

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

than 15 to 20 feet in height, with the legs dangling, and with a rather awkward flight. It gave at these times a short cackle and would drop to the creek and then disappear. Although we knew its approximate location and even tried to come up on it, we were unable to flush it a second time.

Early in January we enlisted the aid of two other observers, Kate Palmer and Dorothy Baker, both amateur ornithologists, both of whom were familiar with the Virginia Rail from previous observations. They, both, observed this bird feeding and then disappear from sight. My wife and I, on two separate occasions, approached within ten feet of the bird. It was wary but apparently not near as afraid as on prior occasions. It fed downstream through the open water, wading a few steps at a time, evidently feeding on vegetation and water insects as well as scattered grain. Throughout this entire period of time the Genesee River was completely frozen over and only an area of about 150 yards of our stream was not frozen. On occasions, the bird crossed both snow and ice, leaving tracks that we noted were larger than those of a hen pheasant.

Dr. Eaton planned to visit us on January 25, but a blizzard developed and temperatures dropped to 20 degrees below zero, so he did not come. We advised him we would let him know when conditions were favorable again for observation.

The weather worsened. On February 14 a neighbor reported having seen the bird in flight as it traveled some 100 yards or more. On checking we found tracks a considerable distance upstream from where it had been feeding. On going downstream we found tracks appearing through drifted snow from a hole about four inches in diameter, and one could see the mark of wing feathers in the snow. The tracks led to open water and then disappeared. This was the last date that we can presume the bird to have been alive.

On February 19 we had a quick thaw and temperatures rose to 40 degrees. The entire creek drifted over on February 16, 17 and 18. As my wife walked the creek on February 19, she found the King Rail lying dead in what had been its sheltered area under the overhanging snow. The snow had collapsed from sheer weight and the rail was apparently suffocated. The bird was sent to Dr. Stephen W. Eaton at St. Bonaventure University, who reported that it had a full digestive tract containing water plants and animal life. The specimen is now in the permanent collection of that University.

Lou L. Burton, John Street, Belmont

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON DECEMBER 1 - MARCH 31 DAVID B. PEAKALL

The winter was extremely severe throughout the most of the state, prolonged cold was general and there were record snowfalls in some areas. In the northern part of the state there was virtual standstill in activity due to snow. Frank Clinch remarks that "roads became canyons too narrow for parking and often too deep to see even the tops of trees a hundred yards away."

For most of the winter it was extremely poor for winter finches; then in February a large invasion of Purple Finches occurred. This movement effected the entire state, but it was much less marked on Long Island. A wider canvas is necessary to determine the origin of this movement, although the flight was later in the lower Hudson valley than elsewhere. Associated with this invasion was a moderate flight of Pine Siskins and in some areas small to moderate numbers of Evening Grosbeaks.

The Hawk-Owl is a species that rarely invades our area. During the winter nine individuals were reported from six regions, mainly from the more northern areas. It is difficult to compare this invasion with those of many