

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Long-eared Owl breeding on Long Island: The following are a few of the more pertinent details of the nesting of the Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*) at the Muttontown Preserve, East Norwich, Nassau Co., in the Spring of 1977. This is the first documentation of nesting Long-eared Owls in Nassau Co. since the 1940's. Notes were kept on the nest area and behavior of these owls from the time of their first sighting, on 12 December 1976, until a final observation of the young birds on 30 June 1977. My sightings and identification of the nest and young have been confirmed by William E. Paterson, Naturalist, Nassau County Museum; Otto Heck, Professor of Biology, Trenton State College, Trenton, New Jersey; and Ralph Cioffi, Federation of New York State Bird Clubs Breeding Bird Census for Northern Nassau County.

A family group of five Long-eared Owls was first located on 12 December 1976, in a large stand of conifers consisting mainly of Eastern White Pines (*Pinus strobus*). During the winter the owls evidently hunted over open fields; an analysis of 303 pellets taken from the roost showed that 90% contained remains of Meadow Voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*). On or about 23 March 1977 the three young of the previous year were evicted from the area by the two adults, presumably in preparation for the coming breeding season. The nest was located in a pine with a breast-height diameter of eleven inches, in a section of the Preserve consisting of open fields, which had been mowed within the past year, surrounded by stands of conifers. The nest was an old crow's nest, partially rebuilt by the owls, and was in a crotch 43.6 feet from the ground.

Only two young appear to have fledged. I located them on 8 June 1977 on the ground, and from their plumage I estimated that they were between four and five weeks old. The nest tree was not climbed at this time. A final sighting of the two young and one adult bird was made on 30 June 1977. In the future, this area will be left as undisturbed as possible to encourage the owls to stay for at least another year.

The complete nest record, with photographs, is on file at the Nassau County Museum, at the Muttontown Preserve.

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Green-tailed Towhee on Long Island: A Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*) was first noticed on December 9, 1976, at the feeders of Robert Adamo, Wading River, Long Island. Mr. Adamo, who had previously seen the species in the West, notified Aline Dove who confirmed the identification the next day. It was seen by the writer and other observers on December 11 and by many other competent birders on later dates. The bird was in perfect adult plumage and associated primarily with White-throated Sparrows (*Zonotrichia albicollis*).

A wooded area overgrown with bushes and vines, including Japanese Honey-suckle, was directly behind the feeding area and the towhee spent most of its time there, appearing at the feeders periodically. For a few days in January, it was also reported at the feeder of James Clinton, about three-fourths of a mile to the east. On one occasion, it was heard to give the soft "mew" call note typical of the species, and on January 16 it was lured from cover, obviously excited, by a tape-recording of the species' song. However, it failed to respond to repeated playbacks a short time later. Recognizable photographs were obtained by at least two photographers but none was adequate for publication. One photo has been deposited in the American Museum of Natural History to verify the record.

Bull (1974) listed three previous records from mainland New York State and earlier (1964) reported two occurrences in northern New Jersey. Three of the previous birds were first seen in December or January, one in October and one in May.

This bird survived one of the coldest Januaries in many years with the ground nearly continuously covered with snow and ice. After warmer weather returned and the snow cover disappeared in mid-February, it visited the feeder less frequently but was seen sporadically through April 22, 1977. During its stay, it was seen at least 56 times on 51 days by the Adamos and other observers.

REFERENCES

- Bull, J. 1964. *Birds of the New York Area*. New York, Harper and Row, 540pp.
Bull, J. 1974. *Birds of New York State*. Garden City, New York, Doubleday, 655pp.
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Buff-breasted Sandpiper in Oswego County in May: Because spring shorebirds are often difficult to observe in the Oneida Lake basin region, and encouraged by the low level of Lake Ontario, on 28 May 1977 I led my Syracuse University Ornithology Class to the inlet of Sandy Pond, Oswego Co., where we were rewarded by one of the finest collections of spring shorebirds I have seen in upstate New York. While attempting to center a small group of Black-bellied Plovers (*Pluvialis squatarola*) in my spotting scope, I noticed what seemed to be an over-sized pipit staggering about in a wrack line of dead alewives (*Pomolobus*). A second glance immediately suggested Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*), an identification confirmed by detailed and repeated observations, at times within 15 m through a 30x telescope, during the next two hours under good lighting conditions.

The bird was between the accompanying White-rumped Sandpiper (*Calidris fuscicollis*) and Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) in size, but had a more erect stance than either. The characteristically small-headed, large-bodied appearance of the