. C. Bull., 5: 117.
1880	Mar. 9	Ponquogue	1	Dutcher, Auk , 3: 439.
1882	Early June	Greenport	2	Dutcher, ibid.
1915	Late June	Gardiner's Island	2	Latham
1918	June	Gardiner's Island	1	Latham
1924	May (25)	Orient	1	Latham (fide Cruickshank)
*1924	Aug. 28	Mastic	1	W. S. Dana (ibid.)
1927	May 25	Orient	1	Latham (ibid.)
1929	May 28	Orient	1	Latham (ibid.)
1934	July 1	Orient	1	Latham. Male in Latham's coll.
1936	Aug. 20	Orient	1	Latham. Female in Latham's coll.
1937	May 9	Moriches Inlet	1	S. Raven & Wilcox (fide Cruickshank)
1938	June 18-21	Moriches Inlet	1	Wilcox (ibid.)
1939	June 10	Moriches Inlet	1	Wilcox (ibid.)
*1944	Sept. 23 & 24	Oak Island Beach	2	Grant, Nathan, Soll et. al.
*1944	Sept. 30	Moriches Inlet	1	Wells & Yrizarry
1950	June 23 & 25	Moriches Inlet	2	Wilcox, C. S. Robbins, & A. J. Duvall (fide Nichols)
1951	Nov. 11	Moriches Inlet	1	J. Cadbury, et. al. (fide Nichols)
*1954	Sept. 4-18	Mecox Bay	1	McKeever, et. al.
*1954	Sept. 4	Moriches Inlet	3	Eisenman, & Grant
*1954	Sept. 6-26	Jones Inlet	1	Bull, Carleton, et. al.
*1954	Sept. 4-Oct. 17	Shinnecock Inlet	3	Carleton, Raynor, Puleston, et. al.
*1954	Sept. 6-18	Cedar Beach	1	Bull, Carleton, et. al.
*1954	Sept. 25	Captree State Park	1	Carleton, et. al.
*1954	Oct. 2	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge	1	Mayer (fide Nichols)
1957	June 13	Gardiner's Island	2	Wilcox. Bred. Nest & Eggs.
1958	Aug. 21	Orient	1	Latham
1959	Sept. 8	Orient	1	Latham
†1960	May 17	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge	2	Burnbaum
†1960	May 30	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge	1	Davis, et. al.
†1960	May 29	Jones Inlet	1	Sixty observers
†1960	June 3	Jones Inlet	2	Buckley & Scheider
†1960	June 11	Democrat Point, Fire Island	2	Malone & Restivo
1960	June 17	Louise's Point, Springs	2	Hale
1960	Summer	Moriches Inlet	2	Raynor, Wilcox, et. al. Bred.
1960	July 8	Moriches Inlet	3	Wilcox (one adult in addition to nesting pair)
1960	Aug. 21	Shinnecock Inlet	2	Puleston
*1960	Sept. 13	Short Beach	2	Norse & Post
*1960	Sept. 13	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge	2	Johnson
*1960	Sept. 14-17	Moriches Inlet	5	Raynor, Puleston, et. al.
*1960	Sept. 14	Captree State Park	1	Post, Ryan, et. al.

*1960	Sept. 13-21	Mecox Bay	2	McKeever, <i>et. al.</i>
*1960	Sept. 17-21	Shinnecock Inlet	1	Kallman, Post, Puleston, <i>et. al.</i>
1960	Oct. 10	Fisher's Island	1	Ferguson & Matthiessen (<i>fide</i> Nichols)

* Birds which can be directly attributed to hurricanes.

† Same birds?

TABLE II

No. of individuals/ occurrences*	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Total
1	1	0	7	3	3	3	8	2	1	28
2			1	8		1	4			14
3							2			2
5							1			1
Total individuals/ month	1	0	9	19	3	5	27	2	1	
			67 individuals (46 occurrences)							

Occurrences of Oyster-catchers in New York per month.

* Occurrence — No. of individuals seen in one locality at one time, or for a consecutive period of time.

The month of September contains more occurrences than any other month. However, this total loses its significance when we realize that all but one of these birds can be attributed directly to a hurricane. Out of the sixty-seven individuals listed in Table I twenty-eight can be attributed to such storms.

As would be expected, June, with nineteen individuals, and May, with nine individuals, follow September in the greatest number of individuals per month. Most of the June occurrences are of two individuals, at least one of which was definitely a mated pair, as presumably were the other six. Of these eight pairs five occurred in 1960 alone.

To my knowledge the Oyster-catcher has never occurred, in New York, away from Long Island.

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