



Photographs by Paris and Pepper Trail

General Information Center, Seneca Lake, 31 December 1968

Immature Black-legged Kittiwake on Seneca Lake at Geneva: At noon on December 31, 1968, while checking gulls and waterfowl on Seneca Lake at the "turn-out" on Routes 5 and 20 at Geneva, I noticed among a flock of Ring-billed Gulls one bird which was considerably smaller, resembling superficially and at first glance a Bonaparte's. As I watched with 7 x 35 binoculars, the bird banked and flew directly over me, and I saw his black legs. As I continued to watch, I further noted the all black wingtips, black neck-band, slightly forked tail with black terminal

band, and a zig-zag on the back and wings which was also black. My Field Guides confirmed my suspicions that this was a Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*). Mr. Paris Trail and his son Pepper Trail arrived within half an hour, and succeeded in photographing the bird from all angles, both flying and sitting on the water. The photographs clearly show the black legs and the other identifying features.

A check of the literature shows (Eaton, 1909) a Seneca Lake record, with no date or verifying details given. A bird supposedly taken at Auburn in January, 1854 is mentioned by William Hopkins in the *Proceedings of the Boston Society of Natural History*, but the whereabouts of the specimen is unknown to this writer.

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Evening Grosbeak in Unusual Plumage at Hornell: An "all yellow" Evening Grosbeak (*Hesperiphona vespertina*) has been present in North Hornell and Hornell since late November 1968. All body plumage is a beautiful clear yellow, the wings are white and the tail is white with a few outer tail feathers black. The eyes are dark and the bill is a clear pale cream color. We have seen it at distances of four to ten feet and noted that there are a few blemishes caused by small indistinct areas of pale brown. At a distance, however, it suggests an overgrown canary with white wings.

It first appeared at a neighbor's feeder on November 20 and apparently never returned there. The bird came to our yard on November 24 and we fed it last on February 21. There have been eight different reports of its presence at various feeders in North Hornell and Hornell, covering a roughly elliptical area varying from one to three miles in radius from our house.

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Gray Partridges in Jefferson County: During the past winter (1968-9) most of the snowfall in Jefferson County came before New Year's Day. The heaviest fall arrived on the last weekend of 1968 and left a deep blanket of snow. For about three weeks following this, many coveys of Gray Partridges (*Perdix perdix*) could be seen along the roadsides, particularly on secondary roads where grass was uncovered by plowing of the shoulders. An extensive thaw late in January reduced the snow cover considerably. Partridges were then much less in evidence and light snowfalls for the rest of the winter did not seriously interfere with securing food.

The factors relating to the success or failure of this species in New York State have been the subject of much study. The State Conservation Department has carried out a number of research projects. Studies have shown that portions of Jefferson County support the highest concentrations of Gray Partridges in the state, the northwestern part of the county providing excellent habitat.

Since 1952 there has been an open season on Huns, as they are popularly known, with hunting pressure generally light. Winter survival appears to be good, birds showing adaptability in finding food under adverse conditions. A major factor in the success of the species is early summer weather, during the period of nesting. Cold and wet weather in June and July has a serious effect on the hatching of eggs and the survival of chicks.

Agricultural practices are important. Extensively cultivated areas are needed, with such crops as small grains, corn, alfalfa and hay. The dairy farming areas in Jefferson County supply this need. However, more and more farm land is being abandoned or put to other uses, as it is in other parts of the state. With the current decline in farming, the future of the Gray Partridge seems in doubt.

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