

HISTORICAL NOTE ON PIPITS WINTERING IN ORIENT, LONG ISLAND

ROY LATHAM

Water Pipits, *Anthus spinoletta*, occur on eastern Long Island as fall and spring migrants. In the fall they arrive in Orient, Suffolk County, with exceptional regularity, never varying more than a day or two from September 28. They are usually common by the first week in October, and leave between November 10 and 15. The earliest spring record in Orient is April 1, 1905 and the latest date noted is May 15, 1907. Pipits arrive during the spring plowing and follow the plow for hours picking up small insects for food. Never have more than two pipits together been observed in Orient during the spring migration.

Prior to the winter of 1909-10, pipits had occurred in Orient as an abundant autumnal and a rare spring migrant. The winter of 1909-10 was the mildest ever recorded on Long Island. It was noted for its freedom from ice, snow and frozen ground, the ground being in plowing condition throughout the entire winter. This may have been the principal cause of the pipits' tarrying beyond their usual latest departure date of November 20. In late December, 1909, a flock of 28 pipits was found in an oat field grown for a cover crop. The flock remained in the same field until the last day of March.

There was considerable interest in what the pipits would do the following winter. Again, some lingered past November 20. Two flocks, one of 52 and the other of 55 individuals, were located in late December. It was a cold month, and the winter of 1910-11 was the opposite extreme of the preceding one, with the temperature dropping nearly to zero several times. With the very rough weather came the greatest flight of Snow Buntings ever recorded in Orient. The numbers of buntings hovering over the fields were compared to a great fall flight of Tree Swallows, and at the height of their invasion were estimated at 10,000 individuals. They were concentrated on cultivated fields two miles in length by half a mile in width, a combination of several adjoining farms. Mixed with the buntings were many Horned Larks and a few Lapland Longspurs. The two compact flocks of pipits remained isolated from each other about a mile apart, feeding by themselves on the outskirts of the big bunting flock rather than actually associating with it. The fields were abundantly covered with crab-grass, corn-grass and wild mustard seeds. The growth of oats gave sufficient shelter, and the pipits wintered through satisfactorily. Probably the abundance of accessible food and suitable shelter were the main factors causing them to winter in Orient.

During the fall migration period pipits have never been observed in

such compact flocks as were seen that winter. In all the fifty-four years since then, only an occasional pipit, or rarely more than ten, has been noted, for a single day only, in the dead of winter.

In recent years, pipits do not come to Orient in the abundance of fifty years ago. This is also true of the Horned Larks and Snow Buntings. The status of the Lapland Longspur, never a common species in Orient, has not changed. Of late years, the buntings have been scarce or even absent in winter more often than in former years. On several farms where the Horned Lark used to be common daily all winter into April and early May, they are now seen not at all for weeks at a time, or are seen in small, isolated groups of less than a dozen individuals at infrequent intervals.

Orient, Long Island, New York 11957

Minutes of the 18th Annual Meeting of the Council of The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc.

The 18th annual meeting of the Council of the Federation, held at Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y., was called to order at 9 A.M. on June 12, 1965 by the President, Mr. Robert Arbib. A quorum was declared with 37 delegates representing 28 clubs answering the roll call.

Minutes of the 1964 Council meeting were read and approved. The report of the Treasurer, Mr. Kenneth D. Niven, was approved. Mr. Niven read the auditors' statement of approval of the Treasurer's report.

The Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Frederick Marsi, reported that all clubs had been sent the required notice of the proposed by-laws amendment to raise individual and club dues, as well as a later reminder.

Mrs. Dorothy McIlroy, *Kingbird* Editor, mentioned her appreciation of the previous editor's work. She reported two changes: the new printer, in Ithaca, for *The Kingbird*; and the granting of second-class mailing privileges, which will result in great savings in postage, for which thanks are due the Ithaca assistant postmaster for his help and advice in this matter. Mrs. McIlroy also made two requests: 1) that contributors of data to the Regional editors send in their reports immediately at the close of the reporting-period, so that the Regional editors can send their reports in on time and *The Kingbird* appear on time; 2) that we all help in finding articles for *The Kingbird*. Dr. Edgar Reilly has offered to give a talk, on a month's notice, to any local club on how to write articles for *The Kingbird* and similar magazines. After January 1, 1965, zip-code will be required on *Kingbirds* as part of the second-class mailing arrangement; any subscriber whose zip-code does not appear on his *Kingbird* is requested to send his zip-code number to Mr. Niven or Mrs. McIlroy.