

**Wheatear at Van Cortlandt Park, New York City:** At about 12.30 P.M. on June 8, 1968 near the Parade Ground in Van Cortlandt Park, we spotted a bird slightly smaller than a Hermit Thrust on the ground approximately 30 feet in front of us. As it moved constantly about in an open area with sparse tufts of grass, we could see little of it except the gray head with a black mask running through the eyes straight to the bill, lined with white above. It vaguely suggested a shrike—but the bill was short and pointed. As we moved closer, the bird hopped up a small incline, occasionally flashing white in its tail. When it emerged onto an open roadway, we could see that the back was dark blue-gray, the wings quite dark, almost black, the breast washed with creamy buff, the legs dark. We checked the legs for a band, in case it might be an escapee; there was no band. Despite the nervous twitching and wagging of its tail, the bird not only stayed on the roadway for most of five minutes, but also allowed us to approach fairly close to it along the road. Although one of us had seen Wheatears (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) several times in this full plumage in Europe, it did not occur to us that this bird was a Wheatear until it finally flew up into some nearby shrubbery, clearly showing us the black and white “inverted T” pattern on the tail. Shortly afterwards it disappeared and we were unable to find it again.

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ED. NOTE: This is the eighth appearance of this species in the Marine Region. Two other records were also in the spring—May 13, 1956 at Orient and June 3, 1941 at Moriches Inlet (John Bull, *Birds of the New York Area*). Of interest is another Wheatear reported in nearby Connecticut this May (see future issue of *Audubon Field Notes* for details).  
T. Davis

**Unusual Concentration of Singing Slate-colored Juncos near Owego:** On July 17, 1968 Mildred White and I observed an interesting number of singing Slate-colored Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*) in the Frost Hollow area near Owego. On four trips to this area, we found eight singing birds in a distance of about 2 miles. At one stop we had two very disturbed birds and one with food in its bill. Elevations range from 1000' to 1250'. In addition, on the cross road, about a quarter mile to the south we saw another junco that was tail-fanning, but found no other near. Along about one and a half miles of the northern section of this cross road we found four more singing birds. Elevations there are 1250' to 1350'. Hemlock is the predominant tree along both roads. Juncos regularly nest at these higher elevations, but we have not previously noted such a concentration in this area.

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**Apparent Recognition of Danger by Evening Grosbeaks:** On July 17, 1967, I caught in a 2-cell Potter trap, and banded, two adult male Evening Grosbeaks (*Hesperiphona vespertina*) at the window feeder of Dora Burnett in Old Forge, New York. They were in the trap perhaps 15 minutes before being liberated.

A week later I set the trap in the same position, hoping to catch the four young that were reported there the day before, or a third unbanded male in the area. (Females had been seen earlier, but were not coming to the feeder with the young.) The males flew to the feeder from the near-by tree in which they usually perched, but refused to land. When a young one flew toward the trap, a male intercepted it and drove it to the ground, refusing to let it come to the feeder. Both birds then fed on the ground.

This behavior was repeated on July 27th, neither of the two banded males landing on the feeder, although they fed freely beneath it, and no young being allowed to land. A third, unbanded male was trapped successfully. All of these birds had been in the habit of eating at the feeder, rather than on the ground, so it would seem that the trap was recognized now as a danger.

By July 30th, the young were independent, and after this both they and the adults came to the trap, singly. Several were caught and banded. Both this year, and in 1968, it appeared that the males brought the young to the feeder, and no females were seen at this time.

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## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

June 1—August 15

DAVID B. PEAKALL

The Icterids, like the poor, are always with us. Three years ago I mentioned that there was some evidence that bird life was becoming less diverse and quoted the work of the Grabers in Illinois. They found that although the total number of breeding birds in that state had changed little from early this century, the numbers of many species had declined seriously whereas the population of only a few had markedly increased.

The Icterids are successful not only from the viewpoint of their numbers but also when judged by their recent range expansion. Three western species have been moving eastwards in the last few decades. These are the Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and Brewer's Blackbird. The Western Meadowlark spread rapidly across Ontario after the first nesting in 1929. The first specimen for New York was obtained near Rochester in 1948. Evidence suggestive of breeding in the Rochester area was obtained in 1957 and in the Niagara Frontier in 1960. In 1962 nesting was definitely established near Poughkeepsie, in this case hybridising with an Eastern Meadowlark. It seems likely that the Western and Eastern Meadowlarks, formerly separated ecologically, are now coming together again. The Yellow-headed Blackbird first nested in Ontario in 1931 but its spread has been slower than that of the Western Meadowlark. However, recently it has bred in south-western Ontario. Brewer's Blackbird moved into Michigan in the late 1940's; there were only two records before 1943 but a decade later it was locally common in the Upper Peninsula and south-western Michigan. In Ontario it first bred in 1945 at Port Arthur, reached Sunbury by 1962 and southern Ontario (Wellington County) by 1967. It is now within a hundred miles of New York State. So far there have been few records of this species in the state; two sight records in 1953 and the first specimen in the winter of 1966. Even so, the remarkable range extension of this species suggests that it would be worth looking for breeding in this state.

The markedly increased production of young from the Osprey colony on Gardiner's Island is most encouraging. It suggests that there is still hope of reversing the downward path before breeding ceases completely. The rate of decline over the last fifteen years had suggested that this would occur within a few years. The correlation with the halting of the