

Lark Bunting on Long Island: On September 6, 1964, an immature Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) was observed at Jacob Riis Park, Brooklyn, by Eliot Hirshberg and myself.

An unfamiliar and distinctively different note from high above drew our attention to a small Fringillid dropping from several hundred feet altitude, flashing brilliant white wing patches and white marks in the tail. It perched on the far side of a large bush as we maneuvered into position to obtain a better look. The crown and upperparts, of a distinctive gray-brown color, were completely streaked, as was the breast and flanks. The streaks were not at all coarse, but rather crisp and well defined. The face, the most critical character in identification of obscure finches and sparrows, had a "dark cheek effect" accentuated by a clearly defined jaw line, which appeared darker and bolder than the breast streaks. Perched, the white wing patch was largely concealed. The pale, heavy finch bill, the odd face, the quality and tone of the streaking, the call-note, the startling white in the wings, and the certainty that I had never seen this bird before, all added up to my first Lark Bunting.

Tom Robben, 21 LaSalle Drive, New Rochelle

Ed. Note: John Bull's recent book **Birds of the New York Area** gives 5 previous records, 4 of which are fall reports.

Bohemian Waxwings at Belmont: While having breakfast the gray, frosty morning of November 7, 1964, and watching the birds at our feeders, our attention was called to a stranger that had flown into the pear tree and was perched between a Blue Jay and a House Sparrow.

Observation with 7x35 binoculars disclosed a gray, crested bird, larger than the sparrow, smaller than the jay. It faced me, showing a black mask which continued low to the throat, edged around by white. The breast was a diffused, dull gray, and as it turned it revealed a relatively broad, white wing patch, the feathers of the wing being faintly tipped with red. The primaries were a darker gray than the breast and back, and the slightly darker tail feathers were tipped with yellow in a broad band. A rusty appearance showed under the tail. It was shortly joined by a group of Cedar Waxwings, and the contrast in color and size was immediately evident. The Cedar Waxwings were glistening bronze, smaller, lacked the wing patch, and were buffy rather than rusty under the tail. The larger bird was grayer and seemed more plump. References consulted confirmed our identification of the stranger as a Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrula*).

Later in the morning, I saw a group of waxwings feeding on Multiflora Rose hips. As they flushed, I noted three of the gray strangers.

Lou L. Burton, John Street, Belmont

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FALL SEASON

AUGUST 16 - NOVEMBER 30

DAVID B. PEAKALL

The weather of the period was dominated by drought, with rain only in brief spells, and the total deficit for the year was considerable. The dry conditions adversely affected marsh birds in some areas; shorebird migration was affected by the drying out of some good areas but in others fresh feeding areas were exposed.

In three areas where observations were made regularly the land-bird migration, especially of warblers, was considered to be good. Post and

Tudor give a dramatic account of birds seen in Bronx Park on September 13. There was a good flight at both ends of Lake Ontario at this period. However in Region 5 the Redstart was considered to be unusually scarce whereas it was the dominant species in the New York City area. A late September flight (28-29th) was also noted widely. Both of these "waves" were preceded by a low pressure front moving thru the area. The documentation of flight dates and numbers from six banding stations on Long Island adds a much needed statistical basis to the fall migration reports. It would be interesting to compare radar and/or moon-watching data with mist-netting and other ground observations. It should not be beyond the Federation to organize a moon-watch. This method was used successfully by Lowery (Recent studies in avian biology, 1955) in his studies of migration across the Gulf of Mexico and has since been applied to other areas. It has the advantage that little equipment is needed, a mounted telescope and patience. A count is made of the number of birds seen to cross the face of the moon. From this figure the number of birds migrating per mile of front per hour can be calculated. The direction of migration can also be assessed but virtually no identification of species is possible. The method is limited by weather (obviously a clear night is necessary) and can only be carried out for a week or so on either side of full moon. Even so, much useful information could be obtained on nocturnal migration.

The scarcity of hawks continued in most areas although there was a good flight of Rough-legged Hawks in October and November. In many areas the birds did not remain long and in one investigation it was shown that the mouse population was low. However, good numbers were still present at the end of the period in the coastal areas of Long Island. A fine flight of Broad-winged Hawks was noted in Region 4. It will be of great interest to determine whether or not this is an important regular feature of the migration of this species down the Appalachian ridges. A daily hawk watch in Region 9 added useful information to our knowledge of migration down the Hudson valley. The Snowy Owl obeyed the four year rule and invaded this winter. The attention of observers is drawn to the appeal for information on this invasion elsewhere in this issue.

Rosche comments that the proportion of immatures to adults in the herons was noticeably lower than normal in late summer. This is a useful index of breeding success. It points out the fact, also considered in Scheider's article on shorebirds in this issue, that much useful information can be obtained by observers who take the trouble to separate adults from immatures in the fall. The numbers of Common Egrets reported was low throughout the state.

There was a good scattering of records of Hudsonian Godwit this fall. It is generally considered that this species — like the Golden Plover — migrates off-shore from the Maritime Provinces to northern South America. This is based on the occurrence of the species on the coast after north-east storms and by radar plots (Drury and Keith, Ibis 104:449, 1962). However there appears to be no definite evidence that this off-shore flight is neces-

sarily the main flight. The numbers observed on the coast, even after major storms, are only 10-20 individuals. Hagar has described the mass departure of the Hudsonian Godwit from Hudson Bay; the most direct route to Argentina would be mainly over-land.

The count of Redheads at Montezuma is encouraging but other areas did not note an increase of this hard-hit species.

The fall flight of winter finches was non-existent. Not only were Cross-bills and Pine Grosbeaks virtually unrecorded but Siskins, Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches and even Tree Sparrows were scarce. Some observers considered that there were exceptionally poor numbers even of non-flight species. A late flight is always possible but it looks like a poor winter for land-birding.

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REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

RICHARD C. ROSCHE

The most outstanding weather feature characterizing this report period was the dryness of September, October and November following, like last year, an unusually wet August. Water levels on the Great Lakes, Niagara River, and at many small ponds and lakes throughout the region were at all-time lows. Some small ponds dried up completely for the first time in memory. Unfortunately, most good shore-bird habitat appeared after the main seasonal movement of these birds. Pond edges and marshes did not become too dry to have an adverse effect on the nesting activities of those birds dependent on this type of habitat. Hunting seasons were postponed and the woodlands of the State were closed for a period during October.

A number of observers commented on the abundance of small landbirds this season. One stated that there occurred "... possibly the best seasonal migration of landbirds in at least eight years" during August and September (Harold H. Axtell). "Waves" of migrants seemed most obvious on August 22 and 27, September 5, 6, 12, 25, 26 and 28, and on October 11.

Other highlights of the season include the occurrence of a number of rarities — Little Blue Heron, European Widgeon, Hudsonian Godwit, Pomarine Jaeger, Black-legged Kittiwake, Sabine's Gull and Bohemian Waxwing; the exceptional number and variety of small gulls on the Niagara River; the Snowy Owl incursion; the lack of any kind of a winter finch flight; and the increasingly apparent scarcity of most birds of prey and marsh birds.

This Regional Editor would like to take this opportunity to express his thanks and appreciation to all those who have contributed to these reports in the past five years. At the same time he would like to request observers in the Region, especially those away from the metropolitan Buffalo area, to contribute as regularly as possible. We need records and reports for this publication from all places in the Region at all times of the year. Records for December through March should be sent by April 10; for April and May by June 10; for June through August 15 by September 10; and for August 16 through November by December 10.

Abbreviations used below are: ad-adult; Alleg-Allegany; Be ISP-Beaver Island State Park; Bu ISP-Buckhorn Island State Park; Bflo-Buffalo; Chaut-Chautauqua; Co-County; Gen-Genesee; imm-immature; Lk-Lake; max-maximum; Nia-Niagara; N-North; OOGMA-Oak Orchard Game Management Area; opp-opposite; Pk-Park; Pt-Point; R-River; Wyo-Wyoming.