

FIELD NOTES

House Finch in the Schenectady Area: The first record of a House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) in the Schenectady area was on April 29, 1964. The bird, an adult male, came to the writer's feeder with a pair of Purple Finches, at about 5:30 P.M. It was observed from 25 feet and resembled a Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*) except that its rump and breast were brighter colored and it lacked the brightness about the head of a male Purple Finch. I also noted the striped flank.

On May 5, the bird appeared again at our feeder, and with a 10 x 50 binocular I observed the breast, rump and striped flanks. Peter Wickham, the records chairman of the area who knew the species from Long Island, was able to provide additional points of identification. Attempts to catch the bird by netting were eventually successful, and eleven Club members observed it before its release. Measurements were taken, as follows: Total length: 155 mm; Wing 82 mm; Tail 67 mm; bill 11 mm; tarsus, 16.5 mm, weight 24.2 grams. While being handled, the bird gave the House-Sparrow like "cheep" call. It was banded with F. and W. band #101-103007 on its right leg.

Robert P. Yunick, 1527 Myron Street, Schenectady 12309

Ed. Comment: Attention is called to the article in the July 1962 KING-BIRD by Gilbert Cant, which summarizes the history of the House Finch in the state, and gives useful tips on identifying the bird in the field.

Franklin's Gulls in Central New York. A group of six small gulls with black heads was observed on April 11, 1964 by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Farnham and Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Ives on flooded land just east of the Seneca River near Montezuma. The gulls roared high in the water and occasionally fed like dabbling ducks; from time to time flew up, circled round and returned. When in flight the distinctive pattern of the wing, the white space separating the grey of the wing from the black near the ends, was obvious. With the white spots at the very tip the pattern was thus white-black-white-grey. We are convinced that these birds were Franklin's Gulls (*Larus pipixcan*).

Although there are a few upstate records of the Franklin's Gull, a group of six in breeding plumage appears to be unprecedented.

Hubert F. Ives, 5039 Skyline Drive, Syracuse 15

Wintering Baltimore Oriole: For two winter seasons, I have had a female Baltimore oriole (*Icterus galbula*) at one of my backyard feeders on Long Island's north shore. This is unusual for several reasons, chief of which is we have no orioles nesting nearby during the spring and summer.

The first winter the oriole came to the feeder, which is a large glass one on a tall pole, she was bedraggled and her tail feathers were scanty. She fought for food. (I put suet, corn bread and doughnuts out for her mixed with seed for my other visitors). She showed no fear of our banging kitchen door or of belligerent Bluejays and Starlings.

After a particularly bad ice storm, when the trees were stiff with sleet, the oriole was noted to have an injured foot. She could fly but had difficulty alighting on the feeder perch. She found a very clever solution to what could have been a fatal problem. Branch by branch, she laboriously hopped up a tall arborvitae which stands next to the feeder. When she was slightly higher than the feeder, she would drop, not fly, right down into the food tray. The distance was just short enough to make the maneuver successful.

On very cold days, when the temperature was five to ten above zero, the oriole sat huddled in the feeder long after eating. The glass sides and back provided concentrated sunrays and perfect protection from wind. She survived the winter and left in the spring.

The second winter, what was apparently the female oriole came again (the scant tail feathers identified her for me). But this time there was a

male with her. He was beautifully feathered and not physically handicapped in any way. They stayed all winter, feeding alternately, until January. Then, a strange thing happened. Suddenly, one day, the female oriole attacked the male, pinning him to the ground and pecking him so savagely that I almost intervened. Finally, he flew off with the female chasing. I never saw him again. The female came daily after that and left as before in early spring.

Alice Vee Sweeny, 25 Meadow Lane, Syosset

Varied Thrush at Bellport, Long Island: On December 19, 1963 Dr. Clarke Williams, an associate of mine at Brookhaven National Laboratory, reported to me an unusual bird that had come to his feeder for several mornings past. Next morning I went to his home in Bellport, on the south shore of Long Island, at about 7:30 A.M., and within a few minutes the bird arrived and began feeding. It was a Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*); it appeared to be a young bird, as the dark edges of the lower flank feathers were very pronounced, and the breast band somewhat blurred at the edges instead of being sharply defined. It was obviously in excellent condition and fed well; on all occasions I watched it during its appearances at the Williams' home it appeared to prefer cracked corn to the other mixed seeds that were scattered around. It did not go to any of the elevated feeders but remained on the ground. It did not associate with any other birds, but was not bothered by them.

At this time of year, the weather was generally bad, with northerly winds, temperatures remaining below the twenties, and some light to moderate snowfalls. Since, however, the Williams' house faces to the south, the thrush was able to feed in a relatively sheltered area, and after a leisurely feeding, generally lasting ten-fifteen minutes, it would often sun itself for a while in the lee of a small evergreen, or fly off to rest in one of the pitch pines bordering the garden.

The bird continued to come regularly to this location to feed many times almost every day, in spite of snowstorms and other adverse conditions, until January 17, 1964, when it disappeared quite abruptly. Since it had survived the worst snowstorm to date on January 13, its disappearance might be blamed on one of the many cats prowling in this neighborhood.

During the month that it frequented the Williams' home, a number of ornithologists were privileged to observe this rare visitant, thanks to the generosity and interest of Dr. and Mrs. Williams.

Dennis Puleston, Brookhaven

Ed. note: See *Kingbird* 9:22 for an account of this species at Watertown in 1958 and a summary of previous reports.

Varied Thrush at Orient, Long Island: On April 17, 1964, a Varied Thrush, *Ixoreus naevius*, was recorded in Orient, Long Island walking in a secluded section of a yard at a distance of fifteen to twenty-five feet from the observer, before six A.M. In this area where the bird was searching for food, bird food had been spread on the ground daily since December. The bird was under observation at this close range for three hours. The dark band on the breast was prominent. While on the ground the bird was very robin-like in its behavior. In time the bird crossed a driveway and wandered onto the freshly plowed ground of a newly planted potato field.

A search through the literature indicates that along the eastern seaboard practically all of the few records for this accidental species from the north-west have been in the autumn or early winter. The winter of 1963-1964 was comparably mild with no extremely cold temperatures or deep snow-cover on the ground.

This thrush showed up on the first morning in April on which any noticeable movement occurred with the immediate spring species in 1964. It definitely had not wintered in Orient.

Roy Latham, Orient, Long Island

Ed. note: Bellfort is more than thirty miles from Orient, where the preceeding record was obtained.