

Feeding Note on Wintering Purple Sandpiper at Dunkirk: A Purple Sandpiper successfully wintered at the Dunkirk Harbor, being reported from 26 Dec 1966 to 23 April 1967 [*Kingbird* 17(2):91, 17(3):154]. The bird was probably one of three that were reported as a group as late as 10 and 11 Feb. A single bird had successfully spent the winter at the same site in 1963-64 [*Kingbird* 14(2):95].

On 22 and 23 April 1967 the authors studied and photographed a Purple Sandpiper feeding on earthworms for a period of 4 hours at Dunkirk. The bird remained on the lee side of an eight inch wall for most of this time while a steady 35-40 m.p.h. wind was blowing from the west. The bird frequented shallow rain pools and soft muddy areas, probing stilt-like for worms which it secured with great dexterity. The authors were semi-hidden in a standing vehicle, which the Sandpiper approached as close as four feet. Although many small worms (2-4 inches) were taken, a particularly large one (later measured at 5 inches) proved to be too large, and after many attempts the bird abandoned the mangled remains.

Purple Sandpipers normally forage on rocky shores, feeding on insects and small crustaceans (Bent. 1927, Bull. 142, Smithsonian Inst.). Feeding behavior as described above would normally occur only in the summer on the breeding grounds. The bird was almost completely in the brown nuptial plumage.

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Ed. Note. There are a number of records of Purple Sandpipers feeding in muddy pools and even on turf at high tide (Darling, *A Naturalist on Rona*, 1939; Waters, *British Birds* 59:346, 1966; Feare, *British Birds* 59:347, 1966). It seems likely that the unusual feeding behavior described above was caused by its normal feeding grounds being covered with water due to the high winds.

More Hybrid Flicker Notes from Watertown. Since writing a previous note (*Kingbird* 17(1):18, 1967) more information has been developed on this subject. Three hybrid flickers collected by D. Blais 1964-65 have been preserved as specimens in the collection of Jefferson Community College. Their descriptions are as follows:

1. Female—wings combination of yellow and salmon-red color; tail yellow.
2. Female—wings same as #1; tail mostly salmon-red.
3. Male—wings same as #1 and 2; tail combination of both colors.

A hybrid collected by P. Gaskin near Watertown May 1966 is as follows.

4. Male—wing feathers mostly yellow, except that two on each wing are salmon; tail—outer two feathers on each side salmon, other six yellow.

A male I found Burrville July 25, 1967 is as follows:

5. Male—wing feathers about half yellow and half salmon; tail—outer two feathers on each side mostly salmon, the central two salmon, the rest yellow.

All birds examined were symmetrical in color.

No. 2 specimen and another bird banded and released were reported in the earlier note. All birds have a red nape, gray crown, brown throat and cheeks, and the males have black moustaches, which makes the Yellow-shafted heredity seem dominant to that of the Red-Shafted Flicker. From descriptions and dates it appears that the known total is six hybrid flickers seen in the Watertown area in four years. Is this unusual so far east of the overlapping ranges of these two?

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Ed. Note: See note on hybrid flickers in New York State by E. M. Reilly, *Kingbird* 11(2):89, July 1961. Dr. Reilly recently suggested that helpful additional knowledge of the proportion of hybrid flickers in the state could be gained if a few bird-watchers would look carefully at every flicker they see and keep accurate notes on

whether evidence of hybridization, such as red in wings or tail and moustache color, is present. Museum specimens may be unintentionally biased by the tendency to collect the odd-plumaged birds.

In his doctoral thesis (Cornell University, 1959), "Hybridization in the Flickers (*Colaptes*) of North America," Lester LeRoy Short, Jr. stated (p. 73) that "the incidence of orange or reddish shaft color in eastern *auratus* population is rather high (table 20)." This table showed that of 266 specimens of Yellow-shafted Flicker from beyond 1000 miles east and north of the center of hybridization in Nebraska about one-third showed this color in some of the shafts and vanes of wings or tail, usually symmetrically. He also commented that "it would appear that the original source of this character in the eastern flicker population was the *cafer* population" probably by introgression. He concluded that "the various North American flickers, exclusive of *Colaptes fernandinae* of Cuba, . . . should be recognized as comprising one species, *Colaptes auratus*" with five subspecific groups—*auratus* (Yellow-shafted), *cafer* (Red-shafted), *chrysoides* (Gilded), *mexicanoides* and *chrysocaulosus*.

A hasty check of 59 New York State Yellow-shafted Flicker specimens, mostly Tompkins County, in the Cornell collection showed that at least eight of these had some orange or red color in the shafts and vanes of the wing and tail feathers.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON

December 1—March 31

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The term old-fashioned winter conjures up pictures of iced-over lakes and huge snow drifts; whether they were really more severe than some recent ones in New York State is open to doubt. It is, however, interesting to contemplate the differences in the species that the bird watcher might expect to see now as compared to fifty years ago. The old-timer probably saw more Sharp-shins and Cooper's Hawks than could be found today, but the total list has increased over the years. The Great Black-backed Gull did not penetrate into the Great Lakes until the mid-1930's and has increased greatly both on the coast and in the Great Lakes basin since then. The ratio of Mallards to Blacks has increased, due to an increase in the number of Mallards. The state-wide average from the waterfowl census for 1955-59 was just under 5000, compared to over 10,000 in 1962-66. It is among the landbirds that the increase in variety of species is the most marked. The Mourning Dove is now a common winter resident. The Evening Grosbeak was rare before the early 1940's. Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, and Mockingbird are all part of the winter scene now. The increases of these species on Christmas counts has been tabulated previously in these summaries (*Kingbird* 16:93, 17:87). Undoubtedly some of these changes have been aided by the availability of food at feeders. Baltimore Orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks winter regularly in small numbers. An Orange-crowned Warbler was at a Long Island feeder for a few weeks in January. While not related to feeders it is of interest that on December 31, King and Virginia Rails were re-