

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Boreal Owl found on Ocean Parkway, Long Island, New York. On January 15, 1975, I observed an owl lying dead on Ocean Parkway near Cedar Beach, in western Suffolk County. Adjacent to the road were dense stands of Pitch Pine and Japanese Black Pine, a habitat in which Saw-whet Owls (*Aegolius acadicus*) occur in varying numbers each winter. Believing the bird to be a Saw-whet Owl, I stopped and retrieved the specimen. Later, however, closer examination proved the bird to be a Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*). The light yellow beak, speckled forehead, and black lining of the facial discs separated this owl from its smaller relative, the Saw-whet. The specimen was in excellent condition, having suffered only a broken left wing and head injuries.

The Boreal Owl is a rare winter visitant to the northern portions of New York State. There are two old specimens from northern Connecticut (Bent, 1926) and Bull (1964) mentions one recent specimen from New Jersey, found after having struck the Raritan Arsenal on November 1, 1962. The present specimen is the first record for Long Island. Identification was confirmed by John Bull of the American Museum of Natural History; the specimen is presently No. 821687 in the collection of that institution.

The true status of the Boreal Owl on Long Island cannot be determined on the basis of this one specimen. Roy Latham, in more than seventy years' experience on the Orient Peninsula, has no record for this species. He is of the opinion, however, that in light of a number of records from Rhode Island, the Boreal Owl does occur irregularly in small numbers on Long Island (Latham, pers. comm., Feb. 7, 1975). Being of a nocturnal nature, however, and because of its retiring habits during the daytime, it may be overlooked. Now that it has been proven that the Boreal Owl may occur on Long Island in winter, the pine groves that are the winter haunts of the Saw-whet Owl should be checked carefully to try to determine the exact status of this northern wanderer.

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LITERATURE CITED

- Bent, A. C. 1926. *Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey*. Dover Publications, New York.
Bull, John. 1964. *Birds of the New York Area*. Harper and Row, New York.

For an account of earlier occurrences of the Boreal Owl in New York State, see *The Kingbird*, 1965, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 74-76. —Eds.

Swainson's Warbler at Forest Park, Queens Co., New York City. On May 10, 1975, the author, accompanied by John Carabella and Elaine Cook, discovered a Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) at Forest Park, Queens Co., New York. Alerted immediately by us, Stephen B. Dempsey, Dave Ewert, Michael Gochfeld, Michel Kleinbaum and Tom Robben subsequently observed the bird. All our observations took place in oak forest, in heavy undergrowth on the slopes of a glacial pothole. This individual was a particularly dull Swainson's in that its crown was only slightly reddish-brown in contrast to the brown back. The creamy white eyeline, dingy white underparts and longish bill were clearly noted. As Kleinbaum observed the bird, an Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*) flew at it, chipping loudly. The Swainson's flew a short distance, and a second Ovenbird immediately began harassing it. As if this were not enough, the bird was approached too hurriedly by birders anxious for a glimpse, and it took flight and vanished altogether. The combined efforts of

many and the employment of tape recordings of the species' song failed to locate it again.

This record falls within the May 5-20 span of the four previous New York occurrences. Interestingly, three of these other birds were also found in the heavily-birded New York City parks. A photograph of a Swainson's Warbler that was banded at Tobay Sanctuary, Nassau Co., New York, on May 20, 1973 appears in *American Birds* (1973, 27: 841); this photograph served to remove the species from the state hypothetical list.

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Hermit Thrush—song heard in northern part of winter range. The Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) is known to sing on its wintering grounds in the southern part of United States but no degree of singing seems ever to have been recorded along the northern limits of its wintering range. The following experiences relate to two Hermit Thrushes found near Accord, Ulster County, in southeastern New York State (between 41° N–42° N) citing in particular an instance when one of the birds broke into song.

In late November, 1974, I discovered the two birds in a dense overgrown old field on the hillside in the rear of my residence. After this a weekly visit was made and I was usually met with the familiar "chuck" alarm note but I soon became aware that one of the birds would occasionally use a distinctive call note of typical *Catharus* quality—possibly stimulated by a disturbance such as my presence would cause. Only one of the birds appeared to be using this call note. I tried an imitation of it and received an immediate response, shortly followed by the bird coming out of the dense cover into the more open woods where I was standing, flying up into the trees and pausing momentarily to search for this other "thrush." About the same time a Robin flew in through the tree tops and was met by the Hermit who rose in a curving upward flight that ended in brief pursuit, although no actual attack was made. The bird finally returned to its retreat and fell silent. I avoided further imitations.

Whenever I visited the area only one of the thrushes exhibited this kind of restlessness. I came to feel that it was always the same bird. The other was more typical of wintering Hermits—retiring and quiet except for the occasional "chuck." About mid-December I heard one attempt at singing but the song stopped following the first few introductory notes. However, on December 30, 1974, I was suddenly surprised when the bird changed from the call note and delivered the full song three times before flying farther into the tangle and becoming silent. This was the only instance of singing that I heard although observations were continued until mid-January, at which time I lost contact with the birds and an extended search was not initiated.

Past experiences have repeatedly shown that it took a good snowfall to force any nearby Hermits out of their dense coverts to join the other birds coming and going about my residence where a feeder was in use. Once out they would soon discover the fruits of the Boston Ivy and Honeysuckle vines covering the house plus a nearby Holly tree, and would seek this fare almost daily, and avoiding the bird feeder, as long as snow blanketed their regular grounds.

This year, the winter so far had been moderate and fairly open. My expectations were rewarded for on February 9th, following a succession of light snowfalls, two Hermit Thrushes appeared in my yard where they fed on the previously mentioned fruits. In the very limited time spent in watching the birds I heard no notes but one of the birds was obviously more restless than the other. They disappeared after about two weeks, following the return of more open and continued moderate weather.

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