

- White, Mrs. Mildred. A partially albino blue jay. *Kingbird* 11:34.
Wilcox, Leroy. More on hybrid flickers. *Kingbird* 11:200.
Wilson, John E. and Robert F. Perry. Controlled waterfowl hunting. *N. Y. State Conservationist* 16(2):2-5.
Woodford, James and Donald E. Burton. Ontario-Western New York Region. *Audubon Field Notes* 15:35-39, 325-328, 405-409.
----- and John Lunn. Ontario-Western New York Region. *Audubon Field Notes* 15:464-467.
* Omissions should be called to the attention of the Bibliography committee: Sally F. Hoyt, Chairman, John B. Belknop, Allen H. Benton, & Kenneth C. Parkes.
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FIELD NOTES

Tree Swallow Roost in Orient, Long Island. With Notes on Their Habits Thereto:

The tree swallow roost was first discovered on October 4, 1908. It was a clear typical October afternoon with a light easterly breeze coming over the sea. I was enjoying a late afternoon stroll when my attention was arrested by an enormous gathering of swallows that had collected high above a certain woodlot. I noticed immediately that the many thousands of swallows that filled the air in the vicinity had arrived at this one locality and were maneuvering strangely at an extraordinary height.

They were first observed shortly after sunset and a faint gloom dimmed the air. The birds were exceedingly high and their movements most interesting. The great flock would huddle in a compact bunch, then rapidly spread out into an extensive loose flock. Then, with surprising quickness they would dash together again into a swarming mass. These drill-like maneuvers were repeated time after time as the flock gradually rose upward. Once again the great flock expanded far out and up. They turned, and the entire assemblage rushed to a dense center, where they hovered briefly; then like a huge serpent uncoiling, a narrow column of birds poured downward from one edge of the great flock and with a rushing roar went whirling and twisting with meteorlike speed earthward. The column did not exceed ten feet in diameter, yet thousands upon thousands of swallows poured downward in less than two minutes' time. Approximately two-thirds of the entire flock went down in that first grand descension. The swallows that remained up continued their interesting antics about five minutes longer before descending in like manner, a few of the last remaining up until it was too dusky to distinguish them by sight. It was my first observation of the kind, a spectacular sight to witness and one never to be forgotten. The rushing sound from the many small wings was equal to that of an express train approaching from the opposite side of the woods. I was elated that I had located a swallow roost. Looking westward toward the bright afterglow I could see myriads of swallows streaming through the treetops seeking roosting perches for the night. The noise from the thousands of fluttering wings was likened to the surf on a distant shore and lasted well into the darkness before all became composed. After all the birds had settled down and become quiet for the night, I shook a tree and the commotion that followed the disturbance was startling. Every tree evidently was full of roosting swallows.

The roost consisted of a twenty acre tract of second-growth mixed hardwood trees, fifteen to thirty feet in height, of oak, hickory, sassafras, maple and cherry. Low level farms spread out on the west and north of the roost and salt marshes with salt tidal creeks on east and south.

The following evening I was at the roost before the swallows arrived to study their behavior in full. The western sky that evening was deeply roseate tinted and the column of descending birds was beautiful, as were the vast numbers of swallows moving northward through the woods after their descent against the bright western sky. On both nights the swallows came down in the south section of the woodlot and moved northward seeking perching supports. It was light enough the second night, from the glow of the western sky, to observe the swallows as they perched tightly together along the branches to the very tips which were sagging under the weight. Many birds could be detected seeking perches and even trying to cling to leaves. A low contented twitting was the only note heard and this slowly subdued into silence as the evening progressed.

The third day had been warm with a light easterly breeze, and the tree swallows flight over the farm was the heaviest of the season as the birds drifted along westward toward the roost.

Just east of the roost in the south edge of a marshy pasture was a small fresh water pond where the swallows would drink and bathe every afternoon enroute to the roost, refreshing themselves for the night rest. They swirled around this pond with open bills, the lower bill skimming the surface in drinking and dip and drag their bodies through the water to bathe, fluffing their plumage as they arose to renew the act. Often more than a hundred birds struck the water at a time. This continued for over an hour each evening as the flocks approached the roost. The marshy pasture surroundings of the pond was the habitat of lies, mosquitoes and other insect food for the swallows. Conditions were perfect for them to retire contentedly for the night, refreshed with food and drink.

The third evening at the roost the flock was indescribably immense, such magnitude could not be estimated in numbers. The topmost birds were so high that they appeared as pepper dots against the sky. How they could come down at such terrific speed without injury is unbelievable, together with the suddenness of the descent from a solid packed flock at great height, one edge of the flock unraveling downward until the whole flock had disappeared into the foliage.

In the morning I ventured to the woodlot to get an understanding of the departure of the swallows from the roost. This was extremely enlightening in comparison to their retirement the previous evening. Soon after dawn the swallows began to leave the roost in small numbers. At first, in periods of several minutes. Only one, two or three swallows left together. This soon grew to 50 in a group and increased rapidly, the last half of the total going out in a steady stream. All the swallows came out on the east side of the woods and flew high toward the east. None of them stopped to feed or remained on the mainland of Orient after leaving the roost. They flew east over Gardiner's bay to the outlying islands to feed and retrace their flight.

The shore line is two miles east of the roost and the off-shore islands ten miles distant. Here the swallows spent most of the mornings feeding and trending back with their erratic flight, resting as they progressed. They frequently rested by perching on the bare plowed farmland like a great blue mat, sometimes covering an acre of ground. Forerunners of the flight began to reappear around noon in Orient with the peak of their abundance arriving between four and six in the afternoon. Many of them reached the pond by mid-afternoon.

A series of mornings showed a variation in the manner of departure from the roost. On the morning of October 7, following the evening when the great numbers could not be estimated when the swallows went to roost, an estimation could be reckoned by the division of the flock into smaller groups the next morning as they left the roost. The first two flocks that departed were estimated at 10,000 birds each with the succeeding flocks thereafter decreasing in numbers. The total became 75,000 birds that morning. Probably there were 100,000 or more swallows in the roost that night. All the birds from the roost that morning flew high toward the east, as on the preceding mornings. Immediately after the last swallows had departed, an immense flock of cowbirds and grackles vacated the roost, the number of cowbirds estimated at 2,000 individuals.

On October 18 the number of swallows was estimated at 25,000 individuals. This was a remarkable number for the lateness of the season, considering that the 20th of October is the average date for the last record of this series, but the proceed-

ing two days had temperature registering above 80 degrees. The next morning a marked change took place at the roost. The first three flocks of swallows, of a thousand or more birds each, left the roost close together, and, instead of going eastward as usual, they circled round and round high above the roost, ascending higher and higher until they faded from vision even with binoculars. The several flocks that followed acted in a like manner, but could be discerned barely visible at a great height and then they disappeared in a southerly direction. This was the direction the first larger flocks seemed to be trending. Only a few later individuals flew off toward the usual easterly direction as heretofore. Later that day only the few, that had gone east in the morning, returned to the roost over the usual route.

Could this be the secret of the swallows' southward migration — to ascend from the roost at dawn to an invisible height and to strike out for a southern destination? I had considered them feeding preceeding a flight south; in this case, it does not appear so. Perhaps their southerly flight would not take them a much greater distance than their morning trek eastward from the roost. At least these flocks did not appear again at the roost where they had been for so long a period.

On the morning of the last great flight of swallows at the roost, small hawks as the sharp-shinned, Coopers and pigeon were common around the roost and every hawk observed had a swallow; and they were seen to pick a swallow off at will. The hawks were feasting morning and evening on swallows so easily obtainable.

As to the present, we never get the big flights of Tree Swallows in late years and they never spread out to rest on the plowed land as they did in my young days. Also, we never see them mixed with Martins in large flocks (The Martins used to perch on the ground with them in August). Fifty years ago the Martins would string out on the telephone wires as far as the eye could reach for a quarter of a mile, and more, in a long dark row. For years we have not seen a Martin in the fall migration.

Roy Latham, Orient, Long Island

Evening Grosbeak Feeding Young in Dutchess County in July 1962: On May 9th I recorded 20 Evening Grosbeaks feeding at the window feeder of my home, three miles north of Standfordville, Dutchess County. This was the last record for the season until May 20th when I discovered one male and one female on the gravel driveway under a Silver Maple tree.

This pair of Evening Grosbeaks was seen again on May 26th. On May 31st I noted a male eating sunflower seeds. We did not see him again until June 17th when he was back at the feeder eating sunflower seeds again. Next we saw the female feeding at this same feeder again on June 25th, 28th, and 30th.

We especially noticed how green their beaks were during this season, as we had never seen them except with the yellow beaks of winter. When the female returned on the 4th of July with a somewhat fuzzy, black-beaked replica of herself, we were sure they had nested near us and had raised at least this one young.

On July 7th several members of The Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club saw the female with this one young. We went on vacation shortly hereafter and did not see them again.

Mrs. Paul Haight, Standfordville

King Rail at Belmont, Allegany County: Early in December 1962 my wife reported a strange bird which had flushed a short distance from her and disappeared in marsh grasses (cattails and canary grass). I thought at first it might be either a Woodcock or a Common Snipe. Several days went by and then she noted the bird feeding about a stump, again in the creek bottom. This creek passes through the village of Belmont and enters the Genesee River just above the Belmont Dam. Using field glasses, we knew it to be neither a woodcock nor a snipe and after checking in **Birds of North America**, we thought it might be a King Rail (*Rallus lelegans*). Both Dr. Sally Hoyt and Dr. Stephen Eaton, to whom we wrote, confirmed our identification from the description.

At the suggestion of Dr. Hoyt, we scattered mixed grain along the creek bottom and began daily checks and observations of the bird. Arriving home from work about 3:00 P. M., we would walk to the creek area. At first the bird was very wary and would quietly hide in swale and brush. Only on three occasions did the bird flush and then only for a short distances of 10 to 15 yards. It would fly not more