

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Burrowing Owls on Long Island: In his book *Birds of The New York Area* (1964) John Bull mentions two possible occurrences of Burrowing Owl in the New York City area: (1) one caught alive in New York City on 8 Aug 1876 but suspected of having escaped from captivity, and (2) one shot at Westhampton, Long Island, on 27 Oct 1950. The latter was a specimen of the western race (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*) and may have been a genuine wanderer. Considering the foregoing it is against all odds that my wife Hanna and I should have been involved with three occurrences of this species on Long Island between December 1976 and March 1982.

On 28 Dec 1976 we picked up a Florida race Burrowing Owl that was on the verge of dying of exposure during a snow storm. The bird was on the median of the Jones Beach strip at Cedar Beach and it was given first aid and stabilized by Hanna, who has a permit to rehabilitate wildlife. At the time we had no experience with this species so Tom Davis came to our house and photographed and measured the owl. He concurred with us that it was the Florida race (*Athene cunicularia floridana*) thought to be sedentary. Many believed that it had accidentally boarded a truck or ship and was only able to free itself upon arriving here (cf. *Kingbird* 27:69; 1977). At the American Museum of Natural History John Farrand confirmed the identification and both he and John Bull agreed that the wisest course to take would be to return it to Florida. So on 6 Jan 1977 the owl was returned to Miami, Florida, via National Airlines.

On 3 Dec 1978 Port Authority supervisor Sam Chevalier, a close friend, was operating his truck along the back roads at J. F. Kennedy International Airport. Hanna was seated next to him. They were searching for a Snowy Owl seen the day before but instead flushed a Burrowing Owl. A phone call brought Jim Ash to the scene in record time. He had missed seeing the Cedar Beach Owl by minutes and was determined that history would not repeat itself. The owl was identified, with the aid of a 20x scope, as a Florida race bird. The following day Sam saw the owl in the same general area. This individual was quite wary and impossible to approach. The owl was not seen again until 30 Jan, when it was found at a different location on the airport. It was last seen on 1 Feb. At this time, various other raptors were on the airport, including a Peregrine Falcon, Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl, Common Barn-Owl, and occasional Goshawks and Cooper's Hawks, so the possibility of foul play exists. Copies of my original notes have been filed with the New York State Avian Records Committee.

On 29 Mar 1982 Sam, Hanna and I were birding the airport. We stopped the truck on a dirt road and got out. While looking for sparrows we came upon the flattened and stiff carcass of a Burrowing Owl. It was easily identified by plumage and the distinctive tarsi. At this point Hanna and I had studied the birds in both Florida and Texas, and this too was a Florida race individual! Unfortunately, its remains were misplaced before they could be deposited in a museum collection.

The occurrence of this species on a 6,600 acre airport so far from its normal range immediately suggests the probability of plane-assisted passage, all the more because, within their home range, they also favor airports and similar places such as golf courses. I don't believe anyone familiar with this race of Burrowing Owl would seriously consider that they would undertake an unassisted flight from the state of Florida to New York. One thing, however, is certain wherever they are encountered Burrowing Owls are a joy to watch and are especially entertaining when introducing their young to the outside world.

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[Anyone who observed the last two of these birds and who has original field notes is encouraged to send a copy of those notes to the NYSARC. Even fragmentary remains of rarities found dead should be saved and deposited in an ornithological collection along with your name, the date and place the remains were found, and an indication of why the specimen should be preserved. Skeletons and scattered feathers usually suffice to permit later verification of a record; New York State's Yellow-billed Loon record is documented by a lower mandible only! — The Editor]

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Late Date For Unfledged Juvenile Wood Thrush — On 3 July I discovered a female Wood Thrush completing a nest at Heart Lake, Essex County. The site is at an elevation of 2178 feet above sea level. The nest was built only a few hundred feet from the shores of Heart Lake near lean-to number 10. The nest rested in the branches of a Red Maple tree and was 25.5 feet above the ground. The branch it rested on curved gently away from the trunk and the nest was about 24 feet out from the base of the trunk. The tree grew within a few feet of the lean-to.

The outside of the nest was draped generously with bark of the Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and a long strand of plastic-like wrapping material. Small shells were found in the mud used for construction of the nest. It had apparently been collected from the nearby shores of Heart Lake. The mud was combined with leaf mold to make a sturdy nest. A few blowfly larva were found in the used nest. The nest also included some Northern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) cones, some dried plant stems, rootlets and one rubber band.

Between 3 July and 6 August I devoted in excess of 15 hours closely observing the behavior of the pair of Wood Thrush from nest building through the fledging stage. Reconstructing the events, I believe the nest was finished on 4 July. Three eggs were laid from 5 July through 7 July. Incubation continued from 8 July through 20 July and the nestling period was from 21 July through 3 August. The dates from the list compiled by Gordon M. Meade