

FIELD NOTES

Record of Late Breeding in the Hermit Thrush: During a survey of breeding bird populations in an oak-pine forest at the Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, Long Island, N.Y., in 1961, I discovered an unusual nest of the Hermit Thrush (*Hylocichla guttata*). The nest is of interest since it represents one of the latest breeding records for the species. The population of the Hermit Thrush on eastern Long Island is a restricted and isolated one assignable to the race *faxoni* (W. E. Lanyon, per. comm.).

I found the nest containing three eggs on August 17. It was situated on the ground, embedded in the litter and well concealed from above by moderately dense, low shrub cover of *Vaccinium* spp. and *Gaylussachia baccata*. On 25 August three nestlings two-three days old were present. Estimated hatching date is 22 or 23 August. The young fledged successfully on 1 September giving a nestling period of 9 to 10 days. The estimated date of completion of the clutch is 10-11 August, depending on the exact date of hatching and assuming a 12 day incubation period (Gross in Bent, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull., 196:147, 1949).

The date of nesting and the clutch-size suggest that this record represents either a late second brood or a re-nest. Bull (Birds of the New York Area, p. 339, 1964) gives egg dates for Long Island as May 14-June 22. But later nestings, including a few August records, are known for some northeastern populations. Gross (op. cit.) reported two nests found by F. H. Allen in New Hampshire. One was found on 1 August and the other on 9 August, 1883, both with three eggs. Saunders (Roosevelt Wild Life Bull., 5:364, 1929) gave dates of hatching for three late nests in northern New York as July 24, August 8, and August 12. Another nest contained three eggs on 22 July and two nestlings and an infertile egg on 10 August. Smyth (Auk, 64: 625-626, 1947) reported a late nest in northern New York with a nestling "starting to feather" on 31 August. Finally, Knight (J. Maine Ornith. Soc., 11:122-123, 1909) recorded young Hermit Thrushes leaving a Maine nest on September 8.

Although the present record from Long Island represents one of the latest known nestings for the species, the records reviewed above suggest that late July—early August nest starts are not altogether unusual in this highly insectivorous thrush (see also Palmer, Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., 102:417, 1949; Gross, op. cit.: 151).

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Ed. note: Such late nestings, as Mr. Greenlaw implies, are the result of some interference with the normal or usual breeding period. First or second nesting may have been broken up, resulting in a delay in part or all of the cycle. Exact documentation such as this is, however, quite uncommon.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

FRITZ SCHEIDER

Torrential Hurricane Agnes brought an excess of rain to an already brimming summer scene. All reports agree it was the wettest summer in several decades and the devastation to nesting species (v.i.), though difficult to document, was probably quite extensive. Particularly severe were the losses in water birds (herons, geese, ducks, rails, gallinules, coots) at the various marshes and refuges at the north end of the Finger Lakes and the southern fringe of the Lake Ontario plain (cf Region 3). Similarly ground-nesting species, particularly such gamebirds as Ring-

necked Pheasant (2,5) and Gray Partridge (6), seemed to have fared very badly with the heavy rains. A third group sorely injured by the combination of severe rain and persistent cold includes most aerial insectivores, especially swallows — numerous Bank Swallow colonies had their nesting sites washed out, Tree Swallows (3,4,5,9) and Purple Martins (5) had loss of young or sharply reduced total counts, Cliff Swallows colonies continued to decline — ? weather or House Sparrows ? —, and the Rough-winged Swallow, basically a riverine species in central and southern New York, may have been decimated by the severe flooding and bank erosion. And like the Rough-winged Swallow, river edge and/or bottomland and ravine wall species such as Eastern Phoebe, the Waterthrushes, and Canada Warbler seemed woefully low in July counts everywhere in the storm affected area. Interestingly the counts of rails and many riverine species along the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers (5,8,9) seemed as good or better than ever. A specialized effect of Agnes was the high tide flooding-out of tern colonies along the south shore of Long Island (10) and, inland, such lake elevation that the Oneida Lake gull colonies never established and the tern colonies there were severely delayed. A spin-off of the extensive rains and high water was the virtual absence of normal shorebird habitat and almost all upstate sectors complained of very poor numbers and variety of same thru July and early August.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Breeding Bird Surveys have rapidly superceded all other forms of breeding bird surveillance and many reports rely heavily on these. It behooves observers then to persist in annually running these routes and preferably at the same date if possible. Most of the early June counts appeared to have very good numbers; however, numbers on the counts run in the first week of July seem markedly less than might be anticipated — ?? reduced song, flood losses, — or both??

American Bittern may be joining the parade of vanishing species across the state (3,5,8) and the presence of a few white herons (3,5,9) was only slight compensation for the dearth of Black-crowned Night Herons and Least Bitterns. The massive reproductive loss of waterfowl at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge is well described (3) and lesser losses in the western sector of 5 are parallels to that. Local waterfowl production is described as good in 2, 6, and 9, all sectors peripheral to the severe flooding. Red-shouldered and Marsh Hawks have virtually disappeared as breeders across the state with only a few scattered Red-shouldered in the Adirondacks (5,7) as the last vestige of this formerly abundant handsome raptor. Ospreys continue to decline on Long Island (10); their breeding status and/or success in the Adirondacks is currently unknown.

Both cuckoos seemed scarce in the more southern sectors (3,4,9) but showed some improvement in numbers in 5, 7, and 8. Common Night-

hawks continue to decline, being specifically so noted in 2, 3, and 5. Similarly Whip-poor-will, except for 5, showed a decline and the species was unreported in the Adirondack sector. The loss of Eastern Phoebe and swallows nestings has been mentioned (cf 3,5) and the continued decline of marsh wrens was probably accelerated by the cattail-deep flooding of the local marshes upstate. Robins and Wood Thrushes seemed to be increasing but the Veery counts (3,5) continue low.

Two positives noted in this grim litany of negatives – Cedar Waxwings were everywhere (3,5,7,8,9) and both Red-eyed and Warbling Vireos appeared to be on the upswing (2,3,4,5). Warblers presented a mixed bag – increased numbers of Yellow Warblers (3,5) but strongly decreased tallies of Redstart (3,5). Sufficient tallies and numbers are not available from the Tug Hill Plateau and the Adirondack regions but there is a suggestion that Blackburnian Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, and even the abundant Myrtle Warbler may be decreasing. Careful counts of the ravine-haunting Louisiana Waterthrush and the river edge Yellow Warblers in 3, 4, and western 9 next year might give some hint of the reproductive losses suffered this year.

Orchard Orioles were reported nesting in 2 and 3 but virtually absent in 9, where formerly scarce but regular. Indigo Buntings were reported up in 2 and 3 and similarly Purple Finches were increased in 3,4,5, and 7. Red Crossbills appeared in either late July or August in 2,3,5,7,8,9, perhaps presaging a major irruption this winter. Henslow's and Vesper Sparrows are noted as decreased in 2,3, and 5 but there is a suggestion that the White-throated Sparrow may be expanding in the higher elevations of 4, southern 5, and 9.

The Monk Parakeet, now reported from 4, 6, 9, and 10, appears to be expanding rapidly and I suspect another pest species is here – any chance of getting it declared a game bird?

Rarities for the summer season include Louisiana Heron (9), Yellow-crowned Night Heron (9), Sandhill Crane (3), Black-necked Stilt (10), Laughing Gull (5), Cabot's Tern (10), Acadian Flycatcher (2) – also see Region 10 report, Orchard Oriole (8), and Clay-colored Sparrow (2,6,).

My compliments to the Regional Editors of 2 thru 10, particularly for the numerical data of the breeding bird censuses. The Region 1 report was not available for summary unfortunately and we are the less for it.

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