

UPSTATE NEW YORK FIELD TRIPS OF THE THIRTEENTH INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS

MARGARET S. RUSK

The quadriennial International Ornithological Congress met, for the first time in the United States, under the secretary-generalship of Dr. Charles Sibley at Cornell University June 17-23, 1962. Cornell's Shackleton Point biological station on the south shore of Oneida Lake was selected as headquarters for upstate New York field trips of the Congress, for the weeks immediately preceding and following the Cornell meetings.

In charge of these excursions was Dr. Gustav Swanson of the Cornell Department of Conservation. On the second Week's trips Mrs. Swanson was also present, and contributed her knowledge of regional history. Acting as local guides, Mrs. Dorothy Ackley, Mr. Paul Paquette, Dr. David Paekall, Mrs. Jean Propst, Dr. Walter Spofford, and I had the great pleasure and privilege of showing our Upstate birds and habitats to internationally known ornithologists from Britain, the Scandinavian countries, Germany, the Netherlands, Curacao, and western U. S.

Congress members on the first week's trips were: Miss Ella Adelholt of Denmark, known for her work on banding recoveries; Mrs. Enid Austin of California; Mr. and Mrs. Robert Booth of the Cleveland Audubon Society; Dr. Mary Erickson of the University of California; Mrs. Keresten Hadding of Sweden and New York City; Mr. Eric Hosking, England's best-known bird photographer, with Mrs. Hosking; Dr. James Monk, Editor of *The Ibis*; Mr. Guy Mountfort, Secretary of the British Ornithologists' Union, with Mrs. Mountfort; Mr. Niels Preuss, one of the most active students of migration in Denmark; Dr. Gustaf Rudebeck of the State Museum of Natural History in Stockholm; Dr. William Serle, authority on nest ecology and the taxonomy of West African birds; Mr. Robert Spencer of the British Museum (Natural History); and Mr. P. A. van der Werf of Curacao, expert on distribution of West Indian birds. Participants the second week were: Dr. G. A. Brouwer of the Netherlands, active in the International Council for Bird Preservation, with Mrs. Brouwer; Mr. and Mrs. Henry Craw of England; Mrs. Bertha Hartmann-Muller of Germany; Mr. Bernt Loppenthin, Editor of the Danish checklist; Mr. Sven H. Mathiasson of the Goteborg Natural History Museum; Dr. Gunther Niethammer, Editor of *Journal fur Ornithologie*; Dr. Ernst Schuz, best known for his experimental work on migration of White Storks; Sir Arthur Landsborough Thomson, past President of the British Ornithologists' Union, with Lady Mary Thomson; and Mrs. Eleanore Waldhoer, whose film of the life history of the Wallcreeper delighted Congress audiences.

Despite a gray morning, the first of the Monday trips, to Sandy Pond and Selkirk Shores State Park, got off to a cheery start with tea served by Dr. W. D. Bulger of the National Wildlife Federation beside his wildlife pond in Pulaski, where the group examined the pond-side skyscraper Purple Martin apartments. At Sandy Pond two Short-billed Marsh Wrens jumped out of the grass marsh in response to my stone-clicking, so everyone had a glimpse of this uncommon wren. The Hooded Warbler that nests at Selkirk sang in circles amongst the maple undergrowth, but perched in the

open momentarily for the second week's group. This day, June 25, the Pine Warbler, Cardinals, and Purple Finches all were feeding young in the grove of great white pines at Selkirk. On the way home a detour was made to look for the elusive Prothonotary Warblers in the maple swamp of Muskrat Bay on Oneida Lake.

In addition to the gay-colored Wood Ducks and other breeding waterfowl at Howland's Island, the group saw both a Common Egret and a Black-crowned Night Heron there on June 12. Turkey Vultures hanging in the summer sky were a new world ornithological specialty of this more southern habitat. The Tuesday excursions also visited Camillus Valley, with its maidenhair-covered limestone ledges, where the Europeans admired the brightly-plumaged new world finches, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Indigo Buntings, and the instantaneous flash of a Hummingbird. On the first Camillus trip Dr. Swanson suggested "spishing up" some Chickadees, as the foreign visitors had been asking about "American tits". To everyone's surprise, the first bird to respond was a Tufted Titmouse, a new bird to the Valley; our more southern "tit" was also there for the group two weeks later, along with a unique northern woodpecker — a Sapsucker. Other special Camillus birds on view were Cerulean Warblers feeding young in the nest the first week, and the second week a family group of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and the Chat.

On June 12 the Hoskings, accompanied by the Mountforts, Mr. van der Werf and Dr. Spofford made a special photographic trip to a Goshawk nest in the hill country near Norwich.

Highpoint both weeks was the overnight Adirondacks trip. Near East Lake, exploration of a spruce bog yielded such northern species as Ruby-crowned Kinglets singing their wiry song, Olive-sided Flycatchers carrying nesting material, and Bay-breasted Warblers feeding young. The Ornithologists were guests overnight of Mr. and Mrs. C. V. Bowes at Covewood Lodge on Big Moose Lake. On Wednesday evening the Bowes guided a canoe trip to visit a beaver dam across the lake and glimpse Gray Jays which slipped silently down through the pines, to the great delight of Mr. Mountfort, for whom they were "a lifer". After a night filled with cries of Loons and Barred Owls, the groups climbed Blue Mountain where they saw breeding Blackpoll Warblers. The Europeans recognized the lovely wild trills of their only Wren, our Winter Wren. Just at the foot of this Adirondack peak with its Canadian birds, Mr. Mountfort made the surprising discovery of a Tufted Titmouse!

The Friday excursions were to Whetstone Gulf, a precipitous gorge which unexpectedly cuts through the north edge of the Tug Hill Plateau. Dr. Serle demonstrated his uncanny ability to locate nests, by spotting a Red-breasted Nuthatch as it darted into its pitch-daubed hole in a dead snag. Parula Warblers buzzed in the tree-canopy of our picnic spot; other breeding warblers were more visible in the lower second growth, while one looked down upon the Canada Warblers along the gorge walls.

Saturday morning trips to Rome Sand Plains provided opportunities to see new species typical of that unique area. Bank Swallows were feeding

young in a colony in an abandoned sand pit. Hermit Thrushes gave their flute songs from the blueberry-carpeted ground, and Ovenbirds herded their young through the bracken. Black-throated Green and Nashville Warblers darted among the white and pitch pines. A Scarlet Tanager sang near its nest in a white oak. Overhead a Red-shouldered Hawk circled, and from the wetter sphagnum bog areas White-throated Sparrows whistled. "Damn fine birds! Jolly nice birds!" exclaimed Dr. Rudebeck as he spotted his first pair of Bluebirds. The second group glimpsed a pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers near the Sand Plains, and both groups visited a Cliff Swallow colony under the eaves of a barn. Near Verona, Mr. Mountfort gathered up a handful of Upland Sandpiper chicks from the roadside while the parents with uplifted wings worriedly gave their purring calls and mournful whistles.

Mr. and Mrs. Craw and Mrs. Waldhoer stayed for a final Saturday afternoon and evening to see showy orchids at Pumpkin Hollow and the beaver dam at Gully Road near Marcellus, and the Montezuma Eagle nest.

There were dawn trips to Clay Swamp and Steven's Pond where both bitterns were heard; Bobolinks burred over the pastures, and the pair of Canada Geese with their six goslings sailed regally across the pond. On evening trips to Cicero Swamp our International visitors heard Henslow's Sparrows, Whip-poor-wills calling in a three-part round, and the thrush vesper chorus.

At the Shackleton Point headquarters, where they lived in charming lakeside cottages and a luxurious converted barn, newly readied by Mr. Paul Laible and his staff, the field trippers could hear the Warbling Vireo in an elm outside the dining hall, watch Tree Swallows at their nest boxes, and listen to a screech Owl in the evenings. There one of our guests, impressed with the size of our Robin, dubbed it the "Imperial Thrush"; many had first views of some typical northern New York birds in these surroundings.

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Alfred A. Starling, 26 Clinton Ave. S., Rochester 4, N. Y.

Mr. John Elliott, President
New York Federation of Bird Clubs
3994 Park Avenue
Seaford, Long Island, New York
Dear Mr. Elliott:

I wish to express my personal appreciation and that of the National Audubon Society to the New York Federation of Bird Clubs for your federation's active and timely support of the Golden Eagle Bill, not only through Senator Keating, one of the sponsors of the bill and other members of the New York delegation in Congress, but also in connection with the recent Senate Committee hearings. The response to the request by John Alderman for assistance in bringing a key witness to the hearing from Texas was most gratifying.

This is the kind of teamwork that wins conservation battles.

We are quite optimistic that this important bill will become law before the present session of Congress is adjourned.

Sincerely,
Carl W. Buchheister
President

INFORMATION WANTED

I am interested in obtaining information on the current status and spread of the Great Black-back Gull in New York State. I would be grateful for any counts made this winter and for any unpublished or obscure data from past years especially the period prior to 1950.

D. P. Peakall, Upstate Medical Center,
766 Irving Ave., Syracuse 10, N. Y.



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