

FIELD NOTES

Chickadee Migration in Monroe County: As early as September 1, 1961, observers in the area northeast of Rochester noted Black-capped Chickadees in greater than normal numbers, but this was passed off as limited post-nesting wanderings of local birds after a successful nesting season. This theory was upset on Sept. 30 when 25 birds hit the banding nets in Dr. Leubner's back yard in Irondequoit; this almost proved that the chickadee population at this time consisted of something more than wandering local birds.

After due consideration, the observers chose Oklahoma Beach as a vantage point from which to await developments. This area is about a quarter of a mile east of the Irondequoit Bay outlet into Lake Ontario. Somewhat above the railroad the slope levels out into suburban lots which are well shrubbed. The upper slopes are rather lightly wooded.

On Friday, October 5, Mrs. Mary Ann Sunderlin and Miss Louise Zeitler counted 503 chickadees between 1:30 and 2:15 p. m. On Saturday Mrs. Sunderlin and Mrs. Thomas McNett counted 1,253 chickadees between 9:30 a. m. and noon. They returned at 1:20 p. m. and counted 6,297 more chickadees in the next 2 1/4 hours.

On October 8 they were joined by Warren Lloyd, Miss Ruth MacRae, Mrs. Ruth Shermer, Joseph McNett, Dr. and Mrs. Neal Moon, Bob Dobson, and Walter Listman. Observers were continually at the point from 7:15 a. m. to 5:15 p. m. During this time 17,166 chickadees were counted and 6,860 more estimated. On Monday, in little more than four hours of observation, 7,154 birds were counted. On Thursday an estimated 2,000 birds were observed passing this point.

Thus in the three peak days of the flight passing this point 31,870 chickadees were counted, and there must have been many thousands that passed when no observers were present.

In addition to the chickadees, at least 14 Tufted Titmice, 43 White-breasted Nuthatches, and 35 Brown Creepers were observed on the three peak days. A single Boreal Chickadee was carefully studied by Mrs. Shermer.

The combined total of the peak two days of the last great flight in 1954, which was watched from a point about two miles west of Manitou, was estimated at 20,000 birds. That migration followed a west-east direction, the opposite of this year's flight.

Where did they go? This flight seemed to turn inland just east of or over Rochester. At the peak of the flight there was no comparable flight in either direction at Manitou or other nearby points. During this time the maximum estimated count at Manitou was only 75 on Oct. 7, and these birds were moving in the usual west-east direction. Between Oct. 7 and 15 small flocks were observed passing regularly over the heart of Rochester, almost always in a southerly direction. After the flight tapered off, the number of chickadees present locally did not seem greater than usual during a fairly good chickadee year. — Howard S. Miller, 54 Luella St., Rochester 9.

Harris' Sparrow Near Ithaca, Tompkins County: At 10:30 a. m. on October 15, 1961, Charles A. Sutherland, Rosemary Almendinger, and the writer, all of Cornell University, observed a Harris' Sparrow near Route 89 west of Cayuga Lake, about five miles north of Ithaca, Tompkins County. The birds was found in a large pile of brush and overturned tree stumps in the center of a large field planted in corn and pumpkin, near the corner of Doboise and Perry City Roads, in Ulysses township. It was in company with a great number of House and Song Sparrows, as well as some White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows. At about the same time of day on October 16 the writer again visited the brush pile with Paul A. Buckley, Kendall W. Corbin, and Neal G. Smith. The bird was again seen.

Observations on both days were made from a distance of 30 to 40 feet, with 7 and 8 power binoculars. There was an overcast sky on the 15th and a clear sky on the 16th. The size and bulk of the bird was apparent on the 16th when

an adult White-crowned Sparrow sat on a bare branch within about four inches of the Harris', thus providing size comparison. Most noticeable were the high crown, more rounded than that of a White-crowned Sparrow, the irregular blackish patch on the upper breast, and the extensive olive-buff color on the sides of the head and neck. Other outstanding characteristics of the bird were the pink bill, the dark slaty forehead, and the buffy-brown flanks, overlaid with dark streaks. The underparts, including the throat, with the exception of the breast-patch and the buffy undertail coverts, were off-white. The back spotting, wing pattern of two narrow wingbars, and uniformly brown tail were similar to those of the White-crowned Sparrow. The colors of the eye, feet, and legs were not noted. At no time did the bird call.

The bird was last seen about 5:00 p. m. on October 16 when the writer again visited the area with Timothy Zorach, who had a brief but recognizable look at the bird before it flew off into the adjacent cornfield, as it had done on each of the two previous occasions. Corbin is familiar with the species from western Minnesota, and Sutherland had seen one in Massachusetts in 1959.

On the basis of the whitish rather than dusky throat and the black rather than reddish breast patch, it is thought that the bird was an adult female in winter plumage. Immatures in the Cornell University collection have the throat marked with dark brown and the breast patch ruddy brown. Of the specimens in this collection, the observed bird appeared most like an adult female, No. 12055, collected on December 28, 1941, in Cleveland Co., Oklahoma.

This appears to be at least the fourth record for New York State. There is a sight record of one at Hamburg, Erie Co., on November 8-11, 1951 (Ed. — See **Kingbird**, July, 1954, p. 38). An immature was seen at Saltaire, Fire Island, in Suffolk County, on Sept. 30, 1956, and one was at a Jamestown feeder through November of 1957. There have been a number of recent records from Massachusetts, most at feeders. One was seen at Troy Meadows, N. J., May 7, 1935, and there are a few other published records for the northeast.

The fall migration route of this species is extremely narrow, encompassing a 250-mile wide strip through the central plains, just west of the Mississippi River. It winters in this same narrow belt from Kansas and Iowa south to the Texas coast. In Minnesota the bulk of autumn records fall between mid-September and mid-October; in other midwestern and central states October is the peak of migration. In this respect the Ithaca record is in accord with the migration dates in the species' normal range.

A cold front originated in central South Dakota on October 12, and this passed the Ithaca area late on October 13. The appearance of this bird may in some way be correlated with these climatic conditions. — Douglas J. Futuyma, Department of Conservation, Fernow Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca.

Herring Gulls Catching Flying Ants: In the October, 1961, issue of the **Kingbird** Mr. Thomas Lesperance of Keeseville cites the habit of Herring Gulls catching flying ants. While mist-netting migrating birds on the outer beach at Tiana Beach, Shinnecock Bay, Long Island, during the months of September and October, 1961, I noted numbers of Herring Gulls catching flying ants from about 5:00 to 6:00 p. m. on the consecutive evenings of Sept. 22 and 23.

The easternmost lane and the westernmost lane where the mist nets were operated are about one mile apart. On both evenings there was very little wind, and all the ants were flying west in this one mile area. This activity was apparently limited to the times specified above. The gulls were feeding on the ants at a height of about 50 to 100 feet in the same manner as described by Mr. Lesperance. There were such tremendous numbers of ants that they could be seen in this entire one mile area, and the nets, which are about five feet high, were covered with crawling ants. — Leroy Wilcox, Oceanic Duck Farm, Speonk, Long Island.

Additional Notes on Birds Hawking Insects: Reading Thomas Lesperance's "Herring Gulls Catching Flying Ants" in Northern New York State brings to mind a similar experience my wife and I had this past fall. At about 6:00 p. m. on a